

**PROMOTION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE THROUGH SMALL CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITIES IN THE LIGHT OF *AMORIS LAETITIA*: A PASTORAL STUDY OF
GATUNDU DEANERY, ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI**

Kairu Jane Wanjiru

Masters Candidate, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)

E-mail of corresponding author: kjanekairu@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The purpose was to explore effective ways of promoting marriage and family life through Small Christian Communities in the light of *Amoris Laetitia* in Gatundu deanery for new evangelization.

Statement of the problem: The researcher observed that there seems to be laxity, separation and divorce in some marriages and family life in Gatundu deanery. Individuals and families are receiving less support from social structures than in the past. Inadequate preparation before marriage has led to intolerance and hostility in the family.

Research methodology: This study takes pastoral circle or spiral of praxis as its methodology which comprises of four moments closely related, namely: insertion, social analysis, theological reflection and pastoral planning. This method is both inductive and deductive, thus, it embraces both the pastoral action of the Church with its teachings emphasizing on reading the signs of times.

Findings: The researcher observed that some families live in dire poverty and great limitations. Many children are abused sexually and abandoned on the fringes of society. This phenomenon sweeps away the ideal of family and marriage when its commitment to stability proves tiresome. The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis; *Amoris Laetitia* are available but not in the local language and there is no one to explain thus it's difficult to implement. Manual for marriage stipulates that those to be prepared for marriage are to take not less than six months but people are taught for four to six weeks. Not only that, some even don't come for marriage sessions especially if they are from rich families, they pay for those sessions and they get married in the Church and this shows the inadequate preparations of marriage and hence hinders the promotion of marriage and family life.

Conclusion: The proper ongoing formation of leaders on the role of SCCs can promote marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery. In the light of these study the pastoral perspective in the African context and guided by Kingdom Of God as our pastoral angel component, we argue that if the local Church in the contemporary society can embrace the traditional elements of *kubanga na kunyitanira* (planning and solidarity) and incorporate them in marriage and family life it can enhance the promotion of marriage in Gatundu deanery since it embraces hospitality, generosity, oneness, listening, dialogue, respect, mutuality and commitment among others. Tribalism and intermarriages since it is a challenge which disintegrate families, it needs reverential dialogue for marriage to be sustained. Thus, for this to be realized, strategic pastoral plan need to be put in place.

Recommendations: The study gives recommendations so as to enhance the promotion of marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery and by doing so we will be responding to the essential need for strategic pastoral planning.

Keywords: *Marriage and Family life, Promotion, Gatundu Deanery*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on the Agikuyu and where they are located, the Gikuyu language, the location of Gatundu deanery and the climate found in this place in relation to promotion of marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery.

In Kenya, the estimated population as of 6th April 2021 is 54,666,122 based on Worldmeter elaboration of the latest United Nations data.¹ The Agikuyu are 6,500,000 which is 12% of the total population. This shows that Gikuyu is the largest ethnic group in Kenya. The number is about six and a half million among Kenya's total population taking those in Diaspora into account.² The Agikuyu live throughout Kenya but primarily reside in Nairobi County and the central part of Kenya located in the central region of the country. As Kenyans largest group, they occupy a central position in Kenyan's social life. The capital city of Nairobi lies just at the southern boundary of the area traditionally occupied by the Agikuyu. Gikuyu land is a plateau of about a hundred miles (160 kilometers) from the North to South and 30 miles (48 kilometers) from East to West. Its elevation ranges from about 3,000 feet (900 meters) to over 7,500 feet (2,300 meters) above the sea level.³ Rainfall is plentiful. However, on the eastern side of the plateau, the area is comparatively dry and is dominated by a grassland zone. The elevation increases to the West, giving rise to more rainfall where plant life is abundant and most of the population is concentrated.⁴

¹ Cf. Kenya Population (2021) Worldmeter <https://www.worldmeters.infor>kenya>population> accessed on 07/04/2021.

² Cf. Gerald Joseph Wanjohi, *The Wisdom and Philosophy of the Gikuyu Proverbs*, (Nairobi: Pauline's Publications, 1997), 19.

³ Cf. *The Wisdom and Philosophy of the Gikuyu Proverbs*, 19, See also Gikuyu world of Culture Encyclopedia, www.everyculture.com>Japan-to-Mali-Gikuyu.html accessed on 23/03/2021, E Karega Mutahi, *Sound Change and the Classification of the Dialects of Southern Mt. Kenya*, (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983), 26.

⁴ Cf. Gikuyu world of Culture Encyclopedia, www.everyculture.com>Japan-to-Mali-Gikuyu.html accessed on 23/03/2021.

Thus, we can assert that being the largest group in the country and living together in one of the fertile places in the country could have been one of the indicators, which can assist to promote marriage and family life.

Gatundu deanery is located in the central highlands of Kenya and it is one of the thirteen deaneries in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. The deanery is comprised of nine parishes: Gatitu, Gatundu, Karinga, Kiganjo, Mutomo, Mutunguru, Munyu-ini, Ndundu and Ituru. Gatundu is in central province where most of the Agikuyu people reside and which is a high plateau whose altitude ranges from 1,000 metres to 2,500 metres above the sea level. The plateau is in the form of an oblong roughly running in a northeast southwest direction, the length being about 160 kilometers and width 50 kilometers.⁵

The political situation among the Agikuyu beginning with the family based political approach, the elder's role and influence and lastly the solidarity beyond the ethnical ties. This will be in line with how Gatundu deanery can promote marriage and family life. The Agikuyu today are predominantly represented in a variety of Christian Churches and others are Muslims. These include the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestants, independent Churches, Anglicans, Pentecost's and many other mushrooming sects. The significance of their belief is a high god Ngai, who is maintained as the Ngai of the Agikuyu. Agikuyu are monotheistic, they belief in one God. For the Agikuyu, Ngai created everything. He resides at Mt Kenya (*Kirinyaga*).⁶ He should only be approached for serious problems such as those involving life or death questions. During periods of famine and epidemics diseases, Ngai was approached by the elder among the council of the elders who offered sacrifices and called God on behalf of the entire community.⁷ The Agikuyu also believed in the ancestral spirits.⁸ The ancestral spirits were the high god and other non-human spirits. They would give people information's about the causes of diseases, deaths and other misfortunes and would sometimes prescribe new medicine.

Culturally, in the past, religious values emphasized community solidarity and discouraged individualism where individuals or families failed to team up with the others either in ceremonies like marriage, funerals and initiations among others. Authority was vested in elders and prophets, who were believed to know what was best for all people. Expressions of individuality and solitary life were not encouraged at all.⁹ Someone perceived to be outside the group could be accused of being a witch and could be killed. Thus, as we have observed, some traditional elements were highly emphasized especially community solidarity hence discouraging individualism and solitary life. These traditional elements therefore are good indicators and if adopted can assist to strengthen

⁵ Cf. Geoffrey Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu 1500-1900*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1974), 26.

⁶ Cf. Silvano Bottingore, *Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity*, (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books (E.A) Ltd, 1984), 35, See also Judith Mbula Bahemuka, *Our African Heritage*, (Lagos: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1982), 11-12.

⁷ Cf. Gikuyu world of Culture Encyclopedia, www.everyculture.com>Japan-to-Mali-Gikuyu.html accessed on 23/03/2021, See also Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Spirituality*, (London: Cassel Ltd, 1979), 109-110.

⁸ Cf. James Kihara, *Ngai we belong to you*, (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1985), 8-9, See also Gikuyu world of Culture Encyclopedia, www.everyculture.com>Japan-to-Mali-Gikuyu.html accessed on 23/03/2021.

⁹Cf. Gikuyu world of Culture Encyclopedia, www.everyculture.com>Japan-to-Mali-Gikuyu.html accessed on 23/03/2021.

the relationship of those living in marriage life and help in promoting marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery.

As far as Agikuyu marriage system was concerned, the Agikuyu preferred large families living in big compounds. It was considered a religious obligation to have children.¹⁰ Boys were desirable because they carried on the family name, which was passed on through the male line. Girls were desired because the family could collect the bride price, which could in return be used to obtain wives for their brothers. A married woman became more powerful as she bore more children. A childless marriage among the Agikuyu is practically a failure since children bring joy not only to their parents, but also to the *mbari* (clan) as a whole.¹¹

Polygamy was valued and having many wives and many children was a sign of wealth but today with the influence of Christianity and western education, the trend has been toward monogamy meaning the issue of polygamy is dying a natural death as one of the informant explained.¹² Events leading to marriage began with an initial meeting of the aspiring son in law with his prospective parents in law. The young woman's consent was required at this meeting before events could proceed. Later stages included parental visits, exchange of goods as bride wealth, and finally the young woman moving into the home of the husband. Today, marriage still involves these traditional rituals and exchanges. There is still bride wealth, significant involvement of parents in the choice of their children's spouses, and the high value placed on having children.¹³ Marriage and family life were very much valued among the Agikuyu and children were seen as a blessing not only to the family but to the entire community. Having this in mind we can therefore say that, these are good indicators which if accommodated can of help to Gatundu deanery as far as promotion of marriage and family life is concerned.

Thus, it is clear that past traditional elements were highly emphasized especially community solidarity hence discouraging individualism and solitary life. These traditional elements if adopted are good indicators and if embraced can assist to strengthen the relationship of those living in marriage life and help in promoting marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery. Marriage and family life were very much valued among the Agikuyu and children were seen as a blessing not only to the family but to the entire community. Having this in mind we can therefore state that, these are good indicators which if adopted can be of help to those living marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery.

2.0 THE OPPORTUNITIES FACING MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE IN GATUNDU DEANERY

The purpose of the study was to establish the root causes associated with the promotion of marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery. We observed some members of a particular tribe emphasizing a strong loyalty to their community while exulting themselves as superior to the rest of which it led to strong negative emotions for any person outside that tribe. We also observed some people

¹⁰ Cf. C.Cagnolo and Hilary Wambugu, *The Agikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore*, (Nairobi: Wisdom Graphics, 2006), 115, See also Facing Mt. Kenya, 163.

¹¹ Cf. Facing Mt. Kenya, 164

¹² Josiah Kimani interviewed by the researcher via telephone on 12/06/2020 at 11:36 Am.

¹³ Cf. Gikuyu world of Culture Encyclopedia, [www.everyculture.com>Japan-to-Mali-Gikuyu.html](http://www.everyculture.com/Japan-to-Mali-Gikuyu.html) accessed on 23/03/2021.

prioritizing their own needs more than the needs of the community. Apparently, individuals and families are receiving less support from social structures than in the past. Separation and divorce in some marriages and family life in Gatundu undermine family bonds. Inadequate preparation before marriage gives rise to intolerance and hostility in the family. These realities show a pastoral concern.

Then, as we elaborated in the previous section, the percentages are showing that the Agikuyu have a large number of populations and they speak one language and this promotes the spirit of *kubanga na kunyitanire* (planning and solidarity). The fathers who are heads of the families are sources of unity in their families, the Agikuyu are farmers and they depend on what they get from their farms to survive, there are religious elements which if adopted can promote marriage and family life. All in all, there are areas of concern when it comes to the promotion of marriage and family life as we have observed in first section that there is and lack of support if one marries from a different tribe. In our social pastoral analysis, we attempt to seek the root causes associated with the problems associated with the promotion of marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery.

2.1 Nature and Formation of SCCs

The priority of the SCC in the AMECEA Region came from the AMECEA Bishops who in their plenary meeting on planning in 1973 recommended that each diocese was to form SCCs as a pastoral priority.¹⁴ Thus, the AMECEA bishops planted the seed of the SCCs in the AMECEA region.¹⁵ Embracing this priority where the bishops strongly believed that these communities would bring positive change and influence in the individual life of the faithful and in the SCCs, the Archdiocese of Nairobi and specifically Gatundu deanery has embraced this priority where the seed of the SCCs has yielded fruits that have boosted the spirituality of Christ's faithful especially in evangelization.¹⁶ In fact, Gatundu deanery has been fostering this spirit of SCCs since then.

The SCCs are formed by 15 to 20 families as the pastoral guidelines of the Archdiocese of Nairobi recommends.¹⁷ The basis for these SCCs should be the family which is the Church "Church of the family."¹⁸ Thus there is no SCC which should consider itself "as something different from the family since it is composed of families. Its well-being depends on the organization of the families because the attitudes and the traditional elements received within the family become the attitudes and the values of the community."¹⁹

From the research findings, one of the respondent expressed that the SCCs meet every Sunday after Mass or in the afternoon. The SCCs follow the recommended method by the Archdiocese

¹⁴ The word AMECEA means Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa. This is an umbrella body for Catholics in the regions covering Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

¹⁵ Cf. Pastoral guidelines, Archdiocese of Nairobi, (Nairobi: Pauline's Publications, 2013), 16

¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹⁷ Cf. Pastoral guidelines 16, See also Nicholaus Segeja, Small Christian Communities: A Vital Icon for new Evangelization, *African Christian studies*, Vol 27, No 4, December 2011, 25, See also Anthony Mayala, *Barua ya kichungaji, Jumuiya ndogo ndogo Imani hai*, (Mwanza: CPPC, 1995), 6.

¹⁸ Cf. Augustine Mringo, *Communio at Grassroots*, (Bangalore: Indian Institute of Spirituality, 1995), 96, See also Klemens Giger and Ireneus Chiwangu, *Familia ni Kanisa* (Peramiho: Permiho printing press), 1980, 49.

¹⁹ Cf. *Communio at grassroots*, 96.

pastoral guideline which is the Lumko method. According to what is stipulated by Archdiocese guidelines, they are supposed to begin with the opening prayer and hymn, reciting of the rosary, reading of the Word of God (preferably of the following Sunday liturgy) moments of silence, (5 minutes) sharing of the Word of God, prayers of the faithful, reporting work done in the previous week for example visiting the sick, announcement and then closing prayers.²⁰ Unfortunately this method is not effective as one of the respondent expressed because on one hand either the members are not well conversant with it or they see it too long thus taking much time mostly in rural areas especially in Gatundu deanery.

From the research findings one of the respondents expressed that, when the SCCs meet, they pray the rosary if there is any member who knows how to lead, have prayers of the faithful and then discuss the agenda of the day. Although active participation of the members is highly recommended, this is not so as one of the respondents explained. Majority in the SCCs are women, children and few men who are the leaders. The leaders and the few competent members seem to be the only active members in the SCCs. Most of the SCCs members seem not to meet every Sunday; they meet mostly if there is an agenda on money contributions or if they are to animate Mass. If they have no responsibility in the Church they don't meet at all as one respondent expressed. There seem to be no strong emphasis especially on spiritual matters in the SCCs either on promotion of marriage and family life, on family centered catechesis, ongoing catechesis in the SCCs, reading of the Catechism of the Catholic Church or any other Church document for enrichment.²¹

2.2 Ongoing Family Centered Catechesis

According to the research done in Gatundu deanery the responses verify that there is very little done on family centered catechesis. Thus, there is need to cultivate and foster a sense of belonging to the SCCs as domestic Church and consequently enable the SCC foster and promote marriage and family life. As far as ongoing formation of leaders in Gatundu deanery is concerned the researcher interviewed few leaders from different parishes and their responses were similar, they are given workshop when they take over as new leaders before they are sworn in²² after that, there is nothing like on-going formation of leaders until may be one of the leaders will be re- elected for the second term and attend the workshop again which emphasizes on leadership.²³

2.3 Pastoral Challenges and Care for Christian Marriage and Family Life

Pope Francis argues that “Christian families, by the grace of the sacrament of matrimony are the principal agents of the family apostolate, above all through “their joy filled witness as domestic Churches.”²⁴ The pastoral care and the prerequisites for the celebration of marriage is wanting

²⁰ Cf. Pastoral Guidelines, 18.

²¹ James Muniu interviewed by the researcher via telephone on 10/11/2020 at 9:05 Am.

²² Nancy Muchoki treasure St Gabriel Parish interviewed by the researcher on 01/12/2020 at 10:10 Am.

²³ John Gathinji, vice moderator, Paul Muchiri secretary, and Esther Nyambura treasure interviewed by the researcher on 06/12/2020 at 3:45 Pm.

²⁴ Cf. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), Nairobi, Pauline's Publications, 16 March 2016, no 200.

hence spouses are not disposed to the holiness and the obligations of the new state of life. In connection with the pastoral care of marriage and family life, the researcher wanted to know the duration of marriage preparations in Gatundu deanery.

2.4 Lay Ministry and Apostolate

One of the respondents a trained catechist expressed that there are lay ministries which are very active like the catechetical lay ministry, altar servers and legion of Mary. Other lay ministries like the ministry of the sick, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, peace and justice among others are there but inactive. Due to the inactiveness of some of these lay ministries you find that the catechists do most of the work in the parish like coordinating and organizing other volunteer catechists like the Sunday school, young adults, and pontifical missionary childhood teachers among others. In some parishes where there are no volunteer catechists it's a big challenge for the trained catechist. This has been one of the challenges in Gatundu deanery because there cannot be strong SCCs without these ministries.

One of the catechists interviewed by the researcher expressed that, in every SCC there are those who have been elected to be in charge of these lay ministries like the ministry of the sick, peace and justice, ministry of the liturgy, among others but they are not active. From these finding therefore it could be interpreted that there is need to revive and to empower these lay ministries. There is as well need of ongoing formation of these lay ministries through seminars, workshops, recollections among others because when they are active they will be able to identify the sick who may need the sacrament of the anointing, the needy families, those facing challenges in marriage and family life, those who may need different sacraments in the Church among others and this could be a way of promoting marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery.

3.0 THE TEACHINGS OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF *AMORIS LAETITIA*

3.1 Biblical Insights on Marriage and Family Life

In this section we are going to look at some of the scriptural insights in line with the promotion of marriage and family life through the features of communion and reverential dialogue especially in the SCCs. This will help those living in marriage and family life to be able to face and embrace the challenges which they will encounter as they live together. This will be approached in both Old and New Testament.

3.2 Old Testament

The Old Testament begins respectively with the story of creation in the first, second and third sections of Genesis. We see the plan of God from the beginning when he was creating. He created for six days and on the seventh day he rested. He did not create everything together; he had a strategy for each and every day, for example, Then God said "let there be light," and there was light, God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from darkness, God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." Thus evening came and morning followed the first day (Gen 1:3-4). Thus, God created for six days and on the seventh day, he rested having created everything and found it very good.

In executing this strategy, God the father deliberated (reverential dialogue) with the divine beings of his heavenly court (I Kgs 22:19; Jb1: 6; Ps 82:1). We clearly see this when he was creating human being, then God said “let us make man in our own image, after our likeness (Gen 1:26). Thus God created man and woman in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them (Gen 1:27). The aspect of communion and reverential dialogue is coming up very strongly where God involved the divine beings of his heavenly court. Therefore, Gatundu deanery is called to dialogue and work in communion especially in promoting marriage and family life. God was the first to promote marriage and family life “God created man in his own image and likeness, male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:27-28). Again God felt the need of a man to have a companion, who will live together with him, “Yahweh God said, it is not right that the man should be alone.....and the man said: “this one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh ;...(Gen 2:23). This is the call for Gatundu deanery through SCCs to be at the fore front to adopt the reverential dialogue and in communion promote marriage and family life. Thus in order for the promotion to be effective, efficiency and relevant there must be a good strategy. In fact in the Old Testament we see the strategy of God especially in creation and in saving mankind. This shows us how reverential dialogue, strategizing and working in communion are important.

Man and woman were created equal in order to complement each other as partners. As soon as Adam saw his wife, he realized that she was completely different from all other creatures; she is flesh from his flesh, bone from his bones. According to the Jewish expression it means than man and woman are of the same nature and the same dignity. Marriage and family life were instituted by God and they are uniquely in all societies. Unfortunately, marriage and family life are threatened by rapid changes taking place today and have to be carefully protected if they are to survive and fulfill their purpose according to God’s plan. Thus, we argue that equality of the sexes, interdependence and mutual respect, harmony with one another, with nature and with creator can guarantee the integrity of this institution.

The story of the fall in (Gen 3:1-13) teaches us about human beings tendency to sin craving for empty independence from God. Man and woman were clinging to the empty promises. All in all our God is full of mercy and compassion, he took the initiative to save mankind and bring him back to himself, to be in communion with God. In Gatundu deanery we see lack of initiative in bringing Gods people together so as to strategize for the good of marriage and family life. The teaching from the fall of man is a good teaching on reverential dialogue and coming together in communion to strategize for the basic pastoral activities in favour of marriage and family life. Despite the fall of man, God did not leave him in sin, he strategized to save him. We see the prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah among others being sent by God (reverential dialogue) to bring man back to God. Thus, Gatundu deanery has to strategize and re-inculcate the spirit of communion so that the spirit of promotion of marriage and family life can change and improve. Thus, from the Old Testament we can see that it was characterized by Gods initiative to strategize and look for a way to save his people from sin, to bring back humanity to himself; we also see teachings on importance of strategizing and working in communion so as to improve the promotion of marriage and family life.

3.3 New Testament

On the threshold of his public life, Jesus performs his first sign at his mother's request during a wedding feast (John 2:1-11). In this, the Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that henceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence.²⁵ The communion between God and his people finds its definitive fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the bridegroom who loves and gives himself as the savior of the humanity. By means of baptism, man and woman are definitely placed within the new and eternal covenant, in the spousal covenant of Christ with the Church (Eph 5:21-33). Thus, it is because of this covenant that the intimate community of married life and love is elevated and assumed into the spousal charity of Christ, sustained and enriched by his redeeming power.²⁶

Marriage is a commitment in which spouses have a responsibility towards each other. Marriage has to be protected from anything that can destabilize its existence. St Paul warns that the parties should guard against the temptation to disrupt marriage through divorce since that act is essentially ungodly and never supported by the Church (1Cor 7:10-11). Paul also encourages mutual love and submission in marriage in reference to Christ. Paul recommends a relationship in which mutual respect and harmony prevails between husband and wife (Eph 5:23:32). He emphasizes the important of communion and reverential dialogue among those living in marriage life. The implication of the same is that marriage is a valuable institution where couples complement each other, reason and make sound decision (reverential dialogue) together for a healthy communion of life.²⁷ St Paul talking on marriage says that "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, he adds "for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.

He continues to emphasize that this is a great mystery in reference to Christ and the Church (Eph 5:25; Gen 2:25). God created the institution of marriage so that the two who join in the lifelong union may offer each other shelter, protection and insulation from struggles in life through love. God therefore, is the originator and sustainer of every marriage. Couples, who attempt to exclude God in their lives, in vain do they try to build a loving and lasting marriage life. Marriage therefore is a way which God uses to reveal himself to the world for the building of the Kingdom of God. In marriage, there should be an equal self-giving for the sake of building the Kingdom of God, by accompaniment for the promotion of marriage and family life in the Church. Thus, Gatundu deanery is called to strategize to execute the parish apostolate and in communion promote marriage and family life.

To conclude this section we assert that in the Sacred Scriptures both Old Testament and New Testament we have seen the importance of the institution of the sacrament of marriage, thus

²⁵ Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Revised Edition, (Nairobi: Pauline's Publication Africa, 2001), no 1612.

²⁶ Cf. *A Catholic Catechism*, Kenya Episcopal Conference, (Nairobi: Pauline's Publications, 2008), no 188-189.

²⁷ Cf. John Martin Owor, *In Loving we are Reborn*, (Nairobi: Pauline's Publication's 2019), 20.

Gatundu deanery has been invited to adopt the reverential dialogue and in communion embrace this holy institution and promote it and for this to be effective they need to strategize.

3.4 Post Vatican Council II Teaching

In this section we are going to see Pope's encyclical letters. They are specifically for teaching faith and morals to all the faithful in the whole Church. We are going to look at few of them on matters enhancing the promotion of marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery through SCCs.

3.4.1 Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*

The apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis talks of the joy of love. Indeed this apostolic Exhortation has been the main inspiration of this thesis. His opening remarks are "the joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church."²⁸ This means that surely the sorrows and the agony experienced by families affect the Church as well. This document was inaugurated during the jubilee year of mercy and the Pope says that it represented an invitation to Christian families to value the gift of marriages and family, and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience. Second, because it seeks to encourage everyone to be a sign of mercy and closeness wherever family life remains imperfect or lacks peace and joy.²⁹ The Pope points out clearly that family are not a problem; they are first and foremost an opportunity. The Pope begins by confirming that the Bible is full of families, births, love stories and even family crises. The Bible begins with marriage in the book of Genesis and ends with the wedding feast of the lamb (Rev 21:2, 9).

Therefore, the Pope value and respect marriage and family life and he is encouraging Gatundu deanery to embrace this holy institution and in their pastoral planning, make it a priority to promote it. It is very clear that marriage is a holy institution by God (Gen 2:24) and therefore need to be upheld, boosted and promoted. Marriage is a divine plan by God "therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Gen 2:24) Thus, marriage pertains to the identity of the couples to be joined or cleave, to become one flesh, an expression of profound harmony, closeness both physical and interior. It is very clear from the scriptures that the couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon capable of revealing God the creator and savior, hence fruitful love becomes a symbol of God's inner life (Gen 1:28; 9:7).

The Pope also talks of marriage as a community of love between husband and wife, a gift reflecting the life of the Trinity, hence; a communion and intrinsic bond characterized by indissolubility and openness to life, mutual self-giving, sanctification and salvation of the spouses.³⁰ Therefore, it is good to acknowledge the good of the spouses already manifested in the natural marriage, which include unity, openness to life, fidelity and indissolubility. Pope Francis does not hesitate to describe the Church as a family of families, constantly enriched by the lives of all those domestic Churches.³¹ The Pope sees very clearly that on one hand we cannot encourage a path of fidelity and mutual self-giving without encouraging growth, strengthening and depending of conjugal and family love in favour of the family life and mission of the Church.

²⁸ Cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, no 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, no 5.

³⁰ Cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, no 67-74

³¹ *Ibid.*, no 87.

The Pope reiterates the fact that marriage/family life is an institution by God: hence, a gift to be received cherished and used for God's plan or purpose. This therefore explains the nature, identity and even vocation and mission of marriage and family life.³² The Pope does not only put emphasis on the importance of marriage and family life but makes it a determinant factor in explaining an ecclesiology appropriate to our situation today. Thus, it is in this line of thought that *Amoris Laetitia* looks at marriage and the family, even when challenged from within or without, as a living space that could not only turn into a domestic Church, but should not operate in isolation. Thus, in solidarity with others, the family partakes in the very life and mission of the Church and the success of the Church will always be determined by the concerns of the family.

Observing what is happening globally, Pope Francis does not hesitate to point out the challenges experienced by marriage and family life today. He suggests some possible solutions to help marriage and family life to be stable. For marriage to be stable, it requires a better understanding of what it means to enter that marriage, and so proper preparation and encouragement should be emphasized to those involved for better awareness of their sacrament and happiness. This is a call in Gatundu deanery especially to have a reverential dialogue and in communion strategize for adequate marriage preparations, accompanying the marriage people and journeying with those experiencing challenges and for this to be effective we need strategic pastoral plan.

In conclusion, our Popes have really supported this holy institution of marriage. They emphasized a lot on African values especially the Church as a family. Gatundu deanery is called to emulate and adopt these traditional elements like generosity, hospitality, respect and solidarity among others. They have also emphasized on the important of pastoral care, which the Popes says is the responsibility of the Church to accompany Christian families on their journey through life. The pastoral care of the families should be treated as a real matter of priority and preparation of marriage pastoral care to the young families and this is what Gatundu deanery is called to plan as a priority i.e. offering adequate marriage preparations, supporting those experiencing marriages challenges, ongoing formation after the sacrament of matrimony among others. Thus, for this to be effected, we need strategic pastoral plan. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis promotes marriage and family life by first confirming that the Bible is full of families, births, love stories and even family crisis. The Pope does not hesitate to point out the challenges experienced by marriage and family life from within and from without and he offers pastoral possible solutions.

3.4.2 John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio

Marriage is a consent between man and woman coming together to form a bond of union through love to live together for life. The sacrament of marriage is expressed as a reality of divine plan which comes with responsibility to the individuals as part of salvation of humanity; the spouses are committed in a bond which is indissoluble and irrevocable love. In this document, Pope talks of the importance of the pastoral care of the family, that it is the responsibility of the Church to accompany the Christians family on its journey through life. Thus, after preparation of engagement and the sacramental celebration of marriage, the couple begins their daily journey towards

³² Cf. *Lumen Gentium* no 11, See also *Compendium of the Social Teachings of the Church*, (Nairobi: Pauline's Publication's, 2005,130-131, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no 2366, *Gaudium et Spes*, no 1, Nicholas Segeja, understanding *Amoris Laetitia* in the light of *Evangelii Gaudium: A Pastoral perspective*" [good shepherd vol 1 no 2 Dec 2016], 62.

progressive actuation of the values and duties of marriage itself. Thus, the pastoral intervention of the Church in support of the family is a matter of urgency.³³ Therefore, every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care of the family which should be treated as a real matter of priority in the certainty that future evangelization depends largely on the domestic Church.

Pope emphasizes on preparation of marriage and pastoral care after marriage especially to the young families. He talks of agents of pastoral care of the families i.e. bishops, priests, religious men and women and lay specialists. He also mentions of the pastoral care in different cases who are to be supported especially families with physically, mentally challenged children, children with addicted with drugs, families with no homes especially the refugees among others. Focusing on what Pope is emphasizing, it is a call for Gatundu deanery to strategize and in communion work on the aspects of adequate marriage preparations, and ongoing formation after the sacrament of matrimony and being close to the married people experiencing difficulties. In 2021 Lenten campaign, the first week talks of families, it explains that the families find themselves in a unique environment due to rapid changes in the social, economic, political and religious extremism, not to mention serious pandemics that have left families confused, stressed and desperate. It continues to explain that, in our country today, families are facing untold difficulties and the role of parents is in disarray as they continue to compete with various influences from the world.³⁴ With such scenario, that's why Pope John Paul II is emphasizing on pastoral care of the families. Thus, for the pastoral care of those living in marriage and family life to be effective, Gatundu deanery needs strategic pastoral plan.

3.5 Selected Fathers of the Church

At this particular section, we deal with some selected Fathers of the Church. We will contemplate and reflect on the sound teaching which has been dealt with on the matters pertaining promoting marriage and family life. We will see the contribution of the Fathers of the Church and the Magisterium, the contributions of the sound theologians as well as any ministerial programme established for the purpose of promoting marriage and family life.

3.5.1 St. Clement of Rome (99 A.D)

He was the third successor of Peter the apostle as bishop of Rome, and therefore, our fourth Pope. St Irenaeus, himself a father of the early Church, tells that "Clement saw the blessed apostles and conversed with them, and head yet ringing in his ears the preaching of the apostles and had their tradition before his eyes. He is well know and connected with the Papal's letter to the Corinthians which was written about 80 A.D in an effort to restore peace to the Church at Corinth Greece. The letter was widely read in the early Christian Churches and is included in some early manuscript as scripture, along with the letters of Paul."³⁵

³³ Cf. *Famirialis Consortio*, no 65.

³⁴ Cf. *Catholic Peace and Justice Commission*, Lenten message 2021 on Families, 11.

³⁵ Cf. https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Pope-Clement/of/Rome,_who_is_St_Clement_of_Rome? Accessed on 13/05/2020.

Clement wrote the letter to settle a controversy among the Corinthians against their Church leaders and reveals that he considered himself empowered in another community's affairs.³⁶ This letter attributed to him, was the first document indicating that the Roman Church intervened in the affairs of the neighbouring Churches (reverential dialogue) to provide instruction on organizational matters. The plan he had was in a form of letter which aimed at reconciling them in peace, renewing their faith, and proclaiming the doctrine he had lately received from the apostles. The aim was to bring them together (in communion) as one family of God.

St Clement encouraged the faithful to always desire to be united (in communion) with the Lord and with the others.³⁷ He said "let us fall down before the Lord, and beseech him with tears, that he would mercifully be reconciled to us, and restore us to our former seemly and holy practices of brotherly love. For such conduct is the gate of righteousness, which is set open for the attainment of life."³⁸ St Clement is emphasizing the aspects of communion, unity, reverential dialogue, synodality and solidarity. He had to strategize so as to bring the communities together and this is a call for Gatundu deanery to come together as one family and in communion, in reverential dialogue strategize in favour of marriage and family life.

At Corinth there was a big Christian community which was established by St. Paul. In actual fact, Corinth was a trading town because of the port and it used to attract different people Greeks, Jews and people from different areas. In the pontificate of St. Clement, there were disagreements and divisions in the Church of Corinth between the laity and the clergy and among the laity themselves. This situation went so bad to the extent that some of the laity chased away some of the clergy. St. Clement then, wrote a letter (reverential dialogue) in order to bring solutions to this pastoral problem. The letter contained powerful and authentic teaching to the laity and also to St. Clement. He called upon the laity to stop fighting, end the quarrels and dissensions. He wrote: "Do we not have one God and one Christ, and one Spirit of grace poured out upon us? Why do we wrench and tear apart the members of Christ, and revolt against our own body?"³⁹ His aim was to bring all into communion.⁴⁰

3.6 Views from Theologians

Here we are going to look at the position of scholars on the issue of reverential dialogue and communion in favour of the promotion of marriage and family life. This scholars and theologians are based on the African understanding; we are going to revisit their views on the issues of reverential dialogue and communion so as to enhance the promotion of marriage and family life through SCCs.

³⁶ Cf. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/saint/Clement/of/Rome>, who is St Clement of Rome? Accessed on 13/05/2020.

³⁷ Cf. Clement Majawa, *Patristic Education*, (Nairobi: Kijabe Press, 2014), 153, 178-179.

³⁸ Cf. St Clement of Rome, "Practice of Brotherly love," in <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.toc.htm> #P171-20841 accessed on 13/05/2020.

³⁹ Cf. W.J. Burghardt, "Fathers of the Church", in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. V* (2nd Ed), (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America, 2002), p. 640, See also St Cyprian of Carthage-New world Encyclopaedia www.newworldencyclopedia.org accessed on 08/02/2021.

⁴⁰ Cf. Picardal L. Amado, *Journeying Towards a New way of Being Church*, (Philippines: Claretian Communications Foundations 2016), 359.

3.6.1 Joseph Healey

Healey quoting Segeja states that “The AMECEA bishops started laying emphasis on developing SCCs as a concrete expression of, and realization of, the Church as family model of the Church which reflects the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II.”⁴¹ In his book, Healey emphasizes the role of the SCCs in the Church and in the society where he looks at the SCCs contribution to the praxis and theology of Church as family of God in Africa. Fr. Emmanuel Orobator in Healey’s book states that “the 1994 African synod made a decisive option for the formation and development of SCCs as the privileged means for actualizing the model of the Church as a family. Today, a significant number of African theologians laud the rapid implantation and growth of SCCs, which they judge as the active embodiment and tangible manifestation of “a new way of being local Church.”⁴²

Thus, we argue that SCCs as a new way of being Church is a good model of promoting marriage and family life through reverential dialogue and in communion but for this to be effected in Gatundu deanery there is a need of the strategic pastoral planning. In the same vein, John Mary Waliggo argues that “the African bishops could have chosen the Vatican Council II concept of Church as communion or as people of God, but they purposely chose Church as family because they wanted to use African family as the model for being and living Church. The family model includes everyone i.e. baptized and non-baptized, involving every member stressing the aspect of communion and it serves well the emphasis on Small Christian Communities.⁴³ In his book, Healey continues to argue on the importance of the SCCs and he stresses that St Paul shifted his missionary operation centre from synagogue to families making them the true milieus of solidarity (domestic Churches), open to other domestic Churches.⁴⁴

Paul founded the first SCCs as house Churches that met in private homes. These communities were self ministering, missionaries by their very nature and were family based evangelizing communities. SCCs embody the values of inclusiveness; sharing, unity and solidarity that form the contemporary family of God and these values are good ways of promoting marriage and family life. Healey has written on SCCs, in his online book in collaborative global website, he emphasizes the importance of on-going formation in SCCs, he argues that the ongoing formation in SCCs helps the members to be formed, informed and transformed. In the same book, Healey indicates further the importance of ongoing formation as he presents the future challenges and priorities of SCCs in AMECEA region. He does this by pointing out the need for the promotion of the pastoral circle method so that it can be used in Bible sharing among the laity in SCCs for them. To be able to theologize at the local level, he quotes Patrick Kalilombe who proposes doing theology at the

⁴¹ Cf. Joseph Healey, *Building the church as family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, CUEA Press: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 2012, 5, See also Segeja, N. “summary notes” on *The development and Ecclesiology of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in AMECEA Countries*, Nairobi: Unpublished notes, 2010, p.4.

⁴² Cf. Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa, 77, See also Orobator, A .E. *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in its social context, Justice and Peace*, 243, See also Journeying Towards a new way of being church, 393.

⁴³ Cf. Waliggo, J.M. *The Church- as- Family of God and Small Christian Communities*, AMECEA Documentation Service, No 429 (1st December 1994), p.1, See also Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today*, (Nairobi: Pauline’s Publications, 2005), 103.

⁴⁴ Cf. Small Christian communities today, 103, See also, Journeying Towards a new way of being Church, 375.

grass roots.⁴⁵ This kind of reverential dialogue, communion and ongoing formation in SCCs is what is needed in Gatundu deanery where we discovered in section two of our findings that there is no ongoing formation of leaders in SCCs. Thus, for the ongoing formation in SCCs to be effected and implemented, there is the need of strategic pastoral planning. Then there is also the need of pastoral circle method (but in an elaborative and systematic manner) which needs to be considered in Gatundu deanery.

3.6.2 Nicholas Segeja

In support of Healey in matters of promoting marriage and family life through SCCs, Segeja expresses that the experience received in the families is equivalent to the experience in our Church too. He argues that through the support which we receive in our SCCs becomes a source of restoring the joys in the family and hence a way of promoting marriage and family life. He also argues that “the challenge is to make the parish through the SCCs a source and a tool of the restoration of the joys in the faith to their hearts and inspiring commitment to the Gospel. To make the parish through SCCs appear as an attractive family of families who wish to share joy rather than imposing obligations, who point to horizon of beauty, loveliness and hope rather than that of loneliness and despair.”⁴⁶

Segeja continues to argue that in the last few decades the concern for marriage and family life has drawn a global and special attention in both the Church and society. The concern is propelled by the thirst for responding to the challenges facing family in the world today. In his article on “family centered parish through small Christian communities- A parish model for new evangelization” Segeja envisages by discussing from the praxis of Jesus and in an African context concrete ways of responding to the challenges of marriage and family life today. He argues seconded by the two assemblies of the synods of Africa, that effective, efficient and relevant response to such challenges requires in the first place the understanding of the parish as a family of families in the neighborhood, or rather small Christian communities (SCCs). Thus, according to Segeja, SCCs are a pastoral priority and a way of being Church in the setup of the parish today and should be restructured in the favour of marriage and family life.⁴⁷

The parish becomes not only an expression of reverential dialogue, inclusive conversation and co-responsibility or collaboration, but also a realization of the basic pastoral activities, namely, evangelization in all its facets, catechesis, sacramental and liturgical life, and the spirituality of the faithful. Therefore, the challenges affecting marriage and family life are part of the reality calling for new evangelization. Therefore, the parish serves not only as a point of reference in discussing the challenges of the families affecting the life and mission of the Church, but also, it stands in need of a family centered ecclesiology and pastoral missionary conversation. The Church in Africa and especially Gatundu deanery should consider the formation and establishment of small Christian communities (SCCs) not only as a pastoral priority but also as a way of being the

⁴⁵ Cf. www.smallchristiancommunities.org, what are small Christian communities? accessed on 02/02/2021

⁴⁶ Cf. Nicholas Segeja, “*Family-Centered parish through small Christian communities: A model for new Evangelization*” in Nicholas Segeja and Emmanuel Wabanhu Eds. *The Echo of Amoris Laetitia in Africa: Towards living the “Joy of love experienced by families”* in the Church, Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2017, 233.

⁴⁷ Cf. Nicholas Segeja, *Family centered parish through Small Christian Communities- A parish model for new evangelization in the Echo of Amoris Laetitia* 223-224.

Church.⁴⁸ Perhaps this is still the best way, at least up to the present, of encountering the challenges of families in the context of new evangelization.⁴⁹ The challenge, however, is to make the formation and establishing of SCCs a way of being attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who helps us together to read the signs of time.⁵⁰

Pope Francis arguing on the notion of the parish as a family of families, he says that it is in the parish where SCC, ecclesial movements and associations not only live in harmony but also a pastoral outreach aimed specifically at families can be effectively, efficiently and relevantly realized. In fact the parish is to be seen as an entry, open to everyone in every corner of the globe, to the Christian faith and experience of the Church.⁵¹ Thus, more than pastoral care of families, the parish is the mainstream in its basic pastoral activities, the effort to strengthen and promote marriage and family life, it should also prevent the breakdown of marriages and not desist from proposing the full ideal of the Gospel and the logic of mercy.⁵² Thus, it is a pastoral challenge to the Church to make sure that our SCCs are engaged in ministering the needs of the families from the root which is in the marriages. If this is ministered well, then it will build (through its basic pastoral activities) a happy family and hence a happy Church.

4.0 TOWARDS THE PROMOTION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF *AMORIS LAETITIA*

4.1 Reverential Dialogical- based in Strategic Pastoral Planning

The Church family is called to participate for the building of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, all the members of the SCCs should be involved as far as strategic pastoral planning of the deanery is concerned. This is because in the Agikuyu indigenous family, every member is considered to have something to contribute for the wellbeing of the whole community. Even the mission of the Church was entrusted by Jesus to the whole community. Hence, strategic pastoral planning should embrace interpersonal relationship, communal participation, mutuality and collaboration. The pastoral agents should create opportunity for workshops, seminars, conferences on capacity building in strategic pastoral planning. This training should start from the deanery level down to the grassroots levels. The training is very important not only for them as members of body of Christ to plan together, but also to help each individual Christian to learn to plan for his/her life or for his/her family. These workshops should be on going guided by the evaluations to be determined and done following the action plan to be made at the end of each training workshop.

⁴⁸ Cf. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator in *Small Christian Communities, Fresh Stimulus for a Forward- Looking Church*, (Phillippines: Claretian Publication, 2013), 113-115, See also Klaus Kramer, a new way of being Church in *Small Christian Communities, Fresh Stimulus for a Forward- Looking Church*, 163-165.

⁴⁹ Cf. Family centered parish through small Christian communities- A parish model for new evangelization in the Echo of *Amoris Laetitia*, 231.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, no 14.

⁵¹ Cf. Synod of bishops, The challenges of the families *Instrumentum Laboris*, no 81, See also, Family centered parish through small Christian communities- A parish model for new evangelization in the Echo of *Amoris Laetitia*, 238.

⁵² Cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 307.

4.2 Adequate Marriage Preparation

Among the Agikuyu traditional community before a young lady is married there are some preparations which are to be done. The first one is “*kumenya mucii*” that is to get to know the brides place, the second one is “*kuhanda ithigi*” literally meaning planting a branch of a tree to symbolize that the lady has officially been booked by the groom and the last one is “*ruracio*” paying of dowry as we have seen in section one. Therefore in this line of thought we recommend remote preparations, proximate preparations and then immediate preparations. The pastoral care of the family should begin with the remote preparation which start with infancy, childhood to adolescence and it should take place first of all in the family. It should as well take place in schools as a valid assistance to the family. The integral formation which they should receive will help them to live their own lives in the new self, justified and sanctified through the truth. Then it should not be forgotten that through the grace of God, love is also cherished, strengthened and intensified through the necessary values connected with giving, sacrifice, renunciation and self-denial.

The second stage of marriage preparation is proximate. This is the period which coincides with the youth stage in human growth and development and it pertains to pastoral care of the youth. Thus, in order for this stage of preparation to be effective, efficiency and relevant, the parishes as family of families should provide adequate catechesis which should include both parents and their teenage children. The engaged young people should be helped to understand and be aware that an interpersonal relationship between man and woman is something, which continually develops throughout marriage it does not end with the wedding. The married couples should be helped to discern well their vocation by their shepherds and this discernment should take place before any commitment to marriage and family life. There should be frequent meetings within an atmosphere of reverential dialogue and prayer thus; the participation of the pastoral agents is of paramount importance. Therefore, adequate marriage formation program/ syllabus for all the pastoral workers should be put in place because care for the families in the parish is one of the principal duties of the parish priest and the pastoral agents.

The third stage is immediate preparation and it is responsible in educating the engaged couples in the responsibilities of Christian marriage and to prepare them for proper marriage rites. The pastoral agent should ensure that the engaged couples have understood and have accepted the teachings of the Church on marriage and family life such as wedding ceremony, the spousal and parental responsibilities inherent in this marriage institution. It is therefore desirable that the whole parish community takes part in these celebrations. These should not end in the three stages of marriage preparations, the pastoral agents should make sure they accompany them with the ongoing formation with the aim of assisting them to make use of the grace of the sacrament in favour of the promotion of marriage and family life.

4.3 Promotion of Family Centered Catechesis

In Gikuyu community, families were greatly valued, the gift of life was sacred and children were seen as a gift from God and a blessing. Then it is from these families where we should embrace the traditional elements of *kubanga na kunyitanira* (planning and solidarity) and incorporate them in the marriage and family life to help in promoting marriage and family life since it embraces hospitality, generosity, oneness, listening, dialogue, respect, mutuality and commitment among others. Thus in line with this thought we recommend the promotion of family centered catechesis.

This is because within these families when these traditional elements are embraced and incorporated in the Church, they enhance the promotion of marriage and family life.

4.4 Adequate Ongoing Formation of Leaders on the Role of SCCs

In our second section which is pastoral analysis, we discovered that the SCCs leaders are only given workshops or seminars after they are elected as new leaders leading to lack of inadequate ongoing formation of leaders on the role of SCCs. Therefore it is in this line of thought that we are recommending adequate ongoing formation of leaders on the role of SCCs. We recommend awareness programmes like workshops, seminars, annual general meetings, retreats, recollections and conferences in the deanery which should be included in the strategic pastoral planning. We recommend that as soon as new team takes up an office, the first thing to be done it to have a two days workshop probably on a weekend when most of the people can be available. All this is to enhance the promotion of marriage and family life.

5.0 Conclusion

In great awareness of the need for the Church to care and promote the institution of marriage and family life, the Church has therefore an obligation of involving with great diligence the recommendations we have given for future prosperity. As we have indicated in the research, individuals and families are receiving less support from social structures than in the past, tribalism and individualism weakens family bonds, inadequate preparation before marriage has led to intolerance and hostility in the family. Thus, bearing this in mind in the process of promoting marriage and family life we realize that it is of great importance because it is a communal responsibility of the Church and the society. Therefore, if the local Church in the contemporary society can embrace the traditional elements of *kubanga na kunyitanira* (planning and solidarity) and incorporate them in marriage and family life it can enhance in the promotion of marriage and family life in Gatundu deanery since it embraces hospitality, generosity, oneness, listening, dialogue, respect, mutuality and commitment among others. Tribalism which leads to negative attitudes and intermarriages since it is a challenge which disintegrates families, needs reverential dialogue for marriage to be sustained. Thus, for this to be realized, strategic pastoral plan need to be put in place.

6.0 Recommendations

The researcher does not claim to have studied and exhausted the field of the study of promoting marriage and family life through SCCs. However, some areas require further research/ study in the future. To help in the promotion of marriage and family via SCCs, the researcher recommend the following to serve as the future areas for further research in aid of promoting marriage and family life through SCCs for effective witness of the married couples: Tribalism leading to stereotyped attitude, individualism and lack of support when one wants to marry from a different tribe which we found are some of the challenges that hinder the promotion of marriage and family life through SCCs. With *kabanga na kunyitanira* as the researchers original contribution the local Church in Gatundu deanery will enhance in promoting marriage and family through SCCs.

REFERENCES

A. Bibles

Revised New Standard Version Catholic Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

The New African Bible, Nairobi: Pauline's Publications Africa, 2012.

The New Jerusalem Bible, Standard Ed. London: Longman and Todd Ltd, 1985.

B. Church Documents

I. Conciliar Documents

Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, (21 November, 1964).

_____, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, (7 December, 1965).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Revised Edition, Nairobi: Pauline's Publication Africa, 2001.

Compendium of the Social Teachings of the Church, Nairobi: Pauline's Publication's, 2005.

A Catholic Catechism, Kenya Episcopal Conference, Nairobi: Pauline's Publications, 2008.

II. Papal Documents

John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1999.

Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), 24 November 2013.

_____, Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), 16 March 2016.

C. Local Magesterium

Synod of bishops, The challenges of the families *Instrumentum Laboris*.

K.C.C. B, Catholic Peace and Justice Commission, Lenten message 2021, Rebuilding our Nation through Inclusive and Accountable Governance, Don Bosco printing Press, 2021.

D. Books

- Bottingore Silvano, *Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity*, Nairobi: Heineman Educational Books (E.A) Ltd, 1984.
- Mbula Judith Bahemuka, *Our African Heritage*, (Lagos: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1982).
- Cagnolo C. & Hilary Wambugu, *The Agikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore*, Nairobi: Wisdom Graphics, 2006.
- Healey Joseph & Jeanne Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today*, Nairobi: Pauline's Publications, 2005.
- Karega E. Mutahi, *Sound Change and the Classification of the Dialects of Southern Mt. Kenya*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983.
- Kenyatta Jomo, *Facing Mount Kenya*, London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969, reprint
- Kihara James, *Ngai we belong to you*, (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1985).
- Kramer Klaus , *A new way of being church in Small Christian Communities, Fresh Stimulus for a Forward- Looking Church*. 1984.
- Majawa Clement, *Patristic Education*, Nairobi: Kijabe Press, 2014.
- Mayala Anthony, *Barua ya kichungaji, Jumuiya ndogo ndogo Imani hai*, Mwanza: CPPC, 1995.
- Muriuki Geoffrey, *A History of the Kikuyu 1500-1900*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Mringo Augustine, *Communio at Grassroots*, (Bangalore: Indian Institute of Spirituality, 1995).
- Orobator E. Agbonkhanmeghe in *Small Christian Communities, Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, Phillippines: Claretian Publication, 2013.
- The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in its social context, Justice and Peace*
- Owor John Martin, *In Loving we are Reborn*, Nairobi: Pauline's Publication's 2019.
- Pastoral guidelines, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi: Pauline's Publications, 2013.
- Picardal L. Amado, *Journeying towards a New way of Being Church*, Phillippines: Claretian Communications Foundations, 2016.
- Segeja Nicholas and Wabanhu Emmanuel Eds. *The Echo of Amoris Laetitia in Africa: Towards living the "Joy of love experienced by families" in the Church*, Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2017.
- Shorter Aylward, *African Christian Spirituality*, (London: Cassel Ltd, 1979), 109-110.
- Waliggo, J.M. *The Church- as- Family of God and Small Christian Communities*, AMECEA Documentation Service, (1st December 1994).
- Wanjohi Gerald Joseph, *The Wisdom and Philosophy of the Gikuyu Proverbs*, Nairobi: Pauline's Publications, 1997.

D. Articles

Segeja, Nicholas understanding *Amoris Laetitia* in the light of *Evangelii Gaudium*: A Pastoral perspective” [good shepherd vol 1 no 2 Dec 2016], 62.

Small Christian communities: A vital icon for the new Evangelization, *African Christian studies*, Vol 27, No 4, December 2011, 5-7.

“*Family-Centered parish through small Christian communities: A model for new Evangelization*” in Nicholas Segeja and Emmanuel Wabanhu Eds. *The Echo of Amoris Laetitia in Africa: Towards living the “Joy of love experienced by families”* in the church, Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2017, 230-233.

Segeja, N. “summary notes” on *The development and Ecclesiology of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in AMECEA Countries*, Nairobi: Unpublished notes, 2010, p.4.

C. Internet Sources

www.smallchristiancommunities.org, what are small Christian communities? 02/02/2021.

https://www.kccb.or.ke/home_news-2/pastoral-guidelines-for-a-process-of-discussion-in_action 20/08/2020.

Kenya Population (2021) Worldmeter <https://www.worldmeters.infor>kenya>population>, 07/04/2021.

Gikuyu world of Culture Encyclopedia, www.everyculture.com>Japan-to-Mali-Gikuyu.html, 23/03/2021.

<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Pope-Clement/of/Rome>, who is St Clement of Rome? 13/05/2020.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/saint/Clement/of/Rome>, who is St Clement of Rome? 13/05/2020.

W.J. Burghardt, “Fathers of the Church”, in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. V* (2nd Ed), (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America, 2002), p. 640.

St Cyprian of Carthage-New world Encyclopedia www.newworldencyclopedia.org, 08/02/2021.

Hermigild Dressler (Ed.), *The Father of the Church: A New Translation Volume I*, (Washington D.C, The Catholic University of America, 2002), p. 458.

Catholic Encyclopedia: St Cyprian of Carthage-New Advent www.newadvent.org>cathencatholicencyclopedia, 08/02/2021.

Healey, Joseph. “*Beyond Vatican II: Imagining the Catholic Church of Nairobi I.*” Nairobi <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/TCCRSA.pdf> 10/02/2020).

Healey J. G., MM, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of SCCs in Eastern Africa*, pdf, 10/02/2020).