

# THE DIVINE LITURGY

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# OVERVIEW

- In Antiquity, liturgy describes the public services and acts which are performed for the benefit and common interest of all.
- The word is applied to Temple services and the functions of the priests in the Old Testament.
- In the New Testament, it describes the saving work of Christ (Heb. 8:6) and Christian Worship (Acts 13:21).

- The Divine Liturgy is the sacred rite by which the mystery of the Eucharist is celebrated.
- A celebration in joy and thanksgiving of the whole mystery of the divine economy (management) from creation to Incarnation, to the Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, enthronement in heaven, and to the glorious Parousia (second coming).
- A continuous Pentecost.
- A simultaneous experience of judgment, forgiveness, and true life.

- The bread and wine used in the Divine Liturgy are prepared by the priest at a small table (The Table of Preparation) located at the left of the Altar (The Holy Table).
- When the priest terminates this rite, called Proskomedia, he leaves the chalice and the paten (diskos) on the Table of Preparation and moves to the Altar to begin the Divine Liturgy.
- A small gathering rite collects the faithful in attendance.

- The Divine Liturgy is composed of two parts:
- Liturgy of the Word (Synaxis, Liturgy of the Catechumens)
- Liturgy of the Faithful (Eucharistic celebration)

- The Liturgy of the Word is a version of the synagogue service.
- It focuses on biblical readings.
- The Homily or Sermon is a prophetic utterance that expounds the readings.
- The service follows the structure set forth in the Didache (ca.100 AD) and used at Antioch.

- The Liturgy of the Faithful is derived from the words and actions of the Lord at the Mystical or Last Supper.
- The Eucharist itself was instituted by Christ at the Supper on Holy Thursday to perpetuate the remembrance of his redemptive work
- AND to establish a continuous intimate communion between Himself and those who believe in Him.
- Initially it was celebrated within the context of an evening community meal (agape or love feast).



- The nucleus of every eucharistic rite consists of:
- The offering and the placing of bread and wine on the Holy Table (Altar)
- The great eucharistic prayer (Anaphora)
- The breaking of the consecrated Bread
- The communion of the consecrated gifts by the people of God

- Celebration of the Eucharist is the central mystery of the Church.
- The Church is a eucharistic community.
- We are continuously changed from a human community to the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the holy people of God.
- In the Eucharist we obtain God Himself, and God is united with us in the most perfect union.
- It is the Messianic banquet, the meal of the kingdom (Rev. 19:9), where Heaven joins the Earth.

- It is the very presence of God's embracing love which purifies, enlightens, perfects, and deifies (2 Pet. 1:3-4).
- "Christ disseminates Himself in every believer through that flesh whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, to secure by this union with the Immortal that man, too, may be a sharer in the incorruption." Nicholas Kabasillas (+1390 AD), Commentary on The Divine Liturgy
- Our fallen humanity is transformed into the glorified humanity of the new Adam, Christ.
- The Eucharist enables us to live forever in Christ.

# TEMPLE ROOTS OF THE LITURGY



Carrying the Ark of the  
Covenant  
Relief  
Auch Cathedral, France

Photo by Vassil  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
File:Cath%C3%A9drale\\_d  
%27Auch\\_20.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cath%C3%A9drale_d%27Auch_20.jpg)

- The tabernacle was built so the Lord could “dwell” there (Ex. 25:8) and speak to Moses from between the cherubim on the ark (Ex. 25:22).
- The Tabernacle is a copy of Heaven (Ex. 25:9, 40) as is Solomon’s Temple (1Chr. 28:11-19).
- When the Tabernacle was completed, the Glory of the Lord came to fill the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34), as it also came to fill the newly built temple (1 Kgs. 8:11).
- The Temple is where God dwells with His people.

- The First Temple period ends with the “aniconic reform” of Josiah and the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.
- 2 Kgs. 23 describes the destruction of the Asherah and the host of heaven with the destruction of the houses of the Temple prostitutes (the holy ones).
- The horses at the gate of the Temple were removed as well.
- The Ark of the Covenant, the menorah, chrism, Aaron’s rod, and the bronze serpent were removed from the Temple.
- At the time of Jeremiah, the Ark was taken to Ethiopia (Axum).

- The “reformers” said the Lord is not visible in human form (Dt. 4:12).
- Yet, Moses (Ex. 24:10), Ezekiel (1:26-28) and Isaiah (6:5) had visions of God.
- The priestly blessing, “May the Lord make his face shine on you, May the Lord lift up his face upon you,” (Num. 6:25-26) could only be read in public but not explained (Midrash Megillah 4.10).
- Instruction in all the unwritten traditions of the priests (Num. 3:10, 18:7) was prohibited (Dt. 29:29).



- “All who then will live [in the Temple in that time] will lose their vision, and the hearts of all of them godlessly forsake Wisdom, and the house of the kingdom will be burned and the whole chosen people dispersed” (1 Enoch 93; Jer. 44:17; ).
- The Glory of the Lord left the Temple (Ezek. 11:26).
- “How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing ...they will call upon me but I will not answer...” (Prov. 1:22-28).

- A priestly remnant, the Rechabites or nozerim, opposed the reform (Jer. 38:19). The Temple was condemned as impure and polluted (1 Enoch 89:73).
- A remnant knew the “hidden things in which all Israel has gone astray” (Damascus Rule II; Amos 3:12).
- The Lord promised one would always serve before Him because of their faithfulness. (Jer. 35:19)
- They are not of the lineage of Aaron.

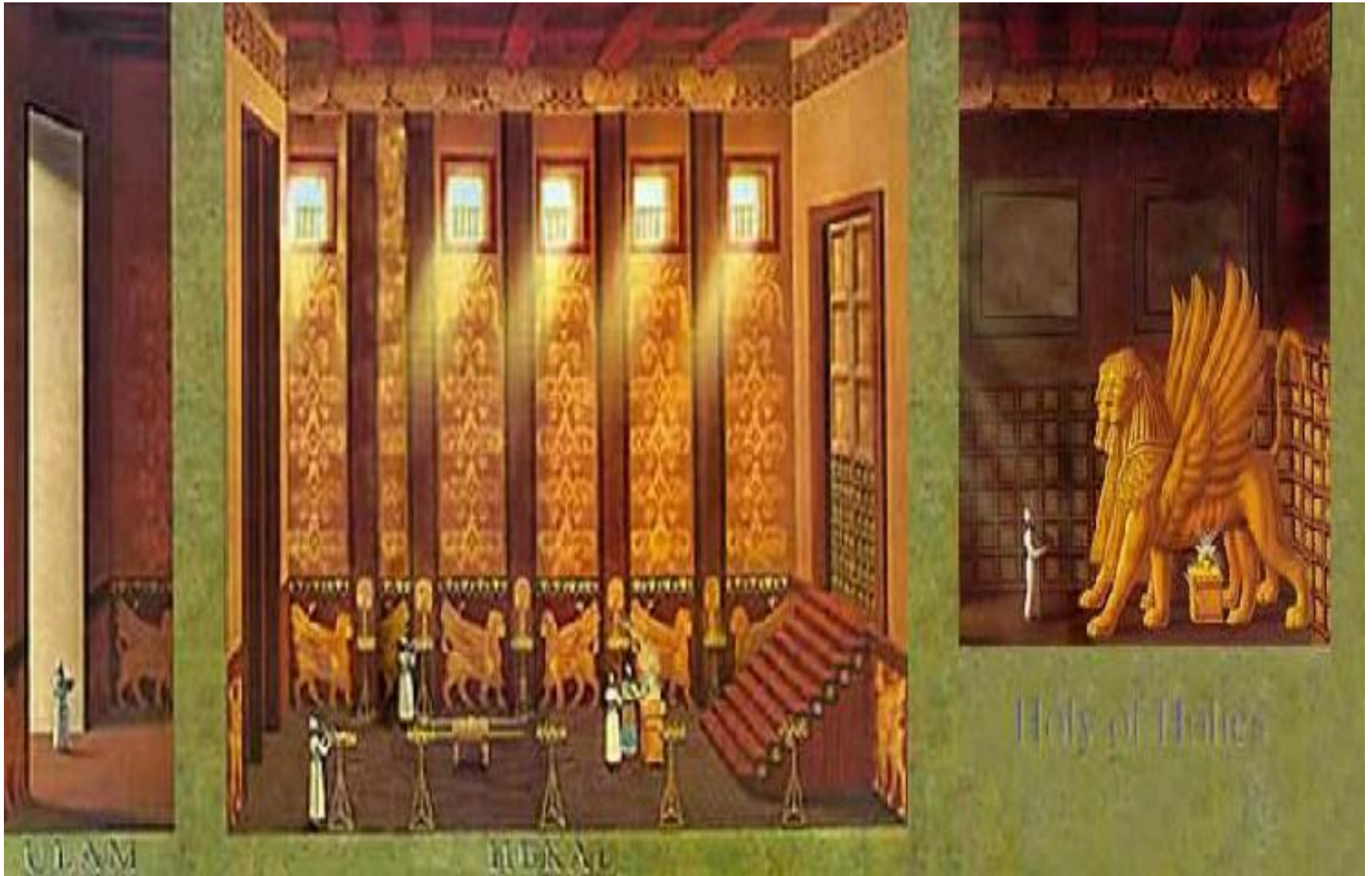
- There is no mention of Aaron or his priests in any pre-Exilic text. He is not mentioned by Ezekiel, a priest in the First Temple.
- The Old Testament was heavily edited after the Exile, and, again in the second century before Christ, following the resistance to Hellenism. These are the scriptures used by the Apostolic Church.
- The older tradition is the priesthood of Melchizidek (Gen. 14:18-21).
- The “reformers” substituted the Law for Wisdom, the Wisdom that made humans like gods (Dt 4:6).

- The Second Temple period ends with the destruction of Herod's Temple by Rome.
- God was never present in the Temple reconstructed after the return of Israel from Babylon.
- The age of prophecy ended.
- The Third Temple is the mosque erected on the ruins of Herod's Temple.
- The mosque was consecrated by Jewish priests.

The Court of Israel

The Court of the Priests (Nave)

The Holy of Holies (Sanctuary)



The First Temple

- The Tabernacle replicated the days of creation.
- Moses began to erect it on the first day of the year, and each stage corresponds to one of the days of creation (Ex. 40:16-33).
- The veil corresponded to the firmament set in place on the second day of creation, to separate what was above from what was below.

- The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube, lined with gold to represent the light and fire of the divine presence (2 Chron. 3:8).
- Everything beyond the veil corresponded to the (First) Day, beyond the visible world and beyond time.
- The rituals of the Holy of Holies were taking place outside time and matter, in the realm of the angels and the heavenly throne, and the High Priest in the Holy of Holies was more than human, seeing beyond time.

- Ps 110 describes how the king is born as the divine son in the Glory of the Holy of Holies and declared to be the Melchizidek priest...one through whom the Spirit has spoken, a man anointed and raised up (2 Sam. 23:1).
- Ezekiel saw this divine and human figure enthroned, the Glory of the Lord in human form. (Ezek. 1:26-28)...as did Daniel (7:13) and Isaiah (6).



- The Showbread (the Bread of the Presence) was laid on the table of marble when it was brought into the Holy of Holies on every Sabbath (an eternal covenant, Lev. 24:8), and on the table of gold when it was brought out of the Holy of Holies (Mishna Menahoth 11:7).
- The Showbread was “most holy” (Lev. 24:9), having acquired holiness and would impart holiness to those who consumed it.
- Only the priests consumed this bread.

- The priests who ate the goat of the sin offering, most holy food, were able to bear the iniquity of the congregation and thus make atonement for them (viz Ex. 28:38).
- Cereal offerings are ranked ahead of the sin offering and the guilt offering (Num. 18:9), required an invocation, and had to be stored and eaten in the holy chambers of the Temple court (Ezek. 42:13).

- When the desert tabernacle was moved, the Ark and the table of the Showbread were the only items to have three covers (Num. 4:5-8).
- The Christian gifts are covered with three covers.
- The Showbread is the “Bread of the Presence.” (“Presence” is a circumlocution for the Lord himself as in Ex. 33:14, Dt. 4:37).
- “Not as an ambassador nor an angel, but He himself saved them” (Is. 63:9).

- Libation vessels were also kept on the Showbread table (Ex. 25:29; I Kgs. 7:50).
- The elders who saw the God of Israel on Sinai ate and drank in safety before him (Ex. 24:11)...as is anticipated in Ps. 23.
- “The House of Wisdom is the tabernacle, and Wisdom’s table is the Showbread and wine” (Midrash Rabbah Leviticus XI:9)

- The Day of Atonement acts to protect the covenant of peace (Gen. 9:16).
- The pollution of human sin caused the covenant to collapse (Is. 24:4-6).
- Atonement was effected by blood (Lev. 17:11).
- Whose blood?
- The goat sacrificed in the desert represented the Lord (Lev. 16:8).

- The blood that renewed the creation was new life from the Lord.
- The High Priest represented the Lord.
- He was signed with a cross, anointed with chrism (lost since the “reform” of Josiah), and bore the Sacred Name on his forehead.
- Only at the Day of Atonement does the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies (and ascend to the mercy seat over the ark).

- The Lord is both high priest and victim (Dt. 32:43).
- Paul interprets the death of Jesus as atonement (1 Cor. 12:3).
- Christ is the High Priest offering the atonement sacrifice (Heb. 9:11-12).
- Levitical priests have their position due to earthly descent; Melchizidek has been raised up with the power of indestructible life (Heb. 7:15-16).
- As incense was offered on the Day of Atonement, the church and those assembled are censured at each Divine Liturgy.

# THE CHRISTIAN TEMPLE



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, Florida



The cupula represents Heaven. Christ is depicted as the Pantocrator (the Almighty).

The Virgin (Theotokos) is depicted with Christ in her womb. She is wider than the Heavens as she contains the One who cannot be contained. This is the burning bush seen by Moses.

- The Holy of Holies is separated from the Holy Place by a low fence or rood screen.
- Following the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the restoration of images as aids to worship, icons began to be hung on the rood screen. Eventually, this developed into an iconostasis separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place.
- Only the clergy are permitted to enter the Holy Place directly (the Royal Doors).
- At the solemn moment of the consecration and epiclesis, a curtain is drawn across the Royal Doors, recalling that only the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies at the Day of Atonement.



The Nave of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, Florida



The Nave or the Holy Place, Mt. Athos



Holy of Holies  
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, Florida

- The synoptic gospels link the Eucharist to the death of Jesus.
- The Passover sacrifice is the only sacrifice that does not require a priest (Ex. 12:6) and must be consumed whole (Ex. 12:46).
- The words of institution, however, emphasize the bread was broken.
- Only at the Day of Atonement is the Lord both priest and victim.
- The Day of the Lord is the Day of Atonement (Barnabas 7).

- The cup at the Last Supper is linked to the covenant (Zech. 9:9-11; Mt. 8:11 and 26: 28; Mk. 14:23-24; Lk. 22:20)...and the great Jubilee to be inaugurated (Is. 25:6; 2 Bar. 29:5-8) on His return (Mt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 14:15).
- In the Eastern liturgy, the priest “sacrifices” the loaf and removes the “lamb” to be mixed with the wine in the chalice, as did the high priest at the Day of Atonement. (1,2,3 Enoch are all priestly documents.)

Archimandrite Stavros Akrotirianakis elevates the Showbread (Prosfhora) during the prothesis at the Table of Preparation prior to preparing the “Lamb” for sacrifice.



St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, Florida



Prosfora.  
The "Lamb" is  
outlined.



The Lamb is accompanied by offerings in memory of the Theotokos, the Angels, John the Baptist, the Saints, the dead as well as those communing.

An icon of the Nativity is present at the Table. The "Lamb" is covered with a piece that represents the star that directed the Magi.

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, Florida



- “The Spirit which raised Him from the dead comes down now and celebrates the mysteries of the resurrection of His body and completes the mystery of our Lord’s resurrection from the dead” (Liturgy of Mar Narsai).
- The consecration is the resurrection: the power of the Godhead comes upon the oblation.
- Maranatha. Come, Lord.

- At the end of the Second Temple period, the expectation of the great Jubilee was associated with appearance of Melchizidek and his atonement sacrifice, restoring the First Temple.
- The Didache (at 9-10, 100 AD) uses priestly Wisdom imagery as it offers thanksgiving for the gifts of knowledge and eternal life, and for the Sacred Name dwelling in the hearts of those who have received the spiritual food.

- “He who eats of me will hunger still, he who drinks of me will thirst for more” (Eccl. 24:20).
- “Wisdom has built her house, she has set up seven columns ...Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed” (Prov. 9:1,5).
- The gift of Wisdom brings eternal life (Wis. 8:13).
- “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24).

- The symbology of the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse of John) is consistent with restoration of the First Temple:
- The ark is restored to the Holy of Holies (11:19).
- Four horses ride out from the Temple (6:1-8).
- The “Man” (a circumlocution for God) stands in the midst of the seven lamps, the menorah (1:12).
- The Spirit promises the faithful (12:17) that they would receive the hidden manna (2:17).

- The Queen of Heaven is in the Temple (12:1).
- The faithful will eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life (2:7; 22:14) and wear the Sacred Name (22:4).
- John was known to the high priest (Jo 8:15).
- John is remembered as vesting as high priest (Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, +190 AD), as was James the Just, the “brother” of the Lord.

- John the Baptist, a Nazrite, son of a high priest, is a cousin of the Lord (Lk. 1:5-17, 36).
- Many priests were “obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).
- Jude, a “brother” of the Lord, quotes 1 Enoch (a priestly document) in his Epistle.
- Jerome (+420 AD) quotes the Gospel of the Hebrews which says that Jesus gave His linen shroud to the servant of the high priest after His resurrection and then appeared to James the Righteous, His “brother.”
- James had the authority to impose Temple purity regulations on Paul (Acts 21: 21-24)



- Clement of Alexandria (+216 AD) reports the “blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul...” (Miscellanies 1.1).
- “James the Righteous, John, and Peter were entrusted by the Lord after His resurrection with the higher knowledge. They imparted it to the other apostles, and the other apostles to the seventy, one of whom was Barnabas” (Eusebius, +339 AD, History 2.1, quoting Clement).

- Irenaeus (+202 AD) presented a manual of essential teaching (Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching 1) and the need “to hold the rule of faith without deviation”.
- The first major topic was a description of the seven heavens, the powers and archangels in them, the relationship of the cherubim and seraphim to the Word and Wisdom of God, and the role of the sevenfold Spirit.”
- All is Temple symbolism.

- “Which of the saints has left us in writing the words of invocation at the offering of the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing? For, as it is well known, we are not satisfied with saying the words which the Apostle and the Gospel have recorded, but, before and after these words we add other words, on the grounds that they have great strength for the mystery. And these word we have received from the unwritten teaching.”

Basil the Great, +379 AD, On the Holy Spirit 66

- “...among the Hebrews some things delivered unwritten” (Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies 7.17).
- Facing the East to pray is a custom dating to the First Temple, and is reflected in Rev 7.
- Triple immersion baptism, the sign of the cross, and the words of invocation also date to the First Temple and were “handed down to us in a mystery from the tradition of the apostles” (Basil the Great, On the Holy Spirit 66).

# STRUCTURE OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

- Following the tradition of Israel, men and women sit on separate sides of the church.
- There is a Gathering Rite based on Jerusalem use as incorporated into the rite of the Great Church at Constantinople (from Antioch).
- “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages” (Mt. 28:19) opens the Liturgy.
- “Amen” (1 Chr. 16:36).

- In the East, the Divine Liturgy grew, evolved, and was adapted at the court of the Emperor in Constantinople (New Rome). Gradually replaced the other rites used by the local churches.
- The Liturgy of Basil the Great was the chief liturgy until the twelfth century. The Eucharistic prayer (anaphora) is a detailed account of salvation history beginning at the Creation.
- It was celebrated every Lord's Day and great feast day.
- Now it is celebrated during the five Sundays of Great Lent; Holy Thursday, the vigils of Pascha, Christmas, and Theophany

- The Liturgy of Basil the Great is a modification of the oldest and longer liturgy, that of James the Righteous of Jerusalem, the “brother” of the Lord
- The Liturgy of John Chrysostom is shorter. It is distinguished by its clarity and simplicity.
- Originally the weekday liturgy in Constantinople, it is now celebrated at every eucharistic assembly apart from Great Lent.



- The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts is that of Pope Gregory (the Dialogist). It is celebrated on the weekdays of Great Lent as well as the first three days of Holy Week.
- The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts does not contain the Eucharistic rite as gifts sanctified on the previous Lord's Day are utilized.
- It is comprised of Vespers (with scripture readings), the solemn transfer of the gifts of Holy Communion to the Holy Table, and the distribution of Communion.

- The Liturgy of Mark is utilized by armed force chaplains of the Orthodox Church in America. Its origin is Alexandria.
- The Sarum rite is a local English modification of the Roman rite and is used in some jurisdictions.

- Seventeen Eucharistic prayers (Anaphora) are known to the Church.
- One, that of Addai and Marai, does not employ the words of consecration.
- Not all have an epiclesis (calling the Holy Spirit down on the gifts).
- The gifts are consecrated by the entire Eucharistic prayer.
- Until the ninth century, the faithful communed in the hand and drank from the chalice. Now only the clerics consume in this manner.

# Bibliography

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