

Promoting Online Young People Seekers Small Christian Communities

By Alloys Nyakundi, MPS

Having realized that many young people are drifting away from the Catholic Church, Pope Francis has been calling on church leaders to walk the extra mile to reach out to young people where they are and not wait for them. The Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) responded to this call by appreciating the importance of reaching out to young people by financing the Online Young People Seekers Small Christian Communities that offer young people a safe place to share their concerns and find support for the challenges they face.

This virtual community of about 15 people meet twice a month on Zoom. It's also an international and diverse group that comprises young people from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Pakistan, and the USA. They are not limited only to the above countries but they welcome young people from other parts of the world who want to journey with them. This community is committed to growing together and seeking to find its rightful place within the Catholic community.

Through our encounters, the young people have been able to speak on different issues like:

1. They feel disconnected from the church because they no longer feel welcome and are discouraged by the church because of the silence when injustices are perpetuated in front of their eyes and no one speaks against them.
2. Young people want to be included in the leadership of the church and they don't want to be mere spectators. They want to be part of the decision-makers.
3. Young people want accompaniment and help in understanding issues like: sexuality, drug and substance abuse, depression and transitions in life.
4. Injustices to the environment.
5. Some said that there is a lot of criticism in church and they avoid going to church because they don't want to be criticized.
6. The impact of social media on their lives.

In one of our encounters, Meg McCarthy from the USA highlighted how she felt disconnected from the church in one of the Synodal Gatherings that had been organized by the Albany Diocese. She said, "what stood out from the discussion is that young people feel disconnected from the church they love. For instance, I shared my feeling of being disconnected in the presence of 40 young people who had attended that session of the Synodal Process. I didn't connect at all with the young man who said that the Catholic Church has to return to being the backbone of Western civilization."

Collins Ongoma from Kenya shared about a friend who was very active in Christ the Teacher Catholic Parish in Kenyatta University in Nairobi including being an acolyte. But on going back to her home parish she felt out of place and ended up joining a Pentecostal denomination where she felt her expectations were being met.

Stacey Wandiemba from Kenya gave a testimony on how the online encounter with other young people has transformed her life. She said, “I knew I wanted to belong. I was looking for a family, a place to call home, and people who understand me. I’m glad that I found it in my online Small Christian Community. I saw people who looked like me and had an idea of the common issues affecting us in general. There was no problem that was overlooked and everything was anchored in Christ. My faith in Christ grew, and I had the confidence to let the past go and accept God. I am looking at my life right now. Without my family, I feel I am incomplete. These are people whom I look up to and they also look up to me. We nurture each other, and we have made a lifelong friendship. Above all we let Christ be the anchor of every situation.”

Jenipher Tumuhaise from Uganda said, “some young people feel demotivated when their parents are not committed to attending mass. This also discourages them because they don’t have someone to accompany them nor have a role model. These online encounters with other young people is my new motivation because of the encouragement I get from other young people.”

They also engage in different activities that expand their understanding of the church's teachings. For example, in one of their encounters, the facilitator asked the young people to come up with an image of Jesus that comes to their mind or reflects the work that they do. Everyone was given two minutes to interpret the image and how it reflects on them. It was exciting to see the different types of images young people have about Jesus Christ. Some of the images they gave are: Jesus as a donkey, friend, safari park guide, eldest brother chief intercessor and a farmer.

In summary, our online Young People Seekers Small Christian Community meet young people where they are. They meet globally hence giving them a global view of life. Young people also get an opportunity to discuss with other young people from different parts of the world the kind of projects they are doing with their local communities.

People who want to learn more about the Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) ministry can get free, online materials by visiting the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website [GO»](#)

In addition, two Facebook Pages offer more information:

- Small Christian Communities [GO»](#)
- Young People Small Christian Communities [GO»](#)

For more information and if you want to join a Online Young People Seekers Small Christian Community please contact the Facilitator:

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