TANGAZA COLLEGE

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF JESUS' PRIESTHOOD VIS-A-VIS INCULTURATION OF MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.

ASSAY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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FEBRUARY, 2000
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DECLARATION

I declare that this essay is my original work and has not been submitted to any other educational institution for credit purposes.

Signed..... Date.....15th/2/2000.....

SHABANI EDMOND, O.C.D

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated with gratitude to my mum Ngalima Toteliwabo Daphrose who kept me nine months in her womb and who taught me to love God, and to my older and younger brothers and sisters with whom I share the same blood.

AKNOWLEGMENT

It is for me a moral debt to thank all those who have contributed in one way or another to the realization of this paper.

I would like to thank first of all and in a special way Father Rolandi Giovanni S.D.B, who in spite of all his occupations and activities has accepted and willed to be the moderator of this work. His knowledge, courage, patience, advice and corrections made this work to be accomplished. In the same line, I am also grateful to Sr. Aringo Margaret F.S.J and Father David Costello, O.C.D, who took all their time to read, re-read and polish my English.

I am grateful to the staff and students of Tangaza College and in a special way to all my classmates for their contribution and interest in my theological growth.

Finally I would like to thank every member of the Camelite community, Nairobi, and in a special way the Rector and the Student Master for their support. May God bless all of them.

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INTRODUCTION

We are presently experiencing a religious crisis where priesthood seems to be rejected by the challengers of the priests of the Catholic Church. The Church meets serious objections and challenges in this area. The objections are caused by a secularized mentality. Some people think that to talk of priesthood today is meaningless; and others claim that the Church has no right to insist on it because its founder was not, according to them, a priest.

If we go back to the ancient Jewish religion, the ministers were called "priests". Today, in our century there are many religions and sects, whose number grows every year in the world, but only few of these religions and sects use the term "Priest". Some religions and some sects use the term "Pastor ", others " Mtumishi " (Kiswahili word meaning " Servant "), some use " Apostle ", others " Shepherd ", " Evangelist " and some others use similar words to these. Only a few religions use the term " Priest ". One could ask him/herself: what is the meaning of " priest ", why do many religions avoid the use of this term, what is its foundation, is this term understood by people or does it have a negative background? How can our priesthood be justified today?

This work will have four chapters which are connected to one another. The first Chapter aims at discovering the history of priesthood and its divine institution in the Old Testament. The aim of the second chapter is to examine the priesthood in Jesus' time and its relationship with him. And we will see the judgement of Christ on the priests of his time and his correcting behavior toward them. The third chapter is to analyze the priestly function of Jesus.

The priesthood of Christ remains a very complex mystery: we can not exhaust all its aspects, because we have also to leave space for faith. If we want to talk of this mystery at the present moment, it is to enlighten the greatness and the seriousness of the Christian priesthood as it is exercised by our priests, because to deny Christ' priesthood, is to cut the root of the ministerial priesthood of the Church. To reject the ministerial priesthood of the Church is to ignore its initiator,

Jesus Christ, the Eternal Priest.

The fourth chapter about inculturation will tell us how every culture exercises the ministerial priesthood according to its genius without neglecting the place of Jesus the founder of the true priesthood and of all cultures. The final point is to show that inculturation should go beyond its own external or ritual form.

At the end of our work, we don't claim to have said everything, or to have said exactly what we intended to say. We are aware of our limits in this matter, trusting that the Lord himself will add to our contribution the necessary elements which are missing, and doing all this for his own glory.

CHAPTER ONE: PRIESTHOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In this first chapter, I will deal with priesthood in the Jewish community or Jewish religion; but my research has revealed that some writers like J.Goetz and Jean Galot object to the idea that " where there is religion, there is a priest".[1] Some people also affirm that in all religions even the pagan ones, the cult of divinity had always had priests (priestesses) as the ones who officiate at their ceremonies.[2] These people had been the representatives or the delegates of the community so that they might pay a worthy homage or cult to God. As I have just said, in this chapter I am not going to deal with Priesthood in general; I am going to limit myself to the institution of priesthood among the people of God (Israel), the attributions of priest in the Old Testament, and the way the ritual cult had been organized up to the time of Christ the Messiah.

1.1. INSTITUTION OF PRIESTHOOD

The function of priesthood is ancient. It was present in both primitive and Jewish religions. Its history goes back to the earliest Antiquity, even before Moses. There was, from the beginning, what we can call " patriarchal " priesthood. The chief of the family was at the same time the one to play the priestly functions. He used to offer to God homage, sacrifices, prayer and petition on behalf of those who were under his responsibility or power. That is the reason why I found an indication of "Priest" among the nomadic tribes of Median, in the south of Palestine, where Moses was initiated and prepared to receive the call from the God of his father Abraham (Ex 3:6 ; 2:15). I see little difference between this ancient priestly function, and the one played today by the chiefs of tribes, the fathers of families in some societies in Africa.[3]

After the Revelation at the burning Bush (Ex 3:1 ff.), this priesthood changed; and this was

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[1]J. Galot, S.J, Theology of the Priesthood (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 18.
[2]J.S.Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy (Nairobi: E.A.E.P), 187.

[3]A. Shorter, African Culture: An overview. Socio-Cultural Anthropology (Nairobi: P.P.A, 1998), 73.

the beginning of the mosaic priesthood. The Priest, a man-mediator between God and the People, was confirmed at the burning thorn bush when God Yahweh sent him saying: *"...go, then; I send you..."* (Ex 3:10). It is from this moment that I see Moses assuming the mediation of the communication of the divine will. By this feature I realize that, unlike familial priesthood, the sphere of activity is broader. I move from the patriarchal priests who used to offer, as chiefs of families, sacrifices for all their own, to only one mediator for the whole people.

Before this, Moses seems to have been initiated into this function in Midian by Jethro, his father-in-law, since in Hebrew father-in-law used to be called *" Circumciser "* and the Son-in-law *" Circumcised."* [4]

Indeed, Moses did not exercise this function alone but he involved his brother Aaron into it and also the descendants of Levi (Ex. 4: 10-14). Although Aaron appears in the Scripture as the ancestor of all priests, this history is more complex therefore I would prefer to retain that he was Moses' brother, companion and interpreter to Pharaoh and to the People.[5]

In the Old Testament the texts show that the priest of Yahweh was called " Levite." The Hebrew uses the term " Kohen " which means " Soothsayer " or the term " Lewi " which means "Oracle-giver".[6] It is difficult to establish whether the two words "Kohen" or "Lewi" mean priest of Yahweh or priest of other gods when it is used in Gen. 41: 45; 1 Sam. 5:5 ; 6:2; 2 Kgs 10: 19. In these passages this word Lewi means, those who burn incense to the divinity, whether Baal, Yahweh, Dagon or On.

From the beginning of Exodus, this name " Levite " is used by God himself: *" The Lord became angry with Moses and said, " what about your brother Aaron, the Levite? "* (Ex.4:14); Here

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[4]J. Blenkinsopp, The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible (London: Doubleday, 1992), 151-152.

[5]M.I. Dimont, Jews, God and History (New York: N.A.L, 1962), 39-40.

[6]A. Stoger, " Priest(hood) ", in J.B. Bauer, Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology (London: Sheed and Ward; vol.2, 1970) 701.

I see that Aaron is also called " *The Levite* ." But who is this man-Levite? He is considered to be the ancestor of all priests. He is presented as the first high priest (Ex.28: 1ff; 29:1 ff.; Si 45: 6-22).

After reading Ex 29: 1-35, it appears that Yahweh gives the description of a liturgical consecration of the high priest who, in this text, seems to be Aaron alone. In its first verse, there are three actions of this consecration: the purification by bath (v.4), the specific dress (vv. 5-6. 8-9), and the anointing of the high priest (v.7). I can also add to this that *" the ministry of the high priest was characterized by three elements: his calling and election by Yahweh, his privilege of entering the Holy of Holies, and his atoning function."*[7]

I can see in this text that Aaron, who belongs to a low family of the tribe of Levi (Ex.6: 16-20), is now raised to the priestly dignity by a particular choice of God Himself (Num. 17:16-25). So, he became the responsible one of the Sanctuary and of all its ritual, a function he did not have in Egypt. By his priesthood, Aaron became the Chief of the tribe of Levi (Num18:1-2). Priesthood in Moses' time was so exercised by Aaron and his sons (Navad, Avihou, Eleazar and Ithamar), and was helped by the members of the tribe of Levi to which he belonged. But the two first born of Aaron (Navad and Avihou) were denied the priesthood and died in the desert without children. The reason is because they *" offered unholy fire to the Lord "*(Num 20: 26). The priesthood became hereditary in a restricted way from father to son.[8]

Later, the priesthood became the monopoly of the tribe of Levi constituting really a tribal succession. The particular choice of this tribe seems to be the fruit of its fidelity to Moses and through him, to God during the revolt of the people in the desert (Ex 32: 25-26. 28a). The fidelity of its obedience was worthy of blessing from God and religious responsibility in the midst of the people of Israel (Ex.32:29; Dt.33: 8-11).

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[7] A. Stoger, " Priest(hood)", in J.B. Bauer, Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology, 702
[8] J. Blenkinsopp, The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible, 165-166.

1.2. ATTRIBUTES OF THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The discussion above is an attempt to locate the origin and foundation of priesthood in Israel. The priest, by his institution, was the *"man of the sacred"*, in charge of religious functions. These functions gave him a capital importance in Israel as follows:

1.2.0. ORACULAR FUNCTION

This function was exercised by the use of *" Urim "* and *" Thummin"*: two objects used by the priest to determine God's will, when there was a problem or doubt which needed clarification. Moses exercised this function himself (Cf. Ex.18: 13-16). He later imparted the same function to the tribe of Levi (Cf. Deut.33: 8).

