

Inculturating the Roman Rite of Marriage in Bette Culture

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Introduction

The understanding of marriage in the Roman Catholic tradition has developed throughout the centuries. Beginning as a communal and cultural celebration, it gradually became recognized by the Church as a Sacrament. The current marriage liturgy is heavily influenced by the Greco-Roman customs. This culture is alien to the Bette people which leads to the celebration of two marriage rituals among the Bette people: The Catholic liturgical rite and the Bette cultural rite. This necessitates a critical look into the meaning, rituals, and celebration of marriage within the Bette ethnic group and how this resonates with the Church's liturgical celebration of marriage.

Our intention in this paper is to critically study the principles of Vatican II and the Roman Marriage Ritual and propose an adaptation of the Bette form of consent and blessings. To accomplish this task effectively, we shall look at the influence of the Jewish and Roman cultures on the present Roman rite of marriage. After that is done, we shall do an in-depth study of the documents of Vatican II on liturgical inculturation and the inculturation of marriage. Then, we will look at the Bette meaning of marriage in Bette culture and how the rite is celebrated. After giving this background, we shall look at the form of consent and blessings and propose an adaptation.

Jewish and Roman influence on the Roman Rite of Marriage

The Christian marriage is influenced by both the Jewish culture and the Roman culture. Early Christianity, an off-shoot of Judaism learned a lot from Judaism and

adapted their practices. While there are no documented sources of how the apostles and the early church celebrated marriages, some scholars argue that there was a marriage rite that was very much an adaptation of the Jewish marriage ritual.¹ The remnant of this influence of Judaism is seen in some of the marriage prayers of the Eastern Churches such as the Armenian Rite. These prayers which move from blessing to supplication reflect a Jewish eucharistical structure.

Christian marriage was also influenced by the Roman culture. In the classical Roman culture, marriage involved two stages: the engagement ceremony and the marriage ritual. According to German Martinez, the engagement ceremony was “a formal promise of the husband to receive the girl into his house; reading of the pacts of the dowry with reciprocal exchange of gifts; the presentation of the nuptial ring by the groom to the bride, and sometimes the presentation of the dowry, as well as the mutual kiss.”² The engagement ceremony did not necessarily take place the same day with the marriage. This was a very important part of the marriage and it constituted some social and juridical rights and obligations on the bride and the groom. The marriage ritual itself according to Martinez involved three stages: the girl is being presented to the groom, there is a procession to the groom’s household; and then there is a religious rite in the house of the husband.³ The religious rite was not a Christian rite. It is important to note here that, within this Roman cultural celebration of marriage, there was already a strong element of consent, which principally took place during the engagement ceremony. At the marriage ritual itself, there was no need to ask the couple to give their consent. Consent would later become the core of the Roman Catholic Marriage ritual. The engagement ceremony was

¹ Kenneth W. Stevenson, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, p.18

² German Martinez, *Worship: Wedding to Marriage*, p.109

³ *Ibid.* p.109

necessary for marriage because it was in this ceremony that the man and woman in the midst of their families accept to enter into marriage.

The Development of Consent

The Church's teaching on consent developed in two stages. The first stage deals with the situation of the Roman slaves, and the second with the situation of children being forced into marriages. The Roman empire did not allow slaves to get married. Marriage was reserved for people in the upper class. John T. Noonan writes that, “

*Freedom to marry did not exist for a very large part of the population, the slaves. These people were not free to marry at all; they had no legal capacity to marry. As far as the law was concerned, a very large group of people were thus forced to live promiscuously with each other or with their masters.*⁴

The Christian church recognized this as an evil way of living and gradually made attempts to correct this. Christians believed that slaves like other members of the society had a right to marry. Noonan says it is by the twelfth century that there are strong moves by the church to legitimate slave marriages.⁵ The Church taught at the time that slaves have the right to marry even if this was against the will of their masters.

The second stage of the development of consent is the issue of arranged marriages. Parents arranged the marriages of their children. Gratian in the 12th century asked the question, “Can one give a daughter to be married against her will?” Gratian argued in the negative that the daughter cannot be married against her will. It took many

⁴ John T. Noonan, Jr. History and the Values of Christian Marriage, in, Marriage in the Light of Vatican II, p.3

⁵ Ibid. p.4

centuries for the Christian church to come to terms with this position held by Gratian.⁶ Writing on this development, Noonan says this development reached its peak with the institution of marriage as it is today in the West. He writes, “Now, not only is freedom of consent protected, but freedom of choice has been enlarged so that there is not only freedom at the moment of consent but freedom in the choice that precedes the marriage contract.”⁷

It is clear from the development of marriage that Christians borrowed marriage symbols from the cultures they lived in, and then Christianized these symbols. As Metzger notes in his book, *History of the Liturgy*, “Christians adapted marriage rites inherited from the surrounding cultures: joining of hands, giving of the veil, blessing, and crowning.”⁸ This is important to this paper because Vatican II invites the Christian church to interact with the cultures in which she finds herself and this paper argues that there are certain marriage symbols within the Bette culture that can be inculturated in the Roman Rite without causing any danger to the faith.

Vatican II on the Inculturation of Marriage

Having given this background on the development of marriage in the Christian Church, we want to look at what Vatican II says about the inculturation of marriage. Before we do that, it is important to first look at the general topic of inculturation in Vatican II. Vatican II was a pastoral council called by Pope John XXIII. As the new millennium was only a few decades away, he saw the need for an *aggiornamento*, a renewal in the church as it enters the 21st century. Unlike other councils that were

⁶ Ibid. p.5

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy*, p.102

dogmatic in nature and character, this council was very pastoral and was an opportunity for the church to once more open wide its doors and windows so that she will experience the fresh air of the Holy Spirit. Bishops at the Council as well as the theologians that assisted them in drafting the documents were optimistic of the positive changes that will come out of the council.

Karl Rahner was one of the eminent theologians that contributed immensely at the council. He had divided the entire history of the church into three phases: the founding of the church and how it developed in the East; the Church in the Hellenistic European time; and the period of the world church. Vatican II according to Rahner, was the inauguration of the era, of the world church.⁹ At Vatican II, bishops from across the world were present and they all brought the different aspects of their culture. This was a unique development in the local church that brought about the adaptation of the church to different cultures in the world. With the presence of so many bishops from across the world and their positive contributions to the council, the church moved from a Western European model to a new phase, whereby it can be adaptable in different countries and cultures.

The Fathers at Vatican II wrote that Jesus' incarnation is the first reality of inculturation. He took the form of man and lived within a local custom. Within the different parts of the world in which the church is present or is being taken to, there exist a diversity of cultures and each of these cultures has a richness in which it can express the Catholic faith.¹⁰ The faith is so rich that one culture cannot claim to have a full and universal expression of it. It is thus necessary the church should be built in various

⁹ Rahner, Karl. *Theological Investigations XX: Concern for the Church*. Translated by Edward Quinn. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981. p.80

¹⁰ AG 15

contexts.¹¹ This decree, *Ad gentes divinus*, invites laypeople within the local churches to use the incarnation of Jesus as the model for the adaptation of the faith in different cultural contexts. It invites the people of God in a particular church, both missionaries and natives to be true witnesses of Christ, familiarize themselves with the culture, guard it, develop it and perfect it in Christ, so the faith and the life of the Church will not be alien to the society in which they live. This document calls for a local adaptation and evaluation of a local culture and encourages that the elements of the culture that do not take away from the substance of the faith be held.¹²

Gaudium et Spes speaks extensively of culture and religion and the need to bridge the gap between both. It devotes a whole chapter to discuss this. This document says Jesus spoke through the culture proper to his age and the church throughout history has used the resources of different cultures to preach the message of Christ. The document continues that,

*... the church has been sent to all ages and nations, and, therefore, is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any one particular way of life, or to any customary practices, ancient or modern. ... it can, then, enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves.*¹³

This means that, the church no longer has to express itself only with European customs and culture, but today, the church must use the cultural forms present in every culture it is present, to preach the message of Christ. This helps the church to better express her faith, and the local people to better understand the faith of the church. This is what catholicity is all about. The church present in the different parts of the world

¹¹ AG 19

¹² AG 21-22

¹³ GS 58

contribute their own gifts “to other parts and to the whole Church, so the whole and each of the parts are strengthened by the common sharing of all things and by the common effort to attain to fullness in unity.”¹⁴

While to this point, we have succeeded in discussing what the Fathers of the Council said about the church meeting local cultures, it is important here to discuss the need for an inculturated liturgy. Sacrosanctum Concillium is the first document that was promulgated by Vatican II. This document beautiful presents the need for an inculturated liturgy. The document describes the liturgy as the most efficacious action of the church. This is because the liturgy is the action of Christ himself. It says in the liturgy, we find the church revealed.¹⁵ Though this document does not use the term local church, it says things that reflect the meaning of the term. The document says,

*... because it is impossible for the bishop always and everywhere to preside over the whole flock in his church, he cannot do otherwise than establish lesser groupings of the faithful. Among these the parishes, set up locally under a pastor taking the place of the bishop, are the most important: in some manner they represent the visible church established throughout the world.*¹⁶

Each of the local churches represents the universal church and the universal church is a communion of local churches.¹⁷

The expression of the faith of the local churches using their own cultures attests to the universality of the church. The document posits a strong relationship between the

¹⁴ LG 13

¹⁵ SC 2

¹⁶ SC 42

¹⁷ Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), p. 58

liturgy and the church. This relationship is that, the liturgy is the public worship of the church.¹⁸ The document continues that because liturgical actions reveal the church, and have effects on the church.¹⁹ This document calls for the adaptation of the liturgy in accordance with particular situations and cultures. One of the first major changes that took place after this document was the use of the vernacular in liturgy. This document allowed the use of vernacular. Prior to the promulgation of this document, only the Latin language was used in the liturgy. The church allowed the use of the vernacular because she feels it would be to the advantage of the people.²⁰ The document calls for a prudent consideration of the different elements of the culture of the people and see how these can be admitted into the worship of the church.²¹

Speaking on the sacrament of marriage, the constitution on the sacred liturgy says,

The marriage rite now found in the Roman Ritual is to be revised and enriched in such a way that it more clearly signifies the grace of the sacrament and imparts a knowledge of the obligations of spouses. If any regions follow other praiseworthy customs and ceremonies when celebrating the sacrament of marriage, the Council earnestly desires that by all means these be retained. Moreover, the competent, territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in art. 22, §2 of this Constitution is free to draw up, in accord with art. 63, its own rite, suited to the usages of place and people. But the rite must always conform to the law that the priest assisting at the marriage must ask for and obtain the consent of the contracting parties.”²²

This article calls for the adaptation of marriage and also recommends that new rites could be drawn up. This article making references to previous articles gives us the

¹⁸ SC 7

¹⁹ SC 26

²⁰ SC 36

²¹ SC 37-40

²² SC 77

principles for inculturating marriage. This article invites Episcopal conferences to draw up rites that are suitable for the people and place, and it also calls for the revision of the marriage rite as well as guarantees regions the freedom to use marriage customs and traditions that are not contrary to the faith. Anscar Chapungco reflecting on this article says that, if the typical edition of the Roman ritual is the terminus a quo of adaptation, it must be an adequate model by exhibiting a flexible structure, a rich theology and a spiritual doctrine and a pastoral orientation.²³ He further argues that the Tridentine liturgy which is well noted for its uniformity, never made the marriage rite obligatory for the Latin Church. The praiseworthy customs and ceremonies mentioned by Trent are probably practices such as “the giving away of the bride, the exchange of rings, the giving of arrhae and precious jewels, the wrapping of the hands of the spouses with the priest’s stole, the crowning or veiling of the bride, the blessing of bread and wine, and the blessing of the matrimonial bed or chamber.”²⁴

Article 77 also grants the Episcopal conferences the right to create new rites in their regions. The principles for doing this are found in article 63. The principles are as follows:

- The rituals have to be in harmony with the new edition of the Roman Ritual
- They have to be prepared by competent, territorial ecclesiastical authority.
- The language of the ritual has to be adapted.
- They are to be reviewed by the Apostolic See.
- They are to be used in regions for which they have been prepared.

²³ Anscar Chapungco, *Liturgies of the Future*, p.118

²⁴ *Ibid*, p119

- The prefatory instructions for individual rites in the Roman Ritual must not be left out.

In addition to these principles, is the principle set out in Article 77 that the priest must ask for and obtain the consent of the couple. When the document says the ritual has to be in harmony with the typical edition, it is not suggest that the new ritual has to be celebrated as exact as it is in the typical edition. As Chapungco argues, the typical edition only presents “a type, a model of liturgical celebration.”²⁵ If Chapungco is correct, and it is our position that he is, then liturgy of marriage needs to be culturally adopted to suite the culture in which marriage is celebrated. We hold that Chapungco is correct because, if the liturgy was to be celebrated rigidly as is in the edition typical, Sacrosanctum Concillium would not have called for such a radical adaptation as it did, because it would have contradicted itself.

In 1969, the rite of celebrating marriage was formerly promulgated by the Sacred Congregation for rites. In the introduction, the document reiterated the teachings of Sacrosanctum Concilium on the adaptation of marriage. Some of the important things in this document significant for the thesis of this paper is that it calls for the adaptation of the formulas of the Roman Ritual, including the questions before the consent and the actual words of consent.²⁶ This reinforces our previous argument that the typical edition is only a model of what liturgical celebration should be. The document is clearly saying that we ought not to be fixated on the form of consent that is found in the editio typica but other forms of consent practiced in a particular region can be adapted. The document is recognizing the fact that in most local customs, there is some form of legal freedom in

²⁵ Ibid, p. 7

²⁶ Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium, no. 13

the giving of self in marriage and some level of commitment. If these customs are present in a particular region and reflect the same level of commitment in the church, such practices should be adapted.

The document also says that in mission territories, “whatever is good and is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error should be sympathetically considered, and, if possible, preserved intact.”²⁷ This is an invitation for a radical adaptation. The introduction to the document concludes that “Among peoples where the marriage ceremonies customarily take place in the home, sometimes over a period of several days, these customs should be adapted to the Christian spirit and to the liturgy. In such cases the conference of bishops, according to the pastoral needs of the people, may allow the sacramental rite to be celebrated in the home.”²⁸ This is a recognition of the historical meaning of marriage as both a social and dynamic reality involving the concrete social and personal reality of two persons and their families. They recognize that traditionally marriage was not celebrated in the church, couples went to the church only afterwards for a blessing.

The second typical edition of the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* repeats what is in the 1969 edition but also adds that, “Whenever the Roman Missal gives several optional formulas, other formulas of the same kind can be added.”²⁹ This means that other formulas of the same kind from a particular culture could be adapted into the liturgy.

Having looked at both the conciliar and post-conciliar teachings on inculturation and the inculturation of marriage, the question now is, how can the Roman Rite of

²⁷ Ibid. no.16

²⁸ Ibid, no. 18

²⁹ *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium*, Second Typical Edition, no. 41

marriage be inculturated in Bette culture? Because of how broad this is, we will only look at two important symbols: consent and blessings. But before we do this, it is very important that we look at the meaning and understanding of marriage in Bette culture.

Understanding of Marriage in Bette Culture

Marriage for the Bette people is a social institution within which new life is brought forth into the community. Within the framework of this understanding of marriage, the Bette people see procreation primarily as the good of marriage. Sexual union though pleasurable, is never considered the motive for marriage. In this culture marked by widespread polygamy, the man who married three or four wives as most often was the case, does not do it in order to have more sexual partners with whom he can have pleasure with, but he does this in order to have more children. Children are treasured in Bette culture. This is clearly seen in the names the Bette people bear. For example, the Bette people bear the name, *unwaawhobiwom*. This name means, a child is greater than everything. For the Bette people, there is nothing that is greater than a child. A person who has a child has everything.

Marriage among the Bette people is also considered as a guarantee for the survival of the Bette race. This is because it is in marriage that life is being transmitted. It is important to note here that promiscuity is something completely abhorred in Bette culture. No sexual relations are allowed prior to marriage. A girl who becomes pregnant before marriage is looked upon with disdain and in the most part considered an outcast. There are no consequences for the male partner. However, in a few circumstances the

man may be forced to marry the girl. This makes the unique marital event possible and every young girl or boy desires to experience that day, a day he or she can regard himself or herself as an adult in a community, a life-giver. A man without a wife or a woman without a husband in Bette culture is considered a waste. This has ramifications even for the Catholic priesthood and religious life where chaste celibacy is professed. The Bette people cannot understand why anyone would want to become a priest or a sister and profess celibacy. This partially accounts for the low vocations to priesthood and religious life in a culture that so many people are dedicated Catholics.

Before marriages are performed in Bette culture, there is ipoh abohale. What happens here is an attempt to look at the past and the future of the man and the woman. When the oracle looks at the past, what he does is to see if any one of them is under a curse because he or she has offended an ancestor or done something culturally wrong. The belief is that this will follow them into their marriage and bring them bad luck rather than success in marriage. Some of the things a person does that may result in a curse are incest, gross disobedience of elders, premarital sex and abortion. Incest is considered very grave. A lady who commits incest and goes ahead to marry without undergoing traditional communal purification would have her babies dying until she is able to do this. The oracle's job is to see if the gods are happy with the two about to get married. In some cases, the marriage would be blatantly refused because of things in the past or future, and in other cases, some little sacrifices to the divinities would be needed or just libation poured to the ancestors for a blessing.

Marriage in Bette culture is not considered the business of the man and the woman but it is a joining together of the two communities. Throughout the whole

arrangements of marriage, the two families are heavily involved. In marriage, two families unite together, not just the linear family but the extended families become one family. According to George Ehusani, marriage is a covenant sealed by the arrival of children, and once children are being born into a family, the union becomes theoretically indissoluble.³⁰ Because marriage is a joining together of two families, sealed with the gift of children, divorce is almost impossible. Divorce is difficult because, the divorce is not between just the man and the woman but between the two families. Usually, everything is done to prevent a divorce.

One of the primary reasons for divorce is lack of children in marriage. When there are no children, divorce is considered and usually, both the man and woman understand why they have to do that. It is also not strange to find the woman marrying a younger wife for the husband with the purpose of the younger woman begetting children for the man. Even though divorce may be allowed in the case of a childless marriage, it is not an option many people take because of the bonds existing between the two families already. Most often, the man marries another wife, while the childless woman remains in the house and is considered fully as the man's wife.

Marriages are celebrated with a lot of fanfare in Bette culture. So much money is spent in this celebration because of two things: two people are welcomed to adulthood and the future of the community is guaranteed through the existence that would be brought forth by the new couple. It is not the financial responsibility of the man and woman but they together with their families, their age grades, and their committee of friends all together donate money, drinks, and food for the celebration. The invitation is always an open one, any member of the community, any stranger can come in to share in

³⁰ George Omake Ehusani, *An Afro-Christian Vision: Towards A More Humanized World*, p.175

the joy. The more the people present at the celebration, the better. There is enough to eat and enough to drink.

Areas of Adaptation of the Bette Marriage rite

At this point, let us look at the two areas of adaptation this paper is proposing. As we have argued above using conciliar and post-conciliar documents to show that *editio typica* needs to be radically adapted, the way consent is done and the Bette blessings have to be adapted to the Roman Rite.

Marriage in Bette culture takes place in two stages. The first stage is the ceremony of consent and the second stage is the celebration. The first stage is the most important stage, as from that stage, the girl is considered your wife. This stage usually takes place in the house of the girl. The groom together with all his family comes to the house of the girl with Palm wine and Kola nuts. Palm wine is the traditional drink tapped from Palms. Kola nuts are very significant for the Bette people. Kola nuts have a double symbol of peace and life. There are used as a symbol for peace and as a symbol for life.

At the home of the girl is gathered her own family, linear and extended family. Even though the groom has been making visits to the family of the girl, the family of the girl assumes they do not know what he has come for. He is then asked by the father of the bride in the presence of all the families gathered the purpose of his visit. The groom would respond that he has seen someone in this household that is good and he has come to marry her. He is asked the name of the person and he then gives the name. The girl who may be at the kitchen cooking to entertain the guests is called forth to the gathering

and told that the man present here wants to marry her. She is asked if she is willing to be spend the rest of her life with him raising children and building up the family and community. She can say yes or no. Almost in every case, the girl responds in the affirmative because if she has not accepted to enter into marriage with the man, this gathering wouldn't have been called for.

When she gives her positive response, those gathered break from the silence before this time is filled in the room and express signs of joy. Then the father of the girl would say to the girl, "As a sign of your consent to marry(the name of the man), accept the kola nut from your husband and give it to (the eldest member of the girls family." The girl takes the kola nuts and gives it to the eldest member of the community who says a blessing (called ushang akele) and then hands the kola nuts to one of the young male member of the family to break and share among all the people gathered. Every member of the family present has to have a piece of the kola nut as a sign of their acceptance of this marriage and also as a way of wishing the new couple success in their marital life. The blessing given by the eldest member of the family is for both the man and the woman.³¹

The other traditional aspect of the Bette marriage ritual is the blessings. During the consent ceremony, there is one blessing and during the marriage celebrations itself are two other blessings. During the consent ceremony, the blessing comes immediately after the girl gives her consent and hands over the kola nuts to the eldest member of the family. The eldest member of the family who usually should be in his old age, perhaps older than the father of the girl, takes the Kola nut and says a blessing.

³¹ See more on the typical contents of these marriage blessings in the next paragraphs.

The second blessing is done on the day the girl would be taken out of her house to be given in marriage to the man. Usually the girl is taken away in the night and the celebration of marriage lasts all night. Shortly before the arrival of the man's family in her house, she is called by her parents and there is a gathering with a few family members. Her parents advise her how to live a good married life. After this is done, her father says a blessing for her and then pours water in her legs. This is done as a sign of fruitfulness and life. Water is used because the community being an agrarian community relies very much on water for the fruitful growth of their crops and water also signifies life. It is life-giving.

The last blessing is done when the girl has arrived at the home of the man and the ceremonies are going on. At a point in the ceremonies, the event is stopped in order for this blessing to take place. This blessing is given by the chief of the community or by the eldest member of the community to the bride and the groom. This blessing is very unique. While the first blessing has only one element, the prayer; and the second blessing has a second element, water; the third blessing has three elements: prayer, water and kola nuts. The elders member of the family chews the kola nuts into half pieces and mixed with water splashes it on the ground three times saying words of blessings. The purpose of the water is to signify fruitfulness and life and the purpose of the kola nuts is to signify peace. Splashing it on the ground is the traditional Bette ritual of invoking the intercessions of the ancestors. The ground signifies where they are buried into.

The question here would be what are the contents of these blessings? These blessing like every other Bette blessing is varied because there is no one written blessing for the occasion. The person giving the blessing makes up the blessing as he goes along.

Some people are good at giving these blessings than others. However, there are certain elements that must be contained in these blessings. Among these elements is a prayer for the gift of children, good harvest, peaceful co-existence. A typical blessing may have lines like these:

May you have male children and female children.

May children be your reward.

May you have children to eat your food with you.

By this time next year, may I meet you with a male child.³²

May each yam you plant form three to four big yams.

May you never lack food for your children.

May you have bountiful harvest to feed hundreds of children.

May your children grow up and work hard in the farms.

May you live well and happily together.

Proposals for Adaptation

Our proposals for adaptation of marriage in Bette culture are based on Anscar Chupungco's method of organic progression. By this method, he means a process of supplementing and completing what where necessary what was set out by Sacrosanctum concillium³³ and the *editio typica*. This methodology is grounded on SC 23 which says that new forms adopted in the liturgy should grow organically from forms already existing. Chupungco says this method is organic because, "it results in a new shape that is coherent with the basic intention of the liturgical documents, and, or a wider breadth,

³² Ibid. pp.174-175

³³ Hereafter, SC would be used for the document Sacrosanctum Concillium.

with the nature and tradition of Christian worship.”³⁴ He also says that this method is progressive. It is progressive in the sense that it operates through the dynamics of supplementation and continuance. Supplementation allows for new elements to be inserted into the liturgy and it continues the work begun by Vatican II and the Holy See.³⁵

How then can these two elements of consent and blessing be adapted into the Roman Ritual for celebrating marriage? As can be seen in the early section of this paper, the Conciliar and Post-conciliar documents say consent may be replaced by other forms of consent but that the priest must ask for and obtain consent. The document also says for pastoral reasons, Episcopal conferences may allow the celebrations of marriages at home if this is the custom. In Bette culture, it is the tradition that marriages are celebrated at home. The situation in Bette culture calls for a new pastoral way of celebrating this sacrament. Presently in Bette culture, there is a tension between the traditional celebration of marriage and the Roman liturgical Rite for the celebration of marriage. Most Catholics have continued to celebrate the traditional marriage ceremony without the church marriage, while others have to go through two marriage ceremonies: the traditional Bette Rite and the Roman Catholic Rite. There is a pastoral need to integrate the Bette and the Roman Liturgical rites into one.

Our proposal is that the proposal found in the editio typica should be replaced with the traditional Bette consent. Instead of this consent to be asked for and received on the day of the church wedding, the consent given at the ceremony of consent should suffice. The ceremony of consent for Catholics should involve a priest. After the groom

³⁴ Anscar J. Chupungco, *Inculturation and the Organic Progression of the Liturgy*, in, *Ecclesia Orans* 7, 1990, p.10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

has been questioned by the parents of the girl the purpose of his coming and he has given his purpose, the girl should be called forth before the families and the priest. The father of the girl now tells the girl the purpose of the visit of the man. At this point, the priest instructs the would be couple on the meaning and purpose of marriage and the Christian marriage. After he has done this, in place of the father of the girl asking the girl to give her consent, the priest asks her and obtains the consent in the name of the church. The sign of her consent which is the handover of the Kola nuts to the eldest member of the family remains the same.

The form I am proposing here would be faithful to the canonical requirement of the priest asking and obtaining the consent and at the same time would reflect the authentic Bette tradition. This form is also more pastoral because it overcomes the hesitation of most Catholics having their marriages blessed in the church because of the expenses involving in celebrating the second ceremony.

The area of blessings also has to be adapted. In the Roman Ritual the couple have to be blessed by the priest. The priest can be part of the three blessings of the traditional Bette rite. In the first blessing which is immediately following the consent, the priest may invite the elder to bless the couple while he gives the final blessing. The final blessing of the priest which may be taken from the Roman Ritual should be reflective of the people's tradition. This would mean that the elements found in Bette marriage blessings together with some of those typical lines found in Bette Marriage blessings must be incorporated. The blessing from the Roman ritual may altogether be replaced with the traditional Bette marriage blessing because this blessing contains within it not only elements that are not contrary to Catholic teaching but also elements that are reflective of Catholic values.

These include the raising of children, hard work, the peaceful co-existence of the couple and marriage as life time commitment.

The second blessing stays the same with the father of the girl blessing her daughter and the priest being a witness of this blessing. In place of the father pouring her the water on her legs, the priest using holy water may bless the girl.

The last blessing we will propose should be done in the church. The only reason this should be done in the church is to emphasize the fact that they are also members of another family, the family of Christ. This would be after the all night ceremony at the home of the groom. The couple together with their family and parishioners gathers for a Mass of thanksgiving at the church. The readings used should be those present in the Roman Ritual. A homily is given that reflects the readings and the sacrament of marriage. After the Eucharist, the priest does the third blessing. The priest like the eldest member of the family also uses both Kola nuts and water to splash on the floor. He does this splashing in front of the crucifix, the altar and the tabernacle.

Why these three elements? Within these three is the life and salvation of Christians. Christ's death offers Christians salvation; the Eucharist is a life-giving celebration that guarantees Christians a share in the body of Christ; and the tabernacle signifies the ever presence of Christ with his people. This would also become a pedagogical tool for the couple. They are reminded by this symbolic action of the salvation offered them by Christ; they are reminded to take the Eucharist in their married life seriously as it is a way Christ is present in their family life; and they are assured of Christ's ever presence in their family life. After these blessings, the Mass continues and dismisses as usual and the couple returns home where the celebration continues.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have stated development of Christian marriage. We have discussed the teachings of the conciliar and post-conciliar documents on liturgical inculturation and specifically the inculturation of marriage. We have argued that the inculturation of marriage in Bette culture is possible and have offered a proposal for the adaptation of marriage in Bette culture. It is our position that this paper is a step towards celebrating one Marriage ceremony that is authentically Catholic and reflects deeply the Bette culturally celebration of marriage.