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I, Martha Lungu declare that this dissertation:

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APPROVAL

This dissertation of Martha Lungu is approved as fulfilling the partial requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church is making efforts to recognize the importance of equal participation of women and men in decision making. The Church has acknowledged the many activities that the women are involved in, in their parishes through the lay group organizations. Leadership in any institution or organization is crucial for its life and mission. It is true that leadership goes with decision making and the pattern of leadership is shaped by the given culture. In the Catholic Church, the structure has been hierarchical and patriarchal and no wonder the leadership pattern tends to be one-sided. Today there is great awareness among people in all walks of life about the democratic values and freedom to participate in decisions that affect them. Two strands of thought run the research: activities performed by women lay groups in a patrilineal, matrilineal and mixed cultural parishes, and women involvement in decision-making in the three above-mentioned cultural set ups by the women's lay groups. The study aimed at identifying the activities that the women in the lay groups do and their participation in decision-making and how far the decisions they make go in an all male-centered and patriarchal governance that has kept women and laity in general at the bottom of the church hierarchy.

The study used the qualitative method to collect and interpret data from focus group discussions (FGDs) through interview guides. 12 FGDs were held to collect primary data in the three parishes; Msipazi Parish located 25 kilometers in the south of Chipata, St. John's Parish located 87 kilometers to the west of Chipata and St. Anne's Cathedral Parish in the central part of Chipata town. The FGDs proceedings and interviews were recorded using an audio tape recorder besides note taking. Editing and correction of errors and verification were done.

The study revealed that both the Catholic Women's League and St Anne's lay groups in the three set-ups carried similar activities in the church. The Catholic Women's League in the mixed set up stands out stronger and more influential than other groups where decision making is concerned. The women in the patrilineal set-up are able to participate in decision-making unlike the way society perceives them. The women in the matrilineal set-up have little to say when they mix with men yet society perceives them to be strong. Women worked well in their groups but contributed less when mixed with men in various meetings. It was also noted that not all decisions made in the women lay groups are often endorsed by the parish councils and the priests. In most cases women leave major decisions to be made by the parish priest or the bishop.

DEDICATION

To my beloved husband Martin, my daughters Kaluwe and Esther, my son Joseph, my sister Kimmy and my brothers Collins and Sabbu, I happily dedicate this dissertation. I also dedicate this to my beloved late parents Living'i Lungu and Esther Ngwira. May Their Souls Rest in Eternal Peace.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

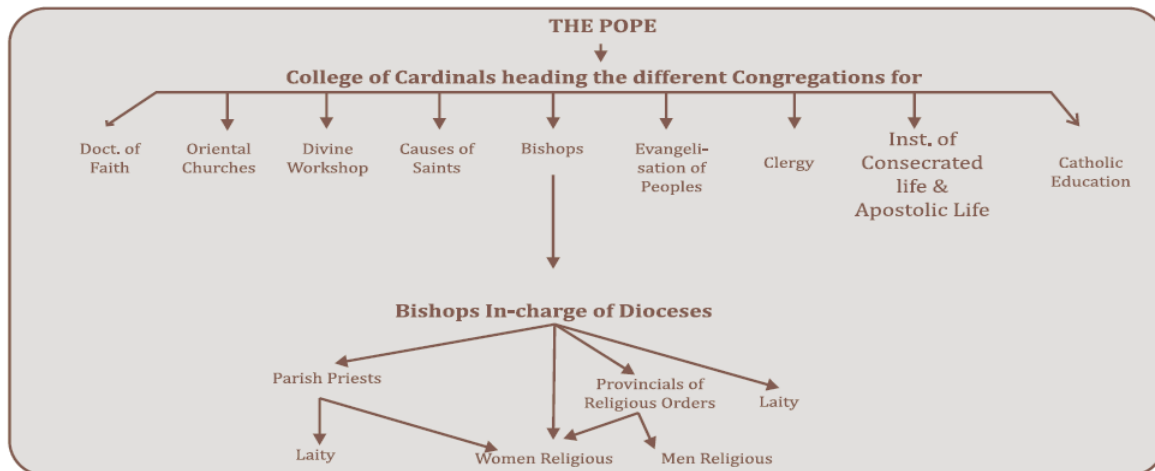
The chapter will outline the general background of women in the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church in Zambia, social and cultural background of women in the study areas, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, justification and definition of terms.

1.2 GENERAL BACKGROUND OF WOMEN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Church has set forth that women have a role in every aspect of society. Cardinal Ratzinger articulated the same point in 2005 when the Vatican released its documents “On the collaboration of women and men in the church and in the world.” This document was written to address the ongoing questions of men’s and women’s roles in such a way that the differences between the sexes could be seen in a positive light. The document itself was short, but it took years to get consensus on it among consulting theologians and other experts.

Under the leadership of Pope John Paul II, women were given prominent roles in the Vatican, such as Harvard law professor Mary Ann Glendon’s appointment to head Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. More women earned theological degrees and assumed more responsibilities in local dioceses.

ORGANISATION CHART OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (ROMAN CURIA)



Burke (1980) rightly says that because women are knowledgeable, they have become active participants in the decisions that affect their lives. They are beginning to trust the validity of their own experiences and judgments. Thus they are less likely than in the past to unquestioningly accept the direction of the experts, be it priests.

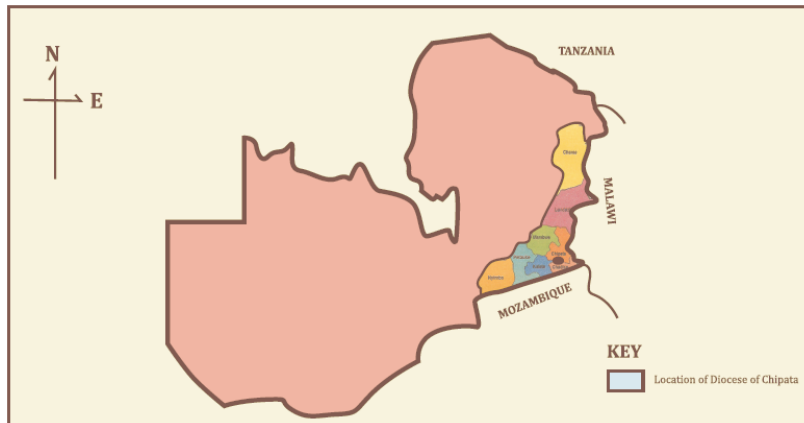
1.3 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

In Zambia, the Catholic Church is divided into eleven dioceses, each led by a Bishop or Archbishop. Each diocese consists of different parishes which are led by the parish council under the supervision of the parish priest. Each parish council is composed of representatives from different men and women lay groups. These lay groups have different constitutions and rules that guide their conduct and responsibilities.

All over Zambia, catholic women are involved in various activities in the lay organizations, which they have formed and in the church as a whole. These women have more formal education today than they did since the beginning of the 20th century. This is especially true of religious sisters. The media keep women informed about the advances in the sciences and changes in the society. Slowly, the style of questioning and the intellectual skepticism common to natural sciences have influenced all aspects of life. Women as well as men try to base their behavior on the best knowledge available, enlightened by ethical and religious values. They try to follow what they learn that happens to be different from their traditions and cultures.

1.3.1 CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHIPATA

The Catholic Diocese of Chipata is in the Eastern Province of Zambia. It covers an area of 68.9 kilometer square in stretch from Luangwa Bridge which demarcates the Archdiocese of Lusaka from the Catholic Diocese of Chipata, to Chama District in the northern part of the province.



Eastern Province has eight districts namely Nyimba, Petauke, Katete, Chadiza, Mambwe, Lundazi, Chama and Chipata, the provincial headquarters. In Nyimba, there is one parish, five in Petauke, one in Katete, two in Chadiza, four in Lundazi, eight in Chipata, and one in Chama, making the total number of parishes to twenty-two in the whole Catholic Diocese of Chipata. All the parishes are headed by a parish priest who has an assistant. In some of these parishes, there is more than one priest. Each parish has several outstations which are attended to by the parish priest and his assistants, if any.

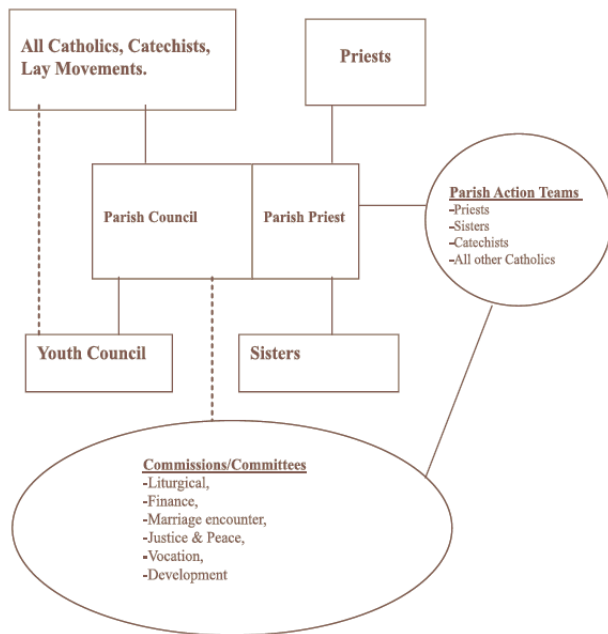
In the parishes and outstations, there are several lay groups. These lay groups operate independently according to their constitutions, but the parish priest should be fully aware of what is going on in his parish.

Decisions in the parish set up of the Catholic Church are hierarchically made as per structure below:

1.3.2 PARISH HIERARCHY

- Parish Priest
- Assistant Parish Priest
- Catechist
- Parish Council
- Small Christian Community and Lay Group Executive Members
- Christians

The hierarchy in the Catholic Church is very clear and it is strictly followed.



In Chipata Diocese, there are 3.2 million Catholic members of which three quarters are women. Just like other dioceses, women are organized in various lay groups that have different constitutions that guide them as stipulated above. One anthropologist, Rasing (1998) affirms that each group has a constitution and rules, which are made and codified by the district council of every group. She further mentions that each group has a representative who is a member of the parish council. Some examples of lay groups are the Catholic Women’s League, St Anne’s, the Nazareth, Tertiary, Actio and Legion of Mary. This varies according to the parishes. In some parishes one would find that other lay groups do not exist.

Women's groups play a very important role in church ,as Rasing in her , "The bush burnt ,the stones remain"(2001),clearly states, "women's activities are shown by their work for charity, collecting money for the church, and cleaning the church"(2001:199). Women also "plan spiritual and social acts e.g. visiting people who are ill and activities like the preparation of church festivals,"(Rasing 1995:21). Together with the men, women make sure that the priests are taken care of by washing their priestly robes. This shows how much women have contributed to the smooth running of the church both at spiritual and material levels since its inception. For instance, already in the gospel of Luke, the apostles and Jesus himself had a lot of women followers who supported the church ministry as benefactors (Luke 24:10). In analyzing these activities and contributions women do in the church, it is important to assess women's positions and influence when it comes to decision making.

