

BOOK REVIEW

- Title:** The Nexus Between ICT and Liturgy: Towards Consolidating Digital Worship in the African Context
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Our time is agog with activities of human beings that are increasingly affected in form, size, content and time by the Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The result is that the benefits of the attendant information revolution are very well pervasive. Banking, commerce, contract, communication, publication, education, research, marketing and so on, are enhanced and facilitated by ICT and its applications. Recently, liturgists, theologians and religious scholars have shown huge interest on how ICT can best be harnessed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Catholic liturgy. While the use of ICT may appear evident, the profound links and the countless opportunities it has for the 21st century e-worship are yet to be considerably explored. The book entitled *The Nexus between ICT and Liturgy in the African Context: Towards Consolidating Digital Worship in the African Context* deals with the future of worship in Churches at this era of digital blast.

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The masterpiece draws inspiration from the Second Vatican Council's Decree, *Inter Mirifica*, on the Media of Social Communication.

The book is plotted in seven chapters. Chapter One introduces the work with preliminary issues such as the statement of the background and the problem, enunciation of the aim and objectives, asking of the questions that guide the study, indications of the scope and limitations of the study, declaring the method of analysis in the study and stating the significance of the work. Surely, the central problem of the study is how to make the worshipping Church begin to speak the language of the digital world for the purpose of being liturgically relevant to the people of the internet age. Chapter Two undertakes a general framework of the concepts of ICT and Catholic Liturgy. Reflecting on the dialectics of ICT in the Catholic Liturgy, and also doing a theoretical and liturgical construct of using ICT, the content of this chapter makes an interesting study especially on the evolution of the conceptions. The study here affirms the need for the Church of our times to utilize the massive prospects in the new media technology. It also reviews the expert views and authorities, and traces the historical development of the digital revolution. The chapter culminates in the examination of the existing but available literature on the key variables.

Chapter Three situates itself within a real consideration of the connection between ICT and Catholic worship. The symbiosis is demonstrated under *anamnesis*, person, and event-based lenses. Huge lessons are drawn from the deployment of ICT during the era of COVID-19 pandemic. Types and forms of ICT for Catholic Liturgy are also exposed. Chapter Four is on the use and abuse of ICT in liturgical celebrations today. The chapter is an effort to note the possible uses and abuses or errors on the use of ICT in which participants get themselves tangled and jumbled even when they are in utmost good faith (*uberrima fides*).

Chapter Five examines the provisions of the Second Vatican Council Decree, *Inter Mirifica* in the light of the yearning for use in liturgy of ICT tools such as e-liturgical books, e-confessions, e-congregation, e-choir, e-fundraising. The chapter also reflects on the biblical and theological foundations on the use of ICT at the liturgy. Chapter Six dwells on the future of e-worship in African Christianity of the 21st

century. The chapter offers a demonstrative model of how the Church in Africa can influence and enhance pastoral and liturgical transformation in Africa through digitalized worship and a critical and constructive engagement with machinery of ICT. It considers the parameters of the propriety of some key ICT pastoral tools such as banners, overhead/screen projectors and PowerPoint displays; pre-recorded and televised masses; live streaming programme; the use of iPad at the gospel reading, slide show at homilies; use of iBreviary for the prayer of the Church; and concelebrants snapping pictures at Mass. This discussion in this chapter strongly suggests to the Church in Africa to “consider advancing digital worship in an effort towards consolidating knowledge and resources about e-worship and the modern media”.

Chapter Seven makes practical recommendations and concludes the study. This last chapter makes far reaching recommendations such as proper training of the ministers to be ICT savvy; relevant ongoing formation of priests, ICT directors and the lay faithful; voting of substantial fund for the procurement and maintenance of ICT; parish pastoral plan to adequately integrate ICT; development of a model youth mass; re-orientation in the seminary; proper legislation on the use of ICT at worship; setting up the media office at the parish and diocesan levels; establishment of diocesan and parish ministers of ICT; annual week of ICT at the parish and diocesan levels respectively; increased ICT-thematic homilies; periodic ICT-penitential service; and composition of the rite of celebration of a digital liturgy. The book concludes with a demand of a “radical response by those who read it. Consolidating on the gains in some parts of the continent, the Church in Africa is urged to justify the hopes of the universal Church on her by using ICT at Christian worship in order to bear fruits of authentic and convincing Christian living and witnessing”.

The focal point of the treatise is a reflection on the possibility of complementarity, mutual symbiotic relationship between ICT and public worship. There is partnership, mutual support and collaboration among the worshippers within the two spheres. None should look down on the other. In liturgy, which is primarily worship, there are also subsidiary and supplementary benefits such as education, catechesis and enlightenment. There are also instructions and formation in social, moral,

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and religious values. It is obvious that when not handled well, ICT use will result to devastating and calamitous destruction of liturgical tradition, heritage and patrimony. Nonetheless, examining ICT for e-worship, the book advocates for adherence to guidelines in liturgical celebrations. Hence, the book discloses the meaning, theology, types, prospects, uses, and abuses in ICT for digital worship.

In all, the book is a strong invitation to the Church and the people of God to utilize the media and generally the ICT, for divine praise and worship. The book contains reflections that are well packaged and wrapped. It is written in plain language intelligible to the common man without of course forfeiting the technical theological content that must adorn such a discourse as required by the subject matter. The work is rich and lucidly presented and does not contain needless minutiae. Still more, the book is a celebration of erudition, versatility and resourcefulness in various disciplinary areas where the author goes to and fro in order to illustrate his points. As a well formed and informed scholar, the author has the *arête* of using theology and liturgical sources to demonstrate his theses. Although academically and systematically presented and also rich in vocabulary and sound grammatical creations, anyone would find the book an interesting and invaluable piece that can swell the reader's spiritual and intellectual stock. This book will make a spirited impact not only on scholarship in liturgical theology in Africa but also as a spur towards an easy consolidation of Christian worship in our world today. It is hoped that this work will ultimately be valuable and priceless to all clergy, consecrated persons, and the lay faithful in the Church, and indeed to everyone.