

TANGAZA COLLEGE

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

**The Specificity of the Zairean Rite
vis-à-vis the Roman Rite**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, research and reflection. It has never been submitted anywhere in academic sphere for credit purpose.

Signed.....*Achille Mpila*.....

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Date: *Feb 7th 2001*.....

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor:

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DEDICATION

To my late father Julien Mpila
and my mother Marie-José Mubebwala,
Fountains of my intellectual,
spiritual and missionary maturity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In bringing the Gospel of incarnation to the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), the Episcopal Conference wisely thought of initiating a liturgical celebration that would fit for those under her care. The "Zairean Rite" is the result of all the efforts made by the Episcopal Conference, to have the gospel inculturated.

Many people have helped me directly or indirectly in bringing this essay into fruition, since its conception. I am deeply grateful to father Rolandi Giovanni SDB, my supervisor, for his availability and concern which oriented this essay. I would also like to remember the Episcopal Conference, of the Democratic Republic of Congo and all those in one way or another contributed to the elaboration of the Zairean Rite.

In a special way, I would like to thank my SVD confreres both in Congo and Kenya, my parents and relatives, who played a major role in the redaction of this essay. Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to Fr. Tom Leyden, Guillaume, Joseph, Alpha, Leon, Modeste and Raphael, without forgetting Fr. Cyrille, Fr. Lievain and Fr. Roger who have been instrumental in my research.

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Introduction

The last three decades have been a very decisive period for inculturation in the Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Among the areas where the Church put a very strong emphasis of inculturation, that of liturgical celebrations seems to be the most striking. It is this last point which has attracted us most and is going to be our concern in this dissertation. Over the past three decades the Episcopal Conference of Congo worked hand in hand with the Holy See in the field of inculturation. As we already said, being concerned about the liturgical celebration, we must acknowledge that there came up something that the Africans can be proud of.

Having made great efforts in inculturating the Eucharistic celebration for Africa, mostly for Congo, the Church in Congo was finally rewarded with what they deserved. A new rite is born, allowing the people of Congo to pray as Africans and specifically as Congolese. This new way of celebrating the Eucharist reflects an authentic, original and typical African and Congolese celebration.

Being the fruit of a hard work not only of the Episcopal Conference of Congo, but of the Holy See as well, the new rite is known with the title: "*Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire*" (now Congo). It is called this because it is a rite that is rooted in the Roman Rite. In our work, we will also be using the term "Zairean Rite" meaning the Zairean Mass.

Captivated by the originality of the new rite, I am also concerned with what the Zairean Rite needs to be in days to come. It is in this line that we will not only praise the Zairean Rite, but we will show how it needs to be improved as well, especially when we

will have to assess it.

Divided as it is into four chapters, our work will concentrate on the African cultural heritage in the Zairean Rite, the Eucharistic celebration according to the Roman Rite, the specificity of the Zairean Rite and the assessment of the Zairean Rite. The first chapter deals with some of the African values that are important for a liturgical celebration of this kind. The second chapter tries to show how the Mass is structured in the Roman Missal, for that is the root of the Zairean rite. The third chapter sketches out the uniqueness of the Zairean Rite vis-à-vis the Roman Rite. This is a key for us to assess the Zairean Rite. The fourth and last chapter is where we will assess the Zairean rite. In assessing it, we will deal with the merits it has and the challenges it encounters.

All together, this essay modestly analyses the specificity of the Zairean Rite, so that, following all the challenges, the Episcopal Conference of Congo, theologians and the Church in general may help the Zairean Rite to become a complete rite.

Chapter One: **The Zairean Rite, and its African Theologico-Cultural Heritage**

I.1. Missionary situation before the birth of the Zairean Rite

We all know that Christianity was brought to Africa by foreign missionaries while Africans knew God already. Many Africans accepted Christianity and were baptized. Christianity was warmly welcomed on the African soil¹. Following the fact that Christianity came to Africa with foreign missionaries, it is quite understandable that African liturgical celebrations were performed with a western background. Until some foreign missionaries together with some native theologians started thinking of how to celebrate the liturgy in an African way, especially in a Zairean way, otherwise formerly there was no mention of African values in the liturgical celebrations. All liturgical celebrations of that time were rooted in the western culture.

Later on, when the idea of dialoguing with cultures came up, as an effort for a better evangelization, African cultures were then allowed to bring into the Catholic Church their contribution.

I.2. Need for a new Liturgical Celebration

The Zairean rite is for sure an initiative of the Episcopal conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo, after they had understood that a new way of celebrating the liturgy was more suitable. Knowing what took place a year after the independence of

¹ Cf. John Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion, 2nd Ed (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1991), 190

the Democratic Republic of Congo (1961), Elochukwu Uzukwu writes in his book “Worship as Body Language”, what the bishops of Congo were thinking about the liturgy. They came to realize that,

*The liturgy introduced by the missionaries was alien to the Africans, and that a return to the sources would open the way to fundamental adaptations*².

This is, in my opinion, the idea that has always been one of the preoccupations of the Vatican Council II, as far as the liturgy was concerned. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 30 unceasingly calls for the promotion of an active and a full participation of the people in the liturgy, stating that,

*By means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes*³.

I.2.1. Possibilities offered by the Church

Sacrosanctum Concilium 37 – 40, somehow try to support the concern of the Bishops of Congo, about the liturgical celebration that seems not to be understood by the people. In these pages of the document of Vatican II, the Magisterium agrees that anything that harmonizes with the true and authentic spirit of our faith is welcome in the church and especially in the domain of the liturgy.

This encouraged the Episcopal Conference of Congo to go ahead with the idea of having the Mass adapted to the theologico-cultural heritage of the Congolese people. For

² Elochukwu Uzukwu, Worship as Body Language, Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 298

³ Austin Flannery, Vatican Council II (Bandra, Bombay: St Pauls, 1995), 30

Vatican II this is a way of urging the Church to get engaged in the progress of the liturgy, in order to reinforce its missionary character. This is clearly stated in number 38 of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in these terms,

*Provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved, provision shall be made, when revising the liturgical books, for legitimate variations and adaptation to different groups, regions, peoples, especially in mission countries*⁴.

I. 2. 2. Call for the Africanization of the Evangelization in Africa

The visit of Pope Paul VI to Africa, precisely to Uganda in 1969, boosted to hundred percent what was the intention of the bishops of Congo. On this occasion, the Pope did not hesitate to stimulate all the bishops of Africa to try their best, to have Evangelization in Africa adapted to the culture of Africa. These are the words that he used:

*Une question demeure très vive et suscite beaucoup de discussions, se présente à votre oeuvre évangélisatrice, celle de l'adaptation de l'Évangile, de l'Église, à la culture africaine*⁵.

For Pope Paul VI, the adaptation of Evangelization in the African continent into the local culture was an urgent work to be done, so that the people of Africa may really understand what they believe in. After this strong invitation, the bishops of Africa tried their best to meet these expectations of the Church. In Congo, the Episcopal conference

⁴ Austin Flannery, Vatican II, p. 32

⁵ Conférence Episcopale du Zaïre, Présentation de la liturgie de la Messe, Supplément au Missel Romain pour les Diocèses du Zaïre (Kinshasa: Editions du Secretariat General, 1989), 7

of Congo came up with the idea of having the Eucharist celebrated in a Congolese style. Hence the incubation of the Zairean rite began.

1. 2. 3. Gestation and Birth of the Zairean Rite

Since 1961, the Episcopal conference of Congo had come to the agreement of having the Church in Congo to be evangelized in a deeper way; meaning, to use the inculturation in order to make people understand the message of the Good News while seeing their own cultures playing an important part in it. This option led them to the elaboration of a project of a text for Mass, bringing in some elements of Congolese cultures, with the aim of having a “Congolese Rite”. This happened in 1969, under the guidance of the Episcopal Commission for the Evangelization.