1.4 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF WOMEN IN THE STUDY AREAS.

The Catholic diocese of Chipata houses both matrilineal and patrilineal ethnic groups. Much of the people in Katete District belong to the matrilineal Chewa speaking people while that in Msipazi parish in Chipata District is predominantly occupied by the patrilineal Ngoni speaking people. In addition there is a mixture of ethnic groups in St Anne's parish which is located right in Chipata town. Women in matrilineal setup have more power and make many of the decisions compared with those in the patrilineal setup where men have much authority. In this connection it is expected that women in Katete make major decisions than those in Msipazi and share the authority between women and men in St Anne's parish.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Various researchers have shown that the majority of congregants in the Catholic Church are women. These women have formed lay groups that are involved in various activities within and outside the church. Despite the large numbers and activities done, women are usually left out when it comes to major decision making in the church. If the church as a whole has acknowledged and appreciated the activities that women perform in their lay groups, then these should take part in decision making. There is need to investigate how much influence women have in decision-making and implementation at parish level in a male dominated church.

1.6 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

- To find out women's activities and involvement in decision making in the patrilineal, matrilineal and mixed cultural setup in the Catholic Church.

1.6.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To assess the way the church incorporates women's decision.
- To investigate the challenges that women face when implementing their decisions and what they do when their decisions are not honoured.
- To find out the activities that women do and how involved women are in decision making in a patrilineal, matrilineal and mixed cultural set up in the Catholic Church.
- To find out how patriarchal, matriarchal and mixed cultural organized societies influence decision making between genders.
- To find out whether the church puts in practice its own ideas on women's involvement.

1.6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does the church incorporate women's decision?
- What challenges do women face when implementing the decisions they make at the parish and what do they do when their decisions are not honoured?
- What activities do women do and how are women involved in decision making in the patrilineal, matrilineal and mixed cultural set up in the Catholic Church?
- In what ways do patrilineal and matrilineal organized societies influence decision making between genders?
- Does the church put in practice its own ideas on women's involvement?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will highlight the activities and decisions that women do and make in the church. Secondly, it will also highlight how far the decisions made by women are implemented. Thirdly, it will explore if there is a difference in decision making between patrilineal and matrilineal organized communities. This will help the policy makers in the church when considering women's needs when enhancing development in relation to men. This study will contribute to the pool of knowledge in gender and religious studies.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Archdiocese: A Catholic religious region headed by an archbishop. In Zambia there are only two archdioceses namely Lusaka and Kasama.

Archbishop: The Catholic religious leader in charge of the archdiocese. There are two archbishops who are in charge of the two Archdioceses in Zambia

Benefactor: A well wisher who is willing to give financial support to a project or any activity. A number of benefactors support church projects. There are some priests who have benefactors within and outside Zambia who help them financially and materially.

Bishop: The Catholic head of a diocese. There are nine dioceses and two arch dioceses in Zambia. This study was carried out in the Catholic diocese of Chipata.

Diocese: A Catholic demarcated region headed by a bishop. This study was carried out in the Catholic Diocese of Chipata and permission to conduct the research there was granted by the local bishop.

Equality: The right of different groups of people to have similar social positions and receive the same treatment as other groups.

Equity: A situation in which everyone is treated equally.

Gender: is defined as “The widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate male and female behaviour, characteristics and roles, which ascribe to men and women differential access to power, including productive resources and decision making authority”. (UNAIDS/99.16E.March199)

Matrilineal: A cultural understanding in which the line of descent goes through women.

Parish: An area that has its own church and that a priest is responsible for.

Parish Council: A body that organizes parish activities.

Parish Priest: An ordained minister who leads the parish.

Patrilineal: Type of society in which the line of descent goes through men.

Priest: An ordained minister in the Catholic Church who is also in charge of the outstations under his Parish

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study background, statement of the problem, objectives, the significance of study and the definition of terms. The next chapter reviews the related literature to the study. Chapter three describes the methodology used. The following chapter presents the findings, analysis and discussions of the results. Finally chapter five indicates the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two points out literature review on what has been written about women's activities and involvement in decision-making in the past and present situation. It also highlights the contributions of the missionaries to the current position of women in the Catholic Church. It further discusses other churches other than the Catholic Church's points of view on women's activities and involvement in decision-making in their churches. Finally, it also outlines women involvement in decision-making in the Catholic Church.

According to Rasing (2001), women during the pre-colonial era were involved in various traditional religious activities including holding high positions both in religious and secular spheres. In her book, *The Passing on the Rite of Passage*, Rasing (1998), she gives an example of the Bemba Royal women who had a role in the political and religious life where they were in charge of the ancestral shrines. Richard (1940) and Hinfelaar (1989), say women held high positions in the Bemba land. Hinfelaar further highlights that the women were heads of home-shrines and performed religious rituals.

All over Africa, women founded independent churches and in these churches there were male adherents as well as female. The leaders of these churches were women and they made decisions that were followed by both men and women. Jansen (1986) mentions that in East Africa, revival movements featured women in great numbers and took active part in religious and social life. She

gave an example of the Lumpa church of Alice Lenshina of Zambia and Maria Legio church of Gaudencia Aoko in Kenya. Calmettes (1978) argues that women dominated Alice Lenshina's Lumpa church. These women held leadership positions and made decisions on their own.

In Southern Africa, as Wilson (1939) highlights, that both men and women were heads of families and territorial nobles. They were believed to have access to supernatural powers and made major decisions in societies. There was equality between men and women. Hastings (1989) supports this by saying that men and women lived in the same culture. He further argues that female duties were evidently different from male duties but they were correlative and integrated within a unitary whole, which provided support, meaning and some degree of happiness for all participants. Comaroff (1992) echoed a similar view when she said that women in Botswana were perpetually engaged in a complimentary cycle of cultivation and gathering. They made major decisions even when rains failed or stored reserves ran low.

2.1 MISSIONARY CONTRIBUTION TO WOMEN'S STATUS

The coming of missionaries and the belief in Christianity has led to women relegated to subordinate positions with men taking dominant roles and influential positions and making major decisions. Hinfelaar (1989) attributes the decline of women's status in religious as well as other spheres to the coming of colonialists and missionaries. The missionaries referred to the Bible and claimed that God created Adam first and Eve was made out of Adam's rib. The Bible in the book of Genesis chapter 2 says, "Upon seeing the woman, the man said, this at last is bone of my bone and fresh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of a man"Vs 18-25.



Missionaries of Africa Priest during church service - Picture by Fr. B. Zulu

They quoted the book of Genesis chapter one in the Bible which talks about the creation story. Hastings (1989) has a similar view when he says, the missionary Christianity in its western goals and never entirely hidden colonial objectives, challenged African unitary between men and women. The impact of Christianity has made African society dominated by men and it has been treated overwhelmingly in male terms. Hastings (1989) further argues that the nature of the 19th century

western Christianity is also a factor that has allowed no public role to women in the main churches.

A largely male dominated church encountered a large female leadership- dominated traditional Africa. It was noticed that where African customs were matrilineal, missionaries could be bewildered and attacked as being opposed to God's laws.

According to Hastings (1989) there were many married and unmarried European women in the missionary work by late 19th century. They were the majority of the all mission workers. Despite the numbers, they were in rather subordinate positions in terms of the missionary hierarchy and few would stand out clearly.

Rasing (2001) argues that the missionaries undermined women's positions in all spheres. In church circles women were pushed into the background and women's lay groups were marginalized. She further says that missionaries could refer to the Bible to emphasize male domination and they were the ones who had power and chose male catechists. This led to women losing their traditional values and deterioration of their power. The missionaries even quoted the Bible to justify their argument on the position of women in the church. One scripture that was quoted is 1Corinthians14:34-35 "... women should remain silent in churches. They are not allowed to speak, but be in submission, as the law says, if they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in church" (New International version Bible). This is a curious passage. It appears to prohibit women to talk during services. But it contradicts 1Corinthians 11: 5 in which St Paul states that women can actively pray and prophesy during services. "The fact that women had no important positions in the Catholic Church is reflected in the lack of literature on women and women's lay groups in their churches,"(Rasing.2001:196).

This scenario highlighted by Rasing, still exists in the Catholic Church today as it can be seen that men are still dominate despite being the minority. Although women in the Catholic Church are involved in various activities, they are marginalized when it comes to decision making (Dennis 1996). Bernadette Mbuy-Beya (1998), an African woman scholar concurs with Dennis that the Catholic Church is hierarchically male dominated with the highest rank of the Pope to the level of priest. All the influential positions are taken by men and ordination to women priesthood is not

even on the agenda, though there is a minority of catholic women fighting for it. Due to the minority women fighting for this case, it has come to symbolize the integration of women into all aspects of church life. Here it has to be noted that almost all the women involvements do not go beyond the decision making which is usually restricted to ordained ministers. Even Burke's (1980) research findings reviewed that women in the Catholic Church had no access to the decision making councils that affect their lives.

2.2 OTHER CHURCHES POINT OF VIEW

Some churches have tried to incorporate women decision making by first allowing ordination of women. These churches include the Anglican Church, United Church of Zambia and other Protestant churches. In these churches women had either been denied or had been granted to participate in church decision making bodies with reluctance. Women in the churches where they participate in decision making have found their way to work with their men counterparts in that they contribute in major decision making. Few ordained female pastors have been accepted in local communities. This is so because of the background of Christian religion where men dominated and women sat and listened to men preaching.

Other scholars like Mbuy-Beya (1998) confirm that women also do full pastoral work in hospitals, prisons, orphanages, retirement homes and parishes and yet they are still left out in decision making. Though men dominate in decision-making, they do not get involved in such activities. Men think that such kind of work is meant for women.

Kabeer (1966) rightly observes what may have started out that a way of organizing labour takes on a normative significance so that values become embodied in the tasks and in who does them. In this case, the division of labour becomes an accepted norm such that women have been made to perform certain chores which men take to be inferior.

This is in line with the Reformed Fellowship of the East Valley, Mesa, AZ (Circa, 1995) says, "in the beginning God created male and female. He made Adam first, and then Eve from Adam's rib. This order of creation subordinates wives to their husbands in marriage, and women to men in the church. As an act of submission to their creator, women are commanded to submit to their

husbands and to male leadership in the church. Women are not allowed to preach or have authority over men in any formal capacity in the church” (Pg 24). This has continued being propagated in many Catholic and Christian set ups. This is a male point of view and male interpretation of the scripture. The fact that Eve came into being second in this myth, does not automatically indicate subordination. The last born is not automatically subordinate to the first born.

