

New Faith to New World: Stories from the History of the Armenian Church

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1. Introduction for Teacher

This 16-session course has a simple goal: to introduce students to some of the important events and figures in Armenian Church history. The original *Stories from the History of the Armenian Church* was written by Dr. Hagop Nersoyan as a Sunday School textbook in 1963. It was subsequently edited for a new generation, illustrated, and released in 2009 with the title *New Faith to New World: Stories from the History of the Armenian Church*.

This is a course that requires a considerable amount of reading – not a popular activity in this era of truncated news articles and the bits and pieces featured on the Internet and social media. Nevertheless, it can prove to be a rewarding investment of class time in the upper grades.

How to handle the reading? Some ideas:

- Assign reading to be done at home. If you doubt this will work, try incentives for those who read consistently (a modest gift card to an eatery, bookstore, online store, etc.).
- Divide text among students and have them read and relate their part, i.e. “teach” the class that portion.
- Allow time for reading to be done silently in class before the session starts. Provide juice and donuts for this 15 minutes.
- Prepare text as a “reader’s theater” so that class can perform it together. Some sessions lend themselves naturally to this (the text has abundant dialogue) and has been done for you already.
- Invite someone (or different people) with a commanding voice and a theatrical flair to read the text aloud. You can pause for an occasional question or clarification.

Do I have to use the entire course? We don’t have that many weeks to devote to this!

You can select any of the stories that you think are important for students to know. Certainly, you would start with the first several chapters as foundational stories and then choose according to preference or theme. At the end of the course, students should be gifted the book to take home and continue reading (if not immediately, perhaps down the road...)

And their parents will have access to a valuable resource.

How do you prepare as a teacher?

If possible, you should read the entire curriculum beforehand and then re-read the current session’s text closely when you prepare each week. Be ready to answer questions about names or vocabulary. If there are current events or personalities (even from the recent past) that can be connected to the history being reviewed, present it to students via the newspaper article, magazine cover, Internet feature, etc. Required handouts appear at the end and are identified by session.

There are two Diocesan videos used in sessions 2 and 4. Review them prior to the sessions to be prepared.

Timing is approximate and offers only a *guideline* as to how to pace the class. The sessions are dense and may require more time or spontaneous shifting of gears. Be

flexible and ready to adjust! You may also find that some sessions could be continued the following week.

Prayers are often provided for each session but feel free to choose your own, to be creative with student participation, or use *Here I Am, Lord*, a book of prayers geared for young adults recently updated and issued by the Department. (See our Catalog at www.vemkar.us.)

You will learn as much as your students will using this course! If you enjoy learning and expanding your own understanding and knowledge of the Armenian Church, you will enjoy this course.

Session 1. Introduction

1. *Opening Prayer:* “Dear Lord, thank you for our time together to learn more about you. Please bless us as we take this journey into the history of our church, which was born so long ago as your Body on earth, continues to this day, and will continue to the end of time. Amen.”
2. *Write the words* History of the Armenian Church *on the board. Ask students what people, events, dates, battles, movements, etc. come to mind when they see this phrase. As students respond, draw lines from the phrase and record their contributions at the end of each line (called a webbing exercise). They might need prompting! Depending on the response:* “Well you really know a lot more than you thought, right? Or I know you have learned more than this over the years, but this course will give us a good opportunity to learn more.”
3. *Distribute books and have students write their names inside.* “Our main resource for the next few months will be one of the great classic works in our church, *New Faith to New World* by Dr. Hagop Nersoyan, who was a professor of philosophy, a deacon of the Armenian Church and a prolific author of essays and reflections on Armenian Church topics. Dr. Nersoyan believed very strongly that history is best understood through stories. When you think of it, this is exactly how the Bible teaches its great truths. Decades ago, this entire book in a longer form was studied closely by Sunday School students. They were even assigned essays to write! However several years ago, the stories and the very fact-dense introductions were abridged and now we finally have an opportunity to look at some of it together. We won’t be reading every story and the stories we *do* read won’t always be read in their entirety. But the work we do together will give us a great sense of the sweep of Armenian Church history from the beginnings up through the founding of the first church in America. So let’s start right in.”
(15 min)
4. “As the Introduction is a very important prelude to all the stories, let’s take a look at some of it together (p. 8).” *Read the first five paragraphs (this can be done silently, out loud, taking turns, or with the help of a guest reader who can read with flair.* “So, what is history?” *Wait for answer and refer students to first paragraph.* “Yes, those events and people that affect human destiny in an appreciable way *and* are recorded by someone or, in pre-literate societies, in *some way* (ruins of buildings, pottery, art).” *Ask:* “What is the

responsibility of the Armenian Church?" Refer them to the 5th paragraph and wait for answer. "Yes, to make its flock aware of God's presence in the world and how that changes how they live."

5. *Continue by saying:* "Now there are various periods into which the history of the Armenian Church and people can be divided." *Read together the last paragraph on page 9 through the top concluding sentence on page 11. Ask:* "What are the five challenges (refer them to the first paragraph on page 10) that Nersoyan identifies as having been courageously met by the people whose stories he tells?" *Discuss. Then summarize the key point on page 11 by commenting:* "And how amazing it is to be reminded that while individuals are made famous because of certain important things they did, *lots* of people were actually involved, whether it's building a Cathedral or winning a battle. Can you think of a famous person in American history and what he or she was known for?" *Wait for answers then say...* "How about President Abraham Lincoln? What's just one thing he was known for? Ending slavery with the passing of the 13th Amendment. But who did it take to accomplish this? Countless people who advised him, senators, congressmen, anti-slavery advocates, many simple folks who told him what they thought, and so on. King Drtad and Queen Ashkhen are reported to have built the first Armenian Cathedral in Armenia, but just as Nersoyan says, did they do this alone? With only their own two hands? Of course not." (20 min)
6. *Read the rest of the Introduction.* "So some good thoughts here. First of all, (refer to the second paragraph, on page 11, "A"), history is about the people and events who make us uniquely who we are. And when we know that, we know ourselves better. For example, let's see how that works out for us individually. (*Prepare this in advance and write each answer on the board*) I was born in _____, my grandparents (or great grandparents) came from _____, my father and mother worked as _____ while I was growing up, my hero was _____, and the biggest news of the time was _____. Who can give me this information about themselves?" *Ask for two volunteers – their answers will of course be different; write them on the board as they answer.* "Can you see from just these simple facts, how we are built into who we are by such things?" (20 min)
7. "Lastly (*refer students to the final paragraph of the Introduction*), what do we do when re-read about the influential people of our church history? Yes! We don't just admire them and celebrate their memories. That's not what they would have wanted. That's not what God wants us to do when we reflect on the lives of saints." *Read the last five lines of the paragraph starting with "They are not interested in our praises."* *Close the book and ask:* "Okay, complete this sentence everyone: Today I learned that _____." *End with the Lord's Prayer.* (5 min)

Session 2. The Gospel is Preached in Armenia: Thaddeus & Sandoukht

New Faith to New World/ Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 3

1. *Open with a prayer.* “Lord, open our eyes to the devotion and love the early apostles had for you and the deep faith that led a princess to choose you over life itself. Fill us with your wisdom and your love. Amen.”
2. *Ask students (by show of hands):* “Has anyone ever been to Armenia and seen the temple at Garni?” What were your impressions of Garni?” *If no one has seen it, show the attached picture and tell the class:*
 - Garni is a reminder of Armenia's pre-Christian, pagan history.
 - Ancient Armenians worshipped many gods, such as Anahit, Aramazd, Vahagn, and fire.
 - People used to have to sacrifice their best livestock to lifeless statues of these gods.
 - The temple priests grew very rich, without any care for the people.



3. “Okay, Armenia is a pagan land; the people have not heard of Jesus Christ. Let’s read about how they *do* hear about him.” *Start on page 32 with the paragraph beginning "Even when beliefs weaken..." and divide the text into roughly equal portions, stopping on page 37 at the first set of asterisks. Have each group or student silently read their passage and then retell what they have learned to the rest of the class. (25 min)*
4. *After the students complete their review, fill in the continuing story with this information:*
 - King Sanadrouk's spies informed him that his daughter was attending Christian services.
 - The spies reported that Sandoukht had received Holy Communion.
 - The king decided to put a stop to Sandoukht's Christian worship.
5. “Let’s consider what we have read and talked about so far with the help of a video on this very story.” *Show the Diocesan Bread and Salt video "Crown or Sword."* *Discuss, using these questions:*
 - a. What struck you about the video? What did you like? What did you learn that you didn’t know before? *(Students might not have known what pagan Armenia was like in the 1st century.)*

- b. Do you recall the opening image? (*a clock loudly ticking*) What did this image mean to you? (*perhaps the passing of time, a sense of something urgent*)
- c. The narrator tells us that sometimes things change, that “people start to see the world in a new way.” Turn to 2 Corinthians 17 and let’s read (“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”). What does this mean? (*That someone who has rooted his or her life in Christ cannot remain the same, they are transformed, and see the world differently, seeing the world and others as God does.*)
- d. The video very dramatically describes what pagan religion was like in the Armenia of Princess Sandoukht: “The gods were impersonal, heedless of human concerns, forces of nature like the storm or the sun, invisible spirits...,and people lived in fear.” We might not have gods of the storm and sun, but what *are* some of the gods we worship today? And even live in fear of not having them? (*Success, physical attractiveness, celebrity, popularity, wealth, things, etc.*) What do you think kids *your* age worship?
- e. The two objects Sandoukht’s father placed before her were powerful symbols. What did the crown represent? (*More than just her royal title, the entire life that goes with it: physical comfort, fame, self-importance, worldly treasure, etc.*) The sword? (*Again more than just the executioner’s tool, a symbol as well of a world that is ruled not by compassion and justice but by cruelty and sheer might.*) What are some of the ways *we* are offered a choice between our faith and the world every day? (*Could be something as simple as choosing to be kind rather than impatient; coming to Sunday School even if we’re tired.*)

