

A GLANCE AT TRADITIONAL MODES OF COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE LENS OF LITURGICAL INCULTURATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM IGWEBUIKE AND SHIKROT TRADITIONS

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Abstract

One of the challenges of pastoral and liturgical communication has been the failure to christen the rich traditional modes of communication for effect worship in an African way. Inspired by the search for genuine liturgical inculturation, the researcher embarked on a qualitative study entitled: "A Glance at Traditional Modes of Communication through the Lens of Liturgical Inculturation: Perspectives from Igwebuike and Shikrot Traditions" to investigate the matter in Igbo and Ngas cultures. It found that music, song and dance, death and funeral rites, baptism and churching, as well as elements of human communication, are traditional modes of communication that are resourceful for liturgical inculturation. With expert-theological insights, such as introducing peoples/cultures into the Church, and enriching the gospel with positive values and cultural diversity, the study recommended rethinking theological content, restoring group/participatory communication and employing signals, signs and symbols as other critical ways of ensuring excellent liturgical inculturation. It concluded that developing an ongoing-evangelization which baptizes the rich values of the cultures under review is crucial for smooth liturgical inculturation.

Keywords: Communication, Igwebuike, Inculturation, Liturgical, Shikrot, Traditional.

Introduction

Communication has always been part and parcel of man. Before the advent of colonialism in Africa, people of the continent had their modes and forms of communication. Among various cultures in Africa, different forms of traditional communication, such as idiophones, membranophones, aerophones, symbology, were effectively employed as traditional modes of communication (Akakuru, Nwokedi & Edi, 2015). Aside from these, the people also saw comedians, town criers, messengers, dancers and musicians as Public Relations' experts who used various forms of human communication to fulfill

their role in society. The Igbos of South and Ngas people of North Central Nigeria held traditional modes of communication in high esteem. While the worldview of the Igbos was built around *Igwebuike* (Kanu, 2016 & 2019), that of the Ngas was weaved around *Shikrot*. From birth to death, these philosophies set the parameters for every kind of communication in the society. Since ours is an incarnational faith, part of the history of Christianity has been its encounter with other cultures, being deeply rooted in these cultures (Udeani, 2007). Unfortunately, in Africa, the story was different.

As time went by, the arrival of Christian missionaries led to a crisis of faith. Since the early missionaries did not understand the native modes of communication, they framed everything as fetish, thus discarding it. Consequently, they passed the faith to Africans under the cloak of Western culture. For this reason, the message was disdainfully looked upon as one that lacks luster and content which is irrelevant to the daily lives of the people (Umezinwa, 2014). This mentality was, however, met by resistance from emerging local clergy and scholars. There was then agitation to inculturate some aspects of the faith towards harmonizing faith and culture. Reflections of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, through the Vatican II document, facilitated this. This is because the Church began to teach that, although salvation in Christ is for all peoples, there exists an inclusiveness which reflects on existential religious liberty and pluralism. This is where Igbo traditional religion or *Igwebuike* comes in (Anyanwu, 2019). Umezinwa concurs that "Some efforts - have been made after the Vatican II council to express God's message through culture" (2014,p.199).

Inspired by the dire need for smooth liturgical inculturation in both Igbo and Ngas cultures, amidst a Europeanized-Church in Africa, this study aspires to:

1. Account for the traditional modes of communication in both *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* traditions;
2. Trace extant sacred objects and cultural values of Igbo and Ngas origins that could be employed for liturgical inculturation;
3. Review extant theological insights of liturgical inculturation *vis-à-vis* its bottlenecks and challenges;

4. Facilitate interreligious dialogue between faith and culture in *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* traditions, and;
5. Propose valuable recommendations towards revamping liturgical inculturation in *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* worldviews.

Conceptual Clarification

a). Traditional Modes of Communication

In this study, traditional modes of communication means the organised system of communication which was in place before the coming of the imperialists to Africa. Also referred to as trado-rural or native media, traditional modes of communication, which were anchored on oramedia, enabled the people to communicate with one another and transmit vital information within the community. In *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* ontologies, these modes of communication include: directives, news, advertising, public relations, entertainment and education as well as transmission of mores, customs and traditions (Dyikuk, 2019a & Akakuru, Nwokedi, Edi, 2015).

b). Liturgical Inculturation

The operational definition of inculturation is the process by which the Church takes up the good values of different cultures (John Paul II, 1995, No 61) and transforms or incarnates them into truths of the gospel. Since every culture has positive values and forms which can enrich the gospel (John Paul II, 2001, No 16), inculturation midwives the marriage between faith and culture in a new and profound way. It takes into cognizance gestures and signs as well as all other different forms of communication employed by the people of God (Francis, 2013, No 129) in particular churches during liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations.

c). *Igwebuike* Tradition

As the lungs or vital organ of Igbo tradition of South Eastern Nigeria, *Igwebuike* philosophy means “number is strength” or “number is power” (Kanu, 2016). It is a worldview which engenders communication and culture through complementarity, harmony and communality. It is also described as a driver for the transmission of values, mores and customs of Igbo people. *Igwebuike* is a mechanism for ensuring unity and the desired synergy for discussion within and

outside Igbo land. In this study, *Igwebuike* tradition will be used interchangeably with Igbo tradition, culture, philosophy and worldview (Kanu, 2015, 2017, 2018).

d). *Shikrot* Tradition

Shikrot, which translates as “talk of love,” encompasses the religious, political and socio-cultural life of the Ngas people of North-Central Nigeria. It covers the ethics and behavioural patterns of the people that are based on charity. The communitarian philosophy further reveals the various forms of communication in the society, even as it showcases the revered culture of the people, such as their mores, customs and traditions (Dyikuk, 2019c). *Shikrot* tradition will be used exchangeably with Ngas culture, tradition, worldview and philosophy.

Arrival of the Catholic Faith in Igbo and Ngas Lands: A Historic Approach

Overview of the Faith in Igbo Land

The Igbos of South Eastern Nigeria are said to have originated from the Nri Kingdom. There are other views that Igbo people have ancient Hebrew roots. From whichever perspective one views it, the South-Easterners are said to have settled in cities like Onitsha, Owerri, Nnewi, Okigwe, Aba and Orlu. Their culture and traditions which are displayed through festivals of arts and culture (Obindigbo, 2020) are weaved around *Igwebuike* philosophy, which makes for communalism and shared communication. This philosophy is further expressed in kindred, clan and extended family system. Their patterns of stratification and socialization are also built on a strong sense of fellow-feeling and the need to put the community first.

When the Holy Ghost Fathers evangelized the semi-savannah Northern Igbo land in the 1900s, within the first three decades, the faith was consolidated (Kalu, 1995). Ilogu (1974, pp. 56-62) presents the history of the advent of Catholicism in Igbo land in three phases. The first phase (1885-1900) started with the introduction of missionary policies through contact with the Igbo people, their religion and culture; the second phase (1900-1905) featured a focus on implementing missionary apostolates, like building schools, hospitals and opening new mission churches in major Igbo towns; and the third phase (1931-1967) saw the establishment and growth of the Catholic faith, through consolidation with Catholic schools and hospitals in the area.

Before and within this time, there were a lot of pagan, diabolic, superstitious practices which the early missionaries frowned at. This made the dialogue between faith and culture very difficult. What made matters worse was that the early missionaries simply dismissed African cultural practices as primitive and evil. They frustrated any attempts at inculturation. As time went on, the seeming conflict between faith and culture began to be resolved as local clergy were ordained. This paved way for priests studying up to Doctorate degree levels so as to be experts in various theological disciplines, on the one hand, and to initiate attempts at liturgical inculturation, on the other. From erstwhile heroic witness of Bishop Joseph *Shanahan*, C.S.Sp. (1871–1943), today Catholicism is a national religion for people of the southeast because the region has the highest number of indigenous clergy (including Bishops) and the world's largest Catholic Seminary, Bigard Memorial, located in Enugu (2020 President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2020).

Synopsis of the Faith in Ngas Land

The Ngas people of Plateau State in North Central Nigeria who are now divided into sub-groups in places like Pankshin, Ampang, Amper and Kabwir have Borno as their ancestry (Tolu, 2020). Its people, who are now domiciled in Pankshin and Kanke Local Government Areas, are driven by *Shikrot* worldview which is a guiding principle for relating to God and humanity. Although Ngas is the most populous language in the two LGA's, its people live amidst diverse cultures with inhabitants who speak many languages, like Mupun, Miship, Fier, Tal, Kadung, Pal and Bijim. Other tribes in Pankshin include: Mupun, Miship, Fier, Tal, Kadung and Pal. There is also the presence of a few Igbos, Yorubas, Idomas, Tivs, etc (Pankshin Local Government Area, 2020). In terms of religion, the Ngas are mostly Christians, with few African Traditional Religionists and Muslims who migrated from Bauchi, Zaria, Katsina Kano and Kebbi.

Like Jos, the Plateau State Capital, the old Pankshin LGA which was split, with Kanke as a new LGA, has been the melting pot of the middle-belt that is blessed with good weather and rich stable food. This made the area an irresistible attraction for Christian missionaries to start new churches (Higazi, 2011). Today, the dominant faiths in Ngas land are Roman Catholic Church, Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), Anglican Church, Foursquare Gospel Church, Assemblies of God, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), to mention just a few.

With the arrival of Society of African Missions (SMA) Catholic Missionaries in Shendam on 12 February 1907, the seed of the faith was planted. One hundred and seven years later, the Catholic Diocese of Pankshin was carved out of the Archdiocese of Jos and Shendam Diocese on March 18, 2014 as the 56th Diocese in Nigeria, with the appointment of Most Rev. Michael Gobal Gokum as its first Bishop. Pankshin Diocese comprises five civil districts of Pankshin, Kanke, Bokkos, Mangu and Kanam, and is a suffragan of Jos Ecclesiastical Province. Holy Cross Pankshin, whose liturgical feast falls on every 14 September, is the Cathedral Church of the new Diocese (Society of African Missions, 2014 & Paulines Publications Africa, 2020). Aside from the substantive Bishop Michael Gokum of Pankshin, it would be recalled that Ngas has had three other bishops: Gabriel Gonsum Ganaka of Jos Archdiocese (24 May 1937 - 11 November 1999), Kevin Aje of Sokoto Diocese (25 April 1934 - 27 May 2019) and Malachy John Goltok of Bauchi (12 July 1965 - 21 March 2015). Today, local clergy are trained in various theological disciplines abroad and locally towards inculturating the faith.

Traditional Modes of Communication: Liturgical Inculturation in *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* Worldviews

Music Song and Dance

Because the Catholic Church in Nigeria opened the way for singing of choruses, playing of local instruments, clapping of hands and dancing her liturgy, the liturgy in Igbo land is saturated with traditional media (Udoette, 2012 & Dyikuk, 2019a, pp.180-181). According to Umezinwa, (2014) the exit of the missionaries in the 1970s saw concrete efforts at using culture to evangelize, like celebrating Holy Mass in vernacular, translation of the Holy Bible and Roman Missal into Igbo language and taking *Exultet* and Passion Narrative of Good Friday, which were hitherto sang in Latin, in Igbo language. It is now common place to find local hymns and instruments accompanied with dance and clapping of hands as features of Igbo liturgical worship.

Anibueze (2018) is of the view that liturgical innovations and renewal in Igbo land started between 1900 and 1977, with the production of Igbo liturgical, biblical and catechetical texts. Praying the Holy Rosary and singing of the Latin hymns like *Lauda Sion* during Eucharistic processions, such as Corpus Christi or Christ the King celebrations, are now celebrated with many traditional modes of communication. Above all, during the celebration of Holy Mass, "The

procession is now accompanied with singing of traditional songs and dancing to the rhythm of local instruments” (Umezinwa, 2014,p.209).

The Ngas people use the animal horn flute, which they call *sombi*, for liturgical purposes. During the festival dance of the ancestors, called *fer Nji*, certain rhythms, songs and dance steps are made while the horn flute is blown to appease the ancestors. Women and children could participate in some *fer nji* in these festivals. The songs of the *nji*, ancestors are used during social and festival dances. During emergencies which put the lives of the community at risk, musical instruments like the reed flute, *bel*, the thin corn-stalk flute, *yang I nvelang* or *velang* and the big corn-stalk flute, *kwarak* are used. Small or big drums are used in all festival dances. The small drum *nging* is hung over one shoulder and is beaten by a curved stick, while the free hand hit it. It entails kneeling to control the beat and musical messages communicated. It is used in all social events where two or more drummers perform simultaneously. Because the big drum (*kung*) is sacred and very big, the drummer has to sit or stand by its side when performing (Habila, & Danfulani, 1996).

Death and Funeral Rites

In Igbo land, “The adoption of traditional religious features into Christian celebrations is very pronounced in funeral rites. Just as in the traditional practice, the funeral mass is often now celebrated in the family compound of the diseased. The burial of the diseased is always in his or her compound and not in the cemetery. This is a hangover from the traditional religion” (Umezinwa, 2014, p.210).

In Ngas land, when someone dies, the person is mourned for three days. The Christian community prays for the person on the third day, with a celebration, to mark the three days Christ spent in the tomb. However, the three days wailing is that of victory over death, since it is believed that somehow the dead are around, and could visit, and death has been defeated. It is held that, psychologically, death is powerless because those who have died are not actually dead but they are *nji* - living dead which form an extension of the community of the living. Etymologically, *Nji* denotes ancestors which derive from the word *ji*, which means “come” or “arrival.” *Nji* could mean “the one who comes back or returns from the dead.” Among the Chadic-speakers of the Jos-Plateau area, especially the Ngas, there is a strong belief in rebirth. According to Ngas

tradition, the dead are buried facing Sara, the east, to facilitate their return to the human world. Sara represents their ancestral home in the east towards the Chad-Borno basin from where the dead are re-borned (Habla, & Danfulani, 1996). This view is now replaced with the hope of union with the resurrected Christ in heaven.

Baptism and Churching

For the Igbos, the Church has adopted some form of inculturation with regard to a child that is born. "After Baptism, the woman goes for churching. This consists of presenting the child formally to the Lord, offering mass of thanksgiving and the eating and drinking that follow soon after the mass. In the traditional religion, sacrifice of thanksgiving was offered to the ancestors generally 28 days after the birth of a child" (Umezinwa, 2014,p.211).

In like manner, Ngas people have the manhood training which was based on a circumcision (Vwang) rite of separation that lasted for about 30 to 60 days. Associated with mysteries of worship, ancestors and the spirit world, this period was aimed at testing to know who is a real man among young men. While those who are brave were called real men, *Gomis*, anyone who died was said to have been eaten by the ancestors: "Won se kora." Women were not part of this ceremony (Ngas cultural festival - Pusdung, 2019 & Dajur cited in Dyikuk, 2019c). Also, there is the *Gwim* rite which is a covenant-making or oath-taking meal, which entails that the people will reach an agreement or take an oath before the spirit realm that they will cease from committing sin and wickedness in the land. This is done when drought is associated with consequences of communal and individual transgression. *Gwim* rite is performed to cleanse or purify the land before a rain maker is begged to invoke rainfall. It is believed that if this rite of oath-taking does not take place, the drought will not abate (Habla, & Danfulani, 1996). Both *Vwang* and *Gwim* are now considered as the sacrament of confirmation.

Elements of Human Communication

Scholars have maintained that various elements of human communication, such as activeness, solidarity and complementarity, ethic of reciprocity and shared philosophy, tradition and religion are rich traditional modes of communication that find expression in *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* cultures. Describing traditional media as an admixture of beliefs, opinions, systems, models, actions, culture

and historical narrative of a given people, they contend that they constitute the oil that greases day-to-day life in rural Africa (Dyikuk, 2019a; DomNwachukwu, 2018; Kanu, 2016 & Kanu, 2017). From active listening during the celebration of Holy Mass, concrete solidarity at Small Christian Communities (SCCs) to shared values, such as the need for saying the truth at all times as well as the place of tradition and religion, these elements of human communication are invaluable assets in liturgical inculturation.

Theology of Liturgical Inculturation: Views and Insights

In attempting to regurgitate or generate a theology of inculturation, it is important to look in the direction of pastoral communication. Perhaps, the best way to initiative is to the Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication, *Communio Et Progressio*, (CP, No.11) where Christ is described as a Perfect Communicator who related with humanity through His “incarnation.” That document further discloses that by totally identifying Himself with those who are expected to receive His communication, He gave His message in words and by the whole manner of His life by preaching the divine message out of the press of His people without fear or compromise. To do that, it continues, He had to adjust to His people’s way of life. This epic rendering speaks to the heart of the interplay between faith and culture. Expectedly, the Pontifical Council for Culture has demonstrated leadership in framing requisite perspectives for “reading the signs of the time” (Dyikuk, 2017). Without this, there would be no meaningful inculturation.

This study will consider some theological points of view for an important endeavor like liturgical inculturation. From the submissions of the Second Vatican Council to post synodal documents and other papal encyclicals, there is robust support for incarnating the word of God and the liturgy in various cultures. The Church supports liturgical inculturation for the following reasons:

To Introduce Peoples/Cultures into the Church

Just as Jesus was born into Jewish culture, where we are born introduces us to the culture and tradition of our immediate environment. This shows that we all come from different traditions and cultures. As such, the Church “introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community” through inculturation (John Paul II, 1990, No 52 & *Catechesi Tradendae*, 1979, No 53). This it does by making the Christian realize that he is welcome to the faith, without

prejudice to where he comes from. In fact, the universality and catholicity of the Church supports this view because, the Church is for people of every tribe, tongue, people and nation.

Enrich the Gospel with Positive Values/Forms

There is no culture that has no positive aspects. For example, the aspect of respect for elders and kneeling in prayer in Igbo and Ngas cultures does not contradict the Catholic faith. Therefore, the Church does not reject those rich aspects of traditional values that can animate the faith. Indeed: “Every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived” (John Paul II, 2001, No 16).

Become a Bride Bedecked with Jewels

The analogy of the Church as the bride of Christ lends credence to the theology of liturgical inculturation. This parallel indicates that faith and culture are two sides of a coin. Through using none offensive signs and symbols in liturgical or para-liturgical activities, the Church takes up the values of different cultures and becomes *sponsa ornata monilibus suis*, “the bride bedecked with her jewels” (cf. Is61:10)” (John Paul II, 1995, No 61).

Ensure Cultural Diversity/Unity

In a Church where conservatists, non-conformists and ecclesiastical mavericks think that liturgical inculturation poses a threat to the unity of the Church, the people of God are reminded that “When properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the blessed Trinity, where all things find their unity” (Francis, 2013, No 117,p.94). If anything, liturgical inculturation aspires to promote cultural diversity and the unity of the spirit.

Transmit the Faith in Newer Forms

Liturgical inculturation helps to transmit the faith in ever new forms. This is why understanding evangelization as inculturation is key. In trying to undertake inculturation, the culture experiences a rebirth as the people of God in a particular Church are able to translate the gift of God into their life and in

consonance with their genius, thus bearing witness to the faith they received. This enriches the faith in a new and eloquent way (Francis, 2013, No 122).

Ensure a Locus Theologicus for New Evangelization

In an era of new evangelization, the people of God are charged to promote and strengthen the faith through continuous inculturation. "Indeed, popular piety, with all its expressions, teaches us to read the signs of time because they are a locus *theologicus* which demands our attention in an era of new evangelization" (Francis, 2013, No 126). Recall that John Paul II employed the term "new evangelisation" in section 33 of his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, to draw the attention of the Church to Mission *ad gentes*, Christian communities and the new evangelisation (Cotter, 2013 & Dyikuk, 2019d).

Create Synthesis with a Particular Culture

Theologians are increasingly looking for avenues where there will be a perfect harmony between faith and culture. Perhaps, that is, Pope Francis warned that the faith should not be predicated on fixed formulations or specific absolute words. He contends that because this communication occurs in different ways, it is not possible to catalogue them all. He surmised thus: "If the Gospel is embedded in a culture, the message is no longer transmitted solely from person to person. In countries where Christianity is a minority, then, along with encouraging each of the baptized to proclaim the Gospel, particular Churches should actively promote at least preliminary forms of inculturation. The ultimate aim should be that the Gospel, as preached in categories proper to each culture, will create a new synthesis with that particular culture" (Francis, 2013, No 129,p.104).

Liturgical Inculturation: Bottlenecks and Challenges

Doubts and Fears

Most efforts at liturgical inculturation are met with doubt, fear and apprehension. This is because African theologians are sometimes circumspect about which aspect of culture they should push forward and which they should discard. "This is always a slow process and at we can be overly fearful. But if we allow doubts and fears to dampen our courage, instead of being creative we will remain comfortable and make no progress whatsoever. In this case we will not take an active part in historical processes, but become mere onlookers as the

Church gradually stagnates” (Francis, 2013, No 129,p.104). Umezinwa, agrees that “There are some people who are not comfortable with the idea of spreading the gospel through the vehicle of culture” (2014,p.213). These unresolved doubts and fears frustrate genuine efforts at inculturating the faith.

Aberrations and Abuses

Various abuses and aberrations have slowed the approval of rites by the Vatican. Some priests experiment liturgical inculturation with changing the structure of Holy Mass. Some even go as far as using another form of bread or other types of unapproved wines for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. For instance, some traditional beliefs and practices, such as belief in reincarnation, traditional method of healing, libation to the ancestors/spirits and polytheism, which are gradually being adopted into Christian practice in the name of inculturation, are at variance with Christian doctrine and should be opposed (Etuk, 2002). Also, excessive use of incense and wooden utensils which makes purification after Mass difficult is a recurrent decimal in many places. Because Africans love dancing, some priests permit some immodest kinds of dance which are sensual in nature in the name of dancing in an African way. This leaves local ordinaries and major superiors with the burden of sanctioning inculturation attempts with good intention.

Syncretism

For instance, back in the seminary, a novice of Ngas extraction that was taking some courses with the seminarians suggested that dog meat which is a delicacy among the Ngas people should be used for the Eucharist. The rebuttal she got from the seminarians was enough to send home the message that the idea was weird and unacceptable. This is an example of syncretism. It is common to find people in both cultures patronizing dibias or shrines for concoctions and charms which they either use for protection, seeking a lover or to harm a perceived aggressor. This syncretic tendency has the capacity of making people develop a superstitious mentality during liturgical functions so that they see the use of sacraments, such as Holy Water, as having “magical powers.” This is a major drawback in developing a theology of liturgical inculturation. Many Africans today declare that are Christians, yet when it comes to matters of inner aspects of their lives, such as passage rites and crises, they turn to their African traditional religions (Udeani, 2007). By proposing that the Church needs “to reduce the syncretic practices among its adherents and build up a strong faith that can

serve a bulwark in moments of crisis,” (Umezina, 2014,p.203) this author presupposes that syncretism is a danger that should be expunged.

Lack of Knowing the Culture

The urban/rural migration in Africa in search for a better life and white collar job has forced many people out of their ancestral homes. This has further made them to forget their culture and traditions. Many priests, religious as well as seminarians and novices are products of this cultural dislocation. It becomes very difficult for them to know the deposit of culture. Since they are not in touch with their roots, it becomes very difficult to inculturate the faith. For example, it is over 100 years since Catholic Missionaries came to Pankshin, but Masses are still said in Hausa language in over 95 percent of the parishes across the diocese. Except for the New Testament, *Shikrot Mpwi*, there is no liturgical book, including the sacramentary, in Ngas language. While those who know the culture do not know the faith, those who know the faith do not know the culture – there lies the paradox. Anyanwu (2019) argues that the Church in Igbo land needs to understand the values Igbo people attach to their culture and make use of them for proper inculturation. This is also true for the Ngas people.

Failure to Understand the Deposit of Faith

The African priest is often caught in a dilemma. He learns theology in English and thinks in the local language - Ngas or Igbo. For those who travel to Rome for further studies, the story is worse because they are forced to learn Italian and are taught in that language only to return home and teach in English or struggle to translate what they have learn in the local dialect. As such, the challenge is, thinking in Italian and speaking English, Igbo and Ngas makes it difficult to communicate effectively, let alone talk about inculturating the faith. The point is that the faith often comes in a Westernized form that is difficult to digest. As a result, inculturating becomes some form of randomized trials.

Conclusion

From the views of ecclesiastical sources, the study highlighted plausible reasons for liturgical inculturation to include introducing peoples/cultures into the Church, enriching the gospel with positive values/forms, becoming a bride bedecked with jewels, ensuring cultural diversity/unity, transmitting the faith in newer forms, ensuring a locus *theologicus* for new evangelization and creating

synthesis with a particular culture. Also, we saw that doubts and fears, aberrations and abuses, syncretism, lack of knowing the culture and failure to understand the deposit of faith are bottlenecks which stand in the way of a robust liturgical inculturation in the African context.

After a careful review of extant literature in both *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* philosophical points of view, the study highlighted rethinking theological content, employing music and dance, use of signals, signs and symbols, utilizing proverbs and wise sayings, restoring group/participatory communication and debuting inculturation guidelines as doable recommendations. In attempting the romance between faith and culture in Igbo and Ngas traditions, it is important to understand that “A people continuously evangelizes itself” (Puebla Document, 1979, p.450). While evangelisation is a continuum, it must be established that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of inculturation (Aparecida Document, 2007, p.264).

In conclusion, interreligious dialogue must be employed between the Church and traditional religion (Anyanwu, 2019) in Africa. It is crucial to develop an ongoing kind of evangelization which baptizes the rich values of the cultures under review. Little wonder, one expert opined that: “African inculturation theologians have chiefly re-interpreted western theological traditions of the Church through a retrieval of some traditional African concepts and values” (Ishola, 2012, pp.166-169). Because many Igbos and Ngas people are now Christians, inculturation of the faith has taken roots amongst them (Dyikuk, 2019a). This is why we need more than a glance at the traditional modes of communication through the lenses of liturgical inculturation towards a more concrete empirical research in *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* traditions which garners support for thinking about God and man’s relationship with Him in the way the African thinks and knows best.

Recommendations: Towards Liturgical Inculturation in *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* Worldviews

Rethinking Theological Content: Various stakeholders, like theologians, especially lecturers in Nigerian Major Seminaries, the Directorate of Social Communication at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), the Diocesan and Religious Directors of Social Communications of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, and the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), need to rethink the content of theological inculturation. “Religion needs dynamism or growth

in order to address the ever changing needs of man. It needs culture contact as well to do the same. The church needs to be dynamic; it needs to grow; it needs to enter into dialogue with Igbo culture in order to be relevant to the people” (Umezinwa, 2014,p.203). What this translates to is that indigenous content of communication, like *Igwebuike* and *Shikrot* philosophies of communication, trado-modern and rural communication, should be included in the curriculum for formation in both philosophy and theology. Future leaders of the Church should be taught on the need to baptize the good aspects of culture towards solving contemporary issues.

