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## Book Review

**Lonappan Arangassery, *Orders of Priesthood and Orders of Service: An Eastern Perspective***, Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, India, 2008, OIRSI no 306, ISBN 978-81-88456-31-4, pages, xiv+208.

The book *Orders of Priesthood and Orders of Service: An Eastern Perspective* is a publication of an original study on *Râzânâyuta, Sacramentality of the Mysteries in the Church of the East*, a doctoral dissertation defended at Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, which was guided by Pierre Yousif. According to the author, this work is an attempt to highlight the liturgical explanations of the East Syrian authors and the commentators on the sacred orders and ministries and to underscore the East Syrian perspectives and emphases in the liturgies of *Syamîdâ*, laying on of hands or imposition of hands, which is the essential character of ordained ministry in the Church.

In this year for priests, *Orders of Priesthood and Orders of Services: An Eastern Perspective* by Dr Arangassery, MST is a book worth reading and imbibing the spirit and style of the ministries in the Church and to project the image of Christ, the High Priest and Shepherd. The book has unearthed some of the precious pearls from the treasury of the East Syriac Patristic tradition, which contribute to the beauty and understanding of ministries in the Church.

The author follows the liturgical methodology in the presentation of the study. Dr Arangassery is of the opinion that “the theology of the ordained ministry, like any other theology, has to evolve after a thorough study of the various elements found in the liturgical tradition and the ordination liturgies, especially the rites and the accompanying prayers at the ordination and their commentaries” (p. 4). The work is undertaken with the view that priesthood in the Church is the foundation and source of every sacramental action. Hence the volume illustrates that “no mysteries are celebrated in the Church without priesthood and that no mysteries are celebrated in the Church without the *rûšmâ* of the priest in the form of the Cross” (p. 5-6).

According to the *Râzânâyuta*, the East Syriac liturgical tradition, the author highlights that “the sacred mysteries are set apart, sanctified, perfected and completed by the priest in the presence of the Holy Cross and the Holy Gospel which represent the body and soul of Christ respectively” (p. 6).

Dr Arangassery, in the present book, attempts to expose the “historical, liturgical and theological study of the sacred Orders in the Church of the East with special references to the laws on clergy and the text of the Pontifical Rites of the SyroMalabar Church approved on 15 August 2007” (p.6), which is a welcome research in drawing the attention to the faithful and joyful celebration of the mysteries and ministries.

The book has ten chapters. It begins with the clarification of terms. The second and third chapters discuss on the priesthood in the Old Testament and the ministries in the New Testament and Early Church respectively. The next two chapters are dedicated to the study of Syriac didascalia and early Syriac fathers on the Ministries and the priesthood and Ministries in Theodore and Narsai. Chapter six illustrates the understanding on priesthood and ministries in the pre-scholastic commentaries. There is a close look on orders of priesthood and service in Abdisho and Timothy II in chapter seven. The chapters eight and nine focus on liturgy of *syamîdâ* of the orders of service and liturgy of *syamîdâ* of the orders of priesthood. The last chapter is devoted to the reflection on orders of priesthood and orders of service in the contemporary theology. Besides these chapters, there is a meaningful introduction, a glossary of Syriac words, and an extensive bibliography on the subject under discussion.

The work reiterates the source of priesthood as “the Spirit given at the laying on of hands that makes him the sacrament of Christ, the High priest” (p. 76). In his critical remark, the author observes, “in liturgical tradition of the Church of the East, these *rûšme* are not made with oil or Myron” (p. 91). Another important insight, Dr Arangassery drives home, is regarding the character of the orders of service. “The recognition of the permanent character of the orders of service is of great significance for a proper understanding of the ecclesial and sacred nature of the ministries. The orders of service should not be treated as stepping stones towards priesthood” (p.

109). In the analysis of the contemporary liturgical practice, the author has this following critical remark, “Disregard for legitimate and meaningful liturgical tradition regarding the structure and nature of the foundational mysteries is very evident in the new Syro-Malabar pontifical” (p.140).

The reading is not obstructed, though the book has profuse use of Syriac and Greek words in the text. In general, the book is simple and narrative in style and occasionally, it is critical as well. As a passionate lover of the Church, the author does not mince words in his observations regarding the liturgical celebrations.

This work is the fruit of a thorough research into the East Syriac liturgical tradition to explore and expose the rich biblical, liturgical, historical richness of the Orders of Priesthood and Orders of service towards a faithful and fruitful celebration of the mysteries of salvation. The volume is a timely interpretation of the text of the Pontifical Rites of the Syro-Malabar Church approved on 15 August 2007. In this sense, the work is a commendable contribution to the theology of the ordained ministry in the Syro-Malabar Church.

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