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THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM
AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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From the General Introduction

These papers, commissioned by the International Federation *Una Voce*, are offered to stimulate and inform debate about the 1962 Missal among Catholics ‘attached to the ancient Latin liturgical tradition’, and others interested in the liturgical renewal of the Church. They are not to be taken to imply personal or moral criticism of those today or in the past who have adopted practices or advocated reforms which are subjected to criticism. In composing these papers we adopt the working assumption that our fellow Catholics act in good will, but that nevertheless a vigorous and well-informed debate is absolutely necessary if those who act in good will are to do so in light of a proper understanding of the issues.

The authors of the papers are not named, as the papers are not the product of any one person, and also because we prefer them to be judged on the basis of their content, not their authorship.

The International Federation *Una Voce* humbly submits the opinions contained in these papers to the judgement of the Church.

The Extraordinary Form and Sub-Saharan Africa: Abstract

The Church in Africa faces challenges from the influence of a secularised Western culture, from the difficulties of authentic inculturation, and from the tensions and conflicts of societies divided along tribal and linguistic lines. In all these challenges, the Extraordinary Form can prove helpful, encapsulating as it does many of the principles of concern for tradition, reverence, and a sense of sin and of the sacred, that characterise African spirituality; providing a stable bulwark against syncretism which allows a more open attitude to African cultural practices; and avoiding the problems of preferring one language, often a former colonial one, over others. While the availability of the Extraordinary Form remains very limited in Africa, it is growing, and Africa’s bishops and religious orders should seize the opportunities which it represents.

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THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

1. The post-Conciliar Papal Magisterium¹ identify a number of challenges facing the rapidly growing Church in Africa. On the one hand, Africa's traditional religions, culture, and tribal social structure pose both opportunities and challenges to the evangelising Church and to social stability and development. On the other hand, the rapid economic development, urbanisation, and exposure to Western culture also create challenges for the Church, as well as opportunities for Africans seeking to escape poverty.

Traditional African culture

2. An important theme is the importance of traditional African culture, including religious culture. Pope St John Paul II expressed this powerfully when he acknowledged, in his 1995 Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, that

these [sc. traditional] religions are the living expression of the soul of vast groups of people.²

In relation to the influence of Western culture, which is frequently corrosive of any kind of spirituality, he continued by urging Africans:

look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions; look to the faith which we are celebrating in this assembly.³

3. The Extraordinary Form expresses many fundamental principles of African culture, without the danger of religious syncretism. First among these is the profound respect for tradition and continuity found in traditional African culture,⁴ in which past generations of the family and tribe are regarded as continuing members of the community.⁵ The African theologian Bénézet Bujo describes this as follows:

Tradition, then, in the African way of thinking, is not to be regarded in a deterministic, much less in a fatalistic, way. It is to be regarded rather as a potency, which the individual may choose to actuate or not. Success or failure depends on a personal choice: in freely recalling the life-giving actions and words of the ancestors, a person is choosing life; but in neglecting these things, that person is choosing death.

¹ It is noteworthy that two special Synods on Africa have taken place in Rome, in 1994 and 2009: the former leading to Pope St John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995), and the latter to Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation *Africae munus* (2011).

² *Ecclesia in Africa* 47: 'quandoquidem ipsae significanter animum exprimunt magnae gentium partis'. Cf. *The Message of the Synod* (1994) 21: 'Particular attention should be paid to our customs and traditions insofar as they constitute our cultural heritage.'

³ *Ecclesia in Africa* 48: 'ut intra vos inspiciatis. Vestrarum traditionum divitias respicite, fidem respicite quam hac in congressione celebravimus.' This is a quotation from Pope St John Paul II's sermon in Lilongwe during a visit to Africa (6th May 1989).

⁴ Bénézet Bujo *African Theology in its Social Context*, trans John O'Donohue (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992; first published in German, 1986) p30.

⁵ See Bujo *op. cit.* p25 and *passim*.

4. Other African cultural-religious principles would include the liturgical principles of mystery and reverence, and a very vivid sense of the reality of the spiritual realm, and of sin.⁶
5. The ancient Latin liturgical tradition is deeply imbued with these principles, which are to an extent common to many traditional societies and indeed to traditional Catholic spirituality. This is something the Latin tradition has in common with those liturgical rites which have developed in Africa itself: those of the ‘great African Churches of Egypt and Ethiopia’.⁷ While distinct in many ways from the Latin Rite, these rites, like the Eastern rites in general, still have much in common with the Extraordinary Form, as discussed in *Positio* 21.⁸
6. It is significant, in this context, that the syncretistic religious group known as Legio Maria,⁹ which has spread from Kenya to many countries of East Africa,¹⁰ has retained a Latin liturgy from its Catholic origins.¹¹
7. In offering a liturgical and spiritual framework which pays proper respect to the traditional principles just noted, in the Extraordinary Form, the Church gives a place of refuge to a religious culture which is otherwise in danger of being overwhelmed by attitudes and practices inspired by post-Enlightenment Western ideas, in a particularly debased, commercialised form.

⁶ *Ecclesia in Africa* 42: ‘Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world. The reality of sin in its individual and social forms is very much present in the consciousness of these peoples, as is also the need for rites of purification and expiation.’ (‘Africani alto religionis sensu praediti sunt, sacrarum rerum sensu, Dei creatoris existentiae sensu et rerum spiritualium. Peccatum, in suis tum privatis tum socialibus formis, in illorum populorum conscientia inest, atque necessitas quoque purificationis et expiationis rituum animadvertitur.’) Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with Journalists (23rd March 2009): ‘On the other hand, the spirit of recollection in the liturgies, the strong sense of the sacred, made a great impression on me: in the liturgies, the groups were not putting themselves forward, they were not drawing attention to themselves, but there was the presence of the sacred, of God himself: likewise in the way they moved, they were always respectful and conscious of the divine presence. This made a great impression on me.’ Cf. Bl. Pope Paul VI *Motu Proprio Africae terrarum* (1967) 8.

⁷ *Message of the Synod* issued by the Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, 6th May 1994. Cf. *Ecclesia in Africa* 31: ‘In recalling the ancient glories of Christian Africa, we wish to express our profound respect for the Churches with which we are not in full communion: the Greek Church of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Coptic Church of Egypt and the Church of Ethiopia, which share with the Catholic Church a common origin and the doctrinal and spiritual heritage of the great Fathers and Saints, not only of their own land, but of all the early Church. They have laboured much and suffered much to keep the Christian name alive in Africa through all the vicissitudes of history’ (‘Attamen, dum veterum Africae christianae laudum redintegramus memoriam, eas impensa prosequi observantia placet Ecclesias, quibus haud plena utimur communionem: Ecclesiam dicimus Graecam Alexandrini Patriarchatus, Ecclesiam Coptam Aegypti et Ecclesiam Aethiopicam. Ipsae enim communes cum catholica Ecclesia et doctrinam et spiritualem disciplinam hereditarias habent a magnis Patribus sanctisque viris, qui non modo ad earum regiones, sed ad universam etiam Ecclesiam antiquam pertinent. Huc accedit quod tot egregia opera patravertunt durasque acerbitates perpessae sunt, ne unquam per varietatem temporum christianum nomen in Africa restingeretur.’) This passage is part of an extended quotation from Bl. Pope Paul VI, *motu proprio Africae terrarum* (1967).

⁸ *Positio* 21: *The Extraordinary Form and the Eastern Churches*.

⁹ Its formal name is ‘Legio Maria of African Church Mission’. Founded in the early 1960s among the Luo of Kenya, it has more than a million adherents today.

¹⁰ Notably, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia.

¹¹ See Matthew Kustenbauder “Believing in the Black Messiah: The Legio Maria Church in an African Christian Landscape” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* Vol. 13, Issue 1 (2009) pp11–40, p14: ‘The material elements of Roman Catholic Christianity—so easily recognized by Western observers in the flowing robes, substantial rosaries and Latin Mass of Legio Maria’s followers—remain intact only insofar as they have helped Legios reframe Christian faith within their own cultural complex’.

Pope Benedict XVI called this cultural invasion a ‘culture shock’;¹² the bishops of Africa at the 1994 Synod exclaimed ‘our identity is being crushed in the mortar’. This assault on African culture has appropriately been described as ‘neo-colonialism’.

8. This conflict between the traditional principles of African spirituality and Western cultural influence creates an unfamiliar context for many liturgical progressives, who have often explicitly seen their proposals as attempts to come to terms with the triumph of post-Enlightenment culture, a triumph which, in their view, can no longer be contested. However we might assess this project in the context of the developed world, the proposal to make concessions to Rationalism, for example, by excluding silence and complex ceremonial from the liturgy, or to make concessions to Romanticism, by promoting informality and spontaneity, take on very different appearance in the African context. There is a real danger of such tendencies assisting the neo-colonial attack on indigenous African spirituality.

Inculturation

9. Considering the historical progress of the Faith in Europe, Latin America, and Asia, it is clear that while Latin Catholicism has had an important influence on local cultures, it does not obliterate them,¹³ but rather has enabled them to develop, as authentic expressions of the genius of the people of these regions.¹⁴ The result is the wonderful diversity of Catholic culture which can be seen around the world. The simultaneous cultural, political, and religious transformation of Africa in the colonial period tends to obscure the application of this generalisation to Africa, but it must be insisted upon, and the demand for ‘inculturation’ must be seen in this context. As Bl. Pope Paul VI expressed it:

For since Christ’s teaching and redemption fulfils, renews and perfects all the good things innate in men’s traditional behaviour, it follows that an African man, when initiated into the Christian religion, is by no means forced to repudiate himself; instead, he takes up again “in spirit and in truth” (John 4.24) the ancient strengths of his people.¹⁵

¹² *Africae munus* 11; cf. *Message of the Synod* 15: ‘But the culture which gave its identity to our people is in serious crisis. On the eve of the 21st century when our identity is being crushed in the mortar of a merciless chain of events, the fundamental need is for prophets to arise and speak in the name of God of hope for the creation of a new identity.’

¹³ Cf. *Ecclesia in Africa* 59: ‘On several occasions the Synod Fathers stressed the particular importance for evangelization of inculturation, the process by which “catechesis ‘takes flesh’ in the various cultures”.’ (‘Crebrius extulerunt synodales Patres momentum praecipuum quod habet in ipsa evangelizatione insertio in culturam: processus nempe quo catechetica institutio diversis in culturis veluti *concorporatur*.’) This passage quotes Pope St John Paul II *Catechesi Tradendae*, 53.

¹⁴ In many ways the Church’s role has been to help local cultures withstand potentially destructive outside influences, notably by making possible permanent records of important literature and music, and opening up new avenues of art and architecture for the expression of local cultural ideas. Examples would be the preservation of the native vernacular poetry of the British Isles and Scandinavia, and the native artistic traditions particularly of the Irish. These cultural monuments from the early Middle Ages continue to be regarded as foundational to the distinct cultural traditions of these countries to this day. In a different way, the Church made possible the outstanding and unique contribution to the Baroque style of architecture in Latin America.

¹⁵ Bl. Pope Paul VI *Motu Proprio Africae terrarum* (1967) 14: ‘Cum enim Christi doctrina et redemptio omnia compleat, renovet et perficiat bona, in traditis hominum moribus insita, Africanus idcirco homo, dum christianis sacris initiatur, non cogitur quidem semetipsum repudiare, sed veteres suae gentis virtutes *in spiritu et veritate* (John 4:24) resumit.’ (English translation by RPD.)

