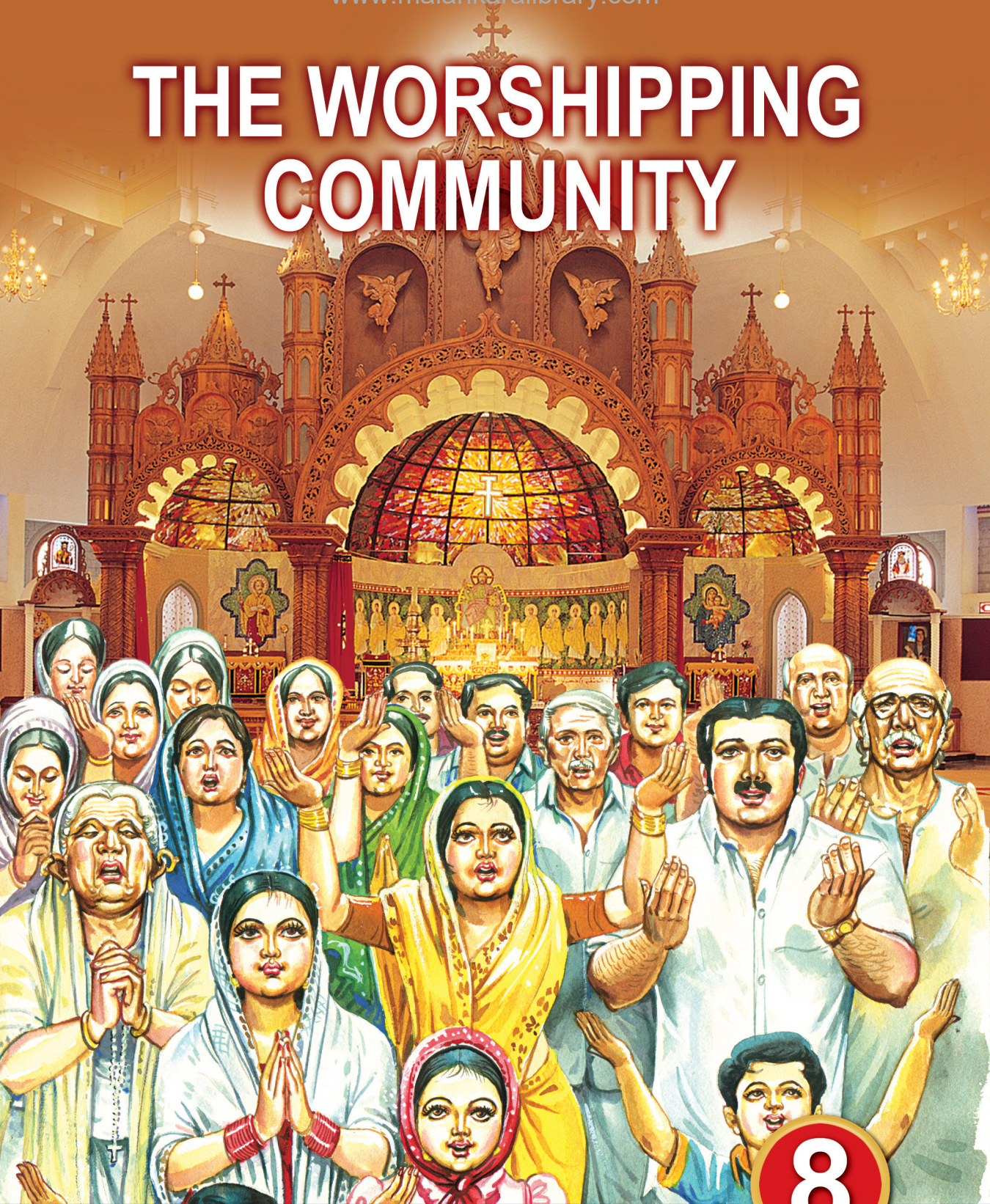


THE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY



THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CATECHISM

**THE WORSHIPPING
COMMUNITY**

STANDARD - VIII

The Synodal Commission for Faith Formation
Catholicate Centre, Pattom, Trivandrum-695 004

- Title : English
**The Syro-Malankara Catholic Catechism - 8
The Worshipping Community**
- Imprimatur : **His Beatitude
Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis
Major Archbishop-Catholicos
of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church**
- Published by : **The Synodal Commission for Faith Formation**
Syro- Malankara Catholic Church
Catholicate Centre
Pattom, Trivandrum,-695 004, Kerala, India.
- First Published : May 1st 2007
- Copy right : **The Synodal Commission for Faith Formation**
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- Design & Layout : **Greeshma Designs
Kottayam
Ph: 9447304348**
- Printing : **St. Mary's Press,**
Pattom, Trivandrum-4
- Distribution : **Catholicate Centre**
Pattom,
Trivandrum,-695 004, Kerala, India
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23 March 2020

BENEDICTORY MESSAGE

It is with great pleasure and reverence that I cherish the publication of the catechism Text of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church in 2002, during the apostolic ministry of His Beatitude Moran Mor Cyril Beselios Catholicos. It was indeed a dream come true as it helped the Church to make a truly measured step towards faith formation. With God's immense grace we are also able to publish the text in Malayalam, Tamil and English for classes one to twelve.

The message of creation and salvation manifested through the life of Jesus Christ was revealed to us all the way through from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The history of this revelation is the history of the salvation of the Church. The core of catechism is this history of revelation and salvation. Through the Holy Spirit this history of salvation continues today in and through the Church. For us this salvation becomes a living experience through the ecclesial life of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Therefore the history of salvation and the patrimony or the valuable traditions of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church become the fundamental source for this catechism. I pray that this Catechism Text brings a new vigour in the growth of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and I earnestly advise the faithful to receive this Catechism Text and help in the promotion and progress of the Church for the greater glory of God.

I sincerely appreciate this unique achievement. I express my profound gratitude to His Grace Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, the former Chairman and Rev. Dr. Antony Kakkanatt, the former Secretary of the Synodal Commission for faith formation who continues to give commendable leadership to prepare and publish this Catechism Text. I wholeheartedly appreciate the genuine efforts taken by His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Eusebius, the present Chairman of the the Synodal Commission for Faith Formation, for his services. God bless them and all those who have collaborated with them in this noble mission.

God bless you all!

✠ Baselios Cardinal Cleemis
Major Archbishop-Catholicos
of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

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INTRODUCTION

The Command of Jesus Christ, “Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15) is the foundation for Catechesis or faith formation. This faith formation has been continuing in the Church from the days of the early Church in different ways. Catechesis is based on the theological positions of each epoch. A serious awareness on the liturgical, spiritual, theological and disciplinary patrimony of the Malankara Catholic Church led to the promulgation of a unique catechism for the Malankara Catholic Church. The entire Church rejoices at the fulfilment of this desire.

Catechism should never become an intellectual pursuit. True Catechesis should lead the pupil to a life of worship and witness. Catechesis should attempt to lead, nurture and confirm the pupil in the life of faith of the Church to which he or she belongs. Thus the catechumen will be able to know and experience Christ in and through the Church and participate in the mystery of salvation and be in communion with the Holy Trinity. Jesus Christ continues his Salvific Mission in and through the Church. Therefore we have concentrated on an ecclesial centred catechesis. This catechesis is founded on the spiritual heritage of the Malankara Catholic Church.

In classes one to seven, we studied the mysteries of God’s revelation. The theme in classes eight to ten is man’s response to revelation. The basic attitude of man is adoration of God, who is creator, protector and redeemer. In classes eight, nine and ten, we learn progressively about the worshipping, living (witnessing) and proclaiming community.

It is not possible to separate worship from the Church. They are mutually complementary. The first part of the textbook for class eight entitled “The worshipping community” is about the worshipping Church. The second part exposes the sacraments, which constitute the core of worship. The third part is the history of the Church from the first to fourth century. The fourth section gives practical counsel for the life of adolescents and explains the media. What we learn from instruction becomes a spiritual experience through the liturgy. This spiritual knowledge and experience lead to life witnessing.

Based on the principle that “the rule of prayer is the rule of faith”, this textbook will help our children to understand better the prayers and songs that we recite in our services and thus allow them to experience truly our Liturgy. The prayers, hymns and practical suggestions given at the end of each lesson give more meaning and spiritual nourishment to the child.

We are profoundly grateful to His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, Catholicos, Major Archbishop of Trivandrum and the other bishops of the Malankara Catholic Church for their constant prayers, support and suggestions. My special thanks are due to our beloved Aboon Jacob Mar Barnabas, the Apostolic Visitor in ETR, India and Aboon Joseph Mar Thomas, the Apostolic Visitor to America and Europe for their continued support and guidance.

To the many priests, religious and lay faithful who have sincerely collaborated in this endeavour we offer our gratitude. I would like to thank Rev. Fr. Samuel Thykoottathil for his effort to translate the Malayalam Text into English. I acknowledge Rev. Fr. Abraham Kalakkudi for his valuable remarks and correction. We would like to thank the Professors of St. Mary’s Malankara Major Seminary, Trivandrum, and especially Rev. Dr. Philip Chempakasserry, Rev. Dr. Kurian Valuparampil, Rev. Dr. Chacko Aerath O.I.C., Rev. Dr. Thomas Kanjiramukalil, Rev. Dr. Kuriakose Thadathil, Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Chediath and Rev. Dr. Samuel Vazhayil. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the diocesan directors of catechism Rev. Fr. Joseph Poovathumtharayil, Rev. Dr. Antony Chethipuzha, Rev. Fr. Robinson Kunnackad, Rev. Fr. Alexander Valiyaveettil, Rev. Fr. Varghese Valikodath and Rev. Fr. Jose Venmalottu. Our thanks are also due to the Text book committee – Prof. Mary Mathew, Shri. N.G. Philip and Shri. M.V. Thomas. So also to Mr. Mathews Orathel for designing the text book and pictures. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Rev. Fr. Joseph Kalariparampil for his assistance. Our indebtedness to Rev. Dr. Antony Kakkanatt who is the master brain behind this work is also sincerely acknowledged.

I pray that through this catechism text each child may be brought to and nourished in and confirmed in the faith of the Malankara Catholic Church and thus be able to know and experience Christ’s love more profoundly.

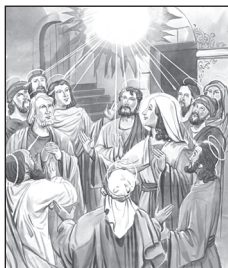
+ Thomas Mar Koorilos

Former Chairman, The Synodal Commission for Faith Formation

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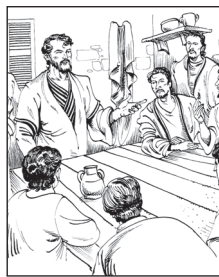
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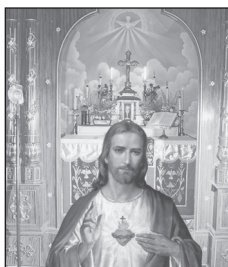
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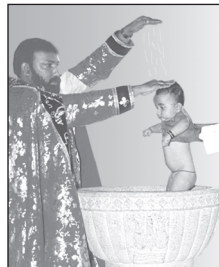
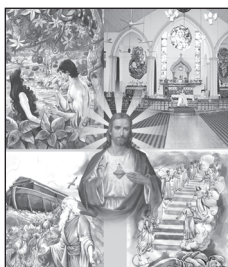
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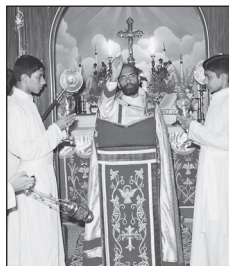
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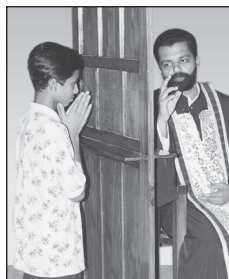


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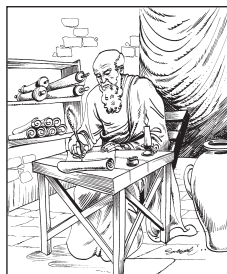
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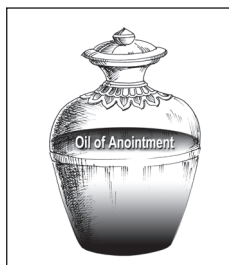
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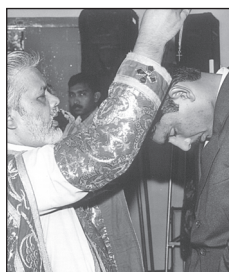


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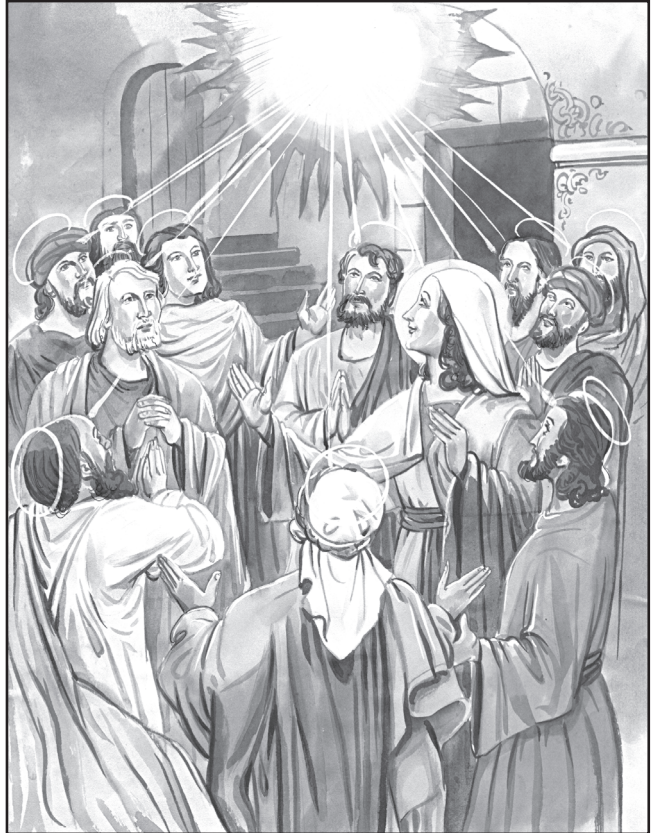


HOLY BIBLE

Lesson 1

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gave hope to the apostles, who were in despair on account of his crucifixion. Jesus appeared to his apostles and encouraged them. On the 40th day of the resurrection, the apostles gathered together on Mount of Olives as per instruction of Jesus. Jesus said to them: “Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24: 49). Then Jesus ascended into heaven.



The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Pentecost was on the 50th day after the Passover. A lot of Jews used to come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, when the community of the apostles was praying in the Cenacle, there came a sound from heaven like the rush of a violent wind. The apostles experienced tongues like blazing fire resting upon them. They began to speak in different languages in accordance with the gift of tongues, the Holy Spirit gave (Acts of the Apostles 2: 1-4). The people, who were in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost gathered together when they heard the sound. They were amazed when they heard the apostles speaking in their own languages. Some of them ridiculed them saying: “they are filled with new wine”.

The Preaching of Peter

Peter, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, standing along with the other eleven apostles addressed the crowd of people: 'These are not drunk, as you suppose. It is due to the operation of the Holy Spirit that they speak thus. God has raised Jesus, whom you crucified and killed. We are witnesses to that. He who is seated at the right hand of God and who received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father has sent this Spirit. That is what you are seeing and hearing' (Acts of the Apostles 2: 14-34).

The address of Peter shed new light on the people, gathered there. Their minds turned to repentance. They asked Peter and the other apostles: "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter told them: "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts of the Apostles 2: 38).

Three thousand people, who heard the preaching of Peter, believed in Jesus Christ that day and were baptized. Thus the Church was established with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The coming of the Holy Spirit marked a new era. The apostles, who were filled with the Holy Spirit, began courageously to bear witness to Christ. Thus the early Church took form in Jerusalem and spread in other places.

The risen Christ had worked through the Holy Spirit. They had the experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit through the Holy Qurbano. The foundation of the Church, its life, growth, nature, direction, leadership, charisma, unity, strength and accomplishment of duties were related to the Holy Spirit.

The Early Church

The lifestyle of the early Christian Community, which was formed in Jerusalem, is well described in the Acts of the Apostles: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts of the Apostles 2: 42).

The Teaching of the Apostles

The early Christian Community always listened to the apostles in order to know and learn more about Jesus Christ. There was no literature about

Jesus in the early period of the Church. Under these circumstances the preaching of the apostles was very important. The early Christian community used to partake enthusiastically in the teachings of the apostles. The apostles gave to the early Church the Lord Jesus, whom they saw, heard and experienced. Through the Holy Spirit the early Church learnt about Jesus from the apostles.

The Communion of Love

The faith in the risen Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit sustained the early Church as a communion. The love of Christ obtained through the apostles was the unifying factor. Thus they grew up as a community confessing their faith in Jesus. The conviction that they were the people of God according to the new dispensation became very strong among them. The conviction that they ought to preach Jesus throughout the world also united them.

We understand about the communion of the early Church thus: “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the Temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people” (Acts of the Apostles 2: 44-47). Love was the characteristic feature of the early Christians. They understood that division was against the works of the Holy Spirit. They understood this communion as the gift of the Holy Spirit. This communion urged them to consider that all were members of the same body, to serve each other and to carry burdens.

One Mind and one Heart

The early Christians had but one mind and one heart. There was no difference among them between big and small, rich and poor. Nobody lived for himself but lived for all. All loved and honoured each other. They sold everything and shared with others. There was no one needy among them. The Holy Spirit had strengthened them to consider each other, to console and to carry burdens. We understand about the early Church thus: “Now

the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common” (Acts of the Apostles 4: 32).

The Breaking of the Bread and Prayer

During the early times, the Christians went to the synagogues and Temple of Jerusalem and attended the holy services. At the same time, they assembled in any convenient house and held the service of the breaking of the bread. When the Christian community grew, the Jews ousted the Christians from their synagogues and Temple of Jerusalem. Hence they held together the prayers and the breaking of the bread in the houses (Acts of the Apostles 2: 46-47).

Since the day of resurrection of the Lord is Sunday, the Christians assembled on Sunday instead of Saturday, the Sabbath day of the Jews and held the service of the breaking of the bread. It was under the leadership of the apostles that the house assembly and the service were held. In course of time when the number of Christians increased, the space in the house was not enough and Christian churches came into existence for worship. In the same way, the service of the breaking of the bread, in course of time, changed into the solemn celebration of the Holy Qurbono.

The service of the breaking of the bread or Holy Qurbono was the foundation of the spiritual strength of the early Christians. The early Church used the Greek word “*Eucharistia*”, which means ‘thanksgiving’ to signify the Holy Qurbono. They offered thanksgiving to God for the immense grace they received from him through the service of the breaking of the bread. As one body, they experienced the communion of love through the service of the breaking of the bread as members of the same family.

The Presence of God in the Holy Eucharist

The early Christian Church understood that the risen Christ dwelt among them through the service of the preaching of the word and the breaking of the bread. They had the experience that Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and was resurrected, lived daily in their midst under the species of bread and wine. A sacramental spirituality, related to the service of the breaking of

the bread became very strong among them. The presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist gave them strength in all their difficulties and sorrows of life. It is from this presence of the Lord that they obtained the courage to bear witness to Jesus Christ and embrace martyrdom. In short, it was the Holy Eucharist that was the foundation of the spirituality and of the real strength of the early Christians.

Each of our parish communities should live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Each parish is obliged to live in the vigour of the early Church. Each parish community should be able to become the communion of love and to experience the living Jesus through the Holy Eucharist in daily life.

Worship

The Church commemorates during the Holy Qurbano on the feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. On that day the disciples, having received strength, went into the whole world to preach the Gospel of Jesus thus:

(Yajamanan varumannerath...)

“On the day of Pentecost, upon the apostles
The Most Holy Spirit came down and dwelt
among them;
And they received; strength as tongues of fire
So that they could preach Jesus’ Gospel
And thus to gather humankind as people of
Christ
So that they owned God’s kingdom and life
eternal
Halleluiah o Halleluiah”.

Life Witness

The early Christian community lived in one mind in faith and prayer. They lived in charity and fraternity. Their life filled with grace attracted many to Jesus. Our mutual love and fraternity should attract others towards Jesus. Let us try for that.

Memorise

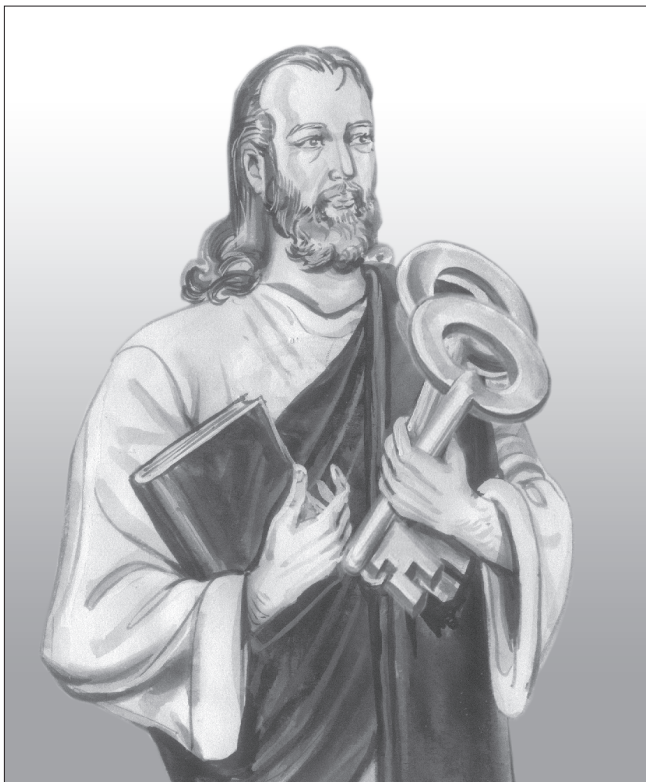
“Day by day, as they spent much time
together in the temple, they broke
bread at home and ate their food with
glad and generous hearts”
(Acts of the Apostles 2: 46).

Questions

1. Describe the event that took place on the day of Pentecost.
2. What were the special life-styles of the community of the early Christians? Describe.
3. The foundation and the real strength of the spirituality of the early Christians was the Holy Eucharist. Substantiate the statement.

THE CHURCH GROWS

Before his ascension, Jesus the Lord told his apostles: “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16: 15). The apostles put into practice this missionary mandate of Jesus. The apostles began this apostolic mission entrusted to them by Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit on the feast of Pentecost. Just as Jesus had told them the apostles had to be witnesses to him ‘in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth’ (Acts of the Apostles 1: 8). This apostolic mission, which the Lord gave was executed through the leadership of St. Peter the head of the apostles and St. Paul the apostle of the gentiles.



The Apostolic Mission of St. Peter

It is Jesus Christ who appointed Peter as the head of the apostles (Matthew 16: 18; John 21: 15-19). After the ascension of Jesus, Peter the apostle started his apostolic mission with the coming of the Holy Spirit. All the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The three thousand people, who listened to the preaching of Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit and inspired by his anointing, were converted and became members of the Church. Thus the early Christian community grew fast

under the leadership of Peter the apostle. Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Peter became the chief spokesman of the Christian message.

The Miracles of Peter

One day, the apostles Peter and John were going as usual to the Temple to pray. Some people had laid a lame man at the entrance of the Temple in order to beg alms from those who came to the Temple. Peter said to the lame man, who begged alms: "... in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk". He was immediately cured (Acts of the Apostles 3: 1-10). They used to lay the sick people on the way Peter walked so that his shadow might fall on them. Thus, those on whom the shadow of Peter fell, got cured of their diseases.

Peter went to several places for the spread of the Gospel. Many Jews were attracted by the preaching of Peter and turned to the Lord. There was a rich lady, by name Tabitha in a place called Joppa. When she died, Peter visited the dead lady at the request of the other Christians. After expelling everyone from the house, Peter knelt and prayed. Then, Peter the apostle said: "Tabitha, get up". As he said this, she came back to life (Acts of the Apostles 9: 36-42). Several other signs and miracles took place in the Church through Peter.

Peter, in Samaria

The starting of the apostolic work of Peter was in Jerusalem. As per the instruction of Jesus Christ, Peter preached the Gospel in Judea, Samaria and Antioch. He invited the faithful to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Peter and the other apostles prayed for the people of Samaria, who received the word of God. Later, through the imposition of hands of the apostles, they received the Holy Spirit. Thus the Church spread in many places. The salutary works of the life of Jesus, especially his passion, death on the cross and resurrection were the theme of the preaching of the disciples of Christ.

Peter, in Prison

The chief priests and the Jewish leaders opposed the apostles, seeing that the people were attracted by their preaching. They were imprisoned

several times because of the spread of the Christian faith. Once Peter and the other apostles, who were imprisoned, were released after being questioned and lashed. Even though they had to undergo persecution, Peter did not refrain from preaching about the Messiah. Peter was again imprisoned for spreading the Christian message. On this occasion the messenger of the Lord opened the doors of the prison and set free Peter and the brothers who were with him. Peter and the other apostles, who were released, taught about Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem. On another occasion, in order to please the Jews, King Herod imprisoned Peter. The messenger of the Lord appeared to Peter, who was chained in prison, and released him. Thus apostle Peter having overcome persecutions and sufferings, showed great enthusiasm to spread the message of Christ (Acts of the Apostles 4: 1-16; 5: 17-20; 12: 6-11).

Preaching of Gospel to the Gentiles

It was Peter who, after a divine apparition, preached the gospel first to the gentiles. Peter preached the gospel as per instruction of God to Cornelius, who was a centurion in the division of the Roman army and to his relatives. When they were listening to the preaching of Peter, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit descended on the gentiles, Peter instructed to baptize them. Peter said about those gentiles, who received the Holy Spirit: “Can anyone withhold the water for baptising these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Thus it became clear that the Church of Christ is for all generations of people (Acts of the Apostles 10: 1-48).

The early apostolic work of Peter was centred on Jerusalem. Afterwards he extended it outside Jerusalem. Peter spent his last days in Rome. There are two Epistles after his name in the New Testament. History testifies that Peter embraced martyrdom, being crucified head down, in 67 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Nero.

The Apostolic Mission of St. Paul

St. Paul was the greatest missionary of the early Church. Since Paul preached the gospel to the gentiles, he is known as the “Apostle of the

Gentiles”. We can consider him as one, who had the greatest share in the growth of the Church in the first century. Paul, who had a Jewish background, was known as Saul. Saul had wide knowledge of the Jewish laws, practices, Holy Scripture and tradition. As an enthusiastic Pharisee, young Saul was in the forefront to persecute the Christians.



The Conversion of Saul

An event that occurred in the life of Saul, a bitter rival of Christ, transformed his whole life. Once Saul set out from Jerusalem to Damascus

with credentials to persecute the Christians. When he approached Damascus, he had a vision of the Lord. A lightning from heaven reflected on Saul; he fell down. The Lord asked: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Saul did not understand, who was speaking. Then the Lord spoke to Saul thus: “I am Jesus whom you persecute”. Thereafter Saul did as the Lord instructed. In continuation of the apparition, Saul was blind for three days. The Lord gave back eyesight to Saul through a disciple called Ananias. From then Saul set out for the preaching of the Gospel. He was thereafter known as Paul (Acts of the Apostles 9: 1-10).

The Preaching of the Gospel

Paul came to Jerusalem from Damascus. He set out to preach Christianity after he had learnt sufficiently about Christ and his teachings. Even though the Christians suspected him first, at the end they accepted his conversion.

After conversion Paul dedicated his life to Jesus. Paul began his apostolic mission from Antioch. The preaching of Paul was founded on the fact that Jesus was the promised Messiah. As a result of his apostolic works, Christian communities were established in many centres. Paul made chiefly three journeys related to the preaching of the Gospel. The following are some of the cities where Paul preached the Gospel: Corinth, Galathia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus and Cyprus.

The fourteen Epistles in the New Testament after the name of Paul are the greatest proof of the apostolic vigour of Paul. The share of these epistles is immense in laying the foundation of Christian Theology.

Persecution and Death

Paul, who carried out apostolic mission for Christ had to undergo persecution several times for the sake of the Gospel. Paul, the apostle says about his persecution thus: “..suffered far more imprisonments; countless floggings; dangers of death. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Three times I was shipwrecked” (2 Corinthians 11: 23-28). Paul, the apostle came to Rome at the end of the third apostolic journey. He was imprisoned during the persecution of emperor Nero and was beheaded in 67 A.D.

Council of Jerusalem

The apostles preached the Gospel first to the Jews, then to the gentiles. Paul made the gentiles, who received the Gospel, Christians. But the Jewish Christians put the condition that the gentile Christians should observe the Jewish customs; especially, that the gentile Christians should be circumcised. The gentiles, on their part, did not look with favour on the Jewish customs. These problems caused crises and disputes in the Church, as a result of which, the apostles and the chiefs gathered in Jerusalem to discuss this subject. This gathering is known as the Council of Jerusalem. This is the first Regional Council of the Church. The apostles Peter and Paul took the chief part in the Council. The Council decided that the Gentiles need not observe the Jewish customs in order to become Christians. Thus, Christianity was freed from Judaism (Acts of the Apostles 15: 1-20).

According to the instruction of Lord Christ, the other apostles and disciples too preached the Gospel in different parts of the world. For the sake of spreading the Gospel they had to suffer many persecutions. Still, overcoming these severe crises, the Church of Christ spread in various parts of the world in the early centuries. The Church flourished under the leadership of Peter, the apostle and in the theological vision of Paul, the apostle. To honour these two great Apostles the Church observes thirteen days of fast and at the end of which celebrates their feasts on 29th June.

Worship

The Church commemorates on the second Sunday after Easter during the celebration of the Holy Qurbano the calling of Simon Peter by Jesus and Peter's following Jesus leaving aside his profession of fishing and preaching the Gospel in Rome and embracing martyrdom:

(Lok Moriyo korenan..)

"Jesus cast net on Simon, the fisherman
And he asked him to forsake his job of fishing;
Cast your net in order to catch all people
And gather them so that they enter the world
of life;

Simon has cast his net in Rome
Some of them gave up their own gods;
And they owned life because of faith in the divine
Lord".

Life Witness

St. Peter and St. Paul bore courageous witness to the Gospel of Jesus. Let us also, like them, try to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus through the example of our lives.

Memorise

"But even if we or an angel from
heaven should proclaim to you a
gospel contrary to what we
proclaimed to you, let that
one be accursed!"
(Galatians 1: 8).

Questions

1. Describe the miracles wrought by St. Peter.
2. What were the experiences of St. Peter in prison?
3. Describe the conversion of Saul.
4. Prepare short notes on St. Paul's preaching of the Gospel.

Lesson 3

THE DIVINE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The risen Jesus Christ, having sent the Holy Spirit, instituted the Church in order to continue his mission. Those who confessed faith in Jesus received baptism, obtained the Holy Spirit and became members of the Church. They believed that the Church is the continuation and the body of Jesus.

Just as Jesus Christ has the human and divine natures, the Church, which he instituted too, has the human and divine characteristics. We mean by the visible and external human structure, the community constituted of individuals, the institutions and associations. The divine characteristic of the Church is invisible and spiritual. This divine characteristic is the living presence of Christ, which sanctifies the Church. Just as human and divine natures are united in Jesus, the external and internal structures of the Church also, are mutually united.



The Church and the Kingdom of God

The public life of Jesus Christ begins with the announcement of the Gospel of the kingdom of God. “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near: repent and believe in the good news” (Mark 1: 15). Thus, a person, having repented and confessed Jesus Christ through conversion

and by receiving baptism, becomes a member of the Church and through it a citizen of the kingdom of God. A person becomes suitable to the kingdom of God by fully accepting Jesus Christ and the reign of God, and by being docile to the will of God.

Through baptism, one becomes a member of the kingdom of God. However the perfect experience of the kingdom of God as a reality, is yet to come. That is fully realized through the second coming of Jesus or at the consummation of time.

The Church is the people of God, which leads a new life, having received the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Greek word "*Ecclesia*" is used to signify the word "Church". This means "the community of the called".

Through baptism, one becomes a member of the kingdom of God as well as of the Church. Jesus brings us up to the experience of the kingdom of God through the sacraments of the Church, especially, the Holy Eucharist. It is the foretaste of the banquet of the heavenly kingdom that takes place through the reception of the Holy Eucharist. The visible Church is the way to the kingdom of God and is its symbol. The perfection of the experience, which is the kingdom of God, is a reality to come. Through the Church, we go forward to the kingdom of God. Hence, there is the experience of the kingdom of God in the Church. The Holy Church is the realization on earth of the kingdom of God, which Jesus preached. Hence, the Church and the kingdom of God are intrinsically related. The Church is obliged to proclaim to humankind the message of the kingdom of God.

The Church, a Mystery

Even though the Church, like other communities, has the structural nature and its specialties, it has also a mysterious nature. The Second Vatican Council stresses this aspect when it deals with the nature of the Church (Lumen Gentium 10). We see chiefly the mystery of the Church in the presence of the Holy Spirit, who incessantly operates in the Church. Behind the visible framework of the Church, there is the invisible work of God's hand. God leads the Church through his loving care. We reach God through the Church. God works among his people. This work is beyond human comprehension. This is the central point of the mystery of the Church.

From the Greek word “*Mysterion*”, the word ‘mystery’ is derived in English, which means ‘secret’. In the Syriac language, the word “*Rozo*” is used to signify this. Here, ‘secret’ signifies a thing having a holy nature. A divine plan, beyond the understanding of the human intellect is what is meant by ‘secret’. To be precise, this secret is Christ himself. Since the salutary mission of Christ is continued through the Church, the Church too is called mystery. Jesus told the apostles: “To you has been given to know the secret of the kingdom of God” (Mark 4: 11). On account of this reason, the Church is considered to be a mystery.

The Church, the Fundamental Sacrament

Sacrament is the visible sign that signifies and produces invisible grace. We have already seen that there are seven sacraments in the Church. In the same meaning, the whole Church could be called sacrament, because the Church is the visible sign, which imparts to us the invisible divine life of salvation. Just as individuals get divine graces through the sacraments, through the Church, the sacrament, divine gifts profusely flow to the whole humankind. Hence, the Church is the fundamental sacrament or the principal sacrament. Since the Church is fundamentally a sacrament, different sacraments are conducted in the Church.

The Church, the Sacrament of Christ

The contemporaries of Jesus could see, hear and feel him and could directly participate in the salvation Jesus gives. In order to see, hear and feel Jesus after his death and resurrection and to participate in the salvation he gives, he instituted the Church as a sign and sacrament. It is through the Church that Jesus today talks to us, associates with us and sanctifies us. Thus, the Church is the visible sign, which makes visible the risen Jesus in the world and imparts to us the invisible divine grace. Hence, the Church is called the sacrament of Christ.

We understand that Jesus is the sign and sacrament, who makes visible the invisible Father. Thus, in Christ himself, we can see the fundamental nature of sacrament. Hence, Jesus Christ is the greatest sacrament. He himself is the sign and symbol of the Father. Just as Jesus is the sacrament of the Father, so also the Church is the sacrament of Jesus.

Worship

The Church remembers on the Sundays of “*Qoodos Eetho*” and “*Hoodos Eetho*” that Moses established the holy place and that it was the pre-figuration of the Church, which Jesus established:

(Lok Moriyo..)

"When Moses established temporary sheds
Within which all people had offered their own
gifts:

The rich used to put in their gold and silver
And the rest put cotton cloth and widow, her
coin;

They were the shadow of the Church
Both on earth and in heaven above
Glory to the Lord, who has founded
the holy Church".

(Order of the Holy Qurbono)

Life Witness

We are called to sanctify through the Church. Let us try to become the children of the kingdom of God through lives based on the word of God and through the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Memorise

“I am the vine, you are the branches.
Those who abide in me and
I in them bear much fruit, because
apart from me you can do nothing”
(John 15: 5).

Questions

1. How are the Church and the kingdom of God related?
2. The Church is considered a mystery. What is the reason?
3. The Church is called the sacrament of Christ. Why?
4. Find out the meaning of the words given below:
a) *Ecclesia* b) *Mysterion* c) *Rozo*

Lesson 4

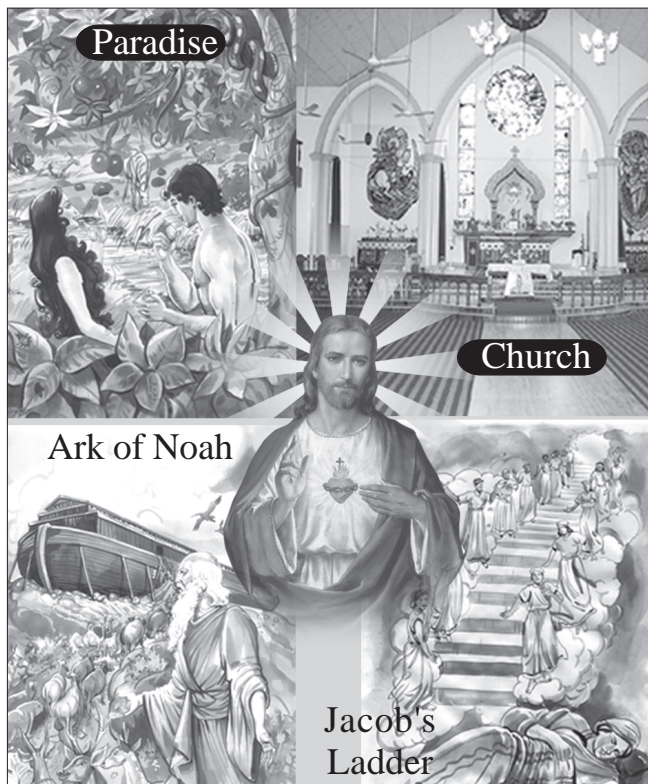
THE SYMBOLS OF THE CHURCH

The risen Jesus continues his mission through the Church. We have studied the internal structure of the Church and its divine nature in the previous lesson. We describe in this lesson certain symbols and examples, which help us to understand more the relationship between The Church and Jesus.

The Church, the Body of Christ

The Church is the continuation of Christ. A lively symbol which St. Paul chose to introduce this idea is: “Church, the Body of Christ”. St. Paul says, ‘Church, which is Christ’s body, the fullness of him who fills all in all’ (Ephesians 1: 23); “He is the head of the body, the Church” (Colossians 1: 18). Paul was called Saul, when he persecuted the Church of Christ. The Lord said to him in an apparition, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts of the Apostles 9: 5). Saul had the conviction that when the Church is persecuted, it is Christ, who is persecuted. Thus the Church and Christ are inseparably related. Similarly, those who receive the body and blood of Christ, become the members of the body of Christ. “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10: 17).

When we say that Christ is the head and the Church his body, it is evident that Christ and the Church have inseparable relationship. Christ has no



Paradise

Church

Ark of Noah

Jacob's
Ladder

physical body after his resurrection; but only the glorified body. Since the Church is Christ's body, it is through the Church, his body, that he speaks and works. As members of the body of Christ, each member of the Church is related to all others. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body Jews or Greeks, slaves or free and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12: 12-13). We are all united with Christ through baptism. Since all members of the Church are the organs of the body of Jesus, all are obliged to live united to each other. Just as when one organ suffers the whole body suffers, the suffering of one of the members of the Church, becomes the suffering of all the members of the Church. This symbol signifies that the members of the Church among themselves and between the Church and Jesus are related.

Church, the Temple

We understand the Church as the temple and house of God. It is because of the special presence of God we respect the temple of God. The Jews considered that there is the special presence of God in the Temple of Jerusalem. Once Jesus said: "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2: 19). The Jews misunderstood that what Jesus said was about the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. But what Jesus meant was that if his body, the temple, was destroyed, he would resurrect on the third day. What Jesus said was that the Church, the new temple, would take form after his resurrection. The cornerstone of this new temple is Christ. It is built on the foundation, the apostles. The faithful are the valuable stones with which the temple is to be built. The Church where the apostles and Jesus gather together is compared to a temple (Ephesians 2: 20-22; 1 Peter 2: 4-5). St. Paul teaches that each believer is the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6: 16, 19). This signifies that since the temple of God is holy, each Christian should live in holiness.

The Church, the Bride of Christ

The most loved symbol of the Malankara Church to connote the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church is "Church, the Bride of Christ". The prophets compared the relationship between Yahweh and Israel

in the Old Testament to the relationship of the bridegroom and bride or between husband and wife (Hosea 2: 19-21; Isaiah 54: 5; Jeremiah 31:32).

Basing on this thought, St. Paul introduces Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as his bride. It is to the ardent love of the husband and wife that St. Paul compares the love relationship of Christ with the Church (Ephesians 5: 23-27).

We can see throughout the Malankara liturgy that the Church is presented as the bride of Christ:

“Bliss to you O Church, bride of Jesus

For your bridegroom will see no end O Jesus,

Have mercy on us” (Sunday, Morning Prayer, Season of the Cross).

Almost all the prayers and hymns of the service of matrimony introduce Christ as bridegroom and Church as bride. Jesus held betrothal with the Church, the bride in river Jordan and on the cross on Calvary; he gave her his body and blood as nuptial ring. In order to marry the Church, Jesus gave his body and blood as dowry and prepared the marriage banquet with his body and blood. In this manner, Jesus bought the Church with his body and blood. We can see in these prayers the thought of St. Paul, that is, “You are bought as ransom”. The thought that Jesus the bridegroom loved the Church, the bride, offering up his life and making her, his own, is evident in our prayers.

When we say that the Church is the bride, each member of the Church becomes the bride of Jesus. An individual becomes the bride of Jesus through his personal love relationship with Jesus. It is through baptism that we become the bride of Jesus and enter into the love relationship of the bridegroom. The foundation of the dedication and fidelity of the Church is to receive Jesus as bridegroom and to worship him alone as God.

Church, the Paradise

(M’siha tan manavatty...)

“O! You most holy Church

Who is the bride of Christ

You are like paradise,

Which is full of blessings.

Within you, there are those
Baptism and thronos
As well as martyrs' bones
And there are presbyters,
Am Halle-eluihah o Halle-eluihah
Who carry life-giving drug
And supply to needy ones" (Sunday Night, First Vigil).

'Paradise' is another symbol that the Malankara Liturgy uses to introduce the Church. In the beginning God created Adam (mankind) and placed him in Eden garden (Paradise) in the eastern side. Paradise was the place of all bliss. The presence of God in the paradise is also in the Church. From the hymn given above, it is clear that there is in the Church the experience of the presence of God of paradise, through baptism, the bones of martyrs, the *thronos*, the life-giving drug (Holy Eucharist) and priests, who distribute it.

The Church, Mother and Heavenly Jerusalem

The Church is presented as mother and heavenly Jerusalem. As mother, the Church gives birth to children through the baptismal font, brings them up, giving them spiritual food and discipline. Since the Church accomplishes the obligations of a mother, the Church is called Mother.

St. Paul describes the heavenly Jerusalem as mother (Galatians 4: 26-28). It was in Jerusalem that the completion of the salutary works of Jesus and the establishment of the Church took place. The Church is honoured as Jerusalem, the holy city of God. On account of this reason, the Church is called the heavenly Jerusalem.

Old Testament Symbols

The ark of Noah is depicted as a symbol of the Church since many people were saved through it. The altar, which Abraham prepared in order to sacrifice Isaac, is considered as another symbol of the Church. The stone that Jacob anointed when he had the vision at Bethel indicates the Church. The tent of Moses, wherein Manna and the tablets of Commandments were placed, is described as a symbol of the Church.

Our prayers are replete with symbols of the Church. King David called the Church, the city of God and prophet Zachariah called it, the altar of holiness. Prophet Ezekiel saw the Church in the crystal throne. Mount Sinai, the chosen mountain of God, signifies the Church.

New Testament Symbols

There are various symbols which explain the Church and the relationship between Jesus and the Church. Mustard seed, yeast and arable land are symbols related to the Church. Besides, Shepherd and sheep (John 10: 1-21), Vine and branches (John 15: 1-10), The cornerstone and other stones of the house (Ephesians 2: 20-22), The Chief priest and the group of priests (Hebrews 5: 10), The head and the members of the body (1 Corinthians 12: 1-31), The second Adam and the new creation (1 Corinthians 15: 22-45), The bridegroom and bride (Ephesians 5: 22-33) are various symbols in the New Testament, through which we see the Church.

Through the different symbols regarding the Church, we will be able to understand more the diverse nature and mission of the Church and to love the Church more. Through respecting, honouring and loving the Church, it is Jesus whom we love and respect. In short, to love the Church and to love Jesus are identical.

Worship

One of the important symbols of the Church is that of the bride. The Church commemorates in the sacrament of matrimony that the holy Church is the bride of Jesus Christ and the Church is blessed because she got Jesus as her bridegroom and hence the Church honours Jesus Christ:

“Church O! Holy Church I am
The blessed spouse of the Most High One;
Holy Church is saying thus:
“Who is my spouse? I am blessed;
He has come and married me,
Behold! I do worship him”
(Order of the Sacraments).

Life Witness

The Church is the body of Jesus. Each one of us is a member of the Church, his body. So let us try to live in unity and love and bear witness to Jesus.

Memorise

“Church, which is his body, the
fullness of him who fills all in all”
(Ephesians 1: 23).

Questions

1. Why is it said that the Church is the body of Christ?
2. Describe the introduction of the Church as the bride of Christ in the background of the Malankara Liturgy.
3. ‘The Church is the temple of God’. Substantiate.
4. Which are the Old and New Testament symbols used to indicate the Church?

Lesson 5

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH



Christ and the twelve Apostles

We recite in the Creed of Nicea: “I believe in the Catholic, Apostolic, One and Holy Church”. The Church recognized these four characteristics of the Church in the early period itself and made it clear in the Council held at Nicea in 325 A.D. The creed was formulated in the Council and the Church included it as part of its prayers.

The Catholic Church

The Church of Christ is known from the early age, Catholic Church. The disciples of Christ were called Christians in Antioch (Acts of the Apostles 11: 26). It was St. Ignatius (+ 110 A.D.), who called the Church of Christ, Catholic Church for the first time. The Christian Church all over the world was known as Catholic Church until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. Those who left the Catholic Church in 451 A.D. were known as Jacobites. The Eastern Greek Churches, which cut away relationship from the Catholic Church in 1054 A.D., were known as the Orthodox and those who separated themselves from the Catholic Church in the 16th century were known as the Protestants or Reformers. Thus, those who separated relationship from the Catholic Church accepted new names.

The Church is Catholic

One of the four characteristics of the Church is Catholic. The meaning of the word Catholic is perfect, complete or universal. We use the word Catholic to mean universal.

St. Ignatius of Antioch taught: ‘where there is bishop, there is Church and the regional Church community, which offers Holy Qurbono presided over by the bishop is the Catholic Church’. A regional worshipping community under a bishop is complete in itself or catholic. The catholicity of the Church is perfect when the regional Church, having catholicity, has communion with the other regional Churches in the celebration of the Holy Qurbono. Thus, when the regional Churches, having catholicity and diversity perpetuate unity and communion, the Church is said to be Catholic in the full sense. Hence, the regional Churches, which stand separately without perpetuating unity and communion, are not Catholic in the true sense. Thus, the Church is Catholic since she safeguards unity and communion.

“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16: 15). On the basis of this admonition of Jesus, it is understood that the Church is spread all over the world. The Church that is spread all over the world is called Catholic Church. Hence, the Catholic Church can be understood as the Universal Church.

The Church is called to embrace everyone and to enter into every culture. It is for the humankind the Church is established. The Church invites all people to salvation. Thus the Church of Christ is able to include all peoples, cultures, and classes together with their variations. Hence, the Church is understood to be Catholic (Colossians 1: 18-20; Matthew 28: 16-20).

In the early Church, the word Catholic began to be used to distinguish the Church, which teaches the true faith from these who teach false doctrines. Thus the Fathers taught that the Church, which teaches the true faith, is the Catholic Church. In course of time, the Catholic Church began to be known as the true Church. Today the Churches, which have canonical relationship with the Pope, are known as the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council teaches: “The Church of Christ exists in the Catholic Church”. The

Pope, the successor of Peter together with the bishops, who have communion with him, rules this Church (Lumen Gentium 8). Today, there are different Churches in the world. But the universal communion, which Christ desired is more clearly seen in the Catholic Church. “Catholic” is a qualification of the Church. The Church that fully has the nature of catholicity is called the Catholic Church. We see the fullness of catholicity in the Catholic Church.

In short, we mean by the term “Catholic”, the Church that safeguards communion and unity, that is spread all over, that embraces all cultures and individuals and that owns the fullness of true faith.

The Church is Apostolic (*Slaihikam*)

The qualifying word ‘*slaihikam*’ is derived from the Syriac word ‘*sleeha*’. The word ‘apostle’ is derived from the Greek word ‘*apostolos*’. The literal meaning of the word *sleeha* or apostle is “One who is officially sent”. Hence ‘apostolic’ is the adjectival form of the noun ‘apostle’.

Jesus chose twelve apostles or ‘*sleehae*’ in order to be with him and to continue the works of salvation. They are the witnesses of all the works of Jesus. The foundation of their Christ experience is what they directly saw, heard and knew through experience. “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16: 15). The apostles received this command of the risen Jesus and went to the different parts of the world and preached the Gospel, which is Christ. Thus the Church was established in different places. The Church that took form related to any apostle and received faith, is an apostolic Church. For, the Church is built on the apostles as its foundation. St. Paul says: “you are... built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone” (Ephesians 2: 20). It is the fundamental faith of the Church that the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles. The Church continues even today the teachings of the apostles and the mission, Christ had entrusted to the apostles. In short, what we understand by apostolicity is the authority of the apostles’ Christ experience and their teaching. The bishops, the successors of the apostles, are the continuation of the apostolicity and its symbol.

Peter the head of the apostles and the other apostles, remaining one in Jesus, made clear the perfection of apostolicity and its fullness. The apostolicity becomes perfect, when the bishops, the successors of the

apostles are in communion with the Pope, the successor of Peter who is the head of the apostles. Since the apostolic communion and unity remain only in the Catholic Church, the perfection of apostolicity is only in the Catholic Church.

The Church is One

It is Jesus Christ, the one person, who is the founder and head of the Church. The Church is the body and continuation of Jesus Christ. Hence, the Church is fundamentally one. St. Paul the apostle says: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12: 27). In fact, it is the unifying Holy Spirit, who through baptism makes each individual a member of the body of the Church. St. Paul the apostle teaches: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12: 13) and “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith and one baptism” (Ephesians 4: 4-5).

St. Paul the apostle says that all are one in Christ. “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3: 28). We see in the prayer of Christ for unity: “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17: 21). Jesus made it clear, during his public life that the characteristic feature of his followers is this unity.

When we say that the Church is one, we do not forget the individuals and the variety of the individual Churches therein. The unity in variety is meant when it is said that the Church is one. The fact that different individuals live in the same faith and sacraments, partake of the same bread and grow under the apostolic leadership of the same bishop, is the visible sign that the Church is one. The bishops of the universal Church, being in communion with the Pope, the successor of Peter, signifies that the Church is one. Hence, the Pope, the successor of Peter, is the visible sign of the centre of unity and its protector, that ‘the entire Church is one’. The 22 ‘Individual Churches’ form but one Church united under the successor of Peter. That

is the Catholic Church. Hence, the qualification, that the Church is one, is more visible in the Catholic Church than in other Churches.

But there existed as a reality divisions and sectarianism throughout in the history of the Church. Under this circumstance, the prayer of Jesus for unity has great significance. Each division of the Church increases the number and depth of the wounds of the holy body of the Lord. It is inevitable that the Church should regain its unity understanding that the origin and example of the Church is the Triune God and the founder, head and soul of the Church, is one.

The Church is Holy

The foundation of the holiness of the Church is its relationship with Jesus Christ. The Church, which is the continuation of Jesus Christ as his body, is holy. Even though the members of the Church are sinners, the Church is holy through the body and blood of Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. It is because of that St. Peter qualifies the Church as “Holy people” (1 Peter 2: 9). Since we partake in the rank of the bride of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5: 26-27) and holy temples of God (1 Corinthians 3: 16), St. Paul calls the members of the Church “Saints” (Romans 12: 13). Each Christian shares in the holiness of Christ through baptism, confirmation and Holy Eucharist.

The Second Vatican Council says: ‘Christ the Son of God, whom we esteem as the only holy, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit loved his bride, the Church. He offered himself up in order to sanctify her. He made her his own body’ (Lumen Gentium 39). It is for each member of the Church that Jesus offered himself. Through this he led them towards holiness.

When we say that the Church is holy, we should not forget that the Church is the community of sinners. The divine side of the Church is always holy. But the human side of the Church is always weak. Since there is the conviction about the sinfulness of the members of the Church, the Church has the sense that she is to be ever sanctified. This process of sanctification is continued in the Church through the sacraments, fast, abstinence, prayers, etc. This sanctification is carried on in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

We have around us different Christian communities. The four characteristics of the Church in their fullness are seen in the Catholic Church more than in all other Churches. This is what differentiates the Catholic Church from the other Churches. That is why we say that the real Church of Christ is the Catholic Church.

Worship

It is one of the four characteristics of the Church that it is apostolic. The faithful recall to mind the apostolic foundation of the Church through the hymn sung when the faithful kiss the hand cross of the Bishop:

(Al Semaon Keepo..)

“The holy church has told
To those who argue thus:
Behold! My structure
Is on Simon, the rock.

Come and see! I have
Twelve pillars in me;
And the Saints, who are,
Beams supporting the rafters.

Prophets have built me
Apostles made firm;
Martyrs are for me
Strong fortresses around me.

Behold! Like a bride,
Who is well adorned
My beam is well set
By Jesus, the Messiah”.
(Order of the Holy Qurbono)

Life Witness

The holiness of the Church is the holiness of the children of the Church. Let us live with the conviction that we are called to live along with the Church a holy life.

Memorise

“You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone”
(Ephesians 2: 20).

Questions

1. Describe the various phases of the saying that 'the Church is Catholic'.
2. Describe the apostolic foundation of the Church.
3. Describe how the Church is one.
4. How is it to be understood when we say that the Church is holy?

THE CHURCH, THE PEOPLE OF GOD



It is the fundamental awareness of the Church that the Church is the people of God. When the Second Vatican Council teaches about the holy Church, it puts special stress on the idea of the people of God. The concept of the Church, the people of God, is being treated in this lesson.

The People of God

In the Old Testament, the community of Israel, whom God established through Abraham, was called the “Peopel of God”. It is through the covenant, which God made with Israel that the people of God took shape: “You will be my people and I, your God”. The people of Israel used to renew this covenant every year through the observation of the Commandments, through offering sacrifices and celebrating the feasts. They had the conviction that they were Yahweh’s own chosen people. Thus the people of Israel were known as the people of God in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, the community, which God has called and separated is “the People of God”. That is, the Israel of the New Testament is the holy

Church. That is the gathering of the elect. Israel, the people of God of the Old Testament is the beginning and symbol of the Church, the people of God of the New Testament.

Jesus made a covenant with the people of God in the New Testament at the time of the Last Supper and through the death on the cross on Calvary. Jesus said to the disciples at the Last Supper: “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22: 20). He completed this covenant on Calvary. In the Old Testament the covenant was sealed with the blood of the sacrificial animal. But in the New Testament, Jesus seals the perfect covenant daily with his own blood. The new covenant, which Jesus made, is the completion of the old covenant. The ‘new people of God’ is the after effect of the shedding of the blood of Jesus. The Church is the new people of God united in Christ through the new covenant. The foundation of the people of God of the Old Testament was the Law of Moses. But the law of the new people of God, which is formed by the Holy Spirit, is the Law of the Holy Spirit. That is the Law of the love of God. In the Old Testament, the descendants of Abraham only were the people of God. But in the New Testament, being united through baptism anybody can join the people of God. The new people of God are called ‘the Church’.

There was a strong awareness among the early Christians that they were the people of God. St. Paul calls the Church: “The community of those who are called”. St. Peter says about the Church thus: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people” (1 Peter 2: 9-10).

We pray in the ‘Sedro’ of the Holy Qurbono: “Lord, do not withhold your mercy from your parish (Church), which you have bought with your blood”. From this emotional petition, namely, that the Church is ransomed with his blood, the spiritual knowledge of the Church is made manifest (Acts of the Apostles 20: 28). The usage “The Church, which the Lord acquired with his own blood” means the public life of the Lord and his sacrifice on the cross. The new ‘people of God’, the Church, renews this

new covenant through the Holy Qurbano and grows as the new people in Christ. The Church daily remembers that through the celebration of the Holy Qurbano, she is bought with the blood of Christ.

The People of God, a Pilgrim Community

Since the people of the Old Testament made the pilgrimage from the slavery of Egypt to the Promised Land, they are known as a pilgrim community. Just as the people of Israel passed through the sufferings of the wilderness, the new Israel too, has to pass through the strains and sufferings of this world. The duration until the second coming of the Lord is the pilgrimage of the Church. This pilgrimage of the Church will reach its destination only with the second coming of the Lord. This New Testament pilgrim community, which is formed by the Holy Spirit, being daily renewed by the Holy Spirit, has to continue its journey through the path of the cross, aiming on heaven, till the consummation of the world.

The Church, the People of God with the Apostolic Leadership

When the Church is said to be the people of God, it is not a group of separated individuals without mutual relationship. But the Church is an association of those who are united in the Holy Spirit in faith, sacraments and leadership. The name, 'people of God' is not given to a special group. The 'people of God' includes all those who received baptism. It is the bishops, the successors of the apostles, who lead the community of faithful, who are the people of God through baptism. When the people of God accept the service of the bishop, who has the apostolic authority and lovingly obey the apostolic leadership, the reality of the Church becomes manifest. Hence, without the bishop, who has the apostolic authority or defying the authority of the bishop, the people of God alone cannot remain as Church. Hence the people of God, really enters into the experience of the Church through association with the bishop.

Just as Peter is the head of the apostolic council, the head of the assembly of the bishops, is the Pope of Rome, the successor of Peter. When all the bishops and the people of God, whom they serve, are in association with the Pope, the reality of the Church becomes more manifest.

The Church, the Worshipping People of God

Worship is the fundamental nature of the Church. The people of God reveal themselves as Church through worship. The early Christian community gathered together under the leadership of the apostles and enthusiastically participated in the service of the breaking of the bread through worship. It is through the worship of the breaking of the bread that the early Christian Church experienced the presence of the risen Jesus. When they gathered together for worship and took part in the breaking of the bread, the awareness of the presence of the risen Jesus with them, became strong. Hence the Church believes that the salutary presence of Jesus Christ is officially present with the Church during the time of worship, especially in the service of the celebration of the Holy Qurbono, which is the breaking of the bread.

We can see the Church in fullness when we offer the Holy Qurbono, because the people of God, the bishop having Apostolic authority or his delegate the priest and the salutary presence of Jesus are there. The three things, namely, the people of God, the apostolic authority and the salutary presence of Jesus, make the Church perfect. It is under this circumstance, it is stated that the real form of the Church is present where we celebrate the Holy Qurbono. That is why it is said that worship creates the Church, enlightens the Church and continuously reveals the Church. Worship is the breath, heartbeat and life of the Church. The Church reveals herself through worship. It could be said that if there is no worship, there is no Church. It is the salutary presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist that brings the people of God to the real perfection of the Church.

The Missions of the People of God

In the Old Testament, the priests, prophets and kings were anointed. The Jews believed that the expected Saviour would be priest, prophet and king as the Messiah or the anointed one. The people considered Jesus as the Messiah. As Messiah, Jesus has the missions of the priest, prophet and king. Through baptism, confirmation and Holy Eucharist, the sacraments of initiation, the people of God, who are in association with Jesus, also have to fulfil these three missions. Like Jesus, each Christian is appointed to offer

himself as acceptable sacrifice to God, to preach his word and to render service to the world.

The Priestly People

The entire people of God share in the priesthood of Christ. That is, they are called to continue the life of sacrifice. When the people of God accept the difficulties and crosses of life and offer them to the Father through Christ, it becomes a sacrifice. When we, who are the sharers in the priesthood of Christ, participate in the Holy Qurbano, we are co-celebrants with the priest. The people of God exercise their priesthood when they offer their sacrificial daily life together with the priest. The people of God are called to fulfil their duty of sanctification by sanctifying themselves.

The Prophetic People

The people of God share in the duty of the prophet just as they share in the mission of Jesus' priesthood. They are obliged to preach the Gospel of Jesus to the whole world as prophets. Each one is obliged to teach the Gospel of Jesus with his witness of life and word. The people of God should be able to fight against the powers of evil and to raise their voice against injustice, inequality and immorality of the society. The voice of the people of God should rise for the deliverance of all the poor, the oppressed and the derelict. We are obliged even to sacrifice our lives in this service for justice (Ephesians 6: 10-17).

The Royal People

Jesus Christ is the eternal king. The royalty of Jesus is not that of the earthly power or authority or dominion, but it is the royalty of love and service. During his public life, Jesus called to him the broken hearted, the derelict and the sick. Jesus dealt as a good shepherd and rendered the service of love to all. Thus Jesus taught that his royalty was not to be served, but to serve others and to offer his life as sacrifice for others. Hence, the people of God are obliged to serve those who suffer in the society, the poor and the derelict and forgetting themselves even to offer their own life to all. Thus, when we serve the society, we will be the real royal people.

Worship

The Church remembers in the Night Prayer of Sunday of the Season of Qyomto (Resurrection) that the presence of Jesus Christ is full in the Church, that he speaks to the people of God through the Church and hence, in order to listen to the Messiah, one should enter the Church:

(M'seeha tan Manavatty)

"The king of heaven and of earth
Has established his Church;
Having entered in it,
He made it his own throne.

Those of you, who desire

To converse to the Lord

Let them enter the Church.

For, he swells within it.

Am Halle-eluiiah, o Halle-eluiiah

Lord, who sustains the Church!

Have pity upon us".

Life Witness

The children, the people of God are those, whom God has specially called and set apart. As the people of God, let us try to live up to the call of God.

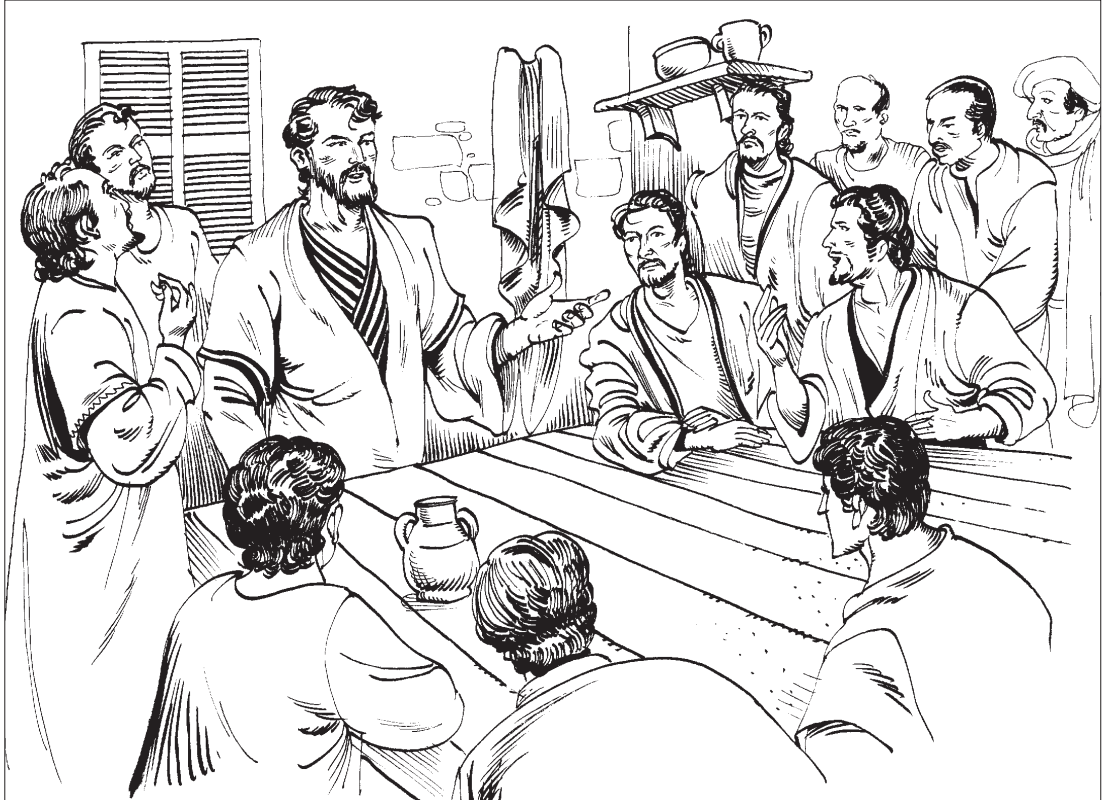
Memorise

"But you are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
God's own people"
(1 Peter 2: 9).

Questions

1. How did the people of God take shape in the Old Testament?
2. The Church is the people of God of the New Testament. Describe.
3. 'The Church, bought by the blood of the Lord'. What does this mean?
4. Describe that the people of God come to the experience of the Church through association with the bishop.
5. 'Worship is the foundation of the Church'. Describe.
6. What is the threefold mission of the kingdom of God? Explain.

THE PRIMACY OF PETER IN THE CHURCH



Jesus Christ specially chose twelve people and trained them in order to continue his mission. They are called the twelve apostles. Among the apostles, Peter has the first place in the Holy Scripture, in the history of the early Church and in the prayers of the Church. This primacy of Peter is being continued today in the Church through the Pope of Rome. The primacy of Peter among the apostles, its witness in the Church, and how this ministry is being carried out in the Church today are the topics of this lesson.

Peter, the Head of the Apostles

Within the assembly of the apostles, Jesus had given Peter a special rank and the first place. Peter was the one, who directly received the authority

from Jesus. “First Simon, also known as Peter” (Matthew 10: 2). Peter is introduced thus in the Gospels (Mark 3: 16; Luke 6: 14). Often it is Peter who appears and speaks on behalf of the apostles. That among the twelve apostles, Peter always stands first is noteworthy in the Gospels (Mark 8:29; 9:5; Matthew 18: 21; John 21: 15-19). Jesus invites Peter to all the important events of his public life. We can see this in the transfiguration on Mount Tabor (Luke 9: 28-36) and in the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26: 36-46). In the Gospel according to St. Matthew, it is described that Jesus gave the primacy to Peter in the Church. Jesus said to Peter: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16: 18-19).

Christ appointed and placed Peter in order to lead the college of apostles, lest after his death on the cross there should be divisions and in order to confirm the other apostles in faith. Jesus said: “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers”(Luke 22:31-32).

After the resurrection, appearing to the apostles, Jesus gave Peter the special authority to guide the Church: “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep”, so saying Jesus raised Peter as the shepherd and leader of the Church (John 21: 15-19).

In the Early Church

After the resurrection of Jesus, this leadership was manifested in the works of Peter. It was Peter, who addressed the people first, on behalf of the apostles, on the feast of Pentecost. Peter gave the leadership to choose Mathias to the college of apostles in the place of Judas. Peter was the spokesman of the apostles before the Jewish leaders (Acts of the Apostles 4: 5-12). It was again Peter, who worked a miracle for the first time in the name of Jesus, who argued for the apostles, who were imprisoned and who

received Cornelius, the gentile, into the Church. It was Peter, who, as representative of the apostles, intervened in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. He gave leadership to the Council of Jerusalem and gave the message. St. Paul visited Peter, stayed with him and acknowledged the primacy of Peter.

Throughout the New Testament it is clear that Peter had the first place among the apostles. Peter exercised this post with co-responsibility and love.

The Primacy of Peter in Tradition

‘Peter, the first of the apostles’, ‘Peter and the other eleven’ (1 Corinthians 15: 5; Acts of the Apostles 2: 14-37; 5: 29); these idioms are clear proofs that the early Church understood the primacy of Peter. The Fathers of both the Eastern and Western Churches have borne witness to the primacy of Peter. St. Chrysostom says: “St. Peter is the head of the group, tongue of the apostles, head of the family of the Church, the cornerstone of the Church and the ruler of the whole world”. Cyril of Jerusalem says: “Peter, the chief of the apostles”. St. Ephrem, St. Augustine, Cyprian, Tertullian and Origen and the other Fathers speak specially about the primacy of Peter.

The tradition of the Greek Orthodox Churches extols Peter in the first place through sayings such as: “The foundation of the Church”, “The instructor of the universe”, and “The president of the sheepfold”. In the tradition of the early Church, it is clear that all Churches had generally accepted the primacy of Peter. The Fathers of the Church and traditions of the Church testify to the fact.

Primacy of Peter in the Malankara Liturgy

The primacy of Peter is described in the entire Malankara liturgy through the following usages: ‘Chief of the apostles’, ‘head’, ‘foundation stone’ and ‘ruler of the house’. The Church commemorates in the Morning Prayer of Sunday during the Season of the Cross that the keys of the Church are entrusted in the hands of Peter:

(Bhagyam te M’seeha tan manavatty)

"In the hands of Simon, cornerstone, your keys are laid,
Bliss! to you Church; O Jesus, have mercy on us".

The Church commemorates in the service of the sacrament of matrimony that Simon is appointed as 'the ruler of the house' in the hymn: (*Pathivrathayam paripavana sabhaye*) "Most chaste spouse, O Holy Church".

The Church commemorates in 'the prayer of incense of the deceased clerics' that Simon is 'the head of the apostles' that he is appointed as 'the steward of the house of God'. That 'Simon is entrusted with the keys of heaven and earth' and that 'Simon is given the power for the absolution of sins'.

(*Ath Moriyo haso lkohanayk.. Sleehanmar Sirasam Semaon...*)

"The Lord said this most pleasing word concerning priesthood
To Simon Peter, who is head of the Apostles,
I appointed you as steward of my house
And I entrusted you the keys of heaven and earth;
If you bind, I shall also bind
If you loose, I shall also loose
If you entreat for sinners, I shall answer you".

There are thus several prayers and hymns in the Malankara liturgy, which portray Peter as the head of the apostles.

The Successor of Peter and the Pope of Rome

St. Peter preached the Gospel in Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Corinth and at the end, in Rome, where he was martyred and buried. Peter became a martyr in Rome when he was bishop of Rome and was the head of the whole Church. Hence, from that time onwards, the bishop of Rome is accepted as the successor of Peter and the supreme head of the whole Church.

The bishop of Rome, the successor of Peter, is known as Pope. The meaning of the word 'Papa' is 'Father'. The Pope has different powers as successor of Peter. Firstly, the Pope is the bishop of Rome. Secondly, he is

the Patriarch of the Roman Church (Latin Church). Thirdly, as successor of Peter, he is the head of the college of bishops, the supreme head of the universal Church and the symbol of the unity of the Church.

We understand that the Pope of Rome is accepted as successor of Peter by the Regional Churches around. The Pope used to intervene in several matters of these regional Churches and rendered necessary help to them. Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria were the first five Church-centres that grew up in the early Church. Tradition bears witness that among the Patriarchs, who ruled over these Churches, the Patriarch of Rome had precedence. In short, the primacy of the bishop of Rome was accepted from the period of the early Church.

Pope and the Assembly of Bishops

The Catholic Church is the communion of 22 Individual Churches having diversity. The bishops of all 22 Churches are the successors of the apostles. The bishop and the Church community in association with the Pope of Rome, is known as the Catholic Church. Thus, the 22 Individual Churches of the world, one in faith, sacraments and in the leadership of the Pope, is the Catholic Church.

It is to the apostolic council under the leadership of Peter, that Christ entrusted to continue his mission. The assembly of the bishops, under the leadership of the Pope, is the continuation of this apostolic council. It is this council of bishops that is the court of the Church. All the powers, which Christ gave to the apostles rest with the council of bishops.

The place, the Pope has in the council of bishops is the same that Peter had in the apostolic council. Just as Peter was the head of the apostolic council, the Pope is the head of the council of bishops and the supreme head of the universal Church. As the leader of the council of bishops, the Pope is infallible when he teaches the Universal Church about matters of faith and morals. That is the teaching of the Catholic Church. He has the special protection of the Holy Spirit in this matter. This special grace of the Pope is known by the name “Infallibility”.

Bishops

It is the bishop who has the full authority to teach, sanctify and to govern the Church of a locality. The Bishop is the symbol of the apostle in a locality. Thus, the Church community of a place entrusted to a bishop is called a ‘diocese’ or an ‘eparchy’.

Each bishop, as shepherd, is obliged to pasture the faithful. Each bishop has not only the responsibility over his diocese, but has the co-responsibility in the growth of the universal Church as member of the council of bishops. The Second Vatican Council calls this co-responsibility of the bishops together as ‘Collegiality of Bishops’.

Priests

The priests are those who help bishops in their service. As representative of the bishop, the priest sanctifies, teaches and guides the parish community. The priest is the shepherd and father of the parish community. The priest, along with the bishop cooperates in the works of the whole diocese.

It is through the Church authorities, constituted of the Pope, bishops and priests that Christ fulfils his shepherd’s duty. The people of God are obliged to accept the authorities of the Church as their spiritual fathers and shepherds.

The Authority to Serve

Authority in the Church is to serve. Jesus said: “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to become first among you must be slave of all. For, the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10: 43-45).

Jesus taught the fundamental lessons of service by washing the feet of the disciples. St. Peter advises the bishops: “Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the over-sight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it – not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5: 2-3).

The primacy of Peter is one of the arrangements of the service, which God has given to the Church. Peter is the visible custodian of the unity and association envisaged by Jesus Christ. The Regional Churches come to the perfect catholicity and apostolicity only when the primacy of Peter is accepted.

Worship

The Church confesses the primacy of St. Peter through the hymn sung at the time of welcoming the Prelates:

(To' baslom..)

“Hearty welcome to you O! Real
Shepherd and the wise leader,
Like Peter, the foundation of Church
And you are like the strong St. Paul;
 Beloved brother of the prophets
 And one of the apostles
 As bright as prophet Elijah
 And as chaste as Holy John;
Lucky is the Church, your spouse”.

Life Witness

The primacy, which Jesus gave to Peter, is being still continued through the Popes. So let us try to live obeying the Pope and the bishops, who participate in his authority and the priests.

Memorise

“You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”

(Matthew 16: 18-19).

Questions

1. Jesus had given primacy to Peter in the council of the apostles. Make this clear from the Holy Scripture.
2. Describe the primacy of St. Peter with examples as described in the Malankara liturgy.
3. What are the powers of the Pope of Rome as the successor of St. Peter?
4. What is meant by the primacy of Peter?
5. What does the ‘Collegiality of Bishops’ mean?

Lesson 8

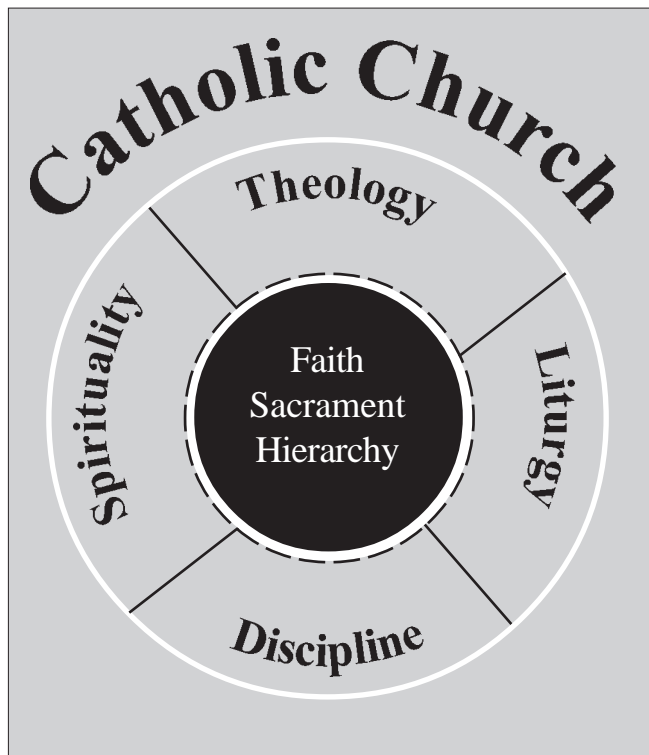
CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF CHURCHES

The Second Vatican Council has clearly stated that the Catholic Church is a communion of Churches. The Individual Churches of every place, without losing their particularity, are in union with the Pope, the successor of Peter. The Catholic Church is the communion of 22 Individual Churches in the unity of faith, sacraments and Church governance. We have three Individual Churches in India itself: the Latin Church, the Syro-Malabar Church and the

Syro-Malankara Church. Being Syrian Churches, the term “Syro” is used. Syro means, that which pertains to Syriac. How the unity and diversity and universality of the Church are realized in the Catholic Church, is described in this lesson.

The Churches take Form

The twelve apostles, the disciples of Jesus, preached the Gospel in different parts of the world. Each apostle preached his Christ experience which he got from what he saw, heard and understood from Jesus. Even though the twelve apostles listened to the same Jesus, the Christ experience of the twelve was diverse. Hence, each apostle preached Jesus as he experienced him.



The culture and language of the place, where the apostles preached, were diverse. Hence, on account of the particularity of the apostle, who preached the Gospel and due to the particularity of the place, where the apostle preached, the Christian community formed in each place had its own peculiarities. Thus in the early Church, various Churches took different forms. Thus various Church communities originated, such as: Church of Jerusalem, Church of Antioch, Church of Alexandria, Church of Rome, Church of Persia, Church of India, etc. Since the culture, language and apostolic tradition of these Churches are different, there arose difference in their mode of worship and rites of sacraments. The Church of each place grew up as a worshipping community in the early Church. As the worshipping communities, the Regional Churches were called “Rites”. This word is derived from the Latin word “*Ritus*”, which signifies the order of offering of sacrifice. Besides, the Churches were known after languages also. On the basis of Syriac, Latin, Greek, the Churches began to be known as Syrian, Latin and Greek Churches.

Each Church took its form with the Christ experience of the apostle and with the specialties of culture of each place. In course of time, through one’s own liturgical rites, through the theological explanations of the Church Fathers, through the spiritual traditions and through the canonical analysis, each Church acquired an individuality of its own. Thus, the Churches having their own liturgy, theological explanations, spiritual tradition and canonical composition are called Individual Churches. These four units differentiate one Church from the other Churches,

The Various Individual Churches of the Catholic Church

At present there are 22 Individual Churches in the Catholic Church. Among them 21 Churches are called Oriental Churches and one is called the Occidental Church. In the fourth century A.D., the Roman Empire was divided into Eastern and Western parts. The Churches that developed in the Western part of the Roman Empire were called the Western Churches and those that developed in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire were called the Eastern Churches. When there are 21 Eastern Churches, there is only one Western Church. Because, the five worshipping communities or

Churches of the Western group gradually have become parts of the Roman Rite. Thus the Western Churches together is known today as the Roman Church or Latin Church. The 22 Churches existing today fundamentally belong to six Liturgical Families. They are Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, Chaldean, Byzantine and Roman.

The Unity and Diversity of the Catholic Church

We have understood that the communion of the 22 Individual Churches is the Catholic Church. The foundation of this unity is the unity of the Triune God. The Church proceeds from the unity of the inter-personal love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Holy Trinity are united into one in love. Jesus had desired that there should be this unity among the people of God and among the Churches. Jesus prayed thus for unity: “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17: 11), “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17: 22). Jesus meant through these prayers, the unity among the apostles and the unity among the Churches, which the apostles were going to establish. St. Paul says: “For just as the body is one and has many members” (1 Corinthians 12: 12). Thus, though the Churches are many, they are united as a body. Paul, the apostle entreats: ‘You are baptized in order that you be united to Christ, that all are one in Jesus Christ and that there should not be any opposition among you’ (Galatians 3: 27-28; Romans 12: 5-8; 1 Corinthians 1: 10).

The 22 Individual Churches of the Catholic Church keep up their particularity and individuality and remain united to each other as one body. This unity of the Church is divine. It is the Holy Spirit, who safeguards this unity amidst difficulties and crises. The Holy Spirit grants unity and love to the Church by shedding into the human hearts the love of God.

The Individual Churches of the Catholic Church are united to each other in three things. (1) Unity in Faith: The faith in Jesus Christ and in the salutary mysteries he revealed is one in all the Churches. (2) Unity in Sacraments: All the Churches believe that there are seven Sacraments and that the Holy

Eucharist is the centre of the life of Sacraments. The faith of all the Churches is one in the fundamental realities of the seven Sacraments. (3) Unity of the Leadership in the Church (Hierarchy): Jesus gave shape in the Church for a definite form of leadership. It is evident in the Holy Scripture that Jesus appoints Peter as head of the Council of the Apostles. The bishops of the various Individual Churches are the successors of the apostles. They are united under the leadership of the Pope, the successor of Peter. The 22 Individual Churches are united in faith, sacrament and in the leadership of the Church. But at the same time, they are different in liturgy, spirituality, theology and in the code of canons. This is the unity and diversity in the Catholic Church.

Malankara Catholic Church, the Symbol of Unity

The Catholic Church exists as symbol of unity in the Universal Church. But we see in the history of the Church that many Regional Churches remain in conflict, without unity. Thus the Church, the body of Christ continues to remain in conflict today. There are many Christian communities in India itself, which remain without any association with the Catholic Church. The Malankara Catholic Church remains as a symbol of unity among these Christian denominations, which are reluctant to come to unity under the pretext of regionalism or on the basis of separation, which happened in the history of the Church.

The Malankara Church of India

St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Christ, arrived in the Southern part of India and established seven Christian communities or churches here. These Christian communities that grew up here, had association and unity with the Persian Church and through her to the Pope of Rome. In the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese missionaries came to Kerala, they compelled the Church here, to accept the Western customs, which created uneasiness in the Church. The Church here decided to break relationship with the foreign missionaries with the '*Koonan Cross Oath*' in 1653 A.D. After the reign of the Portuguese bishop, since the Pope appointed a native bishop, Parambil Chandy, many faithful accepted him. But the community of faithful, which

did not accept bishop Chandy, remained firm under the leadership of Mar Thoma I. They entered into communion with the Jacobite bishop, who came from Antioch in 1665. These people came to be known as Jacobites or *Puthen Koottukar*. Since they accepted the Jacobite bishop, these people lost their unity and communion with the Pope and the Catholic Church. Those who accepted Bishop Parambil Chandy were known as *Pazhaya Koottukar* and preserved unity with the Pope of Rome and the Catholic Church. They were known as Syrian Catholics.

Reunion and the Malankara Catholic Church (Syro-Malankara)

The *Puthen Koottukar* or Jacobites made many attempts to be reunited with the Mother Church. Due to several reasons, they were not successful. Mar Ivanios, Metropolitan Archbishop understood that only by uniting with the Catholic Mother Church and with the Pope of Rome, the Church over here will obtain the perfection of unity envisaged by Jesus and permanent solution for the problems of the native Church would ensue. Thus, Geevarghese Mar Ivanios, Metropolitan is the prophet of unity, who gave leadership to the Reunion Movement. The Metropolitans, Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos and their companions, blowing the trumpet of unity, were reunited to the communion of the Catholic Church on September 20, 1930. Many, who were thirsting for unity, through reunion, returned to the Mother Church. Those who were thus reunited are known as Malankara Catholics.

Those who reunited were able to enter into Catholic communion as an Individual Church, preserving the Antiochean liturgy used by the *Puthen Koottukar*, their spirituality, theology and code of canons. This Reunion Movement could lead over Five Hundred Thousand of faithful to the communion of the Catholic Church during the past 75 years. The Malankara Catholic Church remains in the Universal Church with self-respect as the largest Reunion Movement of the 20th century. Pope John Paul II, of happy memory, has qualified the Malankara Church as 'the fastest growing Church in the Universal Church'. The decree of the Holy Father on February 10, 2005 raising the Malankara Catholic Church as a Major Archiepiscopal Church and its head the Major Archbishop - Catholicos, is a great recognition of the Reunion Movement.

Churches	Daughter Churches	Places
1. Alexandrian	1. Ethiopian	Ethiopia
	2. Coptic	Egypt
2. Antiochean (West Syrian)	3. Syrian	Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Australia, America.
	4. Syro-Malankara	India
	5. Maronite	Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Australia, America.
3. Armenian	6. Armenian	Armenia, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, America.
4. Chaldean (East Syrian)	7. Chaldean	Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon.
	8. Syro-Malabar	India
5. Byzantine (Greek)	9. Albanian	Albania
	10. Belarusian	Ukraine, Belarus.
	11. Bulgarian	Bulgaria
	12. Greek	Greece, Turkey, America.
	13. Greek-Melkite	Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Australia, America.
	14. Hungarian	Hungary, America.
	15. Italo - Albanian	Italy, America.

Churches	Daughter Churches	Places
<p>6. Roman (Latin) (Following rites later on merged with Latin Church) a) Ambrosian b) Gallican c) Irish (Celtic) d) Mosarabic (Visigothic) e) Religious Congregation Rites: Cistercian, Carthusian.</p>	<p>16. Yugoslavian 17. Rumanian 18. Russian 19. Ruthenian 20. Slovak 21. Ukranian 22. Roman</p>	<p>Yugoslavia, America. Rumania, America. Russia, Poland, America. America, Poland, Hungary. Czechoslovakia Ukraine Europe, All over the world.</p>

Worship

The Church commemorates on the feast of the resurrection of Jesus, the happiness and joy of the children of the Holy Church all over the world. When the children of the Church together enjoy, their united enjoyment is the happiness of their true faith and communion. We sing thus on the feast of the resurrection:

(Yajamanan varumannerath..)

“Rise up you O!
Holy Church and you sing glory,
For, the Holy Son and King,
the Messiah has risen;
With joy, he has come to dwell in you
On this thronos, his body and blood
He will give and nourish you with them now
and forever,
O! Holy Church, you enjoy with all your
children; Halleluiah o Halleluiah”.
(Order of the Holy Qurbono)

Life Witness

The unity and love among the Individual Churches of the Catholic Church is an example to us. Let us try to bear witness to unity through living in love and unity.

Memorise

“Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one”
(John 17: 11).

Questions

1. Describe how the different Christian communities took form.
2. What do Eastern and Western Churches mean?
3. Describe the unity and diversity among the Individual Churches of the Catholic Church.
4. Why is it that the Malankara Catholic Church is said to be the symbol of unity?

PART - II



LITURGY

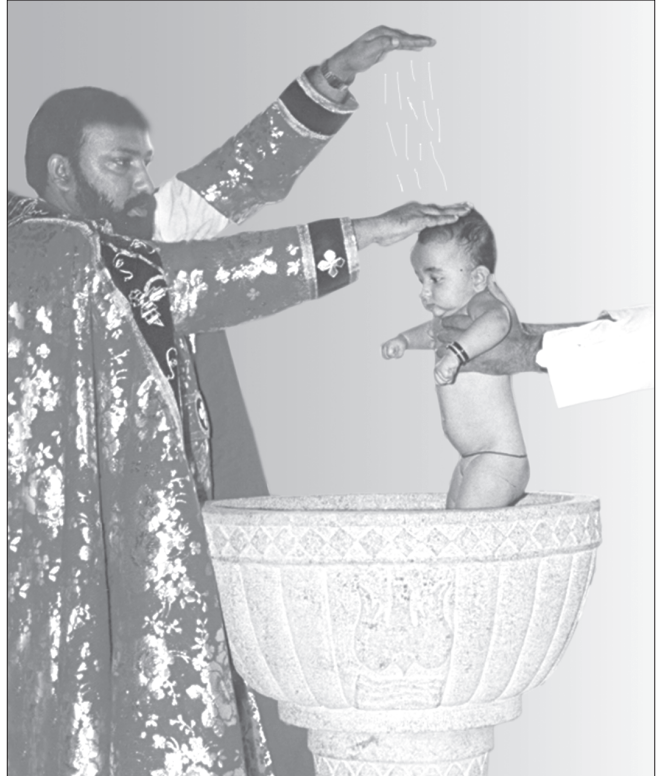
Lesson 9

BAPTISM

The first parents lost divine life by committing sin. Seeing the state of humankind deprived of divine life, God felt pity on human beings. God sent his only begotten Son to the world to save humankind (John 3: 16).

Through the events of the incarnation of the Son of God, public life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, humankind regained the lost divine life. During the lifetime of Jesus, he gave divine life to all those who believed in him. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, he sent the Holy Spirit and established the Church in order to continue to give divine life. The salutary works are continued even today in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

As per command of Christ, divine life or grace is imparted to the Church through the sacraments. The Syriac word “*Qades*” means “to sanctify”. Today we become partakers of the salutary works of Jesus through the sacraments of the Church. Through the sacraments, Jesus relates himself with human life and showers divine life to human beings. Thus, for God to intervene with human beings and having sanctified them, the holy means to impart divine life are the sacraments. There are seven sacraments observed in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Anointing of the sick, Priesthood and Marriage.



Baptism

A Jewish leader, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. Jesus told him: “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit” (John 3: 5-6). Nicodemus did not understand the meaning of the words Jesus spoke. By being born again, what Jesus meant was baptism or the second birth through baptism. Through baptism, we are born again by water and Spirit and being purified from every stain of sin, become sharers in the divine life.

Jesus received baptism from John in the river Jordan before he started his public life. Jesus taught that in order to receive divine life, all should receive baptism. Jesus told the disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28: 19).

According to the command of Jesus, the apostles preached the Gospel and baptized those who believed (Acts of the Apostles 2: 38-41; 8: 12-13). Thus, baptism is a sacrament instituted by Jesus and started in the Church through the apostles. The meaning of the Syriac word “*Maamudiso*” is “washing”. Baptism is the fundamental sacrament of Christian life. The Church understands baptism as the beginning of the life in the Spirit and as the door towards the other sacraments.

Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist are called the sacraments of Christian initiation. We become the children of God, having received the Holy Spirit, through these sacraments. It is because through these sacraments an individual enters into Christian life, becomes a member of the Church and fully shares the salutary mysteries of Jesus, these are called the sacraments of initiation. It is the tradition of the Malankara Catholic Church to administer the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist along with Baptism.

Baptism in the Malankara Order of Liturgy

In the early Church, through the preaching of the apostles many gentiles approached to become members of the Church. They were given preparation for a period of two years. They were known as catechumens, ‘those who

learn faith'. Thus, those who learned faith were administered baptism in the early Church. But there existed the custom in the Church, from the apostolic times, to give baptism to the children of the faithful in their infancy itself. Today it is rare that people belonging to the other religions learn faith and become Christians. The custom of the early Church to give baptism to Christian children in their infancy is continued today in the Church. There are two parts for the service of baptism in the Malankara Church: (1) the preparation for baptism (2) the baptizing.

The Preparation for Baptism

After the preparatory prayer, hymns, *proemion*, *sedro*, *ethro*, and the reading of the Gospel, the celebrant turns towards the candidate and blowing air across the face says: "Lord God, grant to him / her the divine breath, which your only Son breathed on the holy apostles. As you prepare him / her to receive the Holy Spirit remove every remnant of idolatry from him / her".

Baptism is a sacrament by which an individual receives the Holy Spirit. God gave living breath to Adam by breathing into his nostrils (Genesis 2: 7). Thus the first parents had the life of God. But when they sinned they lost divine life or the Holy Spirit. "My Spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh" (Genesis 6: 3). So saying God grieved about man. God, having seen the broken situation of human beings, sent his Son Jesus Christ to the world in order to give back the lost Spirit. Through the works of salvation of Jesus, the Spirit, lost by humankind, was returned to them on Pentecost. God corrected the verdict that 'my Spirit shall not abide in human being hereafter by giving the Spirit on Pentecost' (Third service of Pentecost).

Through the sacrament of baptism, each individual receives the Holy Spirit, whom God promised on Pentecost. Just as God breathed the divine breath into the first human being and as Jesus breathed the divine life on the apostles in the cenacle (John 20: 22-23), the priest, the representative of Jesus, breaths the divine breath upon the candidate at the time of baptism. Through this the child is specially prepared and is enabled for rebirth.

Naming

The priest making the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate without the holy oil, names the candidate in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus the child is set apart for God, being sealed with the sign of the cross in the name of the Trinity.

Renouncing Satan

After the priest has recited the prayer for renouncing Satan, the candidate's face is turned to the western side and the godparent renounces Satan three times. The godparent holds the left hand of the candidate with his / her left hand and repeats the prayer for the candidate. Through the afore-said prayer, the candidate is released from the clutches of Satan and that individual's intellect and mind are sanctified. As a result of which the candidate becomes the temple of God and the worthy abode of the Holy Spirit.

It is symbolic to turn to the Western side and renounce Satan. West is the side of the setting sun. At sunset, darkness pervades. Darkness is considered as the symbol of Satan and his working sphere. That is why the candidate turns to the West and renounces Satan.

All generations of the first parents, who lost the divine life, are born into this world in a state devoid of divine life. The state devoid of divine life is the same as the state without the Holy Spirit. This is what is meant by original sin. If there is no presence of the Holy Spirit, it is mere body. The body without the Spirit is the abode of Satan. That is why Satan is driven out from the child, and the child is prepared to receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: "What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (John 3: 6).

Receives Christ

After renouncing Satan, the candidate is turned facing the East and the godparent confesses faith in Christ three times. The godparent holds the right hand of the candidate with his / her right hand and confesses Christ.

It is meaningful to turn to the Eastern side and confess Christ. East is the side of the rising sun. The rising sun and light are the symbols of Christ.

Besides, it is believed that Paradise is situated in the East and that to the one who turns to the East and confesses Jesus, the door of Paradise is opened. The godparent is obliged to bring up the candidate in faith. Then, the candidate (godparent) makes the profession of faith by reciting the creed together with the faithful.

The Anointing with the Holy Oil

The celebrant seals the sign of the cross with the holy olive oil on the forehead of the candidate. Through this anointing the candidate gets sanctification and rebirth. Through the anointing, the candidate becomes God's son / daughter. The anointing of the candidate could be compared to the anointing of Jesus in Jordan. It is in order to graft one to Jesus, the true olive that one is anointed with olive oil.

Bathing with Water (Baptism)

The celebrant, the candidate and all others go towards the baptismal font. The celebrant holds warm and cold water in his hands crosswise and pours them into the baptismal font. The warm water signifies the flow of the burning divine strength. It is believed that during the time of the baptism of Jesus the water of Jordan became warm through the divine strength. The baptismal font is covered with a veil (*Susopo*) and later on it is raised and fluttered above the baptismal font. Then the Holy Spirit is specially invoked to abide in the water. In order to show the presence of the Holy Spirit, a few drops of holy Myron is poured into the water. In the beginning of creation the Holy Spirit swept over the water. Thus the Church sees the presence of the Holy Spirit in the baptismal water.

The baptismal water is qualified as the spiritual womb and the furnace of in-destruction. Since new life is gained from the baptismal water, it is called the spiritual womb. Just as gold is purified through putting it in the furnace, the candidate is sanctified through the baptismal water. That is why it is called the furnace of indestruction. The candidate puts on indestructible dress or the robe of glory. This robe of glory, which Adam lost in Paradise, is the divine life or the Holy Spirit. The new robe we receive in baptism signifies the divine life.

In the Holy Scripture, water is the sign of death and salvation. At the time of Noah, the evil people perished and Noah was saved through water (Genesis 6: 8). It is through the waters of the Red sea that the destruction of Pharaoh and the saving of Israel took place. Joshua and the Israelites entered into the Promised Land through the waters of Jordan. It was through the baptism of Jesus in Jordan that the new Israel was invited to the kingdom of God. In order that Satan's failure and one's entrance into the kingdom of God take place, one has to pass through the water of baptism.

New Creation in the Spirit

After the blessing of the water the candidate is made to sit in the water with his / her face turned to the East. The celebrant facing the West and placing his right hand on the head of the candidate collects the baptismal water with his left hand and pours on the head of the candidate. While reciting the following formula the celebrant baptizes: "In the hope of life and salvation, in the name of the Father + the Son + and the living Holy Spirit + (name) is baptized for life eternal".

An individual shares in the Paschal mystery of Jesus. St. Paul says that baptism is to die and resurrect with Christ. Since we share in the death and burial of Jesus through baptism, we have share in his resurrection also (Romans 6: 1-11). To dip in the baptismal water, is considered to be the symbol of the death of Christ and to rise from water as the symbol of the resurrection of Jesus.

Through baptism one strips off the old man and puts on the new man. One is reborn as new creation in the Spirit. Baptism is the first sacrament by which one enters into association with Jesus and the Church, his body, through the Holy Spirit.

Worship

While blessing the baptismal water, the baptism of Jesus in Jordan is remembered and also how John prepared water to baptize Jesus:
(Kelpin Jathikalellame..)

"Hearken! All races of earth, Halleluiah
John has prepared the water that he shall baptize;
Jesus, by his baptism, has sanctified the same
As he got on the shore the river
Heaven and earth both honoured him humbly;
The sun and moon offered worship and clouds sang praise to him
And he, sanctified water for cleansing the earth.
Halleluiah o Halleluiah".
(Service of baptism)

Life Witness

Let us be careful to grow in the divine life in our daily life through the sacramental life and virtuous deeds.

Memorise

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit”
(John 3: 5).

Questions

1. Describe the Scriptural foundation of baptism.
2. Which are the sacraments of initiation?? Why are they called so?
3. Why does one turn to the West while renouncing Satan and to the East while confessing Jesus?
4. What is meant by original sin?
5. Describe the symbolic meanings of the baptismal water.

CONFIRMATION



Confirmation is the sacrament of anointing with holy Myron by which all who become children of God through baptism are specially given the Holy Spirit and are confirmed and made perfect. This sacrament makes one a perfect Christian, firm in faith and a soldier of Christ through the special abundance of the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word '*Myron*' means "sweet-smelling oil". When olive oil is mixed with various kinds of aromatic spices and consecrated, the oil becomes Myron. This sacrament is known as 'Anointing with Myron' because, the individual is sealed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and is fully anointed with Myron.

Anointing in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, those who were made kings, prophets and priests were anointed with oil. The persons and things anointed, are separated as God's and sanctified. Israelites believed that through anointing, kings, prophets and priests specially received the Spirit of God. Samuel anointed

David with oil from the horn in front of his brothers. From that day onwards the Spirit of the Lord abided with him strongly (1 Samuel 16: 13). Prophet Isaiah said thus: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me” (Isaiah 61: 1). God asked Moses to anoint Aaron and his sons and to appoint them as priests (Exodus 28: 41-43). The Old Testament taught that those who received the anointment would receive special sanctity and the divine Spirit.

Anointing in the New Testament

Christ fulfilled the promise that he would send the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, confirm them in faith and make them courageous. Christ promised the Holy Spirit to all the members in the Church. Since the apostles understood this, they imposed hands on the heads of those who received baptism for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. There existed the tradition in the early Church to receive the Holy Spirit specially besides receiving baptism. The Holy Scripture testifies that the apostles, through special rite, gave the Holy Spirit to the faithful after giving them baptism (Acts of the Apostles 8: 14-17).

Christ, the Anointed

Jesus Christ is the one genuinely anointed. It was revealed in Jordan that Christ was anointed. The faithful who is enjoined to Christ through baptism gets the very anointing of Christ, the Holy Spirit. The word meaning of the ‘Messiah’ is ‘the anointed one’. Since Jesus is anointed, he is king, prophet and priest. It is to signify this that he was presented with gold, myrrh and frankincense. Jesus told at the synagogue in Nazareth that he had the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4: 18). Through the baptismal water we become partakers of the death and resurrection of Christ. We become sharers of the body and blood of Jesus through the bread and wine. We partake of the anointing of Christ through Confirmation. Thus the faithful become worthy of the status of king, prophet and priest.

Anointing with Myron in the Malankara Church

Soon after baptism the celebrant and servers come in front of the table of prayer together with the candidate and begin the service of Confirmation. The faith that the candidate received in baptism and the special graces he /

she is about to receive in Confirmation are described in the introductory prayer. “O Lord, enable this servant, who has been counted among your devotees in faith, through baptism he / she has received, let him / her receive this seal and sign in your name”.

The candidate, who has received the Christian faith through baptism, gets the seal and sign through the sacrament of Confirmation. The sacraments Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders imprint an indelible mark in the soul. Hence these sacraments can be received only once.

Confirmation is the seal of the Holy Spirit. The divine seal signifies the authority and right of the Creator over the creature. The thing and person sealed belong to the person who sealed them and they are set apart solely for him. God makes one his own by sealing him through the sacrament of Confirmation. Thus an individual becomes Christ’s own soldier. The gift of the Holy Spirit, which one received through baptism grows like a seed and gets strengthened through Confirmation. Thus, it leads an individual towards perfection with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. An individual gets the gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely, wisdom, intelligence, knowledge, thinking, spiritual strength, devotion and fear of God. Thus, Confirmation is the sacrament, which makes an individual a perfect Christian and a soldier of Christ.

After the introductory prayer, the celebrant seals the forehead of the candidate with Myron three times in the form of the cross. Saying: “(name) is sealed with the seal of true faith and sign, the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the holy Myron, the sweet smell of the Messiah, in the name of the Father + and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit + for life everlasting”.

After the prayer of anointing, the body of the candidate from head to feet, is anointed with Myron. Just as Aaron was anointed with oil in order to be purified, this little lamb, which is baptized, is anointed with oil and blessed with the benediction of the Holy Spirit.

The Crowning

After the Confirmation the candidate is crowned. In the Malankara Church, the custom of placing either the handcuff (*Kayyura*) or the *hymnia* (*Oorrara*) of the sacred vestments on the head of the candidate, is in practice. The

importance and meaning of the crown is great in the Christian tradition. We can see that the crown is the sign of royalty and symbol of victory in the Old Testament (Isaiah 28: 5; Jeremiah 13: 18; Psalm 21: 3). In the New Testament the crown is always the symbol of heavenly glory, heavenly splendour and immortal life. There is the custom of carrying the children to the sanctuary and making procession around the thronos in continuation of the crowing ceremony.

Receiving of Holy Communion

After having received the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, the oriental custom of receiving Holy Communion is in vogue in the Malankara Church also. The custom prevalent is to take a drop of the sacred blood from the chalice and to give it on the tongue of the candidate. The receiving of the Holy Communion after the reception of baptism and confirmation, helps to strengthen relationship with Jesus. This signifies the journey with Christ.

The priest gives the Holy Communion saying: “The fruit, which Adam could not taste in Eden is placed on your tongue this day”. Then, the congregation is dismissed after saying the concluding prayer and giving the blessing.

We are those who have come to the full association with Jesus by receiving Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion when we were children. Could we strengthen this relationship with Jesus with our past period of life? How strong is the presence of God in me? May such kind of thoughts help us to grow in the love of God.

Worship

In the service of Confirmation, when the child is anointed, it is remembered how Aaron was anointed with oil and purified. Besides, the Church commemorates that through the anointing with oil, the Holy Spirit, giving his benediction, blesses the child, who has received baptism:

(Chonnan Daivam..)

“Anoint Aaron, with holy oil, so that he may become pure, God said;

We anoint now with this holy oil, the lamb, which has received the baptism.

This is the unction, with which the lamb baptized, is set apart as anointed.

The Holy Spirit, with his secret seal, reigns over it and he blesses it”.

Life Witness

Let us continuously pray that the gift of the Holy Spirit, which we received through the anointment of the Holy Myron, may be strengthened in us.

Memorise

“But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first instalment”

(2 Corinthians 1: 21-22).

Questions

1. What does anointing with Myron mean?
2. Describe the Old and New Testament backgrounds of anointing with Myron.
3. What is the reason why Jesus Christ is said to be the true anointed one?
4. ‘Confirmation is the seal of the Holy Spirit’. Describe.

HOLY QURBONO



Among the Sacraments the most important and the crown of them is the Holy Qurbono. The Old and New Testament biblical background of this sacrament and how the Malankara Church understands this, are introduced in this lesson.

The Paschal Observance of Jesus

Jesus celebrated his last Pasch together with his apostles. In this Paschal banquet Jesus instituted the Holy Qurbono. While observing the Pasch Jesus took bread in his hands, blessed, broke and gave to his apostles and said: “Take, eat, this is my body”. Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them saying: “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant; which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26: 28).

In the background of the Jewish Pasch Jesus celebrated the new Pasch. The slaughter of the Paschal lamb and the Paschal meal are the fundamental parts of the Jewish Pasch. In the new Pasch, Jesus transformed bread as his

body and wine as his blood and gave them to his apostles as food and drink. Jesus signified through breaking and giving the bread, his body, which he was going to offer as sacrifice and through the symbol of wine, his blood, which was about to be shed. In the new Pasch, Jesus, by preparing the meal with his body and blood, pointed out in advance that the real Paschal lamb was himself. It is in this sense that John the Baptist called Jesus the lamb, who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus hinted in advance his death on the cross on Calvary in the background of the Pasch. Just as the sacrifice and meal with shedding blood has become the fundamental component of the Pasch, in the new Pasch too, the shedding of the blood and the meal are merged into one. On account of this, the Church understands the Holy Qurbano as sacrifice and meal.

Offering of Sacrifice in the Old Testament

Offering of sacrifice was most important in the Jewish religion. There is allusion in the Old Testament about the various sacrifices of Abel, Noah and Abraham. Various offerings such as: Burnt offering, Peace offering and Sin offering came into force in the Jewish religion after the Mosaic period. Fruits, lambs and oxen were used for the sacrifices. The sacrifice with the shedding of blood of the animals was more important. Shedding of blood was an important element of sacrifice. The Jews considered that through shedding blood, the very life is offered. The Jews understood the shedding of blood as the recognition of personal relationship with God. Shedding of blood was an inevitable part for remission of sins (Hebrews 8: 22).

The Jews considered sacrifice as recognizing God's authority and loftiness and as means for associating with God and as a religious rite for the remission of sins. Grain and meat are the food materials of human beings. Human beings work more in order to earn these. They consider that they offer themselves when they offer these food materials to God. The Jews considered the altar the place, where there is the presence of God. They believed that life existed in the blood of the animals and that when they pour blood on the altar of sacrifice, they offered the very life of the one who offered the sacrifice to God.

The shedding of blood in the Old Testament was but the symbol of the shedding of the blood of Jesus in the sacrifice on Calvary. The blood of the sacrifice of Jesus gave salvation and remission of sin to humankind forever (Hebrews 9: 11-13).

Holy Qurbono in the Early Church

After instituting the Holy Qurbono in the background of the Jewish Pasch, Jesus said: “Do this in remembrance of me”. Thus, he entrusted the apostles to perpetuate the memorial of the Pasch he performed. According to the desire of Jesus, the sacrifice of the Holy Qurbono was continued in the early Church through the service of the breaking of the bread. The service of the breaking of bread, which was held in houses, was later on transferred to the churches.

The service of the breaking of bread was known in the Syrian Church as “Holy Qurbono”. The Syrian word ‘Qurbono’ has the following meanings: ‘Offering of gift’, ‘Offering of sacrifice’ and ‘Gift’.

The early Christians experienced the presence of Christ, who died on the cross and resurrected in their midst through the celebration of the Holy Qurbono. The disciples, who went to Emmaus, recognized Jesus when he broke the bread (Luke 24: 23-35). The early Christians experienced the living presence of Christ through their coming together for Holy Qurbono (Acts of the Apostles 2: 42, 46). The early Christians gathered together on Sunday, the day of the resurrection of Jesus and broke the bread. They remembered the Pasch of Jesus, death on the cross and resurrection through the service of the breaking of the bread. The conviction that the risen Christ lives amidst them under the species of bread and wine got strengthened in the early Church. Thus, the presence of the Lord in the Holy Qurbono and the Christ experience they got through Holy Communion, were proofs that Jesus lived among them. Thus, Holy Qurbono became the intrinsic element of the relationship between God and human beings. There was no other occasion in which the early Christians experienced the salutary presence of Jesus more as in the Holy Qurbono. The presence of Jesus in the Holy Qurbono was so lively.

Holy Qurbono in the Malankara Church

Diverse liturgical rites grew in different places by the fourth century. There are 22 different Rites today in the Catholic Church. The Malankara Catholic Church uses the Antiochean Rite of Liturgy, which was developed and formed in Antioch. The Order of the Antiochean Qurbono is known after the name of St. Jacob, the brother of our Lord, the apostle and the first chief Bishop of Jerusalem.

Holy Qurbono, the Memorial of Salvation History

Holy Qurbono is not merely the commemoration of the observance of the Pasch and death of Jesus on the cross. But through the command of Jesus, “Do this in remembrance of me”, the Church commemorates in the Holy Qurbono the whole history of salvation, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. There are two parts in the Malankara Qurbono: the secret service and the public service. In the secret service, the Old Testament events: the creation of the universe, creation of man, the fall of man, the call of Abraham and the history of Israel up to Jesus Christ, are commemorated. The Church remembers in the public service: the birth of Jesus Christ, baptism, public life, observance of the pasch, passion, death on the cross, resurrection, ascension, the abidance of the Holy Spirit and the second coming of Jesus Christ. In short, the Church reveals and commemorates through the Holy Qurbono the history of salvation perfected in Jesus.

The Church commemorates these things clearly through a hymn in the Holy Qurbono:

(Velivu niranjoreeso...)

“Lord! Your birth, baptism, passion, crucifixion,

Death, resurrection, and your most glorious ascension;

As well as our First Parents

We recall in this sacrifice” (Order of the Holy Qurbono).

The Holy Qurbono thus helps the faithful to be united with the salutary events and to live fully with Jesus. The relationship with Jesus becomes perfect with the reception of the Holy Qurbono.

The Divine Presence in the Holy Qurbono

The Antiochean Liturgy, formed under Jewish background is replete with numerous Old Testament symbols and signs. The Holy Qurbono is filled with services and rites, which expedite God experience. The faithful experience during Holy Qurbono the great divine experience, which makes heaven descend towards the earth. The sanctuary, the various colours, and the different signs and symbols signify the presence of God. The hymns and prayers of the Holy Qurbono are musical. Thus, in the background of the Holy Qurbono, a divine experience is aroused on the earth.

There are numerous symbols in the worship, which signify that the omnipotent and most glorious God is an immense mystery and that the limited man is unable to understand and comprehend God, the Creator. The Church has very strong conviction regarding the presence of God in the Holy Qurbono. We see in the Holy Qurbono, on one side the glory and power of God extolled, and on the other, the symbols, which connote the abidance of God with us.

In the early Church when the bread was broken, the faithful experienced the presence of God. Today, the omnipotent God is present amidst us through the Holy Qurbono. The divine presence, which our eyes cannot see comes to us through the species of bread and wine as food and drink during the Holy Qurbono.

The Old Testament Symbols in the Holy Qurbono

The Holy Qurbono, which Jesus established on the feast of the Pasch, was the fulfillment of the Old Testament symbols. Abel, through his own sacrifice, signified the Holy Qurbono. The offering of the bread and wine of the chief priest Melchizedech was the symbol of Holy Qurbono. By sacrificing the little lamb, which lay entangled in the bush, Isaac was saved from the sword of Abraham. This sacrifice signifies the Holy Qurbono. The presence of God, which Moses found in the thorny bush, signifies the presence of God in the Holy Qurbono. The people of Israel sacrificed the paschal lamb in order to escape from the messenger-destroyer. It was the foreshadow of the Holy Qurbono. The saying of Joshua that they should

kill the lambs on the fourteenth of the first month and eat the Pasch, means the Holy Qurbono. Prophet Samuel, having killed the young one of a lamb, signified the mystery of the Holy Qurbono. The live coal, which the angel gave to Isaiah in the holy of holies with the fiery tongs, was the symbol of the Holy Qurbono. The fruit, which Adam did not taste in Eden, marks the Holy Qurbono. The Manna, which the people of Israel ate in the desert, signifies the Holy Qurbono. The human figure, which Ezekiel saw in the chariot, is the symbol of Jesus in the Holy Qurbono.

Holy Qurbono, Sacrifice and Banquet

The sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary and the Paschal meal signify that the Holy Qurbono is at the same time sacrifice and banquet. Only by eating the meal, the Holy Qurbono, the sacrifice is perfected. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11: 26). Hence, all those who participate in the Holy Qurbono should also receive Holy Communion.

In the early Church all those who attended the Holy Qurbono received Holy Communion also. If any faithful did not attend worship due to illness, the deacon used to carry and give Holy Communion to that person. Our Church also desires that all, who participate in the Holy Qurbono should worthily receive Holy Communion also. It is the right of every faithful to receive Holy Communion. It is through the Holy Communion that an individual comes into the full experience of a member of the Church.

If there is the conviction of any mortal sin, one should make confession before receiving Holy Communion. In other circumstances, one may receive Holy Communion after receiving absolution of sins during the celebration of the Holy Qurbono. Having partaken in the Holy Qurbono, if anyone consciously keeps aloof from receiving Holy Communion without sufficient reason, one alienates oneself from Christ. It is like going for a banquet and not eating any food. Hence, to keep aloof from receiving communion without sufficient reason is dishonour shown towards Jesus and to his body and blood. Hence, let us be careful to receive Holy Communion with preparation. Thus, we will be able to live with Jesus in full association.

Worship

At the very outset of the Holy Qurbono, the Church remembers the sacrifice, which Jesus the Messiah offered on Calvary:

(Velivu niranjoreeso..)

“In order to wash away world’s manifold sins

O! Christ, who has sacrificed yourself,

so do we

Offer ourselves also,

May this sacrifice be received”.

(Order of the Qurbono)

Life Witness

Holy Qurbono is the central point of Christian life. Let us actively participate in the Holy Qurbono in order to grow in Christ experience.

Memorise

“Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you”

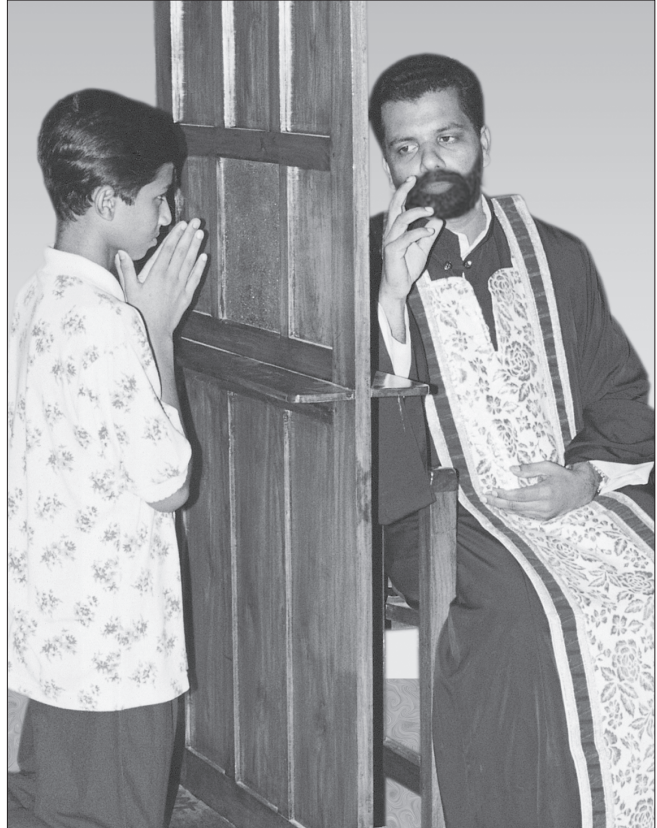
(John 6: 53).

Questions

1. Describe how Jesus instituted the Holy Qurbono.
2. What is the Old Testament concept about sacrifice?
3. Describe the Holy Qurbono-experience of the early Church.
4. Why is it said that the Malankara Qurbono is the commemoration of the history of salvation?
5. Make the reality clear that only through the Holy Communion the celebration of the Holy Qurbono is complete.

Lesson 12**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

An individual receives divine life through Jesus by receiving the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Qurbano. But human beings preserve this divine life in weak and breakable earthen pots. Through the sins of human beings, this divine life may be weakened or lost. As a good physician of the body and soul, Jesus Christ gave absolution of sins for many sinners during his public life. This service of the absolution of sins is still being continued in the Church through the Holy



Spirit. Thus, there are two sacraments, Confession and the Anointing of the Sick, in order to give back to the human being the lost divine life and to cure his body and soul. In this lesson we learn about Confession.

Absolution of Sin in the New Testament

Sin is the choosing of the evil way through misusing the freedom God has given to human beings. Sin is part of the weak human nature. It is the fundamental thought of every religion that the human being is weak and that God absolves sin when the sinner repents of the sin. It is for the gratification of God and for the remission of sins that in the Hindu culture one bathes in river Ganges and goes to Sabari Hill, observing fast. So is the observance

of severe fast in the Muslim religion. The Jews, in the Old Testament, offered sacrifice for the remission of sins.

In the New Testament, St. John the Baptist invited the people to confess their sins and receive baptism of repentance for the absolution of sins. Thus, many people received baptism in the river Jordan. During the public life of Jesus, people came to him with repentance. Jesus gave them absolution. When Jesus was dining at the house of Simon, the Pharisee, a sinner woman of the city approached Jesus. She washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and dried them with her hair and anointed them with sweet smelling oil. Jesus told her: “Your sins are forgiven” (Luke 7: 36-50). Once Jesus said to a paralytic, who was brought to him: “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2: 1-12). Jesus said to the woman, caught in adultery, forgiving her sins: “Do not sin again”. Zacchaeus, who received Jesus in his house, being repentant about his sins, when he confessed and offered compensation for his sins, Jesus led him to the path of salvation (Luke 19: 1-10). Jesus, having pitied him, raised the thief, who repented while hanging on the cross, to the experience of Paradise. Jesus taught the fundamental truths of absolution of sins through the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep.

The Power of Absolution of Sins in the Church

We read in the Holy Scripture that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gave absolution of sins for several sinners who came to him during his public life. Jesus gave the power of absolution of sins to the apostles or the Church. Jesus told Peter: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16: 18-19). Another time, Jesus said to the apostles: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18). Thus Jesus gave to the apostles the power to bind and to loose. After the resurrection, Jesus breathed on the apostles and giving them the Holy Spirit, said: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20: 23). Thus, the power of the absolution of sins, which he gave to

the apostles, is continued through the bishops and priests. The Church is the means, which Jesus instituted through the Holy Spirit in order to continue the salutary mission of Jesus. Hence, the power of the absolution of sins is given to the Church. Through the Church, this authority is given to the bishops and to the priests through them.

The priest is at the same time the representative of the Church and the representative of Jesus. When one confesses sins to a priest, he confesses to Jesus and to the Church Community because the priest represents Jesus and the Church respectively. When the priest absolves sins, it is Christ who absolves sins. In the same way the community of the Church forgives the sinner and admits him to the Church community. In this manner, confession takes place and sins are absolved in relation with the body of the Church.

Sin is the fault to the Body of the Church

The Church is the body of Jesus. Just as the body has different limbs, there are different individuals in the body of the Church. If any of the limbs of the body receives injury that will affect the whole body. We give treatment to the whole body. If the wound becomes a sore, the whole body will suffer. If the wound is cured, the whole body will feel relief. Hence, the sin of an individual, belonging to the body of the Church, harms not only the individual but also the whole body of the Church. The one, who falls in sin, not only brings harm to the individual, but also to the whole body of the Church and gives pain. Hence, the individual who sinned should confess sin and through repentance get reconciled with the community of the Church, The whole Church and the angels in heaven rejoice over the repentant sinner.

Sin is Disease

According to the tradition of the Jews, sin was considered as disease. God deals with humankind, which has fallen into sin as with one, who has disease. Even if one has become a sick person through one's own fault, that one is not punished but given treatment. What is of chief importance is not the fault and punishment but treatment and cure. The Church desires to see the sins of her children as the beginning of disease and to treat them. That is

not to destroy the sick person but to cure and to save. That is the reason why Jesus came as a good physician. More than the judge, who convicts the world, Christ is the great physician, who cures human beings from the bodily and spiritual diseases and leads to life eternal. The Church fulfils through the sacrament of Confession this service of rendering cure.

Confession, the Sacrament of Reconciliation

When the person confesses his/her sins, he/she receives reconciliation and absolution of sins from God. There is only one central commandment in the Christian faith. That is the commandment of love. Hence all sins are against love. Sin creates in an individual a triple alienation. Sin alienates us from God, brethren and ourselves. Reconciliation is said to be to come in harmony with God, brethren and with oneself through confessing sins. Thus, through the sacrament of Confession triple reconciliation takes place. When one receives reconciliation through Confession, uneasiness is removed from the individual and the person obtains divine peace and joy. Jesus says about confessing sins and attaining reconciliation thus: “So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother or sister and then come and offer the gift” (Matthew 5: 23-24). Since one reconciles, confessing sins, the Confession is said to be the sacrament of reconciliation.

Confession, the Sacrament of Absolution of Sins

Absolution of sin is the divine grace, which the individual receives when one confessing sins through awareness of sin, repentance and conversion. The sinner woman came to the Lord, washed his feet with her tears and confessed her sins. Jesus gave her absolution saying: “Her many sins are forgiven”. Thus, she went back with peace and joy. When an individual confesses sins to the priest, the representative of the Church, that individual receives absolution and experiences joy and peace. That is why Confession is called the sacrament of the absolution of sins.

Confession in the Malankara Church

According to the tradition of the Catholic Church, if an individual committed a serious sin, the person should receive Holy Communion only after having confessed sin before a priest and received absolution. Hence, each individual has to decide when to make confession. When there is no serious sin to be confessed, after making the examination of conscience, with the thought of repentance, and having received absolution during the Holy Qurbano, one may receive Holy Communion. According to the common law of the Catholic Church, the faithful should confess at least once a year and should receive Holy Communion. Besides, the Church advises to make confession conveniently during the seasons of all fasts and feasts, and receive Holy Communion. It is the mind of the Church that the faithful through frequent confession and receiving Holy Communion, should grow in spiritual life. Similarly, it is a blessing to confess and receive Holy Communion on important days such as: birth day, feast day, day of marriage, marriage anniversary, etc.

The Spiritual Cure that Confession Gives

The sinner will always live in the consciousness of sin and in an agitated state of mind. The guilty conscience and agitated state of mind may often lead to a state of physical illness. But, through confession, an individual experiences the divine mercy and love and gets the spiritual and mental well-being. Psychological counselling cannot replace confession. Even though the psychological counselling may assist to gain mental release from problems to a certain extent, counselling cannot give either spiritual cure or absolution from sin or divine grace. Only through the sacrament of Confession an individual obtains absolution from sin, spiritual cure and peace.

Worship

The believer begs pardon of sins in the presence of God with repentance saying that the person has only his own tears to offer for the remission of his sins:

(Karunakkadale...)

“O! Lord, let it not happen
That I shall die in my sins
Behold! I shed tears profusely;
I don't offer you either
Lamb or bull or turtledove
Or little ones of domestic pigeons;
Like the woman in Simon's house
Behold! I shed my tears,
Receive them and have mercy on me.
Through love of your Holy Son
And the prayers of your Mother
Halleluiah, forgive all my sins”.
(Order of the Sacraments)

Life Witness

Through the sacrament of Confession, we reconcile with God and fellow beings and enter into love- relationship with them. Since this sacrament aims at the renovation of life, let us take oath to participate in the sacrament with preparation and earnestness.

Memorise

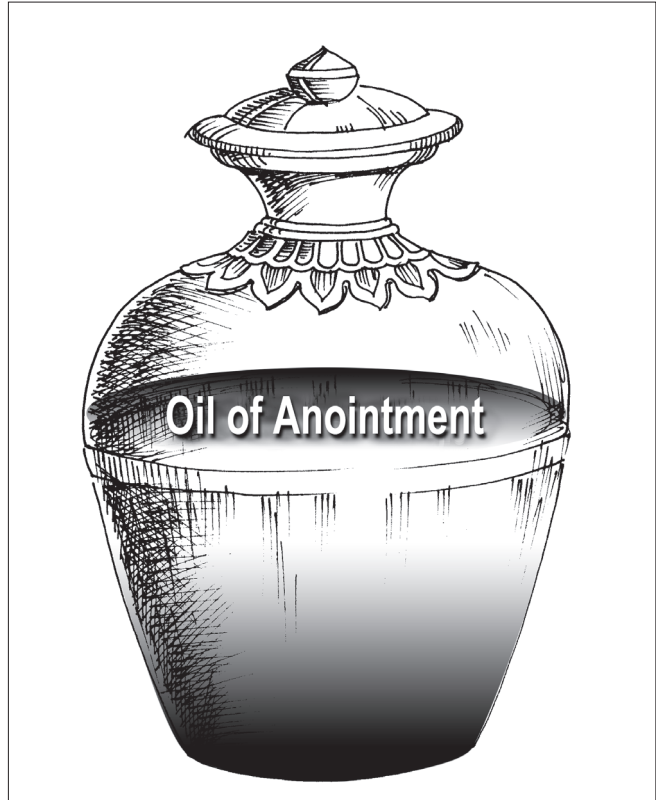
“I confess my iniquity;
I am sorry for my sin”
(Psalm 38: 18).

Questions

1. Describe on the basis of Holy Scripture that Jesus gave to the apostles or to the Church the power to absolve sins.
2. What is the reason for saying that ‘by confessing sin to the priest one confesses sin to God and to the community of the Church’?
3. How does sin become harmful to the body of the Church?
4. Why is Confession called the sacrament of conversion?
5. ‘Confession is the sacrament of reconciliation’. Prove.

Lesson 13**ANOINTING OF THE SICK**

The anointing of the sick is a sacrament by which a patient is freed from illness and sin through the special grace of God. The Church administers this sacrament when one is in the state of serious illness, which may lead to death. As the name ‘anointing of the sick’ signifies, it is the sacrament for the sick people. This is a service, which the whole community of the Church, does for the healing of one of her members. The sign of this sacrament is the anointing with the holy oil given for the sick people in the name of the Church.

**Anointing with Oil in the New Testament**

The Holy Scripture testifies that Jesus the Lord went around the whole of Palestine, preaching the Gospel and healing the sick. The Lord showed the healing of the sick as a sign of the kingdom of God. There is an intimate relationship between the Gospel of the kingdom of God and the healing of diseases. Jesus gave to his disciples the power to drive out evil spirits (Matthew 10: 1). Accordingly, the disciples drove out the evil spirits and cured many sick people by anointing them with oil (Matthew 10: 8). Thus, when the 72 announcers were sent out, Jesus told them: ‘when you enter a

town, cure the sick people in it and tell them the kingdom of God is near' (Luke 9: 2).

St. James the apostle describes the anointing of the sick and the gifts, one receives through it: "Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the Church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up, and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven" (James 5: 14-15). The relationship between sin and disease can be seen throughout the New Testament. Since disease is the result of sin, through the special mercy of Jesus, as one receives absolution from sin, one will be freed from illness also. We see in the Gospel that the paralytic is cured from disease when he is absolved of his sins (Mark 2: 1-5).

The Symbolism of the Anointing with Oil

Each thing that is used for the administration of sacraments has symbolic meaning. The chief thing that is used in the sacrament of Anointing of the sick is olive oil. The Church Father Tertullian (160-220 A.D.) says: "When the sick person is anointed with the holy oil, his/ her soul is sanctified". The anointing with oil symbolically signifies that since the sick person is the member of the body of Christ, all are anxious and interested on behalf of him/her and that the common aim of the Church is the bodily and spiritual welfare of the sick person. The afore-said idea is made manifest by the fact that many visit the sick person and console with prayer and by giving spiritual exhortations. It is certain that this mental attitude of communion of the community gives peace to the sick person and courage to face death and above all, perfect confidence in God. In short, the anointing of the sick serves as the absolution of sin or salvation from sin, the entrance into eternity (James 5: 20) and the abidance of the Holy Spirit.

Anointing of the Sick in the Malankara Liturgy

The custom prevailing in the Malankara Church is, if a member of the Church is seriously ill, to administer him/her the anointing of the sick at the earliest, when he/she is still conscious, and to give Holy Communion. This service is conducted either in the room of the patient or by its side according

to the order of the Malankara Church. Throughout the prayers of the Anointing of the sick, the following themes reflect: entreating mercy from God, absolution of sin and the bliss in heaven.

The celebrant begins the service of the Anointing of the sick with praying to the Trinity to behold with mercy those who suffer affliction, to cure those who are ill and to console those who suffer mental anguish.

After the introductory prayer, psalms, proemion-sedro, and ethro; begins the reading from the Holy Scripture. After the reading of the Gospel, there is the petition of St. James. This is the prayer of the community as a whole to God, for the cure of the sick person. When Jesus cured the mother-in-law of Simon, she received strength, got up to serve him. So also, all the members of the community together entreat God to cure the sick person, so that he/she may serve him. Then the sick person recites the act of contrition and makes confession of sins. In case the patient is unable to say the act of contrition by himself, another one recites the prayer and the patient repents and the patient prays for the absolution of sins. There are two prayers, one long and the other short in preparation for confession in the book of the order of services. In the first, the sick person begs absolution for sins committed in body and in soul, having repented over them. In the second prayer the person requests absolution for each sin committed with the senses of the body: eye, nose, ear, skin and tongue and with the internal senses: consciousness, thinking, understanding and knowledge.

The anointing follows the confession. The celebrant dips the tip of his right thumb in the oil and reciting the prescribed prayer makes the sign of the cross three times on the forehead of the patient and then imposes his hand on the head of the patient. This is the prayer recited while anointing the forehead: “May you be cleansed and sanctified in the name of the + Father and of the + Son and of the + Holy Spirit. May your debts and the sins you committed with or without consent and with or without knowledge be forgiven. May your evil emotions and devilish activities be wiped out from you”. After anointing the forehead, eyes, ears, lips, nose, hands and legs and the whole body are anointed with oil.

After the anointing, the *Kukkilion* of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, are sung and with the final blessing the service comes to an end.

The Service of the ‘*Kanthila*’ (The Service of the Wicks)

The anointing of priests and bishops is called ‘The Service of the *Kanthila*’. The Syrian Word ‘*Kanthila*’ means ‘Wick’. Since this service begins with the lighting of the wicks, it is known as ‘*Kanthila*’. Several priests together celebrate the *Kanthila* Service.

The anointing of the sick is a sacrament, which Jesus and his apostles administered and which was in practice in the Church from early times. Just as baptism is perfected in the sacrament of Confirmation, Confession is perfected in the Anointing of the sick. Removing the dreadfulness of death, through this sacrament, the Lord Jesus pacifies the one who approaches death and makes him bold. It is the duty of the children of the Church to convince the patient to receive this spiritual medicine in the proper manner and at the proper time.

Worship

When the sinner woman bought the precious oil and mixed her tears with it and washed the feet of Jesus, her sins were forgiven. Thus, the Church believes that through the anointing with oil, the patient receives absolution of sins and cure from illness:

(Karunakkadale...)

“Give me the most precious oil
The voice of the sinful woman that says to
the merchant
Is indeed! Pleasing.
Give me the most precious oil
Mixing it with my tears, I shall anoint
The only Begotten Son.
With that sweet smelling oil
I firmly hope in my God, that I shall be
Absolved from my sins.
She bought the oil and went
The Lord, who having seen her faith
Halleluiah; Forgave all her sins”.
(Order of the Sacraments)

Life Witness

The anointing of the sick is a sacrament, which gives consolation and cure to the sick person. Let us try to convince the patients that this sacrament is for experiencing the love of Jesus and to partake of the experience of salvation.

Memorise

“Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective”
(James 5: 16).

Questions

1. Describe Anointing of the Sick in the New Testament background.
2. Make clear the symbolism of the Anointing of the Sick.
3. What is the service of ‘*Kanthila*’?

PRIESTHOOD

From the beginning of the world, there existed the service of priesthood among human beings. The priest is engaged to offer sacrifice to God and to obtain blessings from him. The word 'priesthood' has the meanings: 'elder', 'offeror of sacrifice', etc. We understand priest as one who leads the religious rites and services, and one who works walking in front.



Priesthood in the Old Testament

In the early days of the history of the Jews, there was no special group as 'priests'.

We read in the Holy Scripture that the children of Adam, Cain and Abel made worship, through offering sacrifice to God. The ancient Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob prepared altars and offered sacrifices. They offered sacrifice as head of the family. The first-born of the family performed priestly duties for the family. Priesthood was officially established among the people of Israel as per instruction of God during the time of Moses. Special rules were ascertained for the worship of God.

There were three ranks for priesthood among the Israelites: Chief priest, Priest and Levite. God had raised Aaron, the brother of Moses and his sons to the priesthood. Moses anointed them as priests according to the

instruction of God (Numbers 18: 1-7). Levites were appointed to help the priests. Levites had no anointing. The Chief priest and priests were given the ranks after anointing them (Leviticus 8, Exodus 29). In general, the priest offered sacrifice and incense and bore witness to the revelation of God.

The Priesthood of Jesus Christ

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the Jewish sacrifice and priesthood, the foreshadow and sign, stopped and Jesus Christ established the sacrifice and priesthood according to the New Covenant. Jesus Christ, perfect God, through his incarnation became perfect man and the only intercessor between God the Father and humankind. Priests, kings and prophets were anointed in the Old Testament. The Jewish people were expecting the eternal Messiah or the Anointed One. Since Jesus was the Messiah or the Anointed One, he became the eternal priest, prophet and king. Since Jesus Christ is the only intercessor between God the Father and human beings, he alone is the real priest. The real priesthood belongs to Jesus alone. Hence, only in Jesus, there is the incomparable and most perfect priesthood.

As the sole intercessor, Jesus offered on Calvary self-sacrifice forever for the remission of the sins of humankind. Thus Jesus Christ became priest, who offers the sacrifice and the victim of the sacrifice. Jesus, through his self-sacrifice proved that he is the priest and established the foundation for the New Testament priesthood.

Jesus desired that the sacrifice, he offered for the salvation of humankind, should be offered till the end of the world. For that, he chose twelve apostles in advance and gave the rank of his priesthood and instituted the sacrament of priesthood (John 20: 21-23; Mark 16: 15-16; Luke 22: 19; Matthew 28: 19-20). Thus, the twelve apostles became the chief priests of the Church. They anointed the bishops as their successors (*Episcopa*) and the priests (Elders) (1 Peter 5:1; 1 Timothy 4: 14). Priests, who are anointed in this manner, offer even today the sacrifice, which Jesus offered on Calvary.

Priesthood in the Church

Since the faithful, who have received baptism are anointed by the Holy Spirit, each one of them is like the Messiah, priest, prophet and king. Every

believer fulfils these missions like the Messiah. That is why all members of the Church are said to be the sharers of the priesthood of the Messiah. The anointing with oil, the crowning and the candidate's kissing the thronos in the service of baptism, are all symbols of these: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Peter 2: 9). Thus we read about the faithful in the Epistle of Peter. It is in this background that we pray in the Holy Qurbono: "Bless your parish, which has the grace of the priesthood". Thus, the priesthood, which all have in the Church, is called the common priesthood or the royal priesthood.

The Sacramental Priesthood

Even though all have the priesthood; in order to administer sacraments in the Church, to sanctify, teach and lead the people of God, a few are chosen from among the people of God. These receive the priesthood through the imposition of the bishop's hands and become sharers of the priesthood of service or the sacramental priesthood. These, having especially shared in the priesthood of Jesus, fulfil the priesthood of Jesus in the Church.

The Priestly Ranks of the Church

According to the tradition of the Antiochean Church, there are seven ranks for the priesthood: *Maudyono* (one who professes), *M'Samarono* (the singer), *Koruyo* (reader), *Eupadyakno* (janitor), *Samsono* (server), *Kassisso* (priest), and *Episcopo* (Chief Priest or Bishop). From these, only the last three ranks: *Samsono*, *Kassisso*, *Episcopo* are included in the line of the priesthood. Their anointing is considered as sacrament. The four ranks first mentioned are the initial steps towards priesthood.

Samsono

This is an official rank of the Church. The 'Servers' are the third title-holders of the priesthood. This term is understood as server or Deacon in English. These could be compared to the Levites, the third title-holders of the Jewish priesthood. Their chief duty is to assist the priests in the church-service. They have the right to preach the Gospel and to administer baptism (Acts of the Apostles 6:10; 8: 5; 21: 8; 1 Timothy 3: 8-13).

Kasisso

This is the second rank of the priesthood. The word meaning of Kasisso is 'elder'. It is said in Greek, "*Presbyteros*" and in Syriac, 'Kasisso'. In the early Church, the care of a community was entrusted with the Episcopo or bishop. When the Church grew, those who were chosen to do service to the people of God in different places, were given the authority, through the imposition of hands of the bishop. They were the priests. Their mission was to do pastoral duty to the people, as the representative of the bishop. The meaning of the word 'Vicar' is 'Substitute'. That is why parish priest is called vicar.

Episcopo

The perfection of priesthood is the rank of the Episcopo. This itself is the first rank of priesthood. Episcopo or Bishop is the member of the college of apostles. The fundamental obligation of the Episcopo or Bishop is the triple apostolic mission of sanctifying, teaching and guiding. The entire obligation of a Church community rests with the bishop. The right and authority to give seven ranks of priesthood belong to the bishop alone. The priests have the power to administer the sacraments except priesthood. *Rees Episcopo* (Metropolitan-Archbishop), *Catholicos* - Major Archbishop, Patriarch, and Pope are special ranks among the Bishops. *Rees Episcopo* has some rights over the bishops. The head of an Individual Church is the *Catholicos* - Major Archbishop or the Patriarch. As the representative of Peter, the Pope is the head of the Universal Church and the head of the entire Episcopal Conference.

The Service of the Priesthood

We can compare the service of priesthood to the shepherd, who shepherds the sheepfold. The duty of the priest is to walk in front of the sheep and to shepherd the sheep attentively. The people of God should be brought up as a community in the name of Jesus Christ. The service of the priesthood is to fulfil the salutary mission among people. Just as the shepherd is ready to offer his life for the sheep, the priest should offer himself fully for the sheepfold. The priest is called to teach, sanctify and guide the people of God.

The Order of the Priesthood in the Malankara Church

The service of the order of Priesthood begins during the celebration of the Holy Qurbono. The bishop reminds the candidate kneeling at the entrance of the sanctuary about the qualities necessary for the rank of the priesthood. The candidate, after making the profession of faith and promise of obedience, puts the signature in the record. After that the bishop cuts hair from the head of the candidate in the form of a cross, which signifies that the candidate renounces everything and follows Jesus. Thereafter, the candidate is led to the sanctuary saying: “The Holy Spirit invites you to become priest in the Holy Church”.

In the middle of the reading of the Gospel, when it is read “He breathed upon them”, the bishop breaths on the face of the candidate three times in the form of a cross. Just as Christ breathed on the apostles and infused the Holy Spirit in them, this is the sign that the candidate for priesthood receives the Holy Spirit from the bishop, the representative of Christ. The prayers that follow are centred on the abidance of the Holy Spirit.

The most important part of the service of the priesthood follows. This is the occasion when the Holy Spirit descends upon the candidate and anoints him as priest. The bishop covers the candidate with his cope. Then he flutters his hands over the holy mysteries and receiving divine strength from them, imposes his hands upon the head of the candidate.

Thereafter the celebrant places his hand on the head of the candidate and reciting the stipulated prayer, seals on the candidate’s forehead three times with the sign of the cross. When the service of the priesthood is finished, the bishop and the new priest together complete the Holy Qurbono.

Worship

In the service of the priesthood, the Church very specially commemorates the lofty rank of the priesthood and about the spiritual authority obtained through the priesthood:
(Agyathmee-yanmaree-reum...)

“Beware you! O the priests of God,
For your rank is so sublime.
On this day, it binds and looses
Just as the Saviour entrusted;
The keys of the heights as well as depth
The Lord has entrusted to you;
If you fulfil his good will.
Indeed! You will have the fortune
In order to enter heaven”.
(Service of the priesthood)

Life Witness

Priests are those who serve the people of God, remaining as intercessors between God and mankind in order to serve the people of God. We have the obligation to respect the priesthood. Let us try to find out whether we have the divine call for the priesthood.

Memorise

“I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down
his life for the sheep”
(John 10: 11).

Questions

1. What was the outlook about priesthood in the Old Testament?
2. The perfection of priesthood is in Jesus Christ. Prove.
3. Make clear the difference between the common priesthood and the sacramental priesthood.
4. Give a concise explanation about the order of ranks of the priesthood in the Church.
5. The priest should lead the people of God through his sanctity of life, witness and service. Explain the proposition.

MARRIAGE



In the beginning, God created the human being in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1: 26). Then the Lord God said: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner” (Genesis 2: 18). He joined both of them and made them stay in the Garden of Eden as a family. This is the first marriage and the first family. The marriage and family envisaged by God continues even today in the community. The Church understands the sacrament of marriage as God uniting man and woman, by giving them the invisible grace, when they, who have reached maturity of age, desire to live together through marriage. This lesson introduces the order of the sacrament of marriage in the Malankara Church.

Marriage in the Old Testament

The Holy Scripture begins with the description of the marriage of the first parents at the beginning of creation. The Holy Scripture ends with the description of the marriage banquet of the lamb in the book of Revelation (Revelation 19: 7-9). We can see in the Old Testament, God blessing marital relations of the ancient Fathers: Adam-Eve, Abraham-Sara, Isaac- Rebecca, and Jacob-Rachel. Besides, we have in the Holy Scripture the golden history of many blissful and permanent marital relationships.

In the Old Testament, the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is compared to the relationship of husband and wife. The symbol of Yahweh as bridegroom and Israel as bride is very common in the Old Testament. The model of the permanent covenant between man and woman, who are engaged in marriage, is the covenant, made by Yahweh and Israel on Mount Sinai.

The Viewpoint of Jesus Christ

The teaching of Jesus about marriage is based on the history of creation in the Old Testament. In the history of creation, marriage is good and is part of the design of the history of salvation of God. Jesus teaches about the indivisibility of marriage saying: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate” (Matthew 19: 4-6).

The first miracle of Jesus took place in the background of a marriage feast. The Church gives special importance to the presence of Jesus in the marriage feast at Cana. Hence, the Church understands that marriage is a special sign of the presence of Christ (John 2: 1-12).

The Vision of St. Paul

St. Paul interprets marriage in the foundation of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5: 21-24). St. Paul says that Christ is the bridegroom and the Church, his bride and that Christ loved the Church, the bride, by giving his life. The Church is united in love with Christ, the bridegroom, who loved her by giving his own life to her. St. Paul interprets this holy love-relationship between Christ and the Church as the model for the love between husband and wife. He teaches that the unselfish and the perfect sacrificial love of the crucified Jesus should be the distinguishing feature of marriage (1 Corinthians 6: 12-20; 7: 3-7).

Marriage, the Sacrament founded by God

Although marriage may seem to be a social custom, in the Christian viewpoint, marriage is a reality established by God and is a sacrament.

Through the sacrament of marriage, man and woman are sanctified by grace and are given the blessing to live together until the end of life. Marriage relation, which God shaped in the beginning of creation became a sacrament through the salutary works of Jesus. The spouses receive divine grace and they are enabled to live by being united with the scheme of salvation through the sacrament of marriage.

Marriage, a Divine Call

Marriage is not merely an arrangement by which the persons, who have reached maturity in age, desire to live together. But, it is a lofty and noble call of God. God invites the married to be sharers of his love and work of creation. Even though it may seem an ordinary thing in the eyes of the human being that woman and man love each other and become one in marriage, it is God, who called, set apart and united them. This is the realization of the divine scheme, which God had preplanned. Hence, marriage is a gift and call of God and part of the divine scheme. When we learn the history of the couples from Adam and Eve, the intervention of God is very clear. Marriage also is a call of God like priesthood and religious life.

The Trinitarian Dimension of Marriage

Christian life is a sharing in the Trinitarian life. The beginning and the end of Christian life are in the Holy Trinity. The sublime aim of the married life is the sharing with the Triune God. It is in the name of the Triune God that the service of marriage begins, and the blessings of the ring and thali (*minnu*) take place. We pray in the order of the sacrament of marriage thus: “Let it happen to you that you may enjoy throughout your life praising the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, remaining as three fortresses, protect the Church, the bride. This thought is explained in the hymn: “Three fortresses surround me, says the Holy Church”. The Church teaches that just as the three persons in the Holy Trinity are but one in love, the individuals of marriage should be one. Hence, the model of the love relation of those who are married, should be the love-relation of the Triune God.

The Church Dimension of Marriage

The Church is the community of those who are reborn out of water and the Holy Spirit. Through baptism, one becomes a member of the body of the Church. The existence and personality of a Christian is in the Church. Hence, marriage is not merely an individual contract, but it is in the Church and through the Church men and women get married. We can see the Church dimension of marriage in the service of marriage:

(Vanil ninnoru makudam..)

“From heaven descends the crown
Through the hands of the Lord,
The crown with which the priest crowns
The bridegroom is most precious” (The bride is indeed precious).

“How much splendid! The crown,
Which the Messiah has made
With which spouses are crowned
Through the hands of the Reverend priest”.

The Church joins together, the spouses through these hymns of the service of marriage. The priest, remaining in the place of Jesus, seals the contract, which the spouses make. The spouses are making their contract to Church or to Jesus. It is the Church, which gives them the ring as the sign of their contract. That is why the priest, the representative of the Church and Jesus, gives the ring.

The Unity and Indivisibility of Marriage

“The man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matthew 19: 5-6). These words of Jesus reveal the unity and indivisibility of marriage. The Christian marriage is not one to be accepted at good pleasure and to be rejected at displeasure. It is God, who leads man and woman towards the married life and brings them up in it. For that reason, the spouses are called to a loving contract and dedication that last until death. The marital love of

the Christian spouses is the love relation between Christ and the Church. Just as the relation between Christ and the Church exists till the end of the world, the relationship of the spouses should last till the end of their life.

The Exchange of Life and Faith

The perfection of the mutual giving, discovery and self dedication of the husband and wife, is in generating children. Through this, the spouses become sharers in God's work of creation. To generate children is the sublime aim of marriage. In the Malankara sacrament of marriage, the Church commemorates the exchange of life and faith thus: 'Just as Abraham was pleased with Isaac, Isaac with Jacob and Jacob with Joseph, may the Lord give you good children so that you may also be happy. May the benediction, which God gave to Noah and his children saying: "Increase and multiply and fill the earth" remain with you'.

The family formed through marriage is the fundamental unit of human society. It is through the family, which is established by means of marriage, the preliminary lessons of faith are exchanged to generations. The Church prays thus in the sacrament of marriage: "May you confirm these (spouses) in the faith in you and help them to give the same to their children as inheritance".

It is in the family that people mark the beginning for value-based-life. The heavy responsibility to bring up the children, who are the fruits of their loving dedication, in the fear of God and in the knowledge of the world, rests with the parents. It is through the family, the family-church, the lessons of faith and moral life are exchanged to the new generation.

The Service of Marriage in the Malankara Church

The service of marriage begins in the Malankara Church with the betrothal. The betrothal before witnesses, means that the spouses enter into marriage with free decision and interest.

There are two parts for the service of marriage. The first is called the service of the blessing of the ring and the second, the service of the blessing of the crown.

The Service of the Blessing of the Ring

The service of the blessing of the rings is that of the agreement of marriage. The hymn that comes after the prayer of Kauma and the recitation of Psalm 51, deals with the ring, the sign of the marriage agreement:

(Dhannyan vinmon vasikale...)

“Bless these nuptial rings Saviour with your sacred hands,
Which, the priest gives to the couple in your holy name.
The Messiah, giving ring to the Church, made her his own wife
And she received his sacred body and his blood”.

The ring, which is the sign of the contract, is the symbol of Jesus Christ receiving the Church, giving his body and blood. Christ, the bridegroom, has chosen the Church as his bride with the daily and eternal contract. The Messiah has given to the Church, as a sign of his eternal contract, his own body and blood as ring. In the same way, the blessing and wearing of the ring is the sign of the contract being sealed between the bride and bridegroom.

The Service of the Blessing of the Crown

The hymn that follows the introductory prayer is very meaningful. The new spouses are blessed saying: ‘May God, who blessed the first parents and the tribal fathers, bless these his servants’. The Church reminds the new spouses that through their mutual dedication, they should discover in God the never drying spring of goodness and should receive in life the golden crown.

After the reading of the Gospel, the order of the blessing of the crown begins. The priest prays blessing the crowns and those who wear them. Instead of the crown, gold chains, with cross are being used in the Malankara Church:

(Klilo beede d’ moran...)

“From heaven descends the crown
Through the hands of the Lord;
The crown with which the priest crowns
The bridegroom is most precious” (“The bride is indeed precious”).

The celebrant sings this hymn, while he flutters the gold chain around the head of the bridegroom and bride in the form of a cross and crowns them. Even though the celebrant makes publicly the crowing ceremony, as it is clear from the hymn, the hands of the Lord himself do it from heaven.

The spouses, who have accepted each other through mutual consent, are crowned with the heavenly blessings through the service of crowning. These crowns, over and above embellishing the body as insurmountable weapons, actually beautify the soul. These crowns, symbolizing the crown of thorns of Jesus, are the symbol of the sacrifice, sufferings and self-emptying of the spouses, which they have to undertake in their married life.

The tying of the '*thali*' is a service, which the Christian Church has adopted from the Indian custom. *Thali* is the symbol of unity and it is the string that binds the spouses. Yarn is inserted through the hole of the thali, which has the figure of the cross imposed on it, and the bridegroom ties the same around the neck of the bride, which signifies that their marriage is perfectly sealed with the cross. After the tying of the thali, the bridegroom puts the bridal veil (*mandrakodi*) on the head of the bride. This service is the experience in advance of the wearing of the dress of eternal glory in heaven after having led an unspotted life in this world.

This is followed by the hymn of benediction and the instruction. After that the celebrant makes the spouses hold hands of each other saying: "Behold from now on, I entrust you to each other". This is a sign of their spiritual dedication and the fulfilment of the divine plan. The service of marriage ends with the special instruction of the celebrant for all the faithful present and with his concluding blessing.

Worship

In the hymn of benediction at the end of the service of marriage, the Church prays to Christ that he should bless the crowns, which the spouses wear on their head, extending his right hand and giving blessing, they should be blessed throughout their life:

(Korenan lok...)

“Kindly open the merciful door O!
My dear Lord
Having heard these petitions
and do pity on us.
O! Son of God, bless these
spouses as well, their crowns
Which they wear on their
heads having stretched out your right hand.
Call these spouses by their names and greet
them heartily.
Let their life in world of splendour be filled
with blessings”.
(Order of Sacraments)

Life Witness

The sacrament of marriage is the foundation of family life. Let us try to be more conscious about the sacrament of marriage and about family life. Since each one of us is part of the family, let us pray for our family and for our parents.

Memorise

“This is my commandment, that you
love one another as I have loved you.
No one has greater love than this, to
lay down one’s life for one’s friends”
(John 15: 12-13).

Questions

1. What was the outlook of Paul, the apostle, about marriage?
2. Clarify the thought that married life is sharing in the Triune God.
3. Substantiate the reality that married life should last till the end of life.
4. What does the service of the blessing of the ring mean in the Malankara order of marriage?
5. What is the importance of the service of crowning in the sacrament of marriage?

PART - III



CHURCH HISTORY

Lesson 16

CHURCH, IN THE FIRST FOUR CENTURIES



Colosseum - The place where the first Christians were persecuted

We are trying to introduce the summarized history of the first four centuries of the Church in this lesson. We ought to study the history of the Church in order to know and love the Church. Just as we learn the history of our country in order to love the country, the study of the history of the Church will lead to a deep understanding about the Church.

Christian Church is the continuation of Christ. Christ is God and man. Similarly, the Church also has divine and human elements. The inner soul of the Church is the Holy Spirit. But, since the Church works through weak human beings, we can see human limitations in the works of the Church. The history of the Church will be like the history of any association if you take into consideration only the human element without considering the divine element. The Church begins from God. God leads the Church. The Church is to reach God. This vision through the eyes of faith is necessary to understand the Church.

The Beginning and Growth of the Church

After the resurrection, Jesus told the apostles: “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16: 15). The apostles, who received this mission, bore witness to Jesus in the four quarters of the world, after having received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Peter preached the Gospel in Antioch. Later on he went to Rome, established the Church and died as a martyr. St. Andrew preached Jesus in Alexandria and St. James in Jerusalem. St. Thomas, the apostle, arrived in our country and having laid the foundation for the Christian Church, received the crown of martyrdom at Mylapore. Since St. Paul preached the Gospel among the gentiles, he is known as the ‘Apostle of the Gentiles’.

It is said in the Acts of the Apostles about the life-style of the early Christians thus: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers” (Acts of the Apostles 2: 43). Only the activities of the early times are described here. The early Christians were prepared for the second coming of Christ. It was in Palestine of the Roman Empire that the Saviour was born. The Greek culture was widely spread at that time. Since there was peaceful atmosphere all over the Roman Empire in the beginning of the Church, the journeys of the apostles were safe. In all the known places, there were Jews. In the beginning the apostles went to the Jews. First the Gospel was preached in Syriac language. Later on they began to use Greek and Latin.

The Syrian Church that formed first with the Jews was called the First Church and the Church from among the Greeks as the Second Church and the Church from among the Latin speaking people, was called the Third Church. The teaching of the Gospel of the apostles attracted many. The loving behaviour and the exemplary life of the first Christians gave encouragement to others. Above all, the presence of the Lord and the operation of the Holy Spirit, were helpful for the propagation of the Gospel.

Persecutions

The early Christians had to encounter much opposition. The Jews had stoned to death Stephen. St. James, the apostle, was beheaded. Thereafter

the apostles continuously received persecutions. In many places the Jews had instigated others against the Christians. The Greek authors tried to belittle and ridicule Christians and Christianity in the society. The Roman emperors persecuted Christians for about three centuries. Since the Lord had forewarned them, they endured persecutions without fear: “You will be hated by all nations because of my name” (Matthew 24: 9).

The profession of the Christians that the Greek and Roman gods are not the true God but only human creations and that Jesus Christ alone is real God provoked the gentiles. They subjected them to cruel and mean persecutions. Christians were subjected to cruelties: such as throwing in boiling oil, putting as prey before hungry wild beasts, wrapped with cloth, set on fire and planted as torch by the side of roads. Colosseum was one of the important centres of persecution in Rome. In this round shaped centre of amusement, duels were held between men and wild beasts and the lords and others enjoyed the feat. Many Christians were killed by wild beasts there and became martyrs. Christianity was often considered as the common enemy of the country and was persecuted. Persecution continued from the time of Emperor Nero (54-68 A.D.) to the time of emperor Constantine (313 A.D.). They spread the news that natural calamities, contagious diseases, poverty and famine spread due to Christians. Thousands of Christians courageously offered their life as martyrs. Imbibing inspiration from their warm blood a lot of people came to Christianity. Just as in the Roman Empire, there were cruel persecutions in the Persian Empire also.

Freedom to the Church

Emperor Constantine gave freedom to Christians through the emperor’s order known as the Milan edict in 313 A.D. According to a legend, during Milvian war in 312, the emperor had a vision to fight under the sign of the cross and so doing he won the war. After emperor Constantine embraced Christianity, the growth of Christianity in the Roman Empire was very fast. The emperors who succeeded him too were the spokesmen of Christianity. The Church that suffered persecution became free. Thus Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. In course of time all the ancient Greco-Roman religions became extinct.

None of the Persian kings became Christian. Christianity remained always a minority there. Christianity grew and persisted in India also without the protection of the kings. The followers of Jesus encounter various kinds of oppositions even today. The noble examples of the courageous martyrs, who offered life for Jesus, persuade us to sustain Christian faith. The history of the Church inspires us to bear noble witness without losing grip and faltering of mind even in the midst of oppositions.

Worship

It was their prayer, communion and breaking of the bread that sustained the early Church amidst sufferings and oppositions. During the times of persecution, the life of worship was held in the catacombs. Holy Qurbano, Confession, Baptism and Matrimony began to be administered from early centuries. Those who completed preparation were given baptism on the day previous to Easter and on Pentecost day. In the early Church, Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Qurbano were conferred together.

From the beginning, the Christians gathered together on Sunday and broke bread. Sunday was called the day of the Lord. Christians began to observe Sunday instead of the Sabbath. In course of time, definite form, expression and rites were given to the Holy Qurbano. The mode of confessing sins before Holy Qurbano was an ancient custom. The custom of celebrating the sacrament of marriage in the presence of the president of the Church also originated in the early Church.

The commemoration of the Pasch of the Lord was held on every Sunday. Besides, once a year, the passion, death and resurrection were observed after the name of the Pasch of the Lord. Similarly, the Christ events such as Ascension, Pentecost, Birth of the Lord, Baptism, etc, were commemorated once every year. The mode of preparing for these Christ-events with prayer and fast also began. That is how the 25 days' fast and the 50 days' fast came to be practised.

Order of the Hierarchy

The servers, who belonged to the three ranks: Bishops (*Episcopos*), Priests (*Prebyteros*) and Deacons (*Diaconos*) gave leadership to the apostolic

Church. The bishops were the successors of the apostles. The president of the chief city of the Roman Empire was known after the name of Metropolitan. The head of the Church, who comes as the leader of several bishops, began to be called Patriarch. Thus, the bishops of the cities of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople were known Patriarchs. The Churches of the Roman Empire were formed under the leadership of these five. The Chief President of the Persian Church was known as Catholicos-Patriarch. The President of the Indian Church was known as “Metropolitan of all India”. The leader and head of the five Patriarchs, was the Roman Patriarch. He was known by the name Pope. In the early Church, Rome and the Bishop of Rome had a lofty place among all other Churches.

The New Testament

The apostles handed over the signs and instructions of Jesus to the early Church. In course of time, they took the written form. They are the four Gospels. So also the early Church accepted the letters, which the apostles sent to the various Churches as part of the Holy Scripture. Thus, the New Testament also took shape besides the Old Testament. Most of the Books of the New Testament were written between 50 A.D. and 100 A.D.

Heresies in the Church

Just as the Church had attacks from outside, there were attacks from within also. Some people started to adulterate the true faith and others ventured to teach contrary to it. Thus, those who began to teach false doctrine and sought followers were known as heretics or false instructors. False doctrines originated in the early times about Trinity, about Lord Jesus and about the operation of the Holy Spirit. Certain others worked against the lawful leadership in the Church and established substitute communities and let loose strife and sectarian spirit in the Church. This kind of people are called schismatic. The Church Fathers, who lived in those periods, did try to destroy them and to confirm the Church in true faith.

Worship

The first four centuries of the Church were the period of persecution and martyrdom. Lots of faithful offered their lives for love of Jesus. In the Kukkilion of the Saints, the Church commemorates them:

(Bhagyam Nibiyarkum..)

“Blessed are the prophets, so too the apostles
As well as martyrs, on resurrection’s day”.
(Order of the Holy Qurbono)

Life Witness

Many Christians were prepared to undergo sacrifices and to embrace martyrdom for the sake of faith in the early Church. Let us prepare ourselves today to encounter challenges against faith and to undergo sacrifices for the sake of faith.

Memorise

“But rejoice in so far as you are
sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you
may also be glad and shout for joy
when his glory is revealed”
(1 Peter 4: 13).

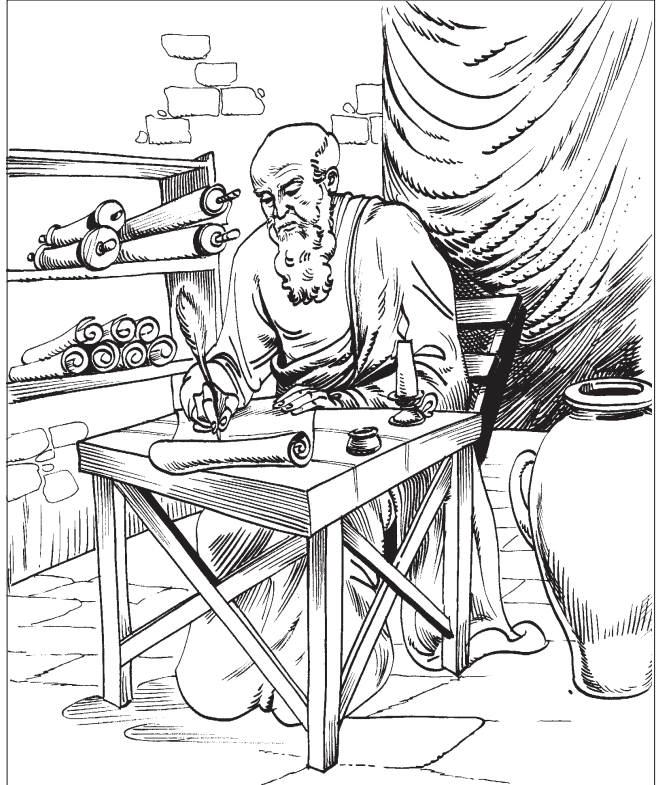
Questions

1. What were the reasons that caused persecution?
2. How did the Church get freedom?
3. Discuss the order of worship of the early Church.
4. Write short notes: (i) New Testament (ii) Heresies (iii) Schism.

Lesson 17

THE CHURCH FATHERS – PREFACE

The holy and learned leaders, who led the Church in the early centuries of the Christian Church, are called the “Church Fathers”. They tried to explain to the people the revealed divine mysteries and to raise their moral standard. They had the major share in rendering specific form to the teaching of the Church. Similarly, they tried to contradict the false teachings that originated in particular periods, to suppress the divisive tendency and to establish peace. Thus the Church Fathers are the strong pillars of the Christian Church.



The Position of the Church Fathers

All those who were the mouthpieces of the official tradition of the first seven centuries are called the Church Fathers. They were those who grasped the message of salvation without error and in its fullness. They had made it part of their life. They had handed down the same without blemish. They were the owners of the pure, lofty and courageous Christian life. They introduced the history of Christ fully and exhaustively. They were the mouthpieces of the true faith. They possessed holiness of life and were faithful to the Church. The Church Fathers have these four characteristics: unblemished teaching, holiness, official sanction of the Church and antiquity.

The Oriental Churches consider as Church Fathers those until John Damascene, who died in 750 A.D. At the same time the Western Church considers as Church Fathers those until Isidore of Cevil who died in 636 A.D.

The Liturgy of the modern Church, Code of Canons and Institution of Asceticism came into existence through the living source, the Church Fathers. Their life of prayer is the model for the generation that succeeded. Their prayer experience became the rule of the Church that followed. These Fathers were the luminous theologians. They tried whole heartedly to hold up the teachings of the Catholic Church. They preached the word of God without error and imparted strength to their Christian life. They bound together Catechism, Theology, Sacred Scripture, Liturgy and Pastoral enterprises. Their works were not confined to the sphere of intellect alone but they worked with the whole man before them.

The teaching of the Church Fathers has a great role in the Catholic Church. Holy Scripture and tradition are two fundamental sources of the faith of the Church. The teaching of the Church Fathers belongs to this tradition. When the Church officially teaches and interprets a subject, she does it basing on the Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church Fathers. Hence, the position of the Fathers of the Church is great in the daily life of the Church.

Outlook towards the Word of God

The Fathers have made the word of God the food of their spiritual and pastoral life and their continuous topic for meditation. They studied the Holy Scripture, wrote commentaries and interpreted them to the people. They gave great importance to the depth, relevance and infallibility of the Holy Scripture. They developed theology through interpreting Holy Scripture. All of them had sound knowledge in the Holy Scripture. They dedicated themselves for the service of the word of God. Their writings form a deep ocean of Scriptural erudition. They are the first masters of the interpretation of the Holy Bible. Thus they tried to build up the kingdom of God basing on the word of God.

Outlook on the Apostolic Teachings

The Fathers believed that their feet were set in the apostolic teachings. They had proclaimed the same repeatedly. They were particular that the canons (rules), which the Councils accepted should be based on the apostolic teachings. Thus they were inseparably one with tradition. “I would have never believed in the Holy Scripture except that the authority of the Church had led me”. St. Augustine says this as the mouthpiece of many people.

Outlook towards the Mysteries of Christ

All the Fathers worked to describe the Messiah, the Word Incarnate. The Fathers introduced the full vision of Christ amidst various false instructors and upheld the true faith. They taught objectively Jesus, who was perfect God and perfect man. That is, all their interpretations were Christ centred. For them, the central point of revelation and plan of salvation was Christ. They perceived in the mystery of Christ, which they keenly looked at, mystery of man being brightened and made meaningful. All the Fathers taught that Christ became man so that we may be made children of God. The Fathers introduced God, who took interest in human beings. The Second Vatican Council teaches this: “The mystery of man could really be brightened only in the mystery of the Word Incarnate. Christ, the new Adam, fully reveals man, to man by truly revealing the mystery of his Father and his love” (Church in the Modern World 22). The Church Fathers proclaimed that Christ alone is the true Saviour of humankind.

Church Fathers belonging to Various Culture

There were many Church Fathers from the different parts of the Roman Empire. The Church Fathers wrote chiefly in Syriac, Greek and Latin languages. Some did not get sufficient recognition in later times. The reason was that there was difference of opinion about their teachings. However, because of their yeomen services rendered to the Church of God, they cannot be forgotten. St. Cyprian and St. Augustine were the chief Fathers of the African Church. St. Athanasios, St. Cyril and St. Dianissius were the high towers of the Egyptian Church. The Churches will ever remember St. Justin of the Church of Palestine, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebius of Caesarea

and Epiphanius of Salamis. St. Ignatius of Syria, St. John Chrysostom and St. Eusthatios and Gregory Naziansen, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Basil of Asia Minor are the most eminent of the Church Fathers.

St. Hilary, St. Hypolytus, St. Ambrose, St. Leo, St. Gregory and St. Jerome of the Latin Church also are very famous.

The important among the Egyptian Fathers were St. Anthony, St. Paccomius and St. Maccarius. Besides these, there were many Fathers from the Syrian Church. The important among them are Ephrem, Aphrahat, Jacob of Saroug, Jacob of Edessa, Theodore from Antioch, Theodor, and Theodorette. They rendered considerable contribution to the Church.

Worship

The Church specially remembers the Church Fathers in the intercessory prayers during the celebration of the Holy Qurbono:

“Lord, remember those who did not alter the true faith you taught and the group of Fathers, who experienced distresses for your Church and your people and the teachers, who are the guardians of the true faith”:

(Order of the Holy Qurbono)

Life Witness

The Church Fathers are those who have made many sacrifices for bringing up and confirming the early Church in faith. Let us try to make their holiness and wisdom our model.

Memorise

"Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith"
(Hebrews 13: 7).

Questions

1. Who are the Church Fathers?
2. In the daily life of the Church, the position of the Fathers of the Church is great. Why?
3. Explain the outlook of the Church Fathers about the mysteries of Christ.

Lesson 18

EASTERN AND WESTERN CHURCH FATHERS

There are Church Fathers, both in the Eastern and Western Churches, who rendered many services. The Fathers, who lived from the first to the first half of the second century, are called apostolic Fathers. They are called so, because they had relationship with the apostles. The important apostolic Fathers are St. Clement of Rome, St. Barnabas, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Polycarp and Pappias.



Those Fathers, who wrote and worked in order to safeguard the true faith, when in the second century there arose false accusations and threats against the Church, were called the custodians of faith. The chief among the custodians of faith are: St. Justin, Tatian, Athanagorus and Theophilus of Antioch. We introduce in this lesson certain important individuals among the Church Fathers from the first to the eight centuries.

St. Ignatius of Antioch (+ 110 A.D.)

St. Ignatius, who was the bishop of Antioch from 98-110 A.D. was thrown before wild beasts in the Colosseum in Rome and had a martyr's death. He was one, who considered that only through martyrdom, one can become a

disciple of Christ and hence he embraced martyrdom fearlessly. He had written thus: “Let me embrace the passion of my God”. All his letters are invaluable treasures. It was he who called the Church of Christ “The Catholic Church” for the first time. In his letter to the Romans he extols much the Roman Church. He addresses the Roman Church: “One who presides in the chief place of the Roman territory”, and “One who presides over in love”. This is the first hint made about the primacy of Rome by one, who is from outside Rome.

St. John Chrysostom (344-407 A.D.)

St. John Chrysostom, from the Church of Antioch, was the bishop of Constantinople. He was known as a great orator even while at Antioch. On account of his oratory, he was called ‘Chrisostomus’, which means, “One with a gold tongue” by the succeeding generation. That has become a part of his name. He made several addresses to promote the moral life of the people. He had to face fierce oppositions for his works against immorality. Thus he was expatriated and in the hills of Caucasus he died in exile. He composed several works on the Holy Eucharist. St. Chrysostom is also known as Mar Ivanios. John Chrysostom, the social reformist, is most renowned among the Church Fathers.

St. Athanasius (295-373 A.D.) and St. Cyril (370-444 A.D.)

These were two shining stars of Alexandria in Egypt. Athanasius was one who loudly proclaimed the divinity of Christ against the Arian heresy, which denied his divinity. He had to undergo many sufferings from his rivals. Five times, he was expatriated for 17 years and he spent his life in exile.

St. Cyril was known from the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.). He clearly taught that Christ is one person and the two natures are united in that one person. St. Cyril is the author of many works.

Cappadocian Fathers

The three Saints, Basil (331-379 A.D.), Gregory Naziansan (330-390 A.D.) and Gregory Nyssa (335-394 A.D.), are known as the Cappadocian Fathers. They were the bishops of three dioceses in Cappadocia. These three wiped

away the Arian heresy and clarified the theological terms. All the three succeeded in their efforts to explain and teach the Nicene Creed. These three intimate friends worked for the common good of the Church. The three were the owners of unsullied personality.

Basil was known as enterpriser, Gregory Naziansan as orator and Gregory Nyssa as thinker. Basil could promote asceticism and social work along with theology. Gregory Naziansan led a withdrawn life, engaged in meditation. He carried out his service as the bishop of Constantinople. Gregory Nyssa and Basil were brothers. The three, who had received higher education, having understood the vanity of the world, embraced religious life and dedicated themselves for the service of the Church.

St. Ephrem (306-373 A.D.)

The most renowned among the Syrian Fathers is St. Ephrem. He was born in Nisibis in 306 A.D. He taught faith chiefly through his poetical works. St. Ephrem could introduce the incomprehensible truths of faith in metric verses. Hence he was also known as the “Harp of the Holy Spirit”. Besides verses, there are prose works and interpretations of Holy Scripture that belong to him. A lot of verses of Ephrem are used in both the East and West Syrian Liturgies. Many Petitions (Bouthos) written after the name of Ephrem are examples for this. He spent the last days of his life in Edessa.

St. Cyprian (210-258 A.D.)

St. Cyprian was born in Carthage in 210 A.D. He was the bishop of Carthage and was the first martyr among the African bishops. He has written thirteen books and many letters. His works were related to practical life. His small work, “Unity of the Catholic Church” is very famous. He had deep conviction about the sublimity of the Roman Church. He was a noble person full of many virtues of the mind and heart.

St. Ambrose (333-397 A. D.)

Ambrose was the bishop of Milan in Italy. He could make the Emperors to accept the teachings of the Church. The thought that the Emperor is in the Church and not beyond the Church ruled Ambrose. Ambrose found

time to write books even in the midst of his busy pastoral duties. He was famous as a great preacher, politician, social reformer, opponent of heresies and preacher of true faith. He maintained both the Church and nation in peace and unity. That he was instrumental for the conversion of Augustine, is what he is most known for.

St. Jerome (342-420 A.D.)

St. Jerome was born at Stridon in Dalmasia in 342 A.D. He was well versed in Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic languages. He paid special attention to the version and interpretation of the Holy Bible. His life was spent in meditation and writing. St. Jerome's eminence in the study of the Holy Bible is recognized even today.

St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.)

Augustine was born at Agaste in Africa in 354 A.D. Augustine, who had his higher studies in Carthage, lived according to the propensities of this world. Later on he was converted and received baptism from St. Ambrose and was appointed bishop of the diocese of Hippo in North Africa in 396 A.D.

He is the chief among the Church Fathers. He was at the same time philosopher, theologian, poet, preacher, critic, writer and pastor. The books of St. Augustine, who had vast erudition in philosophy and theology, are estimable at all times. He has tried to analyze almost all Christian mysteries. He managed the theological subjects such as: Trinity, Christology, grace, sacraments, salvation and consummation of age. He wrote about 1030 works. His most famous work is the 'Confession', which deals with the immortal truths through narrating the story of his own life. Similarly, another important work is the 'City of God'.

He suggested his own remedy for the problems, the Church encountered at that time. He firmly believed in the authenticity of the teaching of the Church.

The Church Fathers are those who, remaining as central pillars of the Church in the early times, led the Church in knowledge and holiness. Let us

try to follow their example, to learn their teachings assiduously and thus to be faithful to the Church.

Worship

The Church Fathers, the successors of the apostles, sustained the Church in the true faith. The Church specially remembers the Church Fathers in every celebration of the Holy Qurbono:

“Lord, grant us the grace to follow the footsteps of the holy Fathers and the teachers, the true faithful. Let it not happen to us to change their true instructions through cunningness or misinterpretation; on the other hand, grant us the grace to be engaged in your strait path with purity and sincerity, which are pleasing to you”.
(Order of the Holy Qurbono)

Life Witness

Almost all the Fathers of the East as well as the West were the chief ones in the knowledge of the Holy Scripture and in spiritual knowledge. Their knowledge and holiness made them pillars of the Church. Let us try to study and know more about the Holy Scripture and faith. Let us try to learn the catechism well.

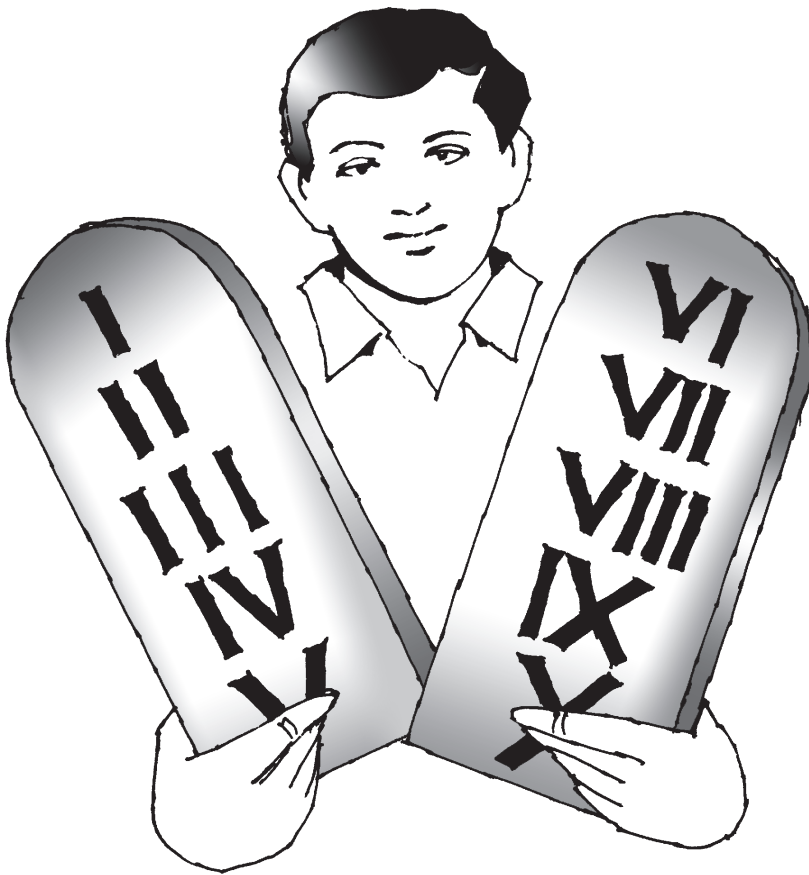
Memorise

“Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven”
(Matthew 5: 16).

Questions

1. Who are called the Apostolic Fathers?
2. Who are known as the Custodians of Faith?
3. Who are the Cappadocian Fathers? Describe.
4. Write a short note on St. Ephrem.

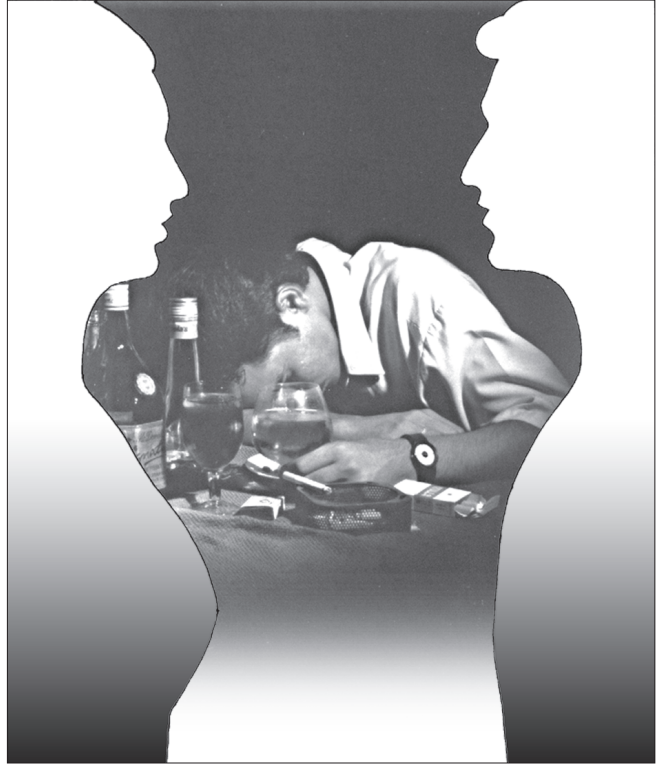
PART - IV



CHRISTIAN LIFE

Lesson 19**THE PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE**

All like infants. Their innocence, modesty and naturalness attract every one. But as they pass by their infancy, instead of developing these good qualities, there is much possibility for losing these. Just as worms destroy the beauty of a blossoming flower bud, there is possibility for a child growing from infancy to adolescence to deteriorate in goodness, innocence and good character through various social environments.



The adolescents are those who have not entirely lost the goodness and innocence of infancy. The reason is that the beauty of their infancy has not yet fully departed from them. When they enter into adolescence from infancy, there is the possibility of receiving some scratch and loss of colour. If only they could understand these mental, bodily, intellectual and social changes, they could guide their adolescence successfully.

Unless the boys and girls manage their adolescence carefully, they will experience its sad results throughout their life. The various problems that could happen are the topics for discussion of this lesson.

Certain Specialties of Adolescence

Adolescence is the period from 12 to 18 years of age. This is the period

of conflicts and challenges. Similarly, many bodily and mental changes happen during this period. This is the transition from the dependence of infancy to self-dependence that happens in adolescence. What happens here is the change from the period of safe infancy to the turbulent period of life.

“Who am I?” is the question that is characteristic of adolescence. The peculiarity of this age is the search to discover one’s own personality. When one cannot find out one’s identity there arises the identity crisis. They will question everything in the effort of stabilizing their own personality. They oppose any relationship, which is a hindrance to establish their own personality. They will question tradition. They will oppose and question parents, teachers, priests and the elder generation. They long for freedom. They will oppose anyone, who denies their freedom. When they are unable to discover their own personality, they will be in despair and confusion. During this age they will try to stand on their own legs and to take their own decisions. In order to establish their identity, the boys will take to the habit of smoking, drinking and drug-addiction and the girls through dressing up in modern style and makeup.

This is the period of vehement emotions. When the adolescents are suppressed through rules and scolding, their minds will be perturbed and there will arise in them unbridled anger, revolting mentality, guilt consciousness, and despair. Indecisiveness and instability are the specialties of adolescents. Young people are idealists. When things do not happen according to their plan, they hate the world; curse and suppressing protest within, retreat and at times, become slave to drinking and drug-addiction. Understanding these peculiarities of adolescence, boys and girls should live carefully with the help of the elder generation.

Friendship

At the beginning of adolescence, children like to separate themselves from parents and family. Children, who were confined to family till then, begin to widen their life circle. They spend time outside home with friends. Boys and girls forming groups of four or five friends, is the specialty of this period. This group has a leader. They show blind obedience to the leader

and to the group. They feel secure in the group only. This friendship has a crucial role in the life of the adolescents.

As per the thought style of the group, the children of the group may turn to either good or evil. The child, who grew up at home in obedience to the parents, studying well and showing earnestness in spiritual life, having entered into bad friendship, will begin to live disobeying parents, neglecting studies, losing interest in spiritual matters and opposing everyone. Since they work in consonance with the likings of the group, they begin to oppose and hate those who stand against the interests of the group. Boys and girls should discern whether the friendship in which they are engaged does good or evil and if it is evil, they should try to evade such friendship. By involving in such friendship, at times, there is possibility of spoiling life itself. The following evils originate from evil friendships: use of tobacco, liquor and dangerous drugs like morphine, obscene pictures, books and movies, excessive interest in ideological political relationships, games and arts, while forgetting their own responsibilities.

Use of Intoxicants

The adolescents will show interest to experience things seen in cinema and novels and to try and imitate film stars according to the instigation of friends. They will also start using intoxicants like: *beedi*, cigarettes and *ganja*. Beginning with casual drinking, they become addicts to it. There are lots of adolescents around us, who have lost their life becoming slaves to intoxication under the instigation of friends. There are lots of people amidst us, who are struggling to stop the use of intoxicants started in their adolescent period. The majority of liquor-addicts are those who have entered into the habit when they were adolescents. Once we have used intoxicants, we will be compelled to use it again. Hence, adolescents should be careful not to become slaves to intoxicants, which destroy the health, personality and family life of human beings. Hence, they should be ready to understand the friendship with addicts as wrong and should try to avoid such friendships. The adolescents should recognize that the use of intoxicants, which begins as mere fun in adolescence, could destroy their whole life. Use of intoxicants

is the greatest evil, which eats up the present day generation. The adolescents should be careful not to be slaves to it.

Excessive Interest in Audio-Visual Media

There are the audio-visual media in plenty today in society, which give pleasure to the ears and eyes. Films, television, internet, dailies and magazines, computers, and mobile phones are audio-visual media, which give human beings knowledge, fun and delight. But the adolescents, who approach them without discretion, being led by emotion alone, become strongly attached to them. The interest and attention of the adolescent students will be diverted to films, television serials, cricket games, football games, rock, concerts, playing cards, useless chatter, wrestling, internet chat, etc, so that their interest and attention to studies and responsibilities will diminish. Thus the adolescents, who become slaves to the audio-visual media, spoil their good future.

In the same way, those who take pleasure in the obscene programmes of these audio-visual media will become gradually attached to them. They will slowly be led to the evils of obscene films and obscene websites of the internet. Hence, the adolescents should diligently attend to use the audio-visual media with due discretion. The audio-visual media, which are useful for knowledge and recreation, should not cause our ruin. So the audio-visual media should be approached with great care.

Friendship with Ideological Politics

It is the speciality of the adolescents to react with excitement. That is the age when they show interest to do anything for ideals and certain principles. They will be ready to do anything before others in order to get recognition and to exhibit their smartness. They will show special interest to become leaders by joining political parties, to become members of revolutionary movements and part of the ideological political coalitions.

There are lots of people in our society, who have spoiled their own life by being attracted to the politics of the educational institutions in their adolescence. The boys and girls, by registering themselves as members of any political party and doing servile works for the interests of the party are

forgetting their responsibilities to study and work, as instruments in the hands of the politicians. For the sake of the politicians and to implement their political schemes, they become ready to do heinous works like: destroying common properties, stoning buses, setting fire to vehicles, loitering in the streets and destroying everything, attacking police, etc. There are those who even die for this; some meet with accidents, yet others are expelled from educational institutions and even there are those who abandon their studies. All these happen due to the political friendship of the adolescents.

Respect for the nation, knowledge in political affairs, sympathy for any particular political party are indeed good. But the adolescents, by being toys in the hands of politicians and being prepared to do anything, due to ignorance of politics, are forsaking their own lives. Hence, the adolescents should take care that they should not spoil their own future by deteriorating as political ruffians and spoiling their own future.

Sexual Attraction

When we look into nature, we see among birds, animals and human beings, mutual attraction and liking between male and female. This is a strong quality, which nature itself has deposited in living beings. Thus sexuality is a great gift, God has given to human kind, for male and female, to love and to live together.

During infancy, children live playing and enjoying together without discrimination of male and female. But during childhood, male and female, form separate groups. Leaving aside childhood, when they become adolescents, there arises special liking and interest for boys towards girls and for girls towards boys. This mutual liking and interest spring from the strength of sexuality, which God has deposited in them. The mutual liking and love between man and woman become meaningful in married life and in family life.

The liking that exists among adolescents is merely emotional. These baseless liking and love are transient. To like and love each other is not wrong. But boys and girls cannot enter into mature liking and loving in adolescence. Only men and women, who have reached maturity, can enter

into mature liking and loving relationships. The emotional tendencies of boys and girls in adolescence may badly affect their studies and responsibilities. Hence, it is better to avoid these emotions, which arise in adolescence, without paying heed to them. Even though these attractions of adolescence are natural, there is the possibility of falling into grave faults if not kept under control. If there is any liking or interest towards anyone, which continuously disturbs the mind, it is better to reveal that to parents or priests or religious and to get their advice. Take care that these likings and interests of adolescence do not affect your studies and responsibilities.

The Remedy for the Problems of Adolescence

The problems of adolescence are to be anticipated and one should not succumb to them. God's grace is necessary not to fall into problems of adolescence. So we have to strengthen personal relationship with God. The following things will stabilize us in the relationship with God, namely, reading of the Holy Scripture, making family prayer, participating in Holy Qurbano with devotion, learning catechism and doing virtuous deeds. If one is facing spiritual problem, speak openly to the priest during confession and introduce the problem clearly. We obtain absolution of sins, good counselling, freedom of mind and happiness through confession. We should go for confession with the conviction that the priest is the representative of God and that he is in the confessional to help us.

It is expedient for the adolescents, who have fallen into problems, to open their hearts and speak either to their parents, teachers, priests or religious. If we have just begun to walk in the wrong path, it is easy to come back. The return would not be easy if we lived for a long period in fault. The adolescents should understand the possibility of evil in anything, which they find difficult to open to their parents. Hence it is very useful to speak openly to others, who have the knowledge, if one feels there is any problem in one's adolescence.

In order not to fall into problems of adolescence, we should have clear conviction about the responsibilities of adolescence. When we fulfil the responsibilities such as, to learn well, attend to spiritual duties, grow in

good habits, help parents and maintain good relationship with all in the family, we will not fall into problems of adolescence.

Worship

O God! Our Lord, may your grace be our help in order to live with conviction about our responsibilities, to live away from evil circumstances and from evil friendship. Jesus, our Lord, help us to grow like you in wisdom, in years and in divine and human favour.

Life Witness

Let us try in our life to keep aloof from the environments of evil and to fulfil our duties with the conviction of responsibility. Let us try to oppose the circumstances of evil by standing close to God.

Memorise

“Jesus increased in wisdom
and in years, and in divine
and human favour”
(Luke 2: 52).

Questions

1. Why is adolescence said to be the period of problems?
2. The friendship of adolescence should be handled with great care. Why?
3. The use of intoxicants is said to destroy the whole life. What is the reason?
4. Why is it said that the likings and attractions of adolescence are to be taken care of?

MEDIA – VIRTUE AND VICE

What we call media are the means used to exchange ideas in a world, which advances very fast. Whatever is instrumental in the exchange of ideas, is media. Exchange of ideas or association of ideas, is the process of exchanging mental pursuits. The publishing of newspapers, film, radio, television channels, websites, etc., are the mass media. They are called the mass media, because they are possible means to associate and to exchange ideas with thousands of people at the same time. It is a reality that the media culture prevalent



today, started with news papers and magazines, grew through radio and television and have reached e-mail and internet and it influences everybody irrespective of time and place. The influence of the modern media of the world has wonderfully increased around us. The media have the great obligation to touch the goodness in human being and to make it mature.

Media could generally be divided into two groups: the traditional media, consisting of speaking, writing and printing and the modern media consisting of electronic media. Newspapers, magazines and other publications belong to the printing media. Radio, television, internet, etc, belong to the group of electronic media. The electronic media have more attraction and power for

enticement. The reason is, to see and hear seem more attractive than merely reading. Hence their influence is higher.

Media reflect the different feelings of people. The relevance of media, which unify the different parts of the world, is very great. Hence the media should work aiming at the common good.

Media – Virtue

The chief missions of media are to impart knowledge, to diffuse ideas and facilitate entertainment. As the information technology advances, the media is providing the world more and more virtue. We get knowledge about anything and everything through the media. Media have a great share in imparting knowledge. Websites, television channels, radio, newspapers and magazines impart authentic knowledge about each subject. Media help human beings very much for removing doubts and for receiving answers for questions. We become world citizens and wise human beings through the media.

The greatest virtue of media is that they help the exchange of ideas. People anywhere in the world can audio-visualize incidents that take place in one corner of the world at the very moment through modern media. The world is reduced into a universal village with the arrival of media. In the field of exchanging news, the role the newspapers carry out, is very great even in an age when electronic media are widely popularized.

Media are the technical wonders which have opened to modern human beings the unbounded possibilities of knowledge and entertainment. Media take care very much in rendering pleasure to both the children and elderly people alike.

There is no doubt that among the technical devices the greatest revolution is brought about by television. It is the media that have enjoined the different groups of people and cultures and have brought about a universal consciousness. Since the internet is widely used, the knowledge that is imparted through it, is very great. Media do great service imparting values, promoting social consciousness and encouraging humanitarian services.

Media – Vice

Even though media provide lots of goodness, they also bring about a culture of vice in the society. The challenge that we face today is that media, which provide knowledge, idea and entertainment, also provide false knowledge and entertainment. Media deny the right for knowing truth of the human being by often providing false news. Since the media try to twist facts for the sake of vested interests, the same things may be propagated in different modes.

Today, media are toys in the hands of the exploiters. Media have turned out to be means of exploitation of a whole generation. They interpret the unreal as real and the real as stale. Advertisements as well as other items of the audio-visual media have undertaken the publicity of degraded sexuality, brutality and murder. Hence, media cast a society devoid of the sense of value.

The excessive influence of television and the infiltration of cable connection have become a threat and challenge to the spiritual life. Today, it is the television programmes that determine the time and length of the family prayer. Even though the internet has large possibilities to serve vast knowledge, the information available in many of its websites are leading to moral deterioration.

Many ideas that bring decay to marital fidelity and the morality of sexuality and programmes, articles and artistic representations of literature that annihilate the value of life, are on the increase today. Besides, an attempt is growing to imitate the stars of films and sports and models of the advertisements. All these will create decline in each one's personality. The programmes that stimulate human interest towards vices are capable of creating in the youth the attacking mentality and sexual anarchy. Hence media are to be handled with great care.

Practical Approach

When the media prepare the banquet of audio-visual programmes irrespective of virtue and vice, the human society should have the capability to discern them. We should have the practical approach regarding the media

that instead of standing outside, criticizing them, getting inside and making use of them. For, all should show interest to choose virtue, having discerned virtue from vice, which the media supply. We should not blindly believe media, which deviate children from the right path, weaken the youth, promote disorder in society and pave the path for moral decline, but ought to be enlightened to read between the lines, to discover the news behind news and to analyze news objectively.

Those who give leadership to media and those who use them should observe moderation and self-restraint. The means of mass media are to be used promoting morality. The centres having authority should restrict media in the right manner. Media should work with the common good in view. Attempt should begin from the upper level of authority to form a good media culture.

Deserving position should be given to media in families. Media should be used in families in a manner without detriment to the family prayer and to the exchange of common ideas in the family. The members of the family should attend to choose and enjoy those audio-visual programs that give importance to knowledge and entertainment as well.

We could overcome the evils that arise from media by using them fruitfully. This technical knowledge should be made use of for the common good – in a manner useful to everyone.

Media and the Church

The Catholic Church maintains a very progressive approach towards media. The Church accepts that all kinds of media may be useful for exchange of ideas. The fact that Vatican has a Pontifical Council for media makes it clear how much interest the Church has for this zone. Besides, the International Media Congress under the leadership of the Catholic Church does promote media. The invitation of the late Pope John Paul II, that ‘the Catholic media should be intermediaries of the culture of love’ demands attention. The different television channels and publications under the leadership of the Church prove how the Church makes use of media. The leading paper of Vatican, ‘L’Osservatore Romano’, Vatican Radio, Vatican television, Vatican

website, the Catholic papers, television channels, websites, printing media, diocesan magazines, etc. help the conversation between the Church and the world. The official document, namely, “The Mass Media”, which the Second Vatican Council published, is a proof that the Church gives very much importance to media.

The Council teaches thus: “The Church approves the fact that the right use of media is a precious achievement to the human society. For, they are capable of rendering entertainment and knowledge to human beings. Besides, they will be useful for the propagation of the kingdom of God” (Mass Media 2). The Christian vision is not to see the media as a problem and hence to keep them away, but to consider them as big sources of unbounded possibilities and to make use of them to the utmost.

Media, which are the seat of unbounded possibilities of knowledge and entertainment, are inevitable for the progress of human culture. But all should try to use them in the right way aiming at the common good.

Worship

Lord God, we understand that there are many circumstances of virtue and vice in the society in which we live. We pray that each one of us may be granted the spiritual strength to forsake vice and to embrace virtue.

Life Witness

Let us take a pledge to accept only the virtue of the media, which are for knowledge and entertainment and to keep aloof from their vice.

Memorise

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”
(Romans 12: 21).

Questions

1. How can we divide media?
2. What are the virtues the media impart to the world?
3. What is the circumstance to say that media are to be handled with great attention?

PRAYER

(Psalms 140, 141, 118, 116)

Lord, I have called upon you, answer me; hear and receive my words.

Let my prayer be like incense in your sight, the offering of my hands like the evening offering.

Set a guard, Lord, before my mouth, a guard before my lips that my heart may not turn to evil words and I may not do deeds of wickedness.

Let me not take salt with impious men; let the just man teach me and reprove me.

Let not the oil of the impious anoint my head; because my prayer was against their evil doing.

The side of the rock has restrained their judges; and they have heard how gentle are my words.

As when a plough cleaves the earth their bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol.

I have lifted up my eyes to you, Lord, and in you have I put my trust, do not cast away my soul.

Keep me from the hand of the proud, who have laid snares for me.

Let the wicked fall into their nets, while I pass on.

With my voice I cried to the Lord; with my voice I besought the Lord.

I poured out my complaint before him; I told him my trouble before him.

When my spirit is faint, you know my way. In the path where I walk, they have hidden a trap for me.

I look to the right and see none that knows me; the way of escape has gone from me and there is none who cares for my soul.

I cried to you Lord, and said “You are my refuge; and portion in the land of the living”.

Hear my petition, because I am brought very low. Deliver me from my persecutors; because they are too strong for me.

Lead me forth from prison that I may give thanks to your name; your just ones shall have hope when you shall reward me.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my by-lanes.

I have sworn and am resolved to keep the judgments of your justice.

I am greatly brought low, Lord, give me life according to your word.

Be pleased with the words of my mouth, Lord, and teach me your judgments.

My soul is ever in your hands and I have not forgotten your law.

The wicked have laid snares for me; and I have not strayed from your commands.

I shall inherit your testimony forever because it is dear to my heart.

I have turned my heart to do your commands forever in truth.

Praise the Lord, all you nations; praise him, all you peoples.

For his grace is strong over us, truly the Lord is forever.

And to you belongs praise O God, Barekmor.

**CATECHISM
OF THE
SYRO-MALANKARA
CATHOLIC
CHURCH**



**ST. LUKE
THE EVANGELIST**