

The Sacristy and Vestry

The Sacristy.

At the North end of the Altar (in ancient times a separate room, called the Sacristy or Chapel of the Oblation (sometimes Chapel of Preparation in Russian, Zhertvinnik) is placed the Table of Oblation (offering or Prothesis) where the offerings are prepared during the Proskomedie or Liturgy of Preparation. Like the Holy Table, the Table of Oblation is covered with rich coverings and the wall around it is decorated with Icons. Upon it are placed the sacred vessels used in the preparation of Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Paten (Diskos).

This is a round vessel with a foot, upon which are placed the Lamb and the particles taken out from the breads (prospora) in memory of the Theotokos, the Forerunner, the Saints, the Living and the Dead.

Star-Cover (Asterisk).

This consists of two bands of metal joined by a screw which, when put together, form the shape of a Cross. This is placed over the Paten after the Lamb and particles have been placed thereon, to support the veil above the Paten and also to keep the particles in order.

Spear.

This is a lance-shaped knife, representing the spear with which the Savior's Body was pierced, used to take particles out of the breads.

Chalice.

This is a cup with a foot into which the wine, mixed with water is poured during the preparation of the Sacrament. To the Chalice also belongs a small Ladle (Zeon) with which the mixed wine and water are poured into the Cup, and also used for the warm water (hence the name Zeon hot water) poured into the Chalice at the Communion of the Clergy.

Spoon.

This is used to administer the Sacrament at the Communion of the Faithful.

Sponge.

There are two Sponges (cut from natural sponges) one used at the Holy Table and one used at the Table of Oblation. That used at the Holy Table to wipe the particles from the Paten into the Chalice, is usually kept in a fold of the Antimension and thus is called the Antimension Sponge. The other is kept on the Table of Oblation to wipe the Chalice after it has been washed at the end of the Liturgy and thus is called the Cleansing Sponge.

Veils.

Three Veils are used: two smaller ones to cover the Paten and Chalice, protecting the Lamb and particles from dust and insects, and a larger Veil, with which the Paten and Chalice and their respective Veils are together covered. This is usually called the Aer since it covers the Holy Vessels even as air covers the earth.

Censer.

This is a cup-shaped vessel with a cover held by three chains uniting into one handle, within which are placed a piece of burning charcoal and incense. This is swung at many places during the Divine services, representing the prayers of the faithful ascending to Heaven. At the Liturgy of Preparation, the Censer, with the incense, represents the gifts offered by the Magi to the Infant Christ gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The Vestry.

At the right (South) side of the Altar is a space reserved for the sacred vessels, books and vestments, called the Vestry (or Diakonnikon, since the Deacons are usually in charge of these items). In ancient times this was a separate room and here the faithful would bring all sorts of edible gifts (cheese, eggs, boiled rice or wheat, etc.) for the clergy.

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