

# **THE AFRICAN CHURCH TODAY AND TOMORROW AN APPRECIATION**

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Fr. Nathaniel I. Ndiokwere's latest book *The African Church, Today and tomorrow* (Vols. I and II) is the combined fruit of committed service to the spread of the Good News and strenuous research into the agony and excitement of Africa's Christians as they seek to appropriate the joys of the Good News in the midst of many Afro-cultural values which they still cherish.

His earlier work *Prophecy and Revolution* (1981) which focused on Africa's Independent Churches and their large flavour of Africanisms apparently laid the remote foundations for Fr. Ndiokwere's spirited tackling of the issue of inculturating the Good News and its approved liturgical forms within the Catholic Church in Africa.

Fully mindful of and respectful towards the teachings of the Church Magisterium on legitimate inculturation in the Church and very sensitive to the difficulties, challenges and complexities of inculturating the Good News in a multi-cultural world and Church, Fr. Ndiokwere courageously wades into the salient issues and thus makes it possible for all those concerned with and interested in inculturating the Good News in Africa to appreciate his more constructive suggestions.

At the heart of this most stimulating and challenging work are the prayer life of Africa's Catholics and their celebration of the Sacraments which Fr. Ndiokwere rightly sees as still requiring a more spirited re-tuning and re-structuring to resonate into the spirit-depths of the African Catholic to empower him to live a full Christianly human life.

The discussion on the Eucharist and Inculturation with the Zairean format of Holy Mass as special reference point is invoked by Fr. Ndiokwere as a necessary base for the emergence of a pan-African rite of Mass within the Mother Roman Rite of Holy Mass. While raising structural questions about the Holy Mass the entire discussion is very exciting and challenging. Some positive suggestions made could easily be accepted without too much debate or delay.

The stimulus of some sub-themes of the 1994 Synod on the Church in Africa is very evident in the discussions on Para-liturgical celebrations, festivities and title-taking among Africa's Catholics. Bishops, priests and all who preach and spread the Good News in special capacities will find in these and in the discussions and suggestions on "effective preaching" and the means of social communication" very timely and relevant insights and helps for Africa's explosive inculturation situation.

This is a book to wrestle with for more productive thinking and practice in inculturation. Such agonistic and exciting wrestling with the book will be the best way to appreciate the tons of sweat that have gone into this work.

