Prot No 132/2021

November 12, 2021

**Pastoral Letter**

**Celebration of the Revised Holy Qurbana in the**

**Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga**

Dear Rev. Fathers, Consecrated Men and Women, and Lay Faithful,

The implementation of the revised text (*editio typica*) and the uniform mode of celebration of the Holy Qurbana on the first Sunday of the Season of Annunciation (November 28, 2021) will be written in gold letters in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church as it strengthens and clearly manifests the identity of the Syro-Malabar Church all over the world. I would like to take this occasion to personally thank all the priests, religious and lay faithful in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga for having faithfully and successfully implemented the Synodal decision in advance.

The liturgy is the aggregate of celebration of faith in a Church through the official public worship, especially the sacraments. Moreover, liturgical heritage is the most important element which distinguishes the identity of a Church *sui iuris*. There is a Latin maxim that addresses the centrality of worship in the life, identity, and mission of the Catholic Church; *“Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi”.* It literally means that the law of prayer is the law of belief. In other words, the way we worship is what we believe. Further deepening the implications of this truth, it is sometimes expanded to as, *“Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi”,* – how we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we will live. Therefore, “Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the “sacrament of unity,” namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops” (SC 26). Due to this fact, Pope Francis wrote in his letter (dated 28 November 2021) to the Bishops, Clergy and Religious and Laity of the Syro-Malabar Church: “I willingly take the occasion of the recognition of the new *Raza Qurbana Taksa* to exhort all the Clergy, religious and lay faithful to proceed to a prompt implementation of the uniform mode of celebrating the *Holy Qurbana*, for the greater good and unity of your Church. May the Holy Spirit foster harmony, fraternity and unity among all the members of your Church as you work to implement the Synodal decision.”

As always, I wish to state that the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga whole heartedly welcomes and faithfully adheres the decisions of the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church held in August 2021 which reiterated the Synodal Decisions of November 1999 (VII Synod, 14-20 November, 1999), regarding the implementation of the revised text and the uniform mode of celebration of the Holy Qurbana which states: “the celebrant shall face the faithful at the *Bema* during the Liturgy of the Word [from the very beginning of the Holy Qurbana till the Order of *Qudasha*], turn towards the Altar - in the same direction that the faithful are facing - for the Liturgy of the Eucharist [From the Order of *Qudasha* till Holy Communion], and once again face the faithful during the concluding rites after Holy Communion” (Prot. No. 0922/2021, dated 27 August 2021).

The liturgy is full of signs and symbols which help us to understand its meaning. The mystery of incarnation and the public ministry of Jesus is being commemorated during the Liturgy of the Word. Considering, Jesus Christ, the incarnated Word of God exercised his ministry among the people; the celebrant facing the congregation during the Liturgy of the Word is theologically significant.

The celebrant faces the altar (Liturgical East) during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The reason behind, the celebrant along with the congregation, faces the altar or Liturgical East is because within the Holy Qurbana, we anticipate the second coming of Jesus Christ and recall our journey together toward our heavenly dwelling place. Both elements can be enhanced when we unite our physical orientation with our spiritual orientation. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) clearly enumerates this in his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*: “A common turning to the East during the Eucharistic Prayer remains essential. This is not a case of accidentals, but of essentials. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a question of dialogue, but of common worship, of setting off towards the One who is to come”. Thus, we understand ourselves as a pilgrim people, making our way home to God. We believe that as we move towards Heaven, Christ also comes to greet us.

After having carefully studied the revised liturgical norms given by the Synodal Commission for Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church, the Presbyterium convened on September 16, 2021, unanimously made the following decisions regarding the implementation of the revised text (*editio typica*) and uniform mode of Celebration of Holy Qurbana in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Mississauga.

