



Practices related to the Celebration of the Divine Liturgy

BURNING CANDLES IN THE CHURCH

One of the devotional practices in the Armenian Church, as in all Orthodox Churches, is the beautiful custom of burning candles in front of sacred shrines, images or relics. It is symbolic of the sacrifice of the Christian soul in order to shine with divine graces, confident in the example and intercession of the saints. So the candle burns itself up to give out light. Light symbolizes Christ, "The Light of the World".

When going into the Church to attend the Sacred Liturgy, or any other service, the believer obtains a candle at the door against an offering of a sum of money, and takes it before an image or a relic or a shrine in the Church and while making a vow and saying a prayer and asking the intercession of the particular saint in his mind or represented by the image or the relic, he lights the candle and places it where it is appropriate. After doing this he crosses himself and returns to his place in the congregation.

Candles can also be handed to the sacristan to be lighted on behalf of the offerer in the sanctuary, where members of the congregation have no access.

MAKING OFFERINGS TO THE CHURCH

Offerings made to the Church are not only payments for the upkeep of the Church. By making an offering during the Divine Liturgy, a Christian becomes a sharer in the giving of the bread and wine on the Altar and his gift returns to him transfigured into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, to fill him with God's grace and integrating him into the Body of Christ. In the primitive Church Christians used to bring their offerings to the Church in kind and thereupon partook of the banquet of love and fellowship.

Offerings are also made as penance, which is a token sanction imposed on oneself, often through the Church, for one's sin. Such sanction is a proof of the believer's contrition and his desire for salvation.

There are various ways of making an offering to the Church.

Votive offerings are various objects given to the Church, such as crosses, pictures, vestments, candles, furniture, etc., as well as provisions for the building of various shrines or parts of the Church.

Annual dues are paid by the active members of the Church entitling them to have a voice in the management of the material affairs of the Church.

Offerings of thanks in connection with the performance of various sacraments and services, such as baptism, matrimony, service for the repose of souls, etc., are made and the money is paid to the treasurer of the Parish Council in accordance with a locally prescribed rate. In addition to this, gifts to the officiating clergymen of the above mentioned sacraments as well as other services, such as house-blessing, tomb-blessing, etc., are as a rule made, the amount of the gift being left to the discretion of the offerer concerned.

Collections in the Church should be made only during the Diptychs or during the Intinction and Fraction, after the Celebrant has pronounced the Exhortation to Communion ("In holiness let us taste . . ."). As many wardens as are necessary pass the plates of collection through the congregation, and after everyone has made his offering, the plates are taken to the vestry or wardens' room. The result of the collections is assigned for the general expenses of the Church, unless otherwise intended and announced previously.

MAKING ANNOUNCEMENTS IN THE CHURCH

Announcements in the Church are made either before the Alleluia of the Gospel Lesson, or after the Doxology.

They are made by the Parish Priest or in certain contingencies by the deacon or even by a senior warden.

Only announcements having a direct or indirect bearing on religious, ecclesiastical or charitable work should be made in the Church.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CONGREGATION

The attitude of the congregation in the Armenian Church is not stiff and formal. An Armenian feels at home in the Church, which must have the atmosphere of a spiritual family. This does not mean that he is in any way disrespectful or irreverent. On the contrary, the freedom which he has must serve him to express more freely his devotion and religious sentiments. He joins the Choir in singing, he crosses himself, he bows whenever he feels like it, in addition to the times when the Deacon bids him to do these things.

He comes early to the service, but if he is late, he does not hesitate to enter. If he has to leave early, he does so without embarrassment. Children of all ages are welcome to the services. Wardens should see to it that children do not cause disturbance.

POSTURE DURING THE LITURGY

The following are the times for the congregation to sit or kneel:

To sit during: The Vesting; The Prothesis; The Lections (except when the Gospel is being read); The Diptychs; The Thanksgiving.

To kneel during: The Hagiody and the Responsoy of the Great Entrance; The Inclination and Elevation; The Doxology.

To stand during: The remaining parts of the Liturgy.

