

**Studying the Armenian Eucharist:  
The Vesting Ritual as a Case Study in Methodology**

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## Abstract

This research investigates how the Eucharistic practice of the Armenian tradition can be brought into dialogue with the historical sources and contemporary theology. The originality of this study is that it applies an interpretative vocabulary for the Armenian Eucharist outside of conventional historical-philological and theologically oriented studies. The thesis uses a holistic approach, integrating textual reading, historical theology, and ritual studies to argue that Eucharist is a historical product, a specific ritual system, and a distinctive performative event with its own textual structure that is experienced every Sunday as a lived theology. As methodological tools the thesis applies an interpretative vocabulary of ritual, performance and historical theology for study of the Armenian Eucharist.

The present research is limited to the Armenian Vesting Ritual as a distinct liturgical unit in the larger Eucharistic event. As such, the main focus of the analysis is Vesting Ritual in its historical-textual, performative, and theological dimensions.

In the example of the vesting ritual, the study shows the contrast between the neo-scholastic theology and the actual textual, ritual, and performative approaches towards the Armenian Eucharist. The study argues that the Armenian Eucharist is a product of historical continuity, adaptation and innovation that has unpacked and unaddressed historical and theological issues.

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis embodies the results of my own work, that it has been composed by me and that it does not include work that has been presented for a degree in this or any other university. All quotations and the work and opinions of others have been acknowledged in the main text or footnotes.

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. What is the Eucharist?

The Eucharist is a central and crucial event in Christian discipleship. It is fundamental to the Church's identity and mission. Eucharist makes the Church and shapes her identity.<sup>1</sup> Eucharist is the assembly of the followers of Christ to remember Him through the blessing, breaking, and sharing of a loaf of bread and blessing and sharing of a cup of wine. This practice of blessing and sharing of bread and wine is a universal Christian practice. As such, different Christian traditions give a highly significant theological role to this practice. For instance, Eucharist is described by the Second Vatican Council as '...a sacred action surpassing all others...the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows...'<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the Lima Document of the WCC states that Eucharist is '...the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit... a proclamation and a celebration of the work of God...'<sup>3</sup> The fifth-century father of the Armenian Church, Yeghishe, commenting on John 6:35, says:

He who eats this bread with holiness and prepares himself for its worth will not miss the Kingdom of Heaven. Placing the immortal bread into the mortal hands, these hands were immediately immortalized. And by eating this, the man was completely spiritualized, with his breath, soul and body, and became a participant in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Khosrov of Andzev, in his tenth-century commentary on the Liturgy, compares the mystery of the Eucharist to the birth of Christ:

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<sup>1</sup> The idea that Eucharist is not a sacrament among the other sacraments but the center of the Church's whole sacramental life is widely discussed in the various Christian traditions. Zizioulas (2001), Schmemmann (1986), McPartlan (2006), Schmemmann (1998), 23-47, 135-151, Higton (2008), 311, Ratzinger (2004), Part III.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7, 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Yeghishe, 203.



The Holy Spirit sent by the Father, took flesh from Mary's womb and mingled and united it to God the Word who was revealed as one Son and God, born from her. The Holy Spirit acts in the same way in the church at the holy altar. Taking the bread, he unites it to the Son of God and likewise the cup to become truly Christ's body and blood.<sup>5</sup>

As these medieval and contemporary sources show, the Eucharist plays a crucial role not only in the practice of the Church but in the process of human salvation as well. The ecclesial and salvific importance of the Eucharist is stressed by theologians across different Christian traditions<sup>6</sup> and many of them argue that liturgical/sacramental theology has a distinct method and a style.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, some of them talk about the Liturgy as *Theologia Prima*.<sup>8</sup>

Liturgical Theology happens in the temple, not in a university office. Liturgical Theology is not written with ink, it is written with incense and temples and feasts and icons and sacraments and relics...Theologians are created over the course of their entire liturgical life...<sup>9</sup>

However, despite that Eucharist is widely discussed topic, in the field of liturgical studies, very little reference is made to how this sacrament is celebrated in the Armenian tradition as performance and the actual rite. The reason behind this neglected attitude towards ritual and experiential aspects of sacramental theology is partly because there is a general assumption among scholars and lay people alike that after all, we all know what Eucharist is. This habitual overfamiliarity with the Eucharistic sacrament is challenged by the flowering of research on the Eucharist and Liturgy in general during the past few decades.<sup>10</sup> Particularly the studies in

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<sup>5</sup> *Xosrov Anjewac'i*, 177-179.

<sup>6</sup> Schmemmann (1986), Wainwright (1980), Chauvet (2001), Lathrop (1999), Belcher (2011), Fagerberg (2004), Boersma (2009).

<sup>7</sup> Kavanaugh (1984), 73-96.

<sup>8</sup> Fagerberg (2004).

<sup>9</sup> Fagerberg (2016), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson (2010), Pitt, Alexopoulos, McConnell (2012), O'Loughlin (2015), Berger, Spinks (2016).

liturgical history have shown that historically and theologically we had only an impoverished sense of the rich complexity of rites and their theological meaning in the Church history.<sup>11</sup>

In the life of a practicing Christian, the Eucharist is such a familiar event that any proposal to define or describe it seems unnecessary. Attempting to do so, however, swiftly reveals that this very familiar core Christian practice is, in fact, a very complex reality. To put it simply, a Eucharist is a consciously undertaken gathering-event through which bread and wine are brought to the altar and are consumed thereafter. It is an event that involves special religious texts and certain particular actions; attending in person, saying particular words, singing particular songs. An Armenian Eucharist is such an event that takes place in an Armenian church, using specific actions and words, prescribed by rubrics and local customs. Therefore, a simple Armenian Sunday Eucharist is an activity/event of people gathering, eating and drinking that involves texts, actions, and performances. In other words, Eucharist is an activity as much as it is an experience. As such, certain experiences produce a certain theological vision, interpretation, and reflection. It is an argument of this thesis that a Eucharistic ritual itself is a most significant event and that the details of Eucharist, the rituals, the texts, the liturgical objects, and the particular people are where the meaning of the Liturgy can be found. 'Eucharist is an *ergon* before it is a *logos*'.<sup>12</sup> Eucharist is an action, an event before it is a theology. Any Liturgy is first and foremost enacted event with its implicit/explicit layers of meaning and purpose which becomes a conceptualized theory in a much later stage of its evolution.<sup>13</sup> However, during this evolutionary change, we often are left with diverse layers of structure, multiple and distinct identities that coexist in the liturgy. As a result, the *leiturgia*, the public action, inherits, what can be called, a *liturgical*

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<sup>11</sup> Bradshaw and Johnson (2012), Bradshaw (2004).

<sup>12</sup> O'Loughlin (2015), xvii.

<sup>13</sup> Bradshaw and Johnson (2012), Bradshaw (2004).

*nominalism*<sup>14</sup> when some liturgical elements/structures are cut off from their initial context and function merely as *decorations* in the Eucharist. In these cases, we have a shift of meaning of Eucharist itself, its basic structure, because meaning (at least in liturgy) happens through the structure. As Gordon Lathrop observes:

Meaning is an abstract idea. In fact, what people grasp in the liturgy, what they become part of, is a palpable order and pattern, an order of service. Habits of heart and mind then are formed in that pattern. The structure is also a key to meaning in Christian prayer.<sup>15</sup>

Taft takes a similar position when he uses structural analysis of liturgical units (in the examples of Litanies and Antiphonal Psalmody) to understand them more clearly: in their historical perspective and a possible renewal/reform liturgy in present. As he states, the purpose of this structural method is an understanding that happens through the structure.<sup>16</sup>

However, once we understand the logic of certain liturgical structures, the questions arise regarding liturgical text composition history, ritual performance and their theological significance. In this regard, it is important to take a not well-represented Christian tradition- an Armenian Eucharist- as case-study and explore what is an Armenian Eucharist as a sacramental performance and ritual practice.

## **1.2.The Scholarly Exploration of the Armenian *Patarag* (Eucharist)**

On a large scale, the scholarly exploration of Armenian *Patarag* began with the study of two Armenian monks of the Viennese Mekhitarist Congregation, namely Joseph Catergian and Jacob Dashian, published in 1897 in Armenian.<sup>17</sup> The volume contained several ancient Eucharists/Anaphoras which were translated into classical Armenian by the Armenian Church

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<sup>14</sup> This resembles with Schmemmann (1990), 115-128.

<sup>15</sup> Lathrop (1993), 84.

<sup>16</sup> Lathrop (1993), 190.

<sup>17</sup> Gatrchean (1897).

Fathers. These collections reflect different versions and stages in the development of the *Patarag* and various traditions borrowed and incorporated into the current Armenian Eucharist. Among these collections stand out the following liturgies:

1. The Liturgy of St. Basil (the oldest Armenian version).
2. The Liturgy of St. Basil (Byzantine version).
3. The Liturgy of John Chrysostom.
4. The Anaphora of St. Ignatius.
5. The Liturgy of Presanctified.
6. The Liturgy of St James.
7. The Liturgy of the Romans.
8. Anaphora of St. Sahak.
9. Anaphora of St. Gregory Theologus.
10. Anaphora of St. Cyril of Alexandria.
11. Anaphora of Athanasius.

In this monumental edition and research, two Armenian scholar-monks argued that the earliest Armenian Anaphoras have close links with the Greek text of Cappadocia, mostly with Gregory of Nazianzen.<sup>18</sup> The publication of this crucial study came to the attention of Frederic Conybeare, who gave a short review of it in 1898.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Catergian (1897), 219, 252, 336-340.

<sup>19</sup> Conybeare (1898), 705-707, Nersessian (2001), 757-758.

### 1.3. Eucharist Approached from Comparative Liturgy Perspective (Baumstark, Winkler, Feulner)

The publication of the Armenian *anaphoras* by Catergian-Dashian in 1897 was followed by other studies both by Armenian and European scholars. In Germany, during the first half of the twentieth century, we may single out Carl Anton Baumstark (1872–1948), who introduced new methods into the study of liturgical rites and ceremonies.<sup>20</sup> Baumstark elaborated a methodology for the comparative study of liturgies, conceiving of them as changing languages, and formulated several laws for the development of rites. Most of the contemporary scholars of Oriental liturgies, such as Robert Taft<sup>21</sup> and Gabriele Winkler<sup>22</sup> (who has studied the survival of ancient Syriac elements in the Armenian liturgy), in particular, have applied and developed Baumstark's methods in their work. A similar approach is adopted by the student of Winkler Hans Jürgen Feulner as well.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, we can observe that current scholarly literature on Armenian Eucharist, following mainly the comparative liturgy methodology of Baumstark, focused on critical editions of liturgical texts and their respective commentaries, as they seek to uncover the earliest layers of Armenian *Patarag*. These scholarly studies on the Armenian Eucharist have focused on the literary-critical analysis of Armenian Divine Liturgy's text, utilizing the comparative historical liturgical method of Baumstark. In assessing the Armenian Eucharist, these scholars drew on manuscripts and published documents to analyze the historical and literary evolution of the Armenian Eucharistic text. As a result, Armenian Eucharist was regarded as a completed and finalized text-document with its historical layers that can be discovered by the means of

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<sup>20</sup> Baumstark (1958).

<sup>21</sup> Taft (1995, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Winkler (1997), Winkler (1984), 93–113, Winkler (2008), 363–387, Winkler (2014), 35–48.

<sup>23</sup> Feulner (2001), Feulner (2010), 189-218.

comparative liturgical study. In this method, the main agenda was the discovery of *historical* and *philological* aspects of the Armenian Eucharist. However, the *theological* analysis and exploration were not explicit in these studies.

#### **1.4. Eucharist as a Conceptual Topic in the Armenian Manual Theology**

On the other hand, many twentieth century Armenian theology textbooks, produced in Armenia and Diaspora, were concern about the theological topics related to the Eucharist and their apologetic defense or critique.<sup>24</sup> Among such topics were

- Why Eucharist is a Sacrament?
- How is Christ present in the elements of bread and wine?
- When do the bread and wine become Body and Blood of Christ?
- What is the difference of Armenian understanding of the “real presence” from Catholic and Protestant one?

These manual approaches to the Eucharistic event were a product of cultural interchange between Armenians and the theologians of Continental European where the neo-scholastic method was a dominant theological style. In this case, the main focus was on theological ideas and concepts about Eucharist disconnected from its ritual logic, textual structure, the historical and performative context of meaning. Following to the classical debates in the West, Armenian Eucharistic theology has centered on metaphysical aspects of Christ's presence such as real/symbolic presence, Eucharist as a sacrifice, celebrant priest as a mediator between God and the people. As a result, there was a little attention given to the liturgical details and critical

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<sup>24</sup> A good example are Ter-Mikelyan (2005) and Galustyan (2014).

theological accounts of the Armenian Eucharist based on its liturgical units and ritual performance.

In these two approaches (comparative liturgiology and neo-scholastic manual theology), what turned out to be, is a reductive model of the Eucharist, when it is either a historical document with its linguistic and historical layers without theological implications and links with ritual context and performance or a theological concept without historical background and again disconnected from its ritual structure and performative context.

Christian liturgy is a very complex reality that includes multiple layers of meaning that can be unpacked by different methods of study including comparative and philological ones. However, within the framework of this approach, the specifically *theological* evaluation of Armenian Eucharist remains untouched. This study aims to remedy this gap. In particular, this dissertation proposes an alternative approach to the Armenian Eucharist than that presently operates in the field of Armenian Eucharist studies.

### **1.5. The Significance of the Study**

This research is the first study to investigate how the Eucharistic practice of the Armenian tradition can be brought into dialogue both with the contemporary theology and the historical sources. In this sense, this dissertation offers a new look at the Armenian Eucharist, starting from its contemporary performative description, followed by commentary from performance and ritual studies. Understanding the link between ritual, performance, and theology in the Armenian Eucharist will help to fully appreciate the complex nature of the Armenian *Patarag*. The importance and originality of this study are that it applies an interpretative vocabulary for the Armenian Eucharist outside of conventional historical-philological and theologically oriented

studies. The findings should make an important contribution to a renewed understanding of the Armenian Eucharistic theology based on its historical evolution.

### **1.6. The Limitations of the Current Study**

Due to practical constraints, this thesis cannot provide a comprehensive study of the Armenian Eucharist. Therefore, a full discussion of the Armenian Eucharist lies beyond the scope of this study. The present research is limited to the Armenian Vesting Ritual as a distinct liturgical unit in the larger Eucharistic event. As such, the main focus of the analysis is Vesting Ritual in its historical-textual, performative, and theological dimensions.

### **1.7. Personal Interest in the Research**

It is the personal experience of celebrating an Armenian Eucharist that has partly driven this research. As such, the present research is undertaken by a practitioner who is part of lived experience with a critical perspective on how the engagement with the historical sources of a particular liturgical tradition and the application of contemporary theological methods can enhance the appreciation of the Armenian Eucharistic event.

### **1.8. The Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is composed of two themed chapters. The first section of the study will give a general observation-description of the Armenian Eucharist, followed by the observed themes and categories. As such, the first chapter is concerned with the methodology used for this study. The chapter goes on by laying out the theoretical and methodological dimensions of the research and



looks at how Eucharist functions as an overfamiliar event, an ecclesial action, a confessional activity, a text, a performance, a bodily reality, a ritual, and a historical phenomenon.

The second chapter will apply the outlined general methodology for the Vesting ritual as a case-study. The main issues addressed in this chapter will be a) the textual aspects of the vesting, b) The interaction of text, performance, and purpose in the vesting ritual movements, and c) the act of blessing as a distinct liturgical dimension, its place in historical context and its current usage in the vesting ritual.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, I will propose critical theological implications/conclusions that can be drawn from our analysis. In each liturgical unit, I will look at what is happening in the text, how it is performed and how it is rationalized as theological interpretation. In the Appendix, the illustrations of the discussed places and objects are presented.

# CHAPTER I

## THE ARMENIAN EUCHARIST: OBSERVING THE RITE

### 1.1. Introduction

The chapter is organized in the following way. Following James White's suggestion that a historian of worship must start from the description,<sup>25</sup> I will begin by observing Armenian Eucharist as it is celebrated in a local Armenian Cathedral. In doing this, the chapter aims to record the phenomenon of Armenian Eucharist as it happens and occurs for ordinary worshipers in a local church, not as analyzed in Armenian theology textbooks. Although there are many online recordings of the Armenian Eucharist, the detailed written description of the Eucharist is still necessary because none of the present recordings shows the complexity and nuances between textual and performative aspects of the Liturgy.

While there are many ways<sup>26</sup> of describing what happens in the Armenian Eucharist, in this chapter I will use more neutral terms signaling the transition from one liturgical section to another. This approach allows me to make observations about the Eucharist without any pre-conceived theological paradigm and avoid initial normative judgments about the worship service. This method partly resembles White's approach when he suggests thinking about Protestant worship in the light of seven categories: people, piety, time, place, prayer, preaching and

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<sup>25</sup> White (1989), 15.

<sup>26</sup> One may categorize the Eucharist as *Liturgy of the Word* and *Eucharistic liturgy/Anaphora* that is common among recent Western liturgical scholarship. In the Armenian context, the Eucharist is generally classified into four main section: Preparation, Liturgy of Catechumens, Liturgy of Faithful and Dismissal/Final Blessing. The thesis deliberately avoids such categorizations because they impose already fixed theological system to Liturgy.

music.<sup>27</sup> Although White's method of liturgical description seems quite helpful in the assessment of Protestant worship, it is not suitable to apply the same pattern to Armenian Eucharist because its historically inherited complexity does not fully match with the categories that White suggests. The following description has no aim to locate or systematize the Armenian Eucharist in any accepted categories but to simply illustrate the complexity of the ritual and performance. An account of the Eucharistic liturgy can only ever be partial when presented simply as a history of texts. A liturgical text expresses ideas, offers an insight into such attitudes, but it is not often possible to read them as straightforward, normative statements.

Liturgy is composed primarily not of words whose task is to mean, but rather of words that function as acts in a structure that is one of action... They are of the nature of verbal gestures and thus cannot be understood outside the context of enacted rite.<sup>28</sup>

Liturgy is under the order of activities, not under the order of meaning.<sup>29</sup> The interest lies in how these two are related. Meaning is connected with words and written texts, however, if we understand liturgy primarily as an action within a certain structure and shape, the question would not be 'What does it mean' but 'What are we doing'. To answer this question, we will need first an account, a description of the liturgy itself, 'a structure that is not merely one of the meaningful words but rather one of structured action, intentional action, movement in a direction'.<sup>30</sup> To illustrate that I will give an account of a particular Armenian Eucharist observed in June of 2018. While a Eucharist thus described is instantly recognizable, it is not, in fact often actually described. Therefore, a detailed description will be followed by an elucidation of themes and methodologies that emerge from it, which will be investigated in the thesis.

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<sup>27</sup> White (1989), 16-21.

<sup>28</sup> McCall (2007), 76.

<sup>29</sup> McCall (2007), 76.

<sup>30</sup> McCall (2007), 76.

## **1.2. Observing the Liturgical Space: Eucharist at the *Etchmiadzin* Cathedral**

The Etchmiadzin Cathedral is located in the center of Vagharshapat city which neighbors with the Yerevan capital city. The cathedral is an integral part of Etchmiadzin's monastic complex that today is known as Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. As such, the Mother See functions and operates as headquarters of the Armenian Orthodox Church and as a residential seat of the Catholicos of All Armenians. Hence, the cathedral is situated in a semi-monastic and administrative environment, close to but not subjected to the urban residential areas of Vagharshapat city. Built in stone in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, this church replaced a preexisting pagan shrine, symbolizing the conversion of Armenians from paganism to Christianity.

Outwardly, the cathedral is quite ascetic as a massive cube surmounted by a faceted cone on a simple cylinder (See Illustration 1). With a minimum of ornament, the building is a solid stone construction. Inside, at the east end, there is the main altar which has semicircular and rectangular stage/bema. At the top of the stage is a high partitioned icon of the Virgin Mary with baby Jesus on her hands (Illustration 3). On top of these are four tall polished brass candlesticks with lit candles. On the south and north side of the main altar at the downstairs, there are two vestries. On the south-east and south-west corners of the building, there are two minor altars named after St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen the Martyr. The south-west altar of St. John the Baptist has an organ on its corner. Two columns stand at the center of the nave supporting the roof of the church. Between the columns in the midst of the nave stands another altar which is commonly referred to as the Altar of Descent (Illustration 4). The story behind this title is that the cathedral was built according to a vision that St. Gregory the Illuminator had after the conversion and baptism of the king Tiridates III in 301/302 CE. According to Armenian historian Agat'angelos, Gregory had a vision in which Christ Himself descended from heaven with a

hammer and hit the pagan shrine showing the place where the new church of the new faith should be built.<sup>31</sup> The *Altar of Descent* stands as a symbol and a reminder of this vision.

In the front of the nave, between the Altar of Descent and the main bema altar is the sanctuary which is kept separate from the nave by the railing. The chairs in the sanctuary are distributed into two arrays where the clergy sits. On the north near to the column stands the throne of the Catholicos-Patriarch and on the south column is the chair of the dean of the cathedral.

### **1.3. The People in the Cathedral**

It is 11:00 am. The cathedral bells ring. The dean, who is normally a bishop, comes from the sacristy, stands at the center of the sanctuary, pronounces a doxology to Christ and loudly recites the Lord's Prayer. He is vested in black exorason, black pointed *klobuk*, and a purple chasuble/*phelonion*. As a bishop, he is also wearing a *panagia*. Other clergy stand or sit on their seats according to their rank. The first line is occupied by bishops and supreme archimandrites,<sup>32</sup> then come archimandrites, hieromonks, and priests. Unlike the bishops and supreme archimandrites, archimandrites, and hieromonks wear black exorason, black pointed *klobuk*, and a black *phelonion*. Married priests wear only black exorason and a black *phelonion*. Deacons sit at the south corner of the church next to the priests. They wear black exorason and an orarion on their left shoulder. After the short bindings pronounced by the dean, the organ plays the music and the choir sings the hymn, *O Deep Mystery*. However, before the start of the hymn the celebrant priest or bishop enters the vestry to get vested with the help of altar servers.

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<sup>31</sup> Agat'angeghos, 37-50.

<sup>32</sup> This title in Armenian tradition is not a hierarchic rank but a scholarly and honorary one.

#### 1.4. Section 1: Vesting in the Sacristy

Vesting starts by reading verses from the Book of Psalms, followed by the main prayer of vesting. As a part of the preparation for vesting the celebrant and his assisting deacon recite verses from the psalm 132 in the vestry before getting vested.

Following the recitation of the psalm, the celebrant offers his private prayer of vesting.

Lord Jesus Christ, who are clothed with light as a garment, you appeared on earth in inexpressible humility and walked with men, becoming eternal high priest (Hebrews 3:1, 4:14) after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm. 110:2, Hebrews 5:10) and adorned your holy church, Lord almighty, having granted us to put on the same heavenly garment, make me also, your unworthy servant, at this hour to be bold and approach the same spiritual service of your glory, so that I may divest myself of ungodliness which is a garment of defilement, and that I may be adorned with your light. Cast away my wickedness from me and shake me out of my transgressions that I may be made worthy of the light prepared by you in the world to come.

Grant me to enter with priestly glory upon the ministry of your holy things together with those you have kept your commandments innocently, so that I also may be found prepared for the heavenly nuptial chamber with the wise virgins to glorify you (Matthew 25:1-13), Christ, who bear the sins of all. For you are the holiness of our souls and to you, o benevolent God, befits glory, dominion, and honor, now and always and unto ages of ages. Amen.<sup>33</sup>

Following this prayer, the deacon presents the celebrant with the various pieces of liturgical vestments. The celebrant blesses each piece before putting it on.

Having been fully vested, the celebrant recites the following short prayer:

My soul rejoices in the Lord for He has clothed me with the raiment of salvation and with a robe of gladness. He has put upon me a crown as upon a bridegroom and has adorned me like a bride with jewels, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is befitting glory, dominion, and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The text of described prayers and litanies are from the *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 19-20. However, some places texts are modified when they do not correspond either to classical Armenian or modern English style. The biblical references within the prayer are mine insertions and do not appear in the original text.

<sup>34</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 23. The prayer resembles to Isaiah 61: 1-11, 21-22.

The singing of the hymn *Khorhoort Khoreen* (O Deep Mystery) signifies the end of the vesting section.

### **1.5. Section 2: Procession Towards the Bema**

While the hymn is sung the deacon and altar servers form a procession to escort the celebrant to the center of the chancel of the sanctuary. By the time the hymn is over, the altar servers with the celebrant will be standing in the center of the chancel facing the altar. The celebrant will wash his hands reciting with the deacon verses from Psalm 26.

Following the washing of the hands, the celebrant loudly recites his first public prayer: ‘By the intercession of the Mother of God, O Lord, receive our supplications and save us’.<sup>35</sup>

### **1.6. Section 3: Confession and Purification**

The next act is the celebrant’s public confession of his sins. Facing the congregation, the celebrant extends his arms, saying:

I confess before God, before the holy Mother of God, before all the saints and before you, fathers and brothers, all the sins that I have committed. For I have sinned in thought, word, deed, and by all the sins that men commit. I have sinned. I have sinned. I have sinned. I beg you, ask God for the forgiveness of my sins.<sup>36</sup>

The congregation’s reply to the celebrant’s request is publicly recited by the presiding clergy (other than the celebrant) when he says:

May Almighty God have mercy on you and grant you the forgiveness of all your transgressions, of the past and the present. May He deliver you from those that are to come, keep you firm in all good works and bring you to the life to come, Amen.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 27.

<sup>36</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 27.

<sup>37</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 29.

After the public confession, the celebrant blesses the congregation, following which, the members of the community ask him to remember them in his prayers: ‘Remember us also before the Immortal Lamb of God, to which the celebrant responds saying, You will be remembered before the Immortal Lamb of God’.<sup>38</sup>

#### **1.7. Section 4: Entrance to the Altar**

This leads us to official and formal entry and an ascent of the celebrant and the altar servers to the altar/bema/stage, which consists of the recitation of psalms, petitions, and prayers. The celebrant is escorted to the altar by a procession of acolytes and altar servers, incensing and chanting verses from Psalms 100 and 43.

Psalm 100 is recited in the antiphon by two acolytes. Then after a short prayer by the celebrant, Psalm 43 is recited again in the antiphon, but this time by the celebrant and the incensing deacon who leads the procession as they ascend to the altar. Following the ascent to the altar, the celebrant loudly proclaims:

In this place of holiness and praise, the dwelling place of angels and purgatory of mankind, we worship and bow down with the awe before these God-presenting and resplendent holy signs and place. We bless and glorify Your holy, wonderful and victorious resurrection. And, together with the heavenly host we offer blessings and glory to You with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto ages of ages. Amen.<sup>39</sup>

As the celebrant concludes the prayer, the curtain of the bema is drawn to cover the altar. The congregation sits while a melody is played by the organist and a hymn is sung by one of the choir members.

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<sup>38</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 31.



## 1.8. Section 5: Prayer at the Bema and Presentation of the Elements

This leads to the actual preparation of the bread and wine to be used during the *Patarag*. Before receiving the bread and wine from the deacon, the celebrant says the prayer of St. Gregory of Narek offered to the Holy Spirit. Following the prayer, the deacon presents the unleavened bread and a pure wine (not mixed with water) to the celebrant. Making the sign of the cross over each of the elements, the celebrant blesses them and puts them in the chalice.

While blessing the bread, the celebrant prays, saying:

Remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is enthroned and sits on the throne not made with (human) hands. He accepted the death of the cross for mankind. Bless, praise and exalt Him forever.<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, the celebrant blesses the cup of wine, pouring it into the chalice while saying:

In remembrance of the redeeming economy of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, through the fountain of whose blood flowing from His side (John 19:34), all creatures have been renewed and made immortal. Bless, praise and exalt Him forever.<sup>41</sup>

Having blessed the bread and wine separately, the celebrant then places the bread on the top of the chalice, now filled with the wine, and continues praying:

Lord our God, who sent our Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly bread (John 6:31-35) and the food of the whole world, as a Savior, Redeemer and Benefactor to bless and sanctify us, bless now O Lord, what is being presented to You and receive it upon Your heavenly altar. As mankind-loving and benefactor remember O Lord, those who offer it and for whom it is being offered. Keep us also without condemnation in the priestly ministry of Your divine mysteries. For holy and glorious is the most honorable majesty of the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto ages of ages. Amen.<sup>42</sup>

After the prayer, the celebrant covers the chalice. He then recites verses from Psalm 93 with the deacon in antiphon. After the covering the chalice, the deacon incenses it while the celebrant blesses it, repeating the biblical words of Annunciation said by the angel to Mary: ‘The Holy

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<sup>40</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 37.

<sup>41</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 39.

<sup>42</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 39.

Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you' (Luke 1:35, ESV).

Following the blessing of the chalice and covering of it, the deacon takes it to the side niche, where it will stay for the duration of the Liturgy of the Word, until the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful. Having completed the preparation of Liturgy, the curtain is withdrawn. The congregation stands.

### **1.9. Section 6: Descending from the Bema to the Congregation, Procession and Incensing**

The curtain opens and the celebrant, carrying the censer, walks around the altar incensing it first, he is led by the incensing deacon who at this stage carries a hand-cross and a candle. The celebrant continues incensing as he comes down from the bema saying:

I offer incense before you, O Christ, for a spiritual fragrance. Receive it for a sweet-smelling savor into your holy, heavenly and intelligible place of offerings. Send down upon us in return the graces and the gifts of your Holy Spirit. We offer glory unto you, with the Father and Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>43</sup>

During the procession, the choir sings the hymn of the procession which may vary from one Sunday to another depending on the feast of the Sunday. The common is *Through the intercession:*

Through the intercession of Your Virgin Mother, accept the supplication of Your servants, O Christ, who with your blood has mad your holy church brighter than the heavens. And You ordained within her, after the example of the heavenly hosts, the ranks of apostles, of prophets and holy doctors. This day, we, the ranks of priests, deacons, acolytes, and congregation are gathered here offering incense before you, O Lord, as Zechariah did in the past. Accept from us our prayers with offerings of incense as the sacrifice of Abel, Noah, and Abraham. Through the

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<sup>43</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 41.

intercession of your heavenly hosts, maintain the throne of the Armenian kingdom ever unshaken.<sup>44</sup>

It is a practice that the members of the congregation kiss the hand-cross of the celebrant as he approaches them during the procession. They request his prayers, asking him to remember them in his prayers at the altar, by saying, ‘Remember us also in the presence of the Immortal Lamb of God’. To which the celebrant responds, ‘You will be remembered before the Immortal Lamb of God’.<sup>45</sup>

### **1.10. Section 7: Ascending to the Bema and Proclaiming the Official Start of the Liturgy**

As soon as the procession is completed and the celebrant ascends to the altar, the deacon says loudly *Bless Master*. The celebrant responds,

Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto ages of ages. Amen.<sup>46</sup>

The choir or the deacon, following the celebrant’s proclamation, chant the Introit. The text of the Introit may change based on the feast or the theme of the Sunday. For regular Sundays the Introit is *Monogenes*, the Only-begotten:

Only-begotten Son and the Word of God and Immortal Essence,  
Who became flesh through the holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin.  
You, that are unchangeable, became man and were crucified,  
O Christ our God, and trampled down the death by death.  
You, who are one of the Trinity, equal in glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
save us.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 43.

<sup>45</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 43.

<sup>46</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 43.

<sup>47</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 45.

The following is the text of the first prayer of the beginning of the Assembly recited by the celebrant:

Lord our God, save your people and bless your inheritance, preserve the fullness of your Church. Sanctify those who have come to greet in love the beauty of your house. Glorify us by your divine power and forsake not us who have put our trust in you. For yours are the might and the power and the glory unto the ages. Amen.<sup>48</sup>

Following the prayer, the choir sings the Midday Hymn which is preceded by verses from Psalm 93. It changes from one Sunday to the next depending on the theme of the Sunday and the music tone/mode of the day.

While the choir continues singing the Hymn, the celebrant inaudibly offers the Second Prayer of the beginning of the Assembly:

Lord our God, save your people, bless your inheritance and preserve the fullness of your Church. Sanctify them who have come to greet in love the beauty of Your house. Glorify us by Your divine power and do not forsake us who have put our trust in You. For Yours are the might, power, and the glory now and forever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Peace to all.

You who have taught us all to pray in common and with one accord and have promised to grant the requests of two or three agreeing together in your name, fulfil now the petitions of your servants as may be expedient for them, granting us in this world knowledge of your truth and in the world to come life everlasting. For you are God beneficent and you love mankind and to you is befitting glory, dominion, and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>49</sup>

The celebrant continues preparing for the Gospel book procession by holding the Gospel book in his hands and saying the following prayer inaudibly:

‘Lord our God, you, who have established in the heavens the orders and the hosts of angels and archangels for the ministry of your glory, make now the holy angels also enter with our entrance and serve with us and glorify with us your goodness.’<sup>50</sup>

At the end of the prayer the celebrant loudly says the final doxology:

‘For yours is might and power and glory unto the ages. Amen’.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 46.

<sup>49</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 47.

<sup>50</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 47.

### 1.11. Section 8: The Gospel Book Procession

After that, the celebrant presents the Gospel book to the deacon, who kisses it, receives it in his hands, elevates it and proclaims *proskhoomeh* (In Ancient Armenian version of the Greek word for attention).

In the meantime, the rest of the altar servers form a procession on bema led by the incensing deacon and the two acolytes, followed by the deacon carrying the Gospel book, as the choir begins to sing the Armenian Trisagion,

Holy God,  
Holy and Mighty,  
Holy and Immortal,  
That rose from the dead,  
Have mercy on us.<sup>52</sup>

At this point in the Eucharist, it is a practice that the reader of the Scripture (Prophets and Apostle) to come forward to the bema and kiss the Gospel book.

While the choir sings the Trisagion, the celebrant silently offers the following prayer:

Holy God, you who rest in the saints and are praised with the thrice-holy cry of the seraphim; glorified by the cherubim and adored by all the heavenly hosts, you, who have brought all creatures into being out of nothing, made man after your own image and likeness, and have adorned him with every grace of yours, and have taught him to seek wisdom and prudence, and have not neglected the sinner, but have laid upon him repentance to salvation. You have made us, your lowly and unworthy servants, worthy to stand at this hour before the glory of your holy altar and to offer the adoration and glory due to you. Lord, accept from our mouths, sinners as we are, the thrice-holy hymn and keep us by your loving-kindness; forgive us all our transgressions both voluntary and involuntary. Sanctify our souls, our minds and our bodies and grant that we may serve you in holiness all the days of our lives, through the intercession of the holy Mother of God and of all your saints, who through the ages have been well-pleasing to you.

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<sup>51</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 47.

<sup>52</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 49.

For you, O Lord our God, are holy and to you is befitting glory, dominion, and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>53</sup>

Following the singing of Trisagion, and as celebrant continues the silent prayer, the deacons lead the congregation in a set of supplications.

### **1.12. Section 9: Scripture Readings**

At the end of the litany, the celebrant loudly recites a short prayer, after which there is a Scripture reading. The readings are usually four: one from the Old Testament, another from a prophetic book, a reading from the epistles and finally one from the Gospels. While the books of the Old Testament and the Catholic epistles are always read from the chancel area, the Gospel book is chanted from the bema. Right before the chanting of the Gospel, the celebrant turns to the congregation and gives peace.

### **1.13. Section 10: The Creed**

At the end of the Gospel chanting the assembled faithful join the altar servers to recite the Armenian version of Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of God the Father, only-begotten, that is of the substance of the Father. God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten and not made; of the same nature of the Father, by whom all things came into being in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, took body, became man, was born perfectly of the holy virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. By whom he took body, soul and mind and everything that is in man, truly and not in semblance. He suffered and was crucified and was buried and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven with the same body and sat at the right hand of the Father. He is to come with the same body and with the glory of the Father to judge the living and the dead; of His kingdom, there is no end.

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<sup>53</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 49-51.

We believe also in the Holy Spirit, the uncreated and the perfect; who spoke through the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels; Who came down upon the Jordan, preached through the apostles and dwelled in the saints.

We believe also in only one catholic and apostolic [holy] Church; In one baptism with repentance for the remission and forgiveness of sins; In the resurrection of the dead, in the everlasting judgment of souls and bodies, in the kingdom of heaven and the life eternal.<sup>54</sup>

#### **1.14. Section 11: Prayer Following the Scripture Readings**

Following the public confession of faith, the deacon intones another set of petitions. While they chant the litanies and the choir responds to them, the celebrant silently says the following prayer:

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, great in mercy and abounding in the gifts of your beneficence, you, who of your own will did endure at this hour the sufferings of the cross and of death on account of our sins, and did abundantly bestow the gifts of your Holy Spirit on the blessed apostles; make us also, Lord, we beseech you, sharers in your divine gifts, in the forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit...'

When the litanies are over, the celebrant chants the rest of the prayer publicly:

'That we may be made worthy to give you thanks and to glorify you with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen'.<sup>55</sup>

The celebrant then turns to the congregation and gives peace. Traditionally in the Armenian Church, long prayers are written in two parts with peace blessing in between the two parts. This blessing in the *Patarag* usually introduces a small liturgical unit or dialogue that is repeated throughout the *Patarag* as well as during the daily services. The liturgical unit under discussion has the following pattern:

- The celebrant blesses the congregation saying *peace unto you all*,
- The congregation responds saying *and also with your spirit*,

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<sup>54</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 55-57.

<sup>55</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 59.

- The deacon invites all to worship God saying *Let us bow down to God* to which the congregation, prostrating, responds *Before you, O Lord*.

The celebrant continues reading the second part of the prayer audibly:

With your peace, Christ our Savior, which surpasses all understanding and speech, defend us and keep us fearless of all evil. Make us equal to your true worshippers, who worship you in spirit and truth; for to the most holy Trinity is befitting glory, dominion, and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>56</sup>

This prayer is followed by the proclamation, *Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ*, which is usually used to indicate the beginning or end of a new liturgical unit, section or service.

### **1.15. Section 12: Taking off Some Vestments of the Celebrant**

The deacon calls for the celebrant to bless the congregation saying, *Bless, Master*. To the deacon's request, the celebrant responds by blessing the congregation and saying *May the Lord God bless you all*.

In rubrics of the *Patarag* at the end of the Liturgy of the Word it is said:

'After this, if the celebrant is a bishop, he takes off his omophorion, his miter and his slippers. If he is a priest, he takes off his crown and his slippers'.<sup>57</sup>

The next section of the *Patarag* begins with the dismissal of catechumens. The deacon indicates this by saying:

Let none of the catechumens, none of the little faith and none of the penitents or the unclean draw near to this divine mystery.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 61.

<sup>57</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 61.

<sup>58</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 63.



Following the dismissal of the catechumens, the choir sings:

The body of the Lord and the blood of the Savior are laid up before us.

The heavenly hosts invisibly sing and say with unceasing voice: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts.<sup>59</sup>

At this point in the progression of the *Patarag*, the deacon calls to sing psalms of praise to God, saying ‘sing psalms to the Lord our God, readers, sing spiritual songs with a sweet voice.’<sup>60</sup>

### **1.16. Section 13: Procession on the Bema and the Transfer of the Elements**

Following the public invitation to sing psalms, the celebrant and the deacon, who will soon carry the chalice with the bread and wine, start reciting verses from Psalm 51 privately. At this time, the choir usually sings one of the hymns of the procession of the chalice, known as *Transfer of the Gifts*. The hymn sung on most Sundays addresses God saying:

You have filled your holy church, O God, with an angelic order. Thousands of thousands of archangels stand before you and myriads of myriads of angels serve you, O Lord. Yet, you were pleased to accept from mankind with intelligent voices the praises, holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts.<sup>61</sup>

After his private recitation of Psalm 51, the deacon approaches the niche, where the chalice (with the bread and wine) is kept to carry it to the altar. Meanwhile, the celebrant steps down from his place and stands in the middle of the bema awaiting the arrival of the chalice. With the open arms, he privately continues reciting Psalm 51. At this time, the deacon incenses the chalice in the niche and kisses it, while reciting Psalms 19:6, 68:33, and Habakkuk 3:3. He then takes the chalice out of the niche and elevates it in preparation for the chalice procession to the altar.

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<sup>59</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 63.

<sup>60</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 63.

<sup>61</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 63.

During the procession, two acolytes stand on both sides of the niche, facing each other, with noise-making fans in their hands. Each fan usually has a six-winged creature depicted on it, representing the imagery of the Seraphim and the Cherubim.

In a solemn procession, the chalice is carried around the altar to be brought to the celebrant.

At the same time, the celebrant silently prays to God, saying:

None of us who are bound by carnal passions and desires is worthy to approach your table or to minister to your royal glory; for to serve you is great and fearful even to the heavenly hosts. Yet through your immeasurable goodness, you, infinite Word of the Father, did become man and did appear as our high-priest; and as the Lord of all did commit to us the ministry of this priesthood and this bloodless sacrifice. For you are our Lord God, who rules over those who are of heaven and those who are of the earth; who sits upon the cherubic throne, Lord of the Seraphim and King of Israel; who alone is holy and dwell in the saints. I beseech you, who alone are good and ready to hear, look upon me, your sinful and unprofitable servant, and cleanse my soul and my mind from all the defilements of the evil one; and by the power of your Holy Spirit enable me, who have been clothed with the grace of this priesthood, to stand before this holy table and to consecrate your spotless body and your precious blood. Bowing down my neck to you, I entreat you, turn not your face from me and reject me not from among your servants; but make me worthy, your sinful and unworthy servant as I am, to offer these gifts to you. For you offer and you are offered and you receive and you give, O Christ our God; and we give glory to you, together with your eternal Father and the most holy and beneficent Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>62</sup>

Approaching the celebrant with the chalice in his hands, the deacon exchanges verse of Psalm 24 with him. The deacon bringing the chalice, starts the recitation of Psalm 24:7-10, saying:

Lift up your gates, O princes; let the everlasting doors be lifted up, and the king of glory shall come in.<sup>7</sup>

The celebrant faces the chalice and censes it reciting the following verses from the same psalm:

Who is the king of glory: The Lord strong in his power, the Lord mighty in battle?

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<sup>62</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 65.

The deacon replies:

Lift up your gates, O princes; let the everlasting doors be lifted up, and the king of glory shall come in.

The celebrant, once again, quoting from Psalm 24, questions the deacon saying:

Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts?

The deacon, handing the chalice to the celebrant, replies:

This is the king of glory!

The celebrant, kissing the veiled chalice, receives it and turning to the people and makes the sign of the cross over them, saying:

Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.<sup>63</sup>

Turning towards the altar, he places the chalice on the table.

The chalice procession is immediately followed by the second washing of the hands of the celebrant.

As soon as the chalice is placed on the altar, the deacons proclaim petitions:

Again in faith and purity let us stand with awe and pray before the holy altar of God; not with guilty conscience and offence, not with craft and cunning, not with deceit and wiles, not with doubt and not with little faith; but with right conduct, a single mind, a guileless heart, with perfect faith, filled with love, full and abounding in all good works. Let us stand in prayer before the holy altar of God that we may find the grace of mercy on the day of the revelation and the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>64</sup>

Having received the gifts, the celebrant places them on the altar and says the following prayer:

Lord God of hosts and creator of all things; you, who have brought all things into visible existence out of nothing; who also in your love of mankind have ordained us to be ministers of so awesome and ineffable a mystery; you, Lord, to whom we offer these oblations, accept from us this presentation and consummate it to be the mystery of the body and blood of your Only-begotten, and grant this bread and this cup to be for us, who taste of them, a remedy of forgiveness for our sins.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 67.

<sup>64</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 67-69.

<sup>65</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 67-69.

At this time, the choir finishes singing the hymn of the chalice procession, allowing the celebrant to audibly recite the final few lines of his prayer:

By the grace and the loving-kindness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with whom to you, O Father, and also to the Holy Spirit, is befitting glory, dominion, and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen. <sup>66</sup>

#### **1.17. Section 14: Greeting and the Sharing the Presence of Christ**

Now that the chalice is on the altar, the celebrant touches it and extends his arms resting them on the altar beside the chalice, with palms of his hands joined. The censing deacon approaches the altar, kisses the celebrant's hand and the altar and, turning to the congregation, proclaims:

Greet one another with a holy kiss. And you, who are not able to partake of this divine mystery, go outside the doors and pray. <sup>67</sup>

Coming down from the altar, the deacon exchanges the Kiss of peace with the representatives of the congregation who are standing in the chancel. Then, these representatives take the Kiss of Peace to the rest of the congregation whose members exchange it among each other. Meanwhile, the choir sings the hymn *Christ is revealed among us*:

Christ in our midst has been revealed;  
He Who Is, God, is here seated.  
The voice of peace has resounded;  
The Holy greeting is commanded.  
This Church has now become one soul,  
The kiss is given for a full bond.  
The enmity has been removed;  
And love is spread over us all.  
Now, Ministers, raise your voices,  
And give blessings with one accord To the Godhead consubstantial,

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<sup>66</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 69.

<sup>67</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 69.

While angels sing: “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of the hosts.”<sup>68</sup>

Following the exchange of kiss of peace, the deacon proclaims:

Let us stand in awe, let us stand in the fear of the Lord, let us stand straight, let us attend with good heed.

The congregation responds: ‘to you, O God’.

Then the deacon adds: ‘Christ, the spotless Lamb of God, offers himself in sacrifice’, to which the choir responds: ‘Mercy and peace and a sacrifice of praise’.

Then the celebrant makes the sign of the cross over people, saying aloud: ‘the grace, the love and the divine sanctifying power of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all’ (2 Corinthians 13:13), to which the choir responds: Amen. And also with your spirit’.<sup>69</sup>

It is at this stage that the deacon orders those in charge of the doors of the building to close them, saying: ‘The doors, the doors’. With this command, the deacon reaffirms that the doors of the church should be closed at this time and henceforth indicating that the main actual Eucharistic prayers are about to begin.

### **1.18. Section 15: Starting the Anaphora**

Following his orders to close the doors, the deacon continues his proclamation encouraging the faithful to lift up their ‘minds in the fear of God, with all wisdom and carefulness’. The congregation responds, saying, ‘We lift them up to You, O Lord Almighty’. The deacon adds, ‘And give thanks unto the Lord with a whole heart’. The choir concludes saying, ‘it is worthy and right’. Following this, the church prepare for the main prayer of the Eucharist-the Anaphora-which is read by the celebrant.

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<sup>68</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 71.

<sup>69</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 71.

The Anaphora leads to the section of the *Patarag* identified as the Pre-Communion rites, which includes Lord's Prayer, doxology and prayers.

The current practice is that the main portion of the Eucharistic prayer is read silently (either in his head or by whispering) by the celebrant. At the same time, the choir sings different hymns, the lyrics of which match the theme of the corresponding part in the Anaphora. In between the hymns of the choir and the petitions and proclamations of the deacons, the celebrant recites a line or two of the Anaphora aloud. This prayer, like many Armenian prayers, is typically divided into two sections with a peace-blessing in the middle.

The first section of the Anaphora is called the Preface and functions as an introduction to the main prayer. It starts with words of praise and glorification to God for having redeemed humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ, who in His coming to the world, assumed human nature through His birth from the Virgin Mary.

The commemoration of the Lord begins by recalling the events of His birth and ministry:

It is truly proper and right with most earnest diligence always to adore and glorify you, Father almighty, who did remove the hindrance of the curse by your imponderable Word, your co-creator, who, having taken the Church to be a people to himself, made his own those who believe in you, and was pleased to dwell among us in a ponderable nature, according to the dispensation through the Virgin, and as the divine master-builder building a new work, he thereby made this earth into heaven. For he, before whom the companies of vigilant angels could not bear to stand, being amazed at the resplendent and unapproachable light of his divinity, even he, becoming man for our salvation, granted to us that we should join the heavenly ones in spiritual choirs...<sup>70</sup>

As the celebrant comes to the final line of the prayer, he lifts up his hands and crossing them, adds the concluding line of prayer aloud, saying:

‘And in one voice with the seraphim and the cherubim, we should sing holy songs and make melodies and, boldly crying out, shout with them and say...’<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 73.

<sup>71</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 73.

The choir starts singing the hymn Holy, Holy, Holy:

Holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts;  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Blessing in the highest.  
Blessed are you who did come and are to come in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.<sup>72</sup>

The celebrant continues the Anaphora, moving to its second section known as Sanctus.

Silently reading this section, the celebrant says:

Holy, holy, holy are you truly and all-holy; and who is he that will presume to contain in words the outpouring of your infinite loving-kindness to us? From the very beginning, you did care for him who had fallen into sin and did comfort him in diverse manners by the prophets, by the giving of the law, by the priesthood and by the pre-figurative offering of animals. And at the end of these days, tearing up the sentence of condemnation for all our debts, you gave us your only-begotten Son, both debtor, and debt, immolation and anointed, lamb and heavenly bread, high priest and sacrifice; for he is a distributor and he is distributed always in our midst without being ever consumed. For having become man truly and without illusion, and having become incarnate, through union without confusion, through the Mother of God, the holy Virgin Mary, he journeyed through all the passions of our human life without sin and came willingly to the world-saving cross, which was the occasion of our redemption.

Taking the bread in his holy, divine, immortal, spotless and creative hands, he blessed it, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his chosen, holy disciples, who were seated, saying.<sup>73</sup>

This section of the Anaphora brings us to the events of the Last Supper. The celebrant recites aloud the words uttered by Christ over the bread and wine. Repeating Christ's actions, the celebrant makes the sign of the cross over the wafer bread, breaks it a little and elevates it, saying:

Take, eat; this is my body, which is distributed for you and many, for the expiation and remission of sins.<sup>74</sup>

The choir responds with Amen.

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<sup>72</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 75.

<sup>73</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 75.

<sup>74</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 75.

Then the celebrant silently recites:

Likewise taking the cup, he blessed it, gave thanks, drank and gave it to his chosen, holy disciples, who were seated, saying.<sup>75</sup>

Then the celebrant makes the sign of the cross over the chalice, elevates it, loudly saying:

Drink this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and many for the expiation and remission of sins.<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile, the choir sings the following hymn:

Amen. Heavenly Father, who did give your Son to the death for us, debtor for our debts, by the shedding of his blood, we beseech you, have mercy upon your intelligent flock.<sup>77</sup>

As the choir sings the hymn, the celebrant continues the prayer in silence, recalling Christ's redemptive suffering, life-giving crucifixion, and glorious resurrection:

And your only-begotten beneficent Son gave us the commandment that we should always do this in remembrance of him. And descending into the nether regions of death in the body which he took of our kinship, and mightily breaking asunder the bolts of hell, he made you known to us the only true God, the God of the living and the dead. And now, O Lord, in accordance with this commandment, bringing forth the saving mystery of the body and blood of your Only-begotten, we remember his redemptive sufferings for us, his life-giving crucifixion, his burial for three days, his blessed resurrection, his divine ascension and his enthronement at your right hand, O Father; his awesome and glorious second coming, we confess and praise.<sup>78</sup>

This section of Anaphora ends with the proclamation:

'And we offer to you yours of your own from all and for all'.<sup>79</sup>

Following this statement, the choir sings the following hymn:

In all things blessed are you, O Lord.  
We bless you, we praise you;  
We give thanks to you;  
We pray to you, O Lord our God.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 75.

<sup>76</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 75.

<sup>77</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 75.

<sup>78</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 77.

<sup>79</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 77.

<sup>80</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 77.



While the choir sings the hymn, the celebrant continues his silent reading of the Anaphora, completing the last section of its first half:

We do indeed praise you and give thanks to you at all times, O Lord our God, who, having overlooked our unworthiness, have made us ministers of this awesome and ineffable mystery. Not by reason of any good works of our own, of which we are always altogether bereft and at all times find ourselves void, but ever taking refuge in your overflowing forbearance, we make bold to approach the ministry of the body and blood of your Only-begotten, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>81</sup>

At the end of the first half of the Anaphora, the celebrant turns to the congregation and making the sign of cross over them, says, *Peace unto all*. To this the choir responds, *And with your spirit*. The deacon orders the congregation to worship God by bowing down. The choir responds, saying, *Before You, O Lord*. The singing of this response, in the current state of the *Patarag*, is melodically connected with the singing of the hymn that follows. That is why the choir pauses after singing the phrase, *Before You, O Lord*, and before continuing with phrase *Son of God*.

Son of God, who are sacrificed to the Father for reconciliation,  
Bread of life distributed among us,  
Through the shedding of your holy blood, we beseech you,  
Have mercy on your flock saved by your blood.<sup>82</sup>

### **1.19. Section 16: The Second Half of the Anaphora**

The celebrant then begins to read the second half of the Anaphora. The first section of the second half of the Anaphora is known as the Epiclesis. The wording of this section of the prayer asks God to send His Holy Spirit upon the faithful gathered and upon the bread and wine, to

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<sup>81</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 77.

<sup>82</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 79.

convert them and make them truly the body and the blood of Christ. Unveiling the chalice, and making the sign of the cross over the bread, the celebrant says:

We bow down and beseech and ask you, beneficent God, send upon us and upon these gifts set forth, your co-eternal and consubstantial Holy Spirit. Whereby blessing this bread, make it truly the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>83</sup>

The celebrant likewise makes the sign of the cross over the chalice, saying: ‘And blessing this cup, make it truly the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’.<sup>84</sup>

This is also repeated three times with the deacon censing the chalice each time the celebrant makes the sign of the cross over it. Finally, the celebrant makes the sign of the cross over the bread and wine together three times saying: ‘Whereby blessing this bread and this wine, make them truly the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, changing them by your Holy Spirit’.<sup>85</sup>

The celebrant then concludes the blessing saying aloud: ‘So that this may be to us all who draw near to it for acquittal, for expiation and the remission of sins’.<sup>86</sup>

## **1.20. Section 17: Pre-communion Rites: Litany and Doxologies**

The Anaphora is followed by a litany of petitions chanted by the deacons. The choir answers each petition with an appropriate response. Then the celebrant reads the following prayer that leads to the singing of the Lord’s Prayer:

God of truth and Father of mercy, we thank you, who have exalted our nature, condemned as we were, above that of the blessed patriarchs; for you were called God to them, whereas in

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<sup>83</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 79.

<sup>84</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 79.

<sup>85</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 79.

<sup>86</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 79.

compassion you have been pleased to be named Father to us. And now, O Lord, we beseech you, make the grace of so new and precious a naming of yourself shine forth and flourish day by day in your holy Church’.<sup>87</sup>

At this stage after the chanted little litanies by altar servers, the celebrant takes a hand-cross, turns to the congregation and by coming to the left part of the stage, delivers the sermon. It is usually based on the daily Gospel passage.

After the sermon, the celebrant turns back to the altar and loudly recites the last verses of the previous silent prayer: ‘And grant us to open our mouths with a cry of bold voice, to call upon you, O heavenly Father, to sing and say...’<sup>88</sup>

The congregation joins to the celebrant in chanting Lord’s Prayer. The celebrant concludes the prayer, saying, ‘For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory to ages, Amen’.<sup>89</sup>

This leads to the next stage of the *Patarag*, when the celebrant elevates the chalice, saying, ‘Holiness for the Holy’. Responding to the elevation of the chalice, the choir sings the following hymn:

The one holy,  
The one Lord,  
Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father. Amen’.<sup>90</sup>

While the choir sings the hymn, the celebrant places the chalice back on the altar and prays silently:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, look down from heaven, from your holiness and the glorious throne of your kingdom. Come to sanctify and to save us, you, who sit with the Father and are here sacrificed. Make us worthy to grant us your undefiled Body and precious Blood and through us to all the people.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 89.

<sup>88</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 91.

<sup>89</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 91.

<sup>90</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 93.

<sup>91</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 93.

This prayer leads to Doxology, ‘Blessed are You, Holy Father, True God,’ which is recited loudly by the celebrant. The choir responds confirming the doxology with the chanting Amen. The same is repeated for the Son and the Holy Spirit. The doxology serves as the liturgical finale of the public commemoration that leads to the actual distribution of bread and wine. The doxology is reinforced by the choir’s Hymn of Doxology:

Amen. Holy is the Father, holy is the Son, holy is the Spirit. Blessing to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>92</sup>

Once again, the Amen at the beginning of this hymn is a response to the third part of the celebrant’s doxology addressing the third person of the Trinity.

As the choir continues to sing the hymn, the celebrant bows down and kisses the altar, he then takes the bread in his hand, dips it into the wine, praying silently:

Lord our God, you have called us Christians after the name of your only-begotten Son and have granted us baptism through the spiritual font for the forgiveness of sins; and you have made us worthy to partake of the holy Body and Blood of your Only-begotten. And now we beg you, O Lord, make us worthy to receive this holy mystery for the remission of our sins, and to glorify you thankfully together with the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>93</sup>

### **1.21. Section 18: Turning to the Congregation and Invitation to Take the Communion**

At the end of the Hymn, the celebrant, turning to the congregation, elevates the chalice and for the first time proclaims it to contain ‘the holy and precious body and blood of our Lord’, saying:

In holiness let us taste of the holy, holy and precious Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who, having come down from heaven, is distributed among us. This is life,

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<sup>92</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 95.

<sup>93</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 95.

the hope of resurrection, expiation, and remission of sins. Sing psalms to the Lord our God, sing psalms to our immortal heavenly king, who rides in chariots of cherubim.<sup>94</sup>

Reminding the assembly that the chalice contains the actual body and blood of Christ, the celebrant invites the congregation to sing songs and psalms of praise befitting the heavenly King. Finally, this proclamation is also an invitation to come forward to receive Holy Communion.

### **1.22. Section 19: Closing the Curtain, Penitential Interlude**

Following the celebrant's invitation to sing psalms to God, the curtain is closed and the celebrant comes back to the altar. The choir starts to sing the 'Lord, have mercy' hymn, which is a solemn hymn of penance that asks God for peace of the world, the healing of sick and salvation of those who have fallen asleep in faith. It is usually sung antiphonically by the deacons and the members of the choir. During the hymn, some members of the congregation kneel as an expression of penance and petitions.

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. O All-holy Trinity, grant peace to the world. And healing to the sick, the Kingdom to those at rest. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Jesus, Savior, have mercy on us. Through this holy and immortal and life-giving sacrifice. Receive, Lord, and have mercy.<sup>95</sup>

### **1.23. Section 20: The Celebrant Behind the Curtain: Private Prayers and Private Communion**

While the choir sings the hymn, the celebrant takes the bread into his hands, breaks it into pieces and dips it into the wine, saying: 'The fulfillment of the Holy Spirit'.<sup>96</sup> Then the celebrant

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<sup>94</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 95.

<sup>95</sup> It is significant that while this penitential hymn is not included in Nersoyan's *Divine Liturgy*, it is sung in all Armenian churches during this part of the Liturgy. The hymn is present in the original composition of current Armenian Eucharist (*Pataragamatuyc*, 1880, 30).

<sup>96</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 97.

begins to read two silent prayers before the communion. Parts of the first prayer are for and on behalf of the Church. Other parts are for the celebrant himself, as his preparation before receiving Communion.

The conclusion of the first prayer is followed by the greeting, Peace to you all, which the celebrant does, making the sign of the cross towards the closed curtain.

The second prayer of the celebrant is attributed to John Chrysostom and it is a personal prayer, which starts with praise and thanksgiving to God. The prayer continues with the celebrant begging God to keep him in holiness. After the prayer, the celebrant seals himself with the sign of the cross. The rubrics in the celebrant's book of the *Patarag* adds:

And he asks forgiveness for his enemies and for those who hate him. And then with fear and trembling he tastes of the Body and drinks of the Cup.<sup>97</sup>

At the end of the private petitions, the celebrant receives Communion. The celebrant continues reading the prayers, while the altar curtain remains closed. Meanwhile, the choir continues singing the 'Lord, have mercy' hymn, followed by the deacon's call to sing psalms.

#### **1.24. Section 21: Congregation Prepares to Receive Communion by Singing a Joyful Hymn**

Responding to the deacon's call, the congregation stands singing the hymn 'Blessed is God' which is an anthology of verses from Psalm 118: 27, 34:8 and 148:1 with Christian doxological statements. Each one of these statements ends with the word, Alleluia:

Christ is sacrificed and distributed among us. Alleluia.  
His Body he gives us for food, and his holy Blood he bedews for us. Alleluia.  
Draw near to the Lord and take the light. Alleluia.  
Taste and see that the Lord is sweet. Alleluia.  
Praise the Lord in the heavens. Alleluia.

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<sup>97</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 97.

Praise him in the heights. Alleluia.  
Praise him, all his angels. Alleluia.  
Praise him, all his hosts. Alleluia.<sup>98</sup>

## 1.25. Section 22: The Congregation Takes Public Communion

Following the choir's hymns and after the celebrant's prayers, the curtain opens and the deacon invites the congregation to communion, saying:

With fear and faith come forward and receive communion in holiness. Say, I have sinned against God, we believe in the Holy Father, true God, we believe in the Holy Son, true God, we believe in Holy Spirit, true God. We confess and we believe that this is the living and life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that become for us propitiation and remission of sins. We confess and believe.<sup>99</sup>

While in some parish churches the whole text is recited out loud, in the Etchmiadzin cathedral only the first sentence of the invitation is said.<sup>100</sup> While it is not a normal practice in the Cathedral to make a public confession for the congregation, in many parish churches at this stage of Eucharist the public confession service is done. The original printed text of the *Patarag* also clearly indicates that.

It comes time for the actual receiving of communion. The celebrant comes forward, kneels and gives the pieces of unleavened bread dipped in wine to the members of the congregation. Usually, the clergy present at the *Patarag* would take the communion before the opening of the curtain, on the altar. In that case, the celebrant will put the bread into the clergy's hands and then will give the cup to drink the wine. While this clerical form of receiving communion is done at the altar, during the 'Lord have mercy' hymn, the lay form of receiving the communion is performed quite differently. Normally members of the congregation come forward to the stage in

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<sup>98</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 97.

<sup>99</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 101.

<sup>100</sup> In Nersoyan's version only the first sentence is included (*Liturgy*, 101).

a line. First come men, then women. The celebrant takes the piece of bread dipped in wine and puts in the mouth of the receiver, saying: *‘The body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ’*. Taking communion by hands is not a practice for lay people and is usually forbidden by the clergy.

If the number of people in the cathedral is huge, the celebrant is accompanied by two other priests, who give communion by the two sides of the stage with their chalices. Usually, they come to the stage during the ‘Lord have mercy’ hymn and take some parts of communion from the main chalice.

After the distribution of the Communion, the choir sings:

Our God and our Lord, has appeared to us.  
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.<sup>101</sup>

Following this, the celebrant makes the sign of the cross by the chalice, blessing the participants with words of Psalm 28:9, saying:

Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance; shepherd them and lift them up from henceforth until eternity.<sup>102</sup>

## **1.26. Section 23: After the Communion, Actions Behind the Curtain**

After this blessing, the curtain closes, so that the celebrant and the altar servers can clean the chalice and vessels used for preparing and serving the communion. The celebrant reads in silence two prayers of thanksgiving while washing the chalice with two deacons. The choir sings two hymns of thanksgiving.

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<sup>101</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 101.

<sup>102</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 101.



As the celebrant finishes cleaning and washing the chalice, the curtain opens. Holding the Gospel book in his hands, the celebrant prepares to come down from the stage, chanting verses from the prayer of Chrysostom, to each verse of which the congregation responds accordingly. The choir responds to the last verse of the prayer, singing, ‘Amen. Blessed be the Lord’s name from this time forth and forevermore’.<sup>103</sup>

### **1.27. Section 24: Final Prayers at the Chancel**

While the choir sings the hymn, the celebrant, carrying the Gospel book, kisses the altar and descends to the center of the chancel, escorted by the two acolytes and censing deacon and followed by the rest of the altar servers. The celebrant concludes the prayer of Chrysostom with a reference to Mathew 5:17, saying:

Amen, amen and amen, you are the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets, O Christ, our God, our Savior, who fulfilled all the economy willed by your Father. Fill us also with your Holy Spirit.<sup>104</sup>

This is followed by the Gospel reading, which the celebrant chants from the center of the chancel. Normally it would be John 6: 47-51, a passage, where Jesus identifies Himself with the bread of life. This Biblical passage reminds, resonates with and reinforces the Holy Communion.<sup>105</sup>

After the celebrant’s chanting of the Gospel passage, the deacon proclaims:

Glory to you, O Lord our God.  
Let us beseech the Lord by the holy cross  
That through it he may deliver us  
From sins and save us by the grace of his mercy.

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<sup>103</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 107.

<sup>104</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 107.

<sup>105</sup> In all printed versions of Armenian Eucharist the final Gospel reading is from John 1:1-14, not John 6:47-51.

Almighty Lord our God, save us and have mercy on us. <sup>106</sup>

The celebrant responds to this proclamation saying his final prayer:

Keep us, Christ our God, in peace under the shadow of your holy venerable Cross.  
Deliver us from a visible and invisible enemy.  
Make us worthy to glorify you with thankful hearts  
Together with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen. <sup>107</sup>

The choir concludes the Eucharist singing verse from Psalm 34:1: ‘I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall at all times be in my mouth’.

The celebrant dismissing the assembly makes the sign of the cross upon them and says:

Be blessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit.  
Depart in peace and the Lord be with you all. Amen. <sup>108</sup>

## **1.28. Section 25: Dismissal and Blessing**

After this blessing, the people come forward and kiss the Gospel book, saying, ‘May the Lord remember all your sacrifices’. The priest responds ‘May God grant to you according to your heart’. As the faithful leave the church, unleavened bread called mas is distributed especially to those who did not receive the communion. Mas in Armenian means ‘portion’. The person receiving it says ‘God is my portion forever’.

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<sup>106</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 108.

<sup>107</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 109.

<sup>108</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 111.

## CHAPTER II ASSESSING THE *LEITURGIA*: METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR OBSERVED THEMES

Several things are observable in the previous chapter account, themes and methodologies that will be introduced here and explored in a later chapter. The methodology of this study will be illustrated by the set of themes and topics that are commentaries/assessments on the previous descriptive account of the Armenian Eucharist and a way how the specific liturgical unit (vesting ritual) will be examined in a later chapter.

### **2.1. Eucharist as Overfamiliar Event**

First of all, it is a very familiar scene, at least for a practicing Armenian Christian observer. A familiar cast of characters and actions are assembled for a familiar occasion. However, while a Eucharist thus described is instantly recognizable, it is not, in fact often actually described. The Armenian theology textbooks normally do not venture into the detailed speech and action of a Eucharistic celebration. It is also true of factual accounts: people narrate what is particular with alacrity, but rarely describe the constants, what ‘everyone knows’ to be the case. It is hard to narrate a Eucharist because its familiarity makes it unnecessary to do so. This suggests that a Eucharist is widely perceived as what might technically be described as a *paradigmatic scene/phenomenon*,<sup>109</sup> which can be referred to and discussed without being precisely described. This is helpfully suggestive of another important feature of a Eucharist, as described. A *paradigmatic scene/phenomenon* is a concentrated depiction of theological visions. This suggests that a Eucharist is a sort of event that is a window on theology more generally and understanding

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<sup>109</sup> Needham, (1981), 89.

of the Church more particularly. Herein lies an example of the ‘insider/outsider problem’, that is whether religious or social phenomena can best be understood from the inside or the outside. On the one hand, the very familiarity of Eucharist stands as a warning against premature conclusions about what it might all mean. On the other, this familiarity is such that Eucharist is not just the occasion for the unconscious enactment of theological positions. Participants utilize the Eucharist in which they are involved, to make a quite deliberate display of what is important to them. Thus, careful observation, mindful of potential blind spots of the ‘insider’, and a complementary awareness that understanding what a Eucharist might mean is not only a concern of disinterested ‘outsiders’, are both very important.

## **2.2. Eucharist as an Ecclesial Action**

The Eucharist takes place in a church building and takes the form of a church service. The overall structure of the Eucharistic service replicates the shape regarded by the liturgical revisers as proper to acts of worship in general: gathering, a declaration of the intent of the service, ‘the Word,’ in both Bible reading and preaching and then some form of symbolic action as a deliberate, ‘spiritual’, though not disembodied response to the Word of God. Blessing and dismissal conclude things. Contained within this ritual structure are liturgical items of ancient provenance such as gathering, kiss of peace, confession, Eucharistic prayers, but also some later liturgical developments as new songs between prayers, secret or silent recitation of Eucharistic and other prayers, that developed independently in response to various theological concerns until brought together in current Eucharistic celebration. The celebrant priest presides throughout all this. While Eucharist is widely considered as an act of the whole people of God, in actual

practice it is the priest who does most of the talking and acting that are involved, the congregation is restricted to the hymns, responses to proclamations and the Lord's Prayer and the deacons or altar servers to their declarations. In all this comes the issue: what does Eucharist mean as theological issue and performative action? What is Eucharist as an act of worship? It is far from clear that all the participants (celebrant and congregation) would give the same answers to these questions. Here we observe the idea of 'dual-purpose ritual'<sup>110</sup> which serves different ends for different participants. As Davies shows, the dual-purpose ritual rests on an understanding that the perceptions and intentions of participants in an event are vital to any proper understanding.<sup>111</sup>

### **2.3 Eucharist in a Particular Christian Tradition**

The Eucharist is a Eucharist in the Armenian Church. The celebrant is not simply a priest, but the priest of this Cathedral, a defined geographical area within the Armenian Church. This means that this particular location has its way of celebrating and hence understanding the Eucharist, even though the standard text of Armenian *Patarag* is the same throughout the dioceses and parishes.

The Eucharist described, while indubitably Armenian, differs in some respects from other Eucharistic celebrations in Armenian churches. The candles on the altar, full recitation of litanies, a sermon, prayers, and litanies in classical Armenian, the celebrant descending from the altar to walk among the congregation at the beginning of the Eucharist stands to mark the church

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<sup>110</sup> Davies, (2002), 120.

<sup>111</sup> Davies, (2002), 120.

as one in the *Etchmiadzin* tradition.<sup>112</sup> So too does the blessing of the celebrant's vestments and prayers for the Armenian Government. Other Armenian *Patarags* might well omit all of these things. While litanies are very popular in Armenia and readings from the Old Testament are fixed in Armenian Lectionary, in practice, they become by no means obligatory. A less important, but a common variant of the Armenian Eucharist would include a Memorial service right after the Eucharist. While memorial service in practice is largely linked to funeral service, the inclusion of such service in the Eucharist would mark the occasion for remembering the significant departed members of that particular community, although in the silent prayers of the Eucharist there is a special request for the departed Christians. A particular Armenian Eucharistic celebration is an event in which a crucial point in the life of a lay people coincides with a point in the working life of an Armenian priest. The Armenian Church Eucharist is a phenomenon that exists in both cultural and theological space. The Eucharistic liturgy perhaps more than any other is a place where the particularities of the interaction of theology and culture are especially evident.

#### **2.4 Text and Performance as Liturgical Categories**

Today the Armenian Eucharist is 'a text-based activity',<sup>113</sup> it is done by using an authorized standard liturgical textbook, the *Pataragamatuyt* that has certain regulations and rubrics. However, this particular standard liturgical textbook is enacted in different settings with different performances, depending on local customs and theological conceptions. Although, there is a standard liturgical textbook, in practice the worship is not done in full accordance with the

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<sup>112</sup> The *Etchmiadzin* tradition does refer to any particular liturgical tradition like *Sarum* or *Ambrosian* rite but simply the cultural and geographical location where the customary performance of the Liturgy is distinctive.

<sup>113</sup> Day, (2014), 1.

regulation of this authorized textbook. Why? Bridget Nichols offers a certain explanation for this:

‘...worshippers enter into ritual action equipped with a certain pre-understanding which includes some knowledge of the propositions of the Faith, a grasp of the reasons for performing the rite...’<sup>114</sup>

Every person that comes to liturgy has a particular pre-conception of what is it all about and what is its purpose. The question is what shapes and informs that pre-perception of liturgy if it is not the text of the liturgy? To answer this, we need to understand what is liturgy as a text and how it is related to liturgical performance and its theological rationalization.

However, liturgy is not merely a text or performance or theological concept but a combination of all of them. As Bridget Nichols rightly observes:

Liturgy is both text and performance,-a text which happens in performance...it is impossible to reflect on one without also taking account of the other.<sup>115</sup>

The text never stands in its own right, it is always for performance and it always presupposes people (participants and/or observers) and particular space in a certain time and cultural environment.

In her *Reading the Liturgy*, Juliette Day offers principles of reading the Liturgy as a text. She identifies authorship, genre, narrative, intertextuality, language, and para-text as important categories and principles to interpret the Liturgy. For Day, the text is not simply printed and written words, but a discourse, meaning making message that is preserved and transmitted through material item:

Text is a product of an activity. It depends upon the discourse, message, the text is a means of preserving and transmitting the discourse.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Nichols, (1996), 257.

<sup>115</sup> Nichols, (1996), 20, 9.

<sup>116</sup> Day (2014), 6, 9.

Day's definition of text as a discourse, a product of activity is quite helpful for our study as it shows that the common divide between text (as printed or written thing) and performance (as gestures and postures) is inadequate. For Day, the textual interpretation of Liturgy means to answer two level questions. In the first level, the questions would be:

- What does the text say?
- What is its theology?
- What are its sources?

The second level is far more important and interesting as at this level we would have more methodological questions such as:

- How does the text say it? (Language, Narrative, Intertextuality)
- Who wrote the text? (Authorship)
- What type of book is this? (Genre)
- What is its purpose?

Day considers the second level questions using the principles of authorship, genre, narrative, inter-textuality, language, and para-text. In the following chapter, I will apply these categories to the Vesting ritual of the Armenian Eucharist to see what fresh vision and the new dimension can they offer for our liturgical understanding.

Describing the Eucharist as a performance is not an unambiguous statement. As Melanie Ross observes, 'Liturgical theology is a discipline in flux, continually seeking new ways to move beyond the study of written texts to access the dynamics of their actual performance'.<sup>117</sup>

The term 'performance' has come to be used to refer to the gestalt of social and cultural interactions that constitute distinctively human events.<sup>118</sup> Still, the notion of a Eucharist as a

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<sup>117</sup> Ross (2010), 186.



performance, in some sense, at least, is not an etic abstract idea with which to interpret the Eucharist. It is also how the participants in Liturgies see things. The introductory account of an Etchmiadzin Eucharist described it as a ‘performance’. In that case, performance is about actions and speech. While some rituals are shaped by texts, the text must be performed to be effectual. It is axiomatic that a ritual must be performed. It must also be performed in a particular way. A ‘Eucharist’ performed in a theatrical context, or as an anthropological exercise, is not a Eucharist. How something is performed determines what that thing is, with the ‘how’ including the context, the intentions of the participants as well as what is included in the actual performance and how that performance is structured.

Words and actions may remain the same from ordo to ordo pontifical, but the performance-the way in which they are done and the “meaning” of that meaning-undergoes an intentional interpretation by a sort of dramatic expansion.<sup>119</sup>

Each performance constructs new meanings and new interpretations. Eucharist is archetypal performance: the special framing of time and place and the adoption and performance of distinct roles are all important. Another aspect of the performance is enactment, how liturgy is performed. Performance is a verb: it is about action, dynamics whereas in the written/printed text it tends to be simply a static concept or a mental construct.

Liturgy is the anamnesis of the Trinity by means of the symbolic interplay of matter, gestures, and word enacted in time and space.<sup>120</sup>

McCall’s observation brings us to another locus of the performance, namely, materiality and embodiment.

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<sup>118</sup> Macdonald, (2013a), 1, Macdonald, (2013b), 31-42, Pierce (2013), 54-62.

<sup>119</sup> McCall (2007), 21.

<sup>120</sup> McCall (2007), 98.

## 2.5 Eucharist as a Bodily Reality

Performance is not about ideas or spirituality but about body and materiality. ‘Liturgy is uniquely a matter of the body’.<sup>121</sup> Eucharist is a concrete, embodied reality.<sup>122</sup> The physical presence of people is vital: not only the priest but also deacons, readers, altar servers and the choir. Eucharist ‘requires the physical presence of living bodies interacting in the same general space at the same time and passing through a series of prescribed motions’.<sup>123</sup> Like the material culture peculiar to a Eucharist, the church building, the internal architecture of the church, smaller artifacts like incense, candles, clothes, and vestments are likewise far from incidental.<sup>124</sup>

When Eucharist is described as primarily a performance, we start to see it as bodily and material practice with bread and wine, water and oil, clothes and architecture. If Eucharist is a performance these all bodily dimensions and material elements play a crucial role in our understanding of Liturgy.<sup>125</sup> The bodily character of the Liturgy directs to the importance of the posture and the gesture of the Eucharist as one of the key dimensions in the interpretation of the rite. Postures, gestures, actions, and speeches of Eucharist ‘encode both intended and unintended meanings...’<sup>126</sup>

The performative character of the Eucharist shows another important dimension of Liturgy, namely, that the old Platonic body/spirit and Cartesian mind/body dichotomy is not a relevant issue. If Eucharist is a performance with embodied actions and material elements, then Eucharist starts with materiality and *ends* with deep and real materiality, not with spiritualized quasi-

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<sup>121</sup> Searle (1992), 56.

<sup>122</sup> Grumett (2016), 17-102, 130-143.

<sup>123</sup> Searle (1992), 56.

<sup>124</sup> Irvine (2007), Grumett (2016), 17-70.

<sup>125</sup> Nichols and Loades (2012), 252–264.

<sup>126</sup> Grimes (1993), 39.

material reality. Eucharist is inevitably incarnational event, it ‘fleshes out’ the presence of the eternal Word of God and the ultimate logic of the material as well.

## **2.6 Eucharist as a Ritual**

The interplay of text and performance brings us to the other significant aspect of liturgy, that is, ritual. In some way or another performance and even the text can act as a ‘ritual instrument’.<sup>127</sup>

All ritual lives in the performance of it, but when a traditional rite ends, a participant is surrounded by a blanket of symbols, stories, icons, and other ritual fragments; texts and traditions reinforce the performance.<sup>128</sup>

Ritual studies can be regarded today as a distinctive discipline with its own content and methodological tools. Thanks to the engagement of anthropology and theatre studies, it is now understood that ritual and performance play a significant role in understanding human beings as distinctively ritualistic/liturgical animals. Ritual implies the community, it is not an isolated act that can be performed by a single person, at least without the audience (real or imaginary). In ritual, self and community/society ‘are dialectical pairs that presuppose and require one another’.<sup>129</sup>

Contemporary liturgical theology has found ritual a compelling idea with which to interpret liturgical texts and liturgical practice.<sup>130</sup> Among such potential interpretational sources, we may single out the J. Z. Smith’s work on the ritual that can be a helpful lens to assess Armenian Eucharist as a ritual. For Smith,

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<sup>127</sup> Petersen (2019), 370-385.

<sup>128</sup> Grimes (1993), 29-30.

<sup>129</sup> Grimes (1993), 11.

<sup>130</sup> Uro, Day, Demaris, and Roitto (2019).

...ritual is, above all, an assertion of difference...Ritual is a relationship of difference between 'nows'- the now of everyday life and the now of the ritual place; the simultaneity, but not the coexistence, of 'here' and 'there'...Ritual précises ambiguities; it neither overcomes nor relaxes them.<sup>131</sup>

Smith suggests to think about ritual as something that is closely connected with the place, e.g. sacred place. And place itself is not merely physical location but in a sense a kind of dimension that involves memory, recollection in terms of both individual and community.<sup>132</sup> The place is also linked with the human body since it is our body that orients us in space.

Smith uses historical, sociological and anthropological insights to make judgments on the evolution of ritual which are very significant and enriching. It is quite remarkable and stimulating how Smith challenges the traditional assumptions (in the case of Smith it is Mircea Eliade's paradigm) about ritual as a *reaction* to the sacred but not as a *generator* of the sacred.<sup>133</sup>

Ritual is not an expression of or a response to 'the Sacred'; rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual...The **sacra** are sacred solely because they are used in a sacred place; there is no inherent difference between a sacred vessel and an ordinary one.<sup>134</sup>

Ritual is far from a straightforward designation. Another significant contemporary discourse on ritual is the work of Catherine Bell as it offers interesting perspectives on the study of ritual. Bell's contribution is significant because she attempts to overcome thought-action dichotomy that is dominant in the traditional understanding of the ritual. According to Bell, the traditional discourse on ritual, implying 'a subordination of action to thought, actors to thinkers'.<sup>135</sup> It seems that this primacy of thought over action in ritual reflects the Platonic and the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy that Bell aims to criticize. She considers ritual in terms of practice. For

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<sup>131</sup> Smith (1987), 109-110.

<sup>132</sup> Smith (1987), 28-35.

<sup>133</sup> Smith (1987), 105.

<sup>134</sup> Smith (1987), 105-106.

<sup>135</sup> Bell (1992), 49.

Bell, the ritual is ‘...a term that is designed to represent the synthetic unity of consciousness and social being within human activity, to be a powerful tool with which to embrace or transcend all analogous dichotomies’.<sup>136</sup>

According to Bell, rituals do not *solve* social problems but express and translate social concerns into the terms of the ritual. *Ritualization* is a key concept that plays in Bell’s work as an effective power strategy.

Bell’s approach is relevant to the Armenian Eucharist context in which the binary oppositions of superior-inferior, here-there or us-them, and central-local play an important part in the discourse of the participants.<sup>137</sup> Eucharist is widely regarded as a ritual by the celebrant and by lay people. Additionally, to describe a Eucharist as ritual is useful because it suggests multiple connections with other rituals. A related concept to the rite of passage is the rite of intensification when ‘a group gathers to re-engage with their basic values’.<sup>138</sup> The thesis argument is that ritual is a necessary analytical category in the understanding of the Eucharist. It is the ritual of Eucharist that is one of the main concerns of this thesis. Eucharist is a universal Christian practice and ritual is a universal feature of the Eucharist.

In her recent article, Kimberley Belcher draws our attention to focus on liturgy as a ritual system.<sup>139</sup> Belcher uses Baumstark’s principles to evaluate liturgy in terms of the ritual system.

She analyses Liturgy as a ritual system under ten principles:

1. Systemic changes in the liturgy exist as changes to individual structural elements, which include aspects of embodied performances as well as texts.

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<sup>136</sup> Bell (1992), 76.

<sup>137</sup> Bell (1992), 125.

<sup>138</sup> Davies (2008), 9.

<sup>139</sup> Belcher (2019), 89-110.

2. Ritual behaviors come to feel 'natural' (indigenized) for participants when they echo systemically with postural, gestural, musical, verbal, artistic elements repeated throughout the ritual system and its surrounding culture.
3. Resemblances between different parts of the system are used to guide the interpretation of each ritual within a ritual system, and those interpretations are used to guide ritual development.
4. Ritual practices that are extremely important tend to become less like ordinary practices over time. On the other hand, this very distance can motivate the reintroduction of 'ordinary' elements to maintain the practice's normativity for the surrounding culture.
5. Every ritual system includes some variation, and shifts in the cultural and political context often change the dominant practice in the equilibrium instead of introducing new practices. Some practices, too valued or too entrenched to be restrained, are reinterpreted as the climate shifts.
6. The process of ritualizing inherently connects utilitarian actions with symbolic meanings.
7. Liturgy is normally remembered by the ritualized bodies that inhabit it. Other recordings, whether euhological collections, books of texts and rubrics, written descriptions, or more technologically sophisticated recordings, generally serve as a score that allows well-trained ritualized bodies to perform their role in a rite.
8. Novel technological aids or recordings for liturgy are usually adopted because there are not enough sufficiently-ritualized bodies that remember the performance. This may be the result of abrupt (imposed) changes to the ritual system, an influx of new initiates, or a socio-cultural crisis such as a war or epidemic.

9. Liturgical forms that require bodies to have long training in specific skills resist imposed change: gestures, performed restraint, artistic forms, and musical formulae, for example, are the least likely to be shifted by sheer force.
10. It is the entrance of un-ritualized bodies into a ritual system that provides the greatest potential for changes in the system.

Defining Liturgy as ritual allows us to evaluate it according to some ‘laws’, ‘regularities’ that exist across different traditions and cultures. The Belcher’s revised principles of Liturgy as a ritual system are quite helpful as they explain how and why some new liturgical elements that were introduced to a certain tradition preserved, while others disappeared. Based on Belcher observations, we may conclude that liturgy does not change by the simple insertion of new liturgical texts. To be regarded as ‘natural’ developments, these new liturgical elements/patterns should be practiced by people (principle 2), justified by certain explanations (principle 6) and have a well-supported environment (principle 8). Most important changes in liturgical logic happen when in the ritual system enter *un-ritualized bodies*, namely those who are not trained within the same previous liturgical tradition. Because liturgy is remembered and preserved not simply due to text and performance but by ritualized bodies that inhabit it, new, as liturgical history shows, sometimes alien patterns enter to previous practice.

## **2.7 Eucharist as a Historical Phenomenon**

Eucharist is a product of history, not a complete finalized unit but an inheritance that was shaped and formed by historical evolution and diverse interpretations. As Maxwell Johnson observes, the primary concern of the liturgical historian is the liturgical text, its historical evolution and interpretations of the liturgical tradition and contemporary experience of the rite,

its use or misuse is the secondary.<sup>140</sup> However, this secondary concern becomes primary when we understand that any historical liturgical text or interpretation at the end becomes today's experience with anachronistic and conflicting heritage. O'Loughlin describes this process as a series of displacements. The first displacement is the separation of the Eucharistic event from a real meal when Liturgy becomes a specific religious event apart from everyday eating and drinking activity. The second displacement was the shift of the Eucharistic focus from thanking the Father to the question of the nature of Christ's sacramental presence in the liturgical elements. The third displacement 'concerns the agent of the Eucharistic action'.<sup>141</sup> From the collective and ecclesial activity, Eucharist becomes the 'primary business of a specialist group...performing a sacerdotal action...'<sup>142</sup> The fourth displacement was considering Eucharist activity in the framework of the sacred/profane system instead of Incarnation (John 1:14) theology that makes the separation between sacred and profane realms no longer relevant religious and theological frame of reference.

History provides an explanation of where we have come from and reminds us of the Christian experience that has been valued and ignored in the past. It alone cannot decide any issue — to assume that it can is the essence of fundamentalism.<sup>143</sup>

History is about the past and it implies change. It is about memory but also an imagination through which certain liturgical history/tradition was written and presented. 'Imagination and imagining thus play important roles in how the past (history) is configured and described...understanding of the past would help with understandings of the present and possibly

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<sup>140</sup> Pitt, Alexopoulos, McConnell (2012), viii.

<sup>141</sup> O'Loughlin (2015), 193.

<sup>142</sup> O'Loughlin (2015), 193.

<sup>143</sup> O'Loughlin (2004), 597.



change the future'.<sup>144</sup> The thesis aims to look at how the Eucharist was imagined in the Armenian tradition and historical memory. Thus, this study will explore the Eucharist also from the historical perspective, that is, it will seek to find the explanation of certain liturgical units, elements, and practices looking to their past *valued and ignored* developments. As Robert Taft proposed, the purpose of doing liturgical history is not to recover the past, but to understand the present liturgy.<sup>145</sup> In this regard, our task is not to assemble historical data from the past, but '...to narrate the present story of the community-its living tradition-pointing out those events and themes that have contributed to its current shape and experience'.<sup>146</sup>

Taken together, this thesis uses a holistic approach, integrating textual reading, historical theology, and ritual studies to argue that Eucharist is a historical product, a specific ritual system, and a distinctive performative event with its own textual structure that is experienced every Sunday as a lived theology. In these diverse contexts appears the issue of the meaningfulness of Eucharist that needs to be addressed. To borrow Kevin Irwin's term, this study is an exercise in *critical liturgical theology*<sup>147</sup> when the question of *adequacy* and *liturgical logic* of the present Armenian rite is in play. In other words, the main concern of the thesis is what makes the liturgy a meaningful activity and experience. These categories and themes (textual reading, performance, ritual studies, and historical theology) will serve as models of reasoning and analysis within which selected liturgical unit of the Armenian Eucharist, namely, the vesting ritual will be examined.

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<sup>144</sup> Spinks (2016), 4-5.

<sup>145</sup> Taft (1997), 193.

<sup>146</sup> Pitt, Alexopoulos, McConnell (2012), vii.

<sup>147</sup> Irwin (1994), 68.

CHAPTER III  
THE ARMENIAN VESTING RITUAL:  
EXAMINING THE *ERGON* AND THE *LOGOS* OF THE RITE

**3.1. Introduction**

As Schmemmann once observed, while modern theologians are preoccupied with what happens to bread and wine, in the early Church the main question regarding the Eucharist was what happens to the Church and people?<sup>148</sup> For Schmemmann, the question of what is the main focus of the Eucharist is a crucial crossline between eschatological and ecclesiological understanding of the Church. Schmemmann's concern was the holistic understanding of Eucharist.<sup>149</sup> Does Liturgy refer to a cultic act of private groups or to those of the organized community, that is, the entire people, who realized that they shared collective memory and a single destiny?

To answer these questions in the context of Armenian Liturgy, the chapter will look at the interaction of words and actions of the celebrant at the beginning of Armenian *Patarag* known as the vesting ritual. The reasons for that are as follows.

1. The Armenian Vesting ritual is a less explored part of Eucharistic celebration<sup>150</sup> and it may give us important insights into some crucial questions such as when the Armenian *Patarag* starts as a liturgical event?

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<sup>148</sup> Schmemmann (1990), 19.

<sup>149</sup> Schmemmann (1990), 19-20.

<sup>150</sup> Generally, the Armenian liturgical features are presented/described briefly and alongside with other Oriental Orthodox Churches without further historical or theological investigation, see Chaillot, C., (2006), 262-263.

2. While the ritual vesting is a universal Christian practice,<sup>151</sup> it is significant to understand how it is enacted and interpreted in this particular setting of the Liturgy. More specifically, what theological vision does the liturgical text initiate? And does this vision resemble the ritual action and performance?
3. Vesting Ritual is a specific Eucharist experience for the celebrant. A vesting ritual is a liturgical unit that shows who is the celebrant within the Eucharistic celebration. The celebrant experiences the Eucharist himself as a rite of intensification in which his existing identity as the cleric is embodied, performed and thus consolidated. This includes the meta-narrative of Eucharist that is enacted in a Liturgy. Actively participating in the performance the celebrant finds himself within a particular storyline that consolidates his ministerial identity. Such stories justify changes in theological position and pastoral practice. Ordained status is marked in a liturgical context by the distinct dress. Wearing special liturgical vestments emphasizes that the celebrant assumes a sacramental function during the celebration of the *Patarag*, and it distinguishes him from the rest of the congregation. The celebrant dresses as a priest to perform a priestly function.

Because of the complexity of the Armenian Vesting ritual, these three questions are intertwined and overlapped in the analysis of the ritual.

Based on these considerations, in the following pages, I will analyze the specific structure and function of the vesting ceremony (and the prayers attached to them) that the celebrant and the altar servers conduct before the start of the actual Eucharist in the Sacristy. Specifically, the analysis would be threefold. First, following Juliette Day's proposed categories, I will look at

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<sup>151</sup> Mayo (1984), Norris, (1950).

some of the textual aspects of the vesting, namely the question of authorship, language, intertextuality, and para-text. Secondly, I will focus on the interaction of text, performance, and purpose in these movements by using the pattern of worship suggested by Edward Phillips,<sup>152</sup> namely, the *Telos*, *Ethos*, and *Order*. In the thesis these terms will refer to the following:

- *Order*: What is the specific order of rites in the vesting ceremony?
- *Ethos*: What set of theological beliefs/ideas and attitudes are introduced in this context?
- *Telos*: What purpose or vision does it propose for understanding the Eucharist in terms of celebrant's identity?

Thirdly, I will look at the act of blessing as a distinct liturgical dimension in the vesting service. In particular, I will place the act of blessing in its historical context to understand its current usage in the vesting ritual.

Applying insights from O'Loughlin and Taft's historical and structural methodology, in each liturgical unit, I will look at what is happening in the text and performance? How it is rationalized as theological interpretation? Based on historical and liturgical evidence do all these rationalizations/justifications make sense? What alternative reading can bring a fresh encounter with the Armenian Eucharist?

And finally, at the end of the chapter, I will propose some critical theological implications/conclusions that can be drawn from our analysis. During the discussion, Feulner's historical observations, mainly but not exclusively, will serve as referential and conversational points.

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<sup>152</sup> Phillips (2012). .

### 3.2 The Vesting Ritual: Overview and Limits of Recent Historical Research

The present Armenian vesting ritual consists of four movements which are:

- A Psalm of vesting,
- Prayer of vesting,
- Prayer over the vestments,
- Hymn of vesting.

In terms of the order first the deacons and altar servers are dressed without any particular prayer or devotional act attached to them. Depending on local church customs, all altar servers-readers wear the same *alb* that has little crosses on the backside of the cloth. The vestments of the deacon are *sticharion* (dalmatic), the *orarion* (deacon's stole). The deacons are distinguished by wearing an *orarion* on their right shoulder. The last person who puts on clothes is the celebrant.

Therefore let us consider these questions in their order and in brief to have a general outlook. Firstly, the vesting ritual as the text says that it is a preparatory text before the main part of the Eucharist composed of psalms, litanies, and prayers. In addition to the psalms, litanies, and prayers, the vesting ritual text has rubrics as background items that indicate how the Liturgy as the text is going to work out. Secondly, the source of the vesting ritual is mainly Nerses of Lambron's commentary on Liturgy from the twelfth century. This is the first place that we find the vesting ritual in the Armenian context. Although the current text in some cases differs from the one attributed to Nerses of Lambron's, in general, they are very similar in terms of order, structure, and content. Thirdly, the theology of vesting ritual is of Temple and priesthood. The Sacristy is regarded as a form of sanctuary, the celebrant is a priest in the likeness of Old Testament priesthood and the church building is a new temple.

Among recent research on the Armenian Vesting ritual is Hans Feulner's conference research paper presented at St Nersess Armenian Seminary in New York City.<sup>153</sup> Feulner's paper is quite remarkable and illuminating as it traces the historical origins and development of Armenian vesting as far as the historical evidence and the method of comparative liturgy permits. Feulner's research shows that the current Armenian Vesting ritual owes much to Roman Latin tradition that was introduced to Armenian Liturgy by the Armenian Bishop Nerses of Lambron (1153–1198). As Feulner puts it, aiming at a reunion with Byzantine and Roman Churches, Nerses first adopted Byzantine-Armenian traditions crystalized in the Armenian Liturgy of Chrysostom. However, when attempts for union with Byzantium failed and people in Cilicia turned to Rome for political and military support, Nerses of Lambron as a part of his liturgical reform shaped the Armenian ritual of vesting in a more Roman way.<sup>154</sup> Feulner's detailed historical analysis of each liturgical garment demonstrates the historical connection between Armenian and Roman vesting rituals.

However, this historical and philological research reveals little about the theological implications of such historical inquiry. In particular, it does not deal with the question on how these Armenian-Byzantine and later Latin traditions can offer a new vision and appreciative understanding of the central activity of Christian life when they are pieced together and confronted afresh by fundamental logic of Eucharistic activity. Until we understand how these historically inherited liturgical traditions effect and form the current perceptions of Armenian Eucharist (both by clergy and lay people), we cannot 'seek to make renewed, fresh contacts with the realities that are valued and explicated within that tradition'.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Feulner (2006), 93-118.

<sup>154</sup> Feulner (2006), 109.

<sup>155</sup> O'Loughlin (2015), 21.

From a lived theology perspective the aim of historical research is not a search for origins detached from its current conceptual perception and liturgical practice, but a fresh encounter with the reality of the Eucharist. As a result of this fresh encounter, we would have a historically informed and theologically sound appreciation of the authentic Armenian Eucharistic tradition.

### **3.3 Reading Vesting Ritual as a Text: Authorship**

Let us now analyze the Armenian Vesting ritual based on the conceptual framework proposed by Juliette Day. To follow Day, the Armenian Vesting Ritual as a text is a particular discourse within a larger liturgical landscape that today we call *Pataragamatuyc* (the Missal). However, as such, as a distinct discourse, the Vesting ritual has its specific features that are important to be explored. First of all, let us consider the authorship as a textual category regarding the vesting ritual and see how it might reveal some layers. The question of authorship of the liturgical text is difficult one as they were not produced by a single person but many people in some way or another contributed to its current form and shape. Despite this fact, however, in the Eastern tradition, we have liturgies the authorship of which is attributed to particular persons such as John Chrysostom, Basil of Caesarea, and St. James. In the Armenian case, as Gatrchian and Tashian have demonstrated, we had a Liturgy of St Gregory the Illuminator (the Armenian version of St. Basil liturgy), St. Sahak (an Armenian Catholicos in 4-5 cc.), John Chrysostom, St. Ignatius, Cyril of Alexandria and Athanasius among others. The variety of these names and the fact that the present *Pataragamatuyc* is a composition of all these different liturgies makes the idea of authorship more difficult and complicated in regard to the liturgical text. Authorship is closely linked to authority, and while we cannot make any definite conclusion whether and to what extent these liturgies correspond to those persons to which they

are attributed, we may say that behind all of these attributions stands an understanding of authorship as authority, that is, someone whose intentions, piety and ‘idea’ stand behind these texts. In the case of Vesting Ritual, we may say that it is the Armenian bishop of Tarsus, Nerses of Lambron who introduced the vesting prayers into Armenian Eucharist. However, this is not sufficient. While it is true that vesting prayers *initially came* to Armenian Eucharist thanks to Nerses of Lambron, it was not by his virtue that they *remained* in the Armenian *Patarag*. The present Armenian *Patarag* was produced and published by the order of Gevork IV, the Catholicos of the time in 1880. The publication was approved by the Catholicos based on the conclusion of a certain liturgical committee that gathered and composed the current text of Liturgy. Thus, the text of the present Armenian *Patarag* is a product of collaborative authorship. In this regard, Harold Love suggests a framework that is helpful in our analysis of authorship in relation to the production of contemporary Armenian Eucharistic text. In Love’s model, the authorship is a collaborative process with the following activities:

1. *Precursory authorship*. ‘A precursory author would be anyone whose function as a ‘source’ or ‘influence’ makes a substantial contribution to the shape and substance of the work...’<sup>156</sup>
2. *Executive authorship*. An executive author is the one who orders, devises, compiles and reformulates text for publication.
3. *Declarative authorship* where the author is the one who declares, approves, fosters or sponsors the text. S/he is not the producer of the text but has a definitive role in its production.

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<sup>156</sup> Love (2002), 40-49.



4. *Revisionary authorship.* In this stage, the text is corrected, edited or revised by the author.

Love's model of authorship shows that Armenian Eucharistic text went in the same way. Hence, the precursory author in the vesting ritual is undoubtedly Nerses of Lambron. The executive authors of present liturgical text may be regarded as the liturgical committee of the time that composed and proposed the present text for publication. The declarative authorship belongs to Catholicos of the day that blessed and sanctified the publication. And finally, the minor revisions and edition of present liturgical text operate as revisionary authorship. However, the revision of the text happens not only through print but by performance and experience as well, therefore any new performance of the Liturgy and its perception-experience by participants acts as a revision. Understood in this way, the celebrant and the participating people also act as revisionary authors bringing new dimensions and layers of meaning to Liturgy as a discourse. Given all this, in liturgical text-discourse, it is impossible to differentiate the author's initial intention and the later developments as the authorship itself is a complex issue. This brings us to consider how authorship and meaning are connected. As Day observes:

A liturgical text is not an 'intention-free zone', it will have been composed with a specific purpose in mind that cannot be ignored if the text is to have coherence in performance. The intended meaning of the prayer text determines its use and where there are choices to be made...that choice will be made with regard to the theological 'meaning', but the 'significance' will be expressed ritually or in the minds of the participants.<sup>157</sup>

Day's observations point out several significant issues regarding the Armenian Vesting Ritual. Firstly, vesting is a ritual act. As ritual animals, we speak about ourselves in the language of garments. Dress as ritual, stresses the importance of the body: 'Garments touch the body...they name the parts of the body touched by the vestments and use verses evoking the

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<sup>157</sup> Day (2014), 39.

actions of donning the garment'.<sup>158</sup> The cloth is a communication tool, identity indicator, and biographical object. Clothes embody and communicate values. It is not a neutral ritual of simple clothing, there is a specific theological meaning attached to it through its prayers and performance. Secondly, the theological purpose of the rite is closely related to the coherence of ritual performance, therefore theological meaning depends on the coherence in performance. Thirdly, the intended meaning or purpose of the rite is reflected in the text, however, given the fact of multiple and multilayered authorship is involved in the production of the liturgical text, it is more than possible that in the vesting ritual we may find not a single but multiple and sometimes mutually exclusive theological purposes. The ritual performance of the rite, in turn, may express the significance of one theological meaning of the rite by neglecting the other ones. The following pages will explore these possible exclusive purposes looking at the historical origin of vesting ritual, its distinct performative features, para-textuality and larger narrative within which it operates.

### **3.4 The Language of the Rite**

The language of Armenian Liturgy is Grabar, a classical Armenian that is not spoken by Armenians today. As such, Grabar is equivalent to Latin and Slavonic and is not regarded as a vernacular. Day identifies five functions of language in worship,

1. Communication of meaning
2. Edification
3. Articulating experience of God
4. Making present that of which it speaks

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<sup>158</sup> Miller (2014), 141, 81.

## 5. Identity formation.

Let us now see how these dimensions of language operate in the Armenian Vesting ritual. As the vesting ritual is done in classical Armenian, the communication of a meaning of rite is limited to a certain group of people, namely, the celebrant and the deacons who due to their seminary training know the language and may recognize what is happening in this specific context. Another feature of vesting ritual is hierarchical and gender-exclusive. There are no women in the vestry and the roles of who will speak what are clearly defined. As Day observes:

Who may speak in a liturgical event is theologically loaded, churches which have a sacramental priesthood insist that certain words and actions are reserved to ministers of an appropriate rank. The rubrics reflect this position.<sup>159</sup>

As for edification, the prayers of the celebrant act as moral cultivation and instruction both to the celebrant and the other ministers as they hear the prayers. Since prayers are addressed to God, they also articulate a certain experience and understanding of God or Christ himself. The language of the rite is Trinitarian starting with doxological praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although the first prayer of the celebrant is addressed to Christ, the rest of prayers are addressed to the Father through ‘our Lord Jesus Christ’ showing that God-talk in the vesting ritual is clearly done in Trinitarian terms. Among experiential themes in the vesting, we may single out gratitude, awe, sense of unworthiness before the holiness of God. Christ is experienced as ‘eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek’, the ‘holiness of our souls’ and the celebrant, due to his weaknesses and transgressions, is regarded as ‘useless servant’. Thus, the relationship between God and the celebrant is asymmetric: Christ is wholly perfect and the Other and the celebrant is weak and useless. Christ is not experienced as a Redeemer and Transformer of lives but as holiness, the distinct Other before whom man feels his unworthiness and useless.

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<sup>159</sup> Day (2014), 140.

The experience of liturgy through language brings us to the performativity of liturgical language. The ‘Speech-Act Theory’ of J.L. Austin<sup>160</sup> and Searle gives us a good framework to consider how liturgical language of vesting ritual makes present that of which it speaks. Vesting ritual speaks about Christ’s eternal priesthood sacramentally present in the person of the celebrant and through the blessing prayers that the celebrant pronounces over the vestments these statements become what they say, they perform and construct the celebrant as a priest who presumably will act *in persona Christi*.

This brings us to the function of a liturgical language as identity formation. The ritual significance of Eucharist is very different for clergy than it is for the congregation. From the clerical point of view, Eucharist is a ritual, specifically a rite of transformation, initiating bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. However, they experience the Eucharist, themselves, as a rite of intensification in which their existing identity as clergy is embodied, performed and thus consolidated. Clergy are themselves formed by the stories in which they find themselves. This includes the meta-narrative of Eucharist that is enacted in a Liturgy. Actively participating in the performance of what can, metaphorically, be understood as a story consolidates ministerial identity. The liturgical language of the vesting ritual justifies changes in theological position and pastoral practice.

Another significant feature of vesting ritual is that while overall Armenian liturgical language is a form of collective speech, in the vesting ritual we hear only an individual speech of the celebrant. It is not a speech of the group, the communication happens only between the celebrant and God/Christ.

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<sup>160</sup> Austin (1975), Searle (1969).

### 3.5 The Vesting Ritual as the Beginning of the Eucharist? *Ethos* and *Telos* of the Rite

The prologue and the entire vesting ritual take place in the sacristy, in the isolated area in the Church building that from the very beginning points out to the mystical perception of Liturgy's nature and character. As the rubrics indicate, when the priest wishes to 'present an offering' (=Eucharist), he shall put on vestments mystically in this way.<sup>161</sup>

Psalm 132 operates as a prologue to a larger ritual narrative in the vesting ritual. Psalm is recited only by the priest or together with the deacon. Unlike other services or rites, the vesting ritual does not start with '*blessed is our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*' formula or with Lord's Prayer recited by the celebrant.<sup>162</sup> This is sometimes justified by the fact that this doxology and Lord's Prayer recites the non-celebrant priest/bishop in public while the celebrant is putting on the garments in the sacristy.

This observation brings us to an important issue: the double or parallel celebration of the Eucharist, when some parts/people speak and act publicly, in the presence of the congregation, while other parts/people remain in the sacristy.

The double version of Liturgy in parallel but different actions and places (one in the sacristy, the other one in public) in ritual performance and practical perception creates at least double theological visions for Eucharist. For instance, these parallel different ritual actions raise the question: when does the Armenian Eucharist start? Is it in the vesting ritual as it indicates the Missal? Or by Christological doxology and Lord's Prayer publicly recited by the other priest/bishop? Or with the proclamation of the celebrant, *blessed is the kingdom of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...*? All these questions are legitimate and may be correct since all of them have

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<sup>161</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 17.

<sup>162</sup> For the standard use of Armenian Christological doxology in Armenian services see Winkler (1997), 93-113.

logical justification. The Eucharist could start from vesting because the rubrics in the Armenian Liturgical text (*Pataragamatuyc*) indicate that. However, equally the Liturgy may start from the Christological doxology and Lord's Prayer publicly recited by the other priest/bishop as in current Armenian practice this doxology and Lord's Prayer, in general, are the clear liturgical pattern that indicates/signals the start of new liturgical service or unit. Likewise, it is possible that the *Patarag* starts with the celebrant's proclamation: 'Blessed is the Kingdom of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for now and always and for ages of ages'. This answer also has a solid ground. Following the comparative liturgy methodology, we can say, that with this Trinitarian doxology start the other Eastern Orthodox Liturgies and that this liturgical pattern was also part of Armenian tradition that was replaced by vesting ritual. Another example of this approach we find in the *Pataragamatuyc* itself, when after the censuring the congregation and ascending to the altar, the rubrics say: 'the beginning or the Law/Order of Holy Patarag'.<sup>163</sup> Another popular and well-accepted position is that we have simply two basic starts for the Eucharist: for the celebrant, it starts from the vesting and for the congregation, it starts from the procession of the celebrant to the altar.<sup>164</sup> However, these multiple interpretations demonstrate that there is no single understanding of the Eucharist's nature since every interpretation implies a certain theological vision. If the *Patarag* starts from vesting the main theological emphasis is on the celebrant, it is what the priest/bishop is doing that matters liturgically, without him, it is impossible to imagine a Eucharist. On the other hand, if it starts from the public doxological proclamation of another clergy, while the celebrant is vesting in the sacristy (outside the

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<sup>163</sup> *Pataragamatuyc*, (1880), 8.

<sup>164</sup> This approach is exemplified in the website of St John Armenian Church in San-Francisco. USA. Accessed March 11, 2019. <https://stjohnarmenianchurch.com/walk-through-divine-liturgy#section2>

congregation!), this causes certain confusion about who is the presider of the Eucharist: is it a celebrant in the sacristy or the priest reciting the Lord's Prayer? In this case what kind of relationships does this double Eucharistic start generate between the celebrant and the congregation?

Taken together, these multiple interpretations are not simply a matter of liturgical management but have deep theological dimension because theology is not an intellectual exercise on theoretical concepts but a reflective process of making sense of certain Christian practices.<sup>165</sup>

### **3.6 Psalm 132: Theological Rationale and Rereading of the Psalm's Liturgical Use in the Vesting Ritual**

Having discussed the problems and complications between the vesting ritual and the interpretations of Eucharist's beginning, let us now consider Psalm 132. Psalm 132 is a text within a vesting ritual text. This inter-textuality generates new meaning in the vesting ritual that is different from the initial understanding of the Psalm. Each interpretation, context or usage creates a specific framework of meaning. The presence of Psalm 132 within the vesting ritual as text raises questions such as why and how this particular psalm was selected and incorporated in the ritual and how does it work upon the worshippers and influence their meaning-making. The insertion of certain text within the other text-discourse willingly or unwillingly directs the reader-participant or observer to make some connections and bring an extra dimension to the meaning of the event.

In the Book of Psalms Psalm 132 is closely linked with the collection known as Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134). The Hebrew name for this collection, *sir hamma alot* (*ma alot*

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<sup>165</sup> Higton (2008), 10-30, Williams (2000), 3-16, Marsh, Slade, Azaransky (2017), 1-22, 50.

probably means ‘steps’) suggests that these collections were used in pilgrimage. In Neh. 3:15 and 12:37 the word *ma alot* refers to steps leading down from the City of David. In 1Kings 10:1-20 and 2 Chron. 9:18-19, the word is used to refer to steps leading to the throne of the king. In Ezek. 43:17, it refers to the steps to the altar. While early Christian authors interpreted the Songs of Ascent in a mystical and allegorical way,<sup>166</sup> as a spiritual pilgrimage of the individual Christian, modern biblical scholarship offers us new important insights about the theological themes found particularly in Psalm 132. With references to the King David, Jerusalem temple and Ark of Covenant, the text implicitly resembles with 2 Sam. 6, the story of David bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. The psalm is structured as prayer (vv. 1-10) and response to the prayer (vv.11-18). The content of the first section is paralleled in the second. The central theological theme of the psalm is divine dwelling symbolized in the Ark of Covenant.

The psalm serves as a liturgy of memory and hope...divine presence brings blessing, provisions for life, and hopes for the future. The mediators of such blessings are the priests robed in the hope of salvation, of wholeness in life...Finding the resting place for YHWH is the central theme of the psalm, but it is the combination of Zion as YHWH’s resting place and the choice of David as the anointed one that provides the structure to support the theme.<sup>167</sup>

### **3.7 Psalm 132 as a Theological Rationale: Celebrant as a Functionary of Christ and an Aaronic Priest**

The start of the vesting ritual with this psalm clearly shows that the logic of the Armenian vesting ritual resonates with this theological narrative of divine presence and dwelling in the temple and priests as mediators of this divine presence. The refrain recited at the first place is the verse 16: ‘Let your priests clothe themselves with righteousness; and let your saints exult with joy,’ that indicates that the main theological focus in the performance of the psalm is the priesthood. However, while in biblical tradition, Psalm 132 refers to a larger and interconnected

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<sup>166</sup> Daley and Kolbet (2015), 1-8, Gillingham (2008), 24-35.

<sup>167</sup> Brueggemann, Bellinger (2014), 556-557.



narrative: dwelling of YHWH, the Ark of the Covenant as symbol of divine presence, David as a king who brings it to Jerusalem, Temple and mount Zion as earthly loci of God's presence and places of pilgrimage, its liturgical use/performance in the vesting ritual with emphasis on the verse 16 over the other part of the text suggests the entirely different referential framework and interpretation. In this case, the emphasis is on the priestly activity as mediation of divine presence. The notion of the Temple as a divine dwelling place is assumed to be the church building as a new temple and a celebrant as a new priest. This implicit notion is explicitly confirmed by the rubrics of some recent English publication of the Armenian *Patarag*, where we read:

Before the Divine Liturgy begins, the celebrant prepares himself spiritually by reciting psalms and preparatory prayers that ask the Lord to make him worthy to offer the Badarak. The priest then puts on his vestments. They are modeled after both the garments worn by Jewish priests in the temple [Ex 28] and the attire of kings because during the Divine Liturgy the priest mystically makes present to us Christ, who reigns with his Father in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>168</sup>

In the classical Christian literature, it is generally believed that Christian priesthood and priestly vesting, in particular, originates from Hebrew Bible, namely from the Aaronic priesthood and from the prescription that we find in the Book of Exodus (28:2-5).<sup>169</sup> The typology with the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron constitutes a theological rationale for Christological interpretation of the role of the celebrant. In the vesting ritual, we have a quasi-theological interpretation of the priest's intermediate role in the Eucharist as a functionary of Christ.

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<sup>168</sup> *Liturgy* (Findikian), 2.

<sup>169</sup> Bradshaw (2014), 1-5.

The inter-textuality of Psalm 132 ‘gives us an example of how meaning is generated or missed in the worship event and how authorial intention and worshippers’ interpretation may not always converge’.<sup>170</sup>

As we can presume from the psalm, the vesting prayers and their order, the main key character in the ritual is the celebrant priest that acts as ‘a functionary of Christ’.<sup>171</sup> This representation of Christ is based on certain exegetical and Christological interpretations. Particularly, following the theological logic of the letter to the Hebrews, the vesting prayers perceive Christ as eternal/true high-priest after the order of Melchizedek, who fulfills the incomplete sacrificial and intermediary role of the Old Testament priesthood (cf. Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 6:20).<sup>172</sup> In this narrative, the celebrant priest in some way participates in the eternal and the true priesthood of Christ. The vesting prayer which is the celebrant’s personal prayer to Christ indicates that connection:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who are clothed with light as with a garment...You became an *eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek* and have adorned your holy church.

Lord almighty, having granted us to put on *the same heavenly garment*, make me, your useless servant, also worthy at this hour when I make bold to approach the same spiritual service of your glory...Grant me to enter *with priestly glory* upon the ministry of your holy things...<sup>173</sup> (emphasizes are mine).

The presence of Hebrews 6:20 in the priest’s prayer shows how a certain biblical source operates in a very different way if it is placed in another context. If the Hebrews author’s purpose is to show the supremacy of Christ over the Old Testament temple, its sacrifices, and priesthood,<sup>174</sup> in the vesting ritual the text operates oppositely. The priesthood of Christ is the basis and justification of the celebrant’s priesthood because it is regarded as participation in the

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<sup>170</sup> Day (2014), 101.

<sup>171</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 267.

<sup>172</sup> Barker (2004), 4-5, 56-57, 70-73.

<sup>173</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 16.

<sup>174</sup> Lindars (1991), 58-101.

eternal priesthood of Christ. Therefore the celebrant's priesthood also in some way corresponds to the priesthood of Melchizedek and is permanent. The two scriptural texts (Psalm 132 and Hebrews 6:20) are chosen and placed in a specific context and order that do not follow their meaning and purpose in Scripture. This, in turn, affects how the worshippers read this particular biblical text. Due to their action in sacramental performance, the meaning of these texts will be limited and reduce to the purposes of specific liturgical context.

### **3.8 A Fresh Encounter: Para-text as a New Perspective**

Despite this explicit theological rationalization, some minor elements in the vesting ritual suggest another, more hidden liturgically structured layer that offers an alternative theological vision. Meaning in a liturgical text is generated not only through actual prayers, psalms or litanies but minor elements such as title, typeface, page layout, section divisions, and rubrics. All these elements constitute a para-text that effects on 'the reading' of liturgical discourse.

In regard to the psalm, verse 9 comes at the beginning with the heading *կցուրդ* (ktsurd). As Winkler shows, the Armenian word *կցուրդ* has the meaning of antiphon in the sense of refrain for the psalm.<sup>175</sup> Etymologically the word *կցուրդ* comes from Classical Armenian *կից* which is equivalent to English suffix *co-*, together. With regard to psalmody, it means the 'responsory' that used to be proclaimed by the whole community.<sup>176</sup> We may say that *կցուրդ* explicitly reveals the initial intended performative style and genre of the Psalm that is as prayer and

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<sup>175</sup> Winkler (1997), 509-512.

<sup>176</sup> Winkler (1997), 509-510.

response to that prayer. To follow Bradshaw,<sup>177</sup> the word *ἕγνιπῆ* implicitly shows that Psalm 132 liturgically is in the ‘cathedral’ style of prayer, where

- The psalm is sung (not recited) as praise by the whole congregation and responses to each psalm verse are done with a refrain, in this case with verse 9.
- It understands ministers of the worship as presiders over the community, not mediators between the divine and the rest of the congregation.

In terms of purpose or telos of the liturgical use of Psalm 132 we may conclude that although architectural setting (Sacristy detached from congregation) and performative style (two people reciting, not singing the psalm) draw our attention to the figure of celebrant as a priest-mediator in likeness of Old Testament and as participation in Christ’s eternal priesthood, the unnoticed but highly significant word-title in the rubrics implicitly and explicitly indicates that the telos of the psalm is communal participation in priestly ministry of Christ and imagines the church-congregation as a new temple and a new priesthood (cf. 1 Peter 2:5-9 and Rev.5:9-10).

The role of the celebrant cannot be interpreted simply in Christological terms (Christ priest and priest as representative of Christ), as further prayers over the individual garment and the content of a vesting hymn introduce another important theme in the theological landscape of the vestment ritual, that is the typological interpretation of garments. In the hymn, Adam is the original priest who is dressed in garments and put in the Garden of Eden. In this case, the garments represent human nature that was created in the image of God and restored/renewed through the passion of Christ and outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

This leads us to the next, in some way a strange unit of vesting ritual, namely, the deacon’s proclamation.

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<sup>177</sup> Bradshaw (1995), 76-78.

### 3.9 A Call for Prayer: A Common Practice in an Uncommon Context

Psalm 131/2 is followed by a short proclamation by the deacon:

Again in peace let us beseech the Lord. Let us ask of the Lord in faith with one accord that He may bestow on us the grace of His mercy. May the Almighty Lord our God save us and have mercy on us.

Although Feulner, finds that this exhortation is a later addition and more corresponds to the Armenian Morning office, he does not explain either historical or theological reasons behind this supposed addition from the Morning service to the Eucharist. Simple manuscript redaction error seems insufficient explanation in this case as this proclamation can be found in the Armenian Liturgy of Chrysostom as well as in the liturgical commentaries of Nerses of Lambron<sup>178</sup> and Yovhannes Arcisheci,<sup>179</sup> as Feulner himself confirms.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, this proclamation (in different variations) is a general exhortation that is used also in other liturgical services such as the Liturgy of Hours, Baptism, Funeral and Memorial services. Hence, the simple historical inaccuracy does not seem to offer sufficient explanation. What is far more significant is not the historical origin and the development of the exhortation but its performative function and theological purpose in the current Eucharistic celebration in general and in the vestment ritual in particular.

The exhortation pronounced by the deacon means that in common practice it is addressed to the congregation in general and not to the priest particularly. As the exhortation is addressed to the whole congregation, it is done in a loud and bold voice. Therefore, the actual performance of the exhortation (how it is done) corresponds to its content (what is said). In terms of

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<sup>178</sup> Nerses of Lambron, 5.

<sup>179</sup> Yovhannes Arcisheci, 58.

<sup>180</sup> Feulner (2006), 98.

performance, we may say that the exhortation is performed by the deacon for the congregation and in the manner/mode it is performed reveals its ritual meaning, significance, and purpose.

However, in the case of the vesting ritual, we observe some important inconsistencies. The exhortation is performed by the deacon in low voice. The text of the exhortation indicates that it is addressed to the congregation (sentence forms like ‘let us beseech, let us ask, upon us, save us and have mercy on us’ clearly demonstrate that the address is communal) but the actual absence of the congregation in the sacristy suggests and implies that it is addressed to the celebrant, which is not the case because if the deacon addresses the celebrant, normally we have the Master title, in the sentences like, ‘bless master’, before the initial blessing of the Eucharist, the Gospel reading, Kiss of peace and so on.

### **3.10 The Liturgical Vestments in the Meta-Narrative of the Liturgical Blessing**

Before dealing with these significant issues, it is crucial to look another sometime neglected dimension of vesting ritual, namely, the act of blessing. Although in the rubrics we are noted that the words the priest-celebrant pronounces over the garments are prayers, the same rubrics indicate that these are a specific type of prayers, a blessing prayers. In particular, we read in rubrics that ‘after the blessing, he (=celebrant) first puts the crown on his head, saying...’<sup>181</sup> Therefore before actual prayers, we have a little blessing service which is performed by the celebrant. Usually, it happens in this way: the assistant deacons will bring and present each garment to the celebrant with these words:

Again in peace let us beseech the Lord:

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<sup>181</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 3.

Receive our prayers, save us, and have mercy on us.<sup>182</sup>

In response, the celebrant will make the sign of the cross over the garment, saying:

Blessing and glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>183</sup>

This short dialogue form service is regarded as a blessing action.

To evaluate the ritual integrity of the vesting ceremony and the theological significance of each individual garment, we need to know how blessing operates in liturgical and ritual dimension. What is a blessing in liturgical terms? In the following pages the concept of liturgical blessing will be briefly discussed and the blessing formula of vesting is reassessed based on Armenian liturgical practice and the historical understanding of the term blessing.

### **3.11 The Liturgical Blessing: Reading Backwards, Looking Forwards**

Blessing is one of the most used but least understood liturgical terms. In everyday life the term is used on various occasions such as wedding (priest or parents/elders bless the bride and the groom), memory (an X person, blessed memory of him), food and in case of clergy even in writing ('every blessing', 'blessing and grace' at the end of the letter). The use of the concept in this manner presupposes a certain understanding of the word and also some myth-narrative, a vision, a perspective for reality itself. In this case, the term 'blessing' tends to refer to a 'religious', 'supernatural' or 'cultic' act or process in opposition to secular, mundane and natural reality. Therefore, the blessing is generally understood to mean a kind of supernatural injection into the sphere of natural reality. In this regard, the blessing is a supernatural and an isolated act that can be performed by a specific 'gifted' person/s. In theological usage, it is often associated

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<sup>182</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 21.

<sup>183</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 21.

with the ‘grace’ as opposed to the natural order of things.<sup>184</sup> Although this view is not explicitly expressed, it is implicitly assumed by the majority ordinary lay people and sometimes by clergy as well. However, though in routine usage the term refers to a ‘religious’, ‘supernatural’ or ‘cultic’ act, in the Judeo-Christian tradition the concept of blessing is defined and considered in a quite different way.

In the Jewish world for blessing comes the word בְּרַכָּה *berakhah* which is a formula or more likely a pattern of prayer that is recited in public or private. Most *berakhah* prayers begin with the words *Barukh Attah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam* (Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe). The function of a *berakhah* prayer is to acknowledge God as the source of all good and the ‘object’ of blessing is not a particular thing/person/event but God Himself. The ‘*berakhah*’ typically starts with the words ‘Blessed are You, Lord our God...’ Hence, the first thing in the blessing is the acknowledgment of who God is: the source of all goodness, the source of the Universe and our lives.<sup>185</sup> The *berakhah* prayers suggest that blessing starts from materiality, from material reality. The matter is sanctified and blessed, but it *remains* a matter. In the Jewish blessing prayers, the standpoint of blessing is not a dualism of matter and spirit, nature and grace, natural and supernatural orders, but a certain vision of reality that acknowledges the sacramental character/dimension of material reality due to its connection to primordial and fundamental Source. All of creation receives God’s grace, is permeated by the Spirit, participates in the divine and becomes whole through its relation with God.

This leads to another dimension of blessing that we find in the Gospel of Mark. In particular, in the scene of feeding the multitude (Mark. 6:31-44), we read that Jesus took the five loaves,

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<sup>184</sup> For recent Nature-Grace debate see Grumett (2015), 123-146, Swafford (2014), Milbank (2005).

<sup>185</sup> Bradshaw and Johnson (2019), 12-14.



looked up to heaven, blessed (Greek *εὐλόγησεν* and Armenian *օրհնէաց*, Mark 6:41) and broke the loaves. In this scene for blessing comes the Greek word *eulogy* from which we have Latin *benedictio* and English benediction, speaking well. However, in the scene of feeding 4000 (Mark 8:1-9), when Jesus blesses loaves, we have an interesting verb shift. While in most English translations we have the same *gave thanks* version, in Greek and Classical Armenian translation we have Greek *εὐχαριστήσας* and its Armenian equivalent *զնիացաւ* (Mark 8:6). And at the Last Supper these two words for blessing: *εὐλόγησεν/օրհնէաց* and *εὐχαριστήσας/զնիացաւ* are brought together in the blessing of bread and wine:

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after *blessing* (*εὐλογήσας*), he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body. Then he took a cup, and after *giving thanks* (*εὐχαριστήσας*) he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it (Mark 14:22-23, NRSV).

The *berakhah* prayer takes the form of *eucharistas*, thanksgiving and this biblical passage traditionally stands as a scriptural basis for the Eucharist, the Christian thanksgiving meal.<sup>186</sup>

Therefore, Christian blessing, based on its original Jewish *berakhah* prayers and Gospel narratives, embodies such concepts and ideas as an acknowledgment of God the Creator of Universe, thanksgiving for His mighty acts and invocation/request to continue His redemptive acts also among us here and today.<sup>187</sup>

Based on these basic historical Judeo-Christian understanding of blessing, Andrew Davison, in his book *Blessing* suggests that we think about this phenomenon in terms of thanksgiving, praise, and recognition of who God is.<sup>188</sup> In more technical terms a liturgical blessing is composed of *Anamnesis*: acknowledging and remembering who is God and what He has done in the past and *Epiclesis*: Asking/calling on (Greek *epikaleo*) God to act or more specifically to

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<sup>186</sup> Bradshaw (2008), 1-23, O’Loughlin (2015), 156-157.

<sup>187</sup> Talley (1976), 115-137.

<sup>188</sup> Davison (2014), Part 1.

send his Spirit to do the same thing today and now. To take this forward it is helpful to think about what a Christian blessing involves, presupposes and implies. Blessing involves thanksgiving that is gratitude, praise that is benediction, which in itself implies an acknowledgment of God's identity and nature, who is God and what He has done and will do.<sup>189</sup>

It is quite significant that the same Anamnesis and Epiclesis liturgical pattern is embedded in the Armenian prayers. For instance, in the blessing prayer of blessing for grapes we read:

O Lord, Almighty God, infinite Father, uncreated, immortal and self-existent, who didst create all things from nothing; who on the third day of Thy creation didst command the earth to bring forth various fruit-bearing plants to supply nourishment for the needs and existence of animal life.<sup>190</sup>

This anamnestic part of the prayer proceeds to the following statement

Therefore, O Lord, as in thy first creation Thou didst bless the good, now likewise bless the first fruits of this present year, these bunches of grapes which are donated to thee according to the custom of the ancient priesthood of Aaron.<sup>191</sup>

Another example is Water blessing prayer in which God is addressed as the one who is strong and does works of wonder.<sup>192</sup> This quite long prayer tells the story of the creation, how God made heaven and earth and everything out of nothing. After creating everything, on the last day of the creation, He created man from the dust and made him alive by giving 'Your all-holy breath'.<sup>193</sup> And then the text continues by remembering the fall of the man and the first sin ever committed against God. Although God closed the doors of the Paradise in front of men, He did not forsake us, for at the end of the time He sent His Only-Begotten Son to find the lost sheep and to reopen the gates of the Kingdom. Through His Incarnation, the Son of God became man, without sin, to restore the fallen nature of the human being and to return us where we belonged

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<sup>189</sup> Davison (2014), Part 1/1

<sup>190</sup> *Blessing of Water*, p. 2.

<sup>191</sup> *Blessing of Water*, 2.

<sup>192</sup> *Blessing of Water*, 2.

<sup>193</sup> *Blessing of Water*, 3.

to be. He came and He called everyone to come back from darkness to light, from death to life.<sup>194</sup> Then the celebrant asks God to come upon this water through his Holy Spirit and to cleanse them for the welfare of His faithful children, *‘for the healing of the sick, for the salvation of souls and bodies’*.<sup>195</sup> The Incarnation transforms not only human life, but the material world as well and matter itself becomes a vehicle of God’s salvific power for healing, for the salvation of human beings. The expression ‘for the salvation of souls and bodies’ is not an accidental one. It indicates a holistic approach of blessing services that rejects any dualism of body and soul, spiritual and material. Christian blessing starts with materiality, with the material world and its elements: water, fruits, oil, trees, etc. These material elements are placed in the context of salvation history and the liturgical anamnesis takes form in salvation history: Creation, Fall, Incarnation, Christ’s death and resurrection, and Second Coming/Parousia.

To put it together, Christian blessing in the examples of Armenian blessing orders does not mean a transfer of power or a ‘consecration’ but is marked by the double strand of thanksgiving and beseeching or in more technical terms of Anamnesis and Epiclesis.

A thing or person is ‘blessed’ by gathering that thing or person verbally into the story of God and holding that thing or person verbally under the freedom of God for the future.<sup>196</sup>

This brings us to another level of understanding of blessing that it is not a ‘religious’ ‘supernatural’ or ‘cultic’ act but a transformative process, ‘an ongoing reorientation’ (Lathrop) in which participants are experiencing a world, a cosmos in an entirely new way.

To bless God- that is to thank Him- is to see the world as God sees it and in this act of gratitude and adoration-to know, name and possess the world.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> *Blessing of Water*, 4.

<sup>195</sup> *Blessing of Water*, 1.

<sup>196</sup> Lathrop (2009), 55.

<sup>197</sup> Schmemmann (1998), 15.

### 3.12 A Blessing Formula or a Simple Litany?

The evidence from these studies suggests a number of important implications for the liturgical blessing of Armenian Vestments. The observations so far suggest a need to rethink and reread the liturgical blessing of vestments. In particular, if a Christian liturgical blessing presupposes a certain pattern, how can the short dialogue form blessing service at the beginning of the vesting be regarded as a blessing action? Interestingly, the same short dialogue form blessing act is used also when the priest/bishop is supposed to bless the incense during the Liturgy of Hours.

This inconsistency between the general liturgical pattern of blessing and the specific liturgical act found in the vesting ritual can be explained and clarified if we consider the historical origins of this short dialogue form of prayer-blessing and its application in Armenian liturgical practice. In this case, the work of Taft on structural analysis of liturgical units is quite helpful as it gives a significant insight into the problem we are dealing with. Taft uses the structural approach to Liturgy to explain certain liturgical parts.<sup>198</sup> Taft finds that liturgy has a certain structure, a form that operates by its own 'laws'. Taft argues that in order to understand liturgy we need to examine these common liturgical frameworks. He looks at Litanies and Antiphonal Psalmody in Byzantine tradition as case studies. For the purpose of the thesis, I will focus on Litanies as they suggest a substantial implication for understanding the Armenian short blessing act found in vesting ritual and the Liturgies of Hours. In an analysis of the Litany, Taft shows that in different liturgical traditions (mainly Latin and Byzantine) there are certain common litany types/units that have a similar structure. This structure can be presented as follows:

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<sup>198</sup> Taft (1997), 187-203.

- Diaconal invitation to prayer (*Oremus*): In peace let us pray to the Lord
- (Silent prayer)
- Concluded collect by presbyter/bishop.<sup>199</sup>

In this pattern the deacon addresses to the congregation, the congregation in response as priestly people pray to God and the celebrant addresses a prayer-collect in the name of the congregation. The *Oremus* functions as an invitation or expression of intention to pray. The word ‘peace’ in some forms of *Oremus* resonates with the following stage of the pattern: silent prayer.

As Taft argues, the evidence shows that this liturgical pattern of Litany is present across different Christian traditions (Rome, Alexandria, Syria, and Byzantium) that confirms his initial proposal that Liturgy as its own inner structure and laws.<sup>200</sup>

Taft concludes his analysis of the Litanies with a reflection on further implications of his methodology:

The initial and indeed sufficient purpose of such analysis is simply intelligibility. But this understanding of structures can have broader implications. Not only can it provide paradigms for the reading of obscure texts and the reconstruction of debased remnants into their original shape; it can also help one identify an organic rhythm and theology of community prayer, ministerial roles, and so on, underlying the ancient structures and their literary forms.<sup>201</sup>

Taft’s analysis of the Litany gives a number of implications for the Armenian Vesting ritual.

Firstly, his structural analysis method clearly demonstrates how effective can be an interdisciplinary approach to liturgy (in this case a linguistic approach) and how it can reveal new layers in the study of Liturgy. Secondly, Taft’s argument that liturgy has common laws and structure means that any liturgy and the liturgical unit can be investigated by this method.

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<sup>199</sup> Taft (1997), 193-194.

<sup>200</sup> Taft (1997), 191, 195.

<sup>201</sup> Taft (1997), 196.

Thirdly, in the context of this thesis this method generally and insight from Litany studies can shed a light into the obscure text of Armenian short dialogue blessing act.

However, while Taft effectively applies insights of structural analysis to liturgy, it is far more significant to understand how material bodies, liturgical spaces and historically inherited texts such as litanies may create unique moments of performance and how each new performance may create a new theological meaning. Due to the historical contingency of the liturgical ritual, this new theological meaning is not always consistent with the *organic rhythm and theology of community prayer* and might be a break and a liturgical irregularity. As a result, *ministerial roles* also may change and take new unexpected theological interpretations. Paul Connerton observes that in theological interpretation understanding comes from the application.

In theological interpretation, the application is an integral element of understanding... The religious proclamation cannot be understood purely as historical documents.<sup>202</sup>

We move on now to consider the short dialogue formula's liturgical nature that is accepted to be an act of blessing. Based on Taft's work and conclusion on the liturgical pattern of the Litany, we can say that most probably this Armenian short dialogue formula is a liturgical irregularity: a Litany changed into a short blessing formula. A piece of strong evidence for this is that the same short formula appears almost in all Armenian services that do not indicate any blessing setting but rather are regarded as either the beginning of the service (in case of Liturgy of Hours) or simply as doxological statements. For instance, at the beginning of the Evening Prayer we have the following structure:

Priest: *I have called upon God and He has heard me in the evening, in the morning and at midday.*

Deacon: *I waited upon my God and I set my eyes upon the Savior, Who delivers His servants and saves them. (Ps. 54:17-18)*

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<sup>202</sup> Connerton (1989), 97.

Priest: *Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;*

Deacon: *Now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*  
*And again let us in peace beseech to the Lord*

Priest: *Blessing and glory Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;*  
*now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*<sup>203</sup>

After this initial opening of the service two deacons recite Psalm 85. However, in the rubrics of the Daily Prayer book before the Psalm, we find *Peace to all*. The same structure is found at the end of the Psalm when after the short prayer (*Glory to You, God, Glory to You for all things*), we have the same dialogue form litany followed by *Peace to all*.<sup>204</sup> It is difficult to say how and why this pattern is present in the Evening Prayer in this particular section that in current practice makes no sense. One explanation for that may be that originally there was a prayer after the Peace which will strongly resemble with Taft's suggested model of Litany. Although, currently we do not have strong evidence for this assumption, however, the fact that this short dialogue form pattern is in the Evening Prayer without any references to blessing of a particular item, strongly supports the idea that in the vesting ritual this dialogue form is not a blessing formula but a Litany transformed (through insertion and special performance of the celebrant and the deacon) into a short blessing model.

The reason for this transformation can be traced from *Patarag* itself. After the initial Trinitarian doxology recited by the celebrant at the bema, the deacons start to proclaim: 'Again in peace let us beseech the Lord. Receive us, save us, and have mercy on us. Bless, Lord'. To

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<sup>203</sup> *Jhamagi'rk*, 377.

<sup>204</sup> *Jhamagi'rk*, 379.

this, we have the response of a celebrant: ‘Blessing and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen’.<sup>205</sup>

However, after this we have the celebrant’s *Peace to all*, kneeling and a collect which is a different move in pattern compared to the formula found in the vesting ritual. This liturgical pattern of giving peace, an invitation to kneeling and a collect strongly resonates and confirms Taft’s argument about the liturgical structure of certain Litanies. It is quite interesting that after the standard invitation form in the *Patarag* context, we have an addition to the deacon’s proclamation: *bless master*. Although today in practice the collect in this structure is regarded as an opening prayer, Khosrov Andzevaci in his commentary on Divine Liturgy<sup>206</sup> explicitly states that this prayer originally was a collect designed for the possessed before their dismissal from the Liturgy. This evidence suggests that while originally the actual blessing was a collect-prayer of the celebrant for certain catechumens, lately, the integrity of this pattern was lost, the collect prayer was omitted from some services but, due to a strong memory of the pattern, the initial dialogue form remained and was regarded now in itself as a form of blessing.

While this historical inquiry seemed explain the original liturgical pattern of the Litany, the actual and current application of it in a form of performance gives an entirely different understanding and perception for the blessing of vesting in general and individual garments in particular. In other words, despite the fact that historical evidence demonstrates liturgical irregularity in the individual elements of vesting ritual, the actual performance of this rite supports a certain theological interpretation, namely, that blessing is now regarded as an added quality that gives a new status to the celebrant as an Aaronic-type priest.

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<sup>205</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 21.

<sup>206</sup> Khosrov Andzevaci, 25, cf. Xosrov Anjewac’i; 106.



Based on these observations, we may state that all of the evidence and studies reviewed here support the hypothesis that although the structural form and parallel use of the short dialogue act show that originally it is a form of Litany, the actual performance (Deacon bringing the vestments to Priest, making the sign of the cross on the vestments) of this act creates and gives a new theological meaning to the idea of blessing as added and injected new quality on one hand and to the celebrant presbyter/bishop as sacerdotos/priest in Old Testament sense. This, in turn, suggests a certain model for Eucharist which in itself is problematic as it allows confused multiple interpretations based on a particular performance of the celebrant.

We may conclude that although the rubrics and performance of the vesting ritual indicate a certain ‘blessing’ dimension through which the celebrant becomes ‘holy’ by putting on the sacred robes, the absence of typical blessing pattern (anamnesis and epiclesis) used in other Armenian blessing services and the historical origin of the blessing formula used in the vesting ritual (which turns up to be a litany!) question and challenge the quasi-theological rationalization of celebrant’s identity as *‘a functionary of Christ’*.

### **3.13 Clerical Vesting: Enacting Power and Virtue**

As Feulner has shown the strong Latin influence on Armenian individual garments, it is important to look at how these established, canonical vesting prayers as *textus receptus* fit into a larger system of current vesting ritual.

Among recent research on Medieval clergy vesting the work of Maureen C. Miller is worthy of consideration as she gives us significant insights not only into the historical but also theological peculiarities of clergy clothing. In her study Miller the origins and the development of clergy vesting from 800-1200 c.. Miller’s work is highly important because Nerses of

Lambron introduced the Latin vestments into the Armenian Rite at the beginning of the twelfth century. Hence the theological and practical reasons for that introduction-experiment may overlap or resonate with the developments that took place in Europe at that time.<sup>207</sup> As Miller shows, the sophisticated vesting ritual of the clergy had a number of factors. Among them are the exegesis of Exodus 28:3-5, the collaboration of bishops with royal power and emergence of the special role of the clergy and allegorical interpretations of individual elements of clerical liturgical garments aimed to cultivate ‘a virtuous celebrant’.<sup>208</sup> As a result of this process ‘what the medieval clergy developed was a language of clothing claiming holiness and power’.<sup>209</sup> The study of Warren Woodfin has shown that the same dialectic of liturgy and power was in Byzantium as well.<sup>210</sup>

We may observe the same triple factors in the Armenian context. Nerses of Lambron was living in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, at that time an independent and flourishing Armenian kingdom, a strong ally of the Crusaders and a bastion of Christendom in the East. Economically thriving, Cilicia was a focus of the Armenian state and culture serving as a crossroad between East and West. Nerses of Lambron himself had a royal origin. His father was a lord of Lambron, Oshin II, and the nephew of the Catholicos Nerses IV (1166–1173). Although having a royal assent, however, Nerses of Lambron was educated at Skevra monastery under the supervision of his uncle Nerses Shnorhali and Grigor Tgha (Gregory IV the Young, Catholicos from 1173 to 1193).<sup>211</sup> Ordained in 1169 at the age of 16 by his uncle, he was consecrated Archbishop of Tarsus in 1176. These factors gave Nerses certain ecclesiastical and political

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<sup>207</sup> Miller (2018), 280-293.

<sup>208</sup> Miller (2014), 80.

<sup>209</sup> Miller (2014), 3.

<sup>210</sup> Woodfin (2012).

<sup>211</sup> Hacikyan (2002), 458.

privileges and opportunities. Driven to renew and reform the ecclesiastical environment of the Armenian Church at the time, he sought to bring the best version of Christian life he could find. Not surprisingly he came across the development of clergy clothing that was happening in Europe. It is quite significant that in his commentary of the Liturgy Nerses of Lambron explains them mainly in terms of glory and power:

The Church is a temple and house of God...and priests were appointed as princes before God...it is unworthy for a prince to enter the palace without due clothes and appear in the prince's glory and there to exercise the Lord's office... And the Lord's office is the holy sacrifice that the priest exercises with proper clothes...However, only those who are pure in heart may clothe and enter God's house. The inner rightness of thought is not done without the external one...<sup>212</sup>

However, the ideas about the glorious appearance of Christian ministers were not accepted without any reservations. They were debated, contested and even sometimes resisted. This was true for Europe and Armenia as well. For instance, in the other liturgical commentary of Hovhannes Ardjishec'i, in the section of vesting, the author critically mentions some people, probably from the monastic circles, who were not so happy with the new developments in clergy vesting.<sup>213</sup> Interestingly enough, Ardjishec'i does not blame them as heretics but addresses them as faithful brothers.<sup>214</sup> This suggests that clergy vesting was not yet established practice, nor a matter of doctrine or theology but a result of an individual initiative of Nerses of Lambron and his support group that lately, due to practical and political reasons, became a common practice. This common practice, however, brought with it some irregularities in the liturgical pattern of vesting ritual. One of these irregularities is the confused understanding of the individual garment's meaning. While Nerses of Lambron and Ardjishec'i explain them in terms of glory and brightness, the actual prayer of the rite in the *textus receptus* draws our attention to an

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<sup>212</sup> Nerses of Lambron, 4.

<sup>213</sup> Ardjishec'i, 8.

<sup>214</sup> Ardjishec'i, 8.

entirely different direction, namely to purification and penance. In the vesting prayers, the celebrant asks for the cleaning and washing of his heart, mind, and thoughts so that he can properly approach to his ministry. This aspect of vesting ritual clearly resonates with Miller's hypothesis that in Medieval Europe one of the aims of reforming clergy clothing was a 'construction of the virtuous celebrant'.<sup>215</sup>

As Miller argues, 'the ritual of preparation has penitential and purificatory aspects...the vesting prayers continue purificatory themes but also construct the virtuous celebrant'.<sup>216</sup>

However, virtue and power are not always identical, especially in the context of Eucharist where the role of the celebrant is interpreted as a combination of ascetic virtuous and worldly power-dominion manner. This note questions whether the idea of bright and glorious vestments in fact correctly represent Christ's redemptive ministry that according to the Gospels comes as service and kenosis (cf. Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, John 13:1-17).

We may say that the language vesting prayers are complicated and multilayered as they aim to construct and cultivate a holy celebrant on the one hand and stress the priestly status of the celebrant on the other. Power and status usually are expressed via certain postures and gestures relative to others. In this case, the authority of the celebrant is expressed through the sign of the cross over every single garment pronouncing the short doxology that is regarded as a blessing act. The deacon here acts as an assistant to the celebrant. In this regard his role and office are not clear neither from liturgical text-rubrics nor the performance as in practice he simply brings the vestments to the celebrant without any gestures or postures (like kneeling before the celebrant, kissing his hand and so on) that may indicate such attitude towards celebrant as submission, trust or veneration. This fact is quite striking as the absence of any

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<sup>215</sup> Miller (2014), 80.

<sup>216</sup> Miller (2014), 80.

special attitude from the deacon's side in the Vesting ritual questions the theological rationalization of vesting ritual as a blessing service.

Having discussed the blessing dimension of the Vesting ritual let us now turn to individual garments and accompanying prayers to see what theological concepts they represent and whether they are consistent with the other parts of the Eucharist and other services as well.

### 3.14 Individual Garments in the Textual Structure and Their Symbolic Interpretation

The individual garments with accompanying prayers are following according to the sequence of the *textus receptus*:

Armenian name of the vestment	Explanation/Equivalent to other liturgical traditions
<i>Khouyr</i> (Illustration 11)	A Priestly Crown
<i>Shapik</i> (Illustration 6)	Corresponding to Byzantine <i>Sticharion</i> and Roman <i>Alb</i>
<i>Porurar</i> (Illustration 7)	Priestly stole, in some way corresponding to Byzantine <i>Epitrachilion</i>
<i>Goti</i> (Illustration 8)	Belt or Cincture
<i>Bazpan</i> (Illustration 7)	Liturgical cuffs equivalent to Byzantine <i>Epimanikia</i>
<i>Vakas</i>	Collar or shawl attached to the neck

(Illustration 9)	
<i>Surjar</i> (Illustration 10)	A semi-circular piece of cloth decorated with crosses and closed above the chest with a clasp
<i>Tashkinak</i>	Towel attached to the belt of the celebrant

As Feulner shows, from eight liturgical vestments, six of them have parallels in Latin liturgical practice.<sup>217</sup> As to *Vakas*, the prayer is completely the same as for *Porurar* which suggests that as individual liturgical vestment on its own, *Vakas* started to be used quite late, perhaps from the nineteenth century, as the special prayer for it we find first in the Vagharshapat's printed version (1880).<sup>218</sup> We can probably say the same about the *Tashkinak* prayer, although Feulner is not quite sure whether it came to Armenian usage from Roman influence. As he observes during the course of history some garments were reshaped and modified according to the needs of local tradition.

If we look at how symbolic interpretation of each individual garment works out in the prayer, we will have the following:

Vestment	Symbolic interpretation
<i>Khouyr/ Priestly crown</i>	The helmet of salvation to fight against the power of the enemy (Eph. 6:17)
<i>Shapik/alb</i>	Garment and vestment of salvation, the robe of gladness (Is. 61:10)

<sup>217</sup> Feulner (2006), 93-106.

<sup>218</sup> *Pataragamatuyc*, 3.

<i>Porurar/ epitrachilion</i>	Righteousness, clean heart
<i>Goti/belt</i>	Girdle of faith, power of grace
<i>Bazpan/ epimanikia</i>	Strength
<i>Vakas/amice</i>	Righteousness, clean heart
<i>Surjar</i>	Radiant garment
<i>Tashkinak/towel</i>	Cleanness

Overall this confirms Miller's thesis that the vesting ritual has two main aspects: purification/holiness and power/authority. However, within this system, we may observe a significant absence of reference to the priestly character of the celebrant. It is quite interesting that while the rubrics clearly speak about the celebrant as a priest in the likeness of Aaron, in the actual blessing prayers of vesting we do not have any reference/connection to Exodus 28, no remembrance of 'myth of origins' of individual garments. Instead, we observe fragmented references to different Scriptural passages (Is. 61:10, Eph. 6:17) that surprisingly resemble with the baptismal prayers in Armenian rite. For instance, the garment of salvation and a robe of gladness while obviously refers to Isaiah 61:10, in the Armenian liturgical landscape and memory brings us to baptismal prayer after the immersion. The white garment is associated with the rite of Baptism. In the early centuries of the Church, the newly baptized were given a white garment, symbolizing their new birth in Christ. This clothing ceremony is still preserved in the baptismal rite, where the priest recites a prayer on the child.

*Blessed and providential God, that clothed Your servant with the robe of salvation and garment of joy and put on his head the helmet of salvation and crown of grace as an invincible weapon against the enemy...*<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> *Mashtoc*, 20.

The newly baptized would wear the alb during the first week after Easter, offering a public witness to their newfound faith in Christ. Even today the Second Sunday of Easter is known as *Dominica in albis (deponendis)*, the Sunday of the (laying aside of the) white garments. It was on this day that the white garment was put aside and regular clothing could be worn. In medieval England, the newly baptized wore their white robes throughout the Easter season, laying them aside on Pentecost, which is still known as Whitsunday (“White Sunday”) in English custom.

Over the next few centuries in the Church, the alb became more and more associated with priestly vestments. The symbolism is retained, reminding the priest of his baptism, but also with an added dimension. According to the *Office for Liturgical Celebrations*, the alb ‘...recalls the new and immaculate clothing that every Christian has received through Baptism. The alb is, therefore, a symbol of the sanctifying grace received in the first sacrament and is also considered to be a symbol of the purity of heart that is necessary to enter into the joy of the eternal vision of God in heaven’.<sup>220</sup>

We may say that the Armenian vestments, being an adaptation of the Medieval Latin tradition of liturgical garments, still remain in their practical usage as bright garments that makes the celebration of the Eucharist more celebratory. The vesting prayers emphasize the ascetic and virtuous character of the celebrant and refer to his baptismal identity. However, later in the late Medieval Ages, we have a paradigm shift regarding the ordination of the presbyter that affected the understanding of the Eucharist as well. As Bradshaw observes, due to a particular reading of Augustine and an increase of private masses without the presence of people, the celebrant started

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<sup>220</sup> *Office for Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff, Liturgical Vestments and the Vesting Prayer.*  
[http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/liturgy/details/ns\\_lit\\_doc\\_20100216\\_vestizione\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/details/ns_lit_doc_20100216_vestizione_en.html)  
(accessed on April 3, 2019).



to be regarded not as a president of the Eucharistic community but as an individual; who has special powers to act on behalf of the community.<sup>221</sup> This transformation soon after received a theological rationale in the work of Aquinas: ‘This sacrament (=ordination) consists chiefly in the power conferred’.<sup>222</sup> The priesthood started to be regarded mainly if not exclusively in terms of spiritual and sacramental power that affected the ordination rites in Europe and due to missionaries in Armenia as well. The clear evidence for that is while in the early Armenian ordination rite and in the vesting ritual we do not have special prayers for vesting, the current ordination and vesting rituals do have such ones that clearly connect the vestments to Exodus 28.

In the Armenian Ordination prayers we read the following:

Lord Jesus Christ, the completion of the Law and the Prophets [Mt 5:17], the distributor of grace and mercy; bless this robe and its crown, as you blessed through Moses the robe and the crown of Aaron and of his sons [Ex 28]. And as in the beginning, Jacob made for Joseph the coat of many colors [Gen 37], bless Lord this vestment and its robe; as also you blessed Elijah's mantle, by which the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha [2Kings 2:13-14].

Bless, O heavenly Father, the robe so that the blessing of your all-holy robe woven from on high may rest upon him. As your prophet predicted and said: "Who is this who comes from Edom with a beautiful robe and in the fullness of strength? [Is 63:1]. May the same blessing rest upon this your servant (Name) and may the blessing of your grace rest fully upon his robe."<sup>223</sup>

This text obviously demonstrates a new understanding of the celebrant that would be confirmed in the short prayer of vesting ritual:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who are clothed with light as with a garment...You became an *eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek* and have adorned your holy church.

Lord almighty, having granted us to put on *the same heavenly garment*, make me, your useless servant, also worthy at this hour when I make bold to approach the same spiritual service of your glory...Grant me to enter *with priestly glory* upon the ministry of your holy things...<sup>224</sup> (emphasizes are mine).

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<sup>221</sup> Bradshaw (2014), 139-149.

<sup>222</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, III a, q.34, a.4.

<sup>223</sup> *Mec Mashtoc*, 260. An English translation by Fr. Daniel Findikian, *The Armenian Sacrament of Ordination to the Holy Priesthood*. <https://www.stnersess.edu/resources---the-armenian-sacrament-of-ordination-to-the-holy-priesthood.html>

<sup>224</sup> *Liturgy* (Nersoyan), 16.

It is striking that while in the early ordination rites the prayers are offered to God the father, both the above-mentioned prayers are addressed to Christ. In this regard, O'Loughlin's notion of Christocentric approach to Eucharist is quite important as he proposes that from the Gregory of Nyssa we have, what he calls a *Christocentrism* in the Eucharist, when the whole direction is put on Christ, His presence in the Eucharist, the remembrance of His words and not on the Father as a focus of Eucharistic celebration.<sup>225</sup> For O'Loughlin, even the common titles for the Eucharist such as Holy Communion or Lord's Supper give a different understanding of the Eucharist:

...Titles like 'Holy Communion' are directed towards Jesus-and reflect that common understanding of Eucharistic activity; while the term 'Eucharist' is directed towards the Father...the focus of Eucharistic thinking can be understood to be about thanking the Father...<sup>226</sup>

O'Loughlin argues that the *Christocentrism* in the Eucharist, the main focus on Christ's presence and actions in the Eucharistic gathering, shifts our attention from the fundamental dynamic of the Eucharist into a superfluous question of how to make Jesus sacramentally present in the Mass. The same Christocentric approach seems to be true in the vesting and ordination prayers addresses as well. While the early ordination prayers focus on the Father and see the presbyter/bishop as ministers and pastoral leaders within a specific community, the later prayers are concerned with the specific status/powers of the celebrant and view him as a successor/a functionary of Christ. Hence the prayers are addressed to Christ as a request for power/status transfer.

Overall, we may conclude that the vestments as bearers of certain theological meaning were directly connected to the ideas about the nature of ordination which in itself underwent a dramatic transformation during the late Medieval Ages. This transformation affected Latin and

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<sup>225</sup> O'Loughlin (2015), 28-31, 39-42.

<sup>226</sup> O'Loughlin (2015), 28, 27.

consequently on Armenian understanding of the Eucharist and the celebrant's nature and identity.

### **3.15 The Sacristy, a Liturgical Space and the Logic of Gathering**

In the analysis of the vesting ritual, a particular interest is the place where it all happens. Several studies in theology and ritual studies show the importance of liturgical space in the construction, development, and perception of the liturgy itself.<sup>227</sup> In particular, Jonathan Smith's work gives a significant account of the crucial role of place in the ritual system. Smith suggests to think about ritual as something that is closely connected with the place, e.g. sacred place. And place itself is not merely physical location but in a sense a kind of dimension that involves memory, recollection in terms of both individual and community.<sup>228</sup> The place is also linked with the human body since it is our body that orients us in space. So in terms of ritual, it would be more correct not to say 'I am in this or that place' but 'I/we bring this or that place into being', we father this place by our action, memory, and social construction.<sup>229</sup> In this regard place in ritual is not a particular physical location but rather a social position within the hierarchical system as it is shown by the author on examples of the Jerusalem Temple and of Holy Sepulcher built by Constantine the Great.<sup>230</sup> In this way, ritual and more specifically the ritual place brings order in society, but it also operates as a sacral justification for power and status in reference to the divine.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Sheldrake (2001), 33-90, Gibbons (2006), 144-160, Doig (2008), 1-19, Kinnard (2014), 169-186.

<sup>228</sup> Smith (1987), 28-35.

<sup>229</sup> Smith (1987), 45.

<sup>230</sup> Smith (1987), 75-95.

<sup>231</sup> Smith (1987), 83, Doig, 27-28.

Smith's analysis demonstrates that 'religious space is dynamic space'<sup>232</sup> and space is not holy itself, that is, it is not a reaction to the numinous but is created by people through certain actions and interpretations such as the Jerusalem Temple and Holy Sepulcher. As a result, the created sacred space generates a particular relationship among people, a hierarchical system that justifies certain things and actions. As such, liturgical place models relationships.

This observation is directly connected to the liturgical space, in our case, to the idea, place, and function of the sacristy. However, before moving on, it is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by the sacristy. In current usage, the sacristy is a vesting room where clergy put on their liturgical clothes as well as a place of liturgical items (vestments, vessels, furnishing) and clothes. As such, it is also called a vestry. The vestry is a room next to the southern side of the main altar. In the Armenian context, we have two names for the sacristy. First and the most used word is սվախնոսանիւ (lit. depository) which has as its root the words *deposit* and *house*, hence the *house of deposits* that keep church's items in safety. Another name for the sacristy is սարկավազանիւ (lit. the house of deacons) that resembles with Byzantine diaconicon.<sup>233</sup>

As such these names suggest that the vestry is an annex in the church building. The two Armenian names (house of deposits and house of deacons) suggest that the initial location of the sacristy is not a special room inside a church but rather a different building or space such as baptistery. It is remarkable to note that in the case of the Patriarch, the Eucharist does not start with the vesting ritual inside the church but we have a procession from the patriarchal residence to the church. The procession happens again during the song *O Deep Mystery*. However, as a performance, the patriarchal procession is the beginning of Eucharistic celebration, while in the case of priestly vesting in the sacristy, the vesting is the beginning of Liturgy.

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<sup>232</sup> Kilde (2008), 3.

<sup>233</sup> Ormanyan (1991), 116.

The vesting in the sacristy and already vested patriarchal entrance the church during give us two different liturgical patterns and models of Eucharist.<sup>234</sup> In the sacristy vesting case, the Eucharist starts in the vestry with special ritual and prayers that as a performance creates and sustains a certain theological vision (Temple and Priesthood theology). Although both celebrant and the people are in the same building, Eucharist starts for them differently: for the celebrant, the start of the Liturgy is vesting as preparation and for the people, Eucharist starts from the song of *O Deep Mystery*. However, in the patriarchal procession, we have a different pattern. In this case, Eucharist starts with the procession for both the celebrant and the people exactly the same time. These two patterns show how performance and action envision certain theology of place and gathering.

The Book of Acts (2:1, 44, 47) and Ignatius of Antioch (Eph. 5:3, Magn. 7:1) speak about gathering in one place. The context suggests that the Greek expression (*epi tou auto*) was a technical term for Eucharistic gathering. The significant issue is that gathering is the first sacramental act in the Eucharist that resembles Christ's promise to dwell among those who gather in His name (cf. Matt. 18:20). The beginning of the Eucharist is an action, an entrance, a gathering. This is evident from Armenian Lectionary as well. In particular, in the Easter vigil service, we read that before the beginning of the vigil, all stand outside the *Martyrium* and the bishop chants Psalm 112: 'Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore'. After this *all together* enter the *Martyrium*.<sup>235</sup> This evidence from early Armenian source supports the idea that the patriarchal procession embodies this theology of gathering as community action: bishop and the people together enter and start the celebration. In the case of individual preparation of the priest in a special detached room, the Eucharist starts with the

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<sup>234</sup> On various models of the Eucharist from the Catholic perspective see Irwin (2005).

<sup>235</sup> *Le Codex Annenien Jerusalem*, 296-97.

celebrant's entrance to the sanctuary, before the bema, when all faithful are already gathered. However, in this scenario, the Eucharist is not of a together-gathering worship leader and the congregation but a meeting of the congregation with the celebrant as a key figure in the celebration. While these differences are not articulated either in rubrics or theology textbooks, the actual performance ritualizes certain perceptions that endure better than any conceptualized theology. Vesting taking place in the special room inside the church, separating the ordained person from the congregation and destroying the meaning of the gathering as a corporate, ecclesial act during which both the celebrant and the people enter and come to the building together. In the procession we have a shared space, the celebrant and the people occupy the same sacramental space, while in the sacristy model, the celebrant and the people have different spaces. How the liturgical space is arranged directly influences how someone experiences the Eucharist itself. Either Eucharist is a shared space among all of its participants, a *koinonia* or a special ritual with special actors who occupy space, different from the observed ones. This either/or experience starts from the very beginning of the Eucharist and depends on which model is enacted, the Eucharistic experience would be accordingly. In the case of the procession, it is 'the movement oriented towards a destination rather than a center. Those processing do not occupy centralized sacred space. Instead, they carry their 'center' with them'.<sup>236</sup> In the procession, the sacred is not restricted to any specific place but is 'capable of annexing, even if temporally, other places'.<sup>237</sup> As Schechner rightly observes, the ritual is a mechanism for transformation<sup>238</sup> and these two cases of ritual performance show how Liturgy in its ritual expression can effect on its theological perception.

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<sup>236</sup> Grimes (1993), 64.

<sup>237</sup> Grimes (1993), 66.

<sup>238</sup> Schechner (1988), 170.

If Christian liturgy is something done, participated in and shared...then the function of liturgical space is to help that interpretation and transformation of grace happen in the community...The externals of the liturgy help translate the experience.<sup>239</sup>

In this regard, Smith's observations about the place as a generator of the sacred are quite relevant as they suggest that certain liturgical elements (such as vesting ritual), ritual and performative patterns (vesting in detached room apart from people) in the Armenian liturgical tradition have been influenced by the Constantinian 'revolution' in Christian ritual. The two patterns of liturgical gathering (procession and vesting) suggest that in the early stages of the community space was shaped to determine the experience of gathering as communion. Later influences modified this experience and transported it into the 'temple theology', which in return re-shaped the liturgical setting to fit a particular 'sacred' meaning.

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<sup>239</sup> Gibbons (2006), 151-152.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the present research was to examine how liturgical actions and theological interpretations interact in the Armenian Eucharistic event when it is brought to dialogue with the historical sources and contemporary liturgical studies.

The first chapter gave a descriptive background to the specific study methods through which a more holistic view of the Armenian Eucharist can be achieved. The second chapter briefly outlined the complexity of the described liturgy and explained how such categories and themes as text, ritual, and performance can be used as fresh models of reasoning and analysis of the Armenian Eucharist. The third chapter applied this reasoning and analysis to a specific liturgical unit, namely, the Vesting Ritual.

The aim of the thesis was not to give a comprehensive and definitive explanation for the Armenian Eucharist but in the examples of selected analyzed liturgical unit (Vesting Ritual), to show that the Armenian Eucharist is not merely a historical literary document nor an elaborative theological concept detached from inner liturgical structure and ritual logic. Instead, it has some unnoticed 'angles' such as text/performance contrast, theologically loaded rationalization of liturgical clothes that illustrate the historical and theological complexity of the Eucharist.

For practical reasons, this study is limited to a certain liturgical unit within the Armenian Eucharist, namely, to the Vesting Ritual. In spite of its limitations, the study certainly adds to a renewed understanding of the Armenian Eucharist by applying a certain methodology and vocabulary outside of conventional historical-philological and neo-scholastically oriented studies.

One of the purposes of the thesis was to evaluate how the vesting ritual as a liturgical unit imagines the Armenian *Patarag* as historically inherited/conditioned and lived experience. This



thesis has explored the specific structure and function of the vesting ceremony that the celebrant and the altar servers conduct before the start of the actual Eucharist in the sacristy. The analysis was threefold. First, following Juliette Day's proposed categories, I have looked at some of the textual aspects of the vesting, namely the questions of authorship, language, inter-textuality, and para-text. Secondly, the chapter has focused on the interaction of text, performance, and purpose in these texts, movements, and prayers. The chapter explored firstly, the set of theological beliefs/ideas and attitudes that are introduced in the context of vesting ritual; secondly, what purpose/vision is proposed for understanding the Eucharist in terms of celebrant's identity. Thirdly, the section in the chapter explored the act of blessing as a distinct liturgical dimension in the vesting service.

The results of this study showed that special vesting for the celebrant was drawn from a certain exegesis of Exodus 28 that saw the Christian presbyter and the bishop as heirs of the Old Testament priesthood. In the Armenian context, this analogy was first enacted in the vesting ritual by the medieval Armenian bishop Nerses of Lambron which, in turn, influenced the later development of the ordination service.

The current study compared the ritual action/performance with the liturgical structure/program of the text and showed that the Armenian vesting ritual inherited and combined different liturgical patterns with the distinctive theological proposals. These different patterns are revealed when they are situated within a wider context of similar development that took place in Europe from the ninth to fourteenth centuries.

These findings have significant implications for the understanding of how historical changes have effected on the liturgical logic and ritual integrity of the Armenian Eucharist. During the historical evolution of the Armenian Vesting ritual, the most important change was a new

understanding of the Eucharist itself. This shift of telos/meaning of Liturgy has a significant implication for the understanding of the nature of the Armenian Eucharist. The current vesting ritual explicitly states that not all people in Sunday Liturgy are active participants because there are distinctive 'doers' and the rest of people are simply present as observers. However, the other parts of the Eucharist such as the vesting hymn, some para-textual elements and the style of the following prayers implicitly speak about the communal character of the Eucharist.

These findings contribute in several ways to our understanding of the Armenian Eucharist and provide a basis for further research. Firstly, the study contributes to a renewed understanding of the Armenian Eucharist by applying an interpretative vocabulary of ritual, performance and historical theology as methodological tools. Secondly, the research demonstrates the contrast between the neo-scholastic theological and the actual textual, ritual, and performative approaches towards the Armenian Eucharist. Thirdly, in the example of the vesting ritual, the study shows that the Armenian Eucharist is a product of historical continuity, adaptation, and innovation that has many historical and theological unpacked and unaddressed issues.

One of the significances of the present study is its methodology. The methods used for the study of the Armenian Eucharist may be applied to other Christian traditions as well.

The present study lays the groundwork for future research into other liturgical units of the Armenian Eucharist. A natural progression of this work is to analyze how different liturgical units (de)construct the Armenian Eucharist as a liturgical text, sacramental performance, and theologically purposeful event. A further study can assess the historically conditioned long-term effects of these (de)constructions.

## APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIONS

ILLUSTRATION 1: MOTHER SEE OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN CATHEDRAL



ILLUSTRATION 2: INSIDE THE CATHEDRAL





ILLUSTRATION 3: THE MAIN ALTAR



ILLUSTRATION 4: THE ALTAR OF DESCENT



ILLUSTRATION 5:  
A TYPICAL ARMENIAN PRIEST  
DURING THE EUCHARIST WITH THE CHOIR AND THE ALTAR SERVERS





ILLUSTRATION 6:  
A TYPICAL ARMENIAN *SHAPIK/ALB*



ILLUSTRATION 7:  
A TYPICAL ARMENIAN *PORURAR* (Right) AND *BAZPANS* (Left)



ILLUSTRATION 8:  
A TYPICAL ARMENIAN *CINCTURE*



ILLUSTRATION 9:  
A TYPICAL ARMENIAN VAKAS



ILLUSTRATION 10:  
A TYPICAL ARMENIAN *SHURJAR*



ILLUSTRATION 11:  
A TYPICAL ARMENIAN *PRIESTLY CROWN/TAG*





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