

**Divyabodhanam Series No. 9**

# **Abba Father...**

**( A short study of the Eastern Christian Worship)**

**Fr. Dr. B. Varghese**



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## **PREFACE**

Fr. Dr. B. Varghese is an outstanding scholar in liturgical studies. His Malayalam Book “Abba Pithave” was very much appreciated by many readers and students of Divyabodhanam. We are happy to have its long awaited translation now available to us.

We should be grateful to Fr. Dr. B. Varghese for personally undertaking the translation of the book by himself and accomplishing it most commendably.

This book gives an essential introduction to Christian Worship, incorporating the foundational principles and historical development of eucharistic and sacramental life with reference to all the major traditions of Christianity. Fr. Dr. B. Varghese is exceptionally gifted to combine the depth of liturgical theology with the clarity of communication.

We are sure, this book will benefit an English-speaking readership, especially the younger generation of the Malankara Orthodox Diaspora. I once again thank the author Fr. Dr. B. Varghese for his commendable work and wish all the readers an enriching experience.

**Fr. Dr. Jacob Kurian**

Vice President  
Divyabodhanam

Old Seminary, Kottayam  
Nov. 10, 2006

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We bow down to the Almighty God who enabled us to bring out this English version of “Divyabodhanam - growing in the wisdom of God” series. We place trust in Him alone who provides His matchless care to this lay training programme.

Divyabodhanam is the brain child of our former president H. G. Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios Metropolitan, whom we pay homage gratefully. Thirumeni was the real inspiration behind the Divyabodhanam programme including the initial financial support.

Our sincere thanks to Rev. Fr. Dr. B. Varghese the author of this book, a known Liturgical theologian, for translating his own earlier Malayalam version “Abba Pithave.” Eventhough this book was published originally in 1985 and its translation was ready by 2003, printing was delayed beacuse of financial and other constraints. We are extremely grateful to Sri. A. K. Jacob, Director of Divyabodhanam, Diocese of Bombay for his generous contribution which enabled is to publish this volume.

Our heartfelt thanks to Prof. Paul C. Varghese who checked the translation. Also we thank Sophia Print House and Udaya Printers for thier prompt services in DTP and Printing works respectively.

Thanks to all associated with the publication of Divyabodhanam books and we hope this book would be a blessing to our English speaking students of Divyabodhanam.

For Divyabodhanam Committee

**Fr. Jacob Mathew**  
(Co-ordinator)

Parumala Perunal  
November 2006

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# UNIT I

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP

### LESSON 1

#### WORSHIP: COMMUNION WITH GOD

- ❑ Communion with God in Silence
- ❑ Different aspects of Worship
- ❑ Different forms of Worship

Worship is communion with God. It is the only way to relate ourselves with God. Worship is an expression of our faith in a living and personal God. The meaning and relevance of worship cannot be understood through definitions and explanations; but through love towards God and faith in Him. An atheist cannot understand the significance of worship. Worship is meaningless to a man who has none to worship.

Not only our heart and tongue, but also our body and whole personality become involved in worship. True worship is the lifting up of the heart, mind and thought towards God. The bodily posture and the act of kneeling down are all a means of establishing communion with God.

#### 1. Communion with God in Silence

Worship does not consist of merely words, thoughts and movements. In silence too one can worship. To remain in silence before God is in itself worship. One can encounter God in the depths of Silence. One who wants to worship should love to remain in silence before God.

Cure d’Ars was a saintly priest who lived in France in the eighteenth century. Once he noticed an old villager coming to the church and sitting there for a few hours. The priest thought that the old man was not praying at all. One day he asked Him: “Why do you sit in the church without praying?” “I look at Him; He looks at me, we are happy together”, replied the old man. The old man was able to talk to God in silence without uttering a word. If we want to love

worship, we have also to practice a similar communion with God in silence. If worship consists merely of repeating a few words or phrases, one gets bored after some time. Prayer in silence should be the foundation of worship. The Psalmist insists on the relationship between the prayer of the lips and the prayer in silence: ‘O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise’ (Ps. 51:15).

## **2. Different aspects of Worship**

When we define worship, the following aspects shall be taken into account.

**(i) Worship is the life of the Church:** Worship is the life of the Church. It is the life breath of the Church. In the New Testament, the word “Church” is mainly used for communities gathered together for worship (eg. the Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila: Rom. 16:5, 1 Cor. 16:19, the Church in the house of Nymphas: Col. 4:15; the Church in the house of Philemon: Phil. 2). “House Churches” of New Testament means the worshipping communities assembled in particular houses. Church is manifested in the world in its catholicity, oneness, apostolicity and holiness in and through a worshipping community. Therefore, a worshipping community is the visible manifestation of the Church. It is in and through worship that the members of the Church assemble and are manifested as the Body of Christ. In other words, the Church lives through worship. ‘When two or three people assemble in the name of Christ’ for worship, the Church is manifested there. Therefore, when worship disappears from the life of the Church, the Church itself disappears from the world.

**(ii) Worship is a personal relationship with God:** It is through worship that we encounter God. The essential aspect of worship is to enter into the presence of God and address Him “Abba Father!” (Gal. 4:4-7; Rom. 8:14-16). In baptism we are incorporated into Christ. As we are “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), we are given the Spirit of Sonship to address God as “Our father!” In Christ, the Son of God, we have become sons of the heavenly Father. We have received the freedom to call God “Our Father who art in heaven!” Worship is the fullest expression of our freedom as sons of God.

**(iii) Worship is glorification of God:** God has created all things visible and invisible, for His glory. The glory of God is manifested in creation. As the Psalmist says: The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handwork (Ps.19:1). It is through worship that human, the crown of creation, becomes conscious of the glory of God and glorifies Him. The Prophet Isaiah saw in a vision that the angels glorified God saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory (Is. 6:3). In worship we join the angelic choir, which glorifies God continuously. We recall this in the “Praise of the Angels” that we recite at the end of night prayer (As the angels and archangels on high in heaven sing and praise, so we poor children of earth sing praise and say...).

**(iv) Worship is the confession of our faith:** All our prayers begin with the words: “ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....”. This short sentence is the confession of our faith in the Holy Trinity. In the Trisagion, which begins Holy, are you, O God.... we confess our faith in Christ. In short, prayer is an expression of our faith in God. All our prayers are based on our faith in Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. Even in the Apostolic Church, doctrinal statements were used as liturgical formulae (eg. 1 Tim. 3:16). In the Orthodox Church, our faith is not preserved mainly in the manuals of theology, but in the prayers that we use in various liturgical celebrations. The Promiun and Sedra of our Church are good examples of this. The Sedra is in fact an exposition of the Bible and the doctrines of the Church. The Nicene Creed is the most important statement of faith that the Church has ever made. Besides being a touchstone of the faith of the Church, it is also a liturgical formula. It is in fact a prayer rather than a doctrinal statement.

**(v) Worship is the celebration of our salvation in Jesus Christ:** Worship is in a sense the celebration of our salvation. In Christ we have been redeemed, our sins have been forgiven and we have been given the grace to stand before God as sons and daughters. Worship is the celebration of this great joy. In worship we glorify God for the salvation in Christ. It is a thanksgiving for the love of God that we have experienced in Christ. Worship is not merely an act of fulfilling a duty, an obligation. It is the expression of our love of God.



### 3. Different forms of Worship

The word worship or liturgy denotes a variety of forms of worship of the Church. The Holy Eucharist, the Sacraments, the Canonical prayers, personal as well as family prayers, fasting, festivals and the reading of the Bible are part and parcel of worship.

#### Questions

1. Why do we say that worship is the life of the Church?
2. What is the importance of prayers in silence?
3. Discuss the significance of worship and service in the modern world.

## LESSON 2

### WHY DO WE PRAY?

Prayer and growth in goodness  Prayer and human freedom   
 Prayer and sanctification  Participation in the divine nature   
 Importance of Corporate Worship

God knows what we need even before we ask. Therefore, do we need to pray? Why does God want us to pray? Does prayer change God's will in any way? Can our prayer change the will of God, who knows the past, the present and the future? Normally these questions are likely to arise in our mind.

#### 1. Prayer and growth in goodness

Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him (Math. 6:8), said Jesus. This contains a warning that our prayer should not be a mere presentation of a list of our needs before God. Even though we can say that presenting our need before God is an expression of our trust in Him, yet the goal of prayer in the Christian tradition is our growth in goodness. God wants us to know what is good for others as well as for ourselves. God insists that we should not lean towards evil, but we must become sons of God by living and growing

in goodness. Prayer is therefore a way of training to grow in goodness, it is a training to direct our lives towards God, who is the source of all virtues.

## **2. Prayer and human freedom**

Prayer is the means to become good by using our freedom without any external compulsion. It is through prayer that we understand the meaning of freedom in its true sense. Freedom does not imply the possibility to do anything that we want. We have the 'freedom' to do good or evil. An act which creates suffering and sorrow to others is not an act of freedom, but an act of slavery, that is, slavery to evil. One, who is a slave to evil, does evil acts, and one, who is free from evil, leads others to goodness. Therefore true freedom is freedom from evil and living in goodness. Prayer leads us to true freedom, which is freedom from evil.

## **3. Prayer and sanctification**

You therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Math. 5:48). The goal of our life is to grow towards perfection of our heavenly Father. The goal of prayer is also to grow in the likeness of God. God is the source of all virtues and He desires only the well being of the world. In prayer our minds and thoughts become centres which think and desire goodness. Through communion with God, we are trained to desire and to do good. We are delivered from selfishness, pride and evil desires and become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). The intellect, the mind and the heart are the centres which control our actions; These centres are cleansed through prayer and we are prepared for acts of holiness.

## **4. Participation in the divine nature**

Man has been created to be a partaker of the divine nature, that is holiness, love and goodness. These divine qualities were seen in their perfection in the incarnate Son of God. In baptism, the faithful are incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and they partake of the divine nature of Christ. It is through prayer that we continue to be in communion with the divine nature. Thus we are transformed into the likeness of God.

## 5. Importance of Corporate Worship

We can worship God at any place and time. Therefore, do we need to assemble together in a place to worship God? If the aim of prayer is communion with God, do we need anything more than individual prayer? But the Bible teaches us about the importance of corporate worship.

- i. God desires corporate worship. During the earthly life of Our Lord, He used to attend regularly the Jewish Synagogue worship. “And He came to Nazareth... and He went into the Synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day” (Lk. 4:16).
- ii. Paul rebukes those who keep away from the church gathering: “and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some...” ( Heb. 10:24-25).
- iii. Christ has promised His presence in the midst of the worshippers: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them” (Math. 18:20).
- iv. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus Christ has taught us to pray: “Our Father who art in heaven.” This is the prayer given to the sons of God to recite together.
- v. Church is a worshipping community. The main activity of the early Church was to meet regularly for worship (Acts. 2:42; 45-46). The groups, which have assembled in houses for worship, are called ‘house churches’ by St. Paul (Col. 4:15; Rom. 16:5, Phil. 2).
- vi. St. Paul says that the Christians who worship in a particular place are praying in communion with Christians all over the world (see, 1 Cor. 1:2).
- vii. In prayer we are not alone. We pray in communion with all the saints in heaven as well as the people on earth. The departed ones who are in Paradise with Christ, are praying forever. Our prayers join with those of our departed. St.

Paul says:

“... whether we wake or sleep we might live with Him “(I Thess.5:10). Both the living and the departed are members of the Church, the Body of Christ. All pray as members of the Body of Christ (Heb. 12:22-24).

## Questions

- 1 “Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” Then what is the need and goal of prayer?
- 2 Discuss the importance of corporate worship.

## LESSON 3

### ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

Adoration  Penitence and Confession  Thanksgiving  Intercession  Meditation  Submission

We have seen that the purpose of worship is the transformation of human so that they will lead a life pleasing to God. The Christian worship contains several elements which help of human transformation. Adoration, penitence, thanksgiving, intercession, meditation and submission are the important elements of Christian worship.

#### 1. Adoration

The goal of worship itself can be summarized as adoring God. Adoration means to express our fear, love and devotion towards God. Through adoration man acknowledges the incomprehensibility, holiness and glory of God. In a sense, adoration symbolizes our self-dedication before God. The attitude of self-dedication is expressed through words and bodily movements. Singing hymns of praise and bowing down and crossing ourselves are the visible expressions of our self-dedication. These outward gestures become meaningful when the mind becomes prepared for the worship of God. If we do not have a sense of the presence of God in our mind, the outward gestures

become merely mechanical.

## **2. Penitence and Confession**

To be aware of our sins and to confess them is also an important element of worship. Repentance and confession stem from our deepest sense of unworthiness. The confession of the prophet Isaiah is a good example of repentance. When he beheld the glory of God, he confessed his unworthiness; ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’ (Is. 6:5).

Simon Peter fell down at Jesus’ feet and said: ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord’ (Lk. 5:8). When St. John saw the risen Christ, he fell at His feet, “as though dead” (Rev. 1:17).

The first step of worship is to know who we are; this is the sum and substance of repentance. One can meet God only through humility and repentance. A humble and regular self-examination leads us to repentance and honest confession of our sins. Confession of our sins helps us to correct ourselves and to grow by the grace of God.

## **3. Thanksgiving**

Prayer and thanksgiving are inseparably related. We thank God for His love, mercy, blessings and faithfulness to His promises. The Psalmist exhorts: ‘Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!’ (Ps. 106:1; 107:1). St. Paul says: ‘Pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you’ (1 Thess. 5:17-18). We are bound to thank God for all the blessings that He is giving to humanity. St. Peter thanked God for the resurrection of Christ, and St. Paul for our redemption from death (1 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 7:24-25).

In the morning we have to thank God for protecting us from all possible dangers of the night; in the evening for giving us a good day and for having brought us rest and peace at the end of the day.

## **4. Intercession**

Intercession is in fact an expression of our concern and love for others. Remembering others in our prayer is as important as service

and teaching. Christians are “a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9), whose vocation is to stand before God, bearing the whole humanity in their hearts. The diptychs (tubden) of the holy Qurbana and the litanies of various liturgical celebrations are good examples of intercession.

## **5. Meditation**

We have already seen the importance of silent prayer. Meditation is a way of “seeking the face of God” (Ps. 27:8) in silence. In meditation, we are concentrating on God, by reciting short mental prayers. We are given more knowledge of God when we seek the face of God regularly by sitting before God in complete silence. In meditation we lift up our mind, heart, intelligence, thought and imagination towards God and seeking His face. Meditation is not merely an intellectual exercise about God. The goal of meditation is to help us spread the light of the presence of God in our mind by reciting short prayers. The so-called Jesus Prayer (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner) is the most important mental prayer used in the Orthodox Church. Meditation includes a self-examination, a “looking into the depths of our hearts”, and to try to know ourselves as God sees and knows us. This should lead us to humility, to repentance and to the submitting of ourselves to God’s will.

## **6. Submission**

Submission is another important element of worship. In a sense, every prayer stems from man’s submission to God. The awareness that we need the grace of God to live, leads us to submit ourselves to the will of God. We have to submit ourselves to God as a canvas is spread before an artist, or as a piano is set before a musician. Let God draw the picture He wants in our life, and let Him play the music that please Him in our life. Submission means allowing God to use us as His instruments to fulfill His plans in history as He wishes.

## **Questions**

1. What are the different elements of worship?
2. What is the purpose of intercession?

## LESSON 4

# BACKGROUND OF THE CHRISTIAN WORSHIP - 1

- ❑ Church and Jewish Religion
- ❑ Jewish Worship
- ❑ Jewish worship
- ❑ Types of Sacrifices
- ❑ Meaning of Jewish sacrifices

### 1. Church and Jewish Religion

The Christian Church which originated in Jerusalem has adopted modes of worships and religious customs from Judaism in its infant stage. In a sense we can say that the primitive Church came up as an offshoot of Judaism. The Christians of Jerusalem used to attend worship in the Temple following the Jewish customs (Acts. 2:42; 5:42; Lk. 24:53). According to St. Mark, Our Lord Himself 'taught in the Temple' day after day (Mk. 14:49). Until A.D. 60, the Jewish converts to Christianity continued to worship in the Temple of Jerusalem. St. Paul prepared himself to attend the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts. 20:16). The Christian worship began to develop after A.D. 60 when the Christians were expelled from the Jewish Synagogues. The origin and development of the Christian worship is, therefore, to be understood against the Jewish background. The Old Testament sacrifices, feasts and worship have left the marks of their influence upon the theology of worship.

### 2. Jewish worship

**Sacrifice in the Jewish tradition:** The central rite of the Jewish worship was sacrifice. Since the beginning of the history of the people of Israel, Patriarchs as well as important dignitaries offered sacrifices. God was pleased with the sacrifice of Abel, but He had no regard for Cain's offering (Gen. 4:1-5). We can find that Patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses offered sacrifices. By the time of Moses, sacrifice became an important element of the Jewish worship. Gradually various types of sacrifices and detailed legislations regarding their offerings were developed. The Book of Leviticus (ch. 1-7) deals with various types of sacrifices that existed in ancient Israel. Following are the most important types of sacrifices of Israel.

### 3. Types of Sacrifices

#### (i) Holocaust or Whole burnt offering: (Lev. 1; Ex. 29)

Holocaust is the most important among the sacrifices of Israel. The victim of a holocaust had to be an unblemished male animal or bird (turtle dove or pigeon). The one who made the offering laid his hand on the victim's head, to signify that the sacrifice was to be offered in his name and for his benefit. He then slit the throat of the victim, and the priest sprinkled the blood all around the altar. Thereafter the victim was completely burned. The holocaust was offered daily in the morning and in the evening for individuals as well as for the whole congregation (Num. 28:1-8). The Jews believed that the holocaust could be offered as expiation for sin and ritual impurity.

It is in the context of the Holocaust that St. Paul called the death of Christ as "a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2).

#### (ii) Peace Offering (Lev. 3; 7:11-21 )

There were three types of peace offerings: Sacrifice of praise, votive offering and offering of free will. Sacrifice of praise was offered to thank God for the favours received (Lev. 7:12-15; 22:29-30). Votive offering was made in fulfilment of a vow (Lev. 7:16, 22:18-23). The sacrifice offered by Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel was a votive offering. Free-will sacrifice was made out of pure devotion (Lev. 7:16-17; 22:18-23).

In the peace offering, which as also known as the communion sacrifice, the flesh of the victim was shared, with portions going to God, to the priest and to the offerer. The sharing symbolized the communion and reconciliation effected between God and the person who made the offering.

The celebration of Passover was also a kind of peace offering, because it was an occasion to thank God for liberation from bondage in Egypt. The Jews also believed that the peace offering effected remission of sins. The meaning of St. Paul's words "For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7), and John the Baptist's witness to Jesus Christ as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn.1:29), is to be understood in the light of the



significance of peace offering.

**(iii) Sin Offering (Lev. 4:1-5, 13; 6:17-23)**

Sin offering was made for the remission of unintentional sins. Jews believed that no sacrifice could remit voluntary sins. In such cases punishments were given to the sinner. If the sin offering was for a priest or for the congregation of Israel a bull was to be offered. When a ruler sinned, an unblemished male goat was to be sacrificed and in the case of a common man an unblemished female goat or a lamb was needed. But if one could not afford to offer a goat or a lamb, it would be replaced with two turtledoves or two young pigeons. The rites of the sacrifice were similar to those of a holocaust. But the characteristic feature of a sin offering was the rituals performed with the victim's blood. When the sin offering was offered for the high priest or for the congregation, the priest who offered the sacrifice collected the blood in a vessel and it was sprinkled seven times in front of the veil in the temple. Some of the blood was put on the horns of the altar and the rest was poured out at the base of the altar.

In the case of a ruler or a common man, the sprinkling of the blood in front of the veil was avoided. As in the case of the peace offering, one portion of the victim's meat was burned on the altar and the remaining went to the priest as his share. The sinner was not given any portion of the meat. In the case of a sin offering for the priest or the congregation, the whole meat was burned on the altar. The meaning of the sin offering was that the sins were burned along with the victim.

The sacrifice offered on the Day of Atonement belonged to the category of sin offering. It is in the context of this ritual that the death of Christ has been presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 9:6-12).

**(iv) Meal Offering (Lev. ch. 2)**

Fine flour, unleavened wafers were used for meal offerings. These were offered with oil and frankincense. One portion was offered on the altar and the rest was for the priests. The meal offering was usually made along with holocaust or peace offering. The offering of cereals

symbolized the offering of the first fruits to the Lord.

**(v) Drink Offering (Lev. 15:1-10)**

In a drink offering wine was offered. Like the meal offering, it was offered along with other sacrifices.

**(vi) Perfume offering**

Aromas had an important place in the Jewish sacrifices. An incense, a mixture of various aromas was burnt in the Temple (Ex. 30:7-8; 34-38). Incense was spread over the burning coals taken from the altar in a censer, and it was placed on the “altar of incense” before the veil every morning and evening (Ex. 30:1-9). It was with a censer containing coals of fire from the altar and with the incense that the high priest entered the holy of holies on the day of Atonement (Lev. 16:12-13).

Incense symbolizes the prayer that ascends towards the divine presence (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8). Paul might have this idea in his mind when he said: “we are the aroma of Christ to God.” (2 Cor. 2:15).

**(vii) Show - bread (Lev. 24:5-9)**

Twelve cakes made from fine flour were placed in two rows upon a table of pure gold. Pure frankincense was placed on each row. Every Sabbath day the cakes were replaced with new ones. The priests would eat the old cakes in a holy place and the frankincense would be burned upon the altar. Though the show-bread was reserved for the priests, Ahimelech, the priest of Nob gave it to David (1 Sam. 21:1-6).

Show-bread or “the bread of the Presence” (1 Sam. 21:6) symbolized the covenant that the Lord had made with the twelve tribes of Israel (Lev. 24:8).

**4. Meaning of Jewish sacrifices**

The sacrifices indicated the desire of the Jews for union with God. It was sign of the personal relationship with a personal God. Sacrifices were thought of as gifts offered to God to acknowledge His dominion over creation. It was a means of communion as well as expiation for sins. Meat and cereals, the objects of offering, were the staple foods

by which he subsisted. The goal of his activities was to gather his staples. So when meat and cereals were offered to God, it was his life that he offered to Him.

The Jews believed that the altar had the presence of God and that the life of an animal was in its blood. The blood, a symbol of life (Lev. 17:11), was put on the horns of the altar and the rest was poured out at the base of it. By the blood coming in contact with the altar, the Jews believed that the life of the offerer is dedicated to the Lord.

The Old Testament sacrifices were types and shadows of the sacrifice of Christ. They were effective enough to make persons, who offered sacrifices, conscious of their sins, but not to redeem them from sins. Christ, the true High Priest, through His atoning death, fulfilled the Old Testament sacrifices and effected remission of sins for the whole of humanity (Heb. 9:11-13).

### **Questions**

1. Describe briefly the various types of sacrifices mentioned in the Old Testament.
2. What is the goal of offering a sacrifice?
3. What is the Christian attitude towards the Old Testament sacrifices?

## **LESSON 5**

### **BACKGROUND OF THE CHRISTIAN WORSHIP - 2**

Jewish Festivals  Great Festivals  Small Festivals

#### **1. Jewish Festivals**

The Jewish festivals had played an important role in the origin and development of the Christian liturgical year and festivals. The Christian festivals of Easter and Pentecost are to be understood in relation to the Jewish Passover and Pentecost. As in the case of the

sacrifices, the Jewish festivals found their fulfilment in Christ and they were transformed into the festivals of the New Israel.

The Jewish festivals can be divided into two types: great festivals and small festivals. The Passover, the Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacle are the great festivals and the Purim, the Feast of Dedication, the Feast of Wood Offering and the Feast of Trumpets are the small festivals.

## 2. Great Festivals

**(i) The Passover (Ex. 12:21-27):** The Passover was also known as the 'Feast of the Unleavened Bread', following the unleavened bread that the Jews ate during this festival. It was celebrated to commemorate the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and the passing over of the Lord's angel. The Passover was celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar (March-April, according to the Christian calendar). On the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan each family was to select an unblemished, male, one-year old lamb. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the lambs were taken to the Temple of Jerusalem and were slaughtered there by the priests. In the evening (that is the beginning of 14<sup>th</sup>), the lamb was roasted and eaten. Not one of its bones could be broken and whatever was left over after the meal had to be burned. Unleavened bread and bitter herbs were eaten with the lamb. In case a family was too small to consume a whole lamb, neighbours also joined it. Wine was drunk and thanksgiving Psalms (Ps.113-118) were sung. Bitter herbs symbolized the bitter experiences that the Jews had in Egypt. In the first Passover, the Jews left Egypt in a hurry and as they had no time to leave the dough to be leavened, they made unleavened bread and ate it. It is precisely because of this that the unleavened bread became the most important item in the Passover meal along with the roasted lamb.

According to the Synoptic Gospels, the Last Supper of Our Lord with the disciples was a Passover meal. At the Last Supper Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist and thus the Christian Passover happen to replace the Jewish Passover.

**(ii) The Pentecost (Lev. 22:16):** The word 'Pentecost' in Greek means fiftieth day. It was celebrated on the fiftieth day after the

Passover. As it was celebrated during the harvest season, it was also known as “the feast of the first-fruits” (Ex. 34:22; Num. 28:26) or “the feast of the wheat harvest” (Ex. 34:22). But the most commonly used name was “the feast of the weeks” (Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10; Num. 28:26), as it had fallen on the fiftieth day or seven weeks after the Passover. Like all harvest festivals, it was a joyful occasion (Deut. 16:11; Is. 9:2). The ritual for its celebration is given in Lev. 23:15-21.

Although originally an agricultural feast, the Pentecost later acquired another religious significance. The Sinai covenant was commemorated on the feast of the Pentecost. The Qumran community celebrated it as a day for the renewal of the covenant.

Since the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles on the day of the Pentecost, it became a Christian festival. It became a great harvest festival, which won over three thousand souls to Christianity.

**(iii) The Feast of Tabernacles or Tents:** The Hebrew name of the third great festival is Sukkoth, which means ‘Tabernacles, Booths, Tents or Huts.’ It is the “the feast of Ingathering” mentioned in Ex. 23:16 and 34:22. The feast of Tents was celebrated in late September or early October and lasted for seven days. For seven days the Jews lived in huts in memory of the huts in which their forefathers lived after their liberation from Egypt (Lev. 23:40-43).

It was also an agricultural feast which marked the ingathering of all the produce of the fields (Ex. 23:16). People celebrated it with dancing, singing and joyous processions (Deut. 16:13-15; Judg. 21:19-21). According to the vision of the prophet Zechariah, this is the feast which is to be celebrated in the ‘new earth’ to be manifested in the Messianic times (Zech. 14:16-18).

People offered holocausts and meal offerings on the feast of Tents. Women used to carry water from the pool of Siloam and pour it at the base of the altar. It was in the context of this rite that our Lord proclaimed. “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:38). It can be guessed from the Gospel accounts that our Lord transfigured in the days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Math. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36).

### 3. Small Festivals

(i) **Purim:** Purim was celebrated to commemorate the incident narrated in the Book of Esther. Haman, the minister of the Persian King Ahasuerus plotted against the Jews to exterminate them. The Jewish queen Esther and her uncle Mordecai saved them from extermination (Esther 9:25-30).

It was celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar, the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the Jewish calendar (February - March). In the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar, lamps were lit in all houses and the people went to the Synagogue. All attended the Synagogue for the reading of the Book of Esther. The Feast of Purim was the occasion for the exchange of gifts and distribution of alms.

(ii) **The Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah:** The origin of the Feast of Dedication is described in the first Book of Maccabees (4:36-59). In B.C. 168, the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes has desecrated the Temple of Jerusalem and its altar. He had sacrificed a swine on the altar and had put up a pagan altar in its place. This was the 'Abomination of Desolation' of which Daniel spoke (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 1 Mac.1.57). Three years later, in 165 B.C., Judas Maccabeus purified the Temple and erected a new altar (2 Mac. 10:5). It was to commemorate the re-dedication of the Temple and the altar that the Feast of Dedication was celebrated. In Hebrew it was known as Hanukkah (= 'renewal'). Hanukkah was observed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev (around 25<sup>th</sup> December), and was characterized by an atmosphere of great rejoicing. Sacrifices were offered in the Temple. Green branches and palms were carried in procession, while hymns and Psalms were sung. Psalm 30, entitled 'A song for the dedication of the Temple' was one of these hymns, but the principal hymns were the thanksgiving Psalms (Ps.113-118), known as the 'Hallel Psalms' among the Jews.

(iii) **Other small festivals:** The feast of wood offering was a ceremonial offering of wood for use in the Temple (Neh. 10:34; 13:31).

On the first day of the Seventh Jewish month, 'the feast of Trumpets' was celebrated (Num. 23.1-6; Lev. 23:24). Special sacrifices were offered and the Book of Laws was read before the people assembled in the Temple.

**(iv) The Sabbath:** The Hebrew word sabbath means “to cease working” or “to rest.” Sabbath was not merely a weekly holiday. It was rather a day for worship. For the Jews, the number ‘seven’ was a sacred one. Seventh day, seventh month and the seventh year were considered holy (Deut.31:10). The seventh year was called the ‘Sabbath year.’ Earth was not cultivated and the slaves were given rest in the ‘Sabbath year.’ Fiftieth year (the year which follows  $7 \times 7$  years) was the Jubilee year (Lev. 25).

The laws concerning the observance of the Sabbath are given in Exodus 16:23-30. The fourth commandment insists: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8). It was a day of complete rest for human as well as animals. The law prescribed death penalty should be given to those who violated the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14-16).

### Questions

1. Describe briefly the Old Testament festivals.
2. How are the Old Testament festivals related to the Christian festivals?

## LESSON 6

### BACKGROUND OF THE CHRISTIAN WORSHIP (3)

- Synagogues
- The Origin of Synagogues
- Building and Furniture
- The Ministers of a Synagogue
- Worship in the Synagogue in the New Testament Times
- Importance of Synagogue

#### 1. Synagogues

The word ‘Synagogue’ is derived from the Greek word ‘sunagein’ which means ‘to bring or lead together.’ The word ‘Synagogue’ is used in two senses in the New Testament: (a) the Jewish congregation that gathers together for worship (Acts 6:9, 9:2) and (b). the place where the Jews assembled for worship. Synagogues were places where

the Jews gathered not for sacrifice, but for prayer, devout reading, meditation and instruction.

## **2. The Origin of Synagogues**

The origin of Synagogues is still unknown. Many scholars think that they originated during the Babylonian Exile (in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), when the people were cut off from the Temple. The center of the Jewish worship was the Temple of Jerusalem and the sacrifices offered there. In 586 B.C., the Temple was destroyed and many Jews were taken prisoners to Babylon. During the Exile, the Jews used to meet in some houses for prayer, scripture reading and teaching of the Law. In Ezekiel's house such worshipping communities met regularly (Ez. 8:1; 20:1-3). The Synagogues seem to have originated from this practice. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (444 B.C.), the Jews greatly felt the need to study the Law and an increasing number of Synagogues were set up.

## **3. Building and Furniture**

In the New Testament times there were many Synagogues in Palestine. Usually Synagogues were of rectangular shape with two or four lines of columns that divided the Synagogue into three or five rows. The main door was on the southern side. There were balconies inside the larger Synagogues. Women used to attend worship sitting in the balconies. In small Synagogues, their place was behind men. The main item of furniture in a Synagogue was a large chest in which the scrolls of the Law and the Prophets were kept. A lamp burned continuously before the chest. On a raised platform called 'bema' a lectern was placed to read the Law from. The Synagogues were constructed in such a way that the people could face Jerusalem, the holy city, during the worship. The front seats were reserved for the leaders of the community. It was to these seats that our Lord was referring when he criticized the Pharisees seeking the chief seats (Matt. 23:6).

## **4. The Ministers of a Synagogue**

The administration of the Synagogue was done by the leader of the local Jewish community. One of them was appointed 'ruler of the Synagogue.' He was responsible for keeping the building and for



conducting regular worship. The ruler decided who should read the scripture or teach and he led them to the pulpit. In some Synagogues, there was more than one ruler (Acts 13:15). 'The attendant' of whom Luke speaks (4:20) may be the assistant to the ruler of the Synagogue. The Synagogues served also as local courts, where disputes were settled, and as primary schools where Jewish children were taught reading and writing. The decision of the court was implemented by the ruler of the Synagogue and his assistant.

### **5. Synagogue Worship in the New Testament Times**

The Synagogue worship had six elements.

**(i) Confession of faith:** The confession of faith was known as reciting 'shema.' In Hebrew 'shema' means "hear." The three texts of the Pentateuch which begins with the words Hear (shema) Israel were used as the Jewish creed (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41). The recitation of shema was preceded and followed by short formulae of benediction. The shema was recited by the whole congregation.

**(ii) Public Prayers:** A collection of eighteen prayers known as 'eighteen benedictions' were said solemnly. The leader said each prayer and was followed by the people saying 'Amen.' Contemporary evidence attests that in the time of our Lord, only twelve prayers were in use. These twelve prayers were divided into three sections: three benedictions, six prayers and again three benedictions. Lord's Prayer has two sections consisting of three petitions each. This structure seems to have been derived from the structure of the eighteen benedictions.

**(iii) Scripture reading:** The prayer was followed by scripture reading. The book of the law was divided into 154 lessons so that it could be read over a period of three and a half years. In Sabbath, the reading of the Law was followed by that of a prophetic text. The reader was free to choose the text of the prophets. It was according to this custom that our Lord read a text from the book of Isaiah (Luke 4:16; Is. 61:1-2).

**(iv) Instructions:** The reading was followed by instructions to interpret the text that was heard. The scripture was always read in

Hebrew. But the instructions were in Aramaic or in the local language (Matt. 4:23; Mk.1:21; 6:2). If a guest was present in the Synagogue, the ruler invited him to give the Sermon (Acts 13:15).

**(v) Psalms:** Psalms were sung in the Synagogue worship. In addition to the 150 Psalms, new hymns were composed and used.

**(vi) Final benediction:** The worship came to a close with the benediction given by a priest, if present, or by the person who led the worship.

As part of the Sabbath worship, special collections were made for charity (Matt. 6:2). The Synagogue worship on a Sabbath consisted of the above elements. But on weekdays some elements were dropped and a short worship was conducted.

Synagogues had the authority to excommunicate those who violated the Law and the Jewish customs. The excommunicated member was given time for repentance and was taken back into the fold after a certain period.

## 6. Importance of Synagogue

The Synagogue worship attracted the Jews as well as the non-Jews. Synagogues were the main centers for propagating the Jewish faith, customs and ethical principles.

Synagogues had an important place in the public ministry of our Lord. Some of his miracles were performed in Synagogues (Matt. 12:9; Mk.1:23; Lk.13:10). Some of his important discourses were made in Synagogues (Lk. 4:18-27; Jn. 6.59). Even Paul's missionary work was centered on them. The Synagogues of the Middle East served as bases for early Christian missions.

The Synagogue worship had played a decisive role in shaping the basic structure of early Christian worship. We shall deal with it in the next lesson.

## Questions

1. Explain briefly the origin of Synagogues.
2. What are the elements of Synagogue worship?
3. Discuss briefly the place of Synagogues in the spiritual life of the Jews?

# UNIT II

## EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

### LESSON 1

#### WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

❑ Place of Worship ❑ Time of Worship ❑ Synagogues and the Primitive Christian Worship ❑ Elements of the New Testament Worship ❑ Goal of Worship in the New Testament

The references to the worship of the apostolic times are scattered in the New Testament. There are brief allusions to the worship of the first Christians in the Acts of the Apostles (2:42; 46; 5:42). In the First letter to the Corinthians, Paul also gives some details (1 Cor. 14; 11:20-26). The Book of Revelation also alludes to the various aspects of worship. In fact, St. John had his vision on ‘Lord’s Day’ (Rev. 1:10), that is on the day on which the Church assembles for worship. John describes the events of the last days in the context of the Christian worship. John’s intention was to teach us that the life of the coming world could be experienced through worship.

#### 1. Place of Worship

The first Christians, following the Jewish custom, attended worship at the Temple of Jerusalem (Acts 2:42; 5:42; Luke 24:53). While he was in Jerusalem, Jesus taught daily at the Temple (Mark 14:49). The Christians of Jerusalem might have attended the Temple worship till the destruction of the Temple in 60 A.D.

Besides, they used to come together for worship in some particular houses. The house of John Mark in Jerusalem was a regular worshipping place of the Christians (Acts 12:12). It might be at the same house that Jesus ate his last supper with his disciples and the disciples were assembled on the day of the Pentecost.

There are references to ‘house churches’ [Eg. the church that meets in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5), in the

house of Philemon (vs. 2), in the house of Nympha (Col. 4:15). 'The Church that meets in a house' means the group which is assembled for worship. In the primitive Church, the faithful in a city always assembled in one place for worship. The system of different parish churches existing in the same city was not there during the first three centuries.

## **2. Time of Worship**

From the Acts of the Apostles, we can understand that the first Christians assembled daily for worship (Acts 2:42; 5:42; Luke 24:53). The Jewish Christians of Palestine seem to have observed Sabbath like the Jews. However, 'the first day of the week had a unique place in the Christian worship (1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 20:7). It was known as 'the Lord's day' (Rev. 1:10). Why did the Apostolic Church choose the first day of the week, instead of the Jewish Sabbath? It was because Our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1), and he appeared to his disciples on the same day (John 20:19; 26). First day of the week was celebrated as the day of resurrection by the Apostolic Church.

## **3. Synagogues and the Primitive Christian Worship**

The first Jewish Christians continued to attend the worship in the Synagogues. St. Paul used to visit Synagogues during his missionary journeys (Acts 17:10; 18:4; 19:8). When the Christians were expelled from the Jewish Synagogues, they might have adopted a few aspects of the Synagogue worship. However, the early Christian worship was in no way a copy of the Synagogue worship. In the Synagogues, the Five Books of Moses were given importance, whereas in the Christian worship, the prophetic books were given prominence. In addition to the prophetic books, the Letters of the Apostles were read during the Christian worship. When the Gospels were written, they were given the central place.

As in the Synagogue, the Christian worship consisted of reading of the Scriptures, their interpretation, singing of hymns and prayers. To these elements the Church added one of most significance. Following the Lord's commandment, celebration of the Lord's Supper became the central act in the apostolic worship. It was generally known

as the breaking of the bread (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7). The celebration of the Eucharist, according to St. Paul, is a tradition which has been received from the Lord (1 Cor. 11:23-26). In the Eucharist, the first Christians experienced the living presence of Christ in their midst. When Christ broke bread and gave to the disciples going to Emmaus, 'their eyes were opened and they recognized him' (Luke 24:30).

#### **4. Elements of the New Testament Worship**

If we put together the various allusions to worship in the New Testament, we can see that it consists of the following elements:

##### **(A) Elements which were adopted from the Synagogue worship**

- (1) Reading of Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13, 1 Thess. 5:27, Col. 4:16).
- (2) Psalms and Hymns (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- (3) Public Prayers (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 2:12), followed by the Peoples' Amen (1 Cor. 16:24).
- (4) Sermon or instruction (1 Cor. 14:26; Acts 20:7).
- (5) Confession of the faith was an important element (1 Cor. 15:1-4; 1Tim. 6:12), though there was no fixed creed.
- (6) Offering for charitable work (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:10-13; Rom. 15:26).

##### **(B) Elements which were derived from the Last Supper**

- (1) The celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:16; 11:23; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7).
- (2). Benediction and thanksgiving (1 Cor. 11:23; 14:16; 1 Tim. 2:1; Luke 22:19).
- (3) Intercession (eg. John 18).
- (4) The saying of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4).
- (5) Hymns and the Kiss of peace as part of the Lord's Supper (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).
- (6) The practice of men and women sitting separately as in the Synagogue and of men attending worship with their heads unveiled and women with their heads veiled (1Cor. 11:6-7).
- (7) The practice of standing up during prayers (Eph. 6:14; Philip. 1:2; 1Tim. 2:8).

There is no doubt that the Christian worship was formed by incorporating elements from both the Last Supper and the Synagogue worship.

### **(C) Agape or Love feast**

A common meal known as 'love feast' (Agape in Greek) was held along with the worship (Acts 2:46). It was observed along with the Eucharist or sometimes separately. When the love feast defiled the serenity of the Eucharistic celebration, St. Paul criticized it (1 Cor. 11:17-34). By A.D.150, agape almost completely disappeared from worship.

### **(D) Prophecies and Speaking in tongues**

Prophecies and speaking in tongues existed in some churches in the first century A.D. (1 Cor. 14). Paul discourages both of them. The aim of both prophecy and speaking in tongues is the glorification of the individuals who are involved in it, but the spiritual edification of the Church. Speaking in tongues contributes to spiritual edification, only when it is interpreted to the faithful (1 Cor. 14:5; 12-13). "But if no one is there who can explain, then the one who speaks in strange tongues must be quiet" (1 Cor. 14:28), says Paul.

As early as the beginning of the second century, speaking in tongues disappeared from the Christian worship. It was charisma given during the apostolic times for the growth and edification of the Church. St. Paul himself admits that it is temporary (1 Cor. 13:8). Nowhere in the New Testament is it said that speaking in tongues is the sole sign of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. The proof of the presence of the Spirit is the transformation of the individual (Gal. 5:22-23).

## **5. Goal of Worship in the New Testament**

According to Saint Paul, the purpose of worship is the "building up (oikodomeo in Greek) of the Church" (1 Cor. 14:4; 5; 12). The various elements of worship are to be understood in relation to this basic goal. It is the community, gathered together for worship, which is called 'house church' by Saint Paul. Church is the body of Christ. It is through the community gathered together for worship that the faithful experience the presence of the risen Lord. Through their

participation in the body of Christ, the first Christians experienced their fellowship in the Church, the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-17). The first Christians were conscious of the truth that they became one body through their participation in the one bread. It is the community which shares in the one bread, which is manifested as the one body of Christ in this world.

### **Questions**

1. Write an essay on the influence of the Jewish Synagogues on the Christian worship.
2. Read 1 Corinthians ch.14 and discuss the gift of speaking in tongues.

## **LESSON 2**

### **HOLY EUCHARIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

□ The Holy Eucharist in the Gospels □ The Holy Eucharist in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul □ Importance of the Eucharist in the New Testament Church

#### **1. Holy Eucharist in the Gospels**

Saint Paul and the Synoptic Gospels record that Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist in the Upper Room during the Last Supper (Matt. 26:26-30; Mk.14:22-25; Lk.15-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). Saint John's Gospel does not contain any description of the institution of the Eucharist.

The Synoptic Gospels point out that the Last Supper was a Passover meal (Mk.14:12; Matt. 26:16; LK. 22:7). Luke writes that Jesus said to his disciples: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk. 22.15). The first three Gospels clearly state that Jesus instituted the Eucharist during the Last Supper by blessing the bread and wine and giving them to his disciples. But there is some evidence in the New Testament which raises doubts

that the Last Supper was not a Passover meal. From the Gospel of St. John, for example, we can assume that the crucifixion of Jesus took place before the Jewish Passover of that year (Jn. 13:1; 18:28; 19:14; 31). Even though John does not give details of the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus, he says that Our Lord ate a supper with his disciples before the Passover (Jn. 13:1-2). For John the institution of the Eucharist might have taken place during this supper. Even Saint Paul does not make it clear that the institution of the Eucharist took place during the Passover meal. He simply writes: "... the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed..." (1 Cor. 11:23).

From this, we can assume that there existed two traditions regarding the institution of the Eucharist. One: the tradition attested by the Synoptic Gospels, according to which Jesus instituted the Eucharist on the Passover day, during the Passover meal.

Two: according to Saint John's Gospel, the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples took place before the Jewish Passover.

Saint John's tradition was widely accepted in the early Church. That is why the Eastern Churches are using leavened bread for the Eucharist. The Jewish Passover was the feast of the unleavened bread. During the preparation of the Passover, the Jews searched their houses for even the smallest portion of leaven, and whatever was found was thrown out. They scrupulously ate only unleavened bread on the Passover day. If Christ had instituted the Eucharist during the Passover meal he would have used the unleavened bread. But we have no evidence to show that in the first centuries even a single Church of the Catholic tradition had used unleavened bread for the Eucharist. Even the Roman Catholic Church began to use unleavened bread by the tenth century.

Some scholars suggest that the Last Supper of Jesus was not a Passover meal, but a Kiddush meal. Kiddush was a festive meal held at the Jewish families on the eve of the Sabbath or the great festivals. For some others, the Last Supper was a Chaburah meal. The Hebrew word *chaber* means friend. Chaburah meal was a supper of friends held on the eve of the Sabbath or on special occasions, such as marriage or betrothal.



The first three Gospels write that Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples in the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan<sup>1</sup> and that he died on the cross the next day before sunset. According to Saint John, the Last Supper took place twenty-four hours before the actual Jewish Passover. That is to say, Jesus might have eaten the Last Supper in the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, and the next day he was crucified. The Lamb of God was ‘sacrificed’ on the cross at the time when the first Paschal lamb was sacrificed at the Temple. When Paul wrote: ‘For Christ, our Paschal lamb, has been sacrificed’ (1 Cor. 5:7), he might have this idea in his mind.

The question: ‘What does the Holy Eucharist signify?’ is more important than ‘When did Christ institute the Eucharist?’ When Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist during the Last Supper and gave his body and blood to the disciples, he was teaching them the truth that he was the true paschal lamb. The Holy Eucharist is not a mere continuation of the Jewish Passover. On the other hand, it is the ‘Christian Passover.’ It is the new Passover in which “the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29) is sacrificed.

## **2. The Holy Eucharist in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul**

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Eucharist is referred to as the ‘breaking of bread’ (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7). The aim of the coming together on Sunday was to break bread (Acts. 20:7). Saint Paul says that, through the breaking of the bread we are “proclaiming the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). Since the blessed bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Christ, he who partakes of them shall ‘examine himself’ (1 Cor. 11:27-29). Through his participation in the bread and wine, he participates in the body and blood of Christ. The faithful who partake of the one bread, become one body with Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

## **3. Importance of the Eucharist in the New Testament Church**

(i) It is through the celebration of the Eucharist that the first Christians experienced presence of the risen Christ in their midst.

This is what is to be understood from the experience of the disciples going to Emmaus (Lk. 24). Jesus as an unknown traveller went with the two disciples. “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Lk. 24:27). However, they did not recognize that it was Jesus who was with them. At last, “when He was at table with them, He took bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him” (Lk. 24:30-31). It was in the Eucharist that they recognized the presence of Christ in their midst.

(ii) The first Christians were conscious of the fact that they were one body, because of their participation in the body and blood of Our Lord.

(iii) The New Testament insists that one should examine oneself before receiving the Holy Eucharist as it is the body and blood of Christ.

### **Questions**

1. What are the two traditions mentioned in the New Testament regarding the institution of the Holy Eucharist?
2. Give the reason for using leavened bread in the Holy Eucharist.
3. Describe briefly the place of the Eucharist in the New Testament Church.

### **Notes**

1. According to the Jewish custom a day begins with the evening (This has been followed by the Syrian Churches). Thus the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan means, 13<sup>th</sup> Nisan 6 pm onwards, according to the modern system.

## LESSON 3

# WORSHIP BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF NICEA

□ Worship before 150 A. D. □ Epistle of Saint Clement of Rome (A. D. 92 - 101) □ Epistles of Saint Ignatius of Antioch (A. D. 100 - 110) □ The Letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan (A. D. 112) □ The Didache or Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles, through the Twelve Apostles □ Justin Martyr (A. D.150)

### **Worship before 150 A. D.**

There are five documents that speak of worship in this period. Generally speaking, the worship of this time was similar to that of the New Testament times.

#### **1. Epistle of Saint Clement of Rome (A. D. 92 - 101)**

Saint Clement, Bishop of Rome was the third successor to Saint Peter. His Letter to the Corinthian Church contains a few allusions to worship at the end of the first century A. D. He quotes the prayer “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Hosts, who fills heaven and earth with His glory” (Is. 6:3), used in the Eucharistic liturgy. This means that this prayer was in use in the Christian worship as early as the first century. He calls the Eucharist “the offering.” To quote Clement: “This is the way in which we find our salvation through Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our offerings, our saviour and defender in our weakness. Through Him we fix our gaze on the heights of heaven; through Him we see the image of the unblemished and divine countenance of God as though in a mirror.”

#### **2. Epistles of Saint Ignatius of Antioch (A. D. 100 - 110)**

Saint Ignatius was the third Bishop of Antioch who succeeded Eudocius, the immediate successor of St. Peter. Ignatius was also the author of seven letters. He uses expressions such as “breaking of the bread” and “Eucharist” for the Lord’s Supper. Ignatius says that when the Christians of a locality partake of the same Eucharist, it symbolizes unity of the Church. According to him, bishop is the center of the unity of the Church. He writes: “The sole Eucharist you should

consider valid is the one that is celebrated by the bishop himself, or by some person authorized by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be, just as wherever Jesus Christ is present, we have the Catholic Church. Nor is it permissible to conduct baptisms or love-feasts without the bishop” (Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 8).

Ignatius qualifies the Eucharist as the “medicine of immortality and the antidote to death which makes us live forever in Jesus Christ” (Letter to the Ephesians, 20).

### **3. The Letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan (A. D. 112)**

Pliny, Governor of Bithynia (in modern Turkey) reported to Emperor Trajan his dealings with Christians. Pliny was not a Christian. But he gathered all information about the Christian communities from the Christians who had forsaken their faith owing to persecution. We get the following details regarding Christian worship from his letter to Trajan.

(a) The Christians used to “gather before dawn on a fixed day and sing a hymn to Christ as is to a god.” This means that the Christians attended the Sunday worship. They might have celebrated the Eucharist also at the gathering before dawn.

(b) The Christians “bound themselves by an oath (sacramento), not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, brigandage, adultery, breach of faith and misappropriation of trust. The oath, of which Pliny writes, seems to be baptism. The Christians lived in high moral purity after their baptism.

(c) When the rites were completed “it had been their custom to separate, and to meet again to take food - but quite ordinary, harmless food.” But Pliny adds that since the Emperor had forbidden all such parties and meetings, the Christians had discontinued the practice of getting together to take food. Thus seems to be a reference to the love feast (Agape in Greek) which existed in the early Church. We can assume that the Eucharist was celebrated before dawn, and later, all had assembled to take part in the love feast.

#### **4. The Didache or the Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles, through the Twelve Apostles**

Didache (i.e. the teaching) is a collection of rules dealing with such aspects of the Church life as baptism, fasting, the Eucharist, ministry etc. This was written in the beginning of the second century A. D. Didache gives precious information about the worship in the second century Church.

**(a) Confession of sins:** Didache insists on the necessity of confessing our sins: “In Church, make confession of your faults, and do not come to your prayers with a bad conscience” (ch. 4).

**(b) Fasting and Prayer:** Didache is the first Christian document which instructs us to fast on Wednesday and Friday: “Do not keep the fast days as those of the hypocrites (i.e. the Jews). Mondays and Thursdays are their days of fasting; so yours should be Wednesdays and Fridays.”

The Jews fasted on Mondays and Thursdays because, according to the rabbinic tradition, Moses went up Mount Sinai on a Monday and descended from there on a Thursday. Didache asks us not to observe the Jewish days of fasting. But it does not give the reason for fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays. But in the later Syrian tradition a canon attributed to Ignatius of Antioch gives the reason: “We observe fast on Wednesday because in it Our Lord announced His passion to His disciples, and they were troubled with sorrow; we observe fast on Friday because in it our Lord was crucified by the Jews...”

Didache continues to speak of prayer: “Your prayers, too, should be different from theirs. Pray, as the Lord enjoined on us in His Gospel, thus: ‘Our Father, who art in heaven...’. Say this prayer three times every day’ (chap. 8).

**(c) Baptism:** Chapter 7 is on baptism: “...immerse in running water ‘in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’ If no running water is available, immerse in ordinary water. This should be cold if possible; otherwise warm. If neither is practicable, then sprinkle water three times on the head, In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ Both the Baptist and the baptized

ought to fast before baptism, as well as any others who can do so; but the candidate himself should be told to keep a fast for a day or two beforehand.”

**(d) The Holy Eucharist (Chs. 9, 10, 14):** Didache uses the word ‘Eucharist’ for the Lord’s Supper. A simple rite was used for the celebration of the Eucharist. Simple prayers were pronounced over the bread and the wine to consecrate them. The prayer over the bread is as follows: “As this broken bread, once dispersed over the hills, was brought together and became one loaf, so may thy Church be brought from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom.”

As a loaf of bread is made from scattered grains and offered to God, the church which is dispersed throughout the world is presented to God in the Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharist is celebrated in a parish in communion and unity with other parishes.

Didache forbids the unbaptized from taking part in the Holy Communion: “No one is to eat or drink of your Eucharist but those who have been baptized in the Name of the Lord.”

Towards the end of the celebration, ‘Hosanna to the God of David’ is recited. The leader of the celebration exhorts: “Whosoever is holy, let him approach. Whosoever is not, let him repent.” The Eucharist is concluded with the prayer, “Maranatha” (Come, Lord!), followed by the People’s ‘Amen.’

## **5. Justin Martyr (AD. 150)**

Justin was an educated man, who was born in Galilee in Palestine. About 150 A.D., he became a Christian and migrated to Rome where he opened a School to teach the Christian faith. His writings give a clear picture of the structure of the Eucharist in the mid second century. The liturgy consisted of the following elements.

### **(i) Liturgy of the Word**

(a) Reading of Scripture: The reading was from the Old Testament and the Gospels and lasted as long as time permitted.

(b) Sermon: The reading was followed by a sermon by the bishop whom Justin calls “President.”

(c) Common Prayer: This included prayer for the Emperor and secular authorities. It was said standing.

(d) Psalms and hymns were recited.

**(ii) The Anaphora (= Offering)**

(a) The faithful exchanged the kiss of peace, which was regarded as the ‘seal of prayer.’

(b) People brought bread and wine from their home. The deacons chose one or more from them to be offered. The bishop said the thanksgiving prayer and the people said “Amen” to express their participation and consent. This prayer was improvised, but the bishop was to follow a certain pattern, consisting of a rather fixed structure and themes.

It was addressed to the Father in the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and it contained a thanksgiving for the gifts that the faithful were made worthy of receiving.

(c) All the faithful attended the celebration. Deacons distributed the Holy Eucharist to those present and took it to those who were sick at home or who were in prison.

(d) Justin writes that the bread and wine are transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ after the Eucharistic prayer.

(e) Collection was part of the worship. Along with the bread and wine, people offered different things to be distributed among the orphans and the widows, the poor and the sick, the prisoners and the travellers.

(f) The worship was conducted on Sundays. Justin gives the following reason for observing Sunday as the day of worship: “The Day of the Sun is the day on which we all gather in a common meeting, because it is the first day, the day on which God, changing darkness and matter, created the world; and it is the day on which Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead.... (and on) the Day of Sun, He offered to His Apostles and disciples, and taught them...”

The above documents attest the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the early Christians. In the early Church all the members

regularly attended worship and received the Holy Communion. The Christians realized their oneness in the Holy Eucharist.

### **Questions**

1. Describe briefly the teaching of Ignatius of Antioch on the Eucharist.
2. What is the importance of Didache in the study of worship?
3. What is the explanation that Justin Martyr gives for the Sunday observance?

## **LESSON 4**

### **EVOLUTION OF WORSHIP IN THE THIRD AND THE FOURTH CENTURIES**

□ The Liturgy of the Word or the Liturgy of the Catechumens □ The Liturgy of the Faithful

In the third century Christian worship, there were two parts: the liturgy of the catechumens and the liturgy of the faithful. Tertullian (c. 200) writes that the worship in the beginning of the third century consisted of the liturgy of the Word and the offering. Bible reading, hymns, sermon and the creed were the elements of the liturgy of the Catechumens or the liturgy of the Word. This part of Christian worship was shaped on the model of the Synagogue worship. The offering of the Eucharist was in fact a liturgy reserved for the faithful.

#### **I. The Liturgy of the Word or the Liturgy of the Catechumens**

##### **(i) Bible Reading**

Scripture reading is an element that has been adopted by the Christian Church from the Jewish Synagogues. It was during the worship that our Lord read a text from the Prophet Isaiah in the Synagogue of Nazareth (Lk. 4:16-20). In the days of Justin Martyr,



Prophetic books and the Gospels were read before the Eucharistic celebration. We have evidences to show that in the fourth century, in Antioch four texts were read before the Eucharist: (a) a text from the Books of Moses, (b) one from the Prophets, (c) one from the Acts of the Apostles or the Catholic Epistles; (d) a text from the Gospels.

But in the fourth century, in other Churches, three texts were read (one from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament). In some Churches, books other than the Scriptures were also read. Thus in 397 A. D. a Council met in Carthage in North Africa permitted the reading of the life of martyrs during worship. Augustine in his sermons quotes from such biographies. This custom of reading the life of martyrs continued in France till the Middle Ages.

The Lectionaries in their present form had their origin in the fourth century. The Synagogues followed a custom of reading a book continuously. That means there was no lectionary in which the texts were arranged according to the theme or importance of each day. The early Church also followed this custom. But in the Christian worship, suitable texts were read on important festivals like Easter. On ordinary Sundays, the bishop chose the texts to be read in worship. In the days of Saint John Chrysostom (c. 347 - 407) in Antioch, the Scripture was read on the basis of a fixed lectionary. Texts relevant for the instruction of the catechumens and the incidents related to the feasts of the liturgical year were included in the lectionary.

Our present lectionary had its origin in Jerusalem in the late fourth century. The first official lectionary of the Roman Catholic Church was made in Southern France by a bishop named Venerius in the fifth century. It consisted of the reading for the feasts of the liturgical year only. The complete lectionary of the Roman Catholics originated in the seventh century.

### **(ii) Hymns between the readings**

In the days of Tertullian, Psalms were sung during the liturgy of the Word. In the fourth century, verses from the Psalms were sung between two readings antiphonally. The antiphonal singing of Psalms between the readings was a custom that existed in the Synagogues also. In our Church, the custom of singing Psalms with Halleluiahs

before reading the Gospel originated from this tradition. This is absent in the Ethiopian and the Old French (Galican) liturgies.

### **(iii) Sermon**

The sermon also is an element taken over from the Synagogue and has a supreme place in the Christian worship from the earliest days. Aim of the sermon is to interpret the lessons which were read. This was the privilege of the leader of worship. In the fourth century, in Jerusalem and in Antioch, the priests as well as the bishop preached. In the fourth century, the liturgical language of Jerusalem was Greek. Since the villagers could not understand Greek, the sermons were translated into Syriac. In the Roman Catholic Church in early days, the priests were not permitted to preach. Since it was feared that the priests might make heretical statements, only bishops had the right to give sermons. But we have enough evidences to show that Augustine preached while he was a priest. In 529 A. D. a synod that met in Vaison in France extended this privilege to the priests also.

### **(iv) Creed**

In the beginning, the Nicene Creed was used in baptism only. But when the Christological heresies disturbed the Church, the Creed came to be used in the Eucharistic liturgy also. It was Peter the Fuller (+ 488), the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, who introduced the Nicene Creed in the Eucharist for the first time. His intention was to show that the Syrians were following the Nicene faith. In the sixth century, the Greeks and the Latins also began to recite the Creed in the liturgy. The Syrians and the Greeks said the Creed at the beginning of the liturgy. In the sixth century the Latins recited the Creed just before the Lord's Prayer. But in the eighth century, the Latins also placed it at the beginning of the liturgy. However, in Rome it was only in the eleventh century that the Creed was recited at the beginning of the Eucharist. From the early days, the Creed was said by the whole congregation.

### **(v) Dismissal of the Catechumens**

As early as the time of Justin Martyr, the unbaptized were sent away before the kiss of peace. In the fourth century, there were special

prayers when the catechumens were sent away. Catechumens, penitents, those who were possessed by demons, and the repenting apostates were dismissed at the end of the liturgy of the Word. Before leaving the Church, each of them knelt before the bishop to receive his benediction. In France and Spain, the catechumens were dismissed even before the reading of the Gospel. But the Western Synods that met in the fourth and fifth centuries condemned this practice. The Synods directed that the catechumens should be sent away only after the sermon and special prayers for them.

In the Consecration of Myron of the Syrian Orthodox Church, after the reading of the Gospel, the archdeacon cries out: “let the Catechumens depart.” This is in fact the remnant of the ancient practice.

## **II. The Liturgy of the Faithful**

The offering of the Eucharist, in fact, takes place after the Nicene Creed. This part is known as Anaphora, which in Greek means “offering.” Only the faithful were allowed to attend this part of the celebration. That is why the early Church called it “the liturgy of the Faithful.” The Churches of the East and the West followed practically the same tradition in the case of the liturgy of the Word. But when we consider the liturgy of the faithful, we find that each Church followed different prayers and rites. The following lessons deal with them.

### **Questions**

1. Discuss briefly the place of Scripture reading and sermon in the early Christian Worship.
2. How did the Creed begin to be used in worship?

## LESSON 5

# EVOLUTION OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC WORSHIP

□ The Roman Catholic Worship in the Middle Ages □ From the Council of Trent to the Second Vatican Council (1565-1965)

The Liturgical language of Rome was Greek till the fourth century. From the fourth century onwards, Greek was replaced by Latin, which was originally the language of North Africa. The most ancient document on the liturgy of the Roman Church is “The Apostolic Tradition” written by Hippolytus, bishop of Rome about 250 A. D. It deals with Baptism, Eucharist, Ordination and other liturgical celebrations. According to this document, in the third century, the Lord’s Prayer was not used in the Eucharistic celebration of Rome. Hippolytus insists that the faithful should pray seven times a day.

### 1. The Roman Catholic Worship in the Middle Ages

Until the ninth century, the Roman Catholic Church of Europe was using various liturgical rites. The main liturgical rites used in Europe are the following:

**(i) The Roman Rite:** It was in use in and around the city of Rome. The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome is the most ancient witness to this rite.

**(ii) The Ambrosian Rite:** It was followed in the Italian city of Milan. The rite of Milan is known under the name of its bishop Ambrose (339 - 397).

**(iii) The Mozarabic Rite:** The liturgy used in Spain until the eleventh century is generally known as the Mozarabic liturgy.

**(iv) The Gallican Rite:** It is the liturgical rite followed in France before the ninth century.

**(v) The Celtic Rite:** Before the sixth century, the Church of the British Islands was known as the Celtic Church, and its liturgy is called the Celtic liturgy.

**(vi) The African Rite:** This was the liturgy of North Africa.

The most important development in the history of the Roman Catholic Worship is the suppression of all the western rites, except that of the city of Rome. The Roman Emperor Charlemagne (742-814) followed a policy of one Church, one ecclesiastical head and one liturgical rite. Thus he ordered that all Christians of the West should follow the liturgy of Rome. As a result, between 785 and 790, the Roman liturgy was introduced in the churches in Charlemagne's empire which included France, Holland, Germany and parts of Spain. Gradually the Roman primacy and the Roman liturgy were imposed on the Christians of the other parts of Europe. However, in a very few places the local liturgical rites continued to be in use.

The characteristics of the Roman liturgy are the following:

(i) Until the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 64), the liturgical language of the Roman Catholic Church was Latin.

(ii) The faithful did not have many opportunities to say response or to sing in the worship.

(iii) The Catholic Church is still using unleavened bread for the Eucharist. This practice was widely accepted in the West by the tenth century. The earliest document that attests this custom is a work by Alcuin (798 A. D.). Before that the Catholic Church also was using leavened bread like the Orthodox Churches.

(iv) The kiss of peace is given not at the beginning of the Anaphora as in our Church, but between the Lord's prayer and the communion.

(v) When the Orthodox Churches lay particular emphasis on the presence and operation of the holy Spirit in the Eucharist, the Catholics give priority to the Words of Institution, i.e., the words pronounced by Christ during the Last Supper (Matt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-24 etc.).

(vi) The Orthodox Churches generally have a large number of anaphoras (More than seventy in the Syrian Orthodox Church). The priest has the freedom to choose one of them, and the anaphora is rather fixed. In the Catholic Church, before the Second Vatican Council, there was only one anaphora. But the prayers changed, according to the festivals and the liturgical seasons.

Towards the end of the sixth century, Pope Gregory I (590-604) took the initiative of reforming the Roman liturgy. Imitating the Eastern liturgies, he introduced the Lord's Prayer. He re-introduced sermon that his predecessor had dropped from the liturgy. He had shortened the long prayers and added new hymns.

The other sacramental rites of the Roman Church had developed in France in the eighth and ninth centuries and gradually they came to be in use in Rome.

In the eleventh century, important changes took place in the Roman liturgy. Before that the custom was to celebrate the Eucharist on a simple altar facing the people. By the eleventh century, the altars came to be constructed at the eastern end of the Church, close to the wall. Thus instead of facing the people, the custom of turning towards the altar became normal in the Catholic Church. The Eastern Churches were following this tradition at least from the fourth century. In the thirteenth century, special significance was attached to the meditation of the Passion of our Lord in the Western Church. Consequently, crucifix came to be placed on the altar. Gradually, in the Latin Church, the Eucharist became a ceremony in which only the priest had any significant role. The priest silently recited most of the prayers and the faithful stood as mere spectators of this 'religious drama.' There arose an impression that the most important part of the Eucharistic celebration was the elevation of the 'blessed host' (the Eucharistic bread). Many people came to the Church merely to see the elevated host and left immediately after this rite. In the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic faithful had the false impression that their duty was to come to the church only to "see" the 'mass' without receiving the communion.

In the Middle Ages, there arose the custom of offering 'private mass' by the priest alone without participation of the people. This custom had its origin among the monks in the eighth century. This developed out of the practice that the priest-monks offered the Eucharist without the people's participation. It was in the thirteenth century that the custom of constructing more than one altar in the same church began among the Latins. The number of priests increased considerably during these days. The sole means of livelihood for

most of the priests was their ministry in the parish. Besides, the general belief was that it was a priest's responsibility and obligation 'to say the mass' regularly. Therefore, the Catholic Church increased the number of altars so that several priests could celebrate the Eucharist at the same time.

## **2. From the Council of Trent to the Second Vatican Council (1565 - 1965)**

In this period, the Roman liturgy remained practically unchanged. Following the decision of the Council of Trent, the Latin Church began to use a new Eucharistic prayer (Taksa) in 1570. Since it was promulgated by the Pope Pius V (+ 1572), it is known as the Missal of Pius V. This Missal was in use in the Roman Church till 1970. In 1570, the Sacred Congregation of Rites was founded in Rome. Henceforth, this Committee was responsible for safeguarding the Roman liturgy from changes and innovations. It was in 1570 that the Roman Church ordered that the liturgy should be celebrated in Latin. Rome prepared and promulgated books of Rubrics (details regarding the celebration of sacramental and liturgical rites) to prevent any change in its worship.

In the Middle Ages, two types of Eucharistic celebrations known as the 'High Mass' and the 'Low Mass' emerged. The High Mass is the solemn celebration with the participation of deacons, readers and choir, whereas in the Low Mass, the priest himself 'said' the prayers and did all the reading. Since most of the people were illiterate, they could not use prayer books, even if they were published in local languages. Therefore, small prayers were popularized for their use. It was in this context that the use of rosary reciting short prayers became widespread among the common people. Till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, translation of the Eucharistic prayers into any local language was forbidden. Any such translation was put into 'index' (the official Roman list of prohibited books).

The Liturgical Movement fostered by some Benedictine Monasteries paved the way for the liturgical reform in the Catholic Church. The object of the Movement, which was started in the beginning of the twentieth century, was to restore the active

participation of the laity in worship. It received an impetus in 1903 when Pope Pius X asked the Catholics to receive frequent communion. Gradually the Movement gained its objective when the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 64) resolved to reform the Roman liturgy. In 1963, the Vatican Council adopted the document entitled 'The Constitution on Sacred Liturgy.' The document instructs that 'the faithful shall be given active participation in the worship.' In 1970, the Committee appointed by Pope Paul VI, published a new Eucharistic prayer (Taksa), known as the Missal of Paul VI. Since 1970, the Roman Church has been using it. New Lectionary and new Sacramental rites were promulgated by Paul VI. The reformed Latin liturgy shortened the elaborate rites introduced by the Council of Trent, and simplified the Eucharistic celebration. Sermon was again given a place in worship. The Missal of Paul VI consists of three Eucharistic prayers or canons. In addition to this, five more Eucharistic prayers were approved by Rome. Three of them were for the Masses for Children and two for the Masses of Reconciliation.

The main development in the Roman liturgy after the Vatican Council is that the Catholics are permitted to celebrate the Mass in their local language. The altar which was placed at the eastern end of the church, near the wall, was further moved to the west. The altar is now placed at the centre of the church or at the entrance of the sanctuary. The priest turns towards the people when he celebrates the mass. The most important positive contribution of the liturgical reform by the Vatican Council is that the Catholics are made conscious of the significance of regular communion. The number of people receiving communion in the Catholic Church is much higher than that in the Eastern Churches.

### **Questions**

1. What were the liturgical rites used in the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages?
2. Explain briefly how the Roman Church came to use only one rite.
3. What were the important changes that were introduced in the Roman liturgy after the Second Vatican Council?



## LESSON 6

# THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROTESTANT WORSHIP

□ Changes made in Roman Liturgy by the reformers □ Protestant Liturgies □ Lutheran Worship □ Anglican Worship □ Worship in the Church of South India (CSI)

The Reformation of Martin Luther had begun in the early decades of the sixteenth century. Luther fought against the corrupt practices, superstitions and spiritual stagnation in the Roman Church. The Churches of the Reformed tradition introduced changes in the tradition, faith as well as their worship. Even though the Reformed Churches were following the same liturgical traditions of the Roman Church, they had made the following changes in the liturgy.

### **Changes made in Roman Liturgy by the reformers**

(i) Local languages were used for worship, instead of Latin which was incomprehensible to common man.

(ii) In the sixteenth century Latin liturgy, the ordinary people had no sense of participation because of the use of Latin, complicated classical music and prayers recited silently by the priest. The priest used to 'say the mass' in Latin, and the people were given some books for reading and meditation during the liturgy. The Reformers decided that the Eucharist should no more be a sacrament celebrated by the priest alone.

(iii) In the Medieval Latin Church there began the custom of placing the consecrated bread and wine on the altar to be adored. The Reformers viewed it as idolatry (Even though the Orthodox Churches preserve the Holy Eucharist to be given to the sick, it is not 'adored' as in the Roman Catholic Church).

(iv) The Roman Catholic Church insisted on the idea that the Eucharist was the sacrifice offered by the Church for the remission of the sins of the world, rather than for the participation of the faithful in the life of Christ. In this context, the Reformers abandoned the idea that the Eucharist was a sacrifice. They taught that the once for

all Sacrifice on the cross was sufficient for the remission of the sins of the world's.

(v) In the Medieval Catholic Church, most of the people abstained from receiving communion for various reasons. Therefore, the Protestants made it a rule that the Eucharist was to be celebrated only when there were communicants.

(vi) The Reformed Churches paid special attention to create new and simple liturgies instead of the long and complicated Latin ceremonies.

(vii) In the Latin liturgy, the Gospel was read in Latin as a mere ceremony, whereas the Protestants read it in local languages so that all could understand. Preaching based on Scripture reading was given a prominent place.

(viii) In the Reformed Churches, "Private Mass" offered by the priest alone, had no place.

## **2. Protestant Liturgies**

### **(i) Lutheran Worship**

In 1520 Martin Luther, the Father of Reformation, criticized the Latin liturgy on the basis of the principles mentioned above. The first Protestant Eucharistic Service was, however, prepared by Andreas Karlstadt. In 1521, on Christmas Day, he celebrated the mass in German for the first time. In 1523, Luther composed a liturgy in Latin which included almost all the elements of the Roman liturgy. The main characteristic of this liturgy was that all the prayers were to be said aloud. Luther said that the Eucharist should not be celebrated if there was nobody to receive the communion. He also encouraged private confession. In his liturgy, the so-called 'Apostolic Creed' was introduced in the place of the Nicene Creed. The Words of Institution was replaced by the reading of the Gospel accounts on the Last Supper.

In 1526, Luther prepared another Eucharistic service, in which the priest was directed to stand behind the altar facing the people. The service abandoned all other parts of the Latin Mass except the Words of Institution. It was directed that the celebrant should distribute

the bread to the people after consecration and then proceed to consecrate the wine.

The centre of the Lutheran worship was sermon. In the eighteenth century, the number of communicants became reduced. As a result, more simplified services were introduced to attract the people and gradually the Eucharist became a scarce celebration. The Lutheran Churches now use a brief and simple service for the Eucharist.

The Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of India has published a new service book, which follows more or less the old liturgical prayers. The service book contains the Nicene Creed also.

### **(ii) Anglican Worship**

It was Thomas Cranmer the Archbishop of Canterbury (+ 1556) who took the initiative in using the English language for worship. In 1549 during the reign of King Edward VI, Cranmer published a Worship book, which is known as The First Prayer Book of Edward VI. The King ordered that all the parishes in England should follow this new Service. The First Prayer Book directed that the 'communion of both kinds' (i.e. the bread and the wine separately) should be given to the faithful. Cranmer translated the Latin prayers into English, and some prayers were altered. He left out the prayers which he thought were unacceptable. The new worship service was rather simple. It laid emphasis on the idea of the real presence of Christ in Eucharist. The Daily Offices, which were originally arranged for seven times daily were simplified, and prescribed for use in the morning and evening. In the Eucharistic service and in the Daily Offices, new prayers were added to assure peoples' active participation. In the Latin Church, there were special service books for each sacramental celebration and the Daily Office. Cranmer collected the prayers in one book. The Prayer Book published by him included Daily Office, intercessions, prayers for the sacramental celebrations and the Catechism of faith.

The Prayer Book of 1549, included many Roman Catholic prayers especially the prayer for the departed. This was unacceptable to many of the leaders of Reformation. Therefore, Cranmer again prepared a more radical Protestant Prayer Book in 1552. It is known as 'The

Second Prayer Book of Edward VI.’ In 1662 this Prayer Book was again reformed. The Anglicans around the world today follow the service books prepared on the basis of the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI.

In 1951, a new service book was published for the use of the Anglican Church in India, Pakistan, Burma and Sri Lanka. It is popularly known as the ‘Order of 1951.’ This was again revised and a new order was published in 1963.

### **(iii) Worship in the Church of South India (CSI)**

In 1947, the various Protestant Churches of South India were united and the Church of South India was formed. In 1950 ‘The Eucharistic Service’ and in 1953, ‘The Book of Common Prayer’ containing the order of other sacraments were published. ‘The Book of Common Prayer’ directs that the worship shall include a general confession of sins. Bible reading, Sermon and the reading of 1 Cor. 11:23-29 and the Decalogue (*i.e. the ten commandments*). At the opening of the Eucharistic service, the celebrant and the assistants enter the church in a procession. The celebrant stands behind the altar facing the people. After the Bible reading, the Nicene Creed is recited and the sermon follows. Then litanies are said and the kiss of peace is given as in the Syrian Church.

Then follows the offertory procession in which the bread and wine are brought to the altar. Some of the prayers of the Eucharistic service have been adopted from Saint James’ Liturgy.

The main feature of the C.S.I. worship is that it has adopted elements from the Latin, Syrian, and Anglican liturgies. Even though an official Book of Common Prayer has been published, the parishes conduct worship with local modifications. The Churches which were following the Anglican Tradition before the union of 1947, are now following their older liturgical practices.

### **Questions**

1. What were the changes that the Reformers introduced into the Roman liturgy?
2. Discuss the importance of worshipping in local languages.

# UNIT III

## THE HOLY EUCHARIST IN THE ORTHODOX TRADITION

### LESSON 1

#### THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF OUR EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

□ The Liturgy of Saint James □ The Saint James liturgy in other Churches □ The Saint James Liturgy in Kerala □ Other Eucharistic liturgies

The Eastern liturgical rites could be divided into two families: the Antiochene family and the Alexandrian family. The Antiochene family included the Syrian Orthodox, the Armenian and the Greek (Byzantine) Orthodox liturgies. The Coptic and the Ethiopian liturgies belong to the Alexandrian group.

No other Eastern Church has such a large number of Eucharistic liturgies as in the Syrian Orthodox Church. The Syrian Church has more than Seventy Anaphoras or Eucharistic orders. About a dozen of them are in use today. However, the most ancient and the most important Anaphora is “The Saint James Liturgy.” All other Eucharistic liturgies were written in imitation of or as an adaptation of the Saint James Liturgy. As late as the fourteenth century, new Anaphoras were composed in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

#### **1. The Liturgy of Saint James**

According to tradition, Saint James, the brother of Our Lord is the author of this liturgy. Even though it has its origin in Jerusalem, there is no evidence to show that it existed in the first century A. D., in its present form. In the fourth century, Saint Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (+ 387), in his sermons on the Holy Eucharist, quoted from the Saint James liturgy. In a sermon of Saint John Chrysostom (+ 407) also we find a quotation from the Saint James liturgy. There fore we have evidence as to its use in Jerusalem in the fourth century.

The anaphora of St. James was originally written in Greek. In the beginning of the fifth century, it was translated into Syriac. A Spanish lady named 'Etheria' visited Jerusalem between 414 and 416 A. D. She describes the worship at the Jerusalem Church. Etheria says that even though the Eucharist was celebrated in Greek, it was simultaneously translated into Syriac, as the villagers could not understand Greek. However, no copy of a Syriac translation of that time has survived.

In the middle of the sixth century, Saint James liturgy was again translated into Syriac. This version did not correspond to the Greek text. Therefore, Jacob Edessa (+ 708) prepared a new Syriac translation, consulting various Greek manuscripts of the Anaphora of St. James. In the following centuries, Moses Bar Kepha (+ 903) and Dionysius Bar Salibi (+ 1171) added several prayers. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Gregorios Bar Hebraeus, the Catholicos of the East, shortened most of the prayers of the Saint James liturgy. Saint James liturgy used in the Malankara Orthodox Church is the revised version of Bar Hebraeus. But the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch still uses the longer version.

Tradition insists that the Saint James liturgy should be used when a priest celebrates the Eucharist for the first time. It shall be used in the first Eucharist offered in a newly consecrated church, as well as for the important dominical festivals like Easter, Pentecost, Christmas or Epiphany.

## **2. The Saint James liturgy in other Churches**

Since it originated in Jerusalem, the Saint James liturgy got wider acceptance. It was used by the Churches in Palestine, Syria, Armenia, Georgia, Greece and Egypt.

The Greek Orthodox Christians of Antioch used Saint James Liturgy for a few centuries and then abandoned it in favor of the liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the official liturgy of Constantinople. Until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem continued to use the St. James liturgy. Gradually they also adopted the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Greek Church of Jerusalem made an unsuccessful attempt to

reintroduce the Saint James liturgy.

In the sixth century, it was translated into the Georgian language. Even though it was translated into Armenian and Slavonic (Old Russian) languages, Saint James' is no more used in these Churches. Only the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and the Malankara Orthodox Church and their Catholic counterparts are using the Saint James liturgy now.

### **3. The Saint James Liturgy in Kerala**

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Saint James Liturgy was translated into Malayalam. The Mar Thoma Syrian Church is using a reformed version of the Saint James'. The Independent Syrian Church of Malabar (Thozhiyoor Church) is using the same liturgy as ours. It is interesting to note that the Church of South India (C.S.I.) has adopted a few prayers from the St. James liturgy.

### **4. Other Eucharistic liturgies**

In the Syrian Orthodox Church, there are more than seventy anaphoras. All of them have been written on the model of Saint James. They have the same structure and rites as Saint James, even though there are differences in the formulation of the prayers. Some times, the same Anaphora has been attributed to different Church fathers, depending on the manuscripts.

In addition to the Anaphora of Saint James, the following anaphoras are used in our Church:

1. The Liturgy of Mar Dionysius Bar Salibi (+ 1171): Three anaphoras are attributed to Mar Dionysius, and only one of them is used in India.
2. The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom (+ 407).
3. The Liturgy of St. John the Evangelist.
4. The Liturgy of Mathew the Shepherd (Royo)
5. The Liturgy of Mar Sixtus, Bishop of Rome.
6. The Liturgy of Mar Eustathois, Patriarch of Antioch.
7. The Liturgy of Mar Julius.

8. The Liturgy of St. Peter, the Apostle.
9. The Liturgy of the Twelve Apostles.
10. The Liturgy of Mar Issac.
11. The Liturgy of Abraham the Hunter (Nahshirtono)
12. The Liturgy of the Holy Fathers (Compiled from various liturgies).

### **Questions**

1. Describe briefly the importance of the Anaphora of Saint James.
2. What are the important Eucharistic liturgies used in our Church?

## **LESSON 2**

### **VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN OUR EUCHARISTIC LITURGY - 1**

Rites of Preparation    The public Celebration    Liturgy of the word

The Eucharistic liturgy has two parts: (1) Rites of Preparation (Tuyobo) and (2) Public Celebration. The Public celebration consists of two elements: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Faithful (Anaphora).

#### **1. Rites of Preparation**

The rites of preparation consist of the priest's entry into the sanctuary (Madbaha) at the end of the Morning prayers, wearing liturgical dress and the preparation of the bread and wine offered. Firstly, the priest turns towards the people and says: "Pray for me so that I may become worthy to offer the living and the holy sacrifice for the whole Church."

This means that the priest alone is not offering the Eucharist. He offers it on behalf of the Church, as its representative. After having asked the people for forgiveness, he goes around the altar and kisses



its corners. Then he ascends the altar-step, picks up the bread in both hands, places it in the Paten and says this prayer “O Thou first-begotten of the heavenly Father, accept this first-born from the hands of Thy weak and sinful servant.” Then he mixes water with wine and says: “O Lord God, as Thy divinity was united with Thy humanity, so unite this water with this wine.” Saint John records that when one of the soldiers pierced the side of Christ, water and blood flowed out (John 19:34). This incident provides one of the reasons for the Church to mix water with the wine.

After having put on the liturgical dresses, the priest again ascends the altar-step and holds the Paten and the Chalice in his hands and says a prayer which has the following words: “Lord Jesus Christ, make us worthy of offering ourselves as a living sacrifice which is pleasing to you and which conforms to Your sacrifice (on the cross).”

In the Eucharist, we offer ourselves to God. Bread and wine are the staples of the people of the Middle East. Offering of the staples means the offering of the fruits of our labour. By offering the fruit of his labour, man offers himself to God. The priest prays that the offering of our life may become selfless and spiritual as the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

It is significant that the plural form (us or ourselves) is used in the above prayer. Even though the priest recites the prayer silently, he says it as a representative of the whole Church. Since the Eucharist is the offering of the sacrifice of the whole Church, the plural form ‘we’ is regularly used in almost all the prayers.

Then the priest holds the Paten in his right hand and stretches forth his hands in the form of a cross and says the prayers of intercession. In the intercession he remembers all those who have been ‘well-pleasing to God from our father Adam even unto this day.’ Then he prays for the sick, penitents, the departed, his teachers, parents, family members and all who have requested to be remembered in the Eucharist.

After having finished the intercession, the priest places the Chalice and the Paten on the Tablaito and covers them with Shushafo (= veil). Then he incenses the holy mysteries and commemorates the Mother

of God, Saints, doctors and priests and all the ‘children of the Holy Church.’

Thus in the preparatory rites, the priest seeks the intercession of the saints. This means that he offers the Eucharist trusting on the saintliness and the preparation either of himself not of the faithful alone, but that of a bigger community of saints who are praying for us and with us. The priest and the faithful pray along with the whole community of the departed ones. The Eucharist is offered by the whole Church, the community of the living and the departed. That is why intercession of the saints has been given a prominent place in our Eucharistic celebration.

In the Eucharist, we not only seek the intercession of the saints, but we also pray for them. As the saints pray for us, we are expected to pray for them too. For we pray as members of the Church, the body of Christ. Both the living and the departed are ‘the living members’ of that body. One member of the body of Christ cannot pray, ignoring the other members. Each Christian should pray bearing all other members of the body of Christ in his heart. Every prayer is the incense ascending to the presence of God. It is precisely because of this that we pray for the living and the departed in the Eucharistic celebration.

## **2. The public Celebration**

The public celebration of the Eucharist can be divided into two parts:

The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Faithful or the Anaphora. The Liturgy of the Word is also known as the ‘liturgy of the Catechumens.’ In the early Church, the catechumens were dismissed before the Creed. Only the faithful were allowed to attend the part of the liturgy that followed the Creed. This is why it is called the liturgy of the faithful.

### **(i) The Liturgy of the Word or the Liturgy of the Catechumens:**

(a) At the beginning of the public celebration, the sanctuary curtain is drawn aside, as though the heaven itself is opened before us. The priest holds the censor and goes around the altar censuring its corners,

accompanied by the deacons. The prayer which is said at this time (“By the prayers of Thy Mother...”), composed by St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch (+ 538). The birth, baptism and the crucifixion of our Lord are evoked in this prayer. This suggests that in the Eucharist, we are made participants in the whole salvific work of Christ. As the shepherds and the wise men adorned the infant Jesus in the manger, the priest goes around the altar accompanied by the deacons and censes it.

Then follows the Trisagion. When we say three times Holy art Thou, O God... Who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us, we are confessing that Jesus Christ, who was true man and true God, died on the cross for our salvation.

(b) The next stage of the Liturgy of the Word is the reading of the Holy Scriptures. We have already seen that the Liturgy of the Word was of utmost importance in the early Christian Worship. First a lesson from the Acts of the Apostles or the General Epistles is read. This signifies that the Gospel was preached first to the Jews. Then a lesson from the Epistles of St. Paul is read from the southern side of the sanctuary, which could evoke the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. The hymn ‘Paul the Apostle’ which is sung before the reading is based on the Epistle to the Galatians 1:18. The Epistles are read as part of the teaching of the faith. Its aim is to confirm the faithful in the faith of the Church. The words, “If any one comes to you preaching contrary to what I have preached, he is cursed by the Church”, are a warning to those who go after the teachings contrary to the apostolic faith.

The Gospel is read after the admonition of the deacon that “with calm and awe and modesty, let us listen to the living words of the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. ..” We listen to the words and deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ that took place in the time of the incarnation of Our Lord.

In the early Church, the reading of the Gospel was followed by a sermon. The purpose of the sermon is to explain the meaning of the texts that were read and to confirm the faithful in the faith of the Church. Therefore, the right place of the sermon, even today, is after

the Gospel reading. A good sermon can prepare the faithful to participate in the Eucharist meaningfully. Today the sermon is given at the end of the Eucharist for two reasons: Catechumens are no longer there in the Church and most of the faithful are late-comers.

(c) The Gospel reading is followed by the Prayer of Pardon (Husoyo) and the offering of the incense. The priest prays for the pardon of his sins and the sins of the faithful. The prayer of Pardon is followed by Sedra, appropriate for the day. The Syriac word sedra means 'a series (of supplications).' Promiun (= introduction) is an introduction to Sedra. Sedra contains theologically and spiritually rich meditations.

After having completed the reading of the Sedra, the priest blesses the censor. The blessing of the censor is a rite which is seen in the Syrian Orthodox Church only. It evokes the need for the sanctification of our sinful life, through the indwelling of the fire of the Holy Spirit. The blessing of the censor in the name of the Holy Trinity, suggests that the prayer of the Church is well pleasing to the Triune God as an incense offering. It implies also that the Church should be filled with the pleasing odour of the worship of the Trinity and that we shall spread that worship through out the world.

### **Questions**

1. Describe briefly the role of the faithful in the offering of the Eucharist.
2. Why do we pray in the Eucharist for the living and the departed?
3. Explain the significance of a sermon in the celebration of the Eucharist?
4. What is the meaning of the offering of incense?

## LESSON 3

# THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF OUR EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY (2)

□ The Liturgy of the Faithful □ Constituent elements of Anaphora

### (ii) The Liturgy of the Faithful

‘The Liturgy of the Faithful’ or ‘the Anaphora’, the second part of the Public Celebration of the Eucharist begins with the Creed. The Greek word Anaphora means ‘offering.’ As the offering of the Eucharist as such takes place in the Liturgy of the Faithful, this part is called ‘Anaphora.’ The Anaphora of the Syrian Orthodox Church consists of the following elements. Most of these elements are found in the Eucharistic celebration of all the Orthodox as well as the Roman Catholic Churches. However, one can find some differences in the arrangements of these elements in various Churches.

### Constituent elements of Anaphora

#### (a) Creed

The faith of the Church does not consist merely of an intellectual knowledge of the divine mystery. Our faith in the Triune God is expressed through the worship that we offer to the Holy Trinity. That is why the Creed, adopted by the Synods of Nicea and Constantinople is recited in all the liturgical celebrations. In the beginning the Creed was used only in baptism. It was Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch (+ 488) who introduced the practice of reciting the Creed in the Eucharist. His intention was to show that the Syrian Orthodox Church was following the faith of the Council of Nicea and Constantinople, and that the Church was offering the Eucharist in conformity with that faith.

The faithful come together in the Body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit and offer the Eucharist, the sacrifice of praise. The Eucharist is our means of communion with the Holy Trinity. That is why we proclaim our faith in the Holy Trinity at the beginning of the Eucharist.

When the Creed is said, the deacon comes to the western door with censor. This signifies two things: first, he shall dismiss the Catechumens and others who are not worthy of receiving the Eucharist; secondly, the deacon, as the representative of the whole congregation, bears its prayers and offers them before God as an incense.

### **(b) Washing of the hands**

When the Creed is said, the priest washes his hands, kneels before the altar and prays. Washing of the hands signifies spiritual preparation for the offering of the Eucharist. It also symbolizes the washing of the feet of the Apostles by our Lord during the Last Supper. It is interesting to note that the Jews washed their hands before every religious meal.

### **(c) The Kiss of Peace**

In His Sermon on the Mount, our Lord said: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Math. 5:23-24; cfr. 6:12). The kiss of peace has been introduced in the Eucharist, in accordance with the above words of our Lord. The priest and the deacon kiss the altar and the kiss of peace is given to the people. This signifies that first God has reconciled Himself with us, and therefore we have the obligation to be reconciled with each other.

Following the kiss of peace, the priest says a prayer and the veil (Shoshappa) that covers the Paten and Chalice is lifted up and waved over them. This symbolizes the fact that through the celebration of the Eucharist, the heavenly mysteries are revealed on earth. Then the priest blesses the congregation in the name of the Holy Trinity.

### **(d) Lifting up of hearts and Praise of the Holy Trinity**

Elevating his hands, the priest says: "Let our minds and our understanding and our hearts, be above where our Lord, Jesus Christ, sits at the right hand of God the Father." And the people respond: "They are with the Lord." This exhortation and the response have

existed in the Eucharist at least from the fourth century onwards. United in Christ, the Church enters into the presence of God the Father, and offers Him the Eucharist, the sacrifice of praise. We are joining the innumerable angels who are continuously glorifying God. The priest exhorts the people to praise God along with the angels: ‘He whom the heavens praise and all the hosts thereof, corporeal and incorporeal.... Angels and archangels, principalities, powers, thrones, dominions, celestial virtues, the many-eyed cherubim and the six-winged seraphim who, veiling their faces and feet, fly one to another proclaiming His Holiness, crying aloud saying Holy.

(People say) Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Heaven and earth are full of His glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that came and is to come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.”

This prayer is based on Isaiah 6:3. The Epistle of St. Clement of Rome attest that this prayer became part of Christian worship as early as the second century.

#### **(e) Institution of the Eucharist**

The priest proclaims the institution of the Eucharist by our Lord during His Last supper, blesses the bread and the wine with the ‘sign of the cross’. The priest stands for Jesus Christ, and the same event, which took place two thousand years ago, is manifested before our eyes. We participate in the same Eucharist that our Lord blessed in the Upper room. We receive the same mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ that our Lord gave to His disciples.

#### **(f) Anamnesis or the Remembrance of the Death and Resurrection of Our Lord**

After having blessed the bread and wine, Our Lord asked his disciples: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25). Evoking these words the priest proclaims: “Do this in remembrance of me as often as you partake of this mystery, commemorating my death and my resurrection, until I come” (and the People say) “Your death, O Lord we commemorate; Your resurrection we confess, and Your second coming we look for.”

The Holy Eucharist is not merely a memory of the salvific work

of our Lord. The death and resurrection of Christ are made contemporaneous. The Greek word anamnesis is not mere ‘memory.’ It suggests rather ‘making an event contemporaneous. Along with the death and resurrection of Christ, His second coming is also manifested in the Eucharist. Therefore, in the Eucharist, we participate in the death and resurrection of Christ, as well as in the joy of His glorious advent.

**(g) Invocation of the Holy Spirit or Epiklesis**

Invocation of the Holy Spirit is characteristic of the Orthodox Liturgy. The deacon exhorts the people:

“How awful is this hour and how perturbed this time, my beloved ones, wherein the Holy Spirit from the top most heights of heaven takes wing and descends, and broods and rests upon this Eucharist here present and hallows it! In calm and in awe are you, standing and praying... Pray that peace may be with us and all of us may have tranquility.”

During this time, the priest waves his hands over the mysteries and says silently: “Have mercy upon us, O God the Father and send forth upon us and upon these offerings Your Holy Spirit...” (Saint James: Longer version).

The priest prays for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the bread and the wine as well as upon the believers. The Holy Spirit who transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, unites and transforms the believers into one body of Christ, the Church. The Holy Spirit sanctifies the divine mysteries and transforms and divinises the faithful. The Spirit descends upon the Eucharist, and comes into the hearts of the believers who receive it. Therefore, St. Ephrem wrote that those who receive the Holy Eucharist, taste the Holy Spirit. When we receive the Holy Mysteries which have the living presence of the Holy Spirit, we become abodes of the Holy Spirit.

**(h) Diptychs or the Prayers of Intercession (see next lesson).**

**(i) Fraction**

The fraction consists of the breaking of the Holy Body and the



mixing of the Holy Blood with it. Before the Fraction, the curtain is drawn. In the Eucharist, we partake of the sacrifice of Christ, the true Paschal Lamb. The Fraction is the breaking of the Christian Passover. A part of the prayer that the priest says silently reads as follows: “You are the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Fraction is also a preparation for the communion. The fraction is followed by a litany or Intercessory Prayers. Then comes the Lord’s Prayers.

### **(j) Lord’s Prayer**

We have already noted that the Eucharist is the offering of the Praise of the sons of God united in Christ. At the end of the Eucharist, the sons of God say the Lord’s Prayer addressing God “Abba Father.” The Eucharist is the thanksgiving for our salvation through the Son. Lord’s Prayer is the ‘prayer of the sons of God’ redeemed in the Son of God. Therefore, it is recited by the whole congregation. Lord’s Prayer also can be regarded as a preparatory prayer for receiving the Holy Eucharist.

### **(k) Exaltation of the Body and Blood**

When the holy Mysteries are elevated and exalted, we contemplate Our Lord, who is the true High Priest that offered Himself to God the Father. At the same time it symbolizes the self-offering of the faithful, united in Christ. Through that offering, we come near to the presence of the Holy Trinity. That is why the priest cries out: The One Holy Father with us, who, by His mercy, created the world. The one Holy Son... (and) the One Holy Spirit, with us....”

### **(I) Prayers of incense (see next lesson)**

### **(m) Holy Communion and Final Thanksgiving**

The priest turns to the people, stretches forth his hands and says: “My brethren and my beloved, pray for me.” The curtain is drawn and the priest and the deacons receive the Holy Communion. Then he brings the holy Mysteries towards the people to give them the Holy Communion. This can symbolize also the second solemn coming of Our Lord.

After having given the Holy Communion to the people, he offers thanksgiving to God: “We give thanks to You, O Lord, for the abundance of Thy mercy wherewith You have accounted us worthy to partake of Your Heavenly Table. Grant, my Lord, that our participation in Your Holy Mysteries be not a cause of our condemnation and that being accounted worthy to partake of Your Holy Spirit we may find a share and an inheritance with all the righteous for ever.”

Then the people are sent away with the words: “Our brethren and beloved, we commit you unto the grace and mercy of the Holy and Glorious Trinity with the blessings and food for your journey that you have received from the atoning altar of the Lord; depart in peace.”

### Questions

1. Describe the significance of reciting the Creed.
2. Do you agree with the statement that the Eucharist is offered by the whole Church? Give your reasons.

## LESSON 4

### INTERCESSORY PRAYERS AND THE PRAYERS OF INCENSE

Intercessory Prayers or Diptychs  The Fathers of the fifth tubden

#### 1. Intercessory Prayers or Diptychs

The intercessory prayers are generally known as tubden. The Syriac expression tubden means ‘again.’ Since the six prayers that the deacon says aloud begin with the Syriac words tubden, the whole set of prayers are called so. The technical name of these prayers is ‘Diptychs.’ In Greek diptychos is a writing tablet which could be folded into two. Originally the names of the faithful, both the living and the departed, were written on a tablet and were read out in the Eucharist. Consequently, the prayer itself was called diptychs.

Both the living and the dead are remembered in these prayers. It is a prayer for the whole Church. Among the six prayers that the deacon says, the first three are for the living and the remaining are for the dead. When the deacon reads a prayer, the priest also says silently a prayer on the same theme. When the people say Kyrie Elaison (= Lord, have mercy upon us), the priest recites loudly another prayer on the same subject. Therefore, tubden or Diptychs includes a set of eighteen prayers that both the priest and the deacon say.

In the Eucharist, we realize that both the living and the dead are members of the same Body of Christ. The Church offers the Eucharist in union with all the men who are incorporated in Christ through baptism. We pray for “the concord and prosperity” of all the members of the Church “that they may attain righteousness.” We pray that God shall have mercy on the living as well as on the departed. We commemorate the presence of the saints and the faithful departed, and our communion with them.

In the first tubden that the deacon says, we remember all the bishops. The names of the heads of the Church, especially Mar Ignatius of Antioch, Mar Baselius, Catholicos of the East, Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem, and the bishop of the diocese are remembered. In the second tubden, all the faithful and in the third all the rulers are remembered.

The next three tubdens are prayers for the departed. In the fourth, the Mother of God, the Apostles and all the departed saints are commemorated. The fifth is on the three Ecumenical Councils which had laid the foundation of the Orthodox faith and the Holy Fathers who tirelessly laboured for the preservation of that faith. The three Councils are those of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431). The following fathers are commemorated:

## **2. The Fathers of the fifth tubden**

1. St. James, the first Bishop and the brother of Our Lord. He is also the author of the Saint James Liturgy.
2. St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. In A. D. 115, he died a martyr in Rome, where he was thrown before lions.

3. St. Clement, Bishop of Rome (+ 97 A. D.).
4. Dionysius: There are several fathers having this name. But St. Dionysius of Alexandria (+ 264) and another Church father who wrote several books under the pseudo-name of Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500) seems to be remembered here.
5. St. Athanasius of Alexandria (+ 373): Athanasius as a deacon fought against the heresy of Arius at the Council Nicea (325). Later, he became bishop of Alexandria.
6. St. Julius was the bishop of Rome (+ 352).
7. St. Basil the Great (+ 379) was the Bishop of Caesarea in Asia Minor, and one of the Capadocean fathers who laid the foundation of the Orthodox faith.
8. Gregorios: This name evokes St. Gregory of Nyssa (+ 395) and St. Gregory of Naziansus (+ 390). The former was the younger brother of St. Basil and latter was his closest friend. The two Gregorys and St. Basil are the Capadocean fathers.
9. Mar Dioscorus of Alexandria (+ 454) fought for the Orthodox faith against the Diophysites at the Council of Chalcedon (+ 451).
10. Mar Timothios of Alexandria (+ 497).
11. Mar Philoxenos of Mabbug (+ 523) was one of the most ardent defenders of the Orthodox faith against the Chalcedonians.
12. Mar Anthimos was a monk (c. 457).
13. Mar Ivanios or St. John Chrysostom (+ 407) was a priest of Antioch and later he became the Bishop of Constantinople.
14. St. Cyril of Alexandria (+ 444) and St. Cyril of Jerusalem (+ 387) are commemorated here.
15. Mar Severus (+ 538) was the patriarch of Antioch. Mar Severus who is described as the crown of the Syrians, the rational mouth and pillar and teacher of the entire Holy Church of God”, defended the faith against the Chalcedonians.

16. Mar Jacob Baradeus (+ 578) was the Bishop of Edessa. When the Syrian Church was persecuted by the Chalcedonians, Mar Jacob travelled in Egypt and in the Middle East and consecrated many bishops and priests.
17. Mar Aprem (+ 373) lived in Nisibis and in Edessa and wrote numerous poems, hymns, homilies and commentaries. Most of the poetical works are incorporated in the Syrian Liturgy.
18. Mar Jacob: Two celebrated Syrian Fathers are commemorated here. Mar Jacob of Serugh (+ 521), like Mar Ephrem wrote a good number of liturgical hymns that we use now. Another Mar Jacob, Bishop of Edessa (+ 708) translated the Anaphora and the baptismal liturgy from Greek into Syriac. It was Mar Jacob of Edessa who compiled the text of most of the Syrian Orthodox sacramental rites.
19. Mar Issac (+ 461), was the bishop of Antioch.
20. Mar Balaeus (+ 450), lived in Aleppo in Syria, was a poet as well as a Chor-Episcopa.
21. Mar Bar Sauma (+ 458) was a monk.
22. Mar Simon the Stylite (+ 451), who became a monk at the age of 16, later lived on a pillar till his death.
23. Mar Abhai was the Bishop of Nicea (5<sup>th</sup> century).

This list includes only the names of the fathers who lived before the 8<sup>th</sup> century. We cannot hold that the list is final. It would be relevant to include the names of the fathers of the Malankara Orthodox Church in this list.

With the sixth tubden which commemorates the departed faithful, the intercessory prayers are concluded.

### **3. Prayers of Incense (Quqliun).**

Quqliun is a Greek word which means 'cycle.' A quqliun contains the complete structure of an office. The term seems to suggest that we celebrate a complete office in the name of the Mother of God, Saints, departed priests or the faithful.

Quqliun is not part of the Holy Eucharist. It signifies that we

conclude the Eucharistic liturgy by offering incense and seeking the intercession of the Mother of God and the Saints. Some other appropriate hymns could be used in their place.

The structure of the quqliun is as follows:

1. Quqliun: a verse from the Psalms is chanted.
2. Eqbo: the Syriac word eqbo means 'step' or edge of something. It denotes the beginning of a prayer.
3. Qolo: means 'hymn.'
4. Boutho: means 'supplication.'

It is interesting to note that a daily office of the Syrian Church also contains the same elements. The following verses from the Psalms are sung in quqliun.

1. The Kings daughter stands forth in glory (Ps. 45:9-11).
2. The righteous shall flourish like palm-trees (Ps. 92:12-14).
3. Let the priests be clothed with righteousness (Ps. 132: 9-12).
4. Like a father pities his children (Ps. 103:13-15).
5. Through thee we push down our foes (Ps. 44:5-7).

The Mother of God and all the departed saints and the faithful are praying with us. The offering of the incense at the end of every prayer symbolizes that our prayers, along with the prayers of the saints rise up towards God as a well-pleasing incense.

## Questions

1. Discuss the meaning of the intercessory prayers.
2. Explain the meaning and structure of quqliun.

## LESSON 5

# WORSHIP IN THE OTHER ORTHODOX CHURCHES

□ Byzantine Orthodox Church □ The Coptic Worship □ The Ethiopian Worship □ The Armenian Worship □ Worship of the Chaldean Syrian Church

### 1. Byzantine Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Churches which belong to the Byzantine tradition are the Russian Church, the Romanian Church, the Churches of Greece and Constantinople, the Bulgarian Church, the Georgian Church etc. In Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, originally the Antiochene liturgy was used. St. John Chrysostom was a priest of Antioch, before he was elected Patriarch of Constantinople.

Byzantines are using two Anaphoras: the Liturgy of St. Basil which is used on important festivals like Easter, Christmas, Epiphany and Pentecost and the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom which is used on ordinary Sundays (The Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom that the Syrians are using, is different from the Byzantine text). In addition to these, the Byzantines are using a 'Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified.' This is not an offering of the Eucharist, but a solemn distribution of the Holy Mysteries which have been kept in the church. During the holy Lent or on a fasting day, the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified is celebrated to give Holy Communion to the faithful.

The Byzantine Eucharistic Liturgy consists of three parts: (a) Preparatory service, (b) Liturgy of the Catechumens and (c) Liturgy of the Faithful.

#### (a) The Preparatory Service

First, the bread and the wine mixed with water are prepared on a table on the northern side of the church. The priest pierces the left side of the bread with a spear-shaped spoon and says: "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water" (John 19:34). The meaning of this rite, which was introduced in the ninth century is evident. Then several small

particles taken from another bread are arranged in rows near the Eucharistic bread. The Byzantines teach that these small pieces represent the Mother of God, the Angels and the Saints. This custom was also of ninth century origin.

### **(b) The Liturgy of the Catechumens**

After the introductory prayers, the priest and the deacons enter the sanctuary with the Gospel in a procession, which is known as the 'Little Entrance.' The deacon reads the Gospel and then the Catechumens are sent away.

### **(c) The Liturgy of the Faithful**

At the beginning of the Liturgy of the faithful, there is a solemn entrance with the bread and the wine which were already prepared on the side-table. The priest and the deacons enter the sanctuary with the bread and the wine in a solemn procession, known as "the Great Entrance." The remaining part of the Liturgy resembles the Syrian Orthodox Liturgy.

During the breaking of the bread (= fraction), some warm water is added to the wine. This rite, known as *zeon*, signifies that the blood of Christ has warmth and life, and that life is mingled with those who receive the Holy Communion.

Two most striking features of the Byzantine worship are the rich Music and the Iconography. A Byzantine church is decorated with icons of Christ, Apostles and the Saints. In the place of the sanctuary veil of the Syrian Church, the Byzantines have an 'iconostasis', a wooden screen fully painted with icons. The icons represent the presence of Christ, Angels, Prophets, Apostles and the Saints. Icons are the works of Orthodox artists, often monks, who painted them after a very long intensive training and spiritual preparation with prayer and fasting. Icons are means of manifesting the presence of God and the glory of God through colours. Like music and words, colour also serves as a means of manifesting the glory of God.

## **2. The Coptic Worship**

The original liturgical language of the Church in Egypt was Greek.



But by the fifth Century, the Egyptians began to celebrate in Coptic language (the language of the pre-Christian Egypt, written with Greek letters). Now they use Boharic (a dialect of the Coptic language) and Arabic. The Copts have four anaphoras. The most ancient and the most important among them is the 'Liturgy of St. Mark.' One of the peculiarities of the Coptic liturgy is that the intercessory prayers (Diptychs) are said immediately after the kiss of peace. Besides, there are two prayers of the invocation of the Holy Spirit (Epiklesis), one before the Words of Institution and the other after.

### **3. The Ethiopian Worship**

The Ethiopian Eucharistic Liturgy is an adaptation, or sometimes a translation of the Coptic Liturgy. However, there are Anaphoras of Ethiopian origin. The most important among them is the Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles. The liturgical language of the Ethiopians is Ge'ez. During the reign of the late Emperor Haile Salasee, the modern language Amharic was introduced in some churches. However, Ge'ez is widely used for all liturgical celebrations.

### **4. The Armenian Worship**

The Armenian worship is indebted to the ancient liturgies used in Syria, Caesarea and Constantinople. The liturgical language is ancient Armenian, and only one Anaphora is in use, which, it is believed, was composed by St. Gregory the Illuminator, who evangelized Armenia.

The Armenians use pure wine and they never mix water with it. Armenian Church is the only Orthodox Church which uses unleavened bread for the Eucharist.

### **5. Worship of the Chaldean Syrian Church**

The Chaldean Syrian (Nestorian) worship was developed in the early Christian centers of Edessa and Nisibis and it contains several ancient elements. The Chaldeans use three Anaphoras: (a). The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari, (b). Anaphora of Theodore (of Mopsuestia), (c). Anaphora of Nestorius.

Anaphora of Addai and Mari is one of the most ancient anaphoras

that we have today. The most ancient manuscripts of this anaphora do not contain the Words of Institution. The structure of the anaphora has much similarity with the Syrian Orthodox Worship.

The Chaldean Syrians of Trichur, Iraq and Iran follow this liturgy. The Syro-Malabar Catholics of India use a modified version of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari.

### **Questions**

1. Explain the characteristics of the Byzantine Worship.
2. What is Great Entrance.
3. Mention two striking differences between the Armenian Liturgy and the Syrian Orthodox Liturgy.

## **LESSON 6**

### **THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND LIFE IN THE CHURCH**

□ The role of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist □ The Importance of regular Communion

The Holy Eucharist has the central place in the Orthodox spirituality. All the spiritual activities and the sacramental celebrations of the Church are centered on the Eucharist. The sacraments such as baptism, ordination or consecration of the Holy Myron are celebrated during the Eucharistic celebration. Marriage and confession are inseparably linked to the celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist, therefore, is the fulfilment of all the sacraments. Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500) qualified the Eucharist as the ‘Sacrament of Sacraments.’

Those who are united with Christ in baptism, come together in a community which celebrates the Eucharist. ‘Those who partake of the one bread, become one body’ (1 Cor. 10:17). It is this community of one body that St. Paul calls ‘the Church which is the Body of

Christ' (Eph. 6:22-32). The Church is manifested to the world in and through the community which is assembled to celebrate the Eucharist. We have already seen that the goal of worship in the New Testament is 'the building up of the Church.' The aim of every Eucharistic celebration is the building up of the Church. The Church should be manifested in the world, as the Body of Christ, which has the presence of the Holy Spirit. In the life of the Church, the world may realize the presence of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), and come to Christ. All men shall be united with Christ, the living stone, and be "built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" (1 Pet. 2:5). All men and women shall be united with Christ and be manifested as one living temple which glorifies God. It is for this goal that the Church celebrates the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

Every community which celebrates the Eucharist is a temple of God that glorifies Him. Every member of that community has his role in the act of glorification. That is why we say that the Eucharist is offered by the whole Church.

### **1. Role of the faithful in celebration of the Eucharist**

In the Orthodox Church, a priest alone cannot offer the Eucharist. He shall be assisted at least by one deacon, representing the community. The Eucharist is not a rite that the priest alone performs. It is the whole Church that offers the Eucharist. As Christ is the head of the Church, the priest is the head of the worshipping community. In the person of the priest who presides over the Eucharistic celebration, the Church sees the living presence of Christ. The head cannot ignore the body, and cannot offer the Eucharist alone. Therefore, the tradition insists that at least two people should be present at the celebration of the Eucharist. The Ethiopian Church insists that at least two priests and three deacons shall be present. An Orthodox priest is not 'obliged' to offer the Eucharist daily. If there is a community, he can celebrate the Eucharist on any day of the year except during the Great Lent (During the Lent, the Eucharist is celebrated only on Saturdays and Sundays and on feast days).

The faithful actively participate in the celebration as a community.

The prayers of the Eucharist regularly use the first person plural form 'we.' No other Eastern liturgy gives such a large number of prayers to be said by the faithful, as in the Syrian Church.

## **2. Importance of regular Communion**

Eventhough the Orthodox Churches speak of the role of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist, they do not insist on receiving communion regularly. Reluctance of the faithful to receive regular communion is a problem that most of the Orthodox Churches face. The Orthodox Churches have more piety and more sense of the presence of God in the liturgy than many other Christians. This is also one of the reasons to keep away from communion. There is a misunderstanding among the faithful that one shall not receive Holy Communion without a complete remission of sins. There is also a misunderstanding that confession is obligatory before every Eucharistic Communion. Serious and genuine efforts shall be made to correct these false impressions. If a believer feels that he has committed sins and should confess them, he should be able to do so. Otherwise, an orthodox can receive Holy Communion after a priest has said a prayer of absolution over him.

In the early Church, not a single member of the Church kept away from communion. If a faithful was prevented from attending the liturgy because of illness, deacons used to carry the Holy Communion to his house. In the second century, Justin Martyr attests to this custom.

However the early Church excommunicated those who committed serious sins such as adultery, murder or apostasy (denial of faith). They had to undergo penance which lasted for a few years. At the end of their penance they were given absolution and Holy Communion. They were excommunicated as a warning to all other members of the Church.

The tradition does not permit us to keep away from Holy Communion, except as part of penitence.

The alienation of humanity as a result of the fall of Adam has been ended in Christ, who came to unite humanity with God (see, John 17:21). It is through our participation in the Body of Christ that

we continue in our unity in Christ. Those who do not communicate, alienate themselves from Christ. The divine life that humanity lost in Adam, is made available in Christ. Every believer shares in that life through the Eucharistic Communion. Christ Himself says: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53).

When we receive the Holy Communion, Christ abides in us and we abide in Him (John 6:56). The Eucharist is the only means of participating in the fullness of the life of Christ. Those who keep away from the Eucharist alienate themselves from Christ and the divine life available in Him.

The divisions and dissensions in the Church are the result of a lack of genuine and regular communion. Real peace and tranquility in the Church are not possible, without having worshipping communities which experience love and unity in Christ through their participation in One bread.

### **Questions**

- 1 Why is the Eucharist called ‘the Sacrament of sacraments’?
- 2 Write a short essay on the importance of regular communion.

# UNIT IV

## SACRAMENTS AND THE LIFE IN CHRIST

### LESSON 1

#### HOLY BAPTISM

□ Preparation for Baptism □ Baptism □ Chrismation □ Concluding rites and the Holy Communion

The baptismal liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox Church was composed in Greek by St. Severus of Antioch (+ 538). Towards the end of the Seventh century, it was translated into Syriac by Jacob of Edessa (+ 708). In the thirteenth century, Gregorios Bar Hebraeus, Catholicos of the East (+ 1286) abridged the baptismal liturgy as he found it too long. The Malankara Orthodox Church now uses the shorter version of Bar Hebraeus.

The baptismal liturgy consists of three parts: (1) Preparation for baptism; (2) Baptism or Immersion (3) Chrismation. As the baptismal liturgy is concluded with the Holy Communion, it can be treated as the fourth part.

#### **1. Preparation for Baptism**

In the early centuries, people who wanted to join the Church were taught the faith of the Church for a certain period. Their training lasted for three years. Those who are preparing for baptism are known as 'Catechumens.' However, from the apostolic times, there existed the tradition of infant baptism for the children of the faithful parents. As adult baptism is rather rare now, our present baptismal liturgy has been arranged for the baptism of infants. The preparation for baptism consists of the following rites.

**(i) Inscription of names:** The Godfather (or Godmother) stands before the sanctuary, holding the child. After the introductory prayers, the priest writes the names of the child and the Godfather in the baptismal register. In the early Church, the names of the catechumens

were written in the 'Book of Life' when then began their training (cfr. Philippians 4:3).

**(ii) Insufflation:** The priest breathes on the face of the child saying: "Give him the breath that Your Only begotten Son had breathed on his holy Apostles" (Jn. 20:22). "Make him worthy to receive Your Holy Spirit.... and drive away all the remains of idolatry from him."

As baptism is the rebirth from water and Spirit, the aim of the rite is to prepare the child to receive the Holy Spirit. God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Similarly the priest breathes on the face of the candidate to give him the new breath of life.

**(iii) Three signs of Cross on the forehead:** Then the priest marks three signs of cross on the forehead of the child. This means that the child is henceforth dedicated to God.

**(iv) Renunciation of Satan:** The Godfather turns the face of the child towards the West, holds his left hand with his left hand and says: "I (name) who receive the baptism renounce you Satan, all your armies, messengers, all your piety and deceit." Renouncing Satan is the first step of turning towards Christ. Liberating the world from the bondage of Satan and evil is the preparation for the coming of the Kingdom.

**(v) Attachment to Christ:** After having renounced Satan, the face of the child is turned towards East, and the Godfather holds his right hand and says: "I (name) who receive the baptism, believe in You Lord Jesus Christ, and in all the teachings that you have divinely entrusted to the holy Prophets, Apostles and Teachers."

On behalf of the child, the Godfather declares that he has decided to live according to the commandments of Christ given to the Church. The role of a Godfather is not limited to the baptism of children. In the early Church, for the baptism of the adults also, the presence of a sponsor or Godfather was necessary. In the early Church, when a pagan wanted to join the Church, he had to be introduced to the Church by a faithful. The faithful had to promise that he should serve as the sponsor of the catechumen and should supervise his training. Sponsor

was a spiritual guide and a teacher of the catechumen. In the baptism of a child, the Godfather as well as his parents are spiritual guides who shall help the child to live in the faith of the Church.

The rite of preparation is concluded with the recitation of the Creed.

## **2. Baptism**

### **(i) First Anointing**

The second part of the baptismal liturgy begins, with an anointing with consecrated olive oil, qualified as “the oil of gladness” (Ps. 45:7). The priest marks three signs of cross on the forehead of the child and says:

“(Name) is signed with the oil of gladness for eternal life, so that he may be worthy of the sonship through rebirth, in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

The olive oil is the symbol of peace and gladness. This anointing signifies that Jesus Christ comes into the life of the baptized with peace and happiness. It also signifies that he is grafted into Christ, the true olive tree (Rom. 11:17).

### **(ii) Consecration of water**

Consecration of the water is one of the most important rites of the baptismal liturgy. The priest pours warm and cold water in the baptismal font and covers it with a Shoshappa (A white linen towel which has a cross on it). The rites that follow are similar to those of the Anaphora. As in the Eucharist, the priest lifts up the shoshappa and waves it over the baptismal font. After a few prayers, he waves his hands over the font invoking the Holy Spirit. Then he pours the Holy Myron upon the baptismal water in the form of a cross. Holy Myron is the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit. In the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit was brooding over the water (Gen.1:1). Similarly, through the pouring of the Myron, the Spirit of God broods over the water and dwells on it and makes it a means of re-generation. The priest pours the Myron saying, “We pour the Holy Myron into this water of baptism for the renewal of the old man.”



The tradition of pouring Myron on the baptismal water has existed in the Church at least since second century. Pouring of Myron, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, shows that baptism is regeneration from water and Spirit.

In the Bible, water is the symbol of death as well as redemption. In the days of Noah, it was through water that God punished the wicked and saved Noah (Gen. 6-8). Pharaoh's army was crushed and the People of Israel was rescued from the waters of the Red Sea (Ex.14). Similarly, it is through the baptismal water that the faithful experience redemption of the New Israel and the defeat of Satan. Joshua and the People of Israel entered the promised land after having crossed the waters of Jordan (Joshua 3). Similarly, Jesus Christ called the New Israel to enter the promised land of the Kingdom of God, after having received baptism in Jordan. One has to cross the Jordan of baptism to enter the Kingdom of God.

Water which is basically a symbol of death, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, is transformed into a symbol of life and redemption. It is for this goal that water is consecrated. At the baptism of Our Lord, the waters of Jordan were sanctified by the physical contact of Christ and by the descent of the Holy Spirit. John's baptism was only for the remission of sins. By his own baptism, Christ rendered the waters of Jordan capable of communicating Holy Spirit. Through the consecration, the Spirit of God transforms the baptismal water into the same water of Jordan. This has been mentioned in a prayer of the consecration:

“O God! You who have sent Your Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and sanctified the waters of Jordan.... Make this servant participant in Your Christ through his salvific baptism.”

### **(iii) Immersion in Water**

After having concluded the consecration of water, the deacon holds the infant in the baptismal font, turning its face towards the East. The priest stands turning towards the West. He baptizes the child saying: “(Name) is baptized for eternal life, in the hope of life and remission of sins, in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Baptism is also the death and resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6:3-5; Col.2:12). Water is poured thrice upon the head of the child, corresponding to the three days that our Lord spent in Sheol.

### **3. Chrismation**

After the baptism, three signs of the cross are marked on the forehead of the child with the Holy Myron. Anointing of the Myron is the completion of regeneration from water and Spirit. Chrismation is an inseparable part of baptism. Without Chrismation, baptism remains incomplete (On the meaning of Chrismation, see the next lesson).

### **4. Concluding rites and the Holy Communion**

The tradition that the newly baptized wears white garments existed in the Church at least until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It means that the baptized has rejected the old man and has put on the garment of glory. Even today, it is meaningful to clothe the baptized children with white dress.

The newly baptized is given a crown symbolizing that he has become worthy of ruling with Christ in His Kingdom. As the Christians are 'royal priesthood' (1 Pet. 2:9), the deacon carries the child to the altar and goes around it.

The baptism is concluded with the Holy Communion. As in the case of Chrismation, Holy communion is the completion of baptism. One who has become the member of the Body of Christ through baptism, gets the full right to receive the Holy Eucharist.

### **Questions**

- 1 Write a brief note on the origin of our baptismal liturgy.
- 2 What is the meaning of anointing with the olive oil?
- 3 What is the meaning of the consecration of water?
- 4 Write an essay on the meaning of baptism.

## LESSON 2

### HOLY MYRON

❑ Oil of Anointing in the Old Testament ❑ Anointing in the New Testament ❑ Anointing of Christ and Chrismation ❑ Preparation and Consecration of Holy Myron ❑ Meaning of Chrismation

In the Malankara Orthodox Church, three holy oils are in use (1) Holy Myron, (2) Olive oil for the baptismal anointing (Oil of Gladness) and (3) Olive oil for the anointing of the sick. The most important among them is holy Myron. Myron is used for the anointing after baptism, for the consecration of the baptismal water and for the consecration of the altars, tablaïto (altar tablet) and the churches.

The Greek word “myron” means perfume or perfume oil. During the early centuries, the use of Myron was limited to baptismal anointing and the consecration of the baptismal water. Later, following the Old Testament tradition, it was used for the consecration of the churches.

#### **1. Oil of Anointing in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, when kings, priests or prophets were consecrated, they were anointed with oil. The Book of Exodus (30:22-25) describes the preparation of the “sacred anointing oil.” God gave the commandment that the Tent of meeting, the Ark of the Covenant and the utensils of the tent of meeting shall be anointed with the holy oil (Ex. 30:26-27). Moses was ordered to anoint Aaron and his sons with the same oil. The Jews believed that the anointed persons or objects were sanctified and set apart for God.

The Old Testament says that the kings Saul, David, Solomon and Jehu were anointed at their installation (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 9:6). The anointing of David has been described as follows: “Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward” (1 Sam. 16:13). Israelites believed that a king received the Spirit of God through his royal anointing.

According to Isaiah, the prophets also receive the Spirit of God,

through the anointing (Is. 61:1). In the Old Testament, anointing was an important sacramental rite. The Old Testament teaches that the anointed received the Spirit of God as well as special sanctification.

## 2. Anointing in the New Testament

Before discussing the anointing in the New Testament, we shall pay attention to a text in the Book of the prophet Ezekiel. In a vision, Ezekiel saw a man, to whom God said: “Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all abomination that are committed in it” (Ez. 9:4). In the Hebrew text, we find that the man was ordered to put a mark of taw (the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet). In ancient times taw was written in the form of a cross (+ or X). In this prophecy, the man was ordered to put a sign of the cross, indicating the ownership of Yahweh. This can be regarded as a prophecy concerning the baptismal anointing of the New Testament times.

In the Book of Revelation of saint John, we can find the fulfilment of the prophecy of Ezekiel: “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3). The Book of Revelation seems to refer to the anointing of the forehead given in baptism. However, there are other New Testament texts that qualify the baptismal anointing as a “sign” or “seal.”

**(i) 1 Cor. 1:21-22 :** “But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us; He has put his seal upon us given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (*In some English versions “anointed us” has been wrongly translated as “commissioned.” We have followed the Greek and the Syriac versions for this translation*). The expressions to establish in Christ refers to baptism, and anoint refers to baptismal anointing. We have seen that in baptism, the forehead of the candidate is sealed with the olive oil, or with the holy Myron. Therefore, we may assume that the expression put His seal means marking the sign of the cross with the oil. St. Paul says that the Christians have been given the Spirit of God through the seal.

**(ii) Ephesians 1:13-14:** “In Him (Christ), you also who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in

him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.” Saint Paul here speaks of the seal received by those who have believed in Christ through their baptism.

**(iii) Ephesians 4:30:** “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” The seal of which Saint Paul says, is the sign of the cross that the Christians receive on their forehead with the oil of anointing.

**(iv) 1 John 2:20 :** “But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know.” In the writings of St. John, Holy One is the name of Christ (See John 6:69). This verse means that a Christian has received anointing through Christ. Jesus Christ is the true anointed one (The Greek word *Christos* and the Hebrew word *Messiah* mean “the anointed one.” At Jordan, Christ was revealed as the anointed one, anointed with the Spirit of God. In Christ, who is anointed by the Holy Spirit, every Christian receives anointing. One who is incorporated into Christ in baptism, receives the same Holy Spirit, the anointing of Christ. Therefore Saint John writes:

“...but the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him” (1 John 2:27). In this text, the anointing of the Holy Spirit is in question. From the above texts, we can assume that the anointing was part of the Christian baptism as early as the New Testament times.

### **3. Anointing of Christ and Chrismation**

The royal, priestly and the prophetic anointing of the Old Testament were the indications of Christ’s anointing. The infant Jesus was offered gold, frankincense and myrrh (Mt. 2:11), indicating that he was king, priest and prophet. At Jordan, He was revealed as the true ‘anointed’ (Messiah). In the synagogue of Nazareth, Christ Himself revealed that He had been anointed with the Spirit of God (Lk. 4:18).

It is through chrismation that the Christians participate in the

anointing of Christ. Through water, we participate in the death and resurrection of Christ; through bread and wine in His Holy Body and Blood. Similarly, through the anointing of the holy Myron, the faithful participate in the anointing of Christ.

In brief, the baptismal anointing has its origin in the anointing of Christ. In Christ the faithful are anointed with the Holy Spirit. In the early Church, olive oil or sometimes perfumed oil was used for the baptismal anointing. However, the goal of the rite was to communicate the Holy Spirit.

#### **4. Preparation and Consecration of Holy Myron**

In the first four centuries, consecration of the Myron was done as part of the baptismal liturgy, as in the case of the consecration of water. As the consecration of Myron became an elaborate ceremony, it was performed a few days before baptism. From the fourth century onwards, baptism was normally given on Easter. Myron was consecrated on the Holy Thursday, so that it would be available for baptism on Easter. Thus the tradition of consecrating Myron on every Maundy Thursday continued to exist in the Syrian Church until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. After the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it became a rare ceremony, held once in a decade. There is no canonical restriction against the consecration of Myron every year.

Now the privilege of consecrating Myron is reserved to the Patriarch or to the Catholicos. But according to the Nomocanon (or Hudaya canon) of Bar Hebraeus, the metropolitan also has the same privilege. The tradition of the consecration of myron by the Patriarch or the Catholicos has been developed only after 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Catholicos or the Patriarch consecrates the Myron assisted by all the metropolitans, twelve priests holding censors, twelve deacons holding Marwahso (fans) and twelve sub-deacons holding candles. The long service has some similarity to the Anaphora. Olive oil, specially prepared and perfumed with a dozen of spices, is consecrated.

#### **5. Meaning of Chrismation**

Chrismation or the anointing with the Holy Myron is the seal of the Holy Spirit. Our Church does not teach that the faithful receive

the Holy Spirit solely through the anointing. Baptismal water is consecrated, so that it should receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. One who is ‘born again’ from water, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, receives the seal of the Spirit through the Holy Myron. The prayer that precedes the chrismation is as follows:

“Lord, let thy servant... receive the holy seal and sign in your name...”. The priest signs the forehead of the candidate with the Holy Myron and says: “With the Holy Myron, the pleasant odour of Christ, the seal and sign of the true faith and the perfection of the gift of the Holy Spirit (name) is sealed in the Name of the Father...”

Anointing with the Myron is the perfection of all the spiritual gifts that we receive in baptism. Our Church teaches that baptism is incomplete without chrismation.

### **Questions**

1. Discuss the Biblical basis of baptismal anointing.
2. Write a short note on the meaning of chrismation.

## **LESSON 3**

### **THE MINISTRY OF PRIESTHOOD**

Different ministries in the Church  Church, the royal priesthood  
 Church and the priestly ministry  Priesthood and Shepherding  
 Ordination or Laying on of Hands  The Threefold Priestly Ministry

Every Christian is a minister to God. We have been made ministers of our God, for His glory and for the building up of His Kingdom. The goal of the ministry of the Church is to manifest the presence of God in the world and to bring the whole world back to God.

#### **1. Different ministries in the Church**

Saint Paul makes it clear that there are different office-bearers in the church and that each of them is exercising a different ministry

according to his vocation (Eph. 4:11). The different ministers are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. They have been given different gifts. The goal of their ministry, according to Paul, consists of (1) preaching the Gospel, (2) helping the members of the Church grow in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, (3) equipping the faithful to carry out their ministry and (4) the building up of the Church or the spiritual growth of the members of the Church (Eph. 4:12-13). Every minister was given a different gift (see, 1 Cor. Ch. 12). But “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). The Holy Spirit divides various gifts among the members of the Church for the spiritual growth of the Church. The relevance of the priestly ministry is to be understood against this context.

## **2. Church, the royal priesthood**

Israel was chosen by God as “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). “Kingdom of priests means, a kingdom in which every citizen is a priest. God chose Israel as a priestly nation to offer intercession and worship on behalf of the whole world. However, one tribe, Levi, was set apart for God’s service. Even in the tribe of Levi, Aaron and his sons were chosen to exercise the priestly ministry on behalf of the people of Israel.

When God saw that the Jews were no more faithful to their vocation, to bear witness to the goodness of Yahweh, God chose the Church, the New Israel. The Church is “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s own people”, “to declare the wonderful deeds of God” (1 Pet. 2:9). The vocation of the Church is to stand before God as a priestly nation bearing the whole world. The anointing, which was reserved to the priests, the prophets and the kings of the Old Testament, is given to every member of the Church. The Old Testament priesthood has come to an end in Christ. Christ is the only High Priest of the New Testament. Through His death, resurrection and ascension, Christians entered the heavenly sanctuary as “high Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:20; 7:1-22). Every believer shares in the priesthood of Christ. Every ministry in the Church, including the priestly ministry, is based on the ministry of Christ.



Then arises the question: if every faithful participates in the eternal ministry of Christ, what is the need of sacramental priesthood?

### **3. Church and the priestly ministry**

God, who distributes different gifts to the members of the Church, wishes that every activities in the Church, shall be done in order and in peace. “For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33). The Apostles were sent to different parts of the world to preach the Gospel and to win people for the Kingdom of God. The Apostles founded churches in the places they went. They were keenly interested in maintaining order and discipline in the Churches that they found. They were aware of the fact that they had a special responsibility towards these Churches. That is why Saint Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth: “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). For the leadership of the new Churches, the apostles appointed special ministers. Thus, in the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke writes about the missionary works of St. Paul and Barnabas: “And when they had appointed elders (presbyters, i.e. priests) for them in every Church, with prayer and fasting...” (Acts 14:23). Timothy was one of the ministers ‘ordained’ by St. Paul (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). Titus, another co-worker of Paul, was ordained as the head of the Church in Crete. Paul directs Titus to “appoint elders (presbyters) in every town” in Crete (Titus 1:6).

Saint Paul reminds the presbyters of the Church in Ephesus, of their responsibilities: “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (episcopos) to care for the Church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son” (Acts 20:28). In this text, the Greek word episcopos (episcopal -plural) has been translated into English as “overseers.” The bishops (episcopal) of the Church in Ephesus were told that their main responsibility was to take care of the ‘flock.’ A bishop is the shepherd of the flock of God. He is the image of ‘the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep’ (Jn. 10:11). This is precisely the meaning of the Christian ministry of priesthood.

#### **4. Priesthood and Shepherding**

A Shepherd with sheep is a usual sight in the Middle East. The shepherd walks at the head of the flock and it follows him. The shepherds carry the lambs or the wounded in their arms. The shepherds have a long staff. They almost never use it to beat the sheep with, but to keep those who go astray close to the flock and to keep defend the flock from wild animals. It is in the light of this usual picture, that the New Testament speaks of the Christian priesthood as shepherding.

The responsibility of a bishop is to walk at the head of the flock. In the New Testament, the important moment in the life of the community was to come together for “the breaking of the bread on the first day of the week.” The bishop, the shepherd of the community, presided over ‘the breaking of the bread.’ It was not permitted to ‘break the bread’ without the shepherd. Thus in the beginning of the second century, St. Ignatius of Antioch writes: “It is not permitted to conduct baptism or love feast without the bishop.”

According to St. Ignatius, Church is manifested in its fullness in and through this worshipping community: “Where the bishop is present, let the Church come together; for, where Christ is present, there is the Catholic Church.”

Every Eucharistic celebration is the participation in the Last Supper of Our Lord. In the place of Our Lord, the president of the worshipping community blesses the bread and wine. In the bishop, the president of the community, the faithful see Christ, the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. As Christ is the head of the Church, the bishop is the head of the Church, because he represents Christ. In a local community, the bishop represents Christ. At the same time, he represents the local Church vis - a - vis the Universal Church.

#### **5. Ordination or Laying on of Hands**

The New Testament attests that the head of a Church was chosen carefully. St. Paul describes the qualities of a Church leader (see. 1 Tim. 3:1-7). The Apostles laid their hands on the chosen candidate symbolizing that he was sharing in the ministry of Christ along with the apostles. By this laying on of hands, the candidate received special

authority to exercise a ministry. This authorization through the laying on of hands is called ordination.

In the Acts of the Apostles we see that the early Church chose “seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.” “These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them” (Acts 6:1-6). St. Paul and Barnabas were ordained by the leaders of the Church in Antioch: “Then after fasting and preaching they laid their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3).

The laying on of hands implied three things: (1) It was a witness that the Church bore regarding the faith and life of a candidate; (2) The candidate received the grace of the Holy Spirit for a particular ministry; (3) It was an authorization by the Church to exercise a ministry.

One who was ordained to be a shepherd of the Church exercised an ‘overseeing’ on all the activities in the Church. Every other ministry was under his authority. Since the bishop has a unique place in the Church, St. Paul reminds Timothy: “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you” (1 Tim. 4:14). A “bishop must be above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2). He should be carefully selected and ordained. Thus Paul writes to Timothy: “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Tim. 5:22). Through the laying on of hands from Paul, Timothy received a gift: “Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6).

## **6. The Threefold Priestly Ministry**

In the Church, there is a threefold ministry: (i) the Bishop (episcopos or Metropolitan); (ii) the Presbyter or Priest; (iii) the Deacon.

**(i) The Bishop:** We have seen that the apostles ordained bishops for the Churches which they had founded. Sometimes, the leaders of the local Church were called ‘elders’ or ‘presbyters’ (Acts. 20:17; 28; 1 Pet. 5:1; 1 Tim. 4:14). A bishop (episcopos) was the head of a local community. His prime duty was to make the Church firmly

rooted in faith and to give leadership to every aspect of the life of the Church. Today the bishops perform the same functions in a wider circle. Catholicos and the Patriarch are the heads or episcopal of the Church in a larger geographical area. They are also heads of the college of bishops.

**(ii) The Elder or the Presbyter:** In the New Testament, the episcopos is also called ‘elders’ (Acts. 20:17; 28: presbyteros). In the beginning of the second century, in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, the ‘elders’ were seen as a group that assisted the bishop in exercising his Episcopal ministry. In the first three centuries, there existed only one worshipping community in a city. It was headed by a bishop, assisted by a group of presbyters. In the fourth century, after the conversion of Constantine, many became Christians, and several worshipping communities (‘Parishes’) originated in a city. In this context, the bishop authorized the presbyters to celebrate the Eucharist and other sacraments for these communities.

**(iii) Deacons:** The deacons were originally appointed to take care of the charitable activities of Church (Acts 6:1-6). By the second century, the deacons were also made responsible for assisting the bishop in the liturgical celebrations.

In the New Testament, we find a twofold ministry: the ministry of episcopos, also called presbyter, and the ministry of deacon. However, the threefold ministry is clearly attested from the beginning of the second century.

## Questions

- 1 Write an essay on the Biblical basis of Christian priesthood.
- 2 What is the role of the bishop in the life of the Church?

## LESSON 4

# MARRIAGE: THE SACRAMENT OF LOVE

- ❑ Marriage in the Old Testament
- ❑ Marriage in the New Testament
- ❑ Marriage in the Early Church
- ❑ The Syrian Orthodox Liturgy of Marriage
- ❑ The Sacrament of Love

In the Christian Church, marriage is a sacrament. It is not merely a social function, or an act of coming together of two individuals. Marriage is deeply rooted in the relationship between God and man. The sacrament of marriage consists in the blessing and recognition of a decision taken by two church members to live as husband and wife in love and harmony.

### 1. Marriage in the Old Testament

The goal of married life, according to the Old Testament, is to have children. The Jews believed that the continuity of a family is an explicit sign of the blessing of God. Abraham was promised the prosperity of his descendants as a reward for his piety and faith: “I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:17-18). In the Old Testament, it was considered a curse, not to have children. Sometimes, for the continuity of the race, the Old Testament allowed polygamy. But in the creation story, as well as in the Song of Songs, monogamy, the married life of a man with a single wife, has been pictured as the ideal one. In the creation story, the principle of one husband and one wife is implied (Gen. 2:18-24). This idea has been used by the prophets to illustrate the relationship between Yahweh and Israel (Jer. 2:1-3; Ez. 16:8-13; Hosea 3:1-3). However, monogamy was not compulsory in the Old Testament.

### 2. Marriage in the New Testament

Marriage has been given a new interpretation in the New Testament. The New Testament does not teach that the sole aim of

marriage is procreation. According to Paul, bearing children in itself is not a means of salvation for a woman: “Yet women will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (1 Tim. 2:15).

In three cases, the New Testament gives a different picture of marriage from that of the Old Testament.

(i) In the Old Testament, there existed a custom that if a man died, having no children, his brother married the widow and raised up the children for his brother’s sake (Deut. 25:5). The synoptic Gospels narrate an incident which illustrates Jesus’ attitude towards this custom (Matt. 22:23-32; Mk. 12:18-27; Lk. 20:27-37). The Sadducees asked Jesus: “In the resurrection, therefore, to which of the seven will she be wife?” Jesus replied to them: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven?” (Matt. 22:30).

On the basis of these words, some think that marriage bond is dissolved with death and marriage is something which is limited to our earthly life. This thought is firmly held by the Western Churches and thus they allow remarriages several times. In his reply given to the Sadducees, who had no faith in resurrection, Christ means only of the Jewish custom of a man marrying his brother’s widow. On the basis of this text we cannot say that marriage bond is dissolved with death. Clement of Alexandria (+ 215) comments on this text as follows: “Our Lord is not denying marriage; but on the contrary he corrects the misunderstanding that carnal desires continue to exist even after death.”

(ii) When the Old Testament permitted divorce (Deut. 2:1-4), Christ warns against it (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mk.10:11; Lk. 16:18). Marriage implies an eternal bond between a man and a woman. The New Testament does not allow divorce except on the ground of infidelity of one of the partners or both.

(iii) St. Paul also holds the idea that the marriage bond is not dissolved by death: “love never ends” (1 Cor. 13:8), says Paul. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul seems to express a belief that celibacy is better than married life (see 1 Cor. 7:1; 7-8). But he highly

respects the sanctity of married life. It is this that makes him use the marriage imagery to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-32). This text provides the basis for the theology of marriage.

The Orthodox Churches follow St. Paul's attitude towards a second marriage which is stated in his first Epistle to the Corinthians: "But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (1 Cor. 7:9). On the basis of this attitude, the Orthodox Churches allow the re-marriage of a widower or a widow. The ceremony of re-marriage has no blessing of the crown, and repentance is the main theme of the prayers.

The New Testament teaching on marriage shall be understood in the light of the Christian faith in resurrection and life in the coming Kingdom. The aim of marriage is not merely the satisfaction of carnal desires or the continuity of the race. The mystery of marriage consists in the oneness of a man and woman in Christ. In eternal love they are united in Christ and that unity is sealed by the sacrament of marriage. The bond of eternal love is broken neither by sickness nor by death.

### **3. Marriage in the Early Church**

In the early Church, marriage was blessed as part of the Eucharistic celebration. After a short prayer, the couple received the Holy Communion. Ignatius of Antioch exhorts that a man and woman shall consult their bishop before taking a decision regarding their marriage. Tertullian (+ 220) also says that the believers shall inform the Church before a final decision is taken. In the fourth century, marriage ceremony became more elaborate. The blessing of the crown became part of the marriage ceremony in the fourth century. According to St. John Chrysostom, crown is the symbol of victory over passions.

### **4. The Syrian Orthodox Liturgy of Marriage**

The Liturgy of marriage, as we use today, has been in use at least from the seventh century. According to ancient Syriac manuscripts, the liturgy was composed by Jacob of Edessa (+ 708). The present liturgy of marriage has two parts: the blessing of the ring and the blessing of the crown. In the ancient Church, the two rites were

conducted separately. The ring was blessed and given at the time of betrothal, and the crown was blessed at the time of marriage. Gregory Bar Hebraeus gives the canons of the Syrian Church regarding marriage (ch. 8).

## **5. The Sacrament of Love**

St. John Chrysostom described marriage as ‘the Sacrament of Love.’ The unique and selfless love between Christ and the Church is the model for a married life. Paul exhorts: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25). The prayers of the ceremony of the blessing of rings emphasize the promises and the faithfulness of God. These prayers exhort that as God is faithful to his promises, man should be faithful to God and should love God and that the love and faithfulness should be seen in every married life.

The second part of the marriage liturgy consists of the blessing of the crown and the tying of a cross (Thali) by the bridegroom around the neck of the bride. The tying of the thali is a ceremony of Indian origin. The new covenant between God and man has been established through the cross. Therefore, the fastening or tying of the cross symbolizes that married life is founded upon the covenant established on the cross.

The crowning of the couples has existed in the Church at least since the fourth century. Crown has a special significance in Christian thought. In the Olympic games of ancient Greece, the winning athletes were crowned with olive leaves. In the Christian tradition, the crown symbolizes victory over sin and death. ‘The athletes received perishable crowns, whereas the Christians through their victory over sin and death receive imperishable crowns’ (see, 1 Cor. 9:24-25).

The crown symbolizes our eternal reward in heaven. St. Paul writes about “the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:7-8), and St. Peter speaks of “the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:4). The crown is the symbol of ultimate victory and eternal life: “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). The martyrs receive crown as their reward.



The Christian life is a continuous combat against the forces of sin and evil. In marriage, the faithful couples unite to fight against the forces of evil and to live for the glory of God. The crown that they are given in marriage is the symbol of ‘the unfading crown of glory’ that they shall receive in the kingdom of God.

### **Questions**

- 1 Why does our Church not permit divorce?
- 2 Why is marriage described as the Sacrament of Love?
- 3 What is the meaning of the blessing of the crowns?

## **LESSON 5**

### **SACRAMENTS OF HEALING**

Confession of the Sins in the early Church     Private confession  
 Anointing of the Sick     Anointing of the Sick in the tradition of the Church

Healing was an important aspect of the public ministry of Our Lord. Along with the healing of the body, Our Lord spiritually healed people by remitting their sins: “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins - he said to the paralytic - ‘I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home’” (Mk. 2:10-11). Thus our Lord gave physical as well as spiritual healing to the paralytic.

Jesus Christ, who had the authority to remit sins, gave the same authority to his disciples: “And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’” (Jn. 20:22-23).

The community of the apostles, that is the Church, has been given the authority to remit sins. As Church is the Body of Christ, it shares the authority of Christ. Therefore, the Church, has the authority to bind and loose: “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall

be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt.18:18). In Matt. 16:19, Christ gave this authority to Peter as the representative of the Church. The gift of the remission of sins is passed on to the Apostles as a whole and hence to the Church. The priest gives absolution as the head of the Church.

### **(i) Confession of the Sins in the early Church**

The Christians of the first century believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent, and therefore, believers should wait for it in all purity of life. Baptism was regarded as a means of remission of sins. Since the coming of Christ was imminent, some Christians thought that sins committed after baptism could not be remitted. The Epistle to the Hebrews says that the sins of those who have denied Christ will not be remitted (Heb. 6:4-6; 7:8; 10:26-31; 12:15-17). The Epistle to the Hebrews took such an intransigent attitude, because the early Church believed that apostasy was a sin which could not be remitted.

There is evidence to believe that a public confession of sins would have existed in some Churches. Thus we find in the Epistle of St. James: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16). Didache, a second century document insists: “Confess your sins in the Church; do not come to pray with a guilty conscience.” Even if public confession of sins ever existed, it was not a widespread practice. The confession of sins was followed by an absolution given by the Bishop. The Bishop laid his hands on the penitent and prayed for him. When Paul wrote to Timothy, “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor participate in another man’s sins; keep yourself pure’ (Tim. 5:22), Paul seems to refer to the absolution given by a bishop. The laying on of hands signifies that the Church accepts the penitence of the sinner, and he is reconciled to it.

The early Church imposed long penitence on those who committed apostasy, adultery or murder. The penitence lasted for several years and the penitent was prevented from receiving Holy Communion. He was permitted to attend the liturgy of the Catechumens and was sent away after it. In some Churches, the penitent stood on their knees

at the door of the Church and begged each one to pray for him. When the Bishop was convinced of the genuineness of their penitence, on an Easter day, they were given absolution and Holy Communion.

### **(ii) Private confession**

By the fourth century, private confession before a priest became a normal practice in the Church. St. John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia refer to this practice. Among the monks, each young monk had a senior spiritual guide. The young monk regularly opened his heart before his guide and confessed his temptations and sins to him. This monastic practice contributed much to the spread of private confession. In the Latin Church, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) resolved that every adult member of the Church should confess his sins before a priest at least once a year. Thus annual confession became obligatory in the Roman Catholic Church.

We cannot say that one should confess one's sins once a year or a month. The notion of a periodical confession has no traditional basis. A person can confess his sins whenever he feels that he has something to confess and that he needs absolution. Confession is a means to live in communion with Christ and in the grace of the Holy Spirit by receiving the remission of our sins. At the same time, it is an occasion to seek spiritual guidance from a priest.

### **(iii) Anointing of the Sick**

In his public ministry, Christ healed every sick man who approached him. When he sent the twelve Apostles with special authority, they "anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (Mk. 6:13). In the New Testament times, oil was used as a medicine. The good Samaritan poured 'oil and wine' and bound up the wounds of the man who was attacked by robbers (Lk. 10:34). Following the example of the Apostles, the elders (or presbyters) of the early Church also anointed the sick:

"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayers of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15).

One receives remission of sins and healing through anointing and prayer. It is a sacrament that is celebrated by the Church for the healing of one of its members.

#### **(iv) Anointing of the Sick in the tradition of the Church**

Sin and sickness are part of the imperfection of the fallen world, and liberation from them needs repentance. The anointing of the sick is, in fact, a liturgy of penitence. The main theme of our liturgy of anointing of the sick is that the one who is sick repents and seeks God's healing and remission of sins. The Church acknowledges his repentance and prays for his healing.

In our tradition, the anointing of the sick is not the last sacrament which prepares one for death. It can be performed at any stage of the illness for healing. It was the Latin theologians of the 12<sup>th</sup> century who pictured the anointing of the sick as the 'last Sacrament.'

At the end of the liturgy of the consecration of Myron, the Patriarch or the Catholicos blesses the oil for the anointing of the sick. This blessed oil is used by priests for the anointing of the sick. The priest marks the sign of the cross with the oil on the forehead, breast, knees, eyelids, nose, lips, ears, hands, legs and abdomen saying: "Let all your debts and the sins that you have committed be remitted and may all the evil desires, and satanic operations be effaced from you."

There is a more elaborate liturgy of the anointing, usually known as "the Liturgy of the Candles." Ordinary olive oil is used for this service. At the end of the liturgy of the Candles, the sick is anointed and the anointing is given to all the participants on their foreheads. This means that everybody needs healing from sins.

#### **Questions**

- 1 Discuss the teaching of our Church on the anointing of the sick.
- 2 Write a short note on the authority of the Church to remit sins.

## LESSON 6

# PRAYER AND FASTING: THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

☐ Canonical fasts of our Church ☐ Daily Offices

The Christian life is a pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God. On our way to the Kingdom, we have to fight against the forces of evil which try to turn us away from God. We get the strength to advance through prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting are the guiding lights in our spiritual pilgrimage.

### 1. Canonical fasts of our Church

The Church encourages fasting on any day of the year, except Saturdays, Sundays, important feast days and the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost.

Before his public ministry, our Lord fasted for forty days (Matt. 4:2; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:1-2). He showed us the importance of fasting (Matt. 6:6, Mk. 2:20; 9:29). Fasting had an important place in the Apostolic Church (Acts 13:2; 14:23, 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27).

#### (a) Fasting in the early Church

Three types of fasts existed in the Church in the first three centuries.

(i) Weekly fasts: The Jews fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. Following this tradition, the early Christians also fasted two days every week. In the second century, Didache spoke of this practice: "Do not fast like the hypocrites (i.e. the Jews) on the Mondays and Thursdays. You shall fast on Wednesdays and Fridays."

In the third century Didache of the Apostles gives the reason for fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays. According to this Syriac document, Our Lord was arrested on Wednesday night and he was crucified on Friday.

(ii) Fasting before Baptism: Didache directs that one who baptizes and the one who receives baptism shall fast before baptism. The Lent originated from this tradition of pre-baptismal fasting.

(iii) Fasting before Easter: According to Tertullian (+ 220), the Apostles themselves introduced the tradition of fasting before the feast of Resurrection. He says that when the bridegroom left the Apostles and remained in the tomb for forty hours, they fasted following the words of their master ('The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day': Mk. 2:20). By the third century, the fasting before Easter was extended to forty days.

### **(b) Fasting for forty days**

The fasting of forty days was first attested in the Church in Edessa around 250 A. D. In 325 A. D. the Council of Nicea resolved that every Church member should fast for forty days which precede Easter. According to St. Athanasius: "Every believer shall fast for forty days; one who does not observe fasting is not worthy of participating in Easter." In the fourth century, Cyril of Jerusalem exhorted Christians to 'set apart forty days for prayer and fasting for the salvation of our souls.'

In the fourth century, it was customary to baptize the catechumens on Easter Day. The Lent was a time for their instruction and final preparation for baptism. In the fourth century, in Jerusalem, the Bishop himself taught the catechumens. By the middle of the Lent, the throne of the Bishop was placed at the center of the Church. The catechumens attended every daily office, and at the end of the office, the Bishop taught them.

Since Saturdays and Sundays were not fasting days, Lent was extended to fifty days, so that the people could fast for forty days, following the example of our Lord.

### **(c) The Other canonical fasts**

By the ninth century, the Church began to observe the Lent of the Apostles (June 16-29), the Lent of the Ascension of the Mother of God (August 1-15) and the Advent Lent (December 1-25). These fasts are in fact preparation for the three important feasts of our Church. In the Greek and the Coptic Orthodox Churches, the Advent Lent is for forty days and it begins on 15<sup>th</sup> November. According to

Bar Hebraeus (13<sup>th</sup> cent), this custom existed in the Syrian Church in his days.

The Nineveh Lent has no fixed date. It is observed three weeks before the beginning of the Great Lent and lasts for three days. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, says Bar Hebraeus, Nineveh Lent was observed in some places in the Syrian Orthodox Church, for five days. The story of Jonah in the Old Testament is recalled in the prayers of the Nineveh Lent.

Fasting prepares our body and mind for the communion with God. It is also a means of identifying ourselves with the world that starves. In the second century 'Book of the Shepherd of Hermas' it is written: "If you want to have a meaningful fasting, give the food that you save through fasting, to a widow, orphan or one who is in need."

## **2. Daily Offices**

The Jews prayed at the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day. Didache instructs to recite the Lord's Prayer three times a day. 'Seven times a day I praise thee for thy righteous ordinances' (Ps. 119:164), says the Psalmist. Following this example, the Church arranged the daily offices to be celebrated seven times a day. Evening, Sutoro (Compline), Night, Morning, Third hour, Sixth hour and the Ninth hour are the canonical hours of our Church. This arrangement of daily office goes back to as early as the end of the fourth century.

The Apostolic Constitutions (written around 380 A. D.), give the reason for praying at different times: "Pray at morning, third hour, sixth hour, ninth hour, evening and at the cock's crow. Pray in the morning, that is, at the beginning of the day, for God had given you a new day; at the third hour, for our Lord was condemned to death by Pilate; at the sixth hour, for our Lord dies on the cross. At the ninth hour, you shall commemorate the earth which trembled, as it could not bear the cruelty of the Jews at the time of the crucifixion of our Lord. In the evening, give thanks to the Lord for He has given you rest from the tiresome works of the day. Praise God at the cock's crow because of the announce of the new day."

The Apostolic Constitutions do not mention "Compline"

(Suthoro). Compline seems to have been introduced by the end of the fourth century. The Syrian word Suthora means 'protection' or 'shelter.' This title of the daily office is derived from Ps. 91:1 ('He who dwell in the shelter of the Most High'). The significance of Suthoro is that we retire from our work and go to sleep in the grace of God.

In the Syrian Orthodox Church, the collection of prayers for a week is known as the 'Book of Common Prayer' (Shehimo). The prayers for each day are arranged in seven canonical hours. Each hour and day has a particular theme. The theme of the ninth hour is always 'the departed' and that of Suthoro is 'repentance.' Similarly, the theme of Sunday is 'the Resurrection of Our Lord', that of Wednesday 'the Mother of God', that of Friday 'the cross' and that of Saturday 'the departed priests and the faithful.'

Saying the daily office is not an end in itself. To make the faithful aware of the presence of God is the goal of the daily offices. The daily offices are arranged in seven hours, so that the faithful shall grow in goodness by fulfilling their daily duties with a sense of the presence of God.

Time is a creation of God. With the creation of the world, time came into existence. A canonical hour is also a means of the sanctification of time. Every moment in our life is a step towards the Kingdom of God. Through prayer, human sanctifies time and through that sanctification, he comes near to the Kingdom of God.

## **Questions**

- 1 Write a short note on the origin of the Great Lent.
- 2 What meaning do the Apostolic Constitution give to each canonical hour?
- 3 Write a short note on the meaning and goal of the daily offices.