## <u>Talk or Intervention on "Pastoral Accompaniment"</u> <u>Related to Family and Marriage in an African Context</u>

The *Instrumentum Laboris* ("Working Document") of the 4-25 October, 2015 Synod of Bishops in Rome on "Family and Marriage" has 16 references to "accompany," 13 references to "accompanying." The document highlights "Accompanying Engaged Couples in their Preparation for Marriage" (No. 94 and No. 95) and "Accompanying Married Couples in the Initial Years of Marriage" (No. 96 and No. 97). For example:

**96.** The initial years of marriage are a vital and sensitive period during which couples become more aware of the challenges and meaning of married life. Consequently, pastoral accompaniment needs to go beyond the actual celebration of the Sacrament (FC, Part III). In this regard, experienced couples are of great importance in any pastoral activity. The parish is the ideal place for these experienced couples to be of service to younger couples, with the possible cooperation of associations, ecclesial movements and new communities. Married couples need encouragement in a basic openness to the great gift of children. The importance of family spirituality, prayer and participation in the Sunday Eucharist needs emphasis so couples might be encouraged to meet regularly to promote growth in their spiritual life and solidarity in the concrete demands of life. Meaningful liturgies, devotional practices and the Eucharist celebrated for families, especially on the wedding anniversary, were mentioned as vital factors in fostering evangelization through the family.

In Kenya we need to explain family life and the sacrament of matrimony more clearly and deeply. Family customs should be respected more. Each family member has his or her role and identity in building a strong spiritual foundation. We try to maintain Christian values in a changing Africa. We promote pastoral accompaniment of members of the family at all levels: children, youth, young couples, couples married a long time.

• Children: In some Vatican documents children are seen as the objects and receivers of pastoral and missionary care. Children can also be the subjects of promoting family relationships and family life, active participants in church life (for example, the liturgy) and agents of evangelization. In Kenya we have the Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC). PMC is as alive and vibrant in Eastern Africa as anywhere else in the world and can teach Europe and North America a great deal about mission. Where else can you find 48,000 children gather for the annual outdoor PMC Mass such as in Nairobi Archdiocese every year.

A very important part of PMC in Kenya is the missionary spirit and outreach of the children. A concrete example is the children's outreach to Haiti.

- Youth.
- Young couples.
- Couples married a long time.

Some important apostolic groups and ministries involved in pastoral accompaniment:

• Small Christian Communities (SCCs): SCC members accompany the engaged couples, and later the young married couples throughout the stages of marriage. Husband and wife should participate in the SCC together to model family unity. Parents should to encourage their children participate in the SCCs as a family. SCC members pastorally accompany adult catechumens in the stages of the RCIA.

Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church in the nine AMECEA countries. Tanzania has over 60,000 SCCs and Kenya has over 45,000 SCCs. Since 1973 they have been a key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa as a "New Way of Being (Becoming) Church" and a "New Pastoral Model of Church."<sup>1</sup> The rich experience of the church in Eastern Africa especially pastoral, parish-based SCCs is contributing to the other parts of Africa and to the World Church. SCCs is a pastoral model of church integrally connected to the structures, ministries and activities of the parish.

- National Family Life Programme on national and diocesan levels.
- Pre-Cana and Cana Programmes.
- Marriage Encounter on the deanery and parish levels.
- Couples for Christ on the deanery and parish levels.
- Marriage Counseling Offices in parishes, e.g. Holy Trinity Parish in Kariobangi North.

Pastoral formation and training on family and marriage at the SCCs, parish and deanery levels is very important. See interview with Cardinal Njue in the 25 July, 2015 issue of *The Tablet*.

**ACTION:** Lengthen and deepen the pre-marital catechesis and the post-marital catechesis. Beginning and advanced training programs for married couple accompaniers (mentor couples) and other facilitators/ formators/presenters/ trainers. Emphasize Train the Trainers (TOT) Workshops for parishes, schools and marriage programs. Engaged couples SCCs that are both a faith sharing group and a support group. Married couple accompaniers are called upon when needed. This overall approach would insure that the engaged couple not focus too much on the celebration and social aspects of their wedding.

One example is empowering young couples to sacramentalize their marriage in the Catholic Church. If the parents of the young woman demand a large dowry and many conditions during the stages of the marriage process this is really disempowering. The young man can spend years in slowing paying the dowry with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and "Facebook Page" www.smallchristiancommunities.org

the couple living outside the sacraments. But if the parents are sympathetic and ask for a reasonable dowry and encourage the couple to get married in the Catholic Church this is empowering.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* refers to "Caring for Wounded Families (Persons who are Separated, Divorced and Not Remarried, Divorced and Remarried and Single-Parent Families)":

**104.** Married couples with problems in their relationship should be able to count on the assistance and guidance of the Church. The pastoral work of charity and mercy seeks to help persons recover and restore relationships. Experience shows that with proper assistance and acts of reconciliation, though grace, a great percentage of troubled marriages find a solution in a satisfying manner. To know how to forgive and to feel forgiven is a basic experience in family life. Forgiveness between husband and wife permits a couple to experience a never-ending love that does not pass away (cf. 1 Cor 13:8). At times, this is difficult, but those who have received God's forgiveness are given the strength to offer a genuine forgiveness that regenerates persons.

**ACTION:** Special outreach programs beginning with listening, accompanying, walking with before teaching (the Emmaus model).

The Catholic Church in Kenya tries to respond to Pope Francis' call to provide pastoral care and accompaniment to "the marginated and those on the periphery of society." The Catholic Church tries to accompany families and couples who are wounded and on the periphery in Kenya. This includes mercy toward broken and fragile families.

Another example is the pastoral concern and care of single Catholic mothers through the SCCs. Their number has increased dramatically especially in big cities such as Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. When these mothers ask for Baptism of their infants, some SCCs first choose a responsible wife and mother in the SCC to "accompany" the single mother – to explain her responsibilities in raising a child a Catholic and other formation and education issues. The SCC member is called the accompanier/the person who accompanies in this Ministry of Pastoral Accompaniment.

In terms of the World Church a growing challenge is the pastoral care of one specific group of the "wounded" (the marginated and those on the periphery of society): the thousands of poor and homeless immigrants from Africa arriving in Italy, England and other European countries.

### Some Cardinal John Njue Stories and Examples

1. Embu, Kenya song about times of receiving and giving. Expatriate missionaries from Europe and North America brought the Catholic Faith to Africa. African Catholics received the faith and are very grateful. Now we are now moving into a new missionary era when African Catholics are sharing their faith with European and North American Catholics, a kind of reciprocation. A good example is Kenya Fidei Donum priests who are serving in priest-poor dioceses especially in Northern Kenya. The next step is to reach out to other needy parts of Africa like South Sudan. Then these priests could go to needy parts of Europe and North America. As the center of gravity of the Catholic Church moves from the West to the Global South, the Catholic Church in Africa has a lot to share and offer to the West and the rest of the world. It is important that Africa's voice be heard and that our African priorities on family and marriage be clearly stated and emphasized.

2. Swahili Song about traveling the hills and the valleys (ups and downs) in family life and marriage.

3. Premarital cohabitation with no intentions of legally binding obligations is increasing worldwide. In Kenya it is described as a *Come we stay* (a popular Kenyan saying) arrangement when a man and a woman begin living together. It is especially an urban phenomenon. During a mass wedding of 34 couples at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Kiambu, Nairobi, Kenya in December, 2013 the *National Mirror* reports that "Cardinal John Njue reached out to couples who have not solemnized their unions and are living in *Come we stay* arrangements, urging them to take the bold step and embrace the sacrament of marriage." He challenged parents saying that the dowry<sup>2</sup> should not be a stumbling block for financial reasons, but ought to cement the bonds of love and family. Cardinal Njue said that the dowry cannot be greater than God.

In a related example Cardinal Njue visited Christ the King Church, Kangemi, Nairobi on 30 March, 2014. He said that this is the "Year of the Family and Marriage" and challenged Catholic parents of demanding too much dowry. There are parents who are willing to arrange the marriage of their children but are unable because the father of the groom does not enough dowry for his son. Other parents deny the wedding in the church unless the full customary dowry is paid.

Njue gave an example of a father who arranged for a man to marry his daughter in the Catholic Church. The customary dowry was paid in the Kikuyu tradition. The wedding was announced and the groom asked Cardinal Njue to join them during their wedding and the cardinal agreed. With one week remaining before the wedding in the church the parents of the bride requested 200,000 Kenyan shillings (approximately \$2,225) more from the groom. He failed to raise the money and so the church wedding had to stop. The cardinal sent for the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This important ritual is not well understood by Westerners. In some African ethnic groups the dowry or bridewealth payment lasts a lifetime. The groom is required to pay a major portion of it before being allowed to marry the bride in church. The balance is paid in portions throughout the couple's lifetime to ensure that there is a continuing bond/relationship between the two families.

father of the bride to discuss this new demand. But the father of the bride said to the parish priest to allow the wedding to continue since he didn't want to have to face the cardinal. Cardinal Njue informed the parents that marriage is a sacrament and not something for parents to get rich.

