

Theological Studies on Saint Chāvāra 11

**HUMBLE MINISTER OF
THE LIVING MYSTERY**

**Liturgical Vision of Saint Kuriakose
Elias Chavara**

Dharmaram Publications

No. 492

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Elias Chavara**

Maryann Madhavathu CMC

2023

Chāvāra Central Secretariat

Kochi 680 030 Kerala, India

&

Dharmaram Publications

Bangalore 560 029 Karnataka, India

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*Humble Minister of the Living Ministry:
Liturgical Vision of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara*

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© 2023 Chāvara Central Secretariat, Kochi

Cover design: Sebeesh Jacob Vettiyadan CMI
Printing: Viani Printings, Kochi

ISBN: 978-93-92996-33-7
Price: Rs. 240; US\$ 15

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Chāvara Hills, Kakkanad
Post Box 3105, Kochi 682 030 Kerala, India
Tel: +91 484 2881802/3
Email: info@chavaralibrary.com
Web: <http://www.chavaralibrary.in/>
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Dharmaram College, Bangalore 560 029, India
Tel: +91 8041116137; 6111
Email: dpoffice3@gmail.com
www.dharmarampublications.com

**Dedicated to
the Immaculate Heart of
Blessed Virgin Mary**

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THEOLOGICAL STUDIES ON SAINT CHĀVARA

Kuriakose Elias Chāvara (1805-1871) – a Carmelite religious priest and professor of theology (*Malpan*), who pioneered consecrated life in the Syro-Malabar Church by founding the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI in collaboration with Thomas Palackal and Thomas Porukara, in 1831, the first indigenous religious congregation for men, and the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC in collaboration with Leopold Beccaro OCD in 1866) – is widely recognized for his pioneering efforts to reform the Catholic Church in Kerala and broader nineteenth-century society. His credible Christian witness, along with the leadership he offered to the St Thomas Christians, at a time when they were undergoing multiple jurisdictional crises, a spiritual and disciplined growth in the Kerala Church.

Canonised on 23 November 2014, Chāvara’s personal sanctity and Christian wisdom have been identified as unique. While secular society admires his contributions to uplifting those existing on the margins and who were socially ostracised through educational and social initiatives, the fundamental core of all his achievements is solidly established in his filial discipleship to Jesus Christ, whom he addressed ‘*ente nalla appa*’ (my beloved father).

Chāvara had a firm foundation in Christian faith, which is clearly visible throughout his life and is testified by those who knew him. He articulated his views and perspectives primarily based on his personal encounter with Jesus and only secondarily based on his readings and theological reflections. They are available to us through his extant writings, which are published in the four volumes of the *Complete Works of Kuriakose Elias Chāvara*. Some of these works, recognized as efforts hitherto unprecedented in Indian literature, offer us a

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goldmine of rich and sound theological insights. Although his access to scientific Christian literature was minimal (if not completely absent), his writings draw from the biblical as well as other Christian traditions, which he had faithfully and creatively interpreted for the enhancement of the faith of the Christian community that he had catered to throughout his life.

Theological Studies on Saint Chāvāra – a joint effort of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) and Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC) – attempts to promote and publish the fruits of scientific investigation into the unique and varied theological insights of Chāvāra in the form of monographs. These theological investigations will be instrumental in appreciating and popularising the sound and solid theological contributions he made toward enhancing Catholic faith in the nineteenth century, which, in turn, indicate that he deserves titles such as ‘Father of the Syro-Malabar Church’ and ‘Doctor of the Church’. As the publication of this series is undertaken with the blessings of the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Church, which has also benefitted from the eminent theological acumen, pastoral insights, and ecclesiastical leadership of Chāvāra, these studies will hopefully bring to light the multifarious theological heritage that he had bequeathed to the Church and the subsequent generations of faithful in India.

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Publishers

Chāvāra Central Secretariat (Kochi)
(A Joint Effort of CMI and CMC Congregations)
&
Dharmaram Publications (Bangalore)

ABBREVIATIONS

AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CCEO	<i>Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium</i>
CMI	Carmelites of Mary Immaculate
CMM	Chronicles of Mannanam Monastery
CSK	<i>Chāvāra Sampoorṇa Kruthikal</i>
CWC	<i>Complete Works of Chāvāra</i>
COrC	Congregation for Oriental Churches
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
LH	Liturgy of the Hours
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
OCD	Order of Discalced Carmelites
OE	<i>Orientalium Ecclesiarum</i>
OIRSI	Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India
PO	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i>
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RR	Roman Rite
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
SMC	Syro-Malabar Church
SMR	Syro-Malabar Rite
SMBC	Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference
TOCD	Third Order of Carmelites Discalced

Foreword

Mar Thomas Elavanal MCBS

Bishop of the Diocese of Kalyan

I am very happy to write a foreword for the book *Humble Minister of the Living Mystery: Liturgical Vision of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara* by Maryann Madhavathu CMC. This book vividly depicts the theological, liturgical, and spiritual vision and contribution of Elias Chāvāra. God in His divine plan redeemed humankind through the Paschal Mystery of Christ. This divine plan of salvation is today continued through the celebration and life of the Paschal Mystery in the Church. Chāvāra was able to attain his spiritual vision and reach the perfection of his vocation primarily through his prayerful meditation on and experiential celebration of the Paschal Mystery.

This book unveils the liturgical vision of Chāvāra, which was the motivating force behind all his spiritual and social reforms in the life of the people of Kerala. He is portrayed in this book as a true model and guiding spirit of authentic liturgical life in the Syro-Malabar Church, who started its "liturgical movement" in the first half of the nineteenth century. His ministry as a religious priest reminds us that monasteries are to be the powerhouses of the Church. The primary role of the religious in the Church - wherever they are - should be to act as the catalysts of spiritual renewal among the people of God.

The Church is the extension of the mystery of Christ, who continues His salvific works through the liturgy. Understanding the importance of liturgy, Chāvāra worked hard towards ensuring the full, active and conscious participation of the people of God in the divine mystery, as

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instructed by the Second Vatican Council (SC §14). He inaugurated the renewal of the Church through the renewal of the liturgy, long before the liturgical movement properly began in the other parts of the Catholic Church. Thus, he has made an indelible mark in the history of the liturgical movement in the Syro-Malabar Church. Through this movement, he tried to bring the people to meaningful participation in the Paschal Mystery celebrated in the liturgy.

Our Christian life is centered on the Paschal Mystery. As St Paul reminds us (Rom 6), through baptism and the Holy Eucharist (1 Cor 11:26), we participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. He tried to make the people aware of the truth that the Liturgy is not only to be celebrated but to be lived. The Christian life is to live what we celebrate. Hence, liturgy is not just the performance of acts of piety but the celebration of our very Christian life. In this sense, we should understand that the Eucharist is the sacramental celebration signifying what we should be after the model of Christ. It is always a call to live like Jesus. Pope Benedict XVI in his apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* teaches that the Eucharist is a mystery to be believed, celebrated, and lived. So liturgy cannot be separated from one's faith and life.

Chāvāra's efficient leadership and efforts during the Roccas' schism and his clear vision with regard to the issue of indigenous bishops are proofs of his love for the authenticity of faith and unity in the Church. The author reminds us that the contemporary Syro-Malabar Church still needs leaders with his vision to solve the problems of division and disunity, especially in the life and practice of our faith. In this book, there is a beautiful comparison of the role of Chāvāra with those of Moses and Elijah. As Moses

rescued the people of God from slavery to lead them to the true worship of God on Mount Sinai, so too Chāvāra led the people of Kerala from the slavery of ignorance to the mountain of God experience revealed in the celebration of the liturgy. Like Elijah, Chāvāra was burning with love for the Lord of hosts and dedicated his own life to bring back the hearts of his people to the worship of God.

The author explains very well how we can see Chāvāra as the best example of one who understood and tried to live the Eastern liturgical spirituality. He constantly meditated on the Paschal Mystery and tried to live that mystery celebrated in the Liturgy. This, in turn, gave him the spiritual motivation and strength for his entire ministry. In three parts, the life and ministry of Chāvāra is explained in the light of the various aspects or dimensions of the Paschal Mystery. In the final chapter, the author very pertinently draws our attention to the need for the leaders of the Syro-Malabar Church to adopt the liturgical vision of Chāvāra in their attempts at liturgical renewal today. This book clearly portrays Chāvāra as the foremost liturgical reformer of the Syro-Malabar Church, who could meditate on, mediate and minister the great mystery of salvation.

I would like to congratulate the author of the book, Maryann Madhavathu CMC, for this scholarly study of the liturgical vision of Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra. This book is a significant contribution to the Church, especially in the field of liturgical theology and spirituality. I wish for wide circulation for this book so that many people may benefit from it and grow in their liturgical vision and spiritual life.

Presentation

Joris Geldhof

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*Chair of the Liturgical Institute and the editor-in-chief of the
bilingual journal Questions Liturgiques/Studies in Liturgy*

This agreeably written and accurately composed book takes the reader on an interesting journey. It is a journey via the most essential elements of the Christian faith, including the Trinity, the incarnation, the economy of salvation, the Body of Christ, the mission of the Church, and so on. But it approaches these matters through the unique point of view of liturgical theology and its continuous focus on the paschal mystery. Maryann Madhavathu's central thesis is that Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra's (1805-1871) theology and spirituality are deeply embedded in and thoroughly inspired by liturgy. However, liturgy in this context should not simply be understood as the amalgamation of rituals and ceremonies performed by Christians but as the encompassing reality of the glorification of God and the sanctification of the world.

Representatives of the liturgical movement in Western Europe, who were generally both scholars and pastors, have put this outstanding theological relevance of liturgy on the agenda again in the twentieth century. These representatives usually had an intensive liturgical prayer life themselves - many of them were monks - and were on the edge of new developments in academic and pastoral theology. Whether they rediscovered ancient or medieval sources, gave the best of themselves in youth ministry, or

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sought to intensify the dialogue with past or present spiritual masters, they concentrated their attention on a broad(er) understanding of sacraments and liturgy in terms of mysteries, particularly the paschal mystery with its many aspects and dimensions. It is with this concentration on the paschal mystery that the author of the present book found many correspondences and similarities in the work and legacy of Kuriakose Chāvara. Therefore, the conclusion that one could consider this saint a precursor and/or promoter of 'liturgical theology' is warranted, and even plausible.

Madhavathu's book is intelligently structured around three clusters, the consistency of which is a logical consequence of an analysis of the concept of the paschal mystery itself. The three parts of her book are entitled 'Meditating the Mystery', 'Mediating the Mystery', and 'Ministering the Mystery'. The sequence of these verbs shows that the paschal mystery in its entirety is something to be contemplated, passed on, and shared. Put differently, the paschal mystery, being the sacramental center of Christian faith, presupposes, promotes, as well as invites contemplative and active approaches; it is something deeply personal but also and at the same time something collective; it is both ecclesial and existential. Still, in other words, the paschal mystery has dominant Christological and ecclesiological undertones, while playing a beautiful soteriological, doxological, and eschatological melody. Chāvara obviously was a great interpreter of this music!

The first part of the book starts with a chapter about the "divine mystery of salvation" and explains where the notion of the paschal mystery comes from. It is demonstrated that the concept indeed has primarily to do with Christ and the Church, whereby the Church sets forth what began with the Christ event. It makes available a sharing in that grand

transition from life to love originating in the Father's raising the Son from death – an event that is continued by the Holy Spirit through time and in the world. The second chapter highlights those elements in Chāvāra's work that correspond with this line of thinking and presents crucial images and metaphors through which Chāvāra expressed these profound mysteries of faith. There is no doubt that he was personally contemplating and interiorising them so as to increasingly become an exemplar of them for others.

The second part of the book continues with this idea and elaborates on it in quite some depth: Kuriakose Chāvāra not only received the paschal mystery but also passed it on to those who were entrusted to his care and many others. His participation in the paschal mystery became more and more transparent for others. It was the source from which he drank and the one he wanted to indicate to others to quench their thirst. Chāvāra showed the way to render God's praises and to live a life where this is absolutely primary. A life of faith moulded by liturgy is ultimately not one where praising God is something one has to do and therefore does, but one whereby one becomes a sacrifice of praise.

Just as the second part naturally sets forth the first, the third part smoothly continues the second. Once it is clear that worship is rather something of the order of being than that it belongs to the mere order of doing – in other words, that it is ontologically anchored before it is practical – it becomes apparent that one cannot organise one's life but around the serving of the paschal mystery. Along with that awareness comes a freedom to testify, a model of leadership, an attitude of attentiveness, and an inspiration to follow Christ beyond the ordinary. Issues of social justice, poverty, lack of equal opportunities, oppression, the call for emancipation, etc. appear in a different light: with more

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lucidity and a deeper motivation to do something about them. In the light of the paschal mystery and liturgical theology embodying and explaining it, the mission of Christians finds there its most intimate and appropriate expression. There it touches the real truth, beauty, and goodness of faith.

In that sense, the life and truly liturgical spirituality of Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra has been an enormous gift for the Church in India as well as an unfathomable treasure for generations of Christians to come, both in India and beyond. For his message, as is the paschal mystery itself, is universal, i.e. Catholic and apostolic. I hope that many readers will benefit from this admirable study, which smoothly integrates the best of liturgical theology and Chāvāra's spirituality.

Leuven

23-03-2023

Preface

St Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra is hailed as a great visionary, who with his farsightedness edited the history of the people of Kerala. This holy man of God is not yet well-known outside the small religious circle of the Malabar Church. Though many may have heard his name since his canonisation on 23 November 2014, the real worth of this person, who lived a very humble life, has not yet been aptly investigated. One may also find a few who condemn his sincere efforts for the renewal of the liturgical life of the Syrian Church of the nineteenth century. In reality, this is a consequence of utter ignorance about his profound philosophical vision and innocent intentions. This book is an attempt to explore the liturgical vision of this significant Church leader. From a distant view, one could recognise that this monk took many audacious steps for the wellbeing of his fellow human beings. But, when one investigates his personality and life through a clear lens of faith and a liturgical microscope, the beauty of its composition becomes clear. The in-depth vision and spirituality that he lived were so substantial that, even after a century, we can gather new pearls of wisdom from his life and writings.

Delving into Chāvāra's works to know more about his mindset, attitudes, and personal values, I came across a very reflective conviction underlying his social and ecclesial reforms for the benefit of the people around him. He was humbly ministering the mystical body of Christ, which is the living presence of the great mystery of salvation. All his efforts aimed to make the body of Christ complete, dynamic, and cognisant and to enable every member of humanity to render perfect worship to God, the Father. As an ideal father, Chāvāra was helping me to understand him through

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his intercession before the Most Holy Father. This *nalla appan* (a good father) inspires me to continue his legacy of ministering the mystical body of Christ with much zeal and devotion. During this pilgrimage through the writings of Chāvāra, I found a very devout lover of Jesus Christ and His Church. Chāvāra was so much involved with the salvation mystery that his whole being was transmuted into the mystery revealed by Christ and continued by the Church. He meditated on the Christ mystery with such vigour that he mediated the mystery revealed in Christ (*Ecce Homo*, John 19:5). Christ is the greatest revelation of the mystery about human beings. He is the perfect human, who invites humanity to acquire the truth about their being as the children of God. Also, Jesus says to Pilate, “For this, I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice” (John 18:37). The true dignity of human beings was revealed by the incarnation, and Chāvāra saw the glory of the *Logos* who entered into the world to enlighten everyone (John 1:9, 14). This stimulated him to impart the knowledge of this truth of self-dignity to the ignorant and to raise them to the status of the children of God. Referring to God as his father and filled with love for his siblings, Chāvāra undertook every pain to gather the scattered children and build the household of God. His efforts for the equal status and complete freedom of every human being took form in various ministries and nurtured the mystery of the Church, which is the extension of Christ’s mystery.

I consider it a privileged opportunity to write about the liturgical vision of the founder of my congregation. Thanks to the Chāvāra theological series, the CMI-CMC joint project, and my superiors, especially Mother Sibi and Mother Jaise, who encouraged and supported me with their

prayers and blessings to undertake and finish this endeavour. I remember with gratitude Fr. Josin Kaithakulam CMI, Fr. Jobi Thurackal CMI, and the authorities of Dharmaram Vidhyakshretham, along with my dear sisters of Jnanodaya convent at Bangalore, for their encouragement, care, and support during my library work for the book. I am indebted to my family members, my friends, and my dear religious sisters, all of whom helped me with sincere prayers and inspiring words. I am indebted to Fr. Saju Chakkalackal CMI, Fr. Benny Thettayil CMI, Fr. Sebeesh Vettiyadan CMI (cover designer), and Mr. Matthew McNicoll for their direct and concrete help and support during the editing and designing of the book. I can say without any doubt that I owe much to my theological mentor, Prof. Dr. Joris Geldhof, who provided me with the offer of a one-year post-doctoral research programme, which gave me enough time to complete the book in the academic atmosphere of KU Leuven. I also appreciate his willingness to write a presentation for the book. I express my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mar Thomas Elavanal, Bishop of the Diocese of Kalyan, for blessing this work with a scholarly foreword. I dedicate this book to the immaculate heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was guiding and protecting me throughout my journey with Chāvāra.

Easter
9 April 2023

Maryann Madhavathu CMC
Pala

INTRODUCTION

“For, though we are sinful and weak, through Your infinite mercy, You have *made us worthy to be ministers of the sacred mysteries* of the Body and Blood of Your Anointed One.”¹ The first *G’hanta* prayer from the anaphora of *Mar Addai* and *Mar Mari*, the disciples of St Thomas the apostle, summarises the personality and liturgical vision of Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra (1805-1871).² He was a humble minister of the divine mystery of salvation. This mystery is nothing else but the mystery of Christ, who continues his ministry through the mystery of the Church. “One of the definite means to reach the perfection of Christian vocation is a life of worship or liturgical life which fulfils their very being as *homo adorans*.”³ Chāvāra had reached the perfection of his vocation as a worshipping being by his life of incessant adoration and unparalleled ministry of the paschal mystery.

In this book, I would like to draw your attention to the untold liturgical vision of the most influential figure of the

¹ Syro-Malabar Bishop’s Synod, *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 46.

² For a complete biography of Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra, see, A. M. Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 2nd Edition, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2020; K. C. Chacko, *Blessed Father Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 3rd Edition, Mannanam: Saint Joseph’s Monastery, 1986; Thomas Kochumuttom, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, Mumbai: Saint Paul Press Training School, 2014; and Leopold Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, ed. Lucas Vithuvatical, Mannanam, 2003.

³ Human beings are called *homo adorans* by orthodox liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemmann. Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 15.

nineteenth-century Kerala Catholic Church: Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra. He is a true guiding spirit of authentic liturgical life for the Church. The liturgy of the Syrian Catholics at the time of Chāvāra was deformed.¹ Chāvāra's liturgical reform attempts were misunderstood by his later detractors. Intending to impart spiritual nourishment to the Church, Chāvāra borrowed various elements of devotion and rituals from the Latin rite. But he had a great desire and made a sincere effort to preserve the Syro-Malabar rite and its rich tradition. He wanted to adopt a few customs to help the organic growth of the Church.² He even translated some prayers from other traditions into Syriac and tried to assimilate them into the Malabar tradition.³ Some still

¹ Until the Synod of Diamper (1599), the Malabar Christians of the Kerala coast followed the East Syrian liturgy. After that it was Latinised and mutilated by Portuguese missionaries. The liturgy of the Syrians was deprived of its beauty and uniformity under Latin prelates. At a later stage, the Church of Kerala lost its relation with the Eastern Church and was left with no detailed written rubrics for the Eucharistic sacrifice, divine office, ceremonies for the dead, etc. and followed different customs in different places. Kanjiramattathil, *The Pastoral Vision of Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 46.

² The liturgy of the Saint Thomas Christians, from the earliest times was the East Syrian Liturgy (the Chaldean liturgy). They received it from the East Syrian Church of the Middle East, as they had trade relations with them. Saint Thomas Christians never developed their own liturgy based on the elements they got from Saint Thomas. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures*, 46.

³ Chāvāra was attached to his rite and liturgy, as is clear from his writings and reform endeavours. He pleaded for the preservation of the Malabar liturgy and depreciated contrary practices. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV, The Letters*, 57-59.

criticise this as having been a grave sin. I would like to make clear that I am not trying to list or analyse the concrete efforts or contributions of Chāvāra in the field of 'liturgy' in the narrow sense of the term, as it is done elsewhere in the same series.

My aim with this book is to reveal that Chāvāra had a profound liturgical vision, which led him to the ministry of the divine mysteries. This ministry is manifested through his numerous efforts to uplift the spiritual and social life of the Malabar Catholic Church. It is quite well-accepted and agreed by all who know the history of Kerala that, without his outstanding vision and passionate and multifaceted mission, the destiny of the Malabar Christians and even that of the civil society of Kerala would have been very different from what it is today. Anyone who is now concerned about the church life and spiritual growth of the Syro-Malabar Church needs a thorough understanding of the real spirit behind the ministry of this legend, who started the whole business of renewal in this Church in the first half of the nineteenth century. Chāvāra's pioneering work for building up the Malabar Church was founded on a firm and strong foundation in the form of his liturgical vision. This vision serves as a cornerstone on which the Syro-Malabar Church is built.

1. The Liturgical Movement and Liturgical Spirituality

From 1918 onwards, the liturgical movement brought about a spiritual renewal in the universal Catholic Church. The liturgical movement is often thought to have begun with a talk by Lambert Beauduin.¹ Beauduin promoted the

¹ Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960), a monk of the abbey of Mont César. Geldhof, "Liturgical Theology," *Oxford Research En-*

theological quality of liturgy, which was reduced to the practical elements for worship at that time in history. Beauduin made it very clear that, for him, the liturgy was not just a practical affair but an *ecclesial reality* of the utmost importance for the entire life of the Church.¹ Romano Guardini (1885-1968)² and Dom Odo Casel (1886-1948)³ are two scholars who have contributed to increasing theological attention toward the liturgy. For Guardini, the liturgy is the actual cult and worship of living communities of faith. He considers liturgy a *vital reality* that is organically associated with the life of faith and the Church. For Casel, the mystery is a fundamental act by which God reveals himself to

cyclopedias, <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-14> [accessed 6 June 2015]. See the booklet Beauduin composed briefly after the 1909 event, originally entitled *La piété de l'église* but trans. Dom Virgil Michel (1888-1938). Beauduin, *Liturgy: The Life of the Church*, trans. Virgil Michel.

¹ Geldhof, "Liturgical Theology" [online].

² Romano Guardini was a German diocesan priest who became a professor of theology in Berlin and Munich. Being a talented speaker, Guardini was especially engaged in youth ministry. His summer recollections in the framework of the so-called Quickborn Movement were famous. For a detailed study of his writings see Kuehn, ed., *The Essential Guardini*.

³ Odo Casel, a monk of the Benedictine abbey of Maria Laach in Germany, is counted as one of the pioneers of the liturgical movement in Europe. He is mostly known for his so-called *Mysterienlehre* (literally, doctrine of the mysteries), which is associated with his 1922 book entitled *Die Liturgie als Mysterienfeier* and, maybe even more so, with his 1932 compilation of articles in *Das christliche Kultmysterium*. For the English translation of his book, see Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, ed. Burkhard Neunheuser.

humanity, particularly in its salvific mode (as exemplified by the Christ event), as well as an ensemble of actions by which this is sacramentally continued in history through the liturgy.¹ The greatest single initiative of the pre-Vatican II period was the encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (1943), which was a reflection on the meaning and purpose of liturgy, leading to a new liturgical spirituality.²

My goal in this study is to explain how Chāvāra could make specific and unique contributions to the difficult process of restoring the liturgical identity of the Mar Thoma Nazranies. Chāvāra, who loved the Church as his own mother, felt the urgent need for a liturgical renewal to bring about the spiritual renewal of the Church.³ He cultivated a liturgical renaissance based on the insights he received from his liturgical experience and tried to bring everyone to that experience through his pastoral activities. He has made an indelible mark on the liturgical revival within the Nazrani Church of Kerala and could be rightly designated as the pioneer of the liturgical movement therein. He inaugurated the renewal of the Church through liturgy long before the liturgical movement was in full swing in the Western part of the Catholic Church. However, in the Malabar Church, the liturgical renewal was not an easy task, and it is here that Chāvāra with his farsightedness made unique contributions

¹ Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 5-7.

² Aerthayil, "The Liturgical Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church," 63.

³ One can never separate spirituality and liturgy as two entities. In the early Church, there was no such distinction between life, liturgy, and theology. Understanding the spirit of liturgy, one can easily recognise that the most important and fundamental spirituality is liturgical spirituality.

towards a renewal, which is rooted deeply in the liturgical tradition of the Syrian Christians of Malabar and based on a clear vision about the Church of Christ as His mystical body.

2. The Liturgical Vision of Chāvāra

Until now, there has been no book that investigates the liturgical vision of Chāvāra that underlay his social and spiritual renewal programmes. The present book is a sincere attempt to fill this lacuna with scholarly care through a dispassionate analysis of Chāvāra's liturgical spirit and wisdom. It is this wisdom and insight that motivated his abundant endeavours for the full, active, and conscious participation of the people of God in the paschal mystery celebrated as well as lived in the Church. Chāvāra's every step towards the spiritual prosperity of the faithful was strongly based on his sound conviction about the direction in which the Church is moving as the chosen people of God. Like Moses, Chāvāra led the people of Kerala from the slavery of ignorance and other vicious social evils due to the caste system prevalent in that society to the mountain of the true presence of God and the freedom of the children of God to worship God, the Father. His aim was perfect worship in the Church, which is the body of Christ and the temple of God. Like Elijah the prophet, Chāvāra burned with zeal for the Lord of hosts, offering his own life as a sacrifice most pleasing to God and orienting the hearts of his people to the one and only true God. Moreover, it is easy to find that Chāvāra was a genuine liturgical theologian of the Malabar Church in the sense that he could live a perfect life of liturgy in the paschal rhythm of Christ with full participation in the divine mystery celebrated.

To unveil the liturgical vision of Chāvāra behind his zealous efforts to renew the Church's life, I have analysed his writings and other available historical data. The main sources of this study are his original works (*The Complete Works of St Chāvāra*). To compliment them, I have also made use of secondary sources, such as biographies, chronicles, and letters related to Chāvāra. I also had recourse to other related historical works and souvenirs. After analysing the facts found in these sources, I have tried to clearly explicate Chāvāra's liturgical and ecclesial vision. His understanding of the relation between the liturgy and the Church as well as his profound vision of the paschal mystery are analysed in this book. This paschal mystery encompasses the entire salvation history of humanity.

3. Partaking in the Mystery

Christian life is not only about following Christ but demands a life immersed in Christ, who is the way, truth, and life. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. His incarnation aimed at the sanctification of humanity through the remission of sins. He came in search of the lost ones and to gather the scattered children of God. He reconciled humanity to the Father through His body. He is the divine truth and reality revealed in human form. In other words, He is the divine mystery revealed to humanity. The Church is the extension and sacrament of Christ. Consequently, the Church is also a mystery. Liturgy is the action of the Church as well as the ministry of the Church. It is the work of the Church for the people of God. Also, Liturgy is the celebration of faith. It enables the members of the Church to participate in the mystery of Christ, which is paschal in nature. The paschal nature of the liturgy is not only to be celebrated but to be lived. Jesus has taught about the

mystery of the kingdom of God and many of his parables unveil the nature of the promised kingdom. It is like a family gathering, a wedding feast, and a sheepfold of the good shepherd.

Like the people of Israel in the Old Testament, the Church, the new Israel, is on an exodus journey towards the promised land of heaven. They are liberated for participation in the heavenly liturgy. However, they have a long and tiresome journey to finish on earth under the providential care of the Trinitarian God through His living presence in the liturgy. This journey of the Kerala Catholic Church was started as a new exodus under the leadership of Chāvāra in the nineteenth century. Chāvāra, trusting completely in the God who called him, performed many wonderful miracles in the society of Kerala to set the people of God free from the bondage of slavery. His farsighted ministry to the mystery of the Church brought freedom, and the new Israel of Kerala started with joy to join the heavenly worship.

This book is divided into three parts, to show how Chāvāra meditated on the sacred mystery, which was mediated through the life of Chāvāra, and to analyse the various ways in which he humbly ministered the mystery. After clarifying what is meant by 'mystery', the first part investigates the vision of the mystery that Chāvāra contemplated by analysing his writings. This may be called Chāvāra's 'doxological' participation in the mystery of salvation. It is the contemplative dimension of his liturgical vision. The second part explores the lived dimension of the mystery in the personality of Chāvāra. This is his 'ontological' participation in the paschal mystery. This forms the imitative dimension of Chāvāra's vision. The third part examines the multiple activities of Chāvāra's ministry

of the mystery that he meditated on and mediated. It is the 'missiological' participation of Chāvāra in the mystery and salvation history of the Church of Kerala. It could be described as the practical dimension of his vision. In short, I aim to reveal the life of Chāvāra, which could be rightly described as an interpretation and extension of the paschal mystery. In the last chapter, I will discuss the necessity of the liturgical vision of Chāvāra for the renewal of the Syro-Malabar Church. What I aim to establish is that Chāvāra, being the foremost liturgical reformer of the Malabar Church, could meditate on, mediate, and minister the great mystery of salvation in such a way that the present Church enjoys the sweet fruits of the trees from the seeds that Chāvāra sowed centuries back.

PART I

MEDITATING ON THE MYSTERY

Chāvāra had clear experiential knowledge of the mystery that is celebrated in the liturgy of the Church and lived by every Christian. He meditated over that mystery throughout his life. Evidence of his continuous contemplation of the mystery is found in his writings. This could be recognised as his spiritual and doxological participation in the mystery. He entered into the mystery through meditation and produced its fruits, which overflowed as doxology in his written works. In this part of the book, I investigate the nature of the divine mystery revealed by Jesus Christ and celebrated in the liturgy, which distributes the fruits of salvation to its participants. This mystery is a combination of the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church. In other words, the mystery of the Church is the extension of the mystery of Christ. The discussion continues with the concept of worship, place of worship as well as an exploration of the full, active, and conscious participation in the worship of the Church. I do this to show how Chāvāra understood this profound mystery and contemplated it, leading to the mediation and ministry of the same mystery in his life.

Before going into the details of Chāvāra's vision of the paschal mystery, let me clarify what is meant by the 'mystery' in this book. Also, we need to examine the relationship between the liturgy and the Church in which the mystery is celebrated and lived.

Chapter 1

THE DIVINE MYSTERY OF SALVATION

The salvation mystery is celebrated in ritual forms in the Church's liturgy. Indubitably, liturgy is the main business of the Church.¹ Christian life is so profoundly interwoven with the liturgy of the Church that one can never fully live a life in Christ without liturgical participation. Jesus came so that humans may have divine life in an abundant measure. To grow in this life, he declared, one needed to have a close relationship with Jesus, like that of the branches to a vine.² Through baptism, a Christian begins a new life in the risen Christ.³ Thus, the old self of the believer is set aside, and the person is reborn. While awaiting the fullness of the divine life at the end of time, the Church already enjoys the first fruits of that life here and now.⁴ The liturgy should be explicated and understood as providing the context and means for the faithful to grow in the divine life in response to the mysteries of salvation. As an icon of that new life, a Christian should be able to challenge and renew his or her old life in and around the Church. Also, it is the liturgy that builds up the body of Christ and makes it the temple of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*, 131.

² See Jn 10:10 and Jn 15:1-6. All biblical references in this book are taken from the NRSV. *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2009.

³ Rom 6:3-4.

⁴ Gaillardetz and Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, 7.

One cannot simply reduce liturgy to a ritual to be performed. Liturgy is a dynamic reality that celebrates a lived and living mystery. In other words, liturgy is an encounter with the living and saving God. It is also about the transformation and salvation of humanity, which is effected by the faithful's participation in the celebrated mystery.¹ Liturgy is about one's encounter with the triune God in word and sacrament, about offering praise and thanksgiving, about enacting the paschal mystery, about celebrating God's love and care for humanity. At the heart of this mystery, then, is God, the creator and saviour of humankind.²

1. A Brief History of the Paschal Mystery

The concept of the 'paschal mystery' gained precedence with the liturgical discussions of the Second Vatican Council, though its history goes back to the patristic period. This notion of the paschal mystery re-emerged in the liturgical renewal of the twentieth century. Vatican II made extensive use of the idea and rooted much of its liturgical and ecclesial theology therein. But this concept has a history prior to the Council. It is embedded in the *Corpus Paulinum* and was greatly expounded upon by the Church Fathers.³ In the middle ages, however, the appreciation of Christian liturgy and life, as seen through the lens of the paschal mystery, diminished. Thanks to the work of liturgical scholars, the paschal mystery achieved renewed prominence around the middle of the twentieth century. The theme of the paschal mystery received much attention before Vatican

¹ Zimmerman, "Editor Notes," 156.

² Zimmerman, "Editor's Notes," 156.

³ Zimmerman, "Paschal Mystery in Patristic Thought," 102-108.

II. Correspondingly, the term *paschale mysterium* occupies a place of primacy in the Council.¹ Scholars argue that in order to properly understand the liturgical renewal initiated by the Second Vatican Council, one must understand the centrality of the paschal mystery in the life and prayer of the Church.² Even though not found as such in Scripture, the Second Vatican Council used this term many times in its documents.³ The paschal mystery is described as the heart of the Church's faith and the source of its salvation.⁴ The Council uses the term paschal mystery to denote the salvific activity of Jesus.⁵ In line with the Council teachings, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "it is this mystery of Christ that the Church proclaims and celebrates in her liturgy so that the faithful may live from it and bear

¹ Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1, 11.

² Gaillardetz and Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, 1; Ferrone, *Liturgy*, 23-25. See also Haunerland, "Mysterium Paschale," 189-209. Haunerland finds that the paschal mystery has not received sufficient attention, in comparison to other concepts like 'active participation' Haunerland, "Mysterium Paschale," 200-201. For more on this matter, see Schrott, *Pascha-Mysterium* and Häussling, "Pascha-Mysterium," 157-165.

³ The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (SC) uses the phrase eight times (§§5, 6 [twice], 61, 104, 106, 107, 109). It occurs in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (GS) twice (§§22, 38), in the Decree on the Training of Priests (OT) once (§8), and in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (AG) once (§14). O'Collins observes that, in GS §22, the relevance of the paschal mystery is said to extend beyond the baptised to the whole human race. O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council*, 63.

⁴ Gaillardetz and Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, 3.

⁵ See O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council*, 61.

witness to it in the world.”¹ Later, we will see that it is this mystery that Chāvāra lived and bore witness to in his life.

2. The Paschal Mystery

In the liturgy, the faithful are brought into mysterious and efficacious contact with the paschal mystery of Christ.² The hallmark of the liturgy should be that it enables people to live the paschal mystery.³ Christ reconciled the world with the Father through his passion, death, and resurrection. The Second Vatican Council defined the paschal mystery as the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ.⁴ The paschal mystery is so profound that it encompasses all the essential aspects of redemption. It could be abbreviated as Christ’s mystery since it incorporates the mystery of the incarnation, public ministry, the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his ascension into heaven, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and the promised second coming.⁵ In each liturgical celebration, the Church proclaims and ritualises the passion, death, resurrection, and glorification of her Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.⁶

2.1. The Meaning of the Paschal Mystery

The concept of the ‘paschal mystery’ consists of two terms: paschal and mystery. There are two distinctive meanings for

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), §1068.

² O’Neill, “General Principles,” 30.

³ Ferrone, *Liturgy*, 92.

⁴ SC §5; Chupungco, *What, Then, Is Liturgy?* 72.

⁵ Weiss, “The Paschal Mystery and the Liturgical Year,” 99; Kemper, Kemper, “Liturgy Notes,” 157.

⁶ Chupungco, “Liturgical Time and Space,” xix.

the word *pascha*, and it has a long history.¹ Pasch, rendered in Hebrew as *Pesach* (פסח), means a 'passing by' and a 'passing through.' Like the Jewish Passover, Jesus, by his passage through the sea of suffering and death, led the new people of God to communion with the Father.² Another suggestion is that the word paschal comes from the Greek *pátha* (verb: *Paschō* [πάσχω] to suffer), which means participation in someone's suffering.³ The first meaning of the Greek *pascha* gives more emphasis to the soteriological aspect of the mystery, while the second meaning underscores the Christological aspect of the mystery. Taken by itself, each lacks comprehensiveness since the paschal mystery is the mystery of Christ and the mystery of salvation. Accordingly, one cannot reduce it to a few crucial historical events in Christ's life; one must encompass the central milestones in the history of salvation.

The 'paschal mystery' includes the term 'mystery,' which is a multi-layered and multifaceted concept. Here, the mystery is considered a central concept underlying the liturgy. The paschal mystery is a rediscovered concept that had a profound impact on the liturgical and pastoral practice of the Church.⁴ Nevertheless, this 'mystery' aspect of the liturgy was only discovered in the twentieth century by Odo Casel through his *Mysterientheologie* (mystery

¹ Vincie, "A History of Holy Week," 108. Also see Vincie, *Celebrating Divine Mystery*, 66-67; Nocent and Turner, *The Liturgical Year*, 2, trans. O'Connell, 347.

² Empereur, "Paschal Mystery," 745 and Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 162-163; see also Bouyer, *Liturgical Piety*, 87, 111, and 192.

³ Bornkamm, "Mystérion," 805.

⁴ Lane, "The Paschal Mystery," 13.

theology) or *Mysterienlehre* (mystery theory).¹ It is important to understand Odo Casel's *Mysterientheologie* (mystery theology) to plumb the depths of the paschal mystery. For Casel, the mystery of Christ in the liturgy is the divine presence.² Romans 6:3-11 provided Casel with a new insight – one who receives baptism participates in Christ's death and resurrection through the ritual act of baptism itself. Thus, salvation is in harmony with the redemptive act, not just grace flowing from it. *Mysteriengegenwart* means mystery in the present.³

In the New Testament, we find that the term 'mystery' is used by Paul in his letters. For Paul, the *mysterion* of God was revealed through Christ and in Christ, who himself serves as the plan as well as its revelation.⁴ Hence, the term 'mystery' refers to the saving plan of God. The fathers of the Church referred to the liturgy as the 'celebration of the sacred mysteries.' According to them, the salvific plan of God is both revealed and sacramentally made present in liturgical acts. But the sacramental work of Christ, making present the saving acts of redemption, is always done by

¹ Kemper, "Liturgy Notes," 157-159; Geldhof, "Meandering in Mystery," 11-32. In his study, Geldhof offers a fundamental, systematic, and theological exploration of the notion of mystery and argues that the liturgical understanding of mystery is the most important achievement of Odo Casel.

² Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 99; Neunheuser, "Odo Casel and the Meaning of the Liturgical Year," 213.

³ Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 6-7 and 38.

⁴ Eph 1:9-10; 3:8-11; Col 1:24-27. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 6. For an account of the occurrence of the term 'mystery' in Scripture, see Zimmerman, "Paschal Mystery in Patristic Thought," 102.

Christ in union with the Church.¹ For Casel, the Church and the mystery of redemption are inextricable. Subsequently, he understood the involvement of the Church in the liturgy and kept the renewed perspective of the Church as the mystical body of Christ.²

Since ritual activity draws humans into participation and understanding of deeper realities, Casel explained that participation in the paschal mystery was mediated through symbols and rituals. Let us now examine the theological content of the paschal mystery. There is no doubt that liturgy is the sum and substance of Christian life. It is not one among many optional activities a Christian might choose. Rather, it is foundational to Christian identity. Liturgy can be compared to an entity having three layers. The outermost layer gives it its form or shape, providing a framework for the celebration of the liturgy, which is the liturgical year with its seasons. The second layer is the real celebration of the liturgy, which means the sacraments and other liturgical services. The rituals, prayers, and euchologies form the second practical, dynamic, and middle layer of the liturgy. It is at this level that we participate in the liturgy of the Church. The third, innermost layer of the liturgy, however, or what is called its essence, is the paschal mystery itself. The paschal mystery is the final reality towards which it points.

2.2. The Layers of the Paschal Mystery

The paschal mystery typically refers to the central salvific events of the New Testament for the new Israel. However,

¹ Also see Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 38.

² Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, 39. We will elaborate on this idea later in the book.

in a broader sense, it includes every action of Jesus spanning the incarnation to his ascension and his sending of the Spirit.¹ For the Jews, the paschal mystery denotes God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the annual commemoration of it in the Jewish feast of Passover. For Christians, the paschal mystery was endowed with a universal scope through the salvific work of Jesus Christ. Historically, the paschal mystery was decisively enacted in the death and resurrection of Jesus.² The paschal mystery is a multifaceted concept encompassing all that is related to the salvation of humankind through Christ in the past, present, and future.

Every Christian liturgy celebrates the paschal mystery since the mystery of Christ is the central wellspring of salvation for all human beings. The paschal mystery of Christ is the sole content of the worship of the Church.³ The paschal mystery has two complementary structural dynamics. Firstly, it consists of God's call, redemptive action, or sanctification. Secondly, it entails the human response of obedience, faith, or worship. Both dynamics find a unique expression in Jesus' life, passion, death, and glorification.⁴ Essentially, liturgical celebrations invite the faithful to participate in the paschal mystery, in union with the dying and rising Christ who is present in the liturgical

¹ Adam, *The Liturgical Year*, trans. O'Connell, 20. The paschal mystery refers not only to the whole mystery of Christ, but the participation of Christians through baptism in that mystery. Harmon, "Finding the Paschal Mystery in the Responsorial Psalm," 227.

² Wainwright, "The Second Vatican Council," 186-187.

³ Pahl and Dyck, "The Paschal Mystery and Its Central Meaning for the Shape of Christian Liturgy," 16-38.

⁴ Campbell, "The Paschal Mystery in the Liturgy of the Hours," 53.

community. In this way, the Church joins her spouse through the paschal mystery, which is the mystery of Christ as well as the Church.

2.2.1. The Mystery of Christ

The paschal mystery refers to the one single saving activity encompassing different aspects of the life of Jesus. It is a term that embodies the underlying unity that points towards the full mystery of Jesus Christ. Everything in the sacred history of salvation is recapitulated, “personified,” and assumed into the person of the incarnated Christ. The paschal mystery constitutes a single event in which Jesus, as a human being fully enters history and exercises his functions as Lord, Christ, and Son of God. The paschal mystery leads one to the heart of Jesus’ person and work.¹ Though the paschal mystery could be summarised by using the paradigm of dying and rising, this paradigm encloses the whole person and mission of Christ.²

This mystery is all about the saviour and thus about the salvation of humanity. The paschal mystery as the mystery of salvation contains various aspects and expressions of salvific activities. This mystery is the mystery of Christ, and Christ himself is a divine mystery, who revealed God as the Trinity to humankind.³ Salvation is the core of the paschal

¹ Regan, “Encountering Christ in Common Prayer,” 49.

² Harmon, “Finding the Paschal Mystery in the Responsorial Psalm,” 227.

³ For a study of the Trinity and the paschal mystery, see von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. For an example of von Balthasar’s Trinitarian theology in connection with the paschal mystery, see von Balthasar, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997.

mystery, which involves God and human beings. Jesus is the new Passover leading the new Israel from death to life, not from Egypt to Canaan. As St Paul writes, “for our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7). Moreover, Passover implies a passage from one context to another, a radical change. This change or passage precisely occurred in the person of Christ.¹ Cyprian Vagaggini explains the Pauline notion of the mystery of Christ by equating ‘sacred history,’ ‘mystery,’ and ‘mystery of Christ’ with Christ Himself.²

The paschal mystery is the mystery of mysteries.³ Besides being the whole mystery of the Jesus event, it reflects not only what Jesus did for humanity but also what the risen Christ does within and through the faithful each day. Zimmermann describes Jesus’ paschal mystery as his passing from divine glory to dwelling among humans and returning to divine glory. Moreover, she adds that it is also a passing of the Church from sinful humanity to having a share in divinity. It enables the Church to share in Jesus’ ministry and to finally share in eternal life itself.⁴

2.2.2. The Mystery of the Church

The liturgy celebrates the paschal mystery that is the mystery of salvation revealed in Scripture, fulfilled in Christ, and now continued by the Church in the power of

¹ Meyendorff, “Christ’s Humanity,” 27. Ryan says that this mystery of faith is Christ. Ryan, “The Liturgical Year,” 67.

² Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 14.

³ Zimmerman, “Editor Notes,” 156.

⁴ Zimmerman, “Editor Notes,” 156.

the Spirit.¹ The liturgy expresses the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church.² In the liturgy, the Church encounters the mystery of Christ. The liturgy manifests not only the mystery of Christ but also the mystery of the Church.³ Accordingly, the paschal mystery includes both the mystery of Christ and that of the Church.

Zimmerman infers that the paschal mystery is not only Christ's mystery, but also the Church's embodiment of his mystery. In other words, Christian living is to be added to Christ's mystery to gain the full and accurate meaning of the paschal mystery. The paschal mystery is the extension of Christ's mystery. It is also the mystery of the Church through its participation in salvation. Liturgy is the ritual celebration of Christ's mystery, while the paschal mystery is the combination of Christ's mystery celebrated in the liturgy and the Christian living of that mystery.⁴ Therefore, the salvific mystery has Christological as well as ecclesiological dimensions. This mystery is divine, sacred, holy, life-giving, praiseworthy, unfathomable, awe-inspiring in nature, and enacted ritually. This idea is repeated in SC, while this mystery is also encountered in the daily life of the faithful.⁵ Christians participate in the paschal mystery and achieve the fulfilment of salvation through the liturgy. Hence, the mystery of the Church consists of preparatory as well as participatory dimensions of the paschal mystery.

¹ SC §§6, 7. Vincie, *Celebrating Divine Mystery*, 15. Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 16-18.

² SC §35:2.

³ SC §26.

⁴ Zimmerman, "Paschal Mystery," 302-312.

⁵ Harmon, "Finding the Paschal Mystery in the Responsorial Psalm," 227.

2.3. Salvation History as Celebrated and Lived Mystery

We have seen that the paschal mystery is the mystery of God's saving work in the history of the world.¹ SC clearly uses the paschal mystery to denote the mysteries of salvation. The salvation mystery has its origins in the Old Testament era. In the New Testament, it is accomplished through Jesus Christ, the saviour. According to Vagaggini, the entirety of sacred history is the mystery of Christ. Everything in history before Christ prefigures his death and resurrection, and everything afterward derives from him.² The Church, which represents the body and sacrament of Christ,³ has human and divine dimensions. The divine dimension of the paschal mystery could be classified into Trinitarian, Christological, and pneumatological aspects of salvation. The anthropological dimension consists of an ecclesiological element, which is complete only with the communion of saints, who lived the paschal mystery in their lives, as well as with the souls of the departed, who are waiting in purgatory for the completion of their salvific experience in heaven.

The paschal mystery is celebrated in the Church using prayers, symbols, and rituals. In the liturgy, the faithful experience the presence of the saviour through the Holy Spirit and enjoy the gifts of salvation. Consequently, the

¹ Gaillardetz and Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, 4.

² Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 15.

³ SC §59. LG also refers to the 'Church' as the 'body of Christ' eight times. For a discussion on this idea, see Chapter 4 of Bouyer, *The Church of God, Body of Christ, and Temple of the Spirit*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn. See also LG §9. For a detailed discussion of the idea of the Church as a sacrament, see Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology*, 242-286.

paschal mystery is the mystery in which the members of the Church participate through the sacraments. The liturgy and sacraments distribute the effects of Christ's salvific work to the Church members. Christians live their daily struggles by dying and rising with Christ through participation in these sacraments. The Church celebrates the paschal mystery and builds the kingdom of Christ on earth through its missionary activities. It prepares and leads the faithful to the fulfilment of their salvation, which happens only at the eschaton and the second coming of Christ. We can, thus, see that the paschal mystery not only has historic phases but also future phases alongside its present phase: the liturgical celebrations of the Church. These phases are filled with the lived examples of the mystery by the holy children of the Church, like that of Chāvāra.

Through the celebration of the paschal mystery, the faithful recall the passion, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus (especially on Sundays). Salvation in a Christian context denotes a new life in Christ, who is raised from death. Jesus' death was for the forgiveness of the sins of humanity. The resurrection of Jesus is the central and pivotal point of the entirety of salvation history.¹ The paschal mystery could be a mystery of Passover from sin, darkness, selfishness, and death into holiness, light, love,

¹ Paul underscores the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus in the story of salvation: if Christ has not been raised from the dead, our preaching is in vain, our faith is futile, and we are still in our sins (1 Cor 15:14, 16). Christ has been raised up for our justification (Rom 4:25). Acceptance of and adherence to the message of the resurrection is the basis of salvation (Rom 10:9). Jesus is the New Creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) and the first fruits of God's harvest of salvation (1 Cor 15:23). Lane, "The Paschal Mystery," 287.

and life. It directs human lives to eternity and to the ever-present reality of God. This mystery leads to active participation through participatory action.¹ As Haunerland puts it, the *participatio actuosa* can be described as a fundamental principle that shapes the liturgy. The essential content of the principle must be the paschal mystery. Form without content is empty activism.²

The paschal mystery continues through the liturgical life of the Church. It is celebrated as well as lived. The Church prepares itself for the fulfilment of the salvific plan of God by daily, weekly, and yearly celebration of the paschal mystery. It is lived by the Christians of the past, present, and future. The Blessed Virgin Mary, the apostles, and the saints realised the paschal mystery in their lives. The departed souls are helped and supported to join the communion of saints by the earthly Church, which itself is struggling to live the salvation mystery in the contemporary world by its prayers and sacrificial acts. The paschal mystery designates a mystery that is a *credendum*, or a given.³

3. Salvation Mystery as History

Succinctly, the paschal mystery is the mystery of salvation that can never be reduced to the mystery of Christ alone. It is the mystery of the *Logos* and *Kyrios*. The *Logos* is present from the beginning until the end. Jesus Christ is the incarnated *Kyrios*. As the mystical body of Christ, the Church continues the salvific acts through its liturgy. At the same time, this salvation mystery is and has a salvation history. The plan of salvation started with the creation of the

¹ Geldhof, "Meandering in Mystery," 32.

² Haunerland, "Mysterium Paschale," 201.

³ Murphy, "Quaestio Disputata," 141.

universe or with the *Logos*. The source of salvation is God the Father. This salvation plan is unfolded in the Old Testament through the selection and preparation of Israel as the people of God. The patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets of Israel had and continue to have very important roles in the history of salvation. It was through them that humanity was prepared to receive the saviour, Jesus Christ.

With the incarnation of the *Logos*, the paschal mystery or salvation mystery enters a new and prominent phase. In this phase, the salvation of humanity is achieved through the life, passion, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Christ is the author of salvation. But this is not the end of salvation history since, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was sent to continue the work of salvation through the ministry of the Church. Thus, the Church becomes the agent of salvation. From the beginning of the Church, the apostles, fathers, doctors, and numerous saints have proclaimed and participated in the paschal mystery through their life and death. Chāvāra is one of the great saints who wholeheartedly participated in the paschal mystery. Let us now examine how Chāvāra understood the paschal mystery in his life, experienced it, and how he could meditate on the mystery of salvation in its fullness.

Chapter 2

CHĀVARA'S VISION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

Chāvāra participated in the paschal mystery through his life of contemplation and prayer. He meditated on the mystery that is celebrated in the liturgy. Meditation involves *anamnesis* (that is memory aroused in the presence of God), praise and worship (that is the expression of feelings and thoughts aroused by recalling God's glory, merciful love, and providence), epiclesis (that is the consecration of corporal and sacramental elements of life by the power of the Holy Spirit), and communion with God (that is the growth in deification, which involves a change in attitude and outlook due to the transformation that happens by the healing touch of God). All these liturgical elements are found in Chāvāra's meditation on the paschal mystery.

1. Chāvāra and the Mystery of Christ

Chāvāra contemplated the salvation mystery in its fullness. We can see his profound desire to perceive the mystery of the incarnation and the entire salvific activities of Jesus in his poetic writing, *Ātmānutāpam*. He describes the mystery of Jesus in beautiful lyrics. A thorough analysis of these verses reveals his understanding of the incarnated mystery.¹ It could be rightly called meditative poetry on the paschal mystery. It can be said that the swan song of Chāvāra is a translation of the economy of salvation into vernacular language and culture. His profound wisdom about the

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, III, 17-22.

mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church is depicted in meditative language with poetic beauty. It is a unique expression of the paschal mystery, which can be described as Chāvāra's vision of the paschal mystery that we celebrate in the liturgy, live in daily life, and expect in its fullness at the eschaton.

In the third canto of *Ātmānutāpam*, Chāvāra expresses his fervent desire to see every incident of the incarnation, beginning from Jesus' stay in the womb of the Virgin Mother Mary till the start of his public life. The fourth canto is a detailed description of the journey of the Virgin Mother with St Joseph to Bethlehem on the day of the nativity and reflections on the helplessness of the Holy Family that night. The nativity-related events are narrated in the fifth canto, where Chāvāra describes the singing of the angel's choir, the Good News announced to the shepherds, and St Joseph's fondling of the child Jesus. The sixth canto continues the nativity events up to the circumcision in the form of a conversation between Our Lady and a shepherdess named Shathi. He also refers to the second coming of the Lord, the end of the world, and the last judgement in it.

The visit of the magi and the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple are depicted in the seventh canto of *Ātmānutāpam*. Following the prophesies of Simon and Anna, Chāvāra reflects deeply on the sorrows of Our Lady foretold by the prophet. Alongside this, there is repentance of his personal sins, admitting them as the cause of all the pains of the Virgin Mother. The passion of Christ is recounted in the eighth canto, which includes his carrying of the cross to Calvary, crucifixion, and death. The ninth canto continues the events following the crucifixion and the scene of *pietà* with the lament of the Virgin Mother Mary. The theme of the tenth canto is the resurrection of Jesus, ascension,

Pentecost, the inception and growth of the Church, conversion of Saul, martyrdom of the apostle James, and the Council of Jerusalem in the presence of the Virgin Mother. The next three cantos describe the life, death, and assumption of the Virgin Mother after the death of Jesus. In these poems, one can find that Chāvāra is immersed in the salvation mystery and meditating on the salvific events, especially those pertaining to Christ. This helps him to assimilate the gospel message into his heart so that Chāvāra could radiate and spread the light of the Good News through his personality and actions.

Chāvāra wrote his own version of the Good News in his poems and became a new gospel to the people of his time. He could translate the paschal mystery into his life by contemplating the mystery of Christ. This enabled him to view each incident of his own life through the lens of salvation history. Reflecting on his birth, growth, failures, and dreams, Chāvāra could integrate the salvation mystery into his own life. He was wise enough to interpret every event of his life in the light of God's plan for the salvation of every human being. His God experience and personal realisation of redemption are gorgeously painted in his writings using poetic words. He wanted to share the Good News of God's saving love through his writings to all his fellow beings and future generations. This desire is solidified in his writings. Chāvāra was well aware of the power of letters. That is why he wrote: "This script will not perish even when I am dead and gone."¹ Through his literary works, the Kerala Church is gifted with a unique edition of the meditation of the paschal mystery.

¹ Chavara, *Chavarul Testament of a Loving Father*, 7.

2. Chāvāra and the Mystery of the Church

Chāvāra had a clear vision of the Church as the extension of the mystery of Christ. This vision about the mystery made him offer himself as a slave to the service of the Church. He was a slave of the Blessed Virgin Mary from his childhood. He venerated Mother Mary, who is the type and symbol of the Church.¹ The Church is more of an organism than an organisation or institute. It is a living, divine-human reality as well as a mystery. Thus, the Church becomes a mystical community. The twentieth century is called the 'century of the rediscovery of the Church.'² The nature of the Church and its deepest essence is that it is, at the same time, the kingdom of God, the priestly people of God, the Bride of Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the body of Christ. Any definition of the Church is an oversimplification, meaning it cannot be defined but described only. The Church is the new Israel, the new people of God. We can find various events in the life of the Israelites - namely, the exodus, the passage through the Red Sea, wandering in the wilderness, the manna, and the water from the rock (1 Cor 10:1-4) - as images or sacramental prefigurations of the Church.³

The ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council presented the image of the Church as the new people of God sharing a common mission and call to holiness. The Church as a

¹ Chāvāra writes about his dedication to the Virgin Mother Mary in his early childhood. His mother used to tell him how the priest told her after dedication: "Tend him with care; know that he's no more yours, But Our Lady's, solemn your sacred bond." Therefore, his mother reminds him: "She your mistress, you her serf, Beware my son, preserve this in your mind." Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, II, 1-24.

² Verheul, *Introduction to Liturgy*, 75.

³ Verheul, *Introduction to Liturgy*, 76.

communion of faithful, centred on Jesus and united in love, is the new awareness created within the Church.¹ The Church is the body of Christ and the fundamental sacrament of the heavenly kingdom. Chāvāra's mind and his dreams were completely ecclesial. All of his actions were oriented towards the flowering of the Church of Kerala. He was a Church-oriented person. He worked hard for the growth of the holiness of the *Suriyani* Church in Kerala. In the following sections, we analyse the various models of the Church in the vision of Chāvāra and see how he meditated on the mystery of Mother Church, aiming at its glory.

2.1. *The New Israel*

We read in Exodus that the journey of Israel from Egypt to the promised land was for worship. Moses asks Pharaoh to let the people of Israel free so that they may go to worship their God in the wilderness.² They travelled from the land of slavery to the mountain of God to offer sacrifice and celebrate a festival. Israel was liberated from Egypt to worship Yahweh. In the same vein, redemption is always oriented toward creating the freedom to worship God. Chāvāra dreamt of a society where all, regardless of caste, sex, or creed, are free and equal before God (Gal 3:26-29). He wished for all to enjoy the status of the children of God and give glory to Him. Having equal rights in the kingdom of God, human beings are heirs of all its benefits equally.

Once saved to worship, the liturgy of the Church keeps the people united in the body of Christ. Only genuine worship of God can help the people of God to grow into the

¹ Aerthayil, "The Liturgical Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church," 63.

² Ex 4:23; 5:1,3,17; 10:3, 24-26.

fullness of their status as the children of God. SC teaches that it is through the liturgy that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church (SC §2). Liturgy is the worship of the Church as well as the manifestation of the mystery of the Church. Liturgical theologians repeat that God works through liturgical action to form faith and unite people to God's own self. Like Moses, Chāvāra led the new Israel of Kerala Church out of the slavery of ignorance and other social evils to give them the opportunity to worship God.

2.2. *The Church as Family*

Jesus taught his disciples to call God 'Our Father,' and this naturally brings in a kind of fraternal relationship between human beings. Chāvāra had this vision of humanity and accepted everyone as his kith and kin.¹ Jesus added all those who obey the word of God to his family.² Jesus gave his own mother as a mother to John and through him to humanity (Jn 19:26-29). The early Church displayed a family spirit, having one heart and mind by gathering, sharing, and praying together: "Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common" (Acts 4:32). This family spirit is found in the vision of Chāvāra. He considered whatever

¹ "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 Jn 3:1). Having deep conviction of this sonship, Chāvāra could call God, *ente appa* (my father).

² "But he said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it'" (Lk 8:21).

he had and received from God as common and spent them for the benefit of God's family members.¹ When Chāvāra left his own family, as promised by Jesus, he gained "a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mk 10:30).

Chāvāra's full name was Kuriakose Elias of the Holy Family, and, in the name itself, we see the holy communion of the three persons of the Holy Family. His vision of the Church was like a family, where there is a merciful father and a loving mother who care for their children. Chāvāra, who experienced God as a loving Father (whom he called *Appa*),² could not but accept every human being as his own brother and sister. The Catholic Church was his mother and the world became his family. For Chāvāra, the Church resembled the family in the parable of the prodigal son found in the gospel of Luke. The Church includes God's children who are always tempted to leave the Father's home and go after selfish desires, wasting the gifts of God, the Father.³ This leads them to a poor condition, where they become slaves of sin and crave for food. God the Father is waiting for their return. But the prodigal son came to his senses through the hardships of life and hunger. Chāvāra was engaged in a constant struggle to make the people aware of their sinfulness and foolish nature by providing means to grow in self-knowledge and understanding.

¹ "So, with yourselves; since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the Church" (1 Cor 12:14).

² "My heart, however, tells me to call you by no other name than my Father." Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 3: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 5.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 4-5.

The Church is also called the household of God by St Paul: “You may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). Those who enjoy God as their Father will find Jesus to be their ‘Elder Brother’ (Heb 2:11-12). Also, St Paul asks Timothy to treat all with a family spirit: “Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters – with absolute purity” (1 Tim 5:1-2). Thus, the Church of Jesus Christ becomes the family of Jesus. With this vision in mind, Chāvāra could write as if Peter the apostle says to his brothers: “Loving *sons*, Christians, keep in love and reverence his dear command...Listen, my *brothers*, this our *Mother* (Blessed Mary)...God our *Father* has willed to take her to his abode, His beloved *spouse*.”¹ Chāvāra wanted to make the house of the Lord “the prayer house for all the peoples” (Mk 11:17). Chāvāra dreamt of a family where God, the Father, and the Mother Church could receive all the children of God and unite them in the mystical body of Christ.

2.3. The Mystical Body of Christ

Worship is the life of the Church and the nature of the Church as the body of Christ is actualised by the public act of it.² The name of the Church, the ‘mystical body of Christ’, expresses the union of the Church community with Christ par excellence.³ Chāvāra was a man of communion, who

¹ Chāvāra, CWC vol. II: *Ātmānutāpam*, XII, 56-70 [emphasis added].

² Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, trans. Moorhouse, 12.

³ The origin of this usage of the mystical body and its history is studied in detail by Henri de Lubac. He finds that no writer of

envisioned unity in the Church. Chāvāra dedicated his life to the cause of the Church and took efforts to revive the life of the Church to which he belonged.¹ Chāvāra loved the Church with much reverence, as Fr. Leopold says:

He had an ardent desire to spread the light of the holy Church in all directions; he was grieved to the point of shedding tears when he heard of the trials and persecutions of the Church and eagerly longed to see the days of her triumph.²

Chāvāra considered union with the head of the Church, the Pope, and the ordinaries appointed by him to be essential for salvation.³ Fr. Leopold writes:

Whenever he happened to hear the news about the Pope, he was always moved to tears, either of sorrow or of joy. It was because of his extraordinary faith that he showed great veneration, love, and obedience towards the Papal Legate who was the representative of the Holy Father, and towards the missionaries who were messengers of the Holy Church.⁴

He sent a sum of Rs 32,007 collected from the faithful to the Holy Father for the expenses of the First Vatican Council in 1870.⁵ "The Church is His beloved Bride who calls to her Lord, and *through Him offers worship* to the Eternal Father" (SC §7). The constitution declares that "in the liturgy, the

Christian antiquity or of the high middle ages uses this to denote the Church. It was later accepted as a term that unfolds the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church. De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 6, 9, and 250.

¹ Panthaplackal, "The Ecclesial Dimension in Chāvāra's Endeavours," 185.

² Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 13.

³ Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 177.

⁴ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 13.

⁵ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I, The Chronicles*, vol. 2, 151.

whole public worship is performed by the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members."¹ Chāvāra had this vision long before the Second Vatican Council.

2.4. The Holy Priesthood

Christians are called "to be a *holy priesthood*, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5b). SC taught that, through *baptism*, humans are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with Him, are buried with Him, and rise with Him; they receive the spirit of adoption as sons "in which we cry: Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15) and, thus, become true adorers whom the Father seeks (Jn 4:23). Chāvāra had an intuitive knowledge of this teaching, as is apparent from his writings. He could assimilate the mystery of salvation into his very being so that each thought, word, and act proved his being as a perfect son of the Father. He called God his own father and loved all as his own. Chāvāra knew holiness is necessary to please God. St Peter taught: "Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15-16). SC §7 teaches that Christ "always *associates the Church with Himself* in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified, and men are sanctified." The public worship of the Church is a cultic expression of the fundamental priestly attitude. All the faithful are royal priests as they share in the one high priesthood of Christ.²

SC §10 undoubtedly puts the aim and object of apostolic works like this: "all *who are made sons of God by faith and baptism* should come together to praise God in the midst of

¹ SC §7.

² Verheul, *Introduction to Liturgy*, 79.

His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper." It is the liturgical gathering and participation in the Eucharist that makes the faithful one in holiness and compels them to love one another as well as fills them with the love of Christ. From the liturgy, grace is poured out and "the *sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God* is achieved in the most efficacious possible way."¹ The sole aim of all Chāvāra's charitable and reforming work was to gather the people of God for the heavenly worship of the Father. He wished to robe them with holiness and to seat them at the heavenly banquet of the Lamb.

2.5. *The Sheepfold of Jesus*

Jesus came in search of the lost sheep. He said: "What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?" (Mt 18:12) Another metaphor for the Church found in the writings of Chāvāra is that of the sheepfold. Chāvāra found in Jesus the Good Shepherd, who came to earth in search of the lost sheep. This idea comes up many times in his poetry.² Chāvāra longed for unity among Christians. He sanctified himself first like Jesus for the sanctification of his brethren.³ Chāvāra had a great desire for the Christianisation of the entire country. He sought blessings from Pope Pius IX for his motherland, the king, and all its

¹ SC §10.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam* II:192-196; V: 173-174.

³ Jn 17:19.

citizens in his letters.¹ He prays that Christianity may become the religion of the whole Kerala region.²

Chāvāra had a profound understanding of the situation of the Malabar Church of his time. He analyses it in the reflections found in his letters.³ Chāvāra was aware of the necessity of good shepherds for the sheep of Malabar. He writes about the frail faith, greed for money, and the simonies practised among the Babylonians, who had authority over the Syrian Christians for many centuries. At the same time, he appreciates the power of endurance, generosity, devotion, the readiness to work for the glory of God, and other virtues found in the European missionaries.⁴ Chāvāra, who had wisdom and prudence, wanted to combine the knowledge and devotion of the missionaries with the Syriac liturgical tradition, language, and East Syrian spiritual patrimony so that the Catholic community of Kerala could benefit from the combination. He was sure that, if the Church has good leaders, it will be blessed with saints. Chāvāra hoped for the reunion of the separated brethren namely, Jacobites of Malabar to the Catholic fold.⁵

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC, vol. 4: The Letters*, 3 and 5. In his letter to Cardinal Alexander Barnabo, the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, he writes: "We beseech you to shower you paternal blessing on our land and to pray God that He may not forsake us." Chāvāra, *CWC, vol. 4: The Letters*, 8.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam III: Appendix 25-28*.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters*, 57.

⁴ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters*, 57.

⁵ Chāvāra, *CWC, vol. 4: The Letters*, 59.

3. Meditated Mystery

In this chapter, we analysed Chāvāra's unique vision of the paschal mystery. He could praise God remembering the wonders and gifts of God lavished through the economy of salvation. Chāvāra delved into the Christ event, was formed, and informed by it. The Christ events shaped his vision of the mystery of the Church. This led him to the conviction that the Church is the new Israel, God's family, the mystical body of Christ, a group of holy priests and the sheepfold of Jesus. Next, we elaborate on Chāvāra's insights on the worship of the Church and the genuine place of worship. He wished to offer true worship in spirit and truth in the body of Christ, the Church, making each organ of the body a holy temple of God. He gathered the scattered sheep into the sheepfold of Jesus so that they can join the heavenly worship and enjoy the wedding banquet of the Lamb of God.

PART II

MEDIATING THE MYSTERY

“The Church proclaims achievement of the paschal mystery in the saints who have suffered and have been glorified with Christ.”¹ Likewise, Chāvāra’s life is an achievement of the paschal mystery because he undertook all of Christ’s pain for His people and is now glorified with Him. The paschal mystery is to be lived by the members of the Church. Throughout the ages, the saints as well as the martyrs gave witness to the paschal mystery through their lives. Thus, they shared in the salvific work of Christ by joining in his sacrificial offering for the salvation of humanity.

The Church celebrates the feast of saints as a part of the celebration of the mysteries of salvation. In other words, “the sanctoral cycle joins and completes the temporal cycle.”² The life of saints commemorated in the liturgy stimulates the Church by their prayer life, suffering for the Church, and service to the Church. Through their intercession, the Church on earth hopes to join the community of saints. By participating in it during their earthly lives, the mediation of the paschal mystery helped the saints to attain the glory they now enjoy. In SC §111, we read that “the feasts of the saints proclaim the wonderful works of Christ in his servants.”³ One can find the

¹ SC §104.

² Rouillard, “The Cult of Saints in the East and the West,” 304. The Chaldean Church celebrates only twenty-five feasts of saints, which are celebrated on Fridays in union with the passion of Christ.

³ In the history of the cult of the saints two kinds of development are found. First, the Church started commemorating the death of

wonderful works of Christ in the life and personality of Chāvāra. Chāvāra is a typical example of the Eastern liturgical spirituality in which the life in Christ achieves its perfection in deification. St Peter wrote:

His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, *through the knowledge of him* who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus, he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them, you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust and may *become participants of the divine nature*.¹

Chāvāra grew in divine wisdom through his deep immersion in the paschal mystery. Thus, he could discern what is needed for the earthly life and to attain godliness. The divine wisdom about the mystery of God helped him to keep away from the corruption of the world and participate in the divine nature. In this section, we investigate the life of Chāvāra to see how he could mediate the paschal mystery in which he participated through meditation. Whoever met Chāvāra could experience the divine signature of the Holy Spirit in his character. Chāvāra's contemplation of Christ's mystery brought a holy charm to his personality and vigour to his ministry of the mystery of the Church.

In the East, liturgy cannot be separated from one's faith and life. This integral nature of faith lived, celebrated, and explained is best examined by analysing the life and

other saints, mainly martyrs or bishops, and then, over time, people began to celebrate the memory of all those witnesses and shepherds who built up the universal Church by their teaching and deeds. Rouillard, "The Cult of Saints in the East and the West," 304.

¹ 2 Pet 1:3-4; [emphasis added].

activities of Chāvāra. Unlike in the West, the East always gave importance to the experiential dimension of faith more than the formulation and articulation of faith. So, the real theology of the Eastern liturgy is found in the liturgy and prayer life of the people of God. To understand the inner self of Chāvāra, we need some idea about the Eastern understanding of spirituality. There are some remarkable differences between the spiritual, liturgical, and theological approaches of the East and West. Chāvāra, being a true adherer of the Eastern Liturgical tradition, demonstrates the unique characteristics of Eastern spirituality in his character and personality. Let us briefly see a few notable variations in the style of the East and West towards Christian life and knowledge of God.

There are few factors that distinguish the faith traditions of the East from the West. Some events that shaped Western Christianity never affected the East, which contributed to the rich tradition of the East.¹ Accordingly, in the East, monasticism took the Church toward the ideal of perfection, with no doubt about knowing God, and, salvation remained participation in God's restoration of the world, as it had been in the patristic age.² What the East retained was a sense of rite and symbol, which was lost by the West when the primary theological act was controlled by practitioners of

¹ The Pelagian controversy, the Scholasticisation of theology in the middle ages, the Reformation in Europe, the confrontation with Modernity, the crisis of confidence with the development of science, medicine and technology, and the crisis due to the effects of the Enlightenment that affected the West never had any influence in the East. Charry, "West Meets East," 2.

² There was no doctrinal division, and salvation never became about rescuing individuals from hell but remained about participation in God's restoration of the world.

secondary theology, who were more concerned over the correct formulation of doctrine.¹ In the East, theology or the written reflection on God remained embedded in and oriented toward Christian piety, especially prayer and liturgical worship. The Christian East held deep humanism of the church fathers. Their theology was of a first-order where attachment to God was never separated from knowing God through prayer and other practices of piety. The reason was never separated from or put against revelation.² The East took up the Greek philosophical interest in being and was more interested in the beauty of the immediately present God.³ These features of the Eastern approach are found in the being and doing of Chāvāra. He was attracted to monastic life to achieve perfection of holiness. He longed to participate in God's plan for the restoration of the world in line with the patristic thought. Chāvāra was not a man bothered much about doctrine but about orthodoxy in its realest sense, that is correct worship and prayer life. He never separated knowledge of God from prayer and devotions. He could combine revelation and reason in a balanced way in his life and teachings.

In the Western approach, the liturgy imbues ethical strength for the journey of life, whereas, in the Eastern approach, the liturgy is a privileged experience of God's rule and kingdom on earth.⁴ The peculiar characteristics of

¹ Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 108-109.

² Charry, "West Meets East," 2.

³ Unlike the West, where salvation comes from an event that God effects (Anselm) or a decision that a person makes (Karl Barth), for the East, salvation is the transformation of the self into the beauty of God. Charry, "West Meets East," 3.

⁴ Irwin, "Liturgical Theology," 109.

Eastern liturgies listed in a study are as follows:¹ the eastern rites are beautiful and moving; rich in theological content as their rites illustrate the maxim *legem credendi lex statuit supplicandi*² and the liturgy is itself a *locus theologicus* of first-rate importance; one can find in the rites ardent piety, attended devotion to all the great mysteries, like the Holy Trinity, passion of Christ, the Holy Eucharist, and the Mother of God;³ they have a wealth of ascetical teaching in the offices and prayers devoted to the awakening of compunction, an abiding and perpetual sorrow for sin; there is a lyric beauty in the offices, a large collection of hymns.⁴ The East sees Christianity as a way of worship in the life of prayer and liturgy, while the West sees it as a way of thought or a set of ideas whose truth is to be perfectly worked out in order to dispel all false notions.⁵ Again, one may easily identify in Chāvāra's life a craving to experience the kingdom of God on earth. He was a profound devotee of all the mysteries of salvation. His ascetical and vigorous liturgical life and prayer life gifted him with compunction and a perpetually contrite heart. Through a life of ideal worship, Chāvāra accelerated towards the perfection of the heavenly Father (Mt 5:48).

¹ Barton, "The Study of Eastern Liturgies," 9-10.

² Explanation of this adage is given in detail in the next chapter.

³ Barton, "The Study of Eastern Liturgies," 11.

⁴ Barton, "The Study of Eastern Liturgies," 13.

⁵ Charry, "West Meets East," 2-3.

Chapter 3

LEX ORANDI, LEX CREDENDI, LEX VIVENDI

If liturgy is the celebration of the paschal mystery, Chāvāra celebrated the mystery not only on the altar, but throughout his life. Consequently, his entire life became liturgical in the broadest sense of the word. The power of liturgy is that it begets an ethical being with self-conscience. Now, let us see how the participation in the divine mystery helped Chāvāra to become a more responsible ethical being with a healthy relationship with the entire universe. We have heard about the axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi*.¹ But this will be complete

¹ This prominent formula appears to have originated with Prosper of Aquitaine (d. after 455), a fifth-century Church father who engaged in a controversy on grace in a treatise formerly attributed to Pope Celestine I, *the Capitula or Praeteritorum Sedis Apostolicae episcoporum auctoritates, de gratia Dei et libero voluntatis arbitrio*: Let the rule of prayer lay down the rule of faith, *lex supplicandi statuat legem credendi*. De Clerck, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 181. Thus, *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of prayer [is] the law of faith) is a derivative of a sentence taken from the work of Prosper of Aquitaine. The passage reads as follows: “*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*” (PL 51, 209), “so that the law of beseeching determines [or founds, or grounds] the law of believing.” Geldhof, “Liturgical Theology” [online]. For a complete English version of the treatise, see Saint Prosper of Aquitaine, “Official Pronouncements of the Apostolic See on Divine Grace and Free Will,” 183. The context in which Prosper invokes this principle is an argument against semi-Pelagianism. See also a discussion on the adage in Johnson, *Praying and Believing in Early Christianity*, 1-23.

only by adding *lex vivendi*.¹ The law of prayer is the law of belief. However, the law of one's belief is reflected in one's law of living or ethical life. The law of living includes both the law of being *and* the law of doing (*lex entis et lex agendi*) for a person. One who prays in the presence of God through remembering God's saving acts – and thereby actively participating in the paschal mystery – possesses a self-awareness about the relationality of human existence. Human beings who realise their close relationship with God, their fellow beings, and the entirety of creation experience a change of attitude and worldview, embracing a transformation in their daily lives and actions.

Chāvāra could assimilate the true wisdom of liturgy in his heart. Furthermore, the paschal mystery calls a Christian to live a life according to the great commandment of love. Liturgical life enabled Chāvāra to live a life full of love for God and neighbours. Love demands that one die to one's selfish motives and care for others. This requires a paschal movement of dying to personal sinfulness.² It is an ongoing

¹ The third term *lex vivendi* was added to this relationship by Kevin Irwin in his book *Models of the Eucharist*, 29-30, 294. This term points to the connection between the practices of prayer, belief, and the ethical actions of a person. This means that Christian liturgical practice is not only oriented toward Christian belief but also toward the lives of Christian persons and communities in and with the world. See also Anderson and Morrill, eds., *Liturgy and the Moral Self*, 4-5.

² Lane, "The Paschal Mystery," 290. Fagerberg refers to asceticism as the art of practising death and resurrection ahead of the final judgement. So, for him, it is pre-emptive mortification. Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism*, 100-101, 121. Bouyer says that Christ's death makes a Christian capable of dying efficaciously. Bouyer, *The Paschal Mystery*, xiv.

process, directed towards perfect union with the Divine and the fullness of divine life at the eschaton. Consequently, the paschal mystery is lived out in terms of Christian hope. The paschal mystery as experienced in Christian life thus produces a certain tension between that which is and that which is yet to come, between the present and the future, and between being and becoming.¹ Let us examine how Chāvāra could live out the tension and rhythm inherent in the paschal mystery.

1. Chāvāra: A Man of *Pascha* - Dying and Rising

Chāvāra's encounter with the saving mystery in meditation led him to intense involvement in the mystery. To be a Christian implies that one participates in the death of Christ to rise with Him into eternal life.² Personal and internal death is necessary to live the paschal mystery. Christians encounter the paschal mystery in their everyday living. There is a paradox involved in the paschal mystery: the paradox of a death that leads to life. This paradox is closely related to Jesus' earthly life.³ Death presupposes a radical change demanded by the Christian life. This is described using various concepts. One is to be born anew and lose one's life to gain it. The parable of the grain of wheat that falls and dies to bear more fruit displays the logic of this change.⁴ The inner unity and dialectic that exists between dying and rising is the core of the paschal mystery. To become a Christian, one must practise the implications of

¹ Lane, "The Paschal Mystery," 290.

² Schmemmann, "The Mystery of Easter," 17.

³ This is the paradox of power in weakness and of life in death. Lane, "The Paschal Mystery," 288.

⁴ Jn 12:24; see Lane, "The Paschal Mystery," 288.

the paschal mystery. It requires that one share in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ through one's own life. That is why we pray like this in the liturgy: "Make us, who actively participate in Your paschal mystery, heirs to Your heavenly kingdom."¹ Next, I shall analyse the life of Chāvāra under the headings taken from the Eucharistic liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Church.

1.1. Participating in the Mystery

Christian participation in the paschal mystery is, therefore, nothing less than the way a redeemed world is, so to speak, to be done.² Kavanagh used to say that liturgy is "doing the world the way the world was meant to be done." Meditating on the mystery of salvation brings out the meaning of the world and defines the relationship of one to the world. This sort of engagement does not leave things as they are but alters and transforms the world. The liturgical wisdom of Chāvāra does not describe the world as one knows on earth but prescribes and ascribes action in relation to it. More powerfully stated, the liturgy does not simply draw a picture of the way the world should be, rather it *creates* the world that *is*. Liturgy is a paradigm that asserts: "This is the way the world ought to be."³ Therefore, liturgy can be apprehended as a means of gaining knowledge that is not merely information about the world as it could be but is also key to transforming the world for better or worse. Ultimately, the transmitted knowledge is of more than just

¹ Prayer of the celebrant after the *Karozutha* prayer of the Liturgy of the Word in the Season of Elijah, Sliba, and the Cross. *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 102.

² Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 100.

³ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 94ff.

the patterned actions of the liturgy: it is inherent knowledge of the holy mysteries and ethical values at its core. It is knowledge gained, not by rational argument or logic but implicitly by the heart.

Syro-Malabar liturgy provides a context for helping a person involved in the celebration to delve into the paschal mystery so that they will get a fresh and new Christian vision of life. Chāvāra not only meditated on the living mystery but could mediate it through his very being and personality.

1.1.1. In Peace and Unity with One Another¹

To live in peace and harmony with one's fellow beings demands occasions of dying to self through forgiving and forgetting other's faults. Only then will one be risen with Christ after *kenosis*, glorifying God through one's suffering, passion, and death to sin. This is the genuine participation in the paschal mystery. Forgiving Chāvāra is found in the case of Kudackachira Antony, bishop Roccas, and Mattan Manjooran.² Chāvāra instructed all to forgive each other,

¹ *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 65.

² On several occasions, Kudackachira had created troubles for Chāvāra. Still, Chāvāra writes very carefully about him in the *Chronicles* so as not to affect his reputation. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I: The Chronicles*, 154-159. Chāvāra behaved very kindly and politely with Bishop Roccas and negotiated his return to Bagdad from Kochi. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I: Chronicles*, 91-92. In his testament to his religious community, Chāvāra asked to help Manjoor Kalapurackal Mathan (who filed a fraud case in the court of Alapuzha against Chāvāra) if he was in financial strain. The Hindu judge, who dismissed the case, was greatly impressed by Chāvāra's noble and forgiving personality. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, 73.

reminding them “otherwise what is the difference between you and the gentiles”.¹ In his Testament, he says: “Even animals retaliate against those who resent them. The ability to overlook faults in others and to forgive them is possible only for those who are strong, prudent, and honourable.”² The beginning hymn of the Eucharistic celebration of SMC reminds the participants of the last supper and the command of Jesus to “do this in memory of me.”³ Chāvāra always had this reconciling attitude in his mind and manifested it several times during his life. If a need for reconciliation is felt before sacrifice, as Jesus taught, one should not offer sacrifices while harbouring a grudge (Mt 5:43-45). Chāvāra followed Jesus and was resolved to prepare a new altar with the love of Jesus and proclaimed that he carried a fully reconciled heart to offer the holy *Qurbana*.⁴

A person expresses solidarity with the less privileged ones if they could recognise the presence of Christ in them and acknowledge them as the temple of God. Chāvāra had a

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters X/6*, 104. Mt 6:14-15; Mt 5:46-47.

² Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 12-13.

³ The holy *Qurbana* of the Syro-Malabar Church (SMC) begins with the following hymn sung by the Celebrant: “As our Lord commanded, On the feast of Passover, Let us gather in His holy name, In unity, let us offer this sacrifice.” The response of the community is: “Let us be reconciled, And prepare a new altar, With the love of the Lord Jesus, Let us offer this *Qurbana*.” *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 13.

⁴ In the Syriac traditions (i.e., Chaldean and Antiochene), the Eucharistic liturgy is referred to by a Semitic word, *Qurbana*, which literally means “offering.” Vadakkal, *The East Syrian Anaphora of Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 162.

special concern for the poor and daily labourers whom he respected as the children of God. Accordingly, he instructed: “Don’t deny or delay just wages to labourers; for, it is a grave sin crying out before the throne of God. Don’t humiliate or trouble the poor; for, God will seek retribution from you on account of their tears.”¹ He opted for the poor long before the liberation theologians.²

Chāvāra speaks about the unity within the religious community like this: “The strength of the monasteries is not the thickness of walls but the zeal and holiness of those who dwell in.”³ He is looking into the core and real essence of unity that comes through the grace of the Holy Spirit.⁴ He knew that unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit and the nature of God, who is the communion of three persons. Chāvāra was

¹ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 24.

² The preferential option for the poor is the core spirituality of liberation theology and its most fundamental contribution to the universal Church. Gutiérrez, *The Density of the Present*, 128 and 166. It is one of the newer principles of the Catholic social teaching articulated in the latter half of the twentieth century. “This love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without health care and, above all, those without hope of a better future.” Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004), *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, §182-184. Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html [accessed 15 June 2020].

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, VI/1, 65.

⁴ Col 3:14: “For unity in love, the bond of perfection through the fullness of Holy Spirit...” *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 37. Commission for Liturgy, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 16-17.

a great devotee of the Holy Family which is a symbol of the Holy Trinity on earth. Chāvāra always stood for unity and peace in his life and maintained these virtues in his personal life, by dying to his egotistic inclinations. Also, we know that only a truly humble person can acknowledge the favours they received. Chāvāra praises and gives thanks to God and his other benefactors for all the gifts he received throughout his life in his writings.¹ Chāvāra says:

For is it because of my power and skill that I did things whatsoever? How is it that you came hither? Who called me from home? How did I become a priest? How could I join the community and become a member of the congregation? Why should anyone address me as Prior? How did I become so come by the present status? Do you think I deserve any one of these favours? Not at all, to be sure. If so, remember that it is God's will that is being accomplished.²

Chāvāra had a gratitude-filled mind and was aware that all that he has belongs to God. Whatever he received from God, he offered to God so that He can use it for the service of others. Thus Chāvāra could live the paschal mystery.

1.1.2. With Due Reverence and Respect³

Chāvāra respected the mystery of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and served the mystery present in human beings considering them temples of God. Just like the Syro-Malabar

¹ His gratitude for God's gift of human vocation, parents, childhood, family, protection from epidemics, and call to priesthood are seen in the first two parts of the *Ātmānutāpam*. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, 1 and 2, pages 1-16.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1.

³ *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 64.

Qurbana starts with the angelic hymn of the nativity, we see a long and illustrated meditation on the incarnation mystery and description of nativity-related events in the *Ātmānutāpam* of Chāvāra. Chāvāra had a great attachment to the mystery of Christ incarnated and approached the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament with unusual devotion and love.¹ Fr. Leopold wrote:

The admirable dignity, devotion, and recollection with which he celebrated the sacred Liturgy made a great impression upon those who participated in it. Besides the usual visits to the Blessed Sacrament enjoined by the Rule, he used to spend long hours on his knees, immersed in prayer before the Tabernacle.²

The very remembrance of the last supper at the behest of Jesus reminds the participants of the holy *Qurbana* of his most important commandment of love as they are gathered around the altar.³ Thus, *anamnesis* of the salvation mystery recalls the need for reconciliation, the love of neighbour, and a renewed life in Jesus. The whole Eucharist is an *anamnesis* of and *Eucharistia* for the salvation mystery—revealed from creation through the incarnation and to be completed in the second coming of Jesus Christ.⁴ Following the Eucharistic

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*. Especially see his desire to see all those events directly in the third canto of his *Ātmānutāpam*. I am not repeating the details since it is already discussed in an earlier chapter.

² Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 13.

³ Jn 15:16.

⁴ Pauly Maniyattu observes that East Syrian Liturgy has two types of commemorations: the commemoration of the mystery of Christ, and the commemoration of the mystery of the Church and of the world. The Syriac word *uhdaha* is used for the

liturgy, Chāvāra's thoughts were filled with *anamnesis* and *Eucharistia* in the real meaning of the words. He remembers and renders gratitude for the endless mercy and providential love of God in each event during his early life. *Ātmānutāpam* is a journey through the Christ-event, recalling the gospel values and the moral teachings of the Master whom he followed.

There is a special rhythm to the paschal mystery. It is the rhythm of nature, like the setting and rising of the sun, dying and rising with Jesus Christ. One dies to one's self by forgiving, accepting faults, tolerating humiliation, and surrendering one's plan to God's will. It includes trusting God in each step of one's life, showing faith in the providing God. Like the grain of wheat (Jn 12:24), Chāvāra died to his own will and so could bear much fruit for the Church.

1.2. Approaching the Mystery

How Chāvāra approached the salvation mystery is shown by some attitudes of the mind demanded by the participants of holy *Qurbana* in the Syro-Malabar Church. They have to gather around the mystery with deep love and true faith¹, with complete dedication and humility, and with pure and contrite hearts.²

commemoration of events such as the Passover in the Old Testament, whereas the word *dukhrana* is used for the cultic commemoration of persons. Liturgy celebrates the *dukhrana* of the mother of Christ, saints, departed brethren, and the living ones. Maniyattu, "Theological Significance of Uhdana and Dukhrana in the East Syrian Eucharistic Liturgy," 231.

¹ *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 47.

² *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 64.

1.2.1. With Deep Love and True Faith

Chāvāra resembled king David, who was a man after God’s own heart. It is the apostle Paul who narrates David as follows: “In his testimony about him he said, ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes’” (Acts 13:22). Like David, Chāvāra did whatever God wanted him to do. Though Chāvāra laments of his imperfect life, his heart was always pointed toward God. He followed God’s will in everything to carry out His wishes. Similar to David, Chāvāra put his absolute trust in God. Chāvāra could face dangerous situations like that of Rocco’s schism with strong faith and confidence like David who fearlessly faced Goliath because he was sure that the Lord was also with him (1 Sam 17:37). Chāvāra trusted God in every situation and could see the providence of God in trials. That is why he could advise his parish people: “Entrust yourself to the divine providence when you are faced with trials and tribulations, diseases and difficulties. He is not a strong person who is patient only when he is delighted.”¹ He believed that if one asks with a humble heart God will provide and keep His promises.²

Chāvāra was faithful to God and delighted in God’s word and kept his statutes. He gained a heart filled with genuine love (*pattangayaya sneham*) by meditating on the passion of Christ. His colloquies and poetry reveal his desire to console and comfort the suffering Jesus, confessing that

¹ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 27.

² In his writings, we see the echo of Jesus’ words: “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you” (Mt 7:7). Chāvāra also admonishes us to ask for the gifts of deep prayer and sanctity with humility. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1.

all the pain is caused by his sins.¹ He wrote about meditation: "If I bear true love for Jesus, I will have enough matter to talk with Him. If not, the very feeling of being with Him (togetherness) is rewarding."² Subsequently, Chāvāra asks for the help of St Theresa of Avila to get this genuine love for him so that she may find it easy then to teach him meditation. The same idea is repeated in his instruction to the religious sisters when he teaches them how to meditate. He wrote in a letter to them that, in the beginning, they may not understand the language of the bridegroom but slowly:

will begin to understand His speech, he will speak more and more distinctly and show you the magnitude of his love. Then the bride will love more and more, and the bridegroom will rejoice over it and adorn her with ornaments. Thus commences the divine union. Then on, there will be nothing to fear.³

Chāvāra was sure that meditation, first of all, requires that one be united in love with God.⁴ Chāvāra instructs his spiritual daughters like this:

Ah! My dear children, these days you must meditate on the love of Jesus Christ ... receive holy communion each day and reflect on God's

¹ See his meditation on the wounds of Jesus on His holy face, head, eyes, and each part of His body on the pages of his Colloquies. He considered his sins as the reason for the sufferings of the Lord and hopes that this passion will help him to join the company of His spouses. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 6-8; 10-12.

² Chāvāra, *CWC, vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 2.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC, vol. IV: The Letters*, VII/8, 85.

⁴ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 3.

love... Above all, learn the art of loving Jesus Christ... Oh Lord, do not be separate from us until we are one with you.¹

Chāvāra had a deep faith in the love of God and addressed Jesus as his saviour and Bridegroom, expressing the level of intimacy in the relationship of his soul with Jesus.² He cried out in great love to the Lord: "If you loved me so much, how could I feel like loving anything else other than your person. O my Lord vouchsafe me to love you at least as much as I hurt you."³ He joins St Paul to say:

How ungrateful have I been to your graces...that is, not because we loved God but because that God loved us. O! how wonderful is God's love and goodness! The depth of His patience! While we were His enemies, God so loved us as to die for us. Then if we go near Him to love Him, He can't help loving us. Alas! Though I had known all these I did in no way requite His love. Dear Father, what made you love me so greatly when I was so unworthy of your love.⁴

The one who loves God can identify what is painful to God. Chāvāra wept over his small sins, knowing that, since God loved him so dearly and bestowed numerous blessings upon him, God will be wounded by his ungrateful actions

¹ Chāvāra, CWC vol. IV: *The Letters*, VII/8, 82-83.

² Chāvāra, CWC vol. III: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 3.

³ Chāvāra, CWC vol. III: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 8.

⁴ Chāvāra, CWC vol. III: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 10-11. Here, Chāvāra refers to Rom 5:8: "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." He also refers to 1 Jn 4:9-10: "God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."

like a loving Father. Similarly, Chāvāra laments that he is unworthy of all the blessings he received and realises that he is a sinful person. Chāvāra owned a very grateful heart. He proclaimed God’s wonderful deeds in his writings and ceaselessly offered praise and thanks to God’s merciful love, just as we read in Ps 26:6–7. Chāvāra loved God so dearly that he could sing like David.¹ God was everything for him so that there is no other solace besides Him:

Severed from you, my God my only good
 What joy, peace or well-being can be mine?
 You, my Love, my joy and all my good fortune
 If not with you, how could I live my life
 My every breath, my food, my drink
 What solace have I save in you!²

About the mercy of God, who forgives our sins, Chāvāra had a strong conviction and so he advised his spiritual daughters,

He is a merciful God. Even one is a great sinner
 but deserts sin and ask pardon, He will accept
 him with mercy. Not only that He will never
 remember his sins. He said He will lock all his
 sins in a box and throw away the key of the box in
 the deep sea. So on this blessed day ask

¹ In Ps 62, we pray: “For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honour; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God” (Ps 62:5-7).

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, III, 141-146. The psalmist sings: “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps 73:25-26).

forgiveness for all our sins humbly. Ask for grace
to never grow less in divine love.¹

Chāvāra's *anamnesis* reminded him of who he is, where he stands, what is he doing, and in which direction he is moving in life. The prayers of the liturgy also make clear that the gathered Church is comprised of human beings, who are created and saved by God, while, at the same, reminding them that they are unworthy sinners: forgiven but in need of God's mercy.²

1.2.2. With Complete Dedication and Humility

The prayer of the celebrant of the Eucharistic liturgy before the *Laku Mara* hymn is a typical example of Chāvāra's perspective towards his own life and capacities.

Lord our God, for all the helps and blessings You
have bestowed on us and for which we can *never*
be grateful enough, we offer You *never-ending praise*
and glory in the Church, crowned like a spouse
with every goodness and grace. You are the
creator and Lord of all.³

Chāvāra expressed his deep joy in all his works during the inauguration of the new building for the convent of sisters of TOCD in 1867 by saying: 'Let He (God) be praised more and glorified at all times and always.'⁴ The only aim of his dynamic life was the greater glory of God. Chāvāra

¹ *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent* (Malayalam), vol. 1, 186.

² "Bless your servants, and listen to our prayers, sinners though we are," *Liturgy of the Hours*, 11; "Bless us with the forgiveness of our sins," *Liturgy of the Hours*, 17; "Let your mercy always abide in us, who are frail and sinful. Forgive us our sins and remit our debts," *Liturgy of the Hours* 19, 22, 24, 25, 28, 31, 55, 42, 55, and 59.

³ *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 24.

⁴ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I: Chronicles*, 137.

surrendered to the will of God without any compromise. In his opinion, “the significant mark of a true religious is total negation of their self-will and perfect obedience as though he had no eyes nor ears of his own.”¹ We see this kind of obedience manifested in his life, even when the Vicar-Apostolic transferred him contrary to his cherished desires.² Chāvāra could graciously accept adverse situations as paternal corrections. Conforming one’s will to God’s will, as made known through the superiors, was very much part of his consecrated and priestly life.³

Chāvāra wrote: “A devotee used to say: ‘In this world, everything happens according to my wish; for, I wish only that which is willed by God.’”⁴ It is not difficult to identify this devotee as Chāvāra, who said, when asked about his wish on his sickbed:

Do I have a will of my own? I do not desire either to go and stay there or to stay here. I am ready to do as I am told. I do not wish to do anything according to my own will. I am ready to do only what I am asked to do.⁵

He could set a good example to the other religious as he wanted to give up his will completely. This is a perfect example of the mediation of the mystery of Christ, who

¹ Chāvāra, CWC vol. IV: *The Letters* (Testaments), 70.

² Chāvāra, CWC vol. I: *Chronicles*, 24.

³ In his colloquies with the heavenly Father, Chāvāra says; “remember it is God’s will that is being accomplished” and “O my Lord, from now on, I resolve to die to my own will and submit myself always to your holy will. I seek not to follow anybody’s will except your own.” Chāvāra, CWC vol. III: *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1 and 7.

⁴ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 27.

⁵ *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent*, vol. II, 10.

“humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross (Phil 2:8.)” During his illness and when he lost his eyesight, he expressed exemplary patience and perseverance.¹ In a circular to the members of his congregation, he writes that “these monasteries are founded by God and will by him to be mirrors of virtues and assembly of holy people.” He continues that they should not reduce them “into an association of self-willed stewards or mere business administrators.”² Chāvāra had a mind of strong dedication and promoted hard work to fight evils like laziness and other bad habits. He advised:

Labour according to your status in life. Refusing to work is not the style of a respectable person, but would fit only the indecent, who do not have a family and progeny. Laziness is the mother of all vices; it ends up in inculcating bad habits such as drinking.³

Chāvāra had the great conviction that everything he has is given or a free gift from God, and this marks a sure sign of humility. Humbly, he acknowledged that every favour he received in his life is from the infinite mercy of God, who poured gifts on an ungrateful soul.⁴ Chāvāra wrote to his

¹ The sisters wrote: “He suffered all the above mentioned diseases with great patience and resignation for three months. But one thing that surprised people was this. When people lose their eyesight normally people become irritated and very sorrowful. But this was not seen in our *Priorachan*. He was always pleasant with a smile on his face. Looking at his face, no one would understand that he was suffering much. On the other hand, he looked joyful.” *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent*, vol. II, 11.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters (Circulars)*, VI/1, 62.

³ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 19.

⁴ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, II, 60.

nephew that he was given more time than his predecessors for the benefit of others. But he feels guilty:

It is only now I realize fully that without making proper use of the talents given me, I had buried them deep like an idiot. My conscience is accusing me now for the fault. Even now I am trying to find lame excuses and false reasons for my failure.¹

Nonetheless, we know that it is out of his deep humility that he compares himself to the one servant who hid his talent in the parable of the talents (Mt 25:25). Chāvāra had a deep conviction and awareness that the God-given limbs, eyes, ears, hands, legs, etc. are to be used only for the glory of God the Creator. Therefore he considered even minor aberrations as serious faults. His feeling could be compared to that of Peter after the miraculous fishing.² This made him more humble, resulting in him receiving more grace from God.³

Another image of sin found in the prayers of the liturgy is one that needs healing, which is also a significant aspect of East Syriac moral theology.⁴ In this Eastern biblical view of sin and forgiveness, a medical conceptual model is applied, rather than the juridical conceptual model used in the West. In the liturgical prayer, sin is seen as a wound or a state of sickness in need of healing: “You the Healer of our lives. May Your mercy’s medicine save us from the wounds

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters*, 53.

² “But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!’” (Lk 5:8).

³ “But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word” (Is 66:2b).

⁴ Vechoor, “Catholic Moral Theology from the Eastern and East Syriac Perspectives,” 364.

of sin.”¹ The only medicine that can effect this healing is repentance and penitence, along with God’s mercy. Christ is the good physician of souls who has the healing power of forgiveness.² In the *Colloquies* of Chāvāra, we read that Jesus prepared medicines out of blood flowing from his wounds to make the sick souls.³ Chāvāra uses this imagery again in his meditation on his vocation. It is found related to the sacrament of reconciliation. He says: “To cure your failures and spiritual wounds, He prepared wisdom medicine of confession with his divine blood and allowed you to take that medicine frequently.”⁴ Chāvāra could wash away even his smallest sins with tears of repentance.

1.2.3. With Pure and Contrite Heart

Chāvāra had participated in the divine mystery to such a level that he felt unworthy to see and experience the presence of God. He became humble and contrite through his deep meditation on God’s mercy and providential love,

¹ *Liturgy of the Hours* (LH), 57.

² The image of health and beseeching the help of the Healer of life is found in the Liturgy of the Hours of the SMC. “Lord, our God, you are the giver of health to our bodies” LH 11; “health to the sick” LH 15, 42, 59; “Heal the sick; lift those who fall, Bestow health to one and all; Cleanse the sins from every one; Increase holiness in all” LH 37, 56. All of these prayers point to the public ministry of Jesus Christ, who healed the sick, forgave sinners, and proclaimed: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” (Mk 2:17).

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 10.

⁴ This idea is lost in English translation but clear in the original Malayalam version. See Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Dhyanasalapangal* (Malayalam), 55.

which is expressed in his writings. In *Ātmānutāpam*, Chāvāra cries that his association with unchristian friends during his training through *Kalari*¹ caused ingratitude since he indulged in pagan blindness.² His mother gave him good formation to grow in faith and devotion in the early days of his childhood. Yet he laments that he could not retain the innocence of life during his school days. He joins the Psalmist in praying, Lord, “not to remember my childhood sins” (Ps 25:7). Again, he regrets losing his infant piety, comparing himself to the prodigal son.³ Hence, he exhorted families to be very careful about the virtue of chastity and modesty in dressing.⁴

One of the significant aspects of the Syro-Malabar liturgy is the self-awareness of the weak and sinful human condition. Consequently, the prayers express the constant need for mercy, grace, and blessing from God, with the words “make us worthy.”⁵ Chāvāra warned against pride and arrogance, giving the example of David, who offended God by counting the number of people in his country (2 Sam

¹ This is the local rural school, where the teacher is called *Aasan*. *Ezhuthu palli*, *Asan Kalari*, or *Pallikkoodam* are the other names for the same system of primary education in Kerala before the English education system started. *Ezhuthupallis* were village schools and major centres for initiating elementary education for non-Brahmin youths. In each *Kara* or village, they functioned under the *Ezhuthachan* or *Asan*. The pupils were initiated in reading, writing, arithmetic, the *Kavyas*, rudiments of astronomy, and astrology. See more in Menon, *Legacy of Kerala*, 61.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam I*: 93-112.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam II*: 25-34.

⁴ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 26.

⁵ “Make us worthy to acclaim his victory.” Commission for Liturgy, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 4, 11, 21, 29, 38, 41, 58.

24).¹ Even over small sins Chāvāra repented, admitting his weakness and asking pardon from God. He had the penitent heart of David, who cried out: “But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression” (Ps 19:12-13). He wept over his childhood sins and was humble enough to confess his small failings in life. However, Chāvāra was confident because he had a pure conscience. We see proof of it from his letters to Cardinal Alexander Barnabo. He writes, “We are sure that God will not forsake those who pray to Him earnestly and with a pure conscience.”²

Even though he was washed by the precious blood of Jesus, Chāvāra weeps over his sins and says that he has become a slave to the evil one.³ He expresses his unworthiness to stand before the great glory of the Almighty.⁴ The saintly soul of Chāvāra shivers with fear at the thought of his sinfulness. However, he, being a slave and devotee of the Blessed Mother, trusts in her help.⁵ Besides that, Chāvāra had a thorough assurance that his sins are forgiven by the saviour and rejoiced over that.⁶ Chāvāra confesses that all the sufferings of the Lord as well as the sorrows of the

¹ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 15.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters*, 8. In another letter to the same Cardinal, he wished “to inform you of certain facts with a pure conscience.” Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters*, 14.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, IV, 197-200.

⁴ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, V, 147-150. This is similar to the experience of the prophet Isaiah in the vision of heaven (Is 6:5).

⁵ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, VI, 207-211.

⁶ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, VI, 349-352.

Blessed Mother Mary are caused by his sins.¹ Nevertheless, he trusts that he will be forgiven because of the sufferings of the Lord and the sorrows of his mother.² With a remorseful mind, Chāvāra weeps at the sight of the Calvary journey of Jesus carrying the cross on his shoulders. He was fully aware that Jesus shed His precious blood for the redemption of his soul.³

On several pages of the *Ātmānutāpam*, Chāvāra laments his sins. Nevertheless, he could confess on his deathbed that he preserved his baptismal innocence throughout his life. It was only because of his holy life and intimacy with the divine mystery that he could recognise even small failures in his spiritual life. He wanted holy people in the Church and practised heroic virtues to attain the perfection of the Christian life by living the paschal mystery. Humility was his fourth vow, and he lived the mystery of *kenosis* very much practically. He is described as a man with the signature of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts and fruits of a life in Christ were evident in his daily business. The repentance and awareness of sins reveal the presence of the Holy Ghost in his spirit (Jn 16:8).

Holiness is divine nature and human beings are called to the perfection of the Father. Chāvāra had a deep conviction about the call to holiness and longed for it throughout his life. On his deathbed, he could certify that he had maintained the baptismal grace without any stain.⁴ However perfect one is in the view of humans, in the light of

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, VII, 61-62.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, VII, 201-212; 241-244.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. II: Ātmānutāpam*, VIII, 51-52.

⁴ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Chāvāra*, 17; Valerian, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 37-38.

the perfect Holiness of God, he becomes aware of his unworthiness and unholiness.¹ Chāvāra confesses his unworthiness in his writings: “I deem not myself worthy to reach high degrees of prayer and sanctity. As I am a great sinner with a heart impure and opaque without virtues of cleanliness and modesty, I realize that I am not worthy to receive the spirit of contemplation and attain to perfection.”² His words unveil his humble heart:

Thou art the Lord of all, all blameless, all pure; I
am a worthless sinner, thy weak servant; Thou art
my father and my creator; Your love is
unchanging and sure; Yet when I think of my sins;
How can I dare to appear before You?³

Rom 12:1 reminds us about the offering of pure body. Heb 10:8 says: “you have prepared a body for me here I am coming to fulfil your will O Lord.” Chāvāra glorified God in his body and life. In Mt 5:13, Jesus taught: “Let your light shine by the charity works you do and let them glorify God” Jesus’ wish to his disciples was incarnated in Chāvāra’s life.

2. Mediated Mystery

This chapter analysed the mediation of the divine mystery by Chāvāra, who lived the gospel values in the paschal rhythm of dying and rising. He could accomplish the

¹ At the sight of the Holy One, Isaiah cried out: “And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts!” (Is 6:5). Moses heard God telling him from the burning bush on Horeb, the mountain of God: “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Ex 3:5).

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol.3: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 2: Ātmānutāpam*, V:142-150.

paschal mystery in his life by practising the heroic virtues in an exemplary way. The Church unremittingly invites its members to live this mystery in their earthly lives by following the example of the saints. Chāvāra grew in divine wisdom through his contemplation of this mystery and acquired experiential wisdom of the same mystery by delving into the passion of Christ and carrying the cross with him for the Church. The contemplative and pastoral involvement of Chāvāra in the paschal mystery may be seen as two dimensions of living the mystery. The divine wisdom attained by Chāvāra through his meditative life educates the Church. At the same time, the participatory wisdom displayed in his life through his charitable life edifies the Church.

All saints are lived models of the paschal mystery. Therefore, the faithful who commemorate these saints in the Church are inspired by their lives. Similarly, the exemplary imitation of Christ by Chāvāra motivates believers to practise the virtues of this saint and live according to gospel values. We could see that the liturgical tradition of the Eastern Churches helps believers to link their experience of God in the liturgy to their daily lives. Chāvāra is one who could be described as a personification of East Syrian liturgical theology and wisdom.

Chapter 4

THE GLORY OF GOD THROUGH THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

The aim of the incarnation of the son of God as Emmanuel was to redeem humankind and give perfect glory to God through the paschal mystery. The Church *accomplishes the work of salvation* by sacrifice and sacraments, around which the *entire liturgical life* revolves (SC §6). Liturgy is the means and context for the Church to glorify God as well as sanctify humanity, thus continuing the salvific work of Christ. It is the celebration of the paschal mystery. The sacraments and other liturgical celebrations are concrete media to get involved in the paschal mystery. Chāvāra was a man who integrated the paschal mystery into his life and became a model for the people of his Church to accomplish this salvation mystery in their own lives. True worship is to give priority to God in one's life, and Chāvāra's life proved his genuine worship.

To be effective, participants of the liturgy must be prepared to participate in the paschal mystery with all their senses, open hearts, and different human faculties. SC §11 speaks of the proper dispositions and tuning of minds, with voices necessary to receive the grace in liturgy. The pastors have a duty "to ensure that the faithful take part *fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.*" SC §12 reminds us of the teaching of the apostle: "we must always bear about in our body, the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame" (2 Cor 4:10-11). This is what we call participation in the paschal mystery. Chāvāra participated

in the mystery of salvation by dying to himself and to self-will and by glorifying God in his body with holiness. He paved the way for others and prepared them for this participation by setting an example through his life and heroic apostolic works.

1. The Celebration of the Mystery Unites and Builds the Church

Liturgy is the very core of the Church's life, and, without it, Christianity has no divine life. Also, the liturgy is the most important and the most exalted life-function of the Church. The paschal mystery, which is the salvation mystery and history of the human race, is celebrated in the liturgical ceremonies of the Church. To discern the real meaning of liturgy a thorough historical survey of the liturgical life of the Church is essential. Likewise, it requires a genuine ecclesiological vision of worship. The liturgy celebrated by the Church community here on earth is a prophetic sign and image of the heavenly Church. SC §26 teaches:

Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the 'sacrament of unity,' namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops. Therefore liturgical services pertain to the *whole body of the Church*; they manifest it and have effects upon it; but they concern the individual members of the Church in different ways, according to their differing rank, office, and actual participation.

The liturgy constitutes the Church and the Eucharist has a community forming power.¹ It is the word of God that calls

¹ Pope John Paul II asserts that "the Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist." Encyclical Letter (17 April 2003) "Ecclesia de Eucharistia," §26. Available at https://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/encyc0303_04_17_ecclesia_en.html.

all people together and keeps them together in the *ecclesia*. Thus, they grow together in the unity of faith and build up the Church. In the liturgy, the Church realises the fullness of her inner being and becomes intensely conscious of her calling. The liturgy is the highest expression of the Church's life, it is an epiphany of the Church. Consequently, the liturgy activates the Church.¹ Thus, the salvation mysteries celebrated by liturgical services animate the entire body of the Church.

2. Worship as the Meeting of the Mysteries

The most prominent way of participating in the mystery of salvation is the liturgy of the Church. In liturgy, the redemption of humanity is celebrated. Christianity is a gift of God to humanity and liturgy is the cultic expression and supreme experience of the Christian reality. God's saving action predominates in the liturgy. In Chauvet's words, liturgy is the "symbolic space" par excellence, which fulfils a powerful and indispensable role in developing "a pedagogy of the faith."²

Liturgy could also be seen as the ascending action of the Church with praise and thanks or an answer to the saving action of God, who descended mercifully to her. Liturgy is a meeting between God and humankind, and the meeting point is Christ. Still, it is not a face to face meeting with the Father, but a meeting under the veil of signs.³ In liturgy, the

vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html [accessed 22 June 2020].

¹ Verheul, *Introduction to Liturgy*, 98.

² Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 189.

³ Verheul, *Introduction to Liturgy*, 19.

mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church meet in the present time. Liturgy is a personal meeting, under the veil of holy signs, of God with his Church members individually, in and through Christ, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. There are five levels of meeting in the liturgy. Firstly, it is a personal meeting with God, which shows the theocentric character of the liturgy. Secondly, this happens through the mediator Christ, revealing its Christo-centric character. Thirdly, this meeting takes place not only with individuals but with the living community of the Church, which is the ecclesial aspect of liturgy. Fourthly, it does not take place directly but under the veil of holy signs, and this shows the sign character or the sacramentality of the liturgy. Finally, it addresses the whole person in body and soul and invites the total person to worship. This is the bodily nature or corporality of the liturgy.¹

To experience and engage with the mysteries, a deep conviction of faith in Christ's mystery and in the mystery of the Church is essential. Unless one is aware of the mystery of Christ and the economy of salvation through Christ, it would be impossible to meet God in the liturgy. This happens through faith in the gospel and confession of Jesus as Christ, the Lord. Only when there is a deep involvement of the people, the liturgy will be meaningful and able to transform the lives of the participants. The Eucharist is the sacramental re-enactment of Christ's all-sufficient atoning sacrifice. However, its perennial efficacy is independent of the dispositions of the faithful, but its full impact on the persons and its power to transform lives depends on the degree of personal involvement.

¹ Verheul, *Introduction to Liturgy*, 19.

3. The Genuine Place of True Worship

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Church is the body of Christ (LG §7). The union between Christians and Christ himself is clear in the voice heard by Saul in Acts 9. Christ identifies himself with the persecuted Christians of the early Church. As LG §7 says, "By communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body." St Paul elaborates on the relation between the Church and Christ in 1 Cor 12, where he describes the Church as a living body with Christ as the head. Like the limbs of a human body, the different members of the Church form one body, so we are all baptised by one Spirit into one body (1 Cor 12:12-13). Even when there is a diversity of tasks entrusted, there is communion and unity in the Church. All the members are related to each other, and they together form a single vital body. In order to overcome divisions, there must be sincere attempts to harmonise the disparity between each other and to stay united despite all differences. The long-cherished dream of Chāvāra, who dedicated his whole life to the service of the Church, was to bring unity and prosperity to the Church of Kerala. He believed that the people of God form a single body of Christ and so everyone should join in His mystical body to offer real worship to God. Since every part of this body is significant, he respected even the least ones among his fellow beings and strived to make them recognise their own dignity as the children of God and an integral part of Christ's body.

3.1. The Mystical Body of Christ

Liturgy is defined by Pope Pius XII as "whole public worship of the mystical Body of Jesus Christ, Head, and

members.”¹ In John 4, we read Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman about the places of worship. Jesus makes it clear to the Samaritan woman that the Jews worshipped at Jerusalem and the Samaritans at Mount Gerizim: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him” (Jn 4:23). Worship starts in the heart of the believer and then passes through Spirit and Truth to God, the Father. God is Spirit and, accordingly, He demands those who worship Him do to so in Spirit and Truth. The Truth is Jesus himself (Jn 14:6), and it is with the help of the Holy Spirit that the Church offers worship in the liturgy through Jesus, joining Him in his once-and-for-all offering at Calvary.

It is in Christ that the Church offers praise and worship to God. He is the meeting point of God and humanity. It is his incarnated and risen body that mediates temporality and eternity. The body of Christ provides the context for true and real worship. He has united all in his body.² In Galatians, we read: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). This unity or communion with Jesus forms a very delightful oblation for God, the Father. With this unifying vision of

¹ Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (25 June 1943), § 20.

² “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive *together with Christ* – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up *with him* and seated us *with him* in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us *in Christ Jesus*” (Eph 2:4-7) [emphasis added].

humanity, as a family or one sheepfold or one body, Chāvāra toiled to uplift and emancipate the marginalised members of his Church community and secular society at large. This is clear from his efforts taken for the education and edification of low caste people and women. All humans are the children of God, and it is through accepting Jesus as the son of God that one owns that status. “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to become children of God” (Jn 1:12).

SC states that, in Christ, “the perfect achievement of our reconciliation came forth, and the *fullness of divine worship was given to us*” (SC §5). The complete and perfect worship was gifted to us through Jesus Christ. Jesus told the Jews: “You destroy this temple and I shall rebuild it in three days... He was speaking of his own body and his disciples remembered his words after his resurrection and believed in the Holy Scriptures and his words” (Jn 2:19-22). This scriptural passage reveals a great mystery of liturgy or worship in the Church. In the liturgy, we offer the most perfect worship to God the Father through, in, and with Jesus Christ, who offered his own body as a holy oblation (Heb 10:10, 20). No one except the Son of God can offer such a pure and pleasing worship to God. It is through Jesus Christ that we offer God the sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15). The most acceptable sacrifice to God is the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, and the whole Church joins in this once and forever sacrifice in each liturgical celebration. Chāvāra held this wisdom about the mystery of the Church in his mind, which was later taught explicitly in the constitution of Vatican II.¹

¹ LG §32 and §7.

3.2. *The Human Body as a Temple of God*

St Paul urges us to offer our bodies as a true living sacrifice, which is pure and pleasing to God (Rom 12:1-2). Thus, true worship happens when it becomes the pure and pleasant sacrifice of the body. Elsewhere, the apostle clarifies that human bodies are the temple of God where the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16). Consequently, we may conclude that holiness in the body and mind of human beings is the most perfect worship presented to God. In this way, Chāvāra offered his own body and life as a fragrant oblation pleasing to God as he testified on his deathbed.¹ Pertaining to the real and true worship, Chāvāra stands as a model for the Syro-Malabar Church in its contemporary life. He gave perfect glory to God through his life and actions. He worshipped God not only in his body with holiness but also in the community of believers, which is the mystical body of Christ.

In order to remind the people of God about holiness and help them to grow in it, Chāvāra dreamt of and later established abodes of holiness for men and women in the form of religious orders. The aim of founding a women's religious congregation was threefold - personal sanctification, the salvation of souls, which means holiness of others, and the integral growth of women and children. To offer true worship through holy lives, Chāvāra urged the members of the Church to attain the perfection of love in their lives. He shared the pioneering inspiration of his teachers in setting up a religious community for men. He

¹ "By the Grace of God and help of the Holy Family baptismal grace I could preserve the purity throughout my life." Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Chāvāra*, 17; Valerian, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 37-38.

could give shape to the life and activities of a religious community, its identity, and charism.¹ His motive behind the foundation of the religious community is clear in the following statement: "It is necessary that in this territory, there are persons who are continuously engaged in prayer and good works for the greater glory of God and the edification of the Church."² He wanted to glorify God and build up the Church by cultivating virtuous lives. His greatest pain was the absence of canonised saints among the Malabar Church Christians, who had been following Christ from the very first century. 1 Pet 2:5 mentions pleasing sacrifices offered to God through Christ Jesus by the holy priestly people. This is done by building up the Church as a spiritual home using the living stones, which are the members of the Church. The respect for human beings in the image and likeness of God made Chāvāra restore the dignity of the marginalised and poor in the society of his time. Chāvāra also taught families to respect our human body, which is the temple of God. He wrote: "Be exceedingly careful to be chaste and modest in all your postures, whether sitting or walking, lying or playing. Immodesty is reprehensible both before God and the world."³ He was very diligent in keeping and growing in the holiness of mind and body.

¹ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a Carmelite religious priest founded the indigenous religious congregation for men, namely CMI (Carmelites of Mary Immaculate), in collaboration with Thomas Palackal and Thomas Porukara in 1831.

² Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 72.

³ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 26. He also asked parents: "Don't let your children move around naked even inside the house." Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 35.

3.3. *Beyond Space and Time*

Worship of God is not confined to a space or a few regulations. The Church participates in the heavenly worship, where angels and saints join the earthly beings in the worship of God, the Father, with Christ, the Son. Chāvāra had a profound belief about this dimension of the Church's worship. For example, he advised the members of the first convent about the recitation of the canonical prayers (the Liturgy of the Hours) as follows:

When you go to recite canon prayers, you have to keep in mind that all the angels and saints of heaven, all the holy souls on earth, and all the guardian angels of the sisters in the prayer room praise the Lord. You should join your voices with theirs and praise Him.¹

By offering praise to God in the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church joins in singing that canticle of praise that is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven. SC §83 says it is a foretaste of the heavenly praise sung unceasingly before the throne of God and the Lamb as described by John in Revelation. The Liturgy of the Hours extends to the different hours of the day, the praise and prayer, the memorial of the mysteries of salvation, and the foretaste of heavenly glory, which is offered in the Eucharistic mystery. Our intimate union with the Church in heaven is put into effect when, with common rejoicing, we offer together praise to the Divine Majesty. There, all those from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation who have been redeemed by the blood of

¹ The convent mentioned here is the Koonammavu convent of TOCD Sisters (now CMC) founded by Chavara and Leopold Beccaro. More about its establishment is found in later chapters. *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent*, vol. I, 77.

Christ are gathered together into one Church with one song of praise, magnifying the one and triune God (Rev 5:9).

'The Book of Revelation' displays the heavenly liturgy, which invites all the faithful to join in the wedding feast of the Lamb and the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 19:7-9; 21:10). On earth, we have a foretaste of the eschaton during the liturgical celebration. Chāvāra had a profound eschatological vision about life and wanted to join the wedding banquet of the lamb of God. He recalls the parable in the gospel where the king's invitee was found without a wedding garment. Chāvāra was always very vigilant to keep the robe of holiness received in baptism very clean with him. Chāvāra says that the "gift of contemplation is the wedding cloth," which Jesus refers to in the parable of the wedding banquet of the king and it is given freely to all who ask for it.¹ Chāvāra kept his white robe of holiness washed in pure tears of deep contrition. He exhorted his fellow beings to protect this white robe of the holy life.

Chāvāra was sure that good examples and zealous leaders can guide a large group on the right path towards the participation of the heavenly banquet. Participation in the earthly liturgy, being the foretaste of the heavenly liturgy, nurtures the hope of the faithful in life after death. The Church participates in that heavenly Liturgy, which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem, toward which she journeys as a pilgrim. By venerating the memory of the saints, she hopes to have fellowship with them one day.

¹ Mt 22:1-14; Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1.

4. Full, Active and Conscious

The salvation of humanity achieved by the paschal mystery of Christ is received through the sacraments and liturgical celebrations of the Church. This demands a full, active, and conscious participation (SC §14) in the mystery of salvation.¹ Full, that is complete, and perfect worship happens only in the totality of the mystical body of Christ. It occurs when the body of Christ is whole. It must be dynamic with each member free enough to grow and enjoy equal status. Participation leads to mediation and it requires a knowledge of what is happening in the liturgy. It necessitates a freedom that comes from the knowledge of the truth.

4.1. United, Complete and Inclusive

A prerequisite condition for one's participation in the salvation mystery is one's incorporation into the body of Christ. Liturgy produces the desired fruits only when the whole body worships God in Spirit and Truth. Also, there should be unity among the members of the body. It is to this unity, with Jesus as the head of the body, that all Christians are invited. St Paul exhorted the community to hold fast "to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God" (Col 2:19). He asks the faithful to practise love and keep peace in their hearts to perform as one body: "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of

¹ SC repeats its call for active and full participation and there are twenty instances in the document where the call for quality participation in the liturgy is explicitly mentioned. See SC §§ 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 27, 30, 41, 48, 49, 50, 59, 79, 90, 113, 114, 118, and 121.

Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful" (Col 3:14-15). To achieve the goal of perfect and real worship, Chāvāra wanted to make the Malabar Church integral, inclusive, and comprehensive in nature. To this end, he fought to eradicate the different strata that existed in his community. He endeavoured to make each member of the Church full and complete with the integration of body, mind, and soul ready for the worship of God. He understood that this takes place when all the faculties of a human being, intellect, thoughts, and emotions, are well informed and freed for worship.

From various definitions of the liturgy, we see that the subject of worship is the community founded by Jesus as his Body. It is as a community that the body of Christ renders worship to the Father through Christ. In other words, it is Christ who renders worship through the community. Since it is the public work of the community of disciples as the Body of Christ, no one can be a passive participant in the liturgy. Liturgy is not a private or individualistic act of worship. It is intimately connected with the ethical life of a believer. The liturgy is not only confined to the walls of the church building but encompasses the people's daily lives, meaning it is in relation to the outer world. God calls for reconciliation (Is 1:18), and, as a sacrament of unity on earth, the Church is struggling to attain the unity within and communion with God through perfect worship.

The relation between the community and liturgy cannot be restricted to bodily participation. The community of people that assembles in Jesus Christ for liturgy is called to do so by God. Likewise, it should be noted that the community participating in the liturgy is not only those who are present bodily inside the house of worship but the entire Church in its complete sense. The Catholic Church teaches

that the Church is a communion of three different Churches.¹ In Eph 2:14, we read that He, Jesus is our peace, who reconciled both parties in his body. This happens in the Eucharist, which is His sacramental body, and in the Church, which is His mystical body. In Galatians 3:28, we find that there is no more division as Jew or gentile, man or woman, slave or free; all are one in Christ Jesus. This communion and union as one body is the aim of the liturgy. It was this communion in the body of Christ that underlay each painstaking endeavour of Chāvāra. He wanted to eradicate all dividing factors from society and the Church to foster the unity that Jesus envisaged in his prayer in Jn 17:21.

4.2. *Dynamic and Living*

If the members of the body are slaves of evil and live in sinful conditions, the active worship of the Church is not possible. True worship happens in the mystical body of Christ and it brings salvation to humanity. To achieve freedom in worship, liberation from Egypt, the land of slavery, is necessary. The people of Kerala were slaves to the ignorance and injustice of the caste system at the time of Chāvāra. As a new Moses for the people of Kerala, Chāvāra

¹ The universal Church is traditionally believed to be comprised of the Church Militant (*Ecclesia Militans*), including all the living faithful who struggle against sin, the devil, and death on earth; the Church Triumphant (*Ecclesia Triumphans*), including all the saints in heaven who overcame struggles on earth; and the Church Penitent (*Ecclesia Penitens*) or Church Expectant (*Ecclesia Expectans*), including those Christians who are in Purgatory for purification after their death. Pope Pius V, *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. Donovan, 93-94; For details, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§218-219; LG§§ 49-50.

led them out of slavery to the mountain of divine presence for the true worship of the real God. To ensure the dynamic participation in the paschal mystery, which affects the identity of the community, Chāvāra took daring steps.

The liturgical celebration of the salvation mystery is, at the same time, the 'already' part of the eschatological experience of salvation as well as the 'not yet' part, where all creation is patiently waiting for the revelation of the children of God.¹ This community on earth is aware of its sinful nature. Even though redeemed by the Son of God, the faithful are still in a struggle and fight against evil as long as they are on their way to their real home in heaven. Therefore, being fully conscious of the vulnerability of human nature, the participants of the liturgy seek the mercy of God daily in their community prayers. On the one hand, the community expresses great joy and gratitude for the mysteries of salvation completed through Jesus Christ by his incarnation. On the other hand, the Church waits with hope to join the heavenly choir once this pilgrimage on earth is over. During this journey, the moments of adoration in liturgy bring a foretaste of eternal life by joining with heavenly beings.

For lively liturgies, burning faith is necessary. It is the word of God that makes hearts burn with the love of God. Chāvāra longed to bring in a renewal in the Christian life of the faithful and, soon after his ordination, started to preach homilies during liturgical celebrations.² Fr. Leopold writes,

¹ Rom 8:19.

² In the chronicles of Mannanam monastery we see, "In the new chapel, here at Mannanam, Mass had to be said on Sundays, and High Masses with preaching on feast days and this could not be let off." Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 1: The Chronicles*, 22.

The young priest preached sermons in many churches, at a time when preaching was very rare and performed many other pastoral services with great zeal. During his time he preached a retreat in the parish of Pulinkunnu at the request of the parishioners. Those who participated in the retreat were moved by it, and derived great spiritual benefit, as is testified by many who still retain fresh memories about it.¹

Chāvāra's enthusiasm for the salvation of souls is clear in his conducting a retreat at Thekke Angadi, which is the filial church of Pulinkunnu.² Chāvāra also initiated retreat preaching in parishes on an annual basis, which was later followed by the members of his congregation. Chāvāra was aware of the power of the living and dynamic word of God which animates and activates the Church as a worshipping community.³ Preaching the word of God in the liturgy as homilies helped Chāvāra to lead the people to the truth of the gospel and it was a pioneering step in the history of the Church of Kerala. Chāvāra could proclaim the bible from the pulpit with vigour and guide the Christian life of the faithful. Being a powerful and effective preacher known as the 'lion in the pulpit,' he could instruct the faithful during liturgical celebrations. Slowly, the Sunday liturgical gatherings became ideal places for religious and social instruction. This helped to guarantee the active participation

¹ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 6.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 1: The Chronicles*, 22.

³ "Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

of the faithful in the paschal mystery celebration within the church and their life.

4.3. Freed by True Knowledge

Worship is not a mere collection of liturgical actions or ceremonies but is, at its core, perfect love from a heart directed by the Spirit and illuminated by the true knowledge of God. Worship must be properly informed, otherwise, it will be reduced to emotional exercise and superficial acts. Without heart, worship may become lip service alone. Isaiah wrote: "The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote" (Is 29:13). Jesus calls the false worshippers hypocrites and adds that those who do worship without heart do it in vain, and their knowledge is only based on human precepts as doctrines (Mt 15:7-9). True knowledge comes from the Father. As Jesus says: "It is written in the prophets, 'and they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (Jn 6:45). After the resurrection, Jesus offered the helper, who teaches us everything and reminds all of the Holy Scriptures: "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26). The beloved disciple John says in his first letter: "As for you, the anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him" (1 Jn 2:27). Here lies the epistemological dimension of worship.

Real liberation comes through education and knowledge about the Truth. The Truth will set one free, the scripture teaches (Jn 8:32). He realised that “the lack of monasteries and convents cause the failure of many virtues and so, there should be a house of vision at least for the ordained.”¹ Fr. Leopold underscores that Chāvāra had a zealous mind “which directed all of his existence to the one thing which is essential, the salvation of souls”² Chāvāra’s great wish was the formation of saints in the Kerala Church, and he was ready to co-operate with anyone for the good of human beings. Chāvāra was a true disciple of Jesus and one taught by the Father and Holy Spirit to perform true and real worship. No doubt, he was known as one with the signature of the Holy Spirit in his heart, as witnessed by his contemporaries.³ He desired to impart real wisdom, which he received directly from God, to his fellow beings and to bring them to the true worship of God. Worship of God without actual knowledge will end up in sensitive experience alone and, without spirit, can result in a form of mere legalism. After gaining genuine knowledge of God, one can render true worship to Him and glorify Him through a life of worship. An in-depth understanding of truth alone can direct the emotions and hearts of humans and thus lead them to actual and worthy worship.

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol I: The Chronicles*, 1.

² Vittuvattical, *Perspectives of a Heroic Christian Life*, 28 and 18.

³ We see this expression ‘one filled by the Holy Spirit’ for the first time in a comment of Mathew Kurian Madathikunnel from Muttuchira. See, in this regard, Pattassery, *Vazhthappetta Chavayachan Vyakthiyum Veeshanavum* (Malayalam), vol. 1, 146-147.

5. Chāvāra: A Paragon of the Mystery

Being a dynamic presence of the divine mystery to his fellow beings, Chāvāra became an instrument of God to bring salvation. The major trial of becoming Christian is that one consents to God's absence and the necessity of mediations in order to reach him. One must also be "willing to give back to God, this body of humanity that he expects from those who claim to belong to Jesus Christ."¹ God needs our and other's imperfect bodies to be present in this world.² Chāvāra offered his body to make God present to his people.

Chāvāra followed his master Jesus in his life journey accompanied by his fellow brethren. He kindled their minds as Jesus did with the disciples who went to Emmaus from Jerusalem (Lk 24). Jesus walked, talked with them, and understood their worries, shared their troubles. He burned their hearts with true wisdom using the word of God and then stayed with them to share his own body as bread where they experienced the communion. This liturgical experience enabled them to witness and go forth towards togetherness with fellow disciples and building up the Church. This summarises the influence of Chāvāra for the Kerala Church. Each involvement of Chāvāra in society prompted its transformation and growth.

In the liturgy, we commemorate and celebrate the salvation history and mystery. However, it should become a lived reality in the service of the world to be rewarded at the final judgment (Mt 25:31-46). Witherington states:

¹ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, trans. Madigan and Beaumont, 189.

² Witherington, "Broken and Given for You," 395.

The Church is the community which keeps, not only the Scriptural and ritual memory of Jesus alive, it is the community which enables that 'dangerous memory' to become enacted in the bodies and lives of the individual members of the *ekklesia*, a dangerous memory which reminds Christians of their duty to serve the world which is the locus of the reign of God.¹

The Church is reminded of its duty to serve the world by memory and involvement in the mystery of Christ. Chāvāra's life was an embodiment of the 'dangerous memory' of Jesus or, in other words, the paschal mystery. The liturgy of the neighbour is a necessary component of the liturgy: just as the Eucharistic bread is broken open 'for you', our ecclesial practice and witness should be broken open 'for the life of the world'.² Chāvāra had a life that was broken for the well-being of others.

6. Freed to Worship

Chāvāra aimed at ecclesiological reform and reformation through the formation and transformation of the lives of the Church's members. Chāvāra established a liberating and enkindling model of worship by igniting the minds and hearts of the people of the Church. It was based on true knowledge about oneself and about God, who is the creator, saviour, and sustainer. 'Let my people be set free to worship.' In the book of Exodus, Yahweh asks Pharaoh through Moses to let the Israelites go free to worship Him. As a modern Moses, Chāvāra was appointed by God to set the people of Kerala free from the bondage of ignorance to offer true worship to him. Chāvāra visualised worship

¹ Witherington, "Broken and Given for You," 403.

² Chauvet, "Le pain romu comme figure theologique," 220-224.

informed by the truth about God and the Son of God. Chāvāra worshiped God in his own body and in the mystical body of Christ. If the liturgy is worship in Spirit and Truth, it happens in the body of Christ which is the genuine place of Worship. Chāvāra knew that the Church, as the body of Christ, is to be united and active with vigour to offer perfect worship to the Father in Spirit and Truth. The Eucharistic body is the perfect worship or oblation for the liberation of the people. Chāvāra offered his whole being, along with the eucharistic body of Christ, as an offering, a sacrifice, as perfect worship to *Abba* for the liberation and uplifting of his people. It is striking to observe how dominant is the Pauline image of the one body with its many members in the life and action of Chāvāra.

Chapter 5

DIVINISATION THROUGH THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

Along with the glorification of God, the liturgy aims at the sanctification of human lives. Participation in the divine mystery is reflected in the ethical life of the faithful. Chāvāra presents such a living example before the world. He was sanctified by his dying and rising with Jesus Christ in liturgical life. Before going into the details of Chāvāra's mediation of the salvation mystery through his vocation as a human being, a priest, a monk, and a liturgical visionary, let us see what is meant by an ethical life in the Eastern ecclesial tradition.

1. The Life in Christ in the East

Ethics is not an independent theological discipline in the East but is seen as an integral part of a holistic theological reflection.¹ The East has a different conception of the relationship between the Church and the world. R. Taft says:

The Westerner tends to emphasize the moral aspects of the sacramental and spiritual life, the strength received to aid him in his pilgrimage towards the final beatitude... The Oriental, however, sees man more as an imperfect similitude of God, which grace perfects. His life in Christ is *a progressive transfiguration into the likeness of God*.²

E. Farrugia states: "Ethics in Eastern theology is never a matter of moralization, isolated from the faith context

¹ Petrá, "Church sui iuris," 175.

² Taft, *Eastern Rite Catholicism*, 13.

provided by dogma in the overall context of the liturgy.”¹ For the Eastern Fathers, it is impossible to think of theology or spirituality in watertight compartments; they were unaware of the distinction between morality and spirituality. The Eastern Churches view Christian moral life as a “life in Christ.” This life in Christ grows through the assimilation of the human into Jesus Christ and his gospel ethos, which is the foundation of all Christian moral norms. Such a life is nurtured by the sacraments of the Church – especially by the Eucharist – and manifests itself as a progressive deification of the faithful in the Church through the Holy Spirit. Looking into the life of Chāvāra, we can easily find the realisation of life in Christ.

We become God by adoption through participation in the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, signified and effected by communion, that is deification. We truly become God not by our nature but by an adoption that leaves our identity and free will intact. Timothy Ware (now bishop Kallistos) explains: “Nor does man, when he ‘becomes god’, cease to be human.”² As Lossky says: “We remain, creatures while becoming god by grace, as Christ remained God when becoming man by the incarnation.”³ Thus, humans do not become God by nature but are merely ‘created gods,’ gods by grace or by status.⁴

The Christian life is a building up of the *bios* in the *Logos* that is living according to Christ. This life in Christ includes Trinitarian, pneumatological, and ecclesial dimensions. The Christian moral life is not merely an individualised ethics

¹ Farrugia, “Christianity as a Society of Mourners,” 72.

² Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 224.

³ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 87.

⁴ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 237.

but also an ecclesial experience of the life of faith.¹ Moral considerations emerge from all contexts of Christian experience and expressions of faith, from the entire living tradition of the Eastern Church, and especially from the liturgical life of the whole Church. There, one finds innumerable examples of moral exegesis of scripture and ascetical treatises on prayer and spirituality.

In Sanskrit, the meaning of 'ethics' is 'enlightening.' Two general terms employed to mean ethics are *dharmasastras* and *nitisastras*. The term *dharma* comes from the Sanskrit root *dhr*, meaning 'that which holds together, that which supports.' The word *niti* comes from the Sanskrit root word *ni*, meaning 'to lead.' *Sastra* means science.² Therefore, ethics is the science that holds people together and that leads people to their destination. This definition applies to the life of Chāvāra as well. He felt with the Church and wanted to bind everyone together and lead the children of God towards heaven while, at the same time, giving them a foretaste of it on earth. His concrete efforts aimed at the betterment of the earthly life of humanity with dignity. In the Eastern tradition, Christian moral life is born of and nurtured by the mysteries (sacraments) of the Church, especially by the divine liturgy or Eucharist. They regard liturgy as the most important means of progressive divinisation of the faithful by the grace of the Holy Spirit.³

¹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 389-431.

² Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit: English Dictionary*, 510-513, 565; Kochappilly, "Christ-Centered Ethics and the Celebrations of the Divine Liturgy," 99-125.

³ Vechoor, "Catholic Moral Theology from the Eastern and East Syriac Perspectives," 352.

2. Chāvāra's Life as a *Eucharistia*

The word *Eucharist* – a short term for the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the Western tradition – comes from the Greek word *eucharistia*, which means “thanksgiving.” *Eucharistia* was used in New Testament times to translate the Hebrew *barakah*, a blessing.¹ This word *eucharistia* (1 Cor 10:16; 11:24 – the cup of thanksgiving) appeared in the writings of St Ignatius of Antioch (107), St Justin Martyr (148–155), and St Irenaeus of Lyons (180–199). *Eucharistia* comes from the root *chair-/char-*, words which express the feeling of joy (*chariō* = to rejoice, *charis* = grace) and ‘*eu*’ means well, rightly, properly. Thus, *eucharistia* means a thankful attitude, an expression of gratitude, thanksgiving.²

The two biblical words mostly translated as thanksgiving are the Hebrew word *toda* (תודה) and the Greek word *eucharistia* (Ευχαριστία). *Toda* means ‘to demonstrate an inner attitude of gratitude of indebtedness’ and is usually associated with ‘adoration, confession, and thanksgiving openly and freely given’. *Eucharistia* means ‘to exude or radiate Charisma or grace’ or ‘to outwardly manifest the indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus.’³ 1 Tim 4:4-5 says: “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving (*eucharistia*); for it is sanctified by God’s word and by prayer.” Everything is to be Eucharist. Everything is to be

¹ Richardson and Bowden, eds., *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 187. For a discussion on the relation between *Eucharistia* and *Berakah*, see Talley, “From Berakah to Eucharistia,” 115-137.

² Verbrugge, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology: Abridged Edition*, §2374.

³ Sherrerd, *Spiritual Dynamics in the Body of Christ*, 360.

given back to God in a prayer of praise. In all these meanings of *eucharistia*, we can see that the life of Chāvāra was a thanksgiving, a radiation of *charisma*, a manifestation of the Holy Ghost, and he could offer every blessing bestowed on him back to God with gratitude.

Qurbana, the Syriac word for the Syro-Malabar Liturgy of the Eucharist, means a “sacrifice or offering.” In the Syro-Malabar Church, the Liturgy of the Hours is called *Divine Praises*. “The Divine Praises are each Church’s school of prayer, instructing in the ancient way of glorifying God in Christ as one Body, in union with and by the example of its Head.”¹ The prayers disclose the underlying purpose of the liturgy to praise, give thanks, and worship the Divine. Chāvāra learned from this school of prayer to glorify God in the mystical body of Christ. He had a heart full of gratitude towards the merciful Father, he selflessly offered his life as a sacrifice for those around him and could sing the divine praises for all the blessings of God and the wonders that God worked through him.

2.1. Rejoicing as God’s Child

One could easily prove that Chāvāra was a beloved son of the heavenly Father who lived the Lord’s Prayer literally in its fullest sense. He always called God *ente appa*. His every breath was for the glory of God, each step was for the kingdom of God, he had no will of his own: only his Father’s. He was fed with the Eucharistic bread and the Word from the mouth of God and fed the sheep with the

¹ *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (CCEO) (1996) §96; OIRSI, *Roman Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgy* (Updated and Enlarged Edition), 247.

same to strengthen them in their sojourn to the promised land. Chāvāra had a forgiving heart that enjoyed God’s endless mercy and was aware of the vulnerability of human nature and put his trust in the Almighty, who protected Chāvāra from trials and evils throughout his life.

An awareness of the divine presence of God and other heavenly beings elevates Chāvāra to the realm of heavenly participation. Truly, Chāvāra was a personification of the Lord’s Prayer.¹ St Cyprian asserts that, “if we call God Father, we should act like his children.”² Hence, the repetition of the “Our Father” not only teaches one to recite the Our Father but also elicits the response to “behave” according to the values revealed therein. Chāvāra’s life and prayer are so intimately linked with the Heavenly Father that he even refers to Jesus as his *appa* (father).³ He trusted God each moment of his life, like a child depends on parents for every need. He practised forgiveness and sought refuge in God’s protection from evil. He lived the relationship with God and other beings according to the Lord’s prayer. If he

¹ The Lord’s Prayer is repeated three times in its full form along with *canona* prayers during holy *Qurbana*. It is also prayed during the Evening prayer (*Ramsa*) and Night prayer (*Lelya*).

² “We should bear in mind and realize that when we call God our Father we ought also to act like sons. If we are pleased to call him Father, let him in turn be pleased to call us sons.” (Second reading from a treatise on the Lord’s Prayer by St Cyprian in the *Office of Reading* of the Latin rite for Tuesday, 11th Week of Ordinary Time).

³ This is clear in the Malayalam original of his Colloquies, where he refers to *ente manoguna appan Esho Mishihā* (my bounteous father, Jesus Christ). See Chāvāra, CWC, vol. III: *Dhyanasalapangal* (Malayalam), 16.

could call God my *appa*, he could also accept all his fellow humans as his *kūṭapirappukaḷ* (kinfolk).¹

2.2. *Walking before the Holy One*

The great reverence for the presence of God is seen in the life of Chāvāra. He lived in the constant presence of the Almighty God, which helped him to lead a blameless life (Gen 17:1). This presence of God and fear of God is a natural characteristic of Eastern liturgical practices. The rituals of lighting the altar, opening the sanctuary veil, and incensing the altar while the community reverently bows create a deep awareness that the entire community is standing in the presence of God. He is the 'Lord of All,' who is so powerful that He can raise human bodies from death, save their souls, and preserve their lives on earth. In addition to these rituals, the five senses are used to experience the presence of a God who is invisible and ineffable, who was present at the same time in a thick cloud, a fire column, and in smoke in the Old Testament stories, and who became incarnate in Christ Jesus to be with human beings. Chāvāra advised his spiritual daughters to walk blamelessly in the presence of God: "Above all, learn the art of loving Jesus Christ. Stay constantly in His presence. Walk along with Him. Converse with him continuously."²

¹ In his circulars and other letters, we find Chāvāra addresses his co-friars as *kūṭapirappukaḷ* which means co-born or siblings. He refers to his parish people also as his own brethren. When he addresses the nuns, they are his loving children. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters* VI/1, 61, 65 and 66; Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, VII, 76, 82, and 83.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, VII/6, 86.

The Syro-Malabar liturgy is a shout of joy for the resurrection of Jesus, which procured the salvation of humanity; it is a resounding proclamation of the hope that it gives to the life of the Church.¹ The *Hallelujah* hymn in the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* before the gospel reading expresses the mindset of Chāvāra in his literary works, especially in *Ātmānutāpam*. He is pouring out his heart, which is filled with gratitude and contrition, like the pen of a gifted poet.² Addressing God as holy³ evokes the memory of heavenly visions described in the Scriptures and elicits awareness of the presence of the same God who commanded Moses to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. The consciousness of their unworthy sinfulness urges the worshippers toward humility as they desire mercy and pray for the grace to become a worthy participant in the

¹ The resurrection hymn *Laku Mara* is a rich example of this joy and hope of the Church: “Lord of all we bow and praise you; Jesus Christ we glorify you; For you give us glorious resurrection; And you are the one who saves our souls.” *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 25; *Liturgy of the Hours*, 6-7; 51. This hymn is repeated three times during holy *Qurbana*, Evening Prayer (*Ramsa*), and Morning Prayer (*Sapra*). The repetition of the song three times has a didactic as well as an experiential benefit. Each time the worshippers repeat it, they become more involved and delve deeper into the layers of meaning of the prayers and the rituals.

² “My heart is stirred by a noble theme, As I sing my ode to the king, My tongue is the pen of a nimble scribe.” *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 32.

³ Further, there is a daily prayer for the sanctification of life in the Trisagion (Thrice Holy). “Holy Lord of all; Holy mighty one; Holy immortal one; Have mercy on us.” *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 27-28; *Liturgy of the Hours*, 11-12; 54.

liturgy.¹ Chāvāra kept this mindset of an unworthy minister throughout his life. He always walked humbly, keeping a contrite heart, and with great reverence for the Holy God who is merciful towards him.

2.3. *Abiding in the Real Presence*

Chāvāra had profound faith in the presence of Jesus in the mystery of the Eucharist and used to spend long hours in contemplation before the Holy Presence.² From childhood onwards, Chāvāra had a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and attended communion dutifully. Fr. Leopold testifies:

He [Chāvāra] used to celebrate the holy Mass with great care, devotion, and order. His respect for and faith in the great sacrament was deep indeed. All those who attended the holy Mass celebrated by him were immensely impressed and inspired. Besides making visits to the Blessed Sacrament as provided by the rules, he would spend daily long hours on his knees, lost in adoration before the Holy Eucharist.³

The Holy Eucharist was the centre of spirituality and prayer for Chāvāra. He preferred to remain locked up in the tabernacle with Jesus. He wrote to the nuns: "I lock up your hearts in the tabernacle of Jesus. For you, I have locked up

¹ It is seen not only in the Trisagion, but also in the doxology of the Lord's Prayer, which is repeated at the beginning and end of the *Qurbana*, as well as in the *Sanctus*.

² Valerian, *Malankara Sabha Mathavinte Oru Veerasanthanam* (Malayalam), 263-264.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV*, 118; Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 13.

my heart there. Stay there until the day of resurrection."¹ He paid frequent visits to the Eucharistic Christ and spent long hours on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament.² He appeared as an angel to those who saw him in contemplation before the Blessed Sacrament.³ He popularised the forty hours adoration of the Eucharist in Kerala.⁴ Later, it quickly spread to other parishes. He promoted daily participation in the holy *Qurbana* among families and among the faithful. He advises in his testament of a good father:

As much as possible, participate daily in the holy Mass. If it is difficult, take part in the Masses on Mondays for the souls in purgatory, on Fridays in commemoration of the passion and death of the Lord, and on Saturdays in devotion to our Lady of Sorrows. If all members from a family cannot attend daily Mass together, let them take turns, ensuring that one or two attend Mass every day.⁵

He also gave due attention to the sacrament of reconciliation. He had a contrite heart that is clear in his 'Act of Contrition'⁶ and his 'Reflections on Mortal Sin'⁷ and 'The

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I*, 85.

² Porukara, *Sthapaka Pithakkanmar* (Founding Fathers), 38.

³ Valerian, *Malankara Sabha Mathavinte Oru Veerasanthanam*, 264.

⁴ It was Pope Clement VIII who issued a historic document named *Quarant' Ore* (forty hours) on the forty hours continual prayer before the exposed Blessed Sacrament in 1592. For a history of this devotion, Hardon, *The History of Eucharistic Adoration*, 10. Though introduced by Bishop Roz after the Synod of Diamper, Chāvāra popularised this devotion in the Malabar Church. Moolan, *The Period of Annunciation*, 4.

⁵ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 25.

⁶ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III*, 18.

⁷ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III*, 57.

Work of Two Priests'.¹ He advised families to prepare children for confession at the age of seven² and insisted that they receive the sacrament of reconciliation at least once per month.³ Chāvāra and the religious priests of *Koventa* were known as retreat preachers and confessors.

3. Living the Mystery of Christ

St Augustine similarly comments on the relation of internal values and convictions to the patterning function of the celebration of the Eucharist in a Pentecost sermon to the newly baptised:

... if you are the Body of Christ and his members, it is your mystery which has been placed on the altar of the Lord; you receive your own mystery. You answer 'Amen' to what you are, and in answering, you accept it. For you hear, 'The Body of Christ' and you answer 'Amen.' Be a member of Christ's body, so that your Amen may be true.⁴

Chāvāra lived the salvation mystery outside the liturgical celebrations. His 'Amen' to the mystery of the altar was extended beyond the church building. In that way, he became a liturgical theologian of the primary type. What I mean by liturgical theology is different from the ordinary sense of the word.

3.1. Primary Liturgical Theologian?

Primary theology cannot be found in papers but lives. Kavanagh identifies theology with the adjustment that changes the acts of the worshippers "by being brought

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III*, 60.

² Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 25.

³ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 36.

⁴ St Augustine, *Sermo 272*, in *Patrologiae Latina* 38, 1246-47.

regularly to the brink of chaos in the presence of the living God."¹ He calls it *theologia prima* since this is where theology is born. This theology "stems from an experience of near chaos; that it is long term and dialectical."²

The liturgical life of a believer is formed by hourly, daily, weekly, and yearly participation in the liturgical celebrations of the Church. In this way, the one formed in liturgy reaches the source of the Church's belief and learns to see the world through the liturgy. Fagerberg says that "the baptized Christians being formed by a life of liturgy do qualify to be called theologians."³ Liturgical theology sees liturgy as a training place for theologians and working space for primary theologians. The liturgy of the Church forms primary theologians, who theologise in the real presence of God and build up the experiential wisdom of God. Their theology becomes the traditional treasure of the worshiping community and is transferred to new generations through the liturgy of their lives.⁴ Accordingly, active participants in the liturgy become worthy to be called the primary theologians of the Church. Chāvāra has not explicitly produced any liturgical theology of the Syrian Malabar Church but assimilated liturgical wisdom, which is found in his very being, writings, and doing. Here, I disclose the primary liturgical theologian in Chāvāra by analysing the qualities found in his personality through shreds of evidence from his writings. I do this in relation to the

¹ Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 74, 76, and 146.

² Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 74-75.

³ Fagerberg, "What Is the Subject Matter of Liturgical Theology?" 49.

⁴ For an interesting study of the liturgy of life, see Manalo, *The Liturgy of Life*; also see Sailers, *Worship as Theology*.

liturgical theology of the Malabar liturgy, which is East Syrian in nature.

3.2. *A Chosen One Like David*

PO 6 says that one *in persona Christi* (Heb 5:1-19, 7:24, 9:11-28), who is anointed to preach the gospel, nurture the faithful, and to worship God according to the new covenant, is a true priest. Shepherding is the duty of a priest. It is done through spiritual leadership and the administration of the sacraments, most importantly through offering sacrifice and worship by celebrating the Holy Eucharist. Chāvāra started his priestly training at the age of ten. He disciplined and equipped himself well for the service of the people of God. He had an ardent desire to live a life in Christ and dedicated himself for the benefit of his folk. Chāvāra adopted the motto “the Lord is my portion” (Ps 16:5), which reveals the depth of his priestly and liturgical vocation. In Deuteronomy, we read: “Therefore, Levi has no allotment or inheritance with his kindred; the Lord is his inheritance, as the Lord your God promised him” (Deut 10:9). Also, we see: “Then the Lord said to Aaron: You shall have no allotment in their land, nor shall you have any share among them; I am your share and your possession among the Israelites” (Num 18:20).

Chāvāra wrote to his nephew, Joseph Chāvāra, strengthening him in his priestly vocation:

... it was *by Your will* that I was received into this Congregation... I feel consoled as I was not pursuing evil ways. *Also if God so wishes, He can achieve through me glory which is beyond my own capacity.* It is *not impossible with God* who once made a weak fisherman, who frightened by the words of a woman had foresworn him, to stand boldly before the Emperor, unmindful of his

threatening roar as if it were the droning of a mosquito, and to come out victorious in the end. He will surely help you to look up courageously and never to be disheartened, even when you feel that you do not have sufficient strength, because ‘everything is possible to me in Him who strengthens me.’ (Phil 4:13). In these words let us hope for our strength and make the decision for yourself: *‘The time that remains for me I will use for His glory only, that I will live up to my vocation and so I oblige my conscience.’* Don’t say that it is impossible for you. He will give strength to your body and He himself will enlighten your mind and intellect. He will give you both, I am sure.¹

This letter displays his conviction about God’s choice regarding his vocation and His providential love that strengthens the weak human being to make impossible things plausible. Chāvāra surrendered to God’s will so that God was glorified by his life. He advises his nephew to take a resolution that his time will be used for God’s glory and will live his vocation as a priest according to his conscience. He gives the example of St Peter, who was weak in the beginning but became strong enough to witness even before the Emperor.² Chāvāra’s dependence on God’s grace is evident in his letter. He is a model for all generations of consecrated people in his strong testimony of life anchored in the Almighty God for whom nothing is impossible (Lk 1:37). He can be compared to the king of Israel who defeated

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters*, 54.

² St Peter was crucified upside down in what is now Vatican City by the Emperor Nero.

the enemy of the people of God trusting in divine help.¹ Chāvāra defeated the wild beasts who came to scatter and devour the sheep with the stones of his divine wisdom and holy life.

3.3. *A Professed Ascetic*

Chāvāra longed and prayed for the institution of religious life for priests and nuns and tried his best to begin its implementation for the spiritual growth of the Church.² Kavanagh explains asceticism as

a kind of Zen³ in the art of maintaining a life of ‘right worship’ as the only way to live in the real order... This is a life expected of every one of the baptized, whose ultimate end is the same supreme beatitude. It is a life all the baptized share, a life within which the professed ascetic is nothing more or less than a virtuoso who serves the whole community as an exemplar of its own life. The ascetic is simply a stunningly normal person who stands in constant witness to the normality of Christian *orthodoxia* in a world flawed into abnormality by human choice.⁴

Chāvāra was a monk and an ascetic who served the whole community of Kerala as an exemplar of his own life. He

¹ “But David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied’” (1 Sam 17:45)

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I: The Chronicles*, 124.

³ Zen is a Japanese school of Mahayana Buddhism emphasising the value of meditation and intuition rather than ritual worship or study of Scriptures.

⁴ Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 161-162.

became a constant witness to the normality of Christian *orthodoxia*.

After a few months of the start of the new convent at Koonammavu, Chāvāra and Leopold visited it in August 1866 and taught them the offices to be prayed daily. They translated both Latin and Syriac texts into Malayalam and practised the rituals. They started praying them by September.¹ Chāvāra advised the sisters to pray the canonical prayers with full concentration and not to think of any other charitable works during prayer. He asked them to take the sound of the bell for prayer as the voice of the great king, Our Lord, and go quickly to offer themselves to him. He told them to think about the prayer room as the palace of the king and behave with modesty and fear of God.² Chāvāra advised them to offer prayers with intent and admonished them about the effectiveness of canonical prayers. He had the great vision even before the Second Vatican Council that, during liturgical prayers, the earthly Church joins the heavenly choir of angels and saints and so, after purifying oneself with holy water and having a contrite heart, the prayers must be said with great attention, being aware of the meaning of the words used.³ He also had the conviction that liturgy is the celebration of the paschal mystery as we read “you should pray it remembering the passion of Christ and joining your prayers to the merits of the passions of Christ.”⁴

¹ *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent*, 31.

² *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent*, 70.

³ *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent*, 71, SC §83.

⁴ *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent*, 71

3.4. A True Carmelite

At Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah worshiped the true God by offering a bull, and God accepted his oblation by sending fire from above.¹ The new Elijah (Chāvāra adopted the second name Elias in reference to the prophet Elijah, who is the patriarch of the Carmelite family) of the Kerala Church offered himself, all his thoughts, words, and actions as a pleasing sacrifice to bring down the fire of wisdom and rain of blessings upon the Malabar Church and the people of Kerala at large. Chāvāra wished the spread of the Gospel as we pray in the fourth *G'hanta* prayer of the anaphora of *Mar Addai* and *Mar Mari*:

Grant us Your peace and tranquillity all the days of our lives. Let *all the people on earth know* that You alone are the true God, the Father and that You sent Your beloved Son Jesus Christ. *May all the people know* that Christ, our Lord, and God, in His life-giving Gospel, *came and taught us the way of purity and sanctity* of the prophets and apostles, martyrs and confessors, doctors and bishops, priests and deacons, and all the children of the holy Catholic Church who have been signed with the *living and life-giving seal of baptism*.²

Chāvāra had the missionary spirit, which is evident in his writings. He prayed for the glory of the Church and expended energy on the sanctification of the children of the holy Catholic Church.

He appeared as a sign of true and genuine worship for the people of God. Elijah is closely linked with the Marian devotion of the Carmelites. As the tradition says, there was a group of prophets who lived on Mount Carmel practising

¹ 1 Kgs 18:20-40.

²*The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 56-57 [emphasis added].

devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We find in Chāvāra a meticulous follower of this Carmelite group in his devotion to Mother Mary. He was offered as a servant of the Blessed Virgin as a child by his mother and he renewed this dedication every year. He considered himself the true slave of Mother Mary. Virgin Mary, the image of the Church, is the perfect model of the divine-human reciprocity. Likewise, Mary became a liturgy. Liturgy is the meeting place of the divine and human. This liturgy is the descending of grace, and, in response, it is a ceaseless *Magnificat* sung in praise and thanksgiving for her redemption.¹

The liturgy consists of a double movement: from God to the gathered Church (descending or *katabatic*) and from the gathered Church to God (ascending or *anabatic*). Both these dimensions are usually mediated by Christ. But the Blessed Virgin Mary is the ‘Mother of the Church’ because she is the Mother of Christ, who instituted the Church and is her invisible Head. Mary collaborated with her Son at every stage of His redemptive work.² Mary is acknowledged as a co-worker in the redemptive work of God, in other words, as Co-Redemptrix.³ Chāvāra could certify his filial trust in

¹Verheul, *Introduction to Liturgy*, 18.

²From the moment of Christ’s ascension into heaven, she nurtured the infant Church by her presence and prayers, especially at Pentecost. After her bodily assumption, Mary continues to intercede for the members of the Church. She is now our Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.

³LG §62 teaches that “the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, *Auxiliatrix*, *Adjutrix*, and *Mediatrix*. This, however, is to be so understood that it neither takes away from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator.” For a study of this title, see Miravalle, *With Jesus*, 7-16. For a discussion of the objections and replies

Mother Mary like this: “Till now, I have never had to draw the net empty after casting it in the name of our holy Mother.”¹ Mary is the type and model of the Church. “She is hailed as a pre-eminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent exemplar [model] in faith and charity”² Chāvāra was a deep devotee of the Virgin Mother and considered himself her beloved son. “At once virgin and mother, Mary is the symbol and the most perfect realization of the Church.”³ Chāvāra could mediate the paschal mystery in his life with the help of his divine Mother, who is the perfect model of participation in the redemptive mystery of Christ.

4. Being and Becoming the Mystery

Chāvāra may be called a *lex orandi*, a rule of prayer in himself. Because he was an model for those who pray since his life was immersed in prayer. He lived the faith that is celebrated and explained in the liturgy of the Malabar Church. He thus provided *lex credenda*, which is the right teaching for the Church. His holy being was the end product of his liturgical life. He could live out what he believed and celebrated in the liturgy. Thus, he displayed the right living, which is *lex vivendi*, the third operational principle of the liturgy.⁴ He tried to bring all his fellow beings into that fulfilment through his ministries of diverse nature. Chāvāra

declaring Mary Co-Redemptrix as the fifth Marian dogma, see “A Response to 7 Common Objections on Mary Co-redemptrix.” http://www.voxpopuli.org/response_to_7_common_objections_part1.php [accessed 5 April 2016].

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters*, 55.

² LG §53; CCC 967.

³ CCC 507.

⁴ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 81.

is the exemplar of *lex vivendi* amongst the Mar Thoma Christians. In his writings, he expressed what he experienced and believed. He lived what he experienced and believed in the liturgy. He shared his wisdom through his acts for the good of others, especially for developing their faith. The doxology expressed in his writings was anamnestic, epicletic, and ecclesiological in nature.

An examination of the life of Chāvāra reveals that the ethics of being leads to the ethics of doing. The participation of a person in the living mystery of salvation provides a setting that elucidates the identity of human beings in their relation to God and one another. Engaging in the paschal mystery leads one to self-awareness and guides one into participating in the sacrificial and merciful love of God in Christ. Chāvāra was inspired to show mercy and forgive others as well as to love others through his in-depth involvement in the mystery of Christ. His life of worship disciplined his inner dispositions and shaped his internal attitude and ethical outlook. He could experience the presence of God in his daily movements as a merciful father, friend, and bridegroom, thus fostering a sense of belonging (“we”-feeling) and togetherness with the entirety of creation. His meditation of the divine mystery led him to the ontological and teleological awareness of human existence. His profound participation in the salvation mystery imparted Chāvāra with a deeper conviction of human and divine relationality. Every time Chāvāra meditated the living mystery, he gained a fresh self-awareness of his purpose in life in relation to the Other, which he mediated through his actions.

PART III

MINISTERING THE MYSTERY

This section of the book investigates the concrete efforts of Chāvāra towards the full, active, and conscious participation of the Kerala Church in the mystery that is celebrated in the liturgy and lived in reality. Chāvāra's in-depth knowledge about the history and tradition of the Malabar Church and his passionate craving for the revival of the Christian life of his people gave way to numerous renewal plans, which touched almost all aspects of the life of the people of Kerala. Chāvāra became an instrument in the hands of the Almighty God to fulfil His dreams. Thus, the Church witnessed wonderful things that God worked through His humble servant in the life of the people of the Malabar coast.

Jesus Christ inaugurated the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven on earth. He asked his apostles to build the kingdom through their ministries in the world. We cannot simply separate the ministry of the Church into various detached dimensions, like pastoral, liturgical, theological, moral, and missionary, because all ministries and gifts aim to build up the Church. In the letter to the Ephesians we read:

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for *building up the body of Christ*, until all of us come to the *unity of the faith* and of the *knowledge of the Son of*

*God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.*¹

Chāvāra received several gifts from God for the edification of the Church, the mystical body of Christ. All of his endeavours aimed at growth in the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God so that all may grow to maturity and to the measure of the full stature of Christ. Chāvāra gathered every possible living stone to build the house of God of which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.² When Chāvāra's ministry to the living mystery is analysed, it would be enriching to investigate about the meaning of the word liturgy. The word 'liturgy,' originated from a word having very similar meaning as a public ministry for the good of society.

1. Leitourgia

Etymologically, the word 'liturgy' means any service done for the common welfare of the people. The word is not strictly religious in its origin.³ It comes from the classical Greek *leitourgia* (λειτουργία), which is a combination of *leitos*, an adjective that pertains to the *laos* (λαός), people or national community, and *ergon* (ἔργον), a noun meaning work.⁴ The word *leitourgia* means 'public work' to signify that work of the people and thus public service to the state.⁵ Consequently, the word 'liturgy' originally meant service in the name of the people or on behalf of the people. In the Christian tradition, it means the participation of the people

¹ Eph 4:11-13 [emphasis added].

² Eph 2:19-22.

³ Senn, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*, 5.

⁴ Chupungco, "A Definition of Liturgy," 3.

⁵ Lewis, "*Leitourgia* and Related Terms," 177.

of God in 'the work of God.' Through liturgy, Christ, our redeemer, and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his Church.

We see that *leitourgia* is primarily linked with a communitarian task pertaining to the whole of society.¹ The first usage of the term *leitourgia* in Greek literature refers to 'a specific political service rendered to the community.' Towards the beginning of the fifth century before the Common Era, it was used in a broader sense to mean 'any service to the community.'² Thus, "a public project undertaken by an individual for the good of the community in areas such as education, entertainment or defence would be called a *leitourgia*."³ In this sense of the word, we could say that the ministry of Chāvāra was a *leitourgia*.

2. Biblical References

Later, *leitourgia* signified the priestly functions rendered in honour of God. Therefore, along with its usage in a predominantly public sense, *leitourgia* also gradually took on a cultic connotation in the Hellenistic period.⁴ In the Old Testament, some uses of the term *leitourgia* in the LXX⁵ refer to the observance of Passover rituals (Ex 12:25).⁶ In the LXX,

¹ Meyer, "Leitourgeo," 219.

² Lewis, "*Leitourgia* and Related Terms," 181.

³ Madden, "Liturgy," 740.

⁴ Chupungco, "A Definition of Liturgy," 3.

⁵ The first translation of the Old Testament is the Greek Septuagint. The Roman numeral LXX (seventy) and the Latin word *septuāgintā* were assigned to this version because of the story of seventy-two translators engaged in the original work. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, 25.

⁶ "When your children ask you, what do you mean by this service? service? You shall say, it is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord" (Ex

the term *leitourgia* was used to designate “the chosen people’s primary reason for existence, namely, the worship of Yahweh” (1 Kgs 19:21; 2 Chr 17:19; 22:8). In the New Testament, the term *leitourgia* does not occur often. In Luke and Hebrews, the use of the word reflects a continuation of the priestly ministry described in the Hebrew Bible. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the heavenly liturgy are also referred to by this term. In Acts, *leitourgia* refers to the worship of the Christian community.

In Paul, it reflects both cultic and non-cultic senses of the term, and Paul mainly uses it to refer to the service he himself renders and receives as well as charitable service to the poor. Paul depicts himself as a *leitourgia* for the gentiles in Rom 15:16. God called him “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God.” In Philippians 2:17, Paul speaks about his self-sacrifice. Here, the word *leitourgia* is used to denote his service to the community. This service can be “either Paul’s missionary endeavours and readiness for martyrdom, or the charitable activities he is undertaking for the community.”¹ Paul refers to the charitable collection for the Jerusalem community (2 Cor 9:17) and to a personal service he received from Epaphroditus (Phil 2:30). The charitable activity he mentions can be read as a transition from the non-cultic sense of the word to a cultic sense. Here, liturgy becomes a generous service for the needy.² As Aimé-Georges

12:26-27). The Greek word used for the service is *latreia* which derives from *leitourgia*. There is a reference in Rom 12:11 where Paul uses the term *leitourgia* instead of *latreia*.

¹ Strathmann, “Leitourgeo and Leitourgia in the New Testament,” 229.

² Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 145.

Martimort observes, “the usage in this manner might reflect Paul’s perspective that these ‘services’ are both good and holy. Though they are offered to Paul and to the needy in Jerusalem, such generosity is an act of ministry to God.”¹

3. Early Church Writings

The term *leitourgia* in the *Didache* denotes the ministry of the bishops and deacons for the Church.² Clement of Rome employs it to counsel the church leaders and to remind them about their dignity: “Let each of us, brethren, in his own rank, be well-pleasing to God and have a good conscience, not over-stepping the defined rules of his ministration – in dignity.”³ Clement speaks about the bishops, “who were appointed by the apostles or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who ministered blamelessly to the flock of Christ in humility, peaceably and nobly.”⁴ The ministry of the bishops is attached to the community. They are appointed by the consent of the whole Church and to serve the people of Christ. Therefore, Clement instructed the bishops to render exemplary service to the community.

Leitourgia in the *Shepherd of Hermas* is the service rendered to God and to the community. In this regard, the author

¹ Martimort, “Preliminary Concepts,” 2. The same idea is found in Rom 13:6; 15:16; 2 Cor 9:12; Phil 2:17, 22, 30.

² *Didache* 15:1 “Select, then, for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, who are honest and have proved themselves, for they too perform the functions of prophets and teachers for you.” Cody, “The Didache: An English Translation,” 13.

³ *Letter to the Corinthians*, 40:1. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, 10.

⁴ *Letter to the Corinthians*, 44:3. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, 10-11.

speaks about “the pure ministry offered to God and to the widows in need.”¹ In the *Apostolic Tradition*, liturgy is mentioned in reference to the community:

Bestow, knower of the heart, Father, on this your servant, whom you have chosen for the episcopate, to feed your holy flock and to exercise the high priesthood for you without blame, ministering night and day; unceasingly to propitiate your countenance, and to offer to you the holy gifts of your Church.²

The *Apostolic Tradition* recalls the ministry of day and night. Instruction is given to the bishops to care “for the flock entrusted to their pastoral service.” In the *Apostolic Tradition*, then, “liturgy is understood to include the bishop’s offerings of the gifts for the Church as well as the unceasing guidance and protection they extend to their people.”³ Irenaeus of Lyons used *leitourgia* in a general sense. For him, it included every service rendered to God in the temple. He considered even the rendering of justice as *leitourgia*. Irenaeus wrote that “he will be commanded to leave idle on the day of rest, who is constantly keeping Sabbath that is, giving homage to God in the temple and all times doing the works of justice.”⁴ For the early Christian authors like that of the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Irenaeus, *leitourgia* includes both services rendered to God and works of charity for the needy.

So, after this analysis, we conclude that we may understand the word ‘liturgy’ in such a way that it includes all those ministries of the chosen one for the benefit of the folk under their care. It denotes Jesus’ ministry and

¹ *Shepherd of Hermas* IX 27:3. Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 243.

² *Apostolic Tradition* 3:4. Attridge, ed., *The Apostolic Tradition*, 30.

³ *Apostolic Tradition* 3:4. Attridge, ed., *The Apostolic Tradition*, 30.

⁴ *Epideixis* 96. Smith, *St. Irenaeus*, 106.

participation in it by living in union with the mystery of Christ. It may be cultic as well as non-cultic in nature. Subsequently, every priestly function, charitable service to the needy, exemplary service to the community, life of sacrifice, missionary endeavours, pastoral care, guidance, and protection as well as works of justice comes under the umbrella of *leitourgia* or the ministry of the mystery. Therefore, I use this broad meaning of the word 'liturgy' to investigate Chāvāra's ministry of the paschal mystery. Chāvāra recognised that liturgy is powerful enough to transform both the worshipping community and the culture and society in which one lives. This part of the book explores Chāvāra's unread and unseen liturgical vision behind his hard work in the fields of education, print media, charitable works, the formation of priests and religious, efforts for unity, justice, and equality in society.

Chapter 6

CHĀVARA'S MODELS FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE MYSTERY

Chāvāra is the pioneer of the Kerala renaissance. This gifted visionary made sincere efforts to realise God's dream for the people of Kerala. He wanted to reach out to his less privileged fellow beings. He was aware that "the glory of God is man fully alive with the life of God."¹ Chāvāra thought of the Church as the people of God or the new Israel, a household of God, the wounded Body of Christ, invitees to the wedding feast of the Lamb, and the sheepfold of Jesus. In all these models, we find a kind of intimate knitting that binds everybody into a whole. The call to Christianity is a call to a community in communion with God. The disciples of Christ are individuals related to Jesus, and this relation brings them into a connection with other Christians. The Christian life thus becomes a locus of interpersonal relationality. Jesus is the model of relationships. He is the model for our relationship with ourselves, with God, with our fellow beings, and with the cosmos. In all these dimensions of our relationality, the

¹ The original quotation from St. Irenaeus of Lyons is as follows: "For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God. For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of the creation, affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who see God." St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 261. Pope John Paul II used this in his remarkable address during his visit to the "Facultés Catholiques de Lyon."

community provides a context for the development and practice of the autonomy of human beings in its mature form. The community of Christians is a believing, worshipping, sharing, and acting community. Chāvāra was a man of relationships and this evoked a responsive behaviour in his mind. He served the great mystery of salvation with a resolution to restore relationships, within humanity in the proper and perfect order. We discuss in the following sections certain models inspired by the bible, which have been identified as apt and applicable to describe Chāvāra's ministry.

1. Chāvāra Leading a New Exodus in Kerala

Chāvāra guided the people of God in Kerala in their freedom struggle against the slavery of ignorance. He helped them to come out of it and recognise their dignity and identity as the children of God. This deliverance aimed to set them free so that they may offer their lives as a pure oblation. However, the place of true worship is not a mountain but Spirit and Truth; that is in the one Body of Christ, which is the Church. The journey of the people of Kerala was from ignorance, darkness, and death towards the Truth, the Light, and the Life; that is to the person of Jesus Christ.¹ This Truth was for all, not leaving any one of the least, and Chāvāra wanted to liberate them by the Truth

¹ *Asato ma sad gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, mrtyor mamrtam gamaya. Shanti, Shanti, Shanti* is a Shanti Mantra (mantra of peace) taken from *Brihadaranyaka Upanishads* (1.3.28). It is translated as "Lead us from ignorance (unreal) to truth (real). Lead us from darkness to light. Lead us from death to immortality. Peace, peace, peace." This prayer of the sages of India was answered by Jesus Christ who claimed himself as the Light, the Truth, and the Life.

so that the knowledge about the Truth is eternal life. God revealed himself to Moses by saying: "I Am Who I Am" (Ex 3:14). Then, Israel turned to God from idols (unreal) to serve the living and true God (real). In John 3:36, we read: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life but must endure God's wrath."

Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly' (Jn 10:10). Also, he clarifies that eternal life is 'to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent' (Jn 17:3). He is the Light of the world (Jn 8:12) and the Truth that makes all people free (Jn 8:32). Unfortunately, this Light of Wisdom and Truth was missing in the social and spiritual milieu of the nineteenth-century Kerala Church. The prophetic vision of Chāvāra recognised it as the blindness of wisdom (*njanakurudatham*).¹ To eradicate it, he took inspiration from the Eucharistic Lord. He accepted God's call to unfetter the people of God from their slavery of nescience about God and themselves. In 1865, Chāvāra issued a directive in the name of Archbishop Barnadenos to start schools attached to every church.² The instruction to

¹ Chāvāra wrote: "Just as without eyes one cannot see the material things of the world, so also without knowledge it will be impossible for us to see or understand the reality of the world that is above and the Lord who dwells therein. As those who have no eyes are called blind so too those who have no learning should be called spiritually blind." Chāvāra, *CWC*, vol. IV: *The Letters*, IX/2, 95.

² At that time, Chāvāra was the Vicar General of the Diocese of Verapoly (Kerala). Chāvāra was very strict, to the extent that he wrote that, if he is not obeyed, he will withdraw permission for spiritual assistance to those Churches.

have “*Pallikoodam*”,¹ which means a school attached to the church, was linked to this order. *Educumdat*² and *Pallikoodam* were the ones among the many ways in which Chāvāra cooperated with God the Father to spread the light of the Truth, to provide the Life, and to show the Way. He was like a spiritual sun who was sent by the Father to remove the darkness of ignorance from the Malabar Church.³ Chāvāra attempted to free the people of Kerala from the idols of

¹ In Dravidian language, *palli* means a ‘city,’ ‘town,’ or ‘village.’ Caldwell, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages*, 572. *Pallikoodam* is a word used in Malayalam that literally means a school is attached. It also can be a sacred place for education. In addition, the word *Palli* denotes respect. The Malayalam word for ‘church’ or ‘mosque’ is also *Palli*. At the time of Chāvāra, *palli* meant a local parish church, and so the schools started in parishes were called *pallikoodam*. Even now, the schools in Kerala are called *Pallikoodam* in Malayalam.

² *Educumdat* means boarding school for the residential study of young girls who were deprived of educational facilities and social life.

³ On the death of Chāvāra, his successor, Fr. Kuriakose Elias Porukara wrote: “On 3 January 1871, at 7.30 a.m. passed away our Father Kuriakose of the Holy Family the founder and first Prior of the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites, newly established in Kerala, the *Malpan* (Professor of Theology) and Vicar General of the St Thomas Christians. This father of ours was a *spiritual sun*. He passed away like the sun rising in the east making its day-long procession over the horizon and setting in the west, removing in its course the darkness over the world and illumining it with golden rays....” Kuriakose Eliseus Porukara CMI, *Sabhakarude Adisthanakaranum Onnamathe Priorumaya Chāvāra Kuriakose Malpante Charitram* (Life of Chāvāra), *Sthapaka Pithakkanmar*, 1905, 29.

selfishness, caste, colour, and creed, which caused divisions and marginalisation in society.

God provided manna and quail during the forty-year journey of the Israelites at the request of Moses. Similarly, Chāvāra fed poor students with food and other essential things in schools. The mid-day meal was a successful strategy that attracted poor families to send their children to schools. This became the model for public schools in the kingdom of Travancore in the 1940's at the recommendation of Divan C. P. Ramaswami Iyar.¹ Children from all castes and religions were admitted to the schools, while low caste and *dalit* were denied admission to public schools. He took the initiative to bring the *dalit* children to the school and to encourage them, he provided them with free textbooks, clothes, and food. Chāvāra also dared to start a Sanskrit school attached to the first religious community.²

Chāvāra tried to transform society at large by his pioneering initiative in establishing a printing press.³ He knew the value of good books and the habit of reading them.⁴ In those days, printed matter in Malayalam was very

¹ In a letter to the king on 26 November 1936, the Divan recommended this practice. A. Sreedharamenon, "A Renaissance Leader Who Walked ahead of His Time," 78.

² Parapuram, *Chronicles*, 1473. It is a Malayalam manuscript in the Archives of the St. Joseph Monastery in Mannanam, written probably between 1902-1905. Also see Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 256.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I: The Chronicles*, 38-39.

⁴ He advised: "Scientific books of the non-believers spread ignorance and erroneous knowledge. Collecting pagan or heretical books or those containing lewd songs in the house is identical to hiding fire in haystacks. Parents shall procure for their children the treasure of books packed with wisdom and

rare, meaning books were only available in other languages, like Tamil, Syriac, or European languages. As he was convinced of the necessity of a press for the Catholic community, he undertook hardships in establishing the press and printed books of Christian prayers, spirituality, and liturgical texts.¹ To propagate Catholic literature, Chāvāra started a printing press at Mannanam in 1846 and printed *Jnana peeyoosham* and *Nasrani Deepika* from there. Chāvāra led the new Israel of Kerala from darkness to the light of wisdom and made them people of God's own country.

2. Chāvāra Building God's Household

Those who are saved by the paschal mystery are members of the household of God. The apostle teaches: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). The Church is like a home built with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.² St Peter says:

philosophical knowledge that enhance piety. As much as possible, you shall buy and build up a collection of such books in your household." Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 28.

¹ In a letter of Chavara to Father Kuriakose Eliseus Porukara, he mentions about nine books printed in the press at Mannanam; namely, *Piusham*, *Yagarakom*, *Dova*, *Samgraham*, *Balanikshepam*, *Novena*, *Via sacra*, *Madhyastham*, *Vasantha*, and *Sathyaveda Pareeksha*. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, V/9, 48.

² "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Ps 118:22). Prophet Isaiah also speaks of this cornerston: "therefore thus says the Lord God, See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: One who trusts will not panic" (Is 28:16; Mt 21:42; 1 Pet 2:6).

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.¹

Chāvāra gathered each living stone to build the Church as a family with the royal priesthood. In this gathered home, all members offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. This is the real worship: to offer sacrifices through the mystical body of Christ, the Church, to the Father. In this venture, Chāvāra wanted to lose no single living stone because everyone is precious before God, and Jesus incarnated out of God's love so that no one who believes in him shall perish.²

St Paul describes the building of God and the strength of raw materials used to survive the fire on the Judgement day as follows:

For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire,

¹ 1 Pet 2:4-5.

² "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward.”¹

We can see that Chāvāra laid a strong foundation for the Malabar Church with his liturgical vision and dynamic participation in the paschal mystery. Since it was built strong with precious stones, even today the Catholic Church and secular society of Kerala stand firm at the time of trials and atrocities. The proof of the success of Chāvāra’s toil is seen in the canonisation of many saints from this Church and in the number of its religious and missionary vocations.² St Peter says about these people of God:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.³

Chāvāra knew that the people of God must be holy so that they can be ministers of the mystery and exercise their royal priesthood while living as *homo adorans*. With this conviction, Chāvāra tried his best to bring all to this family and to nurture sanctity and unity among Christians. He considered himself the prodigal son of the gospel.⁴ He enjoyed the merciful Father’s generosity in clothing him

¹ 1 Cor 3:9-14.

² At present, the SMC has four canonised saints, two Blesseds, five Venerables and eleven Servants of God. Available from http://www.syromalabarchurch.in/syro-malabar_saints.php [accessed 15 June 2020].

³ 1 Pet 2:9-10.

⁴ Lk 15:11-32.

with holiness, adorning him with all heroic virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit. We could see these gifts in the image of a ring on the finger and the protection and providential care of God in the image of sandals for feet of the prodigal son. Chāvāra struggled to bring in all his siblings to home, who were still running after the pods of pig's food. He tried to remind them of the festivity and richness in the Father's house by enlightening their minds. In the Testament of Chāvāra to his parishioners, he writes about his vision of family as a miniature of heaven. He quotes Mark 3:24-25: "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.' And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand." So, he insists on sustaining unity within families.¹ Chāvāra wrote: "The honour and blessing of a family lie in coexisting without any quarrels and to be on good terms with everyone."²

His relational and responsive existence as an obedient son of God and a true ecclesial being obliged him to make others into children of God irrespective of caste, colour, gender, or faith. His humble request to his parishioners was to pray for him like this: "O! Lord, keep the soul of thy servant also in the abode of the just."³ He wished to live forever with all the just in the abode of God. The most significant and singular sign of a Christian is mutual love (Jn 15:35), and his love compelled him to do everything possible to help his own people to achieve holiness and perfection.

Chāvāra was a visionary who dreamt of gender equality and wanted to make every human being free and self-

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, X/6, 103.

² Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 12.

³ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 8.

sufficient. His testament is a manifesto of social behaviour. In *Chavarul*, he writes about communal harmony, tolerance, good values like love, justice, mercy, fear of God, duties towards parents, and respect for elders. There is advice against theft as well as vigilance against the exploitation of children. Even today his instructions find relevance and prove that they were inspired by the eternal one, who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Heb 13:8).

Chāvāra, being a perfect Christian, expressed his love through care, service, and the preferential option for the poor, the needy, and all marginalised human beings. He wrote, “Days on which you have not rendered any good to others will not be reckoned in the book of life.”¹ If a believer is in a true relationship with God, as Jesus described, “I am the vine, you are the branches”, then they will bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Jesus stated clearly: “Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing.” The fruits of the Holy Spirit grow in the life of a believer who remains united to the Body of Christ. This keeps the Church alive in the presence of the risen Lord, just as branches thrive off the vine (Jn 15:5). Chāvāra could bear fruits in all seasons because he remained in Christ as a tree planted near water.² He prospered in whatever he did.

¹ Chāvāra, *Chavarul*, 21.

² “They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit” (Jer 17:8). Also see Ps 1:3, “They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.”

3. *Chāvāra Nursing the Wounded Body of Christ*

Chāvāra saw all types of discrimination in society as wounds that needed treatment and proper medicine. Education was one of the treatments that he found very effective. He had a clear perception of the role of each member of the body of Christ. Therefore, he could start schools, press, or convents that include all, not only those were strictly Syro-Malabar Catholics. He could trigger the re-integration of segregated communities, especially that of the *dalit* and women into the mainstream of society by his offer of open education for all children regardless of caste, class, or religion. He provided them with education opportunities and thus progress.

Chāvāra aimed at a healthy and united body of Christ and so he worked to cure the cancerous growths as well as all types of dangerous infections. He wanted all his people to participate in his ministry of the mystical body of Christ. He designed projects for that purpose. When the body itself produces vaccines that is the best medicine to prevent further sickness. Likewise, Chāvāra wanted to boost the immune system of the body of Christ by the production of antibodies within it to fight the antigens. One of them was the programme of collecting a handful of rice (*pidiyari*).¹ It was collected to feed the poor and the *dalit* children who attended the catechumenate. They were also given clothes and pious articles, like rosaries, scapulars, etc.² He asked his home parishioners of Kainakary to start a house of charity

¹*Pidiyari* means, each family set apart a handful of rice for a common cause every time it is cooked. This was contributed for the good of the Church..

²*Mannanam Chronicles vol. III*, 30 (dated November 1864); see Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 252.

(*upavisāla* or *dharmasāla*) for the abandoned old and sick people. He advised them to beg and raise a fund to build a house for them with a charity box labelled 'Happy Death Charity Box.'¹ *Kettuthengu* was a project in which the yield of 'a number of coconut trees was set apart' for the common cause, usually associated with the Church.² *Nuttikanchu* was another scheme initiated by Chāvāra in which five percent of the produce of the parishioners was donated to the vicariate.³ Chāvāra grew beyond any boundaries of religion, caste, or creed and laboured for the good health of society.

Chāvāra's liturgy was not confined to the Church alone. His dreams were inclusive and integrative. Even in the case of religious observances within the Church, his mind was as generous and vast as that of Jesus, who dined with all the sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes. We read in the gospel an incident where Jesus reveals his mission as a physician:

And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well, have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For, I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."⁴

Chāvāra understood what Jesus meant when he taught "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." Worshipping God without showing mercy to one's fellow beings is of no use. That is

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, IX/7, 126-127.

² Bernard, *CMI Sabha Adyadasakangalil*, 206.

³ Bernard, *CMI Sabha Adyadasakangalil*, 202-203.

⁴ Mt 9:10-13.

what led Chāvāra to take steps to distribute the divine medicine of mercy. The wounds that were caused to the body of Christ by various kinds of dissensions and inequalities hurt Chāvāra's heart. He longed for unity and justice to heal the scars of the Malabar Church. The arrival of Roccas resulted in further disunity, against which Chāvāra fought with his full strength. After the departure of Roccas, Chāvāra and his companions continued with a follow-up to bring all the dissident churches and faithful back to unity. Chāvāra wrote as if Jesus is telling him on his way seeking the lost one,

Your enemies did not like this. So they caught hold of me, beat me, dragged me, further wounds on my flesh and to satiate their fury they pat me to death. But I prepared wholesome medicines out of blood flowing from my wounds and applied them to your diseased body and soul to make you healthy and fat. I gave you my vert blood.¹

Just as Jesus gave his precious blood as medicine for the wounds of sin, Chāvāra as a good Samaritan of the parable used the medicine of mercy and forgiveness as oil and wine to cure the cuts and sores of the Mother Church.² Chāvāra's initiatives were channelised through the religious leaders of the society, namely the priests and nuns. He understood well that convents and monasteries are the best places to start reform and renewal of society and the Church.

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 10.

² Lk 10:34.

4. *Chāvara Preparing Guests for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb*

Chāvara could keep his baptismal robe of grace clean throughout his life. That is announced by the Church by his canonisation as a saint.¹ He wanted to see his people grow in holiness as they are children of the Holy One, called to perfection in love and holiness.² As the king in the parable of Jesus invited people from the streets for the wedding feast of his son, Chāvara gathered the children of God. Chāvara meditated on this parable and insisted on making sure that all of the invitees from Kerala Church have the wedding garment of a holy life.³ The absence of canonised saints in the apostolic Church of Kerala, which received the light of faith in the first century, was painful for Chāvara.⁴

¹ On 23 November 2014, Kuriakose Elias Chavara was canonised by Pope Francis I along with Euphrasia Elavuthunkal, a member of the female congregation he founded.

² "Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15-16).

³ "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless" (Mt 22:11-12). Chāvara interprets this parable as follows: "he was a vagabond, but even without a proper dress on, had he asked for one in all *humility*, he would certainly have been granted that by divine generosity. It was his self-reliance and self-complacency that threw him to torture. So if you are humble enough to ask Him who brought you hither, you will certainly be gifted with the royal robe that is higher degrees of prayer and *sanctity*." Chāvara, *CWC vol. III: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1[emphasis added].

⁴ He wrote: "And as any close observer can perceive, the holy way of life and exemplary conduct has not yet taken root in our

Though he worked hard for the faith formation of the people, he realised that the lack of inspiring models is one of the major reasons for the subjugated condition of the faithful. There should be living examples of holy lives in the consecrated form to lead others towards the eschatological fulfilment of salvation history. Chāvāra recognised God's plan to start religious congregations for the men and women of Kerala. Chāvāra, as the pioneer of Indian monasticism, founded two indigenous religious congregations, one for men¹ and one for women.² He himself entered monastic life in 1831, but he had to wait with patience till 1866 to start one for women.³ Chāvāra took this initiative along with Leopold

Malabar. For this Malabar Church which had received the faith from St. Thomas, the apostle, remains barren, not having produced even one saint, while other countries and islands which received faith much later have brought forth several saints." Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 1: The Chronicles*, 146.

¹ The Congregation was originally called the Servants of Mary Immaculate, but it is now known as the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI). It was established in collaboration with two priests, Thomas Palackal and Thomas Porukara, who were teachers of Chāvāra. It was founded on 11 May 1831 at Mannanam, Kerala.

² The Third Order of Carmelites Discalced (TOCD) was begun with the help of Leopold Beccaro OCD in 1866. It was founded on 13 February 1866 at Koonammavu, Kerala.

³ The Chronicles bring to light that Chāvāra earnestly desired to establish a convent for women and was involved in attempts to start convents both at Alangadu in 1859 and at Puthenpally which was converted into seminary in 1861. Parapuram, *Chronicles*, 656-657. *CKC*, vol. I, 1-2; Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 1: The Chronicles*, 104; *Chronicles of Mannanam Monastery (CMM)*, vol. II, 72-73.

Beccaro (1837-1914),¹ an Italian missionary dedicated to the foundation of the Carmelite Congregation for aspiring women with dreams of holiness and a total dedication to God-realisation.

In the words of Fr. Leopold, the vision of Chāvāra for the convent was “an abode of virtues (*punnyasanketham*) for the girls of Malabar and a convent for them to learn *vedakaryangal* and thus grow up as good Christians.”² The convent was meant to teach sacred matters or *vedakaryangal*.³ Formation of the first members was rooted in knowledge, understanding, and conviction of God, and they were trained to experience the love of Jesus and practise their faith in daily life. Their meditation and spiritual reading were based on the word of God. Chāvāra encouraged reading habits in sisters, saying: “Avoid wasting your time in

¹ Leopold Beccaro of St Joseph OCD (28 August 1837 – 22 April 1914), an Italian Carmelite from the province of Genova, came to Kerala as a missionary on September 17, 1859 when he was a sub-deacon. He stayed at Koonammavu monastery and, after ordination in 1860, was appointed as provincial delegate, novice master of *tertiarii* and parish priest of Koonammavu. He was the confessor and spiritual director of Chāvāra. As an ardent missionary, Leopold served the Kerala Church for sixteen years. For a detailed study, see Maniakunnel, *An Ideal Missionary*.

² Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, x-xi; Porukara, “A Short Biography of Our Most Reverent Father Chāvāra Kuriakose,” 12.

³ *Veda* means ‘sacred knowledge or sacred wisdom’ in religious literature. The Christians of Kerala used to call the bible *Vedapustakam*. So, *vedakaryangal* means literally matters ‘related to the bible.’ *Satyaveda* means ‘faith in Jesus Christ.’ See the discussion on the word *veda* in Maria, *Empowered Womanhood*, 279-280.

useless conversation. The time you save after your proper work and recreation should be spent in spiritual reading."¹ For that purpose, Chāvāra made available to them many books and taught them Tamil as many spiritual books were available only in that language in those days. He also tried to teach them Latin by giving them some books. Even the girls of the *educumdat* [boarding school] were given one copy of the Latin book.²

Chāvāra wrote: "He [i.e., God] wants it [i.e., establishing this congregation] to be a mirror of virtuous life, and its monasteries to be resorts of virtuous persons (*punyasanketam*)."³ In his final Testament to the community, he exhorts the members to practise virtues of religious life to attain perfection.

The significant mark of a true religious is the total negation of their self-will, and perfect obedience as though he has no eyes and ears of his own. One who processes such virtue is a true religious. Although this is not a difficult task, it is rarely practiced to perfection. Realize this and make a strenuous effort.⁴

Chāvāra was personally involved in the formation and animation of the members of the congregations for men and women, and he instilled his vision about the Church's life in them. He was capable of continuing the worshipping heritage through the foundation of these communities, which continue to contribute significantly to the transformation of Church members through their multifarious involvement in the lives of the people even today.

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters* VII/8, 85.

² *CKC vol. I*, 152.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters* VI/1, 61-62.

⁴ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters* VI/4, 70.

We hear a lot about equality and human dignity in recent times. But the situation in the society of Kerala two centuries ago was pitiful, where women were considered only as kitchen animators.¹ The role of nuns was to participate in the formation of society through the training of young girls. The women religious were trained to become leaders of society by becoming self-reliant and realising the dignity of labour. Careful formation by Chāvāra brought steady and radical changes in the lives of consecrated and secular women. *Educumdat* for young girls deprived of educational facilities and social life was started in 1868.² With family being the primary source of education, the proper training of women ensured better formation of their children. These girls learned languages, cooking, music, and catechism along with craftworks.³ Chāvāra's vision was to make the sisters into agents of the spiritual as well as social uplifting of Kerala women and make possible the renewal of families through them.

5. Chāvāra Gathering the Scattered Sheep for the One Sheepfold

God sent Jesus because He “wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). Chāvāra, as a good shepherd, envisioned the formation of priests as charismatic leaders who burn with zeal for the salvation of souls. He established systems for the solid formation of

¹ For a detailed discussion of the situation of women in Kerala in the nineteenth century, see Maria, *Empowered Womanhood*, 89-137.

² On 2 January 1868, the first boarding school was opened at Koonammavu and Puthanangady. Sister Clara was put in charge of the three girls by Fr. Leopold, the provincial delegate. *CKC*, vol. 1, 84-85.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters VII/8 and 11*.

priests aiming at the renewal of the Church. Chāvara had a conviction that the Kerala Church can be renewed under the guidance of holy priests. Higher quality priestly formation was one of the most effective means to impart a renewed ecclesial vision to the Church and to bring change to society at large since priests have a unique role in imparting the love for the mystery of the Church to the faithful and involving them in the mystery of Christ. Chāvara was sure that well-committed leaders of society would automatically transform the social order.

5.1. Forming Good Shepherds

The Church must announce the good tidings of salvation to all. So, she “must *preach* faith and penance, she must *prepare* them for the sacraments, *teach* them to observe all that Christ has commanded, and *invite* them to all the works of charity, piety, and the apostolate”(SC §9). Chāvara was a man who walked before ages. He could partake in the duty of the Church to form pastors. As a good pastor, Chāvara preached the Good News, he prepared the faithful for liturgy, taught them the gospel values and invited all to participate in charitable works. It is through such works that the faithful manifest themselves as the light of the world glorifying the Father.

Towards the renewal of the mystical body of Christ, the first step of Chāvara was to build a well-conducted seminary. Chāvara writes in the Chronicles that the first attempt to create a convent for sisters at Puthenangadi failed since the building was converted into a seminary for the formation of priests since “the bishop found that there is a lot of devastation of souls due to lack of good priests.”¹

¹ *Chronicles of Koonammavu Convent*, 2.

Chāvāra recognised the dire need for properly trained priests. With that in mind, he started seminary formation for priests instead of the Malpanate or parochial seminaries.¹ It is noteworthy to see that most of the priests from the Mannanam seminary could withstand the schism of 1861.² Chāvāra was given the title ‘Malpan,’ equivalent to the modern degree of doctorate in Sacred Science, and was appointed examiner of all the priests of the Syro-Malabar Rite in the apostolic vicariate. He was the main professor at the Mannanam seminary till 1864.³ As the seminary attached to the new monastery, more qualified and committed instructors were available, which offered a better and effective environment for the formation of candidates. According to Leopold Beccaro, the author of his first biography, Chāvāra, even as a young cleric, realised that “an uneducated priest was not only inefficient to do anything worthwhile in his pastoral work but may be even detrimental to the salvation of souls.”⁴

Chāvāra’s seminary formation prepared candidates to participate in the renewal of society and fight against social evils. These well-disciplined leaders could enable the people of God to effectively participate in the paschal mystery

¹ The seminary system was a paradigm shift in the formation of priestly candidates in the Malabar Church. Till then, priestly candidates were trained under a priest following the *gurukula* style of Hindu culture, where students stay with the guru for education and training. Chackalackal, “Holistic Integration of Mystical Aspirations and Social Commitment,” 201-202.

² Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 193. The priests whom Chāvāra formed as a Malpan at Manannam seminary were a great help to him during his fight against Roccas’ Schism.

³ Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakos Elias Chāvāra*, 194.

⁴ Beccaro, *A Short Biography of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 6.

through a meaningful life. Chāvāra tried to instil in the candidates the mind of Jesus so that they would understand the existential necessities of the people and stand up against injustice. They were formed to help with the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Though not all were ideal priests, they could make a notable difference in the ministry of the people of God. These priests could better understand the needs of the time and involve themselves effectively in the spiritual growth of the Church. Like good shepherds, only good leaders can protect and care for the sheep of the Lord, and Chāvāra prepared wise and prudent priests for the Church through seminaries. He was aware of the dangers if the blind leads the blind.¹ To lead and teach the faithful, he dreamt of better training for priests in languages and theological subjects. He felt with Jesus that "the harvest is plenty ... but labourers are few."²

Chāvāra understood that the spiritual life of Kerala is affected badly by the lack of good spiritual leaders, especially bishops, of its own land and rite. The priests and faithful could not wholeheartedly accept and obey the foreign authorities but were craving a bishop of the same liturgical tradition from Baghdad. Chāvāra wrote:

As the magnetic needle always points towards the North, the brethren of my own flesh and blood, called the 'Nazranis of Malankara' had their hearts set, from the earliest times, on getting Syrian bishops. This had often endangered their spiritual life and led them to split from the Communion of the holy Church. Even today, any close observer can perceive, that the holy way of

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, IX/2, 95.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, IX/3, 97.

life and exemplary conduct as not yet taken root in Malabar.¹

He wrote letters to Rome requesting an indigenous bishop of the same rite. In his reflections, he brings out his dreams about the growth of the Malabar Church. He thought that a bishop from Kerala itself or at least one who knows the Syriac language will help to eliminate dissension and discord among the people. It will be beneficial to protect the faith and to keep the faithful away from schism by their dependence on Baghdad.² Chāvāra had the conviction that Christian life grows and reaches its perfection through the liturgical life of the Church. So, guidance in liturgical matters under a bishop of the Syrian rite who is from the same culture was his longing.

5.2. Defending Unity during Roccas Schism

In Kerala, the Church administration was fully controlled by ‘*Propaganda*’ and ‘*Padroado*’ through Latin bishops from the sixteenth century onwards. They could not understand the Syriac Rite of Malabar or its age-old customs and traditions. The Syrian Christians found this in Thomas Roccas, a bishop of their own rite who had come from Babylon.³ They thought he had come to liberate them from Latin rule and

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC*, vol. I *Chronicles*, 146.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters*, 57-59. This is a note found in his handwriting. Though it is uncertain whether it is part of any letter, it is published under the heading ‘reflections’ after the letters to the members of the congregation.

³ On 9 May 1861, a bishop, Thomas Roccas, came to Kerala under the orders of Joseph Audo, the Patriarch of Babylon. He was accompanied by a priest Antony, who had gone from Kerala to Mossul. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters* I/1, 2.

paid allegiance to him.¹ The schism originated because the Syrian Christians longed for their own bishop and followed an unauthorised leader, Roccas, who came without permission from Rome. Chāvāra fought against this schism and saved the Churches from this bishop.² He said that Roccas is the one who entered without permission from the Pope, like the one who enters the sheepfold not through the door (Jn 10:1).³ In Matthew 12:30, Jesus says: "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." Chāvāra quotes these words in his letter.⁴ This bishop from Bagdad has entered the sheepfold of the Lord in Malayalam to scatter His sheep so that they may become prey to the devil, who is the wolf of hell (Jn 10:12). He also compares Roccas to the ravenous wolf in sheep's clothing.⁵ Chāvāra had a fervent love for and commitment to the Kerala Church, which inspired him to act courageously at this crucial time in its history.

Chāvāra says about the mindset of the people of the Kerala Church: "My own brethren went wrong with the desire to have Syrian bishops and it caused a ruin of souls and get separated from the holy communion of the Catholic

¹ Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 188.

² During this crisis, Chāvāra was appointed Vicar General of the whole of the Syro-Malabar Church. Though 86 parishes out of 155 fully and 36 parishes partially had fallen into schism, the prompt action of Chāvāra succeeded in the end, and he could regain his people from Roccas.

³ "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit." Jn 10:1; Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, IX/4, 98.

⁴ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, IX/4, 98.

⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Mt 7:15).

Church.”¹ It seems that he preferred unity in the Church to keeping his Syrian identity, which was a prudent way to get things done under the rule of European missionaries. He had a great vision about the mystery of the Church, which is not merely an external structure. In that vision, he could realise the truth that the well-being of souls and growth in their holiness is more important than correcting its peripheral beauty and structural perfection. This led him to accept and respect those foreign missionary bishops and priests and to obey them, considering them as sincere spiritual fathers who left their own country and kindred to teach us the catechism and the way to heaven.²

Chāvāra fought courageously against the schism of Roccas. While the parishes were welcoming this bishop, he was trying to get proof of his false identity from Rome. Chāvāra wrote letters to the Pope asking for clarification and requesting a reply in the Syriac language so that the priests here could read it and be convinced.³ Once he was sure of it, he set out to confront Roccas and, with sincere efforts, made him agree to return to Syria.

5.3. After the Lost Sheep

“For God so loved the world he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). The mystery of the incarnated love of God is explicit here. Jesus added: “So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I: Chronicles*, 172.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. I: The Chronicles*, 172.

³ His letter is dated 19 June 1861 and he got a reply from Pope Pius IX dated 5 September 1861 in Latin and Syriac. Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 4: The Letters I/1, 3-4*.

lost" (Mt 18:14). Also, Jesus declares his mission at the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4:18). He went out in search of the least and lost ones. He longed for the return of unfaithful Israel so that he could present a purified people of God to His Father in heaven. The ultimate aim of this liberation of the new Israel from the slavery of sin and evil was to offer real worship to the Father.

Chāvāra had the mind of Jesus and always longed for the fulfilment of Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us" (Jn 17:21). During the time of Roccas' Schism, Chāvāra wrote to the parishes like this: "He who enters the sheepfold and exercises authority not having received it from the Pope, the successor of St Peter, does not gather but scatters the sheep."¹ He made it clear that the bishop from Baghdad has no mandate from the Pope. In his opinion, Roccas was a wolf in sheep's clothing who intended to scatter the sheepfold of Christ and drive them to hell. Therefore, he pleads with his brethren to recognise the Lord's warning about the false shepherd who enters the sheepfold not through the right door (Jn 10:1).² Chāvāra wanted to protect the Malabar Church from further division and ardently desired that those outside of the Catholic union may return to the Mother Church. This is clear in his letter to the Pope asking for an indigenous bishop for the *Suriyani* community. Chāvāra prays for his country and the gentile people and seeks blessings from the pope for them in his letters.

Chāvāra could recognise the reason for the warm reception Roccas. He understood that the spirit of Roccas

¹ "He who is not with me is against me. He who does not stand with me scatters" (Lk 11:23).

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, I/2.

was still lurking in some corners of the Church. Therefore, in 1869, considering the longing of the Syrian Christians of Kerala for a bishop of their own, Chāvāra wrote a letter to Cardinal Alexander Barnabo, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, suggesting that it may be good to have two bishops in Kerala: one for the Latin Church and another for the Syrian Church.¹ In his letter, Chāvāra wrote that the Mar Thoma Christians had no bishop of their own, though they received faith from St Thomas; that is why they always go to Babel to have a bishop of their own rite. Therefore, he suggests: "It is good to have two bishops here: one for the Latin Church and other for the Syrian Church. Then their longing to have a bishop of their own will cease. Then gradually their relationship with Babylon will end."²

Chāvāra also expressed the hope that, if the Malabar Church gets a bishop of their own, there is a chance of helping the non-Catholics, especially the Jacobites, "to renounce schism and return to the unity of the Catholic fold."³ It reveals his ecumenical mind.⁴ It is assumed that this letter materially influenced the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith to grant an indigenous bishop for the Syrians later. But this attempt caused great displeasure in Archbishop Leonard for Chāvāra. Chāvāra was longing for the reunion of the Christians of Kerala.

¹ See the transcript of the letter that Chāvāra received from Pope Pius IX in Kadankavil, "Role of Chāvāra in the Establishment of Syro-Malabar Hierarchy," 66.

² Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, II/4, 14.

³ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. IV: The Letters*, II/4, 14.

⁴ Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 189.

6. Serving the Mystery

We could see how Chāvara performed his humble ministry of the divine mystery. It was an expression of his love towards Christ and his mystical body, the Church. All his efforts to make Christ known and loved by all involved charitable and social works in various forms. Chāvara's strong ecclesial awareness inspired him to ensure that the Church must be formed as a community that enjoys real freedom, which comes through knowing the truth. He did everything in such a way that he wanted to make sure that the people of God are set free to worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth. He prepared the people of the Kerala Church to worship God perfectly. This worship was conscious and based on true knowledge. He attempted to make it full and perfect, ensuring the participation of all members of humanity. Chāvara could support the growth of the sidelined members of society since he could recognise the image and likeness of God in every human face. He was a faithful son of God with the heart of his heavenly Father, who finds no difference between the evil and the good or the righteous and the unrighteous.¹

¹ "[S]o that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Mt 5:45).

Chapter 7

CHĀVARA'S LITURGICAL LIFE MOVEMENT

An Appraisal Of Chāvāra's Liturgical Vision

The Malabar Syrian Christians succeeded in maintaining their unity, spirituality, discipline, and venerable heritage up to the period of western religious colonial rule, when its unity was shattered, venerable traditions were suppressed, and ecclesial identity was disfigured. The Church was alienated from its roots.¹ The religious life of the Thomas Christians was centred around liturgy and Church. Additionally, family prayer was one of their greatest patrimonies. They had developed a liturgical spirituality that they handed over to generations and this was known to Chāvāra. Recitation of the divine office of the clergy with the participation of the laity was an important facet in the spirituality of the Malabar Christians.² What was lost due to the lack of good spiritual leadership concerned Chāvāra, and he was determined to help the people of God with all available resources. It was his zealous life and exemplary spirituality that gave vigour to the Church of Malabar. He led a liturgical life movement to bring the community to participate in the life-giving salvation mystery. We discuss that in the following sections.

In the West, the liturgical movement started with the awareness that liturgy was no longer related to the concrete

¹ Koodapuzha, "The Ecclesial Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church," 27.

² Thazhath, "Foreword," 11.

life of the faithful. The monasteries of Europe became centres of liturgical renewal with research for the roots of the liturgy. Monks tried to bring people closer to the mysteries celebrated in the liturgy by explaining the rites and making the language simpler. Bouyer says about the true liturgical movement: "liturgy will never be lived again so long as it is cultivated as a kind of evasion from actual life and not as a supernatural leaven by which our whole life must be permeated so as to conform... to the life of Christ..."¹ This statement underscores the close relationship between liturgy and the life of the Church. As the liturgy aims at the glorification of God and sanctification of the human race, the liturgical life of the Church forms and reforms the ethical life and behaviour of its participants. In the case of Chāvara's life, he could participate in the liturgy in such a way that he himself became the leaven for society. His very life became so exemplary that those who come closer to him were inspired by his holy and selfless personality. Many had certified his ethically upright life with a true Christian spirit.² His life and mission were initiated by God and then filled with divine power. Chāvara served his brethren with great love.

The formation of Christian character requires the fullness of both the glorification of God and the sanctification of all that is human. Praise and thanksgiving fitting to the fullness of God in Christ is a *cantus firmus* (fixed voice) of faithful liturgy – always offered in union with Christ. But in this very offering is

¹ Bouyer, *Liturgical Piety*, 254.

² Pattassery, *Vazhthappetta Chavarayachan Vyakthiyum Veeshanavum*, 139-147. In this book, many bishops, other church leaders, priests, co-friars, and laity who knew Chavara certify that he was a man of divine wisdom, holy life and extraordinary virtues.

the paradoxical mystery of first receiving and then being in-Spirited for service of Christ in the world.¹

Chāvara's character was formed perfectly to glorify God, and it sanctified him and all that came in touch with his life. He received grace and spent it on the Church's service. His life became a combination of both union with the mystery of Christ and altruistic service to the mystery of the Church. St Paul speaks of the whole Body of Christ as a community having a variety of divine gifts. This clarifies the inner connectedness of worship and the Christian way of life.

1. Liturgy and Social Justice

Many who were engaged in the liturgical renewal of the twentieth century had an explicit interest in the communal orientation toward justice and social action.² Gordon Lathrop uses the metaphor of 'geography of liturgy' with "a sense of liturgical orientation, which connects one to the past, to the future, to all the surrounding communities of creatures..."³ Christian liturgy orients us to the world, and we have neglected to see how the worship orients. We allowed religious rituals to give orientations that are exclusively interior to the self and without any exterior references besides heaven. Such orientations leave the community of life outside our window unchallenged and untransformed.⁴ Here lies the significance of Chāvara's renewal efforts. He was fully aware of the dangers of individualism in devotional practices, which neglect the needs of society outside. He could orient the Malabar

¹ Sailers, "Liturgy and Ethics," 188.

² Lathrop, "O Taste and See," 44.

³ Lathrop, "O Taste and See," 44.

⁴ Lathrop, "O Taste and See," 45.

Church in the right direction, where its members always stand side by side with the marginalised, poor, and needy ones of society.

Chāvāra could never imagine a liturgical life of the Church avoiding the weak and oppressed members of the body of Christ. He dreamt of a time when all members of the Church enjoy equal status and are treated with equal dignity. He envisioned the broad mind of the Church revealed later at Vatican II, which declared that the Church is universal and Catholic, accepting even those outside the strict boundaries of the Church.¹ To ensure the just distribution of God's gifts, Chāvāra sought strength and grace from liturgy and prayer. *Ecclesia* is the community gathered together by God. The principal constituents of the Church's worship were the ministry of the Word, the Eucharist, and praise (Acts 2:46-47). The general priesthood of the people of God lies in the practising of a life pleasing to God as St Paul describes (Rom 12:1; Phil 3:3). He uses the same cultic terminology in the confession of faith and in the practice of works of neighbourly charity (Heb 13:15-16). These passages spiritually denote the real priesthood of justice and holiness. Equally, they point to the fundamental attitude of service that gives vitality to worship and makes it real worship in Spirit and Truth.² Chāvāra performed this real worship through his acts of charity for the justice of the people of God.

¹ LG §16, AG §7 and GS §22. The Second Vatican Council affirms the possibility of salvation to all in its teachings. However, it does not relieve the Church of its responsibility for missionary activities and evangelisation.

² Verheul, *Introduction to Liturgy*, 78.

Chāvāra testifies that Rev. Malpan Thomas Palackal and Fr. Thomas Porukara “yearned to establish a House of Penance for priests in Malabar since much good could have been realized through it.”¹ Thus, Chāvāra’s liturgical life movement started from the *kovendas* (monasteries). We realise that there exists a strong relationship between his liturgical movement and his social and pastoral reform activities. For example, the practice of *pidiyari* (keeping aside a wrist full of rice each day for the poor while taking rice for daily use) and *noottikanchu* (keeping 5% apart from income after expence in each parish to establish schools and hospitals) collections which combined daily food with the sharing and uniting sacrament of the altar.

Chāvāra started *Parashneha Dharmashala* at Kainakari for the destitute. He advised people to give just wages to the labourers. He had great concern for the low caste people called *daridranarayanan* or *harijan*, who suffered injustice in society. He received a clear vision from God to translate God’s plan of salvation into reality. Thus, he started to educate even the marginalised ones in society. One can see his vision at the start of the Sanskrit school for the *dalit* and boarding schools for girls. Printing was another medium for making letters a powerful medium for spreading knowledge and wisdom among the illiterate people of God. He dreamt of a very dynamic and active Church in Kerala. Therefore, Chāvāra wished to see the barren Malabar Church alive and full of divine energy with holy children. The Church and the liturgy will be active if people have a living faith and burning hope. He lived a faith that was expressed not only through spiritual exercises but also through charitable works.

¹ Chāvāra, *CWC vol. 1: The Chronicles*, 1.

2. The Organic Growth of the Church

According to Beauduin, the fundamental principles of the liturgy consist of the sanctifying grace of Christ being mediated and communicated by the Church.¹ Chāvāra knew this truth and wanted to make every part of the body of Christ active by the grace from the liturgy. Chāvāra did his best to make the mystical body of Christ, the Church, complete by his all-encompassing approach to a social situation where the people of Kerala were stratified based on caste and status. Participation of the least considered members of the community was ensured by his social reform initiatives.

The concept that became the central focus of the liturgical movement was active participation. Beauduin not only quotes the famous passage from Pope Pius X's *motu proprio Tra le sollecitudini* but also says this: "Active participation in the liturgical life of the Church is a capital factor in the supernatural life of the Christian. We found the evidence thereof in the organic life of the Church."² The anchoring of the concept of active participation in an organic understanding of the life of the Church brings along not only the necessity of a practical and pastoral strategy that Beauduin sought for participation but also an invitation to think more deeply about what participation is. Beyond the importance of the vernacular,

... the members must have the same life as the body of which they are parts... This is a necessary condition of order, of harmony, of peace. As a true member, a Catholic ought to adapt himself,

¹ Beauduin, *Liturgy*, 9.

² Beauduin, *Liturgy*, 17.

unite himself as intimately as possible, to the mystical body of Christ.¹

Chāvāra dedicated his entire life toward this outcome. It was his dream to bring harmony and unity in the body of the Church by ensuring the active role and participation of every member of the faithful.

Active means living or dynamic; that is full of life (John 10:10) and vigour. It demands the organic growth of the Church body and its members. Beauduin emphasises the liveliness of the liturgy like this: "The liturgy lives and unfolds itself also today and, because universal, is of the twentieth century as well as of the first. It lives and follows the dogmatic and organic developments of the Church herself."² This shows that the liturgy is making the Church active and living. The liturgy and the Church are almost personified, which is theologically legitimate because they are both in direct connection with the living and the Risen One.³ Christ's presence in the liturgy and the paschal mystery celebrated in the liturgy nourishes the growth of the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ. The Pauline metaphor is used as well to express the links existing between the heavenly and earthly liturgy:

Between the Church of heaven and the Church of the earth, there exists an intimate union which shall one day become perfect. This union manifests, nourishes, and develops itself by common participation in spiritual goods, by communications of merit and individual goods, by continual exchange of prayers offered to God for the welfare and spiritual progress of each

¹ Beauduin, *Liturgy*, 33.

² Beauduin, *Liturgy*, 36.

³ Geldhof, "German Romanticism and Liturgical Theology," 298.

member and for the increasing prosperity of the entire body. The Catholic is, therefore, by definition, a member of a visible organism.¹

Louis Bouyer observes in the “Belgian liturgical movement” embodied by Beauduin, a “true realism” that “was ruled and inspired by a wide and deep devotion to the Church, the actual hierarchical and collective Church of today, acknowledged as the living body of Christ.”² In a similar vein, we can say that Chāvāra embodied a true spirit of love and devotion to the mystery of the Church, which is the sacrament and living sign of the risen Christ on earth.

3. Conscious Involvement in the Mystery

Conscious participation in the liturgy is ensured when the faithful have enough knowledge of the truth about God, human beings, and the relation between the two. All social and cultural reforms of Chāvāra had their underpinnings in his ecclesiological and epistemological vision for the Church’s revival. Chāvāra looked for ways to make his people enjoy the fragrance of God’s love and be enlightened by the wisdom of truth.³ His efforts to educate the illiterate and to publish books for spiritual reading aimed at sharing the light given to the intellect by the mystery of Christ. It was Chāvāra’s desire with St Paul to unveil the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Jesus to his fellow beings:

¹ Beauduin, *Liturgy*, 23.

² Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy*, 63.

³ The Sunday prayer of the celebrant of holy *Qurbana* before the *Laku Mara* hymn is as follows: “When the sweet fragrance of Your love wafts over us and when our souls are enlightened with the knowledge of Your truth, may we be found worthy to receive Your beloved Son as He appears from the heaven.” *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 24.

I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured *understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself*, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:2-3).

Njanakurudatam is blindness due to a lack of wisdom. In Revelation, we read about the real condition of the Church of Laodicea – she thinks she is alive, rich, and seeing but is actually naked, blind, poor, and dead. Therefore, she is advised to ask for white cloth, eye-balm, and purified gold to get ready to receive the one who comes for the second time.¹ Similar was the situation of the Kerala Church at the time of Chāvāra. But Chāvāra recognised the shortages of the Church and wanted to overcome them with the white robe of holiness, the balm of wisdom for clear-sightedness, and the gold of virtues gained through participation in the paschal mystery. The fruits of salvation were distributed by Chāvāra's generous service. The third *G'hanta* prayer of the anaphora of Mar Addai and Mar Mari enumerates these fruits as follows:

To make us share in your divine life, You assumed our human nature, restored us from our fallen state, and brought us from death to life eternal. Forgiving our debts, You sanctified us, sinners, enlightened our minds, defeated our

¹ "For you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.' You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see" (Rev 3:17-18).

enemies, and glorified our frail nature by Your immense grace.¹

Chāvāra was determined to help the people of God have a share in the divine life, the restored human nature that is glorified by the immense grace from the paschal mystery. He tried hard so that all may experience the forgiving, sanctifying, enlightening, and protecting love of Christ. Chāvāra aimed not for blind faith but a well-informed and reason-based one with true wisdom in the members of the Church. By the term ‘conscious’ participation in SC, the council fathers also aimed at the same. Thus, Chāvāra led an epistemological revolution in the Church of Kerala. Real knowledge about oneself, God, and the Church was brought about by education at all levels. The formation of priests and the foundation of religious houses were meant to mould good leaders and preachers who can guide people of God to the conscious worship of God through rituals and charitable deeds.

No one can deny Chāvāra’s comprehensive vision for the renewal of the Church’s life through true worship. In a close examination of his life and works, Chāvāra emerges as an ethical reminder of a true mode of worship and the epitome of real liturgical spirit. Liturgy is an indispensable basis for Christian and social regeneration.² Worshipping God in the name of Jesus Christ requires a way of life. Christ reacted against ‘worship deprived of mind and heart.’ As St James taught: “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead (Jam 2:17, 26).” Hence, Sunday worship must be followed by care for the needy neighbour. Justin Martyr’s *Apology* states the intrinsic

¹ *The Order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, 54.

² Sailers, “Liturgy and Ethics,” 183.

connection between participation in the Eucharist and caring for the orphan, the widow, and all in need.¹ St Paul also criticises the Corinthian community for their neglect of the hungry, which he considers a violation of the Eucharist.²

4. Ministry as *Leitourgia*

By saying that liturgy is the source and summit of the Christian life, the Church confirms that how we acknowledge God in worship and how we live has a single source in Christ. Gratitude to God, hope in the saving work of Christ, love of God and neighbour, a passion for justice and mercy congruent with God's promises, along with the capacity to repent of sin and failure to so live – all are part of the actual practice that begins and ends in faithful liturgy.³ The glory of God is realised when the dignity of humanity is protected. There comes peace and hope to people on earth, which is the promise at the incarnation. The author of the

¹ In Chapter 67 of the First Apology of Justin Martyr, we read: "Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need." Available at <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm> [accessed 10 June 2020].

² Sailers, "Liturgy and Ethics," 183.

³ Sailers, "Liturgy and Ethics," 187.

Hebrews testifies that God-pleasing sacrifices include charitable works and sharing of what one has (Heb 13:16). Every small or big act aimed at the well-being of one's fellow human beings can be counted as an attempt at the building up of the body of Christ to bring it to fullness and perfection.

Chapter 8

THE IDENTITY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

In this chapter, I intend to explain why and how the liturgy of a particular Church acts as its identity marker. Also, I explore how Chāvāra, as a pioneer of the liturgical movement of the Kerala Church, wanted to preserve and help the organic growth of its liturgy. It explores Chāvāra's concerns and sincere efforts to restore the liturgical identity of the Mar Thoma Nazranies. The Church proclaims and exhibits her symbolic nature mainly through liturgy. The faithful confess, confirm, and deepen their faith and ecclesial identity through liturgy. "There is no other liturgy in Christianity which is born and developed in the same life-situation as that of the Bible. It has also an unparalleled apologetic value."¹ The East Syrian liturgical tradition of the Syro-Malabar Church is very rich in its theology and in helping the participants to experience and live the paschal mystery celebrated in the liturgy. The liturgy of the Malabar Church shaped Chāvāra's life and vision, and, in turn, he wanted to shape the life of the Malabar Church according to that liturgical vision. He was a man of liturgical experience, who translated it to his context. For Chāvāra, the liturgy was not merely a cultic celebration but a reality to be lived daily.

The Second Vatican Council taught about the different Churches:

The holy Catholic Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, is made up of the faithful...who,

¹ Comment made by Tommaso Federici, recorded in Pathikulangara, *Liturgy Experience*, 11.

combining together into various groups which are held together by a hierarchy, form separate Churches or Rites. Between these, there exists an admirable bond of union, such that the variety within the Church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it, for it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and likewise that it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place (OE §2).

Like the different parts of the body, different *sui iuris* churches of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church form one mystical body to increase the beauty of the Mother Church.¹

The vision of the council fathers was clear regarding the individual Churches. They taught that, even though these churches differ in the liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline, and spiritual heritage, they are entrusted to the pastoral government of the Roman Pontiff. Chāvāra never ques-

¹In the Roman Catholic Church, there are twenty-four autonomous particular Churches in communion with the Bishop of Rome: one 'Western' and twenty-three 'Eastern', a distinction that is now more historical than geographical. These Churches, also known by the Latin term *Ecclesiae sui iuris*, have a certain degree of self-governance over the particulars of their internal organisation, traditions, disciplines, canon law, liturgical rites, liturgical calendar, and other aspects of their theology. The Roman Church (also called the Latin Church) and the Syro-Malabar Church (hereafter denoted as the SMC) are both *sui iuris* Churches. The Roman Church follows the Western liturgical tradition, whereas the SMC follows an Eastern liturgical tradition, specifically the East-Syrian liturgical tradition. The term 'rite' is also used interchangeably to indicate a *sui iuris* Church and its liturgical tradition. See details of *sui iuris* Churches in CCEO, canons 27-38.

tioned the primacy of the divinely-appointed successor of St Peter over the universal Church. Being sure about the equal dignity of the Latin and Syrian rites, Chāvāra wished the growth of both. Sadly, the Syrian Christians were not enjoying the freedom to flourish fully because of the lack of indigenous bishops. Toward solving this problem, Chāvāra suggested having separate bishops for each group. But, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council “that none of them is superior to the others as regards rite and they enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations” (OE §3) came later and so Chāvāra’s dream of an independent hierarchy for the Syrian Catholics of Malabar could be fulfilled only in 1923.¹ St Thomas Christians then constituted an autonomous, self-ruled particular Church in communion with the See of Rome. At last, the Malabar Church became independent of any intermediary jurisdiction, whether Latin *Padroado/Propaganda* or Chaldean-Syrian. Later, when Pope John Paul II elevated the Church to Major Archiepiscopal status, it regained full administrative powers, including the power to elect bishops.² It is necessary to know a brief

¹ Syrian Catholics were separated from the Latin jurisdiction at the time of Pope Leo XIII. Thus the Saint Thomas Christians were granted a partial autonomy after their struggle over three centuries. In 1887, two separate vicariates, Trissur and Kottayam, were formed as the first milestones in this process. These two vicariates were divided into three in 1896 (Thrissur, Ernakulam, and Changanacherry), and indigenous bishops were appointed from among the community. However, the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was established only in 1923.

² On 16 December 1992, Pope John Paul II, by the Apostolic Constitution *Quae maiori* (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 85 [1993], 398-399), raised the Syro-Malabar Church to the status of a Major

history of the SMC to understand the different liturgical influences that shaped the identity of the Church.

1. A Brief History of the Syrian Catholics of Malabar

The St Thomas Christians of India believe that they were evangelised by Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. From the early centuries onwards, Mar Thoma Christians had contact with the East Syrian Church. In the first centuries of the Common Era, Cranganore was an important seaport on the Malabar Coast with trade connections to the Middle East. From the fourth century until the end of the sixteenth century, Malabar Christians had bishops sent by the Patriarch of the East Syrian Church. Thus, St Thomas Christians came to share the liturgical, theological, spiritual, and other ecclesiastical traditions of the East Syrian Church.¹ Thus, we can see that an Oriental form of worship or the Chaldean Liturgy was practised in Malabar before the seventeenth century.² Until the sixteenth century, the Thomas Christians followed the East Syrian Liturgy with certain modifications and Indian adaptations. However, with the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries in the sixteenth

Archiepiscopal *sui iuris* Church with the title of Ernakulam-Angamaly.

¹ The Vatican Codex Syriacus 22 of 1301, the writings of the Portuguese missionaries, the three letters of Mar Jacob Bishop of Thomas Christians from 1503-1550, the narrations of Joseph the Indian and the Decrees of the Synod of Diamper validate our argument concerning the East Syrian Liturgy which the St Thomas Christians followed until the seventeenth century.

² Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 32-33; Vadakkekara, *Origin of Christianity in India*, 41-42.

century, this Christian community had to undergo a process of Latinisation.¹

The Portuguese had arrived in Kerala in 1498, during the expedition of Vasco da Gama.² Portuguese *Padroado* rule was imposed on St Thomas Christians, and they appointed bishops for the Church from thereon. The Portuguese *Padroado* paved the way for the Latinization of the liturgy and the ecclesiastical administration of the Malabar Christians. The Synod of Diamper had implemented various liturgical and structural reforms in the Church. The Synod brought the parishes directly under the Archbishop, anathematised certain 'superstitious' social customs characteristic of their Hindu neighbours, and purged the indigenous liturgy, the Malabar Rite, of elements deemed unacceptable according to the Latin protocol. In other words, they were "different from [Portuguese missionaries] in rite, customs, and hierarchical allegiance."³ Many texts were condemned and ordered to be burnt, including the *Peshitta*, the Syriac version of the Bible. Many foreign writers considered them as Nestorians without even looking at their doctrinal teachings.⁴ However, the Christians of Malabar, "who did not break away from Rome, continue to suffer from Latinisation in the fields of liturgy, theology,

¹ Vellian, "Pre-Diamper Sources of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy," 74. The Latinisation (Romanisation) process started with the Synod of Diamper (1599). See also Vellian, *The Romanization Tendency*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1973.

² They had set up a colonial government in Goa and a Latin Church hierarchy under the Archbishop of Goa. The Synod of Diamper in 1599 was convened by Bishop Aleixo de Menezes.

³ Zacharia, ed., *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599*, 14.

⁴ George, *The Church in India*, 6.

spirituality, and canonical tradition.”¹ They continued as “Indians by race”² and Syrians in liturgical practices. In 1934, Pope Pius XI initiated a process of liturgical reform to restore the historic Syriac nature of the Latinised Syro-Malabar Church.

1.1. Affinity to Syrian Traditions

At the time of Chāvāra, the identity of the Malabar Church and its traditions were not well-accepted and respected by the foreign prelates. However, Chāvāra was proud of the history and rich tradition of the *Suriyani* Christians of the Malabar Coast. He also had a great affinity for the East Syrian liturgical tradition. He was an expert in the Syriac language. He did his best to preserve the ancient traditions and heritage of the Church. Chāvāra expresses his strong conviction on the apostolic nature of the Kerala Church in his writings. For example, he writes: “For this Malabar which had received the faith from St Thomas, the apostle, remains barren, not having produced even a saint, while other countries and islands which received faith much later have brought forth several saints.”³ “People in Malabar had true faith in ancient times.”⁴ “We are Mar Thoma Christians who have received our faith from St Thomas.”⁵

St Thomas Christians were called *Suriāni kristyānikal* (Syrian Christians) because they used Syriac as their liturgical language. They firmly believed that Syriac is the

¹ Mathews, “The Genuine Liturgy in India,” 71.

² Mathew and Thomas, *The Indian Churches of Saint Thomas*, 1.

³ Chāvāra, CWC, vol. I: *The Chronicles*, 146.

⁴ Chāvāra, CWC, vol. I: *The Chronicles*, 191.

⁵ Chāvāra, CWC, vol. IV: *The Letters*, II/4, 14.

language “handed down by the apostle Thomas.”¹ Syrian Christians belonged to the Church of the East or the Persian Church, and the name Syrian (*Suriyāni*) is borrowed from the Persian *Soryāni* meaning the Christian ethnicity of the Sasanian Empire.² Syriac was cherished by them as their liturgical language and also the language of their theology and elite culture. The Syriac language was “dear to the St Thomas Christians at a time when the use of vernacular in the liturgy was unknown. Syriac at that time stood as a symbol of their Law of Thomas.”³ The Thomas Christians had an “excessive devotion for the Syriac language because it was the language of our Lord and their apostle Thomas.”⁴ St Thomas Christians “always considered the Syriac liturgy and liturgical language to be apostolic prerogatives of the Church of Malabar.”⁵ Syriac is “indeed the third largest linguistic treasury of the Christian tradition after Greek and Latin, but the first in linguistic affinity to Christian origins.”⁶ It is to be noted here that, until 1962, Syriac was their liturgical language.⁷ Chāvāra was fluent in the Syriac language and translated many other language books into Syriac. He wished to uphold the unity of the Malabar Church with the one, holy, apostolic Catholic Church and expressed this fidelity to the Holy See through his letters.

¹ Nedungatt, *Quest for the Historical Thomas Apostle of India*, 382; see also Nedungatt, “The Syriac Language,” 55.

² Perczel, “Syriac Christianity in India,” 654.

³ Mundadan, “Sources for the History of the St. Thomas Christian Church,” 45.

⁴ Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, 36.

⁵ Vazheeparampil, *The Making and Unmaking of Tradition*, 101.

⁶ Nedungatt, “The Syriac Language,” 60.

⁷ Thadikkatt, “Liturgy of the Syro-Malabar Rite,” 214-215.

Chāvāra translated liturgical books with the goal of bringing order to the services. He wanted the people of God to experience the celebration of the paschal mystery. Unjustifiably, he is denounced as a Latiniser because of his sincere efforts to nourish the liturgical life of the Syrian Christians. His sole aim was the renewal of the Church, and, toward this end, he tried his best with the available sources in his time. He lived at a time when liturgical revival had not been initiated, even in the Latin Church.¹ Chāvāra was an ideal son of the Syrian Catholic Church in Malabar, which followed the East Syrian liturgical rite. "A rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary patrimony, culture and circumstance of the history of a distinct people, by which its own manner of living the faith is manifested in each Church *sui iuris*."² The Eastern Churches have their own "Christian ways of life," "ordering of Christian life," and "spiritual patrimony." Each individual Church has its own apostolic Christ experience. It is a particular incarnation of the Church of Christ in a socio-cultural context. In the case of the St Thomas Christians of Kerala, their Christ experience is based on that of the apostle Thomas, who made the pivotal confession: "My Lord and My God" (Jn 20:28). Chāvāra wanted to live and impart this faith experience and liturgical identity to the Malabar Christians through his liturgical reforms.

1.2. The Nature of Malabar Liturgy

The Malabar Church is "unfortunately poor in the pre-fourth century liturgical sources. One could reasonably

¹ Poonoly, "Writings of Chāvāra," 125.

² CCEO, Canon 28. This document (CCEO) came into force of law on 1 October 1991.

presume that there existed some type of local liturgy, at least in a fluid form, of which there are no historical sources known to us.”¹ A few scholars claim the existence of an indigenous form of Christian worship in the Malabar Church.² The Malabarised Chaldean Liturgy was endowed with local rites and coloured by Indian customs and traditions. It also shared many Eastern traits.³ But the East Syrian form of liturgy is the only developed and organised liturgy that the Thomas Christians of India have ever acknowledged, which they enriched with some indigenous elements.⁴ This may be called an Indianised version of East Syrian liturgy. To understand this adapted liturgy, one needs to look at their lifestyle, customs, celebrations, etc. It is an overall liturgically-oriented Christian life that is being adapted and contextualised.⁵

Latin elements crept into the community of St Thomas Christians even before the Synod of Diamper (1599). The Portuguese missionaries introduced Latin customs and practices, and the Synod brought about a radical change in the Liturgical life of the Church, including a compiled Mass text published in 1606. For a long time, missals were

¹ Vellian, “Pre-Diamper Sources of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy,” 82.

² Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. I: *From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, 63-64; Kanichikattil, “Indigenous People, Indigenous Worship,” 337-338. Also see Pulikunnel, *The Liturgy, Hierarchy and Spirituality of St. Thomas Christians in the Pre-Portuguese Period*, 5-10.

³ Thazhath, *The Law of Thomas*, 45.

⁴ Powathil, “Identity and Dignity of the Syro-Malabar Church,” 69.

⁵ Koonammakkal, “The Liturgical Crisis in the Syro-Malabar Church,” 52-53.

available only in manuscript form in Kerala until 1774 when a missal was printed in Rome. Even after the attempts of Archbishop Menezes to achieve uniformity with the Latin West, the local priests succeeded in saving the greater part of their traditional prayers.¹ Though the prayers and formulas for all these acts of worship were those of the East Syrian Church and in Syriac, the contexts in which they were used was completely Indian or Malabarised. To this treasure, some new Indo-Malabar Christianised rites were added as 'Sacramentals.'²

The St Thomas Christians "adapted the East Syrian liturgy to their surroundings and to the Hindu culture, Christianising the customs and practices of the high caste Hindus from among whom, according to tradition, their nucleus was formed by the apostle."³ By becoming part and parcel of India's varied cult and culture for centuries, the East Syrian liturgy in Malabar is genuinely Indian.⁴ This Syrian Christian tradition in India is "a fantastic fusion of culture and faith."⁵ The Malabar Christian community was not simply a branch of the East Syrian Church. This is because, as Podipara claims, "the relations of the former with the latter were for practical, but not for doctrinal purposes."⁶ The St Thomas Christians developed a rite by adopting the ancient liturgical and theological patrimony of the Chaldean ecclesial tradition. This heritage is expressed

¹ Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvara*, 265-266.

² Podipara, "The Thomas Christians and Adaptation," 189.

³ Vazheparampil, "The *Toma Marga*," 7.

⁴ Kochuparampil, "Editorial," 1.

⁵ Kallarangatt, "St. Thomas Christians of India," 215.

⁶ Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship," 89-104; see also Thazhath, *The Law of Thomas*, 7.

by them in their particular liturgical, theological, spiritual, and disciplinary patrimony, which is distinguished by Indian culture and history.¹ This patrimony was called the Law of Thomas.

2. Chāvāra to Bring Order in Liturgy

Liturgy is an *ordo* or a law given by God.² Schmemmann observes that “there is a good reason to regard the principle of the *ordo*... as having existed from the very beginning in her (the Church’s) ‘rule of prayer,’ as the real principle of this rule.”³ Chāvāra was actively involved in the liturgical life of the Syro-Malabar Church to which he belonged. Though, the Malabar liturgical tradition was deeply influenced by the Syriac tradition for various reasons till the nineteenth century, the Church did not have proper and canonically valid guides to help orderly conduct in its liturgical celebrations. As liturgy for Chāvāra was expected to facilitate moments of intense Christ experience, he was unhappy to see that a lack of structure deprived priests as well as the faithful of a deeper faith experience. Hence, intending to bring about order in the liturgical celebrations within the Syro-Malabar Church, Chāvāra took efforts to locate the Syriac sources of liturgical celebrations, including the liturgy of the hours, and to compile them in an order conducive to the thematic progression of the celebration of

¹ Vazheparampil, *The Making and Unmaking of Tradition*, 107.

² *Ordo* denotes the fundamental outline of Christian worship, the pattern reflected and expressed by many ritual and prayerful actions of liturgy. However, it is more than a structural given. It is an *encompassing invisible reality* that becomes visible in liturgical celebrations, primarily in the Eucharist. Geldhof, *Liturgical Theology as a Research Program*, 55.

³ Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 89.

salvation history through the liturgical seasons. Moreover, his closer proximity to the practices of the Latin tradition inspired him to adopt some of its liturgical and spiritual practices, such as the forty hours adoration, the way of the cross, the recitation of the rosary, and other Marian devotions. Although, this was not a prominent institutionalised mission in the life of Chāvāra, it brought out a positive impact.

With great love, Chāvāra worked hard to organise the liturgical prayers of the Church.¹ Chāvāra recognised that the spiritual barrenness of the Church was due to the lack of a life according to the liturgy and so he undertook the great task of re-structuring the Mass, the divine office, and other aspects of the liturgical life of the people.² To bring uniformity in the rubrics of celebrating the Holy Mass, he prepared the order of the Mass with great care and printed it at Mannanam in 1868 with the title *Tukkasa* (order). For the spiritual growth of the people, he adopted salient rubrics from other rites. He translated the liturgy for holy Saturday from the Latin ritual since, in the Syrian rite, there are no special liturgical services on that day and the churches remained closed on holy Saturday.³ As a seminarian at Pallipuram, he helped Malpan Thomas Palackal to collect whatever manuscripts related to Church worship were available in Kerala and put them in order. Chāvāra

¹ See more details in Madhavathu, "The Reform of the Liturgy of the Hours of the Syro-Malabar Church in Light of Vatican II," 399-412.

² Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 190.

³ Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 190.

composed about ten books for liturgical use in the Church of the St Thomas Christians.¹

Chāvāra had loyalty to his own rite, adherence to the Holy See, and concern for the spiritual progress of others. Being a great devotee of the Blessed Sacrament, he exhorted that at least one member of each family should participate in the divine liturgy every day. By introducing the practice of proclaiming the word of God during the divine liturgy, he brought enlightenment to the people.² Later, the Second Vatican Council also instructed the same.³ Chāvāra also restructured and compiled the prayers and office of the dead as well as other sacramental and pious practices. For each reform, he first traced out his own tradition and then turned to other rites and adapted what was necessary for

¹ Mundadan divides them into four categorises: (1) Original compositions or books that he himself prepared and were published under his care: *Thukasa* (Order of the Mass) and the liturgical calendar. (2) Compilations from existing manuscripts: the Divine Office (breviary), Office for the Dead, and funeral services. (3) Books that Chāvāra adapted from the Roman tradition: the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the lectionary for Mass. (4) Books that he translated into Syriac from Roman liturgical texts: the holy Saturday services, benedictions or blessings. Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 267-268.

² Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 191.

³ SC §§24, 52. "By means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text, during the course of the liturgical year; *the homily, therefore, is to be highly esteemed as part of the liturgy itself*; in fact, at those Masses which are celebrated with the assistance of the people on Sundays and feasts of obligation, *it should not be omitted except for a serious reason.*" SC §52 [emphasis added].

the spiritual good of the people in conformity with the mind of the Holy See.¹

Chāvara was a true son of the Malabar Church and desired that the divine liturgy be celebrated with proper devotion, dignity, and attention. He also made a liturgical calendar following the Syrian order. It was he who compiled the canonical prayers. He was zealous in bringing learned priests to Koonammavu and, after consulting with them, wrote down with his hand the whole text.² Chāvara could go beyond the peripheral layer of liturgy to understand the paschal mystery at its core, and this made him ensure the full, active, and conscious participation of the faithful in the liturgical celebrations. Liturgy must be the action of the whole community. Because of baptism, it is a right and duty of all Christians to actively participate in the public worship of the Church. The vision of the Second Vatican Council is that the liturgy is celebrated with enough attentive participants. The ecclesial nature of the celebration is revealed through the active participation of the liturgical assembly. Chāvara understood that, if the faithful are nurtured in their relationship with Christ and Christ's body, they can be prepared for perfect worship in Spirit and Truth.

3. The Need to Retrieve Chāvara's Vision of Orthodoxy

Reform starting from monasteries is observed in the West and the East. Chāvara had a vision that monks who lead lives of intense prayer and asceticism can bring renewal to the Church and so he worked hard towards the *Bes Rauma* at Mannanam. Chāvara wanted by all means to preserve the identity and traditions of his community. Orderly and

¹ Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvara*, 192.

² Valerian, *Malankara Sabha Mathavinte Oru Veerasanthanam*, 223.

devout celebration of the public worship and good participation of the faithful during them was the aim of the renewal endeavours of Chāvāra.¹

Human beings are called to be worshippers. As we read from the scriptures, Israel was released from Egypt to worship. John the evangelist confirms that the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth. The life of worship or the liturgical life fulfils the very existence of human beings as *homo adorans*. Human persons are called to perfect worship. In the Eastern Christian understanding, 'orthodox' means right praise or proper worship. Orthodoxy is usually understood as simply holding the right beliefs. It also means "right praise," the right way of giving glory to God.² The Greek term "orthodoxy" means "right or correct belief or praise as well as right teaching."³ It may be interpreted as 'right worship', 'right for worship', or 'right in worship'. Orthodoxy implies the inseparability of doctrine and doxology. Doxology produces the right doctrine, whereas the right doctrine is the expression of the right vision of God (*theoria*). This right vision is received in minds purified by prayer and that live fully as the members of the body of Christ. The Church as a praying community celebrates its vision of God in each liturgical event. Liturgy serves as the true environment for

¹ Mundadan, *Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chāvāra*, 267.

² The life of Chāvāra was in that sense a great orthodoxy, since he did his best to give glory to God with all his potential in the right way throughout his life on earth.

³ *Orthos* = right, correct, *doxa* = belief/opinion, or glory; right glorification. Lukken, "The Unique Expression of Faith in the Liturgy," 19; Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical Theology,'" 142; Taft, "The Contribution of Eastern Liturgy to the Understanding of Christian Worship," 274.

the formation of the minds of the faithful. Chāvāra had this wisdom and led his Church towards that formation, which helps to form the right vision of Jesus, and His body, the holy Church.

3.1. Right Worship

God expects true worshippers, who worship him in Spirit and Truth. That is the right worship. It is not confined to a particular space or time. It is not on this mountain or that mountain. The only true and perfect worship is the worship of Jesus Christ, who pleased the Father with his perfect life and sacrifice of life. His whole life was a sacrifice. The followers of Christ participate in this right worship when they attend the worship of the Church, which is the body of Christ. It is through the liturgy that one can offer God the right worship. This happens when the body of Christ or the Church is complete without divisions and discriminations. The undivided Church, which is the body of Christ, is the most pleasing oblation to God, the Father. The efforts of Chāvāra were pointed toward this end. He fought against injustices in society and tried to uplift the marginalised members of the body of Christ. Worship also requires pure and holy bodies as temples of God, where one can offer sacrifices to God. This prompted Chāvāra to work toward nurturing virtuous lives among the people of God, setting inspiring examples by having monks and nuns act as perfect models of a holy life.

3.2. Right to Worship

As we find in the history of Israel, the slavery of Egypt was a denial of their right to worship. Hearing their cry, Yahweh sends Moses to release them so that they can worship Him. Human beings under the bondage of sin are not free to give

glory to God through worship. Only those who enjoy the freedom of the children of God can praise and give thanks to God. This right to worship is restored by the paschal mystery of Christ to the whole human race. Human beings created in the image and likeness of God were supposed to enjoy the company of God throughout their lives and live in the constant presence of God, doing the will of God always. But sin destroyed the whole plan and defiled the human identity, and they were thrown out of the state of great joy in the life of paradise. Jesus regained the right to adore God and to live in his presence. The liturgical life of the Malabar Church was revived and brought into order by the sincere enterprises of Chāvāra.

Chāvāra defended the faith and integrity of the Malabar Church in the nineteenth century. Being aware of the damage caused by foreign prelates, he firmly stood for native church leaders for the Syrian Catholics of Malabar. Later, the Second Vatican Council taught that, for the spiritual good of the faithful, the individual Churches can establish parishes and special hierarchies in every part of the world. If there is the jurisdiction of several Churches in one territory, they must promote unity in action. It was a revolutionary step to allow those who enter into Catholic communion from any non-Catholic church or denomination to retain their own rite and observe it (OE §4). Now the Syro-Malabar Church has regained its 'all India jurisdiction power' and this denotes an important step towards restoring the right to worship in one's own rite.¹

¹ The Syro-Malabar Catholics lost their administrative powers to the Latin Church in 1886 after the Portuguese missionaries seized their authority. In a letter to all the bishops of India dated 9 October 2017, the Pope announced the creation of Shamshabad Diocese,

3.3. *Ri(gh)t(e) in Worship*

As an oriental Church following the East Syrian liturgical tradition for many centuries, the St Thomas Christians had the right to perform the liturgical celebrations in their own traditional rite. After the Synod of Diamper, the following three centuries were not very smooth in the history of the liturgy of the Syrian Catholics of Kerala. They had struggles under the rule of Latin prelates and they yearned for an indigenous spiritual leader and bishop.

There is always a tendency to get the rite 'right,' which means to prepare, to get the right server and minister, to engage in, and to experience the liturgy in its true, good, and beautiful form. One of the ultimate purposes of the celebration of the liturgy is not to get the rite 'right' but to get *life* right. It is to get *life less wrong* until the kingdom comes to us communally and personally.¹ The Second Vatican Council taught:

All members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and *should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life*, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement. All these, then, must be observed by the members of the Eastern rites themselves. Besides, they *should attain to an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them*, and, if in their regard they have fallen short owing to contingencies of times and persons, they *should take steps to return to their ancestral traditions...*To

which restored the 'all India jurisdiction' of the Syro-Malabar Church. Quicke, *A Spiritual Discovery of the Christians in the Middle East*, 38.

¹ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 625.

enhance the efficacy of their apostolate, Religious and associations of the Latin Rite working in Eastern countries or among Eastern faithful are earnestly counselled to found houses or even provinces of the Eastern rite, as far as this can be done. (OE §6)

We see here that the right to preserve a liturgical rite and to continue an established way of liturgical life is given to all individual Churches. The council fathers ask the members of the Eastern rites to know more about their own rite and practise them. If there was any shortage in preserving the ancient traditions in their history, these rites were instructed to take steps to regain them.

4. Shift in Name, Shift in Spirit?

The change of name of the Mar Thoma Nazranies to Syro-Malabar Church seems interesting and upsetting at the same time. These early Christians of the Malabar Coast were proud to be called by names related to specific persons: Jesus the Nazarene and St Thomas the apostle. They followed the *thomamargam* and were known as *margavasikal*. It was the way taught by the apostle and revealed to him by Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. These Christians were proud of their past and traditions as well as thankful for being followers of this way. Now, their change of name suggests a shift in spirituality too. From personal and intimate relations with the Nazarene and the apostle Thomas' Christ experience, their relations are shifted to spaces like Syria and Malabar. It points out that they are restricted to some places and customs. The part of the name 'Syro' may also relate them to the Syriac language of the East Syrian liturgical tradition. Still, I wonder is this a change from the core to the peripheries? Here, we may

notice a shift from the essential and important relationship with the faith roots to the ritualistic and external factors that shape the 'rite'. An identity crisis among members of the community may be an outcome of being cut off from the life-giving roots. There should be a new movement to restore the real connection of their faith with the Nazraene Jesus and His witness and the father of faith, Mar Thoma.

CONCLUSION

A natural objective as well as the outcome of the salvific experience is worship or liturgy. It is the work of the people for God or God's work in the people. It is the work towards fellowship, relationship, and partnership within the community. Chāvāra, with his leadership qualities, wished to upgrade the scholarship of the people of God so that they may worship God, accepting his Lordship, living the fellowship with a true relationship with each other and God. Chāvāra is praised and admired for his social reforms and ground-breaking innovative steps to bring about a knowledge explosion in his age. But what was behind his genuine interest to work so hard to build up the Church and to educate society? The only answer to this question is his ardent desire to regain the status of true worshippers, the *homo adorans*, for the people of Kerala. He had a deep understanding of the economy of salvation, and his participation in the paschal mystery through meditation led to the mediation and ministry of this salvation mystery.

The Church is the extension of the mystery of Christ, who continues his salvific works through the liturgy. Chāvāra worked hard towards ensuring the full, active, and conscious participation of the people of God in this mystery, which is glorious, life-giving, holy, and divine. It was his dream to prepare and renew the priestly and kingly chosen ones¹ and to make them worthy to join the banquet of the

¹ "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

Lamb and the company of the heavenly beings for worship in the New Jerusalem. His efforts to inform, form, and reform his fellow beings aimed at their transformation and growth in perfect holiness with the whole Christ joining the head and the body, to offer true worship to the Father in Spirit and Truth.

This book unveils the true spirit of liturgy, which shaped Chāvāra's objectives and concrete efforts toward the renewal of the Church. Chāvāra is the one who formed the right vision of God and the body of Christ from right prayer and liturgical life, which he imparted to the people of God through the spiritual and social formation strategies he undertook during his life. I did not try to evaluate the success of his attempts as it is quite evident from the results. The current proud status of the Kerala Church and the secular society around it owes much to this legendary leader of Syro-Malabar Christians. Chāvāra should be remembered as *liturgiae amator et cultor*, lover, and servant of the liturgy of all times. His comprehensive, integral, and inclusive personality and actions sprouted from perfect union with the Divine. It challenges contemporary Church leaders to offer perfect worship to God in the complete and holy body of the Church, which gives perfect glory to God alone.

To unify Church members and to nurture the mystical body of Christ, Chāvāra was ready to face any personal losses and challenges. Despite all the limitations of the situations in which he found himself, he could undertake pain in his body, mind, and spirit to fulfil the will of God for the Malabar Christians. His life became a *Gloria*, a *Eucharistia*, and a perfect oblation so pleasing to God that God liberated the people of Kerala from the slavery of ignorance, and bondages of many social evils, leading them to the land of Canaan, where the honey and milk of real

knowledge, wisdom, and freedom flows. Undoubtedly, the prosperity on the spiritual as well as physical level enjoyed by the society of Kerala owes much to the strenuous work and sincere worship of this great saint, Chāvāra. Chāvāra's stance during the Roccas' schism and on the issue of indigenous bishops summarises his love for the unity of the Church. He faced crises with great courage and stood firm for the unity of the Catholic Church. Today's Church of Kerala needs Church leaders with his vision to address the problems of division and lack of faith when the various malignant intentions of even the chosen ones challenge and threaten the well-being and unity of the Church.

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(Joint Venture of CMI and CMC Congregations)
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