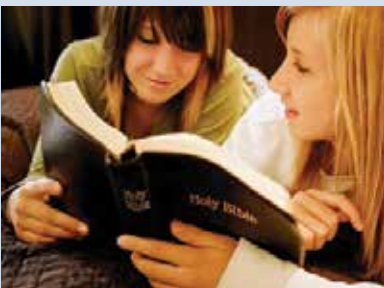


Grade Six

Living the Good Life

Holy People, Holy Time



We Believe Curriculum
Student Text

Living the Good Life

Holy People, Holy Time

By order of
Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate

We Believe Curriculum
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**Grade Six
We Believe**

Living the Good Life

Holy People, Holy Time

Diane Bairamian

Student Text

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Lesson 1

What Is Holy Tradition?



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.

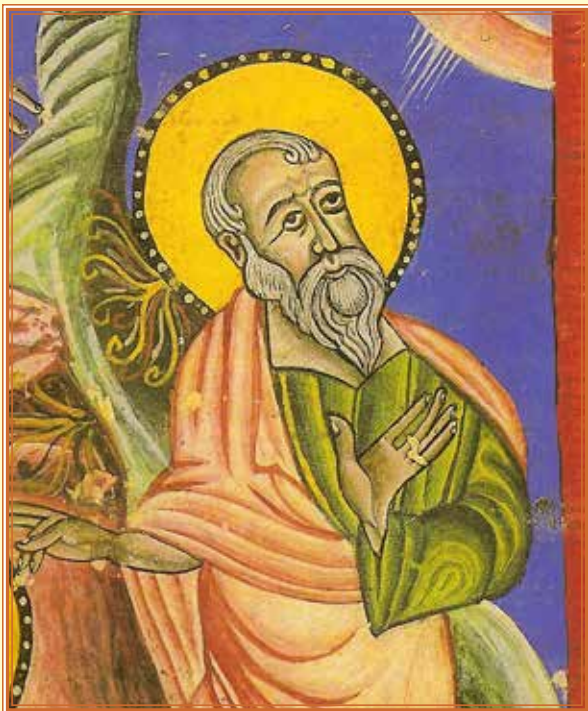
Dear Lord, I pray that I might
be honored with clothing of light, from which I have been stripped
touch the hand of Him, from whom I am separated
receive my daily bread, for which I have not worked
be showered with rewards which I have not earned
remember all my blessings which I always forget.

Prayer 24, St. Gregory of Narek

Identify Yourself!

On the paper provided, note some of the things that make you who you are. Do not write your name on the paper, as you will be using it in a guessing game. Some of the things that go into your identity may be what school you go to, your brothers and sisters, sports you like, where you were born, your nationality, what languages you speak, favorite activities, and your friends.





Identity and the Armenian Church

What if you woke up tomorrow with amnesia? Imagine you can't remember what your name is, where you live, where you are supposed to go to school, or who is in your family. Your day would be a disaster! You would not know what to think or do. The Armenian Church is like a person in that it has to understand its true identity in order to function correctly. As you develop your sense of who you are from the things that you know to be true, our Church also possesses a body of truth about itself. Every believing community, in fact, interprets the life and teachings of Jesus Christ in a very specific way.

This knowledge base, known as Holy Tradition, is founded on the teachings of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and in the evolving life of the community through the Holy Spirit. Many years ago, the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew traveled to Armenia to tell the people there about Jesus Christ. Since they were among the twelve original disciples chosen by Jesus, they heard the actual words he spoke. They were taught directly by him. Thaddeus and Bartholomew were able to give the people of Armenia a very fresh and accurate understanding of God's Kingdom. The Armenian Church is truly blessed to have this foundation, followed only a few centuries later by the great Illuminator, St. Gregory.

As the centuries passed, Armenia produced many saints and teachers. Our church has used the thoughts and prayers of these holy men and women to develop our beautiful worship services and our church tradition. This tradition keeps us focused on Jesus' message so that we can follow God's word even though many years and many ideas have come and gone. We believe the Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church, as Jesus promised (John 16:13); wise men and women still seek his guidance as Nicodemus sought Jesus.



Did You Know?

The St. Thaddeus Armenian monastery [14th c] at Artaz, in present-day Iran, is recognized as a UNESCO historical site.

Nicodemus – A Reminder from God

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews (John 3:1) who lived at the time of Jesus' ministry. He was a member of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were a group of Jews who considered themselves very religious. They strictly followed the Law of Moses from the Old Testament, as well as their own traditions. Most of the Pharisees did not want to listen to Jesus. They had more faith in their own ways and often tried to trick Jesus into saying something wrong.

Nicodemus was very curious about Jesus, so he went to see him under cover of night; he didn't want the other Pharisees to know about the visit. During those precious hours, Jesus explained to Nicodemus the way to enter God's Kingdom (John 3:3-21).

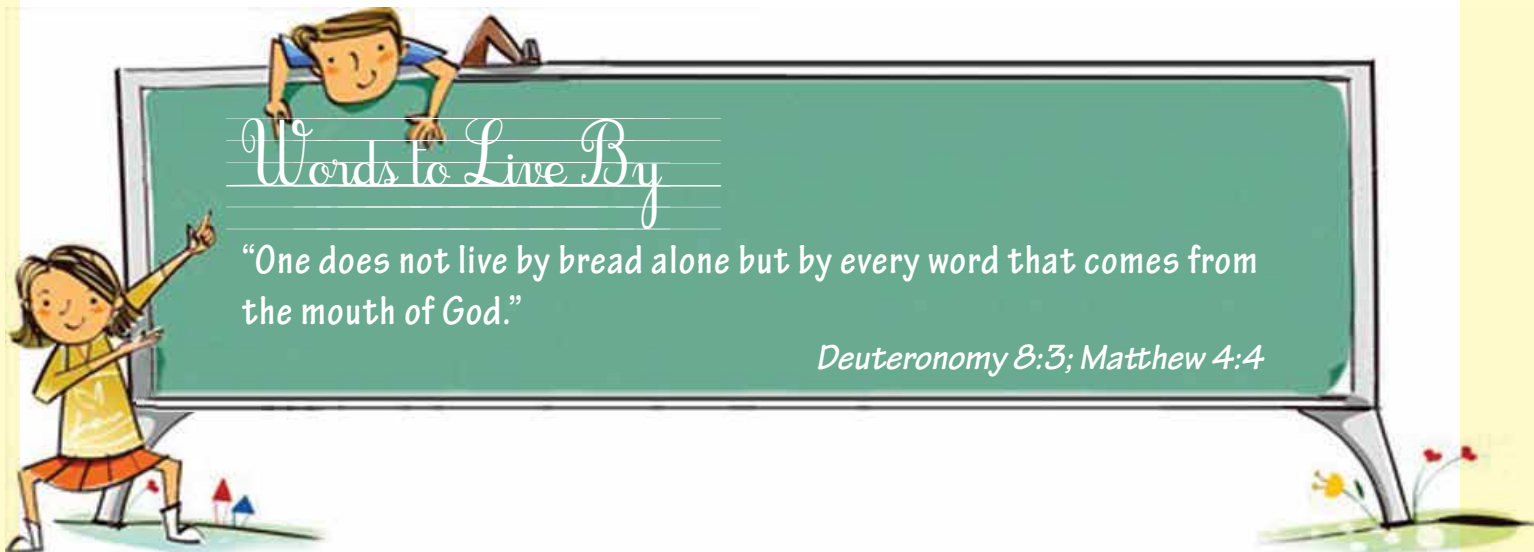
Jesus' words were very different from anything Nicodemus had ever heard. They did not sound the same as the traditions followed by the Jews. He was impressed by what Jesus said, for after the Crucifixion he brought a large quantity of expensive spices to prepare Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39). Nicodemus is a wonderful example of how we *all* might make the effort to learn from Jesus. Let's look at this story together.



John 3:3-21

Discuss these questions as a class:

1. How would you explain being “born again” (verses 5-8)?
2. John 3:16 is a very famous verse. Put it in your own simple words as if you were explaining it to a younger sister or brother.
3. What does verse 19 mean to you? Why is it that people prefer “darkness” to light?



Unit One: A Community Over Time

Lesson 2

The Bible



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.
Send forth your light and your truth,
let them guide me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you dwell.
Then will I go to the altar of God,
to God, my joy and my delight.
I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.

Psalm 43:3-4 (NIV)

Quick Quiz

True or False

- The knowledge base of the Armenian Church, which is founded on Scripture and the working of the Holy Spirit through the church community, is called Holy Orders.
- Thaddeus and Bartholomew were two of Jesus' twelve original disciples.
- Nicodemus was proud to have the Pharisees see him visit Jesus.
- Nicodemus provided the tomb for Jesus' burial.
- The domes on Armenian Church buildings are a symbol of heaven.

A WORLD OF BOOKS

People read for many different reasons. We read to learn about people, places or things or to make ourselves laugh or for fun or for a school assignment or to learn how to build or do something. Whatever the reason, reading helps us expand our imaginations and learn about our world.

Books help us in many ways.

Can you name a book that was important to you and why it was?





The Greatest Book of All

Have you ever been there when your family picked up a new car from the dealer? If so, think back on what you observed that day. You probably remember a lot of excitement on the way to the car dealer. You may have been a bit impatient waiting for the paperwork to be finished so you could ride in the new car.

At the car dealer, did you notice that

the salesperson took a book from the glove compartment of the new car, sat inside with the driver, and explained things from the book? The book that comes with every new car is called the owner's manual. The owner's manual tells you what each piece of equipment is and how to operate it safely. It tells you how to recognize when something is wrong and what you need to do about it. If you read it in advance, it will show you how to avoid problems in the first place. This book comes from the car's manufacturer, so we know the information is correct. You keep the owner's manual in the car at all times so you always have it near whenever you need it.

Have you ever wished that your life came with an owner's manual, like a car? You may be surprised to learn that it did! Like the one in your family's car, it comes directly from the manufacturer, so we know we can trust it. Who is the inspiration for our instruction manual? God! What is the name of this very special book? The Bible.

How do we know this? In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Bible says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so the person of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Wow! According to this verse, what is Scripture and what can it do?



Did You Know?

The 5th century Armenian historian Moses of Khoren wrote a three-volume *History of Armenia* which records many of the events and legends of our ancient times.

Scripture at Work in the Real World

Read each Bible quotation and scenario that appears below. Choose one situation and write a four or five-line skit about it. Make sure every member of your group has a part. Perform the skit for the rest of the class.

Scenario 1

“Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”
Proverbs 12:18

One of the kids in your gym class is the world’s worst athlete. In class, you are picked as captain of the soccer team. You have to choose the people you want on your team, and you end up with the student who cannot play at all. Everyone is laughing at you because you got stuck with the “loser,” and they’re teasing him or her as well. What should you say in this situation that would please God?

Scenario 2

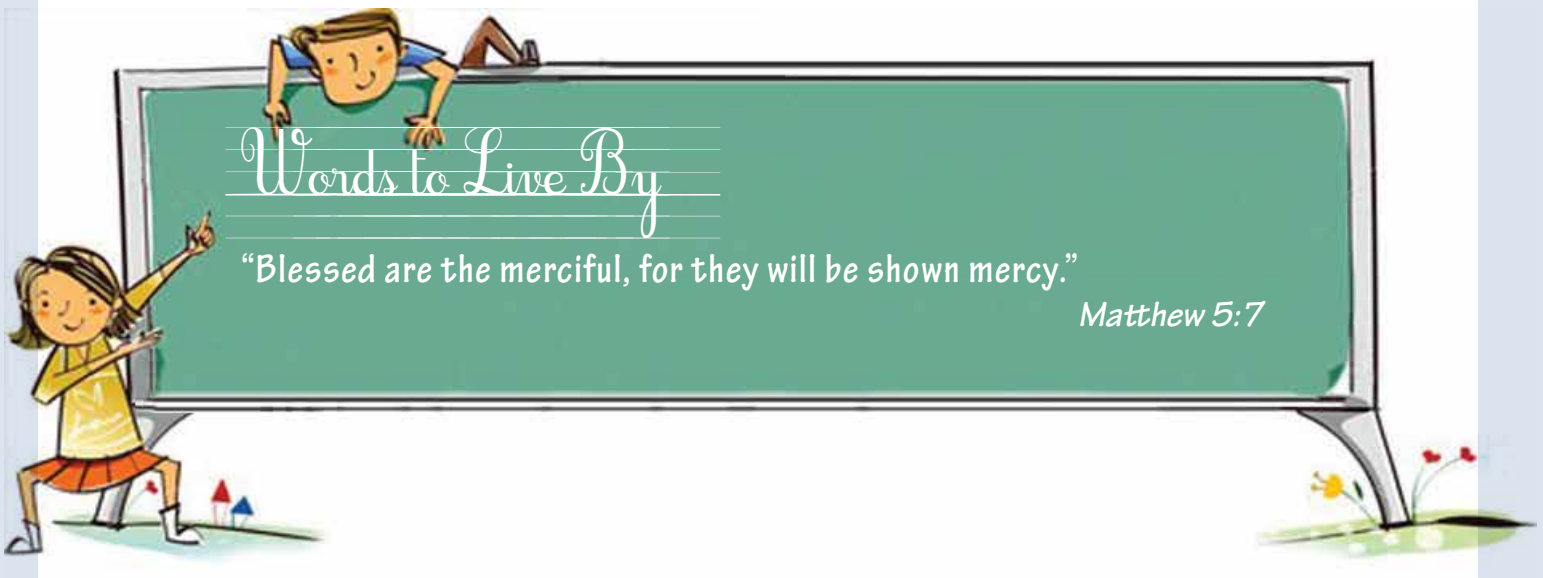
“He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.”
Proverbs 17:5

You just heard that the class bully’s mom lost her job so they have to move away. Your friends are rejoicing. How do you think God wants you to react in front of your classmates?

Scenario 3

“God is faithful; he will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”
I Corinthians 10:13

You’re at the party of the season. You and your friends have been excited about it for weeks. You’re having a great time, when suddenly someone brings out beer. You feel a lot of pressure to drink, because you don’t want to look weird. Knowing you’re way too young to drink and your parents would be angry, what do you do or say?



When Your Warning Lights Come On, Check the Owner's Manual

Have you ever been in the car when a light came on or a noise sounded to let the driver know something was wrong? When this happened, the driver most likely pulled over as soon as it was safe, opened the glove compartment, and looked in the owner's manual to identify the problem. Based on what the manual said to do, the driver took appropriate action, such as driving to a gas station, calling a tow truck, or making an appointment for a repair.

We can always look to our owner's manual, the Bible, for help in any situation. Just like the driver of the car, we pull out of the traffic of our lives, consult the manual, and do what it says. As in the case of the car, if we become familiar with what the Bible says - with the help of Sunday School and all the church's teachings - we will learn to spot trouble before it becomes a problem for us. For example, turn to James 3:2-6. What important life lesson does it contain? How about Romans 12: 9-16. Any helpful advice?



A Lifeline Away From Home

If you open the top drawer of the nightstand in many hotel rooms in the United States, you will see a Bible. A Christian organization (Gideon) has been placing them there for decades. A hotel room may seem like an odd place for the Bible, but imagine what it is like to be homesick, lonely, tired, and perhaps burdened with work or family problems in a strange city where you have nobody to talk to about it. What a comfort it is to know that all you have to do is open a hotel room drawer to have the guidance and security of God's Word wherever you go!



Our Armenian Way

In the 5th century, St. Mesrob Mashdotz created the Armenian alphabet with the encouragement and help of the Catholicos St. Sahag. An incredible accomplishment! The very first words they translated into this new written language were from Holy Scripture: Proverbs 1:2, which says "for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight." This new alphabet and a passionate desire to share the good news of Jesus Christ among the Armenian people led to many years of translating and writing called "The Golden Age."

The Armenian translation of the Bible is so accurate and so beautiful that it is referred to as the "Queen of Translations."

Unit One: A Community Over Time

Lesson 3

Where Two or Three Are Gathered...



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyin Surpo, Amen.

Dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in you we are joined together and rise up to become a living, holy building founded on you. In you we are truly built together to become a beautiful dwelling in which we live by your Spirit. Amen.

(based on Ephesians 2:21-22)

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that Scripture is useful for all of the following except

- a teaching b correcting c engineering d rebuking

2. Proverbs 12:18 says "Reckless words pierce like a

- a sword b bee sting c needle d scissors

3. Proverbs 17:5 says "He who mocks the _____ shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished."

- a illiterate b victim c slow d poor

4. The _____ place Bibles in hotel rooms.

- a Amorites b Hittites c Gideons d Hebrews

5. The Armenian translation of the Bible is known as the

- a oldest translation b queen of translations c easiest translation d newest translation



Symbols of Belonging

Clubs, sports teams, schools, professions, and other organizations often have pledges, uniforms, and other customs that help bond members together. One example of this is the way we say the Pledge of Allegiance.

This reminds us that we are Americans.

What things do you do in school, on a team, or in some organization that bond you together with the other members?



Where Two or More Are Gathered...

The Bible reminds us that living in this world is like being a soldier. It wouldn't be very helpful if a general sent out a single soldier against an entire army. If a group of troops is well-trained and closely bonded to one another, however, they can be effective against even a much larger force.

Just as soldiers drill together, God's people also need to strengthen themselves by practicing their faith together. Like the threads in your experiment, we will be much stronger if we stick together in faith. Our Divine Liturgy is a way we come away from the busy world for awhile to focus as a group on worshipping and learning about God. We publicly

admit our standing as sinners. We share Holy Communion together, which reminds us each week that Jesus' willing sacrifice of his own life is the reason we can be a part of his family.

Within the framework of the church service, with its Scripture readings, ancient prayers, reverent rituals, and beautiful hymns, we see that others feel the same as we do about Jesus. We are strengthened and refreshed by the Holy Spirit. It will be easier for us to follow him in our daily lives, because we are nourished by last Sunday's Badarak.

Jesus tells us to come together in worship. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus says, "For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them." He knew from the very beginning of the church that we would need each other in our Christian life.



Did You Know?

Do you feel as though kids are often excluded from important events? When the disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus, he said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14

Send in the Reinforcements!

After the apostles went into each new place to tell others about Christ, their work with that city was not done. From the map of Paul's missionary journeys, we see that he traveled widely. Without his presence, some of the early churches began to squabble among themselves or develop wrong ideas. Paul would come back to them and steady them, and if he could not go in person, he encouraged them with letters, some of which appear in the Bible. Similarly, the reliability of our church teachings helps keep us on a steady course to God's Kingdom.

Does this mean that the Holy Spirit will not be with us outside of church, or when we are not around other believers? Thankfully, God is happy to be with us anytime, and anywhere.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to "pray continually." In this way, we may stay close to him day and night, in church or far away from home.



A Helping Hand

Read Hebrews 10:23-25.

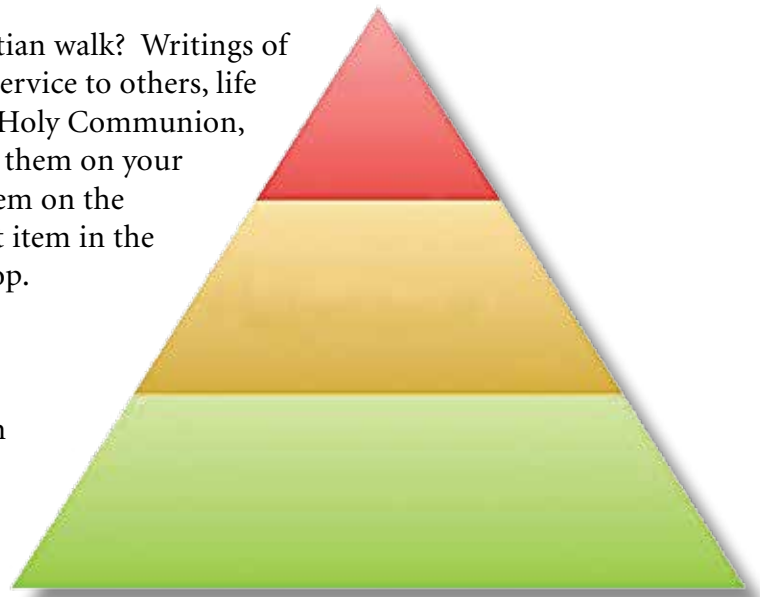
rites, and to their land. The LORD commanded you to you, and you must be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. As summoned Joshua and all the

A Christian Life Pyramid

How helpful are the following things in your Christian walk? Writings of church fathers, Sunday School, private prayer life, service to others, life of the church (as lived by parents, family, friends), Holy Communion, the Bible, Badarak and other church services. Rank them on your Christian Life Pyramid. Put the most important item on the bottom of the pyramid, the second most important item in the next space, and the third in the smallest space on top.

Discuss these questions as a class:

- Would you invite a school friend to come to church with you one Sunday? Why or why not?
- Why did you come to Sunday School this morning?
- Imagine you and your family move to another city where there is no Armenian Church available. What should you do about your worship?



Our Armenian Way

Have you ever heard anyone complain about the length of the Badarak? If you were a monk in a monastery in ancient Armenia you would be praying almost all the time! For centuries our monks followed the “Zhamakirk,” or “Book of Hours,” a daily routine of services and prayers that began long before sunrise and continued into the night. The daily devotions were divided into seven sections, which are the Nocturns, Matins, Sunrise, Midday Hours, Vespers, Peace Hour, and Rest Hour.

Today, many of the rituals have been combined and shortened because there are so few Armenian monasteries and monks. Wouldn't it be interesting to trade the noisy attractions of today's world for a quiet, simple life where every single day is filled with prayer, worship, and the study of God?