4. During his pastoral visits to parishes in Nairobi, after communion at the Sunday Mass Cardinal Njue regularly asks the congregation these challenging questions. Why are so few of you receiving communion? How many of you are in *come we stay* arrangements? When are you going to take concrete steps to sacramentalize your marriage and starting receiving communion again?

## **Additional Notes from the Perspective of Africa**

#### 1. On Vatican Website the Lineamenta of

Sinodi Ya Maaskofu Mkutano wa Jumla wa Kawaida Wa 14 "Wito na Utume wa Familia Katika Kanisa na Ulimwengu Mamboleo"

is published in Swahili. This shows that Africa is being taken more seriously.

2. The Local Churches in Eastern Africa and the Local Churches in North America and Europe and can learn from each other's pastoral experiences in the spirit of the Ugandan proverb *one hand washes the other*. The Eastern African experience of evolving pastoral structures, lay ecclesial ministries<sup>3</sup> and pastoral, parish-based SCCs described earlier can speak a great deal to the Catholic Church in the West.

3. At a recent theological colloquium in Nairobi both Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg Diocese, South Africa and Bishop Emmanuel Barbara of Malindi Diocese, Kenya emphasized that the synod on the family in October, 2015 could be dominated by voices from the Church in Europe and there is "a danger of a Eurocentric Synod without strong input from Africa." See Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, the Chairman of AMECEA's intervention at the October, 2014 synod: the three main pastoral challenges that face Catholic families in Africa were not sufficiently incorporated into the final *Relatio Synodi*.

4. At this colloquium the colloquium participants, cognizant of the diverse pastoral situations in the Catholic Church all over the world, expressed the need for concrete pastoral solutions on the local level in each continent, rather than a "one size fits all" universal approach. The African Catholic scholars further proposed follow-up continental synods. The participants were of the common view to have "an African Synod on African soil with National Bishops Conferences having deliberative, decision-making, legislative power to make pastoral changes and innovations following inculturation and contextualization on the local level."

5. Bishop Antoine Kambanda of Kibungo Diocese, Rwanda's topic for his intervention in Rome is: "Evangelization of the Family."

6. A seven-year-girl who received her First Communion in a parish in Nairobi Archdiocese in Nairobi, Kenya on Easter Sunday, 2015. Her parents were divorced and remarried civilly outside the Catholic Church. The girl said, "Today I am so happy to receive communion for the first time. But my Mommy and Daddy cannot receive with me. Why?" How is the Catholic Church going to answer her?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A list of "Lay Ecclesial Ministries in Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" is found as Online Resource No. 4 in the free, online Ebook *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa* on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 6 June, 2015 at <u>http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\_new.pdf</u>

7. A number of African bishops have pointed out how hard it is to achieve a consensus on marriage rites given the wide variety of African cultural traditions, customs and rites. Retired Kenyan Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki of Nairobi, Kenya explained that the 1994 First African Synod appointed him to a Commission on Marriage in an African Context. He said that our Catholic marriage laws are based on Western law (for example, German law). The hope was to develop common inculturated guidelines on marriage that could be used throughout Africa. But the commission failed and was disbanded. Ndingi said that he could not even get the bishops in Kenya to agree on a common marriage rite for the whole country. Presently in Kenya there are 26 Catholic Dioceses and 42 to 70 ethnic groups (depending on how you count), each with its African traditional marriage customs and rites.

8. Pope Francis' challenge "to be bold and creative" in No. 33 of *The Joy of the Gospel* can be applied to the two meanings of the Eucharistic Famine (also called the "Eucharistic Hunger") in Africa: First, due to the lack of priests on any given Sunday, most Catholics in Africa (up to 80% in some surveys)<sup>4</sup> rather than taking part in a regular Mass participate in a "Sunday Service without a Priest"<sup>5</sup> (especially in rural areas) where usually there is no Holy Communion. See the cover story on "Married Priests: The Bishops Speak Out in Support" in the 11 July, 2015 issue of the *Tablet*.

Second, many, many Catholics in Africa cannot receive communion because they are not officially married in the Catholic Church. In some surveys 60% of adult Catholics in Africa have not had their marriages blessed in church (sacramentalized). Other practicing Catholics are divorced and remarried civilly outside the Catholic Church so cannot receive the Eucharist.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> American Catholics really have no sense of the magnitude of this crisis especially as Catholic dioceses in the USA continue to import African and Indian priests.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Also called "Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest," "Sunday Worship without a Priest," "Sunday Service of the Word with Communion" and "Eucharistic Prayer Service Outside of Mass."

## African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Family and Marriage

Another approach to this final question in the *Lineamenta* is to reflect on African proverbs and sayings related to family and marriage. Pastoral and theological insights emerge. They are used in many SCCs' contexts and situations. A full list is found in Appendix No. 22 of the Ebook -- Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa.*<sup>6</sup> A helpful online resource is the section on "African Wise Proverbs and Inspiring Quotes" on the <u>Afritorial Website</u>. Some examples by three categories:

#### • African proverbs and sayings on family life (19)

A united family eats from the same plate (Ganda, Uganda). Home is best. (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa). Dine with a stranger but save your love for your family (Ethiopian proverb). Blood is thicker than water (many African languages). You can only resemble the parents that gave birth to you. For a cow does not give birth to a sheep (Yoruba, Nigeria). You only have one mother (many African languages). A mother is the cornerstone of a family (Somali, Somalia). A child does not laugh at the ugliness of its mother (Uganda) The person who has not traveled widely thinks his or her mother is the only cook (the best *cook*) (many African languages). No matter how skinny, the son always belongs to his father<sup>7</sup> (Galla, Ethiopia) No matter how useless a person may seem to another, they mean the world to their family (Zulu, South Africa). Brothers and sisters are like calabashes; even if they knock each other, they don't break (Bunyoro, Uganda). Brotherhood and sisterhood does not mean physical resemblance but mutual assistance (Africa). Eating together strengthen brotherhood and sisterhood (Tongo, Ghana). When a man person walks naked it is the kinspeople who feel the shame not the naked person. (Igbo, Nigeria). When brothers fight to death, the stranger inherits their father's estate (Igbo, Nigeria). You must treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It is loaned to you by your children (Gikuyu, Kenya).

A visitor is a guest for two days. On the third day give him or her a hoe. (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

Let the guest come so that the host may benefit (get well). (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> On the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: <u>http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\_new.pdf</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> There is a Sukuma, Tanzania riddle about the importance of the father in the home under the theme "Respect for Those in Authority." The riddle says: "*You do not wipe your nose on the pillar that supports the whole house*?" The answer is: "*Parental father*."

These proverbs and sayings are closely linked to African values of relationships, community and unity. They touch all aspects of human life.

*Blood is thicker than water* is a very common African proverb found in many languages. We have to appreciate the deep African cultural values, ties and loyalties of family, clan and ethnic group. In his intervention during the First African Synod in 1994 on the tragic civil war in Rwanda Nigerian Bishop Albert Obiefuna of Awka, Nigeria explained that "when it comes to the crunch, it is not the Christian concept of the church as a family that prevails but rather the adage that *blood is thicker than water*."<sup>8</sup> Thus the blood of family and ethnic group in Africa is thicker than the water of *Baptism*. Stated another way, at the core of an African's priorities and allegiances blood relationship is often more important than the church as a family, even for an African who has become a Christian. This helps to explain how horrible genocide and ethnic cleansing can take place in predominantly Christian countries such as Rwanda and Burundi and more recently in South Sudan.

The Marsabit Diocese,<sup>9</sup> Kenya Website states:

Ethnicity: Our region, for the last couple of years, has been deeply divided on ethnic lines to a point that sessions at deanery level, where different ethnic groups are present, have become a real problem. People identify themselves more with their tribe than with their faith. There is a tedious but obligatory journey of helping the people gain the sense of belonging to a larger Christian Family. It is urgent for the Church to find ways and means of bringing the people together.

In developing African Christianity and the integration of African values and Christian values in the family we are challenged to go further and rephrase this traditional African proverb to say *the water of Baptism is thicker than the blood of tribalism*. This can start at the grassroots level in our homes and SCCs. For the church to see itself as a Christian family is to extend the boundaries beyond the clan and ethnic group. The water of *Baptism* must be stronger than the blood of narrow clannishness and tribalism. In this process SCCs are challenged to become genuine agents of change for the transformation of society. The African theology and praxis of Church-as-Family can be one of the keys to reconciliation, peace, and unity on the continent.

#### • African proverbs and sayings on raising children (13)

The hen with baby chicks doesn't swallow the worm (Sukuma, Tanzania). A cow never runs away from her calves. (Bemba, Zambia).

