

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that, this Thesis is a product of my original work, achieved through my personal research, reading and reflection. I have never submitted it to any Institute of higher learning for any academic credit. Therefore, I am fully accountable for any information written herein.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the People of God especially the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe and emeritus Bishop Patrick Kalilombe who called for a diocesan mini-synod of 1973-1975 which introduced the establishment of Small Christian Communities in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA:	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i>
AAS:	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
AD:	<i>Anno Domini</i>
AFER:	African Ecclesial Review
AG:	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
AMECEA:	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa
BC:	Before Christ
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
Et.al:	<i>et alia</i>
GS:	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
L.G:	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
MCP:	Malawi Congress Party
PO:	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i>
SCC:	Small Christian Community
STA:	Senior Traditional Authority
TA:	Traditional Authority
UDF:	United Democratic Party

ABSTRACT

This thesis originates from the researcher's experience of poor participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Despite the thirty six (36) years of the existence of SCCs in the Archdiocese and a good start of SCCs in the late 1970s to late 1980s, the researcher is puzzled by the poor participation of the laity. Therefore this study aims at improving participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

The pastoral circle method with the four moments of Insertion, Social-Pastoral Analysis, Theological Reflection and Action plan were used in the research. Also using the quantitative and qualitative research methods, data was collected through observations, questionnaires and interviews. After data analysis, it was found out that one of the root causes of poor participation is lack of continued instruction and teaching to the laity on the ecclesiology of communion and the importance of SCCs, proving right the assumption that the laity lack adequate knowledge on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs. It was also found out that poor participation is due to clericalism and hierarchical mentality among pastoral workers in making pastoral plans for parishes and SCCs with inadequate consultation of the laity, proving right the assumption that the laity are not adequately consulted when making pastoral plans for SCCs. It was also found out that poor participation is due to lack of proper training of the laity in preparing, organising and conducting pastoral activities in SCCs, proving right the assumption that pastoral activities in SCCs are poorly prepared, organised and implemented. Analysis of these root causes led to the identification of the need of 'ongoing formation' as a sign of the time.

This need of ‘ongoing formation’ has been illuminated by the teachings of the Church, starting with the Bible, the Church Fathers, Vatican Council II, the Magisterium of the Church and some theologians. This illumination of the teachings of the Church on ongoing formation, has led to pastoral recommendations and suggestions for action in order to improve participation of the laity in SCCs. A vision statement developed in line with this pastoral action is: “to be a Church-family of God that is united and responsible in achieving deeper and new evangelisation.” The goal of the pastoral plan is: “improving participation of the laity in SCCs of Archdiocese of Lilongwe through ongoing formation.” The strategic objectives are: (1) to help the people of God understand the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs. (2) to enable the clergy involve and consult the laity in pastoral planning for the SCC activities. (3) to come up with and implement relevant weekly and monthly relevant pastoral activities. (4) to enable the people of God adequately prepare, organise and animate weekly and monthly relevant pastoral activities in SCCs. (5) to inculturate the SCCs as family of God. Thus, activities on ongoing formation have been suggested: training workshops, capacity building workshops, and other relevant pastoral activities.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about “Improving participation of the laity in Small Christian communities: A pastoral challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Malawi.” Through this research work we are proposing relevant pastoral activities in order to improve the situation of laity in SCCs from poor participation to an improved active participation in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe were established some thirty six years ago after a diocesan mini-synod in 1973-1975. In that early period, the laity were very enthusiastic and participated actively in SCC activities. But from around late 1980s to the present time, the participation of the laity is not very encouraging. The researcher who has been involved in pastoral work as a seminarian, a curate, a parish priest, bishop’s secretary and pastoral secretary of the Archdiocese, has been puzzled by the situation of poor participation of the laity in SCCs.

The researcher has observed that many of the laity do not actively participate in SCC life despite the fact that it is a general pastoral practice and obligation for each and every Catholic in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe to meet with others and participate in SCC meetings and activities that are either weekly or monthly. The researcher’s experience and observation is that many of them are just aware in theory that they belong to a particular SCC, but in practice, they hardly come together to live or share experiences or pray as a community. They normally come to Church on Sunday for prayers (Sunday Service) but they do not go for SCC meetings and activities. But the same members express admiration of the Pentecostal or Protestant prayer and Bible sharing groups who meet in their residential locations or at prayer house compounds. And some of the Catholics are attracted and go for fellowship prayers and Bible

reading in these Pentecostal and Protestant groups after attending mass or prayer services in the Catholic Church. Some of them even completely abandon the Catholic Church to join the emerging Pentecostal prayer groups, while others go back to traditional religion and other cultural practices like secret society of *Gule wa nkulu*¹.

Just because the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe are not participating actively in SCCs, the communion, liturgical, gospel witness and diaconal services of the church are at stake. Thus, the researcher visualised a challenge² which needs investigation in order to improve the participation of the laity at SCC level and consequently enhance the communion of the members of the Church, proclamation of the gospel, spiritual life of Christians and service of the members to the world.

The central question therefore in this investigation is: how can we improve the participation of the laity in SCC in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe? However, to answer this question we have also to find-out why the laity are not actively participating in SCCs?

In this investigation, the researcher hypothesises that: (1) if the laity are well informed about the ecclesiology of communion and the importance of SCCs, participation of the laity in SCCs can improve. (2) If the laity in SCCs are involved in pastoral planning, active participation of the laity in SCC can improve. (3) If the

¹ *Gule wa nkulu* is the Chewa traditional secret society of the mask dancers.

But the Christian Churches including the Catholic Church condemn this traditional secret society. As such, Christians are not allowed to participate, associate or join this secret society. But many boys and girls and some adults feel attracted and the voluntarily join this secret society of the Chewa.

² The Challenge here is that the laity are not valuing and not living in spirit of communion as required by the SCC life. The individualistic spirit depicted by the some of the laity is source of surprise for us because the laity in the Archdiocese as African, who value community life, should have enjoyed and effectively lived the model of the church as a Family being promoted through SCCs. Therefore, it is worth investigating then so as to find out what is causing the laity not to live as a family in their SCCs.

relevant pastoral activities are well prepared and organised and done consistently or weekly in SCC, active participation of the laity at SCC can be achieved.

In order to do this research thoroughly and come up with pastoral recommendations and suggestions, we are using the Pastoral Method also known as Pastoral Circle or Spiral, which consists of four moments: Insertion, Social Analysis, Theological Reflection and Action plan. But these four moments are put into three parts of Insertion and Social Analysis which is “SEE” part, whereby we are immersing ourselves in the situation of the laity in the Archdiocese: observe what is happening, understanding the situation on the perspective of the people of God and then finding out the root causes of poor participation and identify the main actors, delineating the linkages and consequences; Theological Reflection is the “JUDGE” part, where we are using the Bible teaching, the Church Tradition (Church Fathers), the teaching of the Magisterium and some selected theologians. Then, the Action Plan is the “ACT” part, where what is analysed in “SEE” part and theological reflection in the “JUDGE” part is the basis of the pastoral action aimed at bringing pastoral solutions to the pastoral challenge under investigation.

In order for this research to be more scientific and credible we are using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, and we are using first and secondary sources to obtain necessary information. Thus, we are showing what has been observed and the analysis of historical facts, numbers of people orally interviewed and those who got questionnaires and their responses.

Structurally, the thesis has four main Chapters corresponding to the four moments of the pastoral circle. Chapter One contains the background of the Diocese of Lilongwe. In this historical back ground there is: geographical location; population;

ethnic composition and dwelling very much on the Chewa people who are the predominate tribe in the Archdiocese and some of their traditional beliefs; evangelisation process and approaches in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe before and after Vatican Council II; and the political, economic and social situation of Malawi. This background is presented in the perspective of the challenge under investigation: the poor participation of the laity in SCCs.

Chapter two as part of Insertion in line to chapter one, is the analysis of the root cause of poor participation of the laity in SCCs, their connections and identifying the key actors. Here we are mainly look at the root causes leading to the laity's inadequate knowledge on ecclesiology of communion; lack of involvement of the laity in pastoral planning and lack of well prepared and organised relevant pastoral activities in SCCs. Analysis of the root causes is giving us 'ongoing formation' as a sign of the time that we are using in the theological reflection.

In chapter three which is Theological Reflection, we are focusing on the teaching of the Church on improving participation of the laity in SCCs guided by the sign of 'ongoing formation.' The Church teaching comprises of teaching from the Bible, teaching of the Church Fathers, the Vatican Council II, teaching of Magisterium and few selected theologians.

Chapter Four is the Pastoral Action. Here we are making a pastoral plan, by giving recommendations and suggestions aimed at improving participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. This pastoral plan is guided by a vision, a goal, strategic objectives and some activities. We hope this pastoral plan is going to improve participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. General conclusion attempts to draw an overview of the whole thesis, the expected outcomes

of the implementation of the action plan especially for deeper and new evangelisation in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe and AMECEA region. In general conclusion we have also indicated the unique contribution of the thesis and we have indicated the other areas for future investigations.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LILONGWE

Introduction

In this first Chapter, we are going to trace the historical background of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe in relation to the participation of the laity in the Church's action, especially at Small Christian Community (SCC) level. Within the historical background, we are going to look at the geographical location, population, ethnic composition, and the socio-political and economic situation in line with the participation of the lay faithful in SCC. Moreover, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe is predominantly composed of Chewa people, as such, we are going to study their cultural and religious practices in relation to the participation of the laity in SCC. Furthermore, we are going to trace the evangelisation background of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, the pastoral approaches used before and after Vatican Council II. This Chapter which is the "Inserting part" of our investigation will help us observe what is happening in the Archdiocese from the perspective of the people of God of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Therefore at the end of the Chapter we shall be able to come up with the concrete situation of the laity's participation in SCCs.

1.1. Geographical Location

The Archdiocese of Lilongwe is located in the central region of Malawi. Malawi is a land locked country in the central east part of Africa. It shares boundaries with Tanzania in the north, Mozambique in the east, south and southwest, and Zambia in the northwest. The whole country lies on an area of 118,480 sq km of which 24,400

sq km is water and 94,080 sq km is land. Malawi is 1000 km long from north to south and 80 to 160 km from east to west.³

Malawi is demographically divided into three regions: Southern Region with Blantyre City as its headquarters, Central Region with Lilongwe as its headquarters (but also as the Capital City) and Northern Region with Mzuzu as its headquarters. The regions are further divided into districts: Southern Region with fifteen districts, Central Region with ten districts, Northern Region with seven districts.

The Archdiocese of Lilongwe covers eight districts out of the ten of the central region. The central region is largely a fertile plain suitable for agriculture, except in two districts in the central east where it is characterised with plateau and hilly lands which fall into swampy lake shore areas with high temperatures.⁴

The climate in Malawi is subtropical, which depends upon the altitude and the months of the year. Generally, Malawi can be attributed to have three main seasons: Rain season from November to March, cold season from April to July and hot season from July to November. People depend very much on the rainy season to grow food crops like maize, rice, potatoes and cassava; and cash crops like tobacco, cotton, tea, sugar and coffee.⁵ These crops are mainly grown in arable land, except for crops like rice and sugar that are grown in swampy areas of the lake shore. When rain fall is good, with availability of agricultural inputs like fertiliser and pesticides, people realise good harvest in both the staple food (maize and rice) and the cash crops. This makes many lay faithful to have a lot of food in their homes and money to support their families and the Church.

³ <http://www.malawi.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7231.htm>

⁴ <http://www.malawi.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7231.htm>

⁵ <http://www.malawi.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7231.htm>

Much of the land in Archdiocese is suitable for agriculture. People grow different crops and with good rain fall, people realise good harvest and earn money from cash crop sales. Thus, the laity are able to take care of their families and support the Church especially in the material development of SCC. However, such providence of good harvest should have been a reason enough for the faithful to always take part in SCC prayer meetings for thanksgiving. It is surprising that despite such providence of good land, rains and good harvest many lay faithful do not participate in SCC prayer meetings for thanksgiving.

1.2. Population

According to the 2008 population and housing census report produced by the National Statistics Office, the population of Malawi is 13,077,160, thus, it has grown from 9,933,868 of the 1998 population and housing census. This growth represents a 32% increase within ten years. It also represents a 2.8% inter-censal growth rate per annum. This census also reveals that the population of female is higher than of male. Women are 6,700,549 representing 51% of the total population and males are 6,363,771 representing 49% of the total population.⁶ The central region has 5,491,034 people representing 42% of the total population.

The population of people within the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe is 4,392,781, and the population of Catholics is 1,051,874.⁷ Though the Archdiocese does not give the population of men and women separately, we still conclude from the population facts given above that even in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, women are more than men. Nevertheless, in our field investigation we observed that the

⁶ National Statistics Office, Malawi Government, *2008 Population and Housing Census*, (Zomba: Government Print, 2008), p. 3.

⁷ Communication Office of the Diocese of Lilongwe, *Catholic Directory: Diocese of Lilongwe*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 2010), p.1.

participation of laity, especially men in SCC is by far too low compared to that of women. In question 14 of the questionnaire (refer questionnaire in appendix I) the results on the comparison of participation of men and women in percentage is that women participate more than men by 97.6%. This means that even though the population of women is higher than of men, the poor percentage of participation of men is overwhelming.

Over 80% of the population lives in the rural areas. However, due to growth in urbanization, many people are moving to the urban areas in search of employment and business opportunities.⁸ In the eight districts that the Archdiocese of Lilongwe covers, the population density varies. For instance, in the hilly districts the population is low. Thus, lay faithful houses are very scattered and separated by hills. In such places one SCC covers a big area in order to have thirty families to fifty families, as per guideline of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.⁹ Trading centres, towns and the city of Lilongwe are densely populated. Thus the household of most of the laity in such places are close to each other and mobility for SCC activities is easy.

1.3. Ethnic composition

Malawi Population consists mainly of the different ethnic groups of the Bantu speaking peoples of the sub-Saharan Africa. In the southern region the main ethnic groups are the Mang'anja, Yao, Lomwe, Sena and Ngoni. The central region has the following ethnic groups: Chewa, Ngoni, Nsenga, and Yao. The northern region has the following ethnic groups: Tumbuka, Ngonde, Tonga, Ngoni, Henga and Nyakyusa. However, it is worthwhile mentioning that the Chewa are the dominant group

⁸ National Statistic Office, Malawi Government, p. 4.

⁹ Synod steering Committee, *Let us march together in spreading the Good News of our Lord: Diocese of Lilongwe mini-synod 2004-2006*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 2006), p. 10.

constituting 90% of the population in the central region and are also spread out in the other regions.¹⁰ The language of Chewa people is *Chichewa* and it is the national language of Malawi.

Although the ethnic groups are grouped on regional lines, there is a lot of interaction through intermarriages, business, education, employment and resettlement. Moreover, there are certain common cultural aspects like community life and certain religious world views. This facilitates coexistence among these different ethnic groups. In the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, though the Chewa are predominant, people of other ethnic tribes from the central region and from other regions coexist and participate together in SCC activities.

In Malawi there are also some people of Asian and European origin who are of Indian and British descent.¹¹ With globalization there are also people from the other parts of the world like China, Pakistan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Tanzania, Israel and other countries. Many of these live within Lilongwe Capital City and hence those who are Catholics belong to the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Most of them participate in the life of the Church at parish level and not at SCC level.

1.4 The Chewa people and their religious beliefs

In order to understand well the background of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, we have to first of all know the Chewa people. The Chewa who are found in the central region of Malawi had their kingdom called *Maravi*.¹² It was established as

¹⁰ <http://www.malawi.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7231.htm>.

¹¹ <http://www.malawi.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7231.htm>.

¹² Maravi is a mispronunciation of the word *malawi* (flames of fire). The place where the kingdom was established, a reflection of the rising sun could be seen on the water surface of Lake Nyasa (the present Lake Malawi). But also because of heat from the Sun on the ground, from a distance radiation of the heat from the ground could be seen like flames of fire. Thus, the reflection of the Sun on the lake and radiation of the heat was seen as a flame of fire (*malawi*). Thus, the place was called Malawi. The

early as 900 BC and was discovered by the early European explorers in the 15th century. In actual fact, the word Malawi comes from the name of the kingdom of the Chewa, *Maravi*. The name *Maravi* found in many historical books was a mispronunciation of the word *malawi* (which means flames of fire) by the Portuguese traders and writers.¹³

This Chewa kingdom was established after the Chewa had settled for some time in Dedza district in the central region of Malawi. The Chewa people originated from Zaire (present Democratic Republic of Congo) in two groups of *Banda* and *Phiri* and settled in the central region of Malawi, then Nyasaland, in 900BC. They both lived in clustered villages, and each village was led by a headman or leader of the group of families (locally known as *mwini mbumba*). Several villages together were led by a group-village headman. Several village headmen were under the traditional authority (TA) chief (locally known as *Gogo Chalo*). Several traditional authorities are under a senior traditional authority (STA) who is chosen among the several TAs. TAs and STAs in the whole region of Central and Southern Africa (Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique) are under one paramount chief called *Kalonga Gawa Undi* whose headquarters is in Zambia, Chipata province (Eastern Zambia). This governing structure is still present and followed today.

All the Chewa, respect and obey their traditional leaders. Whenever a chief calls his people for a meeting or any activity, they all go and participate actively. Such

Portuguese mispronounced the word *malawi* as *maravi*. Cf. Cloude Boucher Chisale, *Digging Our Roots: The Chamare Museum Frescoes*, (Balaka: Montfort Media, 2002), p. 19.

¹³ Cloude Boucher Chisale, *Digging Our Roots: The Chamare Museum Frescoes*, (Balaka: Montfort Media, 2002), p. 19.

organisational structures make the Chewa to a united people, living a communitarian and collaborative life.¹⁴

The Chewa in their villages are connected by family descent and marriage ties through a matrilineal system. This reveals another fundamental factor for their unity, obedience, communitarian, solidarity, responsibility and collaborative life.¹⁵ These social and cultural aspects of the Chewa people were a favourable condition for the establishment of SCC in the Archdiocese in 1975. When pastoral agents were teaching and instructing them about the new way of being Church through SCC, many people did not find difficulties to understand and start communion of believers. Actually, many began to feel at home in the Catholic Church by belonging to SCC and many of them were very enthusiastic and committed to prayer meetings and other SCC activities. It is very surprising that today many of the lay faithful despite the communitarian spirit in their villages, they do not live this communitarian spirit in the Church and do not patronise SCC activities. In SCCs, spirit of solidarity, collaboration and sense of responsibility is missing today. Yet the same people go in large numbers to the chiefs meeting and other activities pertaining to the village.¹⁶

The Chewa are also naturally religious. They believe in a creator who is the source of all good and from whom everything originates. The idea and names of God are known and found in the creation myth of the Chewa in which God is called, *Namalenga* (the Creator), *Mphambe* (the Lightning) and *Chauta* (the Big Bow).¹⁷ In this creation myth, *Namalenga* (God the Creator) is presented as a good God who is

¹⁴ Interview with Dr. Justine Malewezi, Chewa Heritage Foundation Chairperson, on 27th July 2011.

¹⁵ Claude Boucher Chisale, p. 19.

¹⁶ Interview with Mr. Milioni Catechist at Salima Parish, on 17th June 2011. Similar sentiments were expressed in the interview with Mr. Seliso Kaziputa and Augustine Chikalipo, Catechists of Madisi parish on 14th June 2011.

¹⁷ Claude Boucher Chisale, p.7.

the source all of that is good: life of human beings, rain, vegetation, animals and also the customs and practices on which He delegated the spirit of the ancestors (*mizimu ya makolo*) to be the custodians. Thus, the Chewa always believe that all the good things they receive are from *Namalenga*. As such, they are supposed to offer thanksgiving sacrifice always to *Namalenga* through the spirits of the ancestors. This thanksgiving attitude is very common among the Chewa and is noticed during the thanksgiving masses for the harvest at SCC, when most of the old committed lay faithful (and even some who are non Catholics) come to offer their crops as thanksgiving offering to God.

On this issue of spirits, the Chewa have a strong belief in spirits and distinguishes between the ancestral spirits (*mizimu ya makolo* which are good spirits) and the bad spirits (*ziwanda* which are agents of evil). The ancestral spirits are the ones referred to as mediators between the living and *Namalenga* (God). The bad spirits are the ones that sometimes enter into human beings and cause sickness.¹⁸

Sicknesses caused by spirit possession are healed by traditional doctors or witchdoctors or medicine men whom among the Chewa are called *Sing'anga*. The Chewa people trust a traditional doctor because he/she gives solutions or answers to their problems.¹⁹ That is why even some Christians in times of sickness or other persisting problems, they would rather frequent the *Sing'anga* than their priest at the parish or their SCC prayer meeting. Even though the Archdiocese of Lilongwe sanctions individuals who visit a medicine man or SCC whose members host witchdoctors, yet some of the SCC members prefer seeking help in traditional way

¹⁸ Martin Ott, *African Theology in Images*, (Blantyre: CLAIM publishers, 2000), p 199.

¹⁹ J.W. M. Van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, (Balaka: Montfort Media, 2001), pp. 244-245.

than in a Christian way.²⁰ Participation of the laity in SCC is most affected by such traditional beliefs and practices because Christians want solutions to their problems.

The Chewa have also another institution of the secret society locally called *Gule wa nkulu* (meaning big dance).²¹ It represents the spirit world of the ancestors which constantly comes in contact with the world of the living on different occasions for different purposes, especially at different rites of passage like, initiation of boys and girls, first pregnancy, installation of the chief, burial and social celebrations.²² *Gule wa nkulu* is an institution that attracts many Chewa and other ethnic people. Those who do not join this institution are considered not mature and not genuine Chewa. Despite the efforts of the Church to stop and end this institution, *Gule wa nkulu* is still present among the Chewa. Many lay faithful feel very attracted to *Gule wa nkulu* so much so that both newly baptised and old Christians usually fall prey to the temptation of this institution. That is why even at present some lay faithful prefer to watch *Gule wa nkulu* dances than attending SCC activities, even though the Church forbids Christians to attend or watch such traditional dances.

In this section we have discussed the Chewa people's societal and leadership structures. We have noted that leadership structures and other cultural values hold the Chewa together. Unity, obedience, community, solidarity responsibility and collaborative life, facilitated the understanding and implementation of SCC as a new way of being Church introduced in the 1970's. The laity were very enthusiastic and committed at participating actively in the SCC activities. But at present, in our

²⁰ Interview with Mr. Petro Kanyendera Catechist at Mpherere parish, on 15th June 2011

²¹ *Gule wa nkulu* or *Nyau* is the Chewa traditional secret society of the masked dancers. The Chewa girls and boys are initiated into this secret society when they reach puberty age, because the real Chewa man and woman must be initiated. It is also an institution of education through which Chewa values are passed to the members of the society at different time in the rites of passage. Cf. Claude Boucher Chisale, *Digging the roots:Chamare Museum Frescoes*, (Balaka: Montfort Press, 2002), p.23 and p.37.

²² Cloude Boucher, pp.23-24, 27

investigation, we have observed that this good cultural background seems not appreciated any more in the way the laity live their life in SCCs. Many of them would prefer attending village meetings convened by the chief rather and other traditional practices than attend SCC activities; they would rather attend *gule wa nkulu* dances than participate in SCC activities; in times of crisis of faith because of various problems, instead of seeking help at SCC through prayers or guidance from fellow SCC members and priests; many of them would prefer to go for traditional religion or traditional medicine for solutions. There is a need in the next chapter to find out why such things are happening.

1.5 Evangelisation in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe

Most of the Chewa people received the Good News of Jesus Christ from the early missionaries of both Protestant and Catholic Churches. The first missionaries in the central part of Malawi were protestant missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church mission, which was a branch of the Free Church of Scotland. They came from South Africa and established themselves in the central region of Malawi at a place called Mvera in Dowa district in 1889. This is the present day Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP).²³

The Catholic missionaries were the second to come to central Malawi. The White Fathers (Missionaries of Africa) landed at Mua near the headquarters of the Maravi kingdom (in present Dedza district).²⁴ They established a mission at Mua

²³Benson Lijenda, *A Central African History, Malawi Schools Certificate of Education*, (Blantyre: Malamulo Publishing House, 2004), p. 54.

²⁴ Roland Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa: Origins and first Development 1889-1935*, (Roma: Historical Department Archives Missionari d’Africa, 1989), p. 9.

which at present is in the Diocese of Dedza, but by then it was Nyasa vicariate.²⁵ These missionaries then opened another mission in the territory of the present Archdiocese of Lilongwe at Chiwamba in November 1902 in Dowa district. This mission was opened by the Fr. Guilleme who was sent by Bishop Dupont of the Nyasa Vicariate from Chilubula Mission in north Eastern Zambia.²⁶

However, the Fathers decided to move the mission to Likuni, near Lilongwe district, because Chiwamba was out of the way and it was very dry and difficult to dig water-wells in dry season. They opted to move to Likuni in Lilongwe district because it was near Lilongwe town (main route to Zambia), and there were two rivers nearby and there were many people around. Thus, in August 1903, Likuni mission was opened, moving from Chiwamba.²⁷

Later, many missions were also opened at Mchinji (Kachebere mission) in 1903, Nambuma in 1928 and Guilleme in 1935.²⁸ This territory in the central Malawi was called Likuni Vicariate and later changed to Lilongwe vicariate. On 25th April 1959 it was elevated from Lilongwe Vicariate to Diocese of Lilongwe. On 9th February 2011 the Diocese of Lilongwe was elevated to Archdiocese of Lilongwe.²⁹

In all the years of development from 1902 to 1965 the missionaries aimed at establishing missions as centres where priests would operate from but also where Christians could come as a community for various celebrations. The missionaries were very committed at giving catechetical instructions both at the mission and outstation centres. They wanted the catechumen and the Christians to understand the

²⁵ Nyasa Vicariate included the present Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Dedza, Mzuzu, and Karonga Diocese in Malawi; and Chipata Diocese in Zambia.

²⁶ Roland Vezeau, p. 63.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 65.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

²⁹ <http://www.catholicdiocese.com/lilongwedioocese.12/09/11>.

faith. Thus, lay members could move from different far distant villages to attend instructions, Sunday services and other celebrations at the mission centre. This approach as we shall see formed a foundation for a later approach proposed by Vatican Council II (1963-1965) of the local church and communion ecclesiology.

It is important, therefore, that at this stage we look at the methods or approaches these early missionaries employed. We have to bear in mind that the pastoral approaches used by early missionaries in evangelisation were, firstly, according to the ecclesiology of the Council of Trent and Vatican Council I which was basically an apologetic counter-reformation one. It presented the Church as a visible perfect society, insisting on authority, institutional and hierarchical structures.³⁰ Secondly, the White Fathers were guided by the special characteristics of the society's missionary vision and methods as proposed by their founder Cardinal Lavigerie and as found in their documents of the constitution instructions.³¹

1.5.1 Evangelisation approaches before Vatican II

The first pastoral approach for the missionaries in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe was the establishment of mission stations where missionary pastors would reside and would be operating from in achieving evangelization. The main goal of evangelization was the salvation of souls. Methodologically, the work of evangelization included: preaching, teaching catechism, preparing catechumens for baptism, taking care of the sick, visiting villages and baptising those in danger of death. Though the teaching methods used by missionaries were foreign to the Africans, still the teaching efforts of missions bore some fruits in the sense that the

³⁰ Patrick Kalilombe, "From Outstation to Small Christian Communities", in *Spearhead* no. 82-83 (June & October 1984) (Eldoret: Gaba Publications) pp. 25-26

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

Christians were actively involved in the different Church activities³² As much as the pastoral workers moved to far distant places for pastoral work, at the same time Christians and catechumen were expected also to walk for long distances to the mission to participate in Sunday services and other ceremonies. So, the laity at that time were very active in participating during the activities organised at the mission. The commitment of the laity at the time of the early missionaries was very admirable. The spirit of the early Christians is different to the one of the present Christians who have parishes and SCC nearby but they do not participate actively.³³

The other approach missionaries used in evangelisation was the founding of schools. They had realised that schools were key to acceptance and conversion in rural areas. The other reason for this approach was to get local helpers (catechists and local priests in future). This was directed by the Holy Father Pope Benedict XV in his encyclical *Maximum Illud* in 1919.³⁴

The opening of schools especially at distant villages led to the development of outstations (prayer chapels) because at those distant schools, the missionaries would go and spend some days in a temporary residence. Later they put catechists in these schools who were teaching as auxiliaries of missionary priests. In these schools, pupils who were also catechumens were learning how to read and write and were also learning the catechism of the Catholic Church. The catechism used was the common one used in the Catholic Church, a simplified distillation of the theological treatise in

³² Roland Vezeau, pp. 96-99.

³³ Interview with Mr. Simango on 26th July 2011, a retired Catechetical Tutor of Kachebere parish, Mchinji.

³⁴ Benedict XV, Apostolic letter on the propagation of the faith through the world, *Maximum illud*, 30th November 1919, AAS 11 (1919), 440-458.

the form of questions and answers and very apologetic. Catechumens were strongly taught to discard all cultural and traditional practices because they were devilish.³⁵

This approach of the early missionaries was very good because it led to conversion of many people to Catholicism. Furthermore, the opening of the schools created many outstations or out-churches, which cut short the long distance of going to the mission. Many Christians patronised activities conducted at their outstations. They felt the Church was within their reach. Thus the sense of ownership, community and responsibility was becoming visible.

In those days even if a priest came unannounced at their station for mass, the laity could quickly pass messages to each other and within a short time many Christians could come in large numbers to participate in the liturgical celebration. Yet today, the spirit of rushing for the spiritual things is not present among our laity in our SCC.³⁶

These remarks from one of the respondents interviewed during field research reveals to us that the participation of the laity in the past was very good and at present the participation leaves a lot to be desired.

1.5.2 Evangelisation approaches after Vatican Council II

Following the new ecclesiology and self understanding of the Church brought about by the Vatican Council II, approach to evangelisation changed after 1965. The AMECEA Bishops in planning for the future of Church of this region resolved to implement Vatican Council II theology of the local Church.³⁷

Following the AMECEA pastoral commitment to realise the local church theology in the region, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe made efforts to implement this new understanding of the Church. The former bishop of the Archdiocese, Bishop

³⁵ Patrick Kalilombe, p.31.

³⁶ Interview with Mr. Simango on 26th July 2011, a retired Catechetical Tutor of Kachebere Parish, Mchinji.

³⁷ Patrick Kalilombe, "The Theme's Biblical Background," in *AFER* Vol.16, No.1&2 (1974): 51-62.

Patrick Kalilombe in 1973 called for a diocesan mini-synod (1973 -1975) to plan for the future of the Church in Lilongwe in line with the new ecclesiology.³⁸ The main purpose was to enable the Archdiocese of Lilongwe to be a living and effective local Church, that is, basically self reliant, self ministering and self propagating.³⁹

With this mini-synod the Archdiocese of Lilongwe made a very big shift in her pastoral approach, from the old (Vatican I theology of Church) to the new approach (Vatican II). The Archdiocese of Lilongwe with this mini-synod which was very consultative (all members of the Church: from the clergy and religious to the laity at the grass root), adopted a new ecclesiology of a Church as a Mystery, a People of God, a Mystical Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, which in other words is the ecclesiology of communion.⁴⁰ With this new approach it meant that all members of the Church, ordained, religious and the laity were called to render active services to God each as a part of the Body of Christ (Romans 12, 1Corinthians12 and Ephesians 4) just like the way the human parts of the body work for the good of the body and the parts benefit from the body.

This new understanding of the Church had two main consequences in the diocese of Lilongwe: Firstly, both priests and laity had to change their attitude in the way they understood their roles in the Church. A priest had to accept the laity to take a bigger role in the Church than before, and the laity had to be more involved in the life of the Church than before.⁴¹ Therefore, there was a need to change the attitude of looking at the Church as belonging to the clergy only and taking them as sole service

³⁸ The mini-synod resolutions were bound together and pastoral guidelines were produced, to guide the implementation process and training of the new leaders of the new structures in the diocese.

³⁹ Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi*, (Zomba: Kachere Series, 1999), pp 34-35.

⁴⁰ Patrick Kalilombe, "From Outstation to Small Christian Communities," p. 40. Cf. *Lumen Gentium* chapters I & 2.

⁴¹ Diocesan Pastoral Secretariat, *Pastoral Guidelines: Diocese of Lilongwe mini-synod, 24 November 1973-24 August 1975*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 1976), p. 9

providers and the laity being at the receiving end. A Church would now be seen as “a more complex interaction based on a generalised involvement in corporate life and works, co-responsibility and subsidiarity.”⁴²

Secondly, this new understanding led to the restructuring of the Church especially at different levels (outstation, quasi-parish, parish, deanery and diocese). Small Christian communities were introduced (shifting from the outstation to SCCs).

The Pastoral Guideline of the Archdiocese states:

Each parish shall be divided into communities of such a size that all the Christians in each community may know each other and collaborate to form a true unity in their Christian life and endeavours. Even Christians who pray at the main parish-church will form their own communities, according to numbers and locality. The Chichewa name for such a local Christian community will be henceforth: “*MPHAKATI*”.⁴³

This was a new way of being Church, because the parish was too vast for the laity to develop interpersonal relationships and hence too difficult to live a life of communion as believers of Christ.

That is why through the preparation of the mini synod, during and after its celebration, the people of God (clergy, religious and laity) were given formation through teachings/instructions to understand Vatican Council II theology of the local Church to understand and change their attitude so that SCC become a good base or place where communion could be lived. The laity were given different responsibilities in order to run the SCC activities and bring salvation of Christ to all people.⁴⁴ The SCC became the centre of activities of the daily life of the Christian community (and not the outstation).

⁴² Patrick Kalilombe p.40

⁴³ Diocesan Pastoral Secretariat, *Pastoral Guidelines: Diocese of Lilongwe mini-synod, 24 November 1973-24 August 1975*, p. 10

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

The Pastoral Guideline also stipulated clearly some of the pastoral activities which were proposed by the people and endorsed by the mini-synod to be undertaken in SCCs:

- a) In liturgy and sacraments (presiding over prayer meetings, leading Church choir, preparing and conducting funeral services, choice of catechumens and many other functions).
- b) Deepening and confirming the Christian life (teaching of children, youth counselling, settling cases of the Christians, teaching catechumens and many other activities).
- c) Participating in the development of the country (building and upkeep of schools, hospitals, bridges and roads, visiting and caring for the sick, the poor and the aged, and many other activities),
- d) Forming specialised groups, localization of the Church, care of the migrant workers, care for those working in estates, looking into question of beer (local gin), drugs and gambling, care of children and making sure they are sent to school, care of the lapsed Christians, and cooperation with other Christian Denominations.⁴⁵

All these activities were proposed bearing in mind the mission of the Church and also the emerging pastoral challenges of that time. These activities were to be carried out in each local community and all Christians were to make sure that work and responsibilities were being divided among members in such a way that they would improve quality of Christian life in communion.⁴⁶ This was really a wonderful guideline for the realisation of the local Church theology and indeed the implementation of the mystical Body of Christ that has many members functioning for the good of the body.

Moreover, for the effectiveness of the structures and proper realisation of the pastoral activities, the Pastoral Guidelines stated that:

- (a) Leaders at all levels must be trained for their specific functions.
- (b) All entrusted with an office should remember that “to be chosen” is a call to service.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 11-18.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.11.

- (c) Those representing their fellow Christians on Councils must speak on behalf of those who send them, and correctly inform them of proceedings and decisions.⁴⁷

These guidelines were implemented through the ongoing training sessions which the diocese organised at deanery and parish levels. Thus, apart from the fact that the laity were involved in the whole mini-synod process, but the aspect of teaching the people of God of what SCCs were all about, helped very much the implementation of SCC policy. Consequently, the laity participated actively in the SCC activities. Today the structure of SCC is well established so much so that to be a Catholic faithful in a parish means that one belongs to a SCC, except in few cases of Catholics who are coming from foreign Western, Asian and American countries where SCCs are not a well known reality.⁴⁸

Even though ideally every lay faithful belongs to SCC, at present there are other indigenous Catholics in the Archdiocese who know that they belong to a SCC but they do not have a clear idea of why we have SCC; they have do adequate knowledge of what happens in their SCC. Many of such lay faithful do not participate in the activities of SCC. Some of them are invited by the leaders who visit them in their homes but they do not show up.⁴⁹ This is a very big challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe today. In the interviews conducted in the different parishes of the Archdiocese, the respondents pointed out that at present in many SCCs, participation of the laity is poor and leaves a lot to be desired. In percentage, the responses from

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 9

⁴⁸ Interview with Fr. Audifasio Kapinga on 2nd June 2011, (He is a senior priest who was present at the mini-synod discussions and was the secretary of Bishop Kalilombe), now he is the parish priest of Maula Cathedral in Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

⁴⁹ Interview with Mr. Vincent Zulu, on 9th June 2011, Catechist of Guilleme Parish in Mchinji.

respondents on poor participation of the laity at SCC were 100%.⁵⁰ This situation is quite contrary to the way the laity were participating in the early years when founding of SCC started, as Mr. Vincent Zulu said:

In the late 1970s and 1980s the laity were participating actively in the SCC. Many of them were proud to belong to SCC. Whenever there was any activity, be it development work, Eucharistic celebration, Sunday service, or other general meetings, the laity used to come out in large numbers. But today the situation is different. People do not come in large numbers to SCC meetings. Usually they are the same people who come and attend SCC activities. The present generation does not understand the importance of SCC.⁵¹

This present situation of poor participation of the laity, calls for an investigation of what has caused these changes. We shall look into this in the next chapter of social analysis.

1.6. Political, economic and social situation

Malawi has been a stable country without wars or tribal conflicts. Before the colonial British government (1891), Malawi was being ruled by chiefs of different ethnic groups. The Chewa are one of the ethnic groups which had a very big and powerful Maravi kingdom ruled by a paramount chief locally known as Kalonga. Within such a kingdom there were other small chiefs under him.

Malawi gained independence from British colonial government on 6th July 1964, and the first African president in the new Republic of Malawi was Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, under the Malawi Congress Party. He consolidated power and was made life president by the party loyalists in 1971. Dr. Banda became a notorious tyrant until Catholic Bishops challenged him with a pastoral letter written in 1992. The pastoral letter raised different issues pertaining to his dictatorial rule, bad

⁵⁰ Interviews were done with priests, catechists (pastoral workers) and some lay members of the Church in the twelve parishes of the four deaneries targeted in the research (24 respondents).

⁵¹ Interview with Mr. Vincent Zulu, on 9th June 2011, Catechist of Guilleme Parish in Mchinji

government and declining of social services. The pastoral letter brought a wind of bloodless political change.⁵²

Despite the dictatorial rule of Kamuzu Banda, the laity were free to worship and participate in the activities of the Church and participate in politics by attending political rallies. Of course, by the virtue of one party system which was there during that period, all the lay faithful belonged to one party of Malawi Congress party (MCP). The only challenge at that time was that, when Kamuzu Banda was visiting an area/place on Sunday, people were obliged to go to attend the political rally. Many Christians, especially in rural areas, would miss Church service for a political rally. The laity felt attracted to political events than to SCC meetings.

In 1994, multiparty democracy was introduced, with Bakili Muluzi being the first president of that era under the United Democratic Front (UDF), who was succeeded by president Bingu wa Mutharika in 2004. The coming of multiparty democracy has given chance to many of the laity to join and support different political parties.⁵³ Thus, up to the present time, the laity patronise political rallies more than SCC meetings. Some informants explained that apart from the fact that political rallies are source of amusement and entertainment, our people go to these rallies to listen to politicians in search of political, economic and social answers which probably the Church does not give. Most of the activities at SCC do not deal with political, economic and social awareness of current issues. Pastoral agents who make

⁵² <http://www.malawi.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7231.htm>.

⁵³ In Malawi there are over thirty political parties. The famous ones are Malawi Congress Party (MCP), United Democratic Party (UDF), Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), People's Party (PP) and Alliance for Democracy (AFORD).

pastoral plans for many SCCs are keen on spiritual matters and may be fundraising for the Church.⁵⁴ So SCC activities suffer because of political meetings.

Economically, Malawi is heavily dependent on agriculture, with tobacco, tea, groundnuts and sugar as its important export crops. Agriculture sector contributes about 63.7% of total income for rural population, 65 % of manufacturing sector's raw materials, and approximately 87% of total employment.⁵⁵ That is why many of the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe earn their living through small or large scale farming of tobacco, cotton and other cash crops and maize and rice for food. Most of their time in the rainy season and part of their time in the dry season is spent in the gardens. With the good economic and agricultural policies of subsidised farm inputs by president Dr. Wa Mutharika in the first term of office (2004 -2009), Malawi made great economic strides. Agricultural production was high.⁵⁶

Such a conducive economic and agricultural environment was a blessing for the people of the central region because they were able to get money and enough food in their households. Some SCCs and outstations that are well organised have been able to build their prayer houses with iron sheets' roofs. With such providential economic conditions, one expects most of the laity in SCCs to commit themselves to their religious and liturgical life. But the contrary was observed. Some of the Christians on Sunday were busy in their fields cultivating or were at home in shades (*zigafa*) drying, binding and preparing tobacco leaves for sale at the auction floors.⁵⁷ One wonders why the laity fail to plan their time for Church or SCCs.

⁵⁴ Mr Kapanga, Mr. Maukira, Mr. Yuda, Catechists of Kasungu St. Joseph parish on 15th June 2011.

⁵⁵ <http://www.malawi.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7231.htm>

⁵⁶ <http://www.malawi.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7231.htm>

⁵⁷ Interview with Catechist Seliso Mereki Kaziputa of Madisi parish (Manyani and Bowe zones), on 14th June 2011

Those employed in public and private sector and living in urban areas, have also benefited by the five years of economic and political success of Malawi. Most of the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe have built dwelling houses, engaged in business and trade. Many of them in town have shown commitment and appreciation to God by contributing tithes in time and in good amount beyond what is expected. However, participation at SCC activities is a challenge to many.⁵⁸

In conclusion, in this section we have noted that many of the lay faithful participate in politics and are more attracted to political rallies than to Church activities. We have also observed that many of the laity put much effort in their gardens, business (trade) and employment and neglect their Christian obligations like participating in SCC activities, thus leading to their poor participation in SCCs.

Conclusion

In this first Chapter we have inserted ourselves into the situation of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe where we have noted good start of SCCs after the mini-synod of 1973-1975 which introduced this new way of being Church and awareness training sessions were conducted. However, in late 1980s we have noticed the dwindling of participation of the laity in SCCs. Thus, we have noted the positive and negative elements about the situation of the laity's participation in SCCs. However, the negative elements are many and making us to convincingly conclude that poor participation of the laity in SCCs is a pastoral challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, because they are affecting negatively on communion of the Church, the liturgical life, the witnessing of the laity and indeed their spiritual life.

⁵⁸ Interview with Mrs. Grace Hiwa a parishioner of St. Patrick's Parish in Lilongwe City, on 25th July 2011.

Thus, from our insertion in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, listening to what people of God are saying and observing what is happening, one easily notices that there is a logical connection between the lack of instructions/teaching or awareness sessions, irrelevant pastoral activities, poor organisation of pastoral activities and participation of the laity. At present it seems many of the laity have no adequate knowledge ecclesiology of communion and the importance of SCCs; they are not actively involved in the activities of SCCs because they seem not interested in them (activities are irrelevant) because in the planning of activities the laity are not involved and so they are prioritising their own personal activities; and many of them seem not know how to conduct well pastoral activities at SCCs which put off many people, consequently, they prefer to go for Pentecostal prayers, political rallies, tradition practices (dances and traditional religion), and dedicate their time to trade and farming. Therefore, we hypothesise that: (1) Poor participation is due to fact that the laity are not well informed about ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs. (2) Lack involvement of the laity in pastoral planning is leading to poor participation of the laity in SCC. (3) Lack of well prepared and organised pastoral activities lead to poor participation.

In the next chapter then, we shall endeavour to prove right or wrong our hypotheses as we shall be establishing root causes behind the poor participation of the laity in SCCs. All these will be done in view of making illumination with the light of the Church teaching on the root causes to be identified in chapter two. The theological reflection in chapter three will help us make a pastoral action in chapter four to improve the situation of participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

CHAPTER TWO
UNDERSTANDING OF FACTORS LEADING TO POOR PARTICIPATION
OF THE LAITY IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Introduction

At the end of chapter one, we concluded that participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe is very poor. This conclusion was based on what we have observed happening from the perspective of the people of God in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. In this second Chapter we would like to analyse and understand this situation by investigating the factors causing the poor participation of the laity. We also want to identify the key actors and explain the linkages and consequences of the challenge of poor participation.

In our analysis, we shall be guided by three hypotheses we made in the previous chapter after observing the situation in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. The hypotheses are as follows: (1). If the laity are well informed about the ecclesiology of communion and the importance of SCCs, active participation of the laity at SCCs can be improved. (2). If the laity are involved in pastoral planning, active participation of the laity in SCCs can be improved. (3). If the relevant pastoral activities are well organised and conducted in SCCs, active participation of the laity in SCCs can be improved.

The analysis shall test these hypotheses and we shall conclude at the end of the chapter the findings, namely; the root causes of poor participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. The findings will help us to identify patterns of the problems which will lead us to a sign of the time that we will use in the theological

reflection before making an action plan to remedy the challenge of poor participation of the laity in SCCs.

2.1 Inadequate knowledge on ecclesiology of Communion and importance of SCCs

In our research in order to understand why there is poor participation of the laity in SCCs, we conducted a field research. Questionnaires were given to different respondents and interviews were conducted with various people in order to find out why after thirty six (36) years since SCCs were established in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, the laity are participating poorly in SCC. In the questionnaire question 2 on the questionnaire was: “How would you rate your understanding of the Church’s teaching on SCC (the ecclesiology of communion)?” The results of the responses of the people of God were as follows:

Table 1: Rating the laity’s understanding of communion ecclesiology

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very Poor	28	11.4	11.4	11.4
Poor	119	48.4	48.4	59.8
Fair	69	28.0	28.0	87.8
Good	27	11.0	11.0	98.8
Very good	3	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total	246	100.0	100.0	

From the responses we can see that 59.8% said they do not know the ecclesiology of communion; 28.0% said their understanding is fair; 11% said their understanding is a good; and 1.2% said their understanding is very good. This is clear evidence that most of the laity have inadequate knowledge about the teaching of the Church on communion ecclesiology and the importance of SCCs. Among the

respondents of the question 2 were the youths. Table 2 below shows us that 8 youths out of the 10 youths said their understanding of SCCs is poor.

Table 2: Age. Rating the laity's understanding on ecclesiology of communion - Crosstabulation

		qn 2. how do you rate your understanding					Total
		Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	
Age	8-12	1	3	3	0	0	7
	13-24	2	6	2	0	0	10
	25-40	12	45	25	9	0	91
	41-55	8	45	19	8	2	82
	>=56	5	19	19	10	1	54
Total		28	118	68	27	3	244

This tells us that even among the youth there is inadequate understanding of the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCC.

In order to verify the information above, we also investigated through question 3 on the questionnaire on how the ecclesiology of communion is being manifested or lived in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. We asked the respondents to rate the performance of their communities (SCCs and parishes) as regards team leadership, coordination of activities, commitment of lay leaders and ongoing formation, since these are some of the key manifestations of communion ecclesiology. The results were as follows:

Table 3: Evaluation of team leadership at SCC level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	10	4.1	4.1	4.1
	Poor	69	28.0	28.0	32.1
	Fair	149	60.6	60.6	92.7
	Good	17	6.9	6.9	99.6
	Very good	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total		246	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Evaluation of coordination at SCC level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	9	3.7	3.7	3.7
	Poor	106	43.1	43.1	46.7
	Fair	117	47.6	47.6	94.3
	Good	13	5.3	5.3	99.6
	Very good	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	246	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Animation and ongoing formation at SCC level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	51	20.7	20.7	20.7
	Poor	103	41.9	41.9	62.6
	Fair	88	35.8	35.8	98.4
	Good	4	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	246	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Commitment of lay leaders at SCC level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	2	.8	.8	.8
	Poor	145	58.9	58.9	59.8
	Fair	85	34.6	34.6	94.3
	Good	13	5.3	5.3	99.6
	Very good	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	246	100.0	100.0	

From the tables (3 to 6) above, we can see clearly that team leadership is poor (32.1%) and it has been rated good with 6.9%. Even though high percentage is on fair (60.6%), still, the fact that poor rating is higher than good, we get the idea that the situation is not admirable. The coordination of activities has been rated poor with 46.7% and good with 5.3%, indicating that coordination at SCC level is also not good. Ongoing formation has been rated poor with 62.6% and good is 1.6%, indicating that ongoing formation is also a problem in SCCs. Commitment of lay leaders has been rated poor with 59.8% and good is 5.3%, indicating that commitment of lay leaders is also poor.

From these findings we can ably conclude that in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe many Christians have inadequate understanding of the Church’s teaching of SCC or ecclesiology of communion and thus, the laity do not appreciate the importance of SCC.

In order to dig deep on why people have such poor understanding after a good start of SCCs some thirty six (36) years ago, question 2.1 was asked for the people of God to explain why such a situation. The table below shows the results of the responses:

Table 7: The reasons for good or poor understanding of ecclesiology of communion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	38	15.4	15.6	15.6
	2	131	53.3	53.7	69.3
	3	65	26.4	26.6	95.9
	4	10	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	244	99.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.8		
Total		246	100.0		

In reason 1 people (15.6%) said they were taught by their parish priest. In reason 2 people (53.7%) said they were never taught about ecclesiology of communion. In reason 3 people (26.6%) said they neither discuss this at SCC nor the leaders of SCC explain to them about ecclesiology of communion. In reason 4 people (4.1%) said they learnt this long time ago during the awareness sessions when SCC where just beginning.

From the about information we can therefore conclude that the main reason why people have poor understanding of SCC is they are taught and there is little initiative of bringing awareness to the laity on ecclesiology of communion and

importance of SCC. Thus, we can see the consequences of not teaching people: lack of knowledge of importance of SCC leading to poor participation. Nicholas Segeja in evaluating SCCs in Mwanza Archdiocese in Tanzania, he also discovered the people of God had a limited knowledge of SCCs because there was very little or no serious effort undertaken to formation and training the people of God about SCCs.⁵⁹

In this investigation, the researcher was also keen to find out briefly about the youth participation in SCCs, so that we can further substantiate the above information. Question 15 and 15.1 were inquiring about the youth participation and the reasons behind answers to be given. The results were as follows.

Table 8: How can you rate the participation of the youths?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	47	19.1	19.1	19.1
	Poor	123	50.0	50.0	69.1
	Fair	29	11.8	11.8	80.9
	Good	46	18.7	18.7	99.6
	Very good	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total		246	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: Why is the situation (of youth) like this in SCCs?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	136	55.3	57.1	57.1
	2	13	5.3	5.5	62.6
	3	13	5.3	5.5	68.1
	4	31	12.6	13.0	81.1
	5	39	15.9	16.4	97.5
	6	6	2.4	2.5	100.0
	Total	238	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	8	3.3		
Total		246	100.0		

⁵⁹ Nicholas Segeja, *Small Christian Communities in the Archdiocese of Mwanza: Analysis and evaluation*, (unpublished thesis), Nairobi:CUEA, 1993), p. 96.

From table 8, participation of the youth has been rated, poor with 69.1% and rated good with 11.8%. Once again, this confirms the poor participation of the laity and especially the youth.

As for the reasons behind the poor participation of the youth as indicated in table 9, the no.1 reason with 57.1% (which is the main reason according to the respondents) is that, many youths and parents do not understand the meaning and importance of SCCs, thus, both parents and youth think SCCs are for adults only, consequently parents do not encourage the youths to participate in SCC activities. This reason is in agreement of what we have already seen in the table 2, where 8 youths out of 10 said they have a poor understanding of ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCC. All this information is helping us conclude that poor participation of the laity in SCCs is due to lack of understanding of the laity on the Church's teaching on SCCs (ecclesiology of communion). This poor understanding, as we have seen is because the laity are not instructed or taught about the ecclesiology of communion.

In the field research, we also conducted interviews in order to identify key actors in this first factor of inadequate knowledge of the ecclesiology of communion among the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. During the interviews respondents were asked in question 3.2a to explain the role of priests and other pastoral workers). Out of 24 people who were interviewed 19 said that at present priests are few and busy they do not find time to teach people about SCCs. The other pastoral workers (catechists and religious in pastoral work) are also occupied with 'other pastoral

activities'⁶⁰ other than teaching of ecclesiology of communion. The other 5 people said sometimes parish priests teach about importance of SCC in the training of leaders after elections of new leaders. Therefore, here we can identify priests and other pastoral agents as the key actors in this challenge.

The second question 3.2b was for the respondents to evaluate the role of the SCC leaders. On this question 21 out of 24 said that the SCC leaders do not teach their people about the ecclesiology of communion. One priest interviewed said:

Many SCC leaders take the information they receive from instructions as personal and do not want to share. It may be that we as priests do not empower enough our leaders or we assume too much and over trust our SCC leaders that they are going to teach fellow laity at the grass root. May be there is need to monitor closely our leaders. There is a problem here which we need to look seriously in our parishes.⁶¹

From such information, we can conclude that the lay SCC leaders are also key actors in factor leading to lack of knowledge of ecclesiology of communion among the laity.

