

How Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Build the Church as a Family of God from the Grassroots Up in the Local Church (Kanisa Mahalia) in Tanzania

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First let us hear the priority of the first Christians in the *Acts of the Apostles* as we read Chapter 2:42-47 on “Life Among the Believers.”

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

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

For deeper evangelization the Tanzanian Bishops confirmed SCCs as key pastoral priority because in this age of evangelization SCCs offer a good opportunity to deepen our Christian Faith. The pastoral agents became more convinced that SCCs can help and are helping the parishes to really become a living and missionary community (*Kanisa Mahalia*). By doing this the faithful are united together (spirit of togetherness)

There are many African proverbs showing that unity and community is a key priority of SCCs in our dioceses:

- *When they work together strings of bark can tie up elephant.*
- *To put a roof on to the walls of a hut needs the joining of hands.*
- *To stay together is fraternity.*
- *Not to aid one in distress is to kill him/her in your heart.*

SCCs are the church on move around the dioceses and around the world.

1. THE PASTORAL PRIORITY OF SCCs IN THE DIOCESES (time of the *Acts of the Apostles*)

- All the believers continued together in close companionship and shared their belongings with one another.
- Sell and distribute their money among all according to each one's need.
- They met as a group in the temple; they had their meals together in their homes.
- Eating with glad and humble hearts.
- Praising God and enjoying the good will of all the people.

2. THE PASTORAL PRIORITY OF SCCs IN THE DIOCESES (now)

- To help Pastors/Parish Priests in their work of serving their parishioners.
- Simplify communication when something is needed to be done
- To help the Pastors/Parish Priests in the everyday services as to reach the parish quickly and easily: e.g. receiving sacraments, cleaning the church, singing in the choir
- To simplify the work of collecting money, offerings and other services to be done at the parish level.
- SCCs act as a right hand for Pastors/Priests for growth of the parish.

Comparing the priority of the first Christians and the priority of SCCs today we have to work for a balance. The spiritual side of the faithful should be focused and developed. The love between members and their Pastors/Priests should lead them to God. The common good of SCCs consist in the sum total of those conditions of social life which enable them to achieve a fuller measure of perfection with greater ease. Their love among themselves and with their Pastors/Priests is the priority.

“And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”

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