

Prosfhora is the bread of prayer. Prosfhora is made with prayer, for prayer. Prosfhora is one of the defining features of Orthodoxy and is unique to Orthodoxy.

Prosfhora contains just four physical ingredients: water, salt, flour, and yeast, with the fifth ingredient being prayer. The word “Πρόσφορον” (prosfhoron), means offering, since we offer it with prayers to the Church, and the Church offers it with prayers to God. The word “Ἀντίδορον” (an-ti-do-ron), also refers to prosfhora, meaning “instead of the gifts.” Prosfhora is offered for the Eucharist and the remainder is given back as antidoron after Holy Communion and distributed to those who did not commune.

Prior to the Liturgy, usually during the Third and Sixth Hours, Orthodox clergy perform the Proskomedia (oblation). In the Slavic tradition, five loaves of used

Loaf #1

With prayers calling to remembrance the events at Golgotha, the priest cuts the Lamb from the first loaf. Then the priest pierces the prosfhora to commemorate Christ being pierced with a spear by one of the soldiers. Like blood and water which flowed from our Lord’s side, when the Lamb is pierced, the priest adds water and wine to the chalice.

Loaf #2

From the second prosfhora, a rectangular piece is removed to commemorate the Theotokos, the Mother of God, and it is placed to the right side of the Lamb from the first loaf.

Loaf #3

Nine pieces for the nine ranks of saints follow. They include commemorations for:

- 1) Angelic powers
- 2) Forerunner (John the Baptizer) and prophets
- 3) Saints Peter & Paul and all the Holy Apostles
- 4) Holy hierarchs
- 5) Martyrs
- 6) Holy & venerable fathers and mothers of the church
- 7) Unmercenaries and wonderworkers
- 8) The Ancestors of God (Joachim & Anna) and saints of the day

- 9) Liturgist of the day, usually St. John Chrysostom (Basil the Great during Lent, and other selected days).

Loaf #4

The ruling bishop is then commemorated, along with all civil authorities (in general, as non-Orthodox cannot be commemorated with the Eucharist), then all the faithful, both living and departed, whose names have been entered for commemoration, cutting a particle for each and putting it on the paten.

Loaf #5

After the living, the pious rulers, church founders, and the priest's ordaining bishop are commemorated, with their own particles. Finally, the priest cuts a particle for himself, covers the gifts, and censes the entire church while reciting Psalm 50. The particles remain on the paten throughout the Liturgy and become the Body of Christ.

This rite is so powerful that the new St. Paisios walked into the altar during Proskomedia, saw fire over the table, and was never ordained.

Antidoron is a universal way of taking the Divine Liturgy home. It is church practice to bring a commemorative loaf of prosphora home and to eat a piece upon awakening. This gives us a tangible tie in with our prayer life. Most importantly, any Orthodox can be commemorated at the proskomedia, even if they are unable to come to church. Space is no obstacle, death is no obstacle, and even sin is no obstacle. Only heresy and schism are obstacles, because they affect our connection to Christ. This emphasizes cosmic nature of the liturgy.

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