



OBJECT ID	F2014.149
OBJECT NAME	Seal, Prosforo
MEDIUM	Paint
MATERIAL	Wood
ACCESS POINTS	<p>Amnos</p> <p>bread</p> <p>ceremonial artifact</p> <p>jesus</p> <p>lamb</p> <p>Mary</p> <p>Mother of God</p> <p>prosforo seal</p> <p>saints</p> <p>Wood</p>

## OBJECT DESCRIPTION

Round, light color, wooden, bread seal. On the main, base of the seal are carvings: the center carving, that is the same three panels sitting on top of one another says "IC XC NIKA" which means "Jesus Christ Conquers" This pieces is also called the Amnos, or The Lamb, and represents the one body of Christ. To the right of the Amnos is a portion that represents the Mother of God: the symbol is a "M" that has arrows on the end. Ther is a small horizontal line going through the middle of the "legs" of the "M" In the top of the "M" is a carving that almost looks like an "A" sitting in between the top of the letter. At the bottom is a carving that looks like an "X." To the very left of the Amnos is a portion that shows nine triangles; these triangles represent the nine orders of saints and angels in heaven. All of these portions, together, make the shape of the cross. In the corners of the 'cross' are carved in semi circlces that are green and purple in color (two of each color). Above the color portion, a little under half an inch is plain in color, but is carved so the edge almost looks like a crown. On the opposite side of the seal is the handle. The very center has the "IC XC NIKA" carving and is edged to look like a star. In between the points is alternating coloring of purple and green and plain wood. The rest of this side is smoothed wood, no coloring or design.

## ORIGIN

Since the early Church, the Office of Oblation (Proskomide) has been a service of offering gifts to God in preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist or

Holy Communion in the Divine Liturgy. The Office of Oblation is thus a prerequisite for the Divine Liturgy.

Today, the priest conducts the Office of Oblation inaudibly during Matins behind the Altar Iconostasis (Icon Screen). The Table of Oblation (Prothesis or sometimes Proskomide) is located to the left of the Holy Altar table. The Table of Oblation represents the cave or stable of Bethlehem where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was born.

For the Oblation, members of the congregation bring wine and bread as an offering to the Church. During the Divine Liturgy, the wine will be consecrated into the blood of Christ, while the bread will be consecrated into the body of Christ.

The wine is a pure grape sweet wine. It is often the Greek sweet wine Mavrodaphne or the sweet wines from Samos or Cyprus.

The holy bread (also called prosphora or offering) must be made from pure wheat flour and water, and is leavened and well baked (see recipe at end). Usually, there are five loaves to represent our Lord's miracle of feeding of "five thousand men besides women and children" with only five loaves of bread (Matt. 14:17-21). But if it is not possible to make five loaves, at least one is necessary for the offering.

In the center of the top of the bread is a round seal. During the Office of Oblation, the priest cuts small portions of the bread to prepare for Holy Communion.

The Service of the Office of Oblation begins with the Priest coming before the Oblation table (Prothesis). He bows, makes three reverences, and says quietly 3 times: "O God, be gracious unto me a sinner, and have mercy upon me." He takes the bread in his hands, elevates it to his forehead with the seal of the loaf upward, and says: "You have redeemed us from the curse of the law by thy precious Blood. By being nailed to the Cross and pierced by the spear, you have become a foundation of immortality for all people. O our Savior, Glory to you." And then he says: "Blessed is our God always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen."

The priest then begins the cutting of the bread. He takes the bread in his left hand and the spear or lance in his right hand, makes the sign of the Cross over the seal with the lance and says three times: "In remembrance of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ."

First, he moves to the central portion of the seal bearing the inscription ICXC NIKA (Jesus Christ Conquers) in its four corners. This portion is called the Amnos, or the Lamb, which represents our Lord who takes on the sins of the world. The Lord is called "Amnos" or Lamb, because like a lamb, He accepted His death with humility and without protest.

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From the third prosphoron, the left of the Amnos (on the right as the priest faces it) cuts out the nine small triangles. He places them on the Paten on the left side of the Amnos, in the same position as they were on the bread. These nine triangles symbolize the nine orders of saints and the angels in heaven, as follows:

1. In honor and memory of the great Angelic Leaders Michael and Gabriel.
2. Of the honorable glorious Prophet Baptist John, of the holy glorious Prophets Moses and Aaron, Elijah, and Elisha, David and Jesse, of the three holy Children, Daniel the Prophet, and of all the holy Prophets.
3. Of the holy, glorious, Apostles Peter and Paul, of the Twelve and the Seventy, and of all the holy Apostles.
4. Of our Fathers among the Saints, great Hierarchs and ecumenical Doctors, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom. Of Athanasios and Cyril, Nicholas of Myra, and all the holy hierarchs.

5. Of the holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen; of the holy Great Martyrs George the trophy-bearer, Demetrios Myrobletes, Theodore Tyre, Theodore Stratelates, and all the holy Martyrs.
  6. Of our Venerable and God-bearing Fathers Anthony the Great, Euthymios, Paisios, Sabbas, Onouphrios, Peter and Athanasios of Athos, and of all the holy ascetics.
  7. Of the holy, glorious and wonder-working healers Cosmas and Damian, Cyrus and John, Panteleimon and Hermolaos and of all the holy unmercenarys.
  8. Of, the holy and righteous Ancestors Joachim and Anna, of the Saints (the saints of the day) whose memory we commemorate today and of all the Saints.
  9. Of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople or Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop Caesarea of Capadocia.
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#### CITATION

Seal, Prosforo, *National Hellenic Museum*, <https://hellenic.whirlihost.com/Detail/objects/>. Accessed 05/14/24.

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