1.2.1. FUNCTION OF INTERPRETING THE LAW AND INSTRUCTING PEOPLE

After the oracular function (Dt. 33: 8), Moses mentioned the function of teaching by the sons of Levi. *" They have kept your word, they held firmly to your covenant. They will teach your customs to Jacob, and your Law to Israel "*(Dt.33: 9b-10a). The religious conscience seems to progress; Levi is blessed because he is a " witness " who keeps and transmits the law of God (Ex.32: 25-29; Dt.33:8-11). This function was a way to reveal the will of God and a way to establish a vertical relationship between God and His people.[9]

1.2.2. SACRIFICIAL FUNCTION

Among the ceremonies of cult, the offering of Sacrifices in the Temple was the most important. The famous blessing of Moses before his death seems to us the most meaningful of all: *"... They will offer sacrifices on your altar."* (Dt 33: 10). For centuries, this function had already been exercised by those who were not priests, for example, Abraham and Jacob (Gn 22: 13, 28.18; 31: 54; 35:14) and many others, such as Manoah, the father of Samson (Jdg 13: 19), David and Solomon

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[9]P. Edwards, S.J., The Theology of The Priesthood (Birminghan: The Mercier Press, Dublin and Cork, 1974), 16.

during Solemnities (2 Sam 6:13.17ff; 24:25; 1Kgs3:4.15; 8:5.62-64; 9:25). It is only later, however, that the priests were able to obtain the monopoly of the sacrifices in the Sanctuary, in such a way that this exclusive privilege could not be taken away from them without punishment of the violator by Yahweh Sabaoth (2 Chr.26: 16-26), and every lay man or woman who risked to approach the Sanctuary had to be put to death (Num 3:38). Every new Sanctuary had a consecrated priest for this office (Jdg 17:5-13; 1 Sam.7: 1; 1 Kgs.12: 3 ff).[10]

1.2.3. FUNCTION OF BEING WATCHFUL ON RITUAL PURITY

The function of Sacrificer gave to the priests of Yahweh a new responsibility: to guarantee the purity of sacrifice and of cult paid to God. This ritual purity was recommended. The simple proximity with an " impure " man did not please God, and led to the rejection of offerings. That is why the minister of God should warn the children of Israel about their impurities, so that because of them, they may not die, by defiling the residence of the " Holy of Holies " which was among them. They were presented to the priest who examined the disease and who finally pronounced the purity or impurity of the one who had been presumed to be sick. After the declaration of the priest, he/she could now be either excluded from the Temple, or accepted for the cultic activities. In the same way, after recovering from a sickness of this kind, the priest had to test this purity so that he might offer sacrifice for it (Mc.1: 44; Lv.14).[11]

1.2.4. FUNCTION OF BLESSING

It was particularly the task of the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement or Great Pardon called " *Yom Kippur*", to enter into the presence of God on behalf of the people. It concerned the solemn blessing pronounced once a year, over the people on behalf of God. The ritual was done on the 10th day of the 7th month of the year. The day was also celebrated by a fast and a Sabbatical rest.

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[10]P. Edwards, S.J., The Theology of the Priesthood, 16.

[11]A. Stoger, " Priest(hood) ", in J.B. Bauer, Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology, 702.

" To bless people in his Name "was an expression to say *"to bless by pronouncing the revealed Name"* (Si 45: 15; Num 6: 22-27 ; 2 Sam.6:18; 1 Kings 8.54).[12]

1.3. PRIESTHOOD AND RITUAL CULT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew language has the same term ('abad) to designate work, service or the cult. These three activities constitute for the elected people the one and the same adoration of God. In a narrow sense of today, cult consists of paying God the homage which is worthy as the creator of all beings: adoration, prayer, thanksgiving. The Bible, moreover, gives us information only on the sacrificial cult which was directed by priests.

However, the condition of participation to the cult was holiness. Indeed, all the organization of the ancient priestly cult was founded on the idea of holiness and on the conviction that one should be holy to approach God (Lv.11: 43.44b; 21: 1-23).[13] In the same way, the notion of purity is capital in the Bible. It is parallel to that of holiness: God being the unique Holy one, all that touches Him or that is consecrated to Him must be holy. Later, to enter in communion with God was a dangerous venture (Ex.3: 6; 33: 23.20; Is.6: 5; 45:15; Gn.32: 31). The people were confronted with a serious problem, since they did not have the holiness required to approach God; if they took the risk they could perish (Ex.19: 12; 33:3). Therefore, they set apart a tribe, which was consecrated, to the service of Yahweh; it was the tribe of Levi. And in that tribe, they isolated a family, the one of Aaron, to receive a particular consecration as High Priests; and even in that family, only one will be taken as High Priest to maintain good relations between the people of God. That is the priest who is " set apart " so that he might penetrate the sphere of the " Sacred " and to reach it with assurance. There were many rites: bath for the purification of the secular, anointing imbuing the holiness, special dresses showing the membership to the sacred world and the sacrifice of consecration (Lv.9; Ex.29).

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[12]J.L. McKenzie, S.J, Dictionary of the Bible (London: C.M.P, 1965), 69b-70a.
[13]J.Galot, S.J, Theology of the priesthood (San Francisco: I.P, 1985), 22.

The holiness of the priest required to be completed by other rites: it was good also to isolate the secular and choose a particular place; because God could not be met anywhere, or anyhow, or anytime, but only in a holy place, at precise moments, and by accomplishing some sacred gestures. The designated place was the Temple of Jerusalem or another sanctuary; they also chose a unique day a year where only the High Priest could enter in the most holy place of the Sanctuary: that was the day of expiation (Yom Kippur). But the problem is not yet solved for one to approach the " Holy of Holies ." It was only by sacrifices that the priest would reach to the unrealistic desire of people. The sacrifices was what was needed.

The passage from physical to the spiritual world was done by sacrificing a bloody living being, because the priest, having human condition, he remained a man of the world, incapable of reaching the divine world(Gn 8:20-21; Lv1:9.17). It was only after the sacrifice of a bloody living being that the priest was supposed to reach the sphere of God. The Priest could then present the prayers and petitions of all people and obtain from God certain favors for the good of all.

To sum up, this first chapter has dealt with the history of the elected people and with the Scriptures to discover the institution and the evolution of priesthood. It was a progressive process, which went from the familial priesthood exercised by the chief of the family to the Mosaic priesthood.

This priesthood passed from Moses to Aaron, and finally became an official institution of the tribe of Levi. That is how the function of hereditary priesthood ("Levitism") began whose functions we have described in the second part. Those who did not belong to the tribe of Levi were not supposed to be priests. We finished by examining the ritual cult in Israel to elucidate the ancient priestly mediation.

My present task shall be to study and to see in the following chapters, the place of Jesus in his own time, and I will finish my reflection by describing the traits of Jesus' priesthood and its later applications.

CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND HIS ATTITUDE VIS-A-VIS THE PRIESTHOOD OF HIS TIME

Chapter one dealt with the function of priesthood, its heredity character and its various functions which were to help a priest to enter into contact with God. In this chapter, I intend to examine priesthood at the time of Jesus, the dawn of Christianity and Jesus' attitude towards priesthood. I shall also discuss the earthly ministry of Christ in the context of priesthood.

Let us now start by the first point of this chapter to discover Christ's contemporary priestly environment and his attitude towards it.

2.1. PRIESTS AND JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

During Jesus' time, there was an already established clerical order, which he recognized even if he always fought it.

In Jesus' time, there was no separation of function between religious and political authority, because these two functions were played by the religious leaders, namely: the high priest, the Sanhedrin and the arch-synagogue in the following order:

a. The High Priest:

The high priest was the supreme chief of the Jewish religion and he used to preside at the most solemn ritual celebrations. He was at the same time the head of the Supreme Court, called the Sanhedrin. It is within these functions that we discover two High priests: Annas (6-15 A.D) and Caiaphas (18-36 A.D).[14]

b. The Sanhedrin:

The Sanhedrin, was the supreme, civilian and religious court of the Jewish nation. It used to examine most criminal matters in Judea. It could arrest those who committed any Jewish offense. The

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[14]J. Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions During the New Testament Period (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 96.

members of the local tribunals were elected by it; it was composed by seventy-one members divided into three categories:

- The Pontiffs: Those who had been high priests or came from within the families from which the high priest had been chosen.

- The Elders (Gerontes): were the chiefs of noble families.

- The Doctors of the law, called " Scribes " : were those who studied or knew Moses' law, they were considered masters of the law.[15]

c) The Arch-synagogue : was the most influential man in the society, he was the presider of religious ceremonies in the synagogue. He had a servant in his order, to assist him.[16]

THE PRIESTS

The priests were divided into twenty-four groups or classes numbering about 7.200 priests all together. Every week, there was one class or group to serve in the Temple.[17] But what was really their relationship to Jesus?

The priests have a very small place in the Gospels. Jesus considers them, just as the Judges of what is " pure " and what is " impure " (Mk 1: 44), but he protests against the principle of such a distinction (Mk 7: 1-19). He relativizes their privileges (Mk 2: 26) and acts only to justify his own freedom and that of his disciples (Mt.12: 5). He finally opposes their behavior (Lk 10:31) when the Scripture requires it (Mt 12: 7).

In the New Testament, and especially in the Gospels, the priests are the principal cause of Jesus' condemnation. The high priests, possessed great political power which started before Christ and continued during the time of foreign dominations (Persian, Hellenistic and Roman) and in the time

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[15]G. Wigoder, The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia, New Revised Edition (New York- Oxford : Facts on File, 7th Ed., 1992), 830b.

[16]Ibid, 897.

[17]Ibid

of the Maccabees' revolution (2 Mac.7) against Antiochus Epiphane. That is why they kept their hegemonies in the Sanhedrin, even in Jesus' time (The Roman domination).[18]

Jesus respected this class of priests by paying the Temple tax, but attacked the abuses they promoted. This is the case, for instance, with the *" merchants driven out of the Temple "* (Lk 19: 45-48), with the discussion on the violation of Sabbath (Mk 2: 23 ff.) and other forbidden things (Mk 2: 15 ff.). Indeed, Jesus gave a profound and radical critique of the purely ritualistic cult. The Jews held on what the priest should do the Sabbath day because it is the work recommended for all priest. But Jesus attacked their rigid attitudes and showed their relativity.[19]

The most obvious relationship between Jesus and the priests of his time is opposition. The high priests intervene in the context of Jesus' Passion (Mt 26: 1-5); they plot against him, and always they were allied with the Pharisees, the Scribes and the Sadducees, classes which in daily life were not on good term among themselves, but came together only for one goal, to attack their common enemy, Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God. It was only on this occasion of Jesus' condemnation that they came to agree together.

On the other hand, the high priests are never presented in the midst of exercising their Sacrificial function, but always they are presented as the holders of power: they overwhelm Jesus with condemnations (Mk 15: 3; Mt 27: 12. 20) They aroused the people against him, they mock him (Mk 15: 31; Mt 28: 11-15).

When Jesus was arrested, the high priest stood up in the presence of Jesus as a judge exercising his power, and plotting against him (Mt 26: 3). And on only one time they alluded to the religious aspect: *" In the name of the living God I now put you on oath..."* (Mt 26: 63) . That is to say that the conflict with Jesus had these two aspects, both political and religious because the

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[18]J.Galot, Theology of the Priesthood (San Francisco : Ignatius Press, 1985), 32-33.
[19]Ibid, 34-35.

question: "... *are you the Messiah?* " of the high priest is doubled by the one of Pilate: " *Are you the King of the Jews* "?(Lk 23: 3) This is only in the Synoptics.[20]

In Saint John, we find the same attitudes of opposition between Jesus and the high priests (11: 47). The conflicts long standing ancient, from the festival of Tabernacles (Jn 7). It was the high priest who organized the arrest of Jesus (Jn 18: 3). John puts in epigraph the role that the high priest played in these cases (Jn 11:51-52). He underlines the words of the high priest to show the divine perspective of redemption: " *Don't you realize that it is better for you to let one man die for the people, instead of having the whole nation destroyed....* " *(Jn 11: 50; 18:14).*

So, the relationships between Jesus and the high priests were complex and ambiguous. But the important thing is to know that the authority of the high priests was more exercised than the exercise of their priesthood or priestly function as I have described it in the " Levitism " above (Jn18: 19-24).

2.2 THE MINISTRY OF JESUS TOWARD PRIESTHOOD

I am trying to see Jesus in his world vis-a-vis the priesthood of his time; his attitude which we discovered can be described as "critical". Next is to see the person of Jesus himself and to situate him in the light of the mentality of his time, regarding himself as a priest.

I intend to point out three elements, concerning the person of Jesus, his ministry and his death. The question I should ask myself is: who is this Jesus? Was he a priest or a lay person?

2.2.1. THE PERSON OF JESUS

According to the Jewish law, Jesus could not be a priest, because the conditions to become one was meticulously observed; one had to be a Jew of the tribe of Levi, from a priestly family. Jesus, though he was a Jew by birth, fulfilled not even one of the great conditions to receive the Jewish

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[20]J. Galot, Theology of the Priesthood, 36-37.

priesthood. He was from the tribe of Juda and not of Levi. He didn't belong to any of the priestly families from among whom such people were recruited.[21]

Concerning his person, Jesus was not a priest among the Jews. When the Jews were questioning themselves about him to know who he was (Jn 7: 25-30.4 ff.) no answer designed him as a priest.

2.2.2. JESUS' EARTHLY MINISTRY

The earthly life of Jesus, as it is presented to us in the Gospels, does not show in any way the priesthood of Jesus. Indeed, Jesus did not offer sacrifices in the Temple. He was more in the line of the prophets who proclaimed the word of God and announced the coming of God and God's kingdom. Jesus, like other prophets, despises the current sacrifices (Mt 9: 13 ; 12: 7 ; Os 6: 6). So he was apparently a prophet and not a priest (Mt 15: 1-20; 12: 1-13; Jn 5: 16-18; 9:16). His first mission, or pastoral task was to teach. He describes this mission at the beginning of his public life (Lk 4: 18-19).[22]

2.2.3. JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS

Jesus experienced a shameful death on the cross. To put somebody on the cross can be compared today to hanging or capital punishment and was far from being a blessing. It was considered as the worst form of death. It was a curse. For the Jews, Jesus' death could not be a sacrifice in the ancient meaning of the term, which was a ritual meaning. The ancient sacrifice consisted of the offering rites done in the holy place (the Temple) and not in putting to death the victim. Yet, Jesus' death took place outside the holy place, at Calvary. Otherwise, it had no connection with any liturgical ceremony. It was in fact the execution of a condemned person and, for that, a scandal, a curse from God (Dt 21: 23 ; Ga 3: 13), a withdrawal from his people's milieu or

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[21]P.J.Dunn, Priesthood. A Re-Examination of The Roman Catholic Theology of the Presbyterate (New York : Alba House, 1990), 56.

[22]J.Galot, S.J, Theology of the Priesthood., 45.

from God's people (Nb 15: 30).

All these considerations show us that there was, according to the socio-politico-religious organization of Israel, a real difficulty for Jesus to be considered a priest. The first Christians had never thought to apply this title to him because nothing apparently, either in his person, or in his ministry, nor in his death, did correspond to the image the Christians themselves had of the priesthood.

The person, the ministry and the earthly death of Jesus took an opposite direction to the considerations of the ancient priesthood. I shall now discus how the post-Easter Christ has raised this question by becoming High Priest per excellence. This will be the concern of our following chapter entitled: *" Jesus, the Great High Priest of the New Covenant"*.

CHAPTER THREE: JESUS, THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST OF THE NEW COVENANT

The second chapter has given us the light about the obstacles that Jesus faced and which did not enable him to be considered as a priest in the Jewish tradition. Now it is a question of specifying the degree of Jesus' priesthood, which is still the unbroken basis of Christian priesthood.

The divine origin of priesthood is still doubtless. It has been affirmed and proved that Jesus of Nazareth had never been a priest in Jewish way of understanding. However, this third chapter would like to maintain that Christ had been and is still a priest par excellence. He is endowed with superior qualities, which surpass the ancient priesthood, by his bodily sacrifice, by his role of mediator, and by the salvation brought to the entire humanity.

3.1. JESUS, THE UNIQUE " TRUE " PRIEST

This title is not enough to convince and to prove the priesthood of Jesus. It is therefore necessary to search and to go further in the Scriptures to remove this difficulty which constituted a veritable distress in the first Christian community. Since Christ was not a priest according to Jewish vision, the Christian faith was put in danger and driven with questions by the supporters of the tradition of the Jewish Religion.

Indeed, if I come back to what I have said in chapter two above, the absence of relationship and the opposition discovered between Jesus and the ancient priesthood, I can see that some attempted solution was necessary. Moreover, it is on this account that, indeed, the Epistle to the Hebrews is organized. This Epistle is the place par excellence where the priesthood of Christ is affirmed in a very clear way. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, presents in very powerful terms, the ineffable greatness of Christ as Priest. He underlines the mission of Christ as Mediator, the

transcendence of his priesthood and of his sacrifices beyond the ones of the Old Testament; in brief the entire Epistle sees in the redemptive work of Jesus a priestly activity.

Comparing Jesus to Aaron, both of them are effectively priests, not by personal choice, but by divine call (He 5: 4). But the Priest-Jesus, stranger in the line of Aaron, realizes a different priesthood outside of the priestly categories of the Levitical priesthood (He 7: 11-14). The divine word, *" You are a priest according to the order of Melchizedek "* (Ps. 110 : 4), which Hebrews made its own, shows that the priestly work accomplished by Christ is radically different from the one accomplished by the priests of the descendent of Levi [23].

This study would be incomplete if it is limited to this application of cultural categories of the Old Testament priesthood to Jesus. It is necessary to dig again into the scriptures of the New Testament to discover in it, through life and gestures, the Christ-Priest. I don't want to deny this evident application in the Epistle to Hebrews. But, the reality is incomparably rich and complex. Besides, the Jesus of history never attributed to himself the title of priest, though he willingly defined his mission in priestly themes.

In fact, the priesthood of Christ is a consequence of his Incarnation. The Incarnate Word realizes the meaning of his name, Jesus, by his quality of priest, of Pontiff and of mediator. He is Supreme Pontiff and universal Mediator. Indeed, from his arrival in the world, Christ received the name of Jesus. This name means " Savior ", and the Angel added when he was speaking to Joseph: *" Because he will save his people from their sins "* (Mt.1:21). Therefore his essential mission is *"to seek and to save the lost "* (Lk 19: 10; Ez.34: 16). Yet Jesus realizes fully the significance of his divine name only by his sacrifice, by accomplishing his work of Pontiff (Mt 20: 28; Mk 10: 16)[24].

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[23]J. Galot, S.J, Theology of the Priesthood (San Francisco : I.P, 1985), 56.
[24]Ibid, 57.

In both the synoptic Gospels and the fourth Gospel, there is an attempt to show that Jesus was very aware of being Priest par excellence.

During Jesus' Baptism, Matthew mentions one revealing element: *"...Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and alighting on him. Then a voice said from heaven, " this is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased"* (Mt 3: 16-17). The heaven that opened is a sign implying the union of the earth and the heaven (Acts 7:56; 10: 11-16; Jn 1: 51) and heavenly revelation (Is 63: 19; Ez 1:1; Ap.4: 1; 19: 11). And this coming down of the Spirit of God on him, is a special consecration, special in his priestly mission in which that Spirit will always be present. This was a kind of divine anointing.

Aware of this divine anointing, Christ was right to apply the prophecy of Isaiah to himself and to say: *"the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me..."* (Lk 4: 18; Is 61, 1). He referred himself to this last text, to the Spirit he had just received from his baptism. He made the Spirit the source of his message and of his salvific action. And his priesthood surpasses that of those who had been anointed by the hands of people to receive the Spirit of God.

The theme of Temple in the Gospels always has some connections with the priestly aspect of Jesus. Indeed, the priestly conscience of Jesus is clear in his attitude vis-a-vis the Temple.[25] He considered himself greater than the Temple, and showed that he offered a sacrifice more precious than the ones of the Sanctuary of Israel. His person in fact replaced the Temple (Mt 12:6; Mk 13: 1-3; 14: 58; 15: 29).

There is certainly a connection with the aspect of priestly messianism in Jesus' life. Because the royal messianism which, with the priestly messianism, constituted the expectation of Israel, has a connection with the message of *" the one who comes "* to rebuild the Temple (the cult) (2 Sam.7:

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[25]P. J. Dunn, Priesthood, A Re-examination of the Roman Catholic Theology of the Presbyterate, 56-57.

13; 1K5: 19; 8: 13. 19; 1 Chr.17: 13; Wis.9: 8); and those expectations are realized in the person of Jesus: *" Destroy this Temple, he said, and in three days, I will rebuild it..."* That is why when he died on the Cross, *" The curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. "* (Mk 15: 38) In fact, the Temple of external cult is destroyed, and the new Temple is Christ himself, a personal being, who gave himself in perfect sacrifice.[26]

Let us take again the account of the Last Supper (Mt 26: 26-29; Lk 22: 19-20; Mk 14: 22-25). It has in it the theme of covenant, which is similar to the covenant of God with his people on Sinai (Ex.24: 16). And when Matthew adds: *"... poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"*, he shows that Jesus accomplished what the High Priests used to do on the day of Yom Kippur. He insists on the fact that in pouring out his blood on the Cross, Jesus ends the Covenant that was sealed on Sinai by the blood of victims (Ex 24: 4-8) and he also announced that the New Covenant predicted by the prophets (Jer. 31: 31-34). At the same time he proclaimed the universal value of his sacrifice for the entire humankind (Is 53: 12).

We also find a very convincing argument of Jesus as true priest in Luke. The third Gospel begins by the liturgy of the Temple (Lk 1: 8-23). This one forms a real parallel with the end of the Gospel where the evangelist presents to us a remarkable vision of Christ blessing his disciples : *"...And he raised his hands and blessed them "*, or *" as he was blessing them..."* (Lk 24: 50-51). This attitude of Jesus is the one of the High Priest who used to bless people after his own consecration (Lv 9: 22-24), and at the end of the liturgy of expiation or the day of Yom Kippur (Si 50:20).

In this context, the priest Zachariah becoming dumb could not bless the people (Lk 1), and the liturgy remained in this way unfinished. That is why, before ascending to Heaven (Lk 24), the High Priest Jesus finished this liturgy by blessing his disciples. The New priest blessed his own (Acts

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[26] J. Galot, S.J, Theology of the Priesthood, 34-35.

3: 26), and these adored him as their Lord and blessed God. Let us notice too that in Lk 24: 53, the Gospel finishes in the Temple where it started in 1: 8.

There is also another place where Luke shows us the 10th Leper who returned to Jesus, after being sent with his companions to the " priests " to approve his healing. The Gospel implies here that this Samaritan sensed that the genuine " priest " was not in the Jewish Temple, but rather in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (Lk 17: 14-19).

In the fourth Gospel, the elements of a theological priesthood of Jesus are expressed in terms of " sanctification " for the salvation of the world and of the " sending to the world: *" The one whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world "* (Jn 10: 36). Moreover, the entire Gospel is structured in a way that it favored the affirmation of Jesus' priesthood.

When the High priest entered into the " Holy of holies " on the day of Expiation, he used to offer, first sacrifices for himself and his house, and then for all the assembly of Israel (Lv 16: 11-16; He 5: 1-3). That way of doing is found in John, when we examine the division of Jesus' prayer in the 17th chapter: Jesus prayed first for himself (vv 1a-5) and for his Apostles (vv 6-19), and then he prayed for all believers or his future disciples (vv 20-26). Jesus' prayer at the end of his earthly life remains a genuine "priestly prayer". In the same prayer, Jesus used a term proper to the consecratory liturgy of ancient priesthood: *"... Consecrate them...And for their sake I consecrate myself to you..."* (Jn 17: 17.19). The triple use of the verb " consecrate " which Jesus uses in these two verses is not uncertain; it is, on the contrary, a clear confirmation of Jesus awareness of being the High Priest, who offers his person and his being for the salvation of all.

At the crucifixion, John tells us that the tunic of Jesus *" was without any seams in it..."* (Jn 19: 23). Among the interpretations given to this passage, there is one, which alludes to the tunic of

the High-Priest-Jesus, as a sign he is assuming now the new priesthood.[27] This interpretation is debatable, but the debate can not in fact, have a prejudice against the particular priesthood of Jesus, because many other passages and elements of scriptures plead in his favor; all Jesus' speeches in John can be read in this line; as it is indicated in the *"first sign in Cana "* (Jn 2), the speech on the *"Bread of life "* (Jn 6); *" the Good shepherd "* (Jn 10); the curtain of the Temple which was torn in two (Mt 27:51; He 9:12; 10:20); etc. It is important to recall here that Saint John puts all his Gospel in the liturgical context of Israel. He presents to us a Jesus going from feast to feast, from day to day with his disciples, and surpassing the rites and traditions of the ancient priesthood by his gestures and his speeches.

After having confirmed Jesus as Priest par excellence, in his acts, in his words and in his person, we are now going, in the second point, to treat the " eternity " of Christ priesthood.

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[27]F.J. Moloney, The Gospel of John, (vol.4) (Collegeville/Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1989), 507.

3.2. JESUS, ETERNAL HIGH-PRIEST

The ancient priesthood had many obscurities and negative aspects in its exercise; and for that, it always received bitter reproaches, even if, the divine institution of the ancient priesthood had never been put in doubt. It was well known by the prophets, but also it was severely criticized by them (Os 5:1; 8: 13; Am 5: 21-25; Ml 2: 1-9; Is 1: 10-16; Jr 2: 8) to the point of predicting the destruction of its foundation, the temple, the cultic place (Jr 7:12-14).

However, Israel concentrated all the accomplishment of God's design on the advent of the Messiah. Among the great divine realizations expected by people, the renewal of priesthood was included (Mal 3: 3). To merit its name, this final accomplishment had to include all essential elements of God's design. And the priestly mediation was presented in all evidence, as one of those elements.

It followed that, to the habitual expectation, in Israel, of a Messiah-King who had to liberate the people from political vicissitudes, another expectation was added, that of a " Priest of the last times", this means, a Messiah-Priest, who had to perfect the cult of Yahweh for eternity, by his particular priesthood (Za 6: 12-13; Ps 110; 2 S 7: 1). But, as it was not in the Jewish mind to wait for two Messiahs one of whom had to be a King, and the other a Priest, all the qualities of the one and of the other were put together in a same and unique eschatological person, an eminent and heavenly being, whom the prophet Daniel called *"Son of Man"* (Dn 7: 13) coming from the clouds and holding the power of an eternal Empire (Dn 7: 17).[28]

In this quick skipping through the Scriptures, it is important to observe that the prophets announced a heavenly character, a man who surpasses mysteriously the human condition, and who gathers in his person, for life, the power of Kings and of priests; in him will be gathered all necessary

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[28] S. R. Taylor et al.(eds.), Bible Commentary (Kansas City, Missouri: B.H.P of Kansas City, 1967), 62-63.

modalities for Israel's salvation, and the universal aspect (Ap 5: 9).

Jesus had, in himself, realized these expectations of Israel in the most perfect way because his conscience of being the *" Son of Man "* is clear and evident in the Gospels. Out of the eighty three times this title is used in the New Testament, we find it eighty times in the four Gospels, and used by Jesus himself compared to only three times in other writings of the New Testament (Acts 7: 56; Ap 1: 13; 14:14) where it is always referred to Jesus. Otherwise, Jesus used this title in quoting Dn 7: 13 to announce his glorious return (Mt 24: 30; 26, 64). So, in reading the New Testament with attention it can not be denied that Jesus Christ thought of himself as the " Son of Man " whom Daniel talked about.

We can not also deny His heavenly origin because the Gospel itself confirms it in many passages that he is the Son of God (Mt 16: 16; Mk 1: 1; Lk 1: 35; Jn 19: 7) made flesh (Jn 1: 14) for the salvation of humanity (Act 9: 20; Rm 1: 3; He 1: 2). The Angel who announced Jesus' birth to Mary connected the child to God and to David, insisting on his belonging to God (Lk 1: 32).

The Author of the " Epistle to the Hebrews " was also convinced of the divine origin of Jesus, and of the accomplishment of God's design in his person. That is why he wrote: *" In the past, God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these days he has spoken to us through his Son... "(* Hb1:1-2). I want to underline here a particularity : *"...in these days..."* (v.2)

This expression referred to the eschatological period, the time of final divine intervention (Ez 38: 16; Dn 2: 28; 10: 14; Mi 4: 1) much expected in Israel, and which the author affirms present by the use of another expression: " in these ". For all Christians that period is inaugurated by Christ (Acts 2: 17; 1 Co 10: 11; 1 P 1: 20). So it is sure that Jesus had accomplished the Scriptures and fulfilled the expectations of people in the way that we have just explained.

The prerogatives of the Messiah: universal Kingship and perpetual priesthood (2 S 7:1; Za 6:12-13) do not come from an earthly nomination, no more than those of mysterious Melchizedek (Gn14:18 ff). Christ realized to the letter many oracles of the Old Testament including Ps.110. This Psalm had been applied to him in the letter to the Hebrews to signify the particular kind of Jesus' priesthood, and its eternity. That is why we find more than one time in the Epistle the quotation of this oracle: " *You are a priest for ever, in the priestly order of Melchizedek* " (He 5: 6. 10; 6: 20; 7: 17)[29]. But who is this Melchizedek who is compared to Christ ? What does he have to do with the eternity of priesthood ?

The name Melchizedek is found two times in the Old Testament. Gn 14: 18-20 says that Melchizedek was " King of Salem ", priest of El- Elyon, the " *God most high who created heaven and earth.* " In the name of his God, he blessed Abraham who presented to him the tithe. And also Ps 110: 4 reports an oracle which associates priesthood and kingship with Melchizedek.

These two old testamentary allusions were used with extreme liberty by the authors of the beginning of the Christian era , following the example of Judaism which largely commented on the meaning of this ancient character. The primitive Church saw in Melchizedek, Jesus' figure, and that for many reasons. Melchizedek was priest and King. Christ was priest " in his way " because he combined in himself priesthood and Kingship. Melchizedek is presented in Genesis without anything to be said about his ancestors, contrary to Jewish priests who are proud of their Aaronic descendence. Christ on his side, is a priest by God's call, and not by heredity. The priesthood of this King, a stranger to the line of Aaron, had been known and venerated by Abraham. This parallelism between Christ, Melchizedek and Aaron is only to reinforce the superiority of Jesus' priesthood over that of the Levites.

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[29]J. Moffatt, D.D. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark limited, 1986). 95-98.

This superiority is also clarified by the continuity of his priesthood. The silence and the omission of the account of Gen. 14 draws a portrait which situates out of the time the enigmatic figure of Melchizedek. This attitude has given rise to the interpretations which consider this Melchizedek as a divine being, heavenly Savior, etc. Moreover, the Bible does not assign any limit of time to the priesthood of Melchizedek. This line distinguishes it from the priesthood of the Jewish High priests, which ended by death (Nb 20:24-28).[30]

The same is true for Jesus, a similar reality is verified in its fullness by the priesthood of the risen Christ because *" risen from the dead, Christ no more dies, He is eternally alive "*. The situation of Christ glorified in Jesus of Nazareth makes of him the guarantor of a final covenant between God and people (He 7: 22; 12: 24; Lk 22: 20; 2 Co 3: 6). He is indeed the man who had been established High Priest next to God. He is unique, capable, and intercedes in favor of people, because no one else is better than him, the glorified one, who had been introduced for ever at the right hand of God (Rm 8: 34; He 9: 24; 1 Jn 2: 1). Also, the Psalm was right to say of him: *" the Lord made a solemn promise and will not take it back: " you are a priest for ever"* (Ps.110: 4).

3.3. THE ATTRIBUTES OF JESUS' PRIESTHOOD

Having discovered how Christ realized, in his person, all the required conditions to be a true and Eternal High Priest, it is now a question of reviewing some functions given to ancient priests, and to compare them with the life of the Eternal Priest who is Christ. It would be proper to consult the oracles and to trace the attributes of Jesus' priesthood and to ask how Jesus as a priest exercised the oracular function in an explicit way. (Mt 21: 11; 12: 23; 16: 14; Mk 6: 15; Lk 7: 16. 26. 39; 24: 19; Jn 6: 14; Acts 3: 22-23). The answer will be directly affirmative, after giving the exact meaning of the term " Oracle ", As it sounded in the mind of an Israelite.

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[30]J. Moffatt, D.D., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews, 94.

The People were aware of their limits and their weaknesses there was a need of a specialized erson, whose function is to discover the will of God and to proclaim it to the people. The specialist, vhether he is named diviner, seer, man of God (priest) or prophet, perceived the divine will and communicated it (Is 8: 19; Ez 3: 16- 21; 14: 12; 33: 1-9): That communication is what is called 'Oracle ".It was received as a word coming from Yahweh. But later, Israel paid all its attention to he instruction of priests or to the word of the prophet (Is 5: 24). The Oracle was also the art to predict the future.

Concerning God's will, Jesus was its sure discerner and its faithful executor. From the beginning of his life, when he was twelve years old, as Luke mentions (2: 42), he was aware of his unique relation with the Father. He had more to do with him than with Joseph and Mary (Lk 2: 49). This conviction pushed Jesus to constitute a new family by which the principle is the perfect realization of God's will as when Jesus asked the question: *" who is my mother ? Who are my brothers? ...Whoever does what my Father in heaven wants him to do is my brother, my sister, and my mother."* (Mt 12: 46-50; Mk 3: 31-35) In this way the Son gathers around Him and his Father people disposed to accomplish the divine will to enter in the Kingdom. Even the honor and glory of his mother, comes, according to Him, above all from her faith in God's word: *" How happy are those who hear the word of God and obey it "* (Lk 11, 28; 1: 45). There are many passages in the New Testament where Jesus underlines that he knows well the Father's will and that his mission is to do not his own will but the will of the one who sent him (Lk 22: 42; Mt 26: 39; Mk 14: 36-41; He 10: 9).

The Gospel of John is also directed to this goal. Jesus' human will is related to this divine will as it progresses as to that goal and its ultimate accomplishment., Jesus' will is one with that of the Father, and he saw himself as always doing *" the work of his Father "; " My food,"* Jesus said to them, " is to obey the will" of the Father (Jn 4: 34); and again : *" I can do nothing on my own*

authority; I judge only as God tells me, so my judgement is right, because I am not trying to do what I want, but only what he who sent me wants."[31] (Jn 5: 30; 6: 38-40; 17: 4.12; 18: 19; 19: 30)

Christ who knew in everything the will of God, communicated it to those whom his Father gave him (Jn 17: 4-8). That is why he could say to his disciples : *" I do not call you servants any longer, ... Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. "* (Jn 15: 15). Indeed, Jesus accepted and lived up to his *" death on the Cross "* (Ph 2: 8; Mt 6: 10; 5: 17-20; 7: 21. 24-27; 12: 50; 21: 50) the will of God.

Elsewhere, we have seen Jesus complaining, like Jeremiah, about the city of Jerusalem (Lk19: 41 ff) and predicting her destruction (Lk 21: 20-24) and that of the Temple (Lk 21: 5). Like Daniel, he announced the great tribulation of Jerusalem(Mk 13: 14-23; Mt 24: 15-25). Jesus had without doubt exercised and led to a good end the oracular function, especially if we read with interest the two other synoptic texts (Mk 13: 1-37 and Lk 17: 20-37) called " synoptic Apocalypse". We can also place the dialogue with Nicodemus (Jn 3: 1-21) within the scope where a man thirsty of desire to know the divine will came to consult the prophet or the Priest of God.

Let us now ask ourselves the type of Jesus' sacrifice, its way of mediation and, finally its descending elements. Those are the three last points of our Chapter.

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[31]Cfr. R. Brown, The Message of Hebrews, Christ Above All (England/Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), 100-101.

3.3.1. THE BLOODY SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

It is said that Jesus did not offer sacrifices, and that even his death, had nothing of a sacrifice in the eyes of his contemporaries. This is true but, it is important to notice that the word " sacrifice" is the most currently used term to define the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross. This word, applied to Jesus' death, creates a lot of ambiguities in relation to the cultural context of the Old Testament where it originated. Indeed, the use of the term "sacrifice" in the New Testament concerning the death of Jesus brings a new meaning to this term. It is a transformation of the meaning to signify the salvific work of Christ because nothing looked like a rite in what had happened on the Cross, and that, those who crucified Jesus did not sacrifice him in an Old Testament sense of the word, because they did not offer him to God. Jesus is the victim who offered himself and in that perspective it is said that Christ is at the same time Priest and victim (Jn 10: 17-18).

In spite of that consideration, Jesus' sacrifice has something in common with the ancient sacrificial rite: the covenant between man and God, through the poured blood, symbol of the given life. The ancient sacrifices were an effort to be reconciled with God or to please Him.[32] But, God had manifested a certain rejection concerning those kinds of sacrifices by proclaiming through the prophets : *" it is the mercy that I want, and not sacrifices "*; what pleases God is a contrite heart and a humble spirit (Ps 50; Os 14: 3; He 13: 15; Mt 5: 33). The true God does not need billy goats nor bulls, because they are only symbols to express the inner intention and the desire to give one's own body. In this way, all acts of human life can be consecrated to God and become sacrifice (Rm 12: 1-2). It means that, when the internalization of sacrifice is not constituted only by rite, but most, of all through actions by which man gets closer to God. He then becomes a man who professes his total

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[32]R. E. Brown S.S, Priest and Bishop. Biblical Reflections (Paramus/ New York/ Toronto: Paulist Press, 1970), 13.

belonging to God, to a God who loves and gives himself according to the hand which is outstretched to him, and according to the heart which is opened to Him.

Yet, the first Christians had begun to interpret the event of Calvary as connected to the salvific history. It means that the life of Jesus had been a Sacrifice for all people and for their sins. In his Passion, Jesus offered himself for us and the fact that he had voluntarily undergone that Passion (Jn13: 1. 3; 12: 20-28; 10: 17-18; 18: 1-8) shows that Christ had really given his life for people as it was declared prophetically by the High priest Caiaphas: *"...that one man die for the people, instead of having the whole nation destroyed "* (Jn 11: 50), and in other similar references which brought Christ closer to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (Acts 3: 26; 4: 25-30; 1 P.2: 21-25; Lk 17: 25; Mt 20: 28; 26: 28; Lk 22: 16. 18. 20).[33]

In as much as the death of Christ constitutes a donation, that death has to be understood in the sense of a sacrificial liturgy. Jesus himself envisages it in this sense: *" For even the Son of Man has come... to serve and not to be served... and to give his life..."* (Mk 10: 45; 14: 24; Is 53: 11-12). He then expressed the sense of his death by the symbols of bread and of wine which he identified with his body and his blood. Yet, those two elements were, in the ancient sacrificial rite *" matter of sacrificial offering and of communion".*

Whereas the ancient priests poured the blood of animals for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus had poured his own. And blood in the Old Testament was considered as the life (Lv 17: 11. 14; Dt 18: 23), which was the particular possession of God; the ancient priest played an important liturgical role: his vital dynamism, especially the one of sacrificing victims " for God ", protected from the power of evil (Ex 12: 13. 23); it was able to purify (= expiatory power) and to reestablish the relationship between human beings and God (Lv 17: 11). That is how for Christ, the new High

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[33]J. M.-O'Connor, " The First Letter to the Corinthians ", in E.R. Brown, A.J. Fitzmyer, E.R.Murphy, The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, The Old Testament (vol I), The New Testament and Topical Articles (vol. II) (Englewood Cliffs, 1990), 813.

Priest, blood was also necessary for the expiation of the sin of the world; his death and the Eucharist (which recall it) are mentioned in terms of " *blood of the covenant* " (Mk 14: 24). His cross takes its true meaning from this vision: all that the gestures of the ancient priests symbolized, the blood of Jesus realized with ultimate perfection.

Translated into sacrificial symbols, the bloody death of Jesus is a sign of donation: " *this is my body given for you*", he said to his own (Lk 22: 19); and the first Christians understood it very quickly: " *he offered himself, he gave himself* " (Gal 1: 4; 2: 20; Eph 5: 25; Tt 2: 14). The sacrifice of Christ remains a gift given at the same time to God and to the people; " *Christ loved us and gave his life for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice that pleases God* " (Eph 5: 2); his blood poured out on the wood of the Cross is a sacrifice to God in his person. This sacrifice is certainly superior to that of the ancient priests by its "sacredness " and in fact, Christ, in spite of his earthly existence and the fact that he adapted to the world, which secularized him and arrested him at the doorway of the sanctuary, has remained the dweller and master of the heavenly residence. God to whom those sacrifices were offered is one with His Son (Jn 17: 21-22). In another way, Jesus remains, in his human condition, rooted and totally living in God. It is in this sense that he said: " *I dedicate myself* " (Jn 17: 19), to signify: " *I offer myself in sacrifice* ".

The hope and the will of any Jewish donor was that his gift may be accepted, and may pass into God's possession; the officiating priest did some gestures, and God would accept his sacrifice to make it his property: There is here, a kind of transfer of the secular to the sacred. But these rites as realized by the Jews, had only the symbols of acceptance; while the sacrifice of Christ presents a personal realism. Its divine character became real when, on the cross, he said loudly: " *Father! In your hands I place my Spirit!* " (Lk 23: 46); and in the same way, in his " priestly prayer ", when he offered this fundamental petition: " *Father, give glory to your Son...* " (Jn 17: 1)

Let us finally underline that" Hebrews " strongly insists on the role of glorification in the sacrifice of Christ. The ancient high priest and his victim could only penetrate a " figurative " sanctuary, built by people's hands. Christ, on the other hand, penetrated by his blood, the true sanctuary (Hb 10: 19). So, Jesus entered by his bloody sacrifice into the heavenly sanctuary (He 4: 14; 6: 20). In his capacity as Supreme Pontiff. Because he lives and remains eternal, he is still alive to intercede eternally for us to the one who had established him: *" High Priest for eternity "*.[34]

3.3.2. JESUS' ROLE AS MEDIATOR

In an implicit way, it has been suggested that the entrance of the high priest into the Holy of Holies had been only the prefiguration of the true entrance of Christ in the heavenly glory. This Holy of Holies was the place where God had his special dwelling. It is where he received homage, blessed the vows and granted the prayers of Israel; He entered into contact with his people in that place.

Indeed, the Old Testament knew very well the notion of mediation. There was on the one hand the *" descending mediation "* in which God transmitted his word and put somebody in charge of keeping the deposit; and on the other hand, there was the *" ascending mediation "* in which people prayed to God through an intercessor. That mediation was above all the privilege of the Kings, of priests or of prophets. And among the mediators in the Old Testament we find, among others, Abraham, a member of chosen people, interceding for the pagans, who did not have access to God (Gn 18: 22-23; 20: 15-17); Moses, chief of the people, in charge of the realization of God's plan assuring the people about God's faithfulness (Dt 9: 18-29; Ex 33: 11-15; 27: 11-13; 20: 18-21). Moreover, he exercised his intercession even for Pharaoh (Ex 8: 4-11; 21- 28). The Kings also exercised this mediation, but on a subordinate level and in an occasional way (1 R 8; 11: 12-36). While the institutional mediation was exercised by the priests (Dt 33: 8-10; 1 S 2: 28; Ex 29: 36-37),

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[34] A. George, " Priesthood ", in L-Dufour (ed.), Dictionary of Biblical Theology (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 409-410.

the prophets were mediators of God's message (Jr 4: 10; 14: 7-22; 17: 14; 32: 16).

In some cases, we also find an allusion to the Angels as mediators on the side of divine world (Gn 28; Dn 3: 49-50; Jb 5: 1; Za 1: 12). And when the Epistle to the Galatians talks of it (Ga 3: 19-20), it underlines that the mediation of the Angels as in the Law of Moses, is inferior to that of God himself in his Son. As Man-God, Christ realized in an unique way that mediation, because he is the Supreme Revelator of the Father (Jn 3: 11; 7: 17-18), and at the same time the perfect atoning Priest before God.[35]

We have identified Christ as the Servant of Yahweh (Is 53); this one was mediator because of being a voluntary victim (Is 53: 7). Yet we have the certainty that Jesus on earth, was that *" man of pain", " object of contempt "*, and *" familiar to suffering"*, whom Isaiah talks about (53: 7 ff); he gave himself as a victim, a ransom for the redemption of humanity (Jn 13: 1-3; 10: 17-18; 12: 10-28; 18: 1-8; Is 53: 4-12; Mt 22: 28; 1 Tm 2: 6; Jn 10: 17-18; Rm 5: 6-8; 8: 1-4; Ga 3: 13; Tt 2: 13-14).

Christ is the Mediator who placed his mediation in his own death (1 Tm 2: 5-6). He is really that Mediator because thanks to his death, the goods of the New Covenant have been given to us: his death is a veritable " guarantee " to it. And his superiority over the priests of the Old Testament is built on the experience of the Covenant of which he is the New Mediator (He 8: 1-6; 9: 15; 12: 24; 6: 17).

The sacrificial death of Jesus made of him an incomparable " Mediator. " There are no more barriers between Christians and God, the passage is now free because at the Ascension of the Risen Christ, the entire humanity has been brought into the sphere of the divinity. There is no more separation because Jesus himself is the " spotless " victim, who has welcomed the transforming action

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[35]R. Brown, The Message of Hebrews, Christ Above All, .36-45.

of the Spirit and has been totally accepted by God (He 9: 24). There is no more distance between the priest and the victim because in his offering, Christ remains in himself victim and Priest, and he has offered himself; " his sacrifice " has at the same time sanctified him as Victim and consecrated him as Priest.

Finally, through Christ people can share in his priesthood, because his Passion has been the act of perfect assimilation to his brothers and sisters. This is the birth of a new solidarity: as a priest, Jesus associates the people to his priesthood (He 10:14).

Jesus' death has reconciled humanity with his Father (Col 2: 14); and that is why, when he died on the Cross, the curtain was torn into two parts, to show that Christ has opened the Gates of heaven which were for a long time closed to the people, and gave people the entrance into the eternal heritage.

Christ remains the Supreme Mediator between the human race and God. It is only through him that people can dialogue with God. No one can enter in the Holy of Holies if it is not with Him and no creature can enjoy the eternal bliss except not by following Jesus as he himself affirms: *" No one goes to the Father except by me "* (Jn 14: 6-7; 8: 19; 12: 45; 2 Co 4: 4; He 10: 20; Mt 11: 27). It is through Christ (his blood poured out for humankind) with him and in him, that people are brought before the face of God (Eph 1: 3- 14). It is his sacrifice and his immolation that establishes such a mediation, unique, irreplaceable and eternal.

The descending elements of the priestly mediation of Christ are concentrated in "Redemption", and " Salvation ". They surpass the ones of the" Ancient mediation " by their transcendent and divine character, by the exceptional quality of Jesus of Nazareth's sacrifice, who offered himself as Priest, Victim and Altar.

3.4 . THE CONTINUITY OF JESUS' PRIESTHOOD IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND TODAY

In the early Church, there was a time when there was an absence of priests, of cult and of Temple. Christians used to meet in the houses of believers, and the Apostles themselves were not seen as priests. But if the one who sent them, the Risen Lord, was a priest according to what we have seen in this third chapter, the Apostles were soon to be considered as priests, because of " *their intimate connection with the saving work of Christ. They carry out the charge which was given to Christ, their destiny is like that of Christ. Their words and actions have the power and authority of his ministry behind them .* "[36]

I t was at the end of the first, beginning of the second century that we find the description of the hierarchy by St Clement. When the early Church grew and when many of the Apostles passed away, some Christians were appointed by the members of the communities to help the Apostles in their ministry: the Episcopoi (or Bishops), the Presbyteroi (or Elders who became to be understood as " Priests") and Diaconoi (or deacons). The ministry was seen as a service, and the transmission of power was done through the cult. The sign of continuity of leadership was the laying on of hands as it is written in the Scripture: " *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate* " (1 Tim 4,14). Two important functions were given to them: to preside over the cult and to preach the gospel. These two functions are exercised by the priests even today. The early Christians started to understand gradually the meaning of the Risen Lord and the activity of the appointed people as " *a participation in the one, definitive priesthood of Christ and not an independent entity beside it. It gives actual force and effect to this work of Christ, but adds nothing new to it.* "[37]

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[36]E. Niermann, " Priest ", in K. Rahner, Encyclopedia of Theology (London: Burns and Oates, 1986), 1282a.

[37]Ibid, 1282b.

Indeed, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus give us a good explanation about priesthood and the theology of priesthood of the early Church, but the Vatican Council II gives us a new and important element which we should not neglect. The declaration "Presbyterorum Ordinis " focuses on the liturgical celebration and it is during this celebration, that the priest exercises his function as minister of the word. For this reason, we can not just talk of "priest" and forget his function. Also as an African, I can not just talk of Jesus' priesthood, the ministerial priesthood in the early Church and forget my continent Africa and the exercise of ministerial priesthood in our time.

The inculturation of ministerial priesthood in the D.R. of Congo in the fourth chapter will focus on the consecration of the Priest and his role over the Eucharist, because as " *Sacrosanctum Concilium* " (the " *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* " of Vatican Council II) insists: " Christ is *always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations... The liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ.* "[38]

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[38] " Sacrosanctum Concilium ", in A. Flannery. O.P. (Ed.), Vatican II, The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents(Banda/Bombay: St. Paul, 1997), 24a.

CHAPTER FOUR: MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD AND ITS INCARNATION IN THE D.R OF CONGO.

In the three previous chapters we dealt with the Biblical foundation of Jesus' priesthood. After presenting the hereditary priesthood in the first two chapters, the third chapter was to show how Jesus entered in the true line of priesthood which was the Order of Melchizedek and that he was a priest par excellence. In this chapter, the ministerial priesthood will be discussed in the specific context of an inculturated Church.

Inculturation has always been in the spirit of Congolese people. It is this spirit that pushed the first Congolese Cardinal, the first black Archbishop of D.R of Congo, to reform the liturgical structures, the habits of Congolese religious nuns (sisters), the building of local churches (Church as house of God) etc. The spirit to inculturate is rooted in the mentality of the Congolese. I will take the case study of the "Luba " people and see how they have contributed a lot in the inculturation of ministerial priesthood in their place and according to their culture. This discussion begins with; who are the Luba? How is their culture? And finally, how is the inculturation done and lived by the Luba? Then the Zairian rite will be examined in general and how it has spread and influenced the people in the whole of Congolese territory.

4.1. THE " LUBA " AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE INCULTURATION OF MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD IN D.R.OF CONGO

4.1.1. THE LUBA PEOPLE

The Luba are the people who inhabit the center of the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are inhabitants of a province called " Kasai ". Kasai is a very big province divided into two: The Eastern Kasai and the Western Kasai. People who belong to Kasai province are called " Luba ". The

Luba are people who have always been rich and prosperous.

According to the history of the evangelization of Congo, and according to the missionaries who evangelized them, the Luba were and are still people who love music, dance, and love priesthood and religious life. It is for these reasons that we find more religious in their province than in any other in Congo. They have more vocations. The priestly ordination, final vows, etc... are celebrated like the enthronement of a King.

4.1.2. SOME SYMBOLS USED IN THE CELEBRATIONS AND THEIR MEANINGS

It has been observed above that the Luba love religious life and priesthood. The religious are called "*BANDIAMBIKE* "in their language (Chiluba) and the priests "*BASASERDOSE* ". This last word comes from the word " *SACERDOCE* " which the French language uses and was borrowed from the Latin language " *SACERDOS* " meaning " priest ". The Luba took the word "*Basacerdose*" from the language in which they were evangelized and transformed it a bit.

A) LEOPARD SKIN, SYMBOL OF POWER

According to their culture, the kings were always dressed in Leopard Skin. The Leopard is for them the most powerful and sacred animal. This traditional rite has been introduced in the Zairian liturgy. This means that when a priest is ordained, he is given a new (liturgical) dress. The elders in the priesthood are the ones to dress him with the leopard skin. This is to show how a priest has to be powerful in word and in action. A priest has to be able to devour the bad spirit, to pray for the sick, and to celebrate or to be a Presider over Eucharist in the way the King convenes his subjects.

Yet, the use of Leopard skin was not limited only to the Luba people in Congo. Many other people like the Bakongo regard the leopard as an "*animal of sovereignty* " which they call in their language " *mbisi i kimfumu* ".[39] Professor Francois Kabasele, gave the source of this liturgical

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[39]F. Kabasele,"Christ as Chief ", in J.R. Schreiter, Faces of Jesus in Africa (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 112-113.

adoption of the Leopard symbolism. He wrote:

" the adoption of the Leopard symbolism by the modern civil authorities in Zaire is an indication of its persistence. With the coming of independence (1960), at Kasai, leader Albert Kalonji was seen to wear a leopard skin at his belt. At Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), Patrice Lumumba often wore a Leopard-skin thong at his neck. Still more recently, President Mobutu and senior party officials wore Leopard-skin caps. "[40]

B) THE LIME

Lime is a white substance obtained by burning limestone, used in making cement and mortar. It is symbol of purity for the Luba of Kasai. Lime is also one of the substances the Luba use. After mixing lime with water, they put it on the face of the newly ordained minister to show that the whiteness is recommended He must be white like lime and this whiteness will push him to "whiten" the people of God who are entrusted to him by the virtue of his priesthood.

The use of lime is not only confined to the ordained minister, it is also used for the celebrations or consecrations to religious life, for religious brothers or religious sisters who accept to live under the temporary vows or perpetual vows and to serve the Lord in a specific congregation or an order.

C) THE TRANSMISSION OF POWER

There are some gestures done which are symbolic. For example, how the power was transmitted from one person to another. In Luba society it was done when an elder wanted to transmit power or authority to the youngest of the family who was now mature, able to be responsible in the society. It was part of initiation. The elder would come closer to the younger and place his forehead against the forehead of the younger one, as a sign of transmission of power. The elder transmitted

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[40] F. Kabasele, " Christ as Chief ", in J.R. Schreiter, Faces of Jesus in Africa, 113.

all power he possessed to the younger one.

The same gesture was adopted in the inculturated Church of the D.R. of Congo. When somebody is ordained priest. During the sign of peace, the elders (Bishop and priests present) will use the sign to transmit power to the young priest, so that he may become like them powerful in word and in actions, and be a good leader; it is also a sign of maturity. We also will find this sign in the Eucharistic celebration, done by the Presider at the beginning of the mass.

D) SINGING AND DANCING

Ritual dances are done to pay homage to God who has given the community a new priest and this is done in the same way as the enthronement of the King. This is to show to the new priest that his ministry is comparable to the royal one; this means that the ministry which is for the good of people, is for God's glory.

When ordination is announced in the Church few months before, a song is composed in which homage is paid, praise is given and the way to follow is shown. In Congo, as in many other African countries, music is part of life. Nwaka Chris Egbulem shows it in his book when he writes:

"*...Sunday celebration begins in family homes as people get ready to leave for the Church. Often singing can be heard in the bathroom and as people dress up. The singing increases in volume as the people leave their homes and join with others of the extended family on their way to Church...on the final approach to the assembly place, people leave off singing their own song and join in the song coming from those already in the Church.* "[41]

Finally, the Luba love priesthood; a " sacerdose " is what they call " Mukalenge mu nene ", it means that a priest is a King. He is there for the people and to defend the people who are Christian. He has another function, among others, to celebrate the Eucharist .

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[41]N.C. Egbulem, The Power of Africentric Celebration, Inspirations from the Zairean Liturgy (New York: A Crossroad Herder Book, The C.P.C, 1996),.128.

4.2. DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF THE ZAIREAN RITE

4.2.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION.

The Celebration of mass has two forms: the solemn rite and the simple rite. The structure of the solemn rite of the Eucharistic celebration in Congo is considered to be the normative schema which encompasses the one of the simple rite.

The essential schema of the Eucharistic liturgy is not different from the one of the Western and Eastern Catholic Churches, which goes back to the apostolic tradition. It is divided into three important parts:

1. The opening of the celebration
2. The celebration of the word
3. The sacrificial celebration which reconciles God and his people and which ends by the communion between God, brothers and sisters.

A) THE STRUCTURE

a. Opening of celebration

- The role of the Announcer/ Animator.
- The Entrance of the priest and ministers
- The Veneration of the Altar.
- Greeting the Assembly.
- To be in the presence of God.
- Song of Acclamation (Gloria).
- Opening Prayer.

b. The Liturgy of the word

- Biblical readings
- Enthronement of the Gospel
- The Sermon
- The Profession of faith.
- Penitential Act.
- The Rite of Peace

The Universal Prayer

c. The Liturgy of Eucharist

- Presentation of the Gifts
- The Eucharistic Prayer
- The Concluding Rite.

4.2.2. EXPLANATION OF THE ZAIREAN RITE

The core of the Zairean rite is expressed totally in a Congolese context. Yet we can not separate Congo from Africa. The Zairean rite is done in the African context characterized by warmth, color, dance, boiling down to a feast, and this sounds well because mass is a feast.

- The Instruments of battle

The Instruments used to fight in Africa are: spears, hatchets and the knives. These instruments appear everywhere the rite performed are important for the life of the group. Life for this people is considered as a fierce battle between the forces of evil and the ones of good. That is why the spears appear in Christian celebration, because Christian life is a battle from which Christ has come victorious.

- Animator

When the entrance procession starts, the Animator (or the Announcer) rings a small bell to announce the entrance of the celebrant and the ministers. It is an important role in our traditional assembly to draw people's attention to announce the coming of a dignitary. An Animator is always a lay member of the Assembly who plays the role of the precursor.

- Entrance Procession of the Presider and other Ministers

The Presider and Ministers move forward to the rhythm of the entrance hymn. The Deacon bears the Lectionary (or for lack of a Deacon, a Reader), and the servers bear the spears and the fire. While the Celebrant bears a special machete or a pastoral staff, a sign showing his role as Conductor of the assembly and as the representative of Christ. So the Presider plays a role like the one of the

Bantu Chief, the intermediary between the visible and invisible world, the channel of transmission of force from the invisible to the visible world.[42]

- The Veneration of the Altar

The Altar is the central place of the Church, it represents Christ. Yet, in African conception of the world, such a place is not only venerable and sacred, but also it transmits the power of life; and the celebrant will put his forehead on this place as a sign of respect, but especially as a demand of blessing by this contact. It is a sign of initiation. When an elder wants to communicate his power to a younger person, as I have said before, he comes closer to him/her and puts his forehead on the forehead of the person. The Celebrant will repeat this gesture at the four corners of the Altar, the hands wide opened in form of " V "[43]

- Invocation of the Saints and Ancestors.

Once the Celebrant has finished to greet the Assembly, the servers lay down the spears at a particular place behind the Altar, and the invocation of the Saints and Ancestors starts. In Africa, an Ancestor is alive. He/she participates in the earthly life. And this associates him/her closely with the important events of life.

The Eucharist being the event par excellence for the African Christian, will instinctively associate the ancestors to this Eucharist, for more plenitude in its act of invoking the Saints who are our ancestors in faith. The Christians maintain their communion in the family generated by the blood of Christ.[44]

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[42]Cfr. Conference Episcopale du Zaire, Missel Romain Pour les Dioceses du Zaire, Ordinaire: Rite Solennel-Rite simple (Kinshasa/ Limete: St. Paul, 1988), 4.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Conference Episcopale du Zaire, Supplement au Missel Romain pour les Dioceses du Zaire, Presentation de la liturgie de la Messe (Kinshasa/ Gombe: Editions du Secretariat General, 1989), 10 b.

- Song of Acclamation (Gloria)

Outside Advent and Lent, at the time of singing the hymn of Praise which is the proclamation of the triumph of God over evil, the Celebrant spreads with the Thurible the sweet smelling smoke which embellishes the atmosphere and which symbolizes the prayer of the Assembly rising towards God. According to African traditions, such incensing would also take away from the place all bad spirits which would attempt to make obstacle to the ceremony.

The servers take back their spears, the celebrant being in the lead with the censer, and they execute a dance around the Altar until the end of the hymn of Praise.

- Opening Prayer.

The hands lifted up, the entire Assembly participates in the prayer proclaimed by the Celebrant. And in many African traditions, the hands lifted up indicate a petition or an imploration.

- Proclamation of the Word.

The first two Scripture readings can be proclaimed by any baptized man or woman. But before proclaiming the reading, the minister asks for the blessing of the Celebrant in a loud voice. This adds to the reading a solemnity worthy of the Scriptures, but also these gestures enter in the line of African traditions which require the blessing of the Elders before starting any important business for the sake of communion and harmony.

