

*The Christmas Greeting is again exchanged.
Christ is born! Glorify Him!*

Everyone is now seated.

The father makes the Sign of the Cross on the bottom of the loaf of bread, and then cuts it and distributes it to all present. (A portion of) the bread is eaten. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger." (John 6:35) As we eat this bread, and follow it with a cup of wine, we are reminded of the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, which is our spiritual sustenance.

*The father gives a toast. The following model may be used:
Good Christians! I greet you on the feast of Christ's Birth and pray that the Lord grant us prosperity and good health to praise the eternal God for many years.*

Reply: Grant this, O God!

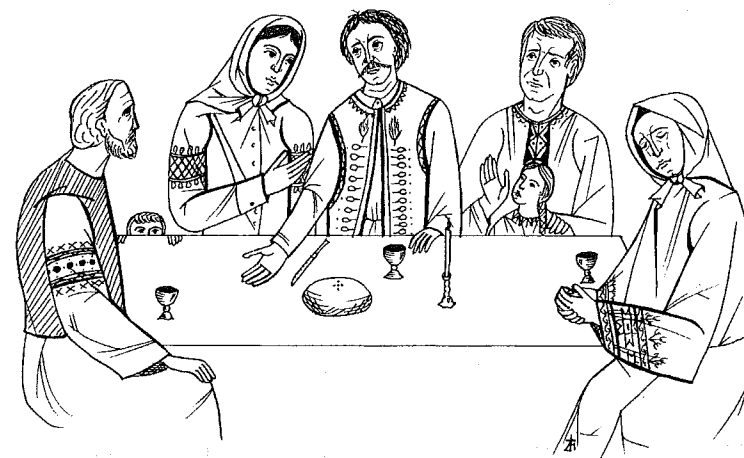
The mother takes a tooth of garlic, dips it in honey, makes the Sign of the Cross over each of those present, and gives it to them to eat. (Alternatively, the mother can go to everyone with the plate of garlic and honey, and let each person take and dip their own.) The honey symbolizes life's sweetness, and the garlic life's bitterness. We accept both the good and the bad in life, and give praise to God through it all.

The meal begins. No one should skip a dish.

After the dinner is complete, the father reads one of the accounts of Christ's birth from Holy Scripture (Matthew 2, or Luke 2:1-20). Then kol'ady - traditional Christmas Carols - are sung.

*Composed by David M. Mastroberte, 1995. Revised 1997, 2000. Final Revision, 2002.
Cover graphic by David M. Mastroberte, 2002.*

НАВЕЧЕРІЄ РОЖДЕСТВА ХРІТОВА
THE EVE OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST



СВАТІЙ ВЕЧЕРЬ
HOLY SUPPER

AS CELEBRATED IN THE MASTROBERTE FAMILY

In addition to the traditional foods, the following items should be prepared:

- A single candle.
- The Festal Icon (if available).
- A pitcher and bowl.
- A rope, to tie around the legs of the table.
- A vessel of holy water (and a sprinkler).
- Straw, either placed on top or underneath the tablecloth.
- An extra place setting, left empty, in remembrance of the departed.

According to a pious custom, the meal begins after the first star appears in the sky. This is a reminder of the Star of Bethlehem.

When the Holy Supper is ready to begin, everyone stands.

The father announces the Christmas Greeting for the first time:

Christ is born!

Христóсь раждáйтесѧ! (*Christos razhdayetsya!*)

Everyone replies:

Glorify Him!

СЛА́ВИТЕ ЕГО̀! (*Slavite Yeho!*)

One of the children (usually the youngest), with a pitcher and bowl, washes the hands of each of those in attendance, in order from eldest to youngest. (A [silver or gold] coin may be placed in the bowl and then given to the youngest child.) As we do this, we pray that the Lord cleanse us from all dirtiness, both physical and spiritual.

The father takes a rope, sprinkles it with holy water and ties it around the legs of the table. This symbolizes the everlasting bond of the family.

The mother sprinkles everyone with holy water. By the sprinkling of this holy water, we ask God to make our souls and minds receptive to the meaning of the Birth of Christ.

The father sprinkles the animals of the household (if there be any) with holy water. Just as the animals in the stable were blessed by God's presence, so we ask the Lord to bless our animals and keep them safe.

The single candle, placed near the center of the table, is now lit. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) As we light this candle and remember Christ's appearance to the world, we ask Him to guide us by His light and warm us with the radiance of His love.

The father now leads a (kneeling) prayer of gratitude to God for all the blessings of the past year, and for His blessing on the coming new year. Then we sing Troparion and Kontakion:

TROPARION

Tone 4 Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, * has shone to the world the light of wisdom! * For by it those who worshipped the stars * were taught by a star to adore Thee, * the Sun of Righteousness, * and to know Thee, the Orient from on high. * O Lord, glory to Thee!

KONTAKION

Tone 3 Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, * and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! * Angels with shepherds glorify Him! The Wise men journey with the Star! * Since for our sake the Eternal God was born as a little child!

The father (or clergyman, if present) blesses the food:

Lord Jesus Christ, born in a manger for our sake and salvation: bless this food and drink of Your servants, for You are holy, always, now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen!