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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.

Before delving into the formation of the Zaire Usage, it is important to understand the discussion on liturgical adaptation. The modern precedent for adaptation, and ultimately inculturation, of liturgical practices stems from sections 37-40 in SC. Of particular interest from this section of SC is the following: “Provisions shall also be made, when revising the liturgical books, for *legitimate variations and adaptations* to different groups, regions, and peoples, especially in mission lands, *provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved* [emphasis mine].”² Additionally, it goes on to say that “[i]n some places and circumstances, however, an *even more radical adaptation* of the liturgy is needed, and this entails greater difficulties [emphasis mine].”³ SC then goes on to list how this more radical adaptation of the liturgy is to be carried out. While SC is often thought to be radical in its assertion of adaptation, it is in fact making, with some alterations, a much more ancient argument.

Development of Inculturation

The idea of inculturation is much older and more normative for the Christian tradition than we often think. Even a casual study of liturgy reveals the multiplicity of liturgical Rites in the Early Church. As early as Ambrose of Milan in *De Sacramentis* (circa. 391) we can see the emergence of diverse liturgical practices, even in what is now modern day Italy!⁴ An often quoted phrase which shows the antiquity and normativity of a diversity of liturgical practices in the Early Church is the dictum of Gregory the Great (circa. 604): “Where the faith is one, a difference in customs does no harm.”⁵ Furthermore, precedent for liturgical diversity is found in the Rites of the Western Church still in communion with Rome to this day.⁶

Turning back to SC, one realizes that this document calls for adaptation, or even radical adaptation. But what exactly does this mean? Elochukwu Uzukwu, in an extensive work on the development of liturgical inculturation in Africa, seems to address this question when he points out that the usage of “adaptation,” along with the restrictive nature of the clause in SC which calls for the preservation of the substantial unity of the Roman Rite, was unacceptable to the African bishops from the beginning. He writes, “‘Adapting’ the Roman liturgy to Africa yields no greater results than tropicalizing the made in Japan cars. African bishops are right in reject-

² Vatican II constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium 4.XII.1963: Acta Apostolicae Sedis Commentarium officiale 56 (1964), section 37. Henceforth cited as SC.

³ SC, section 40.

⁴ Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 98-99.

⁵ Elochukwu Uzukwu, “Africa’s Right to be Different: Christian Liturgical Rites and African Rites [Part One],” *Bulletine de Theologie Africaine* 4, no. 8 (1982), 88. Henceforth cited as Part One.

⁶ Examples include the Rite of Braga, the Ambrosian Rite (in Milan), the Mozarabic Rite (in Spain), and several others including some pertaining to the religious orders.

ing the principle of ‘adaptation’ and opting for ‘incarnation.’”⁷ The question becomes how are we to understand incarnation? Uzukwu is forceful about what incarnation or inculturation should not look like:

Adaptations – ranging from translation of the Latin texts into various African languages, use of the African names of God without grappling with the traditional religious ideas, accommodating the externals of African life (colour, music, musical instruments) without coming to terms with the fundamental spirit generative of these externals – are thus excluded.⁸

Inculturation must be much more than the mere adaptation expressed in SC. Inculturation must take into consideration the entirety of African life and expression. Real inculturation, good inculturation, seeks to give cultic expression to the uniqueness of each individual, society, and culture, in a way which does them justice and seeks to impart their identity.

Joseph Healey observes that in Africa, evangelization and the liturgy have gone through three stages: 1) transplantation or translation, 2) adaptation, and now 3) incarnation or inculturation.⁹ Unfortunately, he points out, inculturation in Africa has been “more at the level of *talking about* liturgy than *doing* liturgy.”¹⁰ There is a need even today for Africa to move beyond mere hypothetical experimentation and toward actual inculturation. Aylward Shorter in 1977 was even more critical. He saw adaptation as being out of date and said, “Today, the survival of Christianity in Africa is bound up with its commitment to African culture.”¹¹ However, in another work he is quick to point out that “[t]he tribal Church and the tribal liturgy must be avoided.”¹² Justin Ukpong flushes out the difference in adaptation and inculturation: 1) Adaptation: “this approach is characterized by processes involving adjustments introduced into a given dominant pattern, structure, or format, the structure itself not being touched,” vs. 2) Inculturation: “[which] aims at structural changes. It reviews the received structure and rearranges it to suit the structure of the indigenous pattern of expression.”¹³ As an example of the latter, he cites the Zaire Usage.

How We Should Experiment

Two articles, one in 1969 by Aloysius Pieris concerning the

⁷ Part One, 105.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁹ Joseph Healey, “Inculturation of Liturgy and Worship in Africa,” *Worship* 60, no. 5 (1986), 413.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 414.

¹¹ Aylward Shorter, “Liturgical Creativity in East Africa,” *AFER* 19, no. 5 (1977), 258.

¹² Shorter, *African Culture and the Christian Church* (New York City: Orbis Books, 1974), 74.

¹³ Justin Ukpong, “Current Theology: The Emergence of African Theologies,” *Theological Studies* 45 (1984), 514-515; 515-516.

Indian Mass Controversy, and the other in 1971 by Francis Mahoney concerning liturgical adaptation and the Aymara Indians, articulate well the way to move from *talking about* liturgy to *doing* liturgy, and specifically in an inculturated way. Mahoney writes that before embarking on liturgical inculturation we must ask the question: “[D]o we believe that the Aymara culture is of value and in itself humanizing not only for the Indian, but also for men of the more dominant world cultures?”¹⁴ If we can answer yes, and Vatican II calls us to answer yes, then inculturation is possible. We can see in this question, a product of its own time, the understanding that inculturation requires a dialogue between cultures. The Aymara culture, in this case, is not only of value to Aymara Indians, but also has something to say to other world cultures. After answering yes to whether we should inculturate a liturgy or not, the question then becomes how.

Pieris attests to the problem of moving from the question of “Should we?” to the question of “How should we?” In response to Cardinal Gut of the Concilium in Rome, Bishop D.S. Lourdasamy came up with a four-step process of experimentation for India approved by Rome: “1) study and research; 2) proposal to the Apostolic See for approval; 3) experimentation; 4) final approval by the hierarchy and the Concilium.”¹⁵ From my research, this seems to be the clearest articulation of the normative way Rome saw experimentation being conducted at this time. However, as Pieris points out through two quotes, the Roman expectation is just not reasonable. Fr. Neuner: “...never has a liturgy been composed in a liturgical laboratory, it must grow in a living community, in deep faith and earnest prayer. Study and experiment must go together.” Similarly, Fr. Puthumana said, “The greatest mistake we can make in this area is not mistakes in experimentation, but the fear of making mistakes.”¹⁶ Both of these attest to the need for step one (study and research) and step three (experimentation) to go together. In less concise words, the African theologians who have worked on an inculturated liturgy for Africa, including those who have worked on the approved Zaire Usage, have leveled similar complaints.

Forerunners to the Zaire Usage

The Zaire Usage has its origins in the hypothetical, yet pastoral, questions asked above concerning liturgical experimentation. But there are also other forerunners to the Zaire Usage which should be discussed. Some say the first moves toward African inculturation began with the composition of the first two known African Masses, the Mass of the Savanes in Upper Volta and the Mass of the Piroguieres, both in 1956: “The former adapted the Latin language and Gregorian melody to the

¹⁴ Francis Mahoney, “The Aymara Indians: A Model for Liturgical Adaptation,” *Worship* 45, no. 7 (1971), 406.

¹⁵ Aloysius Pieris, “The Indian Mass Controversy,” *Worship* 43, no. 4 (1969), 221.

¹⁶ Pieris, 221-222.

rhythm of Volta drums.”¹⁷ A similar mass, the *Missa Luba* in Zaire, was composed in 1958 by a priest from Belgium named Father Guido Haazen.¹⁸ The formation of the Ndzon-Melen mass from 1958 to 1969 in Cameroon was another significant development towards the Zaire Usage.¹⁹ Also significant were the attempts at developing African Eucharistic Prayers: the *All-African Eucharistic Prayer* published in 1970,²⁰ *Three More African Eucharistic Prayers* (for Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) published in 1973,²¹ and the proposed *Igbo Eucharistic Prayer* published in 1980.²² Outside of the Eucharistic context, inculturation was happening in initiatory rites thanks to the general introduction to the 1974 Rites of Christian Initiation which in nn. 30-33 reminded episcopal conferences of article 63b in SC:

[I]t is within the competence of the conferences of bishops to compose for their local rituals a section corresponding to this one in the Roman Ritual, adapted to the needs of their respective regions. After it has been reviewed by the Apostolic See, it may be used in the regions for which it was prepared.²³

Special mention is also made of mission countries:

The conferences of bishops in mission countries have the responsibility of judging whether the elements of initiation in use among some peoples can be adapted for the rite of Christian baptism and of deciding whether such elements are to be incorporated into the rite.²⁴

¹⁷ Anselme Sanon, “Cultural Rooting of the Liturgy in Africa Since Vatican II,” in *Liturgy: A Creative Tradition* (New York City: The Seabury Press, 1983), 63-64.

¹⁸ Marc Ashley Foster, D.M.A., *Missa Luba: A New Edition and Conductor's Analysis* (2005), 1-6.

¹⁹ P. Abega, “Liturgical Adaptation,” in *Christianity in Independent Africa*, by Edward Fashole-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings, & Godwin Tasic (1978: Indiana University Press, n.d.), 599; Elochukwu Uzukwu, “Africa's Right to be Different Part II: African Rites in the Making [Part Two],” *Bulletine de Theologie Africaine* 4, no. 8 (1982), 268. Henceforth cited as Part Two.

²⁰ Shorter, “An African Eucharistic Prayer,” *AFER* 12, no. 2 (1970), 143-148. This was followed by a critique by Benedict Kaholwe, “An African Eucharistic Prayer,” *AFER* 12, no. 3 (1970), 367-370. Kaholwe said it was too staccato, did not have a distinction between living-dead and ancestors, and lacked unity and rhythm. This was followed by a further critique by Elochukwu Uzukwu, “The ‘All-Africa Eucharistic Prayer’ - A Critique,” *AFER* 21, no. 6 (1979), 338-347. In this article Uzukwu dissected each part of the EP.

²¹ Shorter, “Three more African Eucharistic Prayers,” *AFER* 15, no. 2 (1973), 152-160.

²² Elochukwu Uzukwu, “Blessing and Thanksgiving Among the Igbo (Nigeria) Towards an African Eucharistic Prayer,” *AFER* 22 (1980), 17-22.

²³ Catholic Church. *The Rites of the Catholic Church: The Roman Ritual Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 10-11. Henceforth cited as *The Rites*.

²⁴ *The Rites*, 11.

Such a generous statement led to a response for inculturation. In this regard, of note is the Moore ritual which appears to have begun in the 1970s and was solidified by 1980.²⁵ Furthermore, of particular interest are the practices of the Church of Turkana which in the 1970s developed inculturated celebrations for birth, initiation, penance and reconciliation, marriage, sickness, and death.²⁶ Their inculturation of almost the whole sacramental system is the most complete and thorough I have seen in my research. At this same time, but outside of Africa, we see a concurrent concern for inculturation in Asia and dialogue between Asian and African liturgists.²⁷

The formation of the Zaire Usage cannot be understood apart from these historical developments and experiments. Additionally, it cannot be understood apart from the Vatican's restrictions concerning experimental Eucharistic Prayers in 1970 with *Liturgicae instaurationis* and in 1973 with *Eucharistiae Participationem*: "The time...[is] not ripe for granting to episcopal conferences a general permission for the composition of approval of Eucharistic prayers."²⁸ Interestingly, this was further affirmed in the Declaration on Eucharistic Prayers and Liturgical Experimentation by the Congregation for Divine Worship in their March 1988 issue of *Notitiae*; the typical edition of *Le Missel Romain pour les Dioceses du Zaire* was promulgated in the July 1988 issue of *Notitiae* – the same year!

The direct formation of the Zaire Usage began with the Liturgical Movement in Belgium.²⁹ Uzuoku states that "the liturgical movement, which reached its peak after World War II, saw the monastery of Mont-César in Belgium as its center stage. The impact of Mont-César on the Belgian church was not lost on the Belgian colony of Congo-Zaire."³⁰ Thus, the value the Liturgical Movement placed on the active participation of the laity and the Mystical Body of Christ would naturally find their way down to Zaire from Belgium

²⁵ Part Two, 263-264; Elochukwu Uzuoku, *Worship as Body Language* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997) 289-293. Henceforth cited as *Worship as Body*.

²⁶ Tony Barrett, *Incarnating the Church in Turkana*. (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1978).

²⁷ The CBCI Commission for Liturgy, *New Orders of the Mass for India* (Bangalore: National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1974); Brian Hearne, "The significance of the 'Zaire Mass'," *AFER* 17, no. 4 (1975), 212-220; Aloysius Pieris, "An Asian Way to Celebrate the Eucharist," *Worship* 81, no. 4 (2007): 314-328; Aloysius Pieris, "The Indian Mass Controversy," *Worship* 43, no. 4 (1969), 219-223; Paul Puthanangady, "Inculturation of the Liturgy in India Since Vatican II," in *Liturgy: A Creative Tradition* (New York City: The Seabury Press, 1983); A. Savarimuth, "A Report on the Indian Rite Mass," *Worship* 44, no. 4 (1970), 238-247; Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright, *Baptism and Eucharist Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration* (Grand Rapids: WCC Publications, 1983). For a very comprehensive list of sources see P.C. Phan, "Reception of Vatican II in Asia: Historical and Theological Analysis," *Gregorianum* 83, no. 2 (2002), 269-285.

²⁸ Taken from Phillip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship Exploring the Eucharist* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 119.

²⁹ *Worship as Body*, 298. See also Rosino Gibellini, *Paths of African Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 97.

³⁰ Gibellini, 97.

through Belgian missionaries. As seen above, the Missa Luba was composed in Zaire by a Belgian missionary.

In 1961 the Zaire bishops complained that the missionary liturgy was alien to Africa.³¹ The only African bishop on the preparatory liturgical commission of Vatican II, Joseph Malula, auxiliary bishop of Kinshasa, is said to have rendered the Our Father in Lingala, thus foreshadowing the new liturgy.³² In 1969 the bishops established a research committee to produce a Eucharistic liturgy particular to Zaire. Uzuoku writes that "the liturgy that emerged from the research was presented to the sacred congregation of rites for study and approval on 4 December 1973. This liturgy was in use *ad experimentum* until its definitive approval came on 30 April 1988."³³ Thus, the Zaire Usage was formed in a time of great creativity, but at the same time that the Vatican was already clamping down on experimentation. This uniquely colors the way the Zaire Usage was shaped, and ultimately even its very name.³⁴

Models Used to Develop the Zaire Usage

The Zaire Usage was developed from three models: 1) the Roman *Ordo Missae*, 2) the role of the tribal chief, and 3) the African model of assembly.³⁵ The first, the Roman *Ordo*, was impressed on the Zaire bishops by the Congregation for Divine Worship as a prerequisite for the development of the Zaire Usage. Chris Nwaka Egbulem, while understanding why the Congregation for Divine Worship would impose the *Ordo* as the first model for the creation of the Zaire Usage, writes that "beginning with the *Ordo* was one of the flaws of the work of the Zairean liturgical commission."³⁶ He was surprised that the bishops would bow to pressure from Rome, since Rome's instance on this model seems to prevent the construction of an authentic African Eucharistic celebration. But while criticizing the use of the *Ordo*, Egbulem acknowledges that it provided a context for dialogue with Rome.³⁷ Without such a context, it would have been nearly impossible for the Roman authorities to understand the concerns of the bishops of Zaire. The bishops of Zaire would have been speaking a completely foreign liturgical language.

³¹ Chris Nwaka Egbulem, *The Power of Africentric Celebrations: Inspirations from the Zairean Liturgy* (New York: A Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 33-34. Henceforth cited as *The Power*. Egbulem quotes the bishops: "The liturgy introduced in Africa is not yet adapted to the proper character of our populations, and therefore has remained foreign to them." (33-34).

³² *Worship as Body*, 298.

³³ *Ibid.*, 302.

³⁴ *The Power*, 47. For more information on the title controversy see also Chapter 1 of Egbulem, "The 'Rite Zairois' in the Context of Liturgical Inculturation in Middle-belt Africa since the Second Vatican Council." Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1989. Henceforth cited as Ph.D.diss.

³⁵ *The Power*, 38.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

The second model, that of the chief, informed the way the bishops of Zaire understood the priest to be functioning vis-à-vis the liturgical assembly. Egbulem also speaks critically of this model. He writes, “By highlighting the role of the presider, the Zairean commission ran the risk of dwarfing the role of the assembly and confirming a strongly hierarchical theology of the priesthood.”³⁸ An example of how this model concretely affected the Zaire Usage can be seen in the blessing of lectors before they proclaim the reading. The third model, that of the African assembly, was a counterbalance to the second. The usage of this model places in healthy tension the priest-assembly relationship. A healthy tension between the priest and the assembly seems to express well the intention of SC and Vatican II. It is with this model that we get perhaps the most distinctive African influence. This model required the commission to turn to African rituals, including the African understanding of ancestors, spirits, and the world. This brought into the Zaire Usage “joy, color, gesture, and dance.”³⁹ Egbulem articulates well the celebration which emerged from the tension between the second and third models:

The model of the presiding African chief, while it retained some form of the sovereignty of the chief, was enlarged to incorporate the African values of family and community, thus involving the active participation of the people. The role of the presider was no longer the focus; the reference became the assembly itself.⁴⁰

Thus, the usage of multiple models helped the Zaire bishops formulate a liturgy which was 1) in continuity with tradition, 2) expressive of African values and sensibilities, and 3) able to hold in tension unity-diversity and presider-assembly which is the hallmark of SC.

Structural Changes

While looking at the individual structural components of the Zaire Usage, it is important to understand the culture from which this usage springs. Several cultural factors shaped the structure of the Zaire Usage, and those will be addressed as they come up in the structure of the rite itself. The Zaire Usage differs in several ways from the Roman structure from which it was derived. The three main areas of structural difference are 1) the entrance and role of the announcer, 2) the invocation of the saints and ancestors, and 3) the placement of the penitential rite and the sign of peace. It is important to note that some of the parallels between the Zaire Usage and the Ndzon-Melen Mass, which came before it, express certain

pan-African sensibilities and critiques of the Roman Rite.

The first major structural difference between the Zaire Usage and the Roman Rite is the entrance of the announcer. The role of the announcer in the Zaire Usage is official. A parallel should not be established between the announcer and those in the Roman Rite who give announcements pertaining to the mass before the opening hymn. The PGDZ describes the role of the announcer in two places:

Even before the celebration beings, the announcer or herald, who is neither a religious nor a priest, plays the role of precursor: he/she announces the event which they will be celebrating in order to strengthen the consciousness of the community. To do this he/she utilizes a form of salutation which gives rise to a movement of fraternity. Within this opportunity, he/she presents the minister who will go up to the altar.⁴¹

The announcer, or commentator, is the liaison between the priest and the assembly; he/she directs in a discrete way the active participation of the faithful and guides their prayer. His/her interventions are not improvised but prepared in advance in writing and must ensure to bring out the mystery that the church celebrates, proclaims in the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Before the beginning of Mass...He/she introduces the readings with brief admonition.⁴²

The role of the announcer, as can be seen, is crucial. The entrance of the announcer and the announcer’s opening remarks represent the beginning of the liturgy. Here we can also see the influence of the second and third models, as well as SC. The announcer is said to act throughout the liturgy as the liaison between the priest and the assembly. But more importantly the announcer is to ensure the active participation of the faithful and to bring out the mystery celebrated in the liturgy and the readings. The announcer “introduces the readings with a brief admonition” and “intervenes before the Eucharistic Prayer in the dialogue.”⁴³ However, the role of the announcer is found only in the solemn rite. This role is open to lay men and women.

The next major structural difference is the invocation of the saints and ancestors. This represents perhaps the most talked-about variance, and the most inculturated aspect, of the Zaire Usage. To begin with, several things must be said about African ancestors. Africans’ understandings of ancestors are very different from our own. They are much more selective: “Ancestors are the wise, brave and old parents (men and women) who in the time of their human existence

³⁸ Ibid., 41.

³⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁴¹ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, PGDZ 4.

⁴² Ibid., PGDZ 21.

⁴³ Ibid.

have brought honor to their families and descendants. They are honored, venerated, commemorated and invoked as intermediaries for approaching the divine domain.⁴⁴ The ancestors that Africans celebrate are those that have modeled a life worth emulating. They serve as intercessors between the human and the divine. For this reason, ancestors are an important part of African life and ritual. Placed in the Christian context, the importance of the ancestors is not meant to deny the unique priestly and intercessory role of Christ. François Lumbala points out that “Africans may continue to turn to their ancestors to ask spiritual and material graces of them, as long as these appeals are understood as subordinate to Christ, who alone is our salvation.”⁴⁵

Because the invocation of the ancestors is so important, the bishops of Zaire thought it must be included in a truly inculturated Zairean liturgy. After all, it was argued, the African understanding of ancestors was not unlike the Christian invocation of the saints. Because, however, individual saints are officially held up by the Church as having modeled a Christ-like life, Roman authorities did not see it fitting for individual African ancestors to be named.⁴⁶ Thus the invocation of the ancestors was left to the ancestors generally. We can see this in the prayer itself: “And you our righteous ancestors / Be with us.”⁴⁷ Additionally, to head off concerns about the invocation of non-Christians, the bishops cited the invocations in the Roman Canon of Abel, Abraham and Melchizedek.⁴⁸ The PGDZ seeks to underscore the compatibility of the invocation of African ancestors and the ancient Christian practice of the invocation of the saints:

To approach the Eucharist, the sacramental action par excellence, the assembly becomes aware of its sin in front of the presence of Almighty God, source of salvation. From the beginning of the sacred action, the living invoke the saints, friends of God, as intercessors. Communion among Christians on the Earth opens out into the community of the saints in heaven. This is realized by union with Christ, from whom every grace and the life of the people of God come. For the same perspective, justified is the invocation of ancestors of the right heart, which are under the merits of Christ, in communion with God, even the Roman liturgy since ancient times evokes Abel the Just,

⁴⁴ Chris Nwaka Egbulem, “The Genius and Typology of African Prayers.” Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy (Valparaiso: North American Academy of Liturgy, 1991), 59.

⁴⁵ François Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 48.

⁴⁶ Ph.D.diss., 40-43; 236-244; 305-308.

⁴⁷ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, Rite Solennel 7.

⁴⁸ Catholic Church. *The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011) section 93. Henceforth cited as Roman Missal.

Abraham, and Melchizedek.⁴⁹

The last major structural revision is the placement of the penitential rite followed by the sign of peace. The movement of the penitential rite represents a different understanding of its function in the liturgy. The PGDZ states:

Then comes the penitential act. The Word of God, proclaimed in the assembly, is effective and liberating: it questions the community, raises the adhesion of the people of God and purifies the heart. This purification is expressed in the penitential act, whose structure is inspired by the African palaver.⁵⁰

The placement of the penitential rite after the proclamation and explication of the Word of God is meant to express to the community the conversion of the individual in light of God’s Word. Egbulem says it well: “The people enter the assembly with great rejoicing, only to recognize their failings after the Lord speaks.”⁵¹ In many ways this leads to a much stronger affirmation of the power of the Word of God, and the presence of Christ in His word proclaimed. This seems to lead to a strong emphasis of Christ’s presence with us in the Word of God, which SC so desperately tries to develop. Furthermore, the placement of the penitential rite in the Zaire Usage provides a more proper balance to the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and along with the sign of peace and the prayers of the faithful, it acts as a wonderful hinge-point between the two parts of the mass. When the PGDZ’s suggestion that the penitential act include a sprinkling of holy water on the assembly is heeded, the penitential rite also serves to closely identify the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.

The penitential rite flows smoothly into the sign of peace, which has been moved from after the Eucharistic Prayer to before it. This serves to draw out the inherent relationship between the penitential rite and the sign of peace. Egbulem notes that this stems from the ancient tradition of the Didache which placed the sign of peace after the penitential rite.⁵² Thus, the inherent relationship between the two is better accentuated in the Zaire Usage than it is in the Roman Rite. Having reconciled with Christ in front of our brothers and sisters in the penitential rite, it is only fitting that we reconcile also with our brother and sisters. In describing this newly placed rite, the PGDZ says:

The rite of peace then manifests peace or communion

⁴⁹ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, PGDZ 8.

⁵⁰ Ibid., PGDZ 14.

⁵¹ *The Power*, 62.

⁵² Ibid., 63.

among men, and at the same time agreement between God and men. It is presented as the conclusion of the rite of reconciliation before the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice, according to the word of the Lord: "First go reconcile with your brother, and then come and present your offering" (Mt. 5:24).⁵³

The placement of the sign of peace here is an attempt to reconcile the Zaire Usage with the text of Mt 5:24, and not just the practices of African gatherings. The PGDZ also leaves open the way in which this sign of peace is made. One intriguing example is the washing of hands together in the same bowl. Following the sign of peace are the prayers of the faithful. These seek to confirm the reconciliation between God and the assembly, and the members of the assembly with themselves. These prayers are also meant to spill out into creation, thus giving reconciliation a cosmic emphasis. This in many ways parallels the intentions within the Eucharistic Prayer.

Differences in Celebration

Having dealt with the structural differences, it is important to now look at the rite in more detail in order to see how it is celebrated differently from the Roman Rite. Starting with the people's arrival at the church, we see the first signs of a difference in celebration: "Coming to the church, everyone brings his offering."⁵⁴ The fact that everyone brings some sort of offering to the Church helps to establish the communal nature of the liturgy and theoretically helps the assembly understand that the offering on the altar is their own.⁵⁵ As the announcer calls the assembly to silence, he or she utilizes a bell or gong.⁵⁶ This helps to draw out the connection between the announcer and the town crier, who through the beating of a *tsbionda* issued messages to the people of the village.⁵⁷ Immediately as the priest(s), deacon, and other ministers make their way into the space for the procession, one would notice their vestments. While the priest wears a chasuble, the deacon a dalmatic, and the other ministers a tunic, one would notice that these are not the plain vestments we have become accustomed to in the Roman Rite. Rather these are "according to the form of Zaire and of a color which suits the character of the celebration."⁵⁸ One would expect to see the vibrant colors and patterns so characteristic of Zaire. Furthermore, every

⁵³ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, PGDZ 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid., PGDZ 17.

⁵⁵ Edward J. Kilmartin and Robert J. Daly, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998). Kilmartin is concerned with restoring the pneumatological and ecclesiological dimensions of the Eucharist. Through his work he shows how the offering on the altar is the offering of the whole Church.

⁵⁶ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, PGDZ 34.

⁵⁷ *The Power*, 72.

⁵⁸ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, PGDZ 35-37.

minister is to carry "the instrument of their ministry."⁵⁹

At this time the faithful would be standing, and they would stand until the end of the opening prayer.⁶⁰ The ministers in the procession are to move to the rhythm of the song up to the altar, while the faithful dance in place. The PGDZ says this is to "express the participation of the whole body in prayer."⁶¹ This speaks to the Africans' desire for worship to embrace and celebrate Creation and the human body. As the procession gets to the altar, those in the procession, with the exception of the priest, gather around the altar. The priest goes behind the altar facing the people and bows. All those in the semicircle remain in a profound bow while the presider raises his hands in a "V" form and touches every side of the altar with his face.⁶² After this, and the incensation of the altar, all go to their proper places.

After the invocation of the saints and ancestors, and during the acclamation song, the priest incenses the altar while the ministers dance around the altar and the assembly dances in place.⁶³ According to the PGDZ, the dance around the incensed altar "manifests the desire to communicate a life force that radiates from the altar, the sacrifice of Christ."⁶⁴ After the priest says the opening prayer, all sit. The lectors come forward for the readings, each at the proper time. As the lectors come forward, they ask for a blessing from the presider. This is very similar to the blessing a presider gives a deacon before proclaiming the Gospel. The reader approaches the presider, bows and asks for the blessing in order to proclaim the reading:

Lector:	Father, please bless me / that the Lord may help me with His grace, / that I may proclaim the word of God well.
Presider:	May the Lord come to your aid, / so that your eyes light up, / so that the word proclaimed by your mouth / might console the hearts of the people.
Lector:	Amen. ⁶⁵

This is a rather intriguing practice, but one which provides a nice way to work around the Church's call for only instituted lectors to proclaim the reading.⁶⁶ The requirement that this blessing be performed provides a way to temporarily institute

⁵⁹ Ibid., Rite Solennel 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., PGDZ 23.

⁶¹ Ibid., PGDZ 28.

⁶² Ibid., Rite Solennel 4.

⁶³ Ibid., PGDZ 29, 32; Rite Solennel 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid., PGDZ 29.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Rite Solennel 10.

⁶⁶ Pope Paul VI, motu proprio *Ministeria Quaedam* 15.VIII.1972: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis Commentarium officiale* 64 (1972); Gerard Sheehy and Francis G. Morrissey, *The Canon Law Letter & Spirit: A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), Canon 260.

men and women as lectors. Egbulem affirms this sentiment when he says:

In the Zairean Mass, the non-commissioned lector who approaches the presider to ask for and receive a blessing is by that fact receiving the church's mandate to minister to the community in the liturgy. Only in that way, [Mpongo] argues, would such a person stand to speak to the assembly in the name of God.⁶⁷

A procession leads to the enthronement of the Gospel. The people stand during the Gospel inauguration but sit during the reading of the Gospel.⁶⁸ The next component of the mass, which has not already been discussed in detail, is the procession to the altar with the gifts. During the procession of the gifts, the assembly dances in place while those appointed to take up to the altar the gifts dance towards the altar.⁶⁹ The offerings that are not bread or wine are given to the priest first, and then the bread and wine are handed to him. Those carrying the bread and wine handle them over to the priest saying: "O priest of God / here are our gifts / receive them: / They manifest our spirit / of solidarity and sharing, / and they show that we love one another / as the Lord loves us."⁷⁰ This prayer attests to the fact that the offering about to be made is the offering of the assembly with the priest. Here we see again the healthy tension of the second and third models (i.e. the model of the tribal chief and the model of the African assembly).

Before the opening dialogue of the Eucharistic Prayer, the announcer "strikes his/her gong and says to the people: Brothers and Sisters, / let us listen attentively."⁷¹ After a bit of silence, the preface dialogue of the Eucharistic Prayer begins. The Eucharistic Prayer is an adaptation of Eucharistic Prayer II. Some theologians are very critical of this Zairean Eucharistic Prayer: "The Zairean Mass, by taking Eucharistic Prayer II of the Roman Missal and attaching some elements of African life and communication styles to it, has not given birth to an African Eucharistic prayer."⁷² In many cases, the Zairean Eucharistic Prayer is a perfect example of adaptation, which as we have seen is no longer enough. Simply changing the language of Eucharistic Prayer II does not make an inculturated Eucharistic Prayer. However, it seems that perhaps Eucharistic Prayer II was chosen for adaptation because of its sparseness and room for expansion. The ringing of a bell and acclamation is allowed to accompany the Words of Institution, but this in comparison to the inculturation seen in the

Liturgy of the Word and in the Ndzon-Melen Mass seems paltry. Where the Eucharistic Prayer does show some creativity is in the intercessions. The assembly responds to groupings of intercessions saying, "Lord, remember them all."⁷³ The final doxology also attests to African creativity. At this time the people are to hold raised hands.⁷⁴ The doxology is not "Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever. Amen."⁷⁵ Rather it is more of a call and response. After every phrase the priest says, the people respond "Amen!"⁷⁶ The Communion Rite and Concluding Rite that follows are almost identical to the Roman Rite.

Before turning away from the rite itself, it is interesting to note that the presidential prayers for the Zaire Usage are locally written. In fact, many of the prayer texts of the Zaire Usage have local variations.⁷⁷ One such example is the prayer over the gifts in the Luba missal which attests not only to local adaptation of the Zaire Usage, but also to the uniqueness of the African prayer texts themselves: "*Maweya of Cyame*, tempest which uncovers those who clothe themselves with raphia [*madiba*], strong wind which makes the grass to tremble! Behold our gift, but where is yours? We are waiting for you, now and in the days to come. Amen."⁷⁸ The beautiful imagery of the wind making the grass tremble is such a natural image. We often marvel at the phrases in the Roman Rite which connect the liturgy, and ourselves, with the world around us. Perhaps the most pungent is in Eucharistic Prayer III when it says "from the rising of the sun to its setting."⁷⁹ However, the prayers of the Zaire Usage are filled with such natural imagery that it makes our own prayers seem sterile.

Africa and the West

This brings us to back to our own rite and the question posed by Mahoney concerning liturgical adaptation and the Aymara Indians: "[D]o we believe that the Aymara culture is of value and in itself humanizing not only for the Indian, but also for men of the more dominant world cultures?" What does the Zaire Usage have to say to the larger Roman Rite as it stands now? After all, according to the Vatican it stands as a usage within the larger Roman Rite. In order to answer this question it is important to remember the origins of the Zaire Usage. Alex Chima is helpful in this regard. He writes about an experience he had in Africa in which after Mass all the faithful went to a "pagan" rain sacrifice. He was told by a catechist

⁷³ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, Rite Solennel 48.

⁷⁴ Ibid., Rite Solennel 48.

⁷⁵ *The Roman Missal*, 654.

⁷⁶ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, Rite Solennel 50.

⁷⁷ *Worship as Body*, 305.

⁷⁸ Ibid. The original is found in François Kabasele, "Nouveaux Rites, Foi Naissante," *Lumière & Vie* 159 (1983), 61-73.

⁷⁹ *Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer III section 108.

⁶⁷ *The Power*, 75.

⁶⁸ Conference Episcopale du Zaire, PGDZ 23, 24.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Rite Solennel 30.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Rite Solennel 31.

⁷¹ Ibid., Rite Solennel 37.

⁷² *The Power*, 67.

that the faithful went to Mass, but the real prayer was the rain sacrifice. In response Chima writes:

They went to search for what they needed to survive, not at Mass, but at the foot of the hill. The Mass did not seem to them to be relevant to their real needs. If the Mass does not seem relevant to human needs like sickness, drought, epidemics, time of childbirth and death, then there is something radically wrong about the way our liturgy is celebrated.⁸⁰

Chima bemoans the need for a liturgy which speaks to the people, a need for liturgy to be truly inculturated. From his perspective in 1984, the liturgy had not yet moved past adaptation, but he saw genuine creativity in the Ndzon-Melen Mass and the Zaire Usage.⁸¹ But what does this say to us today in the West? How many of our Mass attendees come to Mass but feel like real prayer lies elsewhere? Furthermore, how many people do not come to Mass because it does not seem relevant? Chima's concern in Africa should be our concern in the West as well. But unlike in the West, Africa seems to be moving toward a solution. Thus, what can we in the West learn from Africa?

To begin with, Chima critiques the Western mind-body dichotomy. He states that "[i]n Africa, the whole person is involved in ritual, and any liturgy presented on the basis that the mind alone matters is bound to be sterile and unrelated to life."⁸² We need to regain the concern for the body which is so obvious in Africa and the Zaire Usage's encouragement of dance. Furthermore, he critiques the cerebral nature of the West. He writes:

Nothing diminishes the power of liturgical symbols nor diminishes the energy of religious imagination more than words piled on words piled on words. That is, perhaps, one of the effects of Western thinking, with its stress on the rational and the cerebral, and its need for 'explanations' of everything...When complaints are made in the West that the Mass has 'lost its sense of mystery', perhaps what is meant is that there are too many meaningless words and

not enough powerful symbols in the celebration. So the African stress on wholeness could have an important contribution to make in the ongoing renewal of liturgy.⁸³

Chima's point is totally valid. If we want to regain mystery and make liturgy relevant to people, we need the symbols of liturgy to speak for themselves and we need a recovery of the relationship between mind and body. The failure to do so will lead to the failure of liturgy and liturgical expression in the West. Africa has something to contribute to the larger Church, and perhaps as Chima says its largest contribution will be its stress on "wholeness." Furthermore, Uzukwu writes about three of Africa's critiques of the West: 1) the West's fear of the body, 2) the West's desire to flee a corrupt world instead of transform it, and 3) the West's concern for the individual rather than the community.⁸⁴ We are in desperate need in the West of African sensibilities which seek to preserve the importance of the body, the goodness of Creation and the centrality of community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Zaire Usage stands as a prophetic voice for not only liturgical inculturation in Africa, but for Christian principles which have by and large been lost in Western Christianity. Thanks to the Zaire Usage, within the Roman Rite itself lies the solution to its lack of relevance throughout the world, including the West, today. The solution is not to import the Zaire Usage into the United States, but to use the principles found in its creative genius to develop a liturgical expression which speaks to today's Americans. While the Zaire Usage has its own problems, it reminds us of the beauty of unity in diversity, and how the Church is able to accommodate much more diversity than perhaps we give it credit for. The time for a new age of liturgical inculturation and healthy experimentation is upon us. If the implementation of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal has taught us anything, it has taught us that even in the West the Roman Rite is foreign. So today we must as a Church acknowledge the need to localize the Roman Rite.

⁸⁰ Alex Chima, "Africanising the Liturgy -- Where are we Twenty Years After Vatican II?" *AFER* 25, no. 5 (1984), 282.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 284.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁸⁴ Gibellini, 103.

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