

## **Challenges Facing Marriage Institution Among Catholic Faithful in the Archdiocese of Nairobi**

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# Challenges Facing Marriage Institution Among Catholic Faithful in the Archdiocese of Nairobi



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## Abstract

*Christian marriage reflects the growth and continuity of the church towards maturity. It is a highly respected rite of passage which gives the participants an identity as a married couple. In a unique way it helps individuals to participate in mutual self-giving of one's beauty, talents, capabilities and possessions. The communal nature of marriage ceremonies, the solidarity and sharing embodied among believers around it, make Christian marriage admirable, affordable, and enjoyable. The Christian marriage rites unite husband and wife to the entire community. Therefore, Christian marriage is deeply connected with societal values of love, hope and future and it is hence accorded a special position among the sacraments of Christian initiation as being paramount in the society. At the same time, looking at marriage today, one identifies several signs that render its spousal bonding and unity wanting. Its deeply religious structure, cohesiveness and values are exposed to freedom and secular values leading to permissiveness and times loss of its spiritual identity, separation among couples and a level of pessimism towards it in the society. This paper analyses some of the challenges faced by Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese of Nairobi in relation to marriage institution by examining selected social environmental factors such as how couples spend time together vi-a-vis professional and work engagements, individual background and up-bringing. It makes a number of recommendations for strengthening of the institution of marriage in the Archdiocese.*

**Type of paper:** Field research

**Key Words:** Challenges, Marriage Institution, Catholic faithful, Archdiocese of Nairobi

## Introduction

This paper presents consolidated data and information obtained through the interviews and use of the questionnaires. It provides us with knowledge and information regarding marriage and family gathered during the field research process based on the following: Marriage issues as understood by the married, single people especially the youth within the Church, professional marriage counselors and marriage according to Catholic priests who are also the custodians of the Church teachings on several issues. The Chapter is more



of an eye opener in helping to answer research questions in this study more so on challenges confronting marriage, sacramental marriage and its place among today's Christians, Sacramental marriage and the single people within the Church and finally ways in which traditional marriage understanding could be used to enrich today's Church marriages.



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### Research Objectives

This study investigated the challenges facing the marriage institution among Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. The study was guided the following objectives:

- i. To investigate the impact of work travel demands on family stability in the Archdiocese of Nairobi
- ii. To investigate the perceived role of family in the society among Catholic faithful in the archdiocese of Nairobi
- iii. To investigate the perceptions of marriage stability among Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese of Nairobi

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### Research Methodology

This study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. Both descriptive survey design specifically cross-sectional survey on one hand, and naturalistic designs on the other, were used to investigate the challenges facing the marriage institution among the Catholic faithful of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. On the naturalistic research design, due to the nature of this study, the researcher employed used the pastoral cycle approach in effort to enrich both the qualitative and quantitative method of research. In this method, while statistics are important, the researcher gave more weight to the individual views expressed over and above the number of people interviewed. There is need to interact intensely with the respondents, listen carefully, observe keenly and analyse systematically to be able to present the real situation on the ground.

The study involved 232 participants of different categories of people. Single people plus married counselors had similar questions in their questionnaires since the study focused on individual responses which was assumed to vary according to one's experience. The married, the single people under the youth category, marriage counselors and priest responses were 100, 60, 12 and 20 respectively. The response rate among single people (35-50 year) was 87%.

From the study, women (60%) were a little bit higher than men (40) although the difference was quite minimal. This difference could have been due to the fact that culturally women are fast when it comes to reacting on marriage issues. According to Nyambura (*interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2014*), men appear to worry less about marriage issues and have almost left most of their family duties to women who must feed and provide for many other needs. The age of the respondents varied from 25years to slightly above 60years with the highest number of the respondents being between 30 and 40 years. This was a deliberate strategy to culture an age where married people begin to unmask themselves as they face realities of life. Ndolo (*interviewed on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2015*) calls it the "age



of self affirmation as it is during this age that majority of the married people try to identify with the pressures of life". Age is very important on marriage life and it can affect individual responses.

Closely related to age was the education level where 1% had gone up to primary school level, 55% had gone up to secondary school level, 14% up to university level and 30% had reached done some courses in technical schools and other small colleges. Again, this would add to variation to their responses. The years one had been in marriage were another major concern in this study. 15% of the married people had been in marriage for 5-10 years, 40% had 11-15 years in marriage, and 2% had 21-30years, while 10% had been to marriage over 30 years. This was very important since as the saying goes experience is the best teacher.

To illustrate the above, Kiarie (*interviewed on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014*), for example had been into marriage life for over 50 years. He candidly expressed that his many years in marriage life had changed his whole conception about marriage life for better. He is now more stable, more focused and visionary than he was in his early years of marriage. Maturity in marriage grows with years since one is able to handle more serious issues. Thiongo (*interviewed on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2016*) argues that as one grows in marriage individual needs and concerns keep increasing hence opening one to new ways of handling challenges in life. In conclusion, the entire results reflected a population with good understanding on marriage and family. Data that was collected was presented, analyzed and discussed according to the research question with the aim of summarizing the key findings and make some conclusions.

## Literature Review

### *Definition of Marriage*

The *New International Webster's Pocket Dictionary* (2002) defines marriage as the coming together of both man and woman and their becoming of husband and wife. On the other hand, the *Dictionary of Moral Theology* defines it from a religious and highly divine perspective. Accordingly, it is:

a bilateral contract by which a man and a woman give and reciprocally receive a perpetual and exclusive right to each other's body for the performance of those actions which of their very nature are directed to the procreation of children (Francesco Cardinal Roberti, 1963).

This definition appreciates marriage as a unique contract because of its divine origin in the very law of nature of which its consent cannot be supplied by the human authority with its object and essential properties being beyond the free will of the contracting parties.

In African traditional communities, marriage was looked at as a ceremony of coming together and was normally witnessed by at least some people who represented both communities from where the two people were coming from as well as other members of the concerned society. In almost all African Traditional cultures there were some words said during the marriage ceremony that acted as a bond between the couple or between the two represented communities. Nevertheless, different cultures performed marriage ceremony differently in



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accordance to how they had been socialized and in line with what had been agreed upon from time to time. In this respect, then, marriage was understood as one fulfilling both an individual and a social obligation as it bonded the individual with society. Marriage ritual/ceremony used to be performed with great respect and awe. It was symbolic of a people who had well-established norms and values of life and who recognized through public statement or consent, sharing of food and the presence of a witness or witnesses representing the society a long-lasting unity. Every other marriage activity was done ceremoniously, outwardly showing individual status and their significant new roles.

Phillips (1953) defines an African marriage as an association between two persons/groups of kin for mutual support and the procreation and rearing of children. This definition is closer to that of Kayongo & Onyango (1994) who defines marriage as “union between two people of the opposite sex, which is institutionalized by the payment of bride wealth or by religious or civil ceremonies. The parties are entitled to certain rights and have duties/responsibilities to each other. Both Kayongo & Onyango continue to say that marriage is meant primarily for the creation of children, though we also have other marriages meant to consolidate wealth, create security over the property, or provide companionship for the couple.

From the sociological point of view, marriage is then said to be formed by a group of people joined together by sex or blood relationship or some social contract which is sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for a loving relationship and the procreation and upbringing of children. Normally, this group consists of husband, wife, children, and some members of the extended family and friends as opposed to the African cultures, where marriage remains the concern of the extended family, clan, and tribe in question.

Accordingly, marriage could then be understood as the art of coming and living together as husband and wife with full recognition of all parties involved within the given society. This definition of marriage underlines a situation where the coming together or the union between two people of the opposite sex often has to be institutionalized by the payment of bride wealth and or by religious or civil ceremonies (Kayongo, 1994). It is this coming together that enhances the founding of a Christian family. This is so only when the parties involved are both baptized Christians or just one of them is and when their marriage act is solemnized within the Christian Church.

A Christian sacramental marriage on the other hand is the union of one man with one woman in total mutual self-giving and commitment for life. Of its very nature, marriage seeks the well-being of the individual spouses, the bringing of children in the world, and their upbringing (Kayongo, 1994). These as we shall see later refer to what the church calls, ends, or goals of Christian marriage. In other words, this is what a lay man's language calls characteristics of Christian marriage. The married couples are entitled to certain rights and have responsibilities to each other.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines marriage as a covenant or partnership of life between a man and a woman, which is ordered to the well-



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being of the spouses and the procreation and upbringing of children. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, when marriage is validly contracted between two baptized people, it is then considered sacramental (*Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 1987). Catholic Christian marriage is the main topic of discussion demanded that marriage be given a more thorough understanding than just a definition for convenience's sake. This would also assist in dealing with the first research question that sought to find out if marriage as a sacrament still made meaning to today's believers within the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. For this study, the researcher had to make sure that marriage and if need be the family which is a sister companion of marriage was well understood.

