

# Easter Triduum and its Cultural Enrichment from Igbo-Nigerian Context: Matters Arising

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the traditional ways for the enrichment of the Easter Triduum. Locating its significance in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the Church desires that every effort should be made, so that the celebration will find its rightful place in the lives of the faithful. What beholds the worshipping communities today in the Roman Catholic Rite for Sacred Triduum is generalized into one for all. This is hardly an ideal with the different cultures of the world. Using descriptive and analytical methods, it builds from the theoretical perspectives from the theology of the Second Vatican Council on the renewal of liturgy and integral participation, and which itself builds on long standing tradition, evidenced in the documents especially the ancient authors consulted. The mantra of this paper is that the local Churches should rise to the challenge of using these means of salvation to build up the Body of Christ. The inclusion of cultural elements of Igbo-Nigerian context, for instance, has possibilities to elicit the active participation of the faithful in this regard.

**Keywords:** Easter, *Triduum*, Paschal Mystery, Cultural Enrichment

## **1. Introduction**

This article studies the cultural enrichment of Easter *Triduum* in an effort to ascertain its liturgical function and theological significance. Yearly, Christian worshippers participate in this annual event, with minimal fruits in the lifestyles of some members, even when their cultural background should have facilitated their integral participation. The essay originates from the matters arising *via* the 'open cheque' for inculturation and contextualization, given by the universal Church, through the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, though one must follow the principles and prescriptions enunciated in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* nos. 37-40 (For a detailed study, see Anagwo 2014, pp.276-299). It is my conviction that the significance of the Easter *Triduum* cannot be overemphasized. This is because it is anchored on the Paschal Mystery of Christ. In his book, *The Church at Prayer Volume IV*, Aime G.

Martimort notes that: “The Easter *Triduum* had its roots in the liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem. It was to be expected that, living as they did in the very place of the passion, people there would want to relive each event of the Gospel at the time and on the spot where it had occurred” (1985, p.47). This confirmed the experience of the Jerusalem Church recounted by Egeria, whose travels took her there in 381-384 (Quoted by Egeria 1971, pp.170-171).

However, this practice did not replace the sacramental celebration that characterized the passion-resurrection celebrations during the holy night as attested by the *Catecheses* of Cyril and the *Mystagogical Catecheses* from Jerusalem. Additionally, we should not relegate to the background the influence of the anti-Arian reaction on the origin of the liturgical celebration of the Easter *Triduum*, “for that reaction intensified the devotion of the faithful to the person of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary” (Martimort, 1985, p. 47). Down the centuries, that faith-experience was sustained until recent times and expanded for in-depth catechesis. Originally, Sacred *Triduum* was celebrated in the course of a single Easter vigil. Later, it was broken down into the components of how it is celebrated today. Nonetheless, the Paschal *Triduum* as recently restored, resembles closely the shape and spirit of the three-day *Pasch* known in the early Church. Very significantly, Easter season is ushered in with the Easter *Triduum* which begins from the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper and ends with the Easter Sunday Vespers (Quoted by Lang, 1989 p.566). Admittedly, the use of the cultural values and the genius of the people, as recommended by the Second Vatican Council and re-echoed by the *New General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, could foster evangelization. When the Gospel is preached in a new land, it should not exterminate already existing values of people that are naturally good, just, enduring or beautiful. This paper focuses on the cultural enrichment of the major issues arising from the Sacred *Triduum*, using the Igbo people of the south-eastern Nigeria as the stepping stone of our cultural study. As a prelude, the background knowledge of the Paschal Mystery as the basis of the Sacred *Triduum* is very important.

## **2. Paschal Mystery as the Basis of the Easter *Triduum***

It is certainly right to agree with Chibuko that the Paschal Mystery forms the central point of the Christian mystery and faith. Every Christian theology or praxis has its foundation in the paschal mystery of Christ which embraces His passion, death and resurrection (2001, p.7). Evidently, it not only forms the foundation of the faith of the Church, but also remains the source from which the Church draws its vitality. The Church is built, sustained, nourished and survives on this unique mystery of Christ.

Essentially, Paschal Mystery is the whole experience of Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is the mystery of the incarnation and redemption. It refers to the whole

drama of humanity's salvation which embraces the history of the suffering, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ into glory. It is the continuation in time of the mystery of salvation brought about by God throughout His encounter with humanity. The theology of Easter *Triduum* can only be located with the Paschal Mystery for as Paul said, if Christ died and did not rise, our faith would have been futile, and our situation hopeless (cf. 1 Cor 15:14-15).

Through the liturgical celebrations, the Church constantly relives this mystery. Down the ages, she makes a memorial, a commemoration, a re-enactment, an '*anamnesis*' of this mystery particularly in the sacraments, and her other liturgical celebrations. In the words of Dom Odo Casel the "Paschal Mystery is experienced through the liturgy in which Christ Himself is present and active through the Church and the Church acts with Him" (Quoted by Puthiadem, 2002, p. 21). Christian worship has its full goal attained in the Eucharist because the "fullness of Glory" is found in Christ's self-sacrifice. Everything stems from it. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium* says that the Eucharist is the source and summit of all Christian life (SC 10). Every other sacrament, sacramental and ministry in the Church is geared towards it. In fact, the Holy Mass is that unbloody re-enactment of the paschal event. Christian worship at the sacred *Triduum* is a miniature of the liturgical year that aims at that, an essential which best illuminates and celebrates this feast.

The importance of the Paschal Mystery to the Sacred *Triduum* towards its evolution and sustenance is anchored on Easter. Having a special dignity and solemnity, Paschal *Triduum* inaugurates the Easter celebration as the Feast of feasts, the Solemnity of solemnities, the Festivity of all festivities "*Festivitatatum festivitatatis.*" Since the Easter *Triduum* are celebrations with Christ directed to God, it is most appropriate to celebrate them with the Paschal Mystery of Christ which are found in the New Testament. Jesus Christ is at the centre of every Easter *Triduum* as every aspect takes its meaning from that which alone gives meaning to all of these things, namely, the Paschal Mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ. And this is the basis of any theology of Christian worship. It is therefore in the Paschal Mystery that Christian worship in the Easter *Triduum* has its roots.

### **3. The Spirit of the Sacred *Triduum***

In his oft-quoted book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) rightly emphasizes that 'the art of celebrating the liturgy properly' (*ars celebrandi*) is the key to foster active participation (*participatio actuosa*) of the People of God in divine worship (2000, p.171). Indeed, the art of proper celebration of the Sacred *Triduum* is guided by the appropriate spirit of the paschal days. It was strongly shaped by the Johannine Passion narrative which was part of the Good Friday liturgy of the Word. John presents Christ as the divine *Logos* who freely gives His life and was glorified; as

the one who is enthroned on the cross, there drawing strength from His pierced side (John 18 and 19). The cross of Christ's kingly triumph is thus for John, as it was for the early Church's paschal celebration, one moment of dying-unto-rising, sorrow-unto-joy, death-unto-life, truly the *beata passio*.

Historically, by at least the fourth century, the meaning of Pasch as the Lord's passion was extended and enriched by the concept of passage, which means a passing over from death to life. Jesus, having been in the bonds of death, made His passage to resurrection glory on the third day. Biblical passages provide a good foundation to enhance the view of Pasch as passage: God's chosen people of old, thanks to the blood of a sacrificed lamb, were passed over by the angel of death and then passed through the sea on their journey to freedom; the new Israel, marked by the blood of Christ, the true paschal Lamb, is spared from the darkness of sin and led to light and life through the waters of baptism.

The 1969 calendar reform restores the basic shape of the Easter *Triduum* today. Nonetheless, changes in rite are easier to effect than changes in a fundamental understanding of that rite. An outstanding pastoral challenge is now to help the worshippers appropriate and assimilate the spirit of the renewed Sacred *Triduum*. It is a case of ritual propriety and respect for what Easter *Triduum* ought to be known for. The Council Fathers rightly said: "Pastors of souls must, therefore, realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is realized than the laws governing valid and lawful celebration. It is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by it" (SC 11). This is the primary task of this paper, namely, how the enrichment of the rite could be a valuable asset to the celebration of the Sacred *Triduum*. Let us briefly discuss the rites of each day within the context of their cultural enrichment.

#### 4. Holy Thursday Evening Mass

Liturgically, Holy Thursday can be categorized into two different periods: Before the hour of Vespers it is the final day of Lent, and the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper opens the Easter *Triduum* (See Chibuko, 2015, p.7). Historically, the evening Mass in *Coena Domini* is affirmed to be in existence in Jerusalem at the time of Egeria (Egeria, 1980, 110-113). The greatest mysteries of our redemption, the death and resurrection of God for the sake of humankind are celebrated yearly by the Church beginning with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. In this Mass, the Church recalls the Last Supper in which our Lord Jesus on the night He was betrayed, loving unto the end His own who were in the world, offered to the Father His Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine, gave them to the apostles as the spiritual nourishment and commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to perpetuate this offering: "*Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*" (Do this in memory of Me) [Luke 22:9].

The Church by the celebration of this mystery through liturgical signs and sacramentals is united to Christ in intimate communion. The ceremonies of the evening Mass of Holy Thursday celebrate three significant gifts which Jesus Christ bequeathed to His beloved bride the Church, namely: the institution of the ministerial priesthood, the institution of the Eucharist, and the commemoration of the command of brotherly love, ably demonstrated through the washing of the feet (For a detailed study, see Anagwo, December 2016, pp.18-35).

The celebration consists of Christ's twofold giving, namely: giving of Himself to His enemies to die on the cross for the sake of the world. He is the paschal victim, whose blood saves His people. And also, giving of Himself to His friends, disciples and to His Church, that is, to us in the sacrament of His Body and Blood. This is the institution of the Eucharist. The whole purpose of today's liturgy is to enable the faithful make this self-giving the real motivation for their lives. The ceremony of this evening comprises the following: liturgy of the Word (the liturgy of the Word is dramatized by the washing of feet); the liturgy of the Eucharist (including the transfer of the Holy Eucharist to the Altar of Repose) and finally the adoration. Our point of interest here is the adoration. The faithful are encouraged to continue the adoration before the Blessed Sacrament till midnight and no further adoration is ecclesiastically permitted after this hour. In this adoration at the Altar of Repose, the action of giving thanks, as the hallmark of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, is continued as already indicated above.

***Enrichment of the Adoration:*** A significant event which follows up the communion is the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose for adoration. As one of the significant events of the day, this adoration is begging for attention to strategize how the operation of service is conducted to sustain active, conscious and full participation. This is because people may be naturally tired after the day's work and the ceremonies of the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper. Liturgical *cum* pastoral approaches must evolve means to bring the best from the faithful. Remote and proximate preparation, as *conditio-sine-qua-non* for any fruitful celebration should take place here.

*Ab initio*, it must be sounded loud and clear to the faithful that the adoration is part and parcel of the evening's celebration. Experience has shown that unless proper catechesis is done, many leave the Church thinking that the adoration is not important, may be only reserved for members of Eucharistic Adoration. Inasmuch as it must not be over-bloated, the rich benefits of having quality time to stay with the Lord must be catechized to the people, at least, before that day. Preferably during the announcements on Palm Sunday, it can take note of appropriate disposition as well as other nitty gritty for an effective spirituality

of the *Triduum* celebration. Of course, the Altar of Repose could be sited in a garden-like design with a shade, yet the serenity and decorum where the Lord is kept must be observed, the lighted candle, tabernacle, communion in the ciboria (not in monstrance) etc., must be well prepared.

Members of the Parish choir or Perpetual Adoration group can assist especially to provide songs at the appropriate time. After all, an ancient maxim has it “*Qui bene cantat, bis orat*” (He who sings well, prays twice). *Ndigbo* have a great sense of music, song and dance. Music is an integral cultural heritage of the Igbo. According to Aaron Chisha, in African situation, it would be very rare to find a celebration worthy of the name without dance in one or another form (Chisha, 1990, p.199). Praising God through music, song and dance is part and parcel of Igbo traditional worship. This accounts why many festivals, rituals and celebrations like New Yam Festival, New Moon, Child Naming and Child Outings are characterized with songs and dance. However, adequate provision must be made too for silent adoration with the Lord. Like Elijah who discovered that the Lord speaks in still moments and not in a noisy environment (cf. 1 Kgs 19:9-13). There must be moments of silence. God harkens to the prayer that comes from a devoted and attentive heart (cf. 1 Kgs 18:20-40). Silence which is an acceptable practice in the presence of God for effective Eucharistic Adoration is substantially lacking in our world today. Some adorers talk, sing, gesticulate all through. In the silence of our hearts, God responds to our communion with him. So this aspect must be observed, so that the dialogue with the Divine will be holistic.

Here, the writer advocates what goes beyond the idea of allotting different societies with limited time (one hour) for adoration. Borrowing from the Igbo culture which values elaborateness and verbosity, we are advocating here an elongated adoration with no limited time or categorisation for the people. Let them all be there without time constraints. They should be instructed to come and stay with the Lord. Provision should be made too for reading and sharing the Word of God. Such passages will include the passion and death of Christ especially where He rebuked the apostles and challenged them to keep awake with Him (cf. Matt 26:36-75) or as Chibuko suggests, a reflective reading of some parts of John 13-17 (Chibuko. *Easter Triduum: Ceremonies, Spirituality and Inculturation* 28). Alternatively, the reading of Psalms of Lament (13, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 85, 88, 90) which evoke the innocence of the suffering servant, in the spirit of *itu ogu* and *igu ofo* (expression of innocence and evocation of vindication) of Igbo cultural value and genius could be used.

Before then, recitation of the Rosary could be used to start the adoration especially as the people are still very active with mind, body and soul. It will easily attune them to recite and meditate on the mysteries of the Christian faith,

namely, joyful, sorrowful, luminous and glorious mysteries. As it is traditionally observed, this will last till 12 midnight. Those who can return to their houses will disperse, while others are encouraged to continue to keep vigil with Christ until dawn. The rich benefits of this form of perpetual adoration could be explained to them.

### 5. The Liturgy of Good Friday

The liturgy of the day is couched on the import of the day, Good Friday, that eventful day when the whole creation experiences a turning point in its history. The Holy Mother Church, in a special way, calls to mind the greatest moment of redemption. She bitterly but tenderly and affectionately mourns the death of her Lord and Master. He dies as one so as to rise as/for many, for “unless a grain of seed falls down and dies, it will not bear fruit” (John 12:24). The liturgical ceremony is divided into three parts, namely: the liturgy of the Word, veneration of the Cross and Holy Communion. Good Friday, the Day Christ died has been a day of mourning inspired by compassion (grieving fast). It recalls the words of Jesus that the apostles will fast because the bridegroom was taken away from them (cf. Matt 9:15; Mark 2:20; Luke 5:34-35).

This is the background that informed the early Christians to fast every Friday and Saturday as well as the practice seen in our time especially the abstinence from meat on Fridays in most Churches of the West (Quoted by Nwabekee, 1995, p.111). Thus, Good Friday is a day of fasting and abstinence. Notably, these developments were the aftermath of the 1955 Liturgical Reform of Pope Pius XII; otherwise, there would have been what is Christened “Mass of the Pre-Sanctified” as used to be the case in the Middle Ages. But following the Reform of 1955, the Holy Office renamed it the “Friday of the Passion and Death of the Lord”. This is dramatized in the *Via Crucis* (Stations of the Cross) which is an issue to elaborate on for possible enrichment to appreciate the mystery of the death of Christ on the cross.

*Enrichment with Solemn Via Crucis:* *Via Crucis* is an important aspect of the liturgy of Good Friday which usually takes place by 3.00pm but not later than 6.00pm. For Nwabekee “The Missal of 1970 followed the *Ordo* of 1955 but for prescribing that the Good Friday should be celebrated after 3pm but not later than 6pm as against the Mid Ages practice of anticipating it, by pushing it to the morning hours even though the law says it should not be celebrated before the office of *Noon*” (1995, p.112).

As it (*Via Crucis*) initiates the liturgy of the day, the cultural underpinning of *Ndigbo* could be explored to elicit active, full and conscious participation. *Ndigbo* are vibrant and active people. Igbo culture upholds liveliness as a way of life which must permeate the secular and religious life of the people. In this way,

the *Via Crucis* could be solemnly dramatized along the village paths and in urban areas. As already done in some parishes/dioceses of Eastern Nigeria and beyond today, it can be carried along the major streets within each parish/diocese to elicit this full participation in the liturgy.

During the Stations, it could be dramatized at each station by the Parish Drama Group. However, efforts should be made not to promote the trend of sadism like flogging the person performing the role of Christ mercilessly as well as the use of metal nails to crucify him. Alternatively, as many people as possible could be involved to participate. The biblical passages supporting each station may be read by one person at each station. The leader will introduce each station, another person (second voice) will introduce the thoughts of our Lord while the priest will say the prayer to end each Station.

The selected songs/hymns should have bearing with the Stations of the Cross. This day, it must not be tied to those stereotyped hymns that have one syllabic rhythm. Charismatic devotional hymns that are *ad rem* could be selected. Functional microphones should be provided, so that everybody could hear distinctly what is proclaimed. Efforts should not be spared in giving the best to the acoustics as it stands to promote active participation if they hear the wordings well. More so, those who could not join (the housebound, the sick and aged in particular) may hear the echo or listen while in their homes. Very significantly, when this eventful liturgy is depicted and dramatized well, many are easily touched to retrace their steps towards conversion. The climax of the Stations of the Cross, namely, on the death of Christ, must come out with a distinct message. The moment of Jesus' death on the cross could be announced with one *thunder* /gunshot in the sky. A moment of silence will follow suit before an appropriate hymn to demonstrate or portray Christ's death on the cross.

## **6. The Liturgy of Easter Vigil**

Easter vigil is the summit of the Easter *Triduum*. It is not just a mere annual ritual or a mere liturgical routine. It celebrates the mystery of salvation that calls to mind the passing of Christ from death to life again; from sin to righteousness in Christ. As the true celebration of Easter, in accord with ancient tradition, this night is one of vigil for the Lord (cf. Exod 12:42). The Gospel of Luke (12:33) is a reminder to the faithful to have their lamps burning ready, to be like men/women awaiting for their master's return, so that when he arrives he will find them awake and will eat with them at his table. This night, the Church waits at the Lord's tomb, meditating on His suffering and death. According to St. Augustine, the vigil which commemorates that holy night, when the Lord rose from the dead to life, is regarded as the "Mother of all holy vigils" (Augustine, *Sermon*, 219 PL 38, 1088). For in this night the Church keeps vigil,

waiting for the resurrection of the Lord and celebrates the sacraments of Christian initiation.

The celebration of the Easter Vigil consists of four distinctive stages, namely: the solemn beginning of the vigil which is the service of light, the liturgy of the Word, the liturgy of Baptism, the liturgy of the Eucharist. Under the service of light, we have the blessing of the fire, lighting of the paschal candle, procession and the *Exsultet*. Our interest however is more on the Paschal Candle. Paschal candle is the symbol of the risen Christ. The idea of symbolising the Resurrection with lighted lamps appears to have come from the Easter event in Jerusalem. The most favoured explanation today is that the candle comes from the ancient practice of lightening and blessing a lamp or lamps. Among the Jews "lightening of lamps" on the eve of the Sabbath is an initiation of the Sabbath celebration. However, it was Pope Pius XII who in 1955, introduced the idea of having the candle lighted and blessed at the beginning of the service and then to have it lead the procession. Formerly, this rite took place in the Church and candle was usually not lighted until the *Exsultet* has been proclaimed halfway. The Paschal candle prepared for effective symbolism must be made of wax and never be artificial and be sufficiently of large size, so that it may evoke the truth that Christ is the light of the world.

***Enrichment of the Paschal Candle:*** To demonstrate the pre-eminence of the Paschal Candle, it can be decorated with tender palm leaves (*Omu*). "*Omu*" as one of the most used symbols among Ndigbo is highly multi-referential. The context of its usage determines its symbolism. For instance, during moments of crisis and wars, it could be used as warning and litigation in native court. It can also represent holiness and other auxiliary functions. As a symbol used in war, it is placed across a path where traps are set in the bush. Priests or *dibias* hold *omu* between their lips during ceremonies when they are carrying out a sacred function. As such, people cannot talk to them.

Symbolically, it is also tied across the door of a sick person to indicate seclusion. It deters people from transgressing a farmland wherever it is tied. Placing *omu* on any object indicates that the object is looked upon by the spirits, and the living and the dead are prohibited to touch it. It is also used as a symbol of arbitration and litigation. As a symbol of war, *omu* can be sent to any group of people or town. Above all, *omu* is a symbol of honour. Any special guest is received by *Ndigbo* with palm fronds on both sides of the road through which the visitor passes to herald this heroic welcome. For Jon Ofoegbu Ukaegbu: "Till today in Igboland, it is still the accepted way of welcoming a hero" (1991, p.48).

Based on this last symbolism, the paper advocates the use of palm fronds on the Paschal Candle. It can be beautifully decorated as usually done on the lectern

(where the Word is broken) on festive occasions like Solemnity of Christ the King, Palm Sunday, etc. It presupposes that the basic preparation as required by the liturgy of the day are followed like adequate size for the Paschal Candle to be visible for everybody, the quality which should be a durable one, to mention but a few.

## 7. The Liturgy of Easter Sunday

Easter as the greatest feast of the Church marks the celebration of the Risen Christ. Easter Sunday is rightly designated as the Feast of feasts, the Solemnity of solemnities and the Great Sunday because the Christian year reaches its apex in the celebration of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Incarnate Word. The victory of Christ over death, hell and sin is celebrated as our Easter joy. In the Pauline language, we rhetorically say: "Death is swallowed up, death where is thy sting? Where is thy victory?" (1 Cor 15:15).

Since the celebration of other Sundays grows from this day, they are called 'small Easter' or 'little Easter'; the best must accompany the ceremony. The liturgy follows the usual pattern for Eucharistic celebration, namely, the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist, except of course, a few emphases. For instance, apart from the sprinkling of water to replace the penitential rite, after the second reading, there is the sequence. The homily is followed by the renewal of baptismal vows. There is no creed as it is imbedded in the baptismal vows already.

*Enrichment of the Renewal of Baptismal Vows:* Renunciation and Profession of faith remain an integral part of Easter Sunday especially couched under the renewal of baptismal promises. Thus, the members of the Church are renewed, rejuvenated, made holy and bonded to Christ who has risen to live forever. Following the tradition of the Church, the rite simply questions the renunciation of Satan and all his antics. And the people will respond accordingly 'I do'. After that follows the profession of faith. They are appropriately answered too 'I do'. But more still could be done to enrich the rite. Basically, the ceremonies should not be started until the people have lighted their candles and could be encouraged to raise their candles at each point of response to symbolically demonstrate their affirmation of whatever they say.

Additionally, this paper suggests that in the proclamation of faith and renunciation of the devil, these terms of the renunciation of allegiance to include the local deities, unchristian festivals, fetish spirits, for instance within some areas in Igbo culture, I renounce *Ogwugwu Eze Kwuabo, Ogwugwu akpu, Edo, Agbo Edo, Ulasi, Udo, Agwu, Idemili, Ele, Ezumezu, Ukwu Enwe Uke Oba, Asala, Ojukwu*, to mention but a few (Alutu, 1986, p.263-292). They should also be asked to renounce unchristian festivals like *Oghulu, Igu aro, Ikwu aro, Afia olu*,

*Okuka, Ikpo Ikpukpo, Ota*, etc (Alutu, 1986, p.293-306). As for the profession of faith, it should be added 'No matter the difficulties I go through in live, do I believe that God still loves me'. This profession will check the trend among many Christians who go about searching for a 'crossless' Christ in the face of the vicissitudes of life.

## **8. Implications for Liturgical Celebrations Today and Matters Arising**

The issues raised in this paper are many and varied. Suffice it to mention some implications for contemporary resonance as matters arising on the way forward in the rituals and rites of the Easter *Triduum*. There should be an adequate and up-to-date knowledge of the nature and goal of the Paschal *Triduum*. Full import of the spirituality of the ceremonies of the Sacred *Triduum* should be enunciated to the faithful. Not only becoming conversant with the liturgical laws out of 'rubrical exactitude' but in love and acknowledgement for valid and lawful celebration, the faithful should be made to be fully involved, being aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite and being enriched by it. It should be emphasised that they are ways of doing the will of God, to abide with the liturgical laws prayerfully, devotedly and spiritually. Proper liturgical catechesis before, during and after the celebration will aid in this regard.

A good commentator can be of an assistance to achieve this noble objective. He/she must be adequately trained, formed and informed to guide the worshipping community. Jovian P. Lang corroborates on this role when he said:

A cleric or lay person in this role exercises a genuine liturgical function and should be properly trained to perform the duty correctly, orderly, and in the spirit of the liturgy. Standing in a suitable place before the people, not at the pulpit (ambo or lectern), the commentator with remarks carefully prepared, in a clear, dignified and succinct manner, delivers explanations and directives to the people, thus introducing the celebration and helping the people to understand it better (1989, p.120).

Fittingly, Lang further notes that the role of the liturgical commentator is encouraged as: "The commentator is a person who is skilled at directing others and has a talent for communication of any kind, one who has good idea of the liturgy and an ability to remain in the background while 'stage managing' " (1989, p.121). Indeed, this is of great essence in facilitating the restoration of the Easter *Triduum* and its cultural enrichment. Another salient matter to consider is that the liturgical commentator should properly explain the origin and meaning, historical, cultural, theological and liturgical significance of the Sacred *Triduum*. By so doing, the entire liturgical assembly will be drawn into a fuller understanding of the sacred action and its parts, and this will surely help

the people to participate in the Easter liturgy meaningfully, actively and enthusiastically. Surely some people will not appreciate this practice because they feel that they already know it. The liturgical commentator or his delegate should be polite in passing this message across to the faithful, since the mode and way of transmitting a message is as important as its content. In this way, he/she will elicit the need for active participation of the assembly which is very much encouraged by the theology of the Second Vatican Council.

It cannot be gainsaid that to have a greater impact, the language should be of communicative level for everybody, even the gestures, postures, proverbs, idioms, etc should not be taken for granted. Banal, unfamiliar and informal expressions should be avoided. Thus, flamboyant display of oratory and profane expressions should be discarded. Lifting the congregation's hearts and minds should be the watchword. This will ensure that the active, full and conscious participation advocated by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council are achieved. As such, deep impact will be on the people to go out and live out the Gospel values celebrated during the Easter *Triduum* as witnesses to the Risen Lord.

To have an effective and efficient Easter liturgy, one cannot overlook the liturgical functionaries (altar boys/girls, choir, readers, those whose feet are to be washed, etc). They must be duly prepared. Mastery of the text is very important for those concerned. Appropriate decorum should accompany the stages of the celebration. Liturgical celebration that is worthy of its name abhors haphazard affairs, makeshift or rescue operation. The functionaries must be trained to meet the challenges of their duties. Chibuko rightly affirms that: "Easter *Triduum* calls for perfection in all spheres of its celebration. It discourages improvisation. Only the best is good enough for the celebrations as Christ did" (2015, p.140). Adequate preparation, both proximate and remote, will go a long way to add beauty, elegance and solemnity to the sacred worship during Easter *Triduum*. In 2013, Pope Francis wrote a brilliant Apostolic Exhortation, 'The Joy of the Gospel', *Evangelii Gaudium*. The work corroborates that the Church must rediscover the richness and beauty of Christ and His Gospel which is beautiful in the liturgy. He remarks: "Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving" (no.24). For instance, morning prayers and office of the readings could be arranged in the morning on the days of the *Triduum* to attune the people for the day's celebration. In that light, the Sacrament of reconciliation could also be arranged after each day to reconcile fallen and casual Christians to the fold.

Very significantly, the paper provisionally recommends special dressing for Easter Sunday. As a day greatly marked by festive mood, it can be externally and symbolically celebrated with the liturgical colour of the day. Just like when people gather for traditional worship, they are easily spotted out from far with what they wear. The paper suggests too that not only the major (ordained ministers/celebrants) and minor ministers (non-ordained ministers/acolytes, altar servers, etc) be dressed in white vestments, others can do the same. Since white is the colour of the resurrection. It could be encouraged on a day like this, so that this message of the resurrection could adequately be expressed by the Church. This way of life is already anticipated on the day of Baptism since the candidates use white clothing. This corroborates the treatise of St. Ambrose on instructions concerning the ceremonies after Baptism: "After this, white robes were given to you as a sign that you were putting off the covering of sin, and putting on the chaste veil of innocence, of which the prophet said: 'sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow' (*The Divine Office*, 1974, 315). He further states: "But when Christ sees His Church clothed in white-for whom He Himself, as you find in the book of the prophet Zachariah, had put on filthy garments or sees the soul pure and washed in the laver of regeneration, He says: 'Behold you are beautiful, my love, behold you are beautiful, your eyes are like a dove's,' in the likeness of which the Holy Spirit descended from heaven" (*The Divine Office*, 1974, 315-316). Though symbolically and metaphorically used above, the Easter liturgy presupposes an outstanding outfit to demonstrate what we celebrate. Nevertheless, the writer is not advocating for ostentatious manifestation of the wear, but the inner symbolism of the festive nature of the day. At least, let it be the only day, everybody in the Church wears his/her best clothing especially to mark this Solemnity of all solemnities.

## 9. Conclusion

This paper has examined some major cultural issues generating practical proposals for the enrichment of the Easter *Triduum*. Flowing from its central place in the Paschal Mystery, the Church desires that every effort should be made, so that the celebration will find its rightful place in the lives of the faithful. The present status of the Roman Catholic Rite for Sacred *Triduum* which is eminently generalized into one for all affairs is hardly an ideal and acceptable by all in the various diversities of cultures. This calls for more dynamic, lively and culturally enriched rites which can stand at ease before the searchlight of the Christian message. Those who have the tendency to resist change need to discover that their opinion is obsolete, untenable and anachronistic. It is therefore the contention of this paper that the local Churches should rise to the challenge of using these means of salvation to build up the Body of Christ. The rich cultural values and genius of Igbo-Nigerian context, for instance, have possibilities to elicit and enhance active, conscious and plenary participation. In

this way, the liturgical spirituality and inculturation would be sustained and elaborated for the entire worshipping community. It affirms the slogan: *lex credendi, lex celebrandi, lex vivendi* (literally meaning, the law of what the Church believes, is the law of what she prays for and is the law of how she lives out). This means “what is worth believing is worth celebrating and is worth doing.” This is by meditating, celebrating and living out the Church's teachings contained in the Easter *Triduum*, which are guaranteed on orthodoxy and purity of devotion, harmony and homogeneity, and above all, unity in diversity.

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