

## About the Prósfora Seals

There are two customs within the Orthodox Church for preparing the prósfora and for imprinting the top with a seal.

In the Byzantine tradition, a large loaf marked with ΙΣ-ΧΣ-ΝΙ-ΚΑ in the center, surrounded by several other seals, is used. As explained below, the single loaf signifies the one Body of Christ.

In the Slavic tradition, five small loaves are used in honor of the “feeding of the 5,000.” These small loaves are made with two layers to represent both the two-fold nature of Christ (divine and human) as well as the uniting of heaven and earth.



*Greek and Slavic Prósfora seals*

Thus, in bringing a loaf of bread to God, a prósforon, we are offering our whole life to Him, we are offering Him a gift from, and on behalf of, the entire Church. This oblation, or offering, is the gift of our love.

The priest receives this gift and places it on the holy altar. Thus God accepts our gift, and it passes into His possession. God then transforms the gift through the Holy Spirit and gives it back to us as His Precious Body. We give ourselves to God and He, in turn, gives Himself to us. We come to the Liturgy not just receive Christ, but also to give ourselves to Christ.

During preparation of the Eucharist, the priest conducts the proskomidé in which he first cuts out the center of the stamped design that reads “IC, XC, NIKA” (“Jesus Christ Conquers”).



This is the portion that becomes the Body of Christ (the Lamb).

Next the large triangle on the left is cut in honor of the Virgin Mary.

Then the nine small triangles on the right are cut to commemorate the angels, the prophets, and the Apostles; the holy hierarchs, the martyrs, and the monastic saints; the holy unmercenaries, Joachim and Anna as well as the patron saint and the saint commemorated that day, and finally the saint whose Liturgy is being celebrated (Saint John Chrysostom or Saint Basil the Great).