However, we know quite well that in any institution the activities and direction of the institution depends on the priorities of the administrators. Thus, in the any diocese, pastoral activities being implemented depend on the pastoral priorities of the diocese. That is why, priests, catechists and lay Church leaders as co-workers of the bishop will rely very much on the pastoral policies and priorities of the diocese. If the diocese has no pastoral plan or SCCs are no longer a pastoral priority, then SCCs

⁶⁰ 'Other pastoral activities': here respondents were saying that catechists and religious involved in pastoral work are busy with instructions to leaders; registering and instructing those preparing for marriage and those returning to sacramental life; handling different case (marriage, SCCs and outstation cases) and other administrative issues in their centres. So, they are so busy so much so that they do not think of making plans for conducting awareness sessions to the laity.

⁶¹ Interview with Fr. Audifasio Kapinga, parish priest of Maula Cathedral, 2nd June 2011

are bound to fail or be inactive.⁶² At present the Archdiocese of Lilongwe has no clear pastoral plan, consequently each parish priest tries to do the best he can as regards the implementation of SCC policy. A bishop is a key agent in building a vibrant Church. Patrick Kalilombe argues that bishops are culprits in the SCCs poor implementation because some of the bishops are either not yet in terms with some aspects of modern developments in the Church.⁶³ So, lack of commitment and guidance from the hierarchy of the archdiocese leads pastoral agents to have no sense of direction. It seems pastoral policy of the 1973-1975 and 2004-2006 are no longer a priority of the archdiocese.⁶⁴

Therefore, the hierarchy (the bishop) is also a key player in the factor leading to poor participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

In this section, we have also found out that poor knowledge of ecclesiology of communion is due to lack of ongoing instruction for the laity at different levels of the Church (especially at SCCs and parish level). Key agents in this root cause are pastoral workers, namely: the bishop, priests, catechists and other lay leaders at the grass root.

2.2 Inadequate involvement of the laity in pastoral planning

In the field research, to find out the causes of poor participation of the laity in SCC, questions 11 and 13 on the questionnaire were asked to find out how pastoral planning is done in the parishes. Question 11 was asked to find out who plans for the basic pastoral activities undertaken in SCC. The responses were as follows:

⁶² Rodrigo Megia, "Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa 26 years on: Lights and shadows" in *New Strategies for a New Evangelisation in Africa*, ed. Patrick Ryan (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2002), pp.70-71.

⁶³ Patrick Kalilombe, p.77.

⁶⁴ Interview with Fr. Audifasio Kapinga, parish priest of Maula Cathedral, 2nd June 2011

Table 10: Who proposes plans for these activities?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The parish priest only	20	8.1	8.3	8.3
	Parish team only	55	22.4	22.9	31.3
	The SCC leaders only	18	7.3	7.5	38.8
	The SCC members only	45	18.3	18.8	57.5
	The parish team and SCC leaders only	31	12.6	12.9	70.4
	Parish council	59	24.0	24.6	95.0
	Diocesan pastoral office only	12	4.9	5.0	100.0
	Total	240	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	6	2.4		
Total		246	100.0		

From the results in table 10 above, we understand the differences in approaches of pastoral planning in the parishes and SCCs of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe as far as basic pastoral activities are concerned. It is crystal clear from the percentages above that there is no common approach towards pastoral planning. Each group/part of the Church makes plans on its own.

W.L. Pickett defines pastoral planning as a “process of praying and thinking together about the actions of the Body of Christ in a particular time and place.”⁶⁵ When we look at the responses above, we note that there is no praying or thinking together of the Body of Christ. In some parishes a parish priest plans alone on what the laity should do in their SCC (8.3%). In some cases, the parish team (where the parish priest is the chairman) plans alone without involving the laity at the grass root (22.9%). In some parishes it is the parish team and the SCC leaders planning for the SCC (12.9%) and in some cases the parish council plans for SCC activities (24.6%). Here it is important to remember that in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, the parish

⁶⁵ William L. Pickett, *A Concise Guide to Pastoral Planning*, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2007), p. 16.

priest is also the chairperson of the parish council and the agenda is proposed by him. The other members of the council are either outstation or zone or SCC leaders, who most of the times do not consult the SCC members on what is to be deliberated in the parish council. However, the new constitution of parish council promulgated in March 2011, states that SCC leaders are the members of the parish council.⁶⁶

This situation in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe tells us that most of the pastoral activities in the parish and SCCs are dictated by the parish priest, and the laity, especially those at the grass root level are hardly consulted. As such, activities that are done in SCCs are from the view point of the priest and parish team, and not necessarily from the point of view of the laity. Such activities would rarely address the needs of the laity, in turn, the laity go for activities that appeal to their spiritual quest in Pentecostal prayer groups and other mushrooming Churches.

On why priests (pastoral workers) plan alone, one informant said it is a general attitude and mindset in the Catholic Church that the ordained priest is the one who has been mandated to work and plan the work of fulfilling the mission of Christ.⁶⁷ This clericalism and hierarchism leads pastoral workers not give a listen ear to the laity on what they would wish be done in the SCCs to address their need. Moreover, this attitude is also used by the clergy to maintain the *status quo* doing things the same old way and fearing new changes and new commitments that will require new skills and much concentration.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ For the past 25 years the parish council membership has been varying from one parish to another. It is only in March 2011 when the Bishop issued a revised parish council constitution in which members of the parish council are clearly stipulated. Cf. Archdiocese of Lilongwe, *Parish Council Constitution*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 2011) article 4.5 subsections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2. p.14.

⁶⁷ Interview with Mr. Simango, retired Catechetical Tutor, of Kachebere parish, on 26th July 2011

⁶⁸ Rodrigo Mejia, "From life to practical theology: The pastoral circle," in *New Strategies for a new evangelisation in Africa*, ed. Patrick Ryan, (Nairobi: Pauline publications, 2002), p. 111. Cf. Wolfgang

On the other hand, we also note in the above table 10 that in some parishes and SCCs, planning of activities is done by SCC members alone (18.8%) without the pastoral workers (priests, religious and catechists). This way of planning is also not proper because the Body of Christ does not only comprise of the laity, but comprises also of the pastoral workers who are supposed to listen and guide the proposal from the grass root. In reverential dialogue and prayer they should agree on one thing for the holistic development of the laity and indeed for the salvation of souls.

In this factor of lack of proper pastoral planning, key agents identified are the pastoral agents (bishop, priests, and catechists) and the SCC community members. In the interviews, question 2 was asked to the respondents to get from them on the factors leading to success and failure of implementation of the 1973-1975 mini-synod which introduced SCCs. Out of the 24 respondents 9 including priests and catechists said that over the years after introduction of SCCs, the diocesan administration has not been committed to enforce or revisit the policy of SCCs. One catechist said, “people out here, especially those who participated in the 1973-1975 min-synod and who were there when SCC were introduced, have been waiting to see the pastoral agents come to them to ask for their views on how SCC life is today and then take their views for consideration.”⁶⁹ The bishop as the head of the archdiocese with help of the pastoral secretary, are key actors here who were supposed to champion pastoral planning process to counteract the present challenges.

The other key players in the factor of poor planning are the clergy and the other pastoral workers. Out of the 24 respondents (9 we said identified the diocesan

Schoneke, “Pastoral planning: New responses to changed situations,” in *New Strategies for a new evangelisation in Africa*, ed. Patrick Ryan, (Nairobi: Pauline publications, 2002), pp.130-131.

⁶⁹ Interview with Mr. Vincent Zulu, on 9th June 2011, Catechist of Guilleme Parish in Mchinji

administration) but 15 respondents identified priests and the other pastoral worker (catechist and the religious). The pastoral workers are not very keen to consult the laity in SCC on what has to be done in parish and SCCs. Many of the pastoral workers and some of the laity still have the pre-Vatican Council II attitude that the Church is clerical and hierarchical.⁷⁰ With this attitude, a parish priest is the one who plans for the other members of the Church, and the laity are to receive always without contributing their suggestions. Most of the times, these activities proposed by the parish priest and other pastoral workers are irrelevant because they do not address the needs of the laity. The consequence is that the laity not top of not patronising such activities, they do not own the pastoral activities taking place in their SCCs hence, their participation is limited.

In this section, we have realised that pastoral workers especially pastoral workers do not adequately involve the laity in pastoral planning because of clerical and hierarchical mentality. Neglecting input from the laity in planning renders pastoral activities irrelevant to the spiritual and material needs of the laity. They in turn do not see the need of attending SCC meetings, but rather search elsewhere, especially in Pentecostal prayer groups and social groups for spiritual and even social support. Moreover, the pastoral plan and activities for SCCs planned by the parish team are not owned by the laity. Their participation, therefore, becomes limited.

In this factor of lack of proper planning, the key agents are both archdiocesan administrators and pastoral workers. The Archdiocesan administrators in not coming up with a pastoral plan for the archdiocese, other pastoral workers are left to working without a clear vision, goals and action plan. Thus, affecting the implementation of

⁷⁰ Albert de Jong, *The Challenge of Vatican II in East Africa*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2004) p. 85. Also Cf. Rodrigo Mejia, p. 67.

the irrelevant pastoral activities, which consequently lead to poor participation of the laity in SCCs.

2.3 Lack of well prepared and organised pastoral activities in SCCs

According to *Pastoral Guidelines* of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, SCC activities are many: in liturgy and sacraments, catechesis for adults, youth and children, participating in development work of the community and country and many others which may be necessary for the salvation of Souls.⁷¹ In our investigation, question 8 in the questionnaire was for Christians to evaluate the pastoral activities being done in different SCCs of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. The results were as follows:

Table 11: Bible sharing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	10	4.1	4.1	4.1
	Poor	47	19.1	19.2	23.3
	Fair	59	24.0	24.1	47.3
	Good	129	52.4	52.7	100.0
	Total	245	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		246	100.0		

Table 12: Bible study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	104	42.3	42.3	42.3
	Poor	87	35.4	35.4	77.6
	Fair	18	7.3	7.3	85.0
	Good	37	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	246	100.0	100.0	

⁷¹ Diocesan Pastoral Secretariat, *Pastoral Guidelines: Diocese of Lilongwe mini-synod, 24November 1973 – 24 August 1975*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 1976), pp.11-12.

Table 13: Teaching of catechism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	111	45.1	45.3	45.3
	Poor	72	29.3	29.4	74.7
	Fair	23	9.3	9.4	84.1
	Good	39	15.9	15.9	100.0
	Total	245	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		246	100.0		

Table 14: Eucharistic celebration

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	11	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Poor	170	69.1	69.4	73.9
	Fair	18	7.3	7.3	81.2
	Good	45	18.3	18.4	99.6
	Very good	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	245	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		246	100.0		

Table 15: Other devotions (rosary, sacred heart, Devine mercy, Novena)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	33	13.4	13.5	13.5
	Poor	84	34.1	34.3	47.8
	Fair	80	32.5	32.7	80.4
	Good	48	19.5	19.6	100.0
	Total	245	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		246	100.0		

Table 16: Dialogue with other denominations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very poor	113	45.9	45.9	45.9
	Poor	39	15.9	15.9	61.8
	Fair	57	23.2	23.2	85.0
	Good	37	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	246	100.0	100.0	

From these tables 11-16 we note that Bible sharing is the only one which has been highly rated as good with 52.7%. Many respondents said that Bible sharing is done during Sunday services in outstations and is also done in some SCCs where they gather together to listen to the word of God on the agreed time (not in a Sunday

service)⁷². But the other activities are either not well done or not well prepared. Here, we have to mention that according to the respondents, all the activities listed in the questionnaire and those in the Pastoral Guidelines are done in some SCCs and not done in other SCCs. What we mean here is that one SCC may concentrate on Bible and neglect catechism and other activities.

The same question 8, when analysed on the basis of rural and urban deaneries in Bible teaching and sharing of catechism, we come to understand well the differences in the performance of the basic pastoral activities. The tables 17 and 18 below show the variations in the performance of SCCs in studied deaneries:

Table 17: Deanery: Bible teaching Crosstabulation

		Bible teaching				Total
		Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	
Deanery	Maula	8	14	11	14	47
	Mchinji	24	41	1	13	79
	Salima	50	16	4	3	73
	Madisi	22	16	2	7	47
Total		104	87	18	37	246

Table 18: Deanery: Teaching of catechism Crosstabulation

		Teaching of catechism				Total
		Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	
Deanery	Maula	6	6	13	22	47
	Mchinji	31	39	1	7	78
	Salima	49	16	3	5	73
	Madisi	25	11	6	5	47
Total		111	72	23	39	245

⁷² The researcher has observed that in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, the meetings of SCCs are done in two ways. The first way is that SCCs members meet on Sunday only during the Sunday prayer service where the presiding person preaches to the members. Little discussions and communications about other issues concerning the SCC members are done after the service. This way of conducting meetings does not create much interaction of the members. Usually, the leaders dominate in the meeting. This way of SCC meeting is common in many rural SCCs that are away from the parish who pray on their own on Sundays. The second way is when members meet at any other time agreed upon. It may be Sunday afternoon or any other day of the week convenient to members. These choose a passage to read and one preaches or shares the word of God. It also depends on how capable the leaders are to follow one or other methodologies. In this second way, at least, there is somehow an interaction of members. This way of conducting SCC meeting is common to SCCs in town and those who pray in the parish Church.

As the tables indicate, town parishes (in Maula deanery) 14 respondents said Bible teaching is good and 8 very poor and 22 people said sharing of catechism is good and 6 very poor. In contrast to the rural parishes: In Mchinji deanery good performance in Bible teaching given by 13 respondents and poor by 76 respondents, and in sharing of catechism is good by 7 respondents and poor by 70 respondents; In Salima deanery Bible teaching is rated good by 3 respondents and poor by 76 respondents, and in sharing catechism good is by 5 respondents and poor by 65 respondents; In Madisi deanery Bible sharing is rated good by 7 respondents and poor by 38 respondents, and sharing of catechism is rated good by 5 respondents and poor by 36 respondents.

The main reason behind poor performance of many SCCs in rural parishes is that pastoral activities in SCC are not well prepared and not well conducted because the SCC leaders and SCC members have no adequate capacity and ability to conduct these activities. This was revealed in the interviews conducted during the field research. Question 3.4 in the interviews respondents were asked to evaluate life of SCCs on the SCC meetings and main pastoral activities. Out of 24 respondents 5 said the pastoral activities are done well and are helpful to their spiritual lives. 19 respondents said that leaders and the laity in general are not adequately trained to conduct SCC pastoral activities like Bible teaching, sharing of the catechism and organising other pastoral activities. On Bible they said the Catholic laity have difficulties to express themselves on matters pertaining to the Bible. In most cases Bible teaching or sharing is dominated by one person, especially a leader who preaches to the others. More often, he takes that as an opportunity for personal vendetta against other members of the community. This in the long run divides the

community and slowly others stop coming.⁷³ The respondents show us that leaders and the laity have no adequate capacity to prepare, organise and conduct some of the basic pastoral activities.

However, in order for us to know what basic activities that are commonly done is SCC question 9 in the questionnaire was asked: what other activities do you do at SCC? The table below shows the findings

Table 19: Other activities done at SCC

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	2.8	3.2	3.2
	2	70	28.5	31.7	34.8
	3	33	13.4	14.9	49.8
	4	54	22.0	24.4	74.2
	5	39	15.9	17.6	91.9
	6	5	2.0	2.3	94.1
	7	12	4.9	5.4	99.5
	8	1	.4	.5	100.0
	Total	221	89.8	100.0	
Missing	System	25	10.2		
Total		246	100.0		

The four leading activities are: first, fundraising (2) with 31.7%. Second, are charitable activities (4) with 24.4%. Third, is visiting the sick (5) with 17.6%. Four, are development activities (3) with 14.9%. We note that apart from charitable activities, many SCCs are preoccupied with fundraising initiatives for the material development of the SCC and the parish. As much as material development of the SCC and parish are very important, but the multiplication and frequency of fundraising activities put off some of the Christians.⁷⁴ Too much emphasis on fundraising has led to the divisions within SCC. The rich do not bother to physically participate in SCC

⁷³ Interview with Mrs Grace Hiwa of St Patrick's Parish on 26th July 2011. Similar sentiments were echoed by Catechists of Salima, Madisi and Mchinji deanery.

⁷⁴ Interview with Mr. Simango of Kachebere parish on 26th July 2011. Same sentiments were given by the Catechists who were interviewed in all the deaneries.

activities. They just send the large sums of money to the treasurer as part of their contribution and as an indication that they are part of the SCC. This is done also in view of any help/service those rich people will need in future, being funeral or baptism or wedding of their children. Consequently, the poor, who are unable to contribute much or anything, make themselves available at the SCC meetings. Thus the rich and the poor in SCCs are treated differently. The effect of this is that the members become disillusioned, segregated and this situation consequently contributes to the poor participation of the laity at SCC. Despite the fact that the Church needs financial and material resources for sustainability, still there is lack of balance between fundraising activities and spiritual activities.

On identify key agents, during interviews, questions 3.2a and 3.2.b were asked to evaluate role of role priests and role of SCC leaders respectively. As discussed earlier on, out of 24 respondents, 19 said priests are few and busy to provide for the teaching needs and other frequently need pastoral services. These respondents explained that most of the priests in big parishes are not in touch with their SCC members to listen to their challenges, and more often than not the parish priests and other SCC leaders demands monetary contributions always without considering the spiritual needs of the people. On 3.2b out 24 respondents 21 said SCC lay leaders sometimes seems not well trained as they do not adequately guide people on how to properly prepare and conduct pastoral activities. Many of the SCC leaders fail in their leadership role because they become very partial and tend to be authoritarian rather than leading with love and humility.⁷⁵ Therefore, pastoral workers (priests, catechists and religious) and the lay SCC leaders are key agents in poor preparation and organisation basic pastoral activities.

⁷⁵ Interview with Fr. Innocent Mtapanga, Parish Priest of Namitete Parish, 10th June 2011.

However, in order to find out relevant pastoral activities the people of God want to be done at SCCs, Question 10 on the questionnaire was asked. The table below shows the results of the suggestions from the people of God:

Table 24: Pastoral activities you to be done in SCC

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	6	2.4	2.5	2.5
	2	11	4.5	4.6	7.1
	3	28	11.4	11.6	18.7
	4	25	10.2	10.4	29.0
	5	47	19.1	19.5	48.5
	6	29	11.8	12.0	60.6
	7	52	21.1	21.6	82.2
	8	18	7.3	7.5	89.6
	9	7	2.8	2.9	92.5
	10	18	7.3	7.5	100.0
	Total	241	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.0		
	Total	246	100.0		

According to these results in the table 24:

1st activity (highly preferred) is (7) discussion and sharing of human and ecclesial issues that concern the people of God (21.6%). On this the laity would like to have time to discuss ecclesial challenges so that as a community they can understand the root causes and then find solutions. They also want to discuss challenges that affect them as human beings like: social, political, economic and cultural challenges which they can discuss, understanding causes and find solutions. The laity want through such discussion to fight for human liberation from various enslavement. This pastoral need of the laity to have time for discussions at SCC is what emeritus Bishop Kalilombe advices that, SCCs to improve their life, in terms of participation and addressing other challenges, they need to critique themselves and

analyse what concerns them as Christians or as human beings.⁷⁶ So, when the parish is making its pastoral plan, there is need to include this basic pastoral activity in the SCCs.

2nd activity is (5) economic empowerment of the laity (19.5%). The laity here are proposing that in their SCCs, they should be able to have basic pastoral activities that aim at empowering the laity economically. The laity think that SCC activities should not concentrate on spiritual matters only, but should be able to address the economic life of the people. Moreover, many of the people in Archdiocese of Lilongwe are subsistence farmers and many of them struggle economically. Yet at the same time, SCCs have become the source of income generation for the parish and Archdiocesan ministerial activities. The poor people are trying to contribute from the little they have for the Kingdom of God, yet the Church (hierarchy) does not help build the economic capacity of their laity. On this Joseph Holmes-Siedle advises that the Church has to work for the improvement of the economic status of the people of God to avoid a question which others may ask to the hierarchy that ‘you are building big churches for the glory of God, but what are you doing for the children of God?’⁷⁷ As such, in the spirit of holistic evangelisation and integral human development proposed by *Ecclesia in Africa*⁷⁸, there is a need in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe to plan for activities of economic empowerment of the laity in SCCs so that in turn they can contribute to the development of the Church.

3rd activity is (6) reading, sharing and teaching of Catechism of the Catholic Church (12.0%). On this, the laity express their limitedness to articulate, explain, teach and defend their catholic truths (doctrines). Many of them have the belief in the

⁷⁶ Interview with emeritus Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, on 19th July 2011

⁷⁷ Joseph Holmes-Siedle, “Diocesan report varying progress in building small Christian communities: Plenary preparatory paper no.1”, in *AMECEA Documentation Service*, 5/79/170 (29 May 1979), pp 1-3.

⁷⁸ Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, no 68-69.

Triune God and all the other Catholic teachings, but they find it hard to give reasons for their belief. Thus, they have a deep wish for their SCC pastoral activities to include reading and sharing of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the social doctrine of the Church. Mr Saulos Chilima said:

We know priests are few and it is impossible for them to visit now and again in our SCC to explain and teach us the Church doctrines. But if we are well empowered, we can read, share and teach each other in SCC prayer meetings and in other proper forums.⁷⁹

So, there is need for catechesis to be one of the basic pastoral activities in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

4th activity is (3) conducting workshops annually on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs (11.6%). Here the people of God expressed the need to have ongoing formation about the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs, so that they can constantly be reminded, deepen their understanding and orient new members who joining their SCCs. They proposed yearly sessions on ecclesiology of communion to be part and parcel of the annual activities in all SCCs.

5th activity is (4) conducting workshops annually on Bible study or Bible sharing (10.4%). On this proposal, the people of God would like to learn more about the Bible, especially on how they can do Bible sharing, in SCCs and their families. As already observed, most of the laity fail to share the word of God at SCC because they are not well trained. This proposal then comes as a solution to the problem of the SCC failure to conduct well Bible sharing.

6th activity is (10) Eucharistic celebration monthly in small parishes and twice a year in big parishes (7.5%). The people of God also wish to have Eucharistic

⁷⁹ Interview with Mr. Saulos Chilima, on 15 July 2011, a parishioner of St. Patrick's Parish and member of St. Joseph SCC,

celebration at SCCs as often as possible, bearing in mind that the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life.⁸⁰ In small parishes the laity would like priests to make an effort to celebrate mass monthly or as often as possible. In big parishes, priests should arrange Eucharistic celebration in SCCs at least twice a year. For them, this will strengthen the faith and encourage the participation of the laity in SCCs.

7th activity is (8) youth programs at SCCs (7.5%). For the people of God youth activities at SCC level can be way of improving the participation of the youth. Many of the youth will feel attracted when SCCs have programs that are relevant or appealing to them. Mr. Saulos Chilima noted that when SCC allows the youths to organise and plan activities that are appealing them, surely they will come at SCC. But if the activities do not come from them and do not touch their expectations, they will find no urge to participate in SCC.⁸¹

8th activity is (2) introduction of weekly SCC prayer meetings with different activities every week for a month (4.6%). Here the people of God propose that in all SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, prayer meetings should take place every week and with different basic pastoral activities to be organised for the whole month. This comes from the background that there are other SCCs which meet once a month; others meet when it is convenient, meaning to say if there is no any pressing need, they do not meet; and others meet every week. Thus, people of God want all SCCs in the Archdiocese to have a common approach towards the prayer meetings.

9th activity is (9) empowering the laity on devotional prayers of the Church, like the rosary, sacred heart, divine mercy and novenas (2.9%). The laity also are longing for ongoing formation on popular piety so that they can have their spiritual

⁸⁰ Vatican Council II, Decree on Priestly Life and Ministry *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 December 1965, AAS 58 (1966) 991 -1024, no. 4

⁸¹ Interview with Mr. Saulos Chilima, on 15 July 2011.

hunger satisfied. Many of them realise that devotional prayers are not known by the laity. Thus, they need to be taught and encouraged to pray at SCC and family levels.

10th activity is (1) social communion or social gatherings at SCC level, celebrating together the feast day of SCC, at Christmas and Easter (2.5%). Though with little percentage, but it came very clearly from the laity about the need for SCCs to have social communion or get together for the SCC members on feast day, Christmas, Easter or even on the first harvest ceremony. More often than not, many SCCs have not valued this, but only concentrated on prayer and serious business. Thus, there is need for SCCs to organise such get together for a social communion.

These activities represent the expectations and aspirations of the people of God according to their different needs in the Archdiocese. For the laity to remain committed and to participate actively in SCCs, such activities have to be included in the pastoral plan of the parish and SCCs. Implementing these proposed activities is indeed implementing pastoral activities that are concrete and relevant to the people. Moreover, getting the laity's contribution and involving them in coming up with a pastoral plan and SCC basic activities is the most fundamental element of building communion among the people of God.⁸² Thus, in chapter four of pastoral recommendations, we shall consider all these proposed relevant pastoral activities but also with guidance from the Archdiocesan pastoral office. Following guidance from pastoral office of the Archdiocese is very important because the Bishop, who is the chief pastor and legislator, is the one who gives the pastoral direction of the diocese.⁸³

⁸² Cecil Mc Garry, Rodrigo Mejia and Valerian Shirima, p. 82.

⁸³ The Code of Canon Law, canon 391 &1 and &2. Also Cf Sebastian S. Karambai, *Structures of decision making in the local Church*, (Bangalore: Theological publications in India, 1999) pp.103, 136.

In conclusion, we have understood in this section that the poor preparation, organisation and conduction of SCCs' pastoral activities is due to inadequate capacity and ability of the laity and SCC leaders. The inadequacy comes because the SCC leaders and the laity are not given enough training on how to conduct different pastoral activities in SCC. On top of activities being irrelevant to the needs (spiritual and material) of the laity, the performance of the activities is poor. As such, they would prefer to stay at home or go somewhere else rather than attend SCC meetings which do not enrich them. We have also noted that the key agents related to this challenge are pastoral agents: pastoral worker and SCC lay leaders. However, the people of God looking into their situations and pastoral needs have proposed some pastoral activities to be done at SCCs, to respond to their spiritual and material needs.

From this analysis, we are able to note the linkage between poor preparations and organisation of pastoral activities with poor participation of the laity. We also note the linkage between lack of induction by the pastoral workers to SCC leaders and the laity with poor performance of SCC pastoral activities, consequently making the laity be disinterested and participating poorly in SCC activities.

2.4 Other Factors

From the field research, we discovered other factors which contribute to the poor participation of the laity in a SCC. These other factors were revealed in question 13 which was trying to confirm the three hypotheses in the research but also question 13.1 which was inquiring about other additional reasons for poor participation of the laity in SCC. The results were as follows:

Table 20: Reasons for poor participation according to your knowledge and experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The laity do not understand the meaning and importance of SC	45	18.3	18.4	18.4
	The basic pastoral activities at SCC are not well planned	4	1.6	1.6	20.1
	The laity are not involved in the pastoral planning	18	7.3	7.4	27.5
	Some SCCs are too big	9	3.7	3.7	31.1
	All reasons above (1 to 4)	90	36.6	36.9	68.0
	Many Christians are busy	62	25.2	25.4	93.4
	Many Christians are lazy	14	5.7	5.7	99.2
	None of the above	2	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	244	99.2	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.8		
Total		246	100.0		

Table 21: Other additional reasons

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	99	40.2	40.9	40.9
	2	43	17.5	17.8	58.7
	3	38	15.4	15.7	74.4
	4	9	3.7	3.7	78.1
	5	30	12.2	12.4	90.5
	6	4	1.6	1.7	92.1
	7	18	7.3	7.4	99.6
	8	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	242	98.4	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.6		
Total		246	100.0		

Table 20 confirms the three hypotheses with 68.0%. However, it also reveals other factors like big size of SCC, laziness and busy life of Christians because of their occupations.

In table 21 we discover other reasons in addition to what is in table 20:

1. Lack of commitment on Church or religious matters, 40.9%.
2. Christians are busy with worldly things (like drinking beer, doing business and other personal tasks), 17.8%.

3. Lack of Christian spirit love in the community (backbiting, selfishness and many other ills), 15.7%.
5. Bad examples of SCC leaders and poor leadership in SCC, 12.4%.
4. The inability of SCC to respond to the social and economic needs of members 3.7%.
6. Priests/pastoral workers do not teach or encourage Christians on SCC, 1.7%.
7. Christians are busy at work (with occupational life), 7.4%.
8. Differences in classes leading people not to interact with each other (the rich or the poor), 0.4%.

It is important therefore that we understand how these factors contribute to poor participation of the laity in SCC activities.

2.4.1 Big size of some SCCs

Our investigation reveals that some SCCs in rural deaneries (Mchinji, Madisi and Salima) are very big, either covering big geographic areas (with many villages scattered in one SCC) or with many households over 100 families in one SCC. With such a situation, members of the SCC who cover a long distance to the venue of the meeting, slowly start to miss the activities.⁸⁴ SCC with a big population, many Christians become inactive and they leave responsibilities and activities to few who are active. Moreover, a SCC with a big population and big distances is difficult to manage its meeting and Christians do not know each other.⁸⁵ Thus it becomes difficult to fulfil the objectives of the SCC.

⁸⁴Interview with Mr Petro Kanyendera, Catechist of Mpherere parish on 15th June 2011 and Mr Simeon Kapatamoyo Catechist of Chezi parish on 16th June 2011

⁸⁵ Interview with Catechists of Chiphaso Parish in Kasungu on 14th June 2011: the names of the catechists are: Mr. Gabriel Chimimba, Mr. Charles Nkhoma, Mr. Michael Manda, Mr. Atanzio Eneya,

In the factor of big size of SCCs, question 3.3 in interviews was asked to the respondents to evaluate life of SCCs in relation to the size of SCC. Out of 24, 15 respondents attributed the challenge of big size to the SCC members and SCC leaders (the laity) themselves who refuse to cut or reduce the size of SCC. 9 respondents attributed the challenge to pastoral workers (priests, catechists and religious) for not teaching and implementing the 2004-2006 mini-synod resolution of reducing big SCC to small geographical area and to 30 -50 families or households.⁸⁶ Thus, the key agents in this factor are pastoral workers and the laity at the grass root and their SCC leaders.

2.4.2. Laziness (Lack of Commitment)

Another factor leading to poor participation is lack of commitment on the part of the laity in patronising SCCs. This lack of commitment is paired with laziness that is propelled by lack proper knowledge of SCC and their importance.⁸⁷

It is however surprising that the same Christians who are not committed or displaying laziness in religious matters, are preoccupied with worldly things like entertainment (watching soccer), drinking beer and other activities that are of social interest to them.⁸⁸ Even in the rural areas despite the traditional values like spirit of solidarity, collaboration and sense of responsibility, still, Christians do not demonstrate this spirit when it comes to Church participation. In question 3.1 in the interviews, we asked the respondents to evaluate SCCs in line to their growth today.

Mr. Evance Masankha and Mr. Fredrick Tchiza. The similar sentiments and observations were expressed by Mr. Simango of Mchinji on 24th July 2011.

⁸⁶ Synod Steering Committee, *Let us march together in spreading the Good News of our Lord: Diocese of Lilongwe mini-synod 2004-2006*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 2006), p. 10.

⁸⁷ Interview with Mrs. Grace Hiwa, St. Patrick Parish, on 25th July 2011

⁸⁸ Interview with Mr. Kapanga, Maukira, and Mr Yuda Catechists of Kasungu St. Joseph parish, on 15th June 2011

Among the many answers people gave, 2 respondents out of the 24 said that SCCs in Lilongwe have grown but not to the expectation of those who initiated the SCCs in 1970. They explained that it is surprising that the same Christians participate in village or political activities but do not show commitment and responsibility in Church. When they were asked to explain the reason of this, according to their opinion, they said, may be the Church has not learned much from the Chewa culture as regards why many of the laity have sense of solidarity, responsibility and collaboration to traditional village/society obligations than to Church.⁸⁹

In this challenge men are said to be lazier/less committed than women when it comes to participation at SCC. This has been revealed in the question 14 and 14.1 of the questionnaire as the tables 22 and 23 below show:

Table 22: Comparing participation/attendance of men and women

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Men are equal to women	6	2.4	2.4	2.4
Women are more than men	240	97.6	97.6	100.0
Total	246	100.0	100.0	

Table 23: Why this situation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	33	13.4	13.4	13.4
2	38	15.4	15.4	28.9
3	143	58.1	58.1	87.0
4	24	9.8	9.8	96.7
5	8	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	246	100.0	100.0	

In table 23:

1. Women are more than men in number (13.4%).

⁸⁹ Interview with Mr. Kapanga and Mr Maukira catechists of Kasungu St. Joseph parish on 15th June 2011

2. Most men are busy at work because they are bread winners (15.4%).
3. Most men are lazy and have no commitment to Church and religious matters (58.1%).
4. Most men are not well informed about the importance of SCC (9.8%).
- 5 Most families come as husband and wife (3.3%).

So, among the many reasons why men do not participate in SCC activities 58.1% of the reasons are due to the fact that most men are lazy and have no commitment to Church and religious matters. This is common both in rural and urban parishes.

2.4.3. Busy with occupational life

Another factor given by 7.4% of the respondents is that many Christians are busy with their daily occupations and commitments at work and places of business. Responses on question 3.4 of the interviews revealed that throughout the week (week days and weekends) some are honestly engaged in trying to fulfil their obligations of work as demanded by their employers or their customers. Most of the time, such Christians would be willing to attend SCC meetings but they are not available because they do not arrive in time for SCC meetings or they are away from home for various valid reasons. However, there are other Christians who do not know how to balance their Christian and professional life, thus, they sideline spiritual life because of their occupations. Consequently, poor participation of the laity is registered at many SCCs.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Interview with Mrs. Grace Hiwa on 25th July 2011.

2.4.4 Lack of Christian love and bad examples from SCC leaders

The other factors revealed in the field research are lack of Christian love among SCC members and bad examples of SCC leaders which cause scandals to Christians (12.4%). Many respondents pointed out that in some SCCs, Christians are put off because of the unbecoming behaviour of fellow Christians who do not live the Christian love. Some Christians within the community back-bite others, some are very uncharitable to those who are “not locals”, and some lack the spirit of forgiveness and many other ills. SCC leaders, sometimes tend to favour other people, especially the rich. Some are unkind in their way of speaking and some display authoritarian leaders not listening to people. In this kind of situation some Christians feel offended, unwell come and consequently, they stay away from SCC activities, thus leading to poor participation of the laity.

In these four additional factors, both the laity (SCC leaders and members of SCCs (40.9% in table 21) and pastoral workers (1.7% in table 21) are key actors. SCC leaders fail also to carry out properly their leadership responsibilities because they have a poor understanding of communion ecclesiology. Consequently, their presence and way of relating with fellow Christians does not contributing to the building of the community. The laity do not show personal commitment to fight against laziness and laity are succumbing to materialistic mentality which is gripping the modern world African society.⁹¹ Also pastoral workers are other actors in the sense that they have a responsibility to access and evaluate the life of SCC. So far, many pastoral workers seem not to be aware of the pastoral challenges rocking their SCCs. Some of them

⁹¹ Interview with Mrs Grace Hiwa

seem not to care about whether SCCs are living or dead.⁹² They are unable to read the signs of time in their local Church, thus contributing to the poor participation of the laity.

So, from these additional factors in this section, we are also able to link the connection between these additional factors and the inadequate knowledge of ecclesiology of communion among the laity, inadequate consultation of the laity by the pastoral workers when making pastoral plans for SCCs, and poor preparation and organisation of SCCs pastoral activities. This connection justifies the poor participation of the laity in SCCs.

Conclusion

In this second Chapter, we have analysed the situation of poor participation of the laity in SCCs, and we have discovered that inadequate knowledge of ecclesiology of communion is due to lack of ongoing teaching or instruction sessions for the laity on the Church teaching about SCC and its importance. The key players in this challenge are pastoral workers and SCC leaders.

In our analysis we have also found that lack of proper pastoral planning is due to clerical and hierarchical mentality that only the ordained are the ones to make plans for the Church because they are ordained for the actualisation of the mission of the Church and the laity are to obey and follow what priests propose. In this root cause, the key agents are both pastoral workers and the laity themselves.

We have also found out that poor preparation, organisation and conduction of SCC pastoral activities is due to lack on capacity among SCC leaders and the SCC

⁹² Rodrigo Mejia, pp. 70-71.

members. They are not well trained on how to prepare and conduct activities in SCCs. These root causes have also led to: the laity refusing dividing big SCCs; the laity developing laziness on SCC matters: the laity failing to balance their spiritual life with occupational life; and the laity and their SCC leaders being uncharitable to each other and being authoritarian.

With all these root causes, if there is no intervention, the possible scenario in the future will be for the laity to continue shunning SCC activities in the Catholic Church, seeking spiritual and social support in Pentecostal churches and other social groups, and most of the laity will continue nursing the negative attitude of thinking of the Catholic Church as not being ready to respond to their needs. Consequently, mission of the Church through deeper and new evangelisation will not be achieved.

Therefore, looking at these root causes with a positive and pastoral mind, we see a sign of “ongoing formation.” Through this sign of the time we see the Holy Trinity, the origin of the Church, inviting the Archdiocese of Lilongwe to “an ongoing formation” of the laity on Vatican Council II’s vision of the Church as communion. This sign of “ongoing formation” can help to bring attitude change in the laity. However, for “ongoing formation” to bring the desired attitude change, especially Christian commitment that achieves deeper and new evangelisation, we need first to shed light of Christ on the sign of “ongoing formation” in relation to the analysed factors. That is why in the next chapter (chapter three) we shall make a theological reflection by shedding the light of Christ on the sign of “ongoing formation” of the laity as regards their participation in SCCs. The light of Christ in the teaching of the Church about SCCs will later help us to make pastoral recommendations and suggestions for action in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

CHAPTER THREE

CHURCH TEACHING ON THE PARTICIPATION OF THE LAITY IN SCC

Introduction

In the previous chapter we have discovered that root causes of poor participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe are: Lack of continuous instructions about ecclesiology of communion; the clergy's (and laity's) hierarchical and clerical attitude in pastoral work in not involving the laity in pastoral planning, and lack of proper training to SCC leaders and members on organisation and preparation of SCC activities. All these root causes are an invitation for ongoing formation.

Therefore, in this chapter, we shall use “ongoing formation” as a sign of the time in our theological reflection. In this theological reflection, we shall look at the Sacred Scripture, the Church Tradition (Fathers of the Church), Vatican Council II, teaching of the popes, AMECEA documents, Archdiocese of Lilongwe pastoral guidelines and teachings from selected theologians in relation to ongoing formation of the laity in SCCs. This theological reflection will be very important for us in coming up with pastoral recommendations and suggestions in the action plan in order to remedy the situation of poor participation of the laity in SCCs, but also achieve deeper and new evangelisation.

3.1 Sacred Scripture

3.1.1 Old Testament

In the book of Genesis 1:26 God says “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The use of plural here gives us a glimpse of the communitarian reality

and nature of God. Thus, the three persons of the trinity, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit live in communion and this is the spirit and reality that God is teaching human beings to emulate. This communitarian nature of God is also enshrined in the nature of human beings, for a human being is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, this text is a teaching about God's continuous invitation to human beings to live in communion with Him and fellow human beings. This is the teaching which has to be constantly used in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe where the laity are not adequately informed about Church as a communion.

Moreover, the words of God "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" teaches us that the Holy Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) consulted each other and concurred to create a human being in their image.⁹³ It tells us that the Trinity had a plan and they shared the vision of plan. As Charles Nyamiti puts it, this creation story of human beings is the pre-figuration of the origin of the Church.⁹⁴ This means that on top of understanding the fact that the Church is of divine origin, we need to realise that communion and planning together, is of divine origin. Thus, the creation story of human beings is a teaching for attitude change to the people of God to live life of communion, to understand the significance of SCCs, and planning together for Church activities so that all the Church can participate actively in SCCs.

This is a very important Church teaching because in our analysis we have seen that a spirit of ecclesial communion and of planning together is lacking in the

⁹³ Matthew Henry, "Genesis 1" in *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the whole Bible vol. 1 – Genesis to Deuteronomy*, (Iowa: World Bible Publishers, 1997), p. 10

⁹⁴ Charles Nyamiti, *Studies on African Christian Theology Vol.4: Christ's Ancestral Mediation through the Church understood as God's family: An essay on African Ecclesiology*, (Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 2010), pp.14-16.

Archdiocese of Lilongwe. This, teaching is an invitation that in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe there is need of an ongoing formation on ecclesiology of communion and on pastoral planning that involvement of all members of the Church.

Furthermore, the story of the fall of man in Genesis 3:1-13 teaches us about human beings tendency to sin especially craving for empty independence from God. Man and woman were allured by empty promises. They sinned and became disoriented and ran away from God. However, God searched for them so that they should come back and once again live in communion with Him. Such an initiative from God is continuous as will be seen in later text (of Abraham and Mount Sinai experience). In the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, we have seen the same experience of the sinful tendency of the people of God. After a good start of SCCs in the 1970's, we note the walking away from ecclesial communion in late 1980's to the present due to many factors including unchecked desire to live an individualistic life and search for material needs. Thus, teaching from the fall of man is a good teaching for ongoing formation of the laity so that constantly they should be reminded of coming back to communion with God and fellow human beings through their participation in SCCs. Communion with God and neighbour is what will give the laity true joy, peace, happiness and satisfaction.

After the fall of man, God continues to call humanity to live in communion with him. That is why in the same book of Genesis we read calling of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-9). By calling Abraham, God makes an initiative of constituting a people who should live in relationship with him and with each other. Through Abraham's detachment from his homeland and kinsmen, mankind is invited to an attitude change, to detach him/herself from the selfish self, to enter into communion

with God. Communion with God is a prerequisite for a good communion with fellow human beings. Thus, communion requires a faithful and obedient relationship.⁹⁵ That is why God constantly instructed Abraham to remain faithful and obedient to Him for him to be made father of the nation. We have seen that in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, many of the laity are attached to their personal commitments (farms, professions, business and personal pleasure), and thus putting communion of the people of God and their spiritual and liturgical life at stake. This teaching from Sacred Scripture of the ongoing instruction of God to Abraham is very crucial for the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe so that they can also change their attitude and understand the need of relationship with God if they are to achieve ecclesial communion and growth in their spiritual life.

Ongoing formation in the Old Testament is also seen when God continued to invite and instruct His people to remain in communion with Him and with fellow human beings through the making of the covenant on Sinai Mountain (Exodus 19:1 – 6). In order to ensure an enduring relationship between God and human beings and relationship among human beings themselves, God presented some laws and instructions which were to be followed. God gave them the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-21). The commandments were a means of ongoing formation of the people of Israel so that they may remain in communion with God and with fellow human beings. All these initiatives from God are done with the background of human beings failure to remain faithful and obedient to God. This situation is not different to the one we have observed and analysed in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, where people are no longer faithful to living the Christian promises of living a Christian community life in SCCs. Thus, as the text of Exodus enlightens, in the archdiocese of Lilongwe,

⁹⁵ Matthews Henry, "Genesis 12", p. 84

we need ongoing instruction of the people of God coupled with drawing of some guidelines which will help the people to live the Christian life of communion.

Furthermore, the Word of God continues to teach us that God was never tired of his people. Even after the covenant at Mount Sinai, people of Israel after remain obedient, they continued to deviate and follow the worldly ways. Thus for God to continue to build and sustain the community of Israel, he sent at different times, leaders in the form of judges, prophets, priests and kings to guide and teach the people to maintain their communion with God and with each other. Some of the leaders are Moses, Joshua, Debora, Gideon Samson, Ruth, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and many others.

One of the Major Prophets giving ongoing instruction to the Israelites was Isaiah. He vehemently rebuked and taught the people of Israel to always remain faithful to God. He lamented, “Ah! Sinful nation, people laden with wickedness, evil race and corrupt children! They have forsaken the Lord, spurned the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 1:4). He constantly called upon them to return to the Lord and live faithfully in communion with God. He taught them, “Listen to the instructions of our God, people of Gomorrah! ... Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord. ... If you are willing and obey, you shall eat the good things of the Land” (Isaiah 1: 10, 18 – 19). Such, instruction is what is needed also in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe where we are concerned with the laity’s way of life, neglecting their Christian obligation of living baptism vows of living life of communion and Christian commitment, yet instead they are preoccupied with their daily occupations. Thus the Church leaders like: priests, the religious, catechists and SCC leaders have to do their part like the

prophets in the Sacred Scripture to constantly teach people of their obligations but also to constantly come up with guidelines for SCC for the laity to follow.

The last part of the Old Testament show us how God planned for his people who were not so faithful in keeping the covenant and the relationship with Him. In His plan, God promised to reconstitute the new people through a new covenant in the future. Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel taught the people and assured them that through the new covenant, God would place his law within them, write it in their hearts and shall remove the heart of stone and put in the heart of flesh by his divine grace (Jeremiah 31: 32, Ezekiel 36:26). The plan of the new covenant is another effort by God to renew the people through the teaching of the prophets and indeed by divine grace acting on the life of the people. This reconstitution is an ongoing formation by God to improve the people's life of communion with God.

This is what is needed in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe where we have observed lack of planning. So the Archdiocese has to make plans for ongoing formation in order to re-inculcate the spirit of communion and spirit of planning so that poor participation in SCC can change and improve.

In this section we have noted that the Old Testament characterised by God's initiative to give ongoing formation to human beings, so that human beings can change attitude and live in communion with God and fellow human beings. The stories of Abraham, making of covenant at Mount Sinai, and activities of the prophets, do not only show God's efforts to change the attitude of His people to live in communion with the Holy Trinity and fellow human being, but also that human beings can learn to plan together and participate actively in the Church. Therefore,

from Old Testament we find the teaching about ongoing formation of the laity which is enlightening the situation of poor participation in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

3.1.2 New Testament

In the New Testament the plan and promise made by God the Father in the Old Testament to reconstitute a new people is fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The immediate preparation of the coming of Jesus Christ and the new covenant is made by John the Baptist, who, like the prophets of the Old Testament, keeps on instructing people for a period of time. He calls for change of attitude and renewal of life by repentance so that the people can appropriately live in communion with God and neighbour by living a just and charitable life (Luke 3:1 – 14). Thus, according to the New Testament and preaching of John the Baptist, which is an interior renewal through repentance, is a prerequisite to living a proper life of communion in Church. The laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, whom we have understood that sometimes are discouraged by the bad examples of fellow Christians and even SCC leaders, need to be constantly renewed and be called to repentance so that interpersonal relationships can be rebuild and thereby enhancing life of communion and participation in SCCs.

In the New Testament we also find Jesus Christ himself, calling some of his disciples to constitute an apostolic community so as to help Him in reconstituting a new people of God in Israel and beyond (Mark 3: 14 – 15). Jesus wanted the apostles to first of all change their attitude (to understand Jesus mission) by experiencing communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit through him. At the same time, he wanted the apostles to develop interpersonal relationships among themselves. This was a very good formation for the apostles because the experience would help them in future for formation of Christian communities. Thus, their community experience

with Jesus was an ongoing formation *par excellence* which went on for three years and later continued by the power of the Holy Spirit in the early Church (John 13:4 – 15). In the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, where we have found out that SCC leaders are not well trained and not adequately empowered, parish priests (and other pastoral workers) have to give an adequate training and enough practicum to the SCC leaders so that they be the first ones like the Apostles of Jesus to be imbued with a spirit of ecclesial communion. The laity at the grass root will very much depend on these leaders build a Church that lives communion and fulfils the mission of the Christ.

In the New Testament, the constitution of the new people of God in the new covenant happened through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:1-24:53, John 18:1-21:25). Through the paschal event, the old covenant of the Old Testament was made obsolete by this new covenant (Hebrews 8:13). In actual fact, the Church is born primarily of this Christ's paschal event.⁹⁶ Therefore, in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, the laity have to be helped to relive the paschal mystery so to die from their selfish tendencies of valuing personal progress through business, farming, occupation and other personal pleasures. We saw in our analysis that most of the laity do not participate in a SCC because they prefer to go for personal activities rather than SCC activities. Thus, the laity have to be helped to die from their old selfishness through ongoing formation to be brought about by constant teaching and celebration of the paschal meal of the Eucharist.

In actual fact, the paschal event (through celebration of the Eucharist and through catechesis), draws people together to participate in the life of the Church. That is why the celebration of this paschal mystery in the Eucharist is an act that

⁹⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 766

informs, forms and transforms the laity continuously. The celebration of the Eucharist everyday renews this covenant and the faithful are called to become one and a new people more than before. This is possible because the Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being.⁹⁷ Therefore, the celebration of the Eucharist and catechesis are some of the pastoral activities that have to be well organised and prepared in order to bring ongoing formation of the laity and improve their participation in SCCs.

Furthermore, in the New Testament we also find how the apostle conducted ongoing formation for the Jews and early Christian believer to change their attitude, especially after Pentecost for them (Christians) to actively participate in the community activities (Acts.2:14-41; 3:1-26). The Apostles together with the community members agreed and performed pastoral activities that were very relevant to the needs of the local communities at that time and in their situation. That is why all believers were gathered together, sharing the teaching of the apostles, praying together, breaking the bread and having things in common (Act 2: 42-47). They were meeting in the temple, but more often in their houses, hence the development of house church (Acts 5:20 -21, 25, 42; 8: 35). This experience of the early Christians is what is needed today in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, where pastoral activities planned for SCCs are not appealing to the people. In our analysis in chapter two we noted that most of the laity are not attracted to the activities in SCC. Instead, they either go to Pentecostal groups or other social groups or go for their own personal activities where they think they will get help and spiritual nourishment. Therefore, in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe there is need of ongoing formation not only on involving the laity in

⁹⁷ Ibid., no.1325.

pastoral planning, but also on how to conduct relevant pastoral activities that will help the community in witnessing to the Gospel, building communion and sustaining of the spiritual life.

We also note in New Testament, especially in Acts of the Apostles 17:16-34 that St. Paul built the Christian community of Athens after he had dialogued with the Greek culture (with the Greeks) who had their cultural beliefs which St. Paul noted in their arguments and sacred monuments. In this dialogue and argumentation, St. Paul was able to convince the Athenians and at the same time he appreciated the positive realities in their Athenian religious beliefs. Thus the Athenians using their traditional beliefs were able to accept Christian (in using their traditional religiosity and purifying it by Christian message). This was inculturation *per excellence* by St. Paul in building the Church in Athens. The Archdiocese of Lilongwe where the Chewa cultural has good values of family especially unity, solidarity, obedience, collaboration and sense of responsibility, needs to find a better way of dialoguing with the Chewa culture so that these values are incultured in the SCCs.

In this section we have noted how the New Testament brought ongoing formation to the people of God. Jesus applied ongoing formation by constituting and forming the apostolic community and reconstituting of the new people through his suffering, death, resurrection and coming of the Holy Spirit. We have also noted ongoing formation was applied by the apostles in building the early Christian communities, which were kept alive and active by the laity. With the root causes identified in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, ongoing formation has to be applied in order to improve the situation of poor participation.

3.2. Church Tradition (Church Fathers)

Church fathers are those who are upheld by the Church as authentic teachers and witnesses of the Christian tradition in the ancient times, and provided spiritual formation through their teachings, and have contributed much in the ongoing formation of the laity in Christian communities. The period of the Church Fathers spans from the era of St. Clement of Rome (90 A.D) to St. John Damascene (750 A.D) in the East and St. Isidore of Seville (636 A.D) in the West.⁹⁸ However, we shall look at only three fathers of the Church in line with participation of the laity in the life of the Church and their ongoing formation.

3.2.1. St. Clement of Rome (d. 99 A.D)

St. Clement of Rome is the third successor of St. Peter as bishop of Rome, who led the Church from 90 A.D to 99 A.D. He is known for the letter he wrote to the Corinthians. At Corinth there was a big Christian community which was established by St. Paul. In actual fact, Corinth was a trading town because of the port and it used to attract different people (Greeks, Jews and people from different areas). In the pontificate of St. Clement, there were disagreements and divisions in the Church of Corinth between the laity and the clergy and among the laity themselves. This situation went so bad to the extent that some of the laity chased away some of the clergy.

St. Clement then, wrote a letter in order to bring solutions to this pastoral problem. The letter contained powerful and authentic teaching to the laity and also to

⁹⁸ W.J. Burghardt, "Fathers of the Church", in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. V* (2nd Ed), (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America, 2002), p. 640.

the clergy.⁹⁹ St. Clement called upon the laity to stop fighting, end the quarrels and dissensions. He wrote: “Do we not have one God and one Christ, and one Spirit of grace poured out upon us? Why do we wrench and tear apart the members of Christ, and revolt against our own body?”¹⁰⁰

With the letter, St. Clement provided guidance to the community. The community itself used the letter as a reference point and material for their ongoing formation of the laity especially to rebuild the community and improve active participation of the laity. We learn that later after such ongoing teaching endeavours, peace returned to the Corinthian community and both the laity and clergy participated in the activities the community.¹⁰¹ In the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, where we have observed some of the laity not participating in SCC activities because they do not favour some of the pastoral activities, like fervent fundraising activities, ongoing formation on consultative pastoral planning in coming up with relevant pastoral activities is needed. Such ongoing formation will change the attitude of both the laity and the clergy.

