

The Main Challenges Facing the Catholic Church in 2024 and the Practical Solutions to Overcome these Challenges – From the Perspective of Young Adults in the Global South

By Kristiana Aurel, Alloys Nyakundi and Mary Wahome

Part 1: Young Seekers' in their Online SCC's Gatherings

In the ongoing Synodal Process, the [Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community](#) (SCC) engagement has emerged as an essential and dynamic platform to discuss and address the most pressing challenges facing the Catholic Church in 2024. As the church navigates the complexities of modern times, the SCC actively contributes to analyzing and suggesting solutions to its central challenges.

Throughout the Synodal Process from 2021 to 2024, the Catholic Church has been confronted with several complex challenges that require immediate attention. The year 2024, in particular, has revealed a significant spectrum of challenges, encompassing social, doctrinal, and structural challenges, which need more profound understanding and concerted efforts to solve these challenges. In this ongoing dialogue, the Online Young Adult Seekers SCC is dedicated to exploring and discussing these critical challenges as an integral aspect of the Synodal Process. The active participation and views expressed by individual members of this community on the need for the church to evolve, adapt, and innovate in the face of the complexities of the modern world are worth pondering together.

In two of the biweekly meetings held by the Online Young Adult Seekers SCC, each member gave their views on the critical challenges facing the Catholic Church in 2024. Then the participants conducted research related to the crucial challenges facing the Catholic Church in 2024 in their local areas and gathered both further challenges and possible solutions that could be given to the challenges raised. In responding to the challenges, the Catholic Church is facing in 2024, the SCC members followed the stages in the synod process. In the synod process, there were two rounds; in the first round, the participants answered the question, "What is the most important challenge facing the Catholic Church in 2024?" After that, a moment of silence was held, to allow members to reflect on the question. After identifying the challenges, participants entered round two where participants were asked to provide practical solutions to challenges, they pointed out in round one.

Each institution in the world faces its challenges, be it an educational institution, a behavioral correctional institution, a religious institution, or any other institution.

To answer the questions regarding the critical challenges faced by the Catholic Church in 2024, during every two weeks gathering the [Small Christian Community](#) (SCC) participants each shared their views regarding these challenges, and here are their findings along with solutions to the problems or difficulties they raised.

The Catholic Church, like many other religious denominations, is not spared from a series of challenges that evolve around social, economic and well-being of it is members. One aspect of concern is how the church deals with the influence of other denominations, especially prophetic and ministerial churches.

James Mhangwa, Tanzania, one of the SCC participants gave his views on these challenges and offered constructive solutions. One of the challenges he raised is the concern about the influence of other religious denominations which has confused so many Catholics, especially amid the emergence of churches that emphasize miracles and deep spiritual experiences. This may cause some Catholics to feel called to leave their mother church.

James suggested that there should be a focus in the education and knowledge on the Catholic faith by introducing short educational programs or courses that address the essentials of the Catholic faith, church history, and Biblical interpretation. These courses could be aimed primarily at young men and women and anyone who wants to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith. He highlighted the need to combine the richness of Catholic teachings with an understanding of the *Bible*. He believes that by gaining a solid knowledge of the fundamentals of the faith, Catholics can be more stable in their beliefs and not be easily swayed by appeals from other denominations that emphasize miracles.

This solution also includes equipping individuals who have attended such courses to become teachers and mentors to other young people in the respective communities. This idea could create a domino effect where knowledge of the Catholic faith is spread more widely within the community. James believes that with these steps, the Catholic Church can overcome the challenges it is facing by forming people who are solid in faith, resistant to the temptations of other denominations, and ready to share the richness of their faith with the next generation. Through education and in-depth understanding, the Catholic Church can continue to grow and thrive in answering its call to mission.

According to Jesca Donisian, Tanzania, the Catholic Church which is an institution rich in faith teachings and values, faces a major challenge in keeping the younger generation engaged. She mentioned that there is a gap in religious education, especially after the sacrament

of confirmation. With great passion, Jesca provides a solution that focus on maintaining and enhancing religious education among the young people.

One of the challenges raised by Jesca is the church's inability to keep the younger generation engaged after they receive the sacrament of confirmation. Too often, after this important moment, many young people lose their direction and support in understanding and deepening their Catholic faith. Some even decide to no longer be active in the church.

In addressing this issue, Jesca Donisian proposes the establishment of a system or platform for continuing education for young Catholics. She proposes a platform that can be accessed by Catholic teenagers after receiving the sacrament of confirmation. This platform will be a place for them to continue learning and exploring religious teachings.

Jesca also highlighted the importance of maintaining relationships and communication with the younger generation, especially those in high school. She suggested that church leaders and religious educators could regularly visit schools and provide direct teaching to students. This not only provides knowledge about the Catholic faith but also creates a close bond between the church and the younger generation. In the spirit of collaboration, Jesca invites the entire Catholic community to actively participate in this educational platform. She believes that by keeping the younger generation engaged, the church can create a favorable environment for spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith.

Through her proposal, Jesca Donisian paves the way for strengthening religious education among the younger generation of Catholics. By keeping them engaged, the church can ensure that religious values and teachings are not only ceremonially received, but also lived out in every aspect of their lives.

For Kristiana Aurel, a member of a SCC from Bali, Indonesia, one of the most significant challenges facing the Catholic Church in 2024 is concerning cases of abuse, particularly sexual scandals within the Catholic and Protestant churches in Indonesia. In recent months, one of the most notable instances has involved sexual abuse cases implicating church members and intra-congregational abuse. These cases have encompassed sexual abuse against children and youth who are members of the church, and such abuse has been ongoing for years before being reported to civil authorities. However, responses to these cases have been slow and often overlooked. Therefore, she believes that one of the most pressing challenges facing the Catholic Church is sexual abuse, along with the slow handling and lack of response to these cases, which has diminished public trust in the church institution.

In Indonesia, not only within the church but also across various other religions, there have been numerous cases of abuse involving congregants and their places of worship. To

address this issue, some churches in Indonesia have begun adopting a zero-tolerance policy toward abuse and increasing training for church members on how to report abuse incidents. This is a positive initial step towards restoring public trust in the church.

Kristiana believes that addressing this abuse issue requires concrete action from the church in promptly and transparently handling abuse cases. Preventative measures such as training church members on the importance of reporting abuse cases and enforcing a zero-tolerance policy are essential in rebuilding public trust in the church as an institution responsible and safe for its congregation.

On the other hand, the Catholic Church in Pakistan faces a myriad of challenges, as highlighted by my recent interactions and discussions with the local community during the Christmas season. Numerous grievances and complaints have been voiced regarding the church's strategies, the role of priests, and the perceived exclusion of certain individuals.

According to Ashiknaz Khokhar, Pakistan, one prominent challenge is the lack of a positive role played by the church, particularly in the development and encouragement of the youth. Many feel that the church fails to address the needs and aspirations of the younger generation, leading to a reluctance among them to actively participate.

One proposed solution by Ashiknaz is the appointment of Eucharist ministers responsible for connecting with unreached churches in remote areas. This initiative aims to strengthen the bond between the Catholic faith and the people, fostering a sense of attachment and involvement in the church's developmental activities.

Ashik also pointed out that the challenge of acceptance within the church, especially concerning the LGBTQ+ community, has also surfaced. The article received from a Muslim scholar emphasizes the importance of embracing diversity and human rights. While acknowledging the cultural context of Pakistan, it is suggested that the church should strive to be more inclusive, even if it means facing criticism from other religious communities.

Another pressing matter is the lack of effective Parish councils in many regions. To address this, the establishment of autonomous and empowered Parish councils is recommended. This move aims to bring about transparency and accountability within the church, enhancing its organizational structure. Financial constraints pose a significant hurdle, with schools, hostels, and technical institutions facing closure due to insufficient funds. The distribution of gifts during Christmas highlights the immediate need for financial support, urging the church to consider collaborating with donors to ensure the continued operation of these institutions.

Lastly, the call for a more inclusive approach toward laypeople is emphasized. Empowering individuals within the church to conduct seminars on diverse topics, including

human rights and LGBTQ+ challenges, is seen as a step towards creating a more open and informed community.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges faced by the Catholic Church in Pakistan requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach. By fostering transparency, embracing diversity, and empowering the lay community, the church can play a more positive and impactful role in the lives of its followers. Ashiknaz insights shed light on potential solutions that can contribute to the church's growth and relevance in the changing landscape of Pakistan.

Steven Mwanjila, Kenya, and Faith Makori, Kenya, both share an issue on transparency and accountability on financial challenges in the church. There are diocesan contributions that are made yearly but there are no reports given on how these funds were used or distributed. Targets are given to the church, and they are met, but at the end of it all, people wonder where this money goes to. This is a great turn off for the Christians, especially the youths who end up even not contributing the normal offerings.

To resolve this, people can be encouraged and told that it is not compulsory to participate in every contribution, especially if they do not have the money to do so. Secondly, financial reports should be made, and the treasurers should read them out and make them available for people to check on them to erase their doubts and their concerns.

