Translation of Liturgical/Religious Texts (Catholic Igbo Missal): Transfer or Betrayal of Meaning in the Process of Inculturation

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Abstract
Translation of liturgical/religious texts is a very important element in the process of inculturation of the faith in the Catholic Church since Vatican Council II. The council Fathers regards it as a major criterion for assessing the level of inculturation in any locality. Translation requires a two-way faithfulness – faithfulness to the Latin editiones typicae and faithfulness to the local culture. Unfortunately, translation is usually not faithful. For one, a translated text cannot be an exact transfer of meaning or a transparent depiction of the original, but involves either a loss or an addition, a reduction or an extension of meaning; it always entails a transformation on the interpretive level, of the original text. As a result, the Church approaches it with some caveat, in order not to betray the essential religious significance of original texts in the process. Since Vatican II, the Church has issued a number of documents as guidelines for translation of the Latin editiones typicae into vernacular. This paper examines the import of those documents, with special focus on Comme le prévoit (25 January 1969) and Liturgiam authenticam (20 March 2011). Special study is made of the Catholic Igbo Missal that has witnessed two officially approved translations since Vatican II – Usoro Emume Missa (approved ad experimentum on 17 July 1971) and Usoro Emume Missa (approved on 24 February 2017). The point is that these two translations are reflections of official documents in vogue at the different times of their emergence. The author uses this to show how fidelity or otherwise to those official documents has resulted in varying degrees of adherence to or deviation from the principles of inculturation of the faith in local cultures.

Key words: Translation, inculturation, Catholic Igbo Missal, editiones typicae

Introduction
In Christian theology, inculturation denotes the integration of the Christian faith into people’s culture; a process whereby the faith is made to take
root in the culture, and so to speak, becomes one with the people, such that they no longer see Christianity as a foreign import, but as part and parcel of their societal possession. The Church’s interest in inculturation of her liturgy has remained strong because of the central and pre-eminent place she accords liturgy in her mission and life.

Liturgical texts form an integral part of the liturgy. Through them, the Church prays to God the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. In the Catholic Church, the originals of these texts – the typical editions (editiones typicae) – which are, as it were, a crystallization of the liturgical wisdom of the Church that has been handed down through the ages, are usually in Latin. It was not until Vatican II, that the Church, through the council’s document, Sacrosanctum Concilium, approved the use of vernacular in the liturgy, hence the surge of local translations of the Latin originals. This has been noted as one of the greatest achievements of the council, and it has helped to facilitate effective inculturation of the faith into different cultures of the world. It is such that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDWDS) regards translation of liturgical books into local languages as the most basic assessment of the level of inculturation in any locality.

Nevertheless, due to fear of the possibility of significant departure from the original meanings of liturgical texts, their religious force, impact and import, the Church has always been very careful and cautious with its approval of the use of vernacular. The caveat discernible in the address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Priests and the Clergy of Rome in 2013 captures this sense of caution. While expressing the significance of making liturgical texts intelligible to the people through translations, he notes, “Intelligibility does not mean banality, because the great texts of the liturgy – even when, thanks be to God, they are spoken in our mother tongue – are not easily intelligible, they demand ongoing formation on the part of the Christian, if he is to grow and enter ever more deeply into the mystery and so arrive at understanding.”

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2 For more details, see Michael Muonwe, *Dialectics of Faith-Culture Integration: Inculturation or Syncretism* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris 2014).
5 Benedict XVI, Address at the Meeting of Priests and Clergy of Rome, 14 February, 2013; available from http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-
In the process of translation, there is often some unavoidable dialectical relationship between the original text and the translated one. This calls for careful distinction between what is said in the original text that the translated text conveys, and what it leaves unsaid, between what is retained and what is completely lost, between what is emphasized and what is de-emphasized, what is expressed and what remains subdued, etc.

This paper casts a critical eye on the significance of translation in the process of liturgical inculturation, as well as the principles guiding it. It examines how those principles have taken appropriate care of the original texts and their respective audiences, the translated texts and their present audiences, or how they have neglected both or either. Some of the questions to be addressed include: What is the place of liturgy in the life of the Church and the place of culture in the process of translation? What should be the relationship between the translator and the original text, between him/her and the translated text, then between all the aforementioned and the target audience? To what extent could their relationship promote or mar the communication of the content of an original text to the present worshiping community? Some instances from recent translations of liturgical texts into Igbo Language will be used to bring these issues to the fore.

The Place of Liturgy in the Life of the Church

The liturgy, being a sacred action of Christ the priest and of His Body the Church, surpasses every other action of the Church, her works of charity, piety, and other apostolates; none, Vatican II notes, “can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.” All actions of the Church are directed to it as their summit, just as all of them derive their power and grace from it as their source or font. It is on this note that the council insists on the need to ensure proper formation of both the clergy and the laity on the liturgy, as well as their active participation, both internally and externally, in its rites.

CDWDS clearly states: “The nature of the liturgy is intimately linked up with the nature of the Church; indeed, it is above all in the liturgy that the nature of the Church is manifested;” it “reveals the Church in its true nature.” The liturgy not only helps to build the faith of the members of the Church, it is also an expression of the Church’s faith, hence the ancient saying of the fifth-century

6 SC 7.
7 Ibid., 10.
8 Ibid., 11-20.
9 CDWDS, Varietates Legitimae, 22.
10 Ibid., 26.
Christian writer and disciple of St. Augustine, St. Prosper of Aquitaine, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, meaning that the rule of prayer is the rule of belief; in other words, the way the Church prays expresses her faith. Hence, the Church’s carefulness when it comes to the liturgy, and the premium importance she places on the process of translation of texts used in the liturgy.

**Process of Liturgical Inculturation**

Vatican II insists that every form of liturgical inculturation must use the Roman *editiones typicae* as its starting point. This insistence is intended to ensure that innovations in liturgy follow a definitive pattern, thus forestalling unwarranted bastardization of the Church's liturgy and destruction of its essential nature. Failure to begin from them becomes mere creativity and personal endeavour that may harm the unchangeable aspects of the liturgy itself. Pope John Paul II notes in the Apostolic Letter, *Vicesimus quintus annus*, issued to mark the 50th anniversary of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, that, “In the liturgy, above all, that of the sacraments, there is an immutable part, a part that is divinely instituted and of which the Church is the guardian, and parts that can be changed, which the Church has the power and on occasion also the duty to adapt to the cultures of recently evangelized peoples.”

Apart from using the typical editions to set limits to changes, the authority to bring about changes is not left in the hands of individual priests or bishops, but belongs to “the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority,” like the national conferences of bishops. Even the Roman Pontiff may not bring about alterations in the liturgy as he likes. He should do so in line with the faith of the Church and with due respect to the mystery that is being re-enacted in the liturgy.

Indeed, to make any change, or to displace any element from the whole, the Church demands that there be a diligent and careful theological, historical, and pastoral investigations, alongside the study of “the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy… in conjunction with the experience derived from recent liturgical reforms and from the indults conceded to various places.” The *editiones typicae* have their basic structures, the theologies they embody, their respective historical backgrounds, and the pastoral exigencies behind their compositions. All their component parts have some kind of organic relationship to the whole. These must be taken into consideration.

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12 SC 39.
13 Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1125.
14 SC 23.
Beside the study of the *editiones typicae*, the culture of the community where the rites are celebrated at present needs proper study too, that is,

[the] typical mode of thinking, speaking and expressing oneself through rites, symbols, and art forms... [the] society’s values and ideology, social and family traditions, socioeconomic life, and political system... everything that constitutes the life of a society... [the] people’s prescribed system of reflecting on, verbalizing, and ritualizing the values, traditions, and experiences of life.\(^{15}\)

If the liturgy fails to take into account the specificity of the basic worldview, values and linguistic expressions of particular cultures, the liturgy may be perceived as a foreign ideological imposition that can claim no meaningful relevance to the people in question. There must be deep encounter between the Church’s liturgical texts, symbols, gestures, art forms, music, architecture, feasts, on one hand, and the local culture, on the other, in such a way that they exert mutual influence on each other. It also means incorporating elements from the local culture into the Church’s liturgy so long as those elements have been properly studied, critiqued, and are in line with the true and authentic spirit of the liturgy. This way, the liturgy would not be foreign to any people, and cannot be restricted to any.\(^{16}\)

It is pertinent to bear in mind that even the *editiones typicae* of today are a result of integration for centuries of the cultures of the Romans and the Greeks, those of the Mediterranean and the entire western world into the Church’s celebrations. Therefore, in so far as we need to appreciate the significance of *editiones typicae* in the process of translation, when people defend them with their blood without proper consideration of the present, they are not only mumifying those cultures but also neglecting and denying the potentials of other local cultures, the dynamic nature of lived experiences, and the absolute potentials of the Christian faith for multiplicity of expressions.

**Translations in Liturgical Inculturation**

The point has earlier been made that the introduction of the use of vernacular is one of the greatest achievements of Vatican II, thus, making interlingual translations a necessity that demands the knowledge and mastery of the source language, the receptor language, as well as their respective


\(^{16}\) CDWDS, *Varietates Legitimae*, 18.
cultures. This is more urgent where the two languages concerned are radically different from each other.

Failure to do this may result in too much mutilation of the meaning intended to be communicated to the audience, either through over-preoccupation with faithfulness to the original language or with faithfulness to the new receptors of the message. In either case, the receptors may suffer because they are more or less far removed from the original meaning of texts, and the translator stands the chance of being accused of conveying merely his personal thoughts.

**Translator as Promoter and/or Destroyer of Meaning**

Translation often involves some kind of violence to, retention and/or extension of the original meaning of words in the source text. Because of the close relationship between words and their meanings, there is no way a word could be changed by translation without affecting its meaning. The syntactical, semantic, and structural differences between the source and the receptor languages cannot be ignored. Connotations of words differ from one language to the other, such that one hardly finds two different words in two different languages that bear exactly the same connotations or meanings. Any translation involves the said and the unsaid, the expressed and the unexpressed. Sometimes, some connotations of a word or its force in one language are completely lost in the process of translation, despite the honest efforts of the translator to find its nearest equivalent. This does not nullify the possibility of introducing even new connotations in the target language that may be foreign to the meaning of the text in its original language.

Lawrence Venuti captures this well when he says, “A translation is never quite ‘faithful’, always somewhat ‘free’, it never establishes an identity, always a lack and a supplement, and it can never be a transparent representation, only an interpretive transformation that exposes multiple and divided meanings, equally multiple and divided.” Eugene Nida notes in this regard, “no translation in a receptor language can be the exact equivalent of the model in the source

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language. That is to say, all types of translation involve (1) loss of information, (2) addition of information and/or skewing of information.”

Indeed, any form of translation involves a particular language exerting a transformative effect on another. Some aspects intended to be communicated by the author of the original text, but not captured by him or her, could even become evident in the translated text. Some aspects of the original may resist transformation and translation into another language, while some others easily yield to translation and transformation. These are what Derrida refers to as the “untranslatable” and the “translatable” in texts; and for any text to survive, it must possess these two aspects. According to Derrida, “A text lives only if it lives on, and it lives on only if it is at once translatable and untranslatable ... Totally translatable, it disappears as a text, as writing, as a body of language. Totally untranslatable, even within what is believed to be one language, it dies immediately.”

It is therefore evident that translation can either mar, destroy completely, promote, or extend meanings of texts depending on how it is handled. In all, however, there cannot be a translation without transformation in and of texts. A good translation, at best, possesses as much traces of the original as possible, just as it loses some aspects of the original.

Principles of Translation of Liturgical Texts

Since Vatican II, the Holy See has issued five documents (Instructions) designed to guide the implementation of the liturgical renewal advocated for by the Council Fathers, the central thrust of which was the translation of liturgical texts into vernacular. The first was Inter Oecumenici, issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the "Consilium" for the Implementation of the Liturgy Constitution, on 26 September 1964. The document enunciated general principles for the liturgical renewal. Three years later, precisely on 4 May 1967, came the second Instruction, Tres abhinc annos, which contains further adaptations to the Order of Mass. Liturgicae instaurationes of 5 September 1970 was the third Instruction, and was issued by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, the body that succeeded the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the "Consilium". It touches on the Bishop’s central role in matters of liturgical renewal in his diocese. The fourth Instruction, Varietates legitimate, was issued

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on 25 January 1994, by CDWDS, which answers difficult questions on the Roman Liturgy and inculturation.

Even though the aforementioned Instructions touch on translation in one way or another, it was the fifth instruction, *Liturgiam authenticam*, issued by the same CDWDS on 20 March 2011, that was specifically devoted to the question of translation of liturgical texts, as contained in art. 36 of *Sacrosanctum concilium*. Another document from the Holy See that also dwelt solely on the question of translation of liturgical texts, *Comme le prévoit*, came very much earlier on 25 January 1969, and was issued by the Consilium for Implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The two documents – *Comme le prévoit* and *Liturgiam authenticam* – separated by 42 years of liturgical renewal and practice – have served as the most basic guides for the Church in matters of translation of liturgical texts since Vatican II.

**Comme le prévoit**

Being a carefully formulated document, especially following the enthusiasm that greeted the Vatican II’s approval of the use vernacular in liturgy, this document lays much emphasis on the need to strive to make a translated text alive to the present community of the faithful. To be alive entails taking into consideration the content of the text, its style, the speaker, and the audience. It understands the end of translation as conveying to the receptor community in their specific language and culture the same message that the text intends to communicate to its original audience in their own language and time. But the translation should be such that the language used is understood without much efforts by a greater number of the receptors of the message regardless of their ages and levels of education.\(^{21}\)

*Comme le prévoit* advocates for what experts refer to as functional equivalence in translation, where more attention is paid to readability in the receptor language, even if it entails loss of the structure of the original text. When applied to the translation of liturgical texts, the goal is usually to encourage full, active, and conscious participation of the faithful in the liturgical celebrations. It is in this wise that *Comme le prévoit* notes, “It is not sufficient that a formula handed down from some other time or region be translated verbatim, even if accurately, for liturgical use… [but] must become the genuine prayer of the congregation and in it each of its members should be able to find and express himself or herself.”\(^{22}\) For translation of prayers that are “succinct


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 20.
and abstract,” the document approves that they be rendered more freely in translation while preserving their original ideas. They could either be amplified or paraphrased to meet the needs of today.23

Where precise words are lacking in the receptor language, *Comme le prévoit* recommends choosing words that are nearest in meaning to the original word. The chosen words, it maintains, will gradually, through constant usage and catechesis, be made to assume the meaning conveyed by the original word or expression.24

The gains recorded by *Comme le prévoit* in liturgical inculturation via translations around the globe was huge. It came at a time people were so enthusiastic about experimenting new translations and were therefore in desperate need of guidance in this regard. It helped to get the original texts rendered into as many languages as possible within the shortest possible time. Nevertheless, the document came under criticism from many who saw it as conceding too much to the local languages, thus distancing liturgical texts far from their Latin originals. Hence the need for another document, *Liturgiam authenticam*.

**Liturgiam Authenticam**

This appears much stricter than *Comme le prévoit*. As a caution to what may be referred to as “free translation” that was in vogue, and which allowed for more flexibility, *Liturgiam Authenticam* calls for extra efforts in the preservation of the “dignity, beauty, and doctrinal precision”25 of the Latin originals in the course of translation. The translation, it maintains, must be “marked by sound doctrine, exact in wording, free from ideological influence, and in a language worthy of the sacred mysteries and worship.”26

Unlike *Comme le prévoit* that pays greater attention to the receptor language and the effect of translation on them, *Liturgiam Authenticam* focuses more on preserving the integrity of the original texts. It clearly states that the aim of translation is not to mirror the minds of the congregation at prayer, but to present truths that lie beyond space and time.27 Its variance with *Comme le prévoit* is clearer where it states, “the original text, insofar as possible, must be

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23 Ibid., 34.
24 Ibid., 18.
26 Ibid. 10.
27 Ibid. 19.
translated integrally and in the most exact manner, without omissions or
additions in terms of their content, and without paraphrases or glosses. Any
adaptation to the characteristics or the nature of the various vernacular languages
is to be sober and discreet."^{28}

Liturgiam Authenticam maintains that, in certain circumstances where
precise words are lacking in the receptor language, that the exact words used in
the original language be employed in the receptor language, but adapted to the
vernacular pronunciation, even when the syntaxes of the two languages differ,
so long as this preserves the original text intact.^29 This differs from the thoughts
of Comme le prévoit which recommends that, in such circumstances, words
nearest in meaning to the ones in the original text be used.

Liturgiam Authenticam appears to have adopted the principle of formal
equivalence in translation, which, unlike the functional equivalence of Comme
le prévoit, is more inclined to literal, word-for-word translation. Formal
equivalence promotes faithfulness, as far as possible, to the style, form,
grammar, structure, terminology, and order of words of the original text, so as
to be sure it is not lost in the process of translation. It pays more attention to
getting accurate words from the receptor language to take the place of the ones
in the original to ensure that the structure of the original is maintained. Unlike
the functional equivalence that tries to respect the sense the words intend to
convey and using their equivalent in the local language of the people, it searches
for accuracy.^30 From the foregoing, one may easily be inclined to suggest that
Comme le prévoit is more open to inculturation than does Liturgiam
Authenticam. Let us see whether and/or how the translation of the Roman Missal
into Igbo could shed more light on this.

Catholic Igbo Missal: Translation and Re-Translation

The first Igbo Missal, “Usoro Emume Nke Missa,” was approved ad
experimentum by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship on 17 July 1971.
This was 2 years after the emergence of Comme le prévoit. It has been in use
since then (46 years) until the arrival of the new one, “Usoro Emume Missa,”
(notice the removal of “Nke” in the new translation) which received full
approval from the same congregation (now renamed CDWDS) on 24 February
2017. Certain things were observed in the newly approved missal that differ
remarkably from what the faithful had been used to in the ad experimentum
missal (hereafter, Old Igbo Missal). The changes, as expected, put many of the

^{28}Ibid., 20.
^{29}Ibid., 21.
^{30}Jan de Waard, Eugene A. Nida, From One Language to Another: Functional
faithful off-balance and will certainly take some time before they could get accustomed to them.

This paper will only reflect on two of the changes that, in the opinion of the author, are among the most pronounced. The first is the change from “nọnyekwara gị,” to “nọnyekwara mmyọ gị” (from “and also with you” to “and with your spirit”), as two separate translations of the Latin “Et cum spiritu tuo.” Another is the change from “umunna” to “umunne” (the two words can be used for “brothers,” or “sisters,” or for “brothers and sisters,” but with different connotations), as two separate translations of the Latin “fratres.” In each of the translations, there was what the translator wants to communicate to the audience from the content of the original text. This influenced his or her choice of the words employed in Igbo Language. The analysis below is intended to show how these translations either amplified, subdued, expressed, or retained the sense of the words in the original Latin text and the significance of this.

Igbo Translation of the Latin et cum spiritu tuo:

The Old Igbo Missal translated this as “Nọnyekwara gị” (And also with you). So, the element of the “spirit” (mmyọ in Igbo) as contained in the original Latin text seems completely lost in the translation, while the person of the priest – who appears to be the object of the address – became highlighted. This translation followed the spirit of Comme le prévoit that was in vogue then, which allowed for a more relaxed approach to translation. What needs investigating is whether there is any justification for suppressing or not highlighting, so to speak, the “spirit,” especially when Igbo Language does not lack the word for “spirit.” Or was it just a case of the translator trying to input what he thinks could communicate the original meaning more clearly to Igbo people? Again, did the translation lead to loss of the meaning of the original text, and if so, to what extent did it affect the audience? These questions may be answered as we reflect along. Further, why did the New Igbo Missal bring back the aspect of the “spirit” by changing from “Nọnyekwara gị” (And also with you) to “Nọnyekwara mmyọ gị?” (And with your spirit). What is the implication and significance of this change to Igbo Christians?

To do justice to the questions raised above, there is need to examine briefly, the Igbo understanding of mmyọ and its relationship to the human person, its place in the relationship among human persons and that between them and God.

Igbo Understanding of Mmyọ

Mmyọ has different connotations among the Igbo. First, it represents the shadowy manifestation of a person before birth, after birth, and after death. According to Ikenga Metuh, it seems to be “the real self” directly made by God.
in the first stage of his creative act before ever the self is assigned its specific chi and eke. During a person’s life on earth, his or her mmụọ is thought of as his or her full person, though in a shadowy form.\textsuperscript{31} Several societies in West Africa, including the Igbo, have stories confirming the pre-existence of every human person in spiritual form before birth.\textsuperscript{32}

The Igbo also believe that dreams result from the roaming about of a person’s mmụọ while he or she is asleep, without however being thought of as separate from the person in question at that point in time.\textsuperscript{33} Mmụọ survives the death of a person. In fact, a dead person simply and fully exists as mmụọ.\textsuperscript{34} That is why the dead are conceptualised as existing in “a sort of unquantified body, imagined to be like shadow of a man on a sunny day… Hence it is the full individual person not a part of him or his soul which survives after death.”\textsuperscript{35} This means that the Igbo understanding of mmụọ of a person does not entail the split (of soul and body) as is the case with the Cartesian dualistic view.

Furthermore, mmụọ is also understood as the most interior aspect of a person. According to Theophilus Okere, it is “the spiritual and most intimate manifestation of the self,”\textsuperscript{36} and functions as “the cause or principle of life.”\textsuperscript{37} The Igbo regard mmụọ as the medium through which people communicate with spiritual beings in the Igbo universe. Hence, the traditional diviners, priests, fortune tellers, elders and some other religious functionaries, believed to communicate and associate with the spiritual beings regularly and in peculiar ways, are often described as ndị oje na mmụọ, that is, those who operate at the realm of mmụọ. Mmụọ is also believed to incorporate elements of passion, conscience, and emotional states of a person. When the mmụọ of an ancestor appears among the living, the people usually see it taking the particular “form in which the ancestor died as a human being.”\textsuperscript{38}
So, when the people respond *Nonyekwara mmụọ gi* (And with your spirit) to the priest's *Onyenweanyi nonyere mmụ* (The Lord be with you), they are not using the *mmụọ* in the Cartesian dualistic sense, because the Igbo do not think of the human being in strict dichotomous fashion. The *mmụọ*, in this instance, could refer to the most intimate spiritual aspect of the priest by which he communicates with the spiritual beings as *oje na mmụọ* that he is by virtue of his ordination. In a sense, then, the new translation, *mmụọ gi*, even when it refers to the priest as a person, does not refer strictly to his spirit *per se* as distinct from his body.

When one examines the biblical, the historical, and the pastoral contexts of the usage of "*et cum spiritu tuo*" in the Church, one would also realize that, just like it is for the Igbo, the “spirit” does not simply refer to the priest’s spirit or soul as distinct from his body but to something else.

### Earliest Usages of "*Et cum spiritu tuo*" ("And with Your Spirit")

In the early Church, “And with your spirit” was used exclusively by Christians as a form of greeting. Paul used it in four places to end his letters to Christian communities. In Gal 6: 18, he says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit brethren. Amen.” In 2 Tim 4:22, Paul tells Timothy, “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.” (See also Phil 4:23; Philemon 25). In the work composed in approximately AD 215 in Rome and attributed to Hippolytus, the *Apostolic Tradition*, before the bishop gives thanks over bread and wine, he says to the people, “The Lord be with you. And all reply: And with your spirit.” Then again, at baptism, after anointing and kiss of peace, the bishop again says to the baptized, “‘The Lord be with you.” And the one who has been baptized shall say, "And with your spirit." So shall he do to each one.”

Theodore of Mopsuesta (AD 350-428), Narsai of Nisibis (AD 399-502), and St John Chrysostom (AD 347-407), in their separate elaborations on the use of the phrase “And with your spirit” in liturgical celebrations of their time, maintain that, whenever the faithful respond to the priest with these words, they do not refer to the soul of the priest as distinct from his body, but to the grace of the Holy Spirit which the priest receives by virtue of his ordination, and by which he ministers to the people.
Nọnyekwara Gị vs Nọnyekwara Mmụọ Gị

It is now clear that the sense which the original users of “Et cum spiritu tuo” intends to communicate seems to have been more captured by the New Igbo Missal. That means that the Igbo usage of “mmụọ gị” instead of “gị” is closer to the Latin original, which is in line with the basic thrust of Liturgiam authenticam. It brings the people closer to the meaning the editio typica wants to communicate. Besides, coming to faithfulness to Igbo culture, it appears to have captured more the cultic significance of mmụọ in Igbo culture, especially with reference to the priest. One can therefore make the assertion that Nọnyekwara mmụọ gị makes more meaning culturally, theologically, and spirituality in relation to the office of the priest and his place (as oje na mmụọ) in the midst of the faithful during the Eucharistic sacrifice. In Igbo, whether it refers to the spirit of the priest or to the spirit he received by virtue of his ordination, none carries with it the cartesian dualism of body-soul split. The Old Igbo Missal that contains Nọnyekwara gị, even though it seems to have taken into consideration the priest as a person, did not do justice to the theological, historical, and pastoral understanding behind the editio typica, as the New Igbo Missal does. Again, as far as Igbo culture is concerned, it does not bring out the pre-eminent place and role of the priest among the faithful during the Eucharistic celebration.

Igbo Translation of the Latin Fratres (Brothers)

Just as the Igbo translation of Et cum spiritu tuo changed from Nọnyekwara gị to Nọnyekwara mmụọ gị, so also did the translation of the Latin fratres change from ụmụnna to ụmụnne in the New Igbo Missal. Examining the connotation of ụmụnna and ụmụnne in Igbo Language will reveal the appropriateness or otherwise of the new translation and the reasons for its preference to the old.

Igbo Understanding of Ụmụnna

Igbo society is basically organised into families (ezinaulo). The father is the head of each family. A group of families that have a common male ancestor are grouped under clan/patrilineage (ụmụnna). The ụmụnna can, of course, assimilate into their fold male foreigners who have lived among them for years, if they request for it, regardless of the fact that they are not descendants of the common ancestor of the ụmụnna in question. Ụmụnna is derived from a combination of two words, ụmu and nna. Ụmu means children; while nna means father. Literary, ụmụnna means “children of the same father.” Each ụmụnna is traditionally headed by ọkpara of the eldest family. His view is considered essential in determining which actions are or are not sanctioned by the customs.
and traditions of the people.\(^{42}\) Women who are married into the \(\text{ụmụnna}\) can only form part of it as wives of the male members of \(\text{ụmụnna}\). They have their own group usually called \(\text{otu inyomdi}\) or \(\text{otu nwunyedi}\).

The sisters of the male members of \(\text{ụmụnna}\), married or unmarried, (but who have passed traditional marriageable age), divorced or widowed, form their own specific group –\(\text{ụmuada}\) (or \(\text{ụmuokpu}\)).\(^{43}\) \(\text{Ada}\) means daughter. So, \(\text{ụmuada}\) would literally mean “children who are daughters.” Since Igbo marriage is usually exogamous, almost all the members of \(\text{ụmuada}\) are married outside their \(\text{ụmụnna}\). Many are married outside their villages and some outside their towns. But from wherever they are married to, they come together periodically to take decisions on important issues of serious concern in their kindred.

Even though \(\text{ụmụnna}\) refers to people related by blood, it can also be used by extension to other people with whom one has some relational bond, either socially or culturally. Its singular form is \(\text{nwanna}\) (\(\text{nwa}\) – child; \(\text{nna}\) – Father).

\text{Ụmụnne in Igbo Family Relations}

\(\text{Nne}\), in Igbo Language, means mother. \(\text{Ụmụnne}\) denotes “children of the same mother.” Its singular form is \(\text{nwanne}\) (\(\text{nwa}\), child; and \(\text{nne}\), mother). When one says \(\text{nwanne m}\) “my brother or sister,” strictly speaking, he or she means someone with whom he or she shares the same mother. Traditionally, the concept of \(\text{ụmụnne}\) evokes the feeling of common motherhood as a uniting force among children within the family setting. By extension, \(\text{ụmụnne or nwanne}\) can be used to refer to any person beyond one’s family who shows love to someone or who extends hands of fellowship or assistance to someone in time of trouble or need. The person helped can refer to the helper as \(\text{nwanne m}\) (my brother or sister). In a sense, then, \(\text{ụmụnne}\) illustrates ‘bondedness’ of people among themselves, mutual assistance, and togetherness. It is in this sense that the Igbo say \(\text{nwanne di namba}\) (brotherhood or sisterhood exists outside one’s kindred, neighbourhood, village, or town).

\(\text{Ụmụnne}\) points invariably to \(\text{mkpuke}\), which is the most closely bound family unit that comprises a mother and her children. In Igbo traditional social setting, while \(\text{obi}\), where visitors are officially received by the male head of the family, represents male authority and symbolic valour, \(\text{mkpuke}\) represents the

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interior part of the house where the activities peculiar to mothers are carried out, like cooking, washing, and other domestic chores. This is the place children stay with their mother, especially at their tender years. It is the safest, the smallest, the most intimate, and the most closely-knit family unit where the children feel the warmth and care of their mother. To use the words of Ifi Amadiume, mkpuke is “the female mother-focused matricentric unit” in binary opposition to obi “the male-focused ancestral home.”

In a polygamous setting, each of the wives has her mkpuke where she lives with her own children. Here, children of the same mother form a cordially tight unit of ụmunne, which is much tinier and lovelier than the gathering of ụmunna, which comprises people from different fathers and mothers. In their respective mkpuke, ụmunne eat from the common pot of their mother and are bound in love to one another under the protective love of their mother. They share their intimate thoughts together without any shame and with full trust in one another. According to Amadiume, while “compassion/love/peace” represent the values of ụmunne ideology, “competitiveness/masculinism/valour/force/violence” are characteristics of ụmunna ideology.

Usage of “Brothers” in the Early Church

In the earliest days of the Church, Christians, most of whom were converts from paganism, referred to themselves as a community and lived their life of love for one another in contradistinction to the surrounding hostile pagan environment. Since they were a persecuted group in the society, their bond with one another remained strong. In I Cor. 12, Paul used the analogy of the human body to describe the unity among Christians and how related they should be to one another. Every Christian constituted a member of that body of Christ, the Church. Sharing in the Eucharistic meal symbolized this oneness with one another. The sharing in one bread and one cup, as a memorial of Christ’s passion became central in the gathering of the group that regarded one another as brothers and sisters. In other words, they saw one another as more bonded together than they were with the larger society of which they formed part. They suffered martyrdom and held to one another with faith in God and His only begotten Son.

In the New Testament, the Greek word, adelphoi (brothers) appears over 300 times. Even though it primarily or literary refers to someone’s own blood brother, as is the case with Simon and Andrew (Mk 1:16; Jn 1:41). It is also used

metaphorically to express common ethnic origin (Acts 22:13), one’s neighbour (Mat. 7:3-5), or one with whom one shares spiritual companionship or common discipleship (Mtt. 23:8). It is in this sense that Paul often uses it while addressing Christian communities (I Cor 1:10; Col 4:7; I Thes 1:4). By using *adelphoi* this way, Paul tries to promote equality, mutual co-operation, respect, fraternity, and love among Christians.\(^4^6\)

Furthermore, Paul addresses his fellow Christians as members of the same household, who together belong to the Lord, and cautions them against judging one another (Rom 14:4; see also I Cor. 8:1,10). In his letter to Philemon, Paul refers to Philemon twice as “brother” in his appeal to him to welcome Onesimus back (Phlm 7,20). He also asked him to take back Onesimus no longer as a slave but as a beloved brother (v. 16). As Horrell asserts, Paul’s usage of *adelphoi* is a reflection of an already established designation among the Christian communities of the time.\(^4^8\)

It was in the “house churches” that the early Christians lived concretely their belonging to one another as brothers and sisters. They saw themselves as children of the same family of God belonging to one divine *paterfamilias*, the Father in heaven. In all contexts, the usages of *adelphoi* reveal the existence of or the longing by people to establish among themselves some bond that resembles that among siblings.

The rendering of *adelphoi* as *fratres* in the Latin *editio typical* carries the same connotation of people brought together for worship by the closely-knit relationship as that between siblings. It is, therefore, a term used to address the faithful by the priest and the faithful among themselves during liturgical celebration to show the significance of love, peace, respect, and esteem for one another.

**Fratres: Between the Concepts of Ụmụnne and Ụmụnna**

From the discussions so far, one could see that the two Igbo terms, *ụmụnne* and *ụmụnna*, denote blood relationship and metaphorically could be used for closeness expected to exist among people. But while *ụmụnna* represents people from a common (male) ancestor, *ụmụnne* represents children from a common mother. *Ụmụnna* is more expansive, *ụmụnne* is much more restricted. Children of the same mother are more closely related to one another, and ordinarily know one another more intimately than people from the same *ụmụnna*.


\(^4^7\) Ibid., 299.

\(^4^8\) Ibid., 303.
would. Again, while ụmụnna, in its relationship with the male obi, which lies in the outer part of the family house, also has the connotation of valour, male supremacy, and power, that of ụmụnne does not have such, but is always symbolic of the mother’s mkpuke that connotes compassion, love, and tenderness. It is their mother that children often run to, in face of the father’s aggression and highhandedness.

Since the biblical and liturgical usages of “brothers” are intended to emphasize the closeness among the faithful and the need for greater respect, mutual understanding and love, the Igbo word, ụmụnne, is a better translation of the Latin “fratres” as contained in the editio typica. Therefore, the Old Igbo Missal did not do justice to the original meaning of the word and lost some aspects of the level of closeness demanded by the editio typica. The New Igbo Missal that employed ụmụnne is therefore a better translation and should be embraced.

**Conclusion**

For one to have a dependable gauge of the level of inculturation in any locality, translation of liturgical books remains central. It is indispensable in any attempt to make Christianity at home in any culture. The irony of the whole process is that translation, despite its significance, is not always faithful to the meaning intended by the original authors of texts. It is often an interpretation by translators of what they think the original authors want to communicate to their original audience. But the question remains how to bring the supposed original meaning to bear on the present audience, especially when a given document is centuries-old one. The person of the translator, his level of knowledge of the source language, the target language, the surrounding cultures, and the level of his understanding of the target audience get caught up in a hermeneutical process that cannot be easily glossed over.

The translations of the Latin editiones typicae of liturgical texts in the Catholic Church, usually follow certain patterns, as laid down in several documents from the Holy See. The two most prominent of these, since Vatican II’s approval of the use of vernacular in the liturgy, are *Comme le prévoit* and *Liturgiam authenticam*. They focus specifically on the guidelines for the translation of liturgical texts, within the context of implementation of Sacrosanctum Concilium of Vatican II. While the former, which was older, advocates for freer translation, the latter moves for stricter and, more or less, word-for-word translation. This is manifest in the Igbo Missal, *Usoro Emume Nke Missa* (1971), that utilized the spirit of *Comme le prévoit* that was in vogue then, and *Usoro Emume Missa* (2017), that followed the guidelines as contained in the *Liturgiam authenticam*. Even though one would naturally and/or ordinarily consider *Comme le prévoit* as more inclined to lead to authentic
inculturation in the process of translation of liturgical texts, what is evident in the reflections in this paper is that, as far as the two examples we used are concerned, the more recent *Usoro Enume Missa* (2017) is more inculturated than the older *Usoro Enume Nke Missa* (1971).

It must be admitted that this paper does not represent a detailed study of the two texts; a study which, when undertaken, may yield a different and more revealing conclusion than the two isolated examples (“*Et cum spiritu tuo*” and “fratres”) used in this paper. A more detailed study of the two translations of the same Latin original will reveal more remarkable differences, ranging from the structure, the syntax, and the words employed. Evidences of either suppression or extension, loss or regain, exclusion or inclusion of meanings and connotations of the original Latin words would be clearer. This brings out two important points: First, translation of religious texts does not just entail (near) faithfulness to the original meanings of texts, but also betrayal of meanings; again, the direction of inculturation is after all not only the work of the Holy Spirit but also the work of the Holy Spirit through weak human instruments. This will help us to approach it with great humility and faith in the God who guides and directs His Church towards His Kingdom.