

ܩܘܪܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ

SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
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We extend our apostolic benediction, benevolent prayers and greetings to our brethren, His Beatitude Mor Baselius Thomas I, Catholicos of India, and their Eminences the Metropolitans; our spiritual children: Very Reverend Corepiscopoi, Reverend priests, monks, nuns and 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.

«ܐܣܠ ܩܘܪܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ»

(ܩܘܪܝܢܘܨܐ 54 - ܩܘܪܝܢܘܨܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܘܬܐ)

“He who has a mouth, an intellect and a tongue is indebted to give thanks on behalf of the silent creatures” (Mimro 54, on the Evening Praise)

Dearly beloved in Christ,

With these words, our great saint and teacher Mor Jacob of Serugh clarifies to us the responsibility of humans for the entire creation, which God entrusted to Adam not only to have dominion over, but also to care for as its steward.

As we contemplate the creation and see its beauty and the accord that exists among all creatures; we glorify God, the Creator, for His grace, for “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.” (Psalm 19: 1). When we observe nature, we are amazed by the harmony of the movements of the stars and planets, and the fine order



prevailing among the animals and birds of all species and kinds. We stand in awe before the majesty of God’s wisdom and power, for all creatures are subject to the laws of nature which God has ordained to put the universe in order, because “He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.” (Psalm 148: 6).

The power of God is revealed by the establishment of His authority over the whole world. Thus, His kingdom rules over all the creation, rational and irrational, living and inanimate (cf. Psalm 103: 19), as St. Paul wrote to the Romans: “Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made” (Romans 1: 20). We also read the revelation to Job the righteous instructing him to consider the wondrous works of God and realize the careful attention of God to all the details of our lives, and understand the miracles that are performed by the One whose knowledge is perfect (cf. Job 37: 14-16).

Hence, the earth became a home that God prepared to man and to all creatures. We, humans, live in this house, according to the image of God, our Creator, reflecting in our lives, love which is the principal attribute of God. Mor Jacob of Serugh wrote these beautiful verses depicting the unity of this house:

ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ
ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ
ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ

(ܡܡܪܘ ٢٨ - ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ)

Which is translated as:

- One is the house which the Creator built for all human beings,
 - And one is the earth which holds all of them despite being many
 - One is the universe, with one roof (the sky),
 - One light and one breath from the Creator, has everyone
 - All that is in the house is from God:
 - One is the house and one are all who dwell in it”
- (Mimro 28 – on Ananias and Sapphira)

When God created man, He bestowed on him dominion over all creatures of the earth, the air and the sea (cf. Genesis 1: 26). Man then was instructed to till the earth and keep it (cf. Genesis 2: 15). Man thus was given the responsibility to take care of God’s creation which was subdued to His rule. To describe the importance of this responsibility which was handed down to us, we recall Mor Jacob of Serugh's verse, which we pray weekly on Sunday Evening. He says:

«ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ»

(ܡܡܪܘ 54 - ܕܡܘܪ ܝܥܩܒ ܕܫܪܘܓ)



“He who has a mouth, an intellect and a tongue is indebted to give thanks on behalf of the silent creatures” (Mimro 54, on the Evening Praise)

Therefore, man is called to take care of nature as a custodian who shall give praise, glory, and thanksgiving to God for His gifts and His grace.

However, man was not always faithful concerning this responsibility towards nature. As a result of his bad choices and misbehavior, “the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence” (Genesis 6: 11), there was a flood. After the flood, God made a covenant with man and all the creatures. Man’s abuse of nature, therefore, became a cause for many natural disasters and environmental pollution, which resulted in a great ecological imbalance. Man has long acted selfishly, neglecting nature and ignoring other species. He even showed enmity towards his fellow brethren, abusing the authority entrusted to him by God over nature. Greed has overtaken man who, on individual, group, and state level, is consuming natural resources to quench his desire to collect material possessions beyond his needs. This behavior exhibits a clear distrust in the promise of the Lord Who says: “Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6: 26).

Dear beloved spiritual children,

On this occasion of the great Lent, we invite you to contemplate with us the greatness of our Creator and the beauty of nature which He entrusted to us to care for and benefit from. Let us endeavor to make the earth good soil where the word of the gospel is planted, a garden where love abounds and a sacred place where we glorify the name of God our Creator. The great Lent is an opportunity for us to strengthen our relationship with God, appreciate His redemptive work for us, and thank Him through our good deeds. Let us combine our fasting and charity work with more care for the environment and creation. Let refrain from abusing nature and excessively using in order to contribute to the elimination of pollution and the restoration of our natural habitat to make it sustainable for the benefit of future generations. While we prayerfully contemplate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic which is still affecting many people, we ask our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom the wind and all nature submit (cf. Mark 4: 41), to help us and lead our ship to the harbor of salvation, so that at the end of this Lent, we may reach the Feast of the Resurrection and celebrate it with great joy.

Dearly beloved,

May the Lord bless your fasting and accept your prayers, alms and repentance. May God protect you all from all kinds of pains, sicknesses and diseases, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, St. Peter the Chief of the Apostles, and all the martyrs and saints. ܩܘܪܬܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