



CELEBRATION OF DIVINE LITURGY

The Divine Liturgy can be celebrated only by a Bishop or a Priest, and neither can celebrate more than one Liturgy in one day. This is because they must partake of the Holy Gifts, having, of necessity, prepared themselves beforehand by fasting and prayer. (If the Holy Gifts would be consumed before another Liturgy, the fast would therefore be broken.)

The Liturgy can be celebrated only at an Altar Table upon which is placed an Antimins (Greek for "instead of the table") consecrated by a Bishop, this constitutes his permission to serve the Liturgy. In Orthodox liturgical preparation the Antimins is essential for the commemoration of Liturgy. If by necessity a Liturgy is being commemorated on a table other than a consecrated Altar it may not be served without the blessed Antimins. The Antimins is a rectangular piece of cloth of either linen or silk, typically depicting the representations of the Descent of Christ from the Cross, the Four Evangelists, and inscriptions related to the Passion. A small relic of a martyr is sewn into it. The Antimins is kept in the center of the Holy Altar Table and is unfolded only during the Divine Liturgy, before the Anaphora. The Anaphora is the most solemn part of the Divine Liturgy, or the Holy Sacrifice, during which the offerings of bread and wine are consecrated as the body and blood of Christ. At the end of the Liturgy, the Antimins is folded in thirds, and then in thirds again, so that when it is unfolded the creases form a cross (see photo). It is not permitted to celebrate the Eucharist without an Antimins. **Our church has two Antimins.**

A priest is to celebrate the Divine Liturgy each Sunday and feast day as prescribed. A priest is not permitted to celebrate the Divine Liturgy twice in the same day, and in accordance with Church Canon, two Divine Liturgies on the same Holy Table or Antimins in the course of one day are not permitted in any church. In addition to two Antimins, some parishioners may have noticed that the Altar Table for the first Liturgy is a smaller table placed in front of the main Altar Table. **(This allows two Altar Tables and thus two Divine Liturgies in one day)**

Recently, with the celebration of two Divine Liturgies, some attendants at the first Liturgy may have noticed some of the preparation for the second Liturgy. Upon entering the church before the Divine Liturgy is to be served, the Priest (and Deacon) stand before the Holy Doors and say the Entrance

Prayers. Then, after asking for and receiving in turn forgiveness of the faithful, they enter the Altar; and having made three prostrations before the Holy Table, they kiss the Holy Gospel (Priest) and the Table itself (Priest and Deacon). After this they put on their vestments. Then both the priest and deacon wash their hands and prepare to celebrate the Proskomedie.



PROSKOMEDIA

The first part of the Divine Liturgy (not really part of the Liturgy proper) is the Proskomedie (Greek for the bringing of gifts). In ancient times the faithful brought gifts of bread and wine and from these the Priest selected that to be used at the Holy Eucharist. At the present time, the Priest usually prepares five loaves (in remembrance of the five loaves that fed 5,000 people in the Gospel) these loaves are called Prospophora (oblations) made of wheat flour, mixed with plain water, and leavened. On the top of each loaf is a Cross with the Greek inscription IC, XC, NI, KA, in the four corners, meaning (in Greek) Jesus Christ conquers. The wine must be made from the juice of red grapes with nothing added.

From the first loaf a cube, the size of the entire seal on top, is cut out. This cube, called the Lamb, signifies Jesus Christ, the Paschal Lamb. This is placed on the center of the Paten, (the plate used for this purpose) A Cross is incised on the top of the Lamb and with the spear the side is pierced in remembrance of the piercing of the Savior's side. At the words ...blood and water came out, wine and water are poured together into the Chalice.

From the second loaf a particle is taken out, signifying the Mother of God, and placed at the Lamb's right (the left, looking down at the paten). From the third loaf, nine particles are taken out, signifying nine classes of Saints: 1) St. John the Baptist, 2) Prophets, 3) Apostles, 4) Sainted Hierarchs, 5) Martyrs, 6) Holy Monks and Nuns, 7) Holy Unmercenaries and Physicians, 8) the Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, the Saint whose church it is, the Saint of the day (one particle for all), and 9) the Saint whose Liturgy it is. These are placed in three rows of three particles each, at the Lamb's left (the right, looking down).

From the fourth loaf particles are taken out for the living and placed in a row below the Lamb, and from the fifth loaf particles are taken out for the departed and placed in a row below that of the living. (This when the names which have been offered for prayer are commemorated) Thus all of the particles are arranged on the Paten around the Lamb, depicting the Church triumphant, united in the Liturgy as in common divine service.

The Star (or Asterisk) is then placed over the particles to keep them in place, at the same time signifying the Star of Bethlehem which came over the place where the Christ Child lay. Then the Paten and Chalice are covered

by veils or a vestment cloth, and both are covered by a larger veil the Aer signifying that Christ was clothed in glory, that His glory covered the whole world and that He covers us also with His grace. The prepared elements are then censed by the Priest, who prays that the Lord may bless the gifts and accept them in memory of those offering them and on behalf of those for whom they were offered and also that he, the Priest, be worthy to celebrate the Holy Mystery.