
Divine Liturgy (Kidassie)

Introduction

This booklet is prepared to help the youth born outside of Ethiopia, or who came at an early age, to understand the rite of the Divine Liturgy.

It is essential to know the meaning of prayer, before praying. If we just recite prayers, without understanding the meaning of prayer, we would just be saying words, and not feeling the words. Therefore it is essential that we understand the essence of the Divine Liturgy.

Understanding the Liturgy helps us to be spiritually removed from this world, and be immersed in a spiritual world, live through the events of Christ's birth, His journey to Golgotha, His agony on the day of His crucifixion, and His glorious resurrection. When we understand the Divine Liturgy, we feel the presence of angels. In the Divine Liturgy, we enter into a communion with the hosts of angels in the presence of God.

May God grant us the understanding to know Him, and make us worthy to stand in His presence with all the Holy angels and saints. Amen.

Part I

What is Kidassie (The Divine Liturgy)?

The word Kidassie, when translated directly means Praise, or Liturgy. Liturgy is a mass prayer. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, there are different kinds of mass prayers. But the Divine Liturgy is unique in that:

It is a sacrificial prayer.

The sacrifice is the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

"I am the living bread which comes down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread that I give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world." (John 6:51)

The sacrifice was instituted by Jesus Christ himself on the Thursday before His crucifixion on the Cross on Friday.

"Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave thanks and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and

gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'
Mathew 26:26-29

It is not just words, but involves different actions, both real and symbolic of the Old and the New Testament. The following actions have symbolic and real meanings.

- The procession from Bethlehem to the Holy of Holies
- Offering the Sacrifice on the Altar
- Opening and Closing of curtains
- The Raising of Incense
- Prostration

It is divine: the rite of the Holy Liturgy is set in the image of angelic worship. Therefore, it is called the Divine Liturgy.

- There is a Tabernacle in the holy of holies, where the Divine Liturgy is led by the priests, as there is one in heaven.
"And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened" Rev. 15:5
- We praise Him in the same words as the angels:
"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."
Is. 6:3

Through the Divine Liturgy, we become partakers of divine presence

We stand in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the throne in the holy of holies, as angels stand around the throne of God.

"A throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne ... the twenty four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever." Rev.4:2, 10

- Here is how Father Tadros Yacoub Malaty, a Coptic priest describes this divine presence:

The Eucharist is a journey of the whole church - clergy and lay people alike- towards heaven. It is a unique, enjoyable, joyful, holy and yet fearful journey. In this journey the Holy Spirit carries us to the Throne of Divine Blessing, where we find the open arms of the Father for us, his children. We meet the Slaughtered Lamb in Whom we abide and Who abides in us giving us His body and Blood so that we may bear His holy nature. The journey begins with what is called "Praise" or the "raising of morning or evening incense" (matins or vespers, respectively) ... We begin on the heavenly path by entering into an angelic atmosphere that lifts up our hearts, thoughts and senses

and elevates us towards the heavenly King Himself.

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Part II

Angelic Worship

The Divine Liturgy is set in the image of the Heavenly Worship of Angels. The prophet Isaiah explains his vision of angelic worship as follows:

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with the two he covered his face, and with the two he covered his feet, and with the two he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: The whole earth is full of His glory." Isaiah 6:1-3

From the above verse we see the angels praising God the same way we do in our Liturgy, saying, ***"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His Glory."*** The angels say these words covering their feet with two wings, their face with two wings, and flying with the other two. These are symbolic acts that indicate the following:

They cover their feet to indicate that they are not worthy to stand in His presence.

They cover their face to indicate they cannot see his glory.

They fly with the other two wings to indicate that they cannot go anywhere where He is not.

These actions of the angels show that they humble themselves in His presence. We are also constantly reminded in the Liturgy to humble ourselves before the Lord. Below is another description of angelic worship according to the Revelation of John the apostle:

"I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. ... And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. ... And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. ...

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they

were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created."

Revelation 4:2-11

On both verses we have above there is a throne, with God sitting on it. The twenty-four elders and the four beasts are angels. We can see here also the angels worshiping Him with the same words we say in our liturgy. We also worship God in the same manner in our Liturgy. We have the body of Jesus Christ, God incarnate on a throne in the holy of holies, and the entire congregation, dressed in white, worship Him falling down before him like the angels. Our use of censer and incense is also angelic as we can see from the following passage of the Bible:

" And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Revelation 8:3-4

As we have seen in the previous section, there is also a Tabot (Tabernacle of Testimony) in heaven.

So, we can see from the above verses that there are many similarities between the angels and our worship. There is a temple in heaven, as there is a church on earth. There is an altar in heaven and also in our church. There is a tabernacle of testimony in both, and there is a throne with God on it. We fall down in front of God as the angels do in worship. We also offer incense with our prayers as angels do. Therefore, when we worship God in the Divine Liturgy, we are in the same presence of the glory of God, as the angels. There are few differences though:

The angels can't look upon God, for no one can see him in his glory. Here is how the Apostle John describes how God is manifested on the throne: "***out of the throne, proceeded lightening and thundering and voices.***" But, we look upon him and touch him through the priest, and also receive Him, because He gave us His body and His blood for our Salvation.

Angels carry the throne of God, but God has made our body His temple. That is why the apostle Paul wrote, "***Don't you know that you are the temple of God?***" **1 Corinthians 3:16.**

God through His merciful love allows us to worship him in the Divine Liturgy

like the angels, yet bestowed something greater upon us for He manifested Himself in body for us, and gave us His body and blood so that we may receive Him and have communion with Him. The apostle John marvels and describes the love of God by saying, ***"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."*** 1 John 3:1

If God has given us such love, what should we do in return for the grace of such angelic presence?

Part III

How to Prepare ourselves for the Divine Liturgy

We should prepare ourselves spiritually and physically before we come to the Divine Liturgy.

- Spiritual Preparation
 - Spiritual preparation before coming to Liturgy begins with the knowledge of what the Divine Liturgy is. So it is important that we understand the essence of the Divine Liturgy, as discussed in the previous section.
 - Spiritual preparation involves submitting our will to the will of God, repentance and confession. The Apostle Paul describes spiritual preparation as follows:

"Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans 6:13

How do we make our *"members as instruments of righteousness"*? Our members are our bodily senses. We do this by dedicating our eyes to see good, our ears to hear the word of God, our tongues to praise God and to speak well of others, and our heart to love God and others...

- Physical preparation
 - As we have seen in the previous section, the Divine Liturgy is a journey to heaven, to be in the presence of God's glory. How do we prepare for such an occasion?

We should be clean and wear clean clothes. God ordered Moses to sanctify the people and have them wash their clothes before He came down in the presence of the congregation:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai." Exodus 19:10-11

Likewise, we should be especially clean and wear clean clothes to present ourselves in front of God. This in turn reminds us of the spiritual purity with which we should present ourselves to God.

We should be dressed appropriately when we come to the Divine Liturgy. Jesus Christ once told the apostles a story of a king who made a feast for his Son's wedding. When the king came to see the guests, he saw a man who didn't have wedding cloths. He asked the guest why he didn't have wedding cloths, but the guest was speechless. So, the king told his servants to take guest out of the wedding. (*Mathew 22:1-14*)

The story is a good example of how we should come dressed to the house of God. Christ told this story when teaching about the kingdom of God. He began the story by saying:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain King who arranged a marriage for his son." (Mark 22:2)

The church is an image of the Kingdom of Heaven. The King is God the Father, and the marriage feast is a call to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Son, Whom we offer to the Father on the altar. Therefore, we should have a 'wedding' cloth when we come to a divine rite.

Women should wear decent dresses, and men should wear decent pants. Remember in the Divine Liturgy, we are in the presence of God, with the host of angels.

When the apostle John explained how the angels worshipped God, he also gave details of their clothing, because appropriate appearance is part of divine worship: ***"I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment." (Rev. 4:2)***

Wearing white raiment (*Netela*) reminds us of our angelic presence. White is also a symbol of spiritual purity. So, we are reminded of the need to have spiritual purity, and to examine our spiritual life.

We should humble ourselves like the angels. We should prostrate ourselves with the cross, fall down and worship him when we enter the church.