2.3 WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Pope Benedict the XVI has emphasised the need for close collaboration between men and women in the various activities in the church. To harmonise this, both men and women should be involved in decision making which will make men and women work together harmoniously in church and not create a strict division between males and females. “Since women are called to be partners with men, they must accept all forms of service in the church, including leadership positions in the decision-making processes. The church must encourage and enable women to assume ecclesiastical and societal responsibilities” (Ecumenical and inter-religious affairs, 1997, pg 30). Women have continued performing various activities in their lay groups. As Rasing (1995) rightly puts it that they work for charity and collect money for the church but the church has continued marginalizing them and their lay groups. The women in their different lay groups work hard to raise money to help in the activities in the church. They come up with different ideas of fundraising to achieve their goals of doing charitable work for the church and on their own as mothers.

Chakalakkal, (2004), after her research on Indian women in the Catholic Church says that catholic women are committed to work of maintaining parish life. She further says that they are the backbone of the church but this does not mean that they have a great deal of influence on the decisions that are made. According to her findings, of the 20 catholic males (5.59%), both lay and religious brothers and priests endorsed the above view, while the parish priests were on the defensive. It all shows the reluctance on the part of the clergy to share with women the administrative responsibility in the church. In the Catholic Church, women can only participate at a secondary level. The position of the Catholic Nuns in the church is superior to that of the women

lay organizations and yet they are not allowed to actively participate in decision making at higher level due to the patriarchal nature of the church. When it comes to final decisions, the priest has to take charge. Women have been excluded from making decisions in the churches, even in an advisory capacity, although many of those decisions determined the dispositions of their own lives. Even when women were involved in decision-making, more often than not their voice was not significant in relation to their contribution to the life of the church. (www.catholicgroup/nt.org).

The emergence of women lay groups has been one of the most significant achievements in the Catholic Church worldwide. This has brought women together such that they work and make decisions in these lay groups but Chakalakkal quotes Vibhuti Patel who observed that this solidarity has probably never been used systematically to examine the dependent and disempowering of women's lives.

Most churches do not involve women in decision-making positions. This non-involvement may arise from conditioning in childhood not to desire involvement. Both the conditioning and the resultant non-involvement reflect the pattern formally followed in secular society and long since outmoded. The criterion for the status of women in churches is the word of God in Jesus Christ. The Christian teaching that the missionaries taught was that the Bible taught that women should be submissive to men. A woman was not supposed to stand and talk in front of men. The word of God in the name of Jesus pushes women in a tight corner where they are regarded as the other.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will highlight the study design, the setting, population, population sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1. STUDY DESIGN

The research followed a qualitative method. The researcher used qualitative methods to gather and interpret data from Focus Group Discussions through interview guides. She attended one meeting with each lay group in all the three parishes and interviewed the parish executive members. She also attended mass with these women. This approach was preferred because it allowed her to have an insight on how the women's lay groups conducted their meetings and how they made their decisions.

3.2. SETTING

The research was conducted in the Catholic diocese of Chipata in Eastern Province. There are 22 parishes in the diocese from which three were sampled purposefully. The sample included Msipazi, Katete and St Anne's parishes. Each of these parishes was chosen based on the following variables: kind of cultural system of inheritance and integrated or mixture of different organized decent systems. Msipazi parish was chosen because the people living in that area are patrilineal Ngoni-speaking. It is believed that in a patrilineal parish, men have more authority than women.

This is so because the cultural background influences people's ideas and acts including their faith practices.

Katete was chosen because there are Chewa speaking people who are matrilineal organized. The researcher chose Katete parish to investigate what activities women did and how influential the decision they made were. It is believed that in a matrilineal setting, women are more influential than men. Therefore, it is important to investigate the influences from both the patrilineal and matrilineal backgrounds in relation to behaviours in the parish activities. In St Anne's parish there are different ethnic groups. At this parish, women's lay groups comprise the different ethnicity

3.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The population was drawn from catholic women's lay groups and one men's group in all the three parishes. A men's group was involved because the researcher wanted to get the views of the men and compare them with those of women. In all of the three parishes, a total number of 10 women from Catholic Women's league (CWL), 10 women from St Anne group and 10 men from Joachim group was drawn. A total number of 3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in each parish. Therefore, the total number of 60 women and 30 men were involved in the FGDs in the three parishes. Further, 3 parish council executives were engaged in the FGDs conducted by the researcher. Women who participated in the FGDs for lay groups did not participate in the parish council FGDs so that there is no duplication of data. The parish priests from the three sampled parishes were interviewed on a one to one schedule. The researcher also conducted interviews with three parish priests from other parishes for the sake of objectivity and enriching the data.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION

An interview schedule was used during the research for parish priests and also Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The interviews were both in English and Chewa for the sake of easy communication for those who were unable to communicate in English. The researcher is fluent in both languages. The FGDs, proceedings and interviews were recorded using an audio tape recorder besides note taking by the researcher in order to capture all the facts during transcription.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of data started on the onset of the research with literature review. The researcher used qualitative method to analyze data collected from the targeted persons. Most of the information collected was in sort forms and the researcher had to rewrite the data collected in full. The collected information was kept on paper and on the audio tapes. Corrections were made and if more clarification was required then the researcher checked the tapes for more details. Sometimes corrections and clarifications were done on the spot. Since the method used in analyzing data that was collected was qualitative one, not much coding was done in terms of percentages and the tables showing some variations in the information collected. After the completion of the entire research, the data was compiled and typed on the computer. For easy editing and storage of information, the researcher opted for the electronic form of information storage of the research. However, most of it was also on non electronic (paper) form in case of any unforeseen circumstances. Editing and correction of errors was done while verification on unclear issues was made so as to have a comprehensive report that reflected a true picture of what was discussed.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

All the respondents were assured of total confidentiality and anonymity by the researcher. The participants were informed that their names would not be written down. The participants were informed that the research was about women's activities in the Catholic Church and their involvements in decision making. The participants were asked to feel free and open up and speak their views out. They gave their informed consent after the researcher had clearly explained and assured them.

The interview guide was accompanied by a covering letter assuring them of further confidentiality. The researcher got permission from the Bishop of the diocese and the parish priests of the three parishes.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings from the three parishes namely Msipazi, Katete (St John's) and St Anne's. It discusses women's different lay group's activities and their involvement in decision making in their parishes. The Joachim, the parish council executive and the parish priest's contributions are also discussed in this chapter.

4.1. WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT AT PARISH LEVEL

The findings revealed that women in all parishes under study carry out a lot of activities and were also involved in decision making in their lay groups.

4.2. WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES IN THE CHURCH AT PARISH LEVEL

When asked what activities women did at their parishes, all informants said that they were involved in a lot of activities. They said that they swept inside and outside the church, washed cassocks for the priests and church vestments. The women also said they did marriage counseling. They decorated the altar. They were involved in fundraising activities to raise money and other resources for seminarians. They visited the sick in hospitals and homes and attended funerals. In their lay groups, they donated money or food for priests (Chakudya Cha Ansembe) and many other activities assigned to them by relevant church authority such as the priests and parish executive committee. This was also confirmed during interviews with male participants from the Joachim lay

group, the parish priests and parish executive members. For example, the parish priest for Msipazi emphasized the importance of women when it came to making contributions in terms of carrying out several activities in the church which made it easier for the smooth operation of the church liturgies. He said “In my parish women are more active than men and they do most of the activities in the church. For example, they sweep, wash church vestments and cassocks for priests and seminarians. It is women who visit the sick and attend small Christian community meetings. In fact, about 65 percent of the congregants are women in my parish.” The priest said he was happy with the works that the women were doing at his parish.



More women attending mass during Palm Sunday in Chikungu Parish - Photo by Martha Lungu

The researcher observed three masses on three different Sundays. There were more women in attendance than men. Interestingly, during the first mass, it was a woman who stood up to make an announcement of how offertory was to be done on that Sunday. The two readings from the Bible were read by a woman and man respectively. The researcher also discovered that men and women at Msipazi parish sit in different rows, women on their own and men on their own. The researcher also discovered that even the so called mtulo (offertory) was mainly contributed by the women because they were the ones who were seen in numbers going to offer. It was difficult for the researcher to establish the reason why men did not go in numbers to give offertory. We should take in to consideration that offertory is done through small Christian communities or lay groups which are largely attended by women. Naturally, women end up being many for offertory.

4.3. WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

The study also revealed that women are not only assigned duties but that they were involved in making decisions at various levels. The first encounter that the researcher had with the Catholic

Women's League and the St Anne's lay groups was in a patrilineal set up of the ngoni speaking people. The women of this parish had representatives on the parish council and the parish executive. They said their chairperson and their secretary sat on the parish council and they were also parish executive members.

In Msipazi, women were more influential in the church. For example some women were chairpersons of different small Christian communities and others were chairpersons of financial committees. Some time back men used to dominate these positions but nowadays women were seen to be taking up more challenging positions in the parish. This was attributed to the fact that men were just regular church goers and did not participate actively in church activities. Men would come for prayers on Sunday and that would be all for them until the following Sunday.

The women do recommendable jobs in the church and this makes them happy. The women in positions, like those in the parish council, are able to stand up and voice out clearly in front of men, the priests inclusive. From the research findings, the time when women used to shun positions is long gone.

The study further revealed that both the Catholic Women's League members and St Anne's members of Msipazi parish were able to make decisions and implement them at higher levels such as parish level. One informant said that it was not possible for them to make decisions and implement without the consent of the parish council and the parish priest. She explained that as lay groups, they decided what they wanted to do, for example, if they wanted to do kitchen mending for the father's house, their decision would be taken to the parish council where the parish priest is in attendance and it would be tabled and discussed. The council would then decide whether the women should go ahead or not. The council would consider the feelings and ideas of other lay groups within the parish. The council would protect the interests of other lay groups at the parish. It has to make sure that no lay group is aggrieved because of the activities of one lay group. This is the more reason why all activities done by the lay groups in the parish should be discussed during council meetings. The role of their representatives on the council is to defend and give reasons as to why they should go on with their plans. The informant further explained that in their lay group they were careful when it came to choosing executive members. They needed to choose women who would stand for them in the parish council and defend their decisions. She said it was important to choose women who would speak and challenge the men and other women who would

be against their decisions or those who would stand in their way. There were certain decisions that leaders of both the Catholic Women's League and St Anne's organisation took straight to the parish priest and in most cases the priest would not refuse their suggestions. The women would decide to do a fundraising walk to raise money for vulnerable children and they feel this event cannot wait for the parish council to convene a meeting, they ask for permission from the priest. The arrangement of flowers at the altar is done by the women without getting permission from the parish council or the priest.

