

COMMUNION SUNDAY HOLY BADARAK (DIVINE LITURGY)



PART III. EUCHARIST

<http://diocesanministries.us/faith-and-worship/the-badarak/the-liturgy-of-the-eucharist/>

1. The Liturgy of the Eucharist Begins

As the Liturgy of the Word concludes and the Eucharist begins, the celebrant takes off his crown and slippers following God's command: "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" [Exodus 3:5]. Just like Moses at the burning bush, the priest prepares himself to come into the presence of God. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood, offered to those who have made a life commitment to God and sealed it in baptism.

2. A Hymn about Holy Communion

Like the Liturgy of the Word, the Eucharist also begins with a hymn to Jesus Christ. This first hymn of the Eucharist asserts that when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, we are being joined to the same Son of God who is praised by the angels in heaven.

3. The Procession with the Gifts of Bread and Wine

Another similarity between the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Word is that both begin with a procession. A priest or deacon processes around the altar elevating the veiled chalice above his head. Like the procession with the Gospel in the Liturgy of the Word, this procession draws our attention and devotion to the bread and wine, which become for us the Body and Blood of Jesus. At the end of the procession, the deacon hands the gifts to the celebrant as they alternate verses from Psalm 24.

The Procession with the Gifts concludes with a proclamation by the deacon, leading into a prayer by the celebrant. On behalf of all those present he asks God to "grant this bread and this cup to be for us, who taste of them, a remedy of forgiveness of our sins"

4. A Call to Attention: Let us Stand in Awe

After the Kiss of Peace the deacons invite the people to give their undivided attention to the Eucharistic Prayer, the main prayer of the Badarak. In the course of this long prayer the celebrant, praying on behalf of all the people, asks God to do for us just what Jesus promised at his Last Supper: to fill us with His Body and Blood, the sacrament of His holiness and divine life, in the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

5. The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer of the Church is attributed to the great fourth-century Egyptian theologian St. Athanasius, who strongly influenced Armenian theology. The Prayer is called "Eucharistic" because the story of our salvation in Christ pivots around Christ's Last Supper.

6. The Preface

Theologians refer to the first part of the Eucharistic Prayer as the "Preface". The Preface praises God for sending his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to be born, and to take on the condition of humanity in order to cleanse it and reconcile it with God the Father. This is the mystery of Christ's incarnation. We see the same mystery revealed in the bread and wine of the Badarak.

7. The Hymn of the Angels: Holy, Holy, Holy

The angelic song of the three holies known as the “Sanctus,” Soorp, Soorp, Soorp, is sung in the Eucharist of all ancient churches. When we sing this hymn, we are reminded of the extraordinary privilege of being a Christian

8. The Last Supper

After the Sanctus, the Eucharistic Prayer describes “the outpouring of [Jesus’] infinite loving-kindness to us”. The Prayer recalls God’s repeated attempts, detailed in the Old Testament, to coax mankind back from the vain and sinful distractions of this life to the loving security of God. This culminates in the sacrifice of God’s only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross, as a redemption for our sinfulness. “The world-saving Cross . . . the occasion of our redemption” is perpetuated for us in our celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The Eucharistic Prayer narrates this event, quoting Christ’s own words: “Take, eat; this is my body...Drink this all of you. This is my blood”.

9. The Epiclesis

“Epiclesis” (eh-pi-lee’-sis) is the term theologians use to describe the next part of the Eucharistic Prayer. In the Epiclesis we call on God’s Holy Spirit to come down “upon us and upon these gifts,” so that they may become “truly the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” This is our main supplication in the Eucharistic Prayer.

10. The Intercessions

After the Epiclesis, in the presence of Jesus Christ in his Body and Blood, we pray to our heavenly Father for all of our daily cares and concerns. The Prayer lists them one by one. These subsidiary requests of the Divine Liturgy are called “Intercessions.” We pray for peace in the world, for the stability of the Armenian Church, for our Catholicos, Bishops and clergy, for civil leaders, for travelers, prisoners, captives, for the sick and suffering, for temperate weather and sufficient food, for those who help the poor, for all the living and all the dead.

11. The Conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer

The great Eucharistic Prayer ends with a final reference to Holy Communion, a closing doxology in praise of the Holy Trinity, and of course, the seal of all prayers, Amen: “And having cleansed our thoughts, make us temples fit for the reception of the Body and Blood of your Only-begotten, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, with whom to you, O Father almighty, together with the life-giving and liberating Holy Spirit, is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen”.

12. Prayers and Hymns before Holy Communion

Originally at this point Holy Communion was distributed, the people were dismissed and the Divine Liturgy ended. But over the course of the centuries, new hymns and prayers were added between the end of the Eucharistic Prayer and the distribution of Holy Communion. These rites developed as further preparation for receiving Holy Communion. Theologians call these liturgical elements “Pre-Communion Rites.”

13. Two Hymns of Praise

Two hymns were added before the distribution of Holy Communion. The first is addressed to Christ: Meeayn soorp, “The one holy”. It is sung while the celebrant elevates the Eucharistic bread and the chalice over his head. The hymn is an acclamation that they are the Body and Blood of Christ. The second hymn is sung in praise of the three persons of the Holy Trinity: “Amen, Hayr soorp, Vortet soorp, Hokeet soorp.”

14. Before Holy Communion

At this point the curtain is closed. Behind the curtain the celebrant offers two personal prayers before he himself receives Holy Communion. It is an ancient custom in all eastern churches that when the priest celebrating the Eucharist receives Holy Communion, this should be done out of the sight of the faithful.

15. Confession and Absolution

It is an ancient tradition of the Church that even before receiving Holy Communion the faithful have opportunities to examine their lives and confess to a priest whatever they have done that has distracted them from the life in Christ. The priest prays that God will absolve them of their sinfulness and restore their status as children of God.

16. Holy Communion

In the Armenian Church Holy Communion is distributed in the following manner. The communicant stands before the priest, makes the sign of the cross and says, “Megha Asdoodzo,” I have sinned against God. The priest then places a small particle of our Lord’s Body and Blood — the bread having been dipped into the wine — directly into the mouth of the communicant. The communicant again makes the sign of the Cross and steps aside for others to approach. After all have received Holy Communion, using the chalice to imprint the sign of the Cross over the communicants, the priest imparts the blessing of Psalm 28:9: “Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance; shepherd them and lift them up from henceforth until eternity”.

17. Two Thanksgiving Hymns following Communion

In the early Church, the blessing above marked the end of the Divine Liturgy. There was no need for additional thanksgiving prayers since the Eucharistic Prayer is already the preeminent offering of gratitude to God for all of his blessings. The curtain is closed during this period and while the hymns are sung, the priest and deacons clean the chalice and paten, and return all the liturgical vessels to their proper places.