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The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council: A Historical, Theological and Pastoral Investigation

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND AMONG THE LUGBARA PEOPLE OF UGANDA AFTER THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: A HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract

This dissertation depicted the events in the lives of the Lugbara Ethnic group, who will go down in the history of Uganda, through their actual existence, their deeds, their accomplishments and their contributions, but particularly because of their successful, "small Christian communities," an important segment in all its facets, in the Lugbara Christian life. The new way of being Church that came out of the Second Vatican Council, that is, since the 1960s was the small Christian community. These pages narrated the development, the early struggle, the uncertainty, the needs, the goals, the purposes, the accomplishments and the success of this type of community, without which the African Catholic population would not function in the way it was intended. The small Christian communities play an extremely important role in the Lugbara people's life, way back to the grass roots.

The first chapter of the dissertation focuses on the life and culture of the Lugbara people of Uganda, and answer the question: who are the Lugbara people of Uganda? It explored both how the Lugbara culture and their contact with the outside world impacted their community life and eventually the development of small Christian communities in the Catholic Church. It examined the Lugbara people and their land, and traced the origin and history of the Lugbara people in general, but with special focus on the Lugbara of Uganda. It surveyed the social structure, the economic system, and the political aspect of the Lugbara people, and examined Lugbara traditional religions. It explored the Lugbara contact with the outside world such as the Arab slave traders, the European colonialists, the missionary groups such as the African Inland Mission (Quakers), the Comboni missionaries (Roman Catholic), and the Anglican Church. It also reviewed how these various groups, who occupied their land and the influence received from the outside world, affected community life.

The second chapter of the dissertation began with the question, what are small Christian communities? It located the phenomenon of small Christian communities within the Catholic Church today. It explored the development of small Christian communities in Africa, by looking at the background of the community structure in Africa. It reviewed the history of the AMECEA study conferences of the Eastern Africa bishops, during 1973, 1976 and 1979, and their accomplishments. It examined the purpose and development of small Christian communities in Uganda, Arua and Nebbi dioceses, particularly among the Lugbara of Uganda.

Chapter three of the dissertation investigates the theological and pastoral aspects of the small Christian communities in the Catholic Church and among the Lugbara people of Uganda. The theologies of small Christian communities are deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition such as Comboni missionary activities among the Lugbara, the Second Vatican Council, Papal documents, and the African synod of bishops. The contemporary pastoral activities of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people will include: Bible sharing in their meetings; networks and twinning with other small Christian communities both local and international; the rites of Christian initiation of Adults (RCIA); caring for needy people and developing a health care ministry.

Chapter four of the dissertation attempted to evaluate the small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda. It examined the positive aspects and contributions of the emerging small Christian communities and their effect upon the Catholic Church in the Arua and the Nebbi dioceses among the Lugbara people. It focused also on the negative elements and submitted some suggestions to improve them. The chapter end with the general conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR: Small Christian Communities among the Lugbara People of Uganda: Evaluation and General Conclusion

Dedication

To my Parents: Mr. Jacinto Dratibi Emee and Mrs. Martha Olokoro, through whom I have been blessed with the gift of life, for offering me the opportunity for formal education early in my life.

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Abbreviations

Acts. - Acts of Apostles
ADS. - AMECEA Documentation Service
AFER - African Ecclesial Review
AIM - African Inland Mission
AMECEA - Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
AROPIC - Aringa and Obongi Peace Initiative Committee
ARU - Association of Religious in Uganda
BAT - British American Tobacco
BCCs - Basic Christian Communities
cf. - see or refer to another work
I Cor. - First Corinthians
II Cor. - Second Corinthians
Dt. - Deuteronomy
Dr. - Doctor
Ed. (s). - Editor(s)
Eph. - Ephesians
Ex. - Exodus
Fr. - Father
FUNA - Former Uganda National Army
Gal. - Galatians
Gn. - Genesis
G.S. - *Gaudium Et Spes,* The Pastoral Constitution of the Church on Modern World
Heb. - Hebrews
HIV/AIDS - Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
IACs - Independent African Churches
Ibid. - *Ibidem* - The same work or author that has been quoted before
i.e. - *id est*- that is, that is to say
Jas. - James
Jn. - John
L.G. - *Lumen Gentium,* The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
Lk. - Luke
Mk. - Mark
Mt. - Matthew
Msgr. - Monsignor
No. - Number or nos. numbers
NRA - National Resistance Army
NRM - New Religious Movements
I Pet. - First Peter
II Pet. - Second Peter
Pg(s). - Page(s)
Phil. - Philippians
Ps. - Psalms
RCIA - Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
Rev. - Revelation

Rom. - Romans
I Sam. - First Samuel
SCCs - Small Christian Communities
SECAM - Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
I Thess. - First Thessalonians
I Tim. - First Timothy
Tit. - Titus
UNRF - Uganda National Rescue Front
UNRF II - Uganda National Rescue Front Two
UPDF - Uganda People's Defense Force
Wis. - Wisdom
WNBF - West Nile Bank Front

Introduction

This dissertation is about to introduce a very thorough research of an ethnic group that emerged from the Ugandan territory, in the Eastern part of Africa, about forty miles from the shore of the River Nile, to the Western side. This area is called the West Nile Region or the Territory of West Nile.

Ancient stories that were passed down from generation to generation tell us that the Lugbara ethnic group descended, perhaps by means of the Nile, all the way from Egypt. Most of the land south of the desert was thick with vegetation and it would have been almost impossible to cross it on foot. They may have been a nomadic people and the journey may have taken years. The Lugbara may have lived in different places to seek their own survival, and may have moved towards the West Nile direction by way of the Sudan Territory.

They were an indigenous group of people that believed in an ancient religion, that is, the Lugbara Traditional religion, involving a higher Being, God, the Creator of the Universe, and their ancestors. While the people of the Western World and the orient were living in a totally different culture, missionaries from Italy ventured into the West Nile territory of Uganda in 1917, in search of souls that they wanted to convert to Christianity, sometimes at the cost of their own lives.

Arab traders had been there many years before them, occasionally for the wrong reasons, even to capture Ugandans and Lugbara people and make them into slaves for other countries, for their unjust inhumane financial interest.

Belgium and the British Empire took over the land at different times between 1882 and 1962, and they in turn influenced the people who lived there, both the missionaries and the indigenous population.

These chapters will illustrate the wars and turmoil that took place, particularly from 1882 to this day. Whatever governments were in power, played a role in the political aspects of Uganda and Lugbara in particular. Through the Comboni Missionaries, the Catholic Church became very involved in the lives of the Catholic Christians throughout the African Continent and also in the Lugbara people, following their conversion.

Many Synods were held, and many documents were written and much research was done to determine an effective method to be used to help and to reach the people, as their parishes are rather large in highly populated areas. Eventually the parishes instituted their mission stations or out stations, that served as chapels. Priests visited every site to hear confessions, celebrate Marriages, Baptisms and mainly Mass. The catechists, during a priest's absence, took over some of their duties, by helping with funerals, distribution of Holy Communions, and carrying out religious services involving prayer.

This is a common practice recognized by the Catholic Church in Third World Countries, where there is a definite need. Because of the Large African Catholic population scattered across a vast landscape, with no roads and little transportation, it became necessary to develop or envision an idea that would enable groups of people who live within the same neighborhood or immediate vicinity to work together, pray together, organize together and most of all to love and obey God and love and care for their neighbor. Who is their neighbor? Someone in need, anyone at all, whether he or she is a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, or a member of any other religion, because we are brothers and sisters across the earth.

The new way of being Church that came out of the Second Vatican Council, that is, since the 1960s was the "Small Christian Community." These pages will narrate the development, the early struggle, the uncertainty, the needs, the goals, the accomplishments and the success of this type of community, without which the African Catholic population will not function in the way it was intended.

The African people are very religious. They are numerous, and if they were not a part of the small Christian communities, they would not be as successful, as human beings, or as Catholic Christians. Large parishes of twenty to thirty thousand people become very impersonal and almost chaotic without adequate staff and proper organization. The lack of priests and deacons, distances between one point and another, lack of transportation, and bad roads create obstacles to the efficient function of any Church, anywhere in the world, where such a situation exists. The small Christian communities play an extremely important role in the Lugbara people's life, way back to the grass roots.

The people, as the laity, based on their capacity, ability, and good will, have contributed much to the universal Church and to one another. They are an important part of the small Christian communities. They support the clergy and their parishes in a very dedicated manner. In Uganda, in this case among the Lugbara people, these individuals have a voice and opinions that must be heard. The small Christian communities are small segments of the large picture, their parish. Within the diocese these parishes join together become an organized, functional, devout, articulate, altruistic Church, a Church of prayer and of acts of mercy, responsible, united and efficient, dedicated to God and to humankind.

Through the eyes of our vivid imagination, we must follow the traits that the Lugbara have taken. This dissertation will depict the events in the lives of the Lugbara Ethnic group, who will go down in the history of Uganda, through their actual existence, their deeds, their accomplishments and their contributions, but particularly because of their successful "small Christian communities," an important segment in all its facets, in the Lugbara Christian life. This is their story in chapter one. The Lugbara of Uganda: Life and Culture.

CHAPTER ONE

The Lugbara of Uganda: Life and Culture

Introduction

This chapter is about the small Christian community and the Lugbara people of Uganda. A historical, theological and pastoral investigation of the small Christian communities is important, because these communities have addressed the issues affecting the Lugbara people of Uganda such as poverty, disease, exploitation, injustice, and human right abuses.

To carry out such a historical, theological, and pastoral investigation of the small Christian communities among the Lugbara people, it is necessary to explore their life and their culture. The first chapter of the dissertation will focus on the life and culture of the Lugbara people of Uganda, and answer the question: Who are the Lugbara people of Uganda? It will explore both how the Lugbara culture and their contact with the outside world impacted their community life and eventually the development of small Christian communities in the Catholic Church. It will examine the Lugbara people and their land, and trace the origin and history of the Lugbara people in general, but with special focus on the Lugbara of Uganda. It will survey the social structure, the economic system, and the political aspect of the Lugbara people, and examine Lugbara traditional religions. It will explore the Lugbara contact with the outside world such as the Arab slave traders, the European colonialists, the missionary groups such as the African Inland Mission, the

Comboni missionaries and the Anglican Church. It will also review how these various groups, who occupied their land and the influence received from the outside world, affected community life.

The life and culture of the Lugbara people of Uganda is firmly rooted in the idea of community. Community life is experienced in the family, village, lineage, clan and tribe. The members of the community are actively involved in the social, political, economic and religious life of the people. The same spirit of neighborhood community is emerging in many Catholic parish communities among the Lugbara people, and they are being referred to as small Christian communities. There is a renewed spirit for community building in the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people, because the Lugbara people need each other's support. As John Mbiti writes, "Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group, happens to the individual. The individual can only say, 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.'"[1] This is the African view of the human person. We are all relational and we need one another.

One of the important contributions of the Second Vatican Council is the renewed understanding of the Church as "Mystical Communion."[2] The Second Vatican Council

[1] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Kampala: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 2002), 108-109.

[2] Dennis M. Doyle, *The Church Emerging from Vatican II: A Popular Approach to Contemporary Catholicism* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992), 31. Basing himself on Dulles' work, Doyle explained, "The mystical communion model places it emphasis on the people who make up the Church and their connectedness with each other and with God. This model, while not necessarily rejecting institutional elements, places more stress upon spirituality, community, and fellowship. The Church in this view is something of a spiritual support group that aids people in their quest to live holy lives. Dulles associates two images with this model, the Body of Christ and the People of God."

urges us to live as a community. Therefore, God's word urges us to become a community.[3] The effect of such renewed understanding in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council is reflected by the fact that people coming from the same neighborhood or the Christians who are living next door to each other are beginning to meet and become active members in the parish community. The community in the neighborhood is more involved in giving, sharing, receiving, loving and being together with one another.

The manner in which Christianity affected the Lugbara people, their history, their role and contributions to African society today is narrated throughout these chapters. I am an African Roman Catholic Priest. Like many others, I am a product of the evangelization of the Comboni missionaries of Verona, Italy. They found our people and our hidden corner of the world, during the latter part of the 19th century. Today, in retrospect, I am proud to be a member of the Lugbara ethnic group. I am also happy to be a religious leader within the small Christian community. The members of the Lugbara ethnic group are my people and Uganda is my land.

Over the years, the missionaries have had a great impact on the Lugbara people. They acted as channels through which European ideas, products and methods were introduced to the people as well as providing new religious and moral notions. Among the Africans, they also promoted individualism. Despite all the missionary activities, only in more recent years did the notion of small Christian communities emerge among the Lugbara

[3] Fritz Lobinger, *Building Small Christian Communities* (Nairobi, Kenya: St. Paul Press, 1992), 16. See also Acts 2: 42-47; Acts 4: 32-37; Rom. 12: 3-13; 1 Cor. 12: 12-30; Eph. 4: 1-16; Col. 3: 12-17.

people and in the Catholic Church. These small Christian communities are now celebrated as a new way of being Church. However, in practice, they still retain much of the old institutional, hierarchical, clerical, juridical and often paternalistic way of being Church. If these small Christian communities are to be recognized as a new way of being Church, they need to be grounded in and reflect the various models and images of the Church as presented in the Second Vatican Council, for example people of God, community, pilgrim, and servant. Moreover, these small Christian communities must be agents of liberation, inculturation and communion, by embracing emerging theological methods and paradigms such as contextual and narrative theologies.[4]

1.1 The Lugbara People and their Land

The Lugbara are "Bari speakers or Sudanic-speaking people."[5] They are members of the Moru-Madi sub-group of eastern and central Sudanic languages within the Nilo-Saharan language family. They are related to the Avokaya, Luluba and Moru in eastern and central Sudan; Kaliko and Logo in the eastern and central Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly known as Zaire; and Madi in northwestern Uganda.[6]

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[4] J. N. K. Mugambi, "Theological Method in African Christianity," in Mary N. Getui (ed.), *The Theological Method and Aspects of Worship in African Christianity* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2000), 5-40.
[5] John Middleton, *The Lugbara of Uganda*, Second Edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 2. The same idea was expressed by John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation and Pastoral Application to the Lugbari*, (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 15. John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: International African Institute, Oxford University Press, 1964), 1.
[6] Douglas Boone and Richard L. Watson (eds.), *Moru-Madi Survey Report* (Nairobi-Kenya: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1996), 13. See John Middleton, *The Lugbara of Uganda*, Second Edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 2. John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation and Pastoral Application to the Lugbari*, (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 15. John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: International African Institute, Oxford University Press, 1964), 1.

The Lugbara who settled in the northwestern part of Uganda constitute the largest ethnic group in the west Nile region of Uganda. They live mainly along the line of the Nile-Congo divide, which at this point is also the political boundary between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.[7] The Lugbara people of Uganda are surrounded by other tribes such as the Kakwa in the North; the Nilotic Alur in the south; and the Madi in the northeast of Uganda. To the west is the Democratic Republic of Congo, which also has the Lugbara, Alur, Okebu, Ndu, Bale Lendu, Kaliko, Logo and Kakwa tribes of Congo. John Middleton explains:

> The lowlands (Nile Valley) are occupied by the Madi, although some small Lugbara groups spill over into them. In the north the escarpment ceases and the Lugbara extend to the Sudan border over the low-lying Aringa plains. To the west there is a broken escarpment that forms the boundary between the Lugbara and Keliko, beyond whom are the kingdoms of the Mangbetu and the Azande. To the south lies Alurland high, broken country at the northern end of Lake Albert.[8]

Today the Lugbara of Uganda occupies the two districts of Arua and Yumbe. However, political wars from 1979 to 1984 in Uganda reduced the population of the Lugbara people in the country. Many of them were forced into exile in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sudan. While in exile many lives of children, the elderly and the sick were claimed. Consequently, the 1980 census revealed that "the population of the Lugbara in Uganda was about 414,929 ….and by the 1980s the population of these people seems to be slightly above half a million."[9] As of the 2002 Uganda population and housing census, the total population of Lugbara was 833,928.[10]

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[7] Ibid. 2. John Middleton explains the Nile-Congo divide as follows: "The divide rises from just under 4,000 feet above sea level in the north, where Uganda, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), and Sudan meet, to over 6,000 feet in the south; most Lugbara live between 4,000 and 5,000 feet above sea level. They extend eastward to the escarpment that divides the highland region of the watershed from the wooded lowlands of the Nile valley, less than 2,500 feet above sea level."

[8] Ibid. 2.

[9] John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation And Pastoral Application to the Lugbara* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 16. Mark Leopold, *Inside*

The Lugbara people of Uganda are culturally and linguistically closely related to the Ma'di. The languages and the cultures of both ethnic groups resemble each other. Besides the Madi, the Lugbara are also connected to the Kakwa by common ancestry. Other physical features in the center of the Lugbara land include two mountains, namely, Eti (Wati) and Liru. On the southern fringe of the territory is mount Luku or Mount Sr. Samuel Baker. These mountains play a great role in the history and mythology of the Lugbara people of Uganda. The Abaa Mountain in the Democratic Republic of Congo is also important mythologically and historically to the Lugbara people.

1.2 The Origin and History of the Lugbara People

The early ancestors of the Lugbara people are believed to have lived in Loloi (Loloe or loloyi) of the Juba and Baar regions in the Sudan. They occupied the place called Rejaf in the Juba region. John Baptist Odama says:

> These people belonged to the sub-group of Moru-Madi who are believed to have been in existence by 1000 A.D, according to J. C. Ssekamwa. They were forced to migrate between 1000 A.D and 1500 A.D, when the Bari and Lotuko from the eastern part of Sudan began a regular invasion of the Juba region, forcing the Moru-Madi groups out. In trickles they began to migrate from the Juba region, reaching Uganda between 1600 A.D and 1650 A.D and were called Ma'di. In the 19th century the Arabs gave these people the name the Lugbari, a name which was subsequently adopted by the British who applied it to all the Madi in the present area of West Nile.[11]

West Nile: Violence, History and Representation on an African Frontier (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005), 19-26.

[10] Arua District Report, *2002 Uganda Population and Housing census,* (Arua, Uganda: Arua District Report, 2002), 1-40.

[11] John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation and Pastoral Application to the Lugbari* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 17.

Some historians and anthropologists still have questions about the origin of the Lugbara people. Their ancient tradition, that has reached the twenty first century, is that of a detailed historical narrative that is passed on from one person to another, from one generation to another, so that memories of history will live on and will be given to generations to come. There is no clear and definite hypothesis to identify the origin of the Lugbara people.[12] However, John Middleton writes:

> The history of a people such as the Lugbara …. has been far more complex than often is simplistically held by historians and anthropologists today. Virtually nothing is known of them, in a documentary sense, before the advent of the first Arabs and Europeans who visited them in the late nineteenth century, most of whom left without leaving any written records.…Our knowledge goes back to only the remembered knowledge of some five or six generations….perhaps the 1870's at the earliest.[13]

Most Lugbara traditions regarding their origins, like Christian teachings and traditions, begin with God's creation of the universe. However, the human creation story has a twist because in the Lugbara oral history, the first two human beings Gboro-Gboro (male) and Meme (female) are said to have been superhuman. Another difference between local tradition and Christianity include the tradition that speaks only of Meme whose womb God filled with the living things of the world. Then, a gazelle made an opening through Meme's womb by rupturing it with its hoof and all the creatures of the world came tumbling out. The human being was the final creation to come into the world.

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[12] Comfort Agele, *Naming Among the Lugbara of Northwestern Uganda: Relevance to Inculturation,* A long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies (Nairobi- Kenya: The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Tangaza College, 2003), 3. John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation and Pastoral Application to the Lugbari,* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 15.

[13] John Middleton, *The Lugbara of Uganda*, Second Edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 2-3.

Some Lugbara traditions trace the origin of the people as far as Central and West Africa. The present Lugbara in their various clan traditions trace their migration in three groups according to the hero ancestors who had led their groups.

The first group came straight from the Juba region and settled south-east of the Liru mountain and gradually spread in the area between the Liru Mountain and the river Nile. This group had no clearly named leader.

The second group was that of Banyale (Banale-Oli). It was led by Utere (Tere) from the Juba region. This group first settled in the present day western Acholi before the Luo arrived there. After Utere's death, his son, Banyale (Banale), led the whole group across the Nile and settled near the Eti or wati mountain. Banyale married Ofunyaru and then begot Angundru who produced seven children from whom the various clans of Terego originated and from these, various sub-clans grew and spread.

The third group traces its origin from Jaki or Yaki who is considered by the Kakwa as the brother of their ancestor Yeki. Most Lugbara of northwestern Uganda believe that they were the descendants of Jaki whose sons dispersed from the Liru mountain in the Sudan towards the beginning of the 18th century. For example, the Rubu group claims descent from Aroba who is also said to have migrated from the Liru mountain to have found the Otravu-Rubu and Rubu-yia clans. The descendants of Jaki are the clansmen of Maracha County. These clans include Maracha, Oleba, Tara, Ombia, Yivu, and those clans linked to them. Many clans and sub-clans in Zaire, particularly in the Aru zone, trace their

ancestry to Jaki. These include Otcho and Aluru lu. Some clans of Vurra as well trace their origin to Jaki.[14]

Therefore, from 1600 A.D to 1650 A.D, there have been constant intermarriages among the three groups of migrants and as a result, they became as the Lugbara Society. After consolidating their position in the area, the people began to spread all over what is today known as the Lugbara land. At the end of the nineteenth century, migrations stabilized or terminated. The people became settled and unified with a common culture and language, although variations in dialect developed and continue to the present day. The Lugbara people often refer to themselves as one people or a community of people. The community spirit of the Lugbara is strongly reflected in their social structure.[15]

1.3 The Social Structure of the Lugbara of Uganda

In order to understand the Lugbara origin, history, social structure, political system, economic system and traditional religion, one must come to an understanding of the human person in the Christian tradition and Lugbara tradition. In other words, it seeks an answer to the question, what does it mean to be a human person? Most of the Lugbara understanding of the human person, as we shall discover in this chapter, is related in many ways to the Christian teaching in reference to the human person. Scripture teaches that women and men were created in the image of God. People are able to know and love

[14] John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation and Pastoral Application to the Lugbari,* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 17-18.
[15] Ibid. 18.

their creator, and are set by him over all earthly creatures, that they might rule them and make use of them.[16] It is the Scriptures witness to the mystery of creation that provides the theological foundation for understanding the ultimate place of God, and human life as a reflection of God's image and likeness. The story of creation tells us that at the summit of creation woman and man are made in God's image (Gn 1:26-27). Through the motif of the image of God (cf. Ps 8: 5; Wis 2: 23; I Cor 11: 7; Jas 3: 9) the Bible vigorously affirms the sacredness or dignity of every person prior to any human achievement.[17] That human person, created in the image and likeness of God, affirms the partnership between God and the human person. Above all, humanity is called to communion with God. There is also a partnership between a man and a woman. From the beginning, "male and female God created them" (Genesis 1: 27), and this is the first form of communion between people. The human person is the center of God's creation. From the biblical point of view, we all share in a common human condition which has a common end, namely God. God has created people in view of a blessed destiny that lies beyond the boundaries of earthly misery. For God has called men and women, and still calls them, to attach themselves with all their being to him in sharing forever a life that is divine and free from decay. It means that human dignity does not depend ultimately on human

[16]Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documentary Vatican Council II Constitutions Decrees Declarations A Complete Revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 174.

[17] Elliot N. Dorff, *This is My Beloved, This is My Friend* (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1996), 8. In this Elliot N. Dorff says: "*Being created in the image of God.* A central concept, which shapes Judaism's understanding of ourselves and others, is that each of us was created in image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 27; 5: 1). We are not an accidental happenstance produced by blind forces of nature; we are rather the conscious and purposeful creation of God. Moreover we share some of God's characteristics. Like God, but, of course, not to the same degree, we are capable of sustained thought, creativity, and awareness of ourselves, our world, and God; the light of God is imminent in our spirit (Proverbs 20: 27). We share in God's dominion over the earth (Genesis 1: 26, 28), and we have the divine attribute of free will (Genesis 3: 5; Deuteronomy 30: 19). We are privileged to commune with God and, in rabbinic terms even to be God's partner in ongoing acts of creation."

achievements but on divine love. As we receive this gift in love so we are also expected to give this gift of God in love for others. We are co-creators with God.

As Richard M. Gula explains:

> It means that God is eternally the giver or lover (father), the receiver or beloved (son), and the gift or love which binds them together (spirit). When God expresses divine love outside the trinity, nature comes into being, with the human person being the point at which nature reaches self-consciousness. … from this Trinitarian vision of the human person as the image of God we can see that the fundamental dynamic of personalistic morality is the dynamic of receiving and giving love.[18]

However, in the Lugbara understanding, the human person is created by God. The clans are descended from the first creatures put on earth by God at the beginning of the world. The Lugbara contend that they are all of one blood, which was made by God the creator when he created the first male and female ancestors. They bore children. These siblings produced another male and female pair, who did the same in their turn.

Christian teaching describes the fundamental dimensions of the human person as, "a relational being, an embodied subject, a historical being, fundamentally equal to others but uniquely original."[19]

As "relational social beings…. human persons need to live in social groups with appropriate structures which sustain human dignity and the common good. The moral significance of this aspect of being human is that we must respect the laws and

[18] Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundation of Catholic Morality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 65-66.
[19] Ibid. 64.

institutions of society which promote communal living and uphold the common good."[20] The laws and institutions of society must always uphold human dignity.

When treating the human person as a subject " ….the person is in charge of his or her own life. That is, the person is a moral agent with a certain degree of autonomy and self-determination, empowered to act according to his or her conscience, in freedom, and with knowledge. The great moral implication of the person as subject is that no one may ever use a human person as an object or as a means to an end the way we do other things of the world."[21] The human person as an embodied subject "implies that our bodies are not accessories. They are not merely something we have to house in our subjectivity. Our bodies are essential to our being integrated persons. We express ourselves as the image of God through our bodies. What concerns the body inevitably concerns the whole person, for our bodies are essential to being human and to relating in human ways. As body, persons are a part of the material world. To be a part of the material world holds both great potential and serious limitations."[22] For example, love can "be expressed through bodily ways such as through a gift, a kiss, an embrace or sexual intercourse."[23]

The human person as historical subject "means he and she is relentlessly temporal, seizing each opportunity of the present movement as part of a progressive movement towards full human development …. as historical subjects, our moral reflection must be

[20] Ibid. 67-68.
[21] Ibid. 68.
[22] Ibid. 68.
[23] Ibid. 69.

as dynamic as the human life which it intends to guide."[24] The reality of change and development is always realized in the human person. Historically, the human person is conditioned in his or her experience and limited in his or her perspective for all times, places and people. The human person fundamentally has capacity for change and development. "What has built up human well being in the past may or may not continue to do so in the present or future."[25]

Richard M. Gula writes:

> The dimensions of being human considered as a fundamental equality …. allows us to take an interest in everything that is human and to understand the moral obligations, which inform our common humanity. However, human persons are sufficiently diverse so that we must also take into account the originality and uniqueness of each person. This means that while everyone shares certain common features of humanity each one does so differently and to different degrees.[26]

Each human person is uniquely different, but ultimately shares certain common features of humanity together. One can see the different dimensions of understanding, the human person on one hand as the image of God, a social being, an embodied subject, a historical subject and as fundamentally equal but uniquely original. But on the other hand, the human person still remains a mystery to be understood. The human person is a mystery because we cannot completely exhaust the understanding of the human being. The human being is a reality so rich that the understanding of him or her cannot be exhausted at once or at any given moment or time. The comprehension of the human person is an on going process. Hence the question, who is a human person, becomes an on going

[24] Ibid. 70.
[25] Ibid. 47.
[26] Ibid. 71.

investigation and process. With this understanding of the human person, we can plunge into the understanding of the social structures of the Lugbara people.

The Lugbara people of Uganda believe that they are members of a single family. They recognize themselves to be one people although they rarely know where the boundaries of their country are. They are related to one another because of their common ancestry. They also see their relationship in terms of creation. John Middleton says, "Lugbara conceive of their generic unity in terms of blood; they are one people, all one blood which comes from God the Creator."[27] The Lugbara conceive their relations in three ways: One is in terms of genealogical experience and myth; another is in terms of a field of social relations centered upon the lineage and family cluster of the actors concerned; and a third is in terms of God and spirits. Among the Lugbara people each one feels part of another since each has the same life and blood. The Lugbara view a person as a relational being. We are oriented to another human being. The Lugbara say, *"Angu ndri basi,"* meaning, life is sweeter in company or in community. The Lugbara society projects two social structure systems. The close lineage and kinship tie is the first. The second is the extended relationships. The first (the close lineage and kinship) consists in the local organizations based on clans and lineages whose members are those who can share meals at any moment without impediments. The members of close lineage and kinship normally feel at home with one another and are close to each other. At any time, they can be called upon to share meals in one of the homes within the same surroundings. The second, the extended relationships, is the link between the living and the dead as well

[27] John Middleton, "The Political System of the Lugbara of the Nile-Congo divide," in John Middleton and David Tait (Eds.), *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems,* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 208.

as those living in distant relationships. The extended relationship in general covers relations between people of common ancestry. John Middleton writes:

> Lugbara social organization is one of small local settlements in a constantly fluid relationship, within which territorial values are conceived in terms of those of the agnatic (patriarchal) lineage. Lugbara social relations are restricted in range, the social field of any group being small. Local communities are continually changing both in internal composition, owing to individuals having off as tenants to live in other settlements, and in external relationships, owing to changes in population and locality with shifting of fields and migration-drift of the total population from north to south. Between local groups few ties are long recognized except those of a remote and overall kinship springing from ultimate common ancestry. The society is a fragmentary one, local communities being small and …. socially largely independent.[28]

For a Lugbara person, the family and lineage are central in his or her social relations that extend temporally and spatially. Lugbara lineage and kinship ties are essentially based on and validated by genealogy. At the center is the relation between a person and the living members of his or her minimal lineage and the family clusters around it. Beyond this are less direct relations with the living and the dead members of his or her lineage. There are also relations with more distant living dead kin. The major or key notion of relationship affected the range of everyday social life and relations among the Lugbara and with the people outside the Lugbara society. These key notions are very important in the study and understanding of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda and their extension in the other regions and in the Catholic Church as such. It is, hence, important and necessary to consider these notions separately.

[28] John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion: Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: Oxford University), 4 -5.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines lineage as, "Lineal (consisting of or beginning in a direct line of ancestry) descent from a common progenitor (a direct ancestor, forefather) and family."[29] In Lugbara, the term lineage is described by Odama as:

> Descent in a line of ancestors …. of either matrilineal or patrilineal descent from a common ancestor, are expressed by the word *Suru.* This is a wider term which refers to both territorial areas and the groupings that live in them. The smaller group is called *Oriba* which means people of the same ancestor or people of the same shrine; people of the same ancestry. Another term used to describe a group smaller than that of *Oriba*, is *Enyati,* which means people that normally eat together. These are people who live so close to each other that they are within calling range, when invited to share meals.[30]

In Lugbara vernacular the small Christian communities are referred to as *Enyati,* meaning people who eat together and are close to one another. The members of a lineage have a deep mutual intimacy of relationship when their clan originates from a single ancestor. It is within the lineage that all networks of relationships, whether religious, economic, moral or social are encouraged and fostered by elders, who occupy prominent positions among the members of the lineage. Unity among the members of the lineage is manifested through common work known as *"Oyonga or Oya."* For instance, digging and building of houses or granary are manifestations of unity. This unity is more manifest in mutual assistance at funerals, marriages, ritual sacrifices and eating together, *"Yamari."* Lineage unity and reciprocal responsibility are highly valued. These are some of the key factors determining the growth of small Christian communities among the Lugbara and are essential in the study and understanding of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda.

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[29] George and Charles Merriam, *The Merriam Webster Dictionary,* Home and office edition (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam Webster Inc, 1995), 301.
[30] John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Even Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation And Pastoral Application to the Lugbara* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 18.

The lineage system seems to be a firm foundation for the Lugbara society and small Christian communities. The Lugbara proverb, *"Aluri pa u'ko,"*[31] meaning a single leg does not make any sound or noise, stresses the need for community as an essential element in life. Man or woman lives a life of relationships. He or she contacts the other relatives of the lineage, kinship and the spirit-world. His or her life is interpreted in the context of relations that are either opposed to or in harmony with his or her life with every being around and beyond him or her. In a particular way his or her life is interpreted relationally as being in equality with fellow human beings. Taking lineages into consideration, a glance or look at Lugbara society manifests itself in ascending order of size in the following structures; the hut or house *(Jo)*, the home *(aku or buru)*, family cluster *(Oriba or Enyati)*, and the clan *(Suru)*.

The Hut or House, *Jo* is the smallest unit within the Lugbara social setting. The hut is the house of a married man and woman. John Middleton, clearly and rightly states, "The smallest residential grouping is that living in the hut or *Jo* is that of the elementary family of husband, wife, and children. The hut is the home of a single wife. Lugbara are polygamous, but 64% of married men have only one wife."[32] "In a polygamous household the husband may have a hut for his own use, which is used for the entertainment of guests."[33] The hut is the family of husband, wife and the children.

[31] A.T. Dalfovo, *Lugbara Proverbs* (Rome: Comboni Missionaries, 1984), 71.
[32] John Middleton, "The Political System of the Lugbara of the Nile-Congo Divide," in John Middleton and David Tait (eds.), *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies In African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 204.
[33] John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: Oxford University), 5.

Within the household or the homestead there is always a separate compound for each wife in case of polygamous marriages.[34]

The Home, *Aku, Buru, lico*[35] may be made of one or more huts in which people live. It may be made of the smallest unit of Lugbara social structure consisting of husband, wife and children, but it can be more than this. It may consist of two or more households (families) living together or a polygamous man living with all his wives and children in the same compound. Traditionally, the home was enclosed with a local fence or hedge, *Lico or Seri,* with one entrance or two. A home today may or may not have a fence around it. A home is territorially distinctly separated by fields from the neighboring homes.

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[34] Ibid. 8. John Middleton describes the compound for the household or homestead as follows: "The homestead was a compound some twenty feet across in which were the house of the wife-around building with mud and wattle walls and a thatched roof- and her granaries. A house had a single doorway, closed at night; only a few houses had window spaces. Inside was a bed of sticks and rushes, pegs for hanging possessions, and small alcoves in the walls for tobacco, matches, and other small objects. Most houses and compounds were kept clean by regular application of mud and cow dung, smooth and hard, and house walls were painted with lime wash and decorative patterns of ochre and soot (white, red, and black are the three Lugbara colors). Most compounds were fenced with thorn and euphorbia. The outside gate was closed at night, small animals kept inside and cattle in nearby byres. Around the compound were small rubbish dumps on which would be grown a few gourds and other useful plants and flowers. The compound was surrounded by others of the lineage, they in turn by irrigated and fertilized fields, and further beyond by larger fields under shifting cultivation. Always nearby were outcrops of granite on which women laid clothes to dry, and pounded grains and root crops."

[35] Ibid. 5. John Middleton explains the terms *aku, buru and lico* as follows: "The term used for compound in its literal and social senses is *aku,* the empty space of mud and dung kept clean by daily brushing, the floor on which most of the everyday life of the women is conducted. The word *buru,* is also used, especially in a social or metaphorical sense. There is usually only one entrance to the compound; inside are the huts and granaries, under which are the shrines and magical plants. Other shrines are on the hut verandahs, and the three upright stones of the fireplace, the center of the sphere of women's activities, are somewhere in a sheltered corner of the compound floor. The word *lico* (hedge) is often used to refer to a large compound, and especially when talking of those of the past, which were larger than those of today. *Aku, buru,* and *lico* refer to a single residential settlement, of any size from a homestead containing the hut of one wife to that containing the huts of a family group of three or four generations. In a larger homestead there is no term for a component segment's home, larger than the hut. Besides the living huts there is usually a girls hut in any group of related compounds, where the unmarried girls sleep with their lovers."

The Family-Cluster[36] is a group of families: Families grouped in larger residential units than a home. It is made of different homes of people of a common ancestry or shrine. The fit term for family cluster *is, Enyati*[37] meaning a group of people who live so close to each other that they are at close-call range when needed to share meals, which means people who normally eat together. The Lugbara consider descent by blood as running through both lines of men and women, but the family-cluster is primarily a group under the ritual authority of a single head elder. Therefore, the family-cluster is a group within a single ritual field, headed by a ritual representative of the lineage and the family cluster. A family cluster is not, however, a large group. It is but a unit in a wider territorial system. Wider groups of this system are also associated with wider territorial systems such as the clan or tribe, but the family cluster is the largest productive unit with autonomy over its own land. Family clusters and wider sections are drawn into hostile relations only if one of their members is killed in fighting as a representative of this group. The range of fields of social relations between individuals is mainly within the

[36]Ibid. 31. John Middleton says: "The family cluster was a small group, generally of about twenty-five people (about six adult men and their wives and children)." This is how small Christian Communities have been described among the Lugbara people. John Middleton continues to describe the family cluster among the Lugbara as he put it: "Lugbara thought of the family cluster as being based upon a small lineage. A lineage consists of people descended in one line from a single founding ancestor. Descent may be through men only (patrilineal) or through women only (matrilineal). The Lugbara lineage is patrilineal. A family cluster typically consisted of adult men who are members of a single lineage, with their wives (who by rule of exogamy belonged to other lineages), and unmarried children. It is in this sense that the lineage forms the core of a family cluster. There are both small and large lineages. The family clusters are formed around the smallest, which is …. a minimal lineage. The lineage is conceived as permanent, persisting over many generations; the family cluster is not. Land and livestock are vested in the lineage, but rights in them are enjoyed by its living members. The family cluster is controlled and represented by its head, the elder. Like most Lugbara institutions, the office of elder could not be very clearly or precisely defined. His status and authority shaded into those of the heads of junior families, and these might also be called elders if they are old. But Lugbara always knew whether a man is a real elder or not, and the term is properly applied only to those men who by virtue of genealogical position in the lineage held the custodianship of certain shrines."

[37] J. P. Crazzolara, *A Study of the Logbara (Madi) Language: Grammar and Vocabulary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 240. He describes the meaning of *enyati* coming from the term *ena or enya* polenta; *enya ovo* to stir or prepare polenta, *enya esa* polenta without sause (*tibi)*: poorest meal; *enya jolo* left over or the food ate in the morning, the remains of yesterday's polenta, fairly common among the Lugbara. Enyati will literally mean people who sit together to eat polenta.

neighborhood. Therefore, *Enyati* has become the inculturated word for small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda. They have been built to take advantages accruing from the natural social relations.

The Clan, *Suru*[38] is a group conceived in terms of ancestry. It is a tribal division of exogamous matrilineal or patrilineal descent from a common ancestor. Clan is a wider term referring to territorial areas and groupings that live in them. The Lugbara conceive of their society as composed of clans that have dispersed from the original clan homes where their founders were begotten by the mythical culture heroes, Jaki and Dribidu.[39] Today there are over sixty clans defined genealogically by reference to their founders; the sons of the heroes. The Lugbara seem to regard the clans as basic enduring units and not as corporate groups. The sub-clans which are a little wider than family clusters are the patrilineal or agnatic cores of the society and are composed of family clusters. The clan; *Suru*, is a group of people who consider themselves as belonging together and are so considered by others because they live in a common territory and have ties based on descent, common ancestry and have genealogical links between them. Disputes could arise between clans, but these are settled by sending clan representatives and reconciling or making a pact of no-more-warfare. However, fighting between clans was not always settled, and there remained permanent hostilities between them. The Lugbara conceive of their generic unity in terms of blood. They are one people or one blood which came from

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[38] Ibid. 349. J. P. Crazzolara explains *Suru* as follows: "*Suru* n. used for clan, tribal group, kinship group; *Suru emi dri ado ko ni ya? Suru ama dri Pajulu*, to which clan or sub-clan do you belong? I am from Pajulu."

[39] John Middleton, "The Political System of the Lugbara of the Nile-Congo Divide," in John Middleton and David Tait (eds.), *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies In African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 208. John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: Oxford University), 7.

God the creator. Of descent groups it is said, "People are with different bodies, though all one blood."[40]

Kinship links are relations that accrue to rights and duties of relatives to one another. They form part of the social system and are expressions of relationships. Kinship ties are acquired by birth and marriage. In marriage it is not only two individuals who marry. Through marriage the two clusters of kinsfolk are united. In this sense, kinship is not a lineage relationship because marriage among the Lugbara is exogamous. Through birth, maternal kinship is born. By the birth of a child, kinship is established between the child and its mother's lineage. Birth is a tie of blood and a very intimate and important one for the Lugbara. Paternal kinship is also established by birth. This is a link between a child and its father's lineage. These ties between the individual kins through the parents are very significantly recognized between their lineages. The kinships effected through marriage, maternal and paternal birth, results in the following collective forms of kinship.

Adroo, is the maternal uncle of a person and *Adropi* is the plural form. This does not, according to the Lugbara, only refer to the brothers of one's mother. It is a generic term for the people of the brother of one's mother. Briefly, they are the clansmen of one's mother. These include the brothers, cousin brothers, and paternal uncles of one's mother besides her true father. Maternal uncles of one's father or mother *Abipi*: *Abi*, is grandfather and the term, *Abipi*, refers to the maternal uncles of one's mother or father. These have kinship links with the children of their nephews or nieces. Beyond this link

[40] John Middleton, "The Political System of the Lugbara of the Nile-Congo Divide," in John Middleton and David Tait (eds.), *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies In African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 208.

are the *mere*, who are the uncles of one's maternal or paternal grandfather or grandmother. The kinship link is still strong. Aunts, *Andrapuruka and Awupika*: Are the sisters of one's mother or father. They are one's aunts, but the Lugbara use two different terms to describe them. *Andrapuruka* are the maternal aunts or mother's sisters and *Awupika* are one's paternal aunts or sisters of one's father. In this are included the cousin sisters of one's parents. Brother and father-in-law *Otupi or Otipi or Andripi*: *Oti or Otu* is one's brother-in-law. *Otupi* is the plural form or brothers-in-law. Precisely, *Otu or oti* is the brother of one's wife, but the term is also used in a generic way to describe the clansmen of one's wife. This consists of the brothers and cousin brothers of one's wife. In general, these are males of the clan of one's wife. The term *Andripi* is sometimes used as a synonym of *otupi*, but *Andripi*, is a generic term for fathers-in-law and includes the father and paternal uncles of one's wife. Brothers and sisters-in-law *Onyupazi or Onyere and Ayipika or Aipika*: *Onyere and Onyupazi* are synonymous meaning brother or sister-in-law. They are kinship links applicable to both husband and wife. *Onyupazika* are the plural form. This covers both the biological sisters or brothers of one's wife or husband and the cousin brothers or cousin sisters of the same. In our Lugbara culture we never refer to cousins as such, but we call them cousin brothers or cousin sisters. In relation to the woman, her *Onyereka or Onyupazika* are the brothers and cousin brothers of her husband. In relation to the man, his *Onyereka or Onyupazika*, are the sisters and cousin sisters of his wife. The term *Ayipika* is used to describe the kinship link between a man's wife and his sisters and cousin sisters. The term is, hence, used to express the opposite of brothers-in law, *Otupi*.

One's Clansmen-People, *Odipi or Odupi or Kari'ba,* is a group of direct social relations. It is a group of people of the same clan. The people of this group are not hostile to each other. They are agnatic descendants of a common ancestor,[41] but non-agnatic kin may be subsumed under the term since the ideal behavior towards agnates may be extended to other kin in certain situations. A man's *Odipi* are people of his clan. They do not fight among themselves and they inter-marry. They call their girls sisters. They dance together at funerals and eat bulls together. *Odipi* covers one's brothers, sisters, paternal aunts, uncles and cousins. If one does not have kinship ties to provide a sense of security and protection, not only would this individual not be safe from the enemy, but he or she would not have a social life, since these families share life together. As a result, this situation would make his or her existence impossible. Therefore, this determines a person's good living and feeling or quality of life at home. This aspect of Lugbara social setting is very important for understanding the notion of small Christian communities among the Lugbara.

1.4 The Political System of the Lugbara of Uganda

The Lugbara have been sporadically governed or ruled since 1900.[42] Many scholars have counted or considered them among the arcephalous societies or tribes without rulers, as John Middleton prefers to call them. This view has been categorically denied or refuted

[41] John Middleton, "The Political System of the Lugbara of the Nile-Congo Divide," in John Middleton and David Tait (eds.), *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies In African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 216.
[42] John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: Oxford University), 2.

and contradicted. Anthony Androa says the Lugbara had chiefs, and to say that the Lugbara had no chiefs is not true and is just said out of sheer ignorance of those who say so or know very little about the Lugbara. The people refused to reveal their chiefs for fear of the Tukutuku, Belgians, who killed chiefs when they arrived in the area in 1912.[43] The Lugbara seem to have been politically independent or liberal. Each clan has even been the largest political unit whose head was an elder, *Ba ambo or Ba 'wara*, and later the chief-elder, *Opi*. Political affairs beyond family clusters and clans were outside the control of the elder who was concerned primarily with the ordering of relations within these groups which are seen in terms of personal kinships. It was the responsibility of the elder to terminate hostile relations between family clusters, sub-clans and clans. Political issues were, therefore, essentially local affairs.

In the exercise of his political authority, the elder was assisted by consultants who also made political and military decisions for the clan, sub-clan or family clusters. Besides

[43] A. Androa, *Lugbara Obi*, No. 31, unpublished work (Arua: Diocese of Arua, 1970), 18-19. He writes: "*Lugbara ma opi andra drio ci ya? Oo, Lugbara ma opi andra drio ci. O'duko amani arile paaleko o'biiro kini, Lugbara ma opi andrania yo dii e'yo ifi aloani yo. Ba dinile diki e'yo njee dini agbari, tani kosi, ovoni e'yo ifi be ni ko; ba dinile dii e'yo njee diini agbari, eini Lugbara ma obi nizo trayi trayi, no toko toko ko risi. Si lo e'yo drila ko i, baki asisile e'yo mgbari ndu ovazo no ifizo ko. E'yo azi feepi ba e'yo niipi ko diini yozo kini, Lugbara ma opi yo ri agbari, ba diini opi eidri dii ma e'yo ocizo ci risi. E'yo di ide andraa i, dini, agbari Tukutukuuni (Belijiki) pini andra amuzo risi, eki andra ba opiro diki o'dii te te. Ba kaki mu ndree dini bo, oloki eima opii a'dipiari ko. Eki andra ba sakani ru loo i. Ajerekeni andra amuzu bo risi, e'do andra opii ma ndu addari e'yo ndu ozii ra bo, ba a'iki andra opi eidri dii ma ru i'dazo aloani ko, kini ei ka ei i'daa ra, ba nga mu eri dii te, kile Tukutukuuni andra azi dii o'dile te rile ko."* Translated as: Did the Lugbara people have traditional rulers? Yes, the Lugbara people had traditional rulers. The voices we hear many times that the Lugbara had no traditional rulers is nonsense. These kinds of people say these things out of sheer ignorance. What they say is useless. They are saying these things because they don't know the Lugbara people and their way of life (Culture). They just write about the Lugbara people without seeking to find the truth. Those who write about the Lugbara people and say that they had no traditional rulers don't know much about them. The Lugbara people refused to name their traditional rulers for the fear of the Belgians. When the Belgians reached Lugbara–land, they began killing the traditional rulers one by one. When the Lugbara people saw the killings, they refused to talk about their traditional rulers, but instead they were telling names other than their rulers. When Ajerekeni, the British Governor arrived, the Lugbara people still refused to talk about their traditional rulers and they feared that, if they tell their names, they will be killed just like at the times of the Belgians."

settling hostilities, both internal and external, this council of elders tried crucial cases, but they were normally presided over by the chief-elder, *Opi*. This system continued till the establishment of British rule in the area in 1914. However, during calamities like droughts and epidemics, the chief sought advice from the medicine-men rather than the council of elders.

When British rule was established in the area in 1914, the government appointed chiefs as administrators. They acted as agents of the central government, collected taxes, maintained law and order, and arbitrated in cases. For their daily life, the traditional Lugbara structures of the lineage seemed to remain more effective.

