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Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Domestic Church in the Context of African Ecclesiology¹

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1. Introduction

A popular joke among Christians in Europe goes like this: “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are like flying saucers. Everybody is talking about them, but nobody has seen one.” In Africa, on the contrary, we have “seen” many SCCs.² We have participated in them. We have experienced them as a new model of the Catholic Church. In these SCCs priests, brothers and sisters – and even bishops -- are not the bosses. The lay people are the leaders. Since 2010 the interest in SCCs/BCCs/BECs has increased in both English-speaking and French-speaking west Africa, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. This is attested to by, for example, DRC Sister Josée Ngalula and Rwandan Bishop Antoine Kambamba of Kibungo Diocese. In DRC women are increasingly taking leadership roles in their SCCs because of their competency, without considering their gender. In Rwanda SCCs have played an important role in the reconciliation process after the genocide. But for the most part SCCs are still not a pastoral policy on the diocesan and national levels in many African countries. In many parishes the devotional groups or sodalities are preferred over the SCCs.

My research focuses on Eastern Africa. Today there are over 160,000 Small Christian Communities in the nine AMECEA³ countries. For example, Tanzania has over 60,000 and

Kenya over 45,000 SCCs. Between December, 2013 and May, 2014 I helped to facilitate four Small Christian Communities Workshops in Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia. Later I received this message from the AMECEA Office: “Let us encourage one another in this ministry of continuing to build the Church Family of God around the Small Christian Community that is a communion of families in the neighborhood.”

This describes SCCs very well. We often hear a family described as the domestic church, as in No. 11 of *Lumen Gentium*. We can extend this meaning also to describe an African SCC as the domestic church, the church in the neighborhood. SCCs are also called domestic communities of faith. 90--95% of the SCCs in the AMECEA Region are geographical/territorial, parish-based groups that are an official ecclesial structure in the Eastern African pastoral model of church, an official pastoral policy and an instrument/vehicle/tool of evangelization.⁴ They are a way of life, a spirituality. In this context African SCC members enable and facilitate the practical expression of the three virtues of faith, hope and charity central to the Gospels among people on the local level.

2. Historical Perspective of SCCs in Africa

SCCs developed as a result of putting the communion ecclesiology and teaching of the Second Vatican Council into practice. Latin America, Africa and Asia (especially the Philippines) all pioneered the development of a SCC or BCC/CEB Model of Church.⁵ Many specialists feel that quite independently of one another these three areas of the Catholic Church in the Global South simultaneously experienced the extraordinary growth of SCCs. Thus the African experience did not come from Latin America but developed on its own.

A *Timeline*⁶ can be a helpful lens to trace the development of SCCs in Africa:

- **1961:** At its 6th Plenary Assembly from 20 November to 2 December, 1961 the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Bishops' Conference approved a pastoral plan to promote

"Living Base Ecclesial Communities" (also called "Living Christian Communities."

Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base [CEVB] is the full French term). The bishops opted for these communities to be more important than the well-known mission structures of church buildings, schools and hospitals. These Living Base Ecclesial Communities were said to be the only way to make the church more "African" and close to the people. The inspiration and driving force behind this development was the Archbishop of Kinshasa Cardinal Joseph Malula. André Kabasele Mukenge states that at this assembly "a firm decision was made to align pastoral care by setting up vibrant Christian communities," marking the very beginning of SCCs in Africa.

- **1965:** SCCs made real the vision of Vatican II that calls on the Church to shine forth as "a people made one with the unity (brought into unity) from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (No. 4 of *Lumen Gentium*). No. 9 says that we are even saved "not as individuals... but rather to make them into a people." We are most whom we are when we gather as an assembly for prayer and worship. Living this kind of Christian life reflects our deepest identity, that we are created in the image and likeness of God. This identity manifests itself in our deepest needs for love, happiness, community and family. This is also the sense of No. 17 and 26, and also No. 10 of the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People*.
- The term "Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" is not specifically mentioned in the documents of Vatican II or in the *Code of Canon Law*. But some of the great theologians of the council emphasized them in their writings between the 1950 and 1970s. Father Yves Congar, in *Lay People in the Church* wrote that SCCs are "little church cells wherein the mystery is lived directly and with great simplicity...the church's machinery, sometimes the very institution, is a barrier obscuring her deep and living mystery, which they can find, or find again, only from below." Father Karl Rahner, in *The Shape of the Church to Come* wrote: "The church in the future will be one built from below by basic communities as a

result of free initiative and association. We should make every effort not to hold up this development, but to promote it and direct it on the right lines.”

- The founding fathers of AMECEA had a vision of implementing Vatican II’s ecclesiology of communion in Eastern Africa that focused on the communion (*koinonia*) and service (*diakonia*) aspects. Titus Amigu states: “After the Second Vatican Council … doors were opened and the Spirit of God brought a new Pentecost with the introduction of Small Christian Communities in Africa.” Similarly, Nicholas Segeja states: AMECEA started putting emphasis “on developing SCCs as a concrete expression of, and realization of, the Church as Family Model of Church which reflects the ecclesiology of communion of Vatican II.” According to Emmanuel Orobator, “AMECEA has developed an admirable profile in the African Church in the area of regional ecclesiastical collaboration. Arguably, the most concrete and best achievement of AMECEA is its pioneering role in developing Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a new way of being church.”
- **1966:** Although 1973 and 1976 are considered the official starting points for SCCs in the AMECEA countries, the seeds were sown earlier. It is possible to use the metaphor of a trickle of water that grows into a small stream that grows into a narrow river that is fed by many tributaries and slowly grows into a mighty river that became the AMECEA SCCs Key Pastoral Priority. The very beginning of SCCs in Eastern Africa (and perhaps the whole of English-speaking Africa) can be traced back to the joint pastoral and missionary efforts of the American Maryknoll missionaries in three parishes in North Mara, Musoma Diocese, northwestern Tanzania in 1966. It began with research on the social structures and community values of Legio Maria (an African Instituted Church) among the Luo Ethnic Group carried out by French cultural anthropologist Marie-France Perrin Jassy. The first terms used were *chama* (plural *vyama*, Swahili for "small group/s") and “small communities

of Christians.” The Maryknoll missionaries focused on the formation of small natural communities that were local neighborhood groups in the rural areas.

- **1973:** The AMECEA Study Conference on the theme “Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s” in Nairobi in December, 1973 stated: “We have to insist on building church life and work on Basic Christian Communities in both rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work take place: those basic and manageable social groups whose members can experience real inter-personal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working.” This pastoral policy was in the context of the statement: “We are convinced that in these countries of Eastern Africa it is time for the [Catholic] Church to become truly local, that is, self-ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting.” The theological founder of these SCCs was Malawian Bishop Patrick Kalilombe.⁷ Tanzanian Bishop Christopher Mwoleka emphasized that “there is no blueprint for building SCCs.” SCCs grow, develop, evolve in different ways “from below.” For Mwoleka in his Rulenge Diocese “the entire pastoral work will be carried out by means of Small Christian Communities.”
- **1976:** The AMECEA Study Conference on the theme “Building Small Christian Communities” in Nairobi in July 1976 stated: "Systematic formation of Small Christian Communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come in Eastern Africa." This is the single most important statement that has been made about SCCs.
- **1994:** The First African Synod took place in Rome in April, 1994. Regarding the “Ecclesiology of the Church-as-Family” the Final Message of the Bishops in Section 28 stated: “The Church, the Family of God, implies the creation of small communities at the human level, living or basic ecclesial communities...These individual Churches-as-Families have the task of working to transform society.” St. John Paul II promulgated the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* in 1995. In Number 23 he counsels that the synod should

“involve all levels of the Christian Community: individuals, small communities, parishes, dioceses, and local, national and international bodies.” Number 89 states almost the same thing: “the Church- as-Family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships,” for the sake of self-evangelization, prayer and reflection (“reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel”). “Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups.”

