

Prot. No. MPL: 62/19/32

## **Circular**



Dear Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Venerable Carlo Acutis, a computer expert who died in 2005 at the age of fifteen and declared Venerable in 2018, called Holy *Qurbana* “my highway to heaven”. He participated daily in the Holy *Qurbana* and received Holy Communion.

We should all be aware of the utmost importance of Holy *Qurbana*, which the Second Vatican Council calls “the source and summit of the whole Christian life”(LG11), in our life and the need to celebrate it sacredly and effectively. The celebration of Holy *Qurbana* makes the Church. It is the covenant of the future glory that we hope for. Jesus, who became the Passover Lamb for us and our salvation, asked His disciples to continue the sacramental offering of the sacrifice by saying “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). We begin our *Qurbana* by remembering His command - *Pukdane d'Mishiha*.

Holy *Qurbana* is a great mystery that is to be believed, celebrated, and lived. It is in consultation with the priests of our Eparchy that I write this circular to give you a few directives regarding the celebration of *Qurbana* across our Eparchy.

Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* has three forms: the Most Solemn Form (*Raza*), the Solemn Form and the Simple Form. This distinction is based on the varying degrees of solemnity. The celebrant, the sacred rites, the readings, the hymns, the use of incense, etc. are the factors of solemnity. It is recommended that the *Raza* be celebrated during the most solemn occasions of the Church, the solemn form on other important feasts, and the simple form on ordinary days.

Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* has seven parts:

1. Introductory Rite;
2. Ministry of the Word of God;
3. Rite of Preparation;
4. Anaphora;
5. Rite of Reconciliation;
6. Rite of Communion; and
7. Rite of Conclusion.

In general the *Qurbana* can be divided into two parts: the Breaking of the Word and the Breaking of the Bread.

The Syro-Malabar Synod has decided to celebrate the Breaking of the Word in *Bema*, with the celebrant facing the people, and the Breaking of the Bread (Anaphora) facing the altar in the *Madbha*. We have been following this custom since the founding of our eparchy. We, who are coming from different eparchies in Kerala, have to follow the recommendations of the synod exactly to promote the unity and communion among us.

The Second Vatican Council stated that the “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to the fully conscious and active participation in liturgical

celebrations”(SC14). If we come early in the church, use the *Qurbana* text to actively participate in the prayers and hymns, and consciously take part in all the rituals, we will receive the grace to experience most effectively the living presence of Jesus. As we pray in the *Qurbana*, it will result in the remission of our debts, forgiveness of our sins, and fulfillment in God’s presence.

I would like to request you to observe the following directives to make the celebration of the liturgy, especially that of the Holy *Qurbana*, more effective in our eparchy:

1. Form a liturgy committee in the parish/mission. The Vicar/Assistant Vicar, sacristan, and the representatives of lectors, altar servers, choir, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should be part of this committee. Preparation and training for the Holy *Qurbana* on Sundays and special occasions, and for other sacred celebrations should be conducted with the cooperation of this committee.
2. To foster unity in our eparchy, follow the rites and prayers exactly as in the *Taksa*, as per the decision of the Synod.
3. The choir has a very important role in the liturgy. They have the responsibility to help the congregation to actively participate in the liturgy through the hymns and prayers. Instead of displaying their own abilities, they should lead the congregation to actively participate in the hymns and prayers. The hymns should be the ones officially approved by the Church that encourage piety and are familiar to the people. The volume of the sound should be controlled so as not to cause disturbance to the people. Take care to reduce the beats before and during the hymns. Hymns should not be prolonged unnecessarily. Musical instruments shall not be used during the anaphora (except for the Hymn of Hosana and *Athipujithamam*). Let us always remember the words of St. Augustine, that “those who sing pray twice”.

4. Body language is important in liturgy. Standing during the praise and prayers, sitting to listen to the Word and kneeling to show repentance is common to the Eastern tradition. We should have unity in following this.

Hence, the community shall stand up from the beginning of the *Qurbana* until the beginning of the Scriptural readings, during the proclamation of the Gospel, from *Karozuza* till the rite of reconciliation that begins with “Have mercy on me, O God”, and from the “Our Father” before the holy communion until the end of the *Qurbana*. As we have now realized that the practice of sitting from the *Karozuza* till the creed, which we had followed until now, is not appropriate to the spirit of the liturgy, from now onwards the community shall stand during this time.

The community shall sit during the readings from the old testaments and the epistle and during the homily.

The community shall kneel from “Have mercy on me, O God” until the beginning of the prayer before the “Our Father” before the Holy Communion.

Let us all start to follow these practices in all our churches before 3 July this year.

5. Scriptural readings are in fact the proclamation of the Word of God and must be read from the Lectionary. The lectors shall arrive early and prepare for the readings before the *Qurbana*. The reading shall be clear so that everyone can hear it well. The lector shall not announce the chapter and verse before the readings.

6. There are nine seasons in our liturgical year. It is important to use the prayers and hymns of the liturgical season in *Qurbana* and live according to the spirit of each season.

7. We shall commemorate the names of the Major Archbishop and the Bishop as follows:

*“...of our Major Archbishop, Mar George, the father and the head of our Syro-Malabar Church, of our Bishop Mar Bosco, the father and head of our diocese...”*

Especially note that the house names of the Major Archbishop and the Bishop are not used in the liturgy.

8. Keep on the altar only the sacred objects necessary for the *Qurbana* (Chalice, Paten, Ciborium, Cross, Gospel Lectionary, and *Taksa*). It is better to have other arrangements for objects like the candle stands, flower vases, etc. Before the *Qurbana* the chalice, paten, bread, wine, and water should be kept on the *Beth-gazzas*. It is from there that the celebrant solemnly brings the bread and wine to the altar during the Hymn of the Mysteries.

9. According to the Eastern liturgical tradition, it is not appropriate to have announcements or other programs right after Holy Communion, before the final blessing. Announcements, if any, should be made only after the final blessing.

10. I exhort everyone, especially the vicars, to conduct classes for the laity on our liturgy, especially the *Qurbana*.

11. Although we are a migrant community, since our primary liturgical language is Malayalam, I would like to remind the parents of their important responsibility to teach their children to speak, read and write Malayalam.

12. The anaphora that we use in our *Qurbana*, the anaphora of Mar Addai and Mar Mari, which is also known as Anaphora of the Apostles, is the most ancient anaphora in the history of the Church. Apart from this, I am glad to inform you that the Church allows us to use two more *anaphoras*, that of Mar Theodore and Mar Nestorius, which were used in our Church until the Synod of Diamper. After the necessary preparations we will start to use these *anaphoras* too. In other Eastern rites as well as the Latin rite there are several *anaphoras* in use.

Let us all celebrate the Holy *Qurbana* effectively and lead a Eucharistic centered life, and thus experience daily the living presence of Jesus. Let us pray to God to strengthen us, the weak ones, to celebrate the holy mysteries properly.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now, always, and forever. Amen.

With love,

Your Bishop

**+Bosco Puthur**

2019 May 18

NB: This circular shall be read on Sunday, 2019 May 26th in the churches.