

# **The Liturgical Catechesis of the Syro-Malabar Church**

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## **Chapter 1**

### **A History of the Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church**

#### **History of the Syro-Malabar Church**

7. The Marthoma Christians are those who were fortunate enough to receive the light of faith from St Thomas (Marthomma shliha), one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. After disembarking from a ship at Kodungallur (Musiris) in 52 AD, Shliha traveled around India preaching the gospel and established seven and a half churches - at Kodungallur, Palayur, Kota Kav (Paravoor), Kokkamangalam, Kollam, Niranam, Nilakkal (Chayal), Tiru Vamkot which is popularly known as 'Arapalli'. In 72 AD, Shliha was martyred at Mylapur.

8. The Church in India, which had been established during the apostolic era had been in contact from the first century with the Persian Church, which had inherited the tradition and patrimony of Marthommasliha. Trade relations with the Middle East have become the backdrop for this. Persecution of the Persian Church in the 4th century led to the migration of Christians from there to India. The arrival of the Christian leader Knai Thomman and his companions from Persia is noteworthy in this. The apostolic heritage shared by both churches led to an active relationship with the church in Persia, which had an Eastern Assyrian tradition. Therefore, the East Syriac liturgy common to the churches of India and Persia came into being. Mar John the Persian, who signed the Nicene Synod (325) as bishop of Persia and India, is evidence of the connection of the Marthoma Christians in India with that church from the 4th century.

A traveler named Cosmus Indicoplastus, who visited India between 500 and 525 AD, wrote about the Christians he saw in India, and about the Persian bishop in his book 'Christian Topography'. The religious and liturgical relationship between the two churches led to the acceptance of the Persian bishops and their spiritual leadership by the Church in India. Until the 16th century, bishops from Persia had been holding spiritual leadership here. The Persian bishop in India was known as the "Archbishop of whole of India" but the physical administration of the church was carried out by a priest chosen from among the Marthoma Christians. He was known as 'Archdeacon of All India' and 'Caretaker of one's own community'. He managed the church administration with the help of the general assembly, local meetings and the church meetings.

The social life of the Marthoma Christians was in conformation with the Indian culture of that time, and the spirituality was in accordance with Indian-Oriental traditions. The church life of Marthomma Christians was a reflection of liturgy, theology, spirituality, and discipline that incorporated Eastern Syriac tradition and Indian cultural identity. This lifestyle is called 'Marthoma margam'.

9. The Portuguese missionary who came to India in the 16th century met Christians living in Mar Marthomma way. Though they shared a cordial relation in the beginning, slowly it began to

falter. The Portuguese missionaries could not accept a different way of life of Christians here from what they were used to. Therefore, they crafted plans to gradually conform the liturgical rules and practices of the Marthoma Christians to the liturgical rules and rituals of the Western Church. They implemented that plan in 1599 through the synod of Udayamperur. Immediately after the synod, Marthoma Christians were placed under the rule of Padrovado (a special permission granted by the Pope to the King of Portuguese to administer the Church in mission countries). Marthoma Christians opposed the changes made by the missionaries in the mother church during this period, especially the changes in the church constitutions. Oath of Koonan cross (Koonan Kurish Satyam) on January 3, 1653 was a powerful expression of opposition by Marthoma Christians against Padrovado rule. This declaration caused a split in the church.

10. A section of those who took the oath of the Koonan Cross later adopted the Antiochian tradition and became members of the Jacobite Church. Later they came to be known as “puthan kuttikar”. In this situation, the Propaganda Fide (mission work under papal supervision) intervened directly in the Church and a new system of government was temporarily established. However, this temporary arrangement continued for more than two centuries. The Marthoma Christians, unable to accept both the Padrovado and Propaganda missionary regimes, started making genuine attempts to reclaim their heritage, to receive bishops from their own community and to bring back ‘puthankuttikar’(the ones strayed) who are their own kith and kin to the mother church .

Mar Joseph kariyattil ,Parammakal Thomakathanar and many others before and after them made efforts for the above but they did not yield any lasting results. When the Latin Hierarchy of India was established on September 1, 1886, all Marthoma Christians, who were Catholics, came under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Varapuzha, Leonard Melano.

11. Centuries-long efforts for self-government by the Marthoma Christians took concrete shape only in the second half of the 19th century. As efforts for native bishops continued in earnest, in 1887 Pope Leo XIII separated the Syrians from the Varappuzha administration and established for them the Vicariates of Thrissur and Kottayam. On July 28, 1896, these vicariates were reorganized and three vicariates of Ernakulam, Changanassery and Thrissur were established and local bishops Mar Louis Pazheparampil, Mar Mathew Mackeel and Mar John Menachery were appointed as their heads respectively. Thus, the Syrian Catholics’ desire and longing for native bishops, which lasted for centuries, blossomed. Kottayam Vicariate was established in 1911 for Knanaya Catholics.

12. On December 21, 1923, the Ernakulam Vicariate was elevated to an archdiocese and the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was established by declaring Changanassery, Thrissur and Kottayam as vassal dioceses and with this the Syrian Catholics who were Marthoma Christians came to be known as the 'Syro-Malabar Church'. In 1956, Changanassery Diocese was elevated to Archdiocese.

13. On 16 December 1992, Pope John Paul II elevated the Syro-Malabar Church to an autonomous Major Archiepiscopal Congregation according to the Eastern Canon Law. Ernakulam-Angamaly is the headquarters of Major Archbishop. Mar

Anthony Padiyara was the first Major Archbishop. In 1995 the Diocese of Thrissur and Thalassery and in 2005 the Kottayam Diocese of Knanaya were elevated to Archdiocese. At present the Syro-Malabar Church in India has 5 archdioceses and 13 dioceses in its autonomous region. There are 31 dioceses totally including 9 mission dioceses (Chanda, Sagar, Satna, Ujjain, Bijnor, Jagdalpur, Rajkot, Gorakhpur, Adilabad) which started as mission areas and became mission dioceses, 2 dioceses are set up for expatriates (Kalyan, Faridabad) and 2 dioceses for expatriates abroad (Chicago, Melbourne). An Apostolic Exarchate was also established in 2015 based in 'Mississauga' in Canada for the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church.

## **II Liturgical History**

### **Apostolic Age**

14. There are no clear records available about the liturgy of Marthomma Christians in India during the Apostolic Age. The apocryphal Book of Acts of Thomas gives an indication of the liturgical celebrations in India. Although historical accuracy cannot be claimed for all the details of Thomas's apostolic work, scholarly studies of the Book indicate that accounts of social customs and prayer practices are likely to be correct. Therefore, it must be emphasized that the liturgical celebrations of Thomas and his disciples mentioned in this book have a historical basis.

The Acts of Thomas describes a very simple and brief Eucharistic offering. The celebrant offers the Mass with the prayer of thanksgiving and praise. All believers are partakers of the holy blood and body of Christ. However, the Book of the Acts of Thomas does not provide a detailed description of prayers or rituals. However, it is reasonable to suppose that the disciple Thomas, who came to India, led the service of breaking bread for the faithful and thus offered the Eucharist, as did other disciples who went to different parts of the world.

### **First and second centuries**

15. Some clues about the liturgy of the first and second centuries can be found in ancient documents such as the Didache, the Apology of the Martyr Saint Justin, and the Acts of Thomas. The peculiarity of the liturgy in these centuries was that there was no fixed form for prayers or rituals. Although there was no uniformity in nuances of the liturgy, there were many similarities and the liturgies of Antioch, Rome, Edessa, and Malabar were fundamentally similar. The basic reason for this is that they were all liturgies by disciples.

After the Lord's resurrection, the disciples gathered together in their homes and performed the ritual of breaking the bread. Moreover, the prayers of the Jews who came to faith in the Messiah had a decisive influence on the prayers of the early Christian congregation. The Anaphora (prayer of thanksgiving) of the Eucharist is substantially indebted to the Jewish prayers of benediction (Berachah). In the early days, they went to synagogues for the ministry of the word. Later, when they were separated from the synagogues, they began to preach the word in connection with the breaking of the bread. In addition to the Old Testament, the memoirs of the disciples and the epistles written to the various congregations were regularly read in the liturgical assemblies. At the same time, since the prayers had not acquired a regular form, they were recited

with variations according to the discretion of the minister. This was the state of Christian liturgy throughout the world.

### **Three and four centuries**

16. The different liturgical traditions of the Alexandrian, the Antiochian, and the Persian (Eastern-Syriac) traditions were formalized over the course of three or four centuries. Since the Marthoma Christians maintained good relations with the Eastern Assyrian Churches of Persia, they adopted the Eastern Assyrian liturgy, which traces its heritage to their common father in the faith, Marthoma Sliha. This liturgy took its basic form in the 4th century centered in Edessa. It was therefore easy for the Edessan, Persian, and Malabar churches, who see Thomas as the common father, to adopt the same liturgy. The presence of Jewish colonies, commercial contacts with the Middle East, and the use of the Aramaic (Syriac) language have also paved the way for the adoption of the Eastern Syriac liturgy. In 1578, the Marthoma Christians wrote to Pope Gregory XIII, describing their liturgy as "the liturgy we have received from Marthoma Sliha."

Though Marthomma Christians had an affinity with the East Syriac liturgy as they shared a common heritage, it is not to be assumed that Marthomma Christians copied it exactly. They may have modified the liturgy without altering the fundamentals by incorporating indigenous elements in the place, materials and rituals used for celebrating liturgy. It is quite natural that these kinds of cultural adaptations have been made in the Holy Eucharist, in sacraments and sacramentals. The way of building the church based on the local architectural style is part of the uniqueness of Malabar Christians. Missionaries have testified that Christian churches were difficult to distinguish from other places of worship, except for the cross(sliwa) on the roof of the Madbaha. Other examples of cultural adaptations are thali, mantra kodi and certain special rituals associated with death.

### **Till synod of Diamper (Udayamperur synod)**

18. The Eastern Assyrian order of worship for the Holy Mass was used by Marthomma Christians until the synod of Diamper (1599). Alleging Nestorian heresy in their existing liturgy, Dom Alexis Menezes, the Presiding Officer of the Synod and Metropolitan of Goa, made many changes in their existing liturgical Taksa. However, Menezes did not attempt to change the structure of the Eucharist. The missionaries modified many of the prayers and rituals of the Mar Thoma Christians because they suspected that the Nestorian heresy might have infiltrated the prayers of the Mar Thoma Christians through the Syriac language. The Taksa presented in the synod and some other manuscripts are testimony to the changes made in Udayamperur synod and the practices that existed before that. Besides the Portuguese book Jornada, written by Antonio Deguaya in 1603, gives a rough picture of the Holy Mass and the rites before the Synod.'

### **After Udayamperur Synod**

19. After the synod, the Marthoma Christians used the Taksa with the modifications prescribed at the Udayamperur synod.

The Creed in the Eucharist was made the same as in the Roman order. The names of Nestorius and Theodore, which were added to Carosusa (prayer of the faithful) and prayed for, were removed. Udayamperur synod ordered that the two Anaphoras, which were known by the name of Theodore and Nestorius, should be burned. The missionaries insisted on using unleavened bread and wine from Portugal for the Holy Communion.

The practice of receiving Holy Communion in both similitudes was maintained in all churches. In the Latin Church it was changed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Even then, this practice continued in the Eastern Churches. Udayamperur Synod stopped this practice in the Malabar Sabha. In the first millennium, the sign of the cross was done from right to left in all churches. Later in the Latin Church that custom was modified. Synod of Udayamperur decided that the sign of the cross should be in the Latin style. Before the synod, there was an understanding that the liturgical day began in the evening. Udayamperur Synod changed the way of thinking saying that it was Jewish tradition.

Marthoma Christians did not have the practice of celebrating Mass every day. Holy Mass was offered on Sundays, feast days and memorial days. Marthoma Christians began the practice of daily Mass due to contact with the Western Church.

The Synod made the following rules: three Holy Masses be celebrated on Christmas Day; observance of the Feast of the Holy Eucharist; offering Holy Mass for the dead; attending Holy Eucharist on the days of obligation, if not it is considered a mortal sin. It was also directed that pagan singers or their music bands should not be allowed inside the church.

Bishop Menezes, who summoned the Synod, insisted that the vestments should be similar to those of the Western Church.

The liturgical calendar was adapted to the Latin Rite and the feast days and commemorations were adjusted accordingly.

### **Reforms of Bishop Ross**

20. Bishop Francis Ross, who was a member of the Jesuit Church, was the first Latin Bishop of the Marthomma Christians. Bishop Ross, who knew Syriac, examined the liturgical books and other documents of the Marthomma Christians while he was the rector of the Vypeekotta Seminary, and accused them of heresy. He also worked as the right hand of Bishop Dom Menezes in Udayamperur Synod. The three centuries after the synod were a time when many of the Latin tradition and practices spread among Malabar Christians.

Many of the changes proposed by synod were implemented by Bishop Ross, who came as the bishop of the Marthoma Christians and he started apparent attempts to conform the liturgy of Marthoma Christians to the Latin liturgy. He became the bishop of Syrians in 1601. In 1603, he convened a synod at Angamaly and in light of that, he published the Canon of the Diocese of Angamaly in 1606. Bishop Ross, who was well-versed in Syriac-Latin languages, was able to translate the Latin liturgies into Syriac with ease.

Bishop Ross strictly instructed that the same rituals as in the Latin rite should be used for the sacrament of Baptism. He added to the canon that the feast of the Holy Eucharist should be celebrated and that the prayer taken from the Latin should be recited for eight days. After Bishop

Ross's reforms little appears to have changed until the Syriac Mass Thaksa was printed in Rome on March 25, 1774.

### **Thaksa in Syriac**

21. The Vicar of the Malabar Vicariate, Bishop Apostolica Florence (1757-1773) under Propaganda Fide began to try to get the Syrians' Mass Thaksa printed from Rome. He tried to bring uniformity to the Holy Eucharist in the vicarate. In his view, uniformity to the Holy Eucharist was to make it like that of Latin. After many years of discussions and studies, in 1774, Thaksa was given a stamp from Rome.

Several prayers that were not present in the East Syriac Mass were added to this Thaksa. They were the instructions to begin the Holy Mass with the prayer 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' and the three prayers added from the Maronite rite. One of them is the farewell prayer to the altar beginning 'O altar of sanctification ...' still used in the Malabar Mass.

The Latin manner of blessing the deacon before the reading of the Gospel, the special rites of the reception of Holy Communion, the instruction to kneel whenever the Eucharist is received after the words of institution, and the instruction to raise the holy objects after the words of institution are added elements to this Taksa.

The existing Syriac Almanac was replaced by the Latin Almanac, with the addition of the Feasts of Thomas and the Feast of Nineveh on July 3 and December 18.

The passages that differed in the Syriac translation of the Peshitta were modified and conformed to the Latin Vulgatha translation. Readings were added as per Latin almanac.

The prayers recited while wearing the vestments were translated from Latin into Syriac and printed in Taksa.

The prayers for Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday, as well as the Mass on the 2nd of February and the Pre-sanctified Liturgy were all translated from the Latin order into Syriac and added to the Taksa.

From the Roman Order of the Sacraments the Baptism, Confession, anointing of the sick and Marriage were translated and printed in Rome in 1775. A new edition of this Taksa was printed in Rome in 1845, adding the way of blessing of holy water, places, candles, food, statues and images.

22. Bishop Barnardin Bachi Nellie was the Apostolic Vicar of Malabar from 1853 to 1868 and he issued a decree that everyone should follow the Tukasa – Qurbana Karma Vidhi – that was written in Malayalam by Fr. Chavara Kuriakos Elias, who was the Vicar General of the Syrians. It was this Tukasa that was followed until the restoration in 1962.

### **Liturgical Restoration**

23. The restoration of the Syro-Malabar liturgy based on the Eastern Assyrian tradition was initiated by Pope Pius X. He took the initiative to restore the Eastern Syriac pontificate and the Eucharist. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches in Rome has repeatedly stated the need for a thorough restoration of the liturgy in the tradition of the Marthoma Christians without exception. This congregation appointed a committee in 1954 for the restoration of the Syro-Malabar Mass. Father Placid J. Podipara CMI a member of the Syro-Malabar Church was also a member of this committee. The Revised Order of the Eucharist submitted by this committee was approved by Pope Pius XII in 1957.

With the approval of Pope Pius XII, three books related to the Syro Malabar Mass were published. In 1959, *Ordo Celebrationis Qudasae*, containing liturgical rulings and a calendar, and in 1960, *Supplementum Mysteriorum*, containing seasonal prayers, were published in Latin. As early as 1960, a Taksa of the Mass was published in Syriac from Aluva under the title Taksa d'Qudasae. The Mass with a partial Malayalam translation was published in 1962 and began to be used in the Syro-Malabar Church.

24. Following the Second Vatican Council, when the idea of a timely revision of the East Syriac tradition became stronger, the Taksa prepared with amendments in 1968 was tentatively approved by Rome. Rome urged that a Taksa faithful to Eastern Church tradition be prepared as soon as possible.

In 1985 Rome approved the Taksa for the Rasa, which was prepared at the request of Rome.

On February 8, 1986 in Kottayam Pope John Paul II celebrated the restored Rasa Qurbana for the first time at the beatification ceremony of Blessed Father Chavara Kuriakos Elias and Alphonsamma. In 1989, the Holy See approved the Taksa for the Solemn Qurbana and the Ordinary Qurbana. The Seasonal Prayers of the Holy Eucharist (Pro Pria) were prepared and used with approval from Rome in 2005.

25. The anaphoras of Mar Theodore and Mar Nestorius in the Eastern Syriac liturgy were banned by Udayamperur Synod. When Rome approved the Reformed Eucharist in 1957, these two sacramental orders were translated and permitted to be used in the Eucharist. The Syro-Malabar Synod has also decided to use the Revised Order of Mar Theodore's sacramental order with the approval received from Rome in 2013. The Synod of Syro-Malabar has also decided to revive and use Nestorius' rite.

26 A revised Taksa of sacraments was published in 2004.

Taksa for Holy Orders (2007), anointing with Muron (2007), Christmas (2009), Ash Wednesday, Holy week (2009), Vestition (2009), Blessing of the Church (2014), re-blessing of the church (2014) and Proclamation Books (2013) came to be used in the Syro Malabar Church.

Other liturgical texts to complete the restoration are

Liturgy of the Hours, prayer services for the Dead, Feast celebrations and Blessing Services.

Footnotes:

1. Paul Pallath, The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St. Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper, Kottayam 2008.

2. Antonio De Gouvea, Jornada of Dom , Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese account of the Sixteenth century Malabar, Pius Malekandathil ed.. Mount St. Thomas, Kochi 2004.
  3. Paul Pallath, The Eucharistic Liturgy of the St. Thomas Christians and the Synod of Diamper, Kottayam 2008.
  4. Ordo Celebrationis "*Quddasa*" *juxta asum Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis* , Rome 1959.
  5. *Supplementum Mysteriorum* , Rome 1960
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## Chapter 2

### Introduction to liturgy

27. Liturgy is the celebration of the divine mystery of God's plan of salvation. Therefore, it is a celebration for those who believe in God. Liturgy has a central place in church life as the supreme seat of the Church and the source of her power (Liturgy 10).

#### **I - Liturgy: Etymology and Meaning**

28. The English word liturgy comes from the Latin word *liturgia*. This word is derived from the Greek word). '*Leitourgia*'. The root meaning of this word is public work or service in the name of the people or for the people. In the Christian tradition it means the participation of God's people in the work of God (CCC 1069).

Liturgy is translated in Malayalam as 'worship'. But this term does not fully reveal the reality of the liturgy. It does not fully illuminate the dimensions of service and love inherent in the liturgy. However, the term liturgy helps to understand the liturgy as a ministry of expression of love to God.

#### **II - Liturgy: Definitions and Explanations**

29 The liturgy makes present the redeeming act of the Messiah through ritual ordinances. It takes place in and through the church. It is a sacred ritual that allows the worshippers to fully experience the act of salvation, offering eternal forgiveness and redemption. This makes it clear that liturgy is simultaneously the work of God and the work of the Church. Here the church continues to do by being united with God what God has done for the sanctification of God's people. Although human elements are involved in this, the source is God; and it is divine.

Liturgy is God's invitation to man for salvation and the positive response man gives to that call. The liturgy is a holy ritual that sacramentally re-enacts and provides the experience of the mysteries of salvation in which God came down to earth as a human being to lift men up to God. It is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered to God the Father in union with Jesus and the Holy Spirit for His redemptive ministry. It is the merging point of salvation, sanctification and glorification where God descends to man and man is raised to God. The focal point of the liturgy is the Holy Eucharist. The liturgy consists of other sacraments, sacramentals, liturgy of hours and observances of the liturgical year.

#### **Liturgy in the Church's official teachings**

##### **Mediator Dei**

30. Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947) says of the liturgy: 'The sacred liturgy is, consequently, the public worship which our Redeemer as Head of the Church renders to the Father, as well as the worship which the community of the faithful renders to its Founder, and through Him to the heavenly Father'. (MD 20).

### **In the Exhortations of the Second Vatican Council**

31. The Second Vatican Council did not define the canonical liturgy but gave some explanations. Following are the important ones.

Liturgy is the fulfillment of the priesthood of the Messiah (Liturgy 7).

In the Liturgy human sanctification is accomplished by presenting visible signs (Liturgical Order 7).

Performing complete worship of God in liturgy is by the mystical body of the Messiah; That is, the head and the members (Liturgical Order 7).

Every act of the liturgy is holy and sublime (Liturgical Order 7), since it is the work of Christ the priest and of his body, the church.

No activity of the church can outshine the liturgy in excellence and fruitfulness (Liturgy 10).

All the activities of the Church are directed towards its pinnacle which is liturgy. She derives all her power from the ritual itself (Liturgy 10).

From the Liturgy especially from the Holy Eucharist, grace flows to us as if from a fountain. Thus, God's glorification and human sanctification through the Messiah are most effectually accomplished. All the other activities of the Church are directed, as their goal, to the glorification of God and to human sanctification (Liturgy 10).

It is through the liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist, that our redemption is attained. Liturgy is the most important way to help the faithful to copy the Messianic mystery and the true nature of the Church in their own lives and show it to others. (Liturgy 2).

Liturgy daily builds up the members of the congregation as the Lord's holy temple, God's spiritual dwelling place (Liturgy 2).

Liturgical ceremonies are public celebrations of the Church, not secret rituals of anyone (Liturgy 26).

Our worship on earth with the heavenly host is a foretaste of the worship in the heavenly Jerusalem of the Messiah seated at the right hand of God. It is the confluence of heavenly and earthly worships. (Liturgy 8).

### **Liturgy and the Eastern Canon Law**

32. The document Liturgy and the Eastern Canon Law defines liturgy as "the celebration, or worship, of the Church through the Holy Spirit, the sacred form of the mystery of salvation, which the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished in his Pasch, in submission to the infinite will of the heavenly Father" (No. 1).

### **The Catechism of the Catholic Church**

One of the most striking teachings in the Catechism is that it presents the liturgy as an act of the Holy Trinity. Here we see the shift from a messianic to a trinitarian vision. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the liturgy is the sacramental expression of the plan of salvation that extends from the beginning of the world to the end of the world (CCC 1077 – 1109).

The liturgy is centered on the Father. The Christian liturgy is a response in faith and love to the Father, who has blessed us (Eph. 1:3) in Christ with every spiritual gift in the heavenly realms. In the liturgy, God the Father is praised and worshipped as the source of all blessings concerning creation and salvation (CCC 1082)

The liturgy is the work of the Son, for the glorified Messiah, seated at the right hand of the Father, pours out the Holy Spirit on his body, the Church, and imparts his grace through the sacraments he instituted. In the liturgy of the Church, the Messiah also points out primarily his own paschal mystery. (CCC 1084 – 1085)

The liturgy is fulfilled by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who raises up in us the response of faith, prepares the Church, the people of God, for the encounter with the Messiah, makes the work of salvation present and real, and brings to fruition the gift of unity in the Church.

Based on Church teachings, the 'Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church' explains the liturgy as follows: The liturgy is the celebration of the messianic mystery, especially the paschal mystery. Human sanctification is revealed and realized through signs in the liturgy through the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. It is the common worship of the mystical body of Christ - that is, the head and members together - offered to God. (CCC 218)

### **III Church: The Worshipping Community**

34. God is seen in the Bible as forming a people for himself. Through Moses, he rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt in order to make them a worshipping community. God said to Pharaoh through Moses: "Let my people go, that they may worship me" (Exodus 9:13). God, who saved Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand, said again in the covenant made through Moses on Mount Sinai: "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be my own people, my special possession above all peoples... and you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:5-6) God transformed Israel into a worshipping community that would serve God in holiness by giving them the experience of salvation and by making a covenant with them.

God, who led the people who were in slavery to sin to salvation through the death on the cross of the Messiah, the mediator of the new covenant, made them his own people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9).

It is God's will that the people of God should be a worshipping community that renders priestly service to him. The fundamental nature of the church, his new people whom God has saved and called to salvation, is to be a worshipping community.

#### **IV Signs and Symbols**

35. In the liturgy, there are visible signs and symbols to indicate invisible realities. There is a considerable difference in meaning and significance between signs and symbols. Signs indicate invisible realities. However, symbols not only indicate invisible realities, but also make them present. The altar is not only a sign but also a symbol of the throne of God and the tomb of the Lord. The reality of the throne of God and the tomb of the Lord are realized in the altar.

It is the Messiah who makes the invisible God visible and experiential to us. Although Christ has been revealed through history, it is the Church who makes the invisible Messiah, invisible to external eyes, experiential to us even today. Therefore, just as the Messiah is the sacrament of the Father, the Church is the sacrament of the Messiah. The Church today performs the liturgy of faith and salvation, which the redeemed people of God offer to the Father in union with the Savior Messiah and in the communion of the Holy Spirit, through signs and symbols. It was Christ himself or the Holy Church who chose visible symbols in the liturgy to signify invisible divine things (Liturgy 33).

When the work of salvation is reenacted through signs and symbols, the salvation that is celebrated is one that has been realized in history and will be experienced until the end of the world. Three dimensions of time are visible in all of these: past events and their commemoration (the past remembrance of the saving mysteries fulfilled in the Messiah); the present and worship of God (the Church celebrates the saving mysteries today); and the future and foretaste (the foretaste of the heavenly worship that will be fulfilled in the future). Signs and symbols are the elements that help make these three realities most tangible and touching. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the worship of the Church on earth is woven with signs and symbols (CCC 1145). Therefore, only by understanding what signs and symbols are and what realities they signify can we meaningfully participate in worship of God.

#### **Physical postures in liturgy**

36. The following are common physical positions in worship:

**Standing:** Traditionally signifies resurrection; it is also a sign of reverence, joy, and heavenly hope.

**Facing East:** The ancient tradition of the Church is to worship God facing east. Saint John of Damascus states that this is an unwritten tradition received from the apostles. In the Church tradition, turning east is understood to mean 'turning towards the Lord'. Although geographically it is east, the minister, along with the people, prays towards the cross placed in the church. This illustrates the pilgrim nature of the Church.

**Kneeling:** Indicates sinfulness, repentance, worship, submission, respect, and obedience.

**Bowing the head:** Indicates attitudes of gratitude, submission, respect, and worship.

**Prostration:** A sign of deep worship and intense unworthiness.

**Spreading hands:** A sign of prayer and intercession before God

**Joining hands:** Indicates devotion, respect, and honor.

**Kissing:** Indicates love, respect, and honor.

**Making the sign of the cross:** Indicates the sacrifice on the cross, the explanation in the name of the cross, and the glorification of the Triune God.

## V Active participation

37. The active participation of the faithful is necessary for the Liturgy to be fully effective. Therefore, the faithful should approach the sacred mysteries with a congenial attitude, participate in them with attentiveness, and cooperate with them to receive the gift of grace (Liturgy 11). Its prayers themselves make clear how to actively participate in the Liturgy, especially in its central point, the Holy Eucharist:

Examples of this are the expressions 'with perfect love and firm faith', 'with devotion and attention', 'with eyes lowered and thoughts raised to heaven', 'standing in silence and reverence', 'with a washed and purified heart and a pure conscience' and 'pray with all your heart'.

The thought that we are sacrificing together with Christ will help us to make our participation in the sacrifice complete, conscious, and active. We need to make both external and internal preparations for this sacrifice. The Second Vatican Council teaches: "When the faithful partake of this mystery of faith, they should not be strangers or silent spectators, but should participate in it with awareness, devotion and cooperation, understanding the meaning of the sacraments and prayers, and with a sense of what they are doing." (liturgy 48)

For this, we must carefully recite the prayers of the Holy Eucharist, sing appropriate hymns, and learn the inner meaning of the divine services performed. Above all, we must act before God with a contrite heart and in harmony with our brothers and sisters, with holiness and humility. We must also prepare to receive the Holy Eucharist, the ransom of our salvation, with the remembrance that it is the bread and panacea that gives eternal life.

It is the earnest desire of the Holy Mother Church that all the faithful should practice a fully conscious and zestful participation in the liturgy (Liturgy 14). The very nature of the liturgy demands this. The advice given by Saint Paul to offer oneself as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, in spiritual worship (Romans 12:1) is still very relevant today.

The participation of Christian believers in the liturgy as a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a saved people (1 Peter 2:9, 2:4-5) is their right and duty as a result of baptism (Liturgy 114). In order to ensure zestful participation, believers should be trained to adopt methods such as responsive prayers, psalms, two-part prayers, praises, and physical postures.

The Code of Canon Law of the Liturgy and the Eastern Canon Law (No. 33) teaches that the ministers entrusted with each ministry (priests, ministers, readers, singers, interpreters, choir, etc.) should not replace the community but lead it, so that the community's participation can be outwardly expressed. Spiritual leaders have the responsibility to provide the necessary training and guidance for this.

## Cultural adaptation of the liturgy (Inculturation)

38. The emergence of different individual congregations and liturgical traditions within the Church is also due to the fact that the Church's faith has been proclaimed in different cultural traditions.

Therefore, liturgy, the celebration of faith must be adapted to the ingenuity and cultures of different peoples (CCC 1204). Divine mysteries are celebrated in the liturgy. However, they are celebrated for the benefit of people living in different places, languages, and cultures. This points to the need for cultural adaptation and local language. However, the mysteries of faith that are being celebrated are historical truths, the influence of the place, time, language, and religious and cultural context in which they occurred cannot be ignored. In liturgy, which is part of the Church's faith, and above all in the celebration of the sacraments, there are infallible parts that are divinely instituted and entrusted to the churches for their preservation. Likewise, there are parts that can be changed.

While imparting cultural orientation for evangelized peoples, especially for those newly evangelized, the Church insists on being faithful to the common faith, to the sacred signs and to the hierarchical communion that the Church has received from Christ (CCC 1205). Likewise, the Church does not wish to impose a rigid uniformity on matters that do not involve faith or the common good in the liturgy (Liturgy 37). The Second Vatican Council calls for the protection of essential unity and the possibility of canonical variations and adaptations (Liturgy 38).

### **Liturgy, part of the Church's tradition**

39. The directive document "Liturgy and the Canon Law of the East" states that the patrimony of faith is received through tradition (No. 17). The core, of faith and the resulting tradition is the saving expression of God, revealed through the history of the people of Israel and the redeeming life, death and resurrection of the Messiah. It is God's will to preserve steadfastly and eternally what He has revealed for the salvation of all and to pass it on from generation to generation. It was in accordance with this divine will that the Messiah, who had fulfilled the revelation in himself, commissioned the apostles to proclaim the gospel of salvation to all nations. The apostles' proclamation, preaching, breaking of bread, fellowship, and prayer all paved way for the purpose of sharing these saving mysteries and forming the apostolic tradition. The shift from apostolic tradition to church tradition is gradual. The Gospels had a living tradition in the churches to which they were written even before they took shape. That living tradition is the original form of the Gospels themselves. The second stage is the transmission of tradition through the spoken word. Thus, the writings that began as oral traditions became written, the teachings given by the Church Fathers over the time under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and the interpretations officially given by the Church, became part of the tradition. In other words, sacred tradition is the experience of salvation and the related rites and rituals received from the Messiah by the apostles and handed down to the early church community, nourished through the teachings of the church fathers and the bishops who were the successors of the apostles, through the testimony of the saints and martyrs, and through the life and worship of the church, the community of believers, and passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, it is impossible to distinguish between the sacred tradition and the sacred scriptures. They are both complementary to each other (Divine Revelation 10).

Tradition exists when this patristic heritage of faith is received, preserved, held fast, and transmitted. This happens in the Church. Therefore, tradition is the life of the Church guided by the Spirit (Divine Revelation 8). In the Church, the teachings, proclamations, worship of the apostles, centered on the Messiah, his teachings, life, and redeeming events, and the fellowship and brotherhood among believers are fully integrated and transmitted from generation to generation through the liturgy, which is a celebration of faith. Just as the Church is one, so is the Church's sacred tradition; just as there are different churches within the Church, there are also different traditions within the sacred tradition. The ancient traditions that have survived through the various churches are the common patrimony of the Catholic Church. The Church Fathers, who have experienced and enjoyed this heritage, have from time to time given explanations to these. Thus, the Church Fathers of each Church are the active exponents of the primordial tradition. The apostolic tradition received through the Church Fathers is part of the divinely revealed and indivisible patrimony of the universal Church. (Oriental Churches 1)

### **VIII The Church and Church Traditions**

The Church, historically, was born in Jerusalem, in the Jewish religious and cultural context of Jesus and his disciples there. Therefore, the cradle of the Church is Jewish (Semitic) culture. Geographically, it is in the East (Light of the East 5). Through the preaching of the apostles, the gospel began to spread from Jerusalem to the major Greek cities of the time, to other parts of the Roman Empire, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Thus, church communities were established in various places. The apostles taught and preached about the Messiah, the Lord and Savior. However, each one assimilated and shared the messianic experience with his own personality traits. The communities that received the gospel message were different from one another. This difference was also evident in language, culture, lifestyles, customs, and political and social contexts. Thus, as the apostles preached the gospel to people in different social and cultural contexts, different churches were formed. Thus, the Church took root in the three major cultures of the time - Semitic, Greek, and Roman - and, based on the evangelical spirit received from the apostles, three church traditions emerged. They are known today as the Syriac Orient (the Syrian tradition of the East), the Greek East (the Greek tradition of the East), and the Latin West (the Latin tradition of the West). Therefore, the traditions of the early Church are not limited to any particular church. They are present in the various church traditions mentioned above, which formed in the first century itself.

### **IX Western - Eastern Traditions**

41. The Church is commonly called the West and the East. The basis for this division is geographical. At the end of the third century A.D., the Roman emperor Diocletian divided the empire into four parts. By the end of the fourth century (395), it had been reduced to two. The churches that developed in the western part of the ancient Roman Empire were known as the Western Churches, and those that developed in the eastern part were known as the Eastern Churches. The apostles also founded churches outside the Roman Empire. The Church of India, founded by the Apostle Thomas, the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, which grew up in the Persian Empire, and the Churches of Edessa and Mesopotamia are such. Over the time, the name Eastern Churches came into use for all the Churches that did not belong to the Western category. The sacred tradition of the Holy Church resides, as mentioned above, in three church traditions: the

Eastern and Western Syriac Orient, the Greek East, and the Latin West. The first two of them belong to the Eastern tradition.

## **X The Autonomous church (Private Church) and the Liturgy**

42. In the Catholic Communion there are 24 autonomous Churches in three ecclesiastical traditions - 23 Eastern Churches and one Western Church. A community of Christians united by a legitimate hierarchy, illuminated in liturgy, theology, spirituality, and discipline, officially recognized as autonomous by ecclesiastical sovereignty, is called a Sui iuris Church (CCEO, 27). The autonomous Church, which indicates the individuality of the Church's heritage, is also called the Individual Church. The Eastern Canon Law defines the 'rite' as the heritage in which each autonomous Church lives and expresses the faith in its own way (CCEO, 28). They originate from the Eastern traditions of Alexandrian, Antiochian, Byzantine, (Constantinopolitan), East Syriac, and Armenian, as well as from the Roman (Latin) and Western traditions. However, they are united by faith, sacraments, and hierarchy (Eastern Churches 2). These six traditions are centered on the six official liturgies of the Church. The liturgy is the most important element that determines the uniqueness of each Church.

## **XI Liturgy and Rites**

43. After Pentecost, under the leadership of the apostles, church communities were formed in various parts of the world. The church communities grew as they shared their experience of Christ with the language, culture, and customs of each place. These were reflected in the sacrifices, sacramental practices, and prayers. The word "rite" gradually began to be used to refer to the liturgical practices that developed with their own unique identity. Later, the rite acquired a broader meaning. The liturgy, fasting, abstinence, vestments, canon law, hierarchy, governance, and rituals also became elements of the rite. The church community that includes all of these is also called the rite. According to the Eastern canon law, the rite is a patrimony that is formed through liturgy, theology, spirituality, and discipline, and is differentiated by the historical circumstances and culture of the peoples, and in which each autonomous church lives and expresses the faith in its own way (CCEO. 28).

The four elements that distinguish each rite from others are the above. The most important of these is its own liturgy.

The rituals, symbols, prayers, vestments, and theological perspective of each rite are different from those of other rites.

44. Theology is the second element. Theology interprets and explains revealed truths with the help of the intellect. The life experiences and traditions of each local community help to develop a unique theology.

45. The third element is spirituality. Each individual church preserves the Christian experience of its founder, the apostle, and the theological and spiritual contributions of the church fathers and holy souls.

They have their own spiritual lifestyle, formed in the light of this and on the basis of the spiritual experience of the entire church community. Each rite also has different devotional practices that help to grow in holiness.

46. The fourth element is the administrative system. Each individual church has its own specific administrative systems and style of governance. An example of this is the parish general meetings that traditionally existed in the Mar Thoma tradition.

## **XII Various liturgical families**

47. The sacred tradition of the Catholic Church is found in the three Church traditions: Latin, Syriac, and Greek. There are six main liturgical families in the Western and Eastern Church traditions. One of them is in the Latin (Western) Church tradition and five are in the Eastern Church traditions.

### **The Latin (Western) Church Tradition and the Liturgical Family**

48. Latin was the official language of the Western Roman Empire. The churches that were formed in Latin-speaking areas adopted Latin as their liturgical language. Therefore, they are known as Latin churches. The church community in Rome, which had the literary tradition of Saints Peter and Paul, was the cause of the origin and growth of these churches. Therefore, these church communities are generally called the Roman Church. In addition to the Roman (Latin) liturgy in the Western Roman Empire, there were many liturgies such as Gallic, Ambrosian, Celtic (Irish), Mozarabic (Visigothic), and monastic rites such as Cistercian and Carthusian. However, except for the Roman (Latin) liturgy and the Ambrosian, Mozarabic, and Visigothic liturgies, all the rest exist for namesake today.

### **Greek Church Tradition and Liturgical Families**

49. There are three liturgical families in the Greek Church tradition: Byzantine, Alexandrian, and Armenian. The Greek Church family includes 17 individual churches.

#### **Byzantine (Constantinopolitan)**

##### **Liturgical family**

50. The liturgical language of the churches in Corinth, Thessalonica, Galatia, Philippi, Colossae, and Ephesus, which were part of the Eastern Roman Empire, was Greek. After Constantinople became the seat of the Eastern Roman Empire, it also began to develop as a church center. Since Constantinople was also called Byzantium, these churches came to be called Byzantine churches. The liturgy that developed here is called the Byzantine (Constantinopolitan) liturgy.

There are 14 individual churches that use this liturgical tradition.

- 1 Greek Melkite Church
- 2 Ukrainian Church
- 3 Romanian Church
- 4 Ruthenian Church
- 5 Slovak Church
- 6 Hungarian Church
- 7 Italo-Albanian Church
- 8 Albanian Church
- 9 Bulgarian Church
- 10 Greek Church
- 11 Russian Church
- 12 Belarusian Church

13 Macedonian Church

14 Križevci Church

### **Alexandrian Liturgical Family**

51. This liturgical tradition, which originated in Alexandria, was a major center of religious instruction. It is followed by three churches: the Coptic Church, the Ethiopian Church, and the Eritrean Church.

### **Armenian Liturgy Family**

52. The Armenian Church, which separated from other churches and grew independently from 384 A.D., functioned in an independent style.

### **Syriac Church Tradition and Liturgical Families**

53. The churches that have adopted Syriac as their liturgical language are called Syriac Churches. These are also among the Eastern Churches. There are two liturgical families in the Syriac Church tradition. The Antiochian Liturgy, which uses the West Syriac language, and the East Syriac Liturgy, which uses the East Syriac language.

### **Antiochian Liturgy**

54. Antioch was a center of church activity and religious education from the beginning. The Antiochian Liturgy that developed here is called the West Syriac Liturgy based on the language of worship. There are three churches that continue the West Syriac Liturgy tradition: the West Syriac Church, the Maronite Church, and the Syro-Malankara Church.

### **East Syriac (Chaldean) Liturgical Family**

55. This is a liturgy that was formed outside the Roman Empire. It was formed in Edessa, which was a famous religious center at that time. Linguistically, it is known as the East Syriac Liturgy. This liturgical tradition, which was formed in the Semitic culture and language that was the cradle of Christianity itself, is continued by two churches that adopted the faith from St. Thomas: the Syro-Malabar Church and the Chaldean Church.

### **XIII Liturgical Books of the Syro-Malabar Church**

56. The liturgical books of the Syro-Malabar Church are as follows:

The Taksa of the Holy Eucharist (the Common Order of the Eucharist, the Propria, and the Anaphora)

The Books for Proclamations

The Old Testament Proclamation (Kerian)

The Epistle Proclamation (Egerta)

The Proclamation of the Gospel (Evangalion)

The Taksa of the Sacraments (Baptism, Anointing of the Sick, Reconciliation, confirmation, Marriage)

The Pontifical (ordination, blessings of the Church, Altar, tabernacle and of Anointing Oil)

Prayers on the days of Lord's Feasts (Nativity, Holy Week)

Liturgy of Hours (Ordinary Order and Order of the Feasts)

The Feast Services (Special Services of the Feast Celebrations)  
The Services for the Dead  
Sacramental prayers (Blessings Services, Consecration ceremony of the Religious)

**Footnotes:**

1. A. G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, Vol. I, Minnesota 1987.
  2. Benedict XVI, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco 2000.
  3. W.C. Van Unnik (ed.), *Nestorian Questions on the Administration of the Eucharist by Išō'yahb IV: A Contribution to the History of the Eucharist in the Eastern Church*, Haarlem 1937.
  4. John Damascus, *Accurate exposition of the orthodox faith*, PG 94, Paris 1864.
  5. A. J. Chupungco, *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, Minnesota 1997.
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