

God Within People's Lives: Case Study of a SCC Experience in Peru

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I would like to share an experience that I had in my home country Peru in South America about Small Christian Communities.¹ It happened in one of the villages of my country within the Amazon jungle, specifically in the local area called Nomatsiguenga in the province of Pangoa. This community is called Sonomoro. Its patron saint is St. Anthony of Padua.

I went to this village for around two months as a part of my missionary experience during my long holidays. I was sent to a community to do my missionary service for those months. I was very happy and animated to share my faith and to be a witness of what God has done in my life. When I reached the place, I was amazed to know that for a long time there was no presence of priests, sisters or religious people. The priests who usually go there, go rarely because of the dimension of the territory and the lack of priests and religious.

However, when I started visiting the families I met a group of people who told me that they usually meet to share the Word of God. I was surprised when they told me that because I thought that they would not have any meetings or sharing around the Word of God. But it was just the opposite because despite the lack of religious and priests in that local area, the people kept alive their faith in the sharing of the Word of God in their daily life in their Small Christian Community.

I participated during those two months with them actively and I could see how they used to meet to share the Word of God, to discuss different issues concerning to the village and to do concrete actions in order to help one another in their village. During those months I was just an observer, but I learned many things from them: community life, pious prayers, collaboration, etc. I also learned that the Small Christian Community is a really blessed and sacred space for the Christians where they can be actively listeners to what God can speak to them through their own reality and in practical ways how to apply those teachings.

In the line of the "See," "Judge" and "Act", I would like to make an evaluation of what they usually do during their meetings in the SCC.

¹ In Latin America usually known as Base Ecclesial Community (BEC). Sometimes written as Ecclesial Base Community. In Spanish: *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs).

1. See

On the side of “See”, I noticed that they are very aware of what happens in the daily life of their community. The problems of alcohol, insecurity, poverty, etc. were usually seen as part of their reflections. They could reach the level of realizing what is happening in their reality where they are living. I think that this is an important component in all the meetings in our SCCs because it helps to concretise the Word of God in our own reality. The Word of God should not remain in merely pious prayers or devotions that, for sure, help a lot in our spiritual life. But it should have an impact on what we are living in our lives, in our communities, in our societies and in our countries. Everything must be linked because our God is always present in us. In this line, I can see that the people of Sonomoro has a good starting point in their meetings in their SCC.

2. Judge

In what concerns the “Judge”, I noticed that the SCC members still find difficulties in reaching general agreements. This is also combined with the fact that the majority of people in the rural and native areas have the disadvantage of not having studies. Many of them could not reach high education and even some do not have the basic primary school. I am not saying that people with no studies could not come with great proposals or ideas that may allow us to do a judgement of what we are going to do. However, what I noticed is the lack of information in certain aspects as the problem of mining, natural resources, the awareness of their rights, etc. I do not see their lack of studies as a big problem in taking concrete proposals in their enrichment of the meetings in the SCC, but I see a small problem in the side of judging with a certain awareness in certain areas that might need a bit of knowledge as the former mentioned.

3. Act

On the side of “Act”, I would definitely congratulate the SCC members because of their concrete proposals and actions that allow them to grow in their togetherness, their Christian faith and in the commitment with their society. Some examples are: the saving of money, food or cloth for those who are in extreme need. Another example is the cleaning of rivers, and the collecting of recycle material in order to contribute with the good environment, etc. All these actions are also viewed from the side of the gospel.

The method of their meetings is as follows: Saturdays at around 4 p.m. they ring the bell in their traditional hut made by themselves for the purpose of the meetings. After the general greetings they proceed with the reading of the Gospel of the coming Sunday where the catechist tries to animate with the words that are repeated or the message that the Gospel may bring. It is followed by the intervention of each of the members that try to say a word or a small petition that the Gospel is inviting them to do. They conclude with the “Our Father” and their moment of prayer. At the end the SCC members try to reach to an agreement or a concrete proposal that they may feel will allow them to practice the gospel. This proposal usually comes from what they are passing through (drought, too much rain,

lack of food, a sick member, etc.). The whole meeting takes one hour and a half. The meeting is mixed between men and women.

Definitely, I would never forget this experience of Small Christian Community in Sonomoro in Peru because as an evangelizer, I was evangelized by them. Surely they taught me that GOD IS FULLY PRESENT AND WITHIN THEM.

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