

The Holy Anaphora (Offering)

Having formally concluded the Proskomide – the commemoration of the living and the dead and the concurrent preparation of Bread and Wine – as well as having forgiven one another and committing ourselves to oneness in love and faith, we “offer” – literally “lift up” (in Greek, anaphéro) – the Holy Gifts with those commemorated and all the world to the Lord.

The Anaphora begins with an instruction from the Deacon:

DEACON: Let us stand aright. Let us stand with fear. Let us attend, that we may offer the holy Oblation in peace.

PEOPLE: A mercy of peace (*Titus 1:4*), a sacrifice of praise (*Hebrews 13:15*).

Let us attend! It is inevitable that at times during the Liturgy, our minds will wander. This is to be expected since we are human. This is one reason why the Deacon calls us back to attention by saying, “*Wisdom. Let us attend.*” at different points in the Liturgy: for example, before the Epistle and Gospel readings, the recitation of the Creed and here, just before the Prayer of Offering or Anaphora begins.

We are human beings and not robots and the level of concentration we can muster at any given time will be different at each Liturgy we attend. However, there is a general remedy.

The Liturgy is built, so to speak, to have many levels. For those who read their Bibles, who pray at home regularly, who take their faith seriously, the Liturgy has been found to be an unending source of spiritual wealth.

But to appreciate this takes a lot of work. One can liken it to watching football. Someone who doesn't know the rules of the game will inevitably dislike watching the sport. Yet the spectator who knows the rules, who has played the game, who knows the game from the inside out, can be endlessly involved in what is going on.

Thus, the first and most important way to combat mindless thoughts during Liturgy is to put the hard work of spiritual discipline in on the “off-days,” as difficult as that sounds.

A Practical Suggestion: The most saintly monk or nun has wandering thoughts during the Liturgy. When your mind begins to wander, stop, say the *Our Father* and try to follow along using the Liturgy book with the goal of better and better understanding the meaning of the text.

If you are not able to follow the text, focus on the altar, close your eyes and simply repeat the Jesus prayer: “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*” (or, “*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me*”). Then pray about those people, events and things for which you are truly thankful.

Caution: Remember that your mind has many tracks. The worst possible thing you can do is say to yourself, “*Don't think that.*” This inevitably leads us to think more about it! Rather, change your thoughts by doing something else like focusing on the text of the Liturgy, saying the *Our Father* or the *Jesus Prayer*. Don't worry: your mind will eventually follow.

Having recollected ourselves, and having renewed our intent to be attentive and to participate more and more fully in the Divine Liturgy – and thus in the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven – the Priest offers a Benediction.

This Benediction dates back to Apostolic era and are considered to have been the opening words of the “Agape Meal” or “Eucharistic Assembly,” perhaps following a Synagogue service or as a stand-alone Eucharistic celebration.

PRIEST: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all (*2 Corinthians 13:13*).

CHOIR: And with thy spirit (*cf. Philippians 4:23; 2 Timothy 4:22*).

Next, the Priest urges us to begin the Eucharist by lifting up our hearts to the Lord Most High:

PRIEST: Let us lift up our hearts (*cf. Lamentations 3:41*).

CHOIR: We lift them up unto the Lord.

Then, the Priest introduces the specific meaning of “Eucharist” (Greek, *Thanksgiving*) the exact purpose of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist:

PRIEST: Let us give thanks unto the Lord (*Judith 8:25; Psalm 107:1*).

CHOIR: It is meet and right to worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity One in Essence and undivided.

Finally, the Priest reads the Prayer of the Anaphora in a low voice. In it we are offering two things, worship and thanksgiving. These precede the offering of the Bread and Wine and are, in actuality, precursors to the proper proffering of the Mysteriological (Sacramental) elements.

