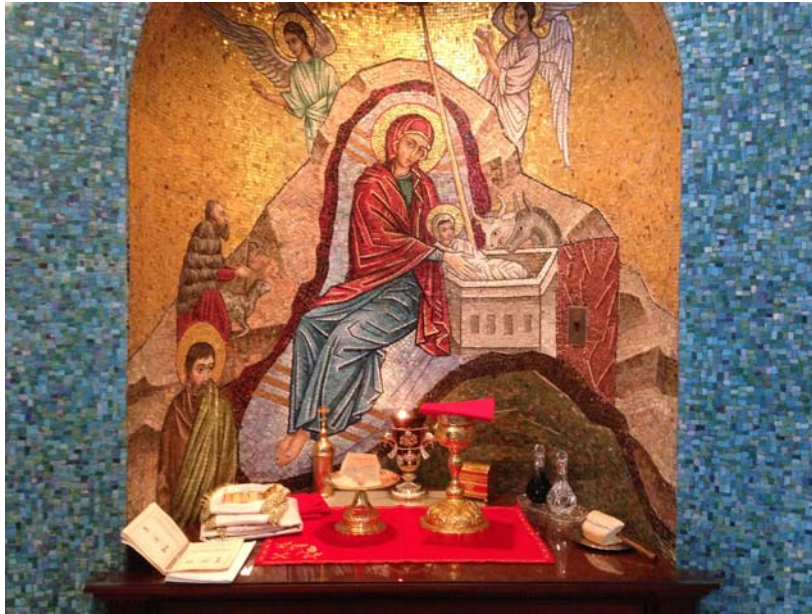


# THE OFFICE OF OBLATION (PROSKOMIDE)



## GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL OF THE ANNUNCIATION

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# THE OFFICE OF OBLATION (PROSKOMIDE)

## Introduction

Since the early Church, the Office of Oblation (Proskomide) has been a service of offering gifts to God in preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist or Holy Communion in the Divine Liturgy. The Office of Oblation is thus a prerequisite for the Divine Liturgy.

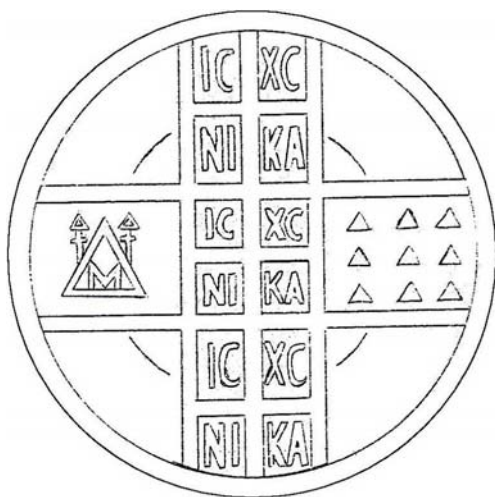
Today, the priest conducts the Office of Oblation inaudibly during the Orthros (Matins) service behind the Altar Iconostasis (Icon Screen). The Table of Oblation (Prothesis or sometimes Proskomide) is located to the left of the Holy Altar table. The Table of Oblation represents the cave or stable of Bethlehem where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was born.

For the Oblation, members of the congregation bring wine and bread as an offering to the Church. During the Divine Liturgy, the wine will be consecrated into the blood of Christ, while the bread will be consecrated into the body of Christ.

The wine is a pure grape sweet wine. It is often Greek sweet wines from Samos or Cyprus. We use either St. John Commandaria, or Rousos Nama for our wines.

The holy bread (also called prosphora or offering) must be made from pure flour and water, and is leavened and well baked (see prayer and recipe at end). In some traditions, there are five loaves to represent our Lord's miracle of feeding of *"five thousand men besides women and children"* with only five loaves of bread (Matt. 14:17-21). But if it is not possible to make five loaves, at least one is necessary for the offering.

In the center of the top of the bread is a round seal. During the Office of Oblation, the priest cuts small portions of the bread to prepare for Holy Communion. The seal on the bread is illustrated below:



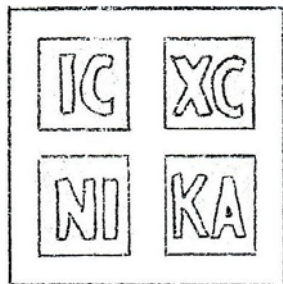
The priest will prepare the elements that will become the body and blood of Christ. As he begins the service you will see a dual theme running through, one being that of the birth of Christ, the second being Christ extreme humility. We learn from the book of Revelation 1:8 that Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. The service of Proskomidi (preparation or oblation) gives us both the beginning of our salvation, with Christ coming into the world, and the end or continuation of our salvation with Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us.

## The Service of the Office of Oblation

The Service of the Office of Oblation begins with the Priest coming before the Oblation table (Prothesis). He bows, makes three reverences, and says quietly 3 times: *"O God, be gracious unto me a sinner, and have mercy upon me."* He reads the prayer *"Prepare O Bethlehem, Eden is open for all. Adorn yourself O Efratha for, in the cave, the Tree of Life has blossomed forth from the Virgin. Her womb has been revealed as a noetic Paradise wherein lies the divine seedling. If we partake of it we shall live, if not, then we shall die as Adam. Christ is born, restoring the once fallen image."* He takes the bread in his hands, elevates it to his forehead with the seal of the loaf upward, and says: *"You have redeemed us from the curse of the law by your precious blood. By being nailed to the Cross and pierced with a lance, You have become a fountain of immortality for all people. Glory to You, our Savior."* And then he says: *"Blessed is our God always, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen."*

The priest then begins the cutting of the bread. He takes the bread in his left hand and the spear (lance) in his right hand, makes the sign of the Cross over the seal with the lance and says three times: *"In remembrance of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ."* Taken from Luke 22:19.

First, he moves to the central portion of the seal bearing the inscription ICXC NIKA (Jesus Christ Conquers) in its four corners. This portion is called the Amnos, or the Lamb, which represents our Lord who takes on the sins of the world. The Lord is called "Amnos" or Lamb, because like a lamb, He accepted His death with humility and without protest.

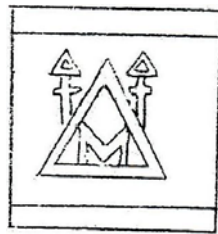


The priest cuts along the right side of the Amnos, saying from Isaiah 53:7: *"As a sheep He was led to the slaughter."* And along the left side of the Amnos, saying also from Isaiah 53:7: *"And as a blameless lamb, dumb before his shearer, He opens not His mouth."* And along the top side of the Amnos, saying from Isaiah 53:8: *"In His humiliation His judgment was taken away."* And along the bottom side of the Amnos, saying from Isaiah 53:8: *"And who shall declare his generation?"* Then the priest inserts the lance in the bottom of the bread beneath the Amnos. He lifts the Amnos up, and while removing it, he says from Isaiah 53:8: *"For His life is raised up from the earth."*

The priest then places the Amnos upon the Paten, makes a deep crosswise cut on the back of the Seal without cutting through it and says from the gospel of St. John 6:51; 1:29: *"Sacrificed is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world, for the life and salvation of the world." "By your crucifixion, O Christ, tyranny was abolished and the power of the enemy was trampled upon, for it was neither an angel nor a man, but the Lord Himself who saved us. Glory to you."*

The Amnos is then turned so the seal is upward, and pierces with the lance the section marked NI, saying again from the gospel of St. John 19:34: *"One of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who saw it bore witness, and his witness is true."* The priest then pours wine and a little water into the Chalice, blesses it and says: *"Blessed is the union of your holy gifts, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen"*

To the right of the Amnos (on the left of the bread as the priest faces it) is the portion for the Mother of God. From this second portion, the priest cuts out the triangle with the letter M and Θ for Mother of God (in the Greek Language), and places it on the Paten. This is in commemoration of our Most Blessed Lady, the Theotokos, Mother of God, Panagia, to whom we pray to intercede for us to her Divine Son. As the priest places this portion to the right of the Amnos, he says: *"The Queen stood at your right hand, clothed in a garment wrought with gold and arrayed in diverse colors."* (Ps. 44:10).



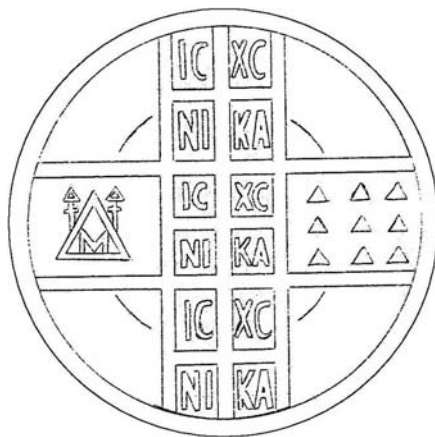
THE PORTION COMMEMORATING THE MOTHER OF GOD

From the third prosphoron, the left of the Amnos (on the right as the priest faces it) cuts out the nine small triangles. He places them on the Paten on the left side of the Amnos, in the same position as they were on the bread. These nine triangles symbolize the nine orders of saints and the angels in heaven, as follows:

1. In honor and remembrance of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and of all the heavenly bodiless powers.
2. Of the honorable glorious Prophet and forerunner Baptist John; of the holy glorious Prophets Moses and Aaron, Elias, and Elisha, David and Jesse; of the three holy Children; Daniel the Prophet, and of all the holy Prophets.
3. Of the holy, glorious, and praiseworthy Apostles Peter and Paul, of the twelve and the seventy, and of all the holy apostles and those equal to the apostles.
4. Of our Fathers among the saints, the universal, great teachers and hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom; Athanasios and Cyril, John the Merciful, Patriarchs of Alexandria, Nicholas of Myra, Spyridon Bishop of Trimythous and Nektarios of Pentapolis the wonderworkers and all the holy hierarchs.



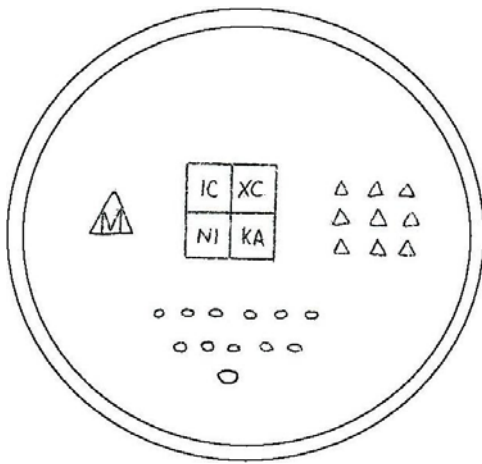
5. Of the holy protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen, of the holy glorious great martyrs, George the Victorious, Demetrius the Myrobletes, Theodore of Tyron, Theodore Stratelates, the priest martyrs Polycarp, Haralambos and Eleftherios; the women martyrs, Thecla, Barbara, Anastasia, Katherine, Kyriaki, Photini, Marina, Paraskeve, Irene, and all the holy Martyrs.
6. Of our Venerable and God-bearing fathers Anthony the Great, Euthymios, Paisios, Savvas, Onouphrios, Athanasios of Athos, Dionysios of Olympos, and of all those who have throughout the ages excelled in asceticism.
7. Of the holy, glorious, and wonder-working unmercenaries: Cosmas and Damian, Kyros and John, Panteleimon and Ermolaos and of all the holy unmercenaries.
8. Of, the holy and righteous ancestors, Joachim and Anna, of Joseph the Betrothed and Symeon the Theodochos, of the Saints (the saints of the day) whose memory we commemorate today and of all the Saints.
9. Of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople or Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop Caesarea of Capadocia.