1. **Bema:** TheLiturgy of the Word should be celebrated at the *Bema* facing the congregation.Where we do not have our own church, it is highly recommended to arrange a *Bema*/ a portable table to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word facing the congregation.
2. **Sign of the Cross at the beginning of the Holy Qurbana:** The practice of making the sign of the cross at the very beginning of the Holy Qurbana should be avoided.
3. **Our Father:** Even though the entire form of the Lord’s prayer (together with *canona*)is given in the text, the second part may be omitted for Ordinary days, Sundays, and Feast days. However, its obligatory for Raza.
4. **Scriptural Reading: “**The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s body” (DV 21). Reading a passage from the holy Scripture during the Liturgy of the Word symbolizes the reading of the whole holy Scripture. Therefore, the practice of announcing the chapter and verses just before the readings from the Holy Scripture during Sacred Liturgy is to be avoided.
5. **Celebrant’s Prayer before the reading from the Epistle:** Out of the two prayers given in the *Taksa*, before the reading from the epistle, the use of the first prayer (“Lord, Our God, illumine our hearts and minds ...”) is strongly recommended.
6. **Prayer for the washing of hands and Offertory Prayers:** The prayers given in the *Taksa* for the washing of the hands (“May God, the Lord of all wash away…” & “And may the Lord wipe away…”) are exclusively the prayer of the celebrant. Furthermore, the Offertory prayers, just after the Hymn of the Mysteries, are reserved to the celebrant alone. Therefore, the practice of the congregation joining aloud with the celebrant for the afore-mentioned prayers should be strongly discouraged.
7. **Use of Incense:** Incensing, as far as possible, is used during the celebration of Holy Qurbana on Sundays and Feast days. However, it is obligatory for Raza and the Solemn Holy Qurbana. During the Eucharistic Celebration, incense is used in the following manner:
   * + - 1. During the Entrance Procession.
         2. During the Hymn of Resurrection: (“Lord of all we bow and praise you…”). The deacon/server enters the sanctuary and incenses the sanctuary, proceeding from the right of the altar. Then moves down the main entrance of the church incensing the congregation. (The regulations of the Fire Department and health concerns of the faithful assembled are well respected).
         3. At the procession before the Gospel and the proclamation of the Gospel itself.
         4. During the preparation of the gifts of bread and wine at the *Bethgazza*.
         5. While the deacon/server says *Diptychs,*the celebrantafter having removedthe *‘Sosappa,* incenses the holy mysteries and the altar.
         6. After the Epiclesis
8. **Bell:** A bell may be rung at two places during the Holy Qurbana.
   * + - 1. A little before the Words of Institution - Just after the first part of the Third *G’hantha*) the server may ring a bell as a signal to the congregation to be attentive for the Words of Institution
         2. Just before the Epiclesis - the server rings the bell to make the congregation vigilant to the invocation of the Holy Spirit.
9. **Farewell Prayer:** The priest says this prayer in low voice immediately after the Holy Qurbana and kisses the altar. Since the farewell prayer is exclusively reserved to the celebrant, the practice of the congregation joining aloud with the celebrant for this prayer should be strongly discouraged.
10. **Songs:** Only those songs given in the *Taksa*can be used during Eucharistic Celebration except for the entrance and holy communion songs.
11. During the Holy Qurbana, the faithful may stand, sit, or kneel as follows:
    * + - 1. **Stand:**

From the beginning of the Holy Qurbana till starting the scriptural readings

During the Gospel reading

From the beginning of *Karozutha* till the service of reconciliation

During the Service of Holy Communion, starting from the prayer, “Lord, let peace flourish in our midst…”

During the concluding rites after the Holy Communion.

* + - * 1. **Sit:**

During the Old Testament and Epistle readings

During Homily

After receiving Holy Communion (sit or kneel)

* + - * 1. **Kneel:**

From the Service of Reconciliation (“Have mercy on me, O God, in your loving kindness…”) till the service of Holy Communion (“Lord, let peace flourish in our midst…”).

The practice of congregation kneeling during the time of Words of Institution is to be firmly discouraged as it not befitting to the liturgical spirit of the occasion.Kneeling signifies repentance in the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: “Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turns confirms our way of thinking” (CCC 1327). Let us all celebrate the paschal mysteries of Jesus Christ with the Church and let our lives and families be filled with abundant graces of the Holy Spirit.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Love of God the Father and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, for ever and ever, Amen.

Yours in our Lord and our God,

Diagram

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Bishop, Eparchy of Mississauga

**NB:** Please read this Pastoral Letter in our parishes and missions during Holy Qurbana on two Sundays 14 and 21 in two parts and do the necessary preparations.