

2024 ACYOA Lenten Retreat Guidebook

Who is Jesus?
Exploring His 7 I AM Statements



DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH (EASTERN)
Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	Page 2
Welcome Letter	Page 3
Sample Schedule for Day-Long Retreat	Page 4
Sample Schedules for Two-Day Retreat	Page 5
Sample Registration Form	Page 8
Sample Code of Conduct Form	Page 9
Session 1: Introduction and Icebreakers	Page 10-11
Session 2: Visualizing the Seven I Am's	Page 12
Session 3: Exploring the I Am's in <i>Badarak</i>	Page 13-16
Session 4: Who Do You Say That I Am?	Page 17-18
Handout for Session 2	Page 19
Handout for Session 3	Page 20

February 7, 2024

Dear Pastors, Parish Council Chairs, Youth Advisors and ACYOA Seniors Chairs,

The Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern) is pleased to offer this ACYOA Retreat Guidebook prepared by the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries and ACYOA Central Council. The ACYOA Central Council will be offering four regional day-long retreats for ACYOA Seniors ages 18-30. In addition, day-long and two-day retreats will be taking place for ACYOA Juniors during Lent! If your parish is unable to attend these retreats, we welcome you to plan and execute your own retreats using this guidebook for the youth and youth adults of your parish community.

In this guidebook, we have provided the nuts-to-bolts instructions for planning and running a retreat to equip you with the resources needed to hold a retreat for your ACYOA Juniors and/or Seniors. You will find three sample schedules, a registration form, a sample Code of Conduct, and detailed lesson plans for icebreakers, an opening activity, engaging group discussions, and a Scripture study. We hope this will assist you in the execution of a retreat that can be organized and led by your parish leadership. *Please keep in mind that this guidebook contains the raw materials of each presentation; clergymen and facilitators should feel free to add their own personality and modify the sessions to meet the specific needs of their audiences!*

As a way of helping our local communities and encouraging our ACYOA youth and young adults to participate in an aspect of service this Lenten season, we suggest adding a canned food drive to your retreats. Encourage each participant to bring 7 canned food items (as a way of connecting to our retreat theme of Jesus' 7 I AM statements).

We will be available throughout the planning stages of your retreats if you have any questions or need additional guidance. We hope that the contents of this guidebook lead you to fruitful discussions, fun fellowship, and a deepened strength within your ACYOA.

We look forward to hearing all about your ACYOA Lenten Retreats!

In Christ,

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(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA LENTEN RETREAT**

SATURDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

10:00 - 10:20 AM	Registration and Welcome
10:20 - 10:45 AM	Diocesan Camp Morning Service
10:45 - 11:30 AM	Session 1: Introduction and Icebreakers
11:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Session 2: Visualizing the Seven I Am's
12:00 - 12:15 PM	Break
12:15 - 1:00 PM	Session 3: Exploring the I Am's in <i>Badarak</i>
1:00 - 2:00 PM	Lunch & Group Photo
2:00 - 3:00 PM	Session 4: Who Do You Say I Am?
3:00 - 3:15 PM	Break
3:15 - 3:45 PM	Rest Hour Service and Personal Reflection
3:45 - 4:00 PM	Clean Up & Depart

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA LENTEN RETREAT**

DAY 1 - FRIDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

5:00 - 5:30 PM	Registration and Welcome
5:30 - 6:15 PM	Session 1: Introduction and Icebreakers
6:00 - 6:45 PM	Rest hour Service
6:45 - 7:45 PM	Dinner
7:45 - 8:00 PM	Group Photo
8:00 - 10:30 PM	Movie/Board Games/Snack Time
10:30 - 11:00 PM	Prepare For Bed
11:00 PM	Lights Out

DAY 2 - SATURDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

8:00 - 8:30 AM	Wake Up
8:30 - 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15 AM	Diocesan Camp Morning Service
9:15 - 10:15 AM	Session 2: Visualizing the Seven I Am's
10:15 - 11:15 AM	Session 3: Exploring the I Am's in <i>Badarak</i>
11:15 - 11:30 AM	Break
11:30 - 12:30 PM	Session 4: Who Do You Say I Am?
12:30 - 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 - 2:00 PM	Pack Up, Clean Up & Depart