3.2.2 St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258 A.D)

St. Cyprian lived in the difficult period of the Church, during the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperors. In addition to that, there was schism in the Church due to the persecutions, as dissensions arose among Christians because of those who caused scandals by lapsing in their faith. Issues of sin of apostasy and how

⁹⁹ Hermigild Dressler (Ed.), *The Father of the Church: A New Translation Volume I*, (Washington D.C, The Catholic University of America, 1981), pp.4-5.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁰¹ W. J. Burghart, “St. Clement of Rome” in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (2nd Ed.), Vol. 3, (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America, 2002), p. 458.

to go about reconciliation of sinners were among other pastoral challenges that created chaos in the Christian community of Carthage (in North Africa).¹⁰²

St. Cyprian is re-known for his writings, especially letters to the Christians and his friend Cornelius who was the bishop of Rome (he was the pope). He also guided the Church in this troubled time through his examples of good deeds.

In order to build and strengthen the divided community due to lapsed Christians, St. Cyprian wrote to Moses, Maximus (priests), Nicostratus and Rufinus (Confessors) that in reaching to some decisions about lapsed Christians, they should not rush. Thus he called for them to consult all members of Christ body: the bishops, priests, deacons, confessors and the laity. He emphasised that the laity have to be consulted in some of the issues if a good decision has to be reached of building the unity of the Church, especially in handling the issue of reconciliation of sinners.¹⁰³ For St. Cyprian, rebuilding communion of the members of the Christian community depended very much on their ideas of the different members of the Church and having one common view towards a possible solution. St. Cyprian's instructions were used as teachings for ordering the community that was in chaos because of the numerous challenges that engulfed the Christian community in that time. Thus ongoing formation was done in their communities using the approach of St. Cyprian.

From the approach of St. Cyprian, the clergy in Archdiocese of Lilongwe has also to learn to take a consultative approach in dealing with pastoral challenges and making pastoral plan that affect the SCCs. The lack of consultation of the laity in pastoral planning in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe can be addressed by ongoing

¹⁰² Roy Joseph Deferrari (Ed.), "St. Cyprian letters 1-81", in *The Fathers of the Church: A new translation Vol.51*, (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), p. 8

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

formation of both the laity and the clergy on how to create reverential dialogue and spirit of consultation in pastoral planning.

3.2.3 St. Ceasarius of Arles (b. 470 A.D)

He was a bishop, very gifted in administration, preaching and writing sermons. He was very popular in preaching and offering practical solutions to Christian life. He lived in a time when persecutions were over and it was relatively a time of peace, the Church enjoyed freedom as a religion of the state. However, because of this too much freedom, priests were occupied with administration of their parishes and temporal affairs, thus neglecting their duties of preaching and spiritual guidance to their lay Christians. On the part of the laity, most of them were occupied very much with their daily occupations especially in their farms, neglecting their spiritual lives and Christian community life.¹⁰⁴

Thus, St. Ceasarius of Arles constantly reminded priests of their duty to read and preach to the laity. In one of his instructions, he compared priests with cows who eat grass and leaves to produce more milk for their calves to drink and grow. He compared the lay faithful with the calves who should always look for their mothers to suckle milk from the udder for their wellbeing. He taught that a Christian community could be kept alive and active by the constant teaching and preaching of the word of God. Ongoing formation by St. Ceasarius encouraged the laity to rush for the word of God and participate in daily recitation of the prayers.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Hermigild Dressler (Ed.), "St. Ceasarius of Arles Sermons vol. 1 -80" in *The Fathers of the Church: A new translation Vol. 31*, (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977), pp.20 - 25.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.30-31.

Moreover, St. Caesarius laboured to help Christians pay attention to spiritual activities in their communities. He preached to the lay faithful who were very busy with their ordinary occupation of farming, to also value prayer life for the good of their souls. He taught them,

I beseech you notice, brethren that there are two kinds of fields; one belonging to God, the other to men.....Yours is the land, God's is your soul. Is it right for you to cultivate your farm and leave God's deserted? If you till your farm and leave God's deserted, is this just, brethren? Does God deserve this from us that we should neglect our soul which He loved so much? For this reason, we should devote the greater part of our energy there, that is, to our soul.¹⁰⁶

This fervent teaching from St. Caesarius was very crucial in dealing with the laity who were very busy in their farm and did not bother either to take care of their souls or participate in the activities of their Christian communities. This situation is similar to the one we have observed in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, where many people are too occupied with their occupational life (work, business and farming) to the point of neglecting their spiritual lives and compromising their participation in SCCs. As such St. Caesarius teaching which helped in transforming his community is an important inspiration today to consider ongoing formation on empowering the laity in preparing and organising pastoral activities and giving them ability to balance spiritual activities with material or occupational life in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, in order to improve participation of the laity in SCC.

In this section, we have discussed the contribution of the Church fathers (St. Clement, St. Cyprian and St. Caesarius of Arles) in improving participation of the laity in Christian communities, especially through their ongoing formation. They

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp.41-42.

wrote letters, gave sermons constantly, to teach the laity. They wrote some letters also to deal with many pastoral problems that divided some Christian communities. Such letters or information was used by the clergy and other local Church leaders as material for ongoing formation of the laity in order to improve their participation in the life and mission of the Church. The Church in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe enlightened by these teachings of the Fathers of the Church has to consider ongoing formation in line to the root cause of poor participation analysed in chapter two.

3.3 Vatican Council II Documents

In Vatican Council II participation of the laity in SCCs and importance of ongoing formation are found many documents, including: *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Ad Gentes*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, among other documents.

3.3.1 Dogmatic constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*)

In this document the council fathers laboured to present the nature and mission of the Church. The Church is presented as mystery that is of divine origin.¹⁰⁷ The mysterious nature of God renders the mysterious nature of the Church. Thus, the calling and gathering of people into the Church is also purely a mysterious and loving work of God.

In trying to explain and teach the nature of the Church, the Council fathers, went into the sacred scriptures, and took the biblical images of ‘people of God’, ‘Body of Christ’ and ‘temple of the Holy Spirit.’ These images are the ones used now

¹⁰⁷ Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, AAS 57 (1965) 5-71, no. 1, 2 and 3

to explain the nature of the Church, which SCCs are a best way of expressing and implement them.

The document teaches that God constituted a people for himself by calling Abraham (Genesis 12:1-11) and making a covenant with Israel at mount Sinai (Exodus 19:5; 24:7-8). Thus God entered into a relationship with people of Israel and the whole human race, so that he can save them not as individuals but as a people.¹⁰⁸ In the New Testament, Jesus Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, reconstituted a new people which St. Peter explains as "...a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people of his own..."(1 Peter 2:9-10).¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the Church is made up of a people of God who are in a personal relationship with God and in personal relationship with each other. This is the understanding that is lacking among the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Thus, ongoing formation about this image of the Church is very necessary to help the laity understand how they are made people of God and how they should actively participate in this relationship.

The other image used by the council fathers to explain the Church is the body of Christ. The Church is the body of Christ and the members are parts of the body (1 Corinthians 12:13-14; Ephesians 4:11-13). Thus the Church as body of Christ comprises of many members. Each part of the body has its function and work in union with each other for the well being of the Church – the body of Christ.¹¹⁰ Thus members of the SCC make the body of Christ and each with the God given gifts (charisms) has to participate in the Church's activities for the good of them all.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., no. 9

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., nos.9-10.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., no 7.

Therefore, ongoing formation for the laity to improve their participation in the SCCs is necessary for the body of Christ to continue to grow and be edified.

Another image in this document is, the Church as the temple of the Holy Spirit. In this image, we are given the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the body of Christ and the people of God. The document teaches that the Holy Spirit constitutes the Church through Jesus Christ, and visibly manifested the Church to the crowd on the Pentecost and always renewing her life (Acts 2: 1-13, 37-47). The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to continue the work of Christ by proclaiming the Gospel without fear. It was the Holy Spirit that transformed the followers of Jesus Christ into a Christian community (Acts 2:42-47; 6:1-7:60). As such, the Christian community (the Church) becomes the home of the Holy Spirit. That is why the members of the Christian community receive the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit which help them to minister to each other and spread the Church to others (especially other Jews and pagans). The Church therefore is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.¹¹¹

These images considered together give a fundamental nature of the Catholic Church as a communion. The people of God are the communion of God and his people and a communion of people themselves. The body of Christ is the communion of God in Christ with his members and communion of the members themselves. The Temple of the Holy Spirit is the communion of God the Holy Spirit with people of God and communion of the people of God who have the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Church is a communion of Trinity with human beings and the communion of human beings themselves (Trinitarian love)¹¹². This is the theology of

¹¹¹ Ibid., 7.

¹¹² Dennis M.Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Visions and versions*, (New York: Orbis books, 2000), p.74

communion which gives birth to the ecclesiology of communion which its implementation has led to the building of SCCs in AMECEA region and in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, in particular.

This understanding of the nature of the Church as communion is lacking in the laity of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. As we have established in our analysis, the root cause is that the laity are not taught or instructed on this renewed understanding of the nature of the Church. That is why the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* sheds light on the root causes of lack of teaching which the Archdiocese of Lilongwe has to respond by providing ongoing formation through teaching the ecclesiology of communion.

To facilitate this ongoing formation, *Lumen Gentium* encourages and teaches that bishops, as successors of the apostles with their collaborators; the priests and deacons, have a responsibility of teaching all people at all time, so that the laity can understand this nature of the Church and take up their responsibilities in order for them to attain salvation (Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 26: 17ff).¹¹³

3.3.2 Decree on the Apostolate of the lay people (*Apostolicam actuositatem*)

In this document, the council fathers address the laity in order to intensify the apostolic activity of the people. The document in clear terms, teaches that the Church can never be without the lay apostolate because it (lay apostolate) is something that derives from the layman's very vocation as Christian.¹¹⁴ Thus this document continues to explain the foundation of the lay apostolic activities; spirituality of lay

¹¹³ Vatican Council II *Lumen Gentium*, no. 24

¹¹⁴ Vatican Council II, Decree on the apostolate of the laity *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 18 November 1965, AAS 58 (1966), 837-864, no. 1.

apostolate; objectives of lay apostolate; places for lay apostolate; different forms of apostolate; and the order that has to be observed in the lay apostolate.¹¹⁵

However, for the laity to understand their apostolic role in the Church and to participate actively through lay apostolate, the document explains the indispensability of training that is ongoing. The document teaches us that ongoing formation is:

Required not only by the continuous spiritual and doctrinal progress of the lay man himself, but also by the variety of circumstances, persons and duties to which he should adapt his activity. This education to the apostolate must rest on those foundations which the council has in other places set down and expanded.¹¹⁶

Here the document teaches us the importance of ongoing formation especially on the content of this document and what is laid down in the other documents especially the *Lumen Gentium*. Their knowledge and good understanding of these Church teachings will be very vital for their active participation in the mission of the Church, especially in SCCs in Archdiocese of Lilongwe where we have observed and realised that the lay are not actively taking part in Church's activities. Ongoing formation called upon by this document if carried out through training workshops on various apostolates, couple with the knowledge of ecclesiology of communion the laity will come to understand more and more of their responsibilities in the SCCs.

3.3.3 Decree on the Church's missionary activity (*Ad Gentes Divinitus*)

This document also teaches about the importance of active participation of the laity in the missionary activity of the Church. However, it starts by describing the fact that the Church by her very nature is missionary since she has her origin from the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., nos.3-27.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., no 28

mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, according to the plan of God the Father.¹¹⁷ To carry out this missionary activity, God relies on human beings who have been called by Jesus Christ in baptism to become his co-workers. Through various types of ministry, they witness to the Gospel message and work for the implantation and growth of the Church.¹¹⁸ Thus the document in away depicts the God who has a mission, vision and plans how this mission of salvation will be realised in the world, with the cooperation of human beings. Once again, this is a fundamental enlightenment which gives the Archdiocese of Lilongwe the importance of having a mission and vision in pastoral work. We have observed that many pastoral workers are not well guided in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe because there is no clear stipulated mission and vision. Thus, ongoing formation in pastoral planning is a necessity in the Archdiocese so that priests and the laity can together put in place pastoral activities that are relevant and all will implement and participate.

The document further urges the ministers of the Church (the hierarchy) to offer ongoing training to the laity, so that as members of the Church they should become conscious of their responsibility. The document advises that ministers “should instruct them deeply in the mystery of Christ, teaching them practical techniques; and help them in their difficulties; according to the spirit of the constitution of the Church and Decree on the lay apostolate.”¹¹⁹ Once the laity understand the mystery of Christ and have acquired practical skills, their interior life and practical apostolic life will be renewed. This renewal certainly is what is required in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe because of the negative attitude of some of laity

¹¹⁷ Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church’s missionary activity *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 7th December 1965, AAS 58 (1966), 947-990, no. 2

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 15.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, no 21

towards the activities and their participation in SCCs. As we have observed and discussed in chapter one two, the laity are preoccupied with their personal activities in farms, trade and offices, and some seeking spiritual help from Pentecostal prayer groups instead of the Catholic Church. Thus, the ministers of the Church have to win back the confidence of the laity by ongoing teaching on the riches of the catholic Church and training them to become true Apostles to the world, hence becoming ‘the light of the world’ (Matthew 5:14) and the ‘the salt of the earth’ (Matthew 5: 13).¹²⁰

That is why for the hierarchy to carry out ongoing formation to the laity according to *Ad Gentes*, Vatican Council II through Pope Paul VI gives some norms in *Ecclesiae Sanctae III*. The pope says that for *Ad Gentes* to be implemented, the lay faithful must be made aware of their missionary obligation in the Church. Thus, the bishops must see to it that the decree is brought to the notice of all the faithful through ongoing conferences and sermons.¹²¹ The norms in *Ecclesiae Sanctae III* are a great inspiration to the Archdiocese of Lilongwe in trying to remedy the situation of poor participation of the laity in SCCs.

3.3.4 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)

This document is the master piece of the Church on the Church’s self understanding in the modern world. It deals with how the Church has to see herself in relation to the modern world and how to dialogue and co-exist with the world. The famous opening words of the document, “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted in any way, are the

¹²⁰ Ibid., no. 36.

¹²¹ Vatican Council II, Norms for implementing the decree on the Church’s missionary activity *Ecclesiae Sanctae III*, 6th August 1966, AAS 58 (1966), 757-787 no.1

joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well”,¹²² are words that show that the Church aims at being in solidarity with the whole human race. With the ecclesiology of communion discussed in *Lumen Gentium*, we note that the Church in AMECEA region, through SCCs, makes the Church be present in the daily ordinary life of people. Through the laity who are present and living their Christian life in SCCs, the Church becomes present in the daily experience of humankind. At the same time, the transformation of the world into a better society by the Church depends more on the laity who are present in the world.

This, therefore, means that knowledge of the laity on nature and mission of the Church becomes very vital. Informed laity, in this regard, become an asset for the Church in fulfilment of her mission. At the same, on top of knowledge, the laity need to realise their responsibility in participating in the life and mission of the Church so that through them, the world can be transformed for the better than before. In order to achieve all this, the document concluded its presentation by calling upon the individual Christians and local Churches to learn and study the teachings in this document and then adapt them into the different situations of the World. This has to be done under the direction of the pastors so that the faithful of different nations and mentalities can become effective Christians in the Church and in the world.¹²³ As such, *Gaudium et Spes* recommends seriously the ongoing formation of the laity in the Church so that they can understand their role and participation actively in the Christian community in fulfilment of the mission of the Church in the modern world. The Archdiocese of Lilongwe has to adopt the suggestions of ongoing formation

¹²² Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et Spes*, 7th December 1965, AAS 58 (1966), 1025-1120, no. 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, no.91.

made by *Gaudium et Spes* so that the situation of poor participation of the laity in SCCs can be improved.

3.3.5 Decree on the ministry and life of priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*)

Although this document is on the life and ministry of priests, it gives some teachings concerning the laity and their participation in the Christian communities. The document teaches that priests in their teaching role have to empower the laity in various aspects of life so that the laity can effectively fulfil their responsibility. Priests are advised not only to concentrate on ceremonies or rituals, but rather to direct their energies towards educating the laity towards Christian maturity.¹²⁴ Such an advice comes with the view of forming the laity to participate actively and maturely in the life and mission of the Church. A priest cannot alone carry out or fulfil the mission of the Church, he needs the support of the laity.

That is why in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe where we have noted that the laity not being so enthusiastic about activities of SCC due to the poor performance of some of the pastoral activities, the clergy have to adhere to the teachings and inspiration of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* as regards ongoing formation of the laity. Once the laity are continuously well formed, they will be able to diligently carry out pastoral activities and thereby fulfilling the mission of the Church. The laity's missionary responsibility and participation in pastoral activities should not even come as an alternative or option due to shortage of priests, but rather due to the obligation each baptised Christian receives by following Christ.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Vatican Council II, Decree on the life and ministry of priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7th December 1965, AAS 58, (1966), 991-1024, no. 6

¹²⁵ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* no. 33.

Moreover, as *Presbyterorum Ordinis* teaches, a priest cannot alone solve all pastoral challenges in the world or in his parish. Thus, the laity must be trained so that they can determine solutions to their problems and determine the will of God in the crises of life, whether great or small.¹²⁶ We have seen that the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe are not given chance to give their views on what they see happening in the Church and in the world or to propose what they would want to be done for their spiritual nourishment and well being as Christians, because the pastoral workers do not consult them when parish team is making a pastoral plans. As such ongoing formation of the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe is greatly needed so that the laity can be empowered in pastoral –social analysis, theological reflection and pastoral planning in order to deal with the emerging pastoral challenges.

In this section, we have discussed five documents of the Vatican Council II which are very explicit about the importance of ongoing formation of the laity in achieving their active participation in Christian communities for the fulfilment of the mission of Christ. *Lumen Gentium*, gives us the images of the Church (Church as people of God, body of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit) which lead to theology of communion and an ecclesiology of communion. This document encourages ongoing formation on the ecclesiology of communion, which in our case is lacking the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Similarly, the other documents, like *Apostolicam actuositatem* encourages ongoing formation on the apostolic activities to done by the laity in the Church; *Ad Gentes* encouraged ongoing formation on pastoral planning and the duties and responsibilities of the laity in the mission of the Church; *Gaudium et Spes* encourages ongoing formation of the empowerment of the laity to prepare and carry out pastoral activities in the Church; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, advocate for the

¹²⁶ Vatican Council II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 6

ongoing formation of the laity so as to empower them to solve challenges in the Church and in the world. Thus, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe has to make a serious choice of taking heed to the message of the Vatican Council II, so that the situation of participation of the laity in SCCs can improve for the better.

3.4 Papal teachings

3.4.1 Vocation and mission of the lay faithful (*Christifideles Laici*)

In this apostolic exhortation, Pope John Paul II with the synod fathers, looked at the vocation of the laity, twenty years after the Vatican Council II. In the document the Pope reminds the whole Church that God still calls men and women to go to the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-4). He emphasises that this call is not only to the clergy and religious, but to the lay people as well.¹²⁷ In writing this apostolic exhortation, the pope aimed at encouraging the laity to hearken “to the call of Christ the Lord to work in his vineyard, to take an active, conscientious and responsible part in the mission of the Church in the great moment in history, made dramatic especially by occurring on the threshold of the third millennium.”¹²⁸

The pope also describes many different ways the laity can participate in the life and mission of the Church. He indicates that a parish is a place where the laity can participate in the life and mission of the Church. On this point he recommends that SCCs are the best place the laity can participate actively, communicating the word of God and expressing it in service and love to one another. Such an approach at SCC

¹²⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30th December 1988, AAS 81 (1989), 393-521, no. 2

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, no 3

level, however, the pope says, requires a renewal so that there can be proper cooperation and assurance of effectiveness of the laity's works and activities.¹²⁹

For the pope, this renewal can be achieved through ongoing formation. The pope therefore calls upon the hierarchy to offer ongoing formation for the laity. This ongoing formation, should not just be intellectual (for the knowledge of the nature and mission of the Church and its structures), but should be also on the spiritual life of the laity, for growth and maturity in faith.¹³⁰ That is why the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, where, we have seen the spiritual life of the people is at stake because the laity are not enthusiastic to participate in the SCC activities, has to consider this ongoing formation for spiritual renewal as proposed by the pope. The laity in Lilongwe find spiritual activities not appealing to their spiritual quest, hence, they frequently Pentecostal prayer groups. So, ongoing formation on pastoral planning and empowerment of the laity on preparing and organising relevant pastoral activities can help improve the spiritual life of the laity and consequently change the situation of poor participation.

3.4.2 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*

In this post-synodal exhortation, Pope John Paul II talks about the situation of the Church in Africa and its evangelisation mission towards the year 2000. The pope then clearly states that the Special Assembly for Africa affirmed that the goal of evangelisation is to build up the Church as the Family of God and that the African Christian families will become the true "domestic churches" which will contribute to

¹²⁹ Ibid., 26

¹³⁰ Ibid., 57

the transformation of the African societies through the Gospel.¹³¹ With a good African background of community life, Church as a family model becomes very relevant to the African Church especially at the SCC level. In the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, this model is specifically very relevant because as we saw, in chapter one, the Chewa society and villages are built on families. Moreover, the Chewa community values are also the family values that build and characterize the Chewa people: unity, obedience, and collaboration. Therefore, the Chewa values must be used in explaining the SCCs as Church family mode when teaching the laity.

The document also emphasises on the importance of inculturation in the African Church. Inculturation has been described on one hand as “the ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and, on the other, the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.”¹³² Therefore, both the issues of Church as family and inculturation proposed by the pope have to be seriously considered in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. In actual fact, understanding the definitions of inculturation given, the Church in Lilongwe has to implement the Church as Family model using the inculturation approach. This, as we have seen in chapter one and two, started already when SCC were being introduced in 1970s. But it lost steam later. That is why inculturation has to be one of the major themes for the laity.

However, in order to implement pastoral recommendations made in *Ecclesia in Africa*, especially inculturation of Church as family model to achieve evangelisation, the document calls upon the hierarchy to organise ongoing formation of

¹³¹ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, 14th September 1995, AAS 88 (1996), 5-82 no. 85

¹³² *Ibid.*, 59

bishops, priests, men and women religious and the laity. Such ongoing formation is needed in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe so that the laity can be helped to integrate the Chewa community and families values with the Christian values in living and participating in SCCs. These efforts once made, will help the laity in Lilongwe to appreciate the Chewa culture and be at home in the Catholic Church, so that they should not be tempted to go back to the cultural traditional practices as we have noted in chapter one and two.

3.4.3 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*

This is the post-synodal apostolic exhortation by Pope Benedict XVI on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace. This document outlines the areas the Church in Africa needs to commit herself.

In this document, the pope acknowledges the importance and role of the laity in the Church. He says, “Through her lay members, the Church is present and active in the world.”¹³³ The documents adds that to enable the laity play their role and participate actively in the Church, and for them to properly take up their responsibilities, it is fitting that centres for biblical, spiritual, liturgical and pastoral formation be organised in the dioceses.¹³⁴ From these words, we clearly see that *Africae Munus* calls for ongoing formation of the laity so that they can be equipped with solid knowledge of the political, economic and social doctrine which can provide them with the principles of acting in conformity to the Gospel.

Therefore, *Africa Munus* calls for Archdiocese of Lilongwe to offer ongoing formation of the laity on social doctrine of the Church so that the laity come through

¹³³ Benedict XVI, Post –Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2011), no. 128.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, no 128

the doctrines find answers to different social-economic and political challenges they are in. This will be a need because we have noted in our observation and analysis that the laity fail to patronise SCCs sometimes because they prefer going to attend political rallies which they believe can offer them answers to the many social-economic and political questions they raise in different situations. So, ongoing formation on social doctrine of the Church will also help the laity to understand and work for justice and liberation of human beings from various oppressive situations. In this way SCCs in Lilongwe will become more relevant than before and participation of the laity at SCC may improve.

Thus, the papal documents: *Christifideles Laici* calls for ongoing formation on pastoral planning and empowerment of the laity on preparing and organising relevant pastoral activities in order to renew spiritual life of the laity; *Ecclesia in Africa* encourages the Church in Lilongwe to adopt ongoing formation for the inculturation of the Church among the Chewa people and implementing the Church of family of God; *Africa Munus* calls for ongoing formation of the laity on social doctrine of the Church for them to have faith that does justice and find solutions from the Church on social economic and political questions.

3.5 AMECEA Pastoral resolutions on SCCs and participation of the laity

The AMECEA bishops in 1973 in Nairobi, Kenya, in their efforts to discover the will of God for the Church in this region for the coming years (1980s), they made a pastoral resolution to build SCCs as a way of implementing the theology of the local Church and communion ecclesiology of the Vatican Council II. They said that SCCs would be the local incarnation of the same universal Catholic Church. The main aim

of the plan was to make the local Church: self ministering, self propagating and self supporting.¹³⁵

With this resolution and plan, the bishops intended the laity to be fully responsible in the life and mission of the Church. As members of the body of Christ, the laity were to play their respective role in different ministries of the Church.¹³⁶ Therefore the establishment of SCCs were the best way to encourage and foster participation of the laity in the mission of the Church.

In order to implement this plan and attain their objectives, the bishops recommended intense trainings for the Church personnel: the bishops, priests, religious, catechists and the laity. The formation was to be done at different levels of the Church and that the formation should be ongoing, especially concentrating on the Christian families, so that parents or married couples, and children grow in the spirit of responsibility.¹³⁷

Furthermore, in 1976, AMECEA bishops met again in Nairobi, Kenya, for the follow up of the 1973 assembly and they met under the theme: “Building Christian communities in Eastern Africa.” At the conclusion, the bishops decided to make the systematic formation of SCCs “a key pastoral priority in the years to come within Eastern Africa.”¹³⁸ The bishops also agreed that each diocese henceforth should make a clear statement on the pastoral priority of building SCCs and each diocese was to work out a plan for implementation of this policy in particular situations.

¹³⁵ AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), “Planning for the Church in East Africa in the 1980s,” in *AFER Vol. 16 ,no.1&2*, (1974), pp.8-10

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹³⁸ AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), “Conclusions” in *AFER Vol. 18, No. 1&2 (1976)*, p 250.

However, the bishops also were quick to point out that, in the task of building SCC, the first thing should be creating awareness among the people of God about the renewed vision of the Church. In order to achieve this, the bishop said that the task of education the people of God is a long time (ongoing) task to be shared by every single member of the local community.¹³⁹

For the bishops, ongoing formation was needed for implementation of SCCs pastoral policy. That is why the bishops encouraged that each diocese should establish a training centre for catechetical and leadership training programmes.¹⁴⁰ Such centres would be very vital in the ongoing formation of the laity in dioceses. So, the issue of ongoing formation to improve active participation of the laity in SCCs was proposed by the 1976 bishops' statement.