Those who are ill or very old, may sit whenever they feel the need. Those who are strong may stand through the whole of the Liturgy. They should *not* think it improper to stand when others are sitting. In sitting or standing no uniformity is necessary.

Crossing of legs, while sitting on a bench or a chair is bad manners in the Armenian Church.

During the singing of the Creed in any service, also during the Angelic Hymn ("Glory to God on high") and when the Gospel-Book is elevated at the end of various services, every one attending the service should have their hands joined (palms touching each other with the four fingers open and united and the thumbs crossed, right over the left) in front of their chest, and the elbows forming an angle of about forty-five degrees.

A long and profound bow by every one in the Congregation is necessary when the Deacon intones: "Let us bow down to God", soon after the singing of the Lord's Prayer. This is the time when the Priest himself bows and says the Prayer of Inclination.

BOWING AND HAND-KISSING

Every time an explicit direction is given in a bidding by the Deacon or in a prayer by the Celebrant to bow down, every one in the Church, servers, clerks and congregation alike, should bow down, bending the head as well as the body down at the waist about forty-five degrees.

Where no such explicit direction is given, such as while saying "*Gloria Patri*", or crossing oneself, or walking past the Altar or the Bishop in his chair, or receiving a blessing, etc., a slight inclination of the head and the body should be made.

Every time the servers at the Altar give to the celebrant or take from him any object, such as the censer or the Gospel-Book, or the hand-cross, they should bow and kiss his hand.

THE FORM OF CROSSING ONESELF

While crossing oneself, the thumb, the index and the middle fingers should be joined together at the tips, keeping the other two fingers turned in and at ease; then first the forehead should be touched, saying: "In the name of the Father", then should be touched the middle of the trunk a few inches above the waistline, saying: "and of the Son", then the left side near the shoulder, saying: "and of the Holy", then the right side near the shoulder, saying: "Spirit" and then the heart, saying: "Amen". By crossing oneself a believer professes his or her faith in the crucified Christ.

The faithful should cross themselves after each bowing down, or when a doxology is being sung or said, namely when "Glory to the Father and to the Son", etc. is being said, or when the name of our Lord is solemnly referred to, as such at the beginning of the reading of the Gospel and, in general, at any time the prayers prompt them to do so.

THE MANNER OF COMMUNICATING

Any member of the Church desiring to take communion must previously make penitence, by confessing duly to a priest, receiving absolution, and by doing penance in an appropriate manner.

If, however, a person desires to receive communion, but has not had the opportunity of confessing and receiving absolution, he or she may communicate after confession in a group with due inward preparation.

After attending the Divine Liturgy on the day in which he desires to communicate, he should come into the Chancel, when, while the curtain is being withdrawn, the deacon calls, after the Hymn of Praise: "In fear and in faith, draw near," etc. Whereupon, when the celebrant turns and comes to the edge of the Bema, the communicant should approach him and, standing, should open his mouth and protrude his tongue, on which the priest lays a small particle of the sacred Body dipped in the precious Blood. He may also ask the celebrant to place the communion in his right palm.

The communicants should remain in the Chancel, or, when there is no more space in the Chancel, in the forepart of the Nave, until the partaking is ended and the priest stands and blesses the people saying: "Save thy people O Lord. . ."

It is necessary to fast during the morning of the day when communion is to be taken. The fast should be observed from 12 o'clock midnight until the time of communion, which should be the first thing taken in the mouth on that day. Persons who are sick or unable to fast, can obtain a dispensation from the priest, by explaining the circumstances to him before communion.

THE RESERVATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The blessed sacrament has been reserved in the Armenian Church since the fifth century. It is usually kept in a pyx placed on one of the gradines of the Main Altar in the centre, and sometimes on the Table of Prothesis or in the aumbrie on the north side of the Apse. At every Liturgy the Celebrant consumes the old fraction of the Sacrament and replaces it with a new fraction.

In case of necessity, the Priest takes the sacrament from the Church and goes direct to the sick, carrying the pyx in his vest pocket or in a small convenient box. On reaching the sick room, he places the Sacrament on a table covered with a white linen, with a table cross behind it and two candles on either side of it. After confession and absolution the Priest administers the communion according to the proper order, and then takes the Sacrament back to the Church.

THE ENTRANCE OF THE CLERKS INTO THE CHANCEL

When the clerks are entering the Chancel formally in processions, they should always do so from the front of the Centre Chancel.

When the first pair, walking abreast, reach the middle of the Centre Chancel, they should bow down together to the Altar; then they should cross themselves, and turning outward, go and stand in their places. Each pair should do the same one after the other.

If the bishop is in his chair, after bowing to the Altar and crossing themselves, they should turn to the bishop, bow to him (*without* crossing themselves) and then go to their places.

If the clerks are entering the Chancel informally, that is without a procession, they should enter from one of the Side Chancels (either right or left, according to convenience), walking in pairs. They should go near the middle of the Bema, put their hands on the edge of the Bema with palms down, kiss the Gospel-book on the Bema, cross themselves, and then go and stand in their places.

If the bishop is in his chair, after kissing the Gospel-Book and crossing themselves, they should go and kiss the bishop's hand and then return and stand in their places. They should *not* cross themselves after kissing the hand of the bishop.

For kissing the bishop's hand, hold your left hand with the palm open on your chest, and with your right hand hold the bishop's hand; then touch it first with your lips and then with your forehead.

Whenever anyone of the Clerks, or one of the servers at the Altar, enters the Chancel singly, he should enter the Chancel from one of the side entrances and should do as prescribed above for informal entry.

Whenever one walks from one side of the Chancel to the other side past the

Altar, on reaching the middle, one should turn to the Altar, bow down, cross oneself and then walk on to where he or she is going.

Clerks and servers at the Altar, when standing or walking and not using their hands, should either keep them joined, or one over the other with palms open and lightly pressed against the body at the waistline.

THE INFORMAL ENTRY OF THE BISHOP

When the bishop visits any of the Churches of his diocese and enters the Church to attend the Liturgy, he first goes to the Vestry and someone in the Vestry helps him to put his sandals, his *p'ilon*, his *panaké* and his *veghar* on. Then the priest of the Church comes to the Vestry and leads the bishop into the Central Chancel, walking before him along the Central Aisle.

When the bishop arrives in the Centre Chancel, he stands in front of the Bema in the middle and says a silent prayer, while the priest stands at the bishop's left a few feet away, facing south.

When the bishop finishes his prayer, the priest leads him to his chair in the northwest corner of the Centre Chancel. On reaching the chair, the priest steps aside and stands near the front left corner of the chair, facing south. When the bishop goes and stands before the chair, the priest comes one or two steps forward, turns on his right, faces the bishop and bows to him slightly, having his right hand with the palm open on his chest. He then goes to attend to his duties.

If the bishop carries an *asa* (ferula), the priest takes it, kissing the hand of the Bishop in the meantime, and puts it somewhere near the chair against the rail; then he bows to the bishop and retires.

If the priest is occupied performing the Liturgy or otherwise, a deacon or a senior server takes the place of the priest to lead the bishop to his chair in the manner prescribed above.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SERVERS

The celebrant is the central figure in the Liturgy. He represents Christ to the people, and the people to Christ. His prayers and the liturgical acts are of the highest importance.

The protodeacon is the second important figure in the Liturgy. He reads the Gospel, brings up the Gifts to the Altar, helps the celebrant wash his hands and generally assists the celebrant in his sacred office.

The protodeacon acts also as the master of ceremonies, as it were, during the Liturgy. He instructs the servers at the Altar or reminds them of what they should do. He is responsible for conducting the ceremony decently and in order. When the celebrant is a bishop, two protodeacons serve him.

The function of the deacon or the censor is chiefly incensing. He takes the

“Greeting” (Kiss of Peace) and passes it on to the congregation. He also takes the “*Mas*” (antidoron) to the congregation. On solemn occasions, when the celebrant is a bishop, the censuring is done by two deacons, one at either side of the Bema.

The fan-bearers shake the fans and also perform small duties at the Altar, such as drawing or withdrawing the curtain, holding the communion-linen (sudarium) during communion, etc.

Usually there are four or six servers at the Liturgy. On solemn days two more persons of minor order may join the servers, to help in saying the litanies and the biddings, or in other small duties, such as turning the pages of the Liturgy-Book (Missal), etc. Thus, not counting the acolytes, eight is the maximum number of servers at the altar.

The choirmaster conducts the singing of the choir.

The reader reads the lessons, often consisting of the Prophet and of the Apostle, but sometimes only of the Apostle, and occasionally of the Law and/or the Wisdom, in addition to the Prophet and the Apostle.

SINGING DURING THE LITURGY

Clerks, when singing the Liturgy, should bear in mind that the music is there to give solemnity and to deepen and make impressive the meaning of the words of the chants. Great attention should be paid to the meaning of the words, which should be pronounced clearly and distinctly.

Most of the hymns should be sung joyfully and with animation. Some should be sung softly but never mournfully. A few are supplicatory and should be sung as a cry from the heart. Some should be sung expressing wonderment and awe. You will only know how to sing when you are mindful of the meaning of each hymn. You should never drag the tunes or hang on the notes. You should never sing sadly. A Christian is always thrilled when communicating with God.

The deacon's parts should be sung recitatively. Their litanies and biddings are always instructions given to the congregation, and they should be clearly and deliberately intoned. Properly speaking, deacons should not sing, but should deliver the words in the form of intoned recitatives. It is preferable for the deacons to say their parts singly, i.e. solo.

The celebrant should neither sing his parts nor deliver them as recitatives. He should simply say his parts with proper accents and with very simple intonations and inflections.

The congregation should do their best to sing softly together with the choir, without, however, creating confusion. It is especially necessary for the congregation to join in the singing of hymns and chants that have

devotional importance such as the Lord's Prayer, the Hymn of Blessing, etc. It is essential that the congregation should never take the attitude of an audience or spectators. They should say their private prayers that are not connected with the Liturgy, only when melodies or odes are being sung. They should enter into the spirit of the mystery by taking part in the singing and paying attention to what is going on during the Liturgy. But they should in no case join the celebrant or the deacons when these are saying their parts.

THE MANNER OF READING THE LESSONS

During the Liturgy all lessons, except the Gospel, should be read from the western edge of the centre chancel. The Lectionary (*Tjashots*) should be put on a book-stand (*grakal*) when being read. No acolytes are needed for the reading of these lessons.

Readings from the Law and from the book of Wisdom, which always precede the Prophet, should be read in the ordinary way and should *not* be intoned.

Readings from the Prophets should always be intoned together with the title. But the intonation should be simpler than that of the Gospel. Long notes on the last syllable of each phrase with one or two inflections are enough.

The reading from the Apostle should *not* be intoned.

The Lesson of the Gospel is read from the Bema by the protodeacon, who holds the Gospel-Book with a fine linen (sudarium), having the two acolytes standing on either side.

The reading of the Gospel should be elaborately intoned, to give it solemnity and impressiveness as the proclamation of the sacred Word of God.

THE MANNER OF INCENSATION

The usual form of censuring is the *high swing*. For this, hold the four chains of the censer at the top end, about two inches below the inverted cap-disc, holding it with the thumb against the index and middle fingers of the right hand and letting the ring-finger and the little-finger touch the chain on your side of it. While holding the chains, the middle chain, which is attached to the lid of the censer, should come second from the left. To begin the swing, hold your arm in a perpendicular position from shoulder to elbow, and in a horizontal position from elbow to fist. Then drop your forearm and the censer all the way down, and then throw the bowl of the censer up and forward, bringing the chain to a horizontal position. Then from this point let the bowl drop down. Repeat the movement.

For the *long swing* hold the censer at the top of the chain, in the same manner as for the high swing, and starting from a perpendicular position of the arm and

of the censer, move the latter forward and backward, imitating the movement of a pendulum.

For the *short swing*, hold the ring on the cap-disc of the censer with your left hand, and with your right hand hold the chains half-way down in the middle (with your thumb against your index and middle finger). Raise your right hand to the level of your left, so that the upper half of the chain is horizontal, and at the height of your chest, about six inches away in front of you. Then throw the bowl with your right hand forward and up, then let it fall down to the starting point. Repeat the movement.

Short swing is used: (1) when the celebrant is saying the Words of the Annunciation during the Prothesis, (2) during the Epiclesis, i.e. during the Hymn to the Son.

Long swing is used: (1) during the Responsory before the Eucharist, (2) during the Anamnesis, (3) during the Doxology, in between the high swings.

High swing is used most of the time. Instructions in the rubrics should be understood to mean censuring in high swing.

Censing should be performed gracefully and incense should be used with moderation.

THE USE OF THE FANS

The fan-bearers should shake the fans gently during the following seven hymns: The Trisagion, The Hagiody, The Hymn of the Kiss of Peace, The Sanctus, The Hymn to the Son. The Lord's Prayer, The Hymn of the Doxology.

The fans should face east and west when the bearers are standing facing north and south, in other words; they should be held at right angles to the face of the bearer. They should be shaken *very* gently. The movement of the fans should conform to the rhythm of the hymn that is being sung.

THE MANNER OF BOWING DOWN

There are four positions for the body when bowing down. a) The full bowing down is done thus: The person kneels down and then bends further and touches the ground with both palms and the forehead and then stands and crosses himself. b) He bends his waist and, putting his open fingers down on the altar or the bema or whatever he is venerating, kisses the altar or whatever he is venerating and then touches it with his forehead. c) He touches his chest with the palm of his right hand and then bends his waist and then crosses himself while straightening. d) He bows his head, usually with hands joined and sometimes palms open, one over the other on the chest.

THE POSITION OF THE PRIEST'S HANDS DURING PRAYER

There are three positions for the Priest's hands during prayers. a) Raising them to the height of the waist, having the palms open upwards and the elbows close

to the body. This is the usual form during all prayers unless indicated otherwise. b) Stretching the arms outwards and sideways, with the palms open upwards. This is the form referred to in the rubrics by the phrase: "with open arms". c) Holding the palms touching one another in front of the chest and directed slightly upwards. This is the form to which the rubric refers saying: "with joined hands". d) Holding the hands open, right over the left, against the chest, at the height of the elbow.

The third and fourth positions are also the positions of the hands of the servers at the Altar. a) and b) signify supplication. c) signifies thankfulness and devotion. d) signifies humility.

THE MANNER OF HOLDING THE FINGERS BY THE PRIEST'S HAND WHEN BLESSING

The position of the fingers of the celebrant when blessing or making the sign of the cross over the people should be as follows:

The index finger should be held straight, the middle finger should be bent in a curved line, the thumb should cross the ring-finger in the form of the letter X, and the little finger should be held in the same form as the middle finger. In this way the four Greek letters corresponding to IS XS are formed, these four letters being the abbreviation of the words Jesus Christ.

There is another form which is also common in the Armenian Church. A ring or circle should be formed with the thumb and the little finger, keeping the other fingers slightly turned in and a little apart one from the other. The circle and the three fingers symbolize the Trinity in unity.

BLESSING THE INCENSE

Before the Liturgy, when the celebrant is fully vested and is ready to enter the Church, the deacon should approach and face him. He should then raise the bowl of the censer as high as the elbow of the priest and with his little finger pull the chain of the lid up, thus opening the bowl of the censer. Then he should say: "In peace let us beseech. . .". Meantime one of the fan-bearers should hold the ark-of-the-incense. The celebrant, after saying: "Blessing and glory. . ." and making the sign of the cross over the ark, should put incense in the censer with the little spoon, which should always be kept in the ark-of-incense.

This ceremony should be repeated also at the beginning of the procession, when the celebrant takes the censer himself for censuring during the procession.

The same ceremony should be repeated immediately before the Memorial Office whenever such service is held at the end of the Liturgy.