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### A HISTORICAL APPRAISAL OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *TRIDUUM* LITURGY AND ITS CONNECTIVITY TO IGBO CULTURAL HERITAGE

Primus Val. Ileme, CSSp.

#### **Abstract**

The *Triduum* has remained one of the earliest celebrations of the Church that its historical development and connectivity to some Igbo cultural heritage are worth exploring. Etymological analysis of *Pascha* as coming from two Latin words, *passio* and *transitus*, meaning passion and passage, respectively, gives a biblical foundation for *Pascha* as *passio* and as *transitus*. This establishes a single basic fact: that the event which marks the movement of the Israelites from the land of slavery in Egypt to freedom are at the foundation of the *Pascha*, as a single celebration of Christ's Last Supper; His Passion/Death and Resurrection. Having given the solid base, this article will essentially be on the historical development of the *Triduum*, which celebrates the Last Supper; Passion/Death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on three different days, with emphasis on Good Friday. Hence, diachronic historical method will be used to give a comprehensive and chronological history of the development of a single Paschal celebration into three-day liturgy: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Hence, like the Jewish traditions that are at the foundation of some of the liturgical practices, there are equally links to the Igbo traditional heritage, especially with the liturgy of the *Triduum*.

**Key words:** Historical appraisal, Development, *Triduum* liturgy, *Pascha*, Christianity, Igbo.

## Introduction

At the point of its inception, Christianity was not yet identified outside the Jewish religion<sup>1</sup>. Both Jesus and his earliest followers were Jews. Though the teachings of Christ were unique in themselves, he and his followers conformed largely to Jewish customs. Christianity in that sense owes some of her traditions to Judaism. This is why the question of the root and the background of Christianity could not be far from Jewish worship<sup>2</sup>.

With Judaism providing a soft landing for Christianity, the term *Pascha* in Christian tradition cannot be very much understood without justifiable reference to Jewish history, especially that of the Israelites in faraway Egypt (cf. Exodus 5:1;10:9)<sup>3</sup>. In giving meaning to the term, *Pascha*, in reference to the life of the Jewish people in Egypt, Thomas J. Talley gives the etymology of the term *Pascha* from the Hebrew term *pesach*<sup>4</sup>. However, its meaning becomes more succinct from the biblical tradition in reference to the event in Exodus 12. Then, we can observe Passover being associated with the *Pascha*. As a follow up to the same line of thought, Philip J. Goddard goes beyond the affirmation that the feast is associated with liberation of the Jewish people in Egypt, especially on the sparing of the Jews on their Passover feast (cf. Exodus 11:1ff), to the point of being an

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. R.T. BECKWITH, "The Jewish Background to Christian Worship", in *The Study of Liturgy*, edd. C. Jones-G. Wainwright-E. Yarnold-P. Bradshaw, Oxford University Press, New York 1992, 68-80.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K.F. PECKLERS, *Worship: New Century Theology*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville (Minnesota) 2005, 34-35.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. K.F. PECKLERS, *Worship: New Century Theology*, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville (Minnesota) 1991, 1.

annual feast<sup>5</sup>. Many of the Igbo annual feasts and celebrations are not free from following the same process to the point of becoming something annual. However, Thomas J. Talley's conviction that the feast of Passover has things in common with the feast of unleavened bread and the domestic ritual meal<sup>6</sup> gives him the much ground to make a historical assertion on the Passover: "Such provided the cultic context for the last supper of Jesus Christ with his disciples, His arrest, trial, Passion and crucifixion"<sup>7</sup>. Gradually, this Passover feast came to have another meaning from the later Old Testament generation of Jews, like the New Yam festival among the Igbos has gone beyond thanking the gods for the bountiful harvest to a kind of community reunion among many communities. For instance, we have Adazi Enu, Adazi Ani, Adazi Nnukwu and Obeledu coming together as sons of Okotu, their ancestral father, to celebrate the New Yam festival. To the current indigenes of these communities, the New Yam festival has more meaning attached than thanksgiving to gods for the great harvest. This second meaning by the later generation of the Jewish people provides the arrest, trial, Passion and crucifixion with secondary significances: *Pascha*, which Philip J. Goddard summed up thus: "The crossing of the red sea and the liberation of the soul from slavery to its passions to the freedom of life in God"<sup>8</sup>. Eventually, this forms the foundation of the earliest Christians' concept of the Passover feast. They began to see in "the Old Testament Passover an image of both the passage of Christ from death to life in his Resurrection, and of the liberation of man from slavery to sin to new life in Christ"<sup>9</sup>. These new meanings were put around the person of Christ as "the

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. P.J. GODDARD, *Festa Paschalia: A History of the Holy Week Liturgy in the Roman Rite*, Gracewing, Leominster Herefordshire 2011, 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> GODDARD, *Festa Paschalia*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> GODDARD, *Festa Paschalia*, 2.

Paschal Lamb, sacrificed for our sins”<sup>10</sup>, which is vividly portrayed in St. John’s Gospel. Here we shall be looking at the *Pascha* from its new concept.

### **Biblical background of the *Pascha***

The story of the Jewish Passover feast cannot be disconnected from the movement of Jacob with his other sons to Egypt as the result of famine and the enthronement of Joseph as a governor in Egypt (cf. Genesis 41-46); their experience of persecutions that trailed the death of Joseph; the birth of Moses and his encounter with God in the wilderness (cf. Exodus 3); and the eventual exit from their place of slavery (cf. Exodus 12:37-39). This feast has been kept as part of the religious life of the Israelites before its entrance into the Christian tradition (cf. Exodus 5:1; 10:9; 14:1-29). Hence, in reference to the event in Exodus 14, the Passover can be viewed from the perspective of “the passage of the angel of death over the houses of the Hebrews marked with the blood of the sacrificial lamb”<sup>11</sup>.

So, Passover feast has remained the Jewish celebration of God’s saving power and his liberating them from the Egyptian slavery. This is not unconnected with so many Igbo communities that have feasts attached to the days on which their forefathers were either liberated from their surrounding enemies or from delivered from deadly pestilence. For instance, the *Inne Festival* among the Igbos of Delta state is the reenactment of the celebration of war victories<sup>12</sup>. This can also be seen among the Igbos of Abia state. However, God did not only complete his work of liberation, but

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<sup>10</sup> GODDARD, *Festa Paschalia*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M. OGBONNA, Ten most important and celebrated festivals in Igboland, «English and internet (28 May 2019)» <http://www.ekwendigbo.com>, [accessed: 22/11/2023].

also commanded the Israelites to commemorate this redemption as an annual festival (cf. Exodus 12:42), together with the feast of the unleavened bread (cf. Deuteronomy 18:1-8; Leviticus 23:5; Joshua 5:10; Ezra 6:19-21; Ezekiel 45:21-24), on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the Jewish month of *Abib*, also called Nisan. This commemoration of redemptions done in anticipation of final redemption of the Jewish people shows both the anamnestic and eschatological characters of the Passover feast. The elements of the two interpretative keys mentioned above are often present whenever every Igbo community gather for a feast, especially during the breaking of the kolanuts. We always hear the elders during the ritual of the kolanuts citing the exploits of some of the community ancestors, and projecting such as a *sine qua non* for eternity. In essence, God instructed the Jewish nation to slaughter the lamb during the day, before the sunset on Nisan 14 and to eat it after the sunset, that is, on 15 Nisan (cf. Exodus 12:6.8). The synaxis of this Passover feast among the Jews, before they started going to Jerusalem later, is described in Exodus 12:5-9.

When they eventually started celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem, with the recognition of the city as the only place with the sanctuary of the nation, where the observance of the pilgrim festivals can be done, and the merger of the Passover and the feast of the unleavened bread, “from the time of Josiah in the seventh century B.C.”<sup>13</sup>, the 15 Nisan was still maintained. In Jerusalem during the celebration, the people who have gathered removed the altars and all the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley (cf. 2 Chronicles 30:18-19)<sup>14</sup>. The priests and Levites, who have purified themselves, offer the burnt offering to the Lord on behalf of the people. There is prayer of purification or ablution by Hezekiah for those who are not in good state for the feast (cf.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> This might be linked to the keeping of the altar bare during Good Friday liturgy from the medieval era till date.

2 Chronicles 30:18-19)<sup>15</sup>. This equally one of the prerequisites for every traditionally chosen Igbo chief-priest before leading the community in major annual festivals. Like the Jewish priests and Levites, the rites of purification for Igbo chief-priests are also meant to put them in pure states for easy communication with the gods.

However, the Passover as celebrated in Jerusalem is what Jesus Christ actually met during his earthly life. He went to Jerusalem for Passover feast with his parents (cf. Luke 2:41-43), and as an adult he was also seen in Jerusalem for the same feast (cf. John 2:13-25). These show that Jesus Christ actually participated in the Jewish Passover feast. Nevertheless, the account of his celebration of the same Passover with his disciples during the last days of his life, as written in the synoptic gospel (Matthew, Mark and Luke), witnessed a change in both the time and the synaxis of the feast. Going by the synoptic accounts, Christ sends his disciples to prepare a room for the Passover (cf. Matthew 26:18; Mark 14:14; Luke 22:8). It is further added in Luke 22:15, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer”. During that Passover with his apostles, he mandated them to do the same “in memory of me” (Luke 22:19), showing the anamnetic dimension of Christ’s Passover meal with his apostles. This points to the continuity of Passover meal, which is not foreign to Igbo festivals and feasts. They have their root to the founders of such communities or as old as the communities themselves. A festival like the New Yam Festival is as old as the cultivation of the crop itself. Like the Jewish Passover feast, it was handed over from one Generation to the next. So, whenever such Igbo festivals are being celebrated the past is made present

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<sup>15</sup> There might be a resemblance here with the prayer of ablution said by the celebrant facing the people before distributing Communion to them during the Good Friday liturgy as seen in *Missale Romanum* 1956, and later removed after the Second Vatican Council.

because the ancestors are often called to be part of the celebration, thereby showing their anamnestic dimensions. From every indication regarding the preparations for the Passover feast, it is obvious that “the preparation for the festival in the synoptic gospel is surely on the 14 Nisan and the supper eaten in the night of the Passover feast i.e., on the 15 Nisan. Jesus, in this chronology, is crucified on the 15 Nisan”<sup>16</sup>. The basic element of the liturgical synaxis moved from an actual lamb to Christ himself in the form of bread and wine.

St. John the Evangelist in his own account states that before the Passover festival, Jesus took supper with His disciples (cf. John 13:1-3). This simply means that it was not a Passover meal. In addition, the linking of what happened in John 19:32-36 with the position of the law in Exodus 12:46 in reference to the Passover lamb shows that, according to the Johannine chronology, the crucifixion took place on the 14 Nisan, at the same time the lambs were slaughtered in preparation for the meal that evening, and Christ taken the place of the lamb (cf. 1Corinthians 5:7)<sup>17</sup>. The difference in the two accounts, as seen above, afterwards became the foundation of the problems between the Christian communities from Asia Minor and other communities led by Rome, in what is referred to as the *Quartodecimanism* or paschal controversy. The point of controversy, according to Matias Augé, is not whether or not Easter marks the death or the resurrection of Christ, rather on the actual day of the death and resurrection of Christ<sup>18</sup>. This was finally resolved with the proclamation by the Council Fathers in the Council of Nicea AD 325.

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<sup>16</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. M. AUGÉ, “The Liturgical Year in the First Four Centuries”, in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, vol. 5: *Liturgical Time and Space*, ed A.J. Chupungco, Liturgical Press, Collegeville (Minnesota) 2000, 146.

### **Pascha in First Century Christianity**

Going by the scriptural account of the general liturgical life of the apostles in the New Testament, there is no mention of an annual celebration of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This might not be unconnected with the eschatological oriented approach that characterized their celebrations. It is worth noting that the apostles, immediately after the ascension of Christ, followed religiously the mandate and the instruction handed down to them by Christ on the day of the last supper by celebrating the Holy Eucharist on the first day of the week.

The Eucharist they were celebrating on that first day of the week covered “the entire Paschal Mystery of Christ”<sup>19</sup>. Going by the above, the first century Christians were celebrating their Passover on the first day of the week, which is also the day of the Lord<sup>20</sup>, with anamnestic and eschatological sense expressed therein. The celebration was later reported by Eusebius of Caesarea thus: “We (the faithful) of the new covenant celebrate on that day of the Lord, which is our Passover; we are always served with the Body of the Saviour and we always take part in the Blood of the Lamb”<sup>21</sup>.

However, apart from the above weekly gathering for the celebration of the Eucharist during this first century, the annual Passover feast was observed among Jewish Christians and was still attached to the remembrance of the Jewish redemption from the Egyptian slavery, which is anamnestic, and in anticipation of the final redemption, the coming of the Messiah<sup>22</sup>, which is

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<sup>19</sup> AUGÉ, “The Liturgical Year in the First Four Centuries”, 137.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. AUGÉ, “The Liturgical Year in the First Four Centuries”, 141.

<sup>21</sup>EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, “De solemnitate paschali”, in *Sabbat und Sonntag in der Alten Kirche*, ed. W. Rordorf (Traditio Christiana 2), Theologischer Verlag, Zürich, 1972, 109.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2.

eschatological. There was actually nothing like an annual Easter celebration by then as J. Talley would want us to believe<sup>23</sup>. The annual Passover feast as celebrated by Jewish Christians in this century never lasted so long as “Christians were separated from the synagogues by the end of the first century”<sup>24</sup>. It wasn’t the end as there was equally a gradual process of separation of Christians from the Jewish framework in the subsequent centuries.

### ***Pascha* in Second Century Christianity**

The annual observance of Passover feast among Jewish and Greek Christians came to be separated from the Jewish context and to develop further around the new concept, Christ the Paschal Lamb, *Pascha*, in this century in Asia Minor<sup>25</sup> as a result of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and eventual dispersion of the Jewish-Christian community to that part of the world<sup>26</sup>. With the eventual and gradual liberation from the Jewish Passover matrix by the Jewish Christians, the annual celebration of Passover developed into an annual Christian celebration of the *Pascha*, which was celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of Spring according to the Julian calendar as observed in Asia Minor<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 4. Here Talley presents the Passover made reference to by Paul in his first letter to Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:8), as signifying Easter instead of the usual first day of the week gathering by Christians for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

<sup>24</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 5; AUGÉ, “The Liturgical Year in the First Four Centuries”, 140.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 7-8. Julian calendar was adopted in Asia in 9 BC. The celebration of Passover in the first spring month was established in Exodus 12:2. Quartodeciman Pascha was 14 Artemisios in the Julian calendar as used in Asia Minor, which they considered the same as to 14 Nisan, following Johannine chronology. Both

The *Pascha*, as was being celebrated then, was never something entirely new from the already existing Jewish Passover<sup>28</sup>. As Thomas J. Talley would observe that in the primitive Christian community, *Pascha* was “a gradual modulation of the Passover and never an adoption of characteristics and themes from Passover and their application to a new Christian celebration of the resurrection”<sup>29</sup>.

It is good to note however that with the exit of the Jewish-Christian hierarchy and the coming in of those of the Greeco-Roman origins, the Sunday *Pascha* took the place of the annual festival in the Jerusalem community<sup>30</sup>. In this case the tradition of maintaining the weekly cycle of the observance of *Pascha* and terminating the fast on the Saturday-Sunday night came into play<sup>31</sup>. Before the controversy regarding Paschal in 190, this weekly cycle was equally established and observed in Palestine and Alexandria with no reference or approval from Rome<sup>32</sup>. In addition, in this second century, regarding the annual observance of *Pascha* in Rome, in total contrast to Alexandria, which had her “earliest date for the celebration of *Pascha* on the fifteenth, that is, the Sunday following or coinciding with Passover”<sup>33</sup>, the feast of *Pascha* was not celebrated before the sixteenth day of the moon<sup>34</sup>. In any case, it is most likely that the two, “the observance of the first day of the week as occasion of Eucharistic assembly and the annual observance of *Pascha*”<sup>35</sup>, are traceable to the

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the 14 Nisan and 14 Artemisios were the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first of Spring. But 14 Artemisios was the same day as 6 April in the Roman calendar.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. AUGÉ, «The Liturgical Year in the First Four Centuries», 146.

<sup>29</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 24-25.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 232.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 25.

<sup>33</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 25.

<sup>35</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 25-26.

Apostolic era. Moreover, the first emanated from the Christian assembly as a result of the movement away from the Sabbath, and the second as the result of gradual and continuous “modulation of the annual Passover”<sup>36</sup>. This *Pascha* celebration among the second century Christians consisted of a fast, which originated from the Jewish fast in preparation for the Passover feast<sup>37</sup>, followed by an all-night vigil that concludes with the Eucharist on the first day of the week<sup>38</sup>. A brief description of the synaxis of the celebration of the *Pascha*, a unitive celebration, in the second century Christian communities as contain in a key liturgical text of that period, *Epistula Apostolorum*, will offer more insights.

The actual date of *Epistula Apostolorum*, which is claimed to have been composed by the eleven Apostles somewhere in Asia Minor for the Christian churches, according to P.J. Goddard, belongs to the second century, though the issue of precision on the actual time of the second century is uncertain<sup>39</sup>. However, C.E. Hill puts the date of the original text to be before 120, or in the 140<sup>40</sup>. Going by the text, the Passover is celebrated at the eve of 15 Nisan, in the night from (14-15) Nisan in remembrance of Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension and eventual coming in glory<sup>41</sup>. The Jewish Passover vigil-watch, which commenced on the sunset of 14 Nisan, was then extended to the early morning

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<sup>36</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 25-26.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 27.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. AUGÉ, “The Liturgical Year in the First Four Centuries”, 147-148.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. GODDARD, *Festa Paschalia*, 4. See also: *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writing*, vol. 1, ed. W. Schneemelcher, John Knox Press, Westminster 1991, 251.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. C.E. HILL, “The *Epistula Apostolorum*. An Asian Tract from the Time of Polycarp”, *J. Early Christ. Stud.* 7 (1999) 1.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 5.

hour of the 15 Nisan by the Christian community<sup>42</sup>, and eventually concluded with ‘my agape and my commemoration’, which could most likely have included the Eucharist<sup>43</sup>. We observed one major change from the synaxis given. The second century Christians ended their Passover (*Pascha*) at the early hours of 15 Nisan with Eucharistic celebration, which puts together the entire mystery of human salvation, and this is in agreement with the synoptic chronology. By ending it with the Holy Eucharistic celebration, they have ended up changing the ‘central liturgical object’ of the celebration from a lamb to Christ. Thereby making Christ, as Thomas J. Talley would put it, “the Paschal Lamb of the New Covenant, whose death and resurrection has fulfilled the Passover”<sup>44</sup>. Holy Eucharist is a communal meal among Christians.

### ***Pascha* in Third Century Christianity**

In this century, the synaxis of the Paschal feast, as a unitive liturgy, is well described by the two key liturgical texts of that century: *Didascalia Apostolorum* and Apostolic Tradition. The *Didascalia Apostolorum* shows also the extension of the vigil and the fast to 9 o’clock in the night of 15 Nisan, ‘third hour in the night after the Sabbath’. In addition, some of the liturgical elements, namely, prayers, intercessions, and readings, that will later form part of the more developed liturgies were introduced. During major feasts among the Igbo people, these three liturgical elements mentioned above tend to be present. There are always

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<sup>42</sup> We have to observe here that the extension of the vigil or night watch to cockcrow was an act aimed at distinguishing the Christian observance from the Jewish. Hence, there is a decision to delay their moment of rejoicing until the end of the Jewish Passover feast. For details see: M.A. POWER, “Nisan Fourteenth and Fifteenth in Gospel and Talmud: A Study of Jewish Camouflage”, *American Journal of Theology* 24 (1920) 252-276.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 6.

<sup>44</sup> TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 32.

prayers in which the ancestors are called upon for intercession, and stories about the exploits of the forefathers are told to the younger generations as the readings contain the experiences of their fathers with God. However, nothing specific is said of the prayers here regarding their liturgical position and roles as to whether they introduced the readings or coming before the readings as we shall see later in the medieval era.

Then, the Apostolic Tradition, dated before the end of 235 CE<sup>45</sup> and appeared originally in Greek language, has the authorship under serious debate<sup>46</sup>. On the celebration of *Pascha*, as a unitive liturgy, in Rome, the documents state:

And they conduct watch the whole night; both shall be read to and be instructed. Those to be baptised bring not anything with them, each brings only for Eucharist. So, the movement cock crows, prays first over the water. Be it water that flow to the font or flows from height<sup>47</sup>.

We can observe the presence of vigil through the night for the baptismal candidates, and that this baptism commences with the blessing of the font early in the next morning, at cockcrow. The presentation of the newly baptised to the congregation, who are also part of the night vigil, is followed later by the sealing of each

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<sup>45</sup> This date has been defended by an author, A.C. STEWART, *On Apostolic Tradition, Hippolytus: An English Version with Introduction and Commentary*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York <sup>2</sup>2015, 28-38.

<sup>46</sup> For the debate see: A.C. STEWART, *On Apostolic Tradition, Hippolytus: An English Version with Introduction and Commentary*, 28-38 and P.F. BRADSHAW, *The Search for the Origins of Christians Worship*, Oxford University Press, England 2002, 78-80. On other dissenting opinions on the authorship see: P.F. BRADSHAW-M.E. JOHNSON-L.E. PHILIPS, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, Fortress Press, Hermeneia Minneapolis 2002.

<sup>47</sup> HIPPOLYTUS ROMANUS, *La tradition apostolique*, ed. B. Botte (SCh 11bis), Cerf, Paris <sup>2</sup>1968,80, nota 20.7-21.1. Other sources: G. DIX, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr*, Alban Press, London 1992.

of the baptized on the forehead and giving them the kiss of peace<sup>48</sup>. The bishop blesses the bread, which is the Body of Christ, and the bowl of mixed wine, which is the Blood of Christ. This is then followed with the distribution of the Body of Christ to the people<sup>49</sup>. The point here is that the vigil extends to the next morning for the baptism and ends with the Eucharistic celebration, which cover the entire mystery of Christ. There are similarities here with the initiation ceremonies into cults like the masquerade cult among the Igbo communities. In some communities, those to be initiated stay through the night, and the actual initiation process commencing in the early morning at cockcrow.

To sum up the major features marking the Paschal celebration from the first to the middle of the fourth century elaborated above, Martin Klöckener states that:

Since the Apostolic period, the church has been celebrating the central events of the Christ mystery in the annual Passover. Consistent with the various liturgical traditions, the theological content and the form of the celebration date back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when, after a preparatory fast, the entire Paschal mystery of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, partly including his return, was united in one celebration, namely in the Paschal vigil. A breakdown to several days and worship meeting is not yet known. Of course, two different phases of the whole night celebration can usually be identified: first a night with fasting, prayer, scriptures (Ex. 12 and 14, Passion) and possibly a sermon, then the Eucharist as a joyful meal and an agape meal. Also, the individual churches accentuate either the passion or the resurrection of Jesus. But the unity

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. HIPPOLYTUS ROMANUS, 90, nota 21.27.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. HIPPOLYTUS ROMANUS, 92, nota 21.31.

of the Paschal Mystery is preserved everywhere in its liturgical memorial service<sup>50</sup>.

So far, we have come to a few observations, namely, that the Paschal celebration of the third century among Christians, as given by the two documents analysed above, *Didascalia Apostolorum* and *Traditio Apostolica*, maintain the idea of vigil through the night. Secondly, that the vigil extends to early next morning after Sabbath, when the fast is broken with the ‘Eucharist’, marking the end of the vigil. Finally, that the annual commemoration of the Christian *Pascha* celebration was still unitive in character.

However, the *Pascha* celebration, which assured us of our redemption, with emphasis on eschatology<sup>51</sup>, was not to maintain that unitive character as it later changed into disparate historical parts and were celebrated separately on different days as we shall see in the liturgy of the fourth century in Jerusalem and as we have them today. This actually happened after the Council of Nicea of 325 AD.

### **The Council of Nicea (325 AD)**

We must note that the Council of Nicea was never called for a liturgical reform. It was specifically on the issue between the bishop of Alexander and Arius, his presbyter. Arianism, as was then called, is a Christological controversy stressing unitarian theology that only God the Father is self-existent. That Christ, the Son of God, is a creature by God therefore cannot be self-existent and co-eternal with God the Father.

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<sup>50</sup> KLÖCKENER, “Die ‘Feier vom Leiden und Sterben Christi’ am Karfreitag”, 211-212.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. GODDARD, *Festa Paschalia*, 21.

However, there were other penitent issues facing the Church that were deliberated on by the Council Fathers, among which is the *Quartodeciman's* controversy. The controversy is on whether Easter, as a unitive celebration, ought to be celebrated on the first day of the week, Sunday, or on Nisan 14, the Jewish holy day. Those on the side of the latter, especially from Asian minor, were labelled *Quartodecimans*, and were excommunicated by Pope Victor 1<sup>52</sup>. According to Matias Augé, the decree issued by the Council of Nicea was specifically directed at, “the diversity of principles that had been adopted by the various Churches for the computation of Easter. Some of these followed the new and rather inadequate method of calculation that had recently been adopted by Jewish communities”<sup>53</sup>

The Council Fathers, in their wisdom, came to a decision that since Alexandria could boast of having the most qualified astronomers, the church in Alexandria was entrusted with making known to other churches the date of the yearly Easter festival, and such was the practice until the celebration of Easter on Sunday, according to the Roman practice, came to be generally accepted<sup>54</sup>.

Hence, the Council of Nicea, not being specifically for liturgical reforms, made no changes in the structures of liturgy, even in that of the Paschal celebration but came up with a generally acceptable day for the celebration of Easter. Let's now examine the fourth century liturgy that has Maundy Thursday, Good

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<sup>52</sup> For details on Quartodeciman's controversy: F.E. BRIGHTMAN, “The Quartodeciman Question”, *JThS* 25 (1924) 254-270; C. MOHRMANN, “Le Conflit Pascal au Ile siècle”, *VC* 16 (1962) 154-171; C.C. RICHARDSON, “A New Solution to the Quartodeciman Riddle”, *JThS* 24 (1973) 74-85.

<sup>53</sup> AUGÉ, “The Liturgical Year in the First Four Centuries”, 147.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. J.B. PITRA, *Juris ecclesiastici Graecorum hisrtoria et monumenta jussu Pii IX. Pont. Max*, vol. 1, Nabu Press, South Carolina 2012.

Friday and Holy Saturday liturgical events celebrated as distinct and independent liturgies.

### **Pascha in Fourth Century Jerusalem**

Here the account of the liturgical synaxis given by *Peregrinatio Egeriae* describes in details the memorial celebration of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, as it was celebrated in Jerusalem in the years 383/384. There have been controversies surrounding the status of the author, her homeland and the date of this liturgical text over the years<sup>55</sup>. However, the contemporary authors later bought into the argument that the name of the author could be Egeria, a Galician consecrated nun, who was likely writing to her colleagues<sup>56</sup>. The actual years of her visit to Jerusalem is put at between 381-384, during which she participated in the Easter celebration<sup>57</sup>.

Going by this well-organized report on Good Friday celebration of the Lord's Passion in Jerusalem, a place of the life and salvation of Jesus, many fundamental changes are witnessed from that of the previous centuries. According to Egeria, with the Eucharist of the Holy Thursday, which is on the Lord's Last Supper, coming to an end, there is a brief station at the Anastasis<sup>58</sup>, at the end of which the people go home for a meal.

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<sup>55</sup> For details on this, see: G.E. GINGRAS, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, The Newman Press, New York/New Jersey 1970, 1-15, and A. MCGOWAN-P.F. BRADSHAW, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria: A New Translation of the Itinerarium Egeriae with Introduction and Commentary*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville (Minnesota) 2018, 2-15.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. GINGRAS, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 11. Though D. Galadza identified her as a French or Spanish nun. (cf. GALADZA, *Liturgy and Byzantinization in Jerusalem*, 43-44).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. GALADZA, *Liturgy and Byzantinization in Jerusalem*, 44.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. MCGOWAN-BRADSHAW, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 61.

The worshippers again gather at the Cave of the Eleona<sup>59</sup> for a vigil, which lasts from the first to the fifth hour of the night<sup>60</sup>. On a vivid description of what takes place during these hours, Egeria states thus:

And there, until around the fifth hour of the night, they continually sing hymns and antiphons and read the scriptural passages proper to the place and to the day. Between these, prayers are said. Moreover, they read those passages from the Gospels in which he spoke to His disciples on that day while sitting in the same grotto, which lies within this Church<sup>61</sup>.

It presupposes from the citation above, that, with the end of the Holy Thursday celebration at the Anastasis, people reassemble for a vigil at 11pm (fifth hour of the night), which is meant most likely to usher in the Good Friday liturgy in the night of the following day with singing of hymns and antiphons and reading of the scriptures. The above event continues till about the sixth hour<sup>62</sup> of the night, when the procession, accompanied with singing of hymns, moves to the Imbomon<sup>63</sup>, where the vigil continues until the cockcrow. Klöckener would argue that the

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<sup>59</sup> This refers to the Church on the West side of the Mount of Olives attributed to Constantine and his mother Helena. The site of this building believed to be the site of the cave in which Jesus used to teach when He and His disciples visited the Mount of Olives. (Cf. McGOWAN-BRADSHAW, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 66-67).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. McGOWAN-BRADSHAW, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 94.

<sup>61</sup> ETERIA, *Itinerarium XXXV*, 3, ed. P. Maraval (SCh. 296), Cerf, Paris 1982, 280, no. 35.3. See also: GINGRAS, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 108. We still see prayers coming up in between the readings as in Erèvan ms 985, which might not be necessarily Collects.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. ETERIA, *Itinerarium XXXV*, 4. Also see: Gingras, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 108.

<sup>63</sup> This is believed to be the site or point from where Jesus Christ ascended into heaven.

liturgical action at the Imbomon represents a certain duplication of that which happened at Mount of Olives<sup>64</sup>.

With the crowing of the cock on Good Friday, the assembly moves from the Imbomon, with song, down to the church on the site of the Mount of Olives, the very place where the Lord prayed<sup>65</sup>. At this point there is brief liturgical action involving a prayer, hymns, the Gospel reading of the passage where Jesus told His disciples to watch and pray that they may not enter into temptation (cf. Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38)<sup>66</sup>, and then another appropriate prayer is said. Afterwards, the worshippers with torches<sup>67</sup> continue on to Gethsemane<sup>68</sup>, where the arrest of the Lord is much central<sup>69</sup>. At this point people show their grief by moaning and groaning with weeping on hearing the Gospel passage describing the arrest of Christ. They continued with the expression of this moment of grief even with hymns until day begins to brighten up. We see the people here trying to express emotionally an event that happened long time ago. It is a kind of re-enactment and re-expression. Most of the festivals in Igbo society follow this kind of trend. You see people bringing to life through some cultural activities or gestures some events that happened long before their birth. A practical example is the Ohafia war dance. This is actually done by muscular men in

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<sup>64</sup>Cf. KLÖCKENER, “Die ‘Feier vom Leiden und Sterben Christi’ am Karfreitag”, 210-251.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. RENOUX, *Le codex arménien Jérusalem 121* (OP 36/168), 274-275.

<sup>66</sup> The reading prescribed for this station in Armenian Lectionary is Luke 22:39-46. (cf. RENOUX, *Le codex arménien Jérusalem 121* (OP 36/168), 275)

<sup>67</sup> Cf. ETERIA, *Itinerarium XXXVI*, 2. “*Candelae autem ecclesiasticae super ducente paratae sunt propter lumen omni populo*”. See also: KLÖCKENER, «Die ‘Feier vom Leiden und Sterben Christi’ am Karfreitag», 210-251; GINGRAS, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 109.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. J. WILKINSON, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, Ariel Publishing House, Jerusalem 1981, 53.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. RENOUX, *Le codex arménien Jérusalem 121* (OP 36/168), 275.

commemoration of their strength in fighting and winning community wars in the past.

Then, with the day fully bright eventually<sup>70</sup>, and following the arrival of the people before the Cross on Golgotha, the passage from the Gospel where the Lord is led before Pilate and the words that were spoken by Pilate to Jesus and the Jews is read (cf. Matthew 27:1-26)<sup>71</sup>. At the end of this, the bishop, with the words of encouragement, sent the people home for a little rest before their participation in the Passion of Christ later in the day<sup>72</sup>. It must be noted that the visits to various places by the worshippers, and the readings introduced at each point only helped to remind them of the story of Christ's Passion and bringing it alive to them. It is intended to commemorate significant moments in the Passion narrative in the very places in which they were accredited to have really taken place<sup>73</sup>. We must state that there was no intention to replicate the detailed Passion story. Kenneth Stevenson tagged it as 'memorative', in which biblical events were celebrated but not directly re-enacted<sup>74</sup>.

From the second to the sixth hour, the faithful had the opportunity to venerate the relic of the true cross. During the veneration of the relic, the bishop is seated and the sacred wood of the cross is brought in in a casket and opened. The sacred wood and the inscription are taken out from the casket and placed on a table already covered with a linen cloth. Then, the bishop, from his sit, holds the sacred wood from its end, while the people present pass one after the other in adoration: "all bow down, touching the cross

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. GINGRAS, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 110.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. ETERIA, *Itinerarium XXXVI*, 4. For further clarification: WILKINSON, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, 268.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. ETERIA, *Itinerarium XXXVI*, 5.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. MCGOWAN-BRADSHAW, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 95.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. K. STEVENSON, *Jerusalem Revisited: The Liturgical Meaning of Holy Week*, Pastoral Press, Washington DC 1988, 9-10.

and the inscription, first with their foreheads, then with their eyes; and, after kissing the cross, they moved on”<sup>75</sup>. Veneration of religious artefacts among the indigenes of the Igbo society forms part of their religious worship and belief. Those artefacts are usually placed respectfully in strategic places for easy accessibility to the worshippers. One can easily observe the same mode of veneration and reverence by the Igbo Christians to the wood of the cross during the Good Friday liturgy.

At the end of the veneration, from the sixth to the ninth hour, the worshippers gathered in front of the cross, between the Anastasis Church and the Martyrium Church<sup>76</sup>, to commemorate in words the suffering and death of Christ<sup>77</sup>. At this point, with the bishop sitting before the cross, passages of the scriptures, which are from the Old and New Testaments, relevant to the Passion of Christ, are read<sup>78</sup>. Towards the ninth hour then, the hour of the Jesus’ death, the Gospel of John 19:30ff, containing the account of Christ’s death, is read. At the end of the reading, prayer is offered and the people depart<sup>79</sup>.

The entire Pilgrim’s account vividly shows how the Good Friday Lord’s Passion is celebrated as an independent liturgy in the Holy Week. Hence, the holistic and unitive Paschal celebration of the first three centuries has become the *Triduum* with the Maundy

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<sup>75</sup> GINGRAS, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 111.

<sup>76</sup> This is big cathedral church built on the order to Constantine on the eastern part of the point where Jesus’ tomb believed to have been excavated. (cf. MCGOWAN-BRADSHAW, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 61-66).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. KLÖCKENER, “Die ‘Feier vom Leiden und Sterben Christi’ am Karfreitag”, 215.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. ETERIA, *Itinerarium XXXVII*, 5. See also: GINGRAS, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 112. Prayer and genuflection followed each Psalm. (cf. RENOUX, *Le codex arménien Jérusalem* 121 (OP 36/168).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. WILKINSON, *Egeria’s Travels to the Holy Land*, 57. Also see: GINGRAS, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 113.

Thursday of Passion preparations; the Good Friday of the Passion; the Holy Saturday/Easter Sunday of the Grave Rest/the Resurrection<sup>80</sup>.

The three liturgical celebrations within the *Triduum* cover the entire Paschal Mystery, passion, death and resurrection of Christ. In a way they express a kind of transitional movement from a life, earthly bound, to a life, heavenly bound. This equally has become the promise and hope of every Christian (cf. Romans 8:11). Generally, this helps in strengthening the already existent belief among the Igbo Christians of the transitional nature of life: from old to new; mortality to immortality; darkness to light.

Through the historical development, one thing has remained constant, the communitarian nature of the celebration. Right from the last Supper of Christ with his apostles, the Christians of every century gathered together in unity to celebrate in thanksgiving and remembrance of entire mystery of Christ. Communitarianism is at the foundation of the Igbo societal life and celebrations.

## Conclusion

We have been able to analyse what the Paschal celebration was like right from the Jewish era in the Old Testament to the first four centuries of Christianity. From the onset, the general synaxis of the Passover feast as observed by the Jews, who lived before and during the earthly life of Christ, centres on their redemption from the Egyptian slavery. This feast was observed from the sunset of the 14 Nisan and has the slaughtering and sprinkling of the blood of the lamb, coupled with songs, forming its liturgical actions. In the New Testament, the two chronological accounts, synoptic chronology and Johannine, put the occasion of Christ's

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<sup>80</sup>Cf. KLÖCKENER, "Die 'Feier vom Leiden und Sterben Christi' am Karfreitag", 210-251.

Passover in two different times, namely, 15 Nisan and 14 Nisan, respectively. This gave rise to the Quartodeciman's controversy, which was later resolved by the Fathers of the Council of Nicea. However, there was a conceptual shift from the lamb to Christ, the New Sacrificial Lamb (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7).

The annual Passover feast as celebrated in the first century Jewish Christian communities, the Apostolic period, was still attached to the remembrance of the Jewish redemption from the Egyptian slavery and in anticipation of the final redemption, the coming of the Messiah. It is obvious that the first century Jewish Christians were not detached from the Jewish Passover feast and from other Jewish festivals as shown in St. Paul's action in the Acts of Apostles (cf. Acts 20:16).

However, having done an exposition of what became of the liturgical synaxis of the Paschal feast in the second and third centuries, we noticed that the celebration of *Pascha* encompasses the Passion, death, resurrection and eventual second coming of Christ. In this sense, the *Pascha*, as was celebrated in the second and third centuries is both anamnestic and eschatological. In addition, we noticed the gradual movement of the *Pascha's* celebration, as a unitive celebration, from Sabbath to the first day of the week, from the celebration of Christ death to his resurrection<sup>81</sup>.

Then examination of the developed liturgy of the 4<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem as accounted for by Egeria shows the eventual splitting of the original unitive celebration of the Paschal Mystery into days: Friday of suffering and death; the Saturday of the grave rest and the Sunday of the resurrection, based on history and some geographical locations. Hence, once unitive liturgical celebration became a three-day celebration of the liturgy of the Lord's

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 11.

Passion and Resurrection. In all, there are established links between the veneration of the cross on Good Friday/the communitarian nature of the entire celebration with the reverence given to Igbo religious artefacts and the communitarianism characterising the entire Igbo societal life and religious celebration.