- **2009:** The Second African Synod took place in Rome in October 2009. Pope Benedict XVI promulgated the Exhortation *Africae Munus* in 2011. No. 131 states: “The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and the ‘new communities’ are fundamental structures for fanning the flame of your Baptism,” particularly in search of justice and peace. A similar sentiment is expressed in Number 133: “Love ‘is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and grant us the courage needed to keep living and working’ … Together with the parish, the SCCs, movements and associations can be helpful places for accepting and living the gift of reconciliation offered by Christ our peace.”

This is a shift in the Catholic Church’s teaching. In most official documents the traditional parish is the basic juridical unit of the Catholic Church. It is significant that SCCs are now called fundamental structures, an ideal place for shaping Christian consciences and helping one another to promote justice and peace.

3. Reading the Signs of the Times in Africa

If we are to read the signs of the times in Africa today we have to track the many meanings of family and the dramatic shifts occurring due to such factors as urbanization, migration, globalization, materialism, secularization and the effects of the social media. We need to

compare and contrast the immediate, living family (the nuclear family) and the wider family (the extended family⁸). We need an ongoing evaluation⁹ and assessment of Small Christian Communities in Africa that includes both their strengths and weaknesses. This is essential for continuing growth. Bishop Rodrigo Mejia assesses this AMECEA key pastoral priority by describe the good pastoral results of SCCs as “lights”: aspects of neighborhood, service, collaboration, human relationships and inculturation. He describes the difficulties or weaknesses of SCCs as “shadows”: exaggerated/overstressed/imposed role of SCCs, poor leadership, lack of pastoral and spiritual ongoing formation, and absence of SCCs in the high middle and rich classes.¹⁰

An assessment and evaluation of SCCs in Eastern Africa (2010-2014) revealed that the participation of priests is mixed. Observations ranged from “priests show real interest in the life and activities of the SCCs” and “priests feel SCCs are very important, even essential, for the parish” to “lack of interest and involvement of priests is the biggest obstacle,” “priests use the SCCs too much for fundraising in the parish” and “we lay people are held hostage by the priorities of the next pastor.” It was also evident that 75% of the members of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa are women. Involving men is a great challenge. Youth are largely missing in the SCCs except for specific Youth SCCs. This raises the challenging question: Without men and youth can African SCCs be genuinely called a/the domestic church?

It was perceived that many SCCs remain prayer groups without involvement in social issues and justice and peace concerns, although there is an increasing use of the Pastoral Spiral especially the methodology/process of “See,” “Judge” and “Act.” Bible Sharing and Bible Reflection is the centerpiece of many SCCs. The assessment also revealed an important main challenge is the working relationship (sometimes tension) between SCCs and the sodalities and devotional groups; (b) to reach young people we need to use creatively the social media,

and (c) ongoing formation and training of SCC leaders and members remained the main challenge and priority for action.¹¹

Festo Mkenda points out an additional challenge: “I find SCCs increasingly being used as a control structure, for example, in fund-raising, forbidding SCCs members to attend burials of some people (for example, non-members of SCCs). Is this the image of Christianity that we want to portray?”¹² However, according to Antonia Bolanie Bimbo Ojo, “Although many times it seems that SCCs have failed, the fact remains that SCCs continue to be the most efficient and effective avenue of evangelization for it brings the gospel to the grassroots level where the participation of all is made possible.”¹³

One concrete way of reaching young people is through online SCCs and SCCs Facebook Pages.¹⁴ It is crucial to form specific Youth SCCs that give young people a specific voice and role and to encourage them to plan their own discussions, reflections, and activities. A survey among young people in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Lilongwe, Malawi, Lusaka, Zambia and Nairobi, Kenya in 2010-2014 revealed that their favorite discussion subjects in SCCs meetings are topics clustered around boy-girl relationships, sex, dating, fashion, popular music, video games, social networks, information technology, sports and the use of leisure time; employment/unemployment, job hunting and career planning; justice and peace issues; how to answer challenges from their Protestant friends especially Pentecostals on the Bible, Catholic Church teachings, etc. Recent research shows this is the main reason that African Catholic youth want to learn more about the Bible; and fund raising projects.¹⁵

