

# THE DIVINE LITURGY

Dn. M.O. JOHN

ܟܬܒܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ

ܘܡܠܟܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܐܢܬܘܢ ܘܟܬܒܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ

Ex Libris

Weth Hlardutho Library

The Malphono George Anton Kiraz Collection

ܟܬܒܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ  
ܘܡܠܟܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ  
ܘܡܠܟܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ  
ܘܡܠܟܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ  
ܘܡܠܟܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ

Anyone who asks for this volume, to read, collate, or copy from it, and who appropriates it to himself or herself, or cuts anything out of it, should realize that (s)he will have to give answer before God's awesome tribunal as if (s)he had robbed a sanctuary. Let such a person be held anathema and receive no forgiveness until the book is returned. So be it, Amen! And anyone who removes these anathemas, digitally or otherwise, shall himself receive them in double.

# THE DIVINE LITURGY

REV. DN. M. O. JOHN



*“What shall I render to the Lord  
for all his bounty to me?*

*I will lift up the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the Lord,  
and I will pay my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all his people”.*

# **THE DIVINE LITURGY**

(A study of the Holy Qurbana)

Author : Rev. Dn. M. O. John

Publisher : Rebecca

Printed at : Printindia, Cochin-682 031.

December 1988

## PREFACE

While I was living in the Basil Aramana, Pathanamthitta, as the Private Secretary of H. G. Daniel Mar Philoxenos Metropolitan, the Very Rev. K. C. Oommen Corepiscopa (Now Ramban Theophorus) entrusted me to take some lessons on the Holy Qurbana to the College Students who used to come to the Aramana Chapel to attend the Liturgy. With great pleasure I prepared some lectures and delivered it regularly in the chapel. When I took the lectures H.G. Mar Philoxenos carefully watched my words and corrected me wherever it was necessary. In my studies of the Holy Qurbana I am indebted to the writings of the Metropolitan Mar Mathews Barnabas also.

In the following pages I note down something that I learned about the Holy Qurbana from my spiritual fathers and from the Holy Tradition of the Church. My study is roughly divided into two parts. In the first part I make a general study of the Holy Qurbana. In the second part I try to bring together the meanings and interpretations of various prayers and actions of the Eucharistic service of our Church.

I use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who encouraged and helped me to write down this and bring it out as a booklet.

I dedicate this work to the growing generation of my church and to all those who love to hear me talking.

Vienna

**Dn. M. O. John**

15th August, 1988.

# CONTENTS

## Part One : The Divine Liturgy

1.	The Holy Qurbana	3
1.1.	Introduction	3
1.2.	The name 'Qurbana' or 'Eucharist'	3
1.3.	Origin of the Qurbana	4
1.4.	The meaning of the Qurbana	5
2.	Eastern understanding of Eucharist	9
3.	The celebration of the Eucharist	11
4.	The Church and Liturgical Vestment	13
5.	The Holy Qurbana is the offering of the Church	17
6.	General structure of the Eastern Eucharist	19
7.	Different texts of Anaphoras	23
8.	The Liturgy of the Indian Orthodox Church	25
8.1.	Early Rites	25
8.2.	The Introduction of the Present Rite	27

## Part Two : The Celebration of the Divine Liturgy

	The Celebration of the Holy Qurbana	33
1.	The Preparation Service (Thuyabo)	33
1.1.	Introduction	33
1.2.	The Service of Melchizedek	34
1.3.	The Service of Aaron	35



2.	The Public Celebration	37
2.1.	Introduction	37
2.2.	The Ministry of the Word	37
2.2.1.	The Opening Hymn	37
2.2.2.	Trisagion	38
2.2.3.	The Reading of the New Testament	39
2.2.4.	The Evangelion	39
2.2.5.	Blessing of the Censer	40
2.3.	The Ministry of the Sacrament (The Anaphora)	42
2.3.1.	Introduction	42
2.3.2.	Kiss of Peace	43
2.3.3.	Lifting up of the Veil (Shushafo)	44
2.3.4.	The Institution	46
2.3.5.	Anamnesis (Remembrance)	47
2.3.6.	Epiclesis (Invocation of the Holy Spirit)	47
2.3.7.	The Diptychs (Great Intercession)	49
2.3.8.	Intinction	52
2.3.9.	The Lords Prayer	53
2.3.10.	Elevation	54
2.3.11.	Intercession of Saints and the Departed	55
2.3.12.	The Communion	57
2.3.13.	The Thanksgiving Prayers	58
2.3.14.	“Depart Ye in Peace”	59
3.	The Post Communion Service	61
4.	Meaning of Syriac and Greek words used in the Holy Qurbana	63



PART ONE

**THE DIVINE LITURGY**



# 1. THE HOLY QURBANA

## 1. 1. Introduction

The heavenly Father wants his children to be always in His presence and in communion with Him. The Divine worship is the solemn occasion of the meeting of man and God. In it we feel his presence and communicate with Him. The perfection and climax of christian worship is the offering of the Holy Qurbana. It is the centre of orthodox worship and spirituality. In it the worshipping community who are Gods' own people, the chosen race and the royal priesthood tastes the divine banquet and gets a glimpse of heaven. In the celebration of the liturgy (Holy Qurbana), the visible and the invisible church, angels and saints, the living and the departed, all come together and praise and glorify the Creator of the universe. In this chapter we consider the significance, meanings and origin of the Holy Qurbana.

## 1. 2. The name 'Qurbana' or 'Eucharist'

In our tradition we use the word 'Qurbana' to denote the divine liturgy. The word means 'offering' or sacrifice, and it recalls the self giving sacrifice of our Lord Christ on the Calvary. In the Qurbana we participate in that divine sacrifice of our Lord and offer ourselves to His divine will.

The Greek (Byzantine) Orthodox tradition uses the word 'Eucharist' for the divine service. It means 'thanksgiving' or the 'liturgy of thanksgiving'. We offer thanks and praise, to our God, for, creating the world and

sustaining it by His divine power and providence. The 'Last Supper' of our Lord to which our Qurbana traces its origin was a ritual feast of the Jews in which they remembered their miraculous deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. So its offering was always linked with a thanksgiving for the mighty deeds of the Almighty, who led his people into the promised land. The church when gather together for the liturgy, remembers the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and offers thanks to Him for all His wonderful deeds, love, protection and promises. So the divine liturgy is an offering of thanksgiving and thanksgiving (Eucharist) itself.

The Roman Catholic tradition commonly uses the word 'Mass' to denote the celebration while the other western evangelical traditions prefer the titles Holy Communion, Lord's Supper etc.

### 1. 3. Origin of the Qurbana

The church traces the origin of the Qurbana to the ceremonial meal (Last Supper in the upper chamber) of our Lord which was probably held at the eve before the Jewish passover (Jn. 18.28). On that occasion Our Lord took bread in his hands, and when he had given thanks blessed it, broke it and gave it to his disciples and said "Take, eat; this is my body" (Mt. 26.26). After that he took the cup, gave thanks, blessed it and gave it to them saying "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant" (Mt. 26.27). Then he asked them to celebrate this divine service in remembrance of Him until His second coming (Lk. 22.19). When the church was founded after the resurrection of the Lord, it conducted the celebration of the Qurbana with great care and reverence (1 Cor. 11.23-29).

#### 1. 4. The meaning of the Qurbana

To the church, the Holy Qurbana was always a sacrament that signifies Christ's gift of Himself to the church as a whole and to the individual believer in particular. From the very beginning the church highly venerated the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and in the 'Acts of the Apostles' we read how the early believers gathered together for the 'breaking of the bread'. The Qurbana is the great sacrifice of our Lord, who was the lamb who bore the sin of the whole world' and offered himself on the Mount Calvary for the remission of the sin of the world. After his death and resurrection he entered the upper heaven to the right hand of God and there he always intercedes for us. In that way, the Eucharist of our Lord which started at Calvary is continuing till the end of the world. Our earthly Eucharist is a participation to that heavenly one. That is why, the church always teaches that the Eucharist is not a mere intellectual remembrance of the sacrifice but a living participation in the salvation wrought out by the Lord Christ. In the Eucharist, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we recall and experience, the divine love revealed through the Son of God. We actively participate in the salvation history and in the heavenly liturgy. We give Him thanks for all His mercies and blessings. We offer him our bodies and souls and our humble gifts and ourselves and pray, "Lord, we remember your death, we confess your resurrection and we look forward to your second coming. May your mercy be upon us all".

St. Paul observes that Christ's sacrifice was the perfection of the offerings of the Old Testament, which was for the remission of sin (Lev. 16.11-17). He writes "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect

tabernacle (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves, but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb. 9.11-12). The church teaches that the offerings of Abel (Gn. 4.4), Noah (Gn. 7.1), Melchizedek (Gn. 14.18), Abraham (Gn. 22.13), Moses (Ex. 12.5) and all the Old Testament sacrifices were types and foreshadows of the offering of Christ. To St. Paul Christ was 'our pascal lamb, who was slaughtered for the redemption of the whole world' (1 Cor. 5.7). The Holy Quarbana is the New Testament offering and the sign and seal of the new covenant. For the church it is the living 'Manna', the bread of life. While He was teaching at the shore of the sea of Galilee, Christ said "I am the bread of life which came down from heaven" (Jn. 6.41). He continued, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh". (Jn. 6. 51). At the last supper in the upper chamber he took bread and gave it to his disciples and said "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.....", Likewise, he gave wine and said, "Drink.....This is my blood poured out for you.....".

To the unbelieving Jews in the Synagogue at Copernaum he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came



down from heaven not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever" (Jn. 6.53-58). In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ"? (1 Cor. 10.16). The blessed Apostle again exhorts, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me". In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me". For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and the blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Cor. 11.23-28).

The early Christian theologians explained and preached about the meaning of the Eucharist.



## 2. THE EASTERN UNDERSTANDING OF EUCHARIST

During the centuries many have explained the meaning of Eucharist. In the 12th century, the Christian west (Schoolmen) formulated the theory of transsubstantiation. This was a theory formed in terms of Aristotelian philosophy which distinguishes the substance of every material object from its external manifestations such as colour, weight and smell. They said that during the celebration, through a process, the substance of bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ while the 'accidents' (or appearance) of the bread and wine remain. According to them, the substance of bread and wine is replaced by the substance of Christ's body and blood and at the same time the Eucharistic gifts look and taste like bread and wine.

During the Reformation, the protestants opposed the above theory and formulated their own particular theories, such as consubstantiation. According to them the communicant, while receiving bread and wine partakes simultaneously of the Body and Blood of Christ. Some of them said that it is the Body and Blood only to those who believe.

Our Church does not accept any of these theories. The Eastern Orthodox tradition does not have the western desire for clear-cut definitions concerning the Eucharist. Our Fathers do not accept the efforts to subject the limitless powers and wonders of the Eternal Almighty to the limited experiments and comprehensions of man.

How the bread and wine offered in the Eucharist changes into the Body and Blood of Christ is beyond human explanation and so it is a mystery for the Orthodox Fathers. They taught that the transformation of the elements, like the Virgin birth, is beyond the comprehension of our created intellect. Referring to Eucharist and other sacraments our Fathers always use the term 'mystery'.

They say that in the Eucharist, we consecrate the elements and pray to Almighty to change it into His Body and Blood. He Himself has shown it and asked us to do so. To his church he has given the authority to change the bread and wine to his body and blood. Our church tradition is reluctant to define, in human terms, either the character or the exact moment of change in the Eucharistic elements. Our Fathers communicate the Qurbana as the real body and blood of our saviour obeying his words, "Take, eat; this is my Body".

### 3. THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

The Jewish passover meal was in the evening and our Lord also had the Last Supper in the evening. The early church (first century) also celebrated the Holy Qurbana in the evening. But by the second century, the church started to give more reverence to the 'sacrament of the body and blood of Christ'. It became the central part of the whole liturgy and its celebration became more ceremonial. People were asked to come to the liturgy with proper preparation and even fasting. By the third century it became a practice to celebrate the liturgy only with fasting and hence it became convenient to celebrate it in the morning. The scriptural reading and prayer services held on Sabbath mornings might also have influenced the shift of Eucharistic celebration from the evening to the morning. Now in all the Orthodox churches the service is conducted mostly in the mornings and everybody is asked to come for the liturgy with proper preparation and fasting. In our tradition we do not offer Qurbana on the week days during the two lent periods of forty days lent and three days lent, in which fasting is compulsory.

On all the festival days we celebrate the liturgy and it is considered to be the crown and perfection of all other Sacraments.

In the Orthodox tradition a priest is allowed to celebrate only one Qurbana in a day and we do not offer more than one Qurbana on the same day at the same altar.



#### 4. THE CHURCH AND LITURGICAL VESTMENTS

The Temple of Jerusalem had three main parts namely the Outer Sanctuary the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The people come to the Outer Sanctuary to pray. In the Holy Place the priests offer the evening and morning sacrifices. Once in a year the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies with incense and offerings for himself and for the errors of the people. About the Old place of worship we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "For a Tabernacle was prepared, the outer one in which were the lamp stand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tabernacle called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the arc of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna and Aarons rod that budded, and the tables of covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.

These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tabernacle performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people". (Heb. 9.2-7).

In our church, the Upper Sanctuary (Madbaha) covered by the curtain is the Holy of Holies. Only those who have received special permission from the Bishop or priests with laying of hands are allowed to enter into the sanctuary The Altar in the sanctuary symbolises the

manger of Bethlehem, or the Mount of Calvary (where Jesus offered the sacrifice) or the cross on which he was crucified, or the tomb in which he was placed, or the table on which he had his last supper. We do not place anything which is not sanctified on the Altar. The cross placed in the Altar is in remembrance of the great sacrifice offered on Calvary and of the salvation attained through it. Thus it is the symbol of salvation and depicts the presence of Christ. We place candles on both sides of the cross and light it always before a prayer. This is in accordance with the ancient practise followed in the Jerusalem temple and reminds us of the words of our Lord who said "I am the light of the World". Also as in the Jerusalem Temple we also have a lamp in the middle of the Outer Sanctuary.

The most important thing during the celebration on the altar, is the "Tabeletha" which is a wooden or marble slab of about 1.50 ft. in length and 0.75 ft. in breadth. This is sanctified along with the consecration of the churches. During the Eucharist the cup and chalice are placed upon the Tabeletha. The Qurbana is not allowed to be celebrated without the Tabeletha. Sometimes the Tabeletha is considered as a portable altar and the Eucharist can be celebrated anywhere outside the church if we have the Tabeletha.

When the altar is calvary, the Tabeletha is the cross on which Christ was crucified. Some fathers have interpreted it as the 'Tree of Life' in the garden of Eden. The Tabeletha is covered with a cloth of three colours viz. red, green and white. Red represents the universe; green the world and white the church. The cup and chalice are placed on the white part, since it is to the church that the body and blood of Christ were given.



Another important thing in the Holy of Holies (Sanctuary) is the table (a reading desk) for the Gospel. Always the 'Word of Life' is honoured and placed in a honourable place in the sanctuary.

Censer is an important instrument in our worship and liturgy. In the Old Testament, they had a censer in the holy place and Aaron and all his successors offered censer in every evening and morning after the command of the Lord (Ex. 30-1-10). When we offer censer we pray, "we offer before thee this incense after the manner of Aaron the priest, who offered holy incense unto Thee in Tabernacle and withheld thereby the plague from the people of Israel".

### **The Priestly Vestments**

The priests and high priests of the Old Testament had special glorious dresses. God Yahweh himself asked Moses to make royal dresses for the priests (Ex. 28). It is written that the dresses were "for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28. 2). The New Testament priests also have royal dresses and each one has its special meaning.



## 5. THE HOLY QURBANA IS THE OFFERING OF THE CHURCH

The Holy Qurbana is the offering of the whole church, and the whole church—visible and invisible is present in the divine service. Always the church teaches that the main celebrant of the Eucharist is the Lord Christ himself as it is the continuation of the offering He made on Calvary. In the Eucharist He stands at the same time as the Son of man and head of the Church and offers and blesses the sacrament.

In the earthly church as the representative of the Lord, and as the leader of the congregation, the Bishop is the one who officiates the holy Sacrament. Since it is difficult for him to be present in all the parishes there are priests as his representatives or vicars. When he officiates the Qurbana the priest can be considered as the representative of both God and man. As Christ he intercedes for the people and blesses them. As the representative of the church he prays for them and leads the church's worship. The blessed Apostle writes, "One does not take the honour (of priesthood) upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was". (Heb.5.4).

The deacon stands in between the priest and the congregation. He is the minister of the bishop and at the same time he leads the congregation in the worship and prays with them.

The people come with offerings, responds to all the prayers and say 'Amen' (Let it be like that) to the prayers recited by the priests. The laity really play a

vital part in the service and no prayer of the priest is complete without the responses from the congregation present. There is a response from the laity for all the prayers and the church always requests the active participation of the people in singing and praying. They pray for themselves and for the whole church and even for the priests or bishops who celebrates. Before all the important occasions in the liturgy the priest requests the prayers of the congregation.

The Qurbana is not only for those who are present in the church but for the whole faithful. The church teaches that the Qurbana is for everybody—for young and old, for rich and poor, for saints and sinners, for literates and illiterates, for the sick, needy, cripples, dumb and blind and for everybody in this world. In our Qurbana we pray for the whole church, for the worldly authorities, for the whole humanity and for the whole creation.

## 6. GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE EASTERN EUCHARIST

There are many Eastern Orthodox Churches, viz, the Coptic, the Greek (Byzantine), the Syrian, the Armenian, the Russian, Georgian etc. They all differ in their cultures and various practices. But all of them have a similar structure for their Eucharistic service and other sacraments. There are differences in language and in the compilation of prayers. But the general structure of the Eucharist is almost the same in all these different rites.

Most of the scholars classify the Eastern liturgies into four main groups.

They are (1) The East Syrian or Chaldean (2) The West Syrian or Jacobite (3) The Coptic and Ethiopian (4) The Byzantine (Greek) and the Armenian.

Each of these group contains different types of prayers (rites) with the same basic pattern. Eucharist is celebrated in a church building which has an altar which is at times concealed from the congregation. The Byzantine (Greek, Russian, Rumenian etc) have a screen and the Orientals (Syrian, Armenian, Indian etc) have a veil to serve the purpose. As we have mentioned earlier, in all these churches Eucharist is celebrated in the morning with fasting. They will not celebrate more than one Eucharist on the same day on the same altar. A Bishop or a Priest will be the chief celebrant. A deacon is necessary to function between the Altar and the laity. All these Eastern traditions insists that besides the priest

and deacon at least one lay person as representative of the Congregation must also be present in the church during the public celebrations since the laity plays a vital part in the services. The ancient traditions of these churches do not have any musical instruments during the Divine Liturgy.

All the Eastern Churches except the Armenians use leavened bread for the Eucharist.

The Eucharist has two main parts:

(1) The preparation service and (2) The public celebration. There is also a third part which is the post communal service.

In the Syrian tradition, the preparation is held on the celebrating Altar. The bread and wine will be prepared with proper prayers by the priest with the help of the deacon, concealed from the congregation. In the Byzantine and Armenian traditions, the bread and wine will be prepared on a special table and will be transferred to the main Altar with a solemn procession known as "the Great Entrance".

Before the public celebration, the Syrian Tradition have a reading from the Old Testament.

The public celebration can be divided into three main parts:

- 1) Reading of the scripture and introductory prayers.
- 2) The Anaphora (offering or sacrifice)
- 3) Communion.

The readings are from the Epistles and from the Gospels. The introductory prayers are variable but are similar and mostly penitential in all the cases.

The central part is the **Anaphora** (offering or sacrifice). It is similar throughout the East, but there are different, variable Texts of Anaphoras. The Anaphora begins with a prayer of thanksgiving. This is followed by the **Sanctus** (angelic praise to the Lord and Master of the universe). The Priest says "up above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, let our minds and thoughts and hearts be lifted up at this time". Then the priest offers praise and the congregation joins the priest in saying "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts, who fills heaven and earth with his glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who came and will be coming in the name of the Lord God. Glory be to Him in the Highest".

After this is the **Anamnesis**, which is the commemoration, of the works of Christ, His Cross, His tomb, His resurrection and His ascension. This contains the words of institution which is the same words spoken by our Lord at the Last Supper.

Blessing and giving the bread He said, "Take, eat; This is my Body". So also giving the cup He said, "Take, drink from it, all of you". The priest also utters the same words and 'institute' the Holy Eucharist. The people respond and pray, "Lord, we remember Your death, we confess Your resurrection and we look forward to Your second coming. May your mercy be upon us all". A special feature of the Eastern Liturgy is that the Anamnesis is completed by **Epiclesis** which is the 'invocation of the Holy Spirit'. In Epiclesis the priest prays

that the Holy Spirit may come upon the elements and consecrate them, thereby making them the body and blood of Christ. He also prays that the Holy Spirit may come upon himself and upon the congregation in order to enable them to receive the Holy Sacrament.

After the Epiclesis comes the **Great Intercession** for the living and the departed. These prayers reaches its climax with the Lord's prayer. The whole congregation, together with the priests recite "Our Father..." as taught by the Lord. After this is the **Eucharistic adoration**. The priest lifts up the Eucharist and the people sing the glory of the Lord. This is followed by the fraction and communion. In the Syrian Tradition the fraction and comixing of the Eucharistic elements are soon after the great intercession.

There is slight difference among the various traditions about the place of intercession also.

In the Alexandrian rite of St. Mark it is before the 'Sanctus'. In the Chaldean rite it is before the Epiclesis and in the Syrian and Byzantine traditions it is just after the Epiclesis.



## 7. DIFFERENT TEXTS OF ANAPHORAS

The most ancient Eucharistic rites are the Syrian rites. Their ancient liturgy is named after St. James, 'the brother and Apostle of Christ and the first bishop of Jerusalem'. Based on this Anaphora there developed more than 90 various anaphoras. All of these anaphoras are ascribed to or associated with the names of Apostles or well-known saints. But it is clear that only very few among them were composed by those to whom they were ascribed. The most popular anaphoras are of St. James, St. Mark, St. John the Evangelist, the Twelve Apostles, St. Clement of Rome and St. John Chrysostom.

The celebrant can select any of these long or short anaphoras according to his convenience. But on the great feast days, Ordination, the first Eucharist of a priest, etc. the anaphora of St. James is used.

The Copts have three anaphoras. The most ancient among them is that of St. Clement. It is said that this liturgy has its origin from St. Mark, the evangelist who founded the Coptic church. They use this only once in a year and that is on Good Friday. The other anaphoras are that of St. Gregory and St. Basil. The rite of St. Gregory is used on Christmas day, Epiphany and on Easter Sunday. The rite of St. Basil is used on all other days.

The Ethiopians have seventeen different anaphoras. Most of them are derived from the Coptic rite and have only very little variations.

The East Syrians or Chaldeans have three liturgies. The most ancient and often used among them is that ascribed to the Apostles, which traces its origin to the foundation of the church in Persia. It is also known after the Evangelists Adai and Mari. The anaphora of St. Theodore of Mopsuestia is used on Sundays from Advent till Palm Sunday. The rite of St. Nestorius is celebrated on Epiphany, on the day of John the Baptist, on the feast of the doctors of the Greek Church, and on Maundy Thursday.

The churches of the Byzantine (Greek, Russian, Rumenian, Georgian etc.) tradition has four anaphoras. The commonly used one is that of St. John Chrysostom. The anaphora of Basil the Great is used on Christmas, Epiphany, St. Basil's Day (New Year Day), five sundays in lent and on Thursday and Saturday in the Passion Week. The liturgy of St. Gregory is used on Wednesdays and Fridays during the lent. The Greeks also have a liturgy of St. James, the Apostle; but it is used only on rare occasions.

The Armenian Orthodox church also has different anaphoras, but only one is in common use. It is known after the name Gregory the Illuminator. This is a developed form of the anaphoras of Basil and Chrysostom.

## B. THE LITURGY OF THE INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

### 8.1 Early Rites

At present the Indian Orthodox Church uses the West Syrian Liturgy of the Church of Antioch without any alteration. This was introduced into our church only by the 18th century and the full introduction of it was an evolution which took almost one century.

The church in India was founded by St. Thomas, one among the twelve, in the first century itself. The Apostle established churches in various places in Kerala and appointed bishops and priests. As all the Apostles did, St. Thomas also offered the sacrament of the 'breaking of bread'. Its form must be the simple one of the Apostles and the primitive church. Reading of the scripture, common intercessory prayer, reconciliation with each other (kiss of peace), presentation of bread and wine, Thanksgiving and Eucharistic prayer, Fraction and communion were the general structure of the Eucharist of the time of Justin Martyr (early second century). St. Thomas also may not have deviated much from this common practice. It is evident that during the early centuries, the structure of the Eucharist underwent various changes and developments. We do not know exactly how these changes happened and how they affected the Indian Christians.

By the fourth century, the Indian Christians got connected with the East Syrian (Chaldean) church of Persia. Later, this relationship became closer and Persian

bishops began to come to India. Gradually, the Persian liturgy in their language (East Syrian) and their forms of worship (rites) with necessary changes were introduced into the Indian church.

The most ancient anaphora of the Persian (Chaldean) rite is the one attributed to Adai and Mari. Persian traditions say that Adai and Mari were the disciples of St. Thomas and were sent by him to Edessa and Selucia in the Persian Empire. Edessa was one of the earliest theological centres in the East and the East Syrian anaphoras were developed there.

The rites introduced into India by the Persians were that developed in Edessa. We cannot say that the East Syrian rites were transplanted into India without any modification or adaptation. The Indian Christians modified the Persian rites with some of their local customs and gave an Indian colour and shape to their liturgy. They kept East Syriac as their liturgical language and were proud to say that their prayers were in Syriac or Chaldean language which was given to them by their Lord St. Thomas. They called their rite "the Law of Thomas" and were devoted to it. When the Roman Catholics and the Portuguese came to India in the sixteenth century, they found the Indian Christians using the Chaldean anaphoras ascribed to Adai, Theodore, Nestorius etc. The Roman Catholic missionaries criticized the Persian rites of the Indian Christians. With the backing of political power the Romans imposed their Latin rite on the Syrian Christians. The Indians protested against that and preferred to leave their churches rather than suffer any change in their rites. Understanding this, the Romans began the policy of 'correction' and Latinisation of the East Syrian Rite. This process reached its climax at the notorious Synod of Diamper (Udayam-

eror). After the Synod, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Menezes asked the Indians to bring all their Syriac books for correction. Hundreds of Syriac manuscripts, historical documents and liturgical books of the Indians were burnt by that furious Archbishop. The Portuguese prevented the coming of the East Syrian Prelates to India and made it difficult for the Indians to preserve their ancient liturgy. The Persian connection of the Indian Christians were cut off and the Romans imposed their authority on the Indians. But the Roman Catholic supremacy could not last for a long time. By 1663, the Dutch captured the Portuguese forts of Quilon, Cochin and Cranganore and expelled the Portuguese from there. The Dutch asked all the Portuguese and Italian Catholic clergies to leave Kerala. They helped the Indian Christians to have correspondence with other Eastern churches. As per the request of the Indians the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch sent his bishop Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem to India in 1665.

## 2.2 The Introduction of the Present Rite

By the coming of Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem to India in 1665, the Indian Christians got connected with the Syrian church of Antioch. Gradually, this relationship between the two churches became so close and eventually the West Syrian liturgy was introduced into the Indian Church. As we have mentioned earlier, this introduction of the West Syrian rite in India was a gradual process which took almost one century.

The Antiochene rite does not differ much from the Persian. Contrary to East Syriac of the Persians, the liturgical language of the Antiochenes was West Syriac. As we have noted in Chapter 7, the Antiochene liturgy is the most ancient one and is very similar to other

Eastern liturgies. The Anaphora of St. James, the brother and disciple of the Lord Christ, was the basic text of all the Antiochene Anaphoras. The Antiochene Anaphoras can be divided into two groups – the one developed in the Seat of Patriarch of Antioch, the other developed in the Seat of Maphrian (Catholicos) of Persia. In the 8th century, Jacob of Edessa revised the Anaphoras of the second group. Again in the thirteenth century, Bar Hebraeus, a Maphrian of the East, revised and re-wrote the entire text of the Liturgy. This revised liturgy of the West Syrian rite that developed in Persia was the one introduced in Malankara in the 18th century and now we use that in our church.

Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem helped the Indians to restore their Oriental traditions and re-introduced the use of leavened bread for the Eucharist, the traditional priestly vestments and the Old Calendar. Mar Gregorios did not introduce the Antiochene rite but he lived in Malankara for more than five years and prepared the ground for the introduction of the Antiochene rite.

In 1751 one Mapherian Mar Baselius accompanied by another bishop Mar Ivanios from Syria came to Malankara. They brought with them the liturgy of St. James and the West Syrian Anaphoras and propagated them in Malankara. Gradually it was made acceptable to the Indians by the tireless efforts of Mar Ivanios.

In the early 19th century the Western Anglican missionaries came to Kerala. They tried to reform the liturgy of the Syrian Christians in India in an anglican model and the Indian church opposed it. This helped the stabilisation of the West Syrian liturgy in Malankara. It was at the Synod of 1836, met at Mavelikkara that the church officially accepted the Antiochene liturgy and faith. We have

reasons to think that in some places in Malankara, other (i. e. Chaldean) anaphoras were also kept, though with little attachment. In 1847, one bishop called Mar Coorilos came from Antioch and lived in Malankara till 1874. He completed the establishment of the West Syrian liturgy, leaving no room for other liturgies to exist in the Malankara church. From then on the Antiochene liturgy was entirely accepted as the liturgy of the Malankara Church. Now we have the West Syrian Liturgy in its full detail and have almost 70 different anaphoras to use. For important festivals, Ordination, the first Eucharist of a priest, etc. we use the Anaphora of St. James. Otherwise the priest is free to chose any of the anaphoras according to his convenience.

When the Persian Liturgy was introduced into our church, we modified the rite and gave it an Indian colour. But when the Antiochene liturgy was introduced into our church, we did not bother to change even a single word of the rite. It is a shame to say that even now in our long liturgy, we do not specifically mention the name of our Apostle St. Thomas. Our Fathers considered it as unlawful to change even a word of the Antiochenes. Here we leave the question, why could we not develop a liturgy of our own based on the great ancient rites we got?





PART TWO

**THE CELEBRATION OF  
THE DIVINE LITURGY**



# THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY QURBANA

Our Holy Ourbana (Eucharist) has three main parts. (1) The preparation service or the Pre-communion service (2) The Public celebration (3) The Post communion service or the concluding service. Among these, the first and the last are not open to the congregation.

## 1. THE PREPARATION SERVICE (THUYABO)

### 1.1. Introduction

It is necessary that a priest who celebrates the liturgy must prepare himself for its celebration at least from the previous evening. The priest must complete all the canonical prayers starting from the evening. Normally, while the morning prayer (mattin) is going on in the sanctuary the priest starts the preparation of the altar which is known as Thuyabo.

The preparation service has two main parts. The first part is the setting of the altar and the offering of Bread and Wine for the celebration. This is known as the service of Melchizedek. The second part of the preparation service is prayers of dedication and long intercessory prayers. This is known as the Service of Aaron.

Wearing the black dress, the priest stands before the step of the sanctuary. There he recites the Psalm fiftyone

and says prayers of penitance. After requesting the prayers of the congregation he enters into the sanctuary saying: "Into the Sanctuary of God I come..." He bows his head before the altar saying: "Into Thy house have I entered O God, and before Thy throne have I worshipped, O Heavenly King, forgive me all the sins that I have committed against Thee". Then he kisses the four corners of the altar saying: "Bind Thou, O Lord, our assemblies with chains, even to the corners of Thy Sanctuary. Thou art my God and I will give thanks to thee, thou art my God and I will extole thee" (Ps 118:28).

## 1.2 The Service of Melchizedek

After some preliminary prayers, the priest washes his hands and put on the royal vestments of "glory and beauty".\*

Then the priest ascends to the altar-step and arranges the offerings in the paten and chalice. The priest's ascension to the altar-step reminds us of our Lord's entrance into the upper chamber. We use leavened bread because Our Lord himself used it for His Last Supper.

While he takes and places the bread in the Paten, the priest prays, "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He, opened not His mouth in His humiliation" (Is. 53.7). Lord prepare it with Thy hands. May the Lord reign the world for ever".

---

\* In the Old tradition, the priests used to wear the Eucharistic vestments only after the service of Melchizedek. It is said that in the very ancient tradition, the priest wore the ceremonial dresses only after the gospels in the public celebration. Now almost all the priests wear it from the beginning of the prepartion service.

The priest pours the wine with equal amount of water into the chalice praying "O Lord God, as Thy divinity was united with Thy humanity so unite this water with this wine". He continues "Our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on the Cross between two thieves in Jerusalem and was pierced in His side with the spear and there flowed out from Him blood and water to wash away the sins of all creation, and He who saw it testified and his testimony is true; and he knows well that what He said is true that you also may believe (Jn. 19. 35). What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me? I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people" (Ps. 116: 12-14).

The mixing of wine and water signifies the unity of divine and human natures in Christ and it reminds us of the coming out of blood and water from the side of the Lord when the soldier pierced him.

Then the priest recites some prayers which mean that through the Qurbana the priest himself and the whole church offers themselves to God.

### 1.3. The Service of Aaron

The priest kneels before the altar and prays for help and protection. Then he ascends onto the altar-step, and there he stands in the place of the high priest Aaron and the Great High Priest, the Lord Himself, and prays for the whole creation. The priest takes the holy vessels in his hands, holds it in both hands crossed against each other over the 'Tabeletha' and prays. He will not place it down until he finishes the prayers. Holding them, first he remembers the great

events during the earthly mission of Christ. Then he intercedes for all the faithful, starts from Adam, saints, departed souls, those who have blood relation to him, for all those who helped the construction of the church, who supports and helps it, etc.

After the long prayers he remembers the names of all those who have specially requested to be remembered. Then the priest remembers the Holy Virgin and the saints, prays for them and requests their intercession. Then he prays for the sick, penitents, departed and his own blood relatives. After these long prayers, the priest places the holy mysteries on the 'Tabeletha' and covers them with a cloth called Shushafo.\* This is followed by a continuation of intercession with incense for the living and the departed.

He finishes the offering of incense with the adoration of the Trinity. The priest concludes the long intercession with the recitation of the Trisagion, Lord's prayer and the Nicene creed.

When the high priest entered into the holy of holies in the Old Testament time, the people stood in the outer sanctuary and prayed. Like that, when the priest conduct the preparatory service, the faithful stand in the church and pray.

“God, who didst receive the lamb  
Blameless Abel brought  
Who the gift of Noah took  
Abram's sacrifice,  
See our fast and hear our prayer  
Answer by Thy grace our pleas”.

This leads to the public celebration of the Eucharist.

---

\* Shushafo is a white cloth with a cross on it. This signifies the swadling clothes of the baby Jesus, the seamless cloth of our Lord, the wrapped burial linin in the sepulchre, and the stone that rolled against the tomb.

## 2. THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION

### 2.1. Introduction

When the priest finishes the preparation, the people sung prayers and the Old Testament is read. The veil is removed and thus begins the public celebration of the Eucharist.

This has two main parts. The first is referred to as the 'Ministry of the word' and the second as the 'Ministry of the sacrament'.

### 2.2 The Ministry of the Word

This includes the opening of the sanctuary, opening prayer, Trisagion, the reading of New Testament, sermon, prayers of absolution and dedication, blessing of the censer and the chanting of the creed.

#### 2.2.1 The Opening Hymn

The bells are rung, the veil is drawn and the priest starts the hymn "Mariyam who brought Thee forth/ Yuhanon who baptized Thee/These our suplicants to Thee/Have mercy upon us, O Lord"\*

While the congregation responds and continue the singing of the above hymn the priest goes around the altar with the censer and kisses its corners. The deacon precedes him with a lighted candle. All these actions are in remem-

---

\* The hymn "Mary who brought Thee forth..." is the one composed by the patriarch Severius of Antioch in the 6th century.

brance of both the birth and the baptism of our Lord. The removal of the curtain at the beginning signifies the revelation of the Lord through the incarnation. Here the sanctuary is the manger, altar is the lap of the Holy Virgin, deacons are angels and shepherds and the congregation represents the whole world. The deacon who goes in front of the priest with lighted candle represents John the Baptist, the fore-runner to our Lord. It is also said that the priest who goes round and kisses the altar represents the shepherds and wise men. Censing of the congregation by the priest is interpreted as the purification of the whole creation by the incarnation of the Lord. The singing congregation represents also the angels who sung at the birth of Christ. When the priest finishes censing he gives the censer to the deacon and begins the Trisagion.

### 2.2.2 Trisagion

Trisagion is the chanting of the hymn "Holy are you Oh! God, Holy are you Almighty, Holy are you Immortal, crucified for us, Have mercy upon us". Following the priest, the congregation chants this three times. According to traditions, groups of angels and arch-angels descended to honour the burial of the Son of their Lord and God at the time of the burial of Jesus Christ. One after another group they praised the Lord Christ and sung, "Holy art Thou Oh! God Holy art Thou Almighty, Holy art Thou immortal". Hearing this, Nichodemus and Joseph of Arimithea and other witnesses of the solemn scene praised God along with the angels and said "Crucified for us, Have mercy upon us". During the divine services of Maundy Thursday and Saturday before Easter we use special 'Kaumas' instead of the Trisagion.



### 2.2.3 The Reading of the New Testament

The Trisagion is followed by three readings from the New Testament, the purpose of which is to recall the great events of our salvation recorded in the New Testament. The first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles or from the general epistles (the epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude). One of the deacons reads this while standing at the northern side of the sanctuary-step. This signifies the mission to the Jews at first.

The second reading is from the Pauline epistles. It is read while standing at the south side and signifies the mission to the gentiles. Hymns are also sung before each reading.

### 2.2.4 The Evangelion

The third and the most important is the reading of the gospel. It is known as 'Evangelion' which means good news.

Ceremoniously, the gospel is brought forth to the front of the sanctuary with lighted candles on both sides and censer in the front.

The bells ring to declare the importance of the occasion and the deacon declares "In tranquility and with reverence, fear and trembling let us give heed to the life-giving proclamation of the word of God from the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Then the priest blesses the congregation with the sign of the cross and says, "these things happened in this manner in the time of the incarnation of our Lord!" The

people respond and say "So we believe and so we confess". A believing attitude to the gospel is emphasized in the words of the priest and in the response of the congregation.

The priest reads the lesson for the day from the Holy Gospel and at the end of it he blesses the congregation saying "peace be unto you all".

After the readings, it is the time for the sermon, which is meant to expose the passage read. Since some are coming late to the church and in order to give them also the gospel message now-a-days the sermon is being postponed to the later part of the service. If everybody would make it a point to come to the church in time the sermon could be preached in time.

A hymn (variable) is sung after the reading of the gospel (or after the sermon provided it on time).

**Prayer with incense.** At the end of the hymn the deacon asks everybody to "stand well" (Stoumen Kalos) and the people respond "Lord have mercy upon us" (Kuriyeleison). This is followed by an introductory prayer and the prayers of Absolution together with the offering of incense. The prayer of Absolution is a great invocation in which the priest calls in memory to the entire church — both militant and triumphant — and submits all to God's grace and mercy. At the end of the prayers the priest blesses the censer and praises.

### **2.2.5 Blessing of the Censer**

The blessing of the censer is a highly symbolic act. The censer here represents the church that glorifies the Holy Trinity. At first, the priest holds one of the four

chains of the censer and says "Hallowed be the Holy Father". Then holding two chains together, representing the divine and human natures in one Christ, he says, "Hallowed be the Holy Son". Then he holds the last chain and says, "Hallowed be the Holy Living Spirit". While the priest does this, the Congregation makes the sign of the cross and ascribe glory to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit by responding to each statement of the priest with 'Amen'. The blessing of the censer symbolises the purification of the church. This can be considered as the climax of the prayers with incense. After the blessings, the priest himself censures the people and dedicates him and the whole church to the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Now the deacon receives the censer from the priest and move towards the people and proceeds to the front door of the church. This also is a symbolic action. This declares the beginning of the important part of the Eucharist. By his action the deacon prepares and the censer purifies the congregation to participate in the divine sacrament. Only true believers are allowed to participate in the coming important part of the sacrament because our Lord took only the twelve to the upper chamber. The coming down of the deacon till the front door of the church is a warning for the unbelievers to go out of the church. During this time the Nicea-Constantinople creed is recited by a deacon or by the whole congregation. After censuring the congregation the deacon returns to the step of the sanctuary and stands there holding together the chains of the censer in both hands. This signifies that the whole congregation is one and united by affirming the faith in one creed.

While the deacon is censuring the congregation and the creed is recited, the priest washes his hands as a

symbol of the washing of the feet of the disciples. This is a preparation to handle the holy things for the offering of the Living Sacrifice. While he washes, the priest prays, "Wash away, O, Lord God, the defiling filth of my soul, purify me by the sprinkling of life, so that in purity and holiness I may be made worthy to enter Thy Holy of Holies, holy and sanctifying and without defilement to handle Thine adorable godly mysteries; so that with a clean conscience I may offer up to Thee the living sacrifice, which is befitting Thee and which recollects Thy glorious sacrifice, Our Lord and Our God for ever and ever". He then turns towards the congregation, humbly bends his head and requests "Brothers and teachers, please pray for me that my offering may be acceptable". Then he kneels down in front of the altar and prays for himself and for the congregation, living and departed, and especially for those whose names are given to be remembered.

While the priest prays, the whole congregation sings a song of Mar Ephrem, "Come, the time of prayer is here/come for pardon, have no fear; It is the time to ask; it is the time for mercy too. See the holy priest ascend, mounting stairs which heavenwards tend. There the pure Qurbana to raise for whoever communicates.....". Now begins the very important part of the divine liturgy. Which is commonly called the "Anaphora".

## 2.3 The Ministry of the Sacrament

### 2.3.1 Introduction

The very important part of the public celebration of the divine liturgy is the Ministry of the Sacrament. This is known as the Anaphora (=offering or sacrifice) of the faithful. Only true believers are allowed to participate

In this divine office because our Lord took only the twelve with him to the upper chamber. In this part there are eight important actions to be noted. They are: (a) The kiss of peace, (b) the remembrance of Christ's institution of the Holy Qurbana, (c) the invocation of the Holy Spirit, (d) the intercession, (e) the fraction and co-mixing, (f) the chanting of Lord's prayer, (g) the communion, and (h) the thanksgiving.

After censuring the congregation and preparing them for the Eucharist, the deacon stands in front of the sanctuary. The priest who knelt in prayer ascends and gets up to the altar-step. This symbolises our Lord's ascension to the upper chamber for the last supper.

The deacon requests the congregation to "stand well" (Staumen kalos) and the congregation responds "Lord have mercy upon us" (Kurielaison).

### 2.3.2 Kiss of Peace

Our Lord said, "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift". (Mt. 5:23,24)

According to the divine command, before offering the sacrifice, the congregation must pray to God for forgiveness and become one by forgiving each other. As a sign of reconciliation they give each other the kiss of peace.

The priest prays, "God of all and Lord, account these our unworthy selves to be worthy of this salvation, that freed from all guilt and united together by the chain of

love we may greet one another with the holy and divine kiss of peace and that we may offer glory and thanks to Thee and to Thy only begotten Son and to Thy Holy Spirit...''

After the prayer for peace the priest turns towards the congregation and says "peace to you all". Then the priest kisses the altar and the chains of the censer. While the priest holds the chains of the censer, the deacon kisses the hands of the priest, both sides of the altar and the priest's outer garment. He now passes the peace to everybody in the sanctuary and then to the congregation with both hands. The passing down of 'peace' from the altar shows that the peace is coming from God. One of the deacons announces, "Let us give peace each one to his neighbour with a holy and godly embrace in the love of our Lord and our God". The congregation prays in response, "Make us worthy, O Lord our God, of this peace all the days of our life". The congregation receives, 'the kiss of peace' from the deacon and passes it from one to another. It is said that in ancient times all the believers used to kiss each other. But most people were inclined to think that a little too humerous thus defeating the solemnity, of the occasion. So wisely the kiss of peace was changed to giving of hands'. After the 'kiss of peace' the congregation stands with bowed heads before God and the priest prays for blessings. This follows a prayer for divine grace to offer the sacrifice. The priest prays, "strengthen us, O Lord, that we may offer up unto Thee this spiritual and unbloody sacrifice....." It is after all these prayers that the church approaches the holy and divine mysteries.

### **2.3.3. The Lifting up of the Veil (Shushafo)**

Till now the holy offerings and the vessels were covered by a linen called Shushafo. Now, the priest

ceremoniously removes this covering while the deacon exhorts, "Let us stand well, let us stand with awe, let us stand with reverence, let us stand in purity, let us stand with holiness, let us all stand, my brotheren in love and in the true faith, and spiritually in the fear of God, contemplating this awe-inspiring and holy Qurbana which is being offered before us by the hands of this reverend priest. For in peace and reconciliation, he offers this living sacrifice on behalf of us all to God the Father, the Lord of All". The praying congregation responds, "This Qurbana is Mercy and Peace, Sacrifice and Thanksgiving". While he removes the veil, the priest says, "Thou art the rock of flint which sent forth twelve streams of water for the twelve tribes of Israel. Thou art the rock of flint which was placed against the tomb of our Lord".

After lifting up the veil, the priest gives the first benediction by saying "The love of God the Father, the grace of the only begotten Son and the communion and indwelling of the Holy Spirit be with you all, my brotheren, for ever and ever". This is the apostolic blessing given by St. Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:14).

After the apostolic blessing, the priest requests the people to lift up their minds and hearts to heaven, where our Lord is seated at the right-hand of God. After 'being in heaven' the priest asks the people to praise the Lord together with the heavenly hosts. He says, "He whom the heavens praise and all the hosts thereof, corporeal and incorporeal, the sun, the moon and all the stars, the earth, the seas and the first-borns whose names are written in the heavenly Jerusalem; angels and archangels principalities, powers, thrones, dominions, celestial

virtues, the many eyed cherubim and the six winged seraphim who veiling their faces and feet, fly one to another proclaiming His Holiness, crying aloud saying Holy, Holy, Holy.....”

The whole creation - visible and invisible - worships Him and adores Him. We also join with them and praise Him “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts, who fills heaven and earth with His glory. Hosenna in the highest, blessed is He who came and will be coming in the name of the Lord God. Glory be to Him in the Highest”. This praise is taken from the angelic song of Isaiah’s vision (Is. 6.3) and the Hosenna of the children in Mt. 21.9.

While the congregation sings and praises the priest waves his hands over the holy mysteries saying silently, “Truly Thou art Holy, Oh! God the Father and Thy Holy Spirit is verily holy, with Thy Holy Son our Lord Jesus Christ”.

#### 2.3.4. The Institution

This is one of the most important occasions in the Holy Qurbana. The priest recalls how our Lord instituted the Holy Qurbana. He takes the bread and places it on the palm of his left hand. As our Lord lifted up his eyes to heaven the priest also lifts up his eyes to heaven and says, “When the sinless one, of his own will, prepared Himself to accept death for us, sinners, He took bread into His Holy Hands, and when He had given thanks, He blessed and consecrated and broke, and gave it to His Holy Apostles, saying: Take, eat of it, This is my Body, which is broken for you and for many, and is given for the remission of sins and for life eternal”. While he says, “blessed” he blesses it with the sign of the cross with his right hand. While he says, “broke”, he breaks it a little without separating it.



Likewise, he takes the chalice with wine in the left hand and blesses with right hand while saying, "Likewise also He took the cup and when He had given thanks, He blessed, consecrated and gave to His Holy Apostles saying: Take, drink of it, all of you. This is my blood which is shed for you and for many and is given for the remission of sins and for life eternal".

We believe that Our Lord makes the instituted bread and wine the real body and blood of Christ through the words spoken by the priest and through the working of the Holy Spirit.

### **2.3.5. Anamnesis (Remembrance)**

After the institution, the priest reminds the congregation about Christ's instruction that the ceremony be continued in memory of His death and resurrection till He comes again (Lk. 22.16; 1 Cor. 11:24-25). Remembering the salvation history, the congregation responds, "Lord, we remember your death, we confess your resurrection and we look forward to Your second coming. May your mercy be upon us all".

Then again the priest offers thanks for all the divine kindness and blessings towards humanity and prays for mercy in the awesome and glorious second coming. In response to this the people cry "Have mercy upon us O God, Father Almighty. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee and we adore Thee O Lord God, O Good one have compassion and mercy upon us".

### **2.3.6. Epiclesis (Invocation of the Holy Spirit)**

After the institution and remembrance, we invoke the Holy Spirit to come down and make the sacrament

divine and perfect. We pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon the consecrated elements (In some ancient anaphoras we pray to the Holy Spirit to come upon the priest and the people also in order to enable them to receive the sacrament worthily). The priest waves his hands over the mysteries and prays in a subdued voice, "May Thy Holy Spirit, O Lord, descend from Thy Holy Abode and hover over this bread and over this mixed cup that is set before us, and may He sanctify them and make me pure and unblemished". While the priest prays, the deacon exhorts the congregation and says, "How awesome is this hour! How awe inspiring is this time, my beloved, when the living Holy Spirit takes wing and descends from the most elevated heights of heaven, brooding and hovering over this Holy Eucharist set before us and sanctifies it! With fear and trembling therefore stand ye, and pray".

Then the priest prays with the words of the prophet Elijah and says aloud three times, "O Lord, Answer me... and forgive me and have mercy upon me".\*

In response to the prayer of the priest, the congregation, cries with fear and trembling "Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy" (Kurielaison, Kurielaison, Kurielaison).

At this solemn and reverent occasion, while the bells ring and the congregation prays, the priest waves his right hand over the consecrated elements making sings of

---

\* While he offered the offering of the oblation at Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah prayed "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel..... Answer me, O Lord, Answer me..." Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. (1 Kings 18.36-39)

the cross and says, "May He (the Holy Spirit) abiding here, make this Bread the life giving Body, the redeeming body and the true body of our God and saviour Jesus Christ." "And perfect this chalice into the Blood of the New Covenant, the redeeming Blood and the true Blood of our God and saviour Jesus Christ". To each of these prayers, the congregation says 'Amen'.

### 2.3.7 The Diptychs (Great Intercession)

After the institution and consecration comes the great intercession which is commonly known as 'Thubden'.\* There are six prayers of intercession. Among these, the first three are for the living and the other three for the departed. First the priest prays loudly, then the deacon prays and during that time the priest prays silently. The congregation responds with "Amen" and "Kurielaison". In the first 'Thubden', the church as a whole, particularly its spiritual head, the bishop of the diocese, and other bishops in fellowship of the church, the priests and deacons were remembered. While the deacon prays, the priest prays silently, "Wherefore we offer unto Thee O Lord, this bloodless sacrifice for the Holy Zion the mother of all churches and for Thy Holy church throughout the whole world; that ye may grant her, the rich gifts of Thy Holy Spirit. Remember O Lord, the faithful and righteous fathers, our patriarchs... our bishop, and the bishops, priests and deacons and all the orders of Thy church. Remember also, O Lord, my misery and

---

\* Actually 'Thubden' is a wrong denotation. The correct word to denote this intercession is 'Diptych'. In ancient times the names of the departed and the living to be remembered were written on two wooden tablets and thus it got the name 'diptychs. Instead of the present six prayers, at that time, there were only two prayers - one for the departed and one for the living.

remember not my sins... remember also, O Lord, our brotheren that suffer oppression, captivity, bondage, want, sickness.....”.

On mentioning the name of the living fathers of the church the priest makes the sign of the cross with his right thumb on the 'Tabeletha'. The second Intercession is for all the faithful brothers and sisters now living and for the whole humanity and especially for those who request our prayers. After the prayer of the deacon, the priest prays, "For all who are oppressed or persecuted, for those that are being tortured or detained, for the poor and the miserable, for exiles and vargrants, for those in prison or in solitary confinement, for orphans and widows, that Thou Lord may be their guardian and provider, we beseech Thee. And to Thee we will lift up praise and thanksgiving - to Thee, and to Thine Only - begotten Son and to Thy Holy Spirit, now and for ever more”.

In the third Intercession those, who hold political in the authority world are committed to divine care and guidance.

The fourth one is for Mary the Mother of God, Apostles and for the saints of the New Testament. The deacon says, "we commemorate the holy and blessed and ever virgin Mary, the God-bearer ... prophets and Apostles, teachers and evangelists, martyrs and confes-sors; the blessed St. John the Baptist ... the illustrious St. Stephen, Chief of deacons and the first of martyrs, the exalted St. Peter and St. Paul chief among the Apostles,\* the whole company of saints, both men and women ...”

---

\* Here we must remember the name of our Apostle St. Thomas also.

In the fifth intercessory prayer, we remember all the departed spiritual fathers and teachers of the church and seek their intercession. In this, we remember the three ecumenical synods of the church (Synod of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus) and twenty three fathers by name, from St. James the first bishop of Jerusalem to Mar Jacob of Edessa (8th century). They were great ecclesiastical leaders and teachers who worked for the establishment of the true faith and teachings of the church. All of them were not bishops. Mar Ephrem was a deacon and some others were only monks. This is the occasion to remember all those who gave leadership to the churches of all ages and those who handed down the true doctrine of the church.\* While the deacon prays, the priest prays silently, "Remember O Lord, the true prelates who from James the Archbishop has confirmed the true faith in Thy church even till this day". As the deacon mentions the name of the Fathers of the church the priest makes signs of the cross on the left rim of the paten.

In the sixth intercession we remember all the faithful departed and especially those departed whose names are given to be remembered. The priest signs the chalice, right rim of the paten, Tabeletha and the 'Taksa' (the text book of Qurbana) with the sign of cross and remembers the faithful departed by name. The deacon prays, "Again we commemorate all the faithful departed who have afore time passed on love and in the true faith, from this holy sanctuary and this church, as also from all areas and regions, who have fallen asleep, and are at rest...".\*\* During the prayer of the deacon, the priest prays in

---

\* It is nice if we can revise the list by including the names of some of our(Indian)fathers like Mar Thoma I, Mar Gregorios of Parumala, Pulikottil Mar Dionysius, Vattasseril Mar Dionysius, The Catholicose Mar Basilius Geevarghese II etc.

\*\* Here the believers must remember their own departed ones.

silence, for all the priests who offered Qurbana from the beginning till now and all from whom they offered it.

At the end of the last intercession, the congregation says, "Kurielaison" three times. As a continuation of the intercession, the priest prays, "Keep us, O Lord, without sin until the end of our life, and gather us at the feet of Thy elect ones, when thou wilt, and where thou wilt and as thou wilt only without shame by reason of our faults, that in this and in all things Thy all honoured and blessed name be glorified and magnified with the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of Thy Holy Spirit...". At the close of the prayer, the priest gives the second benediction in the name of the Lord Christ. Now the sanctuary will be closed by the curtain and the priest conducts the service of 'fraction and commixture' which is known as 'intinction'.

### 2.3.8. Intinction

This is the time of remembering the passion and death of our Lord. The veil is drawn and during this solemn occasion, the congregation sings the hymns of penitance or a hymn based on the vision of Isaiah (Is. 6.1 f.) or some other special hymns. After the hymn the deacon leads the congregation in a litany of intercession.

The priest breaks the consecrated bread and places a piece into the wine in the chalice. With another piece he smears the bread with wine. While doing this with utmost reverence, he says a prayer of Mar Dionysius Bar Slibi which is a confession of the true Oriental Orthodox Christology. The priest confesses and prays, "Thus truly did the Logos of God suffer in the flesh and was sacrificed, and was broken on the cross. His soul was parted from his body while his divinity is no way parted, either from his soul or from his body. He was pierced

on his side with a spear; blood and water flowed from it, for the absolution of the whole world. His body was smeared in that blood, on behalf of the sins of the entire world, the Son died on the Cross; his soul came and was reunited with his body. He turned us from sinister conduct to the right way of life. By the blood of his holy body he reconciled and united the heavenly with the earthly, the chosen people with the gentile nations; and the soul with the body. And on the third day he rose from the tomb. And one is Ammanuel who cannot be divided after the union; there is no division into two natures. Thus we believe, thus we confess, and thus we affirm — that this body belongs to this blood and this blood belongs to this body”.

### 2.3.9 The Lords Prayer

When the service of intinction is over, the curtain is drawn aside and it symbolises the appearance of our Lord after the resurrection. At his death, the veil before the Holy of Holies of the Temple of Jerusalem was torn apart and the Holy of Holies became open. As St. Paul says, now because of the reconciliation brought forth by the blood of Christ, we can enter before the Holy of Holies with boldness and can call God, Abba (which means) Father. Therefore we pray now the Lords prayer which our Lord taught us. As a preparation to recite the Lords Prayer, the priest prays, “O God, majestic and mighty, who by Thy love of humanity called us and drew us near for this divine gift. Because of this we glorify Thee Father. We worship the Holy Spirit. And we sing the Lords Prayer of Thyne only begotten Son, as we with clarity of mind and purity of thought, with simplicity of language, and with cleanliness of body and rectitude of soul, with bold confidence dare to call Thee, O Heavenly God, Holy and All Sovereign and to pray and to say, “Our Father, who art in Heaven”. Now the priest and

the people together recite the Lords Prayer with devotion. At the conclusion of it the priest prays again, "O Good and merciful Father, Thou hast made us worthy of being called Thy children, deliver us from testing that are severe. Rescue us from the evil and from all his forces...".

When the Lord appeared to his disciples after the resurrection he said, "Peace be with you". (Jn.20.21) After the Lords Prayer the priest says to the congregation "Peace be to you all".

Then the people bow their head and the priest prays to make them worthy to receive the Holy Eucharist. He prays, "O Lord, Thy servants have bowed their heads down before Thee awaiting Thy abundant mercies. Send forth Thy blessings and sanctify our souls and bodies and spirits that we may be worthy to partake of the Life-giving mysteries of Christ, our saviour. So shall we offer glory and thanks to Thee and Thy only begotten Son and to Thy Holy Spirit for now and ever more".

After the prayer the priest gives the third benediction in the name of the Holy Trinity. This reminds us of the blessings of Our Lord with uplifted hands at the time of his Ascension (Lk 24:50-51). After this blessing is the Eucharistic Elevation or Adoration.

### 2.3.10 Elevation

The elevation of the Holy mysteries commemorate the ascension of our Lord. The bells are rung, the candles are lighted and the deacon declares, "Let us look on with awe and trembling". The people respond and say, "Lord be compassionate to us, and have mercy upon us". The priest then lifts the paten and chalice one after another. While lifting up the paten he says, "Holy



things to the holy and pure". This declares how much the congregation must prepare themselves for the reception of the divine mysteries. In response to the priest, the people confess their inadequacy as the tax collector and says, "None other is holy save the one Holy Father, the one Holy Son and the one Holy Spirit, Amen".

While exalting the chalice, the priest and the people say together "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Living Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever, Amen".

Then the priest holds the chalice and paten in his two hands held crosswise and exalts them and declares, "With us is the Holy Father, who by His Grace fashioned the world". "With us is the Holy Son, who by the precious suffering of his body redeemed it". "With us is the One Holy and Living Spirit, who completes and perfects all that is and all that is to be. Blessed be the name of the Lord, from ages unto ages of ages". To each declaration, the congregation responds with 'Amen'.

### **2.3.11. Intercession of Saints and the Departed**

After the Eucharistic adoration, the whole company of saints starting with the Holy blessed Virgin and the departed ones are called to memory.

As an introduction to this intercession, the congregation sings:

In Qurbanas and prayers  
Remember we our Fathers  
Who while living taught us  
How to be children of God  
May the Son of God grant them rest  
In that heavenly kingdom  
With the just and the righteous ones  
In the world that perishes not  
Lord, have mercy and help us.

The priest now covers the Holy mysteries and descends from the altar-step. He then sets incense and leads the people in singing hymns of intercession separately for the Blessed Virgin, for saints, for departed clergy and for the faithful departed. These hymns are quotations from Psalms and intercessory prayers. While the intercession is going on, the priest turns towards the people and asks them forgiveness and prayers to partake in the Holy Mysteries.

### 2.3.12. The Communion

The sanctuary is again closed. The priest kneels before the altar and prays to make him worthy to receive the Holy Body and the Living Blood. After the prayers, he ascends to the altar-step, and takes the Holy Body from the chalice with the prayer, "Thee I hold, who holds the ends of the earth. Thee I take up who holds up the deeps. Thee, O God, I place in my mouth. By Thee may I be delivered from the undying fire and be made worthy of the forgiveness of sins like that sinful woman and like that thief, Our Lord and Our God, for ever and ever, Amen".

He partakes of it saying the prayer "The propitiatory live coal of the Body and Blood of Christ Our God is given to me, a sinful servant, for the pardon of offenses and the forgiveness of sins, in both worlds, for ever and ever, Amen". Then with another prayer he partakes of 'the living and life-giving Blood shed on the cross'.

After the celebrant those who are in the sanctuary solemnly and with proper prayers receive the Holy Qurbana. When everybody in the sanctuary has finished receiving, the deacon says "Let us cry aloud and say". The people respond, "Worshipped and glorified is the

Father, Son and the Holy Spirit from the ages into ages of ages glory be to Him Halleluiah''.

Now the curtain is withdrawn. The bells are rung, lighted candles were held in a row, the deacon censes in front of the holy mysteries. The priest takes the paten in his right hand and the chalice in his left hand. All comes in a solemn procession towards the west of the sanctuary with proper prayers and songs. This signifies the glorious second coming of the Lord. After reaching the west of the sanctuary the priest administer holy communion to the congregation\*. As he gives to each person he says, "The atoning live coal of the Body and Blood of Christ our God is given to this faithful believer for the remission of debts, and for the forgiveness of sins, in both worlds for ever, Amen''.

After having given communion to the people the priest again exalts the Holy Qurbana and says, "Glory be to Thee, Glory be to Thee, Glory be to Thee. Our Lord and our God for ever and ever. Moran Yeshu Mesiah, Thy holy Body which we have eaten and Thy atoning blood which we have drunk, may they not be for our condemnation and punishment, rather may they be for the life and redumption of all of us; and have mercy upon us''.

The priest then turns to the east and returns to the altar while the congregation sing, "Thee the whole world blesses and worships. Thy name does every tongue confess/For Thou dost give life to the dead/And good hope to those in grave Halleluiah''.

---

\* Actually this is the right occasion to give the communion to the congregation. But now-a-days due to many practical reasons, in many parishes it is postponed to the end of the service. We must try to bring back the old practice of giving communion on the right time.

This song reminds us that the whole world will worship Him on His second coming.

### 2.3.13 The Thanksgiving Prayers

When he comes back to the altar, the priest places the mysteries on the altar. Then he prays aloud a prayer of Thanksgiving.

“We give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, for the abundance of Thy mercy wherewith Thou has accounted us worthy to partake of Thy heavenly banquet. Grant, my Lord, that our participation in Thy Holy sacrament be not a cause for our condemnation and that being accounted worthy to partake of Thy Holy Spirit we may find a share and an inheritance with all the righteous for ever. We offer up glory and praise to Thee and to Thy Only begotten Son and to Thy Holy Spirit for ever, Amen”.

Then again the congregation bows their head and the priest says with folded hands, “Yeshu Mesiah Our God, who was sacrificed on our behalf by Thine own will and by the will of Thy Father and Thy Holy Spirit, who made us eat Thy Holy Body and gave us drink of Thy atoning Blood, make us steadfast in Thy love. Fill us with the awe of Thee. Establish in us faith in Thee. Adorn us with blameless conduct. Forgive the sins, our own as also of our departed so that in truth we may glorify Thee and Thy Father who begat Thee and Thy Holy Spirit, both now and for ever more”. The whole congregation says ‘Amen’ and then the priest concludes the service by singing a hymn. The people also respond with another hymn.

### 2.3.14 "Depart Ye in Peace"

After the thanksgiving prayers and songs the priest turns towards the congregation and gives the final and the long benediction saying, "Depart ye in peace, our brotheren and our beloved ones, as we commend you to the grace and mercy of the Holy and glorious Trinity, with the provisions and the blessings which you have received from the atoning altar of the Lord.

You who are far, and you who are near, the living with the departed, redeemed by the victorious cross of the Lord and sealed with the sign of Holy Baptism, may the Holy Trinity absolve you from your debts, forgive your offenses, and comfort the spirits of your departed. And may I, a weak and sinful servant, receive grace and help by your prayers. Go ye in peace, glad and rejoicing, and pray for me always". The people respond, "May the Lord accept your offering and help us by your prayers".

The curtain is drawn across the sanctuary and thus the public service of the Eucharist comes to an end.



### 3. THE POST COMMUNION SERVICE

The congregation does not have much place in the post communion service. After the final benediction, the priest kneels before the altar for prayer and intercession. Then the priest receives the holy mysteries with recitation of prayers and Psalms. (esp. Psalms 23 & 29). He cleans the holy vessels and his own hands with proper prayers. After that he conducts special prayers for the departed. Then the priest says farewell to the altar as if it is his last Eucharistic service in this world. Bowing his head and kissing the altar he says with painful heart, "Be at peace the Holy and Sacred Altar of the Lord. I do not know whether I will come before you again. Let the Lord make me worthy to see you in the company of the heavenly first-borns. I trust in this hope. Be at peace the holy and the atoning Altar ..... Be at peace the Holy Altar which is the Table of Life. May my memory not fade in you. Please pray to the Lord Jesus Christ for me ....."





#### 4. MEANING OF SYRIAC AND GREEK WORDS USED IN THE HOLY QURBANA

Qurbana = Present, offering, sacrifice

Amen = So be it

Barekmor = Bless my Lord

Staumenkalos = Let us stand well

Kurielaison = Lord have mercy upon us

Halleluiah = Praise God. Also "Praise to God".

Subho labo labro valrooho Kadiso = Glory be to the  
Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

Men olam vadamo lolam olmin amen = Let it be so from  
the beginning and for ever and ever

Morio rahemelainoo adarain = Lord have mercy upon us  
and help us

Slomo = Peace

Shaino = Good-will

Slomo Lakulkoon = Peace be unto you

Hosho vabkul suba la olmeen amen = So be it now and  
for ever and ever.

Hosenna = Praise





## THE DIVINE LITURGY

Dn. M. O. JOHN

This booklet is a study of the Holy Qurbana and it contains explanations of various prayers and symbols used in the celebration of the Qurbana. The author Rev. Dn. M. O. John is at present a Research Scholar in Ancient Church History at the University of Vienna in Austria. In this work he handles the subject remaining loyal to the rich tradition of the church. We would be grateful if the publication of this would help the readers to participate in the Holy Qurbana more whole-heartedly.

—Publisher