For ten years, this project was being tested countrywide, with the intention of allowing each and every culture to make corrections and bring in new elements according to the customs. The year 1979 was the year that the experimentations were compiled and presented to Rome. From 1979 to 1985, there took place discussions, corrections, and modifications about the proposed “Congolese Rite”, and in 1985, the Congregation for the Divine worship ended up suggesting some corrections to be made. Finally, the rite was approved on 30th April 1988, with a modification about the title. The new title is, “Missel Romain pour les diocèses du Zaïre”, which is the equivalent of, the Roman Missal for the dioceses of Zaïre (⁶).

From here, we shall consecrate the rest of the chapter to a closer look on the theologico-cultural elements in this new rite.

⁶ Cf. Conférence Episcopale du Zaïre, Supplément, p. 9

I.3. The Zairean Rite and the African Cultural Heritage

The Eucharistic celebration in Congo, as in any other place, is influenced by the values that belong to the African cultures, such as the oral tradition, body language and so on. At this very point, it is necessary to know something about those African values, which have been incorporated in the Eucharistic celebration in Congo. We shall limit ourselves to two values: oral tradition and body language.

I.3.1. African Orality in the Zairean Rite

The text of Mass in the Roman Missal for the dioceses of Congo bears, without any doubt, the mark of the African Orality. It is very encouraging, according to Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, to have African orality incorporated in the Christian liturgy for:

*Oral literature and traditions are an important source, a living stream, of an African narrative theology of inculturation*⁷.

If we are to bring about a meeting or harmonizing between the African Orality and the Scriptures, we will have to affirm that African Orality is the Old Testament of Africa. This is not a surprising phenomenon, as it had already taken place in the first centuries of the history of Christianity. In those first moments of Christianity, the Presider (Priest) had no text to follow during the Eucharist and the prayers were being said according to the spontaneity of the priest. Gradually, to avoid heresies, and because of the lack of accuracy

⁷ Joseph Healey & Donald Sybertz, Towards an African Narrative Theology (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1997), 34

in the sacred eloquence, the Church felt the need of having a written text for the Eucharist⁸.

I.3.1.1. The use of words in the Zairean liturgy

Let us consider for instance the use of words and metaphors in the Zairean liturgy. It is important to underline that, in Africa, the word is a basic element of communication that is used in a variety of forms like rituals, song, and poetry. Following this, in the formulation of prayers in the “Zairean Rite”, attention is given to the use of a beautiful style of language. Hence, expressive sonorities, repetitions of words or letters and use of images are frequent in order to create harmony. The repetition of words is meant to harmonize a rhythm or to insist strongly on an idea which is to be included. For instance in the singing of the preface in Lingala, we have:

“ *Totondo yo botondi iiiiiiiiii* ” (literally, we give you thanks).

I.3.1.2. Use of metaphors in the Zairean liturgy

In the liturgical celebration of the Zairean rite, metaphors play a very important role. In general, Africans use metaphors to express things in a pleasant way. The Zairean rite as well, does not escape this African way of doing. That is why the Zairean liturgy is full of metaphors. Let us consider this metaphor in the Zairean mass: “*Mokonzi, yo ozali moyi moye bakotalaka te na miso te*”⁹ (lingala). Which we translate literally in these

⁸ Cf. Laurent Mpongo, L'Eucharistie Chrétienne en République Démocratique du Congo: Apports culturels et théologiques (Kinshasa: L'Épiphanie, 1999), 35

⁹ Archidiocèse de Kinshasa, Toyembani, Nzembo na mindule (Kinshasa: Ed. Centre d'Études Pastorales, 1978), 23

words: *"You the sun we cannot fix our eyes upon"*. In this metaphor God is compared to the sun that cannot be seen with open eyes, just to say that God is transcendent. It is a way of showing the reverence that God deserves, due to his divine majesty. Another metaphor is found in the prayer that is said during the penitential rite; this metaphor sees sin as something that is harmful to the human life. This is a way of saying that sin breaks the relationship between God and his people. This metaphor goes like this:

*lokola sonzo ekangemi na loposo mpe ekomele makila ma moto se bongo
lisumu likoteli biso mpe libebisi bomoi bwa biso*¹⁰.

It can be literally translated as follows:

"as the blood-sucker sticks onto our skin and sucks our blood, evil has come upon us. Our life has been diminished".

1.3.2. Body Expression

The Eucharistic celebration in Congo calls people to participate fully and actively, and makes of the body an indispensable element for a good participation in the celebration. Uzukwu, in his book "Worship as Body Language" tries to show the relevance of the involvement of the human body in our prayers, as he says:

The African experience of body and gestures displays humans in the universe grasped as a totality. The body is the center of the total manifestation of person in gestures. In gestures (verbal and non-verbal) the self reveals itself, from head to toe, as one complex reality...¹¹.

Let us remind ourselves that, it is only through the use of one's body that one can express or communicate as an individual and a social being with his God, his ancestors

¹⁰ Archidiocese de Kinshasa, *Toyembni*, p. 22

¹¹ Uzukwu, *Worship*, p. 10

and his fellow human beings. Hence in elaborating the Zairean rite, the use of the body believed to be a basic condition for a better prayer, was given an important place. That is why the Eucharistic celebration in Congo recommends the use of body language in accordance with what is being expressed.

We can then realize that, among other body movements, dancing seems to be the most remarkable in the Zairean liturgy. About the importance of dancing among the African people John Mbiti says,

*The religious rituals, ceremonies and festivals are always accompanied by music, singing and ... dancing. Music gives outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life, and it is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life. It helps to unite the singing or dancing group and to express its fellowship and participation in life*¹².

The liturgical dance makes the main celebrant, other ministers and the whole assembly participate in the vital force of Jesus, emanating from the altar, which symbolizes Jesus Christ. In this way, we can say that, the altar should not only be seen as a simple table on which bread and wine are put for the Eucharistic celebration, but for Africans, it symbolizes Jesus himself as well.

In the Eucharistic celebration in the Congolese rite this kind of dance is meant to help people to take part in the life of Jesus Christ himself, since before him the heart, the spirit and the body form one and only one human being vis-à-vis the sacred reality on which his destiny depends. Nwaka Chris writes that,

¹² Mbiti, Introduction, p. 27

*the dance around the altar by the ministers ...shows the desire to communicate with the vital force associated with the altar of the sacrifice of Christ*¹³.

I.4. Christian Reflection in the Zairean Rite

If we take a closer look at the Roman Missal for the dioceses of Congo, we will certainly notice at first sight that its way of celebrating is rooted in Christian theology, such as: the theology of the body, theology of participating, theology of sacrifice and the theology of body prayer. Here is what we mean by referring to all these kinds of theology.

I. 4. 1. Theology of the Body

Before anything else it is important for me to consider what Mbiti thinks about prayer in sub-Saharan Africa. Mbiti believes that in sub-Saharan Africa,

*praying strengthens the links between man and God, and man with and his fellow man. Prayers help to remove personal and communal anxieties, fears, frustrations, and worries. They also help to cultivate man's dependence on God and increase his spiritual outreach*¹⁴.

In this perspective, the black African looks at prayer as the elevation of the heart towards God. When praying, the African offers the whole of one's body to God. In the context of the Eucharist in Congo, apart from the faith which comes in prayer, the praying person does not only need one's spirit and soul to communicate with one's God; but the use of words, associated with the body language (body gestures and postures), to make the prayer so effective in all its aspects.

¹³ Chris Egbulem Nwaka, The Power of Africentric Celebrations: Inspirations from the Zairean Rite (New York: The crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 101

¹⁴ Mbiti, Introduction, p. 63

It is unfair to talk of a human being without bearing in mind that a person is or has a body that permits him/her to be part of one's world, one's community and one's society. Saying that a human being is a body means that communication is not complete without body language. This is another way of saying that one cannot claim to communicate without involving the body language.

The human body is a signifying body situated in time and space, for it is such a precious actualization of the *raison d'être* of a human person, as the creature par excellence. The human body becomes therefore the best means of thanksgiving to God. We can say without hesitation that body language is indispensable for a better prayer for humankind in general; and the African in particular as far as the liturgical celebration in Congo is concerned.

What Kabasele is concerned about, is the fact that no matter what it is, a body movement, a sign or a gesture, performed for a liturgical purpose, is meant to have a share in God's plan for the salvation of humanity. Hence, the human body should be used for our prayer of thanksgiving to God because,

It is necessary for us to hear sounds and words, for the Son of God himself has become Word and heard sounds and words, in order to speak to us. It is necessary for us to savor sweet odors in order to be able to guess at the delights of the presence of God; we touch the holiness of God by embracing God's altars and the icons of God's glory in the saints and by taking off our shoes in the places where God is revealed¹⁵.

¹⁵ Francois Kabasele Lumbala, Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1998), 5

1.4.2. Theology of Participation

If one attends the celebration of the Eucharist in Congo, he will without a doubt realize that people do participate in the celebration and that they do not assist at it, as if it were a simple play at which people are only spectators. This participation can be observed at three levels: participation in the ritual, spiritual participation and sacrificial participation.

1.4.2.1. Participating in the Ritual

In accordance with the liturgical celebration in Congo, to take part in the ritual means that the praying assembly is asked to follow the external aspect of the ritual. During the ceremony the participants take the position that is required (raising their hands for praying, standing, sitting...). For some, this participation may look meaningless, but knowing the importance of body language in prayer, this becomes meaningful.

1.4.2.2. Participation in the spiritual aspects

Participation to the spiritual aspect is linked to the interiorization of the gospel message. That is why at this specific moment, the praying assembly is invited to be very attentive to what is being celebrated in order for them to understand and enter the spiritual aspect of the Eucharist. In this way, they may have their lives influenced by the Good News they have heard, in order to implement it in their relation with God, and fellow human beings.

Participation in the spiritual aspect also helps to correct the automatism that was created by the participation in the ritual, for sometimes people, after performing the same

gesture very often, arrive at the point of performing it as a routine without seeking its real meaning.

I.4.2.3. Participation in the Sacrifice

Participation in the sacrifice of the Eucharistic celebration appears to be a perfect combination of the “participation in the ritual” and the “participation in the spiritual aspect”. This participation helps believers to enter into a deep communion with God, with neighbors and the universe¹⁶.

This is seen during one’s contribution to the Church especially during “collection” and during the sharing of peace (kiss of peace). The faithful are also requested to extend their actions outside the Church precisely in their milieu of life, living in perfect fraternity.

I.4.3. Theology of Sacrifice

As recommended by the church, the Eucharist in Congo is built on the theology of the Eucharistic prayer. In the Christian tradition, the word "Eucharist" does not evoke the actual Holy Mass or Holy Sacrament at first. Rather it reminds us of the “thanksgiving action”. Ipso facto, the Christian Eucharist is first of all a magnificent Prayer of request of blessings found in the Scriptures, which is the equivalent of the Jewish “*Berakah*”¹⁷.

In this line, the Eucharistic prayer is believed to be first of all a prayer. In the course of time, Christians started to use the word “Eucharist” to designate the Holy Mass, which is the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Mass is the visible sacrifice, representing the blood sacrifice of Jesus, which took place once for all

¹⁶ Cf. Mpongo, L'Eucharistie, p. 52

¹⁷ Cf. Mpongo, L'Eucharistie, p. 52

on the Cross. The Eucharistic prayer in the Zairean rite brings the praying assembly closer to God, and to thank God for all the good things done to the human race. This kind of prayer stimulates in people the desire to follow the divine will, and the Eucharistic prayer has such a capacity of stimulating people to do the will of God. The Eucharistic prayer gets this capacity from the fact that it comprises three important elements such as praise, thanksgiving/supplication, and doxology. The importance of the Eucharistic prayer is described by Mpongo as follows,

*une louange à Dieu mêlé à une action de grâces qui se réfère aux merveilles opérées par Dieu en faveur de son peuple, la supplication pour que Dieu continue à s'occuper de son peuple et, enfin une petite conclusion, en l'occurrence, la doxologie finale*¹⁸.

The concern of the Zairean rite is that of making the Eucharistic prayer as rich as possible, in order to bring people closer to God.

¹⁸ Mpongo, L'Eucharistie, p. 6

Chapter Two:

The Eucharistic Celebration in the Roman Missal

In this section of our work, we are going to deal with the instruction on the Eucharistic celebration, according to the Roman Missal. This is to help us see clearly the distinction between the Zairean Eucharistic celebration and the Eucharistic celebration in the Roman Missal.

Going straight to the point (description of the Mass in the Roman Missal), let us take into consideration some important points; such as the ministries during the Eucharistic celebration.

II.1. People Involved in the Celebration

Any Eucharistic celebration has a better meaning, when all the ministers required play their role actively. Those ministers are: the Presider, the Deacon (if possible), acolytes, lectors, commentator and the ushers. The ministries during a Eucharistic celebration can be classified in two categories: those belonging to the sacred orders and those belonging to the rank of lay people.

II.1.1 The Ministry of the Sacred Order

We place the ministry of the Sacred Orders at the top of the Eucharistic celebration. The minister of the Eucharistic celebration is a Bishop or a priest. When we use the term “Presider”, what we mean is the minister of the Eucharistic celebration.

During mass, the Presider plays the role of president of the ceremony. In other words, all other ministries are united under the presidency of the priest. He is visibly the head of the assembly. The responsibility entrusted to him is of capital importance, since he becomes ipso facto the guide of the people in the liturgical celebration. Hence, during the eucharistic celebration, it is the responsibility of the Presider,

*to animate the community, to set the tone for the act of worship and throughout to maintain the action of the people... He must be helping them not merely to say prayers and sing chants, but to move towards God and be united with him, which is the purpose of the whole action.*¹⁹

In order to play his role more effectively, the priest should make thorough preparations prior to worship. This is to say that the celebration of the Mass does not take place without the participation of the people and the preparation of what is needed. Being one of the members of the worshipping community, the Presider proclaims the Good News to his brothers and sisters; and united with them he offers the sacrifice to God, through Christ. The priest, who is to serve both God and the worshipping community, must help people to see in all that is done during the liturgical celebration, the presence of the living Christ.

The second office in the sacred orders is that of the Deacon. He too has an important role to play during the Eucharistic celebration. As the helper of the Presider, the deacon is the one to proclaim the Gospel. Apart from the proclamation of the Gospel, the deacon also makes his intervention at many other parts of the Eucharistic celebration which are mentioned below. The deacon is the one to prepare the altar before the

¹⁹J.D. Crichton, Understanding the Mass, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 70

beginning of the liturgy of the Eucharist. It is the deacon who directs the assembly at moments such as the proclamation of the mystery of faith, the sharing of peace; he is the one to conclude the Eucharistic celebration saying, "The Mass is ended, let us go in peace to serve and love God".

Like the Presider, the deacon must also adopt attitudes that will lead people to a full participation in the liturgy.

II. 1. 2. The people of God (Laity)

During our liturgical celebrations, the ministers in the sacred orders occupy the first position as facilitators; after them comes the assembly of the faithful. Among the people whom the priest leads during the Eucharist, others choose to participate while helping in different ways according to their gifts and talents. These ministers are: cantors, acolytes, lectors, commentator, ushers, and many more.

Due to its importance, there is need of saying something about the singing. For us Christians, singing during the Eucharist is the manifestation of our thirst to see the Lord coming in our midst (cf. Col 3:16). It is through singing that we show how happy our hearts are (cf. Ac 2:46), hence: "*He prays twice who sings well*"²⁰. There is a great need of having our singing prepared, so that we can have a well celebrated Eucharist.

²⁰ Collins, Instructions on the Revised Roman Rites, (London: Collins, Liturgical pub, 1985), 86

II.2. The Church that the Apostles left behind

The Church, following its tradition, must remain faithful to the Eucharistic heritage that Christ gave us through his apostles. The following points should be considered in our Eucharistic celebration.

“The Unchanging Faith”: the Eucharistic celebration is a heritage that we Christians received from Christ himself as a “memorial of his death and resurrection”. In this sense, this is the work of our redemption that is still carried out every single moment we celebrate the memory of his sacrifice. Our Eucharistic celebration remains the action of the whole Church and our way of taking part in it. We can then say that this awareness must always be brought in whenever we celebrate the Eucharist.

“Endless Tradition”: with the Holy Spirit keeping us together in spite of our different ways of celebrating the Eucharist (prayers, rites and so on), we are called to preserve the deposit of faith unchanged²¹.

“Adaptation to Modern Conditions”: as time goes by, things change greatly; there is need of accommodating adaptations in celebrating the Eucharist, depending on different situations and circumstances in which we celebrate.

II.3. Individual Parts of the Mass in the Roman Missal

It makes more sense to know the structure of the Mass before highlighting the main parts of the Mass in this section. It is only then that we shall be able to grasp the comments that will be made.

²¹ Collins, Instructions, p.79

II. 3.1. The Structure of the Mass

A. Introductory Rites

- ❖ Entrance Song (veneration of Altar and salutation of People)
- ❖ Penitential Act (Appeal for Mercy)
- ❖ Hymn of Glory

B. Liturgy of the Word

- ❖ The Scripture Readings (Chants between the readings)
- ❖ The Homily
- ❖ The Profession of Faith
- ❖ The Prayer of the Faithful

C. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- ❖ Preparation of the Gifts
- ❖ The Eucharistic Prayer
- ❖ The Communion Rite
 - i. The Lord's Prayer
 - ii. The Rite of Peace
 - iii. The Breaking of Bread
 - iv. Agnus Dei
 - v. Communion

D. Concluding Rites

II.3.2. The Entrance Rites

The entrance rites also known as “Introductory rites”, comprise: the entrance song, the veneration of the altar and greeting of the people, the penitential act, the Kyrie, the Gloria, and the Collect (opening prayer).

As Christians, we believe that our coming together for worship is a call from God, for we are “ecclesia”, people of God (literally: “called together”, “assembled”).

*The entrance rites have the qualities of preparation and introduction, but more purposefully and more concretely, they enable the people to realize they are a community and to prepare to receive the word of God and to celebrate the Eucharist itself*²²

The entrance hymn is meant to accompany the entry of the Presider and all other ministers. It is here that the word of God is first heard, especially when it is directly connected with the Holy Scripture of the day. The entrance song fosters the sense of union among the gathered people. Giving meaning to the celebrant's entrance to the altar, the entrance hymn introduces the worshipping community to the liturgy of the day.

The celebrant's greeting becomes a clear sign that the assembly is gathered by the word of God. This greeting is obviously for Christians the sign of God's presence in the midst of his people.

*This greeting and the people's response manifest the mystery of the Church that is gathered together*²³

The short address by the priest is seen as a communication of the Spirit to the community. Here the main concern of the Presider is to make sure that his address helps the worshipping community to acknowledge the presence of the Spirit in them.

The penitential rite gives an opportunity to the gathered assembly to make a general confession, concluded with the priest's "absolution". The Kyrie is then the acclamation of the gathered faithful, who praise the Lord and implore his mercy.

²² Crichton Mass, p. 83

²³ Collins, Instructions, p. 89

During the Gloria, the Church assembled in the Spirit, praises the Father and the “Lamb” while raising the voices in prayer. The hymn of Glory is sung with the participation of the whole assembly. The Collect, coming after the hymn of Glory is,

*the prayer of the gathered community now aware that it stands in the presence of God*²⁴

In the prayer, the silent needs, aspirations and desires of the community (silent) are presented to the Father by the celebrant, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

II.3.3. Ministry of the Word

We come to the point where the Word of God is read and explained to the people. The Scripture readings, the homily, the Credo and the general intercessions are constituent of this important part of the Eucharistic celebration. This part of the Eucharistic celebration gives to the worshipping community the possibility to absorb God’s word in order to make its message part of themselves.

*When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and it is Christ present in his word, who proclaims the Gospel*²⁵

We have just said that during the reading of Scripture it is God himself who speaks to us; we must be active and attentive when the word of God is being proclaimed. Our part will then be to respond when needed by means of songs of acclamation (songs or hymns between readings or the responsorial psalm, and the Alleluia...)

²⁴ Crichton, Mass, p. 84

²⁵ Collins, Instructions, p. 84

Our participation which is supposed to continue in our living communities, starts when we pay attention to the proclamation of the Word of God. It is at this point that He (God) starts speaking to us of our redemption and salvation. The proclamation of the Word of God makes possible the contact between God and his people.

*The reading of the scriptures in the Mass is an event, it is a happening, it is the intervention of God in the here and now, in the affairs and minds of this gathered community*²⁶.

This event takes place in the Mass, because the history of salvation is still going on in the Church. It is here that God communicates his grace and offers himself to us once again. Through the Gospel reading, in conjunction with the Old Testament, the mystery of salvation is unfolded to the people.

II.3.3.1. Homily

The homily continues to proclaim the scriptures which by themselves, are a 'kerygma' of the New Testament. It is the explanation of the Word, based on the Scripture readings of the day; this is where God's saving deeds are actualized. With the homily, the eschatological time is in act, and the fullness of the divine life is communicated to individuals.

The Homily is proclamation, for it is the continuation of the proclamation of the Scripture readings which themselves are the continuation of the Kerygma of the New Testament.

²⁶ Collins, Instructions, p. 88

II.3.3.2. The Creed and the General Intercessions

The Creed is our principal response to the word of God that was proclaimed in the Scriptures and in the Homily. After having understood God's message, we need to come up with our response by a commitment of faith to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit ²⁷. The Church calls it "profession of faith", as it shows our adherence to Christ as a living person as well as to all he taught and requires of us.

God's message given to us during the reading of the Scriptures and the homily makes us understand what we really need in our Christian life. This becomes the source of inspiration for our spontaneous prayer at this specific time.

Since all the worshipping community cannot express their prayers loudly, priority is given to the prayers read by one of the ministers. They are usually prepared well in advance and are in accordance with the message of the Gospel of the day. However, the whole assembly is to join the minister reading the prayers and also offer theirs in silence²⁸. In many cases it is possible to have prayers that come spontaneously from the people.

II.3.4. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

II.3.4.1. Preparation of the Gifts

At this point, the Church puts emphasis on preparation rather than on offering. These, our gifts, acquire value only when they become part of the Eucharistic offering. What happens is that:

²⁷ Cf. Collins, *Instructions*, p. 92

²⁸ Cf. Flannery, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, p. 168

*They are signs of the people's desire to give themselves in Eucharistic worship, and since self and life and work are really one, they are signs, too, of the surrendering to God of what man has*²⁹.

As Christians, we believe that all that we have was given to us by God. To be grateful for this act of God's bounty, we need to give ourselves to him. This we do when we bring our contribution (money, bread, wine and so on). Whatever we give in view of the Eucharist, is a plea for the coming of Christ to the worshipping community in the Eucharistic action and a thanksgiving for our belonging and being; but this thanksgiving becomes effective only when it is unfolded in the self-offering of Christ. Bread, wine and other gifts are brought to the altar, while an accompanying hymn is being sung.

II.3.4.2. Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic prayer is the climax of our liturgical celebration. It is during the Eucharistic prayer that the entire assembly, united with Christ, come to acknowledge God's deeds and offer the sacrifice of his beloved Son. The most important elements of the Eucharistic prayer are: Thanksgiving, Acclamation, Epiclesis, Narrative of Institution and the final Doxology. We must consider that

*The prayer is not just as bringing about the presence of Christ but as making the great thanksgiving memorial that made the great redeeming actions of Christ present and enabling the community to enter into them*³⁰.

²⁹ Collins, Instructions, p. 96

³⁰ Collins, Instructions, p. 97

II.3.4.3. Communion Rite

The elements of the Communion Rite are: the Lord's prayer, the sign of peace, Lamb of God, communion. Generally, the Church uses the communion rite in order

to emphasize the brotherly love, the spirit of reconciliation that goes with it and the unity of Christians who are made on and by the one bread that is the body of Christ ³¹.

