

Ceremony of Blessing of Grapes

(The text is taken from "Bless, O Lord: Services of Blessing in the Armenian Church"
by Fr. Garabed Kochakian with some linguistic revisions)

The Order of the Blessing of Grapes

(To be conducted after the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God.)

Deacon: Again in peace let us beseech the Lord. Receive, save and have mercy.

Priest: Blessing and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Choir or Deacons: Glory be to Thy Holy Cross, Alleluia. To Thy Crucifixion, Alleluia. To Thy Holy Resurrection, Alleluia.

The light of Thy countenance was a token unto us and Thou hast put gladness into our hearts; Thou hast filled them with the fruit of their corn and wine and oil. Glory be to Thy Holy Cross ... (Repeat)

Glory and worship to the Father and the Son and to the Holy Spirit; now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Glory be to Thy Holy Cross ... (Repeat)

Lo, the life-giving cross which afforded us salvation; through this token we with one accord glorify Thee.

It is the light from the Father of light radiating upon earth, and is a staff of power to the faithful; therefore, through Thy luminous rising it was marvelously exhibited to us as a sign of victory against the enemy; therefore, through this ...

Deacon: Alleluia, Alleluia.

The light of Thy countenance was a token to us and Thou hast put gladness in our hearts.

Then, the following lessons from scriptures are read:

Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. (Proverbs 3:9-11)

Thus says the Lord: "As the wine is found in the cluster, and they say, 'Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it,' so I will do for my servants' sake, and not destroy them all.

"I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah inheritors of my mountains; my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

"Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down for my people who have sought me." (Isaiah 65:8-11)

“So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.

He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

See how great he is! Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of the spoils. And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior". (Hebrews 6:17- 7:7)

Deacon: Alleluia, Alleluia.

O God, have mercy upon us and bless us; let Thy countenance shine upon us and pity us. Alleluia
Orthi.

Priest: Peace unto all.

Choir: And with Thy Spirit.

Deacon: Let us attend with care.

Priest: To the Holy Gospel in Jesus Christ according to John.

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord our God.

Deacon: Proschoumen.

Choir: God doth speak.

Priest: Our Lord, Jesus Christ says:

I am the vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does not bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

If a man does not abide in me he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into a fire and burned.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. (John 15:1-8)

Deacon: Glory to Thee, a Lord our God.

Again in peace let us beseech the Lord.

Let us offer thanks unto our gracious God who has bounteously granted us fruitfulness of plants and trees for the use of His creatures. Let us pray also for the first fruit of clusters of grape, offered unto Him in this holy place; in order that with the blessing with which He blessed His creatures, they may be unto us for food and drink of joyfulness, and to impart health to our souls and bodies through His only-begotten Son, and His life-giving cross and burial and resurrection, through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God, from whom was given unto us the fruit of life and immortality, namely Jesus Christ. May the Almighty God preserve us and have mercy.

Priest: Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

(Then he reads the following):

PRAYER FOR THE BLESSING OF GRAPES

By St. Nersess Shnorhali

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. Thou didst also plant elegant trees for the sustenance and enjoyment of human mortals and so didst bestow upon them Thy blessings, according to the Divine saying: "God saw the multitude were good and blessed them..."

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.

And just as thou commanded the Israelites, through Moses, to donate the first bearing of all their fruits, on the Tabernacle of witness, in order that with this first offering all fruits would receive thy blessing, so too we seek Thy divine and spiritual blessings on these fruits offered this day.

And through this blessed fruit we shall receive in our spirit the intelligible grace of Thy blessings, earning pardon and remission of our mortal sins; to be also worthy of partaking from the Tree of Life which Thou didst order the Cherubic regiment to protect with a flaming sword. And thus immortalized, we shall in the realm of the immortals forever glorify The Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Peace Unto All

Blessed art Thou, Son and Word of the Father, inexpressible radiant of the first light, form and image of the invisible God ... who didst call thyself the vine; Thy followers in love, the branches; and Thy Divine Father cultivator, who sanctifies those who are fruitful in righteousness and cuts off the unfruitful and condemns them to the eternal fire.

The juice of the grape makes the wine which dispels sadness and creates gladness, as the Holy Bible states: "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man." And Thou, O Lord, on the occasion of Thy last supper, dispensed this same pleasure-giving wine to Thy disciples as Thy expiatory blood and representing the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and thus Thou didst establish the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, saying: "This is my blood which is shed for the salvation of mankind."

Therefore, O Lord, bless these bunches of grapes which have been donated to Thine Altar and grant remission of sins and spiritual and physical well-being to all who partake of this blessed offering with faith.

Bless, O Lord, the vineyards and the vinestock from which these grapes came to Thy Holy Church for blessing. Make them fruitful like fertile fields.

O Lord, protect the vineyards and the farms against all kinds of accidents which happen because of our sinful acts. Keep them free of hail, frosts, sunburn and harmful insects, so that through Thy bountiful mercy we may be deserving of sharing the product of Thy vinestock, at Thy Father's heavenly table, and to glorify the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Choir: Amen; Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Priest: Blessed and sanctified be these clusters of grapes and all the fruits of this year with the sign of the Holy Cross and with this Holy Gospel and with the grace of this day, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

(To be repeated three times by the choir and the priest.)

Deacon: By the Holy Cross let us beseech the Lord that He may thereby deliver us from our sins and may save us by the grace of His mercy. Almighty Lord, our God, save and have mercy.

Priest: Guard us, O Christ our God, under the shadow of Thine holy and precious cross in peace.

Deliver us from enemies visible and invisible. Make us worthy to give thanks to Thee and to glorify

Thee with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the Ages of Ages.

Amen.