

Liturgy

QURBONO

The Book of Offering

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION

The Ancient Sources

First of all, we must look back at the liturgical sources of the Antiochene Church of which the Syriac Maronite Church is a part. From the time of the Apostles, Antioch has been an important Christian center. There the Christian Good News originated, and from there it spread by sea and land, to the seashores and the mountain tops.

After the Byzantine rule, Antioch was connected to the city of Jerusalem and to the liturgical movement which flourished around the two churches of the Nativity and the Resurrection. With the erection of the Cathedral Church of the Resurrection, the rites of the Church of Jerusalem became the focus of attention for pilgrims, as well as the source of liturgical blossoming throughout the whole East.

When the Maronites emerged as a Christian Syriac Antiochene community, during the fifth century and later, the Antiochene rites were under the influence of those of Jerusalem, particularly the liturgy attributed to Saint James, the first bishop of Jerusalem. However, the Maronites also had a liturgical tie to another important center, that is the Syriac center of Edessa. Edessa, indeed, was the first Christian state as well as the first great political and cultural Syriac center. Its rites were connected to the Semetic Aramaic Syriac legacy. They were not influenced by the Hellenistic Greek legacy as was the Antiochene rite of Jerusalem; rather, they preserved their own distinctive features and expressions which were closer to the Holy Scriptures and to the original Christian theology.

According to the few documents we have at hand, the Maronite rite is closer to the Semetic Syriac rite of Edessa than to the Antiochene Hellenistic rite of Jerusalem. However, in the fifth century, the differences between the two rites were barely noticeable.

The Maronite Liturgical Evolution Until the Tenth Century

Because of the scarcity of documents, it is not easy to define the liturgical evolution undertaken by the Maronite Church from its beginning until the tenth century. However, we are able to detect such an evolution through the liturgical prayers we have, mainly the *Anaphora of Sharar* and the prayers and hymns of the office known as the *Shimto* (that is, the simple office): In them the Maronite rite appears to have grown closer to the Antiochene sources of Jerusalem.

The Maronite Rite From the Tenth to the Sixteenth Century

The Maronite liturgical manuscripts now in our possession belong to the period between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. The oldest manuscript of the Maronite *Book of the Qurbono* is dated back to the middle of the fifteenth century (1454) and contains a few pages which belong to the twelfth century (Vat. 309). These manuscripts show us that the Maronite rite became extremely close to the Antiochene rite of

Jerusalem (known as the Western Syriac) and more and more, perhaps definitively, distancing itself from the Eastern Syriac tradition of Edessa.

We do not intend to elaborate this here; rather, we refer everyone to the studies, however minimal in number, dedicated to this matter. In fact, the manuscripts of the Maronite *Qurbono*, and most of the anaphoras used at that time, had become common with the Western Syriac rite; however, they preserved the Eastern Syriac anaphora known as the *Anaphora of the Apostles* or *Sharar*. This anaphora is very close to the Eastern Syriac anaphora in use by the Eastern Syriac Churches, Catholic and non-Catholic.

First Edition of the Book of the Maronite Qurbono

The first edition of the Maronite *Book of the Qurbono* was published in Rome between 1592 and 1594. The students of the Maronite College in Rome edited this edition under the supervision of the superiors of the college. This edition was taken from a manuscript written in 1566, in the Monastery of Qozhaya, Lebanon by the hermit Mikhail (al-Razzi), who later was elected patriarch (1567-1581), and who was the brother of Sarkis al-Razzi, his successor to the Patriarchal See (1581-1596).

The publishers of this edition altered the prayers of the eucharistic institution of the al-Razzi manuscript: in fact, they translated the words of consecration from Latin to Syriac. When the new edition reached the patriarch, he rejected it at once and prohibited its use. Then pressured by the papal delegate, Dandini, he accepted it on a temporary basis (1596), provided that things would soon be straightened out and the edition would be revised in accord with Maronite sources.

The Succeeding Editions

One hundred twenty years later, despite strong objections formulated in the writings of some Maronite scholars of the beginning of the seventeenth century, the second edition was published (1716). This edition proved to be more Latinized than the first one. In fact, the anaphora of the Latin Mass, translated into Syriac and Arabic, was inserted here, while the *Anaphora of Sharar* was removed. However, this edition, being the work of the students of the Maronite College, did not register any opposition.

The succeeding editions appeared as exact copies of this second edition, save some trimming in the pages for economic reasons: for example, the third edition (1763) included eight anaphoras instead of the fourteen in the previous editions. The same happened in the four editions published by the Monastery of Qozhaya (Lebanon) in 1816, 1838, 1855, and 1872. The two last official editions appeared in Beirut in 1888 and 1908 under the care of Bishop Youssef Dibs, Archbishop of Beirut. Bishop Dibs placed the Roman anaphora before the other anaphoras and amended the language of the prayers and hymns. The first edition in the Arabic alphabet was published in Jounieh (1959) by the Society of the Lebanese Missionaries. Finally, an abridged rite, called the "Simple Rite" was published in a booklet in 1973, including only one anaphora. It was used experimentally for only one year.

All these editions, save the "Simple Rite" (1973), were published without the seal or the signature of the patriarch, but "with his knowledge" or "after his consultation," or without any reference to the matter.

Projects of the Reform of the Maronite Qurbono

The first project for the reform of the *Qurbono* was planned by some of the students of Rome at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They intended to give back to the

Maronite *Qurbono* its Syriac Antiochene sources, which were missing in the first edition. However, the project failed to see the light.

The Synod of Mount Lebanon (1736) decreed that a commission should be established for the reform of all the rites, but mainly the *Qurbono*. This project never materialized. Before that, Patriarch Stephen Duwaih, of blessed memory (1670-1704), took pains to assemble the liturgical manuscripts, review them and prepare projects of reform for the *Qurbono* and for many of the other liturgical rites. He himself wrote that he was "hoping to delight his eyes with the sight of the publication of the liturgical books". However, he left this world with a heavy heart.

During the forties and fifties of our century, there were some other projects of reform for the Maronite *Qurbono*, but with no result. Then came Vatican Council II (1963-65) with its call for renewal, particularly in the liturgical field. A series of new projects attempted the reform of the Maronite *Qurbono*. Between 1963 and 1982 we personally witnessed about forty of them. Then, at last, the Patriarch Commission on Liturgy and Synod of Bishops focused their attention on the current project. Indeed, since 1980, this project has undergone a great deal of study and revision through the care and solicitude of the Patriarchal Commission on Liturgy.

The Current Project

This project was presented to the Patriarchal Synod of Bishops in 1980; then it was revised and presented a second time in 1982. When all texts of the project were at last assembled, it was accepted, definitively, and in all its details, by the Patriarchal Synod of Bishops and by the Vatican Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Ready for publication, this project is now published, for the first time, with an official decree attested to by the signature of the Patriarch and with his imprimatur.