The marks of the office of an elder or chief were the special stool, *Ogua or Kome or Bili* and the special walking stick or *Kali*. Only elders were allowed to sit on the special stool and use a walking stick. They were acquired only by inheritance of the office. The elders ate the chest meat of chicken, together with liver, kidneys, testicles and penis of animals. Chicken gizzards even today are preserved for elders alone. The elders stayed within shrines, offered sacrifices to ghosts during calamities, consulted oracles and presided over other sacrifices. The hospitality given to an elder or chief had to be great. People gave the chief animals, particularly chicken and animal skins that were considered very precious. He was given arrows and not greeted with a hand motion. He was to be addressed properly.[44] The chief ate alone. The house or room where he stayed was not entered by anyone except by his appointed servants or *Atibo*. He stayed only with more intelligent people. He was excluded from irresponsible people. Chiefs or elders were first born sons or most learned sons, wise and responsible people, quiet, dignified,

[44] A. Androa, *Lugbara Obi*, No. 24, unpublished work (Arua: Diocese of Arua, 1970), 18-19.

reflective and slow in decision, just, mature, good humored, not disruptive, respectable, balanced and mature in judgment and ready to act in union or collaboration with their brothers of the same and they were hospitable people. These were the political organizations of the Lugbara people in the early 1950's.[45]

Today the members of this ethnic group are united under a central government. This was more evident during the transition periods in the era of political upheavals in Uganda from 1978 up to today. This phase of Uganda's political history has been characterized by savagery and brutality. The people of the West Nile, including the Lugbara, were somehow in power when Idi Amin Dada, who originated from the region or Kakwa, ruled the country, Uganda. In terms of security, it meant that once Idi Amin Dada was out of power, revenge against the people of the West Nile was to take place. All of the major ethnic groups of the region, such as Lugbara, Madi, Kakwa and Alur, united and tried to avoid a possible invasion of the enemy.

In 1978 the Tanzanian Liberation Army of Soldiers crossed the river Nile in Pakwach, with the ultimate destination of Koboko, as had been their plan. Koboko is a point where Uganda shares borders with the Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. When the Tanzanians crossed the river Nile the West region territory was silent. The people of the region tried to be cooperative with the invading Tanzanian Liberation Army as much as possible. The Tanzanian Liberation soldiers were received warmly by the population of West Nile. In 1980, the Tanzanian forces decided to leave the region.

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[45] John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation and Pastoral Application to the Lugbari,* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 22.

In the mid-1980's, the region was in the hands of the Uganda National Liberation Front, in which Acholi and Langi soldiers together with undisciplined volunteers occupied the region. The consequences of this occupation were horrendous because the Acholi and Langi who had been the pioneers and primary victims of Idi Amin Dada's brutal and repressive regime unleashed their revenge on the people of this region. Over one million people of the West Nile fled across the border into the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo and into Kenya. Some of the refugees, under the leadership of Idi Amin Dada's ex-military leaders, became refugee warrior communities. The people accepted their fate as refugees, helpless, but determined to train both politically and militarily in order to return and capture power in their home country, Uganda.

The following groups became militarily active: Former Uganda National Army (FUNA), under General Isaac Lumago and Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), under Brigadier Moses Ali. These groups made military raids from the Sudan into areas of Arua among the Lugbara, the Kakwa and the Madi. In retaliation, the government of Uganda placed a military operation in 1981 that led to the massacre of innocent civilians in many parts of the Lugbara territory. The massacre in which many lives were lost in a day occurred at Ombaci. Ombaci is three miles away from Arua municipality. A Catholic parish is located here and also some of the best primary and secondary schools in the country. It is also a heavy peri-urban center.

The Government of Uganda was able to subdue these groups during the second presidency of Milton Obote and to establish a relatively firm hold on the Lugbara and the whole West Nile region, but the military activities of the Former Uganda National Army and the Uganda National Rescue Front did not die out. The Uganda National Rescue Front under the Leadership of Moses Ali was still very strong. He joined Yoweri Museveni's Government, but he also appealed to Muammar Qaddafi of Libya for assistance. He succeeded in negotiating the integration of the Uganda National Rescue Front into the National Resistance Army (NRA) when it seized power on January 26, 1986. The Former Uganda National Army stayed away completely to be integrated into a National Resistance Army although some of its members joined the victorious National Resistance Army in their individual capacity.

One group, however, remained a threat until 2002. They fought the National Resistance Army Government. This was a splinter group from Moses Ali's group; the Uganda National Rescue Front, led by Colonel Ali Bamuze, which was joined with Idi Amin Dada's former Foreign Affairs Minister, Juma Oris. Juma Oris had also been prominently active, to form the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF). The West Nile Bank Front became very vigorous in its military campaigns against the National Resistance Army in the West Nile region, that is, among the Lugbara, Kakwa and Madi, especially in the areas of Aringa, Koboko, Terego, Maracha and Obongi counties. The West Nile Bank Front operated from their base in southern Sudan for quite some time until the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) attacked their headquarters, in Morobo in the Sudan. The West Nile Bank Front suffered heavy causalities in this battle and their

commander, Colonel Juma Oris, was seriously injured and later died. The survivors regrouped under the command of Colonel Ali Bamuze, in what they came to call the Uganda National Rescue Front Two (UNRF II). This group entered into peace talks with the Movement Government of Yoweri Museveni under the initiative of the Aringa and Obongi Peace Initiative Committee (AROPIC). The peace initiative came to pass through the intervention of Colonel Hussein Ada and Lieutenant Colonel Nasur Ezaruku of the Uganda People's Defense Force headquarters. Both Colonel Hussein Ada and Lieutenant Colonel Nasur Ezaruku hail from Aringa County in the Yumbe district. The coordinator of the Uganda National Rescue Front II was Major Rajab Rembe who camped at Ozodri only five miles from Yumbe Town on Moyo Road.

The Uganda People's Defense Force had barracks near Koboko to check on the activities of the Uganda National Rescue Front Two at the start of negotiations with the Government of Uganda. In the barracks area was a Catholic Church and this church was used by the Uganda People's Defense Force army officers for lodging. When the bishop of Arua, Frederick Drandua, complained and condemned the activities of the soldiers, the Government of Uganda planned to assassinate the bishop in 1994.[46]

The political upheavals and the insecurity among the Lugbara and people of the West Nile region since 1980 up to the present continues to provide a fertile ground for conflicts across the region. Many people fear an escalation of violence in the area. In addition, there are armed robbers, gun traders who steal the people's animals and goods.

[46] George B. N. Ayittey, *Africa in Chaos* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), vii. Among those to whom the book is dedicated is Monsignor Frederick Drandua, Catholic Bishop of Arua, who escaped an assassination attempt in 1994.

Secondly, due to this ongoing insecurity in this region, many people feel oppressed by the current government of President Yoweri Museveni. Thirdly, because of the insecurity, there is lack of economic development of this region. Currently, this region of West Nile has no electricity, no clean water, and no roads with the exception of the one that links Arua with Kampala, the capital city of Uganda.

However, for the last two years, despite these acts of insecurity and violence, the people in the region have begun some new home construction and have expressed an unwillingness to join any army or rebel activities.

1.5 The Economic System of the Lugbara of Uganda

The Lugbara have been sedentary subsistent farmers since they established themselves in the land. The Lugbaraland is a plateau that is divided into a low ridge by the many small streams that thread their way across it. The tops of these ridges are often hard rock or free of soil, exposing the grey granite outcrops used as drying platforms for grain and cassava. The soil of the Lugbaraland is very fertile, with plenty of rainfall, averaging fifty-four inches a year. The rainfall is distributed evenly and except for the dry seasons, from December to early March, there are no periods without rain. August is the month of the highest rainfall, although the rains that are important in the agricultural cycle are those that fall in March-April and October-November. During the months of the dry season, that is, December to early March, there is little work to be done in the fields, and

beer and food are more plentiful after the main harvest period of July-August than at any other time.

The main crops grown are millet, sorghum and legumes such as beans and cow peas, and pumpkins. Root crops like cassava and sweet potatoes are also cultivated. The staple food crops were and are still millet, sorghum, beans and simsim, but today cassava and groundnuts are replacing the two grain crops (millet and sorghum) and simsim very rapidly, although they are still grown to provide more variety in our diet. Another grain crop cultivated is maize. Today cash crops like coffee and sugar cane are also cultivated. Isolated fields of banana plants, onions, egg-plants and cabbages are visible in the area, but they are grown on a very small scale, mainly for domestic consumption.

Livestock like cattle, goats and sheep are raised in this area. A good number of families also have pigs. A small percentage of the population has cattle today, but sheep and goats are owned in almost every home. As in the past, today the Lugbara people also keep some fowl. The dominant categories of fowl are chickens, but a few families also keep some ducks and pigeons.

As John Middleton writes during the 1950s that:

> Meat and milk were important in diet; fowl was eaten, but eggs were given only to infants, because it was thought that adults might become sterile by eating them. Game was no longer found in most of the highlands, but was plentiful in the Madi lowlands and the plains of northern Lugbaraland. Fish were found in streams and caught by nets. Ants were an important article of diet; the sound of women and children beating for ants was heard every evening at the beginning of the rainy

> season. Many wild herbs and fruit were gathered, the most important of which was shear butter nut, and mushrooms.[47]

Other economic activities among the Lugbara include iron smelting, that was learned from the Ndu people of Democratic Republic of Congo. The smelted iron was used for making arrows, which were considered as bride wealth before the use of cattle for this purpose. Prior to 1950's, iron was also used for building spears and hoes. Additionally before 1950's,

> Clay for pots, wood, ocher, chalk for whitewash, materials for basket making, and the few other natural products used in traditional Lugbara economy were all obtainable locally over most of the country. Where they were not as in the case of papyrus for matting, which was found in only a few remote places, they were obtained by parties of women. Such resources were not claimed by people living near them. Others could collect them if they desired, although relations of personal friendship played some part.[48]

The Lugbara of Uganda in the early 1960s engaged in traveling and trading across countries such as Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo for special commodities such as soap, tobacco, kerosene, pots, grinding stones of granite, and papyrus mats. These items were mainly sold in the open market. There were also shops and most of them had sewing machines for making clothes. Some of the traders had lorries used for transporting the items from Kampala, the capital city of Uganda and for carrying farm produce. The role of the Lugbara people as traders and hawkers gave them an important economic position in the northwestern part of Uganda. Based on this, they gained importance and recognition in Uganda during the 1960's.

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[47] John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: Oxford University), 12.
[48] Ibid. 13.

Apart from modern consumer goods imported from the outside of Uganda, there are very few manufactured goods in the area at present. This would include the distillery of Adriko in Arua town and the tobacco processing plant in Wandi and Pajulu. However, the main economic role that the Lugbara play in the wider society of Uganda is that, they provide certain cash crops mainly tobacco and cotton. Tobacco is still the most important source of income among the Lugbara of Uganda.[49] John Middleton writes: "in the past the Lugbara had no currency, exchange being barter. In recent years of 1970s, they became involved in the money economy of the rest of Uganda, with the introduction of

[49] Lily Driciru & George Ecima, "Tobacco: Is the Game Worth the Candle," *Leadership* No. 346, Issue 6/1994: 24-26. They wrote: "Tobacco is doing West Nile a big disservice, the London-based Panos Institute has recently pointed out. Forests have been reduced by over half in the last 20 years, to provide fuel for curing or drying tobacco. The 10,000 small-scale farmers in west Nile who grow tobacco take a heavy toll on the environment. Research is urgently needed on the real cost of growing tobacco in Uganda. It would come useful also for a number of African countries where wood for tobacco barns is putting an additional strain on already depleted forests. *The most striking effect of tobacco-growing is near depletion of both natural and planted forests,* saying the study. *Planted forests in Uganda covered 7,225 hectares in the early 1970's; this has been reduced to 3,000 hectares and some valleys have been left with only relics of their former forests.* The area worst affected by deforestation in West Nile is Maracha. *If nothing is done in the next five years, Maracha will be a desert,* says former district administrator Francis Wanyina. Deforestation has caused wells and streams in the area to dry up, forcing people to walk further in search for water and fuel. Women already working long hours have shouldered most of this extra burden. As trees have been axed, soil has less cover and is more likely to be washed away in heavy rains. *Farmers complain of the falling soil fertility and consequently reduction in crop yields,* says the study. British American Tobacco, BAT, says it is aware of the problem and it is replanting trees in Uganda under its reafforestation program, and also improving efficiency of barn furnaces to reduce wood consumption by 40%. Some tobacco farmers, however, are so short of wood for their barns that they are buying it at high cost from up to 50 km away. This is also eroding their earnings from the crop, says the study. The Uganda tobacco farmers are paid promptly, unlike the growers of coffee and cotton, but the average tobacco grower, *has not done well* from the crop, says the study. The *major beneficiaries* are the BAT and the government. BAT's payments to Uganda's national treasury almost quadrupled between 1988 and now, and in 1993 amounted to 10% of the country's tax revenues. If the government were to take into account the environmental cost to the land of tobacco growing, and also the cost of treating smoking related diseases, the drawbacks could outweigh the benefits. Tobacco again depletes soil nutrients much faster than other crops, leaving soil less fertile …. West Nilers ought to wake up before they lose the potentials of producing highly quality agricultural products. Four-fifths of Uganda's tobacco is grown in West Nile region. It has more chances of soil deterioration and loss of potential than any other part of the country. Three million people world-wide in their late thirties onwards die each year from tobacco related diseases like cancer. Death and diseases dominate the international agenda. Yet from the point of view of small farmer or a government finance minister in the poor countries, the struggle out of poverty is a real life and death issue."

taxation….and demand for consumer goods that could only be acquired for cash."[50] Consequently, some men and women went to work for wages on contract and returned after a year. Others went to settle and grow their own cash crops in the south (Buganda and Bunyoro regions). The Lugbara regarded this new custom as an extension of their land that could be used to make money. Many of the latter took their wives with them and eventually became lost to their kin.

In general, the domestic residential groups are economically self-supporting as regards to food. Traditionally, there was little exchange of these resources, and men and women had no need to leave their neighborhood for economic reasons. Today the crops cultivated, the livestock and fowl raised on their property, are used both for domestic consumption and for income. Unlike the past, today there are a good number of people deeply involved in trade. The traders handle industrial products and food raised agriculturally. Presently, there are no large farms in the area. The economy is basically small in scale.

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[50] John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: Oxford University), 15.

1.6 Lugbara Traditional Religion[51]

The Lugbara people of Uganda had their own religious beliefs and practices before the introduction of other new religions such as Christianity and Islam in their region. Dalfovo observes, "Over the last 80 years, the Lugbara people have changed from traditional religion to Christianity and Islam."[52] The impact of the new religions was great, but today some of the Lugbara people still practice the Lugbara traditional religion. Lugbara traditional religion regulates the relationship between the Spirit-World and the Physical-World, since the Lugbara people conceive the two worlds in terms of relationship. The Lugbara are aware of the fact that human beings live in the universe, not as individuals isolated from the rest of the universe, but as part of the universe and the rest of the universe contributes to his or her benefit or detriment.

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[51] Albert Titus Dalfovo, in "Religion Among The Lugbara: The Triadic Source of Its Meaning," in *Anthropos* 96. 2001: 34, explains Lugbara Traditional Religion as follows: "Traditional religion was not a simple affair either to practice or to explain. People grew into it acquiring a participated knowledge of it and trying to fulfill it experientially. Such practical religious knowledge was not the result of a formal teaching, that is, Lugbara traditional society had no initiation ceremonies characteristic of other African Societies. A Lugbara came to know about traditional religion in an informal way, together with knowledge about various other aspects of life and society. Religious knowledge was not divorced from the rest of one's life, particularly in its ethical dimension. What Lugbara people were taught about the demands of the new religions such as Christianity and Islam were not new. Lugbara People knew about these things already. Lugbara People knew that we were not supposed to kill or to poison people, to steal, to quarrel, to break marriage pacts, and the like. The Lugbara people knew about all these. What was striking about the Lugbara people was that they were practicing what they were saying. And also children taught by them, were practicing those things. Their children became good, respectful, and obedient. The Lugbara people knew really how to teach. Expertise in traditional religion was thus obtained from long observation, from listening, and from experience. Time graduated a person in this art, which meant that only elders could reach this stage. A young religious leader or teacher in traditional religion was quite unthinkable. Living one's traditional religion did not mean that one necessarily understood it or could transmit one's knowledge of it competently to others. The various elements of traditional religion were part of a person and community life. Traditional religion was an undistinguished part of life and an undifferentiated component of society. There was no need for a particular word to differentiate religious elements as such and to denote them as a whole, distinct from the rest of individual life and social existence. It was actually difficult to isolate such elements from life and to combine them within the meaning of one word. Moreover, there had been no need or no challenge to prompt a systematization of Lugbara traditional religion."

[52] Ibid. 29.

Lugbara believe that people live in relation with God and fellow human beings.[53] They are created by God. Every person seems to share part of the other. They are also aware of the fact that human beings are of one blood. Besides seeing themselves as coming from Gborogboro and Meme, there is a sense of belonging to a father, the only one and the creator God of all human beings. The Lugbara see the world as a unity of relations. They conceive of two worlds, visible and invisible, which are intertwined. The visible world is the physically material world while the invisible is the immaterial unseen world of spirits. According to the Lugbara, the two worlds are interwoven, but the spiritual one has great influence on the physical world.

The spirit-world is an all pervasive power which is outside and beyond the control of human beings. It belongs to the divinities and ancestors such as the highest spirits or the Supreme Being. Mbiti calls the ancestors the living dead, meaning that even if they are dead, they are still living in the spirit world. John Middleton says the spirit world is omnipotent and timeless, and it can create and destroy people and send them various sicknesses, disasters, and punishments as well as good and prosperity. The Spirit world is both a positive and a negative force to a human being.[54] Because of this, the Lugbara people are constantly preoccupied with interpreting all the events that happen to an individual and in community life. They are very concerned as to what response they must give to the demands of the spiritual world, mainly the lower spirits and the ancestors.

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[53] John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation And Pastoral Application to the Lugbara* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 28.
[54] John Middleton, *Lugbara Religion Ritual And Authority Among An East African People* (New York: Oxford University), 62. John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event Call In Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation And Pastoral Application to the Lugbara* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1991), 23.

The universe, which according to the Lugbara understanding is heaven and earth, is conceived and understood as being magical and religious in its harmony with human beings. Magical and religious phenomena overlap in the daily life of people in such a way that the two aspects are not easily identifiable. Consequently, the individual and communal lives of people are intimately related to the religious experience and the spiritual world. The spiritual world is that of mysterious powers which influence people. It is a world that consists of three categories of beings. The point of departure in understanding Lugbara traditional religion is linguistic. Some Lugbara words will be used, namely, *Adro*[55] *or* God, *adroa*[56]*or* collective term for the gods, *Ori*[57]*or* ancestors, shrines and sacrifices.

The highest spirit, whom the Lugbara people call *Adro,* is God, the first and the highest.[58] God has many attributes such as: God the Creator of people or *Adro ba obapiri.* God who is the owner of the world or *Adro vuu ipiru rii.* He is conceived as God in the sky or

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[55] J. P. Crazzolara, in *A Study of the Logbara (Madi) Language: Grammar and Vocabulary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 181, explains the meaning of *Adro* as follows*: "Adro,* n. God (the Creator), divinity; *Adro ba obapiri,* God who created man; *Ei ede owi ndrisi Adroni,* they sacrifice a goat to God."

[56] Ibid. 181. J. P. Crazzolara explains the meaning of a*droa* as follows*: "adro, adroa or iyi adro or ngari kadiyo,* n. water –ghost ; an imaginary spirit who is believed to dwell in rivers; *Eri aliaro; eri iyi alea; eri ba bi azoro,* It is short, lives in water, catches people (while bathing) and makes them sick (the *edezo* finds out and removes it with sacrifice); (the spirit is described as having a large head with long hair; with only one eye, ear, nostril, arm, leg; there are several kinds of them)."

[57]Ibid. 325. J. P. Crazzolara explains the meaning of *Ori* as follows: "*Ori,* n. ancestral spirit; ghost; *ma atii ma ori ka ma ni ni,* the spirit of my father has bewitched me; *Orijo or Ori abbilli jo,* shrine (grass, mud, stone-hut) of ancestral spirit and ghost; *ma abii ma ori or abbilli,*ghost of my ancestor; *Eri ori abbilli li,* he sacrifices (cut animal) to the ancestor(s); *Eri ma atii ma ori ede or owi mani au or ndrisi,* he sacrifices to my father's ghost a fowl or goat for me; *Ba si orijo dari erima eyo si,* they erected that shrine at his word; *Ori ti,* n. (1) mouth/word of the ghost; *mbaza ori owi or ede piri, eri eyo nze ori tia,* the old man who offers to the spirits, he reports and interprets the ghost's wishes and answers; (2) in front of the shrine; *ma ena owi or obi ori tia,*I offer bread before the shrine; *Ori ipi* (man in charge of the spirits), *Eri orijo ma ta mbapiri,* the spirit's priest is the guardian of the shrine.…*Ori ba,* n. member of a clan-descent group; ….*Orindi,* n. human soul."

[58] Ibid. 21.

Adro bua. He is a God who knows or *Adro ni ra.* He is a God who takes away people or *Adro ba dupiri.* He is a God who fights people or *Adro ba fupiri.* He is a God who gives rain or *Adro ozoo fepiri.* He is a God who is present or *Adro ci.* He is a God who saves or *Adro ama papiri.* He is a God who creates heaven and earth or *Adro bu obapi nyaku beri.*[59] All the attributes of God reveal his activity in the world and in the human life. He is a God who causes one to exist in the world. He provides for the needs of people, such as by sending some rain at the planting season. He allows crops to grow for feeding human beings, and grass for the animals. He gives good health and riches. He gives children to people so that their lineages can increase. God can take away people in death. If people disregard the morals of the lineage, this God can inflict calamities like drought, famine, sickness or epidemics on the people as punishment. God is associated with that relationship between the living and the dead. He is both transcendent and immanent in relation to the human being. He is absolute, the other, yet mysteriously, like wind or air. He reaches out to humanity, he assists them and protects them, as they go on with their existence on this planet we call earth.

The second category of spiritual being is that of lower spirits which are considered the children of the highest spirit, *adroa or* gods in a collective term.[60] The Lugbara believe that the lower spirits inhabit streams, bush land, stones, rocks, groves and mountains. Unlike the highest spirit, the lower spirits are harmful. As John Baptist Odama writes:

> The strangely felt presence of these spirits in the life of the people makes living and night traveling risky. Even random talking about them could easily bring one in contact with them which would be precarious indeed. The belief in these

[59] John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event-Call in Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation and Pastoral Application to the Lugbara* (Kampala, Kisubi: Marianum Press, 1991), 24.
[60] Ibid. 25.

> *adrogoa* to be in themselves so malevolent, really evil and hostile to men, is so strong that in some areas people fear traveling by night, especially in unknown areas.[61]

The last category of beings in the spiritual world is that of good and exemplary ancestors; the living dead.[62] They are people who have died, ceased to be in this world, *Ba bua,* (people in the grave or hole) but are still in close relation to the living. They are remembered in every major event such as marriage celebrations, funeral rites and sickness.

The core of Lugbara traditional religion pointed to the word *"Ori,"* meaning ancestral spirits, sacrifices and shrines. Albert Titus Dalfovo writes: "*Ori* recalled the ancestral spirits together with the shrines erected to signify the presence of the ancestor. It also indicated the special ceremonies and rites performed around these shrines, the sacrifices and offerings affected them. Moreover, *ori* described the gatherings that took place on

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[61] Ibid. 26.

[62] Ibid. 26. John Baptist Odama explains the ancestors or the living dead as follows: "The Lugbara believe they are still people or persons, human beings with social and moral responsibilities as contrasted to things such as clients, babies and young women, none of whom possess social responsibility. All the dead kinsfolk of a man/woman are loosely called ancestors, though he/she may not know all the names, but he/she is sure that after their death they are somewhere beneath the surface of the world or some other place. Only those who have been either family leaders or clan leaders, and have been contacted by diviners after death and are found worthy, are often given a symbolic sign of welcome in a home by erecting stones under granaries to mark their presence among the living kin.…The living-dead, especially those who were well-behaved and respected elders are remembered in every major activity of the clan such as marriage celebrations and funerals, especially of elderly people. In daily life they are recognized as the members of the lineage, above all as heads. Formerly, they used to have libation from the living members quite frequently. Their past lives as old people, morally good examples, used to be recounted at any gathering of elders or clan people. They are looked at as models, wherever they really were exemplary in their lives to the clan members. The living members always considered them as protectors of the clans and of the morality of the lineage. Any signs of degeneration in the clan's behavior were often considered punishable through illness, epidemics and other calamities. Similarly on the occasion of burial, if the corpses were not treated respectfully or were buried in an unbefitting manner, they would also take revenge on the living members. It is not uncommon among the Lugbara to find such statements as: 'Our grandfather or grandmother had laid badly in the grave for us.' This means the relationship between the living members and the ancestors is spoiled. Immediate reparation or restoration of the good relationship is needed. This was always done through the sacrifice of a goat or a lamb. The significance of this was before and after-it must be the norm to live in good relations with the living members and ancestors of one's clan."

the occasion of these ceremonies and rites."[63] The multifaceted meaning of *Ori* highlights a variety of features that characterize Lugbara traditional religion, the main ones being ancestral, humanistic, social and elitist.

First, *Ori* conveyed the ancestral dimension of Lugbara traditional religion, recalling the watchful, safeguarding, and punishing role of the ancestors. The relations with *Ori* were, to a considerable extent, pervaded by fear. The *ori* communicated to religion a pervasive motivation derived from fear founded on the possible punishments caused by misconduct. The *ori* manifested guarding and reproving presence in cases of misbehavior on the part of human beings. Hence, good behavior assured that the *Ori* stayed quiet. Consequently, the idea of religion that emanated from the *Ori* affected behavior rather than belief, and morality rather than doctrine. It demanded conformity in practical behavior rather than theory. It had to do with actions rather than with ideas.

Secondly, the humanistic dimension of *Ori* was a natural derivation of the humanism permeating the concept of ancestors. Though the ancestors referred to as *ori* were somewhat distant from humanity, they nevertheless remained ultimately human. Their shrines were made to occupy places cherished by humans, quite often within the family compound, as the *ori* were still considered to be members of the human community. The food offered to them was the same as that taken by any human. The attitudes and

[63] Albert Titus Dalfovo, "Religion Among The Lugbara: The Triadic Source of Its Meaning," in *Anthropos* 96. 2001: 35. John Baptist Odama, *God's Word As Event-Call in Dt. 26: 1-11: An Exegetical Interpretation and Pastoral Application to the Lugbara* (Kampala, Kisubi: Marianum Press, 1991), 26. Odama describes *Ori* as those who are offered or given sacrifices. *Ori* express the reality of religious relationship which binds the living and the living dead. Through this link the living dead are recognized to be living in another level of the spirit world and have been or have to be accepted as such by those living on earth. The two are united in the act of sacrifice when the living members share with the living dead food, drink and many other things which show signs of close kinship and true communion.

reactions of ancestors such as jealousy, vengeance, and the consideration of traditional values were those experienced by people in ordinary life. In cultivating relationships with the *ori*, the living did not transfer themselves to the trans-empirical reality of the dead, but rather they kept the spirits of the dead within the empirical humanity of the living. That humanism, emanating from the *ori* and extending to traditional religion, involved its adherents. Traditional Lugbara religion had to be seen in the practice of good relations among the group that made reference to the same *ori*. The ethics derived from traditional Lugbara religion was eminently public and social rather than private and individualistic.

Thirdly, all that related to *ori* was public, and that gave a social dimension to Lugbara traditional religion. The very first motivation for a gathering for the *ori* might have been private, like a misfortune, or a calamity affecting a person or a family. As soon as an assembly for the *ori* was organized, the first duty of its private initiator was that of making the forthcoming event public. The actual gathering was public in every detail, both with regard to the actual performance, which was entirely in the open, and to the attendance, which could be witnessed by all. In case anything in connection with the gathering might have passed unnoticed, it would have been eventually brought out in the final speeches. However, a part from the social dimension of the Lugbara traditional religion, it has the private aspects as well.[64]

[64] Lugbara traditional religion has private aspects as well; however, its public aspect is overwhelmingly important. One can observe private religious expressions in the offering of such gifts as chickens, eggs, and food to spirits usually in rivers that are not *ori* or related to them. A similar case is that of placing food on the graves. A private feature is also the confession traditionally practiced among the Lugbara when prompted by some impending danger. A person confesses his or her hidden sins to avert such danger. A similar example is given in the case of a person needing divination. The diviners' oracle needs to be generally preceded by a rather detailed explanation of the petitioner's private affairs.

Fourthly, the term *ori* as referred to in traditional Lugbara religion conveys elitist aspects. In fact, *ori* highlights the active role played by elders in traditional religion and consequently the passive role played by the rest of the people, particularly the women and the young. The women and young attended the *ori* gatherings, but their presence was mainly that of spectators. They might have prepared the food and eaten it, but none of them went beyond the function of acolytes. The final speeches of the elders were a further and conclusive proof that the ceremonial leadership at the *ori* belonged to them. This elders' preeminence extended to everything related to traditional religion. Although religion permeated the entire social life, it was nevertheless the predominant business of the elders. While the women and the young had no particular role to play in the *ori*, elders had in religion an instrument for commanding and maintaining respect, order and security in their society.[65]

1.7 The Lugbara and their Contact with the Outside World

The Lugbara people of Uganda had a complex history before they came in contact with the outside world. There was no written history about them, but many of the things about them were transmitted from generation to generation orally. John Middleton writes: "The history of a people such as the Lugbara in the 1950s when I lived among them had been far more complex than often is simplistically held by historians and anthropologists

[65] Albert Titus Dalfovo, "Religion Among The Lugbara: The Triadic Source of Its Meaning," In *Anthropos* 96. 2001: 35-36.

today."[66] He continues to say, "Virtually nothing is known of them, in a documentary sense, before the advent of the first Arabs and Europeans who visited them in the late nineteenth century, most of whom left without leaving any written records."[67]

All that we know about the Lugbara of Uganda before the advent of the first Arabs, Europeans and missionary groups has been transmitted in the Lugbara oral tradition. For example, we know as John Middleton put it: "By 1885 Egyptian stations had been established among both the Kakwa and Keliko and at several points along the Nile, but there were none in Lugbara. Emin Pasha stayed at Wadelai on the Nile from 1885 to 1889 and had a Lugbara servant and several Lugbara porters, but he did not penetrate the distant highlands." [68]

The Arabs were the first group of outsiders who came in contact with the Lugbara. After the collapse of the great Roman Empire in North Africa, both Egypt and Sudan came under Arab rule. It was from here that as John Middleton writes, "We know that Arab slave raiding was prominent in the region throughout the nineteenth century and earlier."[69] John Middleton continues, "The Northern Lugbara spoke of four parties of Arabs who entered their country before the Belgians came in 1900, some of whom had contact with more important Lugbara men/women."[70]

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[66] John Middleton, *The Lugbara Of Uganda*, Second Edition (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 2.
[67] Ibid. 2.
[68] Ibid. 3.
[69] Ibid. 2.
[70] Ibid. 3. See Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History & Representation on an African Frontier* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005), 126.

It is definitely clear that the Lugbara, especially those from the northern and eastern parts of the country, were seriously troubled by slave trade. Due to these terrible raids for slaves by the Arabs, including the Egyptian and Sudanese slave traders, the Lugbara escaped the terrible fate that met them by moving further into the southern part of the Sudan, Uganda and Congo. These are the areas where one will find clusters such as the Avokaya, Kaliko, Logo, Lugbara and Madi Moru.

The influence of the Arabs on the Lugbara people of Uganda was both negative and positive. Negatively, the slave trade carried out by the Arabs had a terrible impact on the Lugbara. The people suffered the loss of their loved ones. It led to the massive migration to different parts of Africa, such as Sudan, Congo, Uganda and the Central African Republic. The remnants of Emin Pasha's troops controlled the Lugbara in collaboration with the British. For example, after the uprising at Udupi in 1919, the district commissioner of Arua, Alfred Evelyn Weatherhead, "appointed native agents, mostly Sudanese from the remnants of Emin Pasha's troops who had settled in various parts of Uganda. They maintained liaison between the district commissioner, the chiefs, and the local population and were not withdrawn from the west Nile district until mid-1920."[71]

Positively, it was from these descendants of Emin Pasha's troops that Islam came in contact with the Lugbara people, mostly among the Aringa. John Middleton recounts: "There were also several thousand Muslim among the Lugbara people. Arua Town had a population of three thousand so-called Nubis, said to be the descendants of Emin Pasha's

[71] Ibid. 5.

troops, but the term applied to any recently converted Lugbara man or a Lugbara woman who married a Nubi. Their role as traders and hawkers had given them an important economic position in the district."[72] The missionary activity of Islam among the Lugbara will be treated under the topic Islam in West Nile (pages 53-58).

The second wave from the outside world that came in contact with the Lugbara people was the Europeans. This "began with the appearance of a few European travelers who were associated in various ways with the Egyptian administration of the Sudan or the Belgian administration of the Congo Free State, many of whom were remembered as individuals in the oral traditions of Lugbara elders of the 1950s."[73]

At the Berlin Conference in 1885, the great European powers divided African territories among themselves. It was around this time that the Lugbara people of Uganda came in contact with some Europeans. As Toni La Salandra writes: "In 1887 Dr. W. Junker, a private explorer of Russo-German origin, walked from Yei to Koboko, Maracha, Oluvu, maybe also as far as Adumi and Oluko."[74]

In 1890 Uganda became a British protectorate, but the boundaries of the West Nile were not yet defined. It was in 1892, that a Belgian officer, Lieutenant Milz, crossed the Nile-Congo divide (Lugbara land), and issued a treaty of allegiance with Addu Fadl el Mullah,

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[72] Ibid. 6.
[73] Ibid. 3. See Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History & Representation on an African Frontier* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005), 127.
[74] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile, Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionaries, 2004), 9. Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History and Representation on an African Frontier* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005), 128.

one of the mutinied ex-soldiers of Emin Pasha at Wadelai. They set up camp at Wandi in Aringa near Wollo. As a result, the West Nile came under Belgian rule.[75] At that time, this area to the West of the Nile River was part of the Lado Enclave, which had been leased in 1894 by the British to the Etat Independent du Congo.[76] It was not until the death of King Leopold II of Belgium in 1908 that the area west of the Nile River was given to the British rule in Sudan. Captain Stigand became the administrator of the region from Kajo Kaji.[77] At this time also, President Theodore Roosevelt of America came to the region, hunting for Rhinos at Rhino-Camp.[78]

The Belgians began to administer the region in 1900 by opening several posts, of which Ofude, to the west of the Eti or wati mountain, was in Lugbara Land.[79] As John Middleton writes, "Ofude was occupied for five or six years and the garrison then withdrawn."[80] "There were four or five European officers, who rarely left the shelter of encampment, and a detachment of Congo African troops."[81] Generally relations were hostile and there was much raiding for cattle and grain by the Congo African troops.[82] The older members of the Ofude clan still remember the brutality and looting done by the

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[75] Ibid. 10.
[76] John Middleton, *The Lugbara Of Uganda,* Second Edition (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 3.
[77] C. H. Stigand, *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1923), xxvii. In the memoir it says, "Consequently on the death of the King of the Belgians, the Lado Enclave reverted to the Sudan, and Captain C. H. Stigand was specially selected as British representative to take over the Enclave from the Belgians. His sudden appointment, dated 9th March, 1910, to the Egyptian Army was probably, as he described it, the quickest thing on record. …this special duty Stigand was placed in charge of the Kajo Kaji district of the Mongalla, the most southern province of the Sudan, where his well-known administrative ability and capacity for firm and equitable treatment of natives found full scope."
[78] Ibid. 103.
[79] John Middleton, *The Lugbara Of Uganda,* Second Edition (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 3.
[80] Ibid. 3.
[81] Ibid. 3.
[82] Ibid. 3.

soldiers. The Belgians made some of the lineage elders and the wealthier local people become chiefs. These chiefs had overwhelming power,[83] and many of them had been the followers of a prophet, Rembe, a Kakwa, living about forty miles north of Lugbara land. The Lugbara people resented the Congo African troops and the Belgian administrators. It is said that the Lugbara people of Ofude raided the post and shot arrows at its occupants by night.[84] The Belgian regime among the Lugbara was nothing but trouble for the people.[85] He (Rembe) had dispensed sacred water (Water of Allah) in an effort to relieve the area of cerebro-spinal meningitis, rinderpest, Arabs, and Europeans because all four calamities had appeared at the same time and they were causally interconnected in Lugbara thought.[86] The Chiefs or Sultans had all been important men of Rembe, and when the Belgians asked for leading men of authority, they came forward.[87] In the eyes of the Lugbara people, as members of a cult meant to control European power they seemed to be the obvious choice to deal with the Belgians.[88] These men, the chiefs, "were made chiefs and paid for their services in cattle, thus being made rich beyond all Lugbara people."[89] These men became betrayers of the Lugbara people and were responsible for much trouble that harmed the Lugbara population. As Mark Leopold, quoting the Lugbara historian Lulua Odu, wrote:

> The Lugbara saw these chiefs as agents or puppets of the White men. They were given the title of *Ogara ba or mundu ba* (people of the Europeans). They were collaborators and spies of the new order. There was little the people could do to

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[83] Ibid. 3.
[84] Ibid. 3.
[85] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* Introduction by Vincent Harding, with a postscript by A. M. Babu (Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1982), 153, 167, 172.
[86] John Middleton, *The Lugbara Of Uganda,* Second Edition (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 3.
[87]Ibid. 3.
[88] Ibid. 3.
[89] Ibid. 3-4.

> reverse the trend of events. Eventually they had to submit and accept the changes of the new order.[90]

The Belgians and soldiers behaved badly. They came from outside the social system and were at first not absorbed into the Lugbara communities or society. In fact, the Belgians are remembered as white men and women who spent most of their time drinking gin and tea in the Lugbara land.[91] The chiefs were directly responsible for collecting taxes. They abused their power and forgot about their traditional responsibilities to the people, and they acted in a rather greedy manner.[92] The Lugbara directed a lot of hostility towards these chiefs (betrayers) and they used to refer to white men and women, chiefs and other Africans employed in the colonial administration as *Mundu* (people of the gun) that is, a person whose position was ultimately supported by the colonial government.[93]

After the death of King Leopold II of the Belgians in 1908, the area became part of Sudan.[94] The Lado Enclave was handed to the British in Sudan, and the Lugbara land as well.[95] As Lugbara land joined the Sudan politically, again labor, service and taxes were introduced to the Lugbara area; the people worked, and shell money was the currency of the Lugbara people in those years.[96] As John Middleton explains:

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[90] Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History & Representation on an African Frontier* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005), 71.
[91] John Middleton, *The Lugbara Of Uganda*, Second Edition (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 4.
[92] Ibid. 4.
[93] Ibid. 4.
[94] Ibid. 4.
[95] Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History & Representation on an African Frontier* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005), 108-130. C.H. Stigand, *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1923), 1-13; 78-91.
[96] John Middleton, *The Lugbara Of Uganda*, Second Edition (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 4.

> It was at this time that the area became the scene of elephant-poaching on an immense scale, with ivory being taken by traders of all nationalities and without supervision or control; there was doubtless much effect on Lugbara daily life, but it is no longer possible to discover details.[97]

Major Chauncy Hugh Stigand became the administrator of the area within a short time.[98] By 1914, the southern portion of the Lado Enclave (Lugbara land) was passed again to Uganda, and Alfred E. Weatherhead took over the administration of the new area and built a station at Arua, now the present government headquarters.[99] Meanwhile, Aru station in western Lugbara (Congo), which had never been part of the Enclave and so had always been in Congo proper, was opened about the same time, and the first shopkeepers, Arabs and Indians, appeared as the new population.[100] The Lugbara remember Alfred E. Weatherhead as a little man, but very fierce, who walked among the Lugbara without guns.[101] He waged continual force against the Lugbara clans for the first few years, as his early reports show, to persuade them to send representatives to Arua. He referred to the Lugbara as wild and untraceable, and as shy and unorganized. They were described to be people who did not submit to their political superior easily.[102] As John Middleton explains:

> The British administration began to affect everyday life by making the Lugbara and other groups off from each other by gazetted boundaries, by introducing taxation, labor migration, consumer goods, education, Christianity, and the

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[97] Ibid. 4.
[98] C.H. Stigand, *Equatoria: The Lado Enclave* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1923), 1-13; 78-91.
[99] The names of the towns of Arua in Uganda and Aru in Congo literally mean in prison and place of prison. For example in Arua town there is a hill called Arua hill and on top of this hill there is a crater. This crater is always filled with water. The prisoners during the colonial times were put in this water or imprisoned in this water before they are released to go home.
[100] Ibid. 4. John Middleton writes: "The Indians came to Uganda and Eastern Africa as railroad workers. They were brought into Uganda by the British. With time they all settled in different parts of the country and began opening shops and business. The economy of these east African countries was entirely on the hands of the Asians."
[101] Ibid. 4.
[102] Ibid. 4.

> opportunities for a few political leaders to become wealthy and powerful under British protection.[103]

These factors mentioned above had slow effects and became qualitatively significant by the start of the Second World War (1938-1945) among the Lugbara.[104] It should be noted that elsewhere in east Africa radical structural changes took place earlier: in central Kenya and in the southern regions of Uganda by the 1920's, and along the Mombasa coast during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[105] The Lugbara and their neighbors, such as the Madi, Alur, and Kakwa, had a slower change in political structure. But later on the horrors of Idi Amin Dada and Milton Obote in the 1960's were deeply felt among them and along their terrain.[106]

In the 1950's there were five Lugbara counties and each had a chief (*Opi or Sultan*). These counties included Maracha, Terego, Ayivu, Vurra, and Aringa and each had about five sub-county chiefs (*Wakili or Joago*). [107] They were also parish chiefs (*Mukungu*) and village headmen (*Nyapara*). These last two were representative of any indigenous groupings that were exploited by the colonial government.[108] As John Middleton states, "Chief's councils were instituted in 1948 and represented clan and lineage groups, as well as factional interests, such as local Christians and Muslims. These posts were elective by popular vote, and there was also a superior district administration in which posts were open to all peoples of the district."[109] In 1962, as the independence of Uganda came to

[103] Ibid. 4.
[104] Ibid. 4.
[105] Ibid. 4.
[106] Ibid. 4.
[107] Ibid. 5.
[108] Ibid. 5.
[109] Ibid. 5.

pass, much more stress was laid upon elections, and political parties appeared, such as the Democratic Party, Uganda Peoples Congress, and Kabaka Yeka.[110] The Democratic Party became popular among the Lugbara, and the people supported it.

1.8 The Missionary Groups

Another group of people that came in contact with the Lugbara people from the outside world were the different missionary groups. These included the Muslims (Islam), and the Christian missionaries, such as the African Inland mission (Protestant), the Church of Uganda missionaries (Anglican Protestant), and the Comboni Missionaries (Roman Catholics). These missionary groups had a profound influence and effect on Lugbara life and culture.[111]

1.8.1 Islam in West Nile

The spread of Islam among the Lugbara of Uganda, especially in Aringa county, began around the year 1850 when the "army from Egypt led by Emin Pasha came to rule the equatorial province."[112] Emin Pasha then recruited able young people in Northern Uganda, among them Lugbara to assist him in ruling the equatorial province in

[110] Ibid. 5.
[111] With regard to the Comboni Missionaries, their contributions to the Lugbara people were enormous, however, a critical investigation will be carried out in Chapter three.
[112] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile, Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionaries, 2004), 29. P. Josef Stamer, *Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Estella, Navara: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1996), 9-13.

Khartoum. Among those recruited in Lugbara land included: Addu Anula from the Ambala clan, Okuni Diba from the Anyifira clan, Azabo Uruta from the Aliapi clan, Geria Ondoga from the Langi clan, Abiyo Longira and Andi from the Romogi clan. The soldiers in the garrison or camp of Emin Pasha were all Muslims or Nubis, and because of that those picked from among the Lugbara people were converted to Islam and they were given Muslim names without circumcising them. The Muslim names given these young Lugbara people were as follows: Addu Anula was named Fadhal el Mula Ali; Okuni Diba was named Fadhal el Mula Morjan; Azabo Uruta was named Bilal Farjala, Geria Ondoga was named Adam Mbasasaka; Abiyo Longira was named Rizi; Andi was named Asubala. Around the year 1911, these soldiers under Emin Pasha retired and came back to Uganda, making their barracks in Bombo near Kampala. Around the year 1914, Addu Anula came back to his Lugbara land, in Aringa County, leaving his fellow Muslim brothers behind in Bombo. When Addu came back among the Aringa, he became a chief. At that time the Aringa, had their gods (*Abiyonga)* to be worshipped.[113]

While he was still in Khartoum Addu became a Muslim under Emin Pasha, in the Army. He began to influence the fellow Aringa people to become Muslims when he came back home. In 1916, the first Muslims were circumcised in the first Mosque, called *Alelinga* in the village of Renda. These were 19 men circumcised by Charaka. The conversion of these people to Islam had a remarkable influence on the Aringa people and the Lugbara at large. Even Addu asked his fellow army men, with whom he had been together in Khartoum, to come from Bombo to teach the Aringa people the way of Islam. Ramadan

[113] Ibid. 29.

Abyia from Ayivu county was also well versed in Islam. He became the first sheikh of the Muslims of Aringa county.

As a reward for the war against the Mahdi, the British government made the former soldiers, including those from Aringa, chiefs all over the West Nile. They were assigned at different places such as Moyo, Orussi, Angal and Arua. Addu Fadha el Mula was the founder of Islam in Aringa County, among the Lugbara people of Uganda and the West Nile district as a whole. It should be noted that Addu was both a civil leader and a religious leader, and this is acceptable according to the teachings of the Qur'an. That is the reason why many Aringa Muslims thought that the land belongs to them, and hence they persecuted Christians in their land or county. Some times Muslims were hostile to the missionaries and Christians and especially at night there were crimes commited against them. For example, catechumens were beaten on their way to the parish for instructions. Chapels were burned down at night by the Muslims. These Muslims did not receive the formal education introduced by the missionaries, but instead they had only Quaranic schools or Garan for their children.[114]

After 1987 there was a great revival of Islam among the Lugbara people, especially with the construction of new mosques and primary schools in the new district of Yumbe. As Toni La Salandra writes:

> According to the 1991 census, the Muslim population in Arua district was 146,149 (22.9%). In Arua town or municipality alone the Muslims were 12,293 (55%). In Aringa County the Muslims were 78,187 (78.3%). The statistics show that Islam is the second religion among the Lugbara of Uganda.[115]

[114] Ibid. 30.
[115] Ibid. 30.

Today at least, young Muslims tolerate and respect Christian denominations. Inter-religious dialogue carried out within the small Christian communities can be a means to overcome the division between Christians and Muslims. This can best be done through the commitment and interest of these small Christian communities by dialogue. Good communication is encouraged and it can produce peaceful results.

With the introduction of Islam among the Lugbara people of Uganda and Aringa county, there was a Sudanese sheikh, Rembe who preached the water of Allah. The sheikh thought that through the water of Allah the people would become rich, acquire clothes and freedom from the colonial government. The people followed this influential sheikh Rembe because he had promised them everything if they used the water of Allah. One of the supposed great effects of the water of Allah was to make the people invulnerable against bullets as they fought against the British colonial government. It was thought that if the bullet was to be fired at the people, it would just fall to the ground without causing any harm. It was also thought that those who used the water of Allah could make guns out of straw (Bamboo plant), which at the time of battle would have changed into real guns to kill the Christians or the followers of the white colonialists. The water of Allah was preserved in containers under small huts or granaries. The followers would go there to drink at certain times and take away a little, in calabashes, as protection against evil eyes, snakes, wild beasts and the government. The district commissioner, Jack Driberg, fought against such practices by burning the small huts and granaries and killing the promoters or other sheikhs, who were mostly chiefs in the West Nile district. The district

commissioner would appear suddenly at night to arrest the sheikhs or chiefs. The missionaries complained against the barracks of Arua for the immorality and practices of this water of Allah.[116]

It was during this historic moment that the Nubian group, or Muslims, were the ones making the laws and traditions of the people. The people were linked to corrupt chiefs of the place like Fadha El Mullah, Ali of Aringa and Fadha El Mullah Morjan of Bondo. Due to the water of Allah and mistreatment of the people by the British colonial government, the Lugbara people had a hostile attitude towards the British colonial government. For example, twice the Lugbara of Udupi attempted to kill the commissioner, Alfred E. Weatherhead, who established himself in Arua in 1915.[117]

The Lugbara believed they could immunize themselves against the army by using the water of Allah, which could change bullets into harmless little stones. A chief who took sides with the new government feared he would be killed by his own people, and asked protection from the commissioner, who sent seven soldiers to protect him. The people killed three of the soldiers and mutilated the chief cutting him up into pieces. In 1919, the commissioner sent reinforcements and about three hundred people were killed in Udupi.[118] Some escaped into Congo and others were arrested. From that time on, the district commissioner forbade the Lugbara people to carry bows, arrows and spears. Due

[116] Ibid. 31.
[117] Ibid. 32.
[118] This information was documented by the Comboni Missionaries in their Arua Missionary station Diary which says, "In June 1919, the people of Udupi rise against the Government. They killed one wakili and seven soldiers. Reinforcements arrived from Buganda and the rebels were cornered in the reeds near Enyau river, surrounded and slaughtered. 300 (Three hundred) dead and 2000 plus (over two thousand) heads of cattle were taken away."

to the insecurity, the commissioner asked for some help from Entebbe. Immediately, an assistant district commissioner, Mr. Jack Driberg, was sent to Arua. The Acholi nicknamed him *Bwana Tong,* or Mr. Spear, because he carried a spear in his hand constantly. Due to the hostile attitude of the Lugbara, the authorities denied missionaries permission to establish chapels with catechists in the territory. This was also the time when Alfred E. Weatherhead, the district commissioner, erected the prison in Arua town. The barbaric method of imprisonment carried out by the colonial government stopped the rebellion and the violence among the Lugbara people of Uganda.[119]

1.8.2 The Christian Missionaries: Protestants and Roman Catholics

The African Inland Mission (Quakers) and the Verona Fathers (Roman Catholics) entered Lugbara Land in the 1920s. For a couple of decades, it was difficult to assess their impact on the people. The people regarded missionaries as agents of colonial administration, and missionaries were very antagonistic to their traditional system of authority and religion.[120] In many ways, there was a marked separation between Lugbara and European culture. Most Lugbara Christians, evangelists, and others, practiced both some form of Christianity and their traditional rites. They found a little difficulty in reconciling the belief belonging to each, as they were all significant in different situations. Today the influence of Christianity is great in areas of morality and politics. It should be noted that a small minority of the Lugbara now accept indigenous beliefs and teach them to their children. Many Christians are dedicated to the demands of the bible,

[119] Ibid. 32.
[120] John Middleton, *The Lugbara Of Uganda,* Second Edition (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 3.

but there still remain some who take refuge in traditional practices, especially in cases where they feel Christianity cannot help them overcome their problems.

