

*Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County
21580 Atlantic Blvd. Unit 160, Building D
Dulles, VA 20166*

Presiding Priest: Rev. Fr. George A. Alexson

Prosforo Liaison: Effie Koutsourais



Prosfora = Bread for Holy Communion

*We need 4 Prosfora every week
3 Prosfora for Sunday's Liturgy & 1 for Weekday's Liturgy
Total: About 210 Prosfora per Year*

Liaison: Effie Koutsourais (e-mail: emkouts1@aol.com)

Beloved Parishioners,

What a blessing it is for someone to make a Prosforo for Holy Communion!

We need about 210 Prosfora every year. It is an awesome responsibility for each family to offer something towards this effort. We can't ask the same ladies every other week to bake bread for us. Let us all participate in this task, to make it a little easier for them. Ask yourself: What can I do? How can I help?

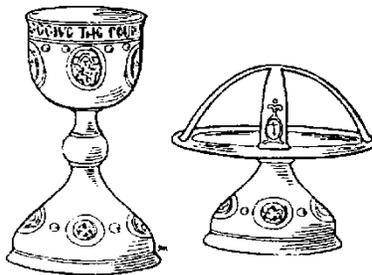
Could your family (if you don't know how or, don't have the time to make a Prosforo) offer a small donation towards this endeavor? The cost is \$8 per Prosforo or \$32 per week. Money collected for this effort (we want to make this very clear) will be used to purchase bread only from the Monastery of Agia Skepi=Holy Protection of the Theotokos located in White Haven, PA (donation is tax deductible).

The sisters bake exceptionally good Prosfora for \$8 each. Because it is bread used for the Liturgy, it cannot be shipped. Thus, in the future, if anyone plans to visit St. Skepi, please let us know: We will provide you the funds to bring back Prosfora for our beloved parish.

Prosfora can be offered for special occasions: Anniversary, Birthday, Memorial service, Nameday or, for loved ones struggling with illness. When you offer Prosfora, you should submit the names of both the living and deceased to be commemorated by the Priest.

For any questions in this effort, please contact Effie Koutsourais or Presvytera Joanna Alexson.

Thank you in advance for your Kindness & support!



Prosforo Seal in Greek is Sphra-yi-tha

The Center of the seal has the letters IC XC and NI KA which mean, "Jesus Christ Conquers". This section of the bread is removed by the Priest and, during the Divine Liturgy transformed into the Body of Christ. It is referred to as the "Lamb of God". The left section of the seal (large triangle) represents the Virgin Mary. The right section featuring the 9 small triangles commemorate the Angels, Prophets, Apostles and Saints of our Orthodox faith. During the Proskomide, prior to the Holy Liturgy, the Priest breaks the bread and prays for those represented by the seal: the Theotokos, the Prophets, the Angels, etc.. He also prays for the living and dead whose names have been submitted to him with our Prosforo. Make certain when you buy a Prosforo seal that the carving on the seal is very deep, so that the impression of the seal will appear clearly on the bread.

Prosforo = Offering Bread to God for the Divine Liturgy

The word Prosforo means "an offering to God". It is a uniquely personal offering in the liturgical life of the Church. Our Lord assures us that He is the Bread of Life and, if we eat of this bread we shall never hunger. The Prosforo is baked by someone in the church and brought to the priest for each celebration of the Divine Liturgy. By bringing the loaf of bread, we are offering our life to God as a gift of our love. Along with the bread, a list of names, living and deceased loved ones, is given to the priest. During the preparation for Communion, the priest cuts pieces of bread representing Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, Angels, Prophets, Apostles, and Saints of the Church. Along with these, he cuts tiny pieces of bread representing the names you have given him and places them all into the Chalice. God is so pleased with our gift to Him, that He transforms it through the power of the Holy Spirit and gives it back to us as His Precious Body for Holy Communion. These gifts become the true Body and Blood of Christ at the consecration. The remaining bread is cut into cubes by the altar boys and placed in a large bowl for the Priest to distribute to the parishioners at the conclusion of the Liturgy. This bread is called Andithoro, which means "instead of the Gifts".

Opening Prayer:

Let us Pray to the Lord. Lord Have Mercy. Dear Lord, this bread that we are baking represents each one of us. We are offering ourselves to You, our very life, in humble obedience and total commitment to You. We place ourselves on Your holy altar through this bread to be used by You in any way that You feel will help enlarge Your kingdom. Accept our gift & make us worthy to receive the greater gift that You will give us when You consecrate this bread and give it back to us as Your Precious Body. Amen.

Ingredients(for 1 Prosforo):

- Holy Water
- 4 cups sifted bread flour (for best texture use 3 cups bread flour & 1 cup semolina-farina)
- 1 pack Fleischmann's quick start active dry yeast
- 3 Dashes of salt (symbolic of Salt of the Earth)
- 1.5 cups warm Water



Supplies:

- Shallow pan (8" in diameter, 1.5 - 2" high)
- Large bowl (used only for making Prosforo)
- Wax Baking Paper
- Icon & Lighted Candle
- Incense and Censer
- Toothpick
- Prosforo Seal

Procedure: Recipe of Maria Themis Tsapos

Begin by making the sign of the cross, asking our Lord to bless and guide you in making the Prosforo. Light your home censer and maintain a prayerful attitude by either listening to chanting or by reciting the "Jesus Prayer" (Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me), the 50th Psalm, or, other similar prayers. Maintain peace and quiet in the home during this time, in respect for the awesome task in which you are engaged: baking bread that will be offered to become the Body of our Lord.

- 1) Cut a piece of wax paper, large enough to cover the baking pan, and push it down to take the form of the pan or, just flour the pan itself.
- 2) Pour one package of yeast into a large bowl. As you start, bless the ingredients with the sign of the cross.
- 3) Slowly add warmed water, simultaneously stirring, and dissolving the yeast with the tips of your fingers.
- 4) Pour in Holy Water in the sign of the cross (saying, "Jesus Christ is Victorious").
- 5) Add 3 dashes of salt (symbolic of the Holy Trinity & our Lord's reference to the faithful as, 'salt of the earth').
- 6) Slowly add 3 cups of flour and 1 cup of semolina (or just 4 cups of the bread flour), mixing the flour, semolina and water with the yeast.
- 7) Begin kneading the dough with both hands, for about 10 min.'s, until the dough does not stick to your hands.
- 8) Once you have formed a large ball, place it in the bowl. Bless it again with the sign of the cross
- 9) Divide the dough ball in half and, cut off a small piece (to make a 2" cross and save it on the side for No.13).
- 10) Take the first dough ball and knead it in your hands until it is smooth (add extra flour if it is necessary).

- 11) Put the ball onto a floured work surface, and with a rolling pin, roll it into a flat round 7"- 8" piece of dough.
- 12) Take the first flattened dough ball and place it in the floured baking pan (never greased). Be certain that the dough covers the whole bottom of the pan.
- 13) Take the small 2" piece dough and cut it in half. Roll each half, into a long 2" piece and, place the first one in the center on top of the 1st flattened dough and, the 2nd small rolled piece should be placed on top of the 1st one, so it can form the sign of the cross.
- 14) Take the 2nd half of the dough from the bowl and, repeat steps 10-11 and then place it on top of the first one.
- 15) Once you have put the two halves of the dough together, one on top of the other, with the cross in between, take a little bit of flour and sprinkle the top of the dough to prepare it for the seal. The double layer represents the dual nature of Christ (Divine & Human).
- 16) Take the seal (and center it in the middle of the dough. Press down, as hard as possible for about 30 seconds, repeating the Jesus Prayer. It is VERY important for the imprint of the seal to come out raised and clear, in order for the bread to be used for the Proskomide (the service for the preparation of the gifts of bread and wine for the Holy Eucharist).
- 17) After 30 seconds slowly wriggle the seal and pull it off gently. You should have a deep imprint of the seal on the top of the dough.
- 18) Use a toothpick, and poke a hole in each corner of the cross in the seal. As you poke the hole in each corner, repeat. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy on the soul of your servant (name) and pray for each member of your family. Cover it with a towel, make the sign of the cross and place it in a warm place to rise.
- 19) Allow the sealed dough to rise for 20-25 minutes or until it doubles in size. Before placing bread in the oven, poke toothpick into the same holes again. Bake in preheated oven at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes. Both top and bottom of the bread should emerge a very light gold.
- 20) Upon removing the Proskomo from the oven, place it on a clean towel (used only for the Proskomo).
- 21) Prepare a list of names (first names only) in two sections: For the Living (family members, relatives and friends) and, For the Deceased. Your Priest will receive the list and will commemorate the names in the Proskomide with your Proskomo.
- 22) The Proskomo should be taken to church (in a freezing bag with the list of names inside) either the day before the Liturgy or, on the day of the Liturgy itself prior to the beginning of the Orthros (by 8:15 a.m.). Otherwise it will be used for the next scheduled Liturgy. May God bless you for your efforts and commitment for this important Ministry of preparing the Proskomo for our Lord and our beloved Parish.



Closing Prayer:

O Lord, accept our humble gift and make us worthy to receive the greater gifts that You will give us, when you consecrate this Bread and give it back to us as Your Precious Body through Holy Eucharist. O God, our God, You sent the heavenly Bread, the food for the whole world, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, as Savior, Redeemer, and Benefactor, to bless us and sanctify us. Do bless this offering and accept it upon Your heavenly altar. As a good and loving God remember those who brought it and those for whom it was brought. Keep us blameless in the celebration of Your Divine Mysteries. For sanctified and glorified is Your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.