(20 min)

6. *Take turns reading the story of Sandoukht’s choice (pp. 39-41), noting the striking illustration on page 40. With the last sentence, conclude: “and as we heard in the video, it would take a few centuries for Christianity to take root in Armenian royalty so that they might declare the entire nation Christian. That’s what we’ll be looking at for the next two sessions.”*

7. *Close with a prayer. Hand out small slips of paper, and have students write a person or situation they want to pray for, i.e. my grandmother who is sick, my friend who is having trouble in school, the people in countries where there is war, etc. (participate as well). Then collect them and pray: “Lord, we end our class in prayer by offering up to you these requests, that you might bless and keep close to you read each request..... Amen.”*

(15 min)

Session 3. The Conversion of Armenia I: St. Gregory the Enlightener

New Faith to New World/ Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 4

- 1. *Opening Prayer: “Heavenly Father, thank you for the brave men and women throughout the ages who sacrificed so much so that we might all walk in the light of your Son Jesus. Please give us the courage to fearlessly follow their example. Amen.”*

2. “Today we will be looking into the life of St. Gregory the Enlightener and we’ll start by eavesdropping on a conversation that took place more than 1700 years ago. *Open the text to page 45.* Assign a student to read the “part” (dialogue) of Garnik, one to read the part of Nathan, and a narrator. *Begin reading aloud on page 45 where the paragraph begins “Garnik was a young peasant...” Stop them on the middle of page 46 after Nathan says, “How could he be so cruel to a friend?” (Note: Vagharshabad was a capital of ancient Greater Armenia and now commonly known as Etchmiadzin, the site of our mother Cathedral.)*

“So here we are listening in on this conversation. But what do we know about St. Gregory’s story up to now?” *They will probably know very little so fill in any gaps in their knowledge by telling them. Ask a recorder to write key words on the board as you speak. Pause to help with key words and sum up action (underlined below; adapt as you wish):*

- The Persians wanted to have more of Armenia under their rule, so they sent Anak, the man we just heard was Gregory’s father, to kill King Khosrov of Armenia.
- Anak attacked Khosrov on a hunting trip. As Khosrov was dying, he ordered that Anak and all his family should be killed.
- A kind nurse rescued Anak’s son Gregory and fled.
- Gregory was raised a Christian in Caesarea and given an excellent education.
- Khosrov’s son, Trdat (known universally as Tiridates), was raised in Rome and then returned to Armenia to be king.
- Before his time in the pit, Gregory had a wife and two sons, Aristakes and Vertanes. They will both become priests and have important roles in the Armenian Church.

3. *Resume the reading. Change readers so that more students have a chance to participate. Begin on page 51 where Nathan asks, “How did Trdat meet Gregory?” Read through to the end of the chapter on page 53.*
4. *Have the students google “images of St. Gregory’s pit” on their smart phones. Remark on how dark and barren the pit is. (30 min)*
5. *Tell the students, “As you recall, before Christianity people used to worship statues, fire, and other idols. But, interestingly, idols are not always made of wood or stone or metal. We spoke about this briefly in our last session. Let’s take a look at what, if anything, is taking the place of God in our lives.” Distribute the handout and pencils. Have the students rank the importance of various things in their lives by circling a number that applies to each activity, with 0 being none and 5 being the most.*

| | <u>Time Actually Spent (in Hours)</u> | <u>Time You Think You Should Spend</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Homework | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Sports | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Relationships | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Helping at home/ Chores | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |

| | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Health/Fitness | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Job | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Sleeping | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Hanging out with friends | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Bible reading/ prayer/time alone with God | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Volunteering | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Spending time with family | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Music practice/ listening | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Other interests/ hobbies | 0 1 2 3 4 5 | 0 1 2 3 4 5 |

After the students have completed the exercise, discuss the results by asking questions such as:

- Does how you spend your time reflect what you believe is important?
- What changes would you like to make to your priorities?
- What surprised you about the results?
- What changes do you think God would like you to make?
- What makes it difficult/impossible for you to make any changes?

6. *End with the Lord's Prayer.*

(30 min)

Session 4. The Conversion of Armenia, II: St. Gregory the Enlightener

New Faith to New World/ Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 5

1. *Open class with a prayer:* “Dear Lord, we are proud of the fact that Armenians were the first nation to declare themselves officially Christian through the miracle of their conversion. And yet that pride comes with a commitment, a commitment to honor you even more openly and more deeply than anyone else. Help us make our ancient faith more than a point of pride, but rather a heart-felt way of life. Amen.”
2. “Today we’re going to continue the incredible story of Armenia’s conversion. I’ll start the story, then we’ll read some silently, I’ll fill in, and we’ll continue reading.” *Start by reading the introductory page*

(55). *Begin with the first sentence of the first paragraph and skip the rest of the paragraph. Then continue reading through to the end of the page. Continue:*

3. “As our story opens, thousands of people are on the road to Caesarea where St. Gregory is to be ordained the first Catholicos. They are also carrying a very important letter. Let’s find out more.” *Start reading at the top of p. 57 to the end of the first paragraph at the top of p. 58.*

(15 min)

4. “Now I want to show you a ten-minute video on part of today’s story.” *Show the Diocesan Bread and Salt video “Strength of Heart.” Discuss, using these questions:*

- a. What struck you about the video? What did you like? What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
- b. Who were the first enlighteners of Armenia mentioned at the beginning of the video - the apostles who brought the faith to Armenia? (*Thaddeus and Bartholomew*) Do you recall the circumstances under which they were empowered to be Armenia’s missionaries? (*On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended into the Upper Room where they were gathered and appeared as tongues of fire over their heads, gifting them with the power to speak different languages. This can be read in Acts 2:1-4.*)
- c. At one point in the video, you heard this about the king: “By every standard of the day, Drtad was a great man.” Who are some of the people that might be described that way today?
- d. Another quote from the film: “Hripsime’s heart and soul belonged to another. She was married already as a holy bride of Christ.” For someone who chooses a religious vocation, to live as a nun, or a monk, or to serve as a priest, the commitment to Christ is as total and as faithful as that of a husband and wife. But all Christians are asked to make a commitment to Christ as well, right? What does Jesus ask of all of us?” Write these two words on the board) “Follow me” and share these verses: “Follow me and I will give you rest, you will learn from me” (Matthew 11:28-30), “I will make you fishers of people” (Matthew 4:19), and “you will find true life” (Matthew 16: 24-26)
- e. Who was the forgotten prisoner in the pit? (St Gregory!) (20 min)

5. *Continue reading about the ordination from the top of page 60 (skip the 3rd paragraph on that page) to the end of the first paragraph on p. 61. “So we see the pageantry and the enthusiasm and the energy that St. Gregory’s ordination inspired. Any comments or questions? If not, let’s move on to the important thing he was able to do once ordained!”*

6. *Start reading on p 61 with the paragraph that begins “The return journey” and end on p 62 at the end of the first sentence of the second paragraph. “SO what happened here?” Yes, St. Gregory has baptized the King and the royal family and the nobles, making Christianity the faith of the nation. But there is one more incredible accomplishment of Gregory’s and of the Armenian royalty as well. Let’s read about it:*

7. *Read from the paragraph starting “I presume” on p. 64 through to the end of the first paragraph on the top of p 65. Ask students to provide the important points of what they just read:*

- a. Gregory saw a vision of where Etchmiadzin, the first Cathedral of the newly Christian people, would be built (*Have them describe the vision.*)

- b. He built smaller churches to honor Gayane, Hripsime and their companions.
- c. The king and queen and others physically assisted with the building.
- d. Gregory is unsurpassed in what he accomplished – he built churches, replacing pagan temples; he wrote; he preached and lived what he preached. (25 min)

8. “Okay, fantastic! I’d like to end class with all of us filling in this blank, one by one, “Today I learned that _____.” When everyone has had a turn, say a simple “thank you, God, for this new knowledge and the opportunity to learn more about our church and people. Let this move us to deeper understanding and faith. Amen.”

Session 5. He Loved His People: St. Nersess the Great

New Faith to New World/ Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 9

1. *Begin class with a prayer by holding up a photo of someone in trouble. This can be from a newspaper or the Internet. There are, unfortunately, plenty of places and people in the world who are in need of help so you shouldn’t have difficulty finding one! Tell the class: “Today we’ll be reading the story of one of the greatest saints of compassion and loving service our church has known, St. Nersess, and learning about how much he did to help others. I’m holding up a picture from the newspaper (explain the story behind the photo in a sentence or two). Keep him (her/them) in mind as we pray this morning: Lord, we live in such gracious comfort. Help us always be aware of those who suffer in the world so that we can make a difference and if not directly to them, to others in our neighborhood, our country, or elsewhere in the world who are in pain, who are hungry, who are alone. Let us be your loving hands in the world. Amen.”*
2. *Tell the class: “We’re going to read the story of St. Nersess starting on page 92. It is only 4 pages. The year is 353. Our hero is only 25 years old, a young but celebrated officer in the Armenian court. As you read, underline words that describe key events or accomplishments. Also, underline a sentence that strikes you, that especially speaks to you.” Allow 10 minutes and tell them they should be at least halfway through. Allow 20 minutes for the entire reading, but if students are done earlier or later, be flexible. (20 min)*
3. *Write the words St. Nersess the Great on the board and box it (this will be a webbing exercise). Ask for a volunteer or two to record answers on the board (again they will draw lines from the box and record the answers). Then call for key events and accomplishments. Make sure the following are mentioned:*
 - a. Ordained deacon, priest and elevated to Catholicos.
 - b. Founded monasteries. Add the following (from the introduction on page 91): “You might need to know a few things about this: The idea of monastic communities – places where people could leave their worldly lives and devote themselves to the Lord in different ways, whether scholarly or through service or prayer – was a very important movement right at this time. People like Sts. Pachomius and Anthony of Egypt and St. Basil of Caesarea were forming such communities during St. Nersess’ lifetime. He even visited a group of monks in Egypt and was so inspired, that he planned for his monasteries to combine works of charity with scholarship and the monastic life. One of the first monastery complexes he opened was near Caesarea and it included a hospital, a school, and a resting place for travelers.
 - c. Hospitals

- d. Rest stops for travelers
- e. Refuges for the elderly, widows, orphans
- f. Was poisoned and died at the age of 45

4. Now have them share the sentence they underlined. Direct them to yours, the 1st sentence of the 2nd paragraph from the bottom of page 94: "The driving concern of the patriarch was to make Christ a living reality in the life of everyone and make that life less painful and safer." Ask: "How did he do this primarily? (*Through his own personal care – as with the lepers – and by building places of safe haven for many different needs.*) (15 min)
5. "What did Jesus have to say about this concern? Let's look at something VERY important to us as Christians." Turn to Matthew 25:31-46. Have students take turns reading. Then discuss the reading using the following questions:
- a. Which group do you identify with in the story – the sheep, the goats or "one of the least of these?" Explain.
 - b. What do they have in common? (neither group knew it was Jesus they were helping or not helping)
 - c. This is the *only* place in the New Testament we hear of such a specific basis for judgment. What 6 actions is Jesus affirming? (*feeding the hungry, providing water for the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing those in need, caring for the sick, visiting the imprisoned*)
 - d. Looking at vv 35-36, how might you be helpful to others – as St. Nersess wanted so much to do – to make Christ a living reality to others? (*At the students' young age, their acts of charity could be giving financially, serving in a soup kitchen, reaching out to a fellow student, helping a friend*) (15 min)
6. Pass out exit slips and have students write their names and fill them out. Review answers. Collect exit slips; be prepared to come back with answers to their questions. End with a prayer. (10 min)

Session 6. The Bible is Translated into Armenian: St. Sahag

New Faith to New World/ Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 11

1. Begin with a prayer in this way. Ask everyone to think about a discovery or invention for which they are very grateful (i.e. printing press, refrigeration, air conditioning, computers, Internet, cell phones). When they have thought of one, have them come forward and write it on the board. Then pray: "Lord, we thank you for the grace and wisdom you bestowed on men and women over the centuries to make life so much better with the inventions of (itemize what's on the board). Today we offer up in prayer as well our gratitude for St. Sahag and St. Mesrob and their students and helpers who worked so hard to create an Armenian alphabet and translate your Word into Armenian for all to hear and understand. Amen." Review their exit slip questions. (15 min)
2. Tell the students to begin reading silently on the bottom of page 103 where the text begins, "On the Holy Friday of the year 378..." to page 104 after the sentence in the second to the last paragraph at the bottom, "The vision had come to an end." Ask the students, "What are three important prophecies from St. Sahag's vision?" (Accept all reasonable responses, but make sure that these are included: Armenia would lose its

independence and be divided between Persians and Romans; he would become the Catholicos; many people would later give their lives for their faiths.)*

**The Byzantine Empire was the name given to the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.*

3. *Have the students continue reading from where they left off to the end of the first paragraph at the top of p 105. Ask the class "Why did Sahag become a monk?" (He wanted to renounce the world, to strengthen his soul, to suffer in imitation of Christ.)*
4. *Have the class resume reading. Stop them again at the very top of page 107 where it says "Through their written language they felt unified." Ask the class, "What invention helped Sahag unify the Armenians through education?" (The Armenian alphabet.) "And what was the first book they wanted to see translated?" (The Bible)*
5. *Finish the chapter, then review the story together as follows. "So we have read just a little bit of the huge and complex story about how our alphabet was founded and the flurry of literary activity that followed. We're going to learn more next week. But let's think a bit creatively about what we just read." Form dyads, or if the class is small, just assign individual students to come up with 2 questions from one of the four text pages: 104, 105, 106, and 107. Make sure all pages are covered. Allow 10 minutes for the formulation of questions and 10 more to discuss answers. If the following weren't asked, make sure that you ask them:*

Page 104

- a. What was Deacon Sahag's connection to St. Gregory the Enlightener? (He was Sahag's great-great-great-grandfather.)
- b. What three important events were foreseen in the vision? (*This was asked of the class earlier but it will help to state them again.*) (Armenia would lose its independence and be divided between Persians and Romans; Sahag would become Catholicos; many people would be martyred.)
- c. Why did Sahag live as a monk for 9 years? (To renounce the world, strengthen his soul, and suffer in imitation of Christ.)
- d. What did he do to suffer in imitation of Christ? (He wore clothes of coarse material, carried an iron weight around his waist, and did not wear shoes.)

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- a. Who was Sahag's daughter's renowned son? (Vartan Mamigonian, of the Battle of Avarayr fame.)
- b. Where had Sahag been educated? (Byzantium or Constantinople)
- c. Where did he live? (In the half of Armenia controlled by the Persians.)
- d. Why was the Persian King unhappy that Sahag would become Catholicos? (His education in Byzantium might make him sympathetic to that region's powers.)

- e. What did he think would be good for the Persians, convincing the Persian King of this? (To be in touch with the West, to exchange ideas and ways of doing things.)

Page 106

- a. Who was the King of Armenia? (Vramshabou – the 3rd important figure in the story of the creation of the alphabet.)
- b. With the invention of Armenian letters, what were Armenians now able to do for the very first time? (Read and write in their own language.)
- c. What important book was translated into Armenian? (The Bible, the beauty of this translation has rendered it “The Queen of Translations.”)
- d. What type of activities took place during the Golden Age? (Many books were translated from Greek and other languages into Armenian; schools were opened to teach the written language, books were written, teachers were trained.)
- e. Why did the authorities in Western Armenia (controlled by the Greeks) initially discourage the use of the written Armenian? (They only wanted Greek to be taught.)

Page 107

- a. What King came to the Armenian throne after Vramshabouh died? (Artashir)
- b. How did the Armenian nobles feel about him? (They thought he was a poor leader and wanted him deposed.)

(20 min)

6. **Word Scramble.** *Distribute the handout to the class. Tell the students, “We are going to do something silly for a moment and do a word scramble. Put the letters in order to spell six common words. The underlined letters in each word are used to form the two words that complete this sentence: ‘The last several years of St. Sahag’s life were difficult, but he was at peace because he knew his work would...’” If they have too much trouble with the puzzle, tell them a hint is in the last paragraph of the chapter they just read. At the end, share the solution with them.* (10 min)

Words: TRUCK, TRAVEL, LUMBER, FLOWER, READER, SPIDE

(Solution: BEAR FRUIT)

7. *Conclude the session.* “So we see how St. Sahag’s life and work bore so much fruit, was *fruitful*. We are *all* called to live fruitful Christian lives. Turn to John 15:5 and 16: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” *Discuss with the class using the following question:* “What do these verses tell us about what we should be doing as Christians?” (*bearing fruit*) “How do our prayers need to be directed?” (*to helping us be*

fruitful) “Is it possible to be truly fruitful, to use all our gifts, apart from God?” (*no*). End with a prayer. (5 min)

Session 7. The Invention of the Armenian Letters: St. Mesrob

New Faith to New World/ Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 12

1. *Open with a prayer as follows:* “Lord, today we learn about a saint of the church who devoted himself to you and to spreading your Word through the invention of an alphabet and the translation of the Holy Bible. As we read, fill our hearts with gratitude and inspiration. Help us, too, become fruitful people who will serve you by serving others. All for *your* glory, Amen.”

Continue: “It’s so hard for us sometimes to understand what it means to bear fruit, to use our gifts for God’s glory. We talked about this briefly at the end of last session. But Jesus is very clear about the most important reason for our good work. Let’s look at Matthew 5:16: ‘In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.’ So what does that mean?” (*That all the wonderful things we do, our discoveries, our creative accomplishments, our hard work, is at heart, a reflection of all the gifts God gave us, and therefore of him...*)

2. *Ask the students:* “How many of you speak Armenian?” (*Show of hands*), then say, “Raise your hand if you can read or write Armenian.” *Direct their attention to the illustration of Mesrob’s vision on page 108 and ask if anyone can read the letters. Then ask where students learned to speak/read/or write Armenian.* “Well, it’s nice to see that some of us are familiar with Armenian, because knowing another language is so important in understanding the culture and personality of the people who speak it. SO knowing Armenian is like having a beautiful window into the Armenian soul.” (10 min)

3. *Tell the class:* “Today we are going to learn about Saint Mesrob and his role in the creation of the Armenian alphabet. Remember that up to now the Armenian language was spoken but could not be written. Most people were illiterate. The royal court used either Greek or Persian for their official correspondence.” *Divide the students into two groups. Tell the first group to begin reading silently from the bottom of page 109 to the second paragraph on page 111 after it says ‘We shall learn how to use them, then we shall teach others.’ Tell the second group to begin reading on page 111 where it says, ‘When Vahrij returned...’ and continue through the end of the chapter.* (15 min)

4. *When the students have finished, give out pencils and four sheets of plain paper to each group. Tell them to number the papers on one side with the numbers 1-4. Tell each group they are going to create a 4-panel cartoon strip about their half of the chapter, with each sheet showing something important from the reading. Stick figures are fine – it’s not an art contest, but clarity is important.* (20 min)

As a guideline, important points in each:

- a. Pp 109-11 (top)
 - People in church listening to someone read the Bible and not understanding

- Catholicos Sahag at work at a desk with his black robe and long beard working on a text with a quill
- Fr. Mesrob talking excitedly to the Catholicos about Daniel's letters
- Catholicos Sahag and Mesrob meeting with King Vramshabouh about the need for Armenian letters
- Vahrij traveling to meet Daniel the Syrian and see his alphabet
- Students pouring into the Armenian capital to be instructed in the new alphabet

b. Pp 111-113

- People working together on trying to refine an Armenian alphabet
- Fr. Mesrob traveling the land with some of his students doing research
- St. Mesrob's dream of a hand writing the letters on a rock
- Translation of the Bible
- St. Mesrob touring the country teaching Armenian/or teaching a few students/inventing the Georgian and Albanian alphabets

5. *When they have finished, tape each team's sheets in order on the wall. Have each team instruct the other group about what they read.* (10 min)

7. *Conclusion: Tell the students:* "As you learned in this chapter, coming up with the Armenian alphabet wasn't easy. The process took years of trial-and-error. Lots of scholars were involved and the court minister Vahrij and later Mesrob took long trips in the days when travel was done on foot or by donkey. Mesrob and his helpers refused to give up. Catholicos Sahag and Fr. Mesrob together with their team translated the Bible and many, many other famous works from other languages into Armenian. Some of these 5th century Armenian translations are the only available texts of these works, making them invaluable! Let's look at the very first phrase translated into Armenian from the Bible: Turn to Proverbs 1:2. These initial verses are explaining the purpose of the proverbs: "for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight." And then let's look at verse 7, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all knowledge." Fear, meaning awe, taking God seriously. He's the real deal. That's the beginning of all understanding. Why do you think that's the controlling principle of all knowledge?"

8. *End with a prayer.* "Lord, give us the wisdom to know who you are, and to truly make you the Lord of our lives and your ways our guiding light." (5 min)

Session 8. The Armenians Defend Their Religion: The Vartanians

New Faith to New World/ Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 14

1. *Open with a prayer:* "Lord, today we will be learning about a time when the men and women of Armenia were asked to defend their Christian beliefs. Difficult decisions had to be made. Help us too, Lord, whenever we face a choice that is about following you or going astray. Give us the courage and vision to do the right thing. Amen."

2. Have the students silently read Chapter 14, which begins in the middle of page 121.
(15 min)

3. For this exercise, you will need pens, as well as the following titles printed at the top of individual blank pages and ready to distribute (one for each student; choose the starred ones first if it's a small group). Tell the students they are going to write a diary entry of one paragraph from the point of view and situation of the individual on their paper. They first need to find the specific reference in the story. Since this is a diary entry, they should think about personal reactions to their subjects and their circumstances.
(20 min)

King Yazdegerd after hearing his armies had just defeated the Kushians

The king 's representative Tenshapur on his way to Armenia to try make the Armenians change their faith. *

The king 's representative Tenshapur after meeting with the Armenian lords about religion.

An Armenian bishop after hearing what Tenshapur wanted. *

Ghevont Yeretz making plans for the meeting at Artashat.*

A council attendee thinking about the letter going to the Persian King.*

King Yazdegerd's reaction to the Armenian lords' refusal to give up their faith.*

Vartan Mamigonian reflecting on what he said to the Persians.*

An Armenian lord upon hearing that he would be taken away.

King Yazdegerd after hearing that the Armenian lords agreed to abandon their faith.

An Armenian lord on the decision to pretend to change their faith.*

King Yazdegerd's observations on watching the Armenian lords participating in the fire and sun worship.

An Armenian lord pretending to participate in the fire and sun worship.*

A magus (Persian pagan priest) on his way to Armenia to teach youth, destroy churches, and take the churches' gold and silver.*

Ghevont Yeretz about his plan to protect the church.

The chief of the magi who escaped back to Persia after being attacked by the Armenians.

Vartan Mamigonian after the magi were attacked and chased away.*

4. *When the students have finished, have them share their diary entries with the class.*
(15 min)

5. *To conclude the session, turn students' attention to the very famous line from the Armenians' letter to the Persians (the last sentence in the 4th paragraph from the top of page 123): "From this faith, nothing can shake us, neither angels nor men, nor sword, nor fire."*
Write it on the board. Ask for comments, referring to the story. Use the following to guide the brief discussion.
 - a. Would you be willing to make this statement?
 - b. We are not living in the 5th century under foreign rule, although, think about it, our forefathers and mothers were living in just such conditions in Ottoman Turkey at the time of the Genocide and they had that same decision to make. What are some of the smaller challenges we face daily to follow Jesus?
End with a prayer. (10 min)

Session 9. Our National Hero: St. Vartan Mamigonian

New Faith to New World/Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/ Chapter 15

1. *Open the class with the 23rd Psalm, lines from which the Vartanian soldiers recited on the day they went into battle against the Persians. Draw students' attention to the title of the chapter: "Our National Hero." Ask them:*
 - What do we understand from the word "our?" (*a community, a society, a people in agreement on fundamental matters of identity, including who our leader is*)
 - How about "national"? Have them look up the word nation on their phones. Discuss meaning. Is it necessarily about geographical boundaries? (*Native American tribes are called "nations," i.e. the Cherokee Nation, and while they no longer have their native lands they are still a people.*) What ties a people together as a nation? (*shared beliefs, language, history, aspirations*)

2. *Write the word "hero" on the board. Ask the class for words that describe a hero and record them on the board as they are mentioned. Definitions include: a person admired for courage, outstanding achievements, extraordinary abilities that save others, a champion, an ideal, an*

outstanding person of divine origins (from the Greek, i.e. Hercules), the chief character in a story. Ask students who they would cite as heroes in today's world, in pop culture (comic book characters like Batman, Superman ?) in their schools, in their families? Be ready with your own examples from world leaders to personal friends and family or perhaps even well-known fictional characters.

3. *Continue: 'Well, today we're going to take a closer look at this man we lovingly call our national hero, the man who led the Armenian people at a crucial time and as a general, led his soldiers, the Vartanians, or in classical Armenian, the "Vartanank," about whom we began to read last week. Write the name on the board: 'Vartan Mamigonian. As you recall from last week, the Armenian leaders had gone to Persia to see the king. They offered him their loyalty and service, but told him they would not change their faith. When the king threatened to keep the Armenians prisoner, they decided they would pretend to follow the pagan Persian religion because they were afraid of what would happen to their leaderless nation. The Armenian leaders were allowed to return home, and that's when the resistance began.'* (10 min)
4. *Have the students begin reading silently on page 128. Stop them after they finish the second paragraph which ends with the phrase, "the love of Christ in his heart." Ask the class: "What does this last sentence mean? Can you describe it more fully? (God's love for us showed us what that very word means and without loving Him first, it is hard to fully love and serve.)*
5. *Have the students resume reading. Stop them on page 128 after the phrase, "who favored pleasing the Persians at all costs" (8th line from the bottom). Ask the class: "What did the Armenians stand to lose if they stopped trying to keep the Persians happy?"(Their freedom, their lives!) "What would they have lost if they did not resist the Persians?" (Their faith, eternal life, by denying their faith.)
Have the students finish reading the rest of the chapter. Ask what, if anything, struck them about the story. (Interesting things to note: the presence of the Catholicos, bishops, and priests; the prayerfulness of the soldiers; the celebration of Badarak before they fought their oppressors.) (20 min)*
6. *Now have them turn back to the introductory page (which they did not read). Have students take turns reading the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs aloud line by line. "Okay, this sums up so beautifully what was important about today's lesson, that I'm going to ask you each to come up to the board and outline the important points and we'll discuss them as you do." Distribute paper and ask students to outline important points. Then have them come up one by one to the board. The following would be a good outline. After each bulletin point are questions you might ask to confirm students' understanding:*
 - *The Battle of Avarayr took place on May 26, 451 A.D. Avarayr is the name of the village in the field of Shavarshan. Why do you think this day has become so important to Armenians? What does it stand for? (Avarayr and 451 became symbols of courage, strength, martyrdom, self-determination and unshakable faith.)*
 - *The Vartanians resisted assimilation and conversion. While we might not be physically attacked for our beliefs or our identity, there are challenges we face all the time. What are some of those? (A secular environment, a multi-cultural society, the discipline it takes to live out your faith.)*
 - *The Vartanians were allying their culture and religion with the Christian West. Think about it. What was in danger of happening without this show of resistance? (Absorption into Persian culture and religion – an irreversible loss.)*

- Vartan, Ghevont, and the other 1035 who fell that day were acknowledged by the Church as saints. *What does this imply? (The Church recognized their sacrifice as extraordinary, made for their faith, to honor and glorify Christ. There are many saints the Church has acknowledged, but there are many men and women who have lived or died for their faith that may not have been noticed by the church of this world but whom God has surely acknowledged.)*
 - The way these soldiers allied themselves with Christ recalls two powerful verses from Scripture in Luke 9:24-25. *Read these from the Bible but start at Luke 9 18. Ask students: “Why do you think Jesus asks the disciples what others think of Him?” (Perhaps to see if they are understanding, if they are hearing His true message). Why does He ask them who HE is (v. 20)? (For the same reason!)” If He asked you that question today what would each of you answer? What does it mean to you to deny yourself and take up His Cross?” (Shouldn’t be overwhelming! It’s putting His way first, putting aside our selfishness, greed, pride, etc. and taking up the life He would want us to live.) “What does it mean to “lose” your life?” (Lose the old way we look at the world and exchange it for God’s way.)*
7. *To conclude, ask: “Thinking back to our definitions of hero, how does St. Vartan fit the bill? He lost the war, right, so where is the outstanding achievement?” (Bravery, vision, determination, sacrifice, action that led to desired results, freeing others). Now ask students to turn to the last line of the story and have a volunteer read it. Then say: “Well, this is exactly what happened. In the very next story – which we will not be reading – Vartan’s nephew, the brilliant military leader and statesman Vahan Mamigonian, negotiates the Treaty of Nuvarsag in 484, permanently securing freedom of religion and nationality for the Armenians. Let’s end with a prayer. “Lord, thank you for this day together in your special presence here at church. We are so grateful for the courage and faith of the Vartanians, for St. Vartan, his nephew Vahan, the priest Ghevont, and all who gave their lives to defend their faith. Give us that same strength in all we think, say, and do. Amen.”* (30 min)

Session 10. New Churches in Difficult Times: St. Nersess the Builder

New Faith to New World/Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 17

1. *Welcome the students. Open with a prayer. “Lord, we thank you for another day of life and more opportunities to know you and one another. As we read the stories from the history of our people, we carry in our hearts the history of all people who have journeyed over the centuries through good times and bad. Help us understand their stories as we understand our own. Amen.”*

Have them begin reading on page 140 through the 4th paragraph. Ask the class:

- *Imagine that this happens today in our city or in your town. Think of the sights and sounds. How would you feel? (sad, angry, fearful)*
- *What makes people attack others that have done them no harm? (desire for power, for world domination, feeling that they are superior and their ways should prevail everywhere)*

- Has this happened at other times, in other places, even recently? (*students can Google “invasions” and cite events in WW II, Russia into Ukraine, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Iraq*)

Conclude: “So almost 200 years after the Battle of Avarayr, we have this invasion of Armenia by the Arabs. They occupy the Armenian capital of Dvin. What happened to the population of that city? (12,000 died and 35,000 were taken into slavery). This invasion marks the beginning of a new era in Armenian history. Let’s continue with the story.”

(15 min)

2. *Tell the students to continue reading to the end. When they have finished, divide the class into 4 groups (or dyads, or any configuration your class number accommodates). Assign each group a different “accomplishment” of St. Nersess as follows. Have them review the assigned section and be prepared to share with the class the accomplishment. Before each group presents, write the title of the accomplishment on the board (i.e. Builder of Churches)*

- Builder of churches, p 140 5th paragraph to p 141 end of 5th paragraph. (Make sure the following is mentioned: Theodorus Reshtouni was the military commander in chief. Looking for a good shepherd for the Armenian people, he identified Bishop Nersess. An inspiringly faithful leader, his first task was to bury the dead and memorialize their memory. Built the renowned church of Zvartnotz, in memory of the angels seen by St. Gregory the Illuminator. Now in ruins, no known reason for its collapse, the beautiful church has been reimagined from its foundation and other architectural remains.) Students can google the images below on their phones or you can have a print copy available to show them.*



- Liturgical Reformer, p. 141, 6th paragraph to p 142 end of 4th paragraph (Hearing the disorder in how the sharagans were sung, Bishop Nersess turned to the monk Basil Jon to put the choirs and sharagans in order; he stressed the importance of singing for the glory of God and not to entertain or show off voices; the importance of teaching as Abbott Basil Jon traveled from town to town instructing the choirs.)*

- c. A Feast Day for All Time, 5th paragraph on p. 142. (*He established the feast of the Cross of Varag (which we celebrate to this day) marking the discovery of a relic of Jesus' cross on Mt. Varag buried there by St. Hripsime and found by two monks, Todig and Hovell in 660*)
- d. Caller of Councils, p 142-143. (*Called two important councils, 645 and 648, in which important doctrines were refined such as responsibilities of Diocesan bishops and doctrinal differences with the Greeks*) (25 min)
2. *Say to the students, "You just read that Catholicos Nersess gave a lot of time and effort to bringing order and clarity to the Armenian Church. As you know, tradition and structure are very important to our church. What are some of the good things about this?" (Clarity and uniformity about what we believe, people know what to expect, easier to understand what God asks of us, etc.) After they respond, ask them what some of the "cons" might be. (Harder for church to change with the times, inflexibility.)* (5 min)
3. *Tell the class, "Today we learned that Catholicos Nersess was not easily discouraged. He liked to look ahead and solve problems. As in his day, we live in a world that is sometimes scary. What things make you feel discouraged perhaps even afraid for the future?" Write their responses on the board. (Some answers may include terrorism, peer pressure, climate change, pressure to get into a "good" college, social media, depression, choosing a career.) When they have finished answering, ask, "What are some of the ways these issues are being dealt with or in the case of more personal matters, you can deal with them?" After discussion, remind them, "Sometimes no matter how hard we try, we can't think of ways to solve earthly problems. This is another place where turning to God in prayer and being resolved in our faith can help."*
5. *Assign each student one of the following Bible verses: John 16:33, Isaiah 54:10, Isaiah 26:3, 1 Peter 5:7, John 14:27, Philippians 4:6-7, Psalm 119:165, Isaiah 55:12, Psalm 29:11, Colossians 3:15, Matthew 11:28-30, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, Romans 15:13. (Divide these as per your class number) then have them read their quotes aloud. Continue: "Consider all these beautiful ways God promises us peace. Keeping our focus on Him may not make the problems go away, but it will help us remember what is really important. Earthly concerns have less power over us if we keep our mind on Him."* (10 min)
5. *Conclude class with a very brief discussion. "Saint Nersess the Builder was said to have a 'contagious faith.' What do you think that means?" Hear their answers, then ask:*
- How can everyday behavior make faith contagious?
 - What can we do to inspire others to "catch our faith" in the following areas:
- Church
 - Sports, playing field
 - Relationships
 - At home
 - In school
 - At work

6. End with prayer: “Lord help us live a contagious faith! Amen.” (5 min)

**Session 11. Churches and a Book of Prayer:
Ashod the Merciful and St. Gregory of Nareg**

New Faith to New World/Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 20

1. Have the opening prayer (below) on the board before they arrive. Welcome the students.

Open by reading the prayer together and discuss:

- a. What does it mean to be “separated from God? *(At one time, in the story of the Garden of Paradise, we were seamlessly united with God, able to hear His voice, able to enjoy His blessings and communicate about them. But the sin of pride, of choosing our own judgment over God’s as to what is best for us, separated us. Jesus made it possible again to know God and draw closer to Him and that’s what we spend our lives doing.)*
- b. What does St. Gregory mean when he says we haven’t worked for our daily bread? *(Our parents certainly work to support their families, but since everything in the world is God’s creation, we have Him to thank for it all.)*
- c. “What are some of the blessings you need to remember right now in your lives? Write down five of them, and be specific. Don’t just write down ‘my family.’ Write down what it is about your family that is a blessing.” *Allow time for them to write. Answer this question yourself. Review by going around and asking for one from each participant. Go around as many times as you think might be meaningful. (15 min)*

Dear Lord,

I pray

that I might be honored with clothing of light,
from which I have been stripped
that I might touch the hand of Him,
from whom I am separated
that I might receive my daily bread,
for which I have not worked
that I might be showered with rewards,
which I have not earned
that I might remember all my blessings,
which I always forget.

*St. Gregory of Nareg
Speaking With God From the Depths of the Heart
Prayer 24*

2. *Continue:* “Today we are going to read and think about two very important people in the history of our church and people, King Ashod the Merciful and St. Gregory of Nareg.” *Divide the class into two groups. Present the assignment according to the number of students in your*

group. “This unit has two distinct sections. Just to make it interesting, you’re going to teach the halves to each other. You’ll be assigned a section. Figure out together how you are going to present the story. You could divide up paragraphs, and relate the contents in your own words. Come up to the front and write key words as you tell your part of the story.” *Have one group silently read about Ashod the Merciful on page 158. This group stops on page 159 after the words, “in keeping them in harmony.” (Second to the last paragraph from the bottom) At the same time, the second group will begin reading on page 159 beginning with the words, “Now the area,” then finish the chapter.*

3. *When they have completed the reading, ask each group to present what they learned to the others. Allow 5 minutes for each presentation. Be prepared yourself by thoroughly reading this chapter. If students are stumbling or missing an important point, be ready to step in. Summarize what students have learned with the following (key words can be written on the board):*

Ashod the Merciful: The Least I Need to Know

1. Around 962 A.D., Ashod was crowned king in the magnificent city of Ani.
2. He loved his people and fed the poor, even inviting them to the palace to eat.
3. He kept the land he ruled in peace; he built a wall around the city for security. He and his queen spent lavishly on homes for the handicapped, and monasteries and schools that produced outstanding scholars.
4. Churches and other buildings were erected. The greatest architect of the time, Trdat of Ani, was even invited to Constantinople to rebuild the dome of the Cathedral of Saint Sophia (a mosque today) which had been destroyed by an earthquake.
5. A revival of the arts took place.

St. Gregory of Nareg: The Least I Need to Know

1. In 950, Gregory was born in the village of Nareg on the shores of Lake Van. His father was Khosrov of Antzevatzik who wrote an explanation of the Badarak.
2. He entered the monastery of Nareg and became famous for his piety, writing, and knowledge.
3. He wrote a commentary on the Song of Songs.
4. After many years of prayer, writing, and meditation, he wrote his masterpiece. “Conversing with God From the Depths of the Heart” a collection of contemplative prayers organized in 95 chapters. (25 min)

4. “We can’t leave the amazing St. Gregory without a closer look at one of his prayers.”
Distribute the handout. Have students read silently or aloud. Then discuss the following:
1. What are the images St. Gregory uses to describe himself? He says he is a... (*book, city, house, etc. just look for the simple image, not the elaborations*)

2. How does he elaborate on each image? *Now discuss the phrases that modify each noun, i.e. a living book, like Ezekiel's scroll, full of woe, moaning; a city without walls or towers – and therefore vulnerable to assault, etc. Note: in Ezekiel 3:1-3, we see Ezekiel directed by God to eat a scroll of prophecies, a scroll that is sweet to the taste; later in Rev 10:8-11, a similar scroll is sweet to the taste but "bitter to the stomach" an image that suggests that while the truth is liberating, it is hard to digest!*
3. What would you say his mood is? (*Despairing, feeling worthless – point out to students that in many other prayers, Nareg dwells on the power and love of God that make Him feel valuable...*)
4. What was the most powerful image for you?
5. Continue: "Now, we are going to become mystic poets. Take a moment to pray for inspiration. Then start your prayer like this (you can write on a board or dictate) 'Lord I am...' and communicate 3 images of yourself as you feel right now. First a simple image, then follow with a bit of elaboration. For example (these are actual student samples): 'Lord, I am a rosebud – a ceremonial flower, closed but ready to bloom.' 'Lord I am a book – kind of dull, filled with pages of rambling stuff that doesn't focus.' 'Lord, I am a question mark – faithful but with lots of unfinished sentences...'"

5. *Discuss students' images. End with a simple "Thank you, God, for a great morning!"*
(20 min)

Session 12. The Holy Spirit in an Armenian Church Father: St. Nersess the Grace-Filled

New Faith to New World/Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/ Chapter 22

1. *Welcome the students. Open with one of St. Nersess' most famous prayers, a verse from the 24 prayers in "I Confess With Faith," recited during the Rest Service of the Armenian Church. Have it written on the board before students enter. Pray it together.*

O Jesus, Wisdom of the Father,
grant me wisdom that I might always think, speak and do
that which is good in your sight.
Save me from evil thoughts, words, and deeds.
And have mercy upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

2. *Have students pray it again. Then ask: "What is the name we associate with wisdom in the Bible? (Solomon) Let's take a closer look at Solomon's story." Have students open their Bibles to 1 Kings 3:5-15. Read from an NIV edition as it contains the translation we need. Continue: "When God tells Solomon that He will give him what he asks for, what does Solomon ask for? ("a discerning heart") Well in many translations that is rendered as wisdom and later on you see that God says to Solomon 'you have asked for a wise and discerning heart.' So what are we asking God for when we ask for wisdom? Is it about knowledge? Information? Or is it about *understanding and judgment*. The discerning heart so I can know how to talk, what to do, what to have running through my mind that*

pleases you. What's an example of an *evil* thought? We're talking about each one of us, I a typical day, what might be a thought, or a word, or an action that is not God-pleasing?"
Discuss. (15 min)

2. Have the class begin reading chapter 22, which begins on page 170. Tell them to stop after the second paragraph on page 172 that ends with "unleavened bread." Then review the reading using the following questions:

- a. Simply put, what was happening in the Armenian world in the 10th century? Armenians were migrating westward to escape poverty and oppression, and joined other Armenians in southeastern Asia Minor who had settled there earlier. This was called Cilicia, also New Armenia.
- b. Who was the hero of our story and what dispute did he get involved in? Bishop Nersess, brother of the Catholicos at the time, Krikor III. He settled a dispute between two Armenian princes of the region, Toros and Oshin.
- c. What kind of conversation did he have with the Greek duke Alex? When the Duke expressed incredulity that two churches, the Greek and the Armenian, were in a dispute about the true faith, Bishop Nersess spoke with him at length and then put in writing many of the basic beliefs of the Armenian Church. He wrote his renowned Essay on the Confession of Faith of the Armenian Church, and sent it to the Greek Emperor. This included such details as why we celebrate Christmas on January 6 and aspects of our Badarak, i.e. the use of undiluted wine and unleavened bread for Holy Communion.

(15 min)

3. Say, "As you see in the chapter, we Armenians have often felt pressure to defend our faith, in ways large and small. When people try to win you to another religion, where can you go to see if their claims are true? (*The Bible, our pastors, church tradition, teachings of our church fathers which have stood the test of time.*)

Say, "In today's times, there is huge pressure not to believe in God at all or to dismiss the importance or even existence of Jesus. Actually, there is plenty of non-Christian evidence to support the reality of Jesus." Tell the class, "Google Mara Bar Serapion on Jesus and read the first few paragraphs." Give them a minute, then say, "This man, who lived between the first and third centuries AD and was not Christian, wrote a letter to his son which mentions Jesus, as well as Socrates and Pythagoras. You all know that Socrates really lived, as well as Pythagoras and his theorem. So here's a concrete reference to Jesus' crucifixion, placed alongside other *real* people whom Mara Bar Serapion knew to have made a great difference in history."

4. "Many other early historians mention Christ and His early followers in their writings." (*Write the names on the board as you mention them.*)

Pliny the Younger (61-113 AD)

Suetonius (about 71-135 AD)

Phlegon (80-140 AD)

(Phlegon is very interesting because he wrote about an abnormal darkness during the Crucifixion. In a secular effort to explain the darkness, he attributed it to a solar eclipse. Startlingly, it could not have been an eclipse, because Jesus' death occurred during Passover, which is held at the time of the full moon. A solar eclipse cannot occur during a full moon.)

Tacitus (56-120 AD)

Thallus (around 52 AD)

Lucian of Samosata (115-200 AD)

Josephus (37-101 AD)

Another interesting footnote: In the Old Testament, Joshua asks God for some additional daylight to help him fight a battle with the Amorites. God granted him that extra-long day. In the Americas, from north to south, many Native American peoples have an ancient legend of a night that was abnormally long! That would have been the flip side of Joshua's long day.

5. *Tell the class, "Here is a remarkable incident that indicates the power of God's truth. After Jesus was arrested, what did the disciples do?" If they do not know, look together at Mark 14:50. ("Then everyone deserted him and fled.) Remind them that Peter, who later decided to hang around the scene, denied Jesus three times when people mentioned that he was one of Jesus' followers. Then ask:*

- Why did the disciples run away? (Fear of being killed)
- What happened after Pentecost? (They went out into the world to teach)
- What ended up happening to most of the disciples? (They suffered violent deaths)

Tell the class, "Something turned the disciples from men terrified of being executed into lions for the faith. All but one of them (John) met the horrible deaths they had feared. Something really extraordinary must have happened to change them. What do you think happened?" (They saw Jesus die on the cross and be buried, but then they later saw Him alive.) Tell them, "They saw Jesus alive again, and realized that He was indeed the Son of God. They could believe His word, so they went out to teach it regardless of the danger." (10 min)

6. *Have students read the rest of the chapter (p 172, 3rd paragraph to the end). Begin: "Bishop Nersess succeeded his brother as Catholicos in 1166. One of his first important works was (write it on the board) his long General Epistle which presented the ideal Christian life. He was subsequently invited by the Greek Patriarch Lucas to consider joining the Greek Orthodox Church which Catholicos Nersess declined to do. Instead he asked to continue their prayerful conversations about their faith, using the Bible and the writings of Church Fathers to support their understandings. What were St. Nersess' accomplishments?" List them on the board as students respond.*

- a. Ecumenical work as he negotiated with the Greeks
- b. A great poet, wrote the haunting *Lament Over Edessa*
- c. Beautiful hymns, among which are the famous *Norasdeghdzyal* (Newly-created) and *Aravod Looso* (Morning of Light)

- d. Many prayers including “Let us remember in the night, Your name O Lord” recited in the rest service. And *I Confess with Faith*, the 24-verse prayer of which we recited one of the verses. This is often used as part of our Lenten services.
- e. Wrote so beautiful and spoke so beautifully, he was titled the Grace-filled or in Armenian Shnorhali.

7. End with another prayer of St. Nersess: “O Christ, guardian of all, let your right hand guard and shelter me by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and waking, that I may never fall. And have mercy upon all your creatures and upon me, a great sinner.” (15 min)

Session 13

The Most Famous Armenian Teacher: St. Gregory of Datev

New Faith to New World/Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 25

1. *Welcome the students. Begin with the prayer. “O Jesus wisdom of the Father.”* Tell them, “Open to chapter 25 in *New Faith to New World* and let’s take a look at the title.” *Have someone volunteer to read it.* This descriptive phrase, the most famous Armenian teacher... hmmm...how does one become a famous teacher? First of all, when you think of the word teacher, what comes to mind? What does a teacher do? *Discuss, recording answers on the board as they are shared. Make sure you mention that a teacher:*

- Imparts information, introduces you to things, concepts, ideas people you didn’t know about before.
- Helps you acquire not only knowledge but competence, even virtues.
- Is someone who “points out” or “shows” – from the Greek and Old English
- Is an educator which comes from the Latin educare which mean bring up; also from educere (ex=out; ducere=to lead, or to “lead out”) so it’s about helping someone *grow* with this new knowledge and its meaning.

Conclude: So...being a famous teacher must mean that you were extraordinarily gifted at doing just that... (5 min)

- 2. *Have students read chapter 25, pp 190-193 but before they do, announce that they will be taking a quiz after they finish. Their task, however, will not be to take the quiz, but to guess what 10 questions would be asked on a quiz.*
- 3. *After students complete the reading, break them into small teams (according to class size; a team can be one student). Distribute the paper and pencils/pens. Have each team write down what ten questions they think you’ll ask. When they complete the exercise, read aloud your “quiz questions.” Have them make a checkmark by any of their questions that are a match. Ask how many matches each team has and then have students read questions that were not on the official quiz and provide the answers.*

QUIZ QUESTIONS

- 1. What church was trying to undermine the Armenian Church? (Latin/Catholic)
- 2. What was the name of the group that was trying to undermine the Armenian Church?

(The Unitors)

3. Who was Gregory of Datev's mentor? (John of Vorodn/Hovhanness Vorodnetsi)
4. What happened to Gregory of Datev in Jerusalem? (He was ordained)
5. What deadly sins did John of Vorodn warn his fellow vartabeds about when he was dying?
(Greed and pride)
6. In what languages was Gregory fluent besides Armenian? (Greek and Latin)
7. Why did Gregory need to know Latin? (To debate the Unitors)
8. Around Gregory of Datev's time, what did the question, "Who gave you your staff?" mean? (Who ordained you as a vartabed/who taught you)
9. How did Gregory apply church law to offenders? (impartially)
10. In what book, did St. Gregory compile most of his teaching (*The Book of Questions* or *Kirk Hartzmantz*)

(45 min)

4. *Conclude class with:* "St. Gregory of Datev was an amazingly intelligent, deeply faithful Christian, who devoted his life to helping others become not only good followers of Christ but people who could teach others. Really, the greatest teachers just don't fill people's heads and hearts with information and inspiration. They empower them to be living examples of what they have come to understand. Do you remember what he counseled graduating vartabeds to do? It's at the top of page 193. He said 'above all...' what? Yes, practice first and then preach. So he was asking them to live their rock solid faith before telling others to do so. This makes sense. We should have these expectations of Christian leaders. What expectations do we have for other professionals?" *Discuss the students' behavioral expectations for, i.e.*

- Their teachers (to know what they are teaching)
- Their coaches (to know the rules and strategies of their sport, to be fair, to be physically fit themselves)
- Their parents (to be models, within reason, of all the virtues and habits they want us to have)
- Police officers (to be law-abiding and fair)
- Their pastor (to set a good Christian example)
- The President of the United States (discuss)

5. *End with a prayer as follows. Ask the class:* "What qualities of St. Gregory of Datev could we ask God to bless us with?" Ask for ideas but make sure to include:

- Devotion to learning
- Confident faith, enough to defend his beliefs to others
- Wisdom
- Perseverance
- Leadership

Write the words on the board as they are mentioned. Then say, "So let's ask God: 'Dear God, thank you for today's window into another person of deep faith and great ability in the story of our church. Help us hold up St. Gregory of Datev as a model of virtue and grant us, too, ___ (list the qualities you have written.) Thank you Lord, Amen.'" (10 min)

Session 14. Dearly Beloved Father: Catholicos Mgrditch Khrimian

New Faith to New World/Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/Chapter 34

1. *Open with a reading from Psalm 22: 1-2, 11, 19. Have 3 volunteers read 1-2, 11, and 19. Then read it all in its entirety. “This was one of the many words that Jesus declared from the Cross, as he was dying. Although Christ was the Son of God, he was also and completely at the same time, the man Jesus and cried out feeling abandoned. Have you ever felt that God was absent? Not listening?” If there are few comments, continue. “Well today we’re going to read about one of the great church leaders who presided at a time of great suffering and trouble, at a time in the Ottoman Empire when the fate of Armenians hung in the balance. This means going right past many centuries and many stories of amazing people in our book.” Turn to chapter 34, page 251.*
2. *“We’re going to read this together, in a very traditional round-robin style. We’ll each read a paragraph (and occasionally I’ll have you read two if they’re short). It’s a long reading, so we’ll pause occasionally and recap what’s important. So please pay attention! You can underline or put a check mark in the text as you read or listen. Read, pausing to recap with questions. If answers are not quickly forthcoming, provide the answer and move on. The following are suggestions – feel free to pause whenever you wish; number paragraphs in your own text to make it easier to follow:*

1st par: Where did some of the wealthiest and most educated Armenians live in the 19th century Ottoman Empire? (Constantinople, Istanbul, “Bolis”)

2nd par: Because of the strategic importance of the city, what Armenian leader was also very important to Armenians throughout the Empire? (The Bishop of Constantinople)

3rd par: Who arrived at the age of 17 from the town of Van, one of many migrants from the hinterlands into the big city? (Mgrditch, the future bishop; depending on interest you can point out the Armenian words *gavaratsi* – provincial - and *pandoukht* – migrant)

4th par: What was Mgrditch like? (A poet, essayist, knew Armenian and could read the Bible in classical Armenian; a voracious reader, became a tutor to a wealthy Armenian family)

5th -6th pars: When he returned to Van to help the people there, what had happened? (His father had died, he married and had a daughter; he lost both - circumstances not certain, probably illness; became a priest at 34)

7th par: What was happening in Constantinople when Mgrditch returned there? (Young men were returning from European educations, questioning the way things were in the Empire)

8th par: What happened to demonstrate that the ordinary folk, the common people were becoming more visible? (The first Armenian novel was written in the modern Armenian language for all to understand; folk tales and songs were being collected as an authentic artistic expression of the people)

9th par (top of p 254): Khrimian became a well-known preacher, with folksy appealing character. What were the two most important things to him? (The Christian faith and the Armenian culture)

10th-12th pars: He became the Bishop of Moush. Why was he shot? (Some felt threatened by his appeal to the common people; they liked things as they were.) Although he had these men arrested, he eventually left for Constantinople.

13th par: What piece of machinery did he revere? (Printing press) He founded a seminary in Varag in 1862 and his influence made the name Khrimian a household word. In 1869 he became Patriarch of Constantinople.

14th par (top of page 255) What were the three problems plaguing the Armenian Church? (The animosity between Russia -- where the Catholicos was -- and the Ottoman Empire, where most Armenians lived; the conflicts between Armenian laity and clergy in Constantinople; and the poor conditions of Armenians living in the provinces.)

15th par: What was the role of Khrimian in the Congress of Berlin? (As head of the delegation, he witnessed the disappointing weakening of the human rights assurances for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. His words became famous: In describing the process of negotiating a treaty, he noted that it was like eating porridge – you had to have spoons of steel to eat your share but “ours were made of paper.”

16th-18th pars: What was Khrimian’s election as Cathocos like? (Unanimously elected in 1892, his election and the follow-up festivities were unprecedented in number and attendance. Throngs of people were at his consecration and other banquets, the mood was exuberant.)

19th-20st pars: What characterized his 15-year tenure? (He loved and cared for the people, renovated churches, including Etchmiadzin, raised money extremely successfully for various projects, canonical reforms, first encyclical written in Modern Armenian)

21st-23rd pars: What were the troubles that marked his tenure? (Political activists wanted too much control of the church; hundreds and thousands of Armenians were being massacred in the provinces and refugees were fleeing to Russia; the Czar declared ownership of all Armenian Churches, this was rescinded shortly after.

24th-25th pars: What affectionate term was given to Khrimian? (He died in 1907, forever being referred to as hayrig, or beloved father.) (45 min)

3. *Tell the class*, “The last half of the nineteenth century about which we just read, was when the violence against Armenians began to escalate. The massacres and oppression grew worse and worse, and culminated in the 1915 Genocide.” *Briefly discuss*:

- What Genocide stories have you heard from your family?
- Have any of you ever participated in a Genocide demonstration? (Show of hands)
- Do you think Turkey will ever admit their actions? Why/why not?
- How does Turkey’s persistent refusal to admit their responsibility affect Armenians today? (5 min)

4. We’re going to conclude today’s class with hope, not despair or anger or sadness, because something amazing happened in 2015 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide. Show the Bread and Salt Video “Alive in Heaven.”

5. *Immediately following the video, ask students to open their Bibles to Isaiah 41:10*. (“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”) *Tell the class*, ““Don’t be afraid” appears very often in Scripture. God doesn’t always make the bad stuff go away, but He promises to help us through it. Armenians have historically valued their faith. In Turkey, they had many years to convert to Islam and avoid persecution, but they didn’t. They chose to wait for the blessing even if that meant losing everything, including their lives, to gain the prize of eternal life with Jesus

Christ. Khrimian Hayrig would have been happy to hear of the canonization of the martyrs. I have every faith they are together in heaven. As a closing prayer, let's simply pledge to remember them in all we do and say this week. Amen." (10 min)

Session 15. The First Armenian Church in the United States: Archbishop Hovsep Sarajian

New Faith, New World/Stories from the History of the Armenian Church/ Chapter 35

1. *Welcome students and open with the Hayr Mer. Distribute the handout and ask students to fill it in. Then pray the Our Father and allow students to echo their answers one by one as you read each line. At the conclusion, discuss interesting answers. Ask students how it felt to put this thoroughly familiar prayer in their own words. Continue:* "This was the prayer Jesus gave to his followers when the disciples asked him to teach them to pray. Interestingly, with all the miracles and healings they saw Jesus perform, the only thing they asked him to teach them was *how to pray*. They knew how important this was. And so Jesus gave them a prayer that covered all things – the holiness of God, and the fulfillment of our spiritual and physical needs – the hunger of both soul and stomach. This prayer is the hallmark of the Christian community. In our church, we say it and sing it in worship and at all our gatherings. It is so important to us. And today we're actually ending our study of famous people and their stories with our *own* story – how the Armenian Church in America came to be." (10 min)
2. *Read the first three paragraphs on page 260. Then continue:* "Let me continue the story: In 1888, activists were speaking to the Armenian-American community in Worcester, MA in order to gain support for a free, independent Armenia. Some of these activists felt the Armenian Church was the ideal base for their efforts, but others disagreed. As a sort of natural evolution of these religious and political yearnings, an Armenian Club was formed."
3. *Have the students resume reading at the bottom of page 261 beginning with the words "The Armenian Club met regularly." And stop on page 262 at the end of the last full paragraph that ends with "a clergyman as their head." Continue to fill in:* "Now the Patriarch of Constantinople and his council needed a priest who had the physical, intellectual, and spiritual strength to make the journey to America and manage the community in Worcester." *Have them resume reading with the 2nd paragraph on page 263 and finish the chapter.* (20 min)
4. *Comment:* "Notice that Archbishop Sarajian stepped aside twice from his positions, first as pastor of the Our Savior Church in Worcester and then as Diocesan Primate because he did not believe that politics had a place in the church and he felt powerless to stop those who did. Actually he was a true visionary, because those very politics divided the church again and again and ultimately into the two separate churches we are today. How many of you feel that a political agenda has a place in the church?" *Ask for a show of hands. Discuss.* (5 min)
5. "This was such an important story to us as the great-great-great grandchildren of all of these people. We are here today because of them all, the original dreamers – the Armenian immigrants of the turn of the 20th century. Let's try to recall together the most important details of this story." *Write "The Founding of the Armenian Church in America." Box the*

phrase and ask a volunteer to come forward to record answers (webbing exercise; recorder will draw lines from the box and write answers given). "Okay, think of any people, or dates that you can connect with this phrase." Make sure the following are included:

- Archbishop Hovsep Sarajian (First pastor of the first Armenian Church in America and first Primate of the First Diocese in America)
- Khrimian Hayrig (Catholicos who founded the first Diocese - Eastern)
- Armenian immigrants (the brave men and women who came to start better lives and support families in their home villages. Dreamers who established the church)
- 1889 (Fr. Sarajian arrives in Worcester at the request of that community, sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople Khoren Ashiglian)
- Soorp Purgitch (The Armenian Church of Our Savior; first Armenian Church established in America, is consecrated in 1891)
- 1898 (First Armenian Diocese in America established)

6. "A great way to end today might be this. Let's pray. 'Thank you God for the courageous and hardworking men and women who came to America decades ago looking for a better life and a way to strengthen their families in their homelands. We are so grateful that their greatest dream was to build a church and be a worshipping Christian community in the Armenian way of their ancestors. Thank you for wise leaders who gave them guidance and love. May we honor their memories with faithful hearts and holy lives. Amen.'" (20 min)

Session 16. Wrap-Up

New Faith to New World Final Session

1. *It might be nice to offer refreshments today! Before class, post the excerpt of St. Gregory's prayer (see below) on the board (on newsprint or directly on the board). Also write SAINTS, CENTURY and KNOWN FOR on the board. Under the Saints category, write the entire list of saints covered (see procedure #3 below). Leave the other categories blank. (Students will be filling in the blanks) Welcome students. Hold up the illustration of St. Gregory of Nareg on page 156. Have students look at it for a full minute in silence. Say: "This is the artist's imaginative rendering of St. Gregory in God's presence in this beautiful moment of the day, composing his prayers. How many of you pray regularly? Is it mealtime prayers, prayers when you're here on Sunday? Can you see yourself sitting quietly by a lake or the seashore or in a park or even in your room, just letting God into your heart for some quiet moments? Try it sometime. In Psalm 46:10 we read: "Be still and know that I am God."*

2. *Turn students' attention to St. Gregory's prayer. Read it a few times together. Tell them: "You know, all people, even people of God, have doubts. Mother Teresa of recent memory, shared some of the doubts she had even though she devoted her life to helping the sick and dying in the streets of India's poorest cities. Probably the saints we studied these past weeks had moments of terrifying doubt. We all have doubts. But what is it about the saintly men and women we read about that makes them different?"(That, exactly as St. Gregory's prayer spells out, they set doubts, an all other obstacles aside to look into the future at what is possible with*

faith and God's help – courage, determination, sacrifice, many blessings that doubt would prevent us from recognizing) (10 min)

3. *Segue: “Well, speaking of blessings, we have truly had a blessed journey through some of the stories in this wonderful book. We have encountered eventful centuries and extraordinary people. Let’s think back together about each of the people we met during this course and refresh our memories about when these people lived and what they are known for.” Divide the chapters among students and have them review their assignment for the required information. Allow 20 minutes (more or less) for their research and 25 to fill in the outline on the board.*

| Saint | Century | Known For |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Thaddeus and Sandoukht | 1 st | 1 st Enlightener/1 st Armenian martyr |
| St. Gregory the Enlightener | 4 th | Enlightener/brought Christianity/301 |
| St. Nersess the Great | 4 th | built monasteries, hospitals, shelters. |
| St. Sahag | 5 th | Catholicos/Golden Age/alphabet |
| St. Mesrob | 5 th | Armenian alphabet |
| St. Vartan | 5 th | Battle of Avarayr |
| St. Nersess the Builder | 7 th | built churches, Zvartnotz, liturgical reform, councils, Feast Day of Holy Cross of Varag |
| Ashod the Merciful | 10 th | fed the poor, built monasteries, schools, facilities for disabled, churches, maintained peace |
| St. Gregory of Narek | 10 th | beloved monk, scholar, religious poet, famous book of 95 prayers, <i>Speaking with God</i> |
| St. Nersess Shnorhali | 12 th | Catholicos, renowned writer of prayers and hymns, composer, leader |
| St. Gregory of Datev | 14 th | renowned teacher, defender of the faith |
| Catholicos Khrimian Hayrig | 19 th | beloved Catholicos, champion of persecuted Armenian in Ottoman Empire, founder of Armenian Diocese in America |
| Abp Hovsep Sarajian | 19-20 th | first pastor of first Armenian church in America; first Primate of first Diocese in America |

(45 min)

4. *For the concluding prayer exercise, the students will need paper and a pen/pencil. Have them write a thank-you note of five lines or so to one of the saints studied. Ask for volunteers to share their notes. End with your own as follows (and if you have a better one, use it!): “Beautiful thoughts, everyone. I’d like to read mine: ‘Lord, thank you so much for the courage and sacrifice of St. Sandoukht. In those early, dark days of Armenia’s story, it must have been hard to stand up for what she saw in Jesus Christ. Help me and all of us here today love you and live as you ask us to even when it’s not easy. In honor of the centuries of saints and martyrs, I pray. Amen.’”*

(10 min)

If the faith of a mustard seed
 Can cast a great mountain
 Into the depths of the sea, then truly
 We should accept it as the first step

Toward eternal life.

Faith means setting aside doubt to see the future....

*St. Gregory of Narek
Speaking With God From the Depths of my Heart
Excerpt from Prayer 10*

New Faith to New World: Session 5

EXIT SLIP Name: -----

The Most Important Thing I Learned Today Was:

I Have a Question:

EXIT SLIP Name: -----

The Most Important Thing I Learned Today Was:

I Have a Question:

EXIT SLIP Name: -----

The Most Important Thing I Learned Today Was:

I Have a Question:



SCRAMBLED WORDS

K U C R T

L R A T V E

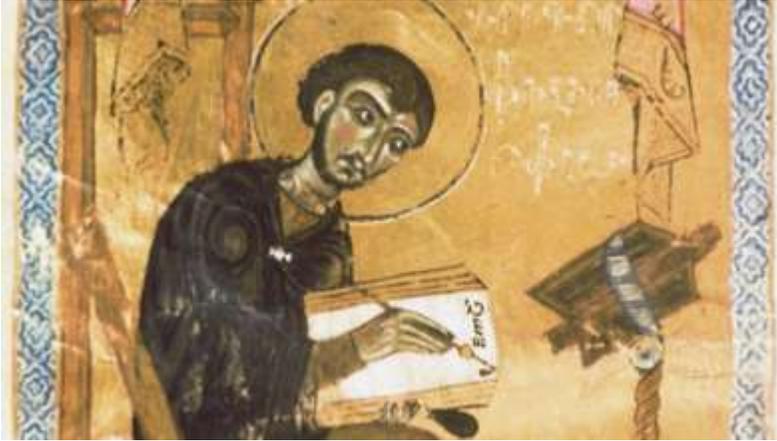
B U R L M E

R E W L O F

D R E R A E

S I D P R E

The last several years of St. Sahag's life were difficult, but he was at peace because he knew his work would:



St. Gregory of Nareg
Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart

I am a living book,
written like the scroll in the vision of Ezekiel, inside and out,
listing lamentations, moaning and woe.
I am a city without walls or towers,
a house empty without doors for protection,
salt in looks but without taste.
salty water, unfit for drinking to quench the thirst,
land unfit for cultivation,
field, barren, and covered with briars.
My personal acres, cared for by God,
but formerly cultivated by the devices of the Slanderer,
an olive tree that is wood without fruit,
trees that do not bear fruit to be cut down,
a hopeless twice dead, talking plant,
a completely burnt out candle that cannot be lit.

Prayer 39

Translated by T. Samuelian

My Lord's Prayer

Use other words to express the phrase on the left.

Our Father _____

Who art in heaven _____

Hallowed be thy name _____

Thy Kingdom come _____

Thy will be done _____

On earth as it is in heaven _____

Give us this day our daily bread _____

And forgive us our trespasses _____

As we forgive those who trespass against us _____

And lead us not into temptation _____

But deliver us from evil _____

For thine is the kingdom _____

And the power _____

And the glory _____

Forever and ever. _____

Amen. _____