



COMMUNION SUNDAYS

“What we SEE Inside the Armenian Church”

Communion Sunday #2 - THE ALTAR

Christ established the mystery of Holy Communion while at the dinner table, thus the mystery of Holy Communion is performed also at a table (*seghan*). The **ALTAR** is a flat marble slab resting on a stone pillar and is anointed from all sides, twelve in all.

Banner (*Khachvar*) - Used to lead processions when there is a festive occasion. At the tip of its staff there is a small cross and below it, ornamented needlework.



Bema (*Pem*) - Special platforms (pulpit, stage), which rise above the floor, are called bema (*pem*). In our church the altar stands on the bema on the east side of the church. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated there and is observable from all parts of the church.

Candlesticks of the Bema (*Ashdanag Pemi*) - Many churches have 2 large candlesticks with large candles at the front ends of the bema. These represent the guardian angels at the gates of heaven.

Candlesticks (*Ashdanag*)- These are made of wood or any kind of metal in any size so as to hold candles vertically. They are primarily used on the altar where there are usually 12 large candlesticks with suitable candles. On great feasts one often sees the altar crowded with a variety of more than 100 candlesticks, large and small, beautiful and ugly, suitable or unsuitable, sometimes even rough pieces of tree trunk serving as candlesticks.



Chalice (*Sugih*) - The cup used in the Divine Liturgy. The chalice must be of silver (if not the base, at least the cup) and gold plated inside. Its shape and ornamentation are matters of taste.

Fan/Flabellum (*Kushotz*) - The exact meaning and utility of the fan was to drive flies away in the form of cherubs. Deacons standing by the celebrant prevented flies from landing on the consecrated elements of Holy Communion, as though cherubs



were protecting the consecrated elements. However, that initial use has lost its significance and today they serve as a musical adjunct rather than a fan. The fans are metallic cherubs with small bells that are fixed at the end of long wooden rods. At important and mystical moments during the Divine Liturgy, the fans move and ring out representing the singing of the cherubs.

Flower (*Dzaghig*) - The flower is a symbol of happiness, honor, and love. Flowers are generally accepted to decorate the altar, especially as symbols of various feasts. We consider 2 conditions as important: not to crowd the altar with flowers, and not to resort to the use of artificial flowers.

Gospel (*Avedaran*) - We shall consider here the Gospel as an object, that is the book that contains the Gospels.

Hanging Lamp (*Gantegh*) - In our church, this refers to ceramic, glass or copper bowls filled with kerosene or oil for lighting. They are hung in front of altars and pictures in reverence and are used for illumination as well.



Picture of Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus - A picture of the Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus hangs above every altar in an Armenian Church.

Veil or Curtain (*Varakooyr*) - The curtain is exclusive to the Armenian Church. Made of cotton or fine cloth or silk, it serves to cover the front of the altar