

Baking With a Prayer

Preparing the bread that will become the Body and Blood of Christ is an ancient Orthodox Church tradition. It is a great privilege and requires, of course, a blessing from the priest.

Since the Divine Liturgy begins in the home of the one who bakes the *prósfora*, this act is itself a sacred and unique event taking place in our kitchen, very specific preparations and prayers are in order. All who are at home, or visiting in our home, should be aware that a holy and solemn event is taking place.

Traditionally women prepare for baking the Altar Bread by cleaning the house, bathing, and wearing clean clothing. Customarily a candle is lit and incense is offered in the home censer along with certain prayers. Often a pious woman will feel moved to come to the Mystery of Holy Confession before beginning this sacred undertaking.

By reflecting on the bread's use, the baking of it becomes a prayerful and solemn undertaking. Needless to say, before one begins the baking process, prayers are in order. After the bread has been baked, the prayer may be said by the family.

Prayers of Preparation Before Baking the Prósfora

First, the Trisagion Prayers are recited. Then:

A Prayer of Repentance:

Lord our God, good and merciful, I acknowledge all my sins which I have committed every day of my life, in thought, in word, and in deed, in body and soul alike. I am heartily sorry that I have ever offended You, Lord: in Your mercy forgive me all my past transgressions and absolve me from them. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your Grace, to amend my way of life and to sin no more, that I may walk in the way of righteousness and offer praise and glory in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to ages of ages. Amen.

A Prayer of Blessing

Bless my hands, Lord, that as I give myself to the making of this bread I may honor You so that this bread may be holy. Accept my gift and make all Your people worthy to receive the Holy Gifts at the Divine Liturgy when You consecrate this *prósfora* and give it back to us as Your precious Body.

Prayer Before Making The Prósfora:

Almighty God, our Help and Refuge, the Fountain of Wisdom and the Tower of Strength, Who knows that I can do nothing without Your guidance and help: assist me, I pray, and direct me with Your divine wisdom and power, that I may prepare this *prósfora*, faithfully and diligently, according to Your will, so that it may be a blessing to myself, to my family, and to all Your faithful. For Yours 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 to ages of ages. Amen.

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

Prayer While Preparing and Baking the Prósfora

While preparing the dough, kneading it, and preparing it for baking the Jesus Prayer should be constantly on our lips:

Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me.

When imprinting the seal into the finished loaf before its final rising, it is customary to press the seal down firmly for as long as it takes to recite the Lord's Prayer (the "Our Father").

During the time the bread is rising, while it is baking, and when it is cooling down we recite the Jesus Prayer, read the Holy Scriptures or a spiritual book, and/or have church music playing.

It is not appropriate, of course, to have the television, loud music, or other secular entertainment going on during the prósphora-baking process.

Prayers of Preparation After Baking the Prósfora

Again, the Trisagion Prayers are recited. Then:

Prayer After The Bread Is Baked:

Lord, this bread that I have baked represents each one in my family and everyone in my parish. I am offering myself to You, my very life, in humble obedience and total commitment to You. I place myself on Your holy altar through this bread to be used by You in any way that You feel will further Your kingdom. Accept my gift and make me worthy to receive the greater gift that You will give me when You consecrate this bread and give it back to us as Your Precious Body. Amen.

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

