VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS
A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS BETWEEN THE LATIN LITURGY AND THE SYRO MALANKARA LITURGY

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Research Master: Master of Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion

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This thesis is a comparative study on the Veneration of the Holy Cross in the liturgical texts and historical sources of the Roman Catholic Church and the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. The Holy Cross enjoys high esteem and devotion in the Catholic traditions and liturgies especially, in the Oriental Catholic tradition. This is very true is the context of the Syro Malankara Catholic tradition. The whole liturgy of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church in pregnant with the theological and symbolic meaning for the adoration of the Holy Cross.

This thesis focuses on the research question: what are the theological, symbolic and spiritual meanings and significance of the Holy Cross in the liturgy, in representing the paschal mysteries of Christ and re-presenting the economy of salvation. From the whole liturgy, I have only taken the liturgy of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the Good Friday liturgy for this research work. The aim of this research is to make an investigation into the prayers and rituals of the liturgical services of the Latin and Oriental traditions and to find out the theological and symbolic meaning of the image of the Holy Cross. The hypothesis for this research is that the Holy Cross manifests the message of divine revelation and effects the salutary gifts accomplished by Jesus on the cross.

The first chapter presents an investigation of the historical development of the liturgy of the Veneration of the Holy Cross. The investigation aims to find the unbroken chain of the veneration of the Holy Cross from the ancient Church to the present-day liturgy of the Church. This chapter gives a brief history on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the celebration of the Good Friday liturgy in Jerusalem and Rome. In the end, the first chapter also gives a succinct note on the liturgical reforms in connection with the Good Friday liturgy.

The second chapter gives the structural explanation, textual analysis and liturgical study on the Good Friday liturgy and the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the Latin liturgy. This chapter is a detailed study on the present-day liturgical celebration of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the Good Friday liturgy. In this chapter, special emphasis is given to the rite of the Veneration of the Holy Cross. After giving a brief description on the history of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy cross, this chapter makes a step-by-step theological analysis of the mass text of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Finally, this chapter ends with a detailed description of the text of the Passion liturgy of Good Friday.

The third chapter is the study on the veneration of the Holy Cross in the Syro Malankara Catholic liturgy. This chapter gives a brief description of the Lenten services, Divine Office and the Good Friday liturgy in the Syro Malankara tradition. In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the Syro Malankara tradition the chapter begins with a structural description of the Lenten rituals and Lenten liturgical practices. As the Syro Malankara spirituality is liturgically oriented, one may not understand the liturgy without a good knowledge of the spiritual practices of the tradition. After making a portrayal of the Lenten practices, this chapter offers the theological analysis of the liturgy of the hours and passion liturgy in a progressive manner. Eventually the third chapter ends with an elaborate description of the rite of the veneration of the Holy Cross and the burial service in the liturgy of Good Friday.

The fourth chapter offers the theological significance of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the liturgical celebration. This chapter makes a comparative analysis of the liturgical aspects of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the Latin and Malankara liturgy. This chapter elucidates the theological significance and meaning of the veneration of the Holy Cross. In this final chapter, we aim to show that the rite of the veneration of the Holy Cross has deep theological and ecclesial significance. The symbolic significance of the Holy Cross and its theological meanings are explained in an orderly manner. This final chapter ends with the reflection of Mar Ivanios’ writings on the Holy Cross and its pastoral significance.
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Leuven

May 31, 2017

Jobin Kuriakose (Fr. Samuel OIC)
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<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Eniyono</td>
<td>hymns with small different stanzas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethro</td>
<td>prayer of/with incense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutoomo</td>
<td>concluding prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyklo</td>
<td>nave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kestruma</td>
<td>place for choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolo</td>
<td>hymns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madbaho</td>
<td>sanctuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M’northa</td>
<td>wooden stand for the holy cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primion</td>
<td>preface (introductory prayer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedaro</td>
<td>series (of prayer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shubukono</td>
<td>reconciliation</td>
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<td>Holy Cross</td>
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<td>Soothro</td>
<td>compline</td>
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<td>Qyamtha</td>
<td>resurrection</td>
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

MOTIVATION

I was born and brought up in a traditional Malankara Syrian Catholic family. My active participation in the liturgical celebration of my parish and activities in the catechism and youth association ignited a desire for a deeper Christian life. Order of the Imitation of Christ, a religious congregation of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church gave me an opportunity to realize my priestly vocation as an answer to this desire for a deeper Christian life. I was very much attracted by the beautiful celebration of the Malankara Liturgy in the monastery. The meticulous liturgical observances in the monastery developed a taste for liturgical spirituality in my personal life. During the fourteen years of formation, I could experience the unique relationship between liturgy and spirituality. The formation in the monastery helped me to officiate the liturgical celebration in the parishes and seminary after my priestly ordination. Unlike the monastery, lay people's participation in the liturgy was passive and inactive. I could understand that the lay people did not have any knowledge about the liturgy they participated. Hence, I began to give them basic teachings on the liturgy. People often asked me questions on the symbolic meaning of icons, gestures, signs and symbols. I could answer them to an extent. However, once they learned about the liturgy, the liturgical celebration became real celebration from a mere celebration. This prompted me to learn deep on liturgy. The most important liturgical celebrations in the Malankara Catholic Church are all associated with the feast of our Lord. As the lay people do not have a background on the feasts there is a growing tendency to devalue and neglect these liturgical practices. It is in this context that we have undertaken the research on the Good Friday liturgy with a special focus on the veneration of the Holy Cross. The rite of veneration of the Holy Cross is a very significant ritual in the Good Friday liturgy of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. In order to have a comprehensive knowledge on this topic, a comparative study is employed with the Latin rite. There has not been any comparative study made on this topic earlier. The research aims to find the answers for the research question based on a particular hypothesis.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim of this research is to make an investigation and critical analysis into the prayers and rituals of the liturgical services of the Latin and Syro Malankara liturgies and to find out the theological and symbolical meaning of the image of Holy Cross. The research question of this project is: What are the theological, symbolic and spiritual meanings and significance of the Holy Cross in the Catholic liturgies, in representing the paschal mysteries of Christ and the economy of salvation? In order to attain this aim the particular ritual of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the liturgy of Good Friday is taken. However, this research also aims to elucidate the historical development and the symbolic meaning of the veneration of the Holy Cross. The leading hypothesis is that the Holy Cross reveals the mystery of salvation history in the liturgical celebration of the Church. From the main research question, we raise several sub-questions: What are the similarities and differences on the veneration of the Holy Cross in the Good Friday liturgy in the Latin liturgy and the Malankara Liturgy. From a pastoral perspective, how does the ritual of the veneration of the Holy Cross help the faithful realize their Christian Spirituality?
OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This thesis is structured into four chapters. The first chapter ‘Historical Evolution of the Veneration of the Holy Cross’ examines the brief history and ecclesiastical background of the veneration of the Holy Cross in different liturgical practices. The veneration of the Holy Cross is a practice that has originated from the beginning of Christianity. It is evident from the third-century liturgical practices and sermons of the Church Fathers. The veneration of the Holy Cross has a major significance in the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and in the liturgy of Good Friday. The first part explores the use of the symbol of the Holy Cross in ancient liturgy, prayers and arts. This part brings out the meaning of the Holy Cross and its development as a Christian symbol. The second part elucidates the history of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the East and West. The third part, presents the historical survey of the Good Friday practice in Jerusalem and Rome. The historical analysis is presented from a liturgical point of view so that it will reveal the theological implications in the following chapters.

The second chapter, ‘Veneration of the Holy Cross in the Latin liturgy’ is an exposition of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the Latin Church. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part analyzes and explores the significance of the Holy Cross in the Eucharistic liturgy of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the second part deals with the structural analysis of the Good Friday Passion liturgy. In the second part, a strong emphasis is given to the study on the rite of the veneration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday liturgy by making the analysis of the structure of the text of the Passion liturgy. A brief note of the liturgy of hours of Good Friday is also mentioned in this chapter.

The third chapter, ‘Veneration of the Holy Cross in the Syro Malankara Catholic Church’ aims to provide a general picture of the rite of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the liturgy of Good Friday in the Syro Malankara tradition. The Holy Cross has a very significant role in the Malankara Liturgy during the Lenten cycle. It is mainly because the Holy Cross used for the veneration is solemnly and ceremoniously erected in the centre of the parish on the twenty-fifth day of the Lent. Due to this reason, the first part pictures the liturgical practices and prayers of the Lenten cycle. The second part brings out the present-day structure and practice of Good Friday liturgy. The final part exclusively explores the rite of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the Good Friday liturgy.

After exploring the historical survey and picturing the present-day celebration of the Good Friday liturgy, the final chapter discovers the theological implication of the Holy Cross. In order to accomplish the aforementioned goal, we order this chapter in three parts. In the first part, we focus on the soteriological aspects of the Holy Cross in the Latin and Syro Malankara Liturgy. The second part develops the symbolic significance of the Holy Cross with a special attention to the Syrian tradition. The third part portrays the Christological significance of the Holy Cross in the Latin and Malankara liturgies with a special focus to the Eucharistic liturgy. Mar Ivanios’ idea on the theology of the Holy Cross is also mentioned in this part. The final and concluding part offers a Christian response to the theology of the Holy Cross which reveals the ecclesial importance of the Holy Cross.
METHODOLOGY
For a comprehensive understanding of the liturgical aspects that concern the rite of veneration of the Holy Cross, different methodological approaches are necessary. We begin with a historical and textual analysis of the liturgy of the veneration of the Holy Cross, in the Good Friday and the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The first task is to make a brief historical research about the development of the Christian symbolic evolution of the Cross. To this effect a historico-investigative study has to be employed. The second venture is to make a structural and textual analysis of Good Friday liturgy in the Latin and Syro Malankara traditions. An analytical method is followed in the exposition of the liturgical prayers in the Latin and Malankara tradition. Thirdly, we will make a comparative evaluation of the findings of the structural and textual analysis of the theological nuances of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the Good Friday liturgy. A hermeneutical approach to liturgy will help to give the fundamental meaning to the Christian worship. The comparative study will help for the comprehensive understanding of the Veneration of the Holy Cross.
CHAPTER ONE
HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

1. Introduction
The cross is the most powerful Christian symbol in the whole world of Christians. The Catholics, Orthodox and the Protestants give high esteem to this symbol. The cross speaks much more than its form. It is an invitation to follow Lord Jesus. It is a vocation to Christian discipleship. The cross strengthens the disciple to follow and imitate Jesus Christ. Without the cross, no one can follow Jesus. ‘And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple’ (Luke 14.27). The cross is the Christian hope that helps the faithful to lead their pilgrim life on the earth. The love and obedience of Jesus Christ is seen in its utmost form on the cross. “God is love; and the Holy Cross is nothing other than God’s love. Love has the character of the cross. The power, fire and nature of love consist in the fact that love has the character of the cross; and there is no love that does not have the character of the cross.”

The cross of Christ is the key that opens the gates of heaven. The Christians venerate and adore the cross because it helps them to fight against the evil forces of the world, it strengthens them to overcome the doubts of faith, and it supports them during the failures and renews them by giving hope for a better future. There was the use of this symbol before the Christian era in different shapes and size. “Centuries before Christian era ancient Crosses were in use as pagan emblems. The origin of the cross is in the mists of antiquity.”

My concern in this thesis is to bring out the theological significance of the cross in general and particularly in the liturgy of the veneration of the cross on Good Friday.

There are many questions that is to be answered before proceeding to the Good Friday liturgy. In the Christian tradition, it is believed that Empress Helena found the True Cross on which Jesus died. The veracity of this discovery is still doubtful. However, from the beginning of Christianity this legend is seen in many writings and prayers of the Christian tradition and it is considered as a ‘true legend’. Tradition says that after the discovery of the True Cross, it was cut into pieces and distributed to other places of importance. One piece was kept at the recovery place on Calvary, where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built.

“The Church of the Holy Sepulcher is the complex of worship spaces built on and around the sites of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. It consists of Martyrium, the Anastasis and various spaces associated with the cross or Golgotha.”

During the annual feast of this Church of the Holy Sepulcher, there was the custom of showing the relic of the True Cross to the people and they venerated it. This ritual is now celebrated as the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross on September 14. Another ritual associated with the relic of the cross is the typical veneration of the cross by the faithful on Good Friday. This ritual arose in Jerusalem before the fourth century. Later the practice was conducted in other churches but

Chapter 1 Historical Survey

the difference was that instead of the relic of the cross they used a cross in the image of the True Cross. Even today there is this adoration of the cross in the Catholic Good Friday liturgy. In this first chapter my primary concerns are in bringing out the historical evolution of the veneration of the cross, especially with regard to the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross and Good Friday liturgy.

2. Historical Evolution of the Holy Cross

In the beginning of Christianity, the early Christians did not consider the cross as a symbol of Christianity due to many reasons. The primary reason was that, the symbol of the cross was in pagan use, and the Romans used it for the crucifixion of criminals. St. Paul’s writings on the crucified Christ and the cross changed the attitude of the Christians towards the cross. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” From then, the cross was considered more as a symbol than as an object. It became a Christian representation in art and icons.

2.1. The Cross as a Symbol of Disgrace for the Early Christians

The early Christians designated the cross as ‘accursed tree’ because it was on this cross that Jesus had to undergo suffering and disgrace during the crucifixion.

“During the first Christian centuries, the cross was a thing accursed. No one professed allegiance to Christ by wearing a cross. From personal witness, everyone was fully aware of what death on a cross meant in terms of atrocious, long, drawn-out suffering. The cross was not something to be contemplated with equanimity. The attitude of Christians to the cross changed in the fourth century, due to a number of factors.”

The early Christians did not use the cross as a Christian symbol until three centuries after the death of Jesus. It may be because the Jews were completely against the idea of idol worship. There was no symbolic representation of the divine in the Jewish world moreover they considered it as pagan idea. Another aspect was that the cross was an instrument of torture and shame, used for the public execution of criminals. For the first Jewish Christians the cross only reminded the pain and agony of Jesus. It was not possible for them to accept it as a symbol of redemption.

2.2. Development of the Cross as a Christian Symbol

“It almost seems incredible that the cross, the supreme symbol of Christianity should have come into use to any extent until nearly three hundred years after the death of Christ.” This cross, which was considered as a disgrace became the symbol of vicarious sacrifice and atonement, a symbol of grace, life, redemption and resurrection through faith. During the fourth century, the cross also served as a sign of victory in the battle against the pagans and the forces of evil. “Egeria is the first one to mention the cross as a cultic object and object of veneration. In the middle ages, devotion to the cross took the form of repentance and ascetic

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4 1 Corinthians 3:19.
7 Egeria is a pilgrim woman, who wrote her travel account to the Holy City of Jerusalem, at the end of the fourth century. She was a nun from Western part of Europe, perhaps from Spain or France. She took a three-year long pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the early 380s.” Lester Ruth, 152.
practices, elicited by graphic, detailed description of Jesus suffering body on the cross in art and writing.\(^8\) From ancient time onwards there was the representation of the cross in arts and pictures. “In iconography, the Cross is found from the middle of the fourth century.”\(^9\) “The iconography of the cross is complex but at the same time straightforward. The crucified Christ is the incarnate divine Lord, the risen savior, and the eschatological judge. The cross is, therefore, the tree of life and sign of hope for salvation from the powers of hell, which continue to attack the Christians.”\(^10\)

One can also find the use of the image of the cross in the early centuries as a representation of the sign of God’s salvation. This idea was propagated by the Apologists of the second century to defend the place of Christianity and at their command, the image of the cross was depicted in various places. “The so-called apologists of the second century, for instance, rigorously defended the place of Christianity in a sophisticated world. Even the cross of Christ, the most ubiquitous sign of God’s salvation, was stamped into the very structures of the physical world. Wherever one looked, one was struck by the sign of the cross.”\(^11\) The early Christians attitude toward the cross in the first three centuries is in clutter. It also varied from places to places. There were few groups who showed reverence to the image of the cross and also other groups who considered it as a pagan emblem.

From the latter half of the fourth century, we see the presence of a relic of the cross and its veneration in Jerusalem. Jerome and Cyril of Jerusalem make a lot of reference to the cross of Christ in their early writings. “In the mid-fourth century, the relics of the cross were gathered, venerated and fought over.”\(^12\) “It was the custom of the pilgrims to Jerusalem to carry a small metal cross. As the pilgrims rested at night on the long journey to the Holy Land, this cross was set up by the roadside and beside it, they would kneel and pray.”\(^13\) The Church Fathers Tertullian and Origen mention the custom of making the sign of the cross on the forehead at the beginning of prayer.

“In Syria in the second century, it seems to have been the custom to indicate the east, towards which the worshippers turned in prayer, by inscribing a cross on the wall. The use of a wooden cross seems to have been known in North Africa about A.D. 200.”\(^14\) By the end of the fourth century, the cross became the central symbol of the Christian faith, a symbol of Christ’s sacrifice for all humanity. The early Church used the cross as a symbol and gesture. This theological symbol motivated the faithful to enter into spiritual combat against the forces of the evil world. According to Augustine the death of Christ was his triumph over the devil. His death on the cross was a sacrifice, a payment of debt owed by humanity, because of the original sin.

\(^12\) Elizabeth A. Dreyer, The Cross in Christian Tradition: From Paul to Bonaventure, 5.
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“Augustine says that the death of Christ on the cross symbolizes different virtues corresponding to the “length, breadth, height and depth as mentioned by St. Paul (Eph 3:18). Breadth, signified by the crossbeam, represents good works, symbolized by the extension of hands. Length in the vertical dimension that goes into the ground signifies perseverance and patience. Height is the upper part, above the crossbeam, behind the head of the crucified, and symbolizes our hope for things from above. Depth is the part of the Cross that is hidden in the ground, from which the whole arises, and signifies the depth of gratuitous grace.”

2.3. Sign of the Cross in Prayers

The sign of the cross was in use long before the cross itself came into general use. The use of the sign of the cross is very ancient and is frequently referred to by the early Christian writers. As far back as the third century Tertullian made this comment on the custom: “At every coming in and going out, in lying down or sitting, we mark our foreheads with a little sign of the cross.” In the synoptic Gospels, we read that Jesus asking his followers to take up the cross and follow him. ‘To take up the cross’ is a phrase that is rich in meaning which presents Jesus suffering and death as a model for discipleship. “From the second half of the second century the early Christian texts mention the sign of the cross, signing oneself, someone else or some object for sanctification.”

By making the sign of the cross they believed that they were protected and cared by their faith in the cross of Jesus Christ. “In the vision of Prophet Ezekiel (Ez. 9:4-6), those who are to be saved from the wrath of God are marked with the Hebrew alphabet Tau, which was written in the form of a cross on their foreheads. There is some evidence that the eschatologically oriented Jewish groups, inspired by this text, had taken up the practice of signing of themselves with the cross by the time of Jesus”. “In 1945, increasing number of Jewish graves with the sign of the cross were being discovered and assigned to more or less the first century after Christ.”

“The original meaning of this sign of the cross was benedictory: that to sign and to bless meant the same thing, and conveyed the same idea.” In religious worships and ceremonial observances, the faithful who attended, frequently made use of the sign of the cross. The early Christians used the sign of the cross to exorcise the demons and to ward off the evil spirits. They also branded their cattle with a cross mark, as they believed this symbol kept the evil spirits away. “The sign of the cross has been in use since Apostolic times. It is a confession of faith in Christ and an expression of gratitude and reverence.” The followers of Christ made the mark of the cross to show that they belonged to Christ. By this symbolic mark, they professed their faith in the crucified Christ. Thus, the sign of the cross became much identified with the faith in Christ. “It is a way of confessing Christ crucified with one’s

very body, in accordance with the programmatic words of St. Paul: We preach Christ, Crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:23).

“St. Cyprian states that it is the authoritative use of the sign of the cross which works the effect in all the sacraments."22 The act of making a sign of the cross is a public and visible YES to the Lord and Christ, who made God’s love visible on the cross. The sign of the cross is a confession of faith to the crucified and resurrected Christ who reigns by the humility of love and suffering which is stronger than all power in the world and wiser than all intelligence in the world. “In making the sign of the cross, the symbol was used to encapsulate the entire economy of salvation and the power of God that accomplishes it."24

2.3.1. The Meaning of the Sign of the Cross

The sign of the cross is the confession of Christian faith in Christ who suffered and died on the cross, but through his resurrection, he transformed the sign of shame into a sign of hope. By making the sign of the cross the faithful place themselves under the protection of the cross. The cross serves as a shield which guards the believers against the battle of the evil powers. The cross is not only a sign of passion but it also represents the resurrection. The cross acts as a saving staff and a bridge through which the faithful cross the abyss of death and reach the safe harbor of God.

The sign of the cross is also a confession of faith in the triune God and it sums all essence of Christianity. By his death on the cross he offered us the truest possible sacrifice and abolished the guilt and through his resurrection he called the humanity to a new life. “In the light of the incarnation, the cross is the event and the sign not of suffering or defeat, but of God’s triumphant glory."25 During baptism, there was the ritual of anointing the forehead with oil in the form of the cross. This was a branding which said that the person after his baptism completely belongs to Christ, sharing Jesus paschal mystery and death. During this period, the cross symbolized God’s salvific power of resurrection and salvation. “For baptism and sign of the cross, which is a kind of summing up and re-acceptance of baptism, are above all a divine event, whenever we make a sign of the cross we accept our baptism anew."26

St. Augustine says that without the sign of the cross, on the forehead of the faithful or in the water or oil for blessing, they may not be duly performed. It is in the virtue of the sign of the cross that all the sacraments find its fulfillment and perfection. The sign of the cross was used as a gesture to designate the three persons of the Trinity over the consecrated host and wine. It also signified the crucified Jesus Christ. For Amalararius, the sign of the cross is to be made only for one time over the bread and wine as the Lord was crucified only once.27

The source of blessing in the sign of the cross is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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22 Ratzinger, The Spirit of the Liturgy, 177.
23 Beresford-Cooke, The Sign of the Cross in the Western Liturgies, 6.
27 Beresford-Cooke, The Sign of the Cross in the Western Liturgies, 12.
When the priest makes the sign of the cross, the benediction received is not from the prayers of the priest but from Jesus Christ, who is present, and who is the source of all benedictions.

2.3.2 The Gesture of the Sign of the Cross

During the dawn of Christianity, the sign of the cross was made with two fingers, three fingers and even five fingers. There were many debates in ancient times about how to make the sign of the cross, whether by three fingers or five fingers. “Claude de Vert affirms that the earlier usage of blessings with three fingers only, with the thumb and the first two fingers. It is testified from the early images, monuments, sculpture and paintings.”28 The sign of the cross made by three fingers symbolizes the three persons of the Holy Trinity. “When five fingers are used, it is a reminder of five wounds of Christ, when three fingers it signifies the Trinity, and two fingers denote the two-fold nature of Christ, the human and the divine.”29

“The Pope Innocent III says how to make the sign of the cross. The sign of the cross is to be made with three fingers, because it is imprinted under the invocation of the Trinity, of which the Prophet says, Who hath comprehended the dust of the earth in three fingers so that it descends from the upper part to the lower, and Crosses over from right hand to the left, because Christ came down from heaven to earth and Crosses over from the Jews to the Gentiles. Some make the sign from left to right because we ought to go from misery to glory, like as Christ as passed from death unto life.”30

The sign of the cross made by five fingers represent the five wounds of Christ. Nicolas Collin says to “make the sign with five fingers together to represent the five wounds of Christ. But he even says that it is better to use three fingers to represent the mystery of Trinity as stated by Innocent III”31. When making the sign of the cross the extension of the three fingers shows the distinction of the three persons of the Trinity and folding the three fingers together shows the unity of Trinity with one divine nature.

In the history, there is a gradual evolution for the development of the meaning of the cross, symbolic and theological, and for the veneration of the cross too. There were also rituals observed for the veneration of the cross. The two important rituals for the veneration of the cross were the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross, which the Church today celebrates on September 14 and the other is on Good Friday. Many ancient writings and documents denote that the people venerated a piece of the relic of the cross on both these days from the fourth century. Today, there is no veneration attached to the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross but the Church continues the practice of the veneration of the cross on Good Friday. My concern in this chapter is to show the historical evolution and present-day celebration of both these veneration.

3. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

The three historical events that are associated with the feast of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross are: Saint Helena’s finding of the true Cross, the dedication of the churches that were built at the site of Mount Calvary and holy sepulcher by Emperor Constantine and emperor Heraclius’ recovery of the True Cross from the Persians and its restoration in

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28 Beresford-Cooke, The Sign of the Cross in the Western Liturgies, 22.
30 Beresford-Cooke, The Sign of the Cross in the Western Liturgies, 21.
31 Beresford-Cooke, The Sign of the Cross in the Western Liturgies, 23.
Jerusalem. Despite the commemoration of these historical events the feast also celebrates the Holy Cross as an instrument of salvation. The cross which was a degraded object and symbol, once used to torture the criminals, became a symbol of life and victory.

According to an ancient legend, it is believed that the Emperor Constantine the Great had the vision of a luminous Cross in heaven on the eve of his battle against Maxentius. The next day he defeated his enemies and he believed that it was due to the power of the cross that he had in the vision. From that day onwards he made the cross his emblem throughout the kingdom. At the request of Constantine, his mother Helena went to Jerusalem and it is said she found the True Cross beneath the temple of Venus on the Mount of Calvary. “Helen or Helena, considered a saint in both Eastern and Western Churches, was the wife of Emperor Constantius, to whom she bore a son, Constantine. About 325 she traveled to the Holy Land founded important churches and according to later legend, discovered the relic of the cross of Christ.”32 It is this discovery that is commemorated on the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross in the East. But in the West, it is the recovery of the cross from the Persians by Emperor Heraclius in 631 that stands as the basis of the feast. These two historical events are mentioned in the introduction for the Mass on September 14, in the Roman Missal.33

3.1. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the East

“The history of the origin of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross shows that the feast is historically rooted in the finding of the cross in the fourth century.”34 It is believed that in the fourth century during the reign of Emperor Constantine, his mother Helena undertook the mission to discover the True Cross. After locating the place of the crucifixion and burial of the Lord she built the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Tradition and legend also attest that Helena, the mother of Constantine the great found the cross on which Jesus died in Jerusalem in fourth century. She also built a large basilica on the site in honour of the cross.

During the yearly feast of the dedication of this Basilica, there arose a custom of elevating the relic of the cross for the veneration of the people. This yearly feast of the dedication of the Basilica was on September 14. It is this display and veneration of the cross, later, developed into the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross. From this account, it is sure that there is a connection between the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross and Helena’s finding of the cross. At the beginning of the fifth century, the relic of the cross was shown to the people of Jerusalem for their veneration. When was the True Cross found? The indications and evidence of date found in various earliest and medieval chronicles are of doubtful value.

“The cross was most likely found in the spring of 325. The story of finding the cross is considered as a “fanciful tale” which came to be used as a legend in the middle ages. It is the chief medium through which knowledge about the finding of the cross was transmitted to both East and West from the fifth century on and its influence on thought must have been considerable.”35

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34 Van Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy, 76.
“Considerable doubt has been cast upon this story of the finding of the True Cross by modern writers, although historians and writers of the time of the discovery and for several centuries afterward apparently never doubted its authenticity.”

Cyril the Bishop of Jerusalem made a mention of the account of the finding of True Cross in his letter to Constantius II.

“The conclusion that Cyril knew about a recent finding of the cross is corroborated by a brief but explicit mention of the event in his letter to Constantius II of 351/353. The authenticity of this letter has been contested in the past, but is no longer doubted today. Here we find the bishop of Jerusalem claiming that the cross of Christ was discovered in his city during the reign of Constantine—and he states this as a matter of common knowledge, in a letter to Constantine’s own son.”

“The term ‘exaltation’ is first used in the 6th century by the monk Alexander of Cyprus (527-565) when he reports that the fathers commanded by the emperor, determined that the day of the Exaltation of the Venerable Cross and of the dedication should be celebrated annually on September 14, in honour of the Trinity.”

“Decades followed upon decades. More and more people came to read and to appreciate the story from Jerusalem about Helena and the finding of the cross. In the East, it seems that the liturgy brought the story in its wake. Many Oriental Churches emulated in the fifth century the order of services as practised in Jerusalem. Among the new rites introduced in imitation of the Jerusalemistic liturgy was the raising on high of a Cross on 14 September, as a kind of re-enactment of the moment when the True Cross was brought up out of the ground and placed before the eyes of the world.”

“The roots of the feast lay there, with Jerusalem as its birthplace and the origin of the feast lies in the finding of the True Cross in Jerusalem at the beginning of the fourth century.”

During the dedication festival in Jerusalem, the cross which had been found was elevated and people venerated it. Later the relic of the cross was distributed to many places which also contributed the same celebration of elevation of the cross and its veneration. “In any case after the sixth century the ritual of venerating the elevated cross was also familiar in other places in the East which possessed a relic of the cross.”

3.2. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the West

In the first half of the sixth century this ritual of the cross was also making its way out of Jerusalem. “Throughout the ages churches, monasteries and individuals all over Christendom have claimed to possess portions of the True Cross. Most of them, however, are of doubtful authenticity.”

The truth is buried in the mist of antiquity. But from the legends and traditions that originated in the beginning of Christianity make claims about such practices.
“With the distribution of the pieces of the cross, the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross also spread. In the West, too people rather quickly came into possession of relics of the cross.”

The available documentations suggest that the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross was introduced into Rome in the seventh century, a few centuries later than its origin in the East. As the Roman liturgy expanded to other parts of the West the Feast of the Exaltation also began to spread. “The first mention of the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross in the West is in the Liber Pontificalis, which reports that in a dark corner of the sacristy of St. Peters Pope Sergius I (687-701) found a Cross decorated with costly gems, containing a piece of wood from the cross of the Lord.”

A relic of the Holy Cross was preserved in Rome from the fourth century but there was no feast attached to it until the seventh century. It seems that Heraclius recovery of the Jerusalem relic of the cross from the Persians in 631 served as a motif for the feast in Rome. In Rome, the main ritual was the veneration of the cross and it was the relic of true cross that was brought from Jerusalem, the object of this veneration. The title for this feast was also related to the Eastern designation of the feast, namely, elevation, exaltation, display. In the Western Liturgy, in the book of Divine Office, we find an allusion to the legend of finding the cross. “The legend was read during Vigils and one finds Antiphons and Responsories based on it.”

An example of such a prayer is as follows.

“Full of desire, Helena prayed in tears, saying: Thou, Lord, show the wood of which our salvation has hung. Saint Helena said to Judas: Fulfill my desire, and remain among the living on earth, so that you may show me on earth that place which is called Calvary, where the precious wood of the Lord is hidden. Judas prayed: God my God, show me the wood of the Holy Cross.”

The prayer cited above mentions the story behind the finding of the True Cross. It is through such prayers that the legend of the True Cross came to be circulating among the early Christians. “The finding of Cross began to be celebrated in the West at a period when there was little liturgical uniformity.” The monks and the clergy only possessed the Divine Office texts and through the sermons of the monks and the clergy, the lay people also came to know about the legend of the finding of the True Cross. There are many pieces evidences that the story of Helena’s finding of the cross was circulating among the people in the early medieval times. There is plenty of indication that the finding of the Holy Cross was in the minds of people who celebrated Inventio Crucis in the Early Middle Ages. It is to be noted that it was not the particular legend of the finding of the cross which was celebrated, but the cross itself and its significance.

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46 Borgehammar, How the Holy Cross was Found: From Event to Medieval Legend, 191.
47 Antiphons 3023 –C.29, Corpus antiphonalium officii 1,302-305.
48 Borgehammar, How the Holy Cross was Found: From Event to Medieval Legend, 188.
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The analysis of the prayers makes it clear that the faithful thanked the Lord for the redemption of the world and humanity. Through these prayers, they commemorated the glorious suffering and death of Christ. These prayers also conveyed that it is through the cross that joy and peace came to the world. The Christian liturgy does not celebrate the mere memory of a past event; instead, the liturgy celebrates the efficacious manifestations of the mystery of redemption. The finding of the True Cross is not the important event in the liturgy. The significance of the Exaltation of the Feast of the cross is that the feast could manifest the redemption brought by Christ before the eyes of the faithful. Thus, during the annual feast of the cross, people commemorate the salvation events of Jesus paschal mystery.

4. Good Friday: A Historical Survey

The liturgical celebration of Good Friday is very important in the Christian liturgical year as the paschal events, mainly the crucifixion of Lord Jesus Christ, are commemorated. On this day the Church celebrates the passion of the Lord. The faithful do remember the Lord who once died for them in the history and saved them eternally through the same death. During his general audience on March 27, 1991, Pope John Paul II exhorted:

“Good Friday is a day of God’s infinite love with humanity’s sin: it recalls the dramatic passion of Christ. In contemplating the crucifix, it is possible to measure the depth of the truth of Jesus’ words: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son […] that world might be saved through him (John 3:16-17).”

There is no reference in the New Testament on the commemoration of Jesus passion, death and resurrection. The disciples only celebrated the Eucharist on the first day of the week. It was on the first day of the week that Jesus rose from the dead and inaugurated a new era against the Jewish Sabbath. “On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.” It was the home Church gatherings of the early Church. As the Jews and the Romans were against the Christians, they gathered in different houses on Sundays and broke bread. “By the time of the book of Revelation came to be written, towards the end of the first century, ‘the Lord’s day’ had become a normal expression for Sunday among Christians.”

The Jews celebrated the Passover as the commemoration of their liberation from the Egyptian slavery to the Promised Land. St. John’s Gospel says that Jesus was arrested on fourteenth of Nisan and he was crucified at the time when the Jews slaughtered the paschal lambs. John wanted to give a theological meaning for Christ’s crucifixion as the sacrifice of the paschal lamb. “The early Christian community saw in the Old Testament Passover an image both of the passage of Christ from death to life in His resurrection, and of the liberation of man from slavery and sin to new life in Christ.” The Early Church interpreted Christ’s crucifixion as the sacrifice of the paschal lamb.

49 For this whole section I rely heavily on Philip J. Goddard’s *Festa Paschalia: A History of the Holy Week Liturgy in the Roman Rite*, 176-177.


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4.1. Earliest Evidence of Holy Week Service

There are a few documents that say about the annual fast associated with the paschal celebration. The Jerusalem Church community celebrated the *Pasch* by going to the particular places of Jesus’ passion and crucifixion. “From the earliest days of Christianity, the anniversary of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has been observed as the greatest and most solemn feast of the year.”[^54] The Early Church observed Good Friday as a day of mourning by fasting and reading the books of the Prophets, Psalms and the Gospel. *Didache*[^55] claims that by the end of the first century each and every Friday of the year was observed as a day of fasting by the Christians.

In the second century, the joyful celebration of the resurrection was preceded by a day of fasting and penance which included the remembrance of Christ’s death on the cross. *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a Church order written in Syria in the first few decades of the third century give some evidence on the paschal celebration. “Therefore, you shall fast in the days of the *pasch*. On Friday and on the Sabbath fast wholly and taste nothing.”[^56] Another ancient source that describes the Holy Week service is the Armenian lectionary. “The earliest explicit reference to the commemoration of Good Friday in conjunction with Easter Sunday is provided by the renowned Christian apologist Tertullian.”[^57] “Saint Epiphanius assures us, that in his time, in the fourth century, Christians eat bread with little salt, and drank water once a day at evening all Holy Week.”[^58] The fullest description of Holy Week service of Jerusalem from the fourth century comes to us from the work of Egeria, the pilgrim nun from Europe.

4.1.1. Egeria’s Description of the Holy Week Celebration in Jerusalem

“Egeria was present in Jerusalem for the whole of Holy Week, and left us a detailed description of the liturgy as it was celebrated during the episcopate of St. Cyril, who was bishop of Jerusalem from about 349 to 387.”[^59] It is said that she came from the far end of Mediterranean to Jerusalem and probably stayed there for three years from 381 to 384. “Egeria came not primarily to sightsee, but to worship the Lord. Her travel diary records her recurring practices at historic locations.”[^60] Her documents suggest that there was a week celebration of Holy Week existed in Jerusalem. The beginning of the Holy Week services must fall between the dedication by Constantine of the relevant buildings in and around which the liturgy is centered, and the visit of Egeria, in other words between 335 and 384. “She gives the impression that the Holy Week services in which she participated between 381 and 384 were well established.”[^61] Scriptural reading was the most important ritual for the whole celebration. There were readings from the book of Psalms and almost all Gospels. “The four Gospels provide us with a detailed picture of the events Holy Week; for the

[^55]: Didache is the collection of the teachings of the early Christians who belong to the first century.
evangelists all devote a disproportionate amount of space to that climactic week in Jerusalem.”

**a. Palm Sunday**

On the Sunday before Easter the people assembled in the Great Church of Martyrion at cockcrow in the presence of the bishop. This service included the reading of three Responsorial Psalms, three prayers, an incensation of the shrine and the Gospel reading by the bishop. After this service, they all moved to the site of crucifixion in procession and at this site also they had the reading from the Psalms, prayers and a final blessing from the bishop. In the morning, they again joined in the Martyrion after a short break. “At daybreak, they assemble again in the Martyrion, where there is a synaxis, including sermons from any priest present who wishes to preach, ending with a sermon from the bishop.”

This service lasted up to fourth of fifth hour. Then in Anastasis the bishop celebrates the Eucharist where all the faithful except the catechumen join. After the Eucharist they went back to their homes for lunch and rest. At one o’clock they all reassemble on the Mount of Olives and at ninth hour they make a procession from the Eleona church to the Imbomon.

“At the beginning of the eleventh hour (five o’clock), the Gospel about the children who ran to meet Christ with palm branches, singing ‘blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’ is read (Mathew 21: 8-9). Then all people descend the Mount of olives, carrying branches of palm or olive, singing hymns and antiphons, and repeating ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’, before the bishop, ‘in the very way the people did when once they went down the hill with the Lord.’

The procession comes to an end at the Anastasis. “And on arriving, although it is late, *lucernare* takes place, with prayer at the cross after which the people are dismissed and return home.”

**b. Maundy Thursday**

There are three morning services on Thursday, from cockcrow till morning, and at nine o’clock and midday. These three services are conducted in the Anastasis and it consisted of hymns, Psalms antiphons and prayers. In the afternoon, the people reassembled in the Martyrion from eighth to tenth hour (2-4 PM) for the Eucharistic celebration. “After the Eucharist, they all go to a place which Egeria describes as ‘Behind the cross’ and which may be either a chapel in the south aisle of the Martyrion or a separate building, and the Eucharist is celebrated again, by the bishop himself, this time everyone receives communion.” This is the only day in the year for the Eucharist to be celebrated at this place. “Then the bishop makes the offering there, and everyone receives communion. On this day, the offering is

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64 According to the Oriental time calculation, a day was divided into twelve hours. The approximate comparison with the modern-day time schedule is given below.

| 7 AM | First Hour | 10 AM | Fourth Hour | 1 PM | Seventh Hour | 4 PM | Tenth Hour |
| 8 AM | Second Hour | 11 AM | Fifth Hour | 2 PM | Eighth Hour | 5 PM | Eleventh Hour |
| 9 AM | Third Hour | 12 PM | Sixth Hour | 3 PM | Ninth Hour | 6 PM | Twelfth Hour |

made behind the cross, but no other day in the whole year.” Following the Eucharist, they all go the Anastasis and after a prayer they receive the blessings. After a quick meal, the people again gather at the Elona Church and for the next five or six hours they say prayers, hymns and antiphons. At about midnight they go to Imbomon and immerse themselves with hymns, antiphons, readings and prayers until the cockcrow on Friday morning.

**c. Good Friday**

At the cockcrow the bishop, clergy and the faithful gather at the garden of Gethsemane. There the Gospel passage of ‘agony in the garden’ is read Mathew 26:1-46. After this Gospel, they all go to the particular place where Christ was arrested. At this place, they listen to the Gospel passage, Mathew 26: 47-56. Egeria says that the people made loud groaning and weeping during this reading. Then they all proceed to the site of Golgotha, where the trial of Christ before Pilate, John 18:28-19:16. After the Gospel reading the bishop addresses the people and encourages them to keep vigil and fast on that day of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. After a short break at the second hour they all come to Golgotha for the veneration of the wood of the cross.

**d. The Veneration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday**

Egeria describes that in the fourth century on the Friday of the Holy Week people venerated a relic of Holy Cross in the Church of Jerusalem. “Before the end of the fourth century, the True Cross was on Good Friday morning exposed at Jerusalem for the veneration of the faithful.” In the Church, they follow a procession as one by one and each one touched the relic of the cross with their forehead and eyes and then kissed the relic with much respect and veneration.

“Good Friday had now arrived, and at the second hour a chair was set for the bishop in the church behind the cross. Before him stood a table covered with a linen cloth. Then what were looked on as the most sacred relics in Jerusalem -the wood of the True Cross and its title --were taken out of the silver-gilt casket in which they were kept and placed on the table. The bishop, as he sat, held the ends of the wood firmly in his hands, and the deacons stood around, while from that time till noon the people passed through the church in a continuous stream, entering by one door and going out by another. As they reached the table, all bowed, bent down their faces so as to touch the wood and the title and kissed the cross.”

Egeria further describes the effect of this ritual on the people who attend this service on the day of Holy Friday. People showed their sympathy with Christ’s suffering, even some people made lamentations and groans while kissing the relic. “It is impressive to see the way all the people are moved by these readings, and how they mourn. You could hardly believe how every single one of them weeps during the three hours, old and young alike, because of the manner of in which the Lord suffered for us.” The ritual lasted till noon. After the veneration of the cross there was the three hours service of scripture, prayer, and hymns. At

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69 “Imbomon is the site on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem where Jesus was considered to have ascended to heaven.” Ruth, 152.


three o’clock the whole ritual came to an end with the reading of the Gospel of John which mentions the passage of Jesus’ death on the cross.

Once the veneration is over, the faithful go into the courtyard between the Anastasis and the Martyrion where they listen to the scriptural readings from, sixth to the ninth hour. “The air is filled with the sound of weeping, as the people meditate on the sufferings Christ endured for us.” At ninth hour the Gospel passage of Christ’s death on the cross, John 19: 17-37, is read. It is followed by some prayers and the dismissal. As time went on, the veneration of the cross came into use in churches which did not possess a relic of the True Cross. “From the custom of venerating the wood of the true Cross itself, in those places which were fortunate enough to possess a fragment, the practice arose in time of paying homage to any representation of the instrument of our Lord’s death.” For as Amalarius says: “Although every church cannot possess the True Cross, yet the virtue of the Holy Cross is not wanting to them in those Crosses which are made after the likeness of the Lord’s Cross.”

4.1.2. The Armenian Lectionary

a. Palm Sunday
The Armenian lectionary was written for the use of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. “It has survived in three manuscripts, ranging from around the turn of the fifth century to about 440, and it is therefore closely contemporary to Egeria’s pilgrimage.” The lectionary calls the Sunday before the Easter ‘the day of the Palms’. On this day of the Palms the faithful go to the Mount of Olives with palm branches, and there they pay and sing from ninth hour to the tenth hour. After this they go to the Holy Anastasis chanting Psalm 118. The antiphon sung during this day is ‘blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’. “Anastasis is the name for Jerusalem’s worship space around the tomb of Christ. The term means “resurrection” in Greek.”

b. Maundy Thursday
“The first reference to the Maundy Thursday Mass as the occasion of blessing is not before the fifth century in a letter of Leo the great.” “In the Armenian Lectionary Thursday is described as the day ‘of the old Zatik’ (Passover), as touching which Jesus said to his disciples, with desire have I desired to eat with you this Zatik.” The lectionary confirms about the evening service at the Elona church. In this service the Biblical passages, Genesis 6:9-9:17, Proverbs 9:1-11, Isaiah 40:9-17, and Psalm 25 are read. At the seventh hour, they assemble at the Holy Shrine of the city. In this service, there are the scriptural readings of Genesis 22:1-18 (the sacrifice of Isaac), Isaiah 61:1-6, Acts 1:15-26 and Psalm 55. After dismissing the catechumens, the faithful begin the Eucharistic service. For the Eucharistic

74 Herbert Thurston, Lent and Holy Week (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1904), 348.
76 Goddard, Festa Paschalia: A History of the Holy Week Liturgy in the Roman Rite, 34.
service they read, Psalm 23, 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 (the institution of the Holy Eucharist) and Mathew 26:20-39 (the last supper and agony in the garden). “Two Eucharists are celebrated, as described by Egeria, one ‘in the Holy Shrine’ and the other ‘before the Holy Cross.’” After the second Eucharist they make a procession to Sion where they make the Gospel reading of the last supper from Mark 14:12-26. Finishing this they move to the Mount of Olives for a vigil. “The vigil consisted of six elements, four on the Mount of Olives, the fifth ante crucem just before dawn on Good Friday, and the last at Sion.”

c. Good Friday

“At the dawn on Friday the Holy Wood of the Cross is set before holy Golgotha, and the congregation adore until the ninth hour.” From sixth to ninth hour at Golgotha they read eight Psalms, eight Old Testament and eight New Testament readings. The Psalms include, Psalm 22, which says ‘My God my God why have you deserted me’ quoted by Christ on the cross. The Christians saw this Psalm a prophesy of the crucifixion. All these scriptural readings are accompanied by a prayer and kneeling. The four Gospel readings are the accounts of crucifixion. All these services took place in the open courtyard between the Anastasis and the Martyrion. “Martyrion or Martyrium is the basilica-type worship space built next to the site of Christ’s crucifixion.”

4.1.3. Good Friday Liturgy in Rome

“Jerusalem’s ceremonial veneration of the cross eventually spread throughout the West, with a Cross or Crucifix used to represent the True Cross; the rite has continued to the present day as part of the liturgy of the passion.” There is no documentary evidence about the beginning of the annual celebration of Pasch in Rome. The ecclesiastical history of Eusebius, written between 303 and 323 mentions the dispute between Pope Victor and Asia Minor bishops concerning the correct date of Easter celebration. The Antiochian Church clung to the lunar calendar, observing the Pasch on the Sunday following the fourteenth Nisan. “However, the Pasch was a unitary celebration of all events by means of which our redemption was procured. Its emphasis was eschatological and not, or at least not primarily, historical.”

Initially the Good Friday liturgy in Rome consisted only of a liturgy of the Word with Scriptural readings and solemn orations. The introduction of the ritual of the cross is generally dated to the period between 683 and 752; the justification for this is that it was during this period that Popes of Eastern background resided in Rome, who would have introduced a rite they had been familiar with from birth. Liturgical books would confirm this dating, because the two oldest sources that mention the veneration of the cross on Good Friday, the Old Gelasian Sacramentary (GeV 395-481) and Ordo Romanus XXIII (OR

81 Ante Crucem in Latin means before the Cross.
87 The Old Gelasian Sacramentary is also known as Gelasian of the Seventh Century, written either at St. Denis or at Chelles, near Paris. It has survived in a single manuscript and is preserved in Vatican library.
23,9-22), likewise stem from this period. “According to Ordo Romanus the cross is placed before the altar, and it is then venerated and kissed by the Pope, the presbyters, the Deacons, the rest of the clergy, and the people, all in their order. During the veneration the antiphon, Behold the wood of the Cross on which hung the salvation of the world; O come, let us worship, is sung.”

a. The Good Friday Liturgy

“The form of the Synaxis in the Roman tituli is preserved in the Old Gelasian Sacramentary, and in the Gelasians of the eighth century which derive from it. It begins at the ninth hour, the time in the afternoon at which Christ died.” A Cross is placed on the altar and the priest and the ministers enter in silence, without any solemnity. The priest begins the service by asking the people to pray for him. After the first two collects and the responsory, the Passion narrative is read and it is followed by the solemn intercessions. There was no mass attached with the Good Friday prayers. In his letter of Pope Innocent I to Bishop Decentius of Gubbio written in 416; the Pope says that “it is certain that the apostles spent these two days in grief and hid themselves from the fear of Jews. It is clear that they also fasted on these two days. So, the tradition of the Church holds that there can be no celebration of the sacraments on those days.” There are various reasons for this. John Beleth in the twelfth century gives the following four reasons.

1. “Christ is the true sacrifice, offered on this day, the type must give way to the reality.
2. Because it was on this day that the Church’s bridegroom is taken away and descended into the lower regions.
3. Because the veil of the temple is rent in two and the horns of the altar thrown, there is no place to offer the sacrifice of the Lord’s body.
4. Because Moses says in the Book of Exodus, ‘Another will fight for you, and you will be silent’, the other referred to being Christ.”

On Good Friday, the service at the Basilica Sessoriana was presided by the Pope. The Ordo Romanus XXXIII states that the Pope left the Lateran palace at about the eighth hour and entered the Basilica of St. John with other ministers. They were all bare in their bare feet. From there they all went to the Basilica Sessoriana, in procession, singing Psalm 118. In this procession, the Pope carried the thurible with incense in his right hand and a deacon carrying the relic of the True Cross in a jeweled reliquary followed him. Arriving at the Basilica Sessoriana, the Pope opens the reliquary and places it on the altar. The Pope then makes a prostration and kissed the relic. After the Pope, the clergy and the people gathered in the Basilica kissed the relic. This is followed by the reading of the passion narrative. “By the

88 OR XXIII seems to be an unofficial account from a liturgically minded Frankish Monk from Switzerland. It consists of Papal ceremonies of the Triduum that he had visited in Rome possibly in the first half of eighth century.
89 Tyrer, Historical Survey of Holy Week, 129.
93 Basilica Sessoriana, situated in Rome, is known as the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem. Tradition says that the basilica was consecrated around the year 325 when the relic of the Holy Cross was brought to Rome by St. Helena and Constantine the Great. It is said that the floor of the basilica is covered with the soil from Jerusalem.
94 It seems that OR XXXIII is composed in the eleventh century, but its date and place of composition are unknown.
time of the Roman Pontifical of the twelfth century, the ceremony began at the sixth hour. The cross was carried by the junior of the cardinal priests.”

The procession was made barefoot. The veneration of the cross took place after the synaxis has concluded with the solemn intercessions. “The Gelasian Sacramentary included nine prayers in the solemn intercession for the Church, Pope, bishops, priests, deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists etc.”

b. The Adoration of the Relic of the True Cross

The Jerusalem custom of the veneration of the Holy Cross was known to the West, but it is not clear at what time the West adopted this service into their liturgy. “However, from 687 to 715, and again from 731 to 752, the See of Peter was occupied continuously by Popes of Greek or Syrian origin, and it seems likely to have been one of these who introduced the rite to the Roman Church.” The first description of the adoration of the cross in Rome is contained in Ordo Romanus XXIII, which is composed possibly before 750. According to Ordo Romanus XXIII, the veneration of the cross takes place with the procession’s arrival at the Basilica Sessoriana.

The veneration of the Holy Cross is a simple rite in which the Pope places the reliquary on the altar. After a silent prayer and prostration, the Pope kisses the relic. He is then followed by all the bishops, priests, deacons and sub-deacons who are present in the basilica. The relic of the cross is then placed on a small folding stand for veneration by the men present in the congregations. When all the men finish the veneration, the relic is taken outside the sanctuary for the veneration by the women. There are some clear similarities between this rite and that of Jerusalem.

“According to Ordo Romanus XXIV, from the second half of the eighth century, the veneration takes place in the evening. A Cross is prepared a little way in front of the altar, supported on each side by an acolyte, with a prie-dieu in front of it.” The cross is then kissed by the Pope, clergy, bishops, priests and finally the people. The Gelasian Sacramentary states that during the same time there was the veneration of the cross in the city and suburban churches, in the same manner. After the veneration, the communion service begins. “Kissing the cross is the most historically repeated action of adoration. It appears in Ordo Romanus XXIII and XXIV, showing that in the time the practice migrated to Rome, probably along with relics of the cross.”

c. The use of the Holy Cross

“The time of ninth century Ordo XXXI the original simple rite has been embellished and elaborated.” The rite takes place in the morning. The relic of the True Cross is placed on

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98 OR XXIV is an account by a Frankish monk from the second half of the eighth century. It describes the Holy Week service and Good Friday service in Rome. This OR suggests that the Good Friday liturgy was celebrated in different churches within the Roman city by Pontifex or his representative.
the altar. The Pope venerates the relic and says the Lord’s Prayer. After the communion service a covered Cross is positioned behind the altar, supported by an acolyte. The use of a covered or a veiled Cross which is unveiled in the course of the ceremony is first found in *Ordo Romanus XXXI*. Two cantors bow before the Holy Cross and begin the *Trisagion* with the Greek *Hagios ho Theos* to which the choir responds with the Latin *Sanctus Dues*. During this time, the covered Cross is carried to the right-hand side of the altar. The Pope or the celebrant takes off his chasuble and receives the covered Cross from the minister. The celebrant then unveils the top of the cross, raises it slightly and begins the antiphon ‘Behold the wood of the Cross’.

When the celebrant raises the cross all the people fall to their knees and make a deep bow. The celebrant then moves further and unveils furthermore portion of the cross, singing the antiphon in a higher note. He then goes to the centre of the altar and unveils the remaining part of the cross and sing the antiphon in a higher note. At the end of the antiphon the clergy as well as the people present make prostrations. Placing the cross in front of the altar the Pope kisses it. He is followed by the clergy, deacons and sub-deacons. The two cantors bring the cross to a convenient place for the veneration of the people. During the veneration Psalm 118 is sung. “With some modifications and rearrangements, this is the rite which endured for a thousand years until the 1970 reform.”

4.1.4. Liturgical Reforms of 1955

“The official name of the day was changed from ‘Friday of the preparation’ to ‘Friday of the Passion and Death of the Lord’.” The timing of the Good Friday liturgy was also changed from the morning to the afternoon. It was suggested to celebrate around three o’clock, the hour when Christ died and not later than six in the evening. In its pre-1955 form the Synaxis began with a silent entrance of the priest, deacon and sub-deacon. The priest is robed in a black chasuble, the deacon in dalmatic and the sub-deacon in tunicle. When they arrive at the altar they make a prostration and a silent prayer. After this prostration, the sacred ministers rise and kiss the altar and the priest says the collect. Following the collect the lector begins the first reading. “In the reformed rite, the priest and deacon simply wear amice, alb and black stole, the sub-deacon amice and alb.” In the Gelasian tradition there are two collects before the first and second reading and in the original Gregorian tradition there are no collects at all. It was in the eighth century that the Collect was added to the Gregorian tradition. “This scheme was followed in almost all the later Romano-German Pontifical.”

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102 The *Trisagion*, literally means Thrice Holy, is a standard hymn of the Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox traditions. It is a praise that addresses the Almighty God three times: *Holy are you O God, Holy are You O Strong and Holy are You Immortal.*


104 The liturgical reforms of 1955 were made during the time of Pope Pius XII. He encouraged the faithful for a meaningful participation in the liturgy. In the light of the encyclical, *Mystici Corporis* Pope redefined the liturgical practices. These reforms made significant changes in the Holy Week liturgy and Easter vigil.


106 Tunicle is a short vestment used by a sub-deacon for the liturgical celebration.


108 Romano-German Pontifical is composed around the middle of the tenth century in the monastery of St. Alban at Mainz and in the next two centuries it spread widely in the empire. By the end of the tenth century this came to in wider use in the churches of Rome.
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and in all the subsequent Roman Pontificals."\textsuperscript{109} It is prescribed that the celebrant gives a blessing to the deacon before reading the passion narrative. Such a blessing was not there in the previous years. “A new prayer for those involved in the government of States was substituted for the old prayer for the Roman Emperor; otherwise there was no change in the text of any of the prayers.”\textsuperscript{110}

Significant changes were made to the adoration of the cross in the 1955 reform. After concluding the Solemn Oration the celebrant doffs his cope and the deacon and sub-deacon their dalmatic and tunicle. The cross that is to be unveiled solemnly is brought in procession from the sacristy. This procession is led by acolytes, followed by the deacon carrying the Holy Cross, between two other acolytes with lighted candles. When the procession enters the sanctuary, the cross is handed to the celebrant and he takes it to the epistle side of the altar and facing the people he uncovers the upper portion of the cross. “The rest of the unveiling takes place as before, though the celebrant is accompanied throughout by the two acolytes with lighted candles, one each side.”\textsuperscript{111}

The cross is supported on either side by an acolyte for the veneration. On two sides of the cross the acolytes kneel down and place lighted candles. In the order of the rank, the cross is venerated by the celebrant and other ministers. They all make a triple genuflection. After this the two acolytes take the cross to the altar rails and hold it for the veneration of the lay people. The faithful come one by one and make a single genuflection. The rubric states that the veneration be performed first by the men present, then by the women, a rule which was seldom if ever observed in practice. After the veneration by all the faithful the cross is carried back to the altar and placed in a high place foreseen by all the faithful. Then the celebrant and the deacons vest in violet colour and begin the communion rite. A deacon brings the Blessed Sacrament. He is accompanied by two acolytes with lighted candles. The 1955 reform omitted all the subsequent prayers which were added in the middle ages as well as the incensation of the altar and the offerings.

4.1.5. Liturgical Reforms of 1970\textsuperscript{112}

The liturgical colour for the day was changed from black to red as red seemed more appropriate to witness the shedding of Christ’s blood for the redemption of humanity. This reform made the initial prostration an optional. “On good Friday in the Roman rite black was used for many centuries. Black was also employed in Spain, Paris and Germany. In the current liturgy, red vestments are worn both on Palm Sunday and on Good Friday.”\textsuperscript{113} “Following their pursuit of ‘liturgical symmetry’ the reformers have replaced the second Old Testament reading with one taken from the New Testament, suppressed the second Collect, and substituted a Psalm for the first responsory and an acclamation in place of the second.”\textsuperscript{114} It resulted in identifying the first part of the Good Friday liturgy with every other solemnity.


\textsuperscript{112} This reform was on the light of the second Vatican Council. The aim of the 1970 liturgical reforms was to bring back lively and active participation in the liturgy. Liturgy was made much more attuned with Christian tradition and biblical texts. Simplified vernacular texts were encouraged in this reform.

\textsuperscript{113} Monti, \textit{The Week of Salvation: History and Traditions of Holy Week}, 36.

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The first reading Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is transferred from Wednesday and the second from Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9 was originally read as the seventh lesson at Matins. A blessing is requested and is given before the reading of the passion narrative. The ancient practice of kneeling and pausing at the words tradidit spiritum is abolished in this reform. Substantial alterations have been made to the texts of the solemn oration. “These changes were said to have been made in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.”

The adoration of the cross takes place in the traditional way. A covered Cross is brought to the sanctuary and is unveiled in three stages and each time the clergy and the faithful make a genuflection. A second form is also given in which the celebrant may carry the cross in procession from the door of the church through the nave to the sanctuary during which he pauses for three times, singing: behold the wood of the Cross. In both cases the cross is finally placed at the entrance to the sanctuary for the individual veneration. During this adoration of the cross the traditional chants of ‘we adore your Cross’ is sung and ‘trisagion’ or any appropriate composition may be sung. “In practice the ancient chants are now normally replaced by a vernacular hymn from the modern repertory.”

The rubrics provide for a silent veneration with a genuflection without leaving the seats if a large number of persons are present in the congregation. After the veneration, the cross is placed on the altar with lighted candles surrounding it. The liturgy of communion begins after the veneration of the cross. The Blessed Sacrament is brought very simply without any procession to the altar accompanied by two acolytes with lighted candles.

Conclusion

There are many reasons to show how the cross, an ancient symbol, became the supreme symbol of salvation and redemption in Christianity. “The cross is the figurative inscription of the Name of God, working miracles and manifesting powers, like the Name of God revealed to Moses. The cross is the symbol of the most Holy Trinity, the holy sign of God-love, consuming in fire unlove, malice and hatred.” It is the result of a historical evolution that originated from the Apostolic times and throughout the following centuries. The legends associated with the cross played a crucial role in the early centuries of Christianity in developing the attitude of devotion and veneration to the cross. “Veneration of the cross and rejoicing in it are not an external commandment for the Christian but an inner imperative.”

Pictorial representation of the cross in iconography and art work generated an exclusive identity for this symbol to become a Christian symbol. The Feast of the Exaltation of the cross and the celebration of Good Friday liturgy were the strong factors that led to the veneration of the cross. Today the Christians give much respect and devotion to the cross and consider the cross as unique symbol of Christianity. This high esteem the Christians show to the cross is explicitly revealed in their liturgy, especially in the Holy Week and Good Friday liturgy, that is described in this first chapter.

117 Bulgakov, Churchly Joy: Orthodox Devotions for the Church Year, 5.
118 Bulgakov, Churchly Joy: Orthodox Devotions for the Church Year, 5.
CHAPTER TWO
VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS IN THE LATIN LITURGY

1. Introduction
In the Latin Church, there are two feasts that are associated with the veneration of the Holy Cross. They are the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the Passion liturgy on the Good Friday. In the first chapter, we have mentioned the evolution of both these feasts. This chapter will make the analysis of the prayers of the feasts according to the present liturgy. It is to be noted that, today, there is no ritual of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross as in the ancient Jerusalem. For the passion liturgy, the present-day liturgy gives the adoration of the Holy Cross in a meaningful way. In this chapter, our focus is to give a structural and systematic analysis of the Mass text of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the passion liturgy in the Latin rite. The Roman Missal is the primary source and the work of Van Tongeren and Paul Turner are the secondary sources.

2. Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
The themes of the Feast of the cross were then, the symbol of the triumph over death and devil and the antitype of the tree of life. It was derived from the Pauline understanding of the cross of Christ as a military trophy behind which the hostile powers had been forced to walk as captives in a triumphal procession. “Thus when the various prayers for Inventio Crucis repeatedly mention the cross as a sign of victory and of protection against all evil, it is a basic theme in Christian reflection on the significance of the cross which is being invoked.”\(^{119}\) The Christian authors in antiquity as well as in the Middle Ages made references to the themes of lapse from paradise and the restoration by Christ in the celebration of the Holy Cross. The Jerusalemistic story of the finding of the Holy Cross has played a significant role in the celebration of the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross in the West; but in the liturgy it was not this historical event that took the primary place but the mystery of the cross. The themes for the exaltation of the cross were the mystery of the cross, Cross as the tree of life, and a banner and flag of victory over Satan.

During the feast of the cross, when the faithful meditate the mystery of the cross, they share in the fruits of salvation. These prayers focus on salvation and salutary bliss effected by the cross sanctified by Christ. In some of the prayers the cross is almost identified with Christ. The salvific significance and salutary meaning are the important themes for the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross. The prayer implies a present-day participation in the bliss of the cross and future participation, where we encounter an eschatological view of the mystery of salvation. Liturgical sources indicate that in the West the feast spread from Rome. The spread of the feast in the West was a consequence of the expansion of the Roman liturgy.\(^{120}\)

“Jesus historical death on the cross provides a sacred historical foundation for the origin of the feast, while the legend of finding the cross and tradition with regard to the recovery of

\(^{119}\) Borgehammar, *How the Holy Cross was Found: From Event to Medieval Legend*, 193.

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the cross by Heraclius anchor the feast historically.” 121 Jesus emptied and humbled himself through his precious blood on the cross and thus the redemption of the world was brought out. His death was a sacrifice an expiation which assured salvation and made Paradise accessible. It is on the Cross that Christ accomplished the salutary deliverance; therefore, the cross represents the victory of Christ. On the basis of liturgical sources, and the hypotheses regarding the history of the origins of Roman sacramentaries, the introduction of the Feast of the Exaltation of the cross into the West can be dated to the first half of the seventh century, and situated in Rome. 122

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross had its origin in Jerusalem on the historical fact of the finding of the cross. But later the feast was characterized as a commemoration of the Holy Cross in which Jesus accomplished the salvation of the humankind. The Cross therefore stands as a redemptive representation of Christ’s exaltation and victory on the cross. “The paschal dimension of the Cross grounds the Feast of the Cross in the mystery of Christ. Thus Sacred History – particularized in the salvific event in Christ is the foundation of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.” 123

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is a commemoration of the cross on which Jesus died. It is not the celebration of the events of Helena’s finding of the True Cross or Heraclius’ recovery of Jerusalem Cross but the place, meaning and function of the cross in the history of salvation. Salvation is the main theme for the celebration of the Exaltation of the Cross because Cross has become the visible sign that symbolizes the sacred reality of deliverance. Jesus’ redemptive death on the cross, which washes the sins of humanity, which offers protection against the battle of the devil, becomes completely manifested in the celebration of this feast.

2.1. Mass on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

The introduction in the Missal gives the historical background for the feast as well as the theological significance of celebration of the liturgy.

“The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross commemorates the rescue of the relic of the True Cross by Emperor Heraclius in 629 after it had been captured by the Persians; it also marks the original dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where the relics of the church were kept in 335. The feast celebrates the Cross, the instrument of our salvation, and is in many ways an extension of Good Friday. The Cross is a great and powerful sign of God’s love for us – a love stronger than death – and also a daily reality in our lives: the only true path of holiness.” 124

In this introduction, the faithful are reminded that the cross serves as the true path of holiness in the daily life. There is no holiness in Christian life without the cross. Christians are called to follow Jesus by taking their Cross, not to avoid the cross. No one can follow Jesus without carrying his or her Cross. The cross thus becomes a vocation for a true Christian life of holiness. This introduction gives the two important aspects of the liturgical celebration, the

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124 The CTS New Daily Missal, 2987.
commemoration of the historical event and the participation in the liturgical event. Through the commemoration and the participation in the sacred liturgy, the faithful renew their commitment to God. By partaking in the liturgy, they are once again strengthened by the love and grace of God. The liturgy gives the faithful a platform to open themselves up to God and share in the glorious fruits of salvation. The analysis of the liturgy shows the depth of the theological meaning of the feast.

2.1.1. Entrance Antiphon

“We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom, is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered.”

The entrance antiphon gives a brief description of the glory of the cross. The central motif is the cross itself that continues the salutary effects of salvation, resurrection and life to the faithful who are saved by the death of Jesus on the cross. Here the faithful are asked to find glory in the cross of Lord Jesus Christ. For the faithful Christians, the cross is the epitome of glory. The death of Jesus on the Cross is considered as the glorious moment of victory over sin and Satan. For the faithful, therefore, the cross always represents glory and victory.

2.1.2. Collect

“O, God, who willed that your only-begotten Son, should undergo the cross to save the human race grant, we pray that we, who have known his mystery on earth, may merit the grace of his redemption in heaven.”

The above prayer of the Mass gives much importance to the saving act of Jesus on the cross. In this prayer of collect the cross is compared as a particular event that Jesus had undergone at the will of his Father. The meaning of this prayer is that the cross is considered as the expiatory sacrifice that Jesus had undergone for the salvation of the human race. It is very important to remember that though this Feast is the Exaltation of the Cross the actual events which are commemorated are the paschal mysteries. Due importance is given to Christ’s death on the cross, as said in the introduction, that this feast can be seen as an extension of Good Friday. In this liturgical celebration, the faithful are called to enter into the mystery of redemption that is achieved on the cross.

2.1.3. Liturgy of the Word

The first reading is from the book of Numbers 21:4-9, about the Israelites who were saved by looking at the bronze serpent fashioned by Moses. During the exodus, some of the Israelites died due to the bite of fiery serpents. Then Moses prayed to God for the people. God commanded Moses to set a bronze serpent on a pole in the midst of the crowd. Those who were bitten were got healed, when they looked at the bronze serpent. It is interpreted in the book of Wisdom as ‘the token of deliverance’. It represents Lord Jesus who was lifted upon the cross for the salvation of the world: Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man is ready to be lifted up; so that everyone who believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The second reading is from the Epistle to Philippians 2:6-11. This passage is about Christ’s humiliation and emptying on the cross. This passage summarizes the whole story of

125 The CTS New Daily Missal, 2987.
126 The CTS New Daily Missal, 2987.
127 Proverbs 16:5-6.
Chapter 2: Veneration of the Holy Cross in the Latin Church

salvation. It makes a clear reference to the divinity of Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. The passage begins with speaking about the divine nature of Christ; the term used is ‘who was in the form of God’. Though he was in the form of God, divine nature, he emptied himself by being born in human likeness. This epistle passage makes a clear description of the Christological claims of Jesus’ divinity and humanity. Death on the cross, in this passage, is used to show Jesus’ obedience to his Father. Death on the cross is the climax of Jesus’ mission, the salvation of humanity, the will the God.

The Gospel is from St. John 3:13-17. Gospel passage brings out the eternal love of God the Father who willingly gave his only Son as a saving sacrifice for the whole world. There is also an allusion made to the bronze serpent and Christ’s ‘lifting up’. The figure of the bronze serpent on the pole is connected with the cross. It is explained Christologically by St. John and is applied to Jesus, the cross, the crucifixion and the glorification. The serpent on the pole is the figure of the cross of Jesus. For the Jews and the Jewish Christians, serpent is one of the important symbols. The Jewish Christians are the pioneers to interpret the bronze serpent as the figure of Jesus on the cross. Those Israelites who looked at the bronze serpent were saved so as those who believe and behold the Cross of Christ are also saved. This Cross indicates the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, and highlights his salvific role.

2.1.4. Prayer over the Offering

“May this oblation, O Lord, which on the altar of the Cross cancelled the offence of the whole world, cleanse us, we pray, of all our sins.”

2.1.5. Preface

“[…] For you placed the salvation of the human race on the wood of the Cross, so that where death arose, life might again spring forth and the evil one, who conquered on a tree be conquered, through Christ our Lord.”

2.1.6. Prayer after Communion

“Having been nourished by your holy banquet, we beseech you, Lord Jesus Christ, to bring those you have redeemed by the wood of your life-giving Cross to the glory of the resurrection. Who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.”

The prayer over the offering identifies the Eucharist with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Cross is represented as an altar for sacrifice in this prayer. It is on the altar of the cross that Jesus placed his body for his sacrificial death on the Calvary. Today, it is on the altar that the Church reenacts the same sacrifice once offered by Christ. It is from the altar that the faithful receive the body and blood of Christ. Jesus’ death on the cross is considered as a sacrifice on the cross. Here the cross denotes the altar where the sacrificial offering is placed. “The cross is conceived in terms of the cult, as an altar; and the crucifixion is seen as a sacrifice.” The crucifixion is considered as an expiatory offering or sin offering. The fruit of the Eucharist and the crucifixion are one and the same – the cleansing of sin. From the cross, the Church, for the first time received the greatest gift of God and through Eucharist the Church still continues to receive this bliss. “In the framework of the Eucharist the sacrificial character of

128 John 3:14, 8:28, 12:32-34.
129 The CTS New Daily Missal, 2990.
130 The CTS New Daily Missal, 2990.
131 The CTS New Daily Missal, 2991.
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Jesus’ death is focused upon the Cross; the Eucharist mediates and strengthens the salvific effect of the Cross. Eucharist and Cross together form a source of blessing for the Church. In these prayers, the faithful ask God to cleanse them from their sins and to give the glory of the resurrection. The whole aim of the liturgy is to make life and resurrection available for the faithful. The faithful, in the liturgy are thus reminded of an afterlife, the eternal life.

3. Good Friday Liturgy

The official liturgy of Good Friday consists of the liturgy of hours and the passion liturgy. “The contemporary Roman observance of Holy Week is an impressive, moving and edifying sequence, and even if it does not retain numerous elements which are of medieval growth, it has also preserved valuable features from the days of the early Church.” Good Friday is not merely an occasion for the pious remembrance of Lord’s passion. It is a means whereby the congregations of the faithful, who participate in the liturgy, take part in the salvific events. By taking part in the liturgical celebration of Good Friday the faithful worshippers commit and renew themselves to Christ and share in his death and resurrection. Thus, the liturgical observance enables the faithful to thank God for the work of salvation and to receive the fruit of salvation simultaneously. The liturgy of Good Friday is not primarily a historical commemoration of Jesus’ passion but a present participation in the salvific events.

3.1. Liturgy of Hours on Good Friday

The Morning Prayer or lauds of the Good Friday begins with Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is a penitential psalm sung by David. This psalm invites the faithful to meditate upon their sins and offences they have committed in the past life. During Good Friday, the faithful are called to reflect on their life. The Church wants the faithful to attain the salvific gifts of God through the liturgical prayers. Therefore, the prayers start with the penitential psalm. The antiphon sung for this penitential psalm is ‘God spared not His Own Son but delivered Him up for us all’. Through this antiphon, the faithful are reminded of God’s unconditional love towards the humanity. The second reading is Psalm 143: 1-12 with the antiphon; ‘my spirit is overwhelmed within me my heart within me is troubled’. Psalm 143 is the Psalm sung by David for his deliverance from the enemies. It is followed by Psalm 85 with the antiphon; ‘One thief said unto the other: We have indeed received the due reward of our deeds, but what has this man done? Lord, remember me, when you come into thy kingdom.’

After the Psalm, the Old Testament reading is taken from Habakkuk 3: 2-19. This reading emphasis the glory of God. The New Testament reading is taken from Luke 1: 68-79, this is the canticle of Zacharias. The Morning Prayer ends with the following prayer: Christ became obedient for us unto death, even to the death of the cross. Look down, we beseech thee, O Lord, on this thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be delivered up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer the torment of the cross.

133 Van Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy, 220.
135 For this whole paragraph, I have heavily relied up on the internet source http://divinumofficium.com/cgi-bin/horas/officium.pl. From this website I have taken the rubrics 1960 section for the Good Friday liturgy of 14 April 2017. [accessed on April 11, 2017].
concluding prayer gives the message of God’s love towards humanity. First it highlights Jesus’ passion and then it makes and offers to the Lord for blessings. The prayers of the third hour, sixth hour and ninth hour are the psalm 119.

3.2. The Passion Liturgy

The introduction of the Good Friday liturgy in the Roman Missal states that the Church does not celebrate the sacraments on Good Friday. The 1969 draft of the revised liturgy explains that the context for this is that ‘the spouse has been taken away’ or ‘sign of mourning’. The altar is kept completely bare without any Cross, candles or cloth. This instruction continues the traditional practice without any change. The main liturgical observance today is called the Liturgy of the Passion which consists of three basic elements: the Liturgy of the Word, the Adoration of the Cross, and Holy Communion. The whole liturgy is celebrated in a simple manner with a lot of devotion and dedication. It is not a Mass celebration but there is the distribution of the pre-sanctified communion at the end of the liturgy. Each prayer for this liturgy is pregnant with high theological depth. The liturgy begins with the priest’s entry to the sanctuary.

3.2.1. Entrance

The ceremony begins ideally at three O’clock with the entrance of the celebrant and deacon dressed in red vestments without any entrance hymn. They go to the sanctuary and before the altar make a prostration and pray in silence. Along with the celebrant the whole congregation also kneels. Upon rising the celebrant says the opening prayer:

“Remember your mercies, O Lord, and with your eternal protection sanctify your servants, for whom Christ your Son, by the shedding of his Blood, established the paschal mystery. Who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen”.

The prostration of the celebrant represents the agony and prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. This entrance prayer is an invocation for the faithful to fathom the depth of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. In this prayer, the economy of salvation itself is considered as the mercy of the Almighty God. The prayer also beseeches God for protection and sanctification of the people. One of the important aspects of partaking in the liturgy is the sanctification of one’s mind, body and soul. It is also mentioned here in this prayer that it is through his blood shedding sacrifice that Jesus established the paschal mystery. It is his blood that Jesus paid for the redemption of the humanity. Jesus death is considered as vicarious death for the salvation of humanity. Blood shedding has an important meaning in the Jewish tradition. It is considered as one of the characteristics of sacrifice.

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136 On this day and the following day, by a most ancient tradition, the Church does not celebrate the sacraments at all, except for the Penance and the Anointing of the sick. Cf. The CTS New Daily Missal, 282.
139 The introduction for the service in the Roman Missal states that; “On the afternoon of this day, about three o’clock (unless a later hour is chosen for a pastoral reason), there takes place the celebration of the Lord’s passion consisting of three parts, namely the Liturgy of the Word, the Adoration of the Cross, and the Holy Communion. Cf. The CTS New Daily Missal, 282.
140 The CTS New Daily Missal, 283.
3.2.2. Scripture Reading

The main motif of the reading from the scripture on this day is to make an intensified identification with the passion and suffering of Christ. All sit for the first reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The theme of the reading is the Oracle of the suffering servant. The promise of the Lord is that the suffering servant will prosper and he shall be exalted and lifted up. The suffering servant is despised and rejected by others. The passage makes a clear explanation about the affliction of the ‘suffering servant’. The suffering servant has taken up the infirmities and diseases of the faithful. The suffering servant is wounded for the transgressions and diseases of the faithful community. In this passage one can see the vicarious effect of the suffering servant. The whole suffering is at the will of the Lord for the salvation of human race. There are questions raised concerning the views of anti-Judaism and soteriology. In this reading one can see the Jewishness of Jesus who stands in the long line of Jews who have been saved by God. Here we see continuity between Jesus and his forebears.

The first reading is followed by the responsorial Psalm (Ps31 [30]:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17-25). The response the people sing “Father; into your hands I commend my spirit” is the Psalm that the Lord quoted on the cross. The second reading is Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9, here the theme is the suffering of Christ the High Priest. This reading emphasis the fruits of the passion won for us by the high priest, Christ, who humbled himself to share in our human nature despite his divine nature.

3.2.3. Gospel

The second reading follows the Gospel acclamation.

Gospel acclamation: “Salvation, glory, and power to the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a Cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every other name.”

The Gospel acclamation invites people to meditate on the mystery of Jesus’ death on the cross. “The history of hearing John’s passion on this day is quite deep. Egeria says the passions were read at the place where Jesus died, but John’s especially the part about Jesus handing over his spirit was proclaimed at three O’clock. One of the earliest listings of Lectionary texts, probably from the seventh century, cites exactly the verse in use today: John 18:1-19:42.”

“Following centuries-old tradition, the passion is chanted, with the three parts divided among the three deacons. One chants the narrative, while the second, with a deep bass voice, chants the word of Christ; the third, with an alto voice, chants the other dialogue.”

In 1965 lay leaders received the permission to take part in the readings of the passion; earlier it was the provision only for those who at least possess the order of deacon. The Lectionary instructs the faithful to kneel and pause for a while at the words of Jesus’ death. The Gospel passages give a good account of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the trial of Jesus before the High Priest, the trial by Pilate, the crucifixion and the burial of Jesus. A thorough

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141 The CTS New Daily Missal, 286.
meditation of this Gospel passage enkindles the minds of the faithful to enter into a pious participation in the liturgy.

3.2.4. The Solemn Intercessions

There are ten different prayers for the solemn intercessions. A deacon or a lay minister says or sings the invitations of these intercessory prayers standing at the ambo. Following a silence, the priest extending his hands also sings or says the second part of each intercessory prayer. The faithful remain kneeling or standing during the intercessory prayer.

The first prayer is for the Holy Church, for its peace, protection and unity that it may glorify the Father in tranquility. In this prayer, the priest prays for the universal Church. The second prayer is for the Pope, the priest prays that he may be safe and unharmed to govern the people of God. The third prayer is for all orders and degrees of the faithful: namely the bishops, priests, deacons, and all the faithful people. The priest prays that all may serve God faithfully. In this prayer, he mentions the name of the bishop and prays for him. The fourth prayer concerns the prayers for all baptized in the Church, and the catechumens who desire for baptism.

The fifth prayer is for the unity of Christians, that God may gather them together and keep them in one Church. The sixth prayer is for the Jewish people that they may advance in love of God’s name and faithfulness to the covenant. The seventh prayer is for those who do not believe in Christ, that with the Holy Spirit they may enter the way of salvation. The eighth prayer is for those who do not believe in God, that they may find the way to God by following what is right. The ninth prayer is for those in public office, that God will direct them for the true peace and freedom of all. The final prayer is for those in tribulation, it asks God to cleanse the world of errors, disease, and hunger, to unlock prisons, loosen fetters, grant safety to travelers, a return to pilgrims, health to sick and salvation to the dying.

3.3. Veneration of the Holy Cross

“Egeria’s travel literature mentions that a relic of True Cross is venerated on Good Friday, but there is no re-enactment of the events leading up to the crucifixion, nor the crucifixion itself.” The veneration of the cross for the Good Friday liturgy can be carried out in two different ways. Today the veneration of the cross is conducted in such a way that the cross is first shown to the congregation who have assembled in the church for the Good Friday service, and then venerated.

In the first form, after the solemn adoration, a deacon accompanied by two ministers takes up a veiled cross (with a violet veil) and makes a procession through the middle of the church. At the end of the procession he gives the cross to the priest who is standing before the altar facing the people. The priest receives the cross, uncovers the upper part and lifts it and sings ‘behold the wood of the Cross’. As a response, all sing ‘come let us adore’ and kneel in silence for a moment. The priest then uncovers the right arm of the cross and performs the

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same ritual so does the faithful. Finally, he uncovers the entire Cross and performs the same ritual for the third time and the faithful join him as in the previous performance.\footnote{146}  

In the second form the priest or the deacon carries an unveiled Cross, along with ministers with lighted candles, makes a procession through the middle of the church from the front door to the sanctuary. During the procession, the person carrying the cross makes a pause for three times and elevates the cross and sings “Behold the wood of the cross” and all the faithful sing the response and kneel in silence for a moment. He, then, sets the cross down in a place where people may come to adore it by kneeling and kissing. The candles are set on either side of the cross. The veneration of the cross gives the assembly an opportunity to meditate the meaning of Christ’s death. The action of veneration of the cross focuses on Jesus’ suffering and triumphs over death.  

“Today, other actions may be done. People may touch the cross, bow before it, or stand for a few moments of contemplation.”\footnote{147} “However, the veneration is performed, the real veneration goes on in the heart of the believer.”\footnote{148} Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI in his book, \textit{The Spirit of the Liturgy}, says that in today’s liturgy, it is on Good Friday, the day of Lord’s crucifixion that prostration appears. “It is a fitting expression of our sense of shock at the fact that we by our sins share in the responsibility for the death of Christ. We throw ourselves down and participate in his shock, in his descent into the depth of anguish.”\footnote{149} By doing this the faithful acknowledge their fallen nature and sinful state and affirms the cross as the burning bush with the flames of God’s love that helps them to stand on their feet.

3.3.1. Antiphon Sung During the Adoration of the Cross

“We adore your Cross, O Lord, we praise and glorify your holy resurrection for behold, because of the wood of a tree joy has come to the whole world. May God have mercy on us and bless us; may he let his face shed its light upon us and have mercy on us.”\footnote{150}

3.3.2. The Reproaches

“Faithful Cross the Saints rely on,  
Noble tree beyond compare!  
Never was there such a scion,  
Never leaf or flower so rare.”\footnote{151}

Chants, ‘We adore your Cross, O Lord’ and the hymn ‘Faithful Cross’ are sung during the adoration of the Cross. In this hymn, it is explicitly clear that the faithful thank God for the joy that is restored to the humanity through the death of Christ. The very important point in this chant is that it is through the wood of the cross that Jesus restored peace and happiness to humanity. Therefore, the cross represents the life of joy and happiness for the faithful Christians. Even in the fourth century the celebration of the veneration of the cross, praising and thanks giving were an important part. The oldest form of the ritual of the veneration of

\footnote{148} Stevenson, \textit{Jerusalem Revisited}, 65.  
\footnote{149} Ratzinger, \textit{The Spirit of the Liturgy}, 188.  
\footnote{150} The CTS New Daily Missal, 300.  
\footnote{151} The CTS New Daily Missal, 303.
the cross was the veneration of the relic of the True Cross. The salvation and liberation of the human race was brought about on the cross.

During the veneration of the cross the congregation commemorates the salvation and liberation which was actualized on the cross by Christ. In this way through the adoration of the cross the faithful participate in the mystery of salvation that was accomplished on the cross. “Thus, we who now commemorate salvation by means of the veneration of the cross are freed from the bonds of sin.”\(^\text{152}\) In this ritual of the adoration of the cross the salvific reality of the cross as a sign of redemption is celebrated and actualized. “But at the same time this vital commemoration of the historically determined revelation of the mystery of the cross calls up the eschatological perspective of redemption. The contemporary celebration refers to the ultimate perfection of redemption.”\(^\text{153}\)

It is the mystery of redemption acquired through the victory of the cross that is celebrated as the main theme rather than the suffering of Christ on the cross. In this ritual of the veneration of the cross the faithful are reminded of the redemption that Christ obtained on the cross. They are called to share the salubrious significance and the glory of the cross. “The Christian faith, above all the Christian Cross, is something to be celebrated and much as we can hover fruitfully before the cross, it still comes down to the need to worship and to worship together.”\(^\text{154}\) In the analysis of the hymns of the Holy Week in the Latine rite one can see that the celebration of the cross is a symbol of God’s triumphant work. The cross is presented as bearing fruit in the lives of the followers of Christ. The cross is the means through with Christ attained a glorious victory in the battle against the evil.

3.3.3. Communion Rite

After the adoration of the cross, the cross is carried to its place and fixed on a stand. Lighted candles are also placed on two sides. On the altar is placed the corporal and the missal. Then the priest goes to the altar and begins the Communion Rite. The Blessed Sacrament is then brought to the altar. The Communion rite begins with the Lord’s Prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is a consistent part of Good Friday liturgy since the seventh century in the Roman liturgy. There is no prayer of ‘sign of peace’ and ‘Lamb of God’ included on this day, which is very particular. Soon after the Lord’s Prayer the priest recites the prayer for the ‘invitation to communion’ by holding the particle above the paten.

After consuming the body of Christ, the priest distributes the communion to the faithful. There is no solemnation attached to the distribution of communion on this day as lamentation is the main theme of the day. So, the most Blessed Sacrament is brought in silence and in a simple way. “Communion has not always been part of Good Friday liturgy. Pope Innocent I said that the sacraments were not celebrated at all on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, largely due to the fast, which apparently included a fast from the communion.”\(^\text{155}\)

It is stated in the eighth century Ordo Romanus that the faithful can receive communion from

\(^{152}\) Van Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy, 93.

\(^{153}\) Van Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy, 84.

\(^{154}\) Stevenson, Jerusalem Revisited, 55.

the reserved sacrament while the Pope and deacon did not consume the Blessed Sacrament. *Ordo Romanus* 24 explicitly said, all receive this communion in silence, and that brings the service to a close. In time the communion rite appeared in the liturgical texts including the Gelasian Sacramentary and the pre-conciliar liturgy where it was commonly called ‘the mass of the presanctified’.

“The question of Communion rite on Good Friday came up in 1953. Ferdinando Antonelli observed, “Holy Communion on good Friday has a profound theological significance: there is no Eucharistic sacrifice, but all share in the fruits of the redemption by communion with the Divine Victim, having commemorated the bloody sacrifice of Christ in the adoration of the Cross.” The decision to restore Communion to the faithful was made in 1955: everyone will be able to render more copiously, in his soul, the fruits of the sacrifice of Calvary by sacramentally sharing in the Divine victim.”

3.3.4. The Prayer after Communion:

After a moment of silence the priest invites the people to pray. Then he recites the prayer after the communion.

“Almighty ever living God, who have restored us to life by the blessed death and resurrection of your Christ, preserve in us the work of your mercy, that by partaking of this mystery, we may have a life unceasingly devoted to you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

In the prayer after the communion prayer, which is addressed to the Father, the death and resurrection of Jesus are measured as the restoration of life of the humankind. The prayer focuses on the effects of the entire paschal mystery, not specifically of this Communion. In this prayer, the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross is referred to as blessed death. It is considered as blessed because it is in his death that he fulfills his mission which he received from his Father, the mission to serve and save the world. Thus, by giving himself on the cross Jesus redeemed the world and it became a great blessing for the humankind.

Another important aspect of this prayer is that it makes clear that by partaking in this mystery the faithful are called to an unceasing life that is devoted to God. Through this prayer, the community commemorates the life-giving death and resurrection of Lord, and prays, that the works of God’s mercy may preserve in them through the partaking in the celebration of the passion mystery. “In a sense, this prayer draws the entire liturgy to a close since it has little to do with the communion rite itself.”

3.3.5. Prayer over the People

In the end, the priest, facing the people and extending his hand over them, makes the prayer of blessing, the prayer over the people.

“May abundant blessing, O Lord we pray, descend upon your people, who have honoured the death of your son in the hope of their resurrection: may pardon come, comfort be given, holy faith increase, and everlasting redemption be made secure. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

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157 The *CTS New Daily Missal*, 309.
159 The *CTS New Daily Missal*, 303.
This prayer asks for God’s blessing to descend on those who have honoured the death of Christ and who also find hope in his resurrection. There is no traditional Trinitarian blessing after this prayer as in the mass. One important aspect of this prayer is that it makes clear that the faithful have honoured the death of Christ by partaking in the liturgy. In both these concluding prayers it is noted that a reference is made also on the resurrection and redemption.

Conclusion
The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross reminds the faithful on the historical events on the finding of the Holy Cross and its later retrieval. The mass reminds them about the redemptive acts of God in the salvation history. The passion liturgy exclusively pictures the event of the crucifixion of Christ. The passion liturgy brings out the salvific mystery of redemption on the cross. The whole passion liturgy portrays the recapitulation of the creation. Christ achieved the recapitulation by his obedience against Adam’s disobedience. The cross for Christ, is the result of this ultimate obedience. By his death on the cross Christ gave back the glory that humanity lost through Adam’s sin. According to Fagerberg, the cross stands between humanity’s present state and the resurrected glory. Therefore, the Holy Cross reflects the message of victory and invites its followers to achieve the glory, that is brought out on the cross.\textsuperscript{160} The ritual of the veneration of the Holy Cross is the best gesture that helps the faithful to meditate on the mystery of the cross. The victorious status of the Holy Cross is clearly pictured in the Passion liturgy. The theological and ecclesial importance of the passion liturgy, which is portrayed in this chapter will be elaborately explained in the final chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS IN THE SYRO MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. Introduction
In the Syro Malankara Catholic Church, Good Friday liturgy occupies a very significant place. The Good Friday liturgical prayers are Biblical, symbolic and meditative. The beauty and meaning of Good Friday liturgy cannot be viewed outside the Lenten liturgical cycle. Therefore, the Good Friday liturgy becomes an indispensable part of the Lenten cycle and vice versa. The whole Lenten cycle of fifty days leads the faithful to the liturgical celebration of Good Friday and Easter. In the Oriental Church, Easter is the most important feast which celebrates the ‘death of Death’, the annihilation of Hell, and the beginning of a new and eternal life. The fulfillment of the Good Friday celebration is achieved in the Easter liturgical celebration.

The Oriental Christians celebrate Easter not as a yearly commemoration of a past event, but they celebrate Christ’s resurrection as something that happened and stills happens in their lives every day. It is a special concept of the commemoration of a past event that is made present in all its saving grace.161 Through the Easter celebration, the faithful receive the gift of the new life that Christ has given them through His death and resurrection. In order to understand the meaning of resurrection one must know the meaning of Christ’s death and its significance. Without a proper understanding of Christ’s death, one cannot understand the mystery of the resurrection.

One can say that the Good Friday liturgy serves as the hermeneutical key that unlocks the mystery of resurrection. This chapter, in detail, makes an analysis of the liturgical prayers and Lenten practices of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. The Syro Malankara Church does not celebrate Eucharist on Good Friday. There is not even the distribution of the pre-sanctified mysteries. On this day, the Malankara Church celebrates the liturgy of the hours and liturgical services of Good Friday. In this chapter I will give the liturgical enactment of the Good Friday service in a step-by-step manner. The theological explanation of the liturgical services is not given in this chapter. It will be explained in the final chapter. As there is no official translation of the liturgical text book in the Syro Malankara Catholic Church I have sought the help of The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Christian’s Holy Liturgy of Passion Week162 and Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit, The Crown of the Year, vol. II163.

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162 The Malankara Orthodox Church can be said as the mother Church of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. It is from this Orthodox Church that Mar Ivanios got reunited to the Catholic Church. The liturgies of these two Churches are the same except for some linguistic changes. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Christian’s, *Holy Liturgy of Passion Week*, from Hosanna to Kymtho (Easter), is compiled by St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. I have made use of the pdf, form available from the website.
2. The Great Lent of Fifty Days

“In the Syro Malankara Catholic Church the Great Lent becomes a period of preparation for the feast of Easter.” One can say that Lent is the preparation for Easter. The fruit of Easter is the new life in Christ. And the medium to achieve this gift of new life is Lent. “In the Syrian tradition Lent is not an end in itself; rather Easter gives meaning to it. It is the time for spiritual and interior preparation to achieve the new life of Easter.” During the fifty days of the Great Lent the faithful prepare themselves by purifying their body and soul. The Church makes no separation of the soul from the body. “The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored, the whole man is to return.” It is through fasting and abstaining from certain food items they make the physical preparation and through liturgical prayers and Bible reading they purify their minds. “In a sense Lenten season is the most important season of the year, as the touchstone of the believer’s faith and of the sincerity of the commitment to the Lord and to the kingdom.”

It is from the Oriental monastic practices that abstinence and fasting come into the liturgical tradition. In the Oriental monastic traditions, the ascetical practices related with Lent are many. These practices help the faithful to rediscover and recover the new life in Christ. “Christ restores wholeness in us and he does so by restoring in us the true scale of values by leading us back to God.” According to the Oriental tradition one cannot enter into the new life without these practices.

Lent becomes a pilgrimage in the Oriental tradition, a spiritual journey that helps one to rediscover one’s true life in Christ. Lent is a spiritual journey and its function is to transmit us from one spiritual state into another. The Lenten spiritual journey of fifty days culminates in the celebration of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and finally its goal, the Sunday of Easter. Alexander Schmemann, the great Russian Orthodox theologian says that: “Lent is a spiritual journey and its destination is Easter, the Feast of feasts.” Without proper observance of Lent, one cannot enter into the full grace of the paschal celebration. Therefore, Lent becomes an indispensable characteristic for the Easter celebration.

2.1. The Structure of the Lenten Prayer Cycle

The Lenten prayer cycle begins with Monday evening prayer, which is conducted on Sunday evening. There are seven canonical hours on a day. They are the evening prayers (Vespers), Soothero (Compline), night prayers, morning prayers, third hour, sixth hour and ninth hour. Apart from the liturgy of the hours the faithful are supposed to read and meditate the Bible

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164 Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit is written by Francis Acharya. He was born in Ypres, Belgium in 1912. He was a Belgian Cistercian monk of Scourmont Abbey. He went to India and took Indian citizenship and established a religious house with Indian cultural and spiritual values and blended it with Syrian Christian liturgy. This abbey is today called as Kurishumala Ashram (Abbey at the mountain of the cross). He died in the year 2002 and is buried in the ashram. Francis Acharya has translated and written many books on Syrian liturgy. The second volume of The Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit deals with the liturgical prayers of the Lenten season in the Syro Malankara Catholic Church.
166 Kakkanatt, Christological Catechesis of the Liturgy, 39.
169 Kakkanatt, Christological Catechesis of the Liturgy, 36.
169 Alexander Schmemann, Great Lent, 11.
Chapter:3 Veneration of the Holy Cross in the Malankara Church

every day. Lenten practices consist of prostrations, fastings and personal devotions. The liturgical text book for Lent highlights the importance of prayer and repentance. It gives a good picture of Biblical characters who observed fasting and prayer. The model par excellence is Jesus’ fasting in the wilderness. Thus, the faithful, through the liturgical prayers, are asked to model their life after these Biblical models. Reconciliation is one of the characteristics of the Lenten prayers which is given utmost importance. The Lenten prayers begin with a special service of reconciliation which is called Shubukono.

2.1.1. Shubukono

“What shubukono means, is that the faithful pardons every injustice done against him by anyone and also requests pardon from every individual for whatever injustice he has done to anyone.”\textsuperscript{170} The service of shubukono is conducted on the first Monday of the Great Lent. “In the Antiochean liturgy the Great Lent begins with a service of reconciliation on Monday morning, and it is called shubukono, the service of reconciliation by giving peace to each other.”\textsuperscript{171} Before entering into Lent all faithful are called to remove all hatred from their minds and they are called for reconciliation with all others. As a symbolical gesture of reconciliation and forgiveness to all, this ceremony is conducted at the beginning of the Lent.

The leading theme of the prayers of shubukono says that the peace and harmony is the gift of love and reconciliation. The second hymn explicitly makes clear that fasting and abstinence from wine during Lent make no sense if the heart is full of revenge and rivalry. The hymn also makes a pleading to Christ to protect the faithful under the safeguard of his cross that keeps the evil away. The service begins with an introductory prayer and is followed by four hymns, primion, sedaro and ethro, Bible reading and the prayer of reconciliation. The exclusive character of this service is the prayer of reconciliation at the end where all the faithful make a full prostration and ask the priest for forgiveness. “They ask his forgiveness with the words: ‘Forgive me, a sinner’. Then the priest asks their forgiveness, prostrating himself before them, and blesses them.”\textsuperscript{172}

2.1.2. Liturgical Prayers for the Week Days

The Lenten pilgrimage starts with a return to the initial glory of man and woman in the paradise. The liturgical prayers and ascetical practices energize the faithful to come to a real repentance which will lead them to a full conversion—metanoia. “The Church, the people of God, is being renewed, undergoing the Passover of the Lord and entering with Him upon a new stage of their Christian life.”\textsuperscript{173} The liturgical prayers for the Lenten days are conducted in seven times. The Church also grants exceptions to lay people, if they find it difficult, to conduct these prayers at least in three times. Repentance is the main theme for the Lenten liturgical prayers. One of the motives of the Lenten liturgical prayers is to initiate the faithful for the Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter. The prayers ask the faithful to model their Lent after Jesus who was fasting and praying for forty days in the desert.

\textsuperscript{171} Kakkanatt, \textit{Christological Catechesis of the Liturgy}, 39.
\textsuperscript{172} Hugh Wybrew, \textit{Orthodox Lent, Holy Week and Easter} (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 38.
2.1.3. Prostrations

Prostrations are one of the distinctive characteristics of the entire Lenten worship. According to Cardinal Ratzinger “Prostration means; ‘lying with one’s face’ to the ground before the overwhelming power of God.” Prostration leads to the sanctification and restoration of the body to its God-given function, the temple of God. In the Lenten worship the body participates in the prayer of the soul as the soul prays in and through the body. In the Syro Malankara tradition there are many prostrations during the Lenten season. First the faithful kneel down on their knees and make a sign of the cross and they bend down and kiss the ground with their forehead. On week days of the fifty days of Lent, the faithful make forty prostrations after the noon prayer. When they make the forty prostrations they remember Jesus’ forty days of fasting in the wilderness.

2.1.4. The Holy Scripture

“During the Great Lent the Biblical dimension of worship is given increased emphasis.” The liturgical prayers in the East are mostly Biblical and it is expressed in the Biblical images, symbols and languages. The Bible is the inspired response of humanity towards God’s revelation in the form of prayers, praises and adoration, written down in human language. Liturgical prayers also express praise and adoration to God. The Bible is the living voice of God that speaks to us continuously for repentance and return.

All liturgical prayers in the Syro Malankara Catholic Church begin with a penitential psalm. “Psalms have always occupied a central and indeed unique place in Christian worship.” The most adequate and perfect expression of people’s prayer, repentance, praise and adoration are seen in the Psalms. Lent is a spiritual challenge that requires a comeback, a resolution and a continuous effort. And the best and easiest way to encounter this challenge is to follow the guidance of the Church. The Church asks the faithful to meditate on the Gospel passages and Lenten liturgical worships, so that they can appropriate the Gospel values into their personal, social and spiritual life.

2.1.5. Fasting

Fasting in the Oriental tradition is an inner purification. “Fasting has meaning as a means to conversion. This conversion is achieved through a sense of sin and its rejection.” It is also a return to love, a fight against hate, jealousy, injustice and envy. By eating the fruit of the tree at the middle of the Eden garden, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned. As the after effect of this sin they lost their grace. Fasting is opposite to this disobedient act of Adam and Eve. “Lent is exactly the opposite; it is a return to the ‘normal’ life, to that ‘fasting’ which Adam and Eve broke, thus introducing suffering and death to the world.” Christ is the new Adam who came to repair the damage caused by the first Adam.

Fasting in the Eastern understanding is to enter into that Christ experience who fasted forty days and won over food and Satan. “The goal of the Lenten fast is present in its beginning, and the fast is undertaken in the sure hope that the cross of Christ has already won

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175 Kakkanatt, Christological Catechesis of the Liturgy, 38.
176 Kakkanatt, Christological Catechesis of the Liturgy, 39.
177 Kakkanatt, Christological Catechesis of the Liturgy, 39.
178 Schmemann, Great Lent, 143.
the victory over human sinfulness. “179 The Orientals believe that Christ liberates them from the total dependency on food and the world. Fasting gives them the existential proof that their dependence on food and world is not absolute. Through fasting they recover their true spiritual nature. Fasting is worthless without a spiritual counterpart. The spiritual counterpart is prayer. Prayers energize and strengthen to fast and fasting helps to deepen prayer. Without feeding oneself with divine food, fasting only becomes spiritual suicide. It is because of this reason that there is the need for a spiritual preparation before fasting. A God-centered fast help the faithful to realize their new life in God. In the Syro Malankara Catholic Church tradition the faithful have to observe fasting on the first Monday and every Fridays of the Lent. They also have to abstain from meat, fish and eggs on all fifty days of the Lent.

2.1.6. Mid-Lent

The twenty-fifth day of the Great Fifty days of lent is known as Mid-Lent. On the twenty-fifth day of the Great Lent M’northa180 is solemnly placed in the Hyklo (centre of the church building) and the Holy Cross is placed on the M’northa very ceremoniously. From this day till the day of ascension this Holy Cross receives the most important place in the church. The faithful come and kiss the Holy Cross whenever they enter the church.

“All of the great week and Easter celebrations are centered on this cross. The faithful kiss this cross when they enter into the Church. Prefigured by the bronze serpent which was placed by Moses among the people of Israel (Num 21:4-9), the cross is the symbol of Christ signifying the whole Christ event; thus, whoever looks upon and touches this cross will be saved. There is a profound Christological significance in this custom, and this cross really signifies the whole salvific Christ-event.”181

M’northa is veiled with red velvet and the cross on it is tied with a red stole. This service is conducted either before the Holy Mass or at the end of the Holy Mass. The service consists of a hymn and the ritual of the solemn celebration of the cross. The first stanza of the hymns recites about the legend of Queen Helena’s finding of the true cross. The second stanza is Christological in sense. It says that there was a separation of Jesus spirit from his body when he died on the cross. Despite this separation there is no separation of his divinity from His body on the cross. “His spirit left him on the cross. His divinity did not pass away from his body. Human life left him, but he remains eternally.”182 Thus, the prayers of the mid-Lent emphasize the salvific role of the Holy Cross in the economy of salvation.

2.1.7. Solemn Celebration of the Holy Cross on Mid-Lent

Solemn celebration of the cross is a particular ritual that uses the wooden cross (the cross on the M’northa) and special prayers. The celebrant who holds the Holy Cross in his hand along with the assistants who hold ceremonial fans and candles faces four directions and recites four special prayers. Prayers made by facing four directions is a particularity in the Oriental tradition. It is a symbolic representation to show the whole universe. At the end of each prayer the celebrant raises the wooden cross and makes a blessing in the form of the cross. In this way, it is to be understood that, the whole universe is blessed. When the celebrant makes

179 Wybrew, Orthodox Lent, Holy Week and Easter, 39.
180 M’northa is the wooden stand on which the Holy Cross is erected.
181 Kakkanatt, Christological Catechesis of the Liturgy, 39.
the sign of the cross the faithful recite ‘Kyrie-eleison’ three times, which means, Oh Lord have mercy.

The first prayer is recited facing the east. The prayer says that the mystery of the rod of Moses symbolizes Jesus Christ. When it is kept at the centre of the Israelites’ tent it symbolizes the salvific cross. “O Lord, we your Church celebrate your Holy Cross for our protection, blessings, good harvest, and our salvation during the middle of this Lent, have mercy on us.” The fathers of Syrian tradition attribute the power of Mosses to his rod which is a type of the cross. “This type which is originally of the Cross, enabled Moses to perform all his miracles.”

Facing the West, the priest recites the second prayer. He prays that, may the Lord make an eternal sign of the life-giving Holy Cross within the faithful. The second prayer says that a vision of the Holy Cross purifies and sanctifies the minds and thoughts of the faithful. In the third prayer which is directed towards the north, the priest prays, that the faithful may find protection under the wings of the Holy Cross and their wounds to be healed by the power of the cross. In the fourth prayer, directed to the south, the priest prays that the faithful be healed from their worries and diseases when they keep their vision on the Holy Cross as the Israelites kept their vision of the bronze serpent.

The solemnity associated with the Holy Cross is to be seen as a preparation for the Holy Week liturgy. This ceremony of the solemn celebration of the cross portrays different salvific events. By fixing the Holy Cross in the centre of the church, the faithful are reminded of the divine presence of Christ. The Lenten practices and the liturgical prayers prepare the faithful for the liturgy of Good Friday. Without the proper liturgical prayers and observances on the Lent, the Good Friday celebration becomes meaningless. During the Lent, the liturgy affirms that the Holy Cross is the saving weapon for the faithful. Therefore they pray: “O Lord who gave us the life-giving cross to win against the fight of Satan on this mid-day of the Lent, have mercy on us.”

3. The Great Friday of the Crucifixion

“The great Friday of the crucifixion is a climax of the celebration of the Life-giving passion.” The Good Friday liturgy of the hours and three special services of Good Friday are the main liturgies on this day. There are two processions for the service. The first procession is conducted outside the Church which signifies Jesus’ carrying of the cross to Golgotha. The second procession is conducted inside the Church, which signifies the carrying of Jesus’ body from the cross to the tomb. The service of Good Friday is long and time-consuming. “The Friday of the great suffering, as it is also called, is very much the climax of the celebration in Kerala, where Good Friday is a public holiday – all works cease and the whole day is observed as a day of fast and prayer.” Despite the liturgical celebration being long and monotonous most of the faithful in the Malankara tradition participate in it with

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183 Cyril Mar Baselios, *Feasts (Perunaalukal)* (Trivandrum: The Liturgical Committee of the SMCC, 2003), 132. [my translation].
185 Baselios, *Feasts (Perunaalukal)*, 135.
vigor and zealous devotion. “Yet among the Church people there are substantial numbers who accept it with gratitude and great seriousness as the supreme opportunity for contemplating Christ’s death.”

3.1. The Liturgy of the Hours

The liturgy of the hours commemorates different themes from the Old Testament and the New Testament. The main message of the liturgy of hours is to show that the crucifixion of Jesus was his self-sacrifice for the reconciliation of all human kind with the Almighty God. In order to show the sinful nature of the humanity the disobedience of Israel are given a frequent reference in the prayers. In the prayers, the faithful are given the examples of the sinful nature of humanity and they are asked to keep vigil and watch to save themselves from this sinful nature. Repentance is one of the main themes of all the prayers and the faithful are also convinced of the mercy of the Almighty God who forgives to all those who repent and come back to the Lord. The textual analysis of the liturgical prayers of the Good Friday liturgy is briefly explained in the following paragraphs.

3.1.1. Evening Prayer

The evening prayer begins with a note that mentions Jesus’ passion and death on the cross. “Christ who by your passion and death on the cross gives life to us, mortals, be gracious to all and make us live in the light of your life.” The opening prayer states that by the celebrations of Passover Jesus put an end to the ancient Passover and by his sacrifice on the cross Jesus put an end to all bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament. The main theme that is developed in the opening prayer is Jesus’ inauguration of a new era or New Testament. The opening prayer ends with a note that beseeches for the faithful’s renewal. One of the main aims of the evening prayer is to prove to the faithful that in Jesus all the laws and prophecies have come to its fulfillment and it is only through Jesus that they can restore and renew their life to reconcile with God.

3.1.2. Night Prayer

The main theme that is meditated during the night prayer is Judas’ betrayal of Jesus and the agony in the garden. In the night prayer Jesus is addressed as the spotless paschal lamb that brought salvation to the world through his sacrifice. In the beginning the prayer hymns portray Judas’ act of betraying Jesus and Peter’s act of denying Jesus.

“Judas betrays. Peter denies.
The priest and the people insult the son.
They hit him on the head and spit in his face.
Glory to you for your graciousness,
You who endured without resistance.”

In this night prayer, it is made clear that the faithful have to be watchful and awake to escape from the trails of the evil spirit. By portraying the acts of Judas and Peter the faithful

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191 Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, Divine Office for the Holy Week (Trivandrum: Catholicate Centre, 2015).341. [my translation].
Christians are reminded that without prayer and watch they too can go away from the divine love. The night prayer portrays the events before the crucifixion. By giving different events in the night prayer, the Church asks the faithful to meditate on these events, which will help them to have a deeper participation in the Good Friday liturgy.

3.1.3. Morning Prayer

In the Morning Prayer, the Church remembers Jesus’ trial and his humiliation in the Primion. The faithful ask Jesus that, let them be not counted among the evil-doers who condemned Jesus. “Today the love of the disciples has become cold and they run in search of a place of refuge while the master of truth stands alone with the crucified enduring pain and suffering.”192 The Primion Sedaro prayer begins by stating Jesus’ death on the cross as the expiatory sacrifice that erased the sins of the humanity. “Praise to the great one and mighty one, who offered himself in sacrifice on the cross, and by the blood of pardon poured forth on the cross erased the account of the sins of the human family.”193 The Sedaro prayer invites the faithful to meditate on the mystery of the creator’s love for the creatures. It begins by giving a short account of creation and its renewal with Jesus’ passion.

3.1.4. Third Hour

The third hour begins with a praise: “Christ who were beaten by a servant in the tribunal, be compassionate to us on the day of your judgment, and be gracious to all”194. The prayers focus on the wicked acts of Jewish people who wanted to kill Jesus at the instigation from their leaders. The prayer says that the Jewish people who force to kill Jesus were so wicked that they could not recognize him as the one who freed them from the slavery of Egypt. The prayers state that due to the sinful situation of the human nature the Jewish people could not recognize the divinity of Jesus and hence Jesus was condemned to death by the Jews. “Therefore, God, the word, who condescended to such an abasement, for our salvation, out of love, we beseech You, by this fragrant incense, exalt Your name over us.”195

The second paragraph gives an elaborate description of the suffering that Jesus had to undergo. By this description, the faithful are called to meditate on Jesus’ passion and his love towards humanity. It can create repentance and conversion in the hearts of the faithful. The prayers also say that the whole universe and the celestial bodies were shattered and shuddered at the passion of Jesus, except the sinful humanity. “The East saw You and was in distress, the West looked at You intently and was shaken, and the other quarters of the earth shuddered like dry leaves in a storm.”196

3.1.5. Service of the Sixth Hour

This service begins with a note of praise. “Christ who were interrogated in the tribunal by your servant, be compassionate to us on the day of your judgment, and be gracious to all.”197 In the beginning of this service the prayers make it clear that Jesus’ suffering on the cross was to give life to Adam, who is the representative of all sinful humanity. “You who mounted

192 Cardinal Cleemis, Divine Office for the Holy Week, 363.
194 Cardinal Cleemis, Divine Office for the Holy Week, 379.
197 Cardinal Cleemis, Divine Office for the Holy Week, 386.
the cross of Your own will to give life to Adam and his children, be gracious to all, O God.” In the Primon Sedaro prayer the passion and death of Jesus are clearly pictured as the part of salvation economy. In this prayer, Jesus is addressed as God the word who are born divinely from the heart of the Father before time, and in the present time appeared in human form from the Holy Virgin.

The beauty of this prayer is that it gives a comparison of the majesty and glory of God in heaven and the humility and shame that the same God, in the person of Jesus, had to undergo on earth in the hands of humanity. “In the highest heaven you are magnified and praised and here below the earthly ones count you among criminals. In the highest heaven, you sit in glory with the Father and the holy spirit on your glorious throne and here on earth you are treated with abuse and laughed at to scorn.” The sedaro prayer ends with a note which says that by partaking in the passion liturgy they may also share in the passion of chartist so that they can rejoice at His resurrection.

3.1.6. Service of the Ninth Hour

The ninth hour prayer begins with the following praise. “Christ, who suffered for us on the cross, may your cross and passion be a shield for us.” In this service, the faithful meditate on the passion and suffering of Christ on the cross. The Primon Sedaro prayer gives a good description of the divinity of the Creator and humanity of the same creator who had to undergo pain and suffering on the earth. “Lord of the creation who were crucified, the creation was terrified and worshiped you. Creator, at the time of whose passion the heights and depths gave witness that you are God and by the stupendous things that happened.”

After giving a good description of the divinity of the Almighty Creator the prayer makes a stress on the divinity of Jesus Christ on the cross. The main theme that is implicitly interwoven in the hymns of the service of the ninth hour is that it is humanity’s sinful nature that caused the crucifixion of Christ. By repeating this theme frequently, the faithful get an idea that they are also responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. It is by Christ’s death on the cross that they were redeemed from the tyranny of sin. Hence, they are invited to repent for their sinful ways and they are invited to receive the fruits of the cross for their eternal life. “It is at the cross of Christ that divinity and humanity, holiness and sin, richness and poverty, suffering and consolation as well as many other seemingly irreconcilable opposite poles of divine-human relationships meet.” The liturgy of the hours prepares the faithful to enter into the main Good Friday liturgy. The liturgy of hours give the faithful the different events of Jesus’ death.

3.2. Liturgical Services

There are mainly three liturgical services for the Good Friday liturgy. The liturgical text instructs the faithful to attend in these services in silence and with great humility. The first service commemorates Jesus’ carrying the cross to the Mount Calvary. The faithful make a

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200 Cardinal Cleemis, Divine Office for the Holy Week, 394.
procession around the Church building which symbolically represents Jesus journey to Mount Calvary. The second service is the veneration of the Holy Cross in which there are a lot of prayers that suggest the role and significance of Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. At the end of this service the faithful come forward and make a personal veneration to the cross. In the third service the faithful commemorate the burial of Jesus. There is a procession within the Church in this service.

3.2.1. First Service

After the morning prayers and the third hour, the celebrant takes the cross from the *M'northa* and removes the stole. He then keeps a long white cloth on his right shoulder and keeps the cross on the white cloth on his shoulder. Holding the cross on his right shoulder the celebrant makes a procession around the Church along with the faithful. This first service involves three Gospel readings, a prayer and a hymn.

Holding the cross on his right shoulder the celebrant reads the first Gospel inside the Church. The first Gospel passage gives the message that Jesus is condemned to crucifixion. It is read from different Gospels to give a chronological meaning for the account. The passages are Mathew 27:26, Mark 15:16-20 and John 16:17. After finishing the first Gospel the celebrant reads out the prayer.

“Celebrant: As He came out of the fort, He carried His Cross on His shoulders. Hebrew women gathered together, weeping over him bitterly. His Mother was standing afar, with all her acquaintances. And like a dove, she began to moan with grief and sorrow. Where are you going, my Son, my beloved One? Where are they taking you? Why did you give up yourself in the hands of the unrighteous people? Woe unto me, my Son; woe unto me, my beloved One. What has happened to you today?

Faithful: Blessed is Your Passion and Your humility for our sake.”

Then the procession begins. During the procession the faithful sing a hymn which has the same meaning of the prayer mentioned above. The faithful in the Church exit through the south door and move towards the west and they wait for the celebrant at the west. The priest moves at the end of the procession line. In the west, the celebrant reads the second Gospel, Luke 23:26-32. This passage mentions the encounter between Jesus, who was carrying the cross and the Hebrew women who were weeping and wailing for him. After the Gospel, the celebrant recites the following prayer and the faithful repeat it after him. “Our Lord, we praise thee as you have carried the cross for us. Your vicarious passion and suffering have become a blessing for us, have mercy on us Lord who carried the cross for us.”

After the second Gospel, the faithful move toward the north and make a full procession around the Church and enters the Church through the north door. Once all the faithful enter the Church, the priest reads the third Gospel. The third Gospel is the events on the Mount Calvary. It is read from Mathew 27:33-34, John 19:18, Mark 15:28. After the third Gospel the priest places the cross again on the *M'northa* without the stole. Thus this first service comes to its conclusion and it is followed by the prayers of the sixth and the ninth hour.

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204 Baselios, *Feasts (Perumaalukal)*, 182.
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3.2.2. Second Service: Veneration of the Cross

The service begins with an introductory prayer. The prayer says that it is with the power of the Holy Cross that the faithful subdue the desires of the flesh and thus they become sanctified. So the faithful ask Jesus Christ to give them the power to carry the Holy Cross on their shoulders in a Christian manner.

“Make us worthy, O Lord, that with our souls steadfast in Thy Holy Cross, we may worship Thee as divinely befitting to Thy holiness. May we, in compliance with Thy supreme command, carry Thy Cross on our shoulders in a Christian like manner, always ready to mortify our members which are on earth and live by you in the fear of God for You are the true life, and constantly awaiting the blessed hope and the glorious revelation from heaven when Thou give reward to those who adore Thy Cross and to those who confess Thy Holy Name, our Lord and our God, forever.”

The prayer ends with a note which says that the faithful believe that God gives the eternal blessing of the heavenly Jerusalem to those who adore and worship the Holy Cross. “Thus it declares that blessing (salvation) is through the cross and the cross is the blessing or salvation. This essential relation between the cross and our salvation is clearly seen in the liturgy of the Passion Friday and Easter.”

In the first Eniyono hymn with ten stanzas there are six references of the Holy Cross. The first stanza says that Jesus has saved the whole world by giving himself as a sacrifice on the wooden cross in Zion. The second stanza says that the whole world was shattered when they heard the voice form the cross. The fourth stanza says that the Holy Church venerates the Holy Cross that liberated them from the clutches of idol worship. In the fifth stanza, the faithful pray that: “May the Holy Cross be a bridge for the dead to reach the harbor of heaven and we the living worship the Lord who endured the pain of the crown of thorns and physical pain on the cross.”

3.2.3. First Kolo

The faithful sing in the hymn:

“O My Brothers, I saw the Wonder on Golgotha and trembled
God is Hung on Tree the Cross and abused by evil men.
Ye heavenly and mortals, Praise and exalt Him ever.
Cross is extremely blessed Because Lord
Word has stretched his hands and hung on it
We are worshipping Him since - He is hope and protector
Utter He told us so Praise and exalt Him ever.”

The hymn says that the Holy Church worships the cross because the cross became holy when God, the word incarnated, stretched out his body on it. “Cross is extremely blessed because Lord Word has stretched his hands and hung on it. We are worshipping Him since - He is hope and protector.”

The following stanzas say that the members of the Church make the sign of the cross on their forehead so that the evil forces do not come near them as the cross

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205 Baselios, Feasts (Perunaalukal), 183.
207 Baselios, Feasts (Perunaalukal), 184
208 Kolo literally means sound in Syriac language. But in the liturgy, it means hymn.
209 Lazarus Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week (Canada: St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church, 2011), 158-159.
210 Baselios, Feasts (Perunaalukal), 186.
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becomes the shield and weapon for the faithful. The song also makes it clear that those who do abandon the cross will fail in their life.

“Blessed Lord has made the Cross
Weapon and fortress for who venerates it,
It is a curse for those who Rejecting Christ and passion
Those rejecting Him will believe when He comes again.”

One can say that the whole prayers in the service of the veneration of the Holy Cross give utmost importance to the Holy Cross. It is important to note that these prayers are the results of the deep meditation of Syriac Fathers. The hymns are very much dramatic and rhetoric. It is not wrong to say that through these prayers the Syriac Fathers give their theology. The salvific role of the Holy Cross is the most important theme in the service of the veneration of the holy cross. In the beginning of this service the faithful are given a good message on the role of the Holy cross in Jesus’ life and they are thus prepared for its veneration. Therefore, by the end of this service the faithful can approach the holy cross with a full conviction on the role of Cross in their salvation. Thus one can say that the liturgical prayers also carry a catechetical element through its celebration. The following hymn is a good example for the catechetical element of the liturgy. It teaches the faithful about the victory of the cross over the evil and idol and gives the real meaning of its veneration.

“O Savior - By Thy Cross - Thou defeated evil one
Therefore, we gained heaven and life
For that we do praise Thee Lord
My Lord and Messiah! We are kneeling at Thy Cross
For saving us from idol mute and fear of evil spirits.”

3.2.4. Second Kolo

“O! Christ O God - To save all of Mankind With the will of Thy Father –
Took flesh from Mother Mary and Thou ascended on Cross
While on Cross, The thief who was on right of Thee Witnessed Thee as
Lord and God – And remember him when Thou Come again in Thy Kingdom
O! Christ O God, By Thy Cross of salvation and Thy life-giving passion -
Thou redeemed whole of the world we praise Thy love for Mankind.
O! Christ O God, By Thy Cross gives us life Thou defeated wicked ones -
And saved Adam’s race from the Slavery of sin and guilt.”

The Second kolo states that Christ the Messiah enlightened and glorified the whole earth till its horizons when he was hung on the cross and thus the Church gained heaven and life by receiving true God. The hymn gives a gist of the whole economy of salvation. One can also see a Christological note in this hymn. The hymn begins with a note on incarnation. It says that Jesus took flesh from Mary at the will of the Father. Jesus’ ascension on the cross is considered as a divine plan in the economy of salvation. By saying that the thief at the right side could recognize Jesus as Lord and God, the hymn highlights the divine nature of Jesus on the cross. At the end of the hymn the faithful praise and thank Christ for his salvific death on the cross. It is Jesus’ death on the cross that redeemed the whole humankind from the slavery of sin and guilt that was brought by Adam by his disobedience.

211 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 160.
212 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 162.
213 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 168.
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3.2.5. The Primion Sedaro

The primion sedaro prayer addresses Jesus Christ as the heavenly peace who embraced the Gentiles and the Jews by his extended hands on the cross. The summary of primion prayer is that the Holy Church worships and thanks Jesus Christ for He has redeemed her by giving himself to be nailed on the cross and thus granted her freedom. “O Lord who love the humanity, you have redeemed us to life and freed us from the authority of death by your death on the cross on this Friday.”

The first part of sedaro prayer states that God has created Adam and Eve on the sixth day, that is Friday, and it is on the sixth day that Jesus Christ has been crucified. Thus, the prayer links the first Adam and the second Adam and the link is Friday. “Later Thou wast moved by his (Adam’s) destruction and for his salvation on this mystery filled Friday, the very sixth day of the week Thy hands were nailed on the cross.”

The second stanza of the sedaro prayer gives lofty significance to the Holy Cross. It is more like a litany prayer that reveals the power of the cross. The faithful make intercessions to Jesus Christ for a peaceful and harmonious life, by reciting the name of the cross as follows:

“By Thy Cross, Calm down rage.
By Thy Cross, silence the wars.
By Thy Cross, Curb down the power of the evil.
By Thy Cross, Stabilize the Churches.
By Thy Cross, Strengthen the monasteries.
By Thy Cross, Enlighten the priests.
By Thy Cross, Exalt the deacons.
By Thy Cross, Uphold the elderly.
By Thy Cross, Restrain the emotions of youth.
By Thy Cross, Give growth to infants.
By Thy Cross, Give absolution to sinners.
By Thy Cross, Forgive the criminals.”

“Now, give sublime order to this, Thy parish which worships before Thy presence honours Thy passions, fondles Thy wounds, kisses and boasts about Thy cross.” The above prayer is the best example to show how the Holy Cross enjoys a lofty place in the Malankara Liturgy. The Holy Cross has a vital place in the liturgical spirituality of the Malankara rite. This lofty status of the Holy Cross is explained well in the liturgy of Good Friday.

3.2.6. Ethro and Hoothoma

The ethro prayer states that the crucifixion of Christ has become spiritual incense that reconciled the whole creation with the Creator. By his incarnation, through his priesthood, and with his passion on the cross, Christ offered his suffering as a sacrificial fire and love as sweet fragrance to his Father. “He is the Lord of priests, who willed to be the same time priest and victim.”

“They suffering on the cross symbolized the fire of the incense and Thy love towards us symbolized the frankincense in the incense which Thou offered before Thy Father for the redemption of our race.” On this great Friday, receive this incense and

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214 Baselios, Feasts (Perunaalukal), 192.
215 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 172.
216 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 172.
217 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 172.
219 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 175.
prayer from your Church and grant her the heavenly blessings of life. *Hoothoma* prayer says that Jesus Christ is the image of the word of the heavenly Father who willfully came to taste death to save the humanity who is having eternal life and who is immortal. “Oh Lord Christ, we pray to thee for your glorious sign of thy cross that protects and guards us from the terrors of the evil spirit by day and night.”

3.2.7. Gospel

**Gospel acclamation**

“Haleluyaha, Haleluyaha, They divided my clothes and they Cast Lot for my garments Haleluyaha.”

The Gospel passage is John 19:28-30. The Gospel passage is the events that happened on the cross on Mount Calvary. After reading verse thirty; “When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished’. Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” The priest makes a pause and he goes to the *M’northa* and blows off the candles on it, as a symbolic gesture of showing the death of Jesus. Then he moves to the centre table and puts the cross horizontally down to show the death of Jesus. “The Lord’s death on the cross is ‘single’ that is, it is only the death of the body, not of the soul, but as such it becomes a ‘sacrament’ for our inner life and an ‘exemplum’ or model for the outer man.” After making these two symbolic gestures the priest goes back to the place of Gospel reading and recites this prayer for the people and the people repeats after him. “Lord we praise you as you came to die for our salvation. You gave us life through your death, have mercy on us and console the souls of our dead forefathers.” He then continues the Gospel reading and finishes it.

4. Veneration of the Holy Cross

The ceremony of the veneration of the Holy Cross involves two rituals; the celebration of the Holy Cross and kissing of the Holy Cross. “The veneration of the cross is not merely a silent viewing of Christ’s suffering but an impressive ceremony of honour done to the king.” It is a service in sharing Christ’s death and resurrection. According to Syriac Fathers Jesus brought salvation to all creation through his sacrificial death on the cross. Hence, it is a very important ceremony in the Good Friday liturgy of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. The ceremony of the veneration of the Holy Cross includes the celebration of the Holy Cross and the kissing of the Holy Cross.

4.1. Celebration of the Holy Cross

The ritual of the celebration of the cross is conducted in the *Kesthruma* as the *Madbaho* is closed. This ceremony is called the celebration of the *sleebo*. The celebration of the Holy Cross is conducted for other feasts too. For other feasts this is done in the sanctuary. The

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220 Baselios, *Feasts (Perunaalukal)*, 196.
221 Baselios, *Feasts (Perunaalukal)*, 201.
222 John 19:30.
226 *Kesthruma* (transept) is the space between the sanctuary and the nave.
227 *Madbaho* is the most Holy Sanctuary.
228 *Sleebo* means the Holy Cross.
exclusive character of this ritual is that the priest holds the cross that is covered in the white robe, horizontally. It is already stated that the priest puts the cross horizontally down during the time of the Gospel reading. The cross that is covered in the white robe symbolizes the corpse of Jesus that is taken from the cross. Therefore, the vertical cross represents the living body of Jesus whereas here the horizontal cross represents the lifeless corpse of Jesus.

The Church sees Jesus’ death as a victorious event not as a defeat. “Wood of the cross before Christ was a thing of disgrace and after the cross of Christ it became a symbol of grace, glory and victory.”229 For this ritual, the covered cross represents the body of Jesus that was taken down from the cross and wrapped in the linen cloth. The white robe in the hands of the priest symbolizes the linen cloth that covered Jesus’ body when it was taken down from the cross. At the end of each prayer the priest raises this ‘covered cross’ and make a sign of the cross. At this time, the assistants ring the bell and the ceremonial fans to show the solemnity of the victorious event.

4.1.1. East

The first prayer is recited facing the east. The first prayer gives the Christian meaning of the cross. It clearly and explicitly proclaims the power of the cross for the Christians. “O Christ, our Lord, who was crucified for the salvation of our race, let Thy Holy Cross be the hope of our peace, the sign of our victory and the weapon of our salvation. Keep us on its side, and protect us by the power of its victory, Our Lord and Our Eternal God forever and ever. Amen.”230 It says that with his two hands on the cross Jesus conquered the four sides of the earth. When the sun saw his creator hanging naked on the cross, it got darkened and the whole world became dark. “Then the earth quaked, the mountains shook and the sun was darkened. The sun could not look at the nakedness of its creator for it was the eternal light nailed on the tree of the cross.”231 This prayer ends with a note: “Tree of Life that was planted in the Middle of Paradise is the Symbol of the Holy Cross. On this day when the Church honours Your victorious cross the earth and heaven also become joyous at the victory of your cross.”232

4.1.2. West

In the second prayer that is directed towards the west, the priest prays for the flock of his sheep to be protected from all the snares and traps of the wicked under the seal of the Holy Cross. “Our Lord God, Let the lambs of Thy parish be made worthy to be protected from the evil designs of the devil and malicious intentions of the wicked by the seal of Thy victorious Cross.”233 The prayer states that upon seeing Jesus on the cross the veil of the temple got torn into two and the whole world shivered at that Friday noon. “The veil of the temple was torn in two, the Saints were terror-stricken and the earth stopped moving.”234 That last note states

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230 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 189.
232 Baselios, Feasts (Perunaalukal), 203.
233 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 190.
that the Holy Cross symbolizes the tree that gave the ram to Abraham for sacrifice instead of Isaac. “And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns.”

“Holy Lamb that saved Isaac from death as the sacrifice; Tree that gave that Lamb was the Symbol of the cross on which; Lord was crucified today – Joyous are earth and heaven; Celebrating Thy Victory.”

4.1.3. North

In the third prayer that is directed towards the north the Church makes a prayer to the crucified Christ for the salvation of the all world. For this salvation the Church venerates and praises the victorious and the life-giving Holy Cross in truth and spirit and implores for her protection too. Another aspect of this prayer states that on the cross Christ plucked of the poisonous fangs of the pain of death and freed the souls from the prison of Sheol. “In Sheol death labored to weariness and the bodies of the dead resurrected.”

“Lord God, Thou for our sake, on the Mount of Golgotha, by Thine own will despised Cross and suffered passion all alone and shattered and destroyed the fangs of terrible death, thus Thou did free all who were bound in darkness in the Hades.”

The last note of the prayer states that the Holy Cross symbolizes the rod of Jacob. “Jacob held his staff and went into a deep sleep during which he had the vision of the ladder. Christ also, nailed on the cross, went into the sleep of death.”

4.1.4. South

The last prayer is directed to the south. In this prayer the priest prays that the Holy Cross should be the weapon of salvation and undefeated hands for the Church so that all the powers that fight against the Church will be defeated by the power of the Holy Cross. The prayer states that the Church venerates the Holy Cross for the enlightenment of the shepherds, purity of the priests and deacons, and for the peace and tranquility of the whole world. The last note of the prayer states that the Holy Cross symbolizes Noah’s ark that saved the life of the living beings on the earth.

“In days of righteous Noah – Lord gave Ark to save his life; That was symbol of the Cross – Gospel of new life to World; On this day of adoration - Joyous are earth and heaven; Celebrating Thy Victory.”

After the four prayers of the celebration of the Holy Cross, the faithful receive the opportunity to kiss the Holy Cross. It is done with great piety and devotion. “Thus the individual pious person hovers before the cross in order that Christ may enter his or her heart.”

4.1.5. Kissing the Holy Cross

The kissing of the cross is one of the most touching and devotional rites in the whole range of the Good Friday liturgy. The cross is placed at the door of the sanctuary. A pillow is kept on

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236 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 191.
238 Baselios, Feasts (Perunaalukal), 205.
239 Karim, Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers, 64.
240 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 194.
241 Stevenson, Jerusalem Revisited, 11.
a mat and on it a white cloth is spread. It is on this white cloth that the cross which is wrapped in the white rob is placed. After placing the Holy Cross the priest takes thethurible and makes incense around the Holy Cross. Then at first the priest makes a prostration and kisses the Holy Cross and puts in the offerings. Following the priest the deacons, the assistants and all the faithful come one after another and make the prostration and offerings.

“Not only is the rite itself most striking by which high and low, rich and poor, humble themselves side by side in order to pay veneration to the mystery of our redemption, but the Church on Good Friday has lavished upon this portion of her service the most exquisite of all her responses and canticles.” During this ritual, the faithful stand on their knees and bend themselves down and kiss the cross with their forehead. While doing this act they are also convinced that they were also responsible for the death of Jesus. And for them this is right occasion to ask forgiveness for all their sins and to make repentance. “We throw ourselves down and so acknowledge where we are and who we are: fallen creatures whom only he can set on their feet.”

During this ritual of kissing the Holy Cross the congregation sings the following hymn repeatedly until everyone finishes the venerations.

“Kneeling before Thy Cross, that Saved our Souls, 
Messiah, we pray with the thief, to remember us 
When you come again.”

“When all finishes this veneration, the priest goes to the Holy Cross makes the incense as in the beginning and kisses the cross and begins the third service.”

4.2. Third Service: Burial

The third service is the burial service. It consists of Gospel reading, procession primion, sedaro, kolo and the creed. At the beginning of the service the priest takes the Holy Cross wrapped in the white robe in his hands. “The priest keeps the top of the cross on his right hand and the bottom in his left hand. He should be very careful to cover the hands of the cross with the white cloth.” After keeping the cross diligently and devoutly in his hands the priest reads the Gospel and then makes a procession inside the Church in the Hyklo. The procession is made three times, two times clockwise and one time anti-clockwise. For the procession the assistants carry two candles, two ceremonial fans and the thurible. While moving, the deacon or the assistant who offers the incense should face the priest and directs the incense towards the Holy Cross which is in the hands of the priest.

“This procession commemorates Joseph and Nicodemos’ taking the Blessed Body of Christ from the cross and taking it in a procession and burying.” The faithful sing a hymn that commemorates the burial event of Jesus during the procession. At the end of the hymn the priest recites a prayer and the people repeat it after him. “Oh Lord the burial you underwent for us is blessed. The humiliation you underwent for us is also blessed. Oh Lord

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242 Thurston, Lent and Holy Week, 352.
243 Ratzinger, The Spirit of the Liturgy, 188.
244 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 187.
245 Basleios Mor Cleemis, The Order of the Holy Services (Thookasa) (Trivandrum: The Major Archiepiscopal Curia, 2014), 134. [my translation].
246 Cleemis, The Order of the Holy Services (Thookasa), 134.
247 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 188.
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who tasted death for us have mercy on us and bless us.” Following the economy of salvation, God the word was born divinely from the holy virgin and underwent humiliation for the sake of humanity. The hymn and the prayer are repeated for three times.

4.2.1. The Gospel

The Gospel passage is the burial event of Jesus Christ. It is read from Mark 15:42-45 and John 19: 39-42. When the priest finishes the Gospel, the faithful in the Church move toward the centre making a way for the procession. Through this way, the priest and the assistants move to south proceed to the west and make two processions. When the second procession comes to the east side of the Church they make a reverse and move to the north and proceed to the west and then the east and they enter into the sanctuary. In the sanctuary, the priest makes the burial ritual while all the faithful pray devoutly.

4.2.2. Primion

In the Primion and Sedaro prayer the celebrant praises the great deed of the Almighty God, who by his will suffered death on the cross and gave to be buried like a helpless one. This prayer addresses the burial of Jesus as ‘life-giving burial’. The prayer says that it is God’s love that forced God to undergo the burial and the tomb. It is a great mystery that one who gives life to all became lifeless on this day. It is a great mystery that the one who creates human beings gave to be buried by the hands of human beings. There is a responsorial prayer in the Sedaro where people make a response: ‘this life-giving burial is a great mystery’.

“This life-giving burial gave happiness to those who were sleeping in the pit of hell: this life-giving burial is a great mystery. Those dried bones which were eagerly waiting for this life-giving burial got their life today: this life-giving burial is a great mystery. This life-giving burial made death and Satan trembled out of fear and destroyed their power: this life-giving burial is a great mystery. This life-giving burial destroyed the walls of Sheol and broke down its fortresses: this life-giving burial is a great mystery.”

4.2.3. Burial Ritual

During this prayer, the priest makes the arrangement for the burial service. The Holy Cross wrapped in the white linen cloth is placed on the altar horizontally. He then uncovers it and washes the cross in vinegar and rose water. This is the symbolic expression of Jewish burial service. After washing the Holy Cross, the priest applies different kinds of perfumes on the cross. The top two edges and the bottom of the cross where the nails are pierced are applied with a mixture of spices and perfumes. It is then covered with a cotton piece. The same is done at the top of the cross where Jesus’ head is placed. When the priest conducts this ritual, he does as if he were doing it with the corpse of the Lord. Therefore, the Holy Cross here represents Jesus’ body. After the application of the perfumes and spices the cross is again covered with the white linen and tied with the palm leaves of Palm Sunday. It is then taken to the burial place, a small rectangular shaped chamber, which is situated below the altar. The priest places the Holy Cross, which represents the corpse of Christ, in the chamber and covers it with white cloths. Incense sticks and lighted candles are placed in front of the chamber.

248 Baselios, Feasts (Perumaalukal), 209.
249 Baselios, Feasts (Perumaalukal), 213.
The Holy Cross is kept in this way till the Easter morning. On the day of Easter, the priest takes the cross and adorns it with red velvet and shows the cross to the faithful and makes the proclamation of Christ’s resurrection. The Christians believe that Christ by his death on the cross changed the very nature of death, made it a passage, a Passover, a *Pascha* into the kingdom of God. Thus Easter celebration becomes the commemoration of the victory of life over death, in and through Christ’s death, on the cross and his resurrection. It is this joyous message of victory that is announced at the beginning of the Easter service in the Syro Malankara liturgy by the celebrant. “Brethren, I announce a new message to you: Christ is risen from the Tomb and has driven his enemies back.” As a reply to this announcement the faithful make the response: “We truly believe and confess.”

**Conclusion**

The Good Friday liturgy occupies a significant place in the Lenten liturgical season. “Good Friday is a composite picture made up of events, reflections, reactions, responses all kinds of human ways of bringing the divine acts of God in Christ into our experience.” The liturgical prayers, services and austere practices reach its climax on Good Friday. It is important to note that the faithful in the Syro Malankara Catholic Church do not eat any food without finishing the whole liturgy. Once they finish the Good Friday liturgy in the evening they take a light meal. In the local churches the faithful are given a bitter mixture of herbs after the liturgical services. This is done as a symbolic gesture of Jesus tasting the bitter vinegar on the cross.

Once the liturgical services are over the faithful go back to their homes for a short rest and they are free to come for the evening liturgy after 6.00 PM. Today, for practical reasons it is not compulsory. But they are supposed to meditate the paschal mysteries and continue the prayers at home waiting for *Qyamtha* (resurrection). This chapter explains the lofty status of the Holy Cross in the Good Friday liturgy of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. The liturgical texts, which are written down by the Syriac Fathers, are the result of long and deep meditations. It is the Syrian theology that is reflected in the liturgy. A deeper analysis of the theology of the holy cross is explained in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER FOUR
THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

1. Introduction
In this final chapter of my thesis, I will explain how the liturgy of Good Friday in the Latin as well as the Syro Malankara Liturgy reveals the mystery of the economy of salvation. The Holy Cross derives its theological significance from its relationship with Jesus’ salvific death on the cross. This unique relationship is briefly explained in the first part. The Good Friday liturgies of both traditions are imbued with a lot of symbolism and meaning. In the second part, the symbolic significance of the Holy Cross is elucidated.

A deep reflection and study on Jesus’ death reveal that the cross not only stands as the instrument for Christ’s death but also serves as the instrument for Christ’s resurrection. Resurrection is a mystery that is beyond time and space. This significance is brought out in the third part. A special emphasis is given to the spiritual significance of the Holy Cross in the writings of Mar Ivanios in the third part. Finally, in the fourth part, we move to a few thoughts on the faithful’s response to the spirituality of the Holy Cross.

The primary sources for this chapter are the official liturgical books of the Church and edited work of Paulachan Kochappilly252 on the Holy Cross. Apart from the liturgical texts the works of Cyril Aphrem Karim253 and Mar Ivanios254 are the main sources for this chapter. As there is no official English version of the Good Friday liturgy in the Syro Malankara Catholic Church I am forced to resort to the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Passion liturgy which is compiled by Lazarus Ramban. As Van Tongeren’s work serves as a primary source for this research frequent references are seen in this chapter too.

The theology of the Holy Cross is very much highlighted in the official documents of the Catholic Church. In order to show this importance, I make use of the encyclical letter Ecclesia de Eucharistia, and the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, Ecclesia in Asia of Pope John Paul II and Mediator Dei the encyclical on the sacred liturgy by Pope Pius XII. The works of Alexander Schmemann and Baby Varghese serves as the secondary sources for this chapter. This is particularly because the Syro Malankara Liturgy belongs to the Orthodox liturgy.

252 Paulachan P. Kochappilly is a CMI priest who has edited the Festschrift in honour of Prof. Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara, The Folly of the Cross. This is a collection of essays that attempts to discover the deeper meaning of the Cross from scriptural, patristic theological and pastoral perceptive.
254 “Archbishop Geevarghese Mar Ivanios (born 21 September 1882 as Gevarghese Panickeruveetil) was the first Metropolitan Archbishop of Trivandrum and the founder of the Reunion Movement in the Malankara Apostolic Church. He is the founder of Bethany Ashram Order of Religious monks and Bethany Convent, Order of Religious Nuns. He was the first M.A. degree holder in the Malankara Church. He also served as the Principal of the Kottayam M.D Seminary High School and as a professor at the Serampore College” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geevarghese_Ivanios [accessed April 17, 2017].
2. The Soteriological Significance of the Holy Cross

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines soteriology as ‘the theology dealing with salvation’ as especially effected by Jesus Christ. The soteriological significance of the Holy Cross comes from its relation with the sacrifice and passion of Jesus Christ. “The cross planted in shame and ignominy has grown through the ages in the hearts of men to become the symbol in mystic beauty and power of the spirit of Jesus Christ.” The death of Christ is an indispensable salvific event for the redemption and salvation of humankind. Christ’s death is not a mere death but it is an expiatory sacrificial event.

Sacrifices have an important place in the Jewish liturgy and Old Testament. Sacrifice is the offering of the most precious thing to God as a gift. From the time of Abel and Cain, the earth was covered by the smoke of burnt offering and the blood of sacrifices. In the sacrifice the one who offers offer oneself and the offerings to God out of his or her love towards God. Sin caused rupture from God and life. Under the bondage of sin humanity became mortal and powerless. “All the sacrifices, however, were powerless to destroy sin and restore the fullness of unity with God that man had forfeited.”

Only God can save humanity, therefore, God gave his only begotten Son for the salvation of the world in ultimate, perfect and all-embracing sacrifice where the salvation of humanity is accomplished. Through the one and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ, humanity is restored and renewed. “In his sacrifice is forgiveness of all sins, all the fullness of salvation and sanctification, the fulfillment and therefore the completion of all religions.” As a sacrificial lamb, Jesus offered Himself on the cross and shed his blood as the ransom for the salvation of humanity.

Christ’s gift of his life as a ransom suggests a contract made in order to obtain freedom for slaves. The main idea is that of liberation attained through the compensation of a redemption price. The cross is the instrument that makes Jesus’ death a sacrificial event. As a sacrificial lamb Christ offered himself on the cross but through his resurrection, he became a triumphant king and achieved victory over sin and Satan. It is the world which is anointed with the blood which flowed from the body of the lamb. The cross is also anointed by the blood of the lamb. “The blood which has flowed in the sacrifice of the lamb, that is to say, Christ’s death on the cross, has anointed the cross.”

The cross is a primary theme of the redemption and salvation of humankind in the early liturgy and writings of the Fathers of the Church. The Salvation of the humankind, the redemption of humanity from sin, restoration of humanity to the primordial state of grace, are the important salvific events that find its origin on the cross. These soteriological events directly make a link between cross and Christ and thereby it moves on to God.

258 Schmemann, The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom, 105.
Chapter 4: Theology of the Veneration of the Holy Cross

2.1. The Cross: The Instrument of Salvation for Humanity

“The cross is the instrument of salvation, but this instrumental significance of the cross obtains an extra dimension because the cross is also a sign, a mystery that refers to salvation.”

In many liturgical prayers, the cross is addressed as the instrument that brought salvation to the world. The daily Eucharistic sacrifice reminds the faithful that there is no salvation except in the Cross of Lord Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of John, we can see a connection between Jesus’ crucifixion on the cross and his exaltation. It is not the exaltation of the cross, for John, but the exaltation of Jesus is the central theme. ‘And when I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to myself” (John 12:32). According to the fourth Gospel, through his death on the cross, Jesus effects salvation and eternal life to the world.

“In the Synoptics, the death and glorification of Jesus are two chronologically separate events while in John they form a unity.”

The exaltation of the cross is the exaltation of Christ himself. The cross itself mediates salvation because it has salutary significance due to Jesus’ death on the cross. In the narrative of John, the cross itself means triumph. Hence the cross is a symbol that mediates and represents salvation. The cross consecrated by Christ effects a continuing, salutary bliss, and thus takes on an eschatological significance. On the cross, Jesus is the glorified Lord and crucified king who with his passion and death paid the ransom for the liberation of the world and so he exercises his universal kingship from the cross. Jesus’ kingship is linked with the cross; Jesus is the eternal king reigning from the cross.

The ultimate aim of Jesus on the cross is the salvation of the whole world. As it is the will of the Father, Jesus, Son of God offered himself as a sacrificial lamb on the cross in order to accomplish salvation. Jesus’ silence on the cross is to be seen as his complete surrender and total obedience to the Father. Jesus delivers himself fully into the hands of the Father on the cross in order to receive from the Father the meaning of his life. The Gethsemane episode in the Gospel portrays that the passion and death that Jesus had to undergo is the will of the Father. Jesus surrendered his will to his Father. This total obedience is compared as the silence of a sacrificial lamb before the slaughters. This allegory is seen in both Latin and Syrian tradition. The Latin mass text says: “He never opened his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers never opening its mouth.”

In the Syro Malankara Eucharist, the following prayer is recited by the

261 Cf. Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei, no.79, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html [accessed on May 8, 2017].
266 The CTS New Daily Missal, 284.
priest when he makes the offertory. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and like a sheep before the shearer he was silent: he did not open his mouth in his humiliation."\textsuperscript{267}

The salvation that Jesus brought on the cross is for the whole world and humanity. In the plan of salvation, God has never excluded anyone. The faithful receive the salvation that is brought out by Jesus on the cross and through the Church. This does not mean that the Church only gives the fruits of salvation to her children alone. The Church wants all humanity to accomplish this salvation that is brought out by Jesus Christ. This is clearly shown in the solemn intercessions of Good Friday in the Latin rite. "Let us pray also for those who do not believe in Christ, that enlightened by the Holy Spirit they too may enter on the way of salvation."\textsuperscript{268}

In the prayer of the veneration of the cross in the Easter liturgy of the Syro Malankara Church the priest prays that; "O Heavenly Peace, the Savior who saved the Gentiles by Thy blessed cross; and the pinnacle of Love, on this day of Thy resurrection we beseech Thee to do away with all conflicts on earth."\textsuperscript{269} Jesus on the cross, by his bloodshed, has planted the seeds of salvation for the whole human race. The ceremony of the celebration of the Holy Cross, towards four directions, in the Malankara Liturgy vehemently highlights the theme of the salvation of the whole universe. By having faith in Jesus, the human race is called to achieve this salvation.

2.2. Redemption of Humanity on the Holy Cross

One of the main results of Jesus’ death on the cross is the redemption of the humanity. Jesus Christ is called as the divine Redeemer who won the merits of redemption on the cross in Mediator Dei, the encyclical of Pope Pius XII.\textsuperscript{270} Through his death on the cross, Jesus redeemed the sinful humanity from the slavery of sin. Therefore, for the followers of Christ, the cross becomes the sacred instrument of redemption. This is expressed in the Gospel acclamation for the Eucharist on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the Roman Missal. “Alleluia, Alleluia! We adore you, O Christ and we bless you; because by your cross you have redeemed the world. Alleluia.”\textsuperscript{271}

The cross becomes the visible sign of redemption that is brought by Jesus’ passion and death. “As sign and meaning, the cross and redemption is related to each other: the signified manifests itself in the sign and inversely, the sign reveals the signified.”\textsuperscript{272} The cross is a sign of redemption on which the precious and salvific blood of Jesus’ flowed for the redemption of all humankind. As the instrument of redemption, the cross is at the same time its embodiment; it is the earthly sign of redemption. By his death on the cross, Jesus redeemed the lost paradise and made it accessible for the faithful. He, the Eternal High Priest who by the blood of his Cross entered the eternal sanctuary, thus gives back to the Creator and Father

\textsuperscript{267} The Divine Liturgy of the Syro Malankara Church (Trivandrum: The Malankara Academy, 1986), 3.
\textsuperscript{268} The CTS New Daily Missal, 296.
\textsuperscript{269} Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 243.
\textsuperscript{270} Cf. Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei, no.79, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html [accessed on May 8, 2017].
\textsuperscript{271} The CTS New Daily Missal, 2989.
\textsuperscript{272} Van Tongeren, Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy, 84.
all creation redeemed. The theme of redemption is also seen in the prayers of the Exaltation of the cross.

“In the prayers of the exaltation of the cross in the Old Gelasian Sacramentary the prayer is offered that salvation again becomes accessible through faith in the wood of the cross (GeV1024). [...] The salvific significance of the cross lies in paradise again becoming attainable, made accessible again for the believer through faith in this cross.”

Adam’s disobedience contrasts with the obedience of Christ on the cross. It is through Adam’s disobedience that humankind comes under the dominion of the devil. By his death on the cross, Christ descended into hell and opened the gates of Hades and freed Adam who was defeated and killed by the power of sin. By freeing Adam from hell Christ became the second or new Adam. By his obedience to his Father Christ recapitulated the first Adam and thereby Christ became the second Adam. Christ the Son of God became man i.e Adam by his incarnation. The divine became human in order to make the humans divine, to make them sons and daughters of God. “Christ was exiled from heaven to bring us back to heaven. His filial obedience reversed the primordial disobedience. He shared God’s wrath with us so that we should share God’s grace with him.”

Jesus’ death on the cross as the redemption of Adam, as a representative of humanity, is an important theme in the Syro Malankara Good Friday liturgy. It is repeated many times, throughout many prayers, in the whole liturgy. There is an interesting comparison on this theme. According to Genesis, Adam was created on the sixth day of the week which is Friday. Jesus also is crucified on Friday. Thus Friday, the sixth day, becomes very significant in the theme of restoration in a Good Friday liturgical song with twenty stanzas. A few lines are given as the example.

“On this Friday God redeemed Adam back to Paradise
On this Friday like a leaf sky covered Lord’s nakedness.
On this Friday Adam has lost his grace by eating fruit
This Friday Lord died on the Cross and brightened all Adam’s race.”

Jesus’ death on the cross as the event of redemption is seen in the prayers of Good Friday in both the Latin and Syrian tradition. The passion liturgy of the Latin Church says, “Almighty ever-living God, who bestowed your promises on Abraham and his descendants, graciously hear the prayers of your Church, that the people you first made your own may attain the fullness of redemption.” The Latin Missal says that Jesus’ death on the cross was God’s fulfillment of his promise towards Abraham and his descendants. In the Syrian liturgy, the prayer of the sixth hour says that they do remember and glorify the redemption that is brought on the cross by taking part in the Good Friday liturgy. “Our Lord and God and the only

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276 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 76.
277 The CTS New Daily Missal, 296.
Chapter 4: Theology of the Veneration of the Holy Cross

begotten Son and word of the Heavenly Father we glorify Thy salvific redemption.”

Another prayer in the Syrian tradition on the Good Friday liturgy states it clear that Jesus’ death on the cross was for the redemption of the whole humanity. In this prayer, the faithful are called to remember the suffering and love of God. “Thy suffering on the cross symbolized the fire of the incense and Thy love towards us symbolized the frankincense in the incense which Thou offered before Thy Father for the redemption of our race.”

2.3. Restoration of Creation on the Holy Cross

The salvific events on the cross took place to restore the creation to its glory before the fall. The word restoration in this context means bringing back the status of glory. The creation enjoyed a status of joy, peace and order in the paradise. Adam’s sin broke this order and as a result, all the creation came under the bondage of sin and evil. God wanted to reestablish the divine order in the creation. The Oriental theology considers the mystery of incarnation as the restoration of humanity. “Incarnation is an act of God’s philanthropy, to restore us to communion with himself. God became man in order to restore God’s image in man that was impaired by the fall.”

Love is the force and spirit that works in all divine principles. In order to establish a world-order of love, God, who is love, became human to teach humanity the path of love. ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life’ (John 3: 16). It is this love of God the Father became incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth.

In the words of Pope John Paul II, the Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. By incarnation, Jesus gave the message of love through his words and deeds. ‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another’ (John 13: 34). The utmost example of love is seen on the cross. The sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross is the result of God’s love towards humanity. “The love manifested by Jesus on the cross is, that which exceeds all comprehension.” Therefore, one can say that the cross is the best symbol to characterize divine love.

The theme of restoration is seen in the prayers of Syro Malankara Catholic Good Friday liturgy. “Praise be to the acceptable oblation who offered Himself on the wood of the Cross and cleansed our guilt by Him being offered up in sacrifice for our sake; who died and restored us to life by His death.”

In this prayer, Jesus’ death is made as the cause of life for the humanity. The cross and Jesus’ death become the principle for eternal life. In the Latin liturgy, it is shown that Jesus’ death restores joy to the whole world. “We adore your cross, o Lord, we praise and glorify your holy resurrection, for behold, because of the wood of a tree joy has come to the whole world.” The prayer in the Latin Good Friday liturgy says that Jesus by his death on the cross restored the humanity to life from the clutches of death and

278 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 175.
279 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 175.
283 Ramban, Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week, 112.
284 The CTS New Daily Missal, 300.
sin. “Almighty ever-living God who have restored us to life by the blessed death and resurrection of your Christ, preserve in us the work of your mercy, that, by partaking of this mystery, we may have a life unceasingly devoted to you. Through Christ our Lord.”  

Restoration of Adam was the eternal plan of the Almighty God. Adam was created in the image of God. By sinning, Adam disfigured the image of God. The sin of Adam also affected the whole of the creation. Jesus, by his incarnation, became the second Adam to restore the image of the first Adam. The salvific history is the message of God’s love for the restoration of creation. In the power of the Holy Spirit Christ accomplished this restoration which was the will of the Father. Therefore, the human restoration of life from sin and death is the result of God’s love. What Adam failed to attain in the paradise has been made attainable by Jesus on the cross. The lost paradise was thus regained and restored on the cross. “Hence the cross of Christ is the turning point, the reentry into Paradise, the moment of reconciliation and the encounter with God in response to the divine promise of immortality through the vision of God in the eschatological Paradise.”

It is on the cross that Jesus accomplished restoration. The wood of the tree in Eden is in contrast with the wood of the cross. Through the wood of the tree in Eden Adam brought sin, oppression, and death to humankind; through the wood of the cross, Christ brought joy, liberation and resurrection to humankind. The cross is the key that unlocks the Garden of Eden which was locked by the disobedience of Adam. Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross opened the gates of paradise. Faith in the cross allows the faithful to accomplish salvation and redemption. “The underlying concept is the idea that humankind, fallen in and through Adam, is restored to its original state through Christ.”

2.4. Salvation Accomplished on the Holy Cross

Salvation is an important theme in the Good Friday liturgical prayers of both traditions. In the Latin as well as in the Malankara Liturgy the faithful venerate the Holy Cross for its soteriological effects. The defeat of evil is very much linked with the defeat of death. Christ conquered death by his death and resurrection. Satan who held the power of death is defeated on the cross. On the cross, Christ destroyed both the power of devil and death. Before the death of Christ, the dead faced only the darkness of the grave. Because of sin, the humans were separated from God and they were under the subjugation of sin and death. By his death on the cross, Christ appeased the Father. “Truly ‘all is accomplished’ on the cross; nothing greater can be thought of or done; it was there that every human and divine resource was consumed; all evil is conquered at its roots, salvation is obtained and every glory is given to the Trinity.”

For the reconciliation and restoration of the humanity, Christ became the holy victim on the cross. The Son of God brought grace to humanity and removed the wrath and guilt that has been sharing by humanity since Adam. The Holy Saturday liturgy in the Syro Malankara

285 The CTS New Daily Missal, 309.
Catholic tradition is especially dedicated to the prayers for the dead. On this day, the Church remembers Jesus’ visit into Sheol and the deliverance of Adam. An example of such a prayer from the Malankara tradition is as follows. “The Lord who is immortal became mortal to free the souls from Sheol. When the dead ones saw the deathless one among them they got up and sang the Songs of praises.”

“In earlier Christian tradition, the cross was not only an object. It was an outcome, a soteriological event that demonstrates who Jesus is and at the same time shows how salvation flows from this ‘lifted’ Christ into the hearts and bodies of believers.” The lifting up of Jesus on the cross was the royal enthronement of Jesus according to the tradition of the Gospel of St. John. The cross thus demonstrates Jesus’ true identity. By the tenth century, the cross had become a cult object in its own right, worthy of acclamation, address, and adoration-worthy, in short, of the liturgy. The theological significance of the cross is celebrated in its climax in the liturgy of the veneration of the cross on Good Friday. In the beginning, it was a relic of the true cross that was venerated. Later on, crosses were made in the likeness of the true cross and were venerated. The ritual of the veneration of the Holy Cross gives the message of salvation.

The ritual of veneration of the Holy Cross is seen in the Latin and Syrian liturgy. In this ritual, the Holy Cross is given very important place. Regarding the antiphon on Good Friday, John Paul II exhorts that the words of the profession of faith are the words of contemplation. He says that these words are the invitation to the faithful to worship the Lord and the worship takes its culmination with the Easter proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection. “This is the wood of the Cross, on which hung the Saviour of the world. Come, let us worship. This is the invitation which the Church extends to all in the afternoon hours of Good Friday. She then takes up her song during the Easter season in order to proclaim: The Lord is risen from the tomb; for our sake, he hung on the Cross, Alleluia.” In both liturgies, the Holy Cross is adored as the sacred instrument that brought out salvation to the world. In the Latin liturgy, the faithful are called to remember the salvation that Jesus accomplished on the cross. The following are the prayers sung during the ritual of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the Latin and Malankara liturgies.

Prayer in the Latin tradition; “Behold the wood of the cross on which hung the salvation of the world. Come let us adore.”

Prayer in the Syro Malankara tradition: “We bow the Holy Cross that gave us salvation
Remember me, O Lord, when you come again
I pray, like the robber who was crucified by your side.”

2.5. Revelation of God’s Love on the Holy Cross

God’s love towards humankind is best revealed on the cross. Incarnation comes to its culmination on the cross. The divine Logos, incarnated in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, lived, suffered and died on the cross out of his love for the suffering humanity. “On the

289 Cardinal Cleemis, Divine Office for the Holy Week, 453.
292 The CTS New Daily Missal, 299.
293 Baselios, Feasts (Perunaalukal), 159.
Cross, he took upon himself the sins of the world, past, present and future.’  

As it was a complete obedience to God the Father, the Father raised him from the dead. The mystery of the incarnation is the story of the divine kenosis of the divine logos. “Incarnation is an act of self-emptying. The power of intellect and reason cannot comprehend the mystery of incarnation as the mystery of self-emptying.” Through his life of ultimate kenosis, Jesus accomplished and fulfilled the plan of redemption which was the divine plan of God.

By surrendering his body and will on the cross Jesus cured the sinful humanity from the painful effects of sin and brought back Adam to his former grace. Jesus annihilated himself like a grain of wheat and gave life to humanity. Jesus’ passion and death on the cross should be understood as the primordial plan of God. Jesus gives himself over to the Father in the obedience of love in order to bring the world back to the Father. A deeper reflection on the mystery of Christ's death on the cross reveals the role of the Trinity. One can say that the Holy Cross on the Mount of Calvary is the revelation of the Trinitarian love. The faithful who believe in Jesus is called to model their life after this ultimate love that is pictured on the cross. One of the optional songs for the Good Friday in the Malankara Liturgy explains more about this love.

“Even if, I suffer loss and persecutions, I will remember the Love I see on the Cross.  
When my adversaries abuse and reject me I will remember the Love I see on the Cross.  
When the sin's temptations come like a mountain, I will remember the Love I see on the Cross.”

The cross becomes the revelation of the Trinitarian God. When the Christians venerate the cross, they actually invoke a prayer to the divine power of the holy and life-giving cross, the Trinity itself. “Together with the sacrifice on the cross of the Son of God, this is the sacrifice of the entire Holy Trinity, consubstantial and indivisible. Only the Son became incarnate and suffered on the cross, but in him was revealed the sacrificial love of the entire Holy Trinity; of the Father who sent him and of the Holy Spirit who reposed upon him.” The tripartite cross bears the sign of the most holy Trinity. There are three lines that intersect on the top of the cross; they proceed toward one another from three different points, but these three lines intersect at the centre of the cross. The three poles also signify the three persons of the Trinity. Christ on the cross reveals the love of God. Christ’s death on the cross is the revelation of divine love. It is not only the sacrifice of the Son of God but it also reveals the love of Father and Holy Spirit.

3. The Symbolic Significance of the Holy Cross

The symbols in the liturgy have the basic function of expressing and narrating the message of salvation history in a meaningful way. Most of these symbols have the Biblical foundation.

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297 Ramban, *Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week*, 208.

298 Bulgakov, *Churchly Joy: Orthodox Devotions for the Church Year*, 3.
“These symbols will help the faithful to grasp the mysterious, transcendental nature of the Almighty and the realities of heavens. It provides a chance for the faithful to encounter God through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.”

The Gospel of St. John gives a theological meaning for the cross. For John Jesus’ lifting up on the cross is his glorification. He identifies Jesus’ death on the cross to his royal exaltation. The Gospel of John reinterprets the finality of the cross and gives it a new ‘resurrection’ meaning. It is on the cross that the Son of man, terrestrial Jesus is identified with glorified Lord. Thus John makes a vital link of identification between the suffering Christ and glorious Lord on the cross. Christ’s death, torment, and torture on the cross were all willed by the Father. God the Almighty Father, so loved the world that he gave up his only Son to be crucified for the liberation of humankind from the bondage of sin. It is on the cross that Jesus ousted the devil so that humankind can participate in resurrection. Jesus’ stretching out of the arms on the cross was a symbolic representation of the gathering of all peoples. “When I am lifted up, I shall draw all people to myself” (John 12; 32). The lifting up of Christ on the cross prefigures Jesus’ ascent to heaven and his drawing of all people to himself.

For the Syriac Fathers, the Old Testament is a solid background and a great inspiration for the New Testament. In order to deal with their New Testament subject, they go deep into the Old Testament to find out the type and ideas that reflect their theme. For the Syriac Fathers, the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament as they believe that the Word of God is one and the same in all the scriptures. Many of the Syriac Fathers say that the Old Testament is inseparable from the New Testament. The divine mystery that is revealed through the incarnation, which is described in the New Testament, for the Syriac Fathers, is revealed through types and symbols in the Old Testament. The Syriac Fathers find a special interest in sketching a typological parallelism between the two Testaments.

“The Antiochene tradition of interpretation is widely preserved, marked with their own style. They interpret the Old Testament events literally, which serves as types for the New Testament in which these events find their meaning spiritually. Then they enter into the sacred time sacramentally to be fulfilled in the Eschaton.”

Therefore, the types and symbols are the easy instruments that reveal the aspects of hidden reality, for the Syriac Fathers. The cross is one of such types that reveal the mystery of God. By making a connection between the tree of paradise and the cross on the Mount of Calvary, the Syriac Fathers bring out the mystery of the economy of salvation into a comprehending vision.

3.1. The Holy Cross Symbolizes Victory

Christ underwent passion and death in order to acquit the humanity from the punishment that they deserved for their sins. Christ suffered a violent death on behalf of the humanity. He

300 Cf. Lewis, Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday, 34.
301 Karim, Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers, 67.
dies our death so that he can unite us to himself in his resurrection.\textsuperscript{302} Through his resurrection, Jesus achieved victory over death and sin. This victorious resurrection of Christ gives hope and salvation for the humanity. Sacrificial death on the cross paved the way for resurrection and salvation. It means that through his sacrificial death on the cross Jesus could achieve his resurrection. Here the cross stands as the life-giving cross, which effects the salutary gift of salvation. Therefore the cross itself is salutary and considered as a \textit{vexillum},\textsuperscript{303} a banner of victory, its triumphal character is emphasized.

The triumphant character of the cross is also mentioned in many early works, such as, cross as a weapon of justice etc. “The cross is a weapon which God has placed in the hands of humankind in order to achieve victory, and at the same time is the banner which marks the triumph obtained.”\textsuperscript{304} By describing the cross as a \textit{vexillum}, its triumphal character is emphasized. The cross is qualified as a weapon that effects salvation because it is on the cross that Jesus becomes the messianic victor. The cross thus brought not only peace and salvation but protection and shelter from the powers of evil.

The theme of victory is seen in the Latin and the Malankara Good Friday liturgy. In the Latin liturgy, Christ’s victory is depicted in many places as the triumph over death and Satan. The following example is given from the reproaches of Latin liturgy. In this prayer, the cross is considered as the banner and device of victory.

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“Sing, my tongue, in exultation
Of our banner and device
Make a solemn proclamation
Of a triumph and its price:
How the savior of creation
Conquered by his sacrifice.”
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The Syro Malankara liturgical cycle concludes with Feast of the cross cycle. The cross cycle symbolizes the victory of the cross over the powers of sin and death. It also symbolizes the expectation of the second coming of Christ.\textsuperscript{306} There are a lot of places where the theme of victory is in the Malankara Liturgy. Here also Christ’s victory is seen as the defeat over hell, sin, death and Satan. In the following example, the prayers say that Christ by his passion and death demolished Hades.

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“Christ our Lord and our shepherd
Bowed to death and died for us;
Demolished Hades all at once –
By his passion on the Cross;
On this day of adoration
Joyous are earth and heaven;
Celebrating Thy Victory.”
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\textsuperscript{303} A military standard or flag carried by ancient Roman troops.


\textsuperscript{305} \textit{The CTS New Daily Missal}, 303.


\textsuperscript{307} Ramban, \textit{Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week}, 193.
3.2. The Holy Cross Symbolizes the Bronze Serpent

“A typological connection is drawn between the cross on which Jesus was lifted up and the bronze serpent that Moses lifted up on a pole in the desert. As this bronze serpent on the pole prevented the death of anyone who looked upon it, and healed them of poisonous snakebites, so the Son of man elevated on the cross will not allow the faithful to meet with disaster, but he gives them eternal life.”

The cross and its allusion to the bronze serpent is seen in the writings of Latin Fathers as well as Syriac Fathers. “In the Latin tradition, it is found in Justin (Dialogue XCIV, 3; CXXXI, 4) and Tertullian (Adversus Marcionem iii, 18).” Syriac Fathers Mar Jacob, Ephrem and Aphrahat write on this topic. According to the Syriac Fathers, the bronze serpent set by Moses is a type of cross. In his Homily 80:27 Jacob writes as follows. “He (Moses) drew His (Christ) body by making the bronze serpent, and by it he was healing all who were bitten by the snakes. The serpent had no venom, neither was sin found in our Lord’s body who became like us.” This comparison of the cross with the bronze serpent that was erected by Moses in the desert gives a connection between the Old and the New Testament.

3.3. The Holy Cross Symbolizes the Tree of Paradise

“In patristic and medieval typological exegesis and in liturgical texts, the tree in Paradise and Adam are frequently prefigurations which are the typos or the figure for the cross and Christ, respectively.” In the earlier writings of the Church Fathers, we see a lot of analogy between the wood of the tree of paradise and the wood of the cross, also between Adam and Christ. By eating the fruit of the forbidden tree (Gen. 2:17) Adam closed off the salvation for the humankind, which can again be opened up by faith in the Wood, that is to say, faith in the cross that is central for the day on which this secret is prayed. The Salvation which was closed off by the wood (the tree) in paradise is opened by Jesus on the wood (cross).

Salvation is made accessible through the cross or in other words the cross opened the salvation which was closed off once through the unthinking and premature eating from the wood (the tree). Through the wood of the cross, Jesus made salvation accessible. This is well expressed in the Malankara Good Friday liturgy. “On Friday, the begotten Son stretched his hands across the cross and stabilized the hands of Adam that stretched to the tree to pluck the fruit.” For the Syriac Fathers, the tree of life serves as a type of both Christ and the cross. For the Syriac Fathers Christ is the tree of life who confers eternal life on those whom He saved by His cross. Ephrem writes in the Hymns on the Church XLIX, 16:

“The Tree of Life is the symbol
Of the Son of the Living One.”

Jacob of Sarug also makes a point in his homily, that Christ is the tree of life that distribute his fruits of life. Christ, the Son of the living God is in the centre of Paradise giving his body

309 Karim, *Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers*, 73.
310 Karim, *Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers*, 73.
312 Ramban, *Holy Liturgy of the Passion Week*, 112.
313 Karim, *Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers*, 44.
as the fruit of life and His blood as the medicine of life. The fruit of life was promised from the tree of life, Christ.

“The bitter tree of knowledge was abolished
By the tree of life which he wanted to spring from Golgotha.
In crucifixion He stretched out His arms like branches,
And his fruits withered in the land of the dead, and it conceived life.”

The cross through which Christ annulled the fall of Adam prefigures the tree in paradise. By eating the fruit of the tree Adam sinned and he hid among the trees. Christ regained Paradise by his lifting up himself on the tree. “The tree in the Garden of Eden which destroyed us is an antithetical symbol of the cross which saved us.”

The wood of the tree in paradise caused death and the wood of the cross caused life. The Cross is considered as a fragrant and radiant tree that bears the fruit, Christ. Christ has triumphed on the cross, this victory focuses on the fall: through redemption on the cross, he eradicated the fall caused by Adam. “Christ has subdued death on the cross and from his death on the cross life has come forth; death on the cross was a death unto life.”

St. Ephrem in his Nisibene Hymns XIV writes as follows

“To the first wood which became a murderer
To it, grace brought forth a Son.
O Cross offspring of the wood,
That didst fight against his sire!
The wood became the fount of death;
The cross became the fount of life.”

In this hymn, Ephrem considers the cross as the fruit of the wood which is the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. When the first wood became the cause of death the second wood became the cause of life.

3.4. The Holy Cross Symbolizes the Rod of Moses

The author of the book of Numbers describes the incident of bronze serpent in chapter 21, (Num: 21:4-9). The Lord sent poisonous serpents to punish the Israelites when they spoke against Him and Moses. When they repented, Moses prayed to the Lord for protection from the poisonous snakes. Moses erected a bronze serpent and those who looked at it were saved. The Syriac Fathers portray Moses as the chief of the Prophets and the leader of the old disciples. According to the Syriac Fathers, Moses’ life is a type of the cross and devoted to the cross. It is not only the actions of Moses, that point to the cross, but his whole career and life as a savior and leader to Israelites, his life and books, reveal the cross. In order to bring out the strong relationship between Moses and the cross, the Syriac Fathers show the significant role of the rod of Moses. The function of the books of Moses, then, was to disclose the mission of the cross. They attribute the power of Moses to his rod which was a type of cross. It is the power of the cross that worked out through the staff of Moses when the waters of the Red Sea were divided to deliver the Israelites, and when the Amalekites were

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314 Karim, Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers, 44.
317 Karim, Symbols of the Cross in the Writings of the Early Syriac Fathers, 39.
defeated. The Syriac Fathers find a lifelong presence of the rod with Moses as a lasting relationship between Christ and Moses. \(^{318}\)

“Come to the rod of Moses, the Prophet of the Hebrews,  
And see how the mystery of the crucified man is painted in it.  
The creator did great miracles through the rod of the righteous,  
Which was carrying the mystery of the wood of crucifixion.” \(^{319}\)

One of the reasons for the Syriac Fathers to consider Moses’ rod a type of cross was that both of them were made of wood. With the rod of Moses, he performed many miracles. He changed the nature of the water from bitter to sweet, he gave them water from the rock, he divided the sea into two etc. “In the sermons of *Hebdomadam sanctum* I, 338 Ephrem considers the staff of Moses to be a type of the cross because the staff protected the nations, and likewise, the cross also spread its wings in the Churches protecting those who believe in it.” \(^{320}\)

### 4. The Christological Significance of the Holy Cross

The symbol cross has existed in various forms in different cultures from ancient time. But as a Christian symbol, the cross transcends all the previous symbolic understanding. It is by Jesus’ death and resurrection that the cross became a powerful Christian symbol and object. “For the early Christians, the cross was more a symbol of resurrection than a symbol of death. Thus the cross was always depicted as a victorious sign.” \(^{321}\) It was very important for the early Christians to assert the resurrection symbolism of the cross, as they wanted to assert the fact of Jesus’ resurrection.

There is an extensive use of the cross as a symbol and as an object in the Christian liturgy. “The cross is venerated because of Christ, who brought about salvation and liberation on the cross; through Christ’s triumph on the cross the cross has become glorious.” \(^{322}\) The Holy Cross becomes the source of hope and centre of Christian worship. In the Church history, the veneration to the cross was not the result of compassion that was shown to the physical suffering of Jesus but devotion to the cross was shown to emphasize the salvific events of death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy of the Catholic Church the Holy Cross represents the glorified Christ.

“In Holy Week, when the most bitter sufferings of Jesus Christ are put before us by the liturgy, the Church invites us to come to Calvary and follow in the blood-stained footsteps of the divine Redeemer, to carry the cross willingly with Him, to reproduce in our own hearts His spirit of expiation and atonement, and to die together with Him.” \(^{323}\)

### 4.1. The Holy Cross Represents Christ in the Latin Liturgy

The Church invites the faithful on Good Friday to remember the passion and death of Christ on the cross in silence. Though the Good Friday liturgy is a celebration of the victory of

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323 Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei, no.158, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encycicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947mediator-dei.html [accessed on May 8, 2017].
Chapter: 4 Theology of the Veneration of the Holy Cross

Christ over Satan and sin, the Church considers this day as a day of silence and meditation. The silent meditation on the passion of Jesus invites the faithful to renew their commitment to Christ. They are reminded that their life is made precious by the blood of Christ. The cross reminds the faithful about the historical event of Jesus’ crucifixion.

“Christ was most despised of humankind on Good Friday; therefore Holy Church has ordained that on the Good Friday men should do him most worship. And for this cause we do that great worship that day not to the cross that the priest holds in his hands, but to him that died for us all, that day upon the cross.”

The liturgical prayers, the reading from the Gospel of John and the presence of the Holy Cross help the faithful to meditate on the historical event of passion and death of Christ. The whole liturgy helps the faithful to approach the cross as if it were Christ. When the faithful kisse the cross in veneration they consider the cross as if it represents Christ who died for them.

“Dives and Pauper, a manual of popular religious instruction, written hundred years before the reformation states that, on Good Friday all over the Holy Church men creep to the cross and worship the cross. The cross that we creep to and worship so highly that time is Christ himself that died on the cross that day for our own sake; he is that cross, brighter than all the stars of the world.”

4.2. The Holy Cross Represents Christ in the Syrian Liturgy

“For the East Syrians the sliha is Christ himself. Sliha means the crucified one.” As they identify the cross with Christ they call it Mar sliha. The prayers of the Divine Office identify the cross with Christ. For example, it says: “although we see only the cross we adore Christ in it and confess His greatness, because through it salvation came to all”. In the Syrian liturgy, the cross symbolizes the person of Christ especially Christ’s resurrection. The presence of the cross in the Syrian churches not only symbolizes the passion, death and resurrection of Christ but also it signifies Jesus’ second coming. This cross symbolizes the glorified Lord who is to come again to judge the world. Thus the cross also becomes a symbol of Christian eschatology.

In the liturgy, the cross is presented with its intimate relation to the salvific mystery of Christ. In the Syrian tradition, the cross plays its vital role in the Good Friday liturgy and in the Easter liturgy. In both these liturgy, the Syrians use a wooden cross to represent Jesus’ death on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter. It is to be noted that they use the one and same cross for the two ceremonies. “Here the cross is in the place of the person of Christ. Both the death and resurrection of the Lord are enacted using the cross.” Since the cross symbolizes Jesus Christ in the liturgical services, especially the passion, death, resurrection and the second coming of Christ, the cross becomes the most important symbol par excellence.

324 Thurston, Lent and Holy Week, 360.
325 Thurston, Lent and Holy Week, 360.
327 Mannooramparampil, “Devotion to the Cross in the Syro-Malabar Church,” 128.
4.3. The Holy Cross Represents Christ in the Syro Malankara Catholic Eucharist

The Malankara Catholic Eucharistic liturgy is a step-by-step re-enactment of the salvation history, from creation to the second coming of Jesus. The first part of the Eucharist recalls the events of creation till incarnation. The public service proclaims the birth, mission, death, resurrection, ascension and the second coming of Christ. As the crucifix, cross with the corpus of Christ, symbolizes only Jesus’ passion and death the Syriac Fathers did not promote the crucifix in their liturgy. The Eucharist is the commemoration of the entire paschal mystery, not only the sacrificial death of Christ. The following offertory prayer of the Malankara Liturgy shows how the Eucharist commemorates the entire paschal mystery.

“We recall the memory of our Lord and our God, Savior Jesus Christ, and of all his saving economy for our sake, especially his annunciation by the angel, his birth in the flesh, his baptism in Jordan, his saving passion, his ascent of the cross, his life-giving death, his precious burial, his glorious resurrection, his ascension into heaven and his sitting at the right hand of God the Father.”

Because of this reason the Syrians do not keep a crucifix on the altar. Instead of a crucifix, they fix the cross that can be the best symbol to signify the dying Christ, the resurrected Christ and the glorified Christ who is going to come. It is this Syrian tradition that is practiced in the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. In the liturgy, the sign of the Holy Cross evokes the salutary blessings of Jesus Christ. “Signing with the sign of the cross and prostrations are integral to the daily offices. Through them the body shares in the eucharistia offered to God.”

There are many blessings that are made in the form of the cross in the Syrian liturgy. In the Syro Malankara Catholic liturgy, the main celebrant of the Eucharist blesses all the people in the form of the cross. In the Eucharist, it is done for fourteen times with the priest’s right hand and three times with the chalice and paten that contain the consecrated body and blood of Jesus. “At the end of the Holy Qurbono the celebrant clearly and authoritatively says: You are redeemed by the victorious cross of the Lord. Through this dismissal prayer again the people are reminded that they are saved by Jesus’ Cross and this salvation is the result of the grace and mercy of the Holy Trinity.” Whenever the priest makes this sign of the cross over the people they bow their head and make a sign of the cross on themselves. In this way, the priest gives the blessings and people receive the blessing with the sign of the cross. In the Eucharist, during the consecration and epiclesis, the priest makes the sign of the cross on the bread and wine thrice each time. “In the cross the liturgy presents the person of Jesus, the crucified one, but now living as the glorified Christ.”

The use of the sign of the cross is also seen in all other sacraments and sacramental. “All the sacraments are most closely united with the cross.” “St. Thomas Aquinas tells us

330 The Divine Liturgy of the Syro Malankara Church, 9.
331 Varghese, West Syrian Liturgical Theology, 135.
332 Thykoottathil, Christological Mysteries: A Contextual Study on the Liturgy of Saint James in the Syro-Malankara Church, 152.
334 Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei, no.164, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html [accessed on May 8, 2017].
that all of the sacraments derive their power from the passion of Christ, which is applied to us when we receive them.\textsuperscript{335} It is also to be noted that all the prayers of the liturgy of the hours in the Malankara tradition begins and ends with the sign of the cross. The Syro Malankara Church has been faithful to its liturgy ever since its beginning. Even today, this Church meticulously celebrates the liturgy in its traditional form. Mar Ivanios, the founder of the Syro Malankara Catholic rite was a liturgical theologian, who always stressed the importance of liturgical spirituality. In his writings, he gives many themes on devotion to the Holy Cross.

4.4. The Holy Cross in Mar Ivanios’ Writings

Mar Ivanios, the founder of the re-union movement, was the first Metropolitan Archbishop in the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. He was a great scholar and theologian in the Malankara Church. Mar Ivanios is an inspiration to thousands of people who are touched by his saintly life. He is the ‘Moses of the Malankara Church’ who has been chosen by God from the womb of his mother. He is an ‘Apostle for and the Father of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church’.\textsuperscript{336} He was a monk and bishop in the Orthodox Church. His deep study of the church’s history helped him realize that the true Church of Christ was not the Orthodox Church that he belonged to but the Roman Catholic Church.

Realizing this truth, he got reunited with the Catholic Church on September 20, 1930. The then Pope, Pius XI, granted permission to Mar Ivanios and his followers to celebrate their liturgy according to the Oriental rite. His deep knowledge of Church history, liturgy and Syriac helped him to write a lot of books which are great treasures for the Malankara Church.

In his writings to the religious monks, he gives very importance for the Holy Cross. He named his religious congregation the Order of the imitation of Christ. As the name suggests, the monks of this congregation were called to imitate Christ. Mar Ivanios always reminded the monks that the best way to imitate Christ was to follow the way of the cross. This idea is shown in his book, \textit{Sanyasa Jeevitha Sahayi}.\textsuperscript{337}

In his guide-book to the ascetics of his congregation, Mar Ivanios gives great emphasis to the Holy Cross. According to him, the Holy Cross manifests the presence of Jesus Christ. “All Sanyasis (monks) will have a separate room. Within the room, there shall be a cross always to manifest the continuous presence of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{338} He continues to say that the cross in the room of the monks carries the message that they are not alone, rather, they always have the loving companionship of Jesus Christ. Whatever the monk does in his room he has to do it in communion with Christ. The presence of the Holy Cross in the room reminds the monk about his constant communion with Jesus Christ. For Mar Ivanios the cross


not only manifests the presence of Christ but also grants the power of Christ that strengthens the monk.

According to Mar Ivanios, all spiritual powers of the monks come from the power of Christ and this varies according to the grade of monk’s communion with Christ. “In spiritual life one’s own personal choice is very important. Living in the world, there is of course the possibility of failure, frail, and lost.” So he asks the monks to seek the protecting power of the cross as the comfort zone and the safe harbor of the monks. The monk should sleep and rise up daily under the shield of the cross that is placed in the cell. The monk has to receive the grace, power and strength from the cross in order to fight the temptations of the world. He should make before this cross his daily special prayers, offerings, self-renunciations etc. and could also renew his vows daily. He could also bow down and serve and adore Jesus Christ at the foot of this cross. For Mar Ivanios, the cross always represented the presence of the glorified and victorious Christ.

Mar Ivanios says that the greatest ideal of the monks is to live alone with Jesus in his room, which he considers as communion with Christ, and it is better than the association with the Lords of the world. For Mar Ivanios ascetic life is a life of constant struggle and fight against the world and its pleasures. Therefore he asks the monks to receive the courage and strength from the cross which is the best weapon against all worldly fights. A monk who loves the cross will always be victorious in his struggles against the world. “Only those who have a share in the cross of the Lord will advance in the purity of life and progress in sanctity. This means to conquer temptations and acquire virtue is to carry the cross.”

Mar Ivanios writes in his, Blossoms of Meditation: “The Holy Cross has sanctified our souls. The sanctifying cross has remitted our iniquities” According to Mar Ivanios, sanctification is very important in the ascetic life because the monk’s life is a life of holiness and sanctity. Therefore, he asks the monks to recite prayers before the Holy Cross to sanctify themselves. One such prayer is as follows. “Holy Cross, sanctify our souls. O sanctifying cross! Forgive our sins and sanctify us.” The prayers that are addressed to the Holy Cross are the prayers for the sanctification of the monks. Personal sanctification is one important aspect in the ascetical life. A monk who is imitating Jesus Christ has to be sanctified through his vows, prayers and sacraments. Absolution of sins in the sacrament of reconciliation is the most important way for sanctification. Apart from this sacrament, there are different prayers for the forgiveness of sins. One such prayer is mentioned above. In this prayer, the monk addresses the Holy Cross as if he addresses Christ.

In the Syrian tradition and liturgy, it is highlighted that Jesus saved the Church on the cross. Therefore, the Syrians consider the cross as a saving shelter that gives protection and safety. This Syrian ideology is taken by Mar Ivanios and he composed the prayers according to this theology. “The Holy Church seeks shelter in your sufferings on the cross. Behold! We

339 Thykoottathil, Christological Mysteries: A Contextual Study on the Liturgy of Saint James in the Syro-Malankara Church, 57.
have taken shelter in your cross. Save us from the evil one and his forces.” Mar Ivanios was very strict with the implementation of Syrian liturgy in its meticulous form. His spiritual life was the result of his strict observance of liturgical discipline. He considered the Christian life as warfare against the devil and his companions and he advised his followers the inevitable need of carrying the cross. He admitted that the life of carrying the cross is really hard but he also believed that such a life of the cross will eventfully end in joy and satisfaction.

5. The Ecclesial Significance of the Holy Cross

The Holy Cross has an important place in the life of the Church. “From the five wounds of Christ on the cross flow the rivers that water the new Paradise, which is the Church.” It is from this source of divine life, the cross, flows the streams of God’s salvific grace to the Church in and through the sacraments. As a consequence, the cross stands on behalf of the very person of Jesus Christ who is the source of resurrection and salvation. As the cross stands for the very person of Jesus Christ, in the Oriental tradition, they use only a cross without the image of Jesus. For the Oriental Church, the cross is the symbol of Christ's triumph over sin, Satan and death, the symbol of glory, salvation, harmony or communion with God and man. The salutary gifts that Jesus imparted on the cross are re-enacted in the Eucharist and liturgy of the Church.

The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection. It binds the members of the Church together and binds them to Christ. “The Eucharist is the continuity of the incarnation and it is the participation in the passion and resurrection of Christ.” Liturgy is primarily the commemoration and the celebration of the salvific deeds of God. In and through the liturgy these salvific deeds become an active experience for the faithful. The paschal mystery of Christ is re-enacted in the liturgy so that the faithful who participate in it can receive the fruits of salvation.

“All the elements of the liturgy, then, would have us reproduce in our hearts the likeness of the divine Redeemer through the mystery of the cross, according to the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, ‘With Christ I am nailed to the cross. I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me’. Thus we become a victim, as it were, along with Christ to increase the glory of the eternal Father.”

5.1. The Holy Cross as the climax of the Christ event

The previous arguments of this chapter give the theological importance on the Holy Cross in Christian understanding. Passion, death and resurrection are the main salvific events from a Christological point of view. These salvific events are very much related to the Holy Cross. Jesus suffering reaches its peak on the cross. Jesus fulfilled his salvific mission on the cross by his death on the cross and he victoriously accomplishes the mission in his resurrection.

344 Cf. Mar Ivanios, The Liturgical Year, 112.
345 Cantalamessa, The Eucharist Our Sanctification, 46.
348 Cf. Kulapurath, “Liturgy is a Means of Union with God,” 106.
349 Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei, no.102, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947mediator-dei.html [accessed on May 8, 2017].
Proclamation of the Kingdom of God was Jesus’ mission. “The only begotten Son of God became Son of man in order to proclaim and to give to man forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God and new life. By his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead he has come into his kingdom.”

“According to Oriental tradition the cross is not a sign of suffering and death but rather the source of eternal life; in other words, the very person of the risen Jesus Christ.” In the Oriental tradition, the liturgy is the re-enactment of the divine dispensation of God realized in history through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. In their liturgy, they visibly express and ritually celebrate the whole salvific events. The death of Christ is the indispensable and inevitable gateway to resurrection. Death is the means towards the end resurrection. Therefore, it is to be said that the cross is the principal agent that unites the means and the end respectively the death and resurrection. If that is the case, then the best symbol to express these significant events of salvation history is the Holy Cross because the cross substantiates the fullness of Jesus’ humanity, divinity, and glory. The Syro Malankara Catholic liturgical year specially remember and celebrate the victory of the cross in the seventh liturgical cycle which is in honour of the Holy Cross.

The Christ-event reaches its climax on the cross at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The purpose of his death on the cross is expressed explicitly in the Gospel of John in Jesus’ own words as ‘to draw all men (both men and women) to himself’. Thus, Christ gathers all humanity on the cross or he draws near all men and women on the cross. John understands Jesus cry at death; ‘it is finished’ (John 19:30) not as a cry of defeat and termination but as a victorious affirmation of what has been done, accomplished and achieved.

The Church is the gathering of all faithful. If the Church is the gathering of the faithful it can be said that the first gathering of the faithful took place at the foot of the cross. In other words, Jesus laid the foundation of the Church on the cross. “That means in the fullness of time God sent his Son to the world in order to gather together or to make an ecclesia of the scattered children of God and to redeem them eternally through his death.” Who are the faithful those are gathered on the cross? The Gospel of Mark gives the answer to this question. In this Gospel, Jesus says, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners’ (Mk: 2:17). If the Church is the community of the gathered by Jesus Christ it is then nothing but the community of the sinners who are called and redeemed by Christ.

5.2. The Holy Cross and the Eucharist

“The Eucharist is the visible, tangible sign and effects and summation of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.” The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ’s paschal sacrifice which contains the sacrificial and sacramental action that represents the sacrifice on the cross in the consecration of the bread and wine that is offered on the altar. The sacrifice on the cross is represented in the Eucharist and its power is applied for the faithful, on the earth, here and now, and to the

350 Schmemann, The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom, 41.
352 Lewis, Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday, 34.
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end of times. “The sacrifice of the Eucharist is one in which the sacrifice of the cross is represented to the end that its saving power be applied here and now for the salvation of the world.”

Though Eucharist is the same sacrifice of the cross, it never repeats what happened on the Calvary, on the other hand, the Eucharist makes present the sacrifice of the cross and prolongs it to generations to come. "There is a unique link between the sacrifice of Christ and Eucharist. The Eucharist renews the event of the cross by celebrating it (not by reiterating it) and celebrates it by renewing it (not just by recalling it)."

Crucifixion is the sacrifice that is offered by the Bridegroom, Jesus, to his Bride, the Church once and for all on the Calvary. "The Eucharist is indelibly marked by the event of the Lord’s passion and death, of which it is not only a reminder but the sacramental representation. It is the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages." Eucharist helps the faithful to draw out the fruits of Jesus’ sacrifice. It is the banquet where the faithful are nourished by the body and blood of Jesus which was offered on the cross. “Jesus did not simply state that what he was giving them to eat and drink was his body and his blood; he also expressed its sacrificial meaning and made sacramentally present his sacrifice which would soon be offered on the Cross for the salvation of all.”

As the Eucharist and the sacrifice of Christ are intrinsically interrelated one may not be able to understand the sacrificial nature of Eucharist without its relation with the cross. As the Eucharist makes present Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, it invites the faithful for conversion and personal response. The faithful who receive the body and blood of Christ, in the Eucharist enters into a communion with the one who has offered for them on the cross. In and through the Eucharist, the Church meets Christ who communicates to her believers the fruits of the sacrifice of the cross. By the power of the Holy Spirit and of the Word, the Eucharist actualizes the unique and perfect sacrifice of the cross. The Sons and daughters of the Church receive the power and strength to follow the path of Christ through partaking in the Eucharist.

The Holy Cross is the instrument on which Jesus could oblate his body and flows his blood and through the same cross, he passed over his body and blood to the Church. It would not have been possible for Jesus to give his body and blood without dying on the cross. The death of Jesus gave life to humanity. The Holy Cross derives its power from the life-giving blood of Jesus that flowed all over it. “The healing power of the cross enters into the very being of man and makes him interiorly healthy, integrated and happy.”

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556 Jose, Eucharist: Impetus for Family Apostolate, 124.
557 Cantalamessa, The Eucharist Our Sanctification, 12.
mortality to immortality. The healing power of Jesus flowed from his body and blood to the Church through the Holy Cross. The healing and life-giving powers of Jesus are fully and really present in the Church only in the real presence of Eucharist. For Alexander Schmemann, the eucharistic sacrament is both a manifestation and realization of a past event in all its supra temporal and eternal reality.\textsuperscript{362} The Eucharist manifests God’s saving sacrifice and helps the faithful to receive the fruits from the same sacrifice.

The central mission of Jesus was to reach out to his followers for all the time. It is through Eucharist, by the act of breaking of the bread and giving of the cup of wine, that Jesus lives with the humanity for all the time. “Christ established the Eucharist at the last supper as a sacramental commemoration of his sacrificial immolation on the cross, the taking on himself of the sin of the world, which is redeemed by him through his suffering and death.”\textsuperscript{363} The bread and wine that is offered on the altar become the transformed body and blood of Christ. By giving his own body and blood, on the cross, Jesus made himself available for the restoration and resurrection of the sinful humanity. In order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages, until he comes again, Jesus instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice. By consuming from his body and drinking from his cup of blood, the faithful who partake in the Eucharist become part of Jesus’ own existence, consciousness, realization and attitude. Thus, by taking part in the Eucharist the faithful followers are challenged to become the extension and continuation of Christ. “The Holy Cross of Christ is the extension of the Eucharist and in it there is the actualization both of God’s action of sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offers to God through Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{364}

It is in the Eucharist that the Church re-presents Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and that she invites all her followers to take part in the Eucharistic life-giving sacrifice. Thus, symbolically one can say that, the cross re-presents the sacrifice of Christ. Accordingly, there is a unique relation between Eucharist and the cross. “The Eucharist is the cross present in the Church, extending to all people in space, in time and in depth, the unique and perfect work of Christ.”\textsuperscript{365} When one takes this unique relationship seriously one can say that the cross represents the life-giving body and blood of Christ, which is Christ himself. Eventually, the cross is an invitation to a Eucharistic life and the Eucharist is the way of living the cross of Christ in one’s personal and social life. As the Church realizes the unique relation between the last supper and the sacrifice on the cross, she celebrates and renews the same in the Eucharist. The symbolic offering of the bread and wine at the supper was actualized in the perpetual offering of his body and blood on the cross. “Through the cross, the kingdom of God, which was secretly manifested at the supper enters into this world and through this entrance becomes struggle and victory.”\textsuperscript{366}

5.3. The Holy Cross Calls for Discipleship

No one can lead a life of Christian discipleship without knowing the message of the cross. The most radical statement on discipleship in the Gospel is, “Any of you who does not give

\textsuperscript{363} Schmemann, \textit{The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom}, 195.
\textsuperscript{364} Amarnad, “The Cross and Shepherding of Christ,” 80.
\textsuperscript{365} Thurian, \textit{The Mystery of the Eucharist}, 21.
\textsuperscript{366} Schmemann, \textit{The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom}, 206.
up everything he has, cannot be my disciple” (Luke: 14:33). There is an implicit idea of renunciation in this verse. In order to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, one has to give up everything except God. “The disciple is to follow Jesus whole-heartedly. It is an invitation to share in the life and destiny of Jesus; complete allegiance to the person and mission of Jesus is demanded.” Attachment towards anything is a hindrance in discipleship as it holds back the disciple from the master. By completely dedicating their physical and spiritual life to Jesus the master, the disciples begin their journey towards divine communion. The perfect model of self-emptying and discipleship is seen in Jesus’ obedience to his Father. “Jesus was a total oblation on the Cross. There was not a cell of his body or sentiment of his heart that he didn’t offer to the Father.”

In Jesus, one can see the greatest example of discipleship in his obedience to his Father while he was fulfilling the will of the Father. For Jesus Christ, the cross was a divine imperative and fulfillment of his life and mission. His mission and life are fulfilled on the cross. The cross becomes an inevitable imperative for a true disciple who proclaims the words of the kingdom of God. Jesus has already announced that; “whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mathew 16:24). As Jesus was aware of the benefits of the cross he demanded the same from his disciples. “Discipleship demands the renunciation of family, occupation, possessions, and social standing.”

The theology of the Holy Cross puts forward a challenge to all the Christians to move from the mere symbol of the cross to Christ himself and thus to become another Christ by living the message of the cross in their day today life. Christians are called to carry the cross faithfully because the cross is the path to resurrection and new life for the humanity. Carrying the cross is same as living the message of the cross and the message of the cross is same as the message of Christ. “This carrying of one’s cross can perhaps be considered as our sharing in the cross of Christ which symbolizes the cross of the whole of humanity.”

As the cross plays a central role in Christ’s mission the Christian disciple should also consider the cross as a central point of reflection and action in his or her Christian life. The greatest glory of the resurrection of Christ was the result of his suffering and death on the cross. “On the cross, therefore, he held aloft his Yes to the Father, glorifying the Father in the cross, and it was this manner of his dying which led, by an inner logic, to the resurrection. The cross is worship, ‘exaltation’; resurrection is made present in it.” In Christian discipleship, the cross is the way towards glory. The future triumph of every Christian disciple is predetermined on the path of the cross but only, in the end, it becomes manifested and revealed. Whoever embraces the cross willfully and whole-heartedly will be raised and

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368 Cantalamessa, The Eucharist Our Sanctification, 24.
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exalted with divine grace in the end. “The highest degree of union is achieved when the self is reduced to nothing and humbled to the extreme. The transition from the old to the new is not an easy swing.”

5.4. The Holy Cross Invites for Kenosis

Jesus invited his followers to follow his path of kenosis. He insisted the need of losing life in order to find it (Mathew 10:39). This losing of life is an active and loving commitment to God’s will. “It is the Holy Spirit, who is love, that stirred the depths of Christ’s human heart to offer himself to the Father for us and that made him embrace the cross.”

By embracing the cross Jesus achieved the fullness of life in his resurrection. The cross became the bridge between his death and resurrection. It is the bridge that united Jesus with his Father. The cross is the instrument of detachment that helps the disciple to attach him or her solely to God. One who embraces it opens the ultimate way towards the divine.

The self-emptying nature of Jesus is a characteristic feature of his divinity that he acquired from his Father. The true love of God the Father is revealed in Jesus’ kenosis. “The Father has given himself over to the world in his only Son in order to redeem it. This kenosis of the Father, this self-emptying, finds the perfect response in the kenosis of the Son on the cross.” Jesus’ kenosis is a manifestation, a revelation of the kenosis of God. “The essential quality of the kenosis of both the Father and the Son is love. The creative kenosis of the Father is revealed itself in the redemptive kenosis of the Son.”

A disciple who is confident to give up his life for the sake of Christ in any situation is the true disciple. God is love and a disciple of this love, in other words God, cannot stand against love. Love demands pain. Christ’s demonstration of love on the cross demands a response from his disciples. “The cross is a demonstration of the love of God and Christ, which demands a response on our part. It is also portrayed as an example to be followed, and indeed, one reason why the cross was necessary was to set such an example.”

Christ gave his love for the undeserving humans. Human beings are called to love and serve God as they are created by God. Apart from creation, restoration of creation on the cross demands a great response from the part of the people. At the cost of his own life, Jesus purchased eternal life for humanity.

A total kenosis or self-denial is an entry into the divine nature of self-giving. “In Jesus’ self-offering to the Father, the self-offering of the Father to the world is fully manifested. The kenosis of the Father is revealed in the kenosis of the incarnate Son on the cross.” On the cross, the faithful see the kenosis of both the Father and the Son. It reveals pure divinity. The disciple who follows Jesus has to empty the ego-self completely as the total self-emptying of Jesus. The climax of Jesus’ self-emptying is seen on the cross. Therefore, for the disciples, the cross must not only an object of veneration but also a challenge that always invites them to transform themselves more divinely day by day. Jesus presented us the best example of
self-denying love for humanity. By crucifying his ego, the disciple liberates himself from all attachments and bring out the ultimate freedom from all bondages and transforms oneself to the path of divinization. In Christian discipleship, there is no divinization without the crucifixion of the self. “Christ became incarnate, suffered, died and was raised all so that we could be divinized. Christ on the cross is the open gate of heaven; we enter into the depth of the mystery of God through him.”

5.5. The Holy Cross Calls for Renewal

“The cross of Christ opens before the Church a window of authenticity and relevance. The cross of Christ is not a decoration for the Church but it is precisely the key for her to become honestly original and genuine.” When the cross is considered as the sacrament of salvation it asks us to compare the existing structure and system with its original message. As the message of the cross is same as the message of Christ, this comparison is to be evaluated with Christ.

Jesus Christ was not a ritualistic or a cultic person. He was against the meaningless rituals and traditions of the Jewish religion and society during his time. Jesus never stressed the divine aspects at the expense of human values. Jesus wanted to teach that, in essence, God and human are bound to be one and there is no dichotomy in divine and genuine human values. Jesus integrated both the divine and human values into his life in perfect a balance. “The cross has become the symbol of Christ, God-man, because it carries at the same time divine glory and human sufferings.” The vertical and horizontal poles of cross symbolically represent this integration, the integration of divine and human values. The cross of Christ is the Original and authentic source to which we have to compare all our existing systems and structures of Christian living.

The cross of Christ is the perfect image and inspiration for the followers of Christ who are called to realize the mystery of the cross and to actualizing it in their personal life. The Christian discipleship is to carry one’s cross after the model of Christ and to follow his footsteps. Jesus experienced a new family-bond in his abba experience where God became the loving Father and every human person his own brother and sister. By his high-priced death on the cross, Jesus united God and humanity, and inaugurated a new family of and renewed humanity. Thus, the cross of Christ becomes a symbol of the new family in which the God becomes the Father of all humanity and the whole human persons become brother and sister. The shape of the cross signifies this one-family relationship and unity: the vertical post represents God and the horizontal post symbolizes the unity of the entire humanity. The Holy Cross of Christ thus becomes the symbol of unity and love of everything that is divine and human.

Conclusion

The cross is the culmination of Jesus’ incarnation and ministry. Hanging between the earth and heaven he built the bridge of salvation on his cross so that the whole of humankind can

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achieve salvation. Jesus’ salvific death on the altar of the cross was an expiation which washed away the sins of the world. The cross is the unique tree which was selected to bear the body of the sacrificial victim, for the slain. The cross is considered as a scale on which the ransom of Christ is weighed. “On the cross, He completely offered Himself and all His sufferings to God, and the immolation of the victim was brought about by the bloody death, which He underwent of His free will.” Being obedient to his heavenly Father, accepting his chalice of blood, Jesus gave himself as a life-giving oblation on the cross.

The concept of Christ as a king who rules from the cross gives cross a glorious nature, the victory over evil and death. Christ himself is the salvation, but his salutary acts are also transferred to the cross. “The world is also saved by the cross, by the love of the cross; and the world is blessed by the cross, overshadowed by the power of the cross.” Hence for the Christians, the cross always represents and symbolizes triumph. The salutary significance of the cross, therefore, comes from this vicarious death of Jesus on the cross. This vicarious death of Jesus is fully revealed in the Good Friday liturgies of the Latin and Malankara Church.

In Christian understanding, the cross symbolically represents the profound salvific events of Jesus’ death and resurrection. “The cross of Christ thus stands as the unique expression of the self-actualization of Jesus Christ.” The struggle between God and the devil is resolved on the cross where Jesus won over the powers of evil and defeated death by his sacrificial death on the cross. It is a glorious battle and the cross is the symbol of victory. Christ conquered death by dying himself on the wood of the cross. During the painful death of Jesus on the cross the veil of the temple of Jerusalem was torn from top to bottom. ‘Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom’ (Mathew 27:50-51). The veil of the temple which divided the sacred and the secular was torn by Jesus death on the cross. The death of Jesus removed the separation between the profane and divine, clergy and laity and sacred and secular. “Under the shroud of the cross, all became one band and holy people of God.”

The cross of Christ is the symbol of humanity’s repentance before God. Jesus Christ during his earthly mission, preached the Good News, taught the values of the kingdom of heaven and healed the sick. By accepting the cross, he reached the zenith of his mission. Death on the cross gave Jesus Christ a new mode of life and existence. Through the Holy Cross, Jesus entered into eternity and invited all his followers to enter through the same gateway. This gateway, the cross, is an invitation to eternity and immortality. Thus, in and through the sacred cross of Christ, the whole of humanity is led towards the realization of the parousia.

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384 Sergius Bulgakov, *Churchly Joy: Orthodox Devotions for the Church Year*, 2.
GENERAL CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to bring out the theological meaning of the veneration of the Holy Cross, in the liturgies of Latin and Malankara tradition. We have explored the theme of the veneration of the Holy Cross from its ancient Jerusalem Good Friday liturgy and the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem and Rome. This thesis is developed in four chapters.

In the first chapter, we made a historical survey on the veneration of the Holy Cross. The sign of the cross and the use of the symbol cross in ancient icons and in arts also suggest that the Holy Cross enjoyed a significant status from the beginning of Christianity. A particular kind of the veneration of the Holy Cross was also associated with the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem from the beginning of the fifth century. Later, by seventh century this custom was introduced into Rome. In this chapter, particular focus was given to the adoration of the relic of the true cross.

The historical survey suggests that, in course of time, as the community of the Christians grew, due to the lack of the relic of the true cross, people began to venerate crosses made in the form of the True cross. The historical investigation also proves that from the fourth century onwards there emerged the custom of the veneration of the Holy Cross in various places. The Armenian lectionary and the travel documents of Egeria give us the proofs for the Good Friday liturgical services in ancient Jerusalem. These documents give us the proof for the ritual of the veneration of the Holy Cross. The first chapter ends with the ancient good Friday liturgy celebration in Rome. After showing ample evidence of the veneration of the Holy Cross in the ancient Christian history we moved on to the present-day veneration of the Holy Cross.

Having established the practice of the veneration of the Holy Cross in ancient Jerusalem and Rome, the second chapter made the liturgical analysis of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the Passion liturgy in the Latin rite. The liturgical analysis of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross makes it clear that the symbol Holy Cross enjoys a status of victory over the evil powers. The victorious feature of the Holy Cross is the main theme of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The analysis of the Passion liturgy shows us that the main theme is salvation. By delineating the divine love of God in the Passion liturgy the Church asks the faithful to renew their commitment to Christ. An active participation in the Good Friday liturgy helps the faithful to discover God’s unconditional love towards humanity.

The third chapter was entirely devoted to the Lenten liturgical celebration and the Good Friday liturgy of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church. The main aim of the Malankara Syrian liturgy is to help the faithful to model their life after Christ. The analysis of the Malankara Liturgy proves the Syrian influence of monastic and ascetic values. According to the Malankara Liturgy, the Christian life is a combat against Satan and evil. In order to conquer the evil powers, one has to grow deep in Christ. Prayers, fasting, and liturgy is the means that help the faithful to achieve the spiritual strength to grow in Christ. The whole structure of the Good Friday liturgy is arranged meticulously, so that, by its observance, the faithful can grow in Christ. The Holy Cross, in the Syro Malankara Catholic liturgy, stands as the victorious symbol of Christ that enables and strengthen the faithful to live and grow in Christ.
The final chapter helped us to bring out the deeper meaning of the Holy Cross. The Holy Cross is not merely a Christian symbol. It has deeper realities. The symbolic exegesis of the Syriac Fathers proves the importance of the Holy Cross in the salvation history. The Holy Cross is not a mere symbol of the New Testament for the Syriac Fathers. They find allusions to the cross in the old testament and draws out a unique relationship between Old and the New Testament. By this, the Syriac Fathers establish the significant role of the Holy Cross in the salvation history.

The most important aspect of the Holy Cross is seen in its representation of Christ. The cross stands as a symbol of Christ, crucified, resurrected and glorified. The cross is the symbol of victory; victory against Satan and evil powers. The Holy Cross is the revelation of the mystery of God's unconditional love that is revealed in and through Christ. The most sublime revelation of God's love is seen on the cross, in the sacrificial death of Christ. By dying on the cross, Christ offered himself to his Father and gave his body and blood as the fruit of salvation to the Church. What he has symbolically offered on the last supper, the bread and wine have become a reality on the cross. It is this reality of the cross that has been celebrated in the Eucharist since Jesus’ crucifixion and which will be continued till His second coming. According to Schmemann the kingdom of God was manifested and appointed at the last supper was established on the cross. That is why it is only through the cross that the gift of the kingdom of God is transformed into its reception, in the Eucharist. For him, the remembrance of the cross is inseparable from the broken body and poured out the blood of Christ, the Eucharist. Therefore, without a doubt, one can conclude that the Holy Cross is the best symbol that expresses the whole mystery of salvation history from the beginning to the end.

As the cross is the symbol of God’s unconditional love it expects a response from its followers. The Church, the community of the followers of Christ, has to give the message of the Holy Cross to the whole world. “The Church must also, ever stand under the cross, and cannot move from that spot.” A true disciple of Christ has to carry his cross in order to follow Christ. In Christian spirituality ‘carrying the cross’ or ‘embracing the cross’ has a deeper symbolic meaning. St. Therese’s of Avila considers the embracing of the cross as the greatest perfection that can be attained by a Christian disciple. She finds this embracing as a help to the disciple to find conformity with Christ. Christ asks his followers to ‘be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mathew 5:48). The unconditional obedience of Christ to his Father is best expressed on the cross. By dying on the cross, Christ achieved salvation for humanity that was entrusted by his Father. As Christ was faithful to his Father, the followers of Christ are also called to be faithful to Christ. It is only by realizing the message of the cross in one’s life one can follow Christ.

It is a matter of undisputable argument to say that the Good Friday liturgies, in the Latin and Malankara, are imbued with deep theological meanings. The lofty status of the
General Conclusion

Holy Cross in the Catholic liturgies is the result of this theological depth. But the mystery of the Holy Cross relies even outside the Good Friday liturgy. In the Syro Malankara Church, the Holy Cross enjoys its graceful excellence in the Easter liturgy as the symbolic expression of Jesus' resurrection. The Holy Cross that is ceremoniously venerated and entombed on Good Friday will be covered with red velvet and is placed in the sanctuary till the feast of Ascension. The red velvet symbolizes victory and glory. As the red velvet completely covers the wooden cross, one may not be able to see the cross. This symbolizes the absence of the physical presence of Jesus after the resurrection.

The presence of the Holy Cross on the M'ortha is thus for sixty days. Twenty-five days of the Great Lent of fifty days and the forty days after Easter. The place of the M'ortha, the color of the velvet and stole have deep symbolism. For the rest of the liturgical year, the Holy Cross is kept on the altar for veneration. Only a further liturgical analysis of the feast of Easter and Ascension will evoke deeper reflections on the mystery of the Holy Cross. Apart from the Latin and Malankara rites, the Holy Cross enjoys lofty status in the Coptic and Byzantine traditions. The spirituality of the Holy Cross has a lot of pastoral and spiritual implications in Christianity. Further research on the veneration of the Holy Cross is also significant from an ecumenical perceptive. This study is thus intended as a starting point and further research is needed to establish a comprehensive theology of the Holy Cross and its pastoral and eschatological dimensions. Furthermore, we aim to undertake liturgico-theological and comparative research on the veneration of the Holy Cross.