

Antidoron

Antidoron is not Communion, but it looks and tastes like communion bread (missing the Blood of Christ as wine.) It is distributed following the Liturgy or other service. It is the same bread as the prosphora, which means “offering,” the bread used for Communion. Some prosphora is made by joining two loaves together, one atop another.

The configuration represents the two natures in Christ. When the Lamb (the squared piece in the bread with IC XC / NIKA (Jesus Christ Conquers) is removed, particles of the bread representing the Theotokos and Saints are also removed and placed to the left and right of the Lamb on the diskos, a plate on a pedestal. Particles for the living and deceased are cut out and placed below the Lamb. The rest of the bread is cut to become the antidoron.

After the Liturgy, the antidoron is distributed to the faithful as they come up to kiss the blessing cross. Antidoron is not considered a sacrament and is explicitly not consecrated during the Eucharistic prayer.

Giving rise to the translation from Greek to “instead of the gifts.” Therefore, other Christians present at the Liturgy, who are not admitted to partaking of the consecrated bread and wine, are often encouraged to receive the antidoron as an expression of Christian fellowship and love.

Yet antidoron is just bread, so it reminds us that our physical body needs to be fed as well in order for us to live. When we bless our food before meals or when a priest blesses the food before a gathering, we are reminded that all food comes from our Creator God for our growth physically to sustain us until we are called to our eternal home.

While it is to be consumed before leaving Church, some people bring it home with them, often for a family member perhaps bedridden at home. It reminds us that the Eucharist is the living Body and Blood of Christ, the bread of life. In remembrance, they consume it following morning prayer. Antidoron can be used throughout the week following the morning meal. This is similar to a “spiritual communion.” Some consume it with holy water.

Its origins may have come from distributing food gifts following the Liturgy. In the early centuries, people brought bread and wine for the Eucharist, which was given to the deacons. They also brought other food items as their offering. Following the end of the Liturgy, this food was distributed to the poor.

This came from the *agape* meals that St. Paul described in his letters. They would have a full meal. (Warning Humor: Since they all must have been like Ukrainians, there was always plenty of food left over.) When the *agapes* (which means “love meals”) were discontinued in the fourth century, the bread may have been distributed as a reminder of the gathering and the needs of the poor.

The Greek Churches have an interesting custom not found in the Slavic churches. This is the raising of the antidoron above the Holy Gifts after the epiclesis, the calling down of the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood. Since it is after the epiclesis, it is not Eucharist, just blessed bread because the epiclesis is

essential.

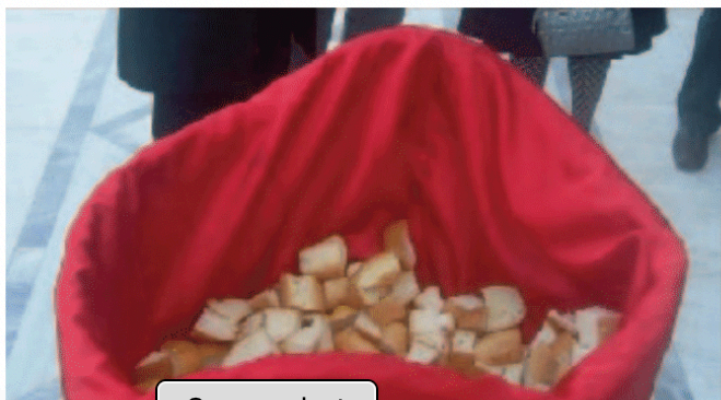
In our Church, mention of the antidoron began to appear in about the ninth and tenth centuries. Germanus of Constantinople mentions it in his treatise “The Explanation of the Liturgy.” After him, many writers of the Eastern Churches have written on the custom of giving the antidoron.

While the practice of blessing and distributing antidoron still continues in the Byzantine and other Eastern Churches, the practice is rare among Western Christians and now only survives in the Latin Church as the *pain bénit* given in French churches and cathedrals after High Mass, as well as in certain churches of Canada and occasionally in Italy, on certain feasts. A similar custom also survives among the Saint Thomas Christians of the Malabar coast in India. Maybe it is something they got from us?

Fr Jonathan Morse



The Lamb and particles are arranged on the diskos, as described. The “ranks” of saints are: Angels; Prophets; Apostles, Holy Fathers; Teachers; Martyrs; Venerable men and women; Wonderworkers, Unmercenaries; Ancestors of God; parish patron, saint of the day, and all saints.



Screenshot