

AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY IN LITURGY

Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, Presenter

CULTURE: “the complex network of ideas, values, ways of relating, assumptions, symbols, beliefs, traditions, affective patterns (formulation and expression of feelings), experiences, worldview, codes of behavior, sense of the sacred that makes a people “a people”... Every culture expresses itself through artifacts, events, rituals, music, etc., but these are not the culture itself; they are only a reflection of the culture’s core elements... (Lumas).¹

- Each culture is unique, organized by group in response to particular situations of group life
- Cultures are dynamic, they evolve given various changes – challenges/accomplishments of group life
- Cultures diversify: generationally, regionally, socio-economically
- Cultures are complex, network of core elements help groups manage the demands of life
- Every culture expresses itself through artifacts, events, music, food, dress, arts. These are not the culture but reflect the culture’s key elements

SPIRITUALITY, a key component of human culture, expresses a people’s particular beliefs about how and why the world was created and describes its own understanding of humanity’s place in that universe. Spirituality inspires human religion, which based on shared understandings of the Holy, provides the community moral direction.

LITURGY is the official public worship of the church. Vatican Council II describes the Eucharist as “the source and summit of Christian life”.

AFRICAN AMERICAN refers to people of Black African descent in the African diaspora, particularly those living in the United States of America. **AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE** is rooted in 1) African traditions, 2) Black Church - Biblical God and God’s people), 3) U.S. experience – Middle Passage, Enslavement, Island/Latin influences, segregation, integration and struggle for liberation; and 4) everyday life.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY: THE SOUL OF A PEOPLE

In “**What We Have Seen and Heard**” (1984, U. S. Bishops):

- Communitarian
- Holistic
- Joyful
- Contemplative

In “**Full of the Spirit: Five Spiritual Gifts of African American Catholics**” (2014, C. Vanessa White)

- God on Our Mind
- People of the Book
- Joy, Wholeness, Contemplation
- All are Welcome
- Called to Do Justice

¹ Eva Marie Lumas, SSS, “The Nature and Goals of Afrocentric Catholic Catechesis” in *God Bless Them . . . Who Have Their Own: African American Catechetical Camp Meeting: A Gathering to Chart a New Course*, Therese Wilson Favors, ed. (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1995), 30.

OUTLINE OF THE EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

...The People Gather

Introductory Rite

- Entrance Song/ Procession
- Greeting
- Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water
- Penitential Rite
- Lord, have Mercy
- Glory to God
- Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

- Reading I
- Responsorial Psalm
- Reading II
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel
- Homily
- Profession of Faith
- General Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Preparation of the Altar-Table and the Gifts
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Communion Rite
 - Lord's Prayer
 - Sign of Peace
 - Breaking of the Bread – Lamb of God
 - Communion
 - Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rite

- Greeting
- Blessing
- Dismissal
- Recession¹

The People Are Sent...

¹J-Glenn Murray, S.J., “The Liturgy of the Roman Rite and African American Worship” in *Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal* (Chicago: G.I.A. Publications, Inc., 1987).