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): It is meet and right to hymn Thee, to bless Thee, to praise Thee, to give thanks to Thee, and to worship Thee in every place of Thy dominion (*Psalm 102:22*), for Thou art God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible (*John 1:18*), incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same: Thou and Thine only-begotten Son (*John 3:16; Hebrews 11:17; 1 John 4:9*) and Thy Holy Spirit. Thou it was Who brought us from non-existence into being (*cf. 2 Maccabees 7:28*, and when we had fallen away Thou didst raise us up again, and didst not cease to do all things until Thou hadst brought us up to heaven, and hadst endowed us with Thy Kingdom which is to come. For all these things we give thanks to Thee, and to Thine only-begotten Son (*John 3:16; Hebrews 11:17; 1 John 4:9*), and to Thy Holy Spirit; for all things of which we know and of which we know not, and for all the benefits bestowed upon us, whether manifest or unseen. And we thank Thee for this Liturgy which Thou hast deigned to accept at our hands, though there stand by Thee thousands of Archangels and hosts of Angels, the Cherubim (*Ezekiel 10:2*) and the Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, who soar aloft, borne on their pinions,... (*Isaiah 6:2*),

PRIEST (EXCLAIMS): Singing the triumphant hymn, shouting, proclaiming, and saying:

CHOIR: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory (*Isaiah 6:3*: Hosanna in the highest (*Matthew 21:9*). Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord (*Psalm 118:26*). Hosanna in the highest.

Commentary – “It is proper and right to... worship You”

What is worship? Why is it important? In English, the words “worship” and “worth” have the same root. We worship whatever is of ultimate value to us.

Orthodox Christians believe that worship of the one, true and living God is our highest calling as human beings and gives our lives meaning, purpose and direction. True worship, worship in the Holy Spirit, happens when – as the Lord Jesus commands in the Sermon on the Mount – we put God and the seeking of His Kingdom as our first priority, above anyone or anything else.

Worship is to love God with all of our mind, all our heart, all our strength and all our soul (*Mark 12:30*). For this reason, worship should not be thought of merely as a *part* of life. Real worship is the offering of the *whole* of our lives – everything that we are and everything that we have – to God. In this sense, worship is more than simply going to Church for Liturgy on Sunday mornings.

Worship is a *way of life* – a lifestyle of complete and total surrender to God, a burning desire to do His will in every facet of one’s life – that is nurtured by the Liturgy. Rick Warren has written in a best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, “*God is not interested in half-hearted commitment, partial obedience and the leftovers of your time and money. He desires your full devotion, not just little bits and pieces of your life.*”

In ancient times, the Latin word *sacramentum*, from which we get the modern English word “sacrament,” had a very specific meaning in military contexts: it was the oath of loyalty unto death that a Roman soldier made to the Roman emperor when he first joined the army. Latin-speaking Christians soon began to apply this word to the liturgical rites of the Church, particularly Baptism and the Eucharist, which were seen as affirming one’s loyalty unto death to Christ, “*the King of kings and the Lord of lords*” (*Revelation 19:16*).

When we participate in the sacrament of the Eucharist by eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ at the Liturgy on Sunday mornings, we are committing ourselves to a sacramental – and therefore surrendered and obedient – way of life the rest of the week.

True worship, worship that is authentic and fully and deeply Orthodox, is a way of life that many modern Orthodox theologians and spiritual writers have called “*the liturgy after the Liturgy.*” We go to Church to participate in the Liturgy, setting apart a specific time each week to offer ourselves to God in love, gratitude and joy for what He has done for us; and in return, at each Liturgy we attend, the gift of the Holy Spirit is renewed in us and we receive the gifts of the Body and Blood of His beloved Son Jesus Christ to nurture His life in us, so that we can become more Christ-like: more loving, more compassionate towards others, more patient, more forgiving, more grateful, more peaceful, more faithful, more joyful.

As St. John the Evangelist and Theologian wrote in his First Letter, “*By this we may be sure that we are in Him: whoever says ‘I live in Him’ ought to walk just as He walked*” (*1 John 2:5-6*). It is in the Liturgy that we are to open the doors of our hearts to Christ in the Holy Spirit so that we can love our neighbors as ourselves (*Mark 12:31*). In other words, in the Liturgy, we are called to be transformed, to become like the God whom we worship. In our Tradition, this process is called *theosis*, a Greek word that means “becoming like God.” We are to become what we worship.

Commentary: Being Slaves of God

When Orthodox Christians come forward to receive the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharist, the priest addresses each person individually as “*the servant of God*,” a phrase often heard in the Liturgy. However, the Greek word used here, just prior to receiving Communion and throughout the Liturgy, is actually “*doulos*,” which means “*slave*,” and so Christians are more accurately to think of themselves as “*slaves of God*,” a Biblical phrase used to describe Moses (*cf. Revelation 15:3*) and the prophets of the Old Testament (*cf. Revelation 10:7*). Saint Paul will also call himself a “*slave of God*” (*Titus 1:1*), as will the apostle James (*James 1:1*). And in his First Letter Corinthians the apostle Peter will write that Christians are to live their lives in freedom precisely because they are “*slaves of God*” (*Corinthians 2:16*). Saint Paul will also identify himself as a “*slave of Christ*” (*Romans 1:1*) and tell the Christians of Ephesus that they are to be “*slaves of Christ, doing the will of God*” (*Ephesians 6:16*).

A slave is someone who is completely dependent on his master; who is always obedient to his master and seeks to do his will. In our relationship with God, does this describe how we live? In the beautiful Lenten prayer of Saint Ephraim, we address God as the “*Lord and Master of my life*.” Do we really believe this? Being a slave of God and a slave of Jesus Christ: this is the way that the apostles and saints define what it means to be a Christian!

The Holy Anámnesis (Commemoration)

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): **W**ith these blessed powers, O Master Who lovest mankind, we also cry aloud and say: Holy art Thou and all holy, Thou and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit. Holy art Thou and all holy, and magnificent is Thy glory; Who hast so loved the world, as to give Thine only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (*John 3:16*); Who, when He had come and had fulfilled all the dispensation for us, in the night in which He was given up – or rather gave Himself up for the life of the world (*John 6:51*) – received bread in His holy, most-pure, and blameless hands; and when He had given thanks and blessed it, and hallowed it, and broken it, He gave it to His holy disciples and Apostles, saying:

PRIEST: **R**eceive, eat; this is My Body, which is broken for you, for the remission of sins.” (*Matthew 26:26*).

CHOIR: **A**men (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*).

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): **A**nd likewise after supper He took the cup, saying: (*1 Corinthians 11:24*):

PRIEST: **D**rink of it all of you: This is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins.” (*Matthew 26:28*).

CHOIR: **A**men (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*).

**Why do we Orthodox Christians believe that we truly receive
the Body and Blood of Jesus in Communion?**

Because it is Biblical

*I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.” These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. (*John 6:51-59*)*

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. (*1 Corinthians 10:16-17*)*

Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For

as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Corinthians 11:2, 23-26)

Commentary: The witness of the early Saints of the Church that the Sacrament of Communion is to be received as the Body and Blood of Christ

Saint Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, who was executed in the Coliseum in Rome ca. AD 115 for being a Christian: "Those who have perverted notions about the grace of Jesus Christ that has come down to us...avoid the Eucharist and public prayers because they do not admit the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins and who the Father, in His goodness, resurrected. The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is the one that is celebrated by the bishop or by some person authorized by him" (*Letter to the Church in Smyrna: 6,7,8*).

Saint Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, who was executed in Rome for being a Christian ca. AD 155: "After the one who presides at our worship has given thanks and all the people have given their assent, those who are called deacons give to each person present the bread and the wine mixed with water, over which the thanksgiving was offered, so that all may partake. This food is called by us the Eucharist. It is not lawful for anyone else to partake of it other than those who believe the things that we teach are true and have been washed in the waters of baptism for the remission of sins and rebirth, and who live by the teachings of Christ. We receive this food not as ordinary bread and drink. Just as Jesus Christ our savior became flesh and blood for our salvation, so we have been taught that the food that has been blessed by the prayer of His Word is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh and nourishes our flesh and blood. For the apostles, in their memoirs that are called Gospels, have passed on to us the things that Jesus commanded them. They relate that Jesus took bread and after giving thanks, said, 'This is my body. Do this in remembrance of me.' And in like manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, he said, 'This is my blood' and gave it to them alone" (*The First Apology written to the Emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, and to the people of Rome: 66*).

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): Remembering this saving commandment and all those things which have come to pass for us: the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection on the third-day, the Ascension into heaven (*Acts 1:9-11*), the Sitting at the right hand (*Acts 7:55*), and the second and glorious Coming:



PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): Thine own of Thine own (*1 Chronicles 29:14*), offered unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all..

CHOIR: We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks unto Thee, O Lord (*Psalms 75:1*), and we pray unto Thee, O our God.

The Holy Kathagiasis (Consecration)

In preparation for the Consecration, the Priest makes three reverences with total awe and reverence, saying:

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): O Lord Who didst send down Thy most Holy Spirit upon Thine Apostles at the Third Hour: Take Him not from us, O Good One, but renew Him in us Who pray unto Thee.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

O Lord Who didst send down Thy most Holy Spirit upon Thine Apostles at the Third Hour: Take Him not from us, O Good One, but renew Him in us Who pray unto Thee.

Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

O Lord Who didst send down Thy most Holy Spirit upon Thine Apostles at the Third Hour: Take Him not from us, O Good One, but renew Him in us Who pray unto Thee.

Commentary: The change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ

The Consecration is the most-holy moment of the Divine Liturgy, for the Holy Spirit comes down upon the Holy Altar in our Church to change Bread and the Wine into the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ.

This is a great mystery, and we do not pretend to examine or describe how it occurs, other than to say, “the Holy Spirit changes.”

The Orthodox Church does not speak of transubstantiation or consubstantiation or any other Western Christian concept. We merely say “change.”

Signifying this great mystery, it takes place “behind the choral veil” of the choir softly chanting, “*We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, and we pray unto Thee, O our God.*”

In other words, what we are able to detect with our senses – in this case with our eyes – is far short of what is actually occurring: the change of bread and wine into the Flesh and Blood of Christ which is happening by the Holy Spirit. Very simply, it is a *mystery*.

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): Again we offer unto Thee this rational and bloodless worship (*Romans 12:1, Hebrews 9:22*), and ask Thee and pray Thee and supplicate Thee: Send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these Gifts here offered:

The priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the Bread, saying:



PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): And make this bread, the precious Body of Thy Christ. Amen. (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*)

The priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the Wine, saying:

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): And that which is in this cup the precious Blood (*1 Peter 1:19*) of Thy Christ. Amen. (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*)

The priest makes the Sign of the Cross over both elements, saying:

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): Making the change by Thy Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen. (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*)

Commentary – The Holy Spirit in the Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy is a charismatic, Pentecostal event – an event in which the Holy Spirit makes the Risen and Living Christ present among us. Christ is present in the Divine Liturgy by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, making the Eucharist the source and summit of the Christian life, what Saint Maximos the Confessor (AD 580-662) called “*the mystery of mysteries.*”

And when we are receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, we are also participating in what Saint Paul and the text of the Liturgy calls “*the communion of the Holy Spirit*” (*2 Corinthians 13:14*).

In Orthodox Christianity, the “epiclesis” or “invocation” (call upon, invoke, pray for) of the Holy Spirit upon the faithful and the gifts of bread and wine being offered, is an essential element in the Eucharistic action, affirming the fact that it is only in and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Church worships, lives, and acts. The Church is the Body of Christ and it is the Holy Spirit that constitutes the Church on the day of Pentecost, at every baptism and at every Eucharist.

Father Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944) has written that “*The Church of Christ is not an institution. It is a new life with Christ and in Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit. The Church, as the Body of Christ, is by that very fact the domain where the Holy Spirit works. More: the Church is life in the Spirit because it is the Body of Christ. Those who live in Christ bear within themselves the Holy Spirit and inversely, those who have the Spirit learn the meaning of Saint Paul’s words, ‘It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.’ It is just this seal of the Spirit, this bearing of the Spirit, which the Orthodox soul seeks and desires above all else.*”

When, in 1968, the current Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius, addressed the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, Sweden, he described the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church in this way: “*Without the Holy Spirit God is far away, Christ stays in the past, the Church is merely an organization, authority is a matter of domination, mission a matter of propaganda, the Liturgy no more than an evocation, and Christian living a slave morality. But in the Holy Spirit, the cosmos is resurrected and groans with the birth pangs of the Kingdom, the risen Christ is present, the Gospel is the power of Life, the Church shows forth the Holy Trinity, authority is a liberating service, mission is a Pentecost, the Liturgy is both memorial and anticipation and human action is deified.*”

In the Liturgy, all things are accomplished by God through Christ in the Spirit. Where the Spirit is, there is Christ; and where Christ is, there is the Spirit. As Father Thomas Hopko has written: “*Christ is the King and the Spirit is His Kingship; Christ is the Anointed One of God and the Holy Spirit is the unction of His anointing; Christ is the Head of His Body, the Church, and the Holy Spirit fills His Body and gives it life; Christ is the Bridegroom and the Spirit fills his Bride,*

the Church; and Christ and the Spirit are perfectly and completely One in their inseparable unity in God, who is love.”

Saint Silouan of Mount Athos (1866-1938) wrote, *“How happy and blessed are we Orthodox Christians that the Lord has given us life in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in our Church in the sacraments, in the holy Scriptures and in the hearts of the faithful. God’s love is known in our Church by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Until I was seven and twenty I simply believed that God was, but I did not know Him. But when my soul knew Him by the Holy Spirit, I was consumed with longing for Him and now, day and night, I seek Him with a burning heart.”* May we all seek the living God with burning hearts!

The priest makes a profound reverence/prostration and continues, praying for all who *are participating continuously and eternally* in the act of consecration and communion:

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): That they may be to those who partake for vigilance of soul, for the remission of sins (*Ephesians 1:7*, for the communion of Thy Holy Spirit (*2 Corinthians 13:13*, for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of heaven (*Matthew 4:17; 10:7*), for boldness toward Thee, and not for judgment or condemnation.

Again we offer unto Thee this rational worship (*Romans 12:1*) for those who have fallen asleep in the faith: Ancestors, Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Preachers, Evangelists, Martyrs, Confessors, Ascetics, and for every Righteous Spirit made perfect in the faith. (*Hebrews 12:23*).

PRIEST: Especially for our most-holy, most-pure, most-blessed (*Luke 1:46*) and glorious, Lady Theotokos, and ever-Virgin Mary.

The Choir chants the Megalynáron (Hymn of Magnification):

CHOIR: It is truly meet to bless thee, O Theotokos, ever-blessed (*Luke 1:46*) and most-pure and the Mother of our God (*cf. Luke 1:43*). More honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without corruption thou gavest birth to God the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify Thee.

Commentary – Who are the martyrs?

Derived from the Greek word meaning “witness,” a martyr is someone who suffers persecution and death for their faith in Christ. Saint Gregory the Theologian, the 4th century Patriarch of Constantinople, once said that *“it is mere rashness to seek death, but it is cowardly to refuse it”* in witnessing to our faith in Christ.

Over the past two millennia martyrs have been a symbol of strength for the faithful, a sign that God is more powerful than death. All of the Apostles, who experienced the Risen Jesus, except for Saint John the Evangelist, were put to death for their faith in Christ. That so many Christians who knew Jesus were willing to die for their claim that “Jesus is Lord” (*1 Corinthians 12:3*) gives a powerful witness to us about who Jesus is.

Saint Justin the Martyr wrote in the 2nd century just before his own execution in Rome for the faith ca. AD 155: *“for it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession of faith; but, the more these things happen, the more others, in even larger numbers, become faithful.”*

This persecution of Christianity has continued through the centuries. To this day, Orthodox Christians continue to be persecuted under Communism, various dictatorships, and Islam. In fact, more Orthodox Christians died for their faith in the 20th century under Communism in the former Soviet bloc countries than in all the persecutions carried out by the Roman Empire during the first 300 years of Christian history.

Saint Stephen (in Greek, *stephanos* means “crown”) was the first person in history to be executed for being a Christian. His story is told in the New Testament by Luke the Evangelist in the Acts of the Apostles (*Acts 6:1-7:60*). A “*man full of the Holy Spirit*,” he was one of the seven deacons chosen by the Apostles to minister to the Greek-speaking Christians of the first community in Jerusalem.

Arrested for his public preaching of Jesus Christ, he was – like his Master before him – brought before the Sanhedrin. For his witness before the Sanhedrin to Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah, he was condemned to death by stoning. Taken outside the city walls, he was brutally stoned to death by an angry mob. Stephen was the first of a long line of many, many men and women who have paid the full price in blood for their faith in Jesus Christ.

The priest continues praying for all who are in the Church:

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): For the holy Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John; for the holy, glorious, and all-laudable Apostles; for Saint(s) NN. whose memory(ies) we keep this day; and for all Thy saints, at whose supplications visit us, O God.

And remember all those who have fallen asleep (*1 Thessalonians 4:13*) in the hope of resurrection to eternal life (*Titus 1:2*), [especially for NN.,] and grant them rest, O God, where the light of Thy countenance shines on them (*Psalms 4:6*).

Again we entreat Thee: remember, O Lord, all the Orthodox episcopate (*cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9*) who rightly divide the word of Thy truth (*2 Timothy 2:15*), all the presbytery (*Titus 1:5-6*), the diaconate (*1 Timothy 3:8-13*) in Christ, and every order of the clergy.

Again we offer unto Thee this rational worship (*Romans 12:1*) for the whole world; for the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church; for those who live in chastity and holiness of life; and for all civil authorities: Grant them, O Lord, peaceful governance, that we, in their tranquility, may lead a calm and peaceful life in all godliness and sanctity (*1 Timothy 2:2*).

The Priest blesses the Antidoron:

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): Great is the name of the most-Holy Trinity, always; now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Remember, Lord, those who brought these Gifts and those for whom they have been offered.

Commentary – Antidoron

Antidoron (from Greek, meaning “*instead of the gifts*” and in Arabic, *qurban*) is the remaining bread from a loaf of prosphora after the Lamb has been removed for the Holy Eucharist at the Proskomide. In Byzantine practice, it is blessed during the Megalynáron to the Theotokos immediately after the epiclesis in the Divine Liturgy and is given by the priest to the faithful after the service.

Historically, Antidoron was distributed only to those who had not received “the Holy Gifts” – Holy Communion – so that they would receive a *blessing* in place of Holy Communion. This practice has changed over time and all those present at the Divine Liturgy may receive Antidoron as a blessing.

In some practices, Antidoron may be distributed to non-Orthodox Christians who attend an Orthodox liturgy, but in other places it is reserved only for the faithful. Portions that are uneaten are disposed of either by burning or by being placed outside where they are consumed by nature.

PRIEST: Among the first remember, O Lord, our Metropolitan Tikhon and our Archbishop Benjamin. Grant them for Thy holy churches in peace, safety, honor, health, and length of days, rightly to divide the word of Thy truth. (*2 Timothy 2:15*).

CHOIR: And all mankind.

Commentary – The Leadership Structures of the Church

In remembering our local Archbishop, we are reminded that we are part of the Church as a whole: the Church Universal, in this country and around the world. The Orthodox Church is a family of Churches that share the same faith and sacramental life. It is composed of fifteen autocephalous (self-governing) Churches: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Albania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the Orthodox Church in America.

In principle every bishop is equal and autonomous. Nonetheless the bishops in a particular geographic region assemble as a body, called a *synod*, and submit their hierarchical autonomy in obedience to the consensus of this hierarchical body. The chairmen or presidents of a synod usually hold a certain administrative pre-eminence and have special responsibilities.

However, Orthodox Christians – while honoring and praying for their spiritual leaders – must always bear in mind that it is Christ Himself Who is the true Head of the Church (*Ephesians 5:23*) and the “Chief Shepherd” (*1 Peter 5:4*) of our souls.

The priest concludes the prayer for all who are in the Church:

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): Remember, O Lord, this city in which we dwell, every [monastery,] city and countryside, and those who in faith dwell in them. Remember, O Lord, those travelers by land, by sea, and by air; the sick and the suffering, captives and their salvation. Remember, O Lord, those who bring offerings and do good in Thy holy Churches, and those who remember the poor (*Galatians 2:10*); and upon us all send down Thy mercies. [For NN.]

PRIEST: And grant that with one mouth and one heart (*Romans 15:15*, we may glorify and praise Thine all-honorable and majestic name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Matthew 28:29*), now and ever and unto ages of ages (*Ephesians 3:21*).

CHOIR: Amen (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*).

PRIEST: And the mercies of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (*Titus 2:13*) be with you all.

CHOIR: And with thy spirit (*cf. Philippians 4:23; 2 Timothy 4:22*).