

In Spirit, In Truth

[Eastern Worship - A Study]

Fr Dr B Varghese

(Divyabodhanam Book Series 18)

Statement

Dear ones,

By God's abundant grace, the first stage of Divyabodhanam program has concluded successfully. The preparation of ten books on our faith related topics itself is a good achievement.

The program that commenced only in 1984 had 49 centres associated with it. There were 130 women and 210 men who participated in this exercise. His Holiness Catholicose is distributing certificates on August 9, 1986 to those who have completed the course (10 subjects).

Now, we are coming to the second stage. Apart from accepting participants for the second batch of the preliminary stage, new courses are being formulated for those who have completed first stage.

The target for the second stage too is to deepen the knowledge of church members in their understanding of faith. This would be useful equally for parents and youth possessing basic education. This process is a basic requirement for all Sunday school teachers.

What is being looked forward to is ten thousands of members completing this course within the next few years resulting in an all-round progress in the faith centred life of our people. Let these books be instrumental in Holy Spirit to experience the love of God that is expressed with the God coming down as a human in Christ. Let there be showering of Blessings from the Almighty to all of you.

Kottayam,

July 3, 1986

Dr Paulose Mar Gregorioso, President, Divyabodhanam



PHOTO

Fr Dr B Varghese

After taking his graduation from CMS College, Kottayam, Baby Varghese joined Orthodox Theological Seminary and took BD of Serambur University in 1978 with First class and First Rank.

He took his MTh from the Catholic University, Paris in 1981 and Doctorate in Theology from Sorbonne University, Paris in 1985. He earned the fellowship instituted by globally well known Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and did his Post Doctoral research studies at Berlin University.

He had carried out assignments such as Asst Director of Delhi Orthodox Centre, Registrar of Orthodox Theological Seminary and Federated Faculty for Research in Religion and Culture in Kerala (FFRRC) with distinction. He has been a professor with orthodox Theological Seminary since 1985, and a faculty with St Ephraim Ecumenical Research Institute, Kottayam (SEERI). He is also a Research Guide with Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.

It shall also be worth noting that he has authored more than a dozen of books on varying subjects.

From the Publisher's Desk

PREFACE

This text is the second volume of 'ABBA PITHAVE' published as part of Divyabodhanam series. The subject that is covered here is the characteristics of Eastern Worship. There are not many books available with us containing a comprehensive coverage of different aspects of Eastern Worship. The reason for this would be that it is not that easy to express the beauty and nobility of our worship through words. The disciples of John, the Baptist who followed Jesus were advised to 'come and see'; this call and wordings thereto are quite pertinent. This author shall be grateful had this volume turned helpful to the readers to participate in our worship more purposefully.

This author is well aware of the limitations regarding the explanations given here. There are many interpretations by many scholars on the meanings of metaphors and symbols used in worships. There may be some readers who feel that the meanings given in this text differ with meanings given in other texts. Let me tell them just one thing; when different facets of a worship is explained, the purpose behind such explanations are not to pass on intellectual inputs, but the attempt is to stabilise the foundation of one's faith. Eastern tradition permits different interpretations that would be helpful to enrich one's faith.

The visions of L/L HG Dr Paulose Mar Gregorioso Metropolitan have influenced quite well the basic thoughts contained in this text which discusses Eastern Worship and Theology. Let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude to late Fr Dr V C Samuel and Fr T J Abraham Malpan for their valuable suggestions regarding the meanings of symbols and to Fr Dr T J Joshua for taking his precious time to read the manuscript and offering suggestions thereto.

Let me submit this volume to all those who have read 'ABBA PITHAVE' and spoken to me with great excitement and words of encouragement.

Fr DR B Varghese

Orthodox Seminary

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Unit 1

Worship in Orthodox Tradition

Lesson 1

Beauty of Jehovah (Psalms 84:1; 28:4)

Awareness of the Presence of God in Worship # Joy of Worship # All for the Glory of God

There is story about how the Russian Orthodox Church had its beginning. Christianity reached Russia in the 10th century when Vladimir was the king of Kiev. Vladimir was a gentile and he wanted to adopt a religion that was the noblest in the whole world. He sent messengers to different parts of the world to study about different religions. Some such messengers met Muslims in Bulgaria, but they were not at all impressed by the worship of Muslims. The messengers conveyed to the king that they found no joy at all among those Muslims. The messengers who reached Rome and Germany visited the places of worship of Roman Catholics, but failed to experience any sort of beauty or charm in their worship. Another group of messengers reached Constantinople and they took part in the Holy Qurbana of St Sophia Church. They were highly impressed by the worship there and excitedly, they wrote to their king like this:

‘We were not sure where we were; in earth or in heaven. We are sure there won’t be any other place for one to experience such beauty and greatness. We have no words to explain the splendour of this worship. But one thing we are convinced; God dwells in that worshipping community. Their worship is nobler than all sorts of worships anywhere in the world. We will never forget the beauty of it’. On the basis of this report, it is stated that Vladimir got attracted to Orthodox Church and got baptised in 988.

The observations of those gentile messengers on Eastern Worship are really note worthy: ‘We will never forget the beauty of it’.

There are many facets in an Eastern Worship making it beautiful all of which may not be expressible in words. When disciples of John, the Baptist followed Jesus, they were advised to “come and see”; this is a call pertinent to us even this day. The quality of Eastern worship can be experienced only by becoming part and parcel of that worshipping community and by taking part in the worship. Its beauty is at a higher pedestal exceeding the dimensions of words. One who stays outside gets to feel only a peripheral beauty; Eastern worship has a spiritual greatness exceeding that peripheral beauty to be experienced only by tasting it.

Awareness of the Presence of God in Worship:

Various facets associated with Eastern worship such as hymns, music, colours, attires of celebrants, Thronose, objects used in Madbaha, fragrance of incense that fills the church, disciplined participation of the people, the interest shown by the people to recite different prayers and hymns are all seen as characteristics of Orthodox worship by Christians belonging to other denominations as also by gentiles. But even if we explain the meanings of each of these facets, they may not

understand them fully. An orthodox believer who takes part in worship may not take too much of an interest to know the detailed meanings of these. All these facets have just one purpose: create an awareness of presence of God in worship; experience the joy of presence of God. These facets in worship can be said to be the entry points to the presence of God. The low lights from candles, the pleasant fragrance of incense, different colours, hymns, sound of prayers; all these together transform the worshipping community to a temple of God. The world sees the presence of God through this worshipping community. Just a few decades back, a French Catholic priest attended the worship of Malankara Orthodox Church and shared his experience with another priest: "In our (Catholic) worship, we declare certain facts about God; here, in Orthodox worship, we see God face to face and talk". The main characteristic of Orthodox worship is that we talk to God seeing Him face to face.

Joy of Worship:

Joy comes up from our awareness of presence of God. The narration St John gives in the Book of Revelations is quite significant as far as Eastern worship is concerned.

"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelations 21: 3 – 4).

Throughout the worship of Orthodox Church, we have a joyous atmosphere. Westerners worship like a guilty man filled with fear and feelings of sin. Orthodox believers worship with the feeling of joy of the kingdom of heaven where there is no mourning or crying or pain. The life awaiting us at the land of eternal light is here in our worship. Heaven is opened before the believers. Believers take part in the eternal worship of heaven.

We pray in the celebration of Holy Qurbana: **'In the company of the thousand of thousands and myriad of myriads of fiery beings that stand before thee and glorify thee unceasingly, may we also be worthy of offering unto thee the Triune hymn, proclaiming and saying'**. [From the Thaksa of Mar Dionysius]

All for the Glory of God:

When we take part in the eternal worship in presence of God, we are submitting everything of us, our wholesome personality, our culture and the fruits of our hard work before God. To submit us wholly before God, we prepare ourselves through prayers and fasting. Our consumable objects like bread and wine are offered to God through Holy Qurbana. Water and oil purify man in presence of Holy Spirit for his transformation (Holy Baptism). Language and literature are offered before God as prayers for glorifying Him. Music and hymns are sung to praise God. Colours, fragrance, icons, artisanship are all turning out to be symbols of presence of God.

Worship aims at a total transformation of man. Literature, music, poetry, drawings, paintings are all expected to be media revealing the glory of God. It is with such a purpose the material, spiritual and cultural facets of man has been dovetailed in Orthodox worship. This world itself should turn to a media that reveals glory of God. All the vibrations of this universe should become part of a cosmic

liturgy glorifying God. Concerning this universe, will of God has to be revealed in worship and such an attempt makes Orthodox worship a dignified one.

Questions:

1. What are the facets that make Orthodox worship really beautiful?
2. What is the ultimate purpose behind using these facets?
3. What is the purpose of worship?

Lesson 2

Importance of Holy Qurbana

Holy Qurbana, Heavenly Feast

The central focus of Orthodox worship rests with Holy Qurbana. The purpose of hourly prayers and observance of lent are all preparations leading to the celebration of Holy Qurbana. All sacraments are fulfilled in Holy Qurbana. Holy Baptism, blessing of Holy Mooron, Ordination are all sacraments celebrated invariably with Holy Qurbana. Therefore early Church father Dionysius Areopagite (C 500) has called Holy Qurbana as 'Sacrament of Sacraments' or 'Mystery of Mysteries'.

The idea that Holy Qurbana is a Heavenly Sacrifice has been reflected in many of our prayers. Along with this, Orthodox Churches advocate that Holy Qurbana is also a Heavenly Feast. A member of Orthodox Church who takes part in Holy Qurbana is one who has been invited for this Feast. But under western tradition, one who attends worship looks like a man of guilt standing before the judge. Worship is an obligation one has to satisfy before the Heavenly Judge. An Orthodox believer participates in worship with all freedom and joy of one who has been invited for the feast. He has been identified and called in Christ to take part in this feast. Participation in this feast is his right. He confronts Christ, the host of the feast and the bread of the feast in worship and experiences him.

Holy Qurbana, Heavenly Feast:

Holy Qurbana is feast of the kingdom of God. The characteristic of kingdom of God is a life filled with joy. The gospels narrated the nature of that joy metaphorically with the feast of matrimony. "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15). The summit of the joy of kingdom of heaven is the invited ones enjoying the feast with the risen Christ. "People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29). "It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them" (Luke 12:37).

Our Lord instituted Holy Qurbana on the occasion of his Last Supper. Participation in the Heavenly Feast was made available to men in Holy Qurbana; this is evident in the words of our Lord: "I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:25). The Heavenly Feast has already commenced here through Holy Qurbana, fulfilment of which comes up in the kingdom to come.

Book of Revelations has pictured Holy Qurbana as the feast of matrimony of Christ with the Church. St John heard this through a big thunder: "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the

roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting, Hallelujah! Our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the lamb has come. And his bride has made herself ready" (Revelations 19: 6, 7; also see 21: 1 – 3). Holy Qurbana is the wedding feast of Church. Wedding feast always happen to be an occasion of joy. The invitees share the joy of bride and groom. For the early Christians, Holy Qurbana was occasion for real joy in their lives. "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2: 46, 47; also see Luke 24:41, 53). The presence of risen Christ made them happy. They identified his presence through Holy Qurbana. "Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight" (Luke 24: 30, 31; John 21: 10 – 14). Gospel writers have highlighted the early Christians experiencing the presence of Christ in worship and about the joy they had while worshipping. (See Luke 24:41, 53; John 20:20).

Holy Qurbana is the Heavenly Feast with the risen and glorified Christ. Here, Christ who took flesh is the host as well as the meal. The spiritual joy of the early Church has been preserved in Orthodox worship. The emphasis is on repentance and guilty conscience when westerners participate in their worship whereas easterners are joyous while participating in the Heavenly Feast in worship. When Western Churches recall the tragic fate of mankind consequent to being slave to sin, Eastern Churches experience the freedom and joy of mankind that has come through Christ while they take part in worship. [L/L H G Dr Paulose Mar Gregorioso has explained this idea in a greater depth in his book 'Joy of Freedom' published by CSS, Thiruvalla]

There many prayers in our Thaksa where Holy Qurbana has been pictured as Heavenly Feast. The thanks giving prayer in the Thaksa of St James is like this: **'We give thanks to You, O Lord, for the abundance of Your mercy, by which we have been made worthy to part take of your Heavenly Table'**.

This has been made more transparent in a Sedaro we use in our Holy Qurbana, which reads as: **'O Lord Jesus our Messiah, make us rejoice in your joyous bridal chamber; make us happy among the invitees and companions of your kingdom; make us good enough to be invited with the righteous and noble who have pleased you; may we be shining with your chosen ones and noble ones on the day your glory rises up; make us seated on your right in that spiritual feast!'**

In this prayer too, joy of the kingdom of heaven at the second coming of our Lord is presented as joy of a matrimonial feast. It is as a part of this joy, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has included dancing as part of their worship.

Questions:

1. Why do we say that Holy Qurbana is sacrament of Sacraments?
2. Why do we say that Holy Qurbana is a Heavenly Feast?
3. Read the below given passages and prepare an essay on Holy Qurbana. [Matthew 26: 26 – 30; Mark 14: 22 – 25; Luke 22: 15 – 20; John 6: 22 – 59; 1 Corinthians 11: 23 – 26]

Lesson 3

Characteristics of Orthodox Worship - 1

Indigenous language # Total Participation of Believers # Prayers for the Living and Departed

There are some similarities between Orthodox Churches and western Churches in their worship, but both have their own characteristics as well. Yet, there are certain notable facets that distinguish Orthodox worship from others; some of these are being discussed briefly here.

Indigenous language:

It is a notable feature of Orthodox Church right from very early centuries that worship has been done in a language that can be followed by those who participate. Greek used to be the language of liturgy in towns like Jerusalem and Antioch, but by fourth century, liturgy was transcribed to Aramaic in Jerusalem for the benefit of those believers coming from rural areas. In Antioch too after sixth century, liturgy got transcribed to Syriac as the popularity of Greek got declined. As of now, Arabic and Turkish languages are used more often in Antioch than Syriac.

Byzantine Church in Antioch and nearby areas were using Greek early, but switched over to Syriac and Arabic gradually. In Edessa and Persian Church, Syriac was the language of liturgy from the very beginning.

In Egypt, Greek was used during early days, but later they started using Coptic language; now, their liturgical language is Arabic.

Presence of Christians was there in Ethiopia from fourth century, but the real growth of the Church took place from sixth century as a result of the gospel works carried out by Syrian monks. Liturgical texts were translated to Ethiopian language very shortly. Now, they conduct their worship in Geez and Amharic, the latter being the modern Ethiopian language.

Armenian Church was using Syriac during their early days. By fifth century, St Mesrop formulated scripts for Armenian language and translated Holy Bible and liturgical texts to Armenian.

Likewise, Byzantine Church too uses indigenous languages for worship. In the tenth century, Byzantine monks Cyril and Methodius reached Russia and their first task was to translate liturgy from Greek to local languages. Orthodox believers in countries like Finland, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Japan, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and all follow their own indigenous languages in worship.

Prior to the second Vatican Council (1962 – 64) Roman Catholic Church was uniformly using Latin language in liturgy. Rome used to have Greek as their language of worship, but chose Latin from early fourth century. This second Vatican council decided to adopt languages for worship as done by Orthodox Church so that the participants could follow the liturgy with proper understanding. On the basis of this decision, Catholics switched over to indigenous languages from 1964.

The live participation of believers is a very attractive characteristic of orthodox worship. Indigenous language is helpful for that. Prayers recited without grasping the meanings would be no different from a resounding gong or clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1). In Malankara Orthodox Church, worship in local language had commenced by early 20th century. Yet, we cannot say that total indigenouness has been made possible because there are many believers who experience a particular aesthetic enjoyment by hearing prayers or hymns in Syrian language or even reciting them. In parishes outside Kerala, it is high time that we switch over to their local languages and it is worth noting that there is good progress in this area.

Total Participation of Believers:

In Orthodox Church, celebration of Holy Qurbana is not a ritual performed by the celebrant keeping the believers aside as viewers. A priest is always the chief celebrant and it is worth noting that in prayers of Holy Qurbana, the term 'we' is always used; that is not singular, but plural. Almost all the prayers in the Thaksa wind up as **'To You we offer praises and thanksgiving, to Your begotten son and to the Holy Spirit'**. As the one who leads the worshipping community, the priest celebrates Holy Qurbana for the community. We have many prayers to understand this.

'All unclean thoughts drive away from us through this sacrifice which we offer to thee, o Lord' [Anaphora of Mar Dionysius Bar Salibi]. **'Strengthen us, O Lord that we may offer up unto Thee this spiritual and bloodless sacrifice'** [Anaphora of St John Chrysostom]

Orthodox Church believes in total participation of the Church and this is the reason why a priest is not permitted to celebrate Holy Qurbana alone. There must at least be one deacon / altar boy and one layman representing the community of believers according to our tradition. But Ethiopian Church insists for at least two priests and three deacons; this is a recently introduced change.

In the early Church, there was no practice to celebrate Holy Qurbana on week days with few believers. All believers used to take part in celebrations of Holy Qurbana whenever conducted. Except those who were sick or those who were ex communicated having committed grievous offences, all other believers who have been baptised used to be regular in attending Holy Qurbana.

Though we teach our believers about participating in the celebration of Holy Qurbana, we are not that serious on exhorting them to be regular in accepting the Holy Communion. This seems to be a shortcoming for us. One reason would be that too much of a piety or fear towards accepting Holy Communion. Again, there is a notion prevailing that it would be quite sufficient that this is done just once a year. Of late, attempts are there to rectify these wrong feelings. In the early Church, there used to be not even a single believer who stayed away from accepting Holy Communion. During the time of Justin Martyr, those believers who were sick and those who were imprisoned were receiving Holy Communion at their places as deacons used to go to them for this.

Prayers for the Living and Departed:

Jesus Christ is the true High Priest; he is sitting at God's right side offering worship in the Heavenly Temple in the presence of God (see Hebrews 10:12). In that heavenly worship, Church in its wholeness takes part for it is the body of Christ. Those who are alive and those who are departed are participants in this worship. Holy Qurbana, the worship of the Church is the visible form of this heavenly worship.

Church, the Body of Christ is celebrating Holy Qurbana. The worshipping community sees Christ, head of the Church and the bridegroom, in the priest who is the celebrant. Church, the Body of Christ is revealed to this world in its wholeness through the community that is celebrating Holy Qurbana. In that Church, the living believers and the departed ones are members. With death, a believer is not separated from the Church. The worship offered by this Body of Christ has the participation of living believers and departed believers. It is based on this doctrine of faith, we are praying for the departed.

Prayer is the pleasant fragrance that is rising to God from Church, the Body of Christ. Prayers of the living and the departed are contained in this. The celebrant recalls this in the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana by offering incense: 'we beseech before thee that this fragrance of incense be pleasing to thee that those who are alive and those who are departed may be comforted at the Heavenly Jerusalem'.

The link that we have for relationship with the departed is our prayers. Through remembrances and intercessions, the believers who are alive experience their relation with the departed ones. Departed ones are the invisible members of the Body of Christ. Any worship without remembering them would be meaningless.

In the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana, all the departed ones right from Adam till date are remembered.

' We, moreover, remember, at this time, upon this Eucharist set before us, first of all, our father Adam, our mother Eve, the Holy Mother of God, Mary, the prophets, the apostles, the preachers, the evangelists, the martyrs, the confessors, the just ones, the priests, the holy fathers, the true pastors, the Orthodox doctors, the anchorites, the monks and all those who have pleased You from Adam and Eve until this day'.

The boundaries of Church, the Body of Christ are not confined to New Testament alone. All those saints right from Adam are worshipping before God along with the angels [See Hebrews 12:22 -24]. The Church too takes part in that very same worship.

Questions:

1. What is the relevance of praying in indigenous language?
2. 'Priest will not celebrate Holy Qurbana alone'. What does this mean?
3. Why do we pray with the saints and pray for the departed in Holy Qurbana?

Lesson 4

Characteristics of Orthodox Worship - 2

Status of Deacon # Prayers those touch our Heart # Worship and exhortation of faith

Status of Deacon:

The role of deacons is a peculiarity in Orthodox worship. A deacon had no role in catholic worships before the 2nd Vatican Council. After 1964, Catholic Church reinstated the position of deacons, but still he doesn't have any worth mentioning role in their worship.

In Orthodox worship, the deacon helps the celebrant, at the same time he gives leadership to the believers in worship and starts many of the prayers being recited by them. The Litany in Holy Qurbana is an example for this. Further, deacon exhorts the believers at different stages of worship to pray by explaining the relevance of.

'How solemn is this occasion, and how awful this time, my beloved, wherein the living Holy Spirit comes down fluttering from the most elevated heights of heaven, and broods upon this Eucharist that is set, hallowing it, stand ye still in reverence and pray'.

To keep the attention of believers concentrated in the presence of God, during very important occasions, there are exhortations by deacon. The prayer before placing incense, the prayer for exchanging kiss of peace, exhortation at the time of Sossafa Celebration, exhortations to bow heads, the suggestion to 'look on with awe and trembling' are all examples.

In Byzantine Church, it is the deacon who reads the Gospel. There, Holy Communion was being given to believers by deacons at least from 2nd century [Justin Martyr].

In our Church, the position of deacon in worship is usually held by laymen who are specially permitted for the same. Yet, it is a fact that a layman has limitations to carry out all those responsibilities of a deacon. Generally, the role of deacon in our Church is seen as an intermediary step towards priesthood. But most of the Eastern Churches have deacons who are deacons till the end. This is a system that can be emulated in our Church too. The presence of properly trained deacons in parishes is an important factor that would be helpful to retain the sanctity of worship. The services of educated laymen who are of good character can be utilised for this. What is meant here is not to have deacons who are paid by the parish or diocese. They can have a usual way of living and have their own sources of income through employment elsewhere but should lead a life of good witnessing. Such persons can be chosen and trained that they are ordained as deacons; they can be entrusted with responsibilities of leadership of spiritual organisations also.

Prayers those touch our Heart:

The Western liturgy is mostly formulated as logically framed statements. Westerners always look at prayers carrying intellectual profoundness and apparent transparency. In the Holy Qurbana of Roman Catholics, the anamnesis following the Words of Institution is an example for this.

Priest: Mystery of faith is great.

People: O Lord Jesus, we proclaim your death. We celebrate your resurrection. We await your coming in full glory.

Priest: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we celebrate the mystery of faith.

People: O our resurrected Lord, we remember your death; we await your coming.

Priest: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

Exhortations and proclamations in this style are not to the liking of Eastern Churches. Orthodox Church has heart touching supplications throughout the liturgy. In the above place, Syrian Orthodox Church uses the following prayer.

'While we remember, O Lord, Your death and Your resurrection on the third day, Your ascension into heaven, Your sitting at the right hand of God and Father and Your second coming whereby Your Will judge the world in righteousness and reward everyone according to his deeds; on account of this, we offer You this bloodless sacrifice so that You may not deal with us according to our debts, nor reward us according to our sins, but according to Your abundant mercies, blot out the sins of Your servants for Your people and Your inheritance make supplication unto You and through You to Your Father, saying, O Lord, Your weak and sinful servants, offer You thanksgiving and acknowledge Your loving kindness unto all and for all'. [Thaksa of St James]

People: O God, Father, Almighty

Prayers we have in Eastern liturgy reflect a devotion that is filled with humility and the feeling of presence of God. Prayers are not aimed at intellectual presentations to catch the attention of God. Instead, they are to help believers to take part in worship with the feeling of presence of God and to meditate.

Roman Catholics give Holy Communion to believers with proclamation, **'Body of Christ, Blood of Christ'**. On the other hand, the words we are using are these: **'The propitiatory live-coal of the Body and Blood of Christ our God is given to the faithful for the remission of debts and for the forgiveness of sins, in both the worlds, forever and ever'**. Prayer that follows kiss of peace also is very meaningful.

'O God the Father! Who by Your great love toward mankind, did send Your Son into the world to bring back the sheep that had gone astray, reject not, O my Lord! The service of this bloodless sacrifice for we rely not on our righteousness, but on Your mercy. Let not this Mystery, which was instituted for our salvation, be for our condemnation, but for the remission of our sins and for the rendering of thanks to You and Your Only begotten Son and to Your all holy, good, adorable, life giving and con substantial Spirit, now, always and forever '.

This characteristic is evident in our hymns also. Eastern liturgical hymns are usually meditational narrations of biblical incidents or recalling the lives of saints.

Worship and exhortation of faith:

Eastern churches do not see liturgy and theology as different. Evagrius of Pontus (345 - 399) has said, 'If you desire to be true theologian, you pray; if you pray, you are a true theologian'. The purpose of learning theology is to prepare the laymen to worship and to educate them of the meanings of worship. Theology derives its meaning from liturgy; in Orthodox tradition, believers are enlightened in faith through liturgy. However, sermons and exhortations have their own role in worship. Yet, more than sermons, Orthodox churches treat prayers in liturgy for enlightenment in faith for believers. Prayers we have in our worship and the visible rituals are important in theological sense. The Anthem of Mar Severiose (By thy mother's earnest prayers) we recite during morning worship and at the commencement of Holy Qurbana is a prayer rich in theological insights. This Anthem and the Nicene – Constantinople Creed are the sum and substance of the doctrine of faith for Eastern Churches.

To a believer who is regular in attending worship with devotion need not be explained specifically the doctrines of faith. The prayers as per the Church calendar, Bible readings particularly those from gospels, the Sedaros are all means of exhortation of faith.

The liturgies for the feast of Pentecost are classic examples highlighting the theological importance for our prayers. There are no documents other than these prayers where we have comprehensively narrated about our faith in Holy Spirit except what we have in the writings of our early fathers. On the basis of Holy Bible and letters of Church fathers, the person of Holy Spirit, Divinity, deeds of Holy Spirit in Church and lives of believers are all covered in meditation through the liturgies of the feast of Pentecost.

The liturgy we have for the Passion Week, feasts like Easter and all, contain the interpretations of the relevant Biblical readings being explained to believers without the need for a separate sermon for the same.

Orthodox Churches do not subscribe to views that theology is a branch of wisdom for the scholars alone to discuss. Biblical readings having no relevance to a liturgy or a prayer or to the celebration of a Sacrament would be dismissed like godless and silly myths (1Timothy 4:7).

Syrian fathers fought against pro Chalcedon Churches to stabilise the faith in Monophysite nature of the person in Christ. They were not attempting to confine this theological truth to an intellectual discussion. They took care that this truth is reflected in Holy Qurbana. Syrian tradition has it in that the mixing of water and wine during the preparatory service is the exemplification of the merging of Christ's godly nature with human nature. The prayer while this mixing is done is this: **'Unite O Lord our God, this water and this wine as Your divinity was united with our humanity'**. The prayer during the time of Fracture and Commixture also illustrate the very same theological truth.

In the service of Holy Qurbana, when the people recite the prayer commencing 'Holy, Holy, Holy God Almighty, by whose glory' the celebrant waves his hand over the Bread and Wine and recites a prayer in silence; this prayer is the gist of the faith of our Church about Holy Trinity and the coming of Holy Spirit:

'Holy is the Father, begetter not begotten, Holy is the son, Begotten and not begetter; Holy is the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father, taking from the Son, One True God, who redeemed us by His grace and mercy'. [Thaksa of Mar Dionysius]

Theology is not something that thinks about God intellectually or making statements about that with logically framed wordings. On the other hand, theology originates with meditating God through prayers. Purpose of theology is not to present God before believers in an intellectual manner, but to prepare the believers to worship God understanding His inscrutability and nobility.

Questions:

1. What role a deacon has in worship?
2. What are the services deacons for life can carry out in a parish?
3. Read our liturgies and look into those prayers you find heart touching to you.
4. Write a short essay about the role of liturgy in teaching doctrines of faith to believers.

Lesson 5

Characteristics of Orthodox Worship – 3

Prayers to Holy Spirit # Fire and Spirit

Prayers to Holy Spirit:

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). The basis of Christian worship is the faith that Jesus Christ is God. According to St Paul, the faith that Christ is God itself is a gift of Holy Spirit. A community that believes Christ is God and worship him has the presence of Holy Spirit among them. In other words, worship is an act that is performed in the Grace of Holy Spirit. "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, *Abba father*" (Galatians 4:6). Those who have become members of Christ's body through Holy Baptism have received his kinship and the grace of Holy Spirit to worship God.

Prayers in our personal life are something that happens only with the presence and acts of Holy Spirit. "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (Romans 8:26). Worship is the relationship between the three persons in Holy Trinity. Son sits on the right of Father and intercedes for us (Hebrews 8:1; 10:12). Holy Spirit prays for us continuously (Romans 8:26). Holy Trinity is the ultimate truth that is live with mutual love and worship. The relationship between the persons in Holy Trinity is Divine eternal worship. The angels, the saints and the believers take part in that worship. Through the grace of Holy Spirit, believers become one with Jesus Christ. Holy Spirit who dwells in Son as an anointment dwells within the

community of believers and prepares them for worship. One of the early Church fathers had said, "If Holy Spirit dwells in one, he cannot, but pray. For Spirit won't remain silent in one".

Based on this faith in Holy Spirit, Orthodox Churches have given importance to the prayers addressed to Holy Spirit (Epiclesis in Greek). In Syrian liturgy, there are prayers addressing Holy Spirit in the services of Holy Qurbana, blessing of water in Holy Baptism, Ordination and in the Perfection of the Mystery of Holy Mooron. In Holy Qurbana, the prayers calling upon Holy Spirit is most noteworthy. Epiclesis appears in different forms in different Thaksa. In most such prayers, we beseech before God, our Father to send Holy Spirit upon the worshipping community as well as upon the Bread and Wine. But the variations deserve attention.

'Have mercy upon me, Lord, and send thy Holy Spirit upon me and upon these offerings which are set for it is the Holy Spirit who perfects all the mysteries of the Church by His brooding upon them'. [Thaksa of Mar Dionysius Bar Salibi]

'O God, have mercy upon us, O God, have mercy upon us, and send down Your Holy Spirit upon these offerings, and sanctify these Mysteries' [Order of Peter].

'O Lord, have compassion on us, O Lord, have mercy on us and send your Holy Spirit upon these offerings set before you. Let Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts' [Order of Mar Isaac].

The content of this prayer is that Holy Spirit may dwell in the hearts of those who take part in Holy Communion. They should produce the fruits of Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). It is also prayed that the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the Bread and Wine shall also sanctify the believers.

'Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy upon us and send from Your holy heavens Your life giving Spirit to hover upon this offering and make it a life giving Body. And may He absolve and sanctify us' [order of 12 Apostles].

The orthodox faith on proceeding of Holy Spirit is also mentioned in Epiclesis.

'O Lord, have compassion on me, have compassion on me and all Your inheritance and be pleased as to sanctify these offerings by the descent of Your Holy Spirit Who eternally proceeds from You and substantially receives from Your Son' [Order of Mar Xystus and Mathai Royo]

'Have mercy upon us, O God the Father Almighty. Pardon us by Your grace and have mercy upon us by Your compassion. Send unto us and upon these offerings placed here, Your Holy Spirit, who is co essential and co eternal with You, O God the Father and with Your only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. May He hover upon these offerings and dwell within us and sanctify our hearts' [Order of Mar Julius].

The deacon reminds believers the importance of this occasion by his exhortation, 'How solemn is this occasion, and how awful this time '.

Fire and Spirit:

Fathers of Syrian tradition say that those who accept the Holy Communion of our Lord accept Holy Spirit as well. The basis for this is the faith that Holy Spirit is present in all Sacraments.

Mar Aphrem says, "See, fire and Spirit in our Baptism; again, see, fire and Spirit in Bread and Wine". Mar Isaac of Antioch of the 5th century says that believers do taste Holy Spirit also: "Come and drink from this cup; eat this live-coal that transform you as fire wearing angels; taste the Spirit that your names are recorded with the spirituals."

Syrian Fathers say these on the basis of their faith that Holy Spirit is present in Holy Baptism, Holy Mooron and Holy Qurbana alike".

We call Holy Qurbana as live-coal because of the presence of Holy Spirit therein. In Old Testament, fire symbolises presence of God. The live-coal which prophet Isaiah saw in his vision (6:6) has been seen as a foretaste of Holy Qurbana by Church fathers. In New Testament, fire is a symbol of the presence of Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, Holy Spirit came down and dwelled on the disciples in the form of flame of fire. St Luke has recorded in the gospel according to him that Jesus Christ gave Baptism of Holy Spirit and fire (3:16).

In short, it is the characteristics of Orthodox Churches to highlight the presence and deeds of Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism, Holy Qurbana and other Sacraments.

We believe that Bread and Wine become Holy Body and Holy Blood due to Holy Spirit dwelling on them.

"So that, by His indwelling, He (the Holy Spirit) may make this bread the life giving Body, the redeeming Body and the Body of Christ our God. And may He (the Holy Spirit) perfect this cup into the Blood of the New Covenant, the Redeeming Blood and the Blood of Christ our God' [Order of Mar James]. This is the prayer the celebrant does waving his hands during the service of Holy Qurbana.

The presence and dwelling of Holy Spirit is there in Holy Qurbana from beginning to end. The assembling of worshipping community itself is by the grace of Holy Spirit. Therefore, Eastern Churches do not venture to say that Bread and Wine are transubstantiated during Epiclesis. The exact moment of sanctification is not defined by Orthodox Churches. Roman Catholic Church teaches that while the celebrant pronounces the institutional words, transubstantiation happens. But we are hesitant to say that transformation of Bread and Wine takes place at a particular moment. Holy Qurbana is just a singular worshipping ritual from beginning to end; we do not detach a particular prayer or deed from it to attach any particular significance. Each and every ritual during Holy Qurbana is inseparable facets. For the very same reason, Orthodox Churches are not happy to subscribe to views that the Sacrament of Holy Mooron is distinctly different from that of Holy Baptism.

Questions:

1. What role Holy Spirit has in Christian Worship?
2. What is our faith about the acts of Holy Spirit in the sanctification of Holy Qurbana?

Lesson 6

Characteristics of Orthodox Worship – 4

Liturgy that is Rich in Biblical Portions

Liturgy that is Rich in Biblical Portions:

There is a feeling among Protestants generally that Orthodox Churches are neglecting usage of Holy Bible. They allege that the lengthy liturgy of prayers and hymns carve away the role for Bible in worship. But the truth is that Holy Bible is the foundation on which Orthodox liturgy is set up; Bible is the point of origin of all prayers in Orthodox tradition. In Holy Qurbana, performance of other Sacraments, hourly prayers and all such occasions, Scripture portions particularly from gospels are read with due importance. The liturgy has abundance of prayers from Bible as well as plenty of Psalms. Further, most of the prayers are expressions or meditations on Biblical thoughts or incidents.

The Sedaros of Syrian Church tradition are rich in portions taken from Scriptures. The Sedaros prescribed for each feast day happen to be the interpretations of the Bible readings marked for that feast. The Sedaros we have for the Passion Week are meditations on the Biblical illustrations of the tribulations underwent by Jesus. Those who authored these Sedaros were certainly those fathers possessing extraordinary scholastic insights. They took care to see that all relevant portions of the Scriptures were included in prayers. They had realised that liturgy is the practical medium to impart biblical knowledge among believers. Common man understands the contents of Scriptures through worship. There is no doubt that the Scriptural truths sharply pierces into the believers' hearts through their participation in worship with devotion. A believer is enriched in spiritual growth by studying Scriptures through mediation rather than attending bible classes.

It is possible to quote lots of prayers from our liturgy to show the inseparable relation between liturgy and Bible. The Promiyon and Sedaro of the evening prayers we have for Yeldho feast are a summary of different Biblical portions related to the occasion. This Sedaro recalls one by one the incidents of virgin birth, placing the child on a manger in Bethlehem, the wise men coming and paying respects and then narrates each of the Old Testament indications about the birth of Jesus.

Again, it is a characteristic of many Sedaros to recall one by one the different portions from Scripture which convey the same message. In a Sedaro of repentance, all the characters we have come across in the Bible who have got redeemed from the wrath of God by their humble penitence are recalled.

'O Lord, you do not wish death for a sinner, instead he should turn away from his wrong path and come to be redeemed (Ezekiel 18:32); you retreated from punishing Nineveh of your wrath as you

were pleased with the penitence of the people of Nineveh and (Jonah); you were pleased with the tears poured down from the eyes of that sinner woman (Luke 7: 36 – 50) you were pleased with the humility of Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33: 12, 13) and you were pleased with the faith of the thief (Luke 23:43); you wish that all men are redeemed and they choose the path of true wisdom (John 3: 16, 17) and you received that prodigal son who had squandered away all his wealth showering your abundant mercy emanating from your fatherly affection (Luke 15: 11 – 32)’.

Holy Bible is not just a text that describes events of the past. It is witnessing God’s eternal love, mercy and righteousness. We are recalling Biblical incidents through our liturgy as a reiteration of God interfering in our present days through the Church and accept our penitence and prayers as He had done during the Old Testament days as well as in New Testament.

Syrian liturgy was formulated by Church fathers who were natives of the land where Biblical incidents happened. This may be a reason why there are lots of references to characters of Bible in Syrian liturgies. The S’hema prayer which we call common liturgy for seven days is an example. In these, we have saints of Old Testament frequently mentioned along with their life incidents. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Moses, David, Daniel, the three youngsters who were thrown to the burning furnace and the prophets are all being remembered in these prayers along with the Apostles.

‘Our father Adam prays for us before you; have mercy on us. Our fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph pray for us before you... The prophets who prophesied about you pray for us; the Apostles who preached you and the martyrs who embraced death for you Pray for us before you’ [Tuesday, sixth hour].

Fathers right from Adam are live in Christ; they pray daily without break seeing God face to face; believers seek their intercession. In every hourly prayer, related Old Testament incidents are recalled.

‘In the morning Israelites blew their trumpets and the walls of Jericho tumbled down (Joshua 6:15 – 20). Daniel prayed when he was in the den of lions, he was redeemed (Daniel 6:16 – 22)’ [Monday morning].

The Old Testament characters are witnesses to the mystery of Christ. In Christ, they too have become members of the Church. The event of redemption commenced in Adam, got fulfilled in Christ and is continuing through the Church. In that history of redemption, Old Testament fathers and apostles are part takers. In that very same history, the present members of the Church are participants now.

‘Blessed are those servants called by the prince to labour in his father’s garden (Matthew 20: 1 – 16). In the morning, Abel and Lot were called; at the sixth hour, he called the prophets; at the ninth hour, he called apostles and at the eleventh hour, he called the chosen martyrs and the thief on the right. Let their prayers s be refuge to us’ [Tuesday midnight].

The men of Old Testament were those who loved God and who were guided by God. The love of God they experienced and tasted and the way they were taken care are passed on to the present believers through the Church as we learn from these prayers.

'The blessings showered on the youngsters who were pushed into the burning furnace, thereby redeeming them (Daniel 3) may be showered on our departed ones and they may be redeemed from the persecutions of burning fire that they inherit eternal life'. [Monday noon]

'May that grace and blessings which protected David from Saul and took care of Joseph in Egypt protect us also who are weak' [Tuesday morning].

Bible teaches us that God listens to prayers not only of the righteous, but also of those sinners who have repented as well as those of the gentiles. Therefore, a sinner need not be hesitant to seek God and His presence.

'We are ashamed to come closer to you as we are covered with stains and trespasses; but, the Canaanite woman, the thief, the tax collector, the sinner woman, the Samaritan woman are all strengthening us; you are abundance of mercy' [Tuesday midnight third Kauma]

These prayers contain meditational interpretations of New Testament metaphors also. We have seen the metaphor of labourers being called to work in the wine garden. Now, let us see the interpretation to the metaphor of ten virgins (Matthew 25: 1 – 13).

'O our Lord, you have taught us the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven through metaphors and similes. May we too get up and proceed like those virgins to receive you; let it be possible for us to fill oil in the lamps you have given us that we are not dismissed from entering the bridal chamber to remain outside with grief and distress; let us find a place in your bridal chamber to rejoice with those wise virgins and all men of holiness' [Tuesday third hour].

The characteristics of most of these prayers are simplified presentation of Bible and re narration thereof. Copies of Holy Bible were not available to common men before invention of printing technology. During such days, even illiterate believers were able to understand Biblical truths through these prayers.

Questions:

1. By citing examples illustrate that Syrian Orthodox liturgy are rich in Biblical narrations.
2. Read out the Sedaro of the evening hour of Yeldho feast.
3. Read the evening prayers of S'hema order and find out the Biblical portions mentioned therein.

Unit 2

Use of Symbols in Worship

Lesson 1

Symbols and Signs

What are Symbols? # Symbols in Holy Bible # Symbols in Christian Traditions

Symbolism is an inseparable facet of Eastern liturgy. Madbaha, curtain, Thronose, candles, Cross, Gospel reading table, Censor, attire of the celebrant, the stone bucket for Holy Baptism are all symbols those are characteristics of an Orthodox church. The Orthodox worship has certain rituals and movements those are symbolic. The pompous processions, Benedictions with the celebrant waving his hands, kneeling down, bowing in reverence to touch the forehead on the floor, bowing the head, raising hands are all symbolic gestures in the worship. Those who are not in this Church may not understand the significance of these gestures. Eastern tradition makes no attempt to logically explain these symbols. Also, Orthodox Church members do not take too much of a curiosity to understand meanings of symbols. They are not much worried about intellectual significance thereof as they are convinced of the presence of God throughout the worship. If worship from beginning to end is considered as a hymn of prayer, each symbol happens to be different notes while rendering that hymn. Each symbol turns meaningful in relation to other symbols. Once a symbol is detached from worship, the symbol may not reveal any meaning.

Book of Revelations explains symbolically the basic principles of Christian worship. An eternal worship is going on in heaven. As revealed to Isaiah and St John, angels are continuously rendering praises of God before the heavenly throne (Isaiah 6:3; Revelations 4:8). As revealed to St John, the twelve tribal fathers of old Israel and the twelve apostles who form the foundation of new Israel or the Church take part in the heavenly worship as twenty-four elders along with the angels (4: 8 – 11). In front of the Heavenly Throne, the 'slain lamb' stand at the centre of elders and angels (5:6). The elders and angels fell down before the lamb in reverence; each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense which are prayers of saints (5:8). Those who have accepted Holy Baptism which is the 'seal of living God' are participants in this heavenly worship (chapter 7). "They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands" (7: 9 – 17) and were taking part in the worship.

What is narrated by St John here is a picture of the Christian worship in Asia Minor during the 1st century. Holy Qurbana is the centre of Christian worship where we see the 'slain lamb' face to face. This is the visible form of eternal worship before the Heavenly Throne. Symbols are means to reveal the invisible heavenly worship to earth. Madbaha, Thronose, Cross, candles, censor are all symbols helping to reflect heavenly worship through time and space. St John had the revelation of heavenly worship on the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10). Orthodox believers view and participate in heavenly worship every Lord's Day. They have vision of the 'slain lamb' at the midst of angels, fathers of tribes, apostles and saints. One should try to understand the meanings of symbols in the light of this background of Eastern worship.

What are Symbols?

There are limitations to orally express the meanings of symbols. Yet, it can be said that symbols are something visible and material that points to an invisible reality. Symbol can be a ritual or object.

In its appearance, the bucket for baptism looks like a large vessel made in stone or cement; but in Christian tradition, this symbolises the tomb of our Lord, the womb of our mother Church and the river Jordan. Believers undergo baptism in water to partake in the death and resurrection of our Lord (Romans 6:4) and for being born again from water and Spirit (John 3: 3 – 5). In baptism, believers are anointed with oil to part take in the anointment our Lord (1 John 1:20, 27; 2 Corinthians 1: 21, 22) and to be sealed with Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:14; 4:30; Revelations 7:3; Ezekiel 9:4). The meaning of Holy Baptism can be expressed only through the symbols of the bucket for baptism, baptism in water and anointment with oil. Through these symbols, believers experience the truth of being one with Christ. Therefore, a symbol can be said to be a visual image of divine mysteries.

Symbols such as bread made of wheat flour, wine, Chalice, Paten, Thronose and Tablitha are all inevitable in Holy Qurbana. Each of these has its own role to express the inner meaning and divine mysterious nature of Holy Qurbana. The celebrant himself is a symbol; a symbol of Jesus Christ. In short, for the celebrations of Sacraments and liturgical rituals, symbols are inseparable facets.

Cross appears to be an image made of wood. With the death of Christ on a wooden cross, cross has become one of the basic symbols of Christian Church. When believers draw cross on their chest, it symbolises their recalling the death of our Lord as well as their experiencing presence of God.

Symbols cannot be confined exclusively to certain objects used in worship or to certain rituals. The architecture of a church, the paintings on the walls thereof, the pictures and icons, the cemetery, the music in liturgies, the offerings made by believers, pilgrimages are all symbols. All these are good enough to raise the hearts of believers to our invisible God. Symbols are, therefore, doors opening towards presence of God.

Symbols in Holy Bible:

In the Old Testament, revelations from God were communicated to men through symbols like words, persons, rituals and incidents. A good example for this can be said to be prophet Jeremiah walking through the streets carrying a yoke on his shoulders (Jeremiah 19:1 – 11) symbolising the forthcoming exile of Israelites. Sabbath and circumcision were symbols for the covenant between Jehovah and Israel.

The second commandment prohibits making any image or idol of anything that is there on the earth or under water (Exodus 20:4). At the same time, Jews considered their Temple and all objects inside the Temple as Holy. The Temple, the Table for Sacrifice, the Ark, the Atonement Cover and the Cherubim with wings spread out were all considered Holy by the Jews (Exodus 25: 10 – 22) and were all symbols of the presence of Jehovah among their midst. The Atonement Cover was also considered as the 'Throne of Jehovah' and the 'Pedestal for placing the feet'. Most of these symbols disappeared during the days of exile. But there are evidences of paintings used in synagogues during the 1st and 2nd centuries of CE. In other words, though the Commandments prohibited making images and worshipping them, Jews never thought of interpreting the Commandments as

prohibiting the usage of symbols. It is the characteristics of Old Testament worship to use symbols of varying meanings.

Symbols in Christian Traditions:

Worship commenced in Christian Church and symbols came to be in use in the line of Jewish systems. The language of symbols and signs can be understood by illiterates also. A believer seeing a cross gets into his mind the entire Christ events. Sometimes, rather than lengthy exhortations, cross would be able to enlighten thoughts of Christ in the minds of believers. At the same time, early Christians used symbols for another purpose also, that is, for keeping Christian mysteries away from gentiles. During the days of severe persecutions, Christians used to get mutually identified by drawing a picture of a fish. In Greek, the word for fish is 'ICHTUS'. This is also an abbreviation of the words '*Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour*' in that language. Picture of fish has also been used as a symbol of Holy Qurbana. In the Gospel according to St John (21: 9 – 13), fish has been interpreted in this way. Thus, Christians of early days could express the basic faith of Christian Church by drawing a picture of fish. The persecutors were not able to understand the meaning or significance thereof.

Ancient churches and catacombs of Rome carry evidences that the faith of early Church used to be expressed through paintings on the walls thereof. The symbols most commonly used during those days were these: Dove symbolising Holy Spirit, palm leaves indicating victory over sin (Revelations 7:9), anchor for hope, good shepherd for Jesus Christ, arc of Noah for Baptism and Church (1 Peter 3: 19 – 21). Further, pictures of lamb, fish or ICHTUS and Cross have been used to symbolise Christ; Greek alphabets Chi-Ro (first two letters of Christos) and Alfa-Omega (first and last alphabets in Greek as indicated in Revelations 1:11, 22:6 and 22:13) have also been in use for Christ.

Early Church had another sign, that of a ship moving through an ocean to symbolise the Church. Of late, this symbol has been adopted as a logo for WCC. The idea behind this symbol can be traced back to the arc of Noah; the dove holding an olive branch flying into a ship was also in common use (Genesis 8:11). A dove holding olive branch was considered as a symbol of Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism. In short, we have no doubt that our early Church was expressing their doctrines of faith through various symbols which were found useful for strengthening believers in true faith.

Orthodox Church is using symbols also as a manifestation of doctrines of faith. In Holy Qurbana, water is being added to wine symbolising the divine nature and human nature merged in Christ. The 'funeral service' during our worship on Good Friday is a symbolic ritual to experience the death on the cross of our Lord and His body being placed in the tomb. Like this, each and every symbol or sign we have in our liturgy has inseparable relationship with our doctrines of faith.

Questions:

1. What roles do symbols have in Orthodox liturgy?
2. Can we say that usage of symbols is scriptural? Why?
3. What were the common symbols used in early Church?
4. How can we address the criticism often raised from certain corners on our kneeling down before the cross on Good Friday?

Lesson 2

Meaning of Place of Worship

Structure of a Place of Worship # Madbaha # Curtain

Churches have taken initiatives to express the characteristics of Christian liturgy through the sculptural works in their places of worship. The structures of such places of worship along with decorations therein often reveal the theological insights of liturgies.

The Christian architectural handiwork started its development consequent to the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 313 AD. The early Church used to have their worship at the houses of believers as we read in Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philipians 2. But the conversion of Constantine led to Holy Qurbana so celebrated secretly at individual houses turned to centres of open worship. In 4th century, Christianity became the official religion of Roman Empire. Roman Empire had a system during the days prior to Constantine to worship the Emperor as God. For such worships, temples were constructed throughout the country. But now, the people started worshipping Heavenly King instead of their Emperor. As worship became a common ritual for the official religion, the Emperor took initiatives to construct large sized places of worship as many as possible. He took care to express the splendour and majesty of the official religion through sculptural extravaganza. The beauty and heavenly halo of worship got reflected through such architecture. Domes at a high position, Madbaha, columns inside and outside, the walls were all designed in such manners as to present the glory of heaven.

The structure of Jerusalem Temple has influenced Christian sculpture more than anything else. In Jewish thoughts, Temple does have presence of God. Temple used to symbolise presence of God in the midst of Israel. In a very same manner, Orthodox Church views their place of worship as a symbol of presence of God. The places of worship, the symbols attached to them and the architectural decorations are all aligned in such a way as to realise the presence of God to anyone who comes across these. Attempts have been there to express presence of God that is the Spirit of worship and the concept of participation in Heavenly worship through the architecture.

“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27). Eastern Churches are well aware of the relevance of these words from Solomon. Therefore, Byzantine Church has been very much on their toes to construct places of worship as an image of this universe in all its minuteness. Constructing Domes symbolising unity and harmony of the universe is a peculiarity of Byzantine Church, in particular, that of Russian Orthodox Church. Further, These Churches have another characteristic that they construct semi circular buildings at the centre of a circular portion; the images of Christ as the king of universe at the central dome and below that, those of angels, prophets and saints seem very attractive to believers. Celebration of Holy Qurbana and prayers take place just below these. These images and sculptures symbolise that the present generation worship God in the presence of those who have been carrying out worship eternally.

The structures suitable to climatic conditions in Kerala are rectangular buildings with high roofing. It is possible that our ancestors would have taken efforts to express 'one God faith' among Hindus through artistic sculptures as they were believers in many gods; this would also be the reason why places of worship were made in simple architectural styles. Detachment to images and sculptures would have come up in Christian Church, possibly, in this Hindu background. It shall also be noted that, of late, the architectural pattern of places of Christian worship have undergone innovations based on associations with Western Churches.

Structure of a church:

Traditionally, Orthodox churches in Kerala have four parts namely Narthex or the portico portion, Nave or the place where the believers stand, Choir or the place just below the Madbaha and then the Sanctuary or Madbaha. There would minor variations here and there. Syrian Churches of Middle Eastern nations also follow this pattern. Each of these parts can be interpreted by way of explaining the meanings contained in liturgy. The interior of a church which we call Naive is rectangular. The word Naive has come from a Latin word NAVIS which means ship. In the last lesson, we had seen that the Church was symbolised with ship. A place for worship being compared with a ship has been a tradition since long. In 'Apostolic Traditions' a text that describes in detail the Antiochian liturgy of 4th century conveys these instruction to the High Priest:

"You rule as the Captain of a ship in a community of believers who assemble for worship and ordain deacons like sailors who shall arrange the believers in their places in preparation as if passengers; let the building for worship be long like a ship with its head on the east. There shall be vestries on either side. The throne for the Bishop shall be set at the centre with seating for Kasheeshas on either side. Deacons are sailors and stewards or managers of the ship and therefore let them stand on either side. Believers may calmly and quietly sit in an orderly manner and the women too with discipline. The one who reads scriptures shall stand on a pulpit at the middle".

By pulpit, what is meant is the high pedestal called 'Bema' or Ambon. In ancient churches, either in the Nave or at the Choir, there used to be a Bema. Most of the Syrian liturgy has references of Bema. Bema was usually used for celebration of Sleebo during Easter and other feast days as well as for reading Scripture portions and delivering sermons. For reading from the law and for exhortations, Jews also were using Bema in their Synagogues.

Madbaha:

Literarily the term 'Madbaha' means 'place of sacrifice'. Madbaha is also called 'KDUSH KDUSHEEN which means Holiest of Holy place and BEDKUDSHA which means Holy place. Madbaha is a symbol of Paradise or Heaven. The very first source of created light is sun which rises in the East. The Paradise or Garden of Eden created by God is also on the East. The reason for Orthodox Church turning to East to pray and that the Madbaha is placed on the East are on account of the reason that man who was dismissed from the Garden of Eden wishes his re entry into Paradise. It is also believed that Son of God makes his second coming from the East (Matthew 24:27).

It was from the 4th century that the Madbaha and its surroundings came to be considered as inaccessible to laymen. According to the interpretations of Syrian fathers, God who is the Holiest dwells in Madbaha. Madbaha is the heaven like place visible on earth. Angels are the visible image of

Heavenly Madbaha, engaged in worshipping God. During early days, entry into Madbaha was restricted to full Deacon upward. However, from 11th century, sub Deacons and readers were allowed entry. Yet, laymen had no authority to enter the Madbaha. Of late, as there is not enough number of deacons or sub deacons to serve at parishes, laymen are accorded special permission to carry out such responsibilities. Even today, those who are below a full Deacon will not move close to Thronose in the Byzantine Church and Chaldean Church. The Ethiopian Church used to consider their Emperor as Divinely appointed successor to King Solomon; yet, just on account of his coronation, the Emperor could not make his entry into Madbaha. Therefore, during the time of his coronation, the Emperor used to be ordained as a Deacon.

Curtain:

In the churches of Syrian tradition, Madbaha is covered by a curtain that has an image of a cross or dove. In Middle Eastern areas, images of saints are also seen on the curtain. The curtain is pulled open from south to north. But in Chaldean Church, the curtain is opened to either side from the middle. In some parishes of Antiochian and Malankara Orthodox Church, apart from the main curtain as said above, there is a small one that covers Thronose alone close to it. This small curtain is closed and opened as and when the bigger one is done. In such parishes, during occasions of Fraction Ceremony and Procession of Holy Mysteries to the west, only the small curtain is closed and opened. However, of late, this small curtain is almost absent.

The sermons of St Cyril have hinted at Curtain being used in Jerusalem during the 4th century. The use of Curtain would have come to Christian Church emulating Jerusalem Temple (Hebrews 9: 3 – 7). The purpose of Curtain can be said to be to preserve the Holiness of Madbaha, to express the invisibility of Divine presence and to point out the Mysterious nature of the celebration of Holy Qurbana in Madbaha.

Byzantine Church uses a Curtain made of wooden panel to cover the Thronose which has Icons of St Mary and other saints on it. This screen is called Iconostasis. Armenian Church and Coptic Church use Curtains of clothe as we do.

Questions:

1. What are the peculiarities of the places of worship of Malankara Orthodox Church?
2. What is 'Bema'?
3. Explain the meaning of Madbaha.
4. What are the reasons why we turn to East for our prayers?

Lesson 3

Thronose and Objects in Madbaha

Thronose # Thablitho # Cross # Candles and Lamps # Evengelion Table or Gospel Stand # Chalice and Paten # Kabilana # Sosaffa # Star# Spoon # Live Coal # Marvahso # Monstrance

Thronose:

'Thronose' is a Greek word meaning 'Throne'. This symbolises the heavenly throne that was high and exalted as seen by Isaiah in his vision (Isaiah 6: 1). In this vision Isaiah sees the Divine Throne as the centre of heavenly worship. In the revelation to him, St John also witnesses heavenly worship taking place before the Throne and the Lamb (Revelations 4:5; 7: 9 – 11). In the very same manner, Thronose has a crucial position when we celebrate Holy Qurbana. This is a symbol that connects our Holy Qurbana to Heavenly Worship.

There are many interpretations to Thronose on the basis of far reaching meanings to Holy Qurbana. Thus Thronose has been pictured in Church traditions as the Divine Throne, as the Tomb of our Lord (Moses Bar Kepha), as the Tree of Life or Immanuel (Mar Dionysius Areopagite), as Golgotha where our Lord sacrificed himself, as the cross and as our Lord Himself.

There is a custom with Byzantine Church and Roman Church to place Holy relics of saints inside the Thronose. This has come up from the tradition of constructing places of worship at the tombs of martyrs during early days. There are evidences of the Holy Qurbana itself being placed inside Thronose wherever Holy relics were not available. However, Syrian tradition does not permit this because Thronose is symbolised as the tomb of our Lord. For the same reasons, we do not place any containers of Holy relics on the Thronose.

Normally, the size of Thronose is 4 ft high, 6 ft long and 3.5 to 4 ft broad to resemble the size of a tomb. There is a step just below and close to Thronose called 'Darga' where only a full Deacon and above can place his foot.

The Last supper would have taken place on a wooden table. On this model, wooden tables were mostly used in early Church. However, alter was considered by early Church as an inseparable constituent for celebrating Holy Qurbana. "We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat" (Hebrews 13:10). St Ignatius of Antioch in AD 107 has repeatedly exhorted about Holy Qurbana and Thronose: "At one place only one Holy Qurbana has to be celebrated; this is because the Body our Lord Jesus Christ is one; the Chalice where we have participation in His Holy Blood is one; we have one alter and one Bishop" (Ignatius: Philippi 4:1).

Thronose made of stones would have come up symbolising the tomb of our Lord. In the ancient places of worship situated at the inner crust of earth which were known as catacombs of Rome containing tombs of martyrs and saints, Thronose made of stones were in use.

As St Ignatius had stated, the common tradition of ancient Church was to celebrate Holy Qurbana on one Thronose only. This tradition is followed by almost all Orthodox Churches. Early Church followed the system of one church, one Thronose and one Holy Qurbana a day. Later, during mid centuries,

when there were many priests in Catholic monasteries, to enable all those priests to celebrate Holy Qurbana, the system of many alters came up. In Malankara Church the system of constructing three Thronose was an innovation after the 17th century. There was no church with more than one Thronose prior to that.

Thablitho:

The Chalice and Paten are placed on the Thronose atop Thablitho which means plate, tablet or table. Catholic Church uses altar stone and Byzantine Church use antimension for the same purpose. Byzantine Church used to have a tradition of placing Holy relics also on Thablitho. Thablitho is a plate made in wood or marble of size 18 inches long and 12 inches broad. When a Church is consecrated, Thablitho too is consecrated. This has been in use at least from 4th century. During those days of persecutions, there was the necessity of a portable altar and Thablitho successfully served that purpose. This also underlines the direct relationship between a parish and the Metropolitan. Holy Qurbana celebrated at different parishes of a diocese are being celebrated in communion with the Metropolitan and Thablitho is a virtual indication of that as the same is consecrated by the same Metropolitan. Another indication for this relationship is the use of leaven and remembering the name of that Metropolitan during the Holy Qurbana, which are explained later.

Thablitho can be said to be a miniature Thronose. This symbolises the cross of our Lord as well as the stone tablet that had covered the tomb. On the basis of the principle of 'One Holy Qurbana in one Church', one Thablitho can be used a day only for one Holy Qurbana. By the same principle, there is only one Holy Qurbana on a Thronose one day. In situations where we have to celebrate Holy Qurbana outside our church or at a church belonging to other denominations, it is essential that we have to use our Thablitho.

Cross:

The custom we have is to have a simple wooden cross on the Thronose. We will not use a cross that carries the image of crucified Christ. The reason for this is that we have our Hope centred on a Christ who has overcome death and resurrected in glory rather than a Christ who is under pain. Cross symbolises our Lord who has undergone death through crucifixion, has resurrected overpowering death and has redeemed human race through his resurrection. Since we consider cross as a sign of victory over death, we raise the cross in our worship during Big Lent arranging a long collar like clothing over it. The reverence to cross is a special characteristic of Syrian Church. The Portuguese who came to India during the 16th century were surprised to see the reverence and devotion Malankara Christians were showing to Cross. On the other hand Byzantine Church gives more prominence to Icons of Jesus Christ and saints rather than to cross.

Candles and Lamps:

Light symbolises Divine presence. Israel experienced presence of Jehovah through the pillar of fire at night. Old Testament days had lamp kept lighted in front of the Curtain permanently (Leviticus 25: 1-4). The candles and lamps symbolise new Israel walking in the light of God. Book of Revelations specifically indicates this: "There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever" (Revelations 22:5). What is meant here is the new Israel that walks in the light of God. "I am the light

of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). This is what our Lord has commanded. Lighted candles symbolises light of life. Lamps were being used in worship during New Testament days (Acts 20:8; Revelations 4:5). Lamps also symbolically recall the fact that we are the light of the world. While Evengelion is read, lighted candles are the accompaniment which brings to our mind what the Psalmist has said: "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalms 119:105).

According to Hudaya Canon, the Madbaha where Holy Communion is preserved should always have a lighted lamp. This indicates the presence of Christ who is the Bread of life and Light of the world.

Evengelion Table or Gospel Stand or Lectern:

Sometimes Evengelion table is called a Throne. Evengelion is a symbol of Jesus Christ. Earlier, Evengelion used to be brought to the table as a pompous procession accompanied with lighted candles, censor and Marvahso. But now, instead of such a pompous procession, the celebrant carries the Evengelion without a procession as in the past. Most of our parishes follow a practice of placing the Evengelion table on the south of the Thronose or the right side commemorating Christ sitting on the right side of the Throne of Father God in his glory; but there are parishes which place this table on the north seeing the importance of north. The table on which Evengelion is placed permanently has been revered by all. Those who enter Madbaha go to this table, bow before it and kiss it with devotion. While offering incense, the Deacon also bows his head before this able in reverence.

Chalice and Paten:

Till 4th century, the Chancel used was made in glass. But from 4th century onwards, usage of Chalice made of gold or silver with costly stones studded on it came up. During early days, Syrian Church had a Chalice that used to be shorter. It was from the 17th century, Chalice of the present size came to use. The present tall Chalice can be said to be an innovation from the Portuguese – Italian style.

However, the Paten retains the ancient form in Syrian Church. Roman Catholics have a custom of sanctifying Chalice and Paten with Holy Oil. But Syrian Church does this sanctification by reciting a prayer. It seems that it was in the 9th century the custom to use Chalice and Paten made of metal was made mandatory. There are evidences that wooden Chalice and Paten were used in some ancient monasteries of Syrian tradition.

Kabilana:

This is a small piece of clothe used to cover Chancel and Paten. There is a word in Syriac 'MCBILONO' which means receptacle or accepting; the correct name for this is 'HOOFYO' or 'cover'. Early Church was using metallic covers. Catholic Syrian Rite in the Middle East region has again started metallic covers. Kabilana is interpreted as symbolising the cloud that dwelled over the Temple (1 Kings 8: 10, 11). The very same interpretation is given for Sosaffa also.

Sosaffa:

This is a white clothe that is used to cover Chalice and Paten once Bread and Wine are arranged. The term used for this was 'ANAFURA' in Syriac which means offering, liturgy, petition or veil. This is interpreted as symbolic of Divine presence and glory. During the preparatory service, when Bread

and Wine are being covered, the prayer reveals this thought: "His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth" (Habakkuk 3:3).

During the celebration of Holy Qurbana, after the kiss of peace, the Sosaffa is raised and celebrated with this prayer: **"You are the hard rock which sent forth twelve rivers of water for the twelve tribes of Israel. You are the hard rock which was set against the tomb of our Saviour"** (Thaksa of St James). According to this prayer, removing Sosaffa from atop the Chancel and Paten is symbolic of the hard rock being removed from the tomb of our Lord (Matthew 27:60). Just similar to Israel having saved themselves from the clutches of death with the flow of water from the hard rock (Numbers 20: 2 – 11), mankind saved themselves from the clutches of death because of our Lord, the water of life resurrected from the tomb made of hard rock (John 7:37 – 39). Sosaffa is also seen as a symbol of the large sheet Peter saw in his vision (Acts 10: 9 – 16). During early days, Sosaffa used to be larger in size that it could cover the Thronose fully. Co celebrants or deacons used to help the celebrant to hold this large sized Sosaffa during its celebration. Even this day, Byzantine Church has a custom that when a Bishop is the celebrant, other priests present help him in Sosaffa celebration.

Star (KAUKBO):

This is a cross shaped object that is placed on the Paten which is seen in Syrian and Byzantine traditions. This is viewed as a symbol of that star which appeared at the time of the birth of our Lord (Matthew 2: 1 – 17).

Spoon (THARVODO):

This is also called 'KALBTHO' or 'thong' (Isaiah 6:6, 7). The purpose of this metallic object is for the celebrant to accept Holy Qurbana from Chalice and to give to believers. It doesn't seem that a spoon was used for this prior to 5th century. This is seen as a symbol of the thong Isaiah saw in his vision.

GMURTHO or Live Coal:

This is a small cushion placed on the left of Thablitho on which the spoon is placed. The purpose of this is to wipe the fingers of the celebrant after touching the Holy Bread and Wine. After blessing Bread and Wine, the celebrant raises Gmurtho and Spoon to be visible to the congregation for which there are many interpretations.

A small vessel that is placed on the left side of Thronose is called 'deaconesses' or 'cruet'. In Syriac, this is called MSHMSHONISO. During preparatory service, the celebrant pours wine and water in this before transferring to Chalice. After touching Holy Bread and Wine, the celebrant washes the tip of his fingers in water that is remaining in this.

Marvahso or Fan:

Marvahso symbolises the Cherubim with their wings spread across the atonement cover (Exodus 25: 18 – 22) and the Seraphs which Isaiah saw in his vision (Isaiah 6: 1 – 4). In our worships, Marvahsos are shaken symbolising angels flying around the Divine Throne. These have been used in worships since 4th century. The earliest document that makes a mention of this is the 'Apostolic Doctrines' (375). 'Let two deacons stand on either side of Thronose holding fans made of clothes or peacock

feathers; let them prevent small insects from nearing the Chalice'. The use of Marvahso came up from this practical action. From 6th century onwards, use of Marvahsos became inevitable for the consecration of Holy Mooron also. Catholics followed this till 14th century.

Monstrance:

Of late it has become common in many of our parishes to keep this gold plated object on the Thronose and to use them during processions. This has made its entry into our Church from the influence of Roman customs. Roman Church introduced this in the 13th century for exhibiting Holy Qurbana during worship. Orthodox Church does not follow this tradition of worshipping blessed Bread and Wine. Taking this for processions is also not an Eastern characteristic. However, emulating Catholics, some of our parishes have started taking this for processions, amending the traditional custom of our priests leading processions with a cross in their hands.

Questions:

1. Explain the meaning of Thronose.
2. How did the use of Thablitho commence?
3. What is the significance of using lamps and candles in worship?
4. What is the relevance of covering Bread and Wine with Sosaffa and later removing it and celebrating?
5. What does Marvahso symbolise?

Lesson 4

Meaning of Bread and Wine

Bread # Wine

Bread:

Eastern Churches follow the example of Christ having used leavened bread made from wheat flour and wine at the Last Supper. [Refer the book ABBA PITHAVE to learn about the use of leavened bread] Bread is something that is needed for man's physical survival. The purpose of man's hard toil in this world can be said to be earning bread. When such bread is submitted before God, man is submitting the fruits of his hard toil or in other words, the very purpose behind his life to God. Bread is a gift from God. As an expression our thanks, we are submitting before God from what He has gifted to us. Thus the relationship between God and man as well as man's obligations to God are being recalled.

At the Holy place of Jerusalem Temple, twelve numbers of consecrated loaves were placed on the table in front of the veil (Leviticus 24: 5 – 9). The meaning behind this is that God has entered into a covenant with the twelve tribes and that God remembers them eternally. The manna Israelites received during their exodus as their daily food was an evidence for God's care on them. As an eternal memory of that care, the golden jar where manna was kept is placed in the gold plated arc (Hebrews 9:4). Church tradition understands that this manna and the consecrated loaf are a foretaste to Holy Qurbana (John 6: 31 – 34).

Now, our Church submits only one loaf before God in Holy Qurbana and not twelve because instead of those twelve tribes, God has entered into new covenant with a single Church. One loaf symbolises Christ, the only begotten one. Further, this also symbolises the unity of Church. "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf" (1 Corinthians 10:17). The Church is scattered across the universe and the unity of such a scattered Church is reflected through this single loaf. This thought is evident in 'Didache', which is understood to have been written in early 2nd century: 'O God, bring together this Church in your kingdom, that is now scattered across this universe just like the grains scattered once across different hilly terrains joined together in this one loaf'. Thus, the one loaf made from many grains symbolises a single Church.

The Bread in Holy Qurbana is known also as 'FURGONO' meaning 'chosen', 'THABAO' meaning 'seal', 'BUKKRO' meaning 'first fruit' or 'first born' (Hebrews 1:6). The term 'BUKKRO' would have come from the prayer that is recited during the preparatory service while placing the loaf in the Paten. **'O You First born of the heavenly Father, accept this first born from the hands of Your weak and sinful servant'**.

The tradition of Syrian Church about Bread in Holy Qurbana can be said to be this: Bread shall be leavened, round in shape with three inch in diameter and three-fourth inch thick. Top surface is divided into four parts by two cross like lines. Each of these parts is divided into three. In all these twelve parts, there are signs of cross. These twelve crosses symbolise twelve apostles who have become one in Christ. These twelve apostles form the foundation of the Church, which is the new Israel. Instead of the twelve consecrated loaves of the old Israel, as a symbol of Christ and new Israel, one loaf is submitted.

We use wheat flour, leaven or fermentum, water, salt and olive oil for making bread. Leaven is a portion of dough kept aside from previous week. Leaven or fermentum symbolises life and the continuity of Church. In case leaven or fermentum is not available on any particular day, it has to be obtained from other nearby parishes. However, if this is not possible under any circumstances, Syrian tradition allows to use fresh flour and to make it leavened.

Leaven or fermentum establishes the relationship between the celebration of Holy Qurbana by Metropolitans and priests. In the 3rd and 4th centuries, there was a custom of the priests adding a portion of the Holy Qurbana offered by Metropolitans to their Patens. Using fermentum can be related to this custom also.

Some of the writers in Chaldean Church have been treating fermentum as a Sacrament of the Church. Chaldean Church has a tradition that a portion of the flour used at the last Supper was handed over to St John by our Lord and this passed through the generations from St Thomas, Addai, Mari and so on to reach the Church of this day.

During nearly the first ten centuries, all Christian Churches including Roman Church were using leavened bread for Holy Qurbana. Roman Church started switching over to unleavened bread only in the 9th century.

Hudaya Canon stipulates using Bread for Holy Qurbana the very same day it is made. The early Church father John of Tella says this: "This Heavenly Bread symbolises Manna which was to be picked for the day only and was not to be carried over to the next morning as commanded by God in Exodus 16; likewise, Bread for Holy Qurbana should be used on the day it is made". This tradition was being followed in Church at least from the 4th century. The dough for bread is readied on the previous evening and is cooked next day morning before Holy Qurbana. This was a service performed only by a priest or by a deacon during early days. Yahya Ebengarir (AD 1083), a Syrian Orthodox author had stressed through his writings in Arabic that while the dough is being readied in the evening and when Bread is made the next morning, the one who is engaged in this service should be wearing neat clothing and keeping on reciting Psalms. The Bread should invariably be made at the church or in its premises. There used to be a system during very early days that the believers used to make bread at their home and bring to church. Gradually, this system gave way to believers bringing to church the ingredients such as the wheat flour, olive oil and the like; later, believers started giving money to church for this. Probably, this would have led to the present custom of 'offering cash for Holy Qurbana'.

Wheat flour, fermentum, salt and olive oil being used to make bread have been provided with certain symbolic interpretations. These four objects are seen as the basic components of creation. Such interpreters are of the view that bread for Holy Qurbana should be wholesome in all respects. Bread can be seen as wholesome only if all the four basic components of creation join together. As a sequel to these interpretations, fathers from Syrian traditions have expanded them as wheat flour symbolises earth or water, salt symbolises fire, fermentum symbolises spirit and oil symbolises air or fire or spirit. Yet, Syrian Church views these interpretations as explanations filled with devotion and not as basic doctrines of faith. Leviticus 2: 13 can be pointed out as a reason for adding salt as well as Mark 9:49 also. The symbolic interpretations of these components point our fingers to the complexities of Holy Qurbana, the Mystery of Mysteries.

Wine:

Ancient canons insist that wine that is the extract of grapes alone can be used for Holy Qurbana. This wine should be a little sweet, a little sour and red in colour. Red wine is called 'blood of grape' in Old Testament (Genesis 49:11; Deuteronomy 32: 14). Wine provides enthusiasm to those who are distressed and those in mourning (Jeremiah 16:7; Proverbs 31:16). Coming of Messiah has been symbolised with the joy of drinking wine (Joel 2:19, 24). Wine also symbolises tribulations (Matthew 26:39; 20:22). It is a sign of transformation through sufferings. Wine happens to be the juice that is fermented after we extract it applying pressure on the wine press (Isaiah 63:2; Jeremiah 25:30). In other words, drinking wine is partaking in the life of our Lord.

Intoxication from wine is often symbolised with intoxication of devotion. "My cup overflows" (Psalm 23:5). In Hebrew language, this can be transcribed as 'your intoxicating cup is noble'. Church traditions see this verse from Psalm 23 as a pointer to Sacraments; fathers interpret this as a spiritual intoxication - spiritual enthusiasm - a believer derives through his taking part in Holy Qurbana. The state of intoxication Noah had is also interpreted this way (Genesis 9: 13 – 24).

In India and elsewhere where wine is not easily available, the extract formed by squeezing dry grapes soaked in water, is also used. However, Church tradition is against the use of ordinary grape juice. From the very early days, Church had been using wine mixed with water. Documents available as of 6th century prescribe equal measure of wine and water. All Christians other than Armenians follow this custom of wine and water mixed equally. On this, Syrian fathers had criticised the custom followed by Armenian Church. John Bar Shushan (AD 1072), the Patriarch of Antioch had written: "We add water to wine as taught by our Lord; Apostle and theologian St John had stated, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear bringing a sudden flow of blood and water" (John 19:34). This is the scriptural portion quoted by Church fathers to justify the custom of mixing water and wine for Holy Qurbana. The prayer at the time mixing water with wine and pouring into the Chalice during the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana also has this portion of the Bible: 'Unite, O Lord, this water and this wine as Your divinity was united with our humanity'. With this prayer, the celebrant pours water into wine. This is seen by Syrian Church as a symbol of Christ's divinity having been merged with humanity.

Questions:

1. Explain the significance of using only on Bread for celebration of Holy Qurbana.
2. Why do we use red wine during the celebration of Holy Qurbana?
3. What are the explanations for adding water to wine?

Lesson 5

Meaning of Offering Incense

In Old Testament # Offering Incense in Christian Church # Offering Incense in Holy Qurbana #
Meaning of Offering Incense #

Offering incense is an inseparable facet of Eastern worship. During hourly prayers, Holy Qurbana and celebrations of other sacraments, incense has a very important role. In Coptic Church, hourly prayers are called Office of the Incense. Right from very ancient days, censor, incense and fragrance were part and parcel of worships and religious rituals in nations adjoining Mediterranean Sea. One reason for this could be the abundant availability of objects causing fragrance which they would have found appropriate for using in their worships. Offering incense in Christian Church can trace its origin to Jewish customs of worships.

Jews believed that offering of incense commenced in worships as commanded by God. Fragrant blend of incense was made mixing up different kinds of fragrant spices (Exodus 30: 34 -38). Such fragrant blends were not allowed to be made by Jews for any other purpose. For offering incense, a separate Altar of Incense was there in the Atonement Cover (Exodus 30: 1 – 10). The Altar of Incense was placed in front of the curtain that was before the Ark of Testimony. A burning coal was to be taken from the table of sacrifice for placing in a vessel and blend of fragrance was to be spread over it; this was to be kept at the Altar of Incense. This was the custom followed during Old Testament days. God had commanded Moses that every day morning and evening, offering of incense must be performed (Exodus 30: 7, 8).

Offering of incense was a main responsibility of priests (1 Samuel 2: 28; Numbers 16:46). The live coal taken from the table of sacrifice alone could be used for offering incense. Nadab and Abihu used live coal from other sources and they died (Leviticus 10:1). As part of certain sacrifices, incense offering was there. The High Priest had to enter the Holy of Holies, always, with incense. Jews believed in Divine presence at the Holy of Holies and therefore it was necessary that the seat of mercy had to be invisible to him; it was for this the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies with incense. The Jews were really scared of Divine Vision. Moses who wished to have a vision of glory of God was told, "But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." (Exodus 33:20). Therefore, the smoke of incense was to cover the seat of mercy as a protection for the High Priest.

The offering of incense every morning and evening used to be performed symbolising the prayers of Israel in their entirety. The meaning behind this is that the prayers of Israel rise up as a fragrance to the Divine presence. The statement of Psalmist, "May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2) has been made in this background.

Offering Incense in Christian Church:

The custom of offering incense in Christian Church has been taken from Old Testament. St John says in the Book of Revelations 5:8 that the prayers of Church, that is the new Israel, [prayers of the saints], are the 'golden bowls full of incense'. This could be a pointer that the worship in Asia Minor would have had incense offerings (Revelations 8: 3- 5). When the Christians of Philippi had sent their

support to St Paul, he acknowledged this commenting that such support was fragrance of sacrifice to God, which also is indicative of what is stated above (Philippians 4:18).

Offering Incense in Holy Qurbana:

As we understand from the Gospel according to St John, our Lord has instituted Holy Qurbana not on the day of Jewish Passover (John 13:1; 18:28; 19:14, 31, 42). Many scholars have opined that our Lord had a Chaburah meal before the Jewish Passover and instituted Holy Qurbana at that time. Chaburah meal is a supper that is arranged by friends before the previous day of Sabbath or other feasts. [See pages 44 – 46 of 'ABBA PITHAVE']. Such meals are having religious significance too. During such a get together, customs included burning objects of fragrance. This indeed was a system prevailing in Mediterranean countries when guests were invited for a meal. But the fragrance offering in a Chaburah meal used to be a ritual with prayers. The chief guest or the head of the hosts would take the object of fragrance and place it on live coal as the offering of incense. Even in these modern days, conservative Jews follow the practice of offering incense with prayers while having meals.

The scholar Gregory Dix, in his book 'The Shape of the Liturgy' (page 425 – 430) has ascertained through his studies that the Last Supper our Lord had with his disciples was a Chaburah meal where objects of fragrance were used. If this is true, offering of incense was a custom that had commenced with institution of Holy Qurbana. But there is no mention about this in New Testament.

However, New Testament does not object to incense offering during worships. According to Book of Revelations, offering of incense is very much there in the eternal heavenly worship (Revelations 5:8; 8: 3 -5). Yet, offering of incense was not very common during worships during 2nd and 3rd centuries. The reasons for such staying away from offering of incense would have been to ensure uniqueness to Christian worship different from those of the gentiles who had been having incense offering in their worships. There were Christians then who did offering of incense to gentile gods to escape persecutions. Such denouncers of faith were branded 'incense burners'. This also would have been reasons for not using incense during Christian worships those days.

By 4th century, offering of incense regained its place in worships. The Spanish woman Aetheria had visited Jerusalem in 4th century and had written about the worships she took part there. She has witnessed that when the Bishop reads out the Gospel in the morning worship, Deacon has been offering incense to believers. There are documents stating that incense was offered during the funeral procession of Peter, the Bishop of Alexandria. In a hymn penned by Mar Aphrem in AD 363, offering of incense during worship has been mentioned.

The custom of honouring High Priests by offering incense commenced in the 4th century. In Roman Empire, when the Emperor or his representatives made appearance in public functions, they used to be honoured by people walking before them with lighted candles or lamps. A servant used to walk side by side carrying live coal so as to take care in case the lamp or candles were accidentally put off. It was common to spread a little fragrance objects with this live coal. Such rituals were quite common in the day to day affairs of the Emperor's mansion. Later, Byzantine Emperors and some European kings also started following this custom of incense offering in their palaces. Lamp and candles were used like this with the sense that the concerned person is honoured. It was from this ritual, the system of honouring High Priests with incense offerings came into Church.

Meaning of Offering Incense:

- a. Incense smoke is indicative of the presence of invisible God. Old Israel witnessed Divine presence through the pillar of cloud; likewise, new Israel or the Church sees incense smoke as a symbol of Divine presence. This should be the reason behind the censor being blessed during Holy Qurbana in the name of Holy Trinity.
- b. With the conviction of Divine presence, the Church offers true worship to God and incense offering is a sign thereof. "In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among all the nations" (Malachi 1:11). The prayers from the Church rise up as pure incense and pure sacrifice. In all our hourly prayers, performance of Sacraments and celebration of feasts we have prayers called ETHRO where this thought is seen repeatedly. In the SHUBAKONO service at the commencement of Big Lent, we pray like this in ETHRO: **"O Lord, we offer before you this service with chosen incense, fragrance of joy, pleasing incense and as You are pleased with these, be pleased with us as You will"**.
- c. Incense also symbolises sanctification of time and space through liturgies of Church. Fragrance indicates virtues. Everyone likes proximity to fragrance and virtuous persons. Contacts with fragrance make other objects also fragrant. Proximity to God, the source of all virtues, makes Church too filled in fragrance. Proximity to Church makes our universe filled in fragrance of virtues. Fragrance of virtues the Church has from proximity to God spreads to universe through liturgy of Church.
- d. God expects sanctification of the lives of believers through worship akin to time and space sanctified through incense offerings. A life in holiness is the incense God likes most. Church uses incense as a pointer to this. We pray in ETHRO of Yeldho Feast morning hour: **"O Lord, we perform offering of incense before You, which is the invisible incense emanating from our hearts where You dwell; may You be pleased to fill our internal senses with fragrance of Your love"**. Each believer is a Temple where God dwells (1 Corinthians 3:17; 6:19). Similar to a Temple getting filled with fragrance of incense, lives of believers should get filled with love of God and virtues of goodness. This invisible fragrance makes incense offerings significant.
- e. "They were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people" (Revelations 5:8). The prayers of the Church also join this. This thought is reflected further in the prayers while incense offering is done around the Chalice and Paten during the preparatory service to Holy Qurbana. Swinging the sensor toward east; **'with the sweet fragrance of incense, may there be remembrance of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God'**. Swinging the censor to the west; **'with sweet fragrance of incense, may there be a remembrance of the prophets, the apostles and the holy martyrs'**. Swinging the sensor toward the north; **'with the sweet fragrance of incense, may there be remembrance of the doctors, the priests, the just and the righteous'**. Swinging the censor toward the south; **'with the sweet fragrance of incense, may there be remembrance of the Holy Church and all her children'**.

Questions:

1. Explain that the offering of incense is Bible based.
2. How did the custom of incense offering come into Holy Qurbana?
3. Explain briefly the meaning of incense offering.
4. Understand the main thoughts contained in ETHRO of different liturgies by reading them.

Lesson 6

Vestments in Worship

Sandal # White Cassock # HAMNIKO # SOONORO # Zende # Phayno # Pallium # Big Oororo # Chain with Cross # Croiser # SLEEBO

During festive occasions in ancient Roman Empire, there was the custom to wear specially designed clothing; the priestly attire chosen for our worships are modelled more or less on this ancient custom. The present day attire for worship has become popular from the 4th century AD. During the time of John Chrysostom, (347 – 407), there used to be separate attire for Bishops, priests and deacons in Antioch. The attire used by priests of the Old Testament days also has crucial roles in formulating appropriate clothing for worship in Christian Church (Exodus 28: 1 – 43). During the Old Testament time, special clothing was designed for priests for dignity and honour (Exodus 28:2). In other words, the priests were wearing separate clothing as a sign of holiness they have been gifted to perform priestly service of Divine glory. The narration we have in Ephesians 6: 11 – 17 explaining the 'Armour of God' also has played a role in the development of liturgical attire.

Today, Syrian Church has sandals, white cassock, Hamniko, cincture (belt), cuffs and Cope as attire for priests to be worn during worships. The prayers recited while wearing each of these describe their meanings also.

Sandal:

In Old Testament, sandal is a sign for getting ready for a journey. People of Israel ate their first Passover meal wearing sandals. Mourners and prisoners of war were not wearing sandals. Sandal symbolises joy, authority, freedom and title (Ruth 4:7; Psalms 60:8; 108:9). Sandals are used in Holy Qurbana as a sign of victory over evil powers and as getting ready to gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). [Make a reference to prayers recited while wearing sandals by the priest]. This also symbolises that the priest is ready to celebrate Holy Qurbana and that he is prepared to lead the Church in its pilgrimage to heavenly kingdom. The sandals being used in Madbaha cannot be used elsewhere.

White Cassock:

In ancient Greece and Rome, white robes were the usual attire of noble men. At least from 2nd century, white cassock was used as clothing during worship. Cyprian (AD 250) wore a white robe while he was martyred. White clothing symbolises the holiness acquired with Holy Baptism. The statement we read in the Book of Revelations, "He who overcomes will be dressed in white" (3:5; 7:9) is about those who are baptised. In his revelation, St John saw the Church wearing 'bright and clean white linen', the righteous deeds of God's men (Revelations 19: 7, 8). The thoughts Rabbis teach that Adam had been wearing 'clothing of light' before his fall. Eastern Churches teach that this 'clothing of light' that was lost with the fall would be regained in Holy Baptism. The celebrants wear white cassock as the Church sanctified in Baptism worships God. The believers who take part in worships would better be wearing white clothing. With second coming of our Lord all would get incorruptible 'clothing of light' powered by Holy Spirit. The attire for those who take part in the eternal worship of the heavenly temple would be this 'clothing of light'. The white cassock in Holy

Qurbana is a foretaste of that. White attire symbolises the sanctified body and mind taking part in worship. Only those who clothe themselves in pure and clean bridal attire have entry into the wedding feast of the Heavenly King (Matthew 22: 11 – 13).

HAMNIKO:

This particular clothing Hamniko has its correct name Oororo also called stole. Deacons wear a long cloth on their shoulders which also has this very same name. In ancient Rome, men used to wear a long shawl on their shoulders during festive occasions which would have led to this Hamniko. In AD 395, Emperor Theodor had commanded that Senators and Consuls should wear a colour shawl as their sign of position in hierarchy. Bishops, priests and deacons were wearing this during that time. Documents of 4th century had mentioned about deacons wearing Oororo. The Synod held at Laodicea in AD 372 had prohibited sub deacons from wearing this Oororo. The custom of deacons wearing Oororo on their left shoulders was prevalent in Antioch during 4th century. St John Chrysostom in one of his speeches had pictured this as the live wings of angels. When the priest wears Hamniko, he recites a prayer which includes this verse from Psalm 18: 39, 40: “Gird me with strength unto the battle and subdue under me them that rise up against me, defeat my enemies before me and I will silence them who hate me”. This can be seen as armour against the forces of evil.

SOONORO:

This is also called Cincture. Tying a belt across one’s waist is a sign of preparation. It was a custom that Passover meal had to be eaten wearing the belt (Exodus 12:11). St Paul has stated about tying one’s waist with truth (Ephesians 6:14). Jesus Christ washed the feet of his disciples tying a towel on his waist as sign of readiness to serve (John 13:4). Prayer recited by the priest while tying the Cincture across his waist contains thoughts of wearing a sword of Divine power to confront the might of evil. “Gird Your sword upon your loin, O Most Mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty; Your majesty triumphs” (Psalms 45:3).

Zende:

These are also called cuffs; the significance of wearing this is a sign of being strengthened and to show that hands are prepared for Divine service. While wearing these on each hand, there are prayers and Psalms (18: 34, 35) recited. Byzantine Church and Chaldean Church use cuffs having crosses on them. The cuffs used by Byzantine Church are open on one side that they can be tied across hands.

Phayno:

This is also called Cope which means a dress that is worn above other clothing. The word Phayno would have originated from the Greek word PHELONUS. In Roman and Greek culture, men used to wear a cassock like clothing above their normal dress. Cope has its origin from this. The Cope as we have now was in use from the 4th century. During early days, deacons in Roman Church were using Cope, but in Eastern Churches, only Bishops and Priests were wearing this. [This can be compared to the bridal clothing for the heavenly feast mentioned in Matthew 25:11]. The significance of Cope is explained using the symbols of the red cassock Christ was wearing before his crucifixion (John 19:5), the cassock worn by Jesus when the bleeding woman touched it (Matthew 9:20) and the cassock Prophet Elijah

was wearing (2 Kings 2:13). When the celebrant wears the Cope, the prayers include Psalm 132: 9, 10 which indicates that Cope is a sign of honour for a priest to be in service to God.

All traditional Churches have the custom of wearing Cope. Till 13th century, Syrian Church was using Cope that could not be opened from the front. There are no stipulations as to the colour of a Cope, but black colour is not to be used. However, a black Cope is used often on Good Fridays. Western Churches have some stipulations on the colour of Cope based on the significance of certain feast days.

VESTMENTS FOR HIGH PRIESTS:

Masnapso:

This is also called Batrasheel. This is to cover the head as part of a Bishop wearing the Cope. The head cover or turban used by the Jewish High Priest was called MISNEPHETH (Exodus 28: 4, 36 – 40). The term Masnapso would have come from this. Usage of turban in Christian tradition has come from the customs followed by monks.

During early days, this was made from white cloth. Rabula, who was Bishop of Edessa (411 – 435), used to wear turban like this as we gather from his biography. In this text, a term BEERUNO meaning 'hood' is used.

When Moses descended Mount Sinai carrying the stone tablets, his face was glowing in splendour and the Israelites were scared to look at him. So Moses placed a shroud over his head (Exodus 34: 29 – 35; 2 Corinthians 3: 12 – 18). It is in this backdrop, our Bishops cover their head with Masnapso while turning to west during celebration of Holy Qurbana. This is worn by reciting Psalm 4:6. [Under normal circumstances, Bishops and Rambans wear a black turban with crosses over it which is also called Masnapso, but it has other names like ESKEEMO, KOOSISO and KOOBATHO].

Big Oororo:

Big Oororo or big Hamniko that is worn over the cope is also called PATHRASEEN. The Greek equivalent OMOPHORION is also used. High Priests have been using this from 4th century. The Pallium used by Catholic Bishops is slightly different. The meaning of Oororo of priests and the meaning of this big Oororo are not different. This is a sign of God's vigil and assertion of victory over enemies. While wearing this, verse Psalm 27:5 is recited.

Chain with Cross:

A chain with cross is part of vestments of Bishops in all Churches. Byzantine Church often uses pendants with icons of our Lord or Mother of God. From 4th century onwards, believers started the custom of wearing a cross on their necks. Chain with cross has become an exclusive right of Bishops only from the 16th century. This symbolises vigil against evil forces. While wearing this, Psalm 34: 5 is recited.

Croiser:

Croiser has a small cross with two serpents on either side. Though Byzantine Church and Syrian Church use Croiser with two serpents, one with a lone serpent is also used in Syrian Church. This symbolises the brass serpent raised by Moses. Croiser with a curved top is also used in Malankara symbolising the sprouted staff of Aaron. Using a Croiser would have come up from the custom of aged monks attending worships with a staff as support. Shepherds have staffs in their hands which is a mark of identification. A sheep when falls into a pit is pulled up by the shepherd using the curved end of his staff which is common in Middle Eastern regions. Shepherds use this staff not to punish sheep, but to guide them the right way and to protect them from wild animals. Believers witness the presence of Christ, the good shepherd, in Bishop. Thus Croiser is a symbol of responsibility and authority over God's herd of sheep. "Therefore be as shrewd as snakes" (Matthew 10: 16). The images of serpents recall these words of our Lord. The cross in between the serpents destructs the power of evil. When a Bishop takes his Croiser in his hands, he recites Psalm 110:2.

Sleebo:

Blessing the believers with Sleebo is a custom that is prevalent in all Eastern Churches. This seems to have come up after 6th century. When Sleebo is taken, Psalm 44:5 is recited; this too symbolises victory over enemies.

Questions:

1. What is the significance of white clothing?
2. What are the meanings of tying belt across the waist and wearing sandals?

[Please note that it is not necessary to learn by heart the nomenclature of different vestments]

Unit 3

Sanctifying Time: Calendar of Worship and Feasts

Lesson 1

Importance of Sunday

Observance of Sunday in Christian Church # In Early Church # Sunday, the Day of Eternity

We have already seen that Christian liturgy is substantially influenced by Jewish customs for its origin as also for its growth. Similarly, the Church calendar and feasts also owe a lot to Jewish religion in their development. Jewish calendar was centred on Passover festival and Sabbath. As we read in Genesis 2:3, God rested from all works on the seventh day after finishing creations; He blessed and sanctified the seventh day. On the basis of this, Jews considered Sabbath, the seventh day as instituted by God and observance of Sabbath as Divine (Exodus 16: 23 – 29; 31: 1 – 17). Passover feast commemorates the liberation of Israel. Observance of Passover was also done as commanded by God (Exodus 12).

In Christian Church, most important days of liturgy calendar are Sundays and Easter. Christian calendar was centred on these two days before Nicaea Synod (325).

Observance of Sunday in Christian Church:

First day of the week: It should be noted that Christian Church did not follow Jewish rituals totally, as they did not take the seventh day Sabbath; instead, observing Sunday, the first day of the week is proof enough for this variation. Rather than the sanctified day of Saturday as Sabbath, Christians considered Sunday more important because Jesus resurrected on Sunday, the first day of the week. Risen Christ revealed himself to his disciples on Sunday (John 20: 19, 26). Again, Christ revealed to those two disciples travelling to Emmaus on the first day of the week (Luke 24: 1, 13). Christ moved close with them as fellow traveller and engaged in conversation. While conversing, he referred to many prophets right from Moses and explained to them whatever was written about him in scriptures (Luke 24:27). Still they could not understand that Christ was the one who was walking with them. When they sat for supper, “he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him” (Luke 24: 30, 31). The apostles experienced the live presence of risen Christ through Holy Qurbana on the ‘first day’. The Holy Communion on Sunday was experienced by disciples as a supper with Jesus Christ (Luke 24:30). It was the experience of Holy Qurbana that enabled their eyes open to recognise risen Christ. The early Christians took part in worship every eighth day and witnessed Jesus and experienced Jesus living

with them. When St John commented on the dilution of faith by St Thomas, this thought also is intertwined there (John 20: 24 – 29).

During the time of St Paul, worship on Sundays had become quite common. Paul, Luke and other members of Church at Troas were, as per this custom, breaking Bread as we read in Book of Acts (20:7). Paul had suggested the Church of Corinth to collect funds during Sunday worship for assisting God's people (1 Corinthians 16:2). These all are evidences that as early as in AD 54, Sunday was earmarked as the day of worship.

Early Church considered Sunday as the day related to Christ. This is the day Christ takes his meal with believers. Each believer is specifically invited for this fellowship.

Lord's Day: In all the above quoted Biblical portions, Sunday has been identified with the term 'first day of the week'. In Jewish calendar, days of the week are called first day, second day and so on. The term 'Lord's Day' has been used for the first time in the Book of Revelations. The 'Gospel according to St Peter, one among the deuterocanonical texts, carries references to Lord's Day as the Feast of Resurrection. In the letters of St Ignatius of Antioch also, Lord's Day refers to Feast of Resurrection (Magnesia 9). St John would have called Sunday as Lord's Day because early Church would have been observing each Sunday as Feast of Resurrection. In Syrian Church also, Sunday is considered as the 'first day' or the 'Day of Resurrection' or KYMTHA.

Roman Empire used to call Sunday as the day of sun. This has prompted Christian Church to see Sunday as dawn of the 'sun of righteousness' (Malachi 4:2).

In Early Church:

During the days of Tertullian itself (AD 200), fasting on Sunday as also kneeling down had been forbidden. This was also applicable for those fifty days from Easter to Pentecost. Kneeling down had been thought as sign of repentance as also of slavery; so it was insisted that prayers on Sundays were to be done in standing pose. Sunday as well as those fifty days from Easter to Pentecost are days of rejoicing with the risen bridegroom and therefore fasting and kneeling were not in order.

Till the beginning of 4th century, Sundays were not holidays; the Emperor Constantine released a proclamation on March 7, 321 that judicial courts and industrial establishments should not work on the Venerable day of the sun.

Right from the day our Lord has risen, Sunday has been observed as the day for worship. The early Church did not have a custom to observe Sunday without celebrating Holy Qurbana. St John Chrysostom says in 4th Century: "This meal symbolises brotherhood; everybody takes part in this meal as if they are in Christ; staying away from this meal is as good as staying away from our Lord; we share this Divine meal on Sunday in fellowship with our Lord and brothers".

Therefore whoever stay away from Sunday worship and the experience of Holy Communion is turning alien to our Lord.

Sunday, the Day of Eternity:

Church fathers have given many metaphorical explanations to Sunday. Among these, a commonly accepted one is to picture Sunday as symbol of eternity. Sunday is the first day of a week; Sunday

comes again after the Sabbath, the seventh day. Therefore, fathers express Sunday as eighth day as well. Process of creation commenced on the first day; first fruit of creation, that is Christ, rose on the eighth day. Therefore, Sunday as the eighth day is the day of commencement of new creation. Eighth day is a day outside the seven days of a week; therefore, the eighth day or Sunday is beyond the concept of time and thus it symbolises eternity. Mankind redeemed in Christ has inheritance to eternity. Sunday is a foretaste to that eternity. Staying away from daily chores on Sunday symbolises resting in eternity. We experience eternity in our Sunday worship, the Holy Qurbana. Part taking in Holy Communion on Sunday is our participation of the feast in eternal kingdom with risen Christ. Such interpretations on Sunday can be seen in the letters of Barnabas, Irenios, Tertullian, Justin Martyr and others.

Among later writers, St Augustine says: "The Day of our Lord, the day sanctified with the resurrection of Christ and the eighth day of eternity point to resting in eternity. What shall be our goal other than reaching the kingdom that is endless!"

We have a similar thought from Mar Gregoriose of Nazianzus: "Sabbath indicates resting inside a tomb; but our Sunday is commencement of new creation. This is the day on which new life flew down from the high".

Sunday also is a symbol of the common resurrection that happens with the second coming of Christ. Man rises from the tomb of sin and worships Christ seeing him every Sunday. The foretaste of our final resurrection is experienced through our worship on Sunday. This is also a reason why we do not kneel down on Sundays.

Questions:

1. How can you reply to a Sabbath follower who questions observance of Sunday?
2. Why is Sunday also called 'Lord's Day'?
3. How do we say that Sunday symbolises Eternity?
4. What are the reasons behind our not fasting and not kneeling on Sundays?

Lesson 2

Big Lent

Origin of Big Lent # Big Lent in Syrian Tradition # Lent for purification of Life

Jews used to fast during Old Testament days itself in relation with repentance, prayers and spiritual disciplining. The fasting of the people of Nineveh was for repentance. Our Lord fasted for forty days as a preparation in prayer to commence his public ministry. Jews had a custom to fast on Mondays and Thursdays as part of spiritual discipline. The Pharisee in his prayer was highlighting his fasting twice a week (Luke 18:12). In line with this, fasting was followed in early Christian Church twice a week at least from AD 100, but on Wednesdays and Fridays. This is documented for the first time in Didache (7:4). Along with Didache, Justin Martyr (AD 150) too had insisted fasting by those who were being baptised, those who were performing Baptism and as best as possible, all believers also. The fasting days of early Church were not just confined to Wednesdays and Fridays or for a couple of days prior to Holy Baptism. From 2nd century onwards, they observed fasting for two more days before the Feast of Resurrection. Those two days between crucifixion and resurrection were days when the bridegroom was not with them. They were fasting on these two days as a preparation to the Feast of Resurrection. It is from this two days fasting, the Big Lent developed to as it is now.

Origin of Big Lent:

Two days' Fasting: During the first three centuries, fasting before Easter was never more than a week; commonly it used to be for only two days. Irenios says about different traditions on fasting in the 2nd century: "Some people hold a view that there must be one day's fasting before Easter; there are others who fast two days and some others even more. There are people who fast 40 hours continuously". Thus, according to Irenios, there was no uniformity in this matter. During the time of Tertullian also (AD 200), fasting was for two days only. In 'Apostolic Traditions', Hippolytus says that there were only two days fasting in Roman Church in 3rd century.

Six days' Fasting: Certain Churches gradually increased the period of fasting from two days to six. Mar Dionysius of Alexandria had stated in AD 247 that six days prior to Easter were days of fasting. He said further that this custom of six days of fasting was not followed everywhere and that fasting on Friday and Saturday before Easter was most common. However, in AD 329, Mar Athanasius said that the 'Holy Fast' was for six days.

In 3rd century, fasting was for six days in Syria. Didascalia (AD 250), a compilation of early Church laws prescribe fasting from Monday to Saturday in the Passion Week. It is insisted in this that only bread, salt and water can be consumed these days. However, Friday and Saturday are different in as much as that there shall be no intake of food these two days. Didascalia relates each day of Passion Week with different incidents. On Monday, Judas had committed to betray Jesus; on Tuesday evening, our Lord had his Last Supper and was caught by Jews; on Wednesday, he was imprisoned at Caiaphas's house; on Thursday, he was brought before Pilate and was crucified on Friday. He was inside the tomb on Saturday and resurrected on Sunday. In Didascalia, each day is connected with

Gospel incidents to explain the reasons for fasting on the respective days. "On Friday, by crucifying our redeemer, mankind killed themselves; so do fasting on Friday. As our Lord slept inside the tomb, do fasting on Sabbath also".

In 377, Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis has written about this tradition: "Six days prior to Easter are observed by all believers in fasting. They eat only bread, salt and water by the evening; however, there are some people who are more deep in devotion do total fasting for two or three or four days or even for the whole week till the Easter morning. They carry out prayer of vigil all these six days. On everyday of Big Lent, they pray continuously from 3'o clock in the afternoon till evening hour. During Passion Week, from the evening of Thursday to Friday morning and from Saturday evening to the morning hour of Easter, there are continuous prayers. In some places, Holy Qurbana is celebrated on Thursday afternoon by 3 pm, but most other places, Holy Qurbana is celebrated only on Easter day morning".

Didascalia also mentions about the prayer of vigil of Friday and Saturday nights. In this prayer of vigil, there were prayers, intercessions and reading of Scripture. Eusebius of Caesarea in 4th century had also recorded this practice.

Forty days' Fasting: What Epiphanius said about 'Big Lent' should be about forty days' fasting. He has not explained much on this beyond saying Big Lent. The first mention of forty days' lent is seen the 5th canon of Nicaea Synod of 325 AD. In the Ferial Letters of St Athanasius, there are mentions of this forty days' Lent. The first exhortation that all believers should observe forty days' Lent had come through the Laodicea Synod in AD 360. Till then, Big Lent was meant only for those who were preparing for Holy Baptism. The Lent that was being observed for six days got extended to six weeks as part of preparations for undergoing Baptism. The fasting before Baptism is seen to be a very ancient custom. Those who were accepting Baptism on the Easter Day had to be on fasting for two or six days as laid down in laws of Church. However, in 4th century, Church amended these laws that the catechumens should undergo their studies for six weeks or forty days. It was also made mandatory that these days were to be days of fasting.

Believers also joined this fast in relation to repentance and their preparations to participate in the Feast of Resurrection. Didache has recorded the custom of believers also fasting along with catechumens. Church fathers encouraged this forty days fasting because the large number of name sake Christians would find this helpful in getting enriched in faith. They gave importance to exhortation of faith related matters along with prayers and fasting during this period. The well known 'Baptismal Homilies' are 18 sermons of St Cyril of Jerusalem on Baptism delivered before believers and catechumens during the days of Big lent. The contents of these sermons are simple interpretations of the Nicaea Creed of faith. Theodore of Mopussuestia (+ 428) and St Severiose of Antioch (+ 538) have delivered similar sermons of exhortation of faith known respectively as Baptismal Homilies and Cathedral Homilies. Even now, Big Lent days are seen as occasion for meditation and exhortations.

The fact that our Lord had fasted for forty days helped Big Lent to gain wide acceptance. In AD 340, St Athanasius had written that the whole world is fasting forty days emulating the fasting done by our Lord. By the end of 4th century, most of the Churches across the world had accepted this forty day Lent.

Yet, there were no uniformity in different Churches for calculating these forty days. Saturday and Sunday were not days of fasting during Big Lent. Fasting was not allowed on Sunday because Sunday was seen as the weekly feast of resurrection of our Lord; Saturday was the preparatory day of this weekly feast of Easter; this was the day of waiting in hope. This was the day we remember our departed souls awaiting final resurrection; Christ, their hope rested in the tomb on Saturday and descended to Sheol to preach the good news of forthcoming resurrection to them. Therefore Church has forbidden fasting on Saturdays except on Holy Saturday. Saturday is also a day of hope as Sundays and therefore celebration of Holy Qurbana is allowed on Saturdays during the period of Big Lent. Now, if we deduct Saturdays and Sundays from the prescribed days of Big Lent, number of fasting days is getting reduced. Therefore to fast forty days as our Lord did, Eastern Churches extended Big lent for seven weeks. This custom was prevailing in Jerusalem as recorded by the Spanish pilgrim Aetheria in her travelogues. However, Western Churches were staying away from fasting only on Sundays from early days; in other words they were fasting 36 days. Therefore, to make it forty days, they modified period of Big Lent to commence on the Wednesday following the commencement of Big Lent by Orthodox traditions from 7th century. Early Church was seeing it more important to prepare for Easter prayerfully rather than arithmetically completing forty days.

During the 4th and 5th centuries, fasting was made rigorous; Church exhorted believers to take food only by evening on the days of Big Lent. It was during this period meat, fish, egg and milk products were forbidden. From 9th century, Roman Church started introducing dilutions to observance of fasting. From 15th century, Catholic monks limited their fasting till noon. After the second Vatican Council of 1964, Catholic Church allowed consumption of meat during lent days except on Fridays. However, eastern Churches did not dilute customs those were followed since early days.

Big Lent in Syrian Tradition:

Big Lent is not a goal in itself. It is Easter that gives a meaning to this Lent. Through Big Lent, we are getting ready to attain renewed life in Easter. This is an occasion of repentance and spiritual preparation. This is also an occasion of sanctification of Church. Fasting from food is a sign of our preparations internally and spiritually; it is a sign of self restraint. By forsaking food, one has to lead a life of repentance in line with Divine Will. Very often, man resorts to evil means in his attempts to earn food of his choice. "Man lives not by bread alone" (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). Through fasting, significance of this verse is revealed. Transformation in life is what makes fasting purposeful. "Even now, return to me with all your heart, fasting and weeping and mourning" (Joel 2:12). Syrian tradition sees sin as a phase of illness. This is the reason why the Evangelion readings during Big Lent period consists of Scripture portions narrating Jesus Christ, the true healer seeing sinners with compassion and consoling them with relief and wellness.

Service of Reconciliation:

The service of reconciliation called SHUBAKONO is held at the commencement of Big Lent. This service is based on what our Lord has advised: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5: 23, 24). The prayers in this service remind the believers that the goal of Lent is not performance external rituals, but a true transformation of one's heart. A life without liquors and fasting from food signifies transformation of life as the purpose of Lent. We have a prayer like this in our SHUBAKONO

service: “Brothers, let us love each other. This is the way we follow the commandment, the true one. We have people who do fasting from food, but possess a heart filled in jealousy and hatred; we have people who stay away from liquor, but kill their brothers secretly”. Without being righteous in life, doing fasting expecting others to recognise is an exercise in futility.

Lent for purification of Life:

Human body is not expected to decay with enjoyment of material comforts and cosy food. God has created man that human body would become dwelling place for God. We observe Lent that our body is sanctified as the dwelling place for God and to offer it to Him.

“O Lord, strengthen us to preserve our body without desire for food, O Lord, let there be control on our stomach that causes all evil thoughts and to check our sense organs that lead us to decay and death. O Lord, cleanse our ears that we hear Your Holy Commandments. O Lord enable us to use our sense of smell and feel Your Holy Spirit, to enable our eyes to meditate your mysteries, to keep our tongue to nourish the sweetness of Your Word and our touch to be sanctified with righteous deeds. O Lord, transform the senses of our soul as created first by Almighty God through our just deeds and our deeds of purity” (from the Sedaro of morning hour on KOTHNE Tuesday). In other words, Lent aims redeeming the state of purity Adam had before his fall.

Human life is an incessant fight. It is a restless fight against death, hunger, laziness and despondency. Lent is the occasion for man to become aware of the spiritual side of this fight. Lent fights for man against evil and temptation that alienates him from God.

“O Lord, enable us to stand steadfast with songs of joy in the battle field of this Holy Lent that there is no surrender before Satan. O Lord, let us be victorious in our fight against Satan and be eligible for the throne set apart for Your warriors of holiness “(KOTHNE ETHRO on Wednesday)

The Promions and Sedaros for the KOTHNE week are rich in thoughts revealing different aspects of Lent. Lent is also an occasion for us to identify with people around us who do not have enough food; through our observance of Lent, we are partaking in their hunger. The prayers during Big Lent contain exhortations to gift the food we have forsaken during Lent days.

“You, the one who is on fasting, call the poor and feed him. You are not to wait for him to come to you, but you are to go after him and fill his belly. The fields are not going to a farmer, but the farmer carries seeds and sows them in the field. When a poor brother comes to you seeking food, you are not to tell him that our Lord would feed him. Such response from you would turn out senseless carrying no reward. But you say the very same to him while feeding him; then it turns for your goodness because he realises that truly who has fed him more than you” (Big Lent Thursday, ninth hour).

What makes a Lent meaningful is the help we render to our brother. There are many in this world who fast daily as they have no food enough to satisfy them. One who fasts religiously, but not opening his eyes to such people doomed to fast every day, will find his fasting not pleasing to God.

Questions:

1. Write an essay on how the Forty Day Lent came into being.
2. Why do we not fast on Saturdays and Sundays?

Lesson 3

Passion Week

Christian Passover # Passion Week in 4th Century # Feast of Hosanna # After Hosanna # Maundy Thursday # Service of Washing the Feet # Good Friday

Christian Church believed that the second coming of our Lord as imminent till the end of 2nd century. But, by 3rd and 4th century, Church had taught the believers that the end of history is quite far off. This faith about the coming of our Lord has been instrumental in the development of liturgy. Church fathers exhorted believers to experience the presence of our Lord through liturgy rather than awaiting the second coming. It was under such background Church started celebrating different festivals reminiscent of the crucial events in the life of our Lord. Fathers encouraged celebration of these festivals. These celebrations were very much helpful in explaining the gospel truths to illiterate believers as well as to name sake believers.

Church succeeded in revealing the Christ events including birth, baptism, public ministry, death, resurrection and ascension through liturgy in one year so that those who joined Church afresh could experience life of Christ in one year through worship. Every week, they understood one event in Christ's life. Through the life of Christ, time and history was sanctified. Church realised that time, weeks and year are sanctified with celebrations of events in the life of Christ. This led to formation of Church calendar. The purpose of Church calendar and liturgy year are paving the way for believers to live with Christ.

The purpose of observing Passion Week also is the very same; to help believers to live with Christ and to help them witness the death and resurrection of Christ. On the Hosanna Sunday, believers make their entry to Jerusalem with Christ. They partake in the Last Supper and washing the feet of disciples. Believer stands close to the cross on Good Friday like the intimate disciple John; he mourns standing close to the tomb of Christ on Holy Saturday; on the morning of Easter day, he rejoices in the presence of Christ.

Christian Passover:

Big Lent and Passion Week have their origin from the celebration of Easter by the early Church. Eastern Churches used to call Easter by the name PASCHA which meant Passover. There was no custom to observe Crucifixion and Resurrection separately during those days. In Christian Passover, both these events were observed together.

Passion Week in 4th Century:

Early Church used to call this week Holy Week or Great Week rather than Passion Week. We have three documents to understand how the Holy Week used to be celebrated in Jerusalem during 4th century. (1) The travelogue of a Spanish pilgrim Aetheria in 375 AD (2) The Mystagogical Catechesis of St Cyril of Jerusalem (3) The Armenian Lectionary prepared in 4th century. Of these, the travelogue of Aetheria is more important than other records. She has narrated all details of the worships in

Jerusalem which she had participated. When Aetheria reached Jerusalem in AD 375, Big Lent was for a period of seven weeks. She has described all minute aspects of rituals held from the previous day of Hosanna Sunday.

“From Saturday of the 7th week of the Lent, Passion events are recalled more often in worships; on this day, all the believers assemble at Bethany, village of Lazarus and take part in worship there. During this worship, Gospel reading contains John 12:1 that Passover will be observed in six days”. As a continuation of this custom of 4th century, we observe the remembrance of Lazarus on the previous day of Hosanna Sunday.

Feast of Hosanna:

Aetheria writes: “Next day is Sunday; this is Hosanna Sunday or Palm Sunday; the Passion Week is commencing. In Jerusalem, this week is called Great week. This day, there is a procession from Mount Olive in the afternoon to receive our Lord (Mathew 21:1)”. This narration by Aetheria is the most ancient description about the Feast of Hosanna. “This day, in the afternoon, believers from Jerusalem used to assemble along with the Bishop at the church at Olive Mountain for worship, from where our Lord ascended to heaven. During this worship, gospel readings constituted narrations of the victorious journey of our Lord to Jerusalem. This is followed by the procession by about 5’O clock. Like our Lord did, the Bishop takes part in this procession atop a donkey. The believers recited hymns and Psalms and used to say aloud, ‘Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!’ (John 12:13)”.

Blessing of Palm leaves became part of Palm Sunday service from 6th century. This custom was there in 6th century with the Mozarabic Rite of Spain. Mozarabic Rite was formulated under influence of the Syrian order of Antioch and therefore, this would have been emulated from Eastern system.

John has written that (John 12:12) the people who received our Lord were carrying branches of Palm trees with them; the name Palm Sunday has its origin here. Palm leaf is a sign of martyrs (Revelations 7:9). The tombs of martyrs used to be decorated with palm leaves as a symbol of their victory over evil. As palm leaf was a sign of success, athletes who succeeded in races were presented with Palm leaves. Israelites had been using Palm leaves for celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:40; Nehemiah 8:15).When Maccabees defeated Syrians, people welcomed them carrying Olive branches in their hands (2 Maccabees 10:7).

Jews were looking forward to the coming of Messiah on the day of Passover to free them by overcoming their enemies. It was in this background, the people of Jerusalem welcomed our Lord holding branches of Palm in their hands.

Palm leaves were one of the common symbols during the days of early Church. It was very common to have a picture of Christ holding a palm leaf after subduing evil and death. Picture of Palm leaf was also used as symbol of heaven; there are pictures of the lamb and apostles standing amidst palm leaves in many ancient churches.

The procession on Psalm Sunday with believers carrying Palm leaves is a foretaste to the crucifixion of Christ and victory over evil. Palm Sunday is an occasion when every believer should receive Jesus Christ with Palm leaves of repentance, self restraint and prayers as he makes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

After Hosanna:

In the 4th century, Passion Week worships were conducted in Jerusalem spread over four churches.

- a. The church named Martyrium constructed by Emperor Constantine at the place where Queen Helen identified the cross on which Christ was crucified
- b. The church named Anastasis or the Holy Tomb Church constructed at the Tomb of Christ
- c. The chapel Eleona on Mount Olive where, according to traditions, our Lord had taught his disciples those lessons we read in Matthew chapter 24 and Mark chapter 13 [Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3]
- d. The church named Imbomon at the spot from where our Lord had ascended to heaven

As narrated by Aetheria, there are prayers at Martyrium on Monday afternoon at 3'O clock. On Tuesday evening, believers assemble at Eleona; here, Matthew chapter 24 and Mark chapter 13 used to be read during the worship. The worship on Wednesday was at Anastasis; here, the scripture portion of Judas betraying Christ used to be read (Matthew 26: 14 – 16). When the priest was reading this, believers used to weep with tears rolling down. Worship on Wednesday came to an end with the Bishop blessing catechumens and believers.

Maundy Thursday:

In Christian tradition, there are three important ceremonies on Maundy Thursday namely (1) Holy Qurbana, that is our participation in Last Super (2) liturgical remembrance of the incident that our Lord washed the feet of disciples and (3) consecration of Holy Mooron. In Jerusalem, among these, there was only the celebration of Holy Qurbana till 4th century which was done at Martyrium on Thursday afternoon by 2'O clock.

Service of Washing the Feet:

During the Last Supper, Jesus stood up and removed his outer vest, took a towel and tied it round his waist; he took water in a jar and started washing the feet of his disciples and dried with the towel (John 13: 4, 5). In Middle East countries a guest coming to a house was welcomed by giving water to wash his feet (Genesis 18:4). The priests of Old Testament days used to wash their hands and feet before they entered the Tent of Meeting (Exodus 30: 19, 20). During the days of the public ministry of our Lord, slaves were washing the feet of guests in Palestine. Also, the prevailing custom then was that disciples of a Rabbi were to serve him as a slave did to his master. We must try to understand the meanings of our Lord's action of washing the feet of his disciples in these backgrounds. Disciples' feet were washed by Lord to prepare them to his tribulations and to be participants in the experience (John 13: 9, 10). Also, our Lord would have thought to make them realise the humility of the forthcoming death on the cross. Washing of feet can also be understood to be a preparation to part take in the Holy Communion (John 13: 9, 10).

In the history of Church, there are three different occasions of washing feet. (1) In Western Church, there used to be a custom from 4th century that feet of those newly baptised were washed. In Milan, when this washing of feet was being performed, St John chapter 13 was being read. By 8th century, this custom disappeared. (2) There was a system among Western monks of washing the feet of those who came to monasteries. They also had a custom of washing the feet of those who entered the order of monkhood. Even now, Syrian Church is following such a practice when a person is

elevated as Ramban as part of the concerned liturgical service. (3) Churches have the system of washing the feet on Maundy Thursday at least from the 5th century. The tradition we have is that the Metropolitan washing the feet of priests or even laymen on this day at his Cathedral. Catholic Church does have this feet washing at parish churches also done by priests.

In 694, there was a synod at Toledo of Spain; this synod insisted that Metropolitans and priests should conduct feet washing service. This synod observed that there were many priests and Metropolitans who ignored this age old service. The synod took a decision that any Metropolitan or priest who do not conduct this service should be suspended for a period of two months. This directive was mainly meant for priests of Roman Church in Spain and France. Feet washing ritual is an indication that the true call of the Church is to serve. God expects Church to follow the deeds of Jesus who tied a towel around his waist and washed the feet of his disciples. Church has to align with the poor and the marginalised; during early centuries, this was the way Church progressed and as an observance of serving the downtrodden, the meaningful service of feet washing found a place in Church liturgy. This means that Church is bound to carry on as a symbol of humility before God and man.

Mooron Consecration:

At least from 5th century, consecration of Mooron was performed as part of the service on Maundy Thursday. There are Syrian fathers who say that on the occasion of Last Supper, our Lord taught his disciples the mysteries of Holy Qurbana and Holy Mooron, though gospels mention only about the former. Because of this, Syrian traditions called Maundy Thursday as Thursday of Mysteries also. Up to 13th century, there used to be consecration of Mooron every Maundy Thursday. Till the days of Bar Abraya, every Metropolitan consecrated Mooron in their diocese with the participation of priests on Maundy Thursday. The custom of Mooron being consecrated by Patriarch or Catholicose is an innovation after 13th century. [Refer ABBA PITHAVE page 111 –116 and 'Is Mooron Scriptural?' by this author # Kottayam 1985].

Maundy Thursday in 4th century:

As narrated by Aetheria, by 2'O clock in the afternoon of Thursday, there was celebration of Holy Qurbana at Martyrium. The Gospel reading was Matthew 26: 20 – 39 which contained the proceedings of Last Supper. By 4'O clock, Holy Qurbana came to end and the believers were disbursed. By 7'O clock in the evening, the Vigil service commenced that would last the whole night. This was done in six stages at different locations. Each incident of the Passion experience was observed at the exact spots where they took place with prayers related to the incident.

- a. After the Last Supper, our Lord retreated to the Mount Olive (Matthew 26: 30 – 35). Like that, all believers assembled at Eleona by 7 in the evening. Prayers and scripture readings went on till 11'O clock.
- b. Next stage was at Imbomon from where our Lord ascended to heaven. This is at 12'O clock midnight. Believers joined in hymns suiting the occasion and there were readings from the scripture. According to Armenian Lectionary, what was read here was John 13:31 – 18:1. This portion contains details regarding the coming of Holy Spirit.
- c. Further stage of worship was done at Gethsemane in the valley of Mount Olive where our Lord prayed in agonising pain where Matthew 26: 36 – 46 was the Gospel reading.

- d. Fourth stage was at the garden where Judas kissed our Lord and Matthew 26: 47 – 56 was read. Aetheria recorded here that by the time the Gospel reading ended, believers cried in loud voices.
- e. Now, the procession started moving through Jerusalem reciting Psalm 118 up to the palace of Pilate. Scripture reading here was John 18:25 – 19:16. Here, Bishop exhorted people to take part in the next stage of worship too despite their tiredness.
- f. Now, all the believers prayed at the pillar where our Lord was beaten up; these prayers ended before dawn. Believers are disbursed for taking rest for a while.

Good Friday:

The worship commenced at Golgotha by 8'O clock in the morning. The very first ritual here was bowing before the Sleebo. The silver casket containing the remains of the Sleebo of our Lord was placed on a neatly arranged table adjacent to the seat of Bishop. Bishop sat on his seat carrying a piece of the Cross of our Lord and believers and catechumens knelt down and kissed the remnants of cross. Deacons stood around exercising great vigil because once, one of the believers in the gathering had bitten away a small part of the cross as stated by Aetheria. Deacons now took care to see that such incident was not repeated. As on these days, our Church does have the ritual of bowing before the Sleebo on Good Friday that had its origin from the custom followed in Jerusalem during early centuries.

After the bowing before Sleebo, by around noon, the Good Friday worship commenced, which lasted about three hours. Scripture readings included portions from Old Testament and New Testament where the Passion experiences were mentioned. "Jesus said, it is finished" (John 19:30). With this reading, prayers came to an end.

By 3'O clock, after the prayers at Martyrium, all moved to Anastasis. What was read here was about funeral (John 19:38 – 42). This is followed by prayers of Vigil throughout the night. Those who were too tired would have gone home to rest but many stayed till this was over.

Holy Saturday:

During 4th century, there was Holy Qurbana on Saturday as understood. Aetheria has mentioned only about prayers of third hour and sixth hour.

Questions:

1. Explain briefly about the origin of Church calendar.
2. What is the significance of feet washing service?
3. How did the custom of bowing before the Sleebo developed in Church?

Lesson 4

Easter, Ascension, Pentecost

Easter Celebrations in 4th century # Feast of Resurrection in Syrian Church # Ascension and Pentecost # Pentecost in Jewish Religion # Feast of Pentecost in Christian Church # Feast of Ascension # Feast of Pentecost in Church Life

Through the previous lesson, we have understood that during the first three centuries, 'PASCHA' or the Feast of Resurrection was observed as a combined remembrance of crucifixion of our Lord and the resurrection. But there were differences between Western Churches and Eastern Churches in these observances during 2nd and 3rd centuries. Eastern Churches followed the tradition of St John and ended their fasting by the evening of the 14th of Nissan month and celebrated PASCHA or Feast of Resurrection same day. The Jews had their Passover meal at the same time. Accordingly, whatever be the day, Nissan 14 used to be the day for Eastern Churches to celebrate the Feast of Resurrection. But a few Eastern Churches and Western Churches as a whole had this on the Sunday that followed Nissan 14. Therefore, when Eastern Churches celebrated Resurrection, Western Churches were continuing their fasting. Those who celebrated Easter on Nissan 14 were called Quartodecimans. Christians in Asia Minor, Kilikya, Mesopotamia and Syria had Easter on Nissan 14. But Christians in France, Greece, Palestine, Pentose and Italy had the celebrations on the Sunday that followed Nissan 14. Based on these, there were differences of opinion between Eastern Churches and Western Churches.

This issue took a serious turn in AD 195. As Bishop of the main city among Western Churches, Victor of Rome instructed that all Churches should observe the Feast of Resurrection as Western Churches did. He also said that those who stood against this would be excommunicated. This is the very first incident of the Bishop of Rome interfering in the affairs of other Churches. Based on a synod held in Asia Minor, Polycrates, the Bishop of Ephesus wrote to Victor justifying the observance of Easter on Nissan 14. He quoted the witnessing of Apostles John and Philip and the martyr Polycarp to substantiate the stand taken by Eastern Churches. As a result, Victor excommunicated all those who were observing the Feast of Resurrection on Nissan 14, but Eastern Churches did not accept this. Realising that the action of excommunication would be ineffective, Victor withdrew this. Till AD 325, the time of Nicaea Synod, Eastern Churches continued to observe the Feast of Resurrection on Nissan 14 itself. However the spirit of love enabled addressing this issue suitably in the Synod of Nicaea and consensus was reached that all Churches would observe the Feast of Resurrection on the Sunday following Nissan 14 as being done by Western Churches.

Easter Celebrations in 4th Century:

Aetheria has not narrated anything particular about celebrating Easter rather than about conducting the Prayer of Vigil as we do. However, we have good information about this from the sermons of St Cyril of Jerusalem as well as from the Armenian Lectionary. Accordingly, the celebrations of Easter at Jerusalem during the 4th century can be briefed as under:

- a. The worship commenced at Anastasis. The prayers that lasted the whole night started with reading Matthew 27: 62 – 66 which contained the request of Jews to seal the tomb that the disciples would not steal body of Jesus from there. This was followed by reading Psalm 88, a

prophecy of our Lord entering Sheol. Then, the Bishop lighted three candles reciting Psalm 113:2: 'Let the name of the Lord be praised both now and forever more'. Priests and deacons came forward and lighted the candles they had with them with which the procession to Martyrium started. The decorative illuminations were made compulsory during the Easter night by Emperor Constantine.

- b. As soon as the procession entered Martyrium, Psalm 118:24 was read out: 'This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it'. With this, the worship started. Feast of Resurrection is one of joy. As part of the worship, twelve scriptural portions were read out all of which pointed to the resurrection of our Lord directly or indirectly [Genesis 1: 1 – 3:24; 22: 1 – 18; Exodus 12: 1 – 24; Jonah 1:1– 4:11; Exodus 14: 24 – 15: 21; Isaiah 60: 1 – 13; Job 38: 1 – 28; Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34; 2 Kings 2:1 – 22; Joshua 1: 1 – 9; Ezekiel 37: 1 – 14; Daniel 3: 1 – 90 <Septuagint>]. After each scriptural reading, Psalms were recited.
- c. This was followed by the Holy Baptism of catechumens. The early Church had identified the day of Easter as the most appropriate occasion for one to take part in the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6: 2 – 5; Colossians 2: 12 – 14). Conducting Holy Baptism on the day of Easter was prevailing in the Church as a common custom from the 3rd century. Catechumens were baptised only after lengthy preparations and exhortations of faith related matters lasting quite a good number of days. Big Lent and Passion Week were the opportunity for the finality of their preparations to accept Holy baptism. In the 4th century, Holy Baptism on the day of Easter in Jerusalem was held at the Baptistery near Martyrium. Only the catechumens, sponsors and priests had entry into Baptistery. The rituals inside Baptistery were forsaking Satan, accepting Christ, anointment with exorcised olive oil, baptism in the name of Holy Trinity, anointment of Holy Mooron and wearing white clothing. Following this, the newly baptised believers moved to Anastasis one by one reciting Psalm 32: 1, 'Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered'.
- d. At Anastasis, Bishop prayed for the newly baptised believers and all returned to Martyrium.
- e. The Holy Qurbana for Easter day was celebrated at Martyrium and the scripture readings were 1 Corinthians 15: 1- 11 and Matthew 25: 1- 20.
- f. After the Holy Qurbana, all believers moved to Anastasis for the final round of prayers. During these prayers, New Testament portions related to Resurrection were being read again. The worship came to an end by early morning and believers were disbursed.

The rituals of Passion Week described above needs no explanations. St Cyril and Aetheria have narrated them so systematically that further clarifications are not needed normally. It catches our attention that Scriptural readings had a crucial place throughout the worship. The Passion Week events were remembered through related readings from the Scripture, apart from carrying out worships at the exact spots of those events. There was an exodus of pilgrims to Jerusalem during this time because the Jerusalem Church was making each of the events realistic to believers by arranging prayers and worships at the exact spots where various events actually took place.

Feast of Resurrection in Syrian Church:

The core of Eastern liturgy calendar is the Feast of Resurrection. Orthodox Churches see each Sunday as a celebration of resurrection. Syrian Church teaches the Feast of Resurrection as a feast of peace and tranquillity. Peace is the theme of Sedaro during Sleebo celebration. Easter is the

occasion where believers are to rise from spiritual death similar to the resurrection of our Lord from death. Easter is the day on which the tombs of sin and lack of faith are broken.

The main parts we have for the Easter service is the declaration of resurrection, procession and celebration of Sleebo. As a finality of all these, Holy Qurbana is celebrated. On Good Friday, symbolising the burial of Jesus Christ, a wooden cross wrapped in a white cloth was placed inside the Thronose. (As we have learnt earlier Thronose is a symbol of the tomb of Christ). Since the cross as a symbol of our Lord was buried inside the Thronose, we do not celebrate Holy Qurbana on the same Thronose on Holy Saturday. During the midnight prayers of Easter service, the cross that was buried inside the Thronose is taken out pompously and a proclamation is made as under: 'Brothers, I announce before you this new information; Messiah has risen from the tomb; he has defeated and driven away his enemies to the back'. This proclamation is made three times. Each time the congregation responds, 'We believe truly and declare that he has risen'.

This declaration is part of Easter service in all Eastern Churches. However, instead of the wooden cross, Byzantine Church uses an icon of Christ.

After completing the prayers related to resurrection, the congregation move out for a procession. During this procession, the hymn sung recalls the incident of our Lord appearing before Mary Magdalene (John 20: 11 – 18). The believers take part in this procession holding lighted candles as if to receive the risen Christ. This custom would have originated from the procession carried out by newly baptised believers in early Church. After the procession, we have the Sleebo celebration which also can be said to be a proclamation of resurrection.

Ascension and Pentecost:

Before the Synod at Nicaea in AD 325, the commonly observed feasts in Christian Church were Resurrection and Pentecost. Both these festivals can be said to have originated from Jewish culture. The death and resurrection of Christ happened along with the observance of Jewish Passover. The Jewish Passover turned out to be the Feast of Resurrection in Christian Church. Similarly, the Pentecost observed by Jews was also redefined in Christian context.

Pentecost in Jewish Religion:

The three important festivals of Jews are Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacle. The literary meaning of the Greek word 'Pentecost' is 'fiftieth day'. Pentecost was observed on the fiftieth day after Passover. Pentecost was their harvest festival. There are many names for this in Old Testament such as Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10), Harvest Feast (Exodus 23:16) and Feast of the First Fruits (Numbers 28:26; Exodus 34:22). This was a festival to offer the first fruits to God with thanksgiving. For Jews, Pentecost is an occasion of praises and joy.

By the time of the public ministry of our Lord, new meanings were there for Pentecost. More than a Feast of Harvest, it turned out to be a day to remember the occasion of Laws given to Moses by Jehovah on Mount Sinai.

Feast of Pentecost in Christian Church:

Holy Spirit descended on the disciples on the day of Pentecost and thus this became a feast for Christian Church. Christian Pentecost is in a way a harvest festival as 3000 people were transformed. The Laws God gave Moses got displaced on Christian Pentecost. Therefore, Christian Pentecost is the day on which a new set of Laws descended on the Apostles. In Jewish history, Feast of Pentecost was the day to remember origin of Israel or the day they received Laws from Jehovah. Holy Spirit descended and established new Israel the same day. Jehovah descended in glory on Mount Sinai and handed over Laws to Moses (Exodus 24: 16 – 18, 33, 34). In the same manner, Holy Spirit descended on disciples as flames of fire and sanctified them as new Israel. Pentecost is the day of birth for new Israel or the Church. The Laws Jews received on Pentecost were changed with the Christian Pentecost. St Paul would have had the relationship between the Feast of Pentecost and the Laws in mind when he compared Holy Spirit with the Laws. This is evident as we read 2 Corinthians chapter 3: “Letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”.

Feast of Ascension:

The early Church used to observe the Ascension of our Lord and the Pentecost simultaneously on the 50th day of Resurrection. Tertullian during early 3rd century and the historian Eusebius during 4th century had made mentions about this observance in their writings. It was towards the end of 4th century, the custom to observe these two separately came into practice. Aetheria also had recorded in her travelogues that these two were observed together. From the narrations of Aetheria, the system of celebrating these two feasts together in Jerusalem can be summed up as under: On the day of Pentecost, there was a festive procession to the church built at the mansion where Holy Spirit descended on the disciples as flames of fire. The worship started by 9 in the morning and Acts 2: 1 – 13 was read out. Feast of Ascension was celebrated in the afternoon. Believers assembled at Imbomon on Mount Olive and readings from Bible were about Christ’s ascension to heaven. By evening, there was a procession through Jerusalem with the believers holding lighted candles and with this the celebrations wound up.

‘Didascalía’ was written towards the end of 4th century in Antioch; according to this, Feast of Ascension was observed on the 40th day of Resurrection and Pentecost on the 50th day. Didascalía says about the event of Ascension as finality of God having taken flesh and his deeds of redemption. This document also reveals that observance of the Feast of Ascension had commenced on the Sunday prior to the 40th day of Resurrection.

Early Church used to call the fifty days following resurrection as days of Pentecost. These fifty days were considered by the Church as days of joy like the feast of Resurrection and days of victory over death and sin. This is the reason why kneeling down and fasting are not allowed these days. Feast of Pentecost is the culmination of this joyous period. By the end of 4th century, Feast of Pentecost used to be celebrated for almost a week as we learn from Didascalía. This was followed by observing Lent for a week. It is based on this tradition Coptic Church has the Apostolic Lent commencing on the next day of Pentecost.

During the end of 3rd century, there were many Churches not observing the Feast of Pentecost with the seriousness it deserved. Therefore, the synod of Elvira (AD 300) insisted that all Churches should celebrate the Feast of Pentecost without fail.

Feat of Pentecost in Church Life:

Pentecost is the feast of anointment of the Church. Holy Spirit anointed Christ in Jordan River and the same Holy Spirit anointed the Church by descending on them on the day of Pentecost. Consequently the live presence of Holy Spirit is there in the Church. Holy Spirit that dwells in Christ as anointment spreads the fragrance of anointment on the Church also. Each believer added to the Church through Holy Baptism receives Holy Spirit through anointment of Holy Mooron. Believers part take in the experience of Pentecost through anointment of Holy Mooron.

Pentecost is also the feast of renewal of the Church. The prayers for this feast beseech for the presence of Holy Spirit more and more in the lives of believers.

'We beseech before you on this noble feast of yours; dwell in us and reveal in us your divine interference that our deeds, our words, our works are all in the right sense and are wholesome. Let our sins and transgressions do not come in the way of your grace flowing to us. May you not be slow in your blessings towards us. Please fill our hearts with your power, wisdom, purity and sanctity. Make us eligible to be your dwelling place for serving you that your grace and mercy fill us. Let us be clean and pure before your Holy presence'. [Silent prayer while congregation kneel down for the third order on Pentecost]

Holy Spirit sanctifies Church and individuals. The evidence that Holy Spirit dwells in Church and in believers is the purity, the sanctity, the righteousness and the fruits of Holy Spirit (Galatians 5: 22, 23).

Questions:

1. What was the controversy prevailed in early Church and how this was sorted out?
2. What were the reasons for conducting Holy Baptism on the day of the Feast of Resurrection?
3. What was the status of the Feast of Pentecost in Jewish religion?
4. Explain briefly the origin of the Feast of Pentecost in the Christian Church.
5. Prepare a short essay on the topic: 'Holy Spirit in individual life'.

Lesson 5

Christmas, Danaho

December 25 # Twenty Five Day Lent # Christmas Today # Feast of Danaho

The term Christmas has its origin from Holy Qurbana celebrated on the day of Yeldho Feast (Mass of Christ). Christmas is a feast that was developed in Western Church from early 4th century.

December 25:

We do not have an accurate indication as to the year and date on which our Lord was born in Bethlehem. "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar The word of God came to John, son of Zachariah in the desert" (Luke 3:1, 2). Luke also indicates that the same year, Jesus too commenced his public ministry: "Now, Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began his ministry" (Luke 3:23). Luke says further that Christ was born at the time of Jewish King Herod and Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar (Luke 1:5, 2:1; Matthew 2:1). Though it is not easy to ascertain the exact year of birth, it would not have been in AD 1. There is a common notion that AD (Annum Domini) commenced with the birth of Christ. It was in and around AD 325, a monk Dionysius Exiguus calculated the Christian era. According to what he has estimated, Christ was born and Christian era commenced in Roman year 754. Roman year means the period from when the city of Rome was founded.

However, a minimum of 4 years' error has come into the estimates of Dionysius. The basis on which Roman year 754 is ascertained as the year in which Christ was born and Christian era commenced has not been specifically shown. Luke has specifically stated that Jesus was 30 years old when Tiberius was in the 15th year of his reign. On this presumption, when Tiberius started his reign, Jesus would have been 15 years in age. According to what has been stated by Clement of Alexandria, Augustus Caesar, the predecessor of Tiberius had reigned for 43 years. That being the case, Dionysius would have thought that Jesus was born in the 28th year of Augustus' reign. His reign started in Roman year 726 and thus, his 28th year is 754. Dionysius ascertained this year as AD 1. Now, according to the documentations of Jewish historian Eusebios Herod passed away in Roman year 850. Therefore, if we accept the calculations of Dionysius, Jesus was born 4 years after the death of Herod. Even if we take it that Jesus was born in the last year of Herod, it would have been before BC 4.

Similarly, month and date are also not known correctly. There were efforts during the early centuries to ascertain the exact date and month on the basis of ancient calendars and witnesses. As opined by Clement of Alexandria, Jesus would have born on April 18 or 19 or on May 29. In a document recorded in Northern Africa, called 'DE PASCHA COMPUTUS' it is shown that Christ was born on March 28. Hippolytus in 3rd century, while interpreting the Book of Daniel has stated that Christ was born on December 25, a Wednesday, in the 42nd year of the reign of Augustus. It was Hippolytus who suggested December 25 as the date on which Christ was born for the first time. However, the Feast of Yeldho was not being celebrated by Church during those days.

St John Chrysostom believed that Christ was born on December 25 and made attempts to prove this. Based on some ancient tradition Chrysostom inferred that Zachariah, father of John the Baptist was

a High Priest. The angel Gabriel appeared to Zachariah on the Day of Atonement which was September 24. But the narrations of St Luke don't mention that Zachariah was a High Priest. There is no mention that the appearance of the angel was on the Day of Atonement. (Refer Luke 1: 5 – 23). According to arguments of Chrysostom, John was conceived on this September 24 and therefore was born on June 24. Accordingly, Chrysostom worked out that Christ was born six months later (Luke 1:36) on December 25. But this too is not easy to prove historically.

Based on another tradition, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mother of God on March 25 (It was believed in the 3rd and 4th centuries that crucifixion of Christ was also on March 25). If Christ was conceived in Mary's womb on March 25, this tradition inferred that he was born on December 25. [See, DUSCHENE, Christian Worship, Its Origin and Evolution, London, 1949, pages 261 – 263].

There is another reason for choosing December 25 as the day of Christmas. According to Julian calendar, MAKARA SAMKRANTHI or Winter Solstice or the day Sun is seen straight on Tropic of Capricorn is December 25. This is January 6 according to Egyptian calendar. From this day shift of Sun to North commences. Those who were devotees of Sun or followers of Mithraism observed this day as the birthday of 'Invisible Sun'. On 25 December, 274 AD, the Roman Emperor Aurelian proclaimed Sun as the chief god of the Empire. He constructed a Temple of Sun. Christmas had its origin in Rome when devotion of Sun as their god was at its climax. Moreover, fathers of the Church had symbolised Winter Solstice with the birth of Christ. From the beginning of 3rd century, fathers had been using 'Sun of Justice' as a name for Jesus Christ. However, this doesn't mean that the feast of 'Sun of Justice' had evolved as Christmas. What is meant here is that this custom too would have influenced to choose December 25 as a suitable day for Christmas.

During early days, Eastern Churches used to observe January 6 as the day of Christmas. It was the Western Churches which started celebration of Christmas earlier than Eastern Churches. Near about AD 336, Christmas started being observed in Rome on December 25. Observance of Christmas commenced at Antioch in 375. It was St Gregoriose of Nazianzus who started this feast to be observed in Constantinople from AD 379. The Church at Alexandria accepted this feast in AD 430. This feast was observed in Palestine on January 6 up to 7th century; gradually, they changed to December 25. Armenian Church that follows Julian calendar has Christmas even today on January 6.

Churches started observing Christmas with grand festivities as a reply to the heretics of Arius as also to answer certain false teachings being spread those days. Observance of Christmas came up shortly after the Nicaea Synod in AD 325 which had excommunicated Arius. In the liturgy for Christmas and the related sermons by Church fathers, there are many statements against Arius. We have many prayers that highlight the Divinity of Jesus Christ in the liturgy of Yeldho Feast in Syrian Church.

'O the Son and the Word of eternal Father, the one came to be born of Holy Will and by being born of Virgin Mother ensuring Mother's Virginity intact, please bless us with Your Grace that we comprehend for sure that You are God'. This is a short prayer in Yeldho feast during the celebration of Sleebo to South; this prayer contains doctrines of faith such as Divinity of Christ, Virgin birth, equality with Father and Holy birth out of free Will. Most prayers of Yeldho feast reflect mysteries of invisible and inexpressible God taking birth as man. From the 4th century, Church had the custom of having prayers in the night on the day of Yeldho feast with celebration of Holy Qurbana. When the Yeldho feast used to be celebrated on January 6 in Bethlehem there was celebration of Holy

Qurbana at midnight as recorded by Aetheria. The worship ended with a procession in the morning to the church at Calvary. Other Churches across the Empire followed this tradition from Jerusalem.

Twenty Five Day Lent (Advent fasting):

Six weeks prior to Christmas were being observed as fasting days from the 6th century. During these days, a few Synods met in Gaul (France) stipulated that believers should prepare spiritually for observing the feast of Christmas in repentance and fasting. Ancient tradition of Syrian Church was to fast 40 days before Christmas (From November 15). Coptic and Byzantine Churches start their fasting even now from November 15. Roman Church used to have six weeks Lent during early days, but they reduced it gradually to five weeks and then four weeks. It was due to Roman influence, the period of Advent Lent was reduced to 25 days in Syrian Church. However, the modern Roman Church has totally rejected observing this Lent. Even the Syrian Church of Antioch during the period of Patriarch Yacob III reduced the length of this Lent.

Christmas Today:

Of late, Christmas has lost its spiritual values and is now seen as just a social custom. Exchange of Christmas gifts was evolved during mid centuries. In many European centres, children were made to believe that infant Jesus was coming to them with gifts. After 16th century, St Nicholas, the saint of children, was pictured as the one coming with gifts and he came to be known as Christmas father. He is also called Santa Claus. There was a feeling among Italians that Befana, an aged lady used to bring gifts. The name Befana has its origin from Epiphany. Likewise, the Spaniards believed that the three wise men were bringing gifts.

Feast of Danaho (Epiphany):

The meaning of the word 'Danaho' is 'Dawn'. In Greek, this is called 'Epiphany'. When St Paul said about the birth of our Lord and about his second coming, had used this Greek word (Titus 2: 11, 13). There is yet another name for this, 'Theophany' which means Divine Revelation. Now, January 6 is observed by Eastern Churches as the day of our Lord's Baptism. However, Western Churches observe January 6 as a feast to recall the three wise men worshipped infant Jesus (Matthew 2: 1 – 12).

As indicated earlier, before AD 375, Eastern Churches had been observing the feast of Yeldho and the feast of Danaho together on January 6. Later, feast of Yeldho was changed to December 25 while feast of Danaho continued to be observed on January 6 itself. From 4th century, some Churches chose January 6 to observe the miracle at Kothne (John 2: 1 -11) and the visit of those three wise men also. However, after December 25 was chosen to observe the Yeldho feast, Eastern Churches were seeing January 6 exclusively as the Danaho feast.

The earliest indication of celebration of the feast on January 6 is seen in a letter of Clement of Alexandria (AD 215). Clemet has written that Gnostics used to observe January 6 as the feast of our Lord's Baptism as Christians have been doing. There was also the custom to baptise catechumens on January 6 in the 4th century. Baptism is the Enlightenment of catechumens and therefore Feast of Danaho was also called Feast of Lights by Eastern fathers. (Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 39:1). There is yet another reason for giving a name like this. According to certain ancient manuscripts, there was an indication of flames of fire or glow of light at the time our Lord entered River Jordan for being

baptised. The text Diatessaron of Tatian, texts of Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria have mentioned this. In the liturgy for Danaho in Syrian Church also, such indications are there. Based on this tradition, we have the hymn **'Water turned warm without fire and logs when Son of God entered Jordan for baptism'** (hymn before Sedaro on the feast of Danaho).

Danaho has to be seen as the feast of Baptism of each Christian believer. The reason for this is that our Lord took Baptism in River Jordan to establish Christian Baptism. **'O Lord, You are the One who absolves all our sins and sanctifies us, You have come down for being baptised to cleanse us of our transgressions, be merciful to absolve the sins of this Church wholly'** [ETHRO]. With our Lord's Baptism, water in Jordan is sanctified. Along with this the whole water of this universe also is sanctified at Jordan. **'O Lord of Holiness, having sanctified all lakes and rivers through Your Baptism, on this day of Your Holy Danaho, in your Holiness, be merciful to make us also Holy. Make our mouths sources of your praises and vessels overflowing with your Glory'**. Worship aims at purification of whole mankind and the entire creations. Danaho Service is a sign of that.

We cannot view the Feast of Danaho detached from the Feast of Resurrection. Baptism of Christ is a foretaste to his crucifixion and resurrection. He stepped into River Jordan as a prelude to his entry into Sheol and his victory over death. In the liturgy for Danaho, there is a mention that Christ annihilated the head of the big serpent that was hiding in Jordan and killed the sect of Satan by drowning them in Holy water which pinpoint to his victory over death. The incident where Pharaoh and his men got drowned in Red Sea is also mentioned in this liturgy as a foretaste to annihilation of Satan through the death of Christ.

The true Baptism of Christ is crucifixion and resurrection (Luke 12:50; Mark 10: 38, 39). Our Lord's entry into Jordan was a prelude that. A believer while being baptised becomes a part taker in the death and resurrection of our Lord thereby participates in the baptism in Jordan also. As the Baptism of our Lord is an indication of his death and resurrection, Danaho is a prelude to Easter. Because of this, in 5th century, the date of Easter was being proclaimed on the Danaho Feast in Alexandria.

Blessing of water during the service of Danaho is a custom that is prevailing since 4th century. Now, we have a ritual in Palestine blessing River Jordan and in Egypt, blessing River Nile. In Byzantine Church, blessing of ponds and lakes are done on Danaho. Our worship has a goal to release the whole universe from evil and their sanctification. St Paul says, "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope" (Romans 8:20). Orthodox Churches believe in sanctification of all creations during worship. This is the reason for blessing water on Danaho attaching importance to it.

Questions:

1. How was December 25 chosen as the day to celebrate Christmas?
2. Find out the statements containing the Divinity of Christ from the liturgy for Yeldho feast.
3. How can we make Christmas more spiritually enlightening?
4. What is the importance we have for Danaho Feast in our spiritual life?
5. Why do we call Danaho, the feast of light?
6. 'Danaho is a prelude to Easter' – Explain.

Lesson 6

Other Feasts

Moronayo Feasts and those to be observed just like Moronayo # Feasts coming after Christmas # Feasts of John, the Baptist # Feast of Mayaltho # Feast of Transfiguration # Feast of Sleebo # Feasts of Mother of God # Feasts of St Thomas

Feasts in liturgy year can be classified into four. (1) Feasts related to the events of our Lord's life (2) Feasts of Mother of God (3) Feasts of Apostles (4) Feasts of Martyrs and Saints.

Those feasts having a direct relation to the life of our Lord are called Moronayo Feasts. Church observes certain feasts related to Mother of God and some Apostles with similar importance as Moronayo Feasts.

Moronayo Feasts and those to be observed just like Moronayo:

December 25 – Christmas; January 6 – Danaho; February 2 – Mayaltho (entry to Temple); March 25 – Annunciation to Mother of God; Easter; Ascension; Pentecost; June 29 – Remembrance of Apostles St Peter and St Paul; July 3 – Remembrance of St Thomas; August 6 – Transfiguration; August 15 – Demise of Mother of God; September 14 – Feast of Sleebo.

Feasts of Ascension and Pentecost are observed based on the date on which Easter falls. Most of the above feasts have been observed by Eastern Churches from 4th century onwards. Emulating Eastern Churches, Western Churches also gradually started observing these. As being briefed below, there was no uniformity of dates in observing feasts among different Churches. There are instances that Western Churches have accepted dates of Eastern Churches and vice versa.

Feasts coming after Christmas:

Once the Yeldho Feast came to be observed from December 25, Eastern Churches proceeded to celebrate feasts of New Testament saints in the succeeding days. The sermon delivered by St Gregoriose of Nyssa, during the funeral of his brother St Baseliose on January 1, 379 had mentioned about the feasts observed by the Church between December 25 and January 1. They are Remembrance of St Stephan on December 26 (now this is on January 8), remembrance of James and John, sons of Zebedee on December 27 (now May 1 and 8) and Apostles St Peter and St Paul on December 28 (now June 29). The list prepared in AD 412 in Syriac also has dates of these feasts the same. Though Armenian Church does not observe Yeldho Feast on December 25, their ancient calendar is in agreement with this list. There are no concrete historical evidences that St Stephan and the other four Apostles listed here have departed for heavenly abode on these dates. The observance of their feasts were not based on historical evidences, but these five disciples being the pillars of Christian Church, their memories were observed on days following Yeldho Feast.

James, son of Zebedee was martyred not in December, but during the time of Passover Festival (Acts 12: 1 – 5). Dates of feasts of James and John were later changed. Like Byzantine Church,

Eastern Churches started observing the memory of James on May 1 and John on May 8 which is continuing till date. The Greeks chose May 8 to observe the feast of John on the basis of a miracle occurred at his tomb in Ephesus.

Feasts of St Peter and St Paul were being observed on June 29 in Western Churches. This was so since the time of Emperor Constantine. There are no reliable evidences that these two Apostles were martyred on June 29. Their mortal remains were shifted to a new church built by Constantine at the location of their ancient tombs. June 29 was chosen to observe the feasts of these Apostles in memory of this incident. Gradually, like Westerners, Eastern Churches also started observing their memories on June 29 instead of December 28. In Jerusalem, feasts of St Peter and St Paul were observed on December 28 itself till 7th century.

From 5th century onwards, Church has been observing the memory of martyrdom of infants on December 27. From 6th century, this feast is on December 28 in Western Church and on December 29 in Byzantine Church.

Feasts of John, the Baptist:

There are three feasts of St John, the Baptist in Syrian Church which are glorification of John on January 7, birth of John on June 25 and beheading of John on August 29. Of these, the earliest one is January 7. This is feast observed in all Eastern Churches. On the belief that John was born six months prior to the birth of our Lord, Western Church started observing June 25 as a feast commemorating the birth of John the Baptist. A sermon delivered by St Augustine has mentioned about this. The feast remembering the beheading of John the Baptist on August 29 was first observed in Constantinople and Syria and then in Western Church.

Feast of Mayalho (Entry our Lord to the Temple) - February 2:

This festival was being observed in Church from 4th century and has its origin in Palestine. Forty days after the Yeldho Feast, this used to be observed in Jerusalem as read in the travelogues of Aetheria. In 4th century, Yeldho Feast was celebrated on January 6 in Palestine and therefore Mayalho was observed on February 14. Observance of this feast commenced in Constantinople in AD 542 following a proclamation by Emperor Justinian. However Western Church views this feast as one of the sanctification of Mother of God. (Luke 2:22; Leviticus 12: 2 – 8). Among all feasts of Mother of God observed by Western Church, this happens to be the most ancient.

Feast of Transfiguration - August 6:

This feast is observed exclusively by Eastern Church. There are no evidences of the Western Church having ever observed this feast. This has its origin in Constantinople after 6th century.

Feast of Sleebo – September 14:

Like Mayalho, this too has its origin in Palestine. Tradition says, Queen Helen unearthed and identified the cross on which Christ was crucified on September 14. Emperor Constantine had built churches at Calvary and at the tomb of our Lord which were sanctified on September 14, 335. These churches were consecrated by Bishops who excommunicated Athanasius in a Synod held at Tire in 335. Feast of Sleebo used to be an eight day festival in Jerusalem during 4th century. This feast

originated in Jerusalem gradually found acceptance in Syrian Church and Byzantine Church. But the Church of Rome started observing this feast only from 8th century.

Feasts of Mother of God:

Syrian Church has five feasts of Mother of God namely Feast of Glorification of Mother of God on December 26, Feast of Mother of God for seeds on January 15, Feast of Annunciation on March 25, Feast of Ascension of Mother of God on August 15 and Birth of Mother of God on September 8.

From 4th century onwards, churches started being consecrated in the name of Mother of God. However, only after the Synod of Ephesus in 431, Church started observing Feasts in the name of Mother of God.

During early days, Feast of Annunciation used to be observed on a Sunday in the Advent Lent (In Syrian Church, 5th Sunday before Christmas). But by mid 6th century, this feast started to be observed on March 25. In the same century, the feast of Demise of Mother of God also became popular. Shortly, Emperor Maurice (+ 602) issued a proclamation that the Feast of Demise of Mother Mary should be observed throughout the Empire.

The Feast of the Birth of Mother of God on September 8 also has its origin in 6th century. The Feast of Mayaltho on February 2 was also seen as the feast of sanctification of Mother of God. All the feasts of Mother Mary have their origin in Eastern Church. It was during the 7th century that Eastern monks propagated these feasts in Western Church.

The feasts of Mother of God namely Annunciation, Demise, Birth, and Sanctification earned wide acceptance in Western Church during the reign of Pope Sergius, who was of Greek origin.

Apart from what are stated above, Roman Catholic Church observes many more feasts of Mother of God. Feast of Presentation of Mary observed on November 21 has its origin in 8th century in the Byzantine Church, but Catholics are celebrating this with great festivities from 14th century. Conception of Anna on December 8, Visitation of Mother of God to Elizabeth, and Feast of Queenship of Mother of God on May 31 are feasts accepted by Catholic Church in the course of time.

Eastern Churches consider Mother of God at a higher level than all other saints. Therefore feasts of Mother of God are treated unparalleled. This is the reason why Syrian Church insists celebration of Holy Qurbana on the Day of Annunciation (March 25) even if it falls on a Good Friday.

However, Orthodox Churches do not subscribe to the view that Mother of God was sinless right from the day she was conceived in her mother's womb as taught by Catholic Church. This advice called Immaculate Conception was proclaimed in Catholic Church by Pope Pius IX in 1759. Orthodox Churches do not teach that no human being is totally sinless other than the 'begotten son, Christ'.

Bodily Assumption of Mary was proclaimed as a basic doctrine of faith in Catholic Church by Pope Pius XII in 1950. Eastern Churches do believe in the Ascension of Mother of God but that is not proclaimed as a basic doctrine of Faith. Prayers of intercession to Mother of God had been in use since 4th century, but the prayer 'Hail Mary. . . .' (Luke 1:28, 42) has taken its present form only in 15th century. From 12th century, this prayer was in use but in varying forms.

Feasts of St Thomas:

Our Church calendar has two feasts of St Thomas. They are DUKHRONO on July 3 and his martyrdom by a spear attack on December 21. Of these, the feast for Syrian Church is July 3 and for Western Church, it is December 21. Chronicle of Edessa records that the Holy Relics of St Thomas was placed at the Edessa church with great festivities on August 22, 394 AD; consequently, August 22 is observed as feast of St Thomas in Edessa and Jerusalem as we understand from the Armenian Lectionary. Syrian Church observes this feast on July 3 commemorating the event of the Holy Relics of the Apostle having been brought to Edessa.

Questions:

1. What are the Moronayo Feasts in our Church?
2. Briefly explain the origin of various Feasts of Mother of God.

Unit 4

Maranatha: Lord, Come Soon

Lesson 1

Music in Christian Worship

In Old Testament # In New Testament # Music in Early Church # Syrian Liturgical Hymns # Liturgical Hymns Today

Music is a very important facet of Christian liturgy. Right from very early days, music had been associated with various religious rituals. In India, Europe and in most of the ancient cultures, music grew and developed through fondling of religions. Music is always a very effective medium to express spiritual feelings. Hymns are always more effective in realising a Divine presence and have a greater impact in liturgy being meaningful. Those believers who attend worship physically and mentally weak are energised to raise their hearts to God through touching music.

In Old Testament:

Psalms are hymns those were used in Old Testament days' worships. They had a crucial position in the worships at their Temple and synagogues. Many Old Testament characters have penned Psalms like Moses (Psalm 90) and Solomon (Psalms 72, 127). David has many Psalms to his credit. There are many Psalms like 126 and 137 written after Babylon exile of BC 586. We have indications through certain Psalms highlighting the importance musical instruments were holding in Old Testament worships (Psalms 149:3; 150: 3 – 5). The one who has written Psalm 150 seems to be of the view that all sorts of musical instruments should be in use during worships. Even during the time of Moses, music accompanied by dances and instruments were part of Jewish worship (Exodus 15: 1 – 21). While David was in power, Ark of God was brought to Jerusalem accompanied by many musicians as a grand procession (1 Chronicles 15). Later, there were 288 musicians in the Temple of Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 25: 1 - 8). In Israel, worship had been considered of prime importance; they had professional systems to train liturgical hymns and also to preserve them. Similar to Israelites used music in their worship to praise and glorify Jehovah (Exodus 15; Psalm 150:1, 2), Christian Church, the new Israel also gave importance for music in their liturgy.

In New Testament:

Music had its prominence in the worship of Apostolic Church. Matthew 26:30 shows that our Lord and disciples had sung songs of praises after their Last Supper. This is how Christians in Ephesus were exhorted to worship by St Paul: "Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5: 19, 20). A similar advice has been given by St Paul to the Church of Colossi also in his Epistle to Colossians (3: 16, 17). "Always giving thanks to God" is the New Testament commandment that has led to prominent roles given for music in hourly prayers and celebration of sacraments.

The ultimate goal of music is praising our God and not ensuring emotional satisfaction of men. Music has a power to act as a catalyst to keep men united. The base of music is the harmony of voice variance. It is an incessant flow of controlled voice. The unified character of universe is reflected in the uniformity of voice in music. Like music is a medium to praise God, Divine Will is that the universe shall be transformed as a musical elegance reflecting Glory of God. The ultimate goal of music is to reflect Glory of God. All hymns should in the end be Psalms praising God.

Music in Early Church:

It is the contribution of Syrian Church to use many hymns in liturgy. The most ancient of such Christian hymns is said to be 'Odes of Solomon' of 2nd century written in Syriac. In the history of Orthodox liturgical hymns, Mar Aphrem is the one who has to be remembered most (+375). Folk songs were used by heretics of Gnostic tradition to spread their ideologies fast among people under the initiatives of Bar Saidan and Harmonious. As these caught the attention of common believers, St Aphrem, who was a Deacon then at Nisibis, started penning hymns to propagate true Orthodox faith. Liturgical hymns of Mar Aphrem were devotional in content and simple in style but emulating the pattern followed by the heretics. Aphrem who was a poet and a singer had been teaching these hymns to believers. Very shortly, his hymns found place in the Church liturgy. Known as the 'Harp of Holy Spirit', the umpteen number hymns written by Mar Aphrem has enhanced the beauty and quality of Orthodox worship.

Syrian Liturgical Hymns:

Syrian liturgy has hymns written by theological poets such as Mar Yacob of Sarug (+ 531) and Mar Baalai (AD 400) apart from those of Mar Aphrem.

Almost all our liturgical hymns can be rendered in eight 'ragas' or 'colours'. Eight 'ragas' are used in Byzantine Church also where they call it 'Octoechos'. Influenced by Greek music, even from 4th century, liturgical hymns used to be sung in different tunes in Antioch. Eight 'ragas' were implemented in Syrian liturgy by the Antiochian Patriarch Mar Severiose (512 – 538). He authored a volume of liturgical hymns those can be sung in eight 'ragas' in Greek language. Paul of Edessa translated this to Syriac during early 7th century. This volume of translation known as 'EKKARA' was improved in quality during the time of Mar Yacob of Edessa (+ 703). Contributions of later writers are also included in EKKARA.

Syrian liturgical hymns are rich treasures of theology and spirituality. The theme contained in them is usually Biblical events. Most of these hymns are prayers of men raising their minds to Divine presence. Man who looks forward to gain strength from God confesses his sins before God. Therefore, many of the hymns in Syrian liturgy contain themes of repentance.

Liturgical Hymns Today:

Worship is not something for an intellectual satisfaction of man. His entire nature and emotions are to be expressed in worship. Music forms part of liturgy to achieve this. Further, music has been included in liturgy so that there is participation from the entire congregation. However, these days, in many congregations, there are choirs to sing hymns that the participation of believers generally gets reduced. There are instances that our worship gets deteriorated to the level of just musical concerts on account of such innovations. A choir should confine themselves to lead the congregation

in singing hymns. The custom of Choirs engaged in singing for believers is a tendency that has to be dipped in the bud.

Syrian and Byzantine Churches follow the custom of singing without support from instruments. Singing hymns in Syriac with the accompaniment of instruments often look indigestible. The loud noises created by instruments are sometimes causing hindrances to the smoothness and sanctity of worship.

Liturgical music in Syrian Church has not developed as much as those in Byzantine tradition. The growth of liturgical music in Russian Orthodox Church, which was formed only by the 10th century, has developed the most compared to other Churches. As far as our Church is concerned, there have not been any attempts to develop indigenous music in liturgy; instead we are sticking on to existing Syrian 'ragas'. Just like indigenous languages, indigenous music too forms part of Eastern liturgy. Talented persons in our Church who are spiritually enriched and blessed with divine gifts would certainly contribute towards this.

Questions:

1. What role music has in Christian liturgy?
2. Discuss the positive role a choir can have in our worship.

Lesson 2

Processions and Christian Worship

In Old Testament # In New Testament # Processions in Christian Worship # Processions in Syrian Church

Processions have important roles in the worships of all religions. Liturgical processions are useful in gathering the believers together as also for presenting some of the basic doctrines of faith dramatically.

In Old Testaments:

Jewish worship had processions recalling the main events in the redemption history. The sojourn of Israelites to Promised Land has been the basic principle of Old Testament scriptural scholarship. We can say that the entire history Old Testament happens to be narrations of Israel's processions of victory'.

Their liberation from Egypt and their sojourn to the Promised Land had been the most important procession in the lives of Israelites. Jehovah led them in this procession with his presence in the pillar of fire from evening to dawn and in the pillar of cloud from dawn to evening. Those who were part of this procession were fed with Manna and Quail. Jehovah provided them water in the desert. The climax of this procession was the fall of the Jericho walls (Joshua 6) and their victory over the land of Canaan.

The setting up of Ark of God at Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6) and sanctification of the Temple constructed by Solomon were crucial events in the history of Jewish worship. Both these events were observed with processions. Old Testament has pictured the journey to Canaan and the return from Babel exile to Jerusalem as large scale processions of multitudes (Numbers 9, 10; Joshua 6; Psalms 104, 113, 125; Isaiah 60). The characteristics of all these processions was the presence of Jehovah in their midst. Jews had strongly believed in the presence of Jehovah as part and parcel of their lives while they were wandering in the desert. With the sanctification of the Jerusalem temple, Jews believed that God had come down to dwell with them. The procession during the occasion of sanctification of the Temple was to receive Jehovah to their midst (2 Samuel 6; 1 Kings 8; Psalms 24, 68, 118; Nehemiah 12: 31 – 38).

To commemorate the main events in Old Testament history, Jews had been observing three feasts. The Feast of Passover recalled their liberation from Egypt, the Feast of Pentecost recalled the receipt of Laws and the Feast of Tabernacle recalled their sojourn through the desert. The focal point of Old Testament history is the exodus of Israelites. This exodus was their journey to Promised Land. The above three feasts were being observed to make Israelites of all ages to be participants in the three main events related to this exodus. Before Christ, Israelites had their hope and dynamism derived from their faith in the coming of Messiah and their expectations about Promised Land. They also

believed that their 'spiritual journey' to Promised Land had been continuing. Later Jewish history has records of pilgrimages to Jerusalem recalling their life in exile.

In New Testament:

The Old Testament concepts of processions have greatly influenced Christian Church. New Testament has pictured the life of our Lord in this world as a procession to the cross. The finality of this procession is our Lord's entry to Jerusalem. People welcomed Christ with a grand festive and victorious procession (Mark 11: 1-10). His final journey to Golgotha was also a procession – a journey accompanied by soldiers and carrying a wooden cross (Mark 15: 21, 22).

Book of Acts is the history of new Israel's sojourn, that is expanding to "all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) leading to the Promised Land in Heaven. Writers of New Testament has stated about New Jerusalem as revealed to Church (Galatians 4:26; Revelations 21:10). According to their vision, Christian life is a victorious procession to Heavenly Jerusalem.

Processions in Christian Worship:

There are indications in the Book of Revelations about processions in worship during New Testament days in the Church at Asia Minor. The visions we read in the Book of Revelations about the large crowd of people walking with palm leaves in their hands (7:9) and the Church as bride of Christ descending from the presence of God in Divine Glory (21: 9, 10) are to be understood in the above context.

But processions have become an inseparable part of Christian worship after Emperor Constantine recognised Christianity. Till then, Christians were holding their worships in secrecy; but with the change of mind in Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of the Empire and processions were seen as a sign of the religion's open nature as well as its official status. The Spanish traveller Aetheria has narrated in her travelogues how important processions were in Christian worships in Jerusalem during 4th century.

Processions symbolise dynamism of worship. Characteristic of Christian worship is not worshipping at one place alone; festive processions are pointing to the Church moving towards Kingdom of God. In Old Testament, the exodus commenced under the leadership of Moses; in New Testament, this is continued through Christ, the new Moses.

Again, processions are part of battles; to express the strength of armed forces, often, processions are conducted. Likewise, Church is waging a battle against forces of evil that is metaphorically expressed through processions linked to worship. These processions can be seen as demonstrations of spiritual unity and might of the Church. This is the reason why we give importance to carrying cross during all our processions.

Processions have another meaning that they symbolises Christians as those in exile in this desert of universe and are wanderers. "When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:23). This means that we are called to be living in exile till the second coming of our Lord. The call of the

Church is a continuous sojourn “to make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). We have to understand that as Christians, our call is not to stay put at favourite locations setting up institutions, but it is a festive and spiritual pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God.

Church is also called to sanctify the whole universe. Processions are part of this call of the Church to transform universe as a Temple with Divine presence there.

Processions in Syrian Church:

There are five different categories of processions in Syrian Church.

- a. Festive Movements in holy Qurbana and celebration of other sacraments
- b. Processions those end up with celebration of Sleebo during Moronayo Feasts (Yeldho Feast, Danaho, Mid Lent, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension)
- c. When Metropolitans are received during Feasts
- d. Processions done during the Parish Feasts
- e. Pilgrimages.

We may not be able to have detailed discussions on all these due to paucity of space.

Processions in Holy Qurbana:

Though small, there are festive processions during celebration of holy Qurbana. The service of Holy Qurbana commences with a procession circling the Thronose which is considered as an indication to the shepherds and the wise men worshipping infant Jesus lying in the manger at Bethlehem.

In Syrian Church, Evengelion is brought forward for reading as a procession of festive nature. There is a similar procession in Byzantine Church also which they call ‘little entrance’. They also have a festive procession carrying Bread and Wine to the main Thronose, which are kept arranged outside the Madbaha, which is called ‘Great Entrance’.

After blessing the censor in the name Holy Trinity, the celebrant turns to the believers moving towards them in Syrian Church; this is also a small processions with all festivities. In the writings of Mar Dionysius Areopagite (AD 600), it is described that Syrian Church of Antioch had the tradition of the celebrant moving around the whole congregation with the censor.

The Paten and Chalice being brought to west is also a procession; this symbolises the second coming of our Lord. The whole celebration of Holy Qurbana from start to end is a festive pilgrimage. One by one, we recall various events such as birth of our Lord, his public ministry, his tribulations, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, second coming and sitting with him at the table for the grand feast in the Kingdom of God.

Procession during Moronayo Feasts and Sleebo Celebration:

The processions we have during Moronayo feasts are sacramental presentations of redemption events in the life of our Lord. In our procession circling the flames of fire during the Yeldho Feast we are expressing our congruence with the shepherds who received the Good News of the birth of our Lord from the angels (Luke 2: 8 – 14). With the procession on the Feast of Yeldho, we are

participating in the experience of the shepherds and wise men who took pain to travel for bowing before infant Jesus.

On the day of Mid Lent, we have procession along with the celebration of Sleebo. During this procession we recall the incidents of Moses raising the brass serpent in the desert and Queen Helen recovering the cross on which Christ was crucified. The brass serpent (Numbers 21) is a symbol of our Lord's crucifixion. The procession on Mid Lent indicates that our Lent is a pilgrimage to the crucifixion of our Lord and his resurrection. [During the days of early Church, Big Lent was also the occasion for teaching faith to catechumens. During the middle period of the Lent, the throne of Bishop used to be placed at the centre the church and he taught catechumens sitting on it. Possibly, the custom of raising the Sleebo in Syrian Church on the day of Mid Lent would have come out of this practice. St Cyril of Jerusalem has recorded about placing the throne of the Bishop like this in the 4th century]

We have already seen the significance of procession on Palm Sunday. It is a symbol of receiving Christ into our life just like our Lord was welcomed to Jerusalem by the people. Members of Church are becoming part takers of the experience of the people of Jerusalem.

The first procession on Good Friday is to recall the last journey of our Lord to Calvary. Like those who loved Jesus then, we are also following Jesus to Calvary with broken hearts. The second procession on Good Friday is a re enactment of the burial of our Lord. We become witnesses to the motionless body of Christ being placed in the tomb. This burial service is an indication of our belief that Christ died in flesh.

The crux of our experience in the procession on Easter day is our standing face to face with risen Jesus Christ. The theme contained in the hymn sung during this procession is Mary Magdalene seeing the risen Christ as the first witness to resurrection (John 20:11 – 18). Symbolising the disciples running towards the tomb, believers take part in this procession (John 20: 1 – 10).

Receiving High Priests:

Receiving Bishops festively for prayers of evening hour and morning our in connection with parish Feasts is also a custom with significance. A Bishop or High Priest is the symbol of the true bride groom, Jesus Christ (Matthew 25: 1 – 13). Believers receive the bride groom and lead him to the bridal chamber. The life of our worship is the presence of Christ, the heavenly bride groom. Church is God's herd of sheep. Believers view in Bishop the presence of true shepherd. Just the herd of sheep follows their shepherd, believers follow the Bishop to the church for worship. This is a sign that worship itself is a procession to Glory of God.

Procession during Parish Feast:

Often, the procession during Parish Feast is called 'RASA' albeit wrongly. This name has its origin from the Syriac word ROSO (RASA in Chaldean Syriac) which has meanings such as 'Holy Qurbana' and 'Mystery'. The processions during Parish Feasts by Catholics invariably has solemn accompaniment of 'Holy Qurbana' and therefore they started calling such processions RASA. In Lesson 3 of Unit 2, we have discussed the gold plated object called Monstrance; Catholics use Monstrance to solemnly carry Holy Qurbana in processions. Orthodox tradition doesn't have the custom of taking Holy Qurbana in processions. Therefore, we should not use the term RASA for our

processions; the term 'Procession' is certainly more sensible. These processions are signifying our incessant sojourn to Kingdom of God.

The goal behind worship is the spiritual growth of the Church. Worship is a pilgrimage of the Church directed towards the wholeness of Divine Kingdom. We can say that the Liturgy Year itself is a festive procession centred on Easter. Each Sunday can be said to be different stages in that procession.

Each of our sacraments can be considered as a festive procession. The meals we have in this journey to Divine Kingdom is Holy Qurbana. Holy Baptism is our journey from the life of earlier man to the renewal in Christ. Holy Confession is a journey from slavery of sin to joy and freedom in Christ. Priesthood is sanctification and solemn swearing to lead the procession of children of God. The call of a priest is to lead believers from the front in their spiritual sojourn to Divine Kingdom.

Questions:

1. Give a brief narration about the need of processions in Christian worship.
2. Explain the meanings of processions in various Moronayo Feasts.

Lesson 3

Scripture Readings in Worship

Lectionary of Jerusalem # Syrian Lectionary

Reading from Scriptures used to be an important facet of Christian worship at all times. We have discussed earlier about the importance attached to Scriptures in the Synagogue worships of Jews as well as their Service of the Word. The early Church had modelled their worship on the Jewish custom in Synagogues and thus, scripture readings and Service of the Word were included in Christian worship. Before the gospels were made available, Old Testament was the Scripture for Christian Church. Synagogues gave prime importance to the five books of Moses, but early Christian Church gave importance to Prophetic books. Early Church did not have a system to choose specific portions from Scripture as we have today, but they followed a pattern as was done in synagogues and resorted to reading continuously from the Old Testament, Gospels and Epistles. Before 4th century, for Easter and Pentecost alone, portions related to the events were read. On other Sundays, Bishop or Priest was choosing any portion as they willed.

By 5th century, most of the Churches started reading Scripture portions related to the concerned events for certain important feasts such as Danaho, Lazarus's Saturday, Palm Sunday, Passion Week, Easter, HOVERO Week, Pentecost and a few other such occasions. On other usual Sundays, each parish could choose what to read as they wanted. The most ancient Lectionary of Syrian Church is a manuscript of 5th century, now preserved in the British Library. [BM. Add. 14528, Burkett, the Early Syrian Lectionary]. This permits to choose portions as they preferred during the Sundays of Big Lent.

Lectionary of Jerusalem:

Among known Lectionaries, the earliest is the one used in Jerusalem in 4th century. Though this was prepared originally in Greek, what is available now is an Armenian translation and therefore this is also called Armenian Lectionary.

Manuscripts reveal that this was formulated by St James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem and our Lord's brother. All the Liturgy orders originated from Jerusalem are known in the name of St James. Manuscripts also mention that this Lectionary was finalised in 4th century by St Cyril of Jerusalem.

Apart from Biblical portions, there was a custom in early Church to read from the life histories of saints and martyrs as well as the epistles of Church fathers. Armenian Lectionary has enough indications of this.

History of Martyrs:

According to Armenian Lectionary, January 11 is the day of remembrance of Peter Apseamos, a martyr. It is stipulated that his life history has to be read on this day. This is to be read in between reading the Epistle of St Paul and Evengelion. Likewise, the remembrance of '40 martyrs' is on March 9 and on that day, the text 'Acts of 40 Martyrs' has to be read as directed in the Armenian Lectionary.

Epistles of Church Fathers:

In the 4th century, a feast of Sleebo was observed in Jerusalem on May 7. This feast was to commemorate the appearance of Sleebo above Golgotha in full splendour on May 7, 350 AD. On May 7, the letter sent to Emperor Constantine by St Cyril of Jerusalem was read between reading the Epistle of St Paul and Evengelion. [Though the Lectionary says Constantine, St Cyril had written his letter to Emperor Constance (337 – 361) who succeeded Constantine]

This Lectionary has given specific importance to the Gospel according to St Matthew. Here, it is worth recalling the tradition that St Matthew has written Gospel mainly targeting the Jewish Christians of Palestine. Jerusalem Lectionary contains readings from only 23 Books of Old Testament. Similarly, among New Testament Books, portions from 2 Corinthians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, Judas and Book of Revelations are not seen to be included. May be, it could be in continuation of this, Syrian Lectionary also has no readings prescribed from 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, Judas and Book of Revelations. There is only one portion from 2 Corinthians in Syrian lectionary.

Armenian Lectionary has provisions to recite Psalms in between Scripture readings. In Syrian Church, the system now is that Psalms are recited only before reading Evengelion.

The base for Syrian Lectionary is the Jerusalem (=Armenian) Lectionary of 4th century. The efforts of our Church to improve upon the present Lectionary should be loyal to Church traditions. [Recently, our Church has released its new Lectionary and has been put to effect from the Kudos Etho of 2016].

Syrian Lectionary:

As there are different orders for Holy Qurbana and other sacraments, there are diversities in the Lectionary also, a speciality of Syrian Church. What is being used in India (published from Pampakkuda) is different from what is being used in Antioch. The base for all these happens to be the 4th century Jerusalem (Armenian) Lectionary, but there are striking similarities between all these.

The readings arranged in Lectionary should be understood on the basis of how our Church calendar is structured. The Syrian Church year is organised as eight stages or eight cycles. (The importance of the number 8 has been discussed early in this text). These eight cycles are centred on Yeldho Feast, Danaho, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacle, Demise of Mother of God and Feast of Sleebo. In each of these cycles, the readings would be related to these feasts containing appropriate messages or thoughts. During the day of remembrance of an Apostle or Old Testament Saint, readings would be portions where such names are indicated or incidents related to their lives are mentioned or similar passages. To site and example, on the day of remembrance of St Stephen, Evengelion reading prescribed is Matthew 23: 34 – 39 where we have a prophecy of our Lord on martyrdom.

Kudos Etho or sanctification of Church is the day of commencement of a new Church year. The subject covered in readings on this day would be the establishment of the Church. The Old Testament readings include setting up of the Tent of Meeting and establishment of the Jerusalem Temple. The message we have from these readings is that the Tent of Meeting and the Temple of Jerusalem are forerunners to establishing the Church. The subjects covered on Hudod Etho are also similar.

Six Sundays following Hudos Etho are preparations to Yeldho Feast. Readings for these Sundays are about events related to the birth of our Lord. During the early days of Syrian Church, all these six Sundays were part of the 40 day Lent prior to Feast of Yeldho.

About ten Old Testament portions are stipulated to be read for Yeldho Feast. All these readings are Old Testament prophecies and indications of the birth of our Lord. Two weeks in between Yeldho Feast and Danaho are earmarked for the events of our Lord's infancy. For the Danaho Feast, there are about ten Old Testament readings which are all Old Testament indications on water. One of them is the servant of Abraham meeting Rebecca, the bride of Isaac at the side of a well (Genesis 24: 1 – 28). This incident is interpreted by Church fathers as a forerunner to the wedding engagement of Christ with the Church. This portion is prescribed to be read on Danaho based on the tradition that the Baptism of Christ has been an occasion of the wedding engagement of Christ with Church. These types of symbolical events are arranged to be included in the readings for different feasts. Prophecy of Isaiah about 'drawing water from the wells of salvation' (12:3), vision of Jeremiah about 'the Lord, the spring of living water' (17:13) the vision of Ezekiel about 'water coming out from under the threshold of the temple' (47: 1, 2), 'the man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the river' seen by Daniel (12: 6, 7), 'water from the rock' (Numbers 20:1 – 11) and 'healing of water' performed by Elisha are all meaningful Old Testament readings included for Danaho feast.

Sundays following Danaho, the Evengelion readings confine to calling the disciples. The main thought for Nineveh Lent is advent of Kingdom of God and repentance. The readings on Sundays remembering the departed priests and departed believers exhort the congregation that they should be awake always because the time our Lord's coming is not known.

The readings on Sundays during Big Lent are centred on our Lord healing the sick. Eastern Churches have a tradition to view sin as an illness and pray God for healing. Big Lent is an occasion of healing of the believers. From Easter to Ascension, the subject is risen Christ appearing before disciples on different contexts as well as readings of Christ's glorification. Following Pentecost, the readings mostly confine to picturing Jesus Christ as the Bread of life. After Sleebo Feast, we have the confrontations between Christ and Pharisees. The message we have here is that the life of a Christian should not be peripheral like those of Pharisees.

Questions:

1. What are the characteristics of Jerusalem Lectionary?
2. Write an essay about the contents and messages of Scripture readings on Easter Sunday.

Lesson 4

Funerals and Life After Death

Prayers for the Departed # Funeral in Christian Church # Funerals In Early Church # Resurrection and Waiting in Paradise # Holy Qurbana for the Departed

Prayers for the Departed:

Perhaps, it is a matter of serious thinking among most people as what would happen to soul after one's physical death. Different religions have explained about life after death based on their varying visions. But it is not possible to infer logically that soul has an end while human body undergoes a transformation. Death is nothing but a mode of existence; it is not an end in totality.

Death is an entry to a new status in life. It is commencement of a long sleep; each day when we sleep in the night, it is foretaste to eternal sleep. When we sleep, our body is static, but mind is dynamic. Our internal organs are active even while we sleep. Likewise, after physical death, body becomes lifeless and later, undergoes transformation, but soul remains live according to Christian faith. Let us sum up the Orthodox faith about life after death.

Resurrection of Christ Confirms Life after Death:

The faith that human life doesn't end with physical death but would rise is founded on the resurrection of Christ. "Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence" (2 Corinthians 4:14). "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). All believers would rise as Christ did. This faith is founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised" (1 Corinthians 15:15).

Life after death is one of the basic faiths of Christianity:

Life after death and the common resurrection that is to happen in Church with the second coming of Christ are basic doctrines of Christian faith. St Paul has explained in detail the Christian faith about life after death in his first epistle to Corinthians chapter 15. "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Life after death comes in Christ:

A believer who is an organ of Christ's body through Holy Baptism enters eternal life. Each believer is becoming part of Christ's immortality. "Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, shall live" (John 12:25).

Holy Baptism and Holy Qurbana ensure Eternal Life:

Through Holy Baptism, each Christian “is alive to God in Jesus Christ” (Romans 6:11). Through Holy Qurbana, “we remain in Christ and Christ in us” (John 6:56). “He who feeds on this Bread will live forever” (John 6:58). “I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54).

Death cannot alienate us from Christ:

The life after death is different from what we experience here. But, one who is baptised and is part of Christ’s body is not detached from Christ even in his death. With death we are not alienated from the love of God (Romans 8: 38, 39). “For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living” (Romans 14: 9).

Life after death is life with Christ:

New Testament teaches that the departed ones experience nearness of Christ (Philippians 1: 20 – 24). “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3: 3, 4).

Departed or not silent:

After death, souls are not in a state of lifelessness; they can think, they can see, they can pray as we are taught in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16: 19 – 31). St John saw in his vision souls of martyrs crying to God for revenge (Revelations 6: 9 – 11). He further saw souls of the departed participating in the worship at Heaven (Revelations 7: 10 – 17).

The departed can sustain in faith and can have change of mind:

Our Lord had gone to Sheol to preach the Good News; he did so because those in Sheol can have a change of mind (1 Peter 3:19, 4:6). Eastern Churches do not advocate that with death one loses chance to have a change of mind. The compassion of God does not end with one’s death in this world. Mercy of God is there for sinners even after their death; it is in this faith, we pray for the departed.

Praying for the departed:

Christian life has attached importance to prayers of intercession. Those who are alive in this world pray for each other. They pray for each other because they are organs of Christ’s body. We have seen above that with death no one is alienated from the body of Christ. Since the departed ones are also organs of the body of Christ we pray for them. Since their souls are live even after death, they are also praying for us.

Final Resurrection:

Christian faith is that with the second coming of Christ, the departed ones would rise in body. As taught in New Testament, in resurrection, they would have a glorified body different from the corruptible body they were having earlier (John 5: 24 – 29; 1 Corinthians 15: 35 – 58; 1 Thessalonians 4: 13 – 18; Matthew 25: 31 – 46). New Testament also says that the righteous and the evil would be judged and would be rewarded according to their deeds (John 5: 24 – 29; Matthew 25: 31 – 46).

But we have hope in New Testament teachings that God is a merciful father rather than a judge. His love exceeds His justice. This is the reason why Church fathers had reservations to explain last judgment in detail.

Funeral in Christian Church:

On the basis of their faith in life after death, all religions have their own customs of funerals, cremation of bodies or burial. Right from very ancient days, people were considering tombs as holy. There were practices among gentiles and at certain times, even among Jews of setting up eatables for the departed on their tombs. It is in this tradition, we read in the Book of Tobit 4:17, "Pour out your wine and your bread on the grave of the righteous, but do not share them with sinners".

During the time of our Lord, Romans used to cremate dead bodies. But Jews always followed the system of placing the body inside a tomb. Jews considered cremation of bodies as a punishment and disgrace. They did not have the practice of using one tomb for a second time. It was on this basis body of Jesus was placed in a tomb that was carved out of rock and another body was not placed there before (John 19: 41, 42; Luke 23:53). Christian Church followed the Jewish custom of burying dead bodies in tombs (Acts 8:2; John 5:28, 29). But there were evidences of gentile Christians cremating dead bodies here and there. However, from 2nd century, the system of burying dead bodies came to be practiced by all Christians throughout the Church.

Funerals in Early Church:

During early days, there were no separate cemeteries for Christians and gentiles. From AD 250, Church fathers including Cyprian insisted that Christians should not be buried with gentiles. During these days, it also used to be insisted that heretics and those who stood against the Church should not be buried along with believers.

Early Church had a system of burying dead bodies in tombs looking like big boxes made of marble or rock. These boxes called Sacro Phages are seen even now in cemeteries of ancient European towns and Rome. Apart from these, there were underground gallery like structures called Catacombs for burying bodies in Rome. Possibly, Catacombs were made due to shortage of space in usual cemeteries. The Catacombs were being made by boring underground walls.

Till 4th century, Bishops were also buried at the cemetery of believers. Their tombs used to have an inscription 'Episcopa'; otherwise, there were no marks of distinguishing. From 4th century onwards,, Bishops in Rome were buried inside churches.

However, early Church took particular care that the tombs of martyrs and saints were taken special care and that their mortal remains were shifted to church and maintained separately. Western Church had a system to construct Table of Sacrifice above the tombs of martyrs and Apostles. This system is not there in Eastern Church. During the days of Pope Damascus (end of 4th century), Thronose was built atop the tombs of Apostles St Peter and St Paul. This would have been done as inspired from Book of Revelations 6:9.

Resurrection and Waiting in Paradise:

Our Church fathers teach that the souls of departed believers wait in fellowship with God till the second coming of Christ. But no exhaustive explanations are given by these fathers as to the nature of that waiting. They explain life after death in the backdrop of Scriptural events. To illustrate life after death, they have relied on the following incidents of Holy Bible: (1) Daniel in the Lion's den (Daniel : 6) (2) Three youths in the fiery furnace (Daniel :3) (3) resurrection of Lazarus (John : 11) (4) Susanna freed from allegations against her (Daniel: 13 in the annexure) (4) Flood during the time of Noah (Genesis: 7,8) (5) Jonah escaping from the womb of giant fish (Jonah 1,2) (6) Isaac escaping death (Genesis 22) (7) After years of illness, the invalid man and the bleeding woman getting healed (John 5: 1 – 8 and Matthew 9: 20 – 22) (8) Leading the herd of sheep to the spring of water welling up to eternal life as the Good Shepherd promised the Samaritan woman (John 4: 13 – 15) and (9) the vision of Ezekiel (37: 1 – 14).

Holy Qurbana for the Departed:

'Didascalia of the Apostles' is a document recorded in Syria around AD 250. This document contains the traditions of the Church since the days of the Apostles. There is a record on celebrating Holy Qurbana for the departed believers in Didascalia as briefed below:

'According to Gospels and as empowered by Holy Spirit, you note to gather in cemeteries to read scripture and pray together and you celebrate Holy Qurbana as pleasing to God. Without doubt, you pray for the departed and in remembrance of the departed, celebrate Holy Qurbana in your churches or cemeteries'. The reason for this is that as stated in gospel (John 11:26), those who believed in God are not dead, but are in rest. Those who are alive are remembered in prayers. Holy Qurbana is a unique form of prayer. It is quite logical to remember the departed believers in Holy Qurbana offered by Church, the body of Christ. By ignoring the departed believers, those who are alive now forming only a part of the body of Christ, cannot pray.

Questions:

1. How do you justify praying for the departed?
2. What is the picture given by Holy Bible about the situation after death?

Lesson 5

Mysterious Nature of Worship

What is Mystery or Koodasha? # Number of Mysteries in Catholic Church # Number of Mysteries in Eastern Tradition

Mysteries are ritualistic services of worship. Usually, the term Sacrament is used for seven such ritualistic services like Holy Baptism, Holy Qurbana, Priesthood and so on. Confining the term 'Mystery' or 'Koodasha' exclusively to these seven ritualistic services is not something justifiable in the light of Orthodox tradition. Each and every ritualistic service of the Church is mysterious in nature. Before explaining these, let us try to understand what a Mystery is.

What is Mystery?

Eastern Churches use a term 'mysterion' in Greek language which means 'mystery' for ritualistic services like Holy Qurbana, Baptism, Priesthood and so on; the Syrian equivalent is ROSO. Both words mean the very same. As equivalent to these, Roman Catholics use 'Sacrament' or 'Koodasha'. 'Sacrament' means 'oath' or 'confirmation' and 'Koodasha' means 'sanctification' or 'submission'. Both these words do not mean 'mystery'.

The word 'Mysterion' has been used in New Testament in different contexts. This word is used often when Divine Mystery is discussed (Romans 16: 25, 26; 11:25; 1 Corinthians 2: 7) When St Paul mentions about Good News in his epistles to Ephesians and Colossians, this is the word he is using. He has attributed the term 'Mystery of God' to Christ (Colossians 1:27; 2:2; 4:3). In short, 'Mysterion' indicates 'mysteries of God' in New Testament. We have to understand the meanings of ritualistic services in worship in the light of the wider meanings 'mysterion' hold. Whenever our Church fathers write about Holy Qurbana or Holy Baptism, the words they use often are 'Mysteries' or 'Divine Mysteries' or 'Holy Mysteries' or 'Heavenly Mysteries'.

Jesus Christ is revelation of Divine Mysteries in fullness. According to St Paul, Christ himself is Mystery of God or a 'Koodasha'. Through mysteries, men become part of Christ. Through mysteries, men become member of Church that is body of Christ; men become part and parcel of Christ's flesh and blood.

To explain the relationship between Christ and Church, St Paul uses this word (Ephesians 5:32). Christ is the Mystery of God. In that Divine Mystery, Church also participates. If Christ is a Mystery of God, Church too is a Mystery. This Mysterious nature of the Church is revealed through various ritualistic services. Usually, the term 'Mysteries' is associated with seven such ritualistic services where the Mysterious nature is revealed. Let us try to understand if we can justify these seven ritualistic services alone being called 'Mysteries'.

In our Creed of Faith, we affirm that 'we believe' on four Mysteries namely Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Church. Nicene – Constantinople Creed of Faith considers Church as resembling Divine Mystery. Holy Church is a community that participates in Divine Mystery. Therefore Church happens to be a sign of Divine Mystery in this universe.

The presence of Church is revealed to this universe through liturgy. Each worshipping community is a visible image of Church. Through each of these worshipping communities, Church, the Divine Mystery is revealed to universe. This mysterious nature is present in all ritualistic services of Church; it is present with all deeds of the Church. A synod is a fellowship that brings out sacramentality of the Church. Guided by Holy Spirit, a synod takes decisions needed for the progressive growth of the Church. The three universal synods were met to suppress tendencies standing in the way of spiritual growth of the Church hampering the validity of true worship. Eastern Churches do not see synod as a constitutional requirement. Synod cannot be viewed detached from the backdrop of liturgy.

The reason why Orthodox Churches have not stipulated an official list of 'Mysteries' lies with the wider meaning of the concept that 'Mysteries' are ritualistic services. It was the Roman Catholic Church that limited their 'Sacraments' to seven. Influenced by Catholics and emulating them some Eastern theologians also have explained 'Mysteries' as seven. Now we will see the approaches of different Church denominations on the number of 'Mysteries' or 'Sacraments'.

Number of Mysteries in Catholic Church:

The Trend synod of Roman Catholic Church held during 1545 – 1565 officially stipulated that 'Sacraments' are only seven and that not even one cannot be added or subtracted. There are two reasons why Catholics proclaimed 'Sacraments' as seven. First, right from 11th century, there were disputes among Catholic theologians regarding the number of 'Sacraments'. Some of the pioneers among them put forward the suggestion of seven. Secondly, leaders of Protestant reformation movement such as Martin Luther and others accepted only Holy Baptism and Holy Qurbana as 'Sacraments'. It was based on this confrontation Trend synod came up with the proclamation that 'Sacraments' are seven, neither more nor less. This proclamation was aimed at seeking an end to the ideological confusions in the church.

Discussions on 'Sacraments' in Catholic Church commenced in 11th century. Peter Damien (+ 1072) had mentioned about twelve 'Sacraments'. He considered Holy Qurbana, Baptism and Priesthood as the main among these twelve. Another notable theologian Hugo of St Victor has mentioned about more than a dozen 'Sacraments'. He classified them as those needed for salvation and those not needed. He included water, palm leaf, blessing of eatables, vestments and vessels for Holy Qurbana among 'Sacraments'.

The French theologian Peter Lombard (1100 – 1160) was the one who came up with seven 'Sacraments' for the first time. They were Holy Qurbana, Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Priesthood, Matrimony, Holy Confession and Anointment. Following this, Thomas Aquinas (+ 1284) also stuck to seven. Since Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas were highly respected theologians in Europe, their inferences found common acceptance. It was based on this general concurrence, Trend Synod officially proclaimed 'Sacraments' as seven in number.

The Catholic theologians who were vehement about their stand on seven 'Sacraments' wrote lengthy essays about the significance of the number 'seven'; 'three' signifies Holy Trinity; 'four' signifies the four parts of creation; the sum total of the two that is seven signifies the unity of God and man. Thus many opinions came up regarding the characteristics of 'seven'. The seven gifts of Spirit (Isaiah 11: 1, 2), the lamp with seven branches in Jerusalem Temple, the seven consecrated loaves, the seven seals opened by the little lamb in the Book of Revelations, the seven verses of

Christ lying on the cross, seven virtues and the seven sins leading to death are all used by Catholics highlighting the significance of 'seven' Sacraments. Following these, even in Eastern Churches, there are occasional writings pinpointing the importance of 'seven'.

Number of Mysteries in Eastern Tradition:

Greek Tradition: Near about AD 500, Mar Dionysius Areopagite, the Church father who lived in Antioch had stated six 'Mysteries'. They were Holy Qurbana, Baptism, Mooron Consecration, Ordination, Monkhood and Funeral. He used the term 'Perfections' for these. He also called Holy Qurbana as 'Perfection of Perfections'. After three centuries, the Byzantine author Theodore Studite (758 – 826) had also mentioned only about these six.

Well known theologian of Byzantine tradition John of Damascus (675 – 826) has stated only Holy Baptism and Holy Qurbana.

Eastern Christians were hearing the concept of seven 'Mysteries' only in 13th century. In 1267, the Byzantine Emperor Michael Palayologos joined Roman Catholic Church and the proclamation of faith he sent to Pope Clement IV had mentioned about seven 'Mysteries'. This proclamation was prepared by Catholic theologians.

After 13th century, a few Byzantine writers influenced by Catholic custom had mentioned 'Mysteries' as seven in number. But this had not been carrying any doctrinal significance rather than personal points of view. Even among those Byzantine writers who said about seven 'Mysteries', the listing did not match between them. A monk Job lived in 13th century had listed seven 'Mysteries' among them Monkhood was one. Also, he viewed Holy Confession and Anointment as one.

A theologian of 15th century namely Simon of Thessaloniki had seen Monkhood as a 'Mystery'. He counted it as one with Confession (or Repentance) and Anointment as a separate one to arrive at seven.

Joseph, a Metropolitan of Ephesus in 15th century had stated that he believed 'Mysteries' as not seven, but more. He gave a list of ten including Consecration of church, Funeral and Monkhood in addition to the seven we all normally know.

Chaldean Syrian Tradition: It seems that there were no lists of 'Mysteries' in Chaldean Syrian Church before 14th century. A writer Abdisho (+ 1318) in his Book of Pearl had provided a list of seven 'Mysteries'. In his opinion, the seven 'Mysteries' were Priesthood, Baptism, Anointment Oil, Holy Qurbana, Remission of Sins, Leaven used for Holy Qurbana and Sign of Sleebo. He claimed that these were the complete list of the 'Mysteries' of the Church and that they were Scripture based.

Patriarch Timothy II was a contemporary of Abdisho; he too said about seven 'Mysteries', but the list differed from that of Abdisho. The 'Mysteries' he listed were Ordination, Consecration of Thronose, Baptism, Holy Qurbana, Monkhood, Funeral and Matrimony.

Syrian Church of Antioch: The six 'Mysteries' seen in the list of Dionysius Areopagite were those mostly seen in Syrian writings before 13th century. In the 'NARASHKUDSHE of Bar Abraya (+ 1286), there were mentions of only five 'Mysteries' namely Priesthood, Mooron, Baptism, Holy Qurbana

and Funeral. However, in his SALGE, he had listed Consecration of church in addition to the five above.

In short, the stand that 'Mysteries' can be limited to seven does not find any justification in the light of Eastern Church traditions. The fathers we have seen above or writers have never confined the number of 'Mysteries' to a specified number. They have written or revealed their insights about some of the 'Mysteries' they found important. By and large, these fathers have not attached any peculiarity to the number 'seven'.

There were some Eastern theologians who opined in 19th and 20th centuries that the number of 'Mysteries' were seven but that could not claim any official recognition. At best, we can say that the concept 'seven Mysteries' help believers to have a sort of general understanding on 'Mysteries'.

If we stick on to the 'seven Mysteries' concept, it would mean that Divine Graces would be passed on to believers only through these seven ritualistic services or it would mean the God acts through these services only. Therefore, limiting 'Mysteries' to any specific number ends up limiting Divine deeds and Divine grace to these services only. Arguing for 'seven Mysteries' would be separating those seven ritualistic services from others.

Many fathers have included Monkhood and Matrimony in the list of 'Mysteries'. Both these are life lines chosen by individuals in submission to the Grace of God. Only those with the call choose either Monkhood or Matrimony. Therefore taking Matrimony among 'Mysteries' and keeping Monkhood outside is as good as admitting albeit indirectly that Matrimony is nobler than Monkhood. Funeral too is accepted by fathers as 'Mystery'. Funeral is a ritualistic service seeing off departed believers in hope to the state of leisure till the second coming of our Lord. This service also possesses 'mysterious' characteristics.

Any ritualistic service not listed in the 'seven' is called 'Sacramental' by Catholics meaning 'small Mystery'. But the differentiation of 'Sacrament' and 'Sacramental' is not accepted in Eastern Churches.

Sacramentality is a characteristic of the Church. Making man a participant in Divine Mysteries itself is a 'Mystery', the biggest of all 'Mysteries' that is Church, the body of Christ. Each movement and ritual in Church life possesses Sacramentality. Man cannot decide that sacramentality can be there only for certain chosen ritualistic services. This is the reason why Orthodox Churches are reluctant to prepare lists and definitions that would cause limitations to Grace of God and Mysterious characteristic of God. The sacramentality of Church is revealed to universe through various ritualistic services such as Feasts, Hourly Prayers, Holy Qurbana, Baptism, Ordination and the like. This doesn't mean that Hourly Prayers are viewed equal with Holy Qurbana. What is said here should be understood in the backdrop of the wider meanings of 'Mysteries'. Again, the purity of life seen in a Monk, the thoughts of a theologian, the Service of a Priest, the innocent devotion of believers are all revealing the sacramentality of the Church.

Questions:

1. Write an essay on the topic, "Number of 'Mysteries' in Eastern Tradition".
2. Explain the Sacramentality of worship.

Lesson 6

Reformation of Liturgy and Indigenisation

Whether Reformation of Liturgy is possible in Orthodox Church # Whether new Orders of Liturgy are possible # New Orders of Liturgy # Indigenisation of Liturgy # Purpose of Liturgy

Two of the greatest events in Christian Church during 20th century were the setting up of World Council of Churches in 1948 and the second Vatican Council in 1964. Both these events had caused far reaching influences on the theological thoughts and liturgical approaches of Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches.

Second Vatican Council had reoriented the characteristics of Catholic theology and liturgy. It is after the year 1964 Catholic Church had started their worship in regional languages instead of their age old practice of having liturgy only in Latin. Along with this their orders of liturgy and Sacraments were renewed. Their lengthy orders of worships were shortened. Complex music gave place for simple music where the whole congregation could join. Active participation of believers in worship was the goal of second Vatican Council. The efforts of Catholic theologians from the beginning of 20th century through Liturgical Movement ended up with reformation of liturgy at the second Vatican Council.

Shortage of time has become a great issue for modern man. In his busy schedule of different day to day affairs, he doesn't have enough time to set apart for worship. Catholic Church resorted to comparatively shortened liturgy with a view to satisfy the spiritual needs of modern generation. But the fact is that even such reformations of liturgy did not help Catholic Church to attract the 'modern generation' which has been drifting away from worship. Those who murmur about the length of Orthodox worship would well recall this experience of Catholics.

World Council of Churches had played constructive roles in reforming Protestant liturgy. After the year 1948, Protestants had many opportunities to understand different denominations closely and experience different liturgies. Thus, many Protestant Churches took initiatives to formulate liturgies those are simple for the believers to comprehend and having indigenous characteristics in worship.

Whether Reformation of Liturgy is possible in Orthodox Church?

Orthodox Churches are the only community that has not attempted any changes in liturgy these modern days. There are many reasons for Orthodox Churches being reluctant to introduce reformation in liturgy. One of the reasons is the relationship between faith and liturgy. The base for prayers and ritualistic services are the doctrines of faith the Church has been holding. Orthodox Churches think in general that so long doctrines of faith do not undergo changes, there can be no change in the form and nature of liturgy.

Liturgy is the expression of Church life. The life of Church in the Grace of Holy Spirit has been transmitted down the generations through liturgy. We worship God along with those who have been worshipping God for ever. What we are today is just one stage of the Church life that has been

sustained through centuries. Therefore, many think that introducing changes to the basic nature of liturgy is not justifiable.

This doesn't mean that the rituals associated with liturgy can never have changes. Similarly, no one can argue on the basis of Church traditions that there is no room for innovations in liturgy.

New Orders of Liturgy:

We have our present liturgy in its present form consequent to its progressive growth through centuries. The history of liturgy is indeed the history of its growth and transformations from time to time. The orders of liturgy were originally formulated in Greek in the Syrian Church of Antioch; they were translated to Syriac in 7th century. Prayers and rituals akin to need of the days were introduced and added. Syrian tradition permits introducing new rituals or prayers without altering the basic nature of liturgy in practice. This could be the reason that there are more than 70 Thaksas for Holy Qurbana in Syrian Church. There are more than a dozen of Orders for Holy Baptism. These sorts of varieties are there in the Orders for other 'Mysteries' also. Therefore, working out new Orders of Liturgy without corrupting basic characteristic thereof are not against Syrian tradition.

But a question comes up as to who can take the initiative in case new Orders of Liturgy can be worked out. The custom in vogue as far as Syrian Church is concerned can't be seen as an effort of the whole Church. Metropolitans using their freedom to do so took steps to formulate different Orders of Liturgy for use in their respective dioceses. In Syrian Church, different Orders of Liturgy were formed centred on Antioch and Tigris. The Liturgy Orders of Tigris used to be different from those of Antioch always.

Indigenisation of Liturgy:

The Liturgy of each Orthodox Church has characteristics of the land where the Church is centred. Language, nature of prayers, rituals and music are different in each Church. Through these factors of worship, the respective indigenusness of Church and liturgy were revealed by each Church. Indigenusness means coordinating life of Church and Liturgy aligning with time, culture and location of the Church. Many Christians in India possess a misconception that indigenusness in India is emulating Hindu customs in worships as they are. There are people in Indian Christian community believing that if oil lamps of bronze, measuring vessel filled with paddy, decorated platters, camphor and lighted lamps are used to perform certain dramatic rituals, they amount to indigenisation. This is more of imitation of Hinduism rather than indigenisation.

Without resorting to any of such imitations, our predecessors have been successful in indigenising Syrian Liturgy. Entering a church barefooted, not using pews in churches, tying the wedding string in service of matrimony, using decorated umbrellas in processions are all customs of purely Indian nature. However, some of the customs those were part and parcel of wedding ceremonies till about 50 years ago are seen to have disappeared now. Indian Church had been following the system of choosing priest elects in parish general body meeting as a continuation of ancient Christian tradition till a few decades back. There are only very few Churches across the globe to have an assembly of laity and clergy, which we call Malankara Association, to take crucial decisions for the administration of the Church and also electing Metropolitans. Metropolitans not being distanced to believers, but living close to them providing spiritual guidelines, yet leading the life of a monk are in line with

Orthodox tradition as well as Indian culture. By indigenisation, what we should understand is to sustain 'Indianism' like this and express them through Liturgy. We are briefing various aspects of indigenisation below, but they need be seen only as subjects for readers to think and discuss as and when occasions permit.

Worship in regional language:

We had a brief discussion on this topic in Chapter 3 of Unit 1 of this text. Eastern Churches were careful always to ensure that the worship was in a language that the believers could follow. Thaksa for Holy Qurbana has already stand translated in India to Tamil, Hindi, Telugu and some other regional languages. It is necessary that service Orders are made ready for use in other Indian languages also.

Insufficiency of Translations:

The Orders of Liturgy in Malankara Church are almost totally translations from Syriac. There are word by word translations in many of our prayers carrying unusually long sentences which make it difficult for the congregation to comprehend meanings correctly. Promiyon and Sedaro are payers rich in theological insights containing deep meaningful thoughts. There must be translations bringing out meanings and thoughts with clarity so that the congregation understands them. A better option to address this lacuna would be resorting to independent translations. The linguistic and ideological inconsistencies we face now by singing Syrian hymns translated to Malayalam word by word but in Syrian ragas are also issues where solutions are required.

Liturgical Music:

In our Orders of Liturgy, hymns should be so chosen that the congregation has total participation. For example, Funeral Service is one where many believers take part with devotion; but the hymns we have in this Order are not easy for even trained singers. There must be innovations here that we have hymns simple in nature that all can join singing. There must be efforts to modify hymns used in other orders also in a similar pattern.

All Syrian ragas are not matching the histrionic taste of Indian culture. We have to pick those ragas that can be sung by ordinary believers ensuring their devotional participation. The notable feature of the service Order of Good Friday is that the hymns we have there are in too simple ragas that any believer can sing them with comfort thereby we have a total participation of the congregation. Similarly, we should have hymns of such nature for all other feasts also.

Along with the above, we have to study as to what extend we can use Indian Classical styles of music in our worships. Russian Orthodox Church that was formed only in the 10th century developed music for their Liturgy purely based on Russian folk style rather than copying Byzantine music ragas. Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopian Churches are using their indigenous music for Liturgy. Likewise, we have an obligation to contain Indian music as part of Christian Liturgy thereby infusing the presence Christ there.

Purpose of Liturgy:

Those who clamour for reformation of worship and indigenisation often forget the purpose of worship. According to New Testament thinking, purpose of Christian Liturgy is 'building up of the Church' (In Greek, OIKODOMIA). This word is translated as 'Spiritual growth' in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Worship is for the spiritual growth of believers; for their growth in love and righteousness. Reformation of Liturgy and indigenisation should be helpful to achieve spiritual growth.

Questions:

1. Briefly narrate your opinion regarding the formulations of new Orders of Service in Malankara Church.
2. Write an essay on the topic, 'Indigenisation of Liturgy'.