Considering that our Eucharistic celebration is the Paschal meal, Christ's body and blood are to be given to the faithful who are well disposed and believe it to be his spiritual food. At this specific section of the Eucharist, the Lord's prayer allows us to ask for our Christian daily bread (the body of Christ), and to be reconciled with our fellow human beings before offering our gifts to God (Matt 5:23-24).

The sign of peace that becomes the sharing of body and blood of Christ, as children of God, is a prayer for the peace and unity of the Church and of the entire humankind; it becomes an expression of mutual love among the worshippers, before receiving the one bread that makes them one body in Christ. This is what the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians puts in words:

In communion we who are many are made one body in the one bread of life which is Christ (1Cor 10:17.)

Following all these preparations, comes the moment for the faithful to share in the sacrifice which is being celebrated, by receiving the body and blood of the Lord by means of consecrated hosts and wine. After having received the body and blood of Christ, the

³¹ Collins, Instructions, p. 110

worshipping community makes a thanksgiving prayer, to show their gratitude to the loving and caring Father.

11.3.5. Concluding Rite

The concluding rite has two important stages, which are described as follows: the first stage is the one that takes place when the priest greets and blesses the people, before entering the last stage that puts an end to the celebration as such. In this last stage, the priest is to ask the whole congregation to implement all that each and every one has learnt from God's message by doing good actions and continue praising the Lord.

Chapter Three:

The Specificity of the Zairean Rite vis-à-vis the Roman Rite.

The difference between the Zairean rite and the Roman rite is seen at different levels. In the first chapter of our work we wrote more about the specificity of the Zairean rite, as it is being nourished by the African cultural heritage; but in this very chapter, the emphasis will be put on the liturgical celebration as such without forgetting its African root. We will here be dealing with the structural and the ceremonial character of the Zairean rite.

Before giving details on this distinction between the Zairean rite and the Roman Rite, we give the outline of the approved structure of the Zairean Mass.

III. 1. The Structure of the Zairean Liturgy

❖ The Introductory Rite:

- Entrance of the announcer: welcome of the assembly, invitation to worship
- Entrance procession of the Presider and ministers
- Veneration of the altar
- Salutation of the people and introduction of the liturgy
- Invocation of saints and ancestors
- Song of acclamation (Gloria)
- Opening prayer

❖ The liturgy of the Word includes:

- The first reading, responsorial psalm, and second reading
- The enthronement and proclamation of the Gospel
- The Homily
- Profession of faith (Credo)
- The penitential rite
- The rite/kiss of peace

- The prayer of the faithful
- ❖ **The liturgy of the Eucharist includes:**
 - Procession to the altar with the gifts
 - The Eucharistic Prayer
 - The Lord's Prayer
 - Communion and Thanksgiving
 - Prayer after communion
- ❖ **The concluding rite includes:**
 - Blessing
 - Recession

III.2. The Structural Uniqueness

As far as the structural character of the Zairean Mass is concerned, Nwaka say,

There are four areas in which the Zairean Mass demonstrates some structural independence from the Roman Rite: the position of the invocation of Saints, the inclusion of an invocation of ancestors, the position of the penitential rite and the position of the kiss of peace ³².

At the ceremonial level, we consider the most powerful role of the Presider, the role of the announcer, the scripture reading and the presentation of the gifts. When we compare the Roman and Zairean mass, it is obvious that they both have the same basic structures, which are: the introductory rite, the liturgy of the word, the liturgy of the Eucharist and the concluding rite. Only, the Zairean Mass comes to be different from the Roman Rite by the fact that the invocation of the saints takes place in the introductory part of the Mass; the invocation of the ancestors which is an entirely new element takes

³² Egbulem, The power, p. 66

place also in this part of the Mass.

Then the penitential rite, which is the third element of the structural specificity of the Zairean Mass, is used to conclude the liturgy of the word, while the Roman Mass has it in the introductory part (before the Gloria). The fourth element that makes the Zairean Mass different from the Roman Rite is the greeting of peace, which has been placed in the liturgy of the word, but not in the liturgy of the Eucharist as in the Roman Rite. Let us now have a closer look at these four points of the specificity of the Zairean Mass.

III. 2. 1. The Invocation of Saints and Ancestors

The invocation of Saints and the invocation of Ancestors form one part, for the simple reason that they almost mean the same thing. What a Western Christian calls 'saint' is what the African Christian will call 'ancestor'.

The Invocation of saints and the invocation of ancestors have both liturgical and anthropological aspects. Placed at the beginning of Mass, it is meant to help the assembly to acknowledge its state of poverty before God and therefore calls on God's intimate friends, the saints and ancestors to intercede on its behalf; because as Africans, we understand God as "the God of our ancestors". Outside an explicit historical revelation, it is difficult to know the positive will of God. Masumbuku says,

The expression 'God of our ancestors' corresponds better to the idea that the Africans have of the role played by those who have preceded us in their relations with the Lord of life ³³.

³³ Masumbuko Mununguri, The Closeness of the God of Our Ancestors, an African Approach to the Incarnation (Nairobi: Pauliness Publications Africa, 1998), 13

In this way, the assembly obtains spiritual support. This reveals the belief that the dead are not strangers to the present assembly of worship. Talking of ancestors, in his book “ Nos ancetres, ces Saints Inconnus”, Bujo tries to prove that our ancestors are really the forgotten saints; because in Africa, he who is called “ancestor”, is supposed to have lived a good life on earth. Hence the ancestors were then good followers of Christ.

The African is very much attached to his ancestors through whom he receives life from God. The ancestors are *ipso facto* the intermediaries between God and his people. The fact that the ancestors are asked to become part of the celebration shows how much they are important in people’s life.

My brothers and sisters, we who are alive on earth today are not the only followers of Christ. Many have already left this world and are now with God. Some did not even know or hear of Christ in their lifetime. But if they sought God with a sincere heart and were even aided by God’s will, then they too are with God. Together with all of these saints, we form one great family. Let us now join ourselves to them. May this sacrifice gather all of us into one family ³⁴.

III. 2. 2. The Penitential rite

Lord our God, as the blood sucker sticks onto our skin and sucks our blood, evil has come upon us. Our life has been diminished. Who can save us, if not you, Our Lord? ... Before you, O Blessed Virgin Mary, before you, all the saints, before our brothers and sisters we confess that we have done wrong and that our hearts have been far from you. We have worshipped you only with our lips ³⁵.

³⁴ Egbulem, The power, p. 144

³⁵ Egbulem, The power, p. 149

The penitential rite of purification in the Roman Mass is put at beginning of the celebration, as the initial act of worship. But the Zairean Mass emphasizes the need for communion between humankind and the divine, as the first movement in worship. Then the rite of purification comes after the homily and the creed. The reason why the penitential rite takes place after the homily is explicitly expressed in these words of Nwaka:

The word of God proclaimed in assembly is efficacious and liberating: it makes a demand on the community, builds up the trust of the people of God, and purifies their hearts... ³⁶

The word of God reminds us that, sin is not divine but human; we are all sinners and we need to ask for his forgiveness if we want to walk on his way. God is the only one who can save us from. The formula used for the penitential rite shows it clearly,

*Lord our God, as the blood-sucker sticks onto our skin and sucks our blood, evil has come upon us. Our life has been diminished. Who can save us, if not you, Our Lord*³⁷?

The placing of the penitential rite here can be understood as the support of the resolution that the assembly takes after listening to the Word of God. The Word of God has power to transform one's life since it reveals to us that we are sinners and that it can arouse in us the motivation for our conversion. Definitely, after God has spoken to us, the penitential rite is welcome to strengthen our new strategies of life. The position of the

³⁶ Egbulem, The power, p. 62

³⁷ Egbulem, The power, p. 149

penitential rite in the Zairean liturgy corresponds to the traditional and,

African rituals in which the rites of purification are performed only after certain preparatory rituals have taken place ³⁸.

III. 2. 3. The Greetings of Peace

The greetings of peace or the sharing of peace is of great importance as far as the distinction between the Zairean rite and the Roman rite is concerned. It comes immediately after the prayer of the faithful in the Zairean Mass. The greeting of peace in the Zairean Mass is placed here because it is more meaningful to have it associated it with the penitential rite. This is a symbol of reinforcing friendship and unity. Nwaka thinks that,

The kiss of peace becomes an outward manifestation of the inward conversion and reconciliation ³⁹.

This is the reconciliation done first of all vertically, meaning between God and his people, and then horizontally, meaning among people themselves. The sign of peace is then regarded as the conclusion of the ritual of reconciliation. It is the manifestation of the restored peace and harmony between God and people, then of the reconciliation among people. We therefore become one family and children of God, as it is said in Matt 5: 24 "Go first and reconcile with your brother, and then come to make your offering".

³⁸ Egbulem, The power, p. 63

³⁹ Egbulem, The power, p. 63

III. 3. Ceremonial Peculiarities

III. 3.1. The role of the Presider

In the Zairean liturgy, the Presider like any other liturgical celebration has the total responsibility of directing the action of the worshipping community. If the Presider in the Zairean rite is different from the Presider in other liturgies, it is because he mirrors the role of the traditional African chief.

The Presider in the Zairean liturgy uses vestments that are reserved to chiefs, as his role indicates. He wears a horsetail and goatskin hat, a traditional dress of the chief that symbolizes his presidential role in the assembly. His role resembles the one of the Bantu chiefs as an intermediary between the visible and the invisible world, or as the canal of transmission of the supernatural forces into the earth. He carries a machete or the shepherd's stick, which symbolizes his role as conductor of the assembly and representatives of Christ.

III. 3. 2. The Announcer

The source of inspiration of the ministry of the announcer takes its origin from the common practice in African villages and Nwaka puts it in these words,

The ministry of the announcer is parallel to that of the town crier in a typical African village ⁴⁰.

The town crier in African villages, is someone chosen by the chief and the elders and is given the responsibility of calling people to take part in meetings called by the chief or the elders, for very important communications. Less important messages can be

⁴⁰ Egbulem, The power, p. 72

delivered by the announcer himself. For this purpose, the village crier must have a clear voice, since he uses no microphone or amplifier.

In the Zairean liturgy, the announcer plays a very important role: it is the announcer's voice that is heard first, before the celebration starts. The announcer is chosen in the ecclesial community and among those who have abilities of public speaking. He is formed in accordance with the strategic role that he plays in the liturgy.

At the beginning of the celebration and at several peak moments, he or she calls people's attention to some events ⁴¹.

The announcer makes his appearances to announce events such as: the beginning of the celebration, the Scripture readings, and the proclamation of the Eucharistic prayer. The announcer plays the role of what I can call a "bridge" between the priest (the Presider) and the assembly of the faithful. He comes to the celebration, very well prepared, because he/she can inspire the active participation of the faithful in the celebration. Another reason of having the announcer prepared before the celebration is that according to the approved text, an announcer who says improvised words during his interventions is not acceptable.

The role of the announcer as we already said, took inspiration from the African way of celebrating life, hence he operates in the same way as in the traditional celebration and uses traditional instruments, such as a bell or wooden gong to make people pay attention to the messages that he has to deliver.

⁴¹ Egbulem, The power, p. 70

III. 3. 3. Music, Song, and Dance

The Zairean liturgy is fully influenced by the local style of singing and dancing. The Congolese are naturally musicians. The whole of human life is lived in that atmosphere; there is no area in human life, which is untouched by the power of music as Nwaka testifies,

*Anyone who leaves the crowded cities to journey into the interior of Zaïre will still be accosted by the music, songs, and dance that are part of the great events of human life in the villages: birth, initiation, marriage, hunting, fishing,...*⁴²

The Zairean liturgy is a liturgy that is crowded with a variety of native instruments, with a uniqueness that many foreign people have witnessed. This uniqueness comes as the result of the fact that singing and dancing is fully present in the life of the Congolese people. Music is so imbedded in the being of the Congolese people that it forms an integral part of their civilization. It is here that we discover the liturgical meaning of the sacred dance. Nwaka refers to one of the great African philosophers Senghor, when he says,

*the Westerners say: 'I think, therefore I am.' We Africans say: 'I dance, therefore I am'*⁴³

Dance in the Zairean liturgy is a natural consequence of living in an environment filled with music. Most parts of the Zairean Mass are sung, and in many cases the singing

⁴² Egbulem, The power, p. 100

⁴³ Egbulem, The power, p. 101

is performed by heart, accompanied by musical instruments, hand-clapping, and festive shouts and shrills.

Music in the Zairean liturgy seems to be one of the most successful aspects; because the people have easily broken away from the inhibitions imported with the Roman Mass and now worship according to their heartbeats. Talking of music, singing and dancing, John Mbiti says,

Through music, singing and dancing, people are able to participate emotionally and physically in the act of worshipping... Afterwards people feel satisfied in spirit, even though tired in body. ⁴⁴

The Zairean liturgy is made of songs that are native compositions and bear the mark of authentic African rhythms. They are composed with an easy style in such a way that people, even illiterates, are capable of singing without reading.

III. 3. 4. The procession

There are three different moments for procession in the Zairean Mass: entrance procession, procession with the Scripture and procession at the moment of the offertory. The first procession, called the entrance procession, involves the Presider and all the other ministers serving at the altar. Those ministers are: the Mass servers the dancing-girls, the readers, the elders (Bankumu) and the Presider himself.

The second procession, which is the procession with the Scripture, takes place before the Scripture reading or the proclamation of the Word of God. This procession

⁴⁴ Mbiti, Introduction, p. 67

does not involve everybody, but only the dancing-girls followed by the readers. The third procession is the one that takes place during the offertory.

III.3.5. Presentation of the Gifts

The presentation of the gifts is one of the remarkable marks of originality in the Zairean liturgy. It begins with the offertory procession, involving the dancing-girls, the readers, some altar servers and a few people selected among the ministers who are not on duty. With solemnity, the ministers start the procession from the rear of the Church carrying different kinds of gifts, dancing to the rhythm of the song which is being sung, and advancing towards the sanctuary where the gifts will be presented to the Presider who will offer them to God on behalf of the worshipping community. When the gifts (other than bread and wine) are presented to the Presider, this formula is used:

O Priest of God, here are our gifts. Receive them. They show our spirit of solidarity sharing and that we love one another as the Lord has loved us⁴⁵.

For the presentation of bread and wine, the following formula is used:

O Priest of God, here is the bread, here is the wine, gifts of God. They also come from the fields and from our human efforts: Receive them. Do offer them to our God that they may become food for eternal life⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Egbulem, The power, p. 151

⁴⁶ Egbulem, The power, p. 151

III.3.6. Eucharistic Prayer

The preface of the Zairean Mass is another point that makes the Zairean liturgy different from the Roman Liturgy. This preface is a new composition, which sprang from Congolese cultural idioms. Its musical character draws its origins from the African traditional heroic songs, and the African oral tradition style becomes one of the exciting elements in it. Here, the Presider dialogues with the assembly, with the mediation of the choirmaster. The content and the manner in which the preface is sung or recited (rarely) show a novelty that is purely Zairean.

The preface of the Zairean Mass follows the second Eucharistic prayer. Its theological section refers to the praise of God and God's names as well as His attributes such as: "the Sun we cannot fix our eyes upon, Sight itself, the Master of life, the Master of all things"⁴⁷. The Christ logical section of the preface mentions the potential richness of the environment of the country, such as: "rivers, forests, savanna, plains, mountains, minerals, birds, animals", and the entire universe which we receive through God's work of creation in Christ.