1.8.2.1 The African Inland Mission: Quaker Group

The African Inland Mission (AIM) a Quaker group had its beginning in the work of Peter Cameron Scott (1867-1896), a Scottish-American missionary of the international Missionary Alliance who served two years in the Congo before he was sent to Scotland in 1892 because of illness. While recuperating, he developed his idea of establishing a network of mission stations, which would stretch from the southeast coast of the African continent to the interior area known as the Sudan, which had never been evangelized by Christians. Scott quickly recruited several men and women who were willing to return with him to Africa to start this missionary work. In 1895, the African Inland Mission's first mission party set off. Unfortunately, in December 1896, Peter Scott died because of the extremely hard pace at which he had been driving himself. The mission almost dissolved in the following year (1897) when most of the workers resigned.

The Council had to take responsibility for the work, and appointed Rev. Charles Hurlburt as director of the mission. After a survey trip to Africa, Charles Hurlburt returned to Africa to work and he eventually brought his entire family. He first worked in Kenya and established the African Inland Mission headoffice at Kijabe, Kenya in 1903. From Kenya, the mission expanded its work to neighboring areas. For example, in 1909 a station was set up in what was then German East Africa (Tanganyika), and later,

Tanzania. President Theodore Roosevelt, in 1912, intervened on behalf of his friend Rev. Charles Hurlburt to persuade the Belgian government to permit the mission to establish a station in the Congo, later called Zaire.

In 1910, soon after the return of the Lado Enclave to the British administration in Sudan, the British only allowed Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries into Lugbara Land. For this reason, the African Inland Missionaries (Quakers) were only allowed to cross the Lugbara Land when moving into the Belgian Congo. It was in 1917, when some African Inland missionaries were traveling to Congo through Lugbara land, that one of their members became ill in the Vurra region of the West Nile, Uganda. As a result of this, the party had to remain there for some time. During the course of their residence in Lugbara land, relationships were formed with the local Lugbara people and also with the Anglican Church (Church Missionary Society). Their leaders invited them to stay on in the West Nile, as there were no missionaries working in the area at that time and the missionaries, in turn, felt welcome.[121] Eventually, the African Inland Missionaries (Quakers) began working in the West Nile District of Uganda, and among the Lugbara under the auspices of the Anglican Church.

Over the years that followed, the African Inland Mission was responsible for establishing one of the protestant church on the West Nile and through this church set a strong relationship with the Madi of the West Nile Diocese and the Nebbi Diocese of the Anglican Church of Uganda. One important aspect of the work was the translation of the

[121] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile, Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionaries, 2004), 32.

Bible into Lugbara and other local languages. The Bible, hymn book and prayer book were translated into Alur, Kakwa, and Lugbara languages. These missionaries were also involved in education and medicine. Under their direction, Kuluva Hospital was founded in the late 1940s and it established a good reputation as a general hospital, as well as becoming an important leprosy center. Kuluva Hospital also became important for eye care, and from that center, a surgeon traveled to various other locations in the country on regular basis. The importance of training local people to carry out the work was emphasized. As a result the African Inland Mission personnel joined by others established the first nurses aide training program, which has now become nursing program. In addition, training programs for leprosy, eye, and dental assistance were also started. The African Inland Mission recently initiated two new outreach ministries in Uganda. One is among the Aringa, which is mostly a Muslim group north of Arua, in the extreme northwest of Uganda. The area borders the Sudan at the north. Although much of the African Inland Mission's work is still associated with the Episcopal Church of Uganda, they are now reaching out to several other churches and organizations as well. African Inland Mission is currently involved with church evangelization, apostolic work, education of pastors, training church finance officers, medicine, agriculture, HIV/AIDS awareness within primary and secondary schools, community development, orphanage care, and refugee work.[122]

[122] Ibid. 32-34.

1.8.2.2 The Church of Uganda: The Anglican Group

The years between 1918 and 1923, twenty different missionaries stayed in Mvara. For example, the English authorities had in mind to divide the West Nile according to the three religious groups, that is, Catholic, Protestants and Islam. The Madi were to be Catholics; the Lugbara were supposed to be the Muslims and the Alur were to belong to the Anglican Church. The British could not succeed in their plan, especially because of the particular prevailing political situation of that period in the West Nile. When the catechists' schools started in the district, the district commissioner, Alfred E. Weatherhead, helped the Verona Fathers to send children (the sons of peasants) to their school. However, he sent the sons of chiefs to the Quakers as was the general practice throughout Uganda. In 1931, all over Uganda the number of baptized Protestants numbered 391,947; Catholics were 406,768; and Muslims were about 70,000. Over half of the population of Uganda was Christian. In 1951 two doctors, Peter and Edward Williams, opened Kuluva Hospital and the Leprosy Center. In 1955 the Protestant Bible in Alur was published in one volume.[123]

In 1964 Bishop Silvano Wani an Anglican, was elected to head the diocese of Northern Uganda in Gulu. He was consecrated in Namirembe June 7, 1964. In the same year the translation of the Lugbara Bible was completed in one volume. In 1969 the Protestant diocese of the West Nile and Madi was cut off from the diocese of Northern Uganda. Bishop Silvanus Wani was appointed its first bishop. He was succeeded by Bishop Luke Orombi, who was later taken to the Nebbi diocese when it was created. Meanwhile, in

[123] Ibid. 33.

the West Nile and the Madi diocese, Bishop Luke Orombi was succeeded by Bishop Enuka Lee Drati. Currently Bishop Luke Orombi is heading the Protestant Church in Uganda. He is now in Namirembe, near Kampala.

The British colonial legacy, through the Church of Uganda, still continues up to today in Uganda. Although Catholic citizens are the majority in Uganda, nevertheless in government, and prominent cabinet positions, they lack representation.

1.8.2.3 The Comboni Missionaries in Uganda: Roman Catholic Group

The Comboni Roman Catholic Missionaries were already working in the southern Sudan in 1900 and their missionary work was extended to northern Uganda. The first expedition of the Comboni missionaries was led by Bishop Francis Xavier Geyer, the Apostolic Vicar of Khartoum, and they settled at Omach on the eastern bank of the Victoria Nile in 1910. Soon, however, the missionaries had to abandon Omach because of the danger of sleeping sickness. The mission post was moved to Gulu. New mission stations were opened from there during the following years, in Madi (1917), West Nile (1918). This occurred after the handover of the Lado Enclave, which included the West Nile, to the British. In 1923 Gulu was erected as a separate Apostolic Prefecture under Fr. Anthony Vignato. They also established mission stations in Lango in 1930 and Karamoja in 1933. In 1938 Bishop Angelo Negri, the successor of Fr. Anthony Vignato, ordained the first two priests of the growing Vicariate.[124]

[124] Ibid. 33.

The Second World War brought severe restrictions to the work of the Comboni missionaries in Uganda. In fact, the whole group was detained at Katigondo, near Masaka, for a period of 18 months. At that time they were compelled to abandon the missions in Karamoja, and permission to return to that area was not granted until 1949. From the very beginning, formal education was one of the primary concerns of the Comboni Missionaries. In this endeavor they received the valuable cooperation of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart from the United States, who concentrated on secondary school teaching. The brothers were mostly involved in farming and teaching in the schools. The Comboni sisters gave their contribution in establishing and running girls' schools and convents for indigenous vocations. The development of these schools reached its peak during the 1950s and early 1960s.[125]

With the approach of Independence, the Comboni missionaries played a leading role in enlightening the people concerning the Christian teaching on social and political affairs in Uganda. This was done mostly through the activities of Catholic Action, the foundation of LEADERSHIP, a magazine for Christian lay leaders, and the valuable contribution of the Gulu Catholic Press. During the pre-independence years, the original ties with the mission of the Sudan were slowly severed, while stronger ties were built with the rest of Uganda. The Catholic Education Secretariat was a useful vehicle for the formation of

[125] John Middleton, *The Lugbara of Uganda* Second Edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 99. As John Middleton Writes: "These were the New People (*Ba Odiru).* The more important New People were educated and semi educated of the government and the missions, and the wealthier traders. They were people who came into contact with Europeans and other foreigners. They attended the same schools; they lived in brick houses and adopted a Western way of life; their families intermarried and many of them had ties with similar people outside Lugbara land. These people were Lugbara and therefore had intimate ties with Lugbara society, but as New People their loyalties were to members of their class, as well as to members of their own lineages and families. The leaders of this class provided a new example for the aspiring younger people who could earn money from labor migration or cash cropping."

these national ties. The first foundation outside the Northern Region was the house at Mbuya, Kampala, which was opened in 1959. Shortly afterwards, the Comboni Missionaries accepted a few parishes in the Archdiocese of Kampala and in the Dioceses of Hoima and Kabale. This important step was taken for two reasons. First, to find an outlet for missionary personnel expelled from the Sudan, and second, to come out of isolation in the North and mix with other pastoral agents in the country. In fact, the north was isolated from the rest of Uganda.

Following the nationalization of the schools in 1964, the Comboni Missionaries, now free of many of the concerns of teaching and school administration, were able to plunge more deeply into pastoral work. Difficulties and handicaps of political origin, plus the state of insecurity prevailing throughout the country, particularly in areas served by the Comboni Missionaries, did not cripple this missionary work. Following their decision to remain and suffer with the people, four missionaries lost their lives during the war of 1979, while many others risked their lives in order to be faithful to their commitments. By the end of 1990, the number of Comboni missionaries who had met violent death had risen to ten. This number includes also the two fathers who gave their lives to save a boy in Kigumba in 1972. The Comboni Missionaries also had, and still have, to face serious difficulties typical of the areas where they exercise their ministry.

The natural characteristics of some northern ethnic groups, together with the ethnic conflicts that led to the decimation of leaders, made it difficult to hand over full political responsibility to suitably qualified local leaders. The Comboni Missionaries, true to the

essence of their missionary call, remain committed to a policy of gradual withdrawal. Their presence reached a peak of 344 members in 1971. By 1981, however, the number was down to 218, and by 1990, to 165. The number of Ugandans in the congregation is slowly but steadily rising. There are now 11 Ugandan Comboni priests and about 30 candidates in the different stages of formation (Postulancy, Novitiate and Scholasticate).

A humble start has also been made to the Postulancy for Brothers. As co-founders of this young Church, the Comboni Missionaries feel special responsibility for leading it to maturity, keeping in mind the enormous difficulties, both social and religious, that exist in their missionary work among the northern and southern populations of Uganda. The Comboni Missionaries still work mainly in the northern dioceses of Arua, Nebbi, Gulu, Lira, and Moroto, but they are also present in the South. Languages and living conditions vary greatly from area to area, making it difficult to implement an extensive exchange of personnel.

The West Nile area is predominantly inhabited by Alur, Lugbara, Madi and Kakwa. Christians make up the majority of the population. The Diocese of Arua suffered a severe set-back during the years 1981-1986, when the vast majority of the Lugbara, Madi and other minor tribes went into exile in Zaire and Sudan. However, when they returned home, they settled down to hard work for the revival of all the Church activities. The Church is expected to become sufficiently self-ministering in the near future. An important event in the history of the Diocese was the first Synod celebrated in 1989. Although much remains to be done, the environment is slowly becoming more Christian.

1.9 Conclusion

A clear understanding of the Lugbara people of Uganda, especially their life and culture, is vital for the next chapter which describes the historical development of small Christian communities in Africa, with focus on the Lugbara people of Uganda after the Second Vatican Council. The Lugbara people of Uganda have gone through a variety of experiences since they came in contact with Arabs, Europeans, and missionary groups. Despite all the negative things they have experienced, they have retained an identity as one people with a strong bond of community. They continue to live in small communities, as they have for a thousand years and more. The outside influences did not succeed in breaking down these small communities or *Enyati*. This Lugbara sense of community no doubt influenced the decision of the bishops to opt for the development of small Christian communities as a pastoral priority among the people in this local Church.

Wars, sickness, oppression, and persecution have occurred in the Lugbara Land. Decades have passed, governments and territories have changed. During the civil conflicts and wars of the 1970s and the 1980s thousands fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sudan. People perished, and families were separated by the horrible historical events of those days. Some never came back and some did and found their loved ones once again. The Lugbara people of Uganda survived their history. It's stronger than ever and with God's help it will continue and so will the Lugbara people.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical Development of Small Christian Communities in Africa with Particular Focus on the Lugbara of Uganda after the Second Vatican Council

Introduction

The introduction of the small Christian communities into the Church is mainly a post-Second Vatican Council development. This is true for the continent of Africa. The idea of building small Christian communities gained momentum in the African continent since the Roman Synod of 1974 with its theme "*Evangelization in the Modern World.*"[126] In the 1994 African Synod of Bishops in Rome, small Christian communities were recognized as an excellent way of evangelizing the local Church.[127] Cecil McGarry, et al, confirmed the African Bishops' view of the role of the small Christian communities and the evangelization within the church by saying, "Fostering small Christian communities (SCCs) has now become part of the pastoral priorities of the African Churches, thanks to the Synod fathers who intervened on this topic."[128] This is also because small communities are a well known African experience.

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[126] Patrick Kalilombe, "Position Papers: Overall View on Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 18/5 (October, 1976): 262. Kalilombe states: "The AMECEA delegates to the Roman Synod of 1974, which had as its theme, "Evangelization in the Modern World," had the chance to realize that all over the Church there is much talk about "Basic Christian Communities." In fact, at the Roman Synod this was one of the recurring topics discussed in connection with evangelization, even if it was evident that people understood different things by this appellation. In preparing for the synod, and later on in participating in it, these (AMECEA) delegates came to even a greater realization of the importance of this theme."

[127] Cecil McGarry, Joselito Carreno, Vincent Kalawa, Gilbert Kazingufu, Juan Monroy, Julien N'guessam Sess, Emmanuel Orobator, Arethas Shirima, Barnabe Ramahatradraibe, *What Happened At The African Synod?* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 136.

[128] Ibid. 46.

In this chapter, I will investigate the historical development of small Christian communities in the continent of Africa, particularly among the Lugbara people of Uganda. It would be extremely difficult to present an overview of the historical development of small Christian communities within the whole continent because it is a vast land mass and too complex to explore. I have chosen to concentrate on the small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda.

The bishops who led dioceses located in the Eastern African countries sometimes were referred to as the AMECEA[129] bishops because they have led and supported the historical evolution of small Christian communities in Africa. They established small Christian communities "as an ecclesiological aspiration, catechetical orientation, and as a pastoral priority."[130] The intention of establishing small Christian communities was expressed in the 1973 plenary study conference on *Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa* held in Nairobi, Kenya in the 1980's. This same intention was also restated with renewed emphasis during the AMECEA 1976 plenary study conference on *Building Christian Communities in East Africa*, in Nairobi, Kenya, and the AMECEA 1979 plenary study conference on *Building Basic Christian Communities*, in Nairobi, Kenya.[131] It is by examining the AMECEA plenary study conferences of 1973, 1976 and 1979 that a great understanding of the historical

[129] The abbreviation AMECEA refers to the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa. It consists of the Episcopal Conferences of Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi. See "The 14th AMECEA Plenary Message and Pastoral Resolutions 2002" (Kampala, Kisubi: Marianum Press, 2003), 6-7.
[130] Laurenti Magesa, "The Church in Eastern Africa: Retrospect and Prospect," *How Local Is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa Symposium of Nine Papers*, edited by Agatha Radoli (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1993), 5.
[131] "The 14th AMECEA Plenary Message and Pastoral Resolutions 2002" (Kampala, Kisubi: Marianum Press, 2003), 9-10.

development of small Christian communities in Africa, particularly among the Lugbara of Uganda, was drawn.

This chapter will begin with the question, what are small Christian communities? It will locate the phenomenon of small Christian communities within the Catholic Church today. It will explore the development of small Christian communities in Africa, by looking at the background of the community structure in Africa. It will review the history of the AMECEA Conferences of the Eastern Africa bishops, during 1973, 1976 and 1979, and their accomplishments. It will examine the purpose and development of small Christian communities in the Uganda, Arua and Nebbi Dioceses, particularly among the Lugbara of Uganda.

2.1 What are Small Christian Communities?

Cecil McGarry, et al, in the book, *What Happened at the African Synod*, states: "The small Christian communities, as we know them throughout the Church today, are a phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century."[132] It was not common in the Catholic Church in Africa, prior to the Second Vatican Council, to see people gathering for prayers and bible study in small Christian communities or at private homes. While in other Christian denominations, as for instance within the Protestant church in Uganda, bible study and prayer groups developed as part of their ongoing tradition.

[132] Cecil McGarry, Joselito Carreno, Vincent Kalawa, Gilbert Kazingufu, Juan Monroy, Julien N'guessam Sess, Emmanuel Orobator, Arethas Shirima, Barnabe Ramahatradraibe, *What Happened at the African Synod?* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 131.

The Second Vatican Council reminds us of our early Christian roots, and encourages us to retrieve the vital elements of Christian life as a community and as people of God.

Barbara J. Fleischer writes:

> The Council's insistence that the Church is the people of God produced many implications for Church life on both a global and local level. A major implication of this image is that the creation of authentic and loving relationships is central to becoming Church. The people of God are formed by their joyful experience of the saving power of God's love, made most visible for us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Transformed by our relationship with God, we are called to be a sign and sacrament to the world of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all human kind.[133]

In the Catholic Church today, the phenomenon of small Christian communities has become important in the lives of many parishes and dioceses all over the world. It has taken different names such as basic communities, basic Ecclesial communities, basic Christian communities, basic family communities and living Ecclesial communities. Others refer to them as: small Christian communities, small basic Christian Communities, small Church communities, small faith communities, Christian Faith communities, Church cell communities, intentional communities, critical communities, and grassroots Communities.[134] For consistency and clarity, the terms, small Christian communities and basic Ecclesial communities will be used interchangeably in this chapter.

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[133] Barbara J. Fleischer, *Facilitating For Growth: A Guide for Scripture Study Groups and Small Christian Communities* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 18.

[134] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish, An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1994), 98.

Small Christian communities are realities in some parishes and dioceses all over the world today. "Something important is happening in the Catholic Church around the world. There's no master plan for it that anyone has contrived, unless perhaps the Holy Spirit has done it."[135] The question we need to ask is: What are basic Ecclesial communities? Margaret Hebblethwaite, in her book, *Base Community An Introduction*, says: "…. there is a lot of excitement and interest about this 'new way of being Church …. but still people are not very clear about what exactly a base community is."[136] In her book, *Base Community An Introduction*, Hebblethwaite writes: "It is not easy to say exactly what something is when you are dealing with grassroots, bottom-up development that takes a different shape in different cultures. You cannot point to one and say, that is what it looks like, because the next one will look different."[137] For example, the understanding of small Christian communities in North America "ranges from a way of perking up the parish at one extreme, to a go-it-alone group set against the institution at the other."[138]

In Latin America, base communities are associated with liberation theology that emphasizes preferential option for the poor.[139] In this context, base communities are the soil from which liberation theology has sprung, and to which liberation theology in turn leads. And so, looking precisely at what a base community is, also finds us examining precisely what the Church is all about.

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[135] Bernard J. Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 4.
[136] Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Base Communities An Introduction* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1994), 1.
[137] Ibid. 1.
[138] Ibid. 1.
[139] Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Towards Political Holiness* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 3-7. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Liberation Theology, 10th Edition* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), xxiv-xxv.

In Africa, the idea of basic Ecclesial community is associated with the African experience of community, in the family, village or the clan. Basic Ecclesial Community has now become a household, village or neighborhood Church, and this is the best way of explaining it in an African context.

John Mutiso-Mbinda, in answering the question, "what is basic community?" writes:

> We may say that community is a conscious commitment to give and to share life together with a limited number of people in a defined geographical area. It is a precious value that binds people and families together. It is a value that enables people to have a common understanding, leading them to mutual trust, help, respect for personal freedom, as well as mutual responsibility. In other words, community calls for constant interaction and interrelationships of people working for the benefit of all.[140]

In this quotation, John Mutiso emphasizes the fact that most small Christian communities are made up of small groups, for example, groups of twenty to thirty people. The people live close to each other, know one another well, share their daily lives, joys, sorrows and meals together. The members come to know each other's tastes and temperaments. They may be blood relatives or not, but what matters is the interpersonal relationship and familiarity of the people. Membership may occasionally increase beyond thirty people. It is a neighborhood Church.[141] It is the Church that prays together, cares for the sick and

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[140] John Mutiso-Mbinda, "African Background to Community Building." *African Ecclesial Review* 19/5 (October 1977): 299.

[141] Aylward Shorter says: "There are, therefore, sound sociological and theological reasons why Small Christian Communities should be built on the phenomenon of the neighborhood. Many of the activities of the Small Christian Communities are extension or perfection of neighborliness. This is true of shared prayer, of care for the sick and concern for issues connected with justice and peace and the integrity of creation. Neighborhood is the immediate field of activity, the immediate context, of the Small Christian Communities. The Small Christian Community is not asked, in the very first place, to care for the community at a higher or more remote level than its own neighborhood. This is, or should be the Church of

is involved or concerned with issues of justice and peace in the neighborhood or community. This neighborhood Church or the phenomenon of small Christian communities is not only limited to the churches in Africa and Latin America, but it has become a worldwide phenomenon. As Bernard J. Lee put it:

> The good news is that Christians are gathering on their own initiative to form communities, usually small ones that are often supported by priests and religious sisters and brothers. But the membership and the leadership are largely lay people. The people of God are doing this, and what they are doing looks a lot like the form of church that was the only form in the early centuries. But it is not simply a repetition or retrieval.[142]

Small Christian communities are informal gatherings at homes. In them, you can identify a dozen adults (men and women) and some children. In these gatherings, some people begin to tell the story of Jesus, and others are telling their own stories, sometimes personal, sometimes from the town in which they live or from the places where they work, that is, their social stories. These stories connect the Word of God with the world. These gatherings have become meaningful for Catholics seeking to live their faith as they live their lives in their communities.[143]

Small Christian communities often move from the Liturgy of the Word to table fellowship, sometimes with a sharing of bread and cup, not Eucharist, but a table experience that remembers that Catholic culture is Eucharistic, both inside and outside of

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the neighborhood." See Aylward Shorter, "Small Christian Communities and the Church as Neighborhood." *Omnis Terra* 34 (March 2000): 124-125.

[142] Bernard J. Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 5.

[143] Peter Debo, "BCCs in Uganda-Building A Church from the Grassroots," *Word of God Parish News Letter, Verbatim,* Volume 4, Number 4 (1998): 15.

Mass. It may also be the community that gathers regularly for Eucharistic celebrations in the parish.

To reiterate the above notion of small Christian communities, Bernard Lee observes:

> Members of these small Christian communities (SCCs) often understand this new experience as a retrieval of the major form for ecclesial gathering. The small Christian community or house church was, in fact, the normative basic unit of church life until Constantine and Theodosius gave Christianity the status of state religion in the mid-fourth century. "Yes, I think we are a way of being church…but a new way that's very ancient in our tradition …. That's what's been exciting for me to discern, that Paul wrote those letters to small house churches." The ancient roots, of course, are there, but this is not a mere retrieval. People in those early centuries built church upon a social form that is no longer part of our culture (that is, American): the household. We sometimes use the expression household today, but it does not mean what it did in the early centuries of Mediterranean Greco- Roman life. While this unit has something in common with extended family, it was a more formally recognized form of social life in the early centuries of the common era and included many who were not blood-kin (for example, business clients and other kinds of professional connections). In those centuries the small Christian community was a natural response to natural social structures.[144]

The two quotations from Bernard J. Lee give one the sense that the Holy Spirit is working in the Church, and gathering people in communities today. These are mainly the lay people who gather to form communities. These communities are rooted in the tradition of the Church. They are also rooted in the social structures of each society. All that is going on with the emergence of small Christian community is not simply a repetition of the past, but a new experience of being Church or form of ecclesial gathering.

[144] Bernard J. Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 6-7.

2.2 The Location of Small Christian Community in the Catholic Church Today

The question we need to ask here is, "Where do we locate the basic Ecclesial communities or small Christian communities in the Catholic Church today?" We locate the basic Ecclesial communities or small Christian communities in the contemporary Catholic Church. Bernard J. Lee offers two beautiful metaphors of "Mainstream" and "Marginal."

2.2.1 Mainstream Small Christian Communities

The mainstream small Christian communities (basic Ecclesial communities) are related in some ways to parish life.[145] They are often connected to the restructuring process of parish life, that is, Renew groups functioning within the parish. As Michael A. Cowan and Bernard J. Lee, write:

> The strength of these mainstream groups is their support and inventiveness for changing parish life. They are a place where leadership for the larger parish emerges and is schooled. Because of members' attentiveness to need within the community, a lot of ministering occurs that does not require the efforts of the parish team. In this regard, parish based small Christian communities both reflect and initiate changing patterns in how ministry happens. To be sure, there are community issues that animate members of small Christian communities in the parish; the strong desire for something new, or dissatisfaction with how needs were met before.[146]

Therefore, in a parish context, these mainstream small Christian communities are in conformity with the traditional setting and structures of the Catholic parish.

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[145] Michael A. Cowan and Bernard J. Lee, *Conversation, Risk and Conversion: The Inner and Public Life of Small Christian Communities* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 57.
[146] Ibid. 58.

2.2.2 Marginal Small Christian Communities

The marginal small Christian communities, refers to the prophetic voice forcing their way into the Church and into the community. Michael A. Cowan and Bernard J. Lee explain this metaphor as follows:

> Margins are metaphors that come from a page with a text and space around the text. We live in a church and a city and a nation and a world with a lot of history and story already on the page. The church and the world that we already know because they are here now these are like texts that are already written. Marginal people rarely find their stories told or honored in the text the way it is already written. Lay people generally, and women in particular, have not found many significant parts of their story on the page of the text called church. So they are working to get the story written in a new way, convinced that the story is large and pliant for rewriting. A lot of these people live in what sociologists might call the margins …. sociologists also tell us that any healthy organization must have marginal people who are challenging the written text and who have some variations of the story tied on the ropes, ready to haul in. That is the basic way that societies change and develop. Center has no meaning without reference to margins, and margin has no meaning without reference to center. It is an interdependent relationship.[147]

Like Michael Cowan and Bernard J. Lee, Terry Veling, in her book, *Living in the Margins: Intentional Communities and the Art of Interpretation*, insightfully describes marginal small Christian communities as follows:

> Marginal communities recognize that there are many ways in which the center no longer holds in their experience of tradition and society. They challenge dominant orderings of patriarchy in their quest for renewed feminist expression, they seek more inclusive and participatory structures over against hierarchical and clericalized structures; they turn their attention to ecological issues in the face of an overly technologized world; they are concerned with the causes of indigenous and third world cultures in the face of dominant Eurocentric traditions. They are seeking alternative theologies, spiritualities, and practices, casting their voice

[147] Ibid. 59-60.

> from the margins over the whole social-symbolic order, questioning its rules, terms, procedures and practices.[148]

Small Christian communities are important marginal notations of new ways of being a church emerging within the Church, which is the main text.[149] Bernard J. Lee says:

> I wish to claim that small Christian communities are important scribbling in the margins of a text called Church. … In popular usage marginal sometimes means irrelevant. But margins are always on the page, always frame the text and anything written in the margins inevitably conditions how anyone ever after reads the text. …. what is in the margins sometimes finds its way into the text in a new edition.[150]

Due to these two locations of small Christian communities in our contemporary Catholic Church, two reactions of the Catholic Church towards these small Christian communities (basic Ecclesial communities) can be identified. Bernard J. Lee beautifully described the reactions as follows:

> Small Christian (or Church) communities have sometimes received warm support from the bishops and pastors of parishes, and sometimes they have not. Rome has expressed reservation about liberation theology and basic ecclesial communities through Cardinal Ratzinger, and small Christian communities are praised and their contribution noted by Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*. Therein is some institutional ambivalence about marginal activity. Small Christian communities do not have a structured, legitimated ecclesial location or a specified relationship to parish or diocese. They have no juridical character. The fact that some bishops and pastors are supportive and welcoming does not create a juridical home for the small Christian communities. Pope John Paul II acknowledges that they can be important instruments of evangelization and that they help to decentralize a parish by spreading out responsibility for the community's life more widely among the community's members (*Redemptoris Missio.* No. 51*).* Still small Christian communities are not the way most parishes in the world conduct parish life. That is why I consider them at this point both marginal and of towering importance.[151]

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[148] Terry A. Veling, *Living In the Margins: Intentional Communities and the Art of Interpretation*, Foreword by Thomas H. Groove, Afterward by Bernard Lee (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 10-11.
[149] Bernard J. Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 117.
[150] Ibid. 118.
[151] Ibid. 119-120.

2.3 The Evolving Small Christian Communities in Africa

The idea of building small Christian communities has gained momentum in Africa since its adoption by the Synod of African Bishops in 1974 and 1975. The impact of small Christian communities was felt in Eastern Africa, when the AMECEA bishops, basing themselves on the work of Marie France Perrin Jassy,[152] *Basic Community in the African Churches,* in 1973, advocated for the formation of small Christian communities in their dioceses. Perrin Jassy's investigation highlighted many significant points that helped explain why the Luo people in North Mara (Tanzania) were leaving the Catholic Church and joining independent African churches. She found that the Catholic Church had played an important role in the life of the Luo people, but she also noted that the Catholic Church was separated from the Luo people by a gap, which the years had not closed. In most cases, the faithful play an essentially passive role in the Church. The faithful, for different reasons, had never had to take a hand in the fortunes of their Church and assume their responsibilities. In contrast, the independent African churches were small, neighborhood-based groups that brought a stronger sense of community and wherein leadership and ministry was shared by many, not just a few.[153]

In Africa there was already a movement to organize parish apostolates around smaller communities since the early 1960s. Today this idea is still maturing. Moreover, in

[152] Dr. Perrin Jassy, a cultural anthropologist was born in France. She conducted an extensive research in East Africa on questions of religious sociology. Marie - France Perrin Jassy and her German born husband, an agricultural expert were part of Maryknoll mission team in Shinyanga, Tanzania in the 1970's. Her investigation was in the context of Luo People.
[153] Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *Basic Community in the African Churches* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 247.

Africa, the Second Vatican Council's vision of the Church and recognition of the role of the laity still has not come to pass.

Eventually, a multitude of factors influenced the formation of small Christian communities in Africa in the 1970s, reaching the Lugbara people in the 1990s. Such factors included the African experience of community life, the 1974 and 1975 African Bishops' Synod, the Latin American experience of basic Ecclesial Communities that received much publicity in Africa, the plenary study conferences of AMECEA bishops' in 1973, 1976 and 1979, and the African Synod of 1994.

During the 1976 plenary study conference of the AMECEA bishops, the small Christian communities were launched as an official pastoral policy. Three years later, the subject of small Christian community was again the major topic of reflection at the AMECEA plenary study conference. In the 1994 African Synod, there was an appeal for the implementation of the objective of small Christian communities.

2.4 The African Experience of Community Life

The Africa experience of community is another factor that has greatly contributed to the development of small Christian communities throughout the continent. The idea of community is firmly rooted in the life and culture of the people in Africa. It is important to look at the contribution of African cultures to the Catholic Church's idea of building small Christian communities.

An African does not merely talk about community, but rather he or she lives and experiences community everyday in the family, village and clan. An African community can be described as a neighborhood in which everybody knows everybody, and the members are actively involved in the life of the group, constantly and fully. For example, in a typical African community like a village, people build houses together, work on subsistence farms, and attend village meetings, funerals and weddings together. The people participate in planning community events together. The African experience of community life is not different from the established basic Ecclesial communities. In Africa, we are not looking for new structures, but groupings of Christians who live in such a geographical and or social proximity that they can easily meet at regular intervals, can know one another sufficiently to have a feeling of spiritual togetherness, and can pray together.

2.4.1 The family community in Africa

In Africa, the family is larger than what western society usually considers a family to be. An African speaks of family community within the context of kinship, monogamy and polygamy. For example, among the Lugbara tribe in Uganda, a person's father is not just the person biologically responsible for his or her conception. His or her mother is not necessarily the woman who physically gave him or her birth. He or she may have as many as fifteen "fathers" and ten "mothers." In the ideal situation, each one of these

would treat him or her as his or her biological father or mother would. Since he or she has several “mothers” and “fathers,” he or she obviously has many more brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces. In fact, in some African languages the words “cousin,” “aunt,” and “uncle,” do not exist. One’s father’s brother is one’s father and one’s mother’s sister is one’s mother. The family community in Africa is the first school a child attends. By living together with his or her parents, brothers and sisters, the child grows to think like them. If the family considers something to be very important, the child will also think that it is important. The African family community has a deep sense of sharing and cooperation between members. Each of the members sees the needs of others and those of the family as a whole and responds accordingly. This deep sense of sharing and cooperation in the family is because of blood relationships.

The extended family includes a father, the children, a father and his brothers, their wives, sons and unmarried daughters. Polygamy even makes the extended family larger and the family community could be a whole neighborhood. Family solidarity is maintained through occasional meetings, in which the family heads discuss their goals and objectives as well as dealing with particular family issues. At funerals, weddings, engagements, and sacrifices, the family head usually takes the opportunity to solve other family problems, and this is a great help to strengthen family solidarity. The family community is an advantage for building a basic Ecclesial community, because everybody knows everybody else at this level.

The face of the African extended family is now changing. Extended families must face many new challenges. Aylward Shorter, in his article "Sociology of the Changing African family," says:

> The African family - especially the large or so called extended family - is under strong pressure today. One threat is the separation of family members and even of spouses through migrant labor. This puts a strain on marriages and is a major factor in desertion and divorce. Due to the dispersal of family members, families operate in a truncated manner in both urban and rural areas. Family roles are amalgamated or improvised.[154]

There is no doubt that the family in Africa faces a serious challenge to cope with social change and with the impact of the mass media. It needs the support of small Christian communities and of various parish associations if it is to be renewed.

2.4.2 The Village Community in Africa

The village community in Africa is again an advantage in building small Christian community because it is made up of a number of families. What we call a village community is the aggregate of clustered households composed of different families which need not belong to the same kin group. The village or settlement is the most acceptable basis for community in Africa. It is the most reliable human community. The village community is composed of both kinsmen and neighbors, and neighborliness and good company are the predominant ideals of village life.

[154] Robert S. Pelton, *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 95.

The village becomes the basis of community because at this local level people can have many shared meanings, due to the fact that they have a common neighborhood residence, a common culture, language and occupation. Religion and kinship, though they may not be shared in the same way, play a great role in community solidarity. People work together in community projects and help each other building houses and granaries, clearing the land, planting, weeding and harvesting, regardless of their religion. If religion does not play a role in helping one another, it means that it is possible for people to help and reach out beyond religion, as human beings in search of peace, brotherhood and sisterhood drawing a global conclusion.

The neighborhood system makes it possible for people to know each other in such a way that they share a feeling of togetherness. It is at this neighborhood level that members are able to participate actively in celebrating each other's life events and crisises, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Reconciliation is most effective at this level if quarrels occur between members or families. Such reconciliations take place through informal conversations or through compensation rites with the aim of reestablishing social order and good neighborliness.

2.4.3 Basic Community in African Independent Churches

These (Independent) churches offer their members an intense experience of community, and this is what attracts their adherents most. In these churches, members love their church, and they treat each other like blood relatives. The independent African Churches

include: Prophetic movements; Messianic movements; Indigenous or native movements; Revival movements; Pentecostal movements; Millenary, Apocalyptic and Adventist movements; dissident Christian movements: Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, the Angel of Eternity; movements inspired by Western wisdom: Rosicrucian, Universal White Fraternity, Scientology, Raelian Movement, Ackankar Moon Movement, Church of Satan; movement of Eastern inspiration: Mahikari, Tenrikyo, Bahaism, and Hari Krishna. Some better known independent African churches include: Vapostori Church of John Masowe; Lumpa Church (superior with respect to the missionary churches); Church of the Lord; Brotherhood of the Cross and the Star; Church of Jesus Christ on earth through the prophet Simon Kimbangu. All these churches and independent African Churches were and still are a challenge for the Catholic Church on African soil.[155]

The presence of African independent churches has been and continues to be a strong challenge for the Catholic Church. In the Catholic Parishes or Outstation churches, the African independent churches are numerous. It is sometimes difficult to know their precise number. But in the independent African Churches because members are fewer in number, they often greet each other on the road or the streets like brothers and sisters. These independent African Churches encourage sentiments of familyhood and they are often successful in their recruiting efforts. They are successful because the size of their communities has remained relatively small, a factor that enables the members to relate to

[155] Jesus Angel Barreda, "New Religious Movements in Africa (NRM), Independent African Churches (IACs)," *Correspondences Course on Missionary Formation*, Lesson 4 (1999): 3-13. See The Pastoral Letter of Catholic Bishops of Uganda to the Faithful on Cults, Sects, and "Religious Groups," *Test the Spirit* (Kisubi, Entebbe: Marianum Press, 1993), 1-5.

one another more easily. Usually, there are about fifty persons in such a community. It is therefore possible for every member to remain active.

These African independent churches also have drawbacks. First, they tend to become closed communities, leaving no channels of dialogue between themselves and other churches. For example, they have a distinctive dress or clothes that they wear everywhere and always. Secondly, this tendency is also noticed within the Catholic Church, with certain movements and associations such as Catholic Action and the Legion of Mary. Such behavior, when not properly guided, has the danger of driving such groups into particularism and discouraging others or themselves instead of allowing their experience of Christ to become universal.

2.4.4 Community in African Traditional Religion

In African traditional religion, it is the whole community that worships. Every member is an active participant. The idea of community-wide participation is a deep value in African society. People are very conscious of this community dimension in their everyday life. In conversations, there is the constant use of the first person plural "we" and the possessive pronoun "our."

As stated previously, the Africans worship together. One should also realize that the whole community dimension of African worship is much wider than in western Christianity. Both the living and the dead are perceived to be members of the whole community. The ancestors are considered to be the guardians of society. It is they who

preserve peace, harmony and stability. They are responsible for bringing new life into the community. Hence, there must be a good relationship between the living and the dead members of society. A tremendous religious character is attached to this, especially at funeral rites and re-burial rites at the grave. For example, some of the first harvest and some beer or water is put aside for the ancestors. Among the Lugbara people of the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is now an accepted custom to pour a little beer or whiskey into a tray that is filled with soil and have it passed around in the bar or restaurant so that they can get the blessings of their ancestors. The role of the ancestors is important in African traditional religion because they are looked at as mediators in a way that is comparable to our view of the Communion of Saints in the life of the Catholic Church.

Why is there total involvement in everyday neighborhood events in African communities and yet a complete lack of involvement in the affairs of the Catholic Church? As John Mutiso- Mbinda put it:

> One answer is that most people do not see Christianity as related to daily life. For example, take an African marriage, which is traditionally a community affair. When two Africans marry in the church, it is very noticeable that the atmosphere inside the church is quite divorced from what happens outside. In the church, only the couple, the priest and a few witnesses seem to be involved, but as soon as the service is over, celebration, rejoicing, and dancing take over, involving almost everybody present. The missing link is the whole community idea. There will be involvement of the whole community in worship only if worship is related to daily life and concerns. Similarly, the whole community is responsible for the socialization and education of its young members. A catechumenate program based on this idea is more likely to succeed than one in which the whole responsibility stays with the priest and the catechist. If everyone can become involved in the life of the Church in these ways, then the vision of basic Christian communities will become a reality.[156]

[156] John Mutiso-Mbinda, "African Background to Community Building," *African Ecclesial Review* 19/5 (October 1977): 305.

Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. The fact is that the Churches established in Africa, most especially the Catholic Church, suffer from individualism.

2.4.5 The Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar

The Churches established in Africa have inherited structures from the colonial period which are often highly developed but also quite burdensome. It is also true that in the course of centuries, individualistic Christianity gained momentum and the notion of Christian community tended to disappear. It was "at the Synod of 1974 and at the 1975 meeting of SECAM,[157] the bishops of Africa resolutely opted for implanting the Church not by adaptation but by incarnation or localization."[158] To arrive at a truly local Church in line with the idea of incarnation, Patrick Kalilombe says:

> Until now the force that keeps the Church going at these levels (diocese, parishes, outstations) does not come from inside the local communities but from the outside … as long as this state of affairs persists the Church in Eastern Africa will remain an infant Church, incapable of standing on its own feet, unstable and at the mercy of changing circumstances.[159]

To remedy this, ecclesial life has to be based on small Christian communities. It is not just following a passing fad in the Church today. It is a basic commitment, a serious shift in pastoral emphasis. The importance of this change of direction can be gauged from the following words:

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[157] SECAM refers to: "The Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar."
[158] *Pro Mundi Vita*, "Basic Christian Communities in Africa," *African Ecclesial Review* 19/5 (October 1977): 269.
[159] Patrick A. Kalilombe, "Position Papers: An Overall View on Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesiastical Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 265.

> It is deliberately intended to modify deeply our pastoral system, policy and practice. Until now the vowed common system was to base the life of the church on the parish. The parish was taken for granted as the basic or nuclear expression of the local church … moreover the main objective of this 'Church' was to be a sort of service organization to minister to the people as individuals.[160]

2.4.6 The Bishops Conference of Eastern Africa

The small Christian communities in the African church developed as a response to the different pastoral needs of the people in that continent. It must be noted here that the parish system as it exists in Africa, (especially in the AMECEA countries) is of a very different kind than the parish system existing in Europe or North America. The parishes in Africa have a very large territorial area and population, especially in the rural areas. It is not only the large territorial size of many parishes that makes it difficult for the priests to reach the people, but also inadequate means of transport and bad roads. Because of these large areas and population in parishes and outstations, the Catholic Church in Africa has difficulty identifying who belongs to which parish or outstation. For people to feel they belong to a group, they need to take an active role in that group. Experience shows that people can become more involved in a group, and become more easily recognized if the group is smaller. The parish then becomes a network of variable grass-root communities in which their vitality and links with one another receive proper due (or proper recognition):

> It is not possible to determine the size of these communities in terms of precise numbers …, but the community should be such as to group together a sufficient number of adherents and variety of ecclesial charism to be able to provide the

[160] Ibid. 266.

ordinary non-ordained ministers or services that can keep the local Church community alive and active in its ordinary day to day life.[161]

2.5 The Emergence of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa

It is often said that the notion or the phenomenon of small Christian communities in Eastern Africa was a combined effort of the bishops and the neighborhood community. While it was copied from Latin America or other places it was the work of the Holy Spirit.[162]

At the diocesan and the parish levels in East African countries, the Second Vatican Council's vision of the Church and recognition of the role of laity meant, a catechist, a teacher of religious education in schools or a member of the choir or a parish society. There were also lay people who functioned as lay assistants to the priests in the various villages of the parish. The parish councils began to develop, and the laity began to take on a fairly extensive range of responsibilities within the Church.

Despite some of the positive changes brought on by the Second Vatican Council in the East African Church, pastoral challenges still remained in the parish communities. For example, there were few priests at that time. As John Paul Vandenakker writes:

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[161] *Pro Mundi Vita*, "Basic Christian Communities in Africa," *African Ecclesial Review* 19/5 (October 1977): 270.

[162] Fritz Lobinge, "Christian Base Communities in Africa and in Brazil," *African Ecclesial Review* 29/3 (June 1987): 152.

> To cope with this situation, the early missionaries set up outstations or mass centers in many rural parishes. These outstations usually located in outlying villages, functioned as chapels or missions of the mother parish. A priest from the parish Church would come around on a regular basis, usually monthly to provide Eucharist and other sacramental celebrations.[163]

The same situation is still true in most of the parishes among the Lugbara people. The parishes are still large and with few priests. The creation of the outstations has brought something of an improvement. John Paul Vandenakker noted:

> Despite the improvement to parish life represented by development of outstations and trained lay leaders to help in the pastoral ministry, these grouping were still too large in many instances to facilitate effective Christian formation and to promote further lay participation in the life of the local Church.[164]

The result was evident. Many parishes continue, to lose their members, even after the Second Vatican Council, to other smaller sects and protestant denominations. In order to address these problems, the focus was set on neighborhood communities.

2.5.1 The Contribution of Fr. Daniel Zwack

An early attempt to discuss these problems and to find solutions is to be found in 1969, where position papers were prepared and delivered. As Joseph Kelly put it:

> One of the most important elements of the study year was that people started discussing from the sub-parish level to the national level such problems as, "function and characteristics of the Church," "new horizons for the Church" (a mature Church self-sufficient in ministry and support), the Church's role in health, education, development and mass media. Other topics included, "lay Christians," "urban and rural parishes" etc.[165]

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[163] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish* (Kansas: Sheed and Ward, 1994), 115.
[164] Ibid. 115.
[165] Joseph Kelly, "The Evolution of Small Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 33/3 (June 1991): 109.

In the position paper delivered by Daniel Zwack under the section titled 'rural parishes,' in a seminar the notion of small Christian communities made its appearance. Two types of communities among the Luo of North Mara of Tanzania were used as his reference. First, the neighborhood community, also called the local community, which consists of some fifty adults living within two or three miles from one another. Second, the parish community headed by the parish council and consisting of representatives from neighborhood communities. The contribution of Fr. Daniel Zwack in the position paper later became the foundation of small Christian communities in the East African Catholic Church.

Another contributing factor occurred in 1973. That marked the beginning of the implementation of the notion of the small Christian communities in Eastern Africa. The events included: The publication of Dr. Marie-France Perrin Jassy's book entitled, *Basic Community in the African Churches*, the mini-synod in the Lilongwe diocese of Malawi, the AMECEA plenary on planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s, and the establishment of the AMECEA Documentation Service. All these events became the major milestones in the emergence of small Christian communities in Eastern Africa.

2.5.2 The Contribution of Marie-France Perrin Jassy

The continuing loss of Catholics to other smaller sects and protestant Churches that was occurring in Eastern Africa made the Maryknoll fathers decide to request Marie-France Perrin Jassy, a cultural anthropologist, to investigate the situation among the Luo of the

North Mara region of Tanzania. She was asked to investigate three problems in North Mara and to propose a practical solution and formulate a pastoral plan. First, the meaning and importance of the dissident movement called Legio Maria. Second, the Luo were leaving the Church to join African movements. Third, the religious needs of the Luo. In the introduction to her book, she writes:

> In fact, it was at the request of an American missionary society, the Maryknoll Fathers of New York, that I went to spend a year in Tanzania in the district of North Mara to gather material needed for a thesis but also to propose practical conclusions on the pastoral plane. Three problems were set to me in the following form: What are the meaning and importance of the Legio Maria, a dissident movement founded in Kenya in 1962 from the Catholic Legion of Mary groups? Why are the Luo leaving missionary churches, particularly the Catholic Church, for African movements? What are "the religious needs" of the Luo? Field work was therefore set up within exact limits as to place and subject.[166]

In 1973, her conclusions were published and can be summarized as follows: First, for people to feel they belong to a group, they have to take an active role in that group. Second, experience has shown that one can attain recognition more easily in a small group than in a large one. Third, members become totally involved in the group's activities and planning when it is small. These became influential factors in the AMECEA bishops' decision to advocate the formation of small Christian communities in their dioceses.[167]

Her research also found that the Catholic Church played an important role and had influence among the Luo, but she noted: "It is separated from the Luo by a gap which the

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[166] Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *Basic Community in the African Churches* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), xi-xii.

