

PENTECOSTAL STYLE OF WORSHIP AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CATHOLIC LITURGY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Over the past forty years, Nigeria has witnessed a rapid rise in Pentecostalism, characterised by vibrant worship practices, prosperity theology, and an emphasis on spiritual gifts, which have increasingly merged with Roman Catholic liturgy, thereby challenging the traditional continuity of ritual norms and theological priorities in Catholic worship. While a wealth of research exists on the growth of Pentecostalism within African Christianity, the specific impacts on Catholic liturgical practices remain largely overlooked, especially regarding the incorporation of charismatic elements within the Eucharistic celebration in Nigeria. This article employs a qualitative approach, integrating primary liturgical texts, pastoral directives, and secondary literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The main argument posits that the charismatic worship styles of Pentecostalism – such as clapping, impromptu prayers, prophetic messages, and personal testimonies – have been selectively integrated into Catholic liturgy, resulting in a negotiated hybrid form that enhances congregational involvement but raises questions about doctrinal and ritual consistency. The findings reveal significant transformations, including the addition of praise-and-worship music before and during Mass, the appointment of lay charismatic prayer groups to lead intercessions, and the use of indigenous percussion instruments in rituals, which are linked to increased lay participation but also create liturgical inconsistencies. By thoroughly cataloguing these liturgical changes, the research enriches liturgical theology, contributes to understanding the processes of inculturation and interdenominational interactions, and provides insights into the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement in Nigeria. It is recommended that Catholic ecclesiastical authorities establish clear guidelines for integrating charismatic elements into the liturgy and provide adequate training in liturgical theology.

Keywords: Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Catholic Liturgy, Pentecostal Worship, Congregational Participation, Inter-denominational Influence.

1. Introduction

The Pentecostal approach to worship and its impact on Catholic liturgy is quite prevalent in Nigeria. This trend has, for a significant period, overtaken traditional Catholic worship practices. Moreover, this Pentecostal influence on Catholic liturgy has affected not just the priests but also the laypersons during liturgical services. Pentecostals prioritize liberating worship from rigidity and structure, which can occasionally result in a lack of planning. Consequently, their style of worship embodies a casual formality, as they aim to steer clear of “a ritual of structured forms and meaningless phrases.” For Pentecostals, worship holds great importance and profoundly impacts their daily lives. Truly, worship, for Pentecostals, is an experience of God that occurs continuously throughout the day and week.¹ The Catholic liturgy follows a formal manner of worship, rooted in the traditions of Hebrew synagogue worship (Acts 2:42). As a result, numerous Catholics in Nigeria have likened the “Pentecostalized Liturgy” to the Catholic Eucharistic celebration. In light of this, many young Catholics in Nigeria favour the joyful spirit characteristic of charismatic liturgy, while the liturgy itself is straightforward, welcoming, and expressive. Therefore, this article will explore the topic to highlight several reasons why Pentecostal liturgy has a greater influence on Catholic liturgy, especially within the Catholic Church in Nigeria.

2. Pentecostalism and Its Basic Characteristics

With its roots in Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, Pentecostalism is often regarded as the “third force” within Christianity. This movement asserts its ability to replicate the original Pentecost that marked the beginning of Christianity. The doctrinal basis of Pentecostalism can be traced to the

¹ Hilary C. Achunike, *Pentecostalism and Catholic Liturgy*. In L. E. Ijezie, S. A. Asobie, & G. I. Onah (Eds.), *Theology and Liturgy in the Life of the Church* (Port Harcourt: CATHAN, 2012), 106.

establishment of four theological concepts in the latter half of the nineteenth century: salvation (sanctification), healing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the second coming of Christ.² Followers of this movement believe that it is their moral obligation to evangelize and prepare the world for the Second Coming. Pentecostalism upholds the traditional tenets of its Protestant predecessors, specifically *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, and *sola gratia*, meaning that faith alone is sufficient for justification and salvation, opposed to works, and that grace is essential, with Scripture being the definitive source of Christian truth. Therefore, while Pentecostalism recognizes Scripture, there are instances where an individual's prophetic insight is granted greater authority.³

Due to its doctrine, Pentecostalism fosters a distinct spirituality. This spirituality highlights the significance of the Holy Spirit's presence in a person's life. Consequently, Pentecostal theology naturally leads to a spirituality that is focused on confronting and eradicating perceived negative or evil influences believed to be responsible for various ailments, personal failures, and challenges.⁴ Thus, when considering all these aspects collectively, Pentecostal spirituality is characterized more as an expressive, outward-focused spirituality rather than a meditative, inward-focused spirituality, as noted by Emeka Nwosuh.⁵

3. Principles of Pentecostalism and Catholic Liturgy

3.1 Principles of Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism, as previously mentioned, refers to particular aspects of Christian life that are often linked to the experience of the Holy Spirit's power, which was notably displayed during the feast of Pentecost in the Bible, along with the gifts of the Spirit given by Christ.⁶ From the studies of the central idea, we can deduce and enumerate the principles that constitute Pentecostalism, which include: i) a focus on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit; ii) the expression of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; iii) the significance of speaking in tongues (glossolalia as understood theologically); iv) Divine Healing and Miracles; v) Prosperity Theology and Holistic Salvation; vi) Engaging and Participatory Worship; vii) Evangelism and Practical Outreach; viii) Eschatological Hope;⁷ ix) vibrant, Spirit-led preaching of the Word of God, emphasizing the "charismatic application of scripture in everyday life;"⁸ x) verbal acceptance of salvation; xi) adherence to *sola fidei*, *sola scriptura*, and *sola gratia*, as upheld in Protestantism.

3.2 Principles of Catholic Liturgy

The term "liturgy" within the Catholic Church signifies the communal and public worship that allows the faithful to engage in the mystery of Christ's saving action. The liturgy represents the pinnacle towards which all activities of the Catholic Church are aimed, and it is also the source from which all

² Emmanuel Chinedu Anagwo, "Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Liturgy: The Nigerian Experience." *The Catholic Church in the Face of Pentecostalism*, edited by Timothy Barga, Jos Studies, vol. 22 (June 2014), 3.

³ Joseph Kenny, "Authority in Pentecostalism: Comparative Theological Perspectives," in Anthony Akinwale and Joseph Kenny(eds.), *Tradition and Compromises: Essays on the Challenge of Pentecostalism* (Lagos: Dominican Publications, 2004), 3.

⁴ Emeka Nwosuh, "Pentecostalism: The New Face of a Christian Spirituality," in Anthony Akinwale and Joseph Kenny(eds.), *Tradition and Compromises: Essays on the Challenge of Pentecostalism* (Lagos: Dominican Publications, 2004), 104.

⁵ Nwosuh, *Pentecostalism: The New Face of a Christian Spirituality* (2004), 105.

⁶ Gabriel Ngbea, "Influences of Pentecostalism on the Mainline Churches in Nigeria" in *Archives of Business Research* Vol.3, no. 3 (June 25, 2015), 68.

⁷ Omogbai E. Odion, "Pentecostalism in the Context of Nigeria: The Historical Origin, Antecedents, and Development of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria." *International Journal of Social Science Research*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2025), 242.

⁸ Ogbu U. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 102.

her strength emanates.⁹ We can deduce and outline several fundamental principles of liturgy as understood and practiced by the Catholic Church, based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):¹⁰ i) The liturgy, particularly the Eucharist, is the heart and peak of Christian life; ii) Liturgy connects us with the cosmic order; iii) Christ Himself is the primary actor during the Eucharistic celebration; iv) Every liturgical ceremony includes the entire Church – those who have lived, those currently living, and those in heaven; v) In the liturgical celebration, the faithful engage in the sacrifice of Christ, his resurrection, and the anticipation of the coming Kingdom, encompassing past, present, and future; vi) The Catholic liturgy employs visible signs and symbols to signify and render present invisible truths, with the invisible holding greater significance; vii) During the liturgical gathering, active participation is expected from all attendees; viii) Given its significance, the Catholic liturgy is overseen by the highest authorities of the Church; ix) The Divine Liturgy is a tremendous gift for the faithful, a source of joy, and a solid foundation upon which to establish a life.

4. Pentecostal Style of Worship and Its Influence on Catholic Liturgy

Pentecostal worship in Nigeria is marked by enthusiasm, spontaneity, and a strong focus on experiential faith. Pentecostals view worship as “an emotional experience of being in the presence of God – an experience enabled by the Holy Spirit,” which is central to the uniqueness of their worship style.¹¹ Their methods of prayer, preaching, healing, and vibrant, joy-filled expressions of worship are clear reflections of their understanding of worship. Jacqueline Grey notes that early forms of Pentecostal worship emphasized an emotional bond with the Holy Spirit.¹² According to Grey, early Pentecostals criticized and rejected traditional liturgies, believing they represented superficial worship in favor of what they considered more spontaneous and therefore authentic expressions of worship.¹³ She argues that modern Pentecostals maintain the same worship ideology as their predecessors, prioritizing “the need for a personal and dynamic relationship with God – to enter the throne chamber and encounter the Holy Spirit” during worship.¹⁴ Thus, in worship, Pentecostals allow the Holy Spirit to guide them into the “throne room,” where they meet God. It is undoubtedly emotionally taxing to enter the “throne room,” where the worshipper engages with God. When believers gather for worship, their entire being is involved. In other words, a person’s mind (*nous*), soul (*psyche*), spirit (*pneuma*), body (*soma*), and heart (*kardia*) are all engaged in sincere worship. Psychologists suggest that worship encompasses three main categories of conscious activity: emotion, knowledge, and will. However, the intellectual and emotional dimensions of devotion should be harmonized.¹⁵ The narratives found in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, as well as the Nigerian cultural context, both influence Pentecostal worship in Nigeria.

Pentecostal and charismatic Christians share a theology that emphasizes practice and personal experience, which is evident in their vibrant and joyful worship styles. Pentecostal gatherings typically include enthusiastic praise, lively music, spontaneous prayers, and invitations to the altar. During worship, participants recount their foundational story, sometimes reenacting the experiences of early Christians in a way that feels current.¹⁶ Furthermore, because Pentecostals emphasize the significance of the Holy Spirit as the one who manifests God’s presence during worship, their worship

⁹ Second Vatican Council. *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (4 Dec. 1963), n. 10.

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Second Edition (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), nn. 1136-1199.

¹¹ Melissa L. Archer, “Worship in the Book of Revelation,” in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016), 115.

¹² Jacqueline Grey, “The Book of Isaiah and Pentecostal Worship,” in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016), 37.

¹³ Grey, *The Book of Isaiah* (2016), 37.

¹⁴ Grey, *The Book of Isaiah* (2016), 38.

¹⁵ Franklin M Segler and Randall Bradley, *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice*, 3rd Edition (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 62.

¹⁶ Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language* (Collegeville Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), x.

is centered on the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ Kimberly E. Alexander clearly states that Pentecostal worship is driven by experience and dynamism rather than by theoretical frameworks or the necessity of precise theology beforehand.¹⁸ Consequently, Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit's influence enables a direct, experiential connection with the divine. The aim of their worship, in their roles as redemptive, sanctifying, and healing congregations, is to foster an environment through which attendees can encounter the redeeming, sanctifying, and healing presence of the Triune God via the indwelling Spirit. Their passionate prayers, along with their boisterous singing and clapping, demonstrate the intensity and vitality of their worship. This approach to worship stands in contrast to the more organized and formal Catholic liturgy, which tends to favor an immediate emotional connection. The impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria is quite notable. These attributes, rooted in the Pentecostal tradition, offer a distinctly different worship model that has inspired and challenged some Nigerian Catholics to reconsider traditional liturgical practices.¹⁹

In various Nigerian Catholic Adoration Centres and Parishes, elements of Pentecostal worship have infiltrated Catholic services. As a result, the Pentecostal style, encompassing prayer, preaching, healing, and worship, promoted by Catholic Charismatics, continues to shape Catholic liturgy in Nigeria. In practice, members of the Nigerian Catholic Charismatic Renewal have incorporated Pentecostal features, such as praise-and-worship music bands, raised-hand prayer postures, and opportunities for personal testimony. Additionally, even outside charismatic settings, some Catholic priests have integrated lively singing, drumming, and dancing into the Mass. Achunike similarly notes that Pentecostalism's influence is widespread, affecting not just the laity but also the Catholic clergy in Nigeria. For instance, previously uncommon "healing Masses" are now frequently held in some dioceses. Although Nigerian bishops have occasionally issued guidelines regarding this blending, the mixture of styles persists. Therefore, the unique Pentecostal focus on the power of the Holy Spirit and emotional engagement is transforming how Catholics in Nigeria observe the liturgy. These transformations indicate a broader conversation that some perceive as new expressions of faith, while others express concerns about maintaining liturgical integrity.²⁰

4.1. Positive Influence of Pentecostal Style of Worship on Catholic Liturgy

The Holy Spirit is allowed ample space to express Himself through spiritual gifts and the personal sanctity of individuals in Pentecostalism. Staying relevant is a crucial aspect of achieving success in any endeavor. Practical actions should align with theoretical concepts. Consequently, specific positive impacts of the Pentecostal approach to worship have been observed in the lives of some Catholics, such as:

Preaching

Pentecostals, as noted by Keith Warrington, believe that the primary purpose of the Bible is to enhance their relationship with God, increase their receptivity to the Holy Spirit's ministry, and draw closer to Jesus.²¹ For most sacred ministers in the Catholic Church who deliver sermons during liturgical celebrations, the Bible serves more as a means to encounter the divine author than as a resource for delineating various beliefs, much like how Pentecostals engage during worship. When these ministers read the Bible to prepare for homilies or sermons, they do so with the expectation that God's words will speak directly to the situations faced by their parishioners. This view is echoed by

¹⁷ Segler, and Bradley, *Christian Worship* (2006), 53-54.

¹⁸ Kimberly E. Alexander, "Singing Heavenly Music': R. Hollis Gause's Theology of Worship and Pentecostal Experience," in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016), 220.

¹⁹ Isidore Iwejuo Nkwocha, *Charismatic Renewal and Pentecostalism: The Renewal of the Nigerian Catholic Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers: 2021), 1838.

²⁰ Nkwocha, *Charismatic Renewal and Pentecostalism* (2021), 1862; Hilary C. Achunike, *The Influences of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians in Nigeria* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2019), 1965.

²¹ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 188.

Warrington, who paraphrases Ellington in stating that Pentecostals expect to discover “the actual words of God addressing their needs and guiding them through Scripture.”²²

Some modern scholars argue that in Nigeria, Catholic doctrine, eloquence, insight, and persuasion are not considered the most essential elements when delivering sermons or homilies during liturgical services. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is vital for many Catholic sacred ministers. Each opportunity they have to preach is viewed as being inspired by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, various Catholic ministers have taken the initiative to connect preaching, singing, and prayer during their homilies. Vincent Leoh states that the predominant style of preaching among today’s preachers follows the Pauline model, which focuses on “the power and demonstration of the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:1, 4) and “by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit” (Rom 15:19).²³ When applied correctly, this approach does not negatively impact the Catholic faithful in Nigeria. Hence, to prevent any “dichotomy between thorough preparation and direct illumination,” Leoh suggests that when sacred ministers preach at the altar, their sermons “should be seen as a divine-human process and collaborative endeavor.”²⁴

Healing

Another positive aspect of Pentecostalism is its emphasis on healing, a feature frequently highlighted by “Charismatic priests.” In Pentecostal congregations, healing plays a vital role in the worship experience. Emmanuel C. Anagwo, in his work *Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Liturgy*, argues that while notable instances of physical healing are found within Pentecostal Churches and movements, spiritual healing holds far greater importance. According to Anagwo, the atmosphere fostered by Pentecostal churches has led to more individuals anticipating healing during worship gatherings, crusades, life-in-the-spirit seminars, and other events.²⁵ The primary disagreement between Pentecostal services and the Catholic liturgy, as noted by the “Charismatic priests,” centers around this issue. The Catholic Church believes that during liturgical celebrations, God’s healing power, or the power of His Spirit, is manifest in its fullest form. The Eucharistic liturgy incorporates a healing aspect, and initiatives such as the weekly Eucharistic celebration for the sick (“Healing Mass”) in nearly all Nigerian parishes and Catholic Adoration Centres are responses to the healing needs of the liturgical community.²⁶

In *Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements in Nigeria*, Matthews A. Ojo posits that healing and miracles are fundamental to the Christian experience.²⁷ The mission of Jesus Christ included healing, as He came to grant us life and to do so abundantly (John 10:10). Jesus demonstrated immense love and compassion for the sick, providing healing wherever He journeyed. He walked throughout Galilee, teaching in synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and curing various illnesses and afflictions among the people (Matt. 4:23). He instructed the Twelve, “As you travel, declare that the Kingdom of God is near at hand; cure the sick, resurrect the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils” (Matt. 10:6-8). As a result, people often expect to receive healing during the Eucharistic celebration or at any Catholic Adoration Centre within Nigeria.

Prayer

The majority of the subjects discussed regarding the Pentecostal preaching style in Catholic liturgical celebrations in Nigeria also relate to their method of prayer. Similar to how Pentecostal preaching is conducted, Catholics who engage in Eucharistic Adoration Centres pray differently as they seek to encounter God through their prayers. In his examination of the Holy Spirit in Paul’s epistles, Gordon Fee notes that the coming of the Holy Spirit significantly transformed Paul's understanding of prayer.

²² Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, (2008), 189.

²³ Vincent Leoh, “A Pentecostal Preacher as an Empowered Witness,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 9, no. 1 (2006), 37.

²⁴ Leoh, “A Pentecostal Preacher, (2006), 43.

²⁵ Anagwo, *Impact of Pentecostalism* (2014), 9.

²⁶ Anagwo, *Impact of Pentecostalism* (2014), 9.

²⁷ Matthews A. Ojo, “Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements in Nigeria: Factors of Growth and Inherent Challenges,” *The WATS Journal: An Online Journal from West Africa Theological Seminary*: Vol. 3: No. 1, Article 5. (September 2018), 87.

While it is uncertain whether fixed prayers were utilized in the Pauline Churches, he remarks that “spontaneous prayer by the Spirit is the norm.”²⁸ The Holy Spirit supports us in our prayers, as “in our present weakness we do not know for what we should pray” (Rom. 8:26-27), and “the Spirit himself intercedes for us with ‘inarticulate groaning.’”²⁹ Nonetheless, spontaneous prayer outside of the Church’s established prayers is also regarded in contemporary Catholic liturgical celebrations in Nigeria as a means to encounter God spiritually in opposition to the principalities and powers. Therefore, as Fee states, “prayer is an activity inspired by God himself, through the Holy Spirit.”³⁰

In contrast to the Structured Prayer of the Faithful provided by the Church, individuals tend to share their specific prayer intentions openly during the Prayer of the Faithful in Nigeria. It is noteworthy that “Pentecostals tend to view God as their personal Father, Jesus as their individual Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit as their guide.”³¹ The Catholic Church in Nigeria now encourages its congregation to pray spontaneously with confidence, without relying solely on the Structured Prayer of the Faithful during the liturgy. For Catholics, prayer serves as “an opportunity to receive heavenly direction and guidance on how one ought to pray in situations of illness and other circumstances, rather than just a request for healing.”³² Consequently, as prayer opens access to the healing, sanctifying, and saving power of God through the Holy Spirit, the impact of the Pentecostal prayer style on Catholic liturgy is significant and cannot be overstated.

Music

In the perspective of Pentecostal scholar Gordon Fee, who highlights the significance of music in Pauline Churches, “alongside prayer, singing has become uniquely associated with the Spirit (1 Cor 14:14–15, 26; Col 3:16; Eph 5:19).”³³ The principle of experiencing encounters that shapes their worship also influences how Catholics perceive pneumatology, ecclesiology, and worship overall. During the latest liturgical events in Nigeria, Catholic sacred ministers aspire for their parishioners to have a connection with the Triune God through the power of the indwelling Spirit.

As a result of the recent effects of Pentecostal music on Catholic liturgy, Catholic ministers in Nigeria now regard music as a tool to prepare the faithful to listen intently to the homily. Robert Webber reinforces the Catholic perspective on music by stating that “music is the wheel upon which the Word and Eucharist ride.”³⁴ Some Catholics believe that liturgical celebrations in Nigeria should facilitate an experiential encounter with God, as music not only primes the faithful for such an experience but also heightens their awareness of God’s presence. Richard Griggs makes a noteworthy observation that music symbolizes a cry of Maranatha during worship, reflecting the community’s anticipation of making that presence a reality.³⁵ This supports David Mosely’s assertion that “music is a participatory experience that connects earthly reality with its transcendent origins in God’s loving and reconciling self-revelation in Christ.”³⁶ Music has become a crucial element of Catholic liturgy for congregants in Nigeria. Thus, as Steven J. Land suggests, “Liturgy enhanced by music fosters a

²⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Baker Acad (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011), 866.

²⁹ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* (2011), 867.

³⁰ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* (2011), 867.

³¹ Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, (2008), 216.

³² Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, (2008), 288.

³³ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* (2011), 885.

³⁴ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 195.

³⁵ Richard I. Griggs, *Musical Worship as a Pentecostal Sacrament: Toward a Soteriological Liturgy* (Lakeland: Southeastern University, 2017), 53.

³⁶ David J. R. S. Mosely, “‘Parables’ and ‘Polyphony’: The Resonance of Music as Witness in the Theology of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer,” *Resonant Witness: Conversations Between Music and Theology*, ed. Jeremy S. Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 269.

relational understanding of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the Spirit's impactful influence on people's hearts and minds."³⁷

Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that Catholics would agree with Jewish musician and composer Erik Contzius, whom Richard Griggs cites, stating, "Singing conveys what words and intellect alone cannot express. In both joy and sorrow, we sing. Music impacts us in mysterious ways. We can discover one's deepest emotions by listening to their singing. We find relief and sometimes liberation when we sing ourselves."³⁸ In this context, the Pentecostal music that Catholics experience during liturgical celebrations illustrates that music serves as "a vehicle for this release and relief, present when chains are broken in freedom, fear is dispelled in celebration, and barriers are removed in obedient trust," exemplified by the narratives of Paul and Silas, as well as the collapsing walls of Jericho.³⁹

Use of Media

Another advantageous way in which Pentecostalism has impacted Catholic liturgy in conveying the gospel is through the utilisation of media. The emergence of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria has led to the widespread use of media for religious broadcasts, and it is rapidly becoming a standard practice in Nigeria. To broadcast Catholic liturgical events, numerous Catholic Bishops and Priests are increasingly appearing on television and radio stations.

The application of mass media (including print, film, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Facebook, email, and the internet) facilitates a quicker dissemination of information about the works of salvation to the public. We live in the Information Age, often referred to as the "Technological Age" or "E-Age," which encompasses innovations like automobiles, financial systems, commercial transactions, online bookings, and internet connectivity. Pentecostal Churches are making full use of these advancements, with many of their leaders regularly appearing on television and radio stations. Notable examples of televangelists and ministries they have leveraged include Emmanuel Television (E TV), Dove Television (D TV), Pentecostal Life Radio (PL FM), The Redemption Television Ministry (RTM), and Redeemed in Cyberspace, as demonstrated by Walter Ihejirika.⁴⁰

The media strategies adopted by Pentecostal churches have profoundly influenced how Catholics participate in their liturgical observances. The Catholic Church in Nigeria is already responding to the "Inter Mirifica" document from the Second Vatican Council, which affirms the Church's right to utilize social communication tools for spreading the Gospel.⁴¹ This is illustrated by the reality that nearly all Catholic dioceses in Nigeria now operate newspaper publications, as well as radio and television stations, such as Radio Sapientia 95.3 FM, which is owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha, Nigeria, and the "Forum" Newspaper published by the Catholic Diocese of Orlu, Nigeria.

4.2 Negative Influence of Pentecostal Style of Worship on Catholic Liturgy

Pentecostalism brings about some adverse effects on the Catholic liturgy in Nigeria. Given that the unfavorable aspects of Pentecostalism often reveal themselves more than the positive ones, here are the harmful impacts of the Pentecostal style of worship on Catholic liturgy:

Exuberant Musical and Worship Styles

One significant factor is the incorporation of Pentecostal-style praise music and lively worship into Catholic Mass. Nigerian bishops openly denounce "inappropriate music" – which includes secular-style songs – and even dancing during the Eucharist as liturgical abuses.⁴² In reality, many Catholic

³⁷ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*. Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2010), 147.

³⁸ Griggs, *Musical Worship*, (2017), 64.

³⁹ Griggs, *Musical Worship*, (2017), 64.

⁴⁰ Walter Ihejirika in Anagwo, *Impact of Pentecostalism* (2014), 9.

⁴¹ Second Vatican Council, *Inter Mirifica: Decree on the Means of Social Communication* (December 4, 1963), Ch. 1, no. 3.

⁴² Jude Atemanke, "Catholic bishops in Nigeria condemn liturgical abuses, call for immediate reforms." *ACI Africa*, 19 Aug. 2024. See also,

parishes now incorporate praise bands, drums, clapping, and dance moves, rather than traditional hymns.⁴³ Liturgically, this transforms the Mass into a joyful celebration rather than a solemn sacrifice. Worship becomes intensely “participatory” and emotional, with congregants (including priests) engaging in swaying, shouting, or moving about during the liturgy.⁴⁴ Theological issues soon arise: critics caution that such a focus on entertainment diverts attention from Christ’s real presence. By emphasizing an emotional “experience of God,” the profound mystery of the Eucharist and the sacrificial aspect may be overlooked. As DePaul liturgist Stan Chu Ilo notes, these “strange practices” result in a “shocking liturgical hybridity” – an unsettling blend of cultural expression and Pentecostal innovations that scandalized the faithful.⁴⁵ In essence, what should be a respectful encounter with Christ transforms, under the influence of Pentecostalism, into a concert or spectacle. This transformation can undermine Catholic doctrine: worshipping chiefly through ritualized excitement risks reducing the sacraments to mere performances. Thus, Pentecostalized music and gestures alter the liturgy’s style (reducing solemnity) and weaken its theology (valuing emotion over the sacrament).

Charismatic “Signs and Wonders” in Mass

Pentecostalism promotes practices such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and collective healing as normal components of worship. When these elements are introduced into Catholic Mass, they disrupt the established liturgical order and create confusion. Priests in Nigeria have observed that healing services, deliverance prayers, or prophetic messages are occasionally added to or blended with the Mass, drawing inspiration from Pentecostal examples.⁴⁶ From a liturgical perspective, this is problematic: it is not prescribed in the Roman Missal to interrupt Communion with folk healing or individual prophecy. Theologically, this leads to confusion regarding sacraments.

Gabriel Ngbea points out that Pentecostal spirituality views healing and prophecy as the right of every believer, “separate from the sacramental life of the church,” which causes the sacraments themselves to be perceived as mere rituals lacking true power. Anthony Akinwale cautions that such Pentecostal-style “prophecies and arranged miracles” – especially when performed in a church context – undermine Catholic credibility and may even verge on sacrilege.⁴⁷ Ultimately, charismatic disruptions in the Mass can encourage superstition: personal revelations may be valued more highly than apostolic teachings, transforming the liturgy into an erratic experience. From both perspectives, the inclusion of speaking in tongues, prophecy, or healing in the Mass diminishes the structured, sacramental essence of Catholic liturgy.

Prosperity Emphasis and Commercialization

Another adverse effect is the introduction of Pentecostal prosperity concepts into the Catholic liturgy. Nigerian Catholic Bishops explicitly condemn the “commercialization of the liturgy”: they observe that some priests now conduct multiple collections and solicit donations during the Mass.⁴⁸ Patrick

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/258785/catholic-bishops-in-nigeria-condemn-liturgical-abuses-call-for-immediate-reforms#:~:text=The%20bishops%20pointed%20to%20the,> (assessed 01/05/2024).

⁴³ Gabriel Ngbea, “Influences of Pentecostalism on the Mainline Churches in Nigeria” *Archives of Business Research*, Vol.3, No.3 (June 25, 2015), 72. See also, Atemanke, *Catholic Bishops in Nigeria*, 01/05/2025.

⁴⁴ Ngbea, *Influences of Pentecostalism* (2015), 72.

⁴⁵ Killiam Chintom Ngala, “To Soundtrack of Xylophones and Drums, Africans Debate Limits of Inculturation.” *Crux* <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2024/09/to-soundtrack-of-xylophones-and-drums-africans-debate-limits-of-inculturation> (assessed 01/05/2025).

⁴⁶ Ngala, *To Soundtrack of Xylophones and Drums*, 01/05/2025. See also, Ngbea, *Influences of Pentecostalism* (2015), 72.

⁴⁷ Anthony Akinwale, “Priest says credibility of Catholicism eroded by the explosion of ministries.” *Crux*, Feb. 2024. See also, <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2024/09/to-soundtrack-of-xylophones-and-drums-africans-debate-limits-of-inculturation> (assessed 01/05/2025).

⁴⁸ Luke Coppen, “Nigeria’s bishops decry ‘alarming’ rise in liturgical abuses.” *The Pillar*, 15 Aug. 2024. See also, <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/nigerias-bishops-decry-alarming-rise> assessed 01/05/2025.

Udoh notes that Masses are occasionally rushed or postponed specifically to create time for fundraising, a practice linked to the influence of Pentecostalism. This is detrimental from a liturgical perspective: rather than the Mass focusing on the Eucharistic sacrifice and prayer, it transforms into a means to achieve something (raising funds or promising material blessings). Often, prayer intentions transition from spiritual needs to requests for employment, wealth, or health – a characteristic of prosperity preaching.

Theologically, this distorts Catholic doctrine. The Church teaches that salvation is an unearned gift of grace, not a commodity acquired through monetary contributions. However, due to the influence of prosperity theology, wealth is subtly perceived as evidence of divine favor, while poverty is viewed as indicative of weak faith. The bishops express concern that such appeals during Mass and prosperity rhetoric are “direct affronts” to the sanctity of the Mass.⁴⁹ Therefore, by treating liturgy as a venue for personal gain or blessings, the economic emphasis of Pentecostalism undermines Catholic devotion, transforming worship into a fundraising effort and clouding doctrine by equating giving with receiving God’s grace.

Sacramental Dilution and Doctrinal Confusion

The integration of Pentecostal elements into Catholic worship can lead to confusion regarding sacraments and doctrine. When charismatic and worldly influences are introduced during Mass, fundamental teachings become obscured. Bishops express concern that deviations from established rituals – such as the Eucharistic Prayer – and disrespectful treatment of the Eucharist have become alarmingly widespread.⁵⁰ Simplifying music to include pop songs or incorporating dance during Communion, for instance, dilutes the Church’s teachings on the real presence and the necessary reverence. Theologians caution that if worship centered on personal experiences – such as miracles and prophecies – becomes the norm, individuals might overlook the institutional means of grace. In fact, the ABR scholar Ngbea points out that disconnecting spiritual gifts from the sacraments trivializes Catholic Christianity to a mere “ritualistic...lacking in power” form of superstition.⁵¹ This manifests in the liturgy as Catholic rituals being augmented (or replaced) by popular devotions, including spontaneous altar calls, unrequested healing sessions, or fundraising activities dubbed as blessings. Theologically, this results in a weakening of doctrine: concepts regarding the sacrificial essence of the Mass, the cross as genuine salvation, and the Church’s hierarchical structure are compromised when all healing is attributed to individual ‘power’ and every liturgy treats the host as if it were a good luck charm. Consequently, the innovations from Pentecostalism can transform the Mass into something unrecognizable – an energetic performance or a self-help gathering – thus disrupting Catholic sacramental theology and liturgical discipline in favor of a mixed and unclear practice.

5. Implications for the Catholic Church in Nigeria

The liturgy of the Nigerian Catholic Church has integrated notable Pentecostal-style elements and formats. For instance, Ignatius Obinwa observes that in numerous parishes, priests “devote excessive time to singing hymns... and consequently communicate very little” in order to accommodate fervent worship.⁵² He notes that celebrants frequently break into spontaneous expressions of praise – exclaiming “Amen!” or “Praise the Lord!” and even encouraging the congregation to clap for Jesus with phrases like: “*meelu Jesu ofu ife*” (which translates to “Do one thing for Jesus”) – during the Mass, reminiscent of a Pentecostal service.⁵³ These innovations have occasionally resulted in a quicker, more eventful liturgy. Patrick P. Udoh remarked that “owing to Pentecostal influences, fundraising was intruding into the liturgy,” and Masses were often “hastened to allow for financial

⁴⁹ Atemanke, “Catholic Bishops in Nigeria Condemn Liturgical Abuses” (assessed 01/05/2024).

⁵⁰ Atemanke, “Catholic Bishops in Nigeria Condemn Liturgical Abuses” (assessed 01/05/2024).

⁵¹ Ngbea, *Influences of Pentecostalism* (2015), 73.

⁵² Ignatius M. C. Obinwa, “Pentecostalism and the Ministry of Catholic Priests in Nigeria Today: A Perspective From Joel 2:28-29.” *A Journal of Contextual Theology* Vol. 4 (2018), 75.

⁵³ Obinwa, “Pentecostalism and the Ministry...” (2018), 76.

appeals.”⁵⁴ In essence, the rigorously structured Catholic liturgical rite has become more flexible: priests have added supplementary prayer segments, testimonies, or appeals, and have sped up or shortened portions of the Mass in ways that are characteristic of Pentecostal vigils. These modifications are broadly recognized as creating a blend between the traditional solemn liturgy and charismatic worship.

The transformation is also apparent in musical and physical expressions. Where Nigerian Masses previously emphasized organ hymns and chanted responses, many now feature full gospel bands equipped with guitars, drums, and keyboards. Researchers have noted that Pentecostalism introduced a new category of “Contemporary Christian music” – praise influenced by pop and rock styles – into churches. Congregational singing has become more upbeat and improvisational, with lyrics focusing on salvation, faith, and spiritual revival rather than traditional doctrine. Alongside the musical changes, Pentecostal worship gestures have emerged within Catholic congregations: individuals raise their hands, dance, sway, or even prostrate themselves during prayer. One study indicates that Nigerian composers are now incorporating indigenous African rhythms and praise choruses into liturgies, emphasising emotional and physical expressions – such as clapping, raised hands, and foot-tapping – over the more subdued demeanor of older liturgical practices. Obinwa cautions that some priests now emulate Pentecostal prosperity preachers by selling “holy oils” and asserting that their blessed water is particularly effective, or by promising material gains instead of focusing on the message of the Cross. He points out that it has become commonplace to encounter assertions like “a good Christian should not suffer” and an overemphasis on miracles and exorcisms.⁵⁵ In practice, this means that a typical Sunday Mass may resemble a Pentecostal praise gathering – vibrant, loud, and highly engaging – rather than the serene, uniform devotion it once represented.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Catholic liturgy in Nigeria has clearly incorporated numerous expressive aspects of Pentecostal worship, resulting in a blended style that highlights enthusiastic participation and emotional involvement. In many Catholic parishes in Nigeria, the Mass now begins and concludes with lively gospel music and drum-based choirs, replacing the previously predominant pipe organ or quieter hymns. Individuals often raise their hands, clap, and occasionally dance during liturgical songs, with brief testimonies or spontaneous prayers (including speaking in tongues or prophetic messages) integrated into the liturgy alongside formal prayers. Homilies have also become more dynamic, typically delivered in an engaging, conversational manner rather than a strictly doctrinal approach. This shift towards performance and celebration has transformed the liturgy into a more experiential event for the faithful, merging the sacramental rite with a worship concert atmosphere.

The ramifications of this Pentecostal influence are both intricate and complicated. On the one hand, the lively liturgical style has rejuvenated Sunday liturgy for numerous Nigerian Catholics, attracting younger individuals, honoring African cultural expressions, and fostering a sense of community through collective enthusiasm. Although the Eucharist and other sacraments remain central, they are now accompanied by an environment of vibrant prayer gatherings and healing services that extend beyond the typical Mass experience. This blending suggests both a creative adjustment – keeping the liturgy culturally relevant and spiritually fulfilling – and a significant challenge in maintaining the essential identity and sacramental richness of Catholic worship over time.

⁵⁴ Patrick Paul Udoh cited by Coppen, “Nigeria’s bishops decry ‘alarming’ rise in liturgical abuses.” *The Pillar*, 15 Aug. 2024. See also, <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/nigerias-bishops-decry-alarming-rise> assessed 01/05/2025.

⁵⁵ Obinwa, “Pentecostalism and the Ministry...” (2018), 76.

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