The praxis of African SCCs and ecclesiology are evolving too. Fundamentally the SCC Model of Church is based on the church as communion (*koinonia*). In terms of contemporary theology this is part of Trinitarian Communion and “communion of communities” ecclesiology. “*If God lives as a community,*” says an African proverb, “*we must do the same.*” SCC members are called to a life of sharing modeled on the Trinity starting from the

smallest fundamental structure, the SCC as a communion of families to the national bishops' conference as a communion of dioceses and archdioceses to the Global Church as a communion of national and continental bishops' conferences.

The “ecclesial identity” of SCCs is a relatively new term in church vocabulary in Africa. Orobator distinguishes between “being” and “becoming,” stating that today’s challenge is to develop “a distinctively African model of Small Christian Communities as a new way of *becoming church*.¹⁶ This focuses on the important ecclesial status and centrality of SCCs in their self-understanding as Local Churches, as the church in the neighborhood. As he explains: “The gathering of Christians in the neighborhood is not only in the name of the church but *is* church. In their localization and specificity, SCCs actualize the mission of the church as both ‘sign and agent of the kingdom of God’.” According to Orobator, “these small ‘churches’ empower Christian existence in active, Christian subjects, and this manifests itself in concrete ways.”¹⁷ In this way, at their best, SCCs internalize, embody and exemplify the radical meaning of the theological insight that the church is a community of the people, for the people and by the people.

As Laurenti Magesa sees it, the ecclesial “shift” in our time “involves a change in emphasis from large entities, such as parishes, as the basic organizational and pastoral units of the Church, to SCCs.” The latter “provide more personal involvement and interaction by all the members of a given community of faith, and are thus closer and more faithful to the image of ‘Church as Family.’” For Magesa, SCCs are the future of Christian mission in Africa.¹⁸ They call for the inculcation or contextualization of new lay ministries according to the principle that “the *church’s needs should determine ministries and not ministries its [the church’s] needs*,” as was the case with the early church. In the words of John Baur, this requires that “all the faithful fulfil their vocation and mission in the church … implying a change from a

priest-based apostolate to a people-based apostolate that demands that the priest assume the role of the ‘community-minded inspirational minister.’’¹⁹

In reading the contemporary signs of the times in Africa we are faced with two meanings of the “Eucharist Famine or Hunger.” First, there are many Catholics who cannot receive communion because they are not officially married in the Catholic Church (in Nairobi Archdiocese as many as 60%). The traditional reasons of the high dowry payment and high cost of the wedding itself are today compounded by the fact that young Catholics are reluctant to make permanent, lifetime commitments. They prefer living together for a period of time to “test” their relationship. Also, due to the lack of priests, on any given Sunday most Catholics (up to 80 % in some surveys) participate in a “Sunday Service without a Priest,” especially in rural areas, where there is no Holy Communion. In general the AMECEA Bishops do not have the Eucharist reserved in outstation chapels and do not allow catechists to distribute communion because of abuses that have taken place. This is also a “Eucharistic Famine.”

Since providing the Eucharist to all Catholics is the heart of our Christian life, Bishop Patrick Kalilombe emphasizes that if Christian communities in Africa cannot receive the Eucharist because of the lack of ordained ministers, we must rethink church laws and pastoral practices and, for example, ordain mature married men of proven leadership skills (*viri probati*) to enable many more people to receive communion so that our SCCs would truly be Eucharistic communities.

4. Case Study of SCCs in Family and Marriage Ministry in Africa

The Catholic Church in Africa actively participated in the Extraordinary World Synod of Bishops on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization" in Rome in October, 2014. This synod defined the “the state of the question” of the family and

marriage. The next Ordinary World Synod of Bishops in Rome in October, 2015 will “seek working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family.”

The Working Document (*Instrumentum Laboris*) for the 2014 **Synod** notes that many responses were “submitted by the synods of the Eastern Catholic Churches, the episcopal conferences, the departments of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General. In addition, other responses — or *observations* — were sent directly to the General Secretariat by a significant number of dioceses, parishes, movements, groups,²⁰ ecclesial associations and families, academic institutions, and specialists, both Catholic and non-Catholic.”

The document highlights both the challenges and examples of pastoral care of the family and marriage. It has a total of 36 references to “community” and “communities” used in different senses: Christian community, church community, ecclesial community, faith community, local community, new community and parish community. No. 48 highlights the “close collaboration of families/homes and the parish in the mission of evangelization … In this regard, invaluable assistance comes from the community made up of families.”

While the expression “the community made up of families” is more general, it is an exact description of Eastern Africa SCCs that are called “a communion of families,” part of the “Communion of Communities Model of Church” that was explained above. “Movements and associations” cover a wide variety of small communities and small groups. Some Catholics continue to place SCCs in these two categories although they are different theologically.

No. 54 states “Many laudable initiatives in marriage preparation are taking place in various parts of the world, including: ‘new communities’ which promote retreats; personal encounters; groups for prayer, reflection and discussion.” What is missing here but is very important for the AMECEA Region is that Eastern African SCCs have a specific ministry for marriage animation and a specific minister for marriage preparation, called the Marriage

Counselor. This person is responsible for coordinating the marriage preparation of couples in the SCC.

No. 146 notes that “The important and effective ecclesial experiences aimed at assisting parents along the way [in preparing their children for baptism] include: catechesis in the family and community; the ecclesial movements in support of the pastoral care of married couples; Sunday Masses; family visits; prayer groups; popular missions; the activities of Basic Christian Communities; groups of Bible study; and the pastoral activities of ecclesial movements.” Unfortunately, the document does not reflect the basic insight of the Eastern Africa experience, that parish-based SCCs are a primary means and “places” for family catechesis, marriage catechesis, family life apostolate, religious education, pastoral care and evangelization.

At the same time the document emphasizes various pastoral activities and methods for marriage preparation and catechesis such as “older and more experienced couples act as “godparents” to younger couples who are preparing for marriage” (No. 56). In Eastern Africa often these pastoral activities and methods take place in the SCCs and are carried out by SCCs members. Other lay ministries in SCCs in Eastern Africa are religious education/catechesis and animation for youth and children, and marriage counseling – helping young couples sacramentalize their marriages and counseling couples with marital difficulties.

There were many references to “community” and “communities” (or their equivalents) in the October, 2014 synod documents that are used in different senses: Three quotations:

- “Vibrant communities exist in parish composed of married couples or entire families who meet regularly, pray together, study and thoroughly discuss the *Catechism of the Church*, read the *Bible* and talk about everyday problems, difficulties and the beauty of life lived in common by couples and treat questions concerning the upbringing of

their children. In other words, they strive to combine faith with life. (under No. 2 – “The Gospel of the Family and Family Ministry” -- in the *Report Preceding the Discussion at the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family*).

- “Family is thus an authentic domestic church that expands to become the family of families that is the ecclesial community” (*Message of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*)
- **“La parrocchia è considerata come il luogo dove coppie esperte possono essere messe a disposizione di quelle più giovani, con l'eventuale concorso di associazioni, movimenti ecclesiari e nuove comunità.”** (under No. 40 – “Accompany the First Years of Married Life” -- in the final *Report of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family (Relatio Synodi)*). **NOTE:** This sentence has to be translated from Italian into English. Please use the official translation from the Vatican.

While the term “Small Christian Communities” is not mentioned specifically in these documents, their life and ministry is definitely described. The synod is trying to inspire SCC members and others to become more active in promoting Catholic family life and spirituality in Africa and everywhere. Some concrete examples:

- Experienced SCC couples accompany young married people.
- SCC members accompany families and couples who are wounded.
- In parishes together with various lay movements SCCs can be united to families and to work with them to promote the living of the “Gospel of the family” in homes.
- SCCs can encourage Catholic men to organize themselves into groups, associations, or even small activist units dedicated to stopping the scourge of abuse in the home and in society.

The final *Report of the Synod (Relatio Synodi)* is the *Lineamenta (Guidelines)* on the theme "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Modern World." A new questionnaire will be sent to local church communities throughout the world. Hopefully Eastern African SCCs will participate in this ongoing process of listening and discernment. The answers will be collated to produce the *Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document)* for the Synod of Bishops XIV Ordinary General Assembly in Rome from 4-25 October, 2015. It was pointed out that Africa has unique challenges and concerns (for example, polygamy, the influence of widespread poverty, economic injustice and war on family life, frozen ideas of culture and tradition usually rooted in powerful patriarchal hierarchies, etc.) and these issues will be addressed more at the October, 2015 synod. At the same time it was emphasized that Africa is coming of age and that the African bishops at the October, 2014 synod staked their claim to a say on the Catholic Church's teachings.²¹

Ongoing evaluation shows that parish-based SCCs remain a key pastoral priority in the AMECEA Region even though their implementation is uneven and varies from diocese to diocese. SCCs as a domestic church are an important part of the pastoral care of the family and marriage in the new evangelization in Eastern Africa. This is seen in the light of the People of God and Communion Ecclesiology that developed after Vatican II as well as the African cultural priorities of communion, relationships and family values. SCCs are the "place" of much pastoral care and the members themselves are the "agents" of pastoral ministry and evangelization. Cardinal Polycarp Pengo of Dar es Salaam Tanzania calls SCCs in Swahili *chombo mahususi cha uinjilishaji* or a special or privileged instrument or means of evangelization.

In addition, there is the important pastoral and missionary outreach of SCCs. Pope Francis has called the Catholic Church a field hospital after battle. Cardinal Walter Kaspar extended this metaphor to say that "the family too is a field hospital where it is necessary to bind many

wounds.” The SCC as Domestic Church can also be compared to a field hospital called to reach out to needy families, broken homes, to the homeless and to those people Pope Francis calls “the marginalized and those on the periphery of society.”

5. The Way Forward in Eastern Africa

Certainly the growth and influence of Small Christian Communities has been one of the milestones and highlights of the first 54 years of AMECEA (1961-2015). Let us say “thank you” to the past and “yes” to the future. “Thank you” to the founders and visionaries who created the AMECEA SCCs as a Key Pastoral Priority. “Thank you” to the faithfulness and commitment of millions of lay Christians in Eastern Africa who have actively participated in SCCs over the years and said “Yes” to the commitment to be truly African and truly Christian in further developing this new way of becoming church. Let us say “Yes” to be open to the Holy Spirit guiding us in the future. “*We create the path by walking.*”²² The way forward is open-ended and exciting. New priorities will emerge. With the help of the Holy Spirit let us respond “boldly and creatively” (No. 33 in *The Joy of the Gospel*) as Pope Francis urges us.

Endnotes

¹ Sister Antonia Bolanie Bimbo Ojo, SSMA responded to my commissioned paper. I have incorporated her comments and insights as well as those from other participants in this final version of my paper.

² This paper highlights Eastern Africa although some examples are used from other parts of Africa. For more articles, case studies, reports and stories on SCCs in 13 African countries see the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website under the section on “Africa Continent,” retrieved on 26 October, 2014,

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa.html>. See also Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa* (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications – CUEA Press, Nos. 199-200, 2012). The Online Digital Version is regularly updated and is available as a free, online Ebook, retrieved on 26 October, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>

³ AMECEA is an acronym for "Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa," a service organization for the National Episcopal Conferences of the nine English-speaking countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), South Sudan (2011), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961). The Republic of South Sudan became independent on 9 July, 2011, but the two Sudans remain part of one Episcopal Conference. Somalia (1995) and Djibouti (2002) are Affiliate Members. AMECEA is one of the eight Regional Episcopal Conferences of SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar).

⁴ The other 5--10% of SCCs in the AMECEA Region are called Specialized SCCs, a type of Small Apostolic Group, and are growing fast. These include school-based SCCs. See Chapter 2 on “Quantitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region” in the Ebook mentioned above, retrieved on 26 October, 2014,

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>

⁵ “SCCs” is an umbrella term used in this paper but different terms are also used in English in Africa: BCC means “Basic Christian Community” and BEC means “Base [Basic] Ecclesial Community” and is sometimes written “Ecclesial Base [Basic] Community.” Even some writers in French prefer the term SCC because it indicates the smaller scale of these communities.

⁶ See the “1961-- 2015 Timeline in the History and Development of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Especially Eastern Africa,” SCCs Website, retrieved on 26

October, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/293-1961-2015-timeline-in-the-history-and-development-of-small-christian-communities-sccs-in-africa-especially-eastern-africa.html>

⁷ During this 1973 AMECEA Meeting, Kalilombe said that *every* bishop, priest, brother, and sister (and as a corollary, every Catholic) should participate in a particular SCC – not as a leader, but as an ordinary member. This reinforces the key priority that ecclesiologically all Catholics, by virtue of their baptism, participate in this new way of becoming church.

⁸ Khofi Phiri points out that in Africa, “The reality lived in the Domestic Church, with the background of the extended family, is more amplified, since family life in Africa goes beyond the nucleus. The family as a Domestic Church can only be conceived in terms of the extended Domestic Church.” *African Traditional Marriage: A Christian Theological Appraisal*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2011), 95. Laurenti Magesa and others emphasize that “extended family” originates from a Western sociological conception of family structures. For Africans this wide network is simply “family” or on a wider scale “clan.” I prefer to use the word “family” to cover the whole variety of meanings.

⁹ For an ongoing evaluation of SCCs see Chapter 3 on “Qualitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region” in the online Ebook mentioned above, retrieved on 26 October, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>

¹⁰ Rodrigo Mejia, “Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa 26 Years On: Lights and Shadows” in *New Strategies for a New Evangelization* ed. Patrick Ryan (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2002), 67-72.

¹¹ See Chapter 14 on “Future Challenges, Priorities and Actions for SCCs in the AMECEA Region” in the online Ebook mentioned above, retrieved on 26 October, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>

¹² See Festo Mkenda’s “Comment” during the Second Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA II), at Hekima College Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, Nairobi, Kenya, 7 August, 2014.

¹³See Antonia Bolanie Bimbo Ojo’s “Comment,” Ibid, 6 August, 2014.

¹⁴ The SCC Facebook Page connected to the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website had 1,311 members (fans) as of 26 October, 2014,
<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

¹⁵ See Chapter 3 on “Qualitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region” in the online Ebook mentioned above, retrieved on 26 October, 2014,

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>

¹⁶ Emmanuel Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way, of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church*, eds. Klaus Krämer, and Vellguth, Klaus (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2013), 125.

¹⁷ Ibid, 123-124.

¹⁸ See Laurenti Magesa, “Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission in Africa,” Maryknoll 100th Anniversary Symposium 2011 (Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2011), 1-12.

¹⁹ John Baur, *2000 Years, of Christianity in Africa*, Second Edition (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009), 319-320.

²⁰ The wide variety of names used shows both the richness and complexity of the English language in describing the “small community” or “small group” phenomenon under which SCCs fit.

²¹ See Tina Beattie, “After the Synod – A Journey into the Unknown,” “Marginal Musings: Tina Beattie's Intermittent Reflections,” retrieved on 26 October, 2014, <http://tina-beattie.blogspot.co.uk>

²² Based on the words “make the road by walking it” of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado.

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