The women of Msipazi, a patrilineal parish praised their parish priest who they said was very understanding and worked well with them. They said he never hindered their progress. The interviewer asked from the patrilineal Ngoni Catholic Women's League what they do when their suggestions are turned down by the council or the parish priest. The women said it was rare that their decisions would be turned down but if it happened they would not go ahead. The reason for not going on would be fear that their group be banished as it would be portrayed as arrogant and not disciplined. The Catholic Women's League vowed obedience and loyalty during commissioning, hence, the reason why they should not go against what they vowed.

However, another woman of the Catholic Women's League lay group said that there were certain decisions that they made as women that the council and the priest were not in agreement with but they went ahead and did what they wanted to. She gave an example of something they do as women and not as a lay group. She said it was the same women found in the lay groups who are also found living in the communities with other people and encountering problems within those communities. She accepted that there are times when they live a double standards life, they obey the teachings of the church and they also obey what society requires of them. She gave an example that when a girl came of age, the church had a group of *alangizi* (marriage councilors) who taught her of how to take care of herself and all the other dos and do nots that the church teaches. She complained that the *alangizi* were not allowed to include traditional values in their lessons as the church regarded the traditional values in their lessons to be pagan. She argued that nowadays young couples divorce at will because they are not well taught before they get into marriage. What the church teaches is not enough to take them up to "till deaths do us part". She said men who were dominating in the catholic leadership hierarchy were the ones who made those decisions that they should not include "Mwambo wathu" (our traditions and cultural values) in the catholic teachings.

She lamented that that was wrong and as mothers, they were worried about their daughters who were being divorced while the young men were free to rush and pounce on other women.

Due to the behaviour of the young men, the women had taken upon themselves to incorporate their traditional values into the catholic teaching without the priest knowing. She said the priest did not know what went on, on the ground as they did it secretly. The women were scared to inform the priest because they knew that it was against the church doctrine to teach what was not constituted in the marriage teachings of the church. The women in their lay groups have been trying to discuss this but each time it was taken to the parish council, the topic would be shut down. They would not get any support from their male counterparts. Another participant said that if they would get support from the male counterparts, it would not be difficult to revise the marriage teachings constitution.

When asked by the interviewer what the women do when the issue of traditional values was turned down. The answer was that they would fight hard so that the church would revise its teachings on this issue for the sake of their children who were suffering in their marriages. The informant felt that men should support the idea of incorporating the traditional values in marriage counseling because it affects them as well. This is so in that they are the ones who marry and discover that the girl was not well cultured. Once this is discovered, they easily divorce and look for another girl to marry. Men are more familiar with the traditional marriage teachings. These are the ones they expect to observe once married to a girl. On the contrary, the church's teachings are different hence leading to a number of divorce cases in the church.

One informant lamented that there are a lot of divorces in the Catholic Church nowadays because of the restrictions in marriage teaching were the church has insisted that traditional values should not be incorporated. She said it was wrong for the church to westernise everything as Africans had their own teachings which need to be preserved. In this issue, the informant complained that as women they are denied the chance to implement their decisions.

4.4. ST. ANNE LAY GROUP

St. Anne group was slightly different from other lay groups because it is involved in marriage counselling. It dealt with couples which had marital problems. It is believed St. Anne and Joachim

were husband and wife. Therefore, those who joined the St. Anne lay group should be married with traceable records of a Christian marriage.

Informants from St. Anne group in all the three set-ups said that the group followed the normal



channel whenever they came up with an activity to perform at the parish. They were free to do whatever they wanted within their group that would involve themselves. But what involved the whole parish, the parish council should know and approve.

One informant from St Anne's parish which is a mixed set-up further said that as members of St.

Members of St. Anne lay group during Mass
Anne lay group, they had respect for men in the church but not to the extent of compromising their group's decisions. She said nobody should stand in their way and in most cases their decisions taken on. As St. Anne lay group, they were happy because in most cases men were very supportive in whatever they decided. This was supported by their representative who is the chairlady of the St. Anne lay group who sits on the parish council executive committee.

Another member of the group said in their lay group, they believed that they should be submissive to men because according to the Bible, men were the head of the house. They believed that major decisions were to be made by men. If men disapproved their decisions, the women of St. Anne lay group would understand and follow quietly. This is in connection with their constitution. She further said that their decisions go up to parish council level where they could be approved or disapproved. They could not say anything beyond what the priest decided. She said priests were always helpful and understanding.

Another woman from this group said there was a controversial issue of uniforms in Chipata diocese. There was uniform for azimai apantondo (this is a catholic women's organization, the umbrella body which embraces all women lay groups in the diocese of Chipata) which was supposed to be worn by all women who belonged to different lay groups when they meet together as catholic women. The uniform comprised the red headscarf, white shirt and navy blue skirt. At the same time the women in their lay groups had their own different uniforms and forcing them to

wear 'pamtondo' uniform by the Bishop was something they did not understand and they did not support.

Each lay group wanted to be identified by their respective uniform. The St. Anne uniform consists of a white headscarf which is tied in a special way, white shirt with a special collar, a light blue skirt and flat black shoes. The women of St. Anne lay group were happy with their uniform and they would like to wear their uniform whenever women of different lay groups met for a common church activity or feast, for example, during Easter. One informant argued that there was no need of having two uniforms within the same church. She said that that had brought a lot of misunderstanding among the women in all the parishes in the diocese. There were some men who were in favour of the mutondo uniform while others were against it. The researcher found out that most women did not want to have two uniforms. There was also a question of which uniform one would wear if she died. One participant said the explanation that was given during one of the Diocesan committee of the laity was that women would wear the lay group uniform and then the mutondo one should be put in the coffin.

However, as St. Anne lay group, they decided when to wear their uniform. The informant cited an example of funerals. She said when their member lost a spouse or a child they were all expected to be in uniform until they buried the deceased. There were also times like when it was their turn to offer the so called chakudya cha ansembe during mass when they would wear their uniforms. Other times were when they were visiting the sick and when having their meetings. They also wore their uniforms during the blousing (commissioning) ceremonies of new members. Blousing takes place when the new members are through with the instructions which they were receiving for a period of two years and they proved to be capable of being members. During the blousing ceremony, the chaplain who is a priest and the Bishop should be present to commission the new members. This is the time when their uniforms are blessed and they wear it during the ceremony.

4.5. THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

The Catholic Women's League commonly known as CWL has its own constitution which guides them and they follow it strictly. Their activities were not different from the St. Anne lay group except that their motto was charity, work and loyalty.

To them, the emphasis was not on marriage but they believed in doing charitable work like visiting the sick whether their own members or not, giving out material support to the clergy and other people who were in need.

They also believed that to run a family and manage it well one must be a hard worker.



She must work hard for the church. One respondent said that a home is managed by a women and not the other way round where men claimed to be the head of the home. She meant that a woman does a lot of work in the home making sure that everything is in order.

Hence, a Catholic Women's League woman should be hard working both in secular and church activities and must manage their home as well.

One informant said one of the objectives of the Catholic Women's League was to unite all Catholic Women's League members in the service of the church, meaning that all the members should be ready to sacrifice their time, resources and finances to the church and other people. She said members should uphold a sacramental life with emphasis on matrimonial and observance of God's natural laws within the Catholic Women's League. As Catholic Women's League members, they trained and encouraged each other to use their talents and skills in the service of the church and the community at all levels. This is what their constitution reflects.

Catholic Women's League members have particular works that they do as their constitution stipulates; they assist in the provision of the church vestments, they identify short and long term projects in all the archdiocese/diocese and these include, literacy classes, pre-school, life skill training and to run awareness programmes, for example, HIV/AIDS awareness campaign.

On the issue of proper uniform, the Catholic Women's League members consider their uniform to be very important to them. Members were not happy with the introduction of the apamutondo uniform. They felt all commissioned members should wear a full uniform at all league meetings and feasts while non-commissioned members should wear praying hands chitenge, white cotton shirt, canvass and white cotton headscarf. To the members of the Catholic Women's League,

proper uniform meant, white cotton headscarf and white cotton blouse, elasticated black navy blue skirt and a folded pleat behind, a navy blue jersey, no earrings, bracelets and make-up and affordable black flat shoes, canvass shoes, sofia or maliposa shoes.

The controversial issue of uniforms is supposed to be resolved by the women themselves. Men had no say over that issue as they were not affected. The situation at that time was that all women had to wear the apamutondo uniform whenever there were feasts. The first thing that came out clearly from the research findings about uniforms among Catholic Women's League is that they did not want to have two uniforms. Due to this reason, they shun catholic women organization meetings.

Catholic Women's League members of St. John's parish in Katete which is a matrilineal set up said the women recognized the authority of the parish council and the priest but whatever the women decided to do at the parish, has to be done as long as it is manageable. They cited an example of the outside alter which they were constructing. They said when they decided to construct the altar all the men in the parish council were against the idea, saying they were women and would not manage. To shame the men, they went ahead with their project and they were about to finish at the time of this study. They encountered a similar reaction when they decided to build a kitchen for the parish. They were proud that they constructed a beautiful kitchen at the parish. So, the women did not obey but did what they wanted.

Catholic women's League at St. Anne's Parish is a hive of activities. The parish is right up in Chipata town and most of the members were educated and are aware of gender equality. Just like other groups, in their meetings they made decisions but they never implemented without permission from the parish council and the parish priest. Members of their group were members of the parish council and even parish executive. The members who were in the executive and the parish council made strong decisions which were at times turned down but they went ahead as planned. The research findings showed that members of the catholic women's league felt that certain decisions that they made in their group were turned down because of jealous from other members of the council especially those members who belong to other lay groups. It is perceived that the Catholic Women's League is for the rich, as such, some of the well meaning decisions are turned down by other groups. The research findings revealed that there was competition among the women lay groups which led to jealousy. Periodic assistance to the priests is done according to the

lay groups and the Catholic Women's League surpasses other groups whether in monetary or material. The researcher noted that one lay group felt jealous of the other.

When the Catholic Women's League decisions were turned down, the leaders would go back to the general membership to give a report. The researcher discovered that when the women met and their leaders gave a report, they influenced one another to go ahead with what they planned without permission, for example, they undertook a fundraising walk which the council denied them permission. The women said it was not good to give up especially if they knew that what they wanted to do was for a good cause. They would risk and give it a try.

4.6 ST JOACHIM MEN'S LAY GROUP

The Joachim men's lay group is a group for men. The group is close to St. Anne



A member of the St. Joachim Men's Group

Women's lay group because according to the Bible, it is believed that Joachim was married to Anne. Most of the Joachim members are married to St. Anne members. The members of Joachim lay group work hand in hand with St Anne women and their constitution is similar except that some activities that they perform at the parish are different. The men do not sweep in the church and they do not wash vestments. The men visit the sick, they are marriage councilors, peace keepers in church, fundraise for the vulnerable and the sick and read in the church during church service or mass.

