

Inculturation of Catholic Liturgical Music: Challenges and Prospects for the Church in Nigerian

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Abstract

The late twentieth century marked a new age for the history of Christianity in Africa as Church leadership passed from the hands of foreign missionaries to indigenous African clergymen and women. This development required that the Church reappraises her evangelising mission so as to maintain and exceed the successes attained by the missionaries and redefine its orientations and goals. This appraisal was necessary especially in the area of the introduction of certain elements of African culture into the Christian faith. It is in this regard that this paper raised questions around the inculturation of Catholic liturgical music. It studied the fundamental place of inculturation in relation to the use of African languages in Catholic liturgical music. To achieve this, it defined inculturation as a theological concept and traced its foundation to the Trinity, the incarnation, creation, paschal mystery, Pentecost and revelation and grace with its imperatives in Church history and Sacred Scripture. For the purpose of a connect, it also studied liturgical music, with reference to its characteristics and functions within the liturgy. The reasons for inculturating liturgical music is based on the understanding of language as the structure of reality and as an instrument for revelation. It submitted that only inculturation, including of liturgical music, would lead to an intensively Christianised community that would witness

transformation of the different levels of its life in the light of the gospel message. For the purpose of this study, the qualitative phenomenological research design method of investigation, exploratory approach, semi-structured interview and purposeful sampling technic were employed.

Keywords: Catholic, Church, Language, Liturgical, Inculturation, Music, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Since the independence of the last African country from colonial rule, the Christian churches in Africa have grown tremendously. The vocations to the priestly and religious life are abundant. About ninety-nine percent of the clergy and consecrated persons currently in Africa are Africans. Thus, Metuh¹ thinks that the Church needs to reappraise her evangelising mission so as to maintain and exceed the successes attained by the missionaries and redefine the Church's orientations and goals. This is considerable given that in spite of these successes, there is an evident lack of depth in the faith and commitment of African converts; there is also an increasing proliferation of Afro-Christian Indigenous Churches. This, according to Metuh, is due to the missionaries' intolerance of the tendency of the new African converts to introduce elements of their religion and culture into Christianity.

This intolerance of missionaries also had consequences on the manner of worship. Africans, a people of songs, dance and drums, were not allowed by some missionaries to sing in their local languages or to beat the drum and dance to its rhythm during worship until recently. African names were also rejected at baptism. Now that the Church has become increasingly indigenous, where do we go from here? Waliggo avers that "the simple rules of communication require that the speaker adapts himself to the audience, and his message, in order to be understood by his audience, has to be clothed in the thought-patterns of the

¹ I. E. Metuh, "Incarnating Christianity in African World-views," in *The Church in Africa and the Secial African Synod*, ed. Justin Ukpong, 923-930 (Port Harcourt: CIWA, 1993).

hearers.”² Since evangelisation in Africa is currently primarily the responsibility of Africans, there is need to make Christianity feel at home in Africa through inculturation.³ This paper, therefore, raises questions around the inculturation of liturgical music. It argues that only inculturation, including of Catholic liturgical music, will lead to an intensively Christianised community that will witness transformation of the different levels of its life in the light of the gospel message.

2. Methodology

This study was carried out using the qualitative phenomenological research design, a kind of exploratory research design. The phenomenological research design is concerned with the direct experiences of people⁴ and used when there is need to understand a social and psychological phenomenon from the perspectives of those involved.⁵ Thus, the essence of using the phenomenological design is to describe the views of Catholics regarding the inculturation of liturgical music as accurately as possible, from their standpoint, without any pre-given frame-work. Semi structured interviews were used to elicit information. This is because semi-structured interviews allow for detailed exploration of issues and generate knowledge that is grounded in reality. This exploratory approach is appropriate for this study because experts agree that in complex interventions, there is need for exploratory investigations as a necessary precursor to future intervention

² J. Waliggo, *Inculturation: Its meanings and urgency* (Nairobi: St Paul, 1996), 14.

³ See A. I. Kanu's works on: "Igwebuike Theology of Omenani," "Igwebuike Theology of Ikwa Ogwe," *OGIRISI: A Journal of African Studies* 16 (2020), 127-144 and 15 -28 respectively. And "Igwebuike Theology of Udi: God's Unchanging Revelation and Man's Changing Culture," *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life* 17, no. 2 (2020), 12-14.

⁴ See C. Moutstakes, *Phenomenological research methods* (California: Sage Publications 1994); D. Robinson and V. Reed, *A-Z of research jargon* (United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1998) and J. Maypole and T. G. Davies, "Students' Perceptions of Constructivist Learning in a Community College," *American History 11 Survey Course, Community College Review* 2 (2001), 56-79.

⁵ See Moutstakes, *Phenomenological research*, and J. C. Welman and S. J. Kruger, *Research Methodology for the Business and Administrative Sciences* (Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishing, 1999).

studies. The subject of the inculturation of liturgical music is an under-researched area in the Nigerian context.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. Based on the purpose of this research, the criteria for invitation to participate in the study were that respondents must be practicing Catholics. The researcher contacted some Catholics across the 6 geopolitical zones, and they referred others to participate in the interview. Recruitment of participants continued until data saturation was achieved. In other words, recruitment of participants continued until no new topics were brought up by the last two participants. A total of 88 participants with a variety of backgrounds participated in the study.

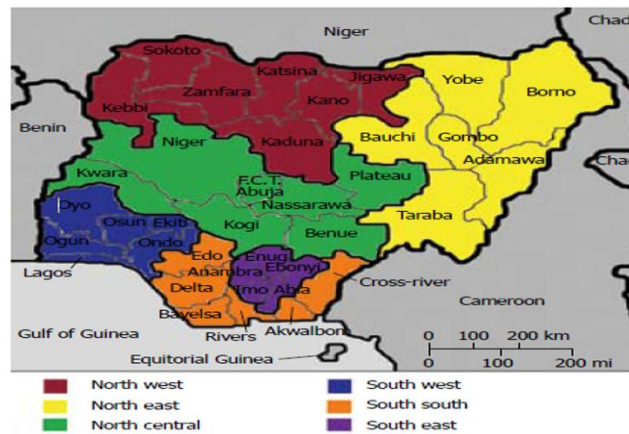


Plate 1: Map of Nigeria showing the six geopolitical zones from which the interviewees emerged

Semi-structured interviews were conducted one-on-one and face-to-face as well as via telephone. Some respondents wrote their responses and sent them to the researcher. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and also via telephone between August and September 2021. An Interview Guide was developed by the researcher, in association with two trained Catholic Liturgists with

sufficient knowledge of the Catholic liturgy. The areas of questioning were:

1. Relevant background information (gender and location)
2. Views of church members regarding the need to translate liturgical music to local languages
3. Views of members regarding the ways in which the translation of liturgical music to local language will impact the spiritual lives of worshippers
4. Potential barriers to the enculturation of liturgical music.

All interviews were recorded with permission from the participants. The interview records were subsequently transcribed verbatim by the researcher. To protect participants anonymity, participants were assigned code from R1- R88.

Data explication was conducted using the explication process described by Hycner (1999). This model was chosen because it allows data to emerge organically, captures the description in the terms of the interviewee and enables the explication to be conducted in a structured manner. The process which has five stages includes: bracketing and phenomenological reduction; delineating units of meaning; clustering of units of meaning to form themes; summarising each interview and where necessary, validating and modifying; and extracting general and unique themes from all interviews. Following this process, the researcher ensured that there were no presuppositions regarding the interviews to be held. Thus, although the researcher had some assumptions about what the views of the church members regarding the inculturation of liturgical music may be, an open mind was maintained. The researcher listened to/read the interviews repeatedly, identified the keywords, and created themes by grouping related parts. The key issues, ideas and concepts raised by the participants formed the major themes. A composite summary of the findings is presented (Tables 1-4) and the themes were graphically represented (Figure 1).

3. Inculturation: History, Definition and Foundation

Historically, inculturation is a new vision of an old problem in the Church or a new approach to a solution of an old problem.⁶ Even though originally borrowed from cultural anthropology where it connotes the insertion of a person into his or her culture, in missiological discussions, it was first used by Joseph Masson, a professor at the Gregorian University Rome, in such a manner that it combines the theological significance of incarnation with the anthropological concepts of enculturation and acculturation.⁷ It was later employed by Cardinal Sin of Manila at the Synod on Catechesis held in Rome in 1977. Its first insertion into Papal Documents was in Pope Saint John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis published in October 1979. Since then, it became a common place and frequently used by him during his visits to Africa.⁸

However, according to Walligo inculturation is about making Christianity feel at home in particular cultures:

Inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his Gospel of salvation ever more understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It is the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought patterns of each people.... It is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity 'truly feel at home' in the cultures of each people.⁹

Focussing on the unification, animation and transformation that should emerge from inculturation, Arrupe defines it thus:

Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in particular cultural context, in such a way

⁶ O. Onwubiko, *A theory and practice of inculturation: An African perspective* (Enugu: SNAAP, 1997).

⁷ P. Schineller, *A handbook on inculturation* (New York: Paulist, 1990) and I. E. Metuh, *African inculturation theology: Africanizing Christianity* (Onitsha: Imico, 1996).

⁸ Schineller, *A handbook on inculturation* and A. I. Kanu, "Inculturation and Christianity in Africa," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2 (2012), 236-244.

⁹ Waliggo, *Inculturation*, 11.

that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the cultures, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation.¹⁰

Inculturation, from the foregoing, becomes an approach in evangelisation after the pattern of the ‘Word made-flesh’, which will involve the gospel taking life and flesh in the beliefs of people who welcome Christ.¹¹ It is a conscious effort to help people be converted down to the very roots of their culture.

4. The Theological Foundations of Inculturation

Inculturation has some theological foundations, which include:

4.1 The Mystery of the Trinity

The penetration and indwelling of the three divine persons reciprocally in one another, does not throw away the distinctiveness of persons in the Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons but consubstantial. The beauty of this interpenetration lies in their distinctiveness. Cultural diversity and pluralism, therefore, does not pose a threat to the Church’s unity and mission, it rather adds to its beauty.¹²

4.2 The Mystery of the Incarnation

According to Krieg, the incarnation refers to the “abiding reality of the hypostatic union of the divine nature and the human nature in Jesus Christ.”¹³ *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) teaches that the incarnation expresses the whole process of inculturation.

¹⁰ P. Arrupe, “Letter to the whole Society on Inculturation,” *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits*. Jesuit Missions: Washington DC (1978), 6.

¹¹ See S. I. Udoidem, *John Paul II on inculturation: Theory and practice* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1996) and R. Crollius, *Inculturation: Newness and ongoing progress* (Nairobi: Pauline, 1986).

¹² I. A. Kanu, “A Hermeneutics of the Igbo-African Kola-Nut as a “Type” of Holy Communion,” *Nnadiesube Journal of Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2019), 27-40.

¹³ R. Krieg, “Incarnation,” in *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. R. McBrien (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 259.

4.3 The Mystery of Creation

Gallagher observes that the narrative of Genesis was an early example of dialogue between faith and culture.¹⁴ That is, between the Jewish faith and the religion of the Ancient Near East.

4.4 The Paschal Mystery

The Paschal Mystery refers to the unified total event of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. John Paul II exhorts that: "This emptying of self, this kenosis necessary for exaltation, which is the way of Christ and of each of his disciples (Cf. Phil 2:6-9), sheds light on the encounters of cultures with Christ and his Gospel."¹⁵

4.5 The Mystery of Pentecost

On Pentecost day, people gathered in Jerusalem from all parts of the world. When the apostles spoke, they were all excited because they heard them speak in their own different languages (Acts 2:5-7). This was the cause of feeling at home for new believers.¹⁶

4.6 Revelation and Grace

Revelation shows that the seed of the Word of God is present in every culture. Thus, the agent of inculturation does not step into a godless context. In the same way, grace "is offered to all men and women, and any exclusivist understanding of grace would deny the understanding of inculturation as a two-way street, a listening as well as sharing or teaching."¹⁷

5. Theological Imperatives for Inculturation

The imperatives for inculturation are taken from the Sacred Scripture and the History of the Catholic Church.

¹⁴ M. Gallagher, *Clashing symbols: An introduction to faith and culture* (New York: Paulist, 1997).

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa and Its Evangelizing Mission (Bangalore: Paulines, 1995), 85.

¹⁶ I. A. Kanu, "An Igwebuike approach to the study of African traditional naming ceremony and baptism," *International Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 11, n. 1 (2019), 25-50.

¹⁷ Schineller, *A handbook on inculturation*, 47.

5.1 Imperatives from the Scripture

Jesus and His apostles came from the Jewish background whose religiosity, prayers and practices of worship were well defined. However, Jesus' attitude towards the Jewish cult was that of fidelity and autonomy. In fidelity, Jesus had respect for the traditions of His time. He came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them (Matthew 5:17). He was faithful in observing the offering of sacrifices in the temple (Matthew 21:12), the service of the Word in the synagogue (Matthew 6:6), observing the day of the Sabbath, the feasts of Passover, Tabernacle, and Dedication (Matthew 26:17-19). His autonomy found expression in His challenge to fellow Jews to spiritualize and interiorize the Jewish religion.¹⁸

When Jesus preached the Gospel, He used categories familiar to His audience. We hear of absentee Lords and Tenant revolts (Matthew 21:31-45); small family-run farms (Mt 21:28-30); debts and debtors (Matthew 18:25-35); extortion and corruption (Luke 16:1-9); uncaring rich (Luke 12:18); day labourers paid merely subsistent wages (Matthew 20:1-6). These graphically reflect the detail of the picture of Palestinian countryside during His time.¹⁹ After Jesus, Dulles observes that His apostles continued to employ the same model in their attempt to bring the Good News to the peoples of their time.²⁰ St Paul writes, "To the Jews I became a Jew, in order to win Jews... I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (Philippians 9:20 & 22).

5.2 Imperatives from Church History

Justin the Martyr (100-165) holds that the different cultures were inspired by God and should be appropriate for His service. He saw these cultures as prefigurations of Christ "a Logos spermatikos" (seed bearing word). Clement of Alexandria (150-215) established

¹⁸ See I. A. Kanu, "Inculturation and Christianity in Africa," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2 (2012).

¹⁹ See S. Freyne, *The world of the New Testament* (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1980).

²⁰ A. Dulles, "An ecclesial model for theological reflection," in *Tracing the Spirit*, ed. James Hug (New York: Paulist, 1983), 218-241.

a fundamental theory- a harmony of faith and Greek culture, which places Greek philosophy at the service of faith. For him, the ideas of Greek philosophy were a gift to mankind and find their unity in Christianity.²¹

St Augustine of Hippo (354-430) holds that faith runs on earth and takes its citizens from all nations and languages; and faith is not to be pre-occupied with customs, laws and institutions, neither is it to reject or destroy any of these, but rather it should observe and conserve them so that they do not constitute an obstacle to the religion that teaches the true worship of God.²²

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) calls for the need to open the doors of the Church for legitimate progress, and this involves the adaptation of the gospel to particular cultures (Sacrosanctum Concilium No. 23). *Ecclesia in Africa*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Saint John Paul II and the Synod of African Bishops in 1994 emphasized the need for the inculturation of the Christian message in Africa. In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI, in his *Africae Munus*, emphasized the need for inculturation in Africa while respecting the universal character of the Church.

6. Catholic Liturgical Music: A Definition

The Catholic liturgy according to the Second Vatican Council is “the *culmen et fons* the source and summit of the life and mission of the whole Church.”²³ Pius XII (1947) defines the liturgy as “the public worship that Our Redeemer as Head of the Church renders to the Father as well as the worship that the community renders to its Founder and through Him to the Father. It is, in short, the worship rendered by the Mystical Body of Christ in the entirety of its head and members.”²⁴ Thus, the Second Vatican Council teaches that

²¹ See E. Shorter, *Towards a theology of inculturation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988)

²² See Kanu, “Inculturation and Christianity.”

²³ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10, 4th December.

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

²⁴ Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy (1947), no. 20. https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html.

“Rightly then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy, by means of signs perceptible to the senses, human sanctification is signified and brought about in ways proper to these signs.”²⁵ This makes the Catholic Liturgy central to the life of the Church.²⁶

Having understood liturgy, what then is liturgical music? Liturgical music refers to chants, hymns, responsorial songs, etc., which the Church admits as part of her official and public worship in law and in practice. The Second Vatican Council describes liturgical music as “a treasure of inestimable value, greater than that of any other art ... [and] forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.”²⁷ Such a music, aims at the glorification of God,²⁸ is Christ centred, pneumatic, biblical, holy and exclude all profanity, promotes prayer, and confers solemnity to the liturgy.

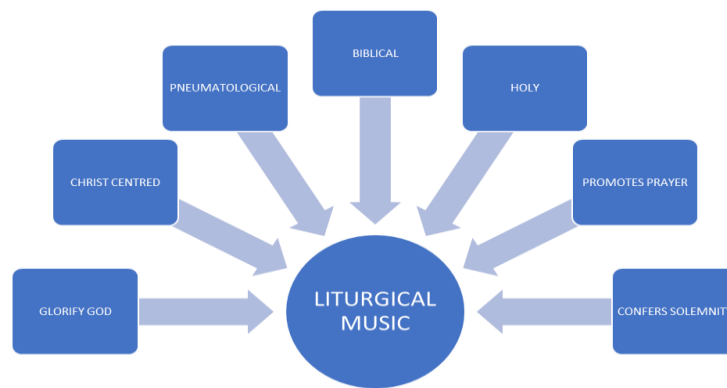


Plate 2: Showing the aims of Catholic liturgical music

²⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concillium*, no. 10.

²⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concillium*, no. 9.

²⁷ *Sacrosanctum Concillium*, no. 112.

²⁸ M. Iyara, “Be moved more by what is sung, not by the melody you hear,” Chaplains Message issued at the 9th Annual National Conference of the National Catholic Liturgical Music Council of Nigeria, held at St Louis College, Jos, Plateau State, 30th August – 1st September 2018.

Liturgical music is reserved exclusively for the liturgy after going through scrutiny for formal approval by a competent episcopal authority (Iyara 2019).

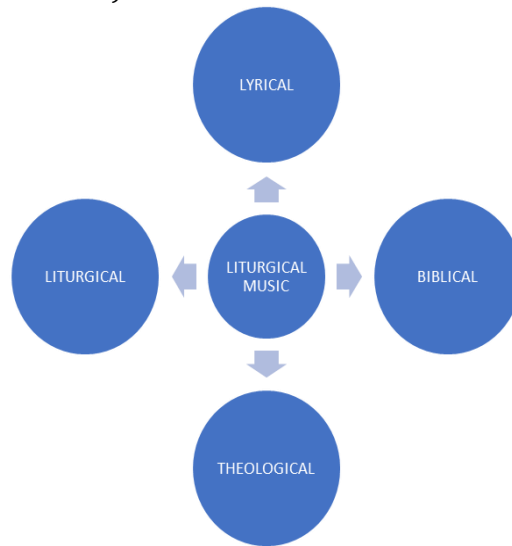


Plate 3: Showing the dimensions of Catholic liturgical music

Before its approval, it must have a lyrical content, authentic biblical foundation, theological basis and be liturgical.²⁹ This music is designed in such a manner that it fits into the different seasons and times as characterised in the Liturgy of the Church; this fitness reflects the sacred mysteries celebrated at different seasons and times.

7. Characteristics and Functions of Liturgical Music

The characteristics and functions of liturgical music are:

- a. **Universal:** They must be such that everyone who hears them, be they from any culture or part of the world will receive an

²⁹ *Musicam Sacram*. (5th March), 23, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_instr_19670305_musicam-sacram_en.html.

impression no other than good.³⁰ It must be compatible with the Christian message and in fellowship with the Universal Church.³¹

- b. **Aesthetic:** God is Beauty itself and associated with beauty. A liturgical music should reveal this beauty, and should be technically and expressively good.
- c. **Diversiory:** It should have the capacity to eliminate boredom and monotony.
- d. **Emotional:** It should help worshippers express themselves.
- e. **Enjoyable:** It should be pleasurable to the human spirit.
- f. **Participatory:** It should enhance the active participation of worshippers.³² The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1967) upholds that: “The usage of entrusting to the choir alone and... the complete exclusion of the people’s participation, is to be deprecated.”³³ The Second Vatican Council adds that “Full and active participation by all the people... is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.”³⁴
- g. **Uniqueness:** It should give every liturgical function its uniqueness or mood.
- h. **Revelatory:** It should help the worshipper have a religious experience.³⁵

³⁰ Pius X, *Tra Le Sollecitudini*, Instruction on Sacred Music (1903). <https://adoremus.org/1903/11/tra-le-sollecitudini>.

³¹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*.

³² See John Paul II, Centenary of the *Motu Proprio*, *Tra Le Sollecitudini* on Sacred Music (2003). https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/2003/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20031203_musica-sacra.html; A. Reid, *The organic development of the liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) and J. Ratzinger and V. Messori, *The Ratzinger’s Report* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985).

³³ *Musicam Sacram*, no. 16.

³⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 14.

³⁵ Paul VI, Address at the General Assembly of the Italian Association of Santa Cecilia, 18th September, 1968.

- i. **Accompaniment:** Liturgical music accompanies the rituals or gestures during worship.

8. The Inculturation of Liturgical Music

The Greek and Roman worlds played significant parts in shaping the character and influencing the history of Christianity, in the sense that while Greek philosophy and culture shaped early Christian theological formulations, the Roman world, shaped the organisational and practical dimensions of the life of the Christian church, and its religious impulses from the rich Jewish tradition. However, as Christianity moved to the shores of Africa, its sympathetic, non-derogatory and non-dominant touch declined. There was a smugness toward African religion and culture, which generated barrage of names for it, like- primitive, pagan, heathen, magic, ancestor worship, juju, fetish, animism, etc.³⁶ In the face of all these, there is need for a Catholicism that is ours while being universal for some reasons:

1. Christianity needs to be more at home in Africa than ever. Let our culture become gospel and the gospel our culture.
2. The faith needs to be deepened.
3. The local language enriches the Church's liturgy.
4. Fostering of participation among worshippers who have come to discover God as persons through a worshipping community is of importance.
5. Our culture is the seed of the Word of God that dwelt among us even before the missionaries came. Through it, we achieved holiness without hearing the gospel.
6. A sympathetic and non-derogatory approach is needed towards local cultures after the examples of Christ and Saint Paul.

³⁶ I. A. Kanu, "Igwebuike: An operative condition of African philosophy, religion and culture. Towards a thermodynamic transformative ontology," Maiden Inaugural Lecture delivered on 22nd February at Tansian University, Umunya (Abuja: Autograde 2021) and "Towards an African cultural renaissance," *Professor Bassey Andah Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3 (2010), 146-155.

7. Our culture is a preparation for the gospel that now reveals the full truth about God.

The Christian faith and liturgy are not against our culture but hunger to take their true residence in our cultures in such a manner that is consistent with the gospel. John Paul II teaches that:

In the field of sacred art and liturgy, a whole enrichment is possible... provided that the meaning of the Christian rite is preserved and that the Church universal, Catholic element of the church is clearly seen... in union with other local churches and in agreement with the Holy See.³⁷

The Second Vatican Council, therefore, calls for the retention of sound tradition in the liturgy while opening the doors for legitimate progress.³⁸ It is in this regard that Paul VI exhorts that:

The expression, that is, the language and the mode of manifesting the one faith may be manifold.... From this point of view, certain pluralism is not only legitimate but desirable. An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the Church.³⁹

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis admonishes that the inculturation of the gospel is imperative for the evangelisation of cultures. There is, therefore, need to use our local languages and musical instruments to enrich the Catholic liturgy. This takes place at the level of creativity, however, in accordance with established liturgical norms and principles.⁴⁰

³⁷ John Paul II, An address to the Bishops from other African Countries, Kinshasa, Zaire. May 3rd 1980, 1. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/fr/speeches/1980/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19800503_vescovi-africa.html.

³⁸ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 23.

³⁹ Paul VI, An address during a visit to Kampala (1969), 1. http://www.archivioradiovaticana.va/storico/2015/11/26/uganda_1969_paul_vi_the_first_pope_to_visit_africa_/en-1189796.

⁴⁰ W. A. Avenya, "Mediocrity, banality and superficiality: Addressing issues of inconsistency with contemporary liturgical music in Nigeria," A paper presented at 10th Annual National Conference of the National Catholic Liturgical Music Council of Nigeria, held at Queen of the Holy Rosary School, Gboko, Benue State, 4th– 7th September, 2019.

8. The Views of Catholic Faithful

Some Catholics were interviewed with the intention of sampling their views on the need for the use of liturgical music in local languages.

Results

The participants (n=88) were slightly skewed in gender towards male. However, participants represented a range of ages and distribution across the 6 geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

Table 1: Participants' Gender and Location

Characteristic	Category	Number of participants (n=88)
Gender	Male	49
	Female	33
Location of affiliated participants in Nigeria	North-West	17
	North-East	12
	North-Central	16
	South-West	13
	South-East	18
	South-South	12

Table 2: Major Themes in participants' responses on the need to translate liturgical music to local languages

Theme	Sub-Theme	Theme Dimensions	#Cited
1. What are the views of Catholics regarding the need to translate liturgical music into local languages?			
Cultural Alignment	Better Understanding	• Clarity of meaning of liturgical contents • Feeling at home with the liturgy	28
			5
			2
	More effective Gospel propagation	• Preservation of Gospel integrity • More effective evangelism	5
			6
	Deeper Divine Connection	• Feeling of connectedness and closeness to God • Spiritual upliftment	5
			4
Inclusion	Better Medium for Praise and worship	• Feeling of more effective worship • Enjoyment of the liturgy	5
	Deeper involvement	• Sense of belonging • Paying attention to liturgy • Feeling accepted by global church	22
			4
			5
			19
	Active participation	• Singing along during liturgy • Carrying the old and locals along • Carrying the youth along	4
			2

Table 3: Major Themes in participants' responses on the ways in which translation of liturgical music to local languages would impact the spiritual lives of the people

Theme	Sub-Theme	Theme Dimensions	#Cited
2. In what ways would the translation of liturgical music to local languages impact the spiritual lives of the worshippers?			
Participation	Disposition and Interest	• Willingness to attend	6
		Mass/readiness for Mass	7
		• Interest/excitement about liturgy	13
Comprehension	Understanding	• Sense of belonging and feeling of acceptance	23
			9
		• Understanding the meaning of the musical contents	10
Engagement	Learning and Mastery	• Understanding of the doctrine and the liturgy	3
			27
		• Increase leaning/knowledge of the liturgy and Mass	6
Reflection	Worship	• Easy mastery the liturgical processes/activities	12
			10
			8
Reflection	Relationship	• Connection to God	2
		• True service to God	
		• Conversion of Souls	5
Reflection	Meditation	• Upliftment of Souls to God	2
		Feeling closer to God/Church	
		The feeling of Direct communication with God	
Reflection		Meditate on what is being said during Mass	
		Reflect on what was said after the Mass	

Table 4: Major Themes in participants' responses on the barriers to the enculturation of liturgical music

Theme	Sub-Themes	Theme Dimensions	#Cited
3. What are the potential barriers to the enculturation of liturgical music?			
Resistance	Unwillingness to change	• Conservativeness of Church leaders and ministers	7
		• Low acceptance by congregation in some culture	6
		• Confusion about where to start from	2
			4
	Fear of the corruption and desecration of Liturgy		11
		• Liturgy may lose spiritual essence/sacredness	3
		• Church may lose universality	9
		• Local musical instruments may introduce noise and erode solemnity of liturgy	2
			18
		• Alien practices may sneak into liturgy	4
Cultural Diversity	Language Diversity	• Fetish traditions may emerge	17
			28
	Exclusion - Multi-tribal congregation singers and audience	• Numerous languages in Nigeria. Which one to use?	3
		• Numerous Dialects – which one to use?	8
			14
Translation	Inadequate vocabulary	• Inability to read local languages, especially among the youth	28
		• People who do not understand the local language used cannot participate	21
			3
	Misinterpretation	• Choir comprise of people of various tribes/languages – which will they learn?	4
			2
		• Some words may not be available in local languages	2

Dissemination and financing	Technical Expertise	• Accurate translation without adding to or subtracting from original liturgy	1
		Inadequacy of experts that understand liturgy and local languages	
		Inadequacy of experts that have adequate knowledge of liturgy, foreign and local languages	
	Dissemination	Inadequate research on local languages in Nigeria and applications	
	Financing	Defining how to get the newly translated songs to congregations	
		Financing the translations and dissemination	

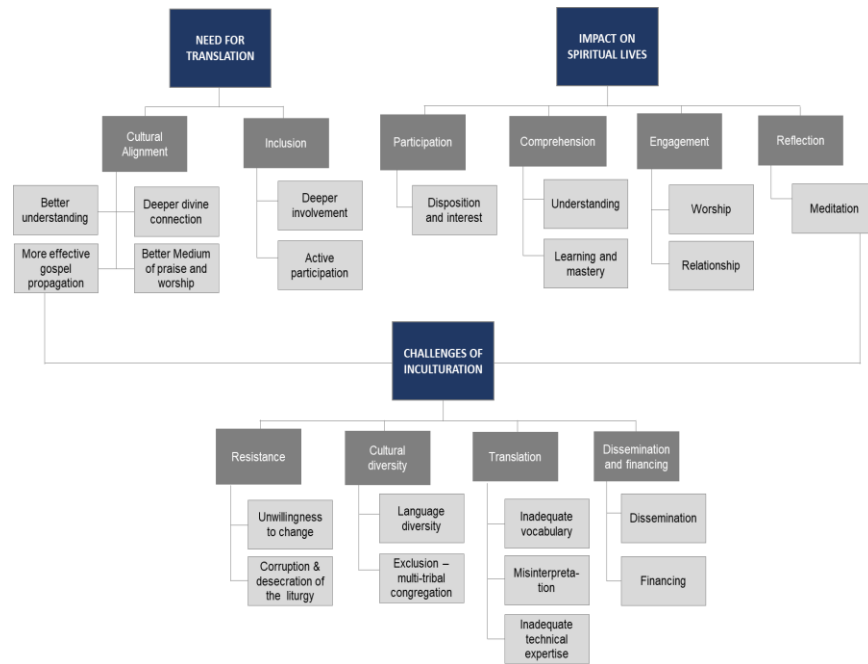


Figure 1: Themes identified in interviews – inculturation of Liturgical Music

9. Discussions

The articulation of the positive impact of inculturating liturgical music From the participants, the following are the benefits of translating liturgical music into local languages:

- a. There is an increased clarity of meaning of liturgical contents
- b. Evangelisation becomes more effective
- c. There is the feeling of more connectedness with God
- d. There is an increased enjoyment of the liturgy
- e. There is a sense of belonging to the universal Church
- f. There is a greater attentiveness
- g. Worshippers are carried along- young and old
- h. Increased learning of the liturgy

- i. Better atmosphere for meditation and reflection

10. The articulation of challenges of Inculturating Liturgical Music

From the foregoing, the challenges of inculturating liturgical music can be articulated as follows:

10.1 Textual Orthodoxy

There is the fear that the right words which are in conformity with the meaning that the Church intends to communicate might be lost, and may end up reminding people of their traditional religion and culture rather than Christ.

10.2 The Choice of Rhythm

The rhythm should express the mood of the liturgy. There is the fear that some rhythms generated through the use of traditional musical instruments might not express this mood. For instance, there are post-communion songs that are played to the tune of an African war dance or a pre-marital romantic dance.

10.3 Isolation of the Local Church

There is fear that the local Church will lose her universality through inculturation. Thus, Gallagher (2003) avers that caution must be taken so as not to isolate a particular church within the universal church.

10.4 The problem of language

- (a) A lot of the local languages in Africa are not developed yet.
- (b) There are many concepts in the liturgy that might not find its equivalent in local African languages.
- (c) More so, that many Africans as a result of colonial influence do not know how to speak their languages raises the fear of the possibility of misrepresentation.

10.5 Fear of Exclusion

This is connected to the problem of language. There is the fear that people who do not understand the particular language in which the liturgical music is sung may begin to feel excluded.

10.6 Fear of Syncretism

Numerous African Independent Churches have obviously taken the initiative of adapting the Christian religion to the mentality and lifestyle of the African people. This raises the fear of syncretism, which is the mixing of elements of two religious systems to the point where at least one, if not both, of the systems loses basic structure and identity.⁴¹

10.7 Poor Financial Support

The financial support available for the choir is insufficient.

10.8 Poor Technical Expertise

Poor personnel with technical expertise in Catholic liturgical music is at the base of several problems and challenges.

10.9 Rigidity

Even after the Second Vatican Council's position on adaptation, some Church leaders still express a rigidity that hampers progress.

11. The Way Forward

The Church cannot step back as a result of the challenges in inculturating liturgical music. The gains obviously outweigh the challenges. The Church, therefore, needs to provide the necessary

⁴¹ See T. Yamamori, *Christopaganism or indigenous Christianity?* (Pasadena: WC, 1975); R. Schreier, *Constructing local theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994); J. Pinto, *Inculturation through basic communication* (Bangalore: Asian, 1985) and I. A. Kanu and E. O. Ezenweke, "Perspectives of Syncretism and its modern trends: A case of Christian and African traditions," *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities* 13, no. 2 (2012), 71-84.

structures for and guidance to the various individuals and groups who serve at the table of liturgical music. This constitutes the way forward:

11.1 The Central Role of the Local Ordinary

So much depend on the decisions of the Local Ordinary on these issues. The Local Ordinary of a diocese, according to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal is the Chief Liturgist of his diocese.⁴² As the Chief Liturgist, priority should be given to liturgical music so as to ensure optimal compliance with laid down liturgical principles or norms. It is the leadership that is provided at this level that the Parish Priests, Chaplains and the Choir Masters will use as guide in their provision of further leadership at the other levels.

11.2 Ongoing Formation

Avenya writes that: “Just as the liturgy grows like a living organism, so also should liturgical formation continue as long as the church continues to offer praise to God in the liturgy. Thus, seminars and workshops are veritable means of keeping alive the liturgical consciousness of all servants of the liturgy.”⁴³ This formation will help to guide priests and lay people who have interests and are talented in music. This should also bring together the best minds in Catholic music so as to generate maximum impact. There might be need to train trainers in reputable Catholic institutions from different dioceses who will continue to form others.

11.3 Catholic Liturgical Music Commission

Each diocese should have vetting authorities who would determine which songs should be part of the corpus of songs sung during the liturgy. This vetting authority should comprise those who have

⁴² General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (1969). <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/GIRM/Documents/GIRM.pdf>.

⁴³ Avenya, “Mediocrity, banality and superficiality,” 14.

been schooled in Catholic liturgical music. This body should have the capacity to foster unity, discipline, regulation, encouragement, training, understanding and collaboration among Catholic choristers.⁴⁴ They are to review every composition for the liturgy and ensure that they meet the set requirements before approving it for public use in the diocese and parishes.⁴⁵

This is necessary as there is a very strong influx of non-theological and non-liturgical music in Catholic worship.

... our church in Nigeria has been enormously blessed with the emergence of so many musicologists who have made tremendous efforts to improve the quality of music in areas of composition, teaching and performance. However, this trend has been negatively endangered by some freelance composers due to their ignorance of theology and poor understanding of liturgical principles concerning sacred music.⁴⁶

This commission should exist at the diocesan, provincial and national levels in the Church so as to ensure compliance at all levels and thus protect the dignity of the Catholic Liturgy.

11.4 Adherence to the Commons of the Mass

While inculturating liturgical music, it is necessary to ensure that composers stick to the exact words or lyrics of the commons of the Mass "... in order to safeguard their theological meaning and our liturgical heritage."⁴⁷ The composer of sacred music should be filled with the Holy Spirit, and see his or her responsibility as a facilitator of the participation of Christ's faithful in the mystery of

⁴⁴ Iyara, "Be moved more by what is sung."

⁴⁵ NACALIMCON, A message issued at the end of the 9th Annual National Conference of the National Catholic Liturgical Music Council of Nigeria, held at St Louis College, Jos, Plateau State (30th August – 1st September, 2018), 3.

⁴⁶ NACALIMCON, A message, 3.

⁴⁷ NACALIMCON, A message issued at the end of the 10th Annual National Conference of the National Catholic Liturgical Music Council of Nigeria held at Queen of the Holy Rosary School, Gboko, Benue State (4th– 7th September, 2019), 3.

God and in the salvation carried out by Christ.⁴⁸ It requires an approach of reverence, conscientiousness and commitment.

11.5 Financing

If the Church understands liturgical music as belonging to her life and mission, then she needs to be ready to invest in music. Financial help is necessary in the areas of translation, funding of commissions and formation of members of the choir.

12. Conclusion

This paper has studied the fundamental place of inculturation in relation to the use of African language in Catholic liturgical music. To achieve this, it defined inculturation and traced its foundation to the Trinity, the incarnation, creation, Paschal mystery, Pentecost and revelation and grace with its imperatives in Church history and Sacred Scripture. For the purpose of a connect, it studied liturgical music, with reference to its characteristics and functions within the liturgy. It generally argues for the inculturation of liturgical music, that is, the use of African languages in liturgical music on the basis of the need to make Christianity or our Catholicism be at home in Africa. This process of inculturation is not without risks. It, therefore, discussed the challenges of inculturating liturgical music and proposed ways forward.

The argument of this paper for the use of African languages for liturgical music, aside the need to make Catholicism feel at home in Africa, is also because of the place the African language occupies in the representation of the world of the African people. This is not to say that songs in Western languages like Latin, English, French, etc. be abrogated. This is an age of globalization, and given the universal character of the Church, songs in Western languages should still be sung, however, when and where relevant. In the Church where we have a tradition of Latin, we need to keep to

⁴⁸ Pope Francis, Address at the International Conference on Sacred Music, Clementine Hall (March 4, 2017), at the 50th Anniversary of the promulgation of *Musicam Sacram*.

those traditions that have given us our identity over the years, and Latin is one of such traditions.

Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus*, develops a picture theory of language in which he argues that the structure of language is conditioned by the structure of reality, for language makes us see reality in a structure corresponding to the structure of language.⁴⁹ Wittgenstein adds that language has an underlying logical structure that provides the limits of what can be said meaningfully, and, therefore, the limits of what can be thought.⁵⁰ The implication of this on the use of Western languages rather than the language of the African people is that we place a limitation on the African's journey into the divine; meaning that the African will only understand God within the limits of his or her limited understanding of the Western language. The use of his or her indigenous language on the contrary, will ensure depth in perception and thus deepening of the faith. This is exactly what the faith in Africa needs today.

Heidegger posits that the human person uses language not only as a tool for communication but as the modal way for the being of man.⁵¹ Language, therefore, becomes an instrument for the disclosure of the mode of being-in-the-world and gives being its ontological and logical descriptiveness (Heidegger 1956 and 1961) (Heidegger 1967 and 1968). It is an instrument for the intelligible and articulate disclosure of the being project and worldhood relations in their structural thingness, boundaries and obscurities within their structural matrix in such a manner that something indicates itself as something (Heidegger 1951) (Heidegger 1971). In this case, (Heidegger 1962) Heidegger (1974), therefore, understands language as an instrument for revelation. To stop the African from having God revealed to him or her in his or her own language is to place a limit on his or her personal identification

⁴⁹ See L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1992).

⁵⁰ See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical grammar* (California: University of California Press, 1974).

⁵¹ See M. Heidegger, *What is philosophy?* Trans. W. Kluback and J. T. Wilde (New Heaven: College and University Press, 1956).

with and personalisation of relationship with God. What assures the continuity of the faith is this aspect of personalisation.

The use of African languages in the liturgy is Africa's contribution towards the enrichment of the Catholic liturgy. If this is done in such a manner that the identity of the Church is respected, and liturgical norms and principles complied with, the universal Church will be richer, and the Church in Africa more authentic.