We should take off our shoes inside the church for the place where we worship him is holy. God commanded Moses, ***"Take the shoes of your feet for***

the ground on which you stand is holy." Exodus 3:5. This by itself is an act of worship and humbling oneself before God.

Physical preparation for a neat and appropriate appearance before the throne of God begins before we come to the Divine Liturgy, but spiritual preparation is a perpetual act of spiritual work in faith in our daily life. In the words of the apostle Peter, *"just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."* **1 Peter 1:13**

Part IV

Steps of the Divine Liturgy

There are different preparations before the Divine Liturgy. These include different prayers, including the Prayer of Incense, prayers over holy Liturgical Items, Preparation of the Altar, Reading of the Miracles of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and other holy books according to the patron saint of the church and the commemoration of the day's saint. In this section, we are going to cover only most of the major parts the Divine Liturgy from the Procession of the Lamb, to the end of the Liturgy.

Preparation of the sacrifice in Bethlehem.

- Bethlehem is the birth - place of Jesus Christ (*Matthew 2:1*). The place where the sacrifice is prepared is called Bethlehem because it is symbolic of this city, which is also known as the city of David.

Procession of the Lamb & Entry into the Holy of Holies

The procession of priests and deacons carrying the sacrificial bread and wine from Bethlehem to the Holy of Holies is called Procession of the Lamb. The priests and deacons take the sacrifice prepared in Bethlehem to the holy of holies. There are many symbolisms in this procession:

- The sacrificial lamb is carried in what we call *Mesobe Worq*, which is a symbol of the Virgin Mary, who carried Jesus Christ in her womb for nine months and five days.
 - The procession from 'Bethlehem' to the Holy of Holies symbolizes the life of Jesus Christ from His birth in Bethlehem to His crucifixion at Golgotha. The Holy of Holies, where the sacrifice is offered, symbolizes Golgotha.
 - This procession also symbolizes Entry into the holy of holies - symbolic of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and ultimately to His crucifixion at Golgotha
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- A deacon goes in the front ringing a bell during the procession. and another deacon carries an umbrella.
 - i. The umbrella is a symbol of the glory of God that was manifested through Jesus Christ.
 - ii. The umbrella also is a symbol of the glory of God that appeared to the Israelites in the form of a cloud. It also symbolizes God's protection over us. (*Exodus 13:21-22; 16:10; 33:10; 40:34-38*)
 - iii. The bell is called *Kalle-Awadi* in Geez, which means Voice of Declaration. It is a symbol of the voice of John the Baptist: "*I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'*" (*John 1:23*). As John the Baptist declared the coming of the kingdom of God, and called the people into repentance, the ringing of the bell is a declaration of the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, and an entrance into an angelic presence, and it also is a call for all in the congregation to repent and come into this divine presence to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Once inside the holy of holies, there are certain steps that are symbolic of the transfer of Jesus from Gethsemane to Hanna, from Hanna to Caipha, from Caipha to Pontius Pilate, and finally to His crucifixion on the Cross.

After the sacrifice is set on the altar, the presiding priest stands facing east in front of the altar, and the deacon stands on the opposite side. They symbolize the two angels who were seen in the tomb after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (*John 20:11-20*)

Worship and prayer

- 1. Doxology:** Once the sacrifice is on the altar in the holy of holies, the priest and the congregation enter into a heavenly worship of praise. But before this, the presiding priest and the assistant priest pray to one another so that God would be pleased with them, as He was with Joseph and Nicodemus, who wrapped the body of Jesus Christ with linen after His crucifixion. The priest also prays that God may accept his offering, as He has accepted the offerings of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Elijah, David, and the widow's coins in the sanctuary. He also asks all the congregation to pray for him, and the assistant priest prays for him saying: "*May God hear you in all that you have asked and accept your sacrifice and offering like the sacrifice of Melchisedec, and Aaron, and Zachariah ...*"

After the first series of praise the deacon the congregation and the priest say the following:

Deacon: *Stand up for prayer.*

People: *Lord have Mercy.*

Priest: *Peace be unto you.*

People: *With Thy Spirit (Let it be done unto us.)*

Adam said "*Stand up for prayer*" first when Jesus Christ came to the departed souls on the day He was crucified to preach salvation to them. (*1 Peter 3:18-19*). The departed souls responded by saying, "*Lord have mercy.*" Jesus Christ preached salvation to all by saying, "*Peace be unto you.*" And the souls responded saying, "*Let it be done unto us.*" The deacons says, "*Stand up for prayer*" repeatedly during the Liturgy to remind everyone the presence of the Lord, and to be alert during the worship service. The congregation responds in the words shown above in acknowledgement of His presence and the priest blesses the congregation in the words of Jesus Christ, saying, "*Peace be unto you.*"

2. **Thanksgiving of St. Basil:** The priest recites the prayer of St. Basil, thanking God for protecting us, strengthening us, and bringing us closer to Him.
3. **Prayer of Oblation:** This is a prayer the head priest recites for those who bring gifts to church, and also for those who wished to bring gifts, but couldn't bring any. The deacon asks the congregation to pray for those who bring oblations, and the congregation in response sing to the Lord to accept the gifts of brothers and sisters.
4. **Prayer of Absolution of the Son:** This is a prayer by the assistant priest asking Jesus Christ to absolve all those in the congregation of their sins, and also the sins of all those who departed before this day in faith. If a bishop or a high ranking priest is present, he prays this prayer. The deacon declares for everyone to worship (falling down on the ground) God in fear before this prayer.
5. **Litany of Petitions:** The head deacon leads the Litany of Petitions, beseeching the Lord to grant us forgiveness, faith, purity, to grant knowledge and preserve in faithfulness and purity, the patriarch, the bishops, the priests, the deacons, the readers, and all those who serve in the church, that he may grant freedom to the prisoners and those who are in captivity, for the safe return of those who are traveling, for the rain, the rivers, the harvest, for our country ...

During the Litany of Petitions, the presiding priest (head priest) prays the raising of incense.

6. Readings: After the Litany of Petitions and another doxology, there are three readings from the New Testament:

1. The Pauline Epistle: A reading from one of the eight epistles of St. Paul
 2. General Epistle: A reading from one of the Epistles of Peter, John, James, Judah, or from the Book of Revelation
 3. Reading from the Book of Acts
7. **Prayer of The Covenant:** This is a prayer from the Book of the Covenant which Jesus Christ had taught the Apostles. There are three sections of this prayer, each having three parts. The priests conduct either of the last two sections of this prayer depending on the time of the Divine Liturgy.
8. **Hymn from Psalm:** The deacon sings a hymn from the book of Psalms appropriate for the day. The congregation repeats this hymn after the deacon.
9. **Reading of the Gospel:** After the hymn from Psalms, the deacon declares the reading of the Gospel, by asking everyone to prayer for the holy gospel, and to stand and listen to the reading. The congregation responds saying, "*May we be worthy to hear the holy gospel.*" The head priest then reads the day's reading from one of the four gospels: *Mathew, Mark, Luke, or John*. After the reading of the gospel, the main deacon orders the catechumen to leave, before the prayer of the faithful (the Anaphora) begins.
10. **Litany of Ministers, Peace, Unity, and Love:** The deacon asks the congregation to pray for the patriarch, bishops, priests, deacons, and thefor peace of the church, the unity of the congregation in it, and for love. The congregation responds asking the Lord for forgiveness, and to bless the congregation.
11. **Creed:** This is an article of faith which the congregation, with the ministers pray together. There are two readings of the Creed. The Creed of the Apostles, and the Nicean Creed of the 318 fathers of Nicea (the fathers who met in Nicea because of the heresy of Arius.) The creed of the apostles is prayed if the days Anaphora is of the Lord, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, or John. The creed of the 318 fathers is prayed with all the another anaphora.

The Nicean Creed

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through whom all things were made. For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and He suffered and was buried. On the third day He rose according to the Scriptures. He ascended into

heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets. In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. expect the resurrection of the dead. And the life of the age to come. Amen.

