

Ayyeng: Indigenous Music in the Liturgy

Contributed by Fr. Marcs Castaneda
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Sadanga is one of the remotest towns of Mountain Province. The Sadanga people are well known for their gift in music. They compose their songs beautifully with the words and music rooted in their way of life. They are known for their traditional chants that occupy a very special place in the culture. The chants are reserved for wedding ceremonies and blessing thanksgivings. Ayyeng is one of the traditional chants that until today are being sung by the villagers. It is a chant held in reserve to the elderly men in the village of Sadanga. On special occasions such as Senga (thanksgiving for the blessings received by the family) rupis (2nd stage of cultural marriage) and dono (the culminating stage of the cultural marriage done in mass celebration) the chant is done spontaneously while waiting for the meals.

The elders usually tell stories through the singing of the chant. It can contain the petition or prayer of the family for good fortunes, good work, good health, bountiful harvest and more animals. The beautiful culture is not seen opposed to the faith. Thus integrating it in our Christian way of worshiping, i.e. liturgical music, it makes it more meaningful. Evangelizing the Ayyeng i.e. directing the petitions and prayers to God who is the source of everything is beautifully integrated in the Eucharistic Celebration, which speaks of thanksgiving, petition, offering, communion. After looking and discerning the richness of the chant, the AYYENG is now chosen to be the title of this music endeavor.

The project contains the indigenous liturgical songs proper in the Eucharistic Celebration. It uses original music and some traditional Kalinga, Bontoc and Sadanga Chants. It includes Ilocano language but with original music to cater the Ilocano faithful. The text of the acclamations underwent a long process of translation by the Liturgical Committee. The acclamations are done short but powerful to underline the dialogue of the mass. Short introductions of instruments are also emphasized in the singing of the acclamations to maintain the response of the people hence done in singing. Thus, "Singing the mass not singing during the Mass." But it has to be noted that the interludes integrated in between the songs are not meant to prolong the acclamation songs but to give a space for the ethnic musical instruments to be listened to. The bamboo instruments as well as the gongs and other ethnic percussions, which are common native instruments of the Igorots, are used to accompany the liturgical indigenous songs. The project however made use of the guitars and drums to have an appeal to the youth of today who are engrossed with rock music. Music is a powerful tool to draw them to the church today. Thus, the project considered the fusion of the western instruments with the indigenous ones to make a good balance for the old folk and the youth of today, who will soon be the church of tomorrow. Let this be a tool to in the music ministry to draw people closer to God through and to bring them in a deeper appreciation of the Holy Eucharist. I thank all the people who became a part of this musical endeavor. I am deeply indebted to my brother priests who patiently supported me in my music ministry. The success of this project is also the success of the people of Sadanga, Mountain Province. I am inspired to write and sing because they motivate me. I don't want to miss thanking my own family who keeps affirming my giftedness especially when I feel tired and down. It is a common knowledge that working without anything is already a failure. Hence, I wish to thank all the generous benefactors who shared their financial assistance especially the Bethlehem Mission Immensee, Switzerland. This work is dedicated to the Bontoc-Lagawe clergy and faithful, my family, the Sadanga people and the Bethlehem Mission Immensee, Switzerland (BMI). The album has a booklet that contains the lyrics and chords of the songs. I believe, it is a help to all liturgical musicians. It is available in CDs and Cassette tapes. You can avail at the Sta. Rita Cathedral Office, Bontoc; Sumcad Music Store, Mt. Province Souvenir Shop at the Multi Purpose Building, Luyod's Store, Central Point Gift Shop and Bontoc Museum. You may also avail at Baguio Cathedral Office, Paulines Religious Center, Naduma Enterprises at SM Bauio. You may contact Fr. Vincent Sagandoy (09185110342) or Fr. Marcs Castañeda (09185363980) for more information. May I include the messages of Bishop Rodolfo Beltran and Bishop Francisco Claver, SJ, our two great bishops in Bontoc-Lagawe.

Message:

I am happy that our Vicariate comes out with a CD album, called, Indigenous Music in the Liturgy. I hope this noble project initiated by Fr. Marcs Castañeda will enhance the spirit of everyone in the Cordillera to love their native songs and especially sing them in liturgical services. Indigenous music is a big factor to strengthen our Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs). It also invites us to consider the harmony of creation. Let us continue to praise God with our beautiful indigenous songs. God bless.

Bishop Rodolfo F. Beltran
Apostolic Vicar of Bontoc-Lagawe

Message:

We have been using the term "re-rooting the faith" for some time now in the Apostolic Vicariate of Bontoc-Lagawe. It simply means that the faith, which initially came to us through the work of CICM missionaries and transmitted to us in its European form, must now become more intimately part of us as Igorots. This is the work of inculturation - making the values of the Gospel that Christ taught to enter more fully into our culture, become integral to it. This is a task that only we who own our culture can do with the help of the Holy Spirit. Our native music is part of that culture and hence it must become more fully a part too of our liturgical worship. This collection of songs that Father Marcs Castañeda has composed is thus a big step in the direction of our deeper re-rooting of our faith. We hope his example will inspire others to use their talents for the same end and help bring about a more inculturated liturgy in the Apostolic Vicariate of Bontoc-Lagawe.

Bishop Francisco F. Claver, S.J.

Apostolic Vicar Emeritus of Bontoc-Lagawe