



SELINUS UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**“That they may become one body and one Spirit”:
Inculturating the Catholic Eucharist
in the light of Oriko for promotion of unity
in Igbo Traditional Society**

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2022

DECLARATION

I hereby attest that I am the sole author of this thesis titled **“That they may become one body and one Spirit”: Inculturating the Catholic Eucharist in the light of Oriko for promotion of unity in Igbo Traditional Society.** I hereby declare that this work, unless specifically indicated in the text, is my work. It is hereby submitted in fulfilment of the Requirement for the award of the degree of doctor of Philosophy in Religion, in Selinus University of Science of Literature.

APPROVAL CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this Thesis titled **“That they may become one body and one Spirit”**: **Inculturating the Catholic Eucharist in the light of Oriko for promotion of unity in Igbo Traditional Society**, carried out by **Daniel Tochukwu Akubue** with student’s registration number UNISE1881IT of the Faculty of ART AND HUMANITIES, has been approved with majority of votes by the Jury and has been accepted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Religion.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Late father Mr Peter Ogbonna Akubue, who died on my birthday, 6th October, 2021.

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Abbreviations

AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
ATR	African Traditional Religion
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CMS	Christian Missionary Society
n.	Number
RCM	Roman Catholic Mission
SC	Sacrosanctum concilium
USA	United States of America
vol.	Volume

Abstract

Igbo people like all other people in the world, have certain traditions, customs, cultures, beliefs and worldviews, which constitute their dos and don'ts. Most of these traditions are passed down to them from generation to generation by their great grandparents. Regrettably, most of these custom and traditions are not healthy and good for peaceful human living. Among these hateful, outrageous and devastating traditions and beliefs in the Igboland is the Osu caste system which in different places both in the past and in the present has continued in forms of disunity, discrimination, humiliation, violations, isolation, etc. in the Igboland.

Following these, efforts were made on possible ways of abolishing the system due to its negative impacts especially with regard to human existence, the dignity of the human person. It is from this point of view that this research has come to evaluate the Osu caste system using the Oriko sacrificial meal which is common to the culture in the light of the Eucharistic sacrifice to address the disease of the caste system.

The condition is so abysmal when compared with the nascent Christianity in the area. This research has as a fundamental problem, the religious conflicts and in particular, the problem of Osu caste system discrimination in Igboland.

In this work, we have applied a tripartite action to help us to undertake the work successfully. They embody: (1) A critical overview of the geographical context in question. This will attempt to explain Igboland before the advent of Christianity, Igbo political and social framework; the Igbo Cosmology with its attendant Socio-Cultural and Moral Values. We will study the missionary contact with the Igboland and their missionary models and strategies. This segment finally culminates on the impact of the missionary models on Christian converts in Igboland.

(2) The work attempts to demonstrate the current forms of Christian Religious Experience amongst Igbos. To achieve this, we will apply the concept of Oriko in the light of the Eucharist. Oriko is a common concept among Igbo people. The word Oriko, which is a short form of Oriri nriko, literally means communion or shared meal. It is also called Orikoro, Nrigba or Nriko¹ but they mean the same thing. According to Michael Echeruo,

¹ These variations are found in the various subcultures and dialect groups in Igboland. In parts of Abia State (Isuikwuato, Arochukwu / Abam, Ngwa), Imo State: Mbano, Mbaise, Owerri, Arondizuogu, Rivers:

Oriko (Oriköro) is peace feast; a kind of meal from assorted condiments where every member of the umunna (extended) family participates as equal; uniting them (living) with the family ancestors (living-dead), both as a binding meal and as reconciliation rituals.² Echeruo's definition articulates, in a skeletal and general way, the meaning of Oriko among Ndigbo. Oriko is both sacrifice and meal. The sacrifice is that of atonement and the meal signifies reconciliation, togetherness and renewal. It is an annual sacrifice. Its scope is wider than the human members of the Umunna. It extends to and includes the ancestors, the gods and the Deity.³

Life for Ndigbo is holistic. All reality is understood as a unified whole. Therefore any grave act of wrongdoing is seen as a break in the unity that characterizes the web of harmonious relationships in the "universe" (discord among the living and the ancestors). This explains why it is a sacrifice of atonement for sins committed.

The Igbo people are covenant people and every care is taken to ensure that the harmony, which exists among the members of the Umunna and between the living and the ancestors and the spirits, is preserved. Every Oriko presupposes that an existing Igba ndu (alliance, agreement, bond) has not been broken but it is re-emphasized and strengthened.

(3) The research resting on the premise that there is need to reinvigorate the elementary modes of missionary intervention in Igboland delved into the possible role of contextual theology; a meticulous application of models of contextual theology particularly that of Eucharist, as a best model for the Igbo context. To achieve this contextualization, the research proposes a sustained Eucharist/Oriko dialogue. This will yield to the revamp of Igbo values such as Onye aghala nwanne ya (togetherness) to become necessary Christian catalysts of change in both moral and value orientation in Igbo Christianity. This change will successfully disperse heinous characteristics of Igbo cultural practices such as the persistent Osu/Ohu Caste System.

If Christianity must make meaningful and deep socio cultural impacts in Igboland, it must embrace the salvific value of Igbo culture which promotes justice, love, equity and God's mercy. Christianity must not just be clothed in Igbo fabrics but make the core questions of the Igbo man, a central focus

Ihuoroha, Oriko is the common variant. In Enugu State: Nsukka and Anambra State: Nri and Delta State: Nri or Oriko

² M. ECHERUO, *Igbo-English Dictionary*, Yale University Press, London 1998, p. 129.

³ Ibid.

of her engagement.

General Introduction

Human Relationship for a very long period of time has faced a whole lot of challenges, possibly due to ignorance or lack of proper understanding of the concepts. For years, Catholic theology has concerned itself with orthodoxy. The emphasis was on the horizontal-vertical dimension of the Eucharist, with little or no reference to the diagonal dimension of the celebration. In the middle Ages, the debates focused on Christ's real presence in the Eucharist.⁴ The main preoccupation at this period was the nature of the Eucharist as meal vis-à-vis the traditional teaching on Eucharist as sacrifice.⁵ The emphasis was on the relationship between its vertical and transcendental proclivity. That is why the liturgy that came out of the Middle Ages and Trent (in reaction to the Reformation) focused on the sacramentality and the power of the ordained to transform bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, but did not talk about transformative role of the Eucharist in the participants and the missionary character of the Eucharist among the Christians.

The idea of the un-bloody reenactment of the sacrifice of the cross pushed the thanksgiving character of the celebration to the margins. The Catholic Church on the power of the clergy to make Christ present in the Eucharist eclipsed the power of the Eucharist to equip the Christians with good life so as to reflect Christ through their daily lives.⁶ Hence, the 1570 missal designed a liturgy in which the Christians were reduced to mere spectators. The clergy took over most of the performative aspects of the liturgical celebrations, leaving for the faithful to be passive and restricted only to the reception of the sacraments. For the laities, the sacraments were reduced to pipelines of grace, with little or no relationship to their daily lives. As a result, the communitarian dimension of the sacraments was not emphasized. There was little or no relationship between liturgy and ethics, so they offered nothing to each other apart from a merely legalistic and extrinsic rapport.⁷

The Liturgical Movement that began in the mid 19th century was an attempt to rediscover the significance of liturgy as a source of Christian life. The movement which began with the Benedictine monks in France, led by Dom Prosper Guéranger, placed liturgical worship and Gregorian chant at the

⁴ A. DERMOT, *Foundations for a Social Theology: Praxis, Process and salvation*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin 1984, p. 143.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ R. SCHMIT, *Attempt to resurrect pre-Vatican II Mass leaves church at crossroads*, in <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/a-ttempt-resurrect-pre-vatican-ii-mass-leaves-church-crossroads>, 31.01.2018.

⁷ Ibid.

center of their spirituality, spread to the parishes through their translations and publications of liturgical texts in the vernacular of the people, allowing the people to understand more the liturgical celebrations. This eventually led to greater participation of the people in the liturgy, through their various responses, which was formerly reserved to those around the altar, such as the altar boys.⁸

The Second Vatican Council in her document, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy crowned, in a sense, the efforts of the Liturgical Movement. The Council Fathers emphasized *participatio actuosa* as the heart of the liturgical reform. They therefore, simplified the rites, so that the faithful might enter into the liturgical euphoria and derive the true Christian spirit from their participation in the liturgy. To this end, liturgical celebrations in vernacular was permitted, prayers and rituals were simplified, the altar was re-orientated, scripture readings and preaching were given greater importance, participation of the community through responses and songs was emphasized and communion under both species was encouraged. Hence, the Council not only made the celebration of the Eucharist more meaningful to the faithful, but also emphasized its diagonal nature as a sacrament of love, a sign of unity and a bond of love.⁹

It is true that active participation during Mass has dramatically increased since the Council, but the link of the liturgy to social dimensions of Christians' daily lives, regrettable was reclined to the background. With the reform and translation of liturgical books, many people lost taste and vigour for the social implications of the liturgy.¹⁰ Hence, the intention of the Council for an active and conscious participation was in doubt if it was ever achieved, because there cannot be any *participatio actuosa* if it doesn't reflect in the daily life of the worshipers. This was the state of affairs with regard to the Church's celebrations especially in Igboland. Though the Eucharistic celebration among the Igbo people was and still is patronized by many Catholics, the social order of injustice and scandalous inequality depicts a divorce of the Eucharistic ethics on the part of people.

⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, "*Liturgical Movement*", available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Liturgical-Movement>.

⁹ VATICAN II COUNCIL, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 47.

¹⁰ T. WHALEN, *The Authentic Doctrine of the Eucharist*, Sheed and Ward, Kansas City 1993, p. 48.

Statement of the Problem

Besides the obvious Christian/Muslim skirmish in Nigeria, Christianity among the Igbo people may not rightly be described as being fraternal. There is a continuous proliferation of Christian churches. Because of this, there are many Christian denominations in Igboland who are in continuous competition and squabbles with each other. One can correctly say that Christianity in Igboland has created camps of enemies fighting each other.

Apart from the wrangles based on religious sects, there is also an ignoble discrimination on caste lines within the members of the Eucharistic community, namely, the diala and the osu. The diala, literally means, sons of the soil, -the freeborn. They are the masters. The osu on the other hand, are slaves, strangers, the outcasts, and the untouchables, people sacrificed to gods forever.

Osu caste system is a system of class discrimination that incorporates the belief that a class of people must be disinherited and excluded from any association with others either because they are victims of a ritual offering or are descended from such people. This system has its origin in the unholy religious culture of the Igbo people who used humans for ritual sacrifice. The problem here is that even after the idols to which people were dedicated have been displaced by Christianity, the caste system still resists all efforts made so far to eliminate it. The mere mention of the word Osu in Igboland instills fear in both the freeborn and the Osu themselves. The name causes a stir and discomfort and really creates an atmosphere of suspicion or despair, pride or jealousy. The word Osu is surrounded by an aura of wickedness and is usually mentioned in a whisper.

The Diala cannot marry an Osu, share the same plate or cup, and so on, with Osu. The only social communication between Osu and Diala was at the level of religious rituals and sacrifices. The Osu participated in the sacrifice and had specific roles to play; he would have to clean up the temple of god, keep it clean and participate in the actual sacrifice on a limited level.

The Purpose of study

It is true that so many studies have been conducted on the Eucharist and inter- personal relationship, the novelty of this dissertation lies in the fact of its being a prime application of the Church's Eucharistic teachings to the Igbo culture of osu caste system to serve as a sensitization document towards the urgent need for greater commitment to the work of inculturation in order to deepen the Eucharistic faith among the Igbo Christians.

Methodology

To get the desired results, this research relies mainly on library resources. I will make use of these resources in a manner that is probing, historical, descriptive, and critical. From the investigative perspective, effort is made to demonstrate the intrinsic relationship between the Eucharist and its social mission, the rapport between liturgy and ethics.

A historical-descriptive approach is employed to review the various trends and characterizations that highlight the reality of community life among the Igbo people. This is followed by historical-analytic exposé of the Igboland and her touch to Christianity. The critical analysis of oriko highlights those elements that can help the Igbo people to understand the Eucharist. Finally, this historical, descriptive and analytic approach to the cultural practice of the Igbo people accomplishes an instrumental function of projecting the work of inculturation of the Eucharist among the targeted group.

Scope and limitations

In the bid to expose as well as address the dichotomy between the celebration of the Eucharist and the practical life of the Eucharistic community, the researcher employs the sacramentum caritatis, a post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Benedict XVI as his foundational document. The Exhortation is aimed at a renewed love and dedication to Eucharistic enthusiasm in the Church. It does so by emphasizing the basic relationship between the liturgical action, Eucharistic mystery and the new spiritual worship in a way that makes clear the unified vision of these three dimensions of the Eucharist. Hence, the document sees the social mission of the Church as that which issues from the Eucharist and very relevant and urgent in the world.

The document is appropriate to the question of osu caste problem because of its emphasis on the ethics of the Eucharist and on dialogue with culture as a means of realizing the social mission of the Eucharist. In the light of this document, this work relates the Eucharist to the Igbo sacrificial/reconciliatory meal (oriko) as a means of unraveling the profundity of the Eucharist for the Igbo Christians. The employment of oriko belongs to the efforts towards making the Eucharist understandable for the Igbo Eucharistic community, so as to help them overcome the osu caste system. In this way, inculturation, as a means of living the Eucharistic life, throws the light of Christian faith on the cultural values, thus transforming them from within as well as enriching the Christian faith. Thus, it is by living the Eucharistic ethics that its transformative character can be realized.

The thesis envisions the Eucharist as that, which can draw humanity together into interpersonal relationship and overcome iniquitous structures that mortify the dignity of the human person.¹¹

The scope of this work is also Igboland; although the problem of discrimination transverses Igboland and Africa as a whole into all human society where segregation and discrimination in forms of race, sex, colour or nationality militates against the common family of all humanity and in particular Christians. But then, the result of this research can be applied outside Igboland in confronting the evil of discrimination.

¹¹Sacramentum Caritatis, no. 89.

Part One CHAPTER ONE

Igboland and Religion before the Advent of Christianity

This chapter consists of an introduction of the Igbo society, geography, and worldview before Christianity, leading to a general evaluation of missionary contact with the Igbos. It will also carry an appraisal of missionary models in a bid to identify what specific models of evangelization prevailed during the contact as well as their impact on Igbo Christianity.

1.1 History of Igbo people and society

The word **Igbo** applies to both the language and culture of an ethnic group in Nigeria. It also applies to a person or persons from Igboland. The word Igbo is also spelled Ibo and formerly Iboe, Ebo, Eboans, Heebo and natively *Ndị̀ Ìgbò*. The Igbo people are the largest single ethnic group in Eastern Nigeria. Igbo people are principally found in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states. A large Igbo population is also found in Delta and Rivers states. They are also found in Cameroon, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea as well as outside Africa.¹² The population of Igbo people is relatively large. They are estimated to be above sixty five million or more people. The figure is a matter of estimation as there are no accurate population figures in Nigeria.

Igbo people speak a language called Igbo. The theory of the origin of the language basically came from the study of Armstrong which indicates that it came from “Kwa sub-family of the Niger-Congo family of languages.”¹³ The Igbo language has multiple double consonant forms and a complicated system of tones. This makes the language a difficult one especially for foreigners.

Igbo people are not difficult tribe to identify either in a group or where they do their legitimate business. They could be identified by: tribal marks. Unlike many other ethnic tribes in Nigeria, Igbo people have specific tribal marks at the two sides of their faces that are not conspicuous like that of the other tribes. Other ways of identifying Igbo people are their language, mode of dressing, dancing, food, hard work, self-determination, bravery, self-reliance, hospitality and community oriented spirit.

¹² G. MWAKIKAGILE, *African Countries: An Introduction with Maps*, Pan-African Books, Continental Press 2006, p. 86.

¹³ G. ARMSTRONG, *The Study of West Languages*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1964, p. 19.

Nevertheless, the origin of the Igbo people has remained an unknown fact despite variety of speculations by different proponents. Francis Arinze says that the, “Igbo people have their history, but it is mostly oral and local. Written history does not date back to many centuries.”¹⁴ The history into antiquity that the Igbo people can lay claim to is found in some parchments of proverbs and folk-tales which were handed on from one generation to another which as generations pass on are being distorted by personal influences of the story tellers.

The origin of the Igbo race is therefore, ambiguous and disputed. Modern generations of young Igbo people try to force the origin of Igbo race to link up with one of the tribes of Israel who found his way into the region during the days of deportations and exiles of Israel.

The effort of the Igbo Scholars to find out their origins is on-going but one fundamental and clear fact is that the Igbo people are blacks and therefore, belong to the black or Negroid race of the world.

1.1.1 Geographical location

Igboland (*Àlà Ìgbò*)¹⁵ also politically known as Southeastern Nigeria is the indigenous homeland of the Igbo people. Igboland has a total land area of about 15,800 square miles (about 41,000 square kilometers). The Igbo nation has four distinct areas. The sloppy Deltas and the Riverbank areas are greatly swamped during the rainy season, and are very fertile. It is the petroleum area of Nigeria. The central belt is a rather high plain. The Udi/Ngwo highlands are the only coal mining area in West Africa.

Igbo people generally don't have one central cultural practice for all situations. Therefore, Igboland is loosely grouped into cultural divisions: northern Igbos also known as wawa people. This people live in Ebonyi and Enugu states. The western Igbo people occupy Anambra state while the Abia and Imo states occupy southern Igboland. This classification is marked by the cultural similarity and vernacular.

Igbo people are also found in some South-Southern states of Nigeria like: Delta, Cross-Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa-Ibom states. But within these states, there are also so many other ethnic groups who would not like to be associated with Igbo race despite speaking and answering Igbo names. The

¹⁴ F. ARINZE, *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion*, Ibadan, University Press, 1970, p. 2.

¹⁵ V. UCHENDU, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria: Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology*, London, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1965, p. 1.

reason for this animosity is linked to their treacherous activities against the Igbo people during the Nigerian/Biafran war (1967 – 1970).

Igbo people are also found in some Northern states of Nigeria like Benue and Kogi states. There has not been a clear information or history that defines why these Igbo people are found living outside the Igbo territories. But most myths have it that they were some of the Igbo people who were misplaced during the slave trade in Africa.

1.1.2 Igbo Political and Social Framework

Politically, Igbo society has no centralized form of government. Leadership is based on groups. Politically Igbo society is described as segments or stateless. This is why the Igbo society consists of autonomous villages ruled by Igwe¹⁶ without any form of formalized, permanent or hereditary leadership systems. They maintained a decentralized and acephalous society. Igbo society is democratic and egalitarian to some significant extent.¹⁷ This is why most people prefer to describe the Igbo political system as ‘ohacracy’. The Igbo word ‘oha’ literally means the people, the general public, the society. Therefore, ‘ohacracy’ may loosely be compared to democracy but in reality is more to democracy. While democracy gives no or minimum option to the minority, ohacracy incorporates everyone in the decision making including the minority while upholding the majority view.

The central political component among the Igbo people is extended family or kindred composed of several families which form umunna; and the largest political component is groups of villages which are normally called a town. Because the Igbo people have no kings who superintends decisions, the executive, legislative and judicial powers is vested in the council of elders, town unions, the family heads, the age grades and the umuada.

The Umunna system in Igboland is primary to all political frameworks in Igboland. The Umunna functions on the representative or delegation capacity. The umunna is the fundamental administrative institution in Igboland. It is not only the micro government but also powerful and heart of governance in Igboland because reference is always made to the umunna in complicated issues.

¹⁶ Igwe is a village head. He cannot be equated as a king in the true sense of it because he doesn't have the authority to impose any decision on the people.

¹⁷ I. IKPECHUKWU, *Igbo Traditional Political system and the crisis of governance in Nigeria*, Institute of African Studies, UNN University Press, p. 4.

There are other institutions of government in Igboland like ozo title holders, the umuada, age-grade and masquerade.

Among the Igbo people, ozo title holders are considered a very important and influential institution. They are considered of upright characters and have social standing. The ozo title can only be conferred to a full-fledged Igbo man whose integrity is not questionable because of the political and moral character they represent. This title makes the holder capable of presiding over meetings about issues affecting the community. The conferment of the Ozo title is often based on social and moral achievements. Despite requiring morally sound person, the ozo title is costly and only few people could afford it. The Ozo title conveys both personal and communal relevance.

Umuada is another strong force of governance in Igboland. This group is made up of women born in the town and married within or outside the town. They wield much influence in their home towns and villages to the extent that it is easier to have problem with umunna than to have problem with umuada. Particularly, they are concerned with the affairs of the women but in general the total welfare of the towns and villages.

Government institutions in Igboland have their specific functions to play which does not impede with others. The Igbo people places social responsibility on the male child, who by nature becomes active at the puberty age (*ifu ama* -initiation into adulthood –the age of joining age grade). The age grades constitute the executive function of towns and villages in Igboland. The age grades is an organization of certain age brackets, most times people who fall into three years age difference organize themselves into a body. Each of these groups takes a name to distinguish themselves from the others and appoints the eldest among them as their leader. They perform both civic and military duties of a town. They are the voluntary labour force of a town.

In describing further functions of the age grade in Igboland, Vincent Ujumadu points out these duties:

Other roles of age grades include serving as agents of social change; role models and community conscience; educators and socializing agents; managers of projects; promoters of good practices; power balance in community schemes; support to the poor and the disadvantaged; enforcers of ancestral worship and protectors of cultural values and norms; and ensuring the

prosperity of the community and ensuring good orientation.¹⁸

The age grade is therefore, a symbolically viable instrument of political and social administration in Igboland. To each grade lies a specific responsibility and obligation to ensure the efficient management of society. The institution of the age grade is highly developed and characterized with purpose.

Next to be mentioned is a body that complements the age grade. This body is the masquerade (*mmanwu*) cult as a government functionary. In Igboland, masquerades are regarded as superior beings. They are treated with respect because they are considered to be spirits that embody both the spirit and human worlds. Masquerades are believed to have come from the spiritual worlds and do function of mediation between human world and spiritual world, making them higher than man. Because of this, certain cryptic functions have been reserved for masquerades. Other function of the masquerades is policing the towns and villages. Much of these functions are to effect obedience to the sanctions of the town on a culprit. The masquerades could raid the house of a culprit; seize his properties until the culprit pays the stipulated fine and additional fines before he collects his properties

Very much recently in 1976, a more politically conscious body known as *Ohaneze ndi Igbo* was formed. This body can be considered today as the most powerful governing body in Igboland. This body was formed for the single purpose of power bargain amongst other ethnic groups in the Nigerian politics.

What we have been able to do is to prove that there is absence of concentration of political power on an individual or on a group among the whole people of Igbo. This perhaps demonstrates the effort of the Igbo man to balance and share power among every Igbo man. Even the terms 'Ohaneze ndi Igbo' is a clear expression of the fact that power belongs to all. This arrangement definitely ensures that "Igbo enweghi Eze" (no supreme leader).¹⁹ Therefore, the decision making is consultative of a collective affair of everybody.

¹⁸ V. UJUMADU, *Age grades as facilitators of development in Igboland*, Vanguard Magazine, October 14, 2017.

¹⁹ Igbo enweghieze is a famous saying in Igboland which expresses the fact that there is no single person who has the monopoly of power in Igboland. This is unlike other ethnic groups in Nigeria who central and revered monarchs as their supreme leaders. In Igboland instead, everyone is a king in his house.

1.1.3 Igbo Cultural Values

Cohesion and peace are fundamental values that every human society pursues. Without stable moral order, no true human society can achieve cohesion and peace because the first human instinct is the desire and pursuit of self-preservation. In a quest to preserve the self, human beings are naturally drawn into conflicts, tensions, theft, disputes, wars, violence, corruption, etc. On a more consumerist and pleasure instincts, man engages in drug abuse, alcoholism, prostitution, adultery, laziness, thereby breaking down the social order and causing anarchy which endangers societal cohesion and development.

Igbo people are notoriously religious and cultural people. Igbo man interprets everything around him from religious perspective. In Igboland, religion and culture are so pervasively welded together that the two cannot be separated. Therefore, it is not surprising that the morals and values of the Igbo people hinges inseparably on religious, cultural and spiritual underpinnings.

What constitutes moral code of Igbo society be it the laws, taboos, customs and forms of behaviour, all derive their compelling power from religion and culture. Thus, morality flows from religion, and through this the conduct of individuals are regulated; any rupture of the moral code is regarded as a punishable evil. An imperative fact about the rules that make up the ethical system of Igbo societies is that they are incorporated into a unified code; to understand this ethical code no rule is considered separately from the unified system as a whole. The desirable ideal is social peace and harmony for the individual persons and the society at large.²⁰

In Igbo society, from birth to death, a traditional Igbo man undergoes several initiations and rites ushering him from one level of social stratum to the eventual entrance into the ancestral world. In this span of life, many cultural and ethical values play out. These values constitute the traditional Igbo means of socialization. To ensure a reliable moral and peaceful society, Igbo people personifies, eulogizes and idolizes certain good values like truth, justice, hard-work, good character etc. Amongst the Igbo people, the truth is valued so much as it is considered to be the web that holds the society together. The confidence built in Igbo society lies principally in the ability of the individual members to tell one another the truth. Thus, the Igbo

²⁰ E. AJAKOR & I. OJUKWU, *The Dynamics of Moral Formation in the modern Igbo Society: The Nnewi Experience*, in *International Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, vol. 2 no. 1, 2020, p. 24.

say: *'eziokwu bu ndu'* (truth is life) in expression to demonstrate the importance of truth. The personification of truth in both in private and public life is a vehement confrontation and resistance against embezzlements of public funds, drugs, human trafficking, and the lapses in the social and judicial systems among others.²¹

Another important virtue that is not only idolized but symbolically represented is justice. At no Igbo cultural gathering or meeting or resolution making that this symbol of justice - 'ofò' is not presented. In short for one to take certain titles in Igboland like the ozo as we have mentioned, one must be a custodian of ofo. It is believed that ofo is a spiritual symbol of authority that came from the ancestors.²² Before any judgment is pronounced, the person pronouncing it must hold the ofo indicating that he is pronouncing the justice as the ancestors did. Thus, Igbo people popularly say: "ejim ofo", which literally translates as 'I hold ofo', to demonstrate that he has done or said everything possible to ensure justice and peace, and then beckons on the ancestors to justify his actions.

In Igboland, people are generally assessed according ones self-comportment. People are easily linked to family lineage in accessing how one is to be understood and related with. "The Igbo conceive good character as providing the means by which man regulates his life to avoid conflict with the supernatural forces and also to be able to live in harmony with his fellow men. Thus, the Igbo believe that each individual must strive to cultivate good character to be able to live a good life in perfect harmony with the forces that govern the universe and the members of his society. This, accounts for the high premium placed on good character."²³ That is why the value placed on good character is more attractive than any other thing man can desire. Igbo people simply say, "ezi afa ka ego" (a good name is more valuable than money). "Ezi agwa bu mma nwanyi" (good character is the beauty of a maiden). "Ezi afa ka eji aga" (good name/character takes one to all places). With these Igbo people emphasize good character than any other thing. "Thus the character of the person would determine, to large extent, his situation in life."²⁴

²¹ Ibid., p. 27.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

1.1.4 Igbo Worldview

Some scholars have recently argued against specific worldviews especially Igbo worldview. Their argument is simple. They argue that specific worldview restricts people from appreciating the totality of reality; that clinging to worldview restricts the Igbo people from appreciating and perceiving the world as it is. Therefore, the traditional Igbo worldview struggles in the midst of the frosty, rational emphasis of the modernist worldview at the expense of dimensions Igbo people's reality. The truth is that Igbo people have its specific approach to the physical and metaphysical world as manifest in its religious inclinations.

The metaphysical world for the Igbo people is a reality. They believe in the multiple existences of both benevolence and malevolence supernatural forces. Through their religion, the experiences they have supersede the one-dimensional approach of the modernist worldview which castigates as superstitious or at best, denies the realities of worldviews.

It would be both misleading and inadequate to discuss theology in Igbo context without dealing with the question of spirituality. The most basic characteristic of Igbo culture is its holistic and integrating nature. "Igbo religion is fundamentally a relationship of interface between the visible world and the invisible world. This relationship permeates the whole of life of individuals as well as of the community."²⁵

Spirituality is those attitudes, beliefs and practices which animate people's lives and help them to reach out toward the supernatural realities. It is a relationship between human beings and the invisible supernatural beings, inasmuch as such the relationship derives from a particular vision of the world, and in turn, conditions the way one relates to oneself, to others, and to the universe as a whole. Spirituality is not restricted to any one religion, but a very important component of various religions and cultures. It is determined in the first place by the basic perspectives of the persons concerned. It is also formed by their life context, their history, their cultural values and the various influences that enter their life.

Worldview can simply be described as a way a group of people see and interpret the world around them. So it will be absurd for people to argue against people's perspective of interpretation of the realities around them. Arguing against worldview is tantamount to arguing against culture and the

²⁵ R. GIBELLINI, *Paths of African theology*, London, Orbis Books 1994, p. 115.

individuality of humanity.

Igbo people are highly religious and cultural. The religion of the people is embedded within culture. The two are inseparable. That is why most times, it is difficult to distinguish the religion of the people from their culture. The realities around them are interpreted from religious and spiritual perspectives.

Igbo religion is polytheistic but the idea of a supreme god who is the creator of all things is central in Igbo theology. This supreme god (Chukwu okike), a high god is benevolent. He is a withdrawn god who after the work of creation rests from active works. He watches the world from a far and in silence. He does not intervene on what happens in the world because he has done everything good. He is not worshiped directly because there is no shrine dedicated to his worship. He receives no direct sacrifice from the living but he is ultimately the receiver of all sacrifices through the myriads of other small gods, the deities: the earth goddess -ala/ali. The earth goddess is the nearest to human affairs –the spirit of fertility. She is considered generous and benevolent; the sky god (Igwe), the source of rain and dews; and then, the sun god (anyanwu). These gods are called god of nature. They are sometimes considered benevolent, generous, diligent; but at other times, considered envious, treacherous and wicked. These gods make or mar humanity depending on the relationship one has with them. That is why consistent sacrifices are made to them in order to control and manipulated them for human interest and comfort.

Igbo people also believe in ancestral spirit and other numerous spirits which inhabit the rivers, the seas, the forests, the mountains. These spirits are appeased each time one wants to make use of their abode.

The place and role of the ancestors in the Igbo worship and prayer patterns have for long been a controversial issue in the Christian worship. The controversies continue to deepen as efforts by African theologians and church leaders continue to grow in the area of inculturation. Some equate the African gods and ancestors with the saints of the Catholic Church and therefore, recommend that these African ‘saints’ should be recognized and invoked at prayers. Others think that as most of these African ancestors were pagans and never received baptism nor believed in God of Jesus, there is no room for them in Christian religion.

Nonetheless, the ancestor worship is vital in Igbo religion. The ancestors are

dead long ago, but they are the 'living dead' family members. They are regularly invoked by the living to intervene and save men in desperate situations. Not all dead qualifies as an ancestor. It is only those who lived good life while alive. These dead are not dead. They are still around and are strong part of their families and community. The family and community thus are not limited to those presently alive; they include members of the past and also future members. This link is a continuum of the same life. The life of the present generation is not a novel creation; it is a continuum from those preceded them. "The new generation cannot recognize themselves outside the identity of their ancestors."²⁶

But there are more. Having passed through death, they become prominent members of the invisible world whereby they share in mystical powers not ordinarily available to the living. They are nearer to god, with whom they can communicate and to whom they can present more effectively the needs of those alive. "That is why the living cannot disregard them: their intervention, though beneficial, can also be punitive if the living misbehave or sabotage the basic principle of life."²⁷ That is to say that the activities of the ancestors correlate to bring about order and happiness for human beings.

Sacrifice is another pronounced form of worship in Igbo theology. To maintain a constant touch and rapport with these divinities, deities and ancestors and ultimately Chukwu, there is always the need for constant religious sacrifices which most times includes human sacrifice of slaves, twins and Osu. These sacrifices, in the traditional Igbo societies are not made directly to Chukwu –the Supreme Being, the sacrifices are made to the deities which are believed to ascend ultimately to God. Sacrifices are made through the deities who direct them to God, because the deities are simply God's messengers.

1.2 Missionary Contact with Igboland

As demonstrated above about the worldview of the Igbo people which is strongly tied to religious, spiritual and cultural underpinnings, largely native and superstitious, which exhibited numerous sacrifices and even the acts of killing twins and burying slaves alive and other forms of rampant and persistent sacrifices, portrays the climate of ancient Igbo cultural society as religiously dreadful . It was more of crude but a natural society that has not been mingled with westernization or scientific exposures and posturing.

²⁶ R. GIBELINI, *Paths of African Theology*, London, Orbis Book 1994, p. 126.

²⁷ Ibid.

It is this traditional religion and cultural adherence of the Igbo man that the missionaries met. With all their knowledge about science, evolution and industrial revolution, they (missionaries) are now in contact with Africans whom they considered typically as impoverished and crude.²⁸ How do you communicate the gospel to these men who could not read or write, and yet bonded to their primordial beliefs? Their first approach to this ‘crude culture’ was aggression and disparagement. The aggressive approach of missionary evangelization was aimed at condemning the traditional culture and religion as superstitious, paganism and fetishism. I remember with vivid sadness those denigrating lines in *Ekpere maka ntogha nke Africa*²⁹ we were made to memorize in catechism classes. Traditional music and song, drama, and masquerades were totally denounced as bad and immoral. Statues and other remarkable art work were wantonly condemned, destroyed and most of them carted away to Europe and America.

In the middle of 19th century, precisely in 1841, missionary enterprise began in Igboland. The pioneer missionaries were white expatriate of the British Church Missionary Society (CMS). Their enterprise was greeted with refusal and resistance. The reason was so simple. The first contact of the Igboland with the white expatriate was horrific, dehumanizing and bestial. The first time the Igbo man saw a white man, it was a white man with chains and guns –the slave trade. It was an enterprise that denied the indigenous people their human rights; an adventure that transported thousands of Igbo men and women into slavery in Europe and America. The missionaries had claimed to have chosen Africa and the Negro race in particular as reparation of the evils of slave trade.

The Igbo people firmly resisted them with violence. They didn’t give up. They went home and re-strategized. Few years later, they (CMS) came back but this time around through black missionaries from Sierra Leone. These missionaries from Sierra Leone were formal slaves who became free and were repatriated to Africa. One major character among these was, Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Ajayi Crowther was born in Nigeria in 1809 in Oyo Empire but taken into slavery with his family. He became the first African Anglican Bishop.

²⁸ N. NDIOKWERE, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow: Inculturation in Practice*, Enugu, Snaap Press 1994, p. 155.

²⁹*Ekpere maka ntogha nke Africa* literally translated is prayer for conversion of Africa. It is a prayer composed in Igbo language by the Irish missionaries. It has a denigrating lines like: “. . . we came to discovered and redeem them from the dungeon where they would have lost forever . . .”

The first attempt of the Roman Catholic missionary into Igboland was by the Portuguese missionaries in the 15th and 16th centuries but failed almost on arrival. In 1885, the catholic missionaries returned to Igboland. This time around there was already the presence of other white expatriate everywhere in Africa. The colonialists had made their way into the Sub-Sahara Africa. It was at this time that the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) was able to settle. So it was difficult for the normal Igbo man to make a distinction between a colonialist and a missionary.

In fact, it is still believed that the early Christian missionaries worked hand in hand with the colonizers. Most times, the missionaries were sent to work out a bargain treaties that placed the Africans under suppression.³⁰ They came as missionaries and mercenaries. The Bible followed the gun and chains. The wedding between colonialism and western missionary scheme is attested by Stephen Neil who argues that, “in West Africa, the progress of discovery and the establishment of Western domination went hand in hand. Neil paints the situation in a lyrical tone, “where the explorer penetrated, it was certain that the missionary would penetrate too; and the missionary would be followed by the trader and the trader by the government.”³¹ For Randee Ijatuyi-Morphé, “colonization and slavery are just but two sides of the same coin, with the former being identical to Christianity.” He continues, “Colonization and slavery may be located in the religious/political world of early Christianity”³² The link between colonialism and missionary movement is remarkably described by David J. Bosch who writes, “Colonial government and the missionary were indeed ideal allies.”³³ And thus, it was feared that the influence of Christianity in the colonization process was certain, though subtle, and had a helping hand in weakening and devastating the Africa’s resilience.

It is argued among the Igbo people that the European brand of Christian values inculcated in Africans was to achieve certain objectives. One of these was to pacify the Africans so that they would become passive and docile

³⁰ L. SUSANNE, “*Religion and Colonization*”. Oxford Bibliographies. Oxford University Press. Retrieved 26 June 2021. For the process of European expansion and the colonial endeavours from the late 15th century to the 19th, historians of the Atlantic world have more often than not identified the imperial states as the most powerful players: the Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch, and English (later British). From these empires’ perspectives, colonization was also about converting the “heathen” to, first, Catholicism, and then, with the Reformation and the rise of different varieties of Protestantism, to other denominations as well.

³¹ STEPHEN NEIL, *A History of Christian Mission*, 1991.

³² R. IJATUYI-MORPHÉ, *Africa's Social and Religious Quest: A Comprehensive Survey and Analysis of the African Situation*, UPA, 2014.

³³ D. BOSCH, *The Christian in Theological Perspective*, 1990.

while the Europeans plundered African land. Even very much recently, Walter Rodney in his *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* contends that missionaries were agents of imperialism:

The Christian missionaries were as part of the colonizing agents as were the explorers, traders and soldiers. The missionaries were agents of colonialism in the practical sense, whether or not they saw themselves in that light. European missionaries preached humility and submission in the face of gross injustice, inhumanity and dehumanization. While British traders were exploiting their African customers, the missionaries preached peace, forgiveness and good neighborliness, which as it were, prevented genuine revolution, self-preservation and determination. Missionaries worked for the preservation of the status quo and continuation of the master-servant relationship between Africans and Europeans.³⁴

This was the suspicion that greeted the advent of Christianity in Igboland. Regrettably too for them, the ideological mechanization they took did not help the first Igbo converts to understand their religion. The encounter was described by Chinua Achebe as that “the white man put a knife on the things that held us together and we fall apart.”³⁵ Wherever Christian missionary project comes into contact with the non-Christian religions, it sets itself to oust them with the false conviction that this is essential for the salvation of their adherents.³⁶

This stinking reception was a major eye-opener and a big challenge to the missionaries. It spurred them for a change of strategy and approach for an effective tool that is not only missionary but that which includes humanitarian works.

1.2.1 Missionary Strategy

There were only two mission groups in Igboland; the CMS had already gained considerable influence for the fact that they had stayed more than 40 years before the RCM. None of these missions had a carved out plan or strategy but operated on what I prefer to call ‘plan as you go’ method until they started clashing for occupation and dominance. Therefore, the prompting factor of dominance, occupation and presence was heightened by the swiping wave of Muslim occupation from the Northern Nigeria. Christian missionaries in the wake of this challenge sought to ‘expand now

³⁴ W. RODNEY, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, New York City, BlackMass Publishing 1972, p. 67.

³⁵ C. ACHEBE, *Things Fall Apart*, London, Heinemann 1958, p. 56.

³⁶ T. YATES, *Christian Approaches to Other Religions, The International Review of Missions 1912-1939*, Tottenham Road, Mission Studies Press 2011, p. 44.

and consolidate later.’ This method became highly popular among all the interest parties in those targeted areas but significantly accounts for the poor catechesis in Igboland.

This background of clashes and struggle for occupation and presence would remain a reality even today in Igboland. The two missions became enemies, and as the saying goes that ‘where two elephants fight, the grasses suffer.’ So when Achebe says that the missionaries brought ‘knife into our unity’, this was one of the perspectives he was referring to. The squabbles between these two Christian religious agents were obvious. The enmity in itself betrayed whatever Christian message they preached. Regrettably, the enmity is still active today.

Despite this violent competitions, there were good missionary measures that the missionaries applied which would eventually become successful strategies not merely in the missionary work of the salvation of the souls but also of the salvation the Igbo man.

1.2.1.1 Establishment of Schools

As one would have expected, the establishment of schools was expedient. The Igbo man was crude, native, without formal education or any other form of western literacy. Invariably understanding the new religion which has come down to him with bible and other books of prayer would be a difficult task.

To establish schools and get the Igbo man into the classroom was easier for the CMS because of the advantage they had from the repatriated slave catechists. While they knew that it was paramount to learn the language of the people, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) sent two missionary-linguists: Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a Yoruba ex-slave and Simon Jonas, a liberated slave from Sierra Leone of Igbo parentage, to Igboland.³⁷ Meanwhile, F. Schön stayed back in Sierra Leone studying Igbo and Hausa languages. When he had collected a vocabulary of 1,600 Igbo words and had translated a few Bible prayers. He sailed up to Igboland through the Niger; Schön attempted to communicate in Igbo. He was disappointed to know that the language he had spent so much time studying in Sierra Leone has different dialects used differently in the different parts of Igboland. He also noticed that his pronunciations were only a mutilation of the language.³⁸

³⁷ H. ANDERSON, *Biographical dictionary of Christina missions*, U.K, Willam B. EerdMans Publishing Company, 1967, p. 74.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.76.

The establishment of schools was first of all spurred by the need to communicate with the indigenes. It was a two-way interest-target: to teach the natives foreign language -English, and to learn the Igbo language themselves. It was these expatriates who first of all introduced the Igbo language into a systematic learning method. Simon Jonas was instrumental in the teaching of the Igbo language.

The competition between the two missions was carried in into their missionary activities through school evangelization. The RCM made more progress than her counterpart because of the wide support she enjoyed internationally from the universal church because of her apostolic succession to St Peter, and locally from the natives because of the numerous packages like health system, foreign foods and other material goods they enjoyed from the white catholic mission.

In early 20th century, building of schools was already popular in Igboland; the Irish missionaries pursued an aggressive policy of evangelization through schools. They penetrated the hinterlands of Igboland opening primary schools.³⁹ Between 1918 and 1920 the Roman Catholic Mission built more than 48 primary schools. This model of evangelization through schools was welcomed by the people who saw education from the positive angle as being equipped to gain the much-needed skills to negotiate with the Whites to rescue the Igbo people the clutches of colonialism. In 1925, the Holy Ghost Missionary had opened about 558 primary schools with 33,737 pupils.⁴⁰

As the native gained from the being educated, the missionaries were also able to access and penetrate the people who have opened themselves the western education. It is evidently clear that with the education, most of the cultural heritages were lost which are it were, were opposed by the missionaries as being fetish, superstitious and paganism.

On the other hand, the CMS could not cope with the striking speed with which the RCM gained access to the people through schools. They themselves have opened few schools especially around the Niger where they first settled. There were also other few schools in Nsukka region of Igboland.

³⁹ J. Nwaka, *The Early Missionary Groups and the Contest for Igboland: A Re Appraisal of The Evangelization Strategies*. In *Missiology, An International Review*, 2007, p. 40.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Meanwhile, since they can no longer compete with the RCM on school establishments, they immediately translated their educational zeal into palpable evidence. They were the first to translate the Bible into Igbo language to help the natives have access to the word of God. They also published hymn books and prayer booklets.

So far, the preceding discussion shows the extent to which education was deployed as a strategy for evangelization. The reality of this situation is that while the multiplicity of schools as an evangelization strategy gained popularity in Igboland that even as of today, there many schools linked to the missions; but the tragedy was that the heads of the people were educated but their hearts remain the traditional Igbo men and women with persistent cultural and faith crisis.

1.2.1.2 Establishment of Christian Villages

The establishment of Christian villages is one of those unpopular strategies that the missionaries applied in Igboland that has continued to hurt the people and has also remained one of the major reasons why majority of the Igbo people castigate Christianity. The creation of Christian villages was a strategy that separated the new converts from their ancestral kin. It was, in a clear language ‘putting knife’ in the unity of the Igbo people. This method separated people from their beloved ones. Today in Igboland, we still have the effect of that arrangement. There are still places where you see a concentration of people with certain religious beliefs. When it became obvious that despite the massive numbers at the schools, Igbo people were not significantly departing from traditional ways, efforts began to spring up on how to isolate and control the new converts. This method though short-lived affected the nature of Igbo kinship and religious unity.

This method was unpopular, divisive and was about tearing Igbo people apart. It was the strategy of the Roman Catholic Mission.

Igbo traditional life as we have tried to demonstrate is largely egalitarian, communal (igwe bu ike or mmadu ka eji-aga) and social. But these qualities of communal living, egalitarianism were threatened by this missionary strategy. By isolating converts in other to quarantine them from traditional influences, the Igbo converts were effectively separated from their original life which was full of harmony and togetherness. This separation wrongly made the convert to understand Christianity as a non-community religion that required separation from community life. With the nature of the Igbo society it became difficult for many converts to detach themselves totally

and thus resulted in a kind of schizophrenia, an attitude that still exists among some Christians.

1.2.1.3 The Bible and the Plow

In the 'Bible and the Plow' was a popular slogan and practice applied by the CMS. As the Catholic mission enjoyed the benevolence of the universal church who offered all the needed material help for both the missionaries and the native people, the CMS mission didn't enjoy this show of charity. Having been overtaken in the school apostolate and to relatively extent, in the implanting of new church mission centers by the RCM, the CMS devised another successive and fruitful apostolate.

They therefore, resolved to find a way of self-help; hence the slogan 'the bible and the plough' represents evangelization through agriculture and industry. They will not just preach the gospel, but also teach the people how to save themselves from hunger. Samuel Ajayi Crowther who championed this project cited Pauline's letter to the Thessalonians which argues that 'he who does not work should not eat' (2 Thes. 3:10). Crowder is popular to have argued that: "a missionary should be a jack of all trade and master of all; one ready to put his hand to work and to do so in a legitimate way, anything that might lead to advancement of the gospel of Christ."⁴¹ They also founded the then famous Onitsha Industrial Mission (O.I.M.) to train young Igbo youths in various works: carpentry, sewing, brick-making and tailors. From this apostolic approach, the CMS mission founded the first school of carpentry in the whole of Southern Nigeria.

Today this missionary strategy of 'the bible and the plow' has continued to yield maximum fruits. The Igboland especially Aba and Onitsha still remain the industrial and business hubs of the whole West Africa, thanks to the missionary initiative of the Christian Missionary Society led by Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

⁴¹ E. EZEANI, *In Biafra Africa Died: The Diplomatic Plot*, London, Veritas Lumen Publishers, 2013, p.78.

CHAPTER TWO

Understanding culture and its implications for Christian faith

In this study of inculturating the Eucharist in Igbo society, culture is not only a key element but a necessary component that plays an important role in inculturation. In view of the important role which it plays, it becomes necessary for us to devote a chapter to it in order to understand it more profoundly.

Culture is a social phenomenon that manifests itself in many perspectives including anthropological, sociological, traditional and religious colorations, even when these manifestations are so intertwined and not easy to explain from specific perspective. Though, anthropologists insist that culture is an important phenomenon that deserves its own field of study and cannot be meshed together with other disciplines.

This becomes imperative in the work of inculturation considering complex society like Igboland where people are so attached to their cultural backgrounds. This is because the data at our disposal like biblical and historical data are from some cultural backgrounds. The mission agents themselves come from a background that is path and parcel of their lives. So if we don't give great attention to culture, we may end up forcing another culture on the people thereby, either assimilating their culture or altogether putting their culture into extinction.

In Igboland for example, most of the mistakes which the early Western missionaries especially the RCM made was the ignorance and labeling the culture of the people as paganism and superstitious as we saw above in their effort to separate the new converts from their kin or in some of the prayers they composed –*Ekpere maka ntogha nke Africa*. Therefore, Jerry Pinto says that “the problem of inculturation is not with regard to faith and its contents, but with regard to the imposition of the cultural form upon people who have different cultures.”⁴²

Anthropologists while insisting on the study of culture as a separate discipline advocate for a cultural marriage, that is, a cultural symbiosis they called culture-contact which allows the independence of every culture which make it possible for human beings to appreciate the roles of every culture. Therefore, it is good to argue that a good missionary a good anthropologist.

⁴² J. PINTO, *Inculturation through Basic Communities: An Indian Perspective*, India, Asian Trading Corp, 1985, p. 21.

Effective mission takes root in the culture of the people. Culture is never separated from the people. So that as the culture grows or changes, the faith already imbibed is being modified by the new realities of culture which never loses its fundamental elements. Faith is communicated through the proclaimed word of God which takes flesh in the culture. This word must be rooted, expressed and demonstrated in the culture of the hearers. In other words, faith and culture cannot be separated.

God's revelation as Lord is given to all people through creation and to specific people through events, recorded as Scripture, and of Jesus Christ himself.⁴³ The incarnation of God and the work of human salvation were in human culture and civilization; "faith is lived, nurtured and expressed in a culture. A lived faith has a cultural character."⁴⁴

In this chapter, we present culture and its understanding as a mean of creating a healthy relationship with the Christian faith. In this chapter, we will look at the concept and definition of culture, culture and symbolism, culture as communication, culture as vehicle for transmission of the Christian faith, dialogue between faith and culture with emphasis on implications on the Christian faith.

2.1 Concepts and Definitions of Culture

Culture is the sum blend of learned and shared beliefs, values, and practices that create cohesion that sum up the way of life of a people. It is in a continuous dynamism, evolving based on the needs and realities of the people as one culture comes into contact with another culture.

In his address to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 2nd June 1982, Pope John Paul II in a letter he entitled: '*Genus humanum arte et ratione vivit*, argued that "Culture is a specific way of 'existing' and 'being' of man." He further added: "Culture is that by which man as man becomes more man, 'he is' more, he accedes more to 'being.'"⁴⁵

Edward B. Taylor was the first to define culture as "that complex whole that includes beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, knowledge and any other habits

⁴³ J. FRAME, *Divine Revelation: God making Himself known*, An Essay, in thegospel.coalition.org.

⁴⁴ J. PINTO, *Ibidem*, p. 20.

⁴⁵ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Genus Humanum arte et Ratione vivi: An Address to the UNESCO*, 1980, no. 6-7.

acquired by man as a member of society.”⁴⁶ These varied definitions point to the fact that there can't be a definite single definition of culture as culture touches all disciplines of human life ranging from religion, anthropology, sociology etc. These differences do not take away the fact that culture is all about how people do and how they respond to realities around them.

Nicki Cole affirms that culture refers to variety of insubstantial characteristics of social life.⁴⁷ Culture according to sociologist includes values, language, and other practices that define a people as a group. Culture also includes the material things common to a society.”⁴⁸ Culture is distinct from social structure and economic aspects of society, but it is connected to them and continuously informing them and being informed by them.⁴⁹

In his four paged essay on Different Notions of Culture, Eliana Briel says that the word culture is one of the most used and complex words in English, but its meanings varied and used in different ways that required some examinations. The word culture is so complex that only ‘nature’ denotes more meaning than culture. Culture cuts across almost everything.⁵⁰

Quoting from the *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*, Briel says that culture signifies the following:

1. *Culture* consists of activities such as the arts and philosophy, which are considered to be important for the development of civilization and of people's mind.
2. A *culture* is a particular society or civilization, especially considered in relation to its beliefs, way of life, or art.
3. The *culture* of a particular organization or group consists of the habits of the people in it and the way they generally behave.⁵¹

She further says that sociologists see the two sides of culture: the material and non-material as intimately connected. Material culture grows from, and is shaped by the non-material aspects of culture. Material culture can also

⁴⁶ E. TAYLOR, *Primitive Culture*, cited in, S. Sackmann, *Cultural Knowledge in Organizations*, Newbury Park, CA., Sage Books, 1991, p. 8.

⁴⁷ N. LISA, *What is you Culture Exactly* in <https://www.grin.com/document/287928>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ B. ELIANA, *Different Notions of Culture*, 2012 in <https://www.grin.com/document/287928>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

influence the non-material culture.⁵²

Giorgio Bonaccorso analyzed culture as a fruitful work of integration between community practice and the exposition of a vision of the world, between society as behaviour and culture as knowledge. In his re-evaluation of the symbolic dimension, he describes human behaviour as a symbolic action. Culture is made up of interconnected systems of interpretable signs; and religion is a cultural system, because it constitutes a fundamental component of the network of symbols found in a society. The preciousness of the rite is to act as a centre of integration of these sequences of symbolic actions to achieve that realism of the sacred which is so relevant for religious worlds.⁵³

From the foregoing discourse of culture, we can't rule out the significant role of socio-anthropological development in the formulation of the concept culture. It is by defining culture and understanding what it represents that we can come to a better understanding of it. But then, Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define despite some attempted definitions. There cannot be a single definition of culture that is universally accepted because many disciplines that study the life of the people approaches culture from different perspective, stressing their areas of interest.

Notwithstanding, Edward B. Taylor's definition has wider acceptance among many authors. Considering the time when this definition was given, it is classical as still meets the expectations of this era. This definition is a foundation that has most of the elements of other definitions. His definition centers on the place of man in the society mirroring the sophist writing of Protagoras of Abdera that "man is the measure of all things." Therefore, culture is what human beings through his actions are able to create out of his society. Culture is the totality codes that reveals a human social society and makes it interpretable. Culture gives a concrete human society a definition, an identity.

George Papagiannis gave a socio-anthropological definition of culture:

Culture is the whole spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society. It also includes not only arts, but also modes of life, value systems, traditions and beliefs. It is through culture that a man expresses himself, recognizes his

⁵² N. COLE, *Ibidem*.

⁵³ G. BONACCORSO, *Rito*, Padova Messagero di Sant'Antonio, 2015, p. 63.

incompleteness, questions his achievements, seeks new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations.⁵⁴

George's definition is broad enough to include the four dimensions of a human being, namely, spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional. Therefore, it means that culture vivifies these four dimensions of life through arts, value systems, traditions, beliefs and fundamental rights of human beings. This implies that culture makes us human. In other words, we are expected to develop our capabilities in these four dimensions so as to be able to pass critical judgments, make right choices, discern values and even question our own capabilities. For this reason, culture is not simply about behaviour. It is a way of life. There can't be a human society completely independent of culture. Instead, we become complete through culture. This definition fits well to our work of inculturation because it affirms everyone's right to his culture.

Culture and society go together; they are very much similar, but are different things. Society is a term that describes the bond or relationship of an organized and structured set of people within a larger community of people that cannot be merely described as a collection or a group of persons. This is where culture comes in defining a society; because culture defines the schemas that characterize a society. This is why against Émile Durkheim argument that 'society has an independent reality from individuals, and exists in its own right, exerting an influence over individuals'; I argue on the contrary that society doesn't exist in the oblivion. Society is so intertwined with the individuals that a people defines her society and that it is the people who exerts influence on the society.

It must be emphasized here that culture is not hereditarily generated. Culture is learned. Culture is not static, it is dynamic. That is why Alfred Kroeber talks about "cultural growth," which means, the accumulation of cultural items. For him cultures grow through: the internal mechanisms by which a culture adds to its total inventory; and external forces.⁵⁵

Human nature is what all human beings, from the American Sailor, Italian Soldier to the Igbo native doctor have in common. It is inherited, it is not learnt. The human ability to feel fear, love anger, joy, pray, to play, is all natural human instincts. But how one interprets and uses these feelings is

⁵⁴ G. PAPAGIANNIS, *Meeting Basic Learning Needs: A Vision for the 1990s, Background Document – World Conference on Education for all, Thailand Jemtien 1990*, p. 153.

⁵⁵ A. KROEBER, *Anthropology with Supplement*, Harcourt Brace, 1923, p. 325.

conditioned by culture.

2.2 Culture and Symbolism

The commitment here is to create a relationship between symbols and cultural elements of a given society in a way that this intersection facilitates an easy understanding of the relationship that exist between signifier and signified that combine to generate religious experience.

Etymologically, the word symbol derives from Greek word *Symbolon* which mean to put together. It puts context and image, idea and material reality together. In other words, “symbol has dual face. It divulges something that cannot be spoken theoretically, but at the same time it masks that thing because it cannot be its sufficient expression.”⁵⁶

A symbol is a signifier of a mental content or meaning attached to material thing. It implies a close relationship between an expressive form and the mental construct of ideas. This is to say that there must be a reciprocal implication between the signifier and the signified -a relationship of equivalence.⁵⁷ Symbols are used to signify objects, existent or imaginary. Symbols are the source of culture. A symbol is an object, word, action, figure, sound, or colors that stands for something else with no natural relationship but signifies that which it represents. Abstract ideas or concepts are represented by symbols. Some symbols represent themselves e.g. the Eucharist represents Christ, yet it is Christ himself.⁵⁸

Symbols mean different things to different people. Symbolism leads to layers of meaning. Each culture provides meaning to individual symbols which is why it is impossible to conjecture how a specific culture will symbolize something. Language is the most common cultural symbol. For example, the alphabets symbolize the sounds of a specific spoken language. Interpretation of this symbolic alphabet may differ according to cultures. When for instance, the word-sound –‘acqua’ is pronounced in Italy, it means water; but when the same sound –‘akwa’ is pronounced in Igboland, it means cloth. That is why it is important to consider cultural background when looking at symbolism of a given culture. This is because many symbols, though similar in appearance, can mean different things. These

⁵⁶ M. DHAVAMONY, *Christian theology of inculturation*, Rome, Pontificia University Gregoriana 1997, p. 52.

⁵⁷ G. BONACCORSO, *La Liturgia e la fede: la teologia e l'antropologia del rito*, Padova, Messaggero di Sant'Antonio 2010, p. 178.

⁵⁸ N. NDIOKWERE, *The African Church, Today and Tomorrow: Inculturation in practice*, Enugu Nigeria, Snaap Press 1994, p. 214.

symbols can best be understood or interpreted in the culture they exist. This is why culture and symbol are inseparable. Clifford Geertz defines culture in relation to symbols as he says that: “culture denotes a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate and expand their knowledge and attitudes towards life.”⁵⁹ Culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols; a system of inherited conceptions expressed on symbolic forms by means of which men communicate. Symbol is any object, event, quality or relation, which serves as a vehicle for conception of meaning.⁶⁰

Surya Bhakta Sigdel says that:

Symbols are arbitrary based on convention of culture. Symbol is interpreted within a culture. Symbols are means of Communication of language, a form of ritual expression, expression of art and belief. Symbols should not be looked at in an abstract way but rather at the way meaning is constructed and used in context.⁶¹

The culture is created by human symbolic actions. Symbolization is a social process. Cultural symbolism is means through which social identity and reality are created. Symbolization is shown to be a significant response to culture. Specific aspects of the culture are shown to be particularly fecund as sources for symbolization. By focusing on the symbolization process and the symbolic forms, the explanatory power of cultural geography can be expanded.⁶²

It is, therefore, not out of place that religious study concerns itself with symbols which helps to generate and interpret religious experience especially in the clime we are studying where religion fervently consist of systems of symbols. This is because religious experience is molded by symbols; and culture as a system of symbols is the veil of interpretation between man and his immediate environment.

In Igboland food and kola nut are religious symbols. Kola nut in Igboland is a very important aspect of the people’s culture. It holds great social significance. The kola nut is a symbol of hospitality, alliance and reverence.

⁵⁹ C. GEERTZ, *Op. Cit.*, p. 89.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ S. BHAKTA, *Culture and Symbolism Nexus in Anthropology*, Article History Revised 9, 30 November 2018.

⁶² B. ROWNTREE & W. CONKEY, *Symbolism and the Cultural Landscape*, USA, Taylor & Francis, Ltd. 1980, p. 1.

It is given to cherished guests; and it is used at important social events.⁶³ Here, the emphasis is not just on the food or kola nut, but on the act of staying together and eating together. In Igbo culture, eating together, among many other things shows that life is given and shared. Life does not belong to an individual. It is sign of fellowship and mutual social obligations.

Just like the Igbo people, eating together has a symbolic effect among the Jewish people. It was in eating together as prescribed God himself, that the salvation of the people was wrought. It is this eating and drinking together as symbol of unity, fellowship and salvation event inaugurated in the Passover account in Exodus that Jesus incorporates in the Last Supper.

In the evening of the Lord's Supper, Jesus with the Twelve had gathered around the table for the meal in a symbolic and cultural style mirroring the first Passover in Egypt. For Jesus, it will be His last; but for the apostles it will be a beginning of a new covenant sacrifice offered daily until Jesus comes back in the eschatological. The bread and wine, duly consecrated by prayer, become insignia of the Lord's body and blood, to be eaten and drunk reverently, and in remembrance of Him. While at the table, under wisp of profound emotion, He demonstrated to them, that this Passover will not be for Him that normal annual historical Jewish feast but a real Passover as its name suggests. Luke alone captures the yawning pains of anticipation of the Passover, "And he said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk 22: 15). At this solemn meal Jesus appears to have observed the essentials of the Passover procedure; but laden under such emotional anguish and especially for the institution of His ever presence in the Eucharist, there may have been a little modifications to His total compliance with the many surplus requirements with which the established memorial of Israel's deliverance from bondage had been observed in traditional custom and rabbinical prescription. At least we are sure of Jesus' addition "do this in my memory" (Lk 22: 19).

Symbols cannot be avoided in religion. But religious relevance is attached to symbols by only those who already have expressions of what it symbolizes. Every religious belief is expressed in a symbolic meaning that refers to supernatural values or beings. This statement is the testimony of the Eucharistic Bread which not only symbolizes Christ but it is Christ Himself who in becoming the word of God assumes body to feed his people

⁶³ V. OZOHU, *Nigeria: Kola Nut - A True Symbol of Our Culture*, Conference on Leadership in Abuja, 2011.

spiritually. The symbolic meaning is only understood by those who attach the same symbolic meaning to it.

2.3 Culture as Communication

To help us to understand culture as communication, we shall first of all take the words one after the other and see the components that make up each. In the term 'culture' we can find such components as: art, folklore, language, rules, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, food, gestures/signs and customs that are systemically linked together to describe an identity of a people. At the other hand, 'communication' has such components like: knowledge, language, gestures/signs, demonstration, words, silence etc, constitute communication. From this explication, we can see that culture and communication reciprocally influence each other. The culture in which people grow influence the way they communicate and the way people communicate influence their culture. The cultural background, customs, value and cultural experiences of individual determines how one communicates.

Communication is the process of exchanging information, and culture as communication refers to the effect of the cultural characteristics that are constituents of communication process. That is why a group of academics and librarians across Australia and New Zealand led by Erika Pearson and Bernard Madill argued that:

Basically, communication is the exchange of information and meaning. We are constantly communication in a wide range of different contexts, such as with each other (interpersonal communication), with different cultural groups or subgroups (intercultural communication), or to large audiences (mass communication). To understand communication, we must know its import in culture.⁶⁴

The relationship between communication and culture is symbiotic. Culture creates communication and communication creates culture. The relationship is tightly interwoven and interlinked. They are inseparable. Communication happens through human interaction in cultural characteristics. In this communicative interaction, culture is spontaneously created effortlessly by the individuals involved, thereby making culture a natural by-product of social interaction. In a case, culture is a natural consequence of social

⁶⁴ E. PEARSON & B. MADILL, *An open textbook: Media Studies 101*, University of Otago, 2013, In, <https://opentextbc.ca/mediastudies101/chapter/communication-culture>.

interaction.

Every social unit develops a culture. In a two or three or more person's relationship, a new culture develops as each continues to interact and communicate with the others. People carry their history, their experiences, their language, habits, idiosyncrasy, and other characteristics that introduce new milieu and difference from previous relationships into new relationship. So that as individuals engage in communication with the members of new group, they create a new set of shared experiences which births new culture.

In this communication process, a group develops culture in form of rules and regulations and other characteristics that guide and give identity to the social unit. Organizations have culture that both give them identity and communicates a message. Using catholic women organization of Igboland as an example, one identifies a catholic woman going to burial/funeral ceremony by the type of clothes she wears; or going to catholic women meeting by the type of cloth she wears. The clothes here become both manifestation of culture and message to whoever sees her. In the same vein, when a bell tolls in a church, it communicates a message. Sometimes, it indicates to the Christians the time for service. At the other times, it tells the Christians that one of the members is dead.

Communication therefore, is the ability to exchange information, to convey a message, or an idea to someone or to a group of people using different cultural mediums understandable to the group. Culture as communication becomes imperative because we cannot talk of the cultural implications of the Christian faith without talking about the transmission of this faith, which involves communication.

The cultural elements like music, colours, artifacts, incense, vestments, etc are so important in conveying religious sentiments and experiences. Most religions especially, Christians use these cultural elements for different celebrations. These elements communicate religious experience. In Igboland for example, traditional procession during liturgical worship introduces everyone into serene participation and at the same time bonds people to their cultural roots. In this way, procession communicates a certain disposition and religious experience to the participants. There are so many other examples in religious practices.

But then, we must be humble to accept the fact that culture is subjective. It is subjective because it is something that develops within a social context and

no society share in totality the same characteristic with another. This being the case, suffice it to say that no culture is better than another culture. No culture has the right to impose its own norms and ideals as universally compelling. The danger is that most times, people are tempted to consider one culture better than another or tempted to assimilate another culture. This is why, at the heart of inculturation, dialogue and consultation is very important. Also, dialogue is important in the communication because it leads to a compromise that balances the excesses of cultural domination.

Thus, preacher or propagator of a religion must be one who understands the importance of culture and its role in building reciprocal communication. The Word of God itself is developed from a cultural background. This cultural background must dialogue with other cultures where the gospel is being implanted. One of the major errors of foreign missionaries in the whole of Africa was the thinking that 'gospel culture' is better than the 'local cultures', and therefore, the local cultures are castigated as superstitious. But the fact is that gospel message would have been easily propagated and effective among the people if it is communicated through their culture. It would also easily enhanced growth of the Christian faith.

Faith enables culture to develop new aspects of faith-expression, providing a home and a garment for faith. Faith inspires, purifies and humanizes culture. On the other hand, culture offers services to faith, especially in its social diffusion; for example, through art, poetry, philosophy, etc.⁶⁵

Faith and culture are inextricably linked. A culture is an expression of the faith that forms it. If a culture is animated by a belief in the good, it will shine forth goodness. If it is animated by denial of this transcendental virtue, it will manifest only viciousness and ugliness. In the former, the culture cultivates affinity and contentment; in the later case, it cultivates nothing but destroys everything. The former finds in the people the fruits of new and renewed cultural expression. The later pulls culture up by the roots, casting it aside, leaving in its place a desert of deconstructed despair, barren and fruitless capable of nothing but destruction of social fabrics. The choice is ultimately faith and culture or the absence of faith, and in consequence, the absence of culture too.⁶⁶

Thus, the understanding culture in relation to communication helps to

⁶⁵ J. PINTO, *Inculturation through Basic Communities: An Indian Perspective*, India, Asian Trading Corp, 1985, p. 22.

⁶⁶ J. PEARCE, *Faith and Culture*, England, Augustine Institute Books, 2018.

explain the origin of differences between the practices, values and customs of various groups and societies, and it provides the communication process by which these differences are bonded. This knowledge heightens people's tolerance for cultural differences. It also explains the process that individuals go through in adapting to new relationships, groups, and societies. Communication builds bridge between cultures. It is a force behind cultural change.⁶⁷

2.4 Culture as a vehicle of Christian Faith

The reformation of Martin Luther in 15th century placed religious sentiment on a personal spiritual level which he argued as grace of God against human work. His position on grace redirected the Christian theology who was gasping for survival to think in the line of Luther. The sacramentality of the Christian theology was put on the bench and functioned more as a substitute –a helper to the grace. Despite the firm decision of Council of Trent on the infallibility of the sacraments, religious sentiments move on the wave crafted by Luther. But in the recent times, religion returns to take on a more concrete expression. In this new expression, religious sentiments do not reside in transient imaginary bodies; rather crucial to the contemporary understanding of religion is its correlation to culture. Religious artifacts and other cultural elements have resuscitated the understanding of the relationship between culture and religion. These artifacts function well as a vehicle for the expression of the deeper sensitivities that arouse religious sentiments in the people. Therefore, faith cannot be separated from culture, and vice versa.

This is why Matt Waggoner argues that religion has indeed rearranged its position. Religious sentiments have moved from the psyches and spiritual levels into cultural values of the people. Religion is no longer a private thing that functions in the bodies and brains of the participants, but rather religion has moved into the culture or a social system. The consequence is that studying religion requires a change of focus, away from the individual and group consciousness and finding the location of religion in the exteriors of cultural values.⁶⁸

The practice of preaching the gospel from one culture to another has persisted throughout the history of the church. St Paul's letters and

⁶⁷ T. HUNT, &R. BRENT, *Mass Communication: Producers and Consumers*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

⁶⁸ M. WAGGONER, *Culture and religion*, in P.B. Clarke (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of sociology of religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 219.

missionary works were stories of implanting of churches in many cultures from Asian culture to Greek and to Roman communities. His letter show how the gospel message interacts with the cultures of the people. And through this interaction, the culture becomes the means through which the message permeates the people. In fact, the only time St Paul appeared unsuccessful in his apostolate was when he applied a strategy against the cultural context of the people (Acts 17:32). In the Old Testament too we find the roots of contextualization. Israel's faith is the belief that Yahweh is the only true God. In the sacred scriptures the people of Israel express how the relationship with this one God was lived in many different ways throughout her history because of the diversity of the humanity that contemplates and worship this one God. Thus, God is always one, but God is described in multiple ways. Ad then, within the scriptures, there appear to be many ways of describing God. Trying to limit Yahweh to a single vision, a one way of understanding Him would in itself be idolatry.⁶⁹

The Gospel, in its expression of the Kingdom of God, expresses itself in human society that takes flesh in the Church. The command of Christ was to a community to whom he entrusted the mission of adapting the gospel to different circumstances. This demand facilitates a constructive dialogue between the gospel and the preacher, a dialogue between culture and gospel, a dialogue among all those who were called to believe in the Gospel. The Christian religion is not the exclusive inheritance of one particular people or of one culture. The histories of all humanity are incorporated into one common history of salvation, the story of God and of humanity.⁷⁰

This gives credence to the relationship between the gospel, the one who preaches the gospel, the evangelized and the culture which forms the bedrock and vehicle of the preached gospel. This link between evangelization and the culture of those evangelized is such that evangelizers, by reaching this understanding, become agents of inculturation, bringing about the incarnation of the word among such a people.⁷¹ Whoever enters the church must know that he is entering a culturally established entity with its own historically developed and multi culture. Becoming a Christian means a kind of exit, a break from one's previous life in all its aspects. Faith is not a narrowed way to God; it leads to the people of God and its history

⁶⁹ P. HIEBERT, *Christian Faith and Cultures Historical Background: An International Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, April 1997, p. 200.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ M. OBETEN, *The Indispensability of Inculturation for Effective Evangelization: Revisiting the Evangelization of Sub-Saharan Africa*, Saint John's University Collegeville, Minnesota, 2018, p. 7.

who have their being in God. God binds himself to human history and space.⁷²

In the recent times, the church discovered that members of cultures completely different from the predominant European culture have profound experiences of God, a different kind of experience and many times complementary to their own. This helps us recognized that God is always experienced, lived and expressed in specific cultures. That is to say that Christian message of salvation is relevant to all cultures and can be understood, lived and expressed with different cultural references. All cultures are vehicles of God's revelation. The Christian faith does not come to destroy cultural identities, but to transform and perfect them while maintaining their own identity.⁷³

2.4.1 Dialogue between Faith and Culture

In his speech during a visit to University of Manila, Philippine, Pope John Paul II remarked:

A university therefore, should not only impart knowledge according to the proper principles and methods of area of study and with due freedom of scientific investigation, it should also educate people who will be true leaders in the scientific, economic and cultural and social fields. It also train leaders in the most important field of life itself: leaders who make a personal synthesis between faith and culture, who are willing and able to assume service of the community and society, bearing witness to their faith, both in private and in public.⁷⁴

The Second Vatican Council has as its primary target, the intension to open the church for dialogue with the world. The Church recognized a mutual benefit of dialogue between the church and the world. And thence, sets herself on the ongoing task of evaluating, from a faith perspective, what the world had to offer. This task emphasizes the consolidation of the indigenous local churches as the goal for evangelization while mingling herself in the culture of the people. It is in these local churches that the process of embodying the gospel in the surrounding culture is brought to fruition, becoming evangelizers of other cultures in the future. This exchange, this dialogue, this symbiosis between faith and culture is therefore, not only vital

⁷² J. RATZINGER, *Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures: Address to the Doctrinal Commissions in Asia*, Hong Kong, 3 March 1993.

⁷³ P. HIEBERT, *Op. Cit.*

⁷⁴ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the students and Representatives of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila Friday, 13 January 1995*, Word and Life Publications, Makati, Metro Manila, 1995, p. 22.

in evangelization but also in understanding of religion. It is precisely a synthesis of this kind that is both urgent and necessary.

To do this, faith needs to dialogue with the culture where it is contextualized. As a matter of fact, it is the prerogative of faith to initiate and promote this dialogue. Dialogue demands the difficult discipline of listening not just with the ear, but with the heart which will give birth to compassion, constructive criticism, patience and consensus. In dialogue between faith and culture listening is core and reciprocal. It is in the mutuality of listening that both faith and culture are enhanced. When this listening is absent, dialogue becomes unfruitful resulting into a situation where everyone is speaking and no one is listening.⁷⁵

Faith/culture dialogue brings peoples together in common inquiry and social action in respectful engagement. That is why renewal of faith goes hand in hand with renewal of culture. In essence, no renewal of faith is possible without a renewal of culture.⁷⁶ That is to say that the dialogue between culture and faith is not only a demand of culture but also of faith, “because a faith that does not become culture is not faithfully lived.”⁷⁷

In faith and culture relationship, faith has three tasks. Its first task is to acknowledge and appreciate the values that are inherent in culture. Every culture has a deposit of values and treasures that needs support to grow. Faith needs to harness these cultural values that need help to grow. Faith also needs to insert itself in culture. Mingling with the culture will not only mean evangelizing the culture but enriching the faith because faith can't function outside culture. Faith is born in culture and in culture, it grows and nourished.⁷⁸

Therefore, culture is purified in the light of faith while faith is interpreted according to the demands generated by culture. In other words, Faith and culture are indivisibly linked together because a culture is an expression of the faith which informs it.⁷⁹

Besides accepting and appreciating what is good in culture, the role of faith is to criticize and construct culture. Faiths inspect cultural forms, yet faith

⁷⁵ P. POUPARD, *The Dialogue between Faith and Culture: Keynote Address at the University of Santo Tomás in Manila*, in *Colloquium of the Federation or Asian Bishops' Conferences*, January 14, 1996,

⁷⁶ J. PEARCE, *Faith and Culture*, online publication, 31 January, 2018.

⁷⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa*, 1995, n. 78.

⁷⁸ P. POUPARD, Op. Cit.

⁷⁹ A. SCOLA, *Relationship between Faith and Culture*, Published in Oasis 10, 2009.

formulations are made by culture. Since culture is a human creation and is therefore, marked by weaknesses, it too needs to be healed, ennobled and perfected.⁸⁰ Faith needs to challenge and confront culture.

⁸⁰ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, n. 54.

CHAPTER THREE

Negative Culture and social problems of discrimination

The culture term has been used both broadly and narrowly. The definition of culture as “complex whole”⁸¹ is broad enough to include what may be described today as negative culture. At certain point in human history, many heinous crimes were part of what form the culture of such eras.

Slavery was a human historical fact suffered especially by Africans. Africans were traded all over the world in that most disgusting human history. It is a social issue seen by law as the most absolute involuntary form of human servitude. This was the most palpable time when African lives were values not more than a broken glass.

Circa the beginning of the 16th century, Europe was experiencing a boom in manufacturing, in what many people now refer to as the Industrial Revolution. Europe became the workshop of the world, as mass industrial production and international trade became attractive, effectively changing the entire global economic system in the process.

As a result, two things happened: there was a large demand for massive quantities of raw materials (copper, cotton, oil) to power the revolution, and there was a surge lavishness in Europe. But unfortunately, Europe lacked labour force for this project. Africa was extremely blessed in both human and natural resources; and so the Europeans exploited this advantage.

During this period of slave trade, many people were displaced from their original homes. Most people were bought and held in cell-camps. This resulted to different groups of people in Igboland: there were the rich families who moved freely because no one can take them into captivity for sale. They were the freeborn (the diala). Then, the slaves were categorized into two different groups: the ohu and the osu. An ohu is a normal slave; a person who was either bought or captured for slavery. The diala kept him as a servant, or sold him to a merchant, or sacrificed him to the gods. He was regarded as a property. An ohu could become a freeborn at the mercy of his master –the diala or if he (ohu) was able to buy himself. Then, an osu is a slave who was used for a non-bloody sacrifice. He is dedicated to a deity or a shrine. An Osu can never be a free person in his whole life. He and his

⁸¹ J. OLUPONA, *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*, Paragon house, Minnesota USA, 1989, p. 113.

descendants are forever osu.

As we have said, the Igbo people are highly religious people. They have sense and respect for the sacred which pervade their religious belief and practices. The osu as a person is considered a 'thing' offered to gods. For this reason, the diala avoids any association with the osu. Despite the advent of Christianity and the permeations of the salvation gospel of Jesus Christ, the Igbo still sees the osu as the 'forbidden', the 'untouchable'. He is excluded from every activities that would make him interact the diala.

At the official abolition of slave trade, these ohu were allowed to go. Many of them could no longer trace their homes. They ended up loitering around the villages together with the osu people. At this point it became difficult to distinguish between the osu or the ohu. So it was easier for the diala to avoid all of them than to speculate who was osu or ohu. This was how they were all classified as same people and discriminated against.

Therefore, in this work, we shall be using only the term osu to mean both the osu and the ohu because, today in Igbo land, they receive the same treatment of discrimination.

3.1 Christian and Non-Christian discrimination

Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity was constantly opposed by the religious leaders of his time. The Jews had no room for compromise with any new ideology which tended to deviate from the Law of Moses of the traditions of the elders. The conflicts culminated in the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. After his death, his disciples carried on His controversial teachings resulting in many religious crises. In the ancient Roman Empire, the crisis also happened between Christianity and pagan religion of the Romans. The Igbo society is not an exception. The wanton destruction of lives and properties triggered by these conflicts has resulted in the topic under consideration. The aim of this study is to investigate the conflicts existing between the two religions since the introduction of Christianity.

Conflict is a human phenomenon. It is predictable in human contact. Thus, it cannot be avoided in the Christianity and African Traditional Religion interaction. Since Christianity came in contact with the traditional religion, there has always been a sharp conflict between the traditionalists and Christians. This bitter conflict has led to wanton destruction of lives and properties, and demolition of cultural artifacts and groves by Christians.

Just as in the recent time, the early Christian church had conflicts with religions and cultures that do not share the same doctrines with it. Harry R. Boer says that the early Christians collided against those who did not confess the church's faith about the person of Jesus Christ.⁸² Conflict is a reality. It does not exist in a vacuum or up in the blues but among humans. It is unavoidable in human interaction. Conflict has been defined variously by interested scholars under different ideological, historical and cultural influences. However, David Francis defines conflict as the "pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups."⁸³ Yet, a more elaborate definition was given by Phil Eze. He says that "conflict is the expression of disagreement over something important to two individuals, groups, states or nations when they had different views, different goals, different needs and different values and they fight over limited resources to address them."⁸⁴ We now look at some areas of conflict in Igbo society.

3.1.1 Ozo title

Ozo Title is both a religious and social conferment. It is the most important social title in the Igbo Society. To become Ozo person implies that the title holder is now an 'Nze' or 'onye nze' which implies living spirit and an ancestor. Augustine Obi in his words sees 'Onye nze' literally as an Ozo person. For him, after taking the title, the person becomes "onye ozo" which he translated literally as "another person." He explains that the person becomes another person rather than what he was formerly because he has acquired in himself some strange spirits especially that of the ancestors.⁸⁵

Ozo title is sacred institution of a system of government in Igboland whose initiation into the fraternity has cultic processes. Gradually *Ozo* title was transformed into a society and its members act or sever as advisers and ambassadors to the King. They metamorphous into a secret society with disguised language, understandable only by its members. The language is used for indoctrination "so that the head of the ritual groups could send messages backwards and forwards."⁸⁶ *Ozo* titled men are spiritually developed and some could have magical powers.

Ozo title-taking has assumed a prestige of honour among the Igbos and it is so revered that most people even Christians want to be initiated into the

⁸² H. Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church*, U.S. A., Ethics & Public Policy Centre Inc. 1976, p. 36.

⁸³ D. Francis, *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, London, Zed books Ltd. 2008, 104.

⁸⁴ O. Phil-Eze, *The Environment, Peace and Conflict in Nigerian*, Nsukka, Spectrum Books Ltd. 2009, p. 393.

⁸⁵ A. OBI, *Christianization of Igbo cultures: Ozo title a case study*, Nsukka, Smart Press Ltd. 2017, p. 268.

⁸⁶ U. OWNUEJEOGU, *Ozo title taking: the problem with Igbo people*, Orlu, Trinity Press 1981, p. 168.

fraternity. Traditionally, it is often believed to be connected with some pagan religious ceremonies by the Christian. But the members of the fraternity have denied such insinuations that it has strange connotations. Ndigba Ekwueme says that “the missionaries called all indigenous arts works of the devil especially those associated with some religious ceremonies. The damage done to the culture of the Igbo by these misguided zealots may never be fully assessed.”⁸⁷ In recent years, it has been emphasized that these rituals are not necessary to the title-taking. According to Francis Arinze:

When, therefore, Christians wish to take title in a town, the parish priest and the local Catholic community must first make an exhaustive inquiry into the title in question. If it is found that the title of itself, contradicts faith or morals, then no Catholic can take it, no matter under what conditions. But if it is found that the title is a purely social affair at the taking of which some pagan religious ceremonies were performed, then the title society must agree to abolish these religious ceremonies for all candidates who take title. An agreement is then signed between the title society and the Catholic Community of the town. Only after such a signed agreement may a catholic proceed to take title. The aim of the agreement is not to Christianize any title. The aim is to remove the pagan religious ceremonies from them so that the titles remain purely social or economic propositions.⁸⁸

Buttressing this further, Fidelis Idigo wrote that:

Christians of various dominations were prohibited by their churches from taking *Ozo* titles because the ceremonies in course of taking the titles are mingled with the pagan rites. In order to avoid participating directly or indirectly in the pagan worship connected with title taking and yet reap the benefits of taking titles, the Christians and the pagans came to agreement approved by the church hierarchy that the procedure of taking title should be the payment of money which substitutes the rites and sacrificial ceremonies according to pagan rites.⁸⁹

Despite this, the members of this title institution are being stigmatized as cultists because of this wrong impression from the non initiates. They are ridiculed in the community and regarded as secret cult members for trying to

⁸⁷ N. EKWUEME, *Religion and Psychology of Christians in Igboland*, Enugu, South Mouth Press 1974, p. 13.

⁸⁸ F. Arinze, *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1970, p. 53.

⁸⁹ F. Idigo, *Royal Dynasties of Aguleri*, Enugu, Niky Printing & Publishing, 2010, p. 74.

promote Igbo culture by taking Ozo title. This wrong impression has done a lot of harm to Ozo institution and as a result, has drastically reduced its popularity.

3.1.2 Burial Ceremonies

Death is inevitable as every person must at some point in life die. In Igboland, the news of death is often received with ominous and gloomy reception, irrespective of the age and circumstance that caused the death of the deceased. Hence, the Igbo people are always seen treating the dead with unreserved respect and an uncommon type of complex rituals.

Charles Ejizu argues that through rituals man says something about his inner religious awareness, his vision and his belief about the cosmos. Ritual is central in Igbo traditional religion. The belief of the Igbo people in ancestral existence is the clearest expression of their faith in the afterlife. The same belief is also the dynamic hope of the traditional Igbo that after a successful life on earth, one would happily reunite with his forefathers in the land of the living dead to continue the endless cycle of life.⁹⁰

In Igboland, burials and burial rituals or rites have become a bone of contention and Christian 'revolution' plays a major role in this. In Igbo traditional culture, before a man or a woman is buried, certain rituals have to be made, such as the 'Iwa Nkita anya'⁹¹, the goat ritual, the cow presentation, mourning, corpse preservation, determining the burial space, removing some vital body parts of the deceased before burial if the person is considered to have died a bad death, etc. These rituals are performed to ensure that the deceased joins his ancestors. The Igbo people believe that a type of burial ritual determines the fate of the deceased in the land of the ancestors. If the burial is not properly done, the spirit of the death will roam around, causing fears and havoc.

In some parts of Igboland, when a woman dies, her corpse will be taken to her father's house and symbolically buried by killing a cow and performing some rituals before the corpse is taken back to her husband's family for proper burial.

⁹⁰C. EJIZU, *Continuity and discontinuity of Igbo traditional religion*, in METUHI, E.I. (Ed.), *The Gods in retreat: Continuity and change in African religions*. Enugu, Forth Dimension Publishers 1986, p. 35.

⁹¹ This ritual is carried out in honour of a deceased person. It is carried out on Eke day. The symbolic implication of Iwa Nkita Anya ritual is for re-incarnation. So that the deceased will be reborn into the world of the living as a bold, fearless and hard-working person. This is because fear is seen as a weakness on the part of a man among the Igbos. The ritual of Iwa Nkita Anya is performed by an appointed person through divination. The executioner of this ritual rite must be a man of strong mind and bold personality

There are other practices like the dehumanizing widowhood rites and practices which include the following: drinking water used in washing husband's corpse, crawling over husband's corpse, long mourning and restriction period, loss of right of inheritance, sitting on bare floor during the period of mourning, a widow not taking bath until eight market days (28 days), and so forth.

Also, Izuchukwu Ihechu and Lawrence Uchechukwu assert that the Igbo people believe that a well done burial ritual would determine the well-being of the deceased in the land of the 'living-dead'. It is often believed that if the burial ritual is not properly done, the dead would be in a state of unrest and cannot partake or mingle with their people in the land of their ancestors.⁹² From a mythological viewpoint, the dead are viewed as the 'living' that deserves necessary rituals in order to progress to the spirit realm. A closer analysis of his point of view reflects that the spirit of the soul stays with the corpse awaiting burial or funerals. While the soul stays around, the family of the deceased makes plans to bury the dead and also perform the necessary rituals that the soul needs to move on, because it is believed that if these rituals are not performed, the dead would keep roaming the street. It is believed that proper burial rite helps the dead join the ancestors and enable him to reincarnate.

Christianity frowns at these practices on theological basis that Christ has purchased our salvation with his death. Therefore, the rituals serve nothing.

3.1.3 Sex Discrimination

In African society and Igbo in particular, the gender peculiarities and patriarchal construct remain a nuisance across virtually all spheres of life in the society. The sensitivity is high to the extent that the boys are made up to see themselves as superior sex to girls. It emphasized that male children are more important than the female. Because of this, the boys feel more important and indispensable. On the other hand, the females are trained to see themselves as weaker sex who must always respect and be submissive to the males. They are made to see themselves as mere appendages to the men folk. The women are lower class citizens who require just minimal attention.

