



COMMUNION SUNDAYS

“What we SEE Inside the Armenian Church”

Communion Sunday #3 - The Priest, Communion, Mahs

Priest - Ordination is one of the most essential ceremonies of Armenian Church. During this ceremony, an Armenian priest receives power and grace to demonstrate his faith and fulfill the sacred duties as a servant of the church. The ceremony of Ordination is administered by the Bishop.

Taking into consideration the various services existing in the church, there are various ranks of clergy as well. However, all they have something in common: “laying of the hands” (*tzemadrutyun* in Armenian) by a Bishop. Becoming a member of Armenian Church and reaching the major ranks of the clergy is a rather long path for an Armenian priest.

Before reaching the major rank, an Armenian priest must be ordained to the four minor ranks. The minor ranks of Armenian church hierarchy are: Doorkeeper (Dnapan), Reader (Entertsogh, Exorcist (Yertmetsutich) and candle bearer (Momakal). The one who receives these four minor ranks is called Dpir/Tbir. Dpir gets special privileges in church as a participant during the worship services. After getting these four minor ranks, the church servant becomes an Acolyte (Pokhasats).

Priest Vestments -



Shabig (Alb) is long tunic, which extends down to the ankles. It is worn during the Devine Liturgy. Shabig must be white and simple, as it symbolizes the gladness of spirit with which the Armenian priest must approach the Lord’s Table. Shabig with its white color also symbolizes purity.

Poroorar is also called stole, which is worn with shabig, as it hangs down in front of it.

Shoorchar (cope) is made from fine, rich material. It symbolizes the power and glory of faith and is also shield and defense from the Evil. Shoorchar is worn by Priests and Bishops during Devine Liturgy and other ceremonies, such as reading the Gospel.

Saghavart is a tall bulbous hat made of fine silk and velvet. This unique hat is worn by the celebrant during the liturgy.

Veghar (crown) in comparison with verargoo, is worn exclusively by celibate clergy in the church. Married clergy stand bare headed in the church; no hat is needed. Veghar symbolizes the humility and the denial of the world.

Communion - The most important religious obligation of every Christian is the receiving of Holy Communion. Holy Communion is a sacrament by which the believer receives Christ’s Body and Blood in the form of bread and wine for remission of sins and the reception of eternal life. It is offered to the faithful during the Divine Liturgy.

During the Lord’s supper Jesus Christ took bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces and gave it to His disciples, saying: “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19) Giving the communion to His disciples, Our Lord, at the same time, gave them the commandment always to perform this sacrament.

Any member of the Church desiring to take Holy Communion must prepare for it. The first step in the preparation process is to consider our intentions. There must be a conscious will to be forgiven of our sins. In this, we must reflect on the ways in which we have sinned, be repentant and reconcile with people that we are not on good terms with. One should not have hate in his heart when accepting the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The next step is to purify oneself through fasting. It is common to fast for 6 hours, or from midnight prior to receiving Communion. If health reasons prohibit fasting, special permission can be granted from the priest to take medicine or light nourishment.

The final step is to confess our sins and receive absolution from the priest. This is done by the faithful confessing their sins through the reading of a formal confession. This is read aloud by clergy and the faithful prior to Holy Communion. Private confession can also be declared.

Mahs - The Armenian word “mahs” or “pajhin’ means a portion or a share of the Badarak. Holy “mahs” is a form of thin flat holy bread distributed by members of the parish council at the end of Badarak as the congregation is leaving.

The distributor of the holy “mahs” shall say:

“Masn yev pajhin yeghitsu soorp badarakis”
(May this be your share and portion of this Holy Liturgy.)

The receiver of the holy “mahs” shall respond:

“Pajhinn im Asdvadz havidyan”
(My portion is God eternal.)

The holy “mahs” is usually taken home and given to someone who could not attend the Badarak or who may be sick or elderly. If the holy “mahs” is not to be given to someone else, then upon receiving your portion in your right hand, kiss the holy “mahs,” make the sign of the cross, and then eat.