

**Catholic Women's Participation in
Empowerment and Liberation Activities: A
Study of Small Christian Communities in Kenya**

By

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.



15/4/2004

Jane Nyawira Kabugi

Date

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors



15/4/2004

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	xvi
MAPS	xix
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	3
1.2 Objectives of the Study	4
1.3 Rationale for the Study	4
1.4 Scope	6
1.5 Limitations	8
1.6 Literature Review	9
1.7 Theoretical/Structural Framework	21
1.8 Hypotheses	24
1.9. Methodology	25
Endnotes	29

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	xvi
MAPS	xix
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem	3
1.2 Objectives of the Study	4
1.3 Rationale for the Study	4
1.4 Scope	6
1.5 Limitations	8
1.6 Literature Review	9
1.7 Theoretical/Structural Framework	21
1.8 Hypotheses	24
1.9. Methodology	25
Endnotes	29

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SETUP	31
2.0 Introduction	31
2.1 The Agikuyu Society: Background Information	31
2.2 Women in the Socio-Cultural Tradition	32
2.3 Proverbs and Taboos among the Agikuyu	42
2.4 The Concept of Motherhood in the Agikuyu Tradition	44
2.5 Old Age	47
2.6 Economic Livelihoods	52
2.7 Women and Education	53
2.8 Women and Political Participation	54
Conclusion	57
Endnotes	59

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH	61
3.0 Introduction	61
3.1 The Catholic Church in Kenya – A Historical Overview	61
3.2 The Archdiocese of Nairobi	63
3.3 The Archdiocese of Nyeri	66
3.4 Women in the Catholic Church	67

3.5 Women and the Small Christian Communities	78
3.5.1 Theological Justification	80
3.5.2 Historical Justification	81
3.6 Forms of Marginalization	85
Conclusion	95
Endnotes	96

CHAPTER FOUR

CATHOLIC WOMEN IN THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (SCC)	100
4.0 Introduction	100
4.1 Religious Development	101
4.2 Education Development	114
4.3 Economic Development	116
4.4 Socio-Cultural Development	119
4.5 Children and the Youth	121
4.6 The Dignity of Human Life	126
4.6.1 Women Peacemakers	126
4.7 Disability and Old Age	132
Conclusion	134
Endnotes	136

CHAPTER FIVE

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT	139
5.0 Introduction	139
5.1 Catholic Women's Disposition of the Beijing Conference	140
5.2 Women in Education and Development	149
5.3 Women and the Media	152
5.4 Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women	156
5.5 Natural Family Planning and HIV/AIDS Prevention/Control	157
Conclusion	166
Endnotes	168

CHAPTER SIX

LIBERATION CHRISTOLOGY AND MARIOLOGY: AN APPRAISAL OF THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITIES	170
6.0 Introduction	170
6.1 Religious Appraisal	171
6.2 Political Appraisal	184
6.3 Socio-Cultural Appraisal	192
6.4 SCC's Liberation Christology	196

6.5 SCC's Liberation Mariology	201
Conclusions	204
Endnotes	208

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	211
7.1 Conclusions	211
7.2 Recommendations	217
Endnotes	219
BIBLIOGRAPHY	220
APPENDICES	234

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to investigate the Catholic women's participation in empowerment and liberation activities in the Small Christian Communities of the Catholic Church. It aims at investigating how the SCC are avenues of liberation and empowerment for women at the grassroots level. To articulate this, a comparative study of women in urban and rural communities was conducted. It is the hope of this study that such knowledge will be useful to theology of women liberation and gender development.

The research was guided by the following objectives: To investigate Agikuyu traditional concept of women; to assess the Catholic women's participation in liberation and empowerment activities in the SCC; to assess the role of the Beijing Conference (1995) in the liberation and empowerment activities of the Catholic women and finally to analyse the Catholic women's liberation activities in view of Christology and Mariology as taught by the Roman Catholic Church.

The study was carried out in the Nairobi Deanery of the Archdiocese of Nairobi and Kieni North Deanery of the Archdiocese of Nyeri. The primary data was used to test the study's hypotheses: the

Agikuyu tradition demean the status of women as second class; the Catholic women in SCC participate in empowerment and liberation activities; the outcome of the Beijing Conference has had both positive and negative effects on Catholic women's liberation activities and finally, the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on Christology and Mariology conscientize the Catholic women on social praxis.

The study has seven chapters. Chapter one forms the introduction and background to this study with the statement of the problem, objectives, the rationale, scope, literature review, theoretical framework, hypotheses and methodology applied to achieve its objectives. Chapter two looks into the African traditional setup surrounding the socio-cultural, economic, religious, educational and political circumstances surrounding the lives of women. For the purpose of this study one ethnic group was identified as a representative variable. This chapter forms an axis through which the Small Christian Communities' participation in social praxis is discussed.

Chapter three gives a historical overview of the Catholic Church in Kenya to help the reader contextualise the study. Within this perspective the status of women in the Catholic Church is handled. The chapter goes further to discuss various forms of alienation facing particularly the women. The question of women's Reproductive Health issues are handled with special reference to family planning. This forms the basis of Chapter four which looks into Catholic women's

liberation and empowerment activities through the Small Christian communities.

Chapter five is a detailed analysis of different sources of women's empowerment besides the social teachings of the Church. The Catholic women, faced with cross cutting issues such as the HIV/AIDS scourge, identify themselves with other women to fight such diseases. The chapter looks at ways the Catholic women integrate themselves in different development activities for survival.

Chapter six is an appraisal of the Catholic women's liberation and empowerment activities with reference to liberation Christology and mariology. These are cardinal paradigms in liberation theology. Chapter seven are the conclusions, findings and recommendations of this study. This thesis has four main conclusions: The SCC are vital organs of the local church through which the Catholic women participate in empowerment and liberation activities. They are also important in the social, economic and religious development of its people. However, according to the primary data, this study concludes that these communities are not exclusively Catholic communities. People from different faiths such as Protestant churches were also found to be members of the SCC due to their openness to other faiths in their neighbourhood and concern for the less privileged.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	-	Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
ASAL	-	Arid and Semi Arid Lands
AMECEA	-	Association of Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa
ANV	-	Active Non-Violence
AOSK	-	Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya
APDK	-	Association of the Physically Disabled People Kenya
BVM	-	Blessed Virgin Mary
CBHP	-	Community Based Health Projects
CEW	-	Civic Education for Women
COVAW	-	Coalition on Violence Against Women
CWA	-	Catholic Women Action
CWS	-	Child Welfare Society
FAME	-	FAWE Award for Media Excellence
FAWE	-	Forum for African Women Educationists
FGM	-	Female Genital Mutilation (used interchangeably with Genital Cutting-FGC)
FIDA	-	International Federation of Women Lawyers
GK	-	Government of Kenya
GSP	-	Gender Sensitization Program
HIV	-	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HURINET	-	Human Rights Network
IRIS	-	Interlink Rural Information Service
IUD	-	Intra-Uterine Device
JP	-	Justice and Peace
JPC	-	Justice and Peace Commission
KEC	-	Kenya Episcopal Conference
KCSE	-	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KCS	-	Kenya Catholic Secretariat
KIE	-	Kenya Institute of Education
KCPE	-	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education

KPF	-	Kenya Pastrolism Forum
NASCO	-	National AIDS/STDs Control Programme
NCH	-	Nanyuki Children's Home
NGO	-	Non-Government Organizations
NFP	-	Natural Family Planning
PMC	-	Pontifical Missionary Childhood
PP	-	Pastoral Programs
RE	-	Religious Education
SCC	-	Small Christian Community(ies)
SEE	-	Social Education and Ethics
SMMT	-	Single Mothers and Mission Training
STDs	-	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
SOS	-	Save Our Souls
Sr.	-	Sister
TWOMS	-	Training Women on Management Skills
UDHR	-	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNFPA	-	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children Education Funds

7

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

ASSUMPTION This refers to the teaching of the Catholic Church that the body of Mary was taken directly to heaven after Her earthly life had come to an end. Pope Pius XII defined this dogma in 1950.

AUTHENTICITY It stresses on the concrete life of people, the uniqueness of the people, their consciousness – right to question life and their passion to establish freedom in the face of dependence. To establish authenticity, as applied in this study, is to create consciousness, liberty and independence in situations of alienation, marginalization, oppressive structures and dependence.

CATHOLIC WOMEN Women adherents of the Catholic faith, both religious (Catholic Sisters) and lay, who in their capacity as baptized (and confirmed) Christians perform their threefold apostolic duties: kingly, prophetic and priestly.

CHARISM The gifts of the Holy Spirit such as wisdom, faith, speaking in tongues (1Cor. 12:7-12).

CHRISTOLOGY The branch of theology that studies the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

COREDEMPTRIX A title reflecting Mary's cooperative role in the history of Salvation and redemption through faith and obedience.

DEANERY A subdivision of a diocese composed of various parishes presided over by a dean (a priest charged by a bishop to preside over one district of a diocese).

ENCYCLICAL A document authored by the Pope to the Catholic Church throughout the world. The documents normally consist of new official teachings or directives.

FEMINISM The term refers to liberation movements for the redemption of the oppressed women. It is also used to refer to women's liberation consciousness and empowerment.

FIAT The Blessed Virgin Mary's acceptance to collaborate with God's good will for the salvation of humankind (Lk. 1:38).

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION The dogma of the Church which proclaims that Mary was free from sin by the grace and privilege of God and by the virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, from the moment of Her existence. Pope Pius IX defined this in 1854.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY The process of Christian faith that consciously undertakes to transform a world in situation of dependence (unauthenticity) on the basis of the gospel.

MAGISTERIAL DOCUMENTS These are official documents containing authoritative teachings of the Church made by the Pope and the Bishops.

MARIAN MAXIMALISM Exaggerated veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary by some Catholic Christians, which is against the teachings of the Catholic Church

MARIOLOGY The branch of theology that deals with the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her prerogatives in the history of salvation.

PRAXIS A reflective action inherently oriented toward transforming a given historical situation in bid to establish authenticity as opposed to practice.

THEOTOKOS This is a Greek word attributed to the Blessed Virgin Mary meaning “God bearer” or Mother of God. The Church during the Council of Ephesus (431) attributed it to Her. Her maternity to Jesus Christ made it legitimate to address Her as *Theotokos*. The council ruled that since there was only one divine person in Jesus Christ, then Mary could be called the Mother of God.

VATICAN II This was the 21st ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church (1962-65) which, among other things, enhanced Catholic Christians’ understanding of the Church and which also opened the

Church to more of its own members, to non-Roman Catholic Christians and to the non-Christians.

VIRGINITY OF MARY This is a doctrine on Mary instituted by the Catholic Church that the act of the birth of Jesus Christ did not diminish Mary's Virginité but rather sanctified it. Mary, according to the Catholic theology did not have any other children. The brothers and sisters mentioned in the Gospel (Mk. 3:31-35) are taught as Jesus' next of kin or relatives. The liturgy of the Church celebrates and acknowledges Mary as the "Ever-Virgin", *Aeiparthenus*.

3

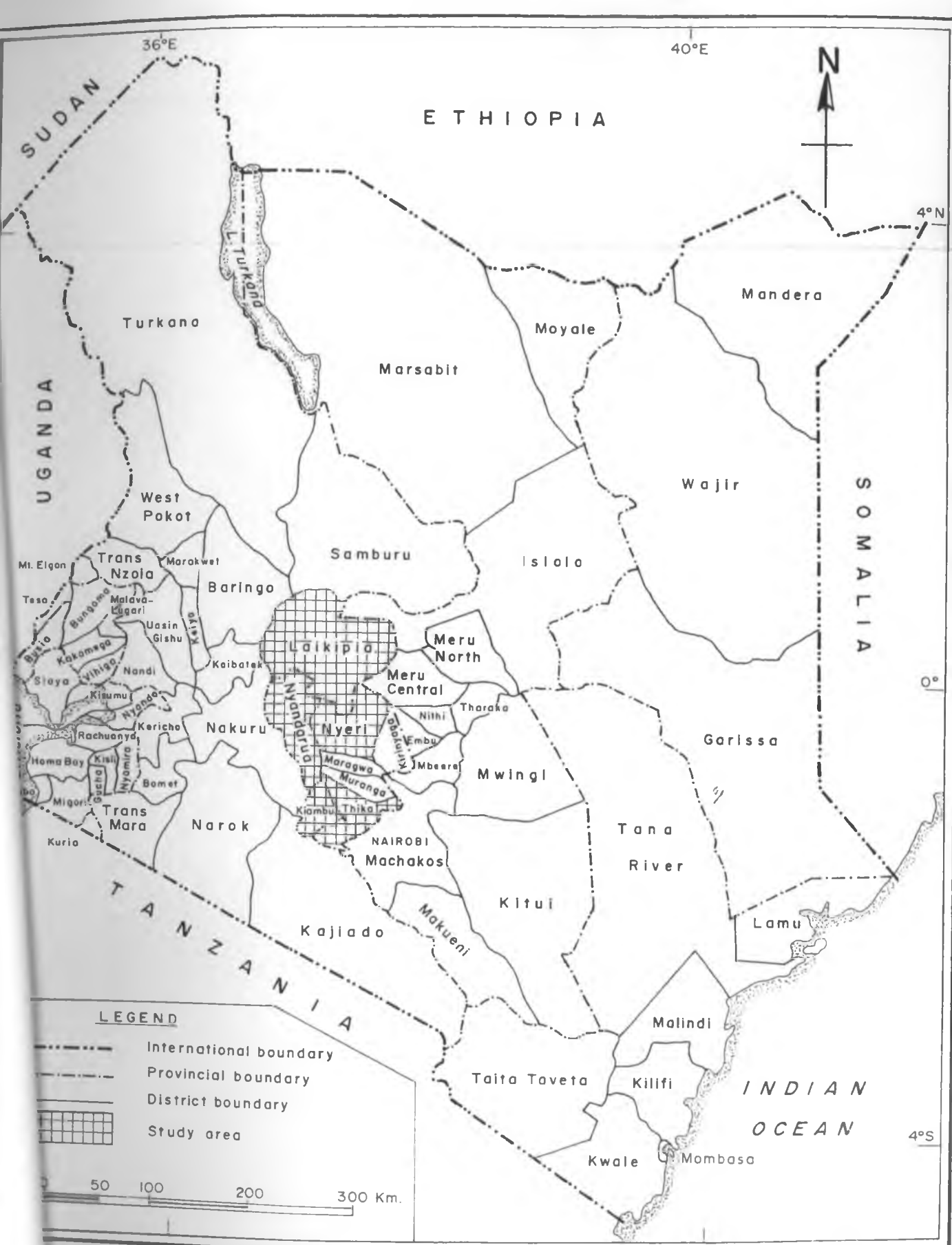







Figure 1 Location of the study area in Kenya.

Source: Survey of Kenya (Kenya Administrative Boundaries Map, 1998).

NYANDARUA

MURANGA

LEGEND

-  Archdiocese Boundary
-  Deanery Boundary
-  District Headquarters
-  Urban Centres
-  Study Area

NAKURU

MURANGA

Mangu Deanery

Gatundu Deanery

Gatundu

Githunguri Deanery

Githunguri

THIKA

Limuru

Thika Deanery

Limuru Deanery

Ruiru

Kiambu Deanery

KIAMBU

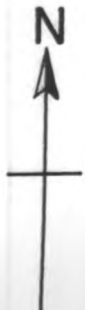
Ruaraka Deanery

KAJIADO

Kikuyu

Nairobi Deanery

Eastern Deanery

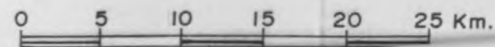


Western Deanery

Makadara Deanery

MACHAKOS

KAJIADO



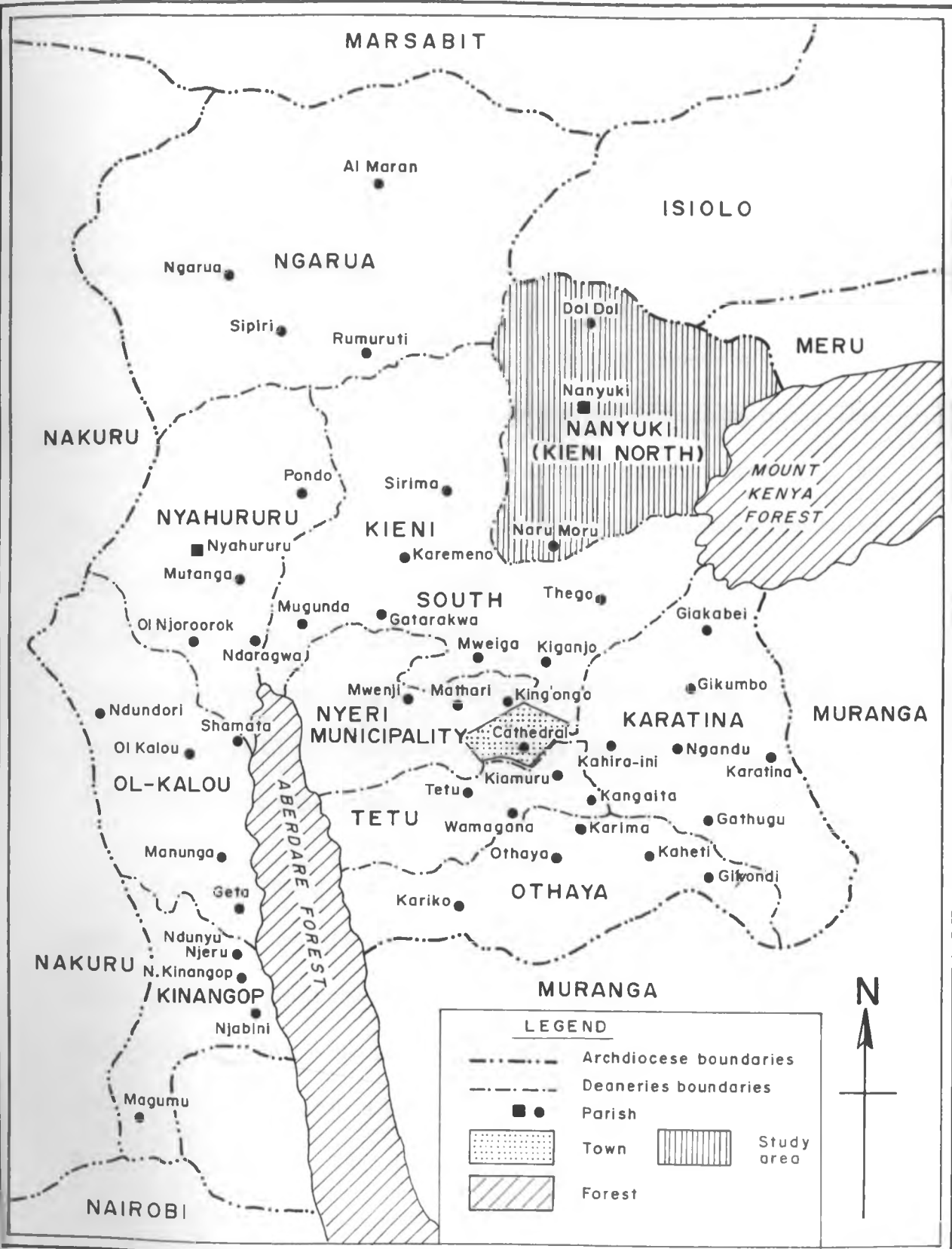


Figure : 3 Archdiocese of Nyeri Deaneries.

Source: Nyeri Catholic Secretariat Office, Nyeri.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The Catholic Church, guided by the patriarchal tradition of the Jewish cultural heritage has continued to subordinate women in leadership roles. This position otherwise referred to, as ‘biology is destiny’ is further enhanced by the African cultural setup, which creates and reinforces male dominance as opposed to female subordination. The theory of ‘biology is destiny’ also known as ‘theology of destiny’¹ is a disposition constituted by the Church and society situating femininity or women’s biology as normative to women’s roles. It marginalizes women both in the Church and society by limiting their participation in the social transformation in the name of their femininity.

The above theology has had Biblical implications for woman³ (Eve) as the supposed source of evil (Gen. 3). It is further enhanced by the anti-feminine Pauline declaration “which he reinforces with Christology: ‘the man is the head of the woman, and Christ is the head of the man’”² (cf. Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; and 1Cor. 14:33-36). This doubly jeopardizes women’s status both as marginalized and as women in the global village. However, to change such an oppressive attitude, recent studies exhibit a development of women’s consciousness in liberation and empowerment. Such consciousness has found roots in the mainstream Catholic

Church to the grassroots level at the Small Christian Communities (SCC) as this study endeavours to explicate.

This study therefore hopes to investigate the participation of the Catholic women in liberation and empowerment activities of all people through the SCC. The SCC are vital organs through which the activities of the Church are engendered. They are intended to make the local church (parish) self-reliant, self-sufficient and self-propagating. The women, as active members of the church enhance the above mentioned goals of the Church by participating consciously in liberation and empowerment activities.

The SCC have empowered women, who would otherwise not participate effectively in reflective actions aimed at transforming the social context that marginalise them, their families and the community at large. Different forms of oppression such as gender inequality, violence against women, poverty, retrogressive traditional cultures among other issues mostly affect women at the grassroots level. Such unauthentic issues disregard women empowerment and community development.

The study's choice of the Catholic women as the core of this field work endeavours to portray a feminine face of the mainstream Catholic Church, through women's participation as leaders, catechists, professionals, mothers, wives and sisters in the hierarchical and patriarchal authority within the Church and society.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The subject of women liberation and empowerment within the framework of liberation theology is not a modern phenomenon. It has intrigued various feminist scholars such as Rebecca Chopp, Anne Nasimiyu Wasike, Mercy Oduyoye, Elizabeth Fiorenza, H. W. Kinoti and Teresia Hinga to mention a few in striving for women's rights, liberation and empowerment. The liberation feminists acknowledge women's power to redeem and empower the society as beacons of hope for the repressed humanity and the rest of creation subjected to degradation through modern science and technology.

The subject of women as liberators, therefore, affirms women's consciousness in establishing authenticity in the face of alienation, marginalization and oppression. Such consciousness is known to stem from corporeal limitations and the awakening of gender mainstreaming in all avenues of development. This has led to women's concern to participate actively in liberation and empowering themselves as a response to conscientization of their roles both in the Church and society.

Most parishes of the Catholic Church are organized into Small Christian Communities (SCC) according to their geographical spread in which women seek to empower themselves to respond to unauthentic situations in their lives. The Church also plays an important role in conscientizing the Catholic women of their participation in liberation activities and empowerment as discussed in this study.

This study therefore hopes to investigate the role of women in the Catholic Church through the SCC as a means of establishing authenticity. To articulate this,

a comparative study of women in SCC within the rural and urban settings was conducted. There is no systematic and comparative study that has been conducted to investigate and articulate the activities of women in SCCs from both rural and urban settings. The present study hopes to fill this gap within the scope of women in liberation and empowerment.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

- 1) To investigate the Agikuyu traditional concept of women.
- 2) To assess the Catholic women's participation in liberation and empowerment activities in the SCC.
- 3) To assess the role of the Beijing Conference (1995) in the liberation and empowerment activities of the Catholic women.
- 4) To analyze the Catholic women's liberation activities in view of Christology and Mariology as taught by the Roman Catholic Church.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

The SCCs are the basic organs of the Catholic Church. They are characterised by the preponderance of women in various activities at the grassroots level yet the women are the least in leadership roles of the mainstream Catholic Church. Through this setup, women at the grassroots level recognise their capacity to play liberation roles not only for the women in the Church but also the surrounding communities (both women and men). The present study intends to articulate the Catholic women's liberation and empowerment roles at the

grassroots level through the SCC by doing a comparative study of urban and rural communities. It is the hope of this study that such knowledge will be useful in community development and gender mainstreaming. The study examines women as a participating majority in the small Christian communities.

The study's option for the Catholic women as the epitome of the field study is to enrich ourselves more on the women's participation in the society from an ecclesial point of view. The mainstream Catholic Church, through its tradition is hierarchical and patriarchal, with priesthood relegated to the male domain. This study endeavours to delve into the distinct roles of the Catholic women in and through the SCCs. Ana Maria Tepedino and Margarida L. Brandao assert the following with regard to women in relation to the marginalised, "women's sensitivity to the pain of others – women's capacity to suffer with, feel with, enter into a solidarity of compassion with others – renders them receptive to the problems of others, to the values of shared generosity, and to the struggle for handing on of the faith in the struggle for justice."³

The world conference on women (Beijing, 1995), the fourth in a series of United Nations World Conferences on women deliberated on equality, development and peace for women. Important themes such as poverty, health, economy, oppression and human rights among others were deliberated on. The Conference was a barometer of asserting women's consciousness, decorum and dignity in liberation participation as opposed to the stereotyped weak, "second class" and oppressed human being. The outcome of the Conference harmonized with Church teachings, according to the researcher, provides a pertinent pedagogy to liberation activities and empowerment. The present study, therefore, hopes to

analyse the contribution of the Conference within the context of women's consciousness and social praxis in the SCC.

This study present synergies of the social teachings of the Church, African cultural values and the consciousness of women in development as contribution to the study of women in liberation and empowerment. This is done within the context of liberation theology. The study underscores the importance of the role of women in establishing community development. It also creates an awareness of the role of interdependence in terms of empowerment within available resources in the communities and the need to empower women for gender equity. Such activities are geared towards the common good.

1.4 Scope

The research was conducted in Kenya within the confines of the Archdioceses of Nairobi and Nyeri as urban and rural settings respectively. The Archdiocese of Nairobi covers an area of 3,271 km², which comprises eleven deaneries namely: Nairobi, Limuru, Thika, Nairobi West, Kiambu, Gatundu, Makandara, Githunguri, Mangu, Ruaraka and Nairobi East Deaneries. The Archdiocese of Nyeri comprises ten deaneries namely: Tetu, Nyeri, Nyandarua, Kieni North, Kieni South, Karatina, Ol'kalau, Ngarua, Nyahururu and Kinangop.⁴ For the purpose of this study Nairobi Deanery (urban) and Kieni North Deanery (rural) of the Archdioceses of Nairobi and Nyeri were studied. This necessitated a comparative study of the two areas of study.

The following gives the site selection and description. More information on the study area is provided in chapter two.

- Nairobi Deanery comprises ten parishes namely: Our Lady Queen of Peace – South B, Holy Family Basilica, Consolata Shrine, St Peter Claver’s, St Paul’s Chaplaincy, Kenyatta Hospital Chaplaincy, St Francis Xavier, Strathmore Chaplaincy, Shrine of Mary Help of Christians and St Austin’s.

Nairobi Deanery was identified as the key urban deanery of Archdiocese of Nairobi. It has a cosmopolitan society with people of different ethnic, cultural and racial backgrounds. This provides the study with a well-blended sample of the respondents’ variables in terms of their cultures, races and ethnicity. The deanery has key Catholic projects and institutions, which have invaluable resources for the requirements of this study as opposed to other deaneries of the Archdiocese. These include Kenya Catholic Secretariat and the office of the incumbent bishop.

Nairobi, being the capital city of Kenya, is where most important social, political, economic, religious and educational activities involving the Catholic women are held and discussed. In addition, occasional public lectures on women liberation and empowerment and seminars pertinent to the progression of this study are held in Nairobi. The researcher had an advantage of participating in lectures and seminars relevant to this study owing to their proximity.

Kieni North Deanery in Laikipia East district was identified as representative of the rural population. It has three main parishes: Narumoru parish, Doldol parish and Nanyuki parish. Narumoru parish is predominantly Kikuyu community. The researcher is proficient in Kikuyu language and thus

communicated effectively and freely with the respondents who could not correspond in English or Kiswahili. Most of the respondents were semi-literate.

Nanyuki Parish also comprises a multi-ethnic community. It will thus enrich our study with a well-blended sample of variables in terms of socio-cultural, philosophical and thought forms of the respondents from a rural setting. Dol Dol parish is predominantly a Maasai community. The Maasai socio-cultural norms will enrich this study.

1.5 Limitations

A number of limitations were encountered during the study. These include suspicion by some of the respondents especially on issues relating to Kieni North deanery has three parishes with over twenty-five outstations and one thousand SCC. It was expensive and time consuming to reach these communities especially in Narumoru parish and Dol Dol parish. The researcher hired research assistants in these two areas. In some areas the researchers had to travel in a group of three for security reasons. This meant hiring and recruiting more assistants. The researcher had a total of seven research assistants within the area of study.

Language barrier was another limitation that the researcher encountered in Dol Dol parish. Dol Dol is predominantly a Maasai area. An interpreter was hired to facilitate communication. It was also tedious to translate some of the questionnaires into Kikuyu in order to reach more respondents.

The author also had to travel to Nyeri to collect more information on the Agikuyu tradition on women. This was an expensive but worthwhile exercise. Most respondents would not disclose their position on the artificial contraceptive, which the study revealed was widely used by most Catholic women besides the teachings of the Catholic Church against the practice. It was therefore not possible to effectively compare urban and rural perspectives on the methods of family planning.

1.6 Literature Review

This section looks at the relevant literature to this study. The literature touches on women liberation and empowerment, the SCC and violence against women. Literature on two important paradigms of liberation relevant to this study, that is Christology and Mariology, has been reviewed.

Mercy Oduyoye in an article “Violence Against Women: A Challenge to Christian Theology”⁵ gives a critique of violence meted out against women through cultural norms, sexism and patriarchy both in the society and the Church. These forms of degradation against women, according to Oduyoye, pose theological problems regarding the place of women in the Christian theology of creation, redemption and salvation. She challenges the sociological idealization of femininity as a manifestation of weakness by advocating for “political feminism” - a complementary and unitary approach between men and women in solving the evils meted out against women. She states that:

Feminism, the political stance developed to handle the sin of sexism insists that power and its use for violence against women by men, and by

human against the rest of creation, has to be redefined. ...Feminists insist on taking women into full account in all matters... But all who advocate the human dignity and equality of women and men are politically feminist.⁶

This article is important in validating women's credibility in their concern for the cry for freedom of humanity and the rest of creation. The present study investigates the role of women in enhancing the 'political feminism' against violence and gender inequality.

*Violence against Women*⁷ is a collection of papers by Kenyan women theologians such as Mary N. Getui, Nyambura Njoroge and Hannah W. Kinoti focussing on women's oppression in various socio-cultural and religious realms. Such challenges as rape, injustices, widowhood and sexuality faced by Kenyan African women are profoundly handled. The theological reflections forthcoming from such challenges are of paramount importance to women empowerment and liberation in this study.

Nyambura Njoroge in an article "Groaning and Languishing in Labour Pains" recounts her anguish as a church minister in relation to the plight of women from an ecclesial viewpoint. She pays attention to the need of recognizing, identifying and supporting those in dire need as a sign of solidarity with Christ: "As we engage in a concrete way in the struggle to eliminate suffering, we join Christ in his Personal journey to Golgotha, which he slowly revealed to his followers, both women and men."⁸ The article concentrates on the plight of women from an ecclesial point of view. There is therefore need to have a detailed study of other forms of marginalisation encountered by women.

*Feminist Theology from the Third World*⁹ is a collection of works of women theologians from Africa, Asia, and Latin America with a few exceptions from Israel, United States of America and the Pacific. It provides a critique of violence against women especially those perpetuated by patriarchy and sexism. The works emphasize doing theology from diverse socio-cultural, religious and philosophy of life.

Such reflections are further enriched by theological themes as Christology and Mariology, which this study has employed to appraise the SCC's liberation participation. The theology of women liberation conceived from the experiences of women in this book will assist the researcher to investigate the Catholic women's Christology and Mariology. The study will, however, focus on diverse forms of oppression that SCC respond to in bid to empower themselves.

Hans Kung in *Christianity: The Religious Situation of Our Time*¹⁰ gives a detailed study of the historical Christian paradigm shifts from the first century to post modernity. He brings to our awareness that although men predominated women numerically in the Church activities, women played equal feminine roles as martyrs, prophets, teachers of the gospel and consecrated virgins. Such models of women Christians as Blandina, and Perpetua and Felicitas in the martyrs trial acts of Lyons and Carthage respectively are cited. However, he provides a critique of the hierarchical structures, male domination and hostility to sexuality that he says has led to the disparagement of femininity. His concern to the feminine legacy is further enhanced by this study's reflection on the roles of women in the ecclesial milieu. This study also looks into contemporary social, economic, political,

ational and cultural aspects of Catholic women liberation activities in the

Elizabeth Fiorenza in *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-ry of Liberation*¹¹ explicates a feminist struggle in the socio-cultural and religious suppression of women with an ecumenical accentuation. Fiorenza is explicit in enhancing a feminist analysis of patriarchal structures and articulating men's liberation in the Church and theology. She calls on Catholic women to radical discipleship and realization of women as full human persons in partnership, autonomy and self-determination. The present study investigates the extent to which the SCC are participating in liberation and empowerment activities not only in the Church but also within their communities.

Allan Boesak's *Black Theology, Black Power*¹² creates an awareness of the need of (women) consciousness in any liberation undertaking. He characterizes liberation theology as christological among other things. Boesak is keen in distinguishing the suffering encountered in liberation as "oppressive suffering" and "redemptive suffering". That is: "suffering enforced upon people by others, by the willful inflicting of pain, crippling to one's resolve and initiative" and "suffering after the model of Christ to save others" respectively.¹³

The distinction between the oppressive and redemptive sufferings as described in *Black Theology, Black Power* becomes an eye-opener to this study in identifying multiple forms of oppression and sufferings faced by the Catholic women and their surrounding communities. The work is also important to this study in alluding to women's consciousness which (one's consciousness) according

to Boesak gives the oppressed and the liberators a basis of analyzing the oppressive situation in a view of establishing authenticity. The present study endeavours to use both christological and mariological investigations in explicating the activities of the Catholic women in the SCC.

P. N. Wachege's *African Women Liberation, A Man's Perspective*¹⁴ is a study on seven basic forms of oppression and exploitation meted out against women. These are political, traditional, economic, sexual, intellectual, ecclesiastical and social forms of oppression. The author further elaborates on ways and means of liberating women from their forms of alienation. He also provides Jesus Christ as a model and prototype for the African women. The present study uses both Jesus Christ and Mary the mother of Jesus as models of liberation. It goes further to appraise the Catholic women's contribution towards liberation and empowerment using the two models of liberation. This is done within the teachings of the Catholic Church and the understanding the SCC Christology and Mariology.

L. Boff and C. Boff's *Introducing Liberation Theology*¹⁵ is cardinal to this study's methodological approach to investigating, assessing and articulating the Catholic women's social praxis. Most fundamental to this study is the professional level of doing liberation theology upon which the present study is based. The book further tackles the key themes of liberation theology that include Christology and Mariology; the analysis forms the basis of this study's understanding of the relationship between these two concepts of liberation. Moreover, L. Boff and C. Boff provide insights into the basic questions/concern of doing liberation theology

namely: oppression, violence, domination and cry for freedom, which are the concern of the Catholic women liberation participation.

J. B. Nickoloff's book, *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*¹⁶ is an overview of Gutierrez's perspective on liberation and liberation theology drawn from his theological monographs, journals and public addresses. Gutierrez point of reference according to Nickoloff is the poor, who become the subject of liberation and liberation theology. He exhibits women as subjects of oppression and liberation and not as potential liberated and conscious liberators of the oppressed which is a task for this study. Gutierrez's Christology on liberation will serve as a reference to a deeper understanding of this study's Mariological – Christological co-relation in liberation praxis. The present study will, however, situate women as conscious liberated and liberators of the oppressed and oppressors who depersonalize themselves by distorting the image of God among the ignoble.

Patrick Ryan's "Evangelization as Liberation from the Perspective of the Poor: An analysis of the Theology of Evangelization of Gustavo Gutierrez"¹⁷ contextualises the theme of evangelization within the theology of liberation as perpetuated by Gutierrez. Evangelization, as handled by Ryan, challenges the Church to a fuller and existential praxis to a world faced by a history of oppression, dehumanization, poverty and a struggle for authenticity by the "other", the poorest of the poor.

Ryan's study on evangelization forms an important constituent of social consciousness and liberation since it gives "a sense of direction in enabling pastoral leaders to develop credible goals and strategies for evangelization; it can

assist in the formation of the skills required in a particularly difficult area of evangelization namely, the interaction of the Church with an oppressive socio-political order; ... can offer a bridge for dialogue and practical cooperation with non-believers".¹⁸ Ryan's work concentrates on evangelization as an aspect of liberation from the perspective of the poor. The present study looks into liberation and empowerment from Catholic women's perspective in the SCC.

Teresia M. Hinga in an article "The Gikuyu Theology of Land and Environmental Justice"¹⁹ accounts on the Gikuyu theological understanding of land, land tenure and land ownership from a cultural, religious and historical perspective. Among the Agikuyu, according to Hinga, Ngai (God) is the sole owner and distributor of land thereby giving them equal access to land use. The Agikuyu system of land distribution was, however, altered by the colonial and postcolonial legacy, which was typified by sexism and patriarchy. Women did not have land rights among the Agikuyu. She further notes that colonialism profoundly affected the Agikuyu acephalous system of communal organization subjecting women to marginalisation. She however explains that women have continually participated in fighting for human rights, dignity and empowerment. She cites Professor Wangari Maathai as an example of such women. Hinga's study looks into the position of women with regard to land, land tenure and land ownership within the Agikuyu tradition. The present study however further looks into other socio-cultural issues that subordinate women and how they counteract them through the SCC.

Karen Baker-Fletcher and G. Kasimu Baker-Fletcher in *My Sister, My Brother: Womanist and Xodus God-Talk*²⁰ present a mutual confluence of a

womanish theology and a mannish theology from a liberation standpoint. Karen and Kasimu, from a feminine (womanish) and masculine (Xodus) theological perspectives respectively provide analytical forms of oppression such as sexism, classism, ageism, able-ism, poverty and patriarchy; and liberation drawn from biblical and traditional theology.

Karen and Kasimu's book, being a dialogue between womanish and mannish theological analysis provides our study with a wide spectrum of constructive theological, ethical, political and economic ventures within the thought forms and contemporary philosophy. The dialogue provided is an epitome of a holistic liberation ethos of an egalitarian society, which this study endeavors to present. We shall, however, focus on the Catholic women liberation roles in the SCC. The present study will also construe and make available fundamental Church's teachings to compound such liberation participation.

Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Heart*²¹ highlights the efficacy of education in creating critical awareness among the people for a progressive political struggle and good citizenry. According to Freire, political awareness that can be achieved through education aggravates the political governance into an efficient, flexible and accommodative state of and for its people. It is through the synergy of a liberating education and political democracy that solidarity between the status quo and the marginalised is formed and propagated. Freire's need to create solidarity through education poses an argumentative disposition for this study's research on the role of critical consciousness in liberation and empowerment as propagated by the Catholic women onus towards the alienated. The present study draws its analysis of the women empowerment from the SCC. It has also looked into

various sources consciousness such as the SCC and the Beijing Conference (1995). These two contribute to liberation and empowerment as shown in the following chapters.

James H. Cone in *For my People: Black Theology and the Black Church*²² elucidate the double jeopardy of black women as blacks and women in North America. He acknowledges the importance of women's liberation movements within patriarchal, ecclesial and social structures. As a theologian he supports the role of black feminist theology giving insights into the development of women's fullest potential as human beings in the Church and community: "I firmly believe that the black church cannot regain its Christian integrity unless it is willing to face head-on the evil of patriarchy and seek to eliminate it."²³ Cones elucidation of the issue of women's liberation and feminine theology sheds light to authentic theological reflections relevant to this study. The present study complements Cone's work by investigating and presenting the contribution of Catholic women in SCC towards eliminating such forms of oppression.

Bernard Ugeux and Pierre Lefebvre in *Small Christian Communities and Parishes*²⁴ analyses the importance of SCC as a new ecclesial dynamism aimed at improving the level of Christian life. Ugeux and Lefebvre explain that the SCC as a model of being Church transcend economic and social differences thus facilitating communion. Through the SCC, the Christians participate in active liberation roles. The Christians also identify with the community's problems thus taking initiative and responsibility towards them in trying to create authenticity.

The SCC poses a revolutionary character of the Church whereby the Christians cease to be 'consumers' to becoming 'producers'. Preponderance of women in these communities is significant in women's participation in liberation participation. Ugeux and Lefebvre note that communities "have a wide social significance as a living sign of a gradual transformation of traditional mentalities and practices"²⁵ of women. This study investigates different forms of transformation that SCC participate in to empower women.

Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike on "The Role of Women in Small Christian Communities" gives a descriptive analysis of the various activities carried out in the SCC. They include the ministry of prayer and instruction in faith, ministry of expectant mothers, ministry of burial, ministry of alcoholics and sanctions, ministry of general reception of sacraments, ministry of Bible study or the Word, ministry for the poor, ministry of public health in general hygiene and the ministry to the sick and healing. The analysis is drawn from a rural setting of Cherengany (Eldoret Diocese) and Rarua (Kisii Diocese) parishes. This article provides an insight into women's roles in the SCC within a rural setting.²⁶ The present study will complement her work by providing a comparative analysis of women's roles in SCC from urban and rural settings. The study will further integrate the social teachings of the Church on Christology and Mariology in light of the Catholic women's liberation participation.

Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike in an article "Mary the Pilgrim of Faith for African Women"²⁷ gives a comparative analysis of the Blessed Virgin Mary's paradigm of discipleship as presented in the Pauline literature and the Gospels. According to Nasimiyu, Paul situates Mary within Her motherhood unlike the Luke's Gospel,

which highlights Her as the “heart of the drama in the Bible”. Mary’s *fiat*, discipleship and participation in God’s salvific plan in human history and historiography are presented as Luke’s point of reference in his infancy narrative. This espouses a feminine approach in the pilgrim of faith.

Nasimiyu gives a mariological development in the Church, which she says was later relinquished with the coming of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. This development gives a basis for the author’s analysis of Mary’s position as a paradigm of faith for the African Catholic women. She gives three different perspectives of Catholic women’s understanding of Mariology: the traditional and contemporary socio-cultural perspectives; Biblical perspectives and experimental perspectives. These perspectives are significant to this study in the explication of the SCC’s understanding of Mary as a model of liberation in their daily activities. The present study will include Catholic women’s understanding of liberation Christology.

Jon Sobrino in *Jesus the Liberator*²⁸ is an important Christological study from a liberation perspective. His Christology is not only contextual³ in the sense that it responds to contemporary life situation of socio-ethical and ecclesial changes in Latin America, but it also responds to the universal significance of the crucified Christ among the suffering and as Good News (liberator) to the oppressed and dehumanized. His Christology centers on Jesus Christ in His totality: “his service to the Kingdom of God, his relationship to ‘God-the-Father’ and his death on the Cross.”²⁹ The present study will include Mariology from a liberation perspective to complement Christology as presented by Sobrino. The two models of liberation will further be used to appraise the Catholic women’s activities.

Ivonne Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer in *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*³⁰ offer an important study with anthropological perspectives towards Mariology. This book's hermeneutics for a Marian theology provides us with an important fundamental basis for a relational Christology and Mariology. The authors' close scrutiny of scriptural analysis of the Virgin of Nazareth will help us create a profound elucidation on Mariology. However, the present study will draw theological reflections from the social teachings of the Church.

Michael Schmaus article on "Mariology"³¹ is based on the Biblical and theological understanding of life and prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Her place in the history of salvation. Schmaus postulates his sentiments from the synoptic Gospels as redacted by the evangelists and from the Pauline Letter of Galatians (4:4) on and about the Blessed Virgin Mary. He makes it clear that the early life of Jesus of Nazareth can only be understood within the confine of Mary's Motherhood which indicates that "dedication to Christ in faith has a Marian colouring".³²

Schmaus does however indicate that such a coloring is faithful³³ to the kernel of the Gospel since "Mary is where the salvation of Christ came to man in the world, not just as an objective entity but as the movement of Christ towards man."³³ He further exemplifies the motherhood of Mary as existential, comprehensive, personal and spiritual. Mary's *fiat* is presented as an intrinsic obedience in the divine change and commitment to God's salvific plan for humankind. This article gives insights to the pedagogy of Mary within the Catholic Church. Mary is an important paradigm of liberation emulated by the SCC. This study goes a step further by looking at the SCC conception Mariology.

It is apparent from the above literature analysis that women's consciousness to liberation, empowerment and authenticity is imperative. Christology and Mariology are also important themes in women's theological reflections in a bid to create empowerment and liberation. Women theologians, all over the world, use their existential experiences for authentic theological reflections to enhance women's liberation consciousness. Secondly, in light of the above analysis, it is apparent that no explicit study has been done to focus on Catholic's women liberation and empowerment activities through the SCC from rural and urban communities. This study therefore hopes to fill this gap by providing a comparative study of SCC in rural and urban settings.

1.7 Theoretical/Structural Framework

This study has adopted two main theoretical/structural frameworks: the structural framework of liberation theology as taught by L. Boff and C. Boff and the theory of Christian Humanism as taught by Pope John Paul II.

Liberation Theology is defined as a new way of living faith. It is praxis of liberation through the Christian living. Different levels of oppression subjected to different people in various regions make liberation theology handy and relevant in establishing social praxis. It is also a contextual theology. This has led to the development of diverse levels of liberation theology. These include Black Theology in South Africa, Black Power theology in North America and feminist theology in North America, Europe and Africa.

The liberation movement of women is a consciousness that can be discerned from the experiences of women in subordination. Different forms of feminism have been instituted in trying to reassert, to transform and to reconstruct the position of women as full members of the society. They include liberal feminism (which look into the legal and political equality for women), radical feminism (endeavour to liberate women from patriarchy) romantic feminism (hope to create feminist consciousness in the public order) and socialist feminism (seek equal opportunities in production and reproduction for women).³⁴

In the Christian arena, a dialogue between feminism and theology from the perspective of the experiences of women in subordination is done. This is referred to as Christian feminism. It is a theology of praxis done within the parameters of the Christian understanding.

The study's concern for the Catholic women in liberation and empowerment activities in Kenya can therefore be qualified as a Christian feminism. To create a proper understanding of the Catholic women, a historical overview of the Catholic Church in Kenya in view of the Catholic women in liberation consciousness is necessary. The study draws insights from the establishment of the present day Church in Kenya within the scope of this study. Important constituents of the local Church, the Small Christian Communities in which the women fully participate in the Church are studied. It is from this point of view that the field study and analysis will be appreciated.

The second theory applied in this study is the theory of Christian humanism as taught by John Paul II.³⁵ Christ first instituted Christian humanism when he united himself with every man through the incarnation thus restoring the dignity of human person as the image of God. The pope as the head of the Catholic Church identifies himself with this humanism in the defense of human freedom and human rights. It is a humanism that speaks for the voiceless accounting for the needs of the marginalised and the oppressed.

Christian humanism commissions every individual to seek and identify with the truth. According to the pope, the search for truth is a human characteristic basic to human reason and true humanism. Such truth seeks to answer the fundamental questions of life in quest for social praxis. Through the conviction that every human is a moral agent, the pope challenges Christians to struggle towards a moral entity. This struggle entails confronting that which presupposes unauthenticity rather than 'avoiding' levels of alienation and marginalisation. Therefore, Christian humanism is a defender of human rights and human search for social praxis. In trying to establish authenticity, Christian humanism holds a universal onus towards humanity. It uses evangelization as purposeful search for truth.

It challenges Christians to participate in liberation through lay apostolate and in personal and interpersonal relationships. Christ as the center of this humanism sets forth a paradigmatic and fundamental option for the poor. Through works of charity the Christians are entailed to othorpraxis within their own

parishes irrespective of the religious affiliation of the poor and marginalised people.

Christian humanism risk criticism of world politics for its commitment and defense of human freedom and human rights. For instance the Church supports workers' unions in fighting for their rights in good working conditions and right remuneration. Liberation participation is therefore a challenging task. It addresses human liberation through faith and reason by questioning and seeking to answer the meaning of life through Christian understanding. It also assumes an integral human liberation from socio-cultural, political, economic, educational and religious marginalisation of women and men. It is a humanism that is conscious of the problems of humanity and seeks to respond to them.

The theory of Christian humanism is imperative to the study of Catholic women participation in liberation and empowerment activities in Kenya. It is within this theory that the liberation and empowerment activities of the Catholic women in SCC are interpreted.

”

1.8 Hypotheses

To achieve the foregoing objectives, the study was guided by the following hypotheses: -

- 1) The Agikuyu tradition demeans the status of women as second class.
- 2) The Catholic women in the SCC participate in empowerment and liberation activities.
- 3) The outcome of the Beijing Conference had both positive and negative effects on Catholic women's liberation activities

- 4) The Roman Catholic Church's teachings on Christology and Mariology conscientize the Catholic women on social praxis.

1.9 Methodology

The following methods were employed to realise this study.

Secondary Data Collection

In the secondary data collection the study enriched itself with related corpus of works; such libraries as Hekima College library, Catholic University of Eastern Africa library and Jomo Kenyatta Memorial library were consulted.

It is important to mention the validity of Christian tradition to the contribution of feminist Mariology and liberation Christology since not all things were recorded in the Gospel narratives (cf Jn 20:30-31; 21:25) owing to the redaction-theological perspectives of the evangelists. The author concentrated on the synoptic Gospels due to their concurrence and peculiarities and “for the centrality of the divine person of Jesus, with his announcement of the Kingdom, his liberating actions, and his death and resurrection”.

Primary Data Collection

Administration of questionnaires, oral interviews, discussions and participant observation methods were employed in the primary data collection. The parishes and the parish priests were the entry point of any data collection in the parishes. The priests had to consent to the research work in their parishes. It is through them that the questionnaires were administered and collected. Fr. Franco Crabo

(Nanyuki parish), the dean of Kieni North Deanery, gave the researcher a recommendation letter to conduct research in Narumoru and Dol Dol parishes. This made it easier for researcher to operate in these parishes.

Oral interviews were conducted to individual or groups of Catholic women during the activities of the SCC. Discussions on the role of women in community development through the SCC were held during this time. Note taking was employed to record the information. The researcher also used the participant-observation method to have an experiential knowledge during the activities of the SCC. The researcher is also a member of one of the SCC in Nanyuki parish and interacts freely with the Christians. This method was therefore applied with no suspicion from different SCC in Nanyuki parish. Liberation theology required the researcher to insert oneself into the life situation of the people since its theological approach begins with experiential knowledge.

1.9.1 Sampling Procedures.

The sample of informants used for the study was divided into three categories; the Catholic lay women, the nuns and the clergy . The following methods of sampling were employed.

1.9.1.1 Simple random sampling

The researcher used the Churches' registers to identify representative SCC within a given parish to represent different locations. This was especially done in the rural setting (Nanyuki and Narumoru Parishes) where there are more than five

hundred SCC in each parish. Ten SCC were consulted in each of the two parishes. All SCC in Dol Dol (three) were consulted.

1.9.1.2 Purposeful sampling

This method was used to identify priests in all the parishes. The study, therefore, had a sample size of twelve priests from both Nairobi Deanery and Kieni North Deanery. The Catholic lay women SCC leaders and religious women were selected through this method.

A sample size of 156 Catholic lay women and 10 women religious were consulted. 11 priests were also interviewed. The researcher had the privilege of attending some workshops organised by the Catholic women such as 'Wanawake wa Amani' in Nairobi. The participants were representatives of different parishes of the Archdiocese of Nairobi such as Kiambu, Thika and Nairobi. The outcome of discussions held with the participants enriched the study with experiences of women from varying socio-cultural orientation. Other seminars attended include Life Skills Planning organised and administered by the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) and sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The training covered such areas as gender roles and equality, STIs/HIV and AIDS, harmful traditional practices and preventing pregnancy among other areas relevant to this study.

Data analysis

Data analysis and interpretation included the editing of questionnaires to determine their accuracy and uniformity.

Questionnaires with major response errors were discarded. Secondly, the responses were coded according to different categories of liberation activities of the Catholic women. The coded data facilitated the analysis as collected from the field. Finally, the edited and coded data was then interpreted within the framework of the research problem and the hypotheses. Descriptive analysis was employed to interpret and present information on Catholic women's liberation participation.

2

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CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SETUP

2.0 Introduction

This chapter delves into the African traditional setup surrounding the socio-cultural, economic, religious, educational and political aspects of the lives of women. As noted in chapter one, the study area comprises a multi-ethnic population. For the purposes of this study, only one ethnic group, the Agikuyu will be considered as a representative variable. This will form an axis through which the Small Christian Communities' participation in social praxis is deliberated.

The chapter facilitates articulation of the roles of women in contemporary society and forms a continuity of ideas from which the Catholic women adopt the teachings of the Church. It also creates an avenue through which the Catholic women's activities in the SCC can be understood. The chapter will enable the reader to further conceptualize the study in terms of women's liberation activities within a patriarchal (Agikuyu) society as will be explicated in the following chapters.

2.1 The AGikuyu Society: Background Information

The Agikuyu people are found in all parts of Kenya although their homeland is in central Kenya. They are the largest Bantu ethnic group in

Kenya, comprising 4.5 millions of Kenya's population. ¹ The Agikuyu claim one common ancestry of Gikuyu and Mumbi who were created by God, (*Ngai*). According to this tradition, Gikuyu and Mumbi begot ten daughters namely Wanjiku, Wangari, Wacheera, Wairimu, Wambui, Mwethaga, Wanjiru, Wangui, Wamuyu and Waithira. The ten daughters later formed the ten Agikuyu clans. These are Agaciku, Ambui, Accera, Angoi, Anjiru, Angari, Aithirandu, Airimu, Aicakamuyu and Ethaga. ²

The Agikuyu people had no centralized government. Every social aspect, including their political organization had a religious tone. There was no distinction between religion and social life. The Agikuyu lived communal livelihoods, the most important aspect of their social set-up being the age-grade system (*riika*). At least each member belonged a *riika*. ³

They worshipped and made sacrifices to *Ngai* (God) under the *mugumo* (fig) tree facing *Kere-Nyaga* (Mount Kenya). Only the elders and about two women (who had reached menopause), and two small children- a boy and a girl- who were said to be clean went for religious rituals near the ³ *Mugumo* tree.

2.2 Women in the Socio-Cultural Tradition

Women acknowledged the birth of a boy child with five ululations (*ngemi*) as compared to four in case of a girl-child in the Agikuyu traditional setting. The child was referred to as '*kaana ga kairitu*' (girl child). The mother only left the house after the child's "cord '*rurira*' fell off". Other practices of gender disparity among the Agikuyu included the mode of first

breast-feeding. The girl child was first fed to the left breast while the boy to the right one.⁴

A young girl was referred to as '*kairitu*' (pl. '*tuiritu*'). They assisted their mothers in chores such as sweeping the house, stoking the fire, and fetching water and firewood. Uncircumcised girls mostly at puberty stage were known as '*irigu*' (sing. '*kirigu*'). At this stage, the girls also assisted in such household chores as fetching water, baby-sitting, sweeping the house and ran small errands for their mothers, among other duties.⁵

After circumcision, as a *rite of passage*, which is also known as clitoridectomy, the girls attained the adulthood status, thus becoming *airitu agima* (grown up girls). The just circumcised girls were known as '*ciiumiri*'. During circumcision, a girl was supposed to display courage by not crying or flinching. This was interpreted as readiness and willingness to become an adult, earning her much respect from the members of society. The ladies were then entrusted with more responsibilities such as weeding farms, washing clothing for children and preparing food for the family. If a girl happened to menstruate before circumcision, women were reluctant to sponsor such cases during initiation since it was perceived as a bad omen. Men of her age group also declined to marry her in case of any misfortune. If she ever got married, the father would decline to accept her bride price.⁶

The purpose of female circumcision as a *rite of passage* was initiation into adulthood. At this stage '*muiritu*' was said to acquire discipline, thus abandoning her juvenile demeanour. Respect for the younger ones and the

older age sets was seen as an outcome of the *rite of passage*. Circumcision was also a way of preparing the girls for adult roles and marriage.

According to Monica Wairimu, the girls at this time were allowed to mix freely with prospective future husbands. This *rite of passage* was also said to create links between the initiates and the living dead. During the recuperation period, the initiates were instructed on the Agikuyu customs and their roles as women. They were not expected to intermingle freely with the younger girls or boys who had not gone through the *rite of passage*. The initiates also gained respect in the community as adults. After the *rite of passage*, the initiates could identify themselves with their age mates with whom they shared experiences, dances, songs and jokes, among other things.⁷

Some of the contemporary Agikuyu women still uphold this cultural practice. They circumcise their daughters, claiming that the practice enables the latter abstain from sexual intercourse for long periods, especially in the slum setting. This, according to one of the respondents, minimizes teenage pregnancy among school going girls. Grace Wanjiru, another respondent, expressed that she finds it “important to practice the ritual because clitoridectomized girls do not engage in sexual promiscuity.” She believes that the Agikuyu customs should not be discarded inspite of activism against female genital cutting (FGC). Abandonment of female circumcision is seen as ignorance and non-respect of the Agikuyu culture. Some of the women who practice female circumcision fear traditional taboos or curses in the family lineage.⁸

One respondent explained that militating against effects of such curses includes circumcising all women within a family setup, including the women married into such families, failure to which the families are believed to risk such calamities as deaths of young children. Women, married into these families, who spurn the practice, are in most cases divorced, to protect the members of the family from the above calamities. This practice is handed down in the family lineage. Some girls in the villages go through the initiation rite due to peer influence and to gain respect within the community.⁹

According to a contemporary female circumciser in Laikipia, popularly known as Mama Omo or Blue Omo (Amina Nyata) who abandoned her 51-year-old practice in the year 2000 through the initiative of the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), FGC deprives women of their sexual pleasure. Amina Nyata is an elderly Kikuyu lady who performed different kinds of female genital cuts to girls from diverse communities in Majengo slums, Nanyuki. FGC, according to her, makes sex and childbearing a nightmare to some of its victims especially the infibulated. In the latter case the victim is subjected to what the lady called 'mal mal' (or stitched) to facilitate the healing process. During this time, the initiate is issued with a special stool with a hole at the center through which she responds to the call of nature.¹⁰

The respondent explained that only a small virginal opening for passing urine is left, the whole idea being to protect the virginity of the girl. The 'surgeon' is invited to reopen the vagina during marriage, to facilitate sexual intercourse for the newly married couple. This way the virginity of the woman is assured. Such experience is painful, according to the respondent, due to the

fresh wound inflicted on the victim. Child bearing becomes more painful to such women. Some women also die due to hemorrhage, after circumcision or during childbirth.¹¹

The respondent used to initiate girls as young as forty days old as well as married women from different ethnic groups, including the Kikuyu, Boran, Maasai, Meru and the Kisii both Christians and Muslims. She claims inheritance of the practice from her late grandmother as her only source of livelihood. For young girls, less than one year old, she earned Ksh 200 and for teenage girls, Ksh. 500 while women paid her Ksh. 1000. If a lady had started menstruation or had intercourse before initiation, Nyata had to “apply a special ointment on the face to avoid blindness”.¹²

According to her, a traditional circumciser should not have sexual intercourse before or after initiation. This, she believed facilitated quick recovery among her patients. She also advised the initiates’ parents not to engage in sexual intercourse during the time of initiation. Such precautions were said to have a religious significance since a traditional circumciser was said to possess mystical powers. The *rite of passage* was “a deeply sacred one, for not only does it mark the ushering in and flow of life (for the sex organ is a symbol of life), but in it lies the survival of the family, clan and the entire community. Traditional circumcisers were highly respected in the traditional society, unlike today when they are derogatorily regarded as ‘female genital mutilators’, uneducated and ignorant of complications associated with such practices.

“Circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls was the gateway to marriage. No uncircumcised man or woman could marry. The circumciser is therefore a key player in the unfolding drama of life and is an instrument in the creation of wholeness for individuals and the community”.¹³

The above respondent (Nyata) eventually quit the practice, her only source of income. The NCWK has yet to fulfill their promise to her of a different economic backing. With her aged mother to take care of, she threatens to revert to practicing FGC if she is not supported economically by those campaigning against it. She lives in Majengo slums, Nanyuki.

The circumcision of girls and women among some Catholic faithful is still practiced because “there is no time that the Church stood against it as a *rite of passage* that did not appear to affect the religion of the people or that of the Catholics.”¹⁴ The Catholics, according to Leys taught an ethic favourable to the life situation of the Africans. The missionaries avoided provoking the Africans which suited the social conditions of the Africans.¹⁵

In a group interview with priests in Nyeri, the clergy gave the following reasons as to why the Catholic Church did not bother to preach against the practice:

- 1) The religion of the Agikuyu was rooted in their cultural and traditional values.
- 2) The missionaries found the initiation of girls in the Kikuyu land not interfering with the faith that they preached. Thus, there was no need to ask them to shun it.

- 3) The Kikuyu could not listen to empty preaching that did not touch their customs (cultural values). They could not appreciate any preacher who castigated their cultures and customs as explained below:
- 4) The method mostly used by missionaries to bring about termination of the practice was to tell the converts that all traditions of the people were evil and from the devil. This wholesale condemnation of culture turned people away from the Christian faith. The fact that those who preached against the practice were also Europeans similar to those who proceeded to occupy people's land was no witness to the preachers' sincerity.¹⁶
- 5) The Agikuyu were bound by taboos regarding the *rite of passage*, which they could not forego.
- 6) The bible does not forbid the practice.
- 7) The *rite of passage* was associated with adulthood among other reasons. It was, therefore, meaningful to the people. According to the clergy, the missionaries who campaigned against it termed it evil, and instead, wanted to introduce their own customs.

Ephigenia W. Gachiri explains in her book, *Female Circumcision*, that the Catholic Church did not publicly denounce female circumcision, as compared to the Protestant Churches for instance the Church of Scotland Mission who "went all-out to outlaw the tradition".¹⁷ The Catholic Church, among others, was responsible in the evangelization of the Archdiocese of Nyeri hence the continued practice of female circumcision.

The formation of African independent churches and schools in the Agikuyu land also helped to sustain the practice, thus paralyzing the efforts of the Protestant missions' campaign against FGC.¹⁸ In 1929, CMS

demanded that their followers denounce the initiation rite. Many children whose families continued with the rite were denied the right to education. This prompted the Agikuyu people to petition the colonial government for the establishment of Agikuyu Independent Schools, which were 'entirely free from missionary influence, both in education and religious matters'.¹⁹

In the Agikuyu tradition a lady (*muiritu*) was expected to remain a virgin until the time of marriage. After child bearing, a woman was known as *mutumia*. In case of single motherhood through premarital pregnancy, she was referred to as '*gicokio*' and could only be married as a second wife and sometimes by older men. A woman whose children were young and uninitiated was referred to as '*kangei*'. According to Jacinta Mugure, the main duties of the *kangei* were to take care of their children and organize their homes. They also prepared food for their husbands, and helped during big social functions in organizing and preparing food for the occasion.²⁰

The women whose children had undergone the *rite of passage* were referred to as *Nyakinyua*. This group of women was part of the decision making body on issues affecting their families. The *nyakinyua* women were consulted with communal decisions. When the children were old enough to get married and bear children the woman gained a new status of *cucu* (grandmother). The great grandchildren later recognized her as *maitu* (mother). By now the woman was advanced in age. Mothers were highly respected in the society, thus socially stigmatizing the barren women.

The Agikuyu women were circumcised annually to avoid the taboo of menstruating before the ritual, hence the saying that women have no age group (*rika*). It is only those whose initiation coincided with boys' circumcision that claimed *rika*. The age group names were given in accordance with occurrences near or during the time of the ceremony such as '*rika ria ndege*' (the 'age group of aircraft'). This was associated with the first plane that flew over their land. '*Rika ria ndege*' was around 1907. Another example is the '*rika ria ng'aragu ya mianga*' (1943)- (the famine of cassava). During this period people fed mostly on cassava, hence the 'age group of the cassava drought'. Similarly '*rika ria muthaithi*' (around 1924) was during the time that construction of bridges began using what they called *muthaithi*.²¹

The age group system was important to serve as a reminder of the age of the people. The system also served, according to Mary Wambui, as a system of assigning roles and responsibilities to the members of the community. A person's age was important in attaining special ranks for men such as counselors. Women, normally appointed by elders, were assigned the responsibility of carrying food for the warriors.²²

Age-mates respected each other and could not engage in shameful acts, for fear of social isolation. Normally, women married men of their age, except in cases where single mothers married old men as second or third wives or to replace deceased wives. Men as well, could not marry women older than their age groups. However, younger women could be married by elderly men, thus becoming incorporated into the age group of

their spouse despite her age. In such cases the tradition required that the woman be accorded the same respect given to her spouse by the community.

Women joined together as an age group during social functions such as traditional songs and dances. Certain foods such as *njahi* (black nutritious beans) and *ucuru wa mukio* (fermented porridge), were prepared. The other age group accorded respect, especially among older age groups were instructors to the younger groups. Decisions pertaining to public governance were left to older age groups. If one age group became notorious in immoral behavior, the others avoided it. If a member went wayward, he/she was always penalized. The existence of such penalties, which were heavy in most cases, made individuals comply with moral and social obligations, to protect the integrity of their age group as well as their family. "If a STD (sexually transmitted disease) hit an age group, it was possible for it to spread within the age group and not to others. This is because people joked, played and visited one another as *per* the age group. If one man for example wanted to marry a girl from another age group, they were fined by their age mates (*mburi ya murangano*).²³

Age groups were, therefore, valid in serving as checks and balances of the community progress. An age group was known by something extraordinary that they had done such as cattle and sheep raids and also protecting their families in case of men. Apart from their names and families or clans, persons were identified with these groups. Persons of the same age group respected and identified with one another.

2.3 Proverbs and taboos among the Agikuyu

The life of Agikuyu women was restricted by certain taboos, *migirow* or *thahu* that demeaned and oppressed women. The Agikuyu people also had proverbs that had little regard for women. As Grace Wamue illustrates in “Women and Taboo among the Kikuyu People”, taboos mainly regulated sexual behaviour, social behaviour, social interaction, cooking habits, eating habits and interrelations between women and in-laws.²⁴ M.N. Kabetu, J. Kenyatta, Stanley Gathigira have enlisted various taboos which checked the lives of the women. Such taboos include:

- a) A menstruating woman could not hold another woman’s child. A woman was said to be unclean.
- b) A woman could not serve food to a man using her left hand. This was seen as a sign of disrespect.
- c) A woman could not cross over her husband while he was seated. If it so happened, they would not engage in sexual intercourse again. Such a woman would get divorced.²⁵

A close look at these three taboos gives an impression of the women’s subordination in the Gikuyu society as compared to that of men. A woman had to be cautious of her status and service with regard to men. Women were dehumanized by taboos that restricted every aspect of their lives. This exposed women to ridicule especially if they had no private life, even menstruation was community affair and the day to day activities were directed by the community taboos.

Some taboos were used to protect women for instance against rape. Raping was regarded as *mugiro* (taboo) and when such a case was reported, it was the duty of the medicinemen to liberate the raped and the rapist from the unrighteousness. The raped woman was cleansed by a medicineman with the use of '*tatha*' (goat's waste from the intestines) and '*itharigo*' (goat's leg). He would dip the '*itharigo*' in '*tatha*' and make the girl sip as she spat. This was what the medicineman would say:

Tahika ... tahika wariga...

Tahika maria wikite...

Tahika maria ugite na utaugite...

Tahika maria uii na maria utoii...

Tahika wariga.....

(Vomit... vomit what you do not know...

Vomit what you have done...

Vomit what you have said and not said...

Vomit what you know and do not know...

Vomit what you do not know...).

²⁶

This was a purification/cleansing ritual done by the medicinemen to the raped girls. This purification ritual of 'vomiting the evil deeds' was also used in other forms of cleansing such as cleansing a man or woman who engaged in sexual relations with someone who had not undergone the initiation *rite of passage*.²⁷

The community also had proverbs that demeaned the status of women. They disregard women as slanderers, untrustworthy, troublemakers, unfaithful, unstable and with no legal force. The following are examples of Gikuyu proverbs about women.

1. *Muici na mundu muka atigaga kieha akua* (He who stole in company with a woman, will live in fear until she dies - Woman conceals only what she knows not).
2. *Mutumia na Kionje ni undu umwe* (A women and an invalid man are the same – Words are for women, actions for men).
3. *Mundu muka ndatumagwo thiri-ini* (A woman is not sent to collect debts - Let women spin and not preach).
4. *Mundu muka na iguru itimenyagirwo* (Woman and sky cannot be understood - Woman, wind and fortune are ever changing).
5. *Nyamucucu, kanua ni koinagirwo ithigi* (Woman, remember that the mouth is sometimes covered with a branch - A woman cannot keep a secret).

C. Barra in *1000 Kikuyu Proverbs*²⁸ gives a number of proverbs relating to the subordination of women in the community. The Agikuyu women were socialized in subordination and internalized the same traditions that have continued to alienate them. The same tradition is still passed on to the contemporary thus affecting their participation in women empowerment and community development. Tradition and culture has also led to gender disparity in the activities of the small Christian communities as shown in the preceding chapters.

2.4 The concept of motherhood in the Agikuyu tradition.

Motherhood in the Agikuyu traditional setup was highly regarded and seen as a means of propagating the ethnic group. It was seen as a way

of propagating the family name. For instance, in the Gikuyu society, the first-born boy child is named after the paternal grandfather, while the girl is named after the paternal grandmother. This gives precedence to paternity among the Agikuyu. It is only in single mother family (not married) that the children are named after the maternal side. By virtue of motherhood, a woman was respected. As Mary Wachira and Jacinta Wanjohi explained: "A home without children had neither laughter nor happiness. Parents took delight in educating their children. Attachment of mothers to their children is so much such that even when a child is delinquent, mothers would never abandon them. Even when convicted, they (children) enjoy encouragement and support from their mothers."²⁹

Motherhood gave women a new status in society and respect was associated with calling the women by their children's names such as '*nyina wa ngania*' (mother of so and so). They would also be greeted as '*wakia maitu*' ('I salute you mother') by their children or people of their children's age group. Any other form of salutation was regarded impudent.

Infertile women, according to Maria Waruguru, were ostracized. Barrenness was seen as a discontinuity of the family, clan and the entire ethnic group, since child bearing was a respected occurrence. Motherhood "kept a home warm and made the parents proud".³⁰ The concept of motherhood in the Agikuyu tradition is likened to the motherhood of Mary in the Catholic theology. The Agikuyu oral tradition of origin stemming from Mumbi takes root in the cultural identification of the people. Mumbi is seen as the mother of the Agikuyu people as explained at the beginning

of this chapter. The names of her nine daughters still form the clan names of the Agikuyu people.

In terms of applicability, such orientation is analogous to and befits the attitude expressed by the Catholic women on the question of Mary and Her Son Jesus Christ. The Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) now becomes the mother of the Christians taking precedence of the Mumbi conception of motherhood in the contemporary. The Blessed Virgin Mary (B.V.M.) now becomes easier to identify with. Mary's motherhood was also easily accepted by the Agikuyu due to their believe that Mary had also undergone in the initiation rite. The Agikuyu translation of 'virgin' Mary was *muiritu*. As indicated earlier traditionally *muiritu* is a circumcised girl among the Agikuyu, hence the conclusion that Mary was circumcised.³¹

By similar application, the importance of the role of a mother has symbolically made the conception of the relationship of Christ and Mary an acceptable doctrine among the Catholic women respondents. Loreshina Wanjugu expressed the view that "women love and are attached to their children just as the Blessed Virgin loved her son Jesus Christ. The witnessing of the life and death of Jesus by her mother through pain and perseverance has made most Catholic women identify with the Blessed Virgin Mary as the mother of the Church." She further explained that "the attachment of mothers to their children and their love for them is associated with the love accorded to Jesus by His mother Mary. The happiness of this Nazareth woman when she bore Jesus is equated to the happiness mothers

derive from their ability to give birth. The barren identify with Mary mother of Jesus who is able to pray for them”.³²

2.5 Old Age

Old age reflected good social status that gave people vital responsibilities to the family and society. The most important responsibility was that of managing the family or the homestead (*mucii*). A homestead comprised the men, their wives, children and members of the extended family. The duties of the old women and men included being custodians of morality and the Agikuyu customs.

Old women had the responsibility of educating the young children and inculcating good morals in them, through narratives and riddles. This was seen as a “process of inculcating in the children the feeling of maturity so that the child would grow up to be *mundu mugima wa kwihokwo* – a mature reliable person”³². Narratives were not only given to children but also young men and women, to teach them good morals. An example of such narratives is *Anake Atatu na Mwari wa Nyina* (Three Men and their Sister) which was narrated to the researcher by Mary Wanjiru Kingori; aged ninety-three years (see appendix for the story as narrated in Kikuyu and translated in English).

The story was narrated to the youth. Although its main theme dwells on the moral behavior of the young and their social obligations towards other people and communal property, the narrative also depicts the roles and

responsibilities of the elderly. We also learn the custom of the Agikuyu people concerning the aged. It portrays the elders as people who practiced polygyn marriage. An elder could have more than one or two wives.

It was also the duty of the elder to divide his property among his sons to avoid conflict. We also learn that among the Agikuyu people, girls could not inherit property, mainly because they were to get married later. As mentioned earlier, it was the duty of the elders to ensure that the raped girls were cleansed. It had to be reported to the elders who were to deal with the rapists, but in this case Marua had killed the three brothers.

The narrator intended the young men and women to know the implications of irresponsible behaviour like stealing or attacking people at night. This was to instill fear regarding any intended but bad actions. It was also to teach them that raping was a taboo (*mugiro*) and that it was forbidden. That is why they had to undergo cleansing. The song in the narrative was meant to emphasize the need to take seriously other people's fears or problems. If Marua had heeded to the fears of Cinji she would not have been raped. This narrative therefore was meant to inculcate good morals in the young as they matured. They were expected to live honest and exemplary lives for the younger ones to emulate. It was also the duty of the men to protect the rest of the society. Marua is depicted as a brave character; ready to fight for his sister. The tone and mood of Marua's song is that of a brave fighter, with a lot of confidence.

Besides being moral guardians, the elderly women also served as midwives. They were said to be 'ritually clean' because they had reached menopause and could not symbolically spread ritual uncleanness to the newborn. They were also experienced and could not harm the new born out of their hands, which would lead to the death of the child: "*Muciarithania amathagwo mutumia mukuru utuite maciara ni undu niwe utangigwatia mwana ucio thahu, tondu ndacokaga kuonanwo nake ni arume*".³³ (The most suitable mid-wife was an elderly woman who had reached menopause because she could not contaminate the child with uncleanness since she was past child bearing and sexual intercourse.

Other roles of the elderly women, according to one informant, included keeping others company during house construction. The elderly women would mind the cooking pots to add firewood as required and check on cooking water level to avoid burning the food. In effect, the elderly women would instruct the *kangei* (newly married women) to add water (*kuorera mai*) if necessary. The *kangei* also sent the elderly women to run simple errands as the Gikuyu saying goes: "*mukuru niatumagwo no kurumwo atarumagwo*" (Elderly can be sent but not abused). This depicts a cordial and symbiotic interrelationship between the young and the old. Other duties performed by the old women included making gruel (*gukia ucuru*), mashing food (*gukima irio*), baby sitting, fetching water and firewood. The very old women stayed in the homestead and were fed and taken care of by other able bodied family members.

The elderly were seen as custodians of morality, a source of wisdom and above all, sources of blessings and curses. According to one informant

blessings “are not just when a parent or the aged says ‘*nindakurathima*’ (‘I have blessed you’). Pleasing the elderly is also perceived to invoke blessings. On the contrary, anger or disrespect meted out against the elderly is believed to invoke curses.³⁴ Angeline Wambui talked of stomach pains ‘*mara magekundika*’ (‘intestines tying themselves’) due to anger especially among women, as a sign of unhappiness, which in most cases was interpreted as a bad omen.

Other forms of blessings took the form of casual utterances by the old upon receiving help from the young. For instance if a young girl fetched firewood or water for an old woman, the latter would sit on the firewood and say, “*uyu uyu, arekaguo orouguo*” (may the same be done to her in her old age). If one visited or did something handy for the old, the latter would say “*uroririkanaguo orouguo*” (may you be remembered the same way”).

The aged also used other forms of blessings such as spitting saliva on the chest several times when something good was done to them and would say, ‘*Ngai arokurathima*’ (may God bless you) or ‘*urorima gukumia*’ (may you sow on fertile grounds). There were also other types of blessings such as *kurathima kwa horohio* (reconciliatory blessings), *kurathima na mata* (blessing with saliva), *kurathima na iria* (blessing with milk), *kurathima na uuki na ugimbi* (blessing with honey and millet), *kurathima na ngoima* (blessing using goats meat), and *kurathima na njohi* (blessing using local brew).³⁵ The Agikuyu, therefore, had various ways of blessing or cursing the obedient and the disobedient, respectively. The fear of evil spirits and contracting leprosy (*mangu*) made the victims strictly observe the curses.

The modern conception of old age differs from the traditional in the sense that while for instance, respect to women is still expressed through the above mentioned salutations (*wakia maitu*), some women resent being publicly addressed as mothers. Pastor John Gakinya once witnessed an elderly woman who was greeted with respect '*wakia maitu*' , (greeting to you mother) by a youth, upon which she responded as follows:

Nokangeithia wakia maitu!
Ndimaituguo nii?
Tandora wega!
(How dare you say greetings to you mother!
I'm I your mother?
Look at me carefully!)

According to the informant such women resent being publicly associated with old age. No wonder Samuel Gitau, quoted in H. W. Kinoti's Ph.D. Thesis: "Aspects of Gikuyu Traditional Morality" said:

There is no 'Gikuyu-ness' left. Gikuyu laws, customs and traditions have been erased... Righteousness is gone. The righteous parent is dying sooner than later from grief. When he steps out of his homestead he sees things he does not want to see." ³⁶

In the traditional Agikuyu society, old age was not really a problem or a disadvantage under normal circumstances. However, their husbands sometimes neglected aged women, especially the eldest in polygyn marriages. One respondent explained that when *athuuri* (male elders) went to dance, they would sit down in a circle *nigetha mainie thumbi* (to show off their crowns) and those who performed well attracted young women (two or three) who stood behind them as admirers. The incompetent elder had no admirer and would go home without a woman. Such men were regarded as *ombani* (attracting women) and in most cases they married their female admirers,

hence neglecting the eldest wives. Thus the Agikuyu would say '*maguta makuru matinaga rwimbo*' (old fat sings no song). This proverb was also applied to the old *ciumbani* by the younger *ciumbani*. This proverb means that unlike the young, the old women folk have no admirers.

2.6 Economic Livelihoods

The main source of livelihood among the Agikuyu was agriculture. The men cleared the bushes ready for planting, while the women prepared land, in addition to sowing, weeding and harvesting. Such responsibilities were undertaken through pulling together in communal labour or "harambee" system where women would organize themselves in-groups for tilling the land, among other tasks. The *kangei* and the *nyakinyua* played a big role in the economic development of the society. Traditionally, a woman "owns little apart from the right to cultivate her husband's land, own household items like pots, pans, grinding stone, a mortar and a thistle, axe, garden tools like machetes and hoes and such simple items. She also owns the foods, usually grains stored in her granaries and which she has harvested in her fields."³⁷

Women managed the family food supplies, consequent upon which they ensured storage of sufficient food to last the family till the next harvest, in consultation with the husbands. As Kenyatta explained:

The surplus grain is sold immediately in the markets to satisfy the (family) needs. If there are no immediate needs, the surplus grain is kept and sold later when there is scarcity of that particular grain in the markets... A wife, who efficiently manages the economic affairs as

well as other duties in her family group, is highly respected not only by her group but also by the entire community.³⁸

The socialization of the women in Agikuyu society made them comfortable about not owning property in terms of land. This tradition is generally adhered to even today, in most cases depriving women of economic empowerment thus marginalising women. In other gender disparity related issues of domestic violence against women are common mainly due to lack of economic empowerment. However, recent efforts in gender awareness and education of women have improved the situation of women. Feminists are fighting for affirmative action to empower women socially, economically, educationally and politically.

2.7 Women and Education

Traditionally, knowledge was transmitted informally. Education among the Agikuyu entailed transmitting the cultural values of the community to the younger generations, through the various *rites of passage*, circumcision being the most conspicuous. During such ceremonies those to be initiated into adulthood learnt cultural norms and practices of their people. As E. Gachiri explains:

The whole initiation period is a time of linalilty when the girl accepts all the wisdom of the tribe without questioning. Some of the education ... covers all behaviour and relationships between husband/wife, sponsor/initiate, age-mates, in-laws, co-wives, stepchildren, young/old, medicine men/women. In short, much of the culture is explained to the initiate to prepare her for her new status as an adult member in the community.³⁹

The *rite of passage* comprised internalizing the people's culture through religion, history, medicine and all other aspects that the group found worth transmitting to their children.⁴⁰

The mothers saw to it that the children learnt their family responsibilities by helping their mothers in the daily chores. Children were also taught using lullabies and folk tales. After puberty, most informal learning was acquired through other older women such as aunts, grandmothers, godmothers and women of the same age as the mothers of the children. Mothers instructed young girls on various duties like harvesting, milking and fetching firewood. There was no formal education in the traditional Agikuyu culture.

2.8 Women and Political Participation

The Agikuyu political organization was that of a stateless society; that is, they did not have a centralized government. They instead had two ruling generations of Mwangi and Irungu. Each generation was made up of elders who exercised authority throughout the Agikuyu land for about 30 to 35 years.⁴¹ The same duration was taken to form the next ruling generation, hence administering the Agikuyu 'country' alternatively. The young men had no political authority. Elders also acted as judges, entrusted with justice without favoritism and in most cases the litigating parties were contented. The elders were cautious in administering justice; hence the Agikuyu would say: *cia athuuri inyuagira thutha* (the elders drink afterwards that is, after the others). This proverb depicts wisdom as characteristic of the elders.

The elders also served as the country legislators and “it was their duty to preserve and interpret the tradition, make new rules where necessary, administer justice and authorize military operations”.⁴² They reconciled conflict partisans and established peace between two warring parties. The male elders’ power were counterchecked by the elderly women’s council (*jama ya atumia*) which militated against any mal-treatment and harassment of women. In cases of wife beating and neglect of family responsibilities, women would demand fines (*ngoima*) from such men.⁴³

Circumcision of girls facilitated women’s participation in the socio-cultural arena. As an adult, “a girl can from now on express her opinion in public and be listened to by the elders. The girl can now become a leader at the many levels in the community and be able to make acceptable decisions.”⁴⁴

But the colonization of Kenya saw a new turn of events by women through active participation in the political arena. During the Mau Mau uprising, for example, the Agikuyu women fed the freedom fighters while others joined the fighting men in the forest. Responsible women were chosen within a given area to fight alongside the men, while other women delivered food to certain collecting points, for the Mau Mau to pick at night. The women would not betray freedom fighters to the colonial authorities. Women also educated the children on the role of the Mau Mau in fighting for their political freedom.

Thus women were at the forefront, actively fighting for Kenya’s political liberation. An outstanding example of such courage is Mary Muthoni

Nyanjiru who was murdered for fighting for the release of Harry Thuku. Cora

A. Presly relates Nyanjiru's story as follows:

According to an eyewitness, the crowd remained fairly calm until Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru, a Kikuyu, galvanized the crowd into action. She accused the crowd, which would not free Thuku. She especially blamed the men for this and told them they should rush to the police station and free Thuku by force of numbers. The crowd surged forward and the British opened fire. An eyewitness to the incident estimated that 56 people were killed ... Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru, the first woman to be killed in a politically motivated challenge to the British, was not just a chance bystander in the crowd...⁴⁵

Other women risked torture and imprisonment by joining the guerilla camps in the forests to serve as soldiers. Elizabeth Gachuka is another example of women's participation in the political liberation movement in Kenya. She was arrested in 1952 and jailed for three months in a Nairobi jail, joined Nyandarua (Aberdares) forest later and operated in the military operations with male warriors between 1953 and 1955.⁴⁶

During this uprising, women suffered death and loss of their loved ones. Some suffered the pain of witnessing the murder and burial of their husbands in their houses. Some freedom fighters were killed by home guards and buried at fireplaces in their huts while women kept silent on the issue, and made fire and prepared food at the same positions to conceal such cruel murder cases. Such women had the burden of counseling their children to help them cope with such traumas. One of the respondents described with pain how she saved her father from the home guards by applying tobacco on his eyes and covering him with a goats skin. The pain in his eyes helped him appear sickly and weak. By lying to the homeguards of the death of her mother, she was

forced to drag her father back to the house as a young girl to prove his inability to walk.⁴⁷

With the death of most men in the society and others living in the forest as Mau Mau freedom fighters, women were forced to become sole breadwinners in their households. Such problems were only alleviated by the social cohesion of extended families, which catered for the welfare of many people as well as the less fortunate. Such communal sharing can now be seen as an aspect of the Small Christian Communities.

Conclusion

The foregoing is an endeavor to understand the African (Agikuyu) traditional setup within the context of the women's roles and status. This study deals with the liberation activities of women cutting across cultural barriers. But for the purposes of this study the Agikuyu were selected as a representative variable being the dominant group in both the areas of study. This chapter gives the reader the background information of the Agikuyu women through which most of their activities are channeled. It is important to understand the socio-cultural issues affecting the lives of women to understand the strengths and limitations manifested in their liberation and empowerment activities.

The chapter has attempted to trace the life of Agikuyu woman from childhood to old age and their participation in the community activities. The subordination of women is distinct in the Agikuyu community. Examples of

taboos and proverbs that demean the position of women in the community are cited. Women are labeled weak, untrustworthy and unpredictable. Most women have been socialized and internalized in the same socio-cultural aspects that marginalise women. Through conscientization women are participating in liberation and empowerment activities as discussed in the following chapters.

However, women played important roles in the socio-cultural, economic and educational areas of the Agikuyu people. The initiation of the girls was an important aspect of women, which marked their readiness to undertake adult roles. Motherhood was also venerated. The next chapter looks at the Catholic women in the Catholic Church to help the reader link the socio-cultural and religious aspects surrounding the lives of the Catholic women as they participate in liberation and empowerment activities in the SCC.

7

Endnotes

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CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

3.0 Introduction

This chapter gives the historical overview of the Catholic Church in Kenya to help the reader contextualize the study. Within this perspective the status of women in the Church is handled. The chapter further gets into the socio-economic survey of marginalization of people within the area of study to facilitate an analysis of the Catholic women's liberation roles through the Small Christian Communities (SCC) as will be presented in the next chapter.

3.1 The Catholic Church in Kenya – A Historical Overview

The Catholic Church may be said to have made its first appearance in Kenya in 1498 when Vasco da Gama (a Catholic explorer) erected a cross on the seashore of Malindi. This was followed by a visit of St Francis of Xavier on his way to India in 1542 and a community of 600 Kenyan converts at Mombasa in 1598 under the Augustinian priests. The Mombasa martyrs in 1631 are also a significant indication of African conversion to Christianity. The Portuguese did missionary work at this time. Their establishment along the coast led to a conflict between them and the Arabs, which thwarted their missionary work.¹

The present day Roman Catholicism in Kenya can be traced against the background of papal policies of Pius IX (1846-1878). His pontificate saw the

establishment of St. Joseph's Society for foreign missions (Mill Hill Missionaries) in 1866. The Mill Hill Fathers were the Dutch, English, German and Tyrolese English – speaking missionaries of the Roman Catholic.²

His successor Pope Leo XII (1878-1903) created the Vicariate of Zanzibar in 1883 under the Holy Ghost Fathers with John de Courmont as the Vicar Apostolic. The present day Archdiocese of Nairobi was established from this vicariate in 1953. Leo XII also saw the extension of the Holy Ghost Mission to Mombasa in 1890. The Holy Ghost Fathers later founded a mission in Mombasa in 1890 and Bura in 1891. Their efforts along the Kenyan coast marked the beginning of their missionary work in Kenya.³

The Holy See also granted the Consolata Fathers the Vicariate of Nyeri for its missionary work in 1909. The work of the three missionary groups- the Mill Hill Fathers, the Consolata Fathers and the Holy Ghost Fathers- led to the evangelization of Kenya. They exercised their missionary work separately up to 1952. It was only in 1953 that Kenya became an ecclesiastical province during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958). This gave the former Vicars Apostolic, who ruled their separate jurisdictions, in the name of the incumbent pope, the right to become bishops of their established dioceses.⁴

As G.M. Ogutu explains, “the creation of the province led to the establishment of the hierarchy which included: His Grace John J. McCarthy (Holy Ghost), Bishop Charles M. Cavellera (Consolata), and the Rt. Rev. Bishop Fredrick Hall (Mill Hill), being in charge of the dioceses of Nairobi,

Nyeri and Kisumu, respectively”.⁵ The following is a brief history of the Archdioceses of Nairobi and Nyeri which comprise the area of study.

3.2 The Archdiocese of Nairobi

The history of the Archdiocese of Nairobi can be traced back as early as mid-1800s. It is attributed to the innovative and laborious input of the French Holy Ghost Missionaries. The Archdiocese of Nairobi was by then part of the Vicariate of Zanzibar which extended along the coast of the Indian Ocean from Cape Guardafui as far as Delgade ⁶. During this time the vicariate had no western boundary; rather, it had a permanent Catholic mission station which was established in 1863 on the Island of Zanzibar.

The mission was later expanded on the mainland in Bagamoyo, Mhonda, Mombasa (1891) and Bura near Voi (1892). The construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway saw a missionary outreach to what can now be termed as the establishment of the Archdiocese of Nairobi ⁷. St Austin's mission is the oldest parish in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, hence its reference as “the mother Church of Nairobi”. It was founded in 1899 with the help of Chief Kinyanjui targeting the Kikuyu country.

This mission, according to the Holy Ghost Fathers was in the outskirts of the city –Nairobi- that gave them the impetus to build a central mission the present day Holy Family Basilica. With the growing population of Africans in Nairobi, Fr Blais opened for them the St Peter Claver Mission. The present day St Peter Claver's was built in 1931. The interior missionary work in Kenya

which is credited to Bishop Allgeyer saw an extension of other missions namely: Riara Mission (1904), Mangu Mission (1906), Riruta Mission (1909), Kalimoni (1912) and Lioki (1913).⁸

The Vicariate of Zanzibar had a vast area extending from the island of Zanzibar to the present day Rift Valley. Its first apostolic vicars were Emile Allgeyer, John Neville and John Heffernan. In 1953 the ecclesiastical province of Kenya was founded. Since this time (1953) other missions namely Mombasa in 1955, Kitui in 1956 and Machakos in 1968 were excluded from the vicariate thus the present day Archdiocese of Nairobi was formed⁹. By 1953 there were three vicariates entrusted to the three mission societies. 1953 is a landmark in the history of the Catholic Church in Kenya. During this year the Catholic hierarchy was erected. The vicariate of Zanzibar became the Archdiocese of Nairobi comprising of Nairobi Province and districts of Kiambu and Thika.¹⁰ The diocese of Nyeri among others was also created. Other parishes in the Archdiocese of Nairobi have gradually been established with the increase of population.

The Holy Ghost Fathers are credited for their work in coffee plantation in Nairobi. It is significant, however, to note that the success of the coffee plantations is attributed to the tireless work of the Gikuyu women. Through their contact with the missionaries, they also got baptized as early as 1900.¹¹ Besides their work in coffee plantations the Holy Ghost Fathers are recognized as the first to make available the Kikuyu grammar and a Kikuyu catechism which was to be used later by the Consolata Missionaries.

His Grace Raphael Ndingi Mwana a' Nzeki is the current bishop of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. His predecessors since 1862 were Maupoint, Bishop of Reunion (1862-1872); Rev. Fr. Horner (1872-1882); Jean Marie Raoul de Courmont (1883-1896); Emile Augustine Allgeyer (1897-1913); John Heffernan (1932-1945); Rev. John J. MacCarthy (1946-1971); and His Eminence Maurice Michael Cardinal Otunga (1971-1997).¹²

The first religious women congregation was the Assumption Sisters of Nairobi founded in 1955 by His Grace the late Archbishop J.J. MacCarthy. Their apostolate included teaching catechism and practicing medicine. The late Archbishop MacCarthy founded it in honour of the doctrine of the Assumption of the B.V.M, which was declared by the Church in 1950. Hence, the congregation was named "Sisters of Our Lady of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Nairobi".¹³ The first indigenous Assumption Sister was the late Sr. Martin Wanjiru formerly of St. Austin's parish and the founder of the Kibarage Good News Center/Habari Njema Center.¹⁴

The Archdiocese of Nairobi is vital to the Church in Kenya. It holds the Church national offices such as the Kenya Catholic Secretariat. Important social, political, economic, religious and educational activities involving the Catholic women are discussed here. His Holiness John Paul II also celebrated the African Synod in Nairobi in 1995. Its teachings were important in opening new challenges to women empowerment.

3.3 The Archdiocese of Nyeri

The establishment of the Catholic Church in what is now the Archdiocese of Nyeri is credited to the missionary enterprise of the Consolata Fathers. This was a missionary congregation founded by Josef Allamano in Italy in 1901. The congregation was entrusted with the missionary work in the present day Central Province including Meru and Embu districts with the exemption of Kiambu district. This was by then referred to as the Province of the Kikuyuland. Through their zealous missionary work, the Province of Kikuyuland was declared an independent Mission from the Vicariate of Zanzibar in September 1905.¹⁵

In 1909 the mission was raised to the status of an Apostolic Vicariate of Nyeri covering Nyeri, Embu, Meru and extending theoretically to Somalia and Ethiopia with Fr. Filippo Perlo, a pioneer Consolata Missionary, as its first bishop. By the decree of the Holy See, Meru (including Embu) was split from Nyeri and made an apostolic prefecture in 1926. In 1953 the apostolic vicariate was made a diocese and raised to an archdiocese in 1990 covering the dioceses of Nyeri, Murang'a, Embu, Meru, Marsabit and Isiolo.¹⁶ The diocese of Nyeri currently comprises the districts of Nyeri, Nyandarua and Laikipia. It has ten deaneries: Tetu, Nyeri, Nyandarua, Kieni North, Kieni South, Karatina, Ol'kalau, Ng'arua, Nyahururu, Kinangop.

The current bishop of the Archdiocese of Nyeri is Bishop John Njue. His predecessors include retired Bishop Nicodemus Kirima who was ordained as a priest in 1926 and appointed the Archbishop of Nyeri in 1990. Bishop

Filippo Perlo (1909-1925), Bishop Giuseppe Perrachon (1926-1930), Bishop Charles Re (1932-1946), Bishop Charles M. Cavallera (1948-1964) and Bishop Caesar M. Gatimu (1964-1987).¹⁷

3.4 Women in the Catholic Church

The question of women in the Catholic Church is a polemic issue, owing to the inhibition of women's participation in priesthood. The Church is however credited for the revitalized image and dignity of women within a patriarchy society. Among the most important contributions of the Church towards women liberation and empowerment is education. Education is key to development and progress of any individual and society. As Emmanuel Kant states, a person can only become human, responsible, cultured, moral, disciplined and free through education.¹⁸

The missionaries established formal education in Kenya first as a mode of evangelization. The first Africans to receive this education through the effort of the missionaries were the catechists who helped bridge the gap between the Africans and the white missionaries. The establishment of the Church in Kenya is credited to them. A catechist:

Presided over the converts, particularly in prayers; taught old catechumens, prepared the baptised for confessions and mass, prepared the sick for a happy death, reminded lukeworm Catholics of their faith, taught reading and writing to the young, conducted funeral services for the converts, baptised those in danger of death, communicated to the

Christians the wishes of the Fathers, reported events of the village to the Fathers, kept record of progress, conversions and deaths, and finally, made all the necessary preparations for the priest's visit to his village, including the entertainment for the priest.¹⁹

The catechists also started bush schools and taught the three R's – reading, arithmetic, and writing. Normally the catechists were men.

Education, therefore, served as a bridge between the African traditional cultures and the Christian development. The African approach to religion as an integral part of life made it easy for the Africans to embrace Christianity as well as the western education. After the World War I education was seen as a limelight to a better survival in terms of skilled labour and job opportunities. According to Baur, the search for education led many Africans to baptism thus integrating the Christian culture: “the African holistic approach to life led the old generation to the conclusion that in order to come to terms with the new way of life brought by the Europeans it would be necessary for their children also to follow the European religion”.²⁰

With the establishment of primary schools, teacher training colleges were set up to improve the standard of education. The teachers (men) were expected to carry along their wives to the colleges to be educated on domestic science and educate their fellow women in the villages. The Phelps-Stokes Commission's report published in 1925 was a benchmark in the increase of primary schools in Kenya.²¹ According to the Commission the British government was to offer grants and supervise mission ran schools. In response to this the Catholic Church paid more attention to the building of schools, the

education of girls and a proper education to raise the standards of living of the Africans by integrating them into the Christian civilization.

The education of girls by the Catholic Church started as early as 1903 with the opening of the first girls' school in Msongari. The Loreto Sisters came to Nairobi in 1921 and started an African girl's school in Limuru in 1936 while the Precious Blood sisters arrived in 1925 and began the Riruta Girls School in 1957. The coming of religious women (sisters) in Kenya boosted the dignity and the morale of the African women both in the Church and society. They "lifted up the self confidence of [the African] girls and mothers giving them an ideal of independent womanhood equal to men thus promoting women's emancipation in Africa."²²

The missionaries saw education of girls, as a means of liberating the African girl from marginalising cultural practices. As more girls achieved respectable status in the society as teachers and nurses, a wave of self-consciousness and independence was created thus discouraging female circumcision. The educated girls normally escaped circum[?]cision as a form of civilization. A new status of dignity for women was also created as girls started making choices of their marriage partners.²³

The training of African girls into sisterhood was another step to their education. Baur notes that with the Christianization of Africans, girls were willing to dedicate their lives to the service of the Church.²⁴ This inclination made it easier for the African girls to be trained to the vocations of sisterhood. In Kenya, a vocation to sisterhood was first established at Bura. African girls

started training in different congregations such as the Assumption Sisters, Precious Blood Sisters, Loreto Sisters, and the Carmelite Sisters. Ogutu, however, notes that most African sisters belonged to the 'labourers' group in the mission stations. They did all the manual work such as washing, cleaning and cooking for the white sisters who worked as teachers in primary schools and nurses in the mission hospitals.²⁵ However, it should be noted that sisterhood among the Africans did not in any way relinquish the value of motherhood in the religio-social orientation of women.

The education of women and their vocation to sisterhood saw a great increase of women participants in the social and ecclesial roles as independent individuals. This was further facilitated by the introduction of the Legion of Mary, a Catholic organization started by Frank Duff, a Holy Ghost Father in Ireland. Quinn Edel first introduced it in Kenya in 1938.

Legion was a section of the Roman army under one captain; hence, the Legion of Mary is analogically an army of Christians under one general, the Blessed Virgin Mary. It accentuates eradication of dehumanizing issues in the society. Another Catholic organization responsible for active Christian participation in the hierarchical Church before the Second Vatican Council is the Catholic Action – the organized lay “apostolate of youth groups, associations of men and women, teachers and workers, coordinated on parish and diocesan level”.²⁶ These two organizations saw the increase of women's roles in Church activities. Other communities include the Catholic Women Association and the SCC.

The Vatican II Council further facilitated women's participation in the Church. Its recognition of the Church as the People of God with a need for Christians to insert themselves in the life of the Church using their giftedness led to the establishment of parish councils. These are the voice of the people at the parish level. The concern of the Bishops of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) to implement Vatican II teachings of opening more channels for Christian involvement in the Church has seen a concerted effort of women participation in the SCC. This was further augmented by the African Synod's (1994) adaptation of the Church not just as the people of God but also as a Family of God; incarnating the Church more into the lives of the Christians.

Education at this level shifts from an evangelizing mission to a conscientizing, liberating, empowering and a developing one. The Catholic Church has continually facilitated education of women through establishing renowned schools and institutions of education. Besides, women are being educated at the grassroots level through seminars and workshops especially those organized at the national level through the Women's Desk at the Kenya Catholic Secretariat headed by a Catholic lay woman.

The above exploit has toned down the "second class" conception of women in the society. Much argument has been raised by a number of scholars concerning the status of women in the ordained ministry (priesthood) as marginalising and subjugating to women. According to the Church Tradition, women are denied the ordination as an imposition of the founder of Christianity that is Jesus Christ. The argument is laid on Jesus lack of appointment of women to the apostolate of the twelve disciples.

This is, however, counteracted with a feminist approach that Jesus is a feminist – pro-women – and was therefore not guided by his time and cultural milieu. This, according to some scholars like Elizabeth Fiorenza challenges the Church tradition against women ordination. Another assertion against women ordination is the improbable physical representation of Jesus Christ by women. That only priests are predisposed to a physical conformity to Jesus maleness. An English Baptist minister on the delicacy of women ordination is quoted to have said:

If a man stands in a pulpit the average woman is not unduly affected by his appearance; but if a woman stands there, men, being men, will often find that their thoughts are less on the word spoken than on the speaker. Someone will reply indignantly that “to the pure all things are pure.” But we are forced to admit that not all men are pure, and in fact, for the majority of men the battle with impure thoughts is a lot more severe than the average women realize. The pulpit which help towards holiness should not provide an additional snare which of course it will not do if its normal occupant is a man.²⁷

Feminist studies on women in the Church have reasoned against such subordination by trying to recreate and revitalize the dignity and image of women within a conscientized world of women liberation. The history of the Bible has been reconstructed to feature the woman’s story (‘her-story’) in light of the history of salvation. Women’s liberation activities in the Bible have been retold through women’s eyes.

Old Testament women liberationists are sited in support of women liberation participation in the social, religious, cultural and political milieus. They include:

1. Miriam who played the role of a prophetess (Ex 15:20-21).

- II. Deborah, a prophetess, who used her feminine power and wit to ensure the victory of Israel's army against their oppressors by giving hope and encouragement to her people (Judge 4:4; 5:24ff).
- III. Huldah, a brave woman who was not only consulted by men like Hilkiah the priest, but also vigorously delivered the message of forgiveness and peace thus acting as God's instrument in the service of the people (2Kings 22:14-20).
- IV. Judith, who for the love of her motherland and her people led them against the mighty army of Nebuchadnezzar (Jud 1:1ff) and dauntlessly beheaded Holoferness the commander of the army (Jud 13:7) raising praise and glory from great men (Jud 15:8-10).
- V. Esther, whose deliverance of the people of Israel is commemorated during the feast of *Purim* (Esther 1-11).
- VI. Abigail, who played a fundamental role of liberating her husband's household from destruction and restrained David from committing evil deeds (1 Sam 25:32-35), among others.²⁸

The above mentioned women played distinctive liberation roles of being prophetesses, intermediaries, reconcilers, liturgical mistresses and salvation agents of God. Their deep courage, self esteem, faith and determination gave them an outstanding participation in liberation of both women and men and for the common good of their society.

These activities are not exclusive to the Old Testament. In the New Testament women who arrayed similar courage and great faith become beacons of hope for liberation participation of women in SCC. They include the woman with a hemorrhage for twelve years healed after touching the cloak of Jesus (Mk 5:25-34) and the poor widow who gave all she had for the support of the Temple (Mk 12:41-44). The women disciples were also the first to be commissioned by Jesus Christ to witness to His resurrection (Mt 28:9-10). The Blessed Virgin Mary embodied the New Testament thus taking part in the history of salvation (Lk 1:26-38).

The gospel according to Luke recounts the position of Mary as a woman of genuine hope, charity and faith to women liberationists among the Catholic women. Such praxis demonstrates the potency of women to liberate and empower other people. Mary's model of liberation according to the Catholic women will be discussed in the next chapter.

In relation to this the Church encourages the participation of women through Church teachings on women (and men) in social ³ praxis. It also recognizes and pays homage to women liberators. John Paul II asserts the following in view of women in establishing authenticity:

Therefore *the church gives thanks for each and every woman*: for mothers, for sisters, for wives, for women consecrated to God in virginity, for women dedicated to the many human beings who await the gratuitous love of another person; for women who watch over the human persons in the family, which is the fundamental sign of the human community; for women who work professionally, and who at times are burdened by a great social responsibility for "*perfect*" women and for "*weak*" women – for all women as they have come forth from the heart of God in all the beauty and richness of their femininity; as they have been embraced by his eternal love; as, together with men,

they are pilgrims on this earth, which is the temporal “homeland” of all people and is transformed sometimes in a “valley of tears”; as they assume together with men *a common responsibility for the destiny of humanity* according to daily necessities and according to that definitive destiny which the human family has in God himself, in the bosom of the ineffable Trinity.²⁹

The Pope further states that:

The church gives thanks for all *the manifestations of the feminine “genius”* which have appeared in the course of history, in the midst of all peoples and nations she gives thanks for all the charisms which the Holy Spirit distributes to women in the history of the People of God, for all the victories which she owes to their faith, hope and charity: she gives for *all the fruits of feminine holiness*.³⁰

However, the patriarchal tradition of the Jewish cultural heritage that predominates the Christian tradition has continually subordinated women in the position of common priesthood, which is lay apostolate (unordained Christians). This has been reasoned, by the Catholic women respondents, as the most important apostolate in relation to Mary’s role in the history of salvation.

Some scholars argue that though Mary was not one of the twelve apostles, her apostolate of embodying the New Testament and offering a model of charity and discipleship in the pilgrimage of faith was of critical importance. This view, according to this study, is widely held by women Christians on their opinion on women participation in liberation within the SCC. Most women in the Church uphold the tradition of the Church with regard to priesthood ‘since nothing much can be done to change it’. Women have reiterated into accepting the Church tradition, which is static.

However, some women Christians presume that women ordination would precipitate a better avenue for the empowerment of women in the

Church. It was however noted by the researcher that such concern was raised in parishes where the respondents accused priests of violating their celibate vows. This was seen to cause 'religious tourism' from the mainstream Catholic Church to Pentecostal churches by some individual Christians.³¹ But this raised a critical concern: How many women prefer women priests? It was ascertained that only a third of the interviewed women preferred women ordained ministers in the Church. With the understanding that Christians are the living Church and not just part of the Church, Catholic women are fully involved in the Church and society through the SCC.

The respondents gave the following reasons for women ordination: 1) the Church should be dynamic and responsive to the needs of the people. In this case there is need for women ordination. 2) Women can actualize the roles of priesthood in their live situation. Hence roles based on gender should be corrected to enhance gender equality. 3) Women should be given a chance since they are in touch with issues affecting families and especially women. The rest preferred men for priesthood. One common issue raised with regard to this preference is the misconception that women are unclean especially during menstruation.

Veronica Wanjiku is an example of women who still adhere to the traditional conception of menstruation. She cautioned her daughters against attending Mass and Church services during their 'unclean' period (menstruation).³² Such a precaution is associated with the Agikuyu lifestyle with regard to menstruation, which is restricted by certain taboos (*thahu/migi*ro). They include 1) A woman should not touch a man during

menstruation. If she did, an elaborate ritual cleansing had to be performed on her and 2) A man should not have sexual intercourse with a woman after menstruation until she ritually cleans herself.

Grace Wamue explains that such taboos dehumanized women making bodily occurrence appear unusual and unclean. 'The taboos interpret it [menstruation] wrongly, making it unique and negative, and turn a normally private affair into a very public event'.³³ Thus, the traditional socio-cultural norms of the Agikuyu still influence people's way of thinking in this area. The African traditional concept of women as weak was also seen as a hindrance to their ordination. It was noted that women are susceptible to slander and confessions would be taken as channels of slanderous discussions. Women are therefore not preferred for ordination by some respondents.

According to John Paul II, establishing authenticity is an inherent need in the human search for truth and meaning for life. But one may ask, why women in the SCC? Femininity combined with Christian humanism becomes this study's point of reference. Women as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters are intimately attached to the world through different levels of relations. They are said to be more exposed to oppression and marginalisation making them more sensitive to alienating situations and hence instruments of liberation and empowerment. Robert Shantz has this to say in relation to women's experiences through men's eyes:

I can try to understand and empathize with that other world (the world of women's experience), but I cannot really know what it feels like to be female and walk home from a bus stop after dark and hear footsteps behind me. I cannot really know what it is like to be female and walk

by the newsstand peddling pictures of my female body. I cannot really know how it feels to be assaulted by unwanted innuendo and leering looks where I work. I cannot really know the helplessness of being dependent upon an abusive husband. I cannot really know how it feels to be patronized by men and then criticized for being over-sensitive of a poor sport when I object. I cannot really know how it feels when my female body is made into seductive decoration to sell beer and automobiles. I cannot really know how it feels to bury all that hurt and resentment for the sake of keeping peace...³⁴

Therefore, the uniqueness of femininity towards establishing human dignity creates a need for active women participation in the society.

3.5 Women and the Small Christian Communities (SCC)

The SCC are basic groups in the Church organization living the gospels according to their live situation. Through the SCC the gospel becomes inculturated within the people's values and cultural set up. Such African values as sharing, community life, a socio-religio approach to life are highly regarded. It is within this approach to Christian living that the Catholic women exercise their prowess for the common good within the SCC. 3

The SCC are a model of being Church, "rotating on the axis of the [gospel] and the laity."³⁵ They emphasis on the participation of the Christians (both men and women) in the work of the Church at the grassroots level. Through the SCC the Church gains socio-religio acceptability where the Catholic women share in the responsibilities of the hierarchical Church. These Communities have also facilitated women Christians to participate more fully in the Church and social activities.

From the field research it was found that women participate more in the SCC than their male counterparts. The Catholic women use SCC as a springboard for liberation and development of women, children, men and the entire society within the parameters of the teachings of the Church. (However, this is debatable as shown in chapter six where Catholic women face the challenge of artificial family planning.) Through SCC, the women are empowered to participate in other socio-religious organizations of their own choice for development. The liberated and empowered women participate more in liberation and empowerment of other people thus giving it a continuance characteristic.

The SCC within the Kenya Catholic Church are small groups of Christians in the Catholic Church of about 15 families within the same vicinity. They can be defined as “the Church in the neighbourhood”.³⁶ They are committed to Christian life of the gospel values and are characterized by a communal life of sharing and supporting each other. They endeavour to humanize the society by living authentically the gospel values. They further integrate the “characteristics of the universal Church, namely, faith, love, worship, mission, concern for justice, service, animation/coordination and communion with pastor”.³⁷ There is no general consensus on the origins of the SCC. Various sources differ on the subject. The following are diverse origins attributed to the SCC.

3.5.1 Theological Justification

The SCC are said to draw their origin from Jesus as the founder. Jesus first called the 12 disciples into a community of discipleship and faith sharing. This communal aspect and sense of belonging saw the disciples together with Mary mother of Jesus among other women waiting in the upper room for the Pentecost as a Christian family (Acts 1). Jesus too looked at His followers as a family (Mt 12:48-50). The SCC are also seen as a response to Jesus' priestly prayer before his death: "Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (Jn 17:21). The early Church, in following the footsteps of Christ was organized into communities of believers (Acts 4).

The modern SCC draw their reference from the Second Vatican Council, a landmark in the history of the Catholic Church. It promoted the establishment of the SCC through the Decree of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church. The Council emphasized the communal aspect of the Church as the People of God in which lay apostolate was emphasized. The laity were to share in the missionary work of Church through their gifts and talents. The Council also deliberated on the social mission of the Church, which opened more channels for the lay apostolate in Christian humanism and social responsibility. This gives the Church its social dimension; a preferential option for the poor, of the poor and with the poor making it a Church of the People in light of the gospel teachings.

In trying to adopt the teachings of the Vatican II, the Bishops of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) emphasized on the establishment of the SCC. This, they

thought, would make the Church economically and pastorally self-sufficient. The Bishops met in Nairobi in 1976 and gave the establishment of SCC a priority in the mission of the Church. The structure of a parish can therefore be said to be a communion of such Christian communities. It is important to note that not all Christians in the Catholic Church belong to the SCC but its necessity is laid on the organization of the parish work including the parish councils.³⁸

3.5.2 Historical Justification

The SCC are said to draw their originality from the Jewish heritage of the synagogues. These were meeting places for prayer after the destruction of the Jewish Temple and the dispersion of the Jews. The synagogues became the centres of Jewish religiosity maintaining their faith. The synagogues were seen as vitality to the growth and origin of Christianity since Jesus too went to the synagogue as a committed Jew (Lk4:16-27).

SCC are also attributed to the Latin American origin in Brazil in the mid-fifties. They are attributed to the scarcity of the ordained ministers (priests) through the creativity of the Christians with an evangelizing mission and an accentuation to social justice. These Communities are said to have spread to other parts of the world³⁹. This origin has been questioned by scholars such as Ian Fraser who argues that the SCC was a worldwide phenomenon in the 1960's through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰

SCC can also be attributed to the African traditional way of life. That is, Africanism does not dichotomize the sacred and the profane as the Western

religion does. It is a humanism that upholds community socialization through sharing and social responsibility. In the contemporary African Christianity, inculturation is in vogue, that is an integration of the Christian religion into the African way of life without relinquishing the gospel values. African humanism “tries to harmonize African values with Christian values... [It] gives a new application and dynamism to the human values of the ancient village world to Africa – particularly the ideas of cooperative living and sharing together”.⁴⁰

The idea of SCC is, therefore, not alien to the African social set up. It was practiced especially among the extended families that lived in a close knit kinship. With the introduction of the monetary economy, this form of socialism was extended to the neighbourhood in the community. As such, SCC are similar to African way of life. This necessitates inculturation of the gospel by means of integrating it in the African way of life thus forming an interconnection between the African traditional spirituality and Christianity. The African way of life can therefore be seen as a foresight to the contemporary SCC.

The establishment of SCC is also seen as a response to the drastic changes of mission stations to sizeable parishes at Independence. The establishment of parishes, according to J. Baur, alienated most Christians who lived in distant villages. The SCC are also seen as a response to the “mushrooming indigenous churches and also an answer to those Catholics who were leaving the church to join indigenous churches”.⁴² The SCC in the rural setting are basically the Church in the neighbourhood as described above.

Besides this definition the SCC, especially in Nairobi deanery, also take the form of 'communities of common interest' such as the single mother groups.

The National lay apostolate office (KEC) has adopted the Lumko training from the Lumko Missiological Institute of South Africa on the establishment and running of SCC.⁴³ This is an approach that aims at making the Church a community Church. The Lumko Missiological Institute has provided guidelines on leadership training, gospel-sharing methods, building of SCC, developing shared ministry through gifts and talents among others.

The office of the national lay apostolate trains SCC representatives to the grassroots level through the diocesan representatives on the Lumko Programmes. Example of approaches used in community development through these Programs are Amos Programmes: "Amos Programmes aim at waking up Christian communities and helping them to do something about the problems which are tormenting them... They offer a way of facing social or economic problems, analyzing them in the light of the Gospel and doing something about them"⁴⁴ Amos was an Old Testament prophet who, among other things, fought against oppression of the poor and superficial religious services. This orientation enables the SCC become more sensitive to the needs of the people especially the marginalised by "standing up for God's way and to criticize what is wrong in society and within the Church community".⁴⁵

The SCC are also introduced to the key principles of development through conscientization. Women (including men) are educated on becoming critical, creative and responsible members of the society. Such principles as

dialogue, reflection and action (praxis), and radical transformation are emphasized through Paulo Freire's approach to liberation and conscientization.⁴⁶ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* serves as a guideline to Freire's liberation principles. Through such training, women in the SCC are trained to effectively participate in the life of the community. The SCC also become a communion of communities within a given parish serving humanity. The Church, therefore, takes the form of a community Church.

The SCC are identified with Catholic saints from whom they derive their names such as St. (saint) John SCC, St. Mary SCC (or in Kiswahili *Jumuiya ya Mtume Yohana and Jumuiya ya Bikira Maria*). Such saintly names are both feminine and masculine. It was however established from the field study that the gender of the named saints do not in any way determine or influence the gender of the participants. For instance, the women Christians only attended some SCC identified with male saints.

The model saints, according to the respondents, are meant to guide the Christians to live saintly lives as modeled by their patron saints. The study however established that most members of the SCC were not acquainted with the life history of their patron saints. As such, the activities of the SCC are not, in most cases, impacted by the lives of their patron saints.⁴⁷

The growth of SCC within a given neighbourhood is determined by the increase of Christian participants. As the number increases, the SCC is split into two to effectively serve the needs of the people. Thus, St Mary's SCC becomes St Mary's SCC (A) and St Mary's SCC (B).⁴⁸ It was also established

that the rural setting has more SCC compared to the urban setting as a result of the limited number of parishes in the latter. Nairobi deanery has ten parishes while Kieni North Deanery has only three parishes. This means there is a limited number of priests serving the community in the rural setting thus enhancing the establishment of more SCC within a given parish to cater for the social and spiritual needs of the communities. For instance, Narumoru parish in Kieni North Deanery has about five hundred SCC⁴⁹ while Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi Deanery has only three SCC⁵⁰.

Such rural communities are only privileged to attend Mass once or twice a month while a Christian in Nairobi Deanery has a chance of attending Mass everyday either in the morning, during lunch break or in the evening. This makes the SCC at the rural setting more of a Church in the neighbourhood. It is within this SCC that all socio-religious needs of the Christians are met. A Christian is also identified in the parish through her SCC.

3

3.6 Forms of Marginalization

This section endeavours to extricate the socio-economic forms of marginalization experienced in the area of study. As the subtitle indicates, marginalization in Nairobi Deanery and the Kieni North Deanery are affiliated to social and economic problems. The following is an explication of these problems to bring the reader into glimpse of the unauthentic situations that the Catholic women seek to liberate themselves through the SCC.

3.6.1 Retrogressive Cultures

Nairobi and Kieni North Deaneries have a close connection in terms of their population variables of multi ethnic cultures. According to the field research, women and the girl child are most affected by African traditional cultures such as violence against women, FGC and early marriages. Women are also a cross-section of people facing comparable problems related to their socio-cultural orientation, despite their social roles and status.

The multi-ethnic communities in Kenya are patriarchal where both men and women are socialized to believe that men are superior to women, making them heads of families, political leaders and decision-makers. Women on the other hand are believed to be the weaker sex, though conscious of their rights as equal part of the human race. Such an attitude marginalizes women, who are also categorised with children within the African cultural set up.⁵¹

The cultural gender differentiated allocation of roles in society is still practised especially in the rural areas. Women are exposed to hard labour of fetching water from long distances and burning charcoal, thereby encountering health related problems. In some cases such as Dol Dol the women are also expected to graze and at the same time provide for the family. Due to financial hardships facing such women, local brewing become an alternative to quick source of income not forgetting the risk of being charged with the possession of illegal brewing.

FGC is affecting approximately seven millions out of fourteen millions of the Kenyan female population with a prevalence of 50 percent.⁵² From the

field research, initiation is an essential *rite of passage* not only among the Agikuyu as shown in the previous chapter but also other Kenyan ethnic groups. Among the Maasai, girls are often married off immediately after the initiation and are sometimes expected to walk for long distances to their spouse's home even before they recuperate. A girl who does not conform to the *rite of passage*, according to the respondents, becomes an outcast and cannot be married or is forced into the rite during childbirth.

The mystification of female initiation and fear/risks associated to the rite has made it difficult to eradicate it. The following are examples of beliefs that expose young girls to the *rite of passage*: 1) circumcised girls make better wives, 2) uncircumcised girls cannot mature physically and mentally, 3) uncircumcised girl's genitalia produces fluids which have offensive odor, 4) female circumcision makes childbirth easy, 5) female circumcision prevents promiscuity, 6) all Africans circumcise their daughters, 7) FGC guarantees girls' virginity, 8) there are no risks involved if FGC is done in hygienic environment with sterile equipment, 9) a midwife dies if she delivers a baby of uncircumcised woman, 10) FGC enhances men's sexual pleasure, 11) a father may die if his daughter is not circumcised and 12) children born to uncircumcised mothers are bound to be mad (crazy)⁵³. Such beliefs are held by different communities and have continued to subject young girls to the operation.

This form of cultural practice that is intended, among other functions, to preserve virginity and to control female sexuality is scientifically proven to

be cruel to a contemporary woman. Research has it that FGC complicates the life of a woman as stated below:

The widespread traditional practice of female genital mutilation contributes to women's health problems in Africa. The procedure, which removes the external female genitalia in varying degrees, can cause infection and bleeding – sometimes leading to shock and even death. Long-term effects include scarring, which can cause life-threatening complications in childbirth, chronic infection and infertility. Women subjected to the practice often experience psychological trauma, painful intercourse and menstruation and diminished sexual pleasure.⁵⁴

Forced marriages are another aspect of violence against women or abuse of the women's rights hence a form of marginalization facing young girls. The parents (mostly men) look for suitors for their daughters who have to acknowledge the marriage for fear of being cursed by the elders. Once a girl is married off she cannot be accepted in her own family hence she thus has to conform to the marriage contract sealed by the parents.

The question of curses is conspicuous among the Maasai in Dol Dol who believe that children die as a result of forsaking such marriage contracts. Thus the girls are forced into marriages with older men. They are also expected to obey and respect their spouses. Margaret Lesuunda writes the following with regard to early forced marriages:

Girls are subjected to forced marriages at an early age, and it is men who decide about the marriage. Young girls are not prepared for marriage at all. Their situation is further worsened by the fact that they are denied the opportunity to get an education. Married girls (average age 16 years) end up having birth complications, which increase their mortality rate. The reason for that is that 99% of births take place in villages... A number of girls have been removed from school for marriage, and few have had the courage to fight against this injustice through the Administration, which, unfortunately, is also male-dominated. When they defy marriage orders, girls end up becoming

social misfits in the community, and due to the resulting mistreatment, they end up in towns as prostitutes in order to earn a living.⁵⁵

According to one of the respondents, girls are often exchanged for cattle during the famine season. Early marriages have drastic effects on the young as follows. It:

Relegates women to a low status because of limited knowledge and experience and the little resources they bring into the union. Early age of marriage also exposes the women to longer reproductive spans increasing their chances of higher fertility. This increases women's risk of poor health and reduces women's opportunities to engage in higher education and employment activities outside the home.⁵⁶

Wife beating is a cultural practice among the Maasai for discipline purposes. The issue of paying bridewealth and fear of being cursed –which is believed to cause death – leaves the Maasai women with no option but to persevere domestic violence. Suicide cases were cited as an alternative to forced marriages. Such cultural practices subordinate women and are abhorred by women who seek to liberate themselves. SCC are important avenues of eradicating women subordination as discussed in the next chapter.

3

3.6.2 Poverty

Most people (56 per cent in 2002) live under the poverty line in Kenya up from 52 per cent in 1997⁵⁷. Basic necessities such as food, clothing, health facilities, education and shelter have become scarce commodities among the poor. The increased retrenchment of workers, dwindling economy, mismanagement and misappropriation of public funds and unemployment have escalated poverty among the people.

Poverty and harsh living conditions in the rural areas has led to massive migration of people to urban centres in search of jobs and better living. The migrants end up in the streets and slums especially in Nairobi creating a population explosion in the slums such as Mukuru and Mathare. The 1984-88 Kenya National Development Plan of District Focus for Rural Development that was meant to integrate the rural urban population in terms of development seems to have had little effect on the rural population. An influx of migrants has continually invaded the cities/towns with the hope of development and survival. S. A. Khasiani notes that:

The implementation of GOK 1984-88 National Development Plan has remained elusive as the center continues to receive a disproportionate share of national investment resources. This has reinforced the perception that the center has greater opportunities ... Migration represents micro level strategies for households and individuals to move away from the periphery and closer to the center and this enhance their share in the national resources⁵⁸.

Migration has also become a common phenomenon of both urban and rural dwellers either from urban to rural; urban to urban aggravated by job opportunities; rural to rural for land settlement, in search of pastures especially among the pastrolists; and rural to urban for better opportunities of development for both men and women.⁵⁹ This form of livelihood is opposed to the African Traditional setup of closely knit extended families giving way to nuclear families and women headed households characterized by the phenomenon of individualism.

Kieni North Deanery is a semi arid area thus subjecting people to poverty due to prolonged droughts. Poverty in the slums (both in urban and rural areas) has had stringent effects on families especially the female-headed

households. A standard family in the slums has a single room with a family of four to six siblings. The children are exposed to drug abuse, police brutality, and sexual abuses as the parents turn to local brewing.⁶⁰

Some of the brewers in the slums use lethal chemicals like surgical spirit and petrol to enhance liquor fermentation for quick sale, which in most cases lead to death and blindness of both men and women. Local brew is sometimes prepared in sewers where they are least suspected. Other brewers, according to the respondents, corrupt the police (sometimes with the local brew) to avoid arrests and harassment. Local brewing is a community problem that the Catholic women seek to eradicate.

Poverty also affect political development in the rural areas where people vote for leaders who corrupt them with basic necessities such as food. Women on many occasions “are used by politicians as rubber stamps (they do the singing and dancing for the guest of honour), but they are rarely the beneficiaries of such activities”⁶¹ which are organized by men.

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3.6.3 Social Stigmatization

This section looks at disability, HIV/AIDS infected and affected, and old age as factors of social stigmatization in the social set up which women in the SCC seek to establish authenticity through their activities.

3.6.3.1 Disability

Disability is a problem that victims live with. It is a physical or mental situation that incapacitates a person to fully participate in social activities

among others. According to the field research, some communities still regard disability as an omen and a misfortune. The disabled are perceived as unable-bodied people doomed to begging.

The parents/guardians barely cope with disability due to social stigmatization. Disabled children are sometimes left under the care of the elderly in the extended family. Some of these children are malnourished to death. Education of such children is seen as a waste of funds. Some of these children are abandoned in special schools for the disabled. They are left under the care of the schools where they are psychologically traumatized.

Disability has rendered some people into street beggars. Rejection and lack of self-esteem lead some to commit suicide. The worst stricken are the mentally retarded girls and women who are sexually brutalized. Such despicable activities infringe the rights of women.⁶²

3.6.3.2 Old Age

Various scholars as well as different individuals according to their own understanding define old age in various ways. Biologically, aging “represents a change in the vulnerability of the body, an increased difficulty for the various tissues and organs to respond when things go wrong”.⁶³ These things could be diseases, depression, accidents and stress. Psychologically, aging “is simply the growing awareness that we are not immortal, that the self which we have built up over the years can be challenged, can be faced with a variety of physical assaults.”⁶⁴

According to the New Webster Dictionary, old age is something ancient or that which has been in existence for long. Old age is also identified with a wrinkled face, grey hair, retirement and inability to perform hard tasks. According to Binstock, the contemporary conception of old age is influenced by an individual's perception where what we 'see' among the aged affects our perspective about aging and the aged.⁶⁵ In this study old age refers to people of over 65 years with particular reference to the neglected lot.

Aging has become a social problem stigmatizing the aged. Neglect, psychological torture, bad health, lack of independence, fear of death, maladjustment to aging, loss of friends through death, and lack of respect are some of the problems facing the aged today. These problems lead to loneliness and sometimes suicide. The African traditional communal way of life integrated the aged in the extended family where the community was dutiful towards them. Old age was a social status that gave them vital responsibilities in the family as well as the society such as custodians of morality. Such responsibilities are today regarded as obsolete. ♪

Stigmatization of the aged is attributed to a number of things. They include individualism blamed on the poor economic status in Kenya, western civilization, generation gap, conflict of ideas between the aged and the young and urbanization among others. Abandonment of the aged makes it difficult for them to survive for long. They are also exposed to harassment and violence with no protection. Some end up losing their property to the extended families thus turning them into street beggars.

The question of moral concepts is polemic especially with the aping of the occidental cultures such as individualism and homosexuality among others. The African philosophy of “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am” has been neglected. The dictum “One for himself/herself and God for us all” is more acceptable and is a way of relinquishing ones duties and responsibilities towards the extended families and the society.

The African communal living of good neighbourhood and sharing has been replaced by individualism. The African socialism such as the Agikuyu saying on kinship: “*Nyumba na riika itiumaguo*” (family and age-group cannot be abandoned) becomes attenuated. The African socialism ensured a close knit of the nuclear and extended families with a communal responsibility. Lack of communal sharing find many in stringent financial constrains.

3.6.6 Illiteracy and Semi-literacy

Education is a necessity to development. It can be termed as a gateway to development and survival since it increases employment opportunities. It also enhances a person’s capacity to make informed choices in all aspects of life. Lack of awareness and illiteracy among other things inhibit the progress of the society. As already mentioned poverty, early forced marriages and migration lead to school dropouts creating a community of illiterate and semi-literate people. This increases poverty among the people for lack of skilled labour within a competitive community. The study will look at ways and

means the Catholic women are involved in educating or creating awareness as a form of liberation activity in communities in the following chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the establishment of the Catholic Church in Kenya with special reference to the Archdioceses of Nairobi and Nyeri. The role of the Church in development of women both in society and the Church has been discussed. It is, however, noted that the Catholic Church continues to subordinate women in the decision-making portfolio in the hierarchy of the Church. With the new model of the Church, the SCC, the women are participating in the Church to counteract such subordination.

The chapter further looked at different forms of marginalization affecting the society. Retrogressive cultures, poverty, old age, disability, illiteracy and semi-illiteracy, and social aberration were discussed. Marginalization and oppression cuts across all categories of people – both men and women. The question of women liberation and empowerment is a situation, of Christian humanism being practiced at the grassroots level by women in the SCC. This Christian humanism with a feminine touch forms the subject of our next chapter.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PRAXIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter looks into the Catholic women's activities in the Small Christian Communities (SCC). Their want to transform the society is a vocation of the lay apostolate¹ and presents women as a participation majority in the SCC. It is through the understanding of their roles as the Church that more women are fully participating in Christian humanism. As already highlighted in the previous chapter, the SCC are the new model of the Church. It is the axis through which the hierarchical Church becomes a Church of the people; that is, it attains its sociological dimension through which the activities of the Church are deliberated and implemented.

Through the SCC, the women take the responsibility of changing the socio-cultural, political, economic and educational forms of alienation. At this level they try to identify modes of oppression and marginalization, question the life situations of the oppressed in trying to get to the root causes of the problems and deliberate on ways and means of establishing praxis within the parameters of the Christian teachings. The efforts of women in SCC expedite their participation in other Christian organizations like the Catholic Action. It is important to note that SCC exist vis-a-vis these Christian associations and work hand in hand for the integral human development.

There are diverse activities that women Christians engage in through the SCC according to the needs of their parishes, talents and professions. They include

services to the sick, the aged, the Poor, Justice and Peace, Catechism and Evangelization and ministry of Ecumenism²

The above mentioned services help to diversify the activities of the SCC in catering for the needs of others with open mindedness to different religions and socio-cultural orientations. This chapter handles the question of the Catholic women in establishing authenticity in and through the SCC.

4.1 Religious Development

According to the social teachings of the Catholic Church, the Catholic women receive a vocation of the lay apostolate through baptism. They participate in Christian humanism according to their faith, sacrifice, gifts and capabilities. The religious sisters in cooperation with lay women evangelize as catechists, participate in the Church liturgy and in the community by working in various institutions like hospitals and schools.

Women in SCC contribute to various activities affecting women as well as the society. These include charitable activities such as feeding the hungry and ministering to the sick. The conversion of women, as affirmed by the respondents, influences family religious orientation through persuasion of family members into joining the SCC. Such progress is however constrained by African traditional beliefs. For instance, among the Maasai community, men as the household heads, perform traditional rituals of invoking blessings on behalf of the family and offering sacrifices, which do not conform to Christian beliefs and practices. Notwithstanding such cultural activities, women have continually cultivated their

faith through the SCC. Women support each other by sharing their experiences, bible reading and interpretation according to their life situations. The study did not encounter such traditional rituals in Nairobi deanery.

Evangelization is an important role of the Catholic women, encompassing bible reading and interpretation according to the needs of the Christians and the society. In Nanyuki parish, bible reading and interpretation in the SCC is guided by the parish priest through *Uongozi wa Jumuiia Ndogo Ndogo* (Kiswahili). This is an organized program for all the SCC in the parish focussing on biblical periscopes and questions related to the bible reading and the needs of the Church/Christians. The Christians are expected to read and interpret the reading according to their *sitz im leben*.³ They also give spiritual nourishment and perform Eucharistic ministries to the sick in collaboration with the parish priest by taking sacraments to the sick in their homes or in hospitals.

The SCC help sustain women socially and economically through merry go-rounds and material contributions. The ministries attributed to the SCC mostly derive their support from the paradigms of Jesus Christ and His mother Mary. During his ministry Jesus preached (evangelized), helped the poor, and healed the sick. At the synagogue he declared his onus as that of liberation (Lk. 4:1-16). As such the SCC in emulating the work of Christ, execute and coordinate their roles as a family. They confront matters affecting them spiritually and temporally by facing up to their situations with the gospel.

Unlike in Nairobi Deanery where ministries are differentiated as outlined above, in Kieni North Deanery the responsibilities of the Christians are met

communally. Individual or group assignment of duties/ministries in the urban deanery was conspicuous. For instance if children complete catechism those in charge of the ministry (of catechism) alert the parish priest to see to it that the children get baptized. In the rural SCC the Christians meet and deliberate their week's duties as a group, with a common goal. They search for the communities' problems and seek to transform them communally. They detect their environmental problems and prioritize resolutions according to the urgency of the problems without assigning particular ministries to particular individuals. However, this does not hinder their individual/personal development of talents towards social responsibility.

The approach given to the service of the community by SCC in Nairobi, however, becomes more diversified than in the rural areas. The assignments of duties to different individuals/groups provide them with variant opportunities to serve the needy. The SCC enhances Christian life community by encountering the gospel with their life situation. Notwithstanding the approaches used in both settings, religious praxis is undertaken through the SCC. ☞

Nanyuki parish was conspicuous of SCC' engagement in the Church liturgy. Each SCC is assigned to lead the congregation in liturgy on particular Sunday Mass. As such, the liturgy becomes a concern of families in the neighbourhood. Christian cohesion becomes pronounced in the Church as each SCC inserts itself into the life of the community by inculturating the gospel according to their diverse cultural backgrounds. This enriches the Church's liturgy with Christian songs done in traditional tunes and dances. Diverse cultural accentuations make it a Church of and for the people.⁴ The liturgy also attracts

more people to the Church especially the youth. Boring liturgies unattractive to the youth were cited as one of the problems facing the youth in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.⁵

It is through the SCC that the 'virtue of assimilation' or 'the virtue of integration' of the Christian values and the African values are facilitated. African values as explained in chapter three is a way of life. The communal aspect of Africanism helps the Christians too develop the 'virtue of availability' in dealing with community work. It is through emulation of the model of Christ that the Catholic women adopt the need to liberate the marginalised. This was evident both in rural and urban communities. As Isabelle Owino puts it,

Occasionally we try to tell our members what goes on in our community. In the Luo community, we believe in close family ties for progress. For instance, an uncle or aunt who is well off can assist in educating his brothers' children, which I feel is helpful. We try to tell the other communities how selfishness destroys families and create hatred among family members; that is, those who don't have hate those who have if the 'haves' cannot aid their relatives.⁶

Similarly, Perpetua Wairimu expressed the following with regard to the above: "We try to tell our members to be more united and work together when problems occur like funerals which are a concern of the community according to the Agikuyu tradition. We also join together joyfully during marriage ceremonies in songs and dances relevant to Christian values."⁷

The preponderance of women in the SCC has led to the diversification roles that were traditionally the domain of men such as catechists, service leaders, and chairpersons in parish pastoral council committees. Service leaders lead the congregation in liturgy and preach in the absence of a parish priest. With the

scarcity of ordained ministers in the rural outstations women have assumed the roles of service leaders. Women have also shown their leadership proficiency in such organizations as the Legion of Mary and Catholic Women Association (CWA).

This way, the women offer an alternative to the male dominated leadership in the Church. However, this is not the case in all parishes. In some rural SCC women leadership is challenged and met with a lot of suspicion. The cultural subordination of women becomes a major obstruction to their leadership roles. Women service leaders encounter rejection, unsupportive and unfriendly attitudes from the congregation, especially from their fellow womenfolk. If a SCC does not have a male attendant, they request men from other SCC to assist in the service leadership⁸. Women's status as leaders relegates them to scrutiny as to whether they are married or not, and if so, whether the husband is baptized. The woman's weaknesses are capitalized on. Women service leaders are rejected in the name of the Pauline teachings on women: "the man is the head of the woman, and Christ is the head of the man" (Eph. 5:22).⁹ Although women are participating actively, in the rural set up, their efforts to respond to these obstacles as service leaders are yet to be overcome considering the role of the Gikuyu tradition and the Catholic tradition on women as discussed earlier.

In the traditional Agikuyu proverb, "*kia mundu muka gitikagio kiarara*" (A woman's word is believed when it happens) demeans women's judgement on contemporary issues. This waters down women's efforts in leadership responsibilities in the rural SCC. For instance, during the Catholic Men Association (CMA) jubilee celebrations in the rural parishes, women were invited

to participate but were not expected to propose anything. Such an attitude and the predominance of women in the SCC was seen as one of the reasons that has kept men away from the SCCs.¹⁰

Although women participate as leaders of SCC and service leaders in the rural areas, the idea of women Eucharist ministers have not been as well received as in the urban setting. In the rural parishes girls hardly serve at the altar during Mass unlike the urban parishes where both boys and girls are encouraged to participate. However, some Christians in the urban centers avoid receiving Eucharist from women due to their supposed 'uncleanness'.¹¹ This is also another reason used against women's ordination.

Bible reading is an important tool in the survival of the SCC. It helps in prayers and knowledge of the word of God. Through Bible interpretation within a given situation, women respond to daily issues affecting them by invoking the Holy Spirit. Bible reading also helps them to defend their faith in Christian living as exemplified by the model of Jesus Christ and His mother Mary and other women Christians as highlighted in chapter two. The religious aspiration of the SCC through evangelization is to get to the root causes of dehumanization, that is sin. Sin, as the bishops of Latin America at Puebla stated, is:

The break with God that debases the human being, is always mirrored on the level of interpersonal relations in a corresponding egotism, haughtiness, domination, violence at every level, and conflicts between individuals, groups, social classes and peoples. They also produce corruption, hedonism, aggravated sexuality, and superficiality in mutual relations (Galatians 5, 19-21). Thus they establish sinful situations which, at the worldwide level, enslave countless human beings and adversely affect the freedom of all.¹²

This comprises an important component of religious participation in liberation of a people. It calls for transformation of hearts for a spiritual and temporal liberation of humanity. It therefore involves the Catholic women into an evangelizing mission with an ecumenical orientation. This was found both in urban and rural settings.

The SCC are, however, not without limitations. There are, for example, limited interactions between the poor and the rich in some urban SCC. Indifferences in religious matters such as speaking in tongues and the question of salvation especially among the charismatic members who are accused of seeking a 'holier than thou' attitude with stylized forms of greeting that segregate other Catholic Christians. Charismatic movements in some parishes have adopted Protestant charismatic approach, thereby creating a dualism of Protestantism and Catholicism in the Church that has become a source of confusion of faith among Christians.¹³

3

4.1.1 Women and Children's catechises

Children's spiritual guidance is sometimes ignored or taken for granted. Sometimes children are made to attend Mass and Services by their parents or guardians, which in most cases prove to be boring and meaningless to them. They are also left under the care of their schoolteachers for moral and spiritual guidance.

The liberation participation of the Catholic women, through the ministry of catechism, has therefore taken into consideration the spiritual needs of the children. The recognition of the fact that children too have a spiritual quest and need to

interact with the transcendent Being has seen women offer counsel into children's full participation in religious activities. Such needs can be identified as prayer in communion with God, participation in the liturgical activities, offering a helping hand to the needy and catechism among other things. The Catholic women through the organization of 'The Society of Holy Childhood' also known as 'Children helping Children' or the 'Missionary childhood' inculcate in young children religious growth.

Sister Herbert Alexa nationally coordinates the Society. Charles de Forbin Janson, Bishop of Nancy, in France, founded it on 9th May 1843 with intent to conscientise children about God. According to Sr. Alexa, the "society concentrates its efforts on the teaching of the Faith to all children, protecting situations where children are suffering from famine and/or lack of parental affection".¹⁴ The children are invited to assist in praying and raising funds to assist the most needy children. Sr. Alexa further noted that the Society is important in "educating and conscientising children so that they become aware of their responsibility to those children who have never heard the Good News or had the opportunity to be incorporated in the family of the Church- in other words, teaching children mission and what it means."¹⁵

The Society is run in the Catholic Church and enjoys the patronage and protection of the Pope; thus it is referred to as Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC). It has its international office in Rome and national office in Nairobi from where it is coordinated to the diocesan level and then to parishes down to the SCC. It caters for primary school age group. The children are expected to pray daily and to make small voluntary sacrifices. They are encouraged to make personal

sacrifices as “something between the child and God”. Such sacrifices may include giving a share of their pocket money, voluntary work, self-discipline, volition to suffer for the sake of others and forgiving among others.

The grants that each child makes in terms of money are collected and sent to Rome to support Church projects for the needy children all over the world. The PMC channels the donations given by the children to institutions dealing with children below the age of fourteen, including nursery centers, dispensaries, primary schools and maternity hospitals. It also offers aid to training skilled labour in such fields as catechetical training and vocational promotion.

PMC, according to Sr. Alexa, helps the children to assume the model of Christ in their missionary activities of evangelizing other children and their own families, helping in temporal needs of feeding, clothing and offering shelter to other children and loving one another. They are also imbued with good moral principles of sharing, caring, loving and responding to the needs of other people. Through PMC the children learn how to pray personally and spontaneously, to relate to other people and children beyond the line of ethnicity, to share their possessions with the needy and to live a true Christian life. The Catholic women perceive it as a means of promoting good neighbourliness, inculcating moral values and a way of preparing them to proper citizenry, family life, vocations of religious life of both men and women and active membership of the local Church as youth and parents.

The virtue of sacrifice and service to God and people has seen some men and women sacrificing their inalienable rights into joining priesthood and

sisterhood to fully participate in the services of the SCC. An encounter of the author with both lay and religious women and men who have gone through the Society of Missionary Childhood affirmed the vitality of the Society. “Children helping Children” emulate the model of ‘Child’ Jesus in cooperation and obedience to His parents. They participate in loving other children as Jesus did, helping the sick, the cripples, beggars, visiting the sick at home and hospitals, praying, giving food and clothes to the less fortunate (cf. 2 Cor 9: 6-9). The Catholic women through the SCC also encourage their children to participate in Bible study, visiting street children, the mentally and physically handicapped children and giving them donations and praying for displaced and refugee children. Through the SCC the PMC educate the children on the model of Christ and the Virgin Mary.¹⁶

In celebrating their enrollment into the PMC, the children are conscientized on the model of Christ. They are also educated on different forms of marginalization that require their attention through pictures and charts. They are then provided with membership cards after promising to be faithful to the mission of the Church by praying for it and sharing their love and money with the poor and the needy.

Other programs that the Catholic women in the ministry of evangelization participate in include teaching Sunday schools. Children are educated on behavioural change and how to participate in liturgy. The parents also encourage their children to participate in the Church activities such as altar boys and altar girls. Children’s catechises and participation in the SCC is sometimes made impossible especially where the SCC converge during the week in both rural and urban settings.

The SCC are at times boring and irrelevant to the young as adult discussions and experiences predominate the events of the communities. The children end up receiving catechism in the parishes and outstation centers other than the SCC. But efforts are being made to increase children participation in SCC by assigning them duties such as bible reading and in opening and closing prayers, in such occasions they are encouraged to pray for their needs and friends.¹⁷

4.1.2 Women in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement

The Catholic charismatic renewal movement was started in the USA in 1967 “when a handful of student and university professors from Duquesne University got together for a retreat weekend. From this small and invisible beginning, by 1990 the movement had grown to include more than 72 million Catholics world wide.”¹⁸ The movement has since spread throughout the world. It has its international office in the Vatican, Rome, at the heart of the church hierarchy. It is therefore a recognized movement in the church, a way of life and a way of being rather than a sect. It is, according to the respondents, another model of the living Church.

The movement involves complete transformation of life according to the gospel teachings. It also involves total commitment to Christ. The charismatic movement enables Christians to have personal relationship with the Lord, which is meant to strengthen the Church. Radical Christian way of life that includes abstinence from alcohol and smoking are emphasized. Programs such as ‘Life in the Spirit’, ‘Leadership training for Prayer Groups’ and ‘Discipleship’ are

organized as a spring board for renewal at the national level and channeled to the diocesan offices and then to parishes.¹⁹

The movement is important in helping the Catholic women to focus on the sacraments of the Church, which include baptism, confirmation, matrimony and the anointing of the sick. The gift of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ during the consecration of the bread and wine (transubstantiation) are appreciated. Christian life and sacraments, according to the respondents, become more meaningful. It is, therefore, a renewal and transformation of the Church experiencing a Catholic Pentecost. The renewed transformation of the Church forthcoming from the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues (1Cor 12:7-12) has raised the prominence of Catholic women's participation in liberation and empowerment roles. Such gifts as healing, miracles and speaking in tongues have revolutionized the position of women in the Church.

The charismatic renewal movement has given them a new face in the hierarchical Church – women as healers, miracle performers, wise, faithful disciples, liberators, among others. This has been perceived by the women respondents as a new chance for the Catholic women in the life of the Church as Pope Paul VI stated in 1975: “Nothing is more necessary to this more secularized world than the witness of the ‘spiritual renewal’ that we see the Holy Spirit evoking in the most diverse regions and milieu... How then could this ‘spiritual renewal’ not be a ‘chance’ for the Church and for the world? And how, in this case, could one not take all the means to ensure that it remains so.”²⁰ John Paul II,

however, cautions the Christians to “remain in an attitude of constant and grateful availability for every gift that the Spirit wishes to pour into [their] hearts”.²¹

The movement focuses on evangelization –radical reformation to diminish the evils in the society. It concentrates on the spiritual welfare of Christians. Through renewal, according to the respondents, Christians have the capacity to share their resources with the poor, uplift the morals and values of the society, curb prostitution, help curb the problem of street children, protect family values essential for evangelization in the sense that it is the African basic unit of a society.²²

One respondent, Lucy Wangari, expressed the need of the Charismatic renewal movement for women in the SCC as a means to a deeper personal knowledge of Christ. The greatest hope, according to some respondents, is the transformation of some priests, which has become problematic leading to ‘religious tourism’ in the Church whereby members join other independent churches. “We pray for the priests to have the capacity to sustain the dignity of the gift of priesthood by saying ‘no’ to adulteration of the sacrament. Transformation should be the core of the priestly formation”.²³ Hence priestly formation and evangelization mission need reformation as expressed by the Catholic women respondents. Some of the respondents expressed their concern on the emphasis laid on ritualistic performance by some Christians with no authentic commitment to Christ.

The movement has an ecumenical orientation in that it is open to other churches in terms of ministry and sharing: “The Catholic women in the

Charismatic movement do not presume the whole truth. We willingly interact and share with other churches".²⁴ The movement is, however, met with challenges. It has not been fully accepted in some parishes (SCC) in both urban and rural settings by both religious and the lay people. It has, therefore, created divisions among the 'saved' Christians and the 'unsaved' within some SCC.

4.2 Education Development

Education is an important tool in eradicating various forms of oppression and alienation. As already highlighted, cultural indignation and discrimination of women in structural set ups, is seen through the lenses of ignorance. As noted by Lucia N. Omondi, education is the 'greatest weapon' in relieving women of gender biases.²⁵ Both men and women ought to be gender sensitized regardless of their social status.

In trying to answer to the needs of the community, the Catholic women in the SCC, with the help of Amos Programme,²⁶ question the root causes of the problems. At this level, the professionals such as health workers seek to conscientise others on health and nutrition. This was more appreciated in the Arid and semi arid areas and among poor communities where health facilities are either unaffordable or not easily accessible. For instance traditional midwives are educated on hygiene, prenatal and postnatal care.

Among the Maasai, an expectant mother is expected to select her food carefully according to the traditions. During her third trimester, the amount of food is reduced consistently as she approaches child bearing. That is, the quality

and quantity of food is strictly and carefully controlled. It is believed that certain types of food are good and bad for her. For instance, milk which is one of the most recommended diet of an expectant mother today was considered to fatten the fetus and hence unhealthy for the mother. A mother was usually fed with sour or curdled milk lest “the fetus should ‘receive the milk direct’ from the mother’s stomach. Curdled or sour milk is thicker and will therefore not pass directly into the uterus to fatten the baby.”²⁷

An expectant mother is therefore supposed to keep slim for easy delivery, which means that the size of the child will also be intentionally reduced. T. Seti, a nurse by profession, is an example of a resource person helping women at the grassroots level. She educates women on family life and improving traditional midwife services to avoid the risk of deaths and the contraction of HIV/AIDS among mothers. Sex education among the youth is also a concern of some of the SCC. Professional health workers also engage in providing home based care for the HIV/AIDS victims. They also teach the infected and affected persons on coping mechanisms. Fr. E. Gichuki noted that Christians’ efforts to serve the sick were watered down by the spread of HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS prevalence is high thus making SCC’s service to the sick predominant in the rural areas as opposed to other ministries.

Nutrition is cardinal especially where women and girl child are denied proper meals due to cultural taboos, which relegate the best foods to men and boys.²⁸ Discussion on family life is occasionally done among the members of the SCC. St Paul SCC- Suswa in Parklands, Nairobi facilitates such discussions by inviting Family Life educators to handle sensitive issues such as the natural family

planning as taught by the Catholic Church. (A further discussion on this subject is handled in the next chapter.) Narumoru parish is an agricultural oriented area where small-scale farming is highly practiced. Agricultural officers within the SCC educate the farmers (both Catholics and non-Catholics) on crop rotation and mixed farming and proper use of agro-chemicals.

The Catholic women through the women's desk at the Kenya Catholic Secretariat (KCS) facilitate training programs at the grassroots level for development. Training Women on Management Skills (TWOMS) is a program on managing micro-projects provided to women. Single Mothers and Mission Training (SMMT) gives single women – divorced, separated, unmarried and widowed – managerial skills. Psychological and social issues to fight against social stigmatization are deliberated on. Gender Sensitization Program (GSP) sensitizes community on gender issues. Priests are also encouraged to use gender sensitive language in sermons. Another vital educational training program facilitated in SCC is the Civic Education for Women (CEW). CEW trains women on civic rights, voting and current political issues e.g. constitutional review.²⁹ The structure of social development in terms of training women at SCC, according to M. Mwaniki, starts from the women desk at the national level. This is then channeled to diocesan women coordinators, deanery women coordinators and finally at the parish level (SCC).

4.3 Economic Development

The SCC is normally used to initiate economic and social development. Within the SCC women organize development-oriented activities such as merry-

go-round targeting the nuclear families. The members contribute to assist themselves financially where each is required to contribute a certain amount of money which is then given to a member or is kept to cater for the needy in the SCC.

Development at the community level is achieved through community based projects initiated by the members to uplift their standard of living and to alleviate poverty. An example of such a project is KAMUTI, which is an organization of three SCC in Narumoru parish. These are Kambi, Murungaru and Tigithi. KAMUTI is a welfare group (characteristically predominated by women) where members contribute towards their own economic development. It has its own leaders besides the SCC leaders. Such associations have in the past suffered managerial and administrative problems. Conflicts regarding funds embezzlement have also been experienced.³⁰ Such economic pursuits of the SCC in Nairobi Deanery were not evident. The parishes provide alternative sources of income such as the Holy Family Basilica Savings and Credit Union which caters for all the Christians. The Self Help groups are spread in almost all parishes of Archdiocese of Nairobi to provide Christians with savings and credit facilities at the parish level.

SCC in the rural setting are also organised into zones where the members are required to contribute according to the needs of their community. Such contributions are distributed to the poor or used to construct houses for the aged in the rural community. In both urban and rural slums, most households are female headed. In Nanyuki parish (Majengo and Likii slums), one of the economic initiatives that women support each other in is volunteering to look after other

women's children while they seek for jobs to support their families. In cases of domestic violence, women in the SCC shelter their fellow women and their families.

The rural SCC have continued to give hope to the poor through communion and problem sharing.³¹ The hand to mouth livelihood makes it difficult for women to afford any contributions for economic development. While monetary contributions of SCC in urban centres range from fifty to three hundred shillings, the slum community barely contribute any money. The unskilled labourers only afford a payment of five shillings. Women and children sleep hungry thus making education and health a luxury. They also depend on help from other SCC and relief food for survival.

In the rural setting, the Church uses the SCC to identify the most needy who are in turn assisted through the efforts of other able SCC. In Nairobi deanery the identified needy cases are normally referred to St. Vincent de Paul's Society of the poor. Needy cases in the rural parishes are a concern of the SCC. The named Society has not been established in the rural deanery.

An example of a Catholic woman participating in the ministry of the sick and the poor in Nairobi deanery is Ann Wairimu (not real name).³² She coordinates the activities of the poor in one of the urban slums. She provides food for the street men and women three times a week. She liaises with established dispensaries and hospitals in the Archdiocese to support the poor and the destitute. She also educates women on NFP, which she described as ineffective due to joblessness and idleness in the slums. She therefore conscientises them on various forms of

contraception but leaves the individuals to decide on which methods to use. She counsels them on dangers of having large families, which they can not maintain.

Ann has also started an AIDS patient program that caters for the sick, poor, needy, street dwellers and victims of HIV/AIDS. She offers counseling to the victims, to those who need pre-test and post –test counseling.

The question of large families is crucial to the roles of women in trying to rehabilitate them. Most street children are from large families who go to streets due to poverty, lack of basic necessities like shelter, food, education and clothing. Sometimes the parents bear the brunt for their ignorance on family planning. The phenomenon of street children in Kenya is alarming and sometimes individual efforts seem elusive. Such families are introduced to small-scale projects. Parents are provided with managerial and training skills to help them identify and start income generating projects.

4.4 Socio-Cultural Development

SCC are socially integrated like extended families where each member identifies with each other. Personal interactions are more elaborate in the SCC than in the wider Church. Each person becomes her neighbour's keeper. Through this communion the women insert themselves into the problems of each other to establish praxis. They contribute money, food and clothes among other things to help the less fortunate in the SCC. During burial and wedding celebrations the SCC engage in catering for their own expenses. The harambee philosophy of contributing towards a common need is augmented in the lives of the women.

The rural setting is basically agricultural. The SCC in the outstations through the harambee spirit help prepare, sow, weed and harvest each other's farm on rotational basis. This helps to minimize the cost of labour, which would otherwise prove to be expensive.

Other social responsibilities extended by the SCC in the rural are include adopting orphans of bereaved members of the community. Sometimes different women Christian families who are assisted by the rest of the community in raising and educating such children adopt the orphans. If a SCC's resources fall short of caring for them, the members approach the neighbouring SCC who in turn contribute money. Such SCC also approach others through their leaders in the parish for support. The problem of a SCC becomes the concern of all SCC. Such cooperation upholds a cohesive communion of communities and the Church as such in the rural parishes.

Some outstations in the rural setting are organized like SCC due to limited number of families in the community especially in the Dol Dol parish. This is as a result of migration in search of pastures during famine. The SCC there end up being a communion of kinship within a given area. Kinship has further facilitated SCC's social cohesion.³³

Due to the social cultural orientation of the Maasai of early marriages, very few women folk have gone through the system of education to earn themselves a good livelihood. However, in the Dol Dol community there are women role models for the young Maasai girls ranging from school inspectors, nurses to teachers. These women (Catholic) work on voluntary basis in sensitizing women

on their roles in the society and by motivating such participation. This conscientises the community on gender equity and the contribution of women in community development. The education of girl-child is emphasised. In this way women uplift the standards of living of their own children by providing them with better nutrition, education and other basic necessities like health.

Wife beating as already indicated in the previous chapter, is a cultural practice among the Maasai. To fight against such cultural arrays, women have resorted to sensitizing men on the dangers of such activities. Men are educated on humane living and on peaceful conflict resolution to save women from being clobbered, battered and murdered in marriages. The SCC have become cardinal channels for gender mainstreaming by empowering women through sensitisation.

4.5 Children and the Youth

The question of the marginalized child is crucial to the role of women in liberation participation. Categories of needy children and the youth include the orphaned, the abandoned, the malnourished, the neglected, the poor and victims of HIV/AIDS pandemic.

These categories are intertwined since a poor child may be malnourished, neglected, abandoned, orphaned as well as HIV positive leading to the circumstances of street children, child labour and child abuse. A case may, however, be unnecessarily connected into all the above mentioned categories. Notwithstanding poverty and HIV/AIDS scourge, natural disasters such as famine and political upheavals of ethnic clashes, promiscuity and permissiveness have

continually alienated the young people. However, the importance of a mother-child relationship cannot be gainsaid. According to some research findings, mothers have special links with their children.³⁴

The volition of the Catholic women to liberate/help the marginalised children is in a sense an extension of maternal love to the despised. Adoption of such children is an example of an intrinsic value of maternity. This does, of course, indicate the intricacy of biological interconnection in the conception and birth of a child, which differs with the Aristotelian view that “woman plays no active biological role in the formation of a fetus”. A view that was also propagated by St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas.³⁵

An example of Catholic women’s liberation participation in the ministry of children and youth is Hellen Gathogo, a social worker in Nanyuki Children’s Home (NCH). The Home was started in 1976 by the Child Welfare Society (CWS) of Kenya in Laikipia District of Rift Valley Province to cater for the needs of the marginalised children. The Home saw its first phase of establishment in 1979 with two orphans, a matron and a cook. The NCH was first established at Majengo slums in Nanyuki as a feeding center for orphans. Majengo slums sprung up as a result of 2nd world war soldiers’ families who never returned home. Lack of financial backing to the female-headed households rendered them poor, illiterate and malnourished.³⁶

In 1980s NCH received volunteers from Norway who sponsored and administered the Home. After four years of service to NCH, the Norwegians left Kenya as a result of political differences with the Kenyan government. The immediate handing over of the Home to Kenyans was unprofessionally done. This

led to financial and administrative problems.³⁷ Today the Home has no sponsors and hence depends on the well wishers and the Christian communities. NCH operates under the policy of CWS. Currently the Home hosts 31 needy children. The Home is currently run under the efforts of a Catholic woman. Hellen Gathogo administers the home and at the same time works as a social worker as well as a matron and own secretary. The home can hardly remunerate thus relegating her to multiple tasks.³⁸

In her capacity as an administrator, matron, secretary and social worker, a mother and wife, Hellen helps to sustain the Home. NCH helps to uphold the nuclear families from which the needy cases hail by empowering them economically and by providing food, clothing and education for children through the 'family rehabilitation program'. It has the saying that "the best place for child development is within a family set up". This helps to keep the family together.

The Home receives children from the age of 6 months to 10 years. From 10-18 years family rehabilitation is emphasized. For a case to be fully considered, it is procedurally investigated to a maximum of 2 years except for the abandoned newborn. Through her efforts, Hellen established that some parents/relatives or guardians abandon or refuse to claim 'abandoned' children for them to be educated in the Home. Those who later identify with such children after successfully being educated are normally charged with child neglect. In case of disadvantaged children, for instance the blind she refers them to special institutions like Thika School for the Blind.

Another important role that Hellen does is the Adoption program for the children. She finds homes for the unwanted and abandoned children. If a case is not identified or claimed within six months, the child is adopted by the institution. Some families within the SCC also adopt children from the institution. The maximum age for adoption in a family of a couple is 45 for a woman and 50 for a man. The family, according to her, must be economically stable to raise and educate the children. Adoption grants the foster parents full rights over the child such as renaming.³⁹ Adoption procedures are done in collaboration with CWS and Nanyuki law courts. The study did not establish any adoptions within urban SCC as an initiative of the Christian communities.

NCH has produced university graduates, police constables, teachers, and headteachers, among others. Once a child qualifies for higher learning the Home solicits funding for learning. Graduates and qualified/skilled persons are enabled to attain jobs after which their files are closed and cease to be regarded as needy cases. Few rehabilitated cases identify with the institution thereafter while others demand services even after gaining employment which puts them and the administrator at loggerheads.

NCH works closely with Laikipia Rehabilitation Center for the street children where Hellen is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Center. This center is used for screening the street children, that is, trying to get their background from which they are referred to Homes or Institutions. Some cases are sent to NCH. Others are referred to Undugu Society in Nairobi. Hellen counsels the children to curb child prostitution and street dwelling. The children respect and regard her as 'mother'.

Hellen has also initiated a 'youth to youth' club that trains teachers in the rights of young persons who in turn teach the students on their rights. Youth to youth club also initiate income-generating projects to help children pay for school fees and enhance children participation in social activities. She further educates parents on the rights of the children. Rehabilitation of street children, according to the respondent, is a challenging task owing to different categories of street children, which include Those that leave home during the day to loiter and/ or look for food. This may be a result of poverty or child delinquency. Others, for instance the street families, literally live in the streets. Their Family relations can scarcely be identified due to the life span spent in the streets.

Nanyuki Rehabilitation Center helps to distinguish such groups of street children in bid to rescue them. NCH serves the Laikipia District of the Rift Valley and its environs. It has the girl child program as one of its initiatives. This involves rescuing them from early marriages some of who are engaged to aged suitors at the age of three years through their parents' negotiations. Rape of such girls by their spouses is rampant. Hellen has taken the onus of rescuing such girls and to protect them against the transmission of STDs and HIV/AIDS, and early marriages. Lamuria is a small center in Laikipia district among other areas that Hellen is actively involved in rescuing girls from prostitution. The family rehabilitation program comes in handy for such cases. Other Homes that she collaborates with include Dagoretti Children's Home and Save Our Souls (SOS) in Nairobi.

4.6 The Dignity of Human Life

Principally, when we talk about the dignity of human life we refer to the decorum, respect, honour accorded to human life from the time of conception to the time of death. From the Christian understanding that confirms the African Traditional conception of life, the dignity of human life transcends the here and now existence to life after death. This is evident in the death and resurrection of Christ, the veneration of saints and the respect accorded to the ancestors respectively.

The preceding chapter analysed the forms of marginalisation meted out against the women-folk, which includes the girl child. It was noted that women and children are the most affected by oppression, poverty and marginalisation. As such, this section endeavours to elucidate the role of the Catholic women (SCC) in restoring the dignity of women including men in families and in the society.

4.6.1 Women Peacemakers

Women Peacemakers is a movement by women concerned with the absence of peace and the suffering of all people within a given situation. It has its goal as recognizing the dignity and giftedness of women and to celebrate such conscientization by participating in the establishment of a just and peaceful society. The women peacemakers have five basic principles that necessitate their full participation in peace and reconciliation activities at a personal and social level. These include:

- 1) All people are created in the image and likeness of God.
- 2) All people are called to oneness in God and to live in peace.
- 3) All peace is built on the four walls of love, truth, justice and freedom.
- 4) All life is sacred and of absolute value.
- 5) All things are possible with God.⁴⁰

The activities of women peacemakers (*Wanawake wa Amani* in Kiswahili) at the grassroots level (SCC) help to raise the self esteem of a woman, to recognize her participation as a woman of peace in the upkeep of the society, and to accord her the dignity stripped by socio-cultural, economic, religious, psychological, physical forms of violence and marginalisation. Their participation is not, however, limited to the benefit of women alone.

Such concerns as environmental, educational, religious awareness have become the onus of the Catholic women peacemakers in the SCC. Such a responsibility was demonstrated when they participated in the⁵ procession and prayers for the controversial Karura forest and other Kenyan forests on Friday 26th March 1999 which was organized by the Catholic Church, the National Council of Churches of Kenya and other religious leaders. The responsibility taken upon by the Catholic women in preserving natural resources was attributed to Christ mission to save the world.⁴¹

Women peacemakers through the SCC also participate in recognizing and maintaining the dignity of women and men by fighting against the classist, sexist, ethnic and cultural levels of oppression. Through the AOSK-JP (Association of

Sisterhood of Kenya- Justice and Peace) coordinator, Sr. B. Nuala, the women peace makers are given workshops and seminars and trained on leadership roles in which case they are expected to lead, train and recruit other women into becoming women of peace. In this case the women are expected to emulate Christ as the perfect model of leadership (service).⁴² The Catholic women in the SCC have extended their awareness program to other Christian and non Christian groups in bid to create peace and to eradicate suffering. The acceptance and awareness of upholding the dignity of people of all races, sex, ethnicity and colour is a wave of creating peace in the multi ethnic country-Kenya. The women peacemakers also empower their fellow women by organizing meetings and seminars to lobby for peace.⁴³

Through Active Non-Violence (ANV) seminars and workshops by the AOSK-JP they are empowered to becoming peacemakers. The “Active Non-Violence is an interfaith movement introduced in Kenya in September 1997. It adheres to the non violence principles of Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King in the face of unjust structures”.⁴⁴ The ANV acts as a tool for women to maintain their dignity in resolving domestic issues without engaging in violence. In this way they recognize the image of God in His creation –man and woman. This corresponds with article 28 of African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights: “Each person has the duty to respect others no matter who they are”. The AOSK-JP also helps in educating the women on human rights and civil rights.

An example of women brutalized by the police was cited. The women respondents complained of being sexually molested by the police before being arrested. Hence, women peacemakers educate others on seeking legal redress by

first noting the police officer's name and identification number to enable them press charges against them. During the 50th anniversary (golden jubilee) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) – which was celebrated on December 10, 1998, the AOSK–JP in liaison with the Catholic JPC, and Kenya Human Rights Commission team and UNIFEM participated in organizing seminars to educate the public on Human rights.

The Catholic women also participated in a march in Nairobi on 5th December 1998 in promoting Human Rights and a photo and video exhibition at the Holy Family Basilica, Nairobi. December 10 is an International Human Rights Day and is celebrated annually all over the world. AOSK – JP was among the Human Rights Network (HURINET) in marking the 50th anniversary of UDHR which “proclaims the fundamental freedoms of thought, expression and belief and enshrines the core right of participatory and representative government with equal emphasis on economic, social, cultural rights and the right to equal opportunity”.⁴⁵ It is apparent that most people are unaware of their rights which is clearly indicated by the myriad challenges facing Kenyans today. ♪

In creating awareness, AOSK-JP is also actively involved in educating women in the SCC on their role in the constitutional review. They are also encouraged to attend informative seminars and workshops and to read books, newsletters and newspapers for conscientization. This way women realize their onus towards peacemaking. They are also enabled to seek their rights both in the family and society in a creative way. This helps build their self-esteem and to restore peace through door to door home visits and in SCC by educating fellow women on restoration and upholding of their decorum and dignity. This has

proved an effective way of eliminating violence in homes. Being a woman of peace also entails counseling and educating women on self-esteem, interpersonal relationship, justice, peace and behavioral change. ⁴⁶

Women at the SCC also educate others on their responsibilities and abilities in the family through experiential knowledge. Women Peace Makers facilitate seminars to create awareness on violence against women through workshops and on ways to eliminate violence at the grassroots level.⁴⁷ Besides this, they are expected to intervene in cases of injustice as women of peace in situations of violence meted out against women. This not only creates peace but also rather unifies the people into a common goal, that is, maintaining peace, love, truth, justice and freedom.

The International Women's Day is observed 8th March of every year. This day helps to raise awareness about the dignity and potentials of women. Its origin is attributed to a group of New York Women Garment Workers who held a demonstration in 1857 protesting poor working conditions. Through the efforts of women in lobbying for an annual international women's day, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for women's Rights and International Peace in 1977. March 8th of every year was thus identified as the international Women's Day, which was first celebrated in Kenya in 1988. Much awareness of the problems facing women and the need to identify with this day was attributed to the outcome of the World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995.

The AOSK-JP and women peacemakers liaise with women groups and SCC in the parishes to mobilize the communities especially women and in some areas also men into celebrating the International Women's Day. It also conscientizes women on their rights, roles and responsibilities and uplifting their self-esteem and dignity. Seminars and workshops are also held to prepare women in celebrating this day.

Such issues as civic education, single motherhood, women leadership, human rights, women in the bible, women and empowerment, good communication skills, economic violence, matrimonial property and inheritance, and psychological and physical violence are discussed to enlighten women and men. Civic education is cardinal in fighting against what Francis Gichia terms as 'political manipulation' which he says is mostly directed to the illiterate and the semi literate. He notes that in "Kenya during campaigns for elections into parliament the rich/elite go around the rural areas 'buying' votes from the common people for a bottle of beer, a kilo of sugar, or a hand-out of 20 Kenya Shillings".⁴⁸ Civic education helps to minimize this problem. ♪

To mark the International Women's Day, women participate in various activities such as Holy Mass where they fully participate in delivering homilies. They also exchange gifts as a sign of mutual consent and ability to help one another. Prayer services focusing on victorious women in the Bible and contemporary successful women are highlighted as role models. Special prayers for victims of domestic violence, drama/plays, songs cultural dances on discrimination against women also help to mark the day. Important to women in celebrating this day is conscientisation through resource persons from such

organizations as FIDA and COVAW on rights of women. Other activities focussing on the community include feeding the hungry, helping the aged, offering gifts to the poor, being supportive to the refugee women, offering support to the HIV/AIDS infected/affected persons and orphans, counseling the displaced, inaugurating justice and peace in parishes, researching on cultural mores that alienate the women and deliberating on ways and means of liberating the womenfolk, fundraising for the orphans, soliciting funds and creating awareness campaign on violence against women.

The international women's Day is more pronounced in the Archdiocese of Nairobi than in the rural areas. This could be attributed to the socio-economic set up in the rural areas. Women in rural setting depend highly on small-scale businesses, farming and pastoralism, which provide meager income for the families. Lack of awareness of such days focussing on women's achievements is also another reason. It is also seen as a waste of time and resources in otherwise busy scheduled days especially in women headed households. According to some of the rural respondents, such celebrations are an elite indulgence exclusive to urban dwellers. However, to respond to the issues affecting the society, the rural SCC counter approach the situations as a social responsibility and not as an outcome of the Women's Day.

4.7 Disability and Old Age

Disability, as already explained, is a physical or mental situation that incapacitates a person and prevents him/her from fully participating in social activities. Lack of awareness among the people has led to the alienation of the

disabled people. The Catholic women in and through the SCC liberate and empower them by conscientizing the people towards socializing with the disabled.

Owing to the problems facing the disabled, the Catholic women educate families on special care for the disabled especially the mentally retarded children. Counseling is also given to those who face self-denial and low self-esteem. In such cases they are helped to adopt in the social and public arena. Such counseling helps them build self-confidence among spouses especially when one of them is disabled.

The Catholic women involve gender workers to sensitize men appreciate and respect disabled women. Counseling families with handicapped people especially mothers on how to protect the girl child is also another cardinal aspect of liberation and empowerment. The intervention of Catholic women in the marginalization of the handicapped helps uplift their esteem and realize that "disability is not inability".⁴⁹ They are empowered to work even harder in income generating projects introduced to them such as small-scale businesses, basketry, knitting and carpentry. They also participate in helping them acquire skills to run the projects in which case the skilled are given the responsibility of training the unskilled. This helps them appreciate their abilities and to raise their self esteem. Hence, they are recognized and accepted as full members of the society.⁵⁰

Old age is also a form of social and economic disability. To help the aged the Catholic women identify institutions for the aged where they are recommended and accepted. Feeding programs are also organized for them. In the rural setting they are also fed and clothed. In cases of poor and abandoned aged people, the

SCC take the responsibility of providing food, clothes, firewood and water for them. The aged, therefore, become the responsibility of the community, which the Catholic women have sought to help.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the Catholic women's participation in liberation and empowerment in socio-cultural, religious, political, economic and educational situations. It portrays the SCC's existential praxis within the parameters of Christian humanism. By putting themselves in the live situation of the marginalized, they seek to establish the root causes of the problems and to expedite authenticity. Their empathy and participation in liberation and empowerment of the marginalized compounds a reflective action of confronting their life situation with the Bible inherently oriented towards transforming a given situation. Such reflective actions (praxis) as opposed to mere practice enable them participate in the mission of the laity as Christians as taught in the *Apostolicam Actuositatem – A.A* (Decree On The Apostolate of Lay People).⁵¹

According to A.A the Christians should be diligent in blending their spirituality with temporal activities in establishing human integral development. Women through the SCC participate in the ministries of justice and peace, evangelization, catechism and ecumenism, poverty, the sick, disabled and the aged. This they do through their self-giftedness and the want to liberate. Important paradigms were cited in their liberation and empowerment activities, that is, Jesus

Christ and Mary, His mother. The two are distinct principles in the theology of liberation.

From the field study, it was also observed that apart from the Church teachings on women in view of liberation, other initiatives like the Beijing Conference are used to resurge the activities of women (SCC) on their roles and responsibilities towards society. This has augmented their liberation and empowerment activities. The next chapter looks into the Catholic women's disposition of this Conference among other issues.

2

Endnotes

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28. Interview with J. Seti. Date 6.7.2000. Place: Nanyuki.
29. Interview with Mrs. M. Mwaniki. Date 29.3.99. Place: Nanyuki.
30. Interview with E. Gichuki. Date 23.1.2000. Place: Narumoru.
31. Interview with F. Carlo. Date 19.11.2000. Place: Nanyuki.
32. Interview with Ann Wairimu. Date 23.1.2000. Place: Nairobi. The respondent sought anonymity due to her position as Catholic Woman in charge of an institution and a member of SCC teaching artificial contraceptives to her clients against the teachings of the Catholic Church.
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CHAPTER FIVE

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

5.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter has given a detailed analysis of Catholic women's liberation undertaking and empowerment roles within the SCC. Notwithstanding the efforts of these Communities, the Kenyan society still encounter unauthentic and oppressive challenges such as domestic violence, HIV/AIDS scourge, unwanted/unintended pregnancies, rape and drug abuse. Within their day to day lives the Catholic women also face challenges linked to male chauvinism.

The denigration of their children through drug abuse, child labour and poverty has rendered them to seek other means of intervention other than the SCC and Church pedagogy. One such elaborate means is the awareness attributed to the Beijing Conference, which this chapter endeavours to discuss among other issues. The Conference was the most popular among others to both areas of study hence the need to look at the women's disposition towards it. Through such conscientization women identify with each other at the grassroots and the national level in trying to empower and liberate themselves.

It was also noted in chapter two that not all women active in liberation and empowerment are members of the SCC. Some women shun SCC due to their demanding careers or lack of interest in the SCC. They, hence, participate as individuals through their own professions such as journalism. This chapter also

hopes to present Catholic women's participation in liberation activities in different forums either as individuals or in-groups as a way of complementing the SCC.

5.1 Catholic Women's Disposition of the Beijing Conference

The Beijing Conference was the fourth in a series of United Nations World Conferences on Women. It brought together a cross section of women from all over the world into a 'round table' on issues affecting them. Important issues of gender and development were deliberated on. These included:

- 1) "Promotion of women's economic independence, realization of their economic potential and the eradication of poverty.
- 2) Women's contribution to sustainable development
- 3) Equal sharing of power and responsibility
- 4) Respect for the human rights of women and girls
- 5) Equal access to education and health care
- 6) The role of women in promoting peace
- 7) "Integration" of the question of the relationship between the sexes in all programs and policies
- 8) Reconciliation of family and professional life for women and men
- 9) An end to violence

10) Encouragement of women and men to work together for equality

11) Empowerment of women".¹

The Catholic women's disposition to the Beijing Conference had both creative as well as negative effects. Having been socialized in a patriarchy society, the inception of the Conference in the Kenyan society had double standard effects. The support and protection of women and the girl child and their rights among other issues were welcomed. But pertinent questions were raised: What is the position of women in the Church and society with regard to the Christian teachings, which cannot otherwise be negated, in comparison with the position of the Conference? Majority of the women respondents felt that men have their rightful place as the head of families and leaders regardless of their potentials and search for gender equality.² Some respondents emphasized that gender equality watered down Christian teachings on the position of women in society and was therefore geared towards family destruction.³

However, the Beijing Conference was a landmark in conscientizing women of their roles and responsibilities in the society. It revolutionized the subservient roles and position of women to active liberation animators and partakers. The Conference created awareness of the need to protect women and girl child. This encouraged women to counter approach women's roles as predisposed by the Christian tradition and the cultural practices. Through conscientization women have become aware of their rights that boost good communication in the field of service – participation in liberation activities.

Small-scale development projects have also been facilitated to change the socio-economic status of women in the communities. Women at the grassroots level are conscientized to educate both boys and girls with the help of these income-generating projects, which have improved their standards of living. Women engage in roles traditionally regarded as masculine for the upkeep of their families. Income generating projects were practiced even before the inception of the conference.

In the rural setting, water projects facilitated by the Nyeri Diocese through material and financial support are coordinated through the SCC. The preponderance of women in the SCC with leadership qualities/skills has seen many co-ordinating community development projects. This has proved challenging to their male counterparts. The empowerment of women at the village level was attributed to the consciousness of their roles and responsibilities forthcoming from the Beijing Conference. The women's awareness of their potentials and contribution, and sense of identification with one another within a given community has enabled them tap potential and talents thus contributing towards community development.⁴

Through conscientization women have also recognized their position as equal in the image of God as men thus encouraging them to seek for equal job opportunities. Though statistical data was not available, it was apparent that girls were encouraged to pursue science-oriented subjects competitive in the job market thus reducing gender disparity in education opportunities with a view of creating leadership roles. The recognition and appreciation of women in the job market has also facilitated a competitive nature with their male counterparts.

This creates a healthy competition for jobs for both men and women. It has also led to a gender sensitive approach towards decision making and policy implementation, which do not marginalise women. This has further prompted to the rise of women role models for young girls capable of leadership roles and empowerment activities. This has, since then, continued to instill a sense of integrity in the women-folk.⁵

The Beijing Conference has also necessitated the enlightenment of women in fighting for their rights especially in cases of discrimination and violence meted out against them such as wife beating, early marriages, FGM and child labour. It brought to their awareness especially at the grassroots level of such organizations as FIDA, which fights, for the rights of women. This has, significantly increased the number of women seeking redress against their abusers. Thus, conscientization has broken the culture of silence among women.

Women have also been emboldened to socialize their children, both boys and girls as equal by providing them with equal educational opportunities. Their role in community development displays Allan Boesak's call for "farewell to innocence".⁶ Women rarely hide behind traditional norms that subjugate them. As Boesak explains, "the greatest ally of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Getting rid of the implanted mentality is central to the philosophy of ... consciousness. ...The moment that people realize that their position in life is not simply their "lot" for which they have to thank (or to blame) God, they begin to see their own responsibility in history".⁷ 'Farewell to innocence' has also created a gender responsibility towards women's initiatives. Men have also been

conscientized of their role in perpetrating and campaigning against gender violence and gender inequality.

Conscientization serves as a catalyst for women at the grassroots level in participating and contributing towards the economic status of their families. It has also opened channels by instilling confidence in women to participate and fully express themselves in the Christian communities. Such activities as charity works and liberation activities targeting especially the less privileged has the onus of the Catholic women. They have been emboldened to participate in deliberating on issues affecting their communities. Preponderance of women in SCC has encouraged their participation in active liberation roles. This has seen more women participate in leadership roles through leadership training by the Church in the SCC such as catechists and service leaders. Through this women command respect in their society and families especially in the rural setup where the socio-cultural subordination of women is still entrenched.⁹

Development projects run by women groups in trying to support each other economically are also mushrooming. Through leadership roles, women are encouraged to contest for Church leadership positions in parish pastoral councils as chairpersons. SCC women leaders also represent their Communities at the parish councils.¹⁰ The Church also empowers them with civic education, conflict resolution and management, active non-violence campaigns in view of enhancing peace. This facilitates the activities of Women of Peace (*Wanawake wa Amani*), already discussed in the previous chapter in fighting for justice and peace.¹¹

The above has inspired women in the SCC to ensue activities geared towards humanizing the society. Through their diverse talents and professions women participate in rehabilitating the street girls, creating HIV/AIDS awareness in the ministry of the sick, assisting fellow women seek redress in cases of violence and in the fight against drug and substance abuse. Awareness has also relieved women as 'beasts of burden' by sensitizing the community on gender sensitivity. To most respondents, "domestic violence was a cultural practice acceptable to both men and women. Women were perceived as the property of the men and could therefore be treated with own (husbands') pleasure even when it meant violating the women. Women at the SCC can now socialize and enlighten one another on their rights and roles in the family and society"¹²

The Church supports women's day – 8th March of each year – both in the urban and rural setting which encourage women's contribution to sustainable development. Women are working hard towards conscientizing men on the position of women in the society and families thus creating an avenue for women liberation. ¹³

The Conference can, therefore, be seen as a driving force for gender focus and an eye opener to women's rights, roles and responsibilities. They strive for equal opportunities and economic development. This has elevated the dignity of women by proving women's capability towards leadership roles and empowerment activities. The women can also compete for equal job opportunities with proper credentials. The Church in cooperation with the SCC hold informative and participatory workshops and seminars with women in educating them on issues forthcoming from the Beijing Conference.¹⁴ Such workshops include Training

Women on Management Skills (TWOMS) and Gender Sensitization Programme (GSP) as explained in chapter four.

The Beijing Conference was however received with suspicion by some Catholic women. The word gender 'equality' has facilitated polemic discussion among the Catholic women. It was argued that women are equal but different from men in terms of their biological disposition. To assume gender 'equality' is therefore unchristian and Radical/romantic feminists' approach which seeks for a credulous equality of both men and women.¹⁵

Such a disposition towards the Conference terms women ordination as unacceptable thus reinforcing the Christian and African traditions on women. Respondents holding this position termed women as 'immature'. Women were also said to lack confidentiality that is practiced by the priests especially in the sacrament of penance. Women catechists or service leaders in SCC were accused of using illustrations affecting members of the SCC while delivering homilies thus alienating the victims from attending services led by women. Women leadership, in view of this, is not appreciated.¹⁶ Such anomalies observed during the research work could be counteracted by empowering women on communication and leadership skill. Others argued that a close association of women with priests would adulterate the ministry: "if sisters working with priests are sexually drawn to each other, what would happen when women work hand in hand with priests?"¹⁷

The Conference, according to some women respondents, as was featured by the media was vocalist, elitist or the single women's mantra that had nothing in common with their fellow married and rural women. Owing to the importance of

the family in the African social setup, some women in the SCC thought of the Conference as a way of underestimating the role of men in families. In other cases the Conference has been identified as the source of family breakups and violence against women. Some women while campaigning for gender equality formed groups of elite who spent their leisure getting drunk and neglecting their families. This was evidenced in the rural areas where guesthouses had special rooms labeled 'Beijing' where such women are said to hold social gatherings. The Conference also saw the emergence of riotous groups of married women in rural areas, which led to marriage complications and divorce cases. Most cases of violence against women were attributed to women's awareness of their rights. The misconception of the purpose of the Beijing Conference could be corrected through education/seminars for in the SCC or other women forums at the grassroots level.

Such repercussions had more women marginalised by the patriarchy society. Women for instance in Dol Dol were not allowed to attend workshops on violence against women. According to some of the respondents, men inhibit women's knowledge of their rights and roles in the community as a disciplinary measure towards inquisitive women.¹⁸ This implicates a drawback of the Conference on liberation, empowerment and gender equality. It was ascertained by some of the respondents that gender campaigners also experienced oppression and marginalization in their own homes.¹⁹ This affirmed the presupposition that women are a cross section of marginalized people regardless of their status in the society. Some women respondents were determined to maintain their families regardless of marginalization to protect their children from broken homes and for economic gains. As one respondent expressed: "*mutumia ni ngoro ya mucii,*

muthuri ni kiongo kia mucii" (a wife is the heart of the family, a husband is the head of the family). This is in view of complementarity and interdependence in the family and the recognition of the man as the head of the family. However the head has more to do with reasoning while the heart – feelings. The man is therefore meant to make decisions regarding the family thus placing woman second to the man.

The women at the SCC who held the above position were cautious on the means of advocating rights and responsibilities of women in societies, which uphold men as the sole decision-makers. This was seen to ogle conflict between men and women, which was not the basic motive of the Conference. The Conference was also unknown to some women before the researchers introduced it to them. This was the case especially in the rural setting where women seemed to work hand to mouth for survival. Other communities lacked resources for development, security and proper infrastructure to necessitate any development as recommended by the Beijing Conference.

In the year 2000, June 5-9, women from around the world reconvened in New York to review the progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action after five years of activity. The meeting was called Beijing +5 Conference. A major concern on the plight of widows was raised. In a statement read on their behalf by the chairperson of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Sara Longwe, stated that widows were "the poorest of the poor, the most oppressed, violated and invisible and whose voices are the most unheard".²⁰

The statement called for the insertion of a special paragraph on widowhood in the Further Action of the Outcome Document. It emphasised that the gross human rights violations widows experience in many areas of their lives, have implications for the society and development in general which cannot be ignored. Other policies discussed in the Beijing +5 included improving accessibility to science and technology for women.²¹ Although much development activities are inferred from the Beijing Conference, it was established from the field study that this was associated to the popularity of the Conference. Little was known of the Beijing +5 Conference both in urban and rural settings.

5.2 Women in Education and Development

Illiteracy and high school drop out in the rural area surpasses that of the urban setting according to findings of this research. The most affected of the study area is Dol Dol, which is found in Mukogondo division of Laikipia district. Dol Dol being a semi arid region mainly depends on pastrolism where the lives of the people are characterized by movements in search of green pastures. Enrollment in schools is high but with great school drop outs especially among girls. Boys also suffer the same fate by spending most of the time herding. Dol Dol also faces the problem of scarcity of schools, which denies most children the opportunity to learn. The importance of education is, however, taking roots in the community with the intervention of elite women and role models to the cultural oriented society through the SCC. Their concern is geared towards the entire community, that is both the Catholics and non-Catholics.

Through the Osiligi Gender Task Force, women offer educational seminars to the women on issues affecting them. Osiligi is a self-help project founded by the indigenous Maasai in Laikipia. It functions as a community based organization. Osiligi is a Maasai word meaning “hope”. It seeks to empower the indigenous people to fully contribute in decision making and aspirations of development.²² Although traditional believes and practices keep men off such workshops, the women through Osiligi are making efforts to sensitise men on gender issues. The seminars held include HIV/AIDS awareness, dangers of FGM, on women leadership and wife beating. The major drawback that women participating in empowering others encounter is the demand for sitting allowances for each seminar. Ignorance has it that even in trying to educate people, they demand to be paid for what they are enlightened on.²³

Illiteracy level is very high among the Maasai community through ignorance of the importance of education. Albeit ignorance, the impact of poverty cannot be underestimated. Not withstanding such drawbacks, the enlightened women sensitize them on the importance of education in development and survival through workshops, during public meetings and through the Church.²⁴ The women liaise with such NGOs as Osililgi, ASAL (Arid and Semi Arid Lands) and the World Vision.

The women are also enlightened on primary health care. In connection with mobile clinics and the above named NGOs, health services for women and children are provided. According to the women respondents, these projects mainly target women and their children since they are the most afflicted in the society. Absence of such initiatives has led to maternal and children morbidity and high

mortality rate through infections and waterborne diseases. Dol Dol has only one health center and one secondary school that make the two basic necessities unreachable and expensive to some of the people. The women liaise with NGOs to educate both boys and girls.

The efforts of such women earn the Maasai children sponsorship from World Vision and the Catholic Mission. They also seek donations for them. This helps to alleviate illiteracy in the community. Through sensitization parents enroll their children, both boys and girls, to primary schools. M. Lesuunda, a primary schools inspector, guides and counsels parents, children and teachers during her school tours. She is one of the Catholic women who participate in women empowerment in the Dol Dol. This, she does communally and some times individually especially to student girls and other times going out of her way to offer financial assistance to needy cases. Through the slogan, 'educating a woman is educating the whole nation' and 'empowering a woman is empowering the whole nation', she empowers and edifies her community especially women through critical awareness and critical approach to life as the chairperson of women's group among the Maasai.²⁵

She provides soft loans to parents to help educate their children as well as setting up small-scale businesses to ensure the education of children. Besides providing and sensitizing parents on the importance of education, political awareness is also crucial to the livelihood of the Maasai. Through civic education they are enlightened on their rights to vote. Lobbying and advocacy on the vitality of education is also done through the SCC. As a woman who has gone through the cultural setting of the Maasai, she offers a good role model for the Maasai girls.

She guides and counsels students on life skills, self-esteem and self-actualization to help them cope with challenges facing them.

5.3 Women and the Media

Creating awareness and consciousness is a way of eradicating ignorance, which in most cases is oppressive and alienating. Media educates, informs and entertains. It deals with stories that are informative and aimed at changing/revolutionizing the society on issues affecting the society, gender violence, drugs and substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and interpersonal relationships.

Some Catholic women have penetrated the media as a “call” and want to liberate and empower the most oppressed group of people in the society mostly slum dwellers, women and children. An example of distinctive liberative work through the media is a feature’s writer, Mildred Ngesa working with the East African Standard Ltd.²⁶ She is a Catholic woman among other journalists complementing the activities of women outside the SCC. Feature writing according to her involves field research, inserting oneself into people’s live situation and elucidation. This is a time consuming activity requiring the individual to apply the participatory research methodology of inserting into the life situation of the community in question.

Ngesa regards herself as a “slum correspondent” – the voice of the poor, less fortunate, most oppressed and marginalised. Her concern for humanity has given her a chance to liberate women and the children marginalised by poverty and cultural practices such as early and forced marriages. She takes the onus of

becoming the voice of the voiceless with a special emphasis to the slum dwellers as well as victims of domestic violence.²⁷

The respondent features stories of the most needy cases to create awareness. Through the stories different people respond by way of helping such cases as women suffering from hemorrhage in Kikuyu, Kiambu district got gynecological attention through a features story from well wishers. The respondent also features rape cases and poor battered women to create awareness among the legal bodies/organizations like FIDA, which respond on legal basis. Her stories on poverty in the slums enable the poor to receive donations. Her aim is to change the society by instilling Christian values of sharing and communalism. In cases where the public fails to respond to the needy cases she keeps revisiting the issues. The stories can be regarded as appeal stories, that is appealing for help or for government intervention.

Being a voice of the voiceless, according to the respondent, is an agonizing task. Half of the population in Kenya is below poverty line as the gap between the rich and the poor escalates. Ngesa instills hope among the poor who live hopeless lives – “poverty smells like death; death smells like poverty”. She has become a close associate of the slum dwellers in Mathare and Korogocho among others who provide her with security while researching on her feature stories. Some of the beneficiaries of her work emphatically expressed the hope and dignity instilled in them after featuring a gang rape against women and the girl child in the slums. Her follow up led to the intervention of the police force. This helped women to seek redress in proper institutions while women counselors sought to help such victims. Rape in the slums is conspicuous thus instilling fear among the victims.²⁸

Media can be oppressive as well as liberative. Featuring domestic violence, according to Ngesa, has a two way impact on the media consumer – negative and positive effects: (1) portray women as weak and (2) create awareness of silent sufferers in which case well-wishers seek to help respectively. Media is, however, an important tool in creating awareness on the rights of women by condemning violence meted out against them and practice of FGM. Our respondent helps to conscientise women on their rights and means to seek redress. By visiting and revisiting such cases she attracts the concern of FIDA for legal action. In cases of violation of human rights such as police brutality and torture, the respondent dauntlessly addresses the Office of the President appealing for intervention on behalf of the victims. She believes that “it takes women to campaign for women conscientization and liberation in the media”.

Such zeal led to the nomination of Ngesa to the FAWE Award for Media Excellence (FAME) in 1998 as the youngest entrant and outstanding journalist. Another good example of the FAME Award is Mary Okumu who sought to empower women through the electronic media by producing a video titled ‘Through Women’s Eyes’. This is a clear indication that femininity is a source of enrichment, liberation and empowerment through unity and diversity. To her, journalism is a call and a vocation to humanize the society with the greatest dream of changing the world as a human activist.²⁹

Media as a means of liberating the society also uses feature stories to educate the society - as a means of eradicating poverty. Examples of individual development at the grassroots level are featured to encourage other people to participate in poverty eradication programs both in the rural and urban setting. For

instance Ngesa featured a story of a man in Makueni – one of the dry lands in Kenya – using a river (water fall) to start a saw mill and a posho mill as well as creating jobs for fellow members of the community. Such informative activities instill hope among the rural community and sensitize them. Other forms of eradicating poverty and discrimination against women that Catholic women are involved in are rescuing girls from early marriages and FGC through the effort of the media. The question of early marriages and FGC are not relegated to the Kenyan cultural oriented communities only but also other African countries such as Somalia with a prevalence of 98 percent. There are about 5 millions of female Somalia population who undergo FGM.³⁰ Hence in communion with other world journalists the Kenyan women journalists are fighting for a common cause.

Other issues concerning the conscientization of the community through the media that Catholic women liberationists engage themselves in are the community awareness communication. This is where people from different communities form groups for community radio. They are licensed to reach their community on issues affecting them and what they understand in terms of their language, for instance folk roles and drama. This helps to reach out to the illiterate and semi-literate people in Kenya. An example of community radio program is the Kenya Pastrolism Forum (KPF) which discusses issues affecting the pastrolists as drought and education in nomadic society.³¹ Women journalists target both urban and rural settings. It is however difficult to find women journalists based in the rural areas (Kieni North Deanery). It was not clear to the study as to whether the African socialisation on gender roles contributed to this situation. However, journalism has continued to attract more women into the profession.

5.4 Socio-economic empowerment of women

Women through the help of Osiligi Gender Task Force among the Maasai participate in toothpick Project. This involves making of toothpicks from Acacia thorns. This helps women earn themselves money to supplement their family. IL Polei Twala, a cultural manyatta is another alternative to illicit brewing and charcoal burning for women. It is a cultural center where Maasai women contribute to cultural activities such as bead making.

Housing projects in Dol Dol to replace the manyatta with stone and wooden houses are on the increase. The manyatta, a traditional way of housing among the Maasai, according to some respondents, demean privacy since they are considered a clanhold. The mode of interaction limit development level – dependency level is very high in the extended families, thus increasing poverty. The educated have to provide for the rest of the extended family. Income generating projects help to create independence.³²

The projects generated by women have created job opportunities for all categories of people such as projects managers, teachers, social workers and the unskilled labour. This in a way curtails the migration of job seekers to the urban centers thus helping maintain and exacerbate the economic growth of the rural areas. As Francis Gichia notes, "youth migration destabilizes rural communities. When the young and energetic members leave, a heavier burden is laid on the old people and children, who are both less productive".³³

In cases of polygamous marriage, where the first wife is expected to feed for the younger wives and economically support them and their siblings – communal

way of life – businesses and awareness on women's roles in society and families assist them to become self supportive and self reliant. This is especially important during drought season when most men migrate in search of pastures. A man migrates with one of the wives while the rest are left to cater for themselves and the children in which case they become overburdened. It is important to note that each woman is expected to have an average of six children. Early marriages expose women to longer reproductive spans. However, sensitization of girls helps them escape early marriages by seeking redress from necessary authority like chiefs. Women from other NGOs such as Osiligi Gender Task force are actively collaborating with women in the grassroots level to empower the girl child.

5.5 Natural Family Planning and HIV/AIDS Prevention/Control

The Catholic Church upholds that any form of artificial contraception disregards the dignity of human life. The Church is also against abortion as a form of contraception. Natural Family Planning (NFP) is said to promote responsible parenthood among married couples through the teaching of NFP methods in accordance to the teachings of the Church. It also aims at promoting family love, to educate and motivate youth on responsible behaviour (including abstinence) and dignity of human person. In definition, NFP:

Is a method of conception regulation based on fertility awareness and selective abstinence. It is an approach to understanding and respecting human sexuality with its inherent procreative capacity and its consequent responsibility. The two modern methods of NFP are Billings methods (ovulation method) and the symptothermal method".³⁴

NFP is validated as a health care program that restores not only the dignity of husband and wife but also of the unborn child. According to the respondents it brings meaning to life and disposes the guilt conscience of women using or practicing artificial contraception. Notwithstanding the teachings of the Church on NFP, it was verified that most women in the Catholic Church are prone to artificial contraception due to a number of reasons. See the table below for more illustration.

7

Women and the Commonly Used Methods of Family Planning

Methods	Rural no. of respondents	Urban no. of respondents	Rural Percentage of respondents	Urban Percentage of respondents
IUD	9	10	15%	11%
Norplant	11	10	18%	11%
NFP	4	6	6%	7%
Pills	22	18	35%	20%
Female Condoms	0	1	0%	1%
Male Condoms	2	10	3%	11%
Virginal Spermicides	0	4	0%	4%
Injectables	1	10	2%	11%
Tubal Ligation	5	8	8%	9%
Diaphragm	1	3	2%	3%
Others	7	11	11%	12%
Total	62	91	100%	100%

The above table represents the commonly used methods of family planning as verified from the field research. According to the data presented in the table, 153 women were interviewed. Women in nuclear and single-mother families were interviewed. The issue of artificial contraception was not well received and it was

hard to get an equal representation of women from both urban and rural setting. This was due to the fact that the Church condemns the practice and most respondents were not willing to discuss it. 85 out of 91 interviewed urban women use artificial contraception as compared to 58 out of 62 interviewed rural women. This under-rates the position of NFP in the community owing to the life situation of the people in question. The women acquire family planning health care facilities from private clinics especially in Nairobi, rural-based health centers and mobile Marie Stopes Clinics among others.

The use of NFP is facing challenges in both urban and rural settings due to a number of reasons. These include women whose source of income is based on sex commercialization, women whose spouses are alcoholics, in cases of uncooperative husbands who demand sex at own pleasure, marriage and date rapes, ignorance and the high illiteracy level. Some of these justifications given by the women are against the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The rural folk expressed NFP as problematic due to their immigrant husbands and partners working in urban and peri-urban centers such as Nairobi and Nanyuki respectively. The availability of their husbands on the women's allegedly "fertile days" would possibly mean unwanted pregnancies in the absence of artificial contraception. John Mbiti affirms the above as follows:

One of the most serious problems precipitated by city life in Africa is the situation that forces the men to work in towns while their wives and children remain in the country. ... For the wife, the husband is simply a person who descends upon her once a year or less often to quench his sexual passion, fertilize her and disappear like a frogman. He hardly shares in the daily responsibilities and concerns of raising a family. His wife is both mother and father to the children.³⁴

Traditional methods of birth control such as polygyny and breast-feeding combined with post-partum abstinence have been relegated by the Christian monogamous preference of marriage and modernization (artificial contraception). Although these are natural methods of family planning, they give men, as the heads of families, the mandate to control the reproductive lives of their wives without dehumanizing them through uncontrolled child bearing.

Despite the stand of the Church on the artificial contraception, some community based health workers (Catholic women) find it problematic to teach NFP as the only method of family planning in the above mentioned circumstances. The slum situation becomes even worse where couples find themselves adulterating marriages to save the lives of their children. The moral question facing them is whether to save the lives of their children from hunger through adulteration or to remain faithful and watch them give in to the cruel hand of death through hunger, malnourishment and poverty. And while in the process of saving their siblings they conceive others. In such situations, according to the respondents, women are exposed to both forms of contraception – artificial and natural in order to enable the individuals concerned to make their moral choice guided by their moral conscience on the methods to use. The above mentioned situations are moral issues and dilemmas facing the Catholic women.

The preference of IUD was justified by the respondents as being less cumbersome and can also be used by illiterate people. IUD is also inexpensive though, according to L. Ndungu, a nurse by profession, there is a risk of infection with prolonged use. Unlike Pills which are obtained every month, IUD are used

for about three to five months. Most of the women who consented using IUD were married.

Pills are mostly preferred as indicated in the above table with 22 and 18 rural and urban respondents respectively using them. The pills are used by all clusters of women – youth who include students, single and married women. They are also readily available in health centers. The school and college going cluster use pills not to family plan but to avoid unwanted/unintended pregnancies, which could also be the case for other categories of women. The same case applies to the use of Norplant and the injectables. Injectables have the side effect of body fattening due to steroid contained in them.³⁵ In most cases urban-based women are more sensitive to their physical appearance where slender bodies are in vogue. They are preferred in the rural setting since there is no risk of forgetting to use as in the case of Pills. Injectables last for three to nine months making it easy to use.³⁶

Tubal Ligation is also widely used in cases where couples are said to have had the number of intended children. However, it is important to mention that in some cases the women are also sterilized without the consent of their spouses. This, according to the respondents, is practiced in cases where the spouses display irresponsibility towards their families in terms of socio-economic support. Sterilization in this case is usually done during childbirth to create the least suspicion to their spouses.

Female condoms were not attested as a form of birth control in the rural setting, hence its 0% users. In the urban setting there was only one recorded user.

Male condoms are listed in the table as a means used by women in family planning. This is as a result of the role played by women in requesting their partners to use condoms. However, other than male and female condoms, abstinence and NFP, artificial contraception interfere with normal human body hormonal production hence causing partial absence of menstrual periods and other times they cause excessive bleeding.³⁷

Notwithstanding the above, NFP women counselors at diocesan and parish level are keen to propagate the dignity of human life by condemning abortion and use of artificial contraception, through workshops and seminars. NFP “make people understand that intercourse is open to the transmission of life and that sperms and ova are potential carriers of life.”³⁸ Topics on development of human life, relationships in families, Christian values on contraception and abortion, menopause and pre-menopause, mid-life crisis, old age and sex education are taught. According to John Paul II, fecundity is a special gift of love from God, which rejects any form of scientific progress. According to him, family life calls for a pro-life mentality thus disregarding contraception in the name of future quality life.

From the above, artificial contraception is controversial among the women practicing it. Despite their knowledge on the stand of the Catholic Church, most of them still practice artificial contraception. Some NFP campaigners were also noted to have used artificial contraceptives at one time or another to plan their families. Some also disclosed using the methods although they teach NFP which contradicts the purpose of their course. Considering the implications of the contraceptives such as high blood pressure among others, the practice cannot be

termed as a move towards liberation. Family planning has also been taken as a burden of women disregarding the role of men. 6 urban and 4 rural women attested the effectiveness of NFP when it fully targets both couples.

Christian development and nourishment are important components in upholding the dignity of a human person, which the Catholic women capitalize in their liberation activities through evangelization of the non-Christians and the de-evangelized. The charismatic movement was allegedly said to play an upper hand in upholding the practice of NFP. Through conversion, Christians are expected to exercise self-control, understanding and respecting each other on equal basis. The Catholic women NFP animators are however guided by the principles of the Christian teachings on Family Life as documented in *Human Vitae* (Human Life) and *Familiaris Consortio* (On The Modern Family). These two Church documents recognize the need to protect human life as the image of God right from the time of conception.

Besides the reasons given for the use of artificial contraception the Catholic women attested that only abstinence and NFP conform to the Social teachings of the Church on family planning. Abstinence among the unmarried and fidelity among the couples are also the only methods with a 100% accurate protection against HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections through sex. In view of this, the National AIDS/STDs Control Programme (NASCO) notes that “abstinence and faithfulness could be promoted through a combination of mass media, counseling and education programmes.” Similarly, abstinence “among adolescents can have a significant impact on the spread of HIV. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and other programmes that address

adolescents and the needs of young people are particularly needed. A reduction in HIV incidence (the annual rate of infections) among today's young people would not only avoid much suffering but it would also be a critical step in controlling the spread of the virus in the country."³⁹

Women are the most vulnerable to HIV infection than men due to their biological makeup. Studies have shown greater concentration of the HIV virus in semen than in vaginal secretions. "Vaginal membranes are also more permeable than the surface of the penis and are more susceptible to injury through rape, forced sex or STDs, which cause open sores or lacerations to allow contact with the blood stream".⁴⁰

Women constitute 58% of those infected in the sub-Saharan Africa thus indicating gender imbalance of infections greater among women. Studies have also shown that majority of HIV positive women were infected by their husbands. In view of this the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, commenting on Africa's HIV gender imbalance at the 2001 Africa Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases in Abuja, Nigeria expressed that: "This is something that should make all of us African men deeply ashamed and angry".⁴¹

The International Conference on AIDS and STDs in Africa (ICASA) held in Nairobi between September 21-27, 2003 indicated a lot of money had gone into sensitizing people about the scourge and very little into caring for the infected. Women are faced with the brunt of caring for the sick and the dying. The SCC have come in handy to support and care for the HIV/AIDS infected and affected persons. Through experience sharing and visiting the infected and the affected

persons women assist and empathize with one another. This enables them to fight against discrimination and stigmatization of the infected people. The risk facing women through their infected spouses and rape among other reasons was identified as one of the reasons for women's need to use condoms as a way of prevention of HIV/AIDS infection and re-infection.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the Catholic women's disposition of the Beijing Conference. According to the field study women have both creative and negative disposition towards the Conference. Creative disposition has rendered awareness in facilitating women's liberation roles. To others, the Conference was unknown or received with suspicion.

The efforts of women in SCC are being supplemented by individual efforts that are not necessarily organized by the SCC. Journalism is an example of such efforts cited in this chapter. This means that one does not necessarily have to belong to the SCC to participate in the liberation and empowerment activities. For instance Holy Family Basilica is one of the most developed parishes in the country but has only three SCC. Women participate through different Christian organizations in the Church like the legion of Mary, St Vincent de Paul for the poor, Self-Help groups and Catholic Women Association.

Finally, women at the base communities and the Church in general are faced with problem of artificial contraception regardless of the teachings of the Church. Leadership roles among women have also not been fully accepted despite

the awareness forthcoming from such Conferences as the Beijing. According to the research findings, the Hierarchical Church in the domination of women also inhibits such inception of women empowerment. The HIV/AIDS is also another menace that is aggravating poverty and dependence in Kenya. Most development activities are challenged by the spread of this scourge.

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and Mary's participation in the history of salvation are important themes in liberation. The following chapter hopes to appraise the roles played by women with reference to liberation Christology and Mariology as taught by the Catholic Church. The chapter will also examine the two models as understood by the Catholic women in their day to day activities.

2

Endnotes

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CHAPTER SIX

LIBERATION CHRISTOLOGY AND MARIOLOGY: AN APPRAISAL OF CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITIES

6.0 Introduction

The preceding chapters are an elaborate study of Catholic women's participation in liberation and empowerment activities. Issues related to educational, religious, socio-cultural and political awareness were discussed among other issues. This chapter appraises the activities of women in the SCC with reference to liberation Christology and Mariology as cardinal themes in the practice of Christian humanism. The subject of the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Christology) in this study is seen as a concept of establishing human dignity as the image of God through His incarnation as explained in chapter one. His concern and liberation of the human kind from a Christian understanding creates an apex of women involvement in liberation activities in the SCC.

The role of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ is closely associated with the work of Christ in the liberation of human kind in the Catholic theology. Christology and the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her role in salvation history (Mariology) are, therefore, seen as vital principles of liberation theology. This chapter delves into the co-relation of the two principles of liberation in the light of the Catholic women's liberation activities.

6.1 Religious Appraisal

The history of human salvation took a different scenario with the incarnation of Christ. This was embodied in the willful participation of Mary to receive Christ in her body. She subjectively participated in the history of salvation and liberation of humanity, which was to be the mission of Christ into the world. The two personalities are vital in Christian humanism as taught by the Catholic theology with particular reference to liberation and empowerment.

Mary was born and reared in the Jewish customs, thus socialized in a cultural mode that was subservient to women's roles. It was through her role as co-redeemer with Christ (*coredemptrix*) that Mary prompts a prototype feminine paradigm for the contemporary alienated and liberated woman. Mary's participation in the history of salvation may be seen as revolutionizing the inferior conception of femininity. Therefore, the dignity of women as exemplified by Mary through her motherhood is an imperative fundamental tool towards liberation participation.¹ Such realization has seen the Catholic women's need to facilitate feminine dignity through liberation and empowerment. This has intrigued many women Christians to participate in liberation activities in the SCCs as shall be exemplified in this chapter.

The birth of Jesus Christ within a nuclear family unit of Mary and Joseph demonstrates its importance in liberation. A family, being the basic unit of the society and the first educators of the children is cardinal to contemporary social cohesion through proper education of children. Jesus demonstrated this

through his concern for the children, which justifies their incorporation in the Christian Community through the Christian pedagogy.

The participation of children in the Triumphal entry of Jesus to Jerusalem and cleansing of the temple (Mt. 21:15-16) is a cursory to their spiritual quest which is often times trivialized as credulous in the society. The SCCs have, therefore, come in handy in incorporating children in communal activities. However, the SCC as observed by the study, are not adequate channels for children's development in Christian matters. Their cognitive level of understanding does not coincide with the activities and discussions of the SCC. Adult discussions and the recitation of the rosary challenge the role of children in the SCCs. Other Communities hold their meeting during weekdays thus discouraging their participation. ²

The liberation participation of Mary in the Annunciation is quite polemic. Matthew assumes Mary as the recipient of an already instituted role. This assumption bears evidence with Mary's fiat that "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me" (Lk. 1:34), a subservient feminine role characteristic of the Jewish customs of the time. Taken from this point of view, some liberation feminists, as well as some Catholic women in the SCCs, disqualify Mary as a figure of women liberation and as a passive character in the salvation history.

It came out clearly, from the field study that the Catholic women easily identify with Mary due to their place in the patriarchal cultural norms. Such a position, where women are subordinate to male chauvinism presupposes the

Catholic women's acceptability of the figure of 'Mother Mary' as a forthright aspiration to liberation and empowerment of women. This has a definite outcome: that women, though working for their liberation, they have also to recognize their position as subordinate to that of men. One informant affirmed to this when she declared that "married gender practitioners and activists succumb to male domination for the sake of their families' survival".³ This is a contradiction of life that women are attempting to reconcile with.

However, such a proposition is counteracted by Mary's quest to establish the authenticity of Her motherhood to Jesus having been a virgin (Lk. 1:34). Her conscious participation to serve through her motherhood intimately unites her with her son. She became the first disciple by receiving the Word of God (Jesus Christ) in her heart and body. According to the respondents, she offers a perfect model of discipleship that Catholic women emulate in their individual or group activities in the SCC.

Discipleship as instituted by Christ and Mary is the zenith of a new community "defined by service to others and commitment to Jesus"⁴ commissioned to the mission of Christ: "fishers of men" (Lk. 4:19). Jesus taught on radical discipleship from a liberation perspective. In the beatitudes, Jesus hails the pure at heart, the gentle, the merciful, peacemakers, those persecuted in the cause of right and those abused and spoken ill of in the account of Christ. The Catholic women prism of discipleship exhibits an authentic Christian liberation participation as the "salt and light of the earth" besides their long sidelined position in the Church and society. True discipleship in Catholic theology is, therefore, following the paradigm of

Christ in fighting for justice. Such an attitude is discernible in the activities of the Catholic women in the SCCs as women of peace, and justice and peace animators.

From the itinerant preaching and life of Christ the Catholic women learn that missionary work is exacting just as that of Jesus Christ (Mt 6: 1-6) and Mary (Lk. 2:35) suffered. Mary suffered motherhood at Calvary, at the foot of the Cross where Jesus was executed: “she stood in accordance with the divine plan (cf. Jn 19:25), suffering grievously with her only-begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart to his sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which she herself had brought forth”.⁵ This fulfilled Simeon’s prophecy: “a sword will pierce through your own soul” (Lk. 2:35).

However, liberation activities, according to Jesus, are to be delivered without any fear. Such suffering and sacrifice have an eschatological promise, that is related to the Second Coming of Christ: “But he who endures to the end will be saved” (Mt 10: 22b, 24: 13, Mk 13:13 and Lk 21:16).⁶ Jesus offers himself as a model of good discipleship in proclaiming the word of God (Mt 10:25) – “it is enough for the disciple that he [she] should grow to be like his [her] teacher” (Lk 6:40). Such biblical promises in the life of the Christians have seen women actively participate in the SCCs to the extent of sidelining family responsibilities. For instance, a woman who fully participates in the SCC vis-à-vis other Christian organizations dedicates all her time to the work of the Church. Such a woman ends up compromising her family especially the

children who lack parental guidance. Such 'fanatical' dedication has resulted to alcoholism, drug abuse and domestic violence within the family.⁶

The agony of Mary's maternity in witnessing the execution of her son, according to John Paul II is the "*high point of Mary's presence in the mystery of Christ and of the Church on earth*", that is the pilgrimage of faith.⁷ The importance of Mary in the salvation history is presupposed by the Catholic women's discipleship – a model of Christian faith and fidelity. The Church's reverence to her as *Theotokos* (mother of God) and *Coredemptrix* (co-redeemer) ascribes an "experience of the sacrifice of our redemption inscribed in [her] heart"⁸ and co-shared with her son. She offers an insidious faith to some Catholic women in liberation undertaking within marginalizing cultural barriers.

Exemplary of Jesus liberation undertaking is His contemplative life in His life. The gospel according to Luke presents prayer as an important ingredient to Christian edification in the liberation participation. Jesus is presented as beginning and ending his ministry with a prayer:

Jesus prays in connection with healing (5:16) and before selecting the 12 apostles (6:12), before his prediction of his passion (9:18), before his transfiguration (9:28-29), and before he teaches his disciples how to pray (11:1-2). He prays for Peter (23:32). He prays to the Father once on the Mt of Olives (22:39-46), and twice from the cross (23:34, 46) ... But Jesus at prayer is not only the model for Christians, but also the mediator of salvation: The figure of Jesus at prayer is a symbol that Jesus' power to effect salvation stems from God. "⁹

Such liberation participation, through prayers, is adopted by the SCCs as a means of empowerment. They start and end their meetings with prayers. Prayer life is also encouraged in their day to day activities. The Rosary is popular among almost all SCC.

The intimacy of Mary and Jesus is said to have sought her special favors from the son as believed in the 1st century, which prompted her role as a mediator for the Christians. This is based on the Christian tradition, which in the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) declared Mary as *Theotokos* (mother of God). The Church according to the Papal teachings, through an affirmative decision, precisely what the Church regarded as “fitting” or derivative pronounced Mary as the mother of the Church. That is, if Mary was Mother of Jesus – the head of the Church – then it was found fitting that Mary was too the mother of the Church.

Mary’s motherhood to the Church, according to John Paul II, is prescribed and demonstrated by Christ as he offered his mother to the apostle John and John to his mother. It is through Mary’s typological essence of motherhood that the Church becomes herself a mother by accepting the word of God and bringing forth new children of God to immortal life through preaching and baptism.¹⁰

Mary’s spiritual motherhood is grasped and utilized as an aspect of priestly role by the Catholic women in spreading the gospel. John Paul II characteristically equates the “spiritual fatherhood” of God to the spiritual motherhood of Mary in the spiritual nourishment of women Christians. In that

case the fidelity of Mary in bringing life to the world obligates the Catholic women in playing “motherhood” by participating in the liberation of both women, children and men¹¹.

The concept of motherhood in the African traditional setup, where a mother is highly appreciated in the family and the society, was appreciated as a consequence of Catholic women’s acceptability of Mary’s motherhood. Among the Agikuyu cultural set up, a woman is highly respected. She is also recognized as a mother to all whose age coincides with her children’s. In other words people, both old and young recognized and respected women of their mother’s age group (in Kikuyu *riika*) as a mother. Mothers were saluted with special greetings as *wakia maitu* (greetings to mother).¹² As such the role of motherhood in African society makes the conception of Mary’s motherhood to Christians and the Church acceptable and highly appreciated by the Catholic women.¹³

Mariology as found in the *Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church)*¹⁴ demonstrate the locus of Christology in the teachings of the Church. McBrien presupposes a Christological-Mariology derived from Mary’s motherhood, that Mary was only declared *Theotokos* to affirm the humanity of Christ. It therefore had a christological orientation¹⁵. If Mariology is presupposed in this way, then the mediation of Mary (*mediatrix*) becomes an affirmation to the mediation of Christ as explained below.

In the history of salvation Jesus Christ is the focal point and fullness of all revelation in history. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the perfect

mediator of the divine truth to humanity through his words and deed, and most of all his death and resurrection¹⁶. The designation made by Christ “I am the door” (Jn 10:7) “testifies to the fact that he alone is the saviour sent by the Father ... the one and absolute way to salvation”¹⁷. The Church does however revere the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*hyperdulia*), which according to *Lumen Gentium* is only second to Christ (*dulia*), that is, subordinate to that of Christ. The Vatican II document explains Her position in relation to mediation as follows:

Mary’s function as mother of men [and women] in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin’s salutary influence on men [and women] originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God. It flows from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. It does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it.¹⁸

This conforms to the teaching of Saint Paul in his Letter to Timothy: “for there is but one God and one mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as redemption for all” (1Tim 2:5-6). Vatican II continues to elaborate on the recourse of the mediation of Mary (*mediatrix*) in these words: “No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source”.¹⁹

Christology therefore presupposes and affirms Mariology. Mary becomes the path that leads to Christ. In the midst of crises, misfortune and suffering and those in the offing through human greed, science and technology, Pope Paul VI counsels Catholic women to direct their attention to the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) to intercede for peace as the Queen of Peace.²⁰ The Church dedicates the month of May each year to BVM in which the women Christian “offer up to Mary from their hearts an especially fervent and loving homage of prayer and veneration”²¹. Pope Paul VI stresses on the efficacy of prayer through the intercession of Mary since “every encounter with her can only result in an encounter with Christ himself.”²²

Such veneration has been exemplified by the Catholic women by emulating the BVM and in the recitation of the Rosary in every SCC meeting and as individuals. Their efforts to facilitate Mary’s mediation were also seen by teaching their children how to recite the Rosary. Catholic women also visit the Shrine of Mary at Subukia, Nakuru, to invoke Mary’s intercession. A spring near the shrine, according to the women respondents, is believed to have healing power.

The Rosary ²³, a popular exercise of piety among the SCC, is a gospel oriented prayer with a Christological accentuation. It reflects on the history of salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to the culmination of the Church at the Pentecost. The Rosary further reflects on the glorious assumption and coronation of Mary in heaven – these teachings are based on the Tradition of Church rather than biblical pedagogy.

Marialis Cultus (*Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*) is an apostolic exhortation issued on February 2, 1974 by Pope Paul VI as a contribution of praise to Her prophesy that “all generations will call me blessed” (Lk. 1:48). It qualifies Mary’s devotion as “Christian” since it assumes its origin and effectiveness from Christ. It finds its complete expression in Christ in the Spirit of God. The Apostolic exhortation is cardinal in making intelligible the devotion of Mary for the Catholic women. The Pope further explains that Mary’s position in the Church is the highest and closest to the Catholic Christians only after Christ.

Marialis Cultus offers basic guidelines to the devotion of Mary. Owing to Mary’s participation in the salvation history as presented to us in the gospels, Her devotion according to Pope Paul VI should thus be drawn from the sacred scriptures and practiced in accordance to the liturgy of the Church. This would necessitate an ecumenical orientation efficacious to Mary’s motherhood in the life of the Church and of the Christians: “Praising God with the very words of the virgin (cf. Lk 1:46-55), they are united, too, with their brethren in the Churches of the Reform, where love for the Sacred Scriptures flourishes”²⁴.

Any exaggeration accorded to Mary, which would instead distort the true Catholic doctrine, is discouraged. The Second Vatican Council II “denounced both the exaggeration of content and form which even falsifies doctrine and likewise the small-mindedness which obscures the figure and mission of Mary. The council has also denounced certain devotional deviations, such as vain credulity, which substitute reliance on merely external

practices for serious commitment. In reference to *Lumen Gentium*, the Pope urges Catholic women to shun exaggerating Marian cult which is evident in some Catholic women practices.²⁵

The above caution does not always apply in the lives of the Christians. Some Catholic women find it hard to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary as a mediator. They believe in the sole mediation of Christ. This was established among the Catholic women whose prior denomination was Protestantism. Some Catholic women do not also believe in the Rosary. The Protestant background and Catholic practices has generated religious confusion. As such Marian veneration is sometimes treated with suspicion since such doctrines have no biblical support.²⁶ Hence, Mary is not a model to all women in the Catholic Church.

The Marian exaggeration was also evident in some practices where Mary was conceived as the she-God. The argument being that, if God is the father, Christ the son, then Mary is the mother-god.²⁷ This argument, though a Christian distortion of the Church doctrines as noted above is a common believe among some Christians. According to the study, this is a way of demystifying the figure of Mary as the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) and Mother of the Church and all Christians. Such an assumption withdraws Mary from being a figure of women liberation. A modern Catholic woman would be seen incapable of meeting the standards of Mary, the Mother of God. In view of this one clergy expressed concern that “it’s a high time that the Church simplified the Marian apparitions which are creating confusion among the Christians”.

Another similar example of Marian exaggeration was the allegation that Mary was appearing to some Christians at Mukuyuini, Muranga. She was referred to as “Our lady of Mukuyuini” whose followers regarded themselves as “*Mbutu ya Maria*” in Kikuyu (Battalion of Mary). The Church, through investigations, declared it heretical and unacceptable.²⁸

Mary’s position, according to some respondents, as *Theotokos* and *mediatrix* offers a “feminine face of the Church”. She encourages them to participate as full members of the Church. Her Immaculate Conception opens new horizons of liberation participation for women in the Church and society as mothers and the religious sisters. Pope John Paul II, in his *Mulieris Dignitatem*,²⁹ severally pays homage to the feminine ‘genius’ in view of revitalizing their participation in enhancing ortho-praxy (right living/authenticity). But one thing is notable; that the Church hierarchy under the guise of tradition subordinates women who have otherwise sought to revolutionize their position as active members of Church through the SCCs. Unless the hierarchical church compromises its tradition, the position of women will remain subordinate. Hence, total liberation in the religious arena would not be attainable.

Speaking of the feminine face of the Church, Jesus could be said to have championed and triggered it through the incarnation and his intimacy/close association with women like Mary Magdalene and the Samaritan woman. He also first revealed the Easter message to women. It has been argued that the maleness of Christ was formative.³⁰ That is, God could have initiated the salvation history through a feminine figure cardinal to

liberation roles of Christ. This would of course contradict the pre-existence of a male Jesus and His sonship to God the Father. Jesus as taught by the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) was of the same substance with the Father, the only begotten Son of God.

Jesus and Mary provide ideal paradigmatic roles to women. They both champion the cause of women in liberation. The Catholic women, in recognizing their union with Christ through baptism as the children of God in the Son Jesus Christ, the body of Christ, holy and living temples of the Holy Spirit³¹ have continually participated in liberation and empowerment. This, they have done not only as part of the Church, but also as the Church.

As the Church, the women Christians have taken a conscientious and responsible part for the authenticity and liberation of the society. This, according to *Lumen Gentium*, they manifest through their copious gifts in diversity and complementarity.³² As such, women as mothers, religious sisters and professionals participate in individual or communal liberation activities guided by the Christian teachings.³³ As emulated by Christ and Mary, the women Christians actualize authenticity in their SCCs through personal and interpersonal relationships in the SCCs. Under the guidance of the ministerial apostolate (priests) the Catholic women in the SCC live the gospel according to their situations in life.

The SCCs are important tools of empowering the de-evangelized members of the Church. At the base community, the SCCs recruit new members willing to join the mainstream Catholic Church by catechizing them.

Through the SCCs the parish priest is enabled to reach more people in the community thus empowering them spiritually. Sin is a contradiction of Christian authentic living. The Catholic women's efforts to incorporate and conscientise people on Christian living is an indication of empowering and liberating them from sin.³⁴

6.2 Political Appraisal

Mariology and Christology can be said to be revolutionary from a liberation perspective. Liberation that seeks to destabilize or threaten the existing structures is seen to have political connotations, hence its revolutionary characteristic. It is also faced with opposition by the existing structures be it from the religious, socio-cultural, economic or political perspective. It is from this point of view that the Jesus' movement which Mary was intimately involved in establishing that the political interrelationship between Christology and Mariology is depicted.

It is from the account of the family of Nazareth that we learn of the life of Jesus before His ministry e.g. the annunciation (Lk 1:26-38; cf. Mt 1:18-25). The family of Nazareth sets forth an important indication to the political and religious arena of the time. Albeit pregnant (with the child Jesus), Mary accompanied Joseph from the town of Nazareth to Judea to partake in the census as required by the law.

The perseverance of Mary is notable bearing her maternal condition. Mary also took Jesus for circumcision on his eighth day as the first born male

child. According to the Law of Moses, a woman had to be purified and the child consecrated to the Lord. Mary and Joseph adhered to this law. Luke gives an elaborate account of Mary fulfilling the laws and customs set forth for the Jews (2:22-51). As such, Mary offers a luminary paradigm of good citizenship in abiding to the laws and regulations set forth for them. In no case is Mary seen antagonizing with the law and the policy makers. Such a model poses a threat to the African women who are subjected to dehumanization by cultural practices.

In the same vein, Jesus underscores the political responsibilities of each citizen towards the state. He highlighted the need of paying taxes to the state as required by the law: “give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar” (Mt 22:21). Caesar had the right to taxes as the representative of the legal government.³⁵ However, this does not assume that the law cannot be forged to accommodate the needs of people especially when they are derivative and take precedence over the liberation of the oppressed. Jesus was critical to the credulous observance of oppressive laws. Notwithstanding the Mosaic Law against working on a Sabbath day, Jesus healed and cured the sick e.g. the cure of the man with a withered hand (Mk 3: 1-6). He emphatically taught that humanity takes precedence over the law: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27; cf. Lk 6: 1-5).

Such awareness of human rights (women’s rights) forthcoming from the teachings of Christ and His feminine empathy, the Catholic women have resulted into active participation in liberation and empowerment. Women at the grassroots level are also identifying and supporting the efforts of women’s

organizations fighting for their rights such as FIDA and COVAW. They see such feminists as Beth Mugo³⁶ as their limelight in fighting for the rights of women. Mary's good citizenry as indicated earlier is seen as unrealistic since "maybe because she was contented with the dehumanizing Jewish customary laws.

A contemporary woman has become the sole breadwinner in female-headed households, which Mary never experienced. She faced the problems that any woman can encounter but not those of violated and single women in the slums."³⁷ This argument portrays Mary as a passive figure of liberation in the socio-cultural arena especially to the conscientised women. Many women who especially identify with the creative effects of the Beijing Conference also seemed to find Mary too passive a model in the public life. Jesus Christ, therefore, becomes a more realistic figure in counteracting the oppressive structures.

From the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus was the establishment of the Kingdom (Mt 3: 3). He therefore fulfilled the prophecies³⁸ of the Old Testament, that a king would be born in the line of David. This is well implied by the genealogy of Jesus (c.f. Is 40: 3). His birth had political connotations. The Israelites expected a revolutionary/political king to lead them successfully to the battles against the Romans. This set forth a conflict between him and the political mandarins of the time in, which case the family of Nazareth had to flee to Egypt for safety (Mt 2:13-18).

Jesus himself in the gospel according to Matthew, acknowledges His sonship to David but goes further to counteract the kind of political messiah the Israelites expected. He, therefore, averred his Lordship to David for his was the kingdom of heaven (Mt 22:41-46). In his life and itinerant ministry, Jesus Christ mainly identified Himself with the rejected, sinners, tax collectors and women in his liberative, salvific and redemptive roles. This saw Jesus lose favor among the Jews that led to his religio-political execution and the subsequent salvific resurrection.

The gospel according to Mark begins with an affirmation of Jesus as the Son of God – the servant of God (c.f. Is 52:13-53:12) unlike Matthew's presentation of Jesus as King. According to Graham Swift,³⁸ Mark omits the genealogy of Jesus that could trace his kingship to David since his was an eschatological Christology. Thus, the messianic secrecy in the gospel according to Mark referred to Jesus as the 'Son of man' (fourteen times) to "avoid the peril of the popular national and materialistic conceptions with which the expectations of the Jews invested the title."³⁹

The gospel according to Luke traces Jesus ancestry to Adam the common ancestry to all people. The universal kingship of Jesus is well indicated by Luke whose orientation was the gentile community that Jesus also came to save.⁴⁰ This is characteristic of Jesus and Mary's mission of salvation – a universal and inclusive mission of saving the world that the Catholic women in the SCCs emulate. Through the activities of the Catholic women identify themselves with each other and their neighbours regardless of their religion, socio-economic and political orientation.

Of interest to this study too is Matthew's inclusion of four women in the family tree of Jesus which foreshadows the circumstances surrounding His birth.⁴¹ These were (1) Tamar who "disguised herself as a prostitute and conceived her sons by Judah, her father-in-law (Gen. 38)"; (2) Rahab who "was a prostitute in Jericho (and) whose life was spared on account of her collaboration with Joshua's spies (Josh 2:6)"; (3) Ruth "the Moabite who married Boaz after placing him in compromising position one night on the threshing floor (Ruth 3)" and (4) the 'wife of Uriah' "Bathsheba, who committed adultery with David".⁴² A. J. Levine includes Mary the mother of Jesus "who became pregnant before her marriage to Joseph but while betrothed to him as her suitor in a legally binding relationship (Matt 1:1-18)" as a contradiction of the impeccable standards of the Jewish customs.⁴³

The above, according to Levine "indicates that marriage is not (contrast 1 Timothy) the prerequisite for righteous action of salvation". Matthew's inclusion of the above women, who in the normal standards would be alienated as social misfits, gives hope of salvation to the marginalised women especially the single mothers. In our Kenyan society we have the girl child and women who are victims of such social aberrations such as discrimination, rape and domestic violence.

The identification of Jesus with such women victims revolutionizes the liberation participation as inclusive of the socially stigmatized among both men and women. Liberation participation is, therefore, a challenging task that entails existentially identifying with the socially alienated, at the risk of being catalogued together with, for instance, the prostitutes. Such boldness is

arrayed by Mary's *fiat* to conceive while still betrothed to Joseph. This attitude is sought to protect the right to life to the unborn children in unwanted pregnancies in both nuclear and single mother families.⁴⁴ The formation of such communities as the single mother Christian communities helps women to their empowerment. The SCC's concern towards these families is in line with the life situation of Mary and Jesus.

The participation of Mary in the history of salvation also meant partaking in the sufferings of Christ: "a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Lk 2:35). Jesus was rejected, persecuted and executed by his own people, the Jews. Mary in her magnificat rejoices and proclaims the greatness of God for exalting her as the handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1:48b) from which all the generations will call her blessed. Mary's magnificat prophesied a religio-political and economic revolution of the time.⁴⁵ That God was to humble the proud and the rich and uplift the lowly and the humble. This proposed a fundamental option for the poor whom Jesus was to liberate.

Poverty or oppression in biblical stance and as depicted by Christ had both corporeal and transcendental repercussions. The SCC have a number of ministries that are in line with community and gender development which include service to the poor, the sick, the socially discriminated and stigmatized HIV/AIDS infected persons among others. Liberation, therefore, as exemplified by the Catholic women seeks to establish an integral human development. As a result, in their evangelizing work, the women Christians do not exclude the plight of the poor. Jesus was also regarded as a friend of the

poor. Mary was also seen to fulfill her social obligation by seeking to help her cousin Elizabeth.

This form of integral liberation tallies with the African concept of living, which does not dichotomize the 'sacred' and the 'profane'. The Magnificat and Jesus' pro-women stance has augmented women's participation in liberation through SCC thus contravening the African cultural values of subservient feminine roles. Women are now contributing to public life to support their families among other roles that culturally alienated them.

Public life, according to the magisterial, is a prerogative of every Christian in the embodiment of justice and peace animation. This could be facilitated by individual or collective participation in humanizing the society. The aspect of Christian life according to Pope Paul II, cannot possibly be alienated from the need to establish justice and full acknowledgement of the rights and dignity of a person and right to life: "Public life on behalf of the person and society finds its *continuous line of action in the defense and the promotion of justice*, understood to be a "virtue", an understanding which requires education, as well as a moral 'force' that sustains the obligation to foster the rights and duties of each and everyone, based on the personal dignity of each human being",⁴⁶

It, therefore, requires the full participation in solidarity with other people in pursuit of the common good through the promotion of justice as a virtue.⁴⁷ The Pope distinguishes the role of education in fostering the rights and duties of everyone. His call to all Christians to participate in the spirit of

service in the public/political arena is seen in the liberation participation of the Catholic women. The Pope teaches that *the spirit of service* is a fundamental element in the exercise of political power. This spirit of service, together with the necessary competence and efficiency has made elaborate the activities of the Catholic women in their capacity as individuals or SCCs .

In this, the Pope recognizes the ability of Christians to serve humanity; for Christ “came not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10:45). Cardinal to Christian participation in the public life is recognition of the essence of all human rights. Catholic women recognize all rights such as right to health, home and work as attributes of the fundamental right to life. As such, a contradiction to an authentic living demeans human dignity and human rights. Such contradictions include murder, genocide abortion, euthanasia and willful suicide. ⁴⁸ Catholic women defend and promote life through religious, educational, socio-economic and political development as shown in chapters three and four.

Transformation becomes every Christian’s initiative to humanize the society. That is, a conversion of ‘heart’, practice of justice and charity, which are ingredients of peace”. ⁴⁹ Conscientization is used to root out various forms of violence meted out against women, children and the society to promote peace and solidarity.

6.3 Socio-Cultural Appraisal

Mary, according to the Jewish customs was betrothed to Joseph but conceived through the Holy Spirit. It was against the Jewish customs for a girl to conceive out of wedlock as Mary did. Mary went through social stigmatization alluded to the impeccable standards of the Jewish socio-cultural mode which she was considered to have broken.

Mary's visitation of Elizabeth, her cousin, who had conceived at her old age and opting to assist her (Elizabeth) is a social disposition that has liberation connotations. She meets the candidature of the inheritance of the Kingdom of God by participating in charity work (c.f. Mt 25) and most cardinal by welcoming Christ to her body. The birth of Jesus through Mary is a benchmark in the history of salvation.

He grew in obedience to his parents and was aware of his filial relationship with His Father (Lk 2:41-52). Such conscientious filial responsibility is further shown by Jesus' obedience to God by resisting the temptations by Satan Lk 4:1-13 (c.f. Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12, 13). As parents, the Catholic women educate their children who are subjected to honor and obey them. Both parents and children are mutually responsible for the spiritual and temporal growth of one another: "children as living members of the family contribute in their own way to the sanctification of their parents".⁵⁰ The incumbent papacy calls for a social cohesion of Christians whereby all people should participate in the mission of the Church.

Jesus in His life intermingled and ate with the outcasts and sinners such as women and tax collectors. He came to liberate the spiritually poor, the rejected, and social outcasts. Following the footsteps of Christ, the women Christians initiate charity work in the SCCs and such organizations as St. Vincent de Paul Society for the poor.

Liberation theologies characteristically identify with the gospel according to Luke due to its accentuation on the humanitarian aspects of Jesus in His life and ministry. It is also regarded as the social gospel due to its deep sympathy for the poor, oppressed, outcasts and women. In contrast to the Matthean gospel which stresses perfection: "You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48), Luke gives emphasis on mercy and compassion: "But I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly ... Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate..." (Lk 6:27-35). Luke presents Jesus as a defender of "womanhood and childhood". This gives impetus to active promotion of the interests of women's issues and the girl child and the Catholic women's empathy towards the course of women empowerment.

Conspicuous of Luke is his anthropological and theological concerns of the human dignity of both men and women. He offers a parallel presentation of the feminine and masculine roles in the history of salvation in his gospel narrative. In the annunciation presentation of Jesus in the temple narratives Luke pairs Zecharia and Elizabeth, and Simeon and Anna respectively imperative to the salvific history (c.f. Lk 4:25-28, 4:31-39, 7:1-17,

7:36-50 etc.). “Luke expresses by this arrangement that men and women stand together and side by side before God. They are equal in honor and grace, they are endowed with the same gifts and have the same responsibilities (cf. Gen. 1:27; Gal 3:28)”.⁵¹

The indiscriminate liberation activities of Christ have rendered the SCCs a communion of all people within a given area. It also enhances Catholic women’s liberation and empowerment activities. However, the emphasis of the girl child question as one respondent pointed out could create the boy child question as an aftermath of the former’s emphasis.⁵²

The birth of Jesus Christ (incarnation) as already highlighted, found its existential fulfillment in the fundamentals of a family unit. The motherhood and sonship of Mary and Christ respectively unravels/demonstrates the filial and familial obligation/importance of kinship/family. Jesus “spent most of his life in the obscurity of Nazareth, ‘obedient’ (Lk 2:51) as the ‘Son of Man’ to Mary his Mother, and to Joseph the carpenter.”⁵³ The incarnation of Christ, which connects Jesus to the human family, makes the family an important constituent of the pilgrimage of faith. The Church’s observation of the year of the family in 1994 was an oblivious intention to prepare the family as *ecclesia domestica* for the new Millennium.

The emphasis of the importance of the family has conscientised women on the need to protect their families. In spite of their awareness of the Catholic social teachings on contraception, some Catholic women have opted to use various contraceptives to plan their families. Defying the teachings of the

Catholic Church can not be regarded as an aspect of liberation. However the study established that through the 'principle of the lesser evil' the Catholic women could use contraceptives. This is an alternative offered to couples by the priests during counseling sessions as a way of responding to the failure of NFP. The issue of fecundity is a woman's problem especially in the female-headed households. Some face domestic violence while trying to preserve the family setup. Women fail to seek redress due to social stigmatization and protecting their children from broken homes.⁵⁴

The Pope teaches the importance of prayer in the life of the family in actualizing individual familial subjectivity and unity through the visitation of the Holy Spirit: "In the solemn nuptial blessing during the Rite of Marriage, the celebrant calls upon the Lord in these words: 'Pour out upon them [the newly weds] the grace of the Holy Spirit so that by your love poured into their hearts they will remain faithful in the marriage covenant'".⁵⁵ Christ's birth and co-existence in a human family further quantifies the basic necessity of the unit family in social cohesion.

*Guadium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)*⁵⁶ emphasis on the full participation of women in eradicating all forms of discrimination and oppression that diminish the equality of all people. It teaches that people, created in the likeness of God are essentially equal and any form of disparity in life existence that diminishes human rights and dignity are a contradiction of God's original purpose. The Catholic women emulate Christ and Mary in humanizing their respective communities.

6.4 SCC's Liberation Christology

Christology is an important theme in SCC's liberation participation as discussed above. Exemplifying His liberation activities, the women practice Christian humanism geared towards eliminating all forms of marginalization and oppression. He is perceived as the saviour since his mission was to save the world. The Catholic women have therefore taken the responsibility of evangelizing their neighborhood as individuals or group apostolate through the ministry of catechism and evangelization (Acts 1:8). The work of evangelization is embodied through love as manifested by Christ. Christ as the center of Christianity thus becomes the vantagepoint of every SCC activity.

Jesus is also the center of Christian humanism through his incarnation and suffering for the oppressed people. Christian humanism entails recognizing the image of God in all people: "Whatever you do to the least of these you do it unto me." A proper SCC environment is necessitated by the existence and co-existence of the people recognizing the mission of Christ as a model of Christianity. Jesus becomes the figure of liberation and empowerment. The pivot point of Christian humanism is hence necessitating both spiritual and temporal liberty (integral development) for the good of all human beings. This means eradicating all forms of bondage. Hence manifesting the love of Christ as he loved the world.

Emulating Christ as a perfect model of liberation means obeying him and thus keeping his Word. Through the teachings of the Church, -the bible, magisterium and the Church sermons – women Christians undergo

transformation, which forms the basis of liberation from sin and temporal marginalization, which include socio-cultural, religious, economic and political dimensions. Jesus as the savior champions the cause of Christian feminism especially in Luke's gospel. Through Christian humanism Catholic women form an arena for transformation both in the Church and the society. This is enhanced especially through the SCC.

The charismatic movement in the Catholic Church has also enabled such transformation and empowerment of the marginalised through the emphasis of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Such gifts identified by the respondents include perseverance, healing and prophecy in their day to day activities. This helps to incorporate the teachings of Christ in dealing with unauthentic situations in their life situations.

As a teacher *par excellence*, the women Christians emulate Jesus teachings. The Catholic women impart Christian values to the communities especially through evangelization to those they interact with. Following the footsteps of Christ, women in the SCCs have taken the onus of teaching catechism to both youth and adults. Through their different professions, they create awareness on hygiene (by nurses and health workers) in the villages and even training traditional midwives. They also facilitated home base care for the HIV/AIDS infected persons in the villages. In the spirit of love they extend their knowledge and duties to their neighborhoods. As mothers, wives, relatives and friends they offer spiritual and temporal guidance as Jesus did. For instance nurses encourage patients to trust in God and belief in Jesus saving and healing power.⁵⁸

Catholic women also take the responsibility of training others on skills for individual development rather than creating dependency through works of charity. Such skills include family life education, hygiene and nutrition, home base care for the HIV/AIDS persons, evangelization and agricultural skills.⁵⁸ This creates a mode of independence and interdependence, which is key to liberation and empowerment.

Christ as the suffering servant through his saving mission has opened avenues for Catholic women to participate in liberation and empowerment activities through the SCCs. This enhances sensitivity towards other people's needs such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless. In the spirit of service the Catholic women (the religious women) forgo their inalienable rights to completely give their service to God and the humanity. According to the respondents, Jesus gives the Christians courage to insert themselves in people's lives situation at the risk of being despised, rejected and neglected as he did. This is conceived as taking up one's cross and following Christ. This means serving Christ through love and perseverance. Women Christians identify with his suffering hence derive courage from Him as their shepherd.

Such undertaking is fully accommodated in the SCCs through bible reading and interpretation according to people's needs. Besides, contemplation is seen as an effective form of liberation and empowerment in the SCC. The Catholic women, following Christ as their role model, emulate His contemplative life especially in times of problems. Catholic women through experience sharing and counseling, pray and fast for their needs, liberation

activities and challenges encountered in their roles. They also pray for strength to be true followers of Christ.

Jesus Christ is seen as the provider. Through prayers their needs are fulfilled and activities rejuvenated. He inspires the Catholic women through His life, ministry, death and resurrection. He is the hope of women Christians in the pilgrimage of faith. Activities in the SCCs are thus directed and geared towards Christ's Second Coming and life after death. Hence the need to carry on the work of Christ through Christian witness in lay and religious apostolate. This helps to build a social cohesion in the SCC through community apostolate.

Christ is the Peace giver. He is the "Prince of Peace". The Catholic women in the SCC emulate Christ in establishing peace and justice in the community. Chapter three of this study is elaborate on the Catholic women's roles as peacemakers (*Wanawake Wa Amani*) and animators of Justice and Peace commission of the Catholic Church in Kenya. Peace and justice is established through identifying with the needy and the oppressed and seeking to establish authentic living. Christ offered a preferential option for the poor, which is prioritized through the activities of the Women of Peace and the activities of SCC in general. Works of charity help to facilitate liberation activities.

Faith in the works of Christ, according to some Christians, serves as the driving force to their liberation activities. Christ is seen as their helper and shield/protector in controversial activities and difficult circumstances such as

fighting for women and children's rights. Some women expressed the necessity of faith in Christ which helps them in spiritual and physical needs. As a protector and provider, Christ helps them face enacting roles with diligence and self-discipline. But this, according to the field research, is not always the case. Women are seeking other means of empowerment such as awareness forthcoming from the Beijing Conference and NGOs for socio-economic sustainability. This means that the goal of the SCC of making the Church self sufficient, reliant and propagating has not been fully achieved.

Christian virtues like forgiveness, trustworthy, patience, perseverance and love are cardinal to Catholic women in their liberation activities. They are basic to forming good role models in the society. They are also characteristic to the universal mission of Christ cutting across cultural, political, socio-economic and religious barriers. This helps to integrate all the marginalised in the liberation roles of Catholic women within and without the SCCs. These communities as already indicated exist vis-a-vis other Christian organization in which the Catholic women express their liberation roles. As such they are able to assist a cross section of women and men as well.

Christ is the advocate/mediator to the father (God). He mediates the needs of Christians to God the father. He is therefore the protector, guardian, strength, help, provider, counsel, truth, way and life of Christians. Christians therefore value prayers and daily sacrifice of Mass. Christ is, therefore, seen as the inspiration of women Christians through Christian pedagogy. He is the paradigm of liberation and empowerment.

6.5 SCC's Liberation Mariology

The BVM is important in rediscovering the life of Christ before his ministry. The Catholic theology presents her as a paradigm of liberation and empowerment. She took part in the history of salvation of humanity through her role as *Theotokos* and *Coredemptrix*. These roles dignify femininity thus raising the position of women to that of liberators in the SCC. The SCC take Mary as a paradigm of feminine 'genius' in liberation. Her obedience brought Jesus Christ to the world thus the Catholic women emphasis on the Christian virtue of obedience.

Mary as presented in the Gospels faced rejection for conceiving out of wedlock. She also had to flee to Egypt for safety and witnessed the death of her son on the cross. Such intimacy of mother to child exposes women into agony of saving their children. The perseverance of Mary as a mother gives courage to women liberators in protecting their families. Women professionals have started groups and organizations supporting women in sustaining their families such as single mother families. The SCCs are handy in supporting families in their neighborhood. Mary's pain of motherhood is empathized by the Catholic women in their liberation participation.

Women suffer in seeing their children engage in drug addiction, drug trafficking, prostitution, forced marriages, teenage pregnancies and HIV/AIDS scourge among others. Mary is therefore a source of inspiration to women at basic family levels. The family of Nazareth gives encouragement to family

survival and women refugees.⁵⁹ Mary, Joseph and Jesus had to flee their hometown to Egypt in Africa for safety; a characteristic of refugee life.

Another important role of the BVM in the life of the Catholic women in the SCCs is her advocacy role. She is recognized as the mediator – bridge to her son. She is seen as the *mediatrix* of Christians just as she requested Jesus to help people at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (Jn 2:3). This was the first miracle that Jesus performed. Mary is therefore seen, in the same manner to mediate for Christians through her motherly love. She is also a helper and guide to SCC. Mary is seen as mother of mercy, protector and source of hope and help of Christians. The SCC therefore invoke her especially through the Rosary. As an honored mother, according to the Catholic theology, God preserved her from original sin (Immaculate Conception) while her body and soul was raised to heaven after her earthly life (the Assumption). Hence through her mediation, Christians are believed to secure protection.

In her total openness and availability to the plan of God Mary gave herself freely to God and cooperated with His will in the process of salvation/liberation. Her Virginity inspires the Catholic women religious in their liberation efforts by foregoing marriage life to live for Christ. “Virginity and motherhood of Mary focus on the primacy of a paradigm that manifests the possibility of accepting God’s grace by human beings. Like Mary, every woman who is fully devoted to God offers her life daily to Christ and with Christ so to obtain completeness in Him.”⁶⁰

The Catholic women respondents perceive her as a woman of integrity thus providing a sense of authentic womanhood and dignity. Through her the dignity of womanhood is acknowledged. Through her the SCC realize their special responsibilities towards their families and community. They also come to a deeper understanding of Christ as they reflect on the Rosary and appreciate their onus to humanize the society. This understanding has brought close association between SCC in striving for the dignity of women.

The women respondents in a group interview expressed their strive to live in holiness just as Mary did. She led a holy life by keeping her body – the temple of the Holy Spirit – for the purpose of God’s working miracle through her since as the women expressed, “the Holy Spirit only dwells and bears fruits in a holy temple”. The SCCs are important reminders to the Christians to be true to the teachings of the gospels. From the field research the charismatic movement which emphasis on Christian renewal on holiness helps the Catholic women in their liberation participation.

As shown through Mary’s life women have learnt that God can use women for noble causes as long as they avail themselves through holiness and faithfulness.⁶¹ Mary’s life serves as a paradigm of true living as a God fearing and beneficiary of God’s graces. As a good mother women imitate her motherhood through the virtues of humility, love, patience and perseverance. Mary is a model in the existential situations that women encounter in their everyday life. “She gives confidence to women in encountering oppressive situations. A life of contemplation becomes ideal for SCC as was for the BVM.”⁶²

Mary is a model of discipleship to the SCC. According to some of the respondents, she is a great woman, the eldest daughter and mother of the Church.

“What the Catholic women strive to become has already been accomplished in Mary’s role as a disciple, mother, wife and Christian. She offers courage for women’s liberation and empowerment by revolutionizing the subservient role of women in both society and the Church. Mary’s humility, holiness, patience, perseverance and contemplative life is a source of confidence for the Catholic women’s liberation participation.”⁶³

SCC’s Mariology is distinct in their approach to marginalization and oppression in the society as they fight to establish Christian humanism characterized by fraternity and egalitarianism.

It was, however, established from the field study, as already indicated, that not all Catholic women observe the Church doctrines on Mariology. Her role as a mediator is sometimes treated with suspicion due to its lack of Biblical support. Mariology has its evidence in the Church tradition.

3

Conclusion

This chapter is an appraisal of Catholic women’s liberation and empowerment activities as practiced in the SCC. This has been presented through the lenses of the co-relation between Christology and Mariology as taught by the Catholic Church and presented in the synoptic gospels. Three levels of appraisals were used to facilitate such a co-relation. These were the religious appraisal, the socio-cultural appraisal and the political appraisal. The chapter goes further to evaluate the understanding of Christology and mariology as practiced by the SCC

in their liberation and empowerment activities. The following conclusions can be drawn from the chapter.

Firstly, the two paradigms of liberation form the zenith of Catholic women's Christian humanism. Christ is the model of liberation through his life, ministry, death and resurrection. He is the only mediator of Christians while Mary His mother only enhances this mediation. According to the Christian Tradition the veneration of Mary (*hyperdulia*) through the rosary enable the SCC to reflect more on the life of Jesus Christ. The Rosary, which is a popular Christian piety, reflects on the life of Mary, Joseph and especially that of Jesus.

Secondly, the dignity of women is insidious to Catholic women liberation participation. Mary as *Theotokos* and *Coredematrix* revolutionized the subservient status of women from an anthropological and sociological point of view. Her role as a dignified partaker in liberation of all people through the birth of Christ changes the feminine subservient roles cutting across cultural barriers. Christ's championing the feminine 'genius' as highlighted in Luke's Gospel further enhances this. The cause of women in liberation calls for the empowerment of all women irrespective of their state, status or colour. Chapter Three of this study captivates the role of women in fighting not only for their dignity and rights, but also for the human life in general.

Thirdly, true discipleship is exacting. It calls for taking up ones cross as exhibited by the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is also identified in Mary's witness of the immolation of her Son. Catholic women are called to play motherhood to all for redemption, liberation and empowerment with

a dedicated and encompassing love for the oppressed and marginalised. Audacious perseverance is therefore an aspect of successful liberation participation. It calls for inserting oneself in the live of the marginalized.

Fourthly, contemplation is a vital component of liberation participation. Through prayers the Catholic women seek guidance and strength in their stringent liberation roles. *Hyperdulia* (veneration of the BVM) with an accent to the mediation of Christ is significant to the SCC. Fifthly, conscientization is key to proper liberation participation and empowerment activities of the Catholic women through the SCC.

Sixthly, awareness of one's gifts and talents are important in participating in SCC. Through these, the Catholic women revitalize their position in the institutional Church thus giving it a feminine face. Through their gifts the Catholic women conscientize and empower other people to participate in their liberation and empowerment. Such roles are concomitant to the true discipleship of Christ in responding to temporal and spiritual temperaments of the people.

Seventhly, the family of Nazareth was Jewish cultured in which Mary coexisted. The archetype of feminine 'genius' of Mary's participation in liberation of humanity poses a challenge to the SCC. As championed by Christ the Catholic women should fight against inherent cultural barriers that inhibit women development. As indicated in chapter three women empowerment in SCC is inhibited by their disregard of own potentials as channels of liberation and empowerment. The capability of women should not thus be underestimated.

Lastly, transformation is an important ingredient to Christological and mariological liberation participation of the SCC. The two paradigms enhance the activities of the SCC in establishing Christian humanism as taught by Pope John Paul II.

37

Endnotes

1. J. Kabugi, MA Thesis, pp1ff.
2. Interview with N. Njuguna. Date 14.7.2000. Place: Nanyuki.
3. Interview with J. Wariaura. Date 17.6.2000. Place: Nairobi.
4. A. J. Levine, "Matthew" in C. A. Newsom and H. S. Ringe (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary* (London: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998) p. 255.
5. John Paul II, *Take Mary as Mother* (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications Africa, 1988), p. 1ff.
6. Interview with F. Kamanda. Date 18.8.2000. Place: Nairobi
7. *Op Cit*, p. 6.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
9. Jerome, 1990, p. 687.
10. *Op Cit.*, p. 9.
11. *Ibid.*, p., 9.
12. Interview with L. Wambui. Date 3.1.2001. Place : Nanyuki
13. *Ibid.*
14. A. Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (New York: Costello Publishing Co. 1975) p. 350ff.
15. McBrien
16. J. Paul II, *Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason)* (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 1998), p. 15.
17. _____, *Journeying Towards the Third Millenium* (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 1998), p. 11.
18. Lumen Gentium, art. 60.
19. *Ibid.*, art. 62.
20. Pope Paul VI, Pope John XXIII, Pope Leo XIII, *17 Papal Documents on the Rosary* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1980), p. 11ff.
21. *Ibid.*, p., 15.
22. *Ibid.*, p., 15.

23. The Rosary is derived from the Latin word *rosarium* (rose garden) which in the 14th century meant a collection of devotional text. Today the rosary is composed of the recitation of 5 decades of Hail Mary (a prayer recitation to BVM), each introduced with the Lord's Prayer and concluded with a Doxology. "each decade is accomplished by a meditation on some aspect of the life of Christ of the Virgin Mary called a mystery. These are divided in 3 groups of 5 known as the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries, focussing on the Incarnation, Passion and glorification of Christ respectively; ...ordinarily only one of these sets, or five decades in recited at a time; to count on a string of beads" [Dominic Monti, "Rosary" in R. P. McBrien (ed.) *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), pp., 1137-1138.
24. *Op Cit.*, p. 51.
25. *Ibid.*, p., 51.
26. Interview with S. Wangui. Date 5.1.2001. Place: Dol Dol
27. Group interview with women, Il Polei. Date 20.5.2000. Place: Dol Dol
28. Interview with Fr. J. Kariba. Date 15.8.2000. Place: Nairobi
29. J. Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem (Dignity and Vocation of Women)* (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications-Africa, 1988), p. 1ff.
30. Teresa Hinga, "Jesus Christ and the Liberation of Women in Africa in *Feminist Theology from the Third World* by Ursula King (ed.), (London: Orbis Books, 1994), p. 269.
31. John Paul II, *Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful (Christifideles Laici)* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994), p. 17.
32. Flannery, A., *Ibid.*, p. 389.
33. *Ibid.*, pp., 783-788.
34. Interview with E. Gichuki. Date 16.1.2001. place: Nanyuki
35. R. E. Nixon, "Matthew" in D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer (et al.), *New bible Commentary*, 3rd Edition (England: Inter Varsity Press, 1970), p. 843.
36. Beth Mugo is the current Member of Parliament in Dagoretti Constituency, Nairobi.
37. Interview with I. Kavesa. Date 2.1.2001. Place: Narumoru
38. E. G. Swift, "Mark" in *Op cit*, p. 853.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 853.

40. H. R. Fuller "Matthew" in J. L. Mays, *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 952..
41. *Ibid.*, p. 952.
42. Levine, *Op cit*, p. 253.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
44. Interview with E. Kipkoech. Date 24.1.2001. Place: Narumoru
45. John Paul II, *Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful (Christifideles Laici)*, p. 69.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
49. John Paul II, *On Social Concern (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)* (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications-Africa, 1993), p., 71.
50. John Paul II, *Op Cit*, p. 79.
51. W. Baird, "The Gospel /according to Luke" in M. C. Laymon, *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 684.
52. Interview with M. Muthigani. Date 9.7.2000. Place: Nairobi.
53. John Paul II, *Letters to the family* p., 6.
54. Interview with M. Obae. Date 27.1.2000. Place: Nairobi. ʔ
55. John Paul II, *Op Cit*.
56. Flannery, 1975, p. 903ff.
57. Interview with S. Otieno. Date 16.9.2000. Place: Nanyuki.
58. Interview with E. Gichuki. Date 16.12. 2001. Place: Nanyuki.
59. Interview with J. Mukabucyana. Date 17.4.2000. Place: Nairobi.
60. Interview with Late M. wahome. Date 17.12.1999. Place: Nanyuki.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Conclusions

The present study has sought to establish the Catholic women's liberation and empowerment activities in the SCC of the Catholic Church. To achieve this objective a qualitative and comparative analysis of women's activities in urban and rural communities was conducted. It investigated the Agikuyu traditional concept on women thus giving the study an African perspective on women through which the activities of the SCC were discussed. This forms a background of women's contemporary understanding of their roles in the SCC and the wider society. It is through the socio-cultural orientation that their activities are enhanced and encountered by the community. The research was conducted in representative deaneries of the Archdioceses of Nairobi (urban) and Nyeri (rural) namely Nairobi Deanery and Kieni North Deanery respectively. The study arrived at several findings and conclusions.

The SCC are vital organs of the local Church. They are concomitant to integral human development not only for the Catholic women but also for the community as such. They enable women to insert themselves into the life situations of the marginalised with a view to transform unauthenticity. It is in the SCC that women participate and express their views on socio-cultural, political, economic, religious and educational issues affecting them. The SCC therefore become avenues of liberation and empowerment for the Catholic women.

However, according to the primary data, this study revealed that these communities are not exclusively Catholic Communities. People from different faiths such as Protestant churches were also found to be members of the SCC due to their openness to their faiths in their neighborhood and concern for the less privileged.

It was noted that the rural setting has more SCC than the urban setting. As such women in the rural set up participate more in the SCC. The study revealed that a single parish in the rural setup like Nanyuki or Narumoru in Kieni North Deanery has over five hundred SCC as compared to urban parishes like Holy Family Basilica, which has three SCC. One of the reasons drawn from the field study was the limited resources serving the Christians in terms of parishes and parish priests in the rural deanery. The Christians therefore communion in SCC and hold services on Sundays in place of the liturgical Mass. Such areas celebrate Mass once or twice in a month.

The SCC are characterised by the preponderance of women. This makes women the participating majority in issues affecting the society at the grassroots level in the SCC. The Catholic women's liberation and empowerment activities stem from the temporal limitations encompassing women and the immediate neighbourhood. The SCC therefore engage in various activities to respond to the needs of the people such as poverty, the HIV/AIDS scourge, early and forced marriages, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse among others. This was observed in both urban and rural setting. These communities exist vis-à-vis other development and Church organizations with which inter-development activities are carried out. However, the role of men in empowering women is vital towards human development. Women in both urban and rural communities enjoy or lack the

support of men at the household and community level thus empowering or disempowering them respectively. Gender sensitization, which lack in the SCC should be encouraged to facilitate the empowerment of women and to encourage the role of men in household and community development.

Conscientization is an ingredient towards active participation in liberation activities. Women in both urban and rural settings draw their guidelines from the social teachings of the Catholic Church. However, awareness forthcoming from the Beijing Conference also necessitated some women's active participation. The Conference was however seen to have both positive and negative effects in women's participation in liberation and empowerment.

SCC facilitate independence and interdependence thus inhibiting dependency, which is an aspect of oppression. Women in SCC empower themselves through bible reading and interpretation according to their life situations. They also support one another by sharing experiences and through merry-go-rounds. SCC supporting each other financially was conspicuous in the rural setting while discrimination or minimal interaction between the rich and poor was elaborate in some communities in the urban setup. As such, while the activities of the SCC are geared towards a self-reliant, self-propagating and self-sufficient church, instances of discrimination defer the cause of liberation and empowerment.

Catholic women's liberation participation are augmented by a generative disposition of the Catholic women towards the Beijing Conference. The field study however revealed that the Conference was of no consequence to some

Catholic women thus inhibiting proper development and liberation. The study therefore concludes that ignorance and illiteracy at the grassroots level inhibit development.

However, women encounter limitations in their activities. Although SCC seek to develop their environs integrally, they do not seem to meet their demands. They hence feel the need to affiliate with other women locally and internationally owing to the afflictions that encompass the lives of women such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. As such, United Nations Conferences on women especially the Beijing Conference (1995) serve as an arena for such identification and conscientization on women's issues. Organisations such as FIDA are also channels of seeking redress against domestic violence, which is mostly meted out against women.

The life situation of the Catholic women does not always tally with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The situation in life of the women obliges them to practice artificial family planning instead of the recommended natural family planning. It was also noted that not every Catholic woman is a member of the SCC due to limited time or the nature of professions. This does not however, limit such women in liasing with the SCC in development activities.

At this stage the study looks at how the above findings correlate with the hypotheses which were set out at the beginning of this study. The findings of the study support as well contradict the first hypothesis that the Agikuyu tradition demean the status of women as second class. At one point the tradition does demean women as second class. Women were labeled as weak, untrustworthy and unpredictable. Chapter two of this study goes further to

give examples of taboos and proverbs within the Agikuyu tradition that restricted the lives of women. The rural communities were more vulnerable to cultural practices that still demean women in active participation in community development such as leadership roles.

On the other hand, the Agikuyu tradition empowered women through the *rites of passage*. The initiation of girls was an important aspect in the lives of women. After circumcision the girls attained the adulthood status which earned them respect from the society. They girls also entrusted with more responsibilities in the community. Motherhood was also recognized and seen as a means of propagating the ethnic group and the family name. It gave women a new status in the society.

Secondly, the hypothesis that the Catholic women in the SCC participate in empowerment and liberation activities is well supported by the findings of the study. Chapter three and four elaborate the contribution of women in the SCC and the society at large through various ministries such as service to the poor, the sick, the socially discriminated and stigmatized especially the HIV/AIDS infected persons. It is through these communities that the Kenyan philosophy of harambee is easily realized towards making the people economically and socially sustainable.

The SCC are therefore channels of “recovering the feminine dimension of humanity”¹ which have been undermined by the African and the Church traditions. Through their efforts to liberate the society in the local Churches, women endeavor to create gender sensitivity to both men and women. This way the long sidelined feminine face of the Church, besides the Mariological

perspective, is too recovered through their active participation in liberation at the grassroots level.

Thirdly, the findings support the hypothesis that the outcome of the Beijing Conference (1995) had both positive and negative effects on the Catholic women's liberation activities. Chapter five of this study shows that creative disposition of the Conference rendered awareness in facilitating some of the women's liberation roles. To others the Conference was of unknown or received with suspicion.

Finally, the findings of this study confirm the hypothesis that the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on Christology and Mariology conscientise the Catholic women in social praxis. Chapter six of this study appraises the activities of the SCC with reference to liberation Christology and Mariology as cardinal themes in the practice of Christian humanism. The SCC emulates both Christ and Mary. However the model of Mary in women liberation and empowerment was quite polemic. Although Mary is a paradigm of liberation, not all Catholic women appreciate her role as a mediator. Her veneration is also exaggerated (Marian maximalism) in some cases.

The study has three main contributions. Firstly, it is relevant to those interested in theology of inculturation and gender development. It has revealed the relationship between culture and the understanding of the doctrine of the Catholic Church on Mary. It has been argued that the cultural concept of motherhood within the African setup influences the acceptance of Mary as a model of liberation.

The study is also important to students of liberation theology. It argues that the SCC are important avenues for women liberation and empowerment. It also presents women as a participating majority despite the cultural (patriarchism) and religious inhibitions against them.

The theology of Mary and Christ as models of liberation in the SCC was discussed. This study is therefore important to those interested in the study of Christology and Mariology as taught by the Catholic Church and practiced by the Catholic women. The study uses existential experiences of women in the SCC from an African socio-cultural understanding of Christology and Mariology.

7.2 Recommendations

The Mainstream Church should appreciate the existential problems facing women especially on family life. Decision making on issues affecting women should, therefore, include women's participation. A thorough study on family life Catholic teachings in view of the Catholic women should be facilitated by the Church to respond to their needs. This, according to the study, would make them more at home with their Church. With regard to this position, one respondent commented that "the use of artificial contraception alienates most Catholic women to participate in the Eucharist. Unless something is done to respond to this issue, most of us will continue carrying the burden of sinfulness in our hearts in as much as we try to appear contented and happy in our Catholic faith".²

The SCC are characterised by the preponderance of women. This study recommends a study on the roles and issues affecting men in the SCC. This would

complement this study and probably come up with recommendations of attracting men to participate more actively in SCC. This would make such communities more of a local Church within a local bearing. This would also be an important area of study in gender and development with a view of attracting more men to participate in development activities in the SCC.

This study recommends that the teachings on the doctrines of the Church be simplified, translated and made available to the Christians at the grassroots level (SCC). This would create a consistency in the understanding of the Catholic doctrines especially on Mary among the SCC. The study noted that the veneration of Mary is sometimes ignored or exaggerated.

The social teachings of the Church, that is the magisterium, should also be made available at the grassroots level to conscientise the Christians on issues affecting them. They should be simplified and translated into Kiswahili and other languages such as Kikuyu to make them more accessible to the Catholic Christians in the rural setting.

2

Endnotes

1. Pontifical Council for the Laity, *The Logic of Self-Giving: International Meeting 'women' Rome 1996* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1997) p. 1 ff
2. Interview with Irene Nyaruai, 23.2.2001

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2/

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CATHOLIC LAY WOMEN

1. Name
2. Age
3. State your parish
4. Marital Status
4. Educational Level
5. Name your Small Christian Community and the area which it is found?
.....
6. What is the significance of that name to you ?
- 6.1 What, in your opinion is a small christian community?.....
- 7 What is the ratio of women to men in your Small Christian Community?
.....
- 8 Describe the activities carried out in a meeting of the small christian community
.....
9. Name and explain the roles and responsibilities of the Small christian
community
10. How do the Catholic women participate in the above roles?
.....
11. How do you incorporate the needs of the children and the youth in the
community?
12. What problems do you face in the small christian community ?
.....
13. How do you participate in alleviating the above problems?
.....
14. How does your small christian community participate in community
development?
.....
15. Are you aware of the Beijing Conference (1995)?
.....

16. If yes, what role has it played in assisting you to actively participate in your christian community or the entire society?
.....

17 .Who is Jesus Christ to you?

18. Explain ways in which you identify with Him?
.....-19

.Do you participate in any developmental issues in the community?
.....

Name them

20. In what ways does Christ enable you to participate in the above roles?
.....

21. Who is the Blessed Virgin Mary to you ?

22. in what ways do you identify with her?

22. Explain the ways in which her model enables you to participate in the society?
.....

23. What problems do you face as women in Church and society?.....

24 .How do you participate in solving the above?
.....

25. Is there any other information you would like to add concerning the roles of the Catholic women in public and private sectors ?
.....?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RELIGIOUS SISTERS

1. Name
 2. Educational Level
 3. What is your occupation?
 4. Do you attend a Small Christian Community?-----Name it-----
 5. What, in your opinion, is a small christian community?-----
 6. What are the development activities of small christian communities?
 7. How do you participate in the above activities ? -----
 - 8 Who is Jesus Christ to you? -----
 9. Explain ways in which you identify with Him?
.....-10
.Do you participate in any developmental issues in the community?
.....
Name them
 11. In what ways does Christ enable you to participate in the above roles?
.....
 12. Who is the Blessed Virgin Mary to you ?
 13. in what ways do you identify with her?
 14. Explain the ways in which her model enables you to participate in the society?
.....
-
15. What problems do you face as women religious in Church and society?-----

 16. How do you participate in solving these problems?-----

 17. Did you attend or hear of the Beijing Conference on women 1995? -----

 18. What were the resolutions of the Conference? -----

19. List the importance of the Conference to women in their day to day -----

20. Is there any other information you would like to add concerning the roles of
the Catholic women in public and private sectors ?-----

3

APPENDIX 3

Questionnaire for the Clergy

1. Name-----
2. Parish-----
3. Describe your parishioners -----

4. List the number small christian communities in your parish? -----
5. What are the development activities of small christian communities?
6. In what ways are the Catholic lay women involved in these communities? -----
-----7. In what ways are the religious sisters involved in these communities?-----

7. How does your parish engage the Catholic women to participate fully in the Church ? -----
-----8 What are the problems experienced by your parishioners and it's environs? -----

9. In what ways do the Christian women participate in alleviating the above mentioned problems? -----
10. What positions do you give them in the Church in terms of leadership roles to help them participate fully in Church? -----

11. How do they respond to the above? -----
12. What is your regard to women leadership roles in the Church?-----

13. Identify the roles a Christian should emulate from Christ in day to day activities

14. Do you think the Catholic women portray any of these examples? ----- If yes, how ?----- if no, why?

15. Enumerate the examples a Christian should emulate from the Blessed Virgin Mary -----

16. Do you think the Catholic women portray any of the above examples? ----- if
no, why? -----

--- if yes, how? -----

17. In what ways should they enhance their participation through the model of
Mary? -----

18. What is the importance of women to the ministerial apostolate ? -----

19. Is there any other information you would like to add concerning the Catholic
women's participation in community development?-----

APPENDIX 4

ANAKE ATATU NA MWARI WA NYINA

Mundu akigia na atumia eeri. Umwe akigia na mwanake umwe, Ucio ungi akigia na anake atatu. Muthuuri-ri, agikukra muno nginya agikinya gukua. Riria akinyire gukua-ri, akiigaya. Akigaira uyu umwe ngombe ciake. Na aya angi atatu, o mundu ciake mundu ciake, ng'ombe hamwe na mburi. Anake aya ataturi, makinyarira indo ciao nginya magithina muno. Uyu umwe niamenyereire indo ciake, nginya ikiingiha muno. Aya atatu makiigua uiiru. Aya atatu makirana ati mamurage no ni akunyiruo thiri iyo ni mundu. Uyu umwe ni ari na mwari wa nyina wetaguo Cinji. Akira mwari wa nyina utuku umwe atongorie indo ciao more nigetha matikoraguo. Magithii, magithii, magithii nginya magikinya kundu kuraihu magiaka mucii na magitura. *Anake aria atatu nimakimarumiriire, magikinya kuria aya angi makiite. Riuri mwanake uyu umwe etaguo Marua. Niegituikite kiumbani agathiaga utuku. Acokari, akainaga atiriri;*

Cinji Cinji mwana wa maitu

Cinji nduhingurire Cinji

Ndi ruhiu rwaka Cinji Cinji

Ruoimire mburi Cinji

Ndi itimu riakwa Cinji

Ruoimire mburi Cinji

Cinji mwana wa maitu

Cinji nduhingurire Cinji!

Cinji niagithiaga akamuhingurira. Rimwe anake aya atatu nimakiigwirwo ni muiritu hakuhi na kihingo. O hwai-ni Wamarua oka mwari wa nyina akiina akimwira:

Marua Marua mwana wa maitu

Marua ngurira ruhiu Marua

*Ngurira itimu Marua
No ihiganagwo Marua
ni arume atatu Marua
Na matienjagwo Marua
Marua agacokia akaina atiriri*

*Cinji Cinji mwana wa maitu
Cinji nduhingurire
Cinji ni hiti iriho
Cinji Cinji mwana wa maitu
Cinji Cinji nduhingurire!*

Anake aya atatu nimakinyitire mugambo wa Marua. Hwaini umwe magiuka kihingoini makiina na Cinji akihingura. Makimunyita moko nake akimatema na ruhiu agitengera nyumba. Umwe akimurumirira. Magithii makimunyita na hinya. Marua ndamenyaga ni anake aria aithe. Akimatemanga na ruhiu na akimathecanga na itimu. Anake aria atatu nimagikuire nake Cinji niagithire na agitahikio ni athuri.

Rugano rwakwa rwathirira hau.”

THREE MEN AND THEIR SISTER (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

“A man had two wives. One got one son. The other got three sons. The man got too old and got to the time of his death.

When the time of death came, he divided his wealth. He gave this (first) son his cattle. And these other three (sons) each got his cattle. Each got cattle and goats. These three sons misused their animal wealth until they became poor. This other (son) took care of his animals until they multiplied. The other three became jealous.

The three conspired to kill the other one but he came to know of their secret through someone else. This one (son) had a sister called Cinji. He told his sister one night to lead the animals so that they escape death. They went! They went! They went until they reached a far place. They built a home and lived there.

The three (sons) went after them until they reached where the others had built a house. Now this one (son) was called Marua. He had become more carefree, often flirting with girls and used to walk around at night. On his return, he would sing:

Cinji Cinji child of my mother
Cinji Cinji open for me Cinji
I have my sword Cinji Cinji
It cost me one goat Cinji
Cinji open for me Cinji!

Cinji would open for him. One time the three (sons) were heard by the girl near the gate. Every evening when Marua could come, his sister would sing:

Marua Marua son of my mother
Marua buy me a sword Marua
Buy me a spear Marua
I'm being watched Marua
By three men Marua
And they are never shaved Marua.

Marua would reply:

Cinji Cinji daughter of my mother
Cinji open for me
Cinji they are hyenas
Cinji Cinji daughter of my mother
Cinji Cinji open for me!

One evening the three (sons) came near the gate and sang like Marua and Cinji opened. They held her hands but she cut them with the sword and ran to the house. One went after her. They went and raped her. When Marua came he found the gate was opened and ran to the house and found them. He killed them without knowing that they were his brothers. The three (sons) died and Cinji was later taken for the cleansing ritual by the elders (gutahikio).

My story ends there.”

Appendix v – List of Informants

Name	Place of interview	Date of interview
1) Jecinta Seti	Nanyuki	6.7.2000
2) Meyoni Lebei	Dol Dol	1.12.1999
3) Teresia Kimirri	Dol Dol	1.12.1999
4) Jenerica Wanjiku	Dol Dol	1.12.1999
5) Margaret Njuguna	Nanyuki	15.4.2000
6) Hellen Gathogo	Nanyuki	29.12.1999
7) Elizabeth Kipish	Dol Dol	15.6.2000
8) Julienne Makubucyana	Nairobi	17.4.2000
9) Margaret Wawere	Nairobi	17.4.2000
10) Sr. Teresa Twagira	Nairobi	17.4.2000
11) Fr. Joseph Wainaina	Nairobi	7.8.2000/23.6.1999
12) Fr. Franco Crabo	Nanyuki	8.5.2000/19.11.2000
13) Cecilia Mburugu	Nanyuki	3.12.2000
14) Lucy Wambui	Nanyuki	.5.2000/17.1.2001
15) Mary Mathenge	Nanyuki	16.11.2000
16) Joyce Kalenda	Nanyuki	14.11.2000
17) Fr. Michael Owour	Nairobi	12.4.2000
18) Sr. Justa Wambugu	Nairobi	11.11.1999
19) Margaret Mwaniki	Nairobi	29.3.2000
20) Margaret Lesuunda	Nanyuki	23.7.1999/17.1.2000
21) Franklin Fuchaka	Nairobi	10.2.2000
22) Catherine Ayieko	Nairobi	17.4.1999
23) Adela P. Calzada	Dol Dol	16.12.1999
24) Jecinta Mwangi	Nanyuki	4.3.2000
25) Lucy Thanga	Nairobi	20.6.2000
26) Sr. W. Catherine	Nairobi	10.2.2000
27) Sheila Karani	Nairobi	19.6.2000
28) Mildred Ngesa	Nairobi	15.1.2000

29) Petronilla Nafula	Nairobi	5.7.2000
30) Sr. Herbert Alexa	Nairobi	5.7.2000
31) Sr. D. McCormick	Nairobi	2.2.2000
32) Stellamaris Kimau	Nairobi	21.6.2000
33) Josephine Wanjau	Nairobi	21.6.2000
34) Margaret Waweru	Nairobi	21.6.2000
35) Evelyn Ouma	Nairobi	22.6.2000
36) 36. Almaz Teferi	Nairobi	22.6.2000
37) Sr. Pauline Nabira	Nairobi	20.4.2000
38) Regina Kamau	Nairobi	22.6.2000
39) Josephine Musyoki	Nairobi	22.6.2000
40) Gloriosa Nduwimana	Nairobi	23.6.2000
41) Lydia Maina	Nairobi	23.6.2000
42) Rose Kamau	Nairobi	23.6.2000
43) Sr. N. Prangan	Nairobi	15.4.2000
44) Juliana Omale	Nairobi	24.6.2000
45) Mary Otuma	Nairobi	24.6.2000
46) Fr. John Kariba	Nairobi	15.8.2000
47) Fr. Ernst Ayoti	Nairobi	2.12.2000/19.12.2000
48) Sr. Julia Simon	Nanyuki	12.1.2000
49) Sr. M. Nyambura	Nanyuki	15.1.2000
50) Sheila Wangui	Nanyuki	5.1.2001
51) Lucy Mburu	Nanyuki	5.1.20001
52) Ann Resiano	Dol Dol	15.12.2000
53) Fr. Elias Gichuki	Narumoru	6.1.2001/16.12.2000
54) Jane Murugo	Dol Dol	15.12.2000
55) Margaret Karmusha	Dol Dol	6.12.2000/11.3.2001
56) Fr. Daniel Muchemi	Nanyuki	22.11.2000
57) Charity Ngatia	Nanyuki	22.10.2000
58) Eugenia Waweru	Nanyuki	17.1.2000
59) Esther Kamweru	Nairobi	17.6.2000
60) Jane Wangari	Nairobi	15.8.2000
61) Regina Kamau	Nairobi	22.6.2000

62) Lornah Murage	Nairobi	27.6.2000
63) A. Kyonda	Nairobi	11.11.1999
64) M. Obae	Nairobi	27.1.2000
65) Ruth Kabiru	Narumoru	26.3.2001
66) Ruth Wangui	Narumoru	26.3.2001
67) Esther Riri	Narumoru	26.3.2001
68) Lucy Muthoni	Narumoru	27.3.2001
69) Christina Wanjiru	Narumoru	27.3.2001
70) . Mercy Munyi	Narumoru	27.3.2001
71) Agnes Wanja	Narumoru	27.3.2001
72) Ann Ngima	Narumoru	27.3.2001
73) Esther Gathoni	Narumoru	27.3.2001
74) Cecily Muthoni	Narumoru	27.3.2001
75) . Florence Kagure	Narumoru	28.3.2001
76) Jane Muita	Narumoru	28.3.2001
77) Mercy Njeri	Narumoru	28.3.2001
78) Cecilia Nyokabi	Narumoru	28.3.2001
79) Margaret Nyawira	Narumoru	28.3.2001
80) Ruth Buuri	Narumoru	29.3.2001
81) AnnaLucy Njachi	Narumoru	29.3.2001
82) Florence Nyagera	Narumoru	29.3.2001
83) Agnes Kingori	Narumoru	29.3.2001
84) Ann Wamuyu	Narumoru	29.3.2001
85) Eva Wanjiku	Narumoru	29.3.2001
86) Mercy Ngima	Narumoru	29.3.2001
87) Lydia Wangui	Narumoru	30.3.2001
88) Zaveruius Kiambi	Narumoru	30.3.2001
89) MaryAgnes Wanja	Narumoru	30.3.2001
90) Pasqueline Njeri	Narumoru	30.3.2001
91) Esther Munyaka	Narumoru	30.3.2001
92) Lucy Njoki	Narumoru	31.3.2001
93) Wamuyu Mwangi	Narumoru	31.3.2001
94) Assunta Mutero	Narumoru	31.3.2001

95)	Nyaguthii Thumbi	Narumoru	31.3.2001
96)	J. Kiromo	Narumoru	1.4.2001
97)	Sophia Meta	Narumoru	1.4.2001
98)	Sabena Olechugu	Narumoru	1.4.2001
99)	Jenerica Wambui	Narumoru	1.4.2001
100)	Jane Mwangi	Narumoru	2.4.2001
101)	Josephine Wachira	Narumoru	2.4.2001
102)	Christine Mwangi	Narumoru	2.4.2001
103)	Jane Gikandi	Narumoru	2.4.2001
104)	Mercy Nyokabi	Narumoru	3.4.2001
105)	Hellen Wanjiku	Narumoru	3.4.2001
106)	Jane Githaiga	Narumoru	3.4.2001
107)	Jane Karomo	Narumoru	3.4.2001
108)	Esther Wangui	Narumoru	3.4.2001
109)	Pascalyn Kiarie	Narumoru	3.4.2001
110)	Mercy Kagecha	Narumoru	4.4.2001
111)	Irene Kiarie	Narumoru	4.4.2001
112)	Valentine Nyambura	Narumoru	4.4.2001
113)	Magdaline Njuguna	Nanyuki	16.6.2000
114)	Lucy Wangari	Nanyuki	12.12.1999
115)	Fr. E. Ngugi	Nairobi	19.2.2001
116)	Nancy Kamau	Nairobi	13 ⁵ / ₅ .2000
117)	Cecilia Wambui	Nanyuki	23.10.2000
118)	C. Wanjiru	Nairobi	20.11.1999
119)	L. Nderitu	Nairobi	23.1.2000
120)	Fr. Aibert	Dol Dol	16.12.2000
121)	Lucy Kungu	Nairobi	19.5.2000
122)	I.J.Muturi	Nairobi	16.2.2000
123)	Janet Akinyi	Nanyuki	19.1.2000
124)	Salome Mwangi	Nairobi	19.1.2000
125)	C. Wesonga	Nairobi	17.1.2000
126)	S. Kimaru	Narumoru	23.11.1999
127)	M. Okumu	Nairobi	19.3.2000

128)	Leah Ndungu	Nairobi	16.2.2000
129)	Beatrice Njagi	Nairobi	16.2.2000
130)	J. Wariaura	Nairobi	17.6.2000
131)	Faith Kamanda	Nanyuki	18.8.2000
132)	Salestine Wangui	Narumoru	3.1.2001
133)	I. Kavesa	Nairobi	23.1.2001
134)	E. Kipkoech	Nairobi	24.1.2001
135)	S.Otieno	Nanyuki	16.9.2000
136)	Late M. Wahome	Nanyuki	17.12.1999
137)	Irene Nyaruai	Nairobi	23.2.2001
138)	Francisca Legei	Dol Dol	15.3.2001
139)	Jane Lemuko	DolDol	15.3.2001
140)	Loise Kimirri	Dol Dol	12.3.2001
141)	Everyn Wamalwa	Dol Dol	18.3.2001
142)	Meoni Legei	Dol Dol	11.4.2001
143)	Sr. Cecilia	Dol Dol	11.4.2001
144)	.J. Wanyangi	Nairobi	12.6.2001
145)	P. Karugu	Nairobi	12.6.2001
146)	E. Mukono	Nairobi	13.6.2001
147)	Fr. Franco Wright	Nairobi	27.8.2002
148)	Mary Kingori	Nanyuki	8.5.2001
149)	Mary Wachira	Nyeri	11.5.2001
150)	Jacinta Wanjohi	Nyeri	12.5.2001
151)	Mary Magdalene	Nyeri	12.5.2001
152)	Grace Wanjiku	Nyeri	12.5.2001
153)	Amina Nyata	Nanyuki	8.5.2001
154)	Fr. J.B. Macharia	Nyeri	16.5.2001
155)	Jacinta Mugure	Nyeri	17.5.2001
156)	Mukondi Kingori	Nanyuki	22.5.2001
157)	Mary Wambui	Nyeri	17.5.2001
158)	Mary Wangari	Nyeri	17.5.2001
159)	Maria Waruguru	Nanyuki	14.8.2001
160)	Loreshina Wanjugu	Nanyuki	14.8.2001

161)	Late M. J. Kombo	Nanyuki	2.5.2000
162)	Saraphina Wanjiru	Nyeri	16.7.2001
163)	Ester Mwihaki	Nanyuki	17.4.2000
164)	Late Sr. M. Wanjiru	Nairobi	24.10.96
165)	M. Njuguna	Nairobi	16.6.2002
166)	Veronica Wanjiku	Nanyuki	17.4.2000
167)	L. Wangari	Nanyuki	12.12.1999
168)	N. Njuguna	Nanyuki	14.7.2002
169)	F.Kamanda	Nairobi	18.8.2000
170)	S. Wangui	Dol Dol	5.1.2001
171)	E. Kipkoech	Narumoru	24.1.2001
172)	M. Muthigani	Nairobi	9.7.2000/19.11.1999
173)	Irene Nyaruai	Nanyuki	23.2.2001
174)	M. Wambui	Narumoru	18.11.1999
175)	C.Ngatia	Nanyuki	17.1.2000
176)	E. Ngugi	Nanyuki	20.2.2001
177)	L. Kungu	Nairobi	20.10.2000
178)	M. Mwaniki	Narumoru	23.11.1999
179)	S. Mwangi	Nairobi	19.1.2000
180)	J. Akinyi	Nairobi	19.1.2000

2

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