Law and Order

Life is full of so many rules. At home there are rules – what time we have to come in, when we can watch TV, what chores we have to do. At school there are rules – about homework, lunchroom behavior, and when we may talk in class. Governments have rules, too, such as the age for driving a car.

Discuss these questions as a class:

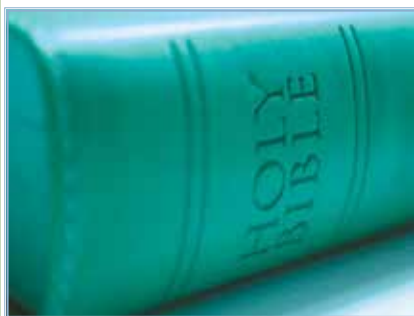
Which one of your parents' rules bothers you the most?

Which of their rules do you think is the most helpful or makes the most sense?

Do you think it's a good idea to make people pay taxes?

What would happen if nobody paid taxes to the government?

Is it important for the Christian community to have rules?



Psalm 119

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm in the Bible. It is divided into twenty-two sections, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. What a great way for Jewish children to learn their A-B-C's!

Read Psalm 119:97-104 and answer the questions below:

1. What emotion describes what the psalmist feels for God's law? (verse 97) _____
2. God's commands make us wiser than our _____.
3. God's teachings give us more understanding than our _____.
4. The psalmist keeps his feet from every evil _____.
5. What food does the psalmist think of when he reads God's commands? _____



The Nicene Creed

Our Statement of Belief

The Church has rules and laws, too. They are born from teachings given to us by God in the Bible. The Bible is sometimes hard to understand. But when we read it again and again, our understanding grows as does our faith!

The leaders of the early church realized that ordinary people might have trouble understanding God's word, especially since very few people could read in those times. The church fathers had to work hard to make sure they were teaching correct things to the people. They

constantly prayed, studied Scripture, and met with other believers to build a true understanding of God. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these ideas were organized into church laws (canons) and creeds.

By 325 AD, the Emperor Constantine had become very worried about all the false ideas that were appearing. He organized a meeting of church leaders in the city of Nicaea, which is near Istanbul, Turkey. St. Aristakes, son of St. Gregory the Illuminator, represented the Armenian believers. This meeting, called the First Ecumenical Council, produced the statement of belief known as the Nicene Creed, or "Havadank," which means "we believe." (It was actually completed at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople.)

We recite the Nicene Creed each week during Badarak.

The Nicene Creed

“We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of God the Father, only-begotten, that is of the substance of the Father.

God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten and not made; of the self-same nature of the Father, by whom all things came into being in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible;

Who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate, was made man, was born perfectly of the holy virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit;

By whom he took body, soul, and mind, and everything that is in man, truly and not in semblance.

He suffered and was crucified and was buried and rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven with the same body and sat at the right hand of the Father.

He is to come with the same body and with the glory of the Father, to judge the quick and the dead, of whose kingdom there is no end.

We believe also in the Holy Spirit, the uncreate and the perfect, who spoke in the law and in the prophets and in the Gospels;

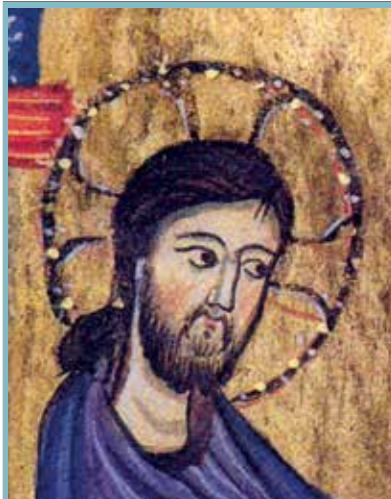
Who came down upon the Jordan, preached in the apostles, and dwelt in the saints.

We believe also in only one catholic and apostolic holy Church;

In one baptism with repentance for the remission and forgiveness of sins;

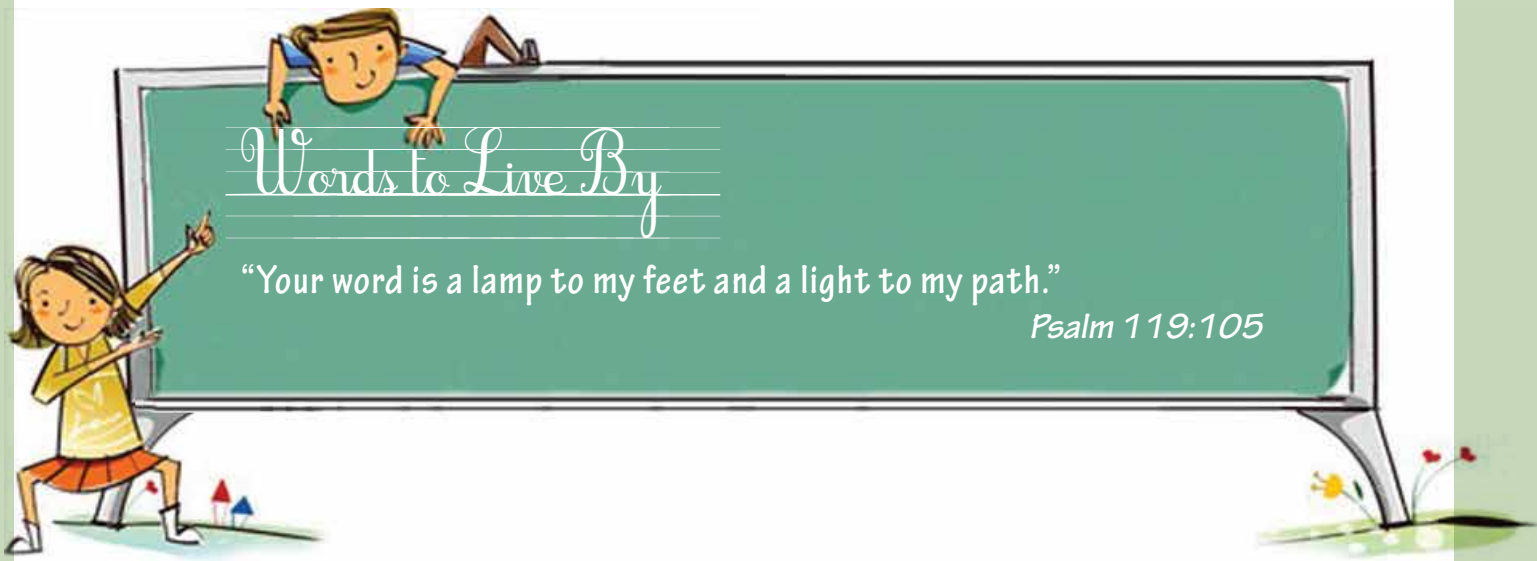
In the resurrection of the dead, in the everlasting judgment of souls and bodies, in the kingdom of heaven, and the life eternal.”

Two other Ecumenical Councils were called to combat strange teachings that arose after the Council in 325 AD. The second Ecumenical Council took place in Constantinople (today’s Istanbul) in 381 AD, and the third at Ephesus in 431 AD. Without these meetings our church would not have been able to feed us with correct ideas about God.



Did You Know?

The most important idea of the Council of Nicaea was to clarify the idea that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human.



Our Armenian Way

Before he became a monk, St. Gregory the Illuminator was married and had two sons, Vertanes and Aristakes. Aristakes, born about 270 AD, studied in Caesarea and grew up to be a monk. Aristakes lived at a monastery in the desert, where he happily spent his days in prayer and worship.

Around 325 AD, St. Gregory wanted to return to the quiet life of a monk, so he asked his son Aristakes to replace him as Catholicos. Aristakes left his hermit's life and lovingly tended the young Armenian Church. After his service to the church, which included travel to the Council in Nicaea, Aristakes was murdered by a nobleman in the year 333 AD.



Unit One: A Community Over Time

Lesson 5

Lives of the Saints



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

If the faith of a mustard seed
Can cast a great mountain
Into the depths of the sea, then truly
We should accept it as the first step
Toward eternal life.
Faith means setting aside doubt
To see the future and the hidden
With the eye of the soul.

*St. Gregory of Narek
Speaking With God From the Depths of My Heart
Prayer 10*

Quick Quiz

Write the correct answer in the space.

1. The leaders of the Armenian Church realized that people might have trouble understanding God's word because they could not _____.
2. Church law may also be called _____ law.
3. In 325, Emperor _____ organized a meeting of church leaders in the city of Nicaea.
4. The First Ecumenical Council developed the _____.
5. The Armenian representative at the Council in Nicaea was Aristakes, the son of _____.

Who's Your Role Model?

We all have someone we admire. When we think about their accomplishments, sometimes we would like to be just like them.

Who is your role model?

Scripture and church history are full of men and women who were living examples of God's principles. Many of them were so loyal to Jesus that they gave up their lives rather than disobey him. These individuals and their special qualities help God's Word and our church teachings come alive for us so many years later. We can look to their actions as models for our own lives.

Which quality – faith, obedience, courage, forgiveness, humility – best describes these saints? Choose one for each saint and write it on the line below.



Stephen

As he was being stoned to death for teaching about Jesus, he cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

(Acts 7:59)



Centurion

He had a sick servant at his home and asked Jesus to heal him. When Jesus offered to go to the centurion's house to heal the servant, the centurion said "Lord, I do not

deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed."

Matthew 8:5-13



John the Baptist

Even though he was a great teacher, he didn't want anyone to think he was important, so he said, "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."

(Mark 1:7)



Mary, Mother of Jesus

She willingly carried out God's plan for Jesus' birth, even though she did not fully understand it.



Vartan Mamigonian

After the Persian ruler ordered Armenia to start worshipping the sun and fire, Vartan was killed leading Armenian troops against a much larger Persian army in 451 AD.

Rules for God's Role Models

Read Colossians 3:12-17

1. Who are the "chosen people" referred to in verse 12?
2. Do you think verse 16 authorizes you to judge people every time you see them behaving in a non-Christian way?
3. Read verse 17 again. How could this be put into effect by: rock stars, police officers, doctors, business leaders

Here I Am, Lord

"Here I Am, Lord" is a hymn written and composed by Dan Schutte in the 1970's. It describes a person seeking to respond to God's call to shed his light everywhere. Some of the words are as follows:

I

I, the Lord of the sea and sky,
I, have heard my people cry.
I, who made the stars of night.
I, will make their darkness bright.
All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Chorus

Here I am, Lord
Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

II

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Chorus

Here I am, Lord
Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

When he calls, how will you answer?

Here I Am, Lord

Based on Is 6

Dan Schutte

VERSE: *Majestically*





Words to Live By

“Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”

Colossians 3:13



Did You Know?

King Drtad and his family needed a new hobby. Drtad’s father was murdered while he was hunting. Drtad lost his sanity while on a hunt, and he was eventually wounded by a traitor while he was hunting, and finished off with poison immediately after. Perhaps painting or tennis might have been safer!

Our Armenian Way

In the time of St. Gregory the Enlightener, a beautiful nun named Hripsimeh, her abbess Gayaneh, and 36 other women came to Armenia to escape the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. When King Drtad heard about Hripsimeh’s beauty, he had her brought to his palace so he could meet her. Even though King Drtad was already married to Queen Ashkhen, he offered Hripsimeh marriage and all the luxuries of the palace. Hripsimeh refused him, and she and her friends tried to run away. Unfortunately, King Drtad’s soldiers caught up with the women and the king executed them all. This wicked act led to Drtad’s mental illness, which was only cured when Gregory was brought from the pit to heal him.

I never knew that _____.

I’m amazed that _____.

Lord, in the hope that I might live in the spirit of the saints, please help me be more _____.



Lesson 6

The Writings of the Fathers



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

O Lord and Master of my life, give me not a spirit of laziness, of despair, of arrogance, or of vain talking. But rather a spirit of diligence, of patience, of humility, and of love, bestow upon me your servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant to me to see my own errors and not judge my brothers and sisters, for you are blessed for all time. Amen.

A prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

Quick Quiz

Write the correct answer in the space.

1. Stephen was executed with _____.
2. Vartan Mamigonian was killed in a battle against the _____ army.
3. Two of the Christian virtues highlighted in Colossians 3: 12-17 are _____ and _____.
4. _____ said he was not worthy to untie the sandals of Jesus.
5. Hripsimeh and _____ were nuns who came to Armenia to escape persecution.



Did You Know?

It is thought that Sts. Mesrob and Sahag employed between 30 and 100 scholars to help them translate the Bible.

Teachers of Treasure

The Bible teaches us so much about God and his kingdom. As you may have seen, however, we do not always understand what God means when we read his Word. That makes sense if you think about it, because we are humans with limited brainpower trying to understand things said by an Almighty God. This doesn't mean we should not read the Bible. On the contrary, it means we should be even more persistent in our studies and in asking the Holy Spirit to guide us. The Church is especially important here, because when we come together as Christians to study God's word and worship him, we are given special understanding.

God has given talents to each of us, and to some men and women he gives the gift of writing, teaching and studying him. Through these people, we are able to have a better idea of what God wants us to know. God used them help explain what we believe and give direction to our worship.

In the Bible, God shows us many places where the written word was used to teach. The following Scripture passages provide examples of how letters and other writings guided the early believers:

Acts 1:1

Romans 1:1-6

I Corinthians 15:1-3



God's Special Helpers



I'm St. Athanasius. I was born in 297 AD in Alexandria, Egypt. As a young deacon, I went along with my bishop to the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. You should have heard some of the crazy things that were said there. I heard a priest named Arius trying to convince the Council that Jesus was not really God, but only created by Him! I could not keep quiet. I explained the truth of Jesus as God, and of the Holy Trinity.

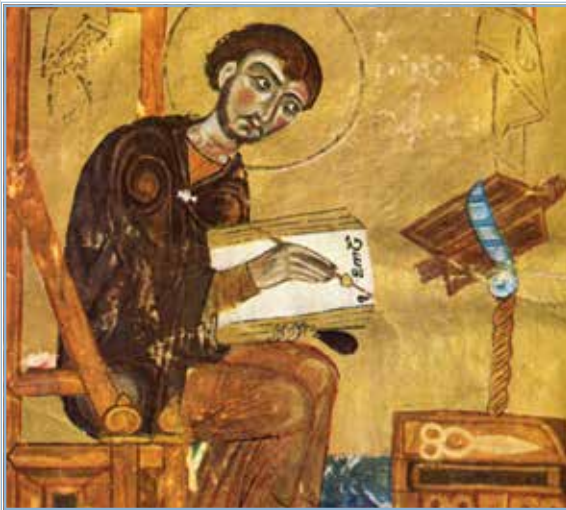
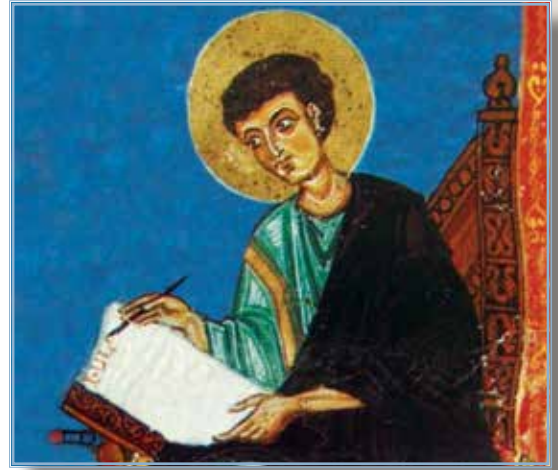
Later I became a bishop, but this Arius just would not go away. He had a lot of power. He kept getting me exiled so he could teach these false ideas. Finally, he died and I was free to defend the true faith.



I'm St. Gregory the Illuminator. You know most of my story. Thirteen years in the pit, being rescued so I could pray for King Drtad. But that was just the beginning. When I baptized the king and his family and Christianity became the state religion in 301 AD, King Drtad sent me out to teach the people of Armenia and nearby countries about Jesus. I had a lot of trouble with the local pagans. They weren't too happy when I tore down their temples and trashed their idols. I think they found a lot of joy later, though, when they began to understand Jesus.

I, Khosrov Antzevatzi, am a 10th century theologian. Do you know what that is? It just means I specialize in learning about God and our relationship with him. I don't understand why anyone wouldn't want to participate in the Divine Liturgy. I mean, sin leads to separation from God, which makes us unhappy. When we go to Badarak, confess our sins, and take part in the Lord's Supper (that's Communion, by the way), we feel better. We feel like we've come back into God's family. I wrote about this, and I said that the Divine Liturgy was a "great medicine." People seem to like that comparison. I'm glad.

Oh, by the way, I am also the father of St. Gregory of Narek.



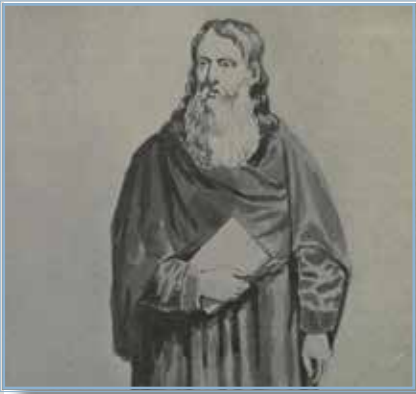
Thanks, Dad. **My name is St. Gregory of Narek.** They don't call me that because I was born there, but because I was educated and spent many years at the Monastery of Narek on the shores of Lake Van. I was actually born around 950 AD in Vasbouragan.

I fell in love with the Bible from an early age. It meant so much to me that I ignored fancy food, nice clothes, parties, and just about everything else in this world. Sometimes church officials didn't understand me too well and I got into trouble. God helped me out, though, and I was free to write and think as I wished. I wrote a book of prayers called *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart*. I just never feel right unless I am spending all my time and energy with God. I can't help it. He means everything to me.



I'm St. Mesrob Mashtots, born around 361. We had a huge problem in Armenia in my time. We didn't have a written alphabet. Church writings had to be in other languages like Greek and Assyrian, which made it very difficult to properly teach our people about Jesus. They only knew Armenian, not these other languages.

Thankfully, God gave me a great idea. What if we made special letters just for us! I ran to Catholicos Sahag with the idea, and he loved it. We prayed a lot and tried a lot of different things, until we had it! Our own alphabet, so we could translate the Bible and other holy writings and teach people about the Lord in a language they understand.



I came along in about 1100 AD. **I'm St. Nersess Shnorhali, or Nersess the Grace-filled.** I didn't want to become Catholicos, but when Catholicos Krikor, my brother, became ill and asked me to replace him, I did. It was another one of the tough times for the Armenian Church. False ideas were circulating again, plus we had the usual squabbles with other churches who want to absorb and change the Armenian Church. All that arguing wore me out completely by about 1173.

The thing I enjoy most is quiet time spent praying. I wrote many hymns and prayers that I understand have become popular. I hope they can be of help to people. That would make me so happy.



My name is Ghevont Yeretz. The word "yeretz" simply means "priest." I was born in a little village called Eechevan at the beginning of the 5th century. I became a priest and studied with St. Mesrob and St. Sahag, working with them to translate important books into Armenian during the early "Golden Age of Armenian Literature." At the Battle of Avarayr, I stood with Vartan Mamigonian and his troops. I could say that day was a terrible tragedy, but it wasn't, because no matter what the Persians did to us, we would not give up our faith. I've learned that standing up for your faith, even if it means dying for it, continues to matter even to this very day.

After the battle, Catholicos Hovsep, other priests, and I hid out in a castle. We were eventually caught by the Persians, who took us prisoner and made our lives miserable. But when I remember all that Christ went through for us, my sufferings seemed pretty minor. The Persians finished us all off with the sword, but we were ready to give our lives for our Lord.



I am Soorp Hagop of Medzpin. I was around pretty much the first half of the 4th century. Long time ago. The happiest time of my life was when I lived alone in the mountains. I ate grass and leaves - I hear young people are always being told to eat more plant material. I was happy with it. I could spend all day in prayer and worship of our dear Lord.

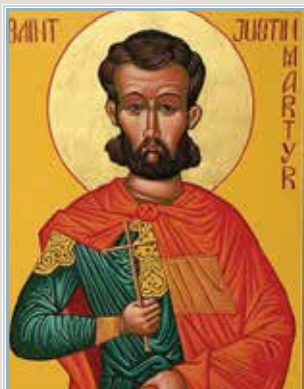
I was never lonely in those years. I had the company of all God's creatures. My friends were the birds and lizards and mountain animals. I often dreamed of finding Noah's ark - in fact I actually climbed Mt. Ararat to look for it! Without any of the high-tech climbing gear you have today.

It was my privilege to accompany Catholicos Aristakes to the Council of Nicaea. I also spent many hours in prayer, especially for the sick.



