

God Comes to Us as Word

Dear Lord, you who have taught us all to pray with one heart and one voice and promised to fulfill the requests of two or three agreeing in your name, help us draw near to you and know you. Bless us as we gather today in the beauty and peace of your house, Amen.

(based on priest's Badarak prayer)

An Encounter With God in Two Parts

I. The Liturgy of the _____ also called the _____.

II. The _____

I.

The _____

The Liturgy of the _____ or the _____.

II.

The _____

The _____



Dictionary Definitions

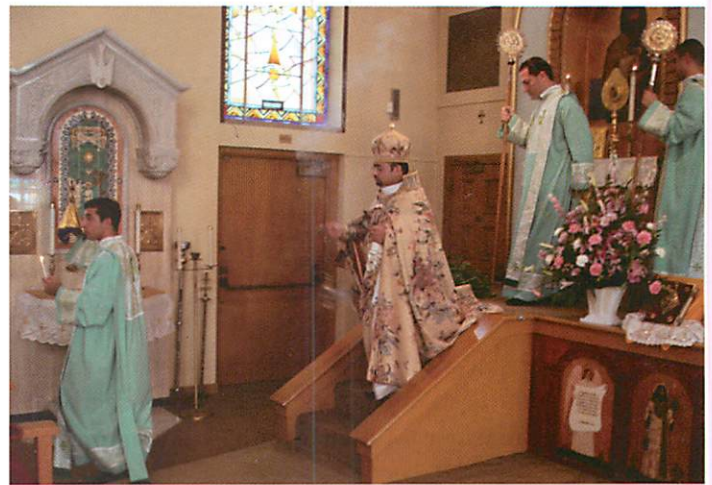
Incense: An aromatic substance such as a fragrant wood or gum (a thickish liquid that is secreted by a plant or tree and hardens into a brittle solid) that is burned to create a pleasant odor. OR the smoke such a burning produces. From the Latin *incendere* which means "to burn."

Incense **ἰσῆ**

Burning incense is an ancient act of piety. In ancient Egypt, a dead king was censed for both purification (it literally masked the putrefying flesh) and protection (as it was meant to prepare the king for entrance into eternal life). A third concept from the ancient uses of incense was

that of "vertical communication" – a means of sending up prayers from human beings to God. All over the ancient Near East incense was used in cultic rituals. We often read reference to the magnetic power of incense to pagan gods – they were actually meant to be attracted by the incense, even inhaling it.

Old Testament priests are often seen burning incense in temple rituals or as a symbol of prayer. A beautiful psalm attributed to David, exclaims:



*May my prayer be set before you like incense
May the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*
Psalm 141:2

Look up the following references in your Bible and describe what's being said about incense:

1. Exodus 30:7-8 _____

2. Exodus 30:34 – 36 _____

3. Isaiah 1:11-17 _____

4. Matthew 2:11 _____

5. Revelation 8:3-4 _____

Remember Me

The priest proceeds through the church in procession with altar servers, offering his hand cross to the faithful who can kiss the cross while saying

“Remember me, also, before the Immortal Lamb of God.”
“*Heeshescheer yev zeas arachee anmah kareenun Asdoodzoh*
Յիշեսչիր եւ զիս առաջի անմահի գառիճն Աստուծոյ:
In response, the priest acknowledges that he will indeed remember you:



“You shall be remembered before the Immortal Lamb of God.”
“*Heeshyal lichik arachee anmah kareenun Asdoodzoh.*”
Յիշեալ լիչիք առաջի անմահի գառիճն Աստուծոյ:



The Armenian Angle

The *sharagans* or hymns sung during *badarak* were originally designed to be sung in a single melody line. Eventually, the music was set to a four-part harmony for a mixed chorus. The version most familiar to us is that of Magar Ekmalian although others, including the renowned priest-musician Gomidas, have also composed music for our liturgical hymns.

The Gospel Above All

The deacon now takes the Gospel book reverently into his hands and holds it high over his head as he proceeds around the altar. It is a beautiful moment to see this gold or silver-covered, often jewel-studded Gospel Book held aloft in a parade around the altar. By lovingly adorning it, we express our reverence and adoration of the Lord, since he is the sole subject of the Gospels. In holding it high, we demonstrate Jesus' place as Lord of our lives. As the deacon proceeds around the altar, the choir and congregation sing *Soorp Asdvadz* (“Holy God”) which sings of God's holiness.



Up Close and Personal

*Do we really consider Jesus Lord of our lives?
How is this reflected in your life?*

Litanies: Petitions from the Faithful

Litanies appear several times in the Divine Liturgy. The ancient Greek meaning of the word *litē*, means supplication and litanies *are* liturgical supplications or prayers in which the deacon declares a series of petitions which alternate with fixed responses from the congregation.

Let's look at the litany on pages 15 and 16 of the liturgy books. Underline key words in each petition.

If you had to give this litany a title, what would you name it?

A Sunday School Petition

This first litany featured a series of prayer requests for the church and the body of believers. Write a litany petition for the Sunday School. It can start

“Lord, please grant/please help/please inspire/please encourage....”

Write it here and read it when your turn comes in the group litany

? What Do I Do...

During the Creed? Why do we need to hold our hands in that rigid position?

Whether it's chanted, sung or simply said, whether in classical Armenian or in English, the creed is the basic statement of faith that all those gathered are professing. So take it seriously, read the words from the pew book (if you say them often enough, you eventually know them by heart) or recite in the language you understand. The position of your hands is symbolic of the unity of the church (palms outstretched together, thumbs crossed, right over left).

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The Synaxis or Liturgy of the Word is the "teaching" half of the Divine Liturgy, meant to educate and prepare worshippers for the Eucharist.
- ✓ The Synaxis focuses the congregation on the Word of God.
- ✓ The Gospel is the revered Word of God and, as it is adorned in precious metal and stones and carried aloft, is a symbol of Christ himself.



QUICK QUIZ

True or False

1. Incense was one of the gifts Joseph gave Mary at the birth of Jesus.
 True False
2. The high point of the Liturgy of the Word is receiving communion.
 True False
3. As the Synaxis begins, the priest moves quickly through the church to get back to the altar in time for Hayr Mer.
 True False
4. The deacon raises up the Gospel book in a procession around the altar.
 True False
5. Litanies are the embroidered veils that cover the chalice.
 True False
6. The Armenian Divine Liturgy consists of two major parts with a preparation and a last blessing.
 True False