In 1979, AMECEA bishops had another study Assembly in Zomba, Malawi, with the aim of studying the pastoral policy of SCCs and then be able to clarify, deepen and confirm their conviction of building SCC in Eastern Africa. In their sharing and reflections, they discovered that much had been achieved in their countries and dioceses since 1976. However, in their conclusion and statement of communication, they were very honest to say that the key factor for the future and success of SCCs would be ongoing training at all levels especially the laity who exercise non ordained ministries and services.¹⁴¹ As such, ongoing formation was really a priority for the bishops in the process building the SCCs in AMECEA region.

Again in 1992 in Lusaka Zambia, the AMECEA bishops had another study assembly with the theme: "Evangelisation with central issues of: inculturation, SCCs

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 250.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.254

¹⁴¹ AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), "Conclusions of the study conference of the AMECEA plenary 1979", in *AFER Vol. 21 No.5* (October 1979), p. 270

and priestly, religious and Christian formation.” The bishops in the assembly thanked God for the successes that SCCs had brought in the Church, especially in sharing the word of God and maturing in faith. They appreciated the laity’s participation in the SCCs. They, therefore, renewed their commitment originally made in 1973 and 1976 to make building of SCC a major pastoral priority.¹⁴² However, the bishops admitted that there was still a long way to go for SCCs to be what bishops wanted. Thus, they reiterated the need for well trained priests, religious and the laity. They emphasised the need for ongoing formation with the aim of empowering the laity.

In 2011 at the celebration of the golden jubilee of AMECEA, the bishops held a 17th plenary assembly at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi, and the theme was: “AMECEA celebrating golden jubilee of evangelisation in solidarity.” In their message the bishops expressed gratitude to God for the graces bestowed on AMECEA in the last fifty (50) years.¹⁴³ Among other resolutions, the bishops agreed on the need to accompany the laity in ongoing faith formation, particularly the catholic professionals. The bishops would like the laity to mature in their faith, so that in their daily life, especially in their professional life, more importantly when they ascend to important administrative, civic and political offices, they should demonstrate their faith.¹⁴⁴ The bishops want the laity to carry their faith wherever they are, so that they should become relevant and transformative leaders of society.

Another resolution of the bishops in this recent assembly is that pastoral option of SCCs in AMECEA region should be evaluated and revitalised.¹⁴⁵ The

¹⁴² AMECEA Documentation Service, 19/92 No. 374, Nairobi, 15th September 1992, p.3

¹⁴³ AMECEA Celebrating Golden Jubilee of Evangelisation in Solidarity, *Proceedings of the 17th plenary assembly at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (27th June – 6th July 2011)*, (Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 2011), pp.380-381.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 374-375

evaluation and revitalisation of SCCs is a resolution which on its own calls for ongoing formation. For SCC to be active and to be full of life, the laity have to be constantly informed, formed and transformed by the Church's teachings and word of God.

Therefore, in this section we can see that ongoing formation of the laity at various levels and with various themes is highly recommended by the AMECEA documents, especially pastoral resolutions. Having observed and analysed the poor participation in SCCs caused by inadequate knowledge of ecclesiology of communion and size of SCCs, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe has to make a special attention to target families or parents for the ongoing formation on Church teaching of ecclesiology of communion. This would help the families to understand the pastoral necessity of SCCs in the parish. It would also facilitate easy creation of good sized-SCCs that will achieve the goal of creating interpersonal relationship and living a true African ecclesial communion.

Furthermore, with lack of relevant pastoral activities and poor implementation of these pastoral activities, as the AMECEA resolution advices, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe has to conduct ongoing formation to the laity by teaching them about lay apostolate so that they grow in a deeper understanding of their responsibilities and be able to carry out activities in SCCs with their full potential. Most of the laity confidently prepare and lead in SCCs pastoral activities because they are not well empowered. That is why this ongoing formation will empower the laity to confidently conduct and lead SCC pastoral activities, so much so that their ability in carrying out pastoral activities will indeed make the local Church be self ministering, self supporting and self propagating. Thus, teachings from AMECEA are enough

reminders to the Archdiocese of Lilongwe at this time when poor participation of the laity is a challenge: a challenge which is a sign of the time that ongoing formation is needed now in the Archdiocese.

3.6 Archdiocese of Lilongwe mini-synod resolutions (Pastoral Guidelines).

3.6.1. Pastoral guidelines for Diocese of Lilongwe mini-synod of 1973-1975

The Archdiocese of Lilongwe came up with pastoral guidelines in 1976 after holding its first mini-synod which took place between 24th November 1973 and 24th August 1975. The mini-synod was held to plan for the Church and to implement the AMECEA pastoral priority of building SCCs in response to AMECEA pastoral plan of 1973 (planning for the Church in 1980s).

The 1976 pastoral guidelines give some Church teachings about the participation of the laity in SCCs and about ongoing formation of the laity to improve participation of the laity in SCCs. On participation of the laity it spells out the obligation of every Christian to participate in the SCCs so that Christians should know each other, love each other and collaborate in true unity of the family of God.¹⁴⁶

To improve participation of the laity and indeed fulfil the mission of SCC as a Church, the pastoral guidelines read: “Christians will meet regularly so that they may know one another, share ideas fraternally, pray together and live out together their joys and sorrows.”¹⁴⁷ The meetings and activities of SCCs are for various aims and purposes in line with the mission of the Church. That is why in order to guide the laity on how best they can live their life in SCCs and how they can participate as Church to

¹⁴⁶ Diocesan Pastoral Secretary, *Pastoral Guidelines: Lilongwe Diocese mini-synod 24th November 1973 – 24 August 1975*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 1976), no. 9.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 10b.

fulfil the mission of Christ, the guidelines spell out activities: liturgy; sacraments; deepening and confirming the Christian life; participating in the development of the country; responsibilities towards: migrant workers, people working in estates, those involved in gambling, drugs and excessive beer drinking, care of the youth, sending children to school, care of lapsed Christians and Christians of other denominations.¹⁴⁸ All these activities and responsibilities were aimed at making the laity participate actively in the SCCs and fulfil the mission of the Church.

Therefore, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, with these pastoral guidelines, it has everything it takes for the revitalisation of the laity's participation in SCCs. Having observed and noted that many of the laity shun SCCs because the activities are not relevant to their daily human and spiritual needs, we note that the pastoral guidelines of 1973-1975 offers a variety of pastoral activities that can address the laity's spiritual needs and can also enhance discussion of the current human and ecclesial challenges. Thus, ongoing formation proposed by these pastoral guidelines on implementation of relevant pastoral activities, must be highly considered in the Church of Lilongwe if the situation of poor participation is to be changed.

3.6.2. Pastoral guidelines for Diocese of Lilongwe mini-synod of 2004-2006

In these pastoral guidelines which were produced in 2006 after a mini-synod of 2004-2006, there are also some teachings about laity's participation in SCCs and on ongoing formation of the laity in order to improve participation of the laity. This document teaches that in all SCCs in the Archdiocese, Christians should not live in isolation and should not be satisfied with fulfilling Sunday services obligation, but rather they should participate in SCC activities. It states that Christians should be

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., nos. 11-23

constantly helped to understand that activities of SCCs should take priority to the activities of associations or movements.¹⁴⁹ Thus, when associations and movements are planning their activities, they should respect the program of events of the SCCs. This should be so because all Christians who belong to associations and movements first belong to SCCs before they become members of associations and movements.

Thus, in 2004-2006 mini-synod pastoral guidelines ongoing formation is being encouraged to keep the laity well informed about their participation priority when it comes to SCC activities. The Archdiocese of Lilongwe, with the root causes of poor participation analysed in chapter two, ongoing formation has to take seriously so that the laity are always reminded of the renewed nature of the Church (Church as communion) and their responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ, who have to contribute for the good of that body. Such ongoing formation will go a long way in sustaining active participation of the laity in SCCs.

3.7. Other selected theologians

3.7.1 Nicholas Segeja

He has written about SCCs. In one of his works: “An ecclesiology of reverential dialogue in the family (*Shikome*), he exposes the significance of reverential dialogue in the family and Church. He says reverential dialogue among other things, brings into being, fosters and sustains human relationships in the family and beyond.¹⁵⁰ Thus for him in order to build an ecclesiology of reverential dialogue where people will be formed into a truly collaborative and responsible members of the

¹⁴⁹ Synod Steering Committee, *Diocese of Lilongwe mini-synod 2004-2006: Let us march together in spreading the Good News of our Lord*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 2006), pp. 9-11.

¹⁵⁰ Nicholas Segeja, *An Ecclesiology of reverential dialogue in the family (shikome)*, (Nairobi: CUEA press, 1998), p.3.

Church, there is need to promote within parishes and SCCs common awareness of the realisation of divine reverential dialogue. This can be brought into being by continuously cultivating of a pastoral direction through conscientization of the people by giving them information.¹⁵¹

Here, we see the author indicating the importance of continuous conscientization which is ongoing formation for the sake of proper pastoral direction. With the challenge of inadequate knowledge of the laity on ecclesiology of communion in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, there is need to consider seriously the point of continuous conscientization of the people of God, so that active participation can be achieved for a proper pastoral direction of the Archdiocese.

In another work “Small Christian Communities in the Archdiocese of Mwanza: Analysis and evaluation,” Segeja discusses some successes and failures of SCCs in Mwanza Archdiocese in Tanzania. One of the reasons for failures he says is the limited knowledge on SCCs among the people of God. Thus, as a solution he proposed that vision of the ecclesiology of communion to be implemented in Mwanza, and this should be done teaching people of the this vision so that people can change their mentality from the institutional Church to Church as communion. For him this process of changing mentality has to involve, the bishop, the clergy and the laity.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Nicholaus Segeja, *An ecclesiology of “Church as family” in the Context of the Basukuma: A pastoral theological study in the Archdiocese of Mwanza, Tanzania*, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Nairobi, CUEA 1997) p. 196-197.

¹⁵² Nicholaus Segeja, *Small Christian communities in Mwanza Archdiocese: Analysis and evaluation*, pp.103-106.

Once again the author here gives light to the Archdiocese of Lilongwe the importance of ongoing teaching to people of God in order to change the mentality of the old (institutional) Church to the new ecclesiology of communion.

3.7.2 Joseph Healey

He is another theologian who has written a lot about SCCs. In his online book in collaborative global website, Healey underscores the importance of formation that is ongoing in order for SCCs to be communities that live by the Word of God. To drive the point home, he recounts the experience in Kenya at the Catholic chaplaincy centre in Kenyatta University where, catholic students undergo monthly formation on evangelisation so that they become evangelisers by going to different SCCs within Nairobi for animation of SCC members on sharing of Word of God.¹⁵³ With such kind of ongoing formation, the SCCs members become transformed as they reflect on the Word of God in an appropriate manner, especially in reflecting it in line to their daily life experience. Thus members of SCC become more inclined to participate in SCCs activities as they find the activities very nourishing spiritually and challenging them to become evangelisers.

In the same book, he indicates further the importance of ongoing formation as he presents the future challenges and priorities for SCCs in AMECEA region. He does this by pointing out the need for the promotion of the pastoral circle method so that it can be used in Bible sharing among the laity in SCCs for them be able to theologize at the local level. He quotes Patrick Kalilombe who proposed the doing theology at the grass root.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ [www.small christian communities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

¹⁵⁴ [www.small christian communities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

This kind of ongoing formation is what is needed in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe where we have observed that participation of the laity is poor because pastoral activities, like Bible sharing are not well done, so much so that people are discontented and resort in attending Pentecostal prayer groups. Moreover, the use of pastoral circle (but in an elaborative and systematic manner)¹⁵⁵ needs to be considered in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have noted how God in the Old Testament and New Testament applied ongoing formation in teaching and changing the attitude of His people, enlightening them about life communion and consultative planning which originated from the Holy Trinity. The Church Fathers (St. Clement of Rome, St. Cyprian and St. Ceaserius), Vatican Council II (*Lumen Gentium, Apostolicam actuositatem, Ad Gentes, Gaudium et Spes, and Presbyterorum Ordinis*), the papal documents (*Christifideles Laici, Ecclesia in Africa, and Africa Munus*), AMECEA pastoral resolutions, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe pastoral guidelines (from two synods of 1973-1975 and 2004-2006) and the teaching of the selected theologians (Nicholaus Segeja and Joseph Healey), advocate for the ongoing formation of the

¹⁵⁵ In an elaborative and systematic manner: here we are appreciating what many SCCs in East Africa are doing in using reading the Bible especially text of the following Sunday. But without undermining this pastoral activity, we have also to realise that sharing such text without a real context or concrete situation of reference, does not help much the community to reflect holistically. This approach is against the Vatican Council new and holistic approach to theology of integrating theory and praxis. What is needed in SCCs is a reflection on human life and history in the light of the Word of God” (Cf. Rodrigo Mejia “Pastoral theology and the pastoral circle: Methodology and dynamics of the pastoral circle”, in *New strategies for a new evangelisation in Africa*, ed. Patrick Ryan, p.121). Thus, the researcher will argue and propose in chapter four of this thesis the importance of using pastoral circle in an elaborative and systematic way where by insertion is done by observing and listening to what is really happening in the community and discussing concrete challenge that are affecting the people of God. The discussion of the challenges in the insertion and social analysis moments have to be given a full day or two (one day o f the week) for an elaborative discussion. Then the other moment of theological reflection has to have its own day also, reading the Word of God and reflecting over it to get illumination of what God says about the challenges analysed. The researcher will show this in the next chapter.

laity especially in bringing awareness to the laity about the new vision of the Church, the Church as communion, and its implications: living in communion with God and fellow human beings; planning together pastoral activities; empowering the laity so that they can participate actively in various ways (lay apostolate) in the mission of the Church by carrying responsibilities especially in SCCs.

From the teachings of the Church, we learn much on the need of ongoing formation in order to change the attitude of the people so that they should become committed and improve their participation in SCCs. Ongoing formation to the people of God in Archdiocese of Lilongwe is needed on ecclesiology of communion, on pastoral planning, on skills to prepare, organise and conduct pastoral activities and on inculturation. To deal with poor participation with the root causes analysed in chapter two and theological reflection made in chapter three, the Church of Lilongwe needs to apply and plan for ongoing formation so that the laity can be empowered in knowledge and skills of conducting pastoral activities. This we hope may improve participation of the laity in SCCs.

Now, because of this illumination on how God changed the attitude of His people through ongoing and with the argument we have made for need of ongoing in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, we are in position to make proper pastoral recommendations and suggestions for action in the next chapter (Chapter four). The recommendations and suggestions are expected to improve participation of the laity in SCCs with the background of the poor participation we observed in chapter one and root causes analysed in chapter two. We have the hope that the pastoral action to be made in next chapter will lead the Archdiocese of Lilongwe not only to deeper evangelisation, but also to new evangelisation

CHAPTER FOUR

PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Introduction

In the previous chapter (three) of theological reflection, we have realised the teachings of the Church advocate for ongoing formation for attitude change of the people of God in order for them to participate in communion with Him and fellow human beings. With this enlightenment, we have argued for the need of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe to plan for the application of ongoing formation in order to empower the laity so that they can understand the new vision of the Church as a communion and be able to organise and conduct pastoral activities in the SCCs. We have argued that application of ongoing formation may certainly improve participation of the laity in SCCs. Therefore, in this chapter we are proposing directional statements which will guide pastoral action in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. We are also making several recommendations and suggestions for action in order to improve participation of the laity in SCCs of the Archdiocese.

4.1 Directional statements (Vision, values, goal and objectives)

As we have discussed in chapter two, the challenge of poor participation is due to: inadequate instructions to the laity on communion ecclesiology and importance of SCCs; clerical and hierarchical mentality of the clergy when making pastoral plans; lack of capacity among the laity in preparation, organisation and implementation of pastoral activities. Having thrown light of faith on these root causes, we can now ably make pastoral recommendations and suggestions with this vision for the Archdiocese of Lilongwe: “to be a Church-family of God that is united and responsible in achieving deeper and new evangelisation.” In order to achieve this vision, the people

of God in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe have to be guided by the following values: love, faith, hope, solidarity, justice, obedience and responsibility. These values are coming from the Chewa family values which we have discussed in chapter one. As we can understand, these values are being inculturated into the Church because they do not contradict the Christian values, rather, they are complementing to what the Church teaches.

The goal of this action plan will be “improving participation of the laity in SCCs of Archdiocese of Lilongwe through ongoing formation for deeper and new evangelisation.” In order to achieve this goal, the following will be the strategic objective: (1) to help the people of God understand the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs. (2) to enable the clergy involve and consult the laity in pastoral planning for the SCC activities. (3) to come up with and implement relevant weekly and monthly pastoral activities (4) to enable the people of God adequately prepare, organise and animate monthly relevant pastoral activities in SCCs. (5) to inculturate SCCs as family of God. From these objectives we suggest activities that are aimed at achieving the goal and vision of this plan.

In this way, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe will not only achieve deeper evangelisation but also new evangelisation. In Lilongwe Archdiocese, just as it is in the whole of African continent, the Church is called to pay much attention in achieving deeper evangelisation by deepening the faith of the faithful with a well outline plan. Pope John Paul II says this to the Church in Africa:

A serious deepening of the faith is thus urgently needed, because the rapid evolution of society has given rise to new challenges linked to the phenomena notably of family uprooting, urbanisation, unemployment, materialistic seductions of all kinds, a certain

secularization and an intellectual upheaval caused by the avalanche of insufficiently critical ideas spread by the media.¹⁵⁶

As we make the recommendations and suggestions for deeper evangelisation through ongoing formation, we at the same time planning towards new evangelisation: that is, a courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today.¹⁵⁷ Thus, we hope that our recommendations and plan for action, which will be prioritised according to the needs of the laity in SCCs, will lead to both deeper and new evangelisation in the Archdiocese.

4.2 Training workshops on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs

As regards objective (1) which is “to help the people of God understand the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs” we recommend training workshops on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs for the laity to understand the nature and mission of the Church (ecclesiology of communion) according to Vatican Council II. AMECEA bishops in the 1976 assembly recommended the task of creating awareness among the people of God, especially the laity, on the renewed vision of the Church, if SCCs are to become vibrant.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, we plan that there should be an ongoing theological formation through training workshops/sessions on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

The content of the workshops will be: The background of Vatican council; The ecclesiology of communion, which is the renewed vision of the Church in

¹⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 76

¹⁵⁷ Lineamenta for XIII Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops, *The new evangelisation for the transformation of the Christian faith*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2011), no 5.

¹⁵⁸ AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), “Conclusions” in *AFER Vol.18, No. 1&2 (1976)*, p.250

Vatican council II; The AMECEA approach to implement ecclesiology of communion and the importance of SCCs as given by AMECEA bishops; Archdiocese of Lilongwe approach to implement AMECEA pastoral priority of building SCCs; Present challenges in SCCs focus on poor participation of the laity; Drawing recommendations, way forward and action plan by the participants (guided by other recommendations to be made in this research work – consulting the laity in pastoral planning and preparation and organisation of relevant basic pastoral activities).

The target groups for these training workshops will be pastoral workers, the lay SCC leaders, and the laity: adults, youth and children. Pastoral workers (priests, religious and catechists) will be trained at the Archdiocesan level. These will in turn offer training sessions to the parish pastoral council executive members at deanery level. These will later train SCCs leaders at the parish level. The SCC leaders will be the ones to give training sessions to the laity at the grass-root level in their respective SCCs. At the grass-root, the laity, especially parents or heads of house-holds will also be responsible to teach other family/household members (children and all those under their care). As the laity themselves will be responsible in training fellow Christians at the grass root, we suggest that the pastoral workers led by the parish priest should play a supervisory role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation.

Bearing in mind that in our field research we discovered that participation of the youth and men is poor in SCC, the SCC leaders, will to make a deliberate effort to target the youth so that they can also be catechised on the Church teaching on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs. This should be done with aim of preparing ground to start SCC meetings for the youth. Furthermore, men also will be targeted deliberately for similar training sessions. For the men, we plan that special

meetings/gathering for men will be called with the purpose of sharing with them this Church teaching. We plan that a gathering of special meetings for men will initiate a move of consulting them on the ideas of starting Catholic men organisation.¹⁵⁹

Many respondents also recommended that teaching sessions on the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCC, should be also given the children in their lessons (catechetical instructions for children) locally known as *Tilitonse*. For the sake of laying a good foundation of the knowledge of SCCs, children have to be taught while young on why we have SCCs in the Catholic Church. Thus, we plan that the SCC leaders should train the *Tilitonse* teachers at SCC level and later at parish level.¹⁶⁰

This shared responsibility and involvement of everyone in offering these teaching sessions is very fundamental in order for the process to be effective, efficient and ongoing. Moreover, Pope John Paul II advises that catechesis has to be and always will be a work for the whole Church, where by every member of the Church must feel responsible. However, the Pope is quick to say that Church members have different responsibilities deriving from each one's mission and vocation.¹⁶¹ Thus, it means at every level, from the Archdiocese level to the family level, each member of the Church must carry out his/her responsibility if the laity are to come to a good understanding of the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs.

¹⁵⁹ During our field research, many respondents expressed this idea and recommended that men be helped to start their organisation or association, if their participation is to be improved in SCCs. Catechists in all deaneries expressed the same idea. Mr Denis Banda, the chairperson of St. Kizito SCC in St. Patrick's Parish, stated that in their SCC men meet every Friday evening after work, they discuss issue pertaining to SCC and their families. They also have a social communion of men only on that day, and many men have like the idea. Thus for him, though they have not officially called themselves and an association, still, the idea of Catholic men association, is long awaited in their SCC.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Mrs. Ketty Nkhoma and Matilda Chiona, on 5th July 2011.

¹⁶¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesis Tradendae*, 16th October 1979, AAS 71 (1979), 1277-1340, no. 16

The teaching sessions will be ongoing and be continually renewed after evaluations and planning again (led by the pastoral workers but done together with the communities), by broadening the concepts of the subject and by revision of its methods, suitable language and by utilisation of new means of transmitting the message.¹⁶² In this way, the laity at each period of time shall remain well informed and updated so that they can understand the nature of the Church, importance of SCCs and indeed the mission of the Church. This for sure, will improve their participation in the SCCs' activities.

By the end of these training workshops (from Archdiocese to the grass root level - for a period to be specified by participants) the laity will have understood: the background information of Vatican Council II; the ecclesiology of communion; why AMECEA adopted pastoral policy of building SCCs; why Archdiocese of Lilongwe initiated the building of SCCs; and how to improve participation of the laity in SCCs. We also expect the laity to change their attitude towards SCC meetings and its relevant pastoral activities; big SCCs to be divided to a reasonable and manageable size, the commitment of the laity towards SCC to improve and be able to balance their religious participation and occupational commitments. All these expected outcomes will lead to improved participation of the laity in SCC activities, thus, improving *koinonia* in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe

In this section, we have recommended training workshops on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs, targeting pastoral workers, parish pastoral council executive members, SCC leaders and the laity at the grass-root in SCCs. These sessions will be on going after an evaluation is conducted at different levels

¹⁶² Ibid., no 17.

guided by the action plans to be drawn at those different levels. We hope these pastoral efforts will improve a spirit of communion in the SCC of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

4.3 Capacity building workshops for the people of God in pastoral planning

The second objective of our pastoral plan is “to enable the clergy involve the laity and consult them in pastoral planning for the SCC activities.” We want the laity at the grass root level to be consulted using the existing forums for consultations in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.¹⁶³ The mission of the Church was entrusted by Jesus to the whole Church and not to the hierarchy and the clergy alone. Thus, pastoral planning entails communal participation, dialogue, common research of the will of God, sharing of different points of view, and usual rules of human interaction.¹⁶⁴ This is also in line with the laws of the Catholic Church which recommend the parish priest (the proper pastor of the parish) to be assisted in a parish by the laity using proper forums in accordance with canons 519, 528 and 529.¹⁶⁵ The issue here is that consultation for pastoral planning must be done using the existing established forums in the Church in order for the parish or SCC community to fulfil the mission of Christ.

¹⁶³ Forums of consultation in the parish in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe are SCC meetings, SCC council (comprising of leaders in SCC), Church council (leaders from SCCs meeting at outstation level), zone councils (leaders from outstation meet at zone or sub-parish) and parish pastoral council. Cf. Pastoral Secretariat of Lilongwe Diocese, *Maudindo mu Mphakati ndiponso Msonkhano wa Bungwe la Mphakati*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 1978), pp.14-28; The Archdiocese of Lilongwe, *Parish Council Constitution*, (Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 2011), nos. 2.2 -2.3, 4.3 -4.4.

¹⁶⁴ Cecil Mc Garry, Rodrigo Mejia and Valerian Shirima, *A light on our path: A pastoral contribution to the Synod of Africa*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 1993), p. 82.

¹⁶⁵ Canon 519 states that: “The parish priest is the proper pastor of parish entrusted to him. He exercises the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for the community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling with the cooperation of the other priests or deacons and with the assistance of the lay members of Christ’s faithful, in accordance with the law.” Canon 528 &1 explains the obligation of the parish priest like instruct truth of faith, catechetical formation, promoting social justice, care of catholic education and the youth, in collaboration with the Christ’s faithful. Canon 529 &2 explains that the parish priest is to recognise and promote the specific role which the lay members of Christ’s faithful have in the mission of the Church, fostering their associations which have religious purposes.

Therefore, we plan to conduct capacity building workshops on pastoral planning to the people of God.

The target groups are: pastoral workers (priests, religious and catechists), parish pastoral council executives, SCC leaders and the laity at the grass-root. The workshops shall be organised first, at the Archdiocese level, for the training of pastoral workers (priests, religious and catechists). Pastoral workers will train parish pastoral council executive members at the deanery level. Pastoral workers and the parish pastoral council executive members will in turn train SCCs leaders at parish level, who will later train the laity at the grass-root in SCCs. The training at the grass-root will be very important not only for them as members of body of Christ to plan together, but also to help each individual Christian to learn to plan for his/her life or for his/her family. We noted in chapter two that some lay people in the Archdiocese are too busy with occupational life: some busy in the farms/gardens, some busy at office, some busy in their business places in order to earn a living. Planning will help them to be able to plan for their life and balance their activities for material and spiritual progress.

The content of these workshops will include: Definition and concepts of pastoral planning; Concept of strategic thinking and planning; pastoral planning basics; the seven basic elements of a pastoral plan; the pastoral planning cycle; implementation of pastoral plan at different levels; action planning; implementation monitoring and evaluation.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ William L.Pickett, pp15 - 215

These workshops will be on going at different level guided by the evaluations to be determined and done following the action plan to be made at the end of each training workshop at different levels.

We expect that at the end of the workshops at different levels, participants (people God) will have: understood the concepts of pastoral planning and strategic thinking; the capacity to plan at their different levels; increased spirit of commitment to participate in SCC activities; with guidance from the pastoral office of the Archdiocese to be able to come up with relevant pastoral activities.

