



CHURCH

THE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

CATECHETICAL TEXTBOOK SERIES OF THE SYRO - MALABAR CHURCH

LESSON 1

WORSHIP OF GOD



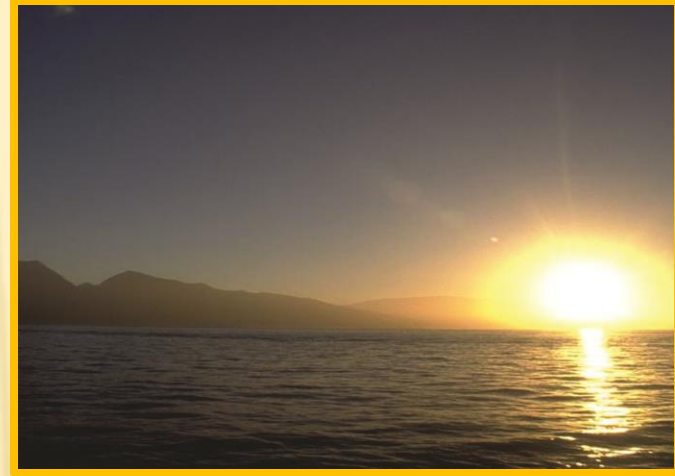


One day, Jesus was conversing with a Samaritan woman by Jacob's well. Casting divine light into the innermost recesses of her heart, he invited her to the path of salvation. It was then, she asked him about the worship of God, the very source of experiential salvation:

"Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem". Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. (Jn. 4:19-20,23). Jesus was, in fact, referring here to the worship of God yet to be fulfilled through him. The true form of worship was the sacrifice on Mount Calvary offered by Jesus dedicating himself to the eternal Father. The active participation in this sacrifice is real worship, no matter, wherever it is offered.

MAN, THE WORSHIPPER

The worship of God is as old as the history of mankind. In the olden days, man worshipped anything and everything that was beyond his wit and might, and hence he worshipped the sun, the moon, the snake, the natural elements etc. His awe and wonder at them led him to worship them. The basic motive of this worship was to escape from their wrath and get favours from them .



The intelligent man, during the process of worshipping the natural powers, probed deep and reached at the omnipotent source that has been imparting might and power to all the natural objects. He addressed this supreme power as God and began worshipping Him and ceased to worship the natural elements. The mode of worship varies depending on the traditional, regional and socio-cultural practices of the people across the globe. Even then the basic tenet of worship was oblation. From time immemorial, man, as a symbolic offering of himself, went on offering flowers, fruits, birds and animals.

Man, who has been created in the true image of God and inspired by the latent God-orientation in him, was instinctively led to worship Him. He will reach God through this instinct, unaided by any external agent.. And hence, St. Augustine said, "God, you have created man for yourself ; until he reaches you, his soul will not be at ease". Yes, man's life becomes meaningful only when it merges with God.



ACTIVITY -1

Make a collage with pictures containing the different modes of worship of the various religions and explain them before the group.

WORSHIP OF GOD IN DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

All religions give due importance to the worship of God despite their variations in mode and manner. Whereas Hindus offer pujas in front of the statues of gods and goddesses, Muslims resort to prayers and hymns recited aloud in addition to fasting and alms-giving. Similarly, Jains and Buddhists have their own peculiar methods of adoration.

ACTIVITY -2

Group the students into four and ask them to make a paper report, with a proper title, presenting the God who comes in search of man, based on the Bible passages: Gen. 12:1-9; 18:1-15; 28:10-22; Ex. 3: 1-18

WORSHIP OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

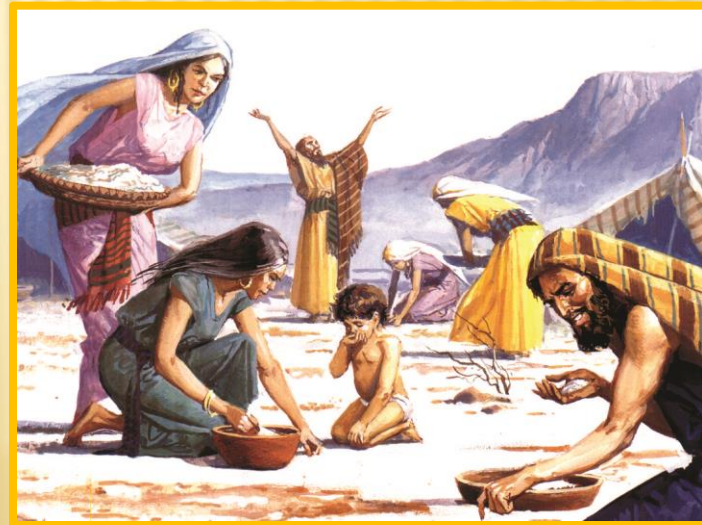
The Old Testament pictures God always going in search of man, whereas in other religions, man goes in search of God. They worshipped God, who revealed Himself to the Israelites. "I am your Lord and God", God said, appearing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The temple in Jerusalem was their place of worship.

God released the Israelites from Egyptian bondage with the intention of making them a worshipping community. Moses, who came with the message to release the Israelites, said to Pharaoh: "Let us go on a three-day journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord, our God" (Ex.5:3). Having been smothered under the ten plagues, the last and final being the death of the first-borns, Pharaoh understood the power of the Israelites' God and decided to release them from slavery, and said: "Go, worship the Lord as you said" (Ex.12:31). God sealed a covenant with the Israelites on Mount Sinai and made them His own people. The Israelites recognized fully the power of God when they were rescued from Egyptian slavery.



God saved them from enemies during their precarious journey across the desert, provided water from the rock to quench their thirst, and Manna and wild fowls to feed them. They remembered the love of God and worshipped Him in gratitude.

They worshipped God not only in their houses but also in the temple in Jerusalem and synagogues. Different types of sacrifices were offered in the temple in Jerusalem; thanksgiving sacrifice, sacrifice for atonement, sacrifice for penance, burnt offerings, incense offering, grain offerings, to name a few. They assembled in synagogues and praised God reading the Bible and chanting psalms. They used to assemble in houses under the head of the family and chanted psalms, broke bread and shared it with everybody. In short, the life of the Israelites was centered on devotion to God.



WORSHIP WITHOUT THE HEART

In the course of time the worship practiced by Israelites dwindled into mere external formalities. They believed that by executing the external formalities they could attain holiness. They forgot that the external formalities ought to be signs of inner holiness; and, consequently, God refused to accept their sacrifices and worship. The Lord said:

“These people draw near with their mouths and honour me with their lips while their hearts are far from me”(Isa. 29:13). “Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good” (Isa.16-17). God taught through the prophet Hosea, “I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings”(Hos.6:6).



WORSHIP IN TRUTH AND SPIRIT

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "the hour is coming when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (Jn.4:23). And Jesus through his life and sacrifice, proved this. True worship is the reciprocation of the love of God who comes in search of man. This worship consists in fulfilling the wish of the loving one; hence, it demands our readiness to sacrifice all our wishes and ourselves.

Jesus sacrificed himself to fulfill the wish of God, the Father. He revealed, through his sacrifice, his love for his Father. Thus, he rendered worship most pleasing to God. We, the Christians, participate in this most majestic and supreme worship rendered by Jesus. Jesus taught us, how to worship God in truth and spirit, by executing His will. As opined by St. Irenaeus, a life led according to the design of God - based on the commandments - is true worship." I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable"(Rom.12:1).

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CHRISTIAN WORSHIP, A SHARING IN JESUS' WORSHIP



We cannot offer a sacrifice better than what Jesus offered. Hence, Christians, who participate in the worship of God, unite with Jesus and offer his one and eternal sacrifice. Christian worship is that praise, respect, thanks and adoration we offer to God in heaven and on earth by uniting ourselves with Jesus, the head of the Church, through our participation in the holy Qurbana, sacraments, sacramentals and the divine office.

THE CHURCH, THE TRUE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

Like the old Israel, the new Israel also is a worshipping community. As a father loves his only son and a husband his wife, God loved Israel. Similarly, He loves the Church, the new Israel. He proved this love by sacrificing His life. **The Church repays this love sacrificing herself and participating in the sacrifice of Jesus. Thus, uniting herself with Jesus, our Lord and God, and offering his sacrifice, the Church has become the worshipping community of the New Testament.**

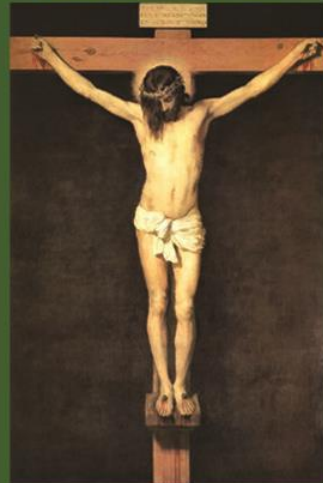
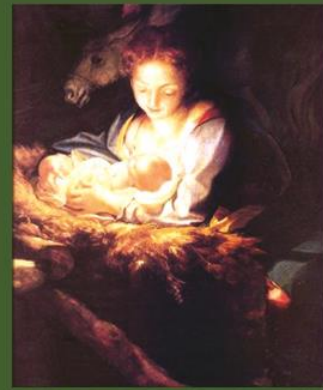
The Church, by participating in the holy Qurbana - a commemoration and celebration of the sacrifice of Jesus, the celebration of the sacraments, the liturgical year, the sacramentals, the divine office etc., is undertaking this duty. The risen Jesus, through these liturgical observances, showers graces upon mankind and offers the adoration of man to God, the Father. (Liturgy-7) .Thus, the worshipping community who offers sacrifice with Christ participates in the salvific experience.

LITURGY: THE WORSHIP OF GOD

The official and public worship of God is called liturgy. It originates from the Greek word 'leitourgia', which means public activity. The word 'liturgy' is used in the Bible to indicate that the Church is publicly praising God.

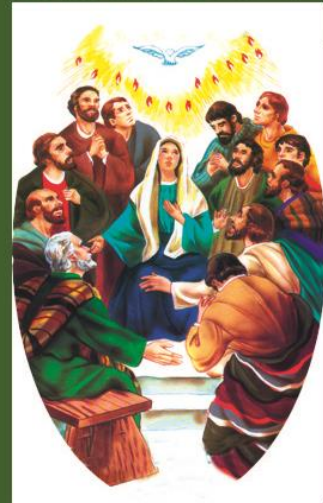
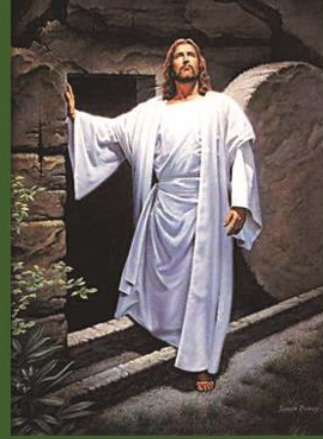
In Malayalam, 'dhaivaradhana' is the word equivalent to liturgy, and it is also used to denote the Holy Eucharist. In an extended way, the word liturgy refers to the Holy Eucharist, the sacraments, the liturgical year, the sacramentals, and the divine office.

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Liturgy is the proclamation of faith by the community of the Church who has reconciled with God the Father through Jesus. It is also the worship of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by the Church in union with Jesus who, out of his love for his Father offered a sacrifice with his life and death on the cross.

Through liturgy, a Christian partakes in the redemptive events such as the incarnation, life, passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus offered the most pleasing worship to the Father, each Christian, by participating in these mysteries, offers true worship to God. It is the duty of every Christian to unite with the Church and worship God.





**LET US
READ AND MEDITATE
THE WORD OF GOD**

(Rom. 12 : 1 - 2)



A VERSE TO REMEMBER

By the mercies of God, present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship. (Rom. 12:1)

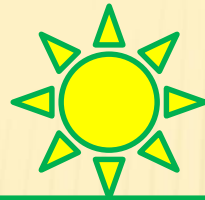
LET US PRAY

Jesus, the eternal priest, please empower us
to offer the holy Qurbana, which you have
given to the Church by sacrificing yourself, with
purity of heart.



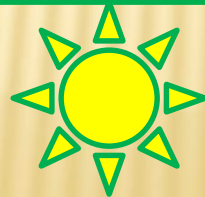
MY RESOLUTION

I will learn about the liturgy of the Church and participate in it whole heartedly.



TEACHINGS OF THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

Hardly there is a single human race who will never pray and chant grateful hymns to God, the creator of the universe in the name of the crucified Jesus. (St. Justin).



QUESTIONS

1. What do you know about the liturgical rites prevalent in the olden days?
2. Christian adoration is a sharing in the adoration of Jesus. Explain.
3. The Jews were a worshipping community. Elucidate.
4. How should we offer worship in spirit and truth as taught by Jesus?
5. What is liturgy? List out the different elements of liturgy.



Thank you