

AN APPRAISAL OF LITURGY AS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The worship of God connects the material with the spiritual sphere. It also presents human beings with the opportunity of relating with God in a more profound manner. For Christians, the finest expression of faith is found in the liturgy especially the celebration of Holy Mass. However, many Catholics are yet to understand the Eucharist as communication. This paper, "An Appraisal of Liturgy as Communication" examined the matter using the qualitative method of study. It discovered that from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Holy Mass is essentially a communication between human beings and God. The study recommended active participation, reverential disposition and effective-communication with God as recipes. It concluded that understanding Liturgy as Communication is crucial to appreciating the Eucharist more and the interaction that flows from that act of worship which is directed to God who alone is worshipped and glorified.

Keywords: Communication, Holy, Liturgy, Mass, Worship.

Introduction

From time immemorial, human beings have engaged in the worship of the either a deity or Supreme Being referred to as God. Even in ancient traditions and kingdoms, people provided a sacred space for communication with a god who is expected to convey their prayers to the Ultimate Being. In those primitive societies especially in Africa, the day-to-day life of the community is related to divine realities as Local Priests, *Dibias* or Intercessors often conveyed the sentiments of the people to deities for intervention in times of famine or pestilence. What is important at those moments is that the people had a sense of direction regarding where to pour out their supplications.

Even with the coming of both Islam and Christianity, the remnant adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR) still communicate with their gods through shrines and temples. Some Christians in Africa still visit local shrines to have their problems solved. Theologians have blamed the trend on syncretism. While that is not the preoccupation of this paper, it is crucial to note that human beings

are always in constant communication not only with a Higher Being but with one another. This communication comes in the form of thanksgiving, petition, adoration and supplication or through the use of signs and symbols.

To put this discussion in perspective, the Christian faith also considers communication with God as one of its cardinal objectives. Since the Christian faith is an offshoot of Judaism, the Letter to the Hebrews beautifully summarizes how God communicated with humanity through the ages: "In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe" (Heb. 1:1-3). This divine communication with humanity is the basis for the liturgy of the new and everlasting covenant established by Christ. Little wonder, the Church upholds the liturgy as the ultimate platform through which human beings can relate with God.

In the Catholic Church, liturgical celebrations often take the form of prayer and worship through the use of rites or rituals which involve signs and symbols. The fullest expression of the Church's liturgy takes place in the Eucharistic celebration where the faithful meet either on a daily basis or once a week to worship the God of heaven and earth who alone demands all honour and glory (Rom.16:27). Perhaps that is why it is said, all religions especially Christianity are essentially about communication (Social Communication Departments AMECEA & IMBISA, 2000, p.21). Apparently, God's people have always made the communication systems of each era holy by using them to communicate with all who gather to worship (Bonnot, 2001).

This is why some scholars hold the view that God is all about communication (Dyikuk, 2017, p. 046). Instructively, John's Gospel opens with the word being present with God and communicating with God (John 1:1). It is further argued that, that the word is associated with light and life and creativity which are "the very hallmarks of the digital age, and is transmitted to the world, enfleshed amongst us and we have seen his glory. That communicated Word, that enfleshed Word, makes known God, exegetes God to all of us. A communicative God incarnates himself within a specific culture and within a specific cultural mode of communication" (Phillips, Lewis & Bruce, 2013, p.3).

The Church, as an Assembly of God's Holy people presents a platform for Christians who express their faith in a way that is unrivalled. In the Catholic Church, the deepest expression of the worship of God is found in the liturgy of

the Holy Eucharist which opens the faithful up to the reality of communicating with the world to bring forth the values of the kingdom. This is where human communication, through interpersonal and group communication becomes not only crucial to human existence (Dyikuk, 2018, p. 045) but to divine worship thus, an appraisal of the liturgy as communication.

Despite the riches of the liturgy which makes for true worship of God, communication between God and man, humanity and God and human beings with one another, Christians are yet to fully understand and appreciate the liturgy of the Holy Mass as communication brought about by nourishment received from the word of God and the table of the Eucharist. In its entirety, liturgy is more than words. It involves all the senses - action and gesture. However, churches hardly recognize that this is part of the way they should worship God (Perham, 1998). For instance, a good number of Catholics do not realize that the words of dismissal, "Go and announce the gospel by your life" is an invitation to go out and communicate the values imbibed at Mass to the world. As such, the aim of this conceptual paper is to:

1. Appraise the place of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the life of the Church;
2. Decry the inability of many Catholics to appreciate the Holy Mass as communication;
3. Explore the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, signs, symbols, ecclesiastical architecture and images as drivers of communication;
4. Find the missing link between liturgical celebrations and living the Christian life in the light of communicating the values of the kingdom.
5. Galvanize more support for understanding and appreciating the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in terms of communication between God and humanity and research about the subject matter.

Deconstruction of Concepts

(a). Liturgy: For the purpose of this paper, liturgy is understood as a fixed rite of public worship which ranges from para-liturgical functions like penitential service to full celebrations like the Holy Mass. The Vatican II document states that: "Although the Sacred Liturgy is above all the worship of the Divine Majesty, it likewise contains abundant instruction for the faithful - not only when things are 'which have been written for our instruction' (Rom. 15:4), but

also when the Church prays and sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their souls are raised to God" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no.33). It also maintains that the Eucharistic liturgy is the source and summit of our Christian lives and existence (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no.10). Little wonder, the Church draws her life from the Eucharist (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, no. 1).

Liturgy is also conceived as the formalized worship of the Father through the Son in the Spirit by signs and symbols otherwise known as verbal and non-verbal cues. It is the live-wire of the Church and the driver of both natural and supernatural grace for divine encounters between God and humanity which leads to transformation of lives.

(b.) Communication: Communication deals with the sending, receiving, and understanding of information and meaning with the response of the receiver defining the success or not of the communication process (Scott, 2005, p.4 & Dyikuk, 2017,p.19). Scholars are also of the opinion that communication is the exchange of thoughts, ideas, emotions and understanding between a sender and a receiver (Guo & Sanchez, 2005, p.83). Communication is equally viewed as a theological term. For instance, God spoke in the beginning and there was light (Gen. 1:3) - That divine speech meant that he related a message or better still, he communicated - this makes social communication as the first course in the theological sciences. Besides, after creation, Adam exclaimed "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..." (Gen. 2:32) - An exclamation that is a communicative act (Dyikuk, 2017, p.20).

Beyond expression of ideas or emotion, communication also implies giving of self in love as exemplified by Christ whose communication was spirit and life. In the Eucharist, he gave the Church the most intimate form of communion and communication between God and humanity as an expression of the deepest union which could exist between him and human beings (*Communio et Progressio*, 1971, no. 11). It is in this incarnational, self-giving and self-revealing human communication that this study highlights the four main forms of communication identified by Dyikuk (2017, Pp.23 & 24) which occur within the context of liturgy:

- i. Intrapersonal Communication:** In the context of liturgy, intrapersonal communication is the kind of communication which takes place within a person in which a person thinks aloud, reflects and broods over an issue like deciding to go for the celebration of Holy Mass. Communicating with oneself through feeling or emotion about the need for prayer, God and going for Sunday worship for instance, fulfils

the demands of interpersonal communication. This kind of communication in which the source and receiver is the same also takes place after the readings are read and the faithful broods over or reflects about the homily in the light of the readings and as it relates to day-to-day life.

- ii. **Dyadic or Interpersonal Communication:** As the name implies, interpersonal communication occurs at the level of person-to-person. It involves two individuals sharing ideas mostly through face-to-face or oral medium with verbal and non-verbal cues. This type of communication in which the source becomes a receiver and the receiver becomes a source, gives way to feedback between the sender and the receiver.

Liturgically, the communication between the Chief-celebrant and each parishioner or that which occurs between the readers (Lectors and Cantors) and each person on the pew passes for dyadic or interpersonal communication. This is because, most times, the readings or homily often appear as if they are addressed to the each individual – this is notwithstanding the verbal and non-verbal cues which occur between the functionaries and the faithful during the celebration of Holy Mass.

- iii. **Group Communication:** Group communication takes place in small groups of three to ten or fifteen people who have a common purpose, mutual influence, shared identity and specific goal. It enables everyone in the group to become a source and also a receiver because of information-sharing and mutual-feedback. A good example of where and how group communication takes place is at Small Christian Communities (SCC's). The celebration of the sacraments like anointing of the sick, penitential service and Holy Mass with small groups of not more than fifteen people qualifies for this kind of communication.

The coming together of the faithful every Sunday is a perennial opportunity for communication and evangelisation (Faniran, 1998, Pp.147-148). Focused group discussions or meeting of various sodalities or pious societies in the Church also passes for group communication. Group Communication helps in mobilising Christian families for pastoral activities towards the expansion of the faith (Olusola, 2013, p.309).

- iv. **Traditional or Trado-rural Communication:** This kind of communication entails the use of available traditional media or means of communication to communicate messages. Traditional or trado-rural communication reinforces the bonds of community and cooperation,

mutual esteem and incorporation of every member of the community (Wilson, 2008, p.51). Often times, trado-rural communication is based on beliefs, systems, opinions, actions, culture and customs which are native and historical to a any given society Nsereka (2013, p. 16). In Africa, for instance, the liturgy is often spiced up with the use of traditional songs and music, proverbs and fables which speaks to trado-rural communication.

Mimes and theatre, talking drum et al are also effective vehicles for communicating the message of the gospel (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 123). Music and dance have a genuine place in African worship. For example, to further enhance this kind of communication, the Catholic Church in Nigeria introduced into her liturgy singing of choruses, playing of local instruments, clapping of hands and dancing (Udoette, 2012, Pp.19 &151).

Review of Literature and Discussion

In this section, our preoccupation would be - Church as mystical communion, liturgy as communication, biblical perspectives of liturgy, liturgy of the word as communication, communicative aspects of liturgy of the Eucharist and liturgical gestures, images, symbols, architecture and the communication of meaning:

Church as Mystical Communion

The Church is a communion and fellowship of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12). Incidentally, the paradigm of the Church as the "People of God" is upheld by the Church's ecclesiology in Vatican II. To be sure, as the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church adopts the participatory, interpersonal, two-way model of communication which empowers. As opposed to the linear, top-bottom model of communication, the Church provides an engaging type of communication through the community celebration of the liturgy. The community celebration provides that the priest "say(s) Mass for the people" (Social Communication Departments AMECEA & IMBISA, 2000, p.16). In contemporary liturgical parlance, he "says Mass for and with the people."

God's self-communication to humanity and the cosmos reached its peak of unity in the incarnation of Jesus who became man and dwelt among us (McDonagh, 1994, p.282). According to Pivarnik (2013, p.221), the entry point of the *transitus* between God and humanity is the Trinitarian action which has its roots in self-communication of the triune God. Sacramental celebrations allow Christ to instruct the faithful and also bind them to the gospel (Pivarnik, 2013, p.221).

As it were, the earthly liturgy is a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling place of all believers where Christ is seated at the right side of God and ministering and the faithful are singing hymns with all the heavenly army, venerating the memory of the saints and hoping for some fellowship with them as they await that day when they shall appear before God in glory (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1076-1209).

Commenting on this, McNamara (2016) stated that the liturgy is a mysterious union with Christ our high priest which is carried out in perceptible signs which come from Christ himself such as the use of bread and wine for the Eucharist and of water and the Trinitarian formula for baptism. This reveals the Church as a mystical communion which discloses the mind of God through its liturgical rites. This shall guide our discussion into liturgy as communion and later, how liturgical signs and symbols communicate meaning.

Liturgy As Communication

We shall consider the three forms of worship due to God, the honour given to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the honour accorded the Saints so as draw their communicative meaning. These are - *Latria*, *Hyperdulia* and *Dulia*. From its Greco-Latin roots, *Latria* is the highest form of communication between God and humanity is the worship or prayer that is due to no other person but exclusively reserved to God who alone is praised, worshipped and adored. A typical example of this form of prayer is the Celebration of Holy Mass which fulfils the prayer of thanksgiving, petition, supplication and adoration.

Hyperdulia is the veneration and honour the Church gives to the Blessed Virgin Mary because of her immaculately conception and perpetual virginity as well as unique role in the mystery of salvation gives her preeminence over the saints. This is because "God prepared before hand to be the worthy mother of his son." The Pilgrim Church has a symbiotic relationship with her because she communicates directly to her son on their behalf and on behalf of the Suffering Church in purgatory. Common examples of this form of prayer are: Para-liturgical prayers and devotions such as May and October Devotions, the Litany of the Saints and other Marian Prayers/Devotions.

Dulia is a Greek term which means the veneration or homage is opposed in nature and degree from the adoration and worship given to God because it is the communication between human beings and the saints which is lesser than *hyperdulia* because the Blessed Virgin Mary is ranked higher than the saints. The

faithful engage in an interpersonal communication with the saints by way of honouring them and seeking their intercession before God. For instance, the Veneration of the Saints and other intercessory prayers which invoke the Saints, fall under *Dulia* ().

Since Vatican II, all the documents of the Church especially the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* which remains its Magna Charta have made the point that liturgy is a dialogue or communication between God and the faithful. The point is also made that in the liturgy, God speaks and the people listen and then respond in a way that there is a blend of action and symbolic narrative with ritual made up of the combination of words and deeds (Social Communication Departments AMECEA & IMBISA, 2000, p.42).

It has been observed that Catholic history appropriates and fully integrates each era's new communication culture into its worship (Bonnot, 2001). This is because the liturgy is essentially a form of communication (Terwilliger, 1969). Since we are experiencing a notorious communications revolution, the question of liturgical communication is of utmost urgency (Terwilliger, 1969). This calls for understanding and appreciating of the liturgy as communication. For instance, in the liturgy, the principal celebrant is the one who adopts, internalizes and emits signs from the treasure of the Church, for the faithful. In that way, he is a recipient and also the vivid interpreter of the liturgical content. The faithful who are involved in the liturgy receive the message of God through the celebrant and are urged to interpret it in their Christian lives (Krajnc & Gerjolj, 2014, p.87).

Indeed, in the process of communication, there is someone who emits signs, so that he or she creates its material form and communicates its meaning through a concrete form. There is also the recipient of the message who recognizes the physical appearance of signs and through this concrete form, perceives the meaning that he interprets at the same time (Krajnc & Gerjolj, 2014, p.87). It is important to also highlight the fact that there is a form of continuity in the liturgy. This is because within it, some communication of the truth that ours is a historical religion (Terwilliger, 1969) takes place. As such, liturgy is a communication between the priest, who precedes over the assembly and the faithful (John Paul II, 2003, p.3).

Biblical Perspectives of Liturgy

Although some evidence points to the fact that there was some form of Scripture reading in the time of the Second Temple (after about 500 B.C.), there is probability that there were no homilies. Although they practiced some form of

storytelling, prophecy and songs in the Temple, the Jews believed that God helped them by speaking directly to them through the prophets. In that way, they integrated the available oral communication system into their worship (Bonnot, 2001).

With the passage of time, orality graduated to documentation as a means of communicating the message of God. With the recoding of stories in manuscripts by scribes, the Jewish way of worship changed from less literate to a literate culture. It is crucial to note that when the Temple was destroyed, synagogue worship replaced Temple worship and scriptures replaced sacrifices. In both rabbinic Judaism and apostolic Christianity, the worship of God depended on the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures and buildings became central (Bonnot, 2001).

The Levitical system of old was a sort of picture gallery for the coming of Christ (Webster, 2018). By his total surrender, Christ became our burnt offering (Lev. 1; 6:8-13 & 8:18-21) (Webster, 2018). From the one single sacrifice he offered and entered into his glory (Heb. 10:11-18), Christ abolished the old sacrifices of bulls and rams and established the new Passover of the lamb (Heb. 9:13-10:18 & 7:27) as the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. This is the reason why in contemporary ecclesiology, the Church is the vocal point of contact or communication between God and humanity. It is where the incarnation is celebrated. That is why some scholars opine that: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through papyrus and paper in many different and various ways, but in these last days, his Word is shown through the digital realm" (Phillips, Lewis & Bruce, 2013, p.3). This directs our discussion in the way of viewing the biblical perspectives of liturgy as it relates to communication.

The Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication states that while he was on earth, Christ revealed Himself as the Perfect Communicator through his incarnation, by totally identifying himself with those who are expected to receive his communication. He gave his message in words and by the whole manner of his life by preaching the divine message out of the press of his people without fear or compromise and so, adjusted to his people's way of life (*Communio Et Progressio*, 1971, no.11). Commenting on this, Musa (2018) stated that the use of oral communication to the usage of scrolls to record the message of prophets and sages culminated in Jesus, "the perfect communicator" who used different media of communication such as interpersonal, group communication, public speaking and local language as well as proverbs and stories to convey his message to the world.

In the context of communication, the Church edifice provides that the congregation hears the word of God and offer prayers. The good acoustics in Christian basilicas have the capacity to make large crowds hear the word of God. Backed by the reading of Scriptures and preaching, magnificent ecclesiastical architecture have become major media events which have made worship to sacralize literate communication culture and restructure the sacred space to accommodate it. The effect is the incorporation of statues, mosaics, frescoes and paintings from Greco-Roman culture into contemporary worship space with the Eucharistic sacrifice being offered no longer in Christian homes but in basilicas (Bonnot, 2001). This is why the new rite rightly communicates and interprets the primitive New Testament original nature of the Eucharist (Terwilliger, 1969). We shall return to this when considering the communicative aspects of liturgy of the Holy Eucharist.

Liturgy of the Word as Communication

All communication is said to be propositional that is “locutionary” which means that it conveys information. Some liturgical language such as the bible reference citation announced by the lector or deacon during the liturgy of the word, are locutionary (Leaver & Zimmerman, 1998, p.147). The liturgy of the word, also known as the ministry of the word, takes three forms namely, liturgy, catechesis and scripture reading. It is argued that without the ministry of the word, everything degenerates - liturgy into magic and ritualism, law into legalism and juridicism, institution into institutionalism and patrons into administrative bosses which calls for setting this deviation and degeneration right (Social Communication Departments AMECEA & IMBISA, 2000, p.41).

The liturgy charges Christians to be at the service of the word by being committed to the word who is Jesus. Just as the early apostles continued to devote themselves to prayer and the service of the word (Acts 6:3-4), the word which is proclaimed provides a leeway for Christians to like Christ, heal, instruct, reconcile and show love. Like Jesus, it enables Christians to communicate effectively in a way that the power of such words come out powerfully (Social Communication Departments AMECEA & IMBISA, 1999, p.20).

The pulpit is the designated place for the proclamation of the word of God. It is also the rightful place where those who belong to the ministerial priesthood proclaim and break the word of God. Discussing liturgy of the word as communication also draws our attention to the role of the laity as heralds (communicators) of the Good News. As Lectors, Cantors, Masters of Ceremony

or Commentators, they communicate the message of Christ to the faithful. At other times, members of the laity preach the Good News to one another in the various pious societies or sodalities they belong to (Dyikuk, 2011, Pp. 18, 19 & 23).

The opinion that favours this view holds that: "Through the liturgy of the word which corrects, indicts, incites, heals, sustains, builds, commands, approves and disapproves, the faithful are led towards shaping their attitudes and structures of societies" (Anagwo, 2014, p.340). This means that the Eucharistic assembly communicates the word of life which has the potency to change and transform lives. The role of liturgical preaching as the most efficient means of communication in favour of the liturgy for life (Chibuko, 2005, p.25) cannot be dispensed with especially by pastors of souls.

Communicative Aspects of Liturgy of the Eucharist

According to Christian liturgical tradition, the people of God spread out their hands in particular in relation to the joyous message which in the Eucharistic sacrifice reaches its peak during the kiss of peace (Krajnc & Gerjolj, 2014, p.83). The Eucharistic liturgy is the sacrifice of the cross that is re-enacted in an unbloody manner by the Church following the command of Christ "Do this in memory of me (Luke 22:19). This makes it the highest form of prayer and the most efficacious of prayers of the Catholic faithful (Anagwo, 2014, p.338). The liturgy of the Eucharist is the reenactment of the sacrifice of Holy Mass on Holy Thursday when Christ instituted the Apostles as priests of the New Covenant (John Paul II, 2003, p.3). It makes the central sign of the reception of Holy Communion basis for union between God and neighbour (McDonagh, 1994, p.288).

Two perspectives are critical here: The Paschal mysteries and unceasing atonement for sins. On the one hand, by shedding his blood, Christ saves sinners through faith in Jesus whom John declares as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). On the other hand, he unceasing makes atonement for the sins of world by calling human beings to repentance. Just as the throats of lambs were slaughtered every morning and evening in the Old Testament (Lev. 16: 22 & 26) as a sin offering, Christ the High Priest (Heb. 4:14) who comes in the Order of Melchizedek (Graham, 2018) is slain as a sacrifice and sheds his blood to redeem humanity (Dyikuk, 2016).

Though this sacrifice was made once and for all at Calvary, it is repeated in the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass in an unbloody manner following the command of Christ. Every time Holy Mass is celebrated, the full effects of Calvary come to the

fore as the atonement of sins is achieved through anamnesis. This means that the people of God are at liberty to always approach the table of the Lord with confidence to communicate and or commune with God in the Eucharist (Dyikuk, 2016).

Liturgical Gestures, Images, Symbols, Architecture and the Communication of Meaning

We have seen that liturgical gestures are decked with communicative meaning. Perhaps it is why for instance Anagwo opines that, striking the breast during the *Confiteor*, making the sign of the Cross on the forehead, lips and hearts at the beginning of the gospel, kneeling during certain parts of the Mass, bowing in adoration at the elevation and joining in chanting at appropriate responses have deep meaning. This is because there is no gesture approved by the Church that is without meaning and value (2014, p.339).

The theological and anthropological dimension of a gesture is even more obvious when the sign of the cross is made with wide spread arms. The procession at mass, collect, being the official greeting, standing position of the priest who spreads out his hands and places his entire body in the shape of a cross in a prominent posture for open, direct, honest and authentic communication, has deep meaning which reveals that all the senses that are used for communication are located at the front of the body in the shape of a Cross (Krajnc & Gerjolj, 2014, p.83). Interestingly, "The cross with spread hands is the most convincing posture of communication and is the starting point for a hug, be it in pain or in joy. With open palms facing upwards, it expresses confidence and courage, as well as honesty and consistency with the spoken word" (Krajnc & Gerjolj, 2014, p.83).

In some cultures, greeting is expressed in the form of a hug and a kiss (Krajnc & Gerjolj, 2014, p.83). It is much the same in liturgy. The Christian tradition of kneeling, which is intended either for a more personal prayer or a moment in the liturgy, which reveals intrapsychic communication highlights the sinfulness and smallness of the human person or community before God (Krajnc & Gerjolj, 2014, p.83). Other rites such as songs and prayers which are usually inspired by the Holy Scriptures clarify the deeper meaning of the essential mysteries (McNamara, 2016). Liturgy is a combination of word and music, silence and space, action and gesture which enables the people of God together to draw close to him (Perham, 1998).

Both the teachings of the Vatican Council II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church upheld the role of symbols and signs in liturgical celebrations. While the former states that in the liturgy the sanctification of man is signified by signs

which are perceptible to the senses and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* no. 7), the latter maintains that in keeping with the divine pedagogy of salvation, a sacramental celebration is woven from signs and symbols whose meaning are rooted in the work of creation, and in human culture as specified by the events of the Old Covenant and fully revealed in the person, life and work of Jesus Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 1145).

Tillich (Cited in Krajnc, 2014, p.311) opines that symbols give access to the deepest reality which underlies every other reality especially the reality of the holy. They also demonstrate the way to God who is “the ultimate concern” of every human being and the means of the disclosure of the truth that union with God is the supreme aspiration of human existence. Tillich’s theory of symbols stresses the importance of symbolism in the liturgy and also emphasizes that understanding liturgical symbolism is key to appreciating the wholeness of liturgy in the light of its symbolism (Krajnc, 2014, Pp.311 & 314).

There is evidence that pictures and images also radiate realities that are otherwise inaccessible to us and also communicate a sense of what is vital. They perform a sacramental function of rendering visible invisible values and enable us to partake in communal activities while indoctrinating our attitudes and world views (Goethal, 1994, p.14). Giving his take on the theology of ecclesiastical architecture, the architectural historian Denis McNamara argues that the Church building is a symbol of the mystical body of Christ which reveals the spirit of liturgy (Clayton, 2015). By words, gestures and signs, the past event becomes a present event which Christ makes present to provide Christians the power of his saving action in such a way that they are saved by it (Christ communicates) (Driscoll, 2016).

Studies indicate that: “In ordinary human relationships we communicate with gesture, with touch, with symbolic action. We do this because experience has taught us that actions speak louder than words. The Church understands this and so communicates God through its great sacramental forms – supremely in the water of Baptism and the bread and wine of the Eucharist – but also through the little gestures that speak of friendship, community, prayerfulness and blessing that are part of every service” (Perham, 1998).

Dismissal and Doxology as Essential Components of Communication

The *Ite Missa Est*, which literally means, Go it is the dismissal, given at the end of Mass denotes that the Holy Mass is not a private affair. Those words underscore

the social dimension of the worshipping community which challenges them to influence the world around them through social justice which they have imbibed during worship. They are not expected to miss the mandate of Christ for instance when he said in Luke, *Go and do the same in the case of the good Samaritan* Or how he ended the parable of the seed: *Let the one who has ears to hear me, hear* (Chibuko, 2005, Pp.84 & 85).

The *Ite Missa Est* or words of dismissal have their importance in liturgical parlance which communicates rich meaning. It is the mind of the Church that the words of dismissal and doxology are a continuation of the invitation to carry on the Great Commission (Mat. 28:16-20). It is hoped that the Christian lives the fruits of the Holy Mass in the public space. The Church expects that the word of God that is broken and the bread of life that is shared from the table of the Eucharist have ripple effects in the daily events of the lives of believers.

To concretely sustain this, the Bishops of Africa in the early 1970s established Small Christian Communities (SCC's) as the locus for greater communion, most realistic and contextualized way of a Church that is participatory at the grassroots with the potential to meet regularly for common worship, discernment and action about common problems. Through interpersonal focused group discussions, the SCC's enable the faithful to share more intimately and co-responsibly, the self-sustenance of the community as well its mission to the world thus experiencing support, acceptance and identity (Social Communication Departments AMECEA & IMBISA, 2000, p.32).

The Church expects that her members become ambassadors of God's saving work. This is why both the words of doxology and dismissal are meant to empower the Christian to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13 & John 8:12). As a result of the Eucharist: "True worshipers ought to renounce violence, greed, materialism, indiscipline, corruption, superstition, immorality, dishonesty and other related juvenile delinquencies, to embrace a Spirit-filled life of hard work, faith hope and charity. No wonder then the Church has always given the pride place to the Eucharistic liturgy" (Anagwo, 2014, p.335).

Table: A - Graphic Summary of the Liturgy as Communication

Variables	Examples	Communicative Meaning
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1.	Church as Mystical Communion.	The Church as the bride of Christ and union of Christ and his Church.	It discloses the affinity between the Christ and the baptized Christian and the promise that we are heirs of the kingdom.
2.	Liturgy as Communication.	The entire liturgical celebration from the sign of the cross at the beginning to the blessing and doxology as well as the fruits of the liturgy in the liturgy of life or life of the faithful.	Liturgy is the act of worship in which Christ reveals himself to humanity in a more intimate union which allows for communication between God and humanity, human beings and God and human beings with one another.
3.	Biblical Perspectives of Liturgy.	From the Levitical Priesthood to the Priesthood of the New Covenant enacted by Christ in the Order of Melchizedek, the sacrifice of bulls and rams is replaced by the Sacrifice of Calvary and the institution of the Holy Eucharist becomes the supreme act of worship in the Church.	The Biblical perspectives of the liturgy reveals how God communicated with humanity through the ages, through prophets culminating in the fullness of his self-communication with human beings by the incarnation of Christ “the Perfect Communicator who came and spoke from the press of his own people.”
4.	Liturgy of the Word as Communication.	The word takes flesh and is broken on the table of the Eucharist.	The Ministry of the Word speaks to the heart of the word made flesh which is broken to take away the sins of the world thus signifying an open relationship and communication with God

			who nourishes, empowers, heals and strengthens the Christian.
5.	Communicative aspects of Liturgy of the Eucharist.	The communicant receives the Body of Christ as nourishment for the journey of faith.	Through anamnesis, Christ is ever present among the faithful making the Eucharistic feast a foretaste of the heavenly banquet which is now consumed thus communicating the union between Christ and the faithful while serving as remedy for sin.
6.	Liturgical gestures, images, symbols, architecture and the Communication of Meaning.	Sign of the cross, kiss of peace, kneeling/genuflection, mosaic, music/songs and ecclesiastical architecture among others.	They communicate the deeper reality of things unseen and lift our hearts to a God revealed in Christ who has gone to prepare place for the elect and shall return in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Source: Author/2018.

Table: B - Graphic Summary of the Hierarchy of Liturgical Prayer and Communication Meaning

Variables		Examples	Communicative Meaning
1.	Latria	The Celebration of Holy Mass which fulfils the prayer of thanksgiving, petition, supplication and adoration.	The highest form of communication between God and humanity is the worship or prayer that is due to no other person but exclusively reserved to God who alone is praised, worshipped and adored.
2.	Hyperdulia	Para-liturgical prayers	The veneration and

		and devotions such as May and October Devotions, the Litany of the Saints and other Marian Prayers/Devotions.	honour the Church gives to the Blessed Virgin Mary because of her immaculately conception and perpetual virginity as well as unique role in the mystery of salvation gives her preeminence over the saints. This is because "God prepared before hand to be the worthy mother of his son." The Pilgrim Church has a symbiotic relationship with her because she communicates directly to her son on their behalf and on behalf of the Suffering Church in purgatory.
3.	Dulia	The Veneration of the Saints and other intercessory prayers which invoke the Saints.	This is veneration or homage is opposed in nature and degree from the adoration and worship given to God because it is the communication between human beings and the saints which is lesser than hyperdulia because the Blessed Virgin Mary is ranked higher than the saints. The faithful engage in an interpersonal communication with the saints by way of honouring them and

			seeking their intercession before God.
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Source: Author/2018.

Limitation of the Study

At this point, it is imperative to state the limitations of the study. The paper did not examine all the aspects of liturgy which communicate meaning. While accepting the limitation of this research, it is fundamental for the researcher to stimulate further research on the necessary communications-infrastructure which are required for a lively and captivating liturgy that meets the demands of the 21st century Christian. This may involve considering the use of PowerPoint, audio-visuals, graphics and online platforms such as twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp et al for both propagating and enhancing the faith.

This may also demand interdisciplinary approaches. Perhaps through an interdisciplinary approach which involves the anthropological basis of celebrating the liturgy like being sensitive to the way a community interpret and understand their lives in relation to the supreme being, incarnating oneself to both the internal and external worldviews of people, knowing how they worship God and how they describe their religious practices (Social Communication Departments AMECEA & IMBISA, 1999, p.53) is important. This is capable of making the Mass better understood and appreciated as a continuous communication.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation

1. Thorough Preparation: Planning is crucial to any serious endeavour in life. It is not different with liturgy. Since liturgy is basically a communication between God and humanity, it requires careful preparation and competent execution. This means that it must be celebrated in a manner that it becomes a dialogue which involves the proclamation of the word of God and the appropriate responses

from the people that are rendered more intelligibly and meaningfully. This also entails that the faithful take part knowingly, actively and fruitfully (Social Communication Departments AMECEA & IMBISA, 2000, p.42). It is an obligation on the part of the faithful to attend and prepare well for an integral transformation (Anagwo, 2014, p.339).

2. Active Participation: To counter the position that mainline Churches are dull, uninteresting and incapable of carrying people along at liturgical functions (Udoette, 2012, p.206), the Church ought to look inwards towards not only motivating active participation in liturgy but providing the needed liturgical paraphernalia which makes for good and qualitative worship. Vatican II has persistently called for “full, conscious, and active participation” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no.14) in liturgical celebrations. Liturgical participation is the watchword for realizing this noble project which is integral, full, plenary and total. The participation is expected to engage the whole person with all the faculties mind, heart and soul as well as body with tongue and lips, hands and feet, arms and legs (Anagwo, 2014, p.339). The *Directory for Masses with Children*, states that: “A fully Christian life is inconceivable without participation in the liturgical services in which the faithful, gathered into a single assembly, celebrate the paschal mystery” (Simcoe , no. 8, p.202). This may mean letting people do as much as possible (Pivarnik, 2013, p.156).

3. Effective-Communication: It is necessary to consider employing the most effective forms of communication ranging from intrapersonal, interpersonal, group or Small Christian Community and trade-rural communication as well as other modern strategies of communication which have the potency of making liturgical celebrations lively. From the perspective of the word of God, it would be appropriate to consider what is the text saying, what it is saying to me, what is it saying to us as an assembly of God’s Holy people and the imperative, what must we do?

This is where ministers of the word and sacraments ought to make their homilies or sermons lively by taking advantage of the means of social communication such as, modern means of communication and new media for the liturgical purposes in particular and evangelization in general. The use of microphone and PowerPoint is equally important (Dyikuk, 2011). Since effective communication is a key component in conveying information, developing, sustaining and determining successful relationships (Dajur, 2015, p.135), it is indispensable within the liturgical assembly.

4. Reverential Disposition: Participation in the liturgy requires interior participation and transformation (Anagwo, 2013, p.10). The people of God are expected to allow the role of external gestures to manifest within the liturgical assembly (Anagwo, 2014, p.339). God is communicated through the words of the liturgy which means that people ought to rightly care deeply about the words they use (Perham, 1998). This calls for the requisite reverential disposition from every worshipper.

5. Integration of Liturgical and Practical Life: The people of God ought to integrate liturgical and practical life. For instance, Dominican spirituality advocates for effective integration of liturgical life and practical spirituality. Since the Eucharistic liturgy has the potency to empower the faithful towards integral transformation, Christians are urged to integrate liturgical life with practical life (Anagwo, 2014, p.340).

6. Unity and Synergy: One of the most beautiful features of the liturgy is that it is the privileged place of encounter between the oppressor and the oppressed where the two share from the common table of God's word and Sacraments. It provides the oppressor the rare opportunity to seek redress and reconciliation as the oppressed sees the need to manifest God's forgiveness by extending the olive branch to the oppressor who is aware that he or she has done wrong (Chibuko, 2005, p.24).

Conclusion

This study had provided substantial evidence that the liturgy which is celebrated at the prompting of the Holy Spirit is essentially communication. It has also noted that human beings desire to draw close to God through every act of worship. Due to his graciousness, the human beings approach God in the liturgy with expectations. They often demand a response which turns every act of worship into a relationship of reciprocity namely communication with divine realities or God himself. As such, when we offer our worship to God, whose nature is always ready to accept what we offer, turns it into a gift and makes it a moment of encounter so that in giving we find ourselves receiving (Perham, 1998).

God has always communicated with humanity through the ages. However, for Christians, his incarnation is the ultimate self-revelation and communication which often evokes a response from the Church as a whole and each individual through liturgical worship with its effects in the life of the believer. As such, in the new covenant, Christ manifests and communicates his work of salvation

through the liturgy of the Church until he returns in glory (Driscoll, 2016). This is why some scholars insist that the “liturgy has huge potential to communicate more of God than anything else within the Church’s life” (Perham, 1998).

We have seen that the world in which the Christian lives falls within the scope of liturgical celebrations and that liturgy is the catalyst and motivating force which determines the complete way of life of the Christian wherever he finds himself (Chibuko, 2005, p.20). It is safe then to conclude that the liturgy is primarily and essentially a triple communication between God and humanity, human beings and God and human beings with one another which calls for deeper research, reflection and appraisal.

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