In this section we have discussed the importance of consulting the laity in pastoral planning. We have recommended training workshops for pastoral workers, the parish council executives, SCC leaders and the laity at the grass-root. Ongoing sessions on pastoral planning will be conducted in future after evaluation meetings at different levels.

4.4. Drawing and implementation of relevant pastoral activities for SCCs

With our third objective, “to come up with and implement relevant monthly pastoral activities for SCCs” we suggest that relevant pastoral activities should be drawn and the implemented in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. We are making this recommendation in this pastoral plan because in our analysis in chapter two, we have seen the pastoral activities which the people of God have suggested to be done in SCCs in Archdiocese of Lilongwe. But in drawing these activities, we have to also to be guided by Archdiocesan pastoral office on the activities that the Chief pastor (the Bishop) deems necessary in line with mission of the universal Church.

Thus, pastoral office of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, through Diocesan Council of Priests, in one of their meetings they passed a resolution that SCCs activities especially weekly meetings should include sharing word of God, sharing of Catechism, praying of the rosary and a meeting for discussion on the life of the SCC.¹⁶⁷ Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* also mentions some or similar pastoral activities as he appreciates and encourages SCCs as a force for evangelisation when he wrote that SCCs members “...come together for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with the view of common commitment.”¹⁶⁸ Therefore, with guidance from the pastoral office of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, inspired by Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* and analysing the proposals of the people of God (in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe) in table 24, we plan the implementation of the following relevant basic pastoral activities for deeper and new evangelisation: Discussion of human and ecclesial challenges; Bible reading and sharing; Reading and sharing of the Catechism of the Catholic Church or the social teachings of the Church; Holy rosary and other devotional prayers; Regular celebration of the Eucharist.

4.4.1. Discussion of human and ecclesial challenges

The SCC members and the entire Church face a number of human and ecclesial challenges. On the human level Christians are affected by: illiteracy, poverty, diseases, food insecurity, and contemporary civilisation which are signs and symptoms of deaths.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand there are also numerous ecclesial challenges some of which are being discussed in this research work. As human beings

¹⁶⁷ Pastoral Office of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, *Minutes of the Diocesan Council Priests on 30th October 2009*.

¹⁶⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1991) no. 51.

¹⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 1986) no. 57.

and believers the laity are supposed to be discussing these challenges in order to reach to a common solution, but more especially to invoke the Holy Spirit who has to come and help them.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the Catholic Church believes in her social doctrine which teaches about the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and common good.¹⁷¹ Here the Church teaches role of individuals in working together for the good of all people and that development agenda should be set by the people themselves, and not somebody outside the community.¹⁷² Therefore, through the SCC discussions, community members with the help of the Holy Spirit, will work using sacred and secular sciences to liberate themselves from such challenges and refer to above bodies those that they cannot solve on their own. In these honest discussions Christians become enlightened about the realities surrounding them and will be able to set an action oriented agenda so that they manifest a faith that does justice. In this way, they be well integrated in their Christian growth, hence they will be able to overcome social and pastoral challenges to come on their way.

For these human and ecclesial discussions to be effective and efficient in dealing with both social/human and ecclesial challenged they must be a common and practical method to be used in the whole Archdiocese. Therefore, we recommend the use a pastoral circle method.¹⁷³ This method is our option because it engages people

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., nos. 57,58 and 65.

¹⁷¹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2004), nos.164- 203.

¹⁷² Ibid., no.189. Cf. Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967), nos.15-17

¹⁷³ Pastoral Circle method also known as spiral method is a new method of theological reflection used mainly in pastoral theology proposed by Vatican Council II in the document *Gaudium et Spes*. This method, unlike other theological hermeneutical methods that use deductive approach (principles deduces from the Bible applied to human experience, and thus Bible is the starting point), pastoral circle has origin in hermeneutical circle but using inductive approach (Human experience is the starting point, and this human experience provides questions and at the same time it is shaped by the light of the Bible). This method has four moments: insertion, social analysis, theological reflection and pastoral planning for action. These four moments are applied in three steps of 'SEE' (insertion and analysis), 'JUDGE' (theological reflection) and 'ACT' (planning for action). Cf. Patrick Ryan (ed.), *New strategies for a new evangelisation in Africa*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2002), pp. 124-128; and

in the process of knowing and understanding their situation (social or ecclesial), analysing the situation and structures, theological reflection on the social and ecclesial situation and then plan an action. Thus, when members of SCC gather for human and ecclesial discussion, they will use and be guided by this method especially taking the first two moments of insertion and analysis (the “SEE” part). The “SEE” part will help them to have a comprehensive view of the challenge or situation with its root causes and key actors. Then, using the other remaining moments of the method (theological reflection and pastoral action) on another day, they will be able to reach a faith-based action. We are confident that this method will help SCC members to go deeper and wider than before in understanding and responding to different challenges, including those (which may emerge in future) leading to poor participation of the laity in SCC.

Furthermore, we are arguing and proposing adoption of this approach because this method, which has been developed in the last thirty decades, has not been fully employed in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, yet it is one of the dynamic and faith-based methodologies that may involve local communities to courageously and forcefully achieve new evangelisation. New evangelisation entails Church’s renewed efforts to meet the challenges which today’s society and cultures, in view of the significant changes taking place, are posing to the Christian faith in its proclamation and witness.¹⁷⁴

We recommend that this pastoral activity should be once a month at the beginning of the month. Each discussion session will be ably prepared by the leaders, after consulting the SCC members on the human and ecclesial challenges the

Frans Wijzen, Peter Henriot and Rodrigo Mejia, *The pastoral circle revisited: A critical quest for truth and transformation*, (Nairobi: Pauline publication, 2006), pp. 37-48, 148-158.

¹⁷⁴ Lineamenta for XIII Ordinary General Assembly of Synod of Bishops, *The New evangelisation for the transmission of the Christian faith*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2011), no. 5.

community is concerned with. Thus, depending on the nature of the challenge (after preliminary scrutiny by the leaders on the suggested challenge), the leaders of SCC will be able to decide whether to take just one or more days to discuss the challenge, following all the four moments of the pastoral circle method. Another alternative will be taking a moment for two weeks (two days in two weeks). Thus, the discussion can take one week (one day of the week) or two or weeks depending on the nature or magnitude of the issue to be discussed. The flexibility of the number of days will be very important so as to give chance to leaders to handle each challenge uniquely. As we will discuss later, we will discover that other pastoral activities proposed by the people of God in the Archdiocese (as in table 24) will be conducted as moments of the pastoral circle, that is, conducting and implementing some pastoral activities as moments of pastoral circle (using pastoral method).

In order to effectively and efficiently implement this basic pastoral activity of human and ecclesial discussion using the pastoral theology method of spiral, we plan to conduct training sessions on the methodology of pastoral theology. The aim is to make people of God know and understand the pastoral circle method and how it can be used in SCC different pastoral activities. The target group will be pastoral workers (priests, religious and catechists in the archdiocese), parish pastoral council executive members, SCC leaders and the laity at the grass root. Pastoral workers will be trained at diocesan level. Training sessions of parish pastoral council executives will be done at deanery level. Training of SCC leaders will be done at parish level. Training of all members of SCCs will be done at SCC level.

Content of the training will include: pastoral theology methodology and its four moments; concepts of social analysis; concepts of theological reflection and pastoral planning; application of pastoral circle in SCC basic pastoral activities.

At the end of this training, participants shall have understood what pastoral circle is; participants will have the capacity to apply the moments in the discussion of human or ecclesial challenge with an aim of making a pastoral action.

Ongoing formation on the use of pastoral circle at SCC will be done after monitoring and evaluation of the implementation at different levels at the agreed time (depending on the action plan at different levels).

4.4.2 Bible reading and sharing

Bible reading and sharing is another pastoral activity we are recommending to be done in SCC. Throughout history, the people of God have always found strength from the Word of God. Moreover, it is the Word of God that reveals the mystery of creation, of human beings' situation and mystery of the Triune God.¹⁷⁵ Today too, ecclesial community grows by hearing, celebrating, studying and living the Word of God.¹⁷⁶ As the Gospel of St. John teaches, the Word of God is life (John 6:63). For our Christians to grow in faith and deepen understanding of the Holy Trinity and become transformed into the likeness of Christ, they need the Word of God. The Word of God has the power to bring about the true conversion, true faith and transformation. This is what evangelisation is all about: bring Gospel message into people's life, and "into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new."¹⁷⁷

As we have observed and analysed in chapter two, the laity are keen to read and share Word of God, but in some SCCs Bible sharing is not done, and in other SCCs it is done but the manner Bible sharing is conducted, does not help the people to

¹⁷⁵ John Paul II *Domunim et Vivificantem*, nos. 3 -10.

¹⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2010) no.3

¹⁷⁷ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8 December 1975, AAS 58, (1976) 5-76, no.18

reflect, share, internalise and appropriate it on the personal level. Worse still, in SCC Bible sharing is done it does not holistically affect the lives of the laity because the sharing and reflection is done without a concrete context of life experience of the people. For instance, in East Africa (AMECEA region) many SCCs read texts of the following Sunday, and they reflect without reference to a concrete life situation. In the end instead of using induction method of theological reflection, they use deductive method, starting from the Bible.

That is why, in order to make SCCs communities do theology at the grass roots, they have to use the pastoral circle, so that their theological reflection should be concrete, relevant and comprehensive. So, the laity in SCCs should be give enough time to reflect on the Word of God on a special day, after they have observed and analysed a challenging situation in the community. It is because of this that we recommend Bible reading and sharing in SCCs of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe as a moment of pastoral circle, and it should be conducted once a month or a week after discussion of human and ecclesial challenges, and to emphasis reading the Bible every day and the texts of the following Sunday in their families.¹⁷⁸ It should be once a month to give chance for other basic pastoral activities which are being proposed in this research work as part of the moments of pastoral circle (theological reflection). This will mean that Bible sharing will not be done in isolation but in relation to the analysis of the human and ecclesial situation or challenges (as discussed above in 4.3.1).

¹⁷⁸ We recommend once a month (one day of the week) in SCC. This practice of once a month can be changed in future for weekly Bible sharing upon consulting the people of God with the particular needs of a particular time. However, the daily reading and sharing of the Bible and reading of the following Sunday texts should also be done in the family, so as to empower and improve the active family participation in SCC sharing.

In the Bible sharing and reflection we recommend to start with two methods: the first method of doing Bible reading should be “Lumko seven steps method”¹⁷⁹ for a period of time. This is will be done for a year or so, just to give people a first level and initiation into serious reflection on the Word of God. The second method, which will be done building on the first one will be the *lectio divina* as proposed by Pope Benedict XVI in *Verbum Domini*. *Lectio divina* will help Christians to constantly listen to God, they will be able to encounter God; God will be able to speak to them, and they will be able understand the things of God.¹⁸⁰ Such an experience with God in the Word of God, if done for a number of years, surely the laity can receive self revelation of God, become transformed and then transform the world. Moreover, if done in the context of pastoral circle on the second step of “JUDGE” or theological reflection, the chosen passages in line to the challenges being analysed (as in 4.3.1), *lectio divina* will become a step *par excellence* in assisting the laity to receive illumination from the Trinity on the challenges being analysed and solution being sought.

In our theological reflection in chapter three, we saw how the Apostles in the New Testament were empowered by Jesus and then the Apostles empowered the early Christians in their communities to be able to share Word of God among themselves. Therefore, for effective and efficient implementation of the pastoral activity of Bible sharing, we plan Bible study and reading training sessions in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. The aim will be to empower the people of God to use the Bible in their life especially for theological reflection in order to come up with solutions to different challenges. Target groups will be the pastoral workers (priests, religious and

¹⁷⁹ F. Lobinger, *Building Small Christian Communities: Training for Community Ministry*, (Nairobi: Pauline publications, 1992), pp.25-27. In this method, there are seven steps taking in reading, reflecting and drawing an action from the Word of God.

¹⁸⁰ Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no 86

catechists), parish pastoral council executive members, SCC leaders and the laity at the grass root. The training will be done at Archdiocesan deanery for pastoral workers. The pastoral workers will train parish pastoral council executive members at deanery level. Pastoral workers and parish pastoral council executive members will train SCC leaders at parish level. SCC leaders will train the SCC members at SCC level.

The content of the sessions will be: Introduction to Bible (origin, books and themes); attitudes and criteria for appropriate Bible reading and sharing; Lumko method; and *Lectio divina*. By the end of the workshops, people of God will have understood what a Bible is and know some of the books and themes; participants shall have the capacity do Bible sharing and doing reflections using both Lumko and *lectio divina* methods; participants will have the ability to organise and conduct pastoral activity of Bible reading and sharing in SCCs. Ongoing training session of Bible sharing will be organised at an agreed time at different levels after monitoring and evaluation at those different levels. This will enable the laity to have adequate knowledge of Bible sharing, thereby ensuring effective Bible sharing at SCCs and consequently improving participation of the laity.

4.4.3 Reading/sharing of the Catechism and social teachings of the Church.

Another relevant pastoral activity that we recommend in the SCCs of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe is the reading and sharing of Catechism of the Catholic Church and the social teachings of the Church. Catechesis has been highly proposed by the people of God in the Archdiocese because many of them have acknowledged of having a shallow knowledge of the doctrine of the Church. As such, community

catechesis is the best option in order to help the laity understand and internalise the Catholic teachings of faith. Pope John Paul II in *Catechesis Tradendae* teaches that,

The aim of catechesis is to develop with God's help, as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth at the level of knowledge and in the life to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by Baptism.¹⁸¹

Just because today many Catholics in SCCs of Lilongwe Archdiocese are being swayed by worldly life and the new Pentecostal movements, there is a concrete need to nourish their faith and give it an intellectual understanding so that they can have reasons to explain and defend their faith.

Moreover, some of laity do not use the gifts of the Holy Spirit (enshrined and endowed in them) because of ignorance, lack faith or undernourished faith.¹⁸² Thus, in order to strengthen their faith and improve their knowledge on the teachings of the Church on the Holy Spirit, there is need of reading and sharing of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in SCCs. Depending on 'the situation',¹⁸³ the reading of the Catechism will be substitute or complement with the social teachings of the Church, which is indeed "Our best kept secret".¹⁸⁴ This knowledge of the Catholic teachings, with the help of the grace of God, will change the life of the laity and will become new creatures: thinking, acting, judging like Christ himself.¹⁸⁵ As such, they will be

¹⁸¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesis Tradendae* (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 1997), no.20

¹⁸² In actual fact way of our Christian, who were baptized when young, after first communion and confirmation they do not learn or receive any catechesis. Thus they become adults and get married with that same knowledge they acquired when young. Many of these as have poor knowledge of the Church teaching. Their faith is really a shaky one. They are undernourished in their faith.

¹⁸³ Situation: the parish priest or SCC leaders, whom we hope will be well trained in guiding the laity in the discussions and reading of Catechism or Social teachings at the Church, will be able to help also in guiding people whether to use the Catechism or social teachings of the Church.

¹⁸⁴ Peter Henriot., et al., *Catholic social teaching: Our best kept secret*, (Washington DC: Orbis Books, 1992) p. 2

¹⁸⁵ John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 20.

able to make pastoral action that is towards transforming different human situations for the better.

We recommend that this pastoral activity should also be done once a month, preferable the third week, succeeding the week of Bible sharing. We recommend the third week so that this pastoral activity be done in relation to the other activities, especially as part of the third moment of “JUDGE” part or theological reflection in the pastoral circle. It will be enlightening further with the church teaching the analysed situation.

In order to effectively and efficiently implement pastoral in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe we plan to conduct training workshops to build capacity of the people of God in reading and sharing Church doctrine. The aim of the workshops will be to empower the people of God to have the capacity to read, share or teach the Catholic doctrine.

Target groups are: pastoral workers (priests, religious and catechists), parish pastoral council executive members, SCC leaders and the laity on the Archdiocesan level, deanery level, parish level and SCC level, respectively.

Content of the workshops will be: introduction to Church doctrines (fundamental theology), over view of different Church (and dwelling on those topics to be proposed by participants); method of instruction (participatory method); background and development of social doctrine of the Church; over view of the documents of Social doctrine by Popes (background, method, themes/main teachings); pastoral perspective of the social doctrines; application of the teachings (using pastoral circle).

At the end of the workshops, participants shall have understood background of Church doctrines; ability to explain some Church doctrines; ability to animate the

reading and sharing Catholic doctrines in SCC; ability to apply Church doctrines using pastoral circle method.

The training workshop will be ongoing after monitoring and evaluation is done at different levels.

4.4.4 Holy Rosary and other devotional prayers

Prayer of the holy rosary and other devotional prayers like Sacred heart of Jesus, Devine Mercy, and different novenas (which are referred as popular piety) are every important in the Catholic Church because they show the faith of the people in a particular Church and culture. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the various forms of popular piety are the expression of the religious sense of the Christian people. However the Catechism continue to advice that the practice of popular piety through different devotions has to be supported and sustained through pastoral discernment in order to purify and correct the religious sense which sometimes is confused and misconceived when such devotions replace the liturgical life of the Church.¹⁸⁶

In the field research, people of God expressed the pastoral need of having pastoral activity that responds the religious quest for different devotional prayers to be conducted in SCCs. These devotional prayers need to accompany proper teachings of the Church (of origin, purpose and other spiritual benefits).¹⁸⁷ On top of proposed devotions to the sacred heart of Jesus, Devine Mercy and other novenas, prayer of the holy rosary was highly recommended by the laity.

¹⁸⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1994) nos.1674- 1676

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Mrs. Grace Hiwa of St. Patrick's parish, and Mr Simango of Mchinji, Kachebere parish. These sentiments were also expressed by many catechists in the interviews and in the questionnaires distributed to respondents in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

Thus on top of introducing other devotions, we recommend holy rosary prayers as a basic pastoral activity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Prayer of the rosary to Mary is very important in bringing about peace and unity in communities. Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Marie*, teaches that rosary is prayer for peace, unity in the community and family.¹⁸⁸

This pastoral activity, just like the others discussed above, we recommend that it should be conducted once a month in the SCC, preferably the four week of the month or after the reading and sharing of the Church doctrine (theological reflection). Here it will act as the third part of “ACT” or action plan of the pastoral methodology. That means the rosary and other devotional prayers will be a spiritual action preceded by the drawing of the action plan after theological reflection. The action plan will be done before the start of the devotional prayer, that is, either at the conclusion of the day of theological reflection or on the day of the devotional prayer. This means that devotional prayers will be oriented towards solution of a challenge that will have been analysed in the first week of the month. Thus the devotional prayers will accompany a diaconal service that will be planned as an action for the community in response to the challenge analysed.

In order to effectively and efficiently implement this recommendation we plan to train workshops on the devotional prayers (with special emphasis on the rosary as the devotional activity to start with in this plan of action). The aim will be to empower people with adequate knowledge of different devotions in the Church and their importance. The target groups will once again be pastoral workers (priests, religious and catechists), parish pastoral council executive members, SCC leaders and the laity

¹⁸⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 2002) no.6.

at the grass roots and training will be done Archdiocesan, deanery, parish and SCC levels respectively.

Content of the workshops will be: Definition of devotion and popular piety; Overview of different devotions (Historical development, its celebration and significance); and dangers of uncontrolled and exaggerated devotions. The Outcome of these workshops are that the participants will have the adequate knowledge of what devotions and popular piety are and their differences with other liturgical Church celebrations; ability to explain the background and significance of various devotions; ability to animate and organise the celebration of different devotions in SCCs as a moment of pastoral action.

To ensure continuity, we plan for an ongoing training on the holy rosary and other devotional prayers, especially after monitoring and evaluation sessions at different levels by the responsible people and at a given time as stipulated in the action plan (to be drawn after the training sessions at every level). Since, this pastoral activity is also relevant to the spiritual needs of the laity and done in concrete situations of the challenges faced by them, we hope it will improve participation of the laity in SCCs.

4.4.5 Regular celebration of the Eucharist.

Celebration of the Eucharist is another pastoral activity that has been recommended by the people of God in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. The AMECEA bishops right away in 1979 at the adoption of pastoral priority of building SCCs, they clearly emphasised the importance and centrality of Eucharist in the communities. They said:

No Christian community can be built up, unless it has its basis and centre in the celebration of the most holy Eucharist. Here, therefore,

all education in the spirit of community must originate...Even if the Eucharist is rarely celebrated with other SCCs together, but the life of every SCC finds its fullest expression in the sacrament in which the risen Lord communicates himself as the bread of life and the principle of unity.¹⁸⁹

These words from the founders and promoters of the SCC pastoral priority, say it all on the significance and pastoral need of the celebration Eucharist in SCC as pastoral activity.

Though some parishes are big and priests are few, the available priests in all parishes should endeavour in celebrating mass in SCCs as often as possible. The Eucharistic celebration, as the bishops expressed, will certainly sustain the faith of the people, strengthen their communion and indeed move them towards charity in and outside their SCCs. Moreover, “In every celebration of the Eucharist, Jesus’ coming and his salvific presence is sacramentally realised.”¹⁹⁰ People of God in SCCs need the Eucharistic celebration: for in the mass and in Eucharist, the faithful meet Jesus Christ who with Father sends the Holy Spirit to members of the Church. Thus, the Eucharist enables the lay faithful encounter the Trinity and such encounter leaves human beings formed, informed and transformed, becoming Christ like: united to the Trinity, to fellow human beings and really to take any faith based action.

Furthermore, it is in the same Eucharist that the communion of the members of the Church is found and strengthened through communion with Jesus Christ.¹⁹¹ So, the Eucharistic celebration at SCC is a key pastoral activity for deeper evangelization and indeed for renewing the world and giving it hope for the future in the midst of so many threats to human and Christian life.

¹⁸⁹ AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), “Conclusions of the study conference of the AMECEA plenary 1979”, in *AFER Vol. 21 no.5* (October 1979) pp.271-272

¹⁹⁰ John Paul II, *Dominum et vivificantem*, no. 62

¹⁹¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1331

On this recommendation of the celebration of the Eucharist in SCCs, we suggest that priests should celebrate masses as often as possible in SCCs. On top of that, we suggest that each SCC should organise Eucharistic or any liturgical celebration on the feast day of their patron saint so as to be able to enhance a spirit of communion. We also suggest organisation of social communion after Eucharistic celebration or on other feast days like: Easter, Christmas, New Year's day and the day of the offering of the first harvest. All these celebrations are aimed at building the communion of the people of God in SCC and therefore improving active participation of the laity.

In order to implement well pastoral activity of Eucharistic, social communion and other celebrations, we plan to organise training workshops on Eucharistic celebration and social communion. The aim of these sessions will be to bring awareness to the participants on the importance of Eucharistic celebration, social communion and other celebrations in SCCs. Target groups will be pastoral workers (priests, religious and catechists), parish pastoral council executive members, SCC leaders and the laity at the grass root and training will be done Archdiocesan, deanery, parish and SCC levels respectively.

The content will be: significance of the Eucharist and Eucharistic celebration; worthy celebration of the Eucharist in SCC; Significance of social communion; and preparations of social communion. At the end of the sessions at different levels, we expect participants to value celebration of the Eucharist at SCC; capacity to prepare and organise a worthy celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharist and celebration of social communion; ability to animate and teach others the importance of social communion.

In order to make this pastoral activity ongoing, training workshop shall be organised after monitoring and evaluation of the implementation at different levels.

4.4.6. Proper order of the relevant pastoral activities

Having recommended and discussed various relevant pastoral activities for SCCs, and having analysed in chapter two that preparation and organisation of pastoral activities influence participation, we again propose that these pastoral activities be done every week and be spread in a month in the following order following the steps in the pastoral methodology of pastoral circle:

- a) Discussion of human and ecclesial problems should be in the first week of the month. With the pastoral circle method, this will be moment of insertion and social analysis.
- b) Bible reading and sharing (using lumko or *Lectio divina*), in the second week of the month. This will be the moment of theological reflection.
- c) Reading and sharing the catechism of the Catholic Church or social teachings of the Church in third week of the month. This will be continuation of the theological reflection, by getting illumination from the teachings of the Church.
- d) Praying of the holy rosary or other devotional prayers in the four week of the month. This will be planning for action, which after agreeing on the action, one of the action will be spiritual activity by conducting a devotional prayer on the day of the meeting and another action will be a diaconal service which the members will agree to carry out as a community on another chosen and specific day.

An evaluation of the action plan will follow at the agreed time in the future. This evaluation is crucial in keeping the pastoral circle be a continuous process. Meanwhile as the SCC members actualise the planned action, the discussion of another challenge can start in the first week (depending on the challenges that are on the hierarchy list of the leaders of SCC). Here the SCC leadership needs to be very active and resourceful because they will have to guide people well in either starting a discussion of a new topic or take another relevant pastoral activity according to the needs of the situation. Our point here is, to emphasis a methodological common approach using the logic of pastoral circle method, though we know that at the same time, fixed agenda or methodology may be compromised because the situation can dictate otherwise.¹⁹²

This order and use of the pastoral circle method being recommended here, is also aimed at having a methodological common approach in all SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. We want at all cost to avoid each parish or SCC to follow their own methodology or to conduct completely different pastoral activities. Fixed

¹⁹² We realise that sometimes the situation in the SCC can dictate the arrangement of particular pastoral activities and using another methodological approach. For instance, there may be a social or political issue within the society that may create a challenge to the community. The SCC members, understanding the necessity and effects of the challenge, they may decide to table the issue at hand for analysis in the SCC in order to find a solution in the light of the Catholic faith. In actual fact, in Malawi it happens yearly that during Lenten season, the Episcopal Conference Commission for Justice and peace produces a Lenten campaign booklet which guides people in SCC meetings for five weeks. In such instances (situations), the SCC is supposed to go for the new agenda dictated by the situation. Here, on one hand, we partially agree with and at the same time correct the proposition of James O'Halloran who argues that SCC prayer meetings should have no fixed agenda or "no cut –and –dried answer to a format" (O'Halloran James, *Small Christian communities: Vision and practicalities*, (Dublin: Columba press, 2002), p. 100). Rather the researcher in this work sees that sometimes the SCC may not have a fixed agenda or format of the prayer meetings, because certain situations may determine the agenda and format. On the other hand, as we have argued in this section, it is inconceivable to have pastoral activities at SCC without a fixed methodological format or an approach. A methodology is always important if anything effective is to be achieved. Moreover, proceeding in conducting pastoral activities without a methodology, we may not move in to an intended directions especially transformation in people's life and society may not be achieved. That is why we have proposed a monthly format of pastoral circle method to be used in the some of the SCC pastoral activities.

methodology for the whole Archdiocese en tells a common approach and common vision.