Restoring Group/Participatory Communication: The onus lies on the hierarchy of the Church in Nigeria and theologians to make concerted efforts at restoring group and participatory communication in various dioceses. The fertile ground for this is Small Christian Communities (SCCs) where group communication engenders solidarity and fellow feeling. Also, “at the level of interpersonal, group, or trado-rural communication, it behoves all to listen to one another, ask critical questions that affect life as well as the realities of peace and justice so as to drive home wholesome growth in all sectors of life” (Dyikuk, 2018b,p.15).

Employing Music and Dance: Unarguably, music and dance are part and parcel of liturgical celebrations in Africa. Although without official ecclesiastical endorsement, local music and dance have become part and parcel of liturgical celebrations in Nigeria. In Igbo culture, African music and dance have been truly incarnated as genuine aids to the true worship of God (Udoette, 2012 & Dyikuk, 2019a). From Pankshin to Awka, it is common place to find families dancing to the altar, especially during thanksgiving for child dedication. Since this practice has been in place for over two decades now, it is incumbent on the Catholic Bishops of Onitsha and Owerri Provinces (for Igbo) as well as Jos Province, where speakers of Ngas language who are part of Pankshin Diocese are domiciled, to come up with a list of approved instruments for liturgical use, as well as measured kind of liturgical dance that should take place during Eucharistic celebrations. Dyikuk (2018a) stresses that traditional songs and music are used to garnish liturgical celebrations. The African mode of worship, which is dynamic and expressive with bodily movements that express joy, should be incorporated in developing a distinctively Igbo (Anyanwu, 2019) and Ngas liturgy.

Use of Signals, Signs and Symbols: The use of signals, signs and symbols is an indispensable aspect of liturgical inculturation. Since the people of South-Eastern Nigeria often employed signals, namely physical embodiments of a message, such as fire, gunshots, canon shots and wooden or skin drum, to draw the attention of listeners that an important message is about to be passed, it becomes crucial for the Church in the areas under consideration to endorse same. In the two cultures, verbal and non-verbal communication constitutes signs and symbols which affect the behaviour of others in communication contexts and have rich meaning. For instance, the Ngas or Igbo traditional patterns of prayer should be considered for possible inculturation into the Church in these regions to suit the people's cultural context (Anyanwu, 2019). Specifically, Anyanwu (2019) contends that the sacred objects and cultural values of Igbo origin could be used to facilitate an Igbo Church. Dioceses should be encouraged to train people in sign language who would assist the deaf and dumb in various communities to understand the word of God. While these signs are associated with denotative meaning, symbols convey connective meaning. This is why scholars emphasize that symbols need an interpreter to unravel their meaning (Dyikuk, 2019a).

Utilizing Proverbs and Wise Sayings: Because of the importance of proverbs and wise sayings in Igbo and Ngas communities, children were taught how to speak in idioms, proverbs and other figures of speech by elders in society. For example, among the Igbos, it was believed without idioms, proverbs, and figures of speech, conversations would be bland and distasteful (DomNwachukwu, 2018 & Dyikuk, 2019a). Dyikuk (2018a) concurs that the liturgy is often spiced with the use of proverbs and fables which reveal elements of trado-rural communication. Indeed, "Liturgical Inculturation should be taken more seriously in terms of using proverbs for homilies or the use of vernacular in liturgical assemblies" (Dyikuk, 2019b,p.114).

Debating Inculturation Guidelines: Catholic Bishops should be at the forefront of inculturating the faith (Dyikuk, 2019b). Concerted efforts should be made to incarnate media-use into the Nigerian pastoral context (Dyikuk, 2019b). The journal, *Cultures and Faith*, published by the Pontifical Council for Culture, is a veritable tool for ensuring that the Church gate-keeps her faith while accepting new cultures (Dyikuk, 2017). With these in place, "The synthesis of faith and cultural elements enriches the church and makes it strong" (Umezinwa, 2014, p.203).

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