

Altar Servers Meet 2023

Bristol-Cardiff Region

“For they will be
made holy who
observe holy things
in holiness.”

Wisdom 6:10





—◆—
What's the Holy Qurbana for you?

Luke 22:15

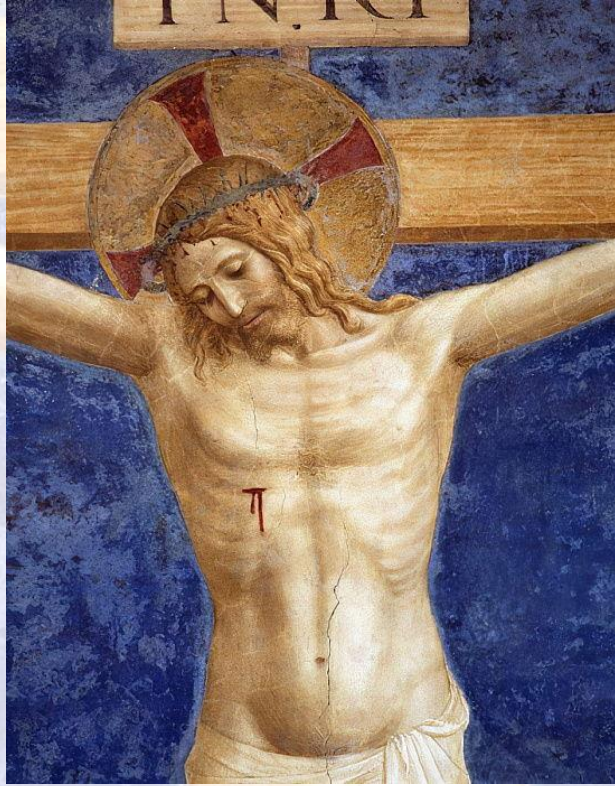
“*et ait illis **desiderio desideravi** hoc pascha manducare vobiscum antequam patiar.*”

“*I have **earnestly desired** to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*”

Ἐπιθυμία ἐπέθύμησα - *With desire, I've desired.*

- It's a peculiar mode of expressing intensity. There's urgency, a longing in those words.
- No one has earned a place at the Supper, it's an invitation.
- Never the result of an individual interior search, but is always a gifted event.
- “Pwqdankhon” / In the Name of the Father





- What are we celebrating in Liturgy?
- Celebration of the Paschal mysteries
- Why did he wait till the night before he died?
- And how is it possible?
- Signs and Symbols
- Traffic Lights/ Birthday Cake
- Signs and Symbols of Christ's Death and Resurrection in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana.
- Signs and Symbols started with Jesus.
- Why did he choose bread and wine? - There are no two substances that suffer a lot to become what it is, other than bread and wine. Wheat is crushed in order to produce flour and grapes are crushed at a vine press. Thus, they become a symbol of Christ's suffering for us.

What is a Symbol?

- sun (syn) “with” + ballein (bolum) “to throw”
= **“thrown together”**.
- **A true symbol participates in or carries or is connected to something greater of which it is a part.**
- Capability for an **“original participation”** that is without a clear divide between the natural and the supernatural.



Being capable of Symbols

- 19th Century - Man's life in modernity became ever more “reasonable,” the liturgy in turn became more “practical,” and more “abstract.”
- The liturgy became head-heavy, cerebral.
- The faithful did not perform a proper liturgical act at all.
- Descartes - splitting man into his famous dual substances, the soul and what he called “extension”—pure, physical matter.



Being capable of Symbols (Romano Guardini)

- Man is not a pure spirit, an angelic being. His *actions* in turn cannot be of a purely spiritual sort.
- Whatever moves the spirit will move matter, and concomitantly whatever affects matter will somehow also influence the spirit.
- **“Man as a whole bears Christian devotion.”**
- **“We must learn to pray with the body.”**
- We must learn to express interiority in our outward appearance and to read the internal by the external.



The Logic of Incarnation

- The sign character of Christ's divinized humanity has passed into the signs of the liturgy.
- “Sacramental principle” in Cardinal Newman
- *Everything of him has passed into the celebration of the sacraments. (DD,9).*
- ***Liturgy is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.*** - Sacrosanctum Concilium 7
- Risk of remaining at the *doorway* of the symbols.
- Moving through the *symbolic entrance* into the deeper realities expressed.



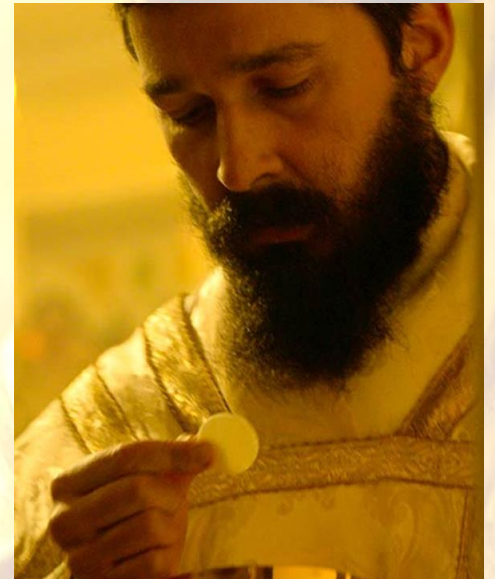


Pope Francis In Desiderio Desideravi

*If there were lacking our **astonishment** at the fact that the paschal mystery is rendered present in the concreteness of sacramental signs, we would truly risk being impermeable to the ocean of grace that floods every celebration” (DD,24).*

Ars celebrandi, Ars dicendi

- Shia LaBeouf - “*Latin Mass affects me deeply ... because it feels like they’re not selling me a car.*”
- Liturgy is not a place of subjectivism and weak sentimentality, but a place of discipline, serious work that is carried out in obedience to the Church.
- *Ars dicendi* – how to say what we ought to say.

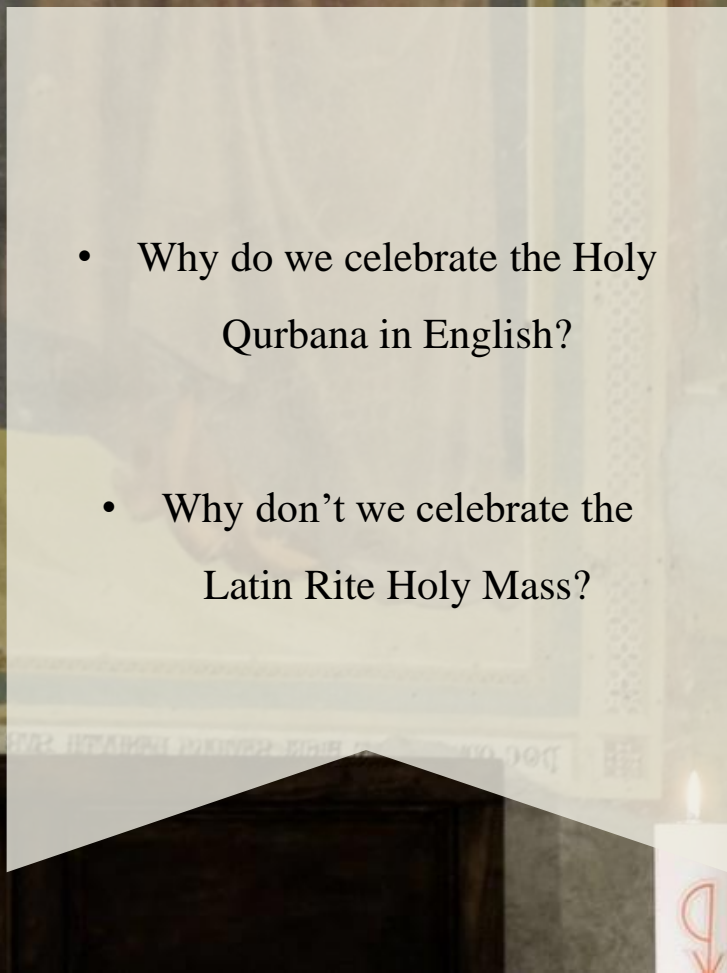




- The subject acting in the Liturgy?
- **Liturgy is an “action” of the whole Christ (*Christus totus*).** Recapitulated in Christ, it is the whole community, the head (Christ himself) and the body (the Church) that offers the Qurbana.
- **Baptismal Priesthood and Ministerial Priesthood**



- Why do we celebrate the Holy Qurbana in English?
- Why don't we celebrate the Latin Rite Holy Mass?





- Catholic Church as a Communion of Churches
- 23 Eastern Churches and 1 Western Church

- Origin of Eastern and Western Churches
- Church of the East
- Missionary activity of St Thomas the Apostle

- 1 Christ, yet 4 Gospels!
- The beauty and richness of Christ and His Church.
- The desire of the Catholic Church
- 4 elements that distinguish one Church from another – Theology, Liturgy, Spirituality and Discipline
- When did Christianity arrived in England?



- St Augustine of Canterbury – Year 597
- Considered Apostle to the English
- Pope Gregory the Great sent him to Christianise King Ethelbert and his Kingdom of Kent from Anglo-Saxon paganism.
- Apostolic Origin of the Syro Malabar Church
- Arrival of Christianity in India even before it came to most parts of Europe.



- **Syriac** – our liturgical language, a later dialect of Aramaic itself.
- Isho, Mariyam, Yousep, Kurbana, Qudasha, Mammodeesa, Sleevea, Sleeha, Malakha, Karosuza.
- **The Qudasha of Mar Addai and Mar Mari - Oriental Gem**
- Birkat Hamazon
- Jewish affinity
- The Qudasha of Theodore
- The Qudasha of Nestorius
- So should we ever say Malayalam Mass?
- Difference between Qurbana and Mass.



The Liturgical Space

- A church built in the Syro-Malabar tradition has many parts, which each have their own theological meaning and practical application – to understand the Liturgy, we should understand where it occurs.





Qanke

- The Qanke is the Sanctuary.
- It symbolises Heaven.
- The Qanke is placed three steps above the Bema.
- It is the Holy of Holies, and traditionally, only those with major or minor Orders enter into this place.



2. Madbaha



- The Madbaha is the Altar, the very presence of our Lord, the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, the Sepulchre of our Lord and the place of the Resurrection. This is where the Liturgy of the Eucharist (Qudasha) occurs. It is placed at the Eastern Wall of the Church.
- The Gospel is placed on the left hand side and the Sleeva (Cross) is placed on the right hand side.



3. Bethgeze



At either side of the Madbaha, there are 2 Bethgazzas (meaning Houses of Treasures), where the bread and wine to be used in the Liturgy are kept. The bread is kept on the left Bet Gaza, while the wine is kept on the right Bet Gaza, when facing the Altar.





4. Madbaha Veil

- The Madbaha and the Qanke are separated from the other parts of the church with a veil.
- The Sanctuary veil reveals the holiness, loftiness and the ineffability of the heavenly mysteries. It also symbolises the present situation of the church that eagerly looks forward to heaven as if through a mirror. (1 Cor 13:12)

