

# **The Ecclesiastical Liturgical Year for the Church of the East**

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## **Introduction**

The ritual year is like an icon, in which the believer sees the presence of the salvific past and a vision of the glorious future. It gives earthly time and the temporary human presence a new spiritual depth, so that the faithful can live his life accompanied by historical Jesus, the Savior, and vision of the victorious Christ, the heavenly groom. That means, the liturgical year is not only an ecclesiastical calendar for remembrance of the events of Christ life with the goal of education but is also a symbolic mystery that enables us to meet Christ face to face, as if Christ himself was among us.

Oftentimes, the term “East-Syriac” is used by theological scholars to distinguish it from the term used to refer to “West-Syriac”, which is often used to refer to the Syriac Orthodox Church. Throughout this article, the term East-Syriac is used interchangeably to refer to the Church of the East. All the apostolic churches in the east and west annually celebrate Lord's feasts, the commemoration days of His mother and other saints as intensive phases of religious and worship life. The goal of this article is to provide an introduction to the structure of the east Syriac ritual year, with a brief explanation of each of its elements, its role in reviving the religious life of people.

## **Theological dimensions of the liturgical year**

The purpose of celebrating the liturgical year is to achieve the salvation God has accomplished for humankind through Jesus Christ.[1] The Church distributed the stages of Jesus' salvific work throughout the months of the year. It is the Church's duty to celebrate the act of salvation accomplished by her divine groom, by commemorating his memory on specific days throughout the year. As believers, we live this plan of salvation throughout the year, the mystery of Christ as a whole, proceeding from incarnation and birth to ascension and Pentecost, until the waiting of joyful hope and the coming of the Lord. In this way, the Church of the East has organized a wonderful ritual year whereby the people celebrate the entire plan of salvation through the days, weeks, and months of the calendar year, with the liturgical year primarily revolving around the event of the Resurrection of Jesus.

## **Sunday as the original holiday**

The early church had already celebrated the memorial of the salvific work; Sunday can be called as the “little Easter” because of its very nature of celebrating the day of the Lord, in commemoration of the Resurrection on the first day of the week (Mt 28:1/Mk 16:1/Luke 24:1/John 20:1) and the day on which he bestowed on disciples the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (Act2:1/John 20:22). The early Christian community came together thereafter for worship (Act20:7), and St. Paul takes it for granted that Christians will meet every first day of the week (1 Cor 16:1-2). The paschal mystery of Christ was initially celebrated on Sunday as a weekly Pasch [2], until the feast of Easter was established as a yearly event, which was introduced about the end of the first century and the beginning of the second. [3]

The basic building block of the liturgical year is Sunday; in nearly all Christian denominations it is considered the day of worship and a weekly holiday. It was “the first day of the week”, according to the Jewish calendar, and since the time of the apostles, Christians have given this first day after the Sabbath a new name: Sunday became the Lord's Day (Rev 1.10). For it was on a Sunday that the crucified Lord rose and it was also on Sunday that Christ sent the Holy Spirit from the Father.[4]

Even the Twelve Apostles doctrine (Didache)[5] that emerged in the Syrian-Palestinian region around the turn of the second century recognized the priority of Sunday. It attests that the Lord's Day is the day on which the faithful come together to participate in the Eucharist and commemorate the suffering, resurrection and glory of the Lord Jesus. Sunday is the day commemorating the beginning of creation and the new creation created by Christ. The experience of the Apostle Thomas (John 20.24-29) becomes the experience of Christians of all places and times.[6] As well, the church, the bride of Christ, looks to the anticipated day when the groom will come back to accomplish his salvation work. By celebrating the mysteries of salvation, the Church releases the riches of power and merit of her Lord, so that the believers come into contact with them and are filled with the grace of salvation. Syriac Sunday piety also includes the belief that it will be on a Sunday that Christ comes again. Then the crowds will meet him at once on Palm Sunday, when he appears with great power and glory from the eastern sky.[7]

Subsequently, in the fourth century the Apostolic Church appointed one Sunday to celebrate the Resurrection in particular. The Council of Nicaea put an end to the discussion of the date of Easter by prescribing that it be celebrated on a Sunday and never on the day of the Jewish Passover.[8] From the reports of Eusebius,[9] the church in Asia Minor had celebrated the Pasch on the 14th of April in accordance with Jewish tradition, even when it fell on a weekday. But the churches in Alexandria, Jerusalem and Rome celebrated it on the Sunday following the 14th of April, irrespective of a particular date. Easter was to be on the Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. This meant the date of Easter would always fall between March 21st and April 25th.[10] Later on, the liturgical year centered on Nativity and the feast of Epiphany, which represent the beginning of Jesus' salvific message. The elements of the liturgical year have since evolved in establishing the other holidays. The Christian festival calendar also included the phases in the life of Christ's mother and memorials of the martyrs and saints.

### **Stages of the development in the liturgical year**

The liturgical year of the Church follows the progressive development of the mystery of Christ and represents its gradual development around the two themes of Easter and Christmas. The liturgical Year, also known as the Church Year, consists of the cycle of liturgical seasons with the paschal events as its center. The dates of many feasts in the liturgical year differ in East and West due to the variations in the date of Easter. Early Jewish Christians naturally began to replace the Passover celebration with the remembrance of the paschal events of Jesus Christ. The early Christian community in the course of time did not hesitate to abandon the Sabbath to make Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, the sacred day of assembly for worship. Following the sequence of the Jewish holidays, early Christians have kept Easter as the Feast of Resurrection, and reinterpreting the feast of Pentecost, that marked the granting the Ten Commandments, as the Feast of the Granting of the Holy Spirit.[11] The concept of "paschal mystery" embraces both the traditions of the Old Testament Passover and the New Testament one that introduced and fulfilled the redemptive act of Christ. The salvation history is a covenantal and communal relationship between God and mankind.

Since the second century, a period of fifty days was established as the feast of a single great Resurrection, with the feast extended progressively by a preparatory period of 3 to 7 days. As for the second observation, since the Gregorian period in the fourth century, the calendar has gradually formed around the birth of Christ-Epiphany, Christ the Sun of Justice (Isaiah 9-John 1) instead of the pagan sun feast. In some Syriac sources (Ephrata

[12] (345)Ephrem[13] (373)the teachings of the Apostles), traces of the Jewish ancient Easter rite were preserved, which was acceptable since the second century in Mesopotamia.[14] Also, in the fourth century, St. Ephrem recognized Easter as the appropriate time to grant the baptism mystery, so the ritual of the baptism was added to the evening of Easter. In addition, the synod of St. Isaac, in order to unify and fix its liturgical customs, decreed in canon 13 that the liturgical usage of the church of Seleucia be observed by all.[15]

In the ancient schedule of readings from the fifth century in the Edessa church, he mentioned the following holidays: Epiphany, Lent, Maundy Thursday, Easter, Friday of Passion, washing of the altar on Saturday, then Sunday of the resurrection with one week of rest (ܨܦܫܬܐ), and also the day of the Ascension with the Sunday of Pentecost.

From the 6th to the 7th century, the liturgical year developed slowly by virtue of the efforts of *Narsai* (ܢܪܨܝܐ, 502)[16] and the scholars of the Nisibis School, who had participated pastorally in these ritual celebrations. We received a set of explanatory lectures by the teachers: *Mar Aba I* (ܐܒܐ ܐܝܘܒ, 540-552)[17] and his student *Tōmā ūrhāyā* (ܬܘܡܐ ܘܪܗܝܐ, 538-543) at Christmas and Epiphany,[19] and after them *qywrā ūrhāyā* (ܩܝܘܪܐ ܘܪܗܝܐ, 543-551) from the Seleucia School on Fasting, Easter, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost. Towards the end of the sixth century, four articles were added to this collection of explanatory articles released during the days of feasts in Nisibis School, by Henana of Adiabene *Mar Hnānā* (ܚܢܢܐ, 572-610)[20], which are palm Sunday, golden Friday, discovery of the cross and the Ba'ath. Finally, an anonymous teacher from the Nisibis School included the eulogy to the Virgin. These sermons were later collected and reissued in a book called *Articles on Feasts* (ܥܠܝܩܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܐܢܐ). Mari ibn Sulaiman mentioned in his book [21] ( ܩܬܐܒ ܕܡܪܝ ܒܢ ܨܠܝܡܐܢ ) that in the days of Catholicos Mar Babai, in Nisibis and ܁ܠܡܕܐܢܝܢ (south of Baghdad), the feasts of Palm Sunday and the Transfiguration were included, which were distinct feasts for the Greeks. Also, *Ibrahim Bar-Levaya of Qatar* (th-8th centuries)[22] also wrote about the topic of the liturgical year and the interpretation of the theological meaning of the last periods of the liturgical year. However, in conjunction with the arrangement of the liturgical material, *Mar Išō'yahb III* (580-659) is also reputed to have fixed the liturgical cycle. The East Syrian liturgical cycle is designated (ܥܘܨܬܐ ܨܦܫܬܐ), which means "seven," derived from the common way Jewish-Mesopotamian culture marked time in 50-day periods of seven weeks plus a day. Towards the middle of the seventh century, he organized the liturgical prayer *hūdrâ* (ܚܘܕܪܐ), reforming the rituals of baptism and repentance, dedication of a new church, and laying hands on all the ordinations.[23]

There are three witnesses who say that *Išo'yahb* III was responsible for the proper ordering and organization of the *ḥûdrâ* with its (ܚܘܕܪܐ) and hence of the Liturgical year. They are: *Thomas of Marga* of the 8th century, the Anonymous Author of the 10th century and *Rabban Brihisho* of 14th century. The Book of Governors of Mar *Thomas of Marga* and the *Expositio Officinarum of Pseudo-George of Abel* are the earliest witnesses to the *ḥûdrâ*. [24] His purpose was to fix the liturgical habits and traditions. With the assistance of the monk *Khnanisho of Hedhyabh*, he compiled the *ḥûdrâ* in the most important feasts (ܚܘܕܪܐ ܚܘܕܪܐ), delivered during the year (650-651). The abbot of the monastery of *Beth Kokhe*-ܚܘܕܪܐ ܕܚܘܕܪܐ, affirmed *Išo'yahb* III for compiling the East Syrian liturgy of the Hours in its present shape. The *ḥûdrâ*, which means cycle, is the liturgical formulary of the east Syriac church. The final formative period of the *ḥûdrâ* comes with the redaction of the Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Elia I (11th century), and Mar Yahb'Alaha II, the last reformer. The last revision of *ḥûdrâ* took place at the Upper Monastery in 1250. [25]

### **The structure of the east Syriac liturgical year**

In the cycle of the year with its 365 days, the Church unfolds the salvific mystery of Christ in its individual mysteries. The ecclesiastical year begins with the memory of the Incarnation of the Son of God and his birth. At Easter, the church celebrates his redemptive suffering and resurrection, commemorates his ascension 40 days later, and at Pentecost marks the Holy Spirit's mission. When the number of months is complete and the year ends, we again get a look into the future.

The traditional Syrian churches have their own way of celebrating the mystery of Christ in the cycle of the year. For the East Syrian Church, the structure of the church year, still in effect today, goes back to the great reformer of their liturgy, the patriarch Catholicos of the Church of the East, *Išo'yahb* III (647-657). [26] With his reform the East Syrian liturgy attained the current shape and exact structure. Since the Jerusalem liturgy is the cradle of all other liturgical traditions, the ancient East Syrian cathedral and monastic practices also developed after the close relationship between *Īšō'Yahb's* reform [27] of the Jerusalem liturgy. [28] He unified the monastic observance of the Upper Monastery in Mosul (northern Iraq) and the liturgical tradition at the patriarchal church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (south of Baghdad). However, the specific Syriac basic structure of the liturgical year did not need to be invented by him. At that time it was already fully formed in both traditions, with differences between them limited to texts, biblical readings, and some memorabilia of saints and martyrs. The two traditions do share important aspects of the liturgical year: the division of the year into weeks

(ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ), and the memorial of the saints on Fridays between Christmas and the Great Lent. So he organized the liturgical observances in three groups: the first is *hûdrâ* -ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ office for Sundays and movable feasts; second is *gaza* ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ, immovable feast days; third is *kshkwl*-ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ for all weekdays; this is according to the order of the Upper Monastery, or the monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham near Mosul, which therefore has the final form of the rite. [29]

Its characteristic features are the introduction of the year into seven-week periods; the memory of outstanding biblical saints; groups of ecclesiastical saints and church teachers on Fridays between epiphany and Lent; and Nineveh, three weeks before the beginning of the Great Easter Lent. Išo'yahb III codified the liturgical order of the year in his liturgical prayer book called *hûdrâ* (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ). Its liturgical calendar divides the year into nine units. Ideally, each counts seven weeks. The liturgical year is divided into seven periods, each of which includes seven weeks. He added two periods of 4 weeks, in order for the liturgical year to begin and end in the form of the Holy Cross†.[30] These liturgical year periods are as follows:

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| <b>1. Annunciation and Nativity.</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ ܕܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ) | <b>6. Summer.</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ)                 |
| <b>2. Apparition of the Lord--Epiphany.</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ)    | <b>7. Elijah.</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ)                 |
| <b>3. Lent.</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ)                                | <b>8. Moses.</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ)                  |
| <b>4. Resurrection.</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ)                        | <b>9. Consecration of Church</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ). |
| <b>5. Apostle.</b> (ܠܘܥܘܘܘܬܐ)                             |  |

The total number of the Sundays equipped liturgically with mass and office is 60. However, since the solar year actually does not count as many Sundays, some are regularly omitted. There are two periods (Periods of Epiphany and Moses), for which the number of weeks is not fixed. The expansion and shortening result from the fluctuating Easter date. The number of weeks of Epiphany period increases or decreases depends on the date of the onset of Lent. In particular the period of Moses can be quite short in some years because it has to finish at the end of October. The fifth, sixth and seventh Moses Sunday is rarely celebrated. This also applies to the eighth Epiphany Sunday. This Sunday is celebrated every 25 years. The summer period may lose one Sunday in exceptional cases, lest the feast of the cross take place before the beginning of the time of Elijah.[31]

## 1. Period of the Annunciation and the Nativity (ܩܠܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܡܐܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܡܐܘܬܐ)

The year's circle begins with the period of Annunciation and the Nativity. It includes four Annunciation Sundays and two Nativity Sundays, so this first period lasts six weeks. The goal of the four Annunciation Sundays is to prepare the believers for the celebration of Christmas. Also, for the West Syrians, six Sundays of Annunciation precede the Nativity on December 25th.[32] The Announcement (ܩܝܡܐܘܬܐ) of the birth of the Messiah and the proclamation of the Incarnation of the Son of God determine the character of the four Sundays of the Annunciation. The gospel of the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist is read first (Luke 1:1-26). On the second Sunday of SUBARA, the congregation hears Gabriel's annunciation to the Virgin from Nazareth and Mary's Magnificat response on the occasion of her visit to Elisabeth (Luke 1: 26-56). The gospels of the two following Sundays tell of the birth and mission of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ and of the proclamation to Joseph (Luke 1:57-80, Mt 1:18-25).[33]

The inclusive celebration motive of the days before the Nativity is the mystery of incarnation. In this regard, a song in the East Syrian Office at the beginning of the first Sunday of SUBARA is a key text for the whole of the following liturgical period: *“God, the word that comes from the Father, has taken the form of a servant, not the angel, but the descendant of Abraham. And because of his goodness he came into our humanity to save our generation from sin”*. [34] This wonderful hymn reflects the nature of the prayers of the early Christians, expressing deep theological meanings in a few words, and presenting a complete heavenly mystery with the incarnation and the Virgin Mary's role in the salvific work, as a descendant of Abraham in accordance with old testament prophecy (Genesis 22:18).

In the Syro-Malabar church in the southern Indian state of Kerala, the period is known under the name *Irupathanchu Nombu*, which means 25 days of fasting. This could be due to Latin influence, since until far into the modern times in the Roman liturgy, Advent was seen as a time of penance comparable to Lent. However, the files of the Synod of Diamper (1599) note that even before the Portuguese arrived, it was customary for Thomas Christians there to fast from December 1 to 24. This practice is likely to have monastic roots. According to the testimony of Gabriel of Basra (end of the 9th century), the monks fasted in the time of the apostles and the time of Elijah. The fasting that was habitual in the Moses period would have moved (relocated) it to the SUBARA weeks. This fasting before Nativity is similar to that in the Western Church based on the model of pre-Easter Lent, after this Nativity joined Easter as the second center of gravity of the liturgical year.[35]

The East Syrian liturgy of the weeks before Nativity is not characterized by fasting and penance, but as a period of preparation to accept the Lord in our lives. It is as if we were in the darkness, and then with the birth of our Lord, the light appeared in our life. It is dominated by joy over the Incarnation of the Son of God, thanks for the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies, reverence of the Virgin and Mother who gave birth to the Redeemer, and jubilation over the beginning of salvation and through divine dispensation (ܠܗܘܘܢܗܘܘܢ) heaven connects once again with earth.

### **Feast [36] of the Birth of Christ (ܠܗܘܘܢܗܘܘܢ ܠܡܝܘܢܐ)**

The east Syriac church celebrates the Nativity together with the other churches of the east and west on December 25th. The east took over this festival from the Roman church. Primarily Nativity was celebrated in Rome; certainly towards the end of the reign of Emperor Constantine I (c. 337). The first person to mention a celebration was noted in the book of the martyrs, written by a person named Dionysius Philocalian in 354. This feast moved from Rome to the East; St. Augustine tells us that this feast entered North Africa in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The Church of Antioch also introduced the feast in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This is attested to by John Chrysostom in a 386 sermon.[37]

There are many reasons why Christians celebrated the birth of Lord Jesus in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, including both historical and dogmatic reasons. Historically, in the city of Rome the winter solstice takes place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, which means the sun begins to increase and the hours of the day start to length. Therefore, the Roman emperor Aurelian (257-275) organized a pagan holiday on that date to celebrate the birth of the “invincible sun god” in the year 274. For this deity, a temple was devoted in Rome to celebrate this feast. But the Church took this feast, and reinterpreted it with a Christian character, to discourage Christians from participating pagan celebrations. It set the date of the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25 of each year, and applied the symbol of the sun to Christ, as stated in several Biblical verses (Malachi 4:2/Luke 1:78-79/John 8:12). As for the theological reason, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the beginning of the Christmas celebration coincided with the convening of the Council of Nicaea in the year 325 AD, which addressed Arians and some Gnostic ideas. Thus, the celebration of Christ’s birth is a response to these heresies and a declaration of true faith in Jesus Christ, equal to the Father in substance and born of the Virgin Mary, as confirmed by the Nicene Creed.[38]

Nativity, in its East Syrian form, reflects everything the biblical writers report about the event in Bethlehem. On the first Sunday after Nativity, the congregation hears the scope of the homage of the wise men, the murder of children by Herod, and the flight to Egypt and return to Nazareth (Mt 2.1-23). The motive of homage to the astrologers from the east is already part of Christ's Birth story. Not surprisingly, the Church of the East highlights the adoration of the wise men from the east (Mt2: 1) and their origin in Mesopotamia, the country between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In the office we encounter a song in which Persia sends its messengers and worshipers, and wishes them a peaceful journey and happy arrival. The East Syrian church, which has sent its missionaries to India and China, already sees these peoples kneeling at the crib in the form of kings from the east: *The kings of Persia, the kings of India, the kings of China bowed their heads and worshiped the king from David's house.*[39] On the second Nativity(ܩܕܝܫܐ) Sunday, in his long gospel Luke (2:21-52) recalls all the events of Jesus' childhood: the circumcision and naming, the presentation in the temple and the testimony of Simeon and Hannah, the pilgrimage of the twelve-year-old Jesus to Jerusalem and his rediscovery in the circle of teachers who marveled at his wisdom.

According to the oldest East Syrian tradition, the Eucharist was celebrated only on Fridays and Sundays, with the Friday between the first and second Nativity Sundays especially highlighted liturgically, and celebrated as the day of a Mary commemoration. The church felicitates the mother of the Lord on the happy birth of the Savior. This recognition of Mary near Nativity is also included in the Byzantine rite on December 26th and in the Roman liturgy on January 1st.[40]

### **Commemoration of St. Mary (the mother of Christ)**

There is only one commemoration during the period of Nativity and Epiphany; in the ritual prayer book (*Khudra*-ܩܘܕܪܐ) this commemoration bears the following title: "The commemoration of Mary, the mother of Christ," and falls on the day of the second Friday after Christmas, or the first Friday if one Friday coincides with Nativity and the day of Epiphany.[41] The Church of the East celebrates this remembrance right after the Nativity, in order to show Mary's role in salvation history in a clear way and to show her supreme position in the mystery of the Incarnation and her intercession for her children. It is worth noting that an anonymous author confirmed that Patriarch *Išo'yahb* III (7<sup>th</sup> century)[42] decided to celebrate this commemoration after Nativity because the prophets mentioned St. Mary, and the plan of salvation began to be fulfilled by the Virgin Mary, the feast of the Virgin is celebrated on Friday because Eve was created on this day, and because the Virgin Mary was transferred to Heaven on the same day.[43]

A hymn in the East Syrian ritual prayers says of her holy role: *'Whoever saw an ewe, carrying a lion cub, who is raising him and is not afraid? Mary was the sheep and the lion cub, and she raised him and did not fear, Glory be to you, our Lord, Glory be to you, Son of God, who honored Mary as your mother'. [44]*

According to St. Giwargis of Arbil (9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> century), provides explanations of the Bible's readings, with its both Old and New Testaments, which are recited during the liturgy throughout the liturgical year, It mentions one Mary's feast, which is celebrated after the first Sunday of Christ Birth. But according to the ritual traditions accepted in the Syriac circumference, since the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century three Marian holidays were linked to three stages of peasant life.[45] Therefore, the Church of the East celebrates the commemoration of Blessed Virgin Mary three times in the liturgical year. The first and most important commemoration is on the first or second Friday after the Nativity of Our Lord; the second is on May 15 and the third is on August 15,[46]. In addition, and the prayers of the annunciation period are also included with the praising of Mary, and every day in a Liturgy of Hours and in the Holy Mysteries we praise and commemorate her in an honorable way. In addition to these, all Wednesdays are dedicated to Mary and in every prayer of the liturgical Hours of the day.

## **2. The feast of Epiphany and its weeks (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܥܦܝܦܢܐ)**

From the historical sources it appears that this holiday is ancient in the Eastern Churches in general and in the Church of the East in particular. One of the oldest Christian holidays besides Easter is the Day of Epiphany. The Assyrian word "ܩܘܪܒܢܐ" means "appearing, the rising of the sun," and expresses the theological meaning of this feast; In the Syriac tradition it is the term used for the beginning of the mission of Jesus and his public manifestation at the river Jordan (Matt 3:13). This Feast stands among the oldest dominical feasts next to Easter, and owes its origin to the Christian East for its meaning, referring to Christ as the "Dawn of Light". Later this feast began to be known as Epiphany, meaning the manifestation of the Lord.[47]

As mentioned above, Nativity, which is celebrated on 25<sup>th</sup> December, originated in the Western World, and then moved to the East; however, the festival of Epiphany, which is celebrated on 6<sup>th</sup> January, originated in the Eastern world, as indicated by its eastern name, and then moved to the west in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The feast of epiphany also has roots that are historical and theological. On January 6, Egypt was dedicated to the celebration of the winter solstice, in honor of the victorious sun over the dark period and the increase of its light. However, its meaning has shifted and centered among Westerners to the appearance of the Lord of pagan nations, represented



Jesus and became Christ's disciples (3th epiphany Sunday). The sign at the wedding at Cana, when Jesus turned water into good wine (4th Epiphany Sunday). The gospel of the (5th Epiphany Sunday) highlights that Jesus is the Son of Man who descended from heaven and ascended again to (John 3.1-21).[52]

### **The Nineveh fasting**

A special feature of the period between Epiphany and Lent is the Nineveh Fasting in all churches of the Syrian tradition, Coptic Church and Ethiopic Church. The ceremony for this fasting takes place on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the third week preceding the Great Lent. The biblical example is the fasting of the people of Nineveh, who listened to the Prophet Jonah who called them to repentance. Fasting averted the threatened doom of their city (Jonah 3: 1-10). Reading regulations of the East Syrian church provide for the Jonah-pericope in the Eucharistic celebration on Wednesday of the Nineveh week.

Just imagine there was a disease that started in the city in which you live, disease so powerful that everyone was getting it and whole cities began to die. This did happen in the 6<sup>th</sup> century: a severe plague, spread through the northern region of what is now Iraq, the ancient city of Nineveh, which is now Mosul and its vicinity. They were scared to see all of their friends and loved ones dying. So they went to the bishop to help them find a solution. They went to him because they had nowhere else to go. The popular declaration attributes the Nineveh fasting to a historical event of the Christian era. According to tradition, the plague invaded the area of Kirkuk and Nineveh in the time of the Catholic Patriarch Ezekiel (570-581). At that time an angel appeared and asked people to fast and pray in order to be freed from the plague; this apparition happened on a Monday. The believers then fasted for three days, and then communed at the Eucharist on Friday. Thereupon the dying came to an end.[53]

On the sixth epiphany Sunday, it is again John the Baptist who points out that: *he who comes from above is above all* (John 3.31). Wonderful healings again demonstrate the divine authority of Jesus on the seventh Epiphany Sunday. On the last, and rarely occurring eighth Epiphany Sunday, the theme of the baptism of Jesus returns again. As on the first day of the Epiphany period, the congregation hears the voice from heaven again: *You are my beloved son, I have found pleasure in you* (Mark 1:11).[54]

## **Holy commemorations [55] on Fridays of the Epiphany period**

The period of Epiphany is also a time for the Remembering of Saints. All the gatherings that take place in this period are dedicated to the memory of the saints who are considered to be the pillars of the Church, because they testified to Christ through their teachings and lives, until their martyrdom. The first Friday after Epiphany is dedicated to the memory of John the Baptist. The Byzantine Church also knows the Johannes Festival as an accompaniment to epiphany.[56] The series of saints' commemorations continued in the East Syrian tradition on the following Friday with the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Then it follows the memory of the four evangelists. The deacon and first Christian martyr Stephens represents the large group of all martyrs. The Friday festival of the Greek ecclesiastical fathers follows. The Syrian church fathers are commemorated a week later. On the penultimate Friday, the people celebrate the commemoration of the local church patron. The last Friday before Lent begins is the day of commemoration of all deceased believers, as it were, the all-souls day of the East Syrian tradition. The West Syrian church also knows of such commemorations of the deceased before the beginning of Easter Fasting but there it is celebrated on the last Sunday before the fasting. As well, among the Catholic Maronites there is the last Sunday before Lent in memory of all deceased believers.[57] Biblical saints and groups of ecclesiastical saints are commemorated successively:

The First Friday: The commemoration of Saint John the Baptist.

The Second Friday: The commemoration of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

The Third Friday: Remembering the Four Evangelists.

The Fourth Friday: Memorial of the martyr Stephen.

The Fifth Friday: Memorial of the Fathers of Greece.

The Sixth Friday: Remembrance of the Syriac and Greek fathers.

The seventh Friday: Memorial of the saint of the local church. Also it is known as that of Catholicos Mar Aba.

Friday the eighth: Commemoration of the forty martyrs.

Friday Nine: Commemoration of the Faithful Dead.[58]

### 3. The Great Lent (ܩܘܕܪܥܝܢܐܝܘܬܐ ܩܘܕܫܐ)

The weeks of the great Fast is known in Syriac as *Sawmâ`Rabbâ`*. The word ܩܘܕܫܐ (*šwmâ*) means fasting and refrain from eating while the word ܩܘܕܫܐ *rabbâ`* means great, which consists of seven weeks prior to Easter. The Great Lent in its current arrangement is the result of a historical development. There are different accounts of the development of Fasting in the early church. In the second century, a preparation fast was mentioned for the annual Resurrection Day, for not more than three days. In the third century it was extended to a period of six days. In the first two centuries Sunday was the weekly Easter feast, as Christians in their early days celebrated the Resurrection of the Lord each Sunday, until the 4<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, there appeared a desire to celebrate Easter in a distinct way. The church wanted to prepare the believers for this central Christian event, with 40 days of fasting before the Easter feast. Galician pilgrim Egeria, a witness concerning fasting in the Jerusalem church, accounts for an eight-week Lent in Jerusalem in c. 384. The reason she gives for this extended time is that eight Sundays and seven Saturdays are not included in the period of Lent and they form all together forty-one fast days.[59] And in the Council of Nicaea (325), the Fathers of the Church decided to celebrate the Day of Resurrection on the Sunday after the spring full moon. The Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 also mentions for the first time the *quadragesima paschae*, which means the forty-day fast in preparation for Easter.[60]

Nevertheless, here we ought to distinguish between this short preparatory fasting for Easter, and the fortieth fasting that the believers (Monks especially) made in some eastern regions in remembrance of the fasting of our Lord Jesus Christ. The beginning of this fasting was after the Feast of Epiphany for forty days and on the last day granted baptism to the unbaptized. However, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Day of Resurrection became the day for baptizing the unbaptized. Therefore, both fasting times were associated before the feast of the Resurrection, and became a special period during which the preachers were prepared to accept the mystery of the baptism and would also reflect the Biblical tradition in which Moses, Elijah and Jesus fasted for forty days.[61]

The great Lent in the East Syrian Church is indeed a period of exactly 40 days. It includes Palm Sunday with the seven Sundays before Easter. For the East Syrian Church, the council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 declares that forty days of fasting is to be observed during the seven weeks before the feast of resurrection.[62] Also, according to the anonymous author, the first day of Lent is on a Monday.[63] Since Sundays are eliminated as fasting days,[64] 36 possible fast days are obtained until Palm Sunday. By

adding the first four days of Holy Week, there are exactly 40 days of Lent. The Church's fasting practice corresponds to that of her master, who fasted in the desert for 40 days (Mt 4: 2). The anonymous author clearly explains this, saying: *“Fasting lasts forty days, no more, no less ... that is six weeks, every week six days, because we do not fast on Sundays, thus the total becomes thirty-six days, in addition to four days of the Holy Week. Friday marks the end of fasting, so we celebrate in the evening prayers on the eve of the Easter Mass. Friday and Saturday are the days of celebration of the Passion of Christ, and are not part of the great Lent (but we fast in it) because it is the memory of the crucifixion of Christ. Thus, the sum of the days of fasting becomes forty-two days: that is, forty days commemorate the fasting of our Lord Jesus Christ, in addition to Friday and Saturday”.*[65]

The data of Khudra's book matches the information provided by the anonymous author. This book is more ancient than the first one, which separated the Holy Week from the rest of the days of the Great Lent, confirming that the Great Lent ends on Saturday morning that described in anthemܡܘܨܝܐ : *By your strength, Christ, we started and we ended your holy fast,*[66] and the last week allocated to Easter fasting. However, the anonymous author mentions this tradition by criticizing it, saying: *“Some consider (fasting) days of the great Lent until the Sabbath that precedes Sunday of Oshana, so fasting consists of forty-one days, including Sundays, but the facts testify that fasting days are days of sadness: as we kneel during them and do not celebrate the entire mysteries of the Mass, that means Without Qudasha -ܩܘܕܝܫܐ. Whereas when we eliminate sorrow and prostration and when we celebrate the entire Mass, these days are not counted during the days of fasting. This matter occurs every Sunday during the Great Lent.*[67] We conclude from this that there are two ways of calculating the number of fasting days, but they agree that the believer should fast 40 days.

Liturgically, during Lent, the East Syriac rite sets apart the following three types of celebration of Eucharist, which are Days of Sunday: Celebration of the entire Mass as usual. The ritual books are called the second type of days of great fasting (ܩܘܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܘܚܪܝܫܐ): the weeks of the mysteries, which include the first week, the fourth week (except for the Sabbath days)[68] and the three days of the seventh week (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday) and all Fridays of all weeks of the holy Lent Except for the Friday of Passion. We find this celebration in many manuscripts, including the manuscript of the British Museum 7181, the Syriac Vatican 42, the Chaldean Patriarchate 36, 40 and 280, and the al-Qush 70. This type of celebration of the Eucharist (ܩܘܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܘܚܪܝܫܐ) includes the biblical readings and the rite of communion, and does not contain the rite of sanctification-ܩܘܕܝܫܐ.[69] We observe in these weeks we find the hymns of mysteries and

Bem, This means that during this hymn of Mysteries (ܩܘܿܢܐ ܕܢܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ) the priest and deacon bring the Eucharist and put them on the Altar, and then they omit the rite of sanctification and move directly to the prayers of communion (ܐܘܿܨܘܿܪܐ).

And in other simple days of the second, third and sixth weeks, there is the simple rite of communion without biblical readings and the rite of sanctification. In all other simple days of great fasting, we find a hymn text in Khudra's book, which is chanted during the communion (ܩܘܿܢܐ ܕܢܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ), meaning the hymn of platform, between evening prayer and monastic prayer before the sleeping called (ܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ). This hymn accompanied the daily communion of monks. Also, the book "The History of *Yousip Busnaya*"-ܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ ܕܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ (979), written by his student monk, *John Bar Caldon* (ܩܘܿܢܐ ܕܢܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ) instructions for beginner monks. This information confirms the existence of the habit of daily communion with the monks.[70]

Especially, also we find that in testimony of the Anonymous author (9<sup>th</sup> century), we find several texts confirming the existence of two types of Liturgy: the first type contains all elements of the Mass, including the ritual of sanctification (ANAPHORA); the second type contains all elements of the Mass (rites of the biblical readings and communion, except for the liturgy of sanctification, which is special for eating bread that had already been sanctified, with the goal of giving the Eucharist to the believers. We cite this text: *The days of great fasting are days of sadness, they bow down, and the sacraments (that is, the Mass) are not fully celebrated with rite of the sanctification.*[71] In the edition of Father Yousip Qalaita, the title of this celebration is the following: (ܩܘܿܢܐ ܕܢܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ ܕܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ).[72] We do not believe that there is a contradiction between the testimony of the interpreters and some of the late legislation that prevented the maintenance of the sacred offering in order to avoid neglect that may occur in some churches. This legislation began to appear in the eleventh century. [73]

It is worth noting that among the Thomas Christians in Kerala, this is also known as fifty days of fast - *Ampathu Nombu*, consisting of seven weeks prior to Easter. It begins in the evening of the first Sunday which called ܩܘܿܢܐ ܕܢܘܿܨܘܿܬܐ. This Sunday is to remember and admonish the faithful to look back, to refrain from all celebrations and leave everything attached to the material world, in order to spend the weeks of the Great Fast in fasting and prayer.[74] This Syriac word originates from (ܩܘܿܢܐ-pt̄r), which means to leave, to quit, to return and to go away, and also which means to eat and drink, to taste.[75] Also, in the Islamic world the Arabic word (الفتور-alfṭwr) is used, which means the fasting person ate his meal after sunset during fasting days.

## The seventh and last week of Lent

This week is a week of a special kind, which starts with Palm Sunday and ends on the eighth day, the Day of the Resurrection, so in this week, is celebrated the mystery of salvation: passion and Resurrection together. However, it is important to show that this week came through historical stages of development: between period of the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, Christians knew only the Easter evening known as the Night of Resurrection, a remembrance of Christ's crossing from the darkness of death to the glory of the Resurrection, and they prepare with only a short fast (Friday and Saturday). From the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the three holy days were organized: Friday as a remembrance of the crucifixion, Saturday for burial, and Sunday for resurrection. Also, the mystery of the baptism was added to the ritual night, an expression of the crossing of the believer along with his Lord, from darkness to light. And in the 5th century this celebration continued for an entire week according to the Jerusalem liturgy.[76]

In the Eastern Churches, especially the church of Jerusalem, we find the Lazarus remembrance on the Friday before Palm Sunday. The raising of Lazar from death is considered the first day of the holy week (John 11: 17-44). Already in the 4th century, even the western pilgrim Egeria reports a liturgical celebration in *Lazarium* near Jerusalem on the day before Palm Sunday.[77] Likewise, It is worth noting that it is mentioned in the East Syriac ritual prayers that the Friday of Lazar is considered the last of Lent (a sign of the end of the Great Lent), and then begins the Paschal-Easter fasting.[78] Before the believers begin the final week, they look at the sign of the Resurrection of Lazarus, who has been lying in the grave for four days. It is an Easter sign of hope, because Jesus has shown through this miracle that he is stronger than death. He is the conqueror of death.

## Palm Sunday (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܝܡܬܐ)

The liturgical memory of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem eight days before Easter corresponds to the biblical accounts and also goes back to the oldest Jerusalem habit in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The tourist Egeria recorded the oldest description we know of Palm Sunday, as seen through her own eyes in 4<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem. She witnessed the ritual of Jerusalem. Also a list was kept for us, in which the readings of the Jerusalem rite were organized.[79] From these two documents, it appears to us that Palm Sunday was related to the Holy Week as Jesus' entrance. The Church of the East preserved from the reading from the long biblical text of Matthew mentioned in the ritual of Jerusalem. The celebration of Palm Sunday moved from Jerusalem to all the other churches. We also

welcome the king with a celebration of pride and gladness: the victorious Christ, who enters the holy city that symbolizes the church, to spread peace in it and in the whole world. The book “Al-Majdal”[80] confirms that Palm Sunday had been accepted in the city of Edessa during the time of Bishop Peter in (498), or before that by Bishop Qura who preceded him.[81] In Palm Sunday he celebrates Jesus as the Messiah King predicted by the Prophet. A poetic text from the daily liturgy brings this aspect of the celebration into the right place: *The day the Messiah king entered Jerusalem, the host and the crowd rose up in astonishment because they saw something unprecedented that happened to the people of the earth. The priests were amazed, the scribes were shocked and the Pharisees made a noise when they heard the children cry: be praised the son of David, full of contempt they asked who was there. The children replied reproachfully and said: This is Jesus, of whom all the prophets have testified, who, Moses, the elect, named in his books the great one, whom David called the Lord, who sits on the right, the one that Isaiah called child and son and ruler of the times. He is the king whom Micah announced from Ephrata. Jeremiah called it the ray of light that illuminates the whole earth. Ezekiel indicated that the earth is subject to the yoke of his rule. David exclaimed: He is the saint of the saints, worthy of holy praise. He has come and fulfilled their revelations and predictions.*[82]

Scripture readings of the holy Mass open the week of suffering. On Monday of the holy week, the first Old Testament reading commemorates the fate of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers. He became the forerunner of the Messiah, who was rejected by the leaders of his people and exposed to death. According to the testimony of the evangelists, the Holy Anointing of Jesus in Bethany is commemorated on Tuesday, (John 12.1-11). Wednesday is the day Judas betrayed his master (Mt 26.14-16).

Also, the first days following Palm Sunday were the final preparatory stage for granting the sacred mystery of Baptism: the preachers and the clergy participate daily for a period of five days, starting from Monday until Friday. The ritual prayer book ܩܘܪܒܢܐ preserved the elements of this ritual that we find comes at the end of the Morning Prayer for Monday of Holy Week, after they finish reciting the Morning Prayer, the clergy stand reciting the hymn of Baptism.[83] This is how they make preparatory ceremonies for Catechumens during this week, except for Great Saturday because the ceremonies of baptism were taking place at the evening of the Resurrection Feast in the first holy Mass.

### **Maundy Thursday (ܡܘܢܕܝ ܬܘܪܫܝܘܬܝܐ)**

It is called for the West Syrians (Thursday of the Mysteries) and the East Syrian church Pasha Thursday -ܡܘܢܕܝ ܬܘܪܫܝܘܬܝܐ. In the evening begins the Easter three-day celebration of suffering, dying and Resurrection of the Lord. The Pasha Thursday Eucharist is equipped with biblical readings that point to the model of the Paschal Lamb. The New Testament pericope includes the Lord's Supper and also the washing of the feet. In the writings of the East Syriac Church Fathers (St. *Aphrahat* (345), *St. Ephrem* (373), we find the theological relics comparing the washing of the feet with the mystery of baptism, and the washing of the feet is explained as crossing through the waters of death to the land of the Resurrection. This rite did not appear in the rituals of Jerusalem until after the 8th century, and then moved to the Eastern Churches. But possible its origin reaches back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century through monastic influence.[84]

Among the Syro-Malabar Christians in Kerala there is a domestic custom on the evening of Pasch Thursday, which is obviously influenced by the Jewish Pesach meal (Ex12). Several loaves of unleavened bread were baked. In the evening one of them, marked with a cross, is broken by the father of the family and distributed to the family members. There is a sweet drink, and the family should eat and drink while standing, careful to ensure that nothing remains or falls to the ground. Non-Christians are not allowed to eat this special bread.[85]

### **Good Friday (ܚܘܕܝܘܬܝܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܐ)**

The proclamation of the Passion is a focal point of the divine service on the Friday of Suffering. At the East Syrian church, the liturgical history of suffering is an artistic textual composition from the passion reports of all four evangelists. It is recited in the evening service (ܚܘܕܝܘܬܝܐ) after the two Old Testament readings and the reading from the Letter to the Galatians (Gal 2: 17 - 3:14).[86]The East Syrian Good Friday liturgy is not only one-sidedly focused on the passion memory, but it also celebrates the whole Paschal mystery, both dark and light sides, death and Resurrection. The paschal suffering and the paschal Resurrection interpenetrate each other, although the memory of suffering is more prominent on Good Friday, while at Easter it is the Resurrection and the new life that Christ's victory over death brings to the children of the Church.[87]

### **Saturday of the light (ܩܝܡܘܢܐ ܩܘܠܘܒܐ)**

On the evening of a Resurrection ceremony in the Church of the East, its roots go back to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in the 4th century. In the rite of the Church of the East, Saturday is called light Saturday. According to the book, Diary of a Trip by the Tourist Egeria, we find a description of the ritual ceremonies that were held in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem on the night of Easter in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The ceremonies of the evening's flame ritual began with a procession from the Holy Sepulcher to the Great Church, a rite that continues in Jerusalem to the present day. On this night in an East Syriac hymn (ܩܘܠܘܒܐ ܩܝܡܘܢܐ), the first Mass was held, with the participation of new Baptized, who take communion for the first time.[88] Noteworthy, Patriarch Išo'yahb III commanded the celebration of baptism on the Saturday evening of light, and it was forbidden to celebrate it on Epiphany,[89] because the Baptism that Christ received from John's hand is the baptism of repentance and does not achieve the new birth that the Baptist receives (Rom 11:2-6). Moreover, on the same day the altar is washed, according to the old Syriac tradition dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This ritual is still preserved in Rome, but the purification of the altar in St. Peter's Church takes place on Thursday Easter after the Mass. It is possible that the washing of its covers were related to the shroud that remained in the tomb, according to the Gospel of John. In this rite, the traces of ancient burial were preserved (compare the broken water pot to wash the grave, which is used until now in burial ritual on the third day of the deceased). This habit has the character of a resurrection life, after the mystery of death has passed in it, to wash and purify from its evils in order to prepare for the mystery of the Resurrection.[90]

### **Feast of the Resurrection (ܩܝܡܘܢܐ ܩܝܡܘܢܐ)**

The early church used the word Easter (Passover) in relation to the feast of the Resurrection, because Easter was a festival known from the Old Testament (Exodus 12). That is why Christians began to use the word Easter in relation to Christ's death and Resurrection (1 Cor5: 7), The passion and death of Christ related to the Old Passover, for Christ is the new Passover lamb, whose blood was shed in fulfillment for our salvation, which surpasses and completes the old feast. Also, In the Hebrew sense of the word, it means the passage from bondage to salvation, from death to life. The night when Christ crossed from this world through death to the world of glory with his Father, so the same symbol applies to believers who participate the vigil of Easter (ܩܝܡܘܢܐ), as in the night the believers cross with their Lord, Christ, from the darkness of sins to the light of new

life (Mark 10:38/Rom 6). This holy vigil [91] appears in all the ancient Christian centers (Jerusalem-Mesopotamia-Constantinople-Rome), which means the liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem affected the formation and development of all rites. Especially in the East Syrian liturgy we find it in the Easter readings schedule in the 6th century.[92] However, regarding of the procession (night of Resurrection), the ritual of light in the evolving ritual of Jerusalem also affected the rite of the Church of the East in 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> century, after moving the rite of light from the beginning of the evening prayer until the beginning of the morning prayer. This procession takes place after the prayer and before the Mass. We can note the similarities between the two rituals in the following schedule:

<b>The rite of light in the liturgy of Jerusalem (8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century)</b>	<b>Ritual notes on the procession in the rite of the Church of the East</b>
At the beginning of the night, going to the Dome of the Resurrection in the most beautiful clothes.	Go to the altar in the best clothes
The three courses are about the Holy Sepulcher or the Resurrection Dome	In front of the altar door
Presenting incense and prostration of the bishop	Silently carrying the incense burner during the procession
Flame the light from the light Saturday	Carry candles during the procession
With his recitation of Isaiah 60	recited Isaiah 60 (ⲓⲁⲛⲁ)
March out of Church	The procession to the Great Church
The final peace kiss at the Dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher	The final kiss of peace in front of the Holy of Holies

Although the word (light) linguistically was not mentioned in the peace procession of the Resurrection, only on the Sabbath of light, unless we discovered some relics from the old rite of light in this procession since the Church of the East believed in the wondrous light of Jerusalem. It is possible that the rite of light was acceptable during a certain period and was lost afterwards, as at the beginning of the evening prayer of the Sabbath of light. An indication of this is that in the city of Al-Hirah it was known before the year 600, as it appeared from ancient Arabic poetry to narrate the third Noman- نعمان الثالث King of Al-Hirah that he himself lit the lamp of the Resurrection.[93]

The rite of peace was usually carried out outside the church in its courtyard, as in the old ritual of Jerusalem; the peace kiss was carried out outside the church. Now this rite is applied in the temple-المسجد, outside the holy of the holies (محراب). This exit symbolizes the visit to the grave, and also, according to *Giwargis of Arbil*, adds a symbolic reason, as it is mentioned that was crucified and buried outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem, and also the good news of the Resurrection emanating from the place of the grave.[94] Therefore, celebration outside of church connected a theological Idea concerning the universal peace between heaven and world. Liturgically, the rite of peace will be exchanged after the deacon's repeated proclamation three times. Every believer will repeat to his companion the utterance (the Resurrection of the Lord- مصلحنا انا نحن and the second will answer: Resurrection, life, and Renewal for you مصلحنا انا نحن انا نحن انا نحن. This heavenly peace expresses fraternal love or mutual forgiveness. It is a private peace, as it appears from the text of proclaiming, litany (حنا انا نحن). This peace was not primarily intended to end enmity and stop Wars, but rather the peace of the Resurrection is salvation in the full meaning of the word, which is the basis of all happiness and joy, the reconciliation between God and man.[95] Then Holy Mass is held after the Easter Sunday on the occasion of Monday of the Thief (Easter Monday) or it is called Monday of انا نحن because doctrinal hymns will be sung in memory of the dead.[96]

### **Period of the Resurrection (مصلحنا انا نحن)**

The fourth liturgical period of the East Syriac church year begins on Easter Sunday, and ends at Pentecost. It is the fifty-day time that counts seven times seven days. After these seven weeks of Easter celebration, the 50th day as a festive conclusion is the great octave day of Easter (Pentecost). The themes reflected in the prayers of this period are: the victory of the tree of life (the cross) over death, thoughts on our Resurrection and the Kingship of Jesus. This liturgical period ends when the Risen Christ sends the Holy Spirit from the Father to the Apostles so that the Church is equipped with the power from above to bring salvation to all peoples. We find in the 1st Monday „Onita d-

Bāsāliqê' -ܩܒܠܝܩܝܐ, [97] concerning the Wood of Cross, which states as follows: *At the hour as the wood of your cross was fixed, O Lord, you shook the foundations of death. And Sheol left with trembling those who it had swallowed in sin. O Lord your command vivified them. Therefore, we also praise you; O Christ the king, have mercy on us.* [98]

Easter Sunday's full name is Great Sunday of Our Lord's Resurrection. It not only celebrates the liberation of the crucified from the bonds of death, but also considers the blessing of Christ's Resurrection for all creation. A song by the East Syrian Easter Office offers praise as follows: *See, all creation is renewed through Christ, the originator of the new life. Because by him the power of death was destroyed and by his call he raised the dead. Satan groans bitterly and says: Woe to me, I have become the mockery of Adam and his children, because, behold, Jesus robbed my power and took my possession from my hand and through his Resurrection he gave life to all his generation.* [99]

The first week after a Resurrection Sunday is called a week of weeks (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ), because Easter celebrations span the entire week. In it, the theological dimensions of Christ's Resurrection and its effects in human life are reviewed. All days of this first Easter week - except Saturday - are days of the Eucharist. The QURBANA (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ)-celebration from Monday to Friday is each day equipped with a biblical reading. From Monday to Thursday, the Resurrection of Christ and the participation of the baptized are the great proclamation theme of this week. In this Eucharistic highlighting of Easter week lives the memory of the earlier baptismal practice of the Church. Those who had been baptized on Easter night attended the Eucharistic celebration every day in Easter week (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ), dressed in their white baptism robes.[100]

### **Friday of the confessors**

Friday in the week of the weeks is the all saints' commemoration of the East Syrian rite. This day is dedicated to the memory of all confessors. The remembrance of the witnesses on Friday after Easter has a historical background. In the Persian Empire, the church had suffered almost 40 years of hard persecution under the ruler Shapur II (309-379). On Good Friday of the year 341, the Persian king executed Mar Shemon bar šaba' (ܫܡܘܢ ܒܪ ܫܒܐ) the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, head of the Church of the East, with other bishops and Christians; all these martyrs died on the day of Good Friday. Because of Good Friday, a commemoration day of the suffering and death of Christ, was not suitable to celebrate the commemoration of human martyrs, it was placed on the Friday after Easter as an anniversary for the Persian martyrs.[101]

## **The new Sunday (ܩܘܕܫܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)**

In the Syriac tradition it is called the New Sunday (ܩܘܕܫܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ). The name could come from the fact that after the outstanding Resurrection Sunday, a new series of Sundays begins again; each of them is as an Easter on a small scale. This Sunday has a new content from the event of the Resurrection of Christ. It is a new Sunday as a day of Resurrection. The name could also be an allusion to the new life in Christ given by the baptism at Easter. Every Sunday renews, nourishes and strengthens our life in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist.[102] In the East Syriac rite, Sunday is sung as the new day on which Christ gave his people hope for life in the new world: “*Sunday is the new day. Come on; let us sing a new song of praise to Christ, the new groom who promised us the new world*”.[103] The biblical reading that marks the face of the new Sunday is the gospel of the encounter of the apostle Thomas with the resurrected One (John 20: 19-31). Overwhelmed by the Lord's physical presence in this post-Easter event, Thomas confesses Jesus as his Lord and God. In accordance with the Syro-Malabar tradition, the south India Christians take a pilgrimage to Mount *Malayattur* on Thomas Sunday, because they believe that the apostle Thomas had been praying and fasting on this mountain for 40 days.[104]

## **Ascension of Christ (ܩܘܕܫܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)**

The feast of the Ascension Day is also celebrated in the east Syriac tradition on Thursday of the sixth week of Easter, namely the 40th day after Easter (Acts 1: 3). The prayers of Ascension Day indicate that the gates of Heaven have opened for us also and we live with Jesus forever. Before the fifth century, the Feast of the Ascension was not observed; otherwise it would have been mentioned by Eusebius (236-340), bishop of Caesarea, honored as the father of history, the Church. Also, when the pilgrim Egeria witnessed Easter in Jerusalem in the 4th century, she didn't mention a festival on Thursday of the sixth week of Easter. According to old Syriac tradition, the memory of Christ's ascension to the Father was related to Pentecost on the 50th day after Easter. However, Johannes Chrysostom (407) is the Leader for this; he delivered a sermon in his hometown Antioch on the feast of the Ascension of (386). Under Patriarch Severus of Antioch (538) the festival was celebrated with great solemnity. So the origin of this feast seems to date back to the end of the 4th century, it is possible that it may even originate in the ritual of the Church of Jerusalem. So, if this feast reached the end of the fourth century, it is possible that it was due to the ritual of the Church of Jerusalem: which was taken with the celebration of the great feast of Pentecost due to its interest in the stages of salvation.[105] Also, according to the Old Testament, Pentecost is called the feast of



custom, the so-called apostle fasting. After the period of Resurrection, the period of the apostles begins. It is characterized by the dimension of repentance with two emphases: The rite of prostration and messengers fasting. Indeed, this habit is very old. Already in the 4th century we have evidences from Egeria in Jerusalem and the Antioch Apostolic Constitutions that the week after Pentecost was celebrated as a week of Fasting. Actually, further development led to extend this initial one-week fasting to all weeks of the period of Apostles. As we learn from Gabriel of Basra in the 9th century, fasting at the time, which spanned the entire period of the apostles, was not just a matter for the monks but also for the faithful in the world. Its original meaning can be seen in the Apostolic Constitutions: the fasting days should remind Christians of the seriousness of being Christian again after the Easter feast and joyful period. Eternal Easter has not yet begun for the church; the struggle with the forces of evil is not yet over with a victorious ending.[107]

### **The golden Friday (ܐܪܘܬܐ ܕܕܗܒܐ)**

Friday after Pentecost is known as the Friday of Gold (Aruwtâ'dDahbâ'). Aruwtâ' ܐܪܘܬܐ means the setting sun. In the East Syriac church this day was demonstrably given special attention. The Mass reading reports the healing of the paralyzed (Acts 3.1-26). The lame man begging there had asked the apostles Peter and John for alms as they passed him, and Peter answered him: *"I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk"* (Acts 3:6). The word of Peter is the gold that was given to the beggar, giving it the name of the day. But its actual meaning is deeper. It should be noted that the healing of the paralytic is the first miracle of healing after Pentecost reported by the New Testament. The apostles did not do this healing on their own. The Lord still works his salvation in the power of his spirit through his Apostles. After returning to the Father, He heals people from heaven through his apostles. His mercy is now communicated and shared with the redeemed humanity through his church founded on the apostles. This is the timely good news of Golden Friday.

### **The seventy-two disciples Friday**

On the last Friday of the Apostles period, the commemoration of the seventy two disciples is celebrated in the East Syrian rite.[108] The emphasis on the activity and the thrust of the period of apostles is continued here. As regards the number of choosing the seventy two, variations are seen in the handwritten textual versions of the Gospel verse Luke 10:1. Some Greek manuscripts and the Syrian Pshitta (ܦܫܝܬܬܐ) indicate seventy disciples.[109] The Jerusalem Bible attests the number to be seventy two. However, the

Hudrâ' attests the feast of seventy two disciples as seen in the hymn below. This explains the inconsistent fixed title. The East Syrian Church and the West Syrian Church devote and celebrate one day at the end of the Apostles' period to the common memory of all the Apostles. This shared apostolic commemoration shapes the first Sunday of the new seven-week cycle of Summer Weeks (ܩܘܪܒܐ).

Regardless whether the number of disciples is 70 or 72, if we go back to the Old Testament Book of Numbers (Num 11:16-26), we find the Lord commanded Moses to choose seventy elders who were the basis of the Sanhedrin council which they later formed to serve as the Supreme Court. Moses stood them around the tent and two men remained in the camp, the name of the one Eldad and the other Medad, and the Spirit came upon them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. Thus in the old tradition the number was seventy in addition to two. It is surprising that this same thing occurs in the subject of the seventy disciples. Some manuscripts such as the Vatican and some Coptic and Syriac versions read seventy-two, and scholars confirm according to most manuscripts that they were originally seventy-two. Thus, on a biblical basis, the number 72 was chosen by the East Syrian church. We learn that in the hymn from the 'Onita d-Mawtba 2' of Leljâ-ܩܘܪܒܐ ܩܘܪܒܐ ܩܘܪܒܐ of the feast of Pentecost which states as follows: *Jesus first chose twelve fishermen according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Afterwards he chose seventy two like the elders during the days of Moses. They went forth to the four quarters and made disciples to the world in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*[110]

### 5. The summer Period (ܩܘܪܒܐ ܩܘܪܒܐ)

The first Sunday of this new seven-week cycle is celebrated as the Feast of the Twelve Apostles. As well, the first Sunday of this period was called *Nuserdel* (ܩܘܪܒܐ ܩܘܪܒܐ). It could come from Persian. Its meaning would be: First Sunday of the New Year. This Sunday is near the summer solstice, which was considered the beginning of a new year in Persia. Therefore, all the people splash water over each other, a symbol in remembrance of the Apostles baptizing their first converts. However, the east Syrian liturgical book (ܩܘܪܒܐ) interprets the word (ܩܘܪܒܐ ܩܘܪܒܐ) as the feast of God, the reason for this translation is the word (ܩܘܪܐ) namely God. However, there is no philological evidence to allow this meaning to be given to this word, which seems to have been inspired by the ending ܩܘܪܐ : God.[111] Thence, the name given to this period is a strange name, because it is the first time that the ritual period does not have a religious name, or in relation to one of the

stages of salvific work, nor with the feast or with a biblical character, rather, it is the earthly-secular name of صيف summer.