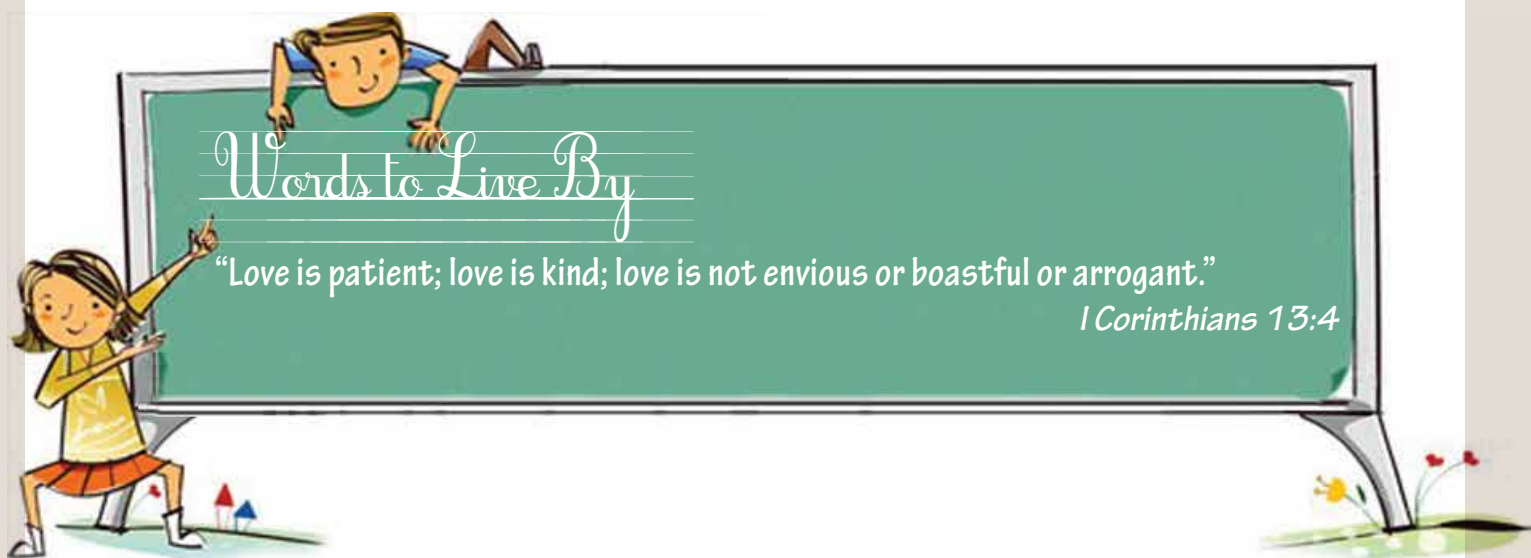
I think I lived before anyone else on this list! **I'm St. Polycarp,** born in Smyrna in 69 AD. I'm so old some of Jesus' original disciples were still alive when I came along. I liked to write about Jesus, and I also became the Bishop of Smyrna.

It was not such a good time to be a Christian, though. We were being killed right and left for our beliefs. I couldn't change. Why would I want to? All I hoped for was that God would keep me around long enough to do the work he sent me here to do - and he did! I was 86 years old when my time on earth ended.



I'm **St. Justin the Martyr**, and I'm almost as vintage as St. Polycarp. I was born in about 100 AD. By my nickname I guess you know what happened to me in the end. You might think I would rather have been St. Justin the Millionaire or St. Justin the Olympic gold medalist. We had the Olympics back then, you know. In Greece. I'm fine with the martyrdom and all - giving my life for our faith was a joy.

My parents were not Christians but thankfully I heard the Gospel in Ephesus, where I lived for a bit. I wrote to emperors to try to get them to stop heathen worship and persecution of Christians. I also liked to encourage people to understand and believe the things Christ said.



Words to Live By

"Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant."

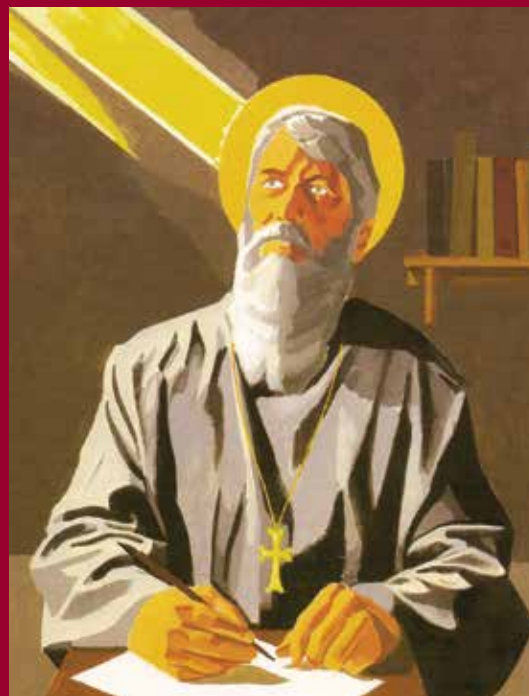
1 Corinthians 13:4

Our Armenian Way

One of our greatest church fathers was St. Nersess Shnorhali (1102-1173). His set of 24 short prayers has been beloved for centuries. They are said at our Lenten service and at other times.

Prayer No. 11, known as "Jesus, Wisdom of the Father," is particularly well-known:

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



Unit One: A Community Over Time

Lesson 7

The Sacraments



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

Lord, you who once called us to the holiness and the enlightenment of baptism, we pray you, make us worthy of your most precious grace. Help us to always put off the old garment of sins and be renewed daily into a new life in you. Fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Adapted from the prayer of baptism of the Armenian Church

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. St. Athanasius was opposed to the ideas of a priest named

- a Drtad b Pilate c Arius d Nersess

2. Khosrov Antzevatzi called the Divine Liturgy a

- a great medicine b service of beautiful hymns
c chance to read Scripture d great work of art

3. Who thought Mesrob Mashtots' plan for an Armenian alphabet was a great idea?

- a Caesar Augustus b St. Gregory the Illuminator
c Gomidas Vartabed d Catholicos Sahag

4. _____ climbed Mt. Ararat to look for Noah's Ark.

- a Catholicos Aristakes b King Drtad
c Ghevont Yeretzi d Soorp Hagop of Medzpin

5. St. Justin the Martyr first heard the Gospel in the city of

- a Ephesus b Rome c Jerusalem d Constantinople

Milestones in Our Christian Life



Everyone's life has "milestone" moments. A milestone is literally a stone that marks the distance from a given point. If you had to mark off your life so far in milestones what would they be? Label them below:

BIRTH

TODAY

Members of the *Christian* family have milestones as well. They mark important moments of a believer's life at which time – although he is with us at *all* times - God is *especially*, mystically present. The word mystical is important here, since the exact nature of how our human experience and God's presence intertwine at these moments is beyond words. In Armenian, the word for "sacrament" is *khorhoort* which literally means "mystery."

The church has named each of these occasions a "sacrament" and while there are many such moments, the church has marked off seven formal 'rite of passage' sacraments.

1. After our physical birth, at which time we become part of a human family, we are born again spiritually, becoming members of *God's* family – the Body of Christ – through **Baptism**

During baptism, we are immersed in the water of the font three times, sharing in Christ's death and resurrection. Our godparents promise to help us grow in our faith. All our friends and family are present as witnesses. In the early church, this was performed at church with the entire community present.

Today, baptisms are private affairs, with just the immediate family attending. Why do you think baptisms were once done with the entire community present?

2. Moments after we are baptized, we experience the sacrament of..... **Chrismation**

We are sealed with holy oil, a sign of the Holy Spirit gracing us with the strength and understanding to live a faithful life. Nine parts of the body are anointed – the forehead, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, heart, back and feet with holy muron—"the oil of gladness" (Hebrews 1:9).

Why do you think these places were chosen to be anointed? What might they represent?

Immediately following Chrismation, we are dressed in new white clothes and presented to the altar to receive our first Holy Communion (more on that later).

We are now fully participating members of the Armenian Church – right from infancy!

3. Sunday Badarak is the weekly invitation by Jesus to continue sharing in his life-giving Body and Blood through the bread and wine of Holy Communion. But as we grow, we are asked to face very seriously the ways we may have "missed the mark" in aiming for a truly Christian life. Sin is the religious word for missing the mark and before communion we have the beautiful opportunity to think about our sins and ask forgiveness. That confession, whether private or the ritualized confession we do at church is the sacrament of **Penance**

The priest has been granted the privilege to release us from these sins. We are given the chance to start all over again – like a new beginning every Sunday. (It’s no accident that Sunday is the first day of a new week!)

Why do you think it’s important to really think about your sins and seek forgiveness?

4. The ultimate sacrament for every Christian is **Holy Communion**

This sacrament was established by Jesus himself at the Last Supper, when he took bread and wine and shared it among his disciples as a sign of the New Covenant and a sign of eternal life with him through his own Body and Blood. We should receive Holy Communion whenever we are in church, as it is the whole point of being there!

5. Many people will have the experience of finding a life partner and forming their own new family. This is the sacrament of **Holy Matrimony**

Or more commonly known as.....marriage! Of course, getting married in the church is just the beginning. A religious billboard campaign once posted a huge highway sign that said: “Loved the wedding; now invite me to the marriage. Love, God.” It takes a lifetime of commitment to turn the sacrament of matrimony into a God-centered marriage.

6. When a person answers the call to give his life to ministry in the church, he might prayerfully speak with his pastor and bishop about it, enter a school of theological studies known as a seminary (our own seminary in America is St. Nersess Armenian Seminary), and ultimately experience the sacrament of **Holy Orders**

This is one of those sacraments, one of those “milestone” moments that are very specific – a person choosing a vocation in the church – which most Christians don’t experience. But if you ever have an opportunity to attend an ordination – go!

There are three basic orders in the church: deacon, priest and bishop. Before these, come what are called the “minor orders,” all of which fall under the name “tbur” or clerk. Many boys and girls serve the church on Sundays by assisting as acolytes or singing in the choir and undergo these orders.

Why do you think it might be exciting to serve the church in an ordained ministry?

7. The sacrament which brings healing and prayer to the sick is called, reasonably enough, the sacrament of **Prayers for the Sick or Final Anointing**

Why a sacrament which suggests two purposes (why pray for healing if it’s ‘final’)? Well, originally, the “final anointing” was intended for the dying. Over time, this was reserved for clergy only. Prayers for spiritual healing, accompanied by anointing with holy oil (although not *muron*), was offered to all the faithful at times of illness. If you ever have a family member who is in the hospital or very ill, ask your priest to visit and pray and anoint your loved one. Go with him on the visit.

Words to Live By

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.”

Romans 8:28

Back to the Bible

The Armenian Church looks to Scripture for the origin of our sacraments. Below are Bible verses that describe each sacrament. Look up the Bible verse; then draw a line from each passage to the sacrament it describes.

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Matthew 18:18 | Holy Orders |
| 2. Genesis 2: 24 | Holy Communion |
| 3. John 1:32 | Anointing of the Sick |
| 4. Mark 14:22-24 | Marriage |
| 5. Hebrews 5:4 | Penance |
| 6. John 3:5 | Baptism |
| 7. Mark 6:13 | Chrismation/confirmation |



Did You Know?

Two sacraments may not be repeated: baptism and ordination. Interesting! They both mark the start of a new life in Christ.

Our Armenian Way

When a baby is born to an Armenian family, planning for the baptism, chrismation, and first holy communion begins almost immediately. The family is excited to introduce the baby into God's family. During the baptism, the baby is immersed three times into water, symbolically "dying" (Christ was in the tomb for three days) and being born again into a new life in Christ. Chrismation (sometimes called confirmation) seals this commitment with the Holy Spirit, then the baby receives holy communion. This way, even a very young child can be a fully participating member of the Armenian Church!



Unit One: A Community Over Time

Lesson 8

Sacred Music and the Arts



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyin Surpo, Amen.

We who have passed this long night adore you, O Lord our God, and as we gather here to offer you our morning prayers, we bless, glorify, and give thanks to you. For you have counted us worthy to pass this night in peace and attain this morning hour. Deem us worthy, O Lord, to receive the promise of eternal life with you, a promise beyond words, that you have given to us your beloved ones. O true God, Jesus Christ our Lord, save us and have mercy.

Morning Prayer of the Armenian Church

Quick Quiz

True or False

- Special milestone events in the life of a Christian are called sacrifices.
- The Armenian Church finds the origin of our sacraments in the writings of St. Gregory the Illuminator.
- Hebrews 5:4, which says “No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was,” refers to the sacrament of marriage.
- Acts 6:3-6 is referring to the sacrament of chrismation when it says: “...choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.”
- In the Armenian Church, babies receive their baptism, confirmation (chrismation), and first holy communion all at once.

Did You Know?

Many of the Psalms were meant to be sung. Some Psalms include instructions to sing them “to the tune of,” followed by the title of some ancient lost song.

In the Old Testament, God gave the Jews specific directions on how to make the priests’ clothing. In Exodus 28:5, God says the garments should contain “gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.” Beautiful color and sounds are to be part of our expressions of faith.



Reflections of God's Glory

What do you see and hear when you enter an Armenian church? The buildings themselves are unusual, with their domes and vaulted rooflines. Inside, you see colorful stained glass windows (although Armenian churches did not originally feature stained glass) and paintings that show important events in our faith and history. There are gold chalices and jeweled crosses. Our clergymen celebrate Badarak wearing crowns and robes of breathtaking fabrics. Beautiful, ancient-sounding hymns are sung. Clouds of fragrant incense drift slowly toward heaven. You know you are someplace very special.

Though we are a small population, Armenians are well-known for their love of art, music, and literature, as well as a great devotion to their Christian heritage. It is natural that our artists would want to combine those

elements when they created our hymns, priestly vestments, altar icons, and other parts of our church. For them, it is the highest expression of love for God to give their best work to make our Divine Liturgy as full of beauty as possible. We try to come as close as we can to imitating the glory of heaven and God's nature with color, shape, music, and verse.

Scripture encourages us to praise God with instruments and song. Psalm 33:1-5 says:

“Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
Praise the Lord with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully, and shout for joy.
For the word of the Lord is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.
The Lord loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.

In fact, the Book of Psalms is concluded by a reminder to give God musical praise. Read Psalm 150.



Our Armenian Way

There are many distinctive Armenian “church” arts. Here are only a few:



Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts

Starting from the 5th century, with the invention of the Armenian alphabet, Armenians began to engage enthusiastically and passionately in one of their most famous religious art forms: manuscript illumination. “Illumination” refers to the gold embellishment used in letters and motifs which almost made these elements “glow.” But it refers, in general, to the decoration of pages of Scripture manuscripts with small detailed paintings, decorated initial letters, small figures and other adornments on

the page. Toros Roslin was one of the most famous of these artists, working in the 13th century.



Armenian Church Architecture

Armenian churches began to be built as soon as Armenia had been converted to Christianity. St. Gregory the Enlightener himself built the first Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin and many other small chapels and churches in Armenia in the early 4th century.

Historically, typical Armenian churches have a few striking characteristics. First, they are capped by a distinctive dome and cross. Thanks to the intersecting

arches upon which the dome sits, there is no need for pillars to hold the structure up - which creates a spacious feeling. Traditional Armenian churches do not have much decoration or stained glass on the walls. When you go to Armenia and visit the many beautiful ancient churches that dot the countryside, you are struck by the grandeur of their simplicity. Outside of Armenia, Armenian churches vary slightly, depending on local and historic adaptations. For example, our churches in Europe and North America often feature stained glass windows. In Jerusalem and the Holy Land, Armenian churches are ornate, covered with icons and lamps. But everywhere, Armenian churches still retain their basic distinctive features.



Armenian Church Music

Armenian Church music originated in the fifth century A.D. with hymns written by St. Mesrob and St. Sahag (the team that created the Armenian alphabet) and the historian Movses Khorenatsi (he wrote the famous Christmas hymn *Khorhoort Medz* – “Great Mystery”). Countless canonical hymns or sharagans were composed over the centuries and compiled in the *sharagnots* (or “book of *sharagans*”). Each feast day of the Armenian Church calendar was assigned a specific sharagan. One of the most brilliant writers of Armenian Church music was the twelfth-century Catholicos Nersess Shnorhali, who wrote many of our most beloved hymns. The music of our *Badarak* today draws mostly on the compositions of Magar Ekmalian (19th century) and Komitas Vartabed (20th century).



Priestly Vestments

The vestments worn by the priests have evolved through literally centuries. Most of them derive from the garments worn by the temple priests as described in chapters 28-30 of the Book of Exodus. Some vestment pieces, such as the bishop's miter (the tall pointed headdress came into use in the 14th century) entered Armenian tradition later, under different influences. These beautiful vestments represent a spiritual "armor" (Ephesians 6:11-17) that clothe the priest in Christian virtues, preparing him to celebrate Badarak and preside over the Eucharist.



Khachkars

Anyone who spends time in Armenia will notice stone crosses throughout the landscape. These monuments are called khachkars, or "cross-stones." Khachkars made their initial appearance in the 4th century. The 12th and 13th centuries saw the creation of the most complex designs for khachkars. Carved out of local stone, they often featured images of birds, lace patterns, or people.

They were sometimes used as gravestones, but many of them simply marked important places and events. It was a way of dedicating an activity to God, and seeking his blessing and protection. New khachkars were welcomed with prayers, readings, and holy oil or water and wine. They have stood for centuries as open-air places of prayer to remind us that God is everywhere and should be included in everything we do.

The following poem by Vahagn Davtian highlights the solitary beauty of our khachkars:

KHACHKAR

In weeds, among rocks,
In the face of the wind, in snows,
In the searing heat of the sun,
There it stands, alone, erect.

Meek, yet defiant,
Crumbling, yet upright,
Intricate, yet pristine,
There it stands, beneath the heavens.

There it stands, in the face of the sun
As a pillar of sorrow, of compassion,
It stands there, centuries on end,
As beauty Crucified.



Unit One: A Community Over Time

Lesson 9

Putting It All Together



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.

Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings. For you have heard my vows, O God; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

Psalm 61:1-5, NIV

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. Armenian Church buildings are unusual because of their

- a stained glass windows b altars c domes d size

2. Which of the following describes the robes and crown of our clergymen during *Badarak*?

- a somber and dark b antique
c like clothing of ancient Greece d colorful and ornate

3. Psalm 33:1-5 encourages us to praise God with the following musical instrument:

- a harp b 12-string guitar c cymbals d harpsichord

4. Who gave the Jews the directions for how to make the priests' clothing?

- a Moses b David c God d Jacob

5. The decoration of Armenian khachkars, or "cross stones," hit its creative peak in

- a the 20th century b the 12th and 13th centuries
c 33 AD d the 17th and 18th centuries

Putting It All Together

Over the past eight sessions, we have explored what makes the Armenian Church special. We looked at Holy Tradition and its most important element, the Bible. The role of the liturgy and rules were explained. We saw what makes a Christian leader, and we peeked into the lives of some of our church fathers. Finally, in these past weeks, we recalled the sacraments, as well as the tradition of Armenian sacred art and music.

Today, your mission is to tell the story of all that you have learned so far. You will create something that will help you recall your foundations as Armenian Christians. As you pull the material together from past weeks, you will refresh these ideas as you move into the next unit, **Sacred Time - The Church Year**



Words to Live By

“The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Galatians 5:22

Did You Know?

Our liturgical processions and some of our kingly-looking vestments are a legacy of the royal court.

Unit Two: Sacred Time –The Church Year

Lesson 1

We Live in God's Time



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyrn Surpo, Amen.

“Blessed are those who do not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers.”

Psalm 1:1-3

Sacred Time – The Church Year

Until the past 200 years or so, most people lived on farms and in small towns. Far from the cities, people arranged their lives around the seasons. Spring meant planting, summer, tending the crops, and autumn brought the harvest. Winter was a time of repairing farm equipment and trying to keep warm and fed.

As God ordered the world with the seasons, the Church has seasons of its own. They do not have to do with weather, but with the eternity of time and God himself. The Church remembers sacred events and people year after year in a pattern that we intend to repeat until the Lord's return. These special times are called feasts.

In the Armenian Church, feasts may be grouped into general categories such as:

1. Tabernacle Feasts

These are the five great feast days of the church, on which key beliefs and seasons are founded, all deriving from the life of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

- a. Christmas – the birth of our Lord
- b. Easter – the resurrection of our Lord
- c. Transfiguration – Jesus transfigured on Mount Tabor, in the presence of Peter, James & John
- d. Assumption – Mary is taken up into heaven at the end of her life
- e. Exaltation of the Holy Cross - the cross is venerated as the Byzantine army passes through Armenia, having captured the cross from Persian-occupied Jerusalem in the 7th century

2. Dominical Feasts

These are connected to Jesus' life and include:

Theophany (Nativity), Naming of our Lord, Presentation of the Lord, Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Transfiguration



3. Feasts of Mary, Mother of God

Annunciation, Mary's birth, Purification, Conception, Presentation to the Temple, Assumption, Discovery of her sash, Discovery of the reliquary (a box containing a veil belonging to Mary).

4. Feasts of the Cross

- a. Discovery of the Cross – On a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 326 AD, the Empress Helena discovers three crosses in the rubble. When she places the body of a youth being borne in a funeral procession on them, he is revived on the “true” cross of Christ.
- b. Apparition of the Cross – A huge cross appears in the skies over Jerusalem in the year 351.
- c. Exaltation of the Cross – The first such “exaltation” was by St. James the Apostle who elevated a cross to bless the faithful and according to tradition sang for the first time: “We bow before your cross, O Christ.” The other important veneration was when Christ's cross was rescued from Persian captivity in the 7th century by Heraclius and his army (which included Armenians). It was lifted up before crowds of faithful as it passed through Armenia and other lands.
- d. Holy Cross of Varak - The monk Todik discovers (C. 660 AD) the piece of the cross buried by the nun Hripsime on Mt. Varak as she was fleeing persecution.

5. Feasts of the Church

Among these are:

- a. New Sunday – The Sunday immediately after Easter, celebrating the establishment of the Church.
- b. World Church (Green Sunday)– A reference to the Upper Room where Christ's apostles were visited by the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire; a celebration of the life and growth of the entire Christian church.
- c. Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin

6. Saints' Feasts

These numerous feasts remember special people of the Armenian Church as well as those from other churches.

You may hear feasts described as fixed, movable, or tabernacle.

Fixed feasts occur on the same calendar dates each year, such as Theophany (Christmas), which is always on January 6 in the Armenian Church.

Movable feasts change dates according to the cycle of the moon or the need to celebrate on a Sunday. An example of a lunar movable feast is Easter, which occurs sometime between March 22 and April 25. The Exaltation of the Cross is one of the feasts that change dates because they must fall on a Sunday.

Tabernacle feasts (Five Major Feasts): The word “tabernacle” refers to the tents that were set up in fields many years ago so that believers could celebrate together in large groups.