The Joachim members said that they had no problems in relating with women from different lay groups though Christians at the cathedral said that they favored the St. Anne lay group. Joachim members defended themselves by accepting that they had something in common with the St. Anne women lay group in that according to the Bible, Joachim married Anne. Hence, membership in

both lay groups is wife and husband. The wife is in St. Anne lay group while the husband is in Joachim.

It was also reviewed by Joachim members that it was true that women did a lot of activities at their parishes. Joachim members acknowledged the fact that women were the ones who were involved in cleaning the church and washing vestments. Women were always in the forefront in fundraising for the church and visiting the sick though in the constitution of Joachim it was indicated that they should also be involved in these activities. The researcher found out that Joachim's constitution was not different from the one for St Anne except that the Joachim members chose activities that they thought they would do. They chose activities that they thought were suitable for men.

In response to whether there were specific duties for men and women at the parish, the Joachim members said that being men, they left all the activities that women did in their homes to women, such as washing, sweeping, cooking. As men, they were involved in keeping peace and order in the church, visiting the sick and some fund raising ventures.

4.7 ST. JOACHIM OF MSIPAZI PARISH

Joachim members of Msipazi parish had different views. The members said that at home they were flexible in that they did the work that women did, for example, cooking, washing clothes, sweeping and drawing water. They said they performed all types of work that the women did at the parish whenever they were called upon.

The St. Joachim group of Msipazi said they understand the concept of gender such that they practiced it in their homes and at the church as well. According to them, gender meant equal opportunities and responsibilities in all work places, churches and at home. They said they understood that men and women were equal. One respondent said that at home they cook, wash and even draw water because even the women are involved in cutting trees and gardening. He said men worked hard even when their wives were not sick. They did the so called women's work even when their women were alright. As Ngoni speaking men, they were known to be stubborn because of their cultural background but they understood that things were changing with time and they did not want to remain behind. They said that they believed in change and time had come for them to recognize women in church and society as a whole. St Joachim members of Msipazi said during parish council meetings, they listen to the suggestions that women make in their lay groups and

when they see that they are genuine, they support them. Members of St. Joachim of Msipazi recognize the effort that women put in at the parish.

In response as to whether women should be given responsibilities, the Joachim of Msipazi parish said women were the best leaders because they had a passionate heart. They were dedicated to work at the parish. Women were perfectionist, therefore, they did everything well. The men were happy because most influential positions in their parish were occupied by women and they commended them.

4.8 ST. JOACHIM OF ST JOHN'S PARISH

In Katete (St John's Parish), men said they had the constitution which they read and understood well but they did specific duties according to what culture prescribed for them as men. They said they would not do a woman's job of sweeping and washing. They were involved in construction work at the parish and they made sure they did their work well.

The St Joachim members of St John's parish said women made major decisions affecting their groups and programmes. St Joachim members of St John's parish said that they did not agree with everything that women decided to do. One respondent said women can at times mislead someone. They should not be trusted at all times. They quarrel among themselves and when they did something good at the parish, they would want the whole world to know. Men sounded jealousy of the activities that the women were performing at the parish hence, the general statement that they made that women were quarrelling among themselves and that they wanted to show off whenever they did something good.

One member of the St Joachim lay group at St John's parish said that the two women lay groups, St Anne and Catholic Women's League, are always at each other's neck. They compete, gossip and boast in whatever they do. If the Catholic Women's League for example, bought food stuffs

worthy one million kwacha, to assist the priests, then the St Anne group would like to double the amount so that they outweigh the other group. Competing among them brings hatred.

On the part of implementing what they decided in their groups, St Joachim members of St John's reviewed that at times women did what they planned but sometimes not. One participant said women sometimes failed to implement because they did not support one another. He said that he found it difficult to understand women at times. The St Joachim members of St John's claimed to have heard about gender equality but they had different observations and comments on it.

At St John's parish, some Joachim members were skeptical about women. They said that the women depended on them. The women shunned positions as they were shy to speak in public. When a position was given to a woman, she would say that she was not ready and allowed men to take charge. Where one courageous woman accepted the position, she would be criticized by fellow women that she was just showing off and the other women would never support her, due to this, even those who would make good leaders shunned the positions.

4.9 ST JOACHIM OF ST ANNE'S PARISH

At St Anne's parish, the Joachim group commended women for what they were doing at the parish. They said so far, the women they were with at the parish council were good leaders. The women contributed actively to the development at the parish. They were committed to the works of the church.

On the part of whether women would have the chance of being on the church leadership hierarchy which is male dominated, the entire Joachim did not condone that. They said as far as the church hierarchy was concerned, women would go up to religious sister level and not priesthood. They said some religious sisters were not conducting themselves well in terms of behaviour. It would be worse off if the church had allowed lay women to go as high in position as a priest. They said the women would just end up disturbing priests. They said the women are better off in their lay groups because even there, they were answering God's call in a different way. The women did not need to become priests in order for them to save God better. The women saving God in their lay groups by helping the needy, visiting the sick, cleaning the church surroundings, fundraising for the church and other charitable activities that they were involved in. The researcher asked the members of the St Joachim groups if it were fair for them to accuse the women in that way and the response was

that “*while it could be true that there were some priests who were promiscuous, it would not be well for women to be priests and be promiscuous because there would be some who would become pregnant and put the church to the shame*”. For women it would be visible unlike the men because they do not get pregnant.

Referring to the Bible in the book of Genesis chapter 3 verses 1-7, which teaches about the roots of evil, the Joachim members of St Anne’s parish said that, “*in the Garden of Eden, a woman, Eve is the one who took the forbidden fruit and ate and then gave it to Adam.*” This implies that sin started with a woman. The members also said that, “*God’s judgment on the woman is meant to explain the pain of childbirth, the woman’s natural desire to have children from her husband and women’s inferior position in the Israelites society of that time. Before their disobedience man and woman were equal partners*”. If women were given the chance to priesthood, they would cause disturbances in the whole system of the church. They said by so saying, they were not condemning women, but they appreciated whatever the women were doing in their groups and that was good for them. The St Joachim members in this parish appreciated the clergy hierarchical set up in the church.

4.10 ST JOACHIM’S VIEWS ON HEADSCARF IN THE THREE PARISHES

The Joachim group of St Anne’s said that the issue of *Mutondo Uniform* should be resolved as soon as possible because once left the way it were, it would bring divisions among women. They said the leaders at the diocese level and the bishop should come to the women’s aid. They said it would also take the women themselves to have the issue sorted out quickly.

St Joachim members from Msipazi supported the idea of women wearing a headscarf in church. They said it was written in the Bible that a woman should cover her head. They were in support of what the Diocesan Council for the Laity decided that no woman should receive the holy Eucharist without a headscarf.

At St Anne’s, St Joachim members said it was not necessary for women to wear a headscarf. They argued that it was not the headscarf that received the Holy Eucharist but what mattered most was the innermost of each individual woman. They also said women were the ones who were in the fore front in making such rules and when these rules were presented to the whole womenfolk in the

church, they met resistance and wanted men to come to their aid and help them sort out the issue. They complained that women decisions and failed to implement them.

At St John's, St Joachim members said it was up to an individual to wear a headscarf or not. They said women should be let free to do what they wanted where dressing was concerned. Members acknowledged that the world was changing and the church would lose a lot of members especially the young ones. The researcher observed that the young women did not wear headscarf in church and they went to receive the Holy Eucharist without it.

4.11 ST JOACHIM'S VIEWS ON UNIFORMS

The participants revealed that at parish level there was nothing they could do although they knew that it was a burning issue because women from different lay groups did not want to wear the same uniform. Another participant who happened to be in favour of the "Mutondo uniform" said that the uniform had a lot of meaning as the red head scarf symbolised the blood of Jesus, the white blouse stood for purity and blue skirt for love. He further explained that because the skirt could show what was inside when women were dancing, the bishop introduced the praying hands chitenge to be worn on top of the skirt so that it could be covered nicely. He emphasised that it would be a good idea if women accepted one uniform.

One participant said that he knew of one old lady who completely refused to wear a different uniform apart from the one from her lay group. He was supported by one participant who is a member of the lay group. He said the old lady said that their uniform was important because it had meaning and there was no need for them to have two uniforms within the same church. She said she did not know who was going to redeem the situation as most of the women were not ready to wear the "apamutondo uniform". She also said the apamutondo uniform was commonly used by the older women and it was going to be difficult to change their mindset.

4.12 THE PARISH COUNCIL

The St. Anne's parish council comprised of 64 members of chairpersons, secretaries and treasurers from different small Christian communities and chairpersons of all lay groups. The members of the parish council elects parish council executive members which consists of chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, vice secretary, treasurer, vice treasurer and four committee members. A full

parish council includes the catechist, the parish priest in charge or his assistant and 12 chairpersons, 12 treasurers, and 12 secretaries all from the 12 small Christian communities at St Anne’s parish. Other 32 members come from lay organizations and youths movements. This brings the number to 64. From the 64, nine members are elected to the parish executive committee.

4.12.1 COMPOSITION OF ST ANNE’S PARISH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

CHAIRPERSON	Male
VICE CHAIRPERSON	Female
SECRETARY	Male
TREASURER	Female
VICE TREASURER	Female
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	3 Female and 1Male

The researcher attended one parish council and one parish council executive meeting at St. Anne’s parish. During the parish council meeting it was discovered that the men out numbered the women. There were 42 out of 64 members present. Out of the 42 present, 15 were women and 27 were men. The men dominated the discussions. Women’s participation was low. The researcher observed that 7 women from small Christian communities were actively contributing to the discussions while 2 women; one was a chairperson of the Catholic Women’s League and the other

Woman from the St Anne group represented their groups well. The women representing Legion of Mary, Action, Nazareth and choir did not participate actively.

The researcher followed the discussions closely. One hot issue that was brought was about the annual general meeting that was held at St Mathias Mulumba Parish for all women (*Azimai apamutondo*) belonging to different lay groups. They were going to have their meeting on 25th-27th July, 2008. The chairlady of *Azimai apamutondo* sits on the parish council representing all women belonging to different lay groups in the parish. She informed the parish council members that each group was to contribute K150, 000.00 for the meeting. Men seemed not to be in support of the suggestion. It became a heated debate between men and women. Women were for the idea and finally the chairperson solved the situation by saying that it was important to support such gatherings. The decision of contributing the suggested amount came from the women and during the council meeting they defended their decision. The women managed to convince all the parish council members and finally a go ahead was given.

The idea of contributing K150, 000 was received with mixed feelings among members of the Catholic Women's League when their leaders presented it to the council during their monthly meeting. The researcher discovered that the issue was not the amount of money but uniform they were supposed to wear during the meeting at St Mathias Mulumba. They did not favour the "mutondo uniform". They wanted to be in their league uniform. This was the same with the St Anne group.

4.13 WOMEN'S DECISION ON THE MUTONDO UNIFORM

In trying to follow up the question of what challenges the women faced when implementing the decisions they made at the parish, the researcher went to attend the mutondo meeting at St Mathias Mulumba. The attendance of the women from the two women lay groups was poor. Most of the women who attended the meeting were those in the parish council and elderly Catholic Women's League and St Anne members. Most young women from both groups were not in attendance.

When asked about the issue of uniforms for women's lay groups and *Azimai apamutondo*, one woman, said that was a very delicate issue which needed to be resolved by the former Bishop of the diocese [who had retired] because he is the one who had introduced the uniform for *Azimai apamutondo* before the coming in of the women's lay groups in the diocese.

The time the mutondo uniform was introduced, the diocese only had the Legion of Mary as a lay group for women and was the Legion of Mary members who used to wear. When members of the other lay groups like the Catholic Women's League, the St Anne group, the Nazareth group, the Action, and the Franciscans group started coming to the diocese of Chipata and were allowed to establish their groups, they had different uniforms from the Mutondo. The question of which uniform is to be used by all women belonging to different lay groups in the diocese arose. Since the Mutondo uniform was introduced by the then Bishop, nobody is coming out clearly to advise the women, hence, the confusion and misunderstanding among women. There is one religious sister who is coordinating all the women and all lay groups in the diocese but the problems of the Mutondo uniform still stands to be a problem.

During the blousing in any women lay group, each newly bloused member must have a full uniform for that particular lay group and a red headscarf for mutondo. Women are forced to have a red headscarf or else they would not be bloused. Therefore, for the sake of being bloused, the newly bloused members buy the red headscarf which they do not use after blousing.

The findings from the parish council executive showed that the idea of wearing apamutondo was not well received by most women. It also revealed that because of the same, women were following what they decided to do in their lay groups. They were wearing their own uniforms. It was also discovered that during many council meetings, women made a lot of decisions and suggestions. This was revealed by one participant from the council executive.

In other dioceses, for example, Lusaka and Ndola, the issue of wearing uniforms for women in the church has been resolved. Women belonging to different lay groups have their own uniforms designed according to their constitutions. Each time they met in their lay groups, they wore their uniforms. When they are carrying out church duties or having meetings, they also wear their uniforms.

However, the church in Lusaka and Ndola dioceses, in order to unite the women, came up with deliberate policy of introducing one uniform for women which is worn when they meet for common functions as catholic women. Both in Lusaka and Ndola dioceses, the general uniform is a white head scarf, a white blouse and a praying hands chitenge. The women feel this arrangement is good because it allows every woman to wear a skirt from their lay group and put a chitenge on

top. At this level that is where we have the catholic women organization which is the mother body for all women lay groups in the church. The executive committee of the mother body consists of women from different lay groups. In this set up, women are united and their decisions are usually handled at this level. The arrangement of this set up was initiated by the women themselves after discussing it at length in different fora.

The problem in Chipata diocese is that the uniform was initiated by the Bishop of the diocese a long time ago before new lay groups were established in the diocese. At that time, there was the only legion of Mary as a women lay group in the diocese. There was no need to change the uniform at that time. But now the women are saying they have decided to change and yet those holding higher positions are quiet.

In churches like the Reformed Church of Zambia, women are identified with a white headscarf, white blouse and a black skirt. In the United Church of Zambia, women wear a white head scarf, red blouse and a black skirt. Similarly, the Seventh Day Adventists' women uniform is a white head sock and a blue dress. These and many more other protestant churches have one uniform and it is easy to identify them when they are with women from other churches. But the Catholic Church has allowed its women members in their lay groups to have different uniforms according to the group founder member. This is done in the catholic diocese of Chipata and women are happy about it. The challenge that the women in the diocese of Chipata are facing is how to come up with one uniform which will show the uniformity and unity of women like women in other churches. They are failing to agree on the colour of the uniform because of the Azimai apamutondo uniform which has a unique headscarf.

The final decision should come from the women themselves. Most of the women in the lay groups want change but the Bishop should sanction because that is how far the women's decision can go if any major change has to be made.

4.14 THE PARISH PRIESTS

All the three parish priests from the three parishes echoed the same sentiments about women's participation in decision making at parish level. They said women are the pillars of the church and there is need to pay attention to what they say. The researcher discovered that the priests counted on women from different lay organizations to run the activities like sweeping, washing, visiting the

sick and the young couples. The priests said there were few men who were involved in such activities.

On the issue of the mutondo uniform, one of the priests said that it was well known that there was confusion among the women but the issue would be well resolved by the women themselves. The priests had no problem with the mutondo uniform or any lay group uniform. They said the women are involved in decision making so it was better for them to decide what should best suit them.

4.15 CATHOLICS' VIEWS ON GENDER ROLES AND DUTIES

The Catholic Church's view on the gender roles and duties are very clear. The church does not segregate on gender roles and duties. Men as well as women have been allowed to form up lay groups and perform different duties as long as it was within the conformity of the church. Women felt that there are certain duties which were specifically meant for them and not for men because of what culture teaches, for example that men should not sweep and women should not thatch.

4.16 WOMEN AND DECISION MAKING IN PATRILINEAL, MATRILINEAL AND MIXED CULTURAL SET UPS.

Patrilineal, matrilineal and mixed cultures are different set-ups. The way men behave in these societies is completely different from their women counterparts.

4.16.1 WOMEN AND DECISION MAKING IN A PATRILINEAL SET UP.

The researcher did her research among the Ngoni speaking people of Msipazi in chief Mpezeni's chiefdom of Chipata district in the eastern province of Zambia. The Ngonis are patrilineal.

In a patrilineal society, power and authority are left in the hands of men. Women are supposed to follow whatever a man says and decides to do without questioning. In this kind of society, a man is regarded as a head of the house regardless of whether he is a sensible man who can make decisions or not. A woman is there to obey and implement whatever decisions made by the head of the house. In marriage both man and woman would be involved in discussions but what should be followed is what has been said by the man. A woman is not supposed to question anything at all. A girl in this kind of society is taught from childhood what her roles are and what is expected of her when she grows up and gets married. Roles are well defined such that there are no ambiguities in

them. A girl will wake up in the morning knowing that she has to draw water from the well, sweep the yard and the house while a boy knows that he is supposed to wait for food prepared by the girl and then take cattle for grazing. A boy is taught to become a responsible husband. He is also schooled to provide security and general maintenance of the women.

From the two group discussions that the researcher had with the two women lay groups, the St. Anne's and few new Catholic Women's League members at Msipazi parish, the participants revealed that most of the positions in their parish were held by women. It was also revealed that women were very influential in terms of decision making. For example, the Parish Chairperson and the head of the finance committee were women. These women were able to make major decisions which both men and women had to follow.

The women said that they understood the gender roles that they are biologically different from men but they were not inferior to men. They said that they knew that they were equal to men. They must have equal opportunities with men. They had respect for the men but not to an extent of being suppressed whenever they wanted to do something at the parish. One openly boasted that they were the majority in terms of numbers at the parish to which men could not compete. She further said that men are not very much interested in going to church as they spent most of their free time drinking beer. Men also get involved in taking care of animals, looking for food and also other provisions for the family. The women acknowledge that though most of the men had no formal jobs, they worked hard for their families in their gardens. What they realise from the gardens is sold at market places. One respondent said that the women were also involved in gardening.

Some men felt that going to church is a sheer waste of time. The few who were serious with prayers and other church activities could not compete with women because they were outnumbered in all circles.

One participant said that the days were gone when women used to shun responsibilities given to them at the church. She said that they had learned of gender equality and they also wanted to be seen contributing something to the church just as men. The women were not ready to stop at anything unless they saw that there was need to do so. The participant further said that even at home women married to the Ngoni men did not keep silent. They had a say in every decision that their husbands made. That was so because there were certain husbands who would not make

concrete decisions which would see the family progress in life. She subjectively said that some husbands were drunkards and irresponsible such that if one would follow them they would go with them into the ditch. Such men needed strong women who would stand up and make major decisions or men were going to dominate in all areas.

She questioned the calibre of the so called 'head of the house'. How would one call such a man a head of the house when he was not able to provide food and security for the family? She lamented. It was because of such behaviour that women woke up from the slumbers and stood up to be heard. The women said culture schooled them to be submissive to their husband at all times but time had come for them to change their mind set.

One highlighted that if one looked at the history of the Ngoni people and their movement from South Africa to the present day Zambia, one would discover that the Ngoni fought with the Nsenga speaking people of Petauke in Eastern Province of Zambia. The Ngoni conquered the Nsenga and married Nsenga women who were matrilineal. The Ngoni with their Nsenga women settled in the present day Chipata District. There was Nsenga blood in the women and men who were married to the present Ngonis. She attributed the Nsenga women's courage to history meaning that the Nsenga women being raised in matrilineal set-up were used to voicing out and not just to be controlled by men at whatever level.

The activities that the women in the Ngoni setup did were not classified. They were involved in all activities regardless of what they were taught in their culture. One participant explained that they were involved in sweeping the church, washing church vestments, visiting other Christians the sick, old and vulnerable. She said the old and the vulnerable were assisted with food and clothes donated by these who could afford. They were also involved in what one would term job for men like building and thatching because there were few dedicated men to do those works. Cultivating among the Ngoni is men's work but the women at Msipazi parish were involved in it.

The researcher asked the women what decisions they make in the church and one participant said there were major decisions like kitchen mending for the priests, how the order of offertory should be conducted during mass, when and where they should hold the parish council. They also made sure that what they decided in their lay groups was supported and implemented with the blessing from the parish council.

When the women were asked if at all there were challenges that they faced, another participant said that they never faced any challenges because whatever they decided was implemented as it was thought to be for the good of the church.

The women could not remember any decisions that were turned down but one participant said that there was a time when a parish priest stopped them from doing certain activities at the parish without giving them proper reasons. The women got frustrated and vowed never to assist that priest. The women stood to their ground and never contributed any *chakudya cha ansembe*. At the end, the priest got frustrated and requested for a transfer to go to another parish. That was supported by the parish priest who said that he learned a very big lesson from that, such that he handled women with great care. He confirmed that the women in his parish were powerful and made most of the decisions and it was true that they held influential positions. He further said that the women were hardworking in his parish and they did most of the work regardless of the Ngoni culture and tradition which restricted a woman to submissiveness. According to Ngoni culture, a woman should follow what the husband says as he is the head of the house. The bride price that is paid by the man means that the woman becomes a property of a man.

The researcher asked the women whether their decisions were affected in any way being in a patrilineal set up. One participant said there were times when men thought they were being undermined because of the many decisions women were making at the church and looked at such women as being stubborn even in their homes. The men would remind the women of what the Ngoni culture was all about and what the Bible taught that they should always be submissive.

Asked on how the church viewed gender, one participant complained that the church's hierarchy was male dominated such that the decisions that the women made did not reach a higher level other than within the parish. She said that at every parish there was a parish priest who had a final say. Some priests would not listen to what women said. In such situations, the women would get frustrated and talk about it when they are on their own. Sometimes they decide to go ahead with their plans without consulting the priest.

She cited an example of the way the *alangizi* taught a girl who had come of age and one who was about to get married. She complained that the church had denied the girls a lot of things that they were supposed to know as they reached maturity and when getting married. As a result many of

the girls got divorced because of lack of knowledge about the culture of the Ngoni. According to the Ngoni culture, when a girl comes of age, she should be secluded from others and kept in a house where nobody is allowed to see her. She would be there for a month and during this time, she is taught how to behave as a big girl and one who is ready to get married. She is taught of how to take care of herself during her menstruation period. The church is against keeping a girl in seclusion for a long period of time and teaching her about marriage and on the last day let her dance the traditional dance called *cinamwali*. The church teaches about cleanliness and good behaviour. Such are decisions which women make and are turned down.

Another woman said that they knew that nobody would listen to them, not even the priest would allow them to teach the girls what was not stipulated in the *alangizi* constitution. The women teach the girls secretly the traditional values of their ethnic groups without the priest knowing. She said that the women had continued obeying the priests but in practice what they did was different.

The women said that because of education and gender sensitization campaigns, most men in the Ngoni land had acknowledged that men and women complement each other. The women confirmed that there were gender violence campaigns which were going on in their villages where drama was performed and the messages were clear about the complementarity of man and woman. One participant said that though men did not sweep in the church and wash church vestments, they thought that one day, men would wake up to sweep and wash. She said that the women were waiting for this to happen and they would start talking to the Joachim men lay group and later assign them with duties which would include washing and sweeping the church surroundings. She said that men should be involved in visitations of the sick which were left to women alone. The women said that they would like to work with men in the duties which were termed to be for women because the women were involved in jobs meant for men.

4.16.2. WOMEN AND DECISION MAKING IN A MATRILINEAL SET UP

The researcher did her research in Katete which is a matrilineal set up. The findings revealed that women in that kind of set-up were not as forceful as those of patriarchal society. Despite the fact that they made decisions in their lay groups, they still depended on men. For example, the women of St. Anne's group revealed that when they wanted to go for blousing in another district, they would start asking for permission from their husbands two weeks before the trip.

A matrilineal set-up is “a type of society controlled by women rather than men, passing power, property, etc from mother to daughter rather than from father to son,” (Hornby A.S, Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English 2000; 727).

The findings also revealed that women still shunned positions in the parish council and depended on men to control and change things. The women were able to accept positions in their lay groups because they did not have alternatives; there were women only in their lay groups but where there were men, they would rather let the men take up the positions. The reasons that the women of St. Anne’s lay group gave were that they followed what was in the Bible that the man was the head of the house and that a woman should not speak before her husband says anything.

The Catholic Women’s League Group of St. John’s seemed to be exposed and for them, they said that they competed well with men. They said their members who sat in the parish council represented the group well. They had no problems with whatever they decided as a lay group. Men were not a hindrance to any progress. They lamented that their decisions just end at parish level and they wished that one day, women would hold higher positions where they would also be ordained as priests because there was no way God should only call men to preach His word and yet both men and women were created in the image of God.

The findings also revealed that because women at St. John’s parish were hard working, men also formed their own group called ‘Mphala’ which was competing with women. The men were also involved in all sorts of activities at the church not to be challenged by women. One participant revealed that the men were emulating what women were doing. She said that it was not all the men that are actively involved in the activities in the church but only a few committed ones.

4.16.3. WOMEN AND DECISION-MAKING IN A MIXED SET UP

The researcher did her research at St. Anne’s parish which is a mixed set up. In a mixed set up, there are women from patrilineal and matrilineal societies. They live together and accept one another’s culture without any conflict.

Being a parish which is found in the hub of Chipata town, the findings showed that women were sensitized about gender. Due to this, the women were able to make popular and unpopular

decisions in their lay groups and defended their decisions on the parish council. It was also revealed that the number of women on the parish council was higher than that of men.

It was also observed during the parish council meeting which the researcher attended that women from the Catholic Women's League group at times performed certain activities without authority from the council. The chairperson of the council cited an example of fundraising walk which the Catholic Women's League undertook without the council giving them a go ahead. The parish chairperson said that it is necessary to get permission from the parish council before performing any activity at the church.

The researcher attended six meetings with the Catholic Women's League and it was during one of the meetings that she managed to ask them why they performed certain activities without permission from the parish council. In response, one member said that it was an oversight that they by-passed the council but they were happy that they walked and managed to raise a good sum of money. The women said they always got permission from the council though they complained that protocol delayed progress at times.

The findings also showed that the women who were members of the parish council represented their group well as they were able to defend their decisions. The chairperson of the council confirmed that the women were able to explain why they decided to do whatever they wanted to do as a lay group. He said the women's decisions were never turned down because their decisions meant well for the church. He complained that it was not fair for the women to perform activities without the knowledge of the parish council when the council always supported them and it never turned down what they decided to do in their lay groups.

The findings showed that there was confusion amongst the women themselves over the issue of uniforms. The majority of the women in different lay groups were not happy that the higher authority in the diocese, especially the bishop and the priests were quiet on the issue of the *mutondo* uniform. A participant from the Catholic Women's League group said that the issue of which uniforms to wear on which event had become a thorn to most women and yet the men who are in the top most positions in this case the priests, had decided to remain silent. She further complained that it was not fair for the leaders to continue being silent on the issue as it was bringing divisions in the diocese. She strongly pointed out that it was in such situations that

women took their own decisions without consultations because men at times frustrated women. She warned that the top leadership should not be surprised if they heard that the women had decided otherwise on the issue of uniforms.

One of the participants in the parish executive said that “the *mutondo* uniform had a history and meaning. It was introduced by the Bishop with a view to unite all catholic women who belonged to different lay groups. When the *mutondo* uniform was introduced, it was worn by the members of the Legion of Mary because that was the only group which was prominent and everybody thought that it was a uniform for that group. Later in the 1980s, members of other catholic lay groups that existed in Lusaka and the Copperbelt spread to the diocese of Chipata and these groups brought in their own uniforms. The members of the new lay groups started inviting their leaders from Lusaka and the Copperbelt to the Catholic Diocese of Chipata to come and open up new branches. Some women were happy and they decided to join the newly introduced lay organisations. The women who joined the new lay groups, for example, the Catholic Women’s League, the St. Anne’s and the Nazareth could not understand why they were to have two types of uniforms and that was the current problem.

The research showed that the women in the diocese were divided over the issue of the uniforms. The women who were fond of the uniform were the members of the old Legion of Mary lay group found in rural parishes. One participant said that the members of the Legion of Mary did not have a uniform of their own as a lay group. She attributed the love that the members of the Legion of Mary had for the uniform to the fact that they had no uniform and depended on the uniform. She further said that the members of the Legion of Mary thought that the uniform brought unity to the women of different lay groups in the church. She said that if they had a uniform of their own as a group, they would not advocate for the uniform for all catholic women in the diocese.

One participant said that changing the uniform to a new one was not favoured because women in the rural parishes would not manage to buy the new uniform to replace the one. She complained that all the women in rural parishes might not take it well if they were told that there were changes in the uniforms. She said it would need the founder of the uniform to quench the fire and not any other person.

The findings showed that the catholic women's league lay group was influential at St. Anne's Cathedral. One participant revealed that the Catholic Women's League members would not accept to wear mutondo uniform during certain occasions, they would insist to wear their uniform. She gave an example of one ordination ceremony of a priest who they supported from school through to the seminary until ordination. They insisted that they wanted to wear their uniform during the ceremony and not the uniform. They vowed never to stop at anything until permission was granted to allow them to be in their uniform and not the mutondo one. The parish priest did not stand in their way. They were given permission to go ahead as they planned. The Catholic Women's League members from St. Anne's parish were the only ones in a different uniform at the ordination. They arranged chairs where they sat as a group and isolated themselves from the other women who wore the uniform.

Another example that was given was when some priests were against the Catholic Women's League members to hold mass at a home of a member with the same newly ordained priest whom they had supported weeks after ordination. The priests could not come in the open to talk about their opinion over the mass because they feared to offend the women. The women went ahead and had a private mass where they showered the young priest with a lot of gifts. The women did not get permission from the parish priest, instead in their group, they also made their own decisions which they took to the parish.

It was explained that the St. Anne lay group was not different from the Catholic Women's League. In their group they also made their own decisions which they took to the parish council and defended strongly. The participants revealed that men were not a hindrance in any way. They complained that sometimes women themselves were jealousy of one another. For example, one women's lay group would start a project and the other lay group would criticize it. One participant expressed disappointment at the way women were behaving towards one another. She said that they never supported one another.

Being a lay group that was strict about marriage issues, the St. Anne group said that despite the fact that the men should be respected in the home, they were not to hinder them from progress concerning development in the home or in the church. The women of St. Anne group were free to do what they thought was good for the church. They stood for what they believed was good.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The research question is about women's activities and involvement in decision making in the Catholic Church; a case study of the Catholic Diocese of Chipata.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

According to the findings of this study, the women in the lay groups under discussion perform the similar activities in their parishes. They wash priestly robes, sweep inside and outside the church building, visit the sick, help the orphans, the aged and vulnerable people and fundraise for the seminarians. The activities that they perform differ from those of their male counterparts.

The findings also revealed that the women in the Catholic Women's League lay group make decisions and implement them though there are times when they are told not to go ahead with what they have decided. The Catholic Women's League lay group in a mixed set up seem to be stronger than those in other set ups.

The women in the patrilineal set up are able to make major decisions in the church unlike the way it is believed that the men in this kind of set up do not allow the women to have a say in meetings

and to make major decisions. According to the findings, the women in a patrilineal set up hold influential positions and they do not shun positions.

The women in the matrilineal set up have respect for the men and they usually get permission whenever they want to do certain things in their homes and at the church. They do make free decisions when they are on their own in their lay groups but when they mix with men in the parish council, they have little to say.

The priests work well with women from different lay groups. They acknowledge the works performed by women in the church and appreciate the decisions that the women make. The priests do not accept everything that the women decide to do in their lay groups unless where they feel it will benefit the church. There are times when women would decide to do certain things that would infringe on other Christians' rights. Under such circumstances, the priest would not agree with the women. The priests accept decisions made by either men or women as long as it is in conformity with the teachings of the Catholic Church. As for the uniform, the priests are not the ones to decide for the women but the women should make the decisions themselves. There are some questions that keep coming as to 'who will challenge the one who introduced the mutondo uniform?' 'Are all the women going to agree to the idea of changing the uniform?' 'Are the women able to make this major decision to change the uniform?' 'Is the Bishop going to accept the women's decision?'

The women should agree on one thing about the uniform before they get divided further. The uniform issue is dividing the women in the church and it should be considered a serious issue that needs urgent attention. All in all, the women in all the three parishes were free to speak out their views.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study have a number of implications for the church, the clergy and the lay groups. For the church to grow and also to make both men and women be considered to be equal in the way they are involved in the activities in the church and the way they make decisions, certain issues should be taken into consideration and be made clear. The study therefore has the following recommendations to the clergy, the lay groups and the parish council.

5.2.1 THE CLERGY

- i. The church should start thinking in the line of ordaining women as priests in the church if the women's decisions were to be considered at higher levels. The ordained women will stand in for their fellow women in the lay groups and help out in terms of the decisions they would be making in their lay groups. The ordained women would sit on highest levels of decision making boards with the male priests. If the issue of ordination becomes an issue of power struggle between men and women, then the very structure has to undergo a process of convention, a change of heart and attitude.
- ii. They should also acknowledge that women are influential and can perform wonders once given chance. The clergy should know that women's active involvement and women in leadership are essential for the church in order to deepen and enrich its identity and legitimise its mission as a community of equals, a process which cannot take place when only males are decision makers.
- iii. The clergy should understand the fact that women in the church constitute the largest number therefore, their decisions should be taken into consideration in most cases.
- iv. The parish priests should be listening and support women and avoid frustrating them.
- v. The clergy should always move with time, having in mind that time is dynamic. There are changes taking place around. They should read the times and know the type of women they are dealing with. They should realise that some women are learned and enlightened.
- vi. The parish priests should not have a closed mind and always think that they know everything but they should consider decisions made by women to be as important as decisions made by men.
- vii. Women and men should be treated the same in the church because the Bible says they are equal in the eyes of God, "so God he created man in his own image, in the image of God, He created them; male and female, He created them," (Genesis 1; 27). The sitting arrangement where men sit in one separate row and women on their own in church should be discouraged especially that women are more than men in attendance. Women sit squeezed in one row while men sit comfortably with a lot of free space. (According to the parishes under study).
- viii. Women in the lay groups should not be forced to wear a headscarf when receiving the Holy Communion. Some catholic sisters have made the wearing of veils as an option and because of this; some of them have stopped wearing them. Although it is said that the rule

of wearing headscarves was made by women themselves at the diocesan conference of the laity, the women do not encourage their fellow women to be wearing the headscarf when receiving the Eucharist. The rule which is not in the interest of most of the girls and women will make people stay away from prayers, or they will go to other churches. The clergy should help the Christians especially those in the diocesan committee of the laity to avoid making unpopular decisions which would bring misunderstanding among the members.

- ix. The issue of uniform should be resolved as soon as possible. It is not good for the clergy to remain silent and pretend that all is well with the women when they know that there is a heated disagreement and misunderstanding among the women. The clergy are the ones holding higher positions in the church. Therefore, they must help the situation before things get to the worst. The same controversial uniform was introduced by the clergy. Let the clergy help out the situation by implementing what the women have decided since it is them who have the final say.

5.2.2 THE LAY GROUPS

- i. Women should first and foremost believe that the criteria for ministry is not the biological factor of being male or female, or the social construction of gender roles but the deciding factor should be the charisma of the individual for a particular ministry of service.
- ii. All the lay groups should work towards the growth of the church and their spiritual growth. They should work according to their constitutions to avoid clashes.
- iii. The decisions that they make in the lay groups should have meaning to all in the church. They should avoid decisions that would frustrate other lay groups.
- iv. Women's lay groups should not compete in whatever activities they are involved in at the church but instead they should support one another.
- v. Women should not feel jealous of one another in their lay groups. They should stop thinking that one group is superior to the other as this would derail them from their objectives in their groups.
- vi. Women should make a concrete decision on the issue of uniform. They should not wait for other people to sort out their problems when they know quite alright that if they got united,

things would work out for them. If they cannot agree on one uniform, then they should agree that each lay group should maintain its own uniform which the members should be free to use during the events.

- vii. One group should be proud of the other that has the charisma of performing certain duties. For example, if the St. Anne lay group has a fundraising walk where they want to raise money to help the priests, the Catholic Women's League lay group should be proud and support that activity. This will make decision makers realize that women are united and are supposed to be let free to make decisions because the fruits will be seen from their work
- viii. The women should support what other women have decided especially when they have seen that it will help the church unless where they differ on the principle of their constitution.
- ix. Women should not shun positions in the church because it is these same positions which will help them make major decisions and influence the decisions. It would be easy for the women to get up positions in the parish executive because they are the majority whenever they meet with men during council meetings. They out-number the men during elections of parish executive members. The women should participate in major decision making at parish councils and even at diocese levels.
- x. Women should have the courage to go ahead with what they have decided in their groups not to be hindered by men. The normal channel of communication should be followed but they should always stand and fight for what is right.
- xi. Women should realize that the church works in close collaboration with them in their lay groups; therefore, they should know that they are as important as their male counterparts. They should not fear to make major decisions in the church. All women groups should network in solidarity as Chakalakaal rightly puts "women in their lay groups should develop positive self image coupled with self confidence and courage, careful planning and strategising, persuasive communication skills, persistence and perseverance" (Chakalakaal,2004:309)

5.2.3 JOACHIM LAY GROUP

- i. The St. Joachim group acknowledges the fact that women constitute the largest number in the church. Therefore, the women should be given chance to decide what they want to do in their lay groups.
- ii. Men should accept that women are the ones who are in the fore-front in the performance most of the activities in the church. Some men in most cases are Sunday Christians who only appear on Sunday and disappear only to resurface the following Sunday. They do not even mind who cleaned the benches where they sit on or the church in which they are praying from.
- iii. The men lay groups should emulate the good work that the women are doing in the church and support them in all ways. They should learn from women's lay groups which are already established.
- iv. It is high time men got over the cultural teachings that man is the head of the house and superior to women. They should get involved in the cleaning of the church, washing vestments, and cassocks and sweep the surroundings of the church they should get involved in all the activities that take place at the church.
- v. Men should understand why women during meetings do not participate actively. It is because of the way women have been cultured. Some women are able to make decisions and talk in front of men now. Men should encourage women to stand by whatever they decide to do in the church. The men should get involved in the fight for equality because by so doing, other men will understand that women are not inferior to men. Men should not always down look the decision made by women but should analyse and assess whether what the women have said make sense or not.

5.2.4 PARISH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

During council meetings, women should be given the chance to say something and men should listen and support them. The parish council executive should not be rigid. They should be allowing women to decide on their own. There are times when following the procedure delays progress. Women who represent lay groups should make sure they report correctly to both the parish council and their lay groups and avoid distortion of information. If during the women lay group meetings they agreed to do a particular event, the

representatives should report to the council the way they discussed in their meeting. When reporting to the group, they should report what was discussed in the council.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS

6.1 WOMEN'S LAY GROUPS

- i. What activities are women involved in at parish level?
.....
- ii. Are all women involved in these activities?
.....
- iii. What activities are you, as a lay group, involved in?
.....
- iv. Who described these activities for you?
.....
- v. Do you face any opposition from fellow women lay groups as you perform?
.....
- vi. How is your working relationship with men's lay groups as you perform such activities?

-
- vii. Do you make decisions in your lay groups?
.....
- viii. What decisions do you make in the church?
.....
- ix. How far do you go with the decisions you make in your lay groups (channel of communication)?
.....
- x. Does the church incorporate the decisions that you make in your lay groups?
.....
- xi. What challenges do you face when implementing the decisions you make at parish level?
.....
- xii. How do you go about when your decisions are honoured?
.....
- xiii. In what ways do patrilineal, matrilineal or mixed culture set ups influence decision making between the genders in the parish?
.....
- xiv. The hierarchy of the church leadership is male dominated. How are your decisions affected by this set up?
.....
- xv. The church has many lay groups with different constitutions. How do other women lay groups affect the decisions and activities that you make/do in your group?
.....
- xvi. How do you receive other groups' views?
.....
- xvii. How do men lay groups react to what you decide in your lay group?
.....
- xviii. How do you relate with the parish priest?
.....
- xix. How do the women's lay groups deal with differences arising among the groups?

.....
xx. How does the church leadership help in the reconciliation of these differences?
.....

.....
xxi. What is your comment on how the church regards the women in the church?
.....

6.1.2 MEN’S LAY GROUPS

i. What activities are you involved in as a lay group at parish level?
.....

ii. How do you relate with women’s lay groups?
.....

iii. Do you put in as much as women do in church activities? Do you agree with what women do at your parish in terms of church activities?
.....

iv. Are there specific duties for men and women?
.....

v. Do you think men are doing more work than women?
.....

vi. How do you share responsibilities with women at your parish?
.....

- vii. Are you affected by the cultural set up in your parish (patrilineal, matrilineal and mixed cultures)?
.....
- viii. Do you agree with what the women decide to do in as lay groups?
.....
- ix. From your observation, do women implement what they decide to do? What could be reasons for implementing or not implementing their decisions?
.....
- x. What do you understand by gender equality?
.....
- xi. Do you think women should take up positions in the church? Give reasons for answer.
.....

8.0 PARISH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

- i. What is the composition of the parish council?
.....
- ii. What is the membership of the parish executive council?
.....
- iii. How many men and women?
.....
- iv. How is the participation between sexes?
.....
- v. Do the women from different lay groups represent their groups' views in the council such that there are no complaints if their decisions are turned down?
.....
- vi. Are the decisions made in these lay groups welcomed by the council?
.....

vii. What happens when the decisions made by women are turned down by the parish council?
.....

viii. What happens when their decisions are welcomed?
.....

ix. Do the women in the parish council participate in the discussions to you expectations?
.....

x. How do they cooperate with other women’s lay groups?
.....

xi. Does your parish council agree with what they decide?
.....

xii. How far do the decisions they make go?

xiii. Do you think at times men hinder women from what they want to do?
.....

xiv. How does the cultural background affect decision making between genders?
.....

xv. Are women already to take up positions in the parish council? Are men already to accept that?
.....

xvi. What is your comment on the fact that women’s decisions are shot down?
.....

xvii. Do think that priests at times hinder women from performing good activities for example when they want to fundraise for their lay group?
.....

FOR PRIESTS

- i. How is the attendance of men and women in your parish?
.....
- ii. Are both men and women active in the church?
.....
- iii. What activities are the men involved in at your parish?
.....
- iv. What activities are women involved in at your parish?
.....
- v. Do men and women perform the same duties in your parish?
.....
- vi. Do women participate in decision making in your parish?
.....
- vii. As a parish priest, do you always agree to the decisions made by the women?
.....
- viii. What is reaction of women if you turn down their decisions?

.....
ix. Do you think men are a hindrance to women's implementation of their decisions?

.....
x. What would be your reaction to the ordination of women to priesthood in the church?

.....