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READING THE EUCHOLOGY OF A COLLECT
AS AN INSPIRATION IN PROCLAIMING THE WORD
OF GOD IN THE LITURGY

Abstract. This paper titled “Reading the Euchology of a Collect as an Inspiration in Proclaiming the Word of God in the Liturgy” argues that, in a Collect’s oration, the Church is always at prayer in her liturgical celebrations. This is because she is a praying Church who recognizes her ultimate dependence on God. Despite all the provisions by the Church to this effect, the Word of God contained in a Collect is not understood optimally. The basic elements are dispensed indiscriminately by the presiding minister. Unfortunately, one notices with dismay how this sacred responsibility is backsliding into hurriedly recited/sung words of the chief celebrant instead of God’s word at the Eucharistic worship. The unavailability of the dignified Roman Missal and the absence of well-functioning acoustics, to mention but a few teething problems, have negatively decimated contemporary Catholic liturgy. This is setting back the clock in projecting this veritable means to nourish the faithful with the Word of God which is always alive and active (Heb 4:12). This paper aims to demonstrate that every Collect is insightful in proclaiming the Word of God in the liturgy. Consequently, using expository, investigative and analytic methods, this paper challenges the worshipping community to understand their individual and collective roles when a Collect is being read at the liturgy, to promote the full active participation of all and ultimately glorify God and sanctify participants at worship.

Keywords: Euchology; Collect; Inspiration; Word of God; Liturgy.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most conspicuous results of the Second Vatican Council is opening up the treasures of the Word of God to the faithful.¹ An elaborate

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¹ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [henceforth SC] in Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1987), 51.

celebration of the Word of God is the key to this light. Undoubtedly, the Word of God designates different avenues for hearing the utterances of God in the Church, Scripture and prayers of the Church from the pulpit, including the homily, through social media, in the marketplace, on a crusade and indeed, from fellow men and women.² Within the framework of biblical renewal, there is also the urgent need to understand the text of the Eucharistic liturgy that contains the Word of God. The Word of God constitutes an essential and vital part of all the Church's liturgical celebrations. It forms the basis as well as the core for all liturgical celebrations. The Word of God forms and informs the faithful and contributes decisively to the sanctification and edification of the members of the Church. For Catholic clergy, religious and laity, the Word of God serves as a reliable and rich reference point, albeit a compass for Christian life and Christian morality, and it has a vital role in the life and mission of the Church. In this way, the Church's liturgy is pedagogical because it has the power to inform, form and educate the minds of the faithful.

Granted that the antiphons, readings, psalms, Glory to God in the Highest, homily, exhortations and Creed of the Eucharistic liturgy are more didactic, yet, through their symbols, prayers and euchologies, the faithful are drawn into a deepened experience of the saving mystery of God to live an authentic life sustained by Christ's Paschal Mystery. Major and minor euchologies (prayers) exist in the Church's liturgical celebration.³ The prayers are biblically oriented. One such prayer is the Collect. A Collect is one of the minor euchologies containing more than it appears to have. It contains more about God and the relationship of human beings with Him. It does indeed have room for the development of a theology that will empower people to live out their faith and prayers in their daily lives.

Despite all the provisions by the Church to this effect, the Word of God contained in a Collect is not understood optimally. The basic elements are dispensed indiscriminately by the presiding minister. It is disheartening that, again and again, one notices with dismay how this sacred responsibility is backsliding into hurriedly recited/sung words by the chief celebrant instead

² For a detailed study, see Emmanuel C. Anagwo, "Adopting New Ways of Celebrating the Word of God in a Pandemic Era" *Bigard Theological Studies (BTS)* vol. 42, no. 1 (January-June 2022): 25.

³ In the strict sense, euchology is the science that studies prayers and the norms that regulate their composition. In the broad sense, it refers to the collection of prayers contained in a liturgical book (see Jovian P. Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1986), 192).

of God's Word at the Eucharistic worship. The unavailability of the dignified *Roman Missal* and the absence of well-functioning acoustics have negatively decimated the contemporary Catholic liturgy, to mention some teething problems, setting back the clock in projecting this veritable means to nourish the faithful with the Word of God that is always alive and active (Heb 4:12). This paper aims to demonstrate that every Collect is insightful in proclaiming the Word of God in the liturgy. To do this, I shall first delineate the meaning of a Collect, explain its nature and structure and explore how the Collect is an inspiration in proclaiming the Word of God in the liturgy, implications and conclusion.

2. COLLECT (*COLLECTA*): ITS MEANING

Originally, the Collect, otherwise called the Opening Prayer or *collecta* in Latin or the *Ekpere Mmeghe* in Igbo (Nigerian), was a term used in Rome in the 5th and the 10th centuries; yet, in the Tridentine version of the *Roman Missal*, the more generic term *oratio* (prayer) was used instead. The Latin word *collecta* means gathering the people together (from *colligo*, "to gather") and has been applied to this prayer as recited before the procession to the Church in which the Mass was being celebrated. It may also have been said to mean a prayer that was collected into one of the prayers of the individual members of the congregation.

Thus, it concludes the introductory rites. This oration by the celebrant serves to gather the prayers of the assembly; hence, it is called the "collect." In simple terms, it is the collection of the individual prayers and petitions of the praying community by the celebrant, joined to the community's intentions and petitions and offered to God the Father through the mediation of Christ in the Holy Spirit. A Collect summarizes the mood, focus and theme of each particular Mass. Accordingly, it is an essential part of the Mass that can never be omitted or altered at will since it is the gathering together of the aspirations of the assembly and an expression of the character of the celebration.⁴

Every Collect is formulated to recall the wonders of God in the life of the people as they articulate their problems before him. All silent pray, along with that of the priest, is recited to become aware that the people are in God's presence and call to mind their petitions. Accordingly, the priest "in whom Christ himself presides over the assembly, directs to God in the name

⁴ Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, 467.

of the entire holy people and all present,” and for this reason, they are also called “official prayers.” The two other presidential prayers are the prayer over the offerings and the concluding prayer. They have a collective character, from which also the term “*collecta*” derives its name.⁵

3. NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF A COLLECT

The nature of a Collect is such that it is never a fixed text. It varies according to the content of every Eucharistic liturgy. This is a very important prayer and indeed, the first of the presidential prayers is reserved for the chief celebrant. Every Collect consists of four elements, namely, the priest’s invitation to pray, a pause, the body of the prayer and the people’s assent. To start, the president or celebrant with arms outstretched invites all people present to pray. He says “Let us pray” or similar words so that the people will be attuned to the atmospheric need for prayer at the moment. Next, he allows for a moment of silence for the people to truly formulate their prayers that will now be gathered together in the prayers of the Church.⁶ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) reiterates and affirms that for the Collect,

...the priest calls upon the people to pray and everybody, together with the priest, observes a brief silence so that they may become aware of being in God’s presence and may call to mind their intentions.⁷

In the current Mass texts, approved on November 27, 2011, the First Sunday of Advent, all the Collects are completely retranslated. Unlike the previous translations, “truly notable for their preciseness of doctrine, aesthetic expression in a calm religious sense, together with genuinely human understanding,”⁸ the sentences of the new translations are more verbose and complex but have retained the basic structure of Collects: an invitation, si-

⁵ Michael Kunzler, *The Church’s Liturgy* (London: Continuum, 2001), 201.

⁶ It is quite unfortunate that some have been totally ignorant of the significance of the silence of this period. As such, during the pause, the congregation also “waits” for the priest to re-gather himself, and continue. However, the right thing is that at this point, the priest “waits” for the people to formulate their own prayers for the “Collect.” The pause is followed by the body of the prayer that is meant to express the character of the celebration.

⁷ *The General Instructions of the Roman Missal* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications-Africa, 2002), 54, No. 127.

⁸ Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, 467.

lence, invocation, amplification, petition and doxology. Yet, since they end with the long doxology, the role of the Trinity will be more precise.⁹ The “Amen” said by the congregation at the end gives assent to the acclamation and makes the prayer their own. Sufficient time should be given to allow the people to be attuned to the atmospheric need for prayer at this moment. In this way, they will formulate their petitions that will now be gathered up in the prayer of the Church.

The Collect is not just a technical term in the liturgy but has become closely associated with the Eucharistic celebration of the liturgy. It includes the gift of God. Since the Collect is a presidential prayer by which special characteristics of particular liturgical celebrations are expressed, it is usually directed to God the Father, through Christ the Holy Spirit by the priest. In its content, it brings out the basic relationship between God and his people. It evokes a relationship of grace and benevolence on the part of God and of dependence and gratitude on the part of his people. The Collect is the climax of the prayer movement started in the introductory rite. At the Collect, the entrance ceremony reaches its peak in the prayer of the priest in the same way that presenting the offering and the reception of communion end in a fitting oration.

Granted that the content and structure of a Collect vary, beginning with an address or invocation to the Father, it is followed by praising God or a reference to some Divine attribute or act as the reason for the prayer; the petition is short, simple and definite, usually supported by a motive, and general, since every worshipper has already articulated their particular intention during the previous moment of silence.¹⁰ Hence, Daniel McCarthy, in his work *Listen to the Word: Commentaries on Selected Opening Prayers of Sundays and Feasts with Sample Homilies*, affirms that the parts of the Liturgical Collect include: the Invocation (which can be simple or complex, having a noun or a noun and one or more adjectives; the Amplification (a relative clause); the Petition (expressed in the imperative or exhortative sub-

⁹ In recent times, precisely on Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021, there was a change of wording in the oration of the Collect of the *Roman Missal*. “One God, for ever and ever” in the long doxology was changed to read only “God, for ever and ever.” This also applies to other liturgical books, such as the Liturgy of the Hours. This is because there is no mention of “One” in the Latin version, and “*Deus*” in the Latin refers to Christ. Hence, the correct translation is simply “... in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever” (see “Wording Change from ‘One God, for ever and ever’ to ‘God, for ever and ever,’ takes effect” in *American: The Jesuit Review* in *Catholic New Service*, February 19, 2021 from www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/02/19/word-change-missal-doxology-catholic-mass-240070, accessed: March 16, 2022.

¹⁰ Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, 467.

junctive); the Purpose (expressed in *ut* + subjunctive, *ad* + gerund (or infinitive), or *ad* + gerundive); and the Motive (*quia* + subjunctive).¹¹ He does not mention anything about the Trinitarian doxology that ends the Opening Prayer.

In his work, “Rudiments of Euchological Composition,” Patrick C. Chibuko opines that the Liturgical Collect, which is a way of praising and acknowledging who God is, is a unit composed of five elements. These include: the Invocatory Introduction, by which God is invoked with or without attributes; the Relative Pronoun, as seen in ‘*qui*’ - who, which describes God’s nature and his works; the Intention for the prayer; and then the Finality of the intention is stated and often introduced by the phrase “so that.” Unlike McCarthy, the Trinitarian Doxology is mentioned next.¹²

4. LITURGICAL ANALYSIS OF A COLLECT

Let us give an illustration using the Collect text of the 3rd Sunday of Advent, Year A of the *Roman Missal*, as it appears in Latin.

*Deus, qui conspicias populorum tuum
Nativitatis dominicae festivitatem fideliter expectare,
Praesta, quaesumus,
Ut valeamus ad tantae salutis gaudia pervenire,
et ea votis sollemnibus alacri semper Laetitia celebrare,
Per Dominum nostrum Jesus Christum, Filium tuum,
qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate eiusdem Spiritus Sancti Deus,
Per Omnia saecula saeculorum.*¹³

The English translation is as follows:

O God, who see how your people
faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s nativity,
enable us, we pray,
to attain the joys of so great a salvation
and to celebrate them always

¹¹ Daniel McCarthy, *Listen to the Word: Commentaries on Selected Opening Prayers of Sundays and Feasts with Sample Homilies* (London: The Tablet Publishing Company, 2009), xv.

¹² Patrick C. Chibuko, “Rudiments of Euchological Composition,” *Journal of Inculturation Theology (JIT)*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1999): 165-166.

¹³ *Missale Romanum, Ex Decreto Sacrosancti Ecumenici Concilii Vatican II Instauratum Auctoritate Pauli PP. VI Promulgatum Ioannis Pauli PP. II Cura Recognitum* (Citta del Vaticano: Libreriae Editrice Vaticanae, 2008), 135.

with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.¹⁴

Invocation: it invokes “O God.”

Anamnesis/Relative Pronoun: the attributes that God is known by are expressed with the relative pronoun “who,” thus “who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s nativity, enable us, we pray.”

Intention/Petition: the petition is made “to attain the joys of so great a salvation.”

Finality/Motive: the motive is expressed by “to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.”

Doxology: it starts with “Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.”

- *Invitatory Introduction (“O God”):* an invocation of the Divine and the Supreme Being. God is invoked with or without an attribute. Technically, a Collect begins with or without the attribute. It is a clear and apparent acknowledgement of God’s indispensability, omnipotence, omnipresence and benevolence. Therefore, it clearly shows the relationship between God and His people and their dependence on his unquantifiable benevolence. This method of prayer can be traced to the fourth century. At that time, the Synod of Hippo, as a response to questions about the role of the Trinity, decreed in 393 AD that prayer at the altar shall always be addressed to the Father. Louis Weill affirms that, when beginning liturgical prayer in the name of God, the assembly places her faith and trust in the One whom Jesus called Abba, Father. It is this name that has taken the primary place in Christian liturgical prayer, and it echoes Jesus’ personal experience of intimacy with God.¹⁵

- *A Relative Pronoun:* the address to God, in an expanded form, is completed by the predicative clause. In Latin, it begins with the relative pronoun “*Que/Qui*” (Who). This is a word or phrase that qualifies God and refers

¹⁴ *The Roman Missal Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II, English Translation According to the Third Typical Edition* (henceforth RM) (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2011), 150.

¹⁵ Louis Weil, “Liturgical Prayer” in P. E. Fink (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 955.

back to Him using an explicit or implicit device within the relative clause that points to God's attributes. It begins with the nature or work of God. Thus, it is a way of praising and acknowledging who God is, a way of describing God's nature and enlarging the address made to Him. Accordingly, it gives a solid foundation to the petitions about to be expressed and reveals who is actually being addressed and what God can do for the worshipping community as he has done in the past as the *anamnesis* often portrays. Nonetheless, when it is a simpler form of the predicative clause, which includes the element of thanksgiving and praise in the prayer of petition, it is dropped to take into account the special character of the particular liturgical day.¹⁶ In this way, memorials, feasts and solemnities of the day can be integrated. December 3, the memorial of St. Francis Xavier can serve as an example: 1. *Deus*, 2. *qui beati Francisci praedicatione multos tibi populos acquisisti*, 3. *da, ut fidelium animi eodem fidei zelo ferveant, et uberrima ubique prole Ecclesia sancta laetetur*, 4. *Per Dominum nostrum Jesus Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate eiusdem Spiritus Sancti Deus, Per Omnia saecula saeculorum*.¹⁷

- Intention: it often introduces the intention of the prayer or better yet, the needs of the assembly. Here, the priest, on behalf of the people, presents their collective intentions. He asks for the grace to do what in human eyes is considered to be practically impossible. Joseph Jungmann asserts that the priest, acting as the mouthpiece of the ecclesial community, humbly presents the situation to the Godhead.¹⁸

- Finality: it is followed by the purpose or finality of intention. It is the reason for what you are asking. The finality is the effect, consequences and purpose of the intention. Here, it must always be celebrated with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.

- Long Trinitarian Doxology/Trinitarian Doxology: a Collect ends with a long Trinitarian doxology (Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever). The Church's prayer is essentially Trinitarian. This is because it is founded on the prayer of the Spirit in us and on the faithful love of the Father who has given us His Son.¹⁹ The word *doxology* comes from the Greek

¹⁶ Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, 201.

¹⁷ *Missale Romanum*, 875.

¹⁸ Joseph Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origin and Development*, vol. I (Maryland: Christian Classic, 1992), 172.

¹⁹ Edward Forley, et al. (eds.), *Commentary on the General Instructions of the Roman Missal* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2008), 424.

word *doxa* which means “glory.” It refers to the general Christian theological theme of praise and glorification of God or more narrowly, to a specific liturgical formulation that expresses the idea in prayer.²⁰ It can also be considered in a broader sense to mean the underlying theology behind Christian public worship and private prayer (such as the recitation of the rosary, stations of the cross, etc). The use of a Trinitarian formula in the liturgy can be traced back to the first generation of Christians. Granted that there was no explicit mention of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic prayer in the *Didache*, the prayer recorded by Justin Martyr already had a Trinitarian structure. The same is true of the Eucharistic prayer in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus. The prayer ends with the doxology addressed to the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.²¹ Christian liturgy is thus the Church’s action; the Church becomes more fully what it is by engaging in the corporate and communal praise and glorification of God as the Father and Creator, the Son as the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier. The same Trinitarian structure can be seen in the *epiclesis*, the conclusion of the orations and doxologies.

5. THEOLOGY OF THE COLLECT

Admittedly, the theology of the Collect is predicated on the understanding that it exposes God’s nature and plan for His creatures in a way that disposes them to work towards the realization of God’s salvific plan. Accordingly, worship becomes the eschatological practice *par excellence*, in which the very beauty of its performance lifts the mind to savour the delights of God. When liturgical prayer is performed based on these theological and spiritual assumptions, the liturgical experience becomes quite fruitful.²² German Martinez notes that the sacramental event is God’s self-gift of grace to us whereby He calls the worshippers to follow the ways of His reign. Through the prayers human beings utter, God exposes His ways, thus mak-

²⁰ Joan M. Pierce, “Doxology” in Orlando O. Espin & James Nickoloff, *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2007), 369.

²¹ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 250.

²² Timothy O’Malley, “The Kerygmatic Function of Liturgical Prayer: Liturgical Reform, Meaning and Identity Formation in the Work of Josef Jungmann,” *Studia Liturgica* vol. 41, issue 1 (2011): 77.

ing His presence an encounter that manifests and celebrates the saving action of Christ and the work of His Spirit in people's lives.²³

The Old Testament (OT) presents how God through prayer inspires people to socio-communitarian participation. The call and mission of Gideon in Judges 6:11-27 is a classical example. It shows how Gideon laments before the Angel of God over the plight of the Israelites. He narrated how they felt abandoned by God when they were in the hands of their enemies. God commanded him with the declaration: "Go, and with your courage, save Israel from the Midianites. It is I who send you" (6:14). Gideon thus became the one who would work to liberate the people of Israel from the hands of their enemies, fortified by the Spirit of God.

The New Testament (NT) shows the work of prayer as divine inspiration to bring about a positive transformation. This is aptly captured in the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane in Luke 22:41-46. As Jesus prayed and poured out His heart in pain and agony, He was able to surrender to the will of the Father, despite how He felt. In the course of the prayer, He was strengthened by the Holy Spirit and began to feel ready and willing to take up the difficult task of our redemption. Robert Karris asserts that "Jesus engages in the contest or *agonia* of seeking to know God's will and accepts that will obediently, not a victim, not out of control, not subject to irrational passion. The angel strengthens Jesus in this contest. His sweat is that of the moral athlete seeking victory in the context."²⁴ In this way, Jesus went to the Cross courageously and willingly, knowing it was the Father's wish to save the world by this means. His prayer thus produced divine inspiration and strength to confront the ugly situation and terrible suffering.

Admittedly, theology reiterates the view of the Collect as a prayer during which divine inspiration is given for the attainment of socio-communitarian participation. The prayer is presented as opening the way to being fully human and truly responsible. From the theological perspective, without prayer, a person demeans themselves, giving way to one's fears and surrendering to their egotism. Prayer is the most personal of the commandments. This is because it shows one how to be a person. The inspiration it brings is thus seen as leading to courageous actions in society. It engineers a person's holistic and mature development, making them a fulfilled human being, a whole person.

²³ German Martinez, *Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 59.

²⁴ Robert J. Karris, "The Gospel According to Luke" in Raymond Brown (ed.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 717.

In the Collect, the petitions of the worshipping community are summed up by the presiding priest.

Therefore, a Collect is most adequately expressed when it captures the collective intention of the worshipping community. Consequently, every Collect intends to expose the community's openness and readiness to work for the transformation of a situation and the people as expressed in prayer, placing hope in the power of God through the liturgical celebration to grant divine help in achieving the goal at hand. Transformation is thus a concept inherent to the nature and meaning of the Eucharistic mystery and its celebration. It presumes other concepts, such as the human quest for meaning and freedom, and thus displays the contemporary religious consciousness of making life better in society.

6. A COLLECT AS DIVINE INSPIRATION TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD IN THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

By divine inspiration, we mean that God concurrently worked with human authors to produce the written message He desired. The authors were divinely inspired to write God's word in much the same way as the prophets were made ready to speak His word: "Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you ... all that I command you, you shall speak. ... Behold, I have put My words in your mouth'" (Jer 1:4:9; Exod 4:11-16; I Sam 3; Isa 6:1-9; Gal 1:15, Rev 1:10-11,19). As one of the theories of inspiration, the content of the euchology of a Collect ranks among other sources of God's inspiration to proclaim His Word in the liturgy.

Ordinarily, words are a basic communication tool used by human beings. Words are powerful. They can revive, edify, destroy, build, cut, fray, modulate, perturb, madden, heal, kill, excite and calm souls.²⁵ The power of the Word can bring about wrath or a blessing according to the kind of spirit invoked to work with the Word. This means that good and evil spirits can be invited to make "the word" perform and become efficacious. When words are used and spoken to someone, they offer an intimate part of their inner life. God utilizes the medium of the human word, whether written or spoken, as one way to remain present with them always. Accordingly, God is fully

²⁵ Emmanuel C. Anagwo, *Celebration of the Word of God: A Liturgical Enquiry* (Berlin: Peter Lang International Publisher, 2020), 60.

present in the Collect. The Word becomes flesh as the Word of God is proclaimed to the worshipping community. In fact, Collects, hymns and psalms are read from scripture and draw inspiration, having their source in it. Actions and force draw their meanings from it. Hence, as the Word of God empowers and enlightens human beings to transform society, God's word contained in the Collect has the ability and willingness to make life and living suitable to the dignity of human persons. The ability to make life and living promote and respect human rights in society can also be ascribed to deciphering the content of the Collect.

Collects have vital roles to play in the liturgical celebration and the life of the people after the Mass is over. They connect and point to where God wants His people to be and how to get there in their varying situations. Collects used at Mass are therefore vital in helping people see what needs to be done, understand their limitations in bringing them to actualization, and ask for the graces needed from God through the supplication expressed in the prayer. Hence, in Collects, worshippers, led by the president of the assembly, ask God for grace to do what in men's eyes is considered impossible to bring about by their efforts alone.

The claim here is that through a Collect, the people are inspired to begin to cooperate with God's words by working towards and bringing about the realization of the vision and dreams that lead to the birth of a new society. Simply put, through the Collect, liturgical prayer becomes the communication between God and human beings in a way that in response to the petitions made, God fills some or all of those petitions with the insight, strength, commitment and determination to bring about positive change in the situation which they pray about. The Word of God creates, recreates, transforms, reforms, renews and revitalises the assembly. The Word of God acts very powerfully wherever it is accepted, internalized and obeyed. It generates life and all the positive qualities associated with it. Wherever it is neglected, the opposite effects are experienced, namely, death, destruction and all the negative features associated with it.

The Mass Collect can also be the source of homiletic preaching by the deacon/priest/bishop. Here, the homilist expounds the Word of God based on the liturgical oration. In liturgical prayers like a Collect, therefore, God inspires people to begin to transform a seemingly impossible situation in a way that is obviously seen as the fruit of God's inspiration. A Collect is a channel for receiving the inspiration to proclaim God's Word in the liturgy, to become instruments for transforming the present situation for the better. It

combats the tendency to sit back, lament or grumble, feeling defeated, helpless and hopeless in the face of unpleasant situations in society. Through prayer, one becomes a courageous instrument for solving a problem, armed by the power and grace of God's word. The Collect inspires the proclamation of God's word in a liturgy endowed with multiple graces in response to the prayers of His people to transform their condition and life situation.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF A COLLECT AND THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LITURGY

This study affirms that the euchology of the Collect remains one of the constituent parts of proclaiming the Word of God in the liturgy and has implications for the Church. Through divine inspiration for the homily, the Church is directed in the Collect to proclaim the Word of God. According to Michael Kunzler, before 1955, there were several Collects in the Roman Rite, through which in the overlapping of Sundays, feast days and Saints' days, all possible aspects of a liturgical date should be commemorated. After the revision, there is always presently one Collect used at any given Mass. The GIRM states the rule that "in each Mass, only one Collect is to be said"; "the same rule applies to the Prayer over the Offerings and to the Post-communion."²⁶ Nonetheless, the *Directory for Mass with Children* (DMC) allows the priest to choose a different Collect than the one prescribed for the day or even paraphrase the Collect to bring the prayer to the level of the children, as long as the character of the liturgical season remains safeguarded. Yet, the intrinsic meaning and the function of the prayer should likewise be preserved.²⁷ Accordingly, the fourfold pattern must still be observed in each case. Generally, the Collect must be precise, full of aesthetic expression and genuine human understanding. At the end of this prayer, which concludes the introductory part of the Mass, all people sit for the next part, which is listening to the Word of God.

Characteristically, every Collect captures the significance of the oration that expresses the theme of the celebration. The priest's words are addressed as petitions on behalf of the people to God the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. It follows that the Collect is to be celebrated in such a way as to favour meditation, and so any kind of mechanical haste that hinders recollec-

²⁶ GIRM 32.

²⁷ Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, 202-203.

tion is clearly to be avoided. Beyond the provisions of the dignified *Roman Missal* and well-functioning acoustics,²⁸ as means of God's word, the Collect has to be read loudly, clearly, distinctly, intelligibly and boldly. In this way, the Word of God contained in the prayer may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared.

Meanwhile, this submitted paper proposes that a Collect can be a source of inspiration and introduce the Word of God to the worshipping community. As an indispensable and dynamic part of the Church's cult, the homilist can apply a Collect as a rich and trustworthy reference point and a spiritual "Global Positioning System" (GPS) for Christian life and spirituality. As such, the homilist may use any of the five elements constituting the Liturgical Collect to expound on the Word of God. The homilist may focus on the invocatory introduction, the predicative clause, the intention for the prayer, the finality of the intentions or even the doxology. Whichever he uses to tailor the Word of God at the Eucharistic liturgy, it will serve as a rich reservoir to elicit active, full, conscious and socio-communitarian participation²⁹ to get a better understanding and appreciation of how the Word of God can occupy its rightful and prideful place in the liturgical celebration and in the life of the faithful as envisioned by the Conciliar Fathers.³⁰

Accordingly, the chief celebrant should read/sing these texts, and even more, to discover the meaning of the rites as divine inspiration to proclaim the Word of God in the liturgy. By meditating on the texts and participating as fervently as possible in the liturgical worship, worshippers will be able to enter with understanding into the mysteries of the praying Church where Christ himself is present and active, and ultimately, where God speaks to His people. In such situations, their faith is ably manifested, captured and sustained by an outstanding liturgical principle that opines the intimate relationship between the *lex orandi* (the law of prayer) and the *lex credendi* (the law of believing). Admittedly, it is extended to the *lex vivendi* (the law of living). This gave rise to the motto of what the Church believes and was popularized by Prosper of Aquitaine. It reads: "*lex credendi, lex celebrandi, lex vivendi*" (what the Church believes, she celebrates and lives).

The spirituality of a Collect's oration that springs from the special place it possesses demands not only a response to the call of God's word to exercise it but also to live a life beyond reproach, a life of holiness, giving a

²⁹ SC 14.

²⁹ SC 14.

³⁰ SC 35.

good example and properly witnessing to the Word of God that is always alive and active (Heb 4:12). St. Ephraem stated that:

The Word of God is an inexhaustible fountain. For your Word has many shades of meaning just as those who study it have many different points of view. The Lord has coloured his words with many clues so that each person who studies it can see in it what he loves. He has hidden many treasures in his Word so that each of us is enriched as we meditate on it.³¹

Indeed, the Word of God ought to be effective, convictive, indictive and provocative, which means that the people should respond to it accordingly. This is because it is God's Word that gives directions and encouragement to the gathering community. The Word of God contained in the Collect reveals the mind of God to the people gathered for worship through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.³²

Reading the euchology of a Collect must be seen as an essential part of the process of evangelizing the world, one of the Church's primary mandates. At liturgical celebrations, the priest reading (reciting or singing) the Collect can be likened to a prophet announcing to God's people gathered to seek His will, seeking God's love for them. Just as the Old Testament prophets' proclamations brought about not only individual conversion but also the conversion of the entire nation, so also the chief celebrant's mode of reading the Collect, containing the Word of God, to His people, if well-prepared and clearly, distinctly and convincingly read, will certainly evoke repentance, conversion, transformation, sanctification, reformation and renewal in the life of the worshippers and the Church.³³

Above all, in the spirit of liturgical inculturation, creating rites and alternatives is a possibility the universal Church has given to every culture. Granted that the Roman rite is a rich reservoir of prayers that dates back to the time of Leo I (440-461), it is only a model intended for the entire world

³¹ Commentary of St. Ephraem on the Diatessaron. See *The Divine Office*, Office of Readings, 2nd Reading of 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

³² Consequently, as the priest recites a Collect, one must be attentive to the Words. Pray along in spirit and ask for God's grace. Respond "Amen" at the end of the prayer, because it affirms what the priest says. Etymologically, the word "Amen" is a biblical affirmation meaning "so may it be" and it signifies ratification and acceptance.

³³ The same argument and implication can also be adduced for the ministry of lector in the Church (For further reading, see Emmanuel C. Anagwo, "The Ministry of Lector Towards the Proclamation of the Word of God: A Double-Edged Sword" in Kekong Bisong (ed.), *Testimony of Faith: A Centenary of Catholicism in Ogoja* (Onitsha: IHM Madonna Press, 2021), 296-309).

and this has to be inculcated into every local church. Beyond the need for the vernacular celebration of the liturgy, there is also a need to create prayers, as stated in the *Instruction of the Consilium* on the translation of liturgical texts: "For the celebration of a radically renewed liturgy one cannot be satisfied with translations; new creations are necessary."³⁴ The Roman liturgy is not fixed, but it allows for flexibility, promotes original creativity and is open to enriching the cultural values of the people in question. It means that every culture is given an open cheque to creativity and innovation as long as they follow the principles of inculturation enunciated in the Constitution of the Reformed Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council 37-40. More Collects can still be composed to adapt to the local circumstances and situations. This is because the renewed liturgy, with the treasure of the existing Collect, allows for a rich possibility of variations, since "variety is the spice of life." Thus, the last composition of the Collect to designate the proclamation of the Word of God in the liturgy has not yet been read, sung or heard. Accordingly, reverence for the Collect calls for effective proclamation and dynamic interpretation using cultural values and the genius of communication skills, such as understandable and clear language, proverbs, idioms, stories, songs, drama, dance, etc. In this way, the clarion call for new compositions of Collects is to respond to the demands of the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council that asked for the enrichment of the existing rite.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper considers it proper and necessary to give the Collect such priority because of its special nature and the chief role it plays in every Eucharistic liturgy. It offers great opportunities for expressing, knowing and spiritually experiencing the Word of God in the homily. After all, every Collect is formulated to recall the wonders of God in the life of the people as they articulate their problems before Him. As a way of praising and acknowledging who God is, it gives a solid foundation for the petitions that are being expressed. In whatever situation the Eucharist is celebrated, a Collect has to clearly emphasize the intentions of the worshipping assembly. In this way, the very essence of the Collect is to proclaim the Word of God in the liturgy in light of the petitions of the worshipping assembly. It contains deep meaning and truths about God and His relation to human beings in a way that ex-

³⁴ Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, 202.

poses what He intends them to do to realize the wonderful plans He, the Creator, has for them. After all, a liturgical celebration in the real sense is distinguished from lethargy. The latter is a synonym for inactivity, dormancy, apathy and being indolent or passive. The former means doing something, being engaged and agile. The faithful participate in the liturgy to remember and not to forget. Those who participate actively in the liturgy cannot live in the world and achieve nothing concrete when things are not going well. As an essential part of the liturgical action that predisposes the faithful, the Collect is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the Word of God so that it can bear fruits in the lives of the faithful. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is clear on this matter:

Pastors of souls must, therefore, realise that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required 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.³⁵

In the words of Hilary O. Okeke, “Nothing therefore should stand in the way of the liturgical celebration that is worthy, orderly, smooth, beautiful and spiritually-enriching.”³⁶ The Word of God that is alive and active needs to be proclaimed effectively and convincingly. This implies planning and preparation. The Collect for each celebration has to reflect on the occasion and the celebrant is to prepare and read very well. For instance, audibly and distinctly reading the texts of a Collect always make a deep impression on people. The priest should strive to show forth the mystery that he presides and celebrates. This clarion call, as the stewards of the mystery of salvation, on the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, must be understood as a gift to be mediated so that God’s love is lived (vertically) and shared with others (horizontally). As such, the contents of the prayer should be read with reverence, gusto and devotion. When it is read, according to the mind of the Church, the people generally appreciate and actively participate in it. According to the US Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, “Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it.”³⁷ Evidently, properly reading a Collect contributes to the beauty of worship, glo-

³⁵ SC 11.

³⁶ Hilary O. Okeke, *Marriage and the Family in the Light of Faith* (Nnewi: CathCom Publishers, 2014), 67.

³⁷ “Music in Catholic Worship” in Statement of the US Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1990), 6.

rifies God and edifies the faithful. The ministers of the Word (especially the priest) must rise to the challenge of reading the euchology of every Collect as a divine inspiration of God's word to restore the oration to its pristine spirit of the liturgy where God is worshipped in spirit and truth (John 4:24). This is because the Word of God in a Collect has always nourished, formed and renewed His people, marking the road-map, being a reference point and a spiritual "Global Positioning System" (GPS) as a verification gateway for Christian life and spirituality.

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ROZUMIENIE EUCHOLOGII KOLEKTY JAKO INSPIRACJI DO GŁOSZENIA SŁOWA BOŻEGO W LITURGII

Streszczenie

Prezentowany artykuł dowodzi, że oracja odbywająca się w trakcie kolekty zawsze jednoczy Kościół w celebracji liturgii. Dzieje się tak, ponieważ Kościół jest wspólnotą modlitewną, która uznaje fakt swojej ostatecznej zależności od Boga. Pomimo wszystkich kościelnych uregulowań tej kwestii, słowo Boże wypowiedane w kolekcie nie jest rozumiane w sposób optymalny. Celebrans niedbale wypowiada poszczególne kwestie i z wielkim smutkiem dostrzegamy, jak ten uświęcony obowiązek zamienia się w pośpieszne recytowanie/śpiewanie słowa przez celebransa zamiast właściwego potraktowania słowa Bożego w trakcie nabożeństwa eucharystycznego. Spośród wielu problemów można wymienić niedostępność Mszału Rzymskiego i złe warunki akustyczne świątyni, które wywarły bardzo negatywny wpływ na współczesną liturgię katolicką. Te czynniki znacznie ograniczają możliwość karmienia się wiernych Słowem Bożym, które jest zawsze żywe (Hebr. 4:12). Artykuł ma na celu wykazać, że każda kolekta to mądry sposób na głoszenie Słowa Bożego w liturgii. Wykorzystując metody ekspozycyjne, badawcze i analityczne, prezentowany artykuł ma sprawić, aby wierni uczestniczący w kolekcie zrozumieli rolę, jaką ogrywają indywidualnie i zbiorowo. Ma to zachęcać wszystkich wiernych do pełnego, aktywnego i uświęcającego uczestnictwa w liturgii, a przez to uwielbienia Boga.

Słowa kluczowe: euchologia; kolekta; natchnienie; słowo Boże; liturgia.