Summer is the time for growing and maturing. The prayer topics on Sundays in summer show a certain parallelism on the level of the spiritual life with these processes in nature. The seed that the apostles sowed among all peoples and nations has risen and is growing. The faithful are invited to deepen their faith and to grow in their Christianity. Life blooms in the garden of the church and the Lord of the Church blesses his people and crowns them with glory. The spread of faith and the way of the church through this period has a goal. At the end of time stands the day when the Lord of the Church will come back. The Christian should live in such a way that he can welcome his Lord at any time. Repentance, penance, and prayer for forgiveness and God's mercy also belong to the period between sowing and harvesting.

Thus, the spirit of repentance as a fundamental thrust in the Summer inspires Liturgy Commentator Rabban Brik-Išo in 14th century to call this period as *Hallelayn* صلا حلي (wash us), and commented on the objective of summer season as follows: *“When the Saints Apostles moved to the four ends of creation when they preached, taught, made disciples, and baptized the whole world when the altars, the temples, the images of gods and the places of worship of the demons were completely destroyed, when they broke the pictures and statues, when they cleaned and purged the creation, when they washed them away from the filth of sin, from their shame and devilish depravity, from then to the end of the world, the believers, of all the children of the Church, plead and ask God to forgive their sins. That is why they say: Khallelayni- صلا حلي (Wash us) through tears (repentance), also all chants of this time include a reference to repentance and turning to God”.*[112]

In addition to this, we also find the theological dimension of repentance exclusively in the Onita d-ramšâ' - رماشا رماشا on the first Friday of the summer. It serves as an appropriate conclusion to the summer. Which states as follows: *O, Lord wash me with the tears of repentance; in your mercy and blessings let me be given liberation from sins and by repentance forgive my debts; O merciful Savior, have mercy upon us.*[113]

## 6. Elijah-Cross( عبدة كرا رماشا - رماشا )

This liturgical period begins at the latest on the Sunday before the cross on September 14. With an early Easter date, several Elijah Sundays precede the Feast of the victorious cross. As well, the rule applies that during the period of Elijah, the last four Sundays, i.e., the Sundays after the feast of the cross on 14th September, are also known as the

Sundays of the Cross. Thus the feast of the Cross serves as the central point that divides the weeks of Elijah from the weeks of the Cross. In the case that summer time extends so far into September that there is only one Sunday left before 14<sup>th</sup> September, the 2nd and 3rd Elijah Sundays are not observed. If the Feast of the Cross falls earlier or even on the first Sunday of Elijah then according to the rubrics, the 6th and the 7th Sunday of the Summer merge together in order to have the first Sunday of Elijah prior to the Feast of the Cross, because of the belief in the appearance of Elijah before Jesus to dispute with the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:2-3). In any case, the fourth Sunday of Elijah has to be observed on the following Sunday after the Feast of the Cross and if this is the only Sunday before the feast of the Cross then the following 3rd and 4th Sundays are omitted, leaving only five Sundays in Elijah-Cross, instead of ideally having seven Sundays.[114]

This is The reason why the first Sunday of the time of Elijah must be held before the feast of the cross, is that the first Sunday of the time of Elijah is the beginning of preparatory fasting for the feast of the cross, which prepares the believers to receive Jesus at his second coming. It is worth noting that *Rabban Brik-Išo* commented on the question of *IšoYahb III*, *Why* did the Patriarch for this period use the name of Elijah? says that it is because he sees a direct connection between the end-time role of the prophet Elijah and the Holy Cross: Elijah will fight the son of doom with the victorious cross in his hands and convert everyone to worship the Holy Cross.[115] Ideally, the Elijah-Cross unity comprises seven Sundays, but usually only counts five Sundays.

The prayers at this period have an eschatological character, this makes believers look forward to the return of Christ, when they appear before the throne of the Lord, so they must contemplate these eternal truths from now on, and prepare for this encounter with repentance, fasting and prayer. This period is imbued with end-time thought, and the dominant theme is the Second Coming of Christ. The faithful watch for the uncertain day when their Lord will come back to give the living and the dead. Then, as three of his apostles may have anticipated his transfiguration on the mountain (Mt 17: 1-13), he will appear to all in his divine power and glory. Elijah and Moses also witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ).[116]

### **Feast of the transfiguration of Jesus (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ)**

The feast of the Transfiguration is the feast that commemorates Christ's appearance in His divine form on Mount Tabor, near the city of Nazareth. It is one of the important Christian holidays, its origin from the Byzantine tradition which dates between the 5th-8th centuries. As for the date of Transfiguration Day, it is the 6th August. The revelation of Christ is a prior revelation of God's Kingdom. This means those people whom the

Lord said will not taste death until they see the example of his coming, the ones he took with him to the mountain and the condition in which he will come on the last day. And this glory that appeared in the Transfiguration is the glory of the resurrection”.[117]

### **Feast of Cross (ܟܘܨܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)**

In this eschatological context, as the prophet Elijah will precede the coming of Christ (Malachi 4:5/Mt 17:10), so the feast of the cross symbolizes the coming of Jesus the second time. This feast happens in The Church of the East precisely on the 13th of September. The festival comes from Jerusalem; it has its roots in the consecration celebrations of the Constantine churches built after the Holy Land trip of Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine I (306-337). These churches were built above the Holy tomb and the stones of Golgotha. Over the place where the cross of the Redeemer had been found at that time, Emperor Constantine had built the great bishopric- parish church in Jerusalem. On September 13<sup>th</sup> (335) in the holy district, the new Temple of Christians was Consecrated. Since then, the Church of Jerusalem has annually celebrated the memory of this historic church consecration in an eight-day celebration. A few decades after the event, the western pilgrim Egeria witnessed this feast and described its splendor. Egeria also tells us that the holy day of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem was thought to be the day when the cross of the Lord was found. Therefore, according to this background of the Tradition, the East Syrian church originally celebrated the feast of the Cross, unlike the Byzantine and Latin Rites, not on 14th of September, but on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Furthermore, *Mar Giwargis of Arbel* mentioned that the Church of the East used to celebrate the Feast of the Cross on September 13, as was done in Jerusalem in the past. A liturgical worship of the Holy Cross on September 14th testifies to the Armenian Lectionary of Jerusalem at the beginning of the 5th century (415). It gradually came to the fore in the consciousness of the local believers and the Jerusalem pilgrims. While the name Exaltation of the Cross dominated in Byzantium and Rome for the cross festival on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, the name Finding the Cross is applicable to the Syrian tradition. The Cross is seen in its theological meaning and placed in the light of Easter. The Syrian tradition interprets the cross more emphatically than the Roman liturgy as an eschatological Sign: it will appear in the eastern sky and be a signal for the second coming of Christ (Mt 24:30). The Sign of the Son of Man in the clouds will herald the final judgment and the completion of salvation.[118]

In the liturgical perspective there are some ritual notes: the Feast of the Cross can take place during the first week, the second week, the third week, the fourth week, or the fifth week of the time of Elijah; Therefore, there are verses from the hymns (ܟܘܨܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)

of the time of the cross added after the hymns(ܩܘܪܒܢܐ)of the time of Elijah, in the night prayer (ܩܠܠܐ), in the prayer session (ܩܒܠܐ) and in the evening prayer(ܩܒܠܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ). If the feast of the cross is not celebrated yet, the special elements of the period of the cross will be omitted, but if you celebrate the feast of the cross, hymns of the period of the cross are added to those of the time of Elijah. Likewise, If the feast of the cross coincides with the Sunday before the time of Elijah, the time of the cross is shortened as follows: it is merged with the sixth and seventh Sundays of the time of the cross, and their elements are chanted together, in order to preserve the aforementioned rule: the first Sunday of the time of Elijah should be preceded by the feast of the cross. Finally, the fourth Sunday of the period of Elijah always follows the feast of the cross, so when there is one Sunday of the period of Elijah before the feast of the cross, the second and third Sunday of the time of Elijah is combined, so the time of Elijah can last only five weeks.

### **7. Moses Sundays (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ)**

The feasts of the Transfiguration and the Holy Cross both symbolize Jesus' second coming, and the period of the cross was surrounded by the period of the Prophet Elijah and the period of the Prophet Moses. Therefore, the liturgical unity Elijah--Cross is followed by further Sundays of eschatological tincturing, named for Moses, who, like Elijah, witnessed the transfiguration of Christ (Mt 17: 1-10). The duration of this time varies between at least two to a maximum of seven Sundays. The duration of this time is not fixed, because it is determined by the date of Easter, so if Easter was early, the number of its weeks was greater, and if Easter was late, the number of its weeks was fewer, but the number of these weeks did not exceed four weeks. Because of their changing period and approach, for the Syrian commentators this cycle is an indication of the uncertainty of the day and the hour when the Lord of the Church will return. In terms of content, Moses' Sundays are an extension of the entire Elijah--Cross period, which is geared towards the second coming of Christ, and also is the end of the church year.[119]

### **8. Period of the Dedication of the church (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܩܘܪܒܢܐ)**

There are four Sundays at the interface between the end of the old ecclesiastical year and the beginning of the new one, culminating in the end of the liturgical year, while in the West Syrian tradition it is the beginning of the Church Year. The East Syrian church sees these Sundays more as the end and summit of the church year. The content of the celebration is the hopeful outlook for the final completion of the Church in heavenly

Jerusalem. There are various attempts to explain the origin of these Sundays. Some see the origin of “the time of church sanctification” as associated with an annual celebration, which was held on the anniversary of the consecration of the Episcopal Church of Edessa or that of Ctesiphon, the seat of the Catholicos patriarch, and then this celebration extended from one day to several weeks. Others think of a Christian parallel to the Jewish *Hanukkah* festival, which commemorates the consecration of the temple (I Makk4: 36-59).[120] Therefore, the ritual prayer book (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ) on the first Sunday of this time is called the following name: (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ), i.e. “The first Sunday of the reverence for the church and it is called renewal”.[121] The term “regeneration” is a term used by the Syriac translation of the sacred book called “simple” to refer to the feast of the renewal of the Temple of Jerusalem,[122] where we read: “The celebration of renewal was in Jerusalem” (John 10:22). Therefore, we can confirm that the roots of the time of “sanctifying the Church” arise from “renewal” feast in Jerusalem.

But the central topic of the Syriac church consecration Sundays is specifically Christian, the material stone-built church symbolizing the spiritual church consisting of the community of believers; Therefore, the meaning of the celebration of the Feast of the Consecration of the Altars and Christian Churches spread throughout the world was transformed into contemplation of the spiritual characteristics of the Church, during the whole period of the sanctification of the Church. As well, we note in particular the eschatological nature of this period: the Church appears as the bride of Christ, who brings the returning bridegroom into the eternal joys of his heaven. Monk Brik-Išo comments concerning this: *‘At the very end, Patriarch Ishoyahb III set the consecration Sundays as the last after the coming of Elijah and after the destruction, disempowerment and condemnation of the son of doom. Then the heavenly groom will appear from the heavens of his glorious holiness and he will raise all people from the dust. He will make the righteous ascend and he will send sinners to hell. The holy church, the bride of Christ, are the saints and the true believers who will joyfully meet him and will accompany him with all respect, the true bridegroom, Jesus, our Savior. He will welcome the church, his bride and let her get into heaven with him. And with excellent voices and sweet chants, they will sing praises together with the heavenly choirs. Our Lord also appreciates us to share in the delights of the saints. Amen, yes Amen.’*[123]

Furthermore, the book of Khudra also gives another name to the church's consecration, as it calls it (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ) "the entry week". We find this naming in a note given after the hymn (ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ) at the end of the prayer session ܩܘܪܒܢܐ. This appellation refers to ceremonial entry on the evening of the first Sunday of this time

from the )prayer house (ܩܘܪܬܐ) located in the church courtyard, where they were celebrating the first part of the Mass, i.e. the rite of the words of God, the morning prayer and evening prayer, since the evening of ascending Thursday, due to the intense summer heat; They enter to recite verses from the ecclesiastical poetry(ܩܘܪܬܐ) into the inside church(ܩܘܪܬܐ), from which they will henceforth offer prayers of divine imposition and liturgical ceremonies due to the approaching winter season.[124] Liturgical texts rich in content on (ܩܘܪܬܐ ܩܘܪܬܐ) Sundays unfold a great theology of the Church. Above all, the church appears as the bride of the heavenly groom and the place where the Redeemer does not stop sharing his mercy. On the first Sunday of (ܩܘܪܬܐ ܩܘܪܬܐ), a hymn sings about the dignity of the church that Christ chose as bride: *Praise will be to Christ who made you his bride through the water of baptism. You, who have become the bride of Christ, are not looking for another groom because he is the real groom who has always been and will be forever. He gave you his body as a gift and his truth as a pledge. Do not exchange it for another one, because you will not find another like this one.*[125]

## **Conclusion**

It is very important to maintain the liturgical calendar and allow ourselves to be carried forward along with it. The mystery of our lord Jesus Christ, unfolded through the cycle of the year, calls us to live His mystery in our own lives. This call is best illustrated in celebrating the life and mission of our lord, His mother Mary, the Apostles, the saints and martyrs, by dedication, commemorations and raising prayers and sacrifices of thanks and gratitude. The Church's desire to see Jesus in all things, and all things in the light of Jesus, also influences the scriptural readings chosen for use throughout the liturgical year. This is clearly demonstrated to us through the east Syriac fathers who organized their ritual prayer cycle in a logical manner, so that they celebrate the stages of Jesus' salvation all throughout the months of the year. The cycle begins with the period of good news and ends with the period of church consecration, which is an extension of the Lord's presence in humanity across generations. Then the Liturgical Ritual added the memorials of the saints and martyrs, and made these feasts usually Fridays, because the saints of the early centuries were especially among the martyrs who shared Christ in his saving salvation. Liturgical calendars shape us at a deeper level, one that is more fundamental than consciousness itself as we find ourselves automatically applying Christ's story to our own and acting accordingly by superimposing Scripture over the days of our lives and guiding us to understand our experience in terms of Christ who is the source of the most important tool for spiritual enrichment and renewal.

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[1] The prayer book of the Assyrian church of the east *hûdrâ* ܚܘܕܪܐ is also called the Khudra ‘of the dispensation’ ܚܘܕܪܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ, which indicate to the whole liturgical year as celebrating salvific work; see manuscript Borgia Syriac 150 (fol. 1r) and Borgia Syriac 85 (fol. 1r).

[2] In this context Pasch from the Hebrew Pesach means a passing by and a passing through. As the Israelites were rescued from Egyptian slavery when the avenging angel passed by their homes and when they passed through the Red Sea and were subsequently let into the promised land, so Jesus by his passage through the sea of suffering and death let the new people of God to a communion of grace with the Father.

[3] Adolf, Adam, *The liturgical year, its history & its meaning after the reform of the liturgy*, translated by Matthew J.O Connell, New York 1981, 35-39.

[4] Acts 2: 1-13.

[5] The *Didache* (Koine Greek: διδασχί .*Didakhé* means "Teaching), also known as “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” is an enigmatic primitive Church document describing early Christian ethics, practices, and order, dated by modern scholars to the first century.

[6]Ferdinand, Hahn, F, *Der Urchristliche Gottesdienst*, Stuttgart 1970, 65.

[7] Andreas Heinz, *Sonntagsfrömmigkeit in der heutigen Liturgie der syrisch-Maronischen Kirche*, in: Hans-Jürgen Feulner, *Crossroad of cultures, Studies in Liturgy and Patristic in honor of Gabriel Winkler*, Rom 2000, 369-393.

[8] Adam, *the liturgical year*, 59.

[9]Eusebius, *an Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C.F. Cruse, London 1998, 235.

[10] *Auf der Maur: Feiern im Rhythmus der Zeit II/1. Feste und Gedenktage der Heiligen*,(GdK 6,1),Regensburg 1994, 33.

[11]Adam, *the Liturgical Year*, 298.

[12] Aphrahat was a Syriac Christian author of the third century from the Persian Empire who composed a series of twenty-three expositions or homilies on points of Christian doctrine and practice. All his known works, the *Demonstrations*, come from later on in his life. He was an ascetic and celibate, and was almost definitely a son of the covenant (an early Syriac form of communal monasticism). He may have been a bishop, and later Syriac tradition places him at the head of Mar Mattai Monastery near Mosul in Iraqi.

[13] Saint Ephraim the Syrian, a teacher of repentance, was born at the beginning of the fourth century in the city of Nisibis (Mesopotamia). He was baptized as a young man and became famous as a teacher in his native city. When the Christian emperor had to cede Nisibis to the Persians, Ephrem fled as a refugee to Edessa, along with many other Christians. He is credited with attracting great glory to the biblical school there. He was ordained a deacon but declined becoming a priest.

[14]A result of this Semitic environment, there never really developed in the Syrian church the sharp distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians. The Semitic character of the ancient

Syrian church is exemplified by one of the main centers of early syriac Christianity, Erbil. This Jewish community likely laid the groundwork for the introduction of Christianity into Arbela.

[15] HABBI, Joseph, *مجامع كنيسة المشرق / mġām'knysīālmšrq / Synods of the Church of the East*, Beirut 1999, 71.

[16] Mar Narsai (399 -502) was one of the foremost of Syriac poet-theologians, he is the most important writer of the Assyrian Church of the East, in which he is known as the 'Harp of the Spirit'. Although many of his works are likely lost, around eighty of his *mēm̄rê* (ܡܥܡܪܝܐ), or verse homilies are extant.

[17] Patriarch Abâ I (540-552) played an important role in the introduction of new elements to the East Syrian rite. Abâ I traveled widely before becoming patriarch in 540 and introduced liturgical souvenirs in the form of the Byzantine Trisagion and the "Angel of Peace" litany. He is also reputed to have composed many *mēm̄rê*, *tûrgāmê*, and antiphonal *qānônê* (psalmody and refrains). According to headings of later manuscripts, he also introduced two new Anaphoras to the liturgy, honorifically attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius, respectively. The 6th century also marked the end of the catechumenate and its associated rituals.

[18] He was a theologian of the Church of the East who wrote several works in Syriac, most of them lost. Thomas was educated in Edessa. There he taught Greek to the future patriarch, Aba. He later travelled with Aba around the Roman Empire, including to its capital, Constantinople. He studied under Aba at the school of Nisibis in the Persian Empire. He also taught at Nisibis. He may have died in Constantinople or on his return journey to Nisibis.

[19] Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1922, 121; Baumstark, D, *nestorian Schriften*. OC 1, 320-342.

[20] Henana was director of the School of Nisibis, the theological center of the Church of the East (571-610), and he tended to teach St. John Chrysostom (349-407), which created confusion in the school and many students left, including among them the future patriarch Išo'yahb II. It is noteworthy that during the Henana era, the number of students reached 800, and they had an accurate education, work, and housing system. See more: Baumstark, *Literatur*, 127.

[21] Mari ibn Sulaiman 12<sup>th</sup> century-ماري ابن سليمان was a east syriac Christian author writing in Arabic. Nothing is known of his life. Mari composed his history around the 1140s as part of a longer work, the *Book of the Tower (Kitāb al-Majdal)*, a collection of encyclopaedic texts that described and defended the theology, liturgy and religious traditions of the Church of the East, for which a number of eighteenth century manuscripts survive. Mari's Arabic text relies on many of the same Syriac sources used by the other medieval compilations of the Church. The work consists of seven parts. The main interest of the work in modern scholarship is the historiographical material in its fifth part, an important testimony of the 11th to 12th-century history of the Church of the east.

[22] He is the Author of an abbreviated Commentary on the Liturgy. Virtually nothing is known of his life. It is presumed that he was some relation of Gabriel Qaṭraya, and it is likely that he belongs to the 7th cent. Abraham's liturgical commentary turns out to be very largely just an abbreviation of that by Gabriel.

[23] Manṣor Al Mokleṣi, *روعة الاعياد / rw'ā'ālā'yād/ the splendor of the Feasts*, Baghdad 1998, 32-40.



before his time, but his work was limited to organizing and coordinating its structure, so we can say that this commemoration of the Virgin Mary rises to its history before the 7th century.

[43] Anonymi Auctoris, *Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiae Georgio Arbelensi vulgo adscripta/ Exposition Church Offices*, CONNOLLY R.H. (ed. & trad.) CSCO Syri, series 2, tom 91-92, Paris-Roma 1915-1995, ,Syriac Text, P. 127 – 129; Memra 1: On the ordering of the Office of Ramsha on weekdays” *Commentary on Liturgy*, (Or. 3336 British Library), Syriac Tests: 29b-30a.

[44] Darmo, *Khudra*, Vol. I, 606.

[45] Mansor, *Feasts*, 229.

[46] E.A.W Budge, (ET) *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the likeness of Christ which the Jews of Tiberias made to mock at*, London 1899, pp.125-126; W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, (3 Parts Gorgias Press 2004), p.284, col.1, (Add. 14,507, fol.28 a, p.280, col.2, (Add. 14,504, fol.58 a)., and p.283, col.1, (Add. 14,505, fol.172 a).

[47] Winkler, *The Appearance of the Light at the Baptism of Jesus*, 344.

[48] Mansor, *Fests*, 22, 51-55.

[49] Beck, Edmond, *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen De Nativitate Epiphania*, CSCO 186, Louvain 1959, 137.

[50] Heinz, *Licht*, 70.

[51] Darmo, *Khudra*, Vol. I, 664.

[52] *Ibid*, 554-557.

[53] Heinz, *Licht*, 72.

[54] Darmo, *Khudra*, Vol. I, 559-560.

[55] According to the east syriac liturgy, there are two syriac words identical to English word commemoration: ܘܗܕܢܐ ܘܕܟܪܢܐ. The term *uhdana* is used for memorial of the Passover event in the Old Testament, which symbolizes the paschal mystery of Christ. With regards to the east Syrian liturgy, the prayer at the time of placing the mysteries (the mysteries of Body and Blood) on the altar used the word *uhdana*, which meant, to celebrate the memory of His passion, death, burial and resurrec-tion, whereas the term *dukhrana* is used for the cultic commemoration of persons. Liturgy celebrates the *dukhrana* of the mother of Christ, saints, and departed brethren.

[56] Heinz, *Licht*, 73.

[57] Andreas Heinz, *Die Heilige Messe nach dem Ritus der Syrische-maronitischen Kirche* (Sophia 28), Trier 1996, 169-177. Heinz, *Feste*, 64.

[58] Darmo, *Khudra*, Volume 1, 202.

[59] Wilkinson, John, *Egeria's Travels*, Westminster 1999, 148.

[60] Adam, *the Liturgical Year*, 91.

[61] Mansor, *Feasts*, 69.

[62] Braun, Oscar, *Das Buch der Synhados oder Synodicon Orientale*, Stuttgart – Wien 1975, 12.

[63] Also the fasting of the Apostles begins on Monday after the feast of Pentecost.

[64] That means many will go without food until the evening on every day except Sunday. Sunday is not a fast day, by the canons. However, on Sunday people abstain from meat and everything that is animal. Only vegetable food and vegetable oil may be taken.

[65]Anonymous, Vol. I, 51-52

[66]Darmo, Khudra, Vol II, 446.

[67]Annuminous, Vol. I, 52.

[68] As it stated by Elias Nisibis, but it is known what makes the sacrament particularly unworthy on this day, first that we reject the Jewish custom and the Jews only go to their churches on Saturday. Furthermore the sacrament is the body of the Lord and it is known that he was in the grave and with the dead on Saturday. Therefore, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, you have to give preference to the first best day of the week over Saturday.

[69]Jammo S.H., La structure de la messe chaldéenne, du début jusqu'à l Anaphore, Étude historique, Rome 1970/ Chaldean liturgy from his beginning to Anaphora, 174.

[70] Youkhana Bar Kaldon, تاريخ يوسف بوسنايا / History of Joseph Bosnaya, translated by Youkhana Jolakh, Baghdad 1984, 166.

[71]Anonymous, Vol. I, 62.

[72] The Liturgy of the Church of the East,ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐܝܢܐ . Printed and published by the Reverend Joseph E.Y De Kelaita, 1928, 3-4.

[73] Concerning of the matter of preservation of the Holy Eucharist, in general, this is rejected by the east Syrian fathers in principle and is only permitted in exceptional cases for limited scope. In a letter to a hermit, Mar Isaac from Nineveh (7th Century) allows the Holy Eucharist to be kept from Friday to Saturday, which can be explained from the model of the manna. Johannan Bar Abgar forbids keeping in itself. In the case that too many particles remain, you can keep them for the following day. But then lamps should burn in front of the holy Eucharist and prayers have to be done all night. Ibn Butlan rejected to keep Eucharist as reference to the examples: Easter lamb and Manna. But he also mentions that some may keep them in case of necessity so that the Holy Eucharist can be given to a persecuted person at holy feasts. Elias of Nisibis categorically refuses to keep it without any restrictions: the Eucharist should not be kept overnight. He accuses the Melkites and Jacobites of keeping the Eucharist for a long time and exposing them to decay, mice and worms. Isho Bar Nun states that many teachers do not allow it at all, but that some permit it in emergencies up till three days. In another place, he initially refuses to keep it because Easter lamb, which was a type of the Eucharist, could not be left. He said also, In case of necessity, if there are too many particles left, it is allowed to keep the rest for one night. If it is not possible to consume the particles, they should be hidden in uncultivated soil or in the wall of the apse of the church. Whoever keeps the chalice should be punished. In the questions about the service of the altar, the preservation of the holy Eucharist is assumed for the following day. The holy sacrifice must not be celebrated on the altar on which the holy Qurbana is kept from the previous day. Otherwise it is not right that two kings should sit on one Throne. Bar Hebraeus also mentions a Canon of ' the Persians,' according to which the altar, on which the Qurbana remains, is not to be left without a light throughout the night. In the case of preservation, a priest had to stand and pray at the altar day and night. That would be too cumbersome. Timothy I. absolutely forbids observation of the sacred Eucharist for the following day according to his canon 17. For reasons he refers to the Manna and the Easter lamb, which

are symbols for the body of our Lord, one should leave nothing for the following day. But already the Manna was saved for the following Sabbath (See Exodus 16:23). We can see a development in the Nestorians' view of the matter. Practice grew stricter after that. Around the middle of the 8th century, the previously granted permission to keep the Holy Eucharist in urgent cases would have been removed. As can be seen from the Testimonies we have cited, permission to preserve them will be maintained later. Therefore, the east syriac fathers mind by referring to the fact that it was expressly stated in Scripture that Mann should be taken on Friday for 2 days. Later on this preservation was definitely forbidden, but had been practiced already by the monks. It proves that in the monks circle the holy Body was reserved from Friday on which mass was said, to Saturday. But this is not so amazing since the east syrian fathers did not consecrate on Saturday. Clearly this type of liturgy ܡܨܝܚܐ was used by monks in monasteries because the ritual of preserving the Eucharist was a pure monastic habit, So that he was also allowed to celebrate Mass alone without the deacon. See: De Vries, Sakramenten Theologie, 245-247.

[74]PATHIKULANGARA, Varghese, Divine Praises and Liturgical Year, vol. 4: Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy (Denaha Services 61), Kottayam 2000, 159.

[75] Bishop J.E. Manna, ܡܨܝܚܐ ܗܘܢܐ ܗܘܢܐ, Chaldean-Arabic Dictionary, 584.

[76] Mansor, Feasts, 90.

[77] Heinz, Licht, 75.

[78]Darmo, Khudra, Vol.II , 446.

[79] Heinz, Licht, 76.

[80] Mari ibn Suleiman or Sulaiman (Arabic: ܡܪܝ ܒܢ ܫܠܝܡܐܢ century Nestorian Christian-th12was a ( He is the author of a theological and .Nothing is known of his life .author writing in Arabic .(Majdal-Kitāb al)historiographical work known as the Book of the Tower

[81]Mansor, Feasts, 79.

[82] Darmo, Khudra, Vol. II, 457.

[83] Ibid, 476, 482, 488, 498.

[84] Mansor, Feasts, 98.

[85] Heinz, Licht, 78.

[86]After reading the Bible, Priest take the cross and bring it to the bishop, who take off his garment, wrap it with a linen cloth, and hand it over to the priest, then take him to the Holy of Holies, where he places him on the altar; As for the crutch of the bishop and the garments, they enter them into the service room.

[87] Heinz, Licht, 80.

[88] Darmo, Khudra, Vol.II, 546.

[89]Anonymous, Volume 2, 96-97.

[90]Mansor, Feasts, 139-140.

[91] It is traditional in both East syriac liturgical practice in general, and particularly in the monastic practice of prayer. When recommending night vigils to monks, the fathers of ascetical life emphasized the fact that because at night the whole world is immersed in sleep and there is nothing that could distract an ascetic, this is the most suitable time for prayer. Mar Isaac of Nineveh states; be more precious in your eyes than all your activities of the day. Night vigil is

that work filled with delight during which the soul experiences that immortal life through the Christ resurrection, and by means of this experience we put off the vesture of darkness and receive the gifts of the Spirit of resurrection. According to Mar Isaac, one should not begin night vigil without proper preparation, namely one should first make a prostration, make the sign of the Cross, stand in silence for a while and then pray with one's own words. The night vigil of every ascetic should include a certain rule, that is, the succession of prayers, psalms, hymns, readings and prostrations. The aim of the night vigil is spiritual illumination: nothing makes the mind so bright and joyous, as do continual vigils. Isaac calls night vigil the light of the thinking (ܠܘܫܢܐ), by which the understanding (ܠܘܫܢܐ) is exalted, the mind (ܠܘܫܢܐ) is collected, and the intellect (ܠܘܫܢܐ) takes flight and gazes at spiritual things and by prayer is regenerated and shines brightly. Therefore, also night Vigil of Easter is regarded generally to us as a means for attaining to the illumination of our mind that is key to our spiritual life.

[92] Mansor, Feasts, 158.

[93] Ibid, 164.

[94] Ibid, 167.

[95] Darmo, Khudra, Vol II, 567-568.

[96] The clerics walk around the graveyard with censers and the book of Gospel. Also on this day they act as a sort of drama in the church, for Mar Narsai has written a homily on the Entry of the Penitent Thief into Paradise. A deacon who acts the Penitent Thief stands at the bottom of the *Haikla*-ܠܘܫܢܐ and the priest who represents the Angel Keeper of Paradise will hold a lance decorated with candles to represent the flaming sword, standing before the door of the Sanctuary and pushing him away as he tries to enter. The Thief asks the angel to open the door of paradise to him and the angel will answer: it is impossible for human beings to enter this place, how is it that you come? After a dialogue the thief shows a Cross which he has been hiding and says, this is my Lord's sign that I may come in. then the Angel will fall back before the holy Cross and draw back the curtain and the thief goes in.

[97] 'Onita d-Bāsāliqê' means the Royal Hymn in the evening Liturgy of the Hours (ramšâ) and comes from the Greek word *basalikai* and had the tradition of honoring the Kings who were also present to join the procession. But in the East Syrian tradition it has entirely another implication of honoring Christ and His glorious Cross and this hymn was chanted to accompany the procession to the Cross placing erected in front of the Church. See Pathikulangara, Varghese, Resurrection, Life and Renewal, Bangalore – Kottayam 1982, 424.

[98] Darmo, Khudra, Vol II, 574.

[99] Ibid, 547.

[100] Heinz, Licht, 81.

[101] Ibid, 82.

[102] Ibid, 83.

[103] Darmo, Khudra, Vol. II, 617.

[104] Moolan, John, Introduction to the Oriental Liturgy and its Theology Syro-Malabar Church (OIRSI 359), Kottayam 2012, 135f; Heinz, Licht, .84.

- [105] Mansor, Feasts, 182.
- [106] Heinz, Licht, 85.
- [107] Ibid, 86; Mateos J., Layla-Sapra, Essai d'Interprétation des matines chaldéennes. OCP 156, Roma, 1959, 253.
- [108] Moolan J., the Period of Annunciation-Nativity of the East Syrian Calendar, Kottayam. India 1988, 40; Mateos, Layal-Sapra, 260.
- [109] KIRAZ, George, The Syriac Peshiṭta Bible with English Translation. Luke, Piscataway/NJ 2013, 87; Heinz, Licht, 88.
- [110] Darmo, Khudra, V.III, 153.
- [111] Heinz, Licht, 88
- [112] Moolan, the period, 45; Heinz, Licht, 90.
- [113] Darmo, Khudra, V.III, 296.
- [114] Moolan, the Period of Annunciation–Nativity, 46.
- [115] Mateos, Layla-Sapra, P.463. Heinz, Licht, 92.
- [116] Heinz, Licht, 90-91.
- [117] Mansor, Feasts, 214-215.
- [118] Heinz, Licht, 92.
- [119] Heinz, Licht, 93.
- [120] Moolan, the Period of Annunciation, 51; Heinz, Licht, 94.
- [121] Darmo, Khudra, Vol.III, 578.
- [122] The Seleucids wanted to forcefully impose Greek culture and religion on the Jews; In 167 BC, King Antiochus III ordered the abolition of the Sabbath and the circumcision and desecrated the Temple of Jerusalem to erect the statue of the god Zeus in it, and imposed the presentation of pagan sacrifices therein; This sparked a Jewish revolution led by the Maccabeus priests. It succeeded in liberating Jerusalem and restoring true worship in the Temple after its purification on 12/12/164 BC, as Judas Maccabeus changed the altar, and offered him a sacrifice to God, and decided to celebrate this memory annually.
- [123] Heinz, Licht, 94.
- [124] Darmo, Khudra, Vol. III, 478.
- [125] Ibid, 585.