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The last of three letters on the new translation of the Divine Liturgy

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In this, the last of three letters on the new translation of our beautiful Maronite Liturgy (The Book of Offering), I would like to focus on that which we usually call the Divine Liturgy, so as to understand what is essential in our Christian life. In the previous two letters, I reflected on the language, music, mystery, beauty and sincerity that must be associated with the Divine Liturgy. Now I would like to reflect on just what it is that we do when we gather for this sacred time of worship.

The Church uses four words to describe the celebration of the Eucharist. Each word adds something important to our understanding. The word **“Liturgy”** is used by Greek speaking Christians and means “the work of the people.” The Liturgy is in fact our “work”, as we prepare and engage ourselves, but we also know that Liturgy is our response to God’s saving work among us.

The word, **“Mass”** is used by Latin Catholics and was most likely taken from the final exhortation: *“ita Missa est”* which means “go in peace.” This signifies that the Mass is what we do to prepare ourselves to go into the world to live and witness to our faith.

Syriac Christians used the word **“Qorbono”** or **“Offering,”** which reminds us that Jesus’ sacrificial *offering* of Himself is our salvation, forgiveness, joy and thus the reason we generously offer ourselves in union with Him as His disciples.

Arabic speaking Christians have created an entirely new word, **“Quddas”**, and it means “to make holy.” It is not only a noun to describe the Eucharist, but also an active verb which describes our fullest engagement in what we call the Quddas, the Divine Liturgy.

Thus, these four words describe four aspects of the worship we give to God in Holy Eucharist. In other words, the Divine Liturgy is our *“work”* in which we *offer* to God our very self, as did Jesus at the Last Supper and also at the Cross. Our self-offering is made anew in the liturgy in union with the definitive and saving self-offering of Christ, which strengthens us to *go in peace* into our world to *make holy* our lives.

I pray that the new translation of the Liturgy will help us even more actively to respond to God with love, faith and good hope.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Gregory John Mansour