III. Traditional Vestments in the Zairean Rite

The use of traditional vestments, gives to the Zairean Rite its mark of originality. Dressed as a traditional chief, the Presider is a symbol of a leader who is to provide food

⁴⁷ Cf. Egbulem, The power, p. 153

and security for those under his care. For this reason the use of spear, knives and other traditional dresses has been introduced in the Zairean liturgy; for it is believed that the Presider who performs like a traditional chief, is a protector against devil spirits and provides spiritual nourishment for the assembly. Bishop Monsengwo, one of the artisans of the Zairean Rite is convinced that the use of these traditional instruments in the Zairean Mass, have something to do with the ministerial priesthood. This means that, Christ continues to take care of his Church as a traditional chief (now Presider) takes care of those given to him by God and ancestors⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ Cf. Iwele Godé, Mgr Monsengwo. Acteur et Témoin de l'Histoire (Brussels: Duculot, 1995), 97

Chapter Four:

Assessing the Zairean Rite

IV.1. Important Consideration

Before assessing the Zairean Rite, it would be very practical to be aware of this teaching of the Church:

*To accomplish so great a work Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross, but especially in the eucharistic species*⁴⁹.

Liturgy is not something that is private: it is the action of the people, for the people. It is as a family of God that human beings are sanctified and offer an agreeable cult to their eternal Father. The liturgy is, for us, the place of the actualization of the union between God and people, fulfilled in the paschal mystery. The liturgy in this sense needs to be given a very important attention, for it is the actualization of our salvation. In view of this, we now move on to assess the Zairean rite.

In this exercise, we shall consider two different aspects: the positive aspect or merits of the Rite, and the challenges that the Zairean rite faces.

⁴⁹ Flannery, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, p. 24

IV.2. The Merits of the Zairean Rite

IV.2.1. The Zairean Rite is Original

In talking of the merits of the Zairean Rite, we must acknowledge today that, it is a liturgical style of celebration, which has an undoubted originality or uniqueness for many reasons

Firstly, the Zairean Rite is the result of the hard work of the local Episcopal conference, in dialogue with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The work of the Episcopal conference consisted in a very serious effort on the field of inculturation of the Eucharist. Iwele says,

L'idée d'un rite zairois de la messe est née, d'une part, de la volonté de la conférence Episcopale exprimée en 1961, de voir la liturgie de la messe être inculturée compte tenu de l'esprit et des croyances religieuses des peuples du Zaïre d'une part et, d'autre part, de toute l'ouverture manifestée peu après par le Concile Vatican dans la Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium sur la liturgie, en matière d'adaptation du rite romain, restant sur sa substance ⁵⁰.

In a free translation this means: the Holy See wished to reward the work that the Episcopal conference of Congo had done. Being the first full indigenous rite of the Eucharist to be approved by Rome since Vatican II, the Zairean rite is the fruit of the perseverance of the Episcopal conference, as well as of the willingness to bring the values of the Zairean cultures into their liturgical celebration.

⁵⁰Iwele, Mgr Monsengwo, p. 93

Secondly, the Zairean Rite is, so far, the one African liturgical experience that evokes the widest interest in people of different classes, starting with the ordinary Christians, then theologians, liturgists, and bishops⁵¹. The Zairean liturgy has therefore been exposed to critique and scholarly appreciation.

Thirdly, during the elaboration of the text of the Zairean Mass, there was a greater concern over traditional African values, than in other official Eucharistic rites of Roman affiliation. The additions of the invocation of African ancestors in the Christian and Catholic worship is a merit that is unique in its own category. The role of the announcer that reflects the African village crier, gives to the Zairean Mass the merit of being one of the most inculturated liturgical experiences in Catholic Africa today. As a result of its richness as an African model of liturgical celebration, the Zairean rite brings awareness to other African countries, to bring more African values into their liturgical celebration. Nwaka expresses it in these words,

*...The Zairean Mass has moved the development of African Christian liturgies much further than any other single liturgical venture on the continent. A greater awareness of African values has been demonstrated... ”*⁵²

IV. 2.2. The Zairean Mass has the home support

The Zairean Mass is a source of attraction, not only outside the country, but it has also taken by storm the hearts of most of the children of Congo. Back home, people prefer

⁵¹Cf. Egbulem, The power, p. 135

⁵² Egbulem, The power, p. 134

it to the Roman Mass. Personally, I have once witnessed a group of people who decided to leave their parish and go to a nearby parish, where the Zairean Mass was celebrated very often.

Those who are familiar with the Zairean Mass will certainly understand that people also prefer it to the Roman Mass, because in the Zairean Mass they find the expression of their humanity; for it takes place in an environment that is the best for the Congolese people, such as dance, music, shouts of joy, and the style of dialogue. The people like it also, because in the Zairean Mass they see and feel the presence of their own culture. Indeed, the Zairean Mass is not distant from the people's traditional cultural values.

IV.2.3. The Zairean Rite in the Logic of the Holy See

The Zairean Mass is a liturgical rite that comes from the Roman rite; hence it follows what the Church recommends. The heritage of the Catholic faith is well observed in the Zairean rite. Remaining in the logic of the Holy See, the Zairean Rite enjoys the advantage of being celebrated in local languages. This makes the natives of Congo happy as they have the liturgy celebrated in languages that they understand better.

IV.3. The Zairean Rite has a long way to go

In the Zairean liturgy there is a good number of African values and it has contributed a lot in the process of inculturation of the Church's work of Evangelization. Still Nwaka says,

Nevertheless, there is more work to be done with this celebration, what has been referred to often as the need to go much further (“aller plus loin”). All is not well yet with the Rite Zairois⁵³.

What is meant here is that, the Zairean Mass still has a long way to go, for it to match the Roman Rite for the simple reason that there are many areas that need to be improved. We are now going to mention a certain number of challenges that the Zairean Rite faces.

IV.3.1. Why the Title, “Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaïre”?

The Zairean Rite, was approved by Rome under the title: “*Missal Roman pour les Dioceses du Zaïre*”, meaning, “Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaïre”, instead of “Zairean Rite”. If we must take into consideration this appellation “Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaïre”, we should obviously understand that the Zairean Rite is nothing but an adaptation of the Roman Rite. Saying this is not a way of underestimating the Zairean rite, this may imply, the so called Zairean Rite has not yet reached the stage of being called a “RITE”. According to Nwaka, even though the Zairean Mass is more than a Roman Missal for Zaïre (now Congo D.R.), it at the same time represents only one aspect of what constitutes a rite; hence it is not to be seen as a rite in itself. A full Zairean rite continues Nwaka, would include the entire sacramental system, as well as other aspects of Church life and practice⁵⁴.

Critically speaking, the Zairean Mass is a modification of the Roman Mass. When we closely look at the Mass we will realize that, the structure is that of the Roman Rite, while the African Zairean cultural heritage is what transforms it into what we now call

⁵³ Egbulem, *The power*, p. 136

⁵⁴ Cf. Egbulem, *The power*, p. 137

“Zaircan Mass”. The Zairean Mass is therefore a hybrid, whose blood is Roman but the flesh is African.

IV.3.2. Some challenges that the Zairean Mass faces

The Archdiocese of Kinshasa, which played a very important role in the approval of the Zairean Rite by the Holy See, was very much concerned about the future of this Rite. For this reason, the Diocesan synod gave some very important recommendations, which continue to be pertinent. Those recommendations are as follows:

*dans la célébration, trouver le temps pour l'intériorisation et le recueillement; équilibrer le rite dans toutes ses parties: liturgie de la parole et la prière Eucharistique; éviter le risque que la célébration devienne une pièce de théâtre à cause de certains abus remarqués: danses exagérées, cris désordonnés, longueur des chants, processions trop longues, peu de formations des ministres*⁵⁵.

This is freely translated as: the recommendations given by the Archdiocese of Kinshasa turn around moments of silence, interiorization and recollection during Mass; harmony between the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist; to control the dancing, the duration of songs, the processions, formation of ministers as far as the Zairean Mass is concerned. In view of what has been said, the recommendations made earlier by the Archdiocese of Kinshasa need to be considered, for they are still relevant.

⁵⁵Cf. Archdiocese de Kinshasa, Le Concile Vatican II et L'Avenir de notre Eglise. Actes du Synode Diocésain. (1986-1988), Tome II, (Kinshasa: Editions de l'Archdiocese, 1988), 11

It is true that the Archdiocese of Kinshasa before the approval of the Zairean Rite made these remarks, but up to our days, they are still relevant and will help the Zairean rite improve for the better. Let us have a closer look at these important remarks.

IV. 3.2.1. Silence in the Zairean Mass

Silence is a great challenge to today's Zairean Rite, for the simple reason that the importance of silence seems to be neglected. This is contrary to the Church's high recommendation on silence in encountering God. The Church says,

*The interior man is aware that times of silence are demanded by the love of God. As a rule he needs a certain moment of solitude so that he may hear God speaking to his heart. It must be stressed that a silence which is a mere absence of noise and words, in which the soul cannot renew its vigor, would obviously lack any spiritual value*⁵⁶.

Here there is a great challenge for the Zairean Mass. The Mass somehow does not give time silence, for it is full of music from the beginning to the end. *Venite Seorsum*, another document of the Church insists on silence as it dwells with the Church's instruction on the contemplative life and on the enclosure of nuns. We have no intention of copying and bringing blindly the monastic style of praying into the Mass, but we acknowledge that silence ought to have an important role to play in the Zairean Rite.

If we can go back to the African traditional heritage, we will find that silence has always been given a great importance. In the African village, wise people, medicine men, diviners, even sorcerers, etc needed silence to concentrate on their job. As silence is a

⁵⁶ Flannery, *Venite Seorsum*, p.622

value in African culture, the Zairean Rite needs to reconsider the place and the importance of silence.

IV.3.2.2. Need to balance the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Prayer

When we suggest that the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Prayer need to be balanced, we mean to focus on their length. In the Zairean Mass, both the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Prayer seem to be longer than necessary. If such a well-composed Eucharistic Prayer could be shorter than it currently is, it would contribute to shortening the whole Rite.

There have been complaints about the length of the Zairean Mass, to the extent that some priests do not feel encouraged to celebrate it so often in their parishes. Apart from the length of the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Prayer, the different processions and exaggerations in singing make the Zairean Mass long. Due to some of these exaggerations, the Zairean Mass fall into exhibitionism.

Taking into account the above point, the Zairean Rite needs to reconsider not only the length of the celebration entirely, but it needs to rethink about some of the bodily gestures and dancing styles which give the Zairean Rite the impression of being a theatric play.

Talking of the dance, we need to say more than the highlight we have just given. The Zairean Mass, if possible, should avoid the fact of being considered as a Mass that is essentially built around dancing. It is true the African people, especially the Congolese, like dancing and singing during ceremonies of great importance like the Mass. Our concern is that, the dancing and singing should not distract the praying assembly. A

dancing style that remind us of profane ones should be avoided. Let liturgical dance styles be composed, to make the difference between pop dancing and the liturgical dancing.

IV.3.2.3. Need for a campaign of popularization

It is in the interest of the Zairean Rite to do a campaign of popularization of the Zairean Mass among the natives of Congo. Such a campaign is urgent, because amazingly enough some or possibly many do not really understand what the Zairean Mass is all about. The Zairean Mass appears not to have been properly grasped by ordinary people. What we suggest here is that the different steps of the Zairean Mass need to be explained to the people, for a better understanding.

The campaign of popularization of the Zairean Mass, which is highly encouraged here, should also take place in catechetical centers and formation houses for religious. Another category of people to whom the Zairean rite needs to be taught properly, are the consecrated people. Places such as novitiates, scholasticates, seminaries and other formation houses have to insert the study of the Zairean rite in their programs. As the future of the Church, these consecrated people should have a thorough knowledge of the Zairean Rite.

The Church in Congo is known as committed to the formation of *Bakambi* (lay people) for the management or running of parishes. In this line, the Church in Congo needs to give to the *Bakambi* good instructions on the Zairean Rite. In such centers, there should be a subject, about the Zairean Rite.

Conclusion

Having gone through the originality, the uniqueness and the specificity of the Zairean Rite, we must acknowledge that it deserves respect from theologians, liturgists, bishops and the Catholic Church in general. By elaborating this rite, the Catholic Church in Congo had shown an admirable effort to make her very living a christian and Catholic worshipping style. The Church in Congo has found her own African experience of christian worship by initiating this new and original Eucharistic celebration.

The Zairean liturgy constitutes a real attempt to celebrate Christ with the whole African soul, scene and life. Being characterized by dance, hymns, music, active participation of the assembly, use of vernaculars etc, the Zairean Mass is a sign that the Gospel Message is accommodated in the African continent. We must acknowledge that this accommodation of the Gospel of Incarnation has been accepted in Africa, but its implementation, especially by means of the Zairean liturgy, still remains challenging.

In spite of all the good that we have said on the Zairean Rite, there are many areas that need to be improved. Those areas are what we mentioned in the last chapter of our dissertation. The deficiencies that we find in the Zairean Rite are necessarily calling for a total revision of the Rite and the need of bringing some additions in what already exist. Such a revision and additions will help the Zairean Rite to become a complete rite. As an African rite, the Zairean Rite, must not only cry for freedom, but it must show a sign of maturity through the imagination, creativity and praxis of the community of believers.

In the last chapter of our work, we took care of saying that there are priests who are still not in favor of celebrating the Zairean Rite. We know that, the Zairean Rite is not a rite that has replaced the Roman Rite; we think that, now that it has been approved,

priests should be motivated to celebrate from time to time.

We all do acknowledge that the Zairean Rite has gained honor in the African continent, following the fact that it is considered as one of the efforts made by Africans to have a pure African way of celebrating the liturgy, making people take part in it. There is a good number of Africans who look at the Zairean liturgy as an affair of the natives of Congo only. Personally, I think it is advisable to make the Zairean Rite more African rather than it being only something that belongs to the church in Congo. This stands, because among those who worked for the approval of the Zairean Rite, are not only Congolese people, but missionaries of other nationalities working in Congo as well. Hence there is a need of making of the Zairean Rite, a rite that can be celebrated in other parts of Africa by non-Congolese people.

To have a better Zairean Rite that would be accepted in all the corners of Africa, I personally recommend that, the celebration must reflect what Africans have in common as far as their cultures are concerned. Things must be put in such a way that all Africans (Catholics) may feel comfortable when celebrating this rite.

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CONGREGATIO PRO CULTU DIVINO

Prot. 1520/85

DECRET ZAÏRENSIUM DIOECESIUM

Confirmant le Missel Romain pour les Diocèses du Zaïre

Dépuis de longues années les Evêques du Zaïre, en application des norms du Concile Vatican II (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 30) et en vue de promouvoir une meilleure participation à la celebration de l'Eucharistie, nourrissaient le désir d'adapter l'*Ordo Missae* aux moeurs et au genie du peuple qui leur est confié.

Une minutieuse étude des données de la tradition a conduit à discerner, toutes choses bien considérées, des éléments susceptibles d'être intégrés dans la Sainte Liturgie. Cette étude a permis aux Evêques de proposer au Siège Apostolique une nouvelle structure des rites afin de l'introduire, avec son consentement, dans la Liturgie de la Messe, restant sauve l'unité fondamentale du rite romain.

A la demande instante de Son Excellence Monseigneur MONSENGWO PASINYA, Evêque titulaire de *Aquae novae in proconsulari*, Président de la Conférence des Evêques du Zaïre, formulé dans sa lettre du 24 septembre 1987, la Congrégation pour le Culte Divin, en vertu des facultés lui accordées par le Souverain Pontife JEAN PAUL II, approuve volontiers et confirme le texte de l'Ordinaire de la Messe dans sa rédaction en langues française avec en annexe les Préliminaires, le Calendrier et les Messes propres, lequel texte est joint à ce Décret.

L'édition fera mention de la confirmation accordée par le Siège Apostolique. En outre, deux exemplaires de cette édition seront transmis a cette Congrégation.

Nonobstant toutes choses contraires.

Au siège de la Congrégation pour le Culte Divin, en cette Année Mariale, le 30 avril 1988.

Paul Augustin Card. MAYER
Préfet

+ Virgilius NOE
Archévêque tit. De Voncaria
Secrétaire.