

ASIAN
HORIZONS
Vol. 12, No. 3, September 2018
Pages: 500-513

PRIESTLY MINISTRY OF HUMANS ON THE EARTH OF THE LORD

Ecological Reading of the Liturgical Prayer of the Qurbana

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Abstract

This article is an ecological reading of the Liturgical prayer of the Qurbana of the Syro-Malabar Church of the Thomas Christians of India in order to demonstrate the priestly ministry of humans on the earth of the Lord. Human beings celebrate and they are called to minister to the celebration of life in fullness, responding to the image of God, which we might call as priestly ministry of humans on the earth of the Lord. Remembrance initiates people to praise and thank God for the faithful, free and friendly relationships. The Liturgy of the Eucharist reminds human beings as ministers of remembrance and relationship and draws the roadmap for the celebration of life. In this Liturgy of the

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This paper was originally presented at the Third International Conference of Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church (CTEWC) on "A Critical Time for Bridge-Building: Catholic Theological Ethics Today," held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina from 26-29 July 2018.

Oriental Church, the author traces the dynamics of a transmission of values in order to initiate a transformation from within in such a way that the worshipping congregation might appropriate the right relationship with the world in their daily ordinary life. Seen the creation as divine revelation, we are given an invitation through the second *g'hantha* (prayer of inclination) of the Qurbana to follow the chief actions of a priest, which each one has to perform in the celebration of the Liturgy and in the ordinary life. Hence, the author proposes that a renewed understanding of the values and vision celebrated in the Liturgy and the concomitant commitment to the manifold realities and relationships will help Christians to fulfil the priestly ministry of humans on earth of the Lord.

Keywords: Celebrative Ethics, Creation, Earth, Ecological Ethics, Nature, Oriental Liturgy, Priestly Ministry, Qurbana, Revelation, Syro-Malabar Church, Thomas Christians of India

Human beings celebrate and they are called to minister to the celebration of life in fullness, responding to the image of God, which we might call as priestly ministry of humans on the earth of the Lord. Remembrance initiates people to praise and thank God for the faithful, free and friendly relationships.

Celebration is central to life and its flourishing: wherever there is life, there is celebration, and vice versa; one mirrors the other. Though there are many salient features to a celebration, the coming together is essential to it. This is true of all forms and levels of life celebration on earth, including that of human life. A meaningful and memorable celebration calls for ministers or celebrants to organize it orderly and beautifully, as in the case of an orchestra: all are important in their assigned roles, space, and time.

Ecology is the word about the world, our home, and it is the study of the celebration of life taking into account the interrelatedness of all things. The key to the cosmic celebration is the inherently interwoven relationship – accepting the truth of all beings and doing justice to all in every circumstance. Recognizing, respecting and responding to the other is the way to ecological harmony and prosperity, the blueprint of which is stipulated in the covenant community consciousness.

Remembrance and re-presentation of the inherent interrelationship in the world help people celebrate and promote the harmony, joy, and beauty of life in the context of community. The liturgical celebration of the Qurbana (Eucharist) is a wonderful event of unfolding the inherent interrelationship of God-creation-human beings and a grateful moment of equipping and enabling the

assembly in pursuing the relationships accordingly. In light of the liturgical celebration, every human being is a priest who is called upon to praise, honour, worship, and adore the Lord our God on behalf of creation and on account of the abundant divine mercy showered upon humanity.

In what follows, I would like to discuss the priestly ministry of humans on earth of the Lord under three successive headings: 1) Humans as Ministers of Priestly Remembrance and Relationship; 2) Liturgy as the Reminder of the Ministry of Ministers; and 3) Liturgy as the Roadmap for the Celebration of life.

1. Humans as Ministers of Priestly Remembrance and Relationship

Human beings, who are rational, intelligent, and relational, take up the responsibility to minister to the celebration of life. In the Christian perspective, people assume this office of ministry because of Jesus Christ, who is the archetype of humans and Jesus who became a servant to save the whole world. Jesus who washed the feet of his disciples stands out as an example of preeminence to be emulated by the followers of Christ. The celebrations on earth, carrying an imprint of the heavenly as well, are organized intelligently and voluntarily by human beings, whose mission is one of a minister. Human beings, following the image of God in which they are created, reflect the image of a servant, who preserves, protects, and promotes the celebration of life in creation, for God creates, sustains, and saves everything for the beauty, joy, and glory of all.

Life is a continued celebration, interwoven with remembrance. As celebrations disappear, so life vanquishes; like the heartbeat of a person. Celebration presupposes relationships. And the remembrance of relationships is the right and first step of celebration; the act of remembering the story is the beginning of a celebration. A genuine remembrance brings us closer to the community – God-creation-human beings – the well-knit web of covenant community consciousness and relationships. By maintaining these fundamental threefold relationships, we actualize and accelerate the celebration of life. And in celebrating these triadic covenantal relationships with God-creation-humanity, there emerges a faithful, free, and friendly ambience for the flourishing of life.

Human beings, when assume the mission of priestly ministry to these threefold realities after the example of Jesus, the Master and Saviour, the reign of God would dawn and the will of God would govern and guide the universe. Humans, the ministers of *oikos*, that is, priests of the temple of God as well, are called upon to praise and

thank the Lord God for the wonderful, beautiful, fruitful providence and presence of the Lord for the wellbeing and harmony of all beings in the world. Genuine celebrations, attending to the interconnectivity of the triadic realities and relationships, make the Angelic hymn at the Nativity of Jesus echo in heaven and on earth, “Glory to God in highest. Peace on earth and hope to human beings,”¹ the *magna carta* for ecological harmony, economic prosperity, and earthly peace, which marks the formal beginning of the liturgical celebration of the Qurbana or Raze in the Syro-Malabar Church, signaling the priestly ministry of people on earth of the Lord.

2. Liturgy as the Reminder of the Ministry of Ministers

The entire liturgical celebration of the Qurbana is a reminder of the priestly ministry of the people of God in the world: praise, honour, adoration, worship, thanksgiving, and glorification of God. There are numerous instances in the celebration where the liturgical assembly remembers the priestly ministry: “We offer glory and honour, thanksgiving, and worship to Your living, holy, and life-giving name. Now, always, and forever.”² This illustrates the vocation of people on earth, that is, rendering priestly ministry as ministers in keeping the beauty and harmony of the world of God. Such an action of the people of God is consolidated in the Liturgy from the beginning to the end. For instance, soon after the celebration of the Angelic hymn in the Liturgy, the antiphon to the prayer of “Our Father” is a telling example, “Our Father in heaven, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory, angels and people sing out Thy glory, holy, holy, Thou art holy.”³ On the one hand, the comingling of heaven and earth in the glory of God is underlined, and, on the other, angels and people jointly sing the glory of God: an orchestration of heavenly and earthly celebration, in which *the role of humans is the ministerial priesthood giving glory, honour, worship, and thanksgiving to God both in heaven and on earth, thus establishing peace on earth and rendering hope to people.*

C: Lord of all, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! The adorable name of Your most Blessed Trinity is worthy of honour from every mouth, thanksgiving from every tongue, and praise from every creature. For, in Your great kindness You created the world and everything in it, and showed humanity Your immense mercy. Multitudes of heavenly hosts and thousands upon thousands of holy angels and host of spiritual ministers of fire and spirit bow down and adore You, O Most High! And

¹See *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, Mount St Thomas, Kakkanad, Kochi: Syro-Malabar Bishop’s Synod, 2015, 13. Hereafter *Syro-Malabar Qurbana*

²*Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 58.

³*Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 14.

they glorify Your name and offer You worship together with the holy Cherubim and Seraphim.⁴

This is the second *g'hantha*, inclination prayer, of the Anaphora of the apostles Addai and Mari celebrated in the Syro-Malabar Church of the Saint Thomas Christians. It is a commemoration of the creation of God and the consequent prayer of worship and thanksgiving offered to the Lord of all on behalf of the entire creation, including human beings. In this prayer, the priest recounts the blessings of God through creation to humanity. Seeing the wondrous creation, the priest in all earnestness acknowledges that the most Holy Trinity is worthy of honour from every mouth, thanksgiving from every tongue, and praise from every creature. The liturgical assembly is informed about the marvellous acts of the Lord and it is trained to honour, thank and praise the Lord our God. A transmission of values is underway in order to initiate a transformation from within in such a way that the worshipping congregation might appropriate the right relationship with the world in their daily ordinary life. In the event of celebration, human beings are reminded of their leadership role in the priestly ministry: they need to imbibe and fulfil the task of tilling and keeping the garden in order to reveal the beauty, joy and glory of God.

The mystical poetry of Saint Ephrem on the *Hymns of Paradise* is fitting. According to him, there are two books of revelation: one, the book of Nature and, two, the book of Scripture. The proper use and reading of these books of revelation in our daily life take us to the presence of God.⁵ Along with the ministerial priest, the community of royal priests, has a bounden duty to continue the pattern of hallowing the Lord through honouring and praising God for the bounty of *creation even outside the four walls of the temple of worship*.

Seen in the perspective of creation as divine revelation, we are given an invitation through the second *g'hantha* to follow the chief actions of a priest, which each one has to perform in the celebration of the liturgy and in the ordinary daily life. As per the text of the prayer, priestly ministry includes, honouring, thanksgiving, praise, adoration, glorification, and worshiping of God. In a celebrative mood, the assembly recollects and renews its commitment to the most Blessed Trinity, who is “worthy of *honour* from every mouth, *thanksgiving* from every tongue, and *praise* from every creature,”

⁴Syro-Malabar Qurbana, 50.

⁵St Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* 5, see Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World of St Ephrem*, Placid Lectures, Rome: CIIS, 1985, 137.

“thousands of holy angels and hosts of spiritual ministers of fire and spirit bow down and *adore* You” and “they *glorify* Your name and offer You *worship*.” The assembly is inspired to take up the mission of the priestly ministry – honouring, thanking, praising, adoring, glorifying, and worshipping – down the lane of everyday life; and thus establishing harmony between the celebration of liturgy and the life of a Christian,⁶ for life and liturgy are not watertight compartments, rather they are interrelated and mutually enlightening, empowering, and enriching.

Canticle of the Creatures of Saint Francis of Assisi gives us a taste of the same liturgical experience and exultation. Obviously the *Canticle* begins with the priestly ministry, “Praise be you, my Lord, with all your creatures” and it concludes with the lines of praise, “Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you light the night/and he is beautiful and playful/and robust and strong.”⁷ Saint Francis sees the friendly, to be precise, brotherly and sisterly relationship with the realities of the world and praises the Lord God for the wonderful providence. See there is a parallel – as far as the priestly ministry of humans on earth is concerned, we can draw of the second *g’hantha* of the Qurbana with that of the *Canticle of the Creatures*: when persons are rooted and related with the realities of the world, they begin to wonder and praise the Lord, performing the priestly ministry before the Lord in deed in the world. Pope Francis chooses the *Canticle of the Creatures* as the prelude to his encyclical, *Laudato Sí: On Care for our Common Home*. In its opening paragraph, Pope Francis comments, “In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.”⁸ And the encyclical attests importance to the priestly ministry prior to the presentation of the hymn. “When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them.”⁹ Unfortunately, humans went astray from the pristine priestly ministry and engage in the unbridled exploitation of creation. The encyclical captures the cause of the current ecological crisis, “We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in

⁶See John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 21; 26.

⁷Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of the Creatures*,

⁸*Laudato Sí*, 1.

⁹*Laudato Sí*, 87.

the water, in the air and in all forms of life.”¹⁰ Quoting Patriarch Bartholomew, the encyclical teaches, “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God.”¹¹ Highlighting the sacramental nature of creation and the priestly ministry of humans on earth, the encyclical reiterates the reflection of Bartholomew:

As Christians, we are also called “to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God’s creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet.”¹²

This illustrates the intimacy of human beings with God through creation. The celebration of the Qurbana, in general, and the second *g’hantha*, in particular, celebrates the communion of humans, heaven and earth. The Eucharist is an invitation to celebrate the cosmic and eschatological communion as a foretaste:

The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God’s hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, “creation is projected towards divinization, to the holy wedding feast, towards unification with Creator himself.”¹³

The liturgical celebration is not in isolation, but it is deeply related to earth, our common home. “He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life.”¹⁴ Life centred on Qurbana sheds “light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor.”

3. Liturgy as the Roadmap for the Celebration of Life

The second *g’hantha* draws a larger picture of community of life, where we get a glimpse of harmony, beauty, joy, and glory of heaven, earth, and humanity. In the liturgical celebration of the Church God, creation, and humanity find a place in the overarching holistic picture of the covenant community and it implicitly presents a roadmap of earthly and heavenly celebration for our times and for all times. The prayer draws our attention to the priestly ministry,

¹⁰*Laudato Sí*, 2.

¹¹*Laudato Sí*, 8.

¹²*Laudato Sí*, 9.

¹³*Laudato Sí*, 236.

¹⁴*Laudato Sí*, 236.

namely, honouring, praising, thanking, adoring, worshipping, and glorifying God, as an assurance towards establishing peace on earth and rendering hope to human beings, which guarantees the glory of God in the highest. Setting the priorities in life, in other words, will address the ethical issues, like, ecological crisis of our times. This means, the words, gestures, attitudes, dispositions, and actions of the liturgical celebration shall find a reverberation amid the trials and triumphs of human life. Thus, the liturgical celebration may be seen as a play school to learn enthusiastically the fundamentals of the faith and shape the programme of Christian life. And the liturgical celebration sets the standard for our everyday behaviour and eventually the process of becoming like Christ, for whom thanksgiving, blessing, and praising God was a spontaneous overflow of his heart in the context of everyday life. If we focus on the creative and celebrative dynamics of the Liturgy, then we are in a position to see and enjoy the merging and mingling of the mystery of Christ and the reality of Christian life in the given context: one inspiring and influencing the other.

Such an integral vision of Christian life is further illustrated and elaborated in the following prayer of the Qurbana:

C: Praising You with a loud voice unceasingly, they proclaim in one voice:

Ch & A: Holy, holy, holy Lord, the mighty God. Heaven and earth are filled with Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who came in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.¹⁵

The glory of God fills both earth and heaven. Everything is pervaded and permeated by the presence of God. Hence, earth and heaven are holy; and everything in it is holy. We are called upon to encounter the glory of God in creation as well. The bridge between earth and heaven is built and now it is up to human beings to recognize the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation. Equally it is an invitation to approach the world with a priestly mission of hallowing the creation, that is, transferring the frame of mind of a priest who joins the creation, angels, heavenly hosts in honouring, thanking, praising, adoring, worshipping, and glorifying God in and through everything of the universe, which would eventually develop the much needed healthy and happy relationship with creation and people. The invitation to sing "Holy, holy, holy Lord" is striking, for it is a reiteration of the interrelationship of the triadic realities. It

¹⁵*Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 51.

reads, "Praising You with a loud voice unceasingly, they proclaim in one voice." The Sanctus illustrates the mingling of earth and heaven in praising and hallowing God on account of Jesus "who came in the name of the Lord," which is a revelation of the glory of God who assumed the human form in the world. By emphasizing the mystery of Incarnation, the worth and beauty of creation is established and further enhanced, which leaves the assembly more and more obliged to maintain harmony in the world.

At the moment of singing the Sanctus, the celebrant makes a prayer in low voice, an important and engaging one as far as our relationship with creation is concerned:

C: God the Father, You are holy. You alone are the true Father! All Fatherhood in heaven and on earth comes from you. Eternal Son, You are holy. Everything was created through You. Holy Spirit, You are holy. Everything is sanctified through You.¹⁶

The above prayer makes the Christian world-vision abundantly clear to the assembly. There is no room for any confusion and conflict regarding the fundamental belief of the community in the goodness and beauty of creation. The attributes assigned to the persons of the most Holy Trinity in the above prayer embolden us to relate with creation as the children of God, the disciples of Jesus, and the fellows of the Holy Spirit. So it is a matter of intimate and important relationship with the world. The whole world, including human beings, belongs to God. God is the Lord of all things, moving and unmoving. Human beings are called upon to be priests performing the ministry of God on earth of the Lord. If God has held the world in high esteem and treated it as his own, we, the children of God, the disciples of Christ, and the fellows of the Holy Spirit, have to develop a lifestyle congenial to the mystery of the Holy Trinity, nurturing and fostering the communion and community of life in light of creative love of the Father, redeeming grace of Christ, and sanctifying fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Seen from the perspective of the economy of salvation, the above prayer may be considered as a statement on the three important phases of revelation. In the beginning of creation, God is the author and father everything. And the prayer celebrates the creation by God, "All Fatherhood in heaven and on earth comes from you." According to the *Book of Genesis*, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). The mission of Jesus is also celebrated in the prayer, "Eternal Son, You are holy. Everything was

¹⁶*Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 51.

created through You.” This is the acknowledgment of the truth, “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” (Jn 1:3). In order to understand the mystery of Christ more comprehensively, it might be appropriate to combine another significant passage from the same gospel. “For God so loved this world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). It is the love of God for creation which moves him to send his only begotten Son Jesus Christ. This tells volumes regarding the love of God for creation. In the third phase of salvation is the present one, which is animated and guided by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the mission of Jesus Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit in the present stage of salvation is also celebrated, “Holy Spirit, You are holy. Everything is sanctified through You.”¹⁷ The Holy Spirit, the helper and councilor, leads the assembly to the fuller truth and greater freedom, as She accompanies the Church in following the mission of Jesus entrusted to her, namely, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). This illustrates the joy and beauty of the gospel of Christ, which the Church is commissioned to carry out faithfully, freely, and fruitfully.

All these scriptural insights unfold the priestly ministry of humans on earth of the Lord, for Christians, seen in light of the ecological issues of our time, are called upon (i) to see the world as God saw it, (ii) to serve the world as God sent his only Son to save it, and (iii) to be sent as the good news to the whole creation.¹⁸ As a matter of fact, *seeing* the wonders of creation and praising the Lord, *servoing* the world in order to *save* it from peril after the example of Jesus Christ, the high-priest, and witnessing the beauty, joy and glory of creation of God spell out the ordinary ministry of a priest, a shepherd having the smell of a sheep.

At this juncture, one might ask a pertinent question: why the celebration of the Qurbana for centuries has not contributed substantially to the upkeep of the earth of the Lord? It is an important and relevant question. Nevertheless, the ecological crisis is due to the rupture in relationships. The ignorance, negligence, arrogance, forgetfulness, etc., of what is being celebrated concerning the fundamental interrelationships might be a serious obstacle in the process of translation. The antidote to address the current ecological

¹⁷Syro-Malabar Qurbana, 51

¹⁸Paulachan Kochappilly, “Ecological Crisis and Christian Response,” *Theology for Our Times* 18 (March 2016), Bangalore: Indian School of Ecumenical Theology, Ecumenical Christian Centre, 1-24.

crisis, both natural and human, is nothing but mindful celebration of the mysteries and the willingness to translate the priestly ministry of humans on the earth of the Lord. In other words, we need to consecrate ourselves to *anamnesis* in order to overcome *amnesia*. Obviously, the liturgical celebration is a heightened moment of a live-transmission of values, in our case, the ecological values enshrined in the liturgical prayers, capable of transforming the lifestyle of the people of the community. Since the liturgical celebration is congregational, the significance of it is far reaching.

Furthermore, the liturgical celebration offers the assembly an opportunity to return to the covenant community consciousness and live a life of reconciliation and communion. This is urgent today. The celebration of the Qurbana sets the scene clearly and cogently. Besides the proper rite of reconciliation in the Qurbana, it is heartening to see the following prayer of the celebrant:

C: Woe to me! I am dismayed! For, my lips are unclean. And I live in the midst of people with unclean lips. My eyes have seen the King, the almighty Lord. How awe-inspiring is this place where today I have seen the Lord face to face! This is none other than the House of God! Lord, may Your mercy be on us. Clean us who are unclean and sanctify our lips. Lord, enjoin the hymns of us, who are feeble, with the praises of the Seraphim and the Archangels. Praise be to Your mercy that has unified the inhabitants of heaven and earth.¹⁹

Seeing the all holy God, the celebrant is dismayed. The celebrant pleads for the mercy of God, for the celebrant and the assembly experience that they are unclean. Evidently the prayer admits the unworthiness of the celebrant in the community. If this is the case of the ministerial priest, the situation of royal priests is not better off. The mercy is available to the congregation in plenty. Hence, it gives courage to appreciate the wonderful providence of God in unifying the inhabitants of heaven and earth, the genuine sign of harmony in the world. And the oft repeated prayer of the Liturgy, "Lord of all"²⁰ is an echo of the admission of the Lord as the head of all things and everything else is belonging to the Lord our God. If God is considered as the Lord of all, all the dealings of humans shall be formed accordingly. In such a circumstance, the overuse, misuse and abuse of creation will be a moral issue for the believers; excuses for irresponsible relationality with creation and human beings cannot stand the test of faith in Christ.

¹⁹Syro-Malabar Qurbana, 52.

²⁰Syro-Malabar Qurbana, 17.

Ecological crisis needs to be addressed holistically and with diverse perspectives. Change of lifestyle is the core of the issue. Spirituality is a way of life. The Liturgy of the Church unveils the blueprint of Christian spirituality. The Syro Malabar Qurbana sketches a roadmap of an interconnected and integrated Christian world vision. *As the celebration, so the way of life.* A person celebrating the liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana is encouraged to maintain a healthy, happy, and holy relationship with the triadic realities and relationships. Unfortunately, there are shortcomings in the field of commitment. A renewed understanding of the values and vision celebrated in the Liturgy and the concomitant commitment to the manifold realities and relationships will help Christians to fulfil the priestly ministry of humans on earth of the Lord.

Conclusion

A brief reflection upon the second *g'hantha* of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy of Mar Addai and Mar Mari, the Apostles of the East presents a beautiful spectrum of relationships which can support and promote the priestly ministry of humans on the earth of the Lord in order to address the ecological crisis of our times. Praise, honour, thanksgiving, adoration, worship, glorification of God, as highlighted in the second *g'hantha*, when performed with a sense of duty and urgency can work for harmony in the world, yielding the joy, beauty and glory of creation and the Creator.

PRIESTLY MINISTRY OF HUMANS ON EARTH OF THE LORD		
WHY	WHAT	WHO
In your kindness You created the world and everything in it	worthy of HONOUR from every mouth	HEAVENLY hosts Angels Spiritual ministers
	THANKSGIVING from every tongue	
	PRAISE from every creature	Every EARTHLY creature
	bow down and ADORE You	
Showed humanity Your immense mercy	GLORIFY Your name	HUMAN beings
	offer You WORSHIP	
THE LORD OF ALL	THE LAND OF GOD	THE PEOPLE OF GOD
Reality	Rationality	Relationality

The Qurbana presents a religious insight, spiritual inspiration, and ethical instruction to the celebrants in fulfilling their priestly ministry as humans on the earth of the Lord, that is, (i) to *see* the world as God saw it, (ii) to *serve* the world as God sent his only Son to save it, and (iii) to be *sent* as the good news to the whole creation. In essence, it is a wake-up call to take-up the leadership in the orchestration of creation in recognizing the sovereignty of God and the dignity of human beings. Following Christ, the high-priest in honouring, praising, thanking, adoring, glorifying, and worshipping the Lord God, is the way of establishing peace and prosperity on earth, joy and hope to the people of God, the guarantee of giving glory to God. The priestly ministry of humans in the liturgical celebration within the temple of God should percolate down to the streets, fields, mountains, trees, rivers, oceans, plants, animals, birds, insects, etc. It is high time to listen to the interconnectivity between “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”²¹

“The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely,” observes Pope Francis. Following the priesthood of Jesus Christ, all human beings are priests on the face of the earth, to honour, thank, praise, adore, glorify and worship the Lord our God. The liturgical celebration of the Qurbana reveals the meaning and significance of being a priest in the world, *relating* oneself with the *reality* on the basis of a *rationality* rooted in the image of God and God who is the Lord of all. Celebration of the Qurbana, invites us to be aware of the fact that world is the body of God; the Church as the mystical body of Christ; and the Eucharistic celebration as the process of the transformation in the divinization of the Body of Christ.

Such a virtue of relationality with the naked realities of the world on the basis of rationality is an act of bridge-building in our society, for it consolidates the triadic bonds: God-creation-humans. Unfortunately, the priestly ministry of humans often neglects and ignores these basic bonds – bridges – for a safe and smooth passage from death to life. A mindful and joyful celebration of the liturgy of the Qurbana could be an antidote to the culture of death, perpetuated by selfish interests and the habits of turning away from the truth, goodness, and beauty of life.

Being priests, after the example of Christ, human beings are called upon to consecrate the whole world – the Body of God – to the praise and thanksgiving of the Holy Trinity in the Mystical Body of Christ through the Eucharistic Body towards the ideal of all for life

²¹*Laudato Sí*, 49.

and life for all, which necessitates everyone to see God in everything and everything in God and to work for the sustainable development of the whole person and all persons on earth of the Lord.

I would like to conclude this reflection with a few select verses from *The Songs of the Three Jews*, which recapitulate the priestly ministry of humans on earth and lead us on to street and fills us with the everyday open eyed mysticism, the urgent need of the hour:

Bless the Lord, all rain and dew;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever (Daniel 3:64)
Bless the Lord, all you winds;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever (Daniel 3:65)
Let the earth bless the Lord;
Let it sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever (Daniel 3:74)
Bless the Lord, mountains and hills;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever (Daniel 3:75)
Bless the Lord, all people on earth;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever (Daniel 3:82).
Bless the Lord, you priests of the Lord;
Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever (Daniel 3:84)