Using the church calendar, complete the following exercise:

1. Find your birthday. Write the date here: _____. Look up the Bible reading in the back of the calendar, and write the Bible reference here: _____.
2. Find Christmas for this calendar year. January 6 falls on what day of the week? _____
3. When is Easter? _____
4. What two major (Tabernacle) feast days fall in the summer? _____ and _____.
What are their dates this year? _____.
5. Flip through the calendar from January to August. Count the church feast days that you had already known about. List 3 here that are new to you: _____

God Calls Us To Celebrate Together

Church feasts did not come about because people wanted an excuse for a party. In the Old Testament, God gave the Jews many feasts to celebrate with specific instructions on how they should observe them. After Jesus' resurrection, Christians, too, marked the events that had changed their lives forever.

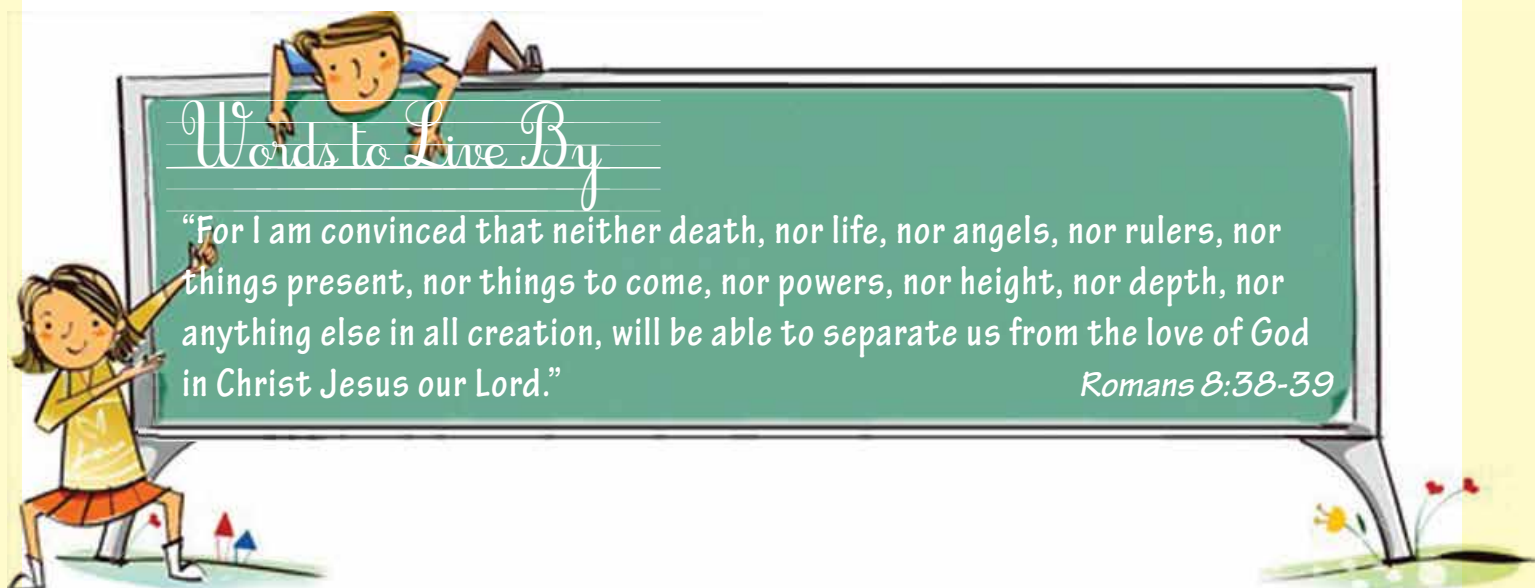
Read the following Scripture passages. In the space provided, write the name of the holiday you think it describes:

Numbers 9:9-14 _____

Luke 2: 1-7 _____

Mark 9: 2-8 _____

Acts 2: 1-4 _____



Did You Know?

An old Armenian tradition holds that between Easter and Ascension, women should not do any sewing in the evenings – otherwise they might become “chicken-blind” or unable to see while looking into the light!

Our Armenian Way

In Unit One, Lesson Three we learned about the Zhamakirk, or “Book of Hours.” This is the daily cycle of prayer observed in Armenian monasteries. We, too, can enjoy these prayers, as we move through each part of our day. We can draw close to God and let his peace fill us before we begin each new activity.

Below is a sampling of the prayers from the Zhamakirk:

Prayer at sunrise

O great and almighty God,
Receive these our morning prayers...
Make your light of righteousness and wisdom
shine over us and make us children of light
and children of day, that in the days that follow
we may lead our life in piety
and live it without sin.

For you are our helper and savior
and to you befits
glory, lordship and honor,
now and forever and ever.
Amen.

Sunrise Service

Prayer in the morning

We give you thanks
O Lord our God....
Strengthen us also,
O Lord,
during this day and at all times,
so that with enlightened minds,
we may always do what is pleasing to you,
and attain the eternal good gifts
with your saints.
Through the grace and mercy
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
to whom befits
glory, lordship and honor,
now and forever and ever.
Amen.

Matins

Evening prayer

Compassionate
Father, nurturer and
creator of all creatures,
receive the prayers of
your servants at this
evening hour, for you
are generous toward
everyone with your
gifts. Have mercy, O Lord, on the whole world and
on your holy church, on the sick, on those who are
in pain, on travelers by land, sea or air, on those who
bear witness to their faith... For you, almighty Lord,
know our needs and our desires more than what we
ask or comprehend. To you, with your Son and most
Holy Spirit, befits glory, lordship and honor, now
and forever and ever. Amen.

Vespers

Nighttime prayers

O beneficent Lord,
Look with your mercy
upon those who worship you
and praise your name.
Send your angel of peace to us,
that he may come
and keep us safe night and day,
in our waking and in our sleep.
So that in this life
with worship and worthy service,
we may arrive at your heavenly kingdom
which you have prepared
from the beginning of the world
for your saints,
and together with them,
give thanks.
We praise the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit,
now and forever
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Nocturns



Lesson 2

Advent and Great Lent: Preparing for Christmas and Easter



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyn Surpo, Amen.

O Christ, you who are the Living Fire, inflame my soul with the fire of your love, which you sent forth upon the earth, that it may make holy my conscience and kindle in my heart the light of your knowledge. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a sinner.

Prayer of St. Nersess Shnorhali, No. 10

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. All of the following are tabernacle (major) feasts except

- a Pentecost b Christmas c Easter d Transfiguration

2. The Assumption is a feast of

- a Sarah b Mary, Mother of God
c St. Hripsime d Priscilla and Aquilla

3. Long ago, tabernacle feasts were often celebrated in

- a tents b caves c the ocean d mangers

4. The Scripture readings at the back of the Diocesan calendar are

- a to be read daily b to be read only on Sundays
c to be chanted during church d fillers for decoration

5. Our Book of Hours has a prayerful service for each of the following daily events except

- a sunrise b morning c evening d before bathing



Did You Know?

As Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he wept as he came near the city. He was very sad about how poorly the people understood God and about what he knew would be the fate of the city.

Luke 19: 41-44

Let's Get Ready!

No important event occurs without preparation. Can you imagine taking a driver's road test without ever having been behind the wheel of a car? How many people would like to have an operation by a surgeon who has never been in an operating room before?

What are things you might do to prepare for the following events?

an exam

a big game

going to church

skiing

getting married

performing in a concert

receiving Holy Communion

babysitting a younger child



It's Not Just About the Party

We need to prepare in our spiritual life, too. In last chapter's discussion of church feasts, we learned that they are a way we can keep in touch with the Lord and his teachings. The fasting, prayer, and other preparations for these feasts bring us even closer to him. Jot down some of your thoughts on the feasts below and how we prepare:

Words/pictures that come to mind when I think of these two celebrations in the Armenian Church:

Christmas

Easter

Words that come to mind when I think of the period of preparation for these two feasts:

The fifty days of Advent (Heesnag Bahk)

The forty days of Great Lent (Medz)

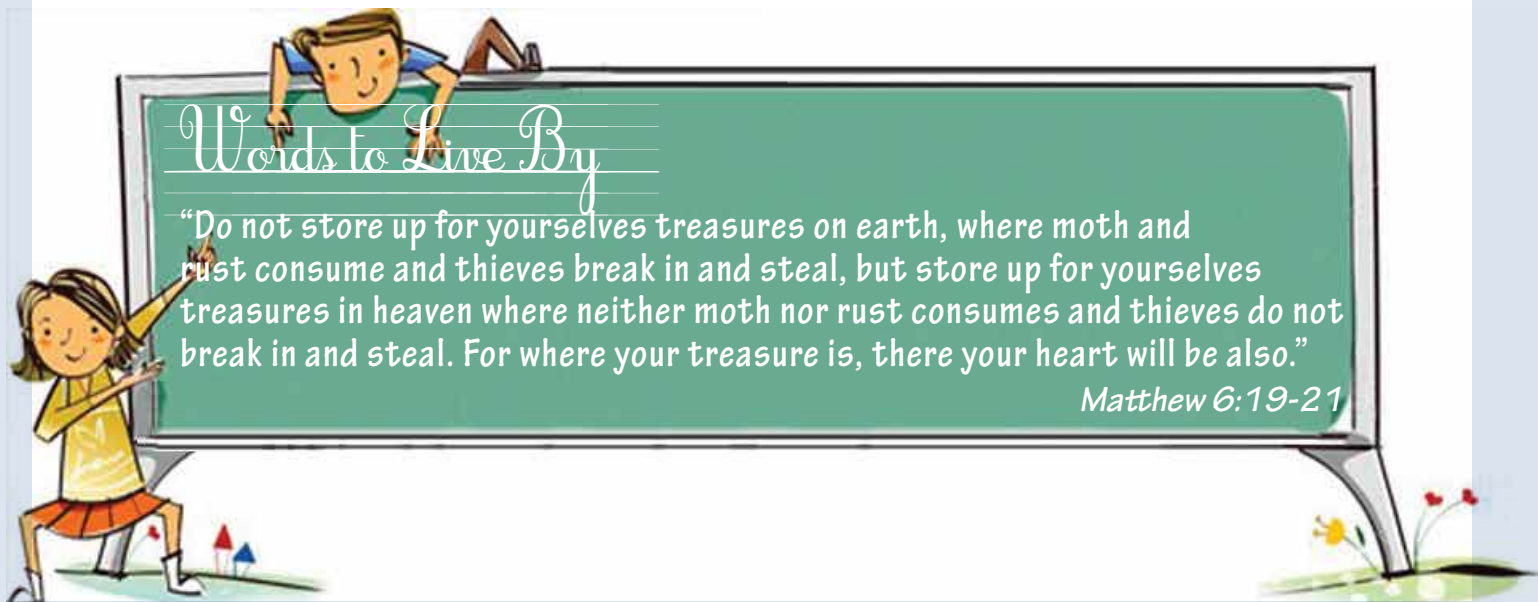
What's the Story?

Fasting and prayer are described many times throughout the Bible. These Scripture verses each have something to say about this: Your teacher will assign you one or two. Sum up the story in a few sentences (write on the lines below), ending with its basic message:

1. Matthew 4:1-4
2. Matthew 6: 5-6
3. Matthew 6:16-18
4. Mark 2:18-20
5. Mark 9:14-29
6. Luke 2:36-37
7. Luke 11:5-10
8. Luke 18:9-14



The message is: _____



Special Times Word Search Puzzle

abstinence holiness

Advent Nativity

apostle Pentecost

Easter prayer

faith Resurrection

fast sacrifice

Great Lent Theophany

Heesnag



Our Armenian Way

Armenians have always had a rich palette of Lenten customs. At Michink, which is the Armenian word for “mid-Lent,” special bread called “Bagharj” was baked. A coin was typically hidden inside this loaf, which was distributed to all around the table. The person who found the coin was considered the “lucky one,” unless, of course, they bit down on it and broke a tooth!

Lesson 3

Easter and the Dominical Feasts



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

Day by day, O Lord, three things we pray. To know you more clearly, to love you more dearly, to follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

St. Richard, Bishop of Chichester

Quick Quiz

Write the correct answer in the space.

1. Fasting is one of the ways we prepare for a _____.
2. The 50-day period leading up to the celebration of Jesus' birth is called _____.
3. The story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) standing in the temple is basically about how to _____.
4. _____ is the period of fasting and prayer that precedes Easter.
5. The popular term for the Wednesday of mid-Lent in the Armenian Church is _____.



Did You Know?

Some scholars believe that the actual date of Jesus' crucifixion is April 7. In the Armenian Church, this also happens to be the date of the Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary.



The Greatest Day of All

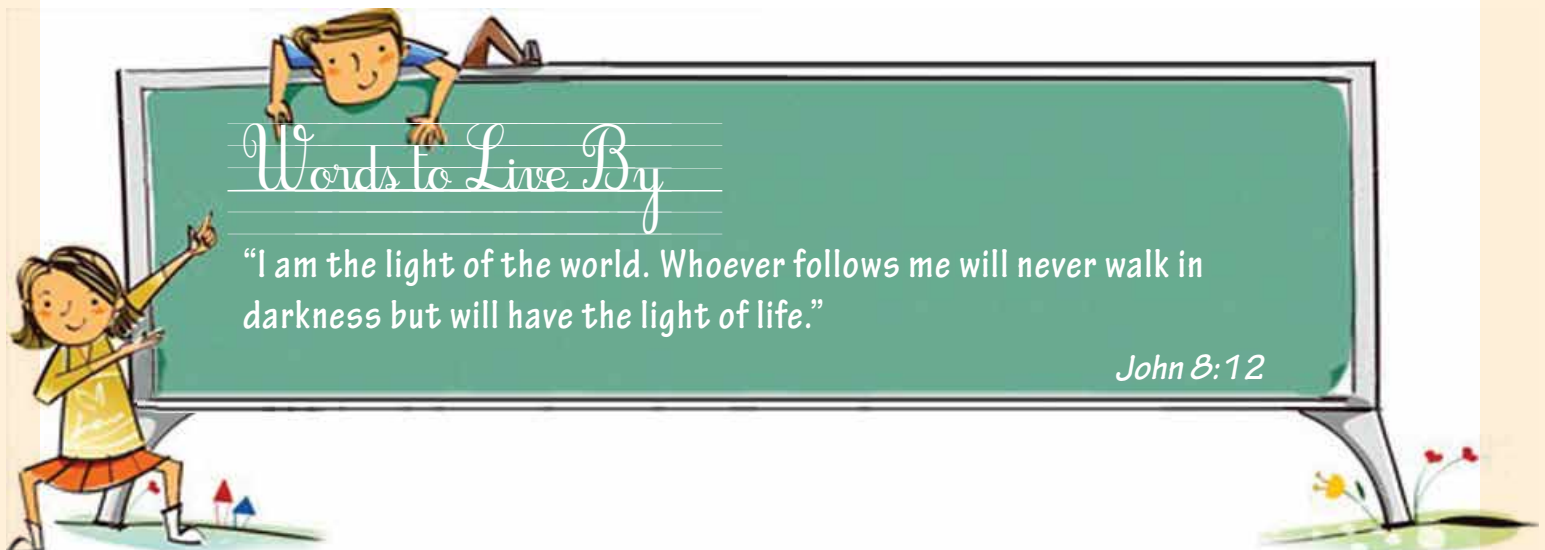
How sad Jesus' family and friends must have been after his crucifixion on the cross, the day we commemorate on Good Friday. They had lost their beloved teacher and they were afraid all their hope was gone. In the dark of the morning, Mary Magdalene trudged forlornly to the tomb to visit Jesus' body. To her horror, the stone was rolled away and Jesus' body was gone! Thinking it had been stolen, she sat crying outside the tomb. Even though Jesus had promised he would rise from the dead, that promise did not really sink in with Mary until he stood before her and called her by name.

Jesus had performed many miracles around his disciples, yet they did not fully realize he was the Son of God until he defeated death by walking out of the grave. Once his friends saw him alive after the Crucifixion, they understood. All he had told them was true! The disciples were overjoyed. They stopped hiding and worrying about being killed. Instead, they soon charged forth like lions to spread the Word fearlessly wherever they were sent.

The Resurrection is the basis for our faith. By this act, Jesus proved he was God. He showed he has the power even to defeat death. We could then know that he has the authority to forgive all sins and give us the eternal life he had promised. Our entire church year rests upon this event. Christmas, Pentecost, and all the other dominical feasts would not be meaningful without the Resurrection.

In the early church, Easter was given the greatest attention. In fact, in those early centuries, converts to Christianity all studied and prepared for their baptisms on Easter Sunday. It was a great day of new life for everyone.

1. Why is Easter so important, more so even than Christmas?
2. What are some ways you have seen God's power in your world?
3. If the Resurrection were to occur today, how do you think people would react?



Celebrations of the Life of Our Lord

Read the following Scripture verses. Draw a line to match them to the Dominical feasts they describe:

Luke 19:37-40

Easter

Luke 2:21

Baptism of Jesus

Mark 16:4-7

Palm Sunday

Luke 24:50-53

Presentation of our Lord at the Temple

Luke 2:8-14

Naming of our Lord

Matthew 17:1-3

Ascension of our Lord

Luke 2:22-24

Theophany/Nativity/Christmas

Matthew 3:13-17

Pentecost

Acts 2:1-4

Transfiguration of Jesus



from Jerusalem

They Have Seen the Risen Lord!

Many saw Jesus after he rose from the dead. Read all about it in:

John 20: 11-18

John 20: 24-29

John 21: 1-14

Hints of Jesus: Daniel

Daniel was a faithful Jew. No matter what sort of pressure he faced, he never turned his back on his faith. He prayed each day and kept all the dietary laws. Under God's protection, Daniel rose to a position of power as an advisor to kings.

Eventually, Daniel was working for Darius, king of the Medes. Darius was so impressed with Daniel's work that he planned to give him charge of the entire kingdom. Darius' other advisors were furious



when they found this out. They convinced Darius to pass a law forbidding anyone in the kingdom to pray to any being but the king himself. At their insistence, Darius agreed to this.

The jealous advisors knew that Daniel prayed to God every day without fail, so they arranged to “catch” Daniel praying to someone other than Darius. Though Darius liked Daniel, he was forced by his own law to throw Daniel into a pit filled with lions. The pit was covered with a stone, and the king retired to a restless and anxious night. The next morning, Darius hurried to the pit and called out to Daniel.

To the king’s joy, Daniel was alive and well. Daniel told Darius that God had sent his angels to protect him from the lions. Darius realized who the living God really was, and he ordered all his subjects to honor him.

This event reminds us a bit of Jesus. The Pharisees and scribes who tried to turn the people against Jesus are like the jealous advisors who plotted against Daniel. Like Daniel, Jesus was turned over to certain death by someone with whom he worked closely. Most importantly, Jesus came back to us, not merely from a den of dangerous animals, but from death itself!



Our Armenian Way

The Armenian Church commemorates the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday with the “Khavaroom,” or “Vigil” service. During this solemn service, we remember the betrayal, arrest, and suffering of Jesus before his Crucifixion. Among the hymns, Psalms, and other prayers are six Gospel readings: John 13:16-18:1, Luke 22:1-65, Mark 14:27-72, Matthew 26:31-56, Matthew 26:57-75, and John 18:2-19:16.

Some Armenians have the custom of tying knots on a thin string with each of these Gospel readings during the Khavaroom. Afterwards, the string with the knots is worn around the wrist to remind the believer of the sufferings of Christ on our behalf. There is no set time for removal, but some wearers keep the string on until the Ascension, some until Pentecost, and others until it falls off. No matter how long it is worn, the Vigil Service bracelet is a quiet way to frequently recall the great gift of our salvation which was bought with the Blood of the Lamb of God.



Lesson 4

Feasts of the Cross



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

Jesus, you taught us so much.

You taught us how to love through our sacrifice.

You showed us the straightest path to the Father

Through the love for him and our neighbor.

May we have the strength to follow your example and your path,

So that we may be worthy to be chosen by you,

When you return as our king and our judge.

My Lenten Journal

Quick Quiz

True or False

- The Virgin Mary was the first person to notice the empty tomb on Easter morning.
- The disciples began to understand that Jesus was the Son of God after he defeated death at his Resurrection.
- Christmas, Pentecost, and all other church feasts would not be meaningful without the Resurrection.
- Daniel, whose experiences prefigured those of Jesus, was also a famous poet.
- Some Armenians tie knots in a string during the Vigil Service on Palm Sunday.

Our Symbol of Victory

Execution on a cross was something to be avoided at all costs. It was an extremely barbaric way to put someone to death. In addition, crucifixions were public, so all who passed by could ridicule the victim. It was considered the most shameful way to die.

So why did Jesus, God and perfect human being, endure such suffering and humiliation? As the Lamb of God, Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice and sin-bearer. He took the punishment for every sin of every one of his people, past, present, and future. Such a huge burden of sin calls for a huge punishment. It required nothing less than God himself suffering death and enduring hell. When Jesus lay still in the tomb, he was not merely resting up for Easter. In those hours his holy nature suffered all that we would face in hell if he didn't take our place. What greater love is there? John 15:13 states "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." When Jesus was raised on the third day, the cross took on a new meaning. It became a sign of the defeat of death and our victory over sin through him. When we see a cross, we feel gratitude. We appreciate what Jesus endured for us, and we celebrate the love that motivated him to offer himself in our place.



Friends of Jesus

After such a demonstration of God's love for us, we realize we can never repay the debt we owe him. We can, however, model his attitude of service and sacrifice. Luke 9:23 states "Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'" This doesn't mean we literally walk around carrying a cross. One way is to make it a point to help and serve others in his name.

