

THE CHURCH FIRST CALLED CHRISTIAN: THE MELKITE CHURCH OF
ANTIOCH

Submitted by

ELIZABETH ANN REEVES BA, MA (Theology), Dip Ed

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

**School of Theology,
Faculty of Arts**

Australian Catholic University
Research Services
Locked Bag 4115
Fitzroy, Victoria 3065
Australia

14 December 2006

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Candidate's Certificate

I certify that the thesis entitled

The Church First Called Christian: The Melkite Church of Antioch

Submitted for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

Is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis has not been presented for the awarding of a higher degree at this or any other tertiary educational institution.

Full name: Elizabeth Ann Reeves

Signed

Date:

ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church is made up of many church communities of different rites, with the main classifications being the Roman rites and the Eastern rites of the Catholic Church. With the influx of migrants especially since the Second World War there has been growth in Australia, in the number of Catholics belonging to the many Eastern rites including Byzantine Catholics, Coptic Catholics and Chaldean Catholics. The Second Vatican Council documents encouraged members of the Catholic Church of the Latin traditions to know and understand the rich traditions of the Easterners so that the full manifestation of the catholicity of the Church and full knowledge of its divinely revealed heritage are preserved. One can ask how familiar are Catholics of the Roman rites with the beliefs, practices, liturgy, devotions and historical development of the other rites in the Catholic Church?

The aim of this thesis is to give understanding about the Melkite Catholic Church in Australia. It takes the reader on a journey from Antioch in Syria to Australia in the third millennium, showing that the Melkites trace their roots to Antioch where believers were first called Christians. This thesis elaborates on who the Melkites are by firstly looking at the origins of this church community and thereby establishing the authenticity of this church community since it was established by the apostles and their co-workers, with the apostles being empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The thesis enumerates the key aspects of the early church at Antioch including theology, liturgy and the structure of the church, with these findings being foundational for the Melkite Church in Australia today. The thesis describes worship in the Melkite Church with emphasis on the development of this worship especially for the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist. It explains important ritual, symbols, architecture and artwork and concluded that these express the key beliefs of this church community. The fundamental dogmas in the Melkite Church are the teachings on the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. The thesis elaborates on these dogmas explaining how they were important in the early church at Antioch and how understanding of them was developed by important theologians revered in the Melkite Church, in previous eras and today. The Christian faith is a living faith. In writing this thesis the importance of Tradition for God's revelation to His holy people is emphasised.

In its study of the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist, the thesis was able to show that the celebration of these sacraments was linked to the early church at Antioch. It especially looked at what was happening at the time of St John Chrysostom at

Constantinople. This time frame saw the beginning of the development of the Byzantine Rite. There is elaboration on the link between the Byzantine rite (the rite of the Melkites today) and the Antiochene liturgy. As well the thesis expounded on the understanding of the three fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon at Antioch and the importance of the ordained ministry today. It concluded that the four sacraments discussed above were foundational in the early church and are essential in worship in the Melkite Church today. The thesis explained important details about the sacraments of Marriage, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick. It especially explained the development of the Sacrament of Penance.

The thesis acknowledges the validity of all rites in the Catholic Church and concluded that encouragement must be given for the preservation of the various rites in the Church. This is important for the Eastern Church communities as they contain a rich heritage, which is an integral part of the Church of Christ. An important conclusion was that the development of the church at Antioch must be understood in the light of Tradition the living and lived faith, which passes on all that the church believes and celebrates in its worship of the Holy Trinity. The Melkite Church of Antioch was first called Christian.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and guidance of many people in writing this thesis, firstly Most Rev Issam Darwish, Bishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Australia and New Zealand, for welcoming me to the liturgies of the Melkite Church, for recommending and lending me many books, and for his fruitful discussion on important topics. I would like to thank the members of staff of the Australian Catholic University for their assistance especially Rev Dr Lawrence Cross for his supervision, Dr Gideon Goosen for supervising me earlier in writing the thesis and Dr Boonseng Leelarthae-pin who was always ready to answer my many questions. I extend a special thanks to Leon Aroyan, Bishop Darwish's secretary for good advice about practical matters and Archdeacon Anthony Lawrence for his guidance. Most importantly I acknowledge the encouragement of my husband, John and my friend Mary, and the prayerful support of my family. I would like to thank Most Rev Philip Wilson, Archbishop of Adelaide and Most Rev Peter Ingham, Bishop of the Diocese of Wollongong for their encouragement of my studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Introduction	1
1. Antioch: The Birthplace of the Melkite Church	5
1.0 Introduction and aims	
1.1 The Early Church at Antioch in Syria	
1.1.1 The Development of the Church at Antioch	
1.1.2 Problems for the Antiochene Church	
1.1.3 Legitimising the Gentile Church at Antioch	
1.1.4 St Peter at Antioch	
1.2 St Ignatius of Antioch and the Antiochene Church	
1.2.1 St Ignatius and Tradition	
1.3 Other Development in the Church	
1.3.1 Further Missionary Activity in the Church	
1.3.2 The Alexandrian School	
1.4 Conclusions	
1.4.1 The Characteristics of the Early Church at Antioch	
1.4.1.1 Theology	
1.4.1.2 Structure	
1.4.1.3 Sacraments and Liturgy	
1.4.2 Overview of Chapter One and the following chapters	
2. The Contribution of Great Theologians to the Theological Tradition of the Melkite Catholic Church	23
2.0 Introduction and aims	
2.1 The Importance of understanding Tradition	
2.2 St Athanasius	
2.2.1 Teachings on the Incarnation	
2.2.2 Teachings on the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity	
2.2.3 Athanasius' contributions to understanding the monastic life	

2.3 St Basil the Great

2.3.1 Theological contributions on the Incarnation, Pneumatology and the Trinity

2.3.2 St Basil and the monastic life

2.4 St Gregory of Nazianzus

2.5 St Gregory of Nyssa

2.6 Conclusions

3. Worship in the Melkite Catholic Church

34

3.0 Introduction and aims

3.1 The Melkites and the Byzantine Rite of Worship

3.1.1 The Byzantine Rite

3.1.2 The Holy Trinity

3.1.3 Words and ideas to convey an understanding of God

3.1.4 Distinctive Melkite Theology

3.1.5 The Deification of Humanity and Melkite Spirituality

3.1.6 Worshipping the Holy Trinity

3.2 On entering a Melkite Church

3.2.1 The Architecture of the Church

3.2.1.1 The Sanctuary

3.2.1.2 The Nave

3.2.1.3 The Solea

3.2.1.4 The Iconostasis

3.3 Revelation of God to His people

3.4 The nature and importance of icons

3.4.1 Creating an icon

3.4.2 Lessons from the theology of icons

3.4.3 Icons as part of the living Tradition of the Church

3.4.4 Debate about the validity of icons in worship

3.4.4.1 Historical perspectives

3.4.5 Reverence shown for important theologians in the Melkite Church through the use of icons

3.5 Conclusions

4. Putting on Christ, The Holy Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist 53

4.0 Introduction and aims

4.1 The Holy Mysteries

4.1.1 Sacramental Theology

4.1.2 Worship and the Holy Mysteries

4.1.3 Putting on Christ in Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist

4.1.4 Biblical Context of Anointing with Oil

4.2 The Sacrament of Baptism

4.2.1 Biblical Perspectives and the Feast of Theophany

4.2.2 Theology of Baptism

4.3 The Sacrament of Chrismation

4.3.1 Biblical Perspectives

4.3.2 Theological Perspectives

4.4 Description of the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation today

4.4.1 Part One, the Reception of a Catechumen

4.4.2 Part Two of this celebration

4.4.3 Part Three, the Sacrament of Chrismation

4.5 Early development of the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation

4.5.1 The New Testament and Baptism

4.5.2 History

4.5.3 The Development of the Byzantine Rite of Baptism and Chrismation

4.6 Understanding the Sacraments in light of Tradition

4.7 The Eucharist

4.7.1 Theology and Biblical Perspectives

4.7.2 Celebrating the Eucharist

4.7.3 Historical Perspectives

4.8 Conclusions

5. Life in Christ, The Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick, The Sacraments of Holy Orders and Marriage

84

5.0 Introduction and aims

5.1 The Sacrament of Penance

5.1.1 Explanation of this sacrament and why it is important

5.1.2 Biblical Perspectives

- 5.1.3 Forgiveness of sin in the Old Testament
- 5.1.4 Historical Perspectives
- 5.1.5 What does this sacrament effect?
- 5.2 The Anointing of the Sick
 - 5.2.1 What is the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and why is it important?
 - 5.2.2 Biblical basis for this sacrament
 - 5.2.3 What does this sacrament effect?
- 5.3 Holy Orders
 - 5.3.1 What is the Sacrament of Holy Orders?
 - 5.3.2 Significant symbols in this sacrament
 - 5.3.3 Early evidence for the three-fold ministry at Antioch
 - 5.3.4 Development of the three-fold ministry using New Testament sources
 - 5.3.5 Episkopoi, Presbyteroi and Diakonoi
 - 5.3.6 What does this sacrament effect?
- 5.4 The Sacrament of Marriage
 - 5.4.1 The marriage union is the domestic church
 - 5.4.2 Important ritual in the marriage ceremony
- 5.5 Conclusions

6. Important Issues Pertaining to the Melkite Church in Australia Today 109

- 6.0 Introduction and aims
- 6.1 Preserving the Eastern Rites
 - 6.1.1 Keeping a close relationship with the Patriarch
 - 6.1.2 The Importance of Evangelisation
 - 6.1.2.1 Evangelisation and the Christian Community
 - 6.1.2.2 The Importance of Language
 - 6.1.2.3 The Importance of Education
 - 6.1.2.4 Icons and Evangelisation
 - 6.1.3 Ecumenism
 - 6.1.3.1 The Second Vatican Council Document, Decree on Ecumenism
 - 6.1.3.2 The Melkites and Ecumenism
- 6.2 Conclusions

7. Summary and Conclusions 118

INTRODUCTION

His Beatitude Gregory III Lahan of the Melkite Catholic Church is Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem. The words “of Alexandria and of Jerusalem” were added when Maximos III Mazlum was the Patriarch of this church community. His rule was from 1833 –1855. Prior to this the Patriarch had the title, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.

The Most Reverend Issam Darwish, BSO, DD, is the Bishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Australia and New Zealand. He is a bishop of the Diaspora looking after the Melkite community in Australia at the beginning of the third millennium. He is the only bishop in Australia and oversees Australian church communities in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Bishop Darwish is directly accountable to the Patriarch of the Melkite Catholic Church. It needs to be noted that this church community is referred to as the Melkite Catholic Church and can be referred to also as the Melkite Greek Church, the Melkite Greek Catholic Church or in short hand the Melkite Church.

This thesis takes the reader on a journey from Antioch to Australia. To appreciate this journey one needs to go back to the beginning of the church and look at significant events and developments in the history of this church community. Firstly one needs to look at how the Christian Church came into being and at the work of evangelisation by the first disciples of Jesus Christ. Authentic evangelisation has Jesus Christ as its source and summit with all its inspiration deriving from Jesus and his teachings.

The main emphasis of this thesis will be worship in the Melkite Church especially studying the *Holy Mysteries* as these are the very heart of Melkite worship. The thesis will discuss in detail the main teachings such as the teachings on the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation since these are paramount for understanding worship in the Melkite Church. Further the important concept of deification will be included. Associated elements in worship including the architecture of the church building, holy images, especially icons and devotions will also be studied showing how these express the theology of this church community. Revelation for this church community comes from Sacred Tradition with Scripture being part of the living Tradition of the church. The contribution to the development of fundamental teachings such

as the dogmas of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation by theologians revered in the Melkite Church will be examined.

In gathering information for this thesis the researcher attended various liturgies of the Melkite Catholic Church including attending liturgies at Greenacre, Guilford and Darlington. The thesis focuses on the Melkite Church in Australia. However, because it is a rather small community, resources are used which refer to the Melkite Catholic Church in America, especially writings of key theologians in America as much more has been written on the theology and worship of this community in America. Many of the resources were recommended by Bishop Darwish.

The Melkite Church developed in Antioch. However it was to experience significant changes after the Council of Chalcedon in 451. This council declared that Christ was one person with two distinct natures, divine and human. Those not accepting this formula became known generally as the Oriental Orthodox Churches and include the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox and the Armenian Apostolic Church. Other Oriental Church communities developed from these at later dates, for example, the Eritrean Orthodox Church. The Eastern Church communities who accepted the authenticity of the Council of Chalcedon came under the protection of the emperor, in the split which gradually widened after Chalcedon, and these became known as the “king’s men” or Melkites, the word “Melek,” being derived from the Syrian language. Hence “the Melkites” were affiliated with the See of Constantinople, while centred on their own patriarchal See, that of Antioch. Constantinople’s own liturgy developed due to the efforts of such people as St John Chrysostom and St Basil of Caesarea, both of whom contributed elements of the Antiochene liturgy, creating further developments in the liturgy of New Rome. Between 960 AD and 1085, significant development was to take place, which led to the creation of a distinct Byzantine Rite. The Melkites of today worship in the Byzantine Rite, to which their Antiochene ancestors made such a contribution. The word *rite*, as used here, refers to the liturgical worship, in which the various and particular forms of expressing the rich theological and spiritual heritage, and the ecclesiastical discipline of the churches of the East and West, are expressed. Today there are more or less five basic rites or liturgical families within the Catholic Church.

The so-called Great Schism of 1054 had an impact on the Melkite Church and on its relationship with the Roman Church. This schism mainly concerned the Eastern Churches that

became known as the Eastern Orthodox Churches and those centred on Rome in the West. In this climate a gradual drifting apart took place between the Melkites and the Church of Rome. However, during this period the Melkites preserved their own independence although with great difficulties. The Melkites are a witness to both the Eastern Orthodox and to the Church of Rome. They preserve their own integrity being true to themselves, as well as having a common heritage with churches of other rites, but also have their own distinct heritage and are in union with Rome. Further difficulties occurred at the time of the crusades. It has been claimed by the Melkites that they never actually fully broke their relationship with Rome. Other events were to challenge the Melkites such as the reign of the Marmelukes from 1250-1516 although this is not part of the discussion of this thesis.

In 1709, Patriarch Cyril V of Antioch, formally recognised the authority of the Pope of Rome as head of the church. Not all members of this church community saw this recognition as important. Some felt that Rome did not understand their Eastern Rites, customs and laws. As a result the church split in two in 1724, with those adhering to Rome being called Melkite Catholics and those remaining under the influence of Constantinople being known as Antiochean Orthodox. The date of formal union with Rome is 1724. The history of the Melkites shows the importance of unity.

The Melkites have migrated to many parts of the world and are a significant group in Australia, which is a multicultural country. They worship Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God and saviour of the world, who intimately reveals the Holy Trinity. This community is conscious of its call to evangelisation although it is not a large community in Australia today. The church in Australia exists to bring the good news about Jesus Christ. In doing this, the Melkite Catholic Church maintains its integrity being true to its own tradition and history as well as being open to the challenges of the third millennium. It is particularly concerned with ecumenism because of the gospel call to be one in Christ.

This thesis has been written in response to Jesus' call that all Christians be one in Christ. It has been written to give some understanding about the Christian East. It is especially written to assist Catholics of the Roman rites to understand much better, our beloved brothers and sisters who are Eastern Rite Catholics. In this particular instance, it explains who the Melkite Catholics are and in general its aim is to give understanding about Catholics of the Byzantine

rite. In doing this it will hopefully also give some understanding about Byzantine Christians who are not in union with Rome.

CHAPTER ONE ANTIOCH: THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE MELKITE CHURCH

1.0 Introduction and aims

The title of the thesis is: The Church first called Christian: the Melkite Church of Antioch. To understand the Melkite Church in Australia today one needs to return to its origins and examine its early development. Hence the aim of this chapter is to address the origins of the Christian Church at Antioch in Syria, which will throw light on the characteristics of the Melkite Catholic Church. The chapter will explain firstly, the development of the Church at Antioch and its great significance for the Gentiles with Antioch being the birthplace of the Melkite Church, secondly the importance of Tradition for passing on the good news about the source and inspiration of the Melkite Church, Jesus Christ, and thirdly, briefly the development of the church in other places that would influence the development of the Melkite Catholic Church. In its conclusion section this chapter will then enumerate the characteristics of the early church at Antioch, which throw light on and give understanding about the Melkite Catholic Church today.¹

1.1 The Early Church at Antioch in Syria

One of the important settlements for Christianity after Jerusalem was Antioch in Syria, which was a very significant city in the Roman Empire. It was founded by King Seleucis, the son of Antiochus, about 300 BC and is situated along the Orontes River about eleven kilometres from the Mediterranean Sea.² In naming this city Antioch, King Seleucis was paying tribute to his father.³ He had also named cities in other countries, Antioch. Antioch in Syria was approximately five hundred kilometres from Jerusalem with a population which was predominantly gentile. However there was a significant Jewish settlement.⁴

From reading the Acts of the Apostles, one can learn of the importance of this city in the development of Christianity following the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem. It was eventually to become a leading centre with its own catechetical school producing many famous bishops and preachers from St Ignatius of Antioch to St John Chrysostom, who had a

¹ Biblical references are taken from the New American Bible in this chapter. In other chapters the reference are taken from the New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition Bible, unless otherwise indicated.

² "Antioch" in *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, vol.1, (Chicago: World Book-Childcraft International, Inc., 1978), 517.

³ D. R. De Lacey and M.M.B. Turner, *Discovering the Bible: The Expansion of Christianity*, rev. ed. (London: Hutton Educational, 1985), 35.

⁴ Raymond Brown and John Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 1-3.

later impact on liturgical development of the Eastern Christian churches and hence on the Melkite Catholic Church. St Peter is regarded as the bishop responsible for establishing the See of Antioch. Tradition indicates that St Evodius and then St Ignatius of Antioch followed him. Antioch was also to produce preachers and bishops with heretical tendencies.

From reading the New Testament writings Jerusalem was the first centre for Christianity. Jesus' ministry here and in other parts of Judea, Galilee and the Holy Land in general was basically to the Jews, however he had come for the salvation of all humanity with this mission becoming clearer with the spread of the Christian Church. On examining the gospels it is clear that Jesus basically lived among his own Jewish people and evangelised them. Hence it is natural that Jewish followers of Jesus started their evangelisation to Jewish communities. The Pentecost event started with the evangelisation of the Jewish people who were in Jerusalem for the Jewish feast of Pentecost with many of them coming from all over the Diaspora. After this initial work of the Holy Spirit with the conversion of around three thousand people, the work of the Disciples of Christ spread throughout the Diaspora at first mainly to Jewish people. Very quickly the gospel message was taken to the Gentiles as well. Antioch was a key place for this happening.

1.1.1 The Development of the Church at Antioch

The Book, the Acts of the Apostles, in the New Testament Canon, gives understanding about how the Church at Antioch (in Syria) developed with evangelisation initially taking place to the Jewish people there. Acts uses the phrase "...preaching to no one but Jews" (Acts 11:19). The persecution of Stephen by the Sanhedrin and further persecution of the Jewish Christians, scattered the believers who "went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch..." (Acts 11: 19). It is clear from Luke's writings about Stephen that there was soon great opposition to Jews who accepted Jesus as Lord and Messiah and as the fulfilment of Judaism. One can clearly say that some of the Jewish people who did not recognise Jesus as the Messiah and continued to follow the Mosaic Law became absolutely intolerant of Jewish Christians to the point of persecution, imprisonment and the death sentence. Paul of course was a ringleader of this treatment. It is no wonder that Jewish Christians fled Jerusalem and settled in such places as Antioch. Acts graphically portrays the animosity towards those who followed the Way (that is, Jesus Christ).

Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he

should find any men and women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains (Acts 9:1-2).

After initial evangelisation to the Jews at Antioch, evangelisation began taking place to the Greeks and "...a great number who believed turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21). This was to cause concern for the Jewish Christians back in Jerusalem. Barnabas was sent by the Jerusalem church to Antioch to investigate what was happening there. "When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart" (Acts 11:23). Acts further reports that a large number of people were added to the church after which Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul (who became known as Paul). On finding him Barnabas brought him back to Antioch where they stayed for a whole year meeting with the church and instructing many people. It is here that the followers of Christ were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).

1.1.2 Problems for the Antiochene Church

Further concerns were to arise for the church at Antioch as described in Acts 15. Some of the Jewish Christians who had come from Judea were telling the church community that unless the male believers were circumcised according to the Mosaic Law, they could not be saved (Acts 15:1). This caused much debate with the church sending Paul and Barnabas and some others to the church in Jerusalem to ask the apostles and the presbyters about this situation (Acts 15:2). A meeting took place, which became known as "the Council of Jerusalem" where the question of keeping the Mosaic Law was hotly debated. The Council of Jerusalem can be referred to as the first Church Council with the apostles and their co-workers present in order to make a very important decision. Peter spoke clearly relating how God had spoken through him to bring the gospel message to the Gentiles, how God had made no distinction between them and the Jewish Christians, and how God had purified their hearts (Acts 15: 7-9). Peter concludes "...that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus .."(Acts 11:11). Paul and Barnabas follow Peter speaking of the signs and wonders God had worked among the Gentiles. Peter was able to speak so clearly because of an earlier vision, which related to the conversion of Cornelius a gentile convert to Christianity written about in Acts 10. It is through Peter's experience with Cornelius that Peter learns not to call any human being unworthy of sanctification and purification. It is the Spirit who will purify humanity. From this experience Peter was able to speak so clearly at the Council of Jerusalem. He is supported by other key people especially the Apostles.

1.1.3 Legitimising the Gentile Church at Antioch

Following Peter's persuasive speech, the apostle James then spoke diplomatically and clearly reminding them of the words of the prophets and how they had proclaimed that after the Lord had rebuilt the fallen house of David, he would reach out to the Gentiles. He concludes by saying that the Jewish Christians should stop troubling the Gentiles and that a letter should be sent to Antioch. This letter would legitimise the Gentile Church in Antioch. Two people were to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return to Antioch, namely Judas (who was called Barsabas) and Silas who were church leaders. The letter was well received with it also containing instruction "to avoid pollution from idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled animals, and blood" (Acts 15:20). There was much rejoicing at Antioch with the good news from the Jerusalem Church. Once again Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch preaching and teaching along with many others.

From the beginning the church at Antioch knew diversity. It was Peter's initial vision (in relation to Cornelius) that led to the endorsement of welcoming gentiles into the Christian community especially at Antioch. However, his vision must be kept in mind for all Christians today as the process of evangelisation continues. It was very important in solving the problem of requirement of male circumcision of gentiles at Antioch. The actual decision making process was based on collegial agreement with this "Council of Jerusalem" being a forerunner to the various synods and councils of the church that would take place over the centuries to follow. One might describe this decision as an apostolic decree. The church at Antioch was culturally diverse, just as the church in Australia is culturally diverse today. Many documents in the church, especially those from the Second Vatican Council, assist in understanding the diversity in the Catholic Church, yet in this diversity Catholics of the various rites are united in their common faith in Jesus Christ. Cultural and language differences need not impede the spreading of the gospel. The unifying factor for Catholics of all rites is their common doctrinal beliefs. At Antioch the overriding belief was the salvific work of Jesus Christ. The Christian understanding of salvation comes from the acknowledgement that Jesus is Lord because God raised him from the dead. Both Jewish and gentile Christians acknowledged the importance of the covenant between God and humanity. Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the new and perfect Covenant.

The gentiles at Antioch were filled with joy on hearing the good news initiated by the apostolic decree given at the Council of Jerusalem especially supported by St. James, referred

to as the brother of the Lord. However, it would be presumptuous to think that all was straight forward and without conflict at Antioch. No doubt there was an overriding unity in the belief of the salvific work of Jesus, however it can be rationalised that there would need to be understanding and acceptance by the four groups that one might deduce from reading Acts, that probably existed in the church there. These groups are referred to in a paper by Nicholas J. Samra, Auxiliary Bishop (Melkite) of Newton (USA),⁵ in which he sums up what the church at Antioch was probably like. He identifies four groups:

1) A group insisting on full observance of the Mosaic Law, including circumcision. 2) A group that did not insist on circumcision but required converts to keep some Jewish observances. 3) A group that did not insist on circumcision nor required observances of Jewish food laws. 4) A group with no circumcision nor food laws and saw no need for Jewish cult and feasts.

These various groups that existed at Antioch would have needed an understanding of each other to bring about a sense of being one in Christ. Unity in diversity would call for prayer, thoughtfulness and co-operation. From reading the New Testament one certainly discerns a great dynamism in the early church at Antioch, however one can understand that there would be tensions in relations to the development of the church there. Gal 2:11-21, for example, records a misunderstanding between Peter and Paul in relation to the circumcised and the gentile Christians. Paul then affirms the important teaching that Christians are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Hence for reasonable harmony a great openness towards living together was needed to ensure that the church was alive and evangelical. Obviously at Antioch the groups did not stay as put but were influenced by other factors that led to a polarisation of cultic practice. Persecution by the Sanhedrin, as noted earlier, was one factor impacting on the growth of the church at Antioch. Another was surely the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem around 70 AD. So far this chapter has emphasised the importance of understanding Jesus as the Messiah. Of course not all Jewish people accepted this with many having their own preconceived ideas as they waited expectantly for this promised one. For the Jewish group known as the Zealots⁶ the expectation was that he would be a liberator of the Jews from Roman authority. How could this Jesus who spoke of his kingdom not being of this world be the Messiah? The zealots' hopes were totally dashed with the Jewish war. The destruction of

⁵ Samra, N. *Ecumenism and the Melkite Church of Antioch*, 1. This paper was presented at the World Wide Meeting of Melkite Bishops at Greenacre (Sydney) in July 2000.

⁶ Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 90. Fredriksen refers to the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian who identifies several groups of Insurrectionists, which included the Zealots.

the temple by Roman authorities brought a crushing blow to the church at Jerusalem. This catastrophe along with the earlier martyrdom of James by Jewish authorities would surely hasten the severing of the relationship of the Antiochene church community with Jerusalem. Jewish identity at Antioch would become far less prevalent. This severing of relationship is brought out in other later writings about Antioch.

1.1.4 St Peter at Antioch

The Church at Antioch was legitimised. Peter and Paul both take a leadership role there. Peter's leadership at the Council of Jerusalem assisted the Church at Antioch to be legitimised and to affirm the baptising of gentiles. Peter's presence there and the apostolic approval of the Church at Antioch, ensures that this church community is founded on the work and mission of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter was a key figure at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and Mary in what appeared to be tongues of fire. Peter speaks boldly to the Jewish people gathered to celebrate the feast of Pentecost proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, Lord and Saviour. In his Pentecost address Peter emphasises the need for repentance and Baptism. Later in his dealings with Cornelius and his stance at the Council of Jerusalem Peter leaves no room for doubt that Baptism is the sign of the new Covenant and it is for all people both Jews and gentiles. The questioning of the need for male circumcision was a difficult one, but appropriate steps were taken to resolve this issue. In taking a leading role at Antioch Peter endorses the fact that the church there is founded on Jesus Christ. In legitimising the Church at Antioch, Peter and the disciples clearly proclaim Jesus Christ as the new and perfect covenant.

1.2 St Ignatius of Antioch and the Antiochene Church

Other evidence for the church at Antioch comes from the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, written on his journey to Rome⁷ where he was to face martyrdom. The journey took place in

⁷ This thesis uses the translation of the letters by Maxwell Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings, The Apostolic Fathers*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 53-105. It acknowledges the authenticity of the seven letters. Reference has been made to them by the historian Eusebius with the preservation of them by Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna to whom St Ignatius wrote on his way to martyrdom in Rome. They are regarded as valuable historical church documents. Various ancient copies (or fragments) have been preserved in different translations, including, the Manuscript of the Greek Original (which does not contain the *Letter to the Romans*), the Latin version, the Syriac Version although not possessed in its entirety, and other evidence. See J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1956) 57-62. Considerable research and study have been done on the letters with the acknowledgement that they have a pivotal place in early Christian history. For example, Charles Thomas Brown, (refer to his book, Charles Thomas Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch* (Peter Lang Publishing: New York, 2000)) examines Ignatius' concept of "the gospel" spoken of in Ignatius' letters and places Ignatius' understanding among the gospels of earliest Christianity. Brown emphasises

the closing reign of Trajan, probably around 107 AD.⁸ It is from these letters that one can discern the theology, practice and structure of the early church at Antioch. It is estimated with reasonable accuracy that Ignatius was writing at the very beginning of the second century and he could write with authority after his time as bishop at Antioch. From studying his writings it is feasible to conclude that what he is writing about regarding the Eucharistic liturgy and theological teachings must be from his experiences at Antioch, as well as from his knowledge of what is happening in nearby church communities. He is passing on his wisdom and experience to other important church communities. His writings indicate a clear understanding about Jesus Christ and how he was worshipped as Lord and Saviour by Christians at the turn of the century. His confidence in Jesus as the saviour of humanity and his promise of resurrection is implicit in his (Ignatius') willingness to die for Christ. "For my part, I am writing to all the churches and assuring them that I am truly earnest about dying for God—if only you yourselves put no obstacles in the way."⁹ He does not want the members of the church to try to rescue him from his immanent death, which would be a cruel one probably being torn apart by wild beasts.

Ignatius clearly acknowledges the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. He states: "There is only one Physician—Very Flesh, yet Spirit too; Uncreated, and yet born; God-and-man in One agreed, Very-Life-in-Death indeed, fruit of God and Mary's seed."¹⁰ In this type of reference, he is clearly bringing out the teaching of the Incarnation and elucidating the two natures of Christ. His letters also indicate the challenges that he, as well as other church communities, faced including dealing with the Docetists, that is those whose beliefs virtually led to a denial of the humanity of Christ. Ignatius emphasises the humanity of Christ clearly in his letter to the Trallians stressing that Jesus Christ was born and ate and drank and was crucified then was raised again.¹¹ An analysis of his letters brings out a central theme of

that Ignatius' concepts are deeply rooted within the context of salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the central theme of all the gospels. More will be said on Brown's finding further into this chapter. William R. Schoedel, (refer to Schoedel's book, William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985)), acknowledges the many people who have researched the authenticity of the letters (pages 1-7). The research shows how other denominations also hold the documents in high esteem. For example, Schoedel acknowledges the work of Anglican Bishop James Ussher of Armagh in the seventeenth century, who laid the foundations for work by such people as Pearson and especially Zahn and Lightfoot. (See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 2.) Brown also cites research work done by Zahn and Lightfoot. Staniforth includes a map of the probable journey of Ignatius to Rome, with this route being deduced from the writings of Ignatius. This route seems very feasible when one reads the letters.

⁸ Staniforth, (ed.) *Early Christian Writings, The Apostolic Fathers*, 55.

⁹ St Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Romans" 4:1-2, in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, 86.

¹⁰ St Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Ephesians" 7:2, 63.

¹¹ Cf. St Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Trallians" 9, 81.

salvation through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and this ties in with the importance of Christ's two natures. Clearly the Docetists were denying the humanity of Christ. This emphasis on the humanity of Christ by Ignatius calls for a critique. One needs to ask what was it that gave Christ's suffering and death its salvific qualities? In answering this question one needs to see salvation in terms of the theme of love. Humanity had been separated from God at the origin of the human race by sin. Only God could bridge this gap. Hence out of love God sent his only Son whose life was one of total self-giving, the perfect act of love, which needs to be understood in terms of sacrifice. Christ cured people, was present for them, forgave sins and worked miracles and gave meaning and understanding to their lives. To sacrifice means to consecrate or make holy. At the Last Supper, at his death and resurrection, Christ as high priest offered once for all the perfect sacrifice, which expiated sin and brought the new covenant between God and the human race. This sacrifice was offered by one who was both divine and human. Hence one can understand why Ignatius took such a definite stand against the Docetists. If Christ was not fully human how could he offer the perfect sacrifice on behalf of humanity?

In examining the above, one can discern the important role that Mary played in God's plan for salvation. Although the texts are brief in referring to the Virgin Mary, they are incisive.¹² Discussion in the above paragraph stressed both the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Mary is the Mother of Christ¹³ so she plays a leading part in the incarnation and guarantees the truly human roots of Christ. Through her, one understands Jesus' connection to earlier generations.¹⁴

Ignatius' letters clearly indicate that by this time mainstream church teaching had divorced itself from the need to keep the Mosaic Law. In fact he spoke strongly against the church members who wanted to continue with the Jewish practices of keeping the Mosaic Law. Jesus was the new and perfect covenant. The question of following the Mosaic Law especially for the church at Antioch was addressed earlier in this chapter. Ignatius assures church members that Jesus is the saviour of humanity, so he speaks very much against Judaizing the faith. This is brought out in the following. "To profess Jesus Christ while continuing to follow Jewish customs is an absurdity. The Christian faith does not look to Judaism, but Judaism looks to

¹² St Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Ephesians" 7:2, 18:2, 63 and 66.

¹³ St Ignatius constantly refers to Christ as "Our God".

¹⁴ Cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Trallians" 9:1-2, 81, Ignatius, "To the Smyrnaeans" 1, 101.

Christianity, in which every other race and tongue that confesses a belief in God had now been comprehended.”¹⁵

In his letters one can discern the basis for sacramental theology, which will develop in the church especially in relationship to Eucharist. This understanding will be elaborated on in the chapters on the sacraments, Chapters Four and Five. Ignatius obviously saw the Eucharist as the most important means of mediating the life and grace of the Risen Lord to the members of his body the church. He clearly writes about the importance of the Eucharist to the church at Philadelphia :

*Make certain therefore that you all observe one common Eucharist, for there is but one body of our Lord Jesus Christ and but one cup of union with his blood and one single altar of sacrifice—even as also there is but one bishop with his clergy and one fellow- servitors, the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God.*¹⁶

One learns of the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. In his letter to the people at Smyrna, he writes, “Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is present, we have the Catholic Church.”¹⁷ Further he emphasises that the “Bishop presides in the place of God: the presbyters function as the council of the apostles, and the deacons are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ...”¹⁸ Ignatius also speaks about marriage and the right of Christians to marry provided it is for the right intention with the sanction of the bishop who is God’s representative. “When men and women marry, it is desirable to have the bishop’s consent to their union, so that the wedding may be a tribute to the Lord and not to their own carnal desire. The honour of God should be the aim in everything.”¹⁹ Ignatius refers to Baptism especially Christ’s Baptism linking it with his passion in other word with the salvific effect of Christ’s suffering and death.²⁰ Much more will be said on Baptism in Chapter Four. Ignatius also refers to the need to repent of sin. “...That is why the Lord offers forgiveness to all who repent, if their repentance brings them back into unity with God and with the bishop’s council of clergy.”²¹

¹⁵ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Magnesians” 10, 73.

¹⁶ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Philadelphians” 4, 94.

¹⁷ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Smyrnaeans” 8, 103.

¹⁸ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Magnesians” 6, 72.

¹⁹ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To Polycarp” 5, 110.

²⁰ Cf. St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Ephesians” 18, 65-66.

²¹ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Philadelphians” 8, 95.

The letters also show a Trinitarian formula,²² however this is not greatly developed theologically. Ignatius speaks of God as Father in some forty-five instances,²³ but refers to the Spirit infrequently, with the Spirit being a divine power which is associated with God or Christ.²⁴ He clearly spells out both the divinity and humanity of Christ. Further, he stresses the importance of love, faith and prayer but most of all the unity of the church. He is the first recorded person to refer to the church as Catholic.²⁵ In studying Ignatius' letters, one can make substantial conclusion about the church at Antioch, about its beliefs, worship, sacramental life, and the leadership in the church.

It needs to be kept in mind that at the end of the first century, when Ignatius would have been active in the church at Antioch there was no canonical New Testament. However some research suggests that Ignatius would probably have been familiar with Matthew's gospel. The book *Antioch and Rome, New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity*, written by Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier provides information relevant to the development of the Church at Antioch and the Church at Rome. John P. Meier looks at the early history of the Church at Antioch and uses New Testament sources especially the Acts of the Apostles and naturally the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. He also endeavours to reason why Matthew's gospel would have been written for the church at Antioch. Charles Thomas Brown, in his book *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, acknowledges that other scholars acknowledge that Ignatius was either acquainted with Matthew or with Matthew's sources. These include W.R. Inge (1905), É. Massaux (1950) and W.-D. Köhler (1987).²⁶ C.T. Brown then goes onto cite other research, which suggests contrary findings. Brown himself takes a much broader view after an indepth analysis of Ignatius' writings. He concludes that Ignatius' use of the word gospel refers to a preached message of salvation through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, one who was both divine and human, with this preached message coming from the earliest gospel traditions, rather than from the canonical gospels themselves. Certainly at the time when Ignatius was bishop at Antioch and during his journey to Rome, recent research gives substantial evidence for the gospels having been written at that time²⁷ although not all four would necessarily be available to all church communities and acceptance

²² Cf. St Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Ephesians" 9, 63, and "To the Magnesians" 13, 74.

²³ William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁵ Cf. St Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Smyrnaeans" 8:2, 103.

²⁶ Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*, 1-2.

²⁷ See Michael Pennock, *This is Our Faith*, rev. ed. (Ave Maria Press, 1998), 48, for suggested dates for the writing of the Gospels.

of the New Testament canon was only in its primacy. On reading the seven letters one certainly discerns the “good news” of salvation for all humanity through the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. Certainly the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ was the central message of the church’s activity. Further, it needs to be kept in mind, that the letters of Ignatius are not a treatise on fully understanding who Jesus is. That is not their intention. Two important themes of his letters are firstly the call to Christian unity especially in light of dissension by the Docetists and secondly his request for the church communities not to appeal against his immanent martyrdom. Further his letters do give insight into the church community at Antioch and also at other locations.

In reading Ignatius’ letters one can be struck by his very direct manner of addressing important issues in the church at the time. This probably flows from the needs of the time. For example the church was under persecution with Ignatius himself on the road to martyrdom. Secondly, the Docetists were threatening the belief in Jesus as true man and Ignatius felt a need to clearly spell out that Jesus was true God and true man. Thirdly, there had been a severing of ties with the Jerusalem church because of the destruction of the temple and the expelling of the Christians from synagogue worship. It came to be understood definitively, that the keeping of the Mosaic Law was no longer necessary for salvation. These were all challenging issues with which Ignatius had to deal. Hence it is possible to conclude that he had to speak in a very clear manner to ensure unity within the church.

Eventually a thriving catechetical school developed at Antioch, which was of great significance in the development of the early church. Antioch eventually became known as the See of Antioch. Ignatius himself was succeeded by a number of Greek-speaking bishops up to the end of the third century (included are Theophilus, Serapion and Paul of Samosata).²⁸ The teachings at Antioch were true to the original inspiration, Jesus Christ. This Jesus is the unique Son of God and promised Messiah. He is the exclusive cause of salvation for all humanity, the new and perfect covenant.

Eventually five great sees developed: Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome and Constantinople. It is from these main centres for Christianity that the five main rites of the church came into being: Antiochene, Coptic, Armenian, Byzantine and Roman. It needs to be

²⁸ Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 34.

noted that in the development of the church various rifts took place leading to the development of a number of church communities which trace their roots back to one of the great sees. This is true of the See of Antioch. Church communities whose roots are in Antioch include the Assyrian Church of the East, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Antiochene Orthodox Church and the Syrian Catholic Church.²⁹

During this early time of development there is very little information on how the sacramental life of the church was celebrated. It is very obvious from Ignatius' writings that the sacramental life of the church community was important, however details of sacramental celebrations are limited. Recent research suggests that the *Didache*³⁰ could well have been the oldest ecclesiastical constitution. The word *Didache* is Greek for "Teaching" with teaching referring to that of the twelve apostles. Beatrice reasons that it is a document used by Syrian Christians and suggests a date as early as the middle of the first century.³¹ Others put it at the end of the first century.³² Others suggest it was possibly produced as late as the fourth century,³³ although consensus seems to be for the earlier suggested times. Further, it is reasoned that it may be of Coptic origin rather than Syrian. It is a manual of instruction containing information on catechesis, the baptismal rite and the Eucharistic prayers. Baptism is Trinitarian and preferably is done in "living" water.³⁴ Sacramental development especially for Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist will be elaborated on in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis.

1.2.1 *St Ignatius and Tradition*

By looking at the development of the church at Antioch one can appreciate the importance of the term Tradition for passing on the good news about Jesus Christ. Put simply Tradition is the church's living and lived faith. It is through tradition that the church develops and hands on through generations all that she is and believes, hence perpetuating her doctrinal teachings, life and worship of the Holy Trinity. When Ignatius was writing his letters there was no

²⁹ See R. Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, 5th ed. (Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 1995), for further information about these church communities and their link with Antioch.

³⁰ This thesis uses the translation of the *Didache* in Maxwell Staniforth, (ed.) *Early Christian Writings, The Apostolic Fathers*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 187-199.

³¹ Pier Franco Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church* (Vicenza: Edizioni Istituto San Gaetano, 1983), 22.

³² E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1987), 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ The words "running water" are used Staniforth's translation. In keeping with the Melkite/Byzantine tradition "living" is preferred. This was confirmed by the Melkite Eparchy.

canonical New Testament, although the gospels were in circulation. The oral tradition was the first means for passing on the gospel, that is the good news about Jesus Christ. By examining Ignatius' writings one can appreciate the living and lived faith of not only the Antiochene community but of the Christian communities that Ignatius had contact with on his way to Rome. The faith is a living faith. One can expect developments to take place. For example by the turn of the first century, there seems to have been a severing from the Jewish communities. Hence concern about the Mosaic Law has little relevance by this time. Ignatius warns the church communities not to try to Judaize Christianity, as the keeping of the Mosaic Law is definitively not necessary for salvation. Jesus Christ is the essential and sufficient cause of salvation.

1.3 Other Development in the Church

At the same time that the church was developing in Antioch, there was considerable development else where in the Roman Empire and even beyond its borders. Main centres for Christianity were being developed in Rome and Alexandria. This thesis will look briefly at the development in Alexandria because of its great impact on the Eastern Christian Churches and its indirect influence on the Melkite Catholic Church. Due to enormous efforts of evangelisation especially by the apostle Paul, the Church of Antioch spread its influence over a considerable portion of the Christian communities including those westward to Cappadocia in Asia and across to Macedonia and Achaia, as well as spreading eastward to Mesopotamia and even beyond this area.³⁵ Further, it spread southward along the coast of Palestine. The Church at Antioch had enormous influence far greater than that of Rome or Alexandria. It was to have great impact especially liturgically and on ecclesiastical development at the imperial city of Constantinople from which the Byzantine Rite was to develop. This will be discussed in the chapters on the sacraments.

1.3.1 Further Missionary Activity in the Church

The Acts of the Apostles describes what are termed Paul's three missionary journeys in which one learns of the dynamism of this evangelist who was inflamed with spreading the gospel throughout the known world at the time. He could be described as the great evangeliser who preached the gospel in season and out of season. On studying the history of the Christian Church one is aware of the contribution of the spread of the gospel by many evangelists. One

³⁵ Austin P. Milner, *Theology of Confirmation* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1971), 12.

area of Christian development of great significance was Alexandria in Egypt. Tradition speaks of St. Mark taking the gospel to Egypt and establishing the See of Alexandria there possibly as early as 42 AD.³⁶

1.3.2 The Alexandrian School

There is considerable historical evidence for the development of the Church in Egypt especially at Alexandria. Like many centres of Christianity in the early church, the Christians of Egypt were to experience fierce persecution.³⁷ Historically Alexandria was considered the most important city in the Mediterranean Basin after Rome by the end of the second century,³⁸ as it was a thriving economic and trading centre. Its maritime and land routes connected Africa to Europe. Further it was renowned as an intellectual and educational centre attracting philosophers and students of religion from all over the world.³⁹ It is not surprising that a thriving Christian Catechetical school should be established there. Its origins remain obscure with the suggestion that the Sicilian Pantaenus started the school or alternatively that the apologist Athenagoras initiated its beginnings.⁴⁰

With Clement of Alexandria (150 –215), there is documentation for the development of the school. He was Greek by birth and well educated in Greek culture and philosophy. With his conversion to Christianity he was able to bring his philosophical knowledge to the service of evangelisation especially in his defence against Gnosticism. His writings elaborate on evangelisation to the secular world at Alexandria especially to the wealthy upper class and this is brought out in his writings entitled the *Protrepticus*, which was an exhortation to conversion to Christianity. Other writings include the *Pedagogus* and the *Stromateis*.⁴¹ The catechetical school in Alexandria is referred to in Greek as the *Didaskaleion*. Persecution from Septimius Severus (202) was severe with Clement taking refuge in Cappadocia with some time spent also at Jerusalem.⁴² With the departure of Clement from the *Didaskaleion*, the emphasis of the school was to change. It was taken over by Bishop Demetrius who called

³⁶ Maged Attia, *Coptic Orthodox Church of Australia, 1969 – 1994* (Bexley, Aust: Coptic Orthodox Publication and Translation, 1995), 1.

³⁷ See for example the persecution of Clement of Alexandria written about later in this chapter.

³⁸ Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 109.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 114.

Origen to use his great talents as an intellectual and preacher to develop this centre as a school of theology.

Origen holds an esteemed place in the Alexandrian school and is considered to be the “Father of Eastern Theology.”⁴³ The historian Eusebius of Caesaria has supplied copious amounts of information about Origen and his life and writings. He was only eighteen when he replaced Clement as the director of the catechetical school at Alexandria, being appointed by Bishop Demetrius.⁴⁴ It was through Origen’s efforts and teaching that his school attained a high prestige and a great respect as a centre for Christian learning. Origen travelled to other ecclesial communities both in the East and West, including Rome, during his thirty years of work at the School of Alexandria. His great contributions were in the field of theology, its history, biblical exegesis and spirituality.⁴⁵ Other notable names in this catechetical school are Athanasius (259-273), Cyril of Alexandria (376-444) and Dioscorus. Dioscorus was to play a significant role in the schism, which occurred after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. The School of Alexandria was to play an important part in the development of the Christian church with a number of its graduates taking key roles in the early ecumenical councils. Especially important is Athanasius. His writings and theological input had considerable influence on the Cappadocian fathers, St Basil the Great, St Gregory of Nazianzus and St Gregory of Nyssa, who individually and jointly had a great impact for the Christian church in general. The Melkite Catholic Church holds these four in high esteem. Their contributions will be discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.

1.4 Conclusions

The first aim in this chapter was to explain the development of the church at Antioch and its great significance for the Gentiles with Antioch being the birthplace of the Melkite Church. Considerable evidence has been given for the establishment of the church at Antioch, especially from the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. The church is founded on the work and person of Jesus Christ who is both God and man. The church is established there under the power of the Holy Spirit as it has developed from the church at Jerusalem, which came into being at Pentecost. It is an extension of the mother church, the

⁴³ Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 71.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

church at Jerusalem and is legitimised by the Council of Jerusalem, which included those apostles who were present at Pentecost and who were empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The second aim was to explain the importance of Tradition for passing on the good news about the source and inspiration of the Melkite Church, Jesus Christ. One can see the importance of Tradition in establishing the church at Antioch. Tradition is the Church's living and lived faith. The church began by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, however at the beginning of this preaching there were no written canonical gospels. These were a later development. Tradition is alive when the apostles and their co-workers gathered for the Council of Jerusalem and made their decision about the Mosaic laws being unnecessary for salvation with Baptism being the new sign of the covenant. This is because Jesus Christ is the new and perfect covenant, the necessary and sufficient cause for salvation. When one examines evidence for church development through the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, one can see the importance of Tradition for passing on teachings about Jesus Christ. His letters reveal many features of the early church and how important the gospel message is at Antioch. Putting all the evidence together for the church at Antioch one can conclude that it has Jesus Christ as its source and inspiration, He is God and man and one with the Father with a Trinitarian formula present. The Eucharist is the chief means of mediating the life and grace of the risen Lord and the church is sacramental in character. The church there is the cradle for Christianity and the gateway for the gentiles. The role of the bishop is essential with Christians gathering together on Sundays with the bishop who is the leader of the church community, to celebrate the Eucharist. There is little evidence in this early part of the church's history as to how its liturgical life was actually celebrated. The various rites developed gradually. However, the basic theology is present in the church which has been empowered by the Holy Spirit and which worships Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God and saviour of the world.

The third aim was to explain briefly that at the same time the church was developing at Antioch it was also developing in other areas especially at Alexandria, which was to influence the development of the Melkite Church. Alexandria in Egypt is one very important area of development with it becoming the See of Alexandria. This centre was to impact on the Christian Church in general and importantly on the Melkite Church. One theologian from the Alexandrian school who had an important influence on the spiritual development of the

Melkite Church was Athanasius and his contributions will be discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis as well as some input in Chapter Three about the concept of deification.

1.4.1 The Characteristics of the Early church at Antioch

A further aim was to enumerate the characteristics of the early church at Antioch, which give understanding about the Melkite Catholic Church today. The important characteristics of the church at Antioch by the end of the first century (or very early second century AD) are listed below.

1.4.1.1 Theology

Jesus Christ is worshipped as Lord and Saviour by this church community. His divinity and humanity are clearly acknowledged. It is acknowledged that salvation came through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the central message of the gospel. Salvation is for all humanity, both Jews and Gentiles. There is a Trinitarian formula with an understanding of the Holy Trinity developing at Antioch. However further theological development of the Trinity will emerge. It is acknowledged that Mary plays an important role in God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

1.4.1.2 Structure

The church at Antioch is apostolic that is founded by the apostles and it is seen as universal with Ignatius using the term catholic. The church is developed under the power of the Holy Spirit since the apostles approve it especially Peter, who with the apostles, were empowered by Jesus Christ and especially at Pentecost to establish the church. These apostles had been commissioned to make disciples of all nations. The mother church, the church at Jerusalem legitimises the church at Antioch especially in its evangelical work to gentiles. Obedience to the bishop is important since he represents Christ. Ecumenism is alive in the establishment of the church by the apostles with its inclusiveness of both Jewish Christians and gentiles with respect for each group. However one needs to note that by the end of the first century, there is a move away from the Jewish practice of keeping the Mosaic Law. In other words, there is greater realisation that Jesus Christ is the necessary and sufficient cause of salvation. Unity in the Church especially in doctrinal belief is essential. One can see the importance of Tradition, the living and lived faith at Antioch. Love, faith and prayer are essential in the Christian community.

1.4.1.3 Sacraments and Liturgy

Baptism is the sign of the new covenant, and it is for all people both Jews and gentiles. The Eucharist is the most important means for mediating the life and grace of the Risen Lord to the members of His body, the church. Baptism, the Eucharist, Holy Orders, Marriage and the Repentance of Sin are referred to. However, there is very little elaboration on the liturgical celebration of these sacraments. Development of these sacraments will be elaborated on in Chapters Four and Five. The three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon is a prominent and important feature of the church. This ministry beginning with how it was understood at Antioch will be discussed in detail when discussing the Sacrament of Holy Orders in Chapter Five.

1.4.2 Overview of Chapter One and the following chapters

On examining the evidence for the development of the church at Antioch one can discern an evangelical community with Jesus Christ as its origin and inspiration. This community is established by the power of Holy Spirit. A detailed enumeration of the characteristics of this apostolic community is given above. These characteristics throw light on and give understanding about the Melkite Church today. Hence Chapter Three will explain worship in the Melkite Church in Australia today elaborating on the belief in the Holy Trinity and other central beliefs in Melkite spirituality. As well it will explain how associated elements in its worship especially church architecture and icons express the theology of the church. Belief in the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation are fundamental in the Melkite Church today as they were at its origin, hence Chapter Two will elaborate on how these central beliefs developed. Chapter One concluded that the church at Antioch was sacramental in character hence an explanation of the importance of the celebration of the sacraments in the Melkite Church today will be given in Chapters Four and Five. All of the chapters in this thesis bring out the importance of understanding Tradition, the living and lived faith of the Melkite Catholic Church.

CHAPTER TWO THE CONTRIBUTION OF GREAT THEOLOGIAN TO THE THEOLOGICAL TRADITION OF THE MELKITE CATHOLIC CHURCH

2.0 Introduction and aims

Chapter One concluded that the church at Antioch was an evangelical community with Jesus Christ as its origin and inspiration. It acknowledged Jesus as the incarnate God sent by the Father to redeem humanity. Further, the church at Antioch had an understanding of God as Trinity. The teachings on the Trinity and the Incarnation in the Melkite Church as in all rites are the two dogmas from which all other teachings and liturgical celebrations flow. Hence this chapter aims to examine development in understanding of these teachings. It will do this by looking at the contributions of St Athanasius, St Basil of Caesarea, St Gregory of Nazianus and St Gregory of Nyssa. The emphasis will be mainly on the writings and works of St Athanasius and St Basil but acknowledges the importance of all four theologians especially the contributions of the two Gregorys at Constantinople I (380-381). In explaining the development of these two teachings it will demonstrate how Tradition and Scripture, which is part of the living Tradition of the Church, are important in revelation in the Melkite Catholic Church. Lastly this chapter aims to show the importance of the monastic life and briefly its development through the efforts of these theologians. Monasticism is important in the Melkite Church.

2.1 The importance of understanding Tradition

As this thesis emphasises the importance of Tradition in understanding the doctrinal development of church teaching it will give a brief overview of this concept. Firstly the Christian Church came into being as discussed in Chapter One and it gradually accepted the various books that would make up the New Testament canon. The Tradition for handing on the faith was most important for the Christian community as no New Testament books actually existed when the church was founded. Initially the teachings about Jesus were passed on orally. In studying the four theologians in this section one can appreciate the importance of the term Tradition which put in a simple way, as was stated in Chapter One, is the Church's living and lived faith. To appreciate Tradition one must be familiar with and study the articulations of the faith community, its liturgy, creeds, church documents especially those from the ecumenical councils, catechisms, Eucharistic prayers, hymns, artwork and devotional practices. Christ is always present in his church as he promised the apostles he would be. "...And know that I am with you always until the end of the world" (Mt 28:20).

During the time of the four theologians clear teachings needed to be given on the divinity and humanity of Christ and the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The question of the divinity of Christ arose from the Arian controversy dealt with at the first ecumenical council in Nicea in 325 but was not largely finalised until Constantinople I in 380-381. Also the question of the nature of the Holy Spirit came to the fore after Nicea I. By dealing with both of these issues clear teaching on the Holy Trinity would come to fruition. A study of the theological writings of the four theologians brings out the importance of Tradition, and Scripture as part of the living Tradition of the church, in the revelation of God to His people. Although St. Athanasius is of the Alexandrian School, his writings and theology are important for Melkite spirituality as will be elaborated in this chapter. The importance of the church at Antioch and the establishment of the Alexandrian school are discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. Major centres for Christian learning generally influence each other. For example the School of Alexandria contributed to development of what was happening in Caesarea in Asia Minor, which was the area in which the Cappadocian Fathers preached the gospels, with Caesarea coming under the See of Antioch.

2.2 *St Athanasius*

Athanasius is a well know theologian who became Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt in 328 AD. He attended Nicea I as a deacon and was very much aware of the Arian controversy which although dealt with at the first ecumenical council continued to rage after the council. Athanasius' contributions to theology were significant. Firstly, he was the first person to definitively recognise the twenty-seven books of the New Testament Canon. He clearly identifies them in his Easter Letter, in 367 AD and adds, "These are fountains of salvation that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of Godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these."⁴⁶ Secondly, he developed teachings on the Holy Spirit and on the Incarnation with his writings showing the importance in revelation of Tradition including Sacred Scripture. His writings on the Holy Spirit and the Incarnation led to clearer teachings on the Holy Trinity. His concept of deification is fundamental in the Eastern spirituality of the Melkite church and permeates the celebration of all the sacraments. (See Chapters Four and Five.) Athanasius' early writing was entitled *Against the Pagans-On the Incarnation of the*

⁴⁶ St Athanasius, "Letter 36, Easter 367," in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, (eds.) *St. Athanasius: Selected Works and Letters*, vol. IV, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 552.

*Word*⁴⁷, which gave insight into his theological stance on the Incarnation. Other writings include *Discourses Against the Arians* and the *History of the Arians*.⁴⁸ His episcopate was to last for forty-six years. However about twenty years of this were spent in exile with his having to leave Alexandria five times,⁴⁹ sometimes taking refuge in the Egyptian desert with the monks known as the desert fathers. The best known of these was St. Anthony of Egypt, who was much revered by Athanasius with Athanasius writing the *Life of Anthony* soon after Anthony's death.⁵⁰ Athanasius' writings were important for the Second Ecumenical Council, even though he died before the council took place. One can refer to commentary on and excerpts from his writings in the books *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church* by Pier Franco Beatrice⁵¹ and *The Doctors of the Church* by Fink.⁵²

2.2.1 Teachings on the Incarnation

Athanasius gives clear teaching on why the divinity of Christ is so important and why God became man. In his book, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, he develops his central concept that Christ had to be divine to be saviour of humanity. Humanity was in need of salvation because of sin at the origin of the human race. He argues along the lines that only God could bridge the gap between humanity and God hence restoring the right relationship. Therefore, Christ had to be of the same substance as the Father. Further Jesus had to become man to effect salvation. Athanasius emphasises Christ's victory over death, which is brought about by Christ being a sacrifice for humanity, an offering free of every blemish.⁵³ In evaluating Athanasius' emphasis on Christ as a sacrifice and perfect offering, one can appreciate that to effect salvation Christ had to be both divine and human, bringing about salvation by an act of perfect love, of offering the perfect sacrifice on behalf of all humanity. This perfect sacrifice established the new and eternal covenant between God and humanity. This could only happen through the Incarnation. His writings clearly bring out both the importance of the divinity and humanity of Christ, as can be seen in the quotes below. It was stated in Chapter One that the church at Antioch acknowledged that salvation came through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Athanasius certainly contributes to this understanding and develops it.

⁴⁷ Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 197.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 199.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 200-201.

⁵¹ Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 193-247

⁵² John Fink, *The Doctors of the Church, An Introduction to the Church's Great Teachers, Volume I, Doctors of the First Millennium* (New York: Alba House, Society of St. Paul, 2000), 1-12.

⁵³ Refer to Athanasius' writings "On the Incarnation" in Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 211.

The word of God, corporeal, incorruptible and immaterial, entered our world. Yet it was not as if he had been remote from it up to that time. For there is no part of the world that was ever without his presence; together with the Father he filled all things and places.⁵⁴ (On the Incarnation).

This is the reason why the Word assumed a body that could die so that this body, sharing in the Word who is above all, might satisfy death's requirement in place of all. Because of the Word dwelling in that body, it would remain incorruptible and all would be freed forever from corruption by the grace of the Resurrection. In death the Word made a spotless sacrifice and oblation of the body he had taken. By dying for others, he immediately banished death for all mankind.⁵⁵

2.2.2 Teachings on the Holy Spirit and The Holy Trinity

Athanasius wrote comprehensively on the Holy Spirit explaining why the Holy Spirit was the third person of the Trinity in his letters to Serapion,⁵⁶ as the nature of the Holy Spirit was being questioned during his lifetime. In doing this he gave clear teachings about the Trinity with the topics the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity overlapping. Excerpts from writings on the Holy Trinity below gives clear teaching on the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is holy and perfect, which is acknowledged as divine in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It contains nothing foreign or extraneous nor has it come into being through a creator or a created substance, but is entirely creative and operative force. It is identical with itself, undivided in nature and one in its action. Indeed, the Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit and thus the unity of the Holy Trinity is saved. Therefore one God is proclaimed in the church, who is 'above all, and through all and in all'.⁵⁷ 'Above all' as Father as origin and source; 'through all' by means of the Word and 'in all' in the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is not only a name or a mere word but truly and really is Trinity.⁵⁸

This passage is typical of Athanasius' writings, which constantly refer to Scripture.⁵⁹ On examining such quotes one can conclude that his writings on the Holy Trinity and pneumatology are scripturally based. The Holy Spirit is present and active in creation, in redemption and ultimate fulfilment.⁶⁰ His contributions to defending Nicene orthodoxy, his elaboration on the dogma of the Holy Trinity, his reasoning for the divinity of the Holy Spirit

⁵⁴ St Athanasius, "On the Incarnation," in Fink, *The Doctors of the Church*, 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 7-8

⁵⁶ Serapion of Thmuis in Egypt, who was a monk-bishop, was a friend of Athanasius and also of St Anthony of Egypt.

⁵⁷ Cf. Eph 4:6.

⁵⁸ St Athanasius, "Letter I to Serapion," in Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 213-214.

⁵⁹ See Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 213-214, for further quotes.

⁶⁰ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology, Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 168.

and his explanation of the Incarnation were important groundwork for the Second Ecumenical Council. More will be said about Athanasius' writings on pneumatology in the section on St Basil.

2.2.3 Athanasius' contributions to understanding the monastic life

Athanasius' writings on St Anthony of Egypt are well known and show his encouragement of and support for the monastic life. The fact that he was supported and sheltered by the monks for some of the time in exile no doubt gave him an understanding of this life style. From his writings on St Anthony one gains insight into the monastic life. Although not the first Christian hermit, Anthony is regarded as the father of Christian monasticism. From his long sermons on how to live an ascetical life, one can discern his idea of early monastic rule.⁶¹ One might describe the mode of Anthony and his followers as semi-eremitical since the monks lived in separated cells (dwellings such as caves) coming together occasionally for prayer. Athanasius' writings made the monastic life-style well known throughout both East and West.

2.3 St Basil the Great

Basil of Caesarea, who became known as the Great, was a bishop, monk and theologian. He was in the interesting position of being born into a family of saints. Both of his parents, Basil the Elder and Emmelia are revered as saints along with his grandmother Saint Macrina the Elder.⁶² Basil's parents had ten children with his sister becoming known as St Macrina the Younger and a brother as St Gregory of Nyssa.⁶³ St Gregory of Nyssa in writing the biography of his sister Macrina, provided considerable information about St Basil's family. In 370, Basil was appointed Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, extending his already active work in several directions. His writings include the books *On the Holy Spirit* and *Against Eunomius* (three books). There are records of his sermons and his letters. Much can be learned about St Basil through the writings of his friend and colleague St Gregory of Nazianzus with Gregory emphasising Basil concern for the poor. He constructed "a type of city refuge", which became known as *Basilias*,⁶⁴ with the main aim of developing both the spiritual and temporal needs of the faith community. One would expect the genuine Christian to speak on behalf of the poor and to work to give them a decent standard of living. Basil also worked on

⁶¹ See St Athanasius, "Life of St Anthony," in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, (eds.) *St. Athanasius: Selected Works and Letters*, vol. IV, 194-221.

⁶² Fink, *The Doctors of the Church*, 52.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 221.

liturgical reform with tradition attributing “The Liturgy of St Basil” to him. His contribution to the liturgy is referred to in Chapter Four.

2.3.1 Theological contributions on the Incarnation, Pneumatology, and the Trinity

Like Athanasius, Basil worked diligently to refute Arianism. His treatise *On the Holy Spirit* was important for recognising the full divinity of the Holy Spirit. His writings on pneumatology stress scriptural study especially New Testament writings. Basil and Athanasius both emphasise that the Holy Spirit is present and active in creation, in the incarnation and thus in redemption. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the apostles at Pentecost. It is in “the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters,” (Gn 1:2) that one discerns the Holy Spirit’s creative powers. It is reasoned that the work or function of the Holy Spirit is to give life in Christ, in other words, the Holy Spirit reveals the Son.⁶⁵ The essential premise of both Athanasius and Basil is that since this is the function of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit cannot be a creature. Hence the Spirit must be consubstantial with the Father and the Son.⁶⁶ Athanasius discusses this concept in his “Letters to Serapion” and Basil elaborates on it in his treatise, *On the Holy Spirit*.⁶⁷ It was these two patristic writings, which were the main reference throughout the Byzantine period for understanding pneumatology.⁶⁸ Like Athanasius, Basil wrote clearly about the Incarnation. This was important for giving decisive teaching about the Holy Trinity. In his writings, Basil reasons that if Christ had not become man then salvation would not have been effected. This is indicated in the following writings.

*If the Lord did not come in our flesh, then the ransom did not pay the fine due to death on our behalf, nor did he destroy through himself the reign of death. For if the Lord did not assume that over which death reigned, death would not have been stopped from effecting his purpose, nor would the suffering of the God-bearing flesh have become our gain: He would not have slain sin in the flesh. We, who were dead in Adam, would not have been restored in Christ.*⁶⁹

This passage is stressing the centrality of Christ assuming human nature to bring about salvation. Basil also stresses that salvation cannot be effected unless Christ is also God. In Chapter One an understanding of salvation was given. It stressed the centrality of Christ being

⁶⁵ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology, Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, 168.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ “Epistola” 261:2 from trans. H. Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 70, quoted in Gerald O’Collins, *Christology, A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 155-156.

both God and man to effect the salvation of all humanity. This central theme was brought out by Ignatius and further developed by other theologians especially the four discussed in this chapter. Basil's teachings were promulgated at the second ecumenical council in 381 even though he died in 379. However the two other Cappadocian Fathers were present at the council to bring Basil's work to fruition.⁷⁰ These two were responsible for the definitive formulation of the Trinitarian dogma, with the formula emphasising unity of substance, *homoousios*, and the understanding of the distinct persons, (*hypostases*) of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2.3.2 *St Basil and the monastic life*

Basil is famous for his organisation of the monastic life. Possibly he is considered the real founder of Greek monasticism. His long and short rule have influenced the Greek monastic tradition. Monasticism is an important part of the Melkite Catholic Church today, with Basil's concepts still being influential in this area of Christian spirituality. He was intensely interested in society and its organisation and saw monasticism as an integral part of Christian society. He devoted his attention to the cenobitic mode of monasticism. Through Basil's efforts it became part of the very soul of the church spreading also to the West especially under the influence of St Benedict. Basil was able to speak first hand of the monastic life because of a two-year visit he made to a number of places in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine. He witnessed men living as hermits in the style of St Anthony with their time being spent in prayer and penance.⁷¹ He was impressed with the devotion of the monks but felt there would be great advantage if they joined their cells to form one monastery. In this way, they could continue their prayerful life but would practice obedience to an abbot, who could then guide them in their work, whether manual, or in libraries or in the classroom with this work benefiting the whole Christian community.⁷²

One can perhaps more easily understand the emphasis on monasticism today by reflecting on the comments of Lawrence Cross. Cross, a contemporary writer on Byzantine spirituality and a priest attached to the Melkite Eparchy at Greenacre writes positively and lovingly about Eastern monasticism, with his writings giving insights into the monastic life in the present day. Cross emphasises that a monk is a Christian who is "set apart in the church to pattern his

⁷⁰ Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 223.

⁷¹ Fink, *The Doctors of the Church*, 53.

⁷² *Ibid.*.

life on Christ.”⁷³ He takes the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and his life “proclaims that goodness, beauty and truth are the true standards of value, and not efficiency, material success, power or force.”⁷⁴ A monk’s life proclaims the “good news’ about Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, as men and women can live now in a new and authentically human way.⁷⁵ Monasticism is at the very heart of the church, but unlike the West there are no religious orders in the Eastern Christian churches and each monastery is an independent identity.⁷⁶ Further it is largely a lay character in the East although some monks take Holy Orders. There are no Melkite monasteries in Australia at present. However, there are plans to develop one in the foreseeable future.⁷⁷

2.4 *St Gregory of Nazianzus.*

Basil’s spiritual development was strongly linked with that of his friend Gregory of Nazianzus. Gregory, too, became famous for his theology and other contributions to the church especially the development of Trinitarian theology. He was given the prestigious title, “the Theologian.” This chapter will not discuss Gregory’s work in detail, but stresses that he presided at the Council of Constantinople (381) using his own writings and those of St Athanasius and St Basil along with the writings and help of St Gregory of Nyssa to expound clear teaching on the Holy Trinity and dogmatic formulation on the Holy Spirit with clear teaching on the divinity of the Holy Spirit being added to the Creed (Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed). He became known as “the Theologian” because of his famous five *Theological Orations*, delivered at Constantinople against Arianism.⁷⁸ He was well prepared for the enormous and challenging task of presiding at the Council of Constantinople as he had spent five years in prayer and study at a monastery in Seleucia (near modern Bagdad, Iraq). It was at the council that the Fathers took up the case of the teachings of Macedonius who had preached that the Holy Spirit is a mere creature and a ministering angel.⁷⁹ Macedonius became bishop of the city of Constantinople in 342, and used harsh methods to spread his theory. He was eventually deposed. His theory was condemned and dealt with at the council with the outcome that the Fathers formulated a definitive statement on the nature of the Holy Spirit. At Constantinople I, Gregory Nazianzen especially with the assistance of Gregory of

⁷³ Lawrence Cross, *Eastern Christianity, The Byzantine Tradition* (Marrickville: E. J. Dwyer, 1986), 81.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 82.

⁷⁷ Confirmed by the Melkite eparch at Greenacre.

⁷⁸ Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*, 225.

⁷⁹ P.C. Thomas, *General Councils of the Church* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1993), 22.

Nyssa brought to fruition clear terminology for the Holy Trinity: Three *hypostases* and one *ousia* in God.

2.5 St Gregory of Nyssa

St Gregory of Nyssa lived from 335 to 394, and was appointed bishop of Nyssa by his brother Basil in 371. Gregory produced significant theological writings including *On the Creation of Man*, *The Great Catechetical Discourse*, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* and *On Virginity* as well as producing the biography of his sister Macrina, a saintly woman.⁸⁰ He made use of the biblical allegorical exegesis of Origen in his writings.⁸¹ He produced three exegetical treatises: *On the Life of Moses*, *On the Psalms* and *On the Canticle of Canticles*. Further, his writings show that he was committed to his brother Basil's interests. Like Basil he was concerned about the Arian heresy and wrote four treatises against the Arian exponent, Eunomius.⁸² He is best known as great mystical theologian of Christianity, which included a meditation on the nature of man.⁸³ He used much of his Greek philosophy to do this then integrated it into the Christian experience especially that of monasticism and the ascetical life. He gave further support to his brother's efforts at developing the monastic life with Gregory's writings giving input and depth to Basil's understanding of the ascetic ideal.⁸⁴ *On Virginity* was written by Gregory at Basil's request.⁸⁵ Gregory himself was married. His writings on this topic are approached philosophically rather than experientially, giving guidelines for the life of a monk. He includes Aristotelian and Platonic ideas in his writings. In attaining virtue one must avoid excesses in either direction that will inhibit the soul from attaining contemplation with the Divine.⁸⁶

2.6 Conclusions

The first aim was to show how clear teachings developed especially on the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation by theologians revered in the Melkite Catholic Church. This was important, as

⁸⁰ Beatrice, *Introduction to The Fathers of the Church*, 229-230. See also "Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Ascetical Works" in Roy Deferrari *et al.* (eds.) *The Fathers of the Church* vol. 58, (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1967). This book includes many of Gregory's writings as well as suitable commentary on his works.

⁸¹ Deferrari *et. al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church*, vol.58, xiii.

⁸² *Ibid.*, xii.

⁸³ Beatrice, *Introduction to The Fathers of the Church*, 230.

⁸⁴ Deferrari *et. al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 58, xiii.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁸⁶ See St Gregory of Nyssa, "On Virginity," and its Introduction Section, in Roy Deferrari, *et al.* (eds.) *The Father of the Church, St Gregory of Nyssa, Ascetical Works*, vol. 58 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 3-75.

these teachings are the central teachings in the Melkite Church. This was achieved by looking at selected writings, theological contributions and efforts of the theologians, St. Athanasius, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St Gregory of Nyssa. With the Incarnation, that is, Christ's coming to earth, God is revealed more deeply. The four theologians clearly expounded on the importance of the Incarnation. Christ had to be fully divine and fully human to bring about the redemption of humanity. The two Gregorys were present at the Second Ecumenical Council to bring finality to the Arian heresy. Constantinople I gave clear wording in relation to the Holy Trinity expounding on the terms *ousia*, *homoousia* and *hypostatis*. Further, an explanation is given on why the Holy Spirit had to be fully divine, with statements on the divinity and nature of the Holy Spirit being added to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. In the early church at Antioch, Ignatius of Antioch acknowledged a Trinitarian formula for the Godhead, with his teaching on the Holy Spirit needing further development. It is theologians such as the four above who develop deeper understanding of key doctrinal teachings.

The second aim was to show how the living Tradition of the church is important in revelation and how the above key theologians contributed to its development. Naturally at the origin of the church, articulations of the faith were sometimes in need of further development. The promise that Christ would be with his church always ensures the development of deeper understanding of key teachings. The four theologians clearly bring out the importance of Tradition. Basil and Athanasius clearly expound on the divinity of the Holy Spirit as discussed in this chapter. Gregory of Nazianzus is the convenor of the Second Ecumenical Council. It is under his direction and with the assistance of Gregory of Nyssa that deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit, making use of Basil's and Athanasius' writings, comes to full fruition. Further, Scripture was very important for these theologians, with examples as follows. St. Athanasius clearly brings out the importance of the New Testament writings in his Easter letter of 367 where he acknowledges the twenty-seven books in the New Testament Canon and he is the first person to publicly do this. St Gregory of Nyssa is known for his biblical exegesis. St Basil and St Athanasius stress the biblical foundation for understanding the divinity of the Holy Spirit. It was concluded Tradition which includes Sacred Scripture is important for these theologians and hence for understanding revelation in the Melkite Catholic Church.

The last aim was to appreciate the development and importance of monasticism. It certainly developed in the time of the four theologians. One learns about the monastic life especially from the writings about St Anthony by St Athanasius. Gregory of Nyssa also wrote on monasticism. Gregory Nazianzen lived the monastic life with St Basil. In the Melkite tradition based on the principles of St. Basil, the monastic life is seen as central to and not separate from the heart of the Christian life. The principles especially espoused by St Basil, are relevant to all members of the Christian community, principles such as prayer being the elixir of the Christian life, work and self-sufficiency, work that glorifies God in all Christian efforts, study that leads to deeper understanding of Christian teachings and contemplation that deepens prayer life and unites the Christian with the Holy Trinity and the communion of saints.

Chapter One discussed the foundation of the Church at Antioch, the birthplace of the Melkite Church. This early church community worshipped Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God and Saviour of both Jews and Gentiles. This church community had been established by the power of the Holy Spirit. A Trinitarian formula was elaborated on but needed further development. This chapter shows how explicit teaching on the Holy Trinity comes to fruition. It was important to do this, as it is the Holy Trinity whom the Melkite faithful worship. Chapter Three elucidates this worship.

CHAPTER THREE WORSHIP IN THE MELKITE CATHOLIC CHURCH

3.0 Introduction and aims

Chapter Two emphasised the importance of the dogmas of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. Hence, this chapter will explain how the Melkite Church worships the Holy Trinity. It will do this by elaborating on the theological understanding of the Trinity and how the Melkites worship in the Byzantine Rite. It will discuss the term *deification*. Further it will explain the importance of associated elements in its worship such as devotions, practices, actions, the architecture of the church, holy images, especially icons, and other symbols and how these express the theology of the Church. The Holy Mysteries, the sacraments, which are the liturgical celebrations of the Church, will be covered mainly in Chapters Four and Five. This chapter will explain in detail why the veneration of icons is important in developing a deep relationship with Christ as well as how icons reflect the theology of the Melkite Church.

3.1 The Melkites and the Byzantine Rite of Worship

Most societies have expressed what is important and life giving through appropriate symbols, art and architecture. Important events and ideas take on the highest significance in religious and social experiences. History records how people have used symbols and ceremonies to mark such events or to preserve important ideas and teachings. The Byzantine rite⁸⁷ encapsulates what is important in theological teachings, worship, beliefs, devotions, practices and contributions of important people, for those who worship in this rite. The chanting, incense, processions, icons, architecture of the church, and other features, all assist in bringing out the richness of the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and other liturgical celebrations and assist in explaining the theological significance of what is happening. Of course this is meaningful to worshippers when they know what the symbols and ritual mean and hence what is being expressed. Symbols and art forms in any age must speak to their viewers. The religious icon, which developed more fully in the Byzantine rite, is very important in this rite and it has become an important addition as a religious image in the Latin rite as well.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ See definition of rite in the Introduction to this thesis

⁸⁸ The use of icons has become common in Australia in the Roman Rite. For example, in the Year of the Father, 1999, leading up to the Great Jubilee celebrations in 2000 each parish church in the Dioceses of Wollongong was given a copy of an icon of the Dormition of the Virgin by Bishop Philip Wilson, (now Archbishop Wilson of the Archdiocese of Adelaide). This icon was presented to a member of each parish church at the end of a special Mass, celebrated at the Wollongong Cathedral on Friday 16 July, with the recipient taking it back to the parish church where it was to be hung. Icons are used in other areas. For example, the Catholic Church at Unanderra, a suburb of Wollongong is adorned with some icons, giving a pleasing mix of Eastern and Western holy images.

3.1.1 *The Byzantine Rite*

The Byzantine Rite could be described as the liturgical system that developed in the Patriarchate of Constantinople and was actually “a hybrid of Constantinopolitan and Palestinian Rites,”⁸⁹ gradually synthesising during the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. More is said on this in Chapter Four. The Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem who had adhered to the Chalcedonian formula gradually adopted this rite. The Melkites of course are included in this group. After the Council of Chalcedon held in 451 they came under the protection of the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, whose capital was Constantinople. This chapter looks at important features of the Byzantine Rite as celebrated in the Melkite Church.⁹⁰ For information about the development of the Byzantine rite one can read many books on its history.⁹¹ In studying worship in the Melkite Church, one can observe that the central teachings are reflected in its worship, architecture, symbols and holy images. Development of doctrinal teaching and symbolic expressions go hand in hand. In appreciating the liturgy and the sacred symbols in the Melkite Church one needs to ask the question, “Who is the God that this community worships?”

3.1.2 *The Holy Trinity*

The Melkite Catholic community in the third millennium worships one, eternal, unique, omniscient, omnipotent, transcendent, yet immanent God. The Central mystery of the Melkite Catholic Church is the teaching on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It is God who makes it known by revealing Godself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The liturgies and theology of the

The Catholic Mission shop in Wollongong, which sells religious art, has many Holy Cards of popular icons. Icons adorn the wall of a local Catholic High School. The Internet is loaded with information about icons showing their relevance in worship to many Christians. It should be noted that the proper religious use of icons requires the user to understand their creation and history, especially out of respect for the Eastern Christian Churches.

⁸⁹ Robert F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite, A Short History* (Collegeville, Minnesota: the Liturgical Press, 1992), 16.

⁹⁰ There are many Byzantine Rite church communities. Byzantine rite churches in union with Rome include, the Melkite Catholic Church, the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the Ruthenian Catholic Church, The Romanian Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church, the Byzantine Catholics in former Yugoslavia and others. See Ronald G. Roberson’s book, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, 5th ed. (Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 1995) for details about these Church communities. Byzantine Rite Churches not in union with Rome include, the Orthodox Church of Russia, the Orthodox Church of Serbia, the Orthodox Church of Greece, the Orthodox Church of Albania and many more. See Roberson’s book for a full list and further details about these church communities.

⁹¹ Suggested books for reading include: Robert F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite, A Short History* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), Tim Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy, The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990). Robert Taft, *Beyond East-West, Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (New York: The Pastoral Press, 1984), Hans-Joachim Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1986). The writer of this thesis does not necessarily endorse comments and opinions given in the books listed in the footnotes on the various topics researched in this thesis.

Melkite Catholic Church are strongly Trinitarian. Raya, an important contemporary theologian in the Melkite Catholic Church describes the Trinity as follows: “The Holy Trinity, one God in three divine persons is the unshakeable foundation of all Christian religious thought and the expression of all Christian religious experience and spiritual life.”⁹² This is the central mystery of the Christian faith because all the other theology emanates from this belief with the spiritual life of Christians proceeding from it. This central teaching on the Holy Trinity is common to all rites both Eastern and Roman. Melkite spirituality has a distinctively Trinitarian emphasis and this will be elaborated on in the chapters on the sacraments.

This one unique God is omnipotent, awesome, beyond all human understanding, transcendent, eternal, yet immanent. These concepts about God are expressed well in the Old Testament. The awesomeness of God pervaded the whole of Jewish teaching. Isa 45:18 proclaims the uniqueness of God and Isa 40:28 that God is eternal.⁹³ Ps 135:5-6 expresses the omnipotence of God. Job 42:3 expresses that God is beyond all human understanding. Who could know God? This immense⁹⁴ and transcendent God is totally other than His creation. Yet He is immanent, that is He is present and in union with His creation. The Jewish people experienced this many times especially when God chose to make them his people (Gen 12:1-2) and when He freed them from slavery in Egypt (Ex 3:8). As revelation about God for the Melkite faith comes from Sacred Tradition, which includes Scripture, it is natural that some initial understanding about God comes from the Old Testament. Understanding the God of the Jewish people is deepened with the coming of Jesus who reveals the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.

3.1.3 Words and ideas used to convey an understanding of God

The ways that the worshipper addresses God indicates what is believed about God. Many of the above concepts, which give some understanding about God, are expressed in the liturgical celebrations of the Melkite Church. In the Divine Liturgy, God is addressed in a variety of ways including: Lord, God Almighty, Heavenly King, Creator, Spirit of Truth, as the One who is “Present in all places” and “filling all things”, Master and Lord Our God, Holy Mighty

⁹² Joseph M. Raya, *The Face of God: Essays in Byzantine Spirituality* (McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania: God With Us Publications, 1984), 21.

⁹³ For biblical references and further details regarding the traits of God, see Michael Pennock, *This is Our Faith*, 33-34.

⁹⁴ Cf. 1Kgs 8:27.

One, Holy Immortal One, and Creator of Heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.⁹⁵ Terms used also express the closeness of God such as Consoler, Redeemer, the giver of life, Master who loves mankind, good and life-giving Spirit.⁹⁶ The believer needs to know that God is in control in all that happens in the universe especially in the many sufferings experienced by humanity, such as torture, atrocities from war, destruction by earthquakes, bush fires, and horrific accidents, and break down in relationships, in other words, that God will right the wrongs, restore justice and will explain the unbelievable mystery of life. This happening is a whole life process. Christians will only partially glimpse the reign of God in this life. The full experience will come at the eschaton. Most importantly, the liturgies reveal that this all-powerful and almighty God is immanent especially in His Word and sacraments. The great drama of the salvation won by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated in the Divine Liturgy. The Word of God reveals that this great creator God delights in being with humanity in their everyday experiences. He chose the humble shepherds as his first visitors. He provided the best wine for the marriage in Cana. He comforted Mary and Martha by raising their brother to life again. God is close to His people. He became man by the power of the Holy Spirit and lived amongst humanity to show his people how to live and to bring God's reign to earth. Thus the Trinitarian God is transcendent yet immanent. God is close to his people because of the Incarnation. Understanding the Incarnation flows from the teaching on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

3.1.4 Distinctive Melkite Theology

All church communities whether Eastern rite or Roman rite believe in one, unique, ineffable God who is in a sense unknowable. Who could know or comprehend God? To know God one would have to be God, one would need the "mind" of God. It is this incomprehensibility of God that is stressed by the Melkites (as well as by other Eastern Churches). This sense that God is "mystery" is reflected in their spirituality and this will be brought out in this chapter. Although God is incomprehensible, Christians do know and love God. The New Testament reveals an intimate and personal God. This great creator God who has no beginning or end and who exists totally apart and independently from his creation is in a mysterious way one with his creation. Hence, in approaching an understanding of the Trinity from an Eastern theological perspective one firstly emphasises the "ultimately indescribable ineffable mystery

⁹⁵ For these various ways of addressing God see *The Divine and Holy Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, (with adaptation for Australian use by Archimandrite Clement Hill), (Lebanon: Melkite, 2000).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

of God who is incomprehensible and who is of His very nature unknowable.”⁹⁷ To have any sense of God one must enter the realm of mystery. This is true of any theological understanding. Humanity could not expect to have complete understanding; one would need the mind of God for complete understanding. Raya emphasises that “Mystery is an object of contemplation not a subject for human science.”⁹⁸ It is through contemplation that one discovers God because it is in contemplation that Christians are naturally led to prayer, which takes the Christian beyond human concepts and expressions. “The aim and purpose of theology is not to see or understand by human words the divine Essence or Nature of God, but to participate in the divine life by which we are deified and which makes us heirs of God.”⁹⁹

Raya’s reflections especially the last quote, call for a critique. Firstly, one can appreciate how prayer is essential in the Christian life, as prayer is the believer’s communication with God. Genuine prayer can grow out of contemplation, which is only meaningful in a reasoned faith based on study, knowledge and reflection. The whole process is important. Faith and reason need to go hand in hand, yet one needs to go beyond both of these into the world of mystery since God is beyond reason. God is inconceivable yet longed for by humanity with God always being righteous and loving and caring for his people. Yet through Christ one can know God, love God and aim to give God glory. Out of love God created humanity and chose to communicate with humanity, with this communication being through his word and through his sacraments. Of course Christ is the essence of God’s communication with humanity, as he is the Word made flesh. Hence it is through Christ that the Christian enters into the divine life. Raya’s reflection is very significant in the sense that the entering into the mystery of God begins with a reasoned faith, but then goes beyond this into the mystery of God who is transcendent, unique, beyond all human understanding yet is immanent, loving and caring. This mystery of knowing the transcendent God, who reveals an immanent presence, is reflected in many ways in the Melkite Church as will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter. Icons for example, are doorways to entering into an understanding of the mystery of God and will be discussed in detail. Incense is used to create an ethereal atmosphere reminding the worshipper of the mystery of God who is unseen.

Cross, a noted Australian author on Byzantine spirituality and a Byzantine priest attached to

⁹⁷ Raya, *The Face of God: Essays in Byzantine Spirituality*, 26.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

the Melkite Catholic Eparchy, stresses that in understanding anything about Eastern Christians¹⁰⁰ “one must constantly remember that life is grounded upon the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”¹⁰¹ Cross stresses that the life of the Christian is living in the loving embrace of the Holy Trinity. In fact the Holy Trinity is the source of all created reality whether spiritual or earthly. The Holy Trinity has everything to do with the world and humanity.¹⁰²

One can appreciate Cross’s emphasis when one reflects on the perfect communion of divine persons in the Holy Trinity and their intimate relationship, with a share in this relationship being offered to all humanity. The intimacy between Father and Son is revealed in the gospels, especially in the Johannine writings with explicit emphasis in John 10:30 which states that the Father and the Son are one. Further, His Son is the only begotten Son of the Father (Jn 3:16). John’s use of the word Son refers to Jesus’ divinity with Jesus uniquely revealing the Father and that this Jesus has always been with the Father (1:1-3). From this one can understand that in the beginning Jesus was with God and through him all things were created (1:1-3). John’s gospel emphasises that knowing the Father intimately is exclusively through the Son, since only He, the Son, has seen God. Further, it is Jesus the Son who makes the Father known (John 1:18). The term, Son, in John’s gospel is central to the Christological message of this gospel. Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father (1:14,18, 3:16,18) and his origins are in the Father (8:42, 16:28, 8:16, 16:32). John’s gospel elaborates on Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1: 14). He dwelt among us to reveal the Father so that the followers of Christ too would know the Father intimately.

The theme of love is central in the Johannine writings, (John 3:16), and God’s love is revealed through his Son. The Holy Spirit makes the Son known and brings this intimacy between the Father and the Son, to those who follow Jesus. Jesus reveals this to his followers in John 16:13-15:

When the spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me Jesus , because he will take what is mine and

¹⁰⁰ See definition of the term “Eastern churches” given earlier in this thesis to understand the term “Eastern Christian.”

¹⁰¹ Cross, *Eastern Christianity, The Byzantine Tradition*, 29.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The importance of the Holy Spirit is elaborated in the New Testament writings and in the writings of the Early Fathers. Most importantly for this thesis are the writings of St Athanasius and St Basil, which have been discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Cross’s emphasis that the Holy Trinity has everything to do with the world and humanity has a sound biblical basis. The Christian lives in the loving embrace of the Holy Trinity and this loving embrace is understood in terms of the deification of humanity.

3.1.5 The Deification of Humanity and Melkite Spirituality

This beautiful intimacy between the Father and the Son that is also shared by humanity is expressed in Melkite theology, as God’s love being so great that as human beings respond to God’s love they begin a process of deification (Theosis). God out of pure love created humanity and was again moved by love to send his Son to deify human beings and creation and to save humanity from sin. The process of deification begins in Baptism and continues to develop as Christians grow in their spiritual life especially in receiving the sacraments. This concept of deification comes from a famous statement of St Athanasius, “For He (Christ) was made man that we might be made God.”¹⁰³ What does this mystery of deification mean? It is a challenging statement that calls for deep reflection, especially if one is to fully appreciate Melkite spirituality. To grasp any meaning of the term deification, one must tie it in with the doctrine of the Incarnation. Understanding the concept begins with an understanding of the Incarnation. Through the Incarnation the Son becomes one with humanity and creation. He elevates fallen creation and fallen humanity and unites humanity to Himself in His human body, in the oneness of His divine Person. It is the Holy Spirit who effects this marvellous union between God and creation in Christ. Further it needs to be emphasised that in understanding the process of deification, that Jesus is both divine and human. This belief has been expressed from the earliest Christian writings and through the various Councils of the Church. It is expressed in Paul’s writings especially in Phil 2:6-8 and in Ignatius of Antioch’s letters. In the Nicene Creed the worshipper state “I believe..in one Lord, Jesus Christ... who for men and our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit

¹⁰³ “Incarnation of the Word 54:3” in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *A Selected library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, *St Athanasius: Selected Works and Letters* (Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 65.

and the Virgin Mary and became man.”¹⁰⁴ The Council of Chalcedon expressed this teaching clearly. The belief in Jesus as both divine and human is fundamental in understanding the term deification.

Melkite spirituality reasons that as Christians follow Christ and grow in holiness they become one with Christ. Hence they become a new creation in Christ, who has two natures (*ousia*), one divine and one human, but there is one person (*hypostasis*). As one grows in holiness then, one becomes more united with the person of Christ and hence with both his natures. Hence deification takes place.¹⁰⁵ One perhaps might put this concept in simple terms as the Christian sharing in the divine life of the Holy Trinity. It needs to be stressed though that this sharing in the divine life will not reach its fullness until the believer enters into eternal life. Again one must emphasise that in reflecting on such a topic one must enter the world of mystery and contemplation.

3.1.6 Worshipping the Holy Trinity

Byzantine worship in the Divine Liturgy is ultimately an ascent to heaven where the believer partakes at the table of the Lord in his heavenly Kingdom. This is the very essence of worshipping the Holy Trinity. The faithful gather as the body of Christ because they have put on Christ in receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist (See Chapter Four). Christ is the icon of the unseen God. Worship in Byzantine spirituality always rejoices and celebrates what Christ has done for humanity. He has done everything to bring salvation to all people. This has been accomplished by His Incarnation, his passion and sacrificial offering, by his death and resurrection and by his glorification. This understanding was clearly believed in the early church at Antioch. It was clearly promulgated by the three Cappadocian Fathers and St Athanasius as discussed in Chapter Two. It is clearly believed and celebrated with great joy in the Melkite church today. The Hymn of the Incarnation, prayed in the Divine Liturgy acknowledges Christ’s powerful and saving work. Death has been trampled. Salvation is a reality for all people. This meaningful hymn ends appropriately with a cry “Save us.” Christ has done it all. Through worship in the Divine Liturgy the faithful longing to follow Christ, will be sanctified so as to enter God’s eternal kingdom. In the baptismal ceremony the

¹⁰⁴ Quotes from the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in this section, are taken from *The Divine and Holy Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, (with adaptation for Australian use by Archimandrite Clement Hill), (Lebanon: Melkite, 2000).

¹⁰⁵ David Petra *et al.*, *Light for Light, Part One, The Mystery Believed* (Pittsburg: God With Us Publications, 1994), 42-44

recipient proclaims, “Yes, I have united myself to Christ.” The priest answers, “Then worship Christ.” The candidate affirms, “I worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial, and undivided Trinity.”

Fullness of worship means putting on Christ and living the life of Christ, which is the very essence of sacramental life, which necessitates sharing in the very life of the Holy Trinity. This is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit and is manifested in the Hymn to the Holy Spirit in the Divine Liturgy. This hymn rejoices in the works of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, who comes to dwell in the faithful and who sanctifies the worshippers so that they may enter the heavenly realm. The hymn joyfully ends “...save our souls, You who are so good.”

Through worship especially in living a sacramental life one opens oneself to sanctification with this happening because the worshipper chooses submission to the divine will. This can better be understood in light of Mary’s fiat. She is the perfect model for living the divine will. At the Annunciation in love and obedience she trustingly puts herself at God’s disposal to become *Theotokos*. Her life is one of right order, living as the creator intended for humanity.

Knowing that it is possible for believers to be made righteous through Christ’s saving power, they can proclaim with joy the Cherubic Hymn:

*We who mystically represent the cherubim
And sing to the life giving Trinity, the thrice holy hymn,
Let us lay aside all earthly cares.*

With the reciting of the Lord’s Prayer in the Divine Liturgy one prays for God’s kingdom to come and for a desire to do God’s holy will, submitting to His divine plan as Mary did. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Living a prayerful and sacramental life is the essence. Raya’s concept of the importance of contemplation and mystery discussed earlier in this chapter would be most significant in worship. Further aspects of worship are discussed in the chapters on the Holy Mysteries especially in the section on the Eucharist.

3.2 On Entering a Melkite Church

On praying in a Melkite Catholic Church one is immediately struck by a very distinct layout and adornment of the church. The church of St Elias, the Prophet at Guilford is a typical Melkite Church where one can discern the main features that will be described in this

chapter.¹⁰⁶ On studying the worship, layout, architecture and holy images in a Melkite Church, one can discern that they reflect the sacred teachings of the church especially the teachings on the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. On entering a Melkite church one bows reverently to the altar while making the sign of the cross as an act of reverence. In making the sign of the cross the worshipper praises the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The sign of the cross is made as follows. Firstly, the thumb and the first two fingers are held together with this trio being an act of faith in the Holy Trinity. The other two fingers, which are held in a curved position, remind the believer of the two natures of Christ, one divine and one human.¹⁰⁷ This simple gesture reminds the believer of who Jesus is, the saviour of humanity, who is both God and man. It expresses the Chalcedon formula concisely. The sign of the cross is made from the forehead to the breast, then to the *right* shoulder and then to the left shoulder, with the cross signifying Christ's victory, over evil, death and suffering. As one makes the sign of the cross one prays to and worships the Holy Trinity.

3.2.1 *The Architecture of the Church*

A typical church building is divided into three parts, the sanctuary, the nave and the *solea*. Another important feature of the church is the *iconostasis*. Many icons adorn the church and are an important feature of a Melkite Church.

3.2.1.1 *The Sanctuary*

The sanctuary is the most holy part of the church as it is in this area that the most important prayer of the church is celebrated—the Divine Liturgy.¹⁰⁸ As was stated earlier, God is omniscient, omnipotent, transcendent, ineffable, unique and mysterious, yet God is immanent and loves and cares for His people. Because of the understanding that God is close, but is mysteriously hidden, the sanctuary is separated by an icon screen called an “iconostasis.” The altar, also called the Holy Table, is placed in the centre of the sanctuary away from the *iconostasis*. A canopy often covers it. The gospel book is enthroned on the altar. The Eucharist can be reserved in a metal dove, which hangs from the canopy with the dove symbolising the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church.¹⁰⁹ There is a smaller table to the left of the Holy Table and this is where the priest prepares the bread and wine for the Liturgy.

¹⁰⁶ Also one can visit the church of St John at Greenacre to see a typical Melkite church although the Iconostasis is not completed. There are many icons in this church.

¹⁰⁷ *Melkites in America, a Directory and Informative Handbook* (West Newton, USA: The Melkite Exarchate, 1971), Section 13, 25.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Section 7, 24

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Section 9, 24.

To the right of the Holy Table and on the *solea*, the bishop's throne is positioned. There may be other seats for the clergy.

3.2.1.2 *The Nave*

The second part of the church is called the nave, which contains the seats for the congregation. In their worship, the Melkites praise God as Lord of Lord and King of Kings. The gesture for worship and praise is to stand in the presence of the Lord. Hence, kneelers are not always a feature of a Byzantine church as the congregation either stands or is seated during worship. In the Melkite Rite, kneeling or lowering oneself to the ground is understood to be a sign of repentance.¹¹⁰ The emphasis in the liturgies is the joyful triumph of Christ's victory through his cross and resurrection. Hence the congregation stands or sits as a sign of this celebration of what Christ has done for humanity. This is especially true in the Easter season and during the Sunday liturgy. However, kneeling is practised in the Holy Week liturgies and those during Lent.¹¹¹

3.2.1.3 *The Solea*

The other very important section of the Church is called the *solea*. It is an open area between the sanctuary and the nave. It is sometimes raised and it is here that marriages and other religious celebrations take place. The celebration of the sacraments are special grace-filled times for worshippers, hence this area the *solea*, is seen as sacred by the worshipper as it is here in the times of sacramental celebrations such as at marriages, baptisms and the receiving of Holy Communion that the faithful come into intimate contact with God. It should be noted that the baptistery may be at the entrance of the church. Positioning the baptistery at the entrance reminds the faithful that it is through Baptism that one enter the church. In practice the baptistery is often on the *solea*, or close to the *solea* as this makes it easy for the congregation to focus directly on the actual baptism.

3.2.1.4 *The Iconostasis*

The worshipper in a Melkite Catholic Church can reflect on the deep theological significance of both the "iconostasis" and the altar and why they are important for the church. The altar in such a church is often referred to as God's throne, with these words denoting the Kingship of God. The altar is separated from the rest of the church as a reminder that God's reign has not

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Section 14, 25.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

fully come to earth, hence humanity is separated from the complete glory of God.¹¹² Therefore Christians are separated from his throne at present. Christ will be fully present at the eschaton. Yet Christians are united with Christ because Christ came into the world to redeem humanity. This is brought out beautifully in John 3:16: “Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but have eternal life.” Hence through God’s great love for humanity, Christians are mystically united with Christ. His coming brought about a greater intimacy between God and humanity and the believer enters a new relationship with the Blessed Trinity.

In a Melkite Church, this new relationship is portrayed by placing the *iconostasis*, (which is a screen, made of wood, marble, metal or bronze, displaying icons), to form a partition between the altar and the rest of the church. God is close but there is some separation from God as stated above. The icons on the *iconostasis*, depict Christ and important figures in our salvation history including Mary, the mother of God, the apostles and the prophets.¹¹³ The *iconostasis* has a central door, which carries an icon of the Annunciation. This door is referred to as the royal door and is flanked by two icons, one being Christ and the other icon being the Mother and Child. The earlier *iconostases* were much lower and were made of stone or marble.¹¹⁴ Later wooden beams were used with icons appearing along the top in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹¹⁵ Eventually icons covered the whole screen. The icons are a wonderful reminder of what Christ has done for humanity and how Christians become adopted sons and daughters of God. Yet the *iconostasis* reminds the worshippers that humanity is not perfectly one with God, but they are closer to God through the coming of Christ. Of course, the *iconostasis* is also used to portray the mystery of God, which is a very important aspect of Melkite spirituality. Humanity cannot have complete understanding of the divine. The believer’s understanding of God and union with God will be complete at the eschaton.

3.3 Revelation of God to His people

Revelation in the Melkite Church comes through Tradition, the living and lived faith. As was stated in Chapter Two, to appreciate Tradition one must be familiar with and study the articulations of the faith community, its liturgy, creeds, Holy Scripture, ecumenical councils, Eucharistic prayers, hymns, artwork and devotional practices. The devotional practices and

¹¹² Ibid., Section 8, 24.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Kala, *Meditations on the Icons* (Rome: St Paul’s, 1993), 16

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

features in a Melkite church as discussed above are an important part of the living Tradition of the Church bringing with them a long history of the sacred story of salvation. Australia is a multicultural country, one in which diversity is celebrated. The Melkite community adds to this diversity, yet remains true to bringing the story of Christian salvation to this country. This diversity is seen for example in the use of icons, which reveal in pictorial form the story of the salvation of humanity. Icons are an important feature in a Melkite church and therefore will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

3.4 The Nature and Importance of Icons

Icons are a most important feature of any Byzantine Church.¹¹⁶ An icon is defined as follows.

An icon is a painting very different from other kinds of pictures. Usually the figures are elongated, made almost abstract and set in a symbolic or non-realistic setting, all to focus attention on the spiritual reality being suggested. Often icons are symbolic pictures of an idea, or a title of Christ or the Virgin Mary. The icon attempts to convey the unique peace of the divine life through its unique style.¹¹⁷

Icons are holy objects to be revered and therefore placed in suitable places, especially on altars or set permanently in shrines. A candle or lamp, which is a symbol of life, burns in the presence of an icon. The light is to remind the believer of Christ who is the light of the world. In any Melkite Church, in the worshippers' home and in other relevant places, for example, Melkite Catholic schools, one will see icons of the Christ, the Virgin Mary, St Macrina, St John Chrysostom, St Basil, and St Gregory of Nazianzus and many others. Christ is the Word of God, the Logos and He is also the image of the unseen God (*eikon*) (Col 2:7). With this perspective in mind one can appreciate that icons were created to lead the believer into union with the unseen God. Christians in prayer before an icon enter the world of mystery to encounter the ineffable, unique God who comes close to the believer through Christ.

3.4.1 Creating an icon

To appreciate icons one needs to study the process of creating an icon. Firstly, all Christians in their spiritual journey are called to a life of holiness. They can learn from and emulate the spiritual path of the iconographer who creates the holy image of the icon. To create a holy image the creator must be holy and devout, and have a great love for Christ and his saving

¹¹⁶ Icons can be seen in any Byzantine Church, for example in the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church and so on.

¹¹⁷ *Melkites in America, a Directory and Informative Handbook*, Section 11, 25.

work for all humanity. Icons are usually painted by monks or by families who for generations have dedicated themselves to this holy work.¹¹⁸ The creation comes from contemplation with the iconographer being steeped in both theology and liturgy. The creator of the icon must first be illuminated by the light of God with the creation of the icon being the fruit of prayer, contemplation and asceticism. The whole process of producing an icon is a holy one taking time and great devotion to the task. Before beginning the task of painting an icon, the iconographer is required ideally to spend forty days in prayer and contemplation. He must prepare thoroughly for the task, which requires joyful hope, trust, patience, humility and perseverance.¹¹⁹

The creator of the icon is not alone in this work as it belongs to the church. The artists must prepare themselves thoroughly as well as their materials, after which they present their materials to the church for a solemn blessing.¹²⁰ Writers of icons may be lay people, clergy and monastics, providing that the preparation is prayerful. The writing of the icon is not an individual interpretation but follows the centuries, old mind of the Church. They become instruments of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the artistic work, which manifests Christ and his life. Hence on gazing on the icon the Christian encounters the living Christ. The purpose of the forty days of preparation including fasting and prayer is for the creator of the icon to concentrate on the creation and diminish any need for praise and adulation. The end result of this spiritual journey in creating the icon is the glorification of the divine.

3.4.2 Lessons from the theology of icons

The Christian can learn from both the journey of the iconographer and the icon itself. On reading the parable of the talents one discerns that Christians are called to use their specific gifts and talents in proclaiming God's reign on earth. Hence the Christian needs to pray and contemplate on Divine realities to bring to fruition what ever it is that God calls the person to do. And the end result of this labour must allow those who come in contact with the Christian to encounter the Risen Christ. The journey through life as a Christian is to be a holy one imbued with the presence of the divine so that the Christian can manifest the divine.

The practising Christian from whatever rite can pray before an icon and become closer to the

¹¹⁸ Raya, *The Face of God*, 153.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Risen Lord. Christians are called to become children of the Light because God is light. All Christians are called to sanctification and in the contemplation before the icon, they can take in the truth that God who forgives all sins when acknowledged and confessed will fill the believer with his divine light. One can experience the truth of St Athanasius' understanding of deification. In praying and meditating before an icon one can keep in mind that God is revealed through his holy word to the ears of the believer, as well as through images to the eyes.

3.4.3 Icons as part of the living Tradition of the Church

As the living Tradition of the Church includes articulations of the faith, appropriate holy images must be included as part of its tradition, especially when they help the worshipper understand more fully, the *kerygma*, the preached message of the apostles. Icons are important in worship in the Byzantine church. They are regarded as part of the living Tradition of the faith. Put succinctly they are visual theology and an integral part of the liturgy, as they relate in pictorial form what the gospels reveal in words. The use of icons has a long history and they have been a means for passing on the teachings of Christ.¹²¹ In the ninth century, in response to iconoclasm, icons were explicitly declared by an ecumenical council as part of the living Tradition of the church being an integral part of worship in the church.

3.4.4 Debate about the validity of icons in worship

The full acceptance of icons in the liturgy followed a very turbulent period in the church with the issues involved coming to a head in the Iconoclast controversy. This controversy pushed the debate about icons to the cutting edge leading eventually to the full endorsement of their use in the liturgy, with important issues about icons being debated during this period. It took debate at an ecumenical council to sort out the controversy, which eventually led to very clear teaching being given on the lawfulness of icons. Clearly defined teachings in the church usually come after a period of intense thought and debate, for example that Jesus was fully God was elaborated on at the Council of Nicea (325), the two natures of Christ was explicitly stated at the Council of Chalcedon. By examining the Iconoclast controversy one can gain insight into the legitimate use of icons in worship and their importance as part of the living tradition of the church. The controversy began with Emperor Leo III.

¹²¹ See David Talbot Rice, *Art of the Byzantine Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), for a detailed account of the history of icons and architecture in the Byzantine Era. See Thomas Kala, *Meditations on the Icons* (Rome: St Pauls, 1993), for an introduction to the history of icons, the painting of icons, their meaning and meditations on icons.

3.4.4.1 Historical Perspectives

Emperor Leo III became the Byzantine Emperor in 717. It was he who questioned the lawfulness of venerating Icons. It needs to be born in mind that Leo III who was previously a soldier knew of the Saracens activities throughout the whole of Asia Minor as well as on the shores of the Bosphorus.¹²² He had seen the execution of four emperors in quick succession. Soon after his coronation the city of Constantinople was besieged with Muslim ships ready to attack this city, but Leo circumvented its destruction.¹²³ Peace then reigned.

It was during this time of peace that the controversy about the veneration of images arose. It could be reasoned that the teachings of Islam, which demands no image of Allah or any attempt to represent the Creator, influenced Leo. In this controversy one needs to ask what were important issues about the use of icons for Christians? What were the objections? Firstly, the main objection was that they were seen as graven images, which were worshipped in place of the one, omniscient, unique God? This objection to their use was based on the Jewish heritage from the Commandment “You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them and worship them...” (Ex 20:4-5). Further, abuse of icons in worship possibly came from superstition dominating instead of contemplation on the divine. The question of idolatry was taken seriously. In 726 Emperor Leo III issued an order demanding that all holy images in churches be destroyed or covered. The iconoclasts obeyed his order but their destruction was strongly opposed by the monks and the ordinary Christian people. The main argument for the support of their use in worship came from St John Damascene (675-749), a key figure in the debate about icons, who argued that icons tell the Christian in picture form what the gospels reveal in words. One might describe them as visual theology and “an integral part of the liturgy.”¹²⁴ John of Damascus argued for the use of icons in his writings *Defence of Holy Images*. He agreed with his opponents that God being invisible, mysterious and transcendent could not be represented. However, since God became man, Christ could be depicted in human form. Hence one conclusion was that the use of icons was based extensively on the doctrine of the Incarnation.¹²⁵

The controversy raged and it took the efforts of Empress Irene and Pope Hadrian to deal with

¹²² P. C. Thomas, *General Councils of the Church* (Bombay: St Paul Publications, 1993), 55.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Kala, *Meditations on Icons*, 15.

¹²⁵ Raya, *The Face of God*, 152-153.

the issue. An ecumenical council was necessary to resolve the issue and it was the Second Council of Nicea in 787, which gave clear teaching on the issue. It affirmed that the veneration shown to statues and images was directed to the person represented by the image, not the image itself. The Second Council of Nicea once again allowed the use of icons in worship and clearly spelt out that icons were a part of the Tradition of the church.

The council did not immediately end the controversy. There was another outbreak of the iconoclastic controversy in 814 under Emperor Leo V.¹²⁶ Once again icons were removed from churches and public buildings. It was only with the death of Emperor Theophilus that persecution ended in 842. His widow Theodora was responsible for Methodius being elected as Patriarch of Constantinople in 843. A new feast was to be instituted known as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy.” It is held on the First Sunday in Lent and is celebrated in honour of icons.¹²⁷ This is an important feast in the Melkite Catholic Church.

This whole incident was challenging for the Christian community. Eventually though a satisfactory outcome resulted. Today icons are regarded with high esteem not only by the Byzantine Churches but also many Christians of the Roman rite as was stated earlier in this chapter. One feature of the use of icons is that the church can pay tribute to important theologians who have contributed to the spiritual growth of the church.

3.4.5 Reverence shown for important theologians in the Melkite Church through the use of icons

One icon used in the Melkite Catholic Church is called the three Holy Hierarchs depicting St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Gregory the Theologian (Gregory of Nazianzus). (St John Chrysostom is discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis). The Melkite teaching on the ritual of praying before an icon claims that in this ritual the Christian is brought into the living presence of those depicted in the icon. One then contemplates how Christ is revealed through them, leading to worshipping the Holy Spirit and then allowing the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of Christians leading them to the fullness of truth.¹²⁸

The figures of the three hierarchs although appearing motionless, possess a deep inner life.

¹²⁶ Kala, *Meditations on Icons*, 14

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15

¹²⁸ Icon Packet, *Come Bless the Lord* (McKees Rocks, Pa: God With Us, 1976), 44.

“The forehead as a vast dome is symbolic of wisdom, while hollowed cheeks and fully-moulded mouth suggest that each Saint was a great orator, theologian and a man of ascetical vision.”¹²⁹ There are also icons of St. Athanasius and St Gregory of Nyssa, which hang in solemnity in a Melkite Catholic Church,¹³⁰ along with the three Holy Hierarchs. This shows the reverence that this church has for these theologians. The contribution of St Athanasius, St Basil, St Gregory Nazianzus and St Gregory of Nyssa to Melkite spirituality and teachings was discussed in Chapter Two.

3.5 Conclusions

An important aim was to explain that the Melkite Catholic Church worships in the Byzantine Rite. A definition of this rite was given with further explanation elucidated throughout the chapter. In discussing this rite it was important to explain that the members of this community worship one unique God, the Holy Trinity with this being done by discussing the writings on the Holy Trinity of Raya as well as the writings of Lawrence Cross. In summary, the Melkites worship the Holy Trinity, one God in three divine persons. This one, unique, ineffable God is both transcendent and immanent. The emphasis in Melkite spirituality is on “mystery,” both the incomprehensibility of God, yet on the other hand that God is intimate and close to his creation through the coming of Christ. To understand God one must enter the world of “mystery” and this is achieved through contemplation. A later part of this chapter explained how this theology is expressed in Melkite architecture, symbols and actions.

A further aim was to explain the term *deification* and its importance in Melkite spirituality. Understanding of this term is based on understanding the doctrine of the Incarnation. Jesus has two natures (*ousia*), one divine and one human, but there is one person (*hypostasis*). As one grows in holiness one becomes more united with the person of Christ and hence with both his natures. Hence deification takes place. This process will not reach its fullness until the Christian enters eternal life.

The fourth aim was to show how devotions, practices, actions, the architecture of the church, holy images, especially icons and other symbols express the theology of the Church. This section firstly looked at what happens when one enters a Melkite Church. In bowing towards the altar one is acknowledging the sovereignty and Lordship of God. In making the Sign of

¹²⁹ Ibid. 45.

¹³⁰ Confirmed by a Melkite bishop.

the Cross in the Byzantine manner one praises the Holy Trinity and acknowledges the divinity and humanity of Christ. Next, the three main sections of the church were examined, the sanctuary, the *solea* and the nave. The sanctuary is the most holy part of the church as it is here that the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, which is the source and summit of the Christian life. The altar is seen as God's throne and the gospel book is enthroned on the altar, the Eucharist is reserved often in a metal dove, which hangs from the canopy with the dove symbolising the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. The nave is the area where the congregation worships. The gesture for worship is to stand in the presence of God. Kneeling is a sign of repentance and is practiced in Lent and Holy Week. The *solea* is the section between the nave and the sanctuary. It is an open area and is sometimes raised. It is here that marriages and other ceremonies take place. These celebrations highlight God's presence, and in these celebrations God's grace sanctifies the worshipper. One very important feature is the *iconostasis*, which is placed between the sanctuary and the *solea*. The *iconostasis* which is a wooden screen displaying icons separates the altar from the rest of the church reminding the believer that God's reign has not fully come, hence humanity is separated from the complete glory of God. The *iconostasis* reminds the believer that humanity will be fully united with God at the eschaton. It also convey a sense of the mystery of God, that God is unknowable yet through the coming of Jesus, God is close to his people.

The last aim in this chapter was to discuss in detail why the venerating of icons is important in developing a deep relationship with Christ as well as how icons reflect the theology of the Melkite Church. This section elaborated on creating icons, the importance of praying before them and what the Christian can learn from their creation. Further it discussed the debate on the validity of icons in worship especially in relation to the iconoclast controversy, and the importance of icons as part of the living tradition of the church. It concluded that icons are part of the living Tradition of the church; they are in a sense a visual gospel. Their use was fully approved at the Second Council of Nicea in 787. Icons have an important place in worship. Chapters Four and Five will elaborate further on worship in the Melkite Church.

CHAPTER FOUR
PUTTING ON CHRIST
THE HOLY MYSTERIES OF BAPTISM, CHRISMATION AND THE EUCHARIST

4.0 Introduction and aims

The celebration of the *Holy Mysteries* (known more commonly as the sacraments) is the very heart of worship in the Melkite Church. Hence, this chapter aims to explain the importance of the *Holy Mysteries* and hence what they celebrate. It will then discuss and elaborate on the Melkite understanding of what it means “to put on Christ” which entails an examination of the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Holy Eucharist. A fuller understanding of the development of these sacraments along with an explanation of how they are linked to the early church at Antioch will be given. Lastly, it will explain how they are part of the sacred Tradition of the Melkite Church.

4.1 The Holy Mysteries

As stated above, the very heart of Christian worship in the Melkite Church is the celebration of the *Holy Mysteries*. “It is called a mystery” writes Saint John Chrysostom of the Eucharist, “because what we believe is not the same as what we see, but we see one thing and believe another...when I hear the Body of Christ mentioned, I understand what is said in one sense and the unbeliever in another.”¹³¹ To comprehend the sacred *mysteries* one must enter the world of mystery. Cross succinctly elucidates: “The seven sacraments communicate one reality: the reality of a living communion with God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.”¹³² They are the very essence of life in Christ. In sacramental worship Christians return to their true nature. It is through putting on Christ in sacramental life that humanity is elevated to the heavenly realm where in worshipping the Holy Trinity one enters the very life of the Trinity and thus is sanctified and perfected. Although the seven sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Marriage are central in worship, the sacramental life permeates the whole church and all of creation making the world holy and sacred. In the tonsuring of a nun or monk, for example, one experiences sacramentality and the holy mystery of God’s presence.

¹³¹“ Homilies on 1 Corinthians, vii, 1”, quoted in Timothy Ware, “The Orthodox Church”, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982), 281.

¹³² Cross, *Eastern Christianity, the Byzantine Tradition*, 57.

Raya, a contemporary theologian and prolific writer in the Melkite Catholic Church, defines a sacrament as “a sign and symbol divinely instituted which imparts, through rites and services, the invisible presence of God, Father-Son-Spirit in order to make the human person share in the life and love of God the Father and in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit.”¹³³ The Melkite ceremonies have a great richness, which brings out the sacredness of what is being celebrated. In the Australian church there are booklets on the liturgy of some of the sacraments, which make for easy following of the sacramental celebrations. The booklets are printed in both English and Arabic, (Arabic on one side of the page and the English translation on the other side). There is also some interspersing of Greek. The language used depends on the appropriateness for the congregation. The names of the liturgical books are included in the bibliography.

4.1.1 Sacramental Theology

In examining the teachings about the sacraments in the Melkite Catholic Church one needs to relate them to the work and inspiration of Jesus Christ. How do they centre on the glorified and risen Christ and hence assist the recipient to enter the life of the Holy Trinity? They are the essence of the liturgical life of the church and are thus celebrated by the community acknowledging the salvific work of Christ in the life of the recipient, with the Eucharist being the source and summit of the Christian life. To appreciate the importance of the salvific effect of sacramental celebration one must have a concept of what salvation is. Raya writes extensively about salvation. He elaborates on the Resurrection as the greatest triumph of Christ bringing liberation to humanity. “It is the redemption of the past and the liberation of the future.”¹³⁴ It has conquered death and sin, through Christ’s own death on the cross. Raya stresses that redemption is universal, that is, it is for all humanity, and hence the divine life of the Holy Trinity is within the reach of all humanity.¹³⁵ The Resurrection is the instrument for humanity’s journey from death to life, “the heavenly kingdom can now be seen on earth.”¹³⁶ On critically analysing Raya’s writings one could simply say that salvation is the presence of God in the life of humanity, that is, sharing in the life of the Holy Trinity. This makes sense when one acknowledges that God is the source of all love and happiness, hence salvation is the good and happiness that God intended for all humanity. This sharing in the divine life will

¹³³ Joseph Raya, *Theophany and Sacraments of Initiation* (Combermere, Ontario: Madonna House Publications, 1993), 13.

¹³⁴ Joseph Raya, *The Face of God*, 84.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 85.

come to fulfilment when the Christian experiences the beatific vision in the next life. It is incomplete in this world, because of the severing of the relationship with God at the origin of the human race through sin. God wished to restore the right relationship with humanity and sent his Son into the world to do this. Christ showed humanity how to live, loved and cared for his people and taught them what they must do to have eternal life. He is the saviour because he offered the perfect sacrifice through his life, death and resurrection. He is the high priest who overcame sin through his sacrificial offering, a perfect act of love offered by one who was both divine and human. Raya's emphasis on salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ is the basis for appreciating the salvific effect of the sacraments.

Taft, a well-known writer on Byzantine spirituality, explains this concept of the salvific action in the sacraments in the following.

*The salvation manifested in the past lives on now as an active force in our lives if we encounter it anew and respond in faith, and we cannot do that unless we remember it. The Old Testament cultic memorial is one of the ways in which Israel remembered making present that past saving events as a means of encountering in every generation the saving work of God.*¹³⁷

The present encounter is the focus of the liturgical celebration as Christ is present in the sacraments today.

*In memorial we do not take a mythic trip into the past, nor do we drag the past into the present by repeating the primordial event in mythic drama. For the events we are dealing with are not myths but history. As such they are ephapax, once and for all. There was one exodus from Egypt and one resurrection of Christ, and we can neither repeat them nor return to them. But that is not to say they are dead static, over and done with. They created and manifested and remain the bearers of a permanent quality of existence called salvation, initiating a permanent dialectic of call and response between God and his people.*¹³⁸

In all of the sacraments the community celebrates that fact that salvation has been won for humanity by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian community does not await salvation as it is here in Christ although the Parousia is to come, which will usher in God's full reign on earth. This concept of salvation is expressed throughout the New Testament writings since Christ is acknowledged as "God's eternal Word" (Jn 1:1; 14), "His new creation" (2 Cor 5: 17, Gal 6:15, Rom 8:19ff, Rev 21-22) and "the new Adam" (1Cor

¹³⁷ Robert Taft, *Beyond East and West, Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1984), 2.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

15:45), “God’s Temple” (Jn 2:19-27), “The New Sacrifice, and its priest” (Eph 5:2, Heb 2:17-3:2, 4:14-10:14).¹³⁹ This list is certainly not exclusive. However one might summarise the above by saying that Christ is simply “the all in all”(Col 3:11),¹⁴⁰ “the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”(Rev 1:8; 21:6,22:13).¹⁴¹ Christ, who is both God and man, brings salvation to all humanity because he offered the perfect sacrifice to his Father in Heaven once for all, hence restoring the right relationship between God and humanity.

4.1.2 Worship and the Holy Mysteries

The above concepts, elucidated by Taft, are essential for understanding Christian worship especially the celebration of the sacraments. Christianity has its roots in Judaism with the most significant part of the liturgical life for Jews being Temple worship and sacrifice.¹⁴² As Christianity developed the Old Testament temple worship with its altar, ritual and sacrifice has been replaced or one should rather say fulfilled in a new and perfect way. Old Testament worship has been replaced in a unique and perfect way by the self-giving of the very Son of God, Christ who is both God and man who came to establish God’s reign on earth. This concept is brought out well by looking at the Passover in the Old Testament, which was one of the most significant events for Jewish people. The sacrificial lamb was a most significant part of the Passover meal and the first-born son was saved. Yet the Passover of Christ has the greatest significance since Christ who is the Lamb of God, came to save all humanity by his sacrificial offering. In this New Covenant, Christ and his saving action is with humanity every single day in the celebration of the Eucharist. Christ at his Last Supper, death and resurrection is re-present. Christ is the new sacrifice and its priest, the Lamb of God who takes away sin. Each of the sacraments is to be studied to understand how they are Christ-centred and hence how they lead the Christian into the very life of the Holy Trinity with the result that deification takes place.

4.1.3 Putting on Christ in Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist

In the Melkite Church, the Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist are celebrated in the one process, in the order given here. It is in receiving these sacraments that a person enters the church and thus the life of the Holy Trinity. The recipient puts on the very

¹³⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴² Ibid.

person of Christ himself becoming a new creation in Christ and a son or daughter of the Father. This new life is sealed in the Spirit and is nourished by the Son with His own body and blood. The sacraments are joy-filled liturgies enriching the spiritual life of both the recipient and the worshippers present. Each of the sacraments has a salvific effect as in some way they bring the recipient from death of sin into the life of the Holy Trinity through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

4.1.4 Biblical Context of Anointing with Oil.

Any discussion on anointing in the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation as well as the sacraments of Anointing of the Sick requires giving a brief overview of the importance of anointing from a biblical perspective. The term ‘Christos’ (the Greek translation for Christ) or ‘anointed one’ is important in the Old Testament. The king in the Old Testament was called ‘the Lord’s anointed.’ The installation of a king included a ritual act of anointing. One sees this in the anointing of Saul (1 Sam 10:1) and David (2 Sam 2:4, 5:3).¹⁴³ This practice of anointing extended to the Aaronic priesthood and prophets were considered anointed by God. In other words, the term ‘anointed one’ denoted one who was chosen for a particular mission. Oil played a significant role in both religious ritual and in the secular life of the Hebrews. For example, it was an important food source and also used medicinally. In its spiritual use it was seen as a sign of joy and is referred to as the oil of gladness. Further it is a sign of healing and cleansing. It can also set a mark or seal on a person. In a sense it is a sign of ownership or a sense of belonging. It is a sign that the worshipper has put on Christ. As was stated above, it was important to priests, prophets and kings. One could expect that it be used for important religious rituals after the coming of Christ especially as he was “the anointed one” par excellence, anointed by the Holy Spirit to establish God’s reign on earth. It would be expected that anointing with oil is included in the celebration of some of the sacraments. In Baptism for example, the anointing brings joy and strength and is an indication that the person belongs to Christ. Hence the use of oil is appropriate ritual in line with what happened at solemn occasions in the Old Testament.

Exodus 29:21 and Lev 8:30 give details of the importance of priestly anointing. This ceremony also included the use of blood. In Lev 8: 30, one reads:

¹⁴³ O’Collins, *Christology*, 25.

Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his vestments and also on his sons and their vestments. Thus he consecrated Aaron and his vestments and also his sons and their vestments.

Leviticus 8, describes the Rite of Ordination of the Aaronic Priest, especially in verse 12: “He (Moses) poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him to consecrate him.” In this rite it also speaks of the anointing of important material objects (verse 10-11):

Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it and consecrated them. He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its base to consecrate them.

The Old Testament elaborates on other uses of oil especially on the idea that oil confers health and well being. It is significant in a rite in the cleansing of the ‘leper’ (Lev 14:15-18), where the priest first consecrates oil by sprinkling some of it before Yahweh and applies it to the one to be anointed.¹⁴⁴ Further anointing with oil was not done during periods of mourning (2 Sam 14:2), when mourners removed themselves from ordinary life and associated themselves with the realm of death.¹⁴⁵ When mourning ended and the person was reintegrated into daily life the event was marked by the resumption of anointing and was seen as an occasion of happiness (Isa 61:3).¹⁴⁶ Anointing was associated with joyful events, including banquets. Hence it was referred to as the Oil of Gladness. The sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation as celebrated in the Melkite Church today make use of anointing with oil. This would be expected as the celebration of these sacraments is imbued with the presence of God and suitable symbols, which point to a deeper inner happening express this. In the Western Rite a post-baptismal anointing with oil is clear fairly early, with this anointing signifying the sacrament of Confirmation.

4.2 The Sacrament of Baptism

4.2.1 Biblical Perspectives and the Feast of Theophany

The great importance of the sacrament of Baptism was outlined in Chapter One. It was clearly stated that Baptism was the sign of the new covenant with the new covenant being Christ himself. Matthew’s gospel makes it clear that the apostles were to “make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt

¹⁴⁴ J. Roy Porter, “Oil in the Old Testament” in Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell (eds.), *The Oil of Gladness, Anointing in the Christian Tradition* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 41.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

28:19). No definite formula is preserved for the celebration of Baptism, however it is to be modelled on Christ's own Baptism. One can gain understanding about Christ's Baptism by appreciating the feast of Theophany, the Baptism of Christ, (January 6), which is a very important feast in the Melkite Church. This feast celebrates not only the Baptism of Christ but also the first manifestation of the Holy Trinity. The Theophany is recorded in the three synoptic gospels and indirectly in the gospel of John.¹⁴⁷ When Jesus emerged from the waters following his Baptism by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove with the voice of the Father coming from Heaven, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:19). What happened to Jesus at his Baptism in the River Jordan is what will happen to Christians during their initiation into the church. After emerging from the waters Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit for a life of loving service.

4.2.2 Theology of Baptism

It is important in studying Jesus' baptism to stress that Jesus was baptised although he had never sinned. Raya elaborates that the water of baptism is symbolic of life and creativity.¹⁴⁸ "The prayers of blessing we say over the water insist on the idea that Christ sanctified water by going into it."¹⁴⁹ One can see Christ's action as sanctifying all creation. Through Christ's baptism one can understand "his vivifying role of transfiguration of things and of human persons."¹⁵⁰ Reflecting on Raya's insights one could stress that Jesus is baptised not because he has sinned, but for the sins of all fallen humanity. His baptism must be seen in relation to his death, which will bring about forgiveness for all humanity. His sacrificial death brought about the renewed relationship with God and humanity.

The word Baptism derives from a Greek verb, which means to consecrate by immersing in water (or by pouring of water), with the recipient being immersed into water to bring about a rebirth. In entering the waters of Baptism the candidates immerse themselves into the death of Christ so as to enter into the resurrection of Christ. From this action one can understand the salvific effect of this sacrament. The recipient of this sacrament is responding to Nicodemus' question to Jesus about what it means to be born again. "Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit'" (Jn 3:5). This reply of Jesus is understood by looking at the liturgical celebration of Baptism and

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1: 9-11; Lk 3:21-22 and Jn 1:31-34.

¹⁴⁸ Raya, *Theophany and Sacraments of Initiation*, 51.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 52.

Chrismation through the signs, symbols, words and actions used in these sacraments. The celebration of Baptism, which is always celebrated with Chrismation in the Melkite Church, is divided into three parts. Hence an explanation of the effects of the Sacrament of Chrismation will be given before describing the celebration of these sacraments.

4.3 The Sacrament of Chrismation

4.3.1 Biblical Perspectives

To understand the sacrament of Chrismation one has to appreciate that Christ promised that there would be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This clearly happened at Pentecost with the powerful action of the Holy Spirit bringing about the birth of the Christian church. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an extension of the manifestation of Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit at his Baptism. Isaiah prophesied that the Spirit would rest upon the Messiah. "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, a branch shall grow out of his roots, The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding" (Isa 11:1-2). This happened to Jesus when he emerged from the waters of Baptism. Jesus' promise of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the *Messianic people* is clearly found in the New Testament writings (Lk 12:12, Jn 3:5-8, Jn 1:33-36, Jn 16:7, 16:13-15, Acts 1:8). Sacraments contain outward signs that indicate a deeper spiritual happening. The laying on of hands indicates the coming of the Holy Spirit during the sacrament with this being accompanied by the anointing with oil. This would be expected to be included in the sacrament since there is a very Scriptural basis for it. In the *Letter to the Hebrews* the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction (Heb 6:1-3).¹⁵¹

4.3.2 Theological Perspectives

The important component in the sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation) is what the sacrament effects. As stated above Christ promised an outpouring of the Holy Spirit but no definite rite was given. (More will be said about the development of this rite in this chapter). What is the effect of Christ sending the Holy Spirit as he did, for example, at Pentecost? The sending of the Spirit implies more than the remission of sins, new birth and a sharing in the life of the Holy Trinity. It brings a nourishing, a commissioning for the prophetic role the follower of Christ is called to live. The role involves evangelisation following the example of the apostles after the Pentecost event, working for peace and justice, protecting innocent

¹⁵¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Imprimi Potest*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Homebush: Society of St. Paul, 1994), par. 1288, 326.

human life and living out the call to Christian service. Raya sums up the importance of this sacrament in the following: “The whole human being is thus “sealed,” consecrated to live the life of the Trinity. The grace of the Holy Spirit is now the real presence of a divine power, and a participation in the divine energy acting in us to deify us. With this grace and power man [humanity] can move and progress in the likeness of God who gradually will reveal himself.”¹⁵²

4.4 Description of the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation today

This topic will look at sections of the liturgical celebration of Baptism and Chrismation today.¹⁵³ This is done to appreciate what the sacraments effect and to enable a comparison to be made with the development of this rite in the early development of the Byzantine rite and the celebration of these sacraments today. The actual celebration of these sacraments is divided into three parts. Aspects of each of the three parts will be examined with commentary being given on relevant sections.

4.4.1 Part One, The Reception of a Catechumen.

During the reception, a series of blessings are given and prayers are said, wherein the recipients (or Godparents) are asked important questions and reply appropriately.¹⁵⁴

Priest: (Name), do you renounce Satan, all his works, all his angels, all his services, and all his pride?

Response: Yes, I do renounce Satan, all his works, all his angels, all his services, all his pride.

Priest: Have you renounced Satan?

Response: Yes, I have renounced Satan.

The repetition of the renunciation of Satan and his works emphasises the importance of what is happening. The recipients cannot serve two masters; they must be prepared to follow Christ. Once Satan is rejected the candidates, (or sponsors on behalf of the candidates) facing East, unite themselves to Christ with the following words.

While facing the East and the priest continues:

¹⁵² Raya, *The Face of God*, 185.

¹⁵³ It should be noted that the priest is the normal minister of the sacrament of Chrismation in the East, whereas in the West it is the bishop.

¹⁵⁴ The words in the Sacrament of Baptism and Chrismation were either recorded at the celebration of a Melkite Baptism or were obtained from the booklet that was used in the ceremonies of Initiation. The Booklet was entitled *Baptism, Byzantine Liturgy*. This booklet was produced in 1998 for use in the Australian Melkite Church with the approval of Bishop Issam Darwish.

Priest: Do you unite yourself to Christ?

Response: Yes, I do unite myself to Christ.

Priest: Have you united yourself to Christ?

Response: Yes, I have united myself to Christ.

Priest: Do you believe in Christ?

Response: Yes, I believe in Christ as King and God.

The repetition once again stresses the importance of unification with Christ. The Nicene Creed giving essential teachings of the church especially about the Holy Trinity, is then recited by the recipients or the sponsors of candidates. When this is finished the priest again asks the following question.

Priest: Have you united yourself to Christ?

Response: Yes, I have united myself to Christ.

Priest: Then worship Christ.

With bowed heads the candidates or the sponsors say:

Response: I worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial, and undivided Trinity.

4.4.2 Part Two of this celebration

The actual Baptism takes place in the second part of the ceremony. Various prayers are said and petitions are chanted with the reply, “Lord have mercy” which is also chanted. The following are some of the petitions.

That he (she) may be declared a child of light, and an heir to the eternal blessings, let us pray to the Lord

That he (she) may become a member and partaker of the death and resurrection of Christ our God, let us pray to the Lord.

These prayers show the importance of the recipient of Baptism entering into the very salvific life of Christ, since his death and resurrection brought victory over evil, death and suffering.

The recipient is blessed with the holy oil of gladness before being baptised. This would be expected since anointing is a very scriptural action as discussed earlier in this section. For the Baptism of an infant, the baby is undressed and is totally naked in receiving this sacrament by total immersion three times in the water. A similar, appropriate procedure is followed for the

adult recipients. The Priest faces the East for the Baptism and says the words during the immersion, “The servant (handmaid) of God (Name) is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” The congregation responds by singing “Amen” as a confirmation of what is happening in this sacrament. Baptism is Trinitarian with these words, actions and ritual bringing the recipient into the very life of the Holy Trinity. There is rejoicing as these words are said, endorsed by a resounding Amen. The newly baptised is clothed in the white garments that have been blessed by the priest. Of course the white garment is a sign of the person’s new life in Christ. “As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27). The recipient has put on Christ himself.

4.4.3 Part Three, the Sacrament of Chrismation

In the third part the candidate receives the sacrament of Chrismation. The priest rests his hand on the head of the one to be confirmed while saying the following prayer.

Blessed are You, O Lord God Almighty, Source of all good things and Sun of Justice, who through the manifestation of your only-begotten Son, our God, made the light of salvation shine upon those who were in the darkness; and who granted to us, unworthy as we are, a blessed cleansing in holy water, and also divine sanctification through life-giving unction. Blessed are You, who now again have been pleased to cause the rebirth of your servant (handmaid) newly enlightened through water and the Spirit, and have granted to him (her) the remission of sins both voluntary and involuntary. Therefore, O Master and most merciful King of all, grant to him (her) the seal of the gift of your holy, almighty and adorable Spirit, and the holy body and the precious blood of your Christ. Keep him (her) in your holiness; strengthen him (her) in the true faith.....

The candidate is then anointed with the Holy Chrism with the priest making the sign of the cross on the forehead, the eyes, the nostrils, the mouth, the ears, the chest, the hands and the feet, saying each time, “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” During this section, a suitable epistle is read. The anointing of the candidates with Myron in Chrismation confirms the royal priesthood (common priesthood or non-ordained priesthood), which implies that in following Christ, they give themselves as “a living sacrifice pleasing to God” (Rom 12:1; cf Phil 4:18). Rom 12:1 brings this out clearly, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship.”

A procession follows starting by encircling the baptismal font then processing around the church three times. The entire congregation joins in this procession with each person carrying a lighted candle. All chant, “All of you who have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia,” which is repeated three times. The procession ends with the priest standing on the *solea* in front of the altar. He leads the congregation while holding the gospel book. From the *solea* he reads the gospel which is Mt 28:16-20. A final blessing is given. On the completion of the baptismal ceremony the baby is given Holy Communion. In the Melkite tradition, Holy Communion is received under both species. In the case of a very small child Holy Communion is given under the species of wine in which a portion of the Divine body (from the previous Divine Liturgy) has been placed.

4.5 Early Development of the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation

This section briefly explains the development of the celebration of these sacraments, so that one can appreciate their link with the early church. Understanding the development of the sacramental rites in the early church is difficult because detailed documents are limited and sometimes fragmentary, with the dating of some of the documents not always being precise. Hence there are many gaps in examining the development of the early rites. Much more important though than understanding an historical perspective is to ask the question, “What effect do the sacraments have?” The answer in one word is Salvation. With the Resurrection the normal boundaries of space and time were suspended. The salvific effect does not come from repeating the event. Rather it is “re-presented.”

4.5.1 The New Testament and Baptism

The study of baptism confirms that when the church came into being baptism was the sign of the New Covenant. This is very clear in the speeches that Peter made to the Jewish people after his and the apostles’ Pentecost experience. Before returning to heaven Jesus had instructed the apostles to make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:18-20). The council of Jerusalem had made it clear that Baptism was the sign of the new covenant replacing male circumcision and it was for all people male and female, Jews and gentiles. At this stage no records are given for the actual ceremony of Baptism, however a very definite guide is given by the Baptism of Jesus. At the legitimation of the gentile Church at Antioch one has no doubt about the importance of Baptism for all Christians, Jewish Christians and Gentiles alike.

4.5.2 History

The *Didache* records that Baptism is Trinitarian and “living” water is to be used. However the exact dating of this document and whether it is Antiochene or Coptic in origin is questioned. This document was discussed in Chapter One. Ignatius of Antioch speaks about Baptism in his letters. He does this by referring to Christ’s baptism and connects Christ’s baptism to his passion. This is clear in Ignatius’ letter to the Ephesians, “Under the divine dispensation, Jesus Christ our God was conceived by Mary of the seed of David and of the Spirit of God; he was born, and He submitted to Baptism, so that by his passion he might sanctify the water” (Eph 8).¹⁵⁵ This comment by Ignatius requires an analysis. Why does Ignatius link Christ’s Baptism to his passion. One could reason that Ignatius has done this, because it is through his (Christ’s) passion that Christ won salvation for all humanity. Further Ignatius refers to Christ sanctifying the water. A possible understanding of this concept of purifying the waters is elucidated by Raya and has been discussed earlier in this chapter. It was clear in the Antiochene church right from its inception that Baptism was fundamental for salvation. The purpose of Ignatius’ letters has already been discussed in Chapter One. One cannot expect a complete treatise on all topics. However one can say in relation to baptism that it is clear that it effects salvation. This is the most important element of any sacramental celebration. Ignatius stresses the importance of Baptism and that its validity comes from the bishop, “Nor is it permissible to conduct baptisms or love feasts agape without the bishop.”¹⁵⁶

Further evidence for the initiation rites in the Eastern Church comes from Milner’s *Theology of Confirmation*,¹⁵⁷ which refers to the original documents available in Whitaker’s *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*.¹⁵⁸ Early evidence about the baptismal rite in the Syrian Church comes from a document known as the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, dating from the first quarter of the third century. This information is given in relation to the appointment and role of deaconesses.¹⁵⁹ There was an anointing of the head by the bishop and also the laying on of his hand, with anointing of the whole body, which for a woman is done by a deaconess.¹⁶⁰ Baptism follows accompanied by the invocation of the divine names. Around the same time

¹⁵⁵ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Ephesians”, in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, 66.

¹⁵⁶ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Smyrnaeans” 8, 103.

¹⁵⁷ Austin P. Milner *Theology of Confirmation* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1971).

¹⁵⁸ E.C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1970).

¹⁵⁹ Milner *Theology of Confirmation*, 12.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

there is a record of the order of baptism in the Syriac version of the apocryphal Acts of Judas Thomas, which follows much the same order as that described in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*.¹⁶¹ Milner gives other evidence for Baptismal rites, which are similar to the above. For this thesis the Baptismal descriptions of St John Chrysostom are of great importance.

4.5.3 *The Development of the Byzantine Rite of Baptism and Chrismation*

St John Chrysostom's description of the baptismal rite is important in understanding Baptism in the Melkite Church in Australia today. St John brought the baptismal rite to Constantinople as it had developed in the Antiochene rite. The Rite of Baptism described in the Melkite rite as referred to above, can be directly related to and is clearly modelled on that described by St John Chrysostom. He was born probably around 345AD and died around 407 AD at Antioch in Syria. He is famous for his preaching ability, which earned him the title Chrysostom, which means "golden-mouthed." In 396 he went to Constantinople as Patriarch. Constantinople was the See in which the Byzantine rite developed and originally it was attached to the See of Antioch. Whitaker refers in detail and provides background information on Chrysostom's description of baptism delivered in Lent c.388 and Lent c. 390.¹⁶² From the documents one can discern the pattern of baptism and its great significance for the Christian.¹⁶³ Chrysostom emphasises that understanding of what the sacrament of Baptism is, be explained to the candidates informing them that it is Christ himself who baptises with baptism being modelled on Christ's own baptism. The candidate must renounce Satan. In renouncing Satan the candidate also renounces Satan's pomp, his service and his works. Then the candidate must attach himself to Christ acknowledging his sovereignty. After this the priest anoints the candidate on the forehead with oil and signs him/her with the Sign of the Cross, saying: "So-and-so [name] is anointed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 35-41. Whitaker has used St John Chrysostom, "Baptismal Instructions" in P.W. Harkins, *St John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions, Ancient Christian Writers* vol. 31, (New York: Newman Press, 1963). The two documents used by Whitaker have the titles "Series of Papadopoulos-Kerameus No. 3" and Stavronikita Series, No. 2

¹⁶³ Ibid., 35.

¹⁶⁴ St John Chrysostom, "Baptismal Instructions, The Second Instruction," in Harkins, *St John Chrysostom Baptismal Instructions, Ancient Christian Writers*, 51.

After the anointing the candidate enters the sacred waters and in doing this buries the old person to sin and death and in coming out of the water is raised to new life in the image of the creator with the Holy Spirit descending on the candidate through the laying of the hand which is done in the baptismal ceremony. Sin is wiped away and the candidate puts on a royal robe. The Baptism is performed by triple immersion. Chrysostom explains in his description the connection between the immersion and descent of the Holy Spirit on the candidate.

That you may learn from this that the substance of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, baptism is conferred in the following manner. When the priest says: “[Name] is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” he puts your head down into the water three times and three times he lifts it up again, preparing you by this mystic rite to receive the descent of the Spirit.¹⁶⁵

One can describe what happens in the early centuries with Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation) as one single celebration. One could understand this more clearly by reflecting on the phrase of St. Cyprian that this single celebration is a “double sacrament”.¹⁶⁶ Baptism takes place with the Holy Spirit descending on the candidate for the prophetic role the candidate is to have in his/her Christian life. This is indicated by the laying on of hands. However in Chrysostom’s description there is no post-baptismal anointing. It is in Theodore of Mopsuestia’s writings that one understands a post-baptismal anointing. It is also seen in later descriptions of the Syrian initiation rites. On completing the baptismal ceremony as described by St John Chrysostom the newly baptised receives the Eucharist.

Having examined the Baptismal ceremony in the Melkite Church in Australia today and the description by St John Chrysostom one can make a comparison between the two baptismal rites. One can discern that the Melkite baptism in Australia today is very much aligned to the ceremony in St. John Chrysostom’s day. The recipient renounces Satan, all his works, all his angels, all his services, and all his pride. Following this renunciation the candidate unites him/herself to Christ. The ceremony clearly brings out the candidate’s unity with Christ. The recipient is then anointed with oil and then the actual baptism takes place. The baby is totally naked and is immersed three times in the water with the words for the Baptism being, “The servant (handmaid) of God (Name) is baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.,52.

¹⁶⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 1290, 327.

the Holy Spirit. Amen” The candidate is dressed in a white garment blessed by the priest signifying his/her new life in Christ.

The conclusion from this is that the baptismal ceremony from the Antiochene School is the basis for what developed in the Byzantine Rite. Whitaker’s research gives understanding about the baptismal rite for both the Syrian and the Roman rites, especially the development of the Syrian rite at the time of St. John Chrysostom. The important point about this sacrament though is what it effects—Salvation. Baptism is modelled on Christ’s own Baptism when a vision of the Holy Trinity emerges. It is Christ himself who baptises the recipient. Hence the ceremony does not say, “John Brown is baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” Rather it says, “The servant of God (name) is baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” This was the form in Chrysostom’s day because he emphasised that it was Christ himself who was doing the baptising. After the Baptism in Chrysostom’s time the candidate received Jesus, his own body and blood in the Holy Eucharist.

There was a gradual introduction of a post-baptismal anointing with chrism into the rite of Antioch. By studying the catechetical instructions of Theodore of Mopsuestia, delivered perhaps in 392 one can see a similarity with those of John Chrysostom both in rite and in theology. The main difference between them is that after the baptismal immersion and the clothing with the white garment, Theodore says that the candidate is signed by the bishop on the forehead. It is reasonable to understand that this signing was done with oil. It was accompanied by the formula, “N. is sealed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Theodore emphasises that the Holy Spirit is given by the laying on of the bishop’s hand with this happening as he immerses the candidate in the font. His comment on the post-baptismal anointing is of interest: “By this invocation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit you are given the sign and manifestation that the Spirit has come also upon you, that you have been anointed by him and that you have received him by grace, that you possess him and that he remains in you.” (Hom. Cat.3) .¹⁶⁷

In looking at this early evidence up until the time of Theodore of Mopsuestia one could conclude, as Milner does, that it is impossible to divide the Antiochene rite into two

¹⁶⁷ Theodore of Mopsuestia , “Hom. Cat. 3,” in Milner, *Theology of Confirmation*, 36.

sacraments.¹⁶⁸ The simplest conclusion for the Antiochene rite, as Milner says, is that “the writers of the church of the East did not know any distinction between a sacrament of baptism for the forgiveness of sins and rebirth, and another sacrament for the reception of the Spirit.”¹⁶⁹ As was stated earlier, St Cyprian refers to these early Eastern rites described here as a “double sacrament.” In doing this he is expressing the very close tie between the two sacraments.

In the Western Rite it is clear that baptism and confirmation were important in the early church, with confirmation following baptism. Confirmation was celebrated with an anointing and the laying on of the hand. This is indicated by Tertullian.

Then having gone up from the bath they are anointed with a blessed anointing of ancient discipline, by which people were accustomed to being anointed for priesthood, by oil from a horn from which Aaron was anointed by Moses. For this reason we were called “Christs” (“anointed ones”) from “chrism”, which is the ointment which lends its name to the Lord.

*It was spiritual because the Lord was anointed with the Spirit by God the Father, as it says in Acts: “For they were gathered together in that city against your holy son whom you have anointed.” Thus also the anointing flows on us physically, but benefits spiritually, as the physical act of baptism (that we are immersed in water) has a spiritual effect (that we are freed from transgressions).
Next, calling and inviting the Holy Spirit, the hand is imposed for the blessing.¹⁷⁰*

From this description of Tertullian’s, one can discern the symbols used in Confirmation in the West. Further one can see the link back to the Old Testament in Tertullian’s writings about anointing with oil. This makes sense as the anointing with oil confirms the royal priesthood (common priesthood) on the recipient. The post-baptismal anointing was to take longer to become customary in the Eastern churches. Milner concludes: “By the latter half of the sixth century, therefore, probably all the churches of the East –except perhaps the Eastern Syrian Church—were using a Chrismation after baptism as a rite for the giving of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶⁸ Milner, *Theology of Confirmation*, 15.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Tertullian (155-220), *On Baptism 7-8* (c. 198-200), from “Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum” 1:282f. (Vienna: F. Tempsky, vol. 1, 1866) quoted in Paul Turner *Sources of Confirmation, From the Fathers Through the Reformers* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 11.

This rite however was never separated from that of baptism and Eastern theologians gave very little attention to the problems of distinguishing the effects of the two rites.¹⁷¹

4.6 Understanding the Sacraments in light of Tradition

Tradition is the living and lived faith. Tradition hands on all that the church perpetuates and believes in relation to the work and inspiration of Jesus Christ. This needs to be understood in terms of Jesus' calls to make disciples of all nations with the promise that he would be with his disciples always until the end of the earth.¹⁷² It is important to look here at the term Tradition in relation to the sacraments by focusing on the specific ritual in the sacrament of Baptism. Ritual includes the blessing of the waters of Baptism, the oil of anointing and even the baptised themselves. The triple immersion takes place. Satan is rejected and all his works. Baptism is true to Tradition when it is based on the work and person of Jesus Christ. The Melkites stress that Baptism is modelled on Christ's own Baptism, which is the first manifestation of the Holy Trinity. The Christian receives baptism in response to Peter's preaching at Pentecost to repent and be baptised. The ritual and symbols in Baptism must point to what it effects. The use of oil has been discussed. The use of water symbolises cleansing and new life. Evidence of the salvific effect of the sacrament must be present. Acknowledgement of the overcoming of evil and sin is important since Christ's work on earth overcame evil, death and suffering. The recipient does this by rejecting Satan and sin. There was no set formula recorded initially for celebrating this sacrament, hence the ritual that developed must reflect what happened to Christ at his own Baptism. The celebration of the sacrament does this. Hence the living Tradition of the church is manifested through this sacrament and similarly through the celebration of the other sacraments.

4.7 The Eucharist

The Eucharist is the heart of the Christian life, with the Christian's initiation into the church completed by the reception of the Eucharist. Further, all of the other sacraments and work of the church are oriented towards this sacrament. Appropriately, the Melkite Church uses the word *Mystery* for sacrament. It is in this sublime mystery of God's love poured out in the Eucharist for his people that the members of the Christian community unite themselves with the heavenly liturgy by uniting themselves to Christ's sacrifice on the cross and to his resurrection. The Christian community offers to God a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving by

¹⁷¹ Milner, *Theology of Confirmation*, 39.

¹⁷² Cf. Mt 28:19-20.

partaking of this Eucharistic mystery, a sacrament of love and a Pascal banquet. The Melkites appropriately call the celebration of the Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy.

4.7.1 Theology and Biblical Perspectives

As the biblical references to the Eucharist give fundamental understanding about this sacrament this section will examine some of the New Testament references to this sacrament. These references are examined in the light of Christ's death and resurrection with all of them relating to the Last Supper. The four gospels and the writings of St Paul elaborate how the Last Supper was celebrated just before Christ's death and resurrection. The Last Supper is presented in the context of the Jewish Passover. In Matthew's gospel, for example, one reads how the disciples prepared to celebrate the Passover Supper on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread (Mt 26:17-19).¹⁷³ That night as it grew dark Jesus was at table with the twelve when he instituted the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist,

During the meal Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. "Take this and eat it," he said, "This is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks and gave it to them. "All of you must drink from it," he said, "for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink this fruit of the vine from now until the day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's reign." Then singing songs of praise they walked out to the Mount of Olives (Mt 26: 26-30).

Christ at the Last Supper of course lovingly gave to the apostles the basis for the Eucharistic rite, especially as he commanded the apostles to repeat what He had done. This command is clearly brought out in the Lk 22:19. One could appreciate that the apostles were prepared for understanding these words by referring to Chapter Six in John's Gospel. Jesus had promised in his ministry that he would give them "bread that would last for ever", that he was "the Bread of Life", that "his flesh was real food and his blood real drink." "I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51). Many of his disciples found this difficult to understand. The writings in Chapter Six need to be understood in the context of the Last Supper where Jesus gives himself to the apostles under the form of bread and wine.

¹⁷³ It is suggested that the meal may have been the *Chaburah* supper that was celebrated during the Passover season. This is a solemn Jewish meal, which included ceremonies of bread breaking and the sharing of the cup of blessing with family and friends as a sign of oneness. See Casimir Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach* (Combermere, Ontario: Alleluia Press, 1976), 175.

Following this celebration of the Last Supper, Jesus entered into his passion and death, a perfect sacrifice to his heavenly Father on behalf of humanity. Paul brings out the importance of Jesus' death in relation to the Last Supper in his writing to the church at Corinth. His writing is dated probably around early 52 AD¹⁷⁴ and he explains to the Christians at Corinth,

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor 11:23-26).

Christ's death was one of total self-giving, of offering the perfect sacrifice to his heavenly Father. In giving himself to the apostles under the form of bread and wine at the Last Supper he was giving them a share in all that his death and resurrection would achieve, which was the salvation of all humanity. In obedience to the Christ command "Do this in memory of me," the Melkite Church along with all the rites of the church in both the East and the West has celebrated the Eucharist proclaiming Christ's death and resurrection until he comes again.

4.7.2 Celebrating the Eucharist

The celebration of the Eucharist, called the Divine Liturgy in the Melkite Catholic Church is celebrated in the Byzantine Rite. To give a Melkite understanding in this section the writings of the Melkite theologian Raya have been used, as well as the book *Light for Light, Part II, The Mystery Celebrated*,¹⁷⁵ which could be described as a catechetical book on the *Mysteries* of the Byzantine Rite and has been compiled by clergy and writers from the Byzantine Catholic Churches in America.¹⁷⁶ Of course other references are used. Basically the Byzantine rite uses two anaphoras, with the more common one being the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. This liturgy is derived from the Antiochene liturgy (which is discussed later in this section); hence it did not originate in Constantinople and was most probably introduced there by St John Chrysostom. The other anaphora is that of the Liturgy of St Basil with this coming from

¹⁷⁴ Hugh Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy, The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 13.

¹⁷⁵ David Petras *et al.*, *Light for Light Part Two The Mystery Celebrated* (Pittsburgh: God with Us Publications, 1996). This book is written as a catechetical resource book for all Byzantine Catholics in USA.

¹⁷⁶ The Melkite Eparchy at Greenacre recommended these books.

the Cappadocian tradition. It “contains a wealth of Scriptural passages beautifully woven together to describe the whole work of salvation.”¹⁷⁷

There are four principal parts to the Byzantine Liturgy¹⁷⁸

The Preparation of the Gifts. This is done privately at the left side table before the Liturgy begins. The bread is cut here in preparation for the Liturgy. The bread that is used is a round loaf of leavened bread with the Greek phrase IC XC NIKA stamped on it. This Greek phrase means “Jesus has triumphed.” Before the Liturgy begins the priest cuts this loaf into small pieces and places them on the paten.

The Office of the Antiphons. This section consists of a series of hymns and prayers, which give glory to God as well as asking for his Mercy.

The Service of the Word. In this section, Christ is present in the Liturgy through his Holy Word in the Sacred Scripture, which is read and proclaimed. It is preceded by what is referred to as the Little Entrance, which is described below.

The Eucharistic Service. This section takes place from the Great Entrance (described below) to the end of the Liturgy. The gifts are brought to the altar, and then the bread and wine are consecrated. After this the priest receives Holy Communion then the faithful.

For a full description of the liturgy one needs to read the book *The Divine and Holy Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*. The laity joins the priest in offering the sacrifice of Christ to his Heavenly Father. Hence the laity are real partakers in the priesthood of Christ as they join in the prayers and hymns of the Liturgy.

The principal parts of the Liturgy are basically described above. The section of the Liturgy described as the Service of the Word is preceded by the Little Entrance, which is the first procession in the Liturgy, heralding Christ’s first manifestation. Hence the priest processes through the church solemnly carrying the beautifully decorated Gospel Book with those gathered singing the Beatitudes. Christ through his holy word in Scripture is truly present in the Liturgy. Important parts of this section of the Liturgy are the Epistle and the Gospel readings.

¹⁷⁷ Petras *et al.*, *Light for Light Part Two The Mystery Celebrated*, 69.

¹⁷⁸ *Melkites in America, A Directory and Informative Handbook*, Section 21, 26-27.

The second procession in the Liturgy is called the Great Entrance. It marks the commencement of the Eucharistic Service and is done with great solemnity. The congregation sing the Cherubic Hymn while the priest carries the bread and wine to the altar. This procession calls to mind that it is through the bread and wine that Christ will come sacramentally to the faithful in Holy Communion. The most solemn part of the Liturgy has begun.

The mystery of Jesus' cross and resurrection is celebrated in the mystery of the Divine Liturgy, which fulfils Jesus' command, "Do this in memory of me." The Liturgy is "an *anamnesis* (commemoration) of the death and resurrection of the Lord."¹⁷⁹ It was on the cross that Jesus offered his life as a bloody sacrifice for all humanity. In the Liturgy the faithful enter into his sacrifice through their sacrifice of praise. St John Chrysostom elaborates on this clearly. "Christ is our High Priest, who offered the sacrifice that cleanses us. Now we also offer that which was once offered and which cannot be exhausted. This is done in remembrance of what was then done, for He said, 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22:19). We do not offer another sacrifice... but we offer always the same, or rather we perform a remembrance of a sacrifice."¹⁸⁰

The Anaphora is the central part of the Eucharist with the introductory section showing appropriate praise to the Holy Trinity elaborating on the central belief of the Melkite Church.

*It is fitting and right to sing to You, to bless, to praise you, to give thanks to You, to worship You in every place of your dominion: For You are God, beyond description, beyond understanding, invisible, incomprehensible, always existing, always the same; you and your only-begotten Son and your Holy Spirit....*¹⁸¹

The introductory section is based on the Jewish prayers of blessing, (*berakah*), with these Jewish prayers beginning with a solemn address of God enumerating his many attributes. It is reasoned that Jesus would have said such a prayer at the Last Supper as the setting for the Last Supper was the Jewish Passover. The *anamnesis* follows with it proclaiming all that Christ has done for humanity. "The Divine Liturgy makes all the past of our salvation present today, and it also makes the future present. Today the final justification of all mankind is

¹⁷⁹ Petras *et al.* *Light for Light, Part Two, The Mystery Celebrated*, 60.

¹⁸⁰ St John Chrysostom, "Homily on the Letter to the Hebrews, 17:6," in Petras *et al.* *Light for Light, Part Two, The Mystery Celebrated*, 60.

¹⁸¹ *The Divine and Holy Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom* (Greenacre, Aust: Melkite Press, 2000), 42.

already present....”¹⁸² In the *anamnesis* the created bread and wine are offered to God. The priest solemnly asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit to transform the Holy Gifts (*epiclesis*),¹⁸³ with the elements becoming the true Body and Blood of His only Son. Communion, unity between God and humanity, is the completion of the Divine Liturgy, which is a gift for the sanctification of worshippers, transforming them making them like God (deification).

4.7.3 Historical Perspectives

In looking at an historical perspective on the Eucharist one needs to appreciate that the writings on the Eucharist in the New Testament provide the basis for all theology and doctrinal developments. Hence in examining other early Christian writings one needs to be familiar with the key passages of the New Testament. Some of the key passages have been discussed already. A succinct summary follows.¹⁸⁴

The accounts of the Last Supper in Matthew, Mark and Luke;¹⁸⁵ the Bread of Life discourse, with the accompanying multiplication of the loaves in John,¹⁸⁶ the account of the “breaking of the bread” in the Acts of the Apostles;¹⁸⁷ the advice on worship in Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians;¹⁸⁸ and the descriptions of the heavenly liturgy in Hebrews and Revelation.¹⁸⁹

In giving an historical perspective one needs to be aware that many books have been written on this subject, so to do justice to the history of the Eucharist one can refer to a large cross-section of writings with a number given in the footnote below.¹⁹⁰ As the Melkite Church has its roots in Antioch, it is important to look at what St Ignatius of Antioch had to say about the Eucharist. Ignatius throws considerable light on the development of the church at Antioch, the birthplace of the Melkite Church. He writes clearly on the Eucharist, stressing that it is the chief means of mediating the life and grace of the risen Lord to the assembly of believers. He stresses the importance of knowing the validity of the Eucharist comes from the bishop. In his

¹⁸² Petras *et al.* *Light for Light, Part Two, The Mystery Celebrated*, 64

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁸⁴ The summary is given in Mike Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2001), 52.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Mt 26:27-29, Mk 14:22-25 and Lk 22:14-20.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Jn 6:1-14, 22, 25-69.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Acts 2:41-47.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. 1 Cor 10:1-22; 11:17-34.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Heb 12:18-29, Rev 4:6-11 and Rev 19:4-9.

¹⁹⁰ See Mike Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2001) and Lucien Deiss (ed.), *Early Sources of the Liturgy* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967). Kucharek’s book *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach*, provides helpful historical perspectives on the Eucharist.

letters one can discern the importance of the Eucharist in the Church at Antioch as well as in the communities he visited or had contact with on his way to martyrdom in Rome. He clearly writes about the importance of the Eucharist to the church at Philadelphia. This theme is stressed in his letters to the Smyrnaeans as well.

*Make certain therefore that you all observe one common Eucharist, for there is but one body of our Lord Jesus Christ and but one cup of union with his blood and one single altar of sacrifice—even as also there is but one bishop with his clergy and one fellow-servitors, the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God.*¹⁹¹

Ignatius in his letters has clearly elaborated on the divinity and humanity of Christ giving understanding to the revelation that salvation comes through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁹² The historical events of salvation that occurred in the past and through the Eucharist—exist in the present church as well. Ignatius speaks clearly about the Eucharist in his letters to the Smyrnaeans. This letter denounces the Docetists who do not accept the humanity of Christ. Docetism is rife with Ignatius speaking out clearly so as to avoid schism in the church at that time. He is stressing the importance of the humanity of Christ as the salvation of humanity came about through Christ's Incarnation. Ignatius refers to the Docetists in his writings on the Eucharist.

*They [the Docetists] even absent themselves from the Eucharist and the public prayers, because they will not admit that the Eucharist is the self-same body of our Saviour Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins, and which the Father in His goodness afterwards raised up again. Consequently, since they reject God's good gifts,...*¹⁹³

One could understand the phrase “the body of our Saviour Jesus Christ” as referring to the Eucharist as well as referring to the body of the historical Jesus who was born, lived amongst his people, died and was raised again. The historical events of salvation really happened in the past with this salvation still present through the Eucharist. From examining Ignatius' letters one can have no doubt of the importance of the Eucharist in the early church.

The *Didache* is a document of interest as discussed in Chapter One. Much has been written about its authenticity as previously examined. Chapter 14 stresses the sacrificial nature of the

¹⁹¹ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Philadelphians” 4, 94. See also “To the Smyrnaeans” 8, 103.

¹⁹² See for example, Ignatius, “To the Philadelphians,” Paragraph 9, 95.

¹⁹³ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Smyrnaeans” 7, 102.

Eucharist with the word sacrifice appearing three times with emphasis on the faithful making a pure sacrifice.¹⁹⁴ To do this worshippers must confess their sins. Malachi's reference to Temple sacrifice is important in this chapter. Appropriate quotes are given below.

For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the nations says the Lord of Hosts (Mal 1:11).

Cursed be the cheat who has a male in the flock and vows to give it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished; for I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is revered among the nations (Mal 1: 14).

This reference of Malachi's has been interpreted "by the early Christian Father as foreshadowing the Eucharist, the always-and-everywhere sacrifice of Christ."¹⁹⁵ Chapters Nine and Ten in the *Didache* refer to the Eucharist with the blessings said over the cup and the bread. However there is no institution narrative and no mention of the Last Supper or the cross. The meal is possibly an agape meal rather than the Eucharist, with the prayers being modelled on Jewish forms of grace, with a 'breaking of bread' in a fellowship meal. On studying the *Didache*¹⁹⁶ one can certainly conclude, as does Aquilina, "even at this early date, the church reserved Holy Communion only for those who were baptised and free of any grave sin."¹⁹⁷

Aquilina, in his book *The Mass of the Early Christians* supplies considerable information on the early Eucharist. Books such as these elaborate more fully on the history of the Eucharist than can be done in this thesis. Prevalent in an historical survey of the Eucharist are Justin Martyr's writings. They are important and are well known. He is the best known of the Greek Apologists and was a convert to Christianity about 130 AD. He spent a period of time in Ephesus before going to Rome where he founded a school.¹⁹⁸ Two of his apologies, (sometimes regarded as one unit), are still available along with his writings entitled *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*. In his apologies Justin describes in clear terms what is happening in the celebration of the Eucharist in the middle of the second century.¹⁹⁹ Casimir Kucharek,²⁰⁰ a

¹⁹⁴ See a copy of the "Didache" in Maxwell Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings, The Apostolic Fathers*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 191-199.

¹⁹⁵ Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians*, 70. Aquilina refers for example, to the writings of the early Christian Fathers, St Justin and St Irenaeus to support this statement.

¹⁹⁶ See also reference to the *Didache* in the section on the Sacrament of Penance

¹⁹⁷ Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians*, 66.

¹⁹⁸ See A. Hamman, *How to Read the Church Fathers* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 13-15, for details on Justin Martyr's life.

¹⁹⁹ See Aquilina, *The Mass of the Early Christians*, 81-87.

priest of the Byzantine-Slav rite, whose research on the history of the Eucharist is used in this thesis, sees Justin's work as important in understanding the development of the Eucharistic Rite in various rites of the Catholic Church. He makes the following conclusion.

*The Eucharistic liturgy as reconstructed from writers of the next two centuries and a half contain all the salient features described by Justin. What preceded the Eucharistic portion of the liturgy need not concern us here, only that at which the initiated alone could participate: (1) Common Intercessory Prayers of the Faithful; (2) the Kiss of Peace; (3) the Presentation of Bread and Wine or the Offertory; (4) the Eucharistic Prayer; (5) Fraction; (6) Communion; (7) Ablutions and Dismissal.*²⁰¹

On reading Justin's description one discerns the salient features described by Kucharek. Kucharek, then goes on to explain the terms in detail.²⁰² He concludes, "The present Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Church, despite the riches of its ceremonial, has preserved the original structural unity and all the ancient constituent parts."²⁰³ Further, he emphasises that the Byzantine rite follows the simple outline of the Eucharist given above.²⁰⁴ However he does point out that the positioning of the Kiss of Peace has changed in order.

Hans-Joachim Schulz in his book *The Byzantine Liturgy* gives a comprehensive explanation of the development of the Byzantine Liturgy. As does Kucharek, he sees the structure of the two Byzantine anaphoras developing from Justin Martyr's description of the Eucharist with this structure also being apparent in the early Christian Eucharist of the third century in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus.²⁰⁵ He comments that these "two documents presuppose a liturgy that is acclimated to Rome but has behind it a Syrian heritage."²⁰⁶ For Justin the Eucharistic prayer is entirely an act of thanksgiving especially for creation and redemption, modelled on the earliest structure known for the eucharistic prayer including the New Testament "blessings" and "eucharists" in the letters to the Ephesians and in Col 1:12-20.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁰ See his book, Casimir Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach* (Combermere, Ontario Alleluia Press, 1976), 175- 190.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 179-190.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Hans-Joachim Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1986), 142.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 143. For further understanding about Justin's description of the Eucharist relating to the earliest structure known for the eucharistic prayer see pages 142-145.

For further understanding on the development of Eucharistic Rite in the Byzantine Rite one can read the research work of Robert Taft. Taft, a priest of the Byzantine-Slavonic Rite, is a well known writer on the development of the Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine rite.²⁰⁸ His writings are the product of decades of study on the sources of the history and theology of the Byzantine Rite. He identifies five distinct historical phases.²⁰⁹

1. The paleo-Byzantine or pre-Constantinian era, about which we know little;
2. The ‘Imperial phase’, during the Late Antique or patristic period, especially from the reign of Justinian I (527-565) and his immediate successors, creating a system of cathedral liturgy that lasted until some time after the Latin Conquest (1204-1261), thus overlapping with phases 3-4;
3. The “Dark Ages” from 610 to ca. 850, and especially the struggle against Iconoclasm (726-843), culminating in the Studite reform;
4. The Studite era itself, from ca. 800-1204;
5. The final, neo-Sabaitic synthesis after the Latin conquest (1204-1261)

This thesis is concerned with the importance of the attribution of St John Chrysostom’s name to the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom and its authenticity and further the link the Chrysostom’s liturgy has with the Antiochene liturgy. Taft acknowledges the contribution of Schulz in understanding the Byzantine Liturgy and its development.²¹⁰ Taft’s writings give extensive detail on the development of the Byzantine Rite including its connection with the Antiochene rite. He explains that the development of the Byzantine Rite began in the period 381-451, with the reader hearing of the Constantinopolitan liturgy in the homilies of its bishops Gregory Nazianzen (379-381) and John Chrysostom (398-404).²¹¹ From these key people one learns about processions, preaching, psalmody and chanting. “It is not surprising that the early Constantinopolitan Eucharist (especially the anaphora) and the Cathedral Office of the Great Church seen in these and other extant remains bear Antiochene traits.”²¹² One would expect this as Byzantium, which later became Constantinople “was originally within the ecclesiastical zone dominated by the See of Antioch.”²¹³ As was stated earlier, John

²⁰⁸ Taft has written extensively. Some of his books are *The Byzantine Rite, a Short History* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), *Beyond East & West, Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1984), and *Liturgy in Byzantine and Beyond* (Brookfield, Vermont: Variorum, 1995).

²⁰⁹ Robert Taft, *The Byzantine Rite, A Short History*, 18-19.

²¹⁰ See the Forward by Taft in Schulz’ book *The Byzantine Liturgy*, ix-xi.

²¹¹ Taft, *The Byzantine Rite, A Short History*, 23.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 23-24.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

Chrysostom was a priest in his native Antioch before becoming bishop of the capital in February 398. Taft points out that “one of the things he brought from home and revised for use in his new Episcopal see was the ancient Antiochene anaphora of the apostles a prayer still used in the Byzantine Rite today as the Anaphora of St John Chrysostom.”²¹⁴ Taft gives evidence for his stance in his essay, *St John Chrysostom and the Byzantine Anaphora that Bears His Name*, in which computer analysis plays a significant part. Taft shows why it is highly likely that the anaphora attributed to St John Chrysostom is authentically that of Chrysostom, and also that this liturgy is essentially an Antiochene liturgy. He gives evidence for the former conjecture by examining in the text itself “such internal indices of authenticity as similar style and the repetition of vocabulary, doublets, and favoured scriptural loci.”²¹⁵ Taft stresses the importance of the recurrence of vocabulary in the process, stating that:

*Certain authors betray themselves by using common words with uncommon frequency, or by employing rare expression more than once. Some authors also cite certain scriptural passages with unaccustomed frequency. This strange frequency of usual terms, or unusual appearance of strange terms, is even more convincing if the contexts in which they emerge closely resemble one another—what are called “doublets,” characteristic phrases repeated almost word for word in several demonstrably authentic texts as well as in the text(s) being scrutinized.*²¹⁶

Taft’s analysis and reasoning appear to be highly logical. With computer scanning revolutionising all textual study in recent times eliminating “the inevitable subjectivity that has usually plagued such work in the past,”²¹⁷ one can expect results that are scientifically based. This reasoning of the use of computer scanning applies as well to the establishment of the link between the anaphora of St John Chrysostom and the Antiochene liturgy. Hence this thesis accepts the reasoning of Taft for the authenticity of the Chrysostom anaphora with its origins in Antiochene liturgical celebration.

Hugh Wybrew has also done a detailed study of the development of the Byzantine Liturgy, beginning at the Last Supper up unto recent times in his book *The Orthodox Liturgy, The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite*.²¹⁸ One important aspect of his

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Robert Taft, “St John Chrysostom and the Byzantine Anaphora that Bears His Name,” in Paul F. Bradshaw (ed.), *Essays on Early Eastern Eucharistic Prayers*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 207.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 207.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 198.

²¹⁸ Hugh Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy, The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990).

book is the reconstruction of how the liturgy would possibly have been celebrated at the time of St John Chrysostom.²¹⁹ Wybrew explains why the two main anaphoras of the Byzantine Rite would have developed from the anaphora of St Basil brought from Caesarea most probably by St Gregory of Nazianzus and the anaphora brought by Chrysostom from Antioch. The anaphora of St Basil, Wybrew conjectures, is highly likely that of St Basil himself. He argues that St Gregory of Nazianzus, a close friend of St Basil, would have brought the anaphora from Caesarea to Constantinople when he became archbishop there. “The capital was not yet the dominant liturgical centre it was to become, and was open to liturgical influences from outside. The tradition of worship was by no means yet fixed, and the various local traditions interpenetrated one another readily.”²²⁰ Further, Wybrew refers to the research of the Belgian scholar Dom Bernard Capelle on the anaphora of St Basil. Capelle compares it with Basil’s theological writings and with an Egyptian anaphora attributed to St Basil. Capelle, one of Wybrew’s sources, concludes that there is good reason to believe that the anaphora bearing the name of St Basil is that of St Basil’s.²²¹ Wybrew also gives evidence for the anaphora of St John Chrysostom being based on that of the anaphora that Chrysostom brought from Antioch.²²²

4.8 Conclusions

This chapter has explained the importance of the *Holy Mysteries*, and what they effect—salvation, with understanding about their salvific effect given by theologians from the Byzantine Rite. It then explained, “putting on Christ” in the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation and the Holy Eucharist. It was important to look at these sacraments in detail including a biblical basis for them, theological perspectives, aspects of their liturgical celebration and historical perspectives. This chapter showed that these sacraments were important in the early church and how they developed. The sacrament of Baptism was examined in detail especially explaining its importance in the early church at Antioch. In the section on historical perspectives it was shown how the Antiochene rite was brought to Constantinople by St John Chrysostom and how St John’s description was the basis for the celebration of this sacrament in the Melkite church today which worships in the Byzantine Rite. This chapter emphasised that Chrismation was always linked to Baptism with this happening because Baptism is modelled on Christ’s own Baptism and as Christ came from

²¹⁹ Ibid., 47-66.

²²⁰ Ibid., 56.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., see page 56 for details.

the water he was anointed with the Holy Spirit for a life of loving service. It was a gradual process of acknowledging a distinct rite for the sacrament of Chrismation, which is celebrated jointly with Baptism. Chrismation must be seen as an acknowledgement that Christ promised an outpouring of the Holy Spirit hence this sacrament relates back to its source and inspiration, Jesus Christ. The important element of this sacrament is what it effects. The sending of the Spirit invests Christians with power in their prophetic role of proclaiming the gospel in their daily lives. Baptism is Trinitarian and hence the candidates when baptised enter the life of the Holy Trinity, then receive the Holy Spirit explicitly for the prophetic role that the Christian is called to live. As explained in Chapter Three, in entering into the life of the most Holy Trinity the Christian begins a process of deification.

A further aim was to explain that the sacraments are an important part of the living Tradition of the church and this was done by looking at the details in the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism. This was important, as there was no distinct formula recorded for celebrating this sacrament in the early church. The sacramental rites gradually developed. However they all relate to the work and mission of Jesus Christ himself.

In examining the celebration of the Eucharist in the Melkite Church it was concluded that it was fundamental to give a biblical understanding of this sacrament. It was stated at the beginning of the section on the Eucharist entitled *Historical Perspectives*, “In looking at an historical perspective on the Eucharist one needs to appreciate that the writings on the Eucharist in the New Testament provide the basis for all theology and doctrinal developments.” In doing this it was concluded that Christ himself instituted the Eucharist. Further, this sacrament was central in worship in the early church at Antioch, with Ignatius of Antioch emphasising that the Eucharist was the chief means of mediating the life and grace of the Risen Lord to the members of his body, the church. One can examine in depth the development of the Byzantine Rite for the Divine Liturgy through the writings of Kucharek, Taft, Schulz and Wybrew to gain understanding about the link between the Byzantine rite and the Antiochene rite. The chapter looked at key perspectives in the description of the Eucharist of St Justin Martyr as the key elements in this early description were the basis for further development in the Eucharist in the following centuries. Although Justin was writing in Rome at the time of the description it needs to be remembered that he had also spent time in Ephesus, which was in the East in the See of Antioch. Schulz and Kucharek both concur that Justin’s liturgy is the basis for the Byzantine Divine Liturgy with Schulz stressing that

although it was written in Rome, it had behind it a Syrian heritage. Essential though, is that the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy relates back to its very source, Jesus Christ himself who instituted the Eucharist with this being clear through examining appropriate biblical references. Most important for the three sacraments discussed is what they effect—salvation, living in the loving embrace of the Holy Trinity.

CHAPTER FIVE
LIFE IN CHRIST
THE SACRAMENTS OF PENANCE AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK
THE SACRAMENTS OF HOLY ORDERS AND MARRIAGE

5.0 Introduction and aims

Chapter Three discussed the importance of worship in the Melkite Catholic Church, where the faithful share in the life of the Holy Trinity. The most efficacious means of doing this is for its members to lead a sacramental life. This chapter will continue discussing the Holy Mysteries, which began in Chapter Four, which explained the importance of “putting on Christ.” After receiving these Holy Mysteries, Christians are then called to life in Christ. Hence this chapter aims to discuss the Sacraments of Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Marriage as receiving these sacraments worthily assists the recipients to a life in Christ. It will explain what these sacraments are and why they are important, the biblical basis for them and what they effect, namely growing in the life of the Holy Trinity. It will give a brief historical perspective on the Sacrament of Penance. The study of Holy Orders will examine what is written about the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon, in the early church at Antioch and evidence for this three-fold ministry in New Testament writings. The section on marriage will explain the Sacrament of Marriage and why it is a microcosm of the church, the mystical body of Christ. It will give an indepth explanation of the liturgical celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Melkite Catholic Church detailing important words, actions, symbols and prayers.

5.1 The Sacrament of Penance

5.1.1 Explanation of this sacrament and why it is important.

Sin takes place when Christians choose to leave God’s embrace. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit the sinners’ hearts can be changed and they will thus seek reconciliation with God asking for God’s forgiveness. It is through sacramental confession that the repentant sinner is fully restored to the life of the church.²²³ The Melkite Catholic theologian, Raya speaks of the church member having a “spiritual father” who must be one who thinks, acts and loves like Christ and who is Christ, the “light of the world” to the repentant sinner. This confessor is not so much a judge but a healer and counsellor who proclaims the wonderful works of God. It is his role to enlighten the conscience of the penitent so that the inner mystery of the Church’s

²²³ Raya, *The Face of God, An introduction to Eastern Spirituality*, 193.

teaching and sacramental life becomes the very essence of the penitent's life.²²⁴ The penitent is renewed in his/her life in Christ.

This spiritual father portrays the healing Christ and is led by the Holy Spirit. He is full of compassion and can read hearts gauging if the sinner has a contrite heart. In the liturgy of this sacrament both confessor and penitent give glory to the goodness and mercy of God, and there is celebration of Christ's victory over sin. There is a complete turning to the Lord himself, his word and his love and to glorify him for his saving action. The reconciliation with Christ takes place in the community, which Christ established, that is the Church itself. Sin is not classified as venial or mortal as any sin offends Christ who died for the expiation of all sin. "He who conceals his sin prospers not, but he who confesses them and forsakes them obtains mercy" (Prov 28:13). In confession all sin is wiped away, helping the penitent to become perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

The formula for absolution is as follows with the priest placing his stole on the head of the penitent covering the stole with both hands.

*God, who through Nathan the prophet forgave David confessing his sins, and Peter shedding bitter tears for his betrayal, and the adulterous woman weeping at his feet, the Prodigal Son, and the Publican, is now forgiving you, N., all the sins of your life in this world and in the world to come. And may he make you stand uncondemned before his awesome tribunal, for he is blessed forever and ever. Amen.*²²⁵

Confessions are heard in a church. Some churches have introduced the confessional, however the confession may be heard in any suitable part of the church usually before an icon of Christ or a cross. Either of these symbols reminds the penitent that it is Christ who has the power to forgive sin and that the priest is in the person of Christ.

Baptism is the chief means for the forgiveness of sin. But it is more than this. Baptism gives new life in Christ in this world and into the world to come. One then may ask what happens when one sins after Baptism. The Sacrament of Penance might be described as a "second Baptism" because it restores repentant sinners to life with Christ. Again and again in the gospel, Christ went in search of the lost, the sinner, and the marginalised. One can approach this sacrament with the assurance that Christ cares for his people; he cares about peace and

²²⁴ Ibid., 196.

²²⁵ Ibid., 197.

happiness in the lives of people who follow him and he understands that his disciples sometimes fail.

5.1.2 Biblical Perspectives

The Melkite Catholic theologian, Raya quotes from Scripture to give a biblical understanding of this sacrament and the authority given to the priesthood for the celebration of this sacrament in Jn 20:22, “Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven. For those whose sins you retain they are retained.” Further to this he notes that in the early church the bishops alone had the power to forgive sins. He speaks of St Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil, and St John Chrysostom writing on this topic.²²⁶

When Ignatius of Antioch was writing his letters he stressed the strong link between the Old and the New Testament. He also spoke about the importance of confessing sin. It is not surprising then that the Sacrament of Repentance grows out of practice in the Old Testament. St John Chrysostom gives a comprehensive biblical perspective on Repentance. It is of interest to look at the writings of St John Chrysostom on the topic of the Mystery of Repentance especially since he was a priest of Antioch, Syria and was later appointed Archbishop of Constantinople. He had great influence on the church at Constantinople, which was the birthplace of the Byzantine Rite with this rite evolving from the Antiochene rite. He spoke clearly on the Sacrament of Baptism and it was concluded that Baptism in Chrysostom’s day was the basis for the baptismal celebration in the Melkite church in Australia today. Repentance is often referred to as a second Baptism. St John Chrysostom writes extensively about repentance and takes very much a Scriptural view referring to both the Old and the New Testament. In fact Chrysostom preached nine homilies on repentance in Antioch between 286 and 287 AD.²²⁷ These homilies reveal deep insight into the human need for repentance, are well founded in Scripture and reveal a tender and compassionate God who reaches out to fallen humanity. His writings on Almsgiving are also included as this topic overlaps with the theme of Repentance. Repentance assists Christians to strive for the perfection that Christ calls his disciples to, with this being part of the process of deification.

²²⁶ Raya, *The Face of God, An Introduction to Eastern Spirituality*, 193.

²²⁷ “St John Chrysostom on Repentance and Almsgiving” in Thomas P. Halton *et al.* (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 96., (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), xv, Introduction Section. Reasoning for the authenticity of the records of the homilies is given in the introduction section (xv-xvi) including the research work of Constantine Loukakis, the Greek patristic scholar who compiled Chrysostom’s writings. He concludes that the nine homilies all have the characteristics of the Chrysostom corpus.

Chrysostom urges the sinner to come to the church and tell God, “I have sinned.”²²⁸ He explains how God invites the sinner to repentance and cites Scriptural passages to show this.²²⁹ He speaks of the many characters and incidences in both the Old and the New Testament where the need for forgiveness is imperative. He refers to such characters as Rahab, King David, King Ahab, Peter, Paul, the “good” thief, and the prodigal son, to show the Father’s infinite compassion and the need for sinners to confess their sins and seek repentance. God, with fatherly love invites the sinner to do this. For example Cain was invited to do this after he murdered his brother Abel. Cain considered his sin too great to be forgiven (Gen 4:13). Chrysostom stresses that Cain did not accept God’s offer of forgiveness because he would not admit his sin. Chrysostom speaks of the sins of King David and of King Ahab. In discussing their sinful actions Chrysostom stresses the importance of mourning for sins in order to have them annulled.²³⁰ Chrysostom details certain actions on the road to repentance including mourning for one’s sins, being humble, fasting, almsgiving, prayer and going to the church.²³¹ Further there needs to be a positive and trustful attitude towards the mercy and love of God when confessing one’s sins. The sinner need not fear God especially by remembering what God did for the “good” thief. “He put him in paradise as a righteous man.”²³² Knowing this then Chrysostom urges sinners to first tell their transgressions so they may be justified.²³³ Further Chrysostom explains how God in both the Old and the New Testament gives laws pertaining to the matter of being made righteous. One can appreciate Chrysostom’s emphasising the laws pertaining to repentance in the Old Testament when one reads Moses legislation about the matter of repentance. It is appropriate to examine the important concept of repentance coming from the Old Testament since it was stated earlier that what happened in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. More will be said on St John Chrysostom’s writings in the section *Historical Perspectives*.

5.1.3 Forgiveness of sin in the Old Testament

From reading the book of Leviticus, one can understand the importance of repenting for sin in the Old Testament. Lev 4:1-31 set the scene for the need for repentance for anyone of the Israelites who had sinned. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 give details of the Sin Offering that must be made to God. Lev 4:27-31 highlights what it involved for ordinary people who have sinned.

²²⁸ Ibid., Homily 2,17.

²²⁹ Ibid., 17-18.

²³⁰ Ibid., 18-22.

²³¹ Ibid., Introduction Section, xviii.

²³² Ibid., Homily 8, 117.

²³³ Ibid., 116.

If anyone of the ordinary people among you sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done and incurs guilt, when the sin you have committed is made known to you, you shall bring a female goat without blemish as your offering, for the sin you have committed. You shall lay your hand on the head of the sin offering and the sin offering shall be slaughtered at the place of the burnt offering. The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and he shall pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. He shall remove all its fat, as the fat is removed from the offering of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar for a pleasing odour to the Lord. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf, and you shall be forgiven.

God made covenants with his people through Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. Yahweh was to be the God of Israel and they were to be his people. They were to keep his commands and holy ways. However there were many times of failure and God invited them to confess. See for example the story of Cain. In fact God gave them specific ritual for confessing and receiving forgiveness for their sins. One can gain further understanding of this by looking at Lev 5:4-6 then at Num 5:5-7.

In examining the ritual for the forgiveness of sin in the Old Testament one can see that God is giving the repentant sinner a clear plan of action. Certain steps must be taken. Firstly, God requires a confession. Then, the sinners must perform a specific action, specific liturgical acts of sacrifice and penance.²³⁴ All of this must be done with the assistance of a priest who will specifically intercede for the person. It is essential that they do all this with the help and the intercession of a priest. This was the procedure for Israel and it was to be fulfilled with the coming of Christ because it was Christ who offered the perfect sacrifice for the remission of sin. The ritual involved in the Old Testament was no easy matter. What the sinner had to do depended on the gravity of the sin. One may have to offer a goat, a sheep or even a bull. This would be a challenging task especially in the case of offering a bull, since it had to be taken to the Temple.²³⁵ In the inner court one would state the reason for the sacrifice. At the altar one would execute the animal and separate the parts eventually handing the appropriate parts to the priest for burning. Waste matter would be removed from the intestines and those parts would be purified.²³⁶ The sinner would sing penitential psalms. At the same time the priest

²³⁴ Scott Hahn, *Lord Have Mercy, The Healing Power of Confession* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), 20.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

would collect the animal's blood and this would be sprinkled over the altar.²³⁷ In singing these psalms sinners showed their sincerity about repentance. One would expect a definite procedure for the repentance of sin after the coming of Christ. In the New Testament Jesus is referred to as the Lamb of God. It is the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who takes away sin. In the Old Testament the sacrifice for sin may have included a lamb without blemish, which was brought to the priest. The procedure included the sinner laying hands on the head of the lamb followed by a confession of sins. In doing this, sins were transferred to the victim with its blood being shed by the stroke of the sacrificial knife. The blood was poured onto the horns of the altar to atone for sin. This action prefigures the sacrificial offering of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ who takes away all sin by the shedding of his blood at Calvary.

5.1.4 Historical Perspectives

The words in the Gospels are the foundation for this sacrament especially in Jn 20:22. The apostles were given the power to forgive sin (in the name of Jesus Christ). Much has been written about the importance of repentance from the early church until the present day. This thesis accepts the research work of Paul F. Palmer S.J. (ed.) in *Sources of Theology, Volume II, Sacraments and Forgiveness, History and Doctrinal Development of Penance, Extreme Unction and Indulgences*,²³⁸ as well as the writings on this sacrament by Casimir Kucharek in his book, *The Sacramental Mysteries a Byzantine Approach*.²³⁹ The historical perspectives of this sacrament will discuss salient features in its development, which pertain to this thesis. Palmer's collection of writings on repentance is very extensive. He gives a rounded New Testament analysis of the importance of repentance including advice given by St Paul. His historical examination of the development of this sacrament is comprehensive, with references to early documents looking at evidence from both the East and the West. He recognises that from an Eastern perspective many documents from the time of the Photian schism in the ninth century are not included.²⁴⁰ Palmer adds, "However, the penitential ascribed to the monk John the Faster (c. 1100) indicates that the discipline in the East differed only in liturgical details from the private discipline of the West as the latter developed under

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Paul F. Palmer S.J. (ed.), *Sources of Theology, Volume II, Sacraments and Forgiveness, History and Doctrinal Development of Penance, Extreme Unction and Indulgences* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1959).

²³⁹ Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach*, 258-267.

²⁴⁰ Palmer, *Sources of Theology, Volume II, Sacraments and Forgiveness*, vi of the Preface.

similar monastic influences.”²⁴¹ Key historical references are examined in the following section.

Ignatius of Antioch stressed the important link between the Old Testament and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One would then expect that a definite ritual for the forgiveness of sins would emerge based on the liturgical procedure in the Old Testament. Although Ignatius as stated earlier does not give details of liturgical celebration, he does write clearly about the need for repentance of sin as indicated in the following.

*...That is why the Lord offers forgiveness to all who repent, if their repentance brings them back into unity with God and with the bishop's council of clergy. I have the fullest confidence in the grace of Jesus Christ, that He will cast loose every chain that binds you; and I appeal to you not to let your actions be prompted by any party spirit, but rather by the teaching of Christ.*²⁴²

*...Every man who belongs to God and Jesus Christ stands by his bishop. As for the rest, if they repent and come back into the unity of the Church, they too shall belong to God, and so bring their lives into conformity with Jesus Christ....*²⁴³

The *Didache* also gives clear instruction on repentance: “In church, make confession of your faults, and do not come to your prayers with a bad conscience” (4:14).

The *Didascalia Apostolorum* speaks in depth on the pardon of sinners.

Judge then, O bishop with authority, as almighty God does; receive with love those who repent, as almighty God does. Rebuke, exhort, instruct, for the Lord God has sworn to forgive those who have sinned, as he says in Ezekiel (33:10-11)

And thou, son of man, say to the house of Israel:

You have said:

Our iniquities and our sins weigh upon us

And we rot away beneath them.

How then shall we be able to live?

Proclaim to them: By my life, says the Lord Adonai,

I do not take pleasure in the death of the sinner!

But let the wicked man turn from his way and live.

Repent therefore,

Turn from your evil ways,

And you will not die, house of Israel!

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Philadelphians” 8, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 95.

²⁴³ St Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Philadelphians” 3, 93.

[God], then here gives hope to those who have sinned that, when they repent, they will find salvation in their repentance. Let them not despair, let them not abide in their sins, let them not increase them! Let them repent, let them lament and weep for their sins, let them be converted with their whole heart... (Ch. 6).²⁴⁴

Teach therefore, O bishop, rebuke, loose (the bonds of sin) with forgiveness. Know that you take the place of almighty God and that you have received the power to forgive sins. For it is to you, bishop, that it was said:

All that you bind upon earth will be bound in heaven.

And all that you loose will be loosed...²⁴⁵

When the sinner has undergone repentance and wept, receive him. And while the people pray for him, lay your hand on him and allow him once again to dwell in the assembly...

Be obedient then, you too, O bishop, seek out him who has perished, go and find him who is wandering, bring back him who has strayed. For you have power to forgive the sins of him who has fallen since you have put on the person of Christ... (Ch. 7).²⁴⁶

Chapter Seven in the *Didascalia Apostolorum* continues to speak of the important role of the bishop in repentance and urges him to heal like a wise and compassionate physician.²⁴⁷ He is to heal all who have been diseased by sin. From these two chapters one can certainly understand the importance of repentance and the important role the bishop who stands in for Christ has in the remission of sin.

This section has emphasised the writings of St John Chrysostom in giving a biblical basis for the need for repentance. Further, Chrysostom certainly emphasises and highly praises divine forgiveness through the priestly ministry with this being evident in the following:

(3.5) Now priests have received a power, which God has given neither to angels nor archangels. For it was not said to them: 'Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Earthly rulers have authority to bind, but only bodies, whereas this binding lays hold of souls and reaches into the heavens. And whatsoever the priests do here below God ratifies the same above; and the Master confirms the judgement of His servants. For what else has been given them but the fullness of heavenly power? 'Whose sins you shall forgive,' He says, 'they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.' What power could be greater than this? The Father has given all

²⁴⁴ "Didascalia Apostolorum" in Lucien Deiss (compiler & ed.), *Early Sources of the Liturgy* (Melbourne: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 80-81.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Mt 18:18 and 16:19.

²⁴⁶ "Didascalia Apostolorum", in Deiss (ed.), *Early Sources of the Liturgy*, 81-82.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

*judgement to the Son. But now I see that this same power in its entirety has been entrusted to priests by the Son.*²⁴⁸

Further, Chrysostom stresses that the priesthood has the power to cure “Leprosy of the Soul”²⁴⁹

(3.6) Jewish priests had power to remove leprosy of the body, in no sense by actually removing it, but by deciding only on those who were cleansed. And you know how greatly prized this power of the priests was at the time. But our priests have received power not merely to declare the removal of leprosy of the body, but to remove altogether leprosy of the soul...

A further comment on Chrysostom’s writings is that at times he does emphasise confessing to God alone, which may lead to a questioning of confessing to a priest. As Chrysostom is so definite in the above about divine forgiveness through the priestly ministry one might have difficulty in interpreting what is intended by confessing to God alone. Certainly it is God alone, who forgives sin in the sacrament; the priest is *persona Christi*, in the person of Christ.

On examining the evidence for this sacrament one is very aware of its importance in making things right with God when one has sinned after Baptism. As with all of the sacraments, the understanding of Tradition, the living and lived faith, is very important. One would certainly expect development to take place. Old Testament repentance was exhaustive and demanding. One would expect ritual to develop based on what happened in the Old Testament. With the coming of Christ one has the assurance that Christ wants the repentant sinner to return to his loving embrace so one would expect appropriate liturgy to develop for this to happen. The Sacrament of Penance is faithful to its origin as it is based on the ministry of Christ himself.

5.1.5 What does this sacrament effect?

Through the forgiveness of sin the repentant sinner is reunited with Christ and thus continues to grow in the life of the Holy Trinity. The grace bestowed in this sacrament helps the Christian to grow in holiness and perfection so that the process of deification can take place with deification being complete in the heavenly kingdom.

²⁴⁸ St John Chrysostom, “On the Priesthood” (280), printed in Paul F. Palmer (ed.), *Source of Christian Theology, Sacraments and Forgiveness, History and Doctrinal Development of Penance, Extreme Unction and Indulgence* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1959), 83.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

5.2 *The Anointing of the Sick*

5.2.1 *What is the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and why is it important?*

This sacrament of healing is important for the seriously ill person. Its purpose is to confer grace upon persons experiencing difficulties in their sickness and suffering. Today's ritual includes the priest laying hands on the sick persons, praying for them and anointing parts of their body with blessed oil. *The laying on of hands* is biblical in origin and indicates the intimacy Jesus encouraged in his ministry. It further signifies the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to give the sick strength especially as they unite themselves in their suffering to Christ's passion and suffering, thus entering more fully into the Pascal Mystery. In the previous chapter the importance of oil has been elaborated on, especially that it signifies God's presence with the believer. The use of oil was a sign of well-being. In the Old Testament it was used to anoint the leper (Lev 14:15-18). Hence since Jesus approved its use as indicated in Mark's gospel (6:13) it is appropriate that it is used in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

The ceremony for celebrating this sacrament, which is sometimes referred to as *Holy Unction*, is as follows. Prayers and hymns are offered for the sick person's recovery. Appropriate readings from the New Testament proclaiming Christ's victory over sin and death are read, then the priest anoints the sick person with oil. This is done on several parts of the body, while praying that the Lord raise up the sick person so that he/she may offer thanksgiving by his/her good deeds. At the end of the ceremony the priest lays the open Gospel Book on the sick person's head. While doing this he prays that the sick person may be healed in soul as well as in body.²⁵⁰

5.2.2 *Biblical basis for this sacrament*

Jesus himself showed love and care for the human family by giving sight to the blind, healing the sick, raising the dead, making the deaf hear and the lame walk. The gospels attest many times to Jesus doing this. As was stated earlier the Old Testament gives a rite of cleansing for the leper and this involved the use of oil with an anointing by the priest. Hence it is not surprising that the use of oil would continue with the coming of Christ. Christ extended his power of healing to the apostles. In Mark 6:13 one reads, "They (the twelve) cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them." Hence, this sacrament

²⁵⁰ *Melkites in America*, Section 40, 32.

is in line with Jesus' empowering the twelve to heal the sick. Further evidence comes from the writings in James' letter.

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up, and anyone who has committed sin will be forgiven (James 5:13-15).

5.2.3 What does this sacrament effect?

The anointing reaffirms the baptismal anointing recalling Christ's victory over evil, sin and suffering. Because of Christ's victory, death is conquered. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the special charism of healing with this manifesting the power of grace of the risen Lord. The sick person may be healed. However, often the sick person is not healed of the particular illness but is rather given the grace to endure the difficulty. Most importantly, it is through this sacrament that the recipients receive the life-giving presence of Christ, which assists in bringing them to eternal life, where all pain and suffering cease with Christians entering the fullness of life with the Holy Trinity. This sacrament is a most important aid in deification for the seriously ill person. The goal of this mystery is to bring about spiritual healing, reaffirm faith and bring forgiveness and renewal. Hence, *Holy Unction* is offered to all of the faithful in many Melkite Churches during Great Week (on the Thursday of Holy Week) to prepare the faithful for Pascha by healing any spiritual ills.²⁵¹

5.3 Holy Orders

5.3.1 What is the Sacrament of Holy Orders?

Holy Orders is a sacrament in the Melkite Catholic Church by which bishops, priests and deacons are ordained and receive the power and grace to perform their sacred duties. To receive Holy Orders worthily it is necessary for the recipient to be in a state of grace and to have the necessary knowledge to carry out the sacred office for that person. The diaconate is the first level in the three degrees in this sacrament. The deacon assists the priest in the liturgy, especially by reading the gospel and leading the litanies. He may also assist in parish administration.²⁵² In the Melkite Church a married man may be ordained a deacon or a priest. However a priest or deacon cannot marry after ordination. Bishops and religious (monks and

²⁵¹ David Petras, *et al. Light for Light, Part Two, The Mystery Celebrated* (Pittsburg: God with Us Publications, 1996), 90.

²⁵² *Melkites in America*, Section 37, 31.

nuns) do not marry. Deacons can be ordained within the full Divine Liturgy or in the Pre-sanctified Liturgy.

The second degree is that of priesthood. The priest does the work of the bishop in a local parish. The bishop through the laying on of hands, confers authority on him to consecrate the bread and wine during the celebration of the Eucharist to become the body and blood of Christ at the altar of God. The priest baptises, hears confessions and absolves repentant sinners from their sins in the name of Jesus Christ. He anoints the sick to bring healing in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. In the Melkite Tradition it is the priest who is the normal minister of the Sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation). This sacred mystery of priesthood is always celebrated during the Divine Liturgy, because the celebration of the Eucharist is the most important function of the priesthood. In summary, a priest's main function is to celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments except Holy Orders. He helps the bishop, preaches and teaches God's word and helps build up the Christian community. When an unmarried priest has lived his vocation in the spirit of loving service he may be given the title of archimandrite. This is an honorary title given by Byzantine bishops to unmarried priests recognising their contributions to the church in much the same way that the title Monsignor is given in the Latin Church.²⁵³

The third level in this sacrament is that of bishop and it is the bishop who possesses the fullness of this sacrament. He is the father and shepherd of the community within his eparchy and may be referred to as the "High Priest." As head of the church in his eparchy he presides over all of the liturgies. He may do this personally or by assigning a priest as his representative. He is seen as a successor of the apostles and as having the highest authority in the church. The Greek word for bishop is *episkopos*, which means "overseer" and hence the bishop has the pastoral and spiritual care of all in his eparchy. The Melkite church stresses that those who are called to service in the Liturgy and the church should be consecrated by a special mystery in which the laying on of hands by the bishop (bishops) identifies the recipient as especially chosen for service. This imposition of hands imparts to the recipient the grace of the Holy Spirit to fulfil his particular ministry.

²⁵³ Ibid. Section 39, 32.

5.3.2 *Significant symbols in this sacrament*

The laying of the hands is the important symbol in this sacrament. The significance of the laying on of hands was discussed earlier indicating the calling down of the Holy Spirit to empower the Christian for a life of loving service. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is a special calling within the church so it is most appropriate that the candidates are empowered by the Holy Spirit for their important role in the church. The grace given in this sacrament leads to deification. Further this ministry is very important for all members of the Melkite Church community who will grow in holiness through living a sacramental life and by obeying the word of God, which the clergy bring to the people.

5.3.3 *Early evidence for the three-fold ministry at Antioch*

In looking at the Melkite Church, one needs to assess what evidence there is for the sacrament of Holy Orders. There is solid foundation for understanding the historical importance of this sacrament when one looks at the early church around the turn of the first century at Antioch and other church communities. One can do this by looking at the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, who was writing very early in the first century probably no later than 107AD. Ignatius writes in a convincing manner about the importance of the role of bishop, priest and deacon. His letters emphasise the importance of these roles, which were common in many of the church communities, which he knew or had contact with on his way to Rome. However, this thesis does not generalise for the whole church. His letters emphasise the sacramental character of the church especially the importance of the Eucharist, with the church being united under the leadership of the bishop.

Make certain therefore that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup in union with His Blood and one single altar of sacrifice—even as there is but one bishop, with his clergy and my own fellow servitors the deacons. This will ensure that all your doings are in full accord with the will of God.”²⁵⁴

The role of the bishop and the priests is paramount as they represent Christ and the apostles. The bishop “presides in the place of God and his clergy (the presbyters) in place of the Apostolic conclave, and let my special friends the deacons be entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father from all eternity...”²⁵⁵

Ignatius urges that nothing should be done involving the church without the bishop’s consent.

²⁵⁴ St. Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Philadelphians” 4, 94.

²⁵⁵ St. Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Magnesians” 6, 72.

*... follow your bishop every one of you as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your clergy too as you would the apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command from God. Make sure that no step affecting the church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop's sanction.*²⁵⁶

Further in his letter to the church at Tralles, whose bishop was Polybius Ignatius writes:

*Your obedience to your bishop as though he were Jesus Christ, shows me plainly enough that yours is no worldly manner of life, but that of Jesus Christ Himself, who gave His life for us that faith in His death might save you from death.*²⁵⁷

Further in this letter he writes:

*Equally, it is for the rest of you to hold the deacons in as great respect as Jesus Christ; just as you should also look on the bishop as a type of the Father, and the clergy as the Apostolic circle forming his council; for without these three orders no church has any right to the name.*²⁵⁸

In his letters one can see that Ignatius writes to or meets with the various bishops who are accompanied by priests and/or deacons.²⁵⁹ Examples of his communication with bishops and clergy follow. Whilst at Smyrna Ignatius is visited by the bishop of Ephesus, Onesimus. After the visit he writes to the church at Ephesus praising the bishop and clergy. He asks that Burrhus the deacon be allowed to remain in Smyrna with him. The bishop of Magnesia-on-the Meander, Damas and his clergy, Bassus and Apollonius and deacon, Zotion visit Ignatius at Smyrna. Ignatius writes to the church at Magnesia acknowledging the visit of this party encouraging respect for the youthful Bishop Damas. Whilst at Smyrna, he develops a warm affection for Polycarp the bishop of Smyrna and writes to him praising him for his godly qualities as well as giving him some very frank advice. In this letter he also addresses the Smyrnaean congregation encouraging them in their spiritual life especially in maintaining unity in their spiritual warfare.

5.3.4 Development of the three-fold ministry using New Testament sources

Hence one can conclude that the role of deacon, priest and bishop are spelt out clearly in Ignatius' letters probably written around 107 AD. The three-fold ministry is common at the time of Ignatius although not necessarily universal. It is reasonable to conclude that these

²⁵⁶ St Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Smyrnaeans" 8:1-2, 103.

²⁵⁷ St Ignatius of Antioch, "To the Trallians" 2:1, 79.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 3:1-2, 79.

²⁵⁹ See Ignatius' letters to the Ephesians, Magnesians and Polycarp for details.

roles were important much earlier than when Ignatius was writing, as they were established in a wide section of the church communities, from Antioch in Syria, then through out a considerable part of Asia Minor including Tralles, Smyrna and Magnesia. This is clearly evident since as discussed above, Ignatius meets with and communicates with various bishops, clergy and deacons along the way. How then did these roles come into being? It is logical to ask what was the lead up to this development of *Episkopoi, Presbyteroi and Diakonoï*, which is the pattern of ordained ministry of Eastern Rite church communities whether in union with Rome or not and also in the Roman Rite as well.²⁶⁰ What New Testament evidence is there for them? How did Jesus Christ call his disciples to serve in the church he would establish? This thesis includes some of the research undertaken by Patrick Dunn printed in *Priesthood*.²⁶¹ Although Dunn is writing from the perspective of priesthood in the Roman rite, the findings are relevant for the three-fold ministry in the Eastern rites. The summary on Dunn's finding will expound some of his key points, including the role of Peter. Dunn makes use of earlier research by Jean Galot SJ and Andre Lemaire.²⁶²

At his Baptism, Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit to glorify God, for a life of loving service and to proclaim God's kingdom on earth. He called all of Israel to conversion and invited many of his followers into discipleship. The calling of the Twelve had special significance. Firstly they were called in a deliberate manner by Jesus. They were to be "his companions and to be sent out to preach, with power to cast out devils" (Mk 3:14-15).²⁶³ The twelve have a definite mission modelled on the mission of Jesus himself: "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you" (Jn 20:21).²⁶⁴ Dunn reasons that when Jesus was recognised as the Messiah and King, the Twelve would be his Ministers with this understanding especially coming from the words in Luke's gospel to the Twelve, "You are the men who have stood by me faithfully in my trials; and I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father conferred one on me" (Lk 22:28-29).²⁶⁵ Dunn further concludes "the Gospels bear witness to a position of leadership involving a responsibility to preach, a power to celebrate the Eucharist, a commission to baptise all nations (Mk 16:16-18), and even the power to remit sins in the

²⁶⁰ See for example the books by Donald Attwater, *The Christian Churches of the East*, vol. I and II, rev. ed. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961), for an appreciation of the importance of these roles.

²⁶¹ Patrick Dunn, *Priesthood, A Re-examination of the Roman Catholic Theology of the Presbyterate* (New York: Society of St Paul, 1990).

²⁶² For a full analysis by Dunn read *Priesthood*, 43-61. Dunn lists Andre Lemaire's book *Ministry in the Church* (London: SPCK, 1977) and three books on the ordained ministry by Jean Galot in his bibliography.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁶⁴ When referring to Dunn, biblical quotes are taken from the Jerusalem bible as this is what Dunn has used.

²⁶⁵ Dunn, *Priesthood*, 46.

name of Jesus' Christ (Jn 20:20-22). All these indications show an intention by Jesus to impart to the Twelve the full extent of his own pastoral authority. Peter is their leader."²⁶⁶

Peter is to take a unique role not necessarily because of his personal achievements, which were sometimes questionable, but because Christ willed it. This is clear in Matthew's gospel,

And I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Mt 16:18-20).

According to Dunn contemporary research recognised the genuine historicity of this passage.²⁶⁷ Further all three synoptic gospels recognise the salient feature of Simon's change of name (Mk 3:16, Lk 6:14). Dunn concurs with Galot's research which stresses the importance of these words to Peter arguing that it was an outstanding initiative on the part of Jesus to appoint one of his own disciples as universal shepherd (Jn 21:15-17) with this shepherd being in the image of himself (Jn 10:11).²⁶⁸ Further Peter is to definitively take on roles of "uncontested leadership from the Day of Pentecost onwards" (Acts 2:14ff).²⁶⁹ One can conclude that this is appropriate, as Peter has been given the keys to the kingdom of Heaven.

Dunn then moves on to examine evidence that there were important co-workers with the twelve. There is considerable evidence for discipleship in the New Testament. For example, post resurrection, when Matthias is elected to replace Judas he is chosen from a larger pool of disciples with the necessity of his having been "with us the whole time that the Lord Jesus was travelling around... right from the time when John was baptising" (Acts 1:21-22).²⁷⁰ Luke reports the Twelve being sent on their mission (Lk 9:10) and further that others were also sent on a mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God: "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit." (Lk 10:1). The seventy-two have similar authority to the Twelve, in other words Jesus was wanting to share his mission of proclaiming the Gospel and his power over the forces of evil. The Twelve have their own particular authority and an immense task

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 47.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 48.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

of teaching all nations (Mt 28:19-20), but are accompanied by a larger group who share in the same mission of proclaiming the kingdom.

Galot, whose research Dunn uses, concludes that “the co-workers with the Twelve,” constituted (using language from later theological writings) the original “presbyteral college”.²⁷¹ It is from this group that “the twelve” were chosen and the rich young man was invited to join it (Mk 10:21). The seventy-two are sent out on mission from this group.²⁷² It was to increase in number, as would be expected with the important work of evangelisation activity and it is from this group that important decisions were made. For example in Acts 1:15 this group now comprising one hundred and twenty persons, gathered after the resurrection to elect a replacement for Judas, as was stated above. Further it was from this group, the apostles included, which gathered at the Council of Jerusalem to make major decisions, which would legitimise the Church at Antioch where gentiles were pouring into the Church. (See Chapter One for details about this important decision.)

5.3.5 *Episkopoi, Presbyteroi and Diakonoi.*

Further, Dunn observes that the church in Jerusalem after concerns about the Hellenists (Acts 6:7), is organised along traditional Jewish lines.²⁷³ There was a group of presbyters²⁷⁴ (apostles and elders) over whom James (the brother of the Lord) presided (Acts 11:29-30, 15:2, 4, 22, 23, Gal 2:9).²⁷⁵ Similar organisation to the presbyteral model can be identified in the Jewish-Christian communities of Cilicia and southern Asia Minor,²⁷⁶ “in each of these churches, they [Paul and Barnabas] appoint elders (*Presbyteroi*) (Acts 14:23). In the church at Philippi one sees that the church is led by overseers and ministers, (*episkopoi kai diakonoi* – Phil 1:1).²⁷⁷ As well as elders-overseers, the church at Ephesus had “ministers’ (*diakonoi*). 1 Tim 3: 8-13 gives a brief description of the characteristic requirements for deacons and also suggests that there were deaconesses. Paul gives further evidence for female deacons when he speaks about the disciple Phoebe in Rom 16:1-2 and refers to her as a deacon of the church of Cenchreae. She appears to have a substantial role in the church. In commenting on deaconesses, one can certainly understand that they were part of the Eastern Churches by

²⁷¹ Ibid., 49.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid., 53.

²⁷⁴ Presbyter is the Greek word for elder. The word priest became the common term for presbyter.

²⁷⁵ Dunn, *Priesthood*, 53.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 54.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

reading the book, Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses, An Historical Study*.²⁷⁸ However, there is no conclusion that the role of deaconess is an ordained ministry in the Eastern Churches.

Further study of the Pastoral Epistles emphasises this hierarchical structure. Dunn elaborates, “Over everyone stands the position of the apostle. Then come individuals like Timothy and Titus who receive from the apostle an authority, which is superior to that of the local leaders—whom they are instructed to choose and to appoint (Tt 1:5; 2 Tim 2:2). A ‘presiding elder’ (*episkopos*) has ‘responsibility for the church of God’ (1 Thess 3:1-5), whereas of leaders who are ‘deacons’ it is said simply that they ‘serve’ (1 Tim 3:8-13).”²⁷⁹

Much more could be said about the development of the priesthood with an understanding of the episcopate. It makes sense if there is holy order in the church, which is surely the role of the ministry of Holy Orders. Dunn’s conclusion section emphasises that “anarchy and disorder are nowhere seen as virtues.”²⁸⁰ “God is not a God of confusion, but of peace” (1 Cor 14:33). As St Paul stresses the Christian family is to be united in belief and practice with its members obeying all that is taught by Scripture and Tradition (2 Tim 3:14-16). Casimir Kucharek, a priest of the Byzantine-Slav rite, has also written on the development of priestly orders in his book *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach*.²⁸¹ His writings concur with Dunn’s research in many aspects especially in the understanding of the *Episkopoi, Presbyteroi and Diakonoi*. He emphasises that Christian priesthood has the Jewish “presbyterate” or body of elders as its pattern.²⁸² His research concludes from New Testament biblical studies especially from the Pauline writings that a body of “presbyters” or elders governed each of the church communities in both Jerusalem and the Diaspora.²⁸³ He elucidates Paul’s role in appointing presbyters as does Dunn and notes the importance of the laying on of hands in Paul’s ministry.²⁸⁴ Hence one can easily understand the importance of the laying on of hands in the celebration of this sacrament today.

²⁷⁸ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses, An Historical Study* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986)

²⁷⁹ Dunn, *Priesthood*, 60.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁸¹ Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach*, 258-267.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 262.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 262-263.

In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch one can clearly discern the importance of the three-fold ministry in many of the church communities with which Ignatius had contact. St Ignatius is emphatic about their importance and stresses this to all members of the church with which he had contact. As was stated earlier in this chapter, these roles must have been in place for a period of time because of the consistency of having the clear roles in so many places. It makes sense then that one finds evidence for them in the New Testament as some of the writings were written in the time that Ignatius was bishop of Antioch and even before this time. One can certainly conclude that these roles were important in the early Church in the See of Antioch from both the Ignatian letters and New Testament sources. Hence, one would expect them to be important in the Melkite Church today.

5.3.6 What does this sacrament effect?

This sacrament gives the grace to the recipients of the sacrament to live worthily the roles which are designated to them. The bestowing of grace is a sharing in the divine life hence bringing about deification. Further, as the recipients perform their sacred duties they bring to members of the church opportunities to grow in holiness especially when they celebrate the sacraments. Hence not only does living the sacramental life of Holy Orders bring about holiness in the life of the priest, bishop or deacon, it enables all members of the church to grow in holiness.

5.4 The Sacrament of Marriage

5.4.1 The marriage union is the domestic church

God the Father sent his only Son into the world to bring salvation to all humanity and to establish his reign on earth. God reigns now, as sovereign king, a reign with no beginning or end. This kingdom is to be experienced by Christians now, in the present life, not as some distant happening in the next life, although this experience is often only a partial one. Its fullness will be seen after death when faithful servants experience the beatific vision. As Christians are co-workers with Christ they are charged with building God's kingdom on earth. They have "put on Christ" and are to be Christ to all people. The church on earth is a macrocosm of the heavenly kingdom where Christians experience deep communion with God and communion with each other, which is in itself a mystery. In praying the prayer taught by Jesus himself, Christians pray "thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven." By living godly lives and by endeavouring to do His holy will, Christians experience God's reign in the church. This is the ideal. The church is the heavenly kingdom with the Sacrament of Marriage

being a microcosm of the mystery of the church.²⁸⁵ In other words, Christian marriage is the domestic church. The Sacrament of Marriage in the Melkite Church with its appropriate symbols and prayers, acknowledges the husband and wife as king and queen in their family life, blessing them in their life in Christ to live holy lives and to proclaim to each other and to their children the saving work of Jesus Christ.

To gain insight into this understanding of the marriage being a microcosm of the mystery of the church one can examine Paul's letter to the Ephesians 5:25-32:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery and I am applying it to Christ and the church.

In the above passage one can discern how Paul is drawing a parallel between the human marriage union and the union of God through Christ with the Church. Kucharek elaborates on this by firstly giving understanding about the intimate union of Christ with his church:

Christ's union with the Church, as intimate as the relation between head and body, is supernatural and life giving. The Church as a body, takes concrete form by being composed of individual members. Through baptism, a person not only becomes a member of the body, the Church, but also receives the life of God himself (sanctifying grace). As long as he is part of the body, the Church, the life of God pulses and grows within him, making him progressively holier, more "like God." All this is done through Christ, the head, who "saves" the whole body. In his total love for that body, Christ sacrificed himself to make it holy, glorious, and faultless. He still feeds it and looks after it because it is his body—and we are its living parts."²⁸⁶

His words sum up the deep communion of God with his people in the very heart of the Church. Kucharek then goes on to elaborate on how marriage is a microcosm of the church. "Since Christian marriage solemnly, mysteriously, signifies the union of Christ with the Church and all its implications, the implications of one apply to the other." Kucharek stresses

²⁸⁵ Cross, *Eastern Christianity, the Byzantine Tradition*, 60.

²⁸⁶ Kucharek, *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach*, 307.

that the union between “Christ and the Church is a supernatural one imparting grace, holiness and salvation.”²⁸⁷ The genuine Christian marriage union must therefore “also be supernatural, imparting grace and salvation to its members, the couple.”²⁸⁸ In both of these unions, Kucharek concludes, “the loving, feeding and salvation of the members, are accomplished through the respective bonds, providing no obstacles are interposed by the individual member. The grace is there, but it has to be applied by the members if the effects and indeed, salvation are to follow.”²⁸⁹ This last comment of Kucharek’s is fundamental to living a holy, faithfilled marriage union with both husband and wife working for and praying for God’s reign in their marriage.

5.4.2 Important Ritual in the Marriage Ceremony

Further, one can study Kucharek’s writings on marriage to gain insight into the development of the rites in the Sacrament of Marriage. He explains that marriage was important in the Jewish tradition and elucidates that as Christian communities became more separated from Judaism the rites in marriage took on aspects of the Greco-Roman world. He comments that generally Christians did not set aside public law.²⁹⁰ In commenting on this one could say this was highly probable, unless of course, the law was contrary to God’s law. And one can discern this attitude in the writings of the Greek apologists, especially those of Justin Martyr.

Kucharek concludes that the church would have adopted appropriate marriage ritual of the Greco-Roman tradition suitable for inclusion in sacramental celebration of marriage and he elaborates on this.²⁹¹ Appropriate Greco-Roman features described by Kucharek are apparent in the Melkite ceremony today. The symbols used in the ceremony are very clear. They included the crowning, the drinking of a glass of wine, and the procession around the tetrapoda (a table used in the celebration of this sacrament). The marriage ceremony in the Melkite Rite has two parts.²⁹² The first part is referred to as the ceremony of engagement or the Betrothal Ceremony. In this part the couple exchange rings and the prayers of betrothal are said. The bride and groom freely take each other as their lawful spouses according to the rite of the Holy Catholic Church. They enter into a permanent, monogamous relationship. A worshipper at a Melkite Rite wedding is easily able to join in the liturgy of this sacrament by

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 310

²⁹¹ Ibid., 311-314.

²⁹² *Melkites in America*, Section 33, 30.

using the booklet, “The Rite of Holy Matrimony According to the Byzantine Rite of the Melkite Catholic Church In Australia and New Zealand”. This booklet is written in Arabic and has the English translation beside it, with some Greek interspersed through the booklet.

The second part of the ceremony is called the Rite of Crowning. In this section of the ceremony the church gives her blessing on the marriage. The couple is crowned usually with crowns of flowers, (for example orange blossom may be used) or otherwise metal crowns made with circlets of gold may be used. The crowning has great significance and beauty. Firstly the crowns signify that the Christian family is an integral part of God’s kingdom and so the couple are called to live under God’s reign, living devout and holy lives. Hence in living their married life in a Christian manner the bride and groom are reminded by the crowns that they will obtain the heavenly crowns bestowed in the heavenly kingdom.²⁹³ The crowning ceremony is one of the lavish parts of the Marriage ceremony. There are two crowns, one for the bride and one for the groom. Before the crowning the priest prays:

O Holy God, who moulded man out of dust and from his rib formed woman and joined her to him as helpmate, for so it pleased your majesty that man be not alone on earth. Now master, stretch out your hand from your holy dwelling place and join together your servant (name) and your servant (name) (here they join hands, the groom’s left to the bride’s right) for it is you that a wife is joined to her husband. Unite them in oneness of mind and join them into one flesh. Grace them with the gift of procreation, the joy of fine children.

For yours is the dominion, yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever.

*Choir: Amen.*²⁹⁴

The priest crowns the groom then the bride and makes the sign of the cross over their heads, then follows this with prayer, saying, “The servant of God (*name of the groom*) is crowned for the servant of God (*name of the bride*) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Then the priest exchanges the crowns and again a blessing is given. After this, the groom’s crown is placed back on the groom’s head and the bride’s crown is placed back on her head and a further blessing is given. The priest and the people chant the following antiphon. “O Lord, our God, crown them with glory and honour, and grant them dominion over the works of your hand.”²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Ibid., Sections 33-35, 30.

²⁹⁴ *The Rite of Holy Matrimony According to the Byzantine Rite of the Melkite Catholic Church In Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: Melkite Press, 2001), 19-21.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 23-24.

The gospel of the Wedding Feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-11) is a popular reading at a Melkite wedding, reminding the couple of the importance of celebrating marriage. Adding importance to this gospel is the sharing of the glass of wine together, referred to as the common cup. The sharing of the glass of wine reminds the couple that in their married life they will share all things together, the joys of their marriage, the sufferings, the good and the bad. In Mk 10:2-12, Jesus stresses, “God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become as one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man put asunder...” The groom firstly takes the cup of wine, then the bride and then the witnesses. Then the couple led by the priest walk around the tetrapod together three times in procession, while a hymn is chanted. This procession reminds the couple that they will now make their journey through life together with all that it brings. The goal of this earthly journey is to lead them to the joy of eternal life. The crowns are then taken from the heads of the couple. The crowning ceremony reflects the words in Psalm 8.

*Yet you have made them little lower than God,
And crowned them with glory and honour.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
and have put all things under their feet. (Ps 8:5-6).*

Essential in the marriage ceremony are the many prayers and blessings. The priest asks for the gift of procreation for them and unity of mind and body. Blessings are asked for them in the same manner that Abraham and Sarah were blessed, and also Joachim and Anne, and Zechariah and Elizabeth. These blessings are most appropriate and pertain to the blessing that God gave to the union between man and woman at the origin of the human race.

The scriptural passages highlight the importance of marriage and the command from God for husband and wife to live in a permanent union of love and fidelity. God blessed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden telling them to be fruitful, fill the earth and subdue it. The priest blesses the couple to live a fruitful and holy life together. One can discern from the scriptural references how God calls husband and wife to love unconditionally and eternally. The symbols and words in the marriage ceremony bring out the sanctity of marriage, the importance of fidelity between the couple, of accepting the challenges that will come their way and having the relationship Christ centred with the couple proclaiming God’s reign on earth especially shown by the crowning of the bride and groom.

The words used in the marriage ceremony especially as quoted in the Rite of Crowning reflect the scriptural basis for the ceremony. They are most appropriate since marriage, a monogamous and faithfilled relationship, is blessed by God at the beginning of creation (Gen 1:27-28,31, Gen 2:23-24) and is endorsed by Jesus in his earthly ministry. Underpinning this relationship is God's call to love and serve.

5.5 Conclusions

This chapter examined the importance of the Sacraments of Healing and the Sacraments at the Service of Communion. For the Sacraments of Healing, it concluded that they are scripturally based and hence are centred on the crucified and risen Lord. They bring about healing whether from the effects of sin or from illness and assist the recipient to become closer to Christ and hence assist the recipient to grow in the life of the Holy Trinity. As they are Christ centred they are faithful to their source and inspiration Jesus Christ.

The Sacrament of Penance is seen as a second Baptism and hence as a very important means of deification. Sin separates the Christian from Christ. Reception of this sacrament restores the life of Christ in the recipient. In looking at a Scriptural basis for this sacrament this chapter utilised St John Chrysostom's analysis of a biblical understanding of repentance, in which he emphasises God's compassion and love for humanity in both the Old and New Testament. As Ignatius of Antioch emphasised the importance of repentance and stressed the link between the Old Testament and the gospel of Jesus Christ one would expect a definite ritual to grow out of the liturgical celebration in the Old Testament. This chapter included an historical perspective especially making use of the research by Palmer on the history of this sacrament. His research gives a very comprehensive historical development of the sacrament. Key historical aspects for this thesis included the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, writings in the *Didache*, evidence in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, then reference to documentation for divine forgiveness through the priestly ministry as discussed by St John Chrysostom. It was concluded that the sacramental celebration of this sacred mystery is founded on the words of Jesus in Jn 20:22, "Receive the Holy Spirit, for those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven. For those whose sins you retain they are retained." This sacrament is important in the process of deification. It restores the life of grace given in Baptism for those who sin after receiving this sacrament. The recipients know a compassionate and forgiving God through the "spiritual father", the priest who is a healer and counsellor. The celebration of the Sacrament

of the Anointing of the Sick was explained in detail with emphasises on the biblical basis for this sacrament since Christ had instructed the disciples to heal the sick. Evidence for the Anointing of the Sick came from the writings of St James.

This chapter also looked at the sacraments of Holy Orders and Marriage explaining what they are and what they effect through the sacred symbols and words used in their celebration. With the sacrament of Holy Orders it looked at the three-fold ministry explaining the roles of bishop, priest and deacon and how important this ministry was in the early church at Antioch and in other church communities, with which Ignatius of Antioch was familiar. It then reasoned that there was New Testament evidence for Holy Orders and it did this by using the research work of Dunn. Then it gave further evidence by looking at the writings of a Byzantine priest, Casimir Kucharek. This thorough examination of Holy Orders in the early church at Antioch using the Ignatian corpus clearly showed the importance of this sacrament with it being based on the work and mission of Jesus Christ. This ministry is central to the sacramental life of Melkite Christians today especially since the members of the Melkite Church when living a sacramental life grow in holiness. Hence the role of Holy Orders today ensures that worship in the church is faithful to the source and inspiration of the church, Jesus Christ.

Discussion on the Sacrament of Marriage began by looking at the church on earth as a macrocosm of the heavenly kingdom where Christians experience deep communion with God and communion with each other and then by discussing the Sacrament of Marriage as a microcosm of the mystery of the church. In the celebration of this sacrament, the ritual, biblical readings and prayers reflect the importance of marriage as the domestic church with the couple being blessed to live holy lives to bring about God's reign on earth. The symbols in the ceremony are clear especially the crowning of the couple, which is a constant reminder of the importance of God's reign in their lives and to work together to obtain the heavenly crown.

CHAPTER 6 IMPORTANT ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE MELKITE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

6.0 Introduction and aims

The previous chapters explained worship in the Melkite Catholic Church today in the third millennium and how this worship developed. It is important that the Catholic Church works to ensure the integrity of the Melkite tradition especially in a multicultural society such as Australia. Hence this chapter aims to look at the importance of preserving the Eastern Rites in this particular case for the Melkite Church in Australia. It will do this by looking at the importance of keeping a close relationship with the Patriarch, by looking at the importance of evangelisation and associated elements such as the Christian community and education. It will look very briefly at aspects of ecumenism.

6.1 Preserving the Eastern Rites

The Second Vatican Council emphasised the importance of the Eastern Christian Churches especially their indispensable contribution to the development of the Christian Church in general. There has been emphasis on these church communities preserving their rites and heritage:

All Eastern Rite members should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their lawful liturgical rites and their established way of life, and that these should not be altered except by way of an appropriate and organic development. Easterners themselves should honour all these things with the greatest fidelity. Besides, they should acquire an ever-greater knowledge and a more exact use of them. If they have improperly fallen away from them because of circumstances of time or personage, let them take pains to return to their ancestral ways” (#6).²⁹⁶

What are some ways that the Eastern Christian churches can work to preserve their own rites? This thesis will look at this question for the Melkite Catholic Church in Australia.

6.1.1 Keeping a close relationship with the Patriarch

One important way of assisting in ensuring the integrity of the rite or ritual tradition of Eastern churches in the Diaspora is maintaining a close relationship with the Patriarch. The title “Patriarch” needs to be understood. Key early Christian communities, developed in Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Rome and later Constantinople. The title Patriarch was

²⁹⁶ “Decree on Eastern Christian Churches,” in Walter Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: The American Press, 1966), 376.

used to honour the bishops of the largest and most important churches, with the bishops of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch being recognised as patriarchs in the early 300's. This recognition was extended by the early 500's to the bishops of Jerusalem and Constantinople. These important areas came to be known as Patriarchates. The institution of the patriarchate has existed in the church from the earliest times and was recognised by the Ecumenical Synods. The term Patriarch has been extended to mean the bishop who has jurisdiction over all bishops (including metropolitans) clergy and people of his own territory or rite, "in accordance with the norms of law and without prejudice to the primacy of the Roman Pontiff" (#7).²⁹⁷ Further, in relation to the Melkite Church in Australia one should note:

*Whenever an ordinary of any rite is appointed outside the territorial bounds of its patriarchate he remains attached to the hierarchy of the patriarchate of that rite, in accordance with the norm of law (#7).*²⁹⁸

Bishop Darwish of the Melkite eparchy at Greenacre acknowledges,

*It is inevitable that outside the patriarchal territory itself certain changes and modifications will naturally occur as enculturation and assimilation take place among peoples. Big differences of religious outlook and practice can be detected between newly arrived migrants and long-time settlers in countries of the Diaspora. The sense of identity or lack of it often leads to tension. However, an extraordinary sense of unity and newfound purpose springs up whenever the patriarch visits the country. Even people whose connection with their own rite has become tenuous frequently experience a renewal of faith, a revitalised interest in their heritage, and an insight into the meaning of ecclesia. Given that the visit of a patriarch can only be an occasional experience, the constant recourse of an eparch to his patriarch will ensure coordinated development, an overall integrity or ritual practice with all of the broader ramifications for the life of the Church which this entails, a vibrant sense of identity, and a united sense of mission. All this will bear fruit in a stronger adherence to the faith of the Church.*²⁹⁹

This outlook is important in the third millennium because of increased globalisation, rapid changes in the cultural milieu, increased migration, and changing perspectives in the post-modern society, especially influenced by the media and constant advances in technology. One questions how the ritual tradition will be preserved with so many factors influencing modern society. Some important issues are discussed below.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 377.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Issam Darwish, "Patriarch and Eparch in Today's Church, Reflections of an Eparch of the Diaspora" in *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, vol. 40 (1999) Nos. 1-4, 107-116, 113.

6.1.2 The Importance of Evangelisation

6.1.2.1 Evangelisation and the Christian Community

The activity of evangelisation is an integral part of the life of a baptised Christian, however this does not mean that the evangeliser acts alone, since community building is linked to evangelisation. Further evangelisation is a community responsibility. Through the sacraments of Initiation, a person becomes a member of the Melkite community, which has its various responsibilities, especially with its members proclaiming the gospel message.

*The community is the agent of evangelisation and the principal sign of its accomplishment. It is an essential part of the psychology and sociology of religious conversion that a person is attracted to adhere to a community and that he/she undergoes an exterior change in social behaviour and relationships. As well as an interior transformation.*³⁰⁰

The Melkite community in Australia has several parish communities that celebrate the sacraments in the Byzantine Rite encouraging its members in the evangelisation process that is, the spreading of the good news about Jesus Christ.

One can experience the importance of a balance between evangelisation and the cultural milieu by attending a celebration of one of the sacraments especially Marriage or Baptism. The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage, for example, clearly brings out the richness of the Byzantine Rite. The ceremony is easy to follow since the English translation is printed in the booklet used for the ceremony. The Melkite Rite for this sacrament certainly brings a rich tradition, which highlights the importance and holiness of this sacrament. The symbols are clear and inspiring and include the crowning, the blessings, and the sharing of a glass of wine. The crowning allows those present to appreciate the respect given to married life, the kingship and queenship of the husband and wife in the kingdom of the King of Kings, a reminder that God blesses the couple and bestows grace upon them to live out the challenges of their life together. The symbols are distinctly Byzantine. The chanting of the hymns is often in Arabic. However, this cultural aspect overlaps with Australian culture as Australian sacred music is also used.

Baptism and Chrismation are other sacraments, which are celebrated with full dignity in the Melkite Church, as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis. The symbols used can be easily understood when an explanation of what they affect, is given. In Baptism the triple immersion

³⁰⁰ Alyward Shorter, *Evangelisation and Culture* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994) 57.

symbolises death to sin and the Christian's new life in Christ. Candles are lit and burn brightly as the rite celebrates that Christ the light of the world is present and active in the life of the new Christian. The procession with candles by the whole congregation highlights this clearly. The procession further highlights a person's journey to the fullness of the Christian life completed in the receiving of Christ in Holy Communion, with this sacrament being the source and summit of the Christian life. Towards the completion of the ceremony, Matthew's gospel is read with the specific command to the baptised to make disciples of all nations. The recipient of the sacrament of Baptism is dressed in a white robe reminding the worshippers that the early Christians were dressed in a white robe as a symbol of their new life in Christ. For the newly Baptised the white robe may be a magnificent dress, emphasising the celebratory aspect of this new life, dressed in a new white robe to meet the bridegroom, Christ himself. The coming together of peoples of different rites allows those present to experience the multicultural nature of the Catholic Church, the universal church, which is most appropriate in Australia, which is such a multicultural country.

The celebration of the sacraments in the Melkite Church always imply that Christians are called to live exemplary lives based on gospel values. This has been emphasised in discussing the sacraments especially in giving understanding to the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Chrismation. Evangelisation within the Melkite Church encourages Christians to bring about a just society, concerned for the common good and one, which appreciates truth, goodness and aesthetics. Put simply, in its evangelisation the Melkite Church aims to bring about the reign of God on earth.

6.1.2.2 The Importance of Language

Language is an important component in evangelisation with the need to use language that is anthropological rather than literary, since language is a most important component of one's cultural and religious life. In evaluating this statement one can appreciate its importance since language that is anthropological takes into account the culture, customs and important community aspects of the people to whom the church is evangelising, where as a literary perspective is less likely to do this. The Melkites in Australia are mainly of Middle Eastern Origin with many worshippers coming from, or having, their roots in Lebanon.³⁰¹ Of course these people bring with them aspects of their Middle Eastern cultures and customs. The

³⁰¹ Confirmed by the Melkite Eparchy at Greenacre. Also some of the Melkite priests in Australia come from Lebanon.

church is challenged to cater for those with deep ties with Middle Eastern countries and on the other hand, for those born in and growing up in Australia. To facilitate the celebration of the Sacraments especially the Divine Liturgy, Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Matrimony, Bishop Darwish of the Melkite Catholic Eparchy sponsored the production of appropriate liturgical books, which are printed in Arabic and have the English translation (Arabic on one side of the page and English on the other side). The liturgies accommodate worshippers from both backgrounds. Archimandrite Clement Hill has adapted the liturgical booklets for use in Australia. He is a Roman Rite Catholic priest with bi-ritual faculties for the Melkite Catholic Church. Through out the booklets, there is an interspersion of Greek, which incorporates the Greek heritage of this group. One especially appreciates this heritage as one examines key theologians who contributed to the development of the theology and liturgy of this rite. These theologians and their contributions have been discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.

The liturgy is described as “ the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows”(#10).³⁰² Further, “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that, full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy”(#14).³⁰³ Hence it is vital that the liturgy be celebrated in the most meaningful way possible. The books on the liturgy as described above ensure that the liturgy is meaningful and easily understood especially by the worshippers in this rite. These books also assist worshippers who join the Melkite congregations, especially for weddings and baptisms. Celebration of the Divine Liturgy that especially involves youth is a feature of this church community with the young people taking part in the liturgy, especially in the choir. This encourages the youth to full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy.

6.1.2.3 The Importance of Education

With increased Melkite numbers in Australia and the opportunity for the development of schools with the availability of funding from the Government in Australia, the Melkite Eparchy has begun its own system of education. This system can insure that its students have the opportunity to learn about their own rites and history and experience their own liturgies within the social and cultural setting of their own Catholic system. The Melkite Catholic School at Greenacre has a Byzantine church next to the school, which ensures the children

³⁰² “Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, 142.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 144.

have the opportunity to appreciate the architecture of this rite and to worship in a church containing many icons. Further, the eparchy at Greenacre has its own library and although not extensive, provides a good cross-section of reading material to facilitate a good general understanding of the Melkite Tradition. This no doubt will grow with time. This type of material can also assist people from the Latin Rite in understanding the Eastern churches more easily, especially their history which has been of paramount importance for the whole Christian community. Much of the available literature comes from the United States of America, where there is greater facility for the production of religious books and journals on the Melkite Church.³⁰⁴

6.I.2.4 Icons and evangelisation

Artworks of a religious nature are an important cultural aspect of a religion. Icons are symbols of a sacred presence and are not simply works of art. They are as important in Byzantine Churches as they are in homes, parish offices, schools and other buildings. Icons are most important in the worship and prayer life of the Melkite faithful. Many icons are available in Australia especially from the eparchy at Greenacre. In a sense they portray the gospels in pictorial form as well as saintly people who are models for Christian living.

6.I.3 Ecumenism

Another way of working to preserve the Eastern Rites is for Byzantine Christians to work together and keep close ties. This would be part of the ecumenical activity that it encouraged today. The Melkite Church in Australia has taken leadership in this area. The word Ecumenism is derived from a Greek word meaning “the inhabited world,”³⁰⁵ and has more recently been taken to mean “universal.” Ecumenical activity among Christians has been an important priority since Vatican II, with its calls for unity among people longing to grow together in Christ, remembering that on the night before he died Jesus prayed that all would be one.

It needs to be remembered that the Catholic Church breathes with two lungs, those of the Roman Rites and the Eastern Catholic Churches with their own particular rites. The word *rite* refers to the liturgical worship, the various forms of expressing the rich theological and

³⁰⁴ These writings are given exposure by such conferences as *Oriente Lumen*, which are held in the United States of America, England and Australia. The most recent one in Australia was held at the Australian Catholic University, Strathfield Campus from 8 July to 11 July 2003. See conference booklet for details.

³⁰⁵ C & R Barnhart, (ed.) *The World Book Dictionary* (Chicago, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978), 668.

spiritual heritage, and the ecclesiastical discipline of the churches of the East and West. “The Second Vatican Council Document *Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches* gives guidelines for the care of and respect for these Eastern Catholic Churches “in addition to those, which refer to the Church universal, leaving all else to be cared for by the Eastern synods and the Apostolic See”(#1).³⁰⁶ The individual churches, both Eastern and Western, which make up the Catholic Church are of equal rank but of different rites, “namely in liturgy, in ecclesiastical discipline and spiritual heritage” (#2).³⁰⁷ No one church is superior to another because of its particular rite. All are called to evangelisation. Hence the Catholic churches, which is the Mystical body of Christ is the faithful who recognise the primacy of the Pope, are united by the Holy Spirit in the same faith and the same sacraments, yet they combine into different groups which are held together by their hierarchy and so form particular churches or rites. The Melkite Church fits these criteria so it could be a model for church communities not in union with Rome who are seeking re-unification. Their re-unification would involve their preserving their own rites yet acknowledging the primacy of the Pope. The Patriarch plays a very important role in each of the various Eastern Rite Church communities and he is the one who has the major input for internal jurisdiction. In fact the Patriarch is given special honour and is seen as father and head of his patriarchate.

Efforts to restore unity among Eastern rite Christians has a long and sometimes turbulent history. Roberson in his book the *Eastern Christian Churches* covers succinctly the road to re-unification of various Eastern Rite church communities with Rome over many centuries as far back as the twelfth century.³⁰⁸ More recent scholarship on ecumenism provides a basis for establishing positive relationships between the various church communities hopefully by learning from past mistakes with guidelines for ecumenical activity coming from such documents as *Decree on Ecumenism* and the papal encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*

John Paul II spoke clearly and emphatically.

Since, in fact we believe that the venerable and ancient tradition of the Eastern churches is an integral part of the heritage of Christ's Church, the first need for

³⁰⁶ “Decree on Eastern Christian Churches,” in Walter Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, 373.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 374.

³⁰⁸ See Ronald Roberson, *The Eastern Christian Churches*, 5th ed. rev. (Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 1995), 119-237.

Catholics is to be familiar with the tradition, so as to be nourished by it and to encourage the process of unity in the best way possible for each (#1).³⁰⁹ Further The members of the Catholic Church of the Latin tradition must be fully acquainted with this treasure and thus feel with the Pope, a passionate longing that the full manifestation of the Church's catholicity be restored to the Church and to the world, expressed not by a single tradition and still less by one community in opposition to the other, and that we too may all be granted a full taste of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal church which is preserved and grows in the life of the Churches of the East as in those of the West (#1).³¹⁰

6.I.3.1 The Second Vatican Council Document, Decree on Ecumenism

The Second Vatican Council Document, *Decree on Ecumenism* made unity among Christians a top priority with subsequent Popes making efforts in this area. This document speaks clearly to the faithful. "Concern for restoring unity pertains to the whole church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the potential of each ..." (#5).³¹¹ Further the document insists that:

Ecumenical activity must not be other than fully and sincerely Catholic, that is, loyal to the truth we have received from the apostles and the Fathers, in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed, and at the same time tending towards the fullness with which Our Lord wants His body to be endowed in the course of time (#24).³¹²

This unity is to be achieved by Christians firstly, acknowledging Christ's call to be one, by praying for unity and working for a better understanding of each other by especially better understanding the doctrinal teachings of the various church communities, with emphasis on shared common ground and common teachings

6.I.3.2 The Melkites and Ecumenism

The Melkite Church is aware of this call to unity and universality. The Church both East (whether in union with Rome or not) and West is united in its fundamental beliefs, belief in the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the salvific work of Christ, and the celebration of the sacraments as efficacious signs of God's presence with us. However these sacred beliefs are not contained in a single tradition. To appreciate the fullness of God's divinely revealed truth to humanity, Christians of both the Eastern and Western Rites must have an appreciation of the fullness of their undivided heritage of the universal church. To do this all must work to

³⁰⁹ John Paul II *Orientalis Lumen* (Homebush (NSW): St Pauls, May 1995), 3-4.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

³¹¹ "Decree on Ecumenism," in Walter Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, 365.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 350.

restore unity. The Melkite Catholic Church is in a special position to work for the restoration of unity of all the Byzantine Rite Christians. It is a model for a Byzantine community being in unity with Rome yet preserving its own integrity and functioning in a multicultural society. It is a model for other church communities of the Byzantine Rite who might consider reuniting with Rome. This thesis will not elaborate on the broad topic of ecumenism and ecumenical efforts, as this is a subject that could be a thesis in itself. Important writers on this topic include Raya, Cross and Samra with references in the bibliography.

6.2 Conclusions

This chapter examined issues pertaining to worship in the Melkite Catholic Church in ensuring the integrity of its rite or ritual tradition. Issues raised were keeping a close relationship with the Patriarch, evangelisation and associated issues such as education. It also briefly looked at ecumenism. It concluded that maintaining a close relationship with the Patriarch was important with Bishop Darwish from the Melkite eparchy elaborating on this. Further it concluded that evangelisation is at the heart of the church, which is done through the Christian community. There is strong emphasis on education especially in facilitating understanding of their own Byzantine rite. This is being done by the building of appropriate educational centres such as schools and library facilities. As icons are such an important component of the Melkite tradition the church community promotes their use, provides through its library facilities information about their importance and ensures that there is a good supply available for its church members. In its sacramental life, it evangelises its church members challenging them to bring about the reign of God on earth, a process that will always be on going, a process that will always need renewing until Christ's comes again at the Parousia in all His glory. The section on ecumenism highlighted how the Melkite church is a model for Byzantine communities who wish to re-unite with Rome. However the thesis left elaboration on the topic of ecumenism to other writers.

CHAPTER SEVEN SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has taken the researcher on a journey from Antioch to Australia. It is a story of God's love for His people, the story of salvation through God our loving Father sending his only Son to earth to bring about the redemption of all humanity. Jesus established a church, the *ecclesia*, where faith and love would grow and spread, where all could learn about the good news of salvation won for humanity through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This thesis examined indepth worship in the Melkite Catholic Church in Australia at the beginning of the third millennium. Its foundations at Antioch are the very foundations of various rites in the Church. The Church at Antioch saw the legitimisation of the Gentile Church. Hence, Antioch is the birthplace in a sense of all Gentile Christians so this thesis would be of interest to many Christians.

The title of this thesis is, The Church first called Christian: The Melkite Church of Antioch. To examine the significance of the title it was firstly necessary to look at the early church at Antioch, how the church came into being there and what were the characteristics of the church there that would throw light on the Melkite Church in Australia today. It used the Acts of the Apostles from the New Testament Cannon and the letters of Ignatius of Antioch as its main sources to do this. Significant commentary was made on the authenticity of the Ignatian corpus. This chapter stressed the importance of Tradition for revelation in the Antiochene church with emphasise on the fact that Tradition is the living and lived faith. The understanding of Tradition was an important concept in understanding the development in the Melkite Church with this becoming more evident as the thesis developed. This chapter also looked at development at Alexandria in Egypt, as St Athanasius from the Alexandrian School would influence the development of this church community. The characteristics of the early church at Antioch were clearly spelt out with reference to its theology, structure, sacraments and liturgy. These characteristics were enumerated clearly in the conclusion section of Chapter One. Some important key features of the church community were that it worshipped Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God and Saviour of the world, there was a Trinitarian formula present, the church was established by the power of the Holy Spirit, Baptism was seen as a sign of the new covenant replacing male circumcision and was for all people both Jew and Gentiles, the Eucharist was the most important means of mediating the life and grace of the risen Lord to this faith community and the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and

deacon was strongly evident. Hence in this chapter, one can see that the origin and inspiration of the Melkite Church is Jesus Christ, who reveals the Holy Trinity. Jesus established the Church especially by empowering the apostles at Pentecost through the coming of the Holy Spirit. And it was these apostles along with St Paul and others who legitimised the church at Antioch.

Chapter Two explained the sound basis for worshipping the Holy Trinity in the Melkite Catholic Church today. In the early church at Antioch a Trinitarian formula is evident. The divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ were clearly acknowledged. The church here was established by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is one with the Father. However, Trinitarian theology needed development with clear teaching on the Trinity resulting thanks to the efforts of many theologians but especially three theologians from Cappadocia, which was in the See of Antioch. The three theologians were St Basil, St Gregory of Nazianzus and St Gregory of Nyssa. Their efforts were enhanced by the important contribution of St Athanasius of Alexandria. The corporate effort brought to fruition clear terminology for the Holy Trinity given at the Council of Constantinople in 381: three *hypostases* and one *ousia* in God. The divinity of the Holy Spirit was explained, with statements on the divinity and nature of the Holy Spirit being added to the Nicene or more correctly the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. In defeating the Arian heresy clear teachings on Christ's divinity and humanity were given. Christ had to be both divine and human to effect the salvation of all humanity. The corporate effort of the four theologians ensured clear teachings on the nature of Christ. The importance of Tradition for passing on the good news about Jesus Christ was stressed in Chapter One. In Chapter Two one can only understand development in expression of doctrinal teaching through understanding the importance of Tradition. A Trinitarian formula was given at Antioch. Greater understanding came to fruition through the corporate effort of the above theologians. The importance of monasticism was also discussed.

Chapter Three looked at the Melkite Catholic Church today expounding on key features, especially worship of the Holy Trinity and the importance of the Incarnation for the salvation of all humanity. This chapter discussed the importance of "the mystery of God" especially in attempting to understand the teaching on the Holy Trinity. This section emphasised that dogmatic explanations of the Trinity were important however the Christian goes far beyond these explanations. Christians are to live in the loving embrace of the Holy Trinity with the faith community sharing in the perfect love that exist between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In

entering into the very life of the Holy Trinity the Christian begins the process of deification. God and humanity become one. Mystery was emphasised since even though one has a reasoned faith one needs to go beyond this into the experience of mystery through contemplation. The chapter explained that the Melkite Church worships in the Byzantine rite and gave salient features of this rite. It explained associated elements in worship that express the sacred teachings of the church which include; the belief in the Holy Trinity, the two natures of Christ and veneration of the saints especially Mary, the Mother of God. It explained that icons are the gospels in visual form and are also used to venerate the saints. They are part of the living Tradition of the Church.

Chapters Four and Five explained the importance of the *Holy Mysteries* (sacraments) in the Melkite Church. The sacraments are the chief means of sharing in the life of the Holy Trinity. Chapter Four explained the importance of what the sacraments effect—salvation, with understanding about their salvific effect given by theologians from the Byzantine Rite. It then went on to discuss the importance of putting on Christ through receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, as these three sacraments initiate the Christian into the church community. Its examination of these sacraments included the biblical basis for them, theological perspectives, aspects of their liturgical celebration and historical perspectives. It was shown that these sacraments were important in the early church and how they developed. Chapter Four concluded that the Sacraments of Initiation are Christ-centred and were endorsed by Christ in the early church.

Chapter Five looked at the Sacraments of Healing and the Sacraments at the Service of Communion emphasising life in Christ for the recipients of these sacraments. An explanation of each of these sacraments was given as well as the biblical basis for them. The Sacrament of Penance was discussed in detail with indepth biblical background given as well as an historical perspective using the research work of Palmer to do this. This sacrament restores the life of grace given in Baptism for those who sin after receiving this sacrament. When worthily celebrated the recipients know a compassionate and forgiving God through the “spiritual father,” the priest, who is a healer and counsellor.

Discussion of the sacrament of Holy Orders was detailed showing clear evidence for the important place the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon had in the early church at Antioch. This was shown by looking at what Ignatius had written in his seven letters. After

elucidating on the evidence for the three-fold ministry from the Ignatian corpus, the thesis examined New Testament evidence for the development of this ministry, with reference to the research by Dunn. Further evidence was obtained from the work of a Byzantine priest, Casimir Kucharek. This section showed that this sacrament is essential in Melkite worship and is based on the work and person of Jesus Christ. The section on Marriage, firstly explained that the church was a macrocosm of the heavenly kingdom where Christians experience deep communion with God and communion with each other and it followed on from this by showing that the Sacrament of Marriage is a microcosm of the mystery of the church. A thorough explanation of the ritual and symbols was given.

Chapter Six looked at issues pertaining to the Melkite Church today because there are challenges for the Eastern rite communities in preserving their ritual traditions. Various areas were examined that would facilitate preserving the Melkite Tradition.

Final conclusion

The study in this thesis of the Melkite Church in Australia today has been comprehensive with this study taking the researcher back to the early church at Antioch. It was clearly shown that the origin and inspiration of the Melkite Church is Jesus Christ and throughout this thesis it has shown that Jesus Christ reveals the Holy Trinity, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This church community gives clear teaching on the Holy Trinity and has contributed to the development and understanding of the key teachings on the Trinity and the Incarnation. In its worship and sacramental life its members live in the loving embrace of the Holy Trinity. This thesis has shown that the Melkite Church traces its roots back to the Church at Antioch where believers were first called Christians.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, W. (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*. New York: The American Press, 1966.
- Aquilina, M. *The Mass of the Early Christians*. Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2001.
- Attwater, D. *The Christian Churches of the East*, vol. 1 & 2, rev. ed. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1961.
- Baptism, Byzantium Liturgy*, Sydney 1998, Approved by Bishop Darwish. This is a booklet in general use in the Melkite Churches in Australia.
- Barnhart, C. & R. (ed.) *The World Book Dictionary*. Chicago: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978.
- Barrett, C. *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*. rev. ed. London: Harper and Row, 1989.
- Beatrice, P.B. *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*. Vicenza, Italy: Edizioni Istituto San Gaetano, 1987.
- Bettenson, H. (ed.) *The Early Christian Fathers*. London: Oxford University Press, 1956.
- Bouyer, L. *Eucharist*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968
- Brown, C. *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000.
- Brown, R. and Meier, J. *Antioch and Rome*. New York: Paulist Press, 1983.
- Carey, M. & Scullard, H. *A History of Rome*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1986.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Imprimi Potest*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Homebush, NSW: Society of St. Paul, 1994.
- Chryssavgis, J. "The Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches" in Sullivan D. (ed.) *Living Ecumenism, Christian Unity for a New Millennium*, The Joint Board of Christian Education, 1995.
- Cross, L. *Eastern Christianity, The Byzantine Tradition*. Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1988.
- Darwish, I. "Patriarch and Eparch in Today's Church, Reflections of an Eparch of the Diaspora" in *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 40 (1999), 107-116.
- Deferrari, R. et al. (eds.) *The Father of the Church*, vol. 22. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953.
- Deferrari, R. et al. (eds.) *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 58. Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1967.

- Deiss, L. (ed.), *Early Sources of the Liturgy*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967.
- De Lacey, D.R. and Turner, M.M. B. *Discovering the Bible: The Expansion of Christianity*, rev. ed. London: Hutton Educational, 1985.
- Donovan, D. *What are they saying about the Ministerial Priesthood?* Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992.
- Dudley, M. and Rowell, G. (eds.) *The Oil of Gladness*, London: SPCK, 1993.
- Dunn, P. *Priesthood, A Re-examination of the Roman Catholic Theology of the Presbyterate*. New York: Alba House, Society of St. Paul, 1990.
- Dvornik, F. *The General Councils of the Church*. London: Burns & Oates, 1961.
- Etteldorf, R. *Christian Greece and Rome*. New York: St. Paul's Publications, 1963.
- Fink, J. *The Doctors of the Church, An Introduction to the Church's Great Teachers, Volume I, Doctors of the First Millennium*. New York: Alba House, Society of St. Paul, 2000.
- Finn, T. *Messages of the Fathers of the Church, Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992.
- Flannery, A. (ed.), *Vatican Council II*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1975.
- Fredriksen, P. *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Gambero, L. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991.
- Goergen, D. *The Jesus of Christian History*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992.
- Hahn, S. *Lord Have Mercy, The Healing Power of Confession*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003.
- Hamman, A. *How to Read the Church Fathers*. London: SCM Press, 1993
- Icon Packet *Come Bless the Lord*. McKees Rocks, Pa: God With Us, 1976.
- "Ignatius of Antioch, St." in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol.7. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967.
- John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Orientalis Lumen*. Homebush, NSW: Society of St. Paul, May 1995.
- John Paul II, *Ut Unim Sint*. Homebush (NSW): Society of St Pauls, June 1995.
- Kala, T. *Meditations on the Icons*. Rome: St Pauls, 1993.

- Kucharek, C. *The Sacramental Mysteries, A Byzantine Approach*. Combermere: Alleluia Press, 1976.
- Kurz, W. *Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1982.
- Lightfoot, J. B. *The Apostolic Fathers*. Michigan: Baker Book House, 1956.
- McDonnell, K. *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, the Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation*. Collegeville, Minnesota: the Liturgical Press, 1996.
- Maged Attia, *Coptic Orthodox Church of Australia, 1969-1994*. Bexley, Aust: Coptic Orthodox Publication and Translation, 1995.
- Maguire, H. *The Icons of Their Bodies, Saints and Their Images in Byzantine*. Princeton, New Jersey: University Press, 1996.
- Martimort, A. G. *Deaconesses, An Historical Study*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986.
- Melkites in America, A Directory and Informative Handbook*. West Newton, USA: The Melkite Exarchate, 1971
- Meyendorff, J. *Byzantine Theology, Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. London: Mowbrays, 1975.
- Meyendorff, J. *Marriage, An Orthodox Perspective*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984.
- Milner, A. *The Theology of Confirmation*. Cork: The Mercier Press, 1971.
- O'Collins, G. *Christology, A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Palmer, P. (ed.), *Sources of Theology, Volume II, Sacraments and Forgiveness, History and Doctrinal Development of Penance, Extreme Unction and Indulgences*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd: 1959.
- Pennock, M. *This is Our Faith*. rev. ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1994.
- Petras, D. et al. *Light for Light, Part One, The Mystery Believed*. Pittsburg: God with Us Publications, 1994.
- Petras, D. et al. *Light for Light, Part Two, The Mystery Celebrated*. Pittsburg: God with Us Publications, 1996.
- Petras, D. et al. *Light for Light, Part Three, The Mystery Lived*. Pittsburg: God with Us Publications, 2001.
- Raya, J. *Abundance of Love, the Incarnation and Byzantine Tradition*. West Newton, USA: Educational Services, Diocese of Newton, 1990.

Raya, J. *The Face of God: Essays in Byzantine Spirituality*. 2nd ed. McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania: God With us Publications, 1984.

Raya, J. *Theophany and Sacraments of Initiation*. Combermere, Ontario: Madonna House Publication, 1993.

Rice, D. T. *Art of the Byzantine Era*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Roberson, R. *The Eastern Christian Churches*. 5th ed. Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 1995.

Rordorf, W. and Others, *The Eucharist of the Early Christians*. New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1978.

Samra, N. *Ecumenism and the Melkite Church of Antioch*. This paper was presented at the Worldwide Meeting of Melkite Bishops at Greenacre (Sydney) in July 2000.

Schaff, P. and Wace, H. *A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Volume IV, St Athanasius: Selected Works and Letters*. Michigan: WM.B. Eerdmans, 1978.

Schememann, A. *For the Life of the World, Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Press, 1973.

Schememann, A. *The Eucharist, Sacrament of the Kingdom*. Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Press, 1988.

Schoedel, W. *Ignatius of Antioch*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

Schulz, H. *The Byzantine Liturgy*. New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1986.

Shorter, A. *Evangelisation and Culture*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994.

Staniforth, M. (ed.) *Early Christian Writings, The Apostolic Father*, rev. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987.

"St John Chrysostom on Repentance and Almsgiving" in Halton, T. et al. (eds.), *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 96. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998.

Taft, R. *Beyond East and West, A Short History*. Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1984.

Taft, R. *The Byzantine Rite, A Short History*. Collegeville Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992.

Taft, R. "St John Chrysostom and the Byzantine Anaphora that Bears His Name," in Paul F. Bradshaw (ed.), *Essays on Early Eastern Eucharistic Prayers*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 195-226.

The Divine and Holy Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. Sydney: Melkite Press, 2000.

The Rite of Holy Matrimony According to the Byzantine Rite of the Melkite Catholic Church In Australia and New Zealand. Sydney: Melkite Press, 2001.

Thomas, P. *General Councils of the Church.* Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1993.

Turner, P. *Sources of Confirmation, From the Fathers Through the Reformers.* Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press. 1993.

Ware, T. *The Orthodox Church.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982.

Weitzmann, K. *The Icon, Holy Images, Sixth to Fourteenth Century.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1978.

Whitaker, E.C. *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy.* 2nd ed. London: SPCK, 1970.

Wybrew, H. *The Orthodox Liturgy, The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite.* Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990.

Yarnold, E. *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation.* 2nd ed. Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1994.