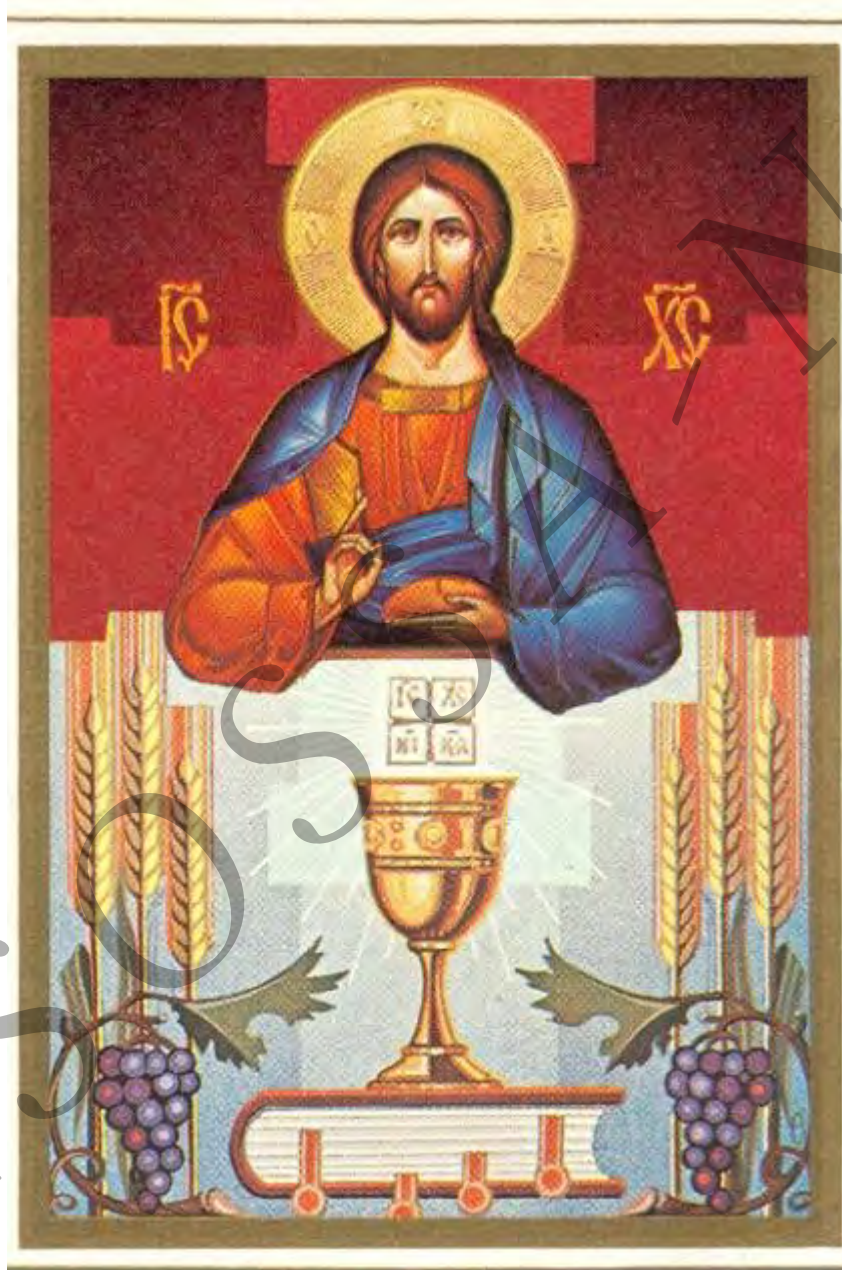


Malankara Syrian Orthodox Sunday School Association
Of North America



The Holy Eucharist 101
Class VIII Supplement



MALANKARA ARCHDIOCESE

of the Syrian Orthodox Church in North America

(Under the Holy Apostolic Throne of Antioch and All the East)

Archbishop Mor Titus Yeldho
Patriarchal Vicar

By the Grace of God



No.46/11

April 29, 2011

Blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ to our beloved Clergy, Sunday School teachers, parents and students.

Spiritual enrichment of our children is one of the most vital responsibilities given by our God Almighty. In Psalm 127:3, we read "Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him". We encourage our children to spend quality time each day in family prayer and communication with parents, which will help you to have a good relationship with our heavenly Father and your parents.

In the past couple of years we have been planning to revise our current curriculum and add the liturgical aspect of our Holy Church to help our children in the North American Diocese to participate in the Holy Services in a meaningful manner. In the recent survey conducted among the teachers of our Sunday school also, this was a main suggestion, so that our children will have a better understanding of our Liturgy.

We hope that this Supplementary text will help our children to know more about our Church services and to gain the spiritual nourishment from them. While we introduce this new supplementary texts to the 8th, 9th and 10th grade, we remind you that this is only a short and simple introduction of the Holy Liturgy. We advise you to consider this as a motivation during your Sunday School years, to seek the advanced study materials for better understanding in future.

In closing, we extend our paternal blessings to you and all who have contributed to the writing and publication of this supplementary texts for our Sunday School. May God bless you.

+ Archbishop Titus Yeldho

Preface

***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,
with all your strength and with all your mind"***

(Deuteronomy 6:5, Luke 10:27)

Truly it is with humility and gladness that we release a supplement to our Class VIII textbook. Time and time again, students and spiritual leaders have approached the Sunday School board to provide educational material on the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. It is through this earnest request and yearning for knowledge from our students that this supplemental study became a reality. The source of this text is the beautifully written literary work The Queen of Sacraments by Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Mani Rajan Corepiscopus.

First and foremost, we thank God Almighty for His guidance in this work. There are many extraordinary people that provided their talents to enable the team to release such a text. We could not have come this far without the prayers, love, and support of our beloved spiritual shepherd and Archbishop, His Eminence Mor Titus Yeldho. His Eminence spent many long hours providing valuable insight and comments for the text, our sincere and heartfelt thanks to the commitment and sacrifice for our children. We would like to thank Rev. Fr. Dileesh Alias for his devoted services for the Sunday School. Alongside Thirumeni in many review sessions for Sunday School is Dr. T.V. John who has embraced the position of Sunday School director last July with dedication and determination to make results happen.

In addition, there are several people that offered their time and energy to the completion of the study, we extend our gratitude to Rev. Dn. Martin Babu, Rev. Dn. Shawn Shaji, and Miss Tina Geevarghese for sharing honest, critical, feedback to provide a valuable study for our young people. We would also like to take this opportunity and thank St. Ignatious, Dallas for sharing their Sunday School program's Supplemental text. As part of the study, we wanted a way to bring the beauty of our Church's liturgy to life - based upon the expression "a picture is worth 1000 words" - we are hoping that the photos throughout the text accomplished this vision. It indeed was a team effort and "each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace" (1 Peter 4:10) was fulfilled and witnessed through this work.

Dear Students and Class VIII Teachers,

Often our young people, due to the lack of readily available resources, attend the Holy Eucharist without realizing the magnitude and wonder of the sacrament. We hope and pray that this text will be a stepping stone to provide you with a fruitful learning experience and instill an interest in our Church. The concepts in the text are the traditions and liturgy gifted to us by our Heavenly Father. With the encouragement and support of our Clergy, teachers, and parents, we can provide an appreciation and understanding for our young people to carry on the beauty of the Orthodox faith in the generations to come. May God continue to abundantly bless each of us.

His servant,

~jm

Table of Contents

LESSON 1: HOLY EUCHARIST INTRODUCTION	5
Introduction	5
The four components of the Holy Eucharist	6
Items used in the Holy Eucharist	6
LESSON 2: THE PREPARATION FOR THE HOLY EUCHARIST	10
Preparation of the Celebrant and the Congregation	10
Preparatory Prayers	11
LESSON 3: PART 1 - PUBLIC CELEBRATION	13
Mass of the Catechumens	13
LESSON 4: PART 2: PRE-ANAPHORA.....	16
Prayers	16
Blessing of the Censer	16
Nicene Creed	17

LESSON 1: HOLY EUCHARIST (HOLY QURBONO) INTRODUCTION

Objective: Understand and appreciate the importance of the Holy Eucharist, the 4 components to the Holy Eucharist, and items used to celebrate the sacrament.

In our Holy Syrian Orthodox Church the beauty and bliss of life is worship and the Holy Qurbono is the central act of worship. In the Holy Services of our Church the whole person – all the senses - are involved. Seeing the heavenly experience unfold in the altar, hearing the melodious chants and hymns of the Celebrant and congregation, smelling the fragrant aroma of incense which purifies the body and spirit, the gentle touch of our fellow brethren during the kiss of peace, and the sweet taste of the body and blood of our dear Lord Jesus Christ emulates the most breathtaking heavenly experience. Hence a person should come with a prepared heart and mind to participate in the Holy Sacrament. The Sacrament is only as meaningful as the effort put forth by the individual. Participating in the Sacrament by singing the hymns, meditating in the prayers, and responding will definitely transpire to an amazing and unique experience.

The Holy Church is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the life of the Church is the life in Christ. Our Lord established the Holy *Qurbono* as the New Testament sacrifice replacing the animal sacrifice of the Old Testament and entrusted the Holy Apostles to celebrate in remembrance of His death and resurrection. Through this sacrament we receive the body and blood of our Lord. St. Paul advises us to receive the Holy Communion with the sufficient preparation and seriousness or otherwise it will be a sin (1 Corinthians 11: 27 – 30). Just like medicine for the ailment of the body, Holy Communion helps us in our spiritual growth and our fight against Satan. Therefore regular attendance in the Church services is vital for us.

In the Holy Church all the sacraments including Holy Qurbana are celebrated by both the Clergy and the people. Both the Clergy and the faithful are essential to administering the sacraments. Hence all are required to learn the liturgy of the Holy Church. Those who are attending the Holy Services need to understand the implied meaning, symbols, and representation in order to experience its full richness. If the participants are aware of the greatness of the Holy Liturgy they will attend the services with the required respect and politeness and will take it seriously. The lack of proper understanding of the Holy Services is the main cause of certain people leaving the Holy Church under the influences of new teaching.

The Holy Church teaches that for salvation one has to partake in five of the seven sacraments – Holy Baptism, Holy Mooron, Holy *Qurbono*, Holy Confession and Anointing of the sick (Marriage and Priesthood are optional).

The Holy Eucharist (Holy *Qurbono*) is a sacrament that enables us to participate and commemorate the birth, public ministry, death, resurrection and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **By obeying His command "Do this in remembrance of me" we become participants of His sacrifice** (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-19.). The word *Qurbono* means 'offering of sacrifice'. Holy Qurbono/Holy Communion is the sacrament which gives completeness to all sacraments and therefore it is called 'the Queen of the Sacraments'. Holy *Qurbono* also is a thanksgiving service. In fact the primary aim of celebrating Holy *Qurbono* is to thank God for all His blessings and mercies and to dedicate ourselves to a life of love for God and all His children.

Essentially Holy *Qurbono* is the core of Christian worship and life. Jesus proclaims "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, abides in me and I in him" (John 6:56). Holy *Qurbono* is the 'bread of life'. When we receive the Holy *Qurbono*, our Lord who conquered death, sin and Satan, renews His dwelling in us.

THE 4 COMPONENTS OF HOLY QURBONO

There are 4 components in the Holy Qurbono – the Celebrant, the sacramental items, the Holy Liturgy (Anaphora/Qurbono Taksas) and the recipient (congregation).

- (1) The Celebrant is a prelate (Patriarch, Catholicose, or Bishop) or Priest (God is the actual Celebrant and the prelate/Priest act as His ambassador). Deacons and Altar Assistant help the chief Celebrant in the Holy Qurbono and other services.
- (2) A list and description of the items used in the Holy Qurbono are given below. However, the primary sacramental items for the Holy Qurbono are the leavened bread and wine (mixed with water). In the Holy Eucharist, the bread and wine after the consecrating become the body and blood of our Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- (3) The liturgy of the Holy Qurbono is known as Anaphora or Qurbono Taksas. The Holy Church has several Taksas (Orders), including that of Taksas of St. James, brother of our Lord, Taksas of St. Dionysus Bar Salibi, Taksas of St. Chrysostom. In the Holy Church there are more than 80 existing Taksas.
- (4) The recipient (congregation) – The preparation and active participation of the recipients is covered in lesson 2.

ITEMS USED IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Vilo (thirasheela) - This curtain separates the sanctuary from the Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:36, 40:3). When this curtain representing the firmament between Earth and sky opens we visualize the opening of heaven.



Thronos (Altar Table): *Thronos* which means "throne" located at the center of the sanctuary represents 'Tomb of Christ'. The *Thronos* is often referred to as the 'Table of Life' because we find the bread of life on it. It is also called the 'Tomb of the glorified Lord' because the bread and wine placed upon it are transformed into the Body and Blood of our resurrected Lord.



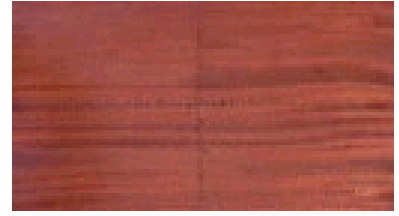
Sleebo (Cross) - The cross placed in the middle of the *Thronos* symbolizes our Lord's sacrifice on Mount Golgotha. The Cross is the symbol of peace, victory, and salvation. It is also described as the weapon in the struggle against Satan.



Candles - The twelve candles on the altar represent the 12 Apostles. Candle light symbolizes the presence of God. Jesus proclaimed "I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). The melting of wax reminds us that we should be prepared to sacrifice ourselves to lighten others. Candles made of animal fats are not permitted to be used in the church.



Tabilitho (Tablet) - This is a piece of wooden slab placed at the center of the *Thronos* and is covered with cloth. Since the *tabilitho* is anointed with the Holy Chrism (Mooron) it is kept covered and should be handled carefully by a Priest or full deacon. It is consecrated with Holy Chrism by a Bishop during the consecration of a church. The *tabilitho* will have inscription of the details by whom and when the consecration of the *tabilitho* was done. The Holy *Qurbono* can be celebrated any where with this slab. Without the *tabilitho* the *Qurbono* cannot be celebrated. *Tabilitho* symbolizes the cross on which our Lord was crucified. The *Qurbono* can only be celebrated on the same *tabilitho* once a day. During the Holy *Qurbono* the paten and chalice are placed over it.



Virikootam (Tricolor spread) - This is a rectangular piece of cloth covering the *tabilitho*. It is made of red, green, and white/yellow pieces of cloth. The red represents the universe, green is the world and white/yellow is the Holy Church.



Chithola (Altar cloth): The colored cloth usually divided into three parts, symbolizes the Holy Trinity. It is used for covering the front part of the *Thronos*.



Dargo (Step): - This is a foot step in front of the *Thronos* used by the Priest to stand during the Anaphora after the Nicene Creed.

Kaso (Chalice) and Peelaso (Paten) - The Chalice holds the Eucharistic wine and the Paten holds the Eucharistic bread. The Paten and Chalice recalls the mystery of the Last Supper, the bread represents the Body of Christ and the wine for His precious Blood.



Cabalana (cover) - The two square shaped cloth called Cabalana are used to cover the Chalice and the Paten when they are not covered by the *shushafo*. This cover symbolizes the shroud that covered the body of Christ.

Kaukbo (Star) - Star (cross) shaped frame made of two hoops of metal is placed over the paten to hold the paten cover without touching the bread. It symbolizes the Star of Nativity, the star that stood above the manger where Christ was born.



Mshamshanitho (bowl) - This is used by the Priest to mix wine with water and also for cleaning his fingers while handling the Holy Body and Blood.



Tharvodo (Spoon) - The small spoon used to administer the Holy Eucharist from the chalice.



Gmurto (cushion) - A sponge of fine texture used to cleanse the sacramental vessels. It symbolizes the sponge which the soldiers used to give Christ the sour wine during His passion on the Cross.

Shushafo (Veil) - This white veil is used to cover the Paten and Chalice. It represents the fact that the Divine Mysteries are hidden from the understanding of men. The divinity and humanity united in Christ, the Divine Word, is beyond human comprehension just the same way as the transformation of bread and wine into flesh and blood of Christ is beyond our perception. It symbolizes the stone rolled over the Tomb of Christ and also the rock of flint which sent forth 12 streams of water for the 12 tribes of Israel.



The Lectern (Gospel stand or Evengelion table) - This is the pulpit which symbolizes the heights of Mount Sinai from where God spoke to Moses and handed him the stone tablets (Exodus 34:2). Therefore the Book of Gospel, which points to Christ Himself, is placed on the Gospel stand. It also represents the second throne where God the Word is present.



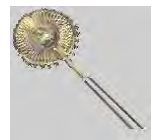
Dhoopakutty (Censer) - It has a lower half and upper half, 4 chains and 12 bells. The lower cup of the censer represents the earth and the upper cup the heaven. The coal in it represents the sinners. The chains represent the Holy Trinity. The first chain stands for God the Father. The second and third chains represent the human and divine nature of God, the Son. The fourth chain represents God, the Holy Spirit. The 12 bells represent the 12 Apostles of Christ. The four chains have several links representing the saints, prophets, emissaries, who led the people of God from the beginning preparing man to be worthy of the new Covenant with God. The fire signifies the Holy Spirit by whose contact the black coal shines and glows representing purification of the sinners to become the children of God. The incense shows the grace of the Holy Trinity and cleansing of sins. As the smoke goes up to the high so also our prayers should go high (Psalm 141:2).



Kai mani (Hand Bell) - The altar assistants use the bell to proclaim and draw attention of the congregation to the important occasions of the Holy Eucharist.



Marvahtho (Fan) - A round shaped silver object with several bells mounted on a long pole. In the center of the fans, the seraphic face and wings are represented. The fans symbolize the presence of angels around the altar. The sounds represent the seraphim and the flutter of their wings around the mysteries. It is carried in processions and used at the most solemn parts of the Holy *Qurbano* to convey the heavenly experience.



Lahmo: The Eucharistic bread is made of wheat flour, pure water, salt, leaven and olive oil. Olive oil is used on the wooden mold for imprinting the pattern which represents the 12 Apostles. The leaven used for preparing the bread is a portion of the leaven used in a previous preparation and can be traced to the leaven (dough) which was used by the disciples of our Lord to make the bread at the Last Supper.



Questions:

- 1. Explain the importance of Holy Qurbano.**
- 2. List and explain the 4 components of the Holy Eucharist.**
- 3. Name and explain 3 of the items used in the Holy Eucharist.**
- 4. Give the meaning of the following:**

(a)Thronos

(b)Tabalitho

(c)Dargo

(d)Kaukbo

(e)Tharvodo

(f) Lahmo

LESSON 2: THE PREPARATION FOR THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Objective: Learn the preparation involved for the Holy Eucharist by the Celebrant and the Congregation.

The Holy *Qurbono* has two phases – the preparation for the Holy *Qurbono* and the public celebration of the Holy *Qurbono*. The Preparation phase has 2 parts – preparation of the participants (Celebrants/congregation) and completion of preparatory prayers leading up to the Public Celebration of the Holy *Qurbono*.

1) PREPARATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS (CELEBRANTS/CONGREGATION)

- ❖ **Prayer and meditation:** The participants should spend some time to meditate and through prayer become filled with thankfulness and repentance.
- ❖ **Reconciliation with brethren:** This is an essential preparatory factor, without reconciliation with our brethren, we cannot get reconciled with God and dedicate ourselves to God's will (Matthew 5: 23 – 24).
- ❖ **Abstinence:** Those that are participating in the Holy Communion should begin the preparation the previous evening by making an earnest effort to avoid worldly things such as video games, unnecessary conversation, and other entertainments which distance us from God. It is important to concentrate on praying, reading the Bible, meditating and asking for the forgiveness of sins.

*Note: As we saw earlier, St. Paul teaches us to receive Holy Communion with adequate preparation and self examination (1 Corinthians 11: 27-30). Hence after spending time in prayer and meditation and having done self examination one can receive Holy Communion. In some churches, the Priest offers a small prayer to those that are coming to receive Holy Communion. Holy Confession is a sacrament of absolution which is also perfected by the Holy *Qurbono* (James 5: 14-15). Holy Confession should be undertaken by a person when he/she is aware of any sins that need to be confessed. The Holy Church encourages its members to partake in confession as often as possible.

- ❖ **Entering the Church and *Madbaho*:** When we enter the church the following prayer is to be said "With reverence will I enter thy house and offer my vows to Thee" (Psalm 61:8). Those that enter the altar shall say the special prayers before entering the madbhaho.



- ❖ **Preparation of the Bread and Wine:** On the eve of Holy *Qurbono*, the dough for the bread should be prepared by combining water, salt, wheat flour and leaven (fermented dough reserved for producing fermentation in a new batch of dough). The Eucharist bread is baked on the same day as the Holy *Qurbono*. Specially prepared mass wine is to be used for the Holy *Qurbono*.

2) PREPARATORY PRAYERS:

Thuyobo (Preparation) - This is the set of preparatory prayers preceding the Holy *Qurbono* at which time the sanctuary is concealed by the veil. In the Holy Bible we see 2 orders of Priesthood, one is the Order of Melchizedek (Genesis 14) and the other is of Aaron (Exodus 28). The Priesthood in the Holy Church is that of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom both these Priesthoods were united. Hence in the preparation part the Priest follows both orders.

Order of Melchizedek: The first service is called that of Melchizedek, the Priest of the most High, who offered to God bread and wine. Melchizedek is described in the Bible as the king of Salem and as the Priest of the most high God (Genesis 14:18). It was with Melchizedek that we see the Priestly mediation in the worship of God for the first time. Through this order we are reminded that the sacrifice of Christ is for all mankind in the same way as Melchizedek offered sacrifice for all men. ("You are a Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek"- Psalms 110:4, Hebrews 5:6, 7:1-3, 11-17). The preparation begins with prayers of repentance (Psalm 51). The Celebrant wearing a black cassock after the required prayers enters the *madbaho* turns to the faithful asking *shubkono* (forgiveness) and prays to make him worthy to offer the sacrifice.



The Celebrant then walks around the *Thronos* and kisses the four corners of the *Thronos*. *The Priest* steps onto *dargo*, kissing the altar thrice, the paten and chalice are arranged on the tabalitho. The bread is placed in paten, and the chalice is prepared with equal water and wine. This represents **the moment when the soldier pierced Jesus' side** with a spear bringing a sudden flow of blood and water (John 19:34). The Priest after arranging the bread and wine covers the paten and chalice, steps down, kisses the thronos in the middle and completes the set of prayers of penitence.

Order of Aaron – The second service is called that of Aaron symbolizing the offerings of Aaron and his sons as mentioned in Leviticus 1. When Aaron and his sons were selected as Priests “It was God Himself who ordered Moses to make sacred garments for Aaron to give dignity and honor” (Exodus 28: 2). Therefore the clergy in our Holy Church also dresses with special vestments during the Holy Sacraments. The Celebrant, after wearing the proper vestments and kneeling before the altar, prays for purification of his organs. The Celebrant then stands up and ascends the altar step (*dargo*). He takes the covers of the paten and chalice off and then lifts them up, right hand over the left in the shape of a Cross and says a general prayer and recites separate prayers for the Mother of God, the Saints, for the sick, for the penitent, for the faithful departed, and for the Celebrant’s relatives. After the prayers, the chalice and paten are covered with the veil (*Shushafo*) and the Priest censes the Holy Mysteries. The order of Aaron is concluded by *huthomo* meaning ‘a prayer of conclusion, “*qaumo*” (which is a set of prayers including the Trisagion and the Lord’s prayer), and the Nicene Creed. While these prayers are said by the Priest inaudibly in the concealed sanctuary, the congregation completes prayers until the sixth hour (noon) and the deacon reads the lesson from the Old Testament for the day.



Questions:

1. How should the congregation prepare to attend and participate in the Holy Eucharist?
2. Why do the Priests wear special clothes for the Holy Sacraments?
3. List and explain the 2 orders of the preparatory prayers completed by the Celebrant before the Holy Eucharist.

LESSON 3: PUBLIC CELEBRATION – Part 1 Mass of the Catechumens

Objective: To learn and understand the different components of the Public Celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

The Mass of the Catechumens was primarily intended for the new believers who were not yet baptized. This part consists of procession around the *thronos*, the Trisagion, epistle reading and the Gospel.

- The *thirasheela* concealing the sanctuary is drawn aside to proclaim the birth of the New Testament age and opening of heaven to the faithful. The Priest begins the public celebration of the Holy Qurbano saying (*Mariyam Dheelethok...*): "Mary who gave birth to thee and John who baptized thee shall pray for us and have mercy on upon us". The Priest offering incense moves in a procession around the *thronos* along with the deacons. The Priest represents Christ, the high Priest, the deacon/thurifer holding the candle and walking backwards represents John the Baptist who prepared the way for our Lord. The procession signifies the public ministry of our Lord. The incense symbolizes the purification of the altar. A hymn referred to as *manisso*, meaning "responsory," authored by St. Severius, Patriarch of Antioch (c. AD. 460-538), is sung by the church during the procession. This hymn (*Nin Mathav.../By thy mother's earnest prayers...*) reaffirms our faith in the incarnation of God, the Son, who is one substance with the Father and Holy Spirit.



- Following the procession, the Priest initiates the Trisagion (Holy art thou o God...), and the congregation joins him.
 - Every prayer of our church starts with a Trisagion which is addressed to our Lord Jesus Christ. It instills in us repentance, humility and unworthiness.
 - The Trisagion praises the Lord thrice--a tradition that follows the heavenly worship mentioned by Isaiah (Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8). It is said that angels sang the Trisagion as Joseph and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus Christ for burial. Another tradition of the Church tells us that the Trisagion was the reply of the angels to the mocking crowd at the site of crucifixion heard by Nicodemus. As the crowd mocked Christ calling Him a betrayer, the angels proclaimed "Holy art Thou O God." As they taunted Him to come down from the Cross if He was powerful enough, the angels proclaimed "Holy art Thou Almighty" and as they mocked Him asking why He could not save Himself from death, the angels sang, "Holy art Thou Immortal." And Nicodemus and Joseph of Aramathia on behalf of the believers cried out, "Thou who was crucified for us have mercy on us."
- After the Trisagion the Priest and the congregation chant *kurielaison* thrice (Greek word meaning 'Lord have mercy upon us.'). It is said several times during the Qurbono.
- Lections for the day (from the calendar of readings) are then read first at the north and then at the south side of the sanctuary. While reading the lections, the deacons stand on the chancel step. Stepping down from the sanctuary symbolizes the fact that the Apostles were sent by heavenly authority, and the readings at the north and south sides symbolize the fact that they spread the Gospel in all corners of the world.
 - The hymn (*Boovilashayshum.../Those Apostles chosen...*) is sung before the first lection. The hymn (based on Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 1:8 and John 1:1,2) proclaims that the Apostles were sent by God. The reading is from the book of *Acts of the Apostles* or from the general epistles of Apostles other than St. Paul. At the beginning and at the end of the lection, the congregation is addressed *Habibai* meaning 'My beloved.'
 - The hymn, (*Paulose sleeha.../Paul the blessed...*) is sung prior to the second lection. This hymn is based on St. Paul's letter to the Galatians 1: 6-9 and is an exhortation to believers to be steadfast in the Gospel they received. The second reading is from any one of the letters of St. Paul. The congregation is addressed *Ahai* meaning 'My Brethren' at the beginning and at the end of the lection.



- After the reading of the second lection, the congregation sings (Halleluiah, halleluiah...) preparing to receive the Gospel. During this hymn the Priest turns westward in a ceremonial manner with lit candles, bells and *marvahtso* are used in reminding us of the significance of the occasion.
- The thurifer offering incense urges the congregation to listen to the Gospel with calmness and modesty. Here the deacon is proclaiming the Biblical message that faith is transmitted through listening (Romans 10:9, 17, Acts 16:31). The Gospel is read with candles lit on either side symbolic of the glowing Word--our Lord who became the light of the world. These lit candles represents the Cherubim with flaming sword (Genesis 3:24). The Priest introduces the reading of the particular day after greeting the congregation with peace.



- While saying the introduction the Priest turns to the altar and makes the sign of the cross on himself. This act is an affirmation of the belief that the words to be read from the Gospel are the words of our Lord who is embodied in the bread and wine of the Holy Eucharist set on the altar. He then faces the congregation, blesses them by making the sign of the cross and then kisses the Book of Gospel and starts reading.
- After the reading of the Gospel, the congregation sings a hymn which is appropriate for the day (Sundays, feast days etc.). There are several hymns available, the hymn that is commonly sung is, (Yajamanan/Blessed are those servants...)
 - This hymn is based on the parable of the faithful servants whom their master finds working diligently on his return (Luke 12:37). The hymn reminds us of Christ's promise, "Fortunate are those whom the Lord finds working faithfully on His second coming in His vineyard—the Church. Lord the Father shall seat them for the feast--the gift of heavenly experience—and the Son shall serve them, and they shall be crowned victors by the Holy Paraclete/Holy Spirit (which means comforter) who plait for them the crowns".

Questions:

1. What does the procession at the beginning of the Public Celebration signify?
2. Explain the origin of the Trisagion.

LESSON 4: PUBLIC CELEBRATION – PART 2 PRE-ANAPHORA

Objective: Learn the components of the Pre-Anaphora (prayers, blessing of the censor, and Nicene Creed) portion of the Holy Eucharist.

In the early church, the catechumens were required to leave the church after the reading of the Gospel and the sermon which followed immediately after. The prayers following this are called the Pre-Anaphora. Rites of pre-anaphora include a set of prayers and blessing of the censor followed by the recital of the Nicene creed.

Prayers: Promiyon, Hoosoyo and Sedro

- *Promiyon*/preface – This prayer of *Promiyon* remembers the great sacrifice of our Lord and beseeches Him to make us worthy of offering the sacrifice.
 - Following the *Promiyon* the Priest places incense and unfolds the left corner of the *Shushafo*. It is said that the *Shushafo* symbolizes the stone which sealed Christ's tomb and the act of unfolding symbolizes the revelation of the resurrected Christ to humanity. The deacon then censens the *thronos*, all who are in the *madbaho*, and the faithful.
- The *Promiyon* is followed by *Hoosoyo*, meaning propitiatory prayer. It is an invariable prayer. The Priest, on behalf of the penitent congregation, beseeches the Lord for mercy and absolution. Christ is described as the absolver and the absolution, the Celebrant as well as the offering. This is the general absolution prayer offered by the Celebrant on behalf of the whole congregation.
- The *Hoosoyo* is followed by the *Sedro*, which is an expiatory prayer. Most of the texts in use for *Sedro* reflect on the fundamental tenets of our faith regarding Christ's life on earth, His incarnation and redemptive passion. There are several sets of *Promiyon* and *Sedro* that are in common use. These prayers are all reminders of our sinful nature and beseech the Lord to make us worthy of offering the sacrifice. The Priest concludes the *Sedro* by praying for the remission of debts and forgiveness of sins in both worlds.

Blessing of the Censer: The prayers for the blessing of the censor are proclamations of the faith in Trinity- The worship of Trinity reminds us of the three periods—the period of Old Testament, the period of Christ's ministry, and the period in which we are living.



- The Priest stands face to face with the deacon holding the censer between them.
 - The Priest puts incense in the censer, grasps one of the chains of the censer blesses it and says **Holy is the Holy Father...**
 - Grasping **two** (signifies both the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ) chains and making the sign of the cross over them he proclaims: "Holy is the Holy Son."
 - Then he grasps the last chain and, again blesses it saying Holy is the Living Holy Spirit.
- The three proclamations are comparable to the Trisagion. While the Trisagion confesses its proclamations to Lord Jesus Christ, these three proclamations are a doctrinal confession of the faith in Trinity. Absolution is completed by the Holy Trinity. The Apostles and the disciples, who enabled men to be worthy of partaking in the heavenly Mysteries (represented by the bells and links of the chains—symbolic links between heaven and earth), are our mediators in receiving this absolution.
- After censuring the sanctuary the Priest hands over the censor to the deacon who censes it to the people and returns to the altar. This signifies Christ coming in to the world and bringing to all mankind the infinite love of His Father by offering up Himself as a sacrifice for us all and returning to the Father reconciling heaven and earth.

Nicene Creed: The Nicene Creed is recited after the blessing of the censer. It is a confession of Faith as proclaimed by the 318 Fathers of the early Church in 325 AD at the Synod convened in Nicea and amended in the later Ecumenical Synods. As the Creed is being chanted a deacon goes about the nave of the Church with the censer and returns to the altar. This act signifies the goodness of the Holy Trinity which goes forth from the Godhead, but is not changed or diminished. It likewise represents God the Word, who came down from heaven and become an incense of reconciliation, offering Himself to us to the Father and making atonement for all humanity by bringing us back to His Father without being changed or losing His Divinity.



- While the Creed is recited, the Priest washes the tips of his fingers in water praying to the Lord to wash away his sins and make him worthy to handle the divine Mysteries and to offer the living sacrifice. This washing reminds the congregation to partake in the sacrament with a clean conscience.
- The Priest asks for forgiveness and requests all to pray to the Lord to accept his offerings. The Priest then kneels before the altar and beseeches the Lord for remission of sins and acceptance of his offering. At this time the Priests remembers the names of those for whom prayers have been requested.

➤ **The need for affirmation of faith:**

- Faith involves belief in objects that are invisible and concepts that are indescribable. Apostle Paul advises us "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for He who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). As the Christian Church in the early centuries began to experience schisms and heresies by the influence of false teachers and challenged of its basic tenets, it was necessary to formulate a Creed to reaffirm the true faith of the Church.
- St. Basilius of Caesarea (330-379 A.D.) observes that the faith of the Church depends both on the Holy Bible and the Apostolic traditions. The creed of the Church which was formulated by the Synod of Nicea came to be an inseparable part of all sacraments and prayers. It is a solemn affirmation of the faith of the Church.
- It is very important to know that the Nicene Creed was formulated even before the Church determined the books of the New Testament. No one can refute the Nicene Creed without denying the New Testament. It is recognized as the proclamation of the Christian faith of the Holy Church.

Major Tenets of the Nicene Creed: The Holy Trinity, The Son, The Holy Spirit, and The Church.

(a) Doctrine regarding the Holy Trinity: Through the New Testament we get a clear picture of the Holy Trinity which consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

- **One True God** - The first line of the Creed is a proclamation of monotheism - the doctrine that there is but **one** God. (You shall have no other gods besides me - Exodus 20:3). Though there are three persons in the Holy Trinity there is only one God-head.

(b) Doctrine regarding the Son: As the Father is from the beginning so is the Son. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This Son, the second person in the Holy Trinity humbled Himself and became man for our salvation (Philippians 2:6-8). He took His body in the womb of St. Mary by the Holy Spirit while she remained a virgin. This is the true mystery of incarnation that both God and man were brought in to union in one being, Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 3:16). The Nicene Creed reaffirms the faith that the incarnate God suffered, crucified, died, buried and rose again. The Church is expecting the eternal king who comes in the glory to judge all and in world to come.

(c) Doctrine regarding the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is one of the persons in the Holy Trinity who is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son. It is the Holy Spirit who spoke through the prophets and apostles and who teaches and guides the Church today.

(d) Doctrine regarding the Church: The Creed professes the 4 fundamental characteristics of the Holy Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

One – the Church is One “there is one body and one spirit – one Lord, one Baptism, etc.” (Ephesians 4: 4 – 6).

Holy – the Church is Holy because it is the Holy body of our Lord. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and the Holy Sacraments which are administered through the Church it is Holy.

Catholic (universal) – The Church is universal in nature without geographical boundary. It refers to the wholeness and totality of all true believers in Jesus as the Christ. The Church as the Body of Christ is not limited to a time, place, race or culture.

Apostolic – The Church is Apostolic because of its Apostolic inheritance and its Apostolic faith. Our Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church maintains the right ordination keeping the pure faith which follows and teaches the message from the Holy Apostles and carries out the Sacraments.

“We, the Syrian Orthodox, are all one in our Lord Jesus Christ, one in our Church, which is the mystical body of Christ and one in our Holy Apostolic See of Antioch which represents the supreme spiritual authority in the Church. No matter how varied we are as people and as nationalities; how different the civilization we belong to and the languages we speak, we are one in our Apostolic patrimony, our religious doctrine, our Syriac language and supreme spiritual leadership. Our forefathers shed their blood for the sake of preserving these principles and securing liberty in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (H.H. Moron Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Essay on Identity of the Syrian Orthodox Church)

Attached below is the Biblical reference of the Nicene Creed to prove that the faith of the Apostolic Church is strongly Biblical.

Nicene Creed

We believe in (Romans 10: 8-10; 1 John 4: 15)
One God (Deuteronomy 6: 4, Ephesians 4: 6)
The Father (Matthew 6: 9)
Almighty, (Exodus 6: 3)
Maker of heaven and earth, (Genesis 1:1)
and of all things visible and invisible; (Colossians 1:15-16)
And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, (Acts 11: 17)
the only-begotten (John 1: 18; 3: 16)
Son of God (Matthew 14: 33; 16: 16)
begotten of the Father before all worlds; (John 1: 2)
Light of Light (Psalm 27: 1; John 8: 12; Matthew 17: 2,5)
very God of very God, (John 17: 1-5)
begotten, not made; being of the same substance with the Father, (John 10: 30)
and by whom all things were made; (Hebrews 1: 1-2)
Who for us men, and for our salvation (1 Timothy 2: 4-5)
came down from the heaven (John 6: 33)
And was incarnate by the Holy Virgin Mary, mother of God, by the holy spirit (Luke 1: 35, 43)
Became man. (John 1: 14)
And was Crucified for us (Mark 15: 25; 1 Corinthians 15: 3)
in the days Pontius Pilate, (John 19: 1)
Suffered, (Mark 8: 31)
died, and was buried; (Luke 23: 53; 1 Corinthians 15: 4)
And the third day rose again according to His will, (Luke 24: 1; 1 Cor. 15: 4)
And ascended into heaven, (Luke 24: 51; Acts 1: 10)
and sits at the right hand of the His Father; (Mark 16: 19; Acts 7: 55)
and shall come again in His great glory (Matthew 24: 27)
to judge both the living and the dead, (Acts 10: 42; 2 Timothy 4: 1)
Whose kingdom shall have no end; (2 Peter 1: 11)
And in the one living Holy Spirit, (John 14: 26)
The life-giving (Genesis 1: 2)
Lord of all (Acts 5: 3-4)
Who proceeds from the Father, (John 15: 26)
And who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, (Matthew 3: 16-17)
Who spoke through the prophets and Apostles; (1 Samuel 19: 20; Ezekiel 11: 5)
In one, (Matthew 16: 18)
Holy, (1 Peter 2: 5, 9)
Catholic (Mark 16: 15)
and Apostolic Church; (Acts 2: 42; Ephesians 2: 19-22)
we confess one baptism for the remission of sins; (Ephesians 4: 5)
And look for the resurrection of the dead; (John 11: 24; 1 Cor. 15: 12-49)
And the new life in the world to come. (Mark 10: 29-30)
Amen. (Psalm 106: 48)

Questions:

- 1. Name the prayers that are included in the Pre-Anaphora portion of the Holy Eucharist?**
- 2. What does the blessing of the censor signify?**
- 3. What are the major tenets of the Nicene Creed?**

APPENDIX: PRAYERS

Prayer while entering the Church

With reverence will I enter thy house and offer my vows to Thee.

Prayers before Receiving Holy Communion

My God and my Lord, make me worthy to receive Thy Holy Body and life-giving precious blood for the eradication of my evil desires, and for the expulsion of my sinful deeds. Help me O God, through partaking these Holy Mysteries, for the remission of my debts, and forgiveness of my sins; and for the purification of my body and the enlightenment of my soul into life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers After Receiving Holy Communion

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, I have received Thy Holy Body and precious Blood unto remission of sins and for life eternal. May this Eucharist be unto me not for condemnation, but for the life and redemption; for joy, health, and gladness; and to make me worthy to stand at Thy right hand during Thy second coming, Amen.