

## **Letter on the Liturgy**

### **Of His Beatitude, Patriarch Gregorios III, Of Antioch and All the East, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem For the Melkite Greek Catholic Church**

To all of you, dear brothers and sisters,  
Your Graces the bishops,  
Superiors General, Mothers General,  
priests, deacons, monks, nuns  
and all the sons and daughters  
of our Melkite Greek Catholic parishes  
in Arab countries, countries of emigration  
and throughout the world.

#### **Foreword**

1. The liturgical books of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church have appeared with a new form over the last fifteen years. The Synod gave its agreement to these books and they appeared with a patriarchal decree.

These books contain theological, liturgical and spiritual prefaces, together with practical advice which helps those who pray to understand the liturgical services and celebrate them properly.

Now after the appearance of these books we have found it suitable and even necessary to publish this letter and incorporate into it all the subject matter and themes relating to the liturgy, so that it can be a reference point.

#### **Preface**

2. Prayer occupied a special place in the life of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ. We find private prayers, nocturnal vigils (during which he spent all night in prayer), prayers with the disciples, teachings that he gave on prayer, and prayers in synagogues and the Temple.

The saints all excelled in the life of prayer, and the prayers that we have are the fruit of the meditations of our holy fathers and their spiritual elevation towards God and it is those prayers that have enriched our Church and liturgical books.

Among the most important stages of my life were the years from 1986 onwards, when my predecessor of happy memory, Maximos V (Hakim) and the Holy Synod designated me President of the Patriarchal and Synodal Liturgical Commission. They were years of very abundant spiritual grace and afforded me a very deep theological culture through the liturgical work. I thank the Lord for that. Much effort was expended to bring these books to the light of day and many hardworking assistants were required over the years to ensure that this happened: legions of reputable

liturgical commissions, on which were represented eparchial clergy, male and female religious congregations and laypersons gathering in *ad hoc* congresses and eparchial meetings, from as early as the sixties of the last century.

3. Among the fruits of this blessed stage are the new liturgical books in our Melkite Greek Catholic Church, which were newly published towards the end of the second and beginning of the third millennium. They really are a great spiritual treasure, in which is realised the saying of Jesus, speaking of the Kingdom of Heaven, “[It] is like unto a treasure, hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” (Matthew 13: 44)

So from 1997 to 2000 there appeared *The Liturgical Prayer Books of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church* in four volumes and six parts in big and little format. The first volume is in two parts: the first part is the period from the month of September, the beginning of the liturgical year or Indiction, to the beginning of Lent, the Triodion. It contains the breviary or Horologion, the Paraklitike or Oktoekhos, and the offices of the month or Menaion. The first part runs through September, October, and November; the second part December, January and February. The second volume is again in two parts: the first part runs through February, March and April; the second part is Holy Week. The third volume, which is special for Paschaltide, comprises the breviary or Horologion and the Pentecostarion, the services for the months of April, May and June. The fourth volume includes the part from Paschaltide until the end of August, with the Horologion or breviary, the Paraklitike, and the Menaion, for the months of June, July and August. These books are really an object of great pride and a motive of respect and thanksgiving to our holy fathers who have left us this great, rich heritage, whose cultural and spiritual traces go back to the early centuries of Christianity, between the fourth to the eighth centuries. These four volumes are the first of their kind in the Byzantine Greek rite, from the point of view of their content, their arrangement and presentation. Between 2005 and 2008 there appeared the Book of the Divine Liturgy in two parts with very useful appendices, which remove the necessity for one to have recourse to other books for the service of the Divine Liturgy. This book is also unique of its kind in the Byzantine Greek rite and really represents a pilot work, pioneering in the modern universal liturgical movement.

4. The Patriarchal and Synodal Liturgical Commission is working today to print the book of the big and little Euchologion, the Typikon or rubrics book and the books of Epistle and Gospel readings (Epistolarion and Evangelion).
5. It was vitally necessary to bring out the importance of these liturgical books' appearance. It encountered much encouragement, despite the resistance, indecision, rejection or opposition of certain persons. But we all felt the need to take

practical, firm, definitive steps or measures in that regard. Sometimes we find on the same altar-table where the Liturgy is served, different editions of the Divine Liturgy, just as we find in the same church different editions of the Liturgy in the hands of the people and the lead-singers and choir. This also applies to the liturgical books used in monasteries. It is time to unify the liturgical books as ecclesial order requires and for this to be a clear, radiant, honourable and splendid image of our unity and the unity of our Church. It really now is quite possible. In reality, the prayer-books are well-ordered, beautifully set and printed by a fine printing-house. The books of the Liturgy are unified and one has no need to have recourse to any other book and so there is no need for the faithful to use other books.

6. In this letter, we are going to discuss the following topics: the theological and canonical principles of the liturgy in general, and those relating to the roles of Patriarch, bishop and priest. On that basis we shall discover the principles relating to the printing of liturgical books and end with ways to animate the Liturgy, which is the principal goal we have been aiming for since God granted us to complete the liturgical books.

## Chapter One

### The Theological Principles of the Divine Liturgy

#### The Eucharist is the Mystery of Mysteries as Pascha is the Feast of Feasts<sup>1</sup>

7. The community of the faithful lives by faith in the mystery of Christ. The sacraments are facets, transfigurations or appearances of the mystery of God who took human form to make humanity in his divine form. Since the Eucharist is the sacrament of all sacraments, it crowns all the various prayers and liturgical services. The Eucharist is like Pascha: it is not in the line of feasts, but the pinnacle, as our liturgical prayers say. Pascha is the “feast of feasts and the celebration of celebrations.” (Eighth Ode of the Paschal Canon)

Indeed there is an essential link between Pascha and the Eucharist, for it is the sacramental place, in which Christ’s Passover is extended to become the Church’s, as the fourth-century Saint Gregory Nazianzus described it, “The offering of the resurrection,” and the fourteenth century Nicholas Cabasilas wrote, “The icon of the Saviour’s economy.” For the eucharistic spirituality of the Liturgy is condensed and the liturgical year’s spirituality meet in their three main outlines:

- i. The service of the Word corresponds to Theophany (Christmas, the Baptism and the preaching of the Gospel)
  - ii. The service of the Anaphora corresponds to Pascha (the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection)
  - iii. The service of Communion corresponds to theosis<sup>2</sup>
8. The Eucharist allows humanity to enter the paschal mystery of Christ making every person a paschal being, by allowing them to participate in the passion, death<sup>3</sup> and resurrection<sup>4</sup> of Christ and a witness to the Holy Spirit, and a Spirit-bearer to the world.<sup>5</sup> So the Church, by celebrating the Eucharist, itself becomes a paschal presence of Christ the Lord in the world.

The Eucharist is the realisation of the mystery of the incarnation and redemption.

9. The aim and object of the Liturgy is Christ himself, who suffers as sacrificial redemption for us. We, through the Eucharistic Liturgy, offer our thanks for the gift of salvation and redemption. So the Eucharist sums up the New Testament.
10. The Acts of the Apostles tell us that Christians met together to hear preaching and to break bread, (Acts 2: 42, 20: 7) as the preaching is Christ himself, the Word (Acts 2:

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<sup>1</sup> The Synodal Liturgical Commission Book of the Divine Liturgy (St. Paul’s Press, Jounieh, Lebanon 2006) pp. 3-8

<sup>2</sup> Father Jean Corbon *The Byzantine Liturgical Year: the mystagogical structure of the liturgical year* (Liturgical publication of the University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik) No. 10, 1988 p. 100 and p. 105

<sup>3</sup> See the first part of the anaphora prayer, where it is mentioned that the Son of God came to fulfil the providence of God the Father with regard to us. Later speaking of the Mystic Supper, there is mention of how Christ was delivered up his Passion and Death.

<sup>4</sup> See the second part of the anaphora prayer, remembering the whole Mystery of Christ: the cross, the tomb, the resurrection and the ascension, after which follows the epiclesis.

<sup>5</sup> We refer to Communion, in which we receive the Lord in his holy Body and Blood. As the Apostles received the Holy Spirit in the event of Pentecost, they were transformed into witnesses proclaiming the risen Christ, breaking bread among the faithful, and announcing life and redemption to the world.

22-24, 32-34) and the bread too is Christ, the food of the faithful. (John 6: 32, Matthew 26: 26, Mark 14: 22, Luke 22: 19, 1 Corinthians 10: 16, 11: 23-24)

11. The Divine Liturgy expresses this in symbolic fashion, by exchanging the Gospel book, (the beautiful proclamation of the Word, placed on the Holy Table, where it is the centre of the prayers and celebration in the first part of the Liturgy) for the chalice and paten, bearing the Blood and Body, which become the centre of the second part of the Liturgy.
12. So the Church thereby symbolically realises the mystery of salvation, which is the content of the holy books in both Testaments. It realises the promise of the Old in the reality of the New. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory..." (John 1: 14) God gave us this mystery through the fact of his free love of us, as Saint John said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3: 16) Life is the Trinity's great gift to humanity. That is why we proclaim at the end of the Liturgy, and the end of that realisation in us, "We have seen the true light; we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith, worshipping the undivided Trinity, for the same hath saved us." So, the hymn comes spontaneously as profound longing, after the joy of meeting, the rapture of union and the bliss of participating in the real divine presence, fulfilling the Gospel verse, "We beheld his glory."
13. That is why we say that the Divine Liturgy is the commemoration which mystically makes present in our lives the events of salvation, as we read in the prayer, "Now the divine powers serve invisibly with us. Behold the King of Glory enters." This is a mystical offering realised happening without our seeing it. "With faith and love, let us draw near, to become participants in eternal life." (Hymn of the Great Entrance in the Presanctified Liturgy.)

#### **The Liturgy as a Foretaste of the Kingdom**

14. In the Divine Liturgy, we live in a special way, whilst still being on earth, the heavenly Liturgy, in which the myriads of angels, ascribe glory and praise to the Divine Trinity, one in essence, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory." (cf. Isaiah 6: 3) It is the heavenly song that we hear being repeated in the heart of the church. We have added to that the earthly hymn, in which Jerusalem welcomes the King coming to save, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." (Matthew 21: 9b)
15. The Divine Liturgy translates us to heaven, for it opens up to us an eschatological dimension and "we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims." (Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 8)
16. The Divine Liturgy brings heaven to us too and allows it to enter our everyday life. The Church or Eucharistic community is the place of new birth through the Holy Spirit, the birth that our Lord Jesus Christ gave us in the mystery of his death and

resurrection. It is a community of the Gospel and Eucharist. It is the Body of Christ is the place of Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit comes down and changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, just as He changes the faithful to become other Christs, and transforms the whole of creation into the living temple of God, in which is repeated in its vaults, songs and hymns of thanksgiving and praise, for the whole of creation “groaneth ...waiting for the ...redemption...” (Romans 8: 22-23)

17. So the earth becomes heaven and life becomes in the Christian vision a universal, cosmic Divine Liturgy. That is why it is said that the Divine Liturgy is heaven on earth.

#### **The Eucharist: starting point for new life**

18. God created man and allowed him to share in his freely given love. If man stumbles on the way of that love, God remains faithful to his Covenant, unto death on the cross, that has transformed us by its power to resurrection and new life.
19. The Eucharist<sup>6</sup> is the celebration of that mystery, and our participation in it, means our acceptance of being renewed by God and changing our lives, and passing over<sup>7</sup> with the risen Christ to new life, thanking him for his divine economy.
20. The Holy Spirit that unites all the concelebrants makes them a united community, open to the love of God and love of others, beginning now on earth and coming to completion in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus the Eucharist is the sign of union in the risen Christ and the link and unity of the community that seeks to change the face of the world and is obliged to prepare the day when the whole of humanity can accept the risen Christ at his second coming. (This is the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist.) With all the saved, we shout, “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” (Revelation 19: 9)

#### **From the Eucharistic Table to the table of poor brethren**

21. These basic dimensions that we experience in Eucharistic celebration, Christians carry in the depths of their life. This is reflected in their daily relations with their surroundings, in the home, the family, the neighbourhood, school, university, or job; with their friends and companions, their subordinates and superiors, with all those they meet. So the faithful go out of church, charged with grace so that their day becomes, holy, perfect, guided by an angel of peace, and they spend their lives as faithful witnesses and keen apostles of the Gospel, living Christian lives of peace, preparing to stand blameless before the fearful judgment seat of Christ when they can give account of the talents they have received, which were entrusted to them. (Matthew 25: 14-30)
22. So the Eucharist does not finish in church at the end of the liturgical celebration, with the departure of the Christian faithful. That is where it begins, when the faithful are united to the Body and Blood of Christ and receive the Lord’s Spirit, they go forth

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<sup>6</sup> Eucharist is a Greek word meaning thanks.

<sup>7</sup> Passing over corresponds to Pesah, (Hebrew) meaning passover.

as preachers, liberators and luminaries, as Christ himself said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4: 18-19) That is what the apostles affirmed in their writings, that “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” (James 1: 27) That is what the holy Church Fathers taught. The fourth century Saint John Chrysostom said<sup>8</sup> that the mystery of the Eucharist was the mystery of Christ. Judgment will be according to the way in which we join the mystery of Christ present in the Eucharistic sacrament and his sacrament present in human brothers and sisters. (cf. Matthew 25: 31-46) Further on he asks, what use we find in adorning the Table of Christ with golden utensils if Christ is dying in our hungry brother?<sup>9</sup> “How can we respect the altar on which Christ’s Body and Blood are placed, yet remain indifferent to Christ himself who is incarnate in our brother in penury and who is dying of hunger? That temple is more important than the other.<sup>10</sup>” The fifth century St Nerses the Syrian adds, “Holiness without your fellow man is not holiness, because you cannot enter the Kingdom alone.”

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<sup>8</sup> St John Chrysostom Sermon L on St Matthew’s Gospel

<sup>9</sup> We can interpret this hunger as for material bread, but also spiritually – as hunger for consolation and good counsel, friendship, repentance and so on.

<sup>10</sup> St John Chrysostom Sermon XX, on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

## Chapter Two

### The Canonical Principles of Liturgical Legislation

23. The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, which appeared in 1990, contains the basic canons that serve as canon law, binding on the faithful of our Church, bishops, priests, deacons, monks and nuns and laypersons. These canons were explained and presented in an *Instruction* called **APPLYING THE LITURGICAL PRESCRIPTIONS OF THE CODE OF CANONS OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES**, published by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches in 1996. In order to observe the discipline and unity of the Church in liturgical matters, we report here the canons that oblige conscientiously with the force of law.
24. *Canon 3* “The Code, although it often refers to the prescriptions of liturgical books, does not for the most part legislate on liturgical matters; therefore, these norms are to be diligently observed, unless they are contrary to the canons of the Code.” It should be noted that the expression “norms” means the rubrics that are to be found in the liturgical books concerning the order of celebration.
25. *Canon 15 no. 1* “The Christian faithful, conscious of their own responsibility, are bound by Christian obedience to follow what the pastors of the Church, as representatives of Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or determine as leaders of the Church.”
26. *Canon 28 no. 1* “A rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary patrimony, culture and circumstances of history of a distinct people, by which its own manner of living the faith is manifested in each Church *sui iuris*.”
27. *Canon 39* “The rites of the Eastern Churches, as the patrimony of the entire Church of Christ, in which there is clearly evident the tradition which has come from the Apostles through the Fathers and which affirm the divine unity in diversity of the Catholic faith, are to be religiously preserved and fostered.”
28. *Canon 40: 1*, “Hierarchs who preside over Churches *sui iuris* and all other hierarchs are to see most carefully to the faithful protection and accurate observance of their own rite, and not admit changes in it except by reason of its organic progress, keeping in mind, however, mutual goodwill and the unity of Christians. 2. Other clerics and members of institutes of consecrated life are bound to observe their own rite faithfully and daily to acquire a greater understanding and a more perfect practice of it. 3. Other Christian faithful are also to foster an understanding and appreciation of their own rite, and are held to observe it everywhere unless something is excused by the law.”

29. We find in this above-mentioned *Instruction* an echo and affirmation of the explanation of those canons. In fact, we read in Chapter II, no. 12, “The Council specifies that changes in the rites and disciplines of these Churches are not admitted except by reason of their own organic progress and adds that whenever they have fallen short, due to circumstances of time or persons, they are to strive to return to their ancestral traditions.”

30. We read in no. 14, with the title *The eminence of Liturgy*, “Ever since its origins, the entire liturgical setting has played an absolutely central role: the vivid sense that all new faith life culminates in the great act of worship of Christ and of the Church united to him is, in fact, a founding element already beginning in the apostolic period. ‘The holy liturgy, the place in which proclamations and adorations and the communion and fellowship among the believers are manifested, is the true former of the Christian life and the most complete synthesis of its various aspects.’ In fact, the liturgy is the ‘summit and font’ of Christian life and expresses it as in a synthesis; evokes and actualizes the mystery of Christ and the Church, presents it to the contemplation of the faithful and sings it, rendering thanks to the Lord ‘for eternal is his love.’ (Psalm 136)”

In no. 15, *The special pre-eminence of the liturgy in the Eastern Churches*, “The pre-eminence of the liturgical patrimony is even greater in the Eastern Churches because they have maintained in a special way the primacy of the liturgy as the summit of Christian life... The whole life of the Church was, therefore, summarized in the liturgy...”

31. In No. 16, *The liturgical heritage in the Eastern Catholic Churches as a source of identity*, we read “It is precisely their liturgies, restored to greater authenticity and vitality by eliminating that which has altered them, that could be the best starting point for a growth of their specific identity, from which could be drawn words and gestures capable of touching the hearts and illuminating the minds of their faithful in the present time.”

32. No. 18 with the title *Liturgical Reform and Renewal*, “The first requirement of every Eastern liturgical renewal, as is also the case for liturgical reform in the West, is that of rediscovering full fidelity to their own liturgical traditions, benefiting from their riches and eliminating that which has altered their authenticity.”

33. In Chapter IV of the *Instruction* there is the matter of *Competencies and Components of Liturgical Legislation*, and we read in no. 22, *Competencies for regulating worship*, “Reference to canon 657, canon 668 § 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches indicates the competent authority for the regulation of public divine

worship. In the patriarchal Churches, this is the Patriarch with the consent of the Synod of Bishops ...”

34. No. 23 speaks of *The role of the bishop* in this sense: “The coordination of the liturgical roles, entrusted to the authority of the Church, is made explicit by the current legislation in canon 199 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches ...

The task of the Bishop is to be vigilant that the liturgical life ‘be fostered as much as possible and ordered according to the prescriptions and legitimate customs of his own Church *sui iuris*.’ (canon 199 § 1) The Bishop, therefore, does not act solely based on its own judgment nor based on the local customs, but refers to the specific heritage of his own Church *sui iuris*. In this way, the authority of the individual Bishops becomes participation in a greater authority which regulates the liturgical life of their own Church *sui iuris*.

In exercising his mandate as moderator of the liturgical life, the Bishop should neither act arbitrarily nor give way to the behaviour of groups or factions, but, together with his clergy, let him be an attentive guardian of the liturgical awareness present and operating in the living memory of the people of God entrusted to him. Just as the determinant of the comprehension of the faith believed, so is it in the *sensus fidelium* is safeguarding of the faith celebrated. The people, from their part, must be faithful to the indications of the pastor and endeavour to understand them in depth and realize his mandate. To promote a better understanding and celebration of the liturgy, eparchial liturgical commissions of experts should be formed. Of great importance in the liturgical maturation of the people of God will be authentic communities of Eastern monks and nuns, places where, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Mystery daily celebrated in faith is lived in fullness.”

35. The *Instruction*, No. 56 *The Liturgy celebrated by the Bishop*, affirms strongly the importance of the celebration of the Divine Liturgy around the bishop in the cathedral and in monasteries. “A text of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, inspired by the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch<sup>11</sup>, affirms that ‘the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God’s holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, at which there presides the bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers.’ (no. 41) This requires that great care be taken of the eparchial liturgical life around the Bishop, such that the cathedral is the true ‘sanctuary’ of every particular Church: thus, the liturgy at the cathedral should be celebrated in an exemplary way. It is marvellously coupled with the exemplary nature of the liturgical celebrations in

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Smyrnians*, 8; *To the Magnesians*, 7; *To the Philadelphians*, 4. (Footnote no. 35 from *Sacrosanctum Concilium*)

monasteries which have always maintained, in the tradition of the Eastern Churches, a true osmosis with the liturgical celebrations of the cathedrals.”

36. Liturgical legislation emphasises the importance of liturgical training in the lives of consecrated persons and the importance of celebrating the liturgical celebration well in an exemplary fashion. We read in no. 71 of the *Instruction*, “In the formation of sacred ministers, care should be taken to promote progressive growth of the interior participation in the holy Mysteries and in Him who operates in them. In order to be mystagogues of the people, they must live in an exemplary way the same mystagogy. Their role in the liturgy is to be the font, food and model for a life of fullness received by the grace of the Lord. Moreover, they are to be perfectly formed toward a precise, in-depth and well-founded knowledge of the holy liturgy, in its theological, spiritual and ceremonial aspects.

The importance of the liturgical life is also emphasized in the canons that address seminaries. These affirm that the liturgy is to be the font and culmination of life (canon 346 § 2, 2); that it is to be taught in virtue of its special importance as a necessary source of doctrine and of a truly Christian spirit (canon 350 § 3); and that the candidates of priesthood are to nourish their spiritual life from it (canon 346 § 2, 3). It is, therefore, necessary that the liturgical life be celebrated with great care and always in its integral form in Eastern seminaries and in formation institutes of Eastern monks and religious, such that the candidates may be shaped by it and learn it in all its richness and completeness, giving due space not only to the Eucharist but also to the Divine Office. The liturgy is to be the true font of spirituality by which the candidates are formed, the element that unifies all that they learn, and the place in which doctrine becomes celebration of praise and thanksgiving and life is transformed by grace...”

37. The *Instruction* also mentions the importance of celebrating the Liturgy in the community according to the liturgical books. We read in no. 98 of the *Instruction*,

“The Eastern Catholic Churches have often run the risk of omitting the communal and solemn celebration of the Divine Praises, substituting it with individual recitation of the Divine Office, on the part of the clergy, while the daily celebration of the Eucharist has remained often almost the only form of communal liturgy. Where such practice of celebrating the Divine Praises with the people has diminished, if not completely disappeared, the ancient tradition should be restored without delay, so as not to deprive the faithful of a privileged source of prayer, nourished by treasures of authentic doctrine.

It is desired that a renewal of monasticism in the Eastern Catholic Churches, felt as urgent in many places, allow monasteries to once again become the place in which

the Divine Praises resound in a privileged and solemn way. Calling upon the time when the Divine Praises were upheld with special care in the East, not only by the monastic communities, but also by the parishes, the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches reminds us of the obligation—often easily forgotten or abandoned—to celebrate them in the cathedrals, parishes, rectoral churches, religious communities and seminaries. It is necessary to observe the prescriptions of the liturgical books (canon 309), but a superficial observance is not sufficient: those responsible must do their best for the faithful to understand the meaning and value of this prayer, love it, take part and find spiritual nourishment in it. They ought to thus be formed through a true mystagogical programme, which allows them to attain nourishment for their own spiritual life from the celebration of the various moments of the liturgical year.”

38. Liturgical legislation mentions important recommendations and guidance on *Sacred places, gestures and objects*. We refer to no. 100, *Liturgical prayer involves the total person*, “...Soul, spirit, heart, mind and body come together to form the spiritual building raised for the Lord. The person, priest of creation, takes everything into his or her being, giving voice to all inanimate reality for the praise of the Creator. In a particular way, with the Incarnation of the Son of God, humanity is assumed by the Word, and the divine sanctifies and consecrates the universe. Here lies the Christian meaning of the space, gestures, and objects which interact with the believer in divine worship.”
39. The *Instruction* recommends the use of incense and we read in no. 101, para. 3, “The Eastern Catholic Churches are to jealously maintain and practice as much as possible the use of incense in the celebrations, even daily, because it belongs in a special way to their own tradition. Every custom to the contrary is to be modified.”
40. The *Instruction* places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of explaining some principles to the people about the meaning of the altar, the place of the sacrifice, the ambon or ambo and the baptistery. The importance of baptism is explained in no. 106, “...The baptistery should normally be placed outside the church proper, because it is only after the Baptism and Chrismation with holy Myron that the neophyte becomes fully part of the Church and thus can enter the temple of which it is a symbol. Where it is impossible to place the baptistery outside, because of the structure of the old buildings, then it should at least be located near the entrance of the church.”
41. The *Instruction* mentions the importance of *Praying towards the East* in No. 107, “Ever since ancient times, it has been customary in the prayer of the Eastern Churches to prostrate oneself to the ground, turning toward the east; the buildings themselves were constructed such that the altar would face the east. Saint John of

Damascus explains the meaning of this tradition: 'It is not for simplicity nor by chance that we pray turned toward the regions of the east .... Since God is intelligible light (1 John 1: 5), and in the Scripture, Christ is called the Sun of justice (Malachi 3: 20) and the East (Zechariah 3: 8 of the LXX), it is necessary to dedicate the east to him in order to render him worship. The Scripture says: 'Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed there the man whom he had formed' (Genesis 2: 8). ... In search of the ancient homeland and tending toward it, we worship God. ...Waiting for him, we prostrate ourselves toward the east. It is an unwritten tradition, deriving from the Apostles.'

This rich and fascinating interpretation also explains the reason for which the celebrant who presides in the liturgical celebration prays facing the east, just as the people who participate. It is not a question, as is often claimed, of presiding the celebration with the back turned to the people, but rather of guiding the people in pilgrimage toward the Kingdom, invoked in prayer until the return of the Lord.

Such practice, threatened in numerous Eastern Catholic Churches by a new and recent Latin influence, is thus of profound value and should be safeguarded as truly coherent with the Eastern liturgical spirituality.”

42. The *Instruction* mentions the importance of icons, or *Sacred Images* in no. 108, “...The specific meaning of the icons, with respect to other images, consists in evoking and representing not the daily, human aspects as seen by the earthly eye, but the absolute Christian newness of ‘what eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart,’ and that the Lord has prepared ‘for those who love him’ (1 Corinthians 2: 9), making them be reborn from above and showing them the Kingdom of God (cf. John 3: 2). ...

Through the centuries, the Eastern Churches as well as the Western ones have elaborated techniques, forms and coherent systems of sacred representation to express their faith and bring it near to mankind. ...The Eastern Churches have remained more faithful to the ancient way of evoking and representing the heavenly realities...

Many Eastern Catholic Churches have often been subjected in this field to Western ways which are sometimes not of high quality, perhaps more simple but foreign to the requirements and significance of their own traditions. An organic recuperation of the proper usages is essential in order to avoid hybridisms and contradictions within the celebrations: the dispositions of the space, images, liturgical vestments, and furnishings are not left to the taste of each individual or group but must correspond to the intrinsic requirements of the celebrations and should be coherent with respect to each other.”

43. The *Instruction* emphasises the importance of faithfulness to the tradition. We read in no. 109, “It cannot be denied that the Eastern Catholic Churches have been exposed, in rather recent times, to the influence of sacred art styles completely foreign to their heritage, concerning both the external form of sacred buildings and the arrangement of the interior space and sacred images. Yet, from the preceding observations emerges a harmonious unity of words, gestures, space, and objects proper and specific to each of the Eastern liturgies. Continuous reference must be made to this aspect when planning new places of worship. To do so naturally requires on the part of the clergy an in-depth knowledge of their own tradition and a constant, well established, and systematic formation of the faithful so that they may be able to fully perceive the richness of the signs entrusted to them. Fidelity does not imply anachronistic fixation, as the evolution of sacred art—even in the East—demonstrates, but rather, development that is fully coherent with the profound and immutable meaning of how it is celebrated in the liturgy.”

44. The *Instruction* requires us to set up patriarchal, synodal or eparchial commissions on sacred art, as we have need in the church. We read in no. 110, “The various Churches *sui iuris* will have to find and form their own experts in this field, and where necessary institute without further delay commissions of sacred art, where they do not already exist, with the precise task of ensuring that the projects for new churches or chapels and the associated furnishings, as well as restorations of older ones, correspond to the criteria and meanings of their own liturgical tradition.

In addition, it will be their responsibility to examine the existing sacred buildings, suggesting improvements or proposing possible interventions.”

45. The *Instruction* ends with advice on applying liturgical legislation, as mentioned in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. We find these considerations in no. 112, “The scope of the present *Instruction* is to assist the Eastern Churches which are in full communion with the Church of Rome with their work directed toward giving the liturgical celebrations the central place due them in ecclesial life, in full fidelity to the specific features of their own traditions.

The insistence on the full recuperation of Tradition does not mean to function to the detriment of changes necessary for the sensibility of the contemporary culture...

Meanwhile, it seemed of primary importance to underscore some general criteria aimed, above all, at recovering a full celebrative coherence in the liturgy in the Eastern Catholic Churches, in such a way that the whole Church is enriched by their specific heritages.

The indications contained here can be completed by the reflection and contribution of the individual Churches *sui iuris*, dedicating the necessary attention to them by studying how they should be applied in the various individual traditions and conditions....”

46. On the basis of all that, the fact of being obliged to implement these liturgical canons has nothing to do with convenience or choice, but is a canonical and ecclesial obligation. That is why all the liturgical and synodal work is binding on the Patriarch to implement it. But many bishops, priests, deacons, monks and nuns do not comply with the requirements of the holy canons (though these have themselves been formed by priests) and the higher authority of Patriarch and Holy Synod, and do not consider themselves bound by the decisions they made themselves. All that has an impact on the parishes, on Church unity, its bonds, its vitality and the success of its mission.
  
47. Some fifty years ago the Synod authorised certain liturgical texts and yet we have found that there are here and there people who do not scruple to use earlier versions. That is a cause for scandal among the faithful and diminishes the Church’s authority, not only as far as the rite is concerned, but also in other sectors of the Church’s life. If our predecessors had begun using the new texts earlier, we would be, as Patriarch, bishops, priests, deacons, monks, nuns, singers and choirs, all using the same text together in all our eparchies and monasteries, instead of remaining as we are, differing in reading and singing in our churches and parishes, even in the same town and same parish: this, despite the fact that we know that the unity of the texts helps to animate the liturgy and prayer, both in publicity and propagation and in its significantly popular character.

### Chapter Three

#### Practical Guidance

Basing ourselves on what was said above, we shall review the following guidance and notifications.

#### 1. Printing liturgical books

48. The Patriarchal Liturgical Commission is alone responsible, under the direction of the Patriarch, for ensuring that any books printed are in conformity with the texts received and issued by the patriarchal church.
49. The liturgical books mentioned above are legally authorised to be printed and are copyright of the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission that had these books published at the Patriarchate's expense. That is why it is forbidden to publish any liturgical book, leaflet or pamphlet without express written permission from the Patriarch. It is also absolutely forbidden to translate the liturgical books into any other language in any country whether within or outside the patriarchal territory, without such permission.
50. We undertook to scrutinise the liturgical books before publication according to the following method. The draft manuscript is given to the Patriarch and the Patriarch passes it to the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission, which examines it in turn and gives its written report to the Patriarch. If the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission sees that it is in conformity with the books already in use, in accordance with the liturgical line already in force in the Patriarchal Church, it gives its approval, saying, "Nihil obstat. Imprimi potest. Imprimatur," with the date and protocol number. The Patriarch then studies the opinion of the Liturgical Commission and if he finds that the books are in conformity with the draft manuscript, and if he is in agreement, writes on the copy, "We give the Imprimatur," again with the date and protocol number. (If there are important matters at stake, it is up to the Patriarch to decide whether to put them to the Synod.) After that, the draft manuscript goes back to its author, who must also have the approval of the local bishop for it to be printed. So the bishop writes on the draft manuscript, "Imprimatur," with the date and the protocol number of the licence.
51. These norms are necessary to preserve the unity of the text, of the rite, its originality and its fidelity to the sacred texts in use. This arrangement is also in conformity with ecclesiastical law, as we showed above and as was explained in the *Instruction* published by the Congregation for Eastern Churches. The reason for that arrangement is the fact that there were many infractions that happened in the past, as the local authority (the bishop) did not always take care to scrutinise texts properly and to ensure that they were in conformity with the official liturgical texts. So there

was a profusion of little publications, booklets in different editions, giving rise to unacceptable chaos in the Church. We shall not allow that to be repeated.

## **2. Principles of Liturgical Animation in the Divine Liturgy**

52. Liturgical animation is the goal of the liturgical restoration. Our Holy Synods have decreed over the last forty years various arrangements, proposals and advice relating to liturgical animation or restoration. We quote here two decrees relating to the Divine Liturgy.
53. “The Fathers decided, with some changes, upon the project presented by Metropolitan Neophytos Edelby, at the Synod’s request. This project contains the least number of changes in the words and actions. Often these have to do with eliminating some insignificant repetitions and as far as possible they are in conformity with the most recent experiments conducted in our sister Orthodox Churches and in our own communities. That is why the Holy Synod is decreeing these abbreviations and allowing them to be used from the beginning of 1970. The Liturgical Commission is charged with supervising the printing of a booklet containing the already corrected text. The Synod gives its approval for that being printed whilst granting permission for those who wish, both bishops and priests, to serve the Divine Liturgy according to the full unabbreviated old text.” (Synodal Decree of 1969)
54. “As far as the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is concerned, and the prayers uttered aloud, we have decided as follows: to be said aloud are the prayers of the First Antiphon, the prayer before the Holy Gospel, the prayer that ends “Under thy protection,” the Offertory prayers after the Little Entrance, the first part of the Anaphora, (“It is meet and right...”) and the second part (“With these powers..”) and then the prayer of preparation for Holy Communion, the prayer after the transference of the gifts to the altar (“Let our mouths be filled with thy praise...”) or Prayer of Thanksgiving. Yet in the Liturgy where there is a choir, some changes can be made to this order, according to circumstances. The Synod requires that the prayer to the Holy Spirit after the words of consecration be ended by a deep prostration.<sup>12</sup>” (Synodal Decree of 1970)
55. We, through the patriarchal power invested in us, confirm these two decrees and we sum them up in the liturgical principle decided in the Synod of 2001, and which we consider as an essential element in liturgical animation through its words: “The prayers of the Divine Liturgy are generally pronounced aloud and not said in a low voice. We emphasise the need for the Anaphora prayer to be said aloud, and we

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<sup>12</sup> Except from Pascha to Pentecost, when kneeling is not allowed in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

leave it up to each celebrant to decide which of the other prayers he wants to say aloud.”

56. Also in 2001 the Synod gave the following definition of liturgical animation, “Liturgical animation means the beautiful, worthy celebration of our liturgical prayers, far from conformism and routine and boring habit, on the one hand and far from chaos and improvisation on the other.”
57. In the past our Synods and clergy congresses in our Church envisaged and required several things for liturgical animation, especially having recourse to the changeable elements of the Liturgy of the Word. That principle can be applied especially to the moveable and fixed dominical feasts. Indeed, liturgical animation can be effected by the choice of the moveable liturgical elements, which differ according to the degree of the feast. We exhort everyone to use them and to get used to them for the animation of liturgical life in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The book of the Divine Liturgy emphasises in its preface the theological and liturgical principle relating to keeping to one Divine Liturgy at one altar in one church, served by one priest. Indeed only pastoral necessity may require a priest to celebrate two or three liturgies in one day, and only with the permission of the eparchial bishop, always supposing that there is sufficient time between one Liturgy and the next for the priest to celebrate the Liturgy perfectly, without feeling mentally and physically tired or exhausted. (14) Lutfi Laham *The Directory of the New Liturgical Books 1992* (Jerusalem 1993 pp. 2-3)

Theology emphasises strongly the unity of the Divine Liturgy and the unity of the concelebrants with the chief celebrant. That means that the Liturgy is one, no matter how great the number of concelebrants may be; and the prayers are those of one and all, whether they are spoken now by the chief celebrant or by one of the concelebrants. Consequently, it is not necessary for each celebrant to say these prayers privately to himself. Actually, the form of the prayers confirms this principle, because they are formulated in the plural: “Receive from us... who stand before thy holy altar...,” even when the priest is celebrating just by himself. Yet there are also prayers proper to the celebrating priest: they relate to the priest’s personal preparation. That is why they are in the singular: “Fill me with the power of thy Spirit...,” “look down upon me, thy sinful and unprofitable servant,” and so on.

Designating one priest or bishop or group to serve the Divine Liturgy is at the basis of our tradition. The others participate in the choir wearing complete clerical dress, under the presiding bishop or superior of a monastery and at the time of communion they put on their epitrahelion and go up for communion according to the known liturgical rule.

There is no indication in the liturgical book requiring each concelebrant priest to pray all the prayers either to himself or aloud. Today's practice in the Melkite Church of every priest saying all prayers in a loud or low voice is a habit that has found its way into our Church without a synodal decision...The custom of every priest saying all the prayers himself does not exist in any rite of either East or West. (See Lutfi Laham *The Directory of the New Liturgical Books 1992* (Jerusalem 1993 pp. 3-4)

58. The main moveable liturgical elements that help us with animation are the following:
1. Diversifying the Litany of Peace at the great feasts.
  2. Modifying the prayers of the first, second and third antiphons.
  3. A new order for the entrance hymn or Eisodos.
  4. New arrangements for the final troparion and kontakion.
  5. A new order for the prayer of the Trisagion and "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ," and "We bow before thy Cross, O Christ..."
  6. Repeating the verses before the Epistle, according to the original usage.
  7. Repeating the verses of the Alleluia after the Epistle before the Gospel.
  8. Possibility for choosing some Epistle-readings and some Gospel-readings in special circumstances.
  9. Keeping the recitation of the ektenia after the Gospel by giving the possibility of varying the requests, prepared beforehand.
  10. Varying the prayers that follow the ektenia, or the prayers of the faithful.
  11. Reintroduce the kiss of peace, especially on Sundays and feast-days.
  12. A new disposition for the hymn, "It is meet and right to call thee blessed, Ever-blessed and Most Pure, and the Mother of our God." Another Marian hymn could be used.
  13. Add to the Koinonikon hymns and psalms and liturgical prayers inspired by the liturgical books, especially for the hymns that are taken from the metaleipsis and other hymns and prayers from the Feast of the Divine Body in the Melkite Church.
  14. During the Communion of the faithful and after the acclamation: "Amen. Amen. Amen," the hymn is sung, "Receive me this day as a communicant..." After that may be also sung other psalms and Biblical hymns suitable to the feast.
  15. Re-adopt the custom of saying the name of the person coming up for Communion.
  16. A new order concerning a hymn other than "We have seen the true light..."
  17. Change or diversify the prayer of thanksgiving.
  18. For the days of Lent, instead of the prayer from the ambon, the prayer of the Presanctified should be said.

59. **Practical Applications**

In what follows we give advice for applying in practice and using the books of liturgy and discovering the moveable elements and how to modify and diversify, to ensure

participation by the faithful in a more lively way and to bring about the hoped for liturgical animation.

To be sure, these practical arrangements do not change or abolish the known rules of the Typikon printed in the books of the Typikon, but are proposals that we advise being implemented with a great deal of fervour, as they help liturgical animation.

- a) **The litany of peace** at moveable and fixed great feasts in the service of these feasts and at the end of these feasts: we sing four newly composed petitions instead of the four corresponding petitions, after the litany that refers to the episcopate, and the other petitions before and after remain the same.
- b) **The antiphonal prayers:** the following order can be used. **On Sundays**, either one of the three usual antiphons can be chosen, or one of the new antiphonal prayers. For the fixed and moveable dominical feast-days of the Menaion, the Triodion and the Pentecostarion, we have introduced new antiphonal prayers. **For weekdays**, we propose the following: on **Mondays and Thursdays**, the prayer of the first antiphon; on **Tuesdays and Fridays**, the prayer of the second antiphon, and on **Wednesdays and Saturdays**, the prayer of the third antiphon.
- c) With the antiphons we do the following: on **Sundays**, for Tones One and Five, we say the verses of the First Antiphon of the week, with the refrain, "At the prayers of the Mother of God..." For Tones Two and Six, we sing the Psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul..." with the refrain, "Blessed be thou, O God." For Tones Three and Seven, we sing the Second Psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." with the refrain, "I will sing to the Lord while I live; I will sing praise to my God while I exist." (Psalm 103: 1, 33 LXX) For Tones Four and Eight, we take the Beatitudes, with the refrain, "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy Kingdom." (Luke 23: 42) One can also pray the pieces proper to the Resurrection, or some prayers from the hymns that are proper to the Eight Tones of the Resurrection. These hymns can be seen in the services for Sundays.  
For the **dominical feasts** there are special antiphons.  
We added a refrain unique to the Feast and it can be sung for all the verses of the three antiphons.  
For services for feast-days and every day, the verses of the three antiphons can be read, one after the other.  
For **weekdays**, an antiphon can be prayed each day, with its refrain, according to the following order: **Mondays and Thursdays**, the First Antiphon with the refrain, "At the prayers of the Mother of God, Saviour, save us;" **Tuesdays and Fridays**, the second group of verses, with the refrain, "At the intercession of thy saints, save us," and on **Wednesdays and Saturdays**, the verses of the third antiphon, with the refrain, "Save us, O Son of God, who art wonderful in thy saints."
- d) We have added a prayer at the Eisodos (Little Entrance). It can be prayed at will.

- e) Hymns of the Little Entrance: there are those proper to the dominical feasts, sung during the whole period of the feast and not just on its first day and the leave-taking of the feast.
- f) The **Troparia**: besides the troparia of the saints of the day, the troparia of the weekday cycle can be sung, Monday for the Angels, Tuesday the Fore-runner, Wednesday the Cross and the Holy Virgin, Thursday for the Apostles and Friday for the Cross, Saturday for the Departed and All Saints.  
The Kontakia for the weekly cycle can also be sung, as mentioned above. Then comes the final kontakion, so-called because it brings to an end the other kontakia and troparia of the day or feast.
- g) We have added another prayer at the Trisagion.
- h) Instead of singing of *Aghios o Theos*, we may sing, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ..." or "Before thy Cross we bow in worship, O Master..." for the whole octave of the feast and not just on the first and last days.
- i) The **Prokeimenon** that precedes the Epistle and the verses of the Alleluia should be strictly kept to be sung antiphonally between reader and choir or congregation.  
It should be understood that the Prokeimena before the Epistle reading on Sundays and feast days, and the verses of psalms with the Alleluia that come afterwards are repeated in a series of eight tones throughout the year.  
There are also verses and psalms before the Epistles that are common to Epistles, just as there are troparia to the saints that are common to a martyr, to a saint, a bishop and so forth.
- j) **The Ektenia**: to preserve the structure of the Liturgy, it is vital to preserve the Litany of fervent Supplication even if one is giving a sermon. The Synod of 1969 insisted on keeping this ektenia.  
One can make three petitions during this ektenia or all the petitions of this ektenia without modifying anything.  
We added forty-five models of special petitions: one can choose what one likes, as the celebrant wishes.  
We propose that the priest, with animators, prepare the petitions of this ektenia. The new special petitions in this book can be prayed either by members of the choir or by other persons and the priest or deacon can round off each petition by the prayer, "We pray thee, hearken and have mercy." And after the whole collection of requests can be concluded by the request, "Again we pray for them that bring offerings and do good works etc."  
It is desirable for the new petitions to be said very often, and if possible, daily by faithful men and women.
- k) The prayers of the Litany of fervent Supplication can be concluded either by the prayer of fervent supplication or by one of the two prayers of the faithful, or by others from the book.

- l) “Thine of thine own, we offer unto thee...”** This phrase is reserved for the principal celebrant and not to another priest or deacon.
- m) The invocation to the Holy Spirit or epiclesis.**  
 One should make a prostration to the ground after the epiclesis.<sup>13</sup>  
 All the people respond after the consecration of each of the elements, “Amen,” and at the end a threefold, “Amen.”
- n) “It is meet and right to hymn thee...”** One may sing, instead of “It is meet...” the irmos proper to the dominical feast for the time of the feast and not just on the first and last days.  
 Where there are two irmoi, one or the other may be sung alternatively.
- o) The Litany before the “Our Father:”** either the requests of the litany may be said, or the prayer before the Our Father.  
 In any case, the final request should be kept, “Having asked for the unity of the faith, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commit ourselves and one another, and all our life unto Christ our God.”  
 It is not desirable to sing, “Grant this, O Lord,” continuously, while the priest or deacon is praying the petitions of the Litany, as the latter cannot be heard by the people. In any case, the exception should never become the rule, or abbreviation becomes the rule, and this is a principle that should be applied at many other points in the Liturgy.
- p) The prayers of the Communion of the Faithful.** As the faithful come forward, each should say his or her name before receiving Holy Communion.  
 It is forbidden to say, (instead of “The servant of God receives..”) “the son of God...” as this phrase refers strictly to the Lord Jesus Christ. (Decree of the Synod 1972)  
 Some psalms, or other suitable liturgical hymns, may be sung, but after “At thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, receive me today as a communicant...” but not instead of “At thy Mystical Supper...”
- q)** In the new Liturgy books, we have put some tables to help with liturgical animation. So, the refrain of the antiphon at the Little Entrance, the hymn of the Eisodos, the final kontakion, the Hymn to the Mother of God, “It is truly meet to call thee blessed...” and for the Apolysis.
- r) Facilitating people’s participation in the celebration**
- i. choir and people alternately responding to different requests during litanies.
  - ii. refrains of the antiphons: choir and people responding alternately
  - iii. encouraging children to take part in processions
  - iv. encouraging people to sing *Aghios o Theos* once
  - v. encouraging people to repeat the verses before the Epistle and the Gospel

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<sup>13</sup> See footnote 3, however.

- vi. the prayer before the Gospel can be said with the people.
- vii. enabling the people to participate in the intentions of the ektenia. It can be recited, with the people responding to each of the requests of this ektenia.
- viii. The prayer before people take Communion can be said together.
- ix. Also the thanksgiving prayer after people have taken Communion can be said together.

### **3. Liturgical animation in liturgical services**

60. We hope that the publication of the new books of liturgical services in their beautiful new form in this fine edition will be stimulating for liturgical animation in our Melkite Greek Catholic Church.

61. Liturgical prayers are very rich in their different elements, in psalms and hymns, especially the canons of Orthros (Matins.) These prayers developed under the influence of monasteries and monks, and many clergy, even monks and nuns themselves, cannot really celebrate these prayers and services completely, due to their great length and variety. This has led churches, monasteries and religious and other centres to abridge the services in different ways.

**The Liturgical Commission prefers the principle of animation and diversification to abbreviation that often deforms liturgical structure.**

62. Here, in what follows, are some pieces of guidance, that we publish here at the beginning of the liturgical books, to be a stimulus to monks and nuns, and to eparchial priests and parishes, for the prayers to gain their fitting place in popular piety, and to animate the Eastern spiritual heritage.

- The Psalms of the daily office can be varied, by singing them in alternation and spreading them out over the week, so that all the Psalms are recited: in Vespers, Compline, Great Compline, Matins and the Hours too.
- The “secret” prayers can be prayed aloud, especially before the ekphoneses at Vespers and Matins.
- The community can be encouraged to participate in the antiphonal prayers, especially in the verses of the Psalms, before the hymns of Vespers and Compline, which we put in bold in the service books.
- Not everything in the Liturgy (hymns and prayers) is always prayer in the true sense of an invocation. It has a broader meaning: the reporting of historic events, theological and ethical exhortations, meditating on the abundance of the Divine Mercy and the vanity of the things of this world, the gravity of sin and so forth. After that at the end, there is one invocation and intercession: “Grant to our souls thy great mercy...Sing to the Lord, O ye people...Blessed be the God of peace etc.” That is why it is not always desirable to read the

prayers in a monotone. Liturgical logic requires there to be a difference between the text itself and the final invocation, through slightly changing the tone of voice or chant.

- The canon of Matins can be varied, by reading sometimes the canon, sometimes the antiphons, or one of the twenty kathismata of Psalms or a spiritual reading from the Church Fathers or monks, or Church documents or saints' lives.
- Distribute the canons of the Paraklitike and the canons of dominical feasts and services over the weekdays, so on one day Odes One and Three could be sung, the next day, Odes Four, Five and Six, a third day, Odes Seven, Eight and Nine. The Ninth Ode of the dominical feasts could also be sung, "Magnify, O my soul..." instead of the hymn to the Mother of God, "It is truly meet..." during all days of the services of the feast. Again, one could choose a triennial principle: in year A, the first part of the canon could be sung, in year B the second part of the canon, and in year C, the third part of the canon, all the while keeping the ninth ode of the canon.
- Provide a foil for the style of celebrating services in the community, so that little communities, especially those in pastoral centres and mission centres, can alternate readings and chants. That is why we have put in the Appendix to the liturgical books, the main hymns with annotated music for the Psalter. We have included this music to facilitate its being sung more directly and to encourage these chants to become known to clergy and people: thus it will become an element for unification.
- Put in place a programme for introducing variety into each week and for each great celebration, especially in monasteries, whilst preserving the basic structure of the services, so that all liturgical components pass in turn during the course of the days and week and nothing is left over or definitively omitted. In the Typikon of our liturgical books, there is a special note for the ecclesiarch, who is responsible for organising the daily liturgical services.
- It is also requisite for monastic or religious communities to celebrate the services in a complete way, especially during the principal dominical feasts and special feasts. So advisable to take up once more the vigils of the major feasts, the Agrypnia or Pannychis. During this vigil there may be also the artoklasia, the blessing of the five loaves. So we can animate our ancient, original liturgical practices.
- The celebration of liturgical services, especially vespers in the evening of great feasts or for the Sunday of great feasts can be a component of liturgical animation in parishes. They must be prepared and celebrated beautifully, enabling the faithful to participate in the spiritual meaning of these prayers.
- The prayers and liturgical chants can be used to animate pastoral or youth meetings, spiritual retreats, congresses so that our rites becomes really

popular, loved by our people. We often distort popular customs due to lack of liturgical sense in our pastoral life.

- There is a preface to each prayer of night and day, in order to assist the understanding of that prayer, its spirituality and symbolism. There is also a special preface for each section of the liturgical books, the Paraklitike, the Menaion, the Pentecostarion. It is important to read them and make use of them for liturgical animation and to explain them to people.
- We have also divided the prayers into paragraphs, to make them more comprehensible and to allow them to be alternated when being prayed. We also only placed colons and not commas and there are more or less accents and more or less dots, according to the degrees of the feast. We believe that placing accents and dots in Arabic is important for an eloquent reading and for understanding the meaning of the prayers.
- It is very fine and desirable for members of the choir and for readers to be trained to use the liturgical books, in order to be able to participate in and assist liturgical animation.

63. We exhort choirs and singers in order for them to participate in the Church's progress which is really a pioneering way forward. We count very much on their efforts in that direction. We call upon them to learn the special music of the Psalter. We have published very simple little books for choir members to enable them to learn the chant according to these principles. We ask the choir directors to really take care of the liturgical singing. We exhort and encourage seminarians to learn psalm-singing (psaltiki) so that they remain in touch with the sung text and with the musical annotation, so that it becomes familiar to us all. Today, that has become easier, due to the development of electronic audiovisual methods and techniques. It is also important for there to be in every parish a little liturgical and musical library, containing the liturgical books, books of musical annotation and recordings of liturgical singing. This liturgical renaissance is very important for the service of the liturgical and spiritual life. We also ask choir-leaders really to put into practice the various pieces of advice to be found in our liturgical books and especially to make plenty of room for the participation of the people in the prayers, so that our liturgical prayers and celebrations become a real, lively exchange between priest, deacon, reader, choir and people. We ask our priests to choose persons in each choir, to whom can be given the mission of liturgical animation in every liturgical celebration.

64. We are counting a great deal on liturgical animation to enliven the faith and spread the holy Word of God and the very beautiful Gospel teachings and the texts of the chants that are really a unique school of liturgical teachings. Liturgical animation, singing, reading and celebration are very significant elements for passing on the spiritual message to a great many of our parishes. Whatever the activities that the

priest does in his parish, such as for example accompanying groups of children and teenagers, confraternities, yet he can reach a greater number of faithful, boys, girls, men and women through the Divine Liturgy and liturgical services such as Vespers, Matins, Grand Compline, Paraclesis and the Akathist.

65. From all that, we see that the role of singing, choir, and means of liturgical animation, so that our celebrations become beautiful and worthy of the great Mysteries that we celebrate and succeed in enabling the teachings of our holy Church to reach the hearts and minds and souls of our faithful, and to animate their feelings and faith. Indeed, the Church, through its liturgical prayers and Divine Liturgy, has the preeminent place to communicate and preserve faith values in our parishes.
66. That is what we intended by this Patriarchal Letter: we want the animation of faith, we are aiming at that; we want there to be a continual new Pentecost through the rites and their content – hymns, eloquent readings, fine preaching, with a very beautiful order and dignity – to preserve the pure, lively, attractive, clear deposit of faith, and for it to become the object of admiration and love for our sons and daughters.
67. Basing ourselves on all the above material set out in this carefully elaborated letter about liturgical legislation stemming from the Patriarch and bishops, on liturgical animation in liturgical services and the Divine Liturgy, we give this Patriarchal Decree:

#### **Chapter 4** **Patriarchal Decree**

We Gregorios III, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem, by our patriarchal authority, based on the holy canons, decree as follows:

1. *We repeat the patriarchal decree made by our predecessor of happy memory, Patriarch Maximos V in 1996: “We, being desirous of preserving ecclesiastical order and unity, decree by our patriarchal authority that the books of liturgical prayers in four volumes be used to the exclusion of all other service-books in public services, whether celebrated in eparchial churches, monasteries or chapels, beginning from the Sunday of Pascha of the year 1997.”*
2. The books of the Divine Liturgy were published according to the recommendation of the Holy Synod. There were proposed to the Fathers of the Holy Synod prolonged, considered studies during 1987-1988 and then in 1992 there was an experimental text and at last the Holy Synod gave its agreement to that text, definitively and officially in 2001 and it appeared in 2006.

3. There was another patriarchal decree in 1991 about the use of this experimental book. Here is what it says, *“We order our brother bishops, our sons, the priests, monks, nuns and all the faithful, readers, singers and choirs, to use this new book, and we would like this book to be really useful to deepen our most noble liturgy and heritage, and for it to be a means of ongoing ecclesiastical, theological and spiritual animation for our Church.”* (Decree of Patriarch Maximos V, 1991) Hence *we require all our priests and bishops, deacons, monks and nuns and lay-people to uphold this decree conscientiously and precisely. And we order all Liturgy books different from these to be withdrawn from circulation and forbid them to be used in our parish churches and monasteries. And we absolutely prohibit their use by bishops, priests and deacons, singers and choirs, readers and people.*
4. *We order them to adhere to the confirmed text in the singing and we exhort them most fervently to use the chants, hymns and melodies placed at the end of each liturgical book and we encourage them to have recourse to and use the unified form in all our churches, although there must be diversification in the use and employment of the different tones.*
5. As far as the laity is concerned, the Patriarchal Liturgical Commission had printed in 2005 a special little booklet, in which there is the guidance from the big book, with the title *“Divine Liturgy with the service of Vespers in Appendix.”* *We order everyone to remove the other little booklets of the Divine Liturgy of whatever kind or date or edition and to limit themselves to this latest booklet, without any other. And we ask that the other booklets be destroyed, whilst retaining a single copy in the parish library.*
6. These orders are very important for preserving ecclesial order and unity in our parishes and among our faithful in the same church and eparchy and for really launching the process of liturgical renewal and liturgical animation and spiritual renewal in our Church.  
*We thank everyone in advance for really working in response to our clear orders that admit of no other explanation and we do not allow any exemptions of whatever nature. We shall observe by suitable means the extent of application of our orders issued in this decree.*
7. *We entrust our eparchial brother bishops and the superiors general and mothers general with putting these orders into practice in their monasteries and various centres. And let our liturgical motto be for all, “One single Melkite Greek Catholic Church, unique liturgical texts, unique liturgical books and unique common hymns.”*

Gregorios III Patriarch, March 7, 2011

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion – “The Sabbath for Man”

68. Some think that the Patriarch is fanatical and that the rite as such is important for him and that he prefers the Sabbath to man.

With much sincerity and friendship, we say to everyone what Jesus said, that we consider that the Sabbath is at man’s service. We too are at his service. We think that the Sabbath is at man’s service and that adhering to liturgical texts is for man and for liturgical animation: that indeed is what we have held to very carefully since we were Patriarchal Vicar in Jerusalem, the Mother of all rites, and were entrusted the presidency of the Liturgical Commission. And that is our lot now as Patriarch, to be responsible for everything to do with the liturgy of our Church, according to canon law.

69. The expression “animation” is the one most often used in all our decrees that we have recently published in the Synod and we are convinced that if the bishops, priests and deacons, monks and nuns themselves put more effort into furthering the proposals that were given by the Liturgical Commission, and carry them out with a great deal of conviction, they are going to be able to animate the rite and the prayers of the faithful, so that our celebrations become beautiful and loved by our people.

70. We have had enough of hearing about a long or short Divine Liturgy, long or short service. We only hear this remark as far as the Liturgy or prayer service is concerned. We never hear about a long or short visit, session in front of the television or the computer, evening with friends or at a dance. We think that these remarks about the length of prayer services are futile and unworthy. Let us take our watches off when we go into the atmosphere of prayer. Let us lay aside our earthly watches and earthly timetables when we enter God’s house. “It is time for the Lord to act.” That is how the Divine Liturgy begins and it is completely for the Lord. It is to that that our liturgical prayers very often exhort us, saying, “Let us lay aside all earthly cares...” and “no-one who is bound by earthly cares and material concerns...” and further, “let our hearts be lifted up unto the Lord...let us attend,” and St. Basil the Great says, “Do not hurry through your prayer. Do not abridge it to make time for worldly business. Pay no regard to people’s faces, but rather direct your heart completely to the King enthroned before you with the angels attending him.”<sup>14</sup>

71. The principles of animation that are to be found in the new liturgical books and in this letter spring really from the spiritual, theological, historical and liturgical originality and rely on the latest deep, academic, liturgical studies and are not a tradition of a particular Church of some kind. Furthermore, they are the same principles that are cited in the Typika of our Melkite Church: namely in the Typikon of Priest Philippos

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<sup>14</sup> Patriarch Gregorios’ Christmas Letter 2009.

Mallouk (1896), the Ecclesiastical Typikon of Archim. Kyrillos Rezk (1911), the book of the Divine Liturgies of Michael Rahmy (1900) and the Prayer Book of Metropolitan Neophytos Edelby (1965). Furthermore the problem is that people are not willing to be bound by one liturgical, ecclesial principle. We shall do all in our power, whatever the difficulty, really to eradicate this sickness and these customs that have really intruded upon and spoiled our holy rite.

We are charting an original course, and count ourselves among the initiators, not the conservatives. Our predecessors were like that too, and our Church has always been a pioneering, not an imitative, Church.

### **Finally**

72. We conclude our patriarchal letter by thanking the Lord, who has granted our Melkite Greek Catholic Church to be able to make these liturgical treasures shine forth in a beautiful, new form at the beginning of this third millennium.

73. We have great pleasure in thanking here the various Patriarchal Liturgical Commissions, which successively have made great efforts to raise the liturgical level in our Church. We thank the benefactors who have helped us throughout all these long years to bring this project into being and this pioneering liturgical work of our Catholic Church in the East and West. We should like to thank especially the Paulist Press for the wonderful realisation of this work.

74. We have the firm hope that our liturgical books may help through their new look to renew our very ancient heritage and to understand Eastern spirituality more deeply, so that they become an effective instrument for talking with God, approaching God and following the good example of our predecessors, who found in the prayer of our mother Church, a very rich source of devotion and adoration, and a real way to Christian life and road to holiness for them.

75. May Christ the Saviour bless all of us and fulfil our hopes for renewal and liturgical animation in our Church through our liturgical prayers, which sanctified our ancestors and parents, and may liturgical rebirth be an agent for unity, strength of spiritual witness of our Church in our society.

May God fulfil our hopes and fill us with his abundant blessings, granting us unity of faith, prayer and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, that we may be able to sing and glorify with one heart and mouth the only Name, worthy of all glory and all dignity, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Given in our patriarchal residence of Damascus, 7 March, beginning of Great Lent of the year 2011,

**Gregorios III, Patriarch**

## APPENDICES

- i. Preface to the Ecclesiastical Typikon of Cyril Rezk, Catholic Publishing House of the Jesuit Fathers, Beirut 1911, p. 3  
“When I saw that the Typikon of our Church had just been nearly destroyed under the influence of many destructive elements as happens very often in such cases if things are not carefully followed up, I felt the need, with a great deal of effort to gather the different significant elements of this book, so that I could really give a very important service to my mother Church, which has a right to that, and I put every possible effort into that and again, I had a further stimulus from my Patriarch Gregorios II in the letter that he sent to me, when I was Patriarchal Vicar in Jerusalem. I taught liturgy and researched liturgical rites in the Seminary of St. Anna in Jerusalem.”
- ii. The speech of Maximos IV, among the documents of the Second Vatican Council concerning the Divine Liturgy.  
(See *The Melkite Greek Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council*, in Arabic and French, Lutfi Laham 1992, p. 112)  
“1. The Reform of the Divine Liturgy in our Greek Catholic Church: we ought, for several reasons, to leave aside developing our rites in an independent way without a previous agreement with the Orthodox branches which are facing us, to avoid creating new differences with our brethren. We cannot make a liturgical renewal, without an agreement with them.  
“2. Eucharistic concelebration: we believe that all clergy participating in the liturgy should wear their full liturgical vestments and participate in an intimate way in the liturgical work presided over by the chief celebrant alone. Despite the new custom among certain non-Byzantine Easterners, it is not necessary for all the concelebrants to say all the prayers of consecration together. Liturgical concelebration is not a synchronised sum of various, different individual celebrations, but is a common work, in which each one has a role.”
- iii. Patriarchal Decree of Maximos IV on liturgical renewal, page 4 (published Harissa, Lebanon 1956): “We have found it our pastoral duty to indicate in this publication the precise principles that should be respected and on which things must be based in this liturgical renewal, in the spiritual renewal that we seek. We draw attention especially to the mistakes that we introduce into the celebration of the Holy Mysteries and that spoil the liturgical renewal and reform.  
“The third foundation is that the liturgy represents ecclesiastical order, instituted by the high authority of the Church, which takes care of it with much solicitude, in order to avoid chaos, disorder and scandal that would gradually penetrate communal prayer, were it not well organised. Liturgical canons and orders are in the Typikon. Neither the priest, nor individual members of the laity have the right to change anything, whether large or small, in these very important orders, but on the contrary, all are obliged to observe them with faith and respect. If there are in these holy regulations anything that requires restoration or renewal, people have the right

to draw it to the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities, and they must take care of the good order, and they too wish there to be renewal and for the true good.” (ibid. Pages 10-11)

“We note that there are liturgical infractions that have started to multiply nowadays and to spread easily due to ease of transport and communications, so that many think that these abuses have become proper rules. The reason for all that is in these infractions, and that is why some clergymen are imbued with the idea that liturgical matters come second to the depth of the liturgy. They have little respect for these canons and take the view that there is no need to have much regard for them, forgetting, or wishing to forget that bark or peel is important for preserving a plant’s pith. The heart of the plant loses much of its substance, becoming fragile, and close to putrefaction, which means that the priest begins to condense certain rites forgetting that the ecclesiastical canons do not give him that right. What makes that so much worse is the mentality of believing oneself, of presuming that some who are specially educated, scoff at the Church’s orders as outdated, believing that they understand the rites much better than the holy fathers of old, who organised them. That is why we ask for the Divine Liturgy to be celebrated, as far as prayers, gestures and symbols are concerned, with a great deal of reverence, piety, compunction, avoiding everything that could harm the holiness of the work that we do.” (ibid. Pages 11 – 13)

“When several members of the clergy are serving the Divine Liturgy together, they must all follow the order laid down by the ephemerus – the person organising the roll – particularly with regard to bowing or prostrating at the same time and in the same way, as the sight of some priests bowing while others are raising their heads creates a bad impression. This point is quite obvious and no-one with any sense of propriety needs to be reminded of this.

“Priests must follow the text of the book in front of them and do not have the right to deviate from it or to summarise it, for they do not have that responsibility. Wishing to strive to explain changes (sic) does not come from a pure, gentle heart, but from presumption in a person seeking to show off. The Church alone has the right and ability to change it and for it to be true and good. What is to become of us if every priest is free to make changes as he wishes?” (ibid. Pages 13)

“We see many neglecting the prayer before the royal doors and going in directly to put on the priestly liturgical vestments without preparation, which scandalises the pious faithful and lessens reverence for priests even among the lay faithful who serve the church. If some special circumstances make it impossible always to say the prayers before the doors, they should at least be said in the sacristy before the priestly vestments are donned.” (ibid. Page 14)

“Being busy themselves with ideas and things foreign to prayer, and being inclined to give least effort, and wishing to move quickly to don their vestments: - all that makes some priests neglect these prayers before the royal doors mentioned above. As

these prayers contain preparation relative to the Divine Liturgy, we draw everyone's attention to the importance of not neglecting them." (ibid. Page 15)

"Again, a reprehensible custom is spreading among some priests of asking a fellow priest to do the proskomedia for them, although it is obligatory for the priest himself, or one of the priests who is going to celebrate with him, to prepare the prothesis. In doing that, the priest must have on his priestly vestments, not just the epitrahelion alone. We even have priests preparing this prothesis in ordinary clothes, without even rasa and epitrahelion, which is quite unbelievable, and yet it happens!

Another, even more serious error, as we have noted in certain places, is that the priest charges one of the servants of the Church, a layperson or sacristan, with doing the prothesis before the Divine Liturgy and limits himself to doing the prayer of the offertory. This is a serious transgression, which gives people the habit of not respecting the holy things, and makes them lose respect for the priest and reverence due to his priesthood. Now there is an essential obligation that spiritual superiors should take serious measures so that this disrespect for spiritual things comes to an end." (ibid. Page 18)

"Again, in the preparation of the Liturgy, prosphora should be used, bread prepared with a special stamp, not just any bread on sale in shops, for such bread usually contains other matter, making the bread illicit." (ibid. Page 19)

"So the priest must expend more effort for the people to understand what is said during the Divine Liturgy, especially during the chanting of the Holy Gospel, and this prayer should be sung slowly and clearly, without too much embellishment, which would mean that the sense of the words themselves be lost." (ibid. Page 20)

"Again, the priest must use the censer during the Divine Liturgy, except if there is no means of so doing.

Many priests shorten the Little Entrance and sometimes even the Great Entrance by just turning on their heel at the altar, although it is known that the Little Entrance must be done by processing around the altar and then going out with the Holy Gospel in front of the iconostasis. In the Great Entrance, the priest should go out of the north door and outside in front of the iconostasis." (ibid. Page 22)

"According to the Greek Liturgikon, the censuring should be done during the singing of the Alleluia and the verses following the reading of the Epistle." (ibid. Page 28)

"Our parents and ancestors in faith had the custom of ending the Gospel reading with the words, "This is the word of truth." This saying is an act of faith with regard to the Word of God, and is an ancient custom going back to an unknown date. That is why it is fitting that we end the Gospel reading as our parents did, with the word, "Haqqan (Truly)," even if it is not printed in the text." (ibid. Pages 28-29)

"We notice that many of our children, the priests, have abandoned the use of zeon in the Liturgy, either through ignorance, laziness or carelessness. For that they are to

be reprimanded. If every priest or bishop starts to do as he likes, our rites are destroyed.” (ibid. Page 29)

“Similarly, one should not use bread in the form of a host, as the Latins and other do, even if the host is of leavened bread, as is done in countries outside our Eastern countries. The outward form of the bread that we see with our eyes must be respected, not just whether the bread is leavened or unleavened, which is less evident.

“Another mistake that arises from ignorance and carelessness is that some priests, as I have been told, begin to do as follows: they communicate from the Lord’s Body, having put the Body into the chalice, without drinking first from the chalice. This is really disregarding apostolic tradition and the regulations of the holy Church and is illicit and deserving of reprimand.” (ibid. Page 31)

“It is disrespectful, too, to transfer the uncovered diskos from the altar to the prothesis, and for this diskos to remain uncovered up until the end of the Liturgy. The diskos must be covered, with the asterisk above it.” (ibid. Page 32)

“We have also noticed that some of our children, the priests, do not respect the orders of the holy Church and celebrate the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom instead of the Liturgy of Saint Basil for trivial reasons and without the permission of their ecclesiastical superiors. This really shows disregard for the liturgical texts and for the order that the Church has arranged. We require this to be conscientiously observed. Where shall we be if everyone does as he likes?” (ibid. Page 33)

“It can be noticed that some priests who are obligated by their pastoral work to celebrate two Divine Liturgies in the ten weeks when the Liturgy of Saint Basil should be celebrated, actually celebrate the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom to save some minutes of time. If those priests thought that the people attending the second Liturgy have the right to hear the Liturgy of Saint Basil, they would not have done that.” (ibid. Pages 33-34)

“In some places, the altar has become a flower-garden and terrace, where various ornaments, such as electric lights can be found, all of which are outside the real meaning or purpose of the altar. Western churches are now abandoning customs that were introduced formerly. In Rome it is now forbidden to use artificial flowers on the altar. Look at the papal altar at the centre of Saint Peter’s basilica. It is simple, without ornaments. There are six candlesticks on the altar. Above is the very high canopy, resting on pillars at the four corners of the altar, not on the altar itself, as generally happens in our churches. We have to go back in history to understand the meaning of the altar without being seduced by appearances and love of mimicry.” (ibid. Page 34)

“We strictly forbid the use of electric light in preference to candles or oil-lamps during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, because, in addition to candlelight or oil-lamps providing quiet, sober light conducive to the spirit of piety, they symbolise spiritually the Church’s holiness from earliest times.” (ibid. Pages 35-36)

“Our hope is that our children, the priests, especially the younger ones among them, will, in a spirit of piety pay close heed to what we are saying. They should not allow a new spirit of apathy to invade their hearts, where it will find good, fertile ground, and oblige them to disregard the words of their superiors, become presumptuous and consider every novelty an advance or progress. They should rather treat what the proper authorities tell them, as coming from the heart of God himself, and consider themselves duty-bound to put it into action in the real world: that should be their rule of conduct.” (ibid. Page 36)

#### **iv. Introduction and Preface to the book of Liturgies (1992)**

For forty years, many questions about the Divine Liturgy and other liturgical matters were conveyed to the Holy Synods of our Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate and the Synod Fathers at various times offered various replies and solutions.

At the Synod of 1986, a new Synodal Liturgical Commission was formed, headed by Archbishop Lutfi Laham, Patriarchal Vicar in Jerusalem. Many questions were put to them about Liturgy, so the new commission saw it as a necessity to deal with all these questions in the context of a complete study, taking into consideration the Divine Liturgy and all other liturgical problems.

##### **Criteria for liturgical reform**

We chose the word reform because it includes the other expressions used, such as renewal, progress, animation and because the meaning of reform is not limited to abbreviation, criticised by some, and not to change, because there is no framework for change, nor to liturgical animation alone, because animation does not include reform of the old, should that be necessary.

We understand by liturgical reform the organisation of the texts of the liturgical services used in our Church, in order to explain in a better, clearer way the basic realities or truths contained in those words, so that the Christian people may, as far as possible, understand them easily and participate with a full, active and common participation.

So we had as a basic principle or rule, fidelity to our original Antiochian Byzantine tradition, so as to be able to preserve in a progressive and open way our original, genuine Orthodox patrimony in the fields of theology, liturgy, hymnography and spirituality.

That is why liturgical reform requires knowledge of our patrimony in order to follow its first inspiration, and to enable us to avoid the temptation of introducing foreign elements into the structure of the liturgy or changing it into another rite.

### **Why liturgical reform?**

The reason for liturgical reform is not desire for change, but it has a pastoral aim, inspired by the spiritual welfare of the faithful. In that respect, we should remember that liturgy is a branch of knowledge and life and can accordingly be taught and lived, in order to give primary liturgical education about the reform, and ensure that it can be common, reaching all the faithful.

In addition to the pastoral aim it is important to emphasise the theological, liturgical principle based on the meanings, symbols, gestures or movements and liturgical terminology. The liturgical texts in Greek, in spite of the fact that they were printed without a critical apparatus, conform to the truth of faith. Therefore, to translate these texts into other languages necessitates faithfulness and precision in translating, so that theological truth can be preserved in a pure expression.

### **Reform is organisation**

Liturgical reform is required to control the prevailing chaos in the printing of liturgical texts and in icon-painting and their placement in church, so that all – bishops, priests, monks, nuns, deacons, laypeople – conform with the Church's instructions and decisions and those of its institutions, according to the holy canons. So it is necessary for every liturgical book of any kind to be printed under the supervision of the liturgical commission. No book or pamphlet may be published without the Placet or permission of the liturgical commission.

Furthermore the liturgical reform should be in line with agreed principles, in order that there be harmony between respect for the Greek text and its original Greek melody, enabling them both to be freely translated into Arabic. We should begin to unify popular basic liturgical songs, so that the faithful can learn them easily and – bishops, priests and faithful - sing them all together at assemblies, congresses and so forth.

### **Reform should proceed from a popular base**

The Holy Synod is the first and last authority in the liturgy. The bishop too is chiefly responsible in his eparchy and has to watch over the implementation of the Synod's decisions.

But if we wish our services to be vital and intensely lived, local liturgical commissions must be formed in eparchies, parishes and monasteries. They should be led by the bishop or his deputy. Every local commission should animate and develop the renewal among the faithful; they will remain in touch with the Synodal Liturgical Commission.

### **Reform as education**

All the faithful, clergy, monastics, the other members of orders and bishops should share in liturgical formation: it is most essential in the reform. We suggest some practical ways of realising it:

1. The printing of a book or periodical, a kind of liturgical directory, explaining the bases and methods of the reform, the decisions of the Synod in this field and the methods of their implementation. This book should contain articles on Byzantine spirituality and history, as well as explanations about the various ritual practices, their meaning and symbolism.
2. Every liturgical book should contain an introduction, explaining the meaning of the rite and symbols; they should be at the disposal of priests and people.
3. Bishops should undertake the responsibility of explaining to their priests the liturgical and theological meaning of each sacrament, so that the formation can proceed uninterruptedly.
4. The same task lies with the Superiors General of the orders and congregations and with the heads of seminaries.
5. Liturgical courses, workshops and congresses should be organised for priests, monks, nuns, members of orders, cantors, teachers of religion and lay-people under the auspices of liturgical education centres and theological institutes.
6. Special care should be given to children, in order to introduce them in a regular way, with precision and piety, to liturgical services.
7. Use should be made of books, videos, cassettes to spread this formation among the people.
8. A really comprehensive library should be available in the rooms of the Liturgical Commission; this would be an information point for everyone about the Liturgical Commission's completed studies and a starting point for a scientific education.

### **Reform as animation**

Liturgical animation means a beautiful celebration, worthy of our prayer; it should be just as far from routine and boring habit as from disorder and improvisation.

The components of animation are very many.

1. We have felt the pressing necessity of animation, where in our Melkite Church the custom has arisen for the daily celebration of the Liturgy, especially in monasteries, houses of religious orders, schools, seminaries and so forth. This has led us to have recourse to the variable elements of the Liturgy and in order not to lapse into a separation, or estrangement, which might alienate us from our particular identity, we have recourse to our traditional elements. A few examples may illustrate this:
  - a) the alternating use of the three antiphonal hymns on various occasions and on various days

- b) the introduction of new texts, which help us to live out our own spirituality at each feast; by introducing new requests into the litanies - these texts are inspired by the liturgical hymns of the feasts themselves;
  - c) the use of the feast's own antiphons and hymns on all days of the octave, through which the faithful can enter more deeply into the hymns proper to the feasts, especially of the Lord and of the Mother of God, and make them their own.
2. The possibility of variation in liturgical prayer is very helpful for various pastoral needs. Our intention was to consider the particular situation of a parish, or an homogenous group, such as a school class, a group of seminarians, pilgrims, people celebrating a special feast, for example a jubilee, or holding a congress, or holding a Solemn Communion and so on.
  3. Another important aspect of liturgical animation is the participation of the people in the prayer of the Church. To that end, simple melodies must be used, easy liturgical responses, as was the custom in the early Church. The documents of liturgical singing in Greece and elsewhere contained popular responses, to which we should revert. This does not restrict the development of ancient, original Byzantine choral art among choirs and specialist cantors. It is very important to combine both together. People should be encouraged to participate in liturgical singing, in which (however) a sufficient portion of the singing should be left up to the cantors and choirs, because people love the beauty of the singing and the beauty of the voices. Both aspects should be preserved, but it should not be permitted for the choir to obliterate the people's participation, since on the whole it is indeed the people's prayer which is the prayer of the Church, and we are not at a concert or in an opera, where artistic performances are given and where the people are simply just listeners.
  4. The participation of the people requires however skilled and trained prayer-leaders. It is the obligation of the bishop and priests to find deacons to serve their church. Besides, there is a lively desire, to restore the institution of the permanent sub-deacons and to broaden their role, so that if there is no deacon they can substitute in singing the litanies; in that way they fulfil the role of the liturgical prayer-leader (animator.)
  5. The role of the reader should not be neglected. He should be chosen from among those who are skilled in singing and reading, in such a way that people understand the text of the psalm, the epistle or any other prayer. It must be ensured that the choirs carry out the singing well and lead the people and so contribute to the beauty of the whole celebration.
  6. In order to attain this goal, all these collaborators ought to get together regularly with the priest, so that everything is well co-ordinated, because the choir and the liturgical prayer-leader select and assign the readings, hymns and melodies together.
  7. All these liturgical pieces of guidance could be made the subject of a periodical or a paper, distributed to the faithful at the beginning of the Liturgy, thus allowing them

to [reflect on and] join in the prayers easily; they could take them home with them and so keep some spiritual guidance for the week. One could also envisage a periodical at parish, inter-parish or eparchial level. (Book of the Divine Liturgies 1992, pages 13 and 21)

**v. Members of successive liturgical commissions**

In 1952, the late Archbishop Euthymios Youakim of Saida and Zahleh was nominated President of the Synodal Liturgical Commission. Also nominated was Fr. Neophytos Edelby as secretary to the commission and then other members joined the commission, representing their congregation or eparchy. Among others were Fr. Nicolas Kadry, Soarite, Fr. Chrysostomos Hallaq, Soarite, who devoted themselves to that work, Fr. Gregorios Hayyek, Salvatorian, Fr. Theophilos Kababi, Aleppine, Fr. Boutros Mouallem, Paulist, Fr. Ignace Dick of the Eparchy of Aleppo, and later there joined them Fr. Euthymios Skaff, Salvatorian. Finally, Mgr. Neophytos Edelby was asked to be president of the commission. The first thing that the commission did was to revise the Paraklitiki. That was done in 1985. Meanwhile, the Anthologion had appeared in Greek in Rome, under the supervision of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and at its expense. The Congregation delegated a commission of three persons to do this work (1967-1980) and Father Georges Gharib, from the patriarchal clergy was one of the members of that commission. (Lutfi Laham, Book of Liturgical Prayers, Jounieh, Pascha 1999, Pages 13-14)

These liturgical commissions supervised the recovery of liturgical texts from our liturgical books: we thank them and value their work. We wish especially to mention persons who worked during the last phase from 1992. They were a united group with a broad base. In it were represented eparchial clergy, religious committees. These are their names: Bishop Saba Youakim, Fr. Georges Baliki, Paulist, secretary, succeeded in 1996 by Subdeacon Elias Shatawi of the eparchial clergy, Fr. Euthymios Skaff, Basilian Salvatorian, Archim. Nicolas Antiba, Basilian Aleppine, Archim. Fouad Sayyegh, of the patriarchal clergy of Damascus, Fr. Alam Alam also of the patriarchal clergy of Damascus, Fr. Samir Nabra, of the eparchial clergy of Saida, Fr. Joseph Saghbini, Salvatorian, Fr. Joseph Gebara, of the eparchial clergy of Beirut, Sr. Eugenie Abouzeid, of the Congregation of our Lady of Perpetual Help, Sr. Maxime Ajjoub of the Basilian Soarite Order. (ibid. Pages 25-26)

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