12. Washing of Hands by the Priest: The head priest announces that all should receive the holy- communion with repentance, and confession, and absolves himself of the consequences of anyone who approaches the holy communion without repentance and confession, and also of anyone's failure to repent and confess. After this the priest washes his hand with water, as Pontius Pilate washed his hands, after declaring himself to be free of the blood of Jesus Christ. *Matthew 27:24*)

The Anaphora (Liturgy of the Faithful)

The rest of the Liturgy is called the Anaphora or Liturgy of the faithful. There are 14 Anaphora in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and one is used at each liturgical worship, depending on the day. The major sections and typical orders of the anaphora's are as follows:

- 1. Declaration of the Anaphora:** The head priest announces the anaphora of the day.
 - 2. Invocation of Intercession:** This is a hymnal recitation of a prayer by the deacon for the forgiveness of our sins through the intercession of St Mary, the holy patriarch, the metropolitan bishop, the apostles, and many other earlier saints.
 - 3. Benediction of St. Basil:** The assistant priest prays the Benediction of St. Basil, beseeching for divine help and blessing. A bishop or a higher ranking priest prays the benediction if present.
 - 4. Commemoration of Institution of the Eucharist:** This is a reading from the anaphora about the first Institution of the Eucharist by Jesus Christ Himself. *(Matthew 26:26-28)* The congregation responds three times saying that they believe all this really happened.
 - 5. Anamnesis: Remembrance of Christ's agony, death, Resurrection, and Ascension:** Right after commemoration of the Institution of the Eucharist, the priest calls on the congregation to remember the agony, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ according to His commandment to remember all these at the time of the Eucharist. *(Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)*
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6. **Invocation of the Holy Spirit:** After the commemoration of Institution of the Eucharist and the Anamnesis, the priest, and the congregation - repeating after the priest - ask for the forgiveness of our sins by receiving the Eucharist, praise the Lord, and invoke the Holy Spirit to descend upon the congregation.
7. **Prayer of Fraction:** This is a prayer by the presiding priest while breaking the sacrifice in a certain symbolic manner. The act of breaking the bread is called Fraction, and the prayer during this time is thus called Prayer of Fraction. This prayer is different depending on which of the anaphora is used for the Liturgy. Generally, it is a prayer beseeching the Lord that His body and blood which we receive may be for our salvation, and not our condemnation due to our sin.
8. The congregation sings the Our father after the prayer of Fraction.
9. **Prayer of Penance:** This is a prayer by the assistant priest, over all the congregation who have bowed their heads in repentance. The deacon declares all those in penance to bow down their heads before this prayer. The assistant priest beseeches the Lord for the absolution of all those who have sinned.
10. **The Lord's Prayer (Egziota):** After the prayer of penance, the priest leads the congregation in the Lord's prayer. The priest and congregation repeat "**Lord have mercy on us**" 41 times.

After Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, they went into fasting. After fasting for thirty five days, the devil came in the form of an angel and told them that God has heard their prayers. So, they interrupted their supplication and followed the devil towards the garden of Eden. But he showed them his real identity, and told them it was he who caused their exile from the Garden of Eden. They remained their wounded and afflicted for 6 days. The 35 days in fasting, and the 6 days in affliction make 41 days. In remembrance of this, the congregation and the priest pray saying, "**Lord have mercy on us**" 41 times.

Before Jesus Christ was crucified, it was ordered that he should be flogged 40 times. But they flogged Him without counting and started over many times. To remember that the agony of Jesus Christ, His suffering beyond the prescribed punishment according to their law, we pray, "**Lord have mercy on us**" 41 time - one more than forty.

11. The presiding priest declares the faith in the presence of Jesus Christ in body in the congregation, acknowledging that the bread and wine on the altar are no longer bread and wine, but the true body and blood of Jesus Christ. The congregation also repeats saying **Amen**, meaning they too do believe that it really is the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
 12. **Receiving the Eucharist (Qurban):** Finally, all the faithful who prepared
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themselves to receive the Eucharist approach and receive it according to their age, sex and order.

Entry into the holy of holies after Holy Communion:

The Eucharist returns to the holy of holies after it is given to those who came to receive it. This is called *Erget (Ascension)*. It is symbolic of the Ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven.

Conclusion

The Divine Liturgy is concluded with benediction and declaration to go in peace.
