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Solemnity in a Red Flag (Conflict) Zone

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A History and Analysis of the Missel Romain pour les Dioceses du Zaire

Nathan Chase

Introduction

The *Missel Romain pour les Dioceses du Zaire* (1988), the missal for the Zaire Usage of the Roman Rite (Zaire Usage), stands as a testament to years of development and reflection on the call of the Second Vatican Council in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) for the adaptation of the liturgy. The Zaire Usage represents a high water mark in liturgical experimentation and inculturation after Vatican II. As the only complete non-experimental inculturated Eucharistic celebration approved after Vatican II, the Zaire Usage is an anomaly, and the likelihood of another usage or rite being formed in today's current ecclesial climate is extremely unlikely. Thus, the Zaire Usage is a special product of post-conciliar creativity and compromise. It is not, however, the only example of post-conciliar imagination. Nevertheless, the Zaire Usage stands as a testament to a time in which changes in liturgical expression were allowed. Its

beauty stems from its intimate connection with the local culture. In embarking on a study of the Zaire Usage, it is important that we be reminded of the reason for its existence. The *Preamble* of the *Presentation Generale de la Liturgie de la Messe Pour les Dioceses du Zaire* (PGDZ) articulates the reason for its formation:

The Eucharistic liturgy described here represents a way for the particular church of Zaire in the African context of Zaire to celebrate the Eucharist in threefold Christian fidelity: fidelity to the faith and apostolic tradition, faith in the intimate nature of the catholic liturgy itself, and the fidelity of the genius of the religious and cultural heritage of Africa and Zaire.¹

¹ Conference Episcopale du Zaire. *Missel Romain pour les Dioceses du Zaire* (Kinshasa: Editions du Secretariat General, 1989), PGDZ 2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this paper are mine.



“Solemnity in a Red Flag (Conflict) Zone.” Notre-Dame de Mokoto, Pentecost 2013, C. A. Chase
N.b. Pictured are solemn vows into a Trappist community, Roman Rite, D.R. Congo.