

## **OFFERTORY**

In the early church, donations of bread and wine were made by the laity to be consecrated in the eucharistic service, and the term “offertory” came also to mean the prayers said by the priest during this part of the Divine Liturgy.

In his epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Clement of Rome (fl. c. 90-100) wrote, “It behoves us to do all things in [their proper] order, which the Lord has commanded us to perform at stated times. He has enjoined offerings [to be presented] and service to be performed [to Him]. . . . Those, therefore, who present their offerings at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed.”

According to the [APOSTOLIC TRADITION](#) (Hippolytus, 1934, 20.10), those who were to be baptized and confirmed were required to bring their [oblations](#) to be offered at the Easter Communion following their baptism. Al-SAFI IBN AL-‘ASSAL made reference to the preparation of oblations either from the church’s own provisions or from donations made by the faithful, with the proviso that they should not be accepted from blasphemers, adulterers, or other wrongdoers and lawbreakers, quoting Solomon’s proverb that a wicked man’s sacrifice is abominable to the Lord.

Although this practice has been discontinued in modern times, and churches now prepare their own eucharistic bread, the Coptic liturgy still preserves this tradition in its prayers. Thus, in the morning offering of incense the priest says, “We pray and entreat Thy goodness, O Thou, Lover-of-Man. Remember, O Lord, the sacrifices, the oblations, and the thanksgiving of all those that have offered them, unto the honor and [glory](#) of Thy holy name.”

The [deacon](#) responds, “Pray for them who attend to the sacrifices, the oblations . . . that Christ our God may reward them in the heavenly

Jerusalem, and forgive us our sins.” Also, after [choosing](#) the most perfect of the loaves offered to be the Lamb in the Divine Liturgy, the priest says, “Remember, O Lord, those who offered unto Thee these oblations, them for whom they were offered and by whom they were offered. Give them all their heavenly recompense.” The [deacon](#) responds, “Pray for these holy and honored offerings, our sacrifices and those who offered them.” A similar prayer is said by the priest on two further occasions: once, inaudibly, while the Arabic Gospel is being read by the deacon, and again toward the end of the minor intercessions. Furthermore, there is the Prayer of Oblation, inaudibly said by the priest following the Prayer of Thanksgiving and prior to the Absolution of the Minister: “We pray and entreat Thy goodness, O Lover-of-man, [pointing to the bread] cause Thy face to shine upon this bread, and [pointing to the chalice] upon this cup, which we have placed on this priestly table [pointing to the altar], which is Thine.”

The offertory is a vehicle for a total sharing with Christ and a means of entering into full communion with Him. Such consummate union could not find better or more poignant expression than the words of Saint Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (c. 35-107), when he was faced with imminent martyrdom. “I beseech you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to become [food](#) for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts. . . . Entreat Christ for me, that by these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God” (1956, p. 75).

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