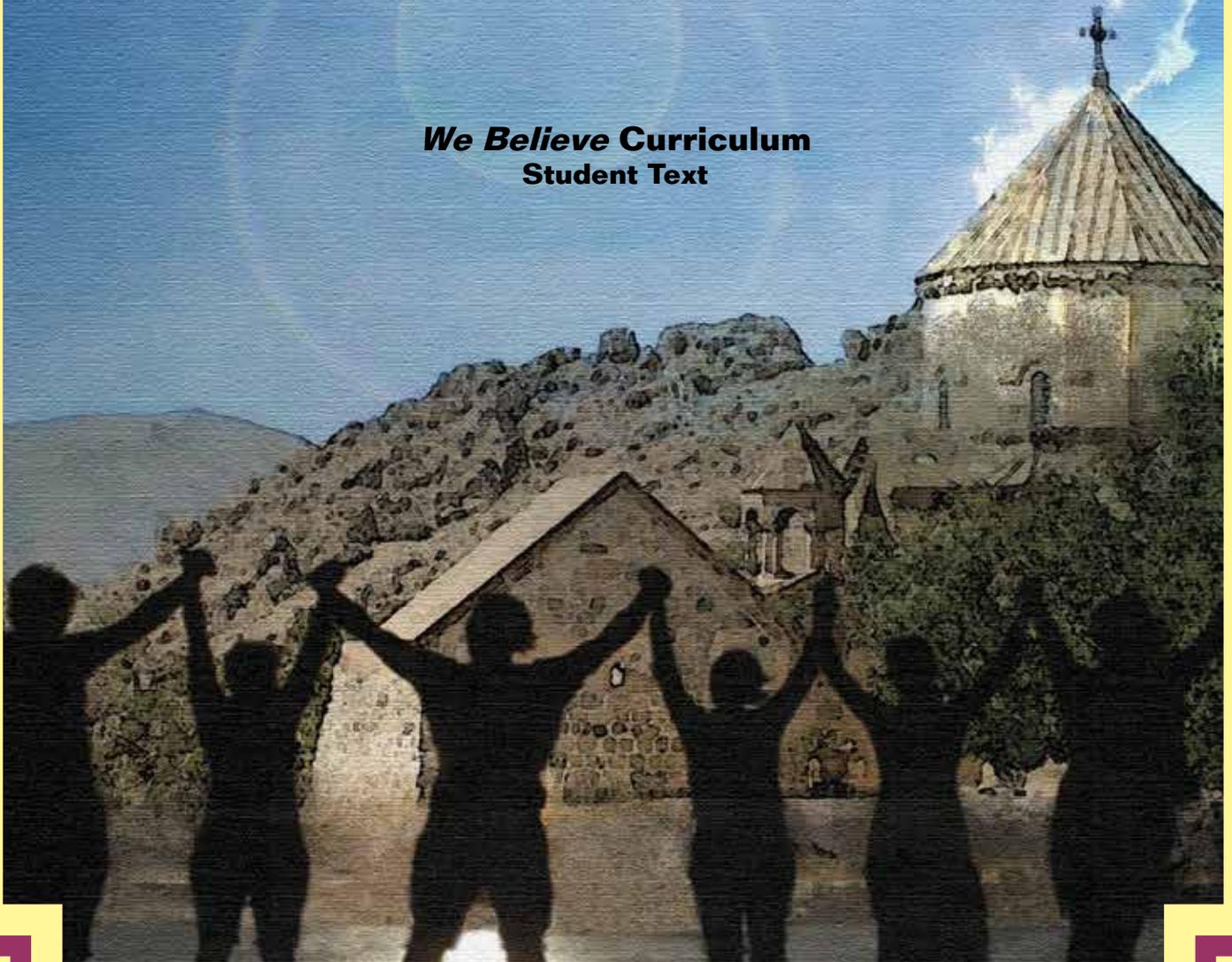


Grade Seven

Surprised By Joy
Discovering God

We Believe Curriculum
Student Text



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Surprised By Joy
Discovering God

Debbie J. Derderian

By order of
Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate

We Believe Curriculum

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Armenian Church Western Diocese*

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Looking At Life

Lesson 1

Unit One

Hello, God? I Have a Few Questions...

Here I Am, Lord

- Group 1: Lord listen to my words.
Group 2: Pay attention to my sigh.
Group 1: My king and my God, listen to me when I cry for help.
Group 2: I pray to you.
Group 1: Lord, in the morning you hear my voice.
Group 2: In the morning I pray to you.
All: I wait for you in hope.



Psalm 5: 1-3

God, I've Heard About You All My Life... But I Need to Know More!

We naturally have questions about our world, our lives, and our future. And even though the world around us seems more complicated than ever, it's really no different than in Jesus' time. Jesus truly was not like anyone the apostles had ever met. Imagine the questions they must have had! This man had control even over the forces of nature as we will see in the Gospel reading today. He could even walk on water. He seemed to have the answer for everything, but sometimes the answer he gave or the way he reacted just led to more questions.

Truly, the world has never been the same since Jesus walked the earth. The apostles were certainly never the same. In fact, *all* people who live with Christ are always

dramatically changed at the very core of who they are and what they do.

How could God change you?

But, before God can truly work in your life you have to learn to TRUST him.

Undoubtedly, just like the apostles, saints, and all who have lived before us, we have doubts and questions—and that's great! Don't ever be afraid to ask questions. God is happy with our questions and completely understands our doubts and fears. We know that now our knowledge is incomplete but someday we will know and understand.



God Asdvadz Աստուծոյ

1 Corinthians 13: 12

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

As you get older you will have more and more decisions to make and, from time to time, you will struggle with who you are and how you fit into this world. We can learn from the examples of the apostles and the saints of our Holy Church who struggled with the same questions and had difficult decisions to make just as we do today. They all had something in common that supported them and helped them make the right decisions, even when it did not seem right to the rest of the world—they gathered in a community as a family of faith. Within that family of faith it is much easier for us to make good decisions because we have the support and wisdom of others and we have the strength and power that the Holy Spirit offers to his Body of believers. Just as they did, you will experience time after time the faithfulness of our God—that faithfulness will lead to trust. Our response to God's faithfulness is to keep the lines of communication open through a prayerful life. Our God not only hears your voice...he listens...he responds!



Scriptural Reflection

*A Journey to Meet Christ
Close your eyes...concentrate
on the rhythm of your
breathing until you feel
yourself calming down...
relax and...prepare yourself
for a journey to meet the
Lord...be alert...a storm is
quickly approaching and you
don't want to make the same
mistake the apostles did!
Listen to the story of Jesus
calming the storm in
Matthew 8:23-27.*



Jesus, Can I Trust You Will Send Me a Lifeboat?



Sometimes life is like a giant storm...yet the teachings of our Church and the practice of faith encourage us to believe and trust in our God who is all-knowing, all-loving and ever-present. He loves us so much that he sent his only Son to help us understand the mysteries of life. He sent his Son to prove how much he loves us and also to make us worthy. Living within the community of faith we witness the faith of others and learn from their example to turn to God in trust for all things but especially when we are caught in a "storm." But, we will still have questions we would like to discuss with Jesus. Let's consider a couple of the most commonly asked questions. There is even room for a question that really bugs *you!*

1. If God is all-loving why do people suffer from disease?
2. What good comes from natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes?
3. It's just so sad...I don't understand why people have to die!
4. *Now ask God to help you understand a question that's been on your mind.*

The Sea of Life (Dzov Gensaguys)

The sea of life daily storms upon me
The raging waves of my enemy hit me
Good captain, to me a protector be.

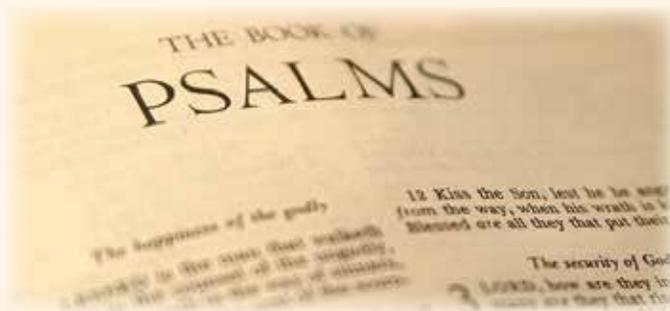
Mesrob Mashdotz



Psalms

Questions → Trust → Praise

Did you know that there was a book of the Bible *all* about people talking to God? Agonizing over their doubts and fears? Asking for God's help? And, ultimately, expressing their trust and praise? While there are many prayers and hymns in the Bible, the one biblical book dedicated to these *entirely* is the book of **Psalms**.



Most of the psalms were originally composed for liturgical worship. Why? Because while they express an individual's feelings, they also expressed what *everyone* often feels. And the community of believers wanted to sing and chant them together, at worship.

There is no sure way of dating the psalms with total accuracy, but we know that some date back before 587 BC—hundreds of years before Christ. Imagine that... we are still praying them!

To this day, the psalms are an important foundation for the Divine Liturgy and all the worship services of the Armenian Church. As a matter of fact, at our Badarak, at the conclusion of his personal confession and when he is going up to the altar, the priest and the deacon take turns reciting Psalm 43.

Open your Bible to the Book of Psalms and read Psalm

43. Why do you think this is such an appropriate psalm to be recited at this moment in our Liturgy?

Identify:

1. 2 verses that ask God for something
2. 2 verses that offer praise to God
3. 2 verses that ask God 'Why'

Saghmos

Uuḡfnu

Write Your Own Psalm

Use the letters provided to begin each sentence.

T _____

R _____

U _____

S _____

T _____

Our Armenian Way

St. Gregory of Narek

(c. 945-1003) was the greatest prayer writer/poet of the Armenian Church and a beloved teacher and churchman in his time. He was born in Narek and entered the monastery of the same name (south of Lake Van). He wrote Bible commentaries, history and poetry. Like many of the psalm writers, **St. Gregory** felt himself completely unworthy. Yet he never lost sight of God's endless mercy and great compassion. He trusted God and, indeed, God found him

so worthy that he inspired this humble man to write *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart*, a book of 95 amazing confessional prayers. For centuries this little book of prayers was the most respected and most read book among Armenians. A miraculous healing power was attributed to it and it was often kept under the bed pillows of the sick.

Here's an example of one of his prayers:

*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
remember all my blessings
which I always forget.*

Prayer 24



What are some of the blessings I need to remember right now in my life?

Looking At Life

Lesson 2

Unit One

God Reveals Himself

Here I Am, Lord

Lord, from the day of our birth you revealed yourself to us through the loving touch of our parents.

As we grow you continue to reveal yourself to us through our senses and our minds. Today, Lord, you will again reveal yourself to us as we learn to know you through your Word, revealed to us in fullness through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ and the sacred Tradition of our holy faith.

Open our hearts, minds and souls so that in faith we might seek understanding, wisdom and grace. We ask this and all things with confidence in your love. AMEN.

What are some ways we grow closer to God through our senses?



God Has Given Us Ways to Find Answers

A bit of holy humor... A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means!" His father smiled and replied, "What do you mean, you 'know' what the Bible means?" The son replied, "I do know!" "Okay," said his father. "What does the Bible mean?" "That's easy, Daddy..." the young boy replied excitedly. "It stands for **'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.'**"

Well, what do you think about that response? Is the Bible a book of instruction?

It is true that reading the Bible involves two aspects. First is *knowing* the Word of

God and committing to it. And the second is trying to better *understand the mystery* of that Word. We call the Bible "God's Word." In and of itself, that suggests that we will always need help to understand the

contents correctly.

That is why the Bible is entrusted to the Church. The Church is made up of the people of

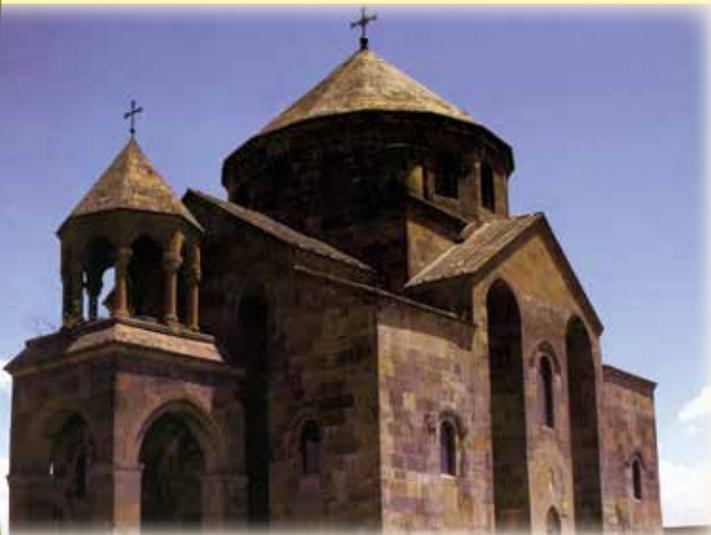
God, and it is to this very group that the wisdom of the Holy Spirit was promised. All through the Book of Acts we read about how the Spirit inspired and empowered believers. And so the Holy Spirit continues to do so today and will do so until the end of time.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... John 1:1

Have you ever thought about where the Bible came from or who wrote it? Even though the Bible is a divine reality expressed in human words, it remains a mystery that requires sound interpretation, reflection and care. That is a job for the Church! All together, as the Church, we listen to the Word with faith and devotion, guard it with dedication and explain it with

faith. The apostles and authors of the Word of God were inspired to write down what they actually lived—this is part of what we call Holy Tradition. Scripture and Holy Tradition are understood at a deeper level through a developed sense of faith of all the people of God over time, guided by the bishops of the worldwide or universal Christian Church.

If you read the introductions at the beginning of each book of the Bible, you can learn a great deal about the authors and their readers. Thanks to Church Scripture scholars along with academics and archaeologists, we know more and more about the original manuscripts, the different writing styles, and the different audiences for which the books of the Bible were written. For example, the Gospel of Matthew was written to a predominantly Jewish community. He explained the mysteries of God, revealed through Jesus Christ, in a way a person of Jewish ancestry would understand. It is a very comforting reality that the Church is a haven



for her children. We can rest assured that if we work together, as a body of believers, God will reveal to us the deepest secrets of a good life, centered in him.

John's Words on *the Word*

The Gospel of John (1:1) says that “in the beginning was the Word.” Have you ever sat and wondered about the beginning of existence? John’s description of the origin of life is very important in the Armenian Church; we repeat it on the majority of Sundays for the “Final Gospel.”

There is a cool TV commercial for bottled water that takes a large drop of water and when it hits the surface it turns into an athlete. At the start of a PIXAR movie, animated figures change their shape to become a word that spells out PIXAR. John’s reflection on the “Word” can evoke its own kind of imagery. As we read, just close your eyes...hear the words...draw a picture of Jesus in your mind. If you thought of Jesus as a ‘Word’ what would that word be?



What has come into being in him was life...and the life was the light of all people...

Imagine Jesus

Here’s a list of words; some are a good description of Jesus and others are not... circle the ones that you think fit, cross out the ones that don’t fit Jesus at all:

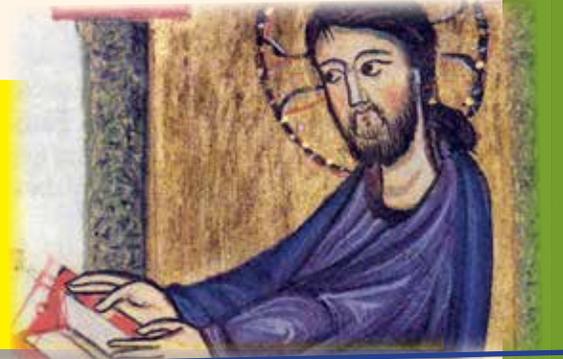
honest shy *divine*
 extraterrestrial **friendly**
happy **gentle** influential
 smart *humble* **NOBLE**
amazing *uninspiring*
 awesome **powerful**
mysterious **spirit** weak
 light **God** sad **fun** **angry**

Imagine Jesus is one of your classmates...
what would he be like?

1. What would be his favorite TV Show?
2. Would he be a popular guy?
3. Would he like to hang out after school?
4. Would he play sports?

5. What kind of music would he listen to?
6. Where would he go to church?
7. Would he join a church youth group?
Would he like it?

The fullness of God's Revelation is expressed in Jesus Christ.



Our Armenian Way

Pentecost/Hokekaloost

Acts 2: 1-12

Հոգեգալուստ



Imagine yourself there in Jerusalem with the apostles on the day of Pentecost. You know the Holy Spirit is present in the wind and the fire and in the people who suddenly have the ability to speak in different languages. How do you think the disciples felt when all of a sudden they were able to speak languages they did not know? The only conclusion one could draw is that this is the handiwork of God. This is when God's Spirit came to renew the face of the earth through the establishment of the Church. This renewal is an ongoing reality through the living Church. Actually, Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Universal Church, celebrated 50 days after Easter. The Armenian Church is one of the members of this Holy Universal Establishment... we are **the True Church** and we have the 'marks' to prove it! We are: One, Holy, Universal, & Apostolic.

While the first nine articles of the Nicene Creed (*Havadamk*) are about the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the last three articles concern the destiny of humankind and the role the Church plays in guiding the faithful toward that destiny. The Church is all true Christian believers together. Another word for true is Orthodox. All of the true churches can be identified by the four 'marks'...



One—founded by the one Lord Jesus Christ, it has one faith, one liturgy and one hierarchy.

Apostolic—because all her ordained bishops are successors of the Apostles, in an unbroken line.

Universal—as according to Our Lord’s command to go out and teach all nations. Our goal is to convert the entire world.

Holy—Jesus Christ is the founder of the Church. He is holy because he is God—He gave his blood for us. We are one body, the Body of Christ, and we do not stand alone!

Do you pray each day for the power of the Holy Spirit? How can this power help you in your choices, decisions and daily activities?

Holy Communion Soorp Haghortootiun

ՍՈՐՔ ՀԱԳՈՐԹՈՒԹԻՒՆ

Take, eat; this is my body, which is distributed for you and for many, for the expiation and remission of sins.

from the Armenian Divine Liturgy

In Luke’s account of the Last Supper, Jesus asks his disciples to remember him and all that he did, as they share the bread that he identified as his body given for us and the cup of wine that he identified with the New Covenant, sealed by his blood.

In Armenian we say: *Arek, gerek, ays eh marmeen eem vor vasun tser yev pazmats paskhee, ee kavootyoon yev ee toghootyoon meghats...* This serves as a common celebration of our faith, a celebration that binds not only all Armenians, but all Christians together as one body. You can go to any Armenian Church in the world and join in the celebration of Divine Liturgy.



Hokekaloost	Pentecost
Muron	Holy Oil
Soorp Haghortootiun	Holy Communion
Arek gerek.....	“Take, eat...”
Havadamk.....	We believe



Choices and Decisions: Following God's Lead

Fill in the blanks with the words below.

God is a God of _____ choices...there is no ONE way that is the ONLY way.

God _____ in the ordinary and is always with us in our _____ and our inclinations.

God's _____ is for us to be happy...not unhappy.

God in his _____, takes us a step at a time.

The choices we make in the present _____ our decisions in the _____.

impact

choices

desire

future

multiple

works

mercy

8 Tips to Help Find Some Answers...

† **Be faith-filled.** Pray for guidance in your decisions and seek to deepen your relationship with God. Let Christian values guide you.

† **Be generous and of service to others.** We find our true heart in acts of service.

† **Pray...** in ordinary and extraordinary circumstances.

† **Share faith.** We grow and learn by talking and studying.

† **Make sacrifices.** A happy and holy life involves sacrifice.

† **Reach out.** Your parish priest & members of your parish family are excellent resources to help guide you.

† **Education.** The more you study the more you learn; remember that God reveals himself...but we must be open to his call.

† **Support.** Have a heart that can listen and lead others to Christ.



Looking At Life

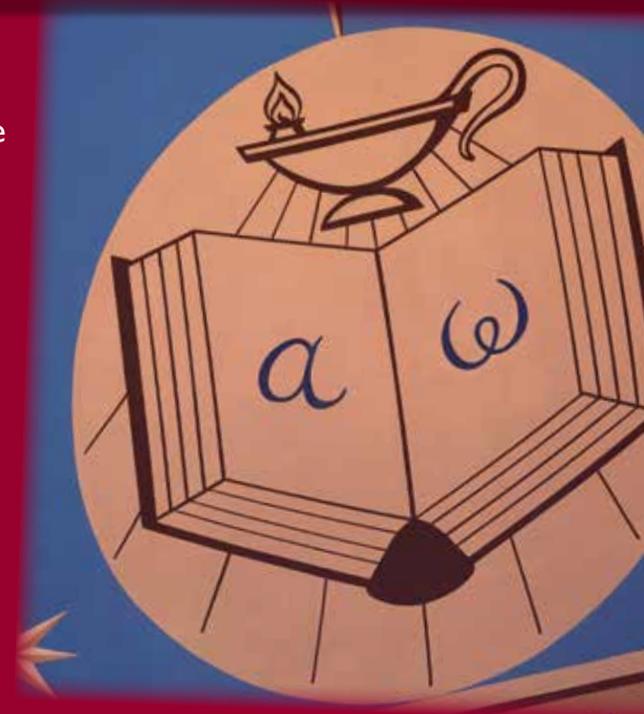
Lesson 3

Unit One

The Alpha and Omega

Here I Am, Lord

- All : Dear God we trust you as Our Father and believe that you created all things.
- Voice 1: You spoke us into being.
- Voice 2: Each of us uniquely created in Body and Soul.
- Voice 1: Our body, which is physical...
- Voice 2: Is stamped with your fingerprint, which is our soul.
- Voice 1: You reveal yourself through your Word, both written and lived.
- Voice 2: You desire a relationship with your children.
- Voice 1: You know us each by name.
- Voice 2: You give us your Spirit to guide and protect us...
- Voice 1: and to give us the grace that we need to be good stewards of the natural resources you gave us.
- Voice 2: You desire true happiness for your children.
- All: You are the Alpha and the Omega; you were there at the beginning of our physical life and you will be with us in Eternity.



The Armenian language was designed with God at its beginning and end. The first letter “**ayp**” is the first letter of the word for God (*Asdvadz*). The last letter of the alphabet “**keh**” is an ancient abbreviation for Christ. God is literally the beginning and end of Armenian letters and literature.

A Peek at Primeval History

As a group, read the accounts of Creation in Genesis 1 & 2 and sequence the events of Scripture in the order in which they happened.



Genesis _____

- a) The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there he placed the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ____
- b) Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. ____
- c) Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ____
- d) Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. ____
- e) This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. ____
- f) Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. ____
- g) Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. ____

- h) The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which he had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ____

Genesis _____

- a) Then God said, Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear;” and it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters he called seas; and God saw that it was good. ____
- b) God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; he made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. ____



- c) Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them;” and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. ____
- d) God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind;” and it was so. God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. ____

- e) God said, “Let us make people in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ____
- f) The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light;” and there was light. ____
- g) Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.” God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ____
- h) Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. ____

Digging Deeper

1. How are the two accounts different?
2. How are the two accounts the same?
3. What is the most difficult for you to accept in the story of Creation?



God's Awesome Creativity!

Yes...the Church teaches and Christians believe that God created the whole world. But God creates in a much different way than humans have the ability to do. Let's look at some different ways we humans can create. A potter can create beautiful pottery from clay, a carpenter can create handsome furniture, an artist has the ability to paint a magnificent mural and a writer has the ability to imagine and write a best-selling novel. These are among some of the many ways that humanity has the ability to create...

In your estimation what is the difference between human creation and God's creation?

Testing the Waters... Science versus Faith

If you learned about the theory of evolution in school you've learned that scientists have a theory that higher forms of life developed from less complex forms over a great period of time. For instance, you might have heard that scientists claim to have strong evidence that humans evolved from the same ancient ancestor as apes. But, how can we believe we were created by God if that is true?



Our Christian belief is not founded in the scientific world, nor confined to a history book. Our evidence in God as the ultimate Creator is found in a book of faith—that book is the Bible. In the 1500's when the printing press was invented, the first book they printed and distributed was the Bible, which was an essential tool in the emergence of modern science. Francis Schaeffer, a renowned historian, said “Science did not conflict with what the Bible teaches; indeed, at the most important point, the Scientific Revolution rested upon what the Bible teaches.”

Would you be surprised to know that the Church accepts, to some point, the theory of evolution? Yes, we believe that God created the world and everything in it...but when exactly that happened in the course of time is an unknown event in the scientific world. But the church

does *unquestionably* believe that the origin of human souls comes from God, that the soul is God's very own fingerprint in every human being. Perhaps God used evolution as his way of forming human beings.

Here are the guidelines that our faith affirms about creation.

1. All things were created by a loving God.
2. Human beings are made in the image of God, which

means we are spiritual beings, with the capacity to know, love, and choose with freedom.

3. Even if human beings emerged in a process of evolution, God is still Creator because he guided the process of evolution.
4. Whatever the origin of humankind's bodily form, our souls are a special creation of God, not the result of evolutionary process. The soul is "God's fingerprint" in each human being.

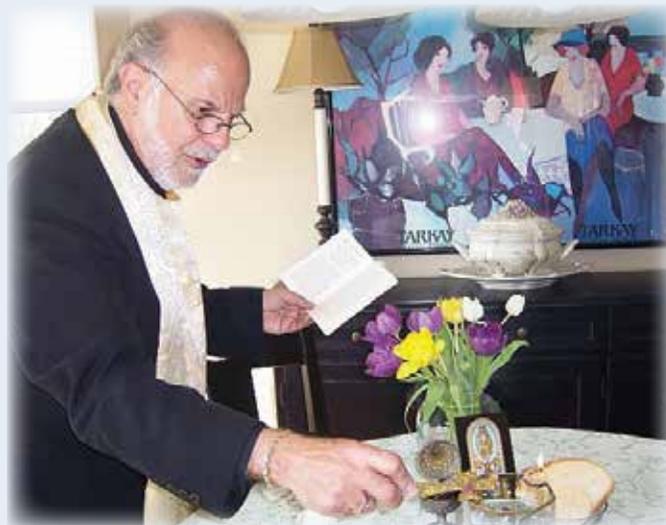
Our Armenian Way

The Blessing of the Fields and the Home

The Armenian Church has many special services that ask specifically for God's ongoing blessing upon creation. One of these special services is the "*blessing of the fields.*" The purpose of the ceremony is to bring fruitfulness and fertility to the fields or gardens. In ancient times the ceremony was conducted outside the church, in the fields, according to the church calendar, approximately 12 times annually. The significance of this service is to both celebrate our blessings and to thank God for the earth and all that is in it.

Another such service is the **Home Blessing (Dnorhnek)** The Church teaches that everything God created is good and holy. So, we do not bless our house to make it holy, but to rededicate it to the Lord, and ask God's protection and blessing upon all those who live or enter the home. During this ceremony three important items are blessed: water, bread and salt. Water is an essential element of life. Think back to our Scripture reading this morning, what did it say about water? (Gen. 1:1-3) Bread is symbolic of our physical need for food and the bread of life—the Body of Christ that we receive in Holy Communion; salt preserves and brings flavor—and in Jesus' words "we are the salt of the earth."

Can you think of other items that are used in a home blessing? Hint: The priest brings them



with him when he comes to visit. See if you can name four of the items

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

During the ceremony, we join in the refrain "Amen. Alleluia." With these words we proclaim that we have confidence in our God who has always come to the rescue of his people. '**Amen**' means "let it be." When we say or sing 'amen,' we are giving our signature to the ritual which has occurred and pledging to be a part of what makes this house, this world, holy.

Next week we will talk about Adam & Eve and the relationship that God has with his people. Remember to bring a photo of yourself as a baby!

Looking At Life

Lesson 4

Unit One

It's All About Relationship

Here I Am, Lord

Remember, Father, your servants, our parents, our teachers, our brothers and sisters, our friends, those who provide for us, the pilgrims, the travelers, those who give us rest, those who work hard, those who profess your name, those who are in penance, those who are enslaved, those who are sick, those who are afflicted, those who rule over us, those who do evil, those who do good, our enemies, those who hate us, and those who ask us in faith to pray for them.

from the Armenian Matins service



So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. Gen 1:27

1. What do you think it means to be made in God's image?

2. What do you think is the best way to know God as he wants us to know him?



Photo Play

Write three interesting things you learned about classmates today.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Tracing Our Ancestry

Our family history is a wonderful way for us to better understand who we are, where we came from and where we are going...we are especially blessed if we have a 'story-teller' in the family!

The Book of Genesis is also a book of wonderful memories for the family of God. It's a story that begins with how God created the world, how evil crept into Paradise, and how God handled the problem. The story continues to record the history of God's people—who were sometimes obedient and faithful and sometimes just downright sinful. Genesis is a wonderful love story between God and each one of us. God creates each person with special and unique qualities. He takes the time to know us, and to appreciate our differences. The truth is that God created us to be happy and live in perfect harmony with him, each other and all creation—so we know that God desires a relationship with us. But how can we fully develop a relationship with God—we can't see him, we can't touch him, we can't have a one-on-one conversation with him, we can't actually hear his voice. Or can we?



God knows each of us by name—and that name is all about relationship!

There is great significance in a name. When an Armenian priest is ordained, he is given a new name. The Bishop takes into account the talents and characteristics that the priest possesses and offers a name of a saint who has similar characteristics with the hope that the newly-ordained priest will follow in the footsteps and perhaps

be guided by the saint whose name he bears. This is biblical—Saul came to be called Paul, Simon became Peter, Sarai was renamed Sarah.

The Hebrew word for 'man' is *Adam*, a name that represents both maleness and femaleness—in other words 'humankind.' *Eve* in Hebrew means 'living,' *Cain* in Hebrew means 'I have produced,' *Abel* in Hebrew means 'breath.'

Family Issues...

We are the family of God!

We've already explored the Creation story and how peaceful and harmonious the first human relationships were. It was, sadly, not going to last. God created us as social beings, designed to be most fully human when we



interacted. In a real way we need other human beings to be able to grow and experience love and sacrifice. We didn't have to wait long to get into trouble. Shortly after Adam and Eve had to leave Paradise, their son Cain introduced the sin of "envy" (considered one of the 7 deadly sins) to the world - envy in the form of sibling rivalry. Let's see how Cain and his brother Abel dealt with this problem and how God settled the score. Read Genesis 4:1-16.

An Either/Or Activity

1. Do you think Cain was guilty of wrongdoing?
2. Do you think God was unfair in his response to what Cain did?

Hmmm...

What verses might help you understand God's judgment better? _____



Our Armenian Way

Kiss of Peace

Kresdos ee mech mer haydnetsav

Քրիստոս ի մէջ մեր յայտնեցաւ

The relationship that God has with his creation is fully expressed in the relationship that Christ has with the Church. The Church is called to embody the living Spirit of love that unites all, so together we can leave Christ's mark on the world. This example of love is expressed in every action that takes place during Divine Liturgy as well as the living mission of the Church.

Our church is a family, made up of all of our families—together we are the 'Body of Christ.' Our relationship with God has everything to do with how we interact with compassion and love with our fellow human beings.

We are called to live in harmony with one another and we are reminded of that fact each and every Sunday just prior to the preparation of the bread and wine that we are about to receive in Holy Communion.

*Krisdos ee mech mer Haydnetsav...*The Kiss of Peace leads us to the reality that Christ is here revealed to his people—the people that he loved and died for. We must understand that before we can be worthy of God we must reconcile ourselves with one another. We cannot in good conscience ask God to forgive us, if we cannot forgive one another. "How can we say we love God whom we cannot see, if we do not love our brother, whom we can see?"

We know from the letters of St. Paul that greeting each other "with a holy kiss" is a sign of unity and love in Christ. In the Eucharist, Christ comes to unite his people to each other and to himself in the gift of his Body and Blood.



This kiss is the sign that our souls are united and that we banish all remembrance of injury. In other words...forgive and forget!

Use your Divine Liturgy Books to find where the Kiss of Peace is in the Divine Liturgy.

1. *Krisdos ee mech mer haydnetsav* means: _____

2. "Blessed is the revelation of Christ" in Armenian is: _____

As we bid one another farewell today...let's take a moment to thank God for the time that we have shared—for the Body which we are a part of—for the family and friends that make us understand how great our God is...He gave us each other to love and care for. Amen.

Looking At Life

Lesson 5

Unit One

God's Shining Light

A Great Team!

Do you like team or group activities? What is your favorite... football, baseball, soccer, debate team, chorus, the church youth group, or? Whether you play on a team or just enjoy watching, you will surely agree that no matter how great each player is it takes teamwork to reach the top.



A good team has talented players. A great team has players who work together so well that they respond automatically. Not everyone on a baseball team has the same ability...some are great hitters, some catchers, others pitch, some play outfield better than others –the teams that make the play-offs are those who have a diverse combination of all the different abilities. In today's Scripture reading, St Paul is challenging the Romans to work together to be a great team. While it is admirable to strive to be your personal best it is most beneficial when everyone works together toward a common goal.

Romans 12: 1-8



Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Spiritual Gifts in Action

Not too long ago the country of Haiti was rocked by a terrible earthquake. Hour after hour the news media reported on the efforts of people there to offer humanitarian assistance to the thousands of earthquake victims. The first thing that strikes you at a time like this is the overwhelming devastation and loss of life. But as you watch the valiant efforts of the rescue workers, all from different walks of life and all possessing different talents and gifts, you will notice a display of teamwork that makes miracles happen—that is precisely God's intention.



God gives to everyone what they need to become the best person that they can be! Think about becoming the best person that you can be. What does it take? Think about it in terms of any great athlete, writer, singer, dancer, scientist, or teacher. What magic do they have that helped them become so good at what they do? There is no trick or magic involved; it takes persistent and hard work and often a little help from friends. Another key is using our gifts in service to God—in this way we become his hands to help those in need...his mouth to tell others the good news... his feet to lead the way...truly his body! There's an awesome song that says it all...It's entitled **"We Are Many Parts."**



"We Are Many Parts"

God of all, we look to you, would be your servants true, let us be your love to all the world.

Refrain

So my pain is pain for you, in your joy is my joy too, all is brought together in the Lord!

Refrain

All you seekers great and small, seek the greatest gift of all; if you love then you will know the Lord!

Refrain: We are many parts, we are all one body

And the gifts we have we are given to share,

May the spirit of love, make us one indeed.

One, the love that we share;

One our hope in despair

One, the cross that we bear



Speaking of “parts,” these words are exchanged when we receive mahs at the end of Badarak:

Mahs yev pazheen yegheetsee kez ee Soorp Badarakes

Մասս եւ բաժինն եղիցի քեզ ի սուրբ Պատարագէս

May this be to you a share (part) and portion of the Holy Sacrifice.

Pahjeen eem Asdvadz haveedyan.

Բաժինն իմ Աստուած յաւիտեան

God is my portion forever.



Practice Makes Perfect

As we have learned in lessons past, there are many different types of prayer—but true prayer, which is heartfelt conversation with our Creator, requires energy, focus and practice. Today we will talk specifically about a certain type of prayer or chant called a “litany,” which is a series of prayer petitions.



✠ 1: That we may pass this hour and the day before us in peace and in faith, let us ask of the Lord.

✠ All: Grant it, Lord. *Shnorhya Der!*

✠ 2: For the angel of peace to guard our souls, let us ask of the Lord.

✠ All: Grant it, Lord. *Shnorhya Der!*

✠ 3: For his forgiveness of our wrongdoings, let us ask of the Lord.

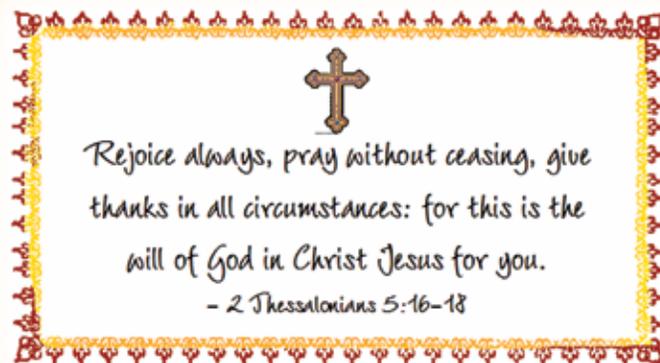
✠ All: Grant it, Lord. *Shnorhya Der!*

✠ 4: For the great and mighty power of the Cross to help our souls, let us ask of the Lord.

✠ All: Grant it, Lord. *Shnorhya Der!*

from the Armenian Divine Liturgy

A “Litany” is... a prayer consisting of a series of invocations and supplications by the leader with alternate responses by the congregation



Our Armenian Way

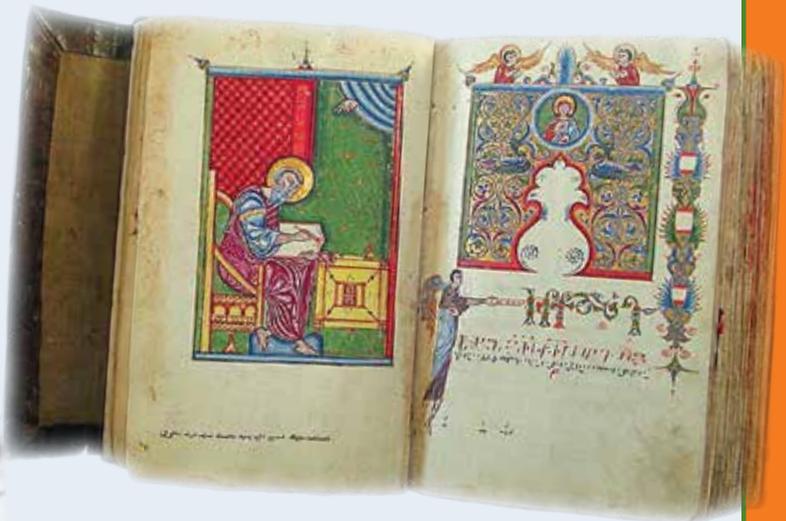
HYE EM YES!

Generations of Gifts

For thousands of years, Armenians have been sharing their God-given talents in their local and national communities and in the world.

Which of the following questions are true and which are false?

1. Yerevan is as old as Babylon, and is fifty years older than Rome.
2. In 1968, the city of Yerevan marked its 2750th Anniversary.
3. Linguists agree that the Armenian language holds a very high place among the most accurate means of expressing human thoughts.
4. The Bible was the first book that was translated into the Armenian language in the 5th century.
5. Some non-Armenian scholars considered the translation of the Armenian Bible a literary monument and have called it the “Queen of Translations.”
6. The 5th century was called “The Golden Age” of Armenia.
7. Armenians invented red ink. They obtained it from a worm called “Vortan Garmeer” which was found in Armenia.



What Are My Gifts?

Spiritual Gift / Talents Inventory

Check the boxes that you feel apply to you now.

Check the gifts that you would like to apply to you.

- I enjoy using my artistic talents.
- When I participate in activities that serve the Lord I really feel alive.
- I firmly believe that God can make miracles happen.
- I enjoy writing poems, stories, songs.
- When I am with someone who is discouraged, I try to lift up their spirit.
- I often feel compassion for kids in my school that have physical or mental challenges.
- I feel confident that when I am old enough I will continue to serve my church community.
- I think it is important to notice and care for people in need who are near us.
- Other: _____



Closing prayer experience

A Litany of Thanksgiving

Leader: Let's thank God for giving us the precious gift of faith.

All: *We thank you for your many gifts, O Lord.*

Leader: Let us thank God for our Mother Church where we gather as his children.

All: *We thank you for your many gifts, O Lord.*

Leader: Let us thank God for our ancestors who gave their all for the faith.

All: *We thank you for your many gifts, O Lord.*

Leader: Let us thank God for our bishops, priests, deacons, and teachers, and all those who serve in our Christian community and for our Christian identity through which all gifts flourish.

All: *We thank you for your many gifts, O Lord.*

Leader: Let us thank him for the gifts of our unity and our diversity.

All: *We thank you for your many gifts, O Lord.*

Leader: Thank you God especially for my special talent/gift...(each person responds).

All: *Amen.*

Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 1

Unit Two

The Holy Bible: A Map for Our Life Journey

Here I Am, Lord

All-knowing and loving God, the more we prayerfully read and reflect on the Scriptures, the more your Word is able to penetrate our hearts. Open our eyes, our ears, our minds, and our hearts so that we can receive you as you come to us through the words of the Bible with the wisdom, truth and love that only you can bestow. Amen.



Where's the Map?

Imagine that your family is planning a three-week road trip through the United States. After a great deal of discussion you finally decide that you will depart from home, let's say San Diego, CA, and travel across the United States to, let's say, Bar Harbor, Maine, a distance of 3,156 miles. Undoubtedly, everyone is excited about this great adventure and has begun to list the tourist attractions that they hope to visit along the way. However, dad reminds the family that pains-taking plans are necessary to make the best use of the time you have as well as to ensure that every family member will enjoy the trip. In addition to planning the best route, there is also limited space, so you will have to wisely select what you will take with you on the trip. The first item of business is to prepare a list of essentials that will benefit everyone on the trip. List the top 5 items that everyone in the family will agree are essential tools for planning the trip:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Undoubtedly, maps would be essential tools in the planning process.

Most travelers planning such an extensive trip would go online or consult AAA (Automobile Association of America). If you are going to do



some camping or hiking along the way, in addition to packing water and basic supplies, you would wisely pack a compass or your GPS to make sure that you don't get lost in the back country. It is safe to say that these useful travel guides would be consulted continually throughout your trip. Three weeks on the road without proper planning could be a disaster—just imagine being confined to a car for three weeks with your younger brother and sister and you are lost... sounds like a nightmare!

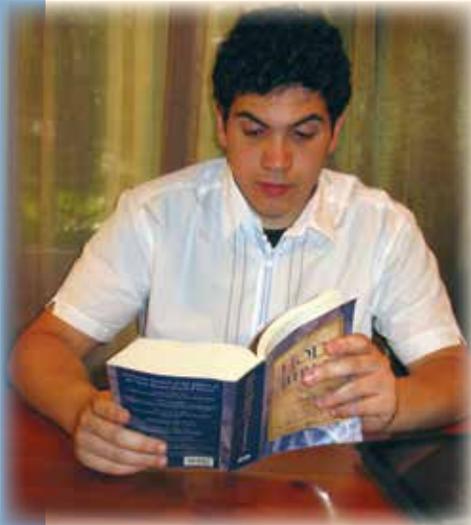
Life, too, is an exciting journey, but there are also dangerous pitfalls and sometimes wrecks along the way. Seems to make good sense that you would want a personal guide to help you navigate the detours and

decide what would be the best life path to take. Don't look too far...you have just the guide book...the Holy Bible can also be considered a true and reliable guide to how we should live. It is both a map and a blueprint for right living, and it clearly highlights the path we should take to arrive safely at our final destination.

Why do so many people try to navigate life without the Church or the Bible as tools especially designed by God for his people?

The Bible and The Church

The Story and A Witness



Some of our Christian brothers and sisters believe the Bible is the final authority on questions of faith, and this misconception leads them to believe that the Church received power and authority from the Bible. It is important to remember that this holy book did not

fall from heaven. God did not give us a Bible to define our faith. God gave us something much more valuable than the printed word. God gave us his most sacred gift, his Son, Jesus Christ, the **“Living Word”** who personally witnessed how he wanted us to live our lives, and gave us his precious Body, the Holy Church. In the early church it was said that scripture was “written on the heart of the church, not parchment.”

It was the Church, after centuries of thought and development, that gave us the book we call the Bible... truly time-tested... it was lived before it was written!

There are two very helpful ways of looking at the “big picture” of what the Bible is all about:

- *Seeing it as a story*
- *Hearing it as a witness*

Have you ever thought what part the Bible plays in Christian life? In II Timothy 3:16-17 we can find the answer to that question. St Paul says that we can use Scripture as our life-guide because...*“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* Truly, the Bible is both a book of promise and purpose! There is one big story unfolding in all the individual stories.

The story below gives us clues about the Promise...

Fill in the blanks with words in the list below:

At the center of the big story is _____ and what he is doing with the _____. The Bible begins with God creating the heavens and earth, and tells the story of his _____ with humankind through the days yet to _____ when he will keep the _____ he made to his people. At that time war, disease, death and pain will be no more. This will be the day in which _____ is removed from the earth and the _____ will be renewed and restored to God's _____ plan for _____

This is God's purpose; this is the story of _____ history. This is when those who _____ in God will see him face to face.



dealings	evil	God	come
human race	trusted	promise	original
universe	creation	salvation	



Adam & Eve's story of disobedience is often called the "fall" of humankind and is vital for understanding much of the Bible, for it explains that the human race is out of relationship with God—and the whole of creation has been affected by that break of relationship.



Line It Up

Let's make a Bible time-line—a map for us to use as we journey through this fantastic adventure.

The story has 6 basic parts. Order them 1-6.

The fall of humankind ____

The time of Israel ____

Jesus ____

The End Times ____

Creation ____

Christ's followers ____

Now identify three (a,b,c) significant events and themes appropriate to each part of the story and mark them (1a, etc.)

God brought the universe into being out of nothing, simply by speaking. ____

God established a covenant with Abraham. ____

The Son of God is born in a humble stable. ____

God placed people in his world to care for it and bring it to its full potential. ____

Humankind had responsibility for the animals, birds, trees and plants. ____

The ultimate victory of God over the forces of evil. ____

Communities of believers (churches) form and gather regularly. ____

They are given the power of the Holy Spirit at the Jewish festival of Pentecost. ____

He lives a human life, full of love and without sin, as God intended it. ____

God gave his people freedom to explore the garden in which he had placed them, but told them not to eat the fruit from one particular tree. ____

Tempted by the serpent, they chose not to do as God wished. ____

Explained in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. ____

God responded by banishing them from the Garden—this is considered the fall of humankind and the universe is out of relationship with God. ____

Israel established itself in the Promised Land. ____

Generations led by Isaac, Jacob and Joseph followed Abraham. ____

Jesus dies and rises from the tomb, granting eternal life to all. ____

They are appointed and given authority to carry the Good News throughout the world. ____

When those who trust God will see him face to face. ____





Asdvadzashoonch
Աստուածատուհի

Our Armenian Way

The Armenian translation of the Bible, completed in the 5th century AD (known as the Golden Age of Armenian literary activity), has been referred to as the “Queen of Translations” because of its accuracy and beauty.

Christians view the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament. That is, for Christians the New Testament is the fulfillment of God’s promise as made in the Old Testament.

The New Testament or New Covenant is the testimony about our Lord Jesus Christ. When he sent his 2nd letter to Timothy, St. Paul encouraged the young man to stand firm in the truths taught to him from the Scriptures... “For in them lie wisdom and the way to salvation in Christ.” They are ‘God-breathed.’ Armenians refer to this as ‘Asdvadzashoonch’ the breath of life for all who seek to walk in God’s ways.

The Bible Speaking as a Witness... Are You Ready to RSVP?

The Bible does not simply tell this story in a detached way, as a historian might. It is written to invite those who hear its message to respond to Jesus too, It is a testimony to what God has done in history as well as what God will do in the future. It is written to encourage its readers to become followers of Jesus, and to help them understand how to follow him in the company of others. Reading the Bible is like receiving an invitation to a party—it seeks our response. Are you ready to RSVP for the journey of a lifetime?



Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 2

Unit Two

A Quick Glance

Here I Am, Lord

The Psalms express the whole range of human feeling and experience, from dark depression to exuberant joy. They are rooted in the experiences of the Hebrew people a long time ago...but they are timeless, and among the best loved, most-read parts of the Bible. The Psalms are poetic, dramatic, comforting and inspirational. Both Jewish and Christian musicians continue to write music for the Psalms. The Psalms are included in many Armenian prayers, services, and liturgies. One of the most popular of these wonderful prayers is Psalm 23. Let's pray it together.

Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
³he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
⁶Surely your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

When you read about God as a "shepherd," what images and feelings come to mind?

Key facts about the Psalms

- ✓ Many authors, called psalmists, contributed to the collection of Psalms; King David wrote many of them.
- ✓ There are 150 Psalms which makes it the longest book in the Bible.
- ✓ Psalms was written as a hymnbook and prayer book for God's people.
- ✓ Jesus quoted Psalms; some of his last words are from the Psalms (Psalm 22).



What do you know about the Bible?

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. The Bible is the world's most widely distributed and widely read book.	T	F
2. The "Bible" is not one book, but many. It was compiled from writings that had religious, cultural, and historical significance over many centuries.	T	F
3. The 10 Commandments are recorded in the book of Genesis.	T	F
4. The Bible tells us that God's people often deserted him for other gods.	T	F
5. In the beginning, the whole earth had one language.	T	F
6. For the Armenian people the Bible has always been alive and full of God's power.	T	F
7. Scholars consider the Armenian translation of the Bible the "King of Translations"	T	F
8. The Old Testament is simply the history of the Jewish people, the New Testament is more important because it is the story of Jesus Christ.	T	F
9. Throughout the Bible God speaks through people.	T	F

God Speaks to Us in Many Ways



more than a millennium, and speaking more than one language!

There are also many different literary forms in the Bible. A literary form is a style of writing, such as a legend, narrative, short story, autobiography, genealogy, riddle or letter. To understand the message of a particular book in the Bible, one must understand the literary form in which it

was written. Confusion and misinterpretation can result from failure to recognize the literary form.

To show the importance of understanding literary forms, find the following from a daily newspaper:

- An editorial
- A recipe in the food section
- An advertisement for a store (i.e. Macy's, Home Depot, etc.)
- A classified for a car or house
- A sports headline*

What does a reader need to know in each of the above, to truly understand its contents?

*We'll do this one for you:

"Cowboys Pluck Falcons on Thanksgiving Day"

- Taken literally (that is, word for word), what could this headline mean?
- Consider your audience—what if this headline were written in the Yerevan Daily News, where the people do not know who or what the Dallas Cowboys and the Atlanta Falcons are?

Our Armenian Way

The Armenian Bible includes Deuterocanonical (“second canon”) Books or Apocrypha (“things that are hidden”). Among these you will find the Books of Maccabees. The stories give an account of the struggle of Jewish patriots to overthrow the oppression of the Syrian ruler Antiochus who tried to suppress Jewish religious practices and the temple rituals. The resistance was led first by Mattathias and then his son Judas Maccabaeus and his four brothers liberated the Jews from foreign rule.

The Macabees won the Jews a brief period of independence from occupying forces. It was a movement to restore not only freedom of worship but personal devotion to God’s law.

The 5th century Armenian historian Yeghisheh records how the Armenians faced their greatest struggle for religious freedom in the middle of the fifth century, when the Persian King attempted to forcibly convert them to Zoroastrianism. But the Armenians were steadfast in their faith, citing the covenant which they established between the people, the Church, and their leaders. The Armenian word for “covenant” is “ookht;” the same word means “testament” as in Old and New Testaments.

The two books of Maccabees greatly inspired Yeghisheh Vartabed.

According to Yeghisheh, Vartan the Brave, “holding the Holy Bible in hand read aloud for everyone to hear about the valiant character of the Maccabees, and with eloquent words he explained to them the nature of their struggle and the valor with which they had fought for their God-given laws...”



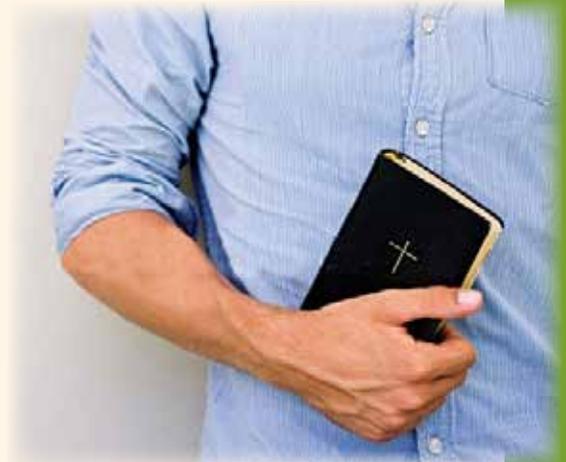
Words You Can Trust... Words You Can Live By

If someone gave you the answer key to your geometry exam would you read it? If you were lost in the mountains would you read the map? The simple fact is that the Bible has stood the test of time because it is an invaluable guide for life.

Written by over 30 people over a period of 1500 years it is as relevant to us today as it was to the people of Jesus’ time. The Bible has been translated into many languages over the last 2,000 years since the Christian faith began.

It is a marvelous gift to humankind. God’s written revelation is light in a darkened world, a refreshing life-giving oasis in a parched desert. To the hungry soul, it is bread from heaven, and to those who feel lost, it is a life-saving compass.

God’s word is effective. When God speaks, things happen. When people read the Bible, things happen too!



Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 3

Unit Two

The Old Testament

Heen Gdagaran Հին Կտակարան

Here I Am, Lord

*Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long. Psalm 25: 4-5*

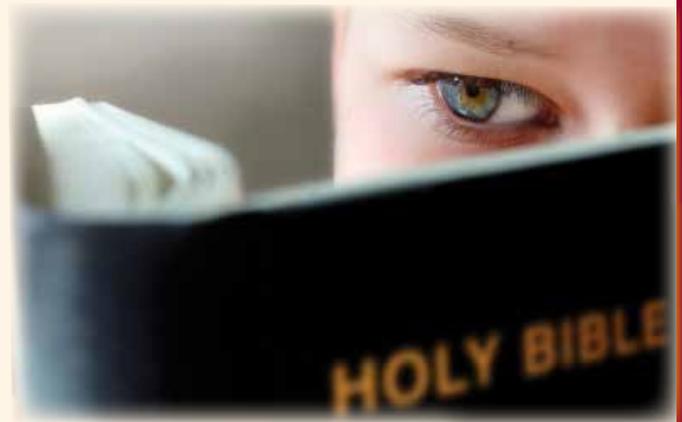
A Sprint through Salvation History

The Bible is divided into two main sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament.



The Old Testament books are primarily about God's distinctive relationship with his Chosen People. At different times these people are called Hebrews, Israelites, Judeans, and Jews. Throughout their history, God breaks through and calls the Chosen People to recognize him as their one and only God. God promises to bless them in a special way, and in return he asks the Chosen People to be faithful in following his commands.

This holy promise between God and his people is called a Covenant (in legal terms we would call it a



contract). *Testament* is another word for *Covenant*, so the Old Testament is the story of the Covenant or contract between God and his special people, the Jews, so most of the books of the Old Testament are also the sacred Scripture of the Jewish people. Since the books were written in Hebrew, they are often referred to as the “*Hebrew Scriptures*.” The Old Testament is “old” not because it is out of date, but because it is the story of how God made his first Covenant with his Chosen People.

Bringing the Past to Life

The Old Testament in our Christian Bibles is divided into four different sections.

1. The Pentateuch or Torah. These five books are the heart of the Old Testament. They contain the



stories of Creation and stories of how sin entered the world. They tell how God broke through to make his first covenant. In the Pentateuch we read how God led his people out of slavery and how God gave them the Ten Commandments to help them live the way he expected them to.

Select the line that names the 5 books of the Pentateuch:

- a. Genesis, Joshua, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers
- b. Deuteronomy, Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Genesis
- c. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

2. The Historical Books. These sixteen books contain religious history and accounts of inspiring people and events. They tell us how the Chosen People settled in the Promised Land, became a kingdom, appointed kings, how they often worshiped false gods and ignored the poor. So God sent special men and women to help the people come back to their senses and worship the only True God—the one with whom they made a covenant.

Select the line that identifies some of the characters in the 16 Historical Books:

- a. Joshua, Samson, Samuel, Solomon, Ruth
- b. Moses, Cain, Noah, Adam, Abraham
- c. Jacob, Abraham, Jeremiah, Judas Maccabees, Daniel

3. The Wisdom Books. These seven books contain the collected wisdom of the Chosen People. You will find songs and prayers that we use in Liturgy and special services. You will find advice on good and holy living. You will also find in the book of Job how the people questioned why bad things happen to good people...it's still a question we ask today!

Name three of the seven Wisdom Books:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____



4. The Books of the Prophets. These books contain the messages the prophets - those special people called by God - delivered to God's straying people. They warned the people, they challenged them, and when they stubbornly did not listen, they offered comfort and hope when the people felt that God had abandoned them. Some of the prophets promised a future savior, the Messiah, who would bring God's peace, love and justice to the world.

Unscramble the letters to identify each of the prophets
 rahcaihz _____ hmeareij _____
 shaiai _____ ekzeile _____
 smaao _____ caimh _____



To fully understand the plan God has for the human race, we need both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament, God reveals the love he has for us. The stories teach us how sin keeps us from being in a completely loving relationship with God. You will see as you explore the Old Testament that God used faithful people to bring his people back on the right path. All the stories of the Old Testament prepare us to understand the New Testament and how Jesus Christ fulfills God's promise to save us from sin and death.

Our Armenian Way

A Picture Paints a Thousand Words

In Jesus' time the world was very different from ours. Biblical scholars offer a great deal of background information that helps us to better understand what the people of that time were experiencing. This intense investigation by scholars helps us understand Scripture at a much deeper level.



Most people then were illiterate, meaning they did not have the ability to read or write. That's really why, for the early Church, oral tradition was so important. The Hebrew people, for example, would pass down stories by word of mouth (imagine how we share camp-fire stories). This is how later generations understood what God expected from them. The epic cycle of David of Sassoun is a great example of oral tradition in Armenian culture.

The Hebrew people recorded Scripture on scrolls and those that had the ability would read it to the congregation.

Art was yet another way of communicating God's word. Armenian artists (most of them monks) produced magnificent illustrations to depict biblical events. Toros Roslin was one of the best known Armenian manuscript illustrators (or



illuminators, called so because of the use of gold leaf in their paintings). He lived in the 13th century (c. 1210-1270). He worked at the scriptorium of Hromkla in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, the seat of the patriarchal see at that time. His patrons included the Catholicos Constantine I, King Hetum I, Queen Isabella, and Prince Levon, in particular. Interestingly, Roslin wrote notes in the margins (called colophons) which have given a rich picture of the world in which he lived. The earliest surviving manuscript he illustrated is the *Zeytun Gospel* (1256).

The miniature below represents a New Testament story. Can you guess what biblical story it portrays?



Creative Expression-Gifts from God

How do you like to tell stories or express yourself? Some people act, some write, some paint or draw, some sing, create pottery, sculpture... the list is endless. The arts are a wonderful gift from God to his creation and they communicate the infinite glory and endless creativity we humans have, because we are made in the image and likeness of God. What do you say we try our hand at some different forms of a creative expression?

1. Read Exodus 20:1-17



(Draw a picture or create your own symbolic language to represent the word that fits in each space)

The _____ are one of the most famous parts of the _____. They
are a summary of the entire _____ God gave to Moses on _____.
For Christians and Jews they play a _____ role in how we make _____,
how we treat each other, and how we go about being in good standing
with _____.

Answers:

Bible God Mount Sinai key
Ten Commandments Law decisions

2. Read Psalms 137: Wisdom-compose a prayer.

3. Read Isaiah 53: Draw your own miniature.

4. Read I Kings 19:8-13: (hearing God's voice) Act it out.



What Rules *Your* Life?

Technology can be a wonderful thing. We know the social networking vocabulary: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Blog... True, they all keep us updated with the lives and activities of our family and friends. That is what they are designed to do—to expand our horizontal network. We can keep adding “friends” until they number in the tens of thousands, most of whom we will know only superficially. However, there is one relationship that social networking sites omit. This is the vertical relationship with our Creator, our Father, and our Friend. To build an authentic, real relationship with God, we have to seek him. God is always there for us, even when the internet connection is down. Think about letting *him* be a big part of what rules *your* life!

Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 4

Unit Two

The New Testament: An Overview

Here I Am, Lord

1 Corinthians 13

Digging for Facts!



Fill in the correct word from the box below.

The Bible is not one _____; it is a library of books that were written over a period of more than 1,500 years by many different _____. These authors were _____ by the Holy Spirit in their _____ and writing. Thus, the Bible is the inspired Word of God without _____. It also has the _____ touch from its authors. Paul is different from David,

who is different from James or Moses. So, their _____ and personality come out to us. These _____ the marvelous depth and wonder of _____ and how God _____ to use us even though he does not need to.

error authors thinking book chooses
human inspired style Scripture create

Our past investigation has taught us many things about the Bible. For example, the Bible is filled with many genres or types of literature, including law, history, wisdom, writings, and poetry. Today we are going to explore the specific genres of the New Testament: sacred biography, history, letters, and apocalyptic literature.

Nor Gdaganan Նոր Կտակարան

Exploring the New Testament

Sacred Biography: The Gospels

Gospel literally means the “**Good News**,” specifically the good news that through Jesus Christ we are saved from sin and death. When the Gospels were written in the 1st century, it was a brand new form of literature. The four Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John) go beyond what we might consider as traditional biography because their primary purpose was to show how Christ revealed himself as Lord and Savior in history through the eyes of each Gospel writer. This is a little different than writing about the life of a President or any other famous personality.



Eyewitness News...

Gospel writers tell their stories

Have you ever been in a situation where you were one of many witnesses called to give your personal account of a car accident or altercation of some kind? Very often a group of people can witness or hear the very same thing...but leave the scene with very different accounts. Today we will explore the scriptural accounts of the four Gospel writers who all were eyewitnesses of Christ's teachings, his miracles, his compassion and the unconditional love he expressed in virtually every situation.

We call Matthew, Mark, Luke and John "Gospels" because they tell the Good News of Jesus Christ. These four books each have their unique picture of Jesus Christ, and are being written with a particular audience in mind. So it was the task of the Gospel writers to offer an eyewitness account in a way that would best impact their audience.



It is believed that Mark was written first. The writers of Matthew and Luke probably used Mark as a starting point in creating their Gospels. This is why these three Gospels have some very similar stories and tell the events of Jesus' life in chronological order. As a matter of fact, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are referred to as "synoptic" gospels, which means "seeing together" or "seeing from the same point of view." The Gospel of John is quite different from the other three and is often called the "theological" Gospel as John presents the teachings of Jesus thematically, emphasizing that he is the Son of God. Having four different accounts gives us a more complete understanding of Jesus than just having one.

Gospel Avedaran Աւետարան

So, What Did We Just Learn?

Fill in the correct answer to the sentences that follow.

1. Gospel literally means _____
 - a. Eyewitness
 - b. Christ's mission
 - c. Good News
 - d. synoptic accounts
2. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they
 - a. Were written at the same time
 - b. Were all written for the same audience
 - c. Include many of the same stories, often in the same order.
3. It is believed that the first Gospel to be written was
 - a. Matthew
 - b. John
 - c. Luke
 - d. Mark
4. The Gospel of _____ is different from the other three, because it has fewer miracles and fewer parables but presents Jesus more clearly as the Son of God.
 - a. Luke
 - b. John
 - c. Matthew
 - d. Mark

Four Witnesses – Four Stories

First Witness...**Mark** representing the Christians in Rome...Read Mark 14: 1-5

Second Witness.... **Matthew** who represents the Jewish followers of Christ: Read Matthew 26:2-5; 6-7

Third Witness.... **Luke** who represents the Gentile Christians: Read Luke 22: 1-2; 3-6

Fourth Witness... **John** who represents all Christian people... Read John 11:38-53; 12:3



Cross Examination Questions

1. What was the occasion?
2. Identify who was involved in the event.
3. What were they trying to do?
4. What were they trying to avoid?
5. What happens right afterwards?

Early Church History

In your history class in school, you studied about the heroic men and women who helped create the United States: George Washington, Susan B. Anthony and many more. The Acts of the Apostles is a book containing stories like these, telling us about the people and events in the early history of the Church. In fact, it is actually considered the second volume of a two volume history written by the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke. It continues the account of salvation history by telling about the beginning of the Christian movement, primarily through the travels, teaching, and miracles of the apostles and the new apostle/missionary, St. Paul.



Here is a reading from Acts 6: 1-7.

6¹But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

²So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program.

³And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility.

⁴Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.”

⁵Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith).

⁶These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

⁷So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

1. What was the problem?
2. What did the apostles do in immediate response?
3. What was the solution?
4. What qualifications were they looking for?
5. How was this solution accepted?
6. What three things happened as a result?

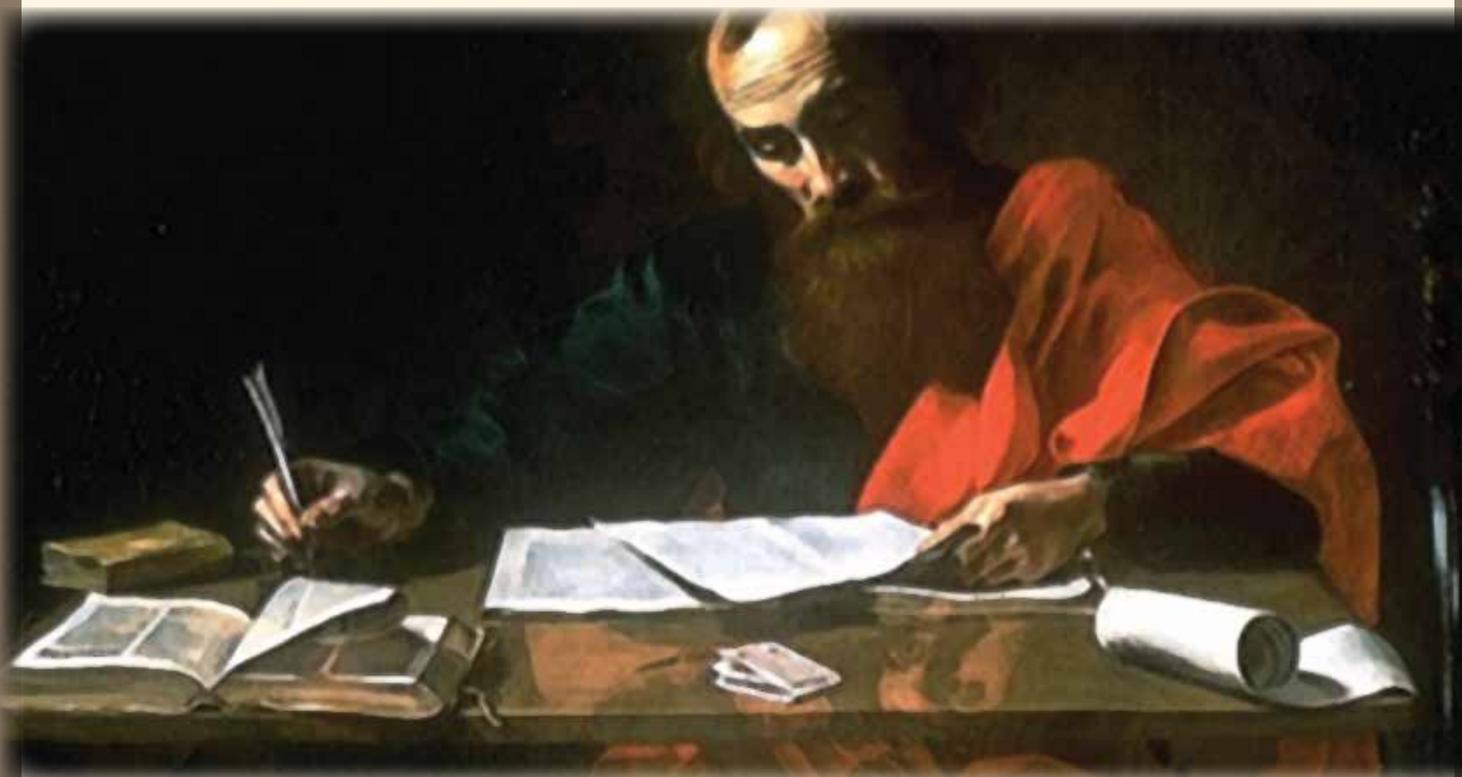
Love Letters

This refers to the 21 letters (also known as ‘*Epistles*’) in the New Testament written to a specific group or person such as Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, Peter, and John. Most challenge the listeners to live Christian lives as true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Today’s opening prayer was from a letter to the Corinthians, reminding them that faith had no meaning without love.

Apocalyptic writing

The last book of the New Testament is the book of Revelation. It is written in apocalyptic style. Apocalyptic writing is a type of literature that paints a picture of the end times, using powerful imagery and symbols whose full meaning is hidden to us for the time being. It expresses the certainty that God will be victorious over evil.



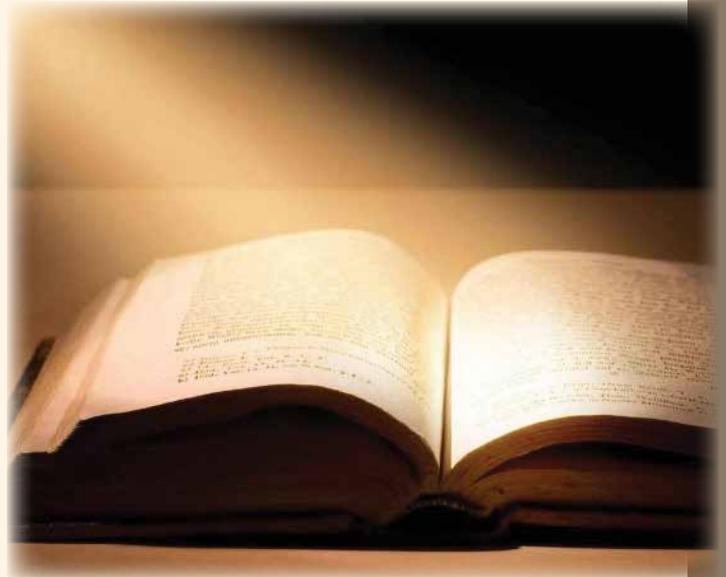
A Vision of Christ

In Revelations 1:12–19, an amazing encounter with the writer and Christ is described. Write in all the images the writer describes. The first three are done for you:

1. There are seven lampstands
2. One like the Son of Man (Christ!)
3. Wearing a robe down to his feet
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

11. _____
12. _____

What an amazing image!



Our Armenian Way

In April 2012, the Library of Congress opened an exhibition entitled “**To Know Wisdom and Instruction: The Armenian Literary Tradition at the Library of Congress**” in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the first Armenian printing press (opened by Hagop Meghabard in Venice, Italy) and the first printed Armenian book, *Oorpatakirk* (Book of Friday). With these accomplishments, the era of Armenian printing had begun.

The exhibition was mounted in the Northwest gallery off the Great Hall of the historic Thomas Jefferson Building and displayed manuscripts and early imprints to illustrate the natural evolution from the hand-copied to the printed book.

The single work most reproduced in the Armenian manuscript tradition was the Gospel book or *avedaran*. Nearly all illuminated Armenian manuscripts up to the twelfth century are Gospels.

Entire Bibles containing the Old and New Testaments are rare and date from the thirteenth century on. Complete New Testaments – the Gospels plus the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles – are even rarer. This reflects the hierarchy of importance of the parts of the Bible in the Armenian and Orthodox churches. In the Gospels, Christ is most fully revealed, *then* in the rest of the New Testament and, finally, in the Old Testament. All our liturgics also support this. For example, only the Gospel book, not the entire Bible, rests on the altar and only the Gospel reading is chanted.

Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 5

Unit Two

Beyond the Gospels: A Story Through Acts and Letters

Here I Am, Lord

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

I Corinthians 13:4-7

A Reliable Source



Have you ever had to write a research paper for a class project? If so, you know that a key to a good grade is using many different types of reliable resource books. You would want to select from sources that provide in-depth insight to your subject matter and perhaps even sources that inspire you. The books of the New Testament are those sources for the Christian faith.

The Gospels lay the groundwork for understanding the message and the mission of Jesus.

The Book of Acts was written by the author of the Gospel of Luke. It shows the Holy Spirit at work in the growth of the early Christian communities,

particularly through the efforts of two of its most important missionaries, Peter and Paul.

We Gather...We Send!

Identify what Jesus instructed the apostles to do, in the order in which it is recorded in

Acts 1: 1-5

1. Not to _____ but to wait for _____
2. John _____ but you will be _____



Read Acts 1:6-25 and identify the order in which the events happened.

- a. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. ___
- b. Two men in white asked them why they were standing up looking into heaven. ___

- c. They went back to Jerusalem and went to the room where they were staying. ___
- d. They asked the Lord if he would restore the Kingdom to Israel. ___
- e. They select another apostle to take Judas' place by casting lots. ___
- f. Jesus told them they would receive power from the Holy Spirit. ___
- g. They told them that Jesus would come back in the same way that they saw him go to heaven. ___
- h. Jesus was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. ___

Read Acts 2: 1-13. Identify 5 important events that took place:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

One very important fact that we read in Acts 1:15 is that Jesus told the Apostles to **“remain in Jerusalem and stay together”**! When we go to church, we gather to worship, share in Jesus Christ through Holy Communion, and become one with our fellow worshippers. Then we kiss the Gospel book and go out into the world.

First we *gather* and once we are strong enough for the journey, we are *sent*!

The Cross offers us a good visual reminder. The parallel arms of the Cross symbolize our communion with one another. The vertical bar of the Cross connects us with God, through the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.



This is the story of Pentecost. In Genesis 11 we find the famous account of the arrogant people who tried to build the tower of Babel to reach up to heaven. God confused their languages so they could not understand one another which made building impossible. The story of Pentecost is just the reverse! As the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles they received a harvest of courage, confidence, and zeal to go out into the world and tell everyone the Good News—that we are saved because of what Jesus did. Amazingly enough, everyone, no matter where they came from, could understand the apostles' message.

Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Christian Church. In the Armenian Church, we celebrate this Feast Day ten days after the Ascension of Christ and fifty days after Easter. What makes this feast so important is that it continues to be the feast that celebrates the unity of all Christians. In the Unites States alone, the Gospel is preached in more than a hundred different languages to people of many different cultures. In the Armenian Church, the Holy Badarak is celebrated in classical Armenian, but the Bible and sermon are preached in the everyday language of that church's parishioners.

The Good News Spreads

The First 30 Years

With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the waiting is over! The apostles and disciples become the new Church full of life and power, completely different from their former fearful selves. And the change is permanent. Right at this point Peter gives a very moving speech and more than 3,000 people were baptized. This was a joyous occasion for the new community—their lives change. They gather and share everything they have. In fact, before these new followers were called ‘Christians’ they were referred to as followers of “the Way.”



Acts 2: 42-47. This is a famous description of the first church community ever! *What were they doing?*

The Good News Faces Tough Opposition!

Despite the fact that the apostles were spreading the Good News, healing people and taking care of those in need, their message faced great opposition. Their teachings, which were centered on Jesus’ resurrection, deeply disturbed the Pharisees and Sadducees. It was like the days of Jesus in Galilee all over again. The apostles were frequently arrested, questioned and imprisoned and it did not stop there. It was not long before the first Martyr Stephen, gave his life for the faith.

Persecution spread but instead of silencing the movement it only broadened the church’s outreach. The apostles continued to travel from place to place baptizing, teaching, and appointing leaders for the newly-established communities.



A World of Letters

However, these new young communities would soon face internal struggles because problems would arise within the community as well as persecution from outside. Where would they find the guidance and encouragement they needed? It was via the epistles or letters that people received guidance and comfort from the apostles. The first letter thought to be written was St. Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, dated around A.D. 51. It is thought to be the oldest book in the New Testament.

The letters or ‘Epistles’ make up about two-thirds of the New Testament. They were written in response to people’s needs and questions, as well as to encourage them when they were facing persecution. The theme was always the same; remain strong and true to the teachings of the Jesus; take care of one another and continue to spread the Good News. Soon these letters were shared among communities. Today we read these same letters and for the same reasons: to answer moral questions and encourage us to stay strong in the faith.

From James 1:19

¹⁹My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry...

What might have been happening in this community for James to say this?

From 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

(the set reading for the Armenian burial service)

¹³Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴For we believe that Jesus died and rose

again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.

To what question do you think this advice responded?

What advice would you want to give *your* parish if

you were writing them a letter of encouragement as a disciple of Jesus?



Our Armenian Way

Each one of us faces difficult challenges during our life journey. Even when we are trying to live right it seems like life is falling apart. This is what the early Christians felt as they were being persecuted and killed by the Romans who were threatened by their faith. They needed a big dose of HOPE!

Our Armenian ancestors were also persecuted for their faith. They were driven from their homeland, marched through the Syrian desert and, like the early Christians, many gave their lives rather than give up their faith.

The Book of Revelation was the very last book to enter the canon of the New Testament, that is, the official list of all the books included in the New Testament. As a result, we do not read it during our worship services as we do the Gospels, Acts, and the Letters. It is filled with strange symbols, coded language, and images that seem like science fiction. But the meaning of it all is that no matter how scary and difficult life gets, there is a happy, hopeful ending because God is victorious over evil.

Many people today try to interpret the Book of Revelation according to signs of the time to predict when the world will end. However, our Church does not make this claim. What She believes and teaches is that this book of Scripture brings us hope in proclaiming God's ultimate triumph over evil in history and to live according to God's plan so that you are ready when it does happen. For Jesus said... *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."* Matthew 24:36

The Armenian Church teaches us to be ready by

- Not being lukewarm about our faith
- Remembering that Jesus is the beginning and end of the universe and history
- In all things, trusting God and having hope
- Knowing in our hearts that a new heaven and earth is waiting for us



Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 6

Unit Two

In A Nutshell

Here I Am, Lord

We believe in the all-holy Trinity, in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit; in the annunciation of Gabriel; in the birth of Christ, in his baptism; in his sufferings; in his crucifixion, in his burial of three days; his resurrection; his ascension as God; his sitting at the right hand of the Father and his awesome and glorious second coming.

From the baptismal service of the Armenian Church

They Can't Be Silenced!



In our Bible exploration over the past few weeks we witnessed the enthusiasm that our early New Testament heroes had in communicating the 'Good News' to the ends of the earth. We also discovered that while many of the common people embraced the healing power of this message and the value and security of the communal life that Christian communities foster, there were many influential religious leaders who felt they were losing control of the people and took every opportunity to stop the disciples from spreading the message. The Gospels refer often to these leaders as the Sadducees and Pharisees, and we know that Jesus was in constant conflict with them throughout his ministry. These leaders believed their troubles were over after they crucified Jesus, but now they had even bigger problems. The disciples could not

be silenced and were testifying that they had encountered the risen Lord! This is not what the leaders wanted the people to hear. Let's try to understand why the religious leaders were against this spirited movement despite the fact that the common people were filled with hope.

Who were the Sadducees and Pharisees?

The Sadducees and Pharisees comprised the ruling class of Israel. The Sadducees were aristocrats. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including that of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin. They worked hard to keep the peace by agreeing with the decisions of Rome, because Israel at this time was under Roman control, and they seemed to be more concerned with politics than religion.

The Pharisees were mostly middle-class businessmen, and therefore were in contact with the common man. The Pharisees were held in much higher esteem by the people than the Sadducees. Though they were a minority in the Sanhedrin and held a minority number of positions as priests, they seemed to control the decision-making of the Sanhedrin far more than the Sadducees did because they had the support of the people.

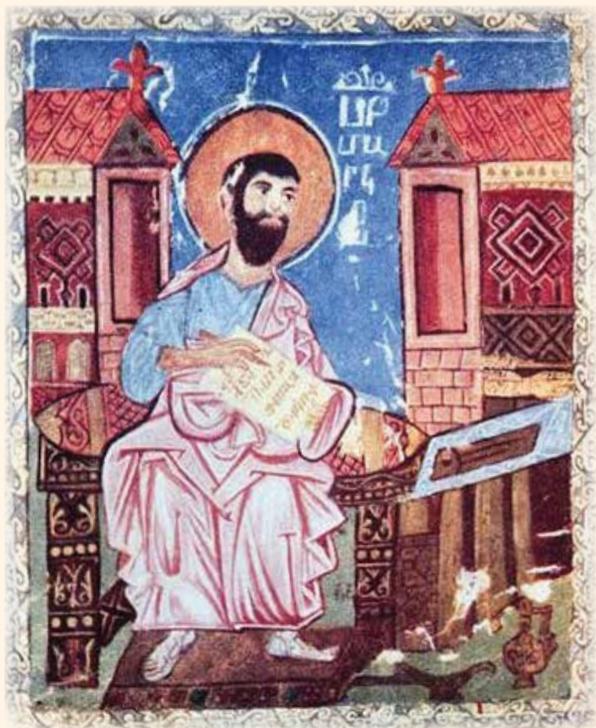
Because the Sadducees were so concerned with politics, they were not troubled by Jesus until they became afraid he might bring unwanted Roman attention. It was at this point that the Sadducees and Pharisees put their differences aside and united conspiring to put Christ to death.

Eyewitness News

Read Mark 16:9-14.

Identify three important facts that Mark tells us that indicate Jesus had risen.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Can you imagine having to explain what you believe about Jesus to someone who did not know about him? What would you tell them? Where would you start? Well, one day Peter and John had to defend themselves before the unbelieving rulers and religious leaders. To see what happened let's turn to *Acts 4:1-12*. What did Peter tell the leaders about Jesus?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Read what happens next in Acts 5:27-39.



The scene: The disciples, who are spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ, are taken before the Jewish council to explain their motives and reasons for this work.

The test: Gamaliel, a wise Jewish leader, talks the rest of the council out of killing the disciples by using the following reasoning: if the disciples' mission is from God, it will succeed despite anything the council does. But if it is not of God's design, it will fail and the Christians will eventually disappear anyway.

The question: Do you think Gamaliel was using a good strategy in posing this argument?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-11.

What does Paul say about Jesus in verses 3 and 4?

Paul said it, Peter said it...we still say it! The three essential points are:

- Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.
- Christ was buried.
- Christ rose on the third day.

The Nicene Creed

Every Sunday during Badarak we profess the same faith as the apostles when we pray the Nicene Creed—in Armenian we call it the **Havadamk** ("We Believe"). Let's see how this universal statement of belief developed.



The Creed that the Armenian Church continues to use is the “Profession of Faith” drafted at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

“As for us, we will glorify him who was before the ages, worshipping the Holy Trinity and the one Godhead, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”
From the Armenian Divine Liturgy

A Meeting In Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35)

As the early church grew in numbers, it encountered growing pains. When Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, a controversy arose regarding the need for Gentiles to first follow Jewish law. The earliest Christians were Jews as was Jesus and they felt it was important to observe the rules of the Jewish faith as a sign that they were the people of the Covenant. But many questions arose as Gentiles (non-Jews) became Christian, including whether it was necessary for them to follow the Jewish custom of circumcision. Paul and Barnabas – Gentile converts – did not believe that Christians should have to follow Jewish law; and they went to Jerusalem to discuss the matter with other apostles. This meeting of the apostles is called the Council of Jerusalem and it was a pivotal point in the history of the Church, because during this meeting the apostles agreed that the foundation of the Christian faith was believing in the Risen Christ and not conforming to Jewish ritual law. There would be more Ecumenical Council meetings in the future to discuss other concerns and challenges that faced the Church.

More Problems for the Early Church...

As Christianity spread new challenges arose. Not only did the Church have to define what it believed to other world religions, it was also challenged to define exactly what we Christians believed about Jesus



Christ. In doing so many complicated issues arose. In response to these issues Church leaders and theologians worldwide tried to explain the mysterious relationship between Jesus and God the Father. Many questionable theories were eventually termed “heresies” (wrong teachings) and rejected by the Church. The word “heresy” comes from the Greek word *haireisis* or choice.

In response to the growing problem, the **First Council of Nicaea** was convened in Nicaea (located in present-day Turkey) by the Roman Emperor Constantine I in A.D. 325. All 1800 bishops were invited; 1,000 from the East and 800 from the West. The Armenian Church was represented by Bishop Aristakes of Armenia who was the son of St. Gregory the Illuminator.

This is commonly regarded to have been the first Ecumenical Council, (in Greek ‘*oikoumenikos*’ means worldwide). More councils would follow. Most significantly, the Council of Nicaea was the first to establish a uniform Christian doctrine, called the Creed of Nicaea. (It was finalized in the next Council at Constantinople in 381).

Our Armenian Way

In your own words, what does the Nicene Creed proclaimed each Sunday at Soorp Badarak declare?

Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 7

Unit Two

The Master Teacher

Here I Am, Lord

Lord, open our eyes to the true meaning of your powerful teaching. Your words are life-giving and life-changing. We know that the Kingdom of Heaven can be realized here on earth when we live and breathe what you taught. Help us be true disciples by believing deeply and living what we believe. Amen.

The Sermon on the Mount

This well-known event features many of Jesus' best-known teachings on prayer, fasting, charity, loyalty, generosity and a lot of very specific advice on what it means to aim for perfection in the heavenly model of God himself: to be "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."



His earthly ministry had only recently begun with his formal baptism by John (the Baptist or Forerunner). Jesus had been travelling and teaching throughout the province of Galilee.

Included as well are the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes, considered the most profound insight into what it means to be a true disciple, a true follower of Christ.

The Beatitudes: From Letter of the Law to Spirit (Matthew 5: 3-11)

These amazing "guidelines for Christian living" might sound difficult at first. But if we remember Jesus' own words "I have come to fulfill the law not to destroy it," then it's easier to see that these are all a matter of taking rules and regulations deeper – to the next level. It's about absorbing godly living right into your heart and acting accordingly. Here's a rewording of these 8 beatitudes that might make it simpler to understand.

1. Depend on God. Don't let material things get in the way of loving God and others.
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Share other people's sorrows and joys. Don't set yourself apart from others.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
3. Learn to be gentle with people and things. Don't try to get your way by violence or bullying.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
4. Work hard to make sure that all people are treated justly. Do what you can to change unjust conditions.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be fulfilled.
5. Forgive others and ask their forgiveness.

Let compassion, not anger, rule your life.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

6. Turn your attention only toward what is good and right. Be faithful to God and God's ways.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

7. Work to bring people together. Don't contribute to quarrels and fights. Look for ways to solve problems peacefully.

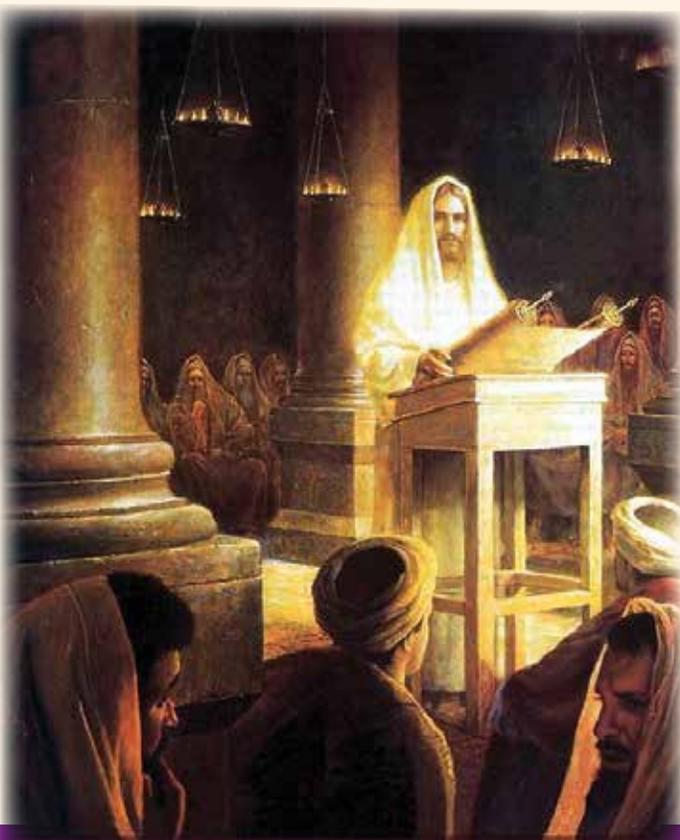
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

8. In difficult times, keep trusting in God and standing up for what is right.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Master Teacher

The greatest teachers breathe life into their lessons and in doing so they inspire and challenge others. Jesus was the Master Teacher in his time and remains a role model for every teacher of Christianity. Jesus not only taught lovingly but imparted a message that actually offers us the key to happiness. Most importantly, Jesus walked his talk—meaning that he not only taught the people of his time, but showed them by his example how to live. He taught that the Kingdom of God is



realized when people live in peace, righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit.

One way of thinking about the Kingdom of God is with the phrase “*God first.*” In Armenian, that’s “*arach Asdvadz.*” This occurs when God reigns over people’s hearts and minds, and actions. When it’s “*God first*” it does not mean that the individual person disappears or is not important. What it does mean is that people regularly seek what God wants them to do with their lives and then they do it. Often though, the messages around us say, “*it’s all about me.*”

- Where do you see signs of “it’s all about God” and “it’s all about me” in our culture?
- Can you think of any characters on TV, sports figures, or other famous people who are living out “it’s all about God” the best they can?
- Can you think of people who live out “it’s all about me”?



It's All About God vs. It's All About Me

Look up the verses in Matthew and complete these famous teachings of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount. Under **It's All About Me**, write how someone would turn this around to his or her point of view. See the first example.

It's All About God

1. Matthew 5:3. Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; _____
2. Matthew 5:5. Blessed are the meek; _____
3. Matthew 5:10. Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; _____
4. Matthew 5:38-39. You have heard it said "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" but I say to you _____
5. Matthew 5:43-44. You have heard it said "You shall love your neighbors and hate your enemies" but I tell you: _____
6. Matthew 6:19-20. Do not store up treasures for yourself on earth, _____
7. Matthew 6:34. Do not worry about tomorrow, for _____
8. Matthew 7:21. Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven but only he _____

It's All About Me

Example:

1. Happy are those who are materially rich for everything they want belongs to them
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Make a list of things that you would like to do or purchase if you had all the money you wanted.

What about you...are you ready to live in God's upside-down kingdom? In the famous Sermon on the Mount Jesus speaks about life in a way that startled his listeners. Many thought it was a sign of God's blessing to be rich, powerful and content. They thought it was justified to respond to violence and oppression with violence and oppression.

Jesus' words continue to challenge us even today. Christianity is not always easy but it is the only way for all people to live as children of God. The challenge for us is to see life more and more the way God does, and then try our best to live that vision.

What do you think Jesus meant when he said ... "for where your treasure is, there is where your heart will be also"? What does that say about the list you came up with above?

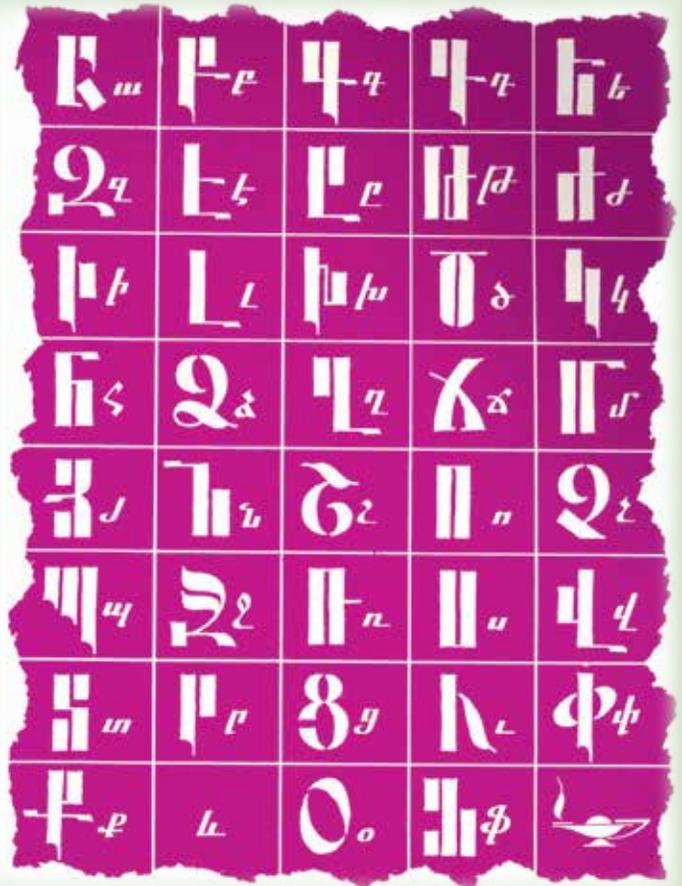


Our Armenian Way

Jesus knows that your *heart* will naturally determine where you put your effort. And so, Jesus wants you to labor for treasures in heaven so that your head, heart and soul will be in heaven, not in the stuff you own or your bank account.

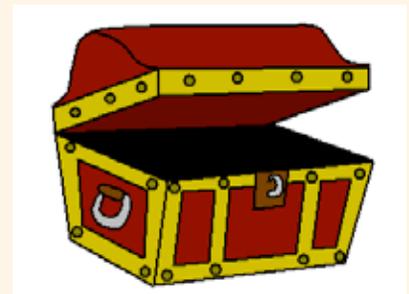
The Armenian Church has made just this kind of investment on our behalf. Through the insightful dedication and contributions of our ancestors, the Armenian alphabet was created, allowing for the translation of the Holy Bible into the Armenian language. Today, despite centuries of trials and tribulation, our ancient faith and culture remain vital wellsprings in the life of the Armenian people. Additionally, the Bible has remained the unparalleled standard for Armenian language and literature and the source of inspiration for original creative works, which directly affected nearly every form of creative expression.

Each of us are rightful heirs to the deposit our ancestors made on our behalf—but, in order to receive our share, we must desire it with our heart!



Sermon on the Mount Word Search

D B I Q P B D E T R O F M O C
 I R L W E R E J O I C E W I L
 N A D E R H E A V E N F F N U
 S S E N S U O E T H G I R H F
 U D H W E S M R Q I L S Q E I
 L R E H C A E T O L T Z V R C
 T A V I U S U D E Y O U Y I R
 P W Z X T M O D G N I K D T E
 P E A C E M A K E R S L R E M
 J R N O D P R O P H E T S M S



beatitudes
 blessed
 comforted
 filled
 heaven
 inherit
 insult
 kingdom

merciful
 peacemakers
 persecuted
 prophets
 rejoice
 reward
 righteousness
 teacher

Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 8

Unit Two

Revealing God's Glory

Miracles

Signs of the power of God clearly present and acting in the World...



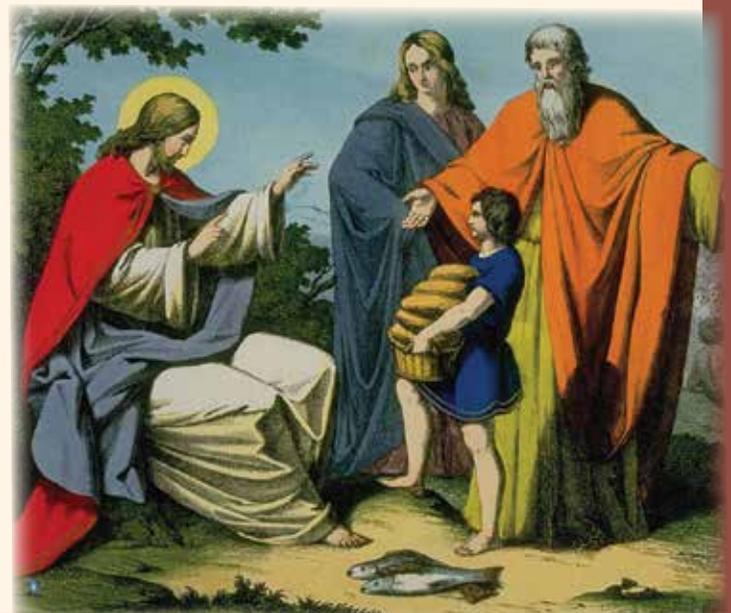
The Book of Psalms identifies our God as a ‘God of wonders.’ (Ps 136:4) We believe that God is the Creator of everything and with just a thought he can sustain all that is. It is accepted by people of faith that God has the power to suspend natural law in order to fulfill his purpose. Miracles were a part of the ministry of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and of course Jesus and the apostles, and their miracles almost always witnessed that the message was from God himself.

Many people seek to experience the miraculous power of God, and will go to extraordinary measures to have

that experience, because they want confirmation that God exists. God willingly gave signs to Moses (Exodus 4:1-9) and Gideon (Judges 6:11-22) to confirm his word. Miracles can aid a person’s coming to faith, as in John 2:23: “Many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.”

However, there comes a time when enough miracles have been performed—the truth has been proven—and it is time to exercise faith.

There are those today whose hearts are hardened toward the truth...they do not want to believe in the power of God clearly present and acting in the world. They want to see something sensational, but they have no real desire to know the truth of Christ.



One of Jesus' greatest miracles is retold in all four of the Gospels: it is the story of how two fish and five loaves of bread fed thousands of hungry people. In John's Gospel the story continues and we see that those who just benefited from the miracle followed Jesus to the other side of Galilee. However, Jesus realized that their motive was only to get some more food, and said "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill" (John 6:26). The crowd's desire was not to know Christ or even to see more miracles; it was simply to fill their stomachs again.

It is the true 'People of God'—people who have received the gift of faith and work at deepening it — who already have confidence in God and believe without need of miracles. They know that rather than seeking after a new miracle it is wise to simply take God at his Word. Simple faith is more pleasing to the Lord than a reliance on dazzling physical experiences. Remember the words of Jesus to Thomas in John 20:29: "because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Miracles: A Closer Look

Below are ten eye-witness accounts of the miracles of Jesus as told by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Match the clue with the correct Scripture verse.

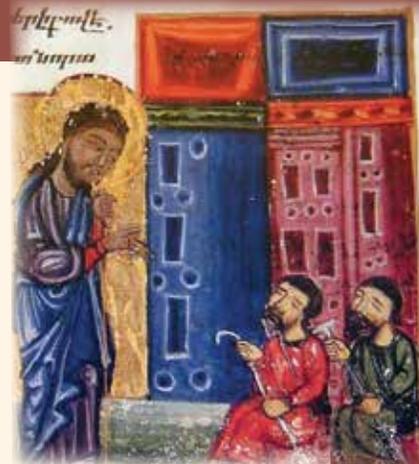
Scripture

1. Luke 8:22-25____
2. Luke 8:26-33____
3. Luke 8:40-42, 49-56____
4. Luke 8:43-48____
5. John 2:1-11____
6. Mark 6:30-44____
7. Matthew 9:1-8____
8. Matthew 20:29-34____
9. Matthew 8:1-4____
10. Luke 7:11-15____



Important Clues

- a. Jesus said, "Get up, pick up your bed, and go home!"
- b. Jesus asked "Who touched me?" And then said, "your faith has saved you."
- c. Jesus had pity on them and touched their eyes; at once they were able to see.
- d. This story told about a naked man and a large herd of pigs.
- e. Jesus heals the man with a skin disease and tells him to offer the sacrifice that Moses ordered.
- f. Jesus told the widow not to cry because her son had died.
- g. This synagogue official had a very sick daughter.
- h. Jesus was asleep in the boat; the disciples thought they were going to die.
- i. Jesus told the disciples to feed many hungry people.
- j. Jesus' mother said, "Do whatever he tells you."



Identify some of the different types of miracles Jesus performed by filling in the blanks.

Example:

Jesus...Calms the sea

C _ _ M _ T _ _ _ _ A.

Jesus healed the...

1. B _ _ _ _

2. _U _ E

3. _A R _L _ _ E D

4. D _ _ O _ S

5. _ _ _ R _

6. _ E _ E R

Bonus Question: Jesus' first miracle as described in the Gospel of John:

7. W _ _D I _ G _ _ A _ _

A _ C _ _ A

Miracles... Much More Than a Virtual Reality!

Virtual reality (VR) is a term that applies to computer-simulated environments that can simulate physical presence without our being able to touch it or experience it firsthand. Undoubtedly, it is an amazing piece of technology. Today many theme parks have simulation rides and 4-D experiences that give you the amazing sensation of actually becoming a physical part of the computer-generated reality.



One can only wonder why people who actually witnessed one of Jesus' miracles still did not believe in him. Did they think it was a trick or some type of magic act that he was performing? We only have the opportunity to read the accounts of others who wrote in the Bible about Jesus' works of mercy, yet many people today believe that Jesus actually did perform miracles, that he did create food for thousands, he did turn water into wine, and he did raise Lazarus from the dead. In John 2:23 it tells us that many believed in him because of the miracles...but then again some walked away despite what they saw.

Through the miracle accounts of the Bible, we have a sense of virtual reality, we know Jesus exists, and we are tied to him through faith. But wouldn't it be great to create a Virtual Reality that would allow you to actually simulate your presence in one of Jesus' miracles. Perhaps you would choose to be present at the wedding feast, or perhaps you would like to feel Jesus' healing touch restoring your sight or healing your cripple legs.

In which miracle of those you just read would you place yourself?

Who are you in the scene?

What are you seeing and feeling?

A Litany of Miracles

lit·a·ny:

a prayer consisting of a series of lines spoken alternately by a leader and the congregation

Leader: Through your miracles, oh Lord, you reveal the power, the glory and the mercy of the Father.

All: We pray for your healing power to transform our world and to renew our life.

Leader: You help the blind to see the truth.

All: Help me Lord to see your miracles.

Leader: You help the lame to walk.

All: Help me Lord to walk in your ways.

Leader: You restore the deaf and mute.

All: Lord heal my inability to hear and my defiance in proclaiming your Good News.

Leader: You raise the dead to life.

All: Through your death on the Cross you restore my soul and grant me Eternal Life. Amen!

I Can See Life's Miracles... If Only I Believe!

In 2 Kings 4:1-7 you will read about how Elisha helps a poor widow. It might not seem like a very important miracle, making one small jar of olive oil enough to fill many bottles, but for this poor widow it made all the difference. This woman who was about to lose everything was given olive oil, a very precious commodity, as it was the basic food for both rich and poor people. Elisha's miracle saved the woman's land and her sons. This is a miracle, God's power clearly present and acting as a sign of God's

care for the poor and powerless. It is also a perfect example of a miracle that happens when we allow ourselves to be used by God, to participate and make miracles happen.

Very often in Scripture, we read that the religious leaders demanded that Jesus perform a miracle to prove himself. But, even if Jesus *had* responded with

a miracle, they would not have attributed the results to God's healing power—for if you do not have faith, miracles are nothing more than bizarre circumstances and extraordinary events that defy explanation. You can see it either way, but for those of us who do believe, miracles are seen and understood through the prism of faith. Keep your eyes and heart open!

Our Armenian Way

The Miracle of the Forty Martyrs

The story of the Armenian people as they came to Christ is filled with miraculous events – apparitions, healings, encounters with angels and even Christ himself. One such renowned event took place in a remote garrison in Sebastia in the 4th century.

It was the winter of 316 A.D. The Roman emperor was Licinius and he had expanded his anti-Christian crusade, demanding that any Christians in the army would have to return to the pagan faith or be killed. It was soon discovered that in Sebastia an elite military unit of soldiers were Christian. They were from various cities of Lesser Armenia, and certainly some were assumed to be Armenian.

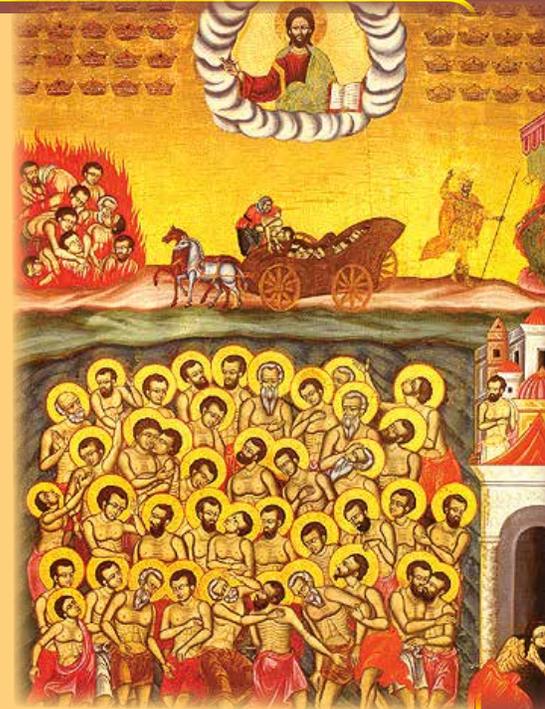
These forty youth were brought before the judge of the region and questioned. The soldiers confirmed that they were, indeed, Christians. Unafraid, they asserted that they were loyal to the emperor as evidenced by their success as soldiers, but that they also bore allegiance to their heavenly king and held fast to their Christian beliefs.

As brutal punishment, the soldiers were lined up to be stoned. However, as the first stone was hurled, a miraculous thing happened. The stone, instead of reaching its intended target, flew in exactly the opposite direction. When other Roman guards started throwing stones, they, too, were unable to harm the young Christian soldiers. Instead, their stones struck themselves.

After this terrifying experience, the brave, faithful young men were ordered to be taken to the lake near the city and spend the night in the frozen waters. Only if they renounced their faith and became pagans could they be spared. One of the forty soldiers broke away and abandoned his Christian faith; he fell dead as he reached the shore. The remaining 39 froze to death.

A second miraculous event occurred that night. Bright halos appeared and rested above the soldiers' heads. Moved by the experience, one of the guards declared himself a Christian and threw himself into the lake with the other martyred soldiers, bringing the number to 40 again. At dawn their bodies were removed from the lake; the Bishop of Sebastia had secretly arranged for the remains of the martyrs to be brought back to him in an effort to bring comfort and consolation to their families.

Shortly thereafter, a magnificent church with 40 bell towers was erected in memory of the soldiers. It was called the Church of the Forty Youths. The church was active until 1400 when the conqueror Tamerlane captured Sebastia and destroyed the city along with its 120,000 inhabitants. The church was finally entirely lost during the Genocide of 1915.



Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

Lesson 9

Unit Two

The Challenges of Lordship

Here I Am, Lord

- All Heavenly Father and True God, you sent your Son to teach us a new way to live.
- Group A Help me to leave judgment up to you.
- Group B To treat others as we wish to be treated.
- A To listen with our hearts.
- B To accept others as they are, knowing that you are the creator of all.
- A Open the eyes of my heart to recognize you as the Lord of all.
- B To live so that others know that you are the king of my life.
- All Teach me how to see with true spiritual vision, so that I may always remain open to learning more about you. Amen.

Journey Through Palestine with Jesus

In Jesus' time, Palestine was under the domination of the Roman Empire. The ruling class (king, aristocratic families, high government officials) and retainers (servants, army, lower government officials, religious officials) were only 10% of the population. However they took 66% of the wealth from the everyday people. The peasant society was politically oppressed and economically abused. All the Jewish people had was their religious identity, which included a unique covenant between them and their God... "I will be your God, and you will be my people." Into this scene walked Jesus, a Jewish teacher and healer who spoke of God's kingdom—affirming that God was still in charge, in spite of the fact that his people were suffering and oppressed.

For three years Jesus taught and healed people. He cared for the poor and outcast of society—he would even help the despised foreigners who came to him. Jesus saw himself as offering renewal to the nation, bringing news of God's forgiving love. He spoke of

the Temple in ways which suggested that it would be destroyed and replaced in some sense by himself. Such a message was not welcome to the Jewish leaders, who had invested their lives in the Temple. Many of them were collaborating with the Roman rulers, and did not want the instability that Jesus seemed to bring. His own family and close friends often misunderstood him and at times even turned their back on him. Rejection



is never easy, but it is especially hard when you are denied by those whom you love.

Yes, Jesus loved his people and what his people needed was a king...a leader who would care for and give identity to the nation of Israel. A king would unite them and make them a mighty nation. For many of the common people, Jesus' actions were all the proof they needed. He was that king they had been promised. He offered them hope and comfort; he even fed them. But the kingdom that Jesus was to bring forth was not an earthly kingdom. How very difficult it must have been for Jesus to disappoint the people who believed he was the one who would deliver them from their earthly bondage and assume the role of their earthly king.

Healing Leadership Still Needed (Feeding the Hungry)



Today there are many countries around the globe that live at the same standards or perhaps even below the standards that the Jews of Jesus' time did. They live in substandard unhealthy conditions, suffering from lack of appropriate housing, food, access to medical care, education...the basic necessities of life.

We can all agree that food is the most important necessity for living a truly human life. According to Oxfam America, there is plenty of food available in the world. Farmers grow enough wheat, rice and other grains to provide every human being with 3,600 calories a day—more than enough to live. However, too much food gets consumed in wealthy countries and not enough gets to countries where food is scarce and people are starving. Let's do a little class study by using the following plan to explore the problems of world food distribution.

Distribution Data

- 15% of your class will represent people from developed countries with annual incomes of \$7,000 or more. (The average U.S. income per person is \$40,584)
- 25% of your class will represent countries with annual incomes of \$699-\$6,999 per person.
- 60% of your class will represent the Third World countries with annual incomes of \$699



1. Read Acts 1:1-9.

What does this question indicate about the disciples' understanding of Jesus?

2. Read Matthew 12:46-50.

How does Jesus' family feel about his ministry? What is Jesus' response?

- Calculate how the above percentages would be represented in your class. (Example: 25 students: 4, 6 and 15 students would make up the three groups. Use different-colored tickets for each group, one for each member. Classmates draw from a bag to determine what group they will be in.
- Distribute 100 pretzels among your classmates as follows:
 - 15% -50 pretzels
 - 25%-30 pretzels
 - 60%-20 pretzels

As Christians, and followers of Christ, what role can we play in feeding the hungry across the globe?

As you explore the Scripture readings below, identify what leadership qualities Jesus exemplified that made him a candidate for the “People’s Choice Awards”

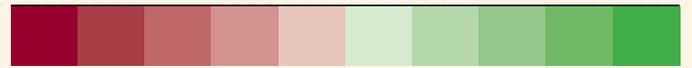


We the People Choose Jesus!

Each of the Scripture passages below identifies something about Jesus that made many of the Jewish people believe he was the long-awaited Messiah. After reading each Scripture, identify in one or two words the leadership quality that Jesus displays. Then check a box on the line scale below each passage to identify how important that characteristic is to your understanding of a great leader.

(1= not important, 10= very important)

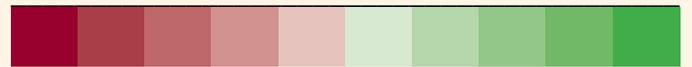
1. Matthew 8:27



1

10

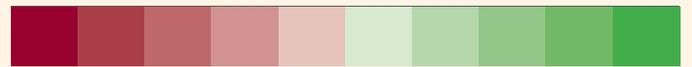
2. Matthew 8:28-34



1

10

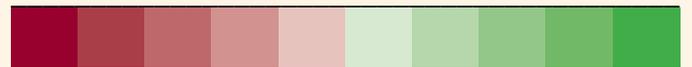
3. Matthew 14:15-21



1

10

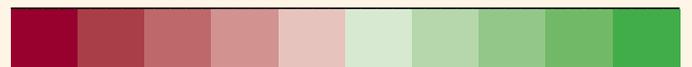
4. Matthew 17:14-20



1

10

5. Matthew 18:12-14



1

10

Our Armenian Way

Khor Virab

Following God's plan is not a mission for the faint of heart... a Christian must have courage to face what at times will be a perilous journey! The seeds of faith that were planted for the Armenian people actually took root in a deep pit known as 'Khor Virab,' where the Patron Saint of Armenia, St. Gregory the Illuminator, was imprisoned for 13 years by King Drtad of Armenia.



Gregory refused to take part in the sacrifices to the pagan goddess Anahid as ordered by King Drtad. Instead, he confessed his Christian faith and began to preach the wisdom of worshipping the One God. Drtad ordered Gregory to be tortured until he renounced Christianity. Gregory endured twelve terrible tortures, but did not recant his faith. Seeing that Gregory's faith was not broken, Drtad ordered Gregory to be put to death by casting him into a pit full of human bones and snakes. St. Gregory survived this horrible ordeal for thirteen years, being secretly fed by a pious woman, believed to be King Drtad's sister, St. Khosrovitookht, or someone sent by her.

Saint Gregory later became the king's religious mentor, and together with Drtad's wife, Queen Ashkhen, and his sister Princess Khosrovitookht, they began to spread the Christian faith throughout the country. In the year 301, Armenia was the first country in the world to be declared a Christian nation. A chapel was initially built in 642 AD at the site of Khor Virab by St. Nerses the Builder as a mark of veneration to Saint Gregory. Over the centuries, it was repeatedly rebuilt. In 1662, the larger chapel known as St. Asdvadzadzin (Mother of God) was built around the ruins of the old chapel. Now, regular church services are held in this church. It is probably the most visited pilgrimage site in Armenia.

St Gregory was one of many who exhibited faith so strong that they were willing to die for Jesus. Rate your own level of faith...what challenges do you continue to encounter in your faith journey?

Jesus you came to teach us our divine strengths by demonstrating that our greatest powers are exercised in loving, forgiving, sharing and gathering in your name. Help me, Lord, increase my faith and model your love in the world. Amen.

The Faith Journey

Lesson 1

Unit Three

What Now? On the Edge of Adventure

Here I Am, Lord

O Holy Spirit, you were a dove sent from on high, descending with a mighty sound and bright light, and armed the disciples with a fire that did not consume while they were waiting in the holy upper room. O, dove immaterial, beyond understanding, you know the depths of God and proceed from the Father, telling us about the awesome second coming of Christ, who is consubstantial with the Father. Blessing in the highest to the Holy Spirit that proceeds from the Father. The apostles drank from the cup of immortality and invited earth to heaven.”

“Arakelo Aghavno” (hymn for Pentecost)



without form

life eternal

equipped

that did not burn them

coming down

of the same substance as



One Step Back

In our last class we were able to catch a glimpse of Jesus through Matthew's eyes.

A. What reassurance was Matthew offering the early Jewish Christians?

B. Identify three reasons why the Hebrew people felt they were in need of a king.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. According to Oxfam, American farmers grow enough wheat, rice and other grains to provide every human being with 3,600 calories a day. That being the case, why do people still starve in countries throughout the world? As Christians, what do you think is our collective responsibility toward the poor? (Matthew 25:35- 36)



Matthew 26: 69-75

What do you think happened to make Peter go from courageously supporting Jesus to denying him three times?

When is it easy to follow Jesus and when is it difficult?



How do you suppose Peter felt after he denied Jesus and remembered that Jesus had predicted the denial?

There are only a few times that a story is recorded in all four gospels and Peter's denial is one of them (Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and John 18). Why do you think that Peter's mistake is told over and over again?



Peter's Disloyalty is Our Problem, Too

Have you ever experienced a friend or family member disappointing you in your time of need? If so, you know that it is an unpleasant feeling. At some time in your life you will experience the pain of feeling abandoned and there will also be times when you are the source of disappointment to another. It's hard to determine which is worse, to be disappointed or to think that you have disappointed someone else—especially someone you love.

The disciples loved and believed in Jesus, but once again we hear how they messed up. First, they fell asleep instead of keeping a prayerful vigil with Jesus, then they ran away when the soldiers came to arrest him, and to make matters worse Peter denied that he even knew Jesus, just as Christ had predicted. How could Peter do it...and, right when Jesus needed him most? How alone and abandoned Jesus must have felt! Imagine, too, how Peter felt when Jesus' prediction came true. Situations like this can surely make us feel terrible. And we long to make things right again.

Like these good friends of Jesus, despite how hard we try, we don't always do the right thing. We've all been in a situation where we denied doing anything wrong, even though we were guilty. We may even blame others. Peter was wrong, and once he realized it, he "wept bitterly." We are often in the position that Peter was...it takes courage to stand up for the truth and for what we believe. We say we believe in Jesus and that we will do everything that he asks us to do, but our human limits hinder us from keeping our promises. However, like the apostles, we are loved by the Lord, so not only is he willing to forgive us, but he is willing to use us to fulfill his holy mission.



Behold, I Make All Things New... Yes, Even You!

The gospel of Matthew ends with two stories of the resurrected Jesus. In the first story he appears to the women at the tomb (28: 9-10). In the second story, that we will hear today, Jesus appears to his disciples – most of whom were nowhere to be found when the chips were down. He gives them a mission. Actually, he commissions them to continue his mission, telling them to “Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (28:19) Imagine that! Despite the apostles’ disloyalty at the most crucial time in Jesus’ earthly life, he appoints them to take over his Father’s business. But they are not quite ready yet—there is a special gift that will be given to them, someone he calls a “Counselor.” (John 14:16) Here’s a clue...it’s one of those gifts that keep on giving.

Read Matthew 28: 16-20

Circle the letter that best indicates how you usually respond when faced with a new situation.

- When it comes to doing something new, I’m usually
 - just plain scared
 - very careful
 - daring
 - afraid of failing
 - afraid people will laugh at me
 - a follower
 - a leader
 - willing to try anything

- The thing I usually have to deal with when doing something I’ve never done before is
 - lack of confidence in myself
 - lack of faith in God
 - fear of standing all alone
 - fear of making a mistake
 - indecision
 - the impulse to rush in without sufficient planning
- Finish this sentence: If I knew I could not fail, something I would like to try in the immediate future is...

On the Edge of Adventure

“When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”
Acts 2:1-4

Filled with the Holy Spirit

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:4 (NIV)
Based on Acts 2:1-21 (NIV)



O M D E D N W Q T H X X G E M
 U A Y N M H I B Q O O U K P Y
 W J U W E V B L V H N L O E O
 O O R I B A M O E E Z G Y N E
 S R N N C E G W T A T N U T I
 K P L D Y D M I R R Q J W E W
 M A N A E G L N O T H E R C S
 C U M L N R X G S L S Z Z O W
 V P L J H G S A H P P N H S X
 Y I C D Y N U M N P I Q D T U
 F P J G X K W A F X S R U R W
 T Z C B E X Y Z G S P S I Y B
 Z F I R E G P E S E E T N T Q
 D E C L A R E D G E A C M K Y
 L S G F K V Z C V M K L N J T

FIRE	PENTECOST	WONDERS	AMAZED
HEAR	OTHER	SPEAK	WIND
SPIRIT	BLOWING	TONGUES	HOLY
DECLARE	LANGUAGE	SOUND	FILLED



Our Armenian Way

The Armenian Church celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit fifty days after Easter on the Feast of Pentecost (*Hokekaloost*). But did you know that we all have our own “personal” Pentecost? Chrismation (we sometimes refer to it as confirmation; it follows immediately after baptism) is the anointing of nine parts of the body with holy muron or chrism and is one of the seven sacraments of the Church. Every time someone receives the sacrament of *chrismation* the gift of the Holy Spirit is given and through that gift God *changes* us. With chrismation, we are now empowered to bear the fruit of a life in the Spirit (we’ll learn more about that later in this unit). Just like the apostles, we become better equipped to live our faith and share it with others. Of course, we are free to ignore that change and all those possibilities. Baptism and chrismation are just a *beginning*, an opening of a door. As we journey through life, we still need to keep choosing to step in.

How Do I Witness?

1. Luke writes of wind and fire. What do these images tell us about the Holy Spirit?
2. How do you think those who were in the crowd felt when they witnessed such an amazing event?
3. With the power of the Holy Spirit the disciples were able to become people they could never be without this power. How does the Holy Spirit empower us today?

Did you ever wonder how Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew were able to communicate with the Armenian people? The Armenian language was a gift from the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when the tongues of fire rested upon them!

*Spirit of God, true God,
who came down into the Jordan River and the Upper Room,
and filled me with the light of faith at my baptism,
make me pure once again with your holy fire
just as you purified the apostles with fiery tongues.
Amen.*

St. Nersess Shnorhali



The Faith Journey

Lesson 2

Unit Three

The Holy Spirit: An Eye-Opener!

Here I Am, Lord

Lord, I don't always know what's next in my life and sometimes the unknown is scary. But I will wait for your gifts. Holy Spirit, help me understand what I need to do and when I need to do it. Give me whatever I need to accomplish it. Amen.

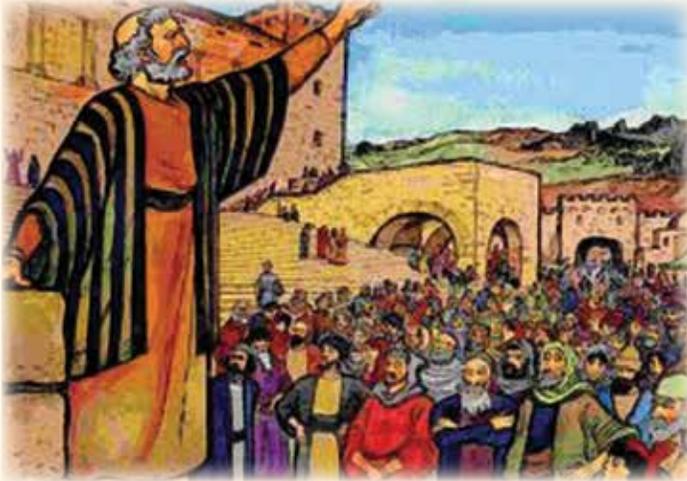


One Step Back

1. Just as Jesus predicted, Paul denied Jesus three times even after he said he would never do that. **T** **F**
2. Jesus knew that the apostles would need a “Counselor” to help them build up his Church; that is why he sent us the Holy Spirit. **T** **F**
3. The Armenian Church commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Feast of the Transfiguration. **T** **F**
4. Through the sacrament of chrismation, the gifts of the Holy Spirit equip us to live as disciples and share our faith with others. **T** **F**
5. Peter’s denial of Jesus appears in all four gospels. How are we best to interpret this?
 - a. Peter’s great weakness is revealed.
 - b. Jesus’ predictions always come true.
 - c. God calls and forgives believers even after repeated acts of weakness.
 - d. The gospel writers didn’t like Peter.

Holy Spirit **Soorp Hokee** **Սուրբ Հոգի**

The Church Takes Root and Grows Strong



The Book of Acts covers a period of almost thirty years. It begins with the Ascension of Jesus and then the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost to Paul's imprisonment in Rome. It describes the spread of Christianity around the northern Mediterranean—through present-day Syria, Turkey and Greece, to the heart of the Roman Empire.

The acts or activities that we read about are mainly those of St. Peter and St. Paul. But the book could also be entitled the Acts of the Spirit of God, for truly, it is under the direction of the Holy Spirit that the newborn church bursts through the national frontiers of Palestine to become an international, worldwide movement. In his own words, the last words to his followers, Jesus told them what their mission would be and who would guide them (Acts 1:8): “When the **Holy Spirit** comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”

It Takes Conversion...Saul Meets Jesus

Saul's confrontation with Jesus, on the road to the old Syrian capital, Damascus, marks a turning-point in the history of the Early Church. It is safe for us to say that never has any conversion brought a more radical change.

Reader's Theater: Acts 9:1-31

Now let's review it step by step...

The blinding light left Saul sightless in the dark for three days, with nothing to do but think. For three days, Paul was practically lifeless—not seeing, not eating, and not drinking. This period reminds us of Jesus' three days in the tomb. In many ways, going through a conversion is like dying—dying to old ways of thinking and acting.



Also, three days gave Ananias the time he needed to reach him...yes after all the years of persecuting Christ's people, Saul would need someone to bring him the next step of the way. When he finally arrived in Jerusalem it would be Barnabas who would testify for him within the community of believers. Now Saul the persecutor becomes Saul the brother—someone who will suffer greatly for the cause that he once tried to stamp out. His conversion even brought forth a new name...Saul becomes Paul. His immense energy is given at once to preaching Jesus as Son of God!

Paul's conversion literally changed his heart about Christ...once blinded by the truth, his experience with Jesus offered him the gift of seeing the world in a new way. I guess we can call this a “wow moment.” However, this conversion can happen to anyone.

Have you ever had an experience that helped you see something in your life in a new way? How did this happen?

Our Armenian Way

Today we explored how the Good News spread and the new Church began to grow, as it sent disciples like Paul to witness to the communities of the world.

Prior to the time of Christ, our Armenian nation, like many others, followed pagan polytheism (belief in many gods). Remember that it was Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew who first preached Christianity in Armenia in the 1st century. The number of believers continued to grow and they were often in grave danger for their Christian belief. Historians have cited persecutions against Christians in 110, 230, and 287. Thaddeus and Bartholomew were both martyred, and the great Illuminator, St. Gregory, was imprisoned for thirteen years for proclaiming the Christian faith. Finally, it was King Drtad, persuaded by the power of the teachings and miraculous cure of St. Gregory, who declared Christianity the official state religion and appointed Gregory as Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church.



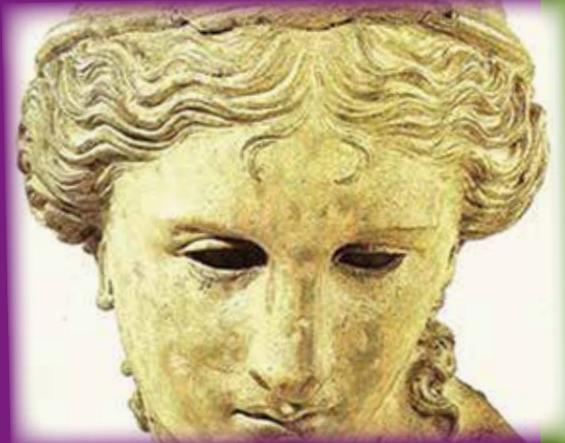
The conversion from a pagan religion to Christianity was not an easy one. St. Gregory, King Drtad, his wife Queen Ashkhen, and his sister Princess Khosrovitookht all worked tirelessly to strengthen the new Church of Armenia. St. Gregory and the king spent much of the rest of their lives trying to eliminate all pagan superstitions and destroyed countless statues and temples, erecting churches and chapels in their place.



Over the centuries, the Armenian people have given their very lives for their faith. From St. Vartan's Battle of Avarayr in the 5th century to the Armenian Genocide of the 20th century, our holy Armenian martyrs have woven a golden tapestry of faith that is our gift today. They paid the ultimate price so that today we could enjoy fellowship and worship in the Armenian Church throughout the world.

Before Christ, Armenians believed in many gods. Here are some of the most important in the old Armenian pantheon.

Aramazd	Creator, father of gods
Astghig	Goddess of love, beauty
Anahid	Goddess of motherhood, fertility
Vahagn	God of war, thunder, lightning
Mihr	God of the sun, light
Tir	God of wisdom, science



The Birth of Vahagn

*In travail were heaven and earth,
In travail, too, the purple sea!
The travail held in the sea the small red reed.
Through the hollow of the stalk came forth smoke,
Through the hollow of the stalk came forth flame,
And out of the flame a youth ran!
Fiery hair had he,
Ay, too, he had a flaming beard,
And his eyes, they were as suns!*

Ancient Armenian poem

Երկնէր երկին, երկնէր երկիր,
Երկնէր եւ ծոգս ծիրանի .
Երկն ի ծովուն ունէր եւ զկարմրիկն եղեգնկ.
Ընդ եղեգան փող ծուխ ելանէր,
Ընդ եղեգան փող բոց ելանէր.
Եվ ի բացոյն վազէր խարտեաշ պատանեկիկ.
Նա հուր հեր ունէր,
Բոց ունէր սօրուս,
Եվ աչկունքն էին արեգակունք:

The First Church

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Acts 2:42-47

This is the first church community ever described!



What is it like – describe it in the space above using words and pictures (even stick figures are fine).

How does it compare with your own parish?

1. It sounds the same because...
2. It seems different because...

Closing Prayer

Thank you God, for this wonderful world and for all the special people we love. Thank you too, for all the different ways there are to work close to you. Make us strong and wise so that we can see those ways. Help us feel how exciting it is to be a priest, or a teacher, or any of the other kinds of people who serve you and work for our people. Bless us with open hearts and open minds, God, so we can see what really matters in life: love for you and for the people and the world you created. We know you will lead our heads and hands to serve you. Amen.

The Faith Journey

Lesson 3

Unit Three

Hearts of Stone to Hearts of Flesh: The Conversion of Armenia

Here I Am, Lord

*This prayer is for you, God.
You teach me, and I trust in you.
Sometimes I mess up.
I did when I was younger, and I still do.
You loved me through it all.
Because you are awesome,*

*you show me what to do, and
I try to do what is good.
I turn to you for help, and
you help me not to worry.
I trust in you.
You protect me and keep me safe.
I trust in you.*

Inspired by Psalm 25



One Step Back

Put a check mark next to the correct answer.

1. The Book of Acts reviews a period of 30 years which covers what time period?

- a. The Ascension of Christ to Paul's imprisonment in Rome
- b. Pentecost to the Ascension of Christ
- c. The Resurrection of Christ to Pentecost
- d. The Crucifixion of Christ to his Ascension

2. After Saul's confrontation with Jesus on the road to Damascus, the blinding light leaves him sightless for

- a. 7 Days
- b. 40 days
- c. 3 days

3. This man from Damascus, who was a follower of Jesus, was sent by God to bless & baptize Saul.

- a. Barnabus
- b. Ananias
- c. Cornelius

4. Historical writers indicate that Christians were persecuted in Armenia as early as

- a. 110 A.D.
- b. 287 A.D.
- c. 301 A.D.

5. To aid in the spread of Christianity in Armenia, St. Gregory and King Drtad

- a. built churches and chapels
- b. destroyed pagan statues and temples
- c. worked very hard for the rest of their lives to spread the faith
- d. all of the above

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. *Ezekiel 36:26*

Faithful Witnesses Continue to Share the Good News

Acts 8:26-40

This is the story of an Ethiopian eunuch who looked for and found Christ. (A eunuch is a man who has been castrated, either by accident or by design. Eunuchs often served as guards of the harems of kings.) This eunuch was reading a text from Isaiah while returning from a visit to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit moved the apostle Philip to explain to him how Isaiah's prophecies pointed to Jesus. And the man believed and was baptized. So why is his baptism significant? It's because his baptism signals the beginning acceptance of Gentile (non-Jewish) believers.



The eunuch's faith was dependent on the interaction of three characters; the Ethiopian who was searching; Philip, bearing the Good News; and the Holy Spirit, who brought them together.

Acts 16:11-15

Women were a crucial part of Christianity from its beginning. Lydia was Paul's first convert in Philippi, which is part of modern-day Europe. She was a textile merchant and was wealthy enough to support a household and open her home to Paul and Silas to stay for an extended time.

Why is it important for us to know about the inclusion of women? In the ancient world, many people considered women to be inferior to men. However, in the life of the new Church, women were not only supporting the missionary work of the Church but also leading and teaching.

Seeds of Faith Spread to Armenia

As Philip baptized the eunuch, geographical, ethnic, and legal barriers were washed away. In baptizing Lydia, Paul addressed the equality in gender. Both of these facts were important to the story of how Armenia became the first Christian nation.



The first seeds of Christianity were planted in Armenia by the apostle Thaddeus. Like Philip, Thaddeus had moved beyond the cultural, geographical and ethnic boundaries to boldly proclaim the Christian faith in Armenia, baptizing King Sanandroog's daughter, Santookht. The king bitterly opposed the threatening new faith, going so far as to imprison his own daughter. In prison, Santookht not only refused to renounce Christianity, but, instead converted the other prisoners. She became the first Armenian martyr. After Santookht was executed, Thaddeus continued preaching and was himself martyred in 66 A.D.



Bartholomew followed Thaddeus' mission to Armenia around the time of Santookht's imprisonment and martyrdom. He converted King Sanadroog's sister Volouhi. The king in anger ordered the execution of both his sister and Bartholomew. We know from the study of our Armenian history that a long line of women were faithful witnesses of the Christian faith.

The Next on the Scene: St. Gregory the Illuminator

Soorp Krikor Loosavorich Սուրբ Գրիգոր Լուսավորիչ

Sometime between 274 and 276 Gregory entered the service of King Drtad as court secretary. (This was particularly ironic, since years ago Gregory's father had killed Drtad's father during a rebellion.) He pursued his duties faithfully over a period of several years. However, the relationship between the two soon began to deteriorate. After refusing to worship at the altar of the goddess Anahid, Gregory was incarcerated in a pit for a period of 13 years. Enduring brutal physical punishments at the hands of Drtad, Gregory remained firm in his faith in Christ. However, after the king fell victim to a mental illness, his sister Khosrovitookht (who had secretly become a Christian) encouraged him to seek the help of Gregory. Gregory was immediately released from the pit. It was through his healing prayers that the king experienced a physical and spiritual conversion which led to the Christianization of Armenia. Gregory became the first Catholicos of the Armenian Church, baptized the royal family, and began to evangelize Armenia which was the first nation in the world to officially proclaim Christianity as the state religion in 301 AD.

Our Armenian Way

Feast Days of St. Gregory the Illuminator

Commitment to the Pit (March)

St. Gregory's imprisonment in the pit launches many miracles: his own survival despite thirteen years in "solitary confinement," the healing of King Drtad, the conversion of a nation. At the site of the deep pit there is now a monastery, called *Khor Virabi Vank* in the Republic of Armenia. The Feast of St. Gregory's commitment to the pit is at present a day of pilgrimage to Khor Virab.

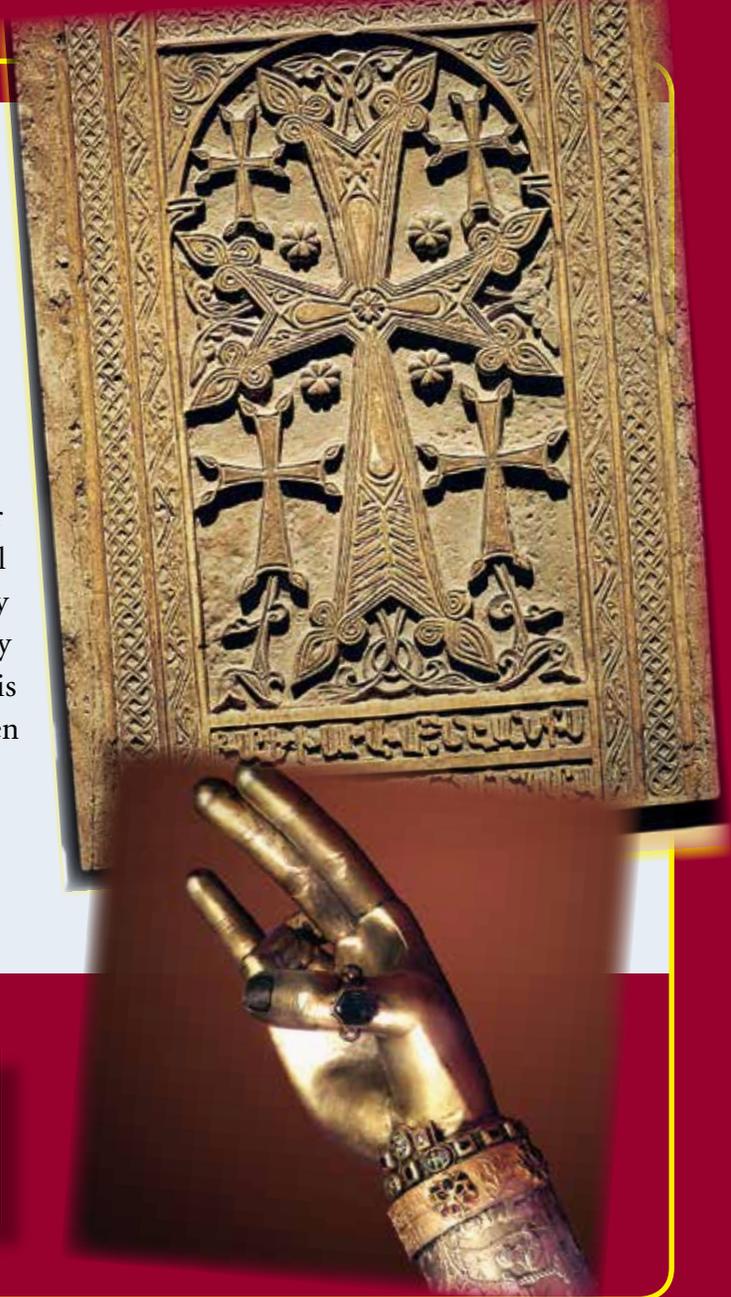


Deliverance from the Pit (June)

St. Gregory's deliverance from the pit was the catalyst that began the "Great Conversion" of Armenia from the darkness of paganism to the light of Christianity. Pagan temples and statues were destroyed in Armenia and replaced with crosses and chapels.

Discovery of His Holy Relics (June)

The relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator are among our most revered within the Armenian Church, as well as all Christian Churches. Today, they may be found at Holy Etchmiadzin, Jerusalem and Antelias. The relic at Holy Etchmiadzin, encased in an arm-shaped reliquary, is used to bless the Holy Chrism (Muron) once every seven years. It is on display in the treasury of the Holy See.



Essay Assignment

**How the Conversion of Armenia in 301 A.D. Affects
How I Live Today in the 21st Century**

Closing Prayer

I kneel before the Creator of heaven and earth.

*I ask to receive the power of the Holy Spirit to
strengthen my inner self.*

I pray that Jesus Christ lives in my heart.

I pray that my life is built on love.

*I pray that I can know how huge God's love is for me
and for all the world,*

*I pray that God's power will work in me to do more
than I can ever imagine.*

Glory to God forever! Amen.

inspired by Ephesians 3:14-21



The Faith Journey

Lesson 4

Unit Three

In The Beginning Was The Word

Here I Am, Lord

How sweet are your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to me.
I gain understanding from your teachings;
And so I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp for my feet
And a light to my path.
I have taken an oath and confirmed it,
To follow your righteous commands.

Psalms 119:103-106



One Step Back

1. Acts 8:26-40 is a story about the conversion of an Ethiopian eunuch by the apostle Philip. What was the eunuch reading when Philip encountered him?

- a. the prophet Jeremiah b. the prophet Ezekiel c. the prophet Isaiah

2. What did the apostles do for both the Ethiopian and Lydia?

- a. invited them to Jerusalem to learn more b. baptized them c. stayed at their house

3. Who was the King of Armenia when Thaddeus went there to preach?

- a. Sanadroog b. Drtad c. Apkar

4. Why did King Sanadroog call for the execution of the apostle Bartholomew?

- a. he would not worship pagan gods b. he baptized his sister Volouhi c. he refused to help King Drtad

5. Name three special feast days dedicated to St. Gregory the Illuminator.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Write It Down For Me...



Imagine for a minute that you are in your classroom and the teacher is giving out the homework assignment for the week. What would you do? Don't take out your notepad and a pencil or your iPad just yet, because there is no written language for your country! The only way that you will be able to remember your assignment is by memory. Ok, some of you will say: 'no big deal it's only my homework.' Well, what about texting, using the internet, emails? Undoubtedly, it is very difficult for us, living in this age of technology, to imagine a world like that. Well, that was what it was like for the Armenian people before a priest by the name of Mesrob Mashtotz created the Armenian alphabet.

Mashtotz, a man of deep faith who desired to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, was deeply disturbed that some of the Armenian people were still following

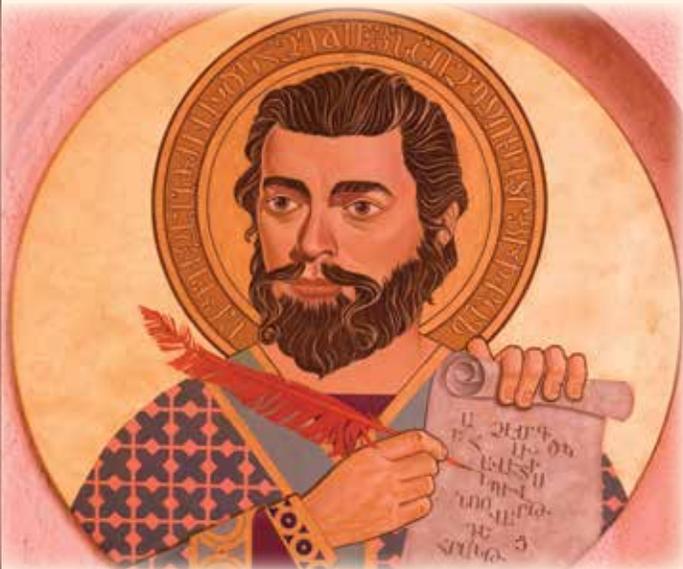
pagan practices, and knew that an Armenian alphabet would help people better understand the liturgy and Scriptures. The Divine Liturgy and the reading of Scripture were conducted in Syriac and Greek often with spontaneous oral translation into Armenian. A written script would help people follow the readings and liturgy and benefit from their divine message.

After a great deal of prayerful reflection, Mashtotz consulted with Sahag, Catholicos of Greater Armenia, who was very receptive to his idea. Together they prayed for God's divine wisdom to guide them. Soon they sought the aid of King Vramshaboh.



Mashtotz enlisted the help of young assistants and sent them to different cities to study languages and alphabets. He himself labored tirelessly. But they were still unable to complete the task. One day, as Mashtotz was meditating in a cave near the village of Palu, the saint had a vision in which the hand of God wrote the alphabet in letters of fire. Undoubtedly, God had a plan for the Armenian nation!

Mesrob Mashtotz went on to build schools across Armenia to teach the alphabet and is even credited for the role he played in developing the alphabets of neighboring nations. The invention of the Armenian alphabet also paved the way for the famous 5th century **Golden Age of Armenia**. Students who were educated abroad returned and originated a new literature, now rich with Christian concepts. The new national alphabet fostered a stronger faith that captivated all Armenian hearts.



Yes, this period was one of marvelous activity. Nearly every book of importance written in Greek and Syriac was translated into Armenian. Over the subsequent centuries, Armenian writers, philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists have achieved world acclaim due in large part to St. Mesrob Mashtotz' influential work.

How Do I Use Language?

Undoubtedly, the written word lends authority and gives power to what is said. It also allows accessibility since something written can be copied and distributed as the Bible was.

Words are double-edged swords: they can build up or they can destroy...How do you use your words? How do you feel about this saying?

True False : "Sticks and stones may break someone's bones, but words will never hurt them."

Since the time of Adam & Eve, the human race has had difficulty controlling its tongue. Let's look at three places in the Bible and see what we learn about the best way to use our words:



1. Proverbs 13:3

It is important to think before I speak because _____

2. James 3:5

My mouth can get me into trouble because _____

3. 2 Timothy 2:16

I don't want to gossip or say foolish things because _____

Proverbs 1:2

Why do you think that these were the first words that Mashtotz translated into the Armenian language?



Our Armenian Way

Goriun Vartabed was a student of Mashtotz and eventually wrote a beautiful account of his teacher's life and amazing achievements. He has also been listed as one of the "junior" translators – that second generation of students who studied and translated works of history and literature.

In his biography *Vark Mashtotzi (The Life of Mashtotz)*, Goriun identifies Sahag and Mashtotz as virtuous men, and compares them to great figures in the Old and New Testament such as Moses, Job, Elijah and St. Paul. Another interesting detail is that both men received burials befitting martyrs which would have been unusual for a 5th century Christian society such as Armenia. In those early days of the Church, sainthood could only be attained through martyrdom in the name of Jesus Christ. Since the Church recognizes both as saints, Goriun's, 'Life' undoubtedly helped persuade churchmen that these men were indeed extraordinary.

The translation of the Bible was finished by the Holy Translators in 425. The first words written in Armenian were: "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding." (Proverbs 1:2)

The first Armenian translation of the Bible is among the world's oldest and is considered by biblical scholars to be the 'Queen of Translations.'

The Armenian Church remembers these men and their accomplishments on the Feast of the Holy Translators in October. The Holy Translators are highly revered in the Armenian Church. Many of the works they translated have since been lost in their Greek or Syriac original, but have been preserved in the Armenian.

My Language and My Life Count!

The old saying "sticks and stones... is a myth. Words really do hurt and can cause irreversible damage. Many times we say things we shouldn't and wish the words were attached to a rope, so we can pull them back out of the air. We can't! Today, you learned about the invention of the Armenian alphabet which led to the enlightenment of the Armenian nation. Like our Holy Translators, we all have the power to contribute to our world...holiness is the doorway in.

Closing Prayer

God, you chose St. Mesrob-Mashtotz to enlighten the Armenian nation through his work, but first he had to choose you...to listen to you, to rely on you and be obedient to your will. Who do you want me to be? You have given me direction in your Word. Help me to hear your call. Help me be the person you created me to be- the real me! Amen.



The Faith Journey

Lesson 5

Unit Three

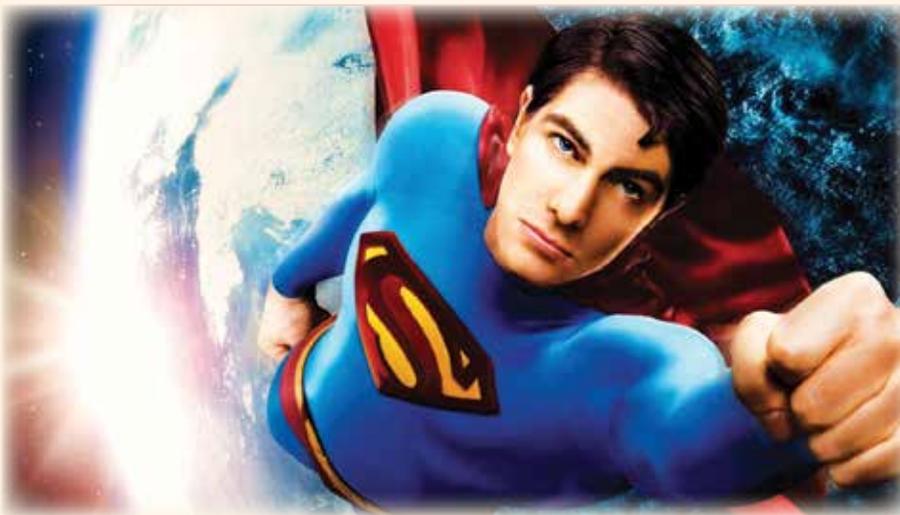
Men and Women Living The Word

Here I Am, Lord

God, at the beginning of each day, a new chapter in my life begins. Help me remember that I leave an impression on every person I meet. Help me to greet them with a smile, a helping hand, sincere advice and kind words. I don't always think of you as part of these encounters, but you truly are! Lord, thank you for all the people who will show me your love today. And help me think of ways I can reflect your love to everyone I meet as well. Amen.



You Can Change the World



Imagine for a moment that by some mysterious power you were able to change the world. What would you change? Would you want to be a Superhero (think Spiderman, Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman) and use your powers to fight evil villains? While getting rid of bad guys might be a noble undertaking, if the goal is to change the world, maybe there's a way to make a bigger impact.

Certainly there are endless possibilities. You could become a medical researcher and work to eradicate disease. Or a

great humanitarian and develop strategies that would feed the hungry of the world or end war. You could become a missionary like Mother Theresa of Calcutta, who dedicated her life to serving the poorest of the poor. Or a visionary churchman like Catholicos Khrimian Hayrig, who so courageously protected his flock in Turkey.

But changing the world is an inside-out job. When we look to change the world, very often we look outside of ourselves. When God looks to change the world, he looks deep within us to get the job done. Didn't we see a wonderful example of how God works through those he created in our last lesson as we learned about the awesome contributions of the Holy Translators and how their life's work affected not just the Armenian people...but the entire world?



One Step Back

1. Mesrob Mashtotz was a

- a. Monk (*vartabed*) b. Catholicos c. Armenian king

2. The Armenian Church recognizes the Holy Translators as those who

- a. founded the Armenian Alphabet
b. translated the Bible
c. began a movement of writing and translating important work into the Armenian language
d. All of the above

3. The Golden Age of Armenia was a glorious period of accomplishment in the

- a. 3rd century b. 5th century c. 7th century d. 12th century

4. The historian Goriun Vartabed wrote the famous book *Vark Mashtotzi* which means:

- a. Works of Mashtotz b. Life of Mashtotz c. Translations of Mashtotz

5. The translation of the Bible was completed in the year

- a. 451 b. 301 c. 425

6. Bonus Question: Proverbs 1:2 was the first thing written in the new Armenian alphabet. See if you can remember the verse which describes the purpose of the proverbs:

“To know _____ and _____: to perceive the words of _____.”

understanding

instruction

wisdom

Celebrating Hope ... Celebrating Christian Life

Are you holy? If someone asked you point blank if you thought you were holy, how would you respond? Would you be comfortable responding to that question or would you squirm a little?

How would you assess yourself in order to answer that question?

The early converts had a great deal to learn about how Christians should live. Saint Paul wrote his longest letter in preparation for his visit to Rome, because he wanted to explain his teachings to the Christians who



lived there. They too needed help with rules for holy living. St. Paul's letter to the Romans is simply referred to as "Romans" and is as timeless and important to us today as it was to Paul's audience. Right from the first chapter, St. Paul gives us important keys to unlock the door to a saintly life:

1. Faith is the Answer to Sin
2. How God Works with Those Who Love
3. The Gospel Shows Us the Way

Read Romans 1:16-17

What should we have complete confidence in? (v. 16)

What does the Gospel reveal? (v. 17)

How does God put us right with him? (v. 17)

How will the righteous live? (v. 17)

Which key does St. Paul describe in this reading?

Read Romans 3:9-24

What is the definition of sinners? (v. 12)

How do we commit sin? (vv. 12-18)

What does the Law do? (v. 20)

What frees us from the powers of sin? (v. 22)

Which key does St. Paul describe in this reading?

Read Romans 8:28-39

What can those who love God be assured of? (v. 28)

What does it mean to be called according to his purpose? (v. 29)

What happens to those who are God's children? (v. 30)

Which key does St. Paul describe in this reading?

The word 'holy' comes from the same word as 'whole.' The original word meant unbroken, healthy, or complete. Someone who is holy has a solid relationship with God. The word 'holy' in Armenian is *soorp* and comes from the same word as *srpel*, to clean. *Soorp* is also the word for saint. Someone who is holy or a saint in Armenian has a clean and pure heart toward God and others.

Holy Soorp Սուրբ

Superhero Saints

As we look at the lives of our saints we see very clearly how God's light shines through men and women whose love for God led them to walk a path of obedience and service. The path of true Christian Spirit has been well traveled throughout the centuries. We are here today as Armenian Christians because our holy saints inspired those around them and all those who came after them. By learning about the saints — the Superheroes of our faith — we, too can be inspired and encouraged.





Our Armenian Way

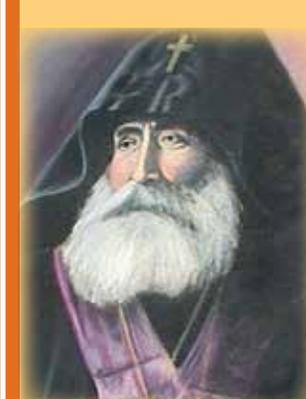
St. Santookht (1st century)

This young princess lived a privileged life as a royal in 1st century Armenia. What could ever win someone away from such a life? When St. Thaddeus left Jerusalem after Pentecost and came to Armenia, gifted with the ability to speak the language, Santookht was among those who heard him preach. She began to follow him, attending the gatherings of believers in the company of her nurse, who was already a convert. Eventually she was convinced that a life in Christ was the way to the best and most meaningful life. Her father was opposed to this new faith, angered by Christ's call to unbiased love and mercy and a humble life of service and prayer. Santookht resisted all his efforts to win her back from her new life. Finally, in a story famous in Christian legend, he offered her the choice of a crown or a sword – life as a princess or.... execution. She chose to die for the Truth rather than live a false life.



St. Nersess Shnorhali (1102-1173)

St. Nersess was one of the outstanding Catholicos of the Armenian Church, known as 'Shnorhali' (which means "filled with Grace") because of the eloquent quality of his writing. He was an accomplished theologian, poet, writer, and composer of hymns. During his tenure as Catholicos, he worked diligently to reconcile the Armenian Church with the Eastern Orthodox churches. Because of this, Nersess is considered by not only the Armenian Church but also the Eastern Churches as a champion of Church unity. Among his many works is a 24-verse prayer titled *I Confess With Faith* which was written to be recited in parts at every hour of the day. Sunday School students are especially familiar with one of the verses – "Jesus, wisdom of the Father, grant me wisdom..."



Catholicos Mgrdich Khrimian (1820-1907)

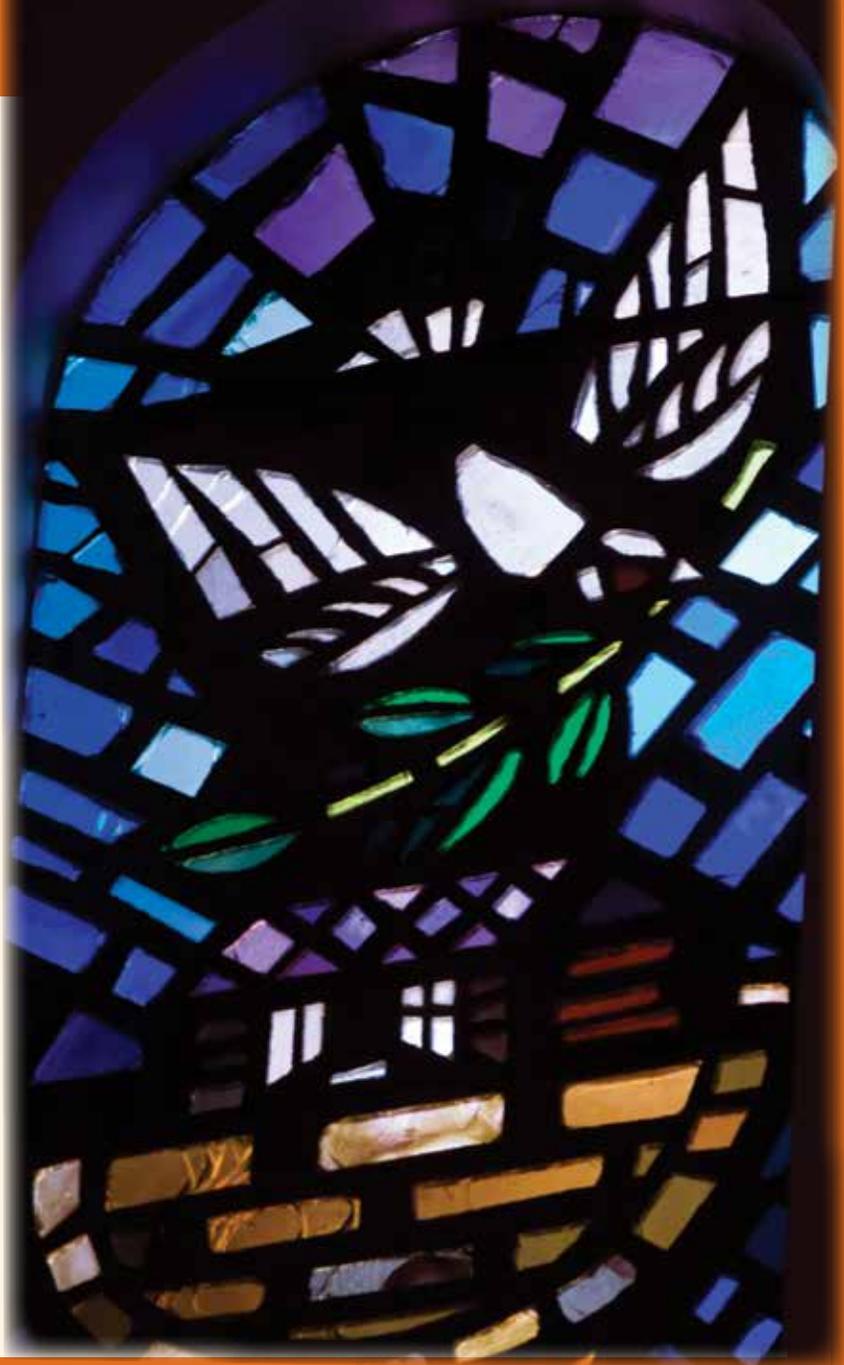
After years of service and works of charity in the Van region (where he was born), Khrimian served as the Patriarch of Constantinople. In 1878, a conference of statesmen was convened in Berlin where they were to discuss the issue of Armenian rights in the Ottoman Empire. Afterwards, Khrimian (who headed the Armenian delegation) delivered his world-famous "paper ladle" speech to the Armenian people back home. He told them: What good could appeals and paper petitions be next to the guns and swords of others? If all human rights were placed in a bowl, the Armenians could draw out very little with their 'paper ladle.'

Khrimian was an equally courageous Catholicos from 1892-1907. During that time, he fought against the Czarist policy of confiscating Armenian Church properties and schools. In 1898, he officially established an Armenian Diocese in the United States. He died in 1907 and was mourned by the countless Armenians who had been touched by his outstanding leadership and love. He became affectionately known as Khrimian Hayrig ("father").

Collage: Holy Living/Saintly Lives

How Does God's Light Shine Through In My Life?

So now we will ask again...*are you holy?* You will be very happy to know that everything God created is holy—including you! Sometimes, though, holiness is hard to recognize. What St. Paul is trying to tell us in the book of Romans is that the goal of Christian life is to live in holiness, which begins with the simple desire to be who God created us to be. Those who have attained this goal we call saints. *We* are also called to be saints. How do we achieve this goal? The best way for you to shine your light is to imitate their devotion to God. It starts out simple: making the choice to respond to God by doing what you know is right, following Christ, thinking as you make decisions, “What would Jesus do”... and, simply doing just that!



Closing Prayer

*Jesus, Wisdom of the Father,
Grant us wisdom.*

*That we may always think, speak and do
that which is good in your sight.*

Keep us from evil thoughts, words, and deeds.

And grant mercy upon us, great sinners.

St. Nersess Shnorhali

The Faith Journey

Lesson 6

Unit Three

The Oldest Church in the New World

Here I Am, Lord

Fill in the blanks with the correct words from the list below.

Kreesdos ee mech mer haydnetzav—Christ is revealed among us!
(from the Divine Liturgy)

_____ in our midst has been revealed! He who is
_____ is seated here.

The voice of _____ has resounded. _____
_____ is commanded. This _____ has now become one
_____. The _____ is given for a full bond. The enmity has
been removed; and _____ is spread over us all. Now, priests, raise
your _____ and give _____ together to the one God,
while _____ sing, “holy, holy, holy!”

holy	Christ	greeting	God	peace	soul
love	voices	Church	kiss	angels	blessings



God’s Promise to the Armenian Nation: “I Will Be Your God...And You Shall Be My People!”

It is written on each of our hearts, “*I will be your God and you shall be my people!*” God entered into human history and walked among the people of the world and Armenians continue to acknowledge Jesus’ presence and love wherever they settle. At the center of the Christian story is *God*—what he is doing with the world and his dealings with humankind from the creation to the day yet to come, when history will be fulfilled.

We can actually break that story into six main chapters.



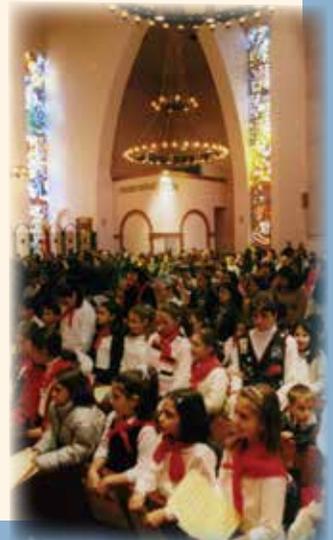
This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

1. **Creation**—A relationship which pleased God.
2. **The fall of humankind**—When we fell out of relationship with our creator.
3. **The Covenant with Abraham**—When God chose one man and all his descendants to come...Yes, in faith, that is US!
4. **Jesus**—The Word made Flesh who came to restore the relationship with our creator.
5. **Christ's followers**—Yes, it's us once again.
6. **The end times**—When we will be fully renewed and restored to the relationship that God intended for his creation.

One of the most devoted of Jesus' first followers was St. Paul. During three different missionary journeys, he was instrumental in founding new Christian communities in what is now the Middle East and Western Europe. His letters to these churches - most of the Epistles of the New Testament - are the earliest and among the greatest works of theology.

And from the beginning of *Armenia's* faith story in 301 AD, our faith has proven stronger than any enemy's persecution; that the Armenian Church is thriving across the globe is living proof!





One Step Back

True or False

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. According to Romans 1:16-17 it is through faith that we are put right with God. | T <input type="checkbox"/> | F <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. St. Santookht first persecuted Christians, then became a convert. | T <input type="checkbox"/> | F <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. St. Nersess established the first Armenian Church in America. | T <input type="checkbox"/> | F <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. We are all called to become saints. | T <input type="checkbox"/> | F <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. The Armenian word “ <i>Shnorhali</i> ” means “ <i>holy</i> ” in English. | T <input type="checkbox"/> | F <input type="checkbox"/> |

Charting a Spiritual Journey

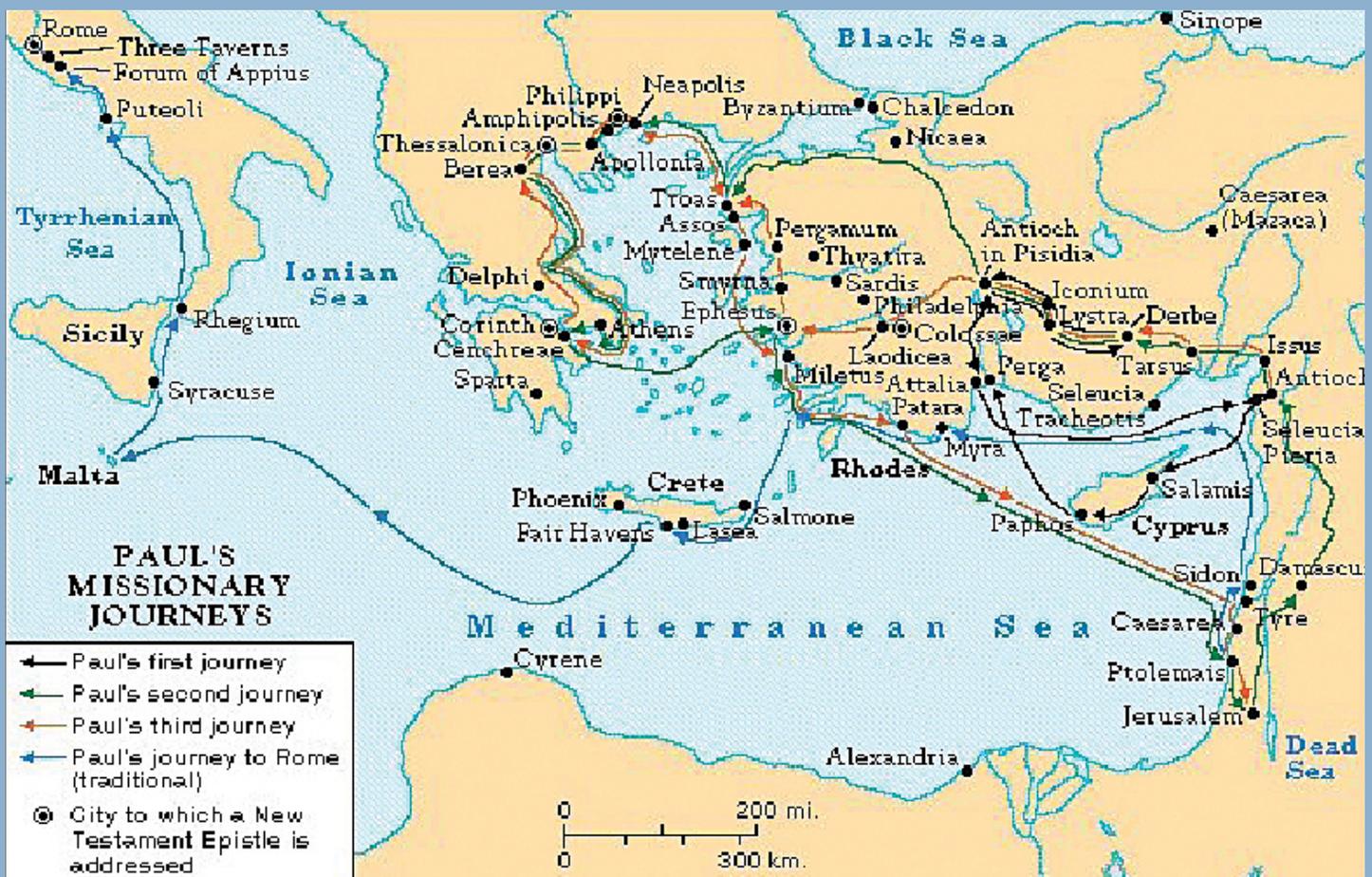
The Bible is an unending story of hope that inspires all Christian life. St. Paul wrote the oldest book of the New Testament to the people of Thessalonica (50-51 A.D.) who were mostly non-Jewish Christians. Apparently due to Paul’s powerful personal witness, they had formed a Christian community in this Greek city. This letter and all the others serve as personal invitations not only for the people of St. Paul’s time, but for the new Armenian communities that sprung up throughout the world, and for each of us today, to live Christ’s message and share it with others.

Before we read about how the oldest Church faced the challenges of the New World, let’s remember where it all began: in the instructions that Jesus gave to the 12 disciples called the Great Commission. It must be an important instruction, as it will be repeated in all the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

“Go make disciples of all nations...and I will be with you always, to the end of time!” Matthew 28:19-20
And there’s more! Read on....

Read your assigned Bible verses and then answer the four questions.

Matthew 28:16-20	Mark 16:14-18	Luke 24:33-49	John 20:19-23	Acts 1:3-9
Where were the apostles and what were they doing?	Where were the apostles and what were they doing?	Where were the apostles and what were they doing?	Where were the apostles and what were they doing?	Where were the apostles and what were they doing?
What reaction did they have to Jesus’ appearance?	What reaction did they have to Jesus’ appearance?	What reaction did they have to Jesus’ appearance?	What reaction did they have to Jesus’ appearance?	What reaction did they have to Jesus’ appearance?
What did Jesus tell them to do?				
Who would help them?				



St. Paul Rocks His World

You remember reading about St. Paul's amazing conversion in the Book of Acts. From a fierce persecutor of Christians, the man called Saul became St. Paul, devoted believer and energetic missionary. St. Paul traveled widely throughout the region, establishing church communities wherever he went. It was never easy. He was often met with hostility and sometimes even threatened and imprisoned. But as people opened their hearts and minds to his message (and you can be sure that the Holy Spirit had a role in this!), it was too good to ignore. More and more people became followers of Jesus Christ, followers of what came to be called "the Way."

Most of the letters in the New Testament are letters from St. Paul to the Christian communities he had founded around the Mediterranean. Above is a map of his three famous missionary journeys.

The first journey, described in Acts 13-14, took Paul from Antioch to Cyprus then southern Asia Minor and back to Antioch. The second journey, described in Acts 15-18, took him from Jerusalem to, among other places, Philippi and Corinth and then finally to Antioch. On

his third and final missionary journey, described in Acts 18-21, Paul went to Galatia, Ephesus and other places, returning finally to Jerusalem. A bit later he sailed to Rome, where he was imprisoned and eventually executed.

St. Paul's epistles or letters contained answers to questions and strong advice about what the communities needed to change and how they could follow Christ more closely. So, for example, the book known as I Corinthians is simply his first letter to the Christians in Corinth. Philippians is his letter to the Christians in Philippi... and so on.

If you were writing to your parish today, what would you want to tell them?

Dear parishioners....

1. One thing we might *stop* doing to follow Christ more closely:
2. Something we might *start* doing to follow Christ more closely:

Our Armenian Way

Some interesting facts: The first real surge of immigration from Armenia to the United States was in the 1890's. From 1890-1914 about 64,000 Turkish Armenians came to the United States before WWI. From 1920 -1924 a second wave of about 30,000 Armenian refugees fled to the United States. A third wave of immigration came following WWII, when 700,000 Armenians immigrated to Europe or the United States. From the 1920's and on, Armenians came to the United States (among other destinations) from Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Russia, and Armenia.

Upon arriving in their new country, those earliest immigrants to the United States knew nothing of America except for what they had heard from fellow countrymen. Few had any guarantee of employment, mainly because they could not speak English. As a result, they made initial contacts with friends and relatives, creating new Armenian communities; they needed each other in this strange land.

One of the first things the new communities did was to establish a church, a place to gather for worship and fellowship. The Armenian Church served as a beacon for every new wave of immigrants, bringing newcomers together in faith and culture.

The first Armenian Church, the Armenian Church of Our Saviour (Soorp Purgitch), was built in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1890 and consecrated on January 18, in 1891 and the first Armenian clergyman arrived, in response to a petition by 300 Armenian residents of the city. By 1897, as the number of Armenian immigrants grew, there were six clergymen serving the Armenian Church in America.

The Armenian Church of North America was established officially by Catholicos Mgrdich Khrimian in 1898, and grew to embrace three Dioceses and thousands of faithful. Today there are Armenian churches all over the world in Western Europe, South America, the Middle East, Asia, Australia, and, of course, Armenia.



Closing Reflection

The Armenian Church

The Armenian Church is the birthplace of my spirit,
shadowed and illuminated like a cavern;
but vast and vaulted, its entrance welcomes guests
to the wide sanctuary where the altar floats
in silence in the distance like a mighty ship.

Even with my eyes closed I can see it,
its Christ's face bright as a child's.
When I breathe in, I breathe its holy incense
smoking on its altar; its sturdy walls quaking
with old and stormy prayers.

The Armenian Church is the unyielding fortress
of our fathers' faith. They raised it
stone by stone out of the earth.
They lowered it dewfall by dew from the heavens.
And they were buried in hushed stillness there.

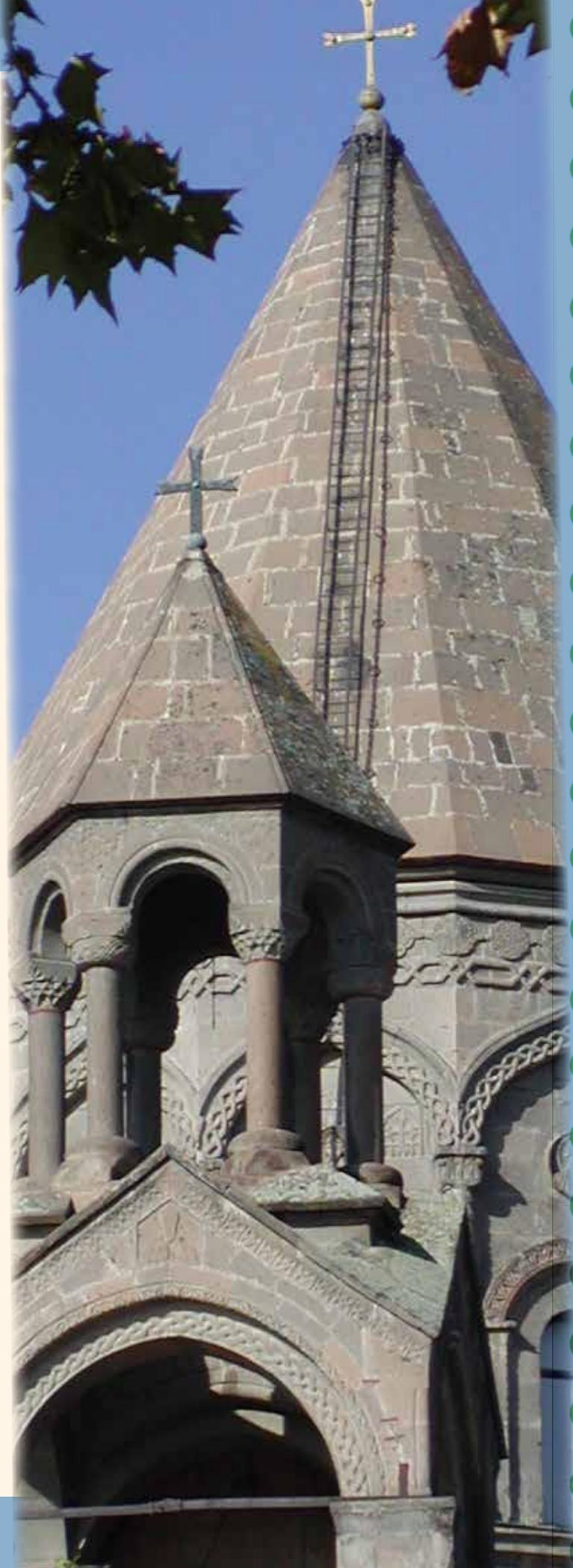
The Armenian Church is the tapestry curtain
behind which God himself descends
into the chalice. And before which my nation
bows its head for communion with the past
with life-giving bread and wine.

Against storms our church is haven and harbor.
Against the cold night it is fire and flame.
It is the shaded forest in the heat of day
Where lilies flower, watered by our hymns, our psalms.

The Armenian Church knows the secret road to heaven
Hidden under every stone. For the Armenian spirit
And body it is the shining armor, its crosses swords;
Its bells reverberate with the victory we know is ours.

Vahan Tekeyan 1924

*Translated by Diana Der Hovanessian and
Marzbed Margossian*



The Faith Journey

Lesson 7

Unit Three

We Are The Church

Here I Am, Lord

We have been filled with your good things, O Lord,
Lutzak ee parootyantz kotz Der,

Լցաք ի բարութեանց քոց Տէր,

by tasting of your Body and Blood.
Jashagelov uzmarreen ko yev zaryoon.

Ճաշակելով զմարմին քո եւ զարիւն:

Glory in the highest to you who have fed us.
Park ee partzoonus geragrogheet uzmez.

Փառք ի բարձունս կերակրողիդ զմեզ:

You who continually feed us,
Vor yev hanabaz geragres uzmez

Որ եւ հանապազ կերակրես զմեզ,

Send down upon us your spiritual blessing. Amen.
Arakya ee mez uzhokevor ko zorhnootyoon.

Առաքես ի մեզ զհոգեւոր քո զօրհնութիւն:

Glory in the highest to you who have fed us.
Park ee partzoonus geragrogheet uzmez.

Փառք ի բարձունս կերակրողիդ զմեզ:

From “Lutzak,” the hymn after Holy Communion



What are the good things with which God fills *your* life?



One Step Back

1. In our last session we explored our faith story and God's great promise to the Armenian people. It's the same promise that God made to the House of Israel in Jeremiah 31:33.

What was it?

- I will put my laws in their minds
- I will write my laws on their hearts
- I will be their God and they shall be my people
- All of the above

2. We looked at our faith story as organized into six main chapters. Number them in their correct order.

- The Covenant of Abraham—when God chose one man and all his descendents to come____
- Jesus—the word made flesh who came to restore the relationship with our Creator ____
- Creation—a relationship which pleased God____
- The end times—when our relationship with God will be fully renewed and restored____
- Christ's followers—witnessing our belief____
- The fall of humankind____

3. Where was the first Armenian Church built?

- Holy Cross in Union City, New Jersey
- Armenian Church of Our Saviour in Worcester, Massachusetts
- St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield, Michigan
- St. Mary Armenian Church in Yetttem, California

4. The Armenian Church of North America was established officially by

- St Gregory the Illuminator
- Catholicos Mgrdich Khrimian
- St. Paul the Apostle
- None of the above

5. St. Paul

- Was baptized a Christian at an early age
- Was famous for persecuting Christians
- Wrote most of the New Testament letters to individual newly-baptized Christians
- Went on many missionary journeys

Christ Lives in Us Through the Holy Spirit!

In our last session, we looked at the six main “chapters” of our faith story. In that outline, it's easy to see that we are living in the same time period as St. Paul and all the apostles, along with the Christians of the Early Church, our Armenian martyrs and Christian ancestors...all of us are Christ's followers. What binds us all together is our initiation into life with Christ through baptism and our life together in his Church.

Right before he returned to his Father, Jesus commissioned his disciples to share the good news of salvation with the whole world.

Read John 16: 7, 12-15.

- What reasons for leaving did Jesus offer his disciples? (v 7)
- What will the Holy Spirit do for the apostles? (13)
- What will the Holy Spirit do for Jesus? (v 14)

Read Acts 2:42-47

List four of the thing the new converts devoted themselves to in verse 42.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Gifts That Keep On Giving

In approximately A.D. 56, St Paul wrote a letter to a new Christian community in Corinth that was having problems. His letter was not meant to scold them but to encourage and guide them. By the time we arrive at chapter 12, we begin to understand what God's idea of Church is. First we are called to gather. Then we are called to discover our God-given gifts and use them to be a light to the world, just as the apostles were.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.”

1 Corinthians 12: 4-5

Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, judgment of gifts, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues.... In verse 7,



Paul explains why these gifts are given to us. What is the reason? _____

2. Read 1 Corinthians 12: 12-26

With what image does Paul illustrate the unity of believers? _____

3. Read I Corinthians 12: 27-29. What gifts are identified? What are your gifts? How do you use them to serve your parish?

4. Read Galatians 5: 22-25. These verses describe the qualities of people who are “in step with the Spirit” (v. 25). List them here; there are nine.

Our Armenian Way

Decades ago in Armenian villages, the ‘dzookh’—which has come to be the word for “parish” but which literally means “smoke”—was defined by groups of chimneys or homes. In this way two or three village priests would divide the care of the flock in a town. They would bless the homes of families in their jurisdiction. It was and still is an Armenian tradition to bless the homes of the faithful, especially during the Easter and Christmas seasons.



Fill Me, Lord

Fill me, O Lord, with the goodness of the fruit that comes from your Holy Spirit.

Fill me with love, so that I will seek to understand and appreciate ...

Fill me with joy, so that I can celebrate your presence...

Fill me with peace, so that I know how to ...

Fill me with patience, so that I stop rushing long enough to...

Fill me with kindness, so that I take the extra time to ...

Fill me with faithfulness, so that I place my mind and heart...

Fill me with gentleness, so that others know that...

Fill me with self-control, so that I act...

Fill me with these fruits of your spirit, Lord I pray! Amen

Plugged In

Lesson 1

Unit Four

Come, Let Us Worship!

Here I Am, Lord

A Glimpse of Glory

Lord Jesus,

I need you to lead me up the mountain

because it is so easy for me to get discouraged.

Let me see your shining presence

because it is so easy for me to get distracted.

Help me focus on what your love requires of me

because it is so easy to want to keep things easy.

Lead me back down the mountain to everyday life with you by my side and help me do what God asks me to do in the world.



Divine Liturgy Soorp Badarak Մուրբ Պատարագ

How Do We Worship?

A. Liturgy Opinion Poll

Before we explore the unique way Armenians as Orthodox Christians worship let's take a Liturgy Opinion Poll. You'll be using an imaginary line at the front of the classroom to express your views.

Absolutely Agree

Sometimes Agree

Never Agree

1. I like everything about our Divine Liturgy.
2. I feel Badarak should be a happier experience.
3. I think listening to the Gospel helps me be a better person but it should be in a language I can understand.
4. I believe that worshipping with my Armenian community is essential to my Christian life.
5. The hymns sung during Badarak help me worship God.
6. Receiving holy communion regularly means a lot to me.



B. What do you enjoy most about the Divine Liturgy?

- hymns prayers sermon Scripture reading
 Holy Communion incense colorful vestments being together

Human beings do not need to be told to worship. It is our nature to do so... you might say we are 'wired' to worship. When we come to know and love God, we just naturally fall to our knees in awe and love (you'll read more about this today). But people who haven't come to know God can be caught up in "ignorant" worship, as we see in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. Or, we are misguided by evil impulses as the Devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness.



1. Read John 4:19-26. What does Jesus say to the Samaritan Woman in verses 22 - 24?

2. Read Matthew 4:8-10. How did Jesus respond to Satan's offer of power in verse 10?

In Jesus' response to Satan he forever settled any discussion on the matter of who is to be the recipient of our worship. He said, "WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD."

The WOW Factor!

In Armenian one of the words we used for "worship" is *yergurbakootyoon* which literally means "kissing the ground." That says a great deal about what we as Armenians feel about what we do every Sunday morning... to kiss the ground you have to fall to your knees! How many of us truly feel that sense of awe and thanksgiving we should have for our God who not only created us, but came down from heaven and became human in a desire to be one with us?



Can you remember any other stories in the Bible where we read about people falling to their knees (or amazed, or filled with awe-inspired terror) when they encountered Jesus? Draw a line from each verse to the matching encounter.

WOW Stories

1. Mark 5:25-34

2. Matthew 2:1-2, 11

3. Luke 2:15-20

4. Matthew 8:2

5. Mark 7:25

6. Matthew 17:6

Who Was It?

a. The mother of the possessed child

b. Disciples (Peter, James and John)

c. The shepherds in the fields

d. A woman who Jesus healed

e. The magi -- visitors from the East

f. Man with dreaded skin disease

Our Armenian Way Sunday Morning Live!

Badarak is *not* a spectator sport! From its Greek root, the word “liturgy” literally means “work of the people.” The very meaning of the word tell us that we need to *participate* in the service. That is why like all ancient Christian churches, the faithful of the Armenian Church worship not only in words, but also in gestures and rituals, beyond what we can ever say in words.

and rituals, beyond what we can ever say in words.

The word we use for our Sunday Liturgy is Badarak which means “sacrifice” -- a reference to the sacrifice that Christ made for us. We share in his body and blood in the form of the sacrament of *Soorp Haghortootioon* or Holy Communion. Upon the holy altar, simple bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. This transformation of physical elements takes place by the power of the Holy Spirit as the priest prays the Eucharistic Prayer and we sing *Vortee Asdoodzo*. We can then approach the ‘table’ to share in the most important meal of the Christian family.

But, like any other great meal, there is planning, preparation, and conclusion. The Divine Liturgy is divided into two main parts. The first part is the “**Liturgy of the Word**” and the second, the “**Liturgy of the Eucharist**”. Let us see how much we know about our *Badarak*.

Pretend that you are in charge of the announcement board at your parish. Your task is to help the parishioners know what happens during the two different parts of the Liturgy. You will find information in the box below; it’s your job to put them in their proper place and, as much as possible, in the proper order.

What Happens When?



Parish Name _____

Liturgy of the Word

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The deacon holds up the Gospel book

Kiss of Peace

Priest vests

Bread and wine become Body and Blood

Reading the Gospel

Havadamk (Creed)

Sing Soorp Asdvadz

Sing Hayr Mer

Holy Communion

Priest confesses his sins

Priest receives the chalice

Kiss the Gospel book

Confess our sins

Procession into the church to the altar

Worship is a gift from God, who thinks of everything. He set aside one day of the week for us to rest from our labors so we might spend extra time in God's presence and enjoy the world he made especially for us.

Life Issue

Why do I need to go to church? I don't get it!

Here are some points to consider to help you understand why the Divine Liturgy is so important. Attending *Badarak*...

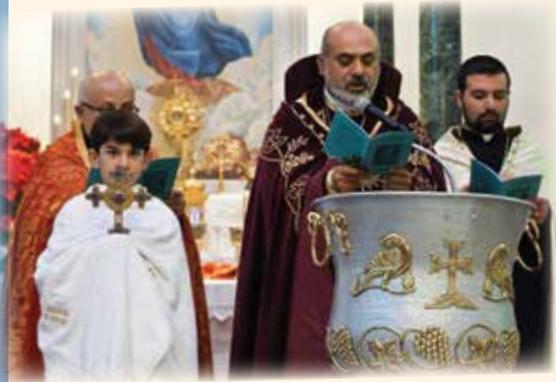
1. Strengthens your relationship with the Lord.
2. Nourishes your personal faith as you pray with a believing community.
3. Builds up the bonds of love among members of the church.
4. Grants forgiveness and rebirth through Holy Communion.
5. Grounds you in renewed faith for the coming week



Our Church has thought of everything...not only does she give us the gift of worship, but she also invites us to participate with our gifts and talents. Many times when you are personally involved in something you take ownership and put your all into it. It is a perfect way for you to worship and give thanks to God, by giving back to him your talents for his glory!

Stepping Up

What roles can young people your age take in the liturgy at your parish? Check all the following that apply. Then circle the activities that you will try (talk with your pastor or parish council chairperson).



- Sing in choir
- Pass the Kiss of Peace
- Serve on the altar
- Greet people as they arrive at church
- Take the offering
- Help make Mahs
- Take Mahs to the ill and shut-ins in your community
- Help organize the candle and flower donation

Do you sometimes complain that you “*do not get anything out of Liturgy*”? Remember that the best way to find meaning in the liturgy is to understand it and to participate as fully as possible in whatever roles are open to you. If you have specific concerns about liturgy at your parish, talk seriously about them with your priest, parents, or Sunday school teachers. They will be glad to help you find ways to address your concerns.

We give thanks to you Lord, who has fed us at your table of eternal life;
you shared your body and blood to save the world and to give our souls life.

Kohanamk uzken Der vor geragretser uzmez hanmahagan seghano ko.

Pashkkelov uzmarment yev zaryoont ee purgootyoon ashkharee.

yev gyank antsans merots.

*Kohanamk (We Give Thanks)
Armenian Badarak Hymn*

Գոհանամք

Plugged In

Lesson 2

Unit Four

Liturgy: The Work of the People

Here I Am, Lord

Christ is revealed among us! He who is God is seated here. The voice of peace has resounded. A holy greeting is commanded. This church has now become one soul, the kiss is given to bind us completely together. Love is spread over us all; now, priests, lift up your voices, and give blessings together to the one God while the angels sing “holy, holy, holy!”



One Step Back...W O R S H I P!

1. The word Eucharist means

- a. sacrifice b. worship c. thanksgiving d. liturgy

2. In Armenian, the word *yergurbakootyoon* means

- a. thanksgiving b. sacrifice c. Holy Communion d. kissing the ground

3. The Divine Liturgy is divided into two parts. What is the first part called?

- a. Liturgy of the Eucharist b. kiss of peace c. Liturgy of the Word d. procession

4. In what part of the liturgy do we sing the Hayr Mer?

- a. Liturgy of the Word b. Liturgy of the Eucharist

5. In what part of the liturgy do we pray the Havadamk?

- a. Liturgy of the Eucharist b. Liturgy of the Word

Worship in Action



Wow, tickets to a famous Broadway show in one of the city's most impressive theatres! You've been marking the days on your calendar for the past three months and now the big night is here. You've spent the entire day getting ready. You're ready to go an hour before it's time to leave; after all, you want to get there early so you can get a great seat. You walk down the center aisle and select a perfect center stage seat. You are in awe of the beauty of the theater...lush red velvet curtain, the orchestra ...this evening's performance would be one that you will remember for years to come. You settle comfortably in your seat and wait for the entertainment to begin.

You know, our churches sometimes resemble a theater: rows of pews, the curtain and the stage... It seems as though that is what some people expect when they attend Sunday Liturgy. They simply sit comfortably in their seat and wait to be entertained. But as we've already seen, liturgy is not at all a show -- it involves the effort and energy of the faithful. It involves our entire body and all of our senses. How are our senses engaged? What movements do we make in this "total spiritual workout"? Jot some answers down here:

Five times in the New Testament you will find reference to a 'holy kiss': Romans 16:16, I Corinthians 16:20, II Corinthians 13:12, I Thessalonians 5:26, I Peter 5:14 — "Greet one another with a kiss of love."

Christian Love... It's More Than Just A Kiss!

Last week we discovered that the Armenian word used for worship is *yergurbakootyoon* which literally means "kissing the ground." In an earlier session we talked about the "Kiss of Peace" which we share with one another during liturgy. Five times in the New Testament you will find reference to a 'holy kiss' and 'kiss of love' which was much more than a greeting. When we share this holy greeting with one another, we are literally saying that we forgive each other and also reconcile ourselves with God who is the truest example of forgiveness.

At the conclusion of Badarak we just don't leave. Before we depart, we line up before the altar and one at a time, we kiss the Bible. This kiss is an affirmation of our relationship with God and his Word. Through this act each one of us is commissioned to '**go in peace to love and serve the world.**' Let us think about some attitudes and habits we can develop that will prepare us to reflect Christ to the world.



The Action Continues...

1. Matthew 5:13
 2. Matthew 5:14
 3. 1 Peter 2:5
 4. 2 Corinthians 5:20
 5. 1 Peter 2:9
- a. ambassadors
 - b. chosen people
 - c. light
 - d. living stones
 - e. salt
1. What does it mean to be the salt of the earth?
 2. How can you be a light for the world?
 3. Name two things you can do to become living stones for God.
 4. What is the job of an ambassador?
 5. How can we be ambassadors for Christ?
 6. What responsibilities do you have as a member of God's holy family?

SPECIAL • EYE WITNESS • REPORT



Seventh-Grader Serves at the Ararat Senior Home

Sevan Krikorian is a seventh-grader at Hovsepian Middle School. Like most boys his age, Sevan enjoys sports, video games and days off from school. But Sevan has found a way of spending his free time that is perhaps uncommon for a boy his age. Sevan spends his Saturday mornings at the Ararat Senior Home in West Hills, California.

Sevan does not understand why 'hanging out' is such big news. He says, "Boys my age like to hang out. I've just found that I like to hang out here at the Ararat home. The residents are always so happy to see me, and appreciate the time that I spend with

them. They really like it when I get a bingo game going. Sometimes I bring my friend Ani, who plays the piano and gets a sing-along going. Really, I would recommend this for other kids...it's a great way to spend a Saturday morning."

Sevan says that he began coming to the nursing home when visiting his grandmother. But when his grandmother died last year, he just kept coming. Sevan insists that it is no big deal, but the staff and residents from the Ararat home who look forward to his weekly visits will tell a completely different story!

1. How are the residents of the Ararat Home benefiting from Sevan's volunteering?
2. What are the benefits *Sevan* experiences?
3. How do Sevan's visits take God's message to the world?
4. Name a way that you've lived God's message of love in your community.





Life Issue

What Does It Mean To Love The “Other?”

It is obvious by the amazing growth of the early Church that Christ’s followers demonstrated a lifestyle that caught people’s attention. People who observed this lifestyle were inspired by how Christ’s followers loved and cared for one another and for all those they came in contact with. These actions made them living witnesses of Christ and his mission; in other words they were living examples of Christ’s love.

Read Matthew 5:23-24 and 43-48. What kind of love does Jesus ask of us in these verses?

Our Armenian Way

Kridsos ee mech mer haydnetsav—At every Armenian liturgy we declare that “Christ is revealed among us” but even more significantly *through* us! God wants to use each and every one of us to make a difference in the world. In the Gospel of Matthew 14:13-21 we hear the story of Jesus feeding a great multitude of people. Jesus was able to use one boy’s small lunch and feed thousands with it. In the same way, God can take whatever we have to offer him and bless it. Even though it does not look like anything, “little is much” when we offer it back to God for his blessing and glory!



The early Church built upon this concept of public worship as an expression of love. The word liturgy means: “the work of the people.” This work does not end when liturgy concludes. One of the goals of our worship is to actually become a life-giving source of love for the world which is what we pledge to do when we kiss the Gospel book at the end of Liturgy.

Closing Prayer

*Remind me, Lord
That I am the light of the world.
That a city set on a hill cannot be hidden.
A lamp is not lit and then put under a basket.
No, it’s set on a stand*

*Where it gives light to all the house.
In the same way, let my light
Shine before all people
So that they may see goodness in what I do
And give praise to you, my heavenly Father.*

Inspired by Matthew 5:14-16

Plugged In

Lesson 3

Unit Four

Liturgy: Starting Over Every Week

Here I Am, Lord

Der vorghormya. Lord have mercy...

Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

All-holy Trinity, grant peace to the world, healing to the sick, and the kingdom to those who passed away. Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Jesus Savior, have mercy on us.



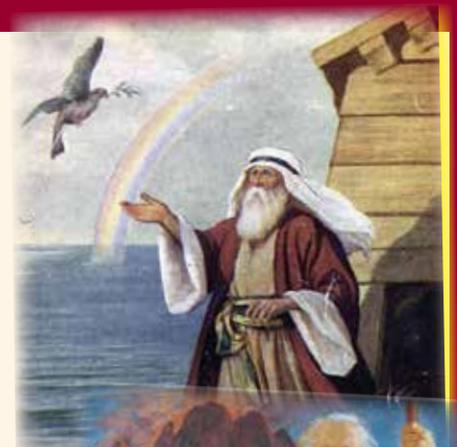
Free to Say Yes....and No

Everyone knows stories from the Bible about people who said 'yes' to God: Moses who followed the directions God gave him from the burning bush. Noah who built and filled the ark exactly as God instructed. And then there was Abraham who was even willing to sacrifice his own son at God's request. And Mary who said 'yes' even though she did not fully understand what God was asking of her.

But no one ever said yes as completely and with as much personal pain as Jesus. His willingness to obey his Father's will and suffer and die on the cross fulfilled God's plan of salvation for all humanity. His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension not only saved us from sin...but gave us new life!

When we are baptized we are grafted onto the Body of Christ -- the family of believers -- and also given the grace to live in a way that is pleasing to God. In past lessons we learned how this grace fills us with the power we need to serve as God's ambassadors.

But grace does not take away our free will. God's greatest gift to us is our ability to make our own choices. Our human nature makes us subject to error and inclined to sin. The good news is that every day we have the opportunity to start over! Every week during the Divine Liturgy we have the opportunity to kneel in God's presence, to ask for forgiveness and to be absolved of our sins. Every week our slate is cleaned and we can start over again.



When We Have Missed the Mark

Even before we approach the altar to kneel and confess before Holy Communion, we could reflect on those things that we might have done or not done that hurt our relationships with parents, siblings, friends, teachers and God. This can help us to be ready to confess them as we receive God's forgiveness through the priest's intercession.



Let's look at the Confession Prayer together – it covers every possible sin that we humans can commit! You will recognize the prayer...but perhaps not completely understand what the words mean.

I ask for forgiveness for the sins that I have committed in thought, word and deed willingly and unwillingly. Knowingly and unknowingly...

When video games are more important than....

When I have been untruthful and made up excuses rather than

When I have said something that hurts another, instead of....

When I have been insensitive to the feelings and needs of.....

Megha Asdoodzo...I have sinned against God

When I have been disobedient or misbehaved through pride, anger, laziness, covetousness, gluttony and lust...

Whenever I was unable to admit I was wrong, like when...

Whenever I have argued too easily with....

When I slept in instead of helping with ...

When I was greedy and...

When I overeat or stuff myself with....

For failing to be a sign of peace and friendship to...

Megha Asdoodzo...I have sinned against God

When I have sinned against all the commandments by either not doing what I should or by doing what I shouldn't...

When I failed to put my relationship with God before...

When I was asked to pray for ...and I never did.

When I am disobedient and rude to...

When I lied about...

When I took..., which I knew did not belong to me.

When I betrayed my friend by...

Megha Asdoodzo...I have sinned against God

When I have purposely kept away from good deeds...

When I could have been a peacemaker but ...

When I could have helped my mom or dad with the chores but ...

When I have been unwilling to forgive ...

Because I continue to be selfish with my time and talent and did not...

Megha Asdoodzo... God I have sinned against you. Help me to recognize the generosity of your love. Help me also to have the strength and courage to follow the ways of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Megha Asdoodzo

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Top Stories Luke 22:1-38

Forgiveness is at the heart of the life and teachings of Jesus. As God forgives us, Jesus asks us to extend the same generosity to others. To forgive and accept forgiveness is an important part of the Christian way of life.

What Are Our Headlines?

Look up the following scripture passages about forgiveness. Answer the question. Choose a headline that matches each story. Write the headline next to the story

1. Luke 22:1-6:

Q. What were the chief priests and the scribes looking to do with the help of one of Jesus' disciples?

A.

2. Luke 22:7-13:

Q. Where did Jesus instruct Peter and John to go to prepare for the Passover celebration?

A.

3. Luke 22:20:

Q. What did Jesus say his blood was?

A.

4. Luke 22:19:

Q. After Jesus gave thanks, what did he say the bread was and what was it for?

A.



5. Luke 22:26:

Q. Jesus said that the greatest among you would do what?

A.

6. Luke 22:34:

Q. What did Jesus say that Peter would do?

A.

7. Luke 22:35:

Q. What three things did Jesus say he sent his disciples out with?

A.

HEADLINE

1. He Provides Everything For The Trip!
2. A Contract Signed In Blood!
3. Wonder Bread... True Soul Food!
4. Servants Take The Lead!
5. One Of The Twelve Accepts A Bribe!
6. As The Cock Strikes Three!
7. A Room For The Party!

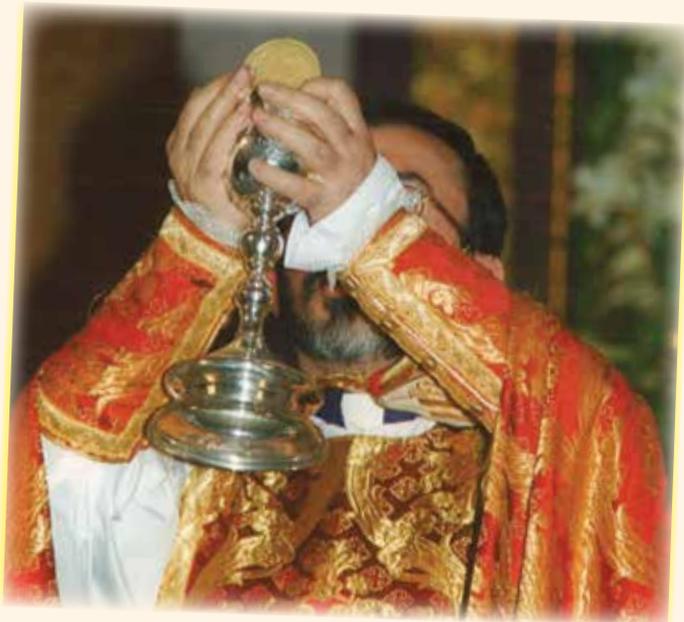
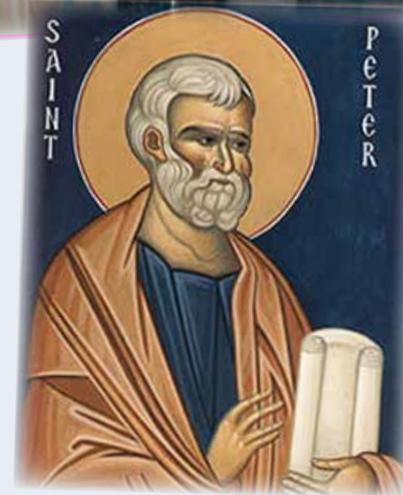
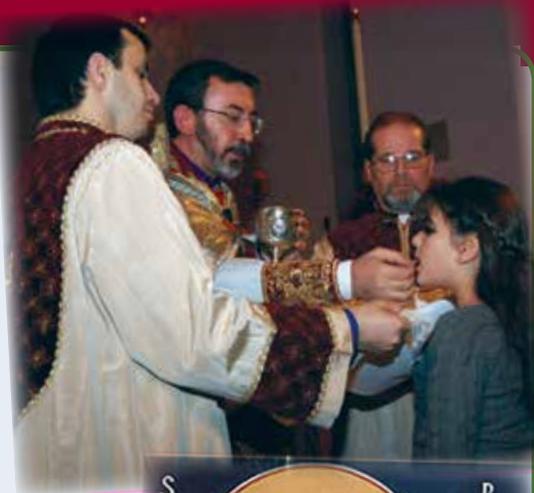
Our Armenian Way

It Happens Every Sunday....Confession ...Communion...

Conversion...Reconciled... Rescued...Renewed

Our Divine Liturgy provides us an opportunity every Sunday to start the week with a fresh slate. In the Armenian Church, it's by means of a group confession, in the presence of the community. And as we saw earlier, it's a chance as well to think concretely and specifically of just how we each might have missed the mark. It's hard to be perfect; we know that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)

Peter's denial of Christ is a perfect example. He truly wanted to be there for Christ, his beloved friend and teacher, but fear overcame him and he deserted the Lord when he needed him most! The Scripture tells us that when Peter recognized his failure he wept bitterly. But he understood God's love, and repented and went on to be a passionate witness for Christ.



Life Issue

Why do I need forgiveness—a fresh new start?

God thinks of everything. Every Sunday, right before we receive Holy Communion, we receive the sacrament of penance/confession as a community. Through the sacrament of penance, the Lord has promised a way for sinners to be reconciled to God and to the Church community ...and there are other benefits we receive:

- Reconciliation with God
- Reconciliation with the Church
- Peace of mind and conscience
- Spiritual comfort
- Strengthening our spiritual "muscles"

Closing Prayer

Again in peace let us pray to the Lord: Lord have mercy! Amen.

Plugged In

Lesson 4

Unit Four

Praying On My Own Time (All the Time)

Here I Am, Lord

Leader to life, path to truth, my Lord Jesus Christ, you led Joseph to Egypt and the people of Israel through the Red Sea. You led Moses to Mt. Sinai and his people to the land of promise.

Now I pray you, Lord, lead me and my companions in peace on the journey before us. For you are my Way and my Truth and my Life. Amen.

St. Hovhannes of Garni



A Community That Prays Together Stays Together

The relationship between God and his people can only come about through prayer. God initiated the process – he created us in his image so that we might communicate together. Prayer is the means of communication.

Prayer was essential in Jewish faith tradition. As you read the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and later the prophets, you see that they were all people of faith and prayer, and essential to their prayer was trust in God's promise of a relationship expressed in love. Over and over again you will find examples in the Gospels of Jesus praying. He prayed in the desert before he began his ministry.

He prayed with his disciples. He said sudden and spontaneous prayers, too. When his disciples asked him how to pray, Jesus taught them the greatest of all prayers—the Lord's Prayer or Our Father (*Hayr Mer*). This prayer is a summary of the whole Gospel. In this prayer, Jesus actually taught people to call God 'Father.'

The night before he died, Jesus prayed for those who would follow him. Even with his last breaths on the cross he called out to his Father in prayer, interceding and asking God to forgive us.

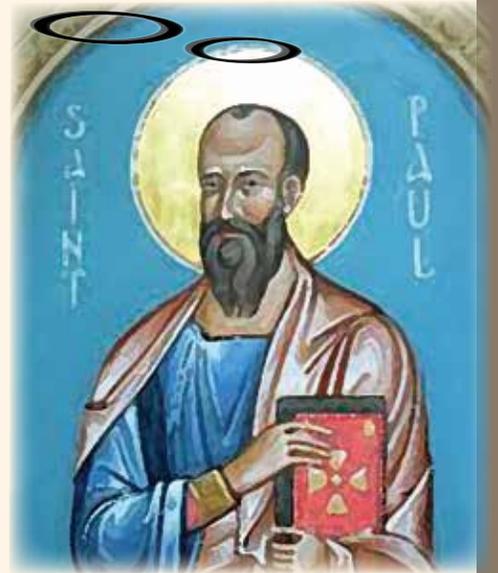
Likewise, the Holy Spirit teaches the church to pray. Regular prayers of the church include daily prayer during the Hours and of course our highest form of communal prayer – the Divine Liturgy or Badarak ...a symphony of prayers set to music that connects heaven and earth.

We pray together, in one voice as the Body of Christ, the Church. We also pray at all times and everywhere – before and after meals, at a lonely or difficult time, when grateful and happy, in celebration and in sorrow. The prayers we say and sing together as a church family allow us to talk together, in one voice. Let's see how many of our sacred prayers you know....

NAME THAT PRAYER...St. Paul's Advice About Prayer!

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

Discover what St. Paul says about prayer while you test how well you know important Armenian prayers. Each quotation comes from a prayer that we pray as an Armenian family of faith. Once you have identified the source of the quotation, you will be able to solve the puzzle.



1. "...as we forgive those who trespass against us" If these words come from the Hayr Mer/Lord's Prayer put a P in number 1; if from the Havadamk/Creed, a C.
2. "...I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth" If the words come from the Havadamk/Creed, put an R in number 2; if it comes from the Voghchooyn/Kiss of Peace, a G.
3. "...blessed is the Lord in all his gifts" If these words are from Jashagestzook/Prayer Before Meals, put an A in number 3; if from the Confessional prayer, put an S.
4. "...Christ in our midst has been revealed" If these words come from the Kunanaleh Arach/Prayer Before Sleeping put an O in number 4; if it is from Voghchooyn/Kiss of Peace, put a Y.
5. "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Hosts" If these words come from the Soorp Soorp/Holy, Holy or Sanctus put C in number 5; if they come from the Havadamk/Creed put an L.
6. "... Guardian of All, may your right hand be upon me day and night" if these words come from the Kunanaleh Arach/Prayer Before Sleeping put an O in number 6; if it is from the Hayr Mer/Lord's Prayer, put a K.
7. "...Who did rise from the dead, have mercy on us" If these words come from Der Voghormya/Lord Have Mercy put an M in number 7; if they come from Soorp Asdvadz/Holy God put an N.

Now let's try it in Armenian...

8. "...Yev Hokyooyn surpo. Amen" If these words come from Der Voghormya put a P in number 8; if from the Sign of the Cross put an S.
9. "...Yegheetseen gamk ko vorbes hergeens yev bergree" If these words come from the Hayr Mer put a T in number 9; if they come from Voghchooyn put a C.
10. "...Yev ee mee Der Heesoos Kreesdos, Vorteen Asdoodճօ" If these words come from the Havadamk put an A in number 10, if they are from Soorp Asdvadz put a G.
11. "...Hisoos Purgeetch, mez voghormya" if these words come from the Hayr Mer put a Y; if they are from Der Voghormya put an N.
12. "Kreesdos ee mech mer haydnetsav" If these words come from the Havadamk but an H in number 12; if they are from the Voghchooyn put a T.
13. "...Orbnyal eh Der ee barkevus yoor. Amen" If these words come from the Jashagestzook put an L in number 13; if they are from the Hayr Mer put a T.
14. "Jesus, Wisdom of the Father..." If these words come from the Creed (Havadamk) put a B; if it comes from a prayer by St. Nersess Shnorhali put a Y.

Turn Down The Noise and Practice the Presence of God!

Read: Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42, 5:16, 22:39-41

Today we read in Mark and Luke that Jesus would go away to a lonely place to pray. Jesus was almost always surrounded by people, so it makes sense that sometimes he just needed to get away to a quiet spot where he would rest and pray. That's important for us too! We all need to have somewhere to go where we can be alone and spend some time in God's presence.

Prayer Aghotk Աղոթք



Our Armenian Way

As Armenians we lay claim to a rich tradition of beautiful prayers and hymns, written by men and women of deep faith. Let's learn about a few of these great authors of prayer.



St. Hovhannes of Garni (c 1180-1245) A well-known healer and preacher, St. Hovhannes traveled widely throughout Armenia and the Holy Land, converting Armenians and non-Armenians alike to the apostolic faith. Garni is an ancient town not far from Yerevan, the modern capital of Armenia. He spent many years in prayer and solitude at the famous Monastery of Geghard, carved out of a rocky mountainside.

St. Hovhannes Mantakuni (c.420-490) was a revered Catholicos of the Armenian Church. He contributed to the development of the *Book of Hours* (*Zhamakirk*) in which is found the morning or “matins” and evening or “vespers” services, the Hymnal (*Sharagnotz*), and *Book of Sacraments and Sacramentals* (*Mashdotz*).



St. Nersess Shnorhali (1102-1173) One of the outstanding Catholicoi of the Armenian Church, St. Nersess was known for his pioneering ecumenical spirit, his leadership, and his great literary output of poetry, letters, essays, hymns, and prayers. Among his best known works are *Jesus, Son*, *A Lament for Edessa*, and *I Confess With Faith*, 24 prayers written to be said at each hour of the day and which are often recited at the Lenten ‘Rest’ (*Hankusdootyan Zham*) service.

St. Gregory of Narek, (c.945-1003) The greatest mystic poet of the Armenian Church and a beloved teacher and churchman in his time, St. Gregory was born in Narek and entered the monastery of the same name (south of Lake Van). He wrote Bible commentaries, history, and poetry and his most famous collection, *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart* was so treasured that it was considered to have healing powers.

Do you believe that prayer has healing power?

Life Issue

Who do I go to for answers?

We pray because God wants us to tell him what is on our minds. Even though he sees and understands our situations better than we do, he still wants to hear from us in our own words.

In many life situations, we don't know God's will until we pray. We want to be in line with God's will, and prayer is not so much about changing God's mind as it is to bring ourselves into alignment with God's heart...and just trust!

Praying to God is talking to the creator of your very being. It is connecting with the God of the universe. You are invited to pray. God himself invites you to bring your burdens, your cares and your needs to him. He invites you to come to him in order to find mercy and grace to help in your times of need. He designed you to be in communication with him.

The Top 5 Reasons Why We Should Pray

- We were created to know God through prayer.
- It moves us closer to the heart of God.
- Prayer gives us wisdom, insight, and strength.
- Through prayer, we invite God to be at work in our lives.
- It begins and continues a life-long relationship with him.



“Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.”

St. Ignatius Loyola (though some attribute to St. Augustine)

Four Different Types Of Prayer

A *doration (praising)*
C *onfession (expressing regret, asking for forgiveness)*
T *hanksgiving (giving thanks)*
S *upplication (asking for)*

This activity is an opportunity to explore the different types of prayers...

ACTS!

Read each of the following examples of prayer. Then decide what form of prayer each of the examples represent. Choose from adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

1. During a math test, Aleen asks the Holy Spirit to help her remember how to solve equations. Form of Prayer: _____
2. During her evening prayers, Ani always thinks about the good things and bad things that happened during the day. Because she got an “A” on her math test, she tells God how grateful she is for the help she got. Form of Prayer: _____





3. In his evening prayers, Zachary tells God that he feels bad about a smart remark he made to a classmate. He resolves to be nice to the classmate in the future.

Form of Prayer: _____

4. Vahe has noticed that whenever his grandpa drives past the Armenian Church he makes the sign of the cross. He explained to Vahe that this is in respect to God who comes to us in a very special way when we worship as a community.

Form of Prayer: _____

5. Arpy's older sister has been studying for weeks to take the state bar exam so that she can practice law. Arpy prays every day to the Holy Spirit to help her sister learn all she needs to.

Form of Prayer: _____

6. One spring day Sevan and his sister Seta were hiking in the hills above the city where they lived. When they arrived at the top of the hill they looked out in the distance and were amazed at how beautiful the view was. Seta reminder her brother about a prayer that they had learned in Sunday School just last week...it was from the book of Psalms..."How beautiful are your works, O Lord,"

Form of Prayer: _____



A prayer inspired by St. Gregory of Narek

If we flee, it is you who come after us.

If we are weak, you give us strength.

If we falter, you set us on the right and easy path.

If we are ailing in body and soul, you heal us.

If we sin, you weep.

If we are just, you smile.

If we are estranged, you mourn.

If we become stubborn, you are patient.

If we are ungrateful, you grant abundantly.

If we quit, you are sad.

If we approach, you celebrate.

Thank you, God, for your great mercy! Amen.

Plugged In

Lesson 5

Unit Four

Milestone Moments and More...The Sacraments of Initiation

Here I Am, Lord

Lord, you called us to holiness and enlightenment in our baptism. We pray you continue to make us worthy of your precious grace. At our baptism, you lifted away the old garment of sin and renewed us to live a life in Christ. Fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may grow in your glory to the end of our days. Amen.

Adapted from the priest's prayer of baptism

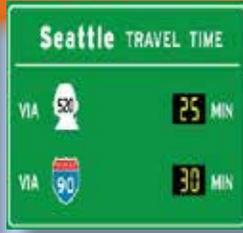


Our World of Signs and Symbols

Every day we rely on signs to make our life easier.



- Signs give direction and explanation. Because signs provide practical information and make things work effectively they are used for functional and organizational purposes. In order to be effective a sign must be immediately recognizable.
- Symbols on the other hand are considered the language of the soul, especially in the life of the church. Symbols by-pass the mind to disclose a deeper meaning. Symbols also reveal or create relationships. Our church life is filled with symbols that do not simply “express” meaning, but might also “create” new thoughts, beliefs, feelings.
- In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As human beings, we possess both body and spirit and because of our two inseparable natures we express and recognize spiritual truths through physical signs and symbols. As social beings, people need signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for our relationship with God.
- Symbols can transform us. The church is full of signs and symbols. Sacraments, in particular, make use of symbolic items (rings, crowns) and gestures (drinking from the same cup, being immersed in water three times).



Above are a few examples of signs and symbols. In the chart below identify which are signs and which are symbols and place them in the appropriate column. Mark symbols which are sacraments with a cross. Then select your favorite symbol, and below, either write a short paragraph or create a picture or cartoon strip that expresses what it means to you.

SIGN	SYMBOL

Welcome to the Family!

The Sacraments of Initiation

Sacraments unite us with God. Since all of Christian life is in union with Christ, the ancient teaching of the Armenian Church is that all of life is sacramental! But over time, the Church acknowledged seven holy events in our faith walk called ‘sacraments.’

The sacraments are a gift of God’s special presence at ‘milestone’ moments where community and individual share blessing. Think of “milestone moments” as important times in our lives, especially transition times, for example: beginning a life in the church when you’re baptized; into a committed relationship, when you marry; into a lifetime vocation, when you’re ordained; into a life clean of sin when you receive Holy Communion.

A sacrament is an effective sign given to us by Jesus Christ, a means by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ, the head, throughout the Church, his body, so that we may share in God’s life.

Let’s start at the beginning with what are called the “sacraments of initiation,” namely: baptism, chrismation, and Holy Communion.

The English word “initiation” derives from the Latin, *initium*, meaning “entrance” or “beginning,” literally “a going in.” The related English verb, “initiate” means to begin or start a particular action or circumstance. There are many forms of initiation and they have varying degrees of importance. Trade union initiations can be a simple familiarization with basic procedures; a military initiation tests for endurance; a tribal initiation allows an individual to be regarded as a full member of the tribe. Our Church welcomes us to the Body of Christ through the sacraments of initiation which open the door to the Church. Let’s look at each step of the initiation process individually so we may discover the special grace that each offers.



Baptism – A Brand New Me!

Read John 3: 1-8

In the Gospel of John, we read that the Jewish leader Nicodemus was confused about Jesus’ words, thinking that Jesus was talking about a second physical birth. Jesus’ answer to Nicodemus tells us how important baptism is: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). This second birth into God’s own family at the sacred font is the source of new and wonderful privileges. Baptism makes us members of Christ’s own body...The word “baptism” is derived from a Greek verb which means to “plunge.”

Baptism is the beginning of our new life in Christ. The symbolism of the ceremony involves: *water, a white baptismal garment & white towel*

Baptism

Mgrdootyoon

Մկրտութիւն

The reality of water is essential for life...it cleanses, refreshes, quenches thirst, and is both life-giving and life-sustaining. The white garment symbolizes that the person is a new creation and is now ‘clothed’ in Christ. The one who is baptized is inducted into the Christian community. All of these material, outer symbols reflect God’s bestowing of a spiritual inner grace to the one baptized.

1. How does water symbolize both life and death in the lives of people?
2. How does this symbolism carry over to the sacrament of baptism?
3. What images come to mind when you think about a white dress, gown or suit?



Chrismation - Signed, Sealed and Delivered!

Read: Matthew 3:13-17, Luke 3:21-22

Baptism is the beginning of our new life in Christ. Chrismation strengthens this new life. The word “christening” means “to become or to make someone a Christian.” “Chrismation” means “anointing with chrim” (holy oil – in Armenian *muron*). The Armenian word for baptism is *mgrdootyoon*. The word *gunoonk* or *troshm* means “sealing” with the *muron*. Chrismation (or confirmation to non-Orthodox Christians) is the sacramental or mystical prayer of sealing by the Holy Spirit whom the child receives after his or her baptism. During the celebration of the

sacrament, the priest anoints 9 parts of the body: the forehead, eyes, ears, mouth, nose, palms, heart, back and feet. The sacrament of chrismation launches us on a life of holy living, close to Jesus, and in the Church.

Why do we use oil? In the Bible’s Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve are located in a magnificent garden filled with the scents of healing flowers, trees and other plants. God created everything we need to heal on an emotional, physical, mental and spiritual level, including wonderful aromatic plants and essential oils. In the Bible there are over 600 references to essential oils and/or aromatic plants.

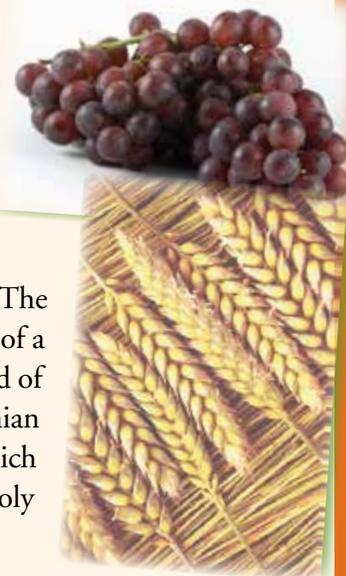
Gnoonk Կնոնք

What functions do various types of oil or balm have in our lives today?

Holy Communion – Pure Soul Food

Read: Mark 14:22-24, John 6:54-57

“*This is my body... This is my blood.*” Jesus spoke those words at the last supper he had with his apostles before he died. He didn’t say “this bread is *like* my body” or “this wine *represents* my blood.” The bread and the wine that you see at Badarak is really Jesus Christ. The sacrament of Holy Communion is the real deal! It nourishes and sustains the spiritual life of a Christian who is continuously renewed with the power of the Holy Spirit whereby his bond of union with Christ Jesus is maintained. As a baptized and chrismated member of the Armenian Church, the child is now entitled to the joy of participation in all the sacraments, of which the greatest is Holy Eucharist. When the priest takes the child in his arms to the altar for Holy Communion, this completes the initial steps of his faith journey.



The word for “sacrament” in Armenian is “mystery.” There is a saying that “You can never grasp a mystery, you can only be grasped by it.” Holy Communion is a great mystery that we will never fully understand, yet can experience with faith. As C.S. Lewis famously said about Jesus’ words on communion, “The command, after all, was ‘Take, eat,’ not ‘Take, understand.’”

Our Armenian Way

Sacraments in the Armenian Church

Throughout his three-year earthly ministry Jesus laid the groundwork for the sacraments that we celebrate today. From the very beginnings of the Christian Church the faithful gathered in homes to remember and celebrate the central teaching of our Christian faith, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We remember this great mystery every time we celebrate Divine Liturgy and we receive Christ in Holy Communion.



Armenian Orthodox Christians often think of only seven specific rituals or ceremonies when they hear the word “sacrament.” However, historically, the number of sacraments was never formally canonized to be just seven. Early Church Fathers included many other services and blessings as sacraments, as moments of special union with Christ. In recent centuries, the Roman Catholic concept of seven formal sacraments became the accepted tradition in the Armenian Church.

Life Issue

Why is anything holy?

To be ‘holy’ is to be set apart! Something is considered holy when it is set apart from common usage and dedicated to the service of God. The churches that we worship in each week are buildings set apart for religious ceremonies; they are where we consciously and publicly dedicate our lives to God in ways that we do not in other places. The altar, baptismal fonts, chalices & candles are all things that are used only for worship...they are all set apart and dedicated to the service of God.

As believers, we need to be “set apart” from the world in the Lord. We need to be living by God’s standards, not the world’s. God isn’t calling us to be perfect, but to be distinct from the world. I Peter 2:9 describe believers as “a holy nation.” It is a fact! We are separated from the world and we need to live out that reality in our day-to-day lives.

How can we become holy? Holiness begins with a right relationship with God and believing in Jesus Christ as Savior and accepting his gift of eternal life. If we are believers, then we recognize that a life truly lived in Christ automatically sets us apart from the world. Then we must daily live a set-apart life, not trying to “blend in” with the world, but instead living according to God’s example and word, lived out in the life of the Church.

Closing Prayer

O God, enable us to rejoice in our own baptism and to partake of a new life in the Church as true children of your family. Grant us your wisdom to understand the Gospel more deeply and your strength to accept the challenges of Christian life. Amen.

Sacraments of Trust and Commitment

Here I Am, Lord

Jesus, help us to be like you and love all people unconditionally. Help us to see that you call us to give ourselves to you by giving ourselves to others without expecting anything in return. Your love is the best gift that we can ever receive. You gave us the best example of unconditional love when you died on the cross. Amen.



One Step Back

True or False:

1. A sign usually expresses or points to deeper meanings. _____
T F
2. The immersion in water during baptism is a symbol of spiritual refreshment. _____
T F
3. The word initiation comes from the Latin meaning 'beginning' or 'entrance.' _____
T F
4. The Sacraments of Initiation are baptism, confession and communion. _____
T F
5. The Armenian Church adopted the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church even while acknowledging that all of life may be considered sacramental.

Bonus Question: What does it mean for a person to be holy? _____

Don't Just Go to Church... BE THE CHURCH!

From the time Jesus began his public ministry he gathered a group of followers around him that became a community. From within this community he chose twelve to be with him at all times, to witness, first-hand, everything he was doing. We know that Christ's twelve students or disciples soon graduated and were referred to as apostles, meaning "one who is sent." Jesus prepared his apostles to carry on his work after his life on earth was complete. In addition to all he had taught them, Jesus also sent them the Holy Spirit who would help them continue their mission through the example of their lives.

The saving work of Jesus continues through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, for through the Holy Spirit, all of us are joined together to 'be the Church.' This means that we do not just belong to the church... WE ARE THE CHURCH! Our unity with Jesus and one another show and grows when we gather each Sunday for Divine Liturgy. The goal of liturgy is to worship God



as a community and to draw spiritual strength from God's living presence with the community at worship. Our weekly worship experience, Badarak, is at the heart of the Church's life and the foundation for our personal lives.

Identify two ways that we can "Be the Church."

Our Armenian Way

The Sacrament of Matrimony

Our Judeo-Christian traditions are deeply rooted in family stories beginning with Adam and Eve. While the image of the family of God runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, it becomes clearer with the coming of Christ. Holiness in the human experience achieved its highest moment with the mystery of the incarnation...God becoming flesh in the person of Jesus. The incarnation is also set in the context of a family story. We have every reason to believe that Jesus grew up in a normal, first-century Jewish family. Yes, Jesus was being raised by Mary and Joseph in the small village of Nazareth...A family probably much like yours despite the passage of centuries.

Our faith tells us that this was no ordinary family...this was a *Holy Family*. Now that Jesus, the incarnate God, had taken on the family experience, family life in general could never again be seen as anything less than holy! Family and holiness are forever intertwined. No wonder the Church blesses marriage by considering it both a sacrament and a covenant because the vows made between the couple are a lifelong commitment. The sacrament of matrimony gives the couple the grace to love each other with the love that Christ has for the church and to form a covenant or agreement. This covenant was founded by God for the good of the couple, for the raising and educating of their children. The Church values lasting, faithful love in the sacrament of marriage and sees the bonds among family members as the foundation of society—in fact the Christian family is considered the "domestic church."



The sacrament of matrimony in the Armenian Church is also known as the 'Rite of Holy Crowning, in which a man and a woman solemnly promise before Christ, the priest and the congregation to be true and loyal to each other for life as husband and wife. This union is blessed by Christ and the Church through the witness and participation of those present.

Armenian wedding

Each action of the wedding service has significance and meaning for the bridegroom and the bride. The major parts of the ceremony are:

- ✠ The blessing of the marriage rings-the circular shape of the ring is a symbol of eternity and a sign to others of the pledge of faithful commitment.
- ✠ The answering of the questions of responsibility and loyalty asked by the officiating priest--a promise made in the presence of God and witnesses becomes a living covenant.
- ✠ The proclamation of their faith. They promise to keep God a part of their lives and to raise their children in the faith.
- ✠ The crowning and enthronement of the bridegroom and the bride-a new Godly kingdom is established.
- ✠ The sharing of their unity in drinking from a goblet of wine in remembrance of Christ's first earthly miracle at the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee. This is their sign of hope that seals their forever covenant.



Through this celebration of a new life and relationship, God's grace is imparted to the newly married couple to live together in the love of Christ, mutually fulfilling and perfecting each other.

Sacrament of Ordination

Another sacrament of commitment is Holy Orders. Those ordained to Holy Orders serve in the name and person of Christ in the midst of his community, the Church, and dispense his sacraments to his faithful. They serve the people of God by teaching them, leading them in worship, and guiding the Church as a whole. Within the Church there are three degrees of Holy Orders: bishop, priest and deacon.

The **bishop** stands at the highest order in the Church hierarchy. The bishop, who is ordained and anointed by the Catholicos, is the head and the spiritual leader



of all the churches of the same geographical region, the diocese. The bishop has the authority to ordain and anoint priests and consecrate churches. During ordination, the bishop receives a staff and a ring as signs of his authority. A bishop of extraordinary accomplishments may be granted the title of Archbishop by the Catholicos.

The **priest** administers and provides for spiritual renewal and education of the faithful, as well as celebrates the Divine Liturgy and performs the sacraments and special services. The priest receives his authority from the bishop through ordination and anointment of the Holy Chrism.

The **deacon** helps the priest both during the services and in his pastoral activity. There are also Minor Orders – all related to altar service – which are bestowed by the laying of hands.

Prayers for the Sick

When someone in the parish is not well, the priest will visit and dispense the sacrament we call “prayer for the sick.” It is a brief prayer ceremony provided in our book of sacraments called the “Mashdotz” and is a prayer for strength and a restoration to health. For a deceased clergyman, this sacrament becomes more elaborate with a final anointing of oil since not only did his life in the Church begin with an anointing but he was ‘reborn’ into a vocation with the anointing at his ordination.



Scripture Tells All!

Read the following scripture passages and identify which sacrament is being identified. Check ‘M’ for Marriage, ‘O’ for Ordination or ‘P’ for Prayers for the Sick

Genesis 1:26-28	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> O	<input type="checkbox"/> P
Mark 1:16-17	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> O	<input type="checkbox"/> P
Acts 6:1-7	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> O	<input type="checkbox"/> P
Genesis 2:20-24	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> O	<input type="checkbox"/> P
James 5:14-15	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> O	<input type="checkbox"/> P



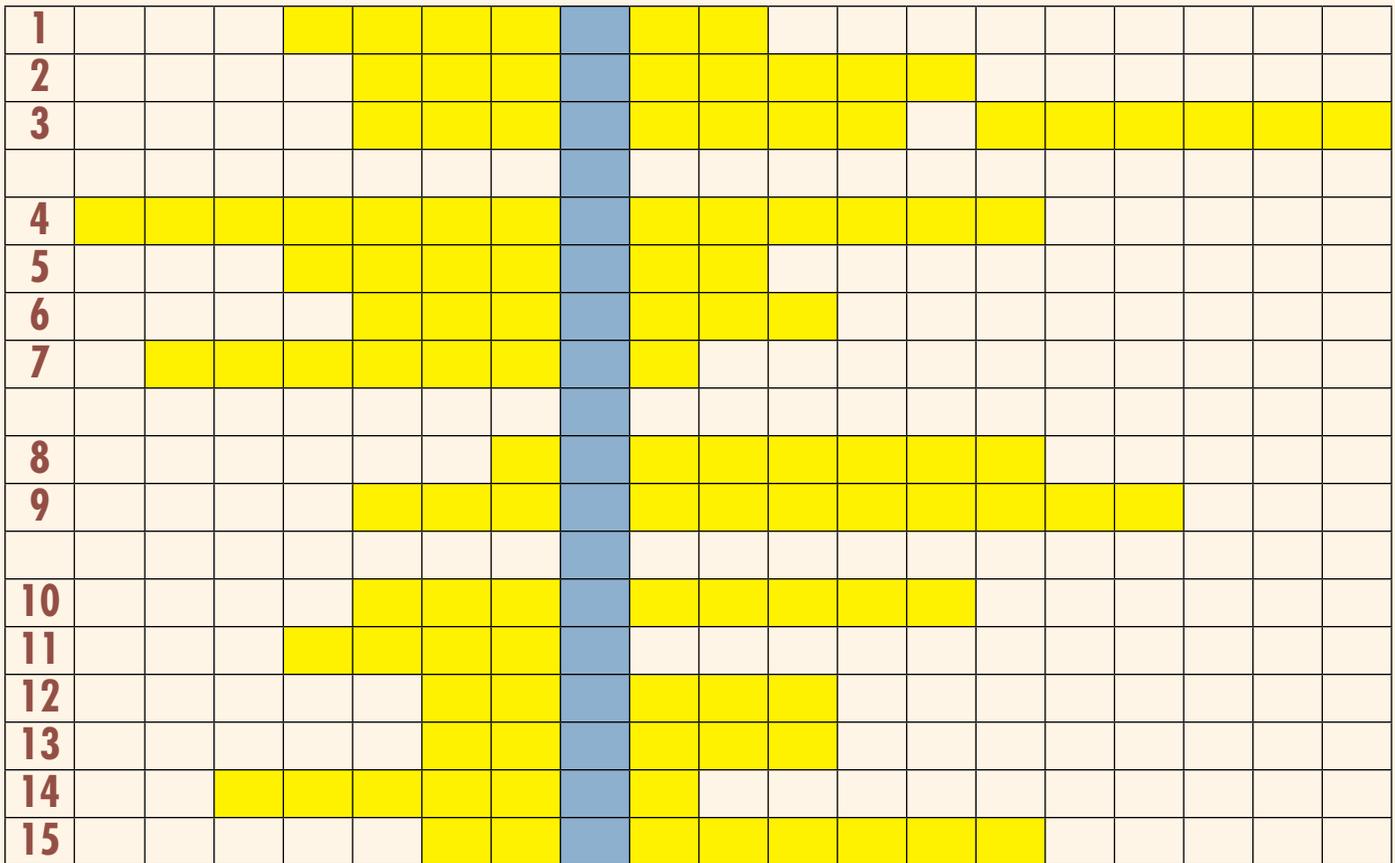
What’s Calling Me?

Do you think you’ll get married someday? Most people do believe that when they’re young, but not everyone gets married. These are two examples of “vocation” that Paul speaks about in 1 Corinthians 7. Both marriage and single life offer special gifts, as well as many opportunities to serve God and other people.

You might receive God’s call to become a deacon or priest. These are also wonderful vocations. But Jesus calls us all to do the work he showed us how to do: helping the poor, comforting the sick, providing the sacraments, teaching and confronting injustice, are among the few.

FIND FOUR

Fill in the blanks of this puzzle with words from the last two lessons. Then look for four words that read vertically which are highlighted in blue. They will answer the question, “What do we celebrate during the liturgical year?”



What do we celebrate during the liturgical year?

1. One who is sent	9. A word often used for “chrismation”
2. Sacrament of thanksgiving	10. Another name for Jesus’ students
3. The Church of the Christian home	11. We grow in our _____ over a lifetime
4. Restoring a relationship	12. Deacon Stephen was the first one
5. Water is the sign of the sacrament	13. He celebrates Badarak
6. The process of reviewing our sins before Holy Communion	14. The Sacrament that begins our new life in Christ
7. What the sacrament of confession or penance leads to	15. Sacrament also called the rite of crowning
8. An agreement between God and his people	

Closing prayer: *God, we belong to our parish and larger church communities. We are grateful for all the good work they do. Today we pray for the members of our church community, locally and globally. Help us to work and pray together so we can help one another become what you ask—people who form your body as we serve one another and the world with love and mercy. Amen.*

Plugged In

Lesson 7

Unit Four

Faith Makes A Difference

Here I Am, Lord

How sweet are your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to me!
I gain understanding from your teachings;
And so I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp for my feet
And a light to my path.
I have taken an oath and confirmed it,
To follow your righteous commands.

Psalm 119: 103-106



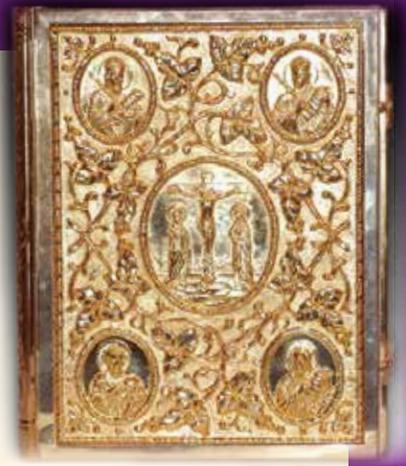
God's Sure Promise...Our Birthright

This year we've discussed many topics to help you gain a better understanding of how God keeps his promises even when we don't. We've explored the ways he reveals himself to us through his Word and the traditions we celebrate together in the context of community. We have touched on how the beauty of the world, which he created for us, reflects his awesome glory! Also of great importance is the fingerprint of God within us which is manifested through our gifts and talents. Certainly we have proven that when we partner with God, and seek his will, we will discover a way of life that will help each of us reach our full potential and be all that God wants us to be, becoming the best version of ourselves.

As we journeyed through the Scriptures we came to understand the type of relationship God desires to have with his people and that despite our human shortcomings, his covenant offers each of us continual

forgiveness and endless opportunities to grow in relationship with him. In fact, not only did he remain faithful, his covenants got better and better, until he gave us the ultimate gift—his Own Precious Son—the new and everlasting covenant. This gift of his Son was the best deal we humans could ever have!

The investment God made for us is your baptismal birthright. So, perhaps as we conclude this year of faith exploration we will reveal the estimated worth of this deposit made in your name. God's promise is that this 'deposit of faith' will continue to pay rich dividends throughout your lives. In order that you fully benefit from your inheritance it is important to know exactly what the terms of this bequest are.



A Deposit Made in Your Name

The 'deposit of faith' is the body of doctrines or guidelines handed down from Jesus to the apostles and from the apostles to their successors, and YES... you are a successor! The deposit of faith contains everything that we've covered this year... the Holy Bible, the sacraments, our Divine Liturgy and so much more that comprises Holy Tradition. *"Therefore, brethren, hold fast to the traditions which you have received, whether by word or by epistle."* (2 Thess. 2:15)

This account holds all those things that God has revealed to us through his Son Jesus and his Holy Spirit. Nothing more will be added and nothing can be deducted from the account. All you are invited to do is draw on the abundant interest the account accumulates!

The deposit has been made in your name. Do you have any idea what the account number might be? Any guess? It's very simple, so simple that you will not even have to write it down to remember it...it is ...'F A I T H.' After a year thinking about faith, what is your definition?

Faith is _____

Simply...F A I T H!

Let's explore the letter, believed to be from St. Paul, to the Hebrews. It was written around 80-90 A.D. to a group of Greek-speaking Christians, some of whom were possibly Jewish Christians who were in danger of losing their faith. The theme was as important then as it is today...God saves us through Jesus' sacrifice and that we should always hold fast to faith and move toward Christ.



Read Hebrews 11.

Havadk ՀԱՄԱՐՔ

Wow! Faith sure has helped a lot of people in the Bible. Chapter 11 of Hebrews gives us many examples of how faith helped people live a godly life. It tells us how these men and women lived, how they obeyed God, and what happened as a result.

Faith is a personal acceptance and firm hold on what God has revealed in deeds and words.

Believing is a conscious and free response...no one can force you to have faith! But, once you have faith, you will recognize that God is both your origin and final goal and that you can put no object or person ahead of him in your life. In fact, God is the only person who truly exists for all times. God is the present tense. We cannot say God was or God will be because God always is. Let's be inspired by Hebrews 11.

1. Think of a way faith has helped you live the way God wants you to live. Start your paragraph like this:

"It was faith that helped me..."

2. Now write another paragraph about the ways faith can help you in the future.

"I know that as I grow in faith I will be able to..."



Our Armenian Way

Gregory of Datev's Book of Questions

Someone who really knew about how faith helps answer questions was the great theologian, teacher, and writer **St. Gregory of Datev** (*Soorp Krikor Datevatzi*). He was born in 1346 in the province of Vaiotz Tzor. He was one of the famous students of Hovhannes Vorodnetzi and was ordained while on a pilgrimage with his teacher to Jerusalem in 1373. Because Krikor understood Latin, which was considered the universal language, he was able to study all the great philosophers of the time. What he learned from them enabled him to write the famous (and very long!) *Kirk Hartzmantz* ("The Book of Questions"), a work of practical theology. (*Theo* from Greek meaning "God" and *-logy*, meaning "study of") He also authored two collections of sermons, the style and depth of which set a new standard for Armenian preaching.

Life Issue: Belong to Believe



Hopefully, through our studies this year, we have come to a better understanding of how community, study, and faith work together to bring us to a better understanding of who God is and what he wants for our lives.

What comes first, belonging or believing? Most people would respond that it is our belief that brings us together and gives us a sense of belonging. But, let's think about it in reverse. Perhaps it is belonging that leads us to belief. Studies overwhelmingly prove that everyone wants to belong...to someone, or something. In the Church we have both. Through our baptism we belong to God and through God to one another. When you enjoy a sense of belonging you are proud to say, to anyone who asks... "I belong here"...this is "my Church"...and, this is what we believe."

Final "Exam"

Here's an opportunity to test your classmates – follow your teacher's instructions for a great class review challenge.

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Department of Christian Education
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
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