

Final Statement of the 3rd Meeting of the Diocesan Coordinators of SCCs and NST for SCCs at PAC Nagpur, Sept. 30th – Oct. 2nd 2009

Theme

***Build a Harmonious Society in our Neighbourhood :
From Small Christian Communities to Small Human Communities.***

1. Introduction :

We, four bishops, 57 priests, 7 nuns, and 4 lay persons gathered at the Pallottine Animation Center, Nagpur from the 30th Sept. to 2nd Oct, 2009 to reflect on the theme: ***Build a Harmonious Society in our Neighbourhood – From SCCs to SHCs.*** We were composed of two groups-members of the National Service Team of the CBCI for SCCs and Coordinators of SCCs from various dioceses in India.

2. Beginnings:

The growth of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in India has not been a phenomenon of the recent past but the result of the concerted efforts of many priests, Religious and lay men and women to be the salt, light and leaven for the different parts of India. It was at the CBCI Conference held in 1992 in Pune, that the Bishops of India took the decision to make SCCs a pastoral priority for the Church in India. This decision was confirmed and renewed at the CBCI Conference in 1996 at Trivandrum. At the Yesu Krist Jayanti meeting held at Bangalore in 2000, where all the Bishops of India were present, together with representatives of every diocese of India (approx 800 persons in all), after a year of preparation and five days of discussions, the house came up with a set of resolutions. The first of these was to ensure that every parish in the country should have SCCs. Other national meetings of Bishops have reiterated the importance of SCCs for the Church in India. Thereafter the Church in India adopted this “*New Way of Being Church*”. The National Service Team (NST) for Small Christian Communities, under the auspices of the CBCI undertook the work of coordination and support to the various initiatives to build SCCs in different regions of India. The work of building SCCS has not been without its own ups and downs. Nevertheless, the overall graph would appear to be on a steady ascent.

3. SCCs are the foundation of Small Human Communities (SHCs):

We are disturbed by the growing trend towards communalism in our country. There have been regular incidents of tension, violence, death and destruction. These have resulted in untold misery especially to the minorities, the poor, children and women.

The formation of SHCs is therefore the need of the hour not only because of the volatile atmosphere where fundamentalism in various forms is visible but is also a gospel imperative as Jesus taught us to love our brothers and sisters as we love ourselves

It was however felt necessary to ensure that the SCCs attain a state of stability and maturity in order to play an effective and responsible role among other groups in the neighbourhood. After the formation of an SCC and its activation through training sessions and a set of activities, the community needs to ‘consolidate’. This would include the involvement of all or a large majority of families, being rooted in the Word of God through regular Gospel Sharing, stable functioning through regular meetings, a spirit of oneness, fellowship, love and outreach to the needy, peer groups and ministries. At this stage the SCCs would be the main operating structure of the parish.

The SCCs can then utilize their numerical strength to address local, civic and political issues, thereby beginning some interaction and collaboration with citizens of other faiths. This would pave the way for the rise of SHCs where the SCC is accepted as an integral part of the local community, wielding influence and promoting Gospel values, partaking in local initiatives for

the improvement of the quality of life and reaching out to the needy in the community. Needless to say the SCC will continue to function as before but the SHC content would be an overflow into the neighbourhood; a leavening through collaboration and understanding, for mutual benefit.

4. Small Human Communities (SHCs)

The SHCs are the neighbourhood communities where each person is respected irrespective of his/her faith and thoughts. In these communities everyone experiences friendship and compassion. It is here that the love of God reigns in the hearts of all and the Kingdom of God is among them. When the SCCs mature in their essential characteristics, SHCs are the inevitable consequence. While the members of SCCs accomplish their mission in communion, the SHCs are being built at the same time. If the apostolic activities of every SCC are planned with a sense of social responsibility, the SCCs become servants of the Kingdom in the neighbourhood, thus paving the way to form SHCs.

When the SCC animators work with the right vision, SCCs become the symbols of peace and harmony in the locality, where there is no discrimination of class, caste, creed, community, language etc. Ultimately all the needs of every one (physical, spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, economic, civic, cultural and political) are taken care of. These neighbourhood communities will undertake various activities including development initiatives, so as to become self reliant and self ministering, always remaining in communion with the local and universal Church. Every one will bear witness to the love of God abiding in them. SCCs will continue to be the salt and leaven in the animation of SHCs. The focus will always be the Kingdom.

5. The concrete points that emerged from this meeting:

- i) The society and Church are being challenged by the effects of globalization and a growing consumeristic attitude to life and values
- ii) A growing trend of fundamentalism in the world
- iii) The Church is called to respond, in an appropriate way, to these challenges by promoting SCCs which are the most effective means of promoting Kingdom values and inter-religious dialogue
- iv) In our pursuit of building a harmonious relationship with people of other religious traditions, we should remember that God reveals Himself in various cultures and at various times in history. This calls us to develop an attitude of respect to others without watering down our faith

This paradigm shift implies that we transform the institutional Church into a Church which is a Communion of Communities. This Church is built on love and sharing, reaching out to people of all faiths and regions to bring about the Kingdom of God. To achieve this goal, it is imperative that we strengthen the SCCs to become the nucleus of transformation so as to permeate all levels of society with Kingdom values. The SCCs are the reality of the Church in the area whereas the Small Human Communities (SHCs) are the missionary reality of the Church.

6. Conclusion

It is a happy coincidence that the NST meeting took place on the eve of the All India Mission Congress scheduled to take place in a few days time. The mission of the Church in India is facilitated and promoted by SCCs animating neighbourhoods through SHCs.

We hope and pray that this national meeting will reinforce our efforts to build SCCs with unabated strength and vigour throughout the country and to act as a catalyst to deepen the relationship and collaboration between SCCs and our brothers and sisters of other faiths through SHCs and thus promote inter religious dialogue and communal harmony. May Mary, the Mother of the Church, guide our efforts towards the building up of God's Kingdom.