In this section we have also recommended relevant pastoral activities that should be conducted in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. The activities are: discussion of human and ecclesial challenges; Bible reading and sharing; reading and sharing of Catechism of the Catholic Church and the social teachings of the Church; devotional prayers especially the holy rosary and other agreed diaconal services to the wider community. The pastoral activities will be done monthly and they will be done one successively (one after another) following the moments of pastoral circle methodology. This common approach we hope will lead to effective actualisation of the pastoral activities and in turn improve participation of the laity in SCCs.

4.5 Capacity building in animation of relevant pastoral activities in SCCs

With the pastoral activities we have recommended and planned above in 4.3 and with the fourth objective “to enable the people of God adequately prepare, organise and animate monthly relevant pastoral activities in SCCs,” we recommend the capacity building of the SCCs leaders and the laity should be undertaken in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Good preparation and organisation of pastoral activities will not only help the smooth and meaningful actualisation of the activities but will also help the participants (the lay faithful) to worthily offer service of praise to God and also yield other intended pastoral results. Well prepared and organised pastoral activities appeal to the heart of the participants and the members become well disposed so much so that they become satisfied, and then will slowly develop a keen interest to participate as often as possible. For all this to happen, the leaders

responsible and the SCC members need to have enough capacity to conduct the pastoral activity.

Therefore, we plan for training sessions on recommended earlier on in 4.2.1. The aim of the capacity building training workshops will be to inculcate skills of animation among the people of God. Target group will pastoral workers, SCC leaders, and the laity at the grass root and they will be trained at Archdiocesan, deanery, parish and SCC levels respectively.

The content of training will be: Skills of animation (communication, instruction methods, and report writing); overview of monthly pastoral activities discusses in 4.3: human and ecclesial challenges; Bible reading and sharing; reading and sharing of Catechism of the Catholic Church or social teachings of the Church, devotional prayers and preparations Eucharistic and social communion celebrations on different occasions.

In order for such training sessions to be continuous, monitoring and evaluations will be conducted at an appropriate agreed time at different levels guided by the action plan to be drawn by the participants of the sessions. Evaluations are crucial to facilitate ongoing formation because they may reveal the gaps and new emerging challenges. This is what emeritus Bishop Patrick Kalilombe suggests:

A spirit of self criticism on how things are going on in SCCs helps the community to grow. This of course, has to start with making the SCCs members feel at home in their SCCs by allowing them to share their views on various issues, contributing to the plans of SCC and being involved in preparations and organisation of activities. If the members feel at home, they will feel free to put forward their opinions on how they think things should be done. Thus, they give leaders insights on where and how to improve things in SCC.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Interview with Emeritus Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, on 19th July 2011.

Such self criticism will enable the SCCs to align to the needs of the time and there by becoming more relevant to the people. In this way participation of the laity can improve in SCCs.

As a way of conclusion, in this section we have recommended capacity building of the SCC leaders and the laity at the grass-root on how to prepare and organise pastoral activities in SCCs. We have planned to conduct training session for pastoral workers at archdiocesan level, for parish pastoral council executives at deanery level, SCC leaders at parish level and the lay faithful at the SCC level. A spirit of self criticism at SCC level has been highly recommended. It is our hope that good preparation and organisation of pastoral activities will lead to improved participation of the laity in SCC.

4.6 Inculturation of SCCs as family of God

On fifth objective “to inculturate the SCCs,” we see the need because in our analysis we realised that many of the laity go back to traditional cultural practices in time of crises and when they do not feel at home and supported in SCCs. We observed also observed that the Chewa society has many good family values that make the Chewa people be united as a family. The main values are unity, obedience, solidarity, collaboration and responsibility. Thus, we can understand that if these values are not existent in the SCCs, then many people will not live as a family, consequently they will not participate actively in SCC and instead they will seek other groupings that will make them live as a family. That is why for the Church in Lilongwe to make the Chewa people be at home in the Church and participate actively, there is need to inculturate the SCCs.

Therefore, we recommend inculturation of the family values in order to make SCCs be a family of God. The Church already teaches us “the local Churches must be involved in the process of inculturation in an ongoing manner, respecting the two following criteria: compatibility with the Christian message and communion with the universal Church.”¹⁹⁴ We suggest firstly instruction workshops on the concept of inculturation according to the Catholic teachings. The workshop should target pastoral workers at Archdiocesan level, parish pastoral council executive members at the deanery level, SCC leaders at the parish level and SCC members at the SCC level. This is very important to involve all people of God at different levels because the pastoral activity of inculturation is very crucial: it is very urgent because it is a requirement for evangelisation but also it is a very difficult and delicate.¹⁹⁵ So, care must be taken in teaching both clergy and the laity in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe on the truths of the Catholic Church on inculturation so that all can be involved with great cautions in order to achieve deep and new evangelisation.

The secondly, we suggest follow up activity from the first one, which should be the actual inculturation of the SCCs as Church as family according to the Chewa family values. Here the Archdiocese of Lilongwe has to draw from the Chewa culture all the positive values of the family life (unity, obedience, solidarity, collaboration and responsibility), and incorporate them into the Christian life of SCCs. Through the process of dialogue and instruction with the laity as St. Paul did in Athens, the Archdiocese using the pastoral workers and lay leaders as animators, should bring and incorporate these values in the life of the SCCs. This is possible because the mentioned positive values are not against the universal Church. Application and

¹⁹⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesial in Africa*, no. 62

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, nos 59 and 62.

implementation of these values will transform the laity and we hope their participation in SCC activities will improve.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have made several recommendations and suggestions for plan of action in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe in order to improve participation of the laity in SCCs. In this pastoral plan we have suggested the following vision statement: “to be a Church-family of God that is united and responsible in achieving deeper and new evangelisation.” In order to achieve this vision, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe will be guided by the following values: love, faith, hope, solidarity, justice, obedience and responsibility.

With our analysis of the root causes of poor participation, we have suggested the goal of this pastoral plan to be “improving participation of the laity in SCCs of Archdiocese of Lilongwe through ongoing formation for deeper and new evangelisation.” In order to achieve this goal and vision stated, the following will be the strategic objectives and main activities:

Objective1: To help the people of God understand the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs.

Objective2: To enable the clergy involve and consult the laity in pastoral planning for the SCC activities.

Objective3: To come up with and implement the proposed and planned relevant monthly basic pastoral activities

Objective4: To enable the people of God adequately prepare, organise and animate monthly relevant pastoral activities in SCCs.

Objective5: To inculturate the SCCs as family of God.

In this pastoral action plan for effective on going formation of the laity at each level, an action plan will have to be drawn, indicating the goal, objectives, activities, responsible persons, time frame, resources needed, expected outcome, indicators (evidence of progress) and means of verification. As Pope John Paul II advised, the bishop and the parish priests at different levels will assume a chief responsibility for fostering, guiding and coordinating the implementation of the planned activities.¹⁹⁶

Thus, from these recommendations and suggestions, we are hopeful that deeper evangelisation in the Archdiocese will be achieved. This is so because the recommendations and suggestions are aimed at empowering the laity so that they can be evangelized and in turn evangelise others through proclamation, life witness, and inculturation.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ John Paul II, *Catechist Tradendae*, no. 16

¹⁹⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.76

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this investigation, we have endeavoured to find out how to improve participation of the laity in SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Having been puzzled by the situation of poor participation of laity in SCC, we have made every effort to discover why the laity are not actively participating in SCCs. We made three hypotheses at the beginning: (1) If the laity are well informed about the theology of communion and the importance of SCCs, participation of the laity in SCCs can improve; (2) If the laity in SCCs are involved in pastoral planning, active participation of the laity in SCCs can improve; (3) If relevant pastoral activities are well prepared and organised and done consistently or weekly in SCCs, active participation of the laity in SCCs can be achieved. Through quantitative and qualitative research methods, data was collected and analysed, and we managed to prove right the hypotheses we made. This research work also used pastoral circle method in order to scientifically investigate the pastoral challenge of improving participation of the laity in SCCs of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

Thus, on the root causes of poor participation of the laity in SCCs, we have found out that inadequate knowledge of the laity on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCC is due to lack of ongoing instruction to the laity by the pastoral agents. Pastoral workers dedicate their ministry in giving sacraments and preparing new Christians, premarital instructions and other pastoral initiative, and neglecting the teaching of the Church doctrines of the new vision of the Church according to Vatican Council II and AMECEA pastoral policy of building SCCs.

We have also discovered that the laity are not involved in pastoral planning because priests still have an old mentality of clerical and hierarchical Church (pre-

Vatican II pastoral approach) where the laity are considered to be at the receiving end, as passive members of the body of Christ. Thus, pastoral workers plan alone without the input of the laity, and consequently pastoral activities planned are irrelevant to the needs of the laity. That is why we found out that most of the pastoral activities implemented in SCCs were not well patronised because they did not address the needs of the laity. Consequently, the laity are seeking spiritual nourishment and social solidarity with Pentecostal groups or traditional cultural practices, leading to poor participation of the laity in SCCs.

We have also found out that poor preparation and organisation of the basic pastoral activities in SCCs are due to lack of training of the leaders and members of SCCs. Most of the leaders and members of SCCs have not been empowered to conduct pastoral activities like reading and teaching of Catechism, sharing the Word of God and other activities. Due to inadequate capacity to prepare well the activities, the activities are not well performed and many people are not satisfied and are not helped to grow in knowledge and faith. Consequently they seek somewhere else for their spiritual satisfaction and nourishment.

Other root causes for poor participation are: Lack of inculturation of the Chewa family values make the laity go for traditional religion and other cultural practices; big size of SCC which makes lay members fail to cover big distances or the members are very many so much so that it is impossible to know each other and fulfil the objectives of SCCs; lack of commitment or laziness, busy occupational life and lack of Christian love. All these root causes seen together indicate to us a sign that “ongoing formation” is needed. This ongoing formation is needed for the people of

God to change their attitude and adopt a spirit of communion in the Church and participate actively to fulfil their Christian responsibilities.

This sign of “ongoing formation” is what we have used in our theological reflection. We have seen in the Bible how God the Father made a consultative plan to create a human being in His image. God continuously formed his people so that they should participate in their relation with the Trinity. Creation of human beings in the image of God was the starting point of the invitation and basis of ongoing formation for mankind to change attitude from individualistic to a community living. Jesus Christ also conducted ongoing formation for the Apostles and the entire people of God so that they should live in communion and participate actively in the Christian community. We also saw St. Paul using inculturation as an approach to evangelisation of the Athenians.

We have also seen the Church Fathers (St. Clement of Rome, St. Cyprian and St. Ceasarius) who taught extensively on the need of ongoing formation in the early Church to improve participation of the laity in SCCs. Vatican Council II and some papal documents are some church documents which bring clearly the renewed vision of the Church as communion and importance of ongoing formation in order to improve participation of the laity in SCCs. The AMECEA pastoral resolutions and local magisterial teachings emphasise very much on the importance of ongoing formation of the laity in improving participation of the laity in SCCs. Selected theologians (Nicholaus Segeja and Joseph Healey) have written and taught us about the importance of ongoing awareness of the people of God of this new way of being Church. So, the teaching of the Church is very clear on the need of ongoing formation in order to change the attitude of the laity for them to adopt the new vision of the

Church and participate actively. The Archdiocese of Lilongwe has to adopt and apply in its pastoral life ongoing formation of the people of God on values themes related to root causes so that participation of the laity can be improved.

Thus, after being enlightened by the teaching of the Church and after arguing for the need of ongoing formation in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, we have made recommendations and proposal for pastoral action, with the aim of improving participation of the laity in SCCs. The vision of this pastoral action plan is: “to be a Church-family of God that is united and responsible in achieving deeper and new evangelisation.” In order to achieve this vision, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe will be guided by the following values: love, faith, hope, solidarity, justice, obedience and responsibility which have been inculturated from the Chewa traditional family values which are the same as the Christian values.

We have suggested this to be the goal of the pastoral plan “improving participation of the laity in SCCs of Archdiocese of Lilongwe through ongoing formation for deeper and new evangelisation.” In order to achieve this goal, the following are the strategic objectives: (1) to help the people of God understand the ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs. (2) to enable the clergy to involve and consult the laity in pastoral planning for the SCC activities. (3) to come up with and implement relevant weekly and monthly pastoral activities (4) to enable the people of God adequately prepare, organise and animate monthly relevant pastoral activities in SCCs. (5) to inculturate the SCCs as a family of God. From these objectives we have recommended and planned activities that are aimed at achieving the goal and vision of this plan.

So, we have planned for training workshops on ecclesiology of communion and importance of SCCs, targeting pastoral workers, lay leaders and the laity (SCC members). The outcome of these workshops will be a good understanding by the laity of the ecclesiology of communion and the local Church's pastoral policy on SCCs.

On pastoral planning we have planned to conduct capacity building workshops on pastoral planning, targeting pastoral workers, SCC leaders and the laity in SCCs. Expected outcome are that people of God should be able to plan together pastoral activities for the body of Christ. On drawing and implementation of relevant pastoral activities, we have recommended the following: Discussion of human and ecclesial challenges; Bible reading and sharing; Reading and sharing of Catechism of the Catholic Church and social teachings of the Church; Holy rosary and devotional prayers, regular celebration of the Eucharist and social communion. These will be done weekly in a monthly circle using the pastoral circle method. In line with the relevant pastoral activities, we have also planned to conduct capacity building workshops to animate the monthly relevant pastoral activities. We have targeted pastoral workers, SCC leaders and the laity in SCCs. We expect the participants to be able to animate SCC pastoral activities.

We have also planned for instruction workshops on the concept of inculturation and the actual implementation of inculturation of the Chewa family values in SCCs so as to make SCCs truly African families of God.

In order to make the pastoral activities ongoing and achieve improved participation of the laity, ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be done at an appropriate agreed time, guided by the action plans (which will include time frame and responsible persons) to be drawn at different levels where the workshops/sessions

will be taking place. The evaluation reports at each level will indicate gaps or areas that need emphasis. Thus another circle of planning will start making the formation of the laity an ongoing process.

The effective and efficient implementation of this pastoral plan however will depend very much on the pastoral will of the chief pastor of the Archdiocese (the Archbishop) and the commitment of the pastoral secretary who is the executor of the diocesan pastoral plan with the collaboration of the deans of deaneries and parish priests. Parish priests will be crucial in mobilising material resources for the workshops/sessions and other related meetings. However, the main limitation may be financial resources at the Archdiocesan level to get the printed materials like training manuals and booklets for SCC leaders and pastoral activities animation (especial social teachings of the Church and pastoral circle method manual in the local language of Chichewa). We hope such a limitation will be overcome by developing or writing teachings/training manuals and SCC meetings' guide in English and translating them into Chichewa. Thus writing proposals to donors and people of goodwill who can support such a pastoral project, will be a strategy to overcome the limitation.

As we can note and understand, this thesis is making a very special contribution in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, AMECEA and beyond, by bringing the aspect of ongoing formation of the people of God as a pastoral strategy to improve participation of the laity in SCCs. In the past, theologians and pastoral workers have been concentrating on strategies to build and establish SCCs. But now it is high time, after AMECEA has just celebrated fifty (50) years of existence and almost thirty six (36) since SCCs establishment became a priority, that ongoing formation of the laity

on ecclesiology of communion be conducted in dioceses to improve participation of the laity and achieve deeper and new evangelisation.

Moreover, the thesis is also making a unique contribution on the use of the pastoral circle method in an elaborative and systematic way in the SCC pastoral activities. For a long time, Bible reading and sharing has been the main activity but it has been done without a pastoral perspective. In this thesis, we have contributed to the pastoral praxis of AMECEA region, the comprehensive, concrete and relevant way of conducting Bible sharing, by making it a moment of the pastoral circle. Thus, with the other proposed relevant pastoral activities taken as moments of pastoral circle, we are giving the Church of Lilongwe and AMECEA region an opportunity to involve the people at the grass root level, to do contextual theology. This grass root theology is what we hope will also help to improve participation of the laity in SCC, because such an approach of theologizing will bring relevant or holistic effects in the life of the laity. New evangelisation being called for today is all about new approaches we have proposed, which will help the Church face the future challenges with courage and hence, revitalize the life of SCCs.

However, this thesis did not cover all areas concerning SCCs and praxis of the Church. Moreover, during our investigation we noted some areas that require serious academic investigation in the future. Thus, we propose the following areas for future investigation: Role of the youth in SCCs; Participation of Men in SCCs; and Inculturation in the SCCs.

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Appendix I: The questionnaire

Dear Fr/Sr/Br/Sir/Madam _____

I am Fr. Vincent Mwakhwawa, a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.

I am a student at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, studying **Pastoral Theology in the Faculty of Theology**. At present am doing research for my Masters Degree thesis. The topic of my thesis is: *Improving participation of the Laity in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Malawi*. This work is being supervised by **Rev. Dr. Nicholas Segeja** as first moderator and **Rev. Dr. Jim Kanakulya** as a second moderator.

I shall be very grateful if you would kindly help me with some information by answering this questionnaire. May you tick or circle the right answer and also write down your answers on the space provided. May the Good Lord, who is full of mercy and source of all wisdom, bless you for your support.

Identification

Questionnaire No:		Parish:	
<u>Deanery:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Gender:</u>	<u>Marital Status:</u>
(1) Maula,	(1) 8-12	(1) Male,	(1) Single,
(2) Mchinji,	(2) 13-24	(2) Female	(2) Married,
(3) Salima,	(3) 25-40	<u>OCCUPATION:</u> _____	(3) Widowed,
(4) Madisi	(4) 41-55		(4) Divorced
(5) Likuni	(5) >56		
(6) Mtimawoyera			

1. What is the name of your Small Christian Community (SCC)?

1.1 Do you know when your SCC started? (1) Yes/year _____ (2) No.

1.2 How did your SCC begin?

- (1) At the insistence of the parish priest and parish team.
- (2) By Parish Council and then animation was done by the parish team.
- (3) Through the directive of the diocese.
- (4) Through the initiative of some Christians.
- (5) I don't know.

1.3 How did you become a member?

- (1) I am not a member
- (2) I decided to join
- (3) Advised by fellow Christians
- (4) To comply with parish policy
- (5) I don't know.

2. How would you rate your understanding of the Church's teaching on SCC
(theology of Communion or ecclesiology of Communion)?

- (1) Very poor
- (2) Poor
- (3) Fair.
- (4) Good.
- (5) Very good.

2.2 Can you briefly elaborate your answer above?

3. In your parish and SCC how can you rate the following:

3.1 Team leadership at parish level:

- (1) Very poor.
- (2) Poor.
- (3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.2 Team leadership at SCC level:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.3 Proper follow up of issues at parish level:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good

3.4 Proper follow up of issues at SCC level:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.5 Coordination at the parish level:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.6 Coordination at SCC level:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.7 Animation and ongoing formation (trainings/seminars) at parish level:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.8 Animation and ongoing formation (trainings/seminars) at SCC level:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.9 Commitment of Parish Team to SCC:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.10 Commitment of lay leaders at parish level:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.11 Commitment of lay leaders at SCC:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

3.12 Commitment of the laity to lay associations and movements:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

4. How important is SCC to:

(1) You as an individual?

(2) The Christians within SCC?

(3) To the people (including non-Catholics) within the location of your
SCC?

(4) The Church in general?

-
5. How often do you meet as SCC?
- (1) Weekly.
 - (2) Every 2 weeks
 - (3) Monthly.
 - (4) When convenient.
 - (5) We do not meet.
6. When do you meet as SCC? (Mention day of the week and time).
- Day of the week _____ Time _____
7. Where do you normally meet as SCC?
- (1) At a prayer house/church.
 - (2) We rotate in different houses of members.
 - (3) Always at one and the same house of a member of SCC.
 - (4) At the house of the chairperson.
- 7.1 Do you have any specific reason(s) why you meet (there) at the mentioned place?
-
8. Give evaluation of your SCC performance on the following activities and briefly give a reason to your answer:
- 8.1 Bible sharing: (1) very poor. (2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
 - 8.2 Bible teaching: (1) very poor.(2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
 - 8.3 Teaching of Catechism: (1) very poor.(2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
 - 8.4 Prayer Life: (1) very poor.(2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.

- 8.5 Eucharistic celebration: (1) very poor.(2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.6 Other devotions (Rosary, Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy, Novenas): (1) very poor (2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.7 Inculturation (integrating faith/Church and culture): (1) very poor.(2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.8 Reconciliation, Justice and Peace issues (discussions and action on them): (1) very poor (2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.9 Dialogue within the Church (among the faithful): (1) very poor. (2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.10 Dialogue within the Church (between Faithful and Church leaders): (1) very poor. (2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.11 Dialogue with other denominations: (1) very poor. (2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.12 Dialogue with Muslims: (1) very poor.(2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.13 Dialogue with African Traditional Religion: (1) very poor. (2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.14 Integral development (spiritual and material development projects): (1) very poor. (2) poor (3) fair (4) Good (5) Very good.
- 8.15 Involvement of the laity in Social life: (1) very poor. (2) poor. (3) fair (4) good. (5) very good.
- 8.16 Involvement of the laity in Politics: (1) very poor. (2) poor. (3) fair (4) good (5) very good.

8.17 Involvement of the laity in economic development of the society: (1) very poor. (2) poor. (3) fair (4) good. (5) very good.

8.18 Involvement of the laity in cultural life of the society: (1) very poor. (2) poor. (3) fair (4) good. (5) very good.

8.19 Discussions and programmes related to HIV/AIDS pandemic: (1) very poor. (2) poor. (3) fair (4) good. (5) very good.

9. What other activities do you do at SCC (not mentioned above)? How important are these activities to you and your fellow SCC members?

10. Can you propose other important activities you wished were done at SCC. How should these activities be done? (You can also briefly explain the importance of the suggested activities).

- Proposed activities:
- The importance of the proposed activities:
- How should these activities be done?

11. Who proposed, planned and initiated the activities mentioned above in 7 and 8 (the activities you do at SCC)?

(1) The Parish Priest only.

(2) Parish Team only.

(3) The SCC Leaders only.

(4) The SCC members only.

(5) Parish Team and SCC leaders only.

(6) Parish Council – consulting SCC members and with guidance from the diocese.

(7) Diocesan Pastoral Office only.

12. What do you think is the best way of planning/coming up with the activities for SCC? (1) Parish Priest alone.

(2) Parish Team alone.

(3) SCC members alone.

(4) Parish Council-consulting SCC members without guidance from the Diocese.

(5) Parish council-consulting SCC members with guidance from the Diocese.

13. According to your knowledge and experience, why do you think many Catholics do not come at SCC meetings or do not participate at SCC meetings?

(1) The Laity do not understand the meaning and importance of SCC.

(2) The basic pastoral activities at SCC are not well planned and are not consistently done.

(3) The laity are not involved in the pastoral planning of the activities to be done at SCC.

(4) Some SCCs are too big.

(5) All the reasons (1, 2, 3 and 4) above are true.

(6) Many Christians are busy.

(7) Many Christians are lazy.

(8) None of the above.

12.1 Can you mention other additional reasons why some Christians do not participate at SCC?

As regards participation/attendance of men and women at your SCC meetings, is it true that:

(1) Men are more than women.

(2) Men are equal to women.

(3) Women are more than men.

13.1 In your view, why is this the case?

13.2 What do you propose to be done to improve or to balance the participation of men and women at SCC?

14. How can you rate the participation of the youth at your SCC:

(1) Very poor.

(2) Poor.

(3) Fair.

(4) Good.

(5) Very good.

14.1 Why is the situation (of youth) like that in your SCC?

14.2 Can you make any suggestions on how to improve the participation of the youth in your SCC?

15. In order to improve the active participation of the Laity at SCC the following should be done:

(1) Teaching the laity on the meaning and importance of SCC (The theology of Communion or ecclesiology of communion).

(2) Basic pastoral activities should be well planned and be done consistently in SCC.

(3) The laity should be involved in pastoral planning.

(4) Some SCCs should be divided.

(5) Putting strong particular laws (by laws) for those who do not attend SCC.

(6) All above – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

(7) All above except (5).

15.1 Can you suggest other ways in order to improve the active participation of laity at SCC?

16. What is your general comment about the future of SCCs?

17. If you have anything to add about SCCs, please feel free to add below or overleaf.

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix II: Interview questions for field research

TOPIC OF THESIS: *Improving participation of the laity in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge.*

Questions:

1. How important was the first mini-synod of 1973-1975 of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe?

2. What were the successes and failures in the implementation of the 1973-1975 mini-synod?

3. Evaluate the life of SCC today in line with:
 - 3.1 Growth of SCCs
 - 3.2 Role of Leaders
 - a) Priests
 - b) Lay leaders
 - 3.3 Size of SCCs
 - 3.4 Meetings and SCC activities

4. What must be done to improve SCC in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe?

Appendix III: List of Respondents

- Archbishop Remi Ste-Marie, Archdiocese of Lilongwe, 14th July 2011.
- Dr. Justine Malewezi, Chairperson of the Chewa Heritage Foundation, on 27th July 2011.
- Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, Emeritus Bishop of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, on 19th July 2011
- Fr. Audifasio Kapinga, on 2nd June 2011, Parish Priest of Maula Cathedral and one of the Senior Priests in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.
- Fr. Frank Phiri, Lecturer at St. Peters Major Seminary, 1st August 2011.
- Fr. Isaac Mpokwe, Parish Priest of Kapiri Parish, on 9th June 2011.
- Fr. James Chizuma, Parish Priest of Kachebere Parish on 7th June 2011.
- Fr. Louis Malama, Parish Priest of Nkhotakota Parish, on 4th July 2011.
- Fr. Peter Henriot, S.J. at Jesuit House in Lilongwe, 14th July 2011.
- Miss Matilda Chiwona, a trainer for *Tilitonse* Children's Catechesis, on 5th July 2011
- Mr Simon Kapatamoyo, Catechist of Chezi Parish, 16th June 2011.
- Mr. Kapanga, Mr Maukira, Mr. Yuda, Catechists of Kasungu St. Joseph Parish, on 15th June 2011.
- Mr. Million, Catechist of Salima Parish, 17th June 2011.
- Mr. Moses, Catechist of Nkhotakota St. Paul's Parish, 4th July 2011.
- Mr. Petro Kanyendera, Catechist of Mpherere Parish, on 15th June 2011
- Mr. Saulos Chilima, Member of St. Joseph SCC, St. Patrick Parish on 15th July 2011
- Mr. Seliso Kaziputa and Augustine Chikalipo, Catechist of Madisi Parish, on 14th June 2011.
- Mr. Simango, a retired Catechetical Tutor, of Kachebere Parish, on 26th July 2011.
- Mr. Vincent Zulu, a Catechist in Guilleme Parish on 9th June 2011.
- Mrs Grace Hiwa, member of St. Theresa of Child Jesus SCC, St. Patrick's Parish on 26th July 2011.
- Mrs Ketty Nkhoma, Education Secretary of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, on 5th July 2011

Appendix IV: Map of Malawi and some parishes of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe