

ܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܝܢ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܝܢ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܝܢ

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We extend our apostolic benediction, benevolent prayers, and greetings to our brethren, His Beatitude Mor Baselius Joseph, Catholicos of India, and their Eminences the Metropolitans; our spiritual children: Very Reverend Corepiscopoi, Reverend priests, monks, nuns, deacons, and the entire blessed Syriac Orthodox people throughout the world. May the divine providence embrace them through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and St. Peter, Chief of the Apostles, and the rest of the Martyrs and Saints. Amen.

**“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119: 105)
The Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church and the Faithful**

Dearly beloved in Christ,

The word of God has accompanied the Church throughout her entire journey, sustaining her faith, shaping her worship, and empowering her witness. Radiant like the star of the East, it guides believers through the course of time, remaining the living and authoritative source that illumines the Church’s path. As the prophet David, the psalmist, proclaims: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

As times change and the world evolves rapidly, people today are overwhelmed by an abundance of information, whereby the capacity to discern between right and wrong is increasingly weakened. In this context, the soul’s longing is renewed for a true and faithful word that touches the spirit, penetrates the depths of the heart, and restores meaning to life.

In light of this contemporary reality, both the believer and the Church are confronted with an urgent question: What is the place of Sacred Scripture today, and how does it continue to fulfill its role in the life of the believer?

This question arises from the steadfast faith to which the Church has borne witness throughout the ages. She has received and preserved the Sacred Scripture as an apostolic legacy, in order to manifest its enduring action and its essential role in the spiritual and biblical formation of the believer.

This spiritual orientation is expressed in a particular way during the season of Holy Lent, a time of repentance and return to the spiritual sources, wherein the Sacred Scripture is placed at the heart of ecclesial life as a source of guidance and a light for renewal.



The Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church

The significance and centrality of the Holy Bible in the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch are evident in being the living word, rooted in the spirit of worship and liturgy, permeating every dimension of ecclesial life, and active at the core of the Church's faith experience. From this living presence flows the foundational role of the Sacred Scripture in shaping the Church's spiritual identity and guiding her witness in the world. Preserved within prayers, hymns, and sacred rites, it remains a permanent wellspring for the formation and education of her children.

Within this Orthodox Apostolic Tradition, the Sacred Scripture is inseparably bound to the life of the Church. The Gospel is venerated at the heart of the worship, proclaimed with reverence, and received as a life-giving proclamation, for the Church perceives in it the presence of Christ, the incarnate Word, at work within her, Who continues to address His people and to lead them throughout history.

The Sacred Scripture: Transformative Power

Although the divine word's foundational place in the life of the Church is well established, the true challenge is to bring it from the broader ecclesial context into the personal experience of each believer.

The contemporary believer faces a great spiritual danger: the distance that may emerge between the abundance of the word and its actual and fruitful presence in life. This reality is clearly revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ in the parable of the Sower (cf. Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23), where the seed is sown generously, yet the soil is not always prepared to receive it and to bear fruit.

Here emerges the danger of becoming accustomed to hearing the word without allowing it to touch the heart or awaken the conscience. Reading then becomes routine; its impact on the heart grows weak, and people lose the grace of growth, becoming unable to attain the full stature of spiritual maturity in Christ.

This shows the need for a deeper listening that restores the word's effectiveness in the heart and in life. When the divine message is received with attentiveness and humility, the word takes root in the very being of the human person, including the will. The reading of Sacred Scripture becomes a living practice that awakens the heart and calls it to renewal. Through attentive listening, the heart is led to the voice that illumines, reveals the truth, and gives life: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6).

Thus, the word leads the person toward fruitful action, continued renewal, and a way of life that bears witness to the truth.

The Sacred Scripture: From Listening to Fruitful Living

The Syriac Antiochian ecclesiastical tradition is rooted in the profound conviction that the divine word is the criterion for the life of faith. The effectiveness of this word is measured by the transformation it brings about in the heart and along the journey of faith, transcending the limits of intellectual knowledge and mental perception. It lays bare the secrets of the heart and directs conduct in accordance with God's saving will, as the Apostle Paul declares: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12).

As the Church enters the blessed season of Holy Lent, Sacred Scripture is experienced as nourishment that fosters spiritual growth, according to the testimony of the Lord: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4).

Therefore, the Church invites her children to read the Holy Scriptures in a spirit of prayer, meditation, and spiritual engagement, so that reading may become a living experience that transforms life itself. The word thus becomes a light that guides, a lamp that illumines the path, and a force that impels a way of life measured by its fruits. In this way, the word is transformed into life, bearing witness to Christ in the details of daily life and in the heart of the world. This deep understanding of the word of God is clearly embodied in the experience of the Fathers, who lived the word through reading, prayer, and a disciplined way of life.

