

Prósfora - Offering for the Liturgy

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51)

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’” (Matthew 26:26)

“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’” (Luke 22:19)

“When He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:24)



Do's and Dont's

The prósfora and its preparation (baking) is an essential part of the Divine Liturgy. It is therefore a liturgical act in itself, and must always be done with the blessing, and under the direction, of the priest.

First, before starting to bake Prósfora, please ask your parish priest for a blessing (permission).

Next, seek training. The priest and/or experienced bakers in your parish can advise you about any variations or customs that apply to your parish and guide your first steps.

Then, obtain a prósfora seal. Your parish priest can help you with this.

It is a good idea to have baking pans, and perhaps a mixing bowl, set aside exclusively for baking the prósfora. This is not a requirement, but it is a common practice.

Always remember that Prósfora is made from only four ingredients: wheat flour (white), yeast, salt, and water. Never use any oil or shortening; never grease the baking pans. Never use any sugar or sweetener.



Not Just Anyone Can Bake the Prósfora

In an absolutely and very real way, the Divine Liturgy extends from our kitchen, where we bake the bread, to the Holy Altar at our parish church, upon which that same bread becomes the Body of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Therefore it is always the priest who will invite individuals to participate in the sacred activity of baking the prósfora. Only a member of the Orthodox Church who is in good spiritual standing, whose conscience is clean, and who has the blessing of a priest may bake prósfora.

In a parish church the faithful chosen and trained for this holy effort typically will take turns baking the prósfora. In monasteries, the géronta or geróntissa (abbot or abbess) assigns to one or more monastics of virtuous life to bake the prósfora.



The Meaning of the Offering

Bread is used to become the Body of Jesus Who is the Bread of Life, of Which, if any man eat, he shall never hunger. This bread which we bake and give to be used in the Liturgy also expresses the offering of our life to God. The Greek word for altar bread is prósfora which means an offering to God. Bread is used as an offering because it represents life. Once consumed, it becomes part of us; i.e., it becomes our flesh and bones.

