



What is the Antidoron and how do I receive at the end of the Liturgy?

St. Nicholas Kavasilas notes that *the bread that is distributed as antidoron, is sanctified beforehand, because it was offered to God* Antidoron is the Blessed Bread that the priest distributes at the end of the service, when one comes to receive his blessing.

At every Divine Liturgy, small loaves called *prosphora* or "offerings" are offered at a service during the Matins, before the Liturgy, called the *proskomedj*, the offering. One of these loaves is used for the "Lamb" which will be sanctified as the Body of Christ for the Holy Communion, while small portions are removed from the remaining *prosphora*, as saints and faithful are commemorated by the priest during the *Proskomedj*. It is the remaining bread from this service that is received after the Divine Liturgy as "Antidoron".

The term "antidoron" means "instead of the (Eucharistic) Gift". At the very beginning of the life of the Church all people were participating in the Eucharist. In fact, the Eucharist was offered after a common meal called agape. After a while that custom stopped to exist and the Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy, became an independent gathering where all present were receiving the Holy Gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ. It was considered the Lord's Dinner and the same way that someone invited to a dinner, goes to participate and not to observe it, the same way all Christians were receiving communion responding to the Lord's invitation to Eat and Drink his Body and His Blood. Imagine if you invite someone for dinner at your house...he comes...but doesn't eat anything from your table! Isn't it kind of offensive? Now, consider that we do the same to the Lord when we come to His Dinner and we do not respond to His invitation to Eat and Drink His Body and His Blood.





Time went on and people, falling to a temptation from the "right" started not receiving communion because they were not feeling worthy! They started creating various rituals and rubrics for how to receive communion etc. Not everyone in the Church, during the Divine Liturgy, was receiving communion! Since the faithful were not receiving Holy Communion, the Church as a loving mother, used the antidoron so people could receive at least some blessing and thus came the antidoron. In some Orthodox Churches, such as the Church of Russia, even today no antidoron is distributed. It seems that the antidoron was kind of a development only within the Mediterranean Orthodox world.

The *Kolivades* movement, Fathers of the Church who lived and worked in the 18th and early 19th centuries, brought a renaissance in the Church life and had a decisive impact in strengthening and reinforcing the education of the enslaved Orthodox peoples. They were the ones who re-introduced frequent participation in Holy Communion, as it should be.

From their name the Holy Gifts indicate that they are not something that someone takes as he/she wishes or because he/she is entitled to them or worthy of them, but only as a Gift from the Lord through the hands of His Ministers. The same is valid for the antidoron too. It's not to be taken by one's own hands but to receive it from the hands of the Lord. The hands of the Priest are an extension of the hands of the Lord as we read in the prayers of the Divine Liturgy and the Priest is not he, himself, who offers the Sacrifice but Christ Himself Who is the one that *offers and is offered, that accepts and is distributed*, the Priest is there only *In Persona Christi*, in place and as a type of Christ.

Regarding the antidoron, the proper and ancient way is to receive this gift from the priest, at the end of the Divine Liturgy. The one receiving Antidoron puts his right hand over his left, the cupped palms held face up. The Antidoron is placed reverently in the hand, then, following an ancient and pious custom, the one receiving bends down and kiss the priest's hand as he places the antidoron in the hand.

