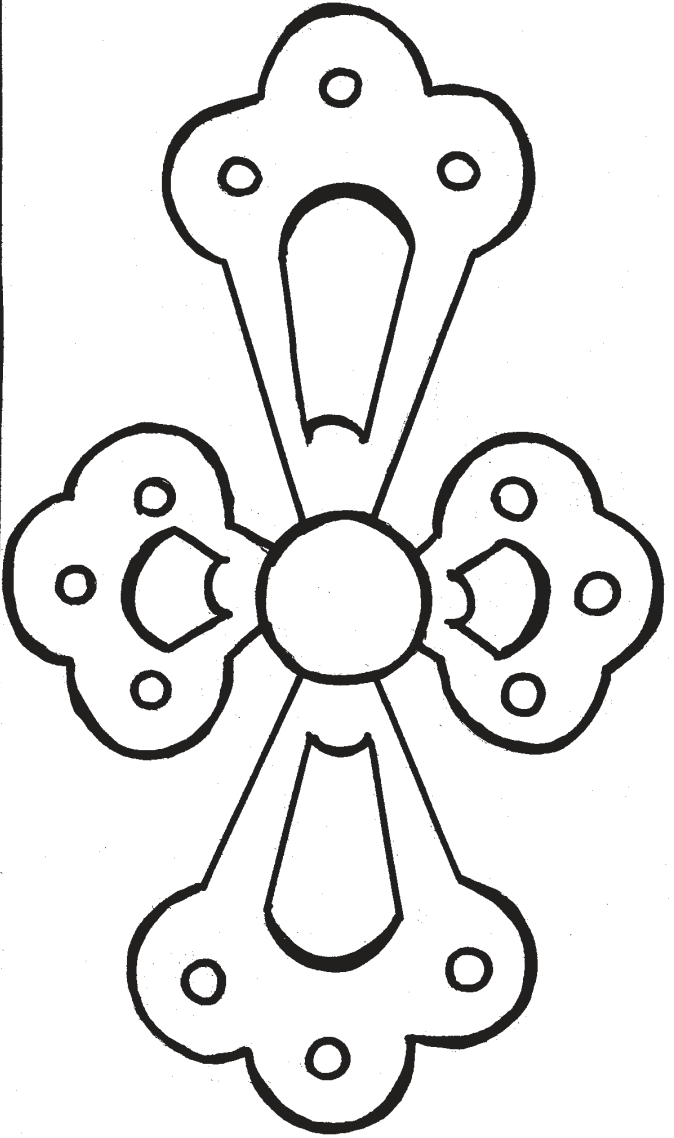
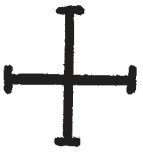
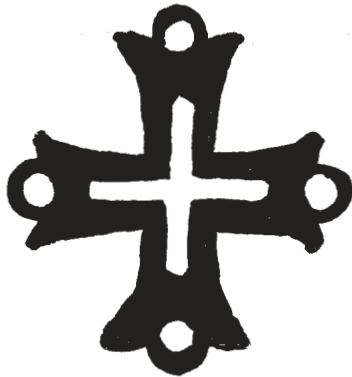


ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय



SERMON PREACHED BY HIS HOLINESS
MAR ESHAI SHIMUN XXIII CATHOLICOS
PATRIARCH OF THE CHURCH OF THE
EAST, IN THE CHURCH OF MAR ADDAI
THE APOSTLE, IN TURLOCK, CALIFORNIA
ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 3, 1967 ON THE
OCCASION OF THE RECEPTION INTO THE
CHURCH OF THE EAST OF SOME SEVENTY
AMERICANS AND THE ORDINATION OF SIX
MEN TO SERVE THE SAME CONGREGATION.



BY ORDER OF HIS HOLINESS

✠Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII
Catholicos Patriarch of
the Church of the East.

Printed at the Patriarchal Press
San Francisco, California, U. S. A.

The Feast of the Passover 1968

And Jesus came and spoke with them, and said to them, All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Just as my Father has sent me I am also sending you. Go, therefore, teach the faith to all peoples; and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and teach them to obey every thing that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world, amen. (St. Matthew 28:18-20, according to the Church of the East P'shetta text).

With this divine, inspiring and electrifying command, our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, on the day of His mighty and glorious resurrection bade His disciples to go to the four corners of the earth, to preach His life giving message to all men, irrespective of race, tongue or colour; thus universalizing His Messianic mission which hitherto as the King of Israel, from the seed of Abraham, and the house of David, had been concerned solely with his own people in the flesh, namely, the Jews.

In the words of St. John: "He came to his own, and his own did not receive him"(1:11).

But in the beginning of his mission on earth, Christ had given another command to his disciples, saying; "But above all, go to the sheep which are lost from the house of Israel." These "lost sheep" are the ten tribes that were led into exile by Sargon, king of Assyria in the year 722 B. C., and by Nebuchadnazer King of Babyon, in the year 597 B. C.

This was the land from which Abraham the father of the Jews had emanated, and in which all the major Jewish prophets had received their vision concerning the advent of the Messiah. It was on the river Khabour (Habor) that the prophet Ezekiel saw his vision, and on the river Euphrates that the prophet Daniel foretold the suffering of the Messiah at the hands of his own people, and the devastation of Jerusalem.

These Jews of diosporos had in the time of Christ grown into great and opulent communities in Babylon and throughout what now constituted the Persian Empire. Indeed their importance was not only numbers and wealth but also from a religious point of view.

The Babylonian "Talmud" often referred to as the Jewish post Christian Bible, was written in Babylon in the Biblical Eastern Aramaic used to this day by the Church of the East. Its importance in the Jewish religious education was so great in succeeding centuries that it often occupied a more central place than the Bible itself.

It was to these "lost sheep of the house of Israel" that Christ bade his disciples to go, and says St. Luke: "So the seventy whom he had sent returned with great joy, and they said to him, 'Our Lord, even demons have submitted to us in your name'."

Indeed, the influence of the Christian faith was already so strong among the Jewish community in Babylon, that the Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem, not long after the resurrection, sent one Khananys (Ananias) to counteract the spread of the Christian faith among the Jews of Babylon and elsewhere in the Persian Empire.

FOUNDATION LAID

Thus, the foundation already laid, immediately after the resurrection St. Thomas the Apostle reminded St. Peter and the other apostles of a promise made by our Lord to Ogar the King of Urhai; the Aramaic speaking kingdom in north west of Mesopotamia, located at the foothills of the mountains of Kurdistan. And so Mar Addai, in whose name this holy edifice has been consecrated, proceeded without delay to the city of Urhai, cured the king of his incurable malady which was also promised by Christ and preached his gospel to the dwellers of that city. Thus, the city of Urhai received the nomenclature "the blessed city, the believing city."

Mar Addai or Taddai, as he has also been called, was soon followed by Mar Tooma (Saint Thomas) the apostle who preached for many years in Babylon, before according to the command of Christ who appeared to him in a vision, went to South India. And he (Saint Thomas) was followed by Mar Bar Tulmay (Saint Bartholmew) and finally by Mar Shimun Keepa (Saint Simon Peter) himself who wrote his Catholic Epistle from Babylon.

Indeed, the spread of Messianic faith throughout the Persian Empire was so rapid that M'shikha-Skha, a Church of the East historian of the fifth century, says that by the year 90 A. D. there were already nineteen episcopal sees, under the see of Babylon, all the way from Syria to the Caspian sea, located in the present day Iran.

Likewise, did all the other apostles, as witnessed by the statement made in the "Acts of the Apostles" by the missionary of the west St. Paul himself, who says that he laboured in Arabia, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East some eighteen years before going to Athens and Rome.

In addition to all these facts one of the earliest and best known of Church historians, namely, Eusebius of Caesaria who wrote his now universally known ecclesiastical history in the fourth century. This history which Eusebius wrote in the Aramaic was during the fifth century translated into Greek and Armenian and in recent times into several other languages. Eusebius writing about the final destruction and devastation of Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 132 A. D. says, that not only the Jews of the Mosaic faith but also the Christian Jews were expelled from Jerusalem, and the latter settled in the city of Halab (Ellepo) in Syria, thus uniting the Apostolic See of Jerusalem of Mar Patros (Saint Peter) and Mar Yacob (Saint James) known as the brother of our Lord, with that of Babylon, or what has usually been referred to "the See of Seleucia-Ctesiphon," the twin capital city of the Persian Empire.

Among these Christian Jews were also the relatives of our Lord, and hence two names appear in the table of the Apostolic Succession of the Church of the East, namely, Mar Abris, relative of the virgin Mary, and Mar Yacob, relative of Mar Yosip (Saint Joseph) the carpenter, in the year 90 and 172 A. D. respectively.

This mass exodus is also confirmed by the Jewish history of this period which speaks of the great number of Jews, escaping the Roman cruelties unleashed under Emperor Hadrian, who fled and settled in Babylon.

Christ said, "Do not think that I have come to annul the law and the prophets; I have not come to annul but to fulfill." (Saint Matthew 5:17). The Christian faith, as we see from the Gospel itself is not separate from the faith of the Old Testament but rather the completion and perfection of that faith, and the Hebraic Christianity was so closely related in practice and worship to the Mosaic faith that according to the same Eusebius of Caesaria, the Jewish hierarchy had chosen Mar Yacob, the brother of our Lord, as the only man who could enter into the Holy of Holies and pray for the Jewish people. This was done in recognition of Mar Yacob's piety and sanctity. (Eusebius pp. 101).

The law and the prophets, Christ upheld, but the blood sacrifices he abolished, and in place of the Passover which He had commanded to Moses, He instituted his own Passover which as the second adam He offered on the Calvary; and in place of the Mosaic priesthood, He instituted his own priesthood, granted by the power of the Holy Spirit through Apostolic succession imparted in the Church by the laying on of hands.

Likewise, because of the close relationship of the Church of the East with the beatified apostles and their immediate successors, this Holy Church has not only retained the Holy Scrip-

tures, the faith, the liturgies, and the canon law without change; but it has also maintained the traditions and customs of the early Church.

Indeed, as witnessed by Eusebius, we find the gentile Church within the Roman Empire, namely, Greek and Latin, from the time of the devastation of Jerusalem, falling under the influence of secular authorities, namely, the pagan Roman Government which in the place of the Hebraic bishops (fourteen in all that sat upon the Apostolic see of Jerusalem) now appoints a gentile bishop by the name of Markos (Mark) whom Edward Gibbon asserts to have been a Latin by race, and this event marks the beginning of falling away of Western Christianity from the Apostolic source and hence of the endless heresies and divisions which arose in the Church (and with which Christianity is plagued to this day) culminating in the interpretation of the divine revelation of the Christian faith on the basis of the pagan Platonic philosophy and which eventually dominated the Western theological thinking through the influence of the Platonic School of thought in the city of Alexandria.

Thus the famous sister schools of Antioch and Urhai (Edessa) whose theology was based strictly on the Holy Scriptures, and had long fought against the errors of the School of Alexandria, which was the source of the Appolenarin heresy already condemned by the whole Church at the Council of Constantinople in the year 381 A. D., where finally defeated at the Council of Ephesus whose edicts were dictated by the Byzantine Emperor of the day.

These historical facts are becoming more and more evident to the Western Christians, especially to those of the Latin and Protestant tradition. The late Pope Pius, in his 1933 encyclical says: "The original text and not a translation, however authoritative, must be taken as the basis . . . "it is of great importance, says the Pope "to study the literary forms of the

ancient East. because Biblical writers did not always use the same forms as we use today." The same report, namely the Church, an organ of the World Council of Churches which quoted the Pope, says: "This relegates many former differences to a secondary status, especially those which were based on Hellenic compromise or upon scholastic legalistic interpretations of the Scriptures." Thus, acknowledging, no matter how tacitly, the deliberate changes made by the Greeks in the Holy Scriptures, and, therefore, of all the versions derived therefrom.

However, these acknowledgments made some two decades ago, have since been followed by far stronger statements and indeed sweeping changes that have been effected in both the doctrine and the liturgy of the Western Church, as witnessed by the numerous pronouncements that have recently emanated from the great ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is our earnest prayer that this vital historical step taken by this Council, and similar efforts being made by the various Christian churches, may be a precursor of the unity which the Lord and Saviour of the Church himself prayed for: "That they may be one, just as we are one." may finally be achieved on the basis of the Holy Scriptures.

SCHOLASTIC INSTITUTIONS

But the achievements of the Church of the East were not only in its appreciation of the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures which were written in the Aramaic language, the language spoken by Jesus and His apostles as well as by the Assyrian people who constituted the nucleus of the membership of this Church; nor in its ever glorious and unequalled missionary enterprise, of which says the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "Their campaign was one of deliberate conquest, and one of the greatest ever planned by Christian missionaries. Their activity may well be said to have

covered the continent of Asia." John Stuart, the author of the 'Nestorian Missionary Enterprise' speaking of these same missionaries says: "The amazing thing is not where they went, but rather where they did not go." Together with these achievements and of equal importance was the progress made by the Church of the East in the field of science and learning. Labourt, the learned French Roman Catholic writer, in his book *Le Chriteanisme dans l'empere Perse* (pgs. 294-301) speaking of its famous institutions of learning, namely, the Colleges of Urhai and N'siwin (Nisibin), founded in the third and fifth centuries A. D. respectively, calls the latter a university. Dr. E. R. Hayes, a priest of the Church of England who has written a history of both these famous schools, in a letter which he wrote to us says: "Here is the story of the first Christian University, if not of the first of all universities."

All branches of sciences were taught in the university of Nisibin including philosophy and medicine. As to their exegetical superiority, we quote the following statement from the "Studies In the History of Religions" by David Gordon Lyon. Speaking about the School of Nisbin, says Lyon: "In its instructions the Bible had the central place in its faculty the Professors of Biblical exegesis held the first rank. Sound principles of interpretation prevailed, and critical opinions were freely uttered which would not have been tolerated in our seminaries a generation ago and many of them are not tolerated now." (The History of Religions, edited by David Gordon Lyon, and George foot Moore, published by the Macmillian Co., New York, p. 266).

Indeed, the difference in the rational interpretation of the Christian faith existing between the Church of the East and the Church of the West, during this period and in succeeding centuries of the Christian era, may well be summed up in the following two instances.

In the eighth century during the Patriarchate of Mar Timotheus I, who was himself a man of profound learning, Eyo (Job) of Urhai, Dean of the famous School of Medicine in Baghdad, in his Encyclopaedia of Knowledge, writes on the "elemental origin of the universe and the bodies comprising it," which of course means the atom, and his opinions are tolerated and respected by the authorities of the Church of the East.

In the seventeenth century, on the other hand, during the papacy of Urban VIII, when Galileo formulated his now universally recognized theory on the solar system, he was threatened with excommunication and torture by the Inquisition.

These facts we have presented without any bias or prejudice but rather as facts of history, without which men could not find or correct his errors and thereby achieve the progress which we witness in our own generation, a progress indeed in which the University of Nisibin could claim an important share, for it was the scholars of the Church of the East who translated all the science into the Arabic language, and the Arabs, in turn, gave that knowledge to Europe through their centres of learning in Spain, and thereby illuminated Europe which was immersed in the dark ages.

It is into the diaconate and the priesthood of this same Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church that these men have been ordained this morning. They together with their followers who number some seventy persons in all, and who live in Seattle Washington, come from various racial and religious backgrounds, namely, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Irish, English, Scandinavian, Portuguese, etc. and this they have done after a long period of prayer and meditation, and with determination that they will serve the Holy Church with all their heart and all their soul. It is our earnest prayer that in this their search and determination, under the leadership

of their able Senior Priest, the Reverend Father Qashisha Michael John McCoy, they may be helped and guided by Our Lord Jesus Christ, the invisible Head and the High Priest of His Church.

The service of the ordination which you have just witnessed goes back to the apostles themselves; indeed to Our Lord who laid His Holy Hands upon them and gave them the power of the Holy Spirit.

The sacrament of the Apostolic succession of the Church of the East which is first of the seven sacraments and without which all the others would be invalid, has been summed up by one of the fathers of the Church, viz, Mar O'dishoo, the Metropolitan of Nisibin and Armenia in his book titled "Marganitha."

The priesthood, says Mar O'dishoo, is the ministry of mediation between God and man in those things which impart forgiveness of sins, convey blessings, and put away wrath. It is divided into imperfect, as was that of the law; and perfect, as is that of the Church.

The foundation of the priesthood in the Church is laid on that declaration of the Lord of priesthood to St. Peter, in the region of Caesarea Philippi: "To thee I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

Its superstructure comes from that other injunction; "Feed My lambs. Feed my sheep. Feed My ewes."

Its completion and perfection from that He breathed on them saying: "Receive ye the Holy Spirit; if ye forgive a man his sins, they are forgiven to him; and if you withhold forgiveness of a man's sins, they shall be held." (Marganitha translated from Aramaic into English by His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun, published by Mar Timotheus Press, Ernakulam, Kerala State, India.)

The focal point of the ordination, however, is the prayer for the descent of the Holy Spirit which we have invoked in this ordination and from which we quote the following verses . . . "And Thou O Lord, look upon these Thy servants, and make them holy and preferred by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Let their mouth speak the truth. And elect them to the priesthood O Lord God Almighty. That they may lay their hands on the sick and they may be cured, and that they may serve Thy Holy Altar with a pure heart and a good conscience, while offering to Thee oblations, prayers and thanksgiving in Thy Holy Church. And that they may consecrate by the power of Thy gift the Sanctifying Womb (baptismal font) unto the sacrament of birth, to those who are called by Thy grace to the participation as sons of covenant of Thy Lordship. And that they may adorn with works of righteousness the children of Thy Holy Catholic Church to the glory of Thy Holy Name. And that they may also be rewarded in the world to come, for the pure and holy service which they are performing before Thee. May they stand in confidence before Thy awesome Throne. And this we ask by the grace and mercy of Thy Only Begotten. To Thee and unto the Holy Spirit, we render praise glory and worship for ever and ever, amen."

FAITH AND DOCTRINE

The doctrine of the Church of the East has been perpetuated unchanged from the days of the apostles and is strictly according to the Holy Scriptures. Any doctrine therefore which is contrary to the Scriptures is considered erroneous and heretical.

This doctrine has been briefly but fully summed up in the following hymn of praise composed by Mar Bawai the Great in the sixth century A. D. :

One is Christ the Son of God,

Worshipped by all in two natures;
 In His Godhead begotten of the Father
 Without beginning before all time;
 In His humanity born of Mary
 In the fulness of time, in a body united
 Neither His Godhead is of the nature of
 the mother,
 Nor His humanity of the nature of the
 Father;
 The natures are preserved in their Qnumas
 In one person of one Sonship.
 And as the Godhead is three substances
 in one nature,
 Likewise the Sonship of the Son is in two
 natures, one person,
 So the Holy Church has taught. "

Thus, the Church of the East professes in two natures in Christ, namely, divine and human, united inseparably and eternally in the person of the Sonship. It rejects the term "Mother of God" used for the virgin Mary, and "God died" also applied to the death of Christ by the Theopaschites. And the reason for this rejection has been so clearly stated by Mar O'dishoo in the book of Marganitha, where he says: "First, if the virgin Mary is the "Begetter of God" and the name God, we know denotes Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then she brought forth the Trinity and not the only Son.

Secondly, If the virgin Mary is the "begetter of God" and He who she brought forth suffered, died and was buried, as the four evangelists testify, either you hold that He died in reality; (and he who really dies has no power whatever to revivify others or himself, but must remain in death for ever) and thus you declare false the saying that He rose again: or else you hold that he died by hallucination, and in the same way rose again, (in which case He could not have risen in reality, seeing that He did not die in reality)

then the hope of the resurrection is vain, since hereby the saying that "He has raised us up with Christ" is made void.

Thirdly, if the virgin Mary is the "Begetter of God" and Peter testifieth of Him who she brought forth, saying: "Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God," then according to your statement she is not the Begetter of Christ, but the Begetter of His Father, and Christ is her grandson, not her son, and she is the mother of His Father. Who then is the mother of Christ?" (Marganitha pp. 41-42).

In conclusion, and before partaking of this most sacred offering of the Body and Blood of Christ, we ask you all to join us in prayer that the Holy Spirit may inspire these men, whom we have just ordained into the ministry of His Church, and with them the whole Church, to once again in accordance with His command go out and preach His message of salvation to all men, baptizing them in the name of the Triune God, bringing them into the unity of His Holy Church.

We wish also to unite our prayer with that of those of the millions who are praying for the unity of the Church which He purchased with his precious blood; so that it may once again be united as it was in the days of the apostles, and that His Prayer to His Holy Father may become a reality in our generation, amen.