

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER THE SON AND THE HOLLY SPRIT ONE GOD AMEN!!!

HOLY COMMUNION

We believe that this sacrament is an unbloody Sacrifice offered for our salvation. Our Lord said: "This is my blood which is given (Sacrificed) for you" (Luke 22:19, 20). St. Paul (I Cor. 10:18-21) gives the proof that the Holy Communion is offered on the altar as a true sacrifice and in Heb. 13:10 he refers to the Christian altar. This sacrifice of the New Testament was foretold in the Old Testament: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering (or "sacrifice"), for my name shall be great among the heathen" (Mal. 1.11). The Council of Nicaea called the Holy Communion an unbloody sacrifice. All the Church Fathers called it a sacrifice. This sacrifice is the same as that which was offered on the Cross, the Offeror is the same Jesus Christ. The difference between this and that which was offered on Calvary is this: a) On the cross our Lord offered a visible sacrifice, in the Holy Communion it is invisible under the form of bread and wine; b) On the cross it was a bloody sacrifice through shedding of * blood, in the Holy Communion it is unbloody; c) The sacrifice on Calvary was offered for all the race of man once only and in one place, but the unbloody sacrifice is offered continuously, in every place on earth.

REAL PRESENCE

The Ethiopian Church holds the doctrine of the real presence. The consecrated bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the consecrated elements. In the Eucharist we eat the blessed flesh of our Lord and drink His precious blood under the form of bread and wine. As the church Fathers said, "Our Lord is present in this sacrament, not in type or by way of granting his grace as in the case of other sacraments, but He is truly and actually present. The bread is changed after prayer into the Lord's very body which was born at Bethlehem from the Virgin Mary, baptised at Jordan, suffered, buried and rose from the dead. Likewise, the wine is changed into the very blood of the Lord which was shed on the cross." We do not take the bread and wine as a mere memorial service in remembrance of the Lord's suffering and death. How the change takes place we do not know and we do not need to know. It is done by the power of God. It is faith, not science. That old-time, ancient conviction, based on faith in an all-powerful God is still deeply entrenched in our Church and this basic belief has been left untouched by the changes affecting many churches in the rest of Christendom. Proof of the real presence can be gathered from the Bible. The Lord said: "This is my body... this is my blood"; from the decisions of the early Councils of Nicaea and Ephesus; the writings of the early fathers (Clement, Dionisius, Cyril of Alexandria, Macarius and Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Gregory, Basil and many others); the writings even of Martin Luther who said: "Christ said, 'This is my flesh,' and we can do nothing better than to respect His words". Before Communion the priest declares: "I believe, I believe, I believe and I confess that this is the body and blood of our Lord and our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. When giving Communion to the recipients he says: "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ", and "This is the precious blood of Christ". As an expression of exterior reverence, when the Sacrament goes around, the people kneel or bow deeply, small and large bells jubilantly ring, and incense fills the air. All this clearly indicates that the real presence is the very heart of the worship which the church is prepared to preserve as handed down by the Apostles. The Institution form in the Anaphoras of John Chrysostom and of St. Mark is: "This is my body... This is my blood" So, from the earliest times to the present day, the Ethiopic liturgy has witnessed to the belief in the doctrine of the real presence.