



TRIVIALIZATION OF LITURGICAL SONGS, A DEVIATION FROM CHURCH TRADITION

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GBOKO, NIGERIA -

The trivialization of liturgical songs of the Church in the context of modernization has been described as a disturbing deviation from the Church's liturgical music tradition. This observation was made by Rev. Fr. Moses Iyara, OSA, the National Chaplain of the National Catholic Liturgical Music Council of Nigeria (NACALIMCO); in his presentation at the 10th Annual National Conference of the of the association, held recently at the Queen of the Holy Rosary School, Gboko, Benue State.

In his paper titled: *Let us Sing Our Faith*; Fr. Iyara noted how the lyrics of some Commons of the liturgy have been distorted out of the lyrics of the liturgical texts by music masters or leaders of choirs, in the attempt to modernize the songs of the Church, in spite of the position of the Church on the tradition of the lyrics of these songs. The National chaplain noted the liturgical songs so affected to include: the Kyrie, the Gloria and Pater Noster. The theme of the conference was: *Mediocrity and Superficiality: Addressing Issues of Inconsistencies with Contemporary Liturgical Music in Nigeria*.

The association's National Chaplain stated that: " ... most disturbing deviation, is the distortion of the lyrics of our liturgical text, which many of us have unknowingly accepted, and even celebrated, by what I would like to describe as the poetic trivialization of the Common parts of the Mass e.g. the Kyrie - Lord have mercy; Gloria - Glory be to

God; Pater Noster – Our Father; Nice Creed – I believe in God ; Sanctus – Holy holy holy and Agnus Dei – Lamb of God.”

Fr. Iyara noted: “The texts of these Commons have been well formulated biblically and theologically over the centuries, in their proper order to reflect the teaching and faith of the Church. But unfortunately, what we observe today is that in the course of trying to use poetry or poetic license to simplify the Commons, we have resorted to distorting their meanings completely.” Stressing the need for the Church in Nigeria to be in conformity with the Universal Church in the realm of the liturgy and liturgical songs, Fr. Iyara stressed the need for the anomaly to be properly addressed and corrected.

At the end of the four-day programme, participants at the conference adopted some resolutions and made recommendations on how to enhance the activities of the association in the country, in the message released at the end of the conference. The document was signed by Rev. Fr. Moses Iyara OSA, National Chaplain; Mr. Aniemekwe Hyacinth Peter, National Coordinator; Sir Jude Nnam, national Music Director and Mr. Ike Emmanuel Nwachukwu, National Secretary.

In the message, the participants, among other things stressed the importance of training of choir masters for the sustenance of the sacredness of liturgical music of the Church. They commended choir masters who have signified intention to study music and commended those who have obtained certificate in this respect. They declared: “We recognize the need to collaborate with these musicologists or experts with formal education in music in order to improve our choir ministry.”

They also admonished members to study liturgical music in any certified Catholic music academy to enhance their mastery of the art. They identified and accepted the sharp difference between Liturgical Music/songs and Sacred Christian songs; noting that “the ignorance of this fundamental fact is what is practically responsible for so many digressions by choristers, composers who make arbitrary selections and compositions of songs for Liturgical

celebrations". The participants therefore made it compulsory for anyone who wants to be a Music Director/Choir Master in the country must have formal and proper training in Liturgical Music.

Other decisions taken at the conference included: the call on all choirs in the country to end distortion and deviation from the tradition of the Church in respect of singing the lyrics of the Commons of the Mass "in order to safeguard their theological meaning and our liturgical heritage" and that the primary role of the choir is to animate the worshipping congregation with liturgical music and not to entertain

The participants considered the need for some committees to streamline the activities of members of the association in the Archdioceses and dioceses as well as setting up a music commission and urged choirs to shun singing beyond liturgical actions. The conference was attended by over 500 participants from all the nine Ecclesiastical Provinces in the country.