### *Marriage from the Biblical Perspective*

The Catholic Church concept of marriage has a lot to do with the Bible both the New and the Old Testament where God is looked at as the designer hence justifying marriage as a divine institution. The Bible carries God's voice to both the Christians as well as the believers in their effort and search for God. According to Kinoti & Waliggo (1977), the Bible is the scriptural pillar of Christianity and authority from where Christian teachings must derive. These words are also echoed by, Dietrich Von Hildebrand wherein his carefully selected words he observes that marriage:

Gives love the structure, the sheltered nest and the climate in which alone it can grow...marriage is the friend and the protector of love between man and woman. It teaches spouses humility as they realize that as an individual one is a very poor lover, (Hildebrand, 1991).

Both husband and wife try to grow and establish themselves in love knowing that marriage has to begin and end with their initiative and desire to reap the fruits of their togetherness. This will be seen in many biblical scriptures such as Hosea chapter 2:14-19; Ephesians 5:25 and Psalms chapter 4 is one of the bonds that keep the marriage relationship and sustains it to the end. Looking at both the Old and the New Testament, marriage is placed in a very special position where once again God is the sole author/designer and, the architect who underlines all specifications, conditions, duties, responsibilities, and repercussions. If there is a voice to go by in marriage, then it is what is recorded in the Bible as it bears the original plan and identity of the creator.

Marriage is therefore to be understood as part of God's creation, willed and designed by God Himself from the very creation of the earth and after His divine nature. That means it carries the divine purpose, command, and authority of God as recorded in Genesis 2:18; 21-25:

"It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him. So then into a deep sleep; while he was sleeping, He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh' and the rib which the Lord had taken from the man, He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she will be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. Therefore, what God has put



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together, let no man put asunder. The man and his wife were naked, and they felt no shame.

Marriage from the Biblical perspective is thus regarded as an institution guiding humanity towards God's original plan which would in return give both man and woman joy and happiness as they take sovereignty of all that God had created. Marriage from the Biblical perspective is to be taken seriously and respected by humanity especially the married lest they give the wrong interpretation of marriage that would destroy believer's understanding of God's plan of marriage in the life of humanity. The Catholic Church teachings on marriage are highly based and driven from both the Old Testament and the New Testament marriage inspirations bringing about God's continued work of redemption through his instruments of salvation where the married are key stakeholders. The relationship between husband and wife should then be guarded and jealously protected as to continue until death. The two, husband and wife should regard each other as equal thus complementing each other with the proclamation of "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" as did the first couple Adam and Eve.

#### *Catholic Church Teachings on Marriage*

Catholic Church teachings on marriage are highly recognized for doctrinal purposes in marriage especially when dealing with Catholic sacramental marriage catecheses. In them, we have different writers who have addressed marriage related issues giving their views which in return have informed the present Church's stand on sacramental marriage. As seen in several of the observations that follow in this chapter, different scholars concentrated on issues that were relevant to their contemporary situation to establish stable sustainable marriage relationships. According to Hasting (1974), Christians believe that Christ blessed marriage in a special way which gives it a different understanding than other people outside the Catholic Church on the purpose of marriage. This calls to attention on the need to identify with the person from the church's point of view. This is likely to make an impact within the society and be of transformative value.

From the Church's perspective, we note that there is still a level of individual internalization and awareness needed on the true reality of Catholic Christian marriage among believers. Many people claim to know a lot about marriage just because they have an idea or two until when confronted with marriage problems and challenges. In such an important area as marriage, it is therefore important to keep in mind that there is a lot that continues to unfold among human

#### *Marriage as a Sacrament*

According to the New Dictionary of Christian Theology, the term sacrament is a Latin word *Sacramentum* which refers to a sacred pledge of sincerity or fidelity, publicly symbolized by a visible sign such as a deposit of money or an oath of allegiance. This very word is also a translation from the Greek *mysterion* referring broadly to hidden realities or sacred rites (Richardson & Bowden, 1984). Hardson (1980) defines a sacrament as a "sensible sign instituted by Jesus Christ by which the invisible grace and inward sanctification are communicated



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to the soul". *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* looks at a sacrament as one of the seven principal liturgical rites of the church through which participants experience the love and power of God (grace) that flows from Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. Sacramental marriage love is therefore a covenant between baptized spouses of which the sacramentality is grounded on the character of baptism which makes the spouses a new creation incorporated in Jesus Christ.

#### *Marriage as Presented within Papal Encyclicals*

Over the years, there have been several authoritative documents from different Popes who reigned in different periods. These documents, rightly referred to as encyclicals include *Arcanum Divinae* (On Christian marriage) of February 10, 1880, by Pope Leo XIII, *Casti Connubi* (on chaste wedlock) of December 31, 1930, by Pope Pius XI, the Letter to the Italian Midwives of October 29, 1951, by Pope Pius XII, *Humanae Vitae* (on human life) of July 25, 1968, by Pope Paul VI, *Familiaris Consortio* (the role of the Christian family in the modern world) of November 22, 1981, by Pope John Paul II, *Donum Vitae* (respect for human life) of February 22, 1987, by Pope Paul VI, *Evangelium Vitae* (the gospel of life) of March 25, 1995, by Pope John Paul II and *Amoris Laetitia* (the joy of love) of March 19, 2016, by Pope Francis.

In conclusion on marriage and related papal encyclicals, we note that faithful love and conjugal chastity are important to any long-lasting marital relationship. They have to be safeguarded by all parties from the family to the religious congregation of faith as well as to the political spheres of life. They do not just appear but have a deep foundation in God the Creator and one who set the pace for human relationships.

#### *Traditional African View on Marriage*

According to Mbiti (2011), "a happy marriage and family life creates other aspects of marriage such as love, good character, hard work, beauty, companionship, caring for one another and parental responsibility". These are virtues that are only possible in stable, loving, and long-lasting marriage relationships. They are qualities looked towards in today's contemporary African Christian marriages. If cultivated in our today's marriage relationships, they are hoped to help combat challenges confronting marriage institution.

For Africans, marriage is a rite of passage that all have to go through. In the book "Love and Marriage" Mbiti notes that marriage is accepted as a normal rhythm of life through which everyone must go through to accomplish individual actualization (Mbiti, 1987). It carries in its continuity and future of the society, especially through procreation. Marriage thus has both purpose and meaning both to an individual and to the society. According to Mbiti (2008), marriage gave identity to an African without which one was not complete. Not getting married was tantamount to rejecting the community hence the community's rejection to the person in return.

Kayongo & Onyango (1994) observe that, with the coming of the Europeans and Arabs in Africa, part of the well-established traditional African views on marriage and family was disrupted affecting almost the entire African marriage and family identity, cohesiveness, and authority. According to our



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Kenyan history, this is likely to have begun during the African's post-independence period when Africans had just come from the inhuman colonization era and its effects. It is a time when the hostile experiences and memories ranging from slavery, forced labor, forced education, and forced religion were still quite vivid especially from those who saw the struggle for independence.

In that regard, when we talk of the contemporary African Christian views on marriage and family we are referring to the period between the late 1960s after our country attained independence and today. During this time marriage as an institution is seen faced with a dilemma where on one hand there is a lot to contend with touching on Christian views while on the other hand African culture and traditions still appear to exercise influence both within the Church field and the society as a whole. As a result, society finds itself on the crossroads not knowing what to take and what to leave as far as marriage and family issues are concerned. Both African culture and the Christian Church teaching demand attention from society.

#### *Summary on Perspectives on Marriage*

In conclusion to the above discussion, we note that marriage is one very complicated institution that deserves to be understood more clearly from its different dimensions. Beginning with the biblical understanding, marriage is a divine institution authored by God who sustains it and commands how individuals should interact with each other, their rules of interaction, and discipline to be observed. The Catholic Church adopted the Biblical views as it interpreted God's plan for marriage through its different advocators who have arisen over time. The Church, therefore, held a stand drawn from both the Old Testament and the New Testament which it developed over time to abide by emerging needs, situations, and occurrences. As already discussed in the chapter, this was necessitated key Catholic theologians such as church fathers, popes, bishops, and other lay people who committed their time and professionalism towards understanding marriage from the divine plan of God and as it befits different epochs in the history of mankind.

Besides the Biblical approach, the researcher also addressed African traditional marriage as one of the approaches that could assist in enriching today's sacramental marriages for stability and healthy long-lasting marriage relationships. African traditional communities had well laid down structures that helped their members to put in place their many values, beliefs, and practices and especially those on marriage where expectations were placed on almost all their members. As one grew up many of his or her activities focused on becoming a future responsible member of the society. Individuals would be guided by various principles or structures that were laid down by the community members. Unfortunately, many of the laid down structures have been confronted by modernity and change right from the time of colonization and the scramble for Africa besides privatization and globalization. This has brought about a blended society that partly holds on African religion and culture while partly embracing other world religions like Christianity and Islam. It is from these that we ended up addressing contemporary African Christians as they interact with the laid down doctrines within the Christian Church especially marriage as a sacrament.



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## Findings of the Study

*Impact of Work-related travels on Marriage Stability in the Archdiocese of Nairobi*

### (a) Distance Travelled by the Married People to Working Place on Marriage

The first research question sought to establish challenges facing marriage as an institution within the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi as a result of work related travels of spouses. Quality time spent together in marriage relationships could be limited by individual commitments such as distance from home to the working environment. Social life policies and practices in the work place either facilitate or hinder the family efforts to attain quality family life (Arcus, 1992). Long working hours, job pressures and job dissatisfaction, stressful working environments, constant deadlines, memos and ultimatums have left marriage and family relationships either highly disrupted. Family members especially husbands and wives normally carry hefty office jobs to finish at home thus affecting dialogue and healthy communications within the family. According to C. Nyambura (*Personal communication*, Dec. 30, 2017) couples are not able to offer quality time in the home environment due to these long distances, stressful office and employment demands.

At times due to fatigue, there is no communication at all and yet spouses are meant to communicate to each other regularly. With no communication in the family marriage and family relationships are almost dead. Without communication among spouse's means everything is at a standstill and life cannot continue that way. Children born and brought up under such environments have felt abused especially when their parents are always late or absent with no communication. This has affected their growing up quite drastically, negatively reducing their morale to work hard in schools and in life. F. Ndolo (*Personal communication*, June 27, 2017) argues that when such happens, the stability of marriage and family life is challenged robbing the family its warm, supportive, safe and caring environment. Such scenarios are more dangerous and never a safe place as later may lead to spousal irritation and domestic violence.

Again where there is no communications, spouses have had to be suspicious of one another, at times wrongly interpreting certain situations. A wife may be late due to strenuous working schedule and traffic jam but because they are not communicating the husband may interpret her lateness as being a result of anti-social habits. This may cause such disagreements as leading to spousal separation and divorce thus affecting the entire family and even society in general. Ndolo continues to say that communication break-down may lead to spouses going outside the marriage boundaries to look for support, companionship and sharing hence leaving marriage and family secrets exposed, and individual privacy and trust destroyed.

According to the research findings, 55% of the respondents indicated that they travelled between 5 to 15 kilometers to reach their working places on time. 18% had to travel between 18 to 30kilometers while another twenty 23% traveled between 0.5 to 2 kilometers. This is more likely a situation where married love is interfered with due to time spent together and fatigue.

Generally, according to these respondents there is likely to arise a situation



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where married love is interfered with due to time spent together and fatigue. Challenges interfering with couple's bonding and marriage love among spouses may lead to many unanswered questions that can likely bring about anxiety in marriage especially if the couple has poor communication and do not understand individual demands at one's working area.

According to data collected on the waking time, the majority of people (up to 77%) wake up between 4.30 and 5.30 a.m. while 16% woke up between 6.00 and 7.00 a.m. A small percentage of them (6%) wake up by 4.00 a.m. This is a clear indication of a couple whose time together is highly affected. Note that in this children brought up by parents going through such time schedules may not have enough time for family socialization. Once again this is directly related to the above two tables and carries similar effects on marriage and family.

Time spent together a major impact on the couple. There are those who may already be used to individual availability while others find it hard to understand certain changes and especially when these are abrupt. This could not be taken for granted in this study since it was in line with our second objective which was meant to find out some of the challenges of married life. Consequently it was found necessary for this study to gather this information in terms of when one wakes up to begin the day as this too affected time spent together in marriage relationship and could consequently bring about marital stress and discomfort. Impact in this question is related to the one on distance travelled from home to work and back. Similar to one on distance travelled quality time spent together as a couple remains a concern. At certain circumstances effects may project to children in case they feel that they only get to meet with their parents on weekends as they have to go to work before the children wake up and only come back when they are already asleep. In such a situation the young people may develop low opinion towards marriage especially if they felt denied off love by their parents. They are also likely to turn to social media as a way of solving some of their problems when parents are not available.

When asked whether the waking time affected marriage relationships or not, 65% of the respondents accepted that their waking up schedule affected their families in one way or the other while 33% indicated that there was no effect at all. Respondents who indicated waking time affected marriage relationships, stated that some did not have time with their children and spouses, while others indicated that they were forced to do a lot of the following day's preparations before going to sleep. Others indicated that the schedule forced them to leave their spouses at a time when they needed each other most. To others, they were unable to give the best of the services to their families especially good and quality breakfast. Again, others felt that they do not get enough rest themselves thus affecting individual's physical health and performance at their place of work. Those who said no indicated that everything was just normal since it was a long practiced routine schedule.

The study investigated how couples made up for areas Affected by pressures of time on marriage in terms of waking up, long travels to work and long absence of couples from the home due to work. Since time spent together is



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an important aspect in marriage relationship, this study sought to know how the married compensated in time away from one another. In a way this could give the direction their marriage was headed to as well as re-awakening the couple towards their marital responsibilities towards each other. Hence in regard to how individuals make up for the deficit time, the following were some of the major responses given among many others

Some stated that they created more time in the evenings, on Saturdays or on Sundays while others Planned their day properly, left children to be attended by the house girl, rectified where necessary, went to bed early, overslept on Sundays, tried to be with the family on weekends and others did nothing. Those who did nothing argued that one cannot change nature. In addition some of the married said that they are used and have accepted that life is like that. To them their routine is just normal and they see nothing wrong with it. They therefore continued with life and forgot what one cannot change. From the many responses given it was clear that something need to be done in educating not just the Catholic believers, but the entire society on marriage bonding and spousal responsibilities towards each other.

*The Perceived role of the Family in the Society among the Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.*

The second research question investigated the perceived role of family in the society. This is because family is a natural consequence of marriage. Respondents were invited to look for what we could borrow from African Traditional marriages to enrich our today's Christian marriages. According to Mbiti, life has meaning only when lived and experienced in a society. Every individual is a product of the society and the society cannot be whole unless individuals contribute to it. *I am because we are and because we are therefore I am* (Mbiti, 2008, pp. 108-109). The role of the family today can only be genuinely understood from the very traditionally held social perspective as the foundational stone for individual marriages and individuals are then molded from it. The study sought to find out some of the practices valued traditionally that could be used to strengthen marriage as an institution. Respondents gave various roles of the family as follows:

- i. That the family is a pillar in society where good families portray a morally upright society thus attracting many to marriage and the founding of the family.
- ii. That the family is assists to meet individual needs of love and sense of belonging.
- iii. That the family is God's idea and should be considered as a gift of God to be cherished, taken care of and prayed for.
- iv. That the family is the backbone of the society and Church.
- v. That a well brought up family is a well brought up community.
- vi. That the family is meant to make its members more committed to God and to the society.



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- vii. That the family is the only sure way where one's peace and support can be truly assured of.
- viii. That the family trains its individual members of their place in society. Man should provide, protect and love, while the woman should be responsible to the children and husband as well as being a good mother.
- ix. The family is the backbone of our society. When it breaks community's morals are eroded.
- x. It is the family that makes a nation and therefore one should bring up children who are God fearing. It should also help solve some conflicts within the society.

The family is actually the base for the Church.

The responses above were just an indication that several people and especially the married understood the reasons why they are in the family. In line with the second objective of this research this helped in establishing some of the practices or ideas that traditionally strengthened marriage as an institution. According to Peter Kiare (*interviewed on June 20, 2016*), traditionally the family was a backbone to individual marriage and security and this need to be re-emphasized to strengthen today's marriage even though time has changed as not all is lost.

*Perceptions regarding the Stability of Marriage and Families within the Archdiocese of Nairobi*

In line with our first research question, family stability is a reflection of marriage values carried forward as well as peace and harmony among members. This cannot therefore be assumed in any environment as has to offer to the future of any society / nation. Marriage as a sacrament will only make meaning if the already existing marriages are stable. As the researcher sought to understand individual views on family stability, this area appeared to have touched many who felt dissatisfied in the area. The following were some of the ideas and observations made:

- i. Marriages and families are at stake because couples are too busy working to provide for their families. They are not able to adequately attend to needs of each other and their children who may adopt negative attitudes and behaviour
- ii. City marriages are very unstable as compared to those in rural areas because most of the parents are very busy with no time for each other. Children are left to social media, peer influence and leadership of house-girls.
- iii. Marriages and families are unstable since people work on day and night shifts and thus are not able to sit together or share much as a family.
- iv. Marriages and Families are just not stable and have no quality time spent as a family since everyone is on the move most of the time



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- v. Where there is no free time for socialization, it becomes hard to control the children making them vulnerable, outgoing and easily manipulated.
- vi. Families are both unstable with poor incomes and under threat of breaking up.



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Families are not only unstable but also treading on a dangerous end. Jean Kagia (*interviewed on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2014*) in very strong words indicated that there is a very great shift of ideologies where marriages and families today are regarded by many as a burden and a liability thus worrying the entire society. According to her, families have embraced a culture of death contrary to the culture of life that gives hope to marriage and family relationships. Besides, Nairobi marriage and families are very unstable because they concentrate more on making money than making homes.

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From this discussion, it can be said that families are negatively affected by social and economic situations especially financial problems. The above observations were some of the feelings of those interviewed. This led to a realization that all is not well with marriage and family life especially within Nairobi. Note that Nairobi is a representative of many urban centers hence the question on what need to be done to improve on marriage and family life today.

### Conclusion on the Findings

From the above discussion a number of conclusions can be made. These can be summarized as follows:

- i. That in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi the marriage institution is facing serious challenges especially lack of commitment between spouses, unfaithfulness among the married, unemployment and other difficulties related to the existing high standard of living.
- ii. That those who were for the Church marriage were for the opinion that it was more stable. Unfortunately, on the same note, they argued that it was not always possible due to the many demands coming from close family members as well as the high cost on wedding demands.
- iii. That the Church plays a very great role in settling marriage issues especially disagreements among spouses.
- iv. That stable marriages demand attention not only from the Church but also from the society. The stakeholders (church and society) have a lot to do with the empowering of marriages for the sake of the married and also for those preparing and focusing on the future. Proper preparation for marriage and family life is of great importance for the good of the church and the entire Christian and non-Christian community.

According to the *Pontifical Council for the Family*, the sacrament of marriage has great value for the whole christian community and in the first place for the spouses whose decision is such that it cannot be improvised or made hastily (*Pontifical Council for the Family, Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage, 2001*). There is need to prepare couples both before and after marriage if the church



and society expect to have stable, healthy and long lasting relationships within families.



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Today in our contemporary society the system of learning to be married does not hold. Young people spend most of their time away from home in education and other professional institutions. Young boy and girls spend most of their life together in these institutions and hardly ever get any good example or role models or teaching on marriage preparation. In some cases, they engage in intimate relationships such as fornication at times leading to the girl becoming pregnant. Thus the two ends up being forced to get married even without serious considerations and preparations. For others, especially those whose parents are key members within the Catholic Church, they hurriedly contact the priest who likewise offers them some hurried catecheses once or twice and eventually joins them together as husband and wife in a marriage ceremony.

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Stephen and Angelina Kyonda says that today marriage is at times looked at just as a mere ceremony for living together and enjoying life (Mr. Stephen Kyonda and Mrs. Angelina Kyonda commenting on youth and marriage issues during a youth seminar at Mji wa Furaha Youth Centre). Much of the preparations are only on what to wear, what car to use, what to eat and where to celebrate with parents and friends. This is simply material preparation otherwise spiritual and life preparations are lacking.

Even when all is done orderly and organized accordingly many young people are offered only two to three marriage catechesis sessions just before their marriage. This is normally divided into 1 hour (one hour) sessions making a total of at least 3 hours. The instruction given is meant to take care of this young person for at least the rest of lifetime preferably above 70 years of age. According to Gichure (*interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2014* over challenges and threats to marriage and family with the urban setting) this displays a total contradiction over what is expected of the newly married couples in relation to what is given.

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