Mary Wahome, Kenya, said that the declining church attendance among the young people and adults is a major problem that needs to be addressed. This is mostly in relation to financial challenges, so many contributions are made in the church, day in day out and no reports are given on how this money has been spent. The many contributions are a turn off for all people because when those people who have money go to give their contributions, the poor of those who do not have them are left behind and this makes them feel ashamed. At the same time, another issue is lack of secrecy, especially among the church leaders. A Christian might have a challenge, they opt to go to church as that is the first place that they are sure they will get help, yes, they will, but after going through so many hierarchies of the church. Later, you will hear some of the leaders going around and spreading word that so and so has been helped, yet they go around boasting and talking. This is a demotivation for everyone and hence people will now stop attending mass.

To curb this, Mary suggested that it is wise for the leaders concerned to get people's views and opinions on board before even producing development projects that require funding, the set targets should come from the congregants themselves and not the hierarchy. Also, secrecy should be highly valued among the church leaders and everyone. It is not fair to go

around spreading word about other people and the kind of help that they have received for every Parishioner.

Collins Ongoma, Kenya, said that the major challenge is about listening to the LGBTQ+ community. The synodal process emphasizes listening to people so much. Listening to this group of people has become a great challenge in the Catholic Church, as their views and opinions are not listened to or heard or taken into consideration. They have been left out and this makes them feel inferior and unwelcome, hence distancing themselves from the church.

To curb this, we should listen to them. They too have a voice, and their voices should be heard and listened to. They were created in the image and likeness of God too and we should not rush into judging and criticizing them, they too are human beings.

Cecilia Ndinda, Kenya, talked of unequal distribution of priests in some churches. She gives an instance of where in their Parish, they have 12 outstations with only three priests running the Parish, and all these outstations have mass going on. Due to this, the priest gives out his homily extremely fast and briefly so that he can go ahead to another outstation and carry out the mass.

To curb this, she suggests that the bishop in charge of the diocese when allocating priests should use a criterion of checking the number of outstations in a Parish and their needs before allocating priests.

Also, another issue is lack of freedom of expression among the church members. Church leaders rarely involve their members in decision making. They make decisions and then inform the members about the final decision that has already been made. She gave an example that in her Parish whenever they want to fundraise for a specific project, few people sit to decide on the dates and how much money each Parishioner is going to contribute without involving Christians. This can be solved by inviting everyone to participate in matters pertaining to church projects.

Abel Nagaya, Kenya, pointed out internal divisions at the local church level especially divisions among the church leader and the clergy when appointing the archbishops and bishops. Tribalism has become a crucial factor because every person wants someone from his or her Parish to get the position of power. This brings in a lot of politics and division among members of a specific Parish or diocese. Some people stop going to church when their own misses a leadership position. Tribalism brings ethnic division and the leaders chosen out of tribalism end up making wrong decisions in support of the people who helped them to get the leadership position hence affecting the growth of the whole church.

He also noted that the catholic church is finding it difficult to adopt to the changing societal challenges. Some church doctrines, rules or laws that used to work sixty years ago are no longer working 21st. For example, some years ago LGBTQ+ and women leadership never used to be a big challenge but now it one of the major challenges that many people are concerned about. This may be because of their cultural norms and values. The pope may give out a directive that is meant to be universal, but it might not suit various parts of the world. To solve this, the church should be well equipped to adapt to the changes in all the places and the communities in the World.

Alloys Nyakundi, Kenya, said that the major problem the Catholic Church is facing is about the discrimination of women in the Catholic Church. Women are treated as second class regardless of the women doing major activities in the church for example cleaning, decorating the church and even in the SCC they are the majority. They are rarely involved in making decisions that affect the whole church. According to him, women should be involved more in decision making and get leadership positions just like men. This will make men and women share church life and live Synodally.

Another challenge Alloys identified is the hierarchical church where the decisions come from the top and Christians are supposed to follow without questioning. There are so many hierarchies in the Catholic Church that are followed with so many titles. Most of the decisions come from the top and those who are at the bottom (Christians) are not given an opportunity to air their views. Those who try to question the magisterium are considered heretics and they find it difficult to get services from the magisterium. A good example is the frustrations young people from Kenya faced when they were trying to prepare for the World Youth Day (WYD) in Portugal in 2023. The organizing team never involved the young people in preparations and when things failed, they still never came back to have a clear conversation with the young people but instead they kept so quiet till things went wrong. The young people were denied their Visas by the Portugal Embassy and now the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops that was in charge has not refunded the young people their all money yet. This has left many young people stressed and depressed more with the current harsh economic time.

Valentine Mukokho, Kenya, talked sexual abuse scandals where the priests, nuns and bishops go against their vows of chastity. Some are married and even they have children, but they hide their families because they will lose their priesthood if the Christians get to know. They end up serving two masters at the same time and misusing the church resources because they must support their families. Some priests take advantage of the vulnerable women and

men, boys and girls who entrust them with the challenges they are facing in their lives hence sexually abusing them.

These challenges should be addressed, and the church can reconsider its stand on celibate life and if allowing the priests to marry can solve the sexual abuse cases and unfaithfulness to their vows so be it.

Aloysius Mugishagwe, Uganda, mentioned that in Uganda he has seen priests using the church as business centers to enrich themselves. The priests are in control of all the projects going on in the church and the finances that are raised in the church. They also try to influence challenges dealing with finances, for example, actively participating in awarding tenders so that they can get some kickbacks. On another note, if for instance, you request a priest to come and offer mass at your home, they will start asking for money and they will list all kinds of things required and they all require money. This might be so challenging to some more so the poor as they might not have the money. To solve these, the clergy and the priests should stop using the church to enrich themselves and just be satisfied with whatever the Christians are able to provide and try to be transparent with church finances.

Joe Healey, USA, mentioned about equality of women in the Catholic Church. They should be given equal rights, treatment, and opportunities to men in the church. The privileges that men have, the women should also enjoy these privileges, for equality and equity in the church, this will eliminate any form of discrimination.

Sarahi Unzueta, USA, informed the young seekers about a movement in the USA called Eucharistic Revival Movement, which is for young people in colleges and universities. The meetings of this movement take place in colleges that can afford it in different cities, and it becomes difficult for most young people to attend, and their voices are left out as it is expensive to get enough money to allow them to attend.

She gave a suggestion on having snacks or some food during SCC gatherings (In-person gatherings) as one major way of motivating young people to attend the SCC and to bring them closer to the church. Also, during these gatherings, people can have dialogues on different emerging challenges to enable them to develop holistically. Maryknollers have been invited to these eucharistic revival ministries to assist and in this way, there are inter-cultural interactions and people get to learn a lot from one another.

Part 2: Young Seekers' Interviews with other Young People

Then after the SCC participants had shared their views as above, the SCC participants conducted research in their respective areas on the challenges faced by the church, and here are their findings along with the solutions to the problems or difficulties they put forward.

Cecilia Ndinda, Machakos, Kenya, interviewed young people in the St. Mary's Tala Parish, Machakos Diocese, Kenya. In a recent interview conducted by Cecilia Ndinda, several significant challenges confronting the Catholic Church in 2024 were highlighted.

In her interview on December 23, 2023, one young person, John Keiti mentioned lack of freedom of expression concerning church decisions. He said that since ancient times, the Catholic Church has not granted freedom of expression to its members. Even if specific "lengthy procedures" are required, our leaders' decisions are binding once announced. Due to their status as leaders whom we respect, challenging their decisions is deemed unacceptable. More so in the African context, young people are seen to be rude or lack respect when they question the adults or the hierarchy. This has resulted in so many young people to fear expressing themselves hence they keep away from many church challenges and activities.

Considering this challenge, John proposed a solution in that the "lengthy" procedures mandating approval from specific activities should be discontinued. The church is a sacred place where everyone should be able to express their views and be involved in certain decision-making processes. While respecting the need to adhere to some rules and procedures, few people should not be the ones making decisions that affect the whole church, but every Christian should be listed to.

Another challenge that arose, St. Mary's Tala Town Parish, Kenya, does not have equal allocation of priests based on the number of church outstations within a Parish. Elizabeth Loko, a youth member from St. John Manza outstation, identified this problem, clearly stating that it has been a challenge in many Parishes' country-wide more so for those ones in upcountry. She pointed out that while the priests might not be enough, there should be guidelines on distributing these priests among different Parishes so that we have a balance. Their Parish has three priests and yet it has 13 outstations meaning that some outstations do not get mass on Sunday. Four of the 13 outstations hold two masses on Sundays resulting in priests doing mass in a rush and this makes the interaction with the Parishioners minimal and leaves the priests exhausted at the end of the day. This challenge is particularly prevalent in rural areas where Parish outstations are spread across various regions.

Elizabeth suggested that priests should be allocated according to the number of outstations within a Parish. Alternatively, other individuals capable of helping such as seminarians, deacons, and sisters, should be sent to assist the priests more so in giving Eucharist to people who do not get an opportunity to celebrate mass every Sunday because of a lack of enough priests, particularly in Parishes with numerous church outstations. This approach could alleviate the burden on priests and ensure the smooth functioning of religious services across all outstations more particularly in the rural Parishes.

Another important challenge highlighted by a young person at St. Mary's Parish is the difficulty young people get when they go for confession. Florence Kanini pointed out that most Catholic young people refrain from going for confession due to fear of facing the priest and divulging their sins. She suggests that they might admit some sins while concealing others, questioning the necessity of confession in such circumstances. She feels uncomfortable confessing her sins, particularly when the priest already knows her, making it embarrassing to disclose certain crucial challenges during confession. Supporting Florence's viewpoint, Kelvin Mutua, expressed his inability to confess sins because the Parish priest happens to be his friend and he wants to look good anytime they meet.

Patrick Kieti adds to this perspective by stating that he is afraid to confess specific sins as they seem too significant to disclose to the priest with whom they actively work together. Consequently, the number of young people confessing their sins and receiving the sacrament is notably lower compared to the attendance at Sunday Mass. Considering these challenges, Patrick Kieti suggests that as a church, there should be a confession space where individuals do not face the priest one-on-one during confession but rather confess anonymously, particularly in churches lacking enclosed confessionals, like St. Dominic Mang'auni outstation. Florence and Kelvin also advocate for educating young people about the importance of confession and avoiding minor sins such as lying and using offensive language, which poses challenges for individuals. This issue emphasizes the church's need to reconsider its approach to confession, ensuring it becomes more accessible and comfortable to young people, encouraging many of them to seek spiritual guidance and the sacrament of reconciliation.

Another challenge highlighted is the offering for Mass. Felix Ngeli, the Parish youth chair at St. Mary's Tala Town Parish, expressed that, particularly within their Parish, Mass would not be conducted without a specific amount of money (above \$15). He cited an example of offering \$10 for Mass, which their leader rejected. The reason that he needed to add more was that, with it, Mass would take place. Their money was rejected regardless of the many unemployed youth making sacrifices to raise that money

Cecilia also observed a similar challenge at St. Dominic Mang'auni Catholic Church, Kenya, where, on December 25, 2023, the youth organized a second Mass, collecting only \$12 for the offering. However, their leader rejected this amount, insisting they increase it. In response to this issue, Felix proposed that the offering for Mass should not be fixed at a specific amount but rather should depend on how much each group, akin to Small Christian Communities, can raise. The offering for Mass should be a voluntary contribution that members can provide as a blessing without coercion. This issue highlights the need for a more inclusive and flexible approach concerning the offering of Mass within the church. It underscores the importance of ensuring that contributing to Mass remains a heartfelt and voluntary offering, aligned with the principles of faith and devotion rather than predetermined by specific monetary thresholds. This shift could foster a more harmonious and inclusive environment within the church community, allowing members to contribute willingly and according to their means.

Abel Nagaya, Kenya, a member of the Online Young Adult Seekers SCC member, researched on the critical challenge confronting the Catholic Church in 2024 and the potential solutions. According to Nagaya, the Catholic Church encountered several challenges in the synod process. One of these challenges emerged at the end of 2023 when the Holy Father provided a pastoral guideline concerning same-sex marriages and LGBTQ+. This situation led to misinterpretations of the Pope's message regarding same-sex marriages within the Catholic Church. This misunderstanding caused individuals to question the Catholic teachings on holy matrimony and the original purpose of marriage according to God. The misinterpretation of the Pope's words has resulted in confusion among Christians and the entire church, sparking endless debates due to differing opinions.

To alleviate tension within the church, especially considering that LGBTQ+ matters have been a prolonged discussion globally, Nagaya emphasizes the responsibility of Catholics to help others understand that the Pope's intention was not to advocate for same-sex marriages but giving a pastoral guideline to the marginalized. Nobody should be unwelcomed from entering the church due to their sins, everyone faces the consequences for their sins and could change, just as other Christians with hidden sins such as adultery, masturbation, gossip, among others, are not exempted from the church and should be treated equally. (This aligns with the viewpoint of Ann Kung'u, a student at Kenyatta University.)

Another significant challenge in the Catholic Church is internal division, including theological differences, doctrinal debates, and governance challenges, which can affect the unity and cohesion of the church. This separation could cause tensions between clergy and laity, potentially impacting the church's ability to address contemporary challenges and maintain a

consistent message. However, it is crucial to note that the Catholic Church has a long history of navigating internal differences and striving for unity under the leadership of the Pope.

To address such internal disputes within the church, Nagaya suggests that the Catholic Church, recognizing the Pope as the synodal leader within the Catholic community, should establish administrative guidelines for Catholic churches across different continents to find solutions according to the local context because challenges affecting the Christians in Europe might not be the same challenges affecting the Catholic church in Africa.

Another pressing issue is the Catholic Church's struggle to adapt to social changes worldwide. The world is dynamic and has undergone various changes across various aspects of life over centuries, including religion and culture. These changes have significantly influenced the church's journey towards the Synod as engaging individuals with differing perceptions about religious and cultural emerging challenges. To tackle these challenges, the pivotal role of the Pope is to acknowledge these differences and issue guidelines tailored for different continents based on their respective cultures and norms. According to Nagaya, these guidelines should be adapted globally to diverse cultural contexts. The hierarchy should be open to conversations about different emerging challenges in the world.

Mary Wahome, another SCC member interviewed a Patrick Gachanja from Gikondi Parish, Catholic Archdiocese of Nyeri, Kenya who pointed out that the misunderstandings and division among church leaders, particularly regarding the Pope's recent message about blessing same-sex couples and LGBTQ+. He stated that the Pope did not say these marriages would or should be accepted into the church as sacraments. There is a difference between a sacrament and a blessing. He explained that priests are ordained and should bless people no matter what; they should not withhold their blessings from anyone. Priests bless murderers, liars, prostitutes, and people committing all kinds of sins, so why should same-sex couples not be blessed? Priests are Christ's representatives on earth, and God's salvation is for everyone and His blessing. He felt that this would cause significant division among church members and leaders.

Patrick clearly stated that nobody should be denied blessings because the priests and other church leaders are not the ones to judge others but instead bring them closer to God. We are all sinners, and it is only God who should judge us by our actions.

On the other hand, Steven Mwanjila, a member of Online Young Adult Seekers SCC, conducted interviews with several youth in his area and found that the Catholic Church faces several challenges today. The first challenge is the Lack of Financial Transparency. Addressing the challenge of financial transparency is crucial for the Catholic Church. Members' contributions are not visible regarding allocation, including funds donated by each Parish in the

diocese every year and funds collected by the congregation for church needs. Erick Kilonzo stated, "The church needs to provide detailed reports to its members on how much money is allocated for each project." He feels that reports are only available to high-ranking church officials, forgetting that the congregation collectively participate in raising the money. Nimo Mwangi also argued that the church does not allocate sufficient funds to assist those in need, even though some of its members struggle in poverty. "It is not that the church does not help those in need, but it's insufficient," she said. Therefore, the church should be more transparent in financial matters as this will enhance trust between the Church and its congregation, and even make people feel comfortable in supporting the church.

The second challenge is Inclusivity. Building a truly inclusive environment, regardless of age, race, or sexual orientation, is crucial. LGBTQ+ individuals should feel accepted in the church. Although more people, especially in Africa in general, oppose the LGBTQ+ community, this is the right time for the church to lead by example and share the love they have been preaching. Chao Peter mentioned that the church faces significant pressure from the secular world, and the Western world should be at the forefront of advocating for the inclusivity of these members as the church is losing the younger generation at an alarming rate. He argued that the African church may take time to accept them entirely, but regardless, these members should be allowed into the church because the church is love. Finally, the church should allow more members to participate in sacraments. Some of them are those who are not married in the church. However, I acknowledge the church's steps to involve more people in celebrating the Eucharist, the latest being single mothers.

The third challenge that Steven Mwanjila found in his interviews is Modernity in the church. Adaptation to modernity emerges as an urgent need. Embracing technology, leveraging social media, and updating traditional practices will ensure meaningful connections with the younger generation and contemporary society. While browsing TikTok, he found a page named Voice of Reason, where a man dwells deeply into challenges related to the Catholic faith and discusses reports on the Synod with his followers. However, this is just one individual. The church should take the initiative to run pages like this on social media; that way, they can reach out to more youth. Victoria Soko argued that the church could use this opportunity to strengthen catechism teaching for young people. Nimo Mwangi also said this is an opportunity for the church to teach young people more about their Catholic faith and how to remain steadfast in it. Platforms like these should help the young people get answers about their Catholic faith. "The only way to reach out to more young people is through social media, where they spend most of their time," said Stacy Koki.

James Alex Mhangwa, Tanzania, interviewed a group in the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam, explicitly engaging with seven youths from the St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish. A synodal process was utilized during this brief encounter, allowing each participant to answer questions. Following this, they observed a ten-minute silent reflection period. A second round involved free discussions where participants proposed practical solutions to the challenges addressed. In these interviews, James collected various thoughts from the group regarding the challenges facing the Catholic Church in 2024. Each young person shared their perspectives.

Joseph Mfuse mentioned that adapting to contemporary social changes that may conflict with the Catholic faith. An example he cited was the blessing of same-sex couples and LGBTQ+ which could potentially divide the church into two groups: those in agreement with the Pope's decision and those who are not.

Irene Kimati raised concerns about the liturgy, pointing out numerous protocols in the church that restrict freedom of worship. She expressed dissatisfaction with rigid protocols such as standing, kneeling, scripted morning prayers, and absent room for innovation in church worship, stating that these protocols often hinder spiritual growth.

Miriam highlighted the need for consistent formations from childhood to adulthood. After receiving instructions on sacraments like Holy Eucharist and Confirmation, there is a perceived absence of further teachings that could strengthen the youth's faith, particularly in matters like marriage.

Emmanuel Yoabu pointed ambiguity within the church regarding blessings for same-sex couples and baptisms for transgender individuals. He noted the controversy arising due to the church's unclear stance on these matters, emphasizing the leadership's opposition to blessing same-sex marriages.

Several practical solutions can be suggested based on the challenges raised by these young adults. Utilizing the Holy Scriptures as the most powerful tool to navigate and transform the world, regardless of its complexity, is paramount. Verses such as John 14:6 emphasize Jesus as the way, truth, and life, underscoring the significant role of Christ as the absolute truth and eternal life. Passages like 2 Timothy 3:16 affirm the divine inspiration and authority of the *Bible*, serving as a guide for truth and righteous living. Moreover, consistent teaching from childhood to adulthood, incorporating relevant spiritual guidance, is essential to strengthen the faith of young individuals.

Ashknaz Khokhar, Mehwish Akram, and Staish Angel, members of the Online Young Adult Seekers SCC, conducted surveys with various youth groups, including Active Youth Group, Emmaus Youth Group, Dominican Youth, Catherine Group, and several members of

nuns in Sahiwal Parish, Pakistan. They gathered crucial insights from these surveys, uncovering key points regarding several significant challenges. The surveys highlighted several key points, notably Sexual Abuse Scandals: The Catholic Church faces substantial scrutiny and criticism due to allegations of sexual abuse by clergy members. These scandals have led to legal actions and financial repercussions and tarnished the church's reputation.

Additionally, there is the issue of Declining church Attendance. Many Parishes are witnessing decreased attendance, particularly among the younger generation. Factors such as changing social values, increasing secularization, and reduced religious affiliations contribute to this challenge. Cultural Attitude Shifts are another pressing issue encountered by the church. Changes in societal attitudes towards gender roles, sexuality, and family structures can create tensions between church teachings and contemporary cultural norms.

Moreover, the shortage of priests is affecting several areas, potentially impeding the church's ability to serve its community effectively. This scarcity might be influenced by celibacy requirements, evolving perspectives on religious vocations, and societal expectations. Financial burdens are also a challenge for the Catholic Church, as it grapples with maintaining churches, supporting charitable initiatives, and addressing legal challenges related to abuse scandals, all of which can strain financial resources.

Interfaith and Denominational Relations present another challenge as the Catholic Church exhibits rigidity in accepting other beliefs, particularly from non-Catholics, potentially neglecting the need for more inclusive attention. Relevance in Modern Society poses an ongoing challenge for the church, requiring constant adaptation to remain pertinent in a changing world. Addressing contemporary challenges, integrating technological advancements, and connecting with diverse communities are persistent challenges. Lastly, Political and Social Challenges remain a struggle for the Catholic Church in navigating engagement in political and social matters such as immigration, environmental concerns, and economic justice while upholding its doctrinal integrity.

The proposed solutions to these challenges lie within Parish councils. These problems must involve people in decision-making processes to be resolved. Listening to the community's voices, especially those providing criticism, is crucial. The church should sanctify laypeople and women as Eucharistic ministers to offer prayers in areas where priests are unavailable. Expanding the responsibilities of nuns beyond monastery duties within Parishes could enhance improvements. Additionally, ensuring greater accountability in funds and scholarships for students and showing care and compassion towards non-Catholics are imperative in the current context.

Valentine Musumba Mukokho, a member of SCC, conducted interviews with members of the Holy Rosary Shiseso Parish in the Kakamega Diocese, Kenya concerning the challenges facing the Catholic Church in 2024. The interviews revealed various viewpoints from Parishioners regarding these challenges.

The first issue highlighted is the matter of synods and the significance of Synodality. According to Caroline, a Holy Rosary Shiseso Parish member, the church's management seems to overlook educating Christian believers about synods and their meanings. She observed that the Parish priests and some Christian believers know more about synods. The Parish often fails to address challenges directed by synods due to the lack of understanding among most Christians. Caroline added that concerning youth involvement in synods, many young people do not attend church activities. Most youth need to be made aware of the essence of moving together.

He noted that it is important to educate Christians about the significance of Synodality and the importance of participating in synod processes. These activities should be explained comprehensively and understood by all Christian believers. Additionally, engaging activities, such as games, hiking, discussions, and similar events, should attract young people to church.

The second challenge raised concerns the transparency of church finances. Edwin one of the young people, emphasized that a lot of money is raised in various event for example fundraisings but there is no accountability on how it is spent. He mentioned that needs to be appropriately utilized by the Parish management. Many announced projects are not initiated, and the church has become profitable, benefiting a few individuals. Edwin highlighted that this challenge significantly affects young people, as many are estranged from the church due to struggling to sustain their livelihoods while the funds they contribute are being wasted by few people.

He suggested that the church should focus more on the spiritual nourishment of it is Christians and not concentrate on taking advantage of Small Christian Communities gathering to fundraise for church projects. Also, there should be transparency and accountability on how the church finances are spent. A report should be provided so that all members can affirm whether the money has been spent well or not.

Rosemary, a Parish member, pointed out that the current challenge affecting the Catholic Church is the focus on educating individuals for leadership roles, overlooking those less educated but possessing significant leadership skills and a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. There is also a concern regarding conducting all masses in English and Swahili, leaving uneducated individuals lagging in their faith. Leadership selections often overlook clan and

tribal considerations, leading to domination by certain clans and tribes in Small Christian Communities.

She suggested that the church should do it is best to accommodate everyone within the church and allowing anyone capable of leading to do so to aid Christian believers in developing their faith. During leadership selections, considering all clans and tribes could enhance representation within the church community. Embracing cultural diversity, like how the Kenyan bishop conducted masses in Kiswahili during the 2023 synod in Rome, should be encouraged.

Several findings emerged from Collins Ongoma's interviews with various youths, including insights from Shiko Wambui from St. Mary's Ongata Rongai. According to Shiko Wambui, the issue to be addressed is Neocolonialism - it has affected us through various moral dilemmas we face in the contemporary society. We have been asked to accept specific standards to be recognized and included. Shiko says, "Blessing same-sex couples, for example, is something we have never idealized before, and now we are asked to recognize teachings that contradict our church, and if not, it's spun as hatred towards that community. It requires order and a structured approach to avoid difficulties with the conservative circles."

Simon Situma from St. Antony of Padua, Kenya, talked about the issue of Racism in the Catholic Church. Simon stated that racism is a disease within our church as a response to World Youth Day. It is degrading for our mother church to disappoint the youth from African countries after organizing the World Youth Day event and then failing to facilitate to ensure they get their visas. In the future, it is better to have regional events where no one's visa can be rejected if the organizers fail to ensure that every youth gets the required travel documents on time. Planning and rectifying such significant errors can help us overcome disappointments in the future.

Collins Ongoma also shared his view that the LGBTQ+ community faces much rejection. The church struggles to find ways to make the LGBTQ+ community feel accepted and wanted by the church. They are buying something new sounds noisy in communities firmly holding onto marriage determined by tradition or religious doctrine. The church is moving in the right direction in its teachings because fostering a spirit of brotherhood will win the battle. Making this community globally accepted will take time, but once a concept is taught and people see things from different perspectives, it can enhance mutually beneficial relationships. Our pastors can also help the community grow more vital within the church, depending on how they tackle this challenge. The main challenge faced is the response that lacks commitment and needs to be timely.

In summary, the above conversation with young people signifies a genuine endeavor to actively understand and address challenges facing the Catholic Church by collecting the above insights. The aim is to facilitate informed discussion and contemplation within the Catholic community. The diverse perspectives and thoughts the young members bring are essential in shaping the church's approach to facing challenges and adapting to the evolving landscape of 2024. The findings are a valuable contribution to collective introspection and deliberation that is essential to the growth and relevance of the church in the present.

Young people are an essential key to the tomorrow of the church. They are the ones that the church is looking to in the future. They are to be the parents to the next group of children in the Pontifical Missionary Childhood; they are the ones to become priests, bishops, laypeople and women, nuns, and even members of the next Catholic Men Association and Catholic Women Association. Therefore, it is essential to continue involving and listening to the views of the young people. Their views and suggestions for these challenges need to be well noted and taken into consideration, and when this is done, the church's future will be well taken care of, and the future will be bright.

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