

Unit 7

Prayers and Hymns

Chapter 1

Common Prayers

We have different forms of prayers such as common prayers, communal prayers and private meditative prayers. Communal prayers mean to pray with congregation. This can take place during church services, or it could be a structured meeting of Christians who have arranged to pray together. In communal prayers, chief celebrant leads the prayers and the faithful participate in the prayers by saying responses and also singing the hymns arranged in the prayers. Prayers in low voice and in loud voice are arranged commonly in Syriac tradition in communal prayers. Private meditative prayers are intended to individual's meditation for his/her personal spiritual edification. The prayer book *Pampakkuda Namaskaram* includes number of private meditative prayers. Common prayers are used both in public and private worships and are mainly intended to be officiated in families and in monastic communities. Traditionally, in Syriac Churches these prayers are known as *Sh'himo* (common) prayers.

The prayer book *Sh'himo Namaskaram* or the Book of Common Prayer of the Syriac Orthodox Church, contains the daily prayers of the Church. The Syriac Orthodox liturgical tradition observes seven offices of prayer for each of the seven days of the week. According to the Scriptures, the new day begins in the evening and is identified by its number. Thus, the days are recognized as the first day, second day, and so on. This is reflected in Genesis 1:5, "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." The offices of prayer are also referred to as the "Hours". The importance of seven offices is alluded to in Psalm 119:164, "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws."

The Hours are in the following order:

1. *Ramsho* (Vespers, or Evening), which is observed at 6pm.
2. *Soutoro* (Compline, or Night Protection) at 9pm.
3. *Lilio* (Night Vigil), which is observed ideally in the middle of the night, but often directly preceding the Morning.
4. *Sap'ro* (Matins, or Morning) at 6am.
5. 3rd Hour at 9am.
6. 6th Hour at 12pm.
7. 9th Hour at 3pm.

This lesson includes the following prayers included in the common prayers:

1. Prayer of Mar Severios (*Uyarapettavante Maravil irickunnavan...*)
2. Praise of the Cherubim (*Ennekum thante idathil ninum...*)
3. Prayer to the Holy Trinity (*Parishudha pithave, ninte parishudha thirunamathal....*)
4. Angelic Hymn (*Melulla Uyarangalil....*)

5. *Maneesa* of Mar Severios (*Nin mathav vishudhanmar...*)
6. The Creed.

Students are recommended to study in detail the above mentioned prayers. For detailed study of these prayers, make reference to Sunday School textbooks of classes 3,4,7,8,9,10 respectively.

Chapter 2

Trinitarian Prayers in the Holy Qurbana

We studied in Unit 2 about our faith in Holy Trinity and about the person and life of Jesus Christ, the Incarnated God, which are the fundamental principles of Orthodoxy. Most of the prayers of the Holy Qurbana are addressed to Holy Trinity. All the prayers end with Trinitarian doxology. The Trinitarian doxology, “Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” or “*shubholabo*” is an important feature of Orthodox liturgy. Some of the prayers chanted by the believers during worship are also the proclamation of this belief. Some of these prayers are discussed in this chapter. Memorizing these prayers is necessary to all Orthodox Christians.

1. During the Elevation of Mysteries

The priest elevates the Paten and says, “Holy things to the holy and pure”. The response is a Trinitarian doxology, “The One Holy Father, the One Holy Son and the One Holy Spirit alone is holy. Amen”. Then the priest elevates the chalice. The response of the believers on this is “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the living Holy Spirit, One God forever and ever, Amen.” This is an acknowledgement from the faithful that they offer glory and worship to the Holy and sanctified Holy Trinity alone. They also adore the Holy Trinity for allowing them to partake in the divine mysteries.

The proclamation of the priest that the “Holy things to the holy and pure”, is also an important aspect in the worship. Those who are participating in the Holy Qurbana confess that they are not holy. Only the sanctified and pure are eligible for partaking in the divine mysteries.

Before the priest begins the most important part of Holy Qurbana (*the Anaphora*) by standing upon the step (*dargo*) the sacristan also ensures that all believers inside the church are truly faithful and sanctified. He holds all chains of the censer together in his hand and give the proclamation “*sthoumenkalos*” symbolises that all who are in the church are true believers. In early period, during this time all the unbelievers (catechumens) would go out of the Church. The rest of the liturgy is supposed to be only for the faithful.

Then the priest proclaims that the Holy Trinity is with the believers. This is giving glory to the Holy Trinity and acknowledging that by partaking in the divine mysteries, the believers are eligible for fellowship with the Holy Trinity.

2. Before the procession of the Holy Mysteries to the people.

When the reader proclaims, “cry we aloud and say”, the congregation prays as follows. “Praised and adored, are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To Him be praise from the beginning, for generation and generation. Halleluiah”. This is also an example for another Trinitarian doxology. See the expression; “to Him”, which is singular indicates the oneness of the Triune God. Here the congregation is proclaiming the “Trinitarian God” and praising without any limits.

Chapter 3

Liturgical Hymns

Kyamtha Evening Prayer

Two orders of common prayers are included in the currently available *Qurbana Kramam*. They are *Sleebea Namaskaram* and *Kyamtha Namaskaram*. We use *Sleebea Namaskaram* from the feast of the Holy Cross (*Sleebea Perunnal*) and *Kyamtha Namaskaram* from the feast of the Resurrection (Easter) of our Lord. We already learned some songs of *Sleebea Namaskaram* in class Nine. Some of the songs from *Kyamtha* evening prayer are going to discuss in this chapter.

The main theme of hymns in *Kyamtha Namaskaram* is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The meanings of some of the hymns are given below:

1. Adam- the head of our race will rejoice at
The Resurrection
O Lord have mercy- upon us all. (*Ee ninn udhanathin naal...*)

We remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ on all Sundays. So, we sing that Adam, the head of all humankind is rejoicing in the feast of resurrection. “Almighty God, have mercy upon us” is our prayer. Due to disobedience Adam was expelled from Eden. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Adam was restored to Paradise.

2. By Your grace, You were inclined
To descend to us sinners
By Your grace, pity Your Church
Which clings to the wings of Your Cross. (*En nadhanin krupa nine...*)

The meaning of the hymn is as follows; “My Lord, Your grace makes you to reach us, the sinners. Have mercy upon the church which trusts on your cross.” This hymn confesses that we humans are sinners. The incarnation happened due to the grace of God. Cross becomes the sign of our salvation. St. Gregory the Theologian (or Gregory of Naziansus, 4th Century, AD) writes, “Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God’s for His sake, since He for ours became human. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better....”

3. In the house of death, our Lord consoled Adam:
“Do not grieve that you had transgressed the commandment
For the sins and offenses, you committed

I was beaten in order to save you from death
Fruit of Eden you ate and I took-bitter drink
 You wore leaves – for you were naked
 Naked they – hung me on the tree
 And the Father was pleased by the blood which I shed”

(“*Naadan mrudaridayilurappichadathe....*”).

Lord went down among the dead and consoled Adam. “Don’t weep over your sins anymore. I received blows because you committed transgressions (Matthew 27:30). I drank sour wine because you ate the forbidden fruit of Eden (Matthew 27:34). You wore leaves when felt naked and for that put me on the cross naked (Matthew 27:35). The anger of the Father is gone when I shed my blood” (read Hebrews 9:22-25). Christ pleased the Father by offering Himself sacrificially out of love for humanity.

The sacrifice in Israel was offered to God for the expiation of the sins of Israel. Animal sacrifice was a type of the perfect sacrifice realized in Christ and true atonement. However, the complete expiation of sin from humanity was accomplished by Christ, the true paschal lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Hence, here we sing the theology of salvation (soteriology). We please God when we offer ourselves to Him without blemish or stain.

4. The scent of Chrism, O Lord, rises from Your wounds
Your lips are like the threads of the finest scarlet
 I sought You and – guards surrounded me
 From them I ran – unto Golgotha
 There I saw Your side pierced and Your blood flowing out
 Astonished, I cried, “Glory – to You for You have
 Halleluiah – saved us by Your Cross”.

(“*Nin murivukalinetten mooron....*”)

This hymn is composed from the perspective of the Holy Church, the true Bride of Christ, who is effusive in her love for her True Bridegroom, Christ. In the Old Testament, the relationship of God and Israel is understood in the context of the marriage of husband and wife. In the New Testament, we see that this relationship is perfected and fully realized in the relationship of Christ and His Church (Eph 5: 32). Jewish tradition also presents the metaphor of husband and wife relation for explaining the relationship between Yahweh and Israel (Jeremiah 31:32). “Instead, as a faithless wife leaves her husband, so you have been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 3:20, Isaiah 54:7-14). From the book of Genesis itself, there is a narrative of nuptial relationship of Yahweh and Israel. There are several examples in the Bible: (Deuteronomy 7:6-11, Jeremiah 2:2, 3:1-4, Ezekiel 16:8, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:22-24). The Syriac liturgical tradition presents Jesus Christ as heavenly bridegroom and Church as the bride chosen by Jesus Christ from the gentiles.

Church fathers allegorically interpreted the Song of Songs to describe the love relationship between heavenly Bridegroom Son of God and His Church. The homilies of Gregory of Nyssa on the Song of Songs are a great resource for understanding this. Origen of

Alexandria also used this metaphor to explain the divine love to humanity. The bride Church seeks the Bridegroom Jesus Christ. At last, the bride finds her bridegroom on the Cross sacrificing His life for her. The Syriac liturgical tradition describes that Crucifixion was the perfection of this holy marriage. Jesus Christ gave the Church His body and blood as the sign of His relationship.

The song “*Nin murivukalee...*” is a poetic presentation of completing the search of Church, the earthly bride to her heavenly Bridegroom Jesus Christ on the cross in Golgotha. So, the meaning of this hymn is as follows: “The fragrance from Your wounds is good as the fragrance of Myron. Your lips are tender like silk thread. I was surrounded by soldiers when I came to see You. I left them and ran to Golgotha. I found Your heart opened and blood began to pour. Praise to the Lord who saved us by His cross”. “Your lips are like a thread of scarlet” – This image is taken from the Song of Solomon 4:3. The Song of Solomon contains the illustrations of the love between the True Bridegroom, Christ and His Bride, the holy Church. This ballad of love provides the Church poetry and imagery to describe her love and pure longing for Christ and His longing for her.

The meanings of the first stanza of some of the songs are dealt here in this chapter. Students are recommended to memorize all the hymns and understand the meaning.

Chapter 4

Post Communion Hymns

The celebrant begins the Post-communion service after the final benediction. During this service, the *Madbaha* is veiled. When the priest conducts the post-communion service, the believers participate in it by singing hymns. In this chapter, we discuss hymns sung during this time.

1. Wipe away, Lord, all my debts
With the sponge of Your mercy
And by Your compassion, Lord
Do not remember my sins.
(*Ente kadangallashesham nin...*)

The meaning of the hymn is as follows; “O Lord, obliterate my sins by your sponge of mercy. All our sins may be removed by your grace.” In Malayalam hymn, the Syriac word *espoogo* is used for “sponge”.

Students are expected to learn the remaining stanzas also.

2. *Our Lord Jesus Christ*
Let not – Your Body and Blood we have received
Be for judgment nor condemnation
But rather for the pardon of sins

And for the resurrection
Halleluiah – with clear faces.
(*Moran Yeshu Mashihā, Ulkondoree nin meyyum....*)

The meaning of the hymn is as follows; “O Lord, it should not be for the punishment and retribution to those who receive your holy Body and Blood. But it should be for the remedy of their faults. Moreover, they may stand on your right side with courage.”

3. If Moses gave life to sinful Reuben
by the blood of beasts
Much more- shall the faithful dead receive
For whom this living - sacrifice - was raised (*Pathakanam roobelinu-jeevan moshā....*)

The meaning of the hymn is as follows; “If Moses gave life to the sinner Reuben by the sacrifice of animals, how much more blessings will the faithful departed receive by the living sacrifice of the Lord.”

Genesis 35:22 narrates the sin committed by Reuben. When Jacob blessed his sons, he pronounced a curse upon his elder son Reuben. “You shall no longer excel” (Genesis 49:4). After instituting animal sacrifice under the instruction of Yahweh, Moses blessed Israelites (Deut. 33:6). Here he reversed the curse of Reuben, saying “Let Reuben live and not die, nor let his men be few.” If the animal sacrifice in the Old Testament period was capable of absolving sins, then how much more efficient will be the living sacrifice of Lord Jesus Christ. The post- communion service ends with this hope.