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Prayer Over the Offerings in the Mass for those Suffering Hunger: A Liturgical Reading in Africa

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Abstract
In Africa today, creating awareness of the liturgical implications of the Prayer over the offerings and its relevance for the everyday lives of the Christians proves to be a difficult task. Anchored on the paucity of liturgical catechesis of the laity on the value of minor and major euchological prayers to life, liturgical prayers are a clarion call and reaction on abundance of divine life and unity in charity. They represent a challenge for an effective love to our brothers and sisters who suffer hunger, so that famine may be banished and all may have strength to serve God with free and untroubled hearts. Given theological basis for assistance to our brothers and sisters, the study explores the liturgical obligations and responsibilities of African Christians, using "Prayer over the Offerings in the Mass for those Suffering Hunger 33," as the source of inspiration. This is because the Church has a mission in society, the mission of renewal, reassurance and reaffirmation of basic human rights among the oppressed, the wretched, and those suffering hunger. The Church must exercise a prophetic voice and mentoring role, of giving them something to eat ourselves (Luke 9:11-17), for the distressed members of her community. Adopting a textual analysis, the paper argues that it is the obligation of the worshipping community to respond to the situation of those suffering hunger and depravations. Under the banner of attitudinal change and compassion, it recommends that the Church must go into the world to proclaim the Good News which will impel them to share all things justly and to care for one another as brothers and sisters.

Key words: Prayer, Offerings, Mass, Suffering, Hunger, Liturgy

1. Introduction

The current terrain of poverty and suffering in Africa generally is a thing of great concern. The indices are not encouraging but worrisome. Accordingly, Africa is described as a symbol of misery and suffering. In 1989, Richard Ostling of *Time Magazine* lamented that: "Africa is a continent crucified by famine and war, pestilence and poverty" (Ostling, 2026). The hunger level has been on the rise over the past few decades. The continent continues to host some of the

world's poorest countries. Situations based on case studies of Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria speak volumes of the negative impact of the spiteful face of poverty and the plight of those suffering hunger. At the moment, Christianity (Catholicism) in Africa is more than ever surrounded by the poor, the needy and the hungry, including the oppressed. God enunciated special laws to enable His people to care for the poor, but hunger has brought new twists and challenges to missionary efforts. In his first Apostolic Exhortation titled, *Dilexi Te* (I have loved you), Pope Leo XIV focuses on Christ's love for the poor and the call for the Church to renew its commitment to those in need. The Pontiff remarks: "I am convinced that the preferential choice for the poor is a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society, if we can only set ourselves free of our self-centredness and open our ears to their cry" (Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexi Te*, no. 7).

In the context of scholarly discussions and debates, and the response of theology, and in this specific instance, the liturgy, this paper, "Prayer over the offerings in the Mass for those Suffering Hunger: A Liturgical Reading in Africa", intends to use liturgical prayer to call for compassion and attitudinal change towards the victims. It seeks to illuminate the denigrating descriptions of the phenomenon of hunger as it is concretely lived in Africa, so that the Church may come to grasp why and how to respond to the seemingly endless situation. To achieve this preferential option for the poor and those who suffer hunger, the hermeneutical understanding of the euchological prayer is very important to be known first, and then the liturgical implications would be marshalled out as the bedrock for this clarion call for change. The conclusion charts the way forward for liturgical catechesis and renewal on the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News to the ends of the earth, matched with practical application to life.

2. Fact and the Phenomenon of those Suffering Hunger in Africa

Today in Africa, wherever anyone goes, he/she sees poverty and those suffering hunger staring him/her in the face. Nonetheless, it would appear that no nation is completely immune to poverty and the phenomenon of those who suffer hunger. After all, about 800 million people still live in these depravation. In Africa, the scenario is damaging, denigrating, and disturbing. After two decades (c. 1970 – 1990) of unprecedented economic growth, how much have the lives of African families improved? The latest estimates from the World Bank suggest that the share of the African population in extreme poverty and hunger did decline – from 56% from 1990 to 43% in 2012. At the same time, however, Africa's population continued to expand rapidly. Accordingly, the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger still increased by more than hundreds of millions which are staggering numbers. It is projected that the world extreme poverty and hunger will be increasingly concentrated in Africa (Anagwo, 2020, 28-46).

Accordingly, in the sub-Sahara Africa, the incidence of poverty has been on the higher scale. African society has frequently been characterised by ineffective government, corruption, and disparate development, resulting in structured imbalances that render several communities susceptible to poverty, political marginalisation and systemic brutality (Opara, 2026, p. 29). They are plagues afflicting people all over the world. Unemployment contributes substantially to hunger in Africa, as poverty remains a major cause of underdevelopment. Take Nigeria as an example. In 2014, she was acclaimed as the largest economy in Africa and the 26th largest economy in the world (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) 2014) due to its rising Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which was regarded as the best economy in Africa. That same year the World Bank assessment appraised Nigeria as the country with the world's highest economic growth rates with an average of 7.4% (World Bank, 2026). Ironically, in spite of this, so to speak wonderful credential, the poverty and hunger in Nigeria is embarrassing. The orchestrated rise in the GDP rate did not translate into any tangible socio-economic gains concerning employment opportunity or financial empowerment for the teeming population of youth. It did not reflect poverty reduction in Nigeria, and neither was there an improvement in the general living conditions of the citizens; which has continued to exacerbate.

Little wonder, an overwhelming proportion of Nigerians are living in poverty and there are those suffering hunger. Available statistics show that poverty is prevalent in Nigeria and has continued to be on the increase since the 1980s (Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), 2005). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2006) reveals that relative poverty measurement in Nigeria stood at 54.4% in 2004 and increased to 69% in 2010. In the same vein, absolute poverty level stood at 54.7% in 2004 and rose to 93.9 in 2010. The report also shows that the percentage of those living on less than $1 (USA) per day standing at 51.6% in 2004 rose to 61.2% in 2010. Admittedly, it is estimated that about 112 million Nigerians (about 67.1 percent of the country's total population of estimated 170 million are living below poverty level, according to statistics from NBS in 2014.

Nonetheless, John Kennedy Opara avers that the continent of Africa possesses abundant cultural diversity, economic innovation, and social resilience (Opara, 2026, p.29). The continent has huge mineral deposits, amazing agricultural potential, generally good weather, increasing number of educated and innovative youths, several rivers and streams, and a very rich biodiversity. African continent proudly celebrates today the presence of erudite scholars whose works have shed light on various areas of human endeavour. This understanding gives us hope to thread the path of their worship to see what it can contribute to ameliorate the level of poverty and state of those suffering hunger. This situation of widespread suffering calls for clear and decisive ways and means to give the sons and daughters of the Church to ameliorate the ugly situation. It is not uncommon that many people turn a blind eye to their plight because they do not fully understand the theological obligation to do something when confronted by the suffering hunger in the contemporary African society,

3. Theological Basis for Communal Care of those Suffering Hunger

Christianity affirms the belief that God shows particular concern for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalised. He identifies with them. Believers are expected to do the same. Biblical foundations for this idea appear throughout the sanctimonious pages of the Old and New Testaments. Here, strangers, widows, orphans are highlighted. The Gospel account according to Matthew remarks that the judgement of nations will be couched on how we treat the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned and destitute, depicting Christian discipleship, measured by compassionate action towards the most vulnerable (Matt 25: 31-46).

Theologically, communal care of those suffering hunger is predicated on the understanding of the old Latin maxim in the tradition of the Church, namely, *lex orandi, lex credendi*. It means that the law of prayer (the way we worship) is the law of belief (what we believe); the law of praying is the law of believing. Sometimes, it is expanded as: *lex credendi, lex celebrandi, lex vivendi* (what the Church believes, she celebrates and she lives out) [Chibuko, "The New Millennium Roman Missal…" p. 64]. It follows that how we believe reflects how we celebrate/worship and determines how we will live. As we worship, so we will believe and so we will live (Anagwo, 2019, "The Influence of Prosperity Gospel…", p.103). And the official public worship of the (Catholic) Church is designated as liturgy. Hence, liturgy, which is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ into glory, remains the inestimable treasure of the Church. Liturgical prayers are very vital in helping people to see what needs to be done, realise their limitation in bringing them to actualization, and then point them on the need to ask for the graces needed from God through the content expressed in the oration.

The opening statement of the Second Vatican Council states the signal that the Church is concerned about the distressed members and calls for love to alleviate their problems: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1987, nos. 26 and 29). In his Encyclical Letter, *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), Pope Paul VI also stresses that the development of people is a way to show this love of neighbour. Accordingly, he states that the Church has close attention: "of those who are trying to escape the ravages of hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance; of those who are seeking a larger share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are consciously striving for fuller growth" (*Populorum Progressio*, 1967, no.1). The same Pope also stresses in *A Call to Action*: "The time has come to pass from economics to politics. To take politics seriously…is to affirm the duty of man, of every man, to recognize the concrete reality and the value of freedom of choice that is offered him to seek about the good...of the nation of mankind" (Nebechukwu, 1994, p.12). With these documents and more, we can rightly say that the Church has said and is still

speaking on the issue of social justice since, according to John XXIII, it is a principle that "all classes of citizens benefit equitably from an increase in national wealth" (Nebechukwu, 1994, p.13). This is a strict fruit of justice bordering on solidarity with the needy and those suffering hunger in our midst.

In his Lenten Pastoral Message 2026, titled: *All Things Work Together*, Patrick Eluke re-echoes this message that: "Jesus makes this connection explicit: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt 25:40). In seeing Christ in the poor, the suffering and the marginalized, we recognize that acts of charity are not optional; they are essential to holiness" (Eluke, 2026, p.23). This teaching is consistent with the Church Fathers. For instance, St. John Chrysostom reminds us, "If you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the church door, you will cannot find Christ in the chalice" (St. John Chrysostom, 1995, p.410).

Be that as it may; liturgically, hunger may rob individual or community/people opportunity to fully participate in the liturgical life of the Church. An adage holds: "a hungry man/woman is an angry man/woman." Nobody can effectively preach the Gospel to a person with an empty stomach. Mahatma Gandhi captures this idea when he said, "To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare to appear is work and promise of food and wages" (Quoted in Ezeanya, 2011, p. 64). Obviously, hunger leads to anti-social behaviour which is against one of the characteristics of liturgy as a communitarian participation. The theological insights revolve around the understanding that those who are poor and defenceless have nobody to turn to but God who has a special place for the victims of injustice and those who are poor and suffer hunger. Consequently, they turn to God for divine care and protection. Ideally, Christians are to be the veritable agents to be used by God to console His people. We now turn our attention to the Prayer over the Offerings for insights.

4. Prayer over the Offerings

Prayer over the Offerings (also called Prayer over the Gifts before the new translation of 27 November 2011 or *Oratio Super Oblata,* or *Super Oblata* in Latin) concludes the offering and introduces the Eucharistic prayer with preface and consecratory prayer. Unlike other prayers within this period, it is said aloud, and the people are expected to make the prayer their own by their response, "Amen." It is not part of the Eucharistic prayer but one of the collections of prayers used in the celebration of the liturgy and classed together as Euchological Formularies. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* remarks on its role in the Mass when it declares that:

> Among the parts assigned to the priest, the foremost is the Eucharistic Prayer, which is the high point of the entire celebration. Next are the orations: that is to say, the collect, the prayer over the offerings, and the prayer after communion. These prayers are addressed to God in the

> name of the entire holy people and all present addressed to God in the name of the entire people and all present, by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ. It is with good reason, therefore, that they are called the 'presidential prayers' (GIRM, 2001, no.30).

When compared to the Collect, *Oratio Super Oblata or Super Oblata* is simpler and more precise. But it expresses in a wonderful manner/variety an abbreviation version of the themes of offering which will be developed better and later in the Eucharistic prayer. It offers an explanation for the significance of material offering transforming them into the language of prayer. Admittedly, the *Super Oblata* is the prayer said by the priest after the offerings have been placed on the altar, the accompanying rites completed, and the invitation to pray is made by the priest. As a presidential prayer spoken aloud, it concludes the preparation of the gifts and prepares all present for the Eucharistic Prayer (Kunzler, 2001, p.221). Like other orations at Mass, it is distinguished by the fact it ends with short doxology (shorter conclusion): *Per Christum Dominium nostrum* (Through Christ our Lord). When the Son is mentioned at the end of the prayer, then it concludes with: *Qui vivit et regnat in saecula saeculorum* (Who lives and reigns forever and ever), [GIRM, 2001, no.77]. The assembly responds 'Amen' to affirm the content of the prayer and to declare that it is prayed aloud on their behalf by the president of the assembly (Anagwo, 2009, pp. 117-118). After all, whenever we say Amen, it means 'let it be so'. Usually, almost all the cultures, traditions, peoples, ethnic groupings, etc. accept this designation 'Amen'. The Christian contextually uses it to confirm, affirm and testify to what is said or is before him/her.

Michael Kunzler affirms that in the present Roman Missal, there are about a hundred prayers over the offerings, 60 of which were not present in the 1570 book. The greater part is extracted from the ancient sacramentaries, others are new compositions out of the excerpts from these sacramentaries, and others again are the product of patristic literature or are totally new compositions (Kunzler, 2001, p.221). In his seminal work, "Rudiments of Euchological Composition," Patrick C. Chibuko notes that the *Super Oblata* introduces the Eucharistic Prayer and explains the significance of the material offering presented at the Mass in the offertory collection (Chibuko, 1996, p.166). The prayer takes cognisance of the fact that the bread and wine have been brought for use in the Mass from the Collections. These Gifts (the bread and wine) are consecrated and become the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. Accordingly, this liturgical prayer is propelled by the comprehension of the point that Christian mission today is to continue the mission of Christ by enabling the Kingdom of God to be situations and contexts possible (Chathanatt, 1995, p.319). This implies that any Christian way of living towards the Holy Spirit involves the liberation of each and all who partake in the Eucharistic celebration. We cannot enjoin or rather partake of the manifold blessings therein in the Eucharist alone.

The liturgical prayer may have a transforming effect especially as we have feelings for fellow beings in our daily aspirations and struggles of life. The clarion call to give them something is upper most in His heart. The love of Christ commemorated in the Eucharistic meal, should be shared among us as our token of love for the generosity and goodness of God to our brothers and sisters. Christian life covers also food and freedom, equality and dignity, sharing of resources, and community. It involves contemplation and action and all that contributes to healing and the wholeness of life (Igbaoyinbo, 2020, p.145). Those who participate actively in the Eucharist cannot live in the world and do nothing to transform the society positively. The Eucharist unites them in the love of Christ and this is love to be shared with others, a love that commits them to social justice. When people's rights and dignity are trampled upon, it challenges the worshippers to seek appropriate measures to correct the wrongs in the society. They do this by showing concern, fraternity, mutual support, peace and love. Those who worship God should do that with their whole humanity, in truth and in spirit (cf. Isa 29:13; Matt 15:8-9). Let us demonstrate this objective with the Prayer of over Offering in Time of Famine or for those Suffering Hunger 33.

4.1 Presentation of the Text: *Tempore Famis Vel Pro Fame Laborantibus*
The Latin form reads thus:
Respice, Domine, oblationem,
quam tibe di tuis datis optimis exhibemus,
ut, quae divinae abundantiam vitae
et unitatem in caritate significant,
ad aequam nos partitionem
mutuumque impellat fraternitatis officium.
Per Christum (*Missale Romanum,* 2008), p.1136).

The English translation goes thus:
Look, O Lord, on the oblation we present to you
from among your wonderful gifts,
so that the offering which signifies abundance of divine life
and unity in charity
may impel us to share all things justly
and to care for one another as brothers and sisters.
Through Christ our Lord (*The Roman Missal*, 2011, p.1118).

4.2 Structural Analysis of the Text
In its structure, the Prayer over the Offering consists of six elements: Identification of the action taking place, which is the offering of gifts; Identification of whom the action is directed, God; Identification of who is acting, the praying Church; A supplicatory terminology, such as 'we beseech thee/give/grant/conceive it,' among others; Identification of the major intentions of the prayer, that is, the things being asked for in prayer; the

Christological conclusion (Chibuko, 1996, p.166). Accordingly, the following elements are identified:

Identification of the action taking place
Look, …, on the oblation we present to you
from among your wonderful gifts,

Identification of whom the action is directed
…Lord

Identification of who is performing the action, the Church, sometimes called the Praying Subject
…may impel us

A Supplicatory terminology
….so that the offering which signifies abundance of divine life
and unity in charity

Identification of the major intentions of the prayer
…to share all things justly
and to care for one another as brothers and sisters.

Christological conclusion
Through Christ our Lord.

4.3 Emerging Themes in the Liturgical Prayer

The Worshipping community does not read the liturgical prayer in isolation. It is deeply entwined towards the socio-communitarian participation of the faithful. The textual analysis will demonstrate such a rich theological depository.

4.3.1 The first element highlights that the offering of gift, which is given by the assembly, now made more visible in the bread and wine, is to be used to remind the Lord and Father of all, of the sacrifice His Son, our Saviour, made for the redemption of all people. Liturgically, it has always been the venerable tradition of the Church, for the faithful to present bread and wine for the Sacrifice, together with the gifts for religious and charitable purposes; hence, the name "offertory." Offertory represents the gifts of the worshippers which are collected and used to help the poor, for the maintenance of the priest and liturgical needs of the Church. The priest offers them to God on behalf of the worshipping community. They are latter distributed for the common good. According to the former classification of the Mass, offertory or *oblata* is the first act of the Mass of the Faithful in which the priest offers to God the bread and wine which are later to be consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ respectively (Anagwo, 2012, p.48).

4.3.2 The second element identifies the Lord (*Domine*) as the One to whom the Mass as a whole and the *Super Oblata*, in particular, are focused upon and addressed. This is founded on the fact that the Godhead is with us always and has been revealed by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity as Three Persons but One God. He is the Source of all graciousness and blessings.

4.3.3 The third element identifies those carrying out the worship and prayer as the Church (otherwise called the praying subject), whose Head is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Technically, "us", an English word, is the first person plural pronoun. Hence, "*nos*", the Latin word, as accusation is used when "us" (the worshipping community) is in the accusative case. It is an indirect object. Hence, it is *nos partitionem* (may impel us).

4.3.4 The fourth element is a petition to God because His love is assured for each and everyone, and is endless, eternal and everlasting. God continues to show His love by sending Jesus Christ to redeem the world permanently through His incarnation and His salvific death and glorious resurrection. Accordingly, the request of the offering, which signifies abundance of divine life and unity in charity, also reveals their faith and confidence in God.

4.3.5 The fifth element identifies the major intention of the prayer, that we may share all things justly and to care for one another as brothers and sisters. Oppression or any form of injustice is harmful to human beings and creates disorder, disharmony, conflict, anarchy and lack of peace. Augustine rightly states, "What are kingdoms without justice but large bands of robbers"! (Augustine, 2012, pp.41,115). Where people are not treated fairly or justly, there is no peace but conflict, animosity and discord. That is actually and always the teaching of the Church.

4.3.6 The sixth element: In Roman liturgy, *Super Oblata* ends with short Trinitarian doxology (Through Christ, our Lord). The Church's prayer is essentially Trinitarian. This is because it is founded on the prayer of the Spirit in us and of the faithful love of the Father who has given us His Son (Forley, *et al*. (eds.), 2008, p.42). The word *doxology* comes from the Greek word *doxa* which means "glory." It refers to the general Christian theological theme of praise and glorification of God or more narrowly, to a specific liturgical formulation that expresses the idea in prayer (Pierce, 2007, p.369). It can also be considered in a broader sense to mean the underlying theology behind Christian public worship and private prayer (such as the recitation of the rosary, stations of the cross, etc.). The use of Trinitarian formula in the liturgy can be traced to the first generation of Christians. Granted that there was no explicit mention of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic prayer in the *Didache*, like in *Super Oblata*, the prayer recorded by Justin Martyr already had the Trinitarian structure. The same is true of the Eucharistic prayer in the *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*. The prayer ends with the doxology addressed to the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit (Kasper, 2012, p.250). Christian liturgy is thus the action of the

Church. The Church becomes more fully what it is by engaging in the corporate and communal praise and glorification of God as the Father and Creator, the Son as the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier. The same Trinitarian structure can be seen in the *epiclesis*, the conclusion of the orations and doxologies.

5. Implications for Pastoral Care of those Suffering Hunger

Today in Africa, Christ is suffering terribly in His members – the poor and those suffering hunger. What are the implications of this Prayer over the Offering in the Mass for those Suffering Hunger in Africa? As the growth rate of those suffering hunger is real and deadly, the prayer text reminds the worshipping assembly of her prophetic mandate to give them something to eat. Additionally, they are to expose ugly situations through constructive criticisms of the situations. This is because they should serve as moral compass of the society. The Church's liturgical response must integrate justice and mercy. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* calls the Church to be a "field hospital" that heals wounds and restores dignity (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, no. 47). With liturgy, as the work of God, *Gottesdienst,* for the people and with the people, it is a necessary celebration of redemptive narrative initiated by God in Christ with the Holy Spirit and done in accompaniment and solidarity with the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. In *Gottesdienst*, the Church in her members serves as a field hospital. In this way, it will weave neatly into the very fabric of the new ecclesiology that establishes the smooth nexus between the illuminative ecclesiology and the liturgy that ritualizes it and extends its relevance to the African society.

On the level of practicality and personal persuasion, the contemporary liturgical prayers such as Prayer over the Offerings will unite and transform participants into instruments to fight for the cause of those suffering hunger. In Africa today, creating awareness of the liturgical implications of the Prayer over the offerings and its relevance for the everyday lives of the Christians proves to be a difficult task. Anchored on the paucity of liturgical catechesis of the laity on the value of minor and major euchological prayers to life. Some Christians have little or no knowledge of the imports of these prayers. The gregarious image of the worshipping assembly is taken as spiritual and inapplicable to the social, political and economic complexities of African society. The Christian community is invisible rather than visible in the socio-communitarian participation. Liturgical prayers are a clarion call and reaction on abundance of divine life and unity in charity. They represent a challenge for an effective love to our brothers and sisters who suffer hunger, so that famine may be banished and all may have strength to serve God with free and untroubled hearts.

This is achievable in the spirit of *"koinonia" (*Communion). Thus, the Greek word *koinonia* which aptly captured this mutual friendly relationship earlier by Luke (see Acts 2: 42) might be somewhat difficult to translate if it is just held to be mere fellowship for the sake of it. In ancient Greco-Roman culture, *koinonia*

primarily referred to business partnership wherein gain and/or loss was adequately and fairly shared by the cooperating partners. To the apostolic era, *koinonia* denoted "sharing," "sympathy," and "mutuality." Thus, in its proper term, it is called in Igbo language of Nigeria *"mmeko nke ndi nso"* (communion of the saints). We share with others by multiplying what we have. This is because of the outstanding Christian principle that "Joy shared is joy multiplied." Each of us is called and challenged to replicate the gesture as children of God who feeds the hungry with rich food, satisfies the thirsty soul, cures the sick, forgives and restores sinners to their past glory. The primitive Church showcased examples how it cared for all members in its constituencies, her leaders respected the mutual and organic nature of the community, comprising the well-to-do people and the downtrodden.

It is the responsibility of the liturgical assembly to organize and mobilise friends, neighbours and communities to respond, care and support those suffering hunger. It is the role of the community of faith to empower the saints, being the Family of God. Often, this is a neglected pastoral skill in an age that focuses on individualism and one-to-one pastoral care. The Church which renews the Paschal Mystery of Christ in celebration must witness to the presence of Christ in her midst by replicating His loving spirit in welcoming all and reaching out to the victims, weak and downtrodden. The Church is a community of the strong and the weak, the healthy and the sick, the saint and the sinner, displaced and non-displaced. As long as they are baptized, they are all united in Christ and become brothers and sisters. The liturgical assembly must, therefore, reflect a gathering where the fundamental, ecclesial, universal, inviolable and inalienable rights of all, and especially those suffering hunger in the land, are not only respected, promoted and ministered to. The poor members, the widows, and famine-impoverished worshipping community could heave a sigh of relief as their immediate basic needs were met through generous donation of well-to-do parishioners. Anything short of this constitutes lack of pastoral care to them.

6. Conclusion

The study, as a textual analysis of the Prayer over the Offering in the Mass for those Suffering Hunger, has shown that liturgical prayers are a clarion call and reaction on abundance of divine life and unity in charity. They represent a challenge for compassion and integral human development of the humanity, as an effective love to our brothers and sisters who suffer hunger, so that famine may be banished and all may have strength to serve God with free and untroubled hearts. The worshipping assembly should read the signs of the times and then interpret them to the advantage of the Church and the society. Pope Francis in the Apostolic Exhortation, The Joy of the Gospel, *Evangelii Gaudium* maintains that the Church must rediscover the richness and beauty of Christ and His Gospel which is beautiful in the liturgy (no.20). The paper explored the liturgical implications, obligations and responsibilities for African Christians, using Prayer over the Offerings in the Time of Famine or those

Suffering Hunger 33, as the source of inspiration. This is because the Church has a mission in society, the mission of renewal, reassurance and reaffirmation of basic human rights among the oppressed, the wretched, and those suffering hunger. The Church must exercise a prophetic voice and mentoring role, of giving them something to eat ourselves (Luke 9:11-17), in order to reinstate them to human dignity. The mantra of the paper is the obligation of the worshipping to respond to the current terrain of suffering in Africa. The implications presented above arise organically from the synthesis of the liturgical analysis that the Church must go into the world to proclaim the Good News which will impel her to share all things justly and to care for one another as brothers and sisters. That is how the daily bread of the downtrodden can be guaranteed. The worshipping community must do more as it is currently engaged in this regard.

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