1. What are some of the things we have that we can share with others?
2. How will God help us with these efforts?
3. How can our words be a reflection of Christ's love?
4. What are some of the issues you think could be helped by Christian action?
5. Read Matthew 6:1-2. When you help others, how does God want you to act about your good works?

Exaltation of the Cross

The gold, jewel-encrusted crosses we see in church remind us of the glory of Jesus' triumph over sin and the grave. Instead of shame and death, now when we see a cross we think of its role in helping us reach God's kingdom. We rest in the peace of our relationship as members of his family.

Years after the Crucifixion, fragments of the Holy Cross were given to various churches, including ours. The major part of the cross remained in Jerusalem, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, until wars caused possession to go back and forth. Today, we venerate this holy

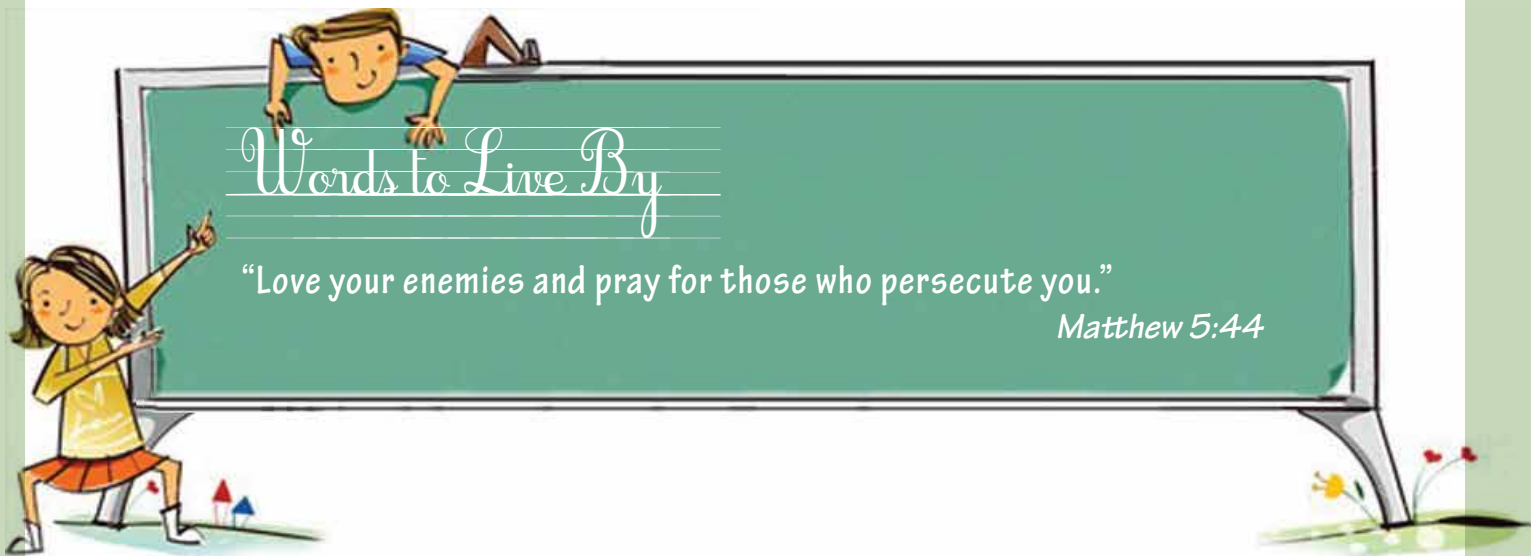
object and all its meaning with the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, or "Khachveratz." This feast occurs on the Sunday nearest September 14, and recalls an interesting historical event. The Persians had captured the cross of Christ when they conquered Jerusalem. In the 7th century, a coalition of forces (which included Armenians) led by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius marched on Jerusalem, seized the cross, and passed through Armenia where it was lifted up and venerated by the crowds that gathered on the way. An extraordinary moment! The feast day takes place at the same time as the harvest and Armenians take this opportunity to give God the credit for a bountiful harvest. We thank him for blessing our fields and farms.

During Khachveratz there is a procession with the cross in the church. We decorate the cross with sweet basil, which has a wonderful fragrance and is used in many foods. The faithful bring home a piece of the basil, which is said to relieve pain, as Christ's death on the cross and his Resurrection relieve us of the pain and sorrow of sin.



Did You Know?

The Armenian people's love of Jesus has led to many traditions and legends about the cross. One of these happened long ago, when villagers would wash the cross of the local monastery and save the water they used. They would then feed the water to their animals or pour it on them to keep them healthy.



Our Armenian Way

There are other famous feasts of the cross. One that is specific to the Armenian Church is called "The Holy Cross of Varak."

In the seventh century, Armenia had suffered terribly in the wars between Persia and Byzantium. Many Armenians had died in the conflicts, and homes, fields, and livestock had been destroyed.

One night during this trying time, in about 660 AD, a hermit named Todik noticed a light in the shape of a cross in the night sky. Bright as the sun, the light graced the Varak Mountains of Van. Todik and his student Hovel followed the

miraculous light, which eventually rested over the monastery at Varak. Entering the chapel there, Todik and Hovel discovered a fragment of a cross that had been left there long ago by St. Hripsime.

The light stayed for twelve days. This gave thousands of the faithful an opportunity to see the miracle. Catholicos Nersess III was so overcome with joy at the sight that he proclaimed a week of prayer and fasting, and he composed the hymn "Through the Sign of Your All-Conquering Cross." The cross-shaped light lifted the spirits of the people of the battered Armenian nation and encouraged them in their difficult times. They knew God was thinking of them and would not desert them, as we know he will never leave us, either.

Lesson 5

The Feasts of Mary



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyun Surpo, Amen.

Dear Mary, Mother of God, you who are like a miraculous flower bearing the sweet smell of eternal life, fill us with obedience and love of God. Amen.

Adapted from "Oh, Miraculous Flower," the Armenian hymn of Assumption

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. In Jesus' time, crucifixions were public because

- a there were no prisons b the authorities were afraid of being sued
c the condemned were to be a public example d those occasions were feasts days

2. Jesus endured the cross for all the following reasons except

- a the punishment had to be big enough to cover all our sins b he loves us
c God told Adam and Eve this was going to happen
d he voluntarily paid the penalty for our sins

3. When Jesus said "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me," he meant

- a only those who are killed in his name can be saved
b we are to model his attitude of service and sacrifice
c all believers must make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem
d we have to be suffering and unhappy to be Christians

4. _____ is used to decorate the cross during the Feast of the Exaltation

- a sweet basil b bitter herbs c rosemary d wheat

5. The Holy Cross of Varak appeared shortly after

- a the First World War b World War II
c the Russian Revolution d the wars between Persia and Byzantium

God's Wonderful Choice

God knew he could only entrust his Son to a very special mother. Mary's faith and devotion to him made her the perfect mother for our blessed Savior.

1. What are some of the qualities that make a good mother?
2. How has the role of motherhood changed since the time of Christ?
3. How do you think modern society views motherhood?

Unswerving Faith and Obedience

Mary, the only child of Joachim and Anna, was raised on the teachings of the Old Testament. Her parents were so grateful to God for her birth, that they gave her to service in the Temple of Jerusalem when she was a little girl. As she grew, so did her love for the law of God and the writings of the prophets. As was the custom, at the appropriate age, an engagement was arranged between Mary and Joseph.

All was progressing normally, when one day an angel came to Mary. He told her she was much favored by God, and she would give birth to a son who would be the Savior of the world. Since Mary had not even so much as held a man's hand, she asked the angel how this was possible. He answered that the child would come from the Holy Spirit. Though very confused and afraid, Mary said "I am the Lord's servant. May it be as you have said." (Luke 1:38)

Joseph, the man pledged to marry Mary, played an important part in the event. Not wishing to expose her to any public disgrace, he decided to quietly end the engagement. An angel then appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife (Matthew 1:18-21). He obeyed God's will, remained with Mary, and together they cared for the young Jesus.

Mary's perfect obedience and Joseph's kindness are an example for us, too. Many times we know what is right, but we don't act on it because it might be difficult. Even though Mary and Joseph faced serious consequences because of the miraculous pregnancy, they never hesitated in doing what God asked.



Did You Know?

Armenians love the Virgin Mary very much and many Armenian names for girls such as Mariam, Vartouhi (Rose), Markarit, (Pearl), Azniv, Lusin, Vergin, Sirarpi, Srpouhi, Aroosiag, Takouhi, Lousaper, Diroohi, and Zevart are directly connected to the name Mary or to attributes of Jesus' mother.

Where Do You Stand?

Line up at the back of the room. Look at the following statements. If you agree with them, stand still. If you totally disagree, take a step forward.

If you are babysitting your little cousin, it is okay to have a friend come over to keep you company. Discuss.

You are out shopping and one of your friends takes something without paying for it. It's better not to say anything to the store manager. Discuss.

You aren't sick, but you really don't want to go to school. It's okay to tell your parents you don't feel well so you can stay home. Discuss.

Everyone is talking about someone you know who supposedly did something awful at a party last weekend. It's fine to stay and listen. Discuss.

Your older brother/sister came in last night after drinking. You don't say anything to your parents. Discuss.

You don't like what your mom/dad packed for your lunch today, so you throw it out and buy something else. Discuss.



What's Happening?

Read the following Scripture verses. In the space provided, tell what event in Mary's life is described.

Luke 1:46-55 _____

Luke 2:34-35 _____

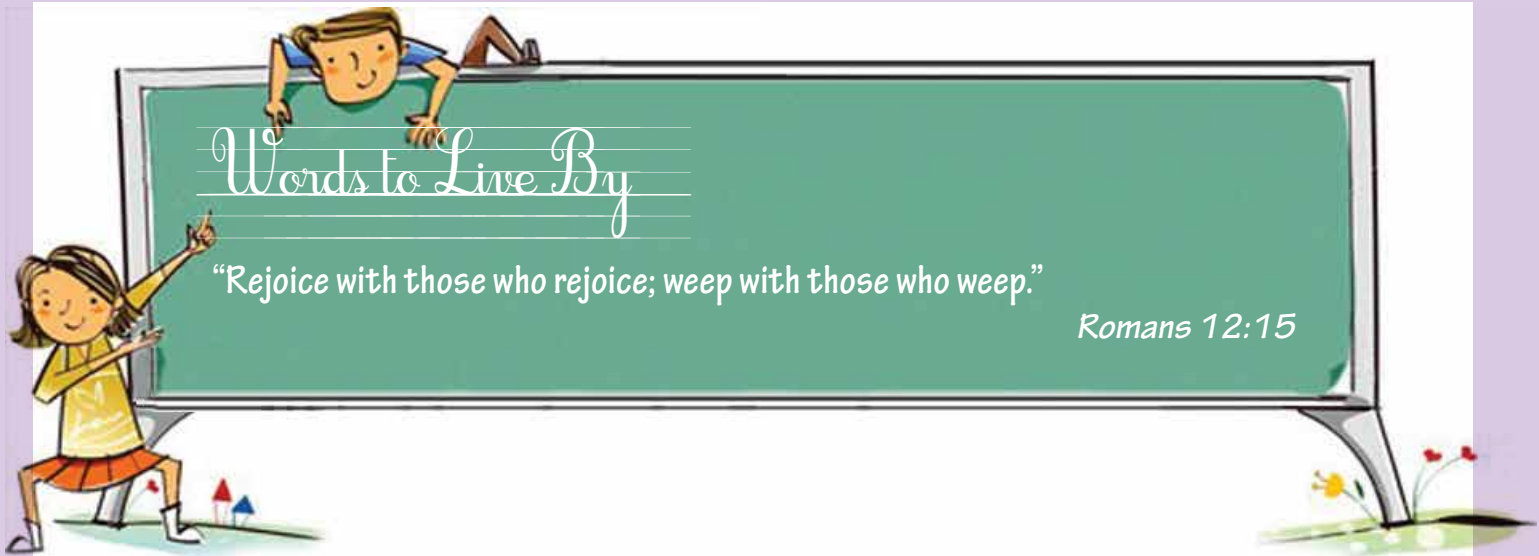
Luke 2:6-7 _____

Luke 2:41-49 _____

Luke 8:19-21 _____

John 2:1-11 _____

John 19:25-27 _____



Our Armenian Way

The founders of our church inspired our love and veneration of the Holy Virgin Mary. Chosen by God, Mary sets the standard for true discipleship which is founded on faith and response in action. Through her, by the Holy Spirit, God became a human being. One of our Tabernacle Feasts, the Assumption, celebrates Mary's welcome into heaven.

After Mary witnessed the Crucifixion of her Son Jesus, she lived in Jerusalem for the remainder of her life. She lived about fifteen years after that tragic and necessary event until she at last left her earthly life. One of the disciples, most likely Bartholomew, was away from Jerusalem at the time of her burial.

When Bartholomew returned, he was informed of Mary's death. Having missed the funeral, Bartholomew insisted that he be allowed to see the Mother of God one last time. He and the other disciples had her grave opened. Mary's body, however, was gone! She had been taken up into heaven to rejoice with her Son. We call the Feast of the Assumption "Verapokhoom," which means "taken up," in recognition of the miraculous way Mary's body was removed to heaven.

We celebrate the Assumption in August with the Blessing of the Grapes. In the Old Testament, grapes are frequently offered to God as the first fruits of the harvest. Jesus, the first fruit of Mary, was offered to God for our sins. Seedless grapes are generally used in this blessing to signify that God became incarnate without a human father.



Lesson 6

The Lord's Day and Every Day: Nourished in Christ



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.

We thank you, Father Almighty, who did prepare for us the Holy Church as a haven, a temple of holiness, where the Holy Trinity is glorified. Amen.

Priest's prayer from the Armenian Divine Liturgy

Quick Quiz

True or False

- The Virgin Mary's parents were Abraham and Sarah.
- Mary, Jesus' mother, was Jewish.
- King Solomon informed Mary that she was going to have a baby.
- Scripture tells us that the Virgin Mary will one day rejoin her Son in heaven.
- Our Blessing of the Grapes feast has its root in the Old Testament custom of offering the first fruits of the harvest to God.



Did You Know?

While preparing for Holy Communion we sometimes have trouble remembering which sins we should recall to God. We can quickly bring them to mind by thinking of these three categories: thoughts, words, and actions.

Blessings of the Badarak

You know by now that each Sunday we celebrate the Badarak. But what do we really understand about it? The very name, “Soorp Badarak,” which means “Holy Sacrifice,” tells us a great deal. It reminds us of Jesus’ suffering and sacrifice so we could be part of God’s family.

The solemn dignity and reverence of our hymns, prayers, and Bible readings remind us of God’s righteousness and eternal nature. Holy Communion is the most important way we can keep Jesus inside our hearts, bodies, and minds. As we receive Communion, we have an opportunity to follow his commands: “Take and eat; this is my body,” and “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:26-28)

Along with other believers, we strengthen our bond with God and each other through these actions. The Badarak is the opportunity to encounter God directly through the Holy Gospel and Holy Communion and be refreshed by God’s Spirit as we head into a new week. God has given us the spiritual tools to take his Good News into the world – now it is up to us to use them.

1. How do you personally participate in the Liturgy?
2. What can we expect to receive from the Badarak each week?
3. What could you be doing to participate more fully in the worship service?
4. The Fourth Commandment says “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” What things are you doing on Sunday that “keep it holy”? What things are you doing that perhaps you shouldn’t?



A Call to Worship

Where did we get the idea to worship God? Did it come from the church fathers? Was it started by the ancient kings of Israel? God himself gave us this command. As our Creator and the One who sustains life with food, water, and all the things we need, God wants us to look to him in every circumstance.

As early as the book of Exodus, God gave Moses even the minutest details of how worship should take place. He gave instructions on exactly how to build the tabernacle, what the priests should wear, and even the type of oil to be used in the lamps. He spelled out how many animals of each type should be sacrificed for a given sin or occasion. He told us everything we needed to know to please him. Of course, we know that even his chosen people, the Israelites, still disobeyed, so he sent his Son as the sacrifice that would cover the new Israel, which is the Church, the Body of Christ. At the Last Supper, Jesus broke bread and shared the pieces along with a common cup of wine with his disciples, asking them to “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19), establishing a new covenant with the people of God.

We continue to pray and sing our Divine Liturgy to this day in remembrance of our Lord, incorporating traditional worship practices from Scripture and other traditional sources (such as the royal court).

Read Psalm 95:6, 1 Chronicles 16:29, Psalm 100, and Matthew 26:26-30 to get an idea of some ways to express worship.



Our Armenian Way

In earlier lessons, we discussed the cycle of daily prayers from the Zhamakirk, or “Book of Hours.” In an Armenian monastery, the Zhamakirk is followed throughout the day in order to keep the faithful mindful of God at all times. At 9:00 AM, the prayers are addressed to the Holy Spirit. At noon, they recall God the Father, as well as the suffering and Crucifixion of the Son. The 3:00 PM prayers are dedicated to Jesus, his death, and his gift of the Holy Spirit.

The following sample shows us excerpts of the prayer service for the Midday hour:

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, you who are great in mercy

Who of your own free will endured at this hour the sufferings of the cross and of death on account of our sins

and did abundantly bestow the gifts of your Holy Spirit upon the blessed Apostles, make us, also, O Lord, we pray, sharers in your divine gifts, in the forgiveness of sins and in the reception of the Holy Spirit.

That we may be made worthy to thank and to glorify you with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages, Amen.

Imagine the peace and calm you would bring to your day if you stopped for a moment and recited a prayer.



Words to Live By

“Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”

Psalm 100:3

Lesson 1

So What Am I Supposed To Do?



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyn Surpo, Amen.

Guard us, O Christ our God, under the shadow of your holy and venerable cross in peace. Deliver us from enemies visible and invisible. Make us worthy to give thanks to you and to glorify you with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer from the Divine Liturgy

Quick Quiz

Write the correct answer in the space.

1. "Soorp Badarak" means _____.
2. The Fourth Commandment tells us to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it _____.
3. In Matthew 26:26-28, Jesus tells the disciples, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the _____ of sins."
4. In the book of _____, God gave Moses detailed instructions on how worship is to be conducted.
5. One of the most important ways we can keep Jesus in our minds, hearts and bodies is by receiving _____.

Words to Live By

"Be still and know that I am God!"

Psalm 46:10



What Do I Really Know About God?

Our understanding of God can be described as “head knowledge” but also “heart knowledge.”

1. What is the difference?
2. Where did you first learn about God or Jesus?
3. What can you do to know him better?
4. How often do you think about God or Jesus outside of church or Sunday School? Many times a day? Not at all? Once a day? On Sunday morning?

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Jesus’ work on the Cross is the sole source of our salvation. By themselves, even our best actions would not be enough to gain salvation on their own. Because we are not perfect, there would always be some little sin to separate us from God, even if we were very good people. As the Bible says in Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

We participate in good works because we are commanded to do so by God, and because good works are a reflection of our true love for Christ. Filled with the Holy Spirit, we follow his commands to serve others. We may even attract others to him when they see us happily perform deeds that show the positive effect his love and mercy have on us.

Scripture has plenty to say about the connection between faith and deeds. Read the following verses:

Matthew 5:16

James 2:14-19

1 Peter 2:12

Psalm 34:12-16

For each Scripture passage, rewrite its message as if you are going to explain it to kindergarteners.



Did You Know?

There is an interesting legend concerning Psalm 46 and William Shakespeare. He was 46 years old when the King James Version of the Bible was released. If you count 46 words in from the beginning of the Psalm (in that translation), you get to the word “shake.” If you count 46 words back from the end of the Psalm (excluding the final word “selah” which was a choral instruction), you come to “spear.” Hmmm...did Shakespeare have a hand in the translation and did he slip his name into the text?

Revisiting St. Gregory of Narek

There is a great difference between knowing about God and actually knowing God. There are highly educated individuals who can quote endless factoids about God and the Bible, but they have no idea of the real message. There are also people who can't even read who are excellent examples of Christian love and service.

When we think of someone who devotes his or her life to serving God, we usually think of a person who serves the poor or sick. Christians can also serve in other ways. God gave us many talents, and they can all be used for his glory. One example of such a person is St. Gregory of Narek (c.945-1003). In a previous lesson, we learned that he had little interest in anything the world had to offer; he was only interested in seeking God.

Gregory was very conscious of his sinful nature. He strongly felt the unhappiness that comes from being apart from the Lord. Toward the end of his life, he wrote a series of prayers collected under the title *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart*. This was Gregory's way of letting his works speak of his true love for the Lord. At one time, these prayers were so cherished by the faithful, people would place them under their pillow for healing. Today, we still look to his writings as we seek God.



Hey, Coach!

Can you think of anyone living today who would be a good mentor to those who wish to follow Christ? Anyone who lived in the past? What is it about them that shows they are followers of God?

Our Armenian Way



Canonization by the Church refers to the process of recognizing a person's faithfulness to Christ and their holy works (known by God and attested to by many witnesses) and then declaring them to be a saint. In the early Christian Church, there were four conditions for canonization of saints: if they had been martyred for their faith, lived a holy life, performed miracles, or preached and spread the Christian faith. The martyrs of the 1915 Armenian Genocide in Turkey were canonized in 2015. Before that, it had been 400 years since a saint had been canonized by the Armenian Church and that was Movses Khorenatsi. Remember, too, that while the Church acknowledges special people of extraordinary faith in this way, it does not mean that others, unknown, have not lived saintly, spiritually excellent lives. *God* is the ultimate canonizer!

Lesson 2

David: God's Success Story



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.

You are my king and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes. I do not trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; but you give us victory over our enemies, you put our adversaries to shame. In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever.

Psalm 44:4-8

Quick Quiz

Write the correct answer in the space.

1. People's understanding of God is sometimes described as "head knowledge" and "_____ " knowledge.
2. Jesus' work on the _____ is the sole source of our salvation.
3. Romans 3:23 says "for all have sinned and fall short of the _____ of God."
4. This saintly man wrote the famous series of prayers entitled *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart* _____.
5. According to Psalm 46, the world will _____ when God lifts his voice.

Words to Live By

"See, I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

Matthew 10:16



No Fear of the Philistine

For weeks the army of the Philistines had camped on one side of the Valley of Elah. The Israelites, trying to find the best time to attack, watched from the other side with Saul, their king. The Philistines had a soldier named Goliath, who was a giant of perhaps nine feet. Each day, Goliath stepped out from the Philistine lines and mocked the Israelites. He challenged them to send a soldier to kill him, but each time the Israelites ran from him in fear because of his great size.

David, a local shepherd boy, had brothers serving with the Israelite forces. David's father sent him to deliver food to his soldier brothers. David heard the insults of Goliath. He was offended that anyone would dare to mock the army of the living God.

Though the giant Goliath was very well armed and in full armor, David

was determined to strike down the Philistine. He declined the armor that was offered to him by King Saul because he could not move around comfortably, and David faced his opponent with only his sling and five stones.

David said to Goliath, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." (1 Samuel 17:45). Goliath moved to attack David, but the shepherd boy killed the giant with a stone from his sling. David placed his confidence in God, not in weapons or armor.

Read 1 Samuel 18:6-9. Discuss these questions:

- David killed the enemy that was bothering King Saul the most. What was Saul's response to David's victory?
- Why do you think Saul reacted this way?
- What are some situations where you have felt jealous of someone?
- Have you ever been the object of jealousy? How did it feel?

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

As God judged David by what was inside his heart, so will he judge our thoughts, words, and actions. He wants to see what we can do with the abilities he has given us. A successful life is one lived for him.

The world has very different standards for measuring success than does God. How would you define success?



Beyond Goliath

When David was anointed king he was very young and a mere shepherd. But God saw his potential and guided Samuel to the right choice by telling him that while “others look at the outward appearance, the Lord looks on the heart.” (I Samuel 16: 7) David loved God’s law and for a long time worked hard to do his will. In Acts 13:22 Paul tells the people of Antioch that God called David “a man after my own heart.” During his reign, David wrote many of the psalms. He was also a fine musician, and he set many of the psalms to music.

As king, David won battle after battle. He kept God first in his heart and was thankful for his blessings. One spring day, however, David took his eyes off God and turned them on Bathsheba, the wife of another man. His love for her led to more disobedience and many tragedies, including the murder of Bathsheba’s husband (he was purposely sent off to war). God finally sent an angel to destroy David’s people until David admitted to God that all the problems were because of his sin. David repented and turned back to God.

If you read the psalms of David, you can clearly see the depth of his relationship with God. He came to God with all his joys and sorrows, inspired by his experiences as a warrior, a poet, a simple shepherd, a king. God was David’s best friend, even when David was distracted by sin. Some psalms are full of joy and gratitude, while others sound like a person who is complaining to the only friend who will listen.

Read Psalm 55:1-11. What is the mood here?
Read Psalm 133. What might have been going on in David’s life when he wrote this psalm?



Did You Know?

When David was helping prepare for the construction of God’s Temple, he provided around 3750 tons of gold, along with many other valuables! *(I Chronicles 22:14)*

Is Your Heart in the Right Place?

David's life is a rich and dramatic history. We see his rise, fall, and restoration to God. It may seem odd, though, that God loved David so much even though he committed much bigger sins than most average humans ever will.

There are three things we may take away from David's example. First, God saw something in David's heart that greatly pleased him. It may have been David's unshakeable faith in him, or the way David looked upon the Lord as his closest friend, or these and other things only God could see.

The second thing that comes to mind when we think of David is the greatness of God's forgiveness. We see David's murders, adultery, and other misdeeds and realize that if God can forgive those sins, then he can forgive anything! No matter what we may have done, we can always come back to him.

Lastly, we can look at David and see that he had many flaws, yet God created him to accomplish great things. We can be assured that even if we don't think we have any special talents, God doesn't see us that way. He looks at what is inside us and sees so much more than we ever could. Any of us, no matter how unimportant we think we are, can live life for the glory of the Lord. If we point our hearts in his direction, heaven's the limit!

How Can I Help You?

- Think of different abilities that various people have. How could they be utilized for God's glory?



Our Armenian Way

King David has a feast day in the Armenian Church. As an example of someone who loved the Lord with all his heart and who was the recipient of God's forgiveness, David is one of the saints celebrated in December, along with Stephen, Peter, Paul, and others. His feast occurs following the fourth Sunday of Advent. We celebrate his life in the season leading to the Nativity, because this Old Testament king of Israel reminds us of how special God's people are to him.

Lesson 3

Jonah, The Reluctant Prophet



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

We remember you, Lord; our prayer comes to you in your holy temple. Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty. But with a voice of thanksgiving, we will sacrifice to you; what we have vowed we will pay. Deliverance belongs to the Lord!”

Based on Jonah 2:7-9

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer

1. The Israelites faced the army of the Philistines at the

- a wall of Jericho b Valley of Elah c Mount of Olives d Garden of Gethsemane

2. The Philistines had a giant soldier named

- a Saul of Tarsus b Cain c Goliath d Ahab

3. David did not want to wear the armor offered to him by

- a Joshua b Goliath c Jesus d King Saul

4. David used what weapon to kill Goliath?

- a crossbow b slingshot c sword d spear

5. David wrote many of the

- a Psalms b Lamentations c Epistles d Ten Commandments

Did You Know?

You may have an Armenian friend by the name of “Hovnan.” Hovnan is the Armenian for Jonah.

He Didn't Listen the First Time

Read Jonah 1

1. Why might Jonah not have wanted to do what God asked?
2. Look at Matthew 8: 23-27 which is about Jesus' miraculous calming of the storm. Compare and contrast with Jonah 1.
3. Jonah was in the great fish three days, then came out alive. What other Bible occurrence reminds you of this situation?
4. Which one of God's commands do you find hard to follow? Why?
5. Jonah had some character traits that made it hard to help Nineveh. What were they? How do you usually solve your problems? Does God enter into your problem-solving process? Why or why not?



The Great Commission – Don't Be a Jonah

Christians often refer to something called “The Great Commission.” This is simply God’s command to take his message of salvation into the entire world. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Like the prophet Jonah, we are to share God’s message with as many people as we can, even though there can be negative consequences for this. From the prophets of the Old Testament to modern-day missionaries who leave home and family to spread God’s Word, history is full of people who suffered and were even killed because they would not keep quiet about their faith. Even today Christians are persecuted and murdered by those who refuse to hear the healing message of our Lord.

We can carry out the Great Commission in many ways. Sometimes God will provide you with an opportunity to talk with another person about your faith. Other times, you can allow your behavior in certain situations to be proof of your love for Jesus without you saying a word. The way you allocate your time, money, or other resources can speak loud and clear about where you stand with God. Your enthusiasm and solidarity at church or Sunday School can be an encouragement to someone who isn’t getting the message.

How could you express God’s message to others – with or without words - in the following places?

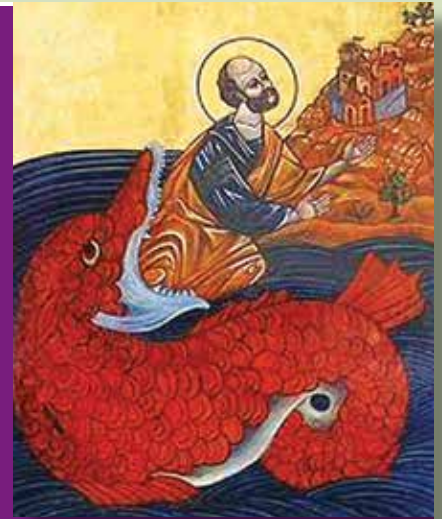
- Sports event
- Hospital emergency room
- School cafeteria where someone is being bullied
- Nursing home
- Animal shelter
- Scene of natural disaster
- Playground fight
- Wedding
- At the airport during a massive flight delay
- In a garden
- In a courtroom



Jonah, You Just Don't Get It!

Even after spending three damp days inside of a large fish and being spit up on shore, Jonah was still giving God a hard time. After Jonah finally did as he was told and delivered God's message to Nineveh, he was very annoyed when God spared the city after the residents changed their bad behavior. Jonah complained to God about sending him on the mission to Nineveh when Jonah knew God would spare the city because of his great mercy and compassion.

God taught a subtle and somewhat humorous lesson to straighten Jonah out once and for all. After speaking to the Ninevites, Jonah went out of the city and waited on a hillside to see what would happen. God caused a big, shady vine to grow over Jonah's head. Jonah was very pleased and enjoyed resting under the vine. At dawn the next morning, God sent a worm to destroy the vine. Then he sent a blazing sun and hot wind to make Jonah so uncomfortable he told God he wished he could die. Read Jonah 4:9-11 to find out the conclusion.



Our Armenian Way

Jonah and the other prophets are part of the foundation of our worship. We look to the writings of Isaiah, Elijah, and others to point us to the true Christ. They also serve as examples of leaders who would not compromise God's message no matter what happened to them. Besides the Bible writers, we also have Gregory the Illuminator, Gregory of Narek, and other teachers from church history who spread God's message in lasting ways.

The words of the prophets are woven throughout the Badarak. We see their role in our faith in the Havadamk, or Nicene Creed, which states "We believe also in the Holy

Spirit, the uncreate and the perfect; who spoke through the law and through the prophets and through the Gospels." Elsewhere in the Divine Liturgy, the Prayer after Communion quotes the prophet David, who wrote in Psalm 28:9, "Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd and carry them forever." Our Eucharistic Prayer comes from the Egyptian theologian St. Athanasius. Each week when we kiss the Gospel book at the conclusion of the Badarak, we recall those who carried the Word to the ends of the earth, and we renew our pledge to do the same.

Words to Live By

"I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise will be at all times in my mouth."

Psalm 34:1

Lesson 4

Paul: Champion of the Gospel



Pray Together

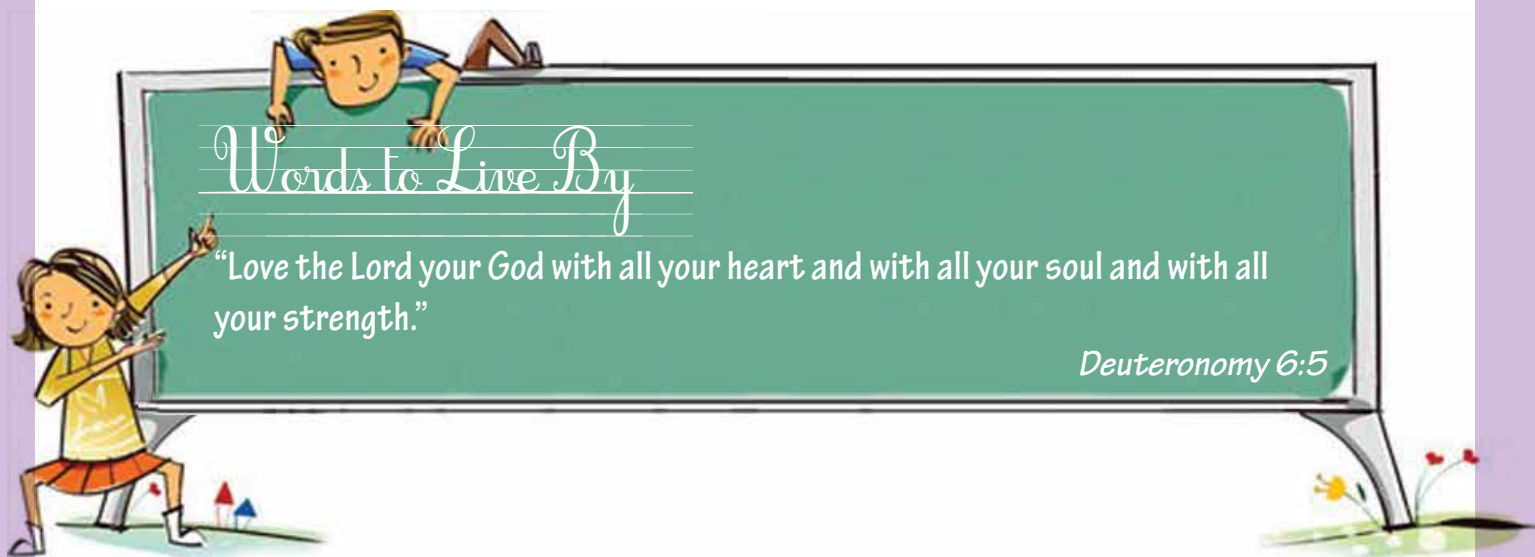
Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyn Surpo, Amen.

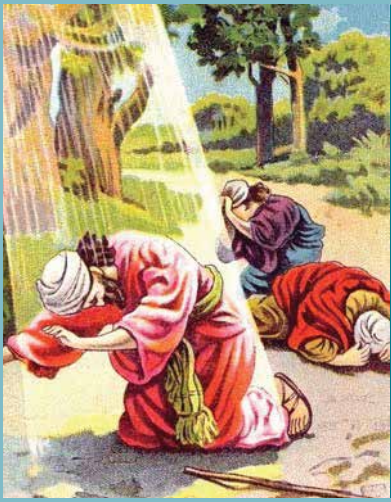
Lord, St. Paul was the greatest missionary of the Christian church. Help us be enthusiastic messengers of your word, also, sharing the Good News of life lived in you through our every action, every word, every thought. Amen.

Quick Quiz

True or False

- The Great Commission refers to the sins of Judas, the betrayer of Jesus.
- In modern times, it is perfectly safe for missionaries all over the world to speak about Jesus.
- Your everyday behavior is one way to let people know you are a follower of Jesus.
- Jonah was very happy God spared the city of Nineveh.
- Our Nicene Creed contains a statement that mentions the prophets.





Did You Know?

After Saul was stricken with blindness on the road to Damascus, God told a disciple named Ananias to find Saul so he could help restore Saul's sight. Ananias knew about Saul's reputation for harming Christians, but he trusted God and followed his instructions.

Acts 9: 10-19

Zeal, Enthusiasm, and Persistence

Saul of Tarsus, who would come to be known as Saint Paul, was a Pharisee. Pharisees were a religious sect in Judaism especially devoted to the Law and its interpretation. He made a career out of doing as much damage as he could to the early Christian church. He thought he was doing God's will by imprisoning and killing those who believed in Christ and he went about his task with much energy and enthusiasm. His name was feared by Christians throughout the region. Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen. He heartily approved of the killing of this deacon and saint.

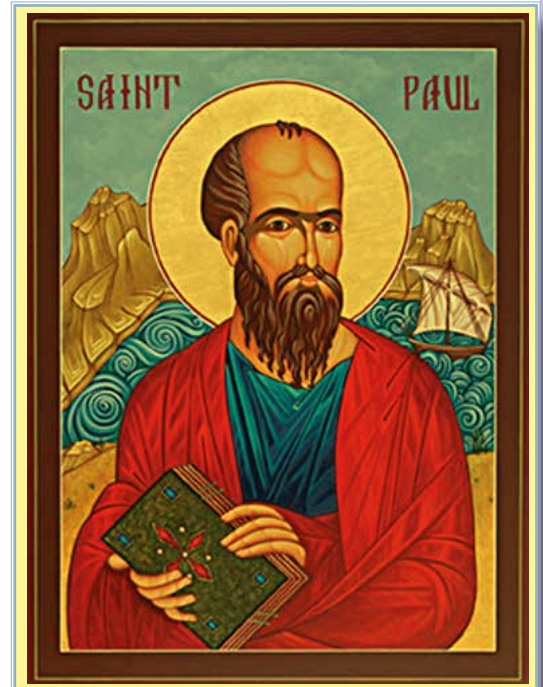
One day he decided it would be a good idea to go to Damascus and round up all Christ's followers there and bring them back to Jerusalem as prisoners. By the end of that journey Paul was changed into the greatest Christian teacher and preacher of all time. Read Acts 9:3-19 to see what happened to make Paul make a 180-degree turn in his attitude toward Jesus.

After the incident on the road to Damascus, Paul immediately began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues. He had seen the Risen Christ and embraced his new mission with the same zeal he had shown in his persecutions of Christians. He never stopped teaching, even though he suffered many beatings, imprisonments, and other hardships. He was ultimately martyred in Rome.

We all have places in life where we need a complete turnaround in our behavior. What are some of those areas?

What strategies could be used to bring about a 180-degree change in these situations:

- sloppiness
- procrastinating
- laziness
- not getting along with siblings
- arguing with parents
- dealing with bullies



Content in All Things

For the rest of his life, Paul devoted himself to the preaching of the Good News. He traveled all over the region teaching and encouraging the early church. He wrote many epistles, or letters, to the different groups of believers to correct errors, plan visits, settle conflicts, and share his feelings and experiences. His epistles are lively and forcefully written, and from them we can gain a real idea of Paul's personality and true love of Jesus and his flock.

Sometimes these letters were written under terrible circumstances. Read Philippians 1:12-14 and 1:19-21 to see an example of some of Paul's difficulties, as well as his hope and faith. In Romans 5:3-5 Paul tells us "we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Read 2 Corinthians 11:16-33. Answer the following questions:

1. How many times was Paul shipwrecked? _____
2. How did Paul escape from the prison in Damascus? _____
3. Who flogged Paul five times, each time giving him 39 lashes? _____
4. When Paul boasts that he is more of a servant of Christ than the Jews, how does he qualify this remark? _____
5. In verse 26, Paul faced danger in what four locations? _____

6. In the same verse, he faced danger from what four types of people? _____

7. Why do you think Paul boasts about his weaknesses? _____



Studies in Faithfulness – A Reader's Theatre

1. SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENT – Homework from Sunday School. It's the last thing I want to do. Don't I have enough to do already? And what's the assignment? I have to write an essay on the importance of spreading the message of salvation in modern times. I have to do this for a celebration of Armenia's adoption of Christianity as their official religion. Wasn't that in something like the fourth century? It's all so long ago. The people don't even seem real...

2. BLIND MAN – He healed me! I've been blind for longer than I can remember, and he healed me! I had heard he could do anything, so I followed him. I wasn't really sure I believed he could do it, but once I felt myself in his presence, suddenly I knew. He asked me, "Do you truly believe I am able to do this?" I answered, "Yes, Lord," and I meant it. More than anything I've ever said in my life!

3. **PETER** – I promised Jesus I would always be there for him. I swore I would never leave him. This night, I failed him. They came and took him away, as if he were a criminal. I got scared. I followed him, but I stayed well behind. Three times, when people asked me if I knew him, I lied and said no. Three times.
4. **CENTURION** – We put a man to death here today. On that cross, right over there. I saw the whole thing. I don't think we should have done it. At the moment he died, the earth shook, and the sky turned uglier than I've ever seen it. They say the man we crucified was the Son of God. You know what? I believe he was.
5. **THOMAS** – They came and told me Jesus was alive again. I said, "I will believe it when I put my fingers in his wounds!" We were all together, and Jesus came in. He let me touch his side, and where the nails pierced his hands. You can bet I believed then! I felt ashamed, though, when he said, so gently, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."
6. **JAMES** – I have my mission. I will go wherever God sends me with the news of Jesus. The other day we were in our room upstairs, when the Holy Spirit came to us. Suddenly I and the others had tongues of fire above our heads, and we were speaking in all different languages, languages we've never understood before. We went out, and when the locals heard us, they said, "Oh they must be drunk with new wine." But how could we be drunk and speak a new language with complete accuracy, so that every traveler could hear us in his own tongue!
7. **PAUL** – I spent years doing all I could to destroy Christ's church. Then one day I was on the road to Damascus, on my way to make more mischief, when the Lord spoke to me. He asked me why I was persecuting him. Struck me blind, he did, too. Three days later he restored the sight to more than just my eyes, and now I shall spend whatever days remain to me establishing his church and teaching his message.
8. **SANTOOKHT** – I've no time! I must tell you, quickly! These gods we worship, here in Armenia - they're lifeless statues. They have no power. The power is all in Jesus Christ, the son of the Jewish God. Only he can save us from sin. Hear me, please! Thaddeus told me everything. He knew Jesus, and witnessed it all. The soldiers are coming to take me now! My own father - demanded that I choose between my God and my life - once I knew Christ, what else could I do?
9. **THADDEUS** – King Sanadrook just killed his own daughter Santookht because she loved Christ. I knew something like this would happen. When Jesus was killed, I was so frightened. I felt I had no protection from something like this happening to me. I didn't think I would have the courage to spread his message wherever he sent me. But the Holy Spirit has strengthened me, and now I feel this urgency to reach as many as I can as fast as I can, before Sanadrook or disease or whatever catches up with me. To my last breath I'll proclaim my Lord and Savior!
10. **KING SANADROOK** – These Christians are mad. They took my daughter's reason and made her renounce her gods! I had to kill her - I thought it would stop them once and for all, when they saw I was willing to put my own child to death for her blasphemy. But they won't stop. I'll finish them all. Thaddeus, Bartholomew - as many as it takes!
11. **BARTHOLOMEW** – King Sanadrook killed Thaddeus. Now I hear he's after me. I don't mind the persecution that follows me everywhere, except that it interferes with what I have to do. These poor people - worshipping statues. I wish I could smash every one of their stone idols, to show the people that their gods are nothing. But my God cannot be destroyed. And they can kill me, and everyone that God sends to replace me, and it won't change the truth. Nothing will stop this message from getting through until God decides everyone he wants to hear has been reached.

