

Kreesdos ee mech: Christ in our midst!

Christ's Real Presence in the Armenian Badarak

I. Introduction

It is stated by some Protestants and Fundamentalist Christians that the Roman Catholic Church invented the idea of Christ's Real Presence in Holy Communion. In reality, this is the faith of all the ancient Churches -some of which have been separated from Rome since the earliest centuries. The Armenian Church, also being an ancient Apostolic Church, is no different in regards to this belief. One visit to our *Soorp Badarak* (literally translated "Holy Sacrifice"), which is our Divine Liturgy or worship service, will leave a visitor with absolutely no doubt of our faith that in Holy Communion we are receiving Christ's true, mystical Body and Blood.

This has always been the orthodox faith of Christ's one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and always will be. Ever since Christ said, "This is my Body... This is my Blood" and "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" Christians have always believed this. St. Paul confirmed this belief by reminding us, "whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord..." "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." This is the faith all the ancient Churches hold until this day.

Those ordained by the Apostles to carry on the faith to the next generation understood this clearly. Thus St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote to the faithful, "I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible" (*Letter to the Romans* 7:3 [A.D. 107]). Before his martyrdom in Rome for his faith in Christ, he also penned these words, "Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. . . . They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes" (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6:2-7:1 [A.D. 107]). Many other examples could be given.

The following document is meant to be an exercise in the maxim "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi" (the law of prayer is the law of faith). All ancient Churches believe that we pray as we believe. The best way of understanding the faith of the Church is by looking at the prayers of the Church in its official public worship. Thus we will be looking at the faith of the Armenian Church in reference to Christ's Real Presence in Holy Communion. I know of no ancient Liturgy which is more explicit and emphatic about the faith of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharistic Communion than that of the Armenian Church..

The Following texts are taken from "The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church"

(St. Vartan Press, New York, 1999) Page numbers are provided corresponding to this edition.

Liturgical prescriptions made in the Badarak are indicated by: small print

Additional comments made by the editors of the new edition of the Divine Liturgy Book are indicated by: { }

Comments added by myself are indicated by: []

II. The Liturgical Witness of the Armenian Church

A. [The Synaxis begins]

If the celebrant is a Bishop, he recites the Prayers to the Holy Spirit by St. Gregory of Narek p.7

... And inasmuch as one of the Trinity is being offered and another accepts the sacrifice, pleased with us through the reconciling blood of his First-born, so may you also accept our supplications and prepare us to be honored dwellings, always ready to partake worthily of the heavenly Lamb, to receive without the sentence of condemnation this manna of life eternal, of the new deliverance... p.8

And he says the following prayer of St. John Chrysostom.

O Lord our God, who sent our Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly bread, the food of the whole world, to be savior and redeemer and benefactor, and to bless and to sanctify us; Bless now, Lord, also this presentation and receive this upon your heavenly altar... p.10

B. [The Eucharist begins]

[Hymn of the Transfer of the Gifts: Marmeen Deroonagan (The Body of the Lord)]

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. p.23

[The Responsory of the Great Entrance: The deacons and the priest recite antiphonally Psalm 23 (24):7-10 in reference to the Mystery of Christ's Presence in Communion]

Then the holy Bread and the Cup of immortality are brought up by the deacons to the holy altar.

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

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

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

The Priest: Who is this king of glory: The Lord of hosts.

The Deacon: This is the king of glory!

And the celebrant bows with fear and trembling and receives the gifts from the deacon and makes the sign of the cross over the people saying:

Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. p.25

The Priest: 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... p.26

The Kiss of Peace

{We know from St. Paul that the earliest Christians greeted one another “with a holy kiss” (Rom 16:16, 1 Cor 16:20, 2 Cor 13:12, 1 Th 5:26), a sign of their unity and love in Christ. This is the meaning of the Kiss of Peace. In the Eucharist, Christ comes to unite his people to each other and to himself by offering them his Body and Blood. p.26}

[After the Holy Bread and Cup have been brought in the Church sings]

[Hymn: Kreesdos ee mech (Christ in our midst)]

Christ in our midst has been revealed; He Who Is, God, is here seated. The voice of peace has resounded; 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, while angles sing: “Holy, Holy, Holy.” p.27

The Anaphora

The Deacon: You who stand with faith before the royal holy table, behold Christ the king seated, surrounded by supernal hosts.

The Deacon: Christ, the spotless Lamb of God, offers himself in sacrifice. p.28

[Anaphora of St. Athanasius the Great]

The Priest: *It is truly proper and right with most earnest diligence 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 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, grant to us that we should join the heavenly ones in spiritual choirs, 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:

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 prefigurative 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 distributor and he himself is distributed always in our midst without ever being 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: Take, eat; this is my body, which is distributed for you and for many, for the expiation and remission of sins.

Likewise taking the cup, he blessed it, gave thanks, drank and gave it to his chosen, holy disciples, who were seated, saying: Drink this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the expiation and remission of sins.

And your only-begotten beneficent Son gave us the commandment that we always do this in remembrance of him.

And descending into the lower 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 of 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. And we offer to you yours of your own from all and for all.

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 pgs. 29-32

[The Words of Institution]

{ On the night before his death, Jesus joined his disciples in a final evening meal, during which he took plain bread and wine, blessed them and gave thanks; and giving them to his disciples to eat, he proclaimed them to be his own Body and Blood, a gesture of loving self-sacrifice and communion. He commanded that we should repeat this ritual in commemoration of him: “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24-25, Lk 22:19). The communion of Christ’s Body and Blood is therefore the heart of our worship, and of our commemoration of Jesus Christ in the Divine Liturgy. p.31 }

[Hymn: Vortee Asdoodzo (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.

THE EPICLESIS

{ At this point in the Eucharist the priest calls on God the Father to send his Holy Spirit upon all of the assembled faithful and on the gifts of bread and wine, to make them truly the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is our ultimate desire and prayer, that in this Eucharist the Holy Spirit will unite all the faithful together with each other and with Christ by way of his Body and Blood so that we will truly come to constitute the Church in its fullest sense. p.33 }

The Priest: 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. (3 times) Whereby blessing this cup, make it truly the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (3 times) 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. (3 times) So that for all of us who approach it, this may be for acquittal, for expiation and for remission of sins. p.33-34

Hymn: Hokee Asdoodzo (Spirit of God)

Spirit of God, who, descending from heaven, accomplishes through us the mystery of him who is glorified with you, by the shedding of his blood, we beseech you, grant rest to the souls of those of ours who have fallen asleep. p.34

[Concluding the intercessions the priest prays]

And having cleansed our thoughts, make us temples fit for the reception of the Body and Blood of your Only-begotten and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, with whom to you, O Father almighty, together with the life-giving and liberating Holy Spirit, is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen. p.38-39

Pre-Communion Rites

The Deacon: By the holy, divine and immortal sacrifice offered on this holy altar, let us beseech the Lord. p.39

The Deacon: That the Lord our God, who has accepted the same at the holy heavenly and intelligible altar, may in return send down upon us the grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, let us beseech the Lord.” p. 40

The Lord’s Prayer

...Give us this day our daily bread... p. 41

The Priest: O 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 beseech 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.

{For the first time the priest turns toward the people with the chalice and proclaims it to be the “holy and precious Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.}

The Priest: “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, hope of resurrection, expiation and remission of sins. Sing psalms to the Lord [as the priest holds the host and chalice high above his head], sing psalms to our immortal heavenly king, who rides in chariots of cherubim. p.44

[Hymn: Der Vorghormya (Lord have mercy)]

...By means of this holy and immortal and life-giving sacrifice. Receive, Lord, and have mercy.

The Priest: What blessing and what thanksgiving will we render over this bread and this cup! Yet, Jesus, only you we bless with your Father and with the all-holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

I confess and believe that you are Christ the Son of god, who did take away the sins of the world.

And breaking the Body, he puts it into the chalice of the Blood, saying:

The fulfillment of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Father, you who have called us by the name of your Only-begotten and have enlightened us through baptism of the spiritual font, make us worthy to receive this holy mystery for the remission of our sins. Impress upon us the graces of your Holy Spirit, as you did upon the holy apostles, who tasted it and became the cleansers of the whole world.

And now, O Lord, beneficent Father, make this communion part of the supper of the disciples by dispelling the darkness of sins. Look not upon my unworthiness and withhold not the graces of your Holy Spirit, but according to your infinite love of mankind grant that this communion be for the expiation of sins and the loosing of transgression, as our Lord Jesus Christ promised and said that whoever eats my Body and drinks my Blood shall live forever.

Therefore let this be expiation for us, so that those who shall eat and drink of this may give praise and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen. p.45-46

+Peace to all

I thank you, Christ the king, who have made me, unworthy as I am, worthy to partake of your holy Body and Blood.

And now I beseech you, let this be to me not for condemnation but for the remission and forgiveness of sins, for health of soul and body and for the performance of all deeds of virtue; so that this may purify my breath and my soul and my body and make me a temple and a habitation of the all-holy Trinity; so that I may be worthy, together with your saints, to glorify you with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen. (p. 46)

A Prayer of St. John Chrysostom:

I thank you and magnify you and glorify you, O Lord my God, for you have made me, unworthy as I am, worthy to partake this day of your divine and awe-inspiring Mystery, of your undefiled Body and your precious Blood.

...By the sealing of my soul with your precious Blood, my Lord and God, let not the destroyer come near me. Cleanse me from all my dead works, Almighty one, who alone are without sin.

...Be with me always according to your unfailing promise that whoever eats my Body and drinks my Blood dwells in me and I in him. You did say so, you who love mankind. Realize the words of your divine and irrevocable commandments. For you are the God of mercy and of compassion and of love toward mankind and the giver of all good things; and to you, together with the Father and the all-holy Spirit, is befitting glory, now and always and unto the age of ages. Amen.

And then [the priest] signs himself with the sign of the Lord and makes to the true God his diverse petitions for himself, for the people and for the world. 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, saying:

In faith do I believe in the all-holy Trinity, in the Father and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. In faith do I taste of this, your holy and life-giving and saving Body, O Christ my God, Jesus, for the remission of my sins. In faith do I drink of this, your sanctifying and cleansing Blood, O Christ my God, Jesus, for the remission of sins. Let your incorruptible Body be to me for life and your holy Blood for expiation and remission of my sins. p.46-47

**[Hymn of Communion by St. Nerses Shnorhali:
Orhnyal eh Asdvadz (Blessed is God)]**

Blessed is God! 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. Praise him in the heights. Alleluia. Praise him all his angels. Alleluia. Praise him, all his hosts. Alleluia. p.47

{The people: (to be recited before approaching the altar.)}

I believe, O Lord, and I confess that You are in truth the Christ, The Son of the Living God who came into the world to save Sinners of whom I am chief. Also, I believe that what I am now to receive is truly You immaculate Body and precious Blood. O Son of God, receive me today as a partaker of Your Mystical Supper. For I shall not betray Your Mysteries to Your enemies, nor like Judas will I give You a kiss. But like the thief will I confess You and say, ‘Remember me O Lord when You come into Your Kingdom. Amen.

The Deacon: The Creed of Holy Communion.

We believe in the Holy Father, true God; we believe in the Holy Son, true God; we believe in the Holy Spirit, true God; we confess and believe that this is the living and life-giving body and blood of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, which shall be for the remission and forgiveness of our sins. We confess and believe.

In fear and faith draw near and communicate in holiness.

And after all have received Holy Communion, the choir sings:

*Our God and our Lord has appeared to us.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

{When all have received communion the curtain closes while the priest cleans the chalice and the altar servers return all the liturgical vessels to their place. During this time the

choir and people sing two hymns of thanksgiving for the grace of having been fed at the Lord's "table of immortality."}

The Choir:

We have been filled with your good things, O Lord, by tasting of your Body and Blood. Glory in the highest to you who have fed us. You who continually feed us, send down upon us your spiritual blessing. Glory in the highest to you who have fed us. (p. 50)

The Deacon: Having again received in faith of the divine, holy, heavenly, immortal, pure and incorruptible mystery, give thanks to the Lord.

The Choir:

We give thanks to you, Lord, who have fed us at your table of immortal life; distributing your Body and your Blood for the salvation of the world and for life to our souls.

[The Prayers of Thanksgiving]

The Priest: We thank you, Father, almighty, who did prepare for us the holy Church as a haven, a temple of holiness, where the holy Trinity is glorified. Alleluia.

We thank you, Christ the King, who did grant us life through your life-giving and holy Body and Blood, grant us forgiveness and your great mercy. Alleluia.

We thank you, Spirit of Truth, who have renewed the holy Church. Keep her without blemish through the faith in the Trinity from henceforth for ever more. Alleluia.

We give thanks to you, O Christ our God, who have granted us this tasting of your goodness for holiness of life. Keep us thereby holy and without blemish, dwelling in and about us by your divine providence... (p.51)

In Christ's Light,
Wm. DerGhazarian
(9-26-02)

III. The Mystical Supper of Christ's Body and Blood

Some may wonder, based on the above explicit testimony of faith, where exactly the Armenian Church derived its faith about Holy Communion from. After all, nearly all Protestant, Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians deny Holy Communion is truly the Body and Blood of Christ -His Real Presence among us. Yet their position directly contradicts the historic Orthodox Faith of the Catholic Church. This faith is witnessed by numerous saints, fathers and writers throughout the history of Christianity:

St. Ignatius:

"Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. . . . They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father,

in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes" (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6:2-7:1 [A.D. 110]).

St. Justin Martyr:

"We call this food Eucharist, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration [i.e., has received baptism] and is thereby living as Christ enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nurtured, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus" (*First Apology* 66 [A.D. 151]).

St. Ireneaus:

"He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own body, from which he gives increase unto our bodies. When, therefore, the mixed cup [wine and water] and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life - flesh which is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, and is in fact a member of him?" (*ibid.*, 5:2 [A.D. 180]).

St. Clement of Alexandria:

"'Eat my flesh,' [Jesus] says, 'and drink my blood.' The Lord supplies us with these intimate nutrients, He delivers over his flesh and pours out his blood, and nothing is lacking for the growth of his children" (*The Instructor of Children* 1:6:43:3 [A.D. 191]).

St. Cyprian of Carthage:

"He [Paul] threatens, moreover, the stubborn and froward, and denounces them, saying, 'Whosoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' [1 Cor. 11:27]. All these warnings being scorned and condemned-- [lapsed Christians will often take communion] before their sin is expiated, before confession has been made of their crime, before their conscience has been purged by sacrifice and by the hand of the priest, before the offense of an angry and threatening Lord has been appeased, [and so] violence is done to His body and blood; and they sin now against their Lord more with their hand and mouth than when they denied their Lord" (*The Lapsed* 15-16 [A.D. 251]).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem:

"The bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ" (*Catechetical Lectures* 19:7 [A.D. 350]).

St. Ambrose of Milan:

"Perhaps you may be saying, 'I see something else; how can you assure me that I am receiving the body of Christ?' It but remains for us to prove it. And how many are the examples we might use! . . . Christ is in that sacrament, because it is the body of Christ" (*The Mysteries* 9:50, 58 [A.D. 390])

St. Augustine of Hippo:

"Christ was carried in his own hands when, referring to his own Body, he said, 'This is my Body' [Matt. 26:26]. For he carried that body in his hands" (*Explanations of the Psalms* 33:1:10 [A.D. 405]).

"I promised you [new Christians], who have now been baptized, a sermon in which I would explain the sacrament of the Lord's Table, which you now look upon and of which you last night were made participants. You ought to know what you have received, what you are going to receive, and what you ought to receive daily. That bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ" (*Sermons* 227 [A.D. 411]).

"What you see is the bread and the chalice; that is what your own eyes report to you. But what your faith obliges you to accept is that the bread is the Body of Christ and the chalice is the Blood of Christ. This has been said very briefly, which may perhaps be sufficient for faith; yet faith does not desire instruction" (*ibid.*, 272).

(The above quotes are from the Catholic Answers web page <http://www.catholic.com/>)

IV. Conclusion

All of this can be summarized in the Armenian Church tradition in the following way: "The moment during the Divine Liturgy when the bread and the wine become truly the blood and body of our Lord Jesus Christ is liturgically referred to as the *Epiclesis*, which means 'Invocation' (see the words of the priest in the section above titled "*Epiclesis*"). In the Armenian Church the transformation of the wine and the bread in to the body and blood of the Lord is referred to as *Transposition* [the Western Church using Aristotelian terminology and concepts refers to this as *Transubstantiation*]. The fathers of the Armenian Church consider the process a mystery and explain it as follows:

Abp. Tiran Nersoyan paraphrases and cites the great twelfth century Armenian Church father and ecumenist, St. Nerses of Lampron:

"According to [Nerses of Lampron] until the Invocation [*Epiclesis*] the bread and the wine are offered as the symbols of the earthly Body and Blood of Christ by the priest. These visible and material symbols are offered to God side by side with the invisible and

spiritual offering by the faithful. At the Invocation [Epiclesis] these two offerings are made one by God the Father.

“During His life on earth, Christ received the Holy Spirit on our behalf, being consubstantial with men. At the Eucharist ‘the blessing of the bread and the cup signifies the imparting of the power of our Lord’s Body , i.e., the Spirit of Grace, to the Gifts.’ Thus the Grace of God makes the ‘bread and the wine of Christ, the Body and Blood of Christ.’ By communicating with the Body and Blood of Christ the faithful receive the same Spirit.

St. Nerses of Lampron also has the following to say on the Epiclesis:

“And how can [the Gifts] be changed by the Holy Spirit from being a symbol into being a reality? Let us show by an example: When we take the body of a man without the spirit, it can be said to be the symbol of man, but not a real man. But when by God’s will a reasonable spirit is united with a dead body, then this is said to be a real, living man. The spirit which was united with the body is not visible to our sensible eyes, nor can we see thereby anything added to the body, but only we see the same body living by the spirit.

“In the same way these symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ were paradigms put before God by the priest; they were the signs of the reality of the reasonable sacrifice. But God the Father, taking the reasonable sacrifice [the Divine Liturgy] together with its symbols, breathed in His omnipotence, the life-giving Spirit into the lifeless body. Thus He made that which was at first a (merely) sensible body, now the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Similarly by the union of the Spirit of Christ with the wine, He made it to be the Blood of Christ. And as by the union of the spirit with the body nothing material is added to the essence of the body, but only thereby matter is energized and becomes operative as living, so also in the same way when the Spirit of God is united with this bread, and it is made to be the Body of Christ, no change or addition is made to the matter, but only it receives intelligible power and thus become operative in them that taste of it.

[Commentary on the Mystery of the Holy Sacrifice, by St. Nerses of Lampron, Archbishop of Tarsus of Cilicia written in 1177. Printed in Jerusalem, 1842, p. 108 (in Armenian)].” -Frequently Asked Questions on the Armenian Church, pgs. 135-136

Thus it is apparent that the Armenian Church’s faith about Holy Communion comes from the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Fathers of the Church and ultimately from Jesus Christ Himself.

Revised 12/3/11 by:
Sub-Deacon Lazarus W. Der-Ghazarian
Feast of the Armenian Church’s First Illuminators:
The Holy Apostles Thaddaeus and Bartholomew