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The Apostolate of the Igbo Church Musicians

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Abstract

The white missionaries who brought the Good News of Jesus to Igbo land used various strategies to make their message reach every nook and cranny of Igbo nation. Such strategies include hospital apostolate, school apostolate etc. Music was hardly emphasized as a veritable tool to download the word of God into the minds of the people. But music is effective, even more than spoken words, in making the contents of any message permeate the recesses of the minds of the recipients. The repetitive nature of the refrain or the chorus helps to stamp the libretto indelibly into the mind. Because of this power of music, there is need therefore for a music apostolate. Music can be effectively used to actualize the mandate that Jesus had given to his disciples to make his message known to everyone. The Igbo Church musicians can fruitfully engage in this apostolate if they use the Igbo cultural features to carry out their functions.

Key words: Apostolate, Music, Culture

Introduction

Jesus, the Son of God, came down on earth with a message of eternal salvation for the entire human family. He passed on this message through his word and the personal testimony of his life. His eternal message, however, did not reach

every corner of the globe before he transited back to heaven. Nevertheless, he entrusted his disciples with the mandate to make his message available to everyone. He charged them to “make disciples of all nations...teach them to observe all the commands I gave you” (Matthew 28: 19-20). The Apostles themselves could not accomplish this task in its entirety before they ran up their own span of life. They handed over the mandate of Jesus to the Bishops together with their collaborators – the priests, the deacons and the baptized lay faithful.

In this paper, we examine how the Church musicians can make their own contributions towards the actualization of the mandate of Jesus to the Apostles. The paper will limit itself, however, to the consideration of how the Igbo Church musicians can use music to enhance this evangelizing mission that Jesus entrusted to the Apostles. Before this, we would like to examine the nature of apostolate and how it serves as an efficacious means in the evangelization of people.

Apostolates in the Church

In the course of the centuries, various strategies aimed at making the spread of the Good News effective were developed. These strategies are the different apostolates that exist in the Church today. The word “apostolate” refers to any activity that promotes the mission of the Apostles. To understand apostolate as an effective strategy in the spreading of the Good News, the word “apostolate” itself must be distinguished from the banal meaning of the word “ministry” as it is used, for example, in the phrase, “healing ministry”. Apostolate and ministry are not identical or synonymous terms. Every apostolate involves ministration or service but not every ministry is an apostolate. The ministration or service that is predicated to any apostolate is selfless. Indeed, the contents of apostolate are: sacrifice, selflessness and abnegation. In the exercise of any true apostolate, there is the fulfilment of Jesus’ mandate: “You received without charge, give without charge” (Matt. 10: 8). This explains why Jesus asked his disciples not to take anything on their journey when he sent them out to go and proclaim the Good News of God. Apostolate does not imply economic advantage or self-serving adventure. Its ultimate aim is the proclamation of the message of Christ that leads to conversion. But this is not the same with healing ministry as observed in many healing centres. It does not involve genuine selflessness and abnegation, whereas these are the hallmarks of the apostolate.

From the foregoing, it is clear that many of those involved in the healing ministry are not engaged in any apostolate. But those who are involved in one form of selfless activity or another on account of the gospel are the ones who are engaged in the real apostolate. They are the ones who are very effective in drawing souls to God.

There are many Apostolates in the Church. School apostolate is one of them. This is used effectively in mission countries. It was used, for example, by Bishop

Joseph Shanahan in his missionary activity in Igbo land. It yielded maximum benefits for the Church. The pupils who enrolled in the mission schools did so primarily in order to acquire Western education. But, in the course of their studies, they were taught the Good News of salvation. Many of them became believers at their impressionable age. Overwhelmed by the impressive success of his school apostolate, Bishop Shanahan affirmed at the end of 1908 that the school apostolate was the “best solution to the problem of evangelizing the natives, and that not only among the huge Ibo nation...but also among the only other very big tribe he had contacted – the Effiks down Calabar way.” (Jordan, 1971)

Other Apostolates in the Church include: hospital apostolate, teaching apostolate, youth apostolate, culture apostolate, apostolate of the sick and the poor, etc. It is perhaps necessary to show further how some of these apostolates bring about conversion and the spreading of the Good News. Let us take, for example, the apostolate of the sick and the poor. Mother Teresa of Calcutta was quintessential in this apostolate. The success story of her apostolate can be seen in her interaction with Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. The latter narrates:

I once asked Mother Teresa, who converted 15,000 men out of the gutters of Calcutta, ‘How, after dragging these poor mortals to your hospice, could you ever evangelize them and teach them the Gospel? And she said ‘I didn’t.’ When I took care of them and showed them love, I would ask them, ‘Would you like to hear about Christ?’ And they would say, ‘Is Christ like you?’ Mother Teresa would say, ‘No, but I try to be like him.’ Then I want to be Christian’ (Fulton J. Sheen, 1999).

So from her charitable work she was able to make Christ known to the people and win their souls to God.

Another example of an apostolate that draws people to conversion or even enhances the Christian practice of exiting members is culture apostolate. Msgr. Martin Maduka of blessed memory was an icon of this apostolate. He had a very strong conviction that culture was a veritable means of evangelizing the people. He can truly be said to have been at the vanguard of this apostolate in Igbo land. He did this through personal example. Among other things, he wore cultural attires in place of soutane, enrolled in cultural institutions like *Ozo*, formed cultural dancing troupes and masquerades, etc. His involvement in cultural ways of life elicited admiration from the traditionalists, who at the time entered the Church in their numbers and became believers. His culture apostolate was very prominent at Nteje where he served as a parish priest. The parish priest before him, a white missionary, failed in his missionary activity because he was disdainful of the Nteje people’s love of traditional music. He placed a ban on it. Many, however, left the Church as a result of this. The

Church, however, witnessed tremendous conversions when Msgr. Maduka was posted there as the parish priest. He lifted the ban placed on cultural dances and displays. He participated in cultural activities himself. As a result of these, new conversions were made, and those who left the Church returned. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that his emphasis on culture was not an end in itself but a means to another end. The presence of the new converts in their numbers offered him the precious opportunity to instruct them properly on the message of salvation. Indeed, catechesis was his main apostolate (Asiegbu and Umezina, 1994). But he used his emphasis on culture to allure the people into the Church.

In this paper, we discuss the music apostolate, that is, the apostolate of the Igbo Church musicians. Is it necessary to have music apostolate? Can it draw people to God just like other apostolates? This paper believes that it can and can even do it in a more efficient and ennobling way.

Music as an Apostolate

Jesus did not embark on the spreading of the Good News of the Kingdom through the instrumentality of music. The Bible noted just one occasion when he sang. He did this together with his disciples (Matt. 26: 30). And this took place after the Last Supper. It is assumed that since the last supper took place in the context of the feast of the Passover, the most likely hymn which he sang together with his disciples at the end of their meal was Psalm 136 (Barclay, 2003). This is a great song of praise. They might have rendered that psalm with the traditional melody for the Bible did not record that they composed the melody they used in singing it. One can assume and rightly so that Jesus must have stunned his disciples with the beautiful sound that came from his beautiful voice. This assumption is legitimately inferred from the fact that “Everything he does is good” (Mark 7: 37). In spite of having been endowed with a beautiful voice, he did not deem it necessary to use music as a tool in his mission to make the Good News available to all.

The Apostles, like Jesus himself, did not employ music as an instrument in carrying out the mandate which Jesus had entrusted to them. It is true that they sang with him at the Last Supper, but they did not consider music as a strategic instrument in the spreading of the Good News. This observation, however, does not imply that they did not recognize the importance of music in our relationship with God. Paul and Silas, who were Apostles by the special grace of God, were said to have sung hymns of praise to God when they were being incarcerated in the prison. Their fellow prisoners listened to them as they did so (Acts 16: 25). The prisoners could have been baffled that Paul and Silas were singing hymns of praise in the midst of their suffering; they could have wondered aloud what could be the source of their joy. Paul did not only love to sing praises to God but also urged the Colossians “With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired hymns to God.”(Col. 3: 16) and

the Ephesians “Sing psalms and hymns and inspired hymns among yourselves, singing and chanting to the Lord in your heart” (Ephesians 5: 19).

Be that as it may, the music apostolate, like other apostolates, can be used to propagate the message of the Gospel. People naturally attend and appreciate liturgical ceremonies which are spiced with beautiful music. As they come in their numbers, an excellent opportunity is created for the evangelizer to pass on to the congregation the living Word of God. So music serves (1) the function of making the people love to attend the liturgical celebrations; (2) it offers them the opportunity of hearing the Word of God as read from the Scripture and as presented by the preacher; (3) it provides them with the opportunity of hearing the word of God as contained in the lyrics of the hymns. Music achieves all these when it is presented in an appropriate manner.

The word of God that is presented in a musical setting has the possibility of producing various emotions that may lead to conversion or to a much better appreciation of the Gospel message. This explains why Charles Jennens wanted to tap on George Frederick Handel’s musical talent in his bid to fight against Deism which was prevalent at their time. Deism is a belief that affirms the existence of God but denies his interference or intervention in human projects. Consequently, a Deist rejects the incarnation, the suffering and death of Jesus for the salvation of mankind. According to Stapert “Deism was fundamentally at odds with Christian beliefs...Deists did not believe in the need for a Messiah.” (Stapert, 2010). For Charles Jennens, the most effective way to confront Deism squarely was to present the Gospel message in musical form. His conviction is predicated on his belief that music has a dramatic effect on those who listen to it. For this reason, he went into partnership with Handel. It is said that he was the one who provided Handel with the short scriptural texts with which he composed the *Messiah* (Stapert, 2010). The stories of the incarnation, death and resurrection are all contained in the Handel’s *Messiah*. In compiling the *Messiah*’s libretto, it is said that Charles Jennens had probably hoped to convert “Atheists, Deists, Jews and Mahometans and anyone else who did not believe Jesus Christ to be the Messiah but may have been more concerned to stem the tide of Deism”(Stapert, 2010). And since the *Messiah* has been performed to millions of audience around the world, to that extent has it been used to preach the Gospel message. Thus, music can be a useful instrument in the actualization of the mandate given to the Apostles to go out and spread the good news.

At this juncture we examine how the Church in Igbo land responded to the call of the Vatican II Fathers to use the elements of Culture to express the message of Christ. In this regard, we focus attention particularly on the Igbo indigenous music.

The Igbo Church and Music

The Vatican Council II acknowledges the symbiosis of the Gospel of Jesus and the cultural elements of the different cultural groups. And it affirms this when it states:

There are many links between the message of salvation and culture. In his self-revelation to his people culminating in the fullness of manifestation in his incarnate Son, God spoke according to the culture proper to each age. Similarly the Church has existed through the centuries in varying circumstances and has utilized the resources of different cultures in its preaching to spread and explain the message of Christ (Flannery, 2001).

In his address to the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria in 1982, Saint Pope John Paul II called on them to know that “It is forever true that the path of culture is the path of man, and it is on this path that man encounters the One who embodies the values of all cultures and fully reveals the man of each culture to himself.” (John Paul II, 1982) This was a clarion call on the Bishops to use the elements of culture to propagate the Gospel.

The call by the Vatican Council II to use the elements of culture to spread the Gospel was taken up seriously by the Church in Igbo land. The Bible was translated into Igbo; the Order of Mass – *Usoro Emume* was produced and a book of ritual blessings in Igbo was also published. There were many cultural elements that were introduced in the celebration of the Eucharist, funeral rites, processions, etc. There was also a significant development in the area of music. Many Igbo musicians played important role in the music development in Igbo liturgy. I wish to mention a few of them, namely, Msgr. Cyril Ezenduka, Prof. Richard Okafor, Mrs. Dorothy Ipere and Mr. Jude Nnam.

Msgr. Cyril Ezenduka was a talented musician whose musical prowess is evident particularly in the composition of Igbo hymns. Before he was sent to study music formally in the United States, he had already composed many beautiful hymns to his credit. He returned to Nigeria with a Master’s Degree in Music, which he obtained from the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

In his vernacular compositions, one finds the adaptation of church music to the local circumstances of the people. In his work, there is the expression of the universal Church music in the Igbo musical setting. Examples abound. They include, for instance, the Benediction hymns, the Prefaces, the *Ecce Sacerdos*, the Psalms, and the *Exsultet* etc. His other compositions are in conformity with the stipulation of the Vatican II, which is that the lyrics in Church music ought to be Scripture based and doctrinal in content.

Part of the reasons why Ezenduka's compositions are evergreen is not only that the lyrics are drawn from the Scripture and the teachings of the Church, but also the fact that he respected the tonality of Igbo language. There is no ambiguity in the meaning of the words. One does not find in his compositions where a word with different tonalities and their corresponding meanings are misapplied.

Ezenduka achieved a lot in his career as an Igbo Church musician because he was a man of faith. His compositions lend credence to this. They showcase him as someone who was very familiar with the Scripture; who read it attentively, understood and imbibed its message and was determined to share it with others. He used different means such as the choirs and singing competitions to spread his music. He travelled to every part of Igbo land to attend occasions such as funerals. It was through this method that the funeral hymns such as, *Ndi nso nke Chukwu*, *Ka Ndi Muo Ozi duba gi na Paradise*, etc, spread to the people. He intoned and led in the singing of these hymns. He was really engaged in the music apostolate.

Another Church musician who helped to develop Igbo Church music is Prof. Richard Okafor. He was a choirmaster and organist at St Patrick's Catholic Church, Enugu, for many years. He led the choir to win prizes at the diocesan singing competitions and the then Eastern Nigerian Music Festival of Arts. Because of his commitment and contributions to the development of Church music in Enugu Diocese, he was encouraged by Most Rev. Godfrey Okoye CSSP, the then Bishop of Enugu diocese to apply to study music at the University. He did. His admission into the department of music at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was sponsored by Bishop Okoye himself. Because of his brilliant performance as the best student in his class in the 1972/73 academic session, he was awarded the University's Foundation scholarship. He was employed after his graduation to teach music as a Junior Fellow at the same university. Later he was given the scholarship by the UNN to do his postgraduate studies in Ethnomusicology at the Queen's University of Belfast. He got his PhD in Music in 1980. He is now Professor of music. His contributions to the development of Church music in Nigeria are immense.

Dorothy Ipere is yet another great Igbo Church Musician. She is a great composer, choir mistress and soprano singer. She has contributed enormously in music development in Igbo land. St Michael's choir, Asata, Enugu was very popular for many years when it was being directed by Dorothy Ipere. Dorothy was once the director of ABC singers and the Enugu Catholic Diocesan Choir. She won many prizes as a super soprano singer at the then Eastern Nigerian Music Festival of Arts. In 1983, she participated with her group in the World Religious Competition which took place in Rome. She got the second position out of the 450 groups that took part in this keenly contested singing competition which was organized by Corda Cordi. Dorothy has the following publications to her credit: 3 hymnals – *Ukwe Advent na*

Christmas, Leenu Nwaturu nke Chukwu and Gawanu na Mba nile; 2 folk operas: *A Young Girl's Dilemma* and *Life is in the Ear*. She also published a text book for beginners in music. The title is: *Rudiments of Music Made Simple*.

Jude Nnam is a household name in Church music in Igbo land. He is a prolific composer and a conductor. The melodies and rhythms of his compositions are unique and germane to Igbo sense of music and dynamism. The Common of the Mass which he composed in the early 1990s is frequently used today in solemn Eucharistic celebrations. Jude Nnam has a Master's Degree in Music. He is currently employed by the Bishop of Abuja Archdiocese, His Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan to help to raise the quality of music performance in the Archdiocese.

The Church is highly indebted to the above mentioned church musicians and many others not mentioned for the faith-driven work which they did in the development of Church music. The Church will never cease to reap the fruits of their adaptation of the universal Church music to Igbo Church. While we continue to adapt the Church music, the new crop of Igbo Church musicians ought to use more than ever the cultural forms and behaviour of the Igbo people in their compositions. This is to say that the way the Igbo sing and dance during their cultural celebrations ought to have more influence on how the Igbo Church musicians compose their hymns for liturgical celebrations. This is what is called inculturation. Inculturation is distinguishable from adaptation. It is, however, only a subtle distinction. Adaptation is the symmetry of two cultures. It implies that what is found in one culture is fitted to suit another culture, though expressed in the latter's cultural forms. For example, just as we sing the *Ecce Sacerdos* in Latin in Pontifical Masses, so must its translation *Lee Nnukwu Ukochukwu* be sung in Igbo in masses presided over by the Bishop. Inculturation is different from this. In the idea of inculturation, there is an attempt to use what is original or distinctive of a cultural group to worship God. This original cultural expression does not necessarily need to be in any other culture. Inculturating the Igbo attitude in music needs to be explored and developed much more vigorously than it is done at the present.

The Second Phase in the Development of Igbo Church Music

The Igbo are pragmatic in nature. They want to see immediately the result of their undertaking. They participate actively in their undertakings. In their community worship, they show extraordinary interest and involvement. They respond with strong emotion and active presence to the prayers led by the leader of the traditional worshipping community (Arinze, 1978). Each intention is presented in a sentence or a few sentences. The response to the prayer is short as well. Their music follows the same pattern. It is in the form of call and response. For example,

Call*Oriri, oriri, oriri o,**Oriri, oriri, oriri o,**Oriri kpo anyi ihu ma oru akpola anyi o,**Onye abiakwala n'ebe anyi na-eri anu na azu,**Oriri, oriri, oriri o***Response***Oriri biam biam n'onu.**Oriri biam biam n'onu.**Oriri biam biam n'onu.**Okpukpu azu emee gbado ya n'onu.**Oriri biam biam n'onu. (Nzeako, 1986)*

The Igbo music is also narrative in form. In its narrative form, the soloist is set to narrate an event or tell a story, while the choristers supply the background music. The chorus is short and it is sung repeatedly as the soloist sings along. The narrative form of Igbo music bolsters the claim that "Igbo music is not only to listen to, but also to learn from. Folk hymns contain instructions, guidance, chronicles, laws, taboos etc." (Okafor, 2005). Igbo music provides an avenue to teach or inform. Because the chorus is short and simple, the audience is able to listen well, understand and internalize the content of the teaching or the information that the soloist is trying to communicate. Alternatively, however, the message is presented in spoken form while the singing of the chorus goes on repeatedly. The second phase of Igbo Church music should have the structure of the call and response as well as the narrative forms of traditional Igbo music. Occasionally, however, it should be set in the larger forms of music like Masses and Anthems as it exists in the Western World.

The inculturation of the call and response or the narrative form of Igbo traditional music into the Igbo church music will not make the latter to be less sacred. It will not diminish the character of the sacred music which is universality. We can appreciate this assertion when we understand this claim in the context of the meaning of substance. Substance is made up of matter and form. Here, form is understood in its Thomistic sense. It is what gives being to matter. It is the essence of a thing. Matter, on the other hand, is the principle of individuation, that which separates a thing from another (Glenn, 1978). Like substance, the sacred music is constituted of text, melody and rhythm. The text is the form while the melody and the rhythm are the matter. The universal character of sacred music is retained if the text is drawn from the scripture and the teachings of the church. The common themes in the Scripture and the teachings of the Church contained in the musical texts make them to be universal. But then the melody and the rhythm as aspects of the sacred music must not be universal. They can differ from one culture to another. They are like matter; they distinguish one type of traditional music from the other. Hence, the Igbo church music is sacred if the text is based on the Scripture or the doctrine of the Church even though it is presented in the form of call and response or in the narrative form.

We can explain this point further by making an illustration with the word “philosophy”. Philosophy is a universal discipline because it deals with the same themes such as: God, man, the soul, justice, good, evil, being, etc. But different regions of the world do not use the same method in their analysis of these concepts. This is why there are different philosophies. They include: Western, Chinese, Asian, African philosophies etc. In the same way, sacred music is universal in nature because it deals with the same themes from the Scripture and the teachings of the Church. But the expression of these themes varies from one culture to another.

The Classification of the Igbo Church Musicians

The Igbo Church musicians are all those who spend or sacrifice themselves and their time in the promotion of sacred music for liturgical worship. They can be classified as follows: the composers, the choristers, the choirmasters, the instrumentalists and the soloists. They are all engaged at their various levels in the music apostolate. Some may not be aware that what they are doing is an apostolate. It is necessary, however, that they do. This will enable them to give it the necessary attention and devotion it requires in order to realize its objective. If they carry out their music apostolate well, they make the liturgy not only solemn but also attractive such that many people are willing to come to take part in it. And because the people are there for the liturgical celebration, the Word of God is passed on to them through the readings and the homily. And what they are told in the homily is consolidated in their hearts through the lyrics contained in the music earmarked for the celebration.

Let us at this juncture expose some of the things that the Igbo Church musicians are to do in order to enhance the effectiveness of their apostolate, which is, to use music to actualize the mandate given to the Apostles to spread the Good News to everyone in every nation.

The composers: The composers occupy important position in the music apostolate. To do their part in music apostolate efficiently, it is necessary that the text they set to music be substantially dependent on the Scripture and the teachings of the Church. This means that they must try to acquaint themselves with the Bible and the doctrines of the Church. Their compositions should be fruits of their reading, understanding and internalization of the Word of God. No one gives what he does not have (*Nemo dat quod non habet*). The Igbo Church musicians should aim to teach and inform through their compositions so that the Christians and non-Christians will be edified by their work.

The Igbo Church music composers should try to make their compositions as simple as possible. Their music should reflect the call and response and the narrative forms of the Igbo music. These are simple forms of musical settings. The compositions should be such that the entire congregation can participate in the

singing. Sacred music achieves its aim if it is simple. Today the hymns from the ecumenical community in Taizé in France, for instance, are sung in many parts of the world because they are simple. The community was founded by Brother Roger Schutz. The hymns from Taizé appear to be the most popular of the contemporary congregational hymns on account of their simplicity. The *Kyrie Eleison* from the Taizé Community is sung in some Churches in Igbo land during the penitential service. It is used also as a response to the prayers during the prayer of the faithful particularly in masses for the dead.

Plato endorses the utility of simple melody, for according to him, “Simplicity of music produces discipline of character” (Plato, 1983). Emphasizing the utility of simple music the Church says that “It should be borne in mind that the true solemnity of liturgical worship depends less on a more ornate form of singing and a more magnificent ceremonial than on its worthy and religious celebration” (Flannery, 2001). Nevertheless, there can be difficult compositions to be sung only by the choir on special occasions. There are now many academically trained musicians who can employ the larger forms in their compositions. But these should be of such a nature that the people understand the message contained in the music.

In the Igbo Church music compositions, the composers should respect the tonality of Igbo language and the other cultural features. In setting new melodies, the Council Fathers state that “The nature and the laws of each language must be respected, and the features and special characteristics of each people must be taken into consideration” (Flannery, 2001). In any Igbo song, therefore, in which there is ambiguity in the meaning of the words, the composer of that song has failed to respect “the nature and the laws” of Igbo language. In the same vein, any song that does not adhere to Call and Response or narrative form of singing, the author of that song has failed to conform to the “features and special characteristics” of the Igbo people.

Furthermore, the Igbo compositions should reflect the cultural behaviour of the Igbo. We take for example, the *Kyrie eleison*. This is considered as an appeal for mercy (Flannery, 2001). It comes after the penitential act if it is not already included in it. If the *Kyrie eleison* is to reflect the cultural behaviour of the Igbo in terms of pardon and reconciliation, its musical form should not express joy. When the sacrifice of expiation is being performed in Igbo traditional religion, the offender is calm and deeply sorry for his offence. Sometimes, he smears himself with ashes (Arinze, 1978). He does not participate in the sacrificial meal. Indeed, there is no expression of joy whatsoever during the process of reconciliation. This is a feature in Igbo idea of reconciliation. Even in the interpersonal relationship, the offender does not approach the injured partner with a dance and expression of joy when he wants to ask for forgiveness. He is rather remorseful. In the same way, the melody of the *Kyrie eleison*

should be such that it manifests the acknowledgment of sin and request for pardon. The melody should not be set in a form that gives room for dancing and clapping of hands. The Igbo Church musicians ought to study and understand other parts of the Mass and express them according to the cultural behaviour of the Igbo.

The Choristers: These are men and women who sing in a choir. They are people who make effort to understand and interpret the works of the composers. They are the barometers through which the intentions of the composers and their works pass on to the congregation. So, they occupy an eminent position in the music apostolate. To carry out this apostolate effectively, there is need for them to rehearse their hymns before the actual presentation in a liturgical celebration in order to remind themselves of the areas of emphasis in the hymns.

Since the work of the choristers in the liturgical celebration is an apostolate, they should select hymns that are related with the theme of the Readings earmarked for the celebration. To do this effectively, it is necessary for them to have a copy of the *Liturgical Diary*. This will enable them to know the Readings beforehand as well as to select hymns that synchronize with the Readings. Where it is possible, they can even request the celebrant to give them the theme of his homily. This is to ensure that what is presented in the homily is accentuated in their hymns.

The Choirmasters: These are very important members of the choir. Indeed, they are the “souls” of the choirs. This means that without them, the choirs do not exist. The standard of any choir is largely dependent on its choirmaster. The choirmasters should be aware of this fact. They teach and direct the choirs. To do their work well, they should avoid dictatorial tendency. They have to relate well with the members of the choir. There is need for them to cultivate the virtue of humility. They must have listening ears. It does not necessarily follow that they are musically better than other members of the choir simply because they are in charge of the choirs.

The choirmasters should try to remind their choristers of the importance of their apostolate. They are the ones to underscore the spirituality of their function as choristers. They can organize praying sessions and retreats for their members. The spirituality of the choristers will certainly improve the spiritual quality of their performance.

Instrumentalists: These are people who accompany hymns with the organ or the local instruments. In the hymns which are accompanied with these instruments, the instrumentalists should not allow their instruments to drown the singing to an extent that the message contained in the music is lost. The Council Fathers noted clearly that “The use of musical instruments to accompany the singing can act as support to the voices, render participation easier, and achieve a deeper union in the

assembly. However, their sound should not so overwhelm the voices that it is difficult to make out the text” (Flannery, 2001). If the choir is singing and the text of the music is not properly heard and understood because of the volume of the sound of the musical instruments, the accompanists can regard themselves as failing in their music apostolate. As already indicated, music for the Igbo is educative and informative. Only a few, if any, would appreciate the sound of the musical instruments when they drown the singing so much that no one understands the text.

The Soloists: The soloists, in the context of music apostolate, are those who sing the psalms in liturgical worship or who lead in the call/response or narrative form presentation. In the singing of the psalms, the presentation must be such that the texts are understood. The common experience in many parishes is that the psalms are foisted into already existing melodies. This leads often to lack of respect for the tonality of Igbo language. The soloist ought to compose a melody that is proper to a psalm. It is the text that determines the melody and not the reverse. This implies that the soloist needs to know whether the psalm is one of thanksgiving, petition, penitence or adoration. The melody should be dependent on the type of psalm. If the soloist is not able to find appropriate melody for the psalm, he/she should recite it audibly.

With regard to the call/response or the narrative form of music, it is necessary that the soloists make their voices loud, clear and distinct. The priests, who preside over the Eucharistic celebration, where the people give response to their prayers, can be regarded as soloists. And so, they should not just sing but sing well those parts of the Mass where there is call/response. The Vatican II Council Fathers emphasized this when they said: “In selecting the parts which are to be sung, one should start with those that are by their nature of greater importance, and especially those which are to be sung by the priest or by the ministers, with the people replying” (Flannery, 2001) It is observed, nowadays, however, that in many parishes, the parts that are allotted to the priests to be sung in solemn Eucharistic celebrations are not sung. It is not because they do not have the competence to do so, but because there are other accretions and distractions that are allowed into the Mass so that there is no longer sufficient time left for singing. They recite those parts as quickly as possible and the solemnity of the liturgy, particularly, the Sunday liturgy is lost.

The soloists that lead the choir in the call/response and the narrative form of singing should lead with a voice that is loud and clear. They must be people that are gifted with good voice. The voice must be inviting and must have the capacity to capture the attention of the audience. The microphone can be used to increase the volume of their voice if it is being rendered inaudible by the choir. However, the microphone should not be too loud as to drown the choir and its chorus that goes on repeatedly in the background.

Conclusion

The music apostolate is an important strategy in the service of the word of God. Those who are involved in this apostolate should be conscious of the nobility of their work and act accordingly to donate themselves to it in order to achieve its objective. The composers, the choristers, choirmasters, instrumentalists and the soloists are prominent in music apostolate. To achieve the aim of this apostolate – the spreading of the Good News of salvation, they should start from themselves. They should allow what they proclaim in their hymns to be expressed in their lives. In this way, the Word of God is spread not just through their hymns but through their lives as well.

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