- 12. HRIPSIMÉ** – I know something dreadful will happen to me now! But I can't go and live with that wicked man. Drtad may be king, but he'll not take me away from my Lord. Why does he hate God's people so? Things are no better now than when King Sanadrook killed his own daughter. It doesn't - oh, here they come! Christ, strengthen me, please!
- 13. GAYANÉ** – I tried to help Hripsimé. I hoped to save her and all our sisters from Drtad's men, but it is not God's will. All we wanted was to live quietly away from the world, to pray and wait for our Lord's return, but it seems we are to meet him now. I hear the shouts and footsteps! Strange, I am not afraid. I long only for that reunion for which I have prayed and hoped. My only regret is for my nation - I fear it will perish in darkness.
- 14. QUEEN ASHKHEN** – My husband is a madman. For weeks he has been ill, pacing and snorting like a wild beast. The best physicians in the land have been able to do nothing for him. They're as useless as those statues before which they pray. I know what's wrong with Drtad. He has been driven mad by his bloodthirsty sin. He murdered Hripsimé, Gayané, and countless others, and he expects not to suffer for it? The only one who can help him is his own former friend Gregory, a man of great faith, whom Drtad had tortured, thrown in a pit, and forgotten. But how can I convince Drtad to seek his help without placing Gregory in further danger. And what will happen when Drtad realizes I am a believer as well?
- 15. KING DRTAD III** – I regret all the terrible things I did to Christ's people. How he is able to forgive me I'll never know or understand. That is what inspired me to love him. He loved me first, when I didn't deserve it. I am only sorry I came to him only after I did so much damage, after he healed me through Gregory. I am like the apostle Thomas, who could not believe without concrete evidence. I held myself to be wise, above all men. And I could not see what is plain to even the smallest child! But now I am preparing to declare Christianity the official faith of my land, and I will not rest until I have done all I can to bring this news to all her citizens.
- 16. PRINCESS KHOSROVITOOKHT** – It's something I never thought I'd live to see. Today, my brother, Drtad, King of Armenia, is being baptized in the Euphrates River. So many years in darkness, with my brother forcing us to hide our faith. I lived in constant fear of discovery. Drtad was uncontrollable. Anyone he associated with Christ met a horrible end. I remember what happened to Santookht. At the hands of her own father. I have no doubt Drtad would have done the same to me, and to his own queen. But the Holy Spirit cleansed my brother of his sin, and Drtad has accepted Jesus. He has vowed to carry God's truth to the entire nation.
- 17. GREGORY** – Glory to God! Our king has come to faith! Year after year I waited and prayed in my pit, sustained only by the Holy Spirit and the kindness of a stranger who fed me. I always had faith in my ultimate reunion with Christ after my death, but I was certain my days of serving him on Earth were through. I could never have imagined he would allow me to participate in this miracle, the commitment of a whole nation to his Son. Oh, thank you, my Lord and Savior. Every dark moment of imprisonment, I count it all glory to you!
- 18. ARISTAKES** – Here I am, in old age, head of the Armenian Church. My dear father, Gregory, has gone home to the Lord, and I am left with the responsibility of the faith of a nation. When I was first asked to assume some of my father's tasks, I protested. I felt I was ill-prepared to work closely among large numbers of people, because I had spent my entire life in solitary prayer and study. And I would not be honest if I didn't say I was reluctant to leave that peaceful life, but God's will be done, not mine.

- 19. GRIGORIS** – I have come to the outermost reaches of the kingdom to try and tell these wild people what God wants, but they care nothing for it. They say they want a church and to learn of the Lord Jesus, but when I confront them about what is wrong in their lives, they accuse me of trying to ruin their livelihood! They're coming toward me in a mob, I don't know what they will do, but I tell you, another will come in my place, and another after that! God will not let his message go unheard!
- 20. HOOSSIG** – I have a difficult duty before me today. My king, Tiran, is on his way to church today. I will refuse to let him in. He will come at the very least to attempt to intimidate me into condoning his sinful ways, perhaps much worse. When I became Catholicos after the martyrdom of my brother Grigoris on the frontier, at first King Tiran was pleased. We worked well together. But soon I saw he had no intention of changing his sinful ways despite my pleas, and I can no longer stand by and allow him to make a mockery of our faith, regardless of the cost to me.
- 21. SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENT** – You know, now that I have seen how much Jesus meant to so many people through the years, I'm beginning to understand that the message really is important. Why else would so many have allowed themselves to be killed in Turkey in 1915 because of their faith? It is true - that message must go on! We can't take it for granted that we will always be able to worship the way we want. If we don't know it well and become strong in it, Christianity could be taken from us in an instant, and then where would we be?

Our Armenian Way

When you think of a mission church, what comes to mind? Maybe a lonely outpost in the jungle, or on a remote island in the middle of nowhere. Those certainly exist, but in the case of the Armenian Church, a mission church is just a small community trying to get established. They may be found all over the world.

In the United States, mission churches may be found in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Austin, Texas. Mission churches exist in the Middle East, and even in Armenia, as the church grows after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

A mission church is the very first step to being a full-fledged parish or community of believers. Visiting priests, deacons and others arrange for the celebration of Badarak and the sacraments. They visit the sick and elderly and raise funds to sustain the parish. They teach the community to become a true Christian family, caring for each other and glorifying God through worship and fellowship in the church. Thanks to God's Spirit guiding these hardworking believers, you may be surprised to find an Armenian parish where you least expect it!



Lesson 5

Women of the Early Church: Taking Part in God's Plan



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for the brave and devoted messengers of your Word that continue to appear among us. You showed us in your own ministry how all people are called to follow you and become leaders themselves, men and women, young and old, all have gifts to inspire and lead others. Help us to use our talents and gifts to serve others, all for your glory. Amen.

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. Paul's original name was

- a Saul b Abram c Pharoah d Barnabas

2. Paul temporarily lost his eyesight while traveling to

- a Ephesus b Egypt c Nineveh d Damascus

3. Paul was eventually martyred in

- a Jerusalem b Damascus c Rome d Bethlehem

4. Hripsimé is usually associated with

- a Sarai b Moses c Gayané d Esther

5. Through _____, God restored King Drtad's sanity

- a St. Athanasius b St. Gregory c St. Nersess d St. Vartan

Lifted Up by Jesus

A good portion of the turmoil in the world is caused by the abuse and oppression of women. Some people even try to use religion to justify their unkind treatment of the female half of the population. God does not discriminate. Jesus came for us all, male and female, because as Romans 3:23 says “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The Lord Jesus understood very well that women were, at best, on the sidelines in society. This was especially true in Biblical times, when women were little more than property. God automatically elevated the status of women when he chose to send his Son to earth through the Virgin Mary, a woman. He could just as easily have had Jesus walk down off a mountain or descend from the stars.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus showed unusual compassion toward the women he encountered. He welcomed their participation in his life and work, even though it would have been unheard-of for a Jewish man, especially an important one, to interact with women in this way.

Read the following Scripture verses. Beside each one, write whether the woman featured in the event was a “helper” to Jesus or was a “receiver” of his mercy.

Matthew 26:6-13 _____

Mark 5:24-34 _____

Mark 12:41-44 _____

Mark 16:9 _____

Luke 4:38-39 _____

Luke 10:38-42 _____

Luke 13:10-16 _____

John 4:4-15 _____

John 11:32-44 _____



Did You Know?

St. Shushanik was the great-granddaughter of St. Sahag.

Lydia and Phoebe*

Two Among Many

There were many women healed and instructed by Jesus, even many more than the stories you have just read about in Scripture! After Jesus' resurrection, many more were called to play exciting roles in the early church. One was **Lydia**, a business woman (Acts 16:11-15;40). Lydia is described as someone from Thyatira, a city in Lydia in Asia Minor. This city was renowned for its luxurious dyed goods and Lydia herself was a successful seller of purple cloth, which was particularly valuable. Think about a dynamic business woman today and you'll get the picture.

Having moved to the Macedonian city of Philippi, Lydia heard Paul speak with a group of women at Sabbath services. Her heart overflowed with love for Jesus and she became an energetic convert, opening her home for Paul and his helpers to stay. After his brief imprisonment, Paul again was welcomed into her home. She may have even hosted Christian worship in her home, as many women did in these early years.

A. *What qualities of business leadership would make Lydia a successful Christian leader?*

Another woman mentioned in the New Testament was **Phoebe** (Romans 16:1-2). In these two fascinating verses, Paul refers to her as sister and deacon (v. 1, sometimes given a misleading translation as "servant")

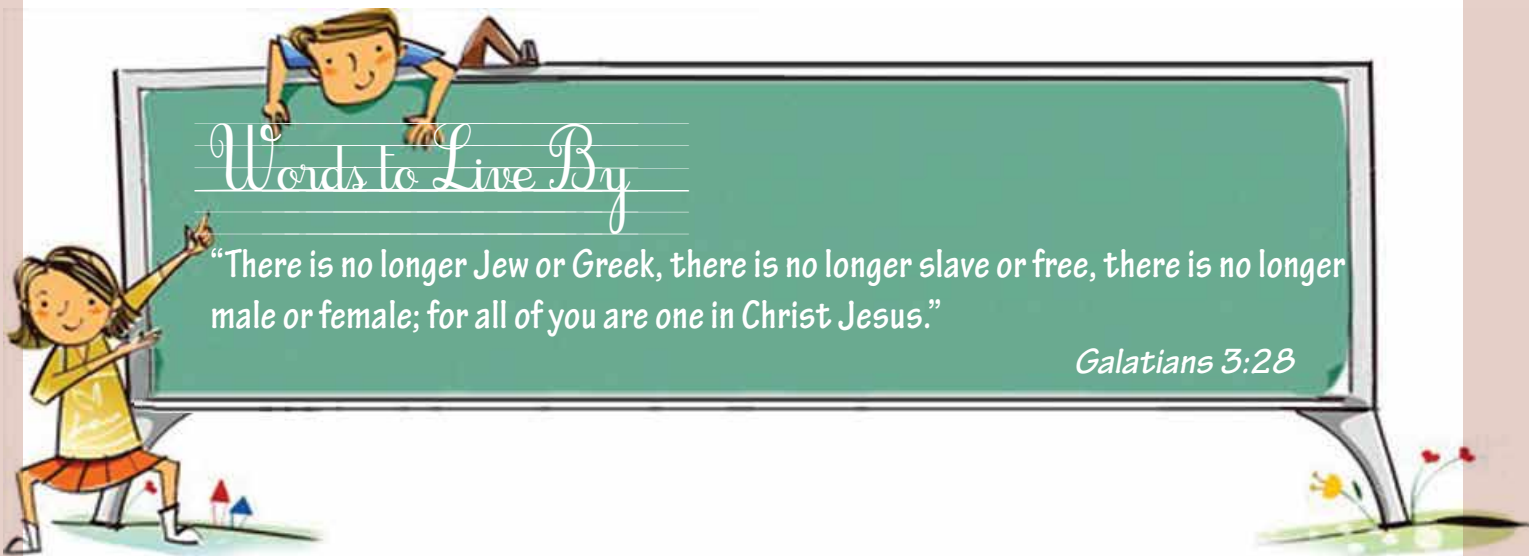
and as "prostatis" (v. 2) – a word found nowhere else in the New Testament but indicating a leadership role. So she seems to have most definitely been a known leader of the church in Cenchreae, a seaport near Corinth, a woman of responsibility and influence. Think of women who work in the church today, either in your parish or at Diocesan headquarters. Phoebe may have had even more authority than women are granted today!



After his reference to Phoebe, Paul mentions many women hard at work in the faithful community. Look at Romans 16: 3-16.

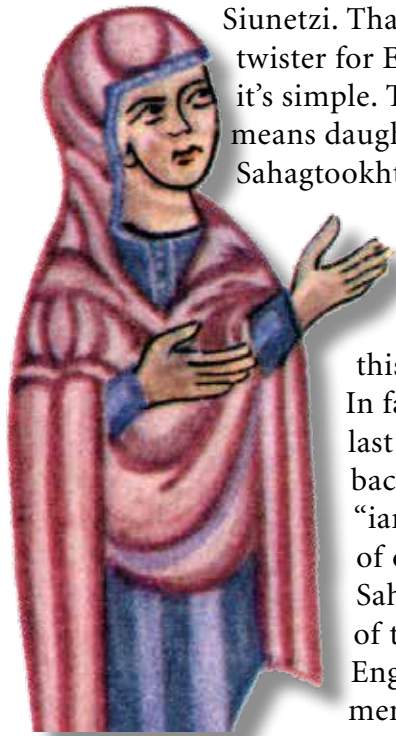
B. *Name five of the women mentioned and a phrase describing them:*

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



A Woman of Prayerful Poetry

Seven hundred years after Christ, a musician and poet lived in the village of Karni, in historic Armenia. Her name was Sahagtookht



Siunetzi. That might be a tongue-twister for English speakers, but it's simple. The ending "tookht" means daughter. So who was Sahagtookht? Literally: "Sahag's daughter." In an age when everyone traced their lineage through their father, this wasn't uncommon. In fact, even Armenian last names often refer back to fathers, with the "ian" meaning "family of or son of." The Sahagians are members of the family of Sahag. In English, the Johnsons are members of "John's clan."

The "etzi" is an ending that means "from" or "of." So she was also from the region of Siunik.

Some of her poems were in the popular acrostic style. These poems would use the letters of her name as the first letter of each 4-line verse. Let's try writing a poem about our faith in Sahagtookht's style. We'll make it easy and have each verse consist of two lines. Make the initial letters of your name larger and darker and leave a space between the two lines. Here's an example by a student named Sam.

Sharing my faith with family and friends
Is what church is all about

And of course God is at the center
Guiding my ways and my heart

Make me grow in faith, Lord
To really know life's meaning and purpose

You can rhyme verses if you like. The prayer-poem's title should be
My Faith.

Our Armenian Way

From the time of St. Gregory the Illuminator through the Armenian Genocide of the 20th century, Armenian women have had the reputation of remaining faithful to Jesus no matter what the consequences. Saint Shushanik is an example of these women who put God before even their own lives. The daughter of Vartan Mamigonian, she was married to Vasken of Ghougark sometime before 451 AD. The couple had four children, three boys and a girl. Around 466, Vasken decided to abandon Christianity for the pagan religion of the Persians. He ordered Shushanik to convert with him, but she refused. For seven years or so Vasken subjected her to beatings, starvation, imprisonment, and other tortures in order to make Shushanik change her mind. She prayerfully endured until about 474 AD, when she was released from her earthly existence to join her beloved Lord in heaven.



Unit Three: Sacred Living: Saints as Mentors

Lesson 6

Taking A Stand



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

With your peace, O Christ our savior, which is beyond all understanding and speech, defend us and keep us fearless from all evil; make us equal to true worshippers, who worship you in spirit and in truth; for to the most-holy Trinity is fitting glory, dominion and honor, now and forever and unto the ages of ages.

Badarak - Prayers after the Lectios

Quick Quiz

True or False

- Jesus' parables sometimes involved women.
- Lydia was a trader in oils and spices.
- Phoebe was a deacon of the early church.
- Saint Shushanik was the daughter of Vartan Mamigonian.
- Jesus did not welcome women to follow him or participate in his work.

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

What is important enough to you that you would consider devoting your whole life to it? Maybe even dying for?



Looking Above

Christian history is built on the sacrifices of generations of believers. Ever since Jesus walked out of the tomb on Easter morning, untold millions of believers have given their time, talents, riches, and even their lives in his service. Some have been canonized by churches or remembered by history, but most are anonymous men, women, and children who quietly did what they knew to be right regardless of the cost.

When the faithful think of Jesus' teachings, they remember all the ways that life is given its true meaning by living as he has told us to. When we think of the Resurrection, we remember Jesus' promise that his people will live with him forever when we leave this world. Christians want to please Jesus and be with him more than anything, so they do not let anything stand in their way. They boldly face ridicule, persecution, and even death to get their prize, eternal life in Christ.

The famous Christian theologian and writer (you might know him as the writer of a series of children's books starting with *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*) C.S. Lewis wrote a beautiful description of the kind of strong faith needed throughout life. In *A Grief Observed*, Lewis said that his own faith - so shaken by his wife's death - reminded him of a nice sturdy cord that he kept in his basement to use for wrapping packages. For that purpose it was very good. But if he had to hang from it while dangling over a cliff, would it hold him? Lewis said most people, including himself, had a perfectly nice faith for wrapping packages. But when we needed to hang on for dear life, it would never hold!



Well We Were Warned!

Read Matthew 10:16-31.

Why does loyalty to the Christian faith come with so many problems? Isn't it more logical that a person who obeys God should have an easy life? Maybe, but if everything went well all the time our faith wouldn't mean much. If we stay with him in trial, however, our faith grows stronger. We lean on him, and he has a chance to work in our lives. He sustains us day by day no matter what. We are grateful and remain faithful until we are reunited with him forever.

An Awesome Faith

As Armenians, we have a modern-day legacy of rock-solid faith. Not so very long ago, our ancestors endured unspeakable cruelty and suffering during the Genocide of 1915. The lives of the Armenians were generally spared if they agreed to convert to Islam, but almost none did. They could not bring themselves to do so. They were not willing to risk their eternal salvation even if it meant saving their own lives and those of their loved ones. In 2015, to mark the 100th commemoration of the Genocide, these men, women, and children were acknowledged by the church as true saints in a special ceremony in Holy Etchmiadzin. We shall always look upon these martyrs with awe and gratitude as we forge ahead with our own walk of faith.



Did You Know?

The Armenian Martyrs Monument - *Dzidzernagapert* (Fortress of Swallows) - was built in 1968 outside of Yerevan. It consists of 12 massive blocks of stone that lean inward over an eternal flame. These stones represent the 12 provinces in Western Armenia that were emptied of Armenians during the Genocide. A nearby obelisk, consisting of two pieces separated by a fissure, symbolizes the union of Western and Eastern Armenia.

The Armenian Genocide* Who, What, When, Where, Why

Who were the victims? **Who** was responsible?

What happened?

When did this happen?

Where did this happen?

Why did this happen?

- God commands us to forgive our enemies no matter how badly they have harmed us (Colossians 3:13).
- Do you think the Turks should be forgiven? Why or why not?
- How can we forgive as God wants us to without allowing our history to be forgotten?



Words to Live By

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Hebrews 11:1



Faith in Action

Discuss as a class:

- ✓ Have you ever felt pressure from friends to do or say something you didn't feel comfortable doing or saying?
- ✓ Have you ever taken an unpopular stand about something at school?
- ✓ Do you think there is a social hierarchy at school? Where do you feel you fit in?
- ✓ What influence do you think social media, TikTok, the Internet, etc. have on your thinking?
- ✓ As you recall the terrible events of the Armenian Genocide, what efforts do you think the Armenian people and Church could be making for justice for others in the world today?
- ✓ What are some things you can do to make your world a little better by taking a stand for your faith?

Our Armenian Way

St. Vartan Mamigonian and his companions serve as beacons of faith. Their courage and conviction is a model for our own lives. The Armenian Church commemorates these brave and faithful warriors with the Feast of Vartanantz, which usually falls in February, on the Thursday before Lent begins. It is also an occasion to celebrate those who are named after Vartan or any of his other martyred officers.

St. Vartan and the battle of Avarayr in 451 AD are so intertwined with our identity that many churches all over the world, including our cathedral in New York City, are named after him and his fellow soldiers. A statue of Vartan on horseback (by the renowned sculptor Yervant Kochari) stands on a busy street in Yerevan to remind us of the heroism and sacrifice of the Mamigonians.



Unit Three: Sacred Living: Saints as Mentors

Lesson 7

Where Do I Fit In?



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.

Dear Lord, we know you are in our hearts. Help us feel your presence and be guided by your love every day. As we grow closer to you, we grow closer to our own true selves and to our Spirit-given gifts. Help us to use these gifts for our own greatest fulfillment, for the good of others, and for your glory. Amen.

Quick Quiz

Write the correct answer in the space.

1. Matthew 10:16 says Christians are sent into the world as sheep among _____.
2. In Matthew 10:24-25, we are told that it is enough for a student to be _____ the _____.
3. During the Genocide, Armenians were usually allowed to live if they agreed to _____.
4. The Armenian Church Feast of Vartanantz falls on the Thursday before _____ begins.
5. St. Vartan is remembered for the battle of _____.



Did You Know?

In the year 1164, St. Nersess Shnorhali successfully brought about peace between two Armenian princes, Toros and Oshin, whose feud was endangering the nation.



Many Parts, One Body

Look around the room. Look at the people you pass as you walk to school or sitting around you at a sports event or show. You can quickly see that we are all different. We come in many shapes, colors, sizes, and personalities. God has also given us different abilities. You may already have a pretty good idea of where your strengths are, but most likely you have not yet discovered many of your talents.

God lists some of the different abilities that he has given his followers. Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 to see a few of them. It is a measure of God's infinite wisdom and power that no two individuals are exactly alike, not even identical twins. If you look at the diversity of people and the rest of nature, you will see that God delights in variety. You should, too, because no matter how un-special you think you are, God has wonderful plans for you that you cannot even imagine at this time. You have so much to offer to him, the church, and the greater world. All you need to do is to make room for God to guide you.

How might someone who has these common gifts use them in the service of the church?

Good head for business
Great cook
Knows the Bible really well
Musical
Good writer
Patient
Likes children
Physically strong
Good handyman skills

What Are My Gifts?

Are you a computer whiz? Can you make people laugh?
Are you a good musician? A fast thinker? An athlete?
Patient? Energetic?