[167] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities And the Parish* (Kansas: Sheed and Ward, 1994), 115.

years have not closed …. in most cases the faithful play an essentially passive role …. the faithful, for different reasons have never had to take a hand in the fortunes of their Church and assume their responsibility."[168]

The independent churches provided the Luo people with a new status. They found a new opening for their desire for leadership that was denied to them. The Luo in these independent churches became leaders in the community.[169] The response of the independent African churches to the Africans appears to be integral to its character. A new concept of the world and total involvement of the members in the life of the community was advocated or made possible.[170] According to Joseph Kelly, the small Christian Communities would eventually offer local Christians or neighbors "an opportunity to achieve these goals desired by many people and would become one of the greatest antidotes to further fragmentation of Christianity into innumerable independent Churches."[171]

Perrin Jassy, in her book, *Basic Community in the African Churches,* went on to report:

> In Nyarombo (North Mara), Catholic Communities were founded in accordance with the conclusions reached about the African independent Churches based on the principle already defined. They were founded geographically on the neighborhood unit, and the principal activities proposed to the faithful were mutual help and worship, one out of two Sundays there was to be a simple liturgy of the word without a priest and for the practical application of Christian charity was to extend not only to members of the group but to everybody in the

[168] Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *Basic Community in the African Churches* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 247.
[169] Ibid. 247.
[170] Ibid. 247.
[171] Joseph Kelly, "The Evolution of Small Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 33/3 (June 1991): 112.

neighborhood. The idea of the spiritual kinship of the children of God, similar to blood kinship, was the basis for association.[172]

2.5.3 The Contribution of the Mini-Synod in the Lilongwe Diocese of Malawi

Another factor that became influential in the AMECEA bishops' decision and advocacy for the formation of small Christian communities in their dioceses was the decision of Bishop Patrick Kalilombe of the Lilongwe diocese of Malawi to hold a mini Synod in his diocese. In August 1972, discussions were held on the parish and diocesan levels on the preparatory document, *Christ's Church in Lilongwe Today and Tomorrow*. Eventually, when the mini-synod was held in November 1973, it helped lay some of the groundwork for future small Christian communities, especially along the lines of being Self-Ministering, Self-Propagating and Self-Supporting. It would later be found in practice that these principles had to be adjusted to the realities of the small Christian communities in relation to neighboring local communities, the larger community and the lack of some charisms in the small Christian communities themselves. A further outcome from the mini-synod was that it helped prepare Bishop Kalilombe for the role he was to play in the AMECEA plenary study conference during the following month of December, 1973.

[172] Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *Basic Community in the African Churches* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 247.

2.5.4 The Contribution of the 1973 AMECEA Plenary study conference on building Christian communities in Eastern Africa

The AMECEA plenary study conference was held in Nairobi in December 1973 the theme was, "Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s." In this AMECEA plenary study conference, twenty-six position papers were written and presented on important subjects, however small Christian community was not one of them at that time. It was not even included in the resolutions of the study conference. The plenary study conference did issue a set of guidelines for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s. In those guidelines, and for the first time, the small Christian communities appeared in an official AMECEA document. The bishops stated in categorical terms that:

> We are convinced that in these countries of Eastern Africa, it is time for the Church to become really local that is, self-ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting. Our plan is aimed at building such local Churches for the coming years. We believe that in order to achieve this we have to insist on building Church life and work on basic Christian Communities, in both rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the Communities in which everyday life and work takes place: those basic and manageable social groups whose members can have real interpersonal relationship and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working. We believe that Christian communities at this level will be best suited to develop really intense vitality and to become effective witnesses in their natural environment.[173]

The small Christian communities are to give life and become witnesses. Through them, the Church is to become really local, that is, self-ministering, self-propagating, and self-supporting.

[173] Patrick A. Kalilombe, "Position Papers: An Overall View on Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesiastical Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 261. See Laurente Magesa, "The Church in Eastern Africa: Retrospect and Prospect," *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa Symposium of Nine Papers,* edited by Agatha Radoli (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, Spearhead Numbers 126-128, 1993), 5-6.

2.5.5 The Contribution of the AMECEA Documentation Service After the 1973 Plenary Study Conference

Each diocese in the region of Eastern Africa is different, particularly in its natural environment and pastoral initiatives. For dioceses to share their different pastoral initiatives, the bishops authorized several months before the AMECEA plenary study conference of 1973, to start a documentation service known as the AMECEA documentation service (ADS). Magazines such as African Ecclesial Review (AFER) started to issue pastoral articles, and to bring a single topic at a time to the attention of the bishops and their dioceses, as often as twenty five times a year. Joseph Kelly explains:

> It also organized a network of correspondents in the dioceses throughout Eastern Africa to report on Pastoral initiatives as they took place. Among other subjects, ADS followed up the evolution of Small Christian Communities. Over the years, it published 50 releases on Small Christian Communities. During this same period, AFER also published very many in depth articles on Small Christian Communities. All this helped the notion of Small Christian Communities to mature and spread.[174]

However, by the end of 1973, the spreading of small Christian communities had not yet happened, but the notion and the importance of the small Christian community was beginning to be recognized and appreciated in some quarters of each diocese.

Another occasion that made the AMECEA bishops reflect on the notion of the small Christian communities was provided in 1974 by the synod of bishops held in Rome which had as its theme Evangelization in the Modern World. At the synod, the AMECEA delegates had the opportunity to realize that all over the Catholic Church there

[174] Joseph Kelly, "The Evolution of Small Christian Communities,"*African Ecclesial Review* 33/3 (June 1991): 114.

was much talk about small Christian communities, most especially within the Churches of Latin America. In fact, this was one of the reoccurring topics discussed in connection with evangelization in the synod. It was also evident that at that time the bishops reached an understanding in reference to the notion of small Christian communities. Since the AMECEA delegates prepared and participated in the synod, they came to realize the importance of the small Christian communities. At this time, in various parts of Eastern Africa, there were diocesan synods, episcopal conferences, study sessions and other pastoral research taking place on the notion of small Christian communities. The major conclusion of these events was that it was important to build small Christian communities as a pastoral priority in Eastern African Churches.[175]

The small Christian community notion was extremely important and definitely recognized by the bishops and pastors of those days. But following all of the religious meetings by the various groups that had taken place with much research and sincere effort, no great progress had been achieved to help develop this community and perform this important task. This was a need of major importance in which numerous participants were involved. It was most urgent because of the large population and the limited amount of priests available. It was necessary to form the small Christian communities to give people a closer community spirit in the church and the opportunity for them to be of service to God and to one another. Despite the diocesan synods, episcopal conferences, study sessions, and other pastoral studies in Eastern Africa, the notion of small Christian

[175] AMECEA Plenary 1976, "Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 262.

communities still remained immature. The thinking and experimentation on the subject had not yet been assembled.

Therefore, the need to bring experts together to share their thoughts on the small Christian communities prior to the 1976 plenary study conference was absolutely necessary. Experts such as Patrick Kalilombe, Brian Hearne, Castor Sekwa, David Kyeyune and John Njenga later became the authors of the position papers for the plenary.[176]

Prior to the 1976 plenary study conference, a questionnaire was circulated by the AMECEA documentation service in 1975. The questionnaires were sent out in order to find out how the Eastern African dioceses including Arua diocese among the Lugbara ranked their pastoral priorities. The results of the survey showed that building small Christian communities was viewed as the highest priority in the AMECEA. Logically, the executive committee decided to have this as the theme (building Christian communities in Eastern Africa) for the 1976 plenary study conference.[177]

2.5.6 The Contribution of the 1976 AMECEA Plenary study conference on building Christian communities in Eastern Africa

The same intent expressed in 1973, that the Church had to become really local for the coming years that is, self-ministering, self-propagating, and self-supporting, was

[176] Ibid. 262.
[177] Patrick A. Kalilombe, "Position Papers: An Overall View on Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesiastical Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 262.

reinstated with renewed emphasis during the bishops' study conference in Nairobi three years later in 1976.[178] The theme of the AMECEA plenary study conference convened in Nairobi in July 1976 was "Building Small Christian Communities." The theme was discussed under the following four headings: First, Bishop Patrick A. Kalilombe gave an overview about building small Christian communities. Secondly, Fr. Brian Hearne presented theological reflections on the objectives of Christian communities. Thirdly, bishop Castor Sekwa and Fr. David Kyeyune discussed worship as the source and fullest expression of Christian community. Fourth, Bishop John Njenga gave a presentation on Christian community in life situations.[179]

The systematic formation of the small Christian communities as the key pastoral priority in the years to come within Eastern Africa was the major recommendation of the 1976 AMECEA plenary study conference. The small Christian communities that the bishops of the AMECEA are trying to build are simply the most local incarnation of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.[180]

In the introduction to the plenary resolutions, Bishop Vincent McCautey argued:

> There was no attempt to draw up a detailed blue-print for Christian communities, for as the conference was well aware the social structures in our African Countries are so diverse that each situation must be treated locally and creatively. The fruit of the study conference, it was generally agreed, was the clarification of

[178] Laurente Magesa, "The Church in Eastern Africa: Retrospect and Prospect," *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa Symposium of Nine Papers,* edited by Agatha Radoli (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, Spearhead Numbers 126-128, 1993), 6.
[179] AMECEA Plenary 1976, "Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 261-308.
[180] Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Base Communities An Introduction* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1994), 7-8. Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In One Holy Catholic And Apostolic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 210-224. Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe, *Communion Of The Saints: Foundation, Nature And Structure Of The Church,* Translator Patrick Madigan (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 105-122.

> ideas and the deepening of convictions that the building of basic Christian communities in Eastern Africa is a practical policy and in the case of primary evangelization, a necessity. The participants pledged themselves … to work for the implementation of the conference's aims and spirit among their associates in their home areas.[181]

The idea of building small Christian communities in Eastern Africa needs now to be put into practice, especially in the area of evangelization. The aims and spirit of the small Christian communities need to be implemented in each diocese.

2.5.7 The Contribution of the 1979 AMECEA Plenary study conference on Building Christian communities in Eastern Africa

The AMECEA plenary study conference of 1979 was held at Zomba, in Malawi from August 13 to 16, 1979. The delegates were asked to give a report on the implementation of the aims and spirit of the 1976 study conference during the 1979 study conference. The different reports reflect that the implementation of the notion of small Christian community varied widely. Some delegates, on the one hand, had a fairly clear notion of the small Christian communities, while on the other hand some delegates thought small Christian communities meant sub-parishes or outstations. The main understanding of small Christian communities in other dioceses was that they were organized to take up parish collections, and up to the present this confusion still persists.

In order to gather data before the plenary on the progress of small Christian communities and the problems experienced in implementing this pastoral priority, a questionnaire was

[181] Joseph Kelly, "The Evolution of Small Christian Communities,"*African Ecclesial Review* 33/3 (June 1991): 116.

sent to all the dioceses. Bishop James Holmessiedle was commissioned to draw up the preliminary report on the result of the survey. Joseph Kelly said: "There was at least a theoretical agreement among the dioceses on the purpose of forming small Christian communities."[182] The plenary study conference was to review the size of the small Christian communities. The ways these small Christian communities were organized varied from seminars to prayer groups. The different dioceses and parishes also reflected different sizes and organization of small Christian communities.

In August 1979, when the delegates arrived for the AMECEA plenary study conference at Zomba, Malawi, instead of gathering in a large hall, they were surprised to find that they were divided into small groups that were directed to separate rooms. Each group was to discuss two questions on the first day of the conference. The first question asked was: "What has been your experience of small Christian communities in your diocese?"[183] The second question asked was: "What are your expectations for these few days of study together?"[184] No position paper was presented in the plenary study conference, but instead, the groups read relevant passages from Scriptures, like Acts 2:42 (Apostles' instruction, communal life, breaking of bread, prayer) and I Cor. 12:27ff (Charisms). They reflected quietly on the passages and shared the fruit of their deliberations. The reading of relevant Scriptural passages, reflections, and sharing took a considerable length of time, and all the delegates took it very seriously because this is what they would do in their various dioceses.

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[182] Ibid. 116.
[183] AMECEA Plenary 1976, "Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 258.
[184]Ibid. 259.

When the delegates met in the plenary session, they understood what was meant by small Christian communities. They had experienced being in one and had themselves reflected on what they were meant to be. As they later declared in the preamble to the resolutions of the conference:

> Living together as a fraternal community, united in the one Holy Spirit, listening together to God's word, and celebrating together the sacrament of unity, the Eucharist, we have been able to clarify, deepen and confirm our conviction that the pastoral option we have taken is indeed one that holds great promise for the Church in Eastern Africa.[185]

The experience of listening, reflection, sharing and celebration in small groups deepened the delegates' understanding of small Christian communities. The different discussion groups came up with resolutions and these resolutions were articulated by Fr. Brian Hearne. He clarified and developed them into the main aspects of small Christian communities along with their Ecclesiology and practical steps for implementing them.[186] Regarding the implementation after the 1979 plenary study conference, the delegates gained a more realistic concept of the small Christian communities than the previous plenary, that is, the 1976 AMECEA plenary study conference.

In order to share the varied experiences and notions on small Christian communities, many articles were published in African Ecclesial Review, AMECEA Documentation Service, and other means or news media. The AMECEA pastoral institute started, in the early days of small Christian communities, to research, think out, publish and live what

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[185] Joseph Kelly, "The Evolution of Small Christian Communities,"*African Ecclesial Review* 33/3 (June 1991): 117.
[186] Ibid. 117.

small Christian community really means. Lumko (Institute of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference) in South Africa also continued to publish detailed information on small Christian communities under the guidance of Bishop Fritz Lobinger. These publications have been widely used in the diocese of Arua, in Uganda.

Reaction to the notion of small Christian communities varied from one place to another. It depended, to a great extent, on whether or not real implementation was taking place in one's area. In some villages, the reaction was that small Christian communities only existed on paper. The Bishops wanted to impose it on the people, but were unsuccessful. In other villages it materialized. Some priests found it hard to let the laity play much more than a passive role. In large parishes, there was a need to establish them, but the question remained: "How could they possibly be trained and visited by the priest?" In some places priests discovered that once properly established, the small Christian communities would actually save them time and labor by taking over much of the work the priests themselves had been doing. Today where the implementation has been successful, some priests wonder how it would be possible to run large parishes without Small Christian Communities.

The pastoral experience of small Christian communities has drawn the attention of many people in other parts of the globe. These Christian leaders are also searching for a new model of Church. Many theologians from other parts of the world, visited parishes located in Eastern Africa, which are made up of a variety of the small Christians communities. These Christian religious leaders from other countries traveled great

distances to search for a new model that could be adapted to their needs at home. The pastoral priority of small Christian communities was also followed closely by the Church in some other parts of the world such as the United States of America, Latin America, Europe, and Asia.

Small Christian communities must be evaluated continually, but one danger in doing so is to embark on the exercise with a pre-conceived idea or criteria. For example, some look only to see how the small Christian communities are handling matters of justice and liberation. Others seek only prayer life. Some search for ways in which small Christian communities can help evangelization. If the small Christian communities are to be really local Church, then they should reflect the full life of the Church that is, its nature and mission, in so far as they can, but not be one sided. The small Christian communities may well be the most dynamic means that exist for inculturating the Gospel message in their own locality. As they meet together week after week, they pray together, reflect on Scripture together and what its message means to them in their local environment, in their family life, in their work and in their parish life.

The notion of small Christian communities has not yet reached its full peak or potential, but we hope that it will eventually become what it was meant to be. In the meantime, the priests, the parish council or an overseer of groups of small Christian communities should maintain constant contact with every small Christian community and monitor its progress to ensure its living unity with the parish and to exchange its experiences with other small

Christian communities and for the common good. The small Christian communities' reports are the first agenda on some parish council meetings in some parishes.

To reflect the image of the Church in their own locality (diocese) more perfectly, the small Christian communities still need some guidance from the pastors and the parish council members, at the local level. In addition, there is a need for guidance on the diocesan and the national levels. There is also a need for up to date guidance from the AMECEA and the SECAM, through their board meetings, departments, institutes and services. The small Christian communities still are to be treated as a priority and also require great assistance from everyone. This is all a part of the growing process. Dedication, faith, persistence, concern, and good will bring great results, definitely essential to improvement.

2.6 The Emergence and Development of Small Christian Communities in Uganda

Regarding the Ugandan situation, due to the unsafe political environment created by President Idi Amin Dada, only one bishop from Uganda managed to attend the 1976 plenary study conference and he had to return home suddenly when one of his priests was dragged off the altar during Mass in his mission. As a result, Uganda received little direct benefit from the 1976 plenary study conference. However, good progress was made in many other dioceses over the following three years. This made the AMECEA Board decide to hold the 1979 plenary study conference on the same subject, "Building Christian communities in Eastern Africa."

I want to point out that toward the close of the study conference of 1976, the participants met in national groups to identify trends that had evolved in their pastoral ministry. Their goal was to make tentative proposals for implementation of the small Christian communities on the national level, based on the conclusion reached by the AMECEA study conference of 1976.[187]

As stated earlier, due to political unrest at home, most delegates from Uganda were not able to attend the study conference of 1976. Participants from other dioceses and a few from Uganda who were members of the national delegations recognized their accountability to bring the fruits of their discussions into the life of their Christian communities. They pledged themselves to the fullest, by putting into practice the implementations based on these conclusions, as individuals and as responsible leaders to each of their ecclesial communities.[188] The delegates were to encourage and inspire Christians to be more like Christ in their everyday life and in their small Christian communities.

However, the few delegates from Uganda came up with the following trends and tentative proposals for the implementation of the small Christian communities at the national level. Therefore, it was suggested that since the majority of its members were not present at the study conference of 1976, the Episcopal conference of Uganda might wish to meet once again to draw their own conclusions of the plenary session and create a plan of action.

[187] AMECEA Plenary 1976, "Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 254.
[188] Ibid. 254.

They could invite the delegates from the study conference to that meeting.[189] At the diocesan level, it was agreed that a meeting of bishops, priests, religious and laity could be held to communicate to them the conclusions and trends of the AMECEA plenary study conference on building Christian communities. Diocesan synods and seminars are a must in order to ensure the education of all priests, religious, catechists and other leaders.[190]

At the parish level, it was agreed that after due education, parish councils should be given more responsibility. As a result of this effort it was hoped, their priests would have more time to do pastoral work. At the sub-parish level and within the villages, it was agreed that more and more responsibility should be given to the laity. They were to define their needs and devise ways and means of meeting them, be they spiritual or material.[191] There was a call made which suggested that more emphasis be put on deepening spiritual formation of the future priests and religious. It was emphasized that "careful selection of priests to teach in the seminaries must be made. Particular stress should be put on the place of the Eucharist in priestly formation and life."[192]

There was a call for re-assessing the catechetical centers. It was noted that, as catechists are the probable candidates for lay ministries, they should be properly trained. Regarding the youth Apostolate, it was stated that the youth form the great majority of the Church in Uganda. Therefore, they need great care. Priests and religious should be trained to serve

[189] Ibid. 258.
[190] Ibid. 258.
[191] Ibid. 258.
[192] Ibid. 258.

the youth, especially through youth associations. In the area of ecumenism it was stated that "the spirit of ecumenism that exists in the structureless basic Christian communities should be used to overcome the obstacles in the top structural community."[193]

In the 1979 AMECEA plenary study conference, the presence of small Christian communities in some dioceses of Uganda was reflected by the contributions of Bishop John Baptist Kakubi of Mbarara diocese in Uganda. The Mbarara diocese in Uganda:

> Covers an area of 10,980 square kilometers. It has a Catholic population of 400, 000, out of a general population of about one million. There are 20 parishes and quasi-parishes encompassing 155 outstations, and served by 27 priests and 120 lay catechists. The average parish has a catholic population ranging between 15,000 to 40,000 which includes the population of the outstations (which range in size from 500 to 3,000).[194]

2.7 The Catholic Church in Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda

The introduction of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara of Uganda is linked to some historical events of the Catholic Church in Africa, Eastern Africa, Uganda and the region of the West Nile where the Lugbara are located. In an African context, as Toni La Salandra writes:

> The modern evangelization of Africa started in the 19th century along the coastal regions of the Continent by groups of missionaries like the Franciscans, the Holy Ghost fathers, the African Missions of Lyons, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Jesuits, the Capuchins, the Vincentians, and others who managed to establish in a short time, a chain of Apostolic Vicariates all around Africa.[195]

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[193] Ibid. 258.
[194] Bishop John Baptist Kakubi, "Christian Communities in Mbarara Diocese," *African Ecclesial Review* 21/5 (October, 1979): 299.
[195] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionary, 2004), 5.

At the beginning of the 19th century the interior of the African continent was still largely unknown to the Catholic missionaries. As soon as the first routes toward the interior were opened, the missionaries felt the responsibility for the evangelization of the people living there.

The Breve *Ex Debito Pastoralis Officio,* of Pope Gregory XVI on April 3, 1846 erected the Vicariate of central Africa with the center in Khartoum. It consisted of practically all the interior territories of Africa. As far as East Africa is concerned, three main routes made the missionary penetration into the continent possible. The missionaries used to evangelize the northern route via the Nile valley, Sudan and then to Northern Uganda, including the Lugbara people. The Southern route was from Zanzibar to Bagamoyo, then to the southern shores of Lake Nyanza (now known as Tanganyika) and by boat to southern Uganda. The third route was from Mombasa to the North-Eastern shores of Lake Nyanza. In Uganda the Northern route via the Nile valley was followed by the Comboni missionaries (formally known as the Verona Fathers). The second route into Uganda was taken by the White Fathers, and the third route was followed by the Mill Hill Fathers.[196]

The Vicariate of central Africa, erected in 1846, underwent several changes in the course of time. In 1872 it was entrusted to Father Daniel Comboni, as the Pro-Vicar. In 1877, when Father Daniel Comboni became bishop, he was appointed as Vicar Apostolic of the vicariate. Based on the proposal of Bishop Charles Lavigerie in 1878, the whole northern part of the Vicariate from the Sobat-Bahr-el -Arab rivers (now known as Sudan) to the

[196] Ibid. 5.

Zambezi river (actual Zambia - Zimbabwe border) was taken from the central African Vicariate. It was then decided that four new ecclesiastical jurisdictions would be erected and assigned to Bishop Charles Lavigerie, as Apostolic delegate for Equatorial Africa and Congo.[197]

In regard to the four new Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions instituted on March 31, 1883, the Vicariate of Nyanza was erected. This was two years before the untimely death of Msgr. Daniel Comboni in Khartoum, on October 10, 1881. His successor, Bishop Sogaro, did not have a full understanding of African life, as he had arrived in Khartoum only on March 6, 1883, a very short time indeed. This Vicariate of Nyanza included the territories of Southern Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Western Congo, Rwanda, and Northern Tanzania. Bishop Leon Livinhac became its first Apostolic Vicar and its center was at Rubaga in Kampala.[198]

The territory of Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda was returned to the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Africa on January 15, 1894. Bishop Antonio Roveggio of the Comboni Missionaries became the new Apostolic Vicar. Meanwhile in northern Sudan, the Mahdist revolution, which had caused the collapse of the Comboni missionary work in the area, came to an end with the fall of Khartoum and Ondurman, by British forces on September 2, 1898. This allowed Bishop Antonio Roveggio to resume his duties with the return of the missionaries. It was clearly felt in those years, following the advancement

[197] John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa An African Church History*, Second Revised edition (Limuru, Kenya: Kolbe Press, 1998), 174-179. Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionary, 2004), 5-6.
[198]Ibid. 240-247.

of the Muslim revival in the north, that the future of missionary activities were to take place in the territory of Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda. For this reason, Bishop Antonio Roveggio, after re-opening the mission in Khartoum, opened Lull among the Shilluk in 1901 and then proceeded to Gondokoro among the Bari, with the intention of starting a new mission in that area. That location was consecrated by the life and death of one of the first missionaries, Angelo Vinco. But Bishop Antonio Roveggio had a malaria attack and he died at Berber, on May 2, 1902.[199]

Bishop Francis Xavier Geyer succeeded Bishop Antonio Roveggio. He continued the policy of Bishop Antonio Roveggio for a southern expansion of the Catholic Church by opening the mission of Mbili in Bahr-el Ghazal in the year 1904. The unresolved differences and tensions between Belgian and English authorities, over the Lado Enclave, prevented, the establishment of a mission in those years. The Catholic Church's plan was to begin a new mission in that area and the possibility of entering Northern Uganda and to expand their work. It was only in 1910 that Bishop Francis Xavier Geyer with Brother Cagol August, his secretary, and Father Albino Colombaroli managed to set foot in Northern Uganda. That was a great blessing and achievement following so many attempts and search a long time.[200]

In Northern Uganda, on March 10, 1910 at Omach, near Pakwach, Bishop Francis Xavier Geyer blessed a big cross made of two rough tree trunks, and with tears in their eyes, the

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[199] Pietro Chiocchetta, *God Works like This: Spiritual Journey of Daniel Comboni* (Rome: Comboni Missionaries, 1998), 13-39. See Bernard Ward, *A Heart for Africa: A Life of Bishop Daniel Comboni* (Lancashire, England: Comboni Missionary Publications, 2000), 31-46.
[200] "Directory of Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, Uganda Province" (Kampala, Uganda: Comboni Missionaries, 1991), 9-15.

three missionaries raised it high in the sky as a sign of faith and hope and that marked the beginning of a great missionary effort. They could hardly imagine then that in a few years, most of the people of Northern Uganda would benefit by the redemption that Jesus brought to all people through the cross. The bishop dedicated the new mission to the Most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a short time the first hut, 15 yards long and 6 yards wide, was ready, and the missionaries left the camp and took residence in it. They had been blessed by God, through their faith and their dedication. They made great strides.

During the month of March, other missionaries arrived from Italy. They were Father Luigi Cordone, Father Pasquale Crazzolara, Brother Clement Schhroer and Brother Benedetto Sigle. Father Albino Colombaroli was appointed the first superior of the mission. Bishop Francis Xavier Geyer blessed the missionaries and together with brother Cagol August left for Europe via Hoima-Mombasa. The first task of these missionaries was to begin schools for educating the children of the area. Secondly, they needed to learn both languages, that was, Acholi and Alur. As Toni La Salandra put it: "Father Pasquale Crazzolara was the most successful, and after a short time, he was able to prepare a catechism in Alur."[201] It must be noted that with the coming of the missionaries, the language of the Alur, Acholi and the Lugbara were not yet put into writing. The missionaries were the first to write the orthography and grammar of these languages. They did remarkable work and were extremely gifted.

[201] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionary, 2004), 12.

2.8 The Catholic Church in West Nile

The first Comboni missionaries to evangelize the people of the West Nile began by opening a mission station at Omach. It was located at the eastern bank of the river Nile opposite present day Pakwach, and it was not healthy at all. Moreover, it was a tsetse fly infested area, a threat to human life. A mission on the western bank of the river Nile (inside the West Nile Region) would have been a better solution, but the government refused to give the Comboni missionaries permission to cross the Nile to the west, because the boundary was not clear between the English and Belgian governments. It was undefined at that particular time. From 1911 to 1917, missionary activities took place among the Alur, Acholi and the Madi. It must be remembered that "the first Christians who stepped on the West Nile soil were not the Europeans missionaries, but the Baganda porters, the Banyoro and the Alur local workers who were baptized in southern Uganda (Buganda region). The Baganda, Banyoro, Alur and Acholi were used as porters, workers, and soldiers by the British colonial government.

It wasn't until 1917 that Father Giuseppe Zambonardi and Brother Luigi Savariano were sent from Moyo to Arua to explore the possibility of establishing a mission. The Arua area was already a residence of the district commissioner. The two missionaries had discussions with the district commissioner, Mr. Alfred E. Weatherhead, and through him with the colonial government based at Entebbe. From the record of Father Giuseppe Zambonardi, the distance between Moyo and Arua was 160 kilometers. The missionaries took 6 days to reach Arua. The meeting with the district commissioner took place on

November 24, 1917. The fathers recorded some important descriptions and impressions of the place: Arua is 1400 meters above sea level and there is fresh air; the population was spread in small families; the huts were small and badly maintained; men were completely naked; the women were wearing two turfs,[202] one in front and the other behind, and they were changed every morning. The Lugbara were speaking a language similar to the Madi. The one thing that impressed them much was the *Cere* or howl, which other tribes did not have. By *Cere* or howl, the Lugbara were calling to each other, or they were expressing joy or sorrow. The district commissioner described the Lugbara as violent and untrustworthy people. Economically, the Lugbara were considered rich in animals and agricultural products; therefore, the diet was well balanced and they were in good health. In 1919, the Lugbara population was estimated to be 250,000.

It must be remembered that when the missionaries reached Arua, the West Nile was already declared a district with its own district commissioner. The missionaries considered it a strategic place for evangelization. The political reason presented to the commissioner by the missionaries was the religious assistance to be given to the Baganda and Alur Christians. The real motive which pushed the missionaries to start a mission in Arua was to stop the advance of Islam and Protestantism, both of them considered enemies of the Catholic faith. These motives did not exclude the major one, that is, the evangelization of indigenous population. The English commissioner also welcomed the missionaries. Father Antonio Vignato wrote a postcard from Gulu to Father Montanari. Father Antonio Vignato, in a meeting with the priests in Gulu, decided to open a mission

[202] A type of grass that grows in the locality, which women knit into a wear part in front of the loin and part behind.

in Arua. He wrote a letter to his superior general in Verona on January 18, 1918 in these words;

> We have come to a conclusion of a big task to face any difficulty for the foundation of a mission in Arua among the Lugbara. Father Zambonardi will go there with Father Fornasa. We considered both the difficulties and loss we meet in delaying the mission of Arua for the presence of Muslims and Protestants and the insistent invitation from the authority. So we decided to commit ourselves to a proof of the providence.[203]

So there are reasons of antagonism, politics and evangelization. All these reasons will be in the process of proselytism in the West Nile on the side of any religion. The reasons to open the Arua mission were different from any other mission started by the Verona fathers. Father Giuseppe Zambonardi was the right man to meet all these requirements. He reached Arua with Father Giovanni Fornasa on February 14, 1918 from Moyo. Father Giuseppe Zambonardi chose Father Giovanni Fornasa as his companion because he was his classmate and could speak Alur and knew the Alur Christians from Omach.

2.8.1 The Mission Station in Arua Among the Lugbara[204]

The Verona fathers opened the mission station of Arua on February 14, 1918. The two priests involved in opening the station were Father Giuseppe Zambonardi and Father Giovanni Fornasa. When the two priests reached Arua to open the station, they were

[203] The diary of Comboni Missionaries, from 1918 to 1949, Unpublished work.
[204] The diary of Comboni Missionaries, from 1918 to 1949, Unpublished work.

hosted by Mr. Alfred E. Weatherhead who was at that time the district commissioner of the West Nile district (diary of 1918).[205]

Before Father Giuseppe Zambonardi and Father Giovanni Fornasa went to open the mission station of Arua, they had already chosen, in the previous month of November, a hill situated west of the government station, because it looked appropriate for construction; it had good fields and some small water resources (diary of Comboni missionaries 1918). The place chosen was Ediofe hill situated on the western side of the present Arua town, that is, across the river Enyawu. This place was forested and very fertile for cultivation.

When the two priests started to construct the first building at Ediofe, the government gave them workers from Adumi, and these were the people of chief Adebua. These people were able to start cleaning the place one week after the arrival of the two priests. They were instructed to leave the higher place for the future permanent building. The higher place is where Ediofe Cathedral is at present.

At the beginning of March, two square huts were ready, and before Easter, even a small chapel that could serve the Christians had been completed in the Arua mission station. In this chapel there were about thirty Baganda and Alur people. The next phase was to

[205] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionary, 2004), 28.

build the fathers' house. The people helped by gathering poles and mud for the construction. There were four large rooms. These rooms were used for many purposes such as residence, storage, and library.

The first challenge that the missionaries faced was that the work proceeded slowly, as the people had never built such houses and they needed constant supervision. Often, these people were not interested and they just left. In May 1918, Father Giovanni Fornasa got sick for several days and in June 1918, the mission station of Arua was struck by a great famine. Because of this, the government gave 30 bags of millet to the missionaries to distribute to the starving people. In July, despite difficulties such as lack of workers, the school building was completed. The lack of workers came about when the district commissioner Mr. Alfred E. Weatherhead had asked the chiefs to send some youths, but most of these young people disappeared after a few days.

On August 15, 1918, Father Giuseppe Zambonardi and Father Giovanni Fornasa moved into the new house which was more comfortable. At the same time, two huts were built; one was a kitchen and the other was a workshop. At the end of October 1918, Father Giuseppe Zambonardi and Father Giovanni Fornasa were visited by Father Giuseppe Beduschi who gave them a retreat and then proceeded to Abaa in Congo.

On November 8, 1918 the news arrived that the World War I had ended. A few days later, the priests and the school children gathered at the government building and

celebrated peace. On the last Sunday of November, there was a solemn celebration to thank God for the end of the First World War. This celebration was attended by government authorities, merchants and business people. On December 25, 1918, the first Christmas was celebrated in Arua mission; the midnight mass was sung and the Baganda, and the Alur celebrated Christmas with the priests.

In January 1919 the missionaries started to build a church. On February 7, 1919 Father Enrico Redaelli arrived in Arua to join his two confreres. In March 1919 some catechists from Gulu arrived to help the priests. The priests sent them to Ajjai, Obobi, Leti, Maracha, Offude and Aringa. During the same month, a certain Norberto arrived from Aba with his wife. He was a good teacher, but later was dismissed by the priest because of his bad behavior. On Palm Sunday April 13, 1919 the priests blessed the new Church. On Easter Sunday, the priests distributed about fifty communions and Father Giovanni Fornasa visited the catechists around Bondo.

In June 1919, the people of Udupi rose against the colonial government and killed one *Wakili* and seven soldiers. Reinforcements arrived from Buganda and the rebels were cornered in the reeds near the river Anyau. Over 300 Lugbara people were surrounded and slaughtered, and over 2000 heads of cattle were taken away. Meanwhile at the Camp of Offude, an attempt was made on the life of the Assistant District Commissioner, Mr. Jack Driberg. Also the chief of Terego and two *Wakili's* of Maracha were taken away. Nothing more was heard about them.

In August, Sir. Barrindon, the governor, visited Arua. He also visited the mission to give assurance to the missionaries who were often troubled by the district commissioner. The district commissioner had obliged the missionaries to recall all the catechists because they had not been requested through Masindi, and the district commissioner was also obstructing the recruitment of catechumens. The governor accepted the complaint of the missionaries. As a result, relations improved. Because the relationship with the district commissioner improved, the priests started a new catechumenate of nine members.

In January 1920, Father Giuseppe Zambonardi visited all Lugbara areas and decided to open schools at Offude, Maracha, Koboko, Terego, and Aringa. On February 2, 1920, Father Giuseppe Zambonardi left Arua for Rejaf, in Sudan, and Father Giovanni Fornasa took over the mission of Arua. On June 6, 1920 Father Pietro Simoncelli was sent as Superior of Arua and in July Father Giovanni Fornasa left for holidays to Italy.

In general, the people under chief Adroni occupied the place given to the Verona fathers. They welcomed the fathers with arrows and spears because of the hostile relationship of the Lugbara with the colonial government. Father Giuseppe Zambonardi answered them that he did not come to fight, but to build a school; if somebody claims any compensation for the land he was ready to pay for it. The people, satisfied by the words of the Father, put their bows down and returned to the village. The district commissioner, Alfred E. Weatherhead, gave disposition to chief Adroni for the construction of the mission

because his people were insubordinate and lazy. Each man should have offered ten days of work and at the end was to receive one rupee (silver coins). About one hundred men came completely naked for the work, at an hour they chose. Some started to level the ground, while others went to cut poles and bamboo for the roof. They left and came back the day after with some crooked poles asking for the pay. The Father answered, "You are going to receive it after ten days of work as agreed upon."[206] But they threw away the bamboo, left and never came back. No worker was able to complete ten days of work. So the missionaries did not spend any money, nevertheless, a small house and a classroom were built on the slope of the hill. Before that time, there was not even a hut on the mission property. Slowly the people gained confidence and some even started to bring some gifts to the priests such as eggs, sweet potatoes, and papaw. Some wanted to build their homes near the mission. On March 3, 1918 about 30 people among the Baganda and Alur were enrolled for the catechumenate. This was the first chance also for the Lugbara to join in the teachings of the Gospel.

The district commissioner, Bwana Gerekede, through the Muslim chiefs, succeeded in tracing some roads like Rhino-Camp to Arua, and built some rest houses for himself and the tourists. These were also used by the missionaries. He made people pay a tax or *Musoro* of two coins a year. From 1921 to 1958 many other mission stations were opened, and eventually these were to become the parishes in the Arua diocese in 1958.

[206] The diary of Comboni Missionaries, from 1918 to 1949, Unpublished work.

2. 9. The Diocesan Synods and the Emergence of Small Christian Communities in the Arua and Nebbi Dioceses among the Lugbara People

Pastorally, Bishop Frederick Drandua, an indigenous bishop of Arua, has been very successful in reorganizing the diocese of Arua, as designed by the Church after the Second Vatican Council and the Promulgation of the New Code of Canon law.

Bishop Angelo Tarantino was not so keen in establishing many structures in Arua diocese. The parishes and outstations or mission stations remained very large. Even his curia was very simple. He had only a procurator and a secretary, and both were part time. Everything was centered around the bishop, and participation by the clergy and laity in running the diocese and parishes was at a minimal. For a long time, the bishop did not even have a driver, perhaps because he did not trust the Lugbara people since the relationship between them and the colonial government had been bitter. Bishop Tarantino did establish the consulting and the presbyteral councils. He also organized a diocesan pastoral council. The pastoral coordinator did not have any office space or support services. The diocese was divided into deaneries according to the tribes, that is, Madi, Lugbara and Alur. The clergy bulletin was his instrument for communicating with his priests.

It has been the task of Bishop Frederick Drandua to update the diocesan structures. In this update, the notion of small Christian community councils was included. A building was constructed near the bishops' house to coordinate all the structures of the diocese. This coordination again depended on capable personnel with a vision to make these

structures function efficiently. When Bishop Frederick Drandua became the administrator of the Arua diocese, the 75th anniversary of the faith in the West Nile region was celebrated in Pakwach. From 1910, with the foundation of Omach, to 1985 no diocesan synod was held. It was necessary to examine the past and resolve problems of the present and make resolutions for the future. To do that, the Catholic Church instituted the diocesan synod (Canon 460-68) which states: "The diocesan synod is the assembly of priests and of the other faithful of the particular church chosen to help the diocesan bishop for the good of the entire Christian community regulated by Canon law."[207]

2.9.1 The First Synod of Arua Diocese and Small Christian Communities

Bishop Frederick Drandua convoked the first synod of the Arua diocese on November 14, 1987. In his letter to the Monsignors, Deans, Parish priests, all clergy and the entire faithful of Arua diocese, he said:

> It is twenty-eight years since the diocese of Arua has been founded. Within these years, conditions concerning the clergy, the religious and the laity of this diocese have changed enormously. New questions or pastoral problems challenge our faith in daily life. I have decided to convoke the first diocesan synod in which you will be consulted and asked to give your opinion so that all the needs of our diocese of Arua may be answered and all pastoral problems be resolved.[208]

[207] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionary, 2004), 106.
[208] Frederick Drandua, *A Local Church Living Committed To Christ: Acts of the First Synod in Arua Diocese* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1990), xi.

Father Dellagiacoma Raffaele was appointed as the general organizing secretary to the diocesan synod. The synod was opened on July 2, 1989 by Archbishop Karl J. Rauber, Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, in Ediofe Cathedral during the celebration of the Mass.[209]

Bishop Frederick Drandua closed the synod on July 15, 1989. The theme of the synod was, "A local Church living committed to Christ." The Bishop presented and promulgated the first diocesan synod statutes at Ediofe on March 19, 1990 on the feast of St. Joseph. The bishop ended the promulgation by saying, "I decree that they shall assume the force of law on September 14, 1990."[210]

In order to give a complete picture of the status of the diocese of Arua at the first synod, one needs to focus on the synod news, the parishes and the clergy. The synod news was established as a means of informing the Christian communities. In issue No. 6 of January 1989, the history of the Arua diocese was reported in brief. It says:

> At the end of 1984 Bishop Tarantino resigned from his post and Msgr. Frederick Drandua his Vicar general and rector of the seminary took over as Apostolic Administrator. He was later confirmed as bishop of the Arua diocese and consecrated as bishop on August 15, 1986. When the New bishop took over, the statistics of the diocese were as follows: The total population was 807,000 out of which 496,000 were Catholics. There were 31 parishes, 956 catechists, 279 permanent Churches and 50 major seminarians.[211]

The synod news also tells about the administrative structures of the diocese as they were presented in 1989. We look upon our Bishop Frederick Drandua as the successor of the Apostles at Arua. He is the shepherd and teacher given to us by Christ, who enabled him

[209] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionary, 2004), 107.
[210] Ibid. 107.
[211] Ibid. 107.

to be our leader through the Sacrament of Orders. Pope John Paul II, whom he visited every five years (*ad limina*) appointed him. The Pro-Nuncio is the ambassador of the Pope to the Uganda government.

In the 1980's Bishop Frederick Drandua had a vicar general that he appointed to act as his deputy. He was Very Rev. Msgr. Lodoviko Ongom, rector of Pokea seminary. He had, moreover, several other officials who helped him in various capacities to run the diocese. They were: The chancellor Father Odama John Baptist, the procurator, Brother John, the pastoral coordinator, Father Jerry Oyuru, the secretary for social service Father Sabino Anyanzo. The medical bureau was headed by Dr. Conrad and Sister Vittoria, the bishop's personal secretary was Father Cornelous Odubi, and the vocation director was Father Stephen Ojobile.

Through the first Arua diocesan synod, we reached a greater understanding of small Christian communities. In chapter six of the synod, discussions were carried out in regard to parish and diocesan structures, for service to the people of God. In section eight of Chapter six, the discussions were on small Christian communities. Section nine of chapter six was on the Christian family, and in the introduction it was stated: "The Small Christian Communities are the way in which the Church helps the Christians to live their faith through the practice of the Commandments of Love, and in solidarity with others in the name of Christ in facing the real problems of life, this is bringing development and true liberation."[212]

[212] Frederick Drandua, *A Local Church Living Committed To Christ: Acts of the First Synod in Arua Diocese* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1990), 35.

In the synod document, Bishop Frederick Drandua decreed:

> (D81.) Each parish priest shall take steps to start small Christian Communities within his parish, either through established prayer groups or in some other suitable way. He shall take care not to force their growth but to see that the Christians are animated in such a way as to desire the growth of such communities. Importance shall be given to creating the spirit of the Small Christian Communities rather than to the structures themselves. (D82.) The on-going formation center shall organize further courses regarding the formation and growth of such communities. Structurally, the Small Christian Community is the most local unit of the Church. The family is the domestic Church, but of its very nature, it has to reach out to other families, and the Small Christian community is made up of several family groups. Family catechesis is, therefore, at the heart of the formation of Small Christian Communities.[213]

The document (E57) exhorts Christian families to participate as a domestic Church in the Church's mission, by being: (a) A believing and evangelizing community; (b) A family where there are daily prayers and bible readings; (c) A community at the service of others especially those in their small Christian community. The most immediate cooperators with the bishop to serve the people of God, among others, are small Christian community leaders and parents. The document stated that all those who have a post of responsibility within these small Christian community structures are to give witness to Christ by working in a spirit of service and collaboration.[214] In the five year plan, it was stated: "Each parish priest shall form small Christian communities within the parish."[215] It appears that the small Christian community is the heart of the Universal Church. It is beginning and making efforts to care about God, family and neighbor. It must not be forced, but it must be inspired. It must root itself in the spirit. The end result is Christian

[213] Ibid. 35-36.
[214] Ibid. 37.
[215] Ibid. 37.

prayer, love of one another and humankind in union with the ultimate goal of sharing our gifts with one another and to raising our prayers to God.

2.9.2 The Second Arua Diocesan Synod and Small Christian Communities

The second synod was convoked by Bishop Frederick Drandua on December 8, 1993, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. One hundred twenty members participated in the celebration of the Synod from November 23 until December 8, 1994. Msgr. Lodoviko Ongom opened the synod at Ediofe Cathedral in the presence of Bishop Henry Orombi of Nebbi Protestant Church of Uganda diocese, on November 23, 1994. The five years pastoral plan was officially promulgated at Lodonga minor Basilica on December 8, 1994. In the Convocation ceremony the bishop said, "I have decided to convoke the second diocesan synod, whose theme shall be; "*Evangelization*." The organizing executive steering committee was composed of chairperson Father Tonino Pasolini; the general secretary Ms. Sherry Meyer; the representatives from the bishop's office Msgr. Lodoviko Ongom vicar general of Arua diocese; the chancellor Father Pierino Madrwa; the representatives from the lay Apostolate Father Miria Matthias and Ms. Lilly Kareo.[216]

The year 1994 was characterized also by some bad events within the diocese. The influx of refugees from Sudan was constant and increasing. Their number was approximately 300,000 in the Madi area alone. Secondly, the enemies of the Catholic Church wanted to

[216] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionary, 2004), 111.

attack at the heart of the diocese. There was a plot to kill Bishop Frederick Drandua.[217] This attempted murder of the bishop served to awaken the Catholics. People of every religion pledged their full support to the bishop and wanted an explanation from the government authorities. It seemed certain that the plot had been arranged outside the area. It was difficult to give an explanation at the moment. After the case went through the courts, the truth was discovered. It seemed that government authorities formed the plot. The boy used for the plot won the case, but it was difficult to report the case against government authority for lack of money and also the fear of further retaliation. The Catholics were very upset and were much concerned for the welfare and health of the Bishop. At the close of the second diocesan synod in the Basilica on December 8, 1994, the Christians cheered the bishop with prolonged applause. Prior to his visit to Rome, the bishop wrote his pastoral letter, "Let Me Live."[218]

In the second synod nothing explicit was discussed about or in reference to the small Christian communities, except in the opening speech of Very Rev. Msgr. Lodoviko Ongom, vicar general of the Arua diocese. It was linked to the African synod of bishops. He wrote: "The theme for the second diocesan synod is, 'Evangelization.' This theme was adopted from the theme of the African synod which in whole reads: 'The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000. You shall be my witness' (Acts 1: 8.).'"[219]

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[217] Raphael D.(ed.), "The Attempt to Murder Bishop Frederick Drandua of Arua Diocese," in *Leadership For Christian Leaders in Africa*, Issue 6/1994 (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1994), 6-9.
[218] Raphael D. (ed.), "Let Me Live: Pastoral Letter of Bishop Frederick Drandua," in *Leadership For Christian Leaders in Africa*, Issue 6/1994 (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1994), 10-12.
[219] Second Diocesan Synod 1994, *Five Years Pastoral Plan for Arua Diocese* (Arua, Uganda: Pastoral Coordinators office, 1994), 8.

Emphasis was put on the integral concept of evangelization as illustrated below:

> Integral evangelization embraces the complex cultural, social, political and economic aspects of our life in this region. We are all aware of the cultural elements like superstition, polygamy, and exorbitant bride wealth which prevent Christ from being in our hearts and in our society. On the other hand, we have cultural elements like communion, solidarity, peace, fraternity, family spirit and hospitality which could be utilized for a better evangelization. The wars and the political instability which we have suffered, the poverty, and underdevelopment of the West Nile region, and the social injustices which are all well-known to us, cannot be left untouched, but these are areas to be faced squarely in line with the Gospel message of salvation. When we assume evangelization in its integral sense then we can truly say that the Church in the Arua diocese is African and it is solid.[220]

It is the task of every Christian in the Arua diocese to re-evangelize and transform the West Nile region with the above mentioned ideals and to work to deliver it from the above mentioned ills. Each person must ask himself or herself, "What can I do to be a better follower of Christ? What can I do to bring my neighbor closer to Christ? What can I do to make the Church solid and mature enough to carry out its evangelizing mission? What can I do to transform the West Nile region or my district or my county to be a better society, where Christ is known and loved and where all are welcomed as truly human, loved and respected?"[221]

One of the agents of evangelization included the laity. It was emphasized that the Christian person has the duty to evangelize in the Church and in the secular society. And Very Rev. Msgr. Lodoviko Ongom was glad to note that the lay delegates to this synod are many. He hopes they will help by attending programs that will enable them to play

[220] Ibid. 9.
[221] Ibid. 9.

their proper role in evangelization today. The transformation of the West Nile region into a better society culturally, socially, politically and economically, depends on how each Catholic Christian assumes his or her role in evangelization.[222] Catechists have played and continue to play a major role in the evangelization of the Arua diocese. Therefore, with regard to catechists, the second diocesan synod of Arua stated:

> Since the coming of the first missionaries, catechists have been at the forefront of evangelization. Without the work of the catechists, the Church of the Arua diocese would not be what it is now. And yet catechists get a lot of difficulties in carrying out their mission of evangelization, to fulfill their duties as husbands and fathers of families because of our insensitivity to their needs. We need to forget the past structures which catered to their needs and we need to create new and just structures that will improve their intellectual, human and material needs.[223]

2.9.3 The Third Arua Diocesan Synod and Small Christian Communities

The theme of the third synod was in tune with Jubilee 2000, "Our call to forgiveness and reconciliation." In his speech, Bishop Frederick Drandua said: "This is our biggest challenge. It is our great task to respond to the signs of our times, and to touch the lives of the people we are called to serve, to be relevant, credible and authentic. No other challenge surpasses this. No other task is more important than this."[224]

The Pro-Nuncio in his speech said:

> This is not just the Church in Arua, but this is truly the Catholic Church with all its dimensions of being the Catholic Church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic…. We cannot stand at the border of the Jordan looking at things. We cannot be spectators, we must participate. Evangelization is urgent, the importance of

[222] Ibid. 11.
[223] Ibid. 11.
[224] Toni La Salandra, *The History of the Catholic Church in West Nile Arua Uganda 1910-2000* (Ombaci, Arua: Comboni Missionary, 2004), 113-114.