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA LENTEN RETREAT***

**if following this schedule, be sure to remind participants to bring a church-appropriate change of clothes for Sunday Badarak*

DAY 1 - SATURDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

2:00 - 2:30 PM	Registration and Welcome
2:30 - 3:15 PM	Session 1: Introduction and Icebreakers
3:45 - 4:15 PM	Session 2: Visualizing the Seven I Am's
4:15 - 5:00 PM	Break
5:00 - 6:00 PM	Session 3: Exploring the Seven I Am's in Badarak
6:00 - 7:00 PM	Dinner and Group Photo
7:00 - 8:00 PM	Session 4: Who Do You Say I Am?
8:00 - 8:30 PM	Rest Hour Service
8:30 - 10:30 PM	Movie/Board Games/Snack Time
10:30 PM - 11:00 PM	Prepare For Bed
11:00 PM	Lights Out

DAY 2 - SUNDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

8:00 - 8:30 AM	Wake Up
8:30 - 9:00 AM	Clean Up and Prepare for <i>Badarak</i>
9:00 - 12:00 PM (<i>depending on when Badarak is in your parish</i>)	Morning Service and <i>Badarak</i>
12:00 - 1:30 PM (<i>depending on when Badarak ends</i>)	Attend Fellowship/Coffee Hour
1:30 - 2:00 PM	Pack Up, Clean Up & Depart

****Suggested list of movies:**

<u>SPIRITUAL</u>	<u>FAMILY FRIENDLY</u>
Man of God (2021)	Remember the Titans (2000)
The Case for Christ (2017)	The Blind Side (2009)
Paul, Apostle of Christ (2018)	Up (2009)
Soul Surfer (2011)	Coco (2017)
The Chosen - S1, E8, "I Am He" S3, E3, "Physician, Heal Yourself"	

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA Lenten Retreat** (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

Sample Registration Form*

(Please modify questions and fields based on the age group of participants)

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ **Age:** _____

Sex: Male Female

Parish: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Home Phone: _____

Participant Cell Phone: _____

Participant Email: _____

PRIMARY PARENT/GUARDIAN	SECONDARY PARENT/GUARDIAN
Name:	Name:
Cell Number:	Cell Number:
Email:	Email:

_____ Yes, my *Code of Conduct* has been read and signed by me (and a parent, if applicable).

**Please note: If you'd like to go completely digital with your retreat, you may create an online registration form using [Google Form](#). Participants can submit their registration using the registration link you send them.*

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. As members of the ACYOA, we are part of a Christian youth organization and expect Christian standards of behavior at all times. Therefore, all participants and chaperones shall be treated with respect and dignity at all times.
2. We are a community – we all need to clean-up after ourselves, share the facilities, and treat the facilities with respect. The destruction, misuse, or abuse of property will not be tolerated. Those found responsible for such behavior will be held financially liable.
3. Be on time and follow the schedule! You are expected to participate in all activities.
4. Participate in discussions, share your ideas, and remember to listen to others. Everyone deserves a chance to speak, and everyone deserves to be heard.
5. Proper dress and language are expected at all times. Participants will not use foul or abusive language, including words of a sexually explicit or violent nature.
6. No weapons of any kind, firecrackers, or inappropriate audio/video recordings are permitted.
7. Participants will not partake in any form of drugs and/or alcohol while participating in the retreat. This includes but is not limited to: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, illegal drugs, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, snuff, chewing tobacco, vaporizers, hookahs, etc. (and their accompanying paraphernalia).

Any serious violation of these rules by participants will be evaluated on an individual basis and dealt with quickly and firmly and may result in expulsion from the retreat. Parents and pastors will be contacted after the retreat to discuss any inappropriate behavior.

**I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CODE OF CONDUCT,
AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE ABOVE INFORMATION.**

Participant Name PRINT: _____

Participant SIGNATURE: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian SIGNATURE: _____ **Date:** _____

SESSION 1: Introductions and Icebreakers

A NOTE TO FACILITATORS: Be sure during the icebreakers that everyone has a chance to speak and introduce themselves with their name, age, etc. Select one or more of the icebreakers below, based on your registration numbers and time available.

1. **Three Objects:** Pass out a notecard/paper with a pencil/pen and give participants three minutes to write or draw three objects that they absolutely could not live without in their daily lives. Then, ask participants to take turns introducing themselves with their name, age, and to share their three objects and ask them to explain why they selected them to the group. Writing or drawing out the objects in advance will help the flow of their speaking, speaking in front of the group will help them gain confidence and feel comfortable to share throughout the retreat, and everyone will have a chance to share and get to know everyone's name.

Supplies: A note card and pencil/pen for each participant.

2. **Spectrum:** In this activity, participants will line up in the center of the room. The facilitator will shout out a question pointing to the right or left side of the line that corresponds with the choices. The middle of the line will be designated as neutral or indifferent. The participants will move their body accordingly in the line to visually show their response. Encourage participants to be honest and not influenced by their friends' responses. The facilitator will call on a participant from each side of the line to explain their answer, which will help the participants get to know each other better and help them gain confidence in speaking and sharing with the group. Try to call on as many different participants as possible during this icebreaker, and feel free to create some of your own "Would you rather" questions specific to your group.

1. Would you rather be really tall or really short?
2. Would you rather have a kitten or a puppy?
3. Would you rather live in the dark or in blinding light?
4. Would you rather read books or write stories?
5. Would you rather travel into the future or back to the past?
6. Would you rather go mountain climbing or skydiving?
7. Would you rather eat cake or eat ice cream?
8. Would you rather take an art class or a music class?
9. Would you rather play sports or watch sports?
10. Would you rather be a bird or a fish?
11. Would you rather go swimming in a pool or an ocean?

3. Graffiti Board: Use a large sheet of roll paper or poster board to post on the wall in your meeting room and have about a dozen sharpie markers in various colors. Ask participants to write I AM statements about themselves on the paper. Gather back as a group, and provide an opportunity for each participant to share what they wrote and explain why. Find a prominent place to post throughout the retreat and encourage them to add to it throughout the day as a source of inspiration.

Supplies: Large sheet of paper or poster board, sharpie markers, painters tape to put on wall.

4. Life In Your Hands: Have participants trace their hand on a piece of paper. Instruct them to write on each finger about the following items:

- **Thumb:** What are some of your strengths?
- **Index Finger:** Who in your life do you trust?
- **Middle Finger:** What qualities in a person help you trust them?
- **Ring Finger:** What makes you a trustworthy person?
- **Pinkie Finger:** What or who is your support system? What gives you strength?
- **Palm:** A goal you can work on to improve during this Lenten season

Supplies: Blank white paper and a pen/pencil for each participant.

5. My Life in Images: Participants will be given 20 minutes to create a collage using magazines. Direct them to create a collage that describes themselves (hobbies, passions, interests, personality, etc) using pictures or individual words that they find. Have a variety of magazines available for each participant (Life, Time, Teen, People, Sports Illustrated, Travel and Leisure, etc). Each person will be given a glue stick, scissor, and a piece of large (11"x17") construction paper or poster board. Ask each person to share their collage and the significance of each picture/word they selected.

If desired, challenge them to reflect on how this collage describes where they are now in their life and faith journey and where they hope to be in the future.

Supplies: At least one magazine for each participant with various genres, glue sticks, scissors, and large (11"x17") construction paper or poster board for each person.

SESSION 2: Visualizing the Seven I Am's

Supplies: Each participant will need a handout of the Seven I Am's (see below), a blank sheet of white paper, and a pencil/pen.

Intro (3 Minutes): In the Old Testament Moses asked God to tell him His name. God answered, "I AM WHO I AM." (Exodus 3:14) Jesus alluded to this in John 8:58, "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.'" Seven other times Jesus used this structure "I am" to show different aspects of His divine nature and His relationship to us.

Read (10 Minutes): Ask for seven volunteers to read through each of the I AM Statements.

The Seven 'I Am' Statements of Jesus

- ☆ John 6:35: "**I AM the bread of life;**"
- ☆ John 8:12: Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "**I AM the light of the world.** He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
- ☆ John 10:9: "**I AM the door (gate).** If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."
- ☆ John 10:11: "**I AM the good shepherd.** The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
- ☆ John 11:25: Jesus said to her, "**I AM the resurrection and the life.** He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.
- ☆ John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "**I AM the way, the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- ☆ John 15:1: "**I AM the true vine,** and My Father is the vinedresser.

John 8:56-58. "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing My day; he saw it and was glad." "You are not yet 50 years old," they said to Him, "and *you* have seen Abraham?" "I tell you the truth," Jesus announced, "before Abraham was, I AM!"

Do (10 Minutes): Ask participants to fold their white piece of paper in half three times to make eight boxes. In box one, have them write the title, "The Seven I Am's." In each of the remaining seven boxes, tell them to write the passage and draw a picture of an image that they visualize when they read the passage.

Discuss (5-10 Minutes): Provide participants the opportunity to share their drawings and discuss what they visualized. Challenge them to share when they have experienced one of the images in their own life.

SESSION 3: Exploring the I Am's in *Badarak*

Christ shares with his disciples who he is in seven different statements. We are also called to come to know who Jesus is from these seven different examples by how we live our lives and how we grow closer to the Holy Trinity (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

We can deepen our faith and relationship with Christ in many ways - today we are going to explore where we see the 7 I Ams throughout the *Badarak* and the ways we are called to pray, reflect and act.

Begin by giving each participant a maroon Badarak pew book along with their print out of the 7 I Am statements from the previous session. Gather around the different areas of the sanctuary to explore the prayers and hymns. Spend 5-10 minutes discussing each one in a 45 min session. There are multiple I Am's that may relate to each prayer/hymn - we will focus on one I Am at each.

Supplies: Badarak book for each participant, one candle for each participant, at least one Bible with the following scripture passages bookmarked: John 6:12, John 10:7-10, John 11:17-27, John 14:4-7, John 15:1-4, and John 10:11-15.

1. I Am the Light of the World

- *Begin at the front of the sanctuary where the faithful light their candles*
- We will begin our search of the I Ams in the *Badarak* where we light candles before *Badarak* begins.
- Which I Am Statement does lighting candles connect to? *Allow the participants to review the list on their handout.*
- **“I Am the Light of the World”** - *Have a participant read the passage*
 - John 6:12 - When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- **Discuss:**
 - We light candles to say a prayer, pray for our loved ones who have passed, and back in the day, candles were the primary way of lighting the sanctuary. So this candle was the light in the dark room...
 - Was there ever a time when you felt like you were in darkness and Christ (or Christ working through someone in your life) provided light for you?
- We'll each light a candle now - Ask Christ to continue to be a light in your life and help you find ways of being a light to others in your life especially this Lent. *Give participants a few minutes to light candles.*

2. I Am the Gate to the Sheepfold

- *Gather in the front pews of the sanctuary near the altar and ask everyone to open their Badarak books to Page 6*
- One of the first parts of the *Badarak* is the chanting of Psalm 100 back and forth between two altar servers (on page 6). Let's chant this Psalm together. Think about which of Jesus' I Am Statements is connected to this Psalm.
- *Chant Psalm 100 together in English - if any participants would like to chant back and forth in Armenian, you can do that too. (Key sentences: “we are his people and the **sheep** of his pasture. Enter into his **gates** with thanksgiving; and into his courts with praise.”)*
- Which I Am Statement does this connect to? *Allow the participants to review the list on their handout.*
- **I Am the Gate to the Sheepfold**

- This Psalm reminds us that we are his people and his sheep and we are to enter **his gates with thanksgiving.**
- Let's read John 10:7-10 –
 1. 7 Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture.
- Jesus reminds us that those who come to Him and go in and out through His gate will find pasture or find rest.
 - Do you go to Jesus when you need rest and peace daily?
 - When are times in your day that you can seek out time with Jesus?

3. Resurrection and the Life

- *Ask participants to open to Page 14. Play a recording of or sing Soorp Asdvadz (vor haryav) then read the translation of the hymn.*
 - *Soorp Asdvadz:* Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and **immortal**, who **rose from the dead**, have mercy on us. (Immortal means one who does not die)
- Which I Am Statement does this connect to? *Allow the participants to review the list on their handout.*
- **Resurrection and the Life**
 - *Let's read John 11:17-27 where Jesus first tells Mary and Martha about this I AM – this is right after their brother had died.*
 - 17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles[b] from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “**I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;** 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” 27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”
- If you continue reading, you'll see that their brother Lazarus rises from the dead!
 - Jesus shares with Martha that her brother will rise from the dead – of course she automatically refers to his resurrection on the “last day” (end of time).
 - But He shifts her focus to 2 things: (1) He HIMSELF is the resurrection and (2) that those who believe in him will LIVE even though they die.
 - These two things are what we celebrate at the end of Lent – at Easter – when Christ resurrects from the dead AND that we will all live eternally!
 - So the next time you hear *Soorp Asdvadz* – remember that story of Lazarus rising from the dead and how Jesus is Holy, mighty, immortal, and rose from the dead to give YOU life (today and forever).

4. **I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life**

- Gather in the chancel (tas) and ask everyone to open to page 22. Ask a participant to read the prayer of the priest that begins with “With your peace, Christ our Savior...”
 - Prayer: With your peace, Christ our Savior, which surpasses all understanding and speech, **defend us** and **keep us fearless of all evil**. Make us equal to your **true** worshippers, who worship you in spirit and in **truth**; for to the most-holy Trinity is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.
- Which I Am Statement does this connect to? *Allow the participants to review the list on their handout.*
- **I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life**
 - *Let's read John 14:4-7*
 1. You know the way to the place where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” 6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”
 - Thomas tells Jesus that he doesn't know the way or the path that he is taking. Jesus shifts the focus and says that HE is the way. In the prayer, the priest asks Christ to help keep us fearless of all evil. How did Christ or the church help you find your way at a time where you were lost, didn't know what path to take, or when you were faced with evil?
 - In the prayer, the priest asks Christ to help make us equal to his TRUE worshippers, who worship in spirit and in TRUTH; what's one way this Lent you can worship Christ in a new way?

5. **I Am the Bread of Life & I am the True Vine**

- Every *Badarak* is us participating in the last supper with our Lord by receiving communion; this is on page 49. Which I AM Statements does receiving communion connect to?
- **I Am the Bread of Life / I Am the True Vine**
 - How do these two connect to receiving communion?
 1. Bread is His Body and the wine is His blood
 2. Receiving Communion also makes us one with Christ - just as the branches are a part of the vine
- **I Am the Bread of Life**
 - He is the bread of life...bread is a critical part of our life to live!
 - We must rely on Him as our spiritual food for spiritual growth and fulfillment in the same way we rely on bread for physical sustenance.
- **I Am the True Vine**
 - *Let's read John 15:1-4*
 1. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.
 - Branch cannot bear fruit unless it is a part of the vine. We also cannot bear good fruit unless we are a part of Jesus. We must remain one with him by receiving

him/communion. This physically unites us as faithful, practicing Christians as one with Christ in the same way that branches that are fruitful are connected to the vine.

- *If there is time, read through the translation of Krisdos Badarakyal on page 47 of the Badarak book. See how many of the I Am statements you find connections to!*

6. **I Am the Good Shepherd**

- *Open to page 50 and ask a participant to read Psalm 28:9 (Priest Line) which is stated immediately after people receive communion during Badarak*
 - *“Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance; **shepherd them** and lift them up from henceforth until eternity.”*
- Which I Am Statement does this connect to?
- **I Am the Good Shepherd**
 - John 10:11-15
 1. 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- As the passage shares, Christ is our shepherd and not just a hired servant in charge of taking care of the sheep. He does not run away but cares for each and every sheep and knows them.
- He also knows each and every one of us and guides us when we are lost and need direction (just like sheep). In what ways can you invite Christ to guide you this Lent?

SESSION 4: Scripture Study - Who Do You Say That I Am?

INTRO: We have spent the last few sessions studying and diving deeper into the meaning of the seven “I Am” statements of Jesus. First, we read them aloud and took the time to sketch what they meant to us. Then, we looked at their relation to our worship in the Holy *Badarak*. Now, it is time for us to see where we fit in. Who is Jesus, really, and who are we meant to be as His followers?

READ: *Luke 9:18-27 – Who do you say that I am?*

Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, “Who do the people say that I am?” **19** And they answered, “John the Baptist; but others say, Eli’jah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen.” **20** And he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.” **21** But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, **22** saying, “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” **23** And he said to all, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. **24** For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. **25** For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? **26** For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. **27** But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

REFLECT: This passage opens shortly after the feeding of the five thousand. We find Jesus praying alone to the Father while His disciples are gathered nearby. He breaks from His prayer and turns to the disciples saying, “Who do the people say that I am?”

1. Imagine yourself sitting in this crowd. Why do you think Jesus would be interested to know what the people think of Him?
2. Imagine that Jesus then turns to you and asks this very same question. From what you’ve heard in *your* lives, who do *people* say that Jesus is?
3. Jesus then asks His disciples outright: “Who do *you* say that I am?” Why do you think He asks the disciples this question? Knowing what you know of Him, how would you respond?
4. Now that we have an idea of who Jesus is, what is the kingdom of God? What does Jesus mean in His statement (verse 27) to the disciples?
 - *Ask participants to describe who Jesus is in a couple of sentences (in their own words).*
 - *Next, ask participants to describe who Jesus is in only one sentence. Ask participants to share.*
 - *Lastly, ask participants to choose one word that best describes who Jesus is to them. Make a collage using a poster with all the words that participants came up with .*

As baptized Christians, the kingdom of God is accessible to us now, through our faith in Christ. In the Lord's response to the disciples (verse 23), He declares, "*If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*" Christ calls on each of us, essentially saying: "Take up your cross, the burdens that have been placed upon you - pick them up, and *every single day*, follow me. Do as I do. Live as I live. Be as I am."

READ: In this new light, let us revisit some of Jesus' "I am" statements from the Gospel according to John.

- "Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life**; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." (*John 6:35*)
- "**I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (*John 10:11*)
- "**I am the true vine**, and my Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. **3** You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." (*John 15:1-4*)

RESPOND:

1. If Jesus is the bread of life, the one who feeds us and the very food being given, who are we? What is our role?
2. If Jesus is the good shepherd, the one who guides His faithful, what are we?
3. Can we be more than just sheep? Can we be shepherds in our own lives? How?
4. According to John 15, Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Following this imagery, what happens if we do not follow Him? Why?
5. What happens to a branch when it falls off of a tree? How can we make sure that we are nourished by the vine and bear fruit?
6. In one word, if Jesus is all these things, who are we?
7. Any other takeaways from these passages?

Let us all continue to deepen our relationship with Christ, following him daily, and learning more about who He is *and* who he calls us to be.

The Seven 'I Am' Statements of Jesus

- ☆ John 6:35: "**I AM the bread of life;**"
- ☆ John 8:12: Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "**I AM the light of the world.** He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
- ☆ John 10:9: "**I AM the door (gate).** If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."
- ☆ John 10:11: "**I AM the good shepherd.** The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
- ☆ John 11:25: Jesus said to her, "**I AM the resurrection and the life.** He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.
- ☆ John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "**I AM the way, the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- ☆ John 15:1: "**I AM the true vine,** and My Father is the vinedresser.

The Seven 'I Am' Statements of Jesus in the *Badarak*

☆ "I AM the light of the world."

- o Lighting a candle before Badarak
- o **John 6:12** - When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

☆ "I AM the door (gate)"

- o *Badarak Book, Page 6* - **Prayer: Psalm 100**: It is he who made us and we were not by ourselves; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving; and into his courts with praise.
- o **John 10:7-10** - 7 Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

☆ "I AM the resurrection and the life."

- o *Badarak Book, Page 14* - **Hymn: Soorp Asdvadz** - Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, who rose from the dead, have mercy on us.
- o John 11:17-27

☆ "I AM the way, the truth, and the life"

- o *Badarak Book, Page 22* - **Prayer**: With your peace, Christ our Savior, which surpasses all understanding and speech, **defend us** and **keep us fearless of all evil**. Make us equal to your *true* worshippers, who worship you in spirit and in *truth*; for to the most-holy Trinity is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.
- o John 14:4-7

☆ "I AM the bread of life" & "I AM the true vine"

- o **Receiving Holy Communion** (*Badarak Book Page 49*)
- o John 15:1-4
- o **Hymn: Krisdos Badrakyal** (*Badarak Book, Page 47*)

☆ "I AM the good shepherd."

- o *Badarak Book Page 50* - **Prayer: Psalm 28:9** - Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance; shepherd them and lift them up from henceforth until eternity.