10. The question is complicated, however, by the opposing forces of syncretism and Evangelical Protestantism, the latter tending to reject all traces of African culture. Syncretistic cults and Evangelical congregations are common in Africa and spread readily, with opposite critiques of the Catholic Church.
11. This situation magnifies the importance of discernment in inculturation, an issue given repeated stress laid by the Papal Magisterium.¹⁶ Indiscreet inculturation has on occasion led to liturgical abuses¹⁷ and church buildings unworthy of the liturgy.¹⁸
12. Inculturation takes place best in the context of a stable liturgy which, while clearly distinct from pagan worship, still appeals to authentic African religious sensibilities. In this context it is not problematic, for example, to permit important African practices such as the bride price, or the use of indigenous names, contrary to the forces which would see the rejection of such things as necessary for a rejection of paganism itself.¹⁹
13. A related point stressed by the Papal Magisterium is the problem of superstition, witchcraft, and the fear of hostile spirits, which can be found in traditional African religion, and cannot easily be excluded from young Christian communities.²⁰ The Extraordinary Form, especially through the blessings of the Roman Ritual, has the effect of really protecting the faithful, as well as calming the minds of the superstitious. This liturgical tradition developed over time in a society that was itself prey to superstition and witchcraft, both real and imagined, and reflects the wisdom of the Church in dealing with it.²¹

Linguistic Pluralism in Africa

14. The reality of vernacular liturgy in Africa for a great number of Africans is liturgy not in their mother tongue, but in a second language, often the former colonial language or, in East Africa,

¹⁶ See Pope Benedict XVI *Africae munus* 37: 'The Holy Spirit enables the Gospel to permeate all cultures, without becoming subservient to any. Bishops should be vigilant over this need for inculturation, respecting the norms established by the Church. By discerning which cultural elements and traditions are contrary to the Gospel, they will be able to separate the good seed from the weeds (cf. *Mt* 13:26).' Cf. Bl. Pope Paul VI *Africae terrarum* 8.

¹⁷ *Africae munus* 153: 'I exhort the whole Church in Africa to show particular care for the celebration of the Eucharist, memorial of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, sign of unity and bond of charity, paschal banquet and pledge of eternal life. The Eucharist should be celebrated with dignity and beauty, in compliance with the established norms.'

¹⁸ *Africae munus* 154: 'There is also a need to ensure that the architecture of these sacred edifices is worthy of the mystery they celebrate and in conformity with ecclesiastical legislation and local style.'

¹⁹ See Bujo *op. cit.* p44-47. Although Bujo appears to wish to extend the Church's embrace of African culture to polygamy and the use of invalid matter for the Mass, his list of things lost in Christianisation include indigenous names, knowledge of medicinal plants, drumming, art, and all manner of customs surrounding hunting and life events.

²⁰ *Africae munus* 93: 'Witchcraft, which is based on the traditional religions, is currently experiencing a certain revival. Old fears are re-surfacing and creating paralyzing bonds of subjection. Anxiety over health, well-being, children, the climate, and protection from evil spirits at times lead people to have recourse to practices of traditional African religions that are incompatible with Christian teaching. The problem of "dual affiliation" – to Christianity and to the traditional African religions – remains a challenge.'

²¹ Pope Benedict XVI in his *Letter to Bishops* accompanying the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* (2007) notes the 'sacrality' of the Extraordinary Form.

Swahili.²² The enormous number of languages in Africa—Nigeria alone has 500 language groups—means that it is impossible either to produce Missals in all languages,²³ or to provide priests who would be able to use such Missals. In South Africa, for example, only four of the nine official indigenous languages are used for the Catholic liturgy;²⁴ in Kenya, a country of 69 languages, only English and Swahili are used.

15. Even if this obstacle could be surmounted, many urban parishes are home to the speakers of many languages, which may include those of migrants or refugees from other countries. The limitations on time and clergy mean that, again, a formal or informal *lingua franca* has to be employed.

16. The practical result is a very widespread use of the former colonial languages in the liturgy, and a concomitant increase in those languages' perceived prestige. Latin has the virtue of not only not belonging to any particular tribe,²⁵ but also of not being the language of any colonial power, or of contemporary European or American cultural influence. As Pope St John XXIII expressed it:

Of its very nature Latin is most suitable for promoting every culture among diverse peoples, for it gives no rise to jealousies, it does not favour any one group, but presents itself with equal impartiality, gracious and friendly to all.²⁶

17. One consequence of Africa's linguistic pluralism is a willingness among Africans to learn new languages; having a second or third language is commonplace even among the less educated. The willingness to learn new languages in no way excludes Latin, when Latin is given a place in the liturgy.

²² Although used and understood by many more, only 15 million Africans speak Swahili as a mother tongue.

²³ The bishops discussed the project of translating the Scriptures into all African languages in *Message 18*; the problem of finding a suitable sacred register of each language for the liturgy is underlined by Congregation for Divine Worship Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (2001) 21: Referring to 'translations intended for peoples recently brought to the Christian Faith', it warns: 'In particular, caution should be exercised in introducing words drawn from non-Christian religions.'

²⁴ In Johannesburg (a metropolis of 6 million, and including speakers of all the official languages) at very most three of these languages would be used. It should be noted that the Church in South Africa is incomparably better-resourced than in other African countries. In busy multi-lingual city parishes even the most important indigenous languages tend to have the less convenient time-slots for Mass.

²⁵ *Ecclesia in Africa* 49: 'It has been rightly noted that, within the borders left behind by the colonial powers, the co-existence of ethnic groups with different traditions, languages, and even religions often meets obstacles arising from serious mutual hostility. "Tribal oppositions at times endanger if not peace, at least the pursuit of the common good of the society. They also create difficulties for the life of the Churches and the acceptance of Pastors from other ethnic groups". This is why the Church in Africa feels challenged by the specific responsibility of healing these divisions.' ('Merito sane dictum est intra fines qui ex colonicis regiminibus manarunt, translaticiarum consuetudinum, sermonum et etiam religionum diversarum coniunctam existentiam saepe ob mutuas contentiones impedimento esse. "Tribuum dissentiones in discrimen vocant, si non pacem, in universum societatis saltem bonum commune adipiscendum, atque difficultates quoque afferunt Ecclesiarum vitae necnon aliarum stirpium pastoribus recipiendis") The passage quotes a document of the Pontifical Commission Iustitia et Pax *I pregiudizi razziali. La Chiesa di fronte al razzismo*, (1988).

²⁶ Pope St John XXIII Apostolic Constitution *Veterum Sapientia* (1962) 3. 'Suae enim sponte naturae lingua Latina ad provehendum apud populos quoslibet omnem humanitatis cultum est peraccommodata: cum invidiam non commoveat, singulis gentibus se aequabilem praestet, nullius partibus faveat, omnibus postremo sit grata et amica.'

Prospects for the Extraordinary Form in Africa

18. The Extraordinary Form has only a limited availability in Africa today.²⁷ In Africa as elsewhere there is a difficulty in training sufficient numbers of priests to celebrate the Extraordinary. Another factor has been a strong concern for unity with the Holy See among African Catholics, during the long period in which the legal status of the former liturgical books was unclear. Now this has been clarified, attitudes can begin to change.
19. It is now a matter for African bishops, and religious orders active in Africa, to ensure that the ‘riches which have developed in the Church’s faith and prayer’²⁸ are available to African Catholics, as they should be to all Catholics. The circumstances of the Church in Africa should not make us hesitate to offer this treasure there, but encourage us to promote it as much as possible. As the Extraordinary Form played its part in the evangelisation of Africa in the past, so it can continue to nourish the spiritual lives of African Catholics today.
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²⁷ The Institute of Christ the King has an apostolate in the Diocese of Mouila in Gabon, and the Fraternity of St Peter one in the diocese of Orlu in Nigeria. The EF is available in a number of places in South Africa thanks to the work of Una Voce South Africa. The website ‘Wikimissa’ also lists provision by diocesan clergy in Natitingou, Benin, and Libreville, Gabon. Other countries are served by the SSPX (which also has a presence in some of the countries already mentioned): namely Bujumbura, Burundi; Yaounde and Douala, Cameroon; Accra, Ghana; Mauritius; Nairobi and other locations in Kenya; La Reunion; Arivonimamo, Madagascar; Omaruru and Windhoek, Namibia; Kampala and other locations in Uganda; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Mansa, Zambia; and Harare and Tafara, Zimbabwe. Source: <http://honneurs.free.fr/Wikini/wakka.php?wiki=Afrique> (accessed 20th April 2015).

²⁸ Pope Benedict XVI *Letter to Bishops* (2007) accompanying the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum*