

Homily Notes for the Fifth Sunday of Easter (B) 6 May 2012

An interesting Case Study of African Palaver Theology or African Christian Palaver Theology on the grassroots, local level was the time when I was asked to prepare the Homily Notes for the "Weekly Reflections for the 2012-2013 Election Year" inspired by the Bible Readings of each Sunday in the "Yes, Kenya Matters Campaign" that was a new online resource to promote civic education before the Kenya General Election in March, 2013. These reflections were circulated by the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC) Commission of the Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya (RSCK) free every week for personal prayer, homilies and SCC meetings.

I could have prepared these notes in the traditional way –by myself and using commentaries, biblical exegesis, etc. Instead I prepared these notes in an African palaver way with members of my St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in the Waruku Section of St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya. Seven of us (five men and two women) first read the three Sunday Reading ourselves. Then we met together to read and reflect especially on the First Reading and the Gospel. Then we applied the readings to our daily life and local Kenyan context. In the process we theologized – what Schreiter called "the local community as theologian." Our secretary wrote a draft of our reflections. Then we revised it. A summary of these Homily Notes for the **FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B) 6 May 2012**¹ is as follows:

1. **Readings:**

Acts: 9:26-31

I John: 3:18-24

John 15: 1-8



2. **Scripture Focus/Biblical Reflection**

- Let us make our home in Jesus Christ as he makes his home in us. As disciples of Christ we must remain in him as His words remain in us. We are branches united with God in Christ Jesus.
- God is love. We should love one another as we are all God's creation.
- If we are united in Jesus Christ we will see people from other ethnic groups (tribes) in Kenya as our brothers and sisters.
- The peace of the Risen Christ brings healing. We should embrace forgiveness and reconciliation in order to bear more fruit.

¹ Published on the Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University Website
<http://www.kucatholic.or.ke> **ADD**

3. Link with Catholic Social Teaching

- “Elections represent a platform for the expression of a people’s political decisions, and they are a sign of legitimacy for the exercise of power. They provide a privileged opportunity for healthy and serene public political debate, marked by respect for different opinions and different political groupings. If conducted well, elections call forth and encourage real and active participation by citizens in political and social life. Failure to respect the national constitution, the law or the outcome of the vote, when elections have been free, fair and transparent, would signal a grave failure in governance and a lack of competence in the administration of public affairs” (Number 81 in *Africa’s Commitment*).
- Small Christian Communities are "Living (or Vital) Christian Communities committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups" (Number 89 in *The Church in Africa*).
- “We have experienced that a properly trained and led SCC adds great value to the promotion of reconciliation. This is because deeper biblical reflection and more regular use of the pastoral circle empower our Christians to engage effectively in the social life around them. Here formation in Catholic Social Teaching (CST) at all levels must be a priority” (AMECEA Statement).
- “It can be helpful for you to form associations in order to continue shaping your Christian conscience and supporting one another in the struggle for justice and peace. The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and the ‘new communities’ are fundamental structures for fanning the flame of your Baptism” (Number 131 in *Africa’s Commitment*).
- “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation” (No. 6 in *Justice in the World*, 1971 World Synod of Bishops).

4. Yes, Kenya Matters (Kenyan Life Focus)

- As the Kenya National Anthem suggests let justice be our shield and defender and may we dwell in unity, peace and liberty.
- As SCC members we are branches of our Kenya Government on the grassroots to promote peace and unity with our brothers and sisters.
- During this Election Year in Kenya it is our responsibility to promote civic education on the local level.
- We should encourage the equal distribution of resources in Kenya.

5. Questions for Reflection and Sharing

- How can you participate in the next General Election as an individual/Small Christian Community/Community?

- What is your role to ensure peaceful elections as an individual/Small Christian Community/Community?
- In the light of the Gospel how can we promote forgiveness and reconciliation in Kenya in order to bear more fruit?
- What can we do to bring about peace and unity in our families, communities and country of Kenya?

6. African Wisdom

- In the light of the Gospel there is the African story “God Is Like a Large Baobab Tree:” “One day my pick-up truck broke down. After I waited for half an hour, a big Coca-Cola lorry came by and the driver, a Muslim named Musa, kindly towed my vehicle to the next town. While we drove into town I sat in his big cab and we talked about, of all things, religion. In commenting on the tensions between Christians and Muslims in East Africa, he said, ‘There is only one God. God is like a large baobab tree with different branches that represent the different religions of Islam, Christianity, African Religion and so forth. These branches are part of the same family of God so we should work together.’ Simply put, Musa taught me a wonderful African metaphor for world religions and interreligious dialogue.”
- “One finger does not kill a louse.”
- “Unity is strength, division is weakness.”
- “If you live in a glass house don’t throw stones.”