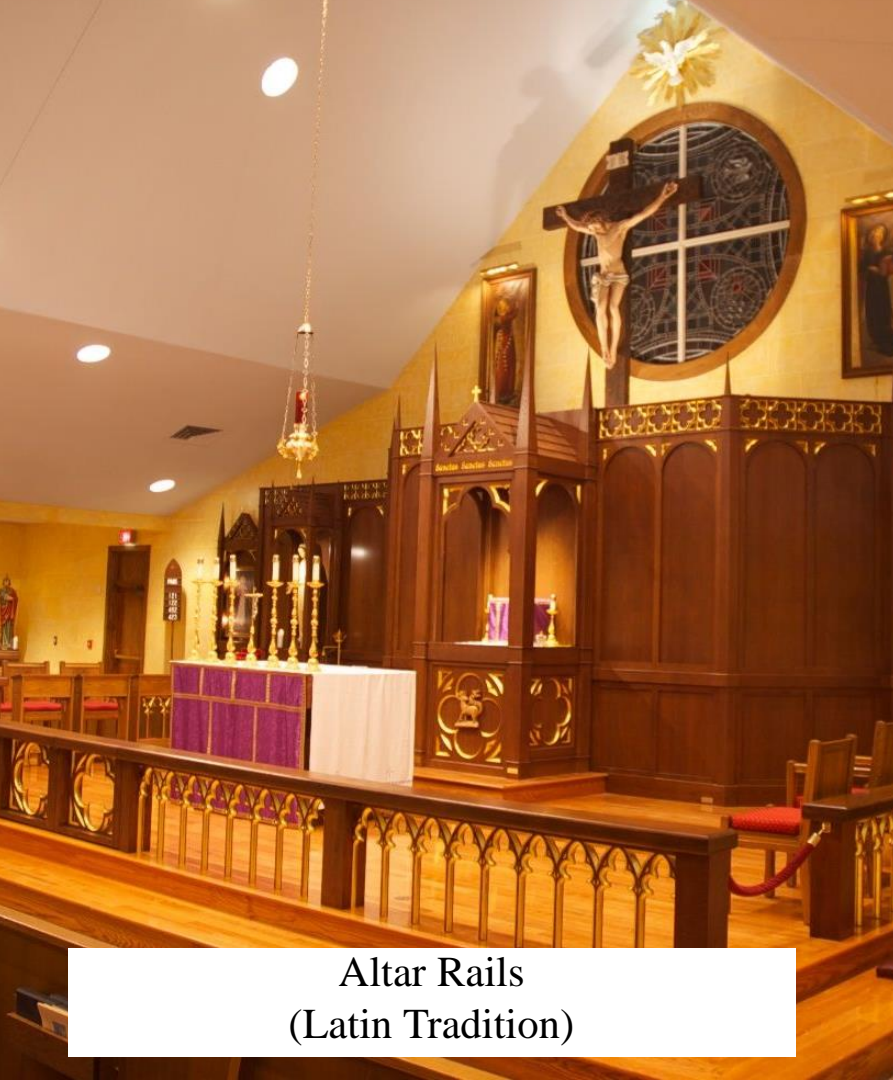




4. Madbaha Veil

- The Veil is Christ Himself, the only way to the Father (John 14:6).
- This is indicated by the fact that the high priest had to enter the Holy of Holies through the veil. Now Christ is our superior High Priest, and as believers in His finished work, we partake of His better priesthood. We can now enter the Holy of Holies through Him. (Hebrews 10:19-20)
- Here we see the image of Jesus' flesh being torn as the veil is torn. The profound significance of the tearing of the veil is explained in glorious detail in Hebrews. The things of the temple were shadows of things to come, and they all ultimately point us to Jesus Christ. He was the veil to the Holy of Holies, and through His death the faithful now have free access to God.





Altar Rails
(Latin Tradition)



Iconostasis
(Greek Tradition)

The image shows the interior of a church, likely the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The architecture features a series of tall, white, fluted columns with gold-colored capitals and bases, supporting a high, vaulted ceiling. The ceiling is decorated with a large, colorful mural depicting a religious scene, possibly the Ascension, with figures in the sky and a central figure. The floor is made of polished wood with a central aisle marked by yellow lines. In the background, a large, ornate altar is visible, partially covered by a white curtain. The lighting is warm and focused on the central aisle and the altar area.

4. Hykala

- This is the place where the people of God stand.
- As we face the Madbaha (the High Altar), we face East, awaiting the Second Coming of our Lord.



Turning towards the East

- Essential Liturgical Symbol
- ***“Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord.” – Cardinal Ratzinger***
- The Christian community isn’t a self-enclosed circle, where we gaze at one another, but it is the pilgrim people of God set off for the *Oriens*, for the Christ who comes to meet us.
- Fundamental expression of Christian synthesis of cosmos and history, which gives Altar its prominence.
- God is Light. Light comes from the East.
- The East is man’s native place. The Garden of Eden.
- Qedem in Hebrew = event orientated. It is the direction of the garden of Eden, the past events of Christ’s death and resurrection and the future event of his second coming.

3. Qestroma



This is the place where the choir stands.



It is elevated one step above the Hykala.



The choir is present to assist the people of God during the Liturgy.



5. Bema

The Bema is the Lower Altar and is a symbolism of the Earth, and in particular, Jerusalem. It's the place of our reconciliation with God.



This teaches us that when Jesus became incarnate, He dwelt in the midst of the people.



The Bema is placed in the middle of the Hykala (middle of the people of God). Jerusalem was traditionally considered the centre of the earth.



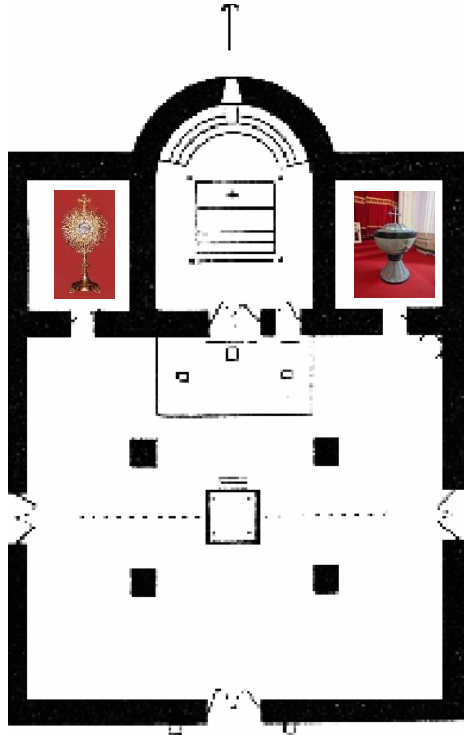
It consists of a table called the Golgotha, the two lecterns for Old Testament and Epistle readings, and the seats for the celebrant and deacons.



6. Sqaqona

The Sqaqona is the narrow way from the Bema to the Madbaha, showing the narrow way we must follow in order to attain eternal life.





Bet - Mammodeesa and Bet-Sahadha

- **Bet-Mammodeesa** - The baptistery is situated outside the sanctuary, but adjacent to it on the right side within the church or better outside as a special chapel. It always keeps up its intimate relation with the altar. The Eucharist is the culmination and completion of Baptism, where the new-born are nourished from the life giving bread.
- **Bet Sahadha (House of Martyrs)** - This is Martyr's Shrine, is outside the sanctuary on the left side, when facing the altar. It's where the relics of saints and martyrs are kept.
-



Our Church Architecture and our participation in the heavenly mysteries

- **“Heavenly Liturgy”** is the most adequate term to describe with one single expression the character of the East-Syriac liturgy.
- The various processions in the Syro-Malabar Qurbana
- The Entrance Procession
- The Gospel Procession
- Procession with the sacred mysteries. People make the procession towards the altar.





THE LITURGICAL VESTMENTS

- The vestments used in the Liturgy also have their own theological significance.

Kothina



- This is a long garment worn over the body.
- It represents the wearing of the new Man (cf. Eph 4:24).
- This represents wearing Jesus.
- One who wears the Kothina wears Christ.





Sunara

- The Sunara is tied around the waist over the Kothina.
- It represents the purity and chastity which each and every servant at the Altar must have.



Urara



- The Urara is worn over the neck and represents the priesthood of Jesus.
- The Urara is the sign of the ministerial priesthood.
- The major and minor Orders wear the Urara in different manners.





ZANDE



- *Zande* is the Syriac word for gloves or handcuffs. They are worn to keep the handcuffs of the *Kottina* in order. They are the symbol that the hands are ready to offer the sacrifice.

Kaapa/Paina



- This is the outermost vestment of priests and bishops.
- It symbolises the righteousness of a priest.
- It also bears resemblance to the outer garment of shepherds, showing how the priest is a spiritual shepherd to his flock.
- The Mar Sleeva on the back of this represents the fact that the priest represents Jesus Himself.





MSANE

- These are liturgical shoes only worn during liturgical services. These come from the prophetic reference to the angels that cover their feet in the presence of God. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. (Is 6:2)

LITURGICAL OBJECTS





Thurible

- 4 chains – The Holy Trinity and the two natures of Christ
- 72 pins – 72 disciples
- 12 bells – 12 Apostles
- The upper part – symbolises heaven
- The Lower part – symbolises earth
- Charcoal – symbol of our Sin, fragile humanity
- Fire (Holy Spirit) burns the charcoal and creates fragrance.



Incense

It is used in the adoration (worship) of God, the veneration of saints and as a sign of respect to individuals such as Bishops and Priests.

The fragrance of the incense represents the sweet love of God and the forgiveness of our sins.

The smoke rising represents our prayers rising to Heaven. The smoke also hinders a clear vision, symbolising the mysteriousness of our faith.

Mar Sleeva



The Sleeva is a sign of our Lord, crucified and risen. The Cross in the middle is a symbol of the passion and death of our Lord. The Cross being empty represents the Resurrection of our Lord, an imitation of the empty tomb. The tips of the Cross as blooming buds is the symbol of the new life, a fruit of Christ's resurrection. The Dove descending on the Sleeva represents the Ruha descending. The bottom shape represents the throne of God the Father. It also looks like a Lotus, symbol of India and a cross erected on a Lotus symbolises Christianity that flourished in India.

The three steps represent Calvary and our ascent towards God. The Mar Sleeva is therefore a dynamic symbol of the paschal mysteries and proclaims the theological, Christological, pneumatological, eschatological and ecclesiological faith of the St Thomas Christians.



Maksaneesa



- The Maksaneesa is the traditional liturgical flabellum used during the celebratory moments of the Holy Qurbana.
- It represents the Seraphim angels who sing ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ in the presence of God.
- It’s the symbol of the unceasing flapping of the angel’s wings in the presence of God.



Maksaneesa

1. Laku Mara
2. Gospel Procession
3. At the ends of the Institution Narrative (Amen)
4. Epiclesis
5. Elevation of the Host

Other moments:

Welcoming Bishop into the Church

Entrance Procession

Festal Processions



Kasa and Pilasa

- Kasa (Chalice)
- Pilasa (Paten)
- These are used to hold the Divine Mysteries and are sacred vessels.
- M'qablana (Pall)
- Sankeenj (Purificator)
- Ketana (C corporal)



Shosappa

- This is a cloth used to cover the Divine Mysteries and represents the Tomb of Our Lord.
- During the Holy Qurbana, the Shosappa first covers the Divine Mysteries representing the death and burial of our Lord.
 - Later, it is placed around it, representing Our Lord leaving the Tomb triumphantly at the Resurrection.
- We place this on the floor during Office of the Departed (Oppees) as we believe that the departed have died and been buried with the Lord.





Other Liturgical objects

- *Evangelion*: This book which contains only the Gospel, proclaimed during liturgical celebrations, is the living symbol of Jesus, and kept always on the right hand side of the altar. When needed, it is brought to the *Bema* in procession and is proclaimed therefrom.
- *Enggarta*: This special book contains all liturgical readings from the Epistles, and is kept on the lectern on the left side of the *Bema*.
- *Qeryana*: This book contains all the liturgical readings from the Old Testament books, and is kept on the lectern on the right side of the *Bema*.
 - *Thaksa (Missal)*



An altar server in the Syro-Malabar Liturgy

- Only ordained ministers (Major and Minor) are allowed to enter the sanctuary and assist at the celebration of the Holy Qurbana (Karoya, Sub-deacon and Deacon). However due to the absence of the major and minor clerics, lay faithful are allowed to carry their role by wearing Kothina and Zunara.
- The deacons
- They keep the order of the Liturgy.
- By serving as a member and leader of the community, he helps them in the active participation of the liturgy. These are evident from the various exhortations and commands given by the deacon throughout the celebration.
- Deacons carry out a significant ministry and thus, they are compared to angels.



- **Sense of Sacredness** – Our holiness/ State of Grace
- **Ascetic Sense/ Sense of Beauty** – Candle Holders height, Shoes (No trainers, only formal shoes)
Taking care of our Kothina
- **Common Sense** – Attention when holding candles, Attention with fire, always looking at the priest, his gestures



Posture of the Altar servers

- Facing the Altar, as the same direction of the people
- 4 Instances where the Taksa directs to turn to the people:
 1. Proclamatory Prayer (*Karosusa*)
 2. Let us pray, peace be with us. Let us pray by commemorating our fathers who are the patriarchs, major archbishops...
 3. Let us all thank the Lord...
 4. Lord, forgive the sins and offences of Your servants.



Holy Qurbana



The Parts of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana

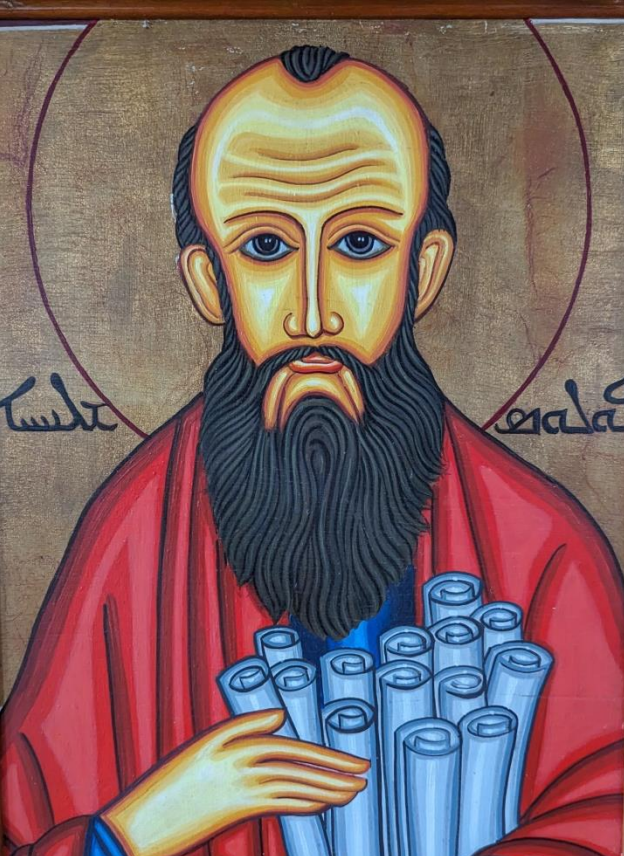
- **Enarxis (Introductory Rites)** – Annapesaha to Lakhu Mara (Sarvadipanam)
- **Liturgy of the Word** – Trisagion to Dismissal of Catechumens
- **Preparation for the Qudasha** – Anthem of the Mysteries to Entrance to the Altar
- **Qudasha (Eucharistic Prayer/Anaphora)** – Prayer Request to Epiclesis
- **Rite of Reconciliation** – Penitential Psalms to Invitation of Communion
- **Rite of Communion**
- **Rite of Thanksgiving and Blessing** – Thanksgiving of the Assembly and Deacon to Farewell to the Altar



Let's pray, peace be with us



- Seems like a very simple thing, right?
- Do you know how it originated?
- The sign of Peace



NEW TESTAMENT

Public Life of Jesus Christ

3. Epistles (1 candle)
4. Gospels (2 candles)



OLD TESTAMENT

Hidden Life of Jesus Christ

1. Law
2. Prophets



St John the Baptist

The Apostle speaks to us through the Epistles, and prepare the way for Jesus Christ, just as John the Baptist did. Not the priest, but a deacon reads the Epistle. For the place of John the Baptist is that of a deacon and not of the New Testament priest.



The Soul of Jesus
(Christ's Divinity)

Seraphim

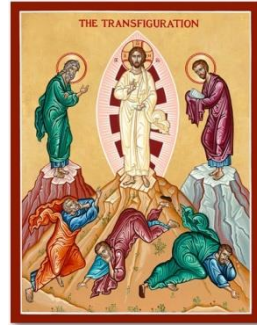
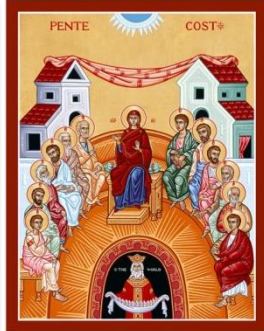
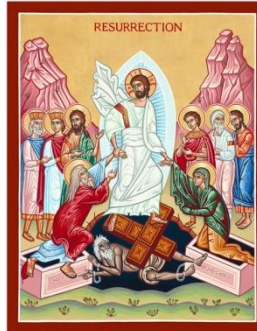
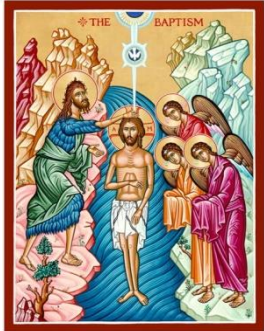
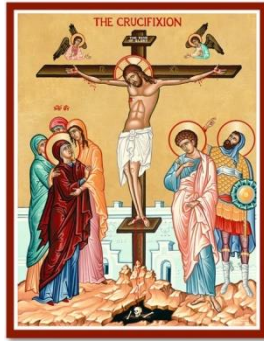
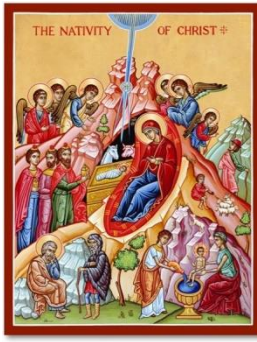
Seraphim

Archangel Michael

The Body of Jesus
(Christ's Humanity)

Archangel Gabriel

Gospel Procession, the symbol of Christ's incarnation; is also the triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The celebrant represents Jesus himself, while the servers represents the Apostles and people who accompanied Jesus.



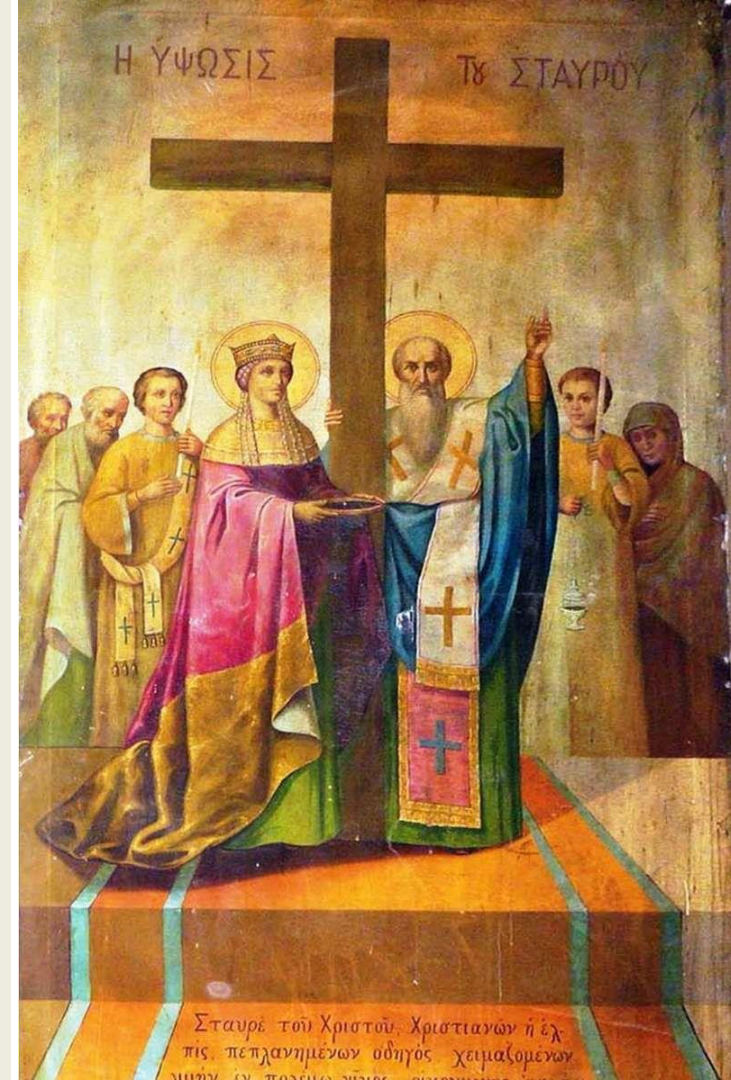
9 Liturgical Seasons

- Weeks of Annunciation (Subara)
- Weeks of Nativity (Yaldha)
- Weeks of Epiphany (Denha)
- Weeks of Great Fast (Sawma Rabba)
- Weeks of Resurrection (Qyamta)
- Weeks of Apostles (Slihe)
- Weeks of Summer (Qaita)
- Weeks of Elijah-Sliwa-Muse
- Weeks of Dedication of the Church (Qudas-Edta)

The Propers of the Liturgical Seasons and Feast Days



- Opening Prayer
- Psalm (Marmitha)
- Anthem of the *Madhbaha* (*Onisa d'Qanke*)
 - Hymn of Proclamation (*Suraya*)
 - Hymn of Halleluia (*Zumara*)
 - Proclamatory Prayer (*Karosusa*)
- Anthem of the Mysteries (*Onisa d'Raze*)
- Anthem of the Divine Mercy (*Onisa d'Vema*)
- Accompanying Anthem (*Onisa d'Vathe*)
 - Thanksgiving Prayers
 - Prayer of Sealing (*Huthama*)





Sign of the Sleeva

For drawing the sign of the cross on themselves, we hold the first three finger tips of the right hand joined together and the other two fingers folding inward as to touch the palm; then they touch first the forehead, then the chest, then the right shoulder and finally the left shoulder.

Every time the Trinity is mentioned, we should make the sign of the cross.





Patron Saints of Altar Servers

St Tarcisius

Boy Martyr of The Eucharist

An example of youthful courage and devotion

Tarcisius was a twelve-year-old acolyte during one of the fierce Roman persecutions of the third century. Each day, from a secret meeting place in the catacombs where Christians gathered for Mass, a deacon would be sent to the prisons to carry the Eucharist to those Christians condemned to die. At one point, there was no deacon to send and so St. Tarcisius, an acolyte, was sent carrying the "Holy Mysteries" to those in prison. On the way, he was stopped by boys his own age who were not Christians but knew him as a playmate. He was asked to join their games, but this time he refused and the crowd of boys noticed that he was carrying something. Somehow, he was also recognized as a Christian, and the small gang of boys, anxious to view the Christian "Mysteries," became a mob and turned upon Tarcisius with fury. He went down under the blows, and it is believed that a fellow Christian drove off the mob and rescued the young acolyte. The mangled body of Tarcisius was carried back to the catacombs, but the boy died on the way from his injuries. He was buried in the cemetery of St. Callistus.



Patron Saints of Altar Servers

St John Berchmans

Jesuit Scholastic

Died at 13 August 1621, at the age of 22.

On his way to school, John would stop by the parish church, where he learned to serve at Mass. From the age of seven he would wake up as early as 5 a.m. in order to serve at two or three Masses. Those who observed him would later testify that he displayed a natural reverence at the altar and a pious demeanour when receiving Holy Communion. He was often heard to remark: "If I do not become a saint when I am young, I shall never become one."

Holy Qurbana: A Pictorial Journey

<http://www.nasrani.org/downloads.html>

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HOLY QURBANA
A PICTORIAL JOURNEY



PERUMTHOTTAM MAR JOSEPH

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