

## **PUBLIC LETTER ON THE SYNODAL PROCESS FROM THE ONLINE YOUNG ADULT SEEKERS SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BASED IN KENYA**

This Public Letter is from the Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community (OYASSCC) members. OYASSCC is an international and diverse group of young adults meeting twice a month on Zoom. We are seeking to find their rightful place within the Catholic Church. We have a membership of 20 people from different countries of the world (Pakistan, Germany, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and the USA). We have been following the Synodal process closely and now make different observations. They say problem-sharing makes it half-solved. The synodal process gives us hope as young people because we see it as an opportunity to speak out about the issues affecting young people.

Unfortunately, things are not up to the expectation because when you ask different people if they are aware of the Synodal moments, you realize that very few people are. We had hoped that the church leadership would play a key role in providing material and creating safe spaces where young people would come together to raise their views. Most of the materials submitted come from a few chosen professionals who assumed to understand the issues affecting the Kenyan Church.

We were hoping and still hope that this process will open up to all people regardless of either being conservatives or progressives. Leaders should listen to the Holy Spirit to guide them instead of being guided by their interests. All people should be open to listening to the Holy Spirit to know the will of God and what God is calling us to do.

Time after time, the involvement of young people in Small Christian Communities is usually not prioritized. The Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) and Catholic Women Association (CWA) are well attended to by clergy and the religious. Young people need people with the expertise on how to deal with them. It goes against the saying that the youth are the future church. If we do not take care of them now, do we expect them to be vibrant in their adult life? Create spaces where they can share their faith and keep encouraging them never to lose focus.

Young people should be the focus. The church should be willing to look for them wherever they are without discriminating against them. We lack supporting structures like mentorship and father figures who can faithfully accompany young people. Most Catholic Church leaders are always ready to work with young people who are always supportive of their agenda and never give any objection. Those who criticize the church are considered bad people and rarely get an opportunity to speak or sit at the decision-making table. When conflict arises because of division among leaders caused by nepotism, clannism, tribalism, or illiteracy, it draws young people to look for other suitable avenues where they will find peace and feel heard.

Many young people undergo depression, stress, family conflicts, and unemployment or earn very little to cater for their expenses, hindering them from fully participating in church life and activities. These make them lose their faith when they cannot find comfort in the church. Patience is needed because they will stand with the church when stable. Losing them to the world cannot be beneficial tomorrow.

We believe the church is our mother though lack of clarity on issues to do with LGBTQ diminishes the trust young people have towards the church. Do parents in our communities choose morally upright children and disown those termed immoral? No! All of them remain to be their children. There is a need for the church to open its arms and embrace all the members because, in African communities, the LGBTQ community faces a lot of persecution and rejection. Times are changing we need to offer solutions to our challenges.

The church should accept the new way of life by being inclusive and supportive of women. Women are pillars in the church like men, and entrusting them with a chance to lead can be transformative. On Saturday, 19 November 2022, during the Nairobi Archdiocese Youth Mass, archbishop Phillip Anyolo asked the young people this question, Who among them would like to be a priest? Some young women present stood up with a lot of excitement and said they would want to be priests. The Archbishop did not discourage or condemn them but told them that maybe as we advance, we should start having this conversation. Our question is, when will women get an opportunity to do so if not allowed?

Most young people desert the Eucharist because of the stringent doctrines that hinder them from enjoying this precious gift that Christ left us. For instance, young women who give birth before

marriage should not be denied the Eucharist and segregated from young adult activities. They do not get pregnant by themselves. Some have sad stories behind their pregnancies which someone should consider. The church should have activities for these young women to feel part of the community.

Young People also want to be heard. We hope the Catholic Church in Kenya will reach out to the marginalized. Many young people have been heartbroken by the status quo and want to see change. Many of them opt to meet outside the churches where they feel comfortable and welcomed by their peers. Instead of discouraging them from using social media, the church should guide young people on how to use it positively. For example, by promoting Online Small Christian Communities for Young People.

Our Online Young Adult Seekers SCC offers a safe space for young people where they can share their frustrations and worries and then be guided accordingly by our enriched sharing is our priority. The church needs to look for alternative ways to reach young people in their environs by enlarging its tent. Social media is a platform if well utilized will help in evangelization.

In summary, we recommend the following:

1. Invest in people who can reach out and serve beyond the confines of the parish and meet young people where they are.
2. Accompany their vulnerable families.
3. Help young people to discern.
4. Adults should have a loving, trusting, and reassuring attitude toward young people.
5. Adults are open to listening and dialogue. Young people make mistakes and fall and need someone who will welcome them and not frighten them.
6. Find practical ways of accompanying young people.
7. Be empathetic about the needs of young people.
8. Warn the church from taking advantage of young people because many have little or no livelihood but to depend on the scraps that fall from the master's table.
9. Young people are attracted to lively masses flavored by dancing. It is evident in Christ the King Chaplaincy at Kenyatta University, where young people participate actively during mass.

Emulation of this by other churches can not only attract young people to church but also create a home for them.

We young people from Kenya hope our views will count and be vital in the decisions derived from the ongoing Synodal Process.

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References:

Small Christian Communities Website: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org>

Small Christian Communities Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Communities Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/875453985953421>

Link to Online Young Adult Seekers article:

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/online-young-adult-seekers-small-christian-communities-as-part-of-the-2021-2023-synodal-process/>

Catholic Church Reform International Website: <https://catholicchurchreformintl.org/>