Before proclaiming the word of God, an Announcer solemnly invites the Assembly to open its ears and its heart to welcome the Sacred text. According to the genius of each language, a particular formula will be used at the end of the reading to provoke an adherence of the audience, for example the reader will finish the reading by saying: " *Bandeko liloba lya Nzambe wana* ", " *N'est-ce pas la parole de Dieu?* ", " *Brothers and Sisters, this is the word of God* ". And the Assembly will answer: " *Todoni yango* ", " *Oui, c'est ainsi* ", " *We accept it* " or another formula can be used : " *Oyo azali na matoyi ya koyoka* ", " *Mes freres et soeurs, cette parole de Dieu, ne merite-t-elle pas*

notre accueil ? ", " *Whoever has ears to hear* " and the Assembly will answer: " *Ayoka* ", " *Oui, elle le merite* ", " *let him hear* ".[45]

When it is time to proclaim the Gospel, the Celebrant takes the Gospel and shows it to the Assembly which acclaims in different ways according to the Regions and languages. This acclamation is a sign of welcoming Christ, word of the Father.

- The Sermon. (Homily)

The Art of speaking of the black African, makes of speech a continual dialogue between the speaker and the people. The speaker makes his speech in a way that people may finish various phrases and may react in emphasizing by a squeal or by a clapping of hands.

- The Penitential Rite

Immediately after the profession of faith comes the penitential rite. The placing it after the proclamation of the word of God and the profession of faith, is to underline the primacy of God's initiative in the conversion. Indeed, it is the word of God which reveals to us our limits and which converts our heart.

The head bowed, expresses an attitude of supplication. This attitude is more explained by some formula of petition of forgiveness such as: " *Mokonzi yokela biso mana* ", " *Seigneur prends pitie de nous* ", " *Lord have mercy on us* " or an other formula: " *Nous t'implorons pardonne-nous*", " *We beg you have mercy on us.* "

Coming to the end of the Penitential rite, the Celebrant moves through the Church sprinking the blessed water on the Assembly. This gesture recalls baptism in the Christian tradition; but it is a gesture which also joins the African traditions of purification and of healing.

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[45]Cfr. R.M. Vanzila, Attempts of the Dancing Church for Inculturation in the D.R. of Congo: Analysis And Prospects (Nairobi, February, 1999), 15-16.

- Peace and Universal Prayer

Purified by God, the celebrant enters into communion with God and with his fellow bothers and sisters. That is why the gesture of reconciliation takes place after the penitential rite. This gesture will be done according to the local usage, such as greeting or embracing. Peace and reconciliation introduce people to a deep communion; and that is what the universal prayer expresses. This prayer is also destined to make of the liturgical Assemblies, a place where the daily life finds an echo.

- Procession and Presentation of the gifts.

At the moment of offertory, the gift are brought forward. These gifts are put in a basket which some representatives of the Assembly bring to the Altar. In a rhythmic dance, and with a song of joy, these gifts are brought to the Altar in procession and are presented to the Celebrant.

In union with its representatives, the Assembly lift up their hands and say the same words addressed to the priest. Among the gifts presented, there is the bread and the wine. The celebrant welcomes the gifts by a light clapping.

When he goes up to the Altar, the priest presents the offerings to God, in a prayer which offers not only the gifts but also the entire Assembly to God.

- The Eucharistic Prayer

The preface is a song of praise to God for the creation and the work of Salvation. In the D.R. of Congo, God is praised for the rivers, for the forests, for the wild life, for the entire Universe. The rhythm and melodies, are borrowed from the heroic songs of African traditions during which the Celebrant is in continual dialogue with the Assembly. This dialogue marks particularly the Eucharistic prayer.

To put more harmony in these interventions of people, the Choir Master will play an important role. The rhythm is not only a festal element, in Africa it goes even beyond that in so far

as it creates a union between the body and the spirit, it "vibrates" the Assembly to the rhythm of God. Also the "Tom toms" or drums are a precious form of expression in the Assembly.

The strident shout is a sign of joy, a sign of feast and honor given to a chief. This shout during the Eucharistic celebration can be produced during a song and even during the sermon or homily. It is in the same line of dancing in the Church. The entire body has to join the spirit in the praise of God. The dance tries to eliminate all dualism.

The Consecration is one of the culminating moments of the Celebration. The attitude of hands lifted up comes from Judaism. The African Christians have easily adopted it to pray to the revealed God, a God who is " Our Father ".

When the time of communion comes, the faithful receive the body of Christ either in the hands, or on the tongue. The priests are not the only ones to distribute communion: almost everywhere, the faithful mandated by the bishop assume that task, and help the Celebrant in the distribution of the body and blood of Christ.

- The concluding Rite

When the Prayer of Conclusion is recited by the Priest, all the Assembly joins in it with hands lifted. After blessing, the priests and those who assist him leave the Altar taking the direction of the way out, while the Assembly remains at their place until the ministers disperse singing: " *Heureux d'avoir rencontre le Christ* ", " *Happy are we, for having met Christ* " in the reality of their lives, of their cultures, with their languages, their images and their symbols with the profound aspirations of an African soul.[46]

This last chapter has examined how the Church of the D.R. of Congo has been faithful to the culture and to the mentality of the people, and that is the reason why the liturgy is alive, people

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[46]C.E.Z. Missel Romain pour Les Dioceses du Zaire, 50-64.

understand what they celebrate, and it is part of their culture. This understanding has been done by using the specific example of the Luba people. They are not the only people who have contributed much to the good of the Congolese Church. Being an inculturated Church, the Church of the D.R. of Congo is faithful to the values of the Christian Religion brought to them by the missionaries.

CONCLUSION

Our aim was to go back to the Scripture and to discover in it the founder of our priesthood today. We have discovered Jesus as a " Unique True Priest ", the greatest and the eternal one. The last chapter dealt with the actualization of priesthood in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As the ancient priesthood was lived in the Jewish context or culture, when it moves from Jewish to other cultures, it has to be inculturated. It is by being inculturated that priesthood has a meaning or is understood by the people who receive it.

Let us ask ourselves an important question: where is the foundation of our priesthood, is it in Jewish priesthood or in Jesus' priesthood? Scripture shows that the priestly institution of the ancient covenant finds its fulfillment in the mystery of Christ. So when the ministerial priesthood is inculturated, it is the mystery of Christ which is inculturated in our African realities. Christ is the founder of our priesthood today. But for our priesthood to be meaningful and successful, we need a radical change of mentality, of behavior, because Jesus' priesthood is strongly founded on the events of his life. Christ celebrated the new liturgy not in ceremonies, but in a concrete event, his death, His sacrifice, which changes completely the religious situation of the people, because it transforms human beings and introduces them into intimacy with God. Christ is then a priest, but of a new kind: He has offered a sacrifice, but without the immolation of an animal.

Comparing the ancient priesthood to the new ministerial priesthood, we can say that there are some resemblances but two different contexts: the Jews had priests and high priests; today we also have priests and bishops as our high priests. They had their special liturgical way of dressing which had meaning according to their Jewish culture; in the Zairean rite, the priests have also a special liturgical dress which has meaning only in the African context. If it goes out of the context, there can be a risk of losing some meaning. By this we can say that every culture is important for the actualization of the message. The Jewish culture should not dominate all cultures, yet Christ is above all cultures, he is unchangeable, he is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Exploring the Zairean rite, we have seen that the ministerial priesthood and the liturgy of the mass are very well inculturated in Congolese reality, but we need also the inculturation of our heart,

of our mentality, of our behavior. In a few words, I can say that the inculturation of the external rite should go together with the conversion of hearts.

Tying to understand why many religions and sects do not use the term " priest ", one idea comes to my mind. It is probably because the non-Catholics find that since our priests are not good examples for their Christians, they do not use the term " priest ". They say that the priests of Jesus' time were rejected by Christ himself because of their behavior and Jesus did not call himself a priest, so how can we take that name which has a negative connotation? Our priests today live like the priests of Jesus' time, who based their teaching on external law. They do not practice what they teach, and many priests are behaving in a scandalous way. In the Gospel, from the beginning of His ministry, Jesus started to gain popularity. Many people came to him, from different countries, from different places, and the number grew day after day because Jesus used to preach with authority and do good to people. And this is the sign of his true priesthood. On the contrary today, many people, after being baptized, after living as Christians in the Catholic Church for a while, see that something is missing in their faith, so they go to look for a true Church, for true pastors who are models of their flock. So in the Catholic Church, the number of believers continues to decrease day after day. For the Church not to loose believers we need a certain inculturation. The inculturation of our cult, of our liturgy is not enough: we need the inculturation of our behavior.

Now, let me explain what I mean by " Inculturation of our heart, or of our behavior ". Before evangelization in Africa and especially in my country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, it was known that both girls and boys should be chaste before and after marriage. Virginity was one of the important conditions for women to be married. So one who was found not to be a virgin, was punished publicly. It was the same for the married couple. When you were married you could not have sex with another man, or with another woman who was not your wife or your husband (only in the case of polygamy this was authorized). When the married woman was caught having intercourse with another man who was not her husband, both of them were burned publicly or stoned.

The priest also by his ordination and consecration, is married to Christ and he should be faithful to his covenant. The African priest should come back to that traditional life, not exactly the way it was, but to take some values from it. Faithfulness and seriousness in priestly commitment should be of rigor, and that is what I can call new inculturation. If a priest does wrong, I am not

suggesting that he be burned or be put to death, but the bishops should think about it and see in which way to correct him. I can give the example of one bishop who used to correct his priests for serious problems, i.e, in case of infidelity to their commitment, to their chastity. The bishop used to send them back to their families, to their parents, to be re-educated for 2 or 3 years without exercising their priestly functions and without being helped by the diocese. This was meant as a reform on his side, an inculturation of ancestral and traditional values. It is only when the priest changed his behavior, that he could be accepted to come back and to continue to exercise his ministry in the diocese.

This inculturation of life, of behavior, should not be only for the ordained ministers but also for all religious brothers and sisters and for all Christians who share the same common priesthood of Christ with all. One of the functions of the priest should be the function of purifying, like Jesus who purified the ten lepers during his ministry. But how can you exercise this function if you yourself are not purified and if you do not even make an effort towards your own purification? We need in our Church today a new Exodus. May God bless our Church, may He bless his priests and all the believers so that inculturation may reach and transform our being.

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