THE NINE PORTIONS COMMEMORATING THE NINE ORDERS OF ANGELS AND SAINTS

Then the priest cuts two portions from the same prosphoron. From the one he commemorates the living by taking out particles and from the other takes out particles to commemorate the dead. The congregation gives the names of the living and dead for whom they want the priest to pray. The priest commemorates the living by taking out their particles from the bread, calling each name that has been given to him to be remembered at this time, and places them below the "Amnos" and to the right of the "Amnos" (left of clergy). To the left of the "Amnos" (right of the clergy), the dead are commemorated. The last portion is for the Priest who prays for his own salvation.

After cutting out the portions of the bread, the Paten should look as follows:



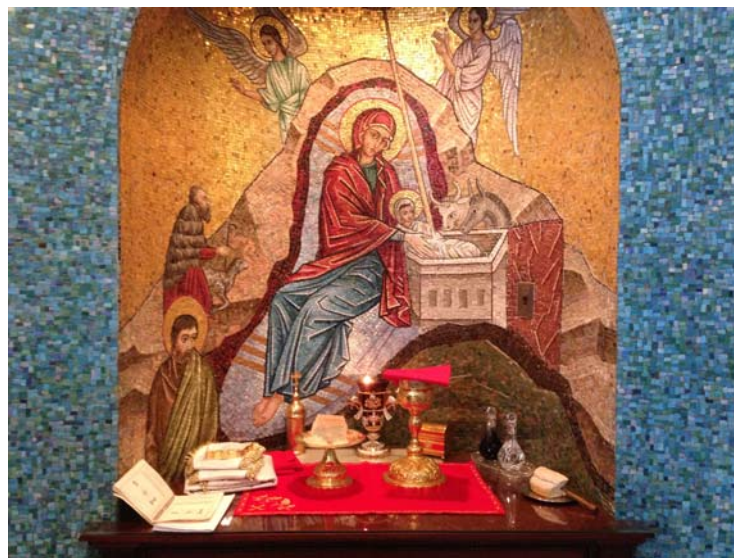
When the Priest completes the Office of Oblation, he places upon the Paten the Asteriscos (Star Cover). The Paten with the Asteriscos and the Chalice are covered with separate veils. Both are then covered with a larger veil, which is called the Aer. (*Read the symbolism of each item on the preceding pages.*)

The Office of Oblation is concluded with a prayer by the priest offered to our Lord, asking Him to bless the gifts of bread and wine, accept them in remembrance of those who offer them, and keep the priest pure during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

## **SACRED OBJECTS USED DURING THE OFFICE OF OBLATION.**

The following objects are used during the Office of Oblation:

The **PROTHESIS (OBLATION TABLE)** is the table used for the Office of Oblation. It is located to the left of the Holy Altar table.



The **PATEN (DISKARION)** is the raised plate where the bread is placed. It symbolizes the manger of Bethlehem.



The **CHALICE** is the cup where the wine is poured. It symbolizes the cup that our Lord used at the Last Supper.



The **SPEAR or LANCE (LONCHE)** is used to cut the bread. It symbolizes the spear that the soldier used to pierce the side of our Lord when our Lord was hanging on the Cross.



The **ASTERISCOS** is the star cover that is placed on the Paten. It is made of metal so that it can support and prevent the small veil from coming in contact with the bread. It symbolizes the star of Bethlehem.

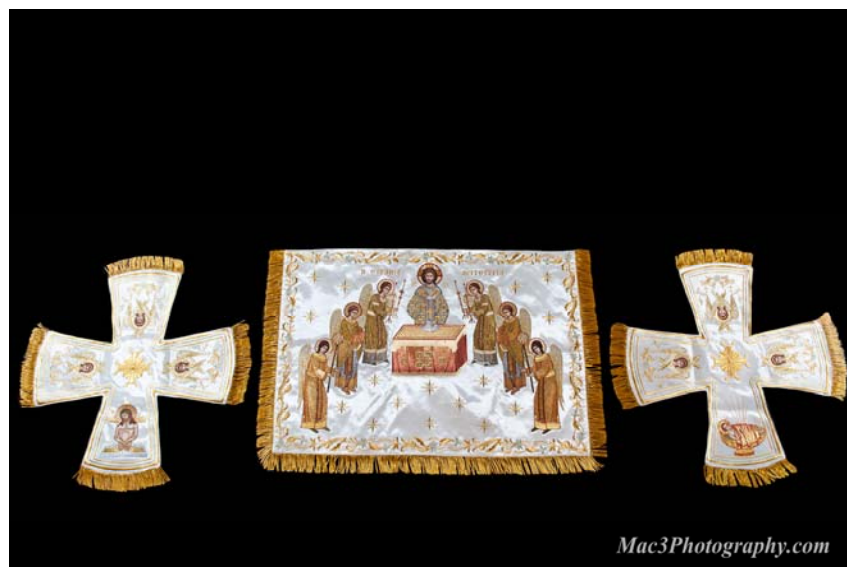




The **AER** is a veil that covers both the Paten and the Chalice. It symbolizes the linen cloth in which Joseph and Nicodemus placed the most Sacred Body of our Lord when they took it down from the Cross. It also symbolizes the Loftiness and Glory of Jesus Christ and his Saving Grace by which His Church is covered and protected and even *"the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Mt. 16:18). Under the Aer, separate smaller veils cover the Paten with the **Asteriscos** and the **Chalice**. They are often in the shape of a cross, with the four points coming down as flaps over the Paten or the Chalice, as depicted below.



THE AER



VEIL COVER FOR THE PATEN AND CHALICE

The **HOLY SPOON** is used to administer Holy Communion to the Faithful. It symbolizes the tong that the Angel used to take the burning coal from the Altar in order to touch the lips of Isaiah to purify him from his sins (Isaiah 6:7).



The **ZEON** is both the small vessel and the warm water it contains, which the priest pours into the Chalice. The warm water symbolizes the mixture of warm blood and water that flowed from the side of our Lord when the soldier's spear pierced Him.



The **ANTIMENSION (C corporal)** is a silken or linen cloth, having upon it the representation of the Deposition of Christ in the tomb and the four Evangelists on the four Corners. It is placed on the Holy Altar table, and the Paten and the Chalice are placed on it for the consecration of the gifts into the Holy Communion.



**SPONGES** are used for cleaning the sacred vessels after the Divine Liturgy. One is used to wipe the Paten after the portions of the bread have been dropped into the Chalice; this sponge is kept on the Altar in the Holy Antimension (C corporal). The other sponge is used to wipe the Holy Chalice after it has been washed, and is kept on the Oblation table.

## **EXPLANATION OF TERMS**

### **ANTIDORON**

The portions of bread remaining after the Office of Oblation. It is not consecrated. It is given to worshipers after the Divine Liturgy. Antidoron means "instead of the Gift."

### **LAMB (AMNOS) The Host ICXC NIKΑ**

The Lord is called Amnos (Lamb), because like a Lamb He accepted His death with humility and without protest. This term is used to refer to the portion of the bread in the center of the seal inscribed ICXC NIKΑ.

### **PROSKOMIDE (OBLATION)**

The offering of gifts.

### **PROSPHORON (singular) or PROSPHORA (plural)**

Holy bread offered for the preparation of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

## **Instructions for Making Prosphora**

Makes 4 1 ½ to 1 ¾ pound Loaves

### **INGREDIENTS**

1 5lb. bag of unbleached flour  
5 cups of water lukewarm  
2 packets yeast or 4 Teaspoons of yeast  
1 Teaspoon salt

### **DIRECTIONS**

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. In a large mixing bowl place flour and make sign of cross in the flour 3 times, then sprinkle in salt.
3. In a small sauce pan add 4 ¾ cups water and dissolve yeast. *(Rest of water maybe required during kneading)*
4. Add water/yeast mixture to bowl with flour and begin kneading.
5. Knead by hand for approximately 10 minutes. Then allow dough to rest for 5 min, cover with plastic cellophane while resting. Then continue to knead for 20 to 30 more minutes. The dough is to be very stiff and then smooth. *(If there are little crumbs and the dough is too dry, wet your hands and continue kneading.)* **DO NOT POUR WATER DIRECTLY ON TO DOUGH!**
6. Weigh out 1 ½ pounds of dough for each loaf, and knead into balls. Place cellophane cover on each ball to prevent it from drying.
7. Quickly use a roller and roll the dough to an 8 inch circle and place into an 8 inch aluminum pan.
8. Cross the seal over the flattened dough in the pan and then stamp the bread, pushing down and with a small jerking twist as you finish adding pressure to the seal. Then remove slowly.
9. Make 12 holes in the dough using a round toothpick. *(4 around the Lamb, and 8 more equidistant holes starting from the top around the seal.)*
10. Cover with a dry cloth towel and set to the side and allow the dough to rise for 30 to 40 minutes or until the dough doubles in size.
11. Place in oven and bake for 1 hour or until a light golden color. You can tell that the bread is done by tapping on the bottom center of the loaf. It will sound hollow.
12. Take out of oven when finished and cool on cooling racks. Then they can be place in plastic bags if needed when completely cool.



## ΠΡΟΣΕΥΧΗ

**(Λέγεται τὴν ὥρα τῆς προετοιμασίας διὰ τὴν ζύμωσιν τῆς προσφορᾶς)**

Εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος. Ἀμήν.

Ἅγιος ὁ Θεός, Ἅγιος Ἰσχυρός, Ἅγιος Ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. (ἐκ γ´)

Δόξα Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι. Καὶ νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.

Παναγία Τριάς, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. Κύριε, ἰλάσθητι ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν. Δέσποτα, συγχώρησον τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν. Ἅγιε, ἐπίσκεψαι καὶ ἴασαι τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν, ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός σου.

Κύριε, ἐλέησον. (ἐκ γ´)

Δόξα Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι. Καὶ νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου. Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου. Γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον. Καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν. Καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

Ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, νῦν καὶ αἰεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.

## ΕΥΧΗ

Κύριε Σὲ εὐχαριστῶ γι' αὐτὴν τὴν ἅγια ὥρα, ποὺ μὲ τὰ ἁμαρτωλά μου χέρια μὲ ἀξιώνεις νὰ ζυμώνω τὰ Πανάχραντα Δῶρα τῆς ἀγάπης Σου. Σὲ παρακαλῶ κατάπεμψε τὸ Πανάγιό Σου Πνεῦμα ποὺ εὐλογεῖ ὅλα τὰ Μυστήρια τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, νὰ εὐλογήσει καὶ τοῦτα τὰ Δῶρα γιὰ νὰ γίνουν καλὰ καὶ εὐπρόσδεκτα στὸ Ἅγιό Σου θυσιαστήριο. Καὶ σὲ παρακαλῶ νὰ τὰ δεχθῆς ὅπως ἐδέχθης τὴ θυσία τοῦ Ἄβελ, τὴ δοξολογία τῶν Ποιμένων, τὰ δῶρα τῶν Μάγων, τὰ δάκρυα τοῦ Πέτρου, καὶ τοῦ Ληστοῦ τὴν μετάνοιαν. Καὶ ἄς μὲ ἀξιώνεις νὰ σοῦ τὰ προσφέρω πάντοτε εὐσυνείδητα. Ἀμήν.

Δι' εὐχῶν τῶν Ἁγίων Πατέρων ἡμῶν, Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. Ἀμήν.

## PRAYER

**(Said at the time of preparing the dough for Proskomonion)**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us. (3)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us! O Lord, cleanse us from our sins! O Master, pardon our transgressions! O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Your Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## PRAYER

Lord, I thank you for this holy hour, that with my sinful hands, you have made me worthy to prepare the most worth gifts of your love. I ask you to send down your all Holy Spirit who blesses all the mysteries of the church, to also bless these gifts so that they may become good and worthy for your Holy Sacrifice. And I ask that you accept them as you accepted the sacrifice of Able, the glorification of the Magi, the tears of Peter, and the penitent thief. And may you make me worthy to offer to you always these gifts. Amen.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.