THE LITURGICAL REALITY OF THE MARONITE CHURCH AND THE NORMS OF REFORM

The Reality

The actual liturgical reality in the Maronite Church is the result of various historical ramifications and accumulations, interacting with multiple intellectual, cultural, and social trends. All of this was reflected in the liturgical status quo.

We have seen an active liturgical movement, especially in regard to the prayers and hymns. The "reformers" grew in number, each following their own inspiration. And for the rite of *Qurbono* itself, we come across various books with different rites, some of them old, some recent, and some even more recent. However, such a positive liturgical movement has often led to a great amount of confusion and chaos. In fact, the clergy as well as the laity were no longer able to distinguish which rite to follow. Furthermore, a great number of supporters of this liturgical movement had allowed themselves to create new liturgical rites, in imitation of the renewal taking place within the Western Latin rite.

This particular situation caused division among Maronites in the community. A true liturgical reform, thus, became of dire necessity for the sake of discipline and unity. The Church leaders, using understanding and wisdom, realized that the time has come to publish one single book for the Maronite *Qurbono*, a book capable of unifying all Maronites, in Lebanon and in the other countries of the world: one *Qurbono* for all, used by all Maronites wherever they are and in any Maronite church they attend.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE LITURGICAL RENEWAL

The Principles of Reform for the *Qurbono*

For renewal of the rite of the Maronite *Qurbono*, the Commission on Liturgy abided by some norms and regulations:

- To be faithful to the authentic sources of the Antiochene Syriac Maronite liturgy and to preserve its identity intact from foreign elements, be they Western or Eastern;
- To oppose innovation, except in that which the welfare of the Church would require in a sure and judicious manner;
- To oppose the return to what is of the past, except in what may preserve the authentic Maronite identity;
- To make the rite of *Qurbono* appealing, from a pastoral point of view, so that the movements and the diversity of the prayers and hymns may lead to the fully conscious and active participation of the congregation;
- To return to the Maronite liturgical cycle, placing this cycle at the core of the whole year: each Sunday and its following week, will have its own proper prayers and hymns, to fit perfectly within the framework of the liturgical year and to focus on the mystery of Christ and on the main Christian mysteries;
- To make room, in agreement with the signs of the times, for the possibility of change in liturgical intercessions, prayers and movements, that they may be suitable to the needs of the various groups of society such as children, students and young people, etc., and may enable them to take an active part in them, provided that the general liturgical structure of the service is not tampered with.

Tradition and Renewal

The liturgical renewal is not a mere return to tradition; it is, rather, a pastoral need stemming from the basic principles of the liturgy and leading toward a new and active participation of the community, in agreement with the spirit of the rite and with common sense. Here we did not create new prayers and hymns; on the contrary, we went back to prayers and hymns selected from our Syriac sources and roots. Most of the time we used the Syriac text as a basis for the translated texts. Indeed, the inherited Syriac text has such a depth and such an authenticity, as to allow it to insure the life of the liturgy, that noble legacy perpetuated by past generations, and to express, at the same time, needs and requirements beneficial to each generation in particular.

We must declare that we did not offer here liturgical texts that would last for ever; only liturgical texts that are authentic. We must rely on them in every ecclesial change deemed necessary, in their content as well as in their form, according to our legacy and to the pastoral requirements. In fact, the future and the true liturgical and pastoral praxis of the Church will demonstrate the need for new directions. The Church itself, through its Commission on Liturgy, will follow these directions and will find a solution to each problem, while affirming the two basic principles: identity on one hand and evolution on the other. Here lies the norm of life itself in all things.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEW MARONITE QURBONO

The New Service of the Qurbono

The new Service of the *Qurbono* is divided into two main parts: the Service of the Word and the Service of the Eucharist or *Qurbono*.

The Service of the Word

By "Word" we mean the word of the Holy Gospel which announces the saving liturgical event. This word is preceded by the Service of the Day, that is, an ensemble of prayers and hymns proper to the special feast or commemoration announced by the Gospel itself.

The Service of the Word is a unified, independent liturgical rite, composed of:

- Opening Prayers
- Service of the Day
- Readings
- Homily

In the past, the celebration of such a rite took place in the center of the church on a platform called the "bema". Traditionally this platform was located between the section of men and that of the women, not at the altar as is the case today. Indeed, the altar is not a platform for the word; it is for the sacrifice and the Eucharist/*Qurbono*.

For that reason, we chose a proper place for this rite: within the sanctuary itself, yet outside the altar; to the right side or before the lectern of the readings, or wherever necessary.

The Service of the Eucharist/Qurbono

This service consists in the consecration of the *Qurbono*, that is, in its offering at the altar; in the remembrance of the Last Supper, death, and resurrection of Christ; in the invocation of the Holy Spirit; and, lastly, in communion shared by celebrant and congregation.

The proper place to celebrate the *Qurbono* in the church is the altar, for the *Qurbono* is a sacrifice. Thus, the celebrant proceeds from the place where the Service of the Word is celebrated to that of the Service of the *Qurbono*.

The Preparation

The Services of the Word and of the *Qurbono* are preceded by lesser rites of preparation. The Service of the Word is preceded by the vesting of the ministers, the lighting of the candles, and the entrance of the ministers. The Service of the *Qurbono* is preceded by the access to the altar, the transfer of the offerings, their actual offering, and the placing of them on the altar. The transfer of the offerings is preceded by their physical preparation on a small altar, or on the side of the main altar during weekdays, before the beginning of any other rite and without the participation of the people.

The Structure of the New Text of Qurbono

The Common Part of the Preparation:

- Preparation of the offerings on a small altar
- Vesting
- Lighting of the church
- Entrance (with the proper hymn)

Service of the Day (Proper to the Feast)

- Doxology
- Opening Prayer
- Glory (Hymn of the Angels)
- Prayer of Forgiveness with the Incense (Hoosoyo)
- Hymn/Qolo
- Prayer of the Incense (Etro)
- Qadeeshat (Trisagion)
- Prayer of the Trisagion

Readings:

- Psalm of the Readings (Mazmooro)
- First Reading(s)
- Fetgomo with the Procession of the Gospel and Incense
- Gospel - Homily - Proclamation (Korozooto)

Pre-Anaphora:

- Creed
- Access to the Altar
- Transfer of the Offerings
- Their Offering and Placing on the Altar
- Incensation

Anaphora:

- Rite of Peace
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Commemorations
- Fraction, Consignation, Intinction, Commixture, and Elevation
- Lord's Prayer and Rite of Penance (in preparation for communion)
- Invitation to Communion: "Holy things for the holy"
- Communion
- Thanksgiving and Conclusion

The Internal Order

We have arranged all these parts distinctly in the new *Book of the Qurbono* without dividing them by numbers, in order to preserve the flow of the rite. However, we have placed the titles and the rubrics in the texts and in the introductions, in order to facilitate a clear understanding of the various parts of the rite. Indeed, the liturgy is not only texts; it is also actions and movements which accompany the texts and prayers in order to express their meaning. Most important among them are: the Gospel, the Eucharist/*Qurbono*, the Memorial, the Rite of Penance, and communion...These are liturgical actions associated to various readings, prayers and hymns.

PARTICULARS OF THE RITE OF THE NEW QURBONO

The Title

The title appears in both Syriac and Arabic. The Syriac word, *Qurbono*, is translated into the Arabic word, *Quddas*, even though the translation is not literal. The two words were retained because of their common use in each language. To complete the title, a subtitle

was added: "According to the Rite of the Syriac Antiochene Maronite Church". The Maronite Church, in fact, is not a self-independent ecclesial group; it belongs to the Antiochene church in its Syriac tradition. The publication of the book by "Bkerke" (the Patriarchal See) here takes on a particular significance: except for the booklet of the "Simple Rite" of 1973, this book is the only liturgical book for the *Qurbono* to be officially published by the Maronite Patriarchate. As for the ten previous editions, beginning with that of 1592, they were published elsewhere, not by the Patriarchate. Besides, the date of 1992 provides a meaning of its own: it reminds us that exactly 400 years ago, the first edition of the *Book of the Qurbono* was printed in Rome (1592-1594). The first edition was initially rejected, because it altered some of the tradition of the Syriac Antiochene Maronite Church (in fact, the title of the edition was: *The Book of the Chaldean Qurbono*). Our present edition, though after 400 years, makes the proper correction and brings back the Service of the *Qurbono* to its authentic Maronite tradition.

Preparation of the Offerings

Today this rite is merely a routine act, without any liturgical meaning. The bread is placed on the paten, then covered; the wine and water are mixed in the cup then covered, waiting to be taken to the altar for the consecration. In earlier times, when the offerings were composed of the collection of gifts presented by the people to the deacon, the rite was full of meaning. The deacon would divide them in two parts, one reserved for the consecration, the other distributed to the people at the end of the *Qurbono*. The part reserved for the consecration was called *Furshono* in Syriac, (hence the Arabic word *Burshan*) meaning: what is set aside for the consecration.

In this simple rite, we have kept the basic elements; we provided each action with accompanying verses, one verse for the bread, another verse for the covering with the veil, etc. We assigned this rite to the deacon according to earlier tradition and as seen in the *Book of Guidance (Kitab al-Hoda - eleventh century)*. Hence, we encourage the presence of deacon in parishes in order to assist the celebrant in this rite. In case of the absence of deacons, the ministers in minor orders may replace them. This rite takes place at a side altar or on a table on the right side of the main altar [the celebrant's right as he stands at the altar]. During weekdays, the preparation of the offerings may take place on the main altar, to the right of the celebrant. This represents, of course, a practical change for weekdays, since the *Qurbono* is now celebrated on a daily basis.

The Vesting

The celebrant wears the proper vestments of the Syriac Maronite tradition, as they appear in the old Maronite documents. The return to such a tradition is necessary in order to preserve the Maronite identity from all foreign elements (Latin and non-Latin). The vestments should show an "Eastern" Syriac Maronite imprint. The prayers and psalms accompanying the vesting are optional. They are well known in our liturgical books. The prayer, "O Lord, make me worthy...", said at the foot of the altar before the start of the *Qurbono*, is of recent use in our tradition; it was borrowed from the Western Syriac Orthodox rite.

Lighting of the Church

The first tangible liturgical action is the lighting. Christ, in fact, is our Light; light symbolizes Him. Thus, the lighting of the church (candles and lights) takes place before the entrance of the celebrant, while the congregation sings a hymn to Christ the Light by whose light we are all enlightened.

The Entrance

The entrance includes the procession of the celebrant and his assisting ministers. The cross bearer leads the procession followed by the candle bearers, the incense bearer, and the bearers of the books needed for the celebration. The procession starts from the sacristy, or better, from the main entrance of the church. The procession is accompanied by a hymn or psalm appropriate to the feast and to the liturgical event, putting everyone in the proper atmosphere of the liturgical day. The entrance procession concludes at the entrance to the sanctuary: all stand before the altar, bow before it, and sing the hymn, "I have entered your house, O Lord..." in Syriac. This hymn must be sung in Syriac in the Maronite churches all over the world. Maronites, wherever they may be, will then be able to hear the same hymn, with the same melody, and in the same language in all their churches.

With the approval of the proper ecclesiastical authority, we have decided to make mandatory the singing in Syriac the three following hymns; the entrance dialogue at the beginning of the service (and the access to the altar at beginning of the anaphora), the *Qadeeshat Aloho*, and the narrative of the institution of the eucharist.

The Service

"The Service" (in Arabic *Khidmat*) is a translation of the Syriac word *teshmeshto*. It means a special rite for a special liturgical action. In fact, in our Maronite tradition, the name *Teshmesht* was given to the liturgical book which contains the Church prayers for the various feasts. The *Khidmat* (service) also means the book which contains the parts of the deacon and the congregation. When we say the *Book of Service*, we are referring to the book proper to the ministry of the deacon during the *Qurbono*.

As far as we are concerned, by "Service" we mean here the prayers of the feast day throughout the whole liturgical season. It is a movable element in the *Qurbono* that varies almost every week. Within the movable frame of the liturgical seasons of the year, it brings depth and beauty to the liturgy. Therefore, the celebrant of the "service of the feast" must be aware of the basic rules of the liturgical year and the succession of its feasts and weekdays.

The Maronite Liturgical Year

The liturgical year begins with the first Sunday of November and concludes with the last Sunday of October. It is centered around the mystery of the Lord Jesus from His birth, to His baptism, to His saving teaching until His death, resurrection, ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples, and the awaiting of His second coming. All these solemnities of the Lord are considered as important milestones of the year, called "seasons". They are: the Birth [of the Lord], Epiphany, Lent, the Passion, the Resurrection, Pentecost, and Holy Cross. They are seasons full of meaning and rich in blessings, lived by the faithful Church week after week, in preparation for a particular feast or as a part of its continuation. They are known by the name liturgical year or liturgical cycle. In this new *Book of the Qurbono*, we offer compilations of prayers and hymns, distributed throughout all the weeks of the year; they accompany all the feasts of the Lord. They constitute the "rite of the service" which forms the first part of the *Qurbono*. There are almost fifty services, having the same number as the weeks of the year. They allow the community to live the "great event" of the Lord Jesus and His mystery of salvation.

This cycle reflects a new and unique matter in the *Qurbono* of the Maronite Church. At the same time, it represents a return to our rich Syriac Maronite patrimony, which includes such a great number of "services," especially during the liturgical period

between the feasts of Pentecost and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. During this period we have focused on the two feasts of the Apostles (Saints Peter and Paul, the Apostles in general), on the feast of the Assumption, and on the general weekly memorials, common to all saints.

The individual faithful and the community are then able to experience each Sunday of the year, and, even more so, each day of the week, a special event connected to the life of the Lord Jesus. In this way, the liturgy becomes a living event, not a repetition of the same prayers and hymns routinely recited indefinitely throughout the days, weeks and years. The individual faithful and the whole community are compelled, thanks to new living rites, to live a new life and to create a blessed movement in the renewal of their faith and their Christian life.

The texts of these various services are taken from the Syriac Maronite liturgical books. Their references are recorded in detail in the studies accompanying the project of the new *Qurbano*.

Order of the Services

The prayers, hymns and actions of each service follow an order which is common to all services:

Glory to God

Doxology

Opening Prayer (Praise and Glory)

Praise of the Angels "Glory to God in the Highest"

Prayer of Forgiveness (*Hoosoyo*)

Proemion (Introductory Doxology)

Sedro (Order of Prayer)

Qolo (Hymn)

Prayer of Incense (*Etro*)

The first group (a) is dedicated to the glory and praise of God at the opening of every service. The second group (b) is a petition for forgiveness through the commemoration of a saving event remembered in the services of each day. In this second group, the sedro represents a more prominent feature: it is, in fact, a remembrance of a saving event of the past as well as a theological meditation on the same event for the sake of the present time, followed by a series of petitions inspired by the event itself and by the needs of the community. The prayer of forgiveness is accompanied by the burning of incense and the incensation.

The Meanings of Incense

The liturgy provides various meanings for the use of incense. The three most important are the following:

- The offering of a burnt "sacrifice of incense" to God for our sins, asking Him to be pleased with our offering and to pardon us;
- The purification from sin and the casting out of the evil spirit who is the cause of sin. Thus the celebrant incenses the community and the area around it, in order to purify them and prepare them to welcome the Lord, the God of glory;
- The giving of honor to God before whom the incense is offered and the honoring of the righteous and just who are the temples of the Holy Spirit.

The rite of burning incense and the incensation itself is part of the ancient rites in our Maronite liturgy. It gives the Eastern rites, in general, a distinctive characteristic. This characteristic, indeed, generates within the liturgy a symbolic and touching movement, as well as a profound feeling of awe and reverence. This rite must be preserved. Each of the participants in this rite plays his own role: the celebrant burns the incense, the deacon does the incensing, a concelebrant recites the proemion and sedro, and the community participates in praying and asking for forgiveness. The ministers at the altar themselves have their own role: they carry the censer and present it to the celebrant. When the celebrant is alone for the *Qurbono*, he himself burns the incense, incenses, and recites the hoosoyo. He may delegate somebody to sing it with a good voice and pleasant melody; however, he should reserve for himself the conclusion of both the proemion and the sedro.

Qadeeshat Aloho

This is the hymn of the Trisagion which is common to all rites in the *Qurbono* and in other liturgical rites. In the Byzantine Church and the Eastern Syriac Churches, this hymn is addressed to the Holy Trinity. However, in the Western Syriac Churches, including the Maronite Church, and in the Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopian Churches, this same hymn is addressed to the Lord Jesus alone. The Latin Church, theologically speaking, considers this hymn as Trinitarian; however, from a liturgical point of view, that is, in the rite of adoration of the cross on Great Friday, it addresses this hymn to the Lord Jesus himself. A time honored tradition tells that Joseph of Arimathea was the first to recite this hymn at the feet of Christ when he removed him from the cross and buried him. The common response to the *Qadeeshat Aloho* is "Have mercy on us". However, on the great feasts and during the liturgical season that follows them, proper verses are added to this response, such as: "who is born from the daughter of David...Have mercy on us" (Birth of the Lord), "who was baptized by John...Have mercy on us" (Epiphany), "who was crucified for us...Have mercy on us" (Passion Week), "who rose from the dead...Have mercy on us" (Resurrection). Such praxis is at the core of our Syriac Maronite tradition. In spite of the opposition of those who deny the use as heretical, we still hold it today: they consider the hymn as Trinitarian and believe that in proclaiming "who was crucified for us", we attribute the crucifixion to the three persons of the Holy Trinity, not only to the Lord Jesus alone. We preferred to keep these various responses for the liturgical seasons, because they add wealth to the rite and depth to our faith.

This hymn and its response must always be sung in Syriac in the Maronite churches throughout the whole world, as a sign of unity among all Maronites.

The Prayer After the Qadeeshat

This prayer is a traditional prayer proper to Maronites in all their rituals. We selected a text serving as a junction point between the conclusion of the *Qadeeshat Aloho* on the one hand and, on the other, the preparation for the hearing of the Word of God, through the coming Scripture readings.

The Scripture Readings

The announcement of the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God, represents the heart of this first part of the *Qurbono*. What preceded was but a preparation to this living Word: to proclaim it, listen to it and live by it. The Church gives it a great importance and surrounds it with hymns, instructions, and a procession in order to display its full meaning. The texts of the Scripture readings vary according to the celebrations and the liturgical seasons. We are preparing a complete and detailed book for the readings, including texts from the Old as well as from the New Testaments. However, for the time being, we limit the reading to two: for Sundays and feast days, the letters of Saint Paul

and the Gospel; for weekdays, the letters of Saint Paul or some of the other letters and Gospel. In the near future, the choice will be wider and more comprehensive embracing all the books of Holy Scripture.

The Psalm of the Readings

The psalm is a hymn proper to the Maronites. Currently it is composed of three poetic strophes according to the Ephremic melody. The hymn assembles verses from the psalms with verses inspired by the saving event which marks the theme of the feast. This particular structure is an ancient part of the Antiochene tradition. In the other rites, its equivalent is the psalmic verses sung before the epistles or readings from the other books of Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel.

As we mentioned above, in the future we will select readings from all the books of the Holy Scriptures. Each reading will be prefaced with a brief explanation for a better understanding of the Scripture passage. The selection of readings is a difficult and lengthy task. At this time, the Commission on Liturgy and a Commission of Scripture Scholars are joining their efforts for that purpose. They will assign the proper Scripture texts to all the days of the year according to the feasts and liturgical seasons.

The Procession of the Gospel

Before the proclamation of the Gospel, a procession takes place inside the sanctuary in honor of the Word of God. In earlier times, this procession used to be performed, according to Patriarch Duwaih, in the midst of the congregation. However, we limited it here to the sanctuary. It starts from and goes back to the place where the *Book of Gospels* is kept, preserving the rite of procession, on the one hand, and shortening the liturgical celebration, on the other. In addition, we have retained the burning of incense before the Gospel, in honor of the Word of God and also as an invitation for the congregation to stand well. The warnings of the deacon, such as, "Remain silent...", provide the congregation with a favorable religious atmosphere.

The Announcement of the Gospel in the Church

The reading of the Gospel is not a simple, hasty recitation; it is, rather, an eloquent announcement made in no hurry; in some churches and circumstances, it becomes a chanting of the text. Formerly, the Syriac text of the Gospel was chanted to a simple tune; then the recitation of the translated Arabic text would follow. The chanting of the Gospel during solemn celebrations has many benefits. We ought to return to it. There is no need to repeat that the evangelical reading focuses on the theme of the feast, that is to say, the saving event.

This liturgical text ought to be simple and easy to understand. Our Maronite tradition chose the Syriac version called the *Peshitta*. It is an ancient text close to the Aramaic in which our Lord, and his Apostles after him, announced first the good news.

The Proclamation (*Korozoto*)

This proclamation is known as "the simple", which is the first of three proclamations, in the Service of the *Qurbano*. It is recited after the homily with the participation of the congregation. Inspired by the theme of the feast, it is considered as a poetical and theological meditation on the celebration. The compilation of these proclamations is conserved in books proper to the deacon. They are now in the process of preparation, adding to the overall list of books for the *Qurbano*. (This overall list includes books for the celebrants, their assistants, their readers, and the congregation.)

With the present proclamation, Part One of the *Qurbono* is concluded. The candidates for baptism or catechumens were allowed to take part in it. Once done, they were dismissed. Then Part Two, reserved to the faithful, would begin. It is the eucharistic part, preceded by the transfer of the offerings, their offering, and their being placed on the altar.

Pre-Anaphora

The Pre-Anaphora is composed of a group of actions and prayers linking Part One to Part Two and preparing for Part Two, the anaphora, which is a Greek term meaning "the offering of the *Qurbono*". This part is opened by the Creed and includes the processional transfer of the gifts, their offering at the altar, and the incensation of the altar, gifts, and people.

The Creed

It is the Nicene-Constantinople that is currently used in the Maronite Church. It was introduced in the Service of the *Qurbono* during the fifth century. Formerly, it was considered as the testimony of the catechumens, made before they were admitted to the Mystery of Baptism; later on, it became the profession of faith of the baptized faithful before the eucharistic part, once the catechumens were dismissed from the church.

The Access to the Altar

The celebrant and his assisting ministers proceed to the altar, singing the hymn of access. This hymn is different from that of the entrance dialogue at the beginning of the *Qurbono*. However, the two hymns have the same meaning. In the use of this hymn, we did not differentiate between bishop celebrants and priest celebrants, though in recent times it was reserved only to bishops. The access is followed by kissing the center of the altar: the altar is, indeed, the symbol of Christ; to honor it is to honor Christ himself.

Orientation of the Celebrant at the Altar

According to the Maronite tradition and to the testimony of Patriarch Duwaih, the altar must be separated from the wall of the apse, in order to allow the celebrants to process around it. Traditional church architecture required that the altar face eastward. It was customary for the celebrant to face east and to have the congregation behind him facing in the same direction.

However, for pastoral reasons and a better understanding of the Eucharist, as the banquet of the Last Supper, a new way of celebration emerged within the Church, that is, to have the celebrant face toward the congregation. Thanks to it, well-informed faithful have shown a greater participation in the *Qurbono*.

On June 6, 1992, the Maronite Patriarchal Synod of Bishops decreed the possibility of celebrating in either direction, that is, facing toward the congregation or, along with the congregation, facing toward the east. The final ruling on the matter is left to the local hierarch. A large number of churches have been built to accommodate this new orientation, which represents, in our opinion, a renewal that agrees with the spirit of the *Qurbono* (as well as a memorial of the banquet of the Last Supper), and also with the requirements of today's pastoral life.

Transfer of the Offerings

The offerings are transferred from their place of preparation to the altar. They are carried in procession accompanied by candles, incense, and the singing of the well-known traditional hymn: "The Lord reigns clothed in majesty." Many meanings are attached to this rite, namely: the separation between the two parts of the *Qurbono*, the

Word of God in the Scriptures and the Word of God in the Eucharist; also the invitation to the congregation to offer itself and be consecrated along with the bread and wine which are offered in order to become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Presentation of the Offerings

The celebrant receives the offerings, then raises them in a gesture of offering to God, saying one of the oldest Maronite prayers in this rite.

The Placing of the Offerings on the Altar

The placing of the offerings on the altar is a liturgical priestly action; it signifies the setting aside the offerings as an official presentation of the altar to God. The rite of consecration begins at this point. Following the placing on the altar, the celebrant makes some commemoration, mainly: the remembrance of Christ and His plan of salvation and the remembrance of the saints, among them the patron of the church and the saint whose feast is being celebrated. Then he announces the general and particular intentions for which the offerings are presented. The offerings are placed at the center of the altar over consecrated piece of wood [or marble] (called a *tableet*), or instead, over a consecrated piece of fabric.

The Incensation

For the first time, the celebrant incenses the altar, prepared for the sacrifice with the offerings now placed in it. As for the previous incensation, at the prayer of forgiveness (Hoosoyo) during the Service of the Word, it was performed outside the context of the altar and the offerings. The incensation is accompanied by a hymn of commemoration, the incense hymn, "Lover of those who repent", another hymn, such as *Salatooke Ma'na* (May your prayer be with us...), or some other hymn.

The Anaphora

Anaphora is a Greek word meaning "the offering" or "the *Qurbono*". It means here the compilation of eucharistic prayers and actions; it starts with the rite of peace, through the consecration and communion until the conclusion of the service. This second part of the *Qurbono* is known today by the name *anaphora*. According to our Syriac Maronite tradition, its prayers vary; they are attributed to the Twelve Apostles, or one of the apostles or evangelists, or one of the forefathers or patriarchs or a noted bishop. The number of anaphoras exceeds seventy in the overall Syriac tradition.

The Western Syriac Anaphora

There are two types of anaphoras in our Maronite tradition; some originate from the Western Syriac model, such as the *Anaphora of Saint James of Jerusalem* and the *Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles*; some others originate from the Eastern Syriac model, such as the Maronite *Anaphora of Sharar* and the Assyrian Chaldean *Anaphora of Addai and Mari*.

In the previous editions of the *Qurbono* (except the "Simple Rite" of Bkerke, 1973), the anaphora used to include, in addition to the complete Western model, some prayers from the *Anaphora of Sharar*, which belong to the Eastern Syriac model. The anaphora was then a mixture of the Western and Eastern models. In this new text of the *Qurbono*, we omitted such a duplication. We set the anaphora according to the Western Syriac model only, without the prayers of the Eastern Maronite *Anaphora of Sharar*. However, this does not mean that we have totally neglected the *Anaphora of Sharar* (see below).

A great number of the Western Syriac Anaphoras are used by the Maronites. We find some of them in the Maronite manuscripts, mainly in the compilation of anaphoras prepared by Patriarch Duwaih. This compilation contains thirty anaphoras, some of them bearing non-Maronite names. Their texts vary from one manuscript to another. However, some of these anaphoras are well known and go back to before the tenth century; they have been adopted by several manuscripts and also by all the succeeding editions of the *Book of the Qurbono*.

As for us, we have adopted in this edition six anaphoras only, hoping that later on we will be able to complete them, until we reach at least twenty-four anaphoras. The six anaphoras currently selected all belong to the Maronite tradition prior to the tenth century. Here they are listed as they appear in the book:

Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles;

Anaphora of Saint Peter, Head of the Apostles (O God of Peace);

Anaphora of Saint James, Brother of the Lord;

Anaphora of Saint John the Apostle;

Anaphora of Saint Mark the Evangelist;

Anaphora of Sixtus, Pope of Rome.

These anaphoras were the subject of a number of studies, some of which were published in a scholarly manner. We have adopted here the scholarly text of the published anaphoras, and, for the non-published ones, we have relied on the liturgical text in common use.

The Eastern Syriac Anaphora of *Sharar*

This anaphora bears various names, such as *Anaphora of the Apostles*, *Anaphora of Saint Peter (the third)*, and *Anaphora of Sharar* (*Sharar* is the first Syriac word of the anaphora and means "confirm"). Several studies have been dedicated to this anaphora which shows a similarity with the Eastern Syriac *Anaphora of Addai and Mari* in use by the Assyrian Chaldean Churches. These two anaphoras may have a same Edessian origin dating back to the fifth century.

In the Maronite rite, the *Anaphora of Sharar* uses the same internal order in the *Qurbono* and in the rite for the consecration of chrism (*myron*) and for the consecration of the baptismal water, on the eve of Epiphany. Without the shadow of doubt, the Maronite Church used the *Anaphora of Sharar* in the *Qurbono*, prior to the sixteenth century. In the first edition of the *Book of Qurbono*, this anaphora was placed after the other anaphoras, while it was omitted in the second edition (1716). It then became known as the *Qurbono of the Signing of the Chalice*, which is but a rite of communion for Great Friday.

The *Anaphora of Sharar* has its own order which is neither clear nor easy. As it stands now, it cannot be used, yet it should be studied and given a new order. The Patriarchal Commission on Liturgy has assumed this task in order to bring back to the Maronite liturgical life, as soon as possible, the *Anaphora of Sharar*, corrected and arranged in a definitive way. From this it appears clearly that the Maronite Liturgy extends its roots to the Eastern Syriac sources. There is no need to note here the difficulty of our task; to

restructure, on one hand, an anaphora which for hundreds of years has fallen from use, and to prepare, on the other, a similar rite for the consecration of the chrism (*myron*) and the baptismal water. We have thus postponed this work to the near future, God willing.

The Six Anaphoras of the New Text of the *Qurbono*

We adopted the six anaphoras, indicated above, with some variations, mainly:

The words of consecration, that is the narrative of the eucharistic institution during the Last Supper, originally varied from one anaphora to another. However, we could not go back to the literal text of each anaphora, since the text of the words of consecration in the present situation of the Maronite rite has assumed a new shape, in its content as well as in its form. Thus, we have limited our choice from all the anaphoras to one single text for the words of consecration. We have selected the text of the *Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles*; we have added to it those slight touch-ups deemed necessary in order to round out the content as well as the form, and to accommodate the musical melody.

We have provided the texts of all anaphoras, without exception, with an Arabic translation facing the Syriac text. We wanted this translation to be elegant and abridged, especially in the commemorations.

The Structure of the Anaphoras

We will not concentrate on each individual anaphora; rather, we will follow the overall structure of the six anaphoras, for they are totally similar to each other. We will explain their prayers and actions in the order assigned to them. We, however, will not list our sources and the many references to our explanations.

Prayer of Peace

This prayer is the first prayer of the anaphora, known as the Prayer before the Peace, is a preamble to all the prayers of the anaphora. It prepares the congregation for the giving of the peace. Once the prayer has been said, the celebrant passes the peace from the altar, and the faithful exchange it in the nave of the church, singing the proclamation of peace (*Korozoto*) known as the "Median" in the original Syriac.

Second Prayer

The second prayer is the Prayer of the Veil. Formerly, it preceded the removal of the great veil from the offerings placed on the altar. However, it lost its meaning in many of the anaphoras, as is the case, for example, in the *Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles* where it followed the rite of peace itself. This prayer may have also the meaning of "prayer of the curtain" which partitioned the temple. The celebrant used to recite it before the curtain and prior to turning to the altar.

Third Prayer

This is the Prayer for the Imposition of the Hand. It is a prayer of blessing, said by the celebrant over the people, as they await the celebration of the Eucharist. The meaning varies according to the anaphora. In the *Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles*, for example, it becomes merely a preparatory prayer for the celebration of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist Prayer

This is, essentially, the basic prayer by which the *Qurbono* is consecrated. It is composed of a single, yet multifaceted prayer. Its unity consists in being one prayer that is Trinitarian. It begins with the thanksgiving to the Father, moves to the memorial of the Son's plan of salvation, and concludes with the invocation of the Holy Spirit. In fact, it is

the Holy Trinity, the One God, who saved us through the incarnate Son. It is the Holy Trinity, the One God, who himself consecrates the *Qurbano* and the Church as well through the incarnate Son.

The eucharistic prayer is composed of several elements:

Introduction: a Pauline greeting and an invitation to the celebration of the Eucharist;

Thanksgiving to the Father who created us and gave us the promise of the Savior;

Memorial of the Son in His plan of salvation for us and in the giving of His Body and Blood for the Church;

Invocation of the Holy Spirit to perfect the consecration of the Body and Blood.

The Introduction

The celebrant introduces the eucharistic prayer by greeting and blessing the present assembly of God. He greets it with a verse from Saint Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (13:13). The verse is altered by liturgical tradition, for the sake of preserving the ecclesial order of the Divine Persons: first the Father, then the Son, last the Holy Spirit. Following the greeting and blessing, the celebrant invites the faithful to begin the prayer of thanksgiving, "Let us thank the Lord with fear": this is, strictly speaking, the eucharistic prayer.

The Introduction to "Holy, Holy, Holy"

The celebrant continues, announcing that it is truly right to thank the Lord, since He is the source of all blessings and gifts from the creation of the world to the incarnation. God must be glorified, not only by the people on earth, but also by the angels in heaven, as clearly appears in the vision of the prophet Isaiah (6:3), in which the prophet listened to the seraphim, shouting: "Holy, Holy, Holy". The Church shouts with them: "Holy...", adding the words of Psalm Sunday: "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord..."

The Thanksgiving to the Father

The celebrant continues the prayer of thanksgiving. Depending on each anaphora, it is sometimes long, sometimes brief; it centers on the never-ending thanksgiving to the Father who created us and, though we have distanced ourselves from Him, never let us down; on the contrary, He promised us a Savior, sent to us the prophets, and in the fullness of time, sent us His only Son. Each anaphora recalls these stages of our salvation and expands on them. However, the theme is one and the same, that is; thanksgiving to the Father for the principal stages of our salvation, and the announcement of the infinite love of God for us.

The Memorial of the Son

The history of salvation, within the prayer of thanksgiving, leads to the events of the incarnation and redemption. It stops specifically at the Last Supper, on the eve of the passion of the Lord Jesus, in which He gave us His Body and Blood. At this point, the anaphora recalls what happened at this Supper, as recorded in the Gospel and in the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. The celebrant repeats here the text of the institution of the eucharist; it is an essential text to the consecration, because it includes the same words with which the Lord Jesus consecrated the bread and the wine for our sake.

While talking about consecration, we do not need to dwell on the differences between the Eastern and Western outlook. The Western Latin rites consider these words alone and not other words, as the words of consecration. The Eastern rites in general, including the Maronite rite, ties these words to the calling of the Holy Spirit; they look at them together as a liturgical unity, complete and undivided. There is no doubt that the words of the Lord Jesus in the Last Supper, according to the theology of the Church, are sufficient to consecrate the *Qurbono*. This is the meaning we give to the profound bowing of the celebrant after each of the Lord's words over the bread and wine. Yet, the liturgy has its rules, and the theology of the Church, its own diversity and wealth. Therefore, we consider the eucharistic prayer as one, likewise the Trinity is One; it is perfected only by the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

We have accorded to the words of consecration all the importance due to them now in our tradition and Church. We have arranged these words in one common text for all the anaphoras, in order to preserve our Syriac Antiochene tradition; yet, we took into account the evolution that took place in our tradition during the last 400 years of history; for the rites, as we said, are a living tradition, not a dead archaeological science.

The narrative of the institution is followed by the memorial of the Son and His plan of salvation, especially His death and resurrection. The Eucharist is but the remembrance of the Lord's death and resurrection, as a Savior, and the awaiting of His second coming, as a judge. The Eucharist is the time in which the Lord appears in truth. The first Christians who were expecting Him and hoping for Him proclaimed in their liturgical and eucharistic gatherings: *Maranatha*, Come, O Lord!

The Invocation of the Holy Spirit

The deacon warns the faithful about "the awesome moment when the Holy Spirit will descend and overshadow the *Qurbono*..." Afterwards, the celebrant kneels on both knees, invokes the Holy Spirit and proclaims, "Hear me, O Lord..." The congregation responds three times, "Lord, have mercy." The celebrant signs the Mysteries with the sign of the cross, then says words which embody the result of his invocation, that is: to "make" the bread and wine, through the overshadowing of the Spirit, the Body and Blood of Christ. The Mysteries become the eucharist consecrated for the forgiveness of sin and for a new life given to the community which shares in it, a community which is also "consecrated" by this overshadowing of the spirit. With this invocation, the liturgy of the Eucharist is accomplished and the *Qurbono* is consecrated.

The Commemorations

The commemorations are known by different names: e.g., intercessions, dyptics, etc. They encompass the living and the dead. The living are divided into three categories: The Church authorities, the civil authorities and the people. The dead are also divided into three categories: the saints, mainly the Virgin Mary and the Apostles, then the fathers and teachers, and lastly the faithful departed in general. In our Arabic translation, these commemorations are abridged to make them suitable to our times. The congregation may add appropriate intercessions and commemorations.

The proclamation of the commemorations belongs to the ministry of the deacon; however, the general rule reserves the first intercession and the final doxology to the celebrant himself.

The Fraction, Consignation, Intinction, Commixture, and Elevation

This rite is complicated, yet complete in itself; through symbolic actions, it embodies all that has preceded, particularly the death and resurrection of the Lord. In the narrative

of the eucharistic institution, the Church remembers the Last Supper of the Lord, His passion and saving death. With grief, she sings the story of His passion. She remembers, after that, His resurrection, especially when invoking the Holy Spirit. In fact, she turns her eyes to the resurrection, for it is the Holy Spirit who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. He is the living Spirit who provides life; thus the invocation of the Holy Spirit is a new resurrection achieved through a new Pentecost. All the above is symbolically embodied by the celebrant in the rite of fraction, consignation, intinction, commixture and elevation: the bread placed on the paten has become the Body of the Lord, and the wine in the cup, His blood. The Body and Blood, separated on the paten and in the cup, symbolize the death of the Lord and His passion. Likewise, the fraction [breaking] of the bread symbolizes the death of the Lord and His passion. The consignation of the Body and Blood symbolizes their unification accomplished by the Lord, through His death and resurrection, between His divinity and our humanity. Indeed, the celebrant, in the concluding prayer of this whole rite, states this when he says: "You have united, O Lord, your divinity with our humanity..."

Lastly, the celebrant takes the broken bread, the living Body of the Lord, and places it on the paten, above the cup of the living Blood. He then elevates them, symbolizing by this elevation the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Lord. This rite takes place before communion, as a preparation for the community to participate in the life-giving Eucharist. The Eucharist revitalizes the congregation; it brings a new life to it and makes it an active and living congregation, witnessing to the living and risen Christ who is for ever glorified.

Preparation for Communion

This is an independent rite; it begins with the Lord's Prayer and includes penance, contrition, forgiveness, imposition of the hand, and absolution. For the conscientious community, this is a rite of communal penance for the absolution of sins, those sins which do not require an individual confession through the Mystery of Penance. With confession itself, this rite becomes a true and complete rite. In fact, the Mystery of Penance is but a rite of admission of sins, contrition for them, and absolution received through the power bestowed upon the priest by the Lord Jesus. All these elements are found in this rite. We must clarify this point in order to encourage the faithful to participate in the communion, without having to confess their sins, except in the case when more serious sins urge the necessity of confession through the Mystery of Penance.

The Lord's Prayer

The congregation either recites or sings the Lord's Prayer, with extended hands. It is placed in the *Qurbano*, for through it, we ask for bread and forgiveness: "Give us our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses". The Lord's Prayer is truly a complete act of contrition. The extending of hands is a sign of supplication and petition for pardon. The following prayer has the same meaning.

The Bowing of the Heads

The deacon warns the faithful to bow their heads before the merciful Lord in order to receive His blessing. This warning enforces the importance of the action for which we prepare ourselves, that is penance before communion.

The Blessing

The celebrant greets the congregation with peace; he places his right hand over the people and gives them the blessing, accompanied by prayer. This prayer changes according to each anaphora; however, the meaning remains the same: "Bless, O Lord,

your people...make us worthy to participate in these mysteries with purity... May the holy Mysteries be for the forgiveness of our sins..."

The celebrant concludes the prayer of imposition of the hand with a Trinitarian blessing. The deacon once more addresses the faithful with another call for penance and for mercy from the Lord, in preparation for the great event, that is communion.

Invitation for Communion

At this point, all that is left for the celebrant to do is to invite the congregation to receive the Mysteries. He elevates the consecrated offerings and proclaims; "Holy things for the holy". The expression is crystal clear and very ancient, dating back to the *Didache* in the second century. The "holy" intended here are those who are sanctified by baptism. They are the true "Christians" who bear this name with truth and merit. The response to the invitation is also crystal clear because their holiness is but a reflection of the holiness of the Trinity over them: "One Holy Father, one Holy Son, one Holy Spirit...blessed be the name of the Lord..."

Conclusion of the Rite of Preparation for Communion

The rite of preparation for communion is concluded with a prayer: "Make us worthy, O Lord God, to sanctify..." This prayer previously was a silent prayer reserved to the celebrant alone. We desired it here to be a public prayer for the whole congregation, in order to incite all the faithful to approach Holy Communion.

Communion

The celebrant receives communion first, then his assistant ministers, and lastly the congregation. The distribution of communion has varied according to times and places. Communion under the two species of bread and wine, as willed by Christ, was the constant rule, unless particular circumstances required otherwise. It is difficult today for the congregation to receive the Blood directly from the same cup or from the same spoon. The current practice for communion - it is not the only one - consists in dipping the Body into the cup and giving communion to the faithful directly in the mouth.

There is another form of distribution for communion; to let the faithful personally take the Body from the paten and dip it into the cup. But it is difficult to make this a general norm, especially in the presence of a large crowd of faithful.

During communion, the congregation sings traditional and well-known hymns. They may also, during the memorial of the faithful departed, sing in Syriac and Arabic [and English] the traditional strophes proper to the occasion. People like these strophes for their simplicity and beauty. There are many hymns appropriate for communion, some of them old and some new.

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

After communion the celebrant says a prayer of thanksgiving; it varies according to the anaphora, yet the meaning remains the same. It consists in giving thanks to the Lord for the great gift He has granted us, that is His Body and Blood.

The Prayer of Blessing

The celebrant greets the congregation with peace; he places his right hand over them while he recites a prayer which varies according to the anaphora. This was the way Christian gatherings in which the faithful were given the blessing of the celebrant were concluded. Then the celebrant recites the prayer of conclusion whose purpose is to mark the faithful with the sign of the holy Cross.

The Dismissal

The celebrant dismisses the congregation inviting them to "Go in peace...May the blessing of the Most Holy Trinity be with you."

Farewell to the Altar

The celebrant bids farewell to the altar with affection. He kisses it with fervor, praying: "Remain in peace, O altar of God... I know not whether I will be able to return to you again to offer sacrifice." This is a well-known, ancient, and venerable prayer.

The End of the *Qurbono*

The celebrant and his assistants return in procession to where they came from; the congregation sings and the bells ring. The *Qurbono* comes to an end in the church, but will be perpetuated in the life of the faithful. Indeed, they were enriched by the Eucharist, so that they might be able to pursue the journey, awaiting for another *Qurbono*, in order to be again enriched by the Eucharist. This will go on till the end of their life, when they will participate for ever in the heavenly banquet of the Lord.

The Conclusion

The liturgy in general, and the liturgy of the *Qurbono*, in particular, is an earthly image which reflects among us the liturgy in heaven. The word, the music, the light, the gestures, the vestments, the prayers, the hymns, the presence of God in the heart of the congregation; all these invite us to get close to God who establishes His dwelling in our midst. The main thing is to pay our pastoral attention to liturgical matters and to give them the necessary seriousness and preparation in order that we be worthy of the Divine Lamb.

Let us not celebrate the *Qurbono* unless we prepare for it. The priest cannot celebrate the *Qurbono* as if he were alone. The *Qurbono* is a communal action. The community must take part in it and the priest must make them participate in it. From now on, every parish should prepare a complete team for the celebration of the *Qurbono*: deacon, cantor, reader, server, choir, congregation, and as their leader, the priest celebrant. If all participate, all will benefit and God will be in all.

The Book of the New Text of the *Qurbono*

This book represents a common task achieved by the Patriarchal Commission on Liturgy, for the welfare of the Maronite Church, in the East as well as in the West. It is an instrument of unification for the gathering of the Maronites wherever they live. The Commission on Liturgy has worked with one heart, with determination and love, representing all dioceses, religious orders, and people; likewise may this new book be for all dioceses, religious orders, and people a sign of eternal love and a pledge of total unity.

A Word of Appreciation for the Commission on Liturgy

A word of appreciation for the members of the Commission on Liturgy is overdue. They are the Reverend Fathers: Youhanna Tabet, Emmanuel Khoury (+1993), Sem'an Atallah, Youssef Merhej, and Augustin Mouhanna. This commission worked unceasingly during many years, from the beginning of this liturgical endeavor until now. A special word of gratitude goes to the Secretary of the Commission, Rev. Fr. Youhanna Tabet, and to all his associates in the Department of Liturgy of the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik. Another word of thanks is directed to the Lebanese Missionary Fathers who committed themselves to the printing, publication, and distribution of this book.

May the blessing of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the One God, be with us all. Amen.

Bkerke

on the feast of the Disciples of our Father Saint Maron, 31 July 1992

+ Boutros Gemayel

Archbishop of Cyprus for the Maronites

Chairman, Patriarchal Commission on Liturgy

English translation by Bishop Stephen Hector Doueih

Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

This document was reprinted from the official website of *The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn* (<http://www.stmaron.org/index.html>). The Greek translation of the above text will be available soon.

NB This introduction was made for the 1992 edition of the Book of the Maronite Liturgy. The Maronite Church published in 2005 a new introduction which will be published on our website in due course.