

The Third Encyclical Letter of Patriarch Rai, Bkerke, March 2014

Through the Grace of God
PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST
AND
CARDINAL OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH
To their Excellencies, our esteemed Brothers, the Bishops,
And the Sons and Daughters of our Maronite Church,
The Priests, the Deacons, the Monks and the Nuns,
And all the Faithful,
And all those of Good Will
Peace and the Apostolic Blessing.

Introduction

1. Our Maronite Liturgy is the Liturgy of the Living Treasure, founded on the Mystery of Christ, the Son of the Living God, who “for us and for our salvation” became man to restore us, to save us and to lead us to His Father in the Holy Spirit. Out of this Treasure, our Maronite Church pours out her spirituality, identity and gifts, and defines her mission in Lebanon, the Patriarchal Domain and the countries of expansion, and in the heart of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This Liturgy enriches the sons and daughters of our Church, pastors and faithful clergy and laity, with faith, values and the witness of life; and, by virtue of their fidelity to this “Living Treasure” they, in turn, enrich the societies in which they live.

The Liturgy of the Living Treasure is built on three dimensions, which are at the root of our Christian identity and the constitution of the People of God: in the priestly dimension the true worship of the Father in Spirit and truth (*John 4:23*) in the Mystery of the Pascal Christ, in the mystery of “His death to redeem us and His resurrection to sanctify us,”; in the prophetic dimension the Word of Life in the Scriptures and in the Church’s living Tradition and her teaching; and in the kingly dimension the law of love and Christian morality.¹

This Living Treasure is a school of faith, catechesis and prayer. It makes present in our liturgical celebrations all of God’s plan of salvation and all those who worship, leading us to a personal encounter with Him and our consent to the healing action of grace in us, thus, making us partners in the mystery of love welling up in our hearts, the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

It is the font and the summit. It is the font that quenches us with the Word, the grace and the divine presence, from which we launch out into human society, carrying love and mercy to the poor, the sick and the needy; justice to the oppressed and the neglected; freedom to the

incarcerated and the enslaved; consolation to the grieving; courage to the weak; and hope to the despondent. It is the aim that we strive for with hunger and thirst in its historical dimension, carrying the experiences of joy and sorrow as offerings from us and from our people to the place of encounter with God; and, its finality dimension, when we return to the Father's home.

2. At the end of this third year of my patriarchal ministry, and for the sake of safeguarding our people, their identity and mission, both of which receive their nourishment from our Liturgy, the Liturgy of the Living Treasure, we have chosen this subject for our third encyclical: *The Maronite Liturgy, the Liturgy of the Living Treasure*, as we live the immense challenges in Lebanon, the Middle East and the countries of expansion, and there is no way to confront them or find solutions for them without recourse to the present and ongoing "Liturgy of the Living Treasure" and the obligation to study it, comprehend it, and be formed by it, now and continuously.

In the first chapter, we discuss the Liturgy, the source of our identity and our Maronite mission, in all its dimensions. The second chapter reveals how the Liturgy is the place of worship in spirit and truth. The third chapter directs us toward the mindful and active participation in the liturgical actions in general. The fourth chapter explains the symbolism in the Divine Liturgy in order to enliven this participation. In the fifth chapter, we arrive at linking the earthly and the heavenly Liturgies. In the sixth chapter, we terminate at the perpetual offering of Christ, the Lord, in our Mass.

Chapter One

The Maronite Liturgy, Source of our Identity and Mission

3. In His first public appearance after His Baptism in the Jordan, and His forty days of fasting in the desert, Jesus entered one Saturday into the synagogue in Nazareth and revealed His identity and mission through Isaiah's prophecy, fulfilled in Him: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me (the *identity*) to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free" (the *mission*) (refer to *Luke* 4:16-18). With these two, the identity and the mission, the Lord made us partners through the sacraments of Baptism and the Chrismation.

The fundamental knowledge in life is for the human person or the community to know their identity, following the Greek philosophical rule voiced by Socrates: "Know yourself." In Caesarea Philippi, Jesus said to His disciples: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is? ...But who do you say that I am?" (*Matthew* 16:13 & 15)

4. The Liturgy is a well organized ritual through which Christians render an act of worship to God, who continues, in His Church and with her and through her, His work of redemption in us, which Christ the Redeemer had accomplished. The Christian community, under the leadership of the bishop or the priest, undertakes this divine service for its spiritual benefit in its three constituents: celebrating this act of worship to God, proclaiming the Gospel of Salvation and the embodiment of Charity by helping the needy.²

***The Liturgy, Source of our Identity**

This same Liturgy became incorporated in the life of the Maronite Church and shaped her identity and mission from her Syriac Antiochene tradition, distinctive in its Liturgy, theology, spiritually and organization.³ For, the Maronite Liturgy is of Antioch and Jerusalem origins and affiliation, and Syriac in spirituality. It has developed and interacted with its Mount Lebanon environment, retaining common elements with the Chaldean Rite and the rites of the Syriac liturgical families in line with the renown School of Edessa and with the Roman Rite in some of its aspects. All these characteristics afford our Maronite Church an ecumenical mission with our sister churches in the pastoral, spiritual and educational sectors.⁴

5. The Maronite Liturgy is distinctive in the dimensions which crystallized its identity and specified the expanse of its mission, which are:

a. The Theological Dimension

The Liturgy emanates from the Holy Trinity, and to the Trinity it is oriented. Through liturgical rituals and prayers, its summit being the Eucharistic Sacrifice known as the Prayer of Blessing, glory, thanksgiving and praise is raised to God, the Father, Lover of all people, to the Son, Savior of the world through His death and resurrection and to the Holy Spirit, Perfector “here and now” of the work of redemption, and the One who accomplishes the fruits of salvation in us and in the world. He directs the Church and leads her and abides in her as through a perpetual Pentecost.⁵

b. The Christological Dimension

Its theological and biblical meanings appear through two fundamental narratives in the public ministry of Jesus Christ: The narrative of His baptism at the hands of John the Baptist in the Jordan River, which forms the launching of his evangelical mission, and the event of His death on the Cross, and His glorious resurrection from among the dead.⁶

c. The Marian Dimension

The Marian Dimension takes prominence in the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary within the theological and popular framework simultaneously, and in texts that describe the Blessed Virgin Mary as the “Mother of God,” handmaid of the divine plan for salvation for the human person.

d. The Monastic and Ascetic Dimension

The Monastic and Ascetic Dimension manifests itself in the evening, night, morning and midday prayers. In them, the churches, parishes and monasteries remind us of permanent repentance, detachment from the world, evangelical simplicity, asceticism, austerity and fasting.

e. The Human Dimension

The Human Dimension reflects a spirituality that is unique to the human person and his/her various experiences, which he/she embodies through a prayer rising toward the Father, emanating from the heart and the mind, with the participation of the body. Liturgical texts also carry numerous experiences of suffering, persecution, wars and expulsions that our people have been through, alongside the joys of communion, solidarity, unity, forgiveness and pardon, in addition to the glories of triumph through the Resurrection of the Lord, the liberation of the people, and the victory of the saints, the sons and daughters of our Church.

f. The Eschatological Dimension

The Eschatological Dimension constitutes the characteristic of the Maronite Liturgy, built on the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus, the new life and the theology of hope. In it, the Liturgy of the earth reflects the reality of the Liturgy of heaven and embodies it.

g. The Biblical Dimension

Texts from the Old and the New Testaments are present in our prayers to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish between the liturgical and the biblical texts, which means, no Liturgy without the Scriptures.⁷

6. All this richness present in our Maronite Liturgy was uncovered by the liturgical reform started by the late Patriarch Elias Boutros Al-Hoayek (1899-1931) and completed by his successor, the late Patriarch Antoun Boutros Arida (1932-1955). This richness increased in brilliance and splendor after the convening of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), in accordance with the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (On the Sacred Liturgy), which laid the foundations for liturgical reform. Foremost among these foundations is that every sound renewal should emanate from traditional constants at the theological, ecclesial and liturgical levels, and should be open to every advancement and organic development; provided this evolution stem from a solid origin of a specific nature and is harmonious with the contemporary condition that the believing community is living “here and now.”

This methodology constituted an essential support in the work of reform through the Patriarchal Liturgical Committee which operates along these principles. The aim of this methodology is to have the Liturgy help the community of believers participate in the liturgical celebrations in a mindful manner, fruitful and effective, requiring that the texts contribute to the building of the spirituality of the individual and the community. Toward that goal, the Institute of Liturgy at Holy Spirit University – Kaslik, the Center for Oriental Studies and Research at the Antonine University, and others from among the ecclesial institutions, have released scientific and pastoral studies that enculturate and nourish with spirituality the sons and daughters of our Church within the Patriarchal Domain and the countries of expansion, by tightening the bonds of their unity and solidarity, and aiding awareness of their identity and mission in the Church and in society.

***The Liturgy is the Source of our Mission**

7. The liturgical life that forms a prayerful community *par excellence*, uncovers the great expanse of our mission at the social and national levels. For, the laity, believers in Christ, who are ingrained in this community, this gives meaning to their involvement in public affairs, where they bear witness to the Gospel and imprint their activity with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, and the Christian values, such as justice, fairness, contentment and impartiality; and they are dedicated in the service of the human person and the common good. Christians, who have commitments in social, political and national affairs, are to aspire to devote themselves assiduously to the liturgical life, especially, the Divine Liturgy and prayer. The rule that Jesus laid down: “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (*Mark* 12:17), demands of them to harmonize in their private and public life, between the spiritual and the temporal fields, and makes of this harmonization a source of spiritual strength for persons and communities. So, in as much as the believing official participates in the liturgical life, by attending the Liturgy and engaging in prayer with a spirit of deep, reverent faith,

ecclesial commitment and a historic conscience, we would witness the unity, strength and steadfastness in the ecclesial family. For the Liturgy is the guarantor of unity on the theological, ecclesial and social levels, and active participation in it creates in believers a genuine openness toward other people, and distances all types of isolation and detachment. In as much as the believer unites with God through prayer, the Eucharist, attentiveness to the Word of God and contemplation, he opens up with love toward all people, sharing their needs, pains and calamities through the human spirit which unites them and turns in its totality to the one God, creator of all, who, in His mercy, sympathizes with every human person and calls him to love and to an abundant life. In this way, the communal liturgical life becomes a hymn of love, unity and peace.

8. In this framework, liturgical life contributes to building unity in the integrated, harmonized and believing community, which is committed to the Gospel message in the family, in the Church and in national life, with the dynamism of love, unity and solidarity. It reflects the portrait of the Church and the authenticity of the People of God, where the clergy and the laity contribute, each with his own role and gift, in witnessing to Christ and His Gospel in faithfulness to ecclesial and historical constancy.

In order to safeguard the unity of our Church, we ask all to maintain unity in the liturgical endeavor in all eparchies, parishes, and monasteries with a sublime ecclesial spirit, in accordance with the directions of the liturgical committee, as ratified by the Holy Synod of our Church. For, the Liturgy belongs to the Church and not to individuals.

Chapter Two

The Liturgy is a Place of Worship in Spirit and Truth

9. When the Samaritan woman asked Jesus about the place of worship of God, whether on Mount Gerizim as the Samaritans say, or in Jerusalem, as the Jews claim, He answered, “Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...but...in Spirit and in truth” (*John 4:21 & 23*).

Jesus Himself is the truth. He is the Word incarnate. He died in the flesh on the Cross as redemption for the human race, and He rose from the dead glorified. By His resurrection, a new temple was erected, His living Body glorified before the throne of God, which became the “place” of the real worship that God desires (*John 4:23*). In the temple of His Body, not built by human hands, and open to all people, true worship of God is realized. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit, the Builder of the new Temple, the Body of Christ, risen from the dead, who draws us to Him in the Mystery of the Eucharist, changing us, uniting us, and making us His spiritual body, that is, the Church.⁸

10. To this spiritual temple, Jesus alluded when He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (*John 2:19*). He was referring to His Body which would be destroyed on the Cross. Then, a new temple would stand, which is His mystical Body, that is, the Church, which has become “the universal sacrament of salvation and its instrument.”⁹

When the High Priest Caiaphas and those with him conspired against Jesus and had Him crucified, they nullified their priesthood with that deed and they spoiled their sacrifices. This is the meaning behind the veil of the Temple of Solomon having been torn from top to bottom (*Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45*), after which, the Temple was completely destroyed at the hands of the Romans in the year 70.

With the tearing of the Veil of the Temple, the heart of the crucified Jesus was “torn” with the piercing of the lance, and from it, new life burst forth, as was alluded to by the blood and water (*John 19:34*), symbolism of baptism for the rebirth of the new human person and oblation for his spiritual food. Through water and blood, the path to the Father’s heart was opened, and “the sword of distress was lifted from the Tree of Life,” returning the human person to paradise after being banished from it by the sin of Adam and his offspring, making of us a priestly kingdom to God, His Father. And, here, “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.” He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the almighty” (*Revelation 1:5-8*).¹⁰

This is **the meaning of the Liturgy, worshiping God in Spirit and truth**, and the Apostle Paul calls it “**the spiritual worship**,” for, he says: “I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship” (*Romans 12:1*). It is worship in imitation of Jesus, who opened His hands on the Cross to draw everyone to Himself, and to gather them into His eternal love. The activity of this love, exuding from the Crucified One, is growing through the Liturgy of the Church to achieve its purpose, which is to change the face of the earth. It is **the Liturgy of the culture of love**.¹¹

11. In light of this concept of “the Liturgy, a place of worship in Spirit and truth,” revealed to us, is the **meaning of “houses of worship”** in the parishes, monasteries and institutions and its inner components.

***The Place of Worship**

The place of worship, known as **the church**, which means, on the one hand, “house of the community of God,” where people gather to hear the Word of God and offer a sacrifice of worship also means, on the other hand, and from a spiritual side, the living community, that is, the mystical Body of Christ, which the Holy Spirit realizes by resting on the faithful, fashioning them into living stones in the spiritual Temple of God (*1 Peter 2:5*).

In our tradition, the church is the heart of the parish and the altar is the heart of the church; and the church being the true manifestation of God and His presence in its midst, our Syriac Antiochene theology demands that its altar faces East,¹² and to have above it a window called “the Window of the Father of Lights” where sunlight, at its rising, enters into the heart of the church in memory of the Father sending His Son into the midst of the world to save those walking in darkness and grant them the light of life. The Liturgy, that is, facing East achieves a unity with the march of history toward its future. It is a march of hope and prayer with cosmic dimensions.¹³

***The Altar**

12. The altar (*mathbah*) is an Arabic expression derived from the Syriac “*madbaho*” and expresses worship **tied to the new sacrifice** at the top of Golgotha and the banquet of the Body of the Lord and His Blood for the life of the world. On this altar, the Church of the earth offers the Father the sacrifice of the Son in accedence to His commandment: “Do this in memory of me” (*Luke 22:19*).

The altar symbolizes the tomb of Christ and the glory of His resurrection and from it flows every sacramental grace for the salvation of the world. In it is the icon of the heavenly altar where the angels serve the Liturgy of the Wedding of the Lamb. In the church, there is one altar because Christ is one and the sacrifice is one and the priesthood is one. It is linked to the person of Christ, the springhead of forgiveness. So, it is called ‘the forgiving altar’ from which we receive the peace and we share it amongst ourselves.

Every time the community of believers gathers around the altar of the Lord to celebrate the Mystery of the Eucharist, **believers should have reverence**, because through the earthly liturgy, they are joined to the heavenly liturgy; they transcend the bounds of history and enter into a state of communion with divine love, thus, leaving from the confines of this world and crossing with Christ, risen from the dead, into the realm of God.¹⁴

***The Bema**

13. Placed in the sanctuary in front of the altar facing the people, are two lecterns for prayers and the readings of the first part of the Liturgy, known as the Liturgy of the Word. A third was placed in the middle known as the “*Bema*” reserved for the reading of the Gospels and for the homily. But, the passage of time merged it with the right hand lectern. From the **Table of the Word**, the faithful are nourished through participation in the prayers and listening to the Word of God from the Epistles and the Gospels and contemplating on them.

To the *Bema*, there are **two interconnected concepts**: The first, **theological**, points to the Word Incarnate who consummates the plan of salvation and dwells among people and teaches them the true meaning of the kingdom of heaven, which begins on earth through His person, words and signs. The second is **ecclesial**, meaning the Church, which continues the service of preaching and teaching in her Eucharistic gathering, after which, she launches to witness to the Word, embodying it as an education and a culture of life in the world.

There is a strong and integrated bond between the *Bema* and the altar that sums up all of the Son’s plan of salvation. For, the *Bema* signifies the incarnation, and the **Altar**, the death and resurrection.

14. The *Bema* is not just a place for reading and announcing, rather, it is **the throne of the Divine Teacher**, Jesus Christ, through whom all the Scriptures are fulfilled in their two Testaments, Old and New. This is how Philip introduced Him when he found Nathanael: “We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth” (*John 1:45*). With this connotation, Jesus taught on the Mount: “Do not

think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (*Matthew 5:17*).

Christ, the Lord, dwells in the midst of the community, and He is their center point, **and they gather around Him**. They listen to Him, because **He speaks to them when the sacred books are read**, and the sign is the one lit candle, when a letter of the Apostle Paul, another epistle, or the *Acts of the Apostles* is read on the lectern to the left; and the lighting of the two candles on the *Bema*, when the Gospel is read, with the community standing, because the Lord is talking to them directly. In preparation for the reading of the Gospel, it is processed and incensed before being read. Then, it is read, with eyes and hearts gazing toward Him, as the *Letter to the Hebrews* invites us to do: “while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God” (*Hebrews 12:2*).

Linked to the *Bema*, is **the bishop’s throne**, head of the local church, representing the Teacher and the Divine Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Through all that, the prayerful community ought to always raise their gaze toward Jesus.¹⁵

15. The homily comes in to aid the faith-encounter with Jesus, the Word, as the Apostle Paul puts it: “Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ” (*Romans 10:17*). In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), His Holiness, Pope Francis, stressed the importance of the homily, because God wants to reach out to others through the homily and to exercise His power through human utterance, to renew the faith of listeners and develop it. **For the homily** revives the dialogue that God started with the faithful through divine utterances, which they heard and which gives the Liturgy its meaning and the warmth of participation in it. **His Holiness, the Pope, calls** for the preparation of the homily through contemplation, prayer and openness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit on the part of the priest, who has to firstly be renewed through the Word, so he can relay it to the faithful as a witness to life. When he prepares the homily, he has to invoke the efficacious and creative light of the Holy Spirit, making of himself and his capabilities an instrument of the work of the Spirit.¹⁶

Chapter Three

The Alert and Active Participation in the Liturgy

16. When the four men came carrying the paralyzed man in Capernaum, Jesus healed him, soul and body. He healed his soul: “Child, your sins are forgiven.” And, He healed his body from paralysis: “rise, pick up your mat, and go home” (Refer to *Mark 2:1-12*). With that, He wanted to show that **the human person is a unity, not divided into soul and body**. He is called to glorify God with all his being, as Paul, the Apostle, says: “The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power... your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you... Therefore, glorify God in your body” (*I Corinthians 6:13-14, and 19-20*).

Alert Active Participation in the Liturgy Encompasses our Human Entity: Soul and Body

17. In the liturgical celebration, we are in the presence of God. Every time we celebrate a rite (RITUS), such as the Liturgy, or the ritual of any other sacrament in accordance with the Maronite Calendar, we are in His presence. **Ritual** means **the practical formula** that regulates the true worship, glorifies God and places us on the right path leading to an encounter with God. Thus, the ecclesial authority regulates it theologically, spiritually and practically, and it ratifies it and orders us to abide with these regulations, which entails not only the texts, but also bodily gestures, because we pray with all our being, soul and body. Therefore, below we explain their meaning and symbols.

***The Sign of the Cross**

18. **The Sign of the Cross** is the first movement through which our body prays. We inscribe it in the form of a cross from our forehead down to the chest and then to the two shoulders. Its meanings are explained by the Venerable Patriarch Estephan Ad-Douaihy: The movement from the head to the chest signifies the descent of the Son of God from heaven for our salvation. Its displacement from the left shoulder to the right signifies His resurrection, from death to life, and our displacement, through His Cross, from the destitution of this world to perpetual glory.¹⁷ And, we say, at the start of our prayers and actions, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” and we end with, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.” We **start** with the name of the One God and the Trinity **beseeching** His help, power and inspiration, **and we end with glorifying**, praising and thanking God for what we have performed in truth, benevolence and beauty. And every prayer ends glorifying, praising and thanking God, when the bishop or the patriarch is the celebrant, reserving for him the Syriac formula known with the uttering, “Bless, Father, head of the priests or the head of the heads,” to terminate the prayer with the full doxology: “Raise glory, honor, praise and thanksgiving to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever.” And the people respond: Amen.

19. **The Sign of the Cross** in its external form is a declaration of our faith and our union with the crucified Christ, who is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” in the face of every weakness and foolishness (*1 Corinthians* 1:23-24). Thus we say, “Yes” in a visible and public manner to Christ who suffered in the flesh for us and manifested the love of God for us until the end, that we may declare with Him our acceptance of the cross of suffering and redemption in our private lives and profess our participation in the salvific love of God. And, we confirm, committed to the fact that God judges the world with the humility of suffering and love. For, in the appearance of weakness He is the All Powerful One, and in the appearance of impotence, He is able to save each one of us. With the Sign of the Cross, we place ourselves under His protection and under the capability of God and we march on the path of life in His footsteps in accordance with His call: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (*Mark* 8:34).

The Sign of the Cross gestures and words, is a **declaration of faith in the Triune God**: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And, when we use holy water with these words at the entrance of the church or at home, it is to remind us of our baptism, where the love of God has crowned us, and the grace of the Son has redeemed us, and the fellowship and indwelling of the Spirit has given us life. In a particular way, our baptism brought us into communion with the death of Jesus and His resurrection and gave us the ability to triumph over trials and to rise to new life. Through the expression of St. Paul “...you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on

the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator” (*Colossians* 3:9-10). All of this means that we are constantly living under the influence of the divine event consummated on the day of our baptism.

20. The Sign of the Cross then, summarizes all the essence of the Christian Religion, which sealed us on our foreheads with the stamp of the cross in all its dimensions and concepts (*Revelation* 7:3). Christianity is the religion of the blessing: Christ is the blessing for all creation and all people. Through the Sign of the Cross, we bless each other. The mother blesses her infant with the Sign of the Cross on his forehead, and on his chest and through it, accompanies her children when they leave home; and parents bless their children with holy water. Blessing is a priestly action, by virtue of baptism, and a priestly action of the parents in addition to the blessing of the priest and the bishop through the authority of Holy Orders.¹⁸

***Standing and Sitting**

21. Standing is for **praying** as we observe in the Old and the New Testaments. Therefore, it is demanded that we stand, as is appropriate in the presence of God. By way of example, we find in the Gospel that the Pharisee, who stood in the Temple to pray, and the tax collector who stood at a distance, striking his chest and praying (Refer to *Luke* 18:11, and 13). Standing is **respect for the Word of God** which we hear, and for God to whom we look toward in prayer, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints as well. It is to express our **readiness** to live the Word of God and to act in accordance with it in our daily life, and to witness to it in our culture.

According to our Christian Tradition, in conformity with Law 20 of the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.), Christians do not kneel throughout the Paschal season, from Resurrection Sunday to Pentecost Sunday on which we go back to kneeling and genuflecting in a specific ritual. Standing during the Paschal season **is in commemoration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and his triumph** over sin and death and to express joy at the Resurrection. Standing is a sign of triumph. This is how Stephen saw it, the hour he was before the Sanhedrin, “Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (*Acts* 7:55). When we stand to pray, we contemplate the Lord Jesus standing in His glory, ready to come to our aid in our need; and He does not draw back. Thus, we unite in His triumph that we may proceed forth to embrace every needy and weak person.¹⁹

22. Sitting is for **contemplation and humility**, which requires that our body be in a state of rest to facilitate listening, contemplation and absorption, and to **direct the vision of the mind and the heart to Jesus**. In that, we “seek God’s face” (*Psalms* 27:8). He is more sublime than we are, yet, He comes to meet us, and we, in turn, seek **rapprochement with Him through our prayers**. Sitting for contemplation also helps us **enter into the depths of our souls**, thus, realizing our poverty, weakness and limitations before the Omnipotence of God, and concurrently, to find God in the depths of our souls. He is “closer to us than we are to ourselves,” as St. Augustine says, and when we find God in our inner self, we know ourselves.²⁰

***Opening the Hands and Joining them**

23. The opening of the hands is the stance while in prayer, and we find it in all religions. It is the state of peace, the shunning of violence, and the opening of the heart to God and His holy ones with confidence and hope. The opening of the hands resembles two wings, as if the human person is aiming to ascend up high to God through the wings of prayer. With respect to

Christians, the opening of the hands reminds of the arms of Christ spread out on the Cross, to draw all to Himself (*John 12:22*) and embrace them. It also reminds of His complete abandonment to the will of God as an act of filial worship and of His perfect union with Him: “yet, not as I will, but as you will” (*Matthew 26:39*). The opening of the hands is worship of God, and love for all people.

24. As for **joining the hands**, it is a sign of commending ourselves into the hands of God, expressing our confidence in His care and trustworthiness as to His love. The priest joins his hands in the consecration after anointing them with the Myron as a sign of acceptance of the consignment of the priesthood, identity, mission and authority. He safeguards this trust, not as if it is his own, rather, as its steward appointed by God. He remembers that, every time he joins his hands after prayer as expression of the safeguarding of graces and gifts received from the graciousness of God.²¹

***Prostrating**

25. Of the most important expressions of spiritual prayer through body motions are, prostrating and kneeling or genuflecting and bowing down, and they are all in the Holy Bible.

Prostration is the falling down with the whole body with face toward the ground. We find it in *Joshua*, when he met “the captain of the host of the LORD” (*Joshua 5:14*), Origen considered that this captain was Christ who was to come. The Lord Jesus Himself prostrated to pray on the Mount of Olives the night of His Passion. He “fell prostrate in prayer, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me”” (*Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:35*). Jesus falls to the ground to be in the state of the fall of the human person and pray to the Father from the depth of His isolation and need, placing His personal human will in the care of the Father’s will, in order to heal the weak human will with the power of God’s will: “not as I will, but as you will.” This is the word of truth which liberates and which, for its sake Jesus accepted this human weakness and resisted it, so as to strengthen it with divine power.²²

In our Maronite spirituality and tradition, **falling to the ground** in prostration is called “*a metany*” derived from the Greek word in the New Testament, *Metanoia*, meaning repentance and penitence with a denial of self in the spirit of backing away from evil and returning to God. The saintly fathers were accustomed to exercise *Metanoia* in this spirit. We still uphold it in a special way in the Rite of Adoration of the Cross, and it remains an important part of our monastic Maronite spirituality. It is a confession of our weakness that throws us to the ground with our need for the power of grace from Jesus, risen from the dead, to raise and strengthen us.

***Worship and Kneeling**

26. Worship is known in the Bible according to the meaning of the Greek word **Proskynein**. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, then He climbed onto the boat, after lifting Peter and preventing him from drowning, “Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, “Truly, you are the Son of God” (*Matthew 14:33*). The same happened with the **man who was blind since birth**. When Jesus met him after healing him, He asked if he believes in the Son of Man? The Blind Man inquired: “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he.” He said, “I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him” (*John 9:35-38*).

Doing homage is an act of faith and worship before God, before Christ and before the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is normally performed by kneeling before the exposed Blessed Sacrament and by kneeling when incensing the cross or the icon of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This kneeling is known in Hebrew as “Barak.” Bending the knee, according to the tradition of the Old Testament, symbolizes bending our strength before the living God, confessing that all that we are at, is a gift from Him. It is known that the knee, “Berek,” signifies strength.

Gestures of spiritual worship expresses themselves through motions of the body, by doing homage or by kneeling. Without the bodily postures of spiritual worship, homage loses all its meaning and becomes simply an external act. True worship encompasses the human person in all his capacity.²³

***Prostration at the Feet**

27. There is still another bodily motion in prayer and it is prostration at the feet **to petition and beseech**, as the leper did, falling on Jesus’ feet saying to Him: “If you wish, you can make me clean” (*Mark 1:40*); and the rich man who hurried to Jesus and knelt down before Him, and asked Him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (*Mark 10:17*); and the man who approached, knelt down before him, and said, “Lord, have pity on my son, for he is possessed... (*Matthew 17:14*). This gesture is an expression of faith in Jesus and His power, in confidence in Him and in respect for Him. It comes mainly from the heart and is made visible through bodily gestures. The opposite is “kneeling” or “falling on the feet” in mockery and debasement as the soldiers of the Governor did when, “Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (*Matthew 27:29*).²⁴

***Bowling**

28. Bowling is a gesture of humility before God who removes from us the spirit of pride, which is the vice at the foundation of sin, and the source of the human person who is arrogant toward God and transgresses His commandments and precepts and makes of himself a god. This was the sin of Adam and Eve: “...you will be like gods” (*Genesis 3:4-5*). The apex of bowing in humility was manifested in the Lord Jesus when He “...bent down and washed His disciple’s feet” (*John 13:1-20*).

Bowling means the **bending of love** and human feelings to God who in His love and mercy had compassion and became incarnate for us. We are called to have compassion on our brethren, every person, in his/her wounds, poverty, sickness and needs. We bow to **receive the blessing** through the Eucharist, the icon, or in the prayer of blessing in the Liturgy. Every time the cantor says: “Bow your heads,” or the priest says: Bless, O God, your people who bow before you,” or at the incensing of the faithful.

Bowling also means **repentance and penitence of heart** with the striking of the chest as the tax collector did in the Temple (*Luke 18:13*).²⁵

***Silence**

29. Silence in the liturgical celebrations is an **essential constituent**, that enables us to receive the Word of God in our hearts, contemplate it and welcome it with resolutions. It is necessary that we repeat in the heart what we declare with our tongue in prayers, hymns, petitions and *Psalms*, and what we have achieved in the Liturgy and other liturgical rituals. It is also required that rubrics and liturgical directives take into account these times.²⁶

Chapter Four

Symbols in the Divine Liturgy

30. Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables and symbols utilizing illustrations from nature and the life of the human person to convey to us and make us understand truths related to the kingdom of heaven. We read in St. Matthew's Gospel: "Such large crowds gathered around him... And he spoke to them at length in parables" (*Matthew* 13:2-3). Actually, in the Synoptic Gospels, *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, we find that there are 30 parables. As for John, Jesus presents the teachings of his gospel in a literary form akin to parables utilizing images from nature and the life of the human person, such as "the vine and the branches" (*John* 15:1-10) to help us understand the Mystery of the Church, communion and mission. He uses the example of the sheepfold, sheep, shepherd and wolf (*John* 10:1-16), to help us understand His relationship with every human person and all of mankind, the concept of authority in the Church, and with this model, every human authority in the family, society and the state.

31. The Liturgy, as an effort of salvation which extends across ritual actions and mystical signs, is full of symbols, that is because symbols point to other matters, more than the visible. **The Liturgy makes use of symbols** to lead it to the truth that is not seen and to enable those who are of one faith to connect with each other.²⁷

The Liturgy *par excellence* is the Sacrifice of the Mass called **the Divine Liturgy**, composed of two main parts: The Liturgy of the instructive Word, and the Qurbano, or the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Its structure consists of **expressions and symbols** all of which are connected to the person of Jesus Christ, the Trinity and the plan of salvation. **For, the symbol** and the expression are external signs which point to that which is symbolized, and through it, the community of believers is transported from the physical to the spiritual and from the tangible to the reality of the kingdom of God.

Before entering into its spiritual, theological and ecclesial concepts and dimensions, we ought to, for the sake of an efficacious and active participation, explain its Eucharistic components, symbols and expressions. This way, our liturgical celebration may be more fruitful.

***The Cross**

32. The Cross is **the essential symbol** for the Christian life and liturgical celebration. It is the symbol of triumph over death through life bestowed upon us by the Lord Jesus. It is the symbol of the Blessed Sacrament, and the offering of the pure slain Lamb for our redemption and salvation. The Cross is the springhead of forgiveness, the banner of peace, and the sign of reconciliation among all peoples for Him who made all people one.

The Cross in the early Christian traditions, particularly in the Syriac Antiochene theology, is a sign of the Divine Presence accompanying all liturgical celebrations: In the Divine Liturgy and in all of the sacraments and liturgical rituals, from the Cross, spring all liturgical celebrations, and all symbols take their full meaning.

We urge all to make the Sign of the Cross in the liturgical celebration and outside them in a clear and reverent manner. And, we call on them, especially, the parents entrusted to convey the Deposit of Faith, to make the Sign of the Cross in their homes, before and after meals and in all the junctures of daily life, thus, always living in the presence of God. Because, through the Sign of the Cross, we invoke the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and are clothed with power from on high (*Luke 24:49*), because the Cross is the power of God (*1 Corinthians 1:18*), and the power of the Church, and in her, it is like a mast to a ship, as the Venerable Patriarch Estephan Ad-Douaihy says, aside from the Body of Christ and His Blood. And, it is the bridge that we cross over on, from our world to heaven, as we chant in our Maronite Liturgy.

***Candles and Lights**

33. The Ritual of the Lighting of the Candles and the Lights goes back in its origin to the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and its symbolism is connected to the lights of the Resurrection and the joy of participating in the Sacred Mysteries.²⁸ The Venerable Patriarch Estephan Ad-Douaihy sees in the lit candles the presence of Christ, Light of the World, the sign of faith that illumines our lives, and the symbol of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. On the use of wax candles at the altar, he says it is the symbol of purity and cleanliness. He adds: “As the honeycomb is gathered by the bee from all flowers, so is the servant who lights them before the Body of the Lord, he has in him all the virtues.”²⁹ Candles are lit for the Liturgy, at every ritual celebration and communal prayer gatherings, especially at night, since its symbolism is basically connected to Christ, who lights up the gloominess of the world through His glorious resurrection, the source of every enlightenment.

***The Chalice and the Paten, the Corporal, the Pall – the Chalice Veil**

34. The Chalice and the Paten are two essential components in the service of the Divine Sacrifice. One of the symbols of the chalice is that it signifies the tomb, and the paten, the stone that was placed at its entrance. **The chalice** also signifies the rock from which water gushed forth, quenching the thirst of the people; and **the paten**, the basket in which Moses placed the bread of life which God gave to His people in the wilderness.³⁰ “**The corporal**” on which the hosts are prepared symbolizes the shroud in which the Body of Jesus was wrapped when in the tomb, and **the two small anaphora palls** which cover the chalice and the paten, symbolize the cloth that the head of the Lord was covered with. **The large anaphora veil** which covers all, symbolizes the glory of God as well as His concealment under the species of bread and wine.³¹

***The Incense**

35. Incense symbolizes Christ who, “loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God as a fragrant aroma” (*Ephesians 5:2*). Likewise, it became an expression of the prayer we raise up to God: “Let my prayer rise like incense before you” (*Psalms 141:2*), and the prayers of the holy ones, as recounted in John’s *Book of Revelation*: “the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones” (*Revelation 5:8*).

Incense is offered to God in honor as well as for prayer. That is why the priest says, “For the glory and honor of the Most Holy Trinity,” when placing the incense in the thurible and blessing it. When he incenses the faithful, they should bow their heads and raise in their hearts a prayer of glory and thanksgiving, because, through the prayer of forgiveness, He purified them from their sins and sanctified them for Himself. Therefore, it is not permissible, in any case, not to use incense as required by the liturgical celebration, and we must avoid whatever contravenes that.

The thurible signifies the Blessed Virgin Mary, who accepted Him into her innocent womb, free from defilement, yet she was not consumed by the fire of His Divinity. **The chains of the thurible** signify the three Divine Persons, equal in substance, power and perfection. **The ring** that holds the chains signify the One Divine nature in three persons. As to how to incense during liturgical celebrations, and in unifying the liturgical endeavor in all our Maronite churches, the directives of the liturgical books must be adhered to, in preserving symbolism and active participation.

***Liturgical Vestments and their Colors**

36. Liturgical vestments signify “the new self, created by God in righteousness and holiness of truth” (*Ephesians* 4:24), and to prepare for the liturgical celebration with purity of thought and heart, and to the priestly authority bestowed by the Lord on His Apostles: “for the glory of the Trinity and the building up of the Church.” The Venerable Patriarch Estephan Ad-Douaihy explains the meaning of vestments as follows: **The alb** signifies piety and purity; the belt signifies the readiness to serve as Jesus did when He began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist (*John* 13:4-5); **the amice** signifies the helmet of salvation, the contemplation of heavenly matters and knowledge of the mysteries, the wreath of the priesthood and the crown of thorns, and the incarnation of the Son of God, who hid His divinity and assumed the image of a slave and came into the world adorned with the veil of humanity;³² **the stole**, *epitraxilion* in Greek, symbolizes submission to the Word of the Lord and keeping His commandments, per His words: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden light” (*Matthew* 11:30), and symbolizes the authority of the priesthood.³³ **The cope** symbolizes love that encompasses all the virtues, the unity of faith, the descent of the Holy Spirit from on high and the virtue of truth and piety, worn by the priest as a sign of the love of Christ to which he witnesses by his pastoral love.³⁴

Liturgical vestments symbolize the end times, the eschatological dimension, for, they are the vestments of the glorified body which Saint Paul speaks of: “For that which is corruptible must clothe itself with incorruptibility, and that which is mortal with immortality” (*1 Corinthians* 15:53). It is also our new dwelling of which he speaks: “For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven” (*2 Corinthians* 5:1).

Out of respect for Christ, who is our Supreme Pontiff, we ask the celebrant priest at Mass, whether eparchial or religious, to undertake it in **full Maronite priestly vestments**, and, **the concelebrant priests** to wear the stole over the Jibbee when needed. It is prohibited to wear the stole over the clerical garb.

37. As for **liturgical colors** in our Maronite Antiochene tradition, there is no clear specification concerning their use. However, at the same time, and through comparisons between Eastern and Western rites, we see that the choice of colors leans toward a unified perspective based on the meaning of the liturgical cycle and assumes a naturally beautiful dimension. Commensurate with the general liturgical directives, our patriarchal committee is striving to specify liturgical colors in the following manner: In the season of the Renewal and the Consecration of the Church and what follows in the **Season of the Glorious Birth of the Lord**, the suggested colors range from white, which is the color of life to bright golden colors; in the **Season of Epiphany**, it is red because it symbolizes Pentecost of the Lord with the descent of the Holy Spirit on Him at the Jordan River; in the **Season of Great Lent**, which is the season of repentance and renewal of faith, the purple color emerges; as for the **Pascal Week**, which is the founding week of the liturgical life of the Church, the colors change according to the Pascal celebration: Purple at the **outset of the week**, white or gold on **Thursday of the Mysteries**, crimson or sumac red on **Good Friday**, because it is the day of witnessing and martyrdom; and on that day the altar is stripped of its covers, symbolizing Jesus taken down from the Cross and placed in the sepulcher, and so, the Church enters into **Saturday of the Light**, the day of awaiting the dawning of the Resurrection. On that Saturday, we celebrate the Rite of Forgiveness in preparation for the Feast of the Resurrection in the Jibbee and the white stole symbol of forgiveness and reconciliation, and when the Rite is concluded, the altar is clothed with the attire of the Feast. **Sunday**, which, liturgically starts Saturday evening, the church is adorned with candles and flowers and the joyful colors are chosen, such as gold or white. In the **Season of Pentecost**, gold is chosen, as well as red symbolizing the tongues of fire. On the **feasts of the martyrs**, red or crimson is chosen; for the **feasts of the saints**, white and its derivatives; and, for the **Marian feasts**, the white indented with blue.

***Constituents of the Eucharist in the Mass: Bread, Wine and Water**

38. These three substances are from the will of Christ. He took **bread** and turned it into His Body, wine and changed it into His Blood. For as the material bread feeds the human person for his survival, so has the Lord made the bread of His Body a spiritual food for souls and pledge for the eternal kingdom. Likewise just as wine gladdens the heart of man, so one is gladdened whose sins are washed by the Blood of Christ. As for the **water** which flowed with the blood from His lance-pierced heart (*John 19:34*), the Church mixes it with the wine in the chalice of the Mass in declaration of the new life fulfilled in the Mystery of Redemption and as a sign of union with Him.

Chapter Five

The Earthly Liturgy and the Heavenly Liturgy

39. Saint John's *Book of Revelation* presents us with an awesome **symbolic portrait of the heavenly Liturgy** which chants to God, the Creator, sitting on the Throne: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come" (4:1-8), and chants to the slain Lamb, who is the Christ, crucified and risen, the Supreme and True Priest, Servant of the Holy One; they shout: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing" (5:12). Then, was heard the chant of every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and in the universe, as they cry out:

“To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever” (5:13). And, from the Throne and the Lamb, the River of Light bursts forth, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit (1:22).

It is in this **Trinitarian eternal Liturgy** that the Spirit and the Church invite us to be partners through the **earthly Liturgy**, where we celebrate the mystery of our salvation in the Sacred Mysteries.³⁵

40. In the Sacrifice of the Mass, the work of our redemption is realized through the Divine Presence with us and in us via Jesus’ Pascal Mystery, the mystery of His sacrifice for our salvation, and the banquet of His Body and Blood for our life. We read in the Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: “At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity [36], a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.”³⁶

The word **Quddass (Mass)** means **Taqdees** (Consecrating), as the Lord Jesus prayed after blessing the bread and wine in His Eucharistic, Pascal Supper: “And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth” (*John 17:19*). **He consecrated Himself** by making of himself a perfect sacrifice, thus becoming the intimate Pontiff and the sacrificial offering at the same time. **He thus sanctified us** through His death and resurrection.

***Participation in the Divine Liturgy**

41. Every time we participate in the Sacrifice of the Mass, we are living the event of our salvation, the mystery of the death of Christ and His resurrection; thanking God, the Father, for His love for us through His Son, Jesus, our Lord. **We renew** our love for Christ, the Lord; we participate spiritually in His death and resurrection; and **we also sit** at His Supper Table and hear Him saying, here and now: “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me...This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you” (*Luke 22:19-20*). We are also **consecrated by the descent of the Holy Spirit**, for in a new Pentecost we declare three times with the celebrant priest “Hear us, O Lord, hear us, O Lord, hear us, O Lord. May your holy and living Spirit descend and overshadow us and our offering.” **Lastly, we realize** that we are celebrating the Host of love and reconciliation with God and with each other, and we hear the Lord saying to us: “Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (*Matthew 5:24*).

***The Work of Jesus and the Community**

42. The ritual of the Mass consists of two services: **The Service of the Word and the Service of the Eucharist**. In either of them, there is, at the head of the community of believers, Christ Himself, who is the Principal Leader. He is the glorious High Priest who presides invisibly over every Eucharistic celebration, represented by the bishop or priest, and the presiding celebrant, as the people participate, among them are lectors, altar servers, bearers of the offerings and cantors.³⁷

The earthly Liturgy, though performed at the hands of the priests, Christ the Lord, is the One who presides through them, and the Liturgy remains **entirely** the work of **Christ** present in His Word and the sacrifice of His Body, which includes the angels, saints, and people living and deceased, past, present and future, in a different form. The *Book of Revelation* of Saint John describes in a mystical way this **heavenly Liturgy**, the Liturgy of God in which the feast of love and the joy of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are consummated, with which we are one, through the earthly Liturgy.³⁸

***Harmony in the Roles and the Liturgical Cycle**

43. Every liturgical celebration has its own Liturgy, as far as persons and their roles and actions are concerned. For the community to be up to the level of the celebration, which is always concurrently divine and human, **harmony** must be achieved **between all components and attendants**: celebrant, concelebrants, deacons, lectors, cantors, altar servers and the prayerful community. Prayers are to be recited and readings proclaimed with clarity and reverence, faith and piety, for we are in the presence of God. In this context, **rubrics** are drawn for the role and duty of each person in the celebration, thus, we pray the *Psalms* with a simple tune, chant the hymns with joy and devotion, and perform communal prayers in a tranquil manner, well ordered and clear.

In this spirit we should master liturgical actions so that they may be received by all as prayerful expressions of the faith, not just external actions. It is harmony between the internal stance and the external one. Let the believer be aware why he/she is doing what he/she is doing. Harmony should also encompass the participating community, doing the same thing at the same time. There is no opportunity for a private, solitary expression that is not in harmony with the prayerful community, even if by a genuine faith-based motive: this one standing, that one sitting and that one kneeling; one liturgical action at one time should be done by the whole community as if done by one person. In this context, the specific directives must be adhered to for each ritual, such as: raising the hands in asking and praying, extending them out in preparation for communion, bowing the head reverently when the Sign of the Cross is made and when accepting the blessing from the celebrant, as well as standing together and sitting together. These are arrangements that reflect a communal spirituality and a spirit of worship worthy of the Divine Presence,³⁹ and place the person in his/her entirety in a state of spiritual, mental and bodily prayer, along with the heart which prays with purity and peace, thanksgiving and praise.⁴⁰

This communal spirituality manifests itself in the popular Liturgy: in the procession inside and outside the church; in the blessing of candles, water, bread, wheat, grapes and the other fruits of the earth, which are a gift from God to His people. We must preserve these tangible signs in our Liturgy that we may not enter into the danger of “stripping” life of its symbols, and so lose their meaning.⁴¹

***The Liturgical Animator**

44. In as much as the liturgical celebration is well organized, so in the same measure would it bring forth more spiritual fruit. There should be no improvisation in our celebrations lest they lose much of their spirituality and reverence. Rather, there ought to be a liturgical animator for the liturgical celebrations: to organize the celebration, direct and coordinate it so that it may be

harmonious and attractive. Following the directives of the parish priest, the liturgical animator is to be concerned with organizing celebrations for groups in the parish such as children, youth, families, the sick and others. This revives in a cyclic manner the Sunday Mass in the heart of the community. For the Sunday Mass is the visible expression of the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and its nucleus is the parish. “For the Liturgy builds up the Church and the Church builds it up”⁴² as the Fathers teach.

***Chanting**

45. Chanting and the liturgical tune constitute an integrated unit with the text, the action and the symbol expressing unity between the earthly Church and the heavenly Church in the chanting of the hymn of thanksgiving and praise to the Father for His love, as manifested in the salvation realized by the Son, consummated through the Holy Spirit in the world. **Ecclesial melodies** are a reflection of the angels’ praise in the Liturgy of the Lamb. Thus, the Liturgy is distinguished by mastering the hymns and thus it is imperative to have **trained choirs** to help lead this. The Maronite Rite, which is distinguished by beautiful melodies of a popular nature did not restrict the melodic service to the choir; rather, desires that the choir helps the people to chant and this is the most distinctive character of our Rite.⁴³

The simplicity of our Rite, despite its depth and its popular character, did not prevent the emergence of choirs that have attained resplendence in musical workmanship. It is also a gift of the Spirit and designations to Him, provided such choirs do not replace the people, especially at major celebrations and the important ecclesial occasions, leaving the people as a silent listener and onlooker. Rather, let the role of the **choir assist the people** in chanting, because “whoever chants, prays twice,” as Saint Augustine says. In this context, we must differentiate between the ecclesial liturgical hymns and spiritual songs, which have their role and benefit in pastoral settings outside the spheres of liturgical celebrations. Selecting hymns for Mass is a theological, ecclesial and educational responsibility. It is up to the priest and his collaborators to make the right selections for the good of souls. This matter requires proper theological enculturation and liturgical knowledge contributing to the living of the liturgical event in an active and nourishing fashion.⁴⁴

***Role of the Priest**

46. The priest has a fundamental role in the liturgical celebration. His priesthood is directly linked to the Eucharist and the Mysteries. It is the starting point of his spirituality and its source and should be his daily provisions for his life, work and mission. With respect to him and the community of believers, liturgy is the “source and summit.” For him, sacramental life is a priority. By virtue of the nature of his service, he is the liturgist, the teacher, the director and the helper so that the liturgical celebration in his parish may be a source of spiritual nourishment for believers.

The Liturgy is faith, piety, organization and joy, and the giving of everything its proper worth and sanctity. It is the time of the divine banquet, which disengages us from the logic of our time and incorporates us into the logic of the Trinity, where the priest and the community quench their thirst from the spiritual treasures, and with them quench the thirst of those longing for righteousness (*Matthew* 5:6). Here is where the priesthood is realized, where the celebrant harmonizes between his voice and his heart; between the apparent and the underlying; between

the bright liturgical mastery and the close vertical relationship with the living Christ, present among us. This is where the celebrant invests all the gifts and capacities he has and becomes the beseecher, teacher, preacher and proprietor of refined taste. This is where the mystery of the “plan of salvation” is realized.

***Duty of the Bishop**

47. The primary person responsible for the Liturgy is the bishop, head of the clergy of the people of God in his eparchy. To him, the spiritual life of the faithful is entrusted. He is the sentinel, animator and presider over the liturgical life in its entirety. His role is to promote liturgical life and organize it in accordance with the specific precepts of the Maronite Church, her legitimate traditions and heritage. This is how he achieves communion with his brothers, the bishops. He is to unite with his clergy and be the vigilant guard over the living liturgical conscience among his people.

It is his duty to form a liturgical committee that connects with the Patriarchal Committee and works to consolidate liturgical endeavors in the eparchy. The faithful are to value greatly liturgical life around the bishop, especially the cathedral church, which should be the model of exercising liturgical life.

The bishop is to provide his priests with ongoing liturgical formation through courses and periodic lectures concerned with liturgical affairs that spring from the authentic heritage of our Church. He is to lead the faithful to her spiritual spring waters and watch over applying her precepts in accordance with her ongoing guidance, for the purpose of invigorating her, causing her to grow and to advance, thus, preserving our noble and rich heritage.⁴⁵

***Liturgical Formation**

48. Liturgical formation is absolutely necessary in order to achieve efficacious, sober spiritual participation in the liturgical celebrations. It ought to encompass the clergy and the people and be made available in the parishes, schools, formation centers for priests, monks and nuns, in theological colleges and institutes of religious formation. For that purpose, the media and modern technological channels are to be employed commensurate with the recommendations of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod that considers “**liturgical reform**” as realized in the Church whenever two things come together: 1) **Scientific formation** and research on the Liturgy from the historical, theological and pastoral perspectives, and, 2) **the ongoing formation** of priests, seminarians, monks, nuns and the laity for the purpose of deepening liturgical understanding and ritual knowledge in their theological, spiritual and pastoral dimensions on the one hand, and on the other, to organize liturgical celebrations and invigorate them in the prayerful parish communities.⁴⁶

By virtue of this all-encompassing formation, the Maronite Liturgy continues, as it has been, mixed with the reality of the present state of affairs of the faithful and their lives. This is made apparent through life experience in their prayers, as in their Christian life choices and their spiritual needs in the shadow of persecution, pains and joys. Thus, the Maronite Liturgy came to be the mirror reflecting the faith of this Church believing in the Triune God and the Incarnation of the Only Begotten Son, true God and true man. Likewise, the Liturgy came to be

reconciliation between celebrating the divine plan and living the free and sincere human experience.

Therefore, it is asked of the shepherds with insistence to persevere with zeal and patience in ensuring liturgical formation for the clergy and the faithful, and enlightening them as to its essential concepts so that they may be able to effectively participate in the celebrations that raise their hearts to God as they celebrate His perceptible salvific mystery.⁴⁷

The Liturgy constitutes a school of faith, as the Fathers of the Church say: “The law of prayer is the law of faith,” for, there is no theology outside of liturgy and prayer.⁴⁸

Chapter Six

The Mass of the Lord Jesus is our Mass

49. The Lord Jesus celebrated His first Mass after His resurrection with the two disciples of Emmaus (*Luke 24:13-33*), and built on that basis, our Mass came to exist, in its two services: the Service of the Word, and the Service of the Eucharist.

In the Service of the Word, the two disciples of Emmaus were in a state of listening to Jesus explain to them the Scriptures and yet their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. He walked with them on the road and began to dispel their grief and strengthen their resolve and cement their faith through “what referred to him in all the scriptures,” and within each of them was a burning desire to know the truth about what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. They heard Him explain the Scriptures and apply them to the all events which had occupied their minds. Because of the immense attachment they had to Him, His words and His explanations, they insisted He stay the night with them. He transformed their despair into hope, and when they recognized Him in the Breaking of the Bread, one of them said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” (*Luke 24:32*).

He walked with them; explained the Scriptures; they listened to Him; He pacified their hearts with a touch of the Spirit... These are **the actions of the Service of the Word** in every Mass.

In the Service of the Eucharist, Jesus sent His peace into their hearts by accepting their invitation and entering their house after having entered the very core of their hearts. So, He broke the bread transubstantiating it into His Body, and administered it to them, confirming His perpetual presence. Then, they recognized Him, but, He immediately disappeared from their sight, leaving the flame of witnessing to Him in their hearts. Right away, they stood up as if He had sent them, and went back to Jerusalem with a missionary spirit to tell of His resurrection.

The gift of peace; the Breaking of the Bread; His concealment in the Host; the flame in the hearts of those witnessing to His resurrection, these are all **the actions of the Service of the Eucharist** in every Mass.

50. Our Mass today is an integrated indivisible unity from beginning to end. It is two complimentary services just as was in the Mass of the Lord. Thus fragmented participation is not

acceptable, such as a believer or a priest arriving after the Service of the Word, and expecting to partake of communion, considering that his Mass is complete. This is not acceptable, because the one who does not have the Word, does not have the Eucharist. The Word of the Lord is the “narrow door” (*Matthew 7:13*) leading to the entrance to the Eucharistic banquet.

***Service of the Word**

51. In our Mass, the Service of the Word, as in the Lord’s Mass, **starts with the longing of the heart** for the encounter with Christ, the Teacher and the Savior and the desire to be enlightened by His words, to read in their light, the signs of our daily life so that we may be firm in the faith and be strengthened in hope and that love may enflame in our hearts. The signs of this enlightenment are one candle for the Epistle and two for the Gospel, commensurate with the saying of the author of the *Psalms*: “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path” (*Psalms 119:105*).

With the preparation of the offerings on the side altar, we place our very selves, our love for God and for each other, our good works, pains and worries, and the intentions of our prayers. **With the priest, we enter** the house of the Lord and bow our heads before the holy Throne, carrying each other in prayer. With Him, we start the Service of the Word by **making the Sign of the Cross** for the glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reciting the opening **prayer of the day**.

After the opening prayer, we chant the angels’ hymn. Why, the angels’ hymn in the Mass, when it is a Birth of the Lord hymn?⁴⁹ In the Mass, we contemplate each stage of Jesus’ salvific journey: His birth (the angels’ hymn); His public life and His journeying through villages and towns (Procession of the Book of the Gospels); His teaching and His sayings (the reading of the Gospel and the homily); His prostration and prayers to the Father in the Mount of Olives (the kneeling of the priest and his prayer: Hear us O Lord...); His arrest and carrying of His Cross to Golgotha (transfer of the offerings from the side altar to the main altar); His death and resurrection (the Breaking of the Bread, joining the pieces together after signing them with the Blood); His Ascension into heaven (raising the Body and Blood high up); the indwelling of the Spirit (Communion); the sending out of the disciples (the final blessing: Go in peace...). Since His birth is the start of His life in the visible flesh, we start the Mass after the opening prayers with the Birth Hymn.

In the reciting of the Prayer of Forgiveness (*Hoosoyo* in Syriac), we beseech the forgiveness of our sins and those of the whole people, after glorifying and thanking Almighty God and seeking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the patron saint of the parish church or monastery, and the saints. We solicit **Divine Mercy from Christ, the Son of God**, He, who saved us and redeemed us through His incarnation, death and resurrection, calling out three times: “You are Holy, O God, You are Holy, O Strong One, You are Holy, O Immortal One, have mercy on us;” and we ask Him through the priest to, “sanctify our minds and purify our consciences that we may praise You with pure hearts and listen to Your Holy Scriptures”, and accept them in our hearts and abide by them. Additionally, through the Psalms of the Readings, which contain praise and halleluiahs, we **listen to the Word of God** with a living faith, in the two readings, lighting one candle for the first, and two candles with incense for the Book of the Gospel, which is processed chanting the Halleluiahs hymn with all the people standing reverently

and with eagerness to hear the Lord speak as the priest reads; then, the people sit and continue to listen to the **homily**, which helps them understand the words they heard and how to apply them to their own life.

Receiving the blessing from the priest or bishop celebrant before commencing the two readings symbolizes the divine authority given them, first and foremost for proclaiming the Word of God. The Service of the Word ends with reciting the Creed while standing.

52. With the Service of the Eucharist we come to the heart of the Eucharistic celebration and its apex. This service is known as the Anaphora, which means the Eucharistic offering, and it includes: the thanksgiving and glorification of the Prayer to the Father; the memorial of the sacrifice of the Body of Christ; the efficacious presence of the Lord in us through the power of His Word and the Holy Spirit; and, the banquet of His Body and Blood.

***Transfer to the Lord's Altar with the Offerings**

Before commencing with the Anaphora, the celebrant ascends to the altar of the Lord as he says: Through the abundance of your goodness, I will go to Your altar, O God; and he asks for the people's prayers for his sake and that of his service. It is entrance into the Banquet of the "wedding feast of the Lamb" and simultaneously exiting the sphere of place and time. He and the community enter to the feast with radiance and joy and so we ascend to the divine presence Who bends down to meet us around the table. We relinquish worldly and earthly thinking that we may live the divine moment, the holy time and the heavenly state. Our Liturgy on earth is a foretaste of the heavenly Liturgy.⁵⁰

Then, **the offerings are transferred** in a reverent procession from the side altar to the main altar where the redemptive sacrifice takes place. In our Maronite Church, **the side altar** represents the city of Nazareth, where Jesus lived His hidden years. The main altar represents the city of Jerusalem, where He offered Himself as a sacrifice of redemption and salvation for the whole world. **The celebrant places the paten with the bread and the chalice with the wine**, which will be transubstantiated into the Body of the Lord and His Blood, over the corporal on the altar, which represents the tomb of Christ, covered by the two small palls as a sign of the stone placed at the entrance to the tomb. Then, he joins his hands in the form of a cross over the sacred mysteries, because with the Cross of the Lord, the world was saved. He recites the prayer "In memory of our Lord" to enter into the dynamics of the Eucharist, which emanates from the salvific present; from the Church which celebrates the "here and now," by embracing the past and the future, in the centrality of salvation realized by Jesus Christ for humankind. Then, he presents a supplication for the living and the dead.

***The Eucharistic Offering**

53. Depending on the saint who authored it, **the Anaphora starts with the Rite of Peace**, in accordance with the commandment of the Lord: "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (*Matthew 5:23-24*).

We read from the sayings of Aphrahat, the wise Persian, the following: "How can we celebrate the sacrifice of Christ for reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins when we do not live it

amongst ourselves? It is truly shameful to offer the host of forgiveness and reconciliation to God when we do not forgive the injury of others and do not reconcile! God is not man to incite Him to lie.”⁵¹

In the name of the people, the celebrant reconciles with Christ, and so, gives the peace to the altar and the Holy Mysteries, and from there, distributes the peace to the concelebrants surrounding the altar, and to the community of believers, while the deacon admonishes: “Let us give the greeting of peace to our neighbor with love and faith that are pleasing to God.” He gives the peace with joined hands, signifying the fellowship of unity and love.

54. Then starts the Eucharistic offering with the **Trinitarian blessing** which inaugurates God’s plan of salvation: “The love of God the Father, and the grace of the only-begotten Son, and the communion and indwelling of the Holy Spirit be with you forever.” This is followed by the **Eucharistic glorification prayer**, and then, the “**Holy, Holy**” hymn.

Then, the **work of the Triune God** begins with the prayer that precedes the Institution Narrative. We first pray to **the Father**, for because of his love for humankind He sent His **only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ**, who became incarnate, saved and redeemed us and left us the memorial of His redemptive sacrifice, which is realized through the Institution Narrative, thus, Transubstantiating the bread into His Body, given up for us, and the wine into His Blood, shed for the forgiveness of our sins that we may have the Pascal Banquet for eternal life. We then continue the memorial of the stages of the life of the Divine Redeemer (the Son) and His plan of salvation for us, arriving at **the invocation of the Holy Spirit** on the bread and wine to consummate the sacrifice “here and now.” We pray “May these holy mysteries be for the forgiveness of sins, the healing of souls and bodies and the strengthening of consciences that none of your faithful people may perish. Rather, make us worthy to live by your Spirit and lead a pure life and we raise glory to you now and forever” (Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles). All these prayers are recited by the celebrant, together with the concelebrants.

55. The Eucharistic prayer forms an **integrated theological unit**; starts with the Trinitarian Blessing: “The love of God, the Father...” and ends with the prayer: “O Lord, you are the pleasing Oblation...” all of this is the work of the One Triune God. It is, in all its parts the Holy of Holies of the Mass. Its structure is based on the Holy Trinity. It is a prayer of the divine plan. It celebrates the Father’s memorial plan which is described through the Eucharistic actions, charting the stages of the history of the plan of salvation as it commences with creation. For the Church offers thanksgiving to the Father for “**the grace of creation**,” “**the grace of life**” and “**the grace of salvation**,” which He drew up after “Adam’s fall.” The Eucharistic prayer portrays the intervention of the Father for the salvation of human beings, and His intervention “in the fullness of time,” when He sent His Only Begotten Son, “incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin Mary, thus, coming to arrange all things for our salvation.”

The Eucharistic prayer continues to describe the plan of the Son, particularly through “news of the Supper,” or what we call “the words of consecration”. In it, there is the call of the Lord: “Take, eat of it all of you, this is my Body.” “Take, drink from it all of you, this is my Blood.” “Do this in remembrance of Me.” This is the Word of the Lord, which reflects His will. It is the

life giving Word, for from it life comes forth, and in it is the transubstantiating power for the bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The offering of the Church continues and is consummated in every Eucharistic sacrifice between His first coming and His second coming. This is why the community asks the Father to **send the Holy Spirit**, consoling and advocating, consummating and sealing. And the commemorations of the living and the dead come to embody the reality of the Church in her sons and daughters called to this Eucharistic encounter, to become living members in the Body of Christ and witnesses to His resurrection.⁵²

***The Intercessions**

56. Intercessions form an essential part of the Eucharistic Prayer, because it “reminds” the Church, with her pastors and her faithful, her living and her dead, of the spirit of communion after the “memorial” of the plan of salvation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Intercessions start with the verb “offer” as extension of the event of the Eucharistic offering,⁵³ and at the start of every intention, with the words, “**Remember, O Lord,**” or, “**For,**” as an echo of “memorial,” which the Church celebrates. Intercession formulae are characterized by a **harmonious literary and theological logic**. Therefore, when adding other intercessions during special occasions, harmony is to be safeguarded throughout the totality of the Eucharistic Prayer.

Intercessions are characterized by a variety of dimensions: **The theological dimension is the communion:** “Those who have asked us to pray for them, those who desired but were unable;” “those who are present, and those who are absent.” **The human dimension:** “For a blessed and prosperous year, for an abundant harvest;” “for the sick and the oppressed;” “for those who are far and for those who are near.” **The eschatological and ecclesial dimension:** is manifest in **ongoing apostolic succession** in the Church, starting with the Eucharistic celebration: “For those who have left us and gone to you, baptized in your name and partaken of the precious Body and Blood of Son, from the first Christian disciples until today.” **On the unity of the bishop, the Church and the Eucharist:** “Remember, O Lord, the faithful teachers who have gone to their rest in the true faith, especially Peter, Paul, Mark...and all those who have endured suffering and persecution for the strengthening of your Church.” **And, the interconnection between the heavenly Liturgy and the earthly Liturgy:** “Remember, O Lord, those who have presented these offerings upon your holy altar; and accept them on your heavenly altar.”

***Fraction, Signing, Sprinkling, Mingling, and Elevation**

57. These five actions constitute one ritual, which may be called “**the mystery of mysteries,**” because, collectively, they aim to express the death of the Lord on the Cross, His burial, His presentation to the Father, His resurrection and His ascension to heaven. Every action of these has its characteristic and meaning.

The Fraction of the Host symbolizes the crucifixion and death; **the signing of the chalice with part of the Host**, consecrating the life giving Blood; **the sprinkling of the Body with the Blood by dipping**, the giving of life symbolized by the Blood; **mingling of the Body in the Blood**, uniting the Body and the Blood; **Elevation of the Body and Blood**, the Lord’s resurrection and ascension into heaven, thus, consummating the mystery of redemption.⁵⁴

***The Lord's Prayer**

58. In the Sharar Anaphora, attributed to Peter, the Head of the Apostles, there is assertion that the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to recite the "Our Father" every time they gather to consecrate His Body. Thus, from the Apostles, the pillars of the Church, all the churches received this commandment, and it came to be recited at all Liturgies, after consecrating the Mysteries.⁵⁵

It is a **prayer of repentance** that cleanses the heart from sins, and a **prayer of peace**, which we beseech of the Lord who bestows on His loved ones before communion. For, peace is **grace and a blessing** from the Redeemer Lord. All these meanings emerge in the first prayer after the Our Father, followed by a greeting of peace from the priest, and the third prayer which he ends with the Holy Trinity blessing, thus, the community bows in acceptance of the reverence of sons and daughters of the One Heavenly Father.

Then, comes the invitation to partake of the Lord's Body and His Blood for those who are in a state of peace with God and the brethren, and in a state of grace and blessing: "Holy gifts for the Holy..." And the faithful respond: "One Holy Father, One Holy Son, One Holy Spirit," in the context of: If the Holy Mysteries – that is, the Body of the Lord and His Blood – are to be given to us, and we were called saints, then this is nothing but the free gift of love from the Only One who is Holy, and from whom all holiness emanates.⁵⁶

***Communion**

59. Partaking of the Body of the Lord and His Blood is called in Syriac, "**Shotofoto,**" **that is, communion with Christ, the Lord.** For, when Jesus consecrated the bread and broke it, He gave the holy Apostles, saying, "Take and eat, this is my Body." And, likewise, over the wine, saying, "Drink from it all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant." And so, He left the Church a model for receiving His Body and Blood among the sons and daughters of the Faith.

Before communion, the celebrant and the community recite the prayer of "communion:" "Make us worthy, O Lord God, so that our bodies may be sanctified with your holy Body and our souls purified by your forgiving Blood. May our communion be for the forgiveness of our sins and for new life. O Lord our God, to you be glory, for ever." It is the communion of the community: two around the priest each carrying a lit candle in respect for the Body of the Lord and His Blood, He who is present with us and in us, enlightening us with the words of life and sanctifying us by dwelling in our hearts; and, a third person carrying a tray so that nothing of the Holy Jewels may fall on the ground.⁵⁷ I ask everyone to conform to communion under the two species, and to refrain from administering in the hand or under the one specie.

"Communion" includes the faithful departed, and so, the people chant, before and after communion, the hymn:

Accept, our compassionate Lord,
Grace us with sweet approval

take from us this host
our departed children in the faith

Celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass is all directed toward **the deep and fundamental union of the faithful with Christ** through communion. This union is called "communion." Christ, the

Lord, gave Himself for our sake that He may bring us into this communion which emanates from Him, to widen and become a communion of unity, love and solidarity with all people. With communion, the new life flows within us and expands to all the members of the Body of Christ, the community of believers, just as the sap starts from the stem and flows into the branches of the vine (*John 15:5-8*).

And so, **communion creates the Church**, and consolidates the bonds of unity for the Mystical Body of Christ. It opens hearts to the **love of the poor** and the needy, **and grants the pledge of eternal glory**. Thus, the Church cries out repeatedly: “*Maranatha – O Lord come*” (*1 Corinthians 16:22*), “*Come, Lord Jesus!*” (*Revelation 22:20*).⁵⁸

***Thanksgiving**

60. The Eucharistic Prayer continues with the Thanksgiving Prayer, which is the actual meaning of the word Eucharist. It is praise and blessing God for His works: creation, redemption and sanctification. Thanksgiving to God, as every act of giving thanks, pleases the one to whom it is directed. Saint Paul says, “...give thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father” (*Ephesians 5:20*). It is worthy to thank God at the end of Mass for the words of life which we heard in the Gospel, for the sanctification of the Mysteries through which we received forgiveness for our sins, and for the communion that gave us His Body and Blood for eternal life.

A prayer of thanksgiving and blessing is first, directed to the Father for His perpetual love; and, second, to the Son for His sacrifice of Himself for our salvation, and the gift of His Body and Blood as food for our souls, and through the Father, Son, and then to the Holy Spirit, because He is the love of God poured out into our hearts, the Achiever of the fruits of redemption and the blessing in His believers. Intermediate between the two is the gift of “peace be with you” from the priest that the faithful may attain to the joy of the Spirit, because Christ is always present in their lives.⁵⁹

***The Blessing – the Sending Out**

61. After Jesus blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to the two Emmaus disciples, they recognized the One who earlier was a stranger to them; and right away, He vanished from their sight. Apostolic love was thus enkindled in their hearts and they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem to announce news of His resurrection, how He appeared to them on the road, and how they came to recognize Him in the Breaking of the Bread (*Luke 24:30-35*).

The expression: “Go in peace, my beloved brothers and sisters with the nourishment and blessings you have received from the forgiving altar of the Lord” is the blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which the priest recites at the end of the Holy Mass, and is, in reality, the formula for sending us forth, so that the Sacrifice of the Mass may be lived in the family, society and the country.

The word “**Mass**” from the Latin “*Missia*,” is derived from “*Missio*;” in French, it is “*Messe*” and it means “**the sending**.”

The Mass in the Church has become tantamount to the “heart” in the “body”, and the flame of the Spirit is love. With this heart and this love, the Apostles proclaimed the Gospel with great zeal; martyrs were emboldened to shed their blood; priests served with wholehearted devotion; monks and nuns consecrated themselves; and lay faithful lived out their baptism.

The Mystery of the Eucharist is that “**heart**” and that “**love.**” The mystery of the Blessed Sacrament is not just the perpetual presence of the Lord Jesus in the Church, rather, it is always the passage from Jesus, the man, to every man and woman. Celebrating Mass is that passage in which each one of us becomes an offering, having heart and love for the Church,

The blessing of sending is for each one of us to go out to his or her life, standing and responsibilities and **live his or her personal Mass** as an extension of **Christ’s great love** which made Him **the sacrifice of redemption**, forgiveness and reconciliation, and a gift of offering for the life of the world.

Epilogue

62. Our Liturgy is truly **the Liturgy of the living treasure** through which our Church is enriched with all her sons, daughters and institutions and thus enriching her societies through her spiritual and human experiences. For, **the living treasure** is God’s plan of salvation which immerses us into the dynamism of the Holy Trinity, with a threefold dimension: Christological, eschatological and Marian, expressed in the monastic, Syriac and Antiochene spirituality, centered on the Holy Bible.

The Liturgy of the living treasure creates our Maronite identity and mission within the heart of Christ’s Church, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. It helps us to create our national culture and civilization, and the cultures of our homelands in the Middle East, the patriarchal domain and in the countries of expansion. Additionally, it fortifies the bonds of unity of our Maronite Church, deeply rooted in the motherland, Lebanon, in the East and spread out, like the cedar branches, in all the regions of the globe.

The liturgical experience of the Maronites is of central importance. For, through liturgy Church life grew in it and developed in all its spiritual, pastoral and missionary dimensions, and was embodied in her cultural, social and human activities.

The pressing needs of our world and the various scientific and technical advancements with all their effects on the life of the human person and peoples, demand of us to find our place and role in the world, emanating from our identity that does not change, and our mission, which varies and spreads to engulf new expanses in our developing world, whose needs are on the rise. What remains for us, in all of this is **the Liturgy of the living treasure**, the source and summit.

63. At the end of the third year of my patriarchal ministry, I raise with you a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all the goodness and graces He has showered upon us and our Church. With His grace and the lights of His Holy Spirit, we start our fourth year, carrying witness to the love of Christ and His salvific Gospel. We place this General Pastoral Encyclical **in the care of**

our brethren, their Excellencies, the bishops, our priests, monks, nuns and our faithful people, and in the care of our seminaries, formation centers and religious colleges, hoping they would delve deeply into it and celebrate their liturgies in accordance with the spirituality of this living treasure, its symbols and its expressions, not for the sake of clutching on to the letter, but, for the sake of entrance into the depths of “worshiping God in spirit and truth” (*John* 4:23). We also place this Encyclical in your care so that, after any liturgical celebration, especially the Divine Liturgy of the Mass, we may go out in peace to our world, in our family and Church, and in our society and the country, and become a community of love, peace and justice, with the spirituality of the Incarnation and total Eucharistic dedication. Christ Jesus is our Light, our Way, our Truth and our Life (*John* 8:12; 14:6). And our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Mother, shows us the way to Him, as the guiding Morning Star, the star of the New Evangelization through the Gospel for our new world.

With my love and Apostolic Blessing.

From our See in Bkerke, Feast Day of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the third year of my patriarchal ministry, 25 March, 2014.

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Endnotes:

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1070

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1069, 1070

³ Refer to the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, Nos. 18-24

⁴ *The Patriarchal Synod*, Text 12 (The Liturgy), in its paragraphs 7-14, portrays the stations of this evolution; Sarhad Y. Hermiz Jammo, *La Structure de la Messe Chaldéenne du debut jusqu'a L'Anaphore, Etude Historique* (OCA 207, Rome: PIO, 1979); Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis, *La Liturgie Syrienne: Anaphore des Douze Apôtres*, Paris, 1950; A. Heiss, *L'Ecole d'Edesse*, Paris, 1930; William Macomber, *A Theory on the Origins of the Syrian, Maronite and Chaldean Rites* (1973) 39 OCP, 235-236; M. Hayek, *Liturgie Maronite: Histoire et Textes Eucharistique*, Paris, Maison Mame, Tor, 1964, 5-12; Bishop Boutros Gemayel, *Tajdeed al-Hayat at-Taqsiya fil-Kaneesa al-Marouniya* (Renewal of Liturgical Life in the Maronite Church), Kornet Chahwan, Report to the committee preparing the Maronite Synod 1988; Bishop Youssef Soueif, *Rutab ma qabl an-Nafoor wa Nafoor Mar Boutros al-Marouni, ar-Raqm ath Thalith* (Rites of the Pre-Anaphora and the Anaphora of Mar Boutros the Maronite, Third Number), (Sharar), A Historical and Liturgical Study, Rome (1992) (in French); Abbott Youhanna Tabet thankfully instituted *Al-Bayt Ghazo* collection, wrote its preface and translated it; they are Maronite liturgical manuscripts constituting an essential foundation of doctrinal writings on textual principles and awareness of the constituents common among sister liturgies and their development through the ages.

⁵ *The Patriarchal Synod*, Text 12 (The Liturgy), 2

⁶ *Ibid*, 18

⁷ Ibid, 18-24

⁸ Joseph Ratzinger (Pape): *opera omnia, Teologia della liturgia*, p. 744

⁹ Vatican II Council *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution – On the Church), 48

¹⁰ Ibid, 58-59

¹¹ Ibid, 59 and 60

¹² *The Patriarchal Synod*, Text 12 (The Liturgy), 58

¹³ Ratzinger, Ibid, pp75-76

¹⁴ Ibid, p 77

¹⁵ Ibid, pp 78-79

¹⁶ Francis (Pope) Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World), 24 November, 2014; refer to paras 138-139, and 145

¹⁷ (Venerable) Patriarch Estephan Ad-Douaihy, *Manarat Al-Aqdass* (Lighthouse of the Holies), Vol. 1, Beirut, 1895, 416-417

¹⁸ Ratzinger, Ibid, pp 168-174

¹⁹ Ibid, pp 184-185

²⁰ Ibid, pp 186-187

²¹ Ibid, pp 192-193

²² Ibid, pp 174-176

²³ Ibid, pp 178-179

²⁴ Ibid, pp 179

²⁵ Ibid, pp 194-195

²⁶ Vatican II Council *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution – On the Sacred Liturgy), 30-31

²⁷ Refer to the book of the curate (Bishop Maroun) Nasser Aj-Gemayel: *Ar-Rumooze Al-Massihya* (Christian Symbols), Beirut, 2011

²⁸ Pierre Maraval, Egérie. Journal de voyage (Itinéraire) - Valère du Bierzo. Lettre sur la Bse Egérie (par M. C. Diaz y Diaz), Sources Chrétiennes, 296, Paris, 1982; réimprimé. 1997

²⁹ (Venerable) Patriarch Estephan Ad-Douaihy, *Manarat Al-Aqdass* (Lighthouse of the Holies), Vol. 1, Beirut, 1895, 159

³⁰ Ibid, pp 177-178

³¹ Ibid, pp 178-179

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- ³² Ibid, pp 298
- ³³ Ibid, pp 299-300
- ³⁴ Ibid, pp 292-306; *The Patriarchal Synod*, Text 12 (The Liturgy), pp 444-445
- ³⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1137-1139
- ³⁶ Vatican II Council *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution – On the Sacred Liturgy), 47
- ³⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1348
- ³⁸ Refer to YouCat (Youth Catechism), 170, and 179
- ³⁹ *The Patriarchal Synod*, Text 12 (The Liturgy), pp 423-424
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, pp 432, and 434D
- ⁴¹ Ibid, 434
- ⁴² Vatican II Council *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution – On the Sacred Liturgy), 218-219?? *The Patriarchal Synod*, Text 12 (The Liturgy), 432
- ⁴³ *The Patriarchal Synod*, Text 12 (The Liturgy), 433
- ⁴⁴ Ibid, 446-447, and 242-246
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, 429-430
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, 430
- ⁴⁷ Ibid, 431-432
- ⁴⁸ Vatican II Council *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution – On the Sacred Liturgy), 207-209?? *The Patriarchal Synod*, Text 12 (The Liturgy), 430-432
- ⁴⁹ When Jesus was born, “...there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests”” (*Luke 2:13-14*).
- ⁵⁰ The Book of Offering, Section 1, 42-43
- ⁵¹ Refer to *Ash-Shaheema Al-Marounia*, Season of Great Lent, Kaslik 1979, 628
- ⁵² LANNE E., “*Liturgies eucharistiques en Orient et en Occident*, 1^{er} – 4^{ème} siècles, “DS 9, 884-899; ANGGI H.-PHAL I., *Prex Eucharistia*, Pribourg 1968; BOUYER L., “*The different Forms of Eucharistic Prayer and their Genealogy*” SP 8, TU 93 (1966) 156-170; LIGIER L., “*La struttura della Preghiera Eucaristica: Diversità e unità*”, EL 82 (1968) 191-215; Voir GIRAUDO, *Eucarista*, 458 No 173; MACOMBER, *Oldest Text*, 360-361; ID., Ancient Form, 86 No 5; ID., *Anaphora of the Apostles*, 76; ARRANZ M., “*L’économie du salut dans la prière du post-sanctus des anaphores de types antiochien*, “ MD 106 (1971) 46-75; RAES, *Paroles de la consécration*, 486-504; LIGIER L., “*De la cène de Jésus à l’anaphore de l’Eglise*” MD 87 (1966) 7-51; ID., “*De la cène à l’eucharistie*”, AdS 21 (1968) 19-57; LIGIER L., «*Célébration divine et Anamnèse dans la première partie de l’anaphore ou Canon de la Messe Orientale*”, *Eucharisties d’Orient et d’Occident* 2, LO 47, Paris 1970, 139-178

⁵³ TAFT, *Great Entrance*, 47 n 133; TAFT, *Dptychs*, 39, 47, 59. RAHMĀNĪ, *Testamentum domini nostri Jesu Christi*, Mayence 1899, 22-23; M. METZGER, ÉD. LES CONSTITUTIONS APOSTOLIQUES, LIVRES VII – VIII (SC 336) PARIS 1987, 200-205. JANERAS S., “*En quels jours furent prononcées les homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste?*” *Mémorial Mgr Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis* (Louvain 1969) 133

⁵⁴ (Venerable) Patriarch Estephan Ad-Douaihy, *Manarat Al-Aqdass* (Lighthouse of the Holies), Vol. 2, 446-447, 519-528

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 471

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 499

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 536-539

⁵⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1382-1405

⁵⁹ (Venerable) Patriarch Estephan Ad-Douaihy, *Manarat Al-Aqdass* (Lighthouse of the Holies), Vol. 2, 615-618