

Liturgics Data File 4.1:

The “Great Church” of Antioch is the first daughter of the “Mother Church” of Jerusalem and first Patriarchate of the Oriental family of Churches. Her distinctive liturgical traditions and school of Sacred Theology, both firmly rooted in the matrix of Judaism and in ancient culture, are the common heritage of all Christendom.

The Church Building or Temple

A Syriac Christian church building or Temple (Syr. Hykala) follows the same pattern revealed to Moses and followed in both the construction of the desert tabernacle and by Solomon in the Temple at Jerusalem. Temples are ‘oriented’ to the East in accordance with the apostolic custom of praying toward the East.¹ Architecturally, it consists of four distinct parts or areas:

- **The Holy Sanctuary** - (Syriac *madhb'ho*) Located at the eastern end of the Church building the Sanctuary represents heaven² and houses the Holy Altar representing the Divine Throne. This Sanctuary is separated from the congregation by the *Veil* (Curtain) (Syr. Parokhet) signifying the skies separating the Heavens from the Earth.³ Ordinarily, only clergy (including their acolytes and other minor clerics) are admitted into the sanctuary for the performance of their respective duties.
- **The Chancel** (Syr. *Azhikakam*) - Located outside the veil of the sanctuary, raised by steps and separated by rails, the chancel consists of the pulpit/lectern(s) from which the scriptures are read and on which the Gospel is kept, known as the Ambo, and the raised area itself, called a Bema. Often this area is adorned with an iconostasis.

¹ The Father of the Church taught that the second coming of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, will be from the east, the place of the rising sun. "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Mathew 24:27).

² "Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the East. And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East.... and the glory of the Lord came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east" (Ezekiel 43:1,2,3) "...for the facade of the temple was toward the east..." (Ezekiel 47:1)

³ Exodus 36:16, 40:3,21

- **The Nave** (Syr. *Hykala*) - The main hall of the church is the place for the congregants and choir(s). In older churches, this area was usually segregated by gender.
- **The Narthex** - Corresponding to the Outer Courtyard of the ancient Israelite Temple, this is the western end of the church building and may include a baptistery and the area immediately surrounding the church.

Temple Furnishings

The Altar

‘Table of Life’ - ‘Tomb of the Glorified Lord’ - ‘Divine Throne’

The Altar is the place before which the priest and assisting ministers offer the Divine Services and Sacrifices according to the ordinances of the Lord as instituted by the Apostles of Christ in all the Churches of God. Only certain consecrated items and approved adornments are permitted upon an Altar.

- *Thabilitho* – a wooden or marble slab placed at the center of the altar covered with linen cloth and consecrated with Holy Chrism by a Bishop. The Paten and Chalice are placed over it. In general, the vessels remain here even when not in use as a remembrance of the salvific acts of the Lord. The Holy Qurbana can be celebrated anywhere with the tablitho. They are typically appropriately inscribed and ‘signed’ by the consecrating Hierarchy.
- The Cross - The cross is placed in the middle of the altar. It symbolizes our Lord's sacrifice on Mount Golgotha. The Cross is the symbol of peace, victory, and salvation. It is also described as the weapon in the struggle against Satan.
- Candles - God is the light of the world. Jesus said "I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12. The candle in the middle of the altar represents the resurrected Lord. The twelve candles represent the twelve Apostles. The burning of wax reminds us that we should be prepared to sacrifice ourselves to lighten others.
- The Chalice and Paten - The Chalice which holds the Eucharistic wine is the most important of all sacramental vessels. The Paten holds the Eucharistic bread. The Paten and Chalice recall the mystery of the Last Supper, the bread standing for the Body of Christ and the Wine for His precious Blood.

- Shushafo (Veil) - This white veil is used to cover the Paten and Chalice. It represents the fact that the Divine Mysteries are hidden from the understanding of men and that the divinity and humanity united in Christ, the Divine Word, is beyond human comprehension just the same way as the transformation of bread and wine to flesh and blood of Christ is beyond our perception (Samuel, 1967)
- M'shamshonitho, washing cup, is a small vessel in which the wine and the water are mixed at the offertory and then poured into the chalice. It is then filled with plain water in which the celebrant washes the tips of his fingers whenever he touches the Holy Body. It must be placed at his left.

In proximity to and 'serving' the Altar are arrayed various item to facilitate the celebration of the Holy Mysteries.

- The Censer - It has a lower half and upper half, four chains and 12 bells. The lower cup of the censer represents the earth and the upper cup the heaven. The coal in it represents the sinners. The chains represent the Holy Trinity. The first chain stands for God the Father. The second and third chains represent the human and Godly nature of the son. The fourth chain represents the Holy Spirit. The 12 bells represent the 12 Apostles of Christ. The four chains have a total of 72 links to represent the 72 evangelists of the Old Testament who prepared men to be worthy of the new covenant with God. The fire signifies the Holy Spirit by whose contact the black coal shines and glows. The incense shows the grace of the Holy Trinity. As the smoke goes up to the high so also our prayers should go high (Psalm 141:2)

In the Kukilion of Syrian Orthodox Church, following the elevation of the Holy Mysteries, the first cycle of hymns is devoted to Blessed Virgin Mariam. In this hymn, the relationship between Jesus and Mother of God has been treated analogous to the King and Princess, illustrated in King David's Psalm 45: 9-12. This Psalm is treated as glorification of the Church as well as Virgin Mother Of God. It is rendered in a contracted form and sung as under:

See the royal daughter stand
Glorious Queen at Thy right hand
Thy father's folk and home leave thou
The King desires thy beauty now.

This is followed by further praises and supplications

Thou whose praise the Church doth sing
Intercession for us bring

Unto Him thine only son
That He may not mercy shun.

Peace the bright archangel brought
Hailing Mary fair,
Favoured is thy blessed lot
Thou the Lord shall bear.

Like a ship did Mary bear-
Laud and honour be-
Him, the captain and the Lord,
God of all the World.

By Thy cross, O Jesus Lord
By thy Mother's praying word,
Take from us and from our path
Punishments and rods of wrath.

- Marvahtho (Fan) - fan shaped object mounted on a pole. In the center of the fans, are pictured winged seraphim. They are carried in processions and waved over the altar during the consecration of the Qorbono.

Table of Preparation

A small *Credence* table at the right side of the sanctuary, usually near the altar, containing liturgical objects (e.g. cruets, lavabo, etc.) at which the offerings of bread and wine used in the Qorbono are prepared.

Furnishings outside the Sanctuary:

The Ambo

The Lectern (Gospel stand or Evangelion table) - This is the pulpit from which the Gospel and other scriptures are proclaimed. Customarily it will have two or more candles placed to either side.

The Cathedra

On the Bema, opposite the Ambo, is placed a throne for the bishop; representative of the continuous Episcopal presence.

Clerical Vestments

When serving at the Altar, Syriac Christian clergy wear distinctive vestments varying according to rank within the hierarchical order of the priesthood.

Kutino - The Kutino or Alb is a white, linen, floor-length and sleeved robe, plain or embroidered, is common to all serving ministers. Before being worn the kutino is blessed by a bishop or, if no bishop is present, by the celebrating priest.

When vesting the priest signs the cross over the kutino three times while reciting:

“Clothe me, O Lord, with the robe of incorruption through the strength of Thy Holy Spirit, and make me worthy to keep the true faith and walk in the paths of purity and righteousness all the days of my life.”

M'sone - slippers worn by all ministers serving in the Sanctuary, usually these are white⁴ (red for higher ranking clergy) and are often decorated.

When vesting with m'sone, the priest recites,

(left) “May my feet, O Lord God, be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace so that I may tread underfoot serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy, for ever.”

(right) “Cast down under my foot, Lord God, all false pride that is exalted against Thy knowledge, and grant that by Thy help I may bring the lusts of the flesh into subjection, for ever.”

Uro-ro - Readers, Subdeacons, and (Arch-)Deacons⁵ wear the white kutino and an uro-ro 'stole' in varying style according to their rank.

- Readers (qoruyo) wear the uro-ro in the form of a Cross.
- Subdeacons (*apodyaqno*) wear the uro-ro folded around the neck.
- Deacons (shamosho) wear the uro-ro over the left shoulder, on either side like wings.
- Archdeacons (*archedyaqno*) wear the uro-ro round the neck. They also wear a zenoro and zende similar to priests.

⁴ Animal products are prohibited on the sanctuary, so the shoes are never leather.

⁵ Servers/Acolytes and Singers (mzamrono) wear the kutino and m'sone only without the uro-ro

In addition to the kutino and m'sone, the Syriac Orthodox priest wears other vestments⁶ at Divine Services:

Phiro (Syr. 'fruit') - a small black cap, like a skull-cap, worn by a priest at all prayers. It is traditionally divided into seven sections symbolizing his full priesthood.⁷

Eskimo - a veil/hood embroidered with twelve crosses worn by monks, hieromonks, and bishops at all times, including Divine Services.

Hamnikho (Syr. 'necklace') - the Priest's stole⁸ designed like the priestly ephod of Aaron.

At the vesting, the priest signs the cross over it twice, reciting (Psalm 18:39, 40):
“Gird me with strength unto the battle and subdue under me them that rise up against me, defeat my enemies and silence those who hate me.”

Zenoro (Syr. 'girdle') - a belt or cincture worn by a priest either over or underneath the hamnikho when celebrating Holy Qorbono.

When vesting the priest signs the cross over it once while reciting (Psalm 45:3):
“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty with thy splendor and glory. Thy glory triumphs.”

Zende (Syr. 'sleeves') - decorated laced cuffs worn by a priest over the sleeves of the kutino when celebrating Holy Qorbono.

At the vesting, the priest signs the cross twice over the left sleeve and recites while wearing it (Psalm 18:34):
“He trains my hands to war; and he strengthens my arms like a bow of brass.”
He then signs the cross once over the right sleeve and recites while wearing it (Psalm 18:35):
“Let Thy right hand help me up, and let Thy loving discipline raise me.”

Phayno ('cope') -

⁶ Some of these are only worn for the celebration of Holy Qorbono, as indicated. When the Qorbono is combined with another service, such as Baptism, the priest may fully vest and celebrate the preparatory services prior.

⁷ Monastics, including Bishops, wear the phiro underneath their eskimo.

⁸ The hamnikho is generally regarded as indispensable for the priest to wear when exercising his office.

He signs the cross over it thrice reciting Psalm 132:9-10: Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness and Thy righteous with glory. For Thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed. Then he puts it on reciting Psalm 132:9: Clothe Thy priests with salvation and Thy saints with glory.

When serving Bishops wear the vestments worn by monastic priests with several adornments.

If the celebrant is a prelate, he puts on the masnaphtho 'turban', a head-cover which symbolizes the cloth with which the Lord's head was bound for His burial. He makes the sign of the cross twice on it and wears it reciting Psalm 4:6-7: Who can show me He who is good? May the light of Thy countenance shine upon us, O Lord, Thou hast given gladness to my heart.

If the celebrant is a prelate, he puts on the batrashil (*Pallium*) which is similar to the Hamnikho but extends both front and back. He crosses it once reciting Psalm 27:5: In the day of trouble, he protects me in the shadow of his tabernacle. He exalts me upon a rock; and now he shall lift up my head above mine enemies.

The Patriarch wears the sakro 'shield' attached to the zenoro on the right side. The shield of faith symbolizes his authority and his position as the protector of the faith (Ephesians 6:16 "... above all taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one).

Prelates also wear a Cross and an icon, usually of the Mother of God, around the neck. While wearing the cross he recites Psalm 34:5: Turn your eyes to him and hope in him and you shall not be disappointed.

Then the prelate takes the crosier (*moroneetho*) in his left hand, which symbolizes the bishop's authority and reminds us of the shepherd's staff, reciting Psalm 110:2: The Lord will send forth the sceptre of Thy power out of Zion: thou shalt rule in the midst of thine enemies. He also takes a hand Cross in his right hand, from which a cloth called mqablonitho 'veil' is hung reciting Psalm 44:5: For Thy cause we shall combat our enemies and for the cause of Thy name we shall trample those who hate us. Upon completing this, the celebrant washes his hands.

The priest's daily dress is a black robe; in India, due to the hot weather, priests tend to wear a white robe. Bishops usually wear a black or a red robe with a red belt. They do not, however, wear a red robe in the presence of the Patriarch who wears a red robe. Bishops visiting a diocese outside their jurisdiction also wear black robes in deference to the bishop of the diocese, who alone wears red robes.

Priests, especially in the Middle East, wear black caps in non-liturgical settings, while bishops and the Patriarch may use a red cap.

The liturgical vestments are worn by the priest during the Order of Aaron in the preparatory prayers that precede the celebration of the divine mysteries. The priest first puts away his outer garments, saying: Remove from me, O Lord God, the unholy garments wherewith Satan has clothed me by the filth of my evil deeds, and clothe me with the choice garments that are fitting for the service of Thy glory and for the praise of Thy holy Name, O our Lord and our God, forever.

Liturgical Calendar:

Feasts in the Syriac Orthodox Church are divided into two classes: moronoyotho, or feasts pertaining to the Lord (e.g., Christmas, Easter), and dukhronos, or commemorating the Virgin Mary and the Saints.

Some feasts are movable, i.e., their dates vary from one year to another (e.g., Easter). Others are immovable, i.e., their dates are fixed (e.g., Christmas). For the movable feasts, the Church employs the Julian Calendar; for this reason, the date of Easter differs from that of Western Easter. For the immovable ones, the Church has been employing the modern Gregorian calendar since the 1950s.⁹

Fixed Feasts

January

1st: Circumcision of the Lord; Sts. Basilus the Great and Gregorius of Nyssa, Doctors of the Church.

6th: Baptism of Christ (Epiphany).

7th: John the Baptist.

8th: St. Stephen, Head of the Deacons and First Martyr.

15th: Holy Virgin Mary of the Sowing.

February

2nd: Presentation of the Lord in the Temple and St. Simon the Elder (Mor Shem'un Sobo).

3rd: Mor Barsowma, Head of the Anchorites.

13th: Patriarch Mor Ignatius Elias III.

March

9th: The Forty Martyrs of Sebastia.

25th: Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary.

April

23rd: St. George (in the Churches in the East, i.e., Iraq, on the 24th).

May

12th: Mor Ya`qub of Nisibin (+338).

15th: Holy Virgin Mary of the Harvest.

June

⁹ Since 1953 the Malankara Church has used the Gregorian calendar even for movable feasts.

15th: Commemoration of the First Church named after the Holy Virgin Mary.
29th: Sts. Peter and Paul.
30th: All Saints; Mor Ya`qub Burd`ono.

July

3rd: St. Thomas.
15th: Mor Quryaqos and his mother Yuliti, Martyrs.
30th: [Maphryono Bar `Ebroyo].

August

6th: Transfiguration of Christ.
15th: Assumption of the Mother of God.

September

7th: Birth of Holy Virgin Mary.
14th: Exaltation of the Cross [Consecration of H.H. Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch].

October

2nd: Maphryono Mor Baselius Yaldo.
7th: Sts. Sargis and Bachus.
15th: Mort Shmouni and Mor Osyo.

November

2nd: Mor Jacob the Dismembered (mfasqo).

December

10th: The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Mor Behnam, his sister Sarah, and his companions.
25th: Christmas.
26th: Glorification of Holy Virgin Mary at the Lord's Birth.
27th: Slaughter of the Children of Bethlehem.

Movable Feasts

St. Severius, Patriarch of Antioch: The Thursday after the Fast of Nineveh.
St. Ephrem the Syrian, St. Theodorus the Martyr: The First Saturday in lent.
Elevation of the Cross, King Abgar, Martyrs of the Syriac Church: The Wednesday at mid-Lent.
Palm Sunday: The Sunday prior to Easter Sunday.
Naheere: The evening of Palm Sunday.
Maundy Thursday and Washing of the Feet: The Thursday of Passion Week.
Good Friday: The Friday of Passion Week.

Easter Sunday: This date of this feast has a special computation and all other movable feasts depend upon it. The feast includes the following Monday and Tuesday.

Confessors: The Friday after Easter.

Ascension: The Thursday of the fifth week after Easter.

Mor Barsawmo, Martyr Bishop of Kfartooth: Thursday before Pentecost.

Pentecost: The Eighth Sunday after Easter.

Advent: The period of eight weeks before Christmas.

The Syrian Orthodox Church observes six fasts:

Fast of Nineveh: Three days commencing on the Monday of the third week prior to the Great Lent.

The Great Lent: Forty-eight days prior to Easter.

Advent: Fifteen days commencing on the 15th of December.

Fast of the Apostles: Three days commencing of the 26th of June.

Fast of the Virgin Mary: Five days commencing on the 10th of August.

Wednesday and Friday Fast: Every Wednesday and Friday around the year, except the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost and any feast of the Lord or the Virgin Mary.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A

ABSOLUTION: A prayer for the forgiveness of sins; also, the imposition of hands and proclamation of this forgiveness by a priest as a part of sacramental confession.

ABSTINENCE

ACCLAMATION: A response by the liturgical assembly taking the form of a shout of joy or praise.

ACOLYTE: One charged with assisting at the altar and sanctuary during the liturgy. Acolyte is a liturgical ministry instituted through a special rite. The term for a person fulfilling the function of acolyte, without being instituted in the role, is server.

ADVENT: The liturgical season beginning eight weeks before Christmas. Advent is the starting point of the liturgical calendar.

ALB (Syr. *Kutino*): A floor-length white garment, sometimes embroidered, worn by all liturgical ministers.

ALTAR: The Holy Table in the Sanctuary upon which the Qorbono is offered.

ALLELUIA (Hebrew “praise God” [Yah]): An ancient term of praise used frequently in liturgical texts.

AMBO (Grk. “ascent”): Usually a lectern on the Bema, it is the place from which the scriptures are read and from which some offices are led/served.

AMBRY: The receptacle that houses the holy oils.

AMEN (Heb. “so be it”): A Hebrew acronym signifying, “God is a Faithful King” used since ancient times as a liturgical response.

ANAMNESIS (Greek: “remembrance”): An important liturgical principle of remembrance in the sense of “making present” an eternal truth, it has been called an *active* form of memory. In the service of the Qorbono, the section after the Words of Institution commemorating the salvific acts of the Lord is known specifically as the Anamnesis following the command of Christ to “do this in memory of me.”

ANAPHORA (Gr.: “offering”): The Great Eucharistic Prayer of the Qorbono.

AOM ALLAH (Arabic "*Mother of God*");

ANTIOCH: Ancient capital city in northwestern Syria. It was in Antioch that the Believers were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26) and where the early Church, under the leadership of the Apostle Peter, established its center after leaving Palestine. Later an important theological school of thought (the "Antiochene tradition") developed there. It is the seat of the Syriac Patriarchate.

APHRAHAT (4th c.): The first "Doctor" of the Syriac Church known as the "Persian Sage". His most famous work is entitled the Demonstrations and....

APODYAQNO (Syr. Subdeacon)

ARAMAIC: The language of the Aramaean people divided into eastern and western dialects. It was the vernacular language of Christ and his Apostles and is used in parts of the Bible to which Hebrew, Syriac, et al is related. It remains the liturgical language of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

ARCHDEACON (Syr. *archedyaqno*):

AZHIKAKAM (Syr. "Holy Place"): The chancel area including the Bema, Ambo, and Iconostasis.

B

BAPTISTRY: The baptismal font and the surrounding area.

BATRASHIL (Syr. Pallium): The omophorion, a vestment worn by bishops similar to the Hamnikho but extending as a scapular both front and back

BEMA (Syr. "Height"): raised area in front of the Sanctuary at which the Scriptures are read.

BISHOP: Hierarchy of the three orders ministry (along with presbyter/priest and deacon) established in the churches by the Apostles. The bishop represents the fullness of apostolic ministry and presides over a specific territory of the Church (called a "diocese") or oversees a specific activity or mission (ie "Education", "Evangelism") At liturgical services, the bishop wears the miter and carries the crosier as a sign of episcopal office. Only a bishop may ordain to major Orders.

BLESSING: A form of prayer invoking God's favor upon a person or object. Blessings are a part of and conclude most liturgical celebrations and are used to sanctify and dedicate persons or objects to God.

BOOK OF THE GOSPELS: A large ceremonial book containing the four Gospels for proclaiming the Gospel at liturgical celebrations.

BOWS:

BREAKING OF THE BREAD: The term used in the Acts of the Apostles to describe the Eucharist. The Breaking of the Bread/Fraction is a part of the Qorbono/Liturgy of the Eucharist.

BYZANTINE: Pertaining to the Tradition of the Church having its origins in the city of Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) and the Eastern Roman Empire, otherwise known as "Byzantium".

C

CANTOR: minister who chants liturgical responses, Psalms, Hymns and may lead the congregation's singing during the liturgy.

CATECHUMEN: An adult who is in the process of preparing for the reception of the Mysteries of Initiation. In the early Church, the process for such preparation could take years. In some old Syriac Churches this time of reception was part of the Easter Vigil Liturgy or, alternatively, at the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (6 January) or Pentecost; this is still preferred. **Catechumenate:** The process of Christian initiation; the catechumenate is the period of initiation from the Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens to the Rite of Baptism.

CATHEDRAL: The church building of the diocesan Church, where the bishop's chair/throne (*cathedra*) is housed.

CELEBRANT: The leader/presider at a religious service, especially of the Holy Qorbono. It is usually, but not always, a priest or deacon.

CENSER: The liturgical vessel used to burn incense. Censers may be open bowls or covered containers hung on chains for swinging.

CHALICE: The cup used to

CHOIR:

CHRISM: A holy oil consecrated for use in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, the dedication of a church building and the consecration of an altar.

CHRISTMAS:

CHURCH:

CIBORIUM: A container with a lid used to reserve the Sacrament in the tabernacle.

CONSECRATION: to make holy, to set apart through special prayers and ritual action.

COPE (Syr. *Phayno*): a vestment worn by priests and bishops.

CORPORAL: fine linen covering the *tablitho* upon which is placed the chalice and paten.

CREED (*credo* - "I Believe"): The Nicene (/Constantinopolitan) statement of belief shared by Christians that is proclaimed as a part of the liturgical celebrations.

CROSIER: A bishop's pastoral staff.

CRUETS: The pitcher-like containers, usually glass, for holding the water or wine to be offered at the Qorbono.

SIGN OF THE CROSS: Ritual gesture made with the right hand by joining the thumb, first finger, and second finger with the first finger extended and *drawing* the sign of the cross starting from the forehead, down the chest and then from the left to the right shoulder.

TABLE OF PREPARATION: A small *Credence* table at the right side of the sanctuary, usually near the altar, containing liturgical objects (e.g. cruets, lavabo, etc.) at which the offerings of bread and wine used in the *Qorbono are prepared.