

The NATURE and MISSION of the CHURCH.
A Stage on the way to a common Statement.

Nairobi Study Group.

The Nature and Mission of the Church

**Comments by
Philomena N. Mwaura**

I have read the WCC document on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* and found it to be very comprehensive in its articulation of the commonly held ecclesiological convictions by various ecumenical Christian Churches of what constitutes the Church and its mission in the world. Of significance to me is the affirmation that the church is one, Catholic, holy and Apostolic and is defined by a common partaking in the life of God who as Trinity is the source and focus of all communion.

The document recognizes that the Church's Catholicity for example rests on a relationship of interactive, mutual, accountability. Despite differences that may arise regarding the necessary conditions for full communion, there is however a consensus about the mutual recognition of our common baptism in the Trinitarian faith of the Church as expressed in the Nicene Creed, a mutual recognition of ministries and agreement on a common life in Christ as well as the readiness for conciliar deliberation and mutual solidarity whenever required.

The understanding of the nature and mission of the Church is based on Scripture for scripture is normative and provides a uniquely privileged source for our understanding of it. I also like the idea that the mission is basic to the identity of the Church. Also the idea that the church and her mission transcend all differences of ecclesiastical organization, creedal articulation, culturally and contextually adapted liturgical rites and practices of Christian life and discipline.

The study document can help me to take concrete steps towards Christian unity through recognizing that there is much that binds us as Christians for we have a common faith, a common source of that faith and the Gospel of love applies to all of us despite our differences in living out that faith. We are also bound by a common humanity that has its source in God.

Concrete steps would be educating our brothers and sisters in the faith about this common witness and not emphasizing the differences but at the same time not losing our identity as for example Catholics.

At the level of humanitarian assistance, there is no problem in working together and finding much that binds us. The problem arises when our different theological standpoints and theologies are articulated.

The document should outline clearly how differences that enhance disunity can be addressed and not merely say that differences should be celebrated.