When the woman is hungry she says, "Roast something for the children so they might eat" (Akan, Ghana).

*Your own child is like an axe; once it falls on you, you pick it up.* It means no matter how serious the offence that your child has committed, you cannot abandon the child or for the child to cease to be your child (Bemba, Zambia).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Albert Obiefuna, "Fourth General Congregation," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17, 1338 (April 27, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Retrieved on 8 June, 2014, <u>http://marsabitdiocese.org/parishes.html</u>

A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm (Yoruba, Nigeria).

The old woman looks after the child to grow its teeth and the young one in turn looks after the old woman when she loses her teeth (Akan, Ghana).

Who loves the mother must love the children also (Bemba, Zambia).

A child who is not taught by its mother will be taught by the world (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*The person who does not listen to an elder's advice gets his or her leg broken.* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

A stick is straightened while still young (many African languages).

It takes a whole village to raise a child (Igbo and Yoruba, Nigeria Proverb).

You are the child of a duck; take care of yourself (Sukuma, Tanzania).

If you think education is costly, try ignorance (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

African proverbs and sayings teach many values about raising children. Often the mother has the central role. Traditionally the elders' advice was very important, but this is changing especially in urban Africa.

There are many insights in the Igbo and Yoruba, Nigeria proverb *It takes a whole village to raise a child*.<sup>10</sup> Child upbringing is a communal effort. The responsibility for raising a child is shared with the larger family (sometimes called the extended family). Everyone in the family participates especially the older children, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and even cousins. It is not unusual for African children to stay for long periods with their grandparents or aunts or uncles. Even the wider community gets involved such as neighbors and friends. Children are considered a blessing from God for the whole community. This communal responsibility<sup>11</sup> in raising children is also seen in the Sukuma (Tanzania) proverb *One knee does not bring up a child* and in the Swahili (East and Central Africa) proverb *One hand does not nurse a child*.

This African proverb can be effectively used during infant baptism. It is the whole extended family that has the responsibility of raising the child in the Catholic faith especially the parents and godparents but also the other siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents and the whole SCC at times. This includes the spirit and practice of pastoral accompaniment.

In general this Nigerian proverb conveys the African worldview that emphasizes the values of family relationships, parenting, parental care, self-sacrificing concern for others, sharing and even hospitality. This is very close to the Biblical worldview as seen in scripture texts related to unity and cooperation (*Ecclesiastes* 4:9,12) and a mother's self-sacrificing love (*Isaiah* 49:15-16).

American politician Hillary Clinton is not the only person who has made this Nigerian proverb popular. In a "Church for Schools" day to support Catholic education in St. Peter's Square, Vatican City on 10 May, 2014 Pope Francis emphasized that family, school and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> A full explanation can be found on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 16 May, 2014, <u>http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/23-1998proverbs/137-november-1998-proverb.html</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> The plan of religious education in the USA uses the term "whole community catechesis."

Catholic community go hand in hand and said: "This makes me think of an African proverb which says: *It takes a village to raise a child*. Let us all say it together: *It takes a village to raise a child*." Inviting the audience or congregation to repeat the proverb is a very African style of communications.

A commentator stated:

Now surely the Pope was meaning to underscore the need for Catholic community in assisting parents to raise children. And that truth needs reinforcing today more than ever. As many growing families in cities in the Western world have found, raising morally healthy children in a secular anti-Christian culture is very challenging. Finding and maintaining a Christian community is essential for good friendships for children, for reinforcing faith and morals, and for giving parents the peers and encouragement they need to continue to go against the tide in raising their children to know, love, and serve God.<sup>12</sup>

Thus in the pope's interpretation of this proverb the village and other local communities supports the parents. The SCC is one of the places where this can happen. The SCC is the church in the neighborhood and closely connected to the local network of clans and families. SCC members are agents of pastoral life, catechetical instructions and evangelization in promoting family life, parenting and family values. Another interpretation of this proverb that the church does not agree with is that the parents and families' help in raising children is insignificant and that more authority should be given to the government and other outside institutions.

# • African proverbs and sayings on marriage ministry/marriage preparation/marriage counseling (14)

*Marriage is like a peanut/groundnut; you have to crack it to see what is inside* (Akan, Ghana).