Think about the qualities and abilities you have that are God's gift to you. Write them here:



Do Everything As Unto God

Read Colossians 3:17. Discuss the following questions:

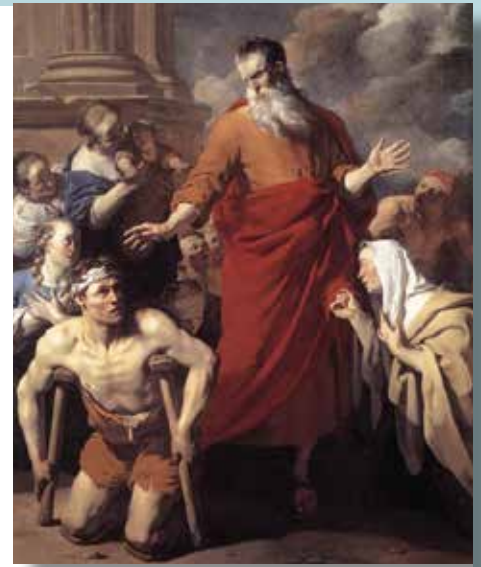
- Everyone has some subject in school they love to hate. If you apply this verse to that subject, what do you think might happen?
- We've all done the bare minimum to get rid of some task we didn't want to do. In light of the Scripture passage, how do you think Jesus feels about that sort of work ethic?
- It's a beautiful Saturday morning and you've been ordered to clean your room. How can the Bible verse make you feel a little better about it?

Feed My Sheep

In John 21:15-17 Jesus repeatedly tells Peter to feed His sheep. In that passage, Jesus is not suggesting that Peter take up farming. What he means is that those who call themselves God's people will serve others, as Jesus served us all. That is also our mission - to do what we can to spread the Good News through our words and actions.

Consider the profiles below featuring a quality you might not consider a "gift." Think how each gift or challenge could be used to serve God's purpose at church and in everyday life:

1. I have a learning disability. I take a lot of garbage for it at school. It's really hard. I've got to do the best I can. God can use my situation to...
2. For some reason I'm able to get along with people from all different groups. This could be useful to the Lord if I...
3. Last year I was the new kid in school. Ugh. God could use this experience to...
4. It never takes me very long to finish my homework. My grades are always really good. I offer my academic skill to God by...
5. I love to make people laugh. I don't disrupt class with my joking around, but in my off time God could use my sense of humor to..



Our Armenian Way

St. Nersess Shnorhali was one of the true heroes of the Armenian Church. He devoted his life to studying about God and teaching others about him. As we know, he gifted the Armenian Church with his famous 24 prayers, "I Confess with Faith," as well as numerous hymns and other writings. The *I Confess with Faith* prayers are so well-loved that they have been translated over the years into more than thirty languages.

Ordained as a priest at age eighteen, this gifted man attained the rank of bishop by around twenty-five years of age. The name "Shnorhali" means "grace-filled," which perfectly describes the character of Nersess. Modest, hardworking, and a peacemaker, he was happy teaching, singing, writing, and praying. He had no ambition for official church power. Nersess only became Catholicos when his brother, Catholicos Krikor, was too ill to continue.

Nersess continued to use his talents and personality to maintain peace and unity in the Armenian Church and with opponents of all types. One example of his character is shown in his handling of a group of people who worshipped the sun. In so many cases, such a sharp difference in religion results in violence and destruction. Nersess, however, chose to use gentle leadership to win back this group. He composed the hymns to our Sunrise Service, and their beauty convinced these "Sons of the Sun" that Jesus is the real light. Instead of force, Nersess used the many gifts God gave him to turn untold thousands to his beloved Lord.

"Jesus, wisdom of the Father, help me think, speak, and do that which is good in your sight. Save me from evil thoughts, words, and deeds. And have mercy upon all your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen."

I Confess with Faith

Lesson 8

Putting It All Together



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.

Fill us, Lord, with the light and fire of your Spirit so that, like the saints and apostles, we might go into the world every day with courage and faith, hope and love, Amen.

inspired by Arakelo Aghavno, the Armenian hymn for Pentecost

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. In I Corinthians 12:28, God says he has set in his church all of the following except

- a apostles b teachers c soldiers d prophets

2. Jesus describes sharing our gifts openly as "letting our light shine before others." This is so that:

- a others will appreciate us b we can go to heaven
c God will reward us d others will praise God

3. Jesus repeatedly told _____ to feed His sheep.

- a Saul of Tarsus b Thaddeus c Peter d Mary

4. St. Nersess Shnorhali is famous for his 24 prayers known as

- a I Confess With Faith b The Lamentations
c The epistles d The Psalms

5. Nersess refused to use _____ when dealing with people of differing religious beliefs.

- a music b prayer
c violence d leadership



Words to Live By

"We love because he first loved us. Those who say "I love God," and hate their brothers and sisters, are liars."

1 John 4:19-20



A Guessing Game Review

So far this Sunday School year you have learned about some of the special people from the Bible, Christian history, and the Armenian Church. You have studied about what made them special and what they contributed to the religious and secular worlds. Go through the textbook and find two. Share whom you've chosen with your teacher (so there are no duplications with other students). Prepare a 4-clue game of identity to present to the class. (Four facts are given, and after each one the class has a chance to guess who the person is.) Prepare, present, and see how well you all do!

Our Armenian Way

Catholicos Hovhanness of Otzoon lived during the seventh and eighth centuries AD. Little is known about his early life. Even before he was ordained as Catholicos in 717, he was already well-known for his intelligence. As Catholicos, Hovhanness had an unusual habit. While most members of the clergy wore simple, plain clothing, Hovhanness was always dressed in fancy, highly decorated robes.

His reputation for wearing magnificent clothing reached all the way to the Emir of Damascus, ruler of the Arab world. The Emir was curious about Hovhanness and invited him for a visit and asked him to wear his best clothes. Hovhanness came to Damascus in his finest robes. The Emir, even though he was a Muslim, knew about Jesus' humility and simplicity. He was puzzled that a Christian leader would be dressed in such glorious garments, so he asked Hovhanness why he didn't dress modestly, as one would expect from a follower of Jesus.

Hovhanness asked the Emir to send everyone out of the room. When the two of them were alone, the Catholicos revealed that he wore a scratchy, shaggy, tight undergarment made of goat's hair underneath the beautiful robes. It must have made Hovhanness extremely uncomfortable all the time. St. Hovhanness explained to the Emir that he wore beautiful outer garments to remind others of the glorious splendor of God's kingdom. But next to his skin, he wore harsh clothing to remind himself of his own sinfulness. The stunned Emir was filled with respect and admiration for Catholicos Hovhanness and remarked that he was truly a holy man.



Unit Four: A World Church

Lesson 1

Holy Etchmiadzin



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyin Surpo, Amen. Lord, we know that you have not called us to believe on our own. You do not expect us to fight our doubts alone. You have called us into the Church, the great community of believers, guided and sustained by the Holy Spirit. In that community, we are united with all those throughout the world who believe in you. Thank you, Lord, for the faith of the Armenian Church which goes all the way back to the apostles, to the risen Lord himself. Amen.

adapted from a prayer by the theologian Hans King



Spiritual Heart of the Armenian Church

Holy Etchmiadzin

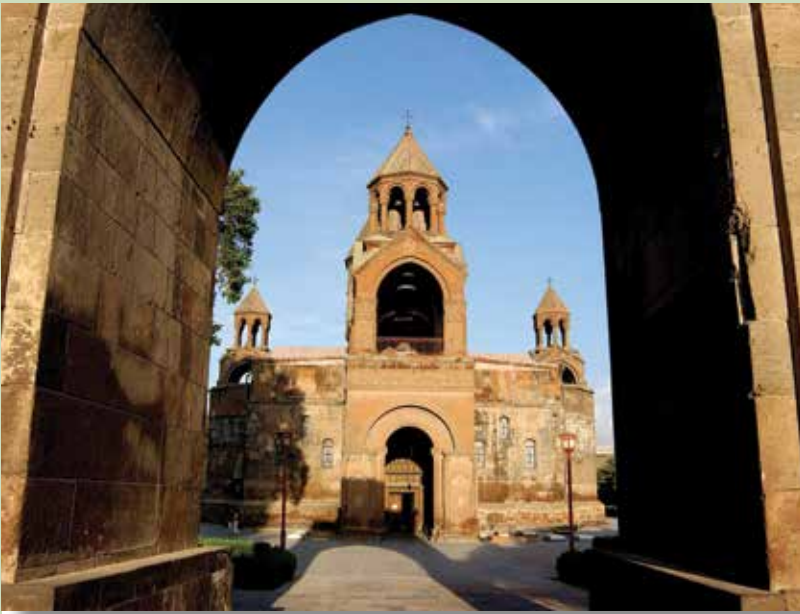
What do you think of when you hear those words? Rugged mountains? Ancient battles? Our church fathers? All of those things make up part of the history of Etchmiadzin, but its most important function is as the spiritual center of the Armenian Church.

A city had been in the area since about the 4th or 3rd century BC, when it was called Vartkesavan. It was not until the time of St. Gregory the Illuminator that Etchmiadzin took on its current greatness. In 301 AD, St. Gregory had a vision of Jesus descending to earth with a golden hammer in his hand. In the vision, Jesus struck the ground with the hammer, and a dome supported by four columns appeared, with a glowing cross above.

Here's the description from where it was recorded in the 5th century account by Agathangelos: *Gregory saw a large pillar with a base of gold; the pillar was made of fire topped by a cloud above which was a bright cross. This pillar represented the Church.*

There were three other columns, all with red bases, columns of cloud, topped by a fire and also a bright cross; all three were symbols of the martyrs. Above these four pillars was a dome of cloud and above that was a great throne of fire topped by a cross.





After this vision, Gregory and King Drtad built a church in the place indicated by the golden hammer. Gregory renamed the spot “Etchmiadzin,” which means “the place where the Only-Begotten Son descended.”

Afterward, chapels for Sts. Hripsime, Gayane, and others were built at Etchmiadzin. Monasteries opened, and the city became our Holy See, or center of religious authority. Over the centuries, the See has been moved to Sis, Ani, and other places. These moves happened to protect the Church in times of danger, or when the civil government or population relocated. Even when the church officials operated from another city, or when Armenians were scattered all over the globe, our hearts always

look to Etchmiadzin as the center of our spiritual and cultural world. The Mother See keeps our direction constant and offers strength to a community that spans thousands of miles.

- Have you ever been to Holy Etchmiadzin?
- If not, have you ever known someone who journeyed there? What did they say about it?
- How important is it for Armenian believers to visit Etchmiadzin?



Your Own Etchmiadzin

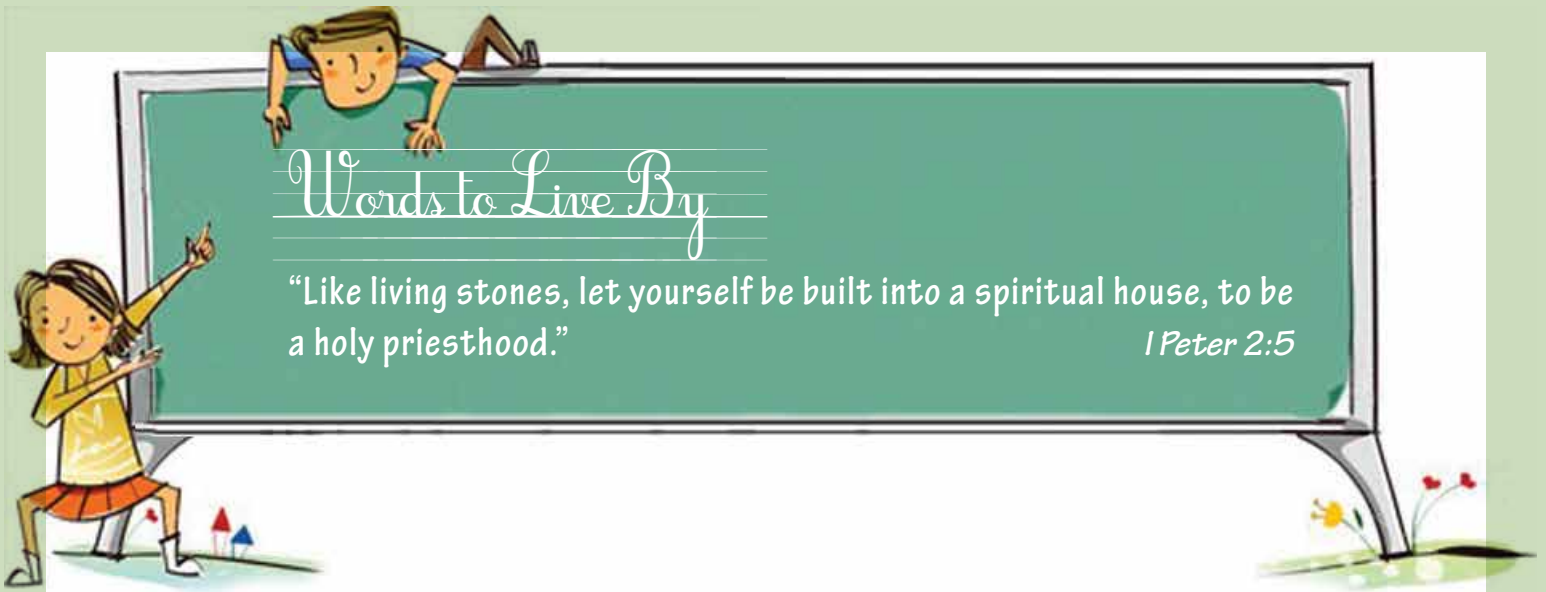
As Holy Etchmiadzin has always been the center of our church as a whole, your parish church is like a mini-Etchmiadzin. Just as the Armenian Church around the world receives its direction and focus from the Holy See, your parish church - grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and on centuries of Holy Tradition with Scripture as a foundation - and your family are the places you look for grounding and guidance in the whirlwind of modern life.

1. How have you seen your parents support your parish?
2. What are things you can do as a young member of the congregation to keep your church vibrant and healthy?
3. As you grow up and go to college, how can you keep close ties with the Armenian Church and her teachings?
4. Where do you see yourself in relation to the church in fifteen or twenty years?



Did You Know?

Etchmiadzin is full of beautiful, fragrant rose bushes.



The Architect of Our Faith

Read 1 Kings 6:2-10 to see the detailed plan God gave Solomon for the building of the temple. As a class, list some of the elements of this magnificent temple.



Our Armenian Way

Our Catholicos is the spiritual leader for Armenians all over the world. The first Catholicos was St. Gregory the Illuminator, and for a while only his descendants could hold the position. Today, the highest-ranking member of the Church authority is elected for life by the world-wide delegation of the National Ecclesiastical Assembly, the supreme legislative body of the Armenian Church; he is then consecrated by twelve bishops.

The Catholicos is the representative of a line of authority that began with the apostles, with Jesus Christ as the supreme head of the church. Calling important councils, blessing holy chrism, and ordaining bishops are some of the many responsibilities of the Catholicos.

The general title of His Holiness is "Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians." For official documents, the title is "(ordained name of Catholicos), Servant of Jesus Christ, By the Mercy of God and the Will of the Nation, Chief Bishop and Catholicos of All Armenians, Supreme Patriarch of the Pan-National Pre-Eminent Araratian See, the Apostolic Mother Church of Universal Holy Etchmiadzin." Imagine having to put that signature on all your work!



Unit Four: A World Church

Lesson 2

Jerusalem



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyin Surpo, Amen.

Lord, we pray for the Holy City of Jerusalem, for its people, its ancient walkways and churches, the Armenian Patriarch and Patriarchate, and all the holy sites which commemorate the events of your earthly life. May Jerusalem forever remain a place of Christian pilgrimage and continuing authority of the Armenian Church, a place to which we too may come some day, seeking to breathe the air you breathed and walk the paths you walked. Amen.

Prayer of St. Nersess Shnorhali, No. 10

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. An old name for the city of Etchmiadzin is

- a Pompeii b Vartkesavan c Constantinople d Varag

2. _____ had a vision that told him where to build a church.

- a St. Nersess Shnorhali b King Drtad
c Gomidas Vartabed d St. Gregory the Illuminator

3. In that vision, Jesus struck the ground with a

- a thunderbolt b golden hammer
c cross d shepherd's staff

4. _____ is one of the cities where our Holy See has moved at various times.

- a Ani b Rome
c Tarsus d Damascus

5. In I Kings 6:2-10, God gave _____ specific instructions for the construction of the temple.

- a Moses b Jesus c Solomon d Adam

The Spiritual Epicenter

This approximately fifty square-mile city is perhaps the most hotly disputed piece of ground in the entire world! Three major religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all claim it as their spiritual center. Even in Old Testament times, Jerusalem was a frequent target of attack.

What makes it so special? To Christians, of course, it is the city where Jesus died and rose again, thereby securing our salvation. And the surrounding Holy Land contains all the sites from his birth to his ascension and the early years of the emerging church. To Jews, it is where the Temple was located and eventually destroyed (c.70 AD) as well as being the site of many other Biblical events. To Muslims, it is the place where the prophet Mohammed is believed to have ascended into heaven. All three religions make claims on Jerusalem, and the supervision of the holy sites continues to incite dispute and conflict.



The Armenian Church and Jerusalem

The (relatively) tiny Armenian Church occupies one full quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem. The Armenian Quarter, the Christian Quarter, the Jewish Quarter and the Muslim Quarter make up what is called the Old City, which is surrounded by 2.5 miles of a thick stone wall erected in the 16th century by order of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. The wall includes 8 gates, seven of which are still used. Up until the late 19th century, the gates would be closed at sunset and opened again at sunrise.

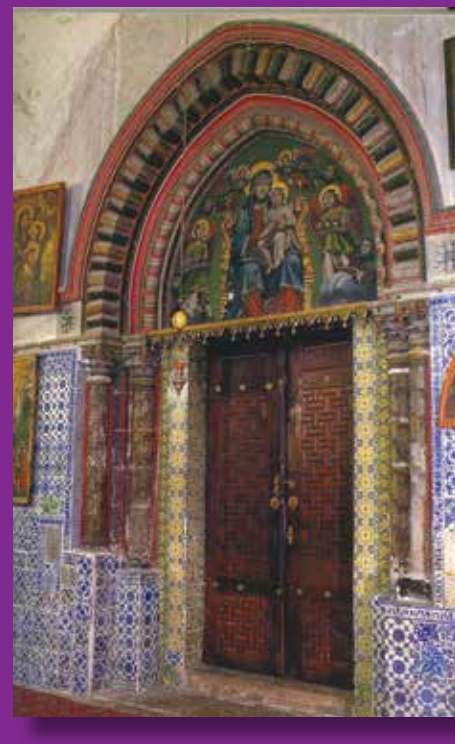
The massive Zion Gate, on Jerusalem's south side, opens into the Armenian Quarter, which is also accessed via the Jaffa Gate, on Jerusalem's west.

Although it was not officially recognized as a Patriarchate until the 14th century, the Armenian Monastery of St. James was the administrative center of religious activity for Jerusalem's Armenians from at least the 6th century. The presence of Armenians in Jerusalem, however, is much older than that. In fact, Jerusalem is the oldest Armenian community outside Armenia.

Armenians began to visit Jerusalem even before the Armenian kingdom officially converted to Christianity in 301. It is from the original complex of 4th and 5th century chapels that the Armenian cathedral and monastery in Jerusalem gradually grew; the monastery's growth continued through the 19th century. Royal patronage at this time also expanded the community's numbers, and the Quarter is still partly populated by descendants of Armenians who entered the community then.

In the early 20th century, the population of the Armenian Quarter was swollen by refugees who fled the 1915 Genocide, peaking at around 20,000. After that time, improved economic conditions made it possible for Armenians to begin leaving the monastery compound for more spacious areas. Today, the population has returned to something near its medieval level.

The Armenian Church is one of three major guardians of the Christian places in the Holy Land (the other two being the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholics, which together occupy Jerusalem's Christian Quarter). Liturgies are held daily by all three of the major denominations. Here are some important facts about the Armenian presence in the main holy places:



The Holy Sepulchre Church

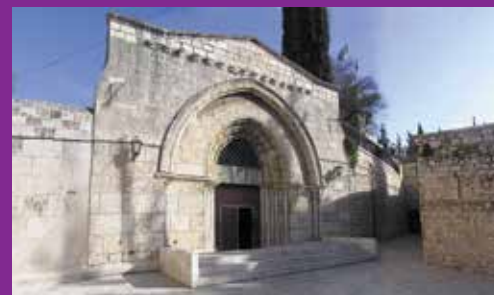
The most important focus of Christian pilgrimage, the Holy Sepulchre complex encloses the sites of Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Planned and funded by the Emperor Constantine, it was dedicated in 335 A.D. Over the seventeen centuries of its existence, the complex has been wholly or partially destroyed several times, by enemy attack, fires and earthquakes. A major restoration at the time of the Crusaders in the 11th – 12th centuries completely changed the character of the church. Its most recent restoration, undertaken jointly by the three main custodians of the site, the Armenians, Greeks, and Roman Catholics, began in the 1940's and has yet to be completed.

In addition to several small chapels within the Holy Sepulchre complex, an upper gallery known as "Second Golgotha" is exclusively owned by the Armenians. The subterranean chapel of St Gregory the Illuminator, whose staircase walls are covered with engraved pilgrim crosses, is also Armenian. From the St. Gregory chapel, a flight of stairs leads farther down to the chapel of St. Helen, the mother of Constantine who discovered the cross of Christ. In both the gallery and the St. Gregory chapel, paintings and mosaics depict major events in Armenia's life of faith.



The Tomb of the Virgin Mary

Mary's tomb is marked by one of the oldest and most imposing edifices in Jerusalem – a two-story church dating from Byzantine times. It is overseen jointly by the Armenians and the Greeks, with lesser participation by the Syrians and Copts as well. Surrounded by the Garden of Gethsemane with its ancient olive trees – an impressive and inspiring sight – Mary's Tomb is the site for daily celebrations of the Divine Liturgy by both Armenians and Greeks.