Male sons are preferred under Igbo culture. The birth of a son into Igbo family is a big celebration and jubilation. The premium placed on the male

⁹² I. IHECHU, & L. UCHECHUKWU, *African communication systems*. Enugu: Iyke-Lito Publishers 2018, p. 62.

children is reflected in the names given to them. Such names as “Obodoechina”, “Ogbonna”, “Nwokeabia”, “Nwokedi, etc extol the importance of male children. A man who has no male child is considered a failure. This way of thinking is of course traceable to Igbo culture. In fact, in the recent past, the girl-child was denied the right to formal education for the simple reason that she was a girl and would be eventually married off to become a property to her husband. Most times, the female children are trafficked for economic gains.

The discriminations against women are many. They include lack of proper education, physical assault, heinous widowhood practices, marginalization of women’s right in the event of dissolution of marriages, female disinheritance, female gender mutilation, female trafficking, and Polygamy where many women are married by a single as properties he has acquire, etc. Igbo women consequently are often regarded and treated as property of their husbands and can be physically beaten assaulted by them as a form of correction. This traumatic domestic violence, regrettably have persisted over the years unabated and underreported by women for of fear of repercussion, shame, and fear of ejection from the home. Some of these women have grown up with this violence and have taken it as normal and cultural.

The worrisome aspect of this problem is that these discriminations are so deeply rooted in our Igbo cultural system and has become a system of thinking for decades. These discriminations have persisted despite the upsurge in feminist jurisprudence for women emancipation and empowerment.

3.1.4 Marriage Customs

In Igboland, Christian marriage is different from traditional marriage. In traditional marriage, the religious aspects include the preliminary divination by which the young man and the woman undergo to find out from the gods of the clan or lineage – if his/her *Chi* (guardian spirit) permits him to marry. In this case, the marriage rests on the mercy of the diviner. Another area of conflict is polygamy. Polygamy in Igboland is sign of opulence. The number of wives determines the number of children. Polygamy runs contrary to the Christian doctrine of monogamy of one man one wife.

Christianity is opposed to these aspects of traditional marriage. They contend that marriage is the idea revealed by God. It is a sacred institution where only the consents of the parties make marriage. Marriage in Genesis has three basic themes: man the image of God; man who is male and

female; man who has autonomy of procreation and power over creation. Marriage, as an intimate community of life and conjugal love, arises from the human act with which the spouses mutually give and receive each other. Therefore, marriage is a natural free act of man and woman who come together to complement each other in becoming one flesh.

But how is the ideal Christian marriage as revealed by God different from the traditional marriage? One wonders why the Church makes herself the sole guarantor of the contract, as if only the sacramental contract institutes the marriage. Why is traditional marriage not recognized as an ascent of creation in which the native requirements for marriage are achieved?

These are the question often asked by some traditionalists. They argue that the Christianity hijacked a natural cause of marriage, and in her attempt to model marriage, flawed it. Therefore, the Church respecting the original will of God, who made marriage a natural union of a man and woman without sin affecting it at its root, should recognize and supports traditional marriage so as to return marriage to humanity where it belongs.

3.2 Osu Caste system

The issue of Osu is one of the most controversial issues in Igbo Traditional Religion before and after the advent of Christianity in Igboland even till date. This is one of the key issues in Igbo Traditional Religion that the influence of Christianity has not been able to sufficiently deal with by either impacting much regulation or abolishing it altogether. The social stratification of the Osu still suffer in Igbo communities even in recent times testifies to this fact. This has continued because of the tyranny of ancient beliefs and ideologies on the minds of Igbo people which signify a bequest of monstrous traditional religious beliefs and of ancestral worship attributes that has rendered the people psychological and spiritual slaves.

There are claims in some areas of Igboland where the influence of Christianity has affected the lives of the people to the extent that, there are signs of abandoning this tendency of segregation. These claims are vivid. But the fact is not beautiful as being presented. But a careful study shows that this still exists in its strong forms. What appeared to have reduced it the violent attacks on them, like using them as sacrifice to deities.

Francis Arinze defines Osu as “a person who is consecrated to a deity. He is symbolically immolated and is then left to live on as a child or slave of this

deity.”⁹³

The Osu were used as victims for sacrifice to deities by a community or a group of people or a family.⁹⁴ In the most primitive era of the whole of West Africa, human bloody sacrifice was prominent. In Igboland, the Osu was the victim of this sacrifice. The Igbo believe that human sacrifice is the highest and most the potent form of sacrifice. This sacrifice is made as an appeasement to the deity to save the society from calamity such as plagues, famine, drought and others. Human beings (Osu) were also sacrificed in connection with Kings. During the accession of a new King, a human being is sacrificed as a protective measure to ensure a long period of reign. Human beings were further ritually killed at the funerals of kings, chiefs and other royalties; at the erection of a new towns or villages, human beings were also sacrificed.⁹⁵

Sacrifice is the hub of Igbo Traditional Religion. Ofomata calls it “the summit of Igbo traditional religion.”⁹⁶ The word sacrifice denotes to a religious act. Ritual sacrifice functions only in religious public worship. So, the word sacrifice here refers to religious worship. That is, a communion between man and God. Sacrifice is man’s paramount way of instituting and sustaining convivial and intimate relation between himself and his object of worship.”⁹⁷

Sacrifice is an offering made to God by a priest of a valuable thing through its immolation, in recognition of His supreme dominion and control and man’s subordination to Him.⁹⁸ Following Pauline’s distinction between internal and external worship, one could also argue for a distinction between internal and external sacrifice. Jesus was the first to talk about the worship of God in spirit and truth pointing to the fact the preference to worship in the spirit. Internal sacrifice could be likened to internal worship or preference to obedience than sacrifice. Internal sacrifice is an offering of ourselves; while the external sacrifice is only a manifestation of the internal dispositions – internal sacrifice.

One can rightly say that internal sacrifice is the soul of external sacrifice and

⁹³ F. ARINZE, *Sacrifice in Igbo Traditional Religion*, Op. Cit., p. 105.

⁹⁴ O. ONWUBIKO, *Facing the Osu issue in the African Synod: A personal response*, Snaap Press, Enugu 1993, p. 24-25.

⁹⁵ F. ARINZE, *Sacrifice in Igbo Traditional Religion*, Op. Cit., p. 71.

⁹⁶ K. OFOMATA, *Survey of Igbo Nation*, Crash-bond Press, Benin 1956, p. 359.

⁹⁷ T. QUARCOOPOME, *West African Traditional Religion*, Clacom Communication, Owerri 1999, p. 89.

⁹⁸ F. ARINZE, *Sacrifice in Igbo Traditional Religion*, Op. Cit., p. 63.

is urgently required for its ethical valuation of the external sacrifice. Internal sacrifice gives meaning to external sacrifice. If the external sacrifice is not spurred by the internal disposition, the external rite would degenerate into formalism, which in itself is the enemy of spirituality.⁹⁹

Mbiti makes a distinction between sacrifice and offering. Sacrifices refer to immolation of animals in order to present the animal in part or in whole to God, supernatural beings, spirits or living-dead. Offerings refer to the other forms of gifts that do not involve the killing of an animal, being essentially the presentation of food stuffs and other items.¹⁰⁰

3.2.1 Inheritance right struggles

The general system of inheritance under the Igbo culture is the primogeniture. The tradition of primogeniture entails the total non-negotiable inheritance of power, properties, titles and positions by the eldest son of a family.

In Igbo traditional culture, there are both tangible and intangible things that are capable of being inherited. Examples of tangible things include landed property, farms, money, cars, machines, houses and others. Intangible benefits capable of being inherited are titles, positions and succession of crown.

The succession to the crown of king (*Igwe*), that is, the mantle of Leadership of an Igbo cultural community is rotational. It moves from one clan to another within the community. The same formula is applicable to chieftaincy. The kingship, the chieftaincy and other titles like Nze and Ozo are very important and enviable positions in Igboland. Unfortunately, the Osu is denied either of these titles. An osu cannot be a traditional ruler of the towns and communities. They cannot be town union leaders. They cannot receive chieftaincy titles. Other forms discriminations the osu suffer include marriage with the free born and mixing up in certain places. They are also deprived of all the communal inheritance.

3.2.1.1 In the society

The osu is perpetually under social constraint. They are not to engage in any social function. They will not join the diala (freeborn) during festivals. They are regarded as taboo and are revered. They cannot marry or intermarry with

⁹⁹ Ibidem., 59.

¹⁰⁰ J. MBITI, *African Religion and Philosophy*, Op. Cit., p. 77.

the freeborn. Marriage for the osu is always within the osu group. An osu must marry an osu and cannot marry diala. They are not allowed to mingle with freeborn and cannot make public speeches at any gathering unlike the freeborn.

The social discrimination of the Osu is better captured by Uche Dike in a story of how life is in Oruku, a community in Nkanu East, Enugu state. Oruku is made up of three clans: Umuchiani, Onuogowu and Umuode. The people of Umuode have limited social interaction with the rest of the two communities because of their status as osu. The other communities had a separate market and placed a fine of N1, 000.00 (about \$10 dollars) on any community member that buys or sells to the Umuode community.

In furtherance to this discrimination of Umuode people (Osu), in 2004 Morris Ede a Commissioner for Special Duties in Enugu State government, was removed from the state government cabinet because he is an Osu. The Governor defended his action by saying: “all we want to do is to preserve our cultural heritage, the violation of which cannot be in our lifetime. I was born and I met Osu, it might be senseless to go contrary to this cultural practice we inherited from our fathers. We don’t hold anything against them.”¹⁰¹

3.2.1.2 In the church

According to Elechi Okemgba, early Christianity in Igboland was congregated by people who suffered some kinds of social discriminations like the lepers, Osu, widows and others who suffered other forms of societal dejections. They saw church as a place of refuge because the church preached universal brotherhood, equality, justice and love. The Osu in particular called church salvation. Thus, the diala (freeborns) were hesitant and to conversion into Christianity not very much interested in going to church because the church was considered a place of gathering of the outcasts and the untouchables.¹⁰² It was for them an abomination to stay under one roof with the Osu. It was a difficult task to convert the Diala.

Since then, the church has been making every effort to incorporate all people as one body of Christ. So far, they have succeeded in bringing them, the Osu and the Diala under one roof for worship. But what happens in the church during the worship and outside the church after the worship has remained a

¹⁰¹ U. DIKE, *The Diala and Osu Conflicts in Oruku, Nkanu East*, Snaap Press, Enugu 2007, p. 253.

¹⁰² E. OKEMGBA, *History of Christian in Igboland: strategies and prospects*, Enugu, Snaap Press, 1998, p. 74.

betrayal of Christian faith.

Despite worshipping together in the same church, they are far apart separated physically but especially spiritually. Most Diala (freeborns) still do not share sign of peace with the Osu nor sit close to them. Church functions like lectors, acolytes, catechists and other church's leadership positions were not given to them.

Most times, some the priests are incapacitated to make drastic changes that are inclusive. They take the option of passive silence in an attempt to respect everyone's choices and freedom of choosing who your friend becomes or not.¹⁰³

3.2.2 Intra-community Conflicts

Conflicts, like sagas, do not end quickly. They are more often punctuated by periodic squabbles and strikes or new challenges than by victory or defeat in wars. It is always an unending antagonism that escalates in different dimension as the day goes. Such is the story of conflicts between most communities of osu and the diala in Igboland.

As we have tried to establish in the foregoing, that the Osu is discriminated against in all social life and more. They are made to live in the obscured part of the towns and communities, and evidently many miles away from the diala. These living settlements where these osu were made to live, in most places of Igboland, gradually grew into large communities and villages only populated by the osu. They increase and multiply in number and in material acquisitions. This progress made by the osu creates envy and unrest among the diala. These envies most times results in conflicts. Laws and rights for recognition and protection of indigenous peoples' rights to land and natural resources in accordance with the customary use and occupancy patterns are not always respected in the cases that concern the Osu.

In 2009, the Osu people were attacked by the diala from Umunya, neighbouring community. The victims of the attack lost both their money and other valuables. Their houses and town hall were burnt down and their electricity and water supply destroyed. In revenge, the osu attacked three women which resulted into a chaos.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ C. MCGARRY and P. RYAN, *Inculturing the Church in Africa: theological and Practical perspective*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi Kenya 2001, p. 58.

¹⁰⁴ K. BENEZERI, M. LAURENTI and S. AYLWARD, *African Christian Marriage*, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York 1997, p. 197.

The consequences of most conflicts are disastrous and far reaching. It ranges from massive loss of lives of the diala but especially that of the Osu, to destruction of public and personal properties. Economic displacement is another grave consequence of conflict. Markets, shops, offices and work places are destroyed and looted. Thus most people are handicapped and plunged into poverty. Physical and psychological problems such as heart attack, wounds, bone fractures, depression, stress, anxiety arises as a result of these conflicts.

Conflict management techniques that assume that all parties negotiate on equal social levels, or the suspension of power imbalances in order to reach a mutually agreeable solutions, do not work in cases like between the osu and the diala, because the diala always believes that he is no equal with the Osu. He asserts his superiority on the Osu.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have been able to introduce the traditional Society, geography, cosmology and religion of Igboland before the Advent of Christianity. It was a traditional society brewed with cultural heritages. Igbo people are highly cultural and religious people. Despite this, they could not harness their cultural practices especially oriko, into a factor that unifies and promotes peace among them; rather they are culpable of many discriminations especially against osu caste system. In the next chapter, we will try to proffer a solution to this discrimination by inculturating Oriko in the light of the Eucharist, demonstrating how this cultural practice which has permeated the lives of the people as a uniting force can be seen from a higher perspective, in the light of Eucharist where Jesus Himself is meal poured out for the remission of humanity. In this way, Oriko will wear the cloak of evangelization.

Part Two

CHAPTER FOUR

Inculturation: Meaning and Relevance

4.1 Definitions of Inculturation

Over the decades, the concept of inculturation has been on the front of theological discourse. Inculturation is the internal evolutionary response of a given culture to the proclamation of the gospel and ongoing evangelization. The task of inculturation is to enter into dialogue with cultures to discover in them those cultural values that resonate with the gospel with the gospel working as an internal agent guiding the process. Inculturation is not a violent clash of the gospel with a particular culture.

Inculturation is a recent insight in the mission of the church. This mission involves a continuation of the mystery of the incarnation taking root in human culture. Since the origins of Christianity, the Christian faith never existed without being taken root in the culture of those who accepted it. The Pauline Jewish and Greeks churches grew on cultural lines. The gospel of Jesus Christ as well as written according to four different cultural situations in the New Testament.

Inculturation is a twofold process. It is a process that allows simultaneous inculturation of the gospel and evangelization of the culture. The gospel remains Good News while it takes on a cultural cloak, adopting and integrating cultural milieu. Inculturation involves notion of growth and mutual enrichment. Hence, it gives culture the knowledge of the divine mystery while allowing it to bring to Christian faith from its own living traditions, some original expressions and vitality that evangelization has not yet expressed. The term is intended theoretically both to defend the integrity of the Gospel and to encourage respect to various cultural contexts.¹⁰⁵

This means that culture contributes to the gospel and helps the gospel to express in a better way the mystery of Christ. It doesn't mean that culture contributes something new to the gospel, but rather introduces a vehicle of simplification that expresses the gospel. Culture complements evangelization models. Inculturation is simply adoption of cultural elements

¹⁰⁵ D. DOYLE, *The Concept of Inculturation in Roman Catholicism: A Theological Consideration*, Religious Faculty Publications 2012, p. 1.

which resemble gospels elements. Such would be violence to the culture.

Jerry Pinto points out that “inculturation is the dynamic relationship between the Christian message and diverse cultures. It is an insertion of the Christian life into a culture.”¹⁰⁶ When this Christian message is well incarnated into the culture of a particular people, Christ’s transforming power is realized and it becomes visible as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away.”

The famous Ugandan Catholic priest, Fr John Mary Waliggo argues that: “It is the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time.”¹⁰⁷

This definition is relevant to our topic. In the first place, Waliggo’s idea of inculturation as reformulating the Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-patterns of each people is valid because Christ’s message must go right into the core of peoples’ life, into the fabrics of their whole being in order for them to understand and appreciate the message. When the Christian message is understood and lived by the people, it becomes part of them and completely inseparable.

This idea of inculturation has spawned into several concepts such as acculturation, enculturation, incarnation, adaptation, and indigenisation of Christianity into indigenous cultures. These concepts gear towards making the Christian faith culturally friendly and accessible.

Because a faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully received. The traditional religion is always more natural to man and occupies the whole of man’s life. Conversion to a new religion like Christianity must embrace language, thought patterns, social relationships, attitudes, and philosophical disposition for it to make an impact upon the individuals. Hence, since the inauguration of the second Vatican council, efforts have been made to open more doors and windows of the church towards a successful inculturation of Christianity which aims at making Christianity take root in the culture, because the church is not tied exclusively or indissolubly to any race or nation, to any one particular way of life, or to any customary practices, ancient or modern. But Western Christians were not

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ J. WALIGGO, *Making a Church that is Truly African*, Kampala, St Paul Publications 1986, p. 12.

aware of the cultural limitations of their theology. They believed their theology is above 'local' cultures and universally valid. They thought that theirs was a Christian culture and identified with their faith and consequently, was fully exportable along with Christian faith since the two for them were mistily one.

However, little by little they grasped the fact that to foster and favour conversions they would have to make certain adjustments. In the process of evangelization, it is necessary to accept certain elements that were not in contradiction with the gospel.

4.2 Explication of the meaning of inculturation

The word inculturation is used in different ways but especially in culture/faith relationship. Inculturation is originality of innovation which arises out of a situation of pure necessity.

Following the turbulent periods of the First World War, and the economic depression of the 1930s, mission suffered lack of zest in confronting the new realities. The stranglehold of Christian civilization by the West was neutralized as the focus of world Christianity began to move inevitably diffused into other cultures. This dares the missionaries to provide missionary fecundity on how Christianity will evangelize other cultures and faiths. The new innovations became successful on global context as virtually major world faiths were challenges and moulded by impact of their meeting with Christianity in the 19th and 20th centuries. This became the process of contextualization of adaptation or what has become popular as inculturation. For instance, Christians in southern India integrated ceremonies and architecture from Hinduism¹⁰⁸ as well as influences from Syrian liturgy and theology.¹⁰⁹ In Europe, Christianity integrated pagan concepts into its faith expression, for example, the fertility symbol of Easter egg. It also produced flexibility of approach, as people construe concepts from their own cultural context.

Mission is God's work in reconciling the world to himself in which men are called to participate for transformation which affects both the subjects and objects of mission. South African Johannes Nicolaas Kritzinger defines it

¹⁰⁸ R. WOODBERRY, *World Christianity, its history, spread and influence*, in C.E. Farhadian (ed.), *Introducing world Christianity*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell 2012, p. 259-271.

¹⁰⁹ A. JONES, *Christianity in South Asia: Negotiating religious pluralism*, in C.E. Farhadian (ed.), *Introducing world Christianity*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell 2012, p. 93-107

more succinctly as ‘transformative encounter.’¹¹⁰ This of course, presumes a centre from which mission is directed. He developed a praxis matrix for mission which has a number of dimensions –agency, contextual understanding, ecclesial scrutiny, interpreting the tradition, discernment for action, reflexivity and spirituality. This seems to be inclusive of an inculturative mission viewed in terms of adaptation, innovation, contextualization, flexibility and incarnation and as the church grew in the 20th century so did reflection on the faith in Africa and these were characterized as inculturation.

4.2.1 Adaptation

To get a good grasp of the new light shed on mission by the idea of inculturation, mission must be viewed from the strategy of adaption which inculturation was meant to replace, and with the concept of *Semina verbi* developed by the Fathers of the Church, especially Saint Justin the Martyr. The examination of the adaptation will undoubtedly facilitate the understanding of inculturation. Peter Schineller says that “to adapt is to make fit.”¹¹¹ To make fit implies “a selection of certain rites and customs, purifying them and inserting them in Christian rituals where apparently suitable.”¹¹²

The term adaptation was used as a missionary strategy to seek to extend to the incarnation of the word to humanity. Adaptation is the strategy of a missionary in identifying with culture’s positive aspects and situating it in his missionary tactics. The quandary is who is to adapt, the evangelizing culture or the evangelized culture, or is it a mutual process of adaptation? Each culture sees itself as a full participant in the evangelizing process.’¹¹³ This being the case, there is limited chance for both culture of maintaining their integrity and yet be able to influence another.

Therefore, the process of adaptation as a missionary strategy is taut to allow the evangelized culture a space for self improvement. Thence, adaptation as a working term has been displaced, largely because inculturation is far more than mere adaptation, though it remains a component of the larger process.

¹¹⁰ J. KRITZINGER, *Using archives missiologically: A perspective from South Africa*, in H. Lems (ed.), *Mission history and mission archives*, Nederland, Stichting de Zending der Protestantse Kerk, 2011, p. 21

¹¹¹ P. SCHINELLER, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, New York, Paulist Press 1990, p. 16.

¹¹² J. WALIGGO, *New Attitudes towards other Churches*, In *Towards African Christian Maturity*, Nairobi, Pauline Publications 1987, p. 11.

¹¹³ F. OBORJI, *Catholic Missiology 1910-2010: Origins and perspectives*, in S. BEVANS (ed.), *A century of Catholic Mission*, Oxford, Regnum, 2013, p. 149.

Adaptation is a form of coercion through rejection of local culture and imposition of new one all in an active process of symbiotic. Africa was Christianized as the result of adaptation and accommodation that can be described as onslaught of coerced conversions.

Africans resisted this coerced conversion imposed by the missionaries' Christianity, but interpreted their religious life from African religious roots while taking from Christianity the elements that satisfies their religious preferences. Some have judged this as syncretism. Osita Asogwa calls it "half Christian, half pagan"¹¹⁴, but it is the only legitimate way of deepening their relationship with God, understanding of their religion and of themselves.

The dissatisfaction with it was as it seemed not only inadequate but also a subtle form of imposition on them. In his words, Sithembele Sipuka asserts that "adaptation selects only those customs that can make sense to the Roman liturgical rite without changing its structure and content"¹¹⁵ and "expresses the external aspect of the encounter between Christian faith and the different cultures."¹¹⁶ Aylward Shorter gives a detailed explanation why adaptation is unacceptable. According to Shorter, "adaptation cannot help but convey an activity that is peripheral, non-essential -even superficial."¹¹⁷ Adaptation has no room for dialogue between the Christian faith and local culture. Chris Sugden says it is a missionary error to evangelize Africans with persuasion to reject their traditional religion and cultural heritage and adopt a new identity as converts. This means to say that before becoming a Christian, an African had to take up the Western cloak and forsake who they were.¹¹⁸ Crucible was the experience that forged their Christian faith which renders Christianity in Africa superficial.¹¹⁹ Adaptation is not a fruitful evangelization strategy. In 1974, African Bishops rejected it as being archaic. They rather pursued a strategy that would imply dialogue between their culture and the Christian faith.

¹¹⁴ O. ASOGWA, *Half Christian, Half Pagan: The Dilemma of the Nigerian Christian*, Nsukka, Shepherd Publications 2008, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ S. SIPUKA, *The sacrifice of the Mass and the concept of Sacrifice among the Xhosa: towards an inculturated understanding of the Eucharist*, Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of South Africa, 2000, p. 240.

¹¹⁶ J. PINTO, *Inculturation through Basic Communities: An Indian Perspective*, India, Asian Trading Corp 1985, p. 9.

¹¹⁷ A. SHORTER, *African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation?* New York, US, Orbis Books, 1975, p. 150.

¹¹⁸ C. SUGDEN, *The Natural Mystery of Folk Religion Hardcover*, Grove Books Ltd, 1992, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ T. GATWA, *The cross-cultural mission: An agenda for theological education in Africa*, in I. PHIRI & D. WERNER (eds.), *Handbook of theological education in Africa*, Oxford, Regnum, 2013, p. 90.

4.2.2 Contextualization

Contextualization is a term imported into theology to express a deeper concept than indigenization. Contextualization is a new term in theology to express concepts or ideals relevant in a given situation to communicate the never changing Word of God through ever changing modes of relevance.¹²⁰ It allows the gospel to take flesh from the situation and context in which the gospel roots itself without doing injustice to the gospel text.

Bruce J. Nicholls says that “contextualization is the explication of the immutable contents of the gospel to be meaningful to the people in their cultures and within their particular existential situations.”¹²¹ So, contextualization is making the Word of God relevant to cultural settings. In this process, the gospel is not altered or thwarted, but the forms and modes are changed for relevance.

Contextualization functions on the situation or context in which the gospel is to be proclaimed. In contextualization, the gospel encounters not the total circumstances of the people. The interest of contextualization is not to concretely deal with the total life circumstances in which the gospel is being implanted. It treats the peoples’ situation in parts and contexts. Since the emphasis of contextualization is on the immutability of the gospel in relation to the changing life styles or situations of the people. It overemphasizes the present context or situation to the detriment of the continuity with the past. Every theology must have adequate leaning with the past as its base. Thus, a good blending of the past, the present and the possible outcome of the future always yields better result. The different between context and culture is apparent. While culture refers to the total way of life of human being, context refers to a specific situation or environment.

Contextualization does not address culture directly, and consequently is not a synonymous to inculturation and therefore, inadequate for proper mission strategy. Though, important in proclamation of the gospel as it points to the fact that situations and contexts differ in terms of the preaching of the gospel. Thus, every particular context calls for creative theological strategy, reflection and application.

¹²⁰ B. KATO, *The Gospel, Cultural Contextualisation and Religious Syncretism*, Minneapolis USA, World Wide Publishers 1975, p. 23.

¹²¹ B. NICHOLLS, *Theological Education and Evangelization Report*, Mary Knoll USA, Orbis Book 1975, p. 647.

4.2.3 Indigenization

The word indigenization was coined from the word indigenous. The word indigenous is originally a biology term, referring to native plants or species. The word indigenization means produced, grown or living naturally in a country or climate, not exotic, hence figuratively, inherent. In a missionary context, the term indigenization means the planting of the churches, through evangelistic efforts which are native to the soil according to the local-economic and cultural context of the people.¹²²

Henry Venn, Roland Allen and Melvin Hodges popularized the goal of missionary movement as the indigenization of the church on the basis of three principles of self support, self propagation and self govern.¹²³ In a broader sense, indigenization is a term describing the translatability of the universal Christian faith into the forms and symbols of a particular culture. It tends to be used in the sense of responding to the gospel in terms of traditional culture of a local place. It relates to use of the local forms of communication, methods of transmission and local personnel.

The authenticity of the process of indigenization flows from the revelation of God Himself in Jesus Christ. The invisible nature of God was made visible in Jesus Christ. God indigenized Himself with human culture in Jesus. Revelation itself comes with a sensitivity of the time, space, culture and literary genres of its reporters. In the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit, He breaks through that Hebrew social-cultural world to proclaim Christ both within and across the global borders of cultural diversities and linguistic expression. The gospel therefore, affirms culture not in a unitary form confined to any one group of people or locality but as the totality of human social expression. So that God, who in his mystical nature, reveals himself in human corporeality through his self support, self propagation and self govern.

The indigenization missionary strategy means that the local community, with its own indigenous leadership, has the responsibility of self support, self propagation and self governance in developing the doctrines and the identity of that local Church.¹²⁴ This means that the bulk of the work is to be done by the indigenous people themselves. Therefore, the local Church should endeavor to identify herself with the people among whom it

¹²² S. PONRAJ, *Growth of Church Studies in Mission*, Indian Institute of Multi Cultural Studies, 1988, p. 38.

¹²³ K. GNANAKAN, *Biblical Theology in Asia*, Bangalore, TBT, 1995, p. 20.

¹²⁴ P. SCHINELLER, Op. Cit., p. 18.

dwells.”¹²⁵ One practical sign of the indigenization of the local Church is the presence of the local clergy.

The inherent danger of indigenization is that it might retard cultural interaction which enriches the flavor of gospel. That is to say that it little or no room for communication among cultures and by extension, no room for missionary.

Indigenization cannot be a proper way of inculturation because it betrays that universality of the Christian message while giving preference to indigenous indoctrinations. Theologians reject indigenization also because some languages, verbal and non verbal have restricted meaning. Though indigenization helps to promote local leadership, it can also result in a situation where it excludes other cultures and other missionary strategies that are necessary for universal church.

4.2.4 Enculturation

As we continue to inquire into the nature of what has been aptly conceptualized as the characteristic processes of cultural reality, one of the concepts under consideration is enculturation; a convenient, operational construct utilized as an analytical tool for the understanding of cultural process. Its genesis and application is anthropological. Enculturation is a bipolar process of cultural transmission and transmutation operating on the pre-adult and adult levels of human development.

Jerry Pinto refers to enculturation as an anthropological term, while Aylward Shorter says that it is a sociological concept. Pinto says that the learning experience which distinguishes human beings from other creatures and help them to achieve competence in their culture may be called enculturation.¹²⁶ This means that enculturation is a process through which a person is introduced to the culture of his society. The process of learning one's culture can be formal or informal. Shorter say that, “individual learns the culture through a process of self adaption; the rules of leaving are naturally given by the society.”¹²⁷

Sometimes, enculturation and inculturation are used interchangeably. But the two words are different. Making the distinction, Schineller observes that:

¹²⁵ A. CHUPUNGO, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis*, Pueblo Books, 1995, p. 17.

¹²⁶ J. PINTO, *Op. Cit.*, p. 11.

¹²⁷ A. SHORTER, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5.

“in the case of inculturation, the individual does not come empty-handed, but has a specific cultural element to bring to the new situation.” Enculturation instead, is the natural taking of a first culture; that is to say that the person has no prior knowledge of culture but takes in the culture naturally and spontaneously as he lives within the cultural zone.

Enculturation is paramount to our study of inculturation because it enables an individual to know his culture so as to dialogue with new culture.

4.2.5 Acculturation

Another term related to inculturation is acculturation. Acculturation is a process of cultural contact and exchange through which a person or group consciously adopt certain values and practices of a culture that is not originally their own. The result being that the original culture of group is not smothered, but modified as it comes in contact with new one. It becomes assimilation at its extreme process, resulting to throttling of the original culture and the new culture adopted in its place.

Acculturation is synonymous with culture-contact. Culture-contact is a British coinage with many prefer to the American acculturation. Some call it cultural flexibility. This is why sometimes, some prefer to describe both inculturation and acculturation to designate one thing. They are not exactly the same. Acculturation is the encounter between cultures. This encounter often brings about cultural change or adjustment.

Acculturation is necessary condition for inculturation because acculturation makes it possible for two cultures to come into contact. Acculturation facilitates the communication between cultures. Scineller points out one important difference between acculturation and inculturation saying, “the process of inculturation calls not only for contact but for insertion.”¹²⁸ This means that inculturation goes beyond culture contact to inserts new meaning into the culture in order to transform into new creation. Jerry Pinto observes that “acculturation implies an element of aggressiveness and does not convey the aspects of dialogue and mutual fusion.”¹²⁹ His observation is important because in these encounters between cultures, an effort must be made to see that no culture dominates another but be mutual. Acculturation is important to our understanding of inculturation, therefore, because when one culture encounters another culture in a mutual relationship and not on

¹²⁸ P. SCHINELLER, *Op. Cit.*, p. 20.

¹²⁹ J. PINTO, *Op. Cit.*, p. 10.

the basis of domination both culture are enriched.

The cultural contact enriches the dynamism of culture. Acculturation promotes communication between cultures for mutual respect and tolerance. This communication is a necessary condition of Christianity.

4.2.6 Incarnation

Incarnation is central Christian doctrine that God became flesh, that God assumed a human nature and became a man in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second person of the Trinity. He was truly God and truly man. The doctrine maintains that the divine and human natures of Jesus do not exist beside one another in an unconnected way but are joined in a personal unity, which fifth ecumenical council at Constantinople in AD553 traditionally referred to as the hypostatic union.¹³⁰ The union is not diminution or mixture of the two natures rather; the identity of each is preserved.

Incarnation is a story about what God has done to offer us salvation and a story about being called by God to participate in his mission to make him known among the nations. Therefore, incarnation is “the most directly theological word to express the meaning of inculturation.”¹³¹ It is “the archetype of inculturation of the Gospel.”¹³² The incarnation has its founding reference in John 1:14. Jesus Christ existed, acted and spoke in human form. The event took place in history. Jesus weaved himself into the culture of the Jews and through it communicated, ritualized and effected salvation of man.

Incarnation refers to the entire Christ’s events: his birth, daily life, teaching, suffering, dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Jesus incarnated into human culture and used the cultural elements like language and customs to express the truth and love of God. He expressed himself through human culture. There could have been no earthly ministry of Jesus if he had not adopted the earthly cultural concepts, symbols and behaviour of his hearers.

Jesus was not just a passive recipient of the culture. He is a culture himself. In his incarnation, he came with a culture for a cultural contact that challenged the human culture in order to give a new identity. His culture brought him into conflict with human culture. The church as the body of

¹³⁰ CCC, no. 468.

¹³¹ P. SCHINELLER, *ibidem*, p. 20.

¹³² M. DHAVAMONY, *Christian theology of inculturation*, Rome, Pontificia University Gregoriana, 1997, p. 95.

Christ learns from Christ to incarnate the gospel of Christ in the cultures of the people to whom she preaches. She must know that she is a culture herself as she interacts with other cultures to bring them into the brighter light. This principle of incarnating the gospel into the culture of the people is important to the universal church, especially in Africa and Igboland in particular, because it is through this process that the gospel will be rooted in the life of the people.

Inculturation is a possible way to represent and re-live Jesus' incarnation, which belong exclusively to him. Incarnation is that of Jesus Christ, but we could speak of incarnation to signify inculturation by way of an intrinsic analogy. Incarnation is not only important because it is linked to inculturation, but it is most important because by reason of incarnation the whole human activity and culture are elevated to a dignity beyond compare and into the awareness that that God has assumed mystically all the cultures of humanity.

4.2.7 Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is another effort to inculturate the Christian faith in a more personal, expressive and vibrant way, which has not been discussed in an elaborate way by scholars. The modern day Pentecostal movement has its history since the late 19th century, a time of escalating apathy against orthodox Christianity. In these 100 years, it has spread from a few of people in Topeka, Kansas and in Los Angeles to hundreds of millions throughout the world. Pentecostalism is energetic and dynamic, but also an emotional style of religious expression of enthusiastic singing and spontaneous testimonies. Pentecostalism is a rapturous form of faith expression, a trans-cultural form of Christianity. It offers rich textured example of innovation distinguished by spontaneous prayer, prophecy and healing. It is a recent type of Christianity in which there is a marked engagement between the natural and supernatural worlds marked by personal conversion to God through the spirit, empowering people to be assertive of the religious conviction.

Pentecostalism is an effort to return Christianity to a pure and simple form of Christianity that respond to people's emotion and immediate needs as it was with the early Christian church. The multiplicity and progressive rise of Pentecostalism in Africa and in Igboland in particular is both a manifestation of vibrancy of faith wanting expression and the recognition of the existence of a spiritual realms and supernatural events seeking clarifications, answers and solutions. Pentecostalism is also a protestant movement against rigidity

of orthodox worship that gives no room for self expression. This is often based on assumptions that western faith comes as a strictly defined, theologically gripped religion devoid of spirituality but operates on intellectuality which reaches far back into ancient times.

Pentecostalism offers a radical new life –a place to be at home in the expressive self. Central to its innovative style is its ability to stand both inside and beyond traditional culture. It is also innovative in the manner in which it allows unrestricted religious expression. Pentecostalism has drastically pursued to recast and revised the public worship, shifting emphasis from the pure preaching of the sound doctrine of scripture and proper administration of the sacraments as the core of Christianity to the exuberant prayer and lax exercise of various charisma under the influence of the Spirit.

In a sense, Pentecostalism is an African brand of Christian religious expression of faith that offers an approach to religion that is not far removed from traditional religion where God is creative, faithful, power, reliable, unrestricted and most especially manipulative.

Pentecostalism is the most versatile and flexible form of Christian expression with regards to integrating itself into African forms and expressions due to its predominant dependence on the activity of the Holy Spirit which allows one to pontificate freely into wide range of religiosity. Put simply, it meets people's hopes through the eruption of the sacred into the secular under the influence of the Holy Spirit that operates without bounds into where spirituality is marked by the harmony of the material and spiritual spheres. It links ancient African traditions with the modern world by means of unmediated accessibility.

4.3 Scope of Inculturation

The Catholic Church is an agent that most talk about inculturation yet at the same time has rigid stronghold of tradition which she has never let go. The Catholic Church is structured to favour Western culture, climate and season because it is a church that developed over a time taking in western culture, vestments, arts, calendar, bread, wine and many of them. This ultimately makes it impossible for an African to become a catholic without first of all 'becoming a westerner' and respecting those traditions.

So talking about the scope of inculturation for example in the Catholic Church is really a herculean task. A true inculturation in Catholic Church

will end up stripping her of her glamour. This doesn't mean that there are not few areas like in art, architecture, drama, language etc that cannot be inculturated into the local cultures.

It is because of this obvious fact that most authors argue that inculturation has a very wide scope. As early as 16th century, Luther called for what we refer to as reformation. He argued that the church was too far from her members in doctrinal and sacramental teachings.¹³³ Roberto Tagliaferri argues that the church was born and developed in Europe, taking on a European cloak and culture without considering other cultures where the church has been implanted for a long time. The time is now when the church must consider rebirth of her life and her whole process of evangelization to include culture.¹³⁴ Therefore, the scope of inculturation extends to the totality of Christian life and doctrine; the central ministry of Christ from which all other ministries take root; the witnessing to Christ; our worship of him and the proclamation of his message.

The scope of inculturation is so immense that it cannot be easily exhausted. It is not just in: art, architecture, sculpture, music, dance, drama, formation of the local Christian community, theology, spirituality, preaching, catechism and worship, liturgical calendar, vestments because inculturation scope is all embracing and must touch every aspect of Christian life. But then we must be careful not to destroy the foundation of the house as we try to beautify it. Everything must be done without jeopardizing the central message of Christian life but helps to build towards an integration of mind and heart which assists Christians to grow towards Christian maturity. Therefore, the scope of inculturation could be in the areas of bible translation into local dialects, simplification of the liturgy to include more of local arts and cultures; pastoral work, more research on African values and culture.

4.4 The Importance of Inculturation

At this point of high religious/cultural crises in Nigeria and Igboland in particular, where religion stands out even more conspicuously than politics and economics in the life of the people, inculturation is not only necessity but also a priority in calming the nerves of cultural and religious ignorance that spurs these crises. This urgency throws some light on its importance, especially as it relates to people in Igboland and their Christian and cultural

¹³³ P. ALTHAUS, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1952, p. 263.

¹³⁴ R. TAGLIAFERRI, *Il Travaglio del Cristianesimo*, Assisi, Cittadella Editrice, 2012, p. 202.

way of life.

Inculturation is looked upon by the great majority of the particular churches in Africa as a task that is urgent, necessary and even a priority. Inculturation consists of process of a systematic way of announcing the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that derives its nuances and tinges from cultural rooting. It allows the Christian faith takes flesh in the cultures.

On the importance of inculturation, the African Bishops argue that inculturation not only consist in transforming the mentality of human beings or groups of people but also approaches cultures so as that they are invigorate from within themselves, to be fertile. Christian faith enriches itself when it enters into dialogue with peoples and with their cultures.¹³⁵

As the importance for the inculturation of the evangelical message is drawn from the mystery of incarnation, the church must follow the path of her master, who came not to abolish but to prune and complete. The Word being God himself, at the fullness of time, revealed his invisibility in a human nature and lived in human space and time. So, through the ministry of the church, the culture of the people is not only saved from destruction but is also healed, ennobled, and perfected unto the glory of God. The Gospel should reach into the heart of human beings because the Kingdom which the gospel proclaims is pursued by men who are profoundly linked to a culture and cannot evade appropriating the elements of human culture.¹³⁶

Inculturation makes evangelization begin at the heart of customs. Christianity remains for many Africans stranger. This is the sources of a certain double quality in living their beliefs, holding them divided between their faith in Jesus Christ and alliance to their traditional practices. One major problem facing Igbo Christians is the conflict of two worlds: the world of Western Christian beliefs and values, and the world of African traditions. Inculturation of the gospel will definitely help the Igbo Christians to resolve the tensions between being a Christian and remaining African. It will help them to appreciate and value their culture which was in the past alienated and despised by Western colonizers and strengthen their resolve to leave those aspects of culture that go against the faith. If not, their faith will remain fragile and superficial, lacking depth and person commitment. Inculturation will also enable the African Christian to express his faith in his

¹³⁵ AFRICAN BISHOPS, *Instrumentum Laboris: for Inculturation* 1993, no. 43.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 52.

own personal expression and in attitudes and gestures natural to him.

This chapter investigates the meaning and theology of inculturation. Specifically, the study examines the demand and relevance of inculturation for cultural and evangelical enrichments. In the course of this discussion certain terms related to the term 'inculturation' were examined so as to see how they help us in understanding it better. However, they all had some form of relationship to it and thus played important roles in facilitating the search for an appropriate word. I also tried to look at the scope of inculturation, which refers us to the extent of work that has to be done to achieve inculturation. Then we affirmed the importance of inculturation as a strategy of evangelization.

CHAPTER FIVE

Inculturation of the Eucharist

The relationship between the ancestors and the Christian faith is meaningless for a form of Christianity that merely transfers dogmas, rites and customs formulated overseas for African consumption. The discussion on this relationship becomes a very important one for a faith that can accept with perspicacity, all the signs of an existing culture. Such openness requires an effort to purify and to liberate the contacting cultures. If the past does indeed shed light on the present, we need to rethink the Christian message otherwise it will become a disturbing influence in Africa, at a time when Africans who refuse to part with their cultural identity tackle a tsunami of foreign civilization bent on conquest of African identity.

5.1 Inculturation Movement

The question about Inculturation movement in the church today revolves around the person of Jesus Christ and his gospel message. The importance and relevance of this is explained by Rosino Gibellini that “all Church reform remains theologically shallow and pastorally ineffective unless it clearly bases itself on the founder of Christianity himself and our faith in him as Son of God and Saviour”¹³⁷ because the mystery which the Church celebrates is only an extension of the mystery of Christ. The church through her ministry tries to reveal and communicate Christ to every language and nation so that the faith of people may be well expressed in the culture and language. So, it might be said, “If you preach the Gospel to Indians, to Africans, to South Americans, to Europeans, each receives it in his own way.”¹³⁸ The coinage of the word ‘inculturation’, illustrates that “each receives it according to his or her own culture.”¹³⁹ Thus, the reality of diverse culture makes inculturation urgent and necessary.

We are, therefore, led to ask in what way inculturation may be said to be founded on Christ or to be an extension of the mystery of Christ. The fact is that in his ministry, Jesus used what we have come to designate today as the inculturation approach to evangelize. He preached the Good News using cultural perspective of Jewish people. So inculturation has always been there. Even the whole effort of second Vatican council was to free the

¹³⁷ R. GIBELLINI, *Paths of African theology*, London, Orbis Books 1994, p. 40.

¹³⁸ G. VAN DER PEET, *20 Essays on Inculturation*, Ambassador Publications, Ogun State Nigeria 1992, p. 1.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

church from a stranglehold of dogmatism of a single story of exclusivist and pyramidal attitude to salvation –outside the church there is no salvation that was suffocating the church, and precisely, the Christian faith; thereby accepting the fact that other cultures or belief systems can offer salvation.

Since the radical reformation blows from Luther, Christianity has been in a rebuttal confrontation of her own weird assumptions. From council of Trent to many synods; from ecumenical council to liturgical movement and other forms of reforms going on in the church. These have not stopped the church from taking a chameleon movement towards cultural blending with the gospel especially in Africa. Throughout the history of mission, the church has been cold-footed in its cultural dealings with Africa. She has applied cauterizing control over African culture, causing them to sever their cultural identity. This makes it impossible to be a Christian and still remain African. Even after hundred years of evangelization, African Christians still remain subjected to cultural tutelage of the mother church. This tutelage of African Christianity by the mother church should take a loosen approach, so that the church in Africa can confidently propose her own approach on cultural views that were bastardized and considered unfit in Christianity by a church that is far from those values. The church must be clear therefore, that:

There is a link between the gospel of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnation Son, he spoke according to the church proper to each epoch. . . . The gospel of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of people; it battles and removes the errors and evils resulting from the permanent allurements of sin. It never ceases to sanitize and elevate the morality of peoples. By riches coming from above, it makes fruits, as it were from within, the spiritual qualities and traditions of every age. It strengthens, perfects and restores them in Christ. Therefore, the church in the fulfillment of her own mission kindles and propagates human and civic culture by her action, also by her liturgy, she leads them interior liberty.¹⁴⁰

The church everywhere and at all times must of necessity constantly seek to find ways and means of making the Gospel message relevant and credible to all people.¹⁴¹ There was a time when people thought of the eternal Gospel as something that could not change. The one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic

¹⁴⁰ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World*, 7-2-1965 in AAS 58, 1996, p. 876.

¹⁴¹ C. HAMMAWA, *Pentecostalism: Proceedings of the National Seminaries Committee Workshop*, Jos Nigeria, Fab Anieh (Nig.) Ltd. 2005, p. 5.

Church possessed an eternal truth. The second Vatican Council thought otherwise. The fathers of the Council agreed to the opening address to the council that: the *depositum fidei* is one thing, the way in which it is expressed is another.¹⁴² This implies the possibility of an obsolete expression of the eternal truth.

Inculturation is about culture that exists side by side with time. But it is also about cultures which exists one after the other. The history of dogma is not only a legitimate study, it is revealing. And if anything at all it reveals that the expression the *depositum fidei* finds at one time, may at another time be obsolete. Another expression being found is that the whole process of inculturation has to take place spontaneously mostly, with the catechists and their documents reflecting the new times. It will take place with great pain, and always slowly over a long period of time. The old expression in its agony will struggle to survive. It will take a last stand against change, but it is fighting a lost battle.¹⁴³

Up till the Second Vatican Council the gospel was to be necessarily dressed in the European garb. The word of God may dress in a garb of a particular culture but is not a culture where it was considered more suited and rooted and from where it was believed to diffuse to all other parts of the world.

Inculturation is a new coined term in Christian theology, and its perspective and meaning is still developing, gaining popularity especially among African theologians. As used in this work, it is understood as an approach in mission/evangelization, and involves evangelizing a culture from within, that is, proclaiming the Good News to people from within the perspective of their cultures.

Inculturation has been studied from different Christological approaches. We have talked about this in the preceding chapter, but would like to refer to it again as emphasis. The incarnation approach is based on the doctrine of Christ, the eternal Word of God, taking human nature in Jesus. And the Word became flesh and lived among men. St. Paul puts it clearly: “His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God ... and became as men are” (Phil. 2:6-7). Incarnation in which God the Son took flesh and lived in human culture, space and time, is a profound instance of God’s initiative for human redemption by inculturating human language and

¹⁴² G. VAN DER PEET, *20 Essays on Inculturation*, Ogun Nigeria, Ambassador Publications 1992, p. 47.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*,

culture. The church exists for evangelization and thus whatever she does is linked to this fundamental mandate for the salvation of humankind. The incarnation of Christ is God's pattern of encounter between Christ and human culture.¹⁴⁴ Jesus as Jewish was immersed in and lived his earthly life in accordance with the mores and prescriptions of Jewish culture. His doing so is not incidental but central to his identity and mission. This is because just as the Word of God became incarnate in a human culture to bring redemption to humanity and creation, the gospel and the Christian faith must become incarnate in human cultures and assume expression through the culture so that the redemption brought by Christ may be actualized in the culture. The mystery of the incarnation, therefore, offers Christological model for inculturation.

Another approach to inculturation is the Logos –the Word of God. Julien Pénoukou uses the idea of the eternal Word, in whom all things were created, to show that Christ pervades all human cultures, even if he is not known or identified as such. He is, therefore, right from the beginning of creation, in solidarity with all creation. This was further expressed by the incarnation. Cultures need to be opened to the gospel and vice versa especially in Igbo culture so that the gospel may take flesh.¹⁴⁵

Another approach is expounded by Aylward Shorter. Shorter demonstrates the possibility of inculturation of the gospel using the paschal mystery: the death and resurrection of Jesus. This approach takes the resurrection as the starting point for understanding the Christological basis of inculturation. According to Shorter, Jesus in his earthly existence was limited in his contact with other cultures. But after the resurrection, he belongs to all cultures and can identify with them through the proclamation of the Good news. There is, therefore, a causal link between the resurrection and inculturation. Besides, the fact that Jesus died and rose points to the fact that inculturation involves challenging cultures to a new life. This approach, according to Shorter, does not deny continuity of Christianity with pre-Christian cultures. The approach has a parallel in the biblical image of the church as the mystical body of Christ. "Thus, Christianity is not only relevant to Africa, but Christ as a member of his Body, is himself African."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴VATICAN COUNCILII, "Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church", 7-12-1965, in AAS 58, 1966, p. 10.

¹⁴⁵J. PÉNOUKOU, *Desclée* in R. GIBELLINI, *Paths of African theology*, London, Orbis Books 1994, p. 45.

¹⁴⁶A. SHORTER, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, Ontario, Wisdom Press 1988, p. 84 - 87.

The fact of the four gospels and other New Testament books recounting a story of Jesus using different cultural backgrounds and jargons is another proof of urgency and necessity of inculturation. The gospels are a document of the faith proclamation of the early Christians a faith understanding of the earthly Jesus, with whom some of them had come in contact. They are a living testimony to the life of Jesus, a record of the way the earthly Jesus impressed himself upon the early Christians. What the gospels reveal is a life of Jesus presented in transcendental terms with eschatological as well as historical dimensions. It is very clear from the commitment expressed in the gospels that the evangelists saw the gospel stories as part and parcel of their faith and that of the early Christian communities. The stories grew out of the people's faith experience of Jesus as the living Lord, and it is this faith that gave them the impetus for their mission to preach Christ to others. This demands that for an appropriate interpretation of the gospels, it is necessary to enter into and share the faith of the Christians in their cultural ambience.

But behind this message stand Judaism and a historical Jesus who was a Jew and preached the gospel message from within the Jewish context and in Jewish Temples and Synagogues. The Jews maintained no separation between secular culture and religious culture. For them, the religion was cultural and the culture was religious. Besides, all facets of life were viewed as much from a religious perspective. Thus, the Torah, the Temple, and so forth were as much cultural as religious symbols. It is from this cultural/religious bond that Jesus was able to start his mission from this cultural background and gave the message a new universal tone that challenged the Jewish culture by using its resources to express the message of salvation.

Cultural questions raised by the church have become part of the larger historical movement seeking to perceive or revive indigenous creativity and curiosity such that "Christianity has to take the people's garb if it must not be seen as a new form of colonialism. If the church is to rediscover the true originality of Christian universalism, she must take on the historical particularity of each people."¹⁴⁷

5.2 Meaning and relevance of Oriko meal in Igboland

The word Oriko is made up of two words: Oriri (to eat) and Mmeko (to act together or to share with one another). The word Oriko literarily means

¹⁴⁷ E. JEAN-MARC, *My faith as an African*, New York, Orbis books 1988, p. 1.

communion or shared meal. It is also called Orikoro, Nrigba or Nriko¹⁴⁸ but they mean the same thing. According to Michael Echeruo, Oriko (Orikoro), which is a grand religious family¹⁴⁹ meal, is a peace feast; a kind of meal from assorted condiments of different foods and kola nuts, eaten together in reconciliation and bond building (alliance) rituals.¹⁵⁰ Oriko is both sacrifice and meal. The sacrifice is that of atonement and the meal signifies reconciliation, trust and renewal. Its scope extends beyond the living members of the umunna. It extends to and includes the ancestors, the unborn, the gods and the deity.¹⁵¹

Oriko has the potentials of making the participant community (umunna) a faith community or rather covenants community. Therefore, the meal is understood as a communion. The oriko sacrifice is a necessary one because it brings about the restoration of the community that has been torn apart by sins and squabbles and restores bond and harmony, exemplified by a kola nut. Deeper than the significance of the kola nut is the oriko meal itself; kola nut is a very important symbol in the oriko meal. It is so important that the change that takes place after the prayer has been said over the kola nut is comparable to what may be called *trans-signification*.¹⁵² In the event of oriko feast the change that takes place deals with the very foundation of umunna and the web of the relationships that exist in the universe, bringing into one perfect union the spiritual and physical realms.¹⁵³ It becomes a sacramental sign wherein the bond that holds the umunna is re-ratified.

What happens with this transformation cannot be described with the same term as transubstantiation which explains the transformation that takes place in the bread and wine by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit when a priest, acting in *persona Christi* has said the prayer of consecration on them during Mass. But we can understand the

¹⁴⁸ These variations are found in the various subcultures and dialect groups in Igboland. In parts of Abia State (Isuikwuato, Arochukwu/Abam, Ngwa), Imo State: Mbanjo, Mbaise, Owerri, Arondizuogu, Rivers: Ihuoroha, Oriko is the common variant. In Enugu State: Nsukka and Anambra State: Nri and Delta State: Nrigba or Oriko

¹⁴⁹ Family in the Igbo-land context is constituted by three levels of relationships: blood relations, sexual unions and adoption. Igbo families are typically extended to aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and other relatives that form a family that functions in unison. In Igbo culture, the sons and daughters of one's aunts and uncles are considered brothers and sisters, not cousins. In Igbo-land, family is not limited to space and time; thus, it cuts across generations, relatives living far and near, the living and those who have joined the ancestors, as well as the ancestors themselves who continue to play a role in the lives of the living.

¹⁵⁰ M. ECHERUO, *Igbo-English Dictionary*, Yale University Press, London 1998, p. 129.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² D. EZE, *Eucharist as Orikonso: A Study in Eucharistic Ecclesiology from an Igbo Perspective*, Frankfurt Germany, Peter Lang 2008, p. 144.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

transformation that takes place after the prayer by placing it side by side with that of the Eucharist. It is not to mean that they are the same but can be said to be parallel. Therefore, there are obvious and significant differences between the oriko and the Eucharist. The two are not of equal valuation.¹⁵⁴

While the Eucharistic species are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the transformation of the materials for the Oriko sacrifice does not change them into the body and blood of the ancestors or of anyone else, but the new reality makes the whole umunna symbolically re-awaken, re-vivified and reaffirmed by the sacredness of the oriko covenant.

Oriko in Igbo culture is considered of great spiritual significance to the participants as it is not just a uniting force among the living but also between the living and the ancestors.¹⁵⁵ The elder who presides over the celebration has to announce in advance that, those who are conscious of their sins or who have quarreled with their neighbours should resolve their differences and make reparation for their sins before coming to the banquet meal. This is because the banquet (oriko) is a sacred meal of umunna.¹⁵⁶ Oriko makes umunna. Therefore, it follows that no one can be part of oriko while he/she is morally in contrast to the love, peace and unity of the umunna.

The concept 'umunna' in the strict sense is the living members of the community, without, however, excluding the 'living dead' (the ancestors) and the unborn. At the oriko celebration all are present, including the unborn, who participate by representation, thus creating a kind of spiritual union. This spiritual union is a symbolic representation of the umunna. All are present because oriko preserves community life. Thus, oriko has the power to renew the foundation of the umunna. Oriko ensures that individual's craving or personal interest does not displace the community's interest. By taking part in the communion, therefore, the people become what they eat: one sacred people bound together in a renewed covenant.

For Ndigbo all reality is understood as a unified whole. Therefore any grave act of wrongdoing is seen as a break in the unity that characterizes the web of harmonious relationships in the universe, which must be resolved with certain sacrifice that restores the harmony between the living, the ancestors

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ M. EGBUOGU, *Eschatological Hope as Christian Theodicy*, Snaap Press, Enugu, 2006, p. 132.

¹⁵⁶ Umunna can be loosely and literally described as an extended family. In Igbo culture, family system is not normally referred to the nuclear family. It is referred to umunna, that is, many nuclear families bound together by consanguinity.

and gods, this oriko does better. Every Oriko presupposes a renewal of this togetherness. Without the sacrifice of renewal and restoration, distrust, fear and anarchy rule the minds of the individual members of the family and the entire umunna.

5.2.1 Oriko constitutes Umunna

Hermeneutical understanding of family in Igbo language is expressed with the concept 'ezi-na-ulo'. Structurally, ezi-na-ulo is a single word but composed of nouns interjected by a conjunction 'na -and'. Ezi connotes outside, external, while ulo connotes inside, internal. They are opposites but combined to complement each other in a unitary complex imagery. They are combined to demonstrate that an Igbo family is not nuclear, composed of father, mother and children, but stretches to include extended and neighbour family in harmonium. Ezi-na-ulo expresses a sociological understanding of life among the Igbo people.

Family is both natural when it concerns consanguinity but sociological institution when it is a close warm of group of people which creates a large environment of equal and loved ones. Ezi-na-ulo is the primary strata of society conglomeration which forms umunna –an extended family.

Structurally, umunna may or may not be a people bounded by lineage. It is made up of so many extended families joined together mostly by history. Because of its extended nature, it is not necessarily a people united by consanguinity, but by a common sacrifice of oriko. Igbo people have a saying that '*izu ka mma na nne ji*'. It is an expression of fraternal trust that exists among a family peopled by blood. The other saying that '*obara anaghi asi asi*' indicates that no one betrays a brother. So there is always intimacy of secrecy and trust among brothers. But since an umunna is most times not peopled by consanguinity, there is the need to introduce a symbolic 'consanguinity' which will create a fraternity, a trust that resembles that which exists between brothers. This is where oriko comes in. Oriko creates bond among the participants that a person who shares in the meal, even though he is not bounded in blood with another, shares a new form of trust exemplified in oriko.

Therefore, in the real sense of it, it is not blood that makes umunna but oriko. It is in the same light that we say that the Eucharist makes the church. It is a paschal meal that unites people of different eras and nations into a brotherhood strengthened only by the logic of mystical body of Jesus.

Just like oriko, every act of public worship and celebration brings the

Umunna together. When people share the kola nut, they express oneness as a covenant community. By participating in the Oriko meal, an individual's membership of the Umunna is also renewed. Sinners who are contrite are reunited into the fold. All the members who are in a sinless state are fortified and encouraged.

The umunna is most constituted in the fullest sense when it celebrates the oriko. By virtue of this celebration, umunna re-enacts itself and re-makes itself. Each time the oriko is celebrated; all the mystical webs of relationships are renewed and strengthened.¹⁵⁷

This meal is a symbolic representation of the Umunna. By taking part in the meal, therefore, the people become what they eat: one sacred people bound together in a renewed covenant. Those members of the community who are in a state of sin, that is those who refused to make peace with one another and thereby cannot take part in the meal are considered excommunicated or rather self-ostracism. This is why much care is taken to ensure that every member of the community partakes in the meal.

5.2.2 Oriko as a meal of re-initiation into the Umunna

The spiritual union to which every person is initiated at birth can be ruptured by an act of sin. Sin, whether it is an offense against God, deities, or against fellow members truncates the wellbeing and communion of the community. As soon as sin is committed, the land is desecrated and the umunna in total chaos. Because the human community is in constant contact with the living-dead, the ancestors, this sin severs this relationship and calls for the visitation of their wrath on the living.

By being responsible for certain atrocities like murder, incest, bestiality, etc, the individual is considered ipso facto excommunicated from his or her community and ought neither to participate in community's gatherings nor to consult the ancestors because "the relationship between him and the living and the dead members of the village had become strained."¹⁵⁸ He is, so to say, no longer a member of the community.

A culprit of adultery for instance ruptures this bond. He/she by this act has separated himself/herself spiritually and physically from the rest of the

¹⁵⁷ D. EZE, *Eucharist as Oriko*, Nsukka, University Press 1985, p. 145.

¹⁵⁸ F. EKEJIUBA, *Igba Ndu: An Igbo mechanism of Social Control and Adjustment*, Bulletin Studies, Ibadan, 1997, p. 16.

umunna. He is so to say, a wanderer, a drifter and needs to be reintegrated into the bond of umunna. In a case of adultery, it is not an individual partner that is offended. The entire community is offended because one of its foundational norms and values has been violated. The entire community needs expiation for this rupture of values, if not, the entire community as well as the offender suffers the retributions from the gods and ancestors. If the woman is the culprit, the husband must stop every association with her including sharing bed and eating her food until expiation through oriko is performed. He abstains from the offender –the source of pollution on behalf of the community to preserve the community from the calamities associated with sins. Abstaining from the wife becomes a representative way of depicting that the wife has been excommunicated from the community.

After all, marriage, according to Igbo tradition, is never a private matter, *ofu onye anaghi anu nwayi*. It is rather a convention, a relationship between two communities. Hence, when the marriage bond is defied through adultery, the woman or man needs to be restored to the entire community of umunna through ritual, which involves the relatives of both the man and the woman, who represents their different umunna. As a ritual of re-admission into the community, the ritual encompasses a public admission of sin, communal atonement sacrifice, and a ritual meal of oriko. The sharing of meal together seals the new covenant between the two umunna communities as well as to restore the woman or the man to her/his community. Thus, the reconciliation and restoration of the wife to her husband or vice versa is done by their different umunna and communities.

This is also the case with murder, which is considered as a disruption of the ecological unit. As such the sin of murder of a kinsman brings chaos into the natural order. The sanctity of the umunna and the cord of concord and trust is symbolically desecrated and broken by the sin of murder. There is a total breakdown of filial trust and as a result no one can share kola nut or eat with another. All ties with the offender and his umunna are broken until reparations are made.

5.2.3 Oriko as an ancestral memorial meal

In many traditional societies, the ancestral cult is perhaps that aspect of culture to which the African is most attached.¹⁵⁹ In most communities this cult of ancestors is so formal that they have fixed calendars. Worship of ancestors takes many forms according to each different society. But the

¹⁵⁹ ÉLA J., *My faith as an African*, New York, Orbis books 1988, p. 16.

fundamental structure of cult of ancestors is its underlying intensions which are the signs which influence and envelop the lives of Africans, constantly recalling the presence of the ancestors in the bends and barks of their existence. One of such gestures is ancestral meal. The ceremony of ancestral meal is more than a language or a symbol; it is decisive experience of participation granting them a mode of covenant in the larger world of the ancestors.

The high point of experiencing and expressing life as a communion with others is captured by the idea of a covenant. Covenant makes a socially or temporally diverse people to lay claim to a common brotherhood. Covenant is also understood as a special act of commitment in a relationship of mutual enhancement. Covenant is usually binding by oath. In Igbo cultural context every oath is accompanied with kola nuts and food. Every covenant assures peace and cohabitation amongst the individual who are involved. In a desire to constantly have peace and harmony with nature, Igbo people keep healthy relationship with their ancestors. This makes them to constantly crave for reunion with the ancestors through oblations they offer. Oblations not only offers an opportunity to commune with the living dead, but a mean one's life takes its meaning and finds fulfilment. The ancestors are offered what human beings also partake.

Food is an indispensable component of all the major cultural Igbo festivities. In Igbo culture, food does not only serve to satiate one's hunger; it is also characteristic for social exuberance and enhancement of community feelings among the people. Food highlights the social and cultural symbolism of vivacity, nutriment, health and especially communality. Meal is perhaps the most basic and most ancient symbol of friendship, love, solidarity and unity in Igbo culture. In our Igbo context, it is unusual for people to eat alone. The meal is always a communal affair where everyone eats from a single plate. Food and drink taken in common are obvious signs that life is shared and that life doesn't belong to an individual; and that life doesn't belong to the present but goes back to the past and extends to the future. Prayers before eating include the invocation of the ancestors to participate in the meal. Food, in Igbo culture, is linked to the past, present and future because it is a product of labour done (in past), eaten in the present but sustains life for the future. This linkage is connected to the eschatological.

Oriko meal takes the central place as the highest form of community meal and to extension, an oblation offered to the ancestors. It is not just a meal on its own but a participation in the umunna reunion. Meal is a communication

between the living and the dead. The oriko meal conjures the past, the present and the future in a more significant way, bringing a total unity and alliance among the living and bestows the patronage of the ancestors. This bringing together of past, present and future mirror that which is expressed in the anamnesis of Christ's saving action.

The ancestors who now are immanently active as the living-dead are primarily considered to be the chief host of Oriko. This is so, because in Igboland, the fertility of the land and the production of the food are considered the benevolence of the ancestors. Food and farming are interconnected. One sustains the other and vice versa. Farming demands energy, dexterity and stamina to produce food. On the other hand, food generates the necessary nutrition and strength for farming. In this whole process of farming to production of food, the ancestors are involved. That is why as we saw in the previous chapter that sacrifices is done to appease the ancestors when there is a poor harvest.

In this light, the place of the ancestors is never displaced in the meal who is frequently invited to participate in the meal as the chief host. Oriko meal is symbolic; it is both a meal and the ancestors themselves. In this way, the ancestors enviously protect and perpetuate the tradition of family and safeguard the purity of the family lineage. It is in this that the bond between the living and the dead is renewed for the special reason of life after death. "It is necessary to transmit life from oneself to another human being, not just biologically but especially spiritually and this means an essential aspect of being alive. It was a share in the divine prerogative of giving life, and this is insurance that one's memory would be cherished after death."¹⁶⁰

Oriko is an ancestral memorial meal in the sense that it invokes into the present not just the living memory but the ancestors into a participation of a meal where the ancestors themselves are the chief hosts and the meal itself. To eat oriko meal is to participate in the lives of the ancestors.

5.3 Oriko in the light of the Eucharist

Faith touches on the totality of existence and all of its enterprise. When faith seeks to understand itself, to verify itself and to account for itself, it begins with the people's struggle to escape from the ideological confinement which they risk being imprisoned. Faith, then, moves from the ground level, from

¹⁶⁰ K. BENEZERI, M. LAURENTI & S. AYLWARD, *African Christian Marriage*, New York, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. 1977, p. 73.

the fundamentals, the palpable realities to clarify the paths that can expand into a larger structure of life.

In the Eucharist, we are presented with the new essential paths of faith, but it has not yet found a new Christian form until the moment when, through the cross and the resurrection and the story that followed are able to be converted to incarnate in our story –in our culture. “The church emerged from within Israel as an independent community”¹⁶¹ purging itself of the grab of Jewish culture and taking on a new identity until this new identity find its own new form. It did not entirely disclaim its Jewish cultural heritage. It was a gradual progression of self-study; even up till today the church has continued to be in dialogue with herself, seeking to understand herself in relation to the faithful which leads up to the understanding that “the lord’s opened side is the source from which spring forth both the church and the sacraments that build up the church.”¹⁶²

The Eucharist is the sacrament that establishes unity between Christ and the faithful; it is the fundamental norm of our Christian action. If Christ comes to us as offered, if he unites himself with us under the form of broken bread, it is an invitation for us to become like him, breaking, serving and sacrificing ourselves for others.¹⁶³

The Igbo people moved from a crude culture into a communality of oriko as its basic principle of fraternity. It was a progressive form of faith seeking to understand itself. It is an attempt by the Igbo people to create a bond with the supernatural, the ancestors and with themselves. It is a reality that penetrates into the foundational structure of Igbo cosmology and sustains it with its communion character. It is both sacrifice and covenant renewal for reconciliation and restoration of equilibrium between the living and the ancestors.

It is not unusual, then, that when Jesus comes to renew creation, he comes with a new food. Since we become what we eat, Jesus wants us to become completely one with him in the Eucharist. The Eucharist points to the new creation. The new creation corresponds to the original creation –we remember the original saving event, the turning around of historical liberation of Israelites from Egypt (Ex. 12). It was both a sacrifice and a covenant exemplified in eating and drinking. By eating, they affirm that they

¹⁶¹ E. JEAN-MARC, *My Faith as an African*, New York, Orbis books 1988, p. 174.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁶³ W. STINISSEN, *Bread that is broken*, USA, Ignatius Press 2020, p. 11.

live in communion with God.

“Every Eucharistic celebration is a step toward the universal transformation where everything is incorporated into the Body of Christ”¹⁶⁴, the church and the heart of all cultures. Oriko only helps the Igbo to understand the Eucharist. That is why they know that the reverence, which oriko receives among the members of the Igbo Religion is only a pointer to a higher reverence to be given to the Eucharist, since the Eucharist points to a higher reality; the reality fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the proto-ancestor.

Understanding the traditional Igbo Oriko cultural meal in the light of the Eucharist will therefore, strongly underline the inadequacy and contradiction in maintaining the Osu caste system or the other forms of discrimination among the Igbo people. It would be a form of hypocrisy to be a Eucharistic community and at the same time adhere to the practice of the Osu caste, which is a culture of discrimination. Eucharistic theology should emphasize among the Igbo the awareness of the covenant relationship between the participants in the meal, which implies that the diala and the Osu enter into a pact of brotherhood when they participate in the Eucharistic meal, which is a higher form of oriko that breaks down the walls of discrimination and oppression.

5.4 The Eucharist among the Umunna community

Among the three major Jewish feasts: Feast of the unleavened bread (the Pesach/Passover), the Feast of the weeks (Shavout/Pentecost) and the Feast of the Booth (Sukkoth), the Passover is celebrated at home with the father of the family as the presiding celebrant. It is a family celebration in a family setting. The night before Israelites were rescued in Egypt, the angel of God had appeared to them and prescribed to them a feast of Passover where every family must eat together. Since their exodus from Egypt, they had followed this family setting of eating the Passover. It was in this family context that Jesus and his apostles celebrated the Last Supper, the Passover of the Lord.

The Eucharist since then has always mirrored as a family meal; an inclusive meal that establishes and sustains mutual trust. Jesus would say in reference to the Eucharist, “whoever eats his flesh and drinks his bloods lives in him, and Him in he” (Jn 6:56). The importance of human relationship or the need

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

for harmony in the African Traditional Religion among the Igbo umunna is demonstrated by the practice of oriko which exemplifies unity that is synonymous with the Christian Eucharist fellowship.

In the context of the Last Supper Jesus instituted a new memorial sacrifice wherein He himself is present in a sacramental form under the appearance of bread and wine to become the spiritual food of the faithful. The communion, literally, a participation in by means of the cup wrought by Christ in shedding of his precious blood; the cup is at once a symbol of unity, communion and a medium of having Life. The bread becomes the communion of the body of Christ (Jn 6: 41-59), which incorporates the participants into his life. Jesus established this ceremony at the last supper with his disciples, the first ecclesiastical umunna to partake of the communion where Jesus partakes as a Proto-ancestor.

The ecclesiological significance of Jesus as ‘master’ ancestor cannot be confined to his function as initiator or as diviner of his community, he is also ever present among his people and his presence is made manifest through a mutual relationship exemplified in meal that unites and reconciles his people. The Eucharistic banquet understood in this way, as the proto-ancestral meal with and of Jesus Christ himself, will become a vital element in the building up of a truly Igbo Church.

Both the Eucharist and the church proceed from Christ and are intrinsically linked with one another. The Eucharist is the Church’s heart, her most precious treasure. The Church is built around the Eucharist. Invariable, we say that the Eucharist constitutes the Church. That is why the church guards it so tenderly over all other treasures and does not readily give it if she is not sure that the recipient appreciates it with great reverence as a high value. This Treasure issues from Christ to build up the Church.¹⁶⁵ The Eucharist goes beyond mere nourishment of the Church. “The church draws her life from the Eucharist. Since Eucharist makes present Christ’s redeeming sacrifice, we must start by acknowledging that there is a casual influence of the Eucharist at the church’s very origin.”¹⁶⁶

5.4.1 Jesus as the master of initiation

As an Obedient Son, Jesus set out doing his Father’s will. Obedience in self-giving characterize Jesus’ mission of goodness and compassion. His

¹⁶⁵ B. BUJO, *African Morality in the age of Inculturation*, Op. Cit., p. 83.

¹⁶⁶ BENEDICTUS Pp XVI, Op. Cit., p. 14.

initiation to the paschal mystery is the sources of eternal salvation for those he brought to share the glory of the father. Through his paschal mystery, Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to the Father by accepting death on a cross. By spending his life for the sake of others, Jesus revealed God's invisible image in human form. Jesus initiated in human history a new face of God ready to dialogue with people. It was new phase of good life that was punitive or judgmental but communitarian. This good life with each other is the mystery of inter-Trinitarian life. It is a mystery of God who reveals himself as a community. God is a community of three persons that exist in love. As a Son dwelling in the father, Jesus spent his life in the glory of the father by bringing in the church, the new creation of God, generation of new creation who live for one another and share with one another.

These new brothers of Jesus receive the grace of filial adoption through the work of reconciliation of the Son on the cross. Before the 'baptism' of paschal mystery, two categories of people existed, the Jews and the Gentiles. From the pierced heart of Jesus on the cross was birthed a new humanity redeemed by the blood of the Son no longer on works of law. They are initiated into a new beginning of an undeserved favour from God calling humanity to form a family of brothers and sisters who reproduce in their existence in the revelation of the Trinity. The newness of the church as the creation from paschal mystery calls for a new way of living depicting the image of the triune God, living in communion with one another.

Salvation in God's Trinitarian life is inspired by Jesus Christ, the Elder brother in the family of God. Jesus Christ is the Elder brother because he takes the responsibility of initiating dialogue between the triune God and humanity. Human beings in Jesus Christ are called to live in this communion not only with one another but by expanding the relationship into the inner life of the triune God. Jesus having revealed the Trinitarian God and having initiated humanity in his life calls man to gear towards close relationships with their fellows.

In his baptism, Jesus initiated us in the new eschatological family of God which is mediated by God's sanctifying grace for all who accept in faith the work of reconciliation done by Jesus Christ on the cross. By participating in the life of the Holy Trinity, human beings experience God's presence, power and love. "The Eucharist is not itself a sacrament of reconciliation but in

fact, presupposes that sacrament. It is the sacrament of the reconciled.”¹⁶⁷

Through the work of reconciliation on the cross wrought by his elder Son, God has adopted by grace all his disciples into his family. This adoption is a gratuitous gift that carves the disciples into the intimate relationship with the beloved Son; as no one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone who the Son chooses to reveal him (Mtt. 11:27). In Jesus Christ, the disciples are the treasured people of God set free from chains of laws and human boundaries and led into the light of knowing God and belonging to the family of God. In the family of God, the disciples of Jesus are healed, liberated and brought to a close communion with one another and with God.

The disciples appropriate this gift of communion in their life. This relationship gives them the strength to work for the reign of God as a response of gratitude to the grace of their adoption. Initiated to a new life of grace by their elder brother in the family of God, the disciples have a blissful future where love forgives, heals, liberates, transforms, brings to communion and gives the fullness of life. In the perspective of Christ’s initiation of humanity into God, the church mission becomes the work of initiating the rest of humanity of every era and place into the Trinitarian love revealed by God in Jesus.

Therefore, it becomes absurd that those who are baptized and participate in the Trinitarian life still see themselves as being superior to others. The osu caste discrimination is a contradiction to the common brotherhood we share through our initiation into Christ in baptism, confirmation and frequent participation in the Eucharist.

5.4.2 Jesus as Ancestor

The spiritual worlds of Africa, the ancestors are placed on a high regard because of their unswerving presence and intermediary role they play between the gods and the living. Not every dead person is an ancestor; those who become ancestors are those who while they were alive had shown interest in the propagation of good life. They must have contributed immensely in the lives of the people and in the community development. They are celebrated and revered because according J. Mbiti “they are living dead.”¹⁶⁸ So long as the living dead is remembered, he is in the state

¹⁶⁷ J. RATZINGER, *God is near us: The Eucharist and the Heart of Life*, New York, USA, Ignatius Press 2003, p. 61.

¹⁶⁸ J. MBITI, *African Religion and Philosophy*, Nairobi, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 1969, p. 25.

of personal immortality.

There could be a misleading presumption to equate or substitute the veneration of the ancestors with the communion of the saints or church's teaching on the immortality of the human spirit. It would be a vitiation of the culture that would likely diminish the essential dimension of culture.

In Africa death and evil are linked sin. At death a person joins his ancestral community. Death is not a traumatic experience. But they fears death because of its dreadful end of the body. But the person who however, to some extent has reconciled with the fact of death by the belief in the community of the forefathers in which he is destined to live has little or nothing to fear. That is why one of the greatest evils that would happen to an Igbo man is not to have children, especially the male ones who would maintain the lineage of his forefathers.

Sickness and evils are linked to ancestral curse or abandonment by the ancestors. Much effort is made to avoid ancestral curse especially through sacrifices, necromancy and other magical powers. Curse or sin does not come from God but they come because of a break in relationship with the ancestors. Christianity sheds a brighter light on the role of Jesus as a proto-ancestor who never abandons his people. A person who has gone through some difficulties and recovers is able to appreciate in a deeper way what God has done for human beings in Jesus Christ. Christ has taken away all curses by his death on the cross. "Through his death we are saved" (Rom. 5:10).

Jesus is the chief ancestor par excellence, more powerful than all the diviner-healers. He has more powerful medicines than the devil that bewitches people with curses and sicknesses and death. In Christ humankind has overcome death (1 Cor. 15:57). Christ is the new creation and we are reborn in him (2 Cor. 5:17). Christ's intervention in human history supersedes that of human ancestors. Christians were dead but have been brought back to life in Christ.

Christianity has Christ as a great ancestor. His death guarantees safety than any other ancestor can give. The metaphoric designation of Jesus as suffering messiah reveals Him as an ancestor who is involved in our wellbeing through his own mortification. He does not just intervene for humanity but participates with man in his suffering through mystery of scandal and contradiction of His the cross. A great paradox of human history

is Jesus' innocent death. What is especially important in Jesus' death is not just that he died, but that he died as an innocent victim.

The challenging message is that in Christ God does not save human beings from suffering, but in and through suffering, the broken Christ is the one who heals a broken world. Even after his glorious resurrection, his wounds did not disappear. He resurrected with his wounds and still carries the wounds on his body so that the church would learn from her wounded messiah that she would continuously be wounded but the wounds should not stop her from glorious mission. "The bruised face of Jesus is present in human suffering and death throughout the history."¹⁶⁹ He comes to humanity as a brother ancestor who shares a common fatherhood of God with them.¹⁷⁰ His brotherhood with humanity transcends all tribal limitations.¹⁷¹

In many ways God calls man into his new life. Life resounds in the scripture: "now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive" (Lk 20:38). "I will protect him and deliver him. I will content him with long life because he knows my name" (Ps 91:14). The passage to new life is linked with the importance of the ancestors who are the great mediators and intermediaries. Christ is the first born from all creation. Christ is our ancestor par excellence because he plays this role of mediation and because he has preceded us in passing over to the Father. He is the source of new life. He sustains the entire human lineage because he embraces both the beginning and the end as the one in whom all people unite in a common destiny.¹⁷²

Ascribing the ancestorship to Christ does not make Him equal with African ancestors or diminish his divinity but infinitely transcended that ideal and brought it to new completion. No other ancestor was capable of such magnificent qualification.¹⁷³ Jesus Christ therefore, in the right sense of the word is the Proto-Ancestor. "The ancestor is revered because he represents the symbolic face of the Father who knows all, who punishes that who rewards."¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ H. JOSEPH & S. DONALD, *Towards an African Narrative theology*, Nairobi Kenya, Pauline Publications Africa 1996, p. 223.

¹⁷⁰ C. NYAMITI, *Christ as Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*, Gwen Mambo Press, 1984, p. 23.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁷² M. ELDORET, *The Paschal Mystery of Christ and All Humanity*, New York, Spearhead 1979, p. 52.

¹⁷³ B. BUJO, *The Ethical dimension of Community, the African Model and the dialogue between the North and the South*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi 1997, p. 59.

¹⁷⁴ E. JEAN-MARC, *Op. Cit.*, p. 22

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we were able to present in detail the meaning of Oriko in Igbo cultural society. We moved on from there to give it an inculturating flesh, presenting it only as a shadow that point to the real which is the Eucharist itself.

In the next chapter, we will focus mainly and squarely on the Eucharist, bringing examples from the biblical tradition of the early church how Eucharist was celebrated and how it helped to unify the early Christians. It is obvious that the most characteristic feature of the Eucharistic celebration at the apostolic era was its unifying aspect. That was why Paul reprimanded the Corinthian Christian who lacked mutual love and ate sumptuously while their neighbours were hungry (1Cor. 11:23-27). Paul opined that the aim of gathering to celebrate the Eucharist and to share the mystery of the body and blood of Jesus Christ is to put an end to all kinds of divisions and factions among them. Paul expected the Eucharist to be the unity symbol and strength of the brothers.

Part three

CHAPTER SIX

Eucharistic celebration in the context of African family

The foregoing exposition of the oriko ritual among the Igbo people shows that the Eucharist can be celebrated in a family context when understood in the light of oriko, when the original concept and purpose of the oriko is re-enforced in all its aspects, followed and respected. Understanding the Eucharist in this way could deepen the faith of the Igbo Eucharistic community and enable it to overcome the osu caste system, because if the Eucharist is understood in the light of oriko, the discrimination against the osu would be done away with. To achieve this, it would be important to consider some significant characterizations that the two ritual meals (oriko and the Eucharist) share in common. This survey, considering the Eucharist as oriko, shall focus only on those essential factors that make the oriko very effective among the Igbo people.

6.1 Eucharist as a model for good Community living

Liturgy and service, that is, the celebration of faith and the life of faith are two vocabularies, or rather two complementary actions that go together. Each would lose its meaning and relevance if it loses the other. The Holy Eucharist as the gift that Jesus Christ makes of himself, revealing God's infinite love for every human being is a perfect demonstration of liturgy/service synergy. This sacrament shows the supreme love that urges us to offer our lives for our friends. Jesus himself demonstrated this synergy. While they were at the table, before that decisive sacrifice that wrought salvation, he girded himself with towel and washed the feet of his disciples. With this, He announces his gesture of infinite humility in service that is worship. So that liturgy takes up the garb of service that is salvific. This profound synergy of the liturgy and service realizes itself in the Eucharist, in Jesus Christ, who offers himself to God the Father that creates and builds his church, whose mission is aimed at evangelization of the world.

In deed the Eucharist experienced with faith shapes the entire community of the church as well as the spiritual life of people who enter into an intimate relationship with Jesus. The communities of the believers live by the Eucharist because it receives from it as its source the life of God given from on high, and in its mission it looks towards the Eucharist as the heart of communion with God. The liturgy is also the fulcrum of all evangelization. Its aim is to unite people with Christ and in him with Father and the Holy

Spirit.

From the beginning, at its institution, the Eucharist held a special place in the theology of Christian unity that is sacrificial. Initiating a beginning of a church who gives and empties himself in self-immolation. This helps the understanding of the Church.

The Church begins, and has her ongoing existence in the Lord's communicating himself to men, going into communion with them, and thus bringing them into communion with one another. The Church is the Lord's communion with us, and at the same time brings about the true communication of men with one another.¹⁷⁵

Ratzinger says, "We who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."¹⁷⁶ Participation in the Eucharist is the basis of all community and interdependence, of one's interaction with God who gives himself, with other people and with the environment and the world in general. Communion as participation is the foundation of solidarity and responsibility in being and acting. Communion indicates an understanding of God not as impersonal abstract being, but Living Word and love.

In the Eucharist, faith finds power to make the church's *lex orandi* unite with *lex credenda* and consequently, turn into *lex agenda* and thus into its life and mission. The Eucharist is therefore, a gift to be celebrated that introduces us into the mystery of salvation, guides us towards communion with one another and with Christ who gives himself, leads to adoration and finally engages us through mission and pastoral services. However, the principal goal of this mission is the sacramental communion of man with God.

The most obvious characteristic trait of the Eucharistic celebration is its unifying character. When the Corinthian Christians did show much fraternal commitment especially for the poor, St Paul called their attention to genuine mutual love which is the key word of the Eucharist (1Cor. 11:23-27). Paul made it clear that the primary aim of gathering to share the mystery of the body and blood of Jesus Christ was to put an end to all kinds of divisions and factions among them. St Paul declares that whoever eats quietly without waiting or respecting the poor thereby, creating inequality of social life does not participate in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11: 17 – 22).

¹⁷⁵ J. RATZINGER, *Gemeinde aus der Eucharistie*, in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Von Weiderauffinden der Mitte. Grundorientierungen, Texte aus vier Jahrzehnten*, edited by his Students, Freiburg 1997, p. 35.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The introductory words of the Eucharistic celebration taken from 2 Corinthians 13:14 (The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all) have great significance. This talk about ones of God's all people. That is a *koinonia*, a communion, a fellowship of God's people. The word *koinonia* has long history. *Koinonia* are people who are united for a common purpose, who have something in common and who share in common interest. This fellowship denotes a way of a living, being and acting, which is the characteristic of a people of God.¹⁷⁷

6.1.1 Eucharist as a memorial meal

Covenant, sacrifice and memorial are closely linked. Covenant is the dominant theme that grounds all of Israel's life and worship. Sacrifice is the ritual expression of the covenant between Israel and God. On the other hand, memorial is the faith dynamism that recalls and makes real God's faithfulness, mercy and saving love.¹⁷⁸

The most import event of Jewish history is the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. In the account of this original saving event were ritual program and divine action. This event would culminate into paschal annual memorial celebration (Ex. 22).

In Gen 22: 1-9, where the episode of the sacrifice of Isaac is narrated, we have synthesis of the doctrine of obedience as an act of worship (1Sam 15:22) and of sacrifice as an act of substitution. These two strands will remain throughout the Old Testament: worship as a sacrifice and worship as obedience to Word. The synthesis of these two elements is found in the Jewish memorial of the Passover of Yahweh. In the most important text that narrates the origin of this celebration (Ex 12.1-13.16) the two elements combine in way extremely mesh and complementary. Lamb is sacrificially killed, cooked and eaten according to the prescription of God. Meanwhile, God passes in the midst of Egypt killing the Egyptians and sparing the Israelites. The text presents the salvific event, as set of a ritual program (killing and eating of the lamb), fruit of obedience to the Word, and a divine action (the passing of Yahweh in the midst of Egypt). Divine action is ambivalent; it contains life and death because it spares life and gives death.

The salvific event is lived in a liturgical climate. God wants this event to be

¹⁷⁷ A. ALBERTIN, Unpublished lecture note on *Liturgia nella fase Bibliche*, 2021/2022 academic year.

¹⁷⁸ L. WANDEL, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, USA 2006, p. 364.

celebrated as a memorial feast for the Lord and as a perennial rite. The celebration repeats the ritual program, but no longer has divine action (the passing of Yahweh in the midst of Egypt). In place of this, there is the proclamation of the event: “When your children ask you: ‘What does this rite mean for you’? You will say to them: “It is the Passover sacrifice for the Lord, who has passed beyond the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck Egypt and saved our houses” (Ex 12:26-27). The proclaimed Word takes the place of the divine action. In celebration, therefore, the Word becomes the preserver-giver of life because it is accompanied by the ritual program. The conjunction of the two elements, sacrifice and Word, constitute the celebration in which the memorial takes place which is a representation of the saving event for future generations.

Also in this case there is a ritual program in the last super (Mt 26.26-28; Mk 14: 22-24; Lk 22.19-20; 1 Cor 11, 23-26) and a divine action in the mystery of the death-resurrection of Jesus Christ. Compared, however, to the Old Testament Paschal, the New Testament has very different contents. The ritual program already contains and anticipates the divine action of death-resurrection, providing its cultic hermeneutics. Only from the ritual program is the sacrificial-cultic value of the death-resurrection of Jesus explicitly known. The ritual experience (last supper) is the cultic hermeneutics and anticipation of the paschal mystery. The command to repeat what the Master had done is enriched by the proclamation of the event (1Cor 11.26: “Whenever you eat this bread and drink this chalice, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes again.”) The salvation in Christian worship, therefore, is present both in the narrative and in the ritual program. As for the Old Testament, also in the New Testament the ritual program and the proclamation, which constitute the celebration, is closely related and has inseparable relationship. The ritual program welcomes the salvation present in divine action, which becomes the proclaimed Word.¹⁷⁹

When Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples, they were following the ritual program of the Passover meal. But Jesus changed the whole dynamic. As they were at the table, He took bread and blessed it, broke it and gave it to them as he said: ‘Take this all of you and eat it, for this is my body, it is given up for you’. After they had eaten, he took the cup and said, “Take this all of you and drink from it. This is the chalice of my blood, the blood of new and eternal covenant which will be poured out for you and for many for remission of sins” (Mt 26: 28). Then he added the

¹⁷⁹ A. ALBERTIN, *Op. Cit.*

sentence that changed the narrative of merely annual Passover meal to a Sacrificial meal for all his followers, “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19)

Eucharist is a memorial because it does not represent but re-present, re-do the action of the Last Supper. It makes present the sacrifice the sacrifice Jesus offered. He said, each time you do this, you are proclaiming the death and resurrection of the son of man until he comes again. The both sacrifices of the altar and that of the cross are the same. Jesus celebrated the bloody sacrifice on the cross; it is still him who celebrates the unbloody sacrifice through the priest who acts in persona Christi.

No longer would the Eucharist be celebrated just as a meal in memory of the escape from slavery in Egypt; but Jesus has added a new dimension to indicate a more significant deliverance. When we celebrate the Eucharist we remember how Jesus gave his body and blood, the totality of himself, ‘so that sins may be forgiven’, so that we are delivered from slavery to cultural practices that are offensive to God, offensive to ourselves and offensive to others. These offensive activities are present reality in Igbo cultural society especially the Osu caste system inherited from their past.

While participating in the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his body. The life and activities of the faithful; their praise and suffering, their prayer and work are united to those of Christ. As a sacrifice, “the Eucharist is offered by all, including the church in heaven and it is offered for all the members of Christ body, the living and the dead, in atonement of sin and to obtain spiritual and temporal benefits from God.”¹⁸⁰

When we participate in the Eucharist we bring the death and resurrection of Jesus into the present. Not only does the Paschal meal allow the Jews to enter into the sacred time and bring a past event of salvation into the present, it also incorporates them into the future New Jerusalem. The sacred event collapse the past, the present and future into one mysterious now enjoyed as the already-not-yet. The anamnesis of the sacred worship puts us into the timelessness where the past, the present and the future are emerged into one eternal moment of constant remembrance.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ CCC, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1373 – 1375.

¹⁸¹ W. STINISSEN, *Bread that is broken*, Ignatius Press, USA 2020, p. 37.

6.1.2 Eucharist as a new Life

It is repeated again and again in the New Testament that the end times have already come through Jesus Christ. The meaning of this, of course, is not that history is finished, but that history's decisive event has already taken a new turn in and with Jesus. In the words of the scriptures, 'the old things have passed away.' There Eucharist is therefore, the sacrament of the eschatological reversal; a sacrament of a beginning of a new turn. Jesus calls it the 'the food which endures to eternal life which the son of man will give' (Jn 6:27). He who eats this food enters eternal life; he enters into a new mode of living. In the Eucharist, the goal of the world and mankind is present, a communicative type of living. In it, a new history is turned.

The Eucharist is ritual meal of new life. It is the sacrament of a new history and the fulcrum of the community of believers. Hence, the Eucharist is the *culmen et fons*¹⁸² of the sacramental life of the Church. The words of Institution the Eucharist demonstrate a new life which the Eucharist has ushered the believers. It is an ushering in the saving blood: "This is my Blood." The blood of the new and everlasting covenant which is poured for you and for the many for the forgiveness of sins" Referring to the death of Christ, St Paul says, "For this, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. All things are made new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The new life that the Eucharist ushers rests on two legs of sacrifice and service. Jesus bridges the gap between master and slave. 'You call me master, yes correctly I am. If I who is your master washes your feet, you must do same to one another.' The Eucharist establishes equity and fraternal accommodation of all the neighbours especially the weak. This tolerance of the weak implies forgiveness of the offenders occasioned by Christ example. This does not apply that the sacrament of penance is latent; rather partaking of the benefits of the sacrament of penance serves to reintegrate one back into the life of the Christian community. This reintegration is perfected and made complete by participating in the Eucharistic celebration and meal. This reintegration after the Eucharist prefigures the idea of new birth or rebirth with which the community receives the penitent as a communicative member. Participation in the Eucharist brings the former offender in a peaceful relationship with other members of the community. To receive the Eucharist is to enter into the universal community of the reconciled. Eucharist derives us to work for unity.

¹⁸² VATICAN COUNCILII, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, (4-12-1963), AAS 10 1963, n. 39.

6.1.3 Eucharist promotes Freedom and Peace

The self sacrifice of Christ on the cross is a mission of human liberation that constantly challenges Christians today.¹⁸³ The 46th International Eucharistic Congress in Wrocław, Poland was focused on presenting and celebrating the mystery of the Eucharist in the light of freedom as a concept of far reaching anthropological, social and salvific significance. Freedom is an expression of truth and life with which humanity was created in the image and likeness of God.

Freedom is God's gift to humanity in creation, and even more in redemption. For this reason, Christ himself willed that the mystery of redemption and our liberation, our Passover should be sacramentally made present to us in the form of Eucharist at all times.

In the Eucharist, Christ not only offers Himself to us but joins Himself to ours so as to overcome limitations and sins and elevate creation. In this process of joining himself to ours, two stages are emphasized: the sanctification that begins with the impartation of sanctifying grace in justification, and the glorification by which we are fully divinized and liberated from all forms of sins. This is because with the Passion of Christ all human suffering has found itself in a new situation, "Christ without any fault of his own took on himself our sins to set us free (1 Pet. 2: 24)."¹⁸⁴

6.2 Eucharist as form of Christ's Life

Here, I prefer to make more use of the term Eucharist to the last Supper. Eucharist is a richer word in describing the Eucharist as sacrifice of thanksgiving and self-emptying. When Jesus hands over his life in the Eucharist to the Church, he communicates a way of life that embraces every aspect of human existence, and ultimately the entire material order of creation and initiate two modes of living: one of fraternity -communion, and the other, that of sacrificing.

The real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is at the centre of catholic theology. That is, in the Eucharist Christ perpetuates Himself, in his body and divinity. This is why the church reverences the Eucharist out of other sacraments as the Sanctissimum Sacramentum. Every other the sacraments are directed toward the 'Eucharist' as their goal. Pope Paul VI, emphasized that the real presence in this sense is the substantial presence by which Christ,

¹⁸³ BENEDICTUS PAPA XVI, Op. Cit., n. 89.

¹⁸⁴ JOHN PAUL POPE II, "Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, (11-2-1984)", MA: St. Paul Editions, Boston 1984, p. 19.

God and man makes himself entirely present.”¹⁸⁵

Our understanding of the relationship between the last Supper and the Crucifixion highlights the theology of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Jesus himself chose a practical way of passing the message of his self giving. The whole actions of the Jesus as he gathered with his apostles for the Supper pointed to the mission of the Eucharist. The institution of the Eucharist allows us to understand the loving self-sacrifice he made of himself through his brutal death.

The death of Jesus on the cross reveals the magnitude of the love and gift he gave to humanity. The Eucharist is the sum of Jesus. When we receive the Eucharist, we receive this Jesus and the sum of this sacrifice. Christ’s flesh mediates a personal communication of gift of the self. Balthasar says that perfect love is the unconditional giving of self.”¹⁸⁶ Or according to Aquinas: “The perfection of love is required not only that a man renounces earthly goods, in a certain sense, he also renounces himself. Divine love causes ecstasy. Divine love takes a man out of himself by not allowing him to belong to himself, but to him whom he loves.”¹⁸⁷

The resurrection of Christ confirms the connection between the institution of the Eucharist and the death on cross: “His death and Christian faith would have been an illusion if there were no resurrection.”¹⁸⁸ In the resurrection, the body of Christ that has been given up for us is integrated within the exchange of love between Father, Son, and Spirit. The resurrection sums up the event of the Paschal mystery as a communion of the divine love and promise of eternal life for those who participate in the life of Christ.¹⁸⁹ Resurrection means that Jesus was not bounded to oblivion of mortality and restrictions but retains his capacity to move around and communicate himself to his people in body and spirit. Jesus could rise from the dead, and did rise from the dead because he had become the one who shares himself with others. To have risen from the dead means to be communicable; it

¹⁸⁵ PAOLO PAPA VI, “Encyclical Letter on Holy Eucharist *Mysterium Fidei* (3-9-1965)”, AAS 39, Paulinas, 3rd September 1965, 587.

¹⁸⁶ H. BALTHASAR, *The Christian State of Life*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983, p. 59.

¹⁸⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Perfectione Spiritualis Vitae*, translated and published J. Procter, O.P. under the title *The Religious State, the Episcopate and the Priestly Office*, Newman Press, Maryland London 1950, p. 10.

¹⁸⁸ J. RATZINGER, *God is near us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press 2003, p. 43.

¹⁸⁹ N. HEALY, *Christ’s Eucharist and the Nature of Love: the Contributions of Han Urs von Balthasar*, in <https://www.anselm.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Instituteof/SA20Studies/Healy.pdf>.

means no longer being in the hidden. And on that basis we can understand why, in John's Eucharistic theology, put the Eucharist together with resurrection as the medicine of immortality.

Von Balthasar elaborates further that Christ, in surrendering his body on the cross was communicating, not only his material bodily substance, but the saving event this material body wrought, invariably the Jesus.¹⁹⁰ But how can the totality of Christ's historical life be included in the Sacrament of the Eucharist? Here we arrive at one of the significant insights of Owen Cummings. Christ can give the whole of his life in this Sacrament because his entire life was already Eucharistic. The form of Christ's historical life from moment of Incarnation is a reception of his existence from the Father with an offering of his life back to the Father. It is misleading to think that Christ instituted the Eucharist at the point of his passion, death and resurrection as a reminder of himself. "In the Eucharist, Jesus through this passion and death assumed the form of broken bread for the salvation of the world."¹⁹¹

In the Eucharist, what is given is not a piece of a body or a thing, but Him, the resurrected –the person who shares himself with humanity through the love he demonstrated on the cross. This means that receiving communion is a conscious personal giving of himself. It is not merely a ritual but an act of entering into the Lord who is in constant communication of himself to man.

The Eucharist therefore, is a form of life, a way of being and acting that comprises the entirety of Christ's chronological life and mission. There is no aspect of our embodied human lives that falls outside of this holy exchange of gifts whereby the Church offers and is offered in a sacrifice pleasing to the Father. The Eucharist is the genuine reality. Here we encounter that reality from which we need to learn to measure every other reality. The Eucharist is the form of Christian life because it is the form of Christ, who is the firstborn and head of all creation.

6.3 The Eucharist as a Trinitarian gift

Here we approach the Eucharist as a Trinitarian gift that divulges the inner relationship that God is love, who exists in the communion of Father, Son, and Spirit in such a way that each of them is fully and equally God, yet there are no three God but one. It is a mystery. In giving himself, Christ offers this

¹⁹⁰ H. BALTHASAR, *Op. Cit.*, p. 391-392.

¹⁹¹ C. OWEN, *Eucharist and Ecumenism: The Eucharist across the Ages and Tradition*, USA, Picwick Publication 2013, p. 105.

triune God in a single act of love. He reveals his eternal origin and he shares with us the love that his Father has for him and the sanctification and advocacy of the Holy Spirit. In the story of salvation, creation is usually attributed to the Father, redemption to the Son and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. This specification does not mean that each acts in isolation of others.

Jesus revealed this mystery to us. After He rose, He sent the disciples to evangelize to the peoples, baptizing them “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). Therefore, the ministry of the Trinity is the goal of the church. While church contemplate the mystery from which she came and toward which she is going, she is entrusted with the mission of living in communion with God and living in communion among us in the model of the divine communion. That is why everything in Christian life revolves around the Mystery of the Trinity.

The trinity is the divine life. Participation in the Trinity is a participation in the mystery of divine life. Both the Eucharist and the Trinity are not known to man by natural human reason. They are mysteries, revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, whose presence in the Eucharist does not modify His relationship to the Father and Spirit and whose kenosis does not diminish His Trinitarian collegiality.

The Eucharist allows for an outpouring and gratuitous relationship with Christ. In the incarnation, mankind has been lifted up in Christ’s obedient sacrifice to share in His divine life, to be one with the second person of the Trinity, and therefore, to enter mysteriously into the inner life of God. In the participation of the Holy Communion, humanity shares in the life of the Trinity.

The Trinitarian being is the designer of the divine economy and at the same time, the ultimate end of the economy is realized in union with the same Trinity. Jesus prays to the Father “that they may be one” (Jn 17:23), and it is the fruit of the eschatology that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). The Christian life then, is both a communal and private struggle to create a communion with one another and with the divine persons whose relationship is the paradigm for all relationships.

Hans Urs von Balthasar highlights the mystery of the Father as the ultimate source of the Eucharistic mystery:

The Lord of the table in the Eucharistic banquet is the heavenly

Father, who sets out for us the best he has to offer. The sacraments come from the Holy Spirit, and the Son who allows himself to be given as food and drink.¹⁹²

The Father is *fons et origo totus trinitatis*.¹⁹³ The unfathomable love of the Father is also the source and summit of the whole economy of salvation. He surpasses every evaluation. God the Father is a distinct hypostasis with personal, unthinkable identity, in an absolute unity of being with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

By taking the extreme option of demonstration of love by dying and communicating the core of his life in the Eucharist, Christ reveals the Father as the source and origin of the whole divinity. Christ's entire life is to make known the Father's love. The gift of Eucharist is a perfect image of a Father who eternally gives himself to generations in the Son. "In giving himself in the Eucharist, Jesus reveals his affinity with the Father."¹⁹⁴ Christ's Eucharist is simultaneously a perfect expression his own identity as the only begotten Son of the Father. Both as God and as man, the incarnate Son receives his being as a gift from the Eucharist reveals and concretizes the incarnate Son's readiness to give the whole of his life unto death in a filial mode.

Therefore, the image of the perichoretic (triune) relationship of the Trinity serves as a model for theology and for Christian culture. The Trinitarian *koinonia* leads to a Trinitarian ecclesiology, a Trinitarian eschatology and a Trinitarian culture of equal rights, solidarity, love, justice and peace.

Thus, Holy Communion is not just a symbol of communion but signifies what it designates –unity, communion. In the Eucharist, men and women eat the body of Jesus whose sacrifice of self-emptying elevates man into the sonship of God and communion with the Trinity. The Eucharist and the Trinity are united in the divine economy. It is an economy in which men actually share both spiritually and physically.

6.4 The Broken bread

Here we begin by looking at the materials for the Eucharist. The effort of human hands is inestimable in the production of bread and wine. There

¹⁹² ¹⁹² H. BALTHASAR, *Epilogue*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2004, p. 117.

¹⁹³ Sixth Council of Toledo, Regional synods of the Visigothic Church in Spain, (9-1-638), In M. EGBUOGU, *Eschatological Hope as Christian Theodicy: An Appraisal of some Attempts at Explaining the existence of Evil and Human Suffering*, Snaap Press, Enugu 2006, p. 148

¹⁹⁴ H. BALTHASAR, *Theo-Drama: The Last Act*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press 1998, p. 384.

would not have been bread if man did not cultivate, harvest, grind and bake the flour; the same as wine. The human work is a concrete expression of sacrifice. Man burns himself to produce food. Honestly as it were, man's major deriving force to work is not for himself; he works to nourish his family. He strives to give life to others. Meal itself in a communitarian society like Africa is fellowship of love. No one eats alone. In eating together, life is shared. This human work is a concrete expression of love. The bread, which is the fruit of man's work, symbolizes man's desire to humanize the world, an indication of love and sacrifice.

Jesus describes himself like grain of wheat: "except a grain of wheat falls into the sand and dies, it remains alone; but when it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). This description prefigures the death and mission of Jesus. The grain of wheat is sown in the earth; it dies and decays but rises again in the form of new life, multiplying the original grain. So by dying and rising Jesus has brought a new life to many brothers (Rom 8:29), who like him must therefore, follow the same path of death, regeneration in baptism and fruitfulness of Christian witnessing. There could not have been a better signification of the Eucharistic bread and Jesus than the wheat.

Thus in the Eucharistic form, the bread has a sacrificial character. The bread symbolizes the whole cosmos, the work of human hands and Jesus himself. As they were seated for the Supper, "Jesus 'took' the bread, 'broke' it and 'gave' it to them (Lk 22:19). The three verbs are very significant in the total action of the sacrifice of the Eucharist. But here we give greater attention to Luke's usage of the Greek word *lambano* which means both 'to give and to receive'. God gives himself to us that we may give it in return. He initiates the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus receives the bread from his Father and gives it to back to God through his saving sacrifice. In the bread, Jesus receives all creation from his Father and through the symbolism of the bread, transforms it into his body. In this transformation Jesus turns the whole universe into his body. He 'unites all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph 1:10). Jesus wants to incorporate everything so as to be all in all.¹⁹⁵

For the fact that the bread refers to the gathering into a unit the whole of mankind and the whole cosmos, every Eucharist celebration is a symbolic anticipation of that primordial total integration. When the priest takes the bread before consecration, it calls to mind the fact that the Father takes all

¹⁹⁵ W. STINISSEN, *Bread that is broken*, USA, Ignatius Press 2020, p. 13.

the creation in the hands and gives same to the Son who in transforming them into his body makes it sacred and returns same to the Father. So that the:

Christian feast, the Eucharist plumbs the very depth of death. It is not just a matter of pious discourse or some kind of religious beautification, spreading a pious gloss on the world; it plumbs the very depth of existence which it calls death and strikes out an upward path to life that overcomes death.¹⁹⁶

The wine, on the other hands, has an eschatological connotation. The normal experience of being drunk induces a feeling of blissfulness, self abandonment into the unknown. The thrill that wine stimulates is an anticipation of the joy of the world to come. "I shall not drink of this chalice until when I will drink of it again in my Father's kingdom" (Mt 26:29). At the Gethsemane, Jesus also talked about the chalice as sign of suffering (Lk 22:42). The wine presents a paradox. It symbolizes both joy and suffering. The choice of wine for Eucharist ultimately signals joy.

Pius XII explains in his encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947), that the two Eucharistic forms indicate the violent separation of the Blood from the Body. For by the transubstantiation of bread into the body of Christ and wine into His blood, His body and blood are really present. Thus the commemorative representation of His death is repeated in every sacrifice of the altar where Jesus Christ is symbolically shown by separate symbols in a state of victimhood.¹⁹⁷

6.5 The Church as Sacrament of Christ

At the council of Trent, the church struggled to confront the Catholic/Protestant polemics on the theology of sacrament. In response to sacramental indulgence in Roman Catholicism, Martin Luther distinguished between the visible and the invisible church. The visible church was recognizable in its structure: sacraments, canon law and hierarchical offices. While the structure might possess some functional value, Luther argued against them because, for Luther, they were tools for corruption which posed obstacles to faith. The instance of monetary payment for indulgence was one the argument Luther had. For Luther and his Protestants coterie, the true church was the invisible church of believers whose membership was known only to God (2 Tim. 2:19; Jn. 4:23).

¹⁹⁶ J. RATZINGER, *God is Near Us*, Op. Cit., p. 44.

¹⁹⁷ PAPA PIO XII, *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, Op. Cit., no. 70.

The liturgical movement led by people like Romano Guardini emphasized that the church is not just the hierarchy but the whole community of believers. He drew attention to the basic link between the church and the sacraments.¹⁹⁸ But then, the church in her teaching of the sacramentality of the church stressed the unity of the visible and the invisible. Due to the visibility of the church, the church was often referred to as a perfect society, a civil society that possess all that is necessary to achieve the society's cravings, namely the material and spiritual needs for the salvation of souls. This situates the church within the world as a sign to the world of God's redemptive love.

Working on the theology of incarnation, the church theologians developed the theology of Christ as the primeval sacrament. After the ascension of Christ into heaven, the church becomes the visible image of Christ, a visible sacrament that communes Christ's grace and salvation. Therefore, the church is the sacrament only in relation to Christ.

The world as a creature from God has in itself the mark of salvation imprinted by grace shared by all the creatures of God. It is in this graced world that the church finds herself. The world though reflects the goodness of God yet it is wounded by sin. This puts the church in a tension of saving the world that harbours her as was the relationship between Jesus and Mary. The church is a visible sign of that grace which carries with her the salvation mission of Jesus throughout the world. It is the effective instrument which conveys God's grace to the world tragically distorted by sin.

If the church is a sacrament of salvation, it is because it issues from Christ who is her head. The church as a sacrament is an instrument of communion with God and humanity. The sacramentality of the visible church is a necessary dimension placed in the service of the inner dimension of God's grace. Therefore, the structures of the church like hierarchy, laws and rituals are mediations that communicated the invisible grace of God. The sacrament brings about the reality of the signified.

God becoming incarnate in a human form became a visible face, the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15) and the exact representation of God (Heb. 1:4) so as to bring salvation to humanity. In the same way, God continues the communication of his grace through the means of the sacraments. If God

¹⁹⁸ R. Gaillardetz, *The Church as Sacrament: Towards an Ecclesial Spirituality*, https://richardgaillardetz.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/the_church_as_sacrament.pdf.

communicated Himself through the human Jesus, it is consistent that the God chose sacraments to reconcile the world to Himself.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The anthropological Perspective

Just as the Africans believe one fulfils his personhood within a living community, so the idea of Jesus as a member of the African community helps to project Jesus as a real person, whose existence remains relevant to the Africans of all ages.

Promoting the idea of Jesus as a universal brother, flaws the diverse divisions and discriminations existing in and among many African communities, ranging from ethnic conflicts, classism to caste systems and other forms of discriminations. The theologico-cultural concept of Jesus as a universal ancestor underpins the idea of universal brotherhood of all Africans and beyond. The incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus unite all the different clans and peoples into a single clan and people of God. This is why St. Paul says, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

The idea of Christ as universal brother is linked to the concept of Christ as proto-ancestor. While making reference to Romans 5: 12-21, Bujo tries to explain the fact that the concept of Christ as a proto-ancestor overcomes the division occasioned by the particularities and dissimilarities associated with discrimination of human race, Jews and Gentiles as all were originally the same in sin but have received identity justified in Christ who shares himself with man.¹⁹⁹

It is in the bid to emphasize the importance of this brotherhood that the African Synod fathers in 1994 designated the Church in Africa as the family of God. In this way they confirmed the importance of the family in the social reality as well as personal identity of every African person. Hence, the church is the family of God founded in Christ.

Bujo further demonstrates that Christ is both the base on which rests the relationship among the surviving members of the church and also between the living and the dead:

Christ is not only engrossed in the web of relationship of the church on earth; he is also engrossed in the web of relationship of the company of the saints in heaven. He is the meeting point for the two worlds, the junction and hinge of this life and

¹⁹⁹ B. BUJO, *African Theology in its social context*, Op. Cit., p. 32.

eschatology. From his position in the world of the ancestors, Christ pulls individuals up from the world of the living to permit them entry into the body of the saved individuals.²⁰⁰

Hence, the church's community remains open to all, the visible and the invisible members,²⁰¹ having its foundation on the blood of the new covenant that is thicker than water. This is why it makes sense to perceive the church as the new umunna, a community of believers gathered around Christ, the proto-ancestor. The New Covenant replaces the old. The foundation of the church, the new umunna is the Blood of Christ, which replaces the blood of animals of sacrifice. There is no longer any need for sacrifices except the sacrifice of the Eucharist which in itself is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that seals the New Covenant.²⁰²

7.1 Participation

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is notorious in its insistence on the correct form of celebration of the Liturgy, including the allowing the liturgy to be celebrated in the vernacular of the local communities to ensure that all participate actively. Because according to it, the liturgy is a "sacred action of Christ the Priest and of His Body which is the Church."²⁰³ The document distinguishes the liturgy as the principal act of prayer of the church that requires every attention,²⁰⁴ with proper dispositions of their minds and heart while celebrating it.

The nature of the liturgy requires the active participation of the faithful, but most often they are not aware that this falls within their duties as Christians. Participation in the liturgical actions derives from the very nature of the liturgy; this means that it cannot be seen as a choice or option, because between participation and liturgy a link of intrinsic necessity is established which makes active participation the only requisite for sacred liturgical action. The church, therefore, beseeches that the faithful present at this mystery of faith should not be strangers or silent spectators. Through a good understanding of the rites and prayers, being conscious of what they are doing with devotion and collaboration, they take part in the sacred action.

The intention for active participation is to avoid such situation of passivity

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 175.

²⁰¹ B. BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African model and the Dialogue between North and the South*, Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi 1998, p. 15.

²⁰² U. EZE, *Jesus Christ the Ancestor*, Pauline Publications Africa, Nigeria 1997, p. 181 – 182.

²⁰³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., no. 10.

but to give the faithful ambience for the possibility of better understanding of the mystery of faith. The object of their understanding and their participation are the rites not in their exteriority and legality but in their objective content, which is the mystery of faith. The text speaks about the understanding the mystery of faith through rites and prayers and affirms the need for the faithful to participate in the sacred action.²⁰⁵ Therefore, the participation as desired by Sacrosanctum Concilium has as its ultimate objective not as a total of ritual elements that make up a celebration but the mystery of faith through rituals and prayers. In the rites and prayers, the faithful participates in the mystery of faith: “we proclaim your death, oh Lord, and profess your resurrection until you come again.”²⁰⁶ It is more accurate to speak of active participation in the mystery of faith through the liturgical celebration.

In the same vein, in African culture, every member of the family takes part in the affairs of the family oriko meal. It can be fairly correct to say that Igbo Catholics have vibrant and enthusiastic faith expression. They can't be generally classified as strangers and silent spectators. But then, the problem is being able to translate this vibrancy of faith expression into daily life activities. This therefore, is reflected in the number of people who partake in the reception of the Holy Communion. And this becomes the bane of the discriminations and sanctions that are paramount in Igboland.

For us to be fully successful and be able to achieve our aim of ‘one body and one spirit’, more efforts have to be made on the part of everyone but especially the priest to catechize the people more and relax most of its restrictive laws, such as those regarding marriage and burial.

7.2 Relationship between Liturgy and Ethics

According to Giorgio Bonaccorso, “the liturgy is, above all, a phenomenon in culture, and, therefore, it has relationships both with other cultural phenomena and with the entire culture.”²⁰⁷ On the other hand, Manuel Velasquez explained that ethics refers to officially stipulated standard of right and wrong that prescribes what human being ought to do, usually in terms of right, obligations, benefits to the society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics includes standards relating to right to life, freedom from injury and right to privacy. Such standards are adequate for ethics because

²⁰⁵ E. MAZZA, *La partecipazione attiva alla liturgia*, Dalla *Mediator Dei* alla *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 330.

²⁰⁶ ANAMNESIS OF EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

²⁰⁷ G. BONACCORSO, *La Liturgia e la Fede.*, Op. Cit., p. 46.

they are sustained by consistent reasoning.²⁰⁸

From these two proponents, it is clear that both liturgy and ethics are united by a common denominator which is people's way or standards of living. They can be said to be products of culture yet unite in such a complementary way that harness, beautify and control cultural excesses. This proves that life is a unity. The social and the spiritual life of an individual cannot be separated into different layers. Life has a single stratum of processes that interchange synchronically and harmoniously with each other to ensure a balanced blissful life experience. Christian faith, though a gift from God through Jesus Christ has throughout the history accumulated through cultural expression human influences and trajectories, much of which is in need of modifications and purification.

Man comes to know God in Jesus Christ who revealed himself in a multiple ways: Jesus revealed himself as the Logos, the divine Word. He revealed as the humble servant and ultimately, he revealed himself as the broken bread. Therefore, the church celebrates these forms of revelation of Christ in the proclamation of the word of God (kerygma), celebration of the sacraments (leitourgeia), and the ministry of charity (diakonia). These are one single way of revealing the merciful face of God and Church's expression of faith in God. They are linked together to complement each other and presuppose each other. Hence, in the Word of God we express faith; in the sacraments we celebrate faith and dispose ourselves for faith's grace; and the work of charity is faith in action. These three are not only the characteristics of the church but also the mission of the church in explication of faith.

The core of Christian faith is its self-disclosure of truth of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ celebrated in the church's liturgy. Faith itself is culture. Insofar as faith tells man who he is in relation to the supernatural, faith creates culture; faith is itself culture moderated by ethics. Faith's expression is not an abstraction; it is one which has matured through the celebration of liturgy and through cultural mingling in which it formed the entire ethical structure of life, creating a balance of the interaction of man with himself, his neighbour, the world and God.

Thus, we can say that liturgy is a holistic act cutting across culture and ethics cementing the unity between God and man.

²⁰⁸ M. VELASQUEZ, <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/what-is-ethics/1/2010>

7.2.1 Understanding the Liturgy

The Hebrew verb '*avad*' majorly indicates 'to serve', 'to be a servant'. When the concept of God as *âdôn* -Lord has man as its subject and God as its recipient, the meaning of the verb has a broad and technical significance. Man serves God broadly when he chooses YHWH as his God (Dt. 6:13; 1 Sam. 12:20-24). Man serves God in a technical way, when man performs an act of worship towards God. The worship service represented by the verb *âdôn* and the noun *abôdâh* indicates the liturgical action that take place materially in the sanctuary (priestly work). In the late use of the verb *avad*, it became synonymous with the verb *šrt* 'to serve a person'.

The root *šrt* (verb - *širret*) indicates the service of an inferior towards his superior. If the recipient is God, it indicates the exercise of worship of God (Deut. 17:12; Jer. 33: 21-22; Ez. 40:46). The cultic service represented by the verb *širret* indicates the interior attitude in the liturgical action that takes place materially in the sanctuary.

Faced with these vocabularies, the New Testament Greek Septuagint translates *avad* as *leitourgein* in its verb form, and *leitourgia* in its noun form to mean a service from the priest and Levites to God. Then, it also translates *širret* in its verb forms as *latreuein* and *douleuein*, and noun forms as *latreia* and *douleia* to indicate the worship rendered to YHWH by the people.²⁰⁹

Therefore, the term liturgy etymologically means *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work). The compound word *leitourgia* stands for the work of the people; the work or service done by the people whether politically, militarily, religiously or in whatever nature for the common good. The word has mostly been used in religious circle to mean the public worship rendered to God.

The word Liturgy has been used by the Catholic Church to describe all the public acts of worship that take place, as it draws the people into the work of God for the people. Liturgy is in many ways the public face through which the people engage with the faith and deepen their relationship with God.

Through the liturgical celebrations, the church participate in the paschal mystery of Christ, that is, his passing through death into eternal glory, just as the people of ancient Israel passed from slavery to freedom through the

²⁰⁹ A. ALBERTIN, Op. Cit., p. 1-2.

original ritual events. Jesus Christ's death and resurrection become present and effective for us in the liturgical life of the church. His death and resurrection though belong to the history yet as risen Lord, Jesus allows us to participate in the paschal mystery through the liturgy of the church, that is, the visible gathering of the people for worship. It is the Holy Spirit, as the font of the Church's life, who draws us together through liturgical actions.

7.3 The liturgy from ethical viewpoint

Ritual and ethics are often considered different faces of religion: one ceremonial and précised in actions, the other informative, theoretical and reactive to everyday moral life. Liturgy as ritual worship is meant to harness Christians' totality of life, affecting their social, emotional and spiritual life dimensions so that they become a 'living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God'; because as it were, the central goal of all Christian worship is to adjust the life of the people to create a harmonious relationship between man and God and between man and his neighbour. That is why the interconnectedness of prayer, belief and morality has been proposed especially by liturgical movement. Through prayer and worship the believers are formed over time in the deep affections that mark Christian life.

Christian ethics is a systematic moral evaluation of human conduct from a Christian perspective about human relationship with one another and his relationship with God. Given the understanding of Christian ethics as that which gives answer to questions like: how I ought to live; why I ought to live this way? The ethical verification of liturgical ideology occupies itself with how liturgy could be celebrated to transmit these required ethical norms that it celebrates, such as justice, truth, freedom, love, basic equality and peace, to provide reasons and answers to above questions. In this view Ellen T. Charry note that "the contemporary church should shape its practice and thought so that a person may have a genuine chance to hear and respond to gospel that answers daily life challenges."²¹⁰

Thus, the active participation in liturgical celebration is an act of interpretation, interpellation and interpolation of the Christian message according to the life condition and environment of individuals in which they experience the call that imputes a responsibility. In liturgy, the transmission of the Christian message mediated by words into life action is central to

²¹⁰ C. ELLEN, *Raising Christian Children in a pagan culture: We are how we worship*, Century Foundation, Owerri 1994, p. 347.

worship. This message spurs a response from man who listens, not only through rituals and symbols in a precise liturgical act, but also from the very existence of individuals in every moment of life, alleviating them in their difficulties. This would be a perfect description of active participation. The ability of liturgy to reflect gospel message of Christ, not only influences the people's attitude during the liturgy, it also increases their participation in the social transformation.²¹¹ This remains essential to the nature of liturgy and do not detract from the aim of liturgy which is the glorification of God and sanctification of man.

Therefore, it is important to state in this discussion that as the priestly function of Christ in its head and members, cannot be classified as an end in itself but an act of glorification of God and sanctification and salvation of man, the importance of liturgy lies in the fact that liturgy is not only about the individual's relationship with God, but an act that has implication in the socio-ethical life of an individual.

The ethical responsibility of the Christian and his community, conceived as a response to the call of God passes through the union with Him in pious and religious ruminations and symbolisms into realism of action. If liturgy is actually to be understood as a dialogue between God and man, this dialogue must transform the human existence into the doing the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven (Mtt. 6:10) where ethical values are the principle of living. As a result, the Christian life could be understood in an ethical sense, as a transformation of values and action, not as an external exploit obligation, but as a result of the free acceptance of the Christian message.

7.3.1 Liturgy symbolizes God's kingdom

We have just referenced the pattern of celestial liturgy as contained in the Lord's Prayer. In the prayer, we don't just pray for God's will to supersede ours but especially that salvation message of Jesus Christ would spread and penetrate sufficiently into all corners of the earth. That is why the kingdom of God is not just that of banquet but the stabilization of righteousness, peace, equity and love. The kingdom of God on earth is that which is already established by Christ's sacrifice. Through Christ's sacrifice, he instituted the church as a temporal form of God's kingdom. The church is only a reflection of the universal kingdom. The church as embodiment of the kingdom of God extends beyond historical time into eschatological reality.

²¹¹ C. ERICKSON, *Liturgical Participation and the Renewal of the Church in Worship*, vol. 59, no. 3, May 1985, p. 231.

This reality has already been initiated in and through Christ. The kingdom of God drew nearer to man when God incarnated in human form so that the kingdom of God, in words of the scriptures, is no longer afar from us, but close at hand; the kingdom of God is close to us indeed in the person of Jesus who not only preached the new kingdom but demonstrated it with signs.

As a witness to God's kingdom, the Church follows Jesus' way of life and retains community character where the ideals of the kingdom are observed through liturgy. Though the kingdom would be fully realized at the end of time, its foretaste is celebrated in the church's liturgical mystery. Christ was the first to celebrate this mystery where He is the *sacerdos vittima*. In the Old Testament and pagan religions, the priest and the victim were distinct and separate. In Jesus, they were united inseparably. Christ's saving action continues ceremonially and symbolically in the life of the church thanks to sacraments.

The centrality of the sacrament, obviously, corresponds to the centrality of the place of its celebration, that is, of worship, of the liturgy. The centre of interest becomes the rite. A rite can be a mystery of a divine act; we can say that the rite represents and renews the mystery of Christ mysteries. Rituality has in itself the symbolic value that refers to salvific events. The mystery is ritual symbolic action, hence the necessity of the liturgy. The liturgy is a symbol, a ritual celebration of a divine action.²¹² So in the liturgy, the church celebrates those divine actions of Jesus and at the same time guides and directs the faithful towards the eschaton where Christ now celebrates the liturgy unending.

7.3.2 The Liturgy as an encounter

Liturgy is an encounter between God and man. It is a dialogue where man offer praise and thanksgiving and God responds by offering man the opportunity to participate in the mystery of salvation. It is on the level where sacred and rite interacts in the mystery of Christian worship. The liturgy is faith lived deeply in the ritual modality of the action with the use of external, physical elements to interact and encounter the ethereal supernatural Being. The idea of encounter is not reducible to indoctrination; and if one wants to uphold the doctrinaire aspect, it must be avowed that the usefulness of the liturgy, even as a caption, lies in the fact that, rather than teaching, it brings doctrine to life.

²¹² G. BONACCORSO, *La liturgia e la fede*, Op. Cit., p. 62.

The liturgy does not reside in the books; it involves action as a fundamental interaction with God. In modern Christianity, faith has been forced into an abstract conceptual system and the life of faith has set out towards abstract meditation; the life in spirit type of Christianity. In this perspective, Christianity appears mainly as a doctrine, a series of dogmas, or as a morality, a set of norms. The encounter then lies on spiritual experience of him who commits himself to personal prayer.

There is a manifold encounter with Christ in the liturgical celebration. It is within the Holy Mass that Jesus is made present in four distinct ways: through the Word, assembly, minister, and the Eucharist. This manifold encounter is the life-wire of the church. Each unites us to Christ and at the same time, draws us deeper into the mysteries of Christ.

The prologue of John establishes how the logos became flesh. The creation account also presents the creative power of the words. Christ is the Word being proclaimed in the liturgy. He is the eternal Word unbounded by space and time. As Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, listening to his words, so too should the gathered assembly open their hearts to God's revealed word. The tragedy is that the so much clamours of personal importance by the ministers distract and pull the people away from encountering with Christ in the word.

Christ is present in the gathered assembly (Mt 18:20). The people of God gather as a liturgical assembly to offer praise and worship to God. They gather in the name of Jesus and are united in Christian charity (Acts 20:7). The assembly has its uniting force in the Eucharistic meal which unites men to Jesus and through Jesus to each other.

Jesus is present in the celebrant who offers at the altar the only sacrifice of the One who was offered at Cross. He acts in persona Christi, while Christ himself who is present to his church as head of his body. The priest forgives on earth and Jesus forgives from heaven. Jesus is present especially under the Eucharistic species in his physical reality and corporeal presence. The council of Trent responding to Luther's Protestant errors declared that Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the Eucharist. Jesus' truly presence in Eucharist asks whether the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist is given by itself or by faith; Jesus is truly present not as an image, a representative –a photograph, rather the Eucharist is Jesus himself. Jesus is really present not by faith or as a sign that stimulates faith in Jesus. He is truly present in the body, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. The real presence of Christ is found only in the sacrament of the Eucharist

and not in the other sacraments, to which it is attributed only by analogy. In the substantial presence, the question of transubstantiation (substantial change of bread and wine change of bread and wine while maintaining the formal accidents) is tackled. Jesus is substantially present not that he manifests himself through the Eucharist and disappears afterwards. The church uses the term substantially present to show that he is really here and now and always in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist, like all Christian worship, is the work of God before it is the action of man. But above all, Christianity, before being a dogmatic doctrine and a moral system, is mystery of Jesus Christ. If the life of faith in itself is considered as intellectually or morally linked, the mysteries show that Christianity is considerably profound physical insertion into the mystical Christ.

Faith gives man the ability to see events transparently as God's interventions, that is, to recognize salvific events in historical events. The history of salvation, therefore, is qualified as hermeneutic nuances inserted into human history by divine grace in which humanity ultimately encounter God.

7.3.3 The liturgy as a mystery of Christian worship

There can be three meanings of the term mystery. In the first place, mystery is means God himself, he who is infinitely distant, the Holy and inaccessible, to whom no one can approach without dying. Secondly, mystery is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, that is, a divine action, the fulfilment of an eternal divine plan that is realized through an action that proceeding from the eternity of God is expressed in time and in the world and reaches its end again in the eternal God. From these two meanings it emerges that the term mystery means something that belongs as such to the typically sacral plane of the ineffable as to the typically historical plane of action and, obviously, of sacred action. Revelation is not the vanishing of the mystery into the conceptual clarity of a doctrine, but the historical fulfilment of what always remains ineffable and active. Thus, in the third place, mystery emerges as worship.

If the mystery (i.e. the historical-saving events and, above all, the death and resurrection of Christ) is an action, and precisely a sacred action (which has the ineffable value of the one who carries it out, that is God), the way it participates in the community of believers must still be a sacred action. Worship is precisely that sacred action. Worship is an action that says the

mystery, it is itself a mystery; the mystery of worship in the inevitable liturgical and ritual significance. According to the last two meanings, the mystery is a salvific event and a liturgical action, it is history and rite. It means that, so to say, began in history (salvific events) and continues in the rite (liturgical actions). Christ's saving action continues sacramentally in the life of the church thanks to what we call mystery or sacrament. The centrality of the sacrament, obviously, corresponds to the centrality of the place of its celebration, that is, of worship, of the liturgy. The centre of interest becomes the rite. A rite can be a mystery of a divine act; we can say that the rite represents and renews the mystery of Christ mysteries. Rituality has in itself the symbolic value that refers to salvific events; the mystery is ritual symbolic action, hence the necessity of the liturgy. The liturgy is a symbol, a ritual celebration of a divine action.

7.4 Liturgy and Justice

In liturgy, the community gathers in prayer where their spiritual hunger for God is fed and is sent forth to the world in mission to feed a hungry world, and to be the salt and light of the earth, and leaven the society. In liturgy we are touched by Christ and are sent forth as bearers of Christ to touch the world.

Justice as peace is the heart of Christ mission, since "he shall be our peace" (Mic. 5:5) because "He will bless his people with peace" (Zach. 9:10). The psalmist anticipates that "in his time, Justice shall flourish, and fullness of peace forever" (Ps 72:7). As he ascends into heaven, he gives and leaves his peace with his disciples (Jn 14:27). In Jesus, peace, justice and freedom was wrought by a single sacrifice. He re-established the broken relationship between God and man, and established justice between man and his neighbour.

The word proclaimed from the prophet Isaiah (61:1), speaks of core Christian mission as proclamation of the gospel and social justice. In the passage humanity is invited to this mission. The call for social justice is dependent upon our hearing, taking to heart and engaging our bodies, minds and spirit in the collective work of social justice. Thus, the liturgy of the word invites the hearer to listen more intently to how the scriptures calls us to a greater resolve to be involved in task of sharing God's love, participate in building just and peaceful world.²¹³

²¹³ L. DOWLING, *Liturgy Unities, Fortifies, Disciplines to bring Justice to the World*, in <http://www.pastoralliturgy.org/resources/liturgyUnitesFortifiesDisciplinestoBringJusticetotheWorld.pdf>.

The liturgy itself is social in nature and it is geared towards socially welfare. To the ancient Greeks who coined the term, liturgy is work in service to others. *Leitourgia* refers to people offering public service for the common good especially for the poor. In ancient Greece, it was expected from the *de rigneur* (rich people) to use good portion of their own assets to alleviate the needy thereby creating a balance between the rich and the poor.

The gathering of the liturgical assembly as a unified entity manifests peace and justice. The nourishing of the liturgical assembly from God's table of justice present in the scriptures urges them to act justly towards others within and outside the assembly.

Partaking in communion is an act of solidarity, one of the major principles of catholic Social justice teaching. The Eucharistic prayers recall and make present God's saving actions, especially the death and resurrection of Christ, proclaims the universal implication of social justice of the Eucharistic sacrifice for humanity, heaven unites with earth: "Lord, may this sacrifice which has made our peace with you advance the peace and salvation of all the world."²¹⁴ Salvation can't be realized without Christ, who is the visible victim of injustice, -the crucifix. So, if we participate in Holy Communion without the works of charity, peace and justice, we are merely good as any other person who has eaten any other food.

The feeding of multitude (Mt. 14: 13-21) demonstrates the connection between the service, liturgy and social welfare. Without the liturgy, the social structure degenerates, as would have been the case if Jesus had not fed the multitude. Liturgy is the indispensable source of the true Christian spirit; the true Christian spirit is indispensable foundation of Christian social regeneration. Hence, liturgy is the indispensable basis of Christian social regeneration. Our degeneration can only find its healing and ultimately regeneration in Christ, the chief liturgist.

²¹⁴ Eucharistic Prayer III

Evaluation

Human relationship is basic to every human society, a distinguishing mark of every community is its capacity to welcome new members into this relationship and by so doing fulfill their desire for identity.²¹⁵ As a result, the rites of initiation into any community are well designed to help the individual experience the transition he has chosen to undertake. Initiation shows that someone is carved into and now belongs to the community in equal capacity with every other person, integrating not just in the societal space but in the cultural values and customs of the community. This is evident in initiation rites of the Igbo community which accompanies the individual through life: at birth, at weaning, at adolescence, upon taking up a trade or office, at marriage, even at death.²¹⁶

The pedagogy of Igbo initiations concerns the whole person: body (channel of knowing through doing, in adequate gestures; hardened and sharpened to live in awareness, the depth of relationship; prompt to execute the wish of the community whose secrets he symbolizes and guards); memory (digesting myths and histories of behaviour transmitted with sufficient body rhythms); soul (creating new relationship cosmic realm, and transformed to new ways of relationship mediated by tradition).²¹⁷

Hence, the initiation and transitional rites of Igboland define a person in his religious, social, political, and cultural dimensions. That is why to make one a Christian implies a redefinition of the person through Christian initiation rites;²¹⁸ which places him on a new light diverse from his cultural and traditional pedestal. Igbo man, so to say, lives in two worlds; the world that his cultural environment bestows on him, and the other world that his Christian calling has placed on him. However, the Igbo man does not seem to have grasped the significance of Christian initiation because Christianity in Igboland is yet to be delivered from its captivity of African Traditional Religious realities. Culture and religion is still his problem.

That is why despite the effects of the sacrament of initiation and other sacraments on the Igbo recipients, the impact on the church Community and the society remains limited, as could be perceived in the caste practice and

²¹⁵ C. ANYANWU, *The Rites of Initiation in Christian Liturgy and Igbo Traditional Society: Towards the Inculturation of Christian Liturgy in Igboland*, Publication Universitaires, Berlin 2004, p. 296.

²¹⁶ F. LUMBALA, *Africans Celebrate Jesus Christ* in Rosino Gibellini, ed. *Paths of African Theology*, SCM Press, London 1994, p. 83.

²¹⁷ E. UZUKWU, *Worship as Body Language Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville USA 1997, p. 244.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

the other heinous African religious practices that have been wrongly given the cloak of culture that makes it difficult to clearly perceive them as evil than a culture.

Thus, there is need to enrich the Christian doctrines of initiation and especially the Eucharist so that these doctrines can incorporate some cultural semantics and symbolism that will help the Christians understand more the significance of the new life through baptism and to sustain the consciousness in the individuals of belonging to a community where all are equal through one initiation rites and invigorated through one Eucharistic meal. This will also help to appeal to the mentality and sensitivity of Igbo person whose religious background (ATR) remains a pragmatic one that something more fundamental and passionate has taken place in him. That is why St Augustine advices the Eucharistic community to always reflect the significance of the Eucharistic celebration. For him, “Eucharist is the sacrament known to the faithful which the church celebrates and offers as the victim in the offering she presents to God.”²¹⁹ Hence, he goes further to identify true sacrifice as an act of compassion. Sacrifice is an act of compassion whether it is done for oneself or towards a neighbour, especially when it is done for the sake of God.²²⁰

There is dearth of compassion is what is lacking among the Igbo Eucharistic communities that necessitates the discriminations and other cultural evils. The totality of the Igbo catholic community still celebrate and participate in the Eucharist together without being one body. The osu still suffers the burden of discrimination. The indifference of the freeborn on the plight of discrimination contradicts the convictions of the Christian belief that: “the joys and hopes, the grieves and the anxieties for the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, are also the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”²²¹ This contradicts equally the spirit and tradition of oriko. Oriko emphasizes communality and identification with the suffering members of the society.

The Eucharist as a foretaste of heavenly banquet is marked by the bond of fraternal charity. Because it prefigures eschatological fulfilment; the Eucharist raises concerns for commitments to issues of justice, reconciliation, holiness of life, promotion of global fellowship as well as the protection of the integrity of creation. The Eucharist presupposes therefore,

²¹⁹ ST. AUGUSTINE, *The City God*, book X, 6

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Op. cit., no. 1.

a community engaged in action for justice and liberation from violence and injustice. Oriko helps Igbo people understand this principle of justice and moral probity and therefore, maintains communion with the ancestral world. In this way, they keep alive the hope to enjoy the friendship of the beatific ancestors, who now live in peace after following the rule of justice and fraternity which is the principal focus of oriko.

Conclusion

In John's account, a night before his death, Jesus prayed: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in through their word; that they all may be one as we are one; so that they may be made perfect in one, and that they world may know that you have sent me, and they loved them as you love me" (Jn. 17:20-23). Jesus' prayer for unity emphasized her role of witnessing to the world.

This prayer seems not yet answered. Humanity has taken up arms and has been in war with each other. The proximity between wars is closing up. Ideological divergences have been on the increase suffocating morality. Religion itself has been camps of armies fighting and retreating. Nigeria, in particular has been bleeding from the clashes of religious jingoists. Christendom herself especially in African and Nigeria in particular has been rent into a thousand pieces by the ever-increasing number of denominations. Eventually, every household is turning into churches and worshipping centers. Cultural and traditional values have struggled for importance in the face of proselyte religions. All these sum up to portray that Jesus prayer has not yet been answered fully. It does appear that we live in the interim time before fulfilment of this prayer. Yet, it doesn't follow that Jesus' prayer is naught.

The unity Jesus prays for here is a unity in the truth, peace, love and tolerance; the tolerance that exists between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The church has often struggled to maintain a balance between the values of unity and diversity that are inherent in the expression of the Christian faith. The history has recorded church's megalomaniac monopoly of truth. This has not helped the church or the society.

In the old order at Babel, the people spoke in many languages and never understood themselves, resulting to confusion and brouhaha and eventually into melee. But in the new order, it is not a coincidence that on Pentecost the apostle proclaimed the gospel, not in a single language, but in many languages of the people who were present and all understood themselves. In this new order, the linguistic and cultural differences were not suppressed or somehow overcome.

In this work we set out with the central theme of asserting the significance of the Eucharistic mission in the light of oriko in resolving all the social barriers of discriminations, especially the osu caste system in Igboland. Our effort in this Eucharistic mission consists in the Eucharistic assembly's

ability to translate the spiritual experiences at the Eucharistic celebration into concrete daily living experience, especially as regards their relationships within and outside the assembly.

The fact that the Eucharistic celebration is able to accomplish a socio-spiritual closeness of relationship amongst the Eucharistic assembly remains paramount in Christian theology. For the Eucharistic assembly to enjoy the transforming effect of the Eucharist, she must actively participate in the Eucharistic celebration, and exemplify sacrificial significance of the Eucharistic mystery. This becomes the reason for employing the inculturation approach, which serves the function of helping the people understand their faith, as well as a major means of evangelizing the cultures. Inculturation is transformative because it assists the gospel in penetrating and engaging cultural values and by so doing transforms it. It liberates Igbo culture from negative customs with the conviction that all men and women created in the image of God belong to the universal family of God, the family of human race redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. While removing the elements of the culture that are fundamentally bad, inculturation tries to purify those cultural elements related to superstition in order to make the faith the people's culture.

Inculturation not only transforms culture, it brings about a mutual enhancement of the trust, which is the outcome of the Gospel engagement with culture while incarnating the Gospel in different cultures. The church introduces people together with their cultures into her community while allowing cultural initiatives but guiding these culture to take Christian garb. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within, by so doing, allows for some adaptation in order to help the people understand their faith from their cultural backgrounds.

In order that the work of inculturation progresses, it requires that Christians in Igboland rid themselves of the negative application of cultural values. Hence, the appreciation of one's values, customs and way of life remains precondition for inculturation. Making use of culture for understanding of one's faith brings about a unity of faith and culture in the worship life of the faithful. It is only by appreciating and proper application of people's cultural practices that the work of inculturation as a veritable agent of evangelization becomes transformative and effective. Failure to embark on inculturation is tantamount to failure to engage in the quest for the transformation, restoration, revitalization and improvement of human conditions around

them. Such would amount to Eucharistic inconsistency, as well as imply insincerity on the part of the Eucharistic community. This also vitiates the idea of the Eucharist as thanksgiving.

The Eucharist, celebrated as a community draws each of us closer to Christ as individuals, but also as a community. It teaches us about human dignity, calls us to right relationship with God, ourselves and others. The Eucharist is a sign of our unrivaled dignity as human persons. This dignity is given to all equally, regardless of our social or economic status, race or caste. The Eucharistic liturgy is the gathering of the young and old, the rich and the poor as well as millions around the world to celebrate Christ's sacrifice. This powerful reality reminds us that a truly Eucharistic community is not closed upon itself.

The Eucharist has provided us some veritable ways of curbing the problems human relationship. Eucharistic mission epitomizes some of the highest levels of love, as the meal shared together emits a deep sense of love of God for humanity which he also expects man to share with his fellow man. It depicts oneness or togetherness. Eucharistic mission brings about peace both in the church and in the cultural society. It brings the rich and the poor together under one table thereby eliminating class and inequalities.

The Eucharist should not just be seen from one side of religious ritual, and thus be made a ceremonial formality, but should transcend the religious boundaries to a more horizontal implication as an integral element that fosters the deepest values and virtues that keeps and maintains the sanctity and sanity of the society. We should be sure that for a variety of reasons, many people will never be baptized or participate in the Eucharist or any other sacraments; community is perhaps the only sacrament they share. In the community, they are called to live out the values of the kingdom. The birth of gospel communities where men and women gratuitously participate and receive the grace-filled sacraments must be considered a privilege and fortune for those who are able to receive it.

With this challenge facing us, the real liturgical problem in these mission contexts is knowing how to be unbiased in confronting such communities of non-baptized. If they are the places where faith roots and births itself in the daily experience of people, they can also be where an indigenous liturgy is created. Such liturgy makes more sense than the pious repetition of old formulas. These traditional rituals challenge Christian liturgies in the new community realities.

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Dear Respondents,

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

I am a Ph.D. Student of Selinus University of Sciences and Literature. I am researching on “That they may become one body and one Spirit”: Inculturating the Catholic Eucharist in the light of Oriko for promotion of unity in Igbo Traditional Society.

I humbly approach you to help me in responding to some cultural issues, especially Osu caste system, and the significance of Oriko in Igboland. Your response is required in achieving the purpose of this study.

Below is the attached questionnaire designed to enable me carry out my study successfully.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Tochukwu Akubue.

QUESTIONNAIRES

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

Instruction: Please tick (√) in the options provided or state clearly in the available spaces where applicable.

(1) Your Gender:

A Male

B Female

(2) Your age range in years

A. 20 – 30 years

B. 30 – 40 years

C. 40 – 50 years

D. 50 years and above

(3) Your educational qualification

A. NCE

B. B.Ed / BA

C. M.Sc

Other (specify)

Response Key:

Agreed (A)

Strongly Agreed (SA)

Disagreed (D)

Strongly Disagreed (SD)

S/N	Questions	A	SA	D	SD
1	Is Osu caste system a fact?				
2	Is Osu caste system discriminatory?				
3	Is it still in existence in Igboland?				
4	To what extent are they avoided?				
5	Are the osu dedicated to the idol forever?				
6	Are the osu people deprived of the inheritance?				
7	Can relating and living with the osu brings curses to the freeborn?				
8	Has Christianity affected the belief and practise				

	of discrimination against osu?				
9	Can osu ever become a freeborn?				
10	Are the osu discriminated in the society including in the churches and markets?				
11	Is there a relationship between the Igbo people with their ancestors?				
12	Do Igbo people worship their ancestors?				
13	Is the ancestral worship beneficial to the living members of the Igbo communities?				
14	How many city dwellers believe that ancestors help them in their daily lives?				
15	Is sacrifice a means of ancestral worship?				
16	Were Igbo people offering the sacrifice of the slaves and that of the osu people?				
17	Does the reason for the ancestral worship in Igboland include favours such as good harvest, good health, absence of calamities, etc?				
18	Will sacrifices continue to be offered to the ancestors to ensure abundant of harvest?				
19	Or will the harvest depend on more on new cultivation techniques?				
20	Has the Oriko Igbo traditional feast any implication in ancestral worship?				
21	Does the Oriko meal include the living and the dead members of the umunna (family)?				
22	Can a sinner or an offender of the community participate in the Oriko meal of the umunna?				
23	Does the significance of Oriko include the forgiveness of the community and social offenders?				
24	Does the forgiveness include the incorporation of the Osu into the freeborn?				
25	Can Christians also participate in the oriko meal?				
26	Is there any resemblance of the oriko with Christian Eucharist?				
27	Or does the Eucharist signify more than the oriko?				
28	Can the practice of the participation in the Eucharist help in the bridging the gap between				

	the freeborn and the Osu people?				
29	Is the present style of the Eucharistic celebration sufficient to arouse a communitarian spirit among the whole Igbo people?				
30	Is the present style of celebrating the Eucharist in Igboland today humanitarian enough?				
31	How can the traditional cultural inheritance be maintained in Christian practice as African society changes?				
32	Can we overcome the contradictions between the desire to be faithful to sound customs, and to be open to changes that are turning traditional society upside down?				
33	How can we re-evaluate the meaning and significance of the Christian mystery, taking into account African symbolism, in a universe where African searches for concrete happiness within the shadow of the ancestors?				
34	How can the community of faith flourish if they have to look to the outside for their resources?				
35	How can people who gather around the gospel in Africa express their faith and make use of their own faculties?				
36	Does the Eucharist as it celebrated in African communities adequately make use of the basic theme of a meal –an event which human beings are graciously given food that lets them live in nearness to God?				
37	Is there problem of the syncretism among the Christians in Igboland?				
38	If there is the problem of syncretism in Igboland, can the reasons include the unresolved allegiance between the ancestral influence and the Christian religion?				
39	Does the binary allegiance mean an indication of weak Christian faith?				
40	Does it mean that both Christian faith and the sacraments could be abandoned in moments of crisis?				
41	Does it show a divorce between Eucharistic				

	celebration and daily life?				
42	Can the gap between the Eucharist and daily life be bridged?				