Liturgical Ministers as Ministerial Leaders: Implications for Parish Worship in Nigeria

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This paper explores liturgical ministers as ministerial leaders to embrace different liturgical functions as ministries of service. This is against the backdrop of Tridentine liturgy whereby the worship is looked up as an exclusive leadership function of the priests alone to lord it over others. It identifies lack of active participation by the lay faithful as one of the major factors escalating passive participation in the liturgical celebrations in Nigeria. In this way, the paper argues that rethinking ministerial leadership is a medium to promote active and parish liturgical participation. Their implications suggest the bishops and priests to ensure that the lay faithful take part fully aware of their ministerial leadership role, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by its effects. Employing descriptive and analytical methods, the mantra of the paper is that in a parish worship where liturgical ministers thrives well as ministerial leaders, it produces mature Christian faithful who know their faith, understand their liturgical roles and diligently exercise them. Such a parish community operates on a level of facilitative and participatory leadership where everyone is carried along through direct participation in directing the liturgical celebrations of the parish.

Keywords: Ministerial leadership, Liturgical Ministers, Parish worship

Introduction

One of the major challenges today within a worshipping community is the exercise of the ministerial leadership. The reason is the over-domineering trait of some Catholic pastors in the exercise of their ministry in Nigeria. The recent book by the Vatican liturgist, Nicola Bux entitled, We are administrators, and not the masters, of the sacraments remains a good revelation in this regard. For one thing, it has opened the eyes of many scholars, theologians and the faithful to see the root cause of many distortions in liturgical celebrations that dwarfed and continues to dwindle the true sense of ministerial service in the Church. One of the beauties of the Catholic worship is its connectedness. It is not autonomous assembly of even independent local dioceses or independent national Churches. Instead, it is a part of God’s people redeemed by Christ, in whom there is no male or female, no Jew or Greek (cf Gal 3:28). Their unity in Christ is not really based on ideology but ultimately on persons of a local parish united around its pastor, a local diocese around its Bishop, several dioceses with their bishops united with the regional Archbishop, in some places, a nation united around its primate or patriarch and all the Bishops, primates and patriarchs in communion with the Bishop of Rome. At every level, there is a communion of people and a communion of Churches, in the end resulting in a universal

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Following the demand of the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, there is need for active, conscious, full and socio-communitarian participation. The contentious issue is: To what extent can the laity collaborate with the priest for a successful and efficacious parish worship? But as with any ethical obligation, responsibility or duty, their participation calls for a renewed conversion of the faithful. For harmonious, co-ordinate and efficient liturgical celebration, there is need for ministerial leadership. According to the Council Fathers, active Eucharistic liturgical participation of the lay faithful was greatly encouraged: “For it is in the liturgy, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, that the work of our redemption is accomplished”, and it is through the liturgy especially that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.

The aim of this paper is to study the role of liturgical ministers as ministerial leaders and use the fruits of the study to reverse the “unfortunate” trend in parish worship in Nigeria where the understanding of ministerial leadership is seriously lacking. Against the backdrop of Tridentine liturgy, the laity have continuously played tremendous role in the daily running of their parishes and the stations; yet, the priests in many cases still remain the “over lords”. Some lay faithful rightly complain that, “some priests are overbearing. They want to have everything their own way”. This is not the type of liturgical ministers of the Second Vatican Council recommended for the Church in Nigeria today.

**Conceptual Investigations: Ministerial Leaders and Liturgical Ministers**

At this point, it will be helpful to have conceptual investigations into the key terms of this paper, namely, ministerial leaders and liturgical ministers. Ministerial leader connotes two words: ministerial and leaders. “Ministerial” is etymologically translated from the Latin word: *minister*-*ministri* (masculine gender) meaning “servant”. In this light, ministry can be described as the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ and carried out by an individual on behalf of a Christian community, in order to witness, serve and realize the kingdom of God (O’Meara, 1983, p. 142). Since it is carried out in the name of the community, it has to receive the divine mandate. The point of emphasis here is the connection between service and the community. Corroborating this understanding, Pope Paul VI states: “ministry means service - service for love, for the benefit of others, together with sacrifice of self”. In the context of this paper, ministry designates a ministry of salvation in the service of all human beings.

Generally, a leader is a person who has influence on a group. Ministerial leadership is easily discerned from the derivative root of the word, “*minister*” which denotes service. So, ministerial leadership is the service arm of liturgical ministry and there is an ongoing dialogic relationship between the leaders and the led. A leader is one who establishes harmony and co-ordination in order to achieve their aims and objectives. So, ministerial leadership expresses any process whereby one person exerts influence over the worshipping community. It is

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3 SC 2.

4 Elsewhere the writer proposes a model of leadership that might be conducted both in the Church and in the secular society (see Emmanuel C. Anagwo, “Liturgical Leadership as Christ’s Brand: A Challenge to Leadership in Africa” in *Grace and Truth: A Journal of Catholic Reflections for Southern Africa*, Chris Grzelak and Quinbert Kinunda (Eds.), Volume 33, Number 3, November 2016, 65-80).


any liturgical ministry that helps one to act of influence to render service to the Christian assembly.

Furthermore, liturgical ministers are those officially assigned to assist during liturgical celebrations. We have major and minor liturgical ministers or what Mary Anne Monye designates in terms of ministries as ordained and non-ordained ministries, otherwise called sacramental and non-sacramental ministries (Monye, 2004). The major liturgical ministers, who are the ordained ministers through the sacrament of orders, are the bishops, priests and deacons. Bishops are the head of the Church’s hierarchy and they ordain priests as collaborators in the ministry. Priests preside at the Eucharistic liturgy because the bishops cannot be everywhere at the same time; hence, they share in their ministry. Deacons whether temporary or permanent are ordained to serve; hence, they are always at the service of the bishop and the Church in general. The minor liturgical ministers, which do not require the power of ordination and is gender free, include all the lay faithful who have significant roles to play during the Eucharistic celebration. They include Mass servers, sacristans, acolytes, lay readers, cantors, choristers, band group, ministers of hospitality, security agents, commentators, catechists, presenters of the gifts, presenters of the prayer of the faithful, ministers of liturgical environment and Eucharistic ministers.

The ministerial leadership is ordered to give leadership services in liturgical worship as in the cult of priests of the Old Testament times typified in the Levitical priest, a chosen race for service to God. It is a process of rendering service by one or more elected or appointed or volunteered persons, to influence and guide others in order to achieve the common good. Jude Eze writes: “In a Catholic parish, ministerial leadership is a collaborative harmonious working together of the priest and people of the parish Church to guide the members in their efforts to live their Christian life faithfully and fulfil their obligations as members of the Mystical Body of Christ” (Eze, 2013, p. 88). It follows that the ministerial leadership is not limited to sacerdotal ministration of the anointed hand of the ordained priest, nor to the effective administration of the parish priest and the parishioners. Instead, each contributes according to his or her capabilities and abilities to build the parish to an expected height spiritually. We are concerned in this paper with both ordained and non-ordained ministers who collaborate for fruitful and effective celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals of the Church.

Theological and Liturgical Considerations on Ministerial Leadership

From the beginning, we have to reiterate that a theology of Christian ministry on behalf of the community has to begin with baptism\(^7\) since it cannot be separated from Christ’s command to witness openly to the Gospel in the world (Rademacher, 1991, p. 91). Similarly, ministerial leadership is a gift to the Church and is rooted in the priesthood of which the first letter of Peter speaks when it calls Christians, “...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people set apart” (1 Pet 2:8-9). It is true that the ministry or office of the sacramental sanctification is an exclusive prerogative of the priest’s ministerial leadership of the Church in the parish community, the lay faithful also share in the indispensable leadership roles in the parish. The ministerial leadership is not clericalization of the laity, but the carrying out of the different functions from the one act of consecration by the priest. It is a way of realizing the share in Christ’s priestly office, which all the faithful have through the sacrament of initiation.

It is the perennial teaching of the Church that every Christian at Baptism receives the gift of the priesthood from Christ the High Priest and it is this baptismal priesthood of the faithful which forms the basis of a priestly

\(^7\) O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* 141.
vocation and ministerial leadership. The early Church understood that the liturgical array of ministers existed to nourish the eternal, evangelistic array of ministers. Ministers as well as ministry exist to attend the visible needs of the Church. The explosion in ministry before now and always happens because of the workings of the Holy Spirit. Since the Church does not exist for itself only but to attend the multiform needs of the society, this means that her ministry must be diversified. Not to undermine the significance of the Second Vatican Council, there is the impetus for the diversification of ministry in contemporary world from the Council’s point of view. This is because the Second Vatican Council initiated a process of a world-Church that had a pastoral focus which returned the basic Christian ecclesial emphasis to the local Church. In this way, the Council examined the ministries as ministerial leadership. As there are varieties of gifts but one Lord (see 1 Cor 12:4-7), so also we have varieties of ministries but one mission. The Council Fathers state: “Various ministries are necessary for the implanting and the growth of the Christian community, and once these forms of service have been called forth from the body of the faithful, by divine call, they are to be carefully fostered and nurtured by all”. The ministry is the service and edification of the community, not the glory of the one who receives the gifts (see 1 Cor 14:5, 12, 19, 25-26).

Liturgical celebrations are the work of the whole congregation gathered together. They are not private activities. The faithful are to actively participate and worship unlike the Tridentine liturgy, where the Eucharistic liturgy was shrouded in mystery and the laity were to stand at a distance preparing their hearts by acts of faith, hope and charity (Beyer, 1998, p. 49). Since active participation was not that encouraged, clericalism reached its peak. It reduced the laity to a condition of passivity and made their apostolate more of an appendage to that of the Church’s hierarchy. Accordingly, Cyprian Vagaggini opines that today there is no confusion during liturgical celebration. Because each has an active role in the liturgical action, but each in his own way (Vagaggini, 1976, p. 842). The liturgical ministers are called to participate in the evangelising mission of the Church. Articulating this fact, Echema firmly asserts that the laity are not merely objects of priestly and hierarchical activity nor are they to be reduced to purely receptive role. Being full members of the Church, they have a mission which is an integral part of the salvific mission of the entire people (Echema, 2011, p. 163). Good Catholics should be selected and given sufficient training and orientation. They should be people who have good standing and reputation in the community. They should be sufficiently trained in the theology of the Eucharist and practical manner concerning their liturgical ministries.

The Crux of the Issue Under Study

The crux of the issue under study is that matters of liturgy have their own principles, that are internal to the development of the liturgy in the Latin tradition down through the centuries. Consequently, these principles, interpreted and enforced by the teaching authority of the Church must create liturgical understanding of what is and is not appropriate behaviour of a parish worship. The liturgical assembly cannot simply imitate the worldly notion of leadership as the lord without provision for service.

The reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council has brought several changes in the liturgical celebration like the use of vernacular, provision of ministries, responses, music to mention a few. These are in

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the hope to encourage active participation of the lay faithful. Elsewhere, we argued that, “Active participation in the Mass is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. When the faithful participate fully during liturgical celebration, it leads to their edification and sanctification” (Anagwo, 2011, p. 30). It underlines the fact that a certain spirit is imperative for this active liturgical participation to take place. This is because Christian worship is in spirit and truth (John 4:24). When passively participated, they serve as forces driving the liturgy to become something other than it is, something man-made, centred on emotion rather worship of God. Active participation in the thoughts of Cosmas Aina, “is not meant to simply be mere flurry of activities performed by the faithful at worship. Rather, it was meant to signify how the people of God engaged with the Church’s liturgy with totality of their whole life” (Aina, 2013, p. 103).

The very nature of the liturgical history in general and the Eucharistic celebration in particular abhors all forms of exclusion. The liturgical assembly is all-inclusive. Essentially, every liturgical celebration is a re-enactment of the Paschal Mystery by which Christ, as head, in union with the Church, his body, continues to give glory to the Father in the Holy Spirit and through which humanity is sanctified and transformed. The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council emphatically calls for a fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations by the faithful. The Council Fathers instructed that at liturgical celebration, every member of Christ’s faithful has a role to play. It is important that all forms of liturgy is completely accessible to the baptized since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together. Active participation is the soul of the liturgical life of the people of God. It underscores the Church’s liturgical life and manifests the newness and fullness of life (John 10:10) which God sent Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to accomplish. Without ministerial spirit within the members of the Church, the inner life of each member may grow weeds and human life may be overthrown by evils. Every community in the Church, therefore, must necessarily make option for personal conviction and engage in helping others towards God and the neighbours.

However, the reality on ground seems to be one which is insensitive to the spirit of liturgy. In some parish liturgical celebrations in Nigeria, some leaders exhibit overbearing dominance in leadership which is oftentimes manifesting in the distribution of the liturgical functions, all in the bid to demonstrate being in-charge. Before the Second Vatican Council, the Church was accused of becoming too Roman and clerical in nature. Often, the clergy considered the particular parishes assigned to them as personal property whereas the laity are snubbed and relegated to the background as only helpers. In this way, the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy was wrongly conceived as the work of a priest. This was as a result of the carry over that the Church belongs to the Rev. Father; hence, it is erroneously called in Igbo “Uka fada”, “Ijo padi” (in Yoruba), “Adowan Fada” (in Hausa), “Ufok Abasi” (in Efik), “Oku Abasi” (in Ibibio and Annag), to mention just a few.

Some lay faithful prefer to be passive participants during liturgical celebrations. To worsen the situation, some pastors discourage the lay faithful from playing active roles to liturgical ministries due to them by not creating favourable and conducive environment for such functions to thrive. Jude Asanbe notes: “a wholesome, a holistic and a realistic theology of ministry must attempt to free ministry from this over-clericalised, impoverished and lopsided conception” (Asanbe, 1987, p. 52). It is sad to know that in spite of the progress made in many areas of the liturgy for the Church in Nigeria, some are still finding it difficult to adjust and adapt.
the liturgy to the ministerial leadership. The distorted understanding of ministerial leadership arises from what Echema calls “hierarchologu” (Echema, 2007) of the authority, where no free hand is given to those entrusted with functions, leading to “power corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely syndrome”.

With such indices of clericalism, parochialism and individualism making their appearance, the submission of the essay focuses in promoting ministerial leadership. This is through the awareness of the dignity and right of the members in liturgical celebrations. It proposes means through which they can be integrated into the mainstream of the Church and boost their participation in the parish liturgy and other Church activities.

**Proposing Seven Implications for the Parish Worship in Nigeria**

By parish worship we mean the liturgical setting in which it is an exclusive prerogative of the priest’s ministerial leadership of the Church in the parish community, but the lay faithful also have unique leadership roles in the parish. This is because the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist demands a conscious synergy of both the priests and the lay faithful. In this context, seven implications gathered together for the parish worship in Nigeria constitute the fundamental pillars of the proposition of this paper. Coincidentally, the writer shares the same sentiments with Stephen R. Covey who cherishes the significance of the number seven (7) and reveals the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* as being holistic, integrated, principle-centred approach for solving personal and professional problems (Covey, 2013). It is certainly correct that the tradition of seven is not strange and new to biblical, ecclesial and liturgical numerology. For instance, the liturgical number seven shows completeness, perfection, whole, totality, etc. Thus God completed his creative mission in seven days. The Sabbath rest, on the seventh day, is to reflect the rest of God which he enjoined His creatures (Gen 1:1-2:4). There are seven implications we can learn from.

**Ministerial Leadership as Service to the Church**

The first outstanding implication of the ministerial leadership on parish worship is for service. This is elaborately understood in the Scripture as a *diakonia* or ministry (see Acts 1:17 and 25; 21:19; Rom 11:13; 1 Tim 1:12). It is the service of the liturgical ministers. Ministerial leadership acts the sacramental bond that ties liturgical actions to what the apostles said and did and to the words and actions of Christ, the source and foundation of the sacraments. The call to serve as liturgical ministers is an invitation to be a gardener or a farmer which requires that the individual invited should be prepared for the work of tending the Church as the garden of God. The notion of farming is a whole complex matrix of human activities that is needed to continue human existence on earth. Similarly, as humanity cannot exist without food, so the Church cannot be without ministerial leaders as exemplified by Christ who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom to many (Mark 10:45).

This calls for discernment in the preparation for choice of the members of the liturgical ministers. Those who are called to liturgical ministries should cherish them and know they are ways to witness Christ in the world. It is a call to work for the salvation of the people of God. The liturgical minister within the parish setting is also working out his salvation with requisite fear and trembling. Accordingly, they should conduct themselves becomingly. Liturgical ministers should carry out their functions with every sense of devotion and commitment. As such, they would gain the maximum benefit that will accrue from such sacred ministries.

**Encouraging Ministerial Leadership**

Secondly, the ministerial leadership is a vibrant organ of the Church and the ministers are specially trained
and encouraged to share in the saving mission of Christ. The liturgical training they garnered in the way of charity disposes them to work assiduously and collaborate with the ministers of the Church. The ministerial leadership is one of the ways of participating in the sacramental nature of the people of God and in the mission of the Church. The ministerial leadership places all the graces of its life, its Gospel witness and unique apostolic works at the service of the missionary work of the Church. The worth of any parish worship is measured by the worth of its laity. The decree *Ad Gentes* underlines the importance and indeed the irreplaceability of the laity in the missionary activity of the Church when it says: “The Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy”.12

They have duty of ensuring that the success of the parish worship through implanting and strengthening of the kingdom of Christ in souls and for spreading it for the four corners of the earth. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states: “The faithful, moreover, should not refuse to serve the People of God gladly whenever they are asked to perform some particular ministry or function in the celebration”.13 But for the worship instituted by Church the celebrant is the Christian community. The priest acts in the name of the community from whom he received his investiture, though not by delegation of the community but by institution of the Church itself. Since the Church’s liturgy is united to Christ to form a single cultural unity, the Church after confers the highest degrees of its hierarchical representation on the persons chosen by Christ as minister of his worship. The sacramental priesthood had the ministry from Christ and from the Church. By the general priesthood of the people of God, lay persons can deputise in some liturgical functions.

**Collaborative Ministry Among Clergy and Lay Faithful**

Thirdly, another salient implication for parish renewal comes when there is collaboration among the various ministries in the Church. The urgency of collaborative ministry in parish worship today cannot be over-emphasized. The reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council strongly encourages collaborative ministry between the clergy and lay faithful. The necessary implication is that the Christian faithful, the clergy and the laity alike, are encouraged to embrace it as veritable means to nourish their faith. On the part of the priests, they play a vital role for the ministerial leadership to be realized. There is need for them to inspire, encourage and lead the people according to the mind of the Church and in the spirit of the liturgy, as all share in different ways in the priestly worship of Christ and not to make themselves the centre of attraction. As for the lay faithful, they have a duty to enquire from the priests whatever part of the ministerial leadership whose meanings and implications they do not understand. The Second Vatican Council has advocated that they should be properly formed internally and externally.14

In carrying out this ministerial leadership function, the Priest should not be autocratic, rather he should listen to the opinions of the faithful which may be effective in his ministry. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council affirmed: “Priests should also be confident in giving lay people charge of duties in the service of the Church, giving them freedom and opportunity for activity and even inviting them when opportunity occurs, to take initiative in undertaking projects of their own.”14 Needless to emphasize, that ministerial leaders are to be personally and actively involved in looking after those entrusted to their watch. They should develop a “people

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12 AG 21.
13 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Henceforth GIRM) (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2002) 97 (See also SC 26).
centred”, giving special care and attention to the efficiency of their ministries. Working intimately with other ministers, participatory style of ministry is needed today more than ever between the liturgical ministers.

**The Priest to Exercise Human Relation in the Parish Setting**

Fourthly, the priest within the parish setting is to show example in good human relations. He is the true co-ordinator, animator and collaborator in the Eucharistic celebration and he must cultivate the attributes that make for good human relations, namely, respect for others, concern for their welfare, generosity, openness, truthfulness, ability to listen, ability to engage in dialogue, ability to take advice and correction, able to delegate assignments, trust, humility and pastoral charity to the people (Chibuko, 2006). Sacred ordination configures the priest to Christ the Head and Shepherd. It is the duty of the Priest to guide and guard the people of God.

However, in this leadership role, he should be seen as a servant leader. In this wise, clerical arrogance, domination and highhandedness should be avoided. The priest should follow the example of Christ who came to serve and not have service done to him (Mark 10:45). This is demonstrated in the washing of the feet of the apostles. In imitation of Jesus attitude to leadership the priest should be humble and be close to his flock in order to know their needs. The priest should avoid life of ostentation and affluence which makes him isolated from the people he is to minister to. As a good shepherd he must spend himself for his sheep. The exhortation of St. Peter is directed to the priest: “I urge the elders among you as a fellow elder myself, give a shepherd’s care to the flock that is entrusted to you; watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly as God wants… Do not lord it over the people in your charge, but be an example for the flock. When the Chief shepherd appears, you will be given the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet 5: 1-4).

**Liturgical Formation for Different Liturgical Ministries**

Fifthly, parish renewal also comes when we promote liturgical formation for different liturgical ministries. This is because to avoid discussion of ministerial leadership only at a theoretical level without praxis, some basic realities on active participation in parish worship are to be known. The first is for active participation of both the clergy and lay faithful, there is the proper need for education. This is for different liturgical ministers on their responsibilities as means to celebrate, co-ordinate and participate in the liturgy, in order to permeate the society and bear witness to Christ in word and deed. The priest is to co-ordinate as the expert and chief executive of the parish and make sure that the right atmosphere is created in the parish worship. It also challenges the formation of the liturgical assembly as a possible way to improve fruitful and effective participation. If the clergy fails to provide credible, spiritual and focused leadership, then the fruits of the liturgical participation will surely elude the assembly.

Detailed and well-taught catechesis on the sacrament of the Eucharist and other liturgical activities should characterise the periodic sessions of their liturgical functions. The Church insists that in carrying out various ministries in the Church, the liturgical ministers must be properly trained. Hence, those chosen to function within the parish worship as liturgical ministers require appropriate formation for the role they are called upon to play in the Church. Such formation could be general and specific. The general formation will take the form of doctrinal and liturgical formation. Liturgical ministers should be equipped with more than a passing knowledge of the scripture, sacred doctrine, the teaching of the Magisterium, liturgical norms and practices, etc. Ultimately, they should be formed liturgically. This liturgical formation will give them some understanding of

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the meaning and structure of the liturgical celebration in general and also the relationship between the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. This formation also involves technical training of the ministers on how to function as ministerial leaders.

**Rediscovering the Word of God in the Various Ministries**

Sixthly, it is certainly correct to agree with Pope Paul VI who while promulgating the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), enjoins the faithful to scrutinize the signs of the times.16 This scrutiny will help them to rediscover the real sign we need especially on the value of the Word of God. It has always been the teaching of the Church that the world came into being through the power of the Divine word spoken by God (Gen 1:3-20) and Christ came to be born a human person through the word of faith of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-38). These two scenes in one divine act seem to form the history of salvation by which various cultures of people seek their expressions in the Christian community. The importance attached to the Spoken Word finds expressions in the various activities of the Church, preaching, catechesis and dialogue among people. From Jesus Christ to the present time, therefore, the spirit of the Spoken Word in the upbringing of people in the Church, in edification in exhortation, in admonition and in correction in errors (2 Tim 3:15-16) needs not to be over-emphasized in the ministry of the word.

The various ministers in the liturgy: bishops, priests, deacons, sacristans, altar servers, choir, ministers of hospitality, to mention just a few, should be led by the Church to rediscover the power of the Spoken Word by God and our individual conscious, active and full participation in this mystery of God, if conversion from evil is to be achieved and celebrated in the liturgy. The words that are spoken by ordained and non-ordained members of the Church are capable of building or destroying the faith of people and breaking relationships in the family, Church and the society. All liturgical ministers and members of the Church, therefore, should learn the various ways and skills of speaking the Word, worthy of its sacredness, dignity and power.

**The Need for Re-orientation and Rethinking for Ministerial Leadership**

Seventhly and finally, the pastoral implication gives us the clearest idea to affirm that the Church in Nigeria needs reorientation, rethinking for ministerial leadership in the parish liturgy, in order to realize the new image of the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council. Ministerial leadership challenges Christ’s faithful to redefine their perceptions of what they do in the name of Christ and His Church. It embraces the service to be performed by them. Liturgical ministers should pattern their ministry on Jesus Christ and His Spirit. Priests, as leaders of the worshipping community, have the grave responsibility to co-ordinate and discern where the Spirit is working. They should ensure that various ministries are formed and found in the Church. In their teaching, while they advocate and defend the rights of powerless, they should equally underscore the responsibilities of Christ’s faithful to act on behalf of the Church so that the values of the kingdom of God find roots in all societal segments. Within the parish setting, priests should watch areas that can ruin collaboration.

The emphasis here however is the comprehensive nature of these implications for the parish worship in Nigeria. Together they cover the whole spectrum of liturgical ministers as ministerial leaders. They also articulate the import of ministerial leadership to practice liturgical ministries. These seven implications are effective when carried out without undue emphasis on lay leadership or clericalism, but in a mutually inclusive

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manner. They also lie at the heart of collaborative ministry. This collaborative ministry also conforms to the spirit of Christian service which resonates with the increasing collaborative participation of both the celebrants and participants. This sense of ministerial leadership has strong biblical, philosophical, theological, ecclesiological and liturgical foundations.

**Inculterating the Positive Cultural Values and Genius of the People**

Over and above all, inculturation is very important in the vision and mission of the Church for inserting cultural values into Christ’s message. Inculturation is the integration of the cultural values of people into the gospel message of Christ. It is a method of evangelization that adapts the cultural values of people and translates them into Christian culture after thorough purification and prophetic discernment. The ministerial leadership has universal application to all cultures. It is not restricted to a particular culture. It addresses and challenges all cultures. To deepen this cultural appreciation of the ministerial leadership, it needs to be practised and appreciated within a cultural context. Liturgy is of its nature social worship, and must involve the contribution of the different members of the worshipping community. Authentic liturgical practice therefore presents itself as the process which enables each individual to take his or her rightful place within the Church in acts of sacramental worship.

History shows that all liturgies did, in fact, come into being in cultural forms. In this era of inculturation and active, conscious and full participation by all, a liturgy that develops within a culture, which the worshipping assembly understands will stand the test of time. Africans and Nigerians in particular are known for many traditional and cultural values and genius of the people. Such values include communalism which is properly African in contrast to individualism which is foreign and is dialectically opposed to collaboration. The Igbo of Nigeria would say: *Onye aghana nwanne ya* “Let nobody forget his own brother or sister”. The individual finds his being as a person not in himself, but in the community. In fact, a man without lineage has no right of citizenship and cannot be classified as having any root. Oliver Onwubiko observed that: “In Africa, brotherhood is real and concretely based on family hood, that is, it is in the family where the welfare of each individual becomes the direct concern of the members of the clan vital” (Onwubiko, 1991). It is general consensus today that the image of the African worship has family as a model. This image emphasizes care for others, solidarity and warmth in human relationships, acceptance of others, dialogue and trust, avoiding all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism. This image must be promoted to enthroned harmonious and orderly exercise of the ministerial duties.

This relationship is a direct fruit of communalism. Onwubiko rightly states, “Africans believe that he who discusses his affairs with others hardly runs into difficulties or make mistakes in the execution of plans.” In this regard, the Igbo of Nigeria would say: “*Ome akara oha oghom anaghi agho ya*” (One who tells others what he/she is doing never suffers mishap). Similarly, “*Onye ajuju anaghi efu uzo*” (He who enquires of direction to a place never misses the road). This is the African way of understanding ministry that as long as the individual belongs and cooperates in the dynamism of the relationship in the community, he/she becomes wholly integrated. This relational life exists in African traditional life. Whatever affects one person affects the other members of the community. To this Emmanuel Ede rightly remarks: “if evil be committed by an individual or a group of individuals, it becomes always the concern of the whole community” (Ede, 1985, p. 104).

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Communities encourage ministerial spirit through team spirit, sharing and togetherness. This is part of African heritage and can still be revived in the parish worship in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper explores liturgical ministers as ministerial leaders whereby the faithful must take part fully aware of their roles, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by its effects. Since the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, theologians, pastors, catechists and lay faithful have raised serious discussions about the form of the liturgical spirit suitable for liturgical ministers. It is from this perspective about rethinking a new way of ministerial leadership that liturgical ministers should anchor their approach to worship in Nigeria. In this way, the paper studied the ministerial leadership in the parish liturgy, precisely between the clergy and laity. It understands ministerial leadership as an indispensable instrument for effective witnessing achieved through team spirit among liturgical ministers.

In conclusion, the essay spelt out the dynamics and implications of ministerial leadership for the Church in Nigeria. It strongly believes that the ordained and non-ordained liturgical ministers can exercise their various ministerial leadership simultaneously with the spirit of active collaboration for the salvation of souls (salus animarium). Admittedly, every good tree is known by its fruits. The qualities of ministerial leadership are progressive in nature. In a parish liturgy where ministerial leadership thrives well, certain indicators reveal a people living in harmony and communion with great prospects and aspirations for their future. Any parish community, that is ministerial leadership in nature, produces mature Christian faithful who know their faith, understand their roles and diligently exercise them. Such a parish community operates on a level of facilitative and participatory leadership where everyone is carried along through direct participation or representation in directing the liturgical celebrations of the parish. The paper urges the Church in Nigeria to justify the hope of the Universal Church on her to integrate ministerial leadership as a medium to promote active and parish liturgical participation in order to bear fruits of authentic and efficacious worship.

References