> formation, deepening the faith, witnessing our faith, inculturating the faith as the Apostles did in the beginning of the Church. There must be a reconciling community.[225]

After the speech, the Pro-Nuncio declared the synod opened on November 23, 1999 at Arua. Many problems had to be addressed by this synod, but two main ones are worth mentioning. For example, the challenges of exorbitant bride wealth and sinful practices at funerals. Therefore, the third Arua diocesan synod declarations had to deal with these two problems affecting the people of the Arua diocese. Consequently, it was declared that from that time forward, the Catholics of the Arua diocese should abandon the practice of bride wealth which had become abusive, and they should also abandon all other sinful behaviors and practices that cause financial problems for the bereaved at funerals. However, the struggle continues toward the achievement of these declarations. It is not easy to destroy old customs overnight. A continuous catechesis will do better than imposing drastic decisions.[226]

On December 7, 1999 Bishop Frederick Drandua closed the synod at Arua by saying: "Tomorrow we make the pilgrimage for the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the Sultana of Africa. There, we shall ask to be born again, a new power generating sons and daughters in the faith and educating ourselves toward the fullness of Christ."[227]

The summary report of the third Arua diocesan synod stated that another difficulty was the organizational problems of gathering the faithful. In parishes where emerging small

[225] Ibid. 114.
[226] Ibid. 114.
[227] Ibid. 114.

Christian communities are already meeting weekly in their homes for prayer, in addition to gathering at the chapel on Sundays, the program was easily organized. Facilitators simply went to the emerging small Christian communities on their usual weekday meetings. In other parishes, where such emerging small Christian communities do not exist, facilitators tried to convince people to remain after Sunday prayer. Most parishes needed more than one meeting with each group of Christians in order to complete the awareness programs.

Almost all parishes complained that men rarely participated in the awareness programs. The people who participated were mostly women and children. However, it is interesting to note that in the listening sessions the men greatly out numbered the women. It seems that women respond willingly to requests to gather for programs. Men do not. But when important meetings such as the listening sessions are held, men are dominant. Several factors contribute to this pattern. First, the lack of schooling among many women contributes to low self-esteem, lack of English skills and hesitancy to speak at important meetings. Secondly, the fact that in the Arua diocese all the chapel pastoral council chairpersons are catechists makes the leadership in the parish heavily male. As a matter of fact, the over-whelming majority of the people at the listening sessions were catechists. Other lay leaders seem to have disappeared during the last five years. Perhaps the policy of catechists being the automatic chairs of the chapel pastoral council should be changed.[228]

[228] Arua Diocese, *Third Diocesan Synod: Summary Report* (Arua, Uganda: Pastoral Coordinator's office, 1999), 7-8.

Another difficulty came with the evaluation of the five year plan from the second synod. First of all, few parishes took the plan to the grassroots when it was first issued five years ago. Consequently, many Christians were seeing the plan for the first time. Secondly, the plan lacked a glossary, and the Christians found some terms and abbreviations hard to understand. Thirdly, there was hesitancy in some Christians to criticize those at a diocesan level. They often just assumed that the bishop and his department heads were doing their jobs. Lastly, the Christians had little experience with the evaluation process.[229]

2.10. The Nebbi Diocese and the Parishes

According to the News from the Vatican on Friday March 15, 1996, Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, erected the diocese of Nebbi in Uganda, with territory taken from the diocese of Arua, making it a suffragan of the Metropolitan Church of Kampala, but today it is a suffragan under the metropolitan Church of Gulu. Pope John Paul II nominated as the first Bishop of the new diocese Father John Baptist Odama, a diocesan priest from Arua. The bishop elect was born in Riki-Oluko, Uganda in 1947 and was ordained a priest in 1974. Since 1990 he had been rector of the National Philosophy Seminary of Alokolum.

[229] Ibid. 8.

The new diocese of Nebbi covered an area of 5,037 sq. km. It had a population of 387,800 out of which 291,353 were Catholics. It had 35 priests and 48 religious. The patron of the diocese is the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

According to the 2003 Uganda Catholic Directory, the diocese of Nebbi had an area of 5,098 sq. km. It had a population of 413,613 out of which 353,346 were Catholics. It had fifteen parishes, forty-nine diocesan priests, twelve missionary priests, thirty-nine Ugandan Sisters, nine Ugandan Brothers, one permanent deacon, one lay missionary and 712 catechists. The parishes include: Blessed Daniel Comboni, Akanyo Parish was established in 1999; St. Anthony Angal Parish was created in 1917; St. Joseph the Worker Kango Parish was created in 2001; Immaculate Heart of Mary Nebbi Parish was created in 1962; Holy Family Nyapea Parish was created in 1933; Our Lady of Fatima Orussi Parish was erected in 1961; Immaculate Conception Paidha Parish was created in 1963; Our Lady of Trust Pakwach Parish was created in 1952; Assumption of Our Lady Panyimur Parish was established in 1987; St. Tereza of the Child Jesus Parombo Parish was created in 1967; Our Lady Help of Christians Rhino Camp Parish was established in 1960; Immaculate Conception Uleppi Parish was created in 1947; St. Charles Lwanga Wadelai Parish was created in 1982; St. Peter the Apostle Warr Parish was established in 1952; and St. Joseph the Worker Zeu Parish was established in 1966. All the parishes of the Nebbi diocese previously belonged to the Arua diocese.[230]

[230] The Uganda Catholic Secretariat, *Uganda Catholic Directory, Third Edition 2003* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 2003), 250-255.

On January 2, 1999, the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II created a new ecclesiastical province that is, the metropolitan of Gulu, Mbarara, and Tororo. The ecclesiastical province of Gulu elevated to the rank of metropolitan Church, the bishop assigned to it the suffragan dioceses of Arua, Lira and Nebbi. The first metropolitan Archbishop of Gulu is Msgr. John Baptist Odama who was taken from the diocese of Nebbi and was replaced by Bishop Martin Luluga as ordinary of Nebbi.

The Right Rev. Martin Luluga was born on March 1, 1933 at Lodonga parish, Arua diocese. He was ordained a priest on June 1, 1963. He was ordained an Auxiliary Bishop of Gulu on January 11, 1987. He became administrator of Gulu in 1988 and was confirmed as ordinary of Gulu on February 22, 1990. He was installed Bishop of Gulu on April 12, 1990. On January 2, 1999, Bishop Martin Luluga was transferred to the Nebbi Catholic Diocese. He was installed as bishop of the Nebbi Catholic Diocese on April 18, 1999.[231]

2.10.1. The first Nebbi Diocesan Synod and Small Christian Communities

On January 24, 2002, Bishop Martin Luluga, after having consulted widely a cross section of the people of the diocese of Nebbi, called the first synod of the diocese.[232] A committee of ten was appointed to steer the process of the synod with the theme, "What is the Church?" The theme was chosen to make people reflect on the Church under the

[231] Ibid. 250.
[232] Nebbi Catholic Diocese, *What is the Church? Acts of the First Diocesan Synod of the Nebbi Catholic Diocese* (Nebbi: Nebbi Catholic Press, 2003), 7.

three of its major aspects of Communion (Koinonia), Service (Diakonia), and Witness (Martyria) as seen in Acts 2: 42-47, when the early Church prayed, broke the bread, shared the Word and shared all they had together, and hence none was in want and no one lacked anything. Therefore, the synod called on all Catholic Christians in the diocese to participate and be committed in the Church and its life.[233]

The three aspects of the Church discussed in the synod were: First, *Communion*: (a) The centrality of the Word of God in our life; (b) Small Christian Communities as manifestations of the effects of the Word of God lived there in. Second, *Service*: (a) Ministries, especially the non-ordained, most of which have been exercised on a small scale in the diocese; (b) Christian commitment in society today; (c) Self-reliance as a goal of development. Third, *Witness*: (a) Inculturation, making our good cultural values part and parcel of our Christian lives; (b) Celebrating Christ in liturgy and the sacraments.[234]

On January 14, 2004, Father Guido Oliana gave a general introduction to the theme of the synod, "What is the Church, who is in Nebbi?" At the conclusion, in section four, he talked about small Christian communities. He wrote:

> The ecclesiological identity of the Small Christian Communities should be more clearly expressed and explained. It is in the vital context of the Small Christian Communities that the mystery of the Church is perhaps more understood and experienced, where all the components and dynamics of the evangelization process are meaningful and effective. From the experience of God's Word and Liturgy, all the rest follow: inculturation, Christian impact on society and the spirit of service in different ministries (catechetical, liturgical, spiritual, social, political and economic). It is in the context of the Small Christian Community that

[233] Ibid. 7.
[234] Ibid. 7.

> the sense of responsibility at all levels develops and unfolds for the growth of the Church and society as such.[235]

On January 16, 2003, Father Sebhat Ayele gave a presentation on the topic, *Small Christians Communities*. He gave biblical and spiritual justification for the foundation and the origin of small Christian communities. He gave the various justifications for the emergence of small Christian communities: pastoral, spiritual, theological, ecclesiological, catechetical, socio-political factors. From the presentation of Father Sebhat Ayele, guidelines and pointers were given in the Acts of the First Diocesan Synod of the Nebbi Catholic Diocese regarding small Christian communities. It stated: "The Church as family cannot reach her full potential unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster closer human relationships."[236]

Small Christian communities are the true, one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church at the local level. They are not a new reality, but are as old as the Church. They are born and wanted by Christ and manifested and lived by the first Christian communities. Hence, this vision of the Church will lead people to a deeper zeal and conversion in the diocese of Nebbi. According to Father Sebhat Ayele,

> As we deepen the concept of the Church in our diocese, we need a continuous reflection on the relevant biblical, pastoral, spiritual, ecclesiological and socio-political aspects of it. Keen attention is to be given to our daily needs so as to put a social base for building up small Christian communities. They are a pastoral priority recommended by our African Bishops for a most effective evangelization in our Church today. The model of Church as family of God will help us to focus on a unique way of living our Christian life and commitment today.[237]

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[235] Guido Oliana, "What is the Church, Who is in Nebbi?" *in Nebbi* (January 14, 2003), 3.
[236] Nebbi Catholic Diocese, *What is the Church? Acts of the First Diocesan Synod of Nebbi Catholic Diocese* (Nebbi: Nebbi Catholic Press, 2003), 50.
[237] Ibid. 50-51.

In the deliberations it was agreed that first, the catechetical commission was to prepare printed materials and programs and propose clear criteria on how to start and strengthen small Christian communities in the diocese. Second, there was a need to train all pastoral agents on the new methodology such as Lumko.[238] Third, the three deanery pastoral centers were to become places for pastoral formation. Fourth, they were to become the way of evangelization today, taken as a priority in the next five years. Fifth, attention was to be given to the holistic aspect of small Christian communities (spiritual, material, and psychological). Sixth, each parish was to begin with a pilot chapel for a better follow up and evaluation.

In the end, Right Reverend Martin Luluga, bishop of the Nebbi diocese decreed:

> First, the diocesan pastoral team shall study and prepare materials on Small Christian Communities. Second, each parish shall choose a pilot chapel in which the new methodology on Small Christian Communities is implemented. Third, awareness programs shall be organized to train the leaders of the pilot chapels.[239]

2.11. Conclusion

The historical development or emergence of small Christian communities after the Second Vatican Council in Africa and particularly among the Lugbara people of Uganda began with their experience of community in the neighborhood such as the family, Village, African independent Churches and the traditional religions of the tribes.

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[238] Lumko is an institute of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. They provide number of programs under the title "Training for Community Ministries."

[239] Nebbi Catholic Diocese, *What is the Church? Acts of the First Diocesan Synod of Nebbi Catholic Diocese* (Nebbi: Nebbi Catholic Press, 2003), 51.

In many parishes among the Lugbara people of Uganda, small Christian communities are emerging and the parishes have become communities of communities. In other words, the parishes are now reflecting the neighborhood Church, in which the people live close to each other, know one another well, share their daily lives, joys, sorrows and meals together. The members come to know each other's tastes and temperaments. They may be blood relatives or not, but what matters is the interpersonal relationships and familiarity of the people.

Small Christian communities are now referred to as *new ways of being Church.* Sometimes, they are referred to as the incarnation or localization of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church within the neighborhood Church.

Building of the small Christian communities in East Africa, Uganda and among the Lugbara people of Uganda has remained a pastoral priority for the Catholic bishops in these regions. The families or the domestic Churches are coming together to share the Word of God, pray together and share their lives together.

The task that lies ahead is to provide the theological and pastoral investigation of these small Christian communities. Investigating the theology of small Christian communities in the Church today will lead us to understand and examine their pastoral activities and implications. The pastoral Activities of these small Christian communities should

therefore reflect the theology of the Church, especially the nature and the mission of the Church in the neighborhood and throughout the World.

CHAPTER THREE

Theological and Pastoral Investigation of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church and among the Lugbara of Uganda

Introduction

The emerging theologies and pastoral practices within the small Christian communities in the Catholic Church and among the Lugbara people of Uganda are deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition such as the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Early Church Communities, the Second Vatican Council, the Papal documents, the African Synod of Bishops, and the community of the Lugbara people of Uganda and their missionary experience.

The third chapter will attempt to investigate the theologies and the pastoral practices of the small Christian communities, as rooted in the tradition of the Catholic Church. It will examine the Catholic Church among the Lugbara during the last eighty-six years, especially, the missionary style, formation, theologies and pastoral practices of the Church among the Lugbara of Uganda. It will attempt to examine the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the Nature and Mission of the Church. The Second Vatican Council envisioned the Catholic Church as Communion and the people of God. During the African Synod of Bishops in Rome, these images were developed into the family of God, which implies the creation of small Christian communities. This chapter will

review some of the papal documents that were written in reference to the small Christian communities, and examine the pastoral practices of these communities at the Catholic parish level among the Lugbara of Uganda. Following this extensive research, it will draw several conclusions.

For the last eighty-six years, the Lugbara people of Uganda have been evangelized by the Comboni missionaries. As one looks at the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people, one will find that its theologies and pastoral practices depend on the missionary style, formation, mentality and diversity of those who evangelize. The Catholic Church introduced to the Lugbara people by the Comboni missionaries takes different forms, such as privileged Church, bourgeois Church, dependent Church, autocratic Church, pro-justice Church, democratic Church, African Church, prophetic Church, and community Church with ministries and services orientated to the needs of the Lugbara people.

The teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the Nature and the Mission of the Church offer a deeper understanding of the Church as a Communion of the people of God. The African Synod of Bishops held in Rome in 1994 placed major emphasis on the Church as a family of God. In the development of ecclesiology, the Church as such is a new theological category which can deepen the present understanding of Church as we know it. This theme is developed from and built on the image of the people of God, based on the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council.[240]

[240] Robert Pelton, *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 100-101.

The final message of the African synod of bishops on the Church as a family and Small Christian Communities, in number 28, states:

> The Church, the Family of God, implies the creation of small communities at the human level, living or basic ecclesial communities. In such communities, which are cells of the Church as Family, one is formed to live concretely and authentically the experience of fraternity. In them the spirit of disinterested service, solidarity and common goals reigns. Each is moved to construct the Family of God, a family entirely open to the world from which absolutely nobody is excluded. It is such communities that will provide the best means to fight against ethnocentrism within the Church itself and, more widely, within our nations. These individual Churches as Family have the task of working to transform society.[241]

The African Synod of bishops chose the model of Church as family, and they wanted to use the African family as the model for being and living the Church. It then serves well to put emphasis on small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda and Africa in general.

The emphasis on small Christian communities or basic ecclesial communities is reflected in papal documents such as *Evangelii Nuntiandi, Christifideles Laici, Redemptoris Missio, and Catechesi Tradendae*. All these papal documents place importance on small Christian communities in the contemporary Catholic Church, that in turn, has its own challenges. They appreciate the positive contributions of the small Christian communities in the areas of evangelization and catechesis, but they also criticize their negative tendencies toward the institutional Church.

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[241] Maura Browne, *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives,* Compiled and edited by the Africa Faith and Justice Network under the direction of Maura Browne, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 78.

This chapter also critically examines the pastoral practices of the small Christian communities among the Lugbara of Uganda, and it attempts to answer the following questions: Why do these communities gather? What do they do when they gather? What is the impact of these communities on the members and the wider ecclesial and civil world? This will lead to the conclusion of the third chapter.

3.1 The Comboni Missionaries among the Lugbara of Uganda

The emerging theologies of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda are not only based on the biblical theme of community, but on the missionary style, formation, mentality and diversity of the evangelizers.[242] After examining the biblical theme of community and the Church, one needs to examine in a critical way how the Catholic Church has carried out it mission among the Lugbara people during the last eighty-six years under the guidance of the Comboni missionaries. This will demand that some references be made to the historical facts of the Lugbara people in order to shed light on the present reality of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara, but also perhaps it will indicate a path for its development towards the future. One is trying to answer the question: How might the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people of the West Nile region live and minister in the days a head?

[242] Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 97.

The Catholic Church among the Lugbara people of Uganda is visibly an institution. It is important to recognize that all institutions are basically a result of cultural experiences of human communities and societies. One is more likely to understand properly the present state and future orientation of a given Church, community and society by placing it in its historical context, and so one is more likely to appreciate the direction of, the nature and mission of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people by looking at it from different angles, that is, from the point of view of its historical and actual performance.

A critical examination of the work of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people is of utmost importance, both for the Local Church of Arua and for the Universal Church. All human institutions should be evaluated occasionally, in order to remain faithful to their purpose, nature, and mission. A critique of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara may help it to grow and may shed some light on the strengths and failures of its past and present activity. It should avail the Catholic Church any opportunity to scrutinize itself in the light of its own faith and teachings.

Most importantly, the critique of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara should help the Church in the effort of charting for itself a path of life, being and acting which is more faithful to its calling as a sacrament of Christ's witness in the world. The Catholic Church among the Lugbara must and should make an effort to stay in step with the changing times. It must continually renew itself. This movement towards renewal will need a more open, conscious, articulated and clear sense of direction.

Therefore, one can contribute to this awareness in some small ways. Issues are raised not because solutions will necessarily be provided during the course of this discussion. The surfacing of the issues is considered important here in itself for the very reason that it serves to raise consciousness. By being aware of the issues and the questions facing us as Church, we can begin to try to find solutions.

We need to recall the Church's plan and objectives as known in various theological, pastoral and catechetical statements of the Church. Basically, it has the vocation of a missionary Church - called to go to all nations and preach the Gospel to all persons. What is required for true evangelization is that beyond theological, catechetical or whatever goals are projected in and for the church, they must be actively implemented. This is an evangelical principle the truth of which, in the evangelizing mission of the Church world wide, cannot be disputed.

For the Association of the Member Episcopal Conference of Eastern African Countries, the pastoral priority is to establish small Christian communities. Despite all the emphasis, the situation of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people at present shows that the objective has not been implemented, primarily because of some authoritarian attitudes among some priests, pastoral agents and the reactionary policies of some bishops. In all, this can be attributed to excessive clericalism and episcopal apathy. This will be discussed in the last chapter of this dissertation.

The history of small Christian communities in East Africa and among the Lugbara, has been unfolding during which its objective of a beautiful and spiritual aspiration failed to be implemented. It is action that establishes the Church in a particular locality. It also distinguishes particular churches from one another and unites them. For example, the great commission of Jesus for his disciples to go and preach the Gospel to all peoples throughout the world would have remained ineffective had the disciples and apostles not acted. Instead, in accordance with the will of Jesus, the disciples went out and preached the word, converting people to Christ, the liberator. The Gospel reached the Lugbara people through the hard work of the Comboni missionaries. Their action is at the very core of an authentic Christian life. In practical terms, programs regarding small Christian communities fall short of the requirements of genuine Christian disciples unless they are translated into deeds.

The questions one needs to ask, as one examine the Comboni missionary activities among Lugbara people of Uganda are as follows: How has the Catholic Church expressed its faith in Christ in certain key areas in relation to the life of the Lugbara people? To what extent has it realized in concrete forms some of its own central aspirations and objectives during these eighty-six years, specifically after Uganda achieved independence on October 9, 1962? What can be done to realize them? In these matters, one cannot pretend to provide direct answers. Indeed, they remain a guiding aspect of this reflection on the Comboni missionary activities among the Lugbara. As a matter of fact, they are

the fundamental issues for the success of the ministry of the Church, among the Lugbara people.

3.1.1 Privileged Church

The Catholic Church that the Comboni missionaries introduced to the Lugbara people of Uganda was the privileged Church. In 1962, when Uganda gained its independence from Britain, it was a hopeful sign for a more welcome change, because the history of civil and ecclesiastical institutions in colonial times had been characterized by "an environment of unquestionable and unshakable psychological chaos, physical slavery and religious bondage."[243] The post independence period should have been the time when both the civil state and the churches should have had any meaningful chance of being themselves, and not agents of neo-colonialism. This psycho-social baggage and control has, of necessity, tainted the Church and makes the task facing it in our own day very difficult indeed. This mission involves a serious attempt on the part of the Church to correct its own historical defects so as to be able to relate to the world that surrounds it in a more Christ like manner.

One of the most enduring problems has been the loss of distinction between culture and Gospel so that, in many cases, the preaching of the Gospel has been simply as a subtle

[243] Magesa Laurenti, "The Church in Eastern Africa: Retrospect and Prospect," *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa Symposium of Nine Papers*, edited by Agatha Radoli, (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1993), 8.

form of cultural mission. The extent of this problem has been pervasive and deeply ingrained in the psyches of millions of people. One may describe the problem in one word as "*privilege*." The Catholic Church among the Lugbara people has reflected the privilege element from the very beginning of its existence. What was much more obvious to the Lugbara people was the sheer power of the Catholic Church in their midst, because of its material affluence.[244] The Comboni missionaries, hailing from Europe exhibited an air of superiority with regard to the Lugbara people. They presented themselves as a class apart in every way; superior in knowledge and wisdom. After all, did they not possess the only true message of salvation? In relation to the Comboni missionaries, the Lugbara people were at best children, and whatever dealings there had to be between them had to show that fact.

This attitude crippled the Lugbara people. The Lugbara customs that had sustained the people, and the God whom they had worshipped for centuries before, were altogether ridiculed. Very little attempt was made to see whether the God of the Lugbara people was the same as the Christian God, albeit called by different name and characterized by different attributes. To the contrary, the mockery of the Lugbara belief fed into the conviction of the privilege the western church had held for itself since the very

[244] Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as A Western Missionary Problem* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 3-4. He describes it as follows: "Western missionary awareness and acknowledgement of relative personal affluence is nothing new. Indeed, even a cursory study of mission history reveals as commonplace a selfconscious sense of superiority on the part of missionaries, deriving from and proven by the fact of-it was thought, providential- economic advantage….the strategies and the outcomes of western Christian missionary endeavors for the past two hundred years are impossible to understand apart from the massive economic and material superiority enjoyed by missionaries, vis-à-vis the majority of the people inhabiting those countries popularly designated "mission fields." Economic power is still the most crucial power factor in the western missionary movement. It is still the most important way that the western missionary expresses his concept of what it means to "preach the gospel."

beginning. Its representatives were certain, no doubt at all, that they had superior knowledge and wisdom, while the Lugbara people looked at them admiringly with uncritical eyes, like children. Privilege, in and of the Catholic Church, can therefore, serve as an theoretical framework in the attempt to interpret the life and mission of the Catholic Church, among the Lugbara people. One thing seems clear: that privilege promotes neither dialogue and ecumenism nor the establishment of structures that respect human rights. Neither does it encourage the proper understanding of the involvement of the Catholic Church in urgent social questions. A European missionary mentality has had a controlling influence on the thinking and acting of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people.[245]

3.1.2 Bourgeois Church

The Catholic Church introduced to the Lugbara people was and still is a *bourgeois* Church, social order dominated by the middle class people. The post independence expectations for a new and just society have largely been frustrated in Uganda, especially among the Lugbara people. It is not a matter of speculation that the Lugbara people have experienced numerous wars. Many of the governments have been dictatorial, oppressive and corrupt, especially the former government of Idi Amin Dada and the current government of Yoweri Museveni. The Lugbara ethnic group, in retrospect, has been

[245] Ibid. 73. Jonathan J. Bonk explains: "Genuinely fraternal strategies in conjunction with poorer Churches are usually frustrating and often unworkable from the point of view of both mission agencies and churches. Money gives power; power results in domination. True partnerships between unequal, if not impossible, is extremely unlikely."

influenced by the British colonial government. The Comboni missionaries of Italy were oppressed by Belgium and the heads of its own government.

The Lugbara people have been disappointed with the Catholic Church as well, and most especially in its role as a defender of justice and human rights. The disappointment with the Church among the Lugbara people has been due mainly to its rather bourgeois mentality, spirituality, structure and institutions. The life and work of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people is based substantially on a model of privilege historically inherited from the western world, that is, from the Comboni missionaries. It is this model of privilege that has been allowed to shape the Church's image among the Lugbara. Just like in the colonial times, the main players in this drama have been the hierarchical leaders: namely, the bishop, priests, and religious men/women. Shortly after independence, and with the increase in vocations and in the numbers of the local leaders in the Church among the Lugbara, the hope among many informed Lugbara Catholics had been that things would change. But change has been slow in coming, and there has been very little of it.[246] As far as the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people is concerned, it is not too difficult to see why the Catholic Church leaders are, in a very real sense, heirs of the Comboni missionary mentality. They have stepped into the shoes of the Comboni missionaries and have internalized similar sociological and theological notions of themselves, in relation to the vast majority of Christians, who have no position of leadership within the Church.

[246] Magesa Laurenti, "The Church in Eastern Africa: Retrospect and Prospect," *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa Symposium of Nine Papers*, edited by Agatha Radoli, (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1993), 10-11.

The controlling component in the relationship between the Catholic Church leaders and the laity has been paternalistic. Their relationship has been one of giving by the leaders and receiving by the laity, rather than one of mutual sharing and learning from one another. Instead of providing the atmosphere for self acceptance needed for building a Church that is responsive to Lugbara questions, aspirations and needs, there has been little practical creativity in the Catholic Church among the Lugbara. For example, the creation of more small Christian communities in the parishes is not taking place. Therefore, the old ones are dying out. Since, however, primarily through its leaders, the image of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara revolves around the approach of privilege and rank, it has itself become socially perceived as a somewhat private or secret institution. Some people have observed that because of a generally privileged status of its leaders, the Catholic Church among the Lugbara has largely escaped experiencing any serious crises or scandals, which would have forced it to re-evaluate some of its inherited privileges and acquired or borrowed structures. On the contrary, for the most part it has, for better or for worse, managed to defend its advantaged position whenever this has been challenged by circumstances, such as priests getting sexually involved with peoples' wives or girls.

It is not only the leaders who have perpetuated this image of the Catholic Church, but the laity has also generally harbored a false image of privilege. This has also had profound consequences in the life and activity of the Catholic Church. One of the results is the understanding of the Catholic Church which is in more or less triumphalistic terms, "a

perfect organization." The triumphalistic attitude results in the lack of enthusiasm for ecumenism and dialogue. Neither doctrinal nor practical ecumenism appears as an important concern on the Catholic agenda, mainly because of this inadequate view that it is only the Catholic Church that possesses the truth, and it does not need anyone else to explain it. Although there has been some inter-denominational and inter-religious contact initiated by the Catholic Church of Arua diocese, it has not been significant. There remains a deep suspicion against ecumenical cooperation to the extent that, even today, development projects are planned and executed in many cases along sectarian lines.

The Second Vatican Council articulated a less triumphalistic ecclesiology, that is, the Church must be seem in terms of community, people of God and the body of Christ. The Catholic Church should not be seen in terms of discrimination, domination, rank or oppressive privilege. Instead, it must positively respond to the call to witness to Christ through service. It is not through dominating over others that the Church and its leaders can effectively fulfill their mission, but by being the least and the servants of all. This was the teaching and praxis of Jesus. It defines the attitude of the whole Catholic Church towards everyone and in essence it is its mission in the world. The Church becomes the body of Christ and invites others into it by fostering community and service. If carried out in this way, the Church may not harbor any attitude of superiority. On the contrary, it has to see itself as a pilgrim, as an institution which has often faltered and still is learning to be faithful to Christ, but never ceases to strive towards that end. It cannot, therefore, be a triumphalistic Church.

3.1.3 Dependent Church

The Catholic Church among the Lugbara people has maintained the attitude of triumphalism and privilege despite the post-Second Vatican Council developments in ecclesiology. What is the reason for this? It is, to a great extent, due to the reality that the Catholic Church has fostered dependence among the Lugbara people. Dependence is practically a built in disability of the African Church. The situation can be called, without exaggeration, structured or systematic dependence. Both privilege and dependence form a vicious circle as one relies perpetually upon the other. In concrete terms, the institutional Church and its sacramental system,[247] among the Lugbara cannot function without great financial assistance by the western Churches.[248] The aid of the West promotes the image and the reality of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara as a privileged institution that depends on outside sources for income, but that excercises a superior attitude over its own people.

The cost of dependence is that the Catholic Church among the Lugbara remains predominantly an object and not a subject of its own history. Among the Lugbara, the

[247] Jean Marc Ela, *African Cry*, Translated from the French by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 5. Marc Ela writes: "It is paradoxical that, in celebrating Jesus' resurrection, the church, in its current Eucharistic practice, reveals our alienation at the hands of a world that imposes its products on us not only generally, but in the very liturgy that actualizes our redemption. Christianity prioritizes the things of the white to the point that wheat bread and grape wine are the only Eucharistic species conceivable for the whole of Catholicism. Imported bread and wine are not only nutritive elements that enter into the composition of a European's menu; they are cultural elements with a meaning for a people and connections with its history. We must admit, then, that through the Eucharistic matter the church is imposing western culture and its symbolic structure on us."

[248] Ibid. 23. Jean Marc Ela states: "Thus as the twentieth century dawned, the mission churches would appear as appendices of the mother churches, bereft of any personality of their own. They would be receiving their funds and their personnel from abroad. Mission would be carried out in a structure of the dependency of the churches of the South on the churches of the North."

Catholic Church will consequently express the faith and organize itself in ways that are really not its own, and not of the Lugbara people. The Christian faith and the institutional Church among the Lugbara will not be able to reflect adequately a deep measure of the sensibilities, religiosity and creativity of the majority of the faithful. To the contrary, it may even alienate them from themselves, from their own being, instead of acting as a force for their holistic integration. It is still the colonial mentality and values that tend to cripple both the Catholic Church and the government in the Lugbara land.

The over-dependence complex is without doubt the sickness of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara. This sickness has tended to cripple, even kill, the growth of an authentic Catholic Church. "The psychology of asking and receiving free gifts often works directly against thinking for self, self-help and ultimately self-survival. Independence and maturity usually suffer, and the subject continues to be led, instead of leading, an object instead of a subject."[249] As much as the problem of dependence has been discussed and the psychology of dependence criticized and repudiated, the praxis among the Lugbara people has not shifted significantly. Trips overseas by Catholic Church personnel to solicit assistance are still unfortunately frequent. Even this fact alone affects the local Church. On account of their connections overseas, expatriate personnel provide relative facility to the Catholic Church leaders to do this. That is why some people argue that key policy decisions in such places or dioceses are being made by the expatriates. For example, in the Arua diocese, it had for some time been the practice

[249] Magesa Laurenti, "The Church in Eastern Africa: Retrospect and Prospect," *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa Symposium of Nine Papers*, edited by Agatha Radoli, (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1993), 15.

to reserve certain positions within the Catholic Church for indigenous personnel, on account of such positions' influence on the development of the Catholic Church with an African character. There are examples where these are being taken over by expatriates, again under the theological rationalization that the Catholic Church throughout the world is one or universal. But few would deny that this is a retrogressive step. Furthermore, in the internal life of the Catholic Church, the manner in which such decisions are sometimes made, often without wide consultation, touches on another issue closely connected to the aspects of privilege, triumphalism and dependence. This is the issue of dialogue.

3.1.4 Autocratic Church

In the Catholic Church there is always the need for dialogue with the Lugbara people and with other religions. In the process of dialogue, privilege has no place and one ought feel the presence of the element of equality. Taking advantage of a privilege to score a point separates people instead of bringing them together. If one is committed to sincere dialogue, he/she must be ready to listen.

The Second Vatican council's view of the Catholic Church as collegial cannot actually be realized without the praxis of dialogue. To over-emphasize the hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church to the exclusion of practical collegiality and collaboration is to deny the nature of the Catholic Church as simultaneously hierarchical and at the same time a

fraternal and a sisterly community of believers. Leaders demand respect, authority and honor in the true Church of Christ, yes even power to strengthen the weak, on account of the quality of their service. Collegiality, therefore, is but a sacrament of unity, while Church order is based on dialogue. Collegiality sometimes fails in its witness to the crucified Christ. Dialogue encourages the involvement of the laity. To be quite specific, the strength of the Catholic Church also depends on the involvement of the laity in the ministries of the Catholic Church, in collaboration with its leaders. The Catholic Church among the Lugbara lacks the support of the laity within it, while the western world has followed the recommendations established by Rome. This is to have the laity play a role as lay ministers.

The decision making processes of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people, and the participation of the laity, leave much to be desired. The pastoral councils that have been established throughout the parishes in Lugbara land following the promulgation of the revised code of Canon law in 1983 are not as influential bodies in the life of many parishes and dioceses as they should be. This also challenges the establishment of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people. The system of operation in the Catholic Church among the Lugbara, has historically been, and still is, predominantly one of distinction or differentiation (clergy and laity) rather than of identification with all groups forming the Catholic Church community. There needs to be a movement of inclusiveness, of sharing on every level, of a genuine feeling of having the same blood, if the Catholic Church is to be truly a place where the value of being human and the rights

concomitant with it are concretely respected. This process may be realized in the small Christian communities.

3.1.5 Pro-Justice Church

An essential aspect of the Catholic Church is dialogue. Dialogue can help improve respect for human rights. In the diocese of Arua, among the Lugbara people, there is the Office of Peace and Justice, headed by Rev. Dr. Natalino Vura. Very little has been done in this area. It is important to note that an understanding of peace and justice has something to say about the inner life of the Catholic Church itself. It is to defend the sacred value of the human person or human dignity. This is to be carried out in families, small Christian communities, parishes, dioceses and the entire Catholic Church, as a result, at every level of Catholic world.

The Catholic Church among the Lugbara has a task and call to defend the sacred value of the human person and human dignity. It is to work towards the transformation of all people, especially those in the Lugbara land, who must recognize one another as brothers and sisters because they are created in the image of God, the Creator. The Catholic Church many times fails in the fulfillment of the practical demands of this vocation or mandate. The Catholic Church often makes the proclamation of human rights without worrying about the actual means of assuring the exercise of these rights by all people. The Catholic Church among the Lugbara people of Uganda cannot proclaim the message

of justice and human rights to others with any measure of credibility if it does not put into practice the same message itself. The implications of this for the internal life of the Catholic Church are profound. With regard to the Catholic Church among the Lugbara, one must ask whether it has established some actual means to assure the exercise of human rights within itself. At the very least, it ought to be concerned about any situation of failure it may encounter in this regard within its own institutional confines, most especially in small Christian communities which are mostly attended by women and children, and men are very few or absent.

The impression one gets from observing the Catholic Church here is that the climate of the privilege that directs its structure and life works to obstruct the realization of the vision of human rights in it. It also desensitizes many Catholic Church leaders to the existence of the problem. To them, the question of human rights within the Catholic Church does not seem to arise; and if someone does raise it, it is declared irrelevant. Before God, there is a sense of human equality, when considering any person. As far as law, justice, aid or opportunity, there should be no difference, and a privilege position should never separate Christians. The institution of the Catholic Church operates as if there were no systematic flaws in it and as though no injuries were sometimes committed. Because of these imperfections against the dignity of persons and communities, do one as a church, nurture a mistaken or exaggerated notion of ourselves as a perfect society? All this indicates that the consciousness of the Lugbara people regarding autonomy and freedom of persons and communities in the Catholic Church need to be raised and discussed.

Transformation of consciousness in this context means much more than a change of attitude of the individual Lugbara people. It also means conversion of the structure of leadership in the Catholic Church in Lugbara land. The Catholic Church among the Lugbara needs to pay close attention to the principles enunciated in the declaration of human freedom for its internal order, because the declaration represents the most concise and concrete ecumenical expression in modern times of the ethics of the Gospel. Respect for the human person is a sacred value. The declaration thus provides an excellent and ready foundation for action, particularly for an appropriate democratization of some of the Catholic Church structures, now in operation, among the Lugbara people.

3.1.6 Democratic Church

The movement for democracy is one of the most significant signs of the times that the Catholic Church among the Lugbara, must learn to read today. It has everything to do with its mission to be a witness of the reign of God, a reign here but yet to come. The movement for democracy in Uganda has certainly not left the Lugbara people unaffected. Among the leaders of the Catholic Church, there are significant numbers who have prophetically advocated that it be taken seriously by the civil authorities. If it is true that the Catholic Church witnesses best to the reign of God by its own life, then once again, it cannot exempt itself from the positive demands of this movement. For the Catholic Church to act in such a way as to appear to be saying that what God desires to be a good

for humanity as a whole is not a good for the Catholic Church's own internal life, is to risk and to forfeit a considerable measure of credibility.[250]

Precisely, how some democratization can be effected within the Catholic Church, while respecting the divine core of its internal order, is properly a matter of study and dialogue. It is already possible to note some of the factors that will be involved. They must form part of the explicit agenda of the Catholic Church for action. The small Christian communities are the best places to begin the action.

The participation of the laity in the decision making process of the Catholic Church has already been noted. It needs to be underlined in relation to the issue of human dignity. If lay people remain peripheral to the decision making process of the Catholic Church, they continue to be second class members of the Catholic Church community whatever may be declared to the contrary. In that case, the Catholic Church will not be able to say with complete sincerity that it respects lay people's rights as individuals and as groups. What should be even more worrisome is, as has been indicated, that this situation establishes another more dangerous and un-Christian one, the climate of insensitivity, of behaving as if the problem does not exist. For in such a climate, the sense of remorse or repentance dies; wrong comes to be seen as right.

[250] Hans Kung, *The Catholic Church: A Short History*, Translated by John Bowden (New York: A Modern Library Chronicles Book, 2001), 7.

The prevailing situation of the laity leads directly to other areas of ecclesiastical organization and human relationships within the Catholic Church, which needs to be reviewed. All of them involve the question of human rights. One may introduce some of the more significant items such as the relationship between priests and bishops; between religious women and the clergy in general; and between the western churches and the Catholic Church among the Lugbara. One of the most negative aspects affecting this relationship is the easy appeal to and use of spiritual sanctions, in each of these cases, by the superiors against the subordinates whenever there are differences of views between them. When this is not really necessary, the use of such spiritual coercion or sanctions becomes not only morally questionable, but positively harmful. It also affects directly the social witness of the Catholic Church. That is why it should not be surprising that if Catholics cannot enjoy the freedom to assert their human dignity in the Church, dignity which is confirmed sacramentally in baptism and by all the other sacraments, they can hardly be blamed if they do not do so with full moral confidence in the civil sphere. In so far as responsibility accrues to Catholics throughout Lugbara land in the current situation of rebel activity in Uganda it lies mainly in this that the Catholic Church has not sufficiently catechized and socialized its members to defend the dignity of the individual and the community against all aggressors. In Catholic catechesis, the link between faith and social responsibility has up to now been very weak indeed. This becomes the challenge posed for small Christian communities in the Lugbara land in Uganda.

3.1.7 African Church

What does the church among the Lugbara people have to offer to the universal church? What is its contribution? What is its role in the church universal and what could be its role? The thinking and behavior of many Catholics among the Lugbara now indicate that the Catholic Church of the future will be characterized by a movement away from the situation of alienation now common in it. More and more Catholics are seeking to establish their own identity in the theological expression and living of their faith. The development of African theologies, the attempts at creating relevant liturgies, the readiness to speak out on issues that involve the Catholic Church, and the popular approval with which all these initiatives are being met are evidence of this orientation. This is providential because it is what leads to a truly African Church among the Lugbara people of Uganda. What does this mean? It means that the establishment of a church in communion with other churches must be one whose spirit is not determined by human forces outside of it, but rather by the concerns and questions of its own members in genuine small Christian communities. Concretely, it means that theology, liturgy, forms of ministry, physical plans and Church government among the Lugbara people will be reshaped based on the outcome of the experience of the dialogue from within. It will reflect the community life of the people, drawing from the inspiration of the scriptures obviously, but also just as obviously, from the people's own rich perception of an ever loving God and the demands of faithfulness in him. Needless to say, this is an area which, if successfully pursued and implemented, will not fail to inspire local churches in other parts of the world that wish to seek more autonomy in unity than has occurred up

till now in the Catholic Church. In the Catholic Church at present, many theologians have said, it seems to be tending toward an unhealthy centralization, which ignores solidarity and renders efforts to build authentic local churches practically fruitless.

The task of the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people of Uganda is to reach the goal of an authentic Church for the whole world. Followers of Christ from every culture must be able to feel at home in the Catholic Church and not be alienated by other cultures imposed upon them in the name of orthodoxy. The most basic gifts which the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people can offer to the world Church lie in its own acceptance and respect for the life and culture of its own people as a privileged vehicle of God's self-revelation. Respect for the image of God in persons and communities implies respect for their worldview because the culture, though imperfect, is the expression of the divine image in them. Since the image of God is in every person and every nation in spite of variations in its actual expression, there is bound to be a basic unity between and among cultures. On account of this, respect for cultures becomes a foundation of the need and validity of a very deep oneness or unity in diversity (not a superficial uniformity) between and among local Churches and the world.

From the Lugbara people's language, signs and symbols, questions that they ask and the life they live, there will emerge their contribution to the universal church. For the Catholic Church, this is a call to commit itself to a serious analysis, theological interpretation of facts and deliberate action. What are the political, economic, psycho-social and religious conditions of the contemporary Lugbara people into which the faith

has to insert itself, into which the Catholic Church has to continually be reborn? As it inserts itself in them and transforms them in accordance with the ideals of the Gospel, the Catholic Church at the same time teaches other Churches, faced with similar situations throughout the world. Likewise, teaching by their own experiences in their own places, these other Churches teach the Catholic Church among the Lugbara People. The struggles in the small Christian communities in the different parts of the world reflect this reality.

3.1.8 Prophetic Church

The socio-economic and political situation of the Lugbara people of Uganda leaves much to be desired. There is still an atmosphere of repression of the population by the current government of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. The Ugandans in general lack such rights and freedoms as free speech and free association. There are no checks and balances against the abuse of political power, in addition there has been a steady increase in the social evils of corruption and nepotism in the government. The massive militarization of the people in Lugbara land, in the midst of dire poverty, is a crying scandal. There is no political vision or will to change this situation, to establish infrastructures designed to assure the long term spirit of civic dedication and commitment by all. In the ethnically heterogeneous environment of Uganda, this is a very dangerous thing. Without such structures today, it will be very easy tomorrow to manipulate and unleash the diabolical forces of tribal/ethnic, religious and class hostilities that will split

peoples and the country of Uganda apart and make reconciliation difficult or positively impossible.

3.2 The Second Vatican Council on the Nature and Mission of the Church

On October 28, 1958 the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Catholic Church elected John XXIII as Pope at the age of seventy-seven. By his own admission, John XXIII said, "Everyone was convinced that I would be a provisional and transitional Pope."[251] As Ralph M. Wiltgen writes, "He had been pope for scarcely three months when he told seventeen astonished Cardinals of his intention to call an ecumenical Council on January 25, 1959 in the Benedictine monastery adjoining the Basilica of St. Paul outside the walls."[252] The Second Vatican Council, held from 1962 to 1965, brought a shift in the understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. This shift in understanding the nature and mission of the Church as read in the council documents will provide a point of departure and context for the discussions of the ecclesiality of the small Christian communities in the Church today.

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[251] Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (eds.), *History Of Vatican II: Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II, Towards A New Era in Catholicism,* Volume I, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 109. Andrew Dawson, *The Birth And Impact of the Base Ecclesial Community And Liberative Theological Discourse in Brazil* (New York: International Scholars Publications, 1998), 109.
[252] Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows Into the Tiber: The Unknown Council* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., Publishers, 1967), 13. See Andrew Dawson, *The Birth And Impact of the Base Ecclesial Community And Liberative Theological Discourse in Brazil* (New York: International Scholars Publications, 1998), 109. T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 117.

The ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council is reflected in various ways in all of the Council's sixteen documents, but the two most important documents for our purpose which represent the two pillars of the Council's ecclesiology are the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* and the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*. A simplified way of describing the major thrust of these two documents is to see *Lumen Gentium* as dealing more with the nature of the Church *ad intra* while *Gaudium Et Spes* focuses on the *ad extra* nature of the Church's relationship to the world.

3.2.1 Lumen Gentium

The final version of *Lumen Gentium* of 1964 is set out in eight chapters: The mystery of the church; the people of God; the hierarchical structure of the church with special reference to the Episcopate; the Laity; the call of the whole church to holiness; religious; the eschatological nature of the pilgrim Church and her union with the heavenly Church; and the role of the blessed virgin Mary, mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and the church.

In considering the Church as a mystery (L.G. 1-8), or in Latin *sacramentum*,[253] the document signaled a shift in the Catholic understanding of the Church. It signified a move away from the wholesale identification of the visible structures of the Church, with the mystical body of Christ and the institutional concern such identification brings with it. It stated its own purpose as unfolding the "inner nature and universal mission"[254] of the church. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Church was "concerned with maintaining internal unity and sacramental integrity, while casting suspicious and sometimes hostile glances toward outsiders who did not accept the Catholic faith."[255] For example, "the defensive stance of the Baltimore Catechism reflects something of the theological and pastoral climate of the Church in pre-Second Vatican Council period."[256]

The Church is a "sign of the unity of humanity with God and an instrument for achieving that union and unity. The Church is then presented in various biblical images: Flock of Christ, Vineyard of God, Temple of the Holy Spirit, heavenly Jerusalem, spotless spouse

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[253] James T. Bretzke, *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary, Latin Expressions Commonly Found in Theological Writings* (Collegeville, Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, the Liturgical Press, 1998), 107-108. Bretzke explains *Sacramentum* As: "Sacrament, Sacred symbol, Sign of a sacred thing. Though the Latin word *Sacramentum* originally meant anything that obliges a person, such as a 'guarantee, oath, or pledge,' the term came to be used by the Church to refer to the visible signs instituted by Jesus Christ to reveal and communicate God's grace to human beings. Tertullian was the first to use the word to signify the Christian rite or mystery of baptism; later the term came to refer to any sign or symbol instituted by Christ in some way to give grace. There was much discussion in the Middle ages about the precise number of sacraments, and finally at the Council of Trent the number of sacraments was defined as being the following seven: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, marriage, holy orders, reconciliation, and anointing of the sick." See T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 123.

[254] Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 1. See T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 123. Andrew Dawson, *The Birth And Impact of the Base Ecclesial Community And Liberative Theological Discourse in Brazil* (New York: International Scholars Publications, 1998), 118.

[255] Dennis M. Doyle, *The Church Emerging from Vatican II: A Popular Approach to Contemporary Catholicism* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000), 30.

[256] Ibid. 30.

of the spotless lamb, pilgrim people, and finally, mystical body of Christ (L.G. 6,7)."[257] Regarding the final image of the Church as Mystical Body of Christ, the first chapter of the document made a significant shift in its understanding of Church. As Howland T. Sanks explains, "After insisting that the hierarchical Church and the Mystical Body of Christ, the visible assembly and the spiritual community, 'form one complex reality comprising a human and a divine element.'"[258] Austin Flannery, in document of the Second Vatican Council explains:

> This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards catholic unity (L.G. 8).[259]

Sanks notes:

> *Mystici Corporis* had identified the true Church with the holy, catholic, apostolic, and Roman Church. The 1963 draft of the schema also said that the true Church "is or est" the Catholic Church. This was substituted with the vague term "subsists in" in order to avoid such former identification and to leave open the question of the relationship of one Church to the many churches. This shift in wording indicated a monumental change in the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward other Christian confessions. It was the first time since the reformation that the Catholic Church recognized other Christians not just as individuals, but as *ecclesial* bodies and applied the term Church to them.[260]

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[257] T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 123.
[258] Ibid. 123-124. See Dennis M. Doyle, *The Church Emerging from Vatican II: A Popular Approach to Contemporary Catholicism* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000), 50-51, 54-62. See Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 9.
[259] Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 9.
[260] T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 124.

The Church is the mystery of Christ who lives on in the world. The Church is a sign and an instrument of communion with God and in union with humanity, as a whole. "This, not only implies that its essence can never be fully captured in any human theology, but that its forms can never be structured according to the organizational ideas of any given age. There is a difference between a perfect society and a mystery. This mystery, furthermore, is a mystery of communion."[261] The Church's mission is within the larger context of God's salvific work in history (L.G.2-4). The Church is not a finished reality (L.G. 5), but a pilgrim people of God, which is presently imperfect and will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven. The document also emphasizes the fundamental unity of its members. Baptism is our fundamental sacrament, the source of our dignity and ministry. It is only after this common foundation that we can begin to speak of differences. Baptism grounds our common priesthood.

Chapter two of *Lumen Gentium* deals with the people of God. It comes before the hierarchical ordering of the Church. The very first sentence of chapter two reads, "At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears him and does what is right (L.G. 9)."[262] It expresses the nature of the Church as communitarian. The Church is first and foremost an "organic structure (L.G. 11)" which is defined in terms of mutual and interpersonal relationships. All the faithful are called to perfection of sanctity and are challenged to receive the special graces of God as a people. Therefore, the Church

[261] Paul Bernier, *Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publication, 1996), 205.
[262] Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 12.

has a sense of the faithful or *sensus fidelium*[263] which is both stronger and more important than any visible organizational structure. The image of the people of God places greater emphasis on the human and communal aspects of the Church, rather than the juridical and hierarchical aspects. Stress is put on the priesthood of all the baptized, that is, the totality of the church as referring to bishops, clergy and laity. Within the Church, particular Churches hold a rightful place. "Again, there are, legitimately, in the ecclesial communion, particular Churches which retain their own traditions, without prejudice to the Chair of Peter which presides over the entire assembly of charity, and protects their legitimate variety, while at the same time, taking care that these differences do not diminish unity, but rather contribute to it (L.G.13)."[264] The document in chapter two reaffirms "that the Church in a wide sense is necessary for salvation, and recognizes that the Catholic Church is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name Christians."[265]

This chapter finally asserts that: "Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the

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[263] James T. Bretzke, *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary, Latin Expressions Commonly Found in Theological Writings* (Collegeville, Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, the Liturgical Press, 1998), 114. Bretzke explained it as follows, "*Sensus fidelium*, sense of the faithful, Expression of the sensitivity and capacity of all the faithful, who through their baptism share in the gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to appreciate and discern the practical meaning that revelation and the Christian faith has in the contemporary world. This term can refer both to the subjective aspects associated with the believers sense of their faith (i.e., the gift of faith) and to the elements of the faith itself which the believers believe and profess (e.g., belief in the assumption of the Blessed Virgin)."

[264] Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 19.

[265] T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 124.

dictates of their conscience, these too may attain eternal salvation (L.G. 16)."[266] Thus, the council carefully insists that the church is the people of God before speaking of the various groups that make up the church such as the hierarchy, laity and religious.[267]

Chapter three discusses the hierarchical structure of the Church with emphasis on the episcopacy. It reaffirms the institution of the episcopacy and Petrine primacy. At the beginning, bishops are understood as the successors of the apostles by divine institution, and this understanding is continued in the document. Through consecration, the bishops are conferred the fullness of the sacrament of orders. This means that the understanding of the bishop just as a priest with greater power of jurisdiction is rejected (L.G. 18-21).[268] It also asserts the collegial nature of the episcopacy. Just as St. Peter and other apostles "constituted one apostolic college, so in a similar way, the Roman pontiff as the successor of Peter, and the bishops as the successors of the apostles are joined together."[269] The pope exercises his primacy in union with the rest of the Episcopal college (L.G. 19). As T. Howland Sanks explains:

> This collegial nature and meaning of the Episcopal order found expression in ecumenical councils and in the ancient practice of conciliar assemblies as well as in the custom of new bishops being consecrated by neighboring bishops … this supreme authority is exercised in a solemn way in an ecumenical council but also, by the bishops living in all parts of the world, provided that the head of the college calls them to collegiate action, or at least so approves or freely accepts the

[266] Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 22.
[267] T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 124.
[268] Ibid. 125.
[269] Ibid. 125.

> united action of the dispersed bishops, that it is made a true collegiate act (L.G.22).[270]

"Episcopal bodies are encouraged to put this collegiate sense into practical application, thus giving official recognition to territorial conferences."[271]

The nature of this collegiality, as well as the nature of the leadership which bishops exercise in their local dioceses, is given much attention in *Lumen Gentium Nos. 20-24.*[272] For example, the bishops have the duty to preach and teach, and this obligation is called a true service or *diakonia* ministry. The authority of this magisterial teaching and the modalities inherent in its infallible character were discussed in *Lumen Gentium No.25.*[273] The constitution again stresses:

> This church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful which, united with their pastor, are also called churches in the New Testament. For these are in fact, in their own localities, the new people called by God, in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (see 1 Thess 1:5). In them the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated so that, by means of the flesh and blood of the Lord the whole brotherhood and sisterhood of the body may be welded together.[274]

The Church is rooted in the Eucharist and it exists in every legitimate local congregation, just as the small Christian communities, under its pastor and the bishop. The Church also

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[270] Ibid. 125.
[271] Ibid. 125.
[272] Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 29-34.
[273] Ibid. 34-36.
[274] Ibid. 36-37.

exists in the communion of all these local churches. It is thus both a local and universal reality.[275]

The document in chapter three also treats other ranks of the hierarchy, such as the priests and deacons. The ministry of priest is referred to in this context as being derived from and dependent on their bishop. As T. Howland Sanks says: "Although priests do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood and although they are dependent on the bishop in the exercise of their power, they are nevertheless united with the bishop in sacerdotal dignity (L.G. 28).[276] Deacons are ordained. They have the ministries of services and these are necessary for the life of the church. The document also calls for the restoration of the permanent deaconate in the church. As it says: "'The deaconate can in the future be restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy,' as seen appropriate to 'competent territorial bodies of bishops,' with the approval of the supreme pontiff. This applies also to married men of mature age.'"[277]

Chapter four discusses the vocation and apostolate of the laity in the Church and in the world. As T. Howland Sanks writes:

> The laity are established among the people of God by reason of their baptism and share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ. But there is a secular quality proper and special to laymen. By their vocation they seek the

[275] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed &Ward Publishing Company, 1994), 38.
[276] T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 126-127.
[277] Ibid. 127.

> kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and work for the sanctification of the world from within in the manner of leaven.[278]

They are called to share in the work of the Church and make use of their charisms in the Church (L.G.30-31).[279] They are called to participate in the saving mission of the Church itself. This apostolic work is commissioned through baptism and confirmation. Their role does not usurp the pastoral leadership of ordained members of the Church, but complements it (L.G.32).[280] Everyone in the Church is to work together for the building up of the body of Christ. Everyone shares in the mission of Christ (L.G.33-35).[281] The Laity have a special role to play in witnessing to the gospel in the world (L.G.36).[282] Finally, pastors are called upon to aid the laity in their mission and to promote their role in the Church (L.G.37).[283]

Chapter five discusses the call of the whole Church to holiness. The faithful are all called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity (L.G.39-42).[284] Chapter six offers a special place for the religious in the life of the church. The religious life is not an intermediate one between the clerical and lay state. It is primarily, "a sign which can and ought to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their Christian vocation (L.G.43-44).[285] Chapter seven

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[278] Ibid. 127.
[279] Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 48-49.
[280] Ibid. 49-51.
[281] Ibid. 51-54.
[282] Ibid. 54-56.
[283] Ibid. 56-57.
[284] Ibid. 58-66.
[285] Ibid. 66-69.

describes the Church as pilgrim. The Church will attain full perfection only in the glory of heaven. *Lumen Gentium No. 48*, says: "… the pilgrim church, in its sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and it takes its place among the creatures which groan and until now suffer the pains of childbirth and await the revelation of the children of God (see Rom 8:19-22)."[286] This shift in the understanding of the Church tries to overcome the triumphalism or the idea of the church as a perfect society. Chapter eight discusses the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church. Mary is hailed as the Church's model and excellent exemplar in faith and charity. It calls Mary a model of the Church in the matter of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ (L.G.53, 63).[287]

Sanks offers a succinct summary of *Lumen Gentium's* contribution:

> *Lumen Gentium* marks some major and dramatic shifts in the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church. Though stressing continuity with Vatican I, it restored the Episcopal college to its rightful place in the governance of the Church, including sharing in infallibility, though always joined to the successor of Peter. It recognized the place and function of the local Churches as well as their diverse traditions. It affirmed the ecclesial nature of other Christian bodies and that they possess some means of grace and salvation. It no longer identifies the Mystical Body of Christ with the Roman Catholic Church alone. It relocated the hierarchical structure of the Church within the whole people of God. It stressed the equality and apostolic vocation of the laity and that all ministry in the Church is service, *diakonia*. It recognized the human imperfection in the Church and its need for reform until it completes its pilgrimage on earth, and it balanced the tendency to divinize the Virgin Mary by locating her within the people of God.[288]

3.2.2 Gaudium Et Spes

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[286] Ibid. 73. See also T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 128.
[287] Ibid. 80-81; 86-87.
[288] Ibid. 128-129

The Pastoral constitution on the church, *Gaudium et Spes* focuses on the Church *Ad extra*. In the discussions of the Second Vatican Council, the council did prepare what came to be called Schema xiii, which went through several drafts. The final version was approved by the council on December 4, 1965. "It is a lengthy, sometimes repetitive document, which is divided into two parts. Part one deals with more doctrinal issues, while part two deals with pastoral applications to the contemporary issues."[289]

At the beginning of the document, the council addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons/daughters of the church, and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity (G.S.2).[290] It affirms its solidarity with the entire human family and conceives of its mission as continuing the work of Christ, who entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served (G.S.3).[291] It calls the Church to read the signs of the times. It describes the condition of men/women in the modern world. There is a true and profound social and cultural transformation that has an effect on the religious sphere of human life. "Science and technology have transformed the face of the earth and extended human domination over space and time. The human community has become all of a piece and has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one (G.S.5).[292] This

[289] T. Howland Sanks, *Salt Leaven and Light: The Community Called Church* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Books, 2000), 129.
[290] Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 163-164.
[291] Ibid. 164-165.
[292] Ibid. 166-167.

dynamic and revolutionary worldview reflects the profound influence of the thought of Teilhard de Chardin on the document and pervades it in many ways (G.S.6)."[293]

The document goes on to describe changes in the social order, as well as psychological, moral and religious changes. It states at the beginning that:

> Meanwhile there is a growing conviction that humanity is able and has the duty to strengthen its mastery over nature and that there is need to establish a political, social, and economic order at the service of humanity, to assert and develop the dignity proper to individuals and to societies.[294]

Human beings are to have control over creation and assume responsibility to guide it too. The council wishes to address itself to all people in order to illuminate human mystery and to cooperate in finding the solutions to the outstanding problems of our time (G.S.10).[295]

Gaudium et Spes presents the Church as the People of God and not the "perfect society" of the post Tridentine times.

> The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world … they try to discern the true signs of God's presence and purpose in the events, the needs and the desires which it shares with the rest of humanity … it will be increasingly clear that the people of God, and the human race of which it forms part, are of service to each other; and the mission of the church will show itself to be supremely human by the very fact of being religious (G.S.11).[296]

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[293] Ibid. 167-168.
[294] Ibid. 170.
[295] Ibid. 171-173.
[296] Ibid. 173-174.

The document in general offers pastoral reflections on a wider range of issues affecting the Church's relationship to the world. The themes and issues addressed include an analysis of the situation of man/woman in the world today, an understanding of Christian anthropology, and includes references to the problem of atheism in part one, chapter one.

Chapter one of part one affirms the dignity of the human person based on the Scriptural teaching that humans are created in the image of God, not as a solidarity, but as a social being in interpersonal communion with others. It affirms that there is a split in human life, that is, the struggle between good and evil. It also affirms the progress in practical sciences, technology, and the liberal arts which human beings have accomplished in their probing of the material world and in subjecting it to themselves (G.S.15).[297] "In discussing the Church's response to atheism, it recommends that a believer bears witness by making one's faith penetrate his/her entire life, and by activating justice and love. It asserts the possibility of ultimate salvation for all (G.S. 22)."[298]

Sanks notes:

> Chapter two of part one calls to mind Christian doctrine on human society as found in encyclicals such as *Mater et Magistra, Pacem in Terris,* and *Ecclesiam Suam.* It reaffirms human interdependence and the consequent responsibility of each social group for the welfare of other groups and of the entire human family (G.S.25-26).[299] It affirms the basic equality of all and the basic human right to education, to follow one's conscience, to privacy and to religious freedom. It calls for more than a mere individualistic morality. It calls for solidarity of the human race. It says: "The best way to fulfill one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's means and the needs of

[297] Ibid. 177-178.
[298] Ibid. 185-186.
[299] Ibid. 190-192.

> others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life (G.S.30)."[300]

Chapter three part one explores the autonomy of earthly affairs. A genuine scientific investigation never conflicts with faith. It distinguishes earthly progress from the growth of Christ's kingdom. It states: "That is why, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society."[301]

Chapter four of part one deals with the role of the Church in the modern world. As the Church is renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family, it is to serve as a leaven and be a kind of soul for human society. The earthly and heavenly intermingle. The Church can contribute more towards the human family and their history. The Church can also be helped by the world in the matter of preparing the ground for the gospel. It wishes to foster mutual exchange and assistance in concerns which are in some way common to the Church and the world (G.S.40).[302]

The Church's purpose is religious, but in certain situations it can initiate activities on behalf of all, particularly the needy. It says:

> Christ did not bequeath to the church a mission in the political, economic, or social order: the purpose he assigned to it was religious. But this religious

[300] Ibid. 195.
[301] Ibid. 205.
[302] Ibid. 206-208.

> mission can be the source of commitment, direction, and vigor to establish and consolidate the human community according to the law of God. In fact, the church is able, indeed it is obliged, if times and circumstances require it, to initiate action for the benefit of everyone, especially of those in need, such as works of mercy and the like … By its nature and mission the church is universal in that it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system.[303]

The document reaffirms the mission and nature of the Church. The Church is not bound to a particular form of human culture, any political, economic or social system, and the Church does not have all the solutions in the social order either.

Sanks notes:

> The council walks a fine line, describing the mission of the Church as a religious one, but also at the same time encouraging the pursuit of a just social order, as a consequence of the gospel spirit.Religion does not consist in acts of worship alone, nor only certain moral obligations. The split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age. The secular activities, however, belong properly, although not exclusively, to the laity. The document admits that this witness to the gospel in the world, this mission to be the sign of salvation on earth is hampered by the unfaithfulness of her members, both clerical and lay and that a great distance lies between the message she offers and the human failings of those to whom the gospel is entrusted.Finally, the help the Church receives from the modern world is to express the message of Christ and accommodate it to the diverse cultures as well as to interpret the many voices of our age to judge them in the light of the Divine Word. The Church has a visible and social structure. It can and ought to be enriched by the development of human social life. That the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation, manifesting and exercising God's love for human beings was repeated at the close of part one of the document.[304]

The second part predominantly is pastoral. It deals with specific topics of concern today such as marriage and family life, human culture, life in its economic, social and political dimensions, war and peace, and the formation of a family of nations. In these areas, the document summarizes the recent papal social teachings.

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[303] Ibid. 209-210.
[304] Ibid. 132.

In summary, *Gaudium et Spes,* marks a major shift in the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic community in its relationship to the modern world. It takes a positive view of advances in human sciences, locates itself within the whole human community and specifically puts itself in service of that community. It urges dialogue with the world, and with its diverse voices. The Church no longer sees itself as a perfect society, but recognizes its failures and limitations, as well as its need to learn from the developments in the human sciences. It recognizes that it does not have all the answers, but must search for solutions to contemporary problems along with the rest of humanity. It recognizes and accepts change and a dynamic and evolutionary view of the world and the social order. Its mission is to witness to the gospel and to serve the common good of all human beings, the second following from the first and not in conflict with it. Thus, the Church's self-understanding *ad extra* is a dramatic reversal of the locked mentality that dominated the preceding century and half.

3.3 The Papal Documents and Small Christian Communities

The Church has addressed in some of its papal documents the idea and practice of small Christian communities. Some of these documents include: The Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*; the Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae;* the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops and its final report; the Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici;* John Paul II's 1990 Encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio;* and other papal statements.

3.3.1 Evangelii Nuntiandi

The 1974 synod of bishops in Rome, on the theme of evangelization in the modern world, was followed by a document or apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the first two words of the document in Latin - on proclaiming the Gospel. Pope Paul VI issued the apostolic exhortation in 1975 and it summed up the synod discussions. It addresses the issue of how the Church should best carry out its essential missionary task in the world. This same topic on proclaiming the gospel was discussed in the Second Vatican Council. It was during these discussions that basic communities or small Christian communities were strongly advocated as an evangelizing strategy by many of the Latin American bishops present in the synod.

The discussion of small Christian communities in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is quite detailed and extensive, and has served as a basis for subsequent magisterium statements on the subject of small Christian communities. The topic of small Christian communities was addressed in section no. 58.[305] Small Christian

[305] Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi:* On Evangelization in the Modern World, December 8, 1975 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Publications Office, 1976), 40-

communities were hailed as a hope for the universal Church, provided they remain truly ecclesial, that is, united to the Church through the hierarchical structures. The Church approved and encouraged the formation of small Christian communities.

In summary, small Christian communities were called to remain truly ecclesial, that is, to be always firmly rooted in the Church and in communion with her pastors. If they ignore this call, they cannot consider themselves ecclesial, that is, united to the Church through the hierarchical structures.

3.3.2 Catechesi Tradendae

Catechesis has always been considered one of the primary tasks of the Church. Consequently, the 1977 Synod focused on catechesis. Evangelization and catechesis are closely linked, that is, there is always the need to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world on one hand, but on the other hand, there is the need for Christians to continually deepen their awareness of the faith and the life of the Church.

It was in the 1977 Synod that bishops addressed the different ways and means by which catechesis can be effectively imparted to the people in the Church today. "It was in the context of this discussion that reference was made to the phenomenon of small Christian communities as being effective means for catechesis."[306] It recognized that there are

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42. See also Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Base Communities: An Introduction* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1994), 181-184.

[306]John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward Publishing Company, 1994), 183.

ongoing problems with some of the small Christian communities, especially their hostility toward the institutional Church, and even engaging in illicit pastoral and liturgical activities within the parish community. However, they are still seen as being effective instruments for parish catechesis. They possess a great potential for parish renewal as well. The bishops also recognized that it is becoming increasingly imperative, "to renew the parish by making it a community of communities."[307]

In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae,* Paul II mentions small Christian communities, especially those that meet the criteria of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* No. 58, as being suitable locus for catechesis in *Catechesi Tradendae* No. 47.[308] In *Catechesi Tradendae* No. 67[309] the parish is described as the pre-eminent place for catechesis. The

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[307] *The Vatican's International Council for Catechesis document, Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community: Some Principles and Guidelines* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice, Vaticana, 1990), No. 62.

[308] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*: On Catechesis in Our time (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1977), 20. The document says, "Yet other instances are the meetings of ecclesial basic communities, in so far as they correspond to the criteria laid down in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi,"* No. 58.

[309] John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*: On Catechesis in Our time (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1977), 29. It states: "I now wish to speak of the actual setting in which all these catechists normally work. I am returning this time, taking a more overall view, to the "places" for catechesis, some of which have already been mentioned in chapter VI: the parish, the family, the school, organizations.

It is true that catechesis can be given anywhere, but I wish to stress, in accordance with the desire of very many bishops, that the parish community must continue to be the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis. Admittedly, in many countries the parish has been as it were shaken by the phenomenon of urbanization. Perhaps some have too easily accepted that the parish should be considered old-fashioned, if not doomed to disappear, in favor of more pertinent and effective small communities. Whatever one may think, the parish is still a major point of reference for the Christian people, even for the non-practicing. Accordingly, realism and wisdom demand that we continue along the path aiming to restore to the parish, as needed more adequate structures and, above all a new impetus through the increasing integration into it of qualified, responsible and generous members. This being said and taking into account the necessary diversity of places for catechesis (the parish as such, families taking in children and adolescents, chaplaincies for state schools, Catholic educational establishments, apostolic movements that give periods of catechesis, clubs open to youth in general, spiritual formation weekends, etc.), it is supremely important that all these catechetical channels should really converge on the same confession of faith, on the same membership of the Church, and on commitments in society lived in the same Gospel spirit: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father (Eph. 4:5-6)." That is why every big parish or every group of parishes with small numbers has the serious duty to train people completely dedicated to

parish is the pre-eminent place of catechesis following this assertion in no.67. There was also the dismissal of the assertion that the parish should be considered old-fashioned, if not doomed to disappear, in favor of more pertinent and effective small Christian communities. The statement is not dismissing the synod's statement that the parish should be a community of communities. Rather, it seems to address people like Leornardo Boff[310] who had called for the outright abolition of the parish in favor of small Christian communities. The synod favors the restructuring of the parish, not its abolition or replacement. In summary, small Christian communities are suitable for catechesis. They are not to replace or abolish the existing parish structure.

3.3.3 The 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops and Its final report

This extraordinary synod of bishops was convened by John Paul II in order to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. The reflections of the synod were to be on the Second Vatican Council and to promote its role in the life of the Church. Two

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providing catechetical leadership (priests, men and women religious, and lay people), to provide the equipment needed for catechesis under all aspects, to increase and adapt the places for catechesis to the extent that it is possible and useful to do so, and to be watchful about the quality of the religious formation of the various groups and their integration into the ecclesial community.

In short, without monopolizing or enforcing uniformity, the parish remains, as I have said, the pre-eminent place for catechesis. It must rediscover its vocation, which is to be a fraternal and welcoming family home, where those who have been baptized and confirmed become aware of forming the people of God. In that home, the bread of good doctrine and the Eucharistic Bread are broken for them in abundance, in the setting of the one act of worship; from that home they are sent out day by day to their apostolic mission in all the centers of activity of the life of the world."

[310] Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, Translated from the Portuguese by Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 1-33. John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward Publishing Company, 1994), 183.

brief documents came out of this extraordinary synod. First, there was a general message to the people of God. Secondly, there was the final report of the synod.

Reflecting on the various themes of Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology, in section # C, of the final report, there was the theme of the Church as communion. It included the following statements: "Because the Church is communion, the new 'basic communities,' if they truly live in unity with the Church, are a true expression of communion and a means for the construction of a more profound communion. They are thus a cause for great hope for the life of the Church."[311] The synod affirmed the Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology of communion. Small Christian communities were seen as a means for the construction of a more profound communion in the Church.

3.3.4 Christifideles Laici

The theme for the 1987 synod on the laity was the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world today. The discussions explored a wide range of issues relating to the laity and their role in these issues. In discussing the role of the laity in the Church, there was reference made to the parish. In proposition no. 1, there was a call for parish renewal, and one sub-section of proposition no. 1 called for fostering within the parish small basic or so called living communities where the faithful can communicate the word of God and express it in service and love to one another. These small Christian

[311] *The final report of the 1985 extraordinary synod of bishops, section II,* C # 6.

communities are true expressions of ecclesial communion and centers of evangelization, in communion with their pastors.[312]

This same statement would be quoted by John Paul II in his Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* no. 26.[313] In the synod's final message to the people, small Christian communities were briefly mentioned. It reaffirmed the concept of the parish as being a community of communities. "We note with great satisfaction that the parish is becoming a dynamic community of communities, a center where movements, basic ecclesial communities and other apostolic groups energize it and in turn are nourished."[314] Few lines were devoted to the synod's two documents on small Christian communities and Joseph Healey an American Maryknoll Missionary in Africa, Tanzania lamented this fact. He finds this somewhat surprising given the fact that there were 37 spoken and written interventions made on their behalf at the synod, almost all of which were positive and supportive. While these statements on basic Christian communities are very good, there is still the impression that they are just one of many pastoral strategies along with various lay associations, such as Catholic Action movements and other apostolic groups. The uniqueness and the significance of basic Christian communities in the Church does not come through forcefully in this final synodal statement, as they did in the earlier interventions from the local Churches.[315]

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[312] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed &Ward Publishing Company, 1994), 185.
[313] John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Christifideles Laici, On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and In the World* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), 23-24.
[314] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed &Ward Publishing Company, 1994), 185.
[315] Ibid. 185-186.

The concern of this synod was also to devise criteria for use in formally discerning and recognizing lay groups and lay movements in the Church. "It was recognized that the laity have the right to form associations among themselves, but they also have the duty to be in true communion with the Church."[316]

John Paul II's 1988 apostolic exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* no. 30,[317] outlined the criteria of ecclesiality for lay groups. It should be noted, these criteria in general relate to lay groups, but not specifically to small Christian communities. They are also an indication of what small Christian communities are called to be like in the Church.

The five criteria can be summarized as follows: It calls for lay members to manifest the fruits of holiness; the responsibility of professing the Catholic faith and being in obedience to the Church's magisterium; the need to be in strong and authentic communion with the Church and her legitimate pastors, especially the pope and the local bishop; conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals; and a commitment to some form of social service to human society.[318] These criteria of *Christifideles Laici* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* can be effectively synthesized in order to give some general criteria for small Christian communities.

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[316] Ibid. 185-186.
[317] John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Christifideles Laici, On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and In the World* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), 28-29.
[318] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed &Ward Publishing Company, 1994), 186.

3.3.5 Redemptoris Missio

The theme for John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* was the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate. There was a great emphasis on the need for all Christians to play an active role in evangelization. It calls for a renewed commitment to evangelization on the part of all believers. Due to this emphasis, this document was in continuity with the Second Vatican Council's *Ad Gentes* document on missionary activity of the laity as well as Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

The entire section - no.51[319] deals with the subject of ecclesial basic communities. Thus, there was a need for these small Christian communities to be in communion with the

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[319] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), 30. It says:

"A rapidly growing phenomenon in the young churches one sometimes fostered by the bishops and their Conferences as a pastoral priority is that of 'ecclesial basic communities' (also known by other names) which are proving to be good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach. These are groups of Christians who, at the level of the family or in a similarly restricted setting, come together for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with a view to a common commitment. These communities are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a "civilization of love."

These communities decentralize and organize the parish community, to which they always remain united. They take root in less privileged and rural areas, and become a leaven of Christian life, of care for the poor and neglected, and of commitment to the transformation of society. Within them, the individual Christian experiences community and therefore senses that he or she is playing an active role and is encouraged to share in the common task. Thus, these communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial proclamation of the Gospel, and a source of new ministries. At the same time, by being imbued with Christ's love, they also show how divisions, tribalism and racism can be overcome.

Every community, if it is to be Christian, must be founded on Christ and live in him, as it listens to the word of God, focuses its prayer on the Eucharist, lives in a communion marked by oneness of heart and soul, and shares according to the needs of its members (Acts 2:42-47). As Pope Paul VI recalled, every community must live in union with the particular and the universal Church, in heartfelt communion with the Church's pastors and the Magisterium, with a commitment to missionary outreach and without yielding

Church's pastors and it ends with a verbatim quote of what the 1985 extraordinary synod's final report had to say about them, being a means for the construction of a more profound communion in the Church.[320]

3.3.6 Other Papal Statements

The theme of small Christian communities has been in many other papal statements apart from those mentioned above. For example, John Paul II in 1980 issued a special message for basic Christian communities in Brazil.[321] In the same year he also visited Kenya, and affirmed the work of establishing small Christian communities, which was going on in much of Africa. In 1986, small Christian communities gained focus in John Paul II's letter to the Brazilian Episcopal conference, which was issued in the wake of the Brazilian bishops' recent Ad Limina visit to Rome.[322]

3.4 The African Synod of Bishops and Small Christian Communities

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to isolationism or ideological exploitation. And the synod of bishops stated: "Because the Church is communion, the new 'basic communities,' if they truly live in unity with the Church, are a true expression of communion and a means for the construction of a more profound communion. They are thus cause for great hope for the life of the Church."

[320] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed &Ward Publishing Company, 1994), 186-187.

[321] Azevedo C. de Marcello, *Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil: The Challenge of A New Way of Being Church* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 257-267.

[322] John Paul Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience* (Kansas City: Sheed &Ward Publishing Company, 1994), 187.

The Catholic Church was seen as a communion of small Christian communities during the 1994 African Synod of bishops. The small Christian communities are a phenomenon of the second half of the 20th Century in the continent of Africa. The idea of small Christian communities in the continent of Africa first seems to have come from Zaire in 1961. As Bernard Ugeux and Pierre Lefebvre write:

> The launching of Small Christian communities in Zaire goes back to the period of 1971-1972 when there was a confrontation between president Mobutu and the Catholic Church. It was a time of crisis, and the Church felt seriously threatened. To meet the crisis it laid down three priorities: the creation and organization of small Christian communities; the institution of new lay ministries; the development of formation structures at every level.
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> Other countries also opted for small Christian communities. AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) made them priority in 1973 and reaffirmed its decision in 1976 and 1979. In 1975 Burkina Faso[323] declared itself for the creation of small Christian communities on the model of Church as family. Similar decisions were taken by other Episcopal conferences. At the same time it has to be recognized that pastoral workers may not always be operating with the same, sometimes unconscious, models of Church.
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> Whatever the hesitations, the Bishops of Africa declared themselves clearly in favor of small Christian communities during the 1977 Roman Synod on Catechesis. They also placed these communities at the center of the pastoral strategy in two major SECAM (Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) documents, *Justice and Evangelization in Africa* (Yaoundé, 1981) and *Church and Human Development in Africa* (Kinshasa, 1984).[324]

The nature of the Catholic Church as a communion in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council was expressed in the idea of small Christian communities during the 1994 Synod of African bishops. Bishop Zacchaeus Okoth, Archbishop of Kisumu, Kenya says:

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[323] This is a small West African country, bordering Mali and Niger in the North, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Benin in the South.

[324] Bernard Ugeux and Pierre Lefebvre, *Small Christian Communities And Parishes* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 9. Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 131.

> Small Christian communities help implement the ecclesiology of Communion so much cherished by the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council. In this ecclesiological context the sharing of the Word of God, the love among Christians and the indiscriminate solidarity with all the neighbors, which characterize the life of these communities, constitute a living proclamation of the Gospel values. It is a fact that many are called to the Catholic Church thanks to the evangelical witness of these small communities. They are also one of the best places in which lay ministries can be developed.[325]

The culture and situation of the African continent fits very well with them, especially among the Lugbara of Uganda. They take the social neighborhood as a human cell of the Church and they are built on the natural and spontaneous social network which characterizes the African way of life, that is, the communitarian value of African cultures. These small Christian communities have multiplied in the continent of Africa. The small Christian communities have taken different names and they appear in various forms from one country to another. Several families from one area or parish territory are brought together to form an organized local group of the faithful gathered in the name of the Lord. The life of the Catholic Church as communion is fostered by them and is expressed through assimilation of the word of God, the Gospel celebration and service. Today the small Christian communities have allowed the Catholic Church to enter deeply into African culture and traditions.[326]

3.4.1 The Preparation: The Outline Document or *Lineamenta* Questions for Discussion

[325] This text is taken from Bishop Zacchaeus Okoth's interventions presentation during the synod. See also Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 137.
[326] Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 131.

The historical evolution of the African Synod and its preparation can be traced from the 1960's up to 1994. Between the 1960s and the 1970s, there were some discussions about an African Council. In 1980, the bishops of the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly known as Zaire) petitioned the Pope for an African Council Convocation. In 1981, during the SECAM (The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) plenary, the issue of an African Council came up, but it was not discussed. In 1982, SECAM showed interest and set up a special study for the African Council. In 1984, during the SECAM plenary at Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the issue of an African Council was once more discussed. It was during John Paul II's visit to Yaoundé, Cameroon in 1985 that he spoke about the possibility of an African synod. In 1986, the Holy See consulted African bishops individually on the African Synod. The results of these consultations came up in 1987 at Lagos, Nigeria, during the SECAM plenary. One third of the bishops consulted said no, one third of the bishops consulted again were pro-synod and one third of the bishops were opposed to the idea of African Synod.

It was on January 6, 1989 that Pope John Paul II called for the African Synod and offered the theme: *The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Toward the Year 2000: "You Shall be my Witnesses (Acts 1:8).* In 1990, guidelines were provided and in 1991 the bishops were asked to respond to the guidelines. In 1992, the bishops' responses were compiled as the working document. On April 10, 1993 in Kampala, Uganda, the working document was launched and the date for the African Synod was given together

with the place where it would be held. The actual event of the African Synod took place from April 10, to May 8, 1994 in Rome.[327]

The preparation of the outline document was carried out by a special commission composed of bishops chosen from every part of Africa. This special commission provided some general lines of reflection and a series of questions to help organize and structure the reflections of the local Churches in the whole of Africa. Justin S. Ukpong writes:

> The theme of the synod, "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: 'You Shall Be My Witnesses' (Acts 1: 8)," was presented in the *Lineamenta* in two major sections. Following a brief history of the evangelizing of Africa, the first part dealt with the meaning and necessity of evangelization. The second part identified and analyzed five different tasks of evangelization in Africa, namely: proclamation of the good news of salvation, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, and the means of social communications. The *Lineamenta* concluded with a questionnaire on each of the above five tasks of evangelization.[328]

Regarding the first sub-theme of evangelization, namely proclamation of the good news of salvation, the outline document recalls the necessity of forming the lay faithful in the view of their vocation and mission in the Church, and here we have the first references to small Christian communities as one place among others in which the formation of lay

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[327] This idea was taken from the presentation of John Mary Waligo, *On African Synod: Time for Action* (Lubaga, November 8, 1994), for the members of ARU (The Association of Religious in Uganda). See also Jan P. Schotte, "Preface" In The *Lineamenta* for Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa: *The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: "You Shall Be My Witnesses (Acts 1: 8) Lineamenta* (Nairobi, Kenya: St. Paul Publications-Africa, 1990), vii-ix. John Paul II, *The Church in Africa: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications- Africa, 1995), 7-11.

[328] Justin S. Ukpong, "A Critical Review of the *Lineamenta,"* In Maura Browne (ed.), *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, Compiled and Edited by the African Faith & Justice Network Under the Direction of Maura Browne (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 32.

faithful can and ought to be fostered and promoted. It says, "Families and parishes, small Christian communities, schools and universities, groups, associations and movements are all places in which the formation of the lay faithful can and ought to be fostered and promoted."[329] The importance of fostering the participation of the lay faithful in the life of the Church, as a communion and mission, without minimizing the role of the parish as the chief place for providing Christian formation and of giving witness to the Gospel as well as experiencing ecclesial communion, was emphasized in the outline document. The role of small Christian communities in the Catholic Church understood as communion in the Second Vatican Council was high-lighted. It becomes the place where the faithful can communicate the Word of God and express it in service and love to one another. The small Christian communities then become the true expression of ecclesial communion and center of evangelization in communion with their pastors.[330]

The outline document has eighty-one questions which are all related to evangelization in Africa, and fourteen of them are on the first sub-theme, proclamation of the good news of salvation, in the questionnaire. Question number 12 is the only one which asks about

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[329] *Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: "You Shall Be My Witnesses (Acts 1: 8) Lineamenta* (Nairobi, Kenya: St. Paul Publications-Africa, 1990), 37.

[330] Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 132-133. Justin S. Ukpong, "A Critical Review of the *Lineamenta,"* In Maura Browne (ed.), *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives,* Compiled and Edited by the African Faith and Justice Network Under the Direction of Maura Browne (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 34. *The Lineamenta for Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: "You Shall Be My Witnesses (Acts 1: 8) Lineamenta* (Nairobi, Kenya: St. Paul Publications-Africa, 1990), 31-37.

small Christian communities: "What evangelizing role is played in your particular Church by the following: the family, the school, small communities and movements?"[331]

The outline document gives quite insufficient attention to small Christian communities. They are just mentioned in passing, and if one takes into account that building small Christian communities is a pastoral priority in many African countries, such as the Churches of the AMECEA region in eastern Africa, they should have received more attention in the outline document. Instead, it emphasized inculturation, the centrality of the word of God, catechesis, the ministry of preaching, the leadership role of priests, and mutual relations between the various people and offices that constitute the church. Small Christian communities have been found to express so well the life and structures of the Church as communion, it should have been given more attention in the outline document.

On a positive note, despite this little attention given to small Christian communities in the *Lineamenta*, this outline document offered an occasion to the Christian faithful to reflect on many issues that touched the hearts of the life of the Churches in Africa, including that of small Christian communities. Small Christian communities, parishes, dioceses and Episcopal conferences were mobilized, as parts of one body, which is the Church. As the AMECEA Pastoral Department wrote:

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[331]*Lineamenta Questions,* In *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives,* Compiled and Edited by the African faith & Justice Network Under the Direction of Maura Browne (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 227. The *Lineamenta for Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission towards the year 2000, "You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:8) Lineamenta* (Nairobi, Kenya: St. Paul Publication-Africa, 1990), 86.

> In January 1989, Pope John Paul II announced the African Synod to promote pastoral solidarity among the Churches in Africa. He wanted to involve the whole People of God and all levels of the Christian community, in preparation of the Synod: individuals, small communities, parishes, dioceses and national bodies.[332]

The points which the local Churches considered insufficient or not well treated in the outline document were introduced and amplified in the working document, which reflected the fruits of all the discussions prompted by the outline document.

3.4.2 The Preparation: The Working Document or *Instrumentum Laboris*

The general secretariat of the synod of bishops further produced a working document, *Instrumentum Laboris,* for the synod based on responses to the *Lineamenta* received from the particular Churches of Africa. "The *Instrumentum Laboris* carried forward the process of consultation, by collecting and presenting in an orderly way, the responses to the *Lineamenta,* which have come from the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, the concerned bodies of the Roman Curia and the other concerned organs of the Church."[333] Its preparation took six months, while three sessions, in Rome (March 1992), in Angola (June 1992), again in Rome (September 1992) took place. It constituted the agenda for the African synod of bishops. The content of the *Instrumentum Laboris*

[332] AMECEA Pastoral Department (Ed.), *The African Synod Comes Home: A Simplified Text* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 9.
[333] Jan S. Schotte, "Preface," in Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa: *The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: "You Shall Be My Witnesses (Acts 1: 8) Instrumentum Laboris* (Rome: Vatican City 1993), 1.

presented the main theme of the synod with its five sub-themes, namely evangelization, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, and the means of social communication.[334]

The question is, how does *Instrumentum Laboris* deal with the theme of small Christian communities? In addressing each of the five sub-themes of evangelization in its second part, proclaiming the good news of salvation, the working document introduced the centrality of the Word of God; catechetics and small Christian communities. Its meaning and importance are well elaborated in this section. As *Instrumentum Laboris* says in number 45:

> Several Episcopal Conferences have adopted Small Christian Communities as a priority of their pastoral plan. Their form varies from country to country, but in general they bring together several families from an area of the town or village within the parish territory. The advantage of such communities is that they give Christians a sense of belonging and a sense of being united in a common purpose. The family and clan structure of traditional African society makes these small Christian communities particularly appropriate. Paul VI enumerated certain conditions for the ecclesial reality of these communities. Although his words seem to refer directly to the Basic Communities of Latin America, some of these conditions apply also to the African situation. They are the following: "that they remain firmly attached to the local Church within which they exist and to the Universal Church, thus avoiding the very real danger of becoming isolated; …. that they maintain a sincere communion with the pastors whom the Lord gives to his Church and with the Magisterium which the Spirit of Christ has entrusted to these pastors; …. that they constantly grow in missionary consciousness, fervor, commitment and zeal." It is very important to train and educate the leaders of these small Christian communities.[335]

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[334] Ibid. 1. See also Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 134. *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives,* Compiled and Edited by the African faith & Justice Network under the Direction of Maura Browne (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 49.

[335] *Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: "You Shall Be My Witnesses (Acts 1: 8) Instrumentum Laboris* (Rome: Vatican City 1993), 20.

Small Christian communities are said to be a priority in several Episcopal conferences in Africa, diverse in form and yet they all have certain features in common. Several families from an area within a parish are brought together. The conditions for their ecclesiality include: an attachment to the local as well as to the universal Church, communion with the pastors and the Magisterium. Their advantages in Africa are described as follows: They fit the culture, family and clan structures; they foster a sense of belonging, of being united for a common purpose in the Church. Their leaders need training and education.[336]

Small Christian communities are identified in the working document as a means of evangelization and a method of proclaiming the Gospel message. They are apparently fruit of reflections on concrete experiences and define in a synthetic way the situations of African. The document gives their common features, underlines their importance and advantages, adverts to possible areas of weakness and lists some basic conditions of their ecclesiality. The document then becomes a reference point for the discussion in the synod. It aims at promoting further reflection during and after the synod and proposes the small Christian communities as a means of developing a more participative Church, in which lay people find their rightful place and feel at home. The document becomes for many African Churches a means of promoting the participation of the faithful in the synod process. Whenever small Christian communities participated, the Church of Africa was involved in the synod. They were all walking together, reflecting and preparing for the special assembly together, both at home and in Rome.

[336]John Baur, *Two Thousand Years of Christianity In Africa: An African Church History*, Second Revised edition, (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994), 508-509.

3.4.3 The Report at the Beginning of the African Synod

The report on the first working day of the synod assembly was presented by Cardinal Hyacinthe Thiandoum, Archbishop of Dakar, Senegal and he highlighted the major points on the synod agenda and focused on the main issues that had emerged from the grassroots consultation. Small Christian communities still appear in this presentation as a topic in the unit or sub-theme of proclamation and the text refers to them as a well-known African experience. The document proposes a question for further reflection: What lesson can be learned and shared from this experience as a model of an evangelizing local Church?[337] As Cecil McGarry writes:

> The small Christian communities are described as places where the whole people of God is mobilized to be Church and to evangelize, and their advantages in this regard are detailed as follows: The concept of family in Africa expresses in concrete imagery, the profound ecclesiological idea of a communion of believers, a fellowship with diversity of roles and persons. There are some theological, pastoral and ecclesiological advantages in using the concept of the Church as family of God, and small Christian communities can derive theological enrichment and missionary motivation from that concept.[338]

The report speaks of the beneficial influences of small Christian communities for the active participation and initiative of lay people in the life of the African Church. It recognizes small Christian communities as belonging to an excellent model of

[337] Hyacinthe Thianndoum, *African Synod: Position Paper* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 5.
[338] Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 135-136. Hyacinthe Thianndoum, *African Synod: Position Paper* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 5-6.

evangelizing local Church. From here on, the small Christian community as a topic will be linked closely to the themes of Church as family, the laity and inculturation.[339]

3.4.4 The Interventions of the Bishops

The interventions in the synod assembly in total were 234, and twenty-five of them mentioned small Christian communities. The bishops who spoke about small Christian communities were mostly from eastern and central African dioceses. They shared their experiences and hopes. They found them to be strong instruments of evangelization and expected that the synod deliberations would eventually be implemented through them.

Bishop Denis Kiwanuka from Kotido in Uganda, in line with Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio No.* 51, defined small Christian communities as, "Communities where common people seek to live the Christian message to the full in the daily concrete situation of their lives."[340] In terms of Church event, Bishop Denis Kiwanuka described them as the means of evangelization through which the Church in Africa tries to meet Christ's command to evangelize all nations (Mt. 28: 19-20). They

[339] Hyacinthe Thianndoum, *African Synod: Position Paper* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 5-6.
[340]Denis Kiwanuka, *Interventions During the African Synod* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 1.

sprang up as a result of a new insight into the understanding of the nature of the Church as Communion, a word that has become a key concept in ecclesiology, especially after the Second Vatican Council, but before an effort was made to find out new ways of being Church. It is within that context that the idea of establishing small Christian communities came up and became later, after the Second Vatican Council, the subject of conscious theological reflection, of pastoral planning and of pastoral priority.[341]

The pastoral efficacy of small Christian communities in today's evangelizing mission of the Church was stressed by Bishop Jean Berchmans Nterere, coadjutor bishop of Muyinga in Burundi. For him they integrate Christian faith and life, and therefore appear as a living and practical way of implementing the social teachings of the Church. These small Christian communities seem to be an appropriate and really effective means for evangelization in Africa and elsewhere in the world.[342] Bishop Zacchaeus Okoth, Archbishop of Kisumu in Kenya, asked the synod to consider the AMECEA pastoral priority of small Christian communities, as a priority valid not only for some Episcopal conferences, but for all Catholic parishes in Africa, since they are an excellent way of implementing the outcome of the synod. He showed in some detail how all the five sub-themes of the synod, proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, justice, peace and communication of the message, found a ready instrument of implementation in small Christian communities.[343]

[341]Ibid. 1.
[342] Jean-Berchmans Nterere, *Interventions During the African Synod* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 1.
[343]Zacchaeus Okoth, *Interventions During the African Synod* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 1-2.

Despite the many ideas that came up from the interventions, the synod fathers in general recognized that small Christian communities are the best way of being Church as communion. This was also described by the Second Vatican Council, the experiences of many local Churches in Africa have given evidence of this over the past decade or so. They fulfill the model of the Church which the synod fathers wish to make their own, that is, the Church as family of God in Africa.

The synod fathers, during the interventions, expressed their confidence in small Christian communities that in the future they could become a way of renewing the Church in Africa. The model of parish, as community of communities, was declared by Archbishop Okoth Zacchaeus of Kisumu in Kenya.[344] On the other hand, Archbishop Anthony Mayala of Mwanza, Tanzania insisted on recognizing the diversification of structures in which the Church exists. He said, "Great stress must be put on the different levels of our local Church communities of communities, in order to give prominence to the building of small Christian communities,"[345] and Bishop Cornelius Kipng'eno Arap Korir of Eldoret, Kenya wanted seminarians to have contact with them during their formation, so that by the time they are ordained they recognize the small Christian communities as the normal way in which a parish is structured.[346]

3.4.5 The Report after the Interventions

[344] Ibid. 1-2.
[345] Anthony Mayala, *Interventions During the African Synod* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 1.
[346]Cornelius Kipng'eno Arap Korir, *Interventions During the African Synod* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 1-2.

This report synthesizes and highlights the most important points that were presented by the reporters after the verbal and written interventions. The significant points in the report either needed further discussion or had to be gathered for the proposals to be made to the Pope with a view to his post synodal exhortation. This time, small Christian community as a topic became connected with the model of the Church as the family of God in Africa. They were perceived by many of the bishops as closely connected with the model of the Church as the family of God. The family in Africa was described by Cardinal Thiandoum as a living cell, in which one will find the Church model and lived experiences of the African peoples. The family becomes a place of reproduction, transmission and protection of life, of learning and interiorization of cultural values, of sharing, of solidarity, of support, and of solving human problems. Therefore, the family is the fundamental basis of humanity and society. This family spirit enlarged into an ecclesial community is a solid basis to live concretely the Church as communion and as people of God. The pastoral efficacy of small Christian communities in the evangelizing mission of the Church proposed by bishop Nterere during the intervention, finds solid echoes and support in the report following the intervention.[347]

As Cecil McGarry writes:

> Small Christian communities are described as the cornerstone of the ecclesial edifice of today and tomorrow. They are places of interiorization of Gospel values, through the word read, meditated and shared, and through sacramental celebration. They are also places where the gospel message is put into practice, the family of the children of God is built up, where discrimination is fought and where Christians live in communion. They are meeting places of theological

[347] Jean-Berchmans Nterere, *Interventions During the African Synod* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 1.

> reflection on today's situation, a place of catholicity where the social dimension of Christianity can develop and serve as an example.[348]

The report after the intervention confronts the themes of Church as family and small Christian community with some further questions, which still have to be studied in more detail. These will include the questions on African marriage, lay ministries in Africa, and inculturation in Africa. In the report after the intervention, it is evident that small Christian communities now occupy a central place in African ecclesiology and Church structures. They have become the center of discussion, as the fathers of the synod now passed them to the small group discussions phase of the synod.

3.4.5 The Small Group Discussion Reports

The synod fathers in their different language groups that is, English, French, and Spanish, were asked to evaluate the experience of small Christian communities in Africa. This was a good opportunity for them, because in the different parts of Africa where small Christian communities are not so well developed, the synod fathers were able to share some of their experiences of small Christian communities, which have become normal an important part of diocesan life. They agreed that small Christian communities were useful and valuable and the natural expression of a church, that is, communion and their experiences reveal it so. The small group discussions were centered on how to develop

[348] Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 139.

and improve the small Christian communities on the basis of the experience already gained and the issues addressed within the groups, highlighted these facts.

Regarding the variety of names of small Christian communities found in the continent of Africa, Cecil McGarry writes:

> There was some discussion of the variety of names to be found on the continent and even farther a field. It was seen that there are good reasons to justify the choice of adjective qualifying or identifying those communities such as, "basic, living Christian, ecclesial, small" etc, according to the origin and the emphasis given in various places. It was clear that the term, "ecclesial" insists on the link between small Christian community and the universal church; "living" expresses their vitality and their celebratory and salvific dimensions; "basic" stresses their identity as church which understands and wants to put in practice the true place of laity, a church renewed from the grassroots, a church of the poor, who are recognized as, "cornerstones of the ecclesial edifice;" while, "small" emphasizes rather the dimension that allows for and fosters mutual personal knowledge and relationship.[349]

From the small group discussion report, there emerged the common features of small Christian communities. It was established that a parish can become a communion of small Christian communities in which people know each other and have concern for one another. They may have between ten and twenty families. They may also have weekly meetings for various purposes such as prayers, reading of the word of God, rosary, reflection on social, economic or political problems as the need arises, and planning social actions. The advantages of structuring the parishes in these ways include:

> They foster the active participation of many Christians in various pastoral and social activities such as catechism classes for the youth and catechumenate in preparation for baptism, preparation for other sacraments, reintegration of those who were alienated from the Church, reconciliation between individuals and

[349] Ibid. 140.

> families, organization of charitable works, such as care for the sick and old, liturgical animation, youth activities of all kinds. The experience of many synod fathers was reported in expressions like: 'wherever small Christian communities exist, they have proved to be the vital cells of evangelization, of inculturation and of the localization of the church in Africa.' 'They are instruments of formation and the starting point for a new society in Africa.' 'Such other benefits as the integration of faith and life, a positive transformation of the sense of belonging to the church, a sense of responsibility within the community, are mentioned by almost all groups in speaking of small Christian communities.'[350]

Despite the advantages of small Christian communities in the parishes, the members of the small group discussion also agreed that they have some difficulties and problems in the continent of Africa. They remained as groups of prayer and reflection, but not a tool of transformation and liberation in African societies. In towns and cities, building such small Christian communities was rather difficult because of ethnic groupings found in them. The sense of community and extended family was often missing. There was no strong sense of community in the urban areas of Africa, unlike in the rural areas.[351]

In the rural areas of Africa, small Christian communities experienced the problem of leadership. Without proper leadership, they often collapse after a short time. Secondly, the young people and women are often passive in their participation because traditionally, in many African cultures, the youth and women are to be quiet and listen during the discussions of their men and elders. There were more women than men, but their participation during the discussions was minimal. The solution to the problem of youth and women could be that one needs to establish a parallel small Christian community for them, so that they can speak freely and express their opinion, which otherwise would not

[350] Ibid. 140-141.
[351] Ibid. 141.

be possible when they are in the presence of men. Although small Christian communities are not solutions to problems, nevertheless, they have made great contributions to the Church, especially, in the area of lay participation.

Those synod fathers who had an experience of small Christian communities tried to share it with those who had not. In order to build them, serious pastoral reflections are required. It is also necessary to find all the conditions or factors that can foster their growth. The initial program to form them should include:

> Home visits, catechesis on small Christian communities, consultation about people's readiness for the project, conscientization of the whole people for a real change of mentality about the nature of the Church as communion, as family of God. The role of the priest vis-à-vis these communities should be well defined and he should integrate the community leaders into the parish council. The place of the Eucharist in the small Christian communities needs reflection, for some priests do not say mass with their faithful on Sunday, because small Christian communities take the Holy Communion from the Parish to their respective places. Seminarians, religious, catechists and all who will be active in ministries in the local churches should have solid formation in the theology and practice of small Christian communities, not so that they may take them over and run them, but so that they can be present in them and be supportive of the lay leadership of the communities. The communities of the place where candidates for priesthood or religious live should always be consulted before these are admitted to the seminary or novitiate. Finally, Catholic schools should be encouraged to give their students experience of how their faith can be supported and grow in small Christian communities. Out of the reflection of the groups, came the proposals on small Christian communities that were considered valid for the whole continent.[352]

The synod fathers in the small group discussions argued and registered the conviction that:

[352] Ibid. 142.

> The church as a family cannot reach its full potential unless it is formed into communities which are small enough to permit close human relations. The creation of such communities in urban and rural areas is of the utmost importance, for they are instruments to break down the barriers of natural alliances of tribe and other interest groups, in order to allow the Christian communities to live as one family, the family of God. For this special attention should be given to the formation of small Christian community leaders. The communities were also seen as of capital importance in the synod's commitment to inculturation.[353]

Therefore, the proposal which the synod fathers made to the Pope during the small group discussions was sent directly to him and was not published, but its tenor can easily be gathered from the group reports which have been considered, and from the message which they sent to all the faithful.[354]

3.4.7 Small Christian Communities: The Synod Message and Challenging Way of Being Church

At the end of the African synod of bishops, the synod fathers addressed all the people of God in Africa in the name of the Catholic Church. It has been a long journey since the publication of the outline document in 1990. The synod fathers emphasized the image of the Church as the family of God that calls for the creation of small Christian communities. The model of the Church as family of God in Africa is a call for the Church to be a communion, and small Christian communities are cells of the Church as family. In them, Christians live concretely and authentically the experience of Christian love in a spirit of service, care and sense of the common good. They also have a lot to contribute to the universal Church. They make Christians go beyond their color, religion

[353] Ibid. 142.
[354] Ibid. 142-143.

and ethnic groups. Small Christian communities are a means to make God's Kingdom present in our societies today.[355]

In order to understand small Christian communities and some of the challenges of this new way of being Church presented in the continent of Africa, one needs to arrive at a deeper understanding of these small Christian communities in their concrete situations. The synod documents brought the idea home when they said that small Christian communities are the Church seen, lived and renewed from the grassroots, that is, the most basic level of the Christian faith. They are cornerstones of the Church life of today and tomorrow in Africa. As a cornerstone for the Church's life in Africa today and tomorrow, small Christian communities can be viewed from the ecclesiological, pastoral and institutional point of view.[356]

"From an ecclesiological point of view, small Christian communities are a way of living a strong Church communion, a way of building Church as the family of God in Africa, as his people, a way of being a Church committed to transform society into a society of love and the kingdom of God."[357] As Msgr. Patient Kanyanachumbi, secretary general of the bishop's conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in his intervention put it, they are schools of ecclesiology. They are places where the Church develops a deeper

[355] John Paul II, *The Church in Africa: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 47-48; 63-66; 69. Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 89-110.
[356] Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 143-144.
[357] Ibid. 144.

understanding of itself and its mission, not in a theoretical way, but out of its own praxis, so that a contextualized African theology grows out of the very life of the Church.[358]

"From a pastoral point of view, small Christian communities are means of integral evangelization and a field of inculturation, where people can learn to pray, and use symbols and practices that arise out of their own traditions, so that their faith and life can become one. They are also an excellent situation from which to discover and promote lay ministries, which serve the needs of the local community."[359] They have become tools of transformation, change and liberation by integrating faith and life in a concrete context. In them, the church learns how it can be Christ's ministering presence in the land of Africa.[360]

As Cecil McGarry put it:

> From an institutional point of view, small Christian communities are an expression of the new model of the Church and a challenge to the old one. In them, one recognizes that all authority in the Church is at the service of communion, and they structure the church on this principle at the local level. Through small Christian communities as institutions the Church moves from a chiefly hierarchical and clerical church to a church communion and church family, in which each person has his/her place, feels at home, and actively participates in building up the community according to the charisms of each.[361]

To appreciate fully the life of a local Church structured on small Christian communities requires a real change of mind and heart on the part of bishops, priests, religious and laity. The old structures of the Church and leadership become transformed and it diffuses

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[358] Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 117-118.
[359] Ibid. 144.
[360] Ibid. 144.
[361] Ibid. 144 -145.

throughout the body. Decisions or judgments will often be made at a very local level in order to respond to needs perceived at that level, which might well pass unnoticed in older parish structures. People often use words to describe this phenomenon which cause unease, words such as decentralization, democratization of the way of organizing the Church, and de-clericalization of ministers within the evolution of lay ministries. The clergy can feel threatened by these expressions, but they are not meant in disrespect and are certainly not meant to deny that the ministries of bishops, priests and deacons are not a part of the Church's life as it developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are perhaps clumsy ways of speaking of the organization of Church, in which all are called to ministry according to the gifts freely given by the Holy Spirit. It is not in any way an effort to lessen the importance or the place in the Church of those charisms, which are part of the institution, papacy, episcopacy and priesthood. It does, however, say something about the way these charisms should be exercised in humble service and in respect for the vocation and gifts of every Christian. The clergy and laity alike are called to a change of heart and mind in order to become a Church that is communion, a people made one in the unity of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.[362]

In conclusion, emerging small Christian communities are becoming part of the pastoral priority of the Church in Africa. Many Africans have a sense of neighborhood and a sense of community, for they are well known African experiences as Cardinal Thiandoum put it during the intervention. In some parts of Africa, they have not taken root, and where they exist, they become important pastoral strategy. They must not only

[362]Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 145.

become a strategy, but a way of becoming a Church that is a communion and the family of God in Africa. In the minds of the synod fathers and in the synod documents, small Christian communities became a central theme of their reflection. Despite the fact that at the beginning they were featured less in the outline document, at the end, the synod fathers understood them to be essential, if the synod reflections were to be implemented and thus become effective and productive in the African Church. They have promoted the active participation of their members and it also helps them to live their baptismal promises. The members share in Christ's mission as priest, prophet and king. There is always transformation in a parish where the small Christian communities are functioning well, especially in the parish structure, mission and the very understanding of the Church itself. Thus, the synod envisioned this transformation taking place throughout the continent as one of the central ways of evangelization towards the year 2000 and beyond. Bishop Frederick Drandua of Arua, Uganda referred to this as "a deeper re-evangelization." One might also say that the synod was convinced that Christ's words, "you shall be my witnesses," will be fulfilled in Africa through the small Christian communities. From now on, the building of small Christian communities is a task and challenge for the African Church, a way of being witnesses of the risen Lord in the whole continent and to the ends of the earth.[363]

3.5 The Contemporary Pastoral Activities of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Parishes among the Lugbara People of Uganda

[363] Frederick Drandua, *Interventions During the African Synod* (Rome: Vatican City, 1994), 1.

After looking at or reflecting on the theology emerging within the small Christian communities in the Catholic Church, one needs to ask the questions, "Why do these small Christian communities gather? What do they do when they gather? What impact do they have on their members and the civil and ecclesial world?" The need for gathering is natural for the human person. The human person is relational. He/she needs to relate with one another. When they gather, there are always different activities that are carried out. Many of the activities of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda are an extension of neighborhood. The activities include: praying and reflecting on the bible together, caring for the sick and the poor in the neighborhood, concern for issues connected with justice and peace, and the integrity of creation or environmental issues. The neighborhood is the immediate field of activity, the immediate context of the small Christian communities. They in turn are to care for their own neighbor first, before caring for a higher or more remote neighbor or someone in the wider community. The small Christian communities should be the neighborhood Church.[364]

3.5.1 Bible Sharing Meetings in Small Christian Communities[365]

Bible sharing is one of the activities these small Christian communities take part in during their weekly meetings. One cannot start preaching the Gospel to the world out

[364] Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 111-116.
[365] Anne Nasimigu Wasike, "The Role of women in SCC," In Agatha Radoli (ed.), *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa*, (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1993), 190-191. See Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 116-117. Rose Musimba, "Small Christian communities and Bible Study," in *Omnis Terra*, No.305 (March 2000): 127-129.

there. “Go into the world and preach the Gospel to the whole of creation” (Mk. 16: 15). One has to start somewhere close by. There is no place or people closer to us than someone at home. Bible sharing meetings are one of the activities of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda. These bible study sessions help the members of small Christian communities to discover which Scripture has developed a common bond with their own life situations. The members of small Christian communities have found it more natural to carry their bibles to the liturgies and more families are using them at home.

It has become easier for members of families, small Christian communities and the parish to evangelize and catechize themselves and others. The small Christian communities are ways of living the Church. The Bible is the life of the Small Christian Communities. The word of God the Scripture is the center of their meetings. Members of small Christian communities are attempting to live the life of Jesus Christ as He commissioned the disciples on the day of his Ascension into heaven, in order to continue his life and work in the world. One needs to know him through bible readings and reflections. This process always develops new insights, especially when properly interpreted. The Bible is an important asset and an essential element for Catholics in small Christian communities and families. The Scriptures serve as a unifying tool across Lugbara land and throughout the universal Church.

3.5.2 Networks And Twinning of Small Christian Communities[366]

Another activity the small Christian communities have involved themselves in is that of network and twinning (the partnership of several Small Christian communities). There are networks or unions of small Christian communities living in the same section or district. The networks of these small Christian communities are alive, biblically inspired, prayerfully concerned and active. On the other hand, there is now a network of small Christian communities and twinning of them with those in different parts of the world. The network and twinning of small Christian communities is beyond measure, because it breaks the barriers of negative ethnicity/tribalism, racism and discrimination, due to color, culture, and whatever can prevent the love of God and neighbor from growing. One characteristic of networking and twinning of small Christian communities, both nationally and internationally, is the fullness of love and joy that radiates from each community that lights up the life of each member. Twinning is an important means for them to develop a broader view and vision.

The networking and the twinning of small Christian communities with other places within and outside the continent, such as Europe, Asia, and the United States, started in East African Churches. Due to networking and twinning, there has been a change in the life of small Christian communities in East Africa and among the Lugbara people of Uganda. Ideas among small Christian communities are exchanged through letters, e-mails

[366] Rita Ishengoma and Joseph Healey, "Reenergizing International Small Christian Communities Twinning," in Joseph G. Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 157-163.

and faxes. To some of the American small Christian communities or intentional Christian communities, Africa is very close to their hearts. The small Christian communities in network or twinned parishes pray for one another during their meetings, since their programs are known to each other. Rita Ishengoma writes:

> We have received letters asking for an East African small Christian community's twin from the following places: United States of America (Total of 22 states): New England: Connecticut, New Hampshire. East: New York, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania. South: Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina. Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin. Rocky Mountains: Colorado, Wyoming. Southwest: Texas. Far West: Oregon, Washington, Montana, California. Canada: Alberta, Ontario. England. Australia: Melbourne. Hong Kong. So far we have arranged twinning with small Christian communities in the following places in East Africa: Kenya: Athi river, Kisumu and Nairobi. Tanzania: Dar es Salaam, Geita, Musoma and Mwanza."[367]

Regarding small Christian Communities among the Lugbara people, they are twinned with small Christian communities in the dioceses of Greensburg and Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania and Raleigh in North Carolina in the United States of America. Through networking and twinning, a new version of evangelization has evolved in the whole Church through emerging small Christian communities.

3.5.3 The Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and Small Christian Communities

The activity of the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) among the Lugbara is best carried out in a small Christian community setting. Such a program is offered to the

[367] Rita Ishengoma, "When Small Christian Communities Twin," in *Omnis Terra, No. 305* (March 2000): 129-130.

adult Catechumens in the parishes, sub-parishes and outstations. It involves Bible reflection, study of the Catholic faith and journeying together as a community.

They encourage the Adult Catechumens to pray and serve within the community. The first step in the Adult Catechumenate is usually for the individual to pray in his/her small Christian community. The catechumen does not learn the faith in a classroom, but discovers it within a living faith community. This becomes an experience of God through the local praying community for the individual catechumen. The Catechumen's faith begins to grow or becomes alive, as the praying community moves from words to deeds, through concrete service to the poor and needy in the neighborhood. Individual leaders in the small Christian communities help the Catechumens with formal instructions. This becomes part of the initiation of the Adult Catechumen into the local faith community. As a result, the leader helps the catechumen in every facet of his/her transition.

Those adults who are interested in becoming Catholics first pass through small Christian communities in their geographical area or neighborhood, which submits the request forms for the Baptism of adults to the parish office. The ministry of *companionship* in small Christian communities begins with the adult catechumenate. In such a ministry, a catechumen chooses a small Christian community member to accompany him/her through the stages (steps and rites) of the rites of Christian initiation of adults. The adult catechumen is invited to participate in all the activities of the small Christian community. An important part of helping adult catechumens who are preparing for baptism to feel at

home in their local Christian community is the development of personal relationships and friendships with its members. Growth in faith is an experience of living in a believing community. The emphasis is on the faith being taught by means of sharing the life of the small Christian community, rather than just being exposed to the learning process of formal instruction classes. Sometimes a small Christian community accompanies its catechumens - another example of community ministry. Here all the members of the small Christian community are responsible for the spiritual and pastoral life and the growth of their own group of parishioners. This approach is related to the Lugbara traditional values of community, joint responsibility and sharing. This whole culture and life has helped them to survive, as well, through the centuries.

The conclusion, following the two years of adult instruction in the RCIA program, gives way to the initiation of the catechumens in many of the parishes during Holy Week. There are many important communal events leading up to the celebration of the three sacraments of initiation, during the Holy Saturday Easter Vigil Mass. For example, in Uleppi parish where I worked for three years, I witnessed catechumens of 30 to 50 in numbers, who had been journeying together for two years. In their villages and outstations, they prayed in regular small Christian communities or in a special catechumen community. During Holy week they lived and prayed together at the parish itself. They developed their own communal identity by praying, singing and dancing together. During the Easter Vigil Mass, the local community presented the candidates for baptism. The symbols of the paschal candles, water, oil of Chrism and the white garment are rich in meaning, as they were inculturated in a local Lugbara setting. Various types

of drums, string instruments (*Adungu)* and bells were played during the singing of the glory be to God and the entire Mass. The women's and girls' ululation enhances the singing. The whole congregation acclaimed the newly baptized with applause, shouts of joy and ululation or howling. The sponsors, friends, relatives and small Christian community members entered the sanctuary and the aisles to sing and dance. The new adult Christians were again reminded of the missionary call of their baptism in the Church during the homily.

Small Christian community members accompany the adult catechumens in their spiritual journey. The sponsor supports the catechumen in all aspects of Christian life during the rites of Christian initiation of Adults, such as participating together at the meetings and activities of the small Christian communities, encouraging the catechumen during the instruction period, and through the various stages of the rites of Christian initiation of adults. The person is Baptized, Confirmed, and he/she receives the Eucharist during the Easter Vigil Mass. The official sponsor guides the newly baptized person into all aspects of Christian life, including marriage and leading a holy life.

The daily life of the small Christian community members puts emphasis on helping the catechumens, in the stages of the rites of Christian Initiation of Adults. All the small Christian community members are called to practice the Gospel, and to express it.[368]

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[368]Joseph G. Healey, "Connection between Small Christian Communities (Sccs) and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in East African Parishes," In *Omnis Terra, No.306* (April 2000): 160-162. Robert Moriarty, "Imaging Initiation in small Christian Communities," in Joseph G. Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* (Maryknoll, New York:

3.5.4 Caring for the Needy People And Small Christian Communities

Another pastoral activity of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people is that of caring for the needy in the community. These communities have encouraged the Christians and the entire neighborhoods to become aware of their mission within their families, extended families and the surrounding neighbors. They have become a source of help against the dangers that threaten the lives of the people in these areas. Issues such as child neglect, alcoholism, poverty, insecurity, health hazards, crimes, ignorance, filth, environmental degradation, hunger and many more are addressed at the meetings. The charitable individuals are at the service of the needy and the poor. By connecting life and what they draw from the Scriptures, on a day to day basis, their deeds are passed on to those in need of help. The put the Scriptural readings into practice and by so doing they are able to integrate the realities of life and their faith. They now transform family and parish life. The experiences of faith and community life in this religious environment are reflected in the lives of the people, in the parish and outside of it. Their cultural richness is shared in faith and love.

The Lugbara people are communitarian by nature and they value their extended families. Therefore, a child is born into a community of the extended family. The child is born

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Orbis Books, 2005), 55-62. See also Irene Wilson, "Project Linkup: A Model of Adult Initiation in Australia," in Joseph G. Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 129-134. Thomas A. Kleissler, et al, *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st Century* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 24-25.

into a clan where the Lugbara culture and values are observed from birth to death. A person's responsibility grows within the family and the entire community. With the present social, economic, political and technological challenges, the Lugbara people are drifting toward an individualistic, greedy life-style, and consequently, they are losing grip on their community responsibilities. The young people need to take responsibility toward the elderly in terms of security, clothing, food, healthcare, shelter and social welfare. These are the ideals the small Christian communities are trying to achieve, that is, creating an environment that promotes growth and development of every human being living and interacting within the neighborhood and wider society. Through the effort of the small Christian communities, people are beginning to know more about one another and the challenges within their communities, and they are attempting to develop concern for and interest in one another. As a result, people are taking the initiative to participate during the events of the community and discover possibilities toward assuming their specific roles and supporting one another.

Sometimes the extended family puts great pressure on its members, and as a result, it has created a psychological and physical distance and disadvantage among various family members. The Church as family of God needs small Christian communities, which focus on the local challenges of people's lives and foster close human relationships among them, in a particular neighborhood. The need for supporting one another, the poor and the needy or helpless within the neighborhood increases in small Christian communities. The love of the universal Church is experienced in them and this love is directed to the poorest of the poor. Building simple houses within each community, where those with no

one to support them, are allowed to stay and be provided for with necessities of life by the members of the community have come to pass in the spirit of Christianity, among the Lugbara.

The members of small Christian communities address the problems of alcoholism, drug abuse, family conflicts and other social problems, such as child abuse and neglect, health and HIV/AIDS, corruption and injustice, environmental degradation, unemployment, ignorance and poverty. They take various initiatives to tackle some of these challenges by acting as community health workers, HIV/AIDS counselors (behavioral process leaders), community based counselors, and street children rehabilitators. Within the small Christian communities there are organizations such as a widows group, care group (praying and being in solidarity with the dying), holy family group, youth group, scouts, flower/dancing girls' group, altar servers, fish youth group, justice and peace group, catechists and liturgical leaders' group.

The members of small Christian communities again tackle many issues of injustice within the immediate vicinity. For example, some of the members can approach the local government officials and seek explanations on issues such as lack of water in the neighborhood. Others may provide legal advice and guidance to parishioners who face various acts of injustice and are unable to afford legal representation. One can find in these small Christian communities legal experts, lawyers, magistrates, and ordinary citizens who lack basic education, that is, they cannot read or write, due to no opportunity in their younger years.

Members, as individuals in small Christian communities, are always challenged to tackle the obstacles of the parish, the neighborhood and society at large. For example, the Holy Family group is made up of people who support the poor and who can build houses within the areas of small Christian communities for the poorest of the poor. The disabled people in the community may have no relatives, income, or home. Sometimes small Christian communities offer them a chance to stay in those houses, and when they die, another person will take it over. These decisions are reached by the leaders of the community. Such services are not only extended to Catholics or Christians, but to all the needy people of the neighborhood, without regard of their religion or ethnic origin, since they live in the same area or village. Consequently, they become part of, and a concern for, the community by virtue of residing within the geographical area of such a territory. This is not only a religious, but also it is, without a doubt, a humanitarian act.

The members of small Christian communities who have problems of alcohol, family relationships and HIV/AIDS are counseled. In the entire parish and neighborhood the poor and marginalized members of the community are made to feel that they are a part of the small Christian community. Broken families are re-united. Run-away youth are returned to their parents and their situations are addressed. Malnourished children are given proper attention, healthcare and immunization. The dying are consoled. Cases of injustice are tackled from the grass-root level. The community members are evangelized through sharing the Word of God and through the experiences gained during the various activities within the community.

Through the numerous contributions offered by these small Christian community members, the parishes are able to reach out and resolve many challenges affecting their lives, both on an individual and a community level. This is a simple model of the Church as a family of God experienced and demonstrated through the care and services that the small Christian communities provide for their members. These small Christian communities are like extended families which are looking after the members, not only those related by blood, but by the fact that they share a common bond as children of God. It is one's hope that such an authentic cultural, traditional and spiritual interaction may encourage the realization of the family who will take the lead, as the nucleus of the Church of God, just as was stated through the deliberations of the African synod of bishops. Corporal and spiritual works of mercy are the heart and the strength, energizing the emerging small Christian communities as the model of jointed African extended families, leading to a fuller participation in the mission of Christ among the Lugbara people of Uganda and the entire human society. This becomes the harvest and fruit of the emerging small Christian communities among the Lugbara people.[369]

3.5.5 Small Christian Communities And Healthcare

Small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda are not only communities of care for the poor, but also for the sick. As *Redemptoris Missio no. 51*

[369] Alphonce C. L. Omolo, "The Neighborhood Church Caring for its Needy People," In *Omnis Terra, No. 306* (April 2000): 162-164.

says: "These communities become a leaven of Christian life, of care for the poor and the neglected, and of commitment to the transformation of society."[370] If it were not for some of these African men/women, some members of society would be forgotten. The small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda are in thickly populated and poverty stricken areas of the region. These small Christian communities are developing a new inculturated and critical form of lay ministry, that is, healthcare ministry or a volunteer community-based healthcare apostolate. In the dioceses of Arua and Nebbi, the parishes and small Christian communities are responding to the healthcare crises affecting their people. These people are assuming social humanitarian tasks that, in other nations, would be picked up as a government responsibility. Therefore, they are to be commended for their altruistic deeds.

In response to the health needs of the wider community, the small Christian communities collectively select those among their members who have special abilities for healthcare ministry. Sometimes members of small Christian communities volunteer for this ministry. Those gifted men and women are then trained and commissioned to be volunteer healthcare ministers, or healthcare service-givers carrying out this ministry. In the parish and neighborhood community members work as birth attendants, herbalists and nurses. They visit the sick in their homes to talk and pray with them. They bring nurses and social workers to evaluate the sick person. They recommend that the sick person go to the dispensary or to the hospital. They sometimes accompany the sick to the dispensaries or hospitals, if necessary. In case of emergency, where there are no vehicles

[370] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), 30.

or transportation of any sort, they carry the sick person to the hospital by using a family bed. They supply medication to the sick. They train family members in home care, nutrition and hygiene. They inform the pastor or any priest if the sick person wants a priest to visit him/her.

The healthcare ministry among the small Christian communities provides a new, inculturated and critical form of lay healthcare ministry. The notion of medical mission is not new among the Lugbara and in the history of the Catholic Church. Many of the dispensaries and hospitals among the Lugbara people, like Kuluva hospital for lepers and Maracha hospital, were started by the missionaries. A lay missionary woman, Miss Minaa Pandolfi[371] for example, started Ovujo hospital in Maracha county. The medical apostolate has played a key role in the evangelization of the Lugbara people. One needs to look at this healthcare ministry in its local and larger context.

Due to lay people, who were gifted in that direction and who identified a much needed health care ministry, it recently came into being to assist people who required medical care. First, healthcare ministry is a new ministry. With regard to its local settings, this ministry exemplifies the recent appearance of an active laity in the medical mission. The history of the Church is filled with services rendered to the poor, for example, from the parochial clergy, religious and missionary institutions, diocesan medical boards and foreign donors (sponsored healthcare whether in hospitals, dispensaries and clinics).

[371] Miss Mina Pandolfi was a lay missionary from Italy. In 1958 with the help of Fr. Aristodemo Maccagnan, she started a dispensary and maternity of the present Ovujo/Maracha hospital.

The effect of these healthcare ministries originating from within the local community and from the lay poor themselves is tremendous. By implementing a community-based healthcare ministry, small Christian communities are demonstrating an unprecedented readiness and ability to evangelize their own neighborhoods. This fitness for evangelization comes in part from the fact that healthcare ministers are members of the community they serve. They are ministers who understand the responsible role and potential local people have for dealing with illness. They can incorporate the community's essential norms and values in the Church's healthcare service. Due to the fact that they are locals, the healthcare ministers enhance the ability of the poor and sick to direct their own affairs, change their environment, promote their own welfare and manage sustainable infrastructures.

As an initiative from within the local community, the healthcare ministry also promises to overcome a deep rooted regional tendency of dependence - that evangelization is the work of expatriates and clergy. A community-based healthcare offers a corrective vision to this dependence habit in Catholic life among the Lugbara people of Uganda.

The healthcare ministry, rather than dependency, manifests a local autonomy in which grass-roots communities weigh their options, make choices, cooperate with external institutions, and thereby strengthen their ability to evangelize the Lugbara culture in depth to its very roots. For small Christian community members, the experience of being

evangelized involves much more than remaining a community that listens to the word. Evangelization also means becoming a community that implements the word of God. Small Christian communities have enabled believers to live their baptismal identity as evangelizers of their immediate surroundings.

The healthcare ministry can be seen as inculturated ministry. It was on July 31, 1969 that Pope Paul VI, in his address in Kampala, Uganda said, "By now, you Africans are missionaries to yourselves."[372] The implications of the pope's declaration were far reaching. Africans were responsible for mission in their homelands, and their traditional values, beliefs and behavior necessarily counted as critical factors in evangelization. Cultures' profound influence on evangelization led Pope Paul VI to acknowledge the necessity of inculturation: "The kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men/women who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures."[373]

The Lugbara culture encompassed a worldview based on mutual dependence or interdependence, a penetrating sense of beauty, wisdom about human destiny, a coherent body of insights into evil and suffering, and an effective set of rituals and therapies that brought reconciliation and healing to individuals and communities, rather than an embarrassment of which they could rid themselves. This recovery of the Lugbara

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[372] A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Uganda, *Let Your Light Shine,* On the Occasion of the Visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, (Kisubi, Uganda: Marianum Press, 1993), 9.
[373]Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi:* On Evangelization in the Modern World, December 8, 1975 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Publications Office, 1976), 16-17.

culture, which was eroded by colonialism and missionary activities, evoked a profound response in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses. Now Christians use their cultures to celebrate the liturgy, interpret the Bible, put Christian morality into practice, write culturally appropriate books for catechesis, and have initiated ministries that meet local needs. Small Christian communities likewise turn to the Lugbara's common cultural resources in order to express the faith and transform social structures. This kind of force to evangelize shapes the healthcare ministry.

By carrying on the healing mission begun by Christ and entrusted by him to the Church, the volunteer healthcare ministers identify themselves with the ecumenical traditions of mission through service. And yet, for all its universality, the healthcare ministry functions as a particularly African form of service. The volunteer healthcare ministers appropriate or carry out the Church's healing mission in concepts, words, symbols and behavior shaped by their traditional way of life and their new culture in small Christian communities. Accordingly, the healthcare ministers have taken a small, fresh and self-empowering step in inculturating the faith at a decisive moment in the history of their people. This healthcare ministry counts as a new form of medical mission. In their examination of inculturation, participants in the African synod of bishops focused on healthcare as a particularly critical domain of inculturation.[374]

[374] Final message of the special Assembly for Africa of the synod of bishops, no. 18-19, in *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, Compiled and Edited by the African faith & Justice Network Under the Direction of Maura Browne (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 75-76.

The healthcare ministry is a critical ministry among the Lugbara people of Uganda. It constitutes more than a new inculturated ministry. It is also a critical apostolate. Like the Jerusalem community in Acts 6, the small Christian communities have created a ministry responsive to pressing human need in their immediate community. An emergency in food distribution gave rise to the ministry of the deaconate. Another critical situation, namely the urgency of healthcare among Lugbara's poor, has led to the healthcare ministry. In the last decade, the Lugbara people have been exposed to an unprecedented menace - HIV/AIDS. It has permeated the Lugbara population. In some places in the Lugbara land like Arua town and other small trading centers or shopping centers, the population of those with HIV/AIDS is very high. With such a great need, the volunteer healthcare ministers inevitably devote much of their ministry to caring for those suffering from full-blown HIV/AIDS related illness. In its actual operation, therefore, the small Christian community's healthcare ministry has become an HIV/AIDS ministry, a critical ministry.[375]

The spreading of HIV/AIDS in Uganda as a whole is well known to the world. The Lugbara people are no exception to the reality of HIV/AIDS. Uganda's tragic present serves as a prelude to its ever worsening plight. Some epidemiologists gloomily hypothesize that HIV/AIDS infection is changing from a temporary contagion affecting millions in Africa to a chronic disease, securely rooted in the continent for generations to

[375] Celia Petty, John Seaman, James Acidri and Camilla Knox Peebles, *Assessment of the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Household Economy: Arua district, Northern Uganda, Interim Report* (Arua, Uganda: DFID and Centers for Disease Control, 2001), 31-40. See also Study Report Arua District, *The District Response Initiative on HIV/AIDS Action Research* (Arua, Uganda: Office of District Director of Health services, 2003), 21. Lance P. Nadeau, "Small Christian Communities' HealthCare Ministry: A Model for Future Mission," In *Omnis Terra, No. 306* (April 2000): 164-168.

come. If such predictions prove to be accurate, then it is likely that the novel healthcare apostolate of the small Christian communities will also convert. It will quickly transform itself from an interim service to a key ministry characteristic of Africa's local Churches in this century. The calamitous probability that HIV/AIDS in Uganda is changing from a pandemic to an endemic should inform any evaluation of the volunteer healthcare ministry as ministry. The relevance and credibility of the Church's message inescapably entails consideration of the very credibility of the proclaimers of this message. By proving themselves equal to this crisis of integrity, small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda are providing the local Church and population of Arua and Nebbi dioceses with a model for a future mission.[376]

3.6 Conclusion

Reflecting on the theologies emerging within the small Christian communities and their pastoral activities, one can conclude that neighborhood is an important Old and New Testament value on which the Church has built the experience of community. For example, in the Gospel, Jesus emphasized that love of neighbor should come second only to love of God and was in fact connected with it. He told the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate what being a neighbor meant (Luke 10: 25-37). The love of

[376] George C. Bond and Joan Vincent, "AIDS in Uganda: The First Decade," in George C. Bond, John Kreniske, Ida Susser and Joan Vincent (eds.), *Aids in Africa and the Caribbean* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 85-97. See also George C. Bond and Joan Vincent, "Community Based Organizations in Uganda: A Youth Initiative," in George C. Bond, John Kreniske, Ida Susser and Joan Vincent (eds.), *Aids in Africa and the Caribbean* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 99-113. Maryinez Lyons, "The point of View: Perspectives on AIDS in Uganda," in George C. Bond, John Kreniske, Ida Susser and Joan Vincent (eds.), *Aids in Africa and the Caribbean* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 131-146.

neighbor transcends the love of family, as Jesus taught: "And if you greet your brother only, what is usual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5: 47-48). Jesus' concept of spiritual kinship to himself is also an obvious relativization of biological kinship (Mark 3:31-35).

From a sociological point of view, the traditional Lugbara society reflects the cooperation of neighbors. The neighbor is needed for such things as house-building, farm clearing, weeding, harvesting and threshing, as well as for collective pursuits such as hunting and fishing. There are also well established neighborhood institutions such as informal neighborhood courts to adjudicate between the rights and claims of individuals, and to impose fines, sanctions or other forms of compensation. Therefore, there are sound theological and sociological reasons why small Christian communities should be built on the phenomenon of neighborhood, or extended families among the Lugbara people of Uganda.

CHAPTER FOUR

Small Christian Communities among the Lugbara People of Uganda: Evaluation, and General Conclusion

Introduction

The Church and the lives of the Lugbara people of Uganda are constantly challenged with deep concerns such as "witnessing the proliferation of armed conflict, deterioration in healthcare and educational infrastructures, the weakening of social and community structures, and an increase in the spreading of disease and other threats to the lives of our brothers and sisters."[377] The small Christian communities are challenged to be the prophetic voices called to address the problems facing the Church and the lives of the

[377] William P. Fay, *A Call to Solidarity with Africa: A Statement of the U.S Catholic Bishops* (Washington, D.C: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2001), 1.

Lugbara people. They are to empower the Lugbara people to resolve their own problems such as HIV/AIDS, poverty, alcoholism, polygamy, ecumenism, political issues, education, Church attendance, health issues, justice and peace.

Chapter four will attempt to evaluate the small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda. It will examine the positive aspects and contributions of the emerging small Christian communities and their effect upon the Catholic Church in the Arua and the Nebbi dioceses among the Lugbara people. It will also focus on the negative elements and submit some suggestions to improve them. The chapter will then end with a general conclusion.

4.1 Evaluation of Small Christian Communities among the Lugbara of Uganda

July 22, 2006 commemorated the 30th anniversary of the AMECEA study conference that advanced a new decision regarding the systematic formation of small Christian communities. As a result, it was concluded that developing small Christian communities should be a pastoral priority in eastern Africa in the years to come.

> These conclusions of the 1976 AMECEA study conference (held at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, Nairobi, Kenya from the 15th to 22nd July, 1976) reflect the decision of the participants that the systematic formation of small Christian communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come within Eastern Africa.[378]

[378] AMECEA plenary 1976, "Building Christian Communities," *African Ecclesial Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 250.

The same idea was emphasized at the Arua diocesan synod of 1989 and at the Nebbi diocesan synod of 2003. It is true that many descriptions and case studies of small Christian communities have been carried out in many AMECEA countries, but little research and evaluation have been done among the Lugbara of Uganda. On the other hand, the Lugbara people have done little assessment, critique and analysis of small Christian communities. The question to be asked now is, "What is the overall evaluation of the small Christian communities among the Lugbara of Uganda?"

At the 1976 AMECEA triennial study conference, the bishops chose as their study theme: Building Christian Communities in Eastern Africa. This evolved naturally from the guidelines recommended at their 1973 meeting at which the topic was: Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980's.[379] It was in 1973 that the idea of small Christian communities emerged in the Church of Eastern Africa. Since that time, it has been thirty two years. Among the Lugbara people of Uganda, at the age of thirty two an individual has reached adulthood, married and had children. Sometimes death in the family has occurred, since the average life span in Uganda is between 40-42 years of age. Small Christian communities are still very young in many parishes. This fact was acknowledged during the first synod of the Arua diocese in 1989.

> Each parish priest shall take steps to start small Christian communities within his parish, either through established prayer groups or in some other suitable way. He shall take care not to force their growth but to see that the Christians are animated in such a way as to desire the growth of such communities. Importance

[379] Ibid. 249.

> shall be given to creating the spirit of the small Christian communities rather than to the structures in themselves.[380]

One has to acknowledge that it is rather difficult to generalize the impact of small Christian communities in all the parishes within the Arua and Nebbi dioceses. Some parishes started small Christian communities, but they were not sure how to go about their formation. Other parishes were not interested in the idea of creating small Christian communities. The little they did withered away like seeds planted on rocky soil. Some of the parishes did not take seriously the idea of small Christian communities even though the Lugbara people have been living in communities as part of their culture. Consequently, small Christian communities have not been fully involved in the pastoral work of these parishes. In some parishes, apostolic groups such as Catholic Action and Legio Maria refer to themselves as small Christian communities.[381]

The idea of forming small Christian communities in parishes seems to be imposed by the bishops, not by the people. The same idea was expressed by Fritz Lobinger who said: "Again and again I was told that the BCCs (basic Christian communities or small Christian communities) did not emerge by themselves. The bishops, priests and religious made the start or were essentially involved in the founding process."[382] The idea of forming these small Christian communities was left to individual pastors, who sometimes

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[380] Frederick Drandua, *A Local Church Living Committed To Christ: Acts of the First Synod in Arua Diocese* (Kisubi, Kampala: Marianum Press, 1990), 35.
[381] It was Nebbi's first diocesan synod on "What is the Church?" that a paper was delivered by Fr. Sebhat Ayele on the topic: Small Christian communities (January 13-January 24, 2003), pages 2-4. He made the same observation on the small Christian communities in the Nebbi diocese.
[382] Fritz Lobinger, "Christian Base Communities in Africa and in Brazil," *African Ecclesial Review* 29/3 (June 1987): 152.

were not ready to cope with this new idea, despite the fact that it was developed long ago in the AMECEA countries. Some pastors still do not encourage the idea of forming small Christian communities, despite the fact that Bishop Frederick Drandua, of the Arua diocese and Bishop Martin Luluga, of the Nebbi diocese are in favor of establishing these small Christian communities in all the parishes.

In some parishes attempts have been made to put the policy of building small Christian communities into practice. A few parishes have successfully developed concrete plans for implementing the idea of small Christian communities. As stated earlier, in some parishes the initiative remains with the individual priests and pastors, who receive little support, if any, from the laity. In the dioceses of Arua and Nebbi, certain people have talked in parishes and outstations about the formation of small Christian communities, and hence many Christians have at least heard of them. Some parishes have even been geographically divided into small Christian Communities and as a result, every parishioner belongs to a small Christian community. Other parishes do not seem to follow the trend preferred by the diocese. This leads me to concur with Robert S. Pelton who said:

> To achieve meaningful success in any major ecclesial initiative or experiment in our contemporary church, a well thought out theology and methodology is a must. Such a theology should be done with and by the people concerned. It should grow as the community grows and multiplies and meets various contexts and experiences.[383]

This has been the attempt of the Nebbi diocese when they decree that:

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[383] Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 96-97.

> The diocesan pastoral team shall study and prepare material on small Christian communities. Each parish shall choose a pilot chapel in which the new methodology on small Christian community is implemented. Awareness programs shall be organized to train the leaders of the pilot chapels.[384]

The policy of systematic formation of small Christian communities has not been put in place in many parishes of the Arua and Nebbi dioceses. Many small Christian communities are too clerically centered and have very poor formation. But surely it is not a priority for the guidelines to just remain on paper. In some parishes, the idea of forming small Christian communities is theoretically accepted, but in practice, it is not working. Cecil McGarry made this observation, with which I agree, when he said, "To enter fully into the life of a local Church structured on small Christian communities, requires a real change of mind and heart on the part of bishops, priests, religious and laity."[385]

Another overall problem with these small Christian communities is the fact that there is no uniformity in forming them. Robert S. Pelton noticed this problem and he expressed it as follows:

> The models of SCCs (small Christian communities) differed. Some wanted to recreate the original communities described in Acts of the Apostles, chapters 2 and 4. Some had in mind the African traditional communities based on the so-called extended families. Some were animated by the model of the Mystical Body of Christ as described in I Corinthians, chapter 12. Others wanted them to be entirely new creations demanded by the pastoral strategies of the times. These various models were not studied in depth nor related to each other. An initiative

[384] Acts of the First Diocesan Synod of Nebbi Catholic Diocese, Angal 13th Jan. to 24th Jan. 2003 (Nebbi: Nebbi Catholic Press, 2003), 51.
[385] Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened At the African Synod?* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 145.

> which should have been presented as coming directly from the way the people live community was thus missed. SCCs necessitated new guidelines, new formation in setting them up, and a certain discontinuity from the way that the African Church was normally growing.[386]

Various parishes approached it differently, as if they were not part of the universal Catholic Church. Some people even consider them sects. Even within neighboring parishes of the same diocese, there are different views on how small Christian communities are to be run. In my own observation, certain parishes in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses have done very little in encouraging and promoting the development of small Christian communities. Robert S. Pelton correctly identified this problem when he stated:

> In practice the SCCs are taken as simply an addition to the old way of being church. The institutional model of church under hierarchical, clerical, and often paternalistic control is still the most dominant. The church is still power and authority centered. Old attitudes, styles of leadership, and structures dominate. Some promoters of SCCs try to point out the conflict between the old and new way of being church. Often they identify the clergy and catechists as the major obstacles to SCCs. Whoever does not promote SCCs is regarded as conservative and whoever does is seen as progressive. The tension here, however, is more complex. The problem goes back to the very beginning of the initiative and the failure to place it fully under the people at the grass roots.[387]

Some priests fear that if such small communities are not properly managed, other sects may derive from them. Due to these concerns in some parishes, small Christian community leaders are not allowed to take full responsibility in this matter, and therefore they must comply with the pastors' view point that rules each respective community.

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[386]Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 97.
[387] Ibid. 98.

4.1.1 The Successes of Small Christian Communities among the Lugbara of Uganda

On a more positive note, some favorable changes have also occurred in some parishes. There has been a good response from many people to adopt a small Christian community lifestyle. For example, people share their faith experiences, gifts and possessions and they also support one another. They exchange ideas as they reflect on and interpret the Scriptures on a weekly basis. There has been an increase in congeniality among people who share ideas during bible study (they live according to the ideals of the small Christian community).

According to the East African Participants' consultation meeting, "African family institutions are under threat from modern social processes. The African family today is living in religious, political, economic, cultural, social and environmental pluralism."[388] With the help and influence of small Christian communities among the Lugbara people of Uganda, parishes have reached out to members of their communities attempting to help them resolve their problems. As a result, many traditional marriages have been rectified or were converted into Christian marriages. Broken marriages have been reconciled. This fact is emphasized below by the East African Participants during their consultation meeting:

> The African family, especially the large or so called extended family, is under strong pressure today. One threat is the separation of family members and even of spouses through migrant labor. This puts a strain on marriages and is a major

[388] East African Participants in the consultation, "The Evolving Sociology and Ecclesiology of Church as Family in Eastern Africa," in Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 105.

> factor in desertion and divorce. Due to the dispersal of family members, families operate in a truncated manner in both urban and rural areas. Family roles are amalgamated or improvised.[389]

Another success of small Christian communities among the Lugbara is that some fallen away Catholics have been brought back to receive the sacraments. There is a considerable increase in Sunday attendance and more people receiving communions. Cases of injustice and disagreements have been mediated. There is oneness in prayer and religious instructions. Sometimes the Eucharist is celebrated in the small Christian communities. Apart from the masses, there are also burial services conducted by leaders of these small Christian communities. Their contributions to society are many. Small Christian communities in the parishes participate in house construction for priests, catechists and the poor. They also meet the costs of purchasing materials. In their generosity, they also offer their labor. These contributions are very successful and most welcome among the Lugbara parishes. Through these small Christian communities, the domestic Church or the family is essential. The families are filled with rituals such as saying prayers at meals or at bedtime, reading bible stories to young children, praying the rosary together, visiting relatives on Sundays. Patricia F. Forster and Thomas P. Sweetser seem to correctly express these important points about the role of small Christian communities: "The domestic church needs help that is not always forthcoming from the parish or macro-church, some other vehicle is needed to lend support and

[389] Ibid. 95. See also Thomas A. Klessler, Margo A LeBert, Mary C. McGuinness, *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st Century*, Revised and Updated edition (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 217.

assistance to family. Small Faith communities could be that vehicle. There are, however, other options."[390]

The handouts in small Christian communities can be a positive tool for communication. They can guide and lead to very good discussions, especially about small Christian community members, forming and helping the adult catechumens. The materials in the handouts allow the small Christian community members to think about healthcare ministry, adult catechumens, social work and their missionary responsibility.

Another success is that some small Christian communities actively search out potential inquirers in their neighborhood (people seeking to embrace the faith). In some parishes, a newly baptized adult is encouraged to specifically invite and find a friend or a neighbor to join the Rites of Christian Initiation for Adults. The new groups of adults joins the other local small Christian communities too. Many small Christian community members are proud and enthusiastic about adult catechumens being in their small Christian communities. In some parishes, in his Sunday homilies between Easter and Pentecost, the priest focuses on the Church year (A) readings connected to the Mystagogy catechesis. The priest directs his message specifically to the new adult Christians and encourages their on-going participation in small Christian communities. However, some of this remains theoretical rather than a widespread pastoral practice.[391]

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[390] Patricia M. Forster and Thomas P. Sweetser, *Transforming the Parish: Models for the Future* (Kansas City: Sheed &Ward, 1993), 124.
[391]Thomas A. Klessler, Margo A LeBert, Mary C. McGuinness, *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st Century,* Revised and Updated edition (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 250-252.

Small Christian communities have helped the laity in understanding their role in the Church today. The parishes and outstations which adopted the small Christian community phenomenon have greatly benefited from it. They have benefited in areas of work such as field work, construction work that otherwise would have to be done by a paid worker for the parish or outstation. They have helped the priests in preparing the people for the sacraments, such as baptism, marriage, confirmation, Eucharist, reconciliation, sacrament of the sick and holy orders. They have helped the priests, catechists, and faithful in solving family problems, visiting fallen away Catholics and finding solutions for other pastoral problems. The faithful now understand that the Church begins in the family and in the small Christian communities, not in the church building. There are now bible studies in homes where people can read and reflect on the Gospel, something which was not done before. In the small Christian communities, people are helping one another at work, in times of misfortune and in celebrations that have brought out the life of love among the small Christian communities members and increased cooperation and mutual understanding among people.

One of the successes in some of the parishes has been the creation and the spreading of the awareness of the importance of these small Christian communities as a pastoral priority and as helping the local Church to be self-ministering, self-propagating and self-reliant.[392] Small Christian communities have helped to transform and deepen Christian

[392] Patrick Kalilombe, "Overall View on Building Christian Communities," in *African Ecclesial Review* 18/5 (October 1976): 274. He writes: "One important objective that was in the minds of the Bishops when they opted for building such basic Christian communities was to hasten the growth of the Church in Eastern Africa into a "self-reliant church." A self-reliant church is one where all the basic structures and resources for its internal life and growth and its external work and mission in the world are found in itself, even if a measure of reliance on external helps may still continue … External help will be sought only for those

life, and they have brought out the role of the laity in the sanctification of the world through their social, economic, political and religious activities within the parish community. Some of the parishes have become a communion of small Christian communities, or a community of communities.

Small Christian communities have enabled many Catholics to become acquainted with the scriptures, since the weekly meetings are centered on reading, reflecting, and sharing the word of God together, and they have tried to allow Scripture to play a role in their lives. Among them, works of mercy such as helping the poor, consoling the sick and the bereaved are performed. In some parishes, concentrated efforts toward development have been encouraged, as follow up action after the reading, reflecting and sharing of the Scriptures. The gospel message has been brought into a context of the Lugbara people of Uganda. The theological method of reflection is used in some parishes. As Patricia M. Forster writes, "This method follows these five steps: (1) Tell the story, (2) Describe relevant details, (3) Reflect on the tradition, (4) Name the experience, and (5) Discern the action."[393] Moreover, in sharing the word of God together with other Christian denominations, more ecumenical awareness has been created. Small Christian communities have become the real place of/or the arena for Gospel inculturation. Due to the work of small Christian communities, it is becoming more evident that a relevant

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needs that are genuinely beyond its capacities. This is how the principle of subsidiarity is meant to work. The Bishops are convinced that if the basic or grass root communities thus took care of themselves, the higher levels (parish, diocese) could soon be able to take care of themselves also without the undue dependence on foreign help that still persists today."

[393] Patricia M. Forster and Thomas P. Sweetser, *Transforming the Parish: Models for the Future* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1993), 136. This theological method of reflection is fully explained in pages 136-139 of the same book.

theology today has to be a theology from the people. Where small Christian communities have thrived, personal awareness and involvement in the liturgy, sharing the Word of God and applying it to everyday life have taken root. Therefore, the Scriptures have inspired Christian communities into practicing the philosophies of Christian life.

The members of small Christian communities are participants not just listeners. Participation enables each individual member develop his/her talents, and these talents are used to enrich the whole community of believers. Members of these faith communities are no longer afraid to express their views. Christian charity is being carried out. This is being done by visiting the sick, helping the poor, sharing ones possessions and other charitable deeds such as sending relief aid to disaster areas. Small Christian communities form mature Christians, whom the local church can depend on for the support of their parish and diocese and in solving their own problems. Thus, the needs of the parish have been met. The laity is more aware of the important role it plays within the Church, society and within human development as a whole. The laity experience Christ's presence when they meet and share the Word of God in small groups. Dialogue has made it possible for members of the community to share their ideas freely. In this way, reconciliation becomes natural to them. Small Christian community members have learned how to use the Bible in relation to the cultural values they experience in life.[394]

[394] Alphonce C. L. Omolo, "The Neighborhood Church Caring for its Needy People," In *Omnis Terra*, No.306 (April 2000): 162-164.

4.1.2 The Problems of Small Christian Communities Among the Lugbara People of Uganda

There are also problems in the small Christian communities and these problems differ from place to place and parish to parish. For example, there is the problem of different religions in both rural and urban areas. Some of these religions have caused disharmony, and this fact was noted by the Catholic Bishops of Uganda in their Pastoral letter to the Faithful on Cults, Sects and Religious groups. They said:

> As Bishops, it is our duty to guide and direct the Catholic faithful, as well as to advise all God's people, especially on religious matters. We therefore wish to offer our guidelines to our people while at the same time discerning the Spirit in the Religious phenomenon, evident in many groupings claiming direct divine authority. Since the event of the Second Vatican Council, the event of the Holy Spirit, a new Pentecostal phenomenon has dawned everywhere. It is advocated by and manifested in popular missions, renewal of devotions, organizations, groups, communities, movements and associations. Along with this Spirit, there has emerged a proliferation or mushrooming of "Religious groups," (sects) cults; some of which are either started or led by Catholics and, as said, have attracted and misled many people.[395]

The social infrastructures in these areas of Lugbara land still remain very poor. Despite the fact that people are physically close in the parish, some choose to live an isolated and individualistic way of life. Printed handouts are sometimes distributed in these small Christian communities, but the instructions are not used because many people don't know how to read and write. For those who know how to read and write, often it takes time to read them and use them effectively. Sometimes small Christian communities are very slow in using them in a systematic way. Many small Christian communities lack facilitators or coordinators to guide them in using these handouts at their meetings or

[395] Pastoral Letter of Catholic Bishops of Uganda to the Faithful on Cults, Sects and "Religious" groups, *Test The Spirits* (Kisubi, Entebbe: Marianum Press, 2000), 1.

during their discussions. Therefore, it appears that the ones who have attended basic formation still need the guidance and assistance of another person.

A large number of Catholic Christians among the Lugbara people of Uganda look up to the priests and catechists as responsible individuals in many things, such as the preparation of the catechumens for baptism. It is hard to move away from the formal catechumen class-session approach. Effective implementation of the rite of Christian initiation of adults takes a great deal of time and work. Many pastoral leaders, especially priests, are reluctant to make this time-work commitment. Yet, it is pointed out that the celebration of each stage of the rite of Christian initiation of adults has many parallels with the Lugbara culture. It is still a very challenging task to inculturate the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults among the Lugbara people.

The small Christian community venture, in both the Arua and Nebbi dioceses, as a pastoral priority has received more lip service than actual implementation. Certain parishes do not seem to have proper diocesan planning leading to systematic formation of small Christian communities. The initiative of forming small Christian communities has been left to individual pastors or priests. Yet the proposal of establishing small Christian communities came from the bishops as it was needed by the Church in AMECEA countries and in the dioceses of Arua and Nebbi. There are enough catechesis and awareness programs with the laity. It is also true that many priests and religious do not know enough about small Christian communities or have not read books on them. Even in those parishes where the priests understand the significance and vision of small

Christian communities, establishing them has become clerically centered with little and sometimes no initiative at all from the laity. There has been over-supervision of the small Christian communities due to the fear that there is danger of schism and splinter groups in the parish or diocese. Small Christian communities are a pastoral model in both the Arua and Nebbi dioceses.

There seems a general lack of participation by men and young people in small Christian community meetings and activities.[396] "Most of the small Christian community members are women-75 percent, according to a recent survey."[397] In the urban areas, the poorer people show greater vigor and interest in small Christian communities than the rich. There is still a lot of shyness in sharing the Word of God during the weekly small Christian community gatherings, especially on the part of women and young people. Starting from scripture and then relating it to daily life does not seem to work well, unless there is a good coordinator. Women and young people have not had the opportunity to speak in public. They have had little schooling and they are shy by nature. The passing of time and practice will give them self confidence.

In rural areas, the timing of small Christian communities is still a problem. When the laity are responsible, the clergy tend to be very strict. Good recommendations from small Christian communities are not welcomed by some priests or pastors. Where husband and

[396] Anne Nasimiyu Wasike, "The Role of Women in Small Christian Communities," *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa* Symposium of Nine Papers, edited by Agatha Radoli (Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1993), 181-200.
[397] East African Participants in the consultation, "The Evolving Sociology and Ecclesiology of Church as Family in Eastern Africa," in Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 92.

wife relationships are not good in the family, it becomes very difficult to build real small Christian communities in the neighborhood. In some areas, drinking alcohol is the major problem for small Christian communities. As the East African participants noted, "single parent households also result from wives who separate from their irresponsible husbands because of the men's drinking, anger resulting in wife abuse and financial mismanagement."[398] When people come for the scripture readings, reflections and sharing in the evening, some of the members are drunk or have hangovers. In these areas, mostly the rural poor or slums of big cities, drinking alcohol hinders family progress and the entire community or neighborhood. In some neighborhoods superstitious beliefs such as *Mazzi*[399] are in conflict with the Christian way of life or the entire neighborhood. In many cases, the fear of superstitions has killed the Christian spirit.

There is also a lack of dedication and patience expressed by members of some small Christian communities. The scarcity of coordinators of small Christian communities is evident in numerous parishes. As a matter of fact, in certain localities they have not been appointed to this day. There is very poor attendance in some small Christian community activities, such as the weekly Bible services and community duties. In some cases, Church leaders, such as catechists and priests, do not emphasize the formation and vitality of small Christian communities in parishes or outstations.

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[398] Ibid. 95.

[399] *Mazzi* is superstitious belief that someone can bewitch you and your family in order to get material wealth. It is often believed that when numbers begin to appear on one's body, that person is about to die, and the one who bewitched is about to get rich.

The lack of committed personnel to implement the formation and establishment of small Christian communities is a factor. Sometimes the bishops, priests and religious do not give small Christian communities priority in their pastoral programs. The idea "small" has not been understood, and that is why we find apostolic groups in most parishes, instead of small Christian communities. Many people all over the world refuse to recognize the need to change. This is also true of Uganda. They want to continue to practice religion as they always have, and therefore the notion of small Christian community has not been introduced effectively within some of the parishes. The Catholics of the Arua and the Nebbi Dioceses, in a few instances, are afraid to start something new by venturing in a direction that would bring about a positive result in their existence and in their religious communities.

4.1.3 Suggestions to make Small Christian Communities Truly Part of Diocesan Pastoral Policy and Integrated into Church Structures

In order to coordinate all small Christian communities within the dioceses of Arua and Nebbi, the parishes and outstations, there needs to be a common guideline drawn up just like the one of the *Lumko*[400] missiological institute of South Africa. The guideline needs to be implemented by the parish. For example, in the dioceses of Arua and Nebbi, there is a need for newsletters or magazines on small Christian communities that should be published to provide information and encouragement, for small Christian communities. The reports received from the different small Christian communities need to be sent to

[400] *Lumko* is an institute of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. They provide a number of programs under the title "Training for Community Ministries." No.19 of the series is "Building Small Christian Communities."

the outstations, then in turn to the parishes, and finally to the diocese. The celebration of sacraments in the small Christian communities, such as Baptism, Reconciliation and Marriage should be stressed and all the members of the small Christian communities should take active part in the planning process.

The structures of small Christian communities should be followed by all the parishes and outstations in the dioceses. Based on these structures, every parish and outstation has to make its own program to fit its own needs and find its own ways of implementing them. There should be a yearly parish written report to the diocese, and one to a national meeting on small Christian communities. Like other important departments, small Christian communities should have organizers and offices from the grassroots, outstations, parishes, diocesan, regional and national levels. There needs to be a network of small Christian communities beginning from the grassroots up to regional levels. There should be seminars, workshops and materials to stimulate the creation and growth of small Christian communities within the dioceses. There ought to be at least one main office at the national level to monitor and encourage the progress, the stability and the success of the small Christian communities.

There is need for brainstorming about small Christian communities at all levels within the dioceses of Arua and Nebbi. The goal is to identify a method to work out a pastoral plan that can be evaluated and revised, every three to five years. There needs to be a diocesan synod on the theme of small Christian communities. There is a need within the dioceses of Arua and Nebbi for more spontaneity and commitment from both the clergy and the

laity, but this is only possible if there is on-going education and an increased awareness about small Christian communities. This can be achieved through seminars, courses, workshops and the periodical sharing of small Christian communities, while building experiences at all levels of the diocese. The diocesan team or committee, comprising priests, laity, and religious, could help in organizing and coordinating this venture. This group would recognize errors in the process and would be able to correct them before they spiraled beyond control.

To help in enhancing the growth of the small Christian communities in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses among the Lugbara people, ultimately there could be the pastoral hermeneutic circle through its fivefold process of: insertion, analysis, reflection, pastoral planning and practice. Thus, starting from the current issues or burning questions, the small Christian community venture would, no doubt, proceed beyond the pastoral model to one of social-political awareness and create change in the light of the Gospel and Church teaching.[401]

As a concrete result, there is a need to educate the Church's top leaders, priests, religious and catechists about the importance of small Christian communities and give them guidelines, so that they can actively participate as coordinators in their own parishes. There is a need to educate the Christians about the meaning of small Christian

[401] Patricia M. Forster and Thomas P. Sweetser, *Transforming the Parish: Models for the Future* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1993), 136-139. See also James D. Whitehead & Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, Revised Edition (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995, 86-99. Robert L. Kinast, *What Are They Saying About Theological Reflection?* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 6-14.

communities and the importance of becoming small Christian community members in their respective areas. All pastoral matters such as sacraments, self-support, self-ministering, self-propagation and Church tax should pass through the small Christian communities before reaching the priests. A small Christian community model of the Church should look like this in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses among the Lugbara. Every Christian should have his/her small Christian community. Outstation, parish and diocesan leaders would be elected by the small Christian communities. Infant Baptisms and Marriages should be recommended first by small Christian communities. All decisions should be made in conjunction with the small Christian communities and not by the parish priest alone. Therefore, in a sense, the Christians of those dioceses will have a voice, and they will influence final decisions in these matters.

There is a need to organize special teachings on the sacraments, prayers and Bible study. Parents need to be helped to become more aware of the importance of small Christian communities. They should encourage their children to participate in Bible reflection and other prayer groups. They should send their children for preparation courses to receive the sacraments and to learn about the Scriptures. There is a need to train youth on how to establish and coordinate small Christian communities. Young people should receive special seminars and courses. In general, small Christian communities offer a promising future and better Christian outlook for the dioceses and for the universal Church.

4.1.4 Contribution of Small Christian Communities Among the Lugbara People of Uganda to the Universal Church

The theme of vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world was emphasized by the Second Vatican Council in its document *Gaudum et Spes.* Small Christian communities help to bring out the mission and spirituality of the laity in their sanctification of the world through their daily lives. Since the Church and the world are not distinct entities, but interrelated dimensions of human life, the laity as Christians are called to deepen their commitment to their incarnate Lord through their dedication to God and to the world.[402]

Small Christian communities are central to the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world through the theme of collegiality, according to the Second Vatican Council. The dioceses of Arua and Nebbi have to take the laity seriously in what they are experiencing and articulating in faith as Church.

As Paul Bernier writes in his summary:

> Ultimately, the task of the Church is to become relevant once again. Either Christ is important in the marketplace or He is irrelevant. Christianity claims to have a message that is supposed to transform society. We are called to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom. All of this is part of the stewardship that God has given us over the work of his hands.[403]

The gospel inculturation and articulation in small Christian communities is the very action of the Church. Small Christian communities as a pastoral priority in the dioceses of Arua and Nebbi among the Lugbara people and in the AMECEA countries are to be taken seriously.

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[402] Paul Bernier, *Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1996), 202-221.
[403] Ibid. 220.

Small Christian communities are places for inculturation/contextualization of the gospel, that is, living it more fully and articulating it more relevantly where the role of the laity is seen as pivotal or critical. They help members and the Church to express the pressing needs for new forms of ministry as a consequence of trying to live up to the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and the world. For example, if the Eucharist is to continue to be the center of Church life and of small Christian communities, then the problem of scarcity of Eucharistic ministers has to be solved without delay.

Small Christian communities are important to the vocation and mission of the laity in that they are to point out their mission as it was clearly shown after the Second Vatican Council, when more power and responsibility was handed over to lay ministers. They are co-workers in evangelization and they can play this role well through small Christian communities, as the first Christians did in the Acts of Apostles, chapter two. Since some of the pastors also have wide experience in the work of small Christian communities and know how these communities strengthen the faith, they should present a clear picture of faith communities to their parishes. They should describe their usefulness in the local and the universal Church, and they should elaborate on how to promote their success. Pastors should give concrete examples to help other pastors realize what is being done within the parishes in connection with the diocese.

There should be common guidelines on how to run small Christian communities. There is a need to build good relationships between the clergy and the laity. Train more laity so that they can become well informed about small Christian communities. We must establish channels of communications on alcoholism and its harmful effects to families and entire communities. The dioceses should emphasize the importance of these communities at diocesan, parish and outstation levels. Priests, religious and all lay leaders should be encouraged to form and inspire these small Christian communities immediately. Small Christian communities should be the number one priority of every diocese serving the Lugbara people of Uganda.

4.1.5 The Commitment of Catholic Church Leaders to Small Christian Communities in the Dioceses of Arua And Nebbi

Bishop Frederick Drandua of the Arua diocese and Bishop Martin Luluga of the Nebbi diocese both support the small Christian communities activities, however, both bishops lack people to implement this pastoral priority. Some of the priests and religious like the idea of establishing small Christian communities and participate in them, while others do not. Some priests and religious do not yet see the importance of small Christian communities in their parishes. They find it difficult for the laity to plan and implement pastoral work without help from the top leaders in the Church, who lack faith in the lay people. Some of the priests and religious find an hour meeting a week a waste of time. The life of the priests and religious among the Lugbara people of Uganda is still clouded with mysteries. They do not see the necessity of a priest or a nun discussing together with the laity, and sometimes even eating together with them. The laity often feel that

they are not members of small Christian communities. Any baptized Christian is a true member of a small Christian community, regardless of his or her state. Many lay Christians in the Lugbara area are beginning to join these small Christian communities.

The conviction and commitment of the Catholic Church leaders can be both positive and negative. In some cases, Church leaders have not helped small Christian communities to grow quickly among the Lugbara people. Some are convinced about and committed to small Christian communities. Unfortunately some priests and religious do not want changes. It is often difficult to convince some of them to be committed to these Christian communities. That is why forming small Christian communities is a frustrating venture in the Arua and the Nebbi dioceses among the Lugbara. Some religious are afraid because of their superiors or pastors. When the superior or pastor says no to a suggestion, that becomes final because of the vow of obedience that they have taken. Some of the lay people are ready to receive any changes for the better and to be convinced by Church leaders. The question always is: Is there anyone to convince them? The clergy and laity might see the importance of small Christian communities, but the practice of it in their daily lives is another thing.

In general, many bishops in Uganda, and those among the Lugbara people accept the pastoral priority, but few seem to have taken definite steps to build them into their diocesan pastoral planning and implementation. Many priests in Uganda are aware of small Christian Communities, but some are not sufficiently informed about them and their purpose, hence resulting in lack of commitment to them. A good number of priests

in Uganda are still operating in the old model of Church clearly they do not know what to do. Some even despise the whole venture of small Christian communities as a waste of time and energy. This define theme should be introduced into our national major seminaries so as to prepare the seminarians to appreciate the roles of these small Christian communities in our Church today. There are some priests in Uganda who seem convinced and committed, but due to lack of support, problems, difficulties and even failures, they lose heart. Some stick to it through thick and thin. For religious in Uganda, it is the same as for the priests. Some lay people in Uganda like and accept the idea of small Christian communities when they are explained to them, but there is not enough conviction and commitment, sometimes due to lack of sufficient education and awareness. Many Christians may respond favorably to the pastoral priority of forming small Christian communities, but still suffer from the old model of Church - depending too much on the priests. Thus, they are cynical about small Christian communities becoming a pastoral priority in their dioceses. Some laity in Uganda do not even see small Christian communities as a necessary means to support the universal Church and as the way of the future.

The vision of the small Christian communities in the Arua and the Nebbi dioceses among the Lugbara people and the whole of Uganda is not yet realized fully, because there are still barriers between bishops and priests, and priests and religious. Too often, the laity are on their own. The laity have a deeply rooted mentality that the bishops, priests and religious are more Godly than themselves. The laity ask themselves: "Is the hierarchy a community in itself?" Differences show up between dioceses that are not committed to

small Christian communities versus those that are committed. If we had really emphasized small Christian communities during these past thirty years, then our local Church would have moved many steps forward. Due to the lack of proper education and information, many Lugbara people harbor a lot of doubt about small Christian communities.

4.1.6 Will Small Christian Communities Grow in Awareness of, And respond to important Social Issues among the Lugbara of Uganda in the next ten years (2006-2016)?

Small Christian communities will grow in awareness of, and respond to important social issues among the Lugbara people of Uganda, if the concrete suggestions given are taken seriously and if every person is convinced and committed to the cause of small Christian communities in the parishes, dioceses and in the region. For example, by using the pastoral theological reflection method or pastoral hermeneutic circle, small Christian communities will move beyond the pastoral model to one of socio-political awareness and produce change in the light of the Gospel and Church teachings. "John Mary Waligo criticizes the SCCs (small Christian Communities) for not being involved enough in justice and peace issues in Uganda, for example, during the recent democratization process."[404]

[404] East African Participants in the consultation, "The Evolving Sociology and Ecclesiology of Church as Family in Eastern Africa," in Robert S. Pelton (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 94.

Small Christian communities can grow in awareness of, and respond to, important social issues among the Lugbara people of Uganda. It depends on how the Catholic Church among the Lugbara people will use new incentives to promote small Christian communities and make the faithful more aware of social issues. The Catholic Church has to find new ways and means of articulating the structures and the importance of small Christian communities to the laity, but more so, to the priests and religious - nuns and brothers. The priests and religious should live a small Christian community lifestyle to set an example of what they preach to others. This was reinforced by *Lumen Gentium* No.46:

> Let religious see to it that through them the Church may truly and ever more clearly show forth Christ to believers and unbelievers alike. Christ in contemplation on the mountain, or proclaiming the Kingdom of God to the crowds, or healing the sick and maimed and converting sinners to a good life, or blessing children and doing good to all, always in obedience to the will of the Father who sent him.[405]

Small Christian communities will grow in awareness and respond to important social issues among the Lugbara people if the bishops, priests, religious and laity come together and discuss freely the problems, the needs of the region and the plans of how small Christian communities can be carried out within this region. Talking and making recommendations alone does not help much. Actions by everyone are needed in order to be aware of, and respond to important social issues of the Lugbara people. Small Christian communities seem to be the work of the laity who need the full support and sincere encouragement of the clergy, religious and bishops. Hopefully, our small

[405] Austin Flannery (ed.), *The Basic Sixteen Documents, Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations,* A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1995), 70.

Christian communities in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses among the Lugbara people of Uganda will mature in the next ten years and reflect a new Church lifestyle in the West Nile region.

4.1.7 Comments About Small Christian Communities among the Lugbara of Uganda

Small Christian communities are a way of life or a new way of life within the Church. They should be lived. Such a life is difficult to practice because it demands emptying one's selflove and sharing even supernatural possessions, but it is the Christian way of life. Some questions are: "Why is it that small Christian communities among the Lugbara people have not gone beyond the pastoral model, as the basic Christian communities in the regions of Latin America have?" "What makes small Christian communities in other areas or regions successful?" "What seems to be lacking in the small Christian communities among the Lugbara people?" The answers may be found in the fact that small Christian communities so far have not served a need among the Lugbara Christians, aside from some works of mercy, praying and reflecting on Bible/ Scriptures together. Christianity among the Lugbara people has not yet become an everyday affair. It remains a Sunday event. It has not yet permeated all aspects of life, so as to begin having a more profound effect on the social, economic, political and religious dimensions of people's lives. The Catholic Church among the Lugbara people should seriously consider the inculturation of the Gospel at the small Christian community level as the stimulus toward growth and integration of all aspects of life in the small Christian communities.

Several suggestions may be given here: First, the diocesan leaders of Arua and Nebbi and the promoters of small Christian communities should visit every parish in the diocese to give seminars on the importance of small Christian communities, how to start them and how to conduct the weekly meetings. Second, parish leaders who do not yet understand the importance of small Christian communities should be educated and be asked to start small Christian communities within their own parish. Third, experienced and capable small Christian community members should be appointed to visit areas where there are no small Christian communities and begin to educate the local Christians. Fourth, every small Christian community should follow its own method of reflection, depending on its own environment. It is unwise to follow exactly the same plan or method in every parish. Fifth, more leaders should be trained to encourage and promote small Christian communities. Sixth, the laity should be trusted and given full responsibility in the running of the small Christian communities. Seventh, parish work should start from the small Christian communities and then go to the outstations, parishes and dioceses. Small Christian communities are to be the center of families. Eighth, parish council leaders should be chosen by the small Christian communities and not only by the priest. Ninth, more videotapes and films on small Christian communities, such as those on HIV/AIDS and wars, should be acquired.

What recommendations can one offer to small Christian communities regarding a plan of action to follow in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses? These can include the following: A plan of parish life should begin at the small Christian community level. There is a need

to promote new ministries in small Christian communities that respond to new requirements and new contexts of the Arua and Nebbi dioceses, Church universal and the world, in this century. There is a need to do reflections on different human problems in the light of the Gospel, and the small Christian communities as the cornerstone. As *Ecclesia Africa No. 89*, says:

> Right from the beginning, the Synod Fathers recognized that the Church as family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships. The Assembly described the characteristics of such communities as follows: Primarily they should be places engaged in evangelizing themselves, so that subsequently they can bring the Good News to others; they should moreover be communities which pray and listen to God's Word, encourage the members themselves to take on responsibility, learn to live an ecclesial life, and reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel. Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of the natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups.[406]

The leaders of the Arua and Nebbi dioceses need to emphasize the mission outreach of small Christian communities so that the life and activities of small Christian communities radiate into the larger community. There is a need to root the ministry of all believers, in a wider sense of pastoral work, into the small Christian communities. The dioceses need to train agents of evangelization in the theology and praxis of small Christian communities. There is a need to promote courses on small Christian communities in the seminary and university curriculum, especially in ecclesiology, pastoral theology, practical theology and contextual theology. This will also ensure that the new models of forming pastoral agents are consistent with small Christian communities as a new way of being local Church. The dioceses ought to promote the active involvement of men and of

[406] John Paul II, *The Church in Africa, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 69.

young people in the life and activities of small Christian communities. The diocesan leader needs to make small Christian communities, the center of the catechesis. There is a need to contextualize small Christian communities in the rapidly growing urban areas of Arua and Nebbi towns and developing small Christian communities in affluent areas. There is a need to bridge the gap created by tribalism, negative ethnicity and economic differences, within the small Christian communities. There is a need to encourage small Christian communities to network and twin within the clerics of the dioceses, and reduce the dependence of the Arua and Nebbi dioceses on foreign aid or donations. As a result, we must become more independent economically, when possible. Decisive actions on all these recommendations will take time, energy and resources, especially financial support at the beginning, and some guidance. There is willingness to advance, but there is no source of income to improve matters in the Arua and the Nebbi dioceses among the Lugbara people.

4.2 General Conclusion.

The Lugbara people of Uganda share many important aspects of the small Christian communities to be reviewed in this general conclusion. Among them are the small Christian communities meet in the homes of the members at least once a week, while the Sunday Worship is conducted in a parish church or a chapel. Hence they do not meet as small communities on Sunday, but rather worship together with the other communities in the parish. Therefore the parish community becomes a community of communities. The Bible sharing process takes place throughout the year during their meetings. It then

becomes the source of meditation, although their way of reflection and prayer is much more spontaneous, in a deeper religious sense.

The small Christian communities among the Lugbara are supposed to engage their members in social, political, economic, cultural and religious actions. These are sometimes carried out through the training of the leaders of these communities. They are also supposed to be conducted through the particular method of using the Scripture in a way which links texts and life. This is the theological method of reflection. It follows five steps: Tell the story; Describe relevant details; Reflect on the tradition; Name the experiences; Discern the action(s). This method of reflection is very important for the small Christian communities as it is used to carry out their actions for the common good of the Lugbara people. Unfortunately, many of these communities do not yet know about this theological method of reflection. Instead, these actions are based on the Lugbara culture and life experience. The links between religion and the different aspects of the Lugbara mentality, applied to everyday life are also limited to the immediate neighborhood. In these communities, emphasis should be placed on issues affecting the world and the Lugbara people. They should foster a global vision with a local focus on isues such as child neglect, alcoholism, poverty, insecurity, health hazards, crimes, ignorance, filth, environmental degradation, and HIV/AIDS. Such issues should be addressed at small Christian community meetings, and actions should follow to address them, where possible.

The small Christian communities among the Lugbara people are not to be viewed purely as prayer groups, but are to be involved in the social, political, economic, cultural and religious aspects of the lives of these people. Although very little has been done to develop this consciousness in the small Christian communities, it is now time to create awareness among the Lugbara people and to address the issues challenging their lives. Moreover, the socio-economic and political situation of the Lugbara people of Uganda leaves much to be desired. There is still oppression and the lack of such rights and freedoms as free speech and free association. There are no checks and balances versus the abuse of political power. There has been a steady increase in the social evils of corruption and nepotism in the government and the Church. The massive militarization of the young people in the Lugbara land in the midst of dire poverty is a crying scandal. The small Christian communities have to insert themselves into the political, economic, psycho-social and religious conditions of the contemporary Lugbara people. They are to transform the Lugbara people in accordance with the ideals of the Gospel and simultaneously, they, in turn, must teach others, both within the Churches or religious institutions and the people of the world, in a secular aspect, that because of a parallel way of life, are caught up in similar situations.

Likewise, the Lugbara population, by reaching out and teaching their own experiences, in their own villages, may pass the knowledge , that they have gained to other inhabitants of the globe, who live in a similar setting, and, in turn, learn from them. This process would become an intercultural exchange of ideas and information that would inhance the lives of those involved, and as a result, give way to a progressive step forward. In the final

analysis it may promote Christianity and contribute to the wider dimensions of the universal Church. It would render glory to God, and a gesture of peace, love and brotherhood/sisterhood to humankind.

The struggles of the small Christian communities among the Lugbara people, and in the different parts of the world, reflect this reality. They are also called to reflect the community life of the Lugbara. They are to draw inspiration from the Scriptures and the Lugbara people's own rich perception of an ever loving God and the demand of faithfulness to him. The most basic gifts that the small Christian communities can offer to the world lie in the acceptance and respect for the life and culture of the Lugbara people, as a privileged vehicle of God's self-revelation.

In the Arua and Nebbi towns, needed the Lugbara Catholic population that attends Church is a little higher from the rural areas. Many only go to Church without participating so much in the small Christian community meetings that are held in their homes. The small Christian communities among the Lugbara people also co-exist and cooperate well with other associations and movements that are part of the parish communities. Such associations, organizations and lay movements include lectors, choir, Eucharistic ministers, servers, ushers, catechists, Legio Maria, and Catholic action.

Among the Lugbara, there are natural starting points of the small Christian communities. There are the Lugbara sense of community or neighborhood, and the desire of the

Lugbara culture for togetherness that must be fulfilled. The bishops, priests and religious made use of this starting point. In these neighborhood communities, there were many activities such as struggle for human rights, and common prayer. They rotate from home to home. For the priests and religious, their will to identify with the parishioners is still lacking and this is the cause of many problems in the small Christian communities. Instead of coordinating the communities, they dominate them. There are no ideal small Christian communities, although sometimes an ideal picture of them is presented. The main task of these communities regards the inner church issues, but they need to focus on external issues, is evident and must be addressed at some point.

The Lugbara ethnic group has been altruistic since the beginning, based on the philosophy of their culture. Earlier, it was a way of life, a way of survival. Later, caring for their fellow man/woman became more evident, as a result of the teachings or doctrines of the new religion (Christianity) they embraced, that were passed on to them through the sacrificial efforts of the Comboni Missionaries. Today, from the grass roots of the Lugbara land, their deeds reflect their spirit of Christianity, in every facet of their existence. The Lugbara people religious convictions are of a higher dimension and they are able to teach the people of the world, how one can reach out to another, while forgetting themselves, in the spirit of peace and brotherhood/sisterhood.

When one reflects on the contents of these four chapters, one comes to realize that these indigenous people of Uganda, who indeed belong to the Lugbara ethnic group, are writing their own history at the very first part of the third millennium. They are a people

of dignity and dedication, of concern and prayer. During the course of our own life, we have frequently heard the Word of God through the Scriptures. Great composers of various nations, through the passing of time, have glorified the Lord through their memorable religious symphonies, often written to elevate our spirit towards a higher Being. The famous directors of Hollywood have created, through their genius and the collaboration of many individuals, spectacular productions in the form of movies that depicted the historical Christ, His life, His Ministry, His Greatness, His Deeds, His Death and His Resurrection. We can attempt to visualize Jesus in the Sermon of the Mount as it is described by Matthew the Evangelist. Walking quietly back in time, we can imagine the scene on the Mountain. We can almost hear the murmur of the crowds, becoming silent as Jesus begins to speak. Matthew wrote: "He began to teach them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called the children of God….." (Matthew 5: 1-12).

The Lord in His Mercy will indeed bless the people of the Lugbara ethnic group, for they have followed the teachings of Christ through the realization of the long awaited small Christian communities of Uganda. With the passing of time, more changes will take place in Lugbara land. The influence of other cultures will leave their mark, but the spirit, the faith and love of the Lugbara ethnic group are mighty and their people will

multiply and live on forever. In contrast to the way of life of their parents and their grandparents, who were a verbal society, (they passed on their history, by telling stories around the evening fire) today's Lugbara have produced several learned and articulate scholars. These new Lugbara narrators will write about their ancestors, their life, their culture and their history. The transformation they experienced, caused by other cultures who dared to venture through the wilderness into their villages, but most of all their books, will reflect their hopes and their dreams for a better life, a better tomorrow, and these heartfelt dreams may come to pass through the lives of the future generations.

As we reach this point of the research, we think back to the very beginning of Christianity. Long ago, the followers of Jesus gave the first image of a Christian community, in the famous Upper Room, where Jesus gathered with his disciples during the Last Supper. Many centuries passed, and millions and millions of people who believed in Christ followed him, sometimes within a climate of peace. Frequently, others, lived with turmoil, persecution, suffering, they died in His Name, for so strong was their faith that they chose to be martyrs, such as the Uganda Martyrs. Through the course of history, the identity and the shape of nations changed to suit the political aspects of those times. Governments all over the globe brought destruction or peace, and natural disasters occurred. As a result, in the aftermath of these events, the world we view is different. But wars and upheavals are still taking place. Two thousand years have passed since Jesus came upon this earth of ours. Through a map, we locate Uganda and the Lugbara people situated along the West Nile, to the East of Africa where one

finds a different kind of wilderness than the one experienced by Jesus and his disciples in the holy land. The heart of the territory is home to the Lugbara ethnic group.

Through a period of about one hundred twenty five years, they have changed from an indigenous way of life, in which they worshipped their own ancestors (or traditional religion that ought to be regarded with some respect) to a lifestyle that imitates the rest of Africa, reflecting also an influence of Europe. Today the descendants of the Lugbara of one thousand eight hundred eighty are a witness to the dedicated evangelization of the Comboni missionaries from Verona, Italy. The Lugbara society has advanced to a higher level of civilization, while it has maintained its culture. Today we can fly across the rain forest of Uganda and eventually find open villages, in which people live in the similar way their ancestors had, prior to them. There is a great deal of poverty, more evident than one may imagine. But if we search, we will find the small Christian communities that are the results of the theologies of the Church, have come to pass. It is not the buildings that play a leading role in all of this. It is the people who believe in God and who follow in the footsteps of Christ, the faithful who are the Church.

Although we all admire art that glorifies God, it is not the structure of bricks and marble that matters; in this case, it's the spirit of the Lugbara people that is strong and so very much alive. It's reflected in their singing, in their liturgical dancing, but most of all in their deep faith that is so sincere. Through this religion that they chose, they glorify God, and their faith will be passed down to their children and their children's children, as long as the Lugbara people live and walk on the earth. This is the active, involved, caring

faith Christian community, whose members, and others who join them, will follow the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they love and imitate. Much has been written, discussed and planned, in an attempt to find a way to reach people and help them carry out the teachings of the Catholic Church, while they are faithful to God and helpful to one another, a practice more prevalent in third world countries due to the immense expose of land and large number of people to be reached. As a result, this is the image and reality of the small Christian communities that were created in the spirit of deep faith and altruism among the Lugbara people of Uganda, people of community, faith and prayer.

The present pastoral focus of small Christian communities in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses is to help the members to live the Gospel in the actual context of their lives, and to reach out in witness and service in their neighborhood and wider society. It aims at making its members a community of believers, centering their life and prayer on Christ and on the Eucharist, that is, the members being a sign of Christ's presence to all, in our society, by compassion and love. The members of the small Christian communities among the Lugbara people need to show special concern for the poor, and be ready to adapt to the changing needs of the people, building on their traditions and culture and therefore witnessing to Christ's love. This way of thinking gives the members of the small Christian communities everywhere the opportunity to live the Christian commitment of love as it was intended by Jesus Christ.

Small Christian communities can be seen as a communion of believers that come together and witness to the word of God by trying to bridge any differences that may arise in social living, economic status, political opinions and cultural background. It becomes a community which lives in a new way. The members are called to share and give witnesses in their daily living situations.

Small Christian communities should always aim at evangelizing and catechizing their members. They should make the members feel at home by bridging the gap between cultures. Jesus must always be recognized as a healer, ancestor, neighbor and suffering servant in them that demands help and a sharing aspect, Jesus as liberator and transformer in justice and peace.[407] We should see Jesus Christ in our fellow man/woman, in the hungry, the poor, the sick, our brothers and sisters anywhere.

The Church, in the midst of the small Christian communities, especially those among the Lugbara people of Uganda, should draw from the Lugbara culture the centrality of the healing ministries. The Church as a family of God should consider family as an important unit in the Lugbara social setting. The Church should be looked at as a communion, a servant, and cultivator of freedom. Thus, the small Christian community should reflect and put emphasis on the new ways of looking at Christ and his Church, among the Lugbara people of Uganda.

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[407] Robert J. Schreiter, "Jesus Christ in Africa Today," in Robert J. Schreiter (ed.), *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), vii-xiii. Volker Kuster, *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999),57-76.

The meetings of the small Christian community members should combine prayers, scriptural readings, social action and cultural adaptations, in order to bring the message of Christ home in the best way that may be understood by the Lugbara people. This will make it easy for witnessing among the members. The small Christian communities become part of the people with the cultural adaptation that is typical of the Lugbara people of Uganda. It should improve the lives of the members of the small Christian communities. There should be sharing and helping one another in the social, economic, religious, political, cultural and spiritual spheres. It should be based on a scriptural sharing and witnessing, of the Lugbara culture that will not only increase the participation, but will help in the realization of the Church's vision of evangelization and catechesis.

The parishes among the Lugbara people of Uganda have become a communion of small Christian communities, both in urban and rural areas. The community, typical of urban model, would include groups of people who live together in an apartment house or a row of houses, or houses of workers in an estate, or housing project such as police barracks. The community typical of a rural model would consist of the extended families in the same neighborhood or geographical area. This incorporates people living in huts within the range of an outer-station, chapel or parish Church.

The Lugbara ethnic group is closely knit, by its geographical and topographical settings. Their traditions and culture have made them altruistic. The Christian religion that they embraced requires loving their God and one another, to help anyone in need, their

neighbor or anyone they can reach - to forget oneself and sacrifice one's own desires in order to lift someone's spirit. Their chance of becoming a multitude of small Christian communities is great. Together they will be part of the universal Catholic Church. They already have contributed numerous priests and religious to their country's flock and to the world. Some countries of the world have given these people an opportunity to continue with their education and these same countries benefited, in turn, through the service given by these individuals in the various parishes of the United States, Canada, Germany, Italy, the Vatican and other global Catholic areas, were African clerics and religious are most welcome and are respected. Their love of God is strong. Their love of mankind has followed many trails and made differences beyond one's imagination. Some of these wonderful people have amazed many throughout the world, with their wisdom, faith, academic contributions and generous spirit. They don't lack simplicity and humility - the qualities that attract them to others. We believe that they will master the art of creating an effective, functional, faithful and pious model of a small Christian community, and then, like the apostles of old, they will go out and teach others to help their fellow man/woman unite others. They will stop and help the poor, the sick, the thirsty, the dying, and share what they have as they have done for centuries or perhaps longer than that. They will pray to the Lord, whose footsteps they have followed. These are the Lugbara ethnic groups. These are my people, in whom I trust and believe. These are the people I have written about throughout these chapters - the Lugbara ethnic group that I belong to, and the people I will always love.

A great deal of work remains to be done, but there is much hope for a successful result. I believe that an initial well planned synod should take place at the diocesan level on the small Christian communities. Someone who is very well versed in this area should plan a seminar that ought to be followed at the diocesan level. All of the bishops should come to an agreement before it is implemented. Every parish ought to review what they are doing in this direction and verify if their way is correct. Some local flexibility should be considered and approved. Once all this has been accomplished and approved, every parish within the Arua and the Nebbi dioceses should consider following the new rules to foster the development and growth of small Christian communities. The best way to do it is to use one pilot parish to experiment with the new ideas. If everything works out according to expectations, then an additional number of parishes should venture to try it. The result should be evaluated at some point to see if it meets the expectations. This is the time to correct problems and encourage people to follow procedures that work for their parishes. A time period should be set to evaluate the results and to decide if this is the correct way to put into practice the idea of the small Christian community as a pastoral priority in the Arua and the Nebbi dioceses, among the Lugbara people and in the Universal Church.

As recommended that the bishops of the Arua and Nebbi dioceses should make a synod to explain the importance of small Christian communities in their dioceses among the Lugbara people, I would like to outline how a multi-day conference on small Christian communities would run.

A plan for conferences on promoting small Christian communities for the Arua and Nebbi dioceses:

1. A date will be picked for next year in the dry season or rainy season for a multi-day workshop to be held in Pokea Seminary for the Arua and Nebbi dioceses. At least one year will be allowed for the planning, preparation and publicity in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses. Other dioceses in Uganda will be invited to send representatives for their own information.

2. Written notifications will be sent to every parish and outstations in the Arua and Nebbi dioceses (including the few small Christian communities in existence) with registration information. Each diocese will be asked to pay the cost for two representatives (parishioners) from each parish/outstations, and as many priests and religious as are able to attend without putting in jeopardy their pastoral responsibilities. Parishes may also provide financial assistance to help out.

3. An outline of the three day conference would be as follows:

   A. Registration

   B. It is expected that both bishops will be in attendance for the multi-day conference. All participants including bishops, priests and religious and laity are given an opportunity to experience what a small Christian community is like. This experience will take most of the first day and will include meal sharing and discussion and shared responsibilities in leading group discussions. Particular emphasis will be given to surfacing and fostering the development of lay

leadership. Clergy will be asked to stand back to allow the laity to experience leadership.

C. Distribution of packets of information containing:

I. Papal documents in support of small Christian communities.

II. Documents from the various synods in Africa in support of small Christian communities.

III. A map of each diocese showing where small Christian communities are located, that is, in the rural area, city or suburbs. This will also point out the need for much energy to begin new small Christian communities.

IV. Statements from each of the bishops of the Arua and Nebbi dioceses pledging full support for future efforts to develop small Christian communities in each diocese as a way of evangelizing and as a way of being local church.

V. Statements from the lay theologians in support of small Christian communities.

VI. Statement from the priests, catechists and leaders of small Christian communities.

VII. The names and address of each attendee will be carefully taken. A list will be made of attendees and a follow up summary of the multi-day conference will be sent to each parish and participant through the headquarters of each diocese.

VIII. Each diocese is to create and properly fund a small Christian community office and appoint priests or religious who will devote much of their time to developing small Christian communities throughout the diocese. It is recommended that these priests or religious schedule regular visits to the small Christian communities that are now operating, and encourage members for existing small Christian communities to accompany them in the effort to visit other parishes/outstations so as to demonstrate lay leadership and shared responsibility as new small Christian communities are brought into existence.

IX. A major celebration of the Eucharist will end the multi-day conference. At the conclusion the bishops from each diocese will issue a joint pastoral letter affirming their own commitment to small Christian communities and ask the cooperation of every pastor, priest, parish and outstation in helping to further develop small Christian communities through the area.

X. At the end of one year, each diocese will evaluate the progress that has been made. Every effort will be made to define goals, address problems, and to promote the continued growth and development of small Christian communities as a way of becoming local church. Through the diocesan news paper, and the diocesan supported radio broadcasts, articles will be printed, and programs will be broadcast to explain the need for small Christian communities, and to encourage Christians to become involved in their local parish or outstation. Because the members of the small Christian communities are supporting the parish/outstation, the local

diocese and the universal church, opportunities will be provided for each small Christian community to send representatives to the parish/outstation to report regularly on activities, progress, and difficulties. Each pastor will issue a written report to the diocesan office for small Christian communities outlining the number of such groups, their leadership and location, and give an evaluation of progress and/or difficulties.

XI. At the end of three years, the overall outreach to build up small Christian communities will be evaluated and changed if necessary so as to recognize and promote those small Christian communities that are doing well, and to provide needed assistance to those who are still struggling. The bishop of Arua and the bishop of Nebbi dioceses when they gather with their local clergy for regional meetings will make small Christian communities a continuing part of the agenda(s) of such meetings, and affirm the intention and commitment to establish small Christian communities in every parish throughout the diocese. Additional deanery or regional meetings to foster the growth of small Christian communities can be held as needed in both dioceses of Arua and Nebbi throughout the year.

A GLOSSARY OF LUGBARA WORDS USED IN THE DISSERTATION

Abi = Grand father.

Abipi = Maternal uncles of one's father or mother.

Abiola = Aringa people and the gods they worship.

Adripi = The term is sometimes used as a synonym of ***Otupi***, but ***adripi,*** is a general term for fathers-in-law and includes the father and paternal uncles of one's wife.

Adro = God the Creator.

Adro = God, the first and the highest.

Adroa = gods in collective meaning.

Adroa/ adrogoa = Lower spirits that are considered as the children of the highest spirit or gods in a collective term.

Adro ama papiri = God who saves.

Adro ba obapiri = God the creator of men/women.

Adro ba obapiri = God who created man/woman.

Adro ba dupiri = God who takes away people.

Adro ba fupiri = God who fights/ kills people.

Adro bua = God in the sky.

Adro 'bu o'bapi nyaku beri = God who create heaven and earth.

Adro ci = God who is present.

Adro ni ra = God who knows.

Adroo = Maternal uncle.

Adro ozoo fepiri = God who gives rain.

Adropi = Plural form of maternal uncles.

Adro vuu ipiru rii = God who is the owner of the world.

Adungu = String instrument.

Alelinga = The first Mosque in the clan of Renda.

Aluri pa u ko = Lugbara proverb, meaning, a single leg does not make sound. It stresses the need for community as an essential element in life.

Aku or Buru or Lico or seri = Home.

Ama ba aluni = We are one people.

Andrapuruka = The maternal Aunts - Mothers' sisters.

Andrapuruka or Awupika = Aunts in general.

Angu ndri basi = Life is sweeter in community or in company with others.

Atibo = servants.

Awupika = One's paternal aunts –sisters of one's father.

A'yipika = The term is used to describe the kinship link between a man's wife and his sisters and cousin sisters.

Ba ambo or Ba 'wara = The elder.

Ba bua = People in the grave or hole.

Ba odiru = The new people.

Ba si orijo dari eri ma eyo si = They erected that shrine because of his word.

Cere = Howl, the Lugbara use it for calling each other. It is also used to express joy or sorrow.

Edezo = Finds out and removes it with sacrifice.

Ei ede owi ndrisi Adroni = They sacrifice a goat to God.

Enya Jolo = Left over or the food ate in the morning, the remains of yesterday's food, fairly common among the Lugbara.

Enyati = Groups that attend one another's sacrifices or those who eat together.

Enyati = People who normally eat together.

Eri aliaro ; Eri iyi alea ; Eri ba bi azoro = It is short ; lives in water ; catches people while bathing and makes them sick.

Eri ma atii ma ori ede or owi amani aussi or ndrisi = They sacrifice to my father's ghost, a fowl or a goat for me.

Eri Orijo ma ta mbapiri = The spirit's priest, or the guadian of the shrine.

Iyi adro = Water ghost, an imaginary spirit who is believed to dwell in rivers or in water.

Jo = The hut or house.

Kali = Special walking stick.

Lico or Seri = Hedge - often refers to a large compound.

Ma abii ma ori = Ghost of my ancestors.

Ma atii ma ori ka mani ni = The spirit of my father has bewitched me.

Ma enya owi or obi ori tia = I offer bread or food before the shrine.

Mbaza ori owi or ede piri, eri eyo nze ori tia = The old man who offers to the spirits, he reports/ interprets the ghost's wishes/ answers.

Mukungu = Parish chief.

Mundu = People of rifle or gun - Europeans.

Nyapara = Village headmen.

Odipi = People of a man's clan, and it covers one's brothers, sisters, paternal aunts, uncles and cousins.

Odipi/Odupi or Kariba = One's clansmen/people - a group of direct social relations. It is a group of people from the same clan.

Ogua, Kome or Bili = Stool as special mark of the office of an elder or chief.

Onyere and Onyupazi = Are synonymous, meaning brother-in-law or sister-in-law. These are kinship links applicable to both husband and wife.

Onyereka or Onyupazika = The plural form of brothers-in-law or sisters-in-law.

Onyereka/ Onyupazika = In relation to the man, his ***Onyereka/Onyupazika*** are the sisters and cousin sisters of his wife.
Onyereka/Onyupazika = In relation to the woman, her ***Onyereka/Onyupazika*** are the brothers and cousin brothers of her husband.

Onyupazi/Onyere and Ayipika/Aipika = Brothers-in-law and Sisters-in-law.

Opi = The chief.

Opi = County chief.

Ori = Ancestral spirits, sacrifices and shrines.

Ori = Ancestral spirits together with the shrines erected to signify the presence of the ancestors.

Ori = Gatherings that took place on the occassion of these ceremonies and rites.

Ori = Expresses the reality of religious relationship which binds the living and the living dead.

Ori = Ancestors, shrines and sacrifices or ancestral spirit and ghost.

Oriba = Clan member.

Oriba = The same ancestor or people.

Oriba or Enyati = Family cluster.

Ori ba = Members of a clan or descent group.

Ori ipi = Man in charge of the spirits.

Orijo = Shrine (grass, mud, stone hut) of ancestral spirit/ghost.

Orindi = human soul.

Ori ti = Meaning mouth/ word of the ghost.

Oti or Otu = One's brother-in-law.

Otu or Oti = Brother of one's wife, but the term is also used in a generic way to describe the clansmen of one's wife.

Otupi = Brothers-in-law (Plural form of oti or otu).

Otupi = The term is used to express the opposite of brothers-in-law.

Oyanga or Oya = Communal work.

Suru = Matrilineal or patrilineal descent from common ancestor.

Suru = The clan.

Suru ba = Ethnic group.

Wakili or Joago = Sub-county chief.

Yamari = Ritual sacrifices and eating together.

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