

# An Example of Inculturation of the Catholic Church in South India: The Case of a Nuptial Mass

OKAMITSU Nobuko\*

In the mid-20th century, the Catholic Church faced a devastating crisis, influenced in part by secularism. Taking the situation seriously, the Church ultimately made the drastic decision to undertake reform to overcome its stagnation. The Church convoked the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, commonly known as “Vatican II,” to undertake this reformation.

Following Vatican II, the Catholic Church embraced the phenomenon of “inculturation” to allow the faithful to understand the message of God in a local context. The Catholic Church thus allows local churches to celebrate the liturgy with elements of local culture included in the official procedure. Today, local churches accommodate local cultural elements in celebration of the liturgy with official permission from the Catholic authority.

This paper focuses on the sacrament of marriage, performed in a local church in India, as an example of inculturation following Vatican II. Samples were collected from field research conducted from 1999 to 2003 in Tamil Nadu, South India.

Key Words: Catholic Church, Marriage, Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Universality, Diversity, India

## I. Introduction

In the mid-20th century, the Catholic Church faced a devastating crisis influenced in part by secularism, detachment from the Church, and reduction in numbers of both the clergy and the devotees. Taking the situation seriously, the Catholic Church ultimately made the drastic decision to undertake reform to break its stagnation.

As an initial step, the Catholic Church convoked the Second Ecumenical Council<sup>1)</sup> of the Vatican (1962–1965), commonly known as the Second Vatican Council or “Vatican II.” Speaking of the situation in which the Church found itself, Pope John XXIII stated that it was time to “open the windows [of the Church] and let in some

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\* 中央大学政策文化総合研究所客員研究員

Visiting Research Fellow, The Institute of Policy and Cultural Studies, Chuo University

fresh air” (Sullivan 2002: 17).

In the epoch-making Vatican II conference, the Church established a new policy to seek rebirth as “the world Church,” adapting itself to local cultures. Adjustment of the Church to the real world was the most important agenda, and themes related to this adjustment were discussed at the conference. Following Vatican II, permission was granted for things never before imagined, including celebration of the Mass in vernacular languages<sup>2)</sup>, an ecumenical dialogue, adoption of local customs into the liturgy, and so on.

After Vatican II, the Catholic Church accepted the phenomenon of inculturation<sup>3)</sup> to allow the faithful to understand the message of God in local contexts. It allows local churches to celebrate the liturgy with elements of local culture incorporated into the official procedure. Today, local churches demonstrate both universality as part of the Catholic Church and diversity based on the local elements included in their celebration of the liturgy.

This paper focuses on a marriage ceremony, one of seven sacraments performed in a specific local church in India, as a case study of inculturation after Vatican II. Samples were collected from field research conducted from 1999 to 2003 in Tamil Nadu, South India.

## II. Inculturation and its Legal Formalities in the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church advocates universality. According to Catechism of the Catholic Church, “the Church is Catholic because Christ is present in her” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1993: 830)<sup>4)</sup>. In contrast to this, diversity is seen in the Church’s missionary works worldwide. In other words, the Catholic Church as a religious organization coexists an inconsistent concept of universality and diversity. The uniqueness of the Catholic Church comes from its dual concept of the universal and the local church.

Ecclesiology of the Catholic Church recognizes both the universal church and the local church. The universal church is considered the Church entity, produced by the communion and the unity of local churches. It represents the universal aspect of the Church and is regarded as existing not in the real world but at the conceptual level (Sasaki 1986: 156–157).

The local church, on the other hand, exists in a particular era and area. The local church performs missionary activities worldwide and represents the diverse aspect of the Catholic Church’s local cultural elements. The Catholic Church allows local churches, in following their mission, to both maintain the universality of the

Catholic Church and also adapt to local cultures. The local church demonstrates uniqueness in every location, but it is also necessary to preserve the universality of the Catholic Church in a global context. Preserving such universality is the priority of the local church.

After Vatican II, the Catholic Church officially acknowledged that the faithful should understand the message of Christ in their own context. In other words, the Catholic Church has embraced the phenomenon of inculturation, allowing for diversity in the local church. The local church thus pursues its mission to maintain the universality of the Catholic Church while also reflecting the traditions and customs of particular regions.

If a local church becomes extremely localized, it can lose its relationship not only with other local churches but also with the Vatican. In this case, it also loses its quality of universality as part of the Catholic Church. Historically, local churches that have become separated from the Catholic Church have been dismantled as a result of weakness caused by their isolation. Therefore, local churches face a conflict between their own identity and their universality as part of the Catholic Church (Clark 1978: 220).

Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments published *Instruction on the Roman Liturgy and Inculturation* to guide each country's episcopal conference or conference of bishops in managing matters related to inculturation (*Instruction on the Roman Liturgy and Inculturation* 1994)<sup>5</sup>. This guideline, which presents the official view of the Catholic Church regarding the Roman liturgy and inculturation, states the necessary formalities the local church must observe when adopting local culture into the liturgy.

The Catholic Church regards the first stage of inculturation to be translation of religious books about the Bible, the dogma, and the liturgy into a vernacular language (*Instruction on the Roman Liturgy and Inculturation* 1994: 9; 28; 53). Liturgical books in a vernacular language used in the local church are thus an example of inculturation.

Furthermore, inculturation in the Catholic Church is subject to an official procedure. If a local church wants to introduce local elements into the liturgy, it must observe the procedure; close correspondence between the Vatican and the local church must take place before inculturation is allowed.

The conference of bishops in the local church has the authority to set rules and regulations regarding liturgical books, and discusses accommodation of the Roman liturgy according to the local context and traditions. Decisions made by the conference of bishops are not legally binding, however, until they have been sanctioned

by the Holy See.

Matters that may be decided by the conference of bishops are limited to the following: (1) the gestures and poses that devotees may perform; (2) the way devotees worship the altar and the Bible; (3) the songs sung at the gathering rite and at the time of communion during Mass; (4) the way the sign of peace is exchanged; (5) the conditions for receiving the host; (6) the materials of the altar and equipment; (7) the materials and forms of sacred implements; (8) the materials and forms of the vestments worn by priests; and (9) the way the host is received (*Instruction on the Roman Liturgy and Inculturation* 1994: 54).

The following procedure governs the use of liturgical books by a local church. The conference of bishops helps the liturgy committee examine, at a local or regional level, how to incorporate local tradition and spirituality in celebration of the liturgy. The conference of bishops submits a plan to change the liturgy, with the instructions of the liturgy committee, to Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. After examination of and deliberation on the change plan with the conference of bishops, Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments sets the duration for a trial period during which the local church will perform the liturgy as written in the proposal from the conference of bishops. Following this trial period, the conference of bishops reports on the results of the trial and the suitability of the changes in liturgy to Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments examines the submitted documents, and then issues laws and ordinances to accept the proposal from the conference of bishops to the local church.

The changes proposed by the local church are adopted in celebration of the liturgy only after Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments sanctions the proposal. The conference of bishops notifies the local community, including the clergy and devotees, about the liturgical changes. Changes in liturgy are thus introduced according to necessity (*Instruction on the Roman Liturgy and Inculturation* 1994: 62–69; Okamitsu 2014: 94–95).

### III. Sacraments in the Catholic Church: Marriage

Sacraments are the official religious rituals of the Catholic Church. Seven are recognized: (1) Baptism, (2) Reconciliation (Penance or confession), (3) Eucharist (Holy Communion), (4) Confirmation, (5) Marriage (Holy Matrimony), (6) Holy Orders, and (7) Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction).

The sacrament of marriage is believed to establish a matrimonial covenant between a man and a woman, and it is assumed to be monogamic. The Catholic Church approves the establishment of a valid marriage only for people with no obstacles under natural or canon law<sup>6)</sup> (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1993: 492; Okada 2003: 236).

Obstacles that invalidate marriage under canon law are defined in Articles 1073 to 1094 (*Code of Canon Law* 1988: 577–585). According to Catholic teaching, the marriage bond is associated not only with Catholic marriage but with any marriage in any religion. Therefore, canon law also applies to marriages among non-Catholic people. Additionally, marriage has two purposes: procreation and education of offspring, and establishment of a lifelong partnership between a man and a woman (Cahill 1994: 569; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1993: 495–506; Okada 2003: 234–238; Trese 2000: 452–453).

The sacrament of Holy Matrimony increases the blessing of sanctifying grace in a couple and bestows sacramental grace upon them (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1993: 495–506; Okada 2003: 237–238; Trese 2000: 455–457). These blessings are considered to convey upon a couple the power necessary to live out the obligations of marriage between baptized persons. The sacramental grace bestowed in marriage is believed to elevate the natural love between the couple to the supernatural level and to sanctify them through the bearing and nurturing of children (Trese 2000: 456–457).

According to the Catholic Church, grace in marriage is bestowed only if both members of the couple are practicing Catholics. If only one is a Catholic, the celebration of marriage still can and should be performed as a part of the public liturgy of the Church, but sacramental grace will not be given.

The Catholic Church considers proper preparation to be necessary for marriage (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1993: 493–498; Okada 2003: 236). Canon law states that priests are obliged to prepare the agreement for the couple (*Code of Canon Law* 1983: 573)<sup>7)</sup>. Further, when the celebration of marriage is performed at a Catholic church, regardless of whether grace is bestowed, it is mandatory to follow the instruction of the parish priest prior to the marriage celebration. This procedure applies to any couple who plan to marry at a Catholic church. The Catholic Church in each country respects local cultures and customs, and thus understands that preparation for marriage is not universal in all local churches. However, although each local church may follow its own procedures, canon law (1065) strongly recommends that the Catholic couple receive the sacraments of Confirmation, Communion, and Reconciliation before the celebration of marriage

(*Code of Canon Law* 1983: 573).

## **1. Rules and Regulations for Celebration of Marriage in the Catholic Church**

### **A. Marriage between Catholics and non-Catholics**

The Catholic Church distinguishes between the marriage of two Catholics and the marriage of a Catholic and a non-Catholic. The latter type is further distinguished into mixed marriages, defined as between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, or inter-religious marriages, defined as between a Catholic and a non-Christian.

To be considered licit, a mixed marriage must follow a set procedure and obtain special permission from an ecclesiastical authority. For an inter-religious marriage, there is an inhibiting impediment, and it therefore requires a matrimonial dispensation. To remove the obstacles to such marriages, certain conditions laid out by Canon Law Articles 1125 and 1126 must be met (*Code of Canon Law* 1983: 599–601).

Celebration of a Catholic's marriage, including mixed marriage, is performed at the church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1993: 491; Okada 2003: 236; Trese 2000: 465). Celebration of marriage between two Catholics normally takes place during Holy Mass, and is called a "wedding Mass" or "nuptial Mass." Canon law (1118) states that a marriage between two Catholics must take place in the diocese of their residence (*Code of Canon Law* 1983: 597).

## **2. The Nuptial Mass: Celebration of Marriage during Holy Mass**

The fundamental form of marriage celebration during Holy Mass consists of 6 elements: (1) the gathering rite / opening ceremony, (2) the liturgy of the Word / scripture reading, (3) the rite of marriage, (4) the liturgy of the Eucharist, (5) the communion rite, and (6) the concluding rite.

The rite of marriage is performed after the liturgy of the Word. It consists of eight elements: (1) confirmation of the will to marry, (2) marriage vows, (3) declaration of the marriage, (4) blessing of the wedding rings, (5) presentation of the wedding rings, (6) exchange of the wedding rings, (7) signing of the marriage license, and (8) joint prayer.

Following the Lord's Prayer in the liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest faces the newlywed couple to give the nuptial blessing. This marriage blessing cannot be omitted from the ceremony under any circumstances. During the concluding rite, the priest gives a special blessing to the newly married couple; the Mass then concludes (Japan Catholic Liturgy Committee 1996: 31–89) (see Table 1).

A priest must be present for the marriage between two Catholics to be considered valid, unless it is too difficult for a priest to attend (Trese 2000: 455). If the priest lives considerably far from the church and his visits are limited to Sunday only, it may be difficult for him to perform the celebration of marriage during Mass at the church. Article 1108 of canon law states that marriages are valid if concluded in the presence of the holder of the see (the bishop of the diocese) or the parish priest and two witnesses (*Code of Canon Law* 1983: 593).

The completed marriage is registered not only in the marriage registration book but also in the baptism registration book, which records the details of baptisms. Canon law (*Code of Canon Law* 1983: 1121–1122) mandates that baptism records must be registered in the baptism registration book and marriage records in the marriage registration book (*Code of Canon Law* 1983: 597–599). Because the marriage bond must be recorded in the baptism registration book as well, the baptism registration book can also be used to confirm the validity of a marriage.

Table 1. Celebration of Marriage during Holy Mass: Basic Form

Gathering Rite/ Opening Ceremony	Liturgy of the Word/ Scripture reading	Rite of Marriage (Marriage Vows)	Liturgy of the Eucharist	Communion Rite	Concluding Rite
		(1) Confirmation of the will to marry (2) Marriage vows (3) Declaration of the Marriage (4) Blessing of the wedding rings (5) Presentation of the wedding rings (6) Exchange of the wedding rings (7) Signing of the marriage license (8) Joint prayer	Nuptial blessing		Special blessing

#### IV. The Nuptial Mass in a Local Church: The Case of S, from K Diocese in Tamil Nadu, South India

This section describes the nuptial Mass of S, celebrated in K Diocese<sup>8)</sup>, as an example of inculturation. S is a Catholic woman, 23 years old at the time of the case study. Before marriage, she was enrolled in the main station of M Parish in K Diocese. She married a Catholic man from the same Diocese; her nuptial Mass was held on September 16, 1999, at her former church.

The nuptial Mass may be celebrated at the church when the couple are Catholics of K Diocese. Celebration of marriage in a parish church takes place only after obtaining official permission from the Church, which is granted through the following prescribed procedures. These mandatory procedure is conducted in a business-like way through a parish priest, regardless of the applicant's caste, financial situation, and family background. It includes the following: (1) confirmation of the applicants' age and church tax payment, (2) attendance of a marriage preparation course, (3) exchange of a pre-marriage application form by the applicants, (4) announcement of the marriage banns at the church, and (5) exchange of a marriage investigation form by the applicants. Traditionally, the betrothal is performed after the marriage investigation forms have been exchanged between the bride and the groom. However, in recent times the betrothal has grown less important, and is commonly omitted.

The nuptial Mass of S was performed at her parish church on the morning of an auspicious day according to the Tamil calendar. The Tamil calendar has a gap with the Gregorian calendar at the start of months, and is referred to when deciding upon suitable months and dates for both religious rituals and secular events. Catholics hold no celebrations not only during the season of Lent, but also during inauspicious months according to the Tamil calendar.

Celebration of S's nuptial Mass began as follows. The bride wore a red silk saree with a white cape on her head, and the groom a western suit. With the bride and the groom at the forefront, relatives on both sides departed from the banquet hall in front of the church toward the church itself, led by a marching band. This procession traditionally begins at the house of the bride; because S's house was far from the church, the departure place was changed.

The size of the band depends on the wedding budget. Fundamentally, the band consists of uniformed musicians with drums and flutes. Lavish spenders may have a band including dancers in addition to the musicians, who lead the march. In the



local area, loud sound is believed to ward off the evil eye and chase away evil spirits who envy human happiness. Therefore, celebrations are always accompanied by loud noises.

After reaching the church, the bride and the groom proceeded to the altar to worship God; they sat on chairs kept in front of the altar and waited for the priest to arrive.

Table 2 compares the basic form of the Mass, the basic form of the nuptial Mass, and the nuptial Mass performed for S.

After the liturgy of the Word, the rite of marriage begins. In the rite of marriage for S, instead of wedding rings, a marriage pendant called a tali was blessed, then placed around the neck of the bride by the groom. This placing of the tali is a Pan-Indian gesture that is also seen in Hindu marriage ceremonies. In the Catholic ritual, the tali symbolizes the bond between the married couple. The hanging of the tali around the bride's neck is the climax of the ceremony.

As in a basic nuptial Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist followed the rite of marriage, during which the bride and the groom formed the offertory line. Subsequently, the groom, bride, and priest ignited an oil lump (*lum/kutu vilakku*) which was placed in front of the altar.

After the doxology (*Through him, and with him, and in him...*), a girl performed the arati ritual. Arati is fundamentally a Hindu ritual (performed by a Brahmin priest) in which fire on a stand or a plate is held in front of statues to awaken Gods. In the Catholic Church, arati is performed by a premenarchal girl wearing a white dress. Three types of arati are performed: single arati, double arati, and triple arati. In the single arati, performed for the priest, flowers are placed on the plate. Double arati, performed for the Bible, uses flowers and sticks of incense. Triple arati, performed for God, uses flowers, sticks of incense, and candles (for light).

In the nuptial Mass of S, triple arati was performed. A girl in a white dress stood, facing the altar, raised a metal plate over her head containing flowers and a candle, and turned clockwise three times. The Hindu ritual for "awakening Gods" is thus adopted into the Catholic nuptial Mass.

Following the Mass, the priest, the couple, and the couple's sponsor signed the marriage registration book in front of the altar. After celebration of marriage in a church, the church sends the marriage registration to the government registration office. With this registration, the couple is recognized as being legally married under both religious and secular law. After taking pictures in the church, the couple and everyone leading the marching band proceeded to the banquet hall. Traditionally, the bride and the groom went to the house of the bride for the wed-

Table 2. Comparison between Basic Mass, Basic Nuptial Mass, and Nuptial Mass of S

<b>Ritual Components</b>	<b>Mass (basic form)</b>	<b>Nuptial Mass (basic form)</b>	<b>Nuptial Mass (Case of S in K Diocese)</b>
<b>Before the Mass</b>			(1) Procession to the church (2) Entrance into the church
<b>Gathering Rite</b>	<b>Gathering Rite</b>	<b>Gathering Rite</b>	<b>Gathering Rite</b>
	(1) Entrance into the church	(1) Entrance into the church	(3) Bride and groom worship God at the altar
<b>Liturgy of the Word</b>	<b>Liturgy of the Word</b>	<b>Liturgy of the Word</b>	<b>Liturgy of the Word</b>
<b>Rite of Marriage</b>		<b>Rite of Marriage</b>	<b>Rite of Marriage</b>
		(2) Confirmation of the will to marry (3) Marriage vows (4) Declaration of the Marriage (5) Blessing of the wedding rings (6) Exchange of the wedding rings (7) Signing of the marriage license (8) Joint prayer	(4) Confirmation of the will to marry (5) Marriage vows (6) Declaration of the Marriage (7) Blessing of the bride (8) Blessing of the tali (9) Placement of the tali around the neck of the bride
<b>Liturgy of the Eucharist</b>	<b>Liturgy of the Eucharist</b>	<b>Liturgy of the Eucharist</b>	<b>Liturgy of the Eucharist</b>
		(9) Offertory (10) Nuptial blessing	(10) Offertory (11) Lighting of the lamp (12) Arati
<b>Concluding Rite</b>	<b>Concluding Rite</b>	<b>Concluding Rite</b>	<b>Concluding Rite</b>
		(11) Special blessing	(13) Special blessing
<b>After the Mass</b>		<b>After the Mass</b>	<b>After the Mass</b>
			(14) Signing of the marriage license (15) Photoshoot (16) Procession to the auditorium

Created by N. Okamitsu

ding banquet following the nuptial Mass; in recent times, many prefer to hold a banquet at the church hall.

When a marriage is celebrated at a church, a fee must be paid to the parish. The bride's family pays for the Mass honorarium, the wine and bread, the fee for permission to take pictures and videos inside the church, and the fee for the church

choir, regulated by the parish. The groom's family pays for those who perform duties in the sacristy, such as the lay minister and the bell ringer; the parish also regulates the amount of this fee.

In K Diocese, the ritual honorarium periodically increases in price. In regulations from 1991, the offering was 20 Rupee for low Mass and 30 Rupee for high Mass. In a concelebrated Mass, which is performed cooperatively by a number of priests, the main priest receives 50 Rupee, and the other priests are paid separately. The standard honorarium for a Mass was 35 Rupee in a survey from 1999 and 50 Rupee in 2002, illustrating the increase in honoraria amounts.

In the case of S, the bride paid for the Mass honorarium (100 rupees), the wine and bread (25 rupees), the fee for video recording (500 rupees), and the band (250 rupees total; 100 rupees for the keyboard player and 150 rupees for three singers). The groom paid 75 rupees for the honorarium from the bridegroom (*varattu map-pilai*) honorarium, or gratitude to the sacristy (*upateeciyar*), and 25 rupees for the bell clerk (grandmother of the temple, or *koovilaayi paatti*).

## V. Local Elements Seen in a Nuptial Mass of K Diocese: The Case of S

The basic form of a nuptial Mass in the Catholic Church is the same in any country. After Vatican II, the Catholic Church allowed local churches to introduce local elements into the liturgy. Such local elements are seen in the liturgy celebrated in each local church.

Local elements observed in the nuptial Mass of S include (1) placement of the tali around the neck of the bride, (2) lighting of the lamp, and (3) the arati ritual.

### 1. Placement of a Tali around the Neck of the Bride

In India, a tali worn around a neck shows a woman's status as being married. In Hindu wedding ceremonies, the groom places a tali on a yellow thread or gold chain around the bride's neck at an auspicious time; this moment is the climax of the marriage ceremony. According to Hindu tradition, a married woman should always wear tali. If her husband dies, the widow removes all jewels, including the tali.

In the nuptial Mass performed in K Diocese, the priest blesses a tali instead of wedding rings, and the groom places the tali around the bride's neck at an auspicious time, as seen in a Hindu wedding. This action, performed during the rite of marriage in the nuptial Mass, establishes the marriage bond between the newly

married couple. In a western wedding, this bond would be established and symbolized by the couple's exchange of wedding rings blessed by the priest.

When the groom places the tali around the neck of the bride, the musicians make a loud noise with drums and reed instruments, which is believed to drive away evil eyes and evil spirits. Wedding attendees throw rice and petals toward the newly married couple during this moment, as is done in a Hindu wedding. Because the act of placing the tali symbolizes the establishment of the wedding bond between the couple, this moment is the climax of the nuptial Mass. The bride kneels to allow the groom to place the tali around her neck, symbolizing the obedience of a wife to her husband; this action is also consistent with the marriage norm in India that a wife obey her husband.

In 1734, the Catholic Church officially stated in *The Oath of 16 Points* that placing and wearing a tali was a Hindu custom, and as such was forbidden from the rite of Marriage and daily life. The purpose of this statement was to forbid Christians in India from following the manners and customs of Hindus (Cronin 2002: 412). Vatican II, however, allowed the local Church to accommodate local traditions and customs in the liturgy. Currently, the Catholic Church regards the tali as an Indian custom. Placement of the tali in the rite of Marriage in India is considered a valid alternative to the exchange of wedding rings performed in western countries<sup>9)</sup>.

## 2. Lighting of the lamp

Following the offertory in the Liturgy of Eucharist, the groom, bride, and priest, respectively, light an Indian-style lamp (*lum/kutu vilakku*) made of brass and placed in front of the altar. The light of the lamp symbolizes God in Christianity, and indicates that God is welcomed into the Mass.

As background to the adoption of Indian elements into liturgy in India, the Catholic Church officially proclaimed on April 25, 1969 that local churches in India could accommodate local culture in the liturgy, in response to requests from India (Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments 1969: 31-33). Since this announcement, a lamp may be used instead of a candle during Mass in India.

In a Hindu temple, a priest lights two lamps placed on either side of the altar to signal the start of the rite (puja). In the Catholic Church, a priest lights the lamp at the beginning of Mass, a parallel to the signal of the start of the rite in a Hindu temple<sup>10)</sup>. These days, lamps are very commonly used as an alternative to candles in India; not only are lamps more cost effective than candles<sup>11)</sup>, they also demonstrate an aspect of Indian culture.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is the climax and main rite of the Mass, reproducing the Lord's Supper. After offertory, a lamp is lighted to symbolize the existence of God. The light of the lamp, indicating the presence of God on Earth, signals the start of an important rite (the Liturgy of the Eucharist). The lighting of the lamp immediately after offertory also recalls the *homa* ritual in Hindu tradition, in which fire mingled with offerings in the hearth produces holy power from the Gods. Fire during *puja* symbolizes two things at Hindu temples in Sri Lanka: that Gods' ingestion of the offerings through the fire in the hearth, and second, the reproduction of holy power. The former interpretation regards the fire as the mouth of the Gods, and the offerings as food; in this context, the Gods eat the food to produce holy power. The latter interpretation regards the fire as female genitalia, and the offerings as sperm; in this context, the union of the fire and the offerings is regarded as intercourse to produce holy power (Tanaka 1986: 14-15).

In the Catholic Church, only a priest customarily lights the lamp at the start of the gathering rite in Mass. In a nuptial Mass, however, the bride and groom are allowed to light the lamp in addition to the priest. Lighting the lamp in celebration of the liturgy generates holy power, as in the Hindu *homa* ritual. The fire lighted by the bride and groom symbolically mingles with the offerings to create holy power, regarded as the grace from God that blesses the couple. In other words, because the fire from the lamp symbolizes God, it is understood that the holy power from the fire brings blessings from God to the newly married couple in a nuptial Mass.

### **3. The Arati Ritual**

The *arati* ritual is fundamentally a Hindu tradition, performed by a Brahmin priest in the temple. The priest, holding fire lit on a plate or in a lamp, turns clockwise in front of holy statues to awaken Gods. In a religious context, the holy power dwelling in the statues arises from the act of *arati*.

Hinduism regards *arati* as a rite to welcome and please the Gods. Hindu Gods are said to be pleased to see people behave as their servants. The presentation of offerings is the most important act to please the Gods. The Gods' superiority is shown through the relationship between a human being, a servant, who presents offerings received by the God, a superior. The essence of *puja* (ritual) is to bring the Gods pleasure (Fuller 1979: 470); it is considered vital to make the Gods happy with offerings (Tanaka 1986: 21).

In contrast, *arati* may also be performed in a secular context by a layperson. Among Hindus, people perform *arati* toward family members or friends before they

embark on a trip. This type of arati is performed to protect the travelers from evil by wishing them a safe journey with the holy power of the fire.

Three types of arati are performed in the Catholic Church: single, double, and triple arati. Each type is performed for a certain object or target. The single arati is performed for the priest, with only flowers placed on the offering plate. During Mass, the single arati honors the priest who celebrates Mass with an offering of flowers. Double arati is performed for the Bible, with flowers and sticks of incense placed on the plate. The flowers and sticks of incense demonstrate a feeling of awe toward the Bible. Triple arati, in which the plate contains flowers, sticks of incense, and a lit candle, is performed during Mass to praise God.

In the Catholic Church, arati must be performed by a premenarchal girl wearing a white dress. Girls of premenarchal age are considered most suitable to perform the arati in front of the altar of the church because they look cute in a white dress with floral decoration.

The Hindu ritual for “awakening Gods” has been adopted by the Catholic Church in India as an act of respect for priests, the Bible, and God. In particular, triple arati, which is performed for God, differs from the other two forms of arati in that it uses fire, which gives out light, the symbol of God in Christianity. The light from the candle thus recalls God, and the ritual of triple arati praises God through the light of the fire.

Importantly, performance of arati in the liturgy does not hinder the meanings of the liturgy, but rather honors something holy in the Christian context. The doxology is a prayer to bring glory to God as father by Christ and through communion with the Holy Spirit (Shirahama 2004: 33); it is a special prayer to acknowledge holiness. Arati is practiced in the liturgy to respect holiness in direct response to the meaning of the doxology. Therefore, arati performed as a Christian rite is quite different from its counterpart in Hindu rituals.

The objects honored by the three forms of arati performed in the liturgy are holy. The object of single arati, the priest, has holiness as a mediator between humans and God. The object of double arati, the Bible, has holiness as the book containing holy words from God. The object of triple arati, God, is the most holy entity in Christianity. Triple arati is thus an act to worship God in the Christian way. The meaning of arati performed in liturgy also differs markedly from that in Hinduism. Arati in liturgy is separate from the Hindu context, having been transformed to worship holiness in a Christian context. This is why arati in liturgy is performed after the doxology, in which God is worshipped.

The performer of arati also depends on context. In Hindu temples, arati is per-

formed by a priest, who has the religious authority to perform religious rites. According to Hinduism, blood is impure; menstruating women are not allowed to enter the temple because blood is believed to desecrate it. Hindu priests are always men, who are far removed from the taint of blood. In the Catholic Church, arati is performed by a premenarchal girl, who is also free from impurity by blood. Although Christianity itself has no concept of pollution of blood, the cultural concept nevertheless affects people's behavior. Some women do not come to church during menstruation. Furthermore, because the most holy space in the church is the altar, some churches do not allow menstruating women to approach it.

## VI. Conclusion

The local church engages in missionary work while maintaining universality as part of the Catholic Church. Every sacrament performed in local churches follows the instructions of the Catholic authority. Therefore, the nuptial Mass of S, celebrated in K Diocese, followed the Roman liturgical form.

Following Vatican II, the Catholic Church permitted the local church to incorporate local elements into the liturgy. Since that time, the Catholic Church has allowed local church to incorporate local elements in the sacraments, after obtaining an official sanction from the Catholic authority. The local elements observed in the liturgy do not contravene the universality of the Catholic Church, but rather show its diversity.

Local elements observed in the nuptial Mass of S are also seen in Hindu rituals. However, although the same elements are seen in the two types of religious rites, each element has a unique significance in its own context. The local elements that have been incorporated by the Catholic Church are detached from the Hindu context, and have taken on new, specific meanings in the Christian context. They ultimately comprise the component elements of the sacraments, as seen in the nuptial Mass performed in K Diocese. Local elements included in the liturgy of the local church are no longer Hindu elements, but examples of inculturation in the Catholic Church.

### Notes

- 1) In the Catholic Church, the official council convoked by the pope is referred to in Latin as *Concilium Oecumenicum*.
- 2) After Vatican II, the vernacular language was used in the liturgy of the Roman Rite in local churches, rather than Latin.
- 3) *Inculturation* is a composite word derived from *incarnation* in the field of missiology and *enculturation* in the field of cultural anthropology.

- 4) According to convention, the name of the book is used, rather than that of the author.
- 5) According to convention, the name of the book is used, rather than that of the author.
- 6) Canon law is the religious law of the Catholic Church.
- 7) According to convention, the name of the book is used, rather than that of the author.
- 8) K Diocese, erected on May 26, 1930, comprises 750 square kilometers with 211 priests. Its total population is approximately 1.9 million (1,922,000), of which 540 thousand (538,000) are Catholics (GC Catholic.org).
- 9) Protestant Christians use both a tali and wedding rings in church weddings.
- 10) In western countries, candles are more commonly used than lamps in the church. In India, both lamps and candles are used.
- 11) Lamps are used because lamp oil is cheaper to purchase than candles.

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