

the beautiful song of “Krisdos Badarakyal”, meaning “Christ is sacrificed” and implying the distribution of Christ the Lord himself, in the midst of all. The hymn invites the faithful to actually and reverently eat a portion of the consecrated host dipped in the wine as the Body and the Blood of Christ. The faithful are now spiritually revived since Christ the Lord has found “the living temples” to abide in them.

### DISMISSAL

This is the last blessing given by the celebrant, now standing among the congregation, where he reads the opening chapter of St. John’s Gospel, reminding them of the Incarnation of God who assuming flesh and was born in the Person of Jesus as the assurance of God’s love for the world. Following the reading of the Gospel, the faithful approach the Holy Gospel individually to kiss the Book and depart in peace.

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## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION



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### WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

A Sacrament in the Armenian Church is the vehicle to distribute the gifts of God through His Holy Spirit. There are seven Sacraments in the Armenian Church as the “visible” moving forces and the “life-giving” sustainers of the members of the church. All seven are established by Christ himself. They are not just rites and ceremonies; they are the “actions” of Christ performed by the authorized members of the clergy. No Sacrament can be performed outside the church anywhere else since it is the holy action of Christ himself. Under circumstances where there is no Armenian Church edifice, a sister church in the neighborhood may be used.

### ARE SACRAMENTS ESSENTIAL?

A church without Sacraments is not considered as “functional” because they are integrated in the life of the Christian faithful all along, from his birth to his death, even though some may argue that the church firmly believes primarily in the Holy Bible and preaches the Word as a priority, deeming Sacraments unnecessary. For that mat-

ter, however, the Sacraments are certainly the off-springs of the Word of God and have reached us as the ordinances of the Bible, directly mandated by our Savior Jesus Christ.

### WHAT IS HOLY COMMUNION?

It is the spiritual communication of the Christian with the Lord Jesus Christ in the exact way he established that mysterious communion during the Last Supper. Holy Communion requires preparation of the bread and wine, and especially preparation of the receiver who must deem himself worthy for it, as he actually eats the Body and drinks from the Cup after the Holy Sacrifice is offered to the heavenly Father. The repetition of the Last Supper is the Holy Badarak (Divine Liturgy) that the church has inherited from the Lord Jesus.

### ITS MEANING

The proper name of the Divine Liturgy is Holy Sacrifice, denoting the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. This also means that as often as we celebrate the Soorp Badarak on the Altar, which represents the Cross on which Jesus was crucified, we commemorate the life of Jesus from his first ministry down to his crucifixion, and ultimately to his victorious Resurrection as the eternal King. The performance of the Soorp Badarak, known also as the Holy Eucharist, requires the following steps.

## PREPARATION

The preparation of the celebrant priest as well as of the bread and the wine come first, symbolizing the Last Supper at which time Jesus broke the bread and blessed the cup of wine and gave them to his disciples to eat and drink “as his Body and Blood.” Preparation is therefore essential in both cases: the presence of the officiating priest, now worthy to celebrate and not by chance at the last minute, as well as the chalice where the wine is poured and the bread is placed with the words of the Institution at the Last Supper.

## THE CELEBRANT PRIEST

He goes to the vestry privately with a deacon to put on his liturgical vestments. So do the deacons and the members of the choir in order to dignify the celebration of the Holy Eucharist during the entire duration. The priest offers prayers for each of the seven parts of his vestments, reflecting his weakness and asking strength and wisdom from God to make him worthy for the great celebration. He then appears with procession among the congregation in front of the altar in the chancel for purification. He washes his hands, confesses his sins, and receives absolution from the nearby priest.

*No sacrament can be performed outside the church...*

## THE GIFTS OF THE EUCHARIST

Upon ascending the Altar, behind the closed curtain, the preparation continues as the deacon reverently presents to the priest the wafer (nushkhar) and the wine (kini) on a small tray with incense and biddings, so that the gifts of the Holy Spirit may abide on them. The priest finally offers incense and the deacon carries the chalice to the side altar, flanked by two lit candles. Now the Altar illuminated with twelve candles representing the Twelve Apostles, the deacons carry the large cross and the fans, ready for the procession.

## EDIFICATION

The second part of the Holy Badarak is to instruct the congregation by the lessons selected from the Holy Bible for each Sunday. First the procession takes place as the celebrant, fully vested, walks among the faithful in full circle holding the censor in his right hand and a cross in the left, led by a large cross, the acolytes with lit candelabras, and followed by the fan bearer sub-deacons. He thus represents Jesus when he preached during his miraculous ministry. Following the procession the “Kingdom of the Father” is proclaimed, and lessons from the Old and New Testaments are read, upon which the priest delivers his sermon of the day. This part of the edification is concluded by the recitation of the Nicene Creed which the early church formulated as the final beliefs and doctrine of the undivided church of Christ. The Creed was unanimously adopted by the bishops of all the churches.

## THE GREAT ENTRANCE – VERAPEROOM

Now prepared and instructed the third part stands as the most essential act of the Liturgy. The chalice resting on the side altar is carried ceremoniously by the deacon and brought to the celebrant, who in turn places it on the Altar and washes his hands one more time as a sign of purification.

## THE KISS OF PEACE

Immediately the kiss of peace is distributed from the chalice and by the peaceful blessing of the celebrant. A deacon descends from the Altar after receiving the Kiss of Peace and distributes to the entire congregation, one by one, as each transfer the Kiss to the next person by saying clearly: “Christ is revealed among us”, to be responded by “blessed is the revelation of Christ”. The Kiss of Peace unites the entire church into one. Neither enmity nor disharmony prevails anymore among the faithful, present or absent.

## INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Three hymns are sung, addressed to each Person of the Holy Trinity, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. During the second song, the celebrant invokes on the Holy Spirit “to come down on the Gifts” and then consecrates the bread three times, the cup three times, and both together three more times, asking the Holy Spirit to change

the bread into the Body, and the wine into the Blood of Christ, following the exact words of the Institution at the Last Supper by Jesus himself. Remember always that the Altar is the Cross on which Jesus was crucified.

## REMEMBRANCE OF SAINTS

Before the administration of the Holy Communion, the church remembers all those patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and the saints who have led the old religion into the new, thus culminating in the person of Jesus Christ as the true Messiah, the Son of God. The name of the incumbent Catholicos of All Armenians is also remembered for his health and ministry.

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## CONFESSION AND HOLY COMMUNION

Confession of sins is mandatory before approaching the Holy Altar to receive Holy Communion, inwardly prepared with pure heart. Proper attire is required by all, special for Sunday’s observance, including veils to cover the heads of the women who should be aware of using the minimum for their makeup. Communion begins soon after