

Inculturation in South Africa

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(1998 “Inculturation in South Africa”. *Grace and Truth* 15,3:26-43.)

1. **Introduction: Universal and Local in Inculturation**

The African Synod refers to inculturation as “an urgent priority” comprising “on the one hand, ‘the ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity’ and, on the other, ‘the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures’” (EA 59)¹. This transformation of human culture into Christian culture has been part of the Church’s mission to evangelize right from the time of Christ. Indeed the Universal Church should be seen as the one communion of all local Churches each manifesting the fullness of the Church in a context (cf Bate 1995:238). Inculturation is a two way process by which the Universal Church becomes local and the local Church becomes Universal. This latter point is particularly important if inculturation is not to become sectarianism, denominationalism and disunity in the fabric of Christ. Each culture provides a dimension of the faith which illuminates the whole and which evangelises the whole of humanity. Many expressions of Christianity which began as local phenomenon have come to have universal significance: Monasticism, the Celtic forms of penance, as well as Greek and Latin ritual processes to name but three. Saints who reflect their time and context such as Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, Ignatius of Loyola and even Paul of Tarsus, are saints for us precisely because what they did and said locally has universal significance. Devotions too have begun in one place and spread. Consider the Rosary, the Infant Jesus of Prague, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Corpus Christi processions, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Pentecostalism. All of these represent part of the inculturation process emerging in one part of the Church’s history and in different cultural contexts. All have spread and affected the Church elsewhere. Inculturation, whilst it happens locally, is never just a local affair.

Nevertheless, much of the work of inculturation that has been done of late in Africa has focussed on rooting and localising Christianity on African soil and in African cultures. This has often meant revisiting traditional African cultures and religions to see what is compatible with the Gospel and thus available for incorporation into Christianity². Often this was a reaction to a missionary Christianity imported into Africa from Europe which tended to paganise and demonise African traditional culture and religion. People were usually required to abandon their cultural inheritance in order to benefit from the advantages of Christianity. Consequently today’s priority in inculturation has become a consciousness moment in which African Christians continue to revisit cultural traditions and roots in order to allow a truly local African Church to emerge in our context.

Africa, however, is a continent of many cultures and this is particularly so in South Africa where cultures from Asia Africa Europe and America meet both in the society and even within the same individual. This raises important questions for the process of inculturation in

¹Whilst the quotation is from the post Apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, the sub quotes come from Propositions made at the Synod.

²The African Journals such as *Telema* (Congo/Zaire); *AFER* (East Africa); *Journal of Inculturation Theology* (Nigeria) and *African Christian Studies* provide many articles on these efforts as do the Gaba publications also from East Africa .

the South African local Church.

2. One Nation, Many Cultures

In the multicultural South African context the local Church has to ask the question “which culture”? Within the borders of our country we see cultures which have their roots in the traditions of the Bantu, the Khoisan, the European, the Malayan, the Hindu, the Arabian and the Chinese. Besides this, other cultures have been created in our country. Since the arrival of White settlers in the 17th century, this region has seen the emergence of new cultural groupings like the “Zulu”, the “Basotho” and the “Tsonga”³ as well as the “Afrikaner”, the “Coloured”, the “Township”, the “Apartheid”, the “Rainbow Nation”, the “Black”, the “White”, the *Marashea*⁴ the “New South Africa” and many others⁵. We are a patchwork quilt of different traditions and value systems sometimes interweaving and interlinking us, sometimes bounding us off from one another as separate groupings.

In fact very few South Africans live within a traditional African cultural framework. About 63% of the country is Urbanised⁶ and the majority of these have been urbanised for more than one generation. Clearly urbanisation has changed the much of the world view, values, rituals and traditions of such people. The economically active population is estimated at 14.3 million. Of these 68% are involved in the formal economy⁷. This is much higher than in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. Such people participate to a greater or lesser extent in a Western type life style and the money economy. 32% are unemployed and forms an urban underclass living in squatter camps and ghettos in the urban areas. These camps create their own organisation and culture. South Africa has a thriving culture of criminality and gang membership. Housebreaking has increased by 268% since 1974, rape by 241%. Truck highjackings increased by 118% in only a single year: 1996. About 150000 people are currently in jail⁸.

Ethnicity plays a major role in the SA consciousness as in many parts of the world. Ethnicity was part of the logic of apartheid but even though apartheid no longer has political power, its cultural legacy continues to exert an impact. The people of South Africa were divided

³These national or ethnic cultural groupings emerged out of the various clans of the region through a variety of historical events. See Hammond-Tooke 1993:32 for the influence of the *Mfecane* on the formation of the Zulu and Sotho polities; see Maluleke 1993:236-252 for an analysis of the creation of the Tsonga ethnic group through missionary agency.

⁴One of the many gang sub-cultures existing in the urban areas of the country

⁵I am not suggesting that these groupings lead to entirely new cultures. Clearly they do not. But the identification of people as belonging to one or other of these groupings has only occurred since that time. Some of these labels for cultural groupings could also be an area for dispute. It is precisely our lack of sufficient cultural consciousness which prevents us from finding clear names for what we really are.

⁶Source: SA 95/96: 117.

⁷Source SA 95/96:88

⁸All these figures are taken from *Fast Facts* January 1998

into 19 cultural groups⁹. We continue to use these labels both for ourselves and for others to indicate identity. Ethnicity is quite geographical in South Africa and this was the rationale in the past for the creation of homelands and cultural areas. But even today the ethnic compositions of each of the nine provinces is very different. The City of Durban comprises ethnic Zulus, Indians and English speaking Whites. The City of Cape Town is completely different comprising a majority of Coloureds, together with largely Afrikaans speaking Whites and Xhosas. Johannesburg is the most ethnically mixed with people from almost all the ethnic groups as well as large contingents of people from West and Central Africa.

How does one speak of inculturation in a mix like this. Ethnic geographical separation has led to largely ethnically homogeneous parishes. The Archdiocese of Durban for example has its “White parishes” (about 24), Zulu parishes (about 35), Coloured parishes (about 7) and Indian parishes (about 11) together with a few racially mixed parishes (about 4)¹⁰. Inculturation in each of these would be very different if taken on the ethnic level which is the way the parishes tend to be divided. A similar story exists elsewhere throughout the country and even in the rural areas language difference is a sufficient reason to keep the few Whites separate from the large number of rural Black Catholics.

Currently the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference operates several pastoral regions “set up to cope with specific pastoral needs especially where it concerns the needs of language groups” (SACBC 1996:31). Currently these include the Pastoral Conferences of the Afrikaans Language Region, the Northern Region, the South Sotho Region, the Tswana Region, the Xhosa Region and the Zulu Region. Clearly these regions do attempt to deal with some questions of inculturation.

At the same time social changes in the “New South Africa” are having an effect. Many urban “White” parishes find themselves with “squatter” camps within their boundaries. Often these go unevangelised. Sometimes an outreach leads to the integration of the people into the parish. Sometimes it leads to the setting up of another culturally based parish¹¹. Clearly ethnicity continues to inform the way we do Church.

3. The Quest for New Cultural Categories in South Africa

Whilst Apartheid has socialised us into a predominantly ethnic understanding of culture it is clear that these categories no longer respond to the complexity of our cultural fabric. Part of the process of inculturation needs to be a search for helpful cultural categories within which we can reflect and act on inculturation. Keteyi (1998:24-27) has already provided us with a way forward in his important book *Inculturation as a strategy for liberation*. Here he suggests four approaches to dealing with culture in the South African Consciousness. These are: “ethnic

⁹The Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 as amended classified people into one of 19 racial groups: White, Cape Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Other Coloured, Chinese, Indian, Other Asian, Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi, South Ndebele, North Ndebele, North Sotho, South Sotho, Tswana, Shangana, Venda, Other Black. The act was repealed in 1991.

¹⁰The figures are taken from an analysis of the Archdioceses of Durban Catholic diocese. They are approximate since some parishes have more than one racial entity which tend to function as though they are ecclesiastically separate.

¹¹In the case of the Indian Parish of Lenasia, evangelisation by the parish to the informal settlement eventually led to the sending of a Black Priest in the area and the emergence of a “separate” quasi parish of Lenasia extension 10. The two entities have now been recombined.

group”, “dominant heritage”, “Black culture” linked together with “Anglo-Boer culture” and the “emergent democratic culture”.

The ethnic approach to culture sees the cultural centre as the “ethnic group” each of which “has a validity of its own for the people who belong to it” (Keteyi 1998:24-25). The dominant heritage approach presents culture in terms of the three major cultural heritages which have informed the people of South Africa: The Asian; the African and the European (:25). The Black/Anglo-Boer approach presents culture in terms of the two cultural groupings which emerged in South Africa and around which the attitudes of Apartheid and Colonialism and the response to them were forged. The Anglo-Boer Culture is that of White Domination and the Black Culture is that of the common experience of oppression. The emerging democratic approach to culture “is the recognition of the emerging cultural reality engendered by the collaboration of all South Africans opposed to Apartheid...produc[ing] a new consciousness that South African people of African, European and Asian heritage are bound in a common destiny” (:26).

I have cited Keteyi at some length since I think that he provides some fruitful cultural ground for the enterprise of inculturation. I would like to build on his work by suggesting some other important areas and approaches to cultural reflection in our context. The African Synod has presented us with the metaphor of God’s family as a valuable theological category around which to reflect on inculturation. The family is chosen precisely because it is such an important cultural category throughout the continent. It would seem to me therefore that we should also attempt an approach to culture built around the notion of *Family*. Many traditional cultural rituals in Africa are largely done at home since they are issues of the family or, in some cases, on a the wider familial level, of the clan. Consequently a cultural analysis of the family or if appropriate the clan could provide some valuable reflection for inculturation. Indeed families of all ethnicities and social groupings have their traditions, customs and gatherings which can be an occasion for the presence of the God of Christ to be acknowledged. Many traditional family and/or clan rituals have deeply Christian dimensions which the inculturation process can help to reveal.

Another important cultural category which affects the life of South Africans is that of modernity and post-modernity (Nxumalo 1996:150). Whilst our heritage may be African, European or Asian, much of our life style today is sourced in symbols and values coming from North America. This is particularly so of young people. From the shopping mall to the class room and from the workplace to the sports field, North American values and attitudes increasingly prevail over those of our heritage. The culturally diverse USA seems to provide an attractive model for many people in the New South Africa. And its evident prosperity reinforces the desires of many here. Questions of inculturation cannot but involve an assessment of the extent to which ideas, beliefs attitudes and values coming from modern and post-modern Western culture have percolated into our social fabric. Without this reality consciousness inculturation will just become an exercise in romantic root tracing for our Sunday enjoyment rather than the vital attempt to build a truly local Church.

The approach of modernity raises a further cultural category: that of the community in which we live. Many people in South Africa continue to live in family or clan based villages or in largely ethnically divided areas, but an increasing number of people find themselves living in communities together with people from other clans, families or ethnic groups. These communities are villages, townships, hostels, squatter camps, suburbs and so forth. Often people migrate into them for economic reasons as they look for work and a better future in urban areas. This too is usually part of the process of modernity. In these cultural contexts an important challenge is the search for ways to deal with the otherness of those with whom we live. Culture is always created as a response to the realities of people living together so it is

natural that the coming together of people from different backgrounds in workplaces, suburbs, townships, informal settlements and the like is bound to create a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and practices or in other words, a culture. Our communities are cultural by their nature. This is a particularly important category for the Church since the basic unit of the Church, the parish, is often coterminous with this local community.

Finally I would add an approach to culture which recognises our own Christian religious tradition. It is very important to realise that the Catholicism we profess today (or Anglicanism, Methodism or whatever) is itself a culture with its own set of traditions and customs. That is why it is often unhelpful to present inculturation as the integration of faith, or Christianity with “culture” as though Christianity or faith were not itself a culture. The fact of the “cultured-ness” of Christianity and our tradition often explains why many Christians react negatively towards exaggerated or hasty attempts at inculturation which dismiss our Catholic heritage as foreign. These attempts do not adequately address the cultured-ness of Christianity itself as a way of life into which people have been enculturated and socialised and in which they often feel much more at home than what some zealous “inculturalists” would like to pretend. Only by treating our own Christian tradition as a culture itself can we address the way in which this culture can be transformed itself by other cultural dimensions of our humanity.

All of this of course seems to make the enterprise of inculturation very complex. But I think that this is a good reality therapy for us. The enterprise of inculturation is indeed a life time one involving all the dimensions of our humanity. A cultural analysis which reflects the reality of our context rather than of this or that ideology seems to me to present a more hopeful ground for effective inculturation. My purpose here has been to propose such an analysis and I summarise its elements here for completeness.

1. Culture in our family or clan
2. Culture in our Ethnic group
3. Culture in our local community: village; township; suburb
4. Culture in Our dominant Heritage
5. Culture and Our Catholic Tradition
6. Culture and the Oppressor/Oppressed paradigm
7. Culture and Modernity
8. Culture and the New Emerging National Consciousness

I would propose that effective inculturation in South Africa could begin if Christian communities could reflect in all of these areas to the extent that they apply. Clearly all of these overlap but the identification of the cultural complexity of the inculturation endeavour could help to avoid simplistic short term solutions to inculturation as well as the perception that it is only an issue for one group in the South African context.

4. Inculturation as the Emergence of the Local Church

The model of inculturation which I think can help us here is one that does not take inculturation as something esoteric or special but one which takes it as part of the ordinary way of being Church in the world. Roest Crolius (1987:IX) reminds us that “inculturation is a historical process coextensive with the history of evangelisation” and Nxumalo (1996:147) correctly points out that “though inculturation is very important for Africa, it has been the way of the Church since the beginning of the Church”. Here we are talking about a model of inculturation which sees inculturation as the process of the emergence of a local Church in a place¹². We are looking for a Church to emerge which is at the same time truly local as well as

¹²See Bate 1994:101-108

reflecting the fullness of the Universal Church¹³. A local Church which is in all ways compatible with the Gospel and in communion with the Universal Church (cf. EA 62) but which is incarnate in its cultural reality seeking to transform it through the power of the cross.

On this ecclesiological level, clear steps or moments in the inculturation process can be articulated¹⁴. The steps are somewhat linked with the question of power relations within the Christian community. As power moves from foreign based missionaries to local people, so the issues of inculturation move from translating the message for the local community, to the assimilation of what is good and compatible with the Gospel from the traditions and customs of the local community and then finally to the transformation of the community, culture and society into a Christian one. This goal, never achieved this side of the eschaton, is always the end point of the inculturation journey and indeed the only purpose of the Church and its mission. The Holy Spirit, principal agent of the Church's mission (RM 21), works for this goal which is indeed the realisation of the salvation of the world.

On a more practical level, it is important to look for ways whereby the inculturation process may be realised in a pastoral context. How, theologically, can we develop a methodology for the inculturation process in South Africa? The Nigerian theologian Theresa Okure provides us with a simple yet elegant model which could be helpful. Using a Biblical Theological approach she suggests that both the life of Jesus and the emergence of the early Church can be understood in terms of a model comprising three defining steps which are common to both. The steps are as follows:

- X The necessity of "Self Emptying"
- X The importance of "selective assumption" from the context for transformation
- X The necessity of identifying the available resources

The first of these implies that any process of salvation demands a dying to self. In order to enter into the human journey of salvation, Jesus had to do this himself in the kenotic journey from being God to becoming human. This entailed that he "emptied himself taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2,7) . Similarly the early Church of Jewish Christians had to examine its own Jewish cultural heritage in the light of their new faith emptying themselves of that which was not helpful for the new Way. Self emptying here often meant they "had to change their Jewish fundamentalist religiosity and mentality, in order to be able to respond to the *Good News*, and as a consequence, to welcome gentiles into their fellowship, as brothers and sisters, as members of the one Body of Christ" (Okure 1990:65). The endeavour of inculturation for the Christian Community in South Africa demands a response to the question: "What are we called to empty ourselves of in order to create a space for the active presence of the Spirit"?

In a second moment we need to ask ourselves questions like: "What aspects of our cultural and human traditions should find a place in our Christian community?" or "What dimensions of our culture reveal and express the Gospel and the Christian faith to us in ways that are intimately our own"? Discerning, choosing and assuming such aspects of our culture into our Christianity is a natural ongoing human activity. In fact it can be described as a "selective assumption" from the context for transformation into Christian praxis. As Christians we should look at the ways in which our human traditions and customs can become a means for living our Christianity. We need to identify the aspects of our tradition that contain the seeds of salvation. This corresponds to the incarnation of Jesus where our humanity is so fully

¹³See LG 23 and AG 20 for Catholic Teaching on the relationship between the local Church and the Universal Church

¹⁴See Bate 1994:109

acceptable to God that he is prepared to assume it in becoming one of us. In a similar way, the early Church was able to use both Jewish and Gentile modes of expression in living its Christianity. However not all the culture is assumed. Many dimensions of both Gentile and Jewish culture were simply incompatible with the Christian way. The same must apply also to us.

Finally each community is called to look at the cultural resources it possesses to follow the Way. Okure (1990:64) reminds us that Jesus was “able to endure the opposition to inculturation and pay the price for it” by drawing on a number of resources: his “fundamental conviction of doing the will of God the Father who sent him” and “his own personal integrity”. The early Church possessed the resource of its zealous commitment to Jesus and his mission (:69) together with the “risk, courage and initiative to divert from preaching only to Jews and begin preaching also to the gentiles” (:69)

5. Areas for Effective Inculturation in South Africa

Applying Okure’s model to the various elements we have proposed in our analysis of the South African cultural context can help us identify some of the more important areas where the enterprise of inculturation may be carried out. Clearly in an article of this length we can merely indicate some possible priorities for inculturation. Further more detailed investigation is essential.

5.1 Inculturation in Family, Clan and Ethnic group

Areas of self emptying here are bound up with too great an attachment to the values, customs and traditions of our family, clan or ethnic group. The Christian community is always a pilgrim one and Christians are continually called to “leave your country and leave your home”. If the centre of our life remains the family, the clan or the ethnic group then our Christianity will become distorted sinking into tribalism, sectarianism, denominationalism and ethnic Churches. We are called as Christians to move from the family the clan or the ethnic group as the centre of our life and identity to the conscious placing of Jesus Christ at the centre of our lives. Sometimes inculturation has erred in this respect and ethnic national churches or family based churches have become the tradition both in Africa in its indigenous churches and in Europe and America in its ethnic national churches¹⁵. The fundamental question here remains who is at the centre of my faith: “Christ or my family or group” Are we Christian South Africans or South African Christians, Christian Zulus or Zulu Christians?

Areas of selective assumption here include the attempt to recognise values, traditions, customs and practices within our family, clan or ethnic group which are compatible with the Christian Gospel. This is currently a major task within the African Church in general as it attempts to correct the distortions of the past which tended to dismiss everything from African Cultures as pagan and evil. Today Christians are called to look at their family, clan and ethnic traditions to recognise what promotes faith, hope and love in the customs, traditions and practices found there.

With regard to resources it is for every family, clan and ethnic group to look at the

¹⁵The linking of ethnicity or nation and church is not new. Much of the reformation was fought under the banner *eius regio cuius religio* binding people to follow the religious choice of their ruler. The Catholic Church in the US had many ethnic parishes often with churches for the Irish or the Polish right next to one another. Rites such as the Maronite, Ethiopian Coptic and Zairean also proclaim national and ethnic expressions of the church. AIC’s are often founded along family, clan or ethnic lines.

qualities it can bring to the Christian faith from its own traditions values and practices. These may be resources of care, harmony, mutual support, and so forth.

5.2 *Inculturation in Local Community: the Village, the Township and the Suburb*

The local community in which we live often brings us out of the homogeneous context which family, clan and ethnic group can provide into a reality where we have to live together with those who are different from us. This coming together of people of different backgrounds and traditions itself calls forth its own culture. This culture has to find a place for diversity, difference and misunderstanding in order that people may live together in harmony and become a community. A new set of laws, politics and practices are set up in the squatter camp, the township, the suburb or the farm in order for human life to continue. This is a cultural context and it is increasingly the norm in South Africa today. So inculturation requires that we search for how to live as Christians and become Church in such a context.

Areas for self emptying would include getting rid of the negative self images generated by people who find themselves in disadvantaged communities such as informal settlements, townships, hostels and so forth. These communities often generate a sense of hopelessness within them. The Christian message demands a sense of hope be instilled. Self emptying is also required as people commit themselves to the values of these communities which are usually economic ones. As people moving to Urban areas for work and a better life, so the values of work, money and consumption take over the centre. Self emptying requires the will not to absolutise these values but to prioritise them within a Christ filled centre.

Areas for selective assumption would include a commitment to making Christ more present as the guide and hope to the people of our area. It implies a recognition of the values which already exist in the community: values of cooperation, sharing and the hope for a better future. It would include a commitment to make our places of work more Christ centred: a commitment to just wages, decent working conditions and the struggle for better local infrastructure: roads, water, lights and so forth.

The resources of such communities often include the enthusiasm and commitment to build up something better for the future. This implies an energy and zeal to work for progress. Such attitudes need to be harnessed in making our local communities better places for our people to live in.

5.3 *Inculturation in Our Dominant Heritage*

South Africans have been divided in the past into Europeans, Asians and Africans. Today there is a movement for all in the country to see themselves as Africans¹⁶. At the same time there is an important cultural dimension to these broad stroke heritages: "...in each group there are shared values and common symbols that are readily understood by people of that group" (Keteyi 1998:25).

Self emptying here could include an awareness of how much this dominant heritage determines the way we think and behave as Christians and how much it cuts us off from people of other dominant heritages so that we feel comfortable in our own and uncomfortable outside of it. It is then the challenge to be able to empty ourselves of that which blocks us from making Christian community together with others from different dominant heritages. This demands a

¹⁶The remarkable series of speeches at the adoption of the New Constitution by parliament in 1997 is a good example of this. Led by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, the leaders of the different political parties despite their ethnic origin or dominant heritage each began their speech with the words "I am an African" to the rapturous applause of the assembly.

willingness to cross borders of language and of ways of understanding the world and faith as well as ways of expressing our Christianity. Self emptying becomes the space we create which allows the other in so that we can build the Christian community together.

Selective Assumption could consist in becoming conscious of ones own dominant cultural heritage recognising the value within it and the opportunities for mutual understanding and unity that it brings with other people from the same heritage: Indian Chinese Malay; or English Afrikaner, Portuguese; or Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho etc in order to allow greater solidarity and support within the group to emerge.

Resources for inculturation here will emerge as people from one dominant heritage recognise the faith gifted-ness of people from other heritages and use the gifts of the community which may be different: for example European organisation, African relatedness and harmony, Asian discipline and zealously in order to create synergistic Christian communities.

5.4 *Inculturation and Our Catholic Tradition*

Often inculturation is seen as the relationship between the Church and culture (Bate 1995:230). Sometimes this dialectic ignores the fact that the Church itself is a culture. Our Catholicism is a culture into which people have been socialised: some from birth and others through conversion. This is often the reason why attempts at inculturation throw up so much confusion in the Christian community. Enthusiasts somewhat mistakenly believe that people have a cultural heritage to which they wish to return in their expression of faith. Attempts to introduce elements of this heritage into the Church's practice and rituals are sometimes met with strong resistance on the part of some Christians as a return to paganism and the fear and oppression of traditional religion from which Christianity has set us free¹⁷.

Self emptying here means an attempt by the Catholic Christian community to see which traditions and practices we do as Catholics continue to be a means of evangelization and of faith expression and which have become empty and meaningless for us. Which contribute to the building the kingdom of God and which have become an obstacle.

Selective assumption asks the question what are the elements and practices of our Catholic faith which are helping us to become Christians whose Christianity touches all parts of our life including the traditions we perform at home. This could include our music; a rediscovery of parts of our Catholic heritage which can speak to people today in, perhaps, mysticism, spirituality and healing. It is also a reexamination of the symbols of our faith to affirm ancient ones and to introduce new ones. Such a process is not new for throughout the history of the Church, Catholicism has responded in this way to its changed contexts¹⁸.

The resources we have include a love for our faith and our Catholic heritage; a strong sense of unity and of tradition and a large number of people which makes for enthusiasm when things get tough

5.5 *Inculturation and the White Domination/ Black Oppressed paradigm*

The White Domination / Black oppressed cultural paradigm divides the country into two fundamental cultural groups based on common experience. "It is a recognition that amongst the oppressed certain modes of behaviour, language, skills and symbols have developed....[T]he

¹⁷See Chaava 1996 and Chitlango 1997 for examples of this.

¹⁸See Kung 1995 for a synthetic description of the cultural and contextual dimensions of Christianity throughout its history. See Bosch 1991 for an application of Kungs paradigm theory to the Church's missionary praxis

culture of white domination...sees the Black people as no more than labour units in the market place....It is racial capitalism” (Keteyi 1998: 25).

Inculturation in this paradigm is seen as a strategy for liberation. It is a liberation from the cultural paradigm of disvalues which distorts the humanity of both groups. Self emptying here implies a deconstruction of attitudes of racial superiority on the part of White people and inferiority on the part of Black people. Much of the latter has been done through movements of Black Consciousness and Black Theology but little has been achieved in deconstructing much of the attitudinal arrogance and cultural superiority amongst White people.

Selective assumption for transformation is a call for Christians of both groups to come together to find ways to reconstruct a common humanity which accepts the history of our past and does not try to sweep it away. Much of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been in this line as have the many attempts to organise seminars and retreats on the healing of memories¹⁹. The emergence of the local Church requires that Christians come together to examine ways of recognising and responding to this cultural dimension of their history.

The resources that the South African Christian community bring are a willingness in many areas to recognise our history and to try to create something new (Bate 1996: 22-27). There are some efforts in the Church to get people to meet and to discuss to have interracial gatherings and to change parish boundaries to deconstruct racially categorised parishes. Further efforts in this regard need to be encouraged.

5.6 *Inculturation and Modernity*

South Africa is a developing country. It is 63% urbanised and a large part of its population has been affected by modernity. Any attempt at inculturation which fails to include the culture of modernity will not respond to the real life of South African Christians.

Self emptying is a very important dimension for inculturation within this cultural paradigm. Modernity proposes itself as the system which can most easily solve people's problems. Christians are easily seduced by its wiles of prosperity and health. Modernity is a secular culture which promises heaven on earth yet throws up a whole host of costs which people must pay. Self emptying here demands a much more critical view of the modern world on the part of Christians. This culture allows little space for spirituality other than as one more consumer product. Christians need to be more critical of many of the secular values of modernity in order to allow Christianity to become a living reality rather than a Sunday duty.

Selective assumption for transformation recognises the value of modernity as a means of bettering the lot of people and creating a better world. Values of hard work, of progress and development have inspired the Christian community to become involved in the world to make it a better world. The Christian community needs to look at the values of modernity which are constructive in creating a local Church that responds to the needs of people in our context and which brings good news.

The resources which the people of this culture bring are those of organisation, hard work and technical skills. They also bring material wealth into the Church. These can be valuable resources to help build up of the local Church; the way of the inculturation process.

5.7 *Inculturation and the New Emerging National Consciousness*

Much has been done since 1994 to create a series of national symbols and attitudes which can bring South Africans together as one nation: A new flag, sporting success, a new

¹⁹See Ward 1995

multilingual anthem, changes to the public television broadcaster from ethnic channels to national cross cultural channels and so on. Part of the process of the emergence of a local Church demands this step happens also in regard to our Christian symbols.

Self emptying here is a call for people to move out of the narrow confines of racially divided parish life to embrace the newness of what is emerging here. Self emptying demands the ongoing effort to work for visible signs of unity and nationhood within the Christian community as well. Very little of this has been done in the Catholic Church in South Africa. The country of 1998 is very different to that of 1994. But can the same be said for the Church?

Selective assumption is a call to look for emerging signs and symbols within our national consciousness which can help us to build a Church that recognises us as one people rather than separated groups. It is the effort to break down those boundaries which existed in the past without denying the values of our different traditions heritages and family backgrounds. It is the quest for that most catholic of virtues: unity in diversity.

Our Catholicism is in fact a great resource for this endeavour within the Southern Africa Christian community. We are less infected with sectarianism and denominationalism which marks Protestantism here. We should be participating in as many ways as possible to bring about a more united Christendom in South Africa both on the ecumenical and on the cultural levels.

6. Conclusion

Inculturation is the emergence of the local Church. Our church in this part of the world is a church made up of people with many different cultural faces. We are a people of cultural diversity not only of different cultural groups but also of cultural diversity within the one group. Almost no-one on South Africa lives within one cultural framework. Consequently the quest for inculturation within the local Church needs to be approached on many different fronts. Each step in the inculturation process requires reflection and action from the Christian community. This See, Judge, Act process can help us to see ourselves as we really are and to become what we are called to be.

The cultural analysis we have proposed here is just one amongst many others which could have been suggested. One of its values however is that it shows us the complexity of our common humanity. The steps for inculturation that we have suggested: self emptying, selective assumption for transformation and resources for inculturation within our culture are but one way of restating the *imitatio Christi* that the Church is called to. Kenosis, incarnation, preaching and healing, passion, death and resurrection is the way of Christ. It is the way of the Church too. All peoples and so all cultures are called to walk this way for the Church to be a living organism amongst them.

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