

**THE ANALYSIS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY
OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC ORTHODOX CHURCH**

EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE PARTS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

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THE PREPARATION

1. THE VESTING

Vesting performed in the Vestry privately, is indicative of the fact that the assumption of a sacred function by a sinful man representing the people in the church, is a mystery. The Priest covers his sinful individuality and performs the Liturgy as the functionary of Christ, clad in glorious vestments befitting the children of light and the royal presence of the Lord.

While the Priest is being vested, the faithful should be mindful of their privileges as Christians and the children of light in the Church, and they should pray God to vest them with the glorious spiritual garments of Christian virtues.

2. THE PURIFICATION

The washing of the hands by the Priest effects ritual purity and signifies the necessity of purifying the soul of all uncleanness before approaching the saving mystery of the Divine Liturgy. The act is symbolic and not utilitarian.

During the Purification the faithful should be mindful of their sinfulness and should pray for the remittance of their sins.

3. THE ACCESSION

In accession the Priest enters into divine presence to perform his duty, which begins with the preparation of the elements of the divine mystery. While Vesting and Purification were the necessary preparations to qualify the Priest personally for the performance of the mystery, in Accession he enters upon his function, glorifying God with gladness and with humility of heart and mind.

During Accession the faithful should be mindful of God's presence, and of His readiness to receive them as His children when they approach him with humble and joyful confidence.

4. THE PROTHESIS

In the Prothesis the Priest does two things. First he receives in the name of God the offerings of the faithful, which consist of bread and wine brought to him by the Deacon and then he sets them on the Table of the Prothesis, presenting them to God the Father in remembrance of the offering by Christ of His Body and Blood during His passion and on Calvary.

The veil is drawn during the Prothesis to indicate that Christ took flesh from the Virgin under the veil of mystery of the Incarnation. He made that flesh His Body and gave it to the world as life-giving food. In the same manner the church, the mystical body of Christ, offers herself in the bread and wine to the Father, who will presently take them and make them Christ's Body and Blood through the Holy Spirit, so that they who partake of them shall be renewed and shall have immortal life.

During the Prothesis the faithful should renew and deepen their sense of dedication to God. They should make an act of submission to the will of God and should commit themselves into the hand of God. They should

pray God to accept their offering, both material and spiritual, and make them worthy of His divine mercy.

B. THE SYNAXIS

1. THE CENSING

Incense is an "offering" for atonement of sins. Its smoke, rising up, symbolizes acceptable prayer. Censing is also an act of honor, when performed before pictures of saints, before the altar, or before dignitaries of the Church and demonstrates the belief that they are all united to Christ in His Kingdom which is made manifest by the Holy Spirit in the Liturgical gathering of the faithful.

The coming of the Priest down into the congregation and walking among them in procession signifies the period of the teaching ministry of Christ, when He came down from heaven, and doing honor to the human nature, assumed manhood, motivated by God's love for man.

As the incense burns and sends up its fragrance, so the Christian should, burning with the love of God, and dedicating itself to Him, should send its ardent prayers to the heavenly Father, in order to receive the spiritual gifts and the graces of the Holy Spirit from on high.

2. THE ENARXIS

Enarxis is the beginning of the Synaxis, and its central theme is that Christians in assembly, coming together in the name of Christ constitute and form one body in the fullness of the Church, which is the depository of divine truth.

The Blessing of the Enarxis proclaims the fact that the Church is the Kingdom of God. It makes us recall the Baptism of Christ, during which the blessed Trinity was revealed and glorified and which marked the beginning of the ministry of Our Lord and of the Kingdom.

The Monogenes or *Only-Begotten* . . . together with the Introit, point to the facts which inaugurated God's Kingdom.

During the Enarxis the members of the congregation should try to realize that they are subjects in God's Kingdom, and members of the Body of Christ that they are united in one sacred purpose, which is the service of God; that they are to learn the laws of the Kingdom through the church and that their minds will be enlightened with the Word of God, proclaimed and taught through the Church.

3. THE LESSER ENTRANCE

After the emphasis on the solidarity of members of the church in the Kingdom of God, the point is made in the Lesser Entrance that the faithful have solidarity with the angels also, and with themselves. Consequently, men have been given the right to approach and to enter into the presence of the heavenly light of truth revealed in the word of God. Prayers are said asking God to make the faithful worthy of the reception of the Word, by cleansing their souls and their minds.

The Trisagion, which is addressed to the Second Person of the Trinity, is a glorification of the Word of God, and the elevation of the gospels-book is the sacramentalization of this glorification.

The Litany enumerates the various orders of the faithful in the Church, for which prayers are said.

During the Lesser Entrance the faithful should meditate on the glory and holiness of the heavenly light, which will dawn upon their souls through the Word of God, speaking in the Holy Gospels. Inwardly they should approach Christ in order to receive the eternal truths into their minds and souls, cleansed of sins and made ready by penitence.

4. THE LECTIONS

The Lections from the Old and New Testaments have been appointed by the Church according to the proper of each day, in conformity with the annual cycle of feasts set out in the Calendar-Book. So each Lection has some direct or indirect bearing upon the significance of the day in the annual cycle, which covers all the important points of the Christian message, proclaimed by the Old and New Testaments.

The faithful should listen attentively to the readings from the Holy Scriptures, trying to understand them with a non-critical attitude of mind. The time of the Divine Liturgy is not the time for a scholarly study of the Scriptures, but rather it is a time for a humble and devout attitude of passivity in order to receive light from on high through God's Word.

5. THE CREED

The Creed is the proclamation of the essentials of the Christian faith of which the church is the depository. It is recited after the Lections in the Synaxis in order to put the minds of the faithful right on the truths contained in the Scriptures.

The faithful, joining in the recitation of the Creed, should renew their act of faith in the teaching of the Church, humbly submitting themselves to the requirements of that faith, with all its implications. They should endeavor also to renew and strengthen their resolve to act upon that faith with an enlightened mind.

6. THE PRAYER AFTER THE LECTIONS

The Prayers after the Lections are the concluding prayers of the synaxis. The first of these two prayers refers to the sufferings of Christ, implying that the faithful have to endure sufferings in the world, in order to remain steadfast in the faith. Then the gifts of the Holy Spirit are requested in order to strengthen the faithful in the struggle against the world. The second prayer is a request for peace.

While the Litany and the Prayers after the Lections are said, the faithful should compose themselves and feel prepared for the great mystery of the Eucharist.

C. THE HOLY SACRIFICE

ON THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE

The Eucharist of "The Holy Sacrifice" is the "showing of the Lord's death." It is communion with Jesus as a friend, and with Christ the Son as with God. It is an act of the Church whereby Christians dedicate themselves to the Lord and become aware of His special presence in their midst, in accordance with His word: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The offering of the Church in the Eucharist is an act closely bound with that of Christ in heaven. The Church "always bears in the body the death of the Lord Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in one body."

The words of institution are recited in the Liturgy after recalling Christ's passion. This means that the mere saying of the words does not by itself constitute the "doing" bidden by Christ to His disciples at the Last Supper. The saying of the words gives the reason why and the authority by which the Priest does what Christ did on Calvary. The Church identifies the bread and the cup with the Body and Blood of Christ because Christ Himself identified them by saying what He said at the Last Supper and by thus establishing the "symbolism."

The Holy Sacrifice is the development of the four elements in the action of Christ in instituting the mystery as recorded in the Gospels. Thus Christ (a) "took bread", (b) "gave thanks," (c) "broke," and (d) "gave to His disciples." The Offertory (a), the Eucharistia (b), the Intinction and Fraction (c), and the Communion (d),

correspond to these four acts of Christ.

1. THE OFFERTORY.

The Offertory is when the "Gifts" are brought to the Altar as the offerings of the church.

An individual layman, in making an offering of bread and wine for the Eucharist, offers himself as a priest for himself. When these individual offerings (or their substitutes in any form of donation) are gathered together, the Priest offers them corporately, because in the person of the Priest the Church acts as a priest to herself, offering herself to God the Father as a body.

Then God accepts this offering "in the beloved," i.e., in Christ the Son, and makes it the body of His Son. At the culmination of this acceptance the congregation cries "Abba, Father" by singing the Lord's Prayer at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer.

Thus the Eucharistic action requires three agents. The believer makes his own offering, his gifts, for himself. The Deacon brings these individual offerings together and makes them into a corporate offering of the Church. Then the Bishop or Priest makes the corporate offering inside the sanctuary to God the Father, on behalf of the congregation.

A. THE GREAT ENTRANCE

The Great Entrance refers to the entrance of the "Gifts" by the Deacon into God's presence on the Altar. It represents also Christ's entry upon His redemptive work by His passion, crucifixion and death, "together with them that are His". It shows the going of Christ up to the Cross, which was the Altar of His sacrifice.

This being the heart of the mystery of salvation, only the initiated can partake in it. Hence the exclusion of "catechumens" and others who are not initiated, or baptized, as well as those who have temporarily forfeited their birthright acquired at Baptism, i.e., the penitents.

During the Great Entrance the faithful should inwardly accompany Christ to His Cross, resolving to suffer with Him, to die and to conquer with Him.

B. THE LAYING OF THE GIFTS.

This symbolizes the laying of Christ on the Cross and in the tomb, as upon the Altar of sacrifice. After laying the "Gifts" on the Altar the Priest censes them, in remembrance of the incense, which the women brought to the sepulcher of the Lord.

During the Laying of the Gifts, the faithful should make acts of faith, hope and charity or love. The Litany of the Offertory is a short paraphrase on these three great virtues. The faithful should also ask God to accept their spiritual offerings in Christ, and should make a renewed resolution to dedicate their lives to God.

C. THE KISS OF PEACE OR THE GREETING.

The Kiss of Peace, which is a sign of reconciliation, is the symbol of fellowship of the faithful in the Holy Spirit, and of the unity of the Church in the love of God. When the "Gifts" are laid upon the Altar, and thus the one body of Christ, the church with its members, is mystically laid upon the heavenly Altar, God is thereby reconciled with His creatures.

When the faithful receive and give the greeting, they should endeavor to realize their inward reconciliation with God and with each one of their fellow Christians. They should try to purge themselves of pride, hatred, envy, malice, and such other vices as create discord and disturb the harmony of the Body of Christ, the Church.

While giving the Greeting, the person giving it says: "Christ among us has been revealed," and the person

receiving the Greeting responds: "Blessed is the revelation of Christ."

2. THE EUCHARISTIA.

The Eucharistia, or the Anaphora, which is the word used in the "Apostolic Constitutions" of the fourth century, is the Eucharistic Prayer, which constitutes the core of the Divine Liturgy. Eucharistia means "thanksgiving" and Anaphora means "to offer sacrifices". It begins with the Prologue and ends with the Doxology.

During the Eucharistia, the faithful, while following step by step the process indicated by the Eucharistic Prayer, should make an intense spiritual effort to feel and realize his unity with Christ and as such the fact that he is a child of God, and being in God.

A. THE PROLOGUE.

The Prologue corresponds with the second action of Christ at the institution, described by His words: "He gave thanks." Thanksgiving therefore is the main theme of the Prologue. In fact, the name Eucharist for the Holy Sacrifice is derived from this opening theme of the Prayer.

At the Prologue the faithful should consider God's infinite mercy to themselves and to mankind, and should give Him "thanks with the whole heart" which is not only meet and proper, but also right and just.

B. THE ANAMNESES.

In the Anamnesis are recounted all the gifts and blessings of God and all the fruits of His infinite mercy; the mercies shown in the old dispensation, and especially those in the new by the Incarnation of the son. Then the mandate of the Lord at the Last Supper is remembered and recounted. This mandate is then linked in the same sentence to the crucifixion, indicating that the "doing" bidden at the Last Supper was a "mystery" sacramentally pre-enacting the sacrifice on Calvary, and thus showing the way in which the faithful could benefit by the passion and death and the resurrection of the Lord.

During the Anamnesis the faithful should recapitulate in their minds and meditate upon the events of the life and passion and death of Christ. Then they should endeavor to realize the fact that they are "in Christ" and as such they try to re-live Christ's life on earth with Him. And they should make an inward, spiritual offering of themselves to God, together with Christ being offered on the Altar.

E. THE EPICLESIS

The Epiclesis corresponds to the moment when Christ's body in the tomb was changed into living, glorified body. The Gifts up to now represented the figures or symbols, "the mysteries," of the earthly body of Christ. At the Epiclesis, when the Holy Spirit descends and infuses the Gifts, they become the "mysteries" the "symbols" of the living, glorified Body of Christ. In the same manner did the Lord's body in the tomb become living through the Holy Spirit and rose from the dead.

During the Epiclesis the faithful, while praying with the priest so that God may send the Holy Spirit upon the Gifts, would also pray their heavenly Father to send the same Holy Spirit into their soul, so that they may be one with Christ and His church, and may thus be transfigured and raised together with Christ, after the remission of their sins.

D. THE DIPTYCHS.

The Diptychs signify and emphasize the fact that the should of the dead are part of the living body of Christ and that they also rise with Christ.

When the General Intercessions are made during the Diptychs, the faithful should remember and pray for the faithful of the past ages, who lived and died in Christ and who carried forward and handed down the faith to the succeeding generations. The members of the congregations would recall and realize the fact that they belong to the same spiritual family under the fatherhood of God, and that the souls of the dead in Christ speak and work in and through them.

During the Special Intercessions the faithful should remember and pray for their own dead, belonging to the immediate circle of their family, relatives, friends and acquaintances. They should also especially remember and pray for them for whom the prayers of the congregation have been requested.

E. THE DOMINICAL PRAYER

After the acceptance of the Sacrifice by God, when the union of the faithful in the Church with Christ is once more assured, when the faithful have "received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry: Abba, Father," when the Spirit bears witness "that we are the children of God...and joint heirs with Christ," then the congregation exultantly bursts into singing the Lord's Prayer. Thus the singing of the Lord's Prayer is the climax of what went before in the Divine Liturgy.

While the Litany is being recited and the Lord's Prayer is being sung, the faithful should follow their meaning with earnest attention, and they should rejoice and be exceedingly glad for their privilege of being the children of the heavenly Father. They should further resolve that they shall be worthy of such an infinitely great and wonderful status.

F. THE INCLINATION AND ELEVATION

The Christian, after realizing his lofty status of being the Son of God and joint heir with Christ, can only be "kept whole" by virtue of his humility, as the Prayer of Inclination suggests. The Inclination signifies the profound truth of the paradox that we can only have the right to be proud by being humble, just as Christ went through the uttermost degree of humility before He rose and ascended into heaven. Humility, the greatest of virtues, is the condition of the possession of our patrimony. The Prayer of Inclination is addressed to the Holy Spirit because He is the source of all virtues.

The Elevation brings to mind the Ascension of Christ, whereby He went up to heaven, up to His holiness, and "sat with the Father," as the wording of the Prayer of Elevation indicates. It shows the highest point of the upward progress of the life of the soul.

During the Inclination and Elevation the faithful should first bow down and pray for the virtue of humility, for the health and wholeness of their souls. Then, rising, they should raise their inward eyes up to heaven and to the throne of God, and should pray the Lord for holiness and for the life of the Spirit from on high.

G. THE DOXOLOGY.

The Doxology is the concluding finale of the Eucharistic Prayer, after reaching the point in the Elevation, which indicates the sitting of Christ in glory on His heavenly throne at the right hand of the Father.

While the Doxology is being sung, the faithful should join the priest and clerks in giving glory and blessings to the Holy Trinity with a heart full of thankfulness and joy.

3. THE INTINCTION AND FRACTION

By the immersion of the sacramental Body of Christ in the sacramental Blood, salvation by Christ's Blood is signified. The spiritual baptism of the believers by the spirit and His fire, through communion with the living, life-giving and glorified Body of Christ and through the washing by His Blood, is indicated by the act of Intinction in the Eucharist.

Fraction is symbolic of the unity of the body of Christ in the multiplicity of the individual members of the Church. Thus one loaf is broken and distributed among the people. Fraction following the Eucharistia corresponds with the action by the Lord when He "broke the bread" after "giving thanks," and said it should be distributed among many.

During the Intinction and Fraction, the faithful should recall their baptism of the water and of the spirit, by which they were cleansed of their sins and received spiritual power from God. They should renew their realization that they are saved by Christ's Blood, and that they share this salvation with their fellow Christians, with whom they are one.

4. THE COMMUNION

Communion is the final act of the Holy Sacrifice. It is the sacramental union of the believer with the Lord Christ. Its effect is remission of the sins of the communicant, his sanctification, and reception by him of the power of the Spirit and of eternal life, which was promised by the Lord Jesus Christ to them that would taste of His very Body and Blood.

Communion is the act by which the believer "mystically" or sacramentally receives Christ through the Holy Spirit. For this reason it brings to mind the day of Pentecost when the Church and her members received the Holy Spirit sent by the Father through Christ. As Pentecost concluded the cycle of events connected with the work of Christ Incarnate, so also communion concludes the "mystical" theosis of the believer through the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The faithful should approach communion with full consciousness of the importance of their act for the health and salvation of their souls. They should receive communion feeling "hungry and thirsty" for it, feeling the necessity for the cleansing of their souls, when they are repentant and humble, and when they are alright in their faith.

Communion is the exclusive and great privilege for an Orthodox Christian, and he should be fully conscious of it.

A. PRAYERS BEFORE COMMUNION

The Prayers before Communion are expressions of joy and gratitude at the privilege of being accounted worthy of communicating with Christ, and thereby being enlightened with divine light. They are also entreaties addressed to God to make the communicants worthy of the great mystery, in spite of their unworthiness, and endow them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, cleansing them of their sins.

When the Hymn of Praise is sung and the prayers are said, the faithful should ask for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to make them worthy of the Holy Communion, either on that particular day or in the proper time in the future. These gifts are humility, saintliness, joy and gratitude for being an orthodox Christian, fortitude to resist the spiritual enemy, etc.

B. THE PARTAKING.

By partaking of the mystical Body and Blood of Christ, the spiritual and bodily life of a Christian are seen to be bound together, and their unity is sacramentally realized. By partaking the Christian will have Christ with him "always even unto the end of the world". Therefore the faithful, if they are spiritually prepared by

repentance, confession, and penance - which they should endeavor always to be - should not fail to receive communion as often as possible. The more the soul is nourished, the healthier it will be.

C. THE THANKSGIVING.

After the Partaking, the essential parts of the Holy Sacrifice come to an end. The Thanksgiving is a review of the benefits that the faithful have derived from Communion, as well as an expression of thanks for them. Also it contains prayers asking God to make those benefits abiding.

During the Thanksgiving the faithful should concentrate their minds on what has taken place in them and should resolve to make their lives in the outside world infused and enlightened with the grace that they have received through the Holy Sacrifice.

D. THE BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

1. THE PRAYER AMID THE CHURCH

The Prayer Amid the Church is a closing prayer, spreading, so to speak, the blessings of the Holy Sacrifice over the whole Church of Christ and the world. During the Prayer Amid the Church, the faithful should remember their brethren of the faith throughout the world, their country, the secular authorities, and all mankind.

2. THE LAST GOSPEL

The Last Gospel gives the theological foundation of the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Holy Sacrifice according to the doctrine of the New Testament. "And the Word was made flesh" is the key phrase and the reception of the Word is paralleled with the reception of Christ through the Holy Sacrifice. Listening to the Last Gospel the faithful should realize that through communion the Word dwells among them.

3. THE BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

The last part of the Liturgy is an appropriate way of sending the faithful away. On leaving the Church the faithful should see that they take God's blessing with them into their daily life in the world.