*Marriage is like a book; every page/day is a new lesson* (Ewe, Ghana). *Marriage is the main post of the hut.*<sup>13</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> John-Henry Westen, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child': Did Pope Francis quote Hillary Clinton?" LifeSiteNews Website, retrieved on 14 May 2014, <u>http://www.lifesitenews.com/blog/it-takes-a-village-to-raise-a-child-did-pope-francis-quote-hilaryclinton</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> "'Marriage,' says an African proverb, is the main post of the hut.' If the house, that is, the Church of Christ in Africa, should sway, perhaps that is because its main support does not plunge deep enough into the earth of Africa. There is a great number of Catholics excluded from the sacraments, the source of unity and strength, by reason of their irregular marital situation. Still others are barred from coming into the Church by reason of already existing relationships. It is good that all of these problems should be treated so as to find out what pastoral solutions are possible." No. 68 of *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod of Bishops First Special Assembly for Africa, *The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission* 

My beloved (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

The journey of marriage is far, far (Ashante, Ghana).

No matter how beautiful is your sister, you cannot marry her (Bemba, Zambia).

*The house that is built well (like a fixed faith) doesn't move any longer (*Lwalu, Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC).

A single person cannot counsel a married couple (Luo, Kenya and Tanzania) An uncircumcised person can never advise a circumcised person (concerning adulthood including marriage) (Gikuyu, Kenya).

The hoes of two people cultivating together in a field sometimes clash (hit) against each other (Sukuma, Tanzania).

*Hoes that dig together never miss to knock at one another* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*Two calabashes in a basin of water will by all means touch each other but not break each other.* (Ewe, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria).

Until the nagging wife marries the second husband, she will not know the value of the first one (Igbo, Nigeria).

*The electric wires are still live* (a warning not to play with the 'live wires" of AIDS because they are packed with enough "voltage" to kill). (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa). *Better a still curtain than a flag blowing in the wind* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

Marriage is basic to African society, but there are many different traditions and customs depending on the local context and situation.

Concerning the Sukuma proverb above – *The hoes of two people cultivating together in a field sometimes clash (hit) against each other*:<sup>14</sup> The Sukuma Ethnic Group is the largest ethnic group (more than six million people) in Tanzania and lives mainly in rural areas in the northwestern part of the country on or near the southern shores of Lake Victoria – mainly in the Mwanza and Shinyanga Regions. The Sukuma are agricultural-pastoralists whose lives focus on farming (maize, sorghum, cassava, sweet potatoes, cotton, etc.) and herding cows. The hoes of two people weeding together in their fields sometimes clash (hit) against each other as seen in this Sukuma proverb. This proverb is applied to married people living in close proximity. They experience misunderstandings and differences at times. This is part of daily life. The proverb is used during Wedding Masses to encourage the newly married couple to persevere in bad times and difficult situations. When marital problems occur, it is used in marriage counseling.

Concerning the Lwalu proverb above -- *The house that is built well (like a fixed faith) doesn't move any longer*. The African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website states:

Towards the Year 2000: "You Shall Be My Witnesses" (Acts 1:8), Vatican: Liberia Editrice and Nairobi Paulines Publications Africa, 1993.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> A full explanation can be found on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 16 May, 2014, <u>http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/57-2014-african-proverb-of-the-month/664-february-2014-the-hoes-of-two-people-cultivating-together-in-a-field-sometimes-clash-hit-against-each-other-sukuma-tanzania-proverb.html</u>

This is a proverb used in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the daily life of married people that praises them for not having the spirit of divorce. The faith union of the Catholic couple is sacramentalized and there is no question of divorce. When a couple marries, the man and woman should live together and try always to feel happy. When a person builds his or house solidly it should remain forever. Before the construction of a house, the cost estimate should be evaluated so that the person has sufficient money to finish. This is true in marriage where commitment is the foundation that makes the husband and wife want to persevere together until they die. The demolition of a house is connected to its expansion or improvement and not to its total destruction. Faith finishes building a house. It is fixed to continue into its old age. This imitates the marriage contract. Aging in marriage with his or her partner is desirable for the family. Building a permanent home is desirable for the family.

In this Lwalu proverb we learn to respect marriage as a permanent alliance. For example, when we say that something is permanent or mandatory, we say that it is "set in stone" such as referring to the Ten Commandments tablets prescribed by God originally. Marriage is a foundational sacrament so the marriage is "set in stone." And this stone supports the home.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Laur Mwepu, "June, 2014 African Proverb of the Month," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 6 June, 2014, <u>http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/57-2014-african-proverb-of-the-month/682-june-2014-the-house-that-is-built-well-like-a-fixed-faith-doesnt-move-any-longer-lwalu-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-drc-proverb.html</u>