**Proskomedia in the Orthodox Eucharist**

Here is a step by step guide to the Proskomedia (Offering) which is completed during the Hours before the Divine Liturgy begins.

1. After strengthening himself through a few prayers and venerating the icons, the priest enters the Holy Altar and kisses the Gospel and Altar Table in preparation to celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

2. Next, he puts on his full set of vestments, blessing and kissing each item while reciting a matching Scripture verse.

3. The priest then washes his hands, thus expressing his desire to be more cleansed of his sins, while reciting Psalm 26:6-12. "I will wash my hands among the innocents, and so will I go around Thy Altar, O Lord..."

4. Next, he bows 3x before the Prothesis, or table used for the Proskomedi, and prays "O God, cleanse me, a sinner, and have mercy on me" (Luke 18:13)

5. The priest then selects one of the prosphora breads to hold in his left hand, while using his right hand for the lance. He touches the lance on the seal, elevating them both to the level of his head and says, "Thou hast redeemed us from the curse of the law by Thy precious Blood. Nailed on the Cross and pierced with a spear, Thou hast bestowed immortality upon mankind. O Savior, glory to Thee."

6. He makes the sign of the Cross over the Credence with the prosphora and lance saying "Blessed is our God, always, now and forever and from all ages to all ages." Then 3 x the priest makes the sign of the Cross with the lance over the seal, saying each time "In remembrance of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 11:24, Luke 22:19)

7. Next the priest cuts out a portion of bread from the central part (IC XC = Jesus Christ prevails) of the prosphora’s seal in the shape of a cube, called "Amnos" or Lamb, which at first represents the Body of Christ and into which it later changes. Thrusting the lance into the right side of the seal (priest's left) he says, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter."

8. Then thrusting the lance into the left side, he says, "And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, so He opens not His mouth."
9. The priest also thrusts the lance into the upper part of the seal, saying "In His humiliation justice was denied Him."

10. Finally, thrusting the lance into the lower part of the central square, he recites the word of the prophet, who contemplated the wondrous origin or lineage of the condemned Lamb; "Who shall declare his generation?"

11. Then the priest inserts the lance beneath the seal and lifts up the "Lamb" and places it on the center of the Paten saying, "For His Life is removed from the earth." This represents the separation of Christ from the flesh of the Virgin Mary.

12. Turning the "Lamb" downward, the priest makes with the lance a deep crosswise cut as a sign of Christ's death on the Cross and says, "The Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world, is sacrificed for the life and the salvation of the world" (John 1:29, 1 John 2:2).

13. Next, the priest turns the "Lamb" upright and pierces it with the lance on the right side, marked 'NI', saying "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who saw it bore witness and his witness is true" (John 19:34).

14. The priest then pours wine and water into the Chalice; he blesses them saying, "Blessed is the union of Thy Holy Gifts, always, now and forever and from all ages to all ages." This symbol of the blood and water which poured forth from Christ's side is what later becomes His Blood.

15. Additional portions are cut out in memory of the Saints, placing these pieces beside the "Lamb" on the Paten, since the saints had a burning desire to be everywhere with their Lord. The first triangle portion is in memory of the Theotokos, saying "In honor and memory of our most Blessed and Glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary, through Whose intercessions do Thou O Lord, accept this Sacrifice upon Thy Heavenly Altar." This portion is placed on the right side of the "Lamb" (the priest's left) with this prophetic recitation, "On Thy right hand stood the Queen, clothed in vesture wrought with gold and arrayed in many colors" (Psalm 44:10).

The priest then cuts nine additional smaller triangles in memory of:

1. The Archangels and Angels
2. The Prophets
3. The Apostles
4. The Holy Fathers
5. The Martyrs  
6. The Holy Ascetics  
7. The Holy Unmercenaries  
8. The Ancestors of our Lord, Joachim & Anna, Saint of Day  
9. Saint whose Liturgy is celebrated  

All these portions are placed in three columns on the left side of the "Lamb."

Next, the priest cuts a big portion of bread out which he cuts little particles for living persons: The Archbishop, bishops, priests, deacons, etc, and for those names offered with the prosphoras. Also for the departed, praying for the remission of their sins. Lastly for himself, saying "Remember, O Lord, my unworthiness and forgive all my sins, both voluntary and involuntary." These pieces are placed below the "Lamb" on the Paten.

Finally, the priest goes back in time to Christ's Birth, remembering when the star shone above the Child and the wisemen offered to Christ the incense, in order to bless the incense with this prayer, "Incense we offer Thee, O Christ our God, as an odor of spiritual fragrance. Do Thou accept is at Thy Heavenly Altar and send down upon us the Grace of Thy Holy Spirit." He censes the Asterik, which he places on the Paten saying, "And the star came and stood over the place where the Child was." (Matthew 2:9)

The priest continues to incense 2 small veils, one for the Paten and one for the Chalice, then the large veil over both, reciting "The Lord is reigning, He is clothed with Majesty; The Lord has clothed with strength wherewith He was girded Himself." (Psalm 93) "Thy virtue, O Christ, has covered the Heavens, and the earth is full of Thy praise. Cover us under the shelter of Thy wings; drive away from us every enemy and adversary; give us a peaceful life; O Lord, have mercy on us and on Thy world, and save our souls, for Thou art Good and Compassionate. Blessed art Thou, O our God, Who art thus well pleased; glory to Thee, always now and forever and from all ages to all ages."

The Proskimidi is concluded with this prayer

"O God, our God, Who has sent us the Heavenly Bread, the Food of the entire world, our Lord and our God Jesus Christ, to save us, to ransom us, to do us good, to bless and sanctify us; do Thou Thyself bless this offering and accept it at Thine Altar above the Heavens. Remember in Thy Goodness and loving kindness both those who brought this offering, and those for whom they brought it; and keep us blameless in the celebration of Thy Holy Sacraments; for Holy and glorious is Thy name, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, always, now and forever and from all ages to all ages. Amen."
The Chalice and Paten are uncovered as a sign of the Resurrection of Christ just before the worshipers recite the Nicene Creed during the Divine Liturgy. The Holy Gifts are later consecrated separately because Christ's Body and Blood were separated in His death upon the Cross.

After the Lord's Prayer is recited, and the people proclaim "**One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.**" the priest then breaks the Lamb which by this time has become the Body of Christ into four pieces. This signifies the Lord's suffering and bruising on the Cross. The four pieces are arranged in the form of a cross. He takes the portion marked "IC" makes teh sign of the cross over the chalice, and a s a symbol of the reuniting of our Lord's soul and body at the time of the Resurrection, he places it in the chalice saying, "**The fullness of the Cup of the Faith and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**"

The priest blesses the container of boiling water, adding hot water to the Chalice saying, "**The ardor of Faith, full of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**" He partakes of the Body still on the Paten and then drinks the Blood saying "**This hath touched my lips, and shall take away mine iniquities and purge away my sins,**" before adding all portions into the Chalice to distribute to the faithful baptized Orthodox Christians who have properly prepared. Prayers of thanksgiving are read by not only the priests afterward, but properly so, by everyone who received.