CULTURE AND LITURGY
National Bulletin on Liturgy

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This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, and diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community liturgy.

Editorial commentary in the Bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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When the Son of God became one of us, he took on our complete human nature, and is like us in all things but sin (see Heb. 4: 15). Jesus became a child of Israel, a Jewish man, a member of the Jewish faith. The days of his flesh were not lived in a vacuum, but within the context and culture of a particular people. He was one of them, and lived, thought, and worshipped with them.

Each of us is born into a particular culture, and shares in its special gifts, insights, and approaches to God and the universe. This part of our humanity needs to be expressed in our life for Christ, in our prayer, and in our public worship. To be a true expression of ourselves, our worship in Christ has to reflect our culture, and be open to all the good that is in it: only thus are we offering ourselves completely to God.

The Second Vatican Council invites us to bring the gifts and beauty of our culture into our worship. This issue of the Bulletin explores some ideas and examples on how this may be done.
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### A PRAYER

God of all nations,  
you have made us in all our diversity  
to reflect your love and power.  
Your Son Jesus is brother to us all,  
and has died and risen to bring us life.  
Your Spirit calls us from all lands and tribes and tongues  
to give you glory with one voice:

All glory and praise to you, Father of all,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
in the love of the Holy Spirit,  
for ever and ever. Amen!

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INTRODUCTION

Disciples
in all nations

This article gives us a brief outline of developments in the Church's approach to culture and liturgy. Sometimes the liturgy has been adapted to the people, but at other times, the liturgy was kept stable and people learned to get used to its alien elements.

Jesus: The gospel of Matthew concludes by giving us Jesus' commission to the Church: we are to invite all nations to become his followers. They are to learn to do all that Jesus has told us to do, and are to be baptized in the name of the Trinity. Jesus, who has all the power in heaven and on earth, remains with us until the end of time (Mt. 28: 18-20).

New Testament days: Beginning in Jerusalem, the disciples brought Jesus' message of repentance and forgiveness to Judea, Samaria, and all nations (Lk. 24: 47; Acts 1: 8). By the end of the first century, the Christian message had spread around the Roman Empire and even outside it. The Christian faith was open to believers of every nationality and background, for God did not restrict the gift of faith to people of one nation or culture (Acts 10: 34-35). Baptism overcame the differences of nationality, language, gender, and social status, and made us one in Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all (see Rom. 10: 12; 1 Cor. 12: 13; Gal. 3: 28; James 2: 1-4).

Christianity began among a small group of Jewish followers of a Jewish teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. Gradually it spread to the Jewish people in the diaspora, and to Greek and Roman pagans. At each of these steps, believers had to separate what belonged to the Jewish culture or faith from what Jesus taught, between what came from an earlier culture and what met current needs and circumstances. We see examples of this in the differences between the Hebrews and the Hellenists (Acts 6: 1); Peter's struggle about unclean foods and about associating with pagans (Acts. 10: 9-29; compare Mk. 7: 17-19); Paul's argument with Peter over eating with Gentiles (Gal. 2: 11-14); the difficulties about circumcision and dietary laws (Acts 15: 1-29); and the question of eating food offered to idols (1 Cor. 8: 1-13; 10: 14 — 11: 1).

Perhaps we would appreciate the situation of the Church in its early years more clearly if we compared the Roman Empire of that time to the
British Empire of 75 years ago. One type of imperial law was imposed on people of different languages, races, cultures, customs, backgrounds, and degrees of sophistication. The same type of compliance to imperial laws was expected of everyone, no matter what their origin or civilization. It was into this type of situation that the new Christian religion came. It was soon recognized by others as something more than a Jewish sect.

The first generations of Christians brought the faith into various countries and cultures. There it was adapted in various ways to embrace each culture, to bring it under the influence of Christ's grace, to baptize the culture and make it a way of life that Christians can live as they seek to follow Jesus. The book of Revelation reflects this when it describes the gospel as being preached to every nation, tribe, language, and race on earth (Rev. 14: 7). All these people are pictured as giving worship together in heaven (Rev. 5: 9; 7: 9-10).

Even the forms of ministry varied in New Testament times. While Ignatius of Antioch speaks firmly of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyters, and deacons in his area around the year 110, the pastoral letters and the Didache reflect other approaches, perhaps more suited to local forms and conditions.

**Early centuries:** In the second and third centuries of the Christian era, the Church seemed to settle in easily in different nations and cultural groups. The liturgy was in the language of the people, the clergy wore no special vestments or distinctive clothing, and ordinary bread and wine were used in celebrating the eucharist. There were differences, of course: the controversy between Asia and the rest of the Church over the date of celebrating Easter is an early instance of failing to understand that different groups can do the same thing in different ways.¹

**East and West:** Constantine, who granted freedom of worship to the Church in the early years of the fourth century, moved the seat of the empire to a new city, Constantinople (i.e., the city of Constantine — now Istanbul, in Turkey). Gradually the Church in the East and the Church in the West began to move in distinct directions because of the varying cultures they served. The East was more imaginative and flamboyant, and loved to use many words; the West, represented by Rome, was more pragmatic, restrained, business-like, terse.² Greek remained the language in the East, along with other languages in different countries. In Rome, Greek yielded to Latin by the end of the fourth century in popular speech and therefore in the liturgy too.

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Constantinople sent missionaries to various countries, and brought its liturgy into their languages.\(^3\) The Western Church imposed the liturgy in Latin on its converts to Christianity, and even made the Celtic Churches change over to Roman ways.\(^4\) After many centuries, the liturgy remained in Latin, which was the language of the educated classes; the ordinary folk spoke their own developing vernaculars, and drifted away from the liturgy as the source of their spirituality.

There were periods when local cultures did influence the Roman liturgy. The Irish approach to reconciliation was eventually adopted by Rome. Under Charlemagne, the Roman and Franco-German liturgies were mingled, and eventually became the basis for today's Roman liturgy.

**Modern history:** With the Renaissance, the invention of printing, and the discovery of America in the fifteenth century, a whole new attitude swept across Europe. For the next century, explorers roamed around the globe, and established colonies in all continents. The Church went with the colonizers, and — until the last years of the twentieth century — remained too closely bound up with their imperialism and colonialism. Too often, Christianity meant European Christianity as practised in the home country, and little effort was made to adapt the faith to the ways of the new believers. The whole concept of the Christian initiation of adults was forgotten, and the catechesis of the colonies followed the model of children's initiation in Europe.

There were brighter moments: the efforts to adapt Christianity to the culture of the Chinese, but this was squelched later.\(^5\) Some work was done in the vernacular among the Iroquois in New France. Generally speaking, however, a Roman liturgy in Latin and a European approach to Christianity went around the world.

The Protestant Reformation in the early sixteenth century brought about many adaptations in their liturgies — an updating that Catholics did not share until the Second Vatican Council (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 51-55\(^{[51-55]}\)).\(^6\) The Council of Trent (1545-1563) made some reforms in the life and teaching of the Church, but could not see the way clear at that time to adapt the liturgy fully to contemporary needs.

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\(^3\) Speaking of St. Cyril and St. Methodius on November 6, 1981, John Paul II said: “They respected the spiritual and cultural riches of every people, quite convinced that the grace given by Christ does not destroy, but elevates and transforms nature. Through their faithfulness to the gospel and to the local cultures, they invented a special alphabet to make it possible to transcribe the sacred books in the language of the Slav peoples.” See *Notitiae*, vol. 17 (1981), pages 582-583; also pages 65-68, 74-79.


In the fifteen years before Vatican II, a wave of changes began in the Catholic Church: a limited use of the vernacular in some sacraments and blessings, reform of the Easter vigil and then of Holy Week, some simplification in the rubrics of the liturgy of the hours. Except for the ritual blessings and the renewal of baptismal promises, these adaptations were in Latin, and were to be the same around the world.

At the same time, various national Churches were beginning to feel the need, even in a vague manner, of adapting the liturgy to meet their needs.

This was the situation when the Second Vatican Council assembled during the autumn months from 1962 to 1965. The Council’s approach to adaptation is discussed in the following article.

**Helpful reading:**


*Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty, by George H. Dunne, SJ (1962, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN 46556).*


Jesus Christ — the Life of the World: A Worship Book for the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1983, WCC, 150, route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland): contents are given in English, French, German, and Spanish parallels; hymns are in various languages.


Inculturation in Korea, Nairobi, Ghana, The Philippines, and Ireland: special issue of Ensign (Spring 1983, Pontifical Missionary Union National Office, 64 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin 6).

Worship: The Life of the Missions, by Johannes Hoffinger, SJ, Josef Kellner, SJ, Paul Brunner, SJ, and Johannes Seffer, SJ (1958, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN 46556): While some of the facts are outdated because of the renewal brought about by Vatican II, much of the contents and insights of this book remains helpful.


A note on some principles of adaptation, by Cardinal James R. Knox: Adaptation “is the main program of pastoral liturgy after the restoration of the liturgical books.” But this is to be done in co-operation between the Congregation for Divine Worship and the episcopal conferences. See Notitiae, vol. 10 (1974), pages 358-359.


Primitive Art: Its Traditions and Styles, by Paul S. Wingert (1974, New American Library, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019; and 81 Mack Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario M1L 1M8).

Guidelines for adaptation

The Second Vatican Council recognized that adaptation in our liturgy is a consequence of the incarnation of the Son of God as one of us, and that it is called for by the nature of worship and of worshippers. This adaptation is particularly necessary in mission countries, but is not restricted to them. Some of the guidelines offered by the Church are outlined in this article.

Constitution on the Liturgy

Various principles and some suggested areas for adaptation are discussed in the Constitution on the Liturgy (December 4, 1963):

Freedom to adapt (no. 37 [37]): The Roman Catholic Church does not want to insist on “rigid uniformity” in things that do not affect the Christian faith or the welfare of the entire believing community. Instead, the Church wishes to respect the spiritual gifts and talents of different cultures and races, seeing these gifts as God-given. Avoiding only those things that are deeply involved with error or superstition, we may preserve anything in our folkways. Some of these may become part of our Catholic liturgy when they are in tune with its spirit.

Unity and variety (no. 38 [38]): We are to keep the basic unity of the Roman rite’s liturgy, but within that broad framework the revised liturgical books are to permit some variations. The liturgy may be adapted to meet the needs and desires of “different groups, regions, and peoples,” particularly in mission territories. This variety also applies, when appropriate, to the outline or structure of rites and to their rubrics or directions for good celebrations.

Local variations (no. 39 [39]): The revised liturgical books will describe areas where adaptations may take place. The episcopal conference may suggest some specific changes or adaptations in the ways of celebrating sacraments and sacramentals, in the language used in the liturgy, in processions, and in music and the arts. All these changes are to be in accord with the basic norms (especially in the Liturgy constitution, nos. 21-40 [21-40]).

Some examples: The introduction to the Roman Rite of Funerals, nos. 4-9, 21-22 [3376-3381, 3393-3394], and the Canadian adaptation in Catholic Funeral Rite (1973, CCC, Ottawa); introduction to Rite of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick, nos. 38-39 [3358-3359], and the ICEL adaptation in Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum (1983, CCCB, Ottawa). Only minor adaptations are included in the Canadian and American editions of the sacramentary and lectionary.
More radical adaptations (no. 40 [40]): When these are needed:

- **Episcopal conference:** The episcopal conference is to study the matter carefully, and see which elements may be taken from the native spirituality, practices, and genius of their people, and incorporated into the Catholic liturgy. These adaptations are to be approved by Rome before being included in the liturgy.

- **Experimentation:** Rome is to let episcopal conferences conduct some experimentation for a number of years, with suitable groups.²

- **Expert help:** Especially in mission countries, experts are to be consulted and involved in adapting liturgical laws and rites.

Some suggested areas:

- **Ritual books** (no. 63b [63]): Adaptations in language, rites, pastoral introductions, rubrics.

- **Use of the people’s language** (nos. 36, 54, 63a, 101, 113 [36, 54, 63, 101, 113]): The cautious beginnings soon gave way to the natural and proper desire and universal need to use our own native languages in praising God.³

- **Sacraments** (nos. 65, 68, 77 [65, 68, 77]): The Council suggested some changes in the rites of Christian initiation for adults and children, in marriage celebrations, in rites for the sick, and in funerals (no. 81 [81]).

- **Sacramentals** (nos. 39, 60-61 [39, 60-61]): Blessings — of persons, places, and things — and other sacramentals may be adapted.

- **Popular devotions** (nos. 13, 17 [13, 17]): These are to be renewed according to the spirit of the liturgy, and are to be adapted accordingly.

- **Calendars** (nos. 107, 111 [107, 111]): Certain feasts are no longer considered universal, and are left to local celebration.

- **Penitential practices** (no. 110 [110]): These may vary with individual and local circumstances.

- **Music** (nos. 39, 119-120 [39, 119-120]): Local musical traditions and instruments may be used in the liturgy.

- **Modern art and furnishings** (nos. 39, 123, 128-129 [39, 123, 128-129]): The Church encourages modern art from all nations and regions as long as it is reverent. Vesture, furnishings, and the materials used may be adapted to local practices and needs.

² In the Instruction *Inaestimabile Donum* (Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, April 3, 1980), paragraph 4, page 4, it is noted that “undue experimentation” has bad effects. Nowhere does this document come out against proper experimentation, adaptation, and creativity. See the commentary on this paragraph in Bulletin 76, pages 219-220.

³ The introduction to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 12-13 [1387-1388], notes the great enthusiasm shown toward the use of the vernacular. To the end of 1978, some 343 languages were approved for liturgical use! Detailed lists are given in *Notitiae*, vol. 15 (1979), pages 385-520.
Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity

Issued in 1965 at the close of the Second Vatican Council, two years after the Liturgical constitution, this document bases its teaching about cultural adaptation on the doctrine of the *incarnation*, and suggests some further areas for adaptation that affect the liturgy. These include:

**Missionary work** (no. 6 [243]): The Church sends out people to preach the gospel and plant the Church where it has not yet been planted, so that native Churches may grow to maturity, and contribute to the good of the Church around the world.

**Recognizing whatever is good** (no. 9 [244]): Missionaries are to recognize the aspects of truth and of grace that are already present in a nation. This includes truths found in the minds and hearts of the people, or in any rituals which are special to them. Missionaries seek to make these more perfect for use in the service of Christ and for God’s glory.4

**Presence of the Church** (nos. 10-11 [245]): By his incarnation, the Son of God became one of us, Jesus Christ our Lord. He involved himself in the specific “social and cultural conditions” of the people among whom he lived: he was a Jew in a Jewish society. In a similar way, the Church becomes present in a society or culture by the lives and witness of Christians. They share in the social and cultural circumstances of their land or nation. Led by the Spirit of Jesus, they seek out the seeds of God’s truth in their tradition, and bring them to serve the gospel. The Christian faith and the Christian Church are never to be an alien or foreign body, but a part of each culture.5

**Rooted in their own culture** (no. 15 [247]): Missionaries are to form Christians who are rooted in their own culture with its riches. These Christians accept all the good customs and traditions of their nation, and are patriotic, loving their own country and seeking to love all people. By their lives and by their word, they lead their fellow citizens toward Christ. Vocations to all ministries are to be encouraged.

**Seminarians** (no. 16 [248]): Those who are preparing for the priestly ministry need to be in close contact with the characteristic ways in which their people think and act. As they grow in understanding their own culture, they

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4 They should seek out indigenous ways of expressing these basic human values that are so fundamental to good liturgy: being able to celebrate, to listen, to express thanks; to forgive and to ask forgiveness; to greet and to welcome others; to take part with a group in an activity; to share in a friendly meal; and to experience actions which are symbolic.

These are based on the Directory for Masses with Children, nos. 9-10 [2142-2143]. These and other qualities are drawn out and explained more fully in Bulletin 89, *Children Learn to Celebrate.*

5 “Christians are indistinguishable from other men [and women] either by nationality, language, or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life . . . . With regard to dress, food, and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.” Excerpt from a letter to Diognetus, no. 5, quoted in *The Liturgy of the Hours* (1976, Catholic Book Publishing, New York): vol. 2, office of readings for Wednesday in the fifth week of Easter, pages 840-842.
can see its values; similarly, they can begin to recognize how the traditions
and religions of their people may have some contact points with Christianity.

**Religious communities** (nos. 18, 40): Religious should try to express and
pass on the treasures of Christian mysticism — including ascetic practices and
traditions of contemplation — in a way that is in harmony with the particular
spirit of the nation where they live. They will accommodate their lives to the
"truly religious traditions" of the culture, and give witness to God’s love and
to the fact that we are all children of God, and brothers and sisters of Jesus
and of one another.

**Local Church** (no. 19 [250]): As the local Church becomes established,
with its own bishop, clergy, and institutions, it needs to be “rooted in the
social life and considerably adapted to the local culture” [italics added]. The
faith is to be celebrated in the liturgy, which is to be in harmony with the
genius of their nation. At the same time, the local Church is to remain in close
union with the universal Church, and to bring its worldwide traditions into
their local culture.

**Laity** (no. 21): The active work of the laity is necessary for the planting
of the gospel in the life and spirit of any nation. They share in the riches of its
culture and work to solve its problems and promote its progress. By their
lives they give witness for Christ to all they meet, showing that the Christian
way of life can be lived within the culture of their society and nation. They
seek to let Christ enter fully into their culture, traditions, and society, and so
make them ever more perfect.

**An incarnate Church** (no. 22): When a local Church is firmly estab­
lished, it must be incarnate, like Christ (see nos. 10-11, above). It borrows the
good things in the practices, traditions, social customs, learning, art, and
scientific achievements of the culture, and uses them to proclaim God’s glory,
to reveal Christ’s saving love, and to shape the life of Christians (see also
Constitution on the Church, no. 13 [143]). This generous sharing of gifts also
enriches the Church around the world. (See no. 19, above: both the local
Church and other Churches benefit from this reciprocity.)

**Training missionaries** (nos. 25-26, 34): They need to be able to adapt
themselves to new and different customs, even though they may seem strange.
They have to understand both the universal nature of the Church and the
diversities to be found in different cultures and in local Churches. They need
to be familiar with cultures and religions, both past and present. They need to
understand the history, culture, customs, language, moral and religious
values, and the structures of society in the land where they will serve. They
are to be trained so that they can dialogue openly, fairly, and respectfully
with the cultures and religions of this society.
Declaration on Non-Christian Religions

This brief document was issued in October 1965, and speaks of the relationships between the Church and these religions.

Recognizing unity and diversity (nos. 1-2): The Council recognizes the growing bonds that link different nations and races in our time, and the basic unity of the human race under God’s loving care. Though we differ in our religions, we all seek the answers to common questions. Our religions are closely linked with our cultures.

Accepting what is true and holy (no. 2): The Catholic Church accepts whatever is true and holy in other religions, and respects their principles which reflect God’s goodness and Jesus Christ’s nature as the light and the truth for all people. The Church is ready to dialogue with these religions, to accept and promote their cultures and their spiritual and moral values.

Rejecting all forms of prejudice and persecution (nos. 4-5): Rejecting the errors of the past, the Catholic Church takes a firm stand against all prejudice or persecution of anyone because of race, color, culture, creed, gender, or state in life. Our Lord Jesus has died and been raised to save everyone, and we cannot reject the human dignity of any person: such rejection is against the mind and the love of Jesus.

These principles help us to recognize and respect the goodness to be found in all cultures. As Christians we are to learn from them and to bring their values into the service of Christ our King.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal

The General Instruction⁶ points out a variety of areas for cultural adaptation in the celebration of the eucharist.

Power to change rites (no. 241 [1631]): As guardian of the sacraments of Christ, the Church has the power to change the ceremonies or rites surrounding the sacraments as long as their essential substance is unchanged (see Liturgy constitution, no. 21 [21]). Different places, times or circumstances may require changes that lead to greater benefits for the people or greater reverence for the sacraments. One example is the restoration by Vatican II of communion under both forms (Liturgy constitution, no. 55 [55]).

Language of the people (Introduction, nos. 12-13 [1387-1388]): The liturgy of the Roman rite may now be celebrated totally in the language of the people (see footnote 3 on page 201, above).

⁶ References in this section are to the revised edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, March 27, 1975, as found in New Introductions to the Sacramentary and Lectionary (1983, CCCB, Ottawa), pages 5-58. This text is also given in Documents on the Liturgy: 1963-1979, document 208, pages 465-533 [1376-1731].
Translation from Latin is only the first step in adaptation. It is evident that translated texts are "clearly not sufficient for the celebration of a fully renewed liturgy. The creation of new texts will be necessary. But translation of texts transmitted through the tradition of the Church is the best school and discipline for the creation of new texts" so that they may be developed from already existing ones (Liturgy constitution, no. 23 [23]).

In the Sacramentary, we have the alternative opening prayers on Sundays and solemnities as a first step in this direction. Through ICEL, the episcopal conferences in English-speaking countries are working on further texts for the years to come.

Postures (no. 21 [1411]): The bishops' conference may adapt the postures of the Mass to the local customs (Liturgy constitution, no. 39 [39]), as long as the adapted posture is in accord with the meaning and nature of the various parts of the eucharistic celebration.

Kissing altar and gospel book (no. 232 [1622]): Where this form of reverence is not in keeping with the ways of a culture or area, the bishops' conference may inform Rome and substitute another sign of respect.

Arts (no. 254 [1644]): The Church has encouraged the arts down through the centuries, and continues to welcome "the artistic expressions of all peoples and regions." As well as preserving the works from all ages of the past, it is ready to encourage modern works that are pleasing to contemporary taste (Liturgy constitution, nos. 123, 129 [123, 129]).

Architecture and furnishings: (nos. 287-288 [1677-1678]): Local artistic styles are welcomed for church buildings and furnishings. Adaptations in harmony with the "genius and traditions of each people" are acceptable. The bishops' conference may choose other suitable materials for church furnishings. (See also Liturgy constitution, no. 128 [128].)

Altar (nos. 263-264 [1633-1654]): As well as stone, the conference of bishops may choose suitable materials for the construction of the altar. Its shape may be in accord with local cultural traditions (Liturgy constitution, no. 128 [128]).

Vessels (nos. 290-295 [1680-1685]): The conference of bishops may approve of the material from which these vessels are made. The shape of the vessels may be in accord with the local culture and its traditions.

Vestments (nos. 301, 304-305, 308 [1691, 1694-1695, 1698]): Another vestment may be approved to replace the alb. Episcopal conferences may suggest a form of vestments to Rome that is more in keeping with their local practices and needs (Liturgy constitution, no. 128 [128]). Local natural

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7 See Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, Instruction Comme le prévoit, January 25, 1969, no. 43 [880].

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fabrics and artificial fabrics may be approved by the episcopal conference. The conference may also suggest to Rome other colors for their region.

Local calendar (no. 316 [1706]): Particular memorials are preferred to memorials in the universal calendar.

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Pontifical Council for Culture: To give flesh to the growing need and desire for cultural adaptation in the Church's evangelization, worship, and living, Pope John Paul II founded the Pontifical Council for Culture on May 20, 1982. The Holy Father considers “the Church’s dialogue with the cultures of our time to be a vital area.” The new council is to be “capable of giving the whole Church a common impulse in the continuously renewed encounter between the salvific message of the gospel and the multiplicity of cultures, in the diversity of cultures” to which the Church must bring the grace of Christ. (See L'Osservatore Romano, weekly English edition, June 28, 1982.)

* * *

The following articles show some of the ways in which some countries are beginning to adapt the liturgy and to bring the riches of their culture into Christian worship.

Helpful reading:


Language and Culture, edited by Patrick Gleeson and Nancy Wakefield (1968, Charles E. Merrill, 1300 Alum Creek Drive, Columbus, OH 43216).


Culture and Liturgy, by Brian Wicker (1963, Sheed and Ward, London; and 64 University Place, New York 3, NY).

Confessing Christ in Different Cultures: Report of a Colloquium Held at the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, 2-8 July 1977, edited by John S. Mbiti (1977, Ecumenical Institute, CH-1298 Céligny, Switzerland).


Many Cultures, One Love, by Lucien Deiss, CSSp (1982, NALR, 10802 North 23rd Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85029).

Rediscovering Ritual, by Paul D. Jones (1973, Newman/Paulist, New York; and 545 Island Road, Ramsey, NJ 07446).


Le Livre d'Or de la Prière de tous les peuples et de tous les temps, edited by Alfonso M. Di Nola (1957, Marabout Université, 65, rue de Limbourg, Verviers, Belgium).


Liturgical Adaptation in the Western Church Prior to the Second Vatican Council, by Michael Joseph King: A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Religious Studies of The Catholic University of America in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Licentiate in Canon Law (1982, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC). This dissertation shows how the theory of liturgical adaptation developed from the earliest days of the Church to the eve of Vatican II.
Sr. Mary Naughton is a Comboni Missionary Sister from Coventry, England. She works as Secretary for Catechetics and Liturgy for the Zambia Episcopal Conference in Lusaka.

I seem to have attended so many ceremonies here lately that it is difficult to know where to begin to describe them. The months of July and August seem to be a favorite time for religious professions and ordinations. People here exult in big liturgical occasions and go out of their way to prepare them. They spend weeks preparing music, songs, and dancing, to say nothing of the cooking for the feast afterwards which is an important part of the whole ceremony; without the meal together afterwards a great occasion loses its impact.

**An ordination:** The ordination ceremony which took place here in Lusaka in July 1983 was held in the open so that everyone could be present; the cathedral just would not have been large enough to hold the crowds that came.

The ceremony began with the procession led by the bishop, who was followed by the priests and deacons. They were accompanied to the altar by girls who danced to the rhythm of the drums, the singing of the choir, and the handclapping of the congregation. The sun was bright and hot and everywhere was bright with color, from the bunting and cover over the raised altar, to the flowers, the red uniform of the altar boys, the blue of the dancers' dresses, the vividly colored stoles of the priests reaching almost to the ground, and the bright reds, yellows, blues, and greens favored by the women in the congregation.

The singing throughout was enthusiastic, with the choir as leader in determining the rhythm of the songs and supplying the accompaniment while the whole congregation joined in. Throughout the ceremony three languages
were used, English, Cinyanja, and Cibemba. The chairman of the cathedral parish council gave a clear and precise step-by-step commentary of each part of the ceremony so that everyone in the congregation should know what was happening at each stage.

When the young priest was finally clothed in his vestments the people rose to their feet clapping, cheering, and ululating with joy that this their son, as the bishop described him, had been given the gift of ordination. At the end of the ceremony he was led to a seat in front of the altar and the faithful brought him gifts: chickens, ducks, a protesting goat, and money from the many parishes represented.

**Sunday celebrations:** This is, of course, an occasion, but even the ordinary Sunday liturgy is marked with the same color, enthusiastic participation of the congregation in singing and bringing gifts to the altar, and the sense of family and community.

Often the parish notices and news are read by a member of the parish council and it is not unknown for members of the congregation to correct him, demand clarification, or clap enthusiastically at some parish achievement. Guests or visitors are usually presented to the congregation and the leaders of the various parish groups will come forward to welcome them formally with a handclasp.

**Music** is, of course, very important. In almost all churches singing is accompanied by drums, shakers of various shapes, sizes, and sounds, and sometimes an instrument consisting of two metal bars and sounding rather like a triangle. In the early days of the Church in Zambia, songs were translated from European hymns and even from Latin. The *Veni Creator* is still recognizable under the guise of more than one Zambian language, and is sung with great solemnity at the beginning of important meetings. In recent years, however, Zambian composers have begun to write sacred songs which are not simply translations but which use their own music styles and rhythms. The songs are written in antiphonal form with the choir or cantor singing a verse and the congregation coming in with the antiphon or refrain usually sung twice. No music is written down and so the songs are learned and passed on orally, with the result that different groups sing them in slightly different ways, often adding verses or changing the refrain to suit different occasions. So much music has been composed that the problem now seems to be to halt the creative flow and give the congregation a chance to become familiar with the new songs and music.

**Dance** is becoming more and more a feature of special liturgies such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Some churches regularly have the procession with the gifts in the form of a dance. This is usually performed by young girls in brightly colored, traditional waistcloths. The dance is very simple and involves gestures of offering such as raising the hands palm-upwards as the dancers move forward to the rhythm of drums and singing. In a ‘dance' used
sometimes at the penitential rite, a very moving sequence of gestures is
performed while kneeling. The dancers move from a position of kneeling on
their heels to kneeling upright while raising their hands in a supplicatory
gesture. At the Gloria a dance of joy is given more impact with the use of
branches of brightly colored flowers which the dancers wave as they raise
their arms.

Adaptation: The community of Poor Clares in Lusaka has played an
important role in the adaptation of liturgy here. Choirs from surrounding
parishes attend their liturgies and are instructed in the use and significance of
dance and gesture in the liturgy. They are also encouraged to compose church
music using local tunes. The sisters make vestments with bold African designs
in bright colors and decorate their chapel with mosaics made from the
brightly colored seeds and fruits of the bush around them. Inside the chapel
the division between the enclosure and the public area is marked off with
the rocks and green plants. The office is sung in the vernacular and the music
is of their own composition and accompanied by local instruments.

The need for meaningful adaptation of many of the liturgical rites is
being felt. Often a translation from the Roman rites into the vernaculars
leaves much to be desired in significance and accuracy. Even in the few places
where English is used, the language is felt to be too concise and the prayers
are over too quickly. As someone commented recently, "These prayers are
like a trickling stream; what we need are waterfall prayers." It is also widely
felt that the involvement of as many of the congregation as possible is vital to
a meaningful celebration of liturgy; all too often it is only the couple getting
married, the person being baptized and his or her sponsor, or the priest alone
who is really involved in liturgical celebrations, while the congregation
remains, as it were, at the edge of what is going on. Progress has been made in
the Sunday liturgies but a great deal still needs to be done for the celebration
of the sacraments and other rites such as funerals, the blessing of seeds, the
anointing of the sick, baptism, and confirmation.

Marriage rites: The National Liturgical Commission is at present
looking at the need for a more meaningful marriage rite for Zambia. It is felt
that a simple translation of the Roman rite is not sufficient and that people
come to church more out of a sense of duty than to celebrate. One diocese
has drafted a rite of Christian marriage for study in an attempt to provoke
discussion and move toward a more meaningful celebration.

The suggested rite is in four parts. The first part is an initiation
ceremony for girls only. At this ceremony a girl who has reached puberty
would be blessed and then instructed by older women in the ways in which
she is expected to behave as an adult Christian.

For the second part an engagement ceremony is envisaged at which gifts
would be exchanged and the families encouraged to help and support the
couple. At the actual marriage ceremony gifts would be exchanged rather
than rings, which have no meaning here. Suggested gifts from the groom to the bride are a pot or wooden spoon and from the bride to the groom an axe or spear. These gifts would symbolize their respect for and acceptance of their respective roles in the marriage partnership. After the marriage vows the parents would be encouraged to bless their children formally and to promise not to do anything which might lead to their separation. The fourth part would bring to the church the traditional formal introduction of the bride to the family of the groom, and the groom to the family of the bride. This takes place some time after the wedding and the suggestion is made that the couple renew their marriage vows and that prayers be said to encourage and strengthen them.

It is hoped that this new rite will stress the community and social aspects of marriage. Though it is still at the discussion stage, it has aroused a great deal of interest and hope that Zambia may soon have its own marriage rite.

* * *

I have been in Zambia almost eight years and these liturgical expressions have become so normal for me that I find it hard to see them as those who come for the first time must see them. Here in Zambia I have discovered how alive and colorful a Sunday celebration can be, and how heartrending a funeral; a deeper meaning in the Holy Week ceremonies which culminate in joy and dancing at Easter, and a better understanding of what participation and involvement in the liturgy can mean.

God bless you,

Sr. Mary Naughton
Secretary for Catechetics and Liturgy

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**EVANGELIZATION**

Paul VI reminds us:

_Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life._

Father Thomas R. Whelan, CSSp, is an Irish member of the Spiritan community, working as a missionary in Sierra Leone in West Africa. While studying liturgy in Rome, he wrote this letter to Fr. Regis Halloran, director of the National Liturgical Office in Canada.

Dear Regis:

It is quite exciting to be a Christian in these post-Vatican II years — even more so to be a missionary. Some years ago during my first appointment to Sierra Leone in West Africa as a student with the Holy Ghost (Spiritan) Congregation, I found myself working in the National Pastoral Center of the country. The NPC, begun in 1975, serves and animates the work of the three dioceses in this small country.

Music: The portfolio on my desk was entitled “Liturgical Music” and it was empty! My job was to co-ordinate some of the work which was going on at local parish level and to give some direction to it.

The first task placed before me by the bishops was to publish an English-language hymnal to serve the parishes in the towns and the secondary schools throughout the country. The job was not easy. The first step was to determine what hymns were known already and then to add to this body, where necessary, so as to have a selection of hymns in the English language that would answer the liturgical needs of these parishes and groups. This meant omitting certain hymns which were not suitable for liturgical use or which presented a theology which was either one-sided or did not reflect properly the Church’s understanding of the mysteries we celebrate. A study of the music of one of the major tribes of Sierra Leone (Mende) gave me some indication as to the type of music which they would find either appealing or difficult. This study also influenced the final selection of hymns — all composed by Western musicians. I would think, on reflection, that if there is a need for English-language music, some of it, at least, could in the future be composed by Sierra Leonean musicians themselves.

In regard to Mende liturgical music, we decided to initiate the project in stages. Many parishes had their own resident composers who were providing music for the liturgy. Much of this music was collected and published in a small book with an accompanying cassette so as to diffuse this music throughout the region. It was not intended to make this collection “official,”
but rather to present a selection of liturgical music in the Mende language and musical idiom to parishes which made little use of Mende music, and to give other parishes an opportunity to share what was used in their own liturgies. To support this initial project, the musicians met in the pastoral center for a week in order to exchange music and discuss their work. It was an opportunity to give them some idea as to what the liturgy is about, and the demands that liturgy makes on music. This meeting proved a tremendous success — a great help to the musicians themselves and an eye-opener to us in our realization of the great musical riches and possibilities that lie hidden in the local genius. But this is only a beginning. As their appreciation of the liturgy develops and deepens, so also will their music become more and more an appropriate expression of their ecclesial worship.

**Language and translation:** Over the last number of years, particularly because of the increasing number of Sierra Leonean priests and under their influence, we have all become more aware of the many different aspects of liturgical adaptation. Previously it meant, for many people, using traditional local music with a liturgy translated into the vernacular languages. The Mass is now translated into the languages of most of the 15 tribes. Some might argue that this is the first stage of translation, hoping that eventually we may have dynamic translations of at least the acclamations and dialogue parts. It is not easy to translate idiomatically from Latin or modern world languages into languages which have totally different grammatical structures and thought patterns.

**Vesture:** The vestments which priests use here are normally those designated by the General Instruction. Within the last ten years or so the outer vestments have been made from a local cloth, *gara*. These are superb and are dyed in beautiful bright colors. Maybe there is some room for us to move toward a single vestment (alb/chasuble) with accompanying stole which would not be too heavy in the great heat, and would be more in keeping with Sierra Leonean style of dress.

**Understanding of God:** To ask someone in Sierra Leone "Ah de body?" or "Ah de time?" is normally to elicit the answer: "God dae" (God is there). People are very conscious of God's presence. According to local belief he does not always take direct interest in the affairs of humankind. People's lives are more affected by the spirits of ancestors and evil spirits. But the supremacy of God (in Mende, *Ngew:* means man in the sky) is never questioned. This vision of God makes catechesis both interesting and challenging. The Christian idea of a personal God who does in fact take an active interest, not only in all humankind (as witnessed by Christ), but also in every individual, is a joy to those who accept the Christian way of life.

**Christian initiation:** We normally have a precatechumenate period for those who wish to be baptized, after which period they enter into a full three-year program. Christian initiation is normally celebrated when the catechumens are ready for it. Much work and thought has still to be put into this
full area. Only a few priests celebrate this sacrament with the lenten and Easter liturgies, mostly because of the practical difficulties involved (organization and workload) for the generally one-man mission stations. The bishops have asked that confirmation be held back for another two or three years after baptism. The full adult rite, celebrating the three sacraments of Christian initiation together, takes place only in exceptional individual cases.

Throughout Sierra Leone the different tribes have their own initiation ceremonies. These are sacred. An adult who has not been initiated is not accepted in society, but is seen to be an overgrown child. These initiation ceremonies could be studied profitably (by Sierra Leonean priests) and there is a possibility that our organization of Christian initiation could learn something from it.

**Postures and gestures:** We have so far put little thought into bodily attitudes and gestures. Individual missionaries have experimented with different aspects of this, incorporating certain gestures which have particularly deep meaning in Sierra Leonean and tribal cultures. Unfortunately nothing has been done at an organized level in this regard. One interesting gesture found in the Mende culture is the practice (not often used) of placing the hand on the left shoulder of a person as a sign of *total* forgiveness. Once done, the incident forgiven can never be recalled by a person who forgives. We have used this most effectively in celebrations of the sacrament of reconciliation.

**Looking toward the future:** We still have a long way to go with liturgical adaptation in Sierra Leone. The ground is ripe. The possibilities and directions are many. The interest is alive. We missionaries can only hope to create the atmosphere and set the general direction while giving whatever support and encouragement possible to the growing number of Sierra Leonean priests. One of them, Fr. Henry Williams, is at present studying liturgical theology at Notre Dame University in the United States. I am finishing a similar course in Rome. When we both return to Sierra Leone we will have a wide open field ahead of us and much ground work to cover before beginning programs of liturgical adaptation. Adaptation cannot ever just refer to the external change of “rite” and “text,” but must be preceded and accompanied by a deepening of the liturgical life of the community.

Please keep us in mind as we forge ahead in our work of continuing on the mission of Christ. May the liturgy truly be the source and the highpoint of the life of the Church in Sierra Leone.

Yours sincerely in the Holy Spirit,

*Tom*

Thomas R. Whelan, CSSp
Creative ideas in Pakistan

Although its national language is Urdu, Pakistan has a sizable English-speaking community, and is a member of ICEL, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy.

In order to keep the Church in Pakistan "informed of its liturgical activities, experiments, plans, and decisions," the National Liturgical Commission (NLC) began to publish an occasional Newsletter. The following notes are reprinted with permission from the first two issues, September 1982 and August 1983.

Adaptation: "We realize that meaningful and inculturized liturgy is not created in a liturgical commission and then sent down to the parishes, as it were, but that such liturgy grows from the grassroots level of the local Church celebrating its life in Christ in the parochial community, presuming that such a parochial setup is truly a community or an intercommunicating collection of basic Christian communities. But a National Commission can be a valuable forum for the exchange of ideas and a means for keeping the parishes informed of what is and can be done at the local level.

"Recently, some members of the NLC presented for discussion suggestions for improving the liturgy of the word; fostering reverence for the Blessed Sacrament; and making greater and better use of various liturgical symbols. The wish was expressed that these suggestions, with those of the NLC made after discussing and evaluating them, be edited and circulated through this Newsletter.

Liturgy of the Word

"Unsheathing the two-edged sword of God's word in the liturgy:"

1. Reverence for the word: "Here in Pakistan, Christians have a great respect for the word of God as found in the holy scriptures and show this by the way they handle the bible: they wrap it in a special and often beautiful

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1 National Liturgical Commission Newsletter, in care of the NLC secretary, Rev. John Taylor, M H M, Fatima Church, School Road, Shalimar 8/4, Islamabad, Pakistan. The newsletter is mimeographed on 8½ by 14 pages.

cloth or wallet, keep it in a suitable place or box in their homes, and kiss it or touch their forehead with it before and after reading from it:

“The customary reverence can be enhanced in the celebration of the liturgy of the word. For example:

- **Have a procession with the bible or lectionary:** Either as part of the entrance rite or after the opening prayer, immediately before the liturgy of the word.

  “A suggestion: have the beautifully bound or 'jacketed' bible placed on a velvet or silk cushion and carried aloft by a lay minister, with attendants holding candles, or ribbons attached to the corners of the cushion. At the conclusion of the procession, the bible is enthroned on the lectern and honored with incense before the readings are taken from it.

- **Have a special place in church** for the bible when not in use: This could be on the lectern facing the people or enthroned on a special carved wood “x” stand, in a special cupboard (our Pak Sanduq is historically an adaptation of the special cupboard in which the scrolls were kept in the synagogue) or glass case.

- **Raise and reverence the bible** before and after reading from it, and accompany this with a prayer or blessing.

- **Have a suitably adorned lectern:** History provides us with a range of artistic lecterns or ambos. Even a simple lectern can be draped with a beautiful cloth (for the lectern is the table of God’s word). To this cloth could be attached a word or verse from the current readings of that day to help focus attention, or a symbol or picture could serve the same purpose for illiterate people.

- **Use the bible symbolically** on various occasions to add solemnity to what is being done:
  - “When a couple pronounces their marriage vows they could place their hand on the bible held by the priest, or the bride and groom could be invited to pass underneath the bible, in Islamic fashion.
  - “During the rite of infant baptism, the bible could be placed on the head or shoulder of the father of the child, to remind him that he carries the burden of giving his child an example of life lived according to the bible.
  - Confirmation: “Those renewing their baptismal vows on the occasion of receiving confirmation could do so while touching the bible or do so individually after the communal renewal, the bishop holding the bible on his knees for the purpose.
“When Afsos takes place, the bible — source of life and consolation — could be reverently enthroned in the midst of the mourners, with suitable texts being read from it occasionally.

2. External reverence is secondary to intelligibility: “The NLC agreed and wished it to be stressed that no amount of external reverence for the material book of the scriptures can make up for a lack of audibility and meaningfulness when the scriptures are proclaimed in the liturgy, for it is only the meaning of scripture that is the word of God which can sanctify, strengthen, heal, call to repentance, and console.

“The communication of the meaning of texts is by far the most important aspect of the liturgy of the word. While the very selection of the texts, the responsorial psalms, and the festive context in which they are proclaimed greatly aid the meaningfulness of what is heard, the essential role of the well trained reader, which is a special ministry in the Church, must not be underestimated. The common practice of thrusting the text reference into the willing or not-so-willing hands of someone just before Mass when no adequate preparation can be made is considered a grave abuse.

• Preparation: “At the very least, the reader should be given time to prepare the text and if possible to practise it with someone listening and giving suggestions on the volume, speed and pauses, variations of pitch and stress, to bring out the meaning and help the listeners to catch it.

“Ideally, readers should be given a very special training, perhaps following the thirteen training sessions suggested in the volume devoted to the training of readers in the “Training for Community Ministries” booklets (published by Collins in 1978), and thus be able to give a short introduction and use some of the classical ways of helping an audience to digest a scripture text and remember key ideas.

“The reader’s aim is not just to make the biblical text audible, but first and foremost meaningful, since only the meaning is sacred and life-giving. The text, therefore, is carefully prepared by someone specially chosen, one who is respected in the community and known to be striving to live a good life according to the gospel (and thus his or her life reinforces the text), and a person, obviously, who has the ‘charism’ for being able to communicate in public.

• Other points:

“Occasionally people object to women or girl readers. However, in this context it should be remembered that as Christians we believe in the equality of all the baptized; moreover, it was a young maiden, Mary, who

3 Afsos means sorrow or mourning. People sit on the ground or on mats in front of the bereaved family’s house with the mourners.
became the mother of the divine Word, and who was singled out by Christ as one who heard the word and kept it.

□ “Finally, the NLC noted with dismay that some Christians imitate the odd custom of reading the whole bible in one session, each member of the group reading a certain number of chapters simultaneously. Such a practice was not felt to be helpful, and tended to reduce the meaningfulness of the scriptures to the minimum, and even to degenerate into magic.”

Readings for Special Occasions

“The following scripture texts are offered by the NLC for experimental use for special occasions in Pakistan:

Pakistan day (March 23):
Is. 43: 1-4; or Gen. 17: 1-13
1 Pet. 2: 9-17
Jn. 18: 33-38

Independence day (August 14):
Is. 32: 15-20; or Deut. 4: 32-40
Gal. 4: 21-31; 5: 1, 13-14
Jn. 8: 31-36

Eid Ul Zaha (Muslim feast)
Gen. 22: 1-19
1 Cor. 8: 1-13
Jn. 6: 48-58

Eid Ul Fitar (Muslim feast)
Lev. 2: 1-16
Gal. 4: 1-11
Lk. 22: 7-20.”

Using Cultural Symbols

The NLC offers “suggestions for the liturgical or paraliturgical use of various symbols: candles, incense, flowers, garlands, perfumes, and holy water:

“It has been pointed out by anthropologists that ‘symbols open the human person to the universal, the total, the deeper life, the mystery. They give a sense of awe, humility, and respect before life and reality. They open up an eschatological dimension to existence’ (see Eliade, Ricoeur, Campbell). Symbols protect us from the terror of immediate encounter with fearful reality. They unite life and give it a multidimensional meaning, while at the same time keeping these dimensions in an integral whole according to a worldview. Contact with symbols triggers off reactions in the depth of the

4 From NLC Newsletter, August 1983, pages 2-6.
human person (thoughts, memories, imaginative associations, fears and hopes, feelings and subconscious forces).

"Consequently, symbols can determine attitudes, values, relationships (with the world, other people, self, feelings). It is only through symbols that certain ideas, beliefs, feelings, subconscious fears and the like are in some way made visible, audible, and tangible. Thus, through symbolic rituals these forces are controlled for the good of the human race or a way found of coping with them without a social or individual breakdown. Symbols are a way of coping with reality and its many aspects, especially helping us to integrate the past and fear of the future in the present.

"All over the world, symbols play an important part in human life and it is especially true in the East that people have a deep sensitivity for symbols, often showing this by their eagerness to use or touch the symbols, this tangible contact giving the people a deep sense of personal participation in or sense of belonging to the reality symbolized.

"What follows now is not the work of a theorist, but is based on some modest research done among a cross section of people in an urban parish in the Punjab.

1. Candles: "All over the world, but especially here in the East, people use the symbol of the candle or candles in their liturgical or paraliturgical services. The very act of lighting a candle gives people a sense of personal participation in the worship and enkindles in them a deep sense of belonging to what is going on. The light becomes a symbol of the power (of God) that can dispel the darkness in our lives (sin, sorrow, fear, despair). For a Christian that force is Christ filled with the Spirit, aptly symbolized by the candle sacrificing itself so that all may have the light of the flame of the Spirit. To light a candle before the Blessed Sacrament or a statue of Our Lady gives people an assurance of help in time of need, for it embodies their faith in the power of Christ, the son of Mary, burning with love for us. As more candles are lit, the community of the children of light is powerfully symbolized and the feeling of strength in unity is enhanced.

"In what follows are some suggestions as to how, perhaps, we could make a more meaningful use of candles in the celebration of the various sacraments:

• Easter candle at baptism: "The use of the Easter candle can be very meaningful during group baptisms. The whole community can gather round the Easter candle in a circle. The circle signifies the need we have for one another in a flourishing community, where Christ, represented by the candle, is the focal point or hub on which we all turn and are kept together. When the rite of lighting individual candles takes place, then each parent and godparent lights a candle from Christ, at the center of the community."
• **Candles at the time of marriage:** “The flame of a candle is a symbol of love and the candle an apt symbol of Christian self-sacrifice. Thus, a candle can be lit during the marriage rite and the spouses invited to hold or touch it, thus increasing their participation and bringing them into contact, through the symbol, with the mystery of marital love.

“The Easter candle can play a central role again and the couple could light their candle(s) from the Easter candle before pronouncing their marriage vows. In this way, the central role of the paschal mystery is brought out clearly, namely Christ’s death and resurrection which is the source of all graces, and the burning love in the hearts of the bride and groom is a symbol of Christ’s love for his bride the Church. Having pronounced their vows holding the candle(s) they could place the candle(s) on the altar, in a specially prepared and beautiful candlestick, as a symbol of their love united with Christ’s, especially during the eucharistic sacrifice.

• **Candles in a communal celebration of reconciliation:** “The theme of light and darkness is a prominent one in the bible to express the life of God (grace) and life without God (sin) respectively.

“In a common celebration of reconciliation, the Easter candle, placed in the middle of the people gathered in a circle, if possible, can be a permanent symbol throughout the service of God’s love in Christ for us sinners, the love that reconciled us to himself. All can have candles lit from the Easter candle at the beginning as a reminder that God gave them the light of life and then the light of grace at their baptism. Acknowledgement of our sinfulness can be expressed by blowing out one’s candle and perhaps turning one’s back on the Easter candle (and one another), but realizing that God’s love still burns for the sinner. Apt biblical texts, especially from the letters of St. John, can be used as a call to repentance, to turn back to the source of light. Reconciliation can be symbolically expressed by the priest relighting one of the penitents’ candles and then this light being passed round to all, thus expressing the gratuitousness of God’s reconciling love and our need to pass this same love to one another in mutual reconciliation and in all turning back to face Christ, the Easter candle, and one another.

2. **Incense:** “Here in the East, incense can and should be made good use of in all our celebrations, even in the *Bastis* and when on *Daura.* From a modest survey, it seems that people associate the use of incense with:

— warding off evil (associated with filth and bad smells);
— purifying a place for worship and purging our sins;
— with prayers rising up into the presence of God;
— with the acceptance of our offering;
— as a sign of hospitality, to welcome a guest;
— as a sign of adoration to God.

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5 *Basti:* An area of the city where many poor people live in crowded conditions.

6 *Daura:* A tour around the villages.
Thus incense could feature in these rites:

- **Entrance rite:** "When the church building and all those taking part are incensed as a sign of being purified and made welcome in the celebration. (In the Eastern rites all the icons are incensed as a sign that, in the communion of saints, they, too, are welcomed into the celebration, for our earthly liturgy is a sharing in the heavenly one.)

- **Penitential rite:** "If not used in the entrance rite, incense, with appropriate accompanying words giving it a special purifying meaning, can be used as part of the confession of sins at the beginning of Mass. The idea should be that we want to be pleasing to God like the sweet-smelling incense and so we pray that like the incense, God’s word and healing love in the Mass we are about to celebrate will pervade our lives with its purifying sweetness.

- **Liturgy of the word:** "The bible or just the book of the gospels can be incensed as a sign of the honor we give to God’s word, as well as of the sweetness of God’s word.

- **Intercessions:** "As each prayer is offered for the needs of others, incense can be put on burning charcoal which is standing in a special bowl in front of the altar. Alternatively, an incense stick can be lit for each petition made and these left smoking on the altar throughout the eucharistic prayer.

- **Preparation of the gifts:** "After the bread and wine have been placed before God on the altar, the gifts and the whole altar, as well as the people (whose self-offering with Christ is symbolized in the bread and wine), can be incensed as a sign that these gifts are acceptable and pleasing to God.

- **Eucharistic prayer:** "During the eucharistic prayer incense can be made to rise up as a symbol of our prayer rising before the Father. During the elevations of the sacred species (both the consecration as well as the *Through him, with him*), incense can be offered as a sign of our adoration and prayer of praise.

3. **Flowers and garlands:** "The use of flowers and garlands can have a variety of meanings, and the following have been mentioned by those consulted in the survey:
- they are an expression of love and joy;
- they are an act of worship and an expression of honor;
- they can be used as a sign of welcome and in the context of worship of our welcoming God into our lives;
- they can be a sign of God’s beautiful living gifts to us.

- **Processional cross:** "The processional cross can be garlanded when it has been carried in as a sign of our welcoming Christ into our midst as we gather in his name.

- **Priest:** "The priest too can be similarly garlanded at this time or during the preparation of the gifts.
• **Gifts:** "When the gifts are brought to the altar, flowers can be added with them as a symbol of all God’s gifts to us. The statues or pictures in the church could be garlanded as a sign that all the saints are welcome and are sharing in our eucharistic worship.

• **Baptism:** “During the celebration of baptism potted plants and flowers can surround the font to help people build up associations with water and all the living things that depend on water, for God’s word and love are like gentle rain that makes all things grow and become beautiful. That water of grace reaches us in baptism.

4. **Perfumes and holy water:** “Since perfumes can symbolize the powerful purity of God or the odor of sanctity, they could be used more often in the liturgy:

• **Penitential rite:** “Mixed with water, the perfume could be sprinkled during the penitential rite.

• **Christ:** “When perfume is mixed into the oil of chrism (as was traditionally done), the anointing at baptism, confirmation, and orders can express the sweetness of the Holy Spirit and the consecration of the person anointed. It used to be pointed out in ancient times that the baptized and confirmed should spread the fragrance of their holy lives through good living, not only through the perfume of the chrism with which they had been anointed!”

• **Christmas:** In one church, perfumed water is prepared after the gospel during the midnight Mass as a symbol of the incarnation, and then all are sprinkled with this perfumed water after the homily.

• **Funerals:** “Perfumed water is traditionally used in the Punjab at funerals.”

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**Further resources:** These cassettes have been produced in Urdu by WAVE, Workshop Audio-Visual Education, 13 Masson Road, Lahore, Pakistan:

* * Common Hymns;
* Songs for Children;
* Selections from the Psalms;
* The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
The Antilles

The Antilles Episcopal Conference covers the islands of the Caribbean (except for Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic). Bermuda and the Bahamas, Belize in Central America, and Guyana and Surinam in South America are also members, as are three French-speaking dioceses and Netherlands Antilles. This essay is based on many interviews by the editor with West Indians and missionaries over a period of six years, and refers mainly to English-speaking areas of this region.

The people of the English-speaking Antilles are mostly African in origin, their ancestors having been brought to the western hemisphere by slave traders. After slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1834 — with full emancipation in most countries by 1838 — the newly freed people had to work their way toward education, self-government, and eventually national independence. There are pockets of Caribs remaining, as in Dominica. Other racial backgrounds in the area include East Indian (i.e., from India), Chinese, European, Amerindian, North American, and people from the Middle East. Proportions vary from country to country: in Guyana and Trinidad, for example, East Indians are as numerous as blacks. As in Hawaii, the multi-racial character of these societies leads to a rich blending of cultures, customs, and styles.

The climate and the rhythm of life in the West Indies are tropical. Except for automobiles, taxis, trucks, and buses — which dash about madly — nothing moves too fast; promptness is not a fetish. Strongly influenced by the commerce and the ways of North America and Europe, the people are struggling to overcome sluggish economies and widespread unemployment in most Caribbean countries, whose population is about 60% youth.

Religion is an important part of the life of the people of the Caribbean, for they are deeply religious. Christians are quite familiar with the bible, and use it easily in prayer services. They are used to lengthy spontaneous prayers, and enjoy spending long periods in church, praying and singing. Colorful, charismatic politicians also quote the bible at political rallies. In Jamaica alone, a land of 2.8 million, more than 150 distinct religious bodies are registered.

Today the mainline Churches are sharing more and more in common programs of religious education through the Caribbean Conference of Churches, of which the Catholic Church is a founding member since 1973.
Prayer breakfasts, ecumenical services and encounters, and common prayer for unity among Christians are growing signs of the movement of the Spirit to bring Christians together into one family, as willed by our Lord (Jn. 17: 21-23). At the January 1984 meeting of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, it was noted that one of the tendencies working against the achievement of unity and reconciliation in the mission of the Church is the “mutual distrust among certain Churches, due in part to the hostility and anti-ecumenism of fundamentalist groups.”

In Trinidad, Hindus and Muslims form 24.7 and 6.3% of the population, while Roman Catholics (36.6), Anglicans (18.1), and Presbyterians (4.2) form 59.9%; others are included in the remaining 11%. Christians try to understand the spirit of the Hindu festivals (such as Divali, festival of lights) and of Muslim festivals (such as Eid-Ul-Fitr, which ends the month of fasting during Ramadan).

People of this region are sensitive to religious symbols and gestures, and are not attracted by weak or emasculated signs. Baptism by immersion, for example, speaks volumes to them, while baptism with a cup of water says little.

**Deep emotions:** The people of the Caribbean islands are friendly, warm, and affectionate. They have strong emotions, and they do not conceal them. They move quickly from one emotion to another, and express them for all to see. They are animated, not reticent: they like bright colors, loud noise, singing, clapping, and rhythmic music. They are ready to share with others, even to the point of playing transistors or PA systems for all in the neighborhood to hear, sometimes until the wee hours of the morning. They like their food sweet or spicy.

**Marriage and family life:** While there are many fine families in the region, there are also some strong attitudes and practices which militate against marriage and family life. There is a very casual attitude toward sexual relations, and in many cases men do not settle down to married life, even while maintaining a relationship with one or more women. In some countries contraceptives are advertised as openly as soft drinks or the local rum; family planning and abortion are seen as the complete answer to population problems. The Churches are trying to promote strong family life and to deepen Christian attitudes and practices.

**Artistic spirit:** The nations of The Antilles have retained much of the artistic spirit of their lands of origin. In song, music, and dance, these strains are evident, and most people have a sense of rhythm and free movement. Carving, batik, and painting are also advanced in some areas. These arts are

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2. Part of this may result from the days of slavery, when families were broken up or separated by sales, and when, at times, slaves were forbidden to marry.
being promoted in most countries so that they will be strengthened and not lost to future generations.

**Educational background:** With two or more centuries of life as British colonies, many of the islands have inherited a primary and secondary educational system that reflects much of the English and Irish systems, including school uniforms. The University of the West Indies (UWI) was founded in 1948 and is still under the influence of English universities. Campuses are in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad, with extramural centers with a resident tutor in other countries.

Education is not compulsory in some countries, due to lack of adequate schools, and illiteracy is a problem being tackled by various organizations.

Generations of teachers have instilled English values of formal dress, of self-restraint, of repressing displays of emotion, of keeping the proverbial stiff upper lip, of using "correct" English. As a result, a strong dichotomy is sometimes seen between "proper occasions" and other times. One of these proper times is when we are in church, where self-expression, emotion, enthusiasm, and the local English dialect are often felt to be somewhat out of place. On the other hand, those Churches which emphasize their African heritage feel free to let themselves go in many of these areas.

**Catholic clergy and religious:** For many years, the greater proportion came as missionaries from England, Ireland, France, Belgium, and the United States. More recently, the number of native Caribbean sisters is growing, and some local communities and secular institutes have been founded; many novices are now formed in the region rather than at a foreign motherhouse. Religious communities of priests are still mostly from overseas, but slowly native vocations are developing. From island to island the diocesan clergy varies in proportion between native and foreign-born. Generally speaking, there is a serious shortage of Catholic clergy. (Some other Churches in the area, however, seem to have developed a native clergy.)

The formation of the Catholic clergy has tended to be from outside the Caribbean. Even those educated locally have been strongly influenced by English and American ways. In the past few decades, however, two local major seminaries have been active: St. Michael's in Kingston, Jamaica, and St. John Vianney and the African Martyrs, in Tunapuna, Trinidad; both are part of the theology faculty of UWI. St. James Seminary in Reading, Jamaica, prepares young men for entrance into the major seminary, and a newly opened center in Basseterre, St. Kitts, will provide discernment and basic formation for men and women entering various ministries.

The Church in The Antilles remains a missionary territory, under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Nations, in Rome. It is well to note that of the seventeen dioceses comprising the Antilles Episcopal Conference, only two bishops are not local, and these two are very much acclimatized after many years of service.
• **Lay ministries:** One positive result of the clergy shortage has been the development of strong lay ministries in many places. Where the catechumenate is active, many lay persons and religious are acting as catechists. Where there are no priests, lay men and women act as leaders of Sunday celebrations, funerals, prayer meetings, liturgies of the word, and other assemblies of God’s people. In practice, these lay leaders have shown a deep sensitivity to the spiritual and cultural needs of their community in worship.

**Liturgal Renewal**

**Progress report:** Among Catholics, the renewal of the liturgy has begun here as elsewhere. Gradually the norms of Vatican II have been put into practice, and slowly the principles of the reformed liturgy are sinking into the ways of the worshipping communities. The Antilles import almost all their liturgical books, mainly from the United States, England, and Ireland. The texts prepared by ICEL, the International Commission for English in the Liturgy, are used. In Jamaica and Guyana, a modern version of the Lord’s prayer is said, using the ICET text.

**Cultural adaptation:** The Second Vatican Council encouraged cultural adaptations in the liturgy, especially in missionary countries. At present, however, the liturgy is celebrated much the same as it is in Boston or London, using the same basic calendar, books, texts, vestments, vessels, altars, linens, altar breads, participation aids, gestures, and movements. It almost seems to be an English or American version of the Roman liturgy transplanted wholly in Caribbean soil.

• **Some strong exceptions:**
  - Music has moved forward quite noticeably. Tambourines, maracas, castinets, bongo drums, and African drums are used well along with organ and guitars. As well as traditional Catholic and Protestant hymns familiar to the people of England and North America, and American folk hymns, there is a growing repertoire of Caribbean music, both traditional songs and choruses and some newly composed hymns and liturgical music.

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3 See *Gathered in His Name: Official Catholic Worship for Parish Communities, Without a Priest Presiding* (1982, Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, Port of Spain, Trinidad). See also Bulletin 79, *Sunday Liturgy: When Lay People Preside*, for further examples of practical guidelines and rites for these celebrations.

4 These are described in *Guidelines for adaptation*, on pages 200-207, above.

5 A recent example of this variety is to be seen in the 501 hymns, psalms, and national songs in *Sing Praises to the Lord: Catholic Hymnal of the Diocese of Montego Bay* (1983, Box 197, Montego Bay, Jamaica, W.I.).

The language that has evolved in the Caribbean is a distinctive form of English, influenced by African, Spanish, French, native Indian, and other languages; it varies slightly from one island to the next. Some of this dialect is used in hymns or choruses. 

In Dominica and St. Lucia, many churches in rural districts use a French-derived dialect, where people would not understand preaching readily if it were done in English. In Curacao, Papimento is used liberally rather than Dutch.

In some communities, chalices and other vessels are carved of precious native woods, such as mahoe wood in Jamaica (see GI, nos. 290-292, 295 [1680-1682, 1685]). A few altars are made of native woods (GI, no. 263 [1653]).

Moving Toward an Adapted Liturgy

Some reasons for reticence: There is still a strong reticence to let go and to allow the people's culture to influence their Catholic worship more fully. As well as the reasons given above, others are suggested: a fear of being too much like some of the local Churches (which have let the culture influence their worship); a feeling that feelings and letting go are improper; a reluctance or lack of awareness on the part of some foreign-born missionaries; a fear of losing contact with the catholic or universal Church (which is seen mainly in limited Western terms). Strong feelings for cultural adaptation are not yet felt clearly by the majority of the people, but mainly by young native clergy and religious, some missionaries, and some lay leaders.

Where to start? Some of the areas where cultural adaptation can begin are these:

- Language: Is there room to move — at least in some parts of the liturgy — to language which is less formal and more in keeping with the daily speech of the people who are worshipping? We already recognize that there are some differences between the English of England and of North America, between the French of France and of Canada, although the same translations are used on both sides of the Atlantic. What are the rhythms, the metaphors, the images, and the poetry of English in The Antilles? Are the people of the Caribbean ready to use their own form of English in parts of the liturgy? The

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* In Jamaica, choruses are lively, simple songs, usually with a refrain, which the people sing from memory. Their origins are said to go back to the English Baptist missionaries in the late eighteenth century. Two examples:

I love that man from Galilee,
For he has done so very much for me.
He has taken all my sins,
Let the Holy Ghost within.
I love that man, that man from Galilee.

Twill soon be done,
All the troubles and trials,
When I get home on the other side.
I'm gonna shake my hands with the elders,
Tell all God's people. Good morning.
I'm gonna sit down beside my Jesus,
I'm gonna sit down and rest a little while.
A homily, the introductions, the invitations, the prayers that may be freely composed, and hymns are places to begin. In the years to come, perhaps other prayers, prefaces, blessings, and even the presidential prayers could be developed to give praise and thanks to God according to the particular spirit and genius of the Caribbean people.

- **Art and environment:** Other than having walls which permit cooling breezes to pass through the assembly, do the church buildings reflect local or foreign ideas of what a church is? Do they reflect the unique identity of this part of the worldwide body of Christ? Would these buildings be equally at home in Kansas or Kensington? Are the furnishings — pews, altars, lecterns, chairs, fonts, stations, and palefaced statues — straight from a foreign church goods catalogue, or do they flow from the Christian insights of this people as they strive to live out their faith as God's people in the Caribbean world? Is native or local art encouraged? Are artists invited to share their God-given talents with the worshipping community? (See GI, nos. 287, 295, 312 [1677, 1685, 1702].)

- Vessels and vestments; covers for altars, lecterns, and books; wall hangings; carvings and statues, paintings and tapestries; seating: do these reflect the local genius or a foreign spirit? (See GI, nos. 304-305 [1694-1695].)

As the move to native art develops, clergy and laity will need help in forming their taste and understanding in these new forms: see Constitution on the liturgy, no. 129 [129].

- **Gestures and movement:** People with an African heritage have a built-in grace of fluid movement that should not be stifled or retarded to a shuffle in processions or singing: the whole body needs to be involved in liturgy or worship. Clergy, ministers, and people alike need to recognize that a procession, for example, is a form of dance. (See *Christian initiation in Tanzania*, by Joseph McCabe, MM, in Bulletin 65, pages 226-229, on the dance of the Easter candle.) Incensing can be a rhythmic, poetic act, a graceful and symbolic gesture when done slowly and beautifully in a relaxed manner, with clouds of fragrant smoke to be seen and smelled by all.

   Loud acclamations, shouts of joy, rhythmic clapping, upraised arms, swaying during community singing, and even the tapping or stamping of feet could be introduced as part of services of the word and other liturgical celebrations, including the eucharist:

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7 In some places, the dialect or patois is basically a spoken medium rather than written. For a Jamaican to talk dialect is acceptable, but to read scripture in it — as is done in Haiti — would probably lead to snickering and stumbling.

8 The church building is to be a reflection of the Church, the body of Christ, the people of God, as they are present and active in this place: see *Dedication of a Church and an Altar* (1978, CCCB, Ottawa), chapter two, page 11, no. 2. God's Church is seen most clearly in the celebration of the liturgy by the local people (Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42 [41-42]; GI, nos. 74-75 [1464-1465]), but also in their works, their other gatherings, and in their buildings.
These things will I remember
as I pour out my soul:
How I would lead the rejoicing crowd
into the house of God,
amid cries of gladness and thanksgiving,
the throng wild with joy.9

- **Blessings and prayers of thanksgiving:** Is there need of developing special blessings in these areas? Are there particular occasions for blessings of people, places, or things,10 and for prayers of thanksgiving? Some possible situations that could be discussed:

  - **People:** Blessing of children before they go away to boarding school or university; of family members who emigrate to other countries, and on their return; of children as they pass through certain stages of their education; blessing of ministers, community workers, teachers, public officials. Is there need to mark the various stages in growing from birth to adulthood to old age?

  - **Places:** Blessing of new or rebuilt roads, bridges, waterworks, power plants; transportation systems; housing projects; community medical facilities or clinics; new or expanded market places; recreational facilities; other places involved in community life, growth, and development.

  - **Things:** Blessing of various plants, fruits, vegetables, animals; of produce and crops at a harvest festival; of new tools, equipment, seeds, fertilizer; blessings of food and drink prepared for and distributed to the poor or to children.

  - **Prayers of thanksgiving:** These may be combined with blessings or may be offered at such times as the completion of a new house or moving to another home, obtaining a new job, or entering a new profession. Thanksgiving may also be made when individual or community prayers are answered.

- **Funerals:** Are there elements in the cultural observances at the time of death that may be used, adapted, or refined for use in the wake, funeral rite, and graveside services? What about the periods after death or burial, including anniversaries? In some places, there is a blessing of cemeteries on or around November 2; sometimes Mass is celebrated there for the faithful departed.

As these areas of adaptation begin to take hold, missionaries, Caribbean people of African descent, and those from other backgrounds need to

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10 See Liturgy constitution, nos. 60-61 [60-61]. Some examples of blessings and thanksgivings adapted to the Canadian culture are given in *A Book of Blessings* (1981, CCCB, Ottawa). These may easily be adapted, or serve as models, for use in other countries and cultures.
realize that they are working together to build the kingdom of God in this area, taking into account the diversity of gifts and traditions, and respecting their differences. St. Augustine reminds us: unity in diversity, with love as the bond of all things. (The motto of Jamaica is “Out of many, one people.”)

Some Areas for Future Exploration

In seeking to adapt their liturgy to their culture, the people of the Caribbean [or of any other area or grouping] need to search many areas of their lives:

Symbols: What are the Caribbean images and ways of expressing God, family, community, love, reverence, generosity, hospitality, sympathy, sin, salvation, hope? Are there strong symbolic actions or gestures that could be used in the liturgy? Are there uses of particular colors, fabrics, plants, or foods that can be incorporated into the liturgy or other forms of community prayer?

• Slavery: One Jamaican priest reminds us that the captivity of slavery must ever remain in Caribbean minds as have the Exodus, the Exile, and the Holocaust in the history, thinking, and prayers of the Jewish people. To be dragged away by force from home and family, and to be sold, often by fellow Africans; to be transported across the ocean, chained in inhuman conditions, where up to one-third died in transit; to have families separated, and to be sold at market like cattle; to be forced to work in servitude for the rest of their lives on alien soil; to be torn up from all roots of language, culture, religion — and this by so-called Christians! — has been branded as an indelible experience in the souls of these people. This experience has to be expressed in their religion and in other parts of their lives: it cannot be ignored, forgotten, or repressed (see, for example, Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song”).

What insights have these people — true sharers in the agony of the suffering servant/slave of God — to offer to the world on the meaning of sin as slavery, and on the liberation brought to us by the dying and rising of Christ? We might compare the deep feelings already expressed in Ps. 126; Ps. 137: 1-6; and Ps. 53: 6.

Calendar: Are there special feasts of particular importance to the Caribbean that should be added to their calendar? Have they particular celebra-
tions to share with the universal Church? Are there special times or seasons of
the year that need a local celebration or observance? (Some dioceses already
have particular rogation days for local concerns.) How are civil occasions
recognized? Should some celebrations in the universal calendar be moved to a
better time for people of this region? How does Carnival (the days before
Ash Wednesday) affect the rhythm of life in parishes and other communities
in some countries?

**Prayer forms:** Are there indigenous prayer forms, styles, rhythms, and
images that still speak for the Caribbean heart today? Is there room for
these in the devotional life of these nations?

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**These questions** for further exploration have to be answered by the
people of The Antilles. They need to enter into the depths of their cultural
experience, and see how this can be used for giving greater glory to God and
for building up the kingdom. As they do this, however, they need to reassess
the liturgical tradition which they have received, with its insights into the
Jewish, Christian, Mediterranean, and Northern European spirit. They may
take the common treasure of Western Christianity, shared by many nations
and cultures, and enrich it by adapting it to the needs and spirit of the people
of God in the Caribbean, people who are members of the worldwide family of
Christians, and who sing their praises in union with the angels and with the
saints of all nations and languages and cultures, in heaven and on earth.

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**Helpful reading:** These books provide some first insights into the history, traditions, and
cultures of the people of the West Indies:

* **History of the West Indian People,** Book IV, Eighteenth Century to Modern Times, by

* **The Making of the West Indies,** by F.R. Augier, S.C. Gordon, D.G. Hall, and M.

* **The People Who Came:** Histories for the Caribbean (Longman Caribbean, Trinidad and
  Jamaica):

  * Book Two, by Patricia Patterson and James Carnegie (1970, 1976);

  Place, Howe, East Sussex).

* **A Family of Islands:** A History of the West Indies, by Alex Waugh (1964, Wiedenfeld
  and Nicolson, 20 New Bond Street W1, London).

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12 For example, the African call and response chant, alternating between a leader and a group or
congregation. See Songs of Zion: Supplemental Worship Resources 12 (1981, Abingdon, Nashville, TN;
available in Canada through G.R. Welch Co., 960 Gateway, Burlington, Ontario L7L 5K7): no. 73. This


History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago, by Eric Williams (1962, PNM Publishing, 90 Frederick Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.).


Island Voices: Stories from the West Indies, selected and introduced by Andrew Salkey (1970, Liveright Publishing, 386 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016; also 1960, 1973, Faber and Faber, 3 Queen Square, London WC1).


Understanding Symbolism in the Liturgy, by Michael Sequeira (1981, The Antilles Liturgical Commission, Box 198, Golding Avenue, Kingston 7, Jamaica, West Indies); see review in Bulletin 81, page 238.

NEXT ISSUE

Social Justice and Liturgy is the title of the next issue of the National Bulletin on Liturgy.

Our life and our prayer have to be in harmony. We cannot pray in comfort when our brothers and sisters are in serious need: God listens to their cries first. What more is expected of us?

The relationship of liturgy and justice in our prayer, our preaching, and our living will be explored in a pastoral way.

Bulletin 96 contains 64 pages, and will be ready for mailing in November. Prices are as given on the inside front cover of this issue.
Paul VI: During his 1969 visit to some countries of Africa — the first visit of a pope to that continent in Christian history — Paul VI spoke about "Africanization," or the adaptation of the gospel and the Church to the culture of Africa:1

Addressing the bishops of Africa, Pope Paul spoke in English of his "profound respect for your persons, for your land, for your culture. We are filled with admiration and devotion for your martyrs, whom we have come here to honor and invoke. We have no other desire than to foster what you already are: Christians and Africans. Hence we wish our presence among you to have the significance of a recognition of your maturity, and of a desire to show you how that communion which unites us does not suffocate, but rather nourishes the originality of your personal, ecclesial, and even civil personality. From the Lord we implore the grace of contributing to your growth, by fertilizing the good seed and stirring up the human and Christian energies inherent in the genius of your vocation to spiritual and temporary fulfillment. Not our interests, but yours, are the object of our apostolic ministry . . . .

"For now, we shall limit ourself to mentioning some general aspects of African Catholic life at this particular moment of history.

"The first of these aspects seems to us to be this: By now, you Africans are missionaries to yourselves." The Holy Father goes on to speak of how the Africans are to build up the Church through the hierarchy and the work of the Holy Spirit. "Both must be at work in the dynamic form which is precisely that suitable to a young Church, called upon to offer itself to a culture responsive to the gospel, such as is your African Church. There must now be associated to and following upon the impulse given to the faith by the missionary action of foreign countries, an impulse arising from the heart of Africa itself. The Church, by her very nature, is always a missionary Church. But, one day, we shall no longer call your apostolate a 'missionary' apostolate in the technical sense, but rather a native, indigenous apostolate, all your own . . . .

"A burning and much-discussed question arises concerning your evangelizing work, and it is that of the adaptation of the gospel and of the Church to African culture. Must the Church be European, Latin, Oriental . . . or must she be African? This seems to be a difficult problem, and in practice may be so, indeed. But the solution is rapid, with two replies. First, your Church

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1 Paul VI, Kampala, Uganda, July 31, 1969, in AAS 61 (1969); pages 573-578.
must be first of all Catholic. That is, it must be entirely founded upon the identical, essential, constitutional patrimony of the self-same teaching of Christ, as professed by the authentic and authoritative tradition of the one true Church. This condition is fundamental and indisputable. We must, all of us, be both jealous and proud of that faith of which the apostles were the heralds, of which the martyrs — that is, the witnesses — were the champions, of which the missionaries were scrupulous teachers. You know that the Church is particularly tenacious, we may even say conservative, in this regard. To make sure the message of revealed doctrine cannot be altered, the Church has even set down her treasures of truth in certain conceptual and verbal formulas. Even when these formulas are, at times, difficult, she obliges us to preserve them textually. We are not the inventors of our faith; we are its custodians. Not every religious feeling is good; but only that religious sentiment which interprets the thought of God, according to the apostolic teaching authority established by the sole Master, Jesus Christ.

"Granted this first reply, however, we now come to the second. The expression, that is, the language and mode of manifesting this one faith, may be manifold; hence, it may be original, suited to the tongue, the style, the character, the genius, and the culture, of the one who professes this one faith. From this point of view, a 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 favored by the Church. The liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense you may, and you must, have an African Christianity. Indeed, you possess human values and characteristic forms of culture which can rise up to perfection such as to find in Christianity, and for Christianity, a true superior fullness, and prove to be capable of a richness of expression all its own, and genuinely African.

"This may take time. It will require that your African soul become imbued to its depths with the secret charisms of Christianity, so that these charisms may then overflow freely, in beauty and wisdom, in the true African manner. It will require from your culture that it should not refuse, but rather eagerly desire, to draw, from the patrimony of the patristic, exegetical, and theological tradition of the Catholic Church, those treasures of wisdom which can rightly be considered universal, above all, those which can be most easily assimilated by the African mind. The Church of the West did not hesitate to make use of the resources of African writers, such as Tertullian, Optatus of Milevi, Origen, Cyprian, and Augustine.² Such an exchange of the highest expressions of Christian thought nourishes, without altering its originality, any particular culture. It will require an incubation of the Christian 'mystery' in the genius of your people in order that its native voice, more clearly and frankly, may then be raised harmoniously in the chorus of the other voices in the universal Church. Do we need to remind you, in this

² Vatican II, Decree on priestly formation, no. 16 [214].
regard, how useful it will be for the African Church to possess centers of contemplative and monastic life, centers of religious studies, centers of pastoral training?

"If you are able to avoid the possible dangers of religious pluralism, the danger of making your Christian profession into a kind of local folklore, or into exclusivist racism, or into egoistic tribalism or arbitrary separatism, then you will be able to remain sincerely African even in your own interpretation of the Christian life; you will be able to formulate Catholicism in terms congenial to your own culture; you will be capable of bringing to the Catholic Church the precious and original contribution of negritude, which she needs particularly in this historic hour.

"The African Church has before her an immense and original task to carry out: she must address herself as ‘mother and teacher’ — Mater et Magistra — to all the sons and daughters of this land of the sun. She must offer them a traditional and modern interpretation of life. The Church must form the peoples to new forms of civil organization, while purifying and preserving those wise forms, the family and the community. The Church must give an impulse as a teacher to your individual and social virtues of honesty, sobriety, and loyalty. She must promote the growth of every activity in favor of the public good, especially the school, as well as assistance to the poor and to the sick. The Church must help Africa on the road of development, of harmony, and of peace.

"... For now we tell you, in the name of the Lord, whom we all love and follow together, that you have the strength and the grace necessary for this, because you are living members of the Catholic Church, because you are Christians, and you are Africans."

- Africanization of the liturgy: These paragraphs are the summary of a survey among some African seminarians:

"All would like to preserve something of their religious past. But the manner of doing it is fraught with difficulties, arising from different customs in different tribes; from differing age groups; from a desire not to be sunk back into tribalism but rather aiming to belong to the universal Church. It is clear that only Africans can achieve this synthesis. Before it comes, much careful sifting of ancient traditions will have to be made.

"Clearly the liturgy should be Africanized as soon as possible. But how soon is that? We have noted that the very word ‘Africanize’ is ambiguous in this connection, because no two tribes are alike in their religious approach to life, and even within the large tribes many considerable differences exist. Besides, do the Africans of the Church want to atomize the African Church in this way?

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3 This paragraph has been translated from the original French.

“It seems that all three of the East African countries, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, will find themselves with Kiswahili as the national language, and this from the liturgical point of view is a considerable advantage. But in most other ways Africanization will prove an arduous task. It might be thought that the seminaries are the place where this can start most readily. Up to a point this is true. Yet, as the seminary is not tribal but national, the students in it do not have a common cultural background in religious customs. One tribe likes slow singing, another joyful, gay song, another does not like singing at all; some would have the drum, others not at all. But deeper than these differences are those of religious social custom.

“In precolonial, premissionary Africa, religion was not a slice of life, separate and self-contained. Religion was the life. Every part of the tribal life was associated with God and the ancestors. Two things will have to be done before the liturgy can be Africanized. The first is to rediscover what were the ancient ways; the second is to graft the new onto them. The first will take a considerable amount of work by anthropologists and fellow workers. The ordinary missionary has neither the time nor the ability. This must be left to such institutions as Gaba and to intelligent seminarians who can still gather from their parents or grandparents facts about the ancient ways. The second element will also be arduous, because not everything of the ancient ways was good, nor will everything be adaptable. Nevertheless the work will have to be undertaken. It covers symbolism, the rites associated with the various stages of life, the ancient sacrifices, the ancient prayers of morning and evening, the blessings, the petitionary prayers; the seasonal ceremonies; the place of ancestors, of spirits, of prayers in sickness. This is a major undertaking and scarcely yet begun.

“In the matter we do not start with a clean, empty sheet, a tabula rasa, but with a definite framework and substance, revealed by God through Christ and handed on by the Church, namely the sacrifice of the Mass, with its two essential parts, the liturgy of the word of God (sacred scripture) and the liturgy of the eucharist. Our aim, surely, is not to substitute African rites for these, but to see these through African eyes and so present them in African ways, in order to make this sublime rite more telling to the African soul.”

John Paul II: “Christ, in the members of his body, is himself African” (244, 296). John Paul II is not afraid to face the question of inculturation squarely, and to encourage the African Church, in unity with the worldwide Church, to bring forth from its culture “original expressions of Christian life, celebration, and thought” (296) in order to bring the gospel to African people. The Church in Africa is to be “fully African and fully Christian” (33), and is to share its values with Christians and others around the world.

5 The reference is to the Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa, at Gaba.
6 In these notes about John Paul II, references in parentheses are to pages in Africa: Apostolic Pilgrimage, compiled and indexed by the Daughters of St. Paul (1980, St. Paul Editions, 50 St. Paul’s Avenue, Boston, MA 02130).
Values: The Holy Spirit "has implanted so many values in the hearts of the African people" (242). The rich traditions of Africa have prepared its people for hearing, understanding, and accepting the gospel of Jesus (337).

"So many of the values that are embodied in the culture of the African nations not only contribute to the building of each nation, but can add to the enrichment of other nations and peoples as well. For Africa has something distinctive to offer to the world. One of the original aspects of this continent is its diversity, but a diversity that is bound together by the undeniable unity of its culture: a vision of the world where the sacred is central; a deep awareness of the link between creator and nature; a great respect for all life; a sense of family and of community that blossoms into an open and joyful hospitality; reverence for dialogue as a means of settling differences and sharing insights; spontaneity and the joy of living expressed in poetic language, song, and dance. All these aspects manifest a culture with an all-encompassing spiritual dimension. This is what makes the African culture unique. This is what binds the many people of Africa together without hampering in the least that immense richness of local expressions or the heritage of single groups and regions."7

Speaking of marriage, the Holy Father notes: "African traditions, judiciously utilized, may have their place in the building up of Christian homes in Africa. I am thinking in particular of all the positive values of the family feeling, so deeply rooted in the African soul and which takes on multiple aspects, which can certainly give so-called advanced civilizations food for thought: the seriousness of the matrimonial commitment at the end of a long process; priority given to the transmission of life and therefore the importance attached to the mother and children; the law of solidarity among families related by marriage, which is exercised especially in favor of old persons, widows, and orphans; a kind of co-responsibility in taking charge and bringing up the children, which is capable of relieving many psychological tensions; the cult of ancestors and the dead, which promotes faithfulness to traditions."8

African and Christian: The Church is deeply rooted in Africa, and its fruits have an African flavor (188, 372). The people of God are walking on African land (171), and are grafted into the universal Church (163-164). The Holy Spirit is guiding the African Church to look at the signs of our times in the light of God's word as taught by the Church (238).

The Church in Africa is to preserve what is worthy in African traditions (295), and bring these values and traditions into the liturgy (295), the preaching (100, 160), the catechesis (160, 243-244), and the formation (375) of the

Church in Africa. Inculturation flows from the incarnation of Christ as one of us (243-244). Africans are invited to bring forth from their cultures “original expressions of Christian life, celebration, and thought, whereby the gospel is brought into the heart of peoples and their cultures” (296).

Some developments: Many steps are being taken in Africa in response to the Liturgy constitution (nos. 37-40 [37-40]) and to the invitations of Paul VI and John Paul II. Some of these are indicated below:

- **Congo**: Visit by John Paul II (1980); see *Africa: Apostolic Pilgrimage*, compiled and indexed by the Daughters of St. Paul (1980, St. Paul Editions, 50 St. Paul’s Avenue, Boston, MA 02130): talks are given on pages 142-166.


- **Ivory Coast**: Visit by John Paul II (1980); See *Africa: Apostolic Pilgrimage*, compiled and indexed by the Daughters of St. Paul (1980, St. Paul Editions, 50 St. Paul’s Avenue, Boston, MA 02130): talks are given on pages 340-399.


- **Madagascar**: The people of this country cannot be satisfied with translations from texts composed in a European way of speaking and thinking. They need more expression, more lyricism than do Westerners.
They like bright and varied colors. Their language is rhythmic, colorful, very flexible and nuanced. While Westerners would consider lyricism in the liturgy as sentimental, the people of Madagascar are ill at ease with sober expressions or direct language, and are turned away as if by crude manners.

Repetitions are difficult for Westerners to bear, but they are frequent in the traditional chants of Madagascar. Chants sung in litany form can promote prayer in many cases. As well, repetitions and litanies can lead the assembly to a common rhythm and a deep communion.

Acclamations are a traditional form of expression in the liturgy, which provides certain formulas. When sung in French in Madagascar, they are hardly felt as acclamations. But when sung in the native language, they do come across as true acclamations. [See Notitiae, vol. 11 (1975), page 309.]


- **Nigeria:** Visit by John Paul II: see L'Osservatore Romano, weekly English edition, February 15-March 1, March 15, 1982.
- **Sierra Leone:** See the article on pages 212-214, above.
- **Tanzania:** On the Africanization of music, see Notitiae, vol. 4 (1968), pages 299-300.


- **Zaire:** Some positive suggestions are offered for the celebration of Christmas, now that it is no longer a civil holiday: Notitiae, vol. 11 (1975), page 19.


Eucharistic rite (experimental): see page 241, below.


• Zambia: See the article on pages 208-211, above. See also the article by Christopher J. Walsh, under Zimbabwe, below.

• Zimbabwe: The liturgy “still needs to incorporate more of African festivity and spontaneity to satisfy the Africans' needs and aspirations” (page 298): see the report on Africanization of music in Notitiae, vol. 4 (1968), pages 298-299.


Helpful reading:


Night prayers from Africa: see page 247, below.

WORLDWIDE MEETING ON LITURGY RENEWAL

At the request of Pope John Paul II, the presidents and secretaries of national commissions for liturgy are being invited to meet with the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome, October 23-28, 1984. International commissions such as ICEL and editors of liturgical reviews are also invited.

The general theme is the assessment of the twenty years of liturgical renewal, and future prospects. Each country will report on how the Constitution on the liturgy has been put into practice, and on the many areas — including cultural adaptation, homily, dramatization, devotional practices, movement arts, roles of lay men and women, and other local needs — where further progress is needed.

Attending from Canada will be Bishops James Doyle of Peterborough and Charles-Henri Lévesque of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, and Fathers Regis Halloran and Jean-Bernard Allard.

The positive approach being taken toward this meeting gives strong hope for twenty more good years of continuing progress in liturgical renewal and adaptation in the Catholic Church around the world.
The Churches in North, Central, and South America have made a number of advances in adaptation of the liturgy to their local cultures. A few examples and references are given here.

**Puebla: Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America:** Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops: Conclusions (1979, NCCB, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005): see nos. 385-443 on the evangelization of cultures. The bishops look carefully at the culture of their countries and see how this affects the mission and the liturgy of the people of God.

**CELAM** (Consejo Episcopal Latino americano): This council speaks for the episcopal conferences in Latin America. Through its liturgical department, DELC [see *Notitiae*, vol. 11 (1975), pages 68-74], it offers guidance for adaptation. Some useful references for further study and consultation:

- Circular letter (September 23, 1974) on liturgy and evangelization: *Notitiae*, vol. 10 (1974), pages 328-330. Emphasis on the need for Rome to accept the collaboration of episcopal conferences in the third stage of liturgical renewal, the deep adaptation of the liturgy to the genius of different nations, especially in missions and in different human groupings (Liturgy constitution, nos. 37-40 [37-40]).


- Meeting on popular piety, in *Notitiae*, vol. 11 (1975), pages 177-181.


- From liturgical reform to liturgical renewal, in *Notitiae*, vol. 13 (1977), pages 513-540. Criteria for developing an authentic liturgical renewal are discussed in pages 524-528.

- *Adaptaciones en la liturgia*: Tarea ecclesial (1982, DELC, Calle 78 No. 11-17, Apartado Aereo 51086, Bogota, Colombia); another booklet of the same title gives the conclusions reached at a consultation in Lima, Peru, in September 1982. “Adaptation is the action of the Church which, in the exercise of its teaching mission, renews the liturgical forms in order to
communicate with the greatest pastoral efficacy the life of Christ to people and to achieve greater participation in the worship given to the Father" (page 5).


**Argentina:** After eleven years, the review Liturgia, published by the national secretariat of the Episcopal Commission for Worship, ceased publication because of rising costs.


**Bolivia:** Crisis in the liturgy, in Notitiae, vol. 11 (1975), page 54. Two causes are mentioned: lack of preparation and liturgical knowledge, and the separation between life and liturgy; there is need to let the liturgy affect popular piety.

**Brazil:** The liturgical situation in Brazil: Notitiae, vol. 11 (1975), pages 111-112; liturgical ministries carried out by lay persons, vol. 11, pages 263-268. The incarnation of Christianity in various cultures takes place through liturgical celebrations, which are to be according to the mental outlook of a particular people: see Notitiae, vol. 10 (1974), page 363.

Need to continue evangelization through small groups and through the liturgical renewal, especially in the renewal of the celebration of marriage: see Notitiae, vol. 10 (1974), page 369.


**Cuba:** Norms on the celebration of the eucharist, in Notitiae, vol. 14 (1978), pages 270-277.


Mexico: The religion of the people at all levels of society has a strong sense of transcendence. Its manifestations come from the native spirit and the influence of the Holy Spirit. People profess their religion with strength and courage. Renewal in Christian life means a greater collaboration of laity with priests. The liturgical movement and other movements are contributing to this renewal. Pastoral action must preserve and purify popular piety, overcome the break between faith and life, free people from fatalism and inertia, and bring them the light of the gospel. See *Notitiae*, vol. 10 (1974), page 368.


United States of America: Under the guidance of the Bishops' Commission on Liturgy, the country has accepted the ICEL translation of the Roman rites, and has made some minor adaptations to meet American needs. The BCL has also provided study guides on liturgy (reviewed in the Bulletin as they are issued), and other positive documents. Some areas of adaptation presently under active study:

- *Worship by black Catholics:* Some helpful references:


• Hispanics: Work is under way to unify the liturgical books used in Spanish celebrations in the United States. There will be one sacramentary adapted to the Spanish used in the U.S., and one lectionary; feasts with particular meaning for the Spanish-speaking communities will be included. A bilingual edition of Pastoral Care of the Sick is being prepared.


• Navajo: In November 1983, the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship approved Navajo as a liturgical language for use in the U.S.A. The Order of Mass and the eucharistic prayers are presently being translated.

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• Other notes:


□ The liturgical movement in many countries, including English-speaking Canada, owes a debt of gratitude to St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, MN 56321, which has produced *Worship* and its predecessor, *Orate Fratres*, since 1926; to Notre Dame University, which has had a summer school of liturgical studies since 1947; and to the growing number of publications and institutions and organizations which contribute so much to the growth of the liturgical apostolate in other Churches and other countries.

□ Helpful reading:


*American Mosaic: The Immigrant Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It*, by Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabursky (1980, New American Library, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019; and 81 Mack Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario M1L 1M8).


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Canada and the rest of the world: Many activities and developments in adapting the liturgy are taking place. These will be covered by articles in future issues of the Bulletin.

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**NIGHT PRAYERS FROM AFRICA**

Come, Lord, and cover me with the night.
Spread your grace over us
as you assured us you would do.

Your promises are more than all the stars in the sky:
your mercy is deeper than the night.

Lord, it will be cold.
The night comes with its breath of death.
Night comes, the end comes,
but Jesus Christ comes also.

Lord,
we wait for him day and night. Amen.¹

* * *

O God,
you have let me pass the day in peace:
let me pass the night in peace.

O Lord, you have no Lord.
There is no strength but in you.
There is no unity but in your house.

Under your hand I pass the night.
You are my mother and my father.
You are my home.²


OTHER NOTES

Being missionary

Father J. Lorne MacDonald, OMI, a native of Prince Edward Island, is the co-director of missions for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. From 1966 to 1968, he worked as a missionary in Peru, until elected provincial. He was also president of the Oblate Conference of Canada. He did his doctoral work at Brandeis University, with field work among the Indians in Northern British Columbia. He also spent a year among the Micmac Indians in Nova Scotia.

This article is taken from "The Meaning of Mission: The Past, Present, and Future," an address he gave in March 1984 in St. John’s, Newfoundland, to teachers, priests, religious, and others working for mission support.

Learning to Listen

It should be said that the words 'mission' and 'missionary' often do not sit too comfortably with many people today, especially when such words imply only a one-sided exchange from those who have to those who have not. We are gradually moving beyond the notion that we are put on this earth just to enrich others, whereas others are not meant to enlighten or enrich us too much. We are no longer comfortable with the notion that we are on the mountain of all wisdom and enlightenment and that somehow, by divine right, we alone have all the important answers to life and eternity, and that we are here only to colonize others to our own particular way of thinking; that we are the privileged with so much to give but that, after all, we have little to receive from those who are different from ourselves. We are beginning to question any suggestion that, as Christians, we have responsibility to speak but not necessarily to listen.

In the past, our notion of mission was colored by this almost colonial approach to spreading the gospel or sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. It was a notion, of course, that not only affected Christianity, but to some extent gave rise to economic and political imperialism, to our ways of edu-
cating the colonized peoples of the world, to our attitudes toward those whose language or culture or color of skin was different from our own. It was again a top-down approach to the vulnerable by the powerful, and to the pagans of the world by the saved. And so, even in our Christian life, we sometimes gave our missionary work a kind of colonial and geographic connotation: “I was on the missions if I were among the pagans in Borneo but was not on the missions if I were among the pagans in Toronto.”

Being a missionary in the past — and this might explain again why we are a little uncomfortable with the word today — may have implied a little self-righteousness. Indian people in order to find their way to God should go to an Indian residential school away from the contamination of their homes and reserves; they must learn English or French if they are to be Christianized; they should stop moving through the forests and lakes following the seasons and the migration of the caribou, and should really build permanent houses on settled reserves that we have established for them, stay in one place, give up all those pagan totem poles or potlatches1 or Indian dances. Our attitudes were not too much different on the foreign missions. Be suspicious of local religious traditions: Peruvian Incas sacrificing llamas to the rain gods; ancestor worship of the Chinese; the tribal religions of Africa. There may have been an attitude implicit in our missionary perspective that suggested that we should really encourage the people into some kind of “civilized” religion, become like good sensible Europeans, settle down, be sober and stable, forget those drums and dances, and learn the litany of the saints and the Latin Mass and the list of kings in the British Empire.

Reflecting on the Good

While it is important for us to reflect on the missionary moods of the past, it may sometimes be a little too easy to condemn a history of which we were not a part, to be critical of our missionary past from the perspective of the present; sometimes we think it very sophisticated to have this great wisdom of hindsight. This, at times, can cause us to be somewhat unfair, forgetful of the good that missionaries of the past did in fact accomplish, of the people throughout the world who did learn about Jesus despite all our missionary foibles and failures. We might too easily forget about missionary

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1 Potlatch is a Chinook word meaning “to give.” Among the Northwest Carrier, for example — and probably among other Western tribes as well — the word began to be used to describe a community celebration during which the giving away of one’s possessions became a mark of accomplishment and prestige, often to the point of leaving the giver destitute. Early accounts describe competing chiefs filling canoes with blankets and sinking them in order to demonstrate their respective capacity to “potlatch” or give away their goods as well as to show their disdain for any dependence on material things. Community prestige therefore was not the outcome of one’s capacity to acquire, but of one’s capacity to survive without acquisition.

men and women who have given and still give their whole lives, with the insights of their time, to live among the Inuit of the Arctic or the Ibo of Nigeria, or in the outports of Newfoundland. We forget about their long examples of prayer and sacrifice and sometimes loneliness, about the genuine love they have for their people, about their efforts to learn local languages or build new clinics and new schools and adjust sometimes to new diets and travel long distances by dog sled or burro, doing their best to bring Christ's message and nourishment to others. We can forget to thank them sometimes, even the men and women perhaps now in their sixties and seventies still up in the Yukon or Labrador North or in various parts of Latin America or Asia or Africa: Canadian men and women, or Europeans who came to work in Canada, sometimes lonely and forgotten in the midst of all this change, perhaps even criticized for their ways of being missionary by someone who has never known mission life. We can easily forget that men and women come to the kingdom of God oftentimes along many crooked paths, and that it is too easy to be wise in hindsight and from a distance.

Wisdom and understanding and knowledge are still gifts of the Spirit; I have a suspicion that they are doled out to us only gradually and in the measure that we are ready to receive them at a given point in our salvation history. It is important not to be too critical too quickly.

Changes: Projects and Pastoral Work

Our former approach to missionary life has been slowly changing over the past 20 years and will continue to do so. It is important for us to do some prayerful reflection on what is happening.

During the fifties and early sixties, a lot of our missionary activity seemed to concern itself with human development. There was a very legitimate concern on the missions for the physical survival of poor people; clinics for health care; co-op housing programs for shelter; food assistance projects; schools for primary and secondary education; agricultural programs for self-maintenance in the jungles of Bolivia and Peru or in the poor areas of Africa; human rights for the tin miners of Bolivia; aboriginal rights for the Dene in Northwestern Canada; social justice for native women; courageous stands against atrocities in Central America or Africa; land claims for Inuit and Indian people; concern for the unemployed if an economy ceases to balance the productivity of capital against the productivity of human beings; help for the refugees throughout the world; the victims of drought or power struggles or alcoholism or starvation or whatever; keeping political channels open to the Patriotic Church of China. None of this, of course, has been discarded as an integral part of missionary work. All efforts to protect the freedoms, lives, health, and human rights of people who suffer however and wherever is still very much a part of missionary work.
In the 1960s in Peru, our great preoccupation among the Oblate Fathers there was to maintain our schools and clinics and industrial training programs in the so-called barriada or poor urban areas. We were much helped in this effort by private and governmental organizations: Misereor and Adveniat of West Germany, the British Ford Foundation, the Canadian International Development Agency, the U.S. Peace Corps, the Canadian University Services Overseas, Oxfam, and the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. We had several contracts with all these agencies of care and concern for people of the third world, and they assisted us in our efforts at human development.

At that time there was this somewhat heavy emphasis — especially characteristic of the more recent past at least — on socio-economic development and social justice in our approach to missionary work. There was of course a continuous and simultaneous concern with pastoral work throughout: teaching of catechism, preaching, celebrating Mass, hearing confessions, baptizing, marrying, burying, all the celebrations linked closely to the apostolates of parish schools and parish clinics.

Cultural Separation and Integration

Yet, it seems that in all of this, in a strange kind of way, we became little islands of our own culture in oceans of great difference. Very seldom would we become truly and completely dependent on local Churches, even if they had actually existed already for centuries; seldom did we work under local pastors or local Church establishments, except in the broadest sense of becoming canonically attached to a diocese. If we were in Latin America or Africa, for example, there seemed to be a strong tendency to keep a life line to our various supply ships at home. Serious crises tended to be resolved from afar. If missionaries became seriously ill, send them home; if you needed money, get it from your home base; if you were short of personnel, put in a call to your provincial or bishop back home. We become empowered by our resources at home, in other words, at least as much as by the resources at hand on the missions. While at one level this was very enabling to the missionary, at another level it caused the missionary apostolate to be relatively quite independent and powerful. The notion of St. Paul — when you were powerless, it would be then you would be strong (2 Cor. 12: 10) — was not one of our great missionary mottoes. To integrate our own pastoral approach with the pastoral work of local Churches already there, to work within already established local parishes in Taiwan or Tanzania or wherever rather than build from scratch our own new and self-sufficient mission stations with our own property and our own personnel and our own supply of money: these were not really representative of the missionary directions we followed in the fifties and sixties. We wanted to be independent. We would
not be vulnerable and dependent. "To eat what they put before us" — again to quote St. Paul (1 Cor. 10: 27) — was not yet completely a part of our missionary vision.

Many would say, and with some justification, that such an approach requiring heroic adaptability to entirely new ways of life, lower and less varied diets, lower levels of affluence, lower levels of health care, lower supplies of money, new ways of understanding and feeling the rhythms of religion, new isolation perhaps from home base, that all of this would have been just too much for the average European or North American missionary, and that he or she would simply end up a physical or emotional basket-case unable to do anything for anybody on the missions or elsewhere.

**Moods of Vatican II**

Little by little, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were new moods beginning to develop within the Church that affected our approach to missionary life. Words like preaching and proclaiming and teaching and directing all began to give way somewhat in favor of words like ‘encountering’ and ‘dialoguing’ and ‘listening’ and ‘sharing’ — much, I might say, to the great frustration of some of the old guard who felt our dogma was going soft and that the magisterium was being treated as so much mush.

Yet the Church as a whole in the spirit of Vatican II was moving on to new insights and new sensitivity to people beyond its own official family and traditional formulations of faith. It was now not only doing for people, but also doing with them, not only definitive decree but delicate dialogue, not only speaking but listening. It was not only bringing the life of Jesus to the poor, but also discovering that life and celebrating that life which may already be there among the poor in their poverty of spirit, simplicity, love of family, life of sacrifice for others, or acceptance of God’s will. All these signs of God’s life may already be very much within the poor people of the third world. And we with the hope and love and faith of Jesus may need simply to discover it and celebrate it. Being missionary may mean today not only knowing how to help but also how to accept help from others. In fact, that may even be at the heart of being Christian.

**Recovering Some of the Past**

In reflecting on this, especially in respect to the missionaries of the last century in Northern Canada — the Eudist Fathers in Labrador and the Oblates and Grey Nuns and Sisters of Providence in the Far North — there was at one time a much greater willingness to survive on the resources of the people to whom we missioned. Old missionaries did learn to fish and build igloos and pull teeth and harness dogs and hunt caribou. They did learn to
depend on resources around them, to make fur clothing and scrape skins and speak Eskimo and Indian languages. They even adapted their teachings somewhat to the people by establishing church chiefs on local reserves, using familiar and concrete symbols as ways of understanding God, printing the teachings of the Church in native languages. They did in fact travel with the seasons and follow the migration of the caribou. They learned to eat their food, adapt to native ways of life, and in fact had very few life lines to home bases in Europe. It was a lifelong commitment to the risks of being vulnerable, something perhaps we should think about again. The people at home kissed the feet of the missionaries as they left, and they were sent by the Church to care and learn and teach in the name of Christ as best they could, with whatever resources were to be found along the way. This is a worthwhile reflection for us on how God may call us to mission: that in a paradoxical way, we are being sent not only to be powerful and benevolent among others, but even more significantly, to be vulnerable.

In a certain way, it was this more gentle insertion into the missions that characterized the 1970s. Suddenly there were new big words that everybody was using. Indigenization was boiled down to making the ministries of the Church less foreign and more local; inculturation, which reminded us that the missionary — whether lay or religious or clerical — somehow had to adjust his or her message and liturgy to the traditions and the values of the people; evangelization, which called us all to see ourselves as missionaries of the gospel by the very circumstance of our baptism and to incarnate God’s word into the daily reality of our lives. All this new missionary thrust was being influenced by trends in the Church as a whole: feeling that our missionary work needed to be more ecumenical; that it needed to be more and more a work of the laity; that the sacraments, as signs of Christ among us, needed to be understood as both causes and celebrations of the faith people actually share.

The Intimate and the Institution

The most significant change in our missionary life came in the late sixties and seventies, not so much in our mission techniques nor in the social and economic projects we were maintaining, but rather in the way we saw ourselves in our relationships to God and to one another on the missions. At so many different levels of Church life people were searching for more intimacy. Books were being written about it. There were programs on affectivity and human relationships and interpersonal encounters every month. It was not a time for saying your beads or doing the stations of the cross by yourself. The mood was togetherness, perhaps in reaction to a growing suggestion that we had made religion a little too distant, too severe, too legal, too joyless, too comfortable for the old and too meaningless for the young. Now we needed to see the life of God more in our honest relationships with
one another. Externally, we had already begun with Vatican II by turning our
altars around and celebrating the sacraments in the vernacular. But we
seemed to want more. We needed to be not only suppliers of human resources
and keepers of rules, we needed to be a deeper and more intimate part of the
lives of one another. Formulas and rituals and regulations needed to be real
and deep expressions of where our hearts were in respect to one another and
in respect to God. Within families, we needed not only to provide the usual
food, clothing, and shelter, but perhaps also to reflect and to pray on the
deepest ways we actually communicate: father and son, mother and daughter,
husband and wife, neighbor and neighbor. We needed to bring Church into
smaller and more intimate groups. We needed to establish more human
exchange between priests and people. We needed to look at ourselves in the
many ways we may overpower or exploit one another: native and nonnative,
French and English, rich and poor, old and young, parents and children, the
have and the have-nots, black and white, Protestant and Catholic, Christian
and Jew, men and women.

As Church, we felt we needed to liberate ourselves and others from those
constraints of sin and human exploitation that would keep anyone in God's
creation from being anything less than a brother and sister for whom I deeply
cared. And so we had all the movements: liberation theology, formation of
small basic communities, parish renewal programs, cursillos, charismatic
prayer groups, marriage and teen encounter programs. All these in one way
or other represent efforts to get people not only talking but listening to one
another and, in that process, learning to listen to Jesus Christ, and then
discovering the joy of being in holy communion with someone else and the
sadness of being proud and independent and alone. All these winds of the
Spirit that blew through the times of change and oftentimes times of pain in
the 1960s and 1970s certainly affected our ways of being missionary.

Missionary Dedication

The process of finding new ways to mission in the name of Christ is still
going on within real people working today in the mission field. From last
year's mission statistics, Canada now has 3,654 religious, clerical, and lay
Catholic missionaries working in foreign countries, apart from those who do
so much on the missions here at home. They represent some 138 different
missionary organizations based in Canada. They are among the great Chris-
tians of our time, and perhaps have been specially graced by God to be what
they are: flexible and faithful, joyful and self-sacrificing, caring, willing in
many cases to die for their missions; speaking Spanish and Cantonese and
Zulu and Ketchua and Portuguese and Swahili and French and English,
often working and praying together in language and cultural teams that we
might find unusual to see here at home. That is not to say they are all saints
yet or that they don't get discouraged and disappointed and angry and lonely:
but with all their humanity, they are there. Their lives and missionary commitment often enrich ours here at home. I am sure, for example, the St. John's mission of Monsefu and the sacrifices that were made there will always bring graces not only to that mission in Peru, but to the people of this archdiocese, and perhaps in ways we may never fully understand in this life.

A Developing Missiology

What are the practical implications of all these changes? How shall we regard missionary life in the future?

• *First of all,* each of us may gradually begin to feel more deeply that there is an apostolic and missionary commitment that is central to our being Christian, that to be a Catholic implies a universal brotherhood and sisterhood of mutual care in the name of Jesus Christ, and that to be apostolic is to be marked as a person of the Church. We may come to realize more profoundly that we are each being sent not only to renew our *personal* lives but that renewal also means missioning to *others:* that each of us may be called upon to reflect not only on our own personal stance before God as an individual, but also to ask myself where in practice today I am bringing peace and freedom and salvation and the Good News of Jesus Christ to others. We need to have a new sense of conscience about this just as clearly as we may now have a sense of conscience about Mass on Sunday or the avoidance of blasphemy or unfaithfulness in marriage. To have a new sense of conscience about our missionary obligations may mark the Christian of the future in a more profound way.

• *Secondly,* all that has been happening over the last 25 years may give us a notion of Christian mission that is somehow much more than one's being in a distant land or on a Northern mission in a purely physical sense. It may have to do first of all with our relationships here at home, with our sense of universal brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ. I am being sent as a missionary to my children or to my students or to my co-workers or to my friends, or even to my enemies. I am being sent to be a genuine sign of Christ to those who are hurting or poor or alone. I am being sent to take a new responsibility for others among the people of God wherever they are in the world, and whoever they are as potential citizens of the kingdom of God. Perhaps I am being sent even to risk my popularity or my security or my old and comfortable ways of thinking, to empty myself and be vulnerable in the service of others and in imitation of Jesus.

It is certainly an awesome challenge, but it is the challenge of the gospel. It will mean bringing our missionary efforts close to home. It may mean a new willingness to reach out and be different in our ways of being Christian, to see Church as more than a building and religious commitment as more than staying safely within the rules. Just as family life is more than a house
and family love is more than our work for food, clothing, and shelter, so too real missionary spirit is more than activity or projects as such: it is radically a matter of the heart.

- **Thirdly,** with a new missionary vision and with God’s help, we will perhaps come to examine ourselves in our relationships with different people, again beginning at home. Do I really make an effort to understand those who are different? those who speak a different language? those who have failed in life through drink or drugs or who are just humanly crippled in some way? those whose color of skin is different? those whose life style or religion or place of origin or personality are simply different than my own? How do I mission to them? It is easy, after all, to mission to those who love us, but do we really mission to the different? Or is there a little self-righteousness left about the supremacy of self, still an unwillingness to be formed by others? Do we still live by the old stereotypes? That all foreigners are strange and sometimes a little bit unnatural. That all people with dark skin or white skin or brown skin cannot really be ‘ones of our own.’

There are also the old stereotypes: the poor man just needs to work harder to be as rich as I am — it’s easy; the slow student just needs to study more to be as smart as I am — it’s easy; the alcoholic just needs to moderate his or her drinking the way I do; the separated and divorced just need to be more loving, the way I am; the young just need to think and feel the way we older folk do; the native person just needs to get a job; the French person just needs to learn English; the old and disabled just need to stop feeling sorry for themselves: it’s easy.

I wonder sometimes how often we truly listen and put ourselves in the place of the other. The new challenge of being missionary may call us to that kind of deep reflection: What kind of heart do I have? Do I really care for my brother or my sister with the care of Christ? Perhaps more than anything else, this may be at the core of our mission to the future and at the center of any missionary work we undertake.

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**RESPECT FOR ANOTHER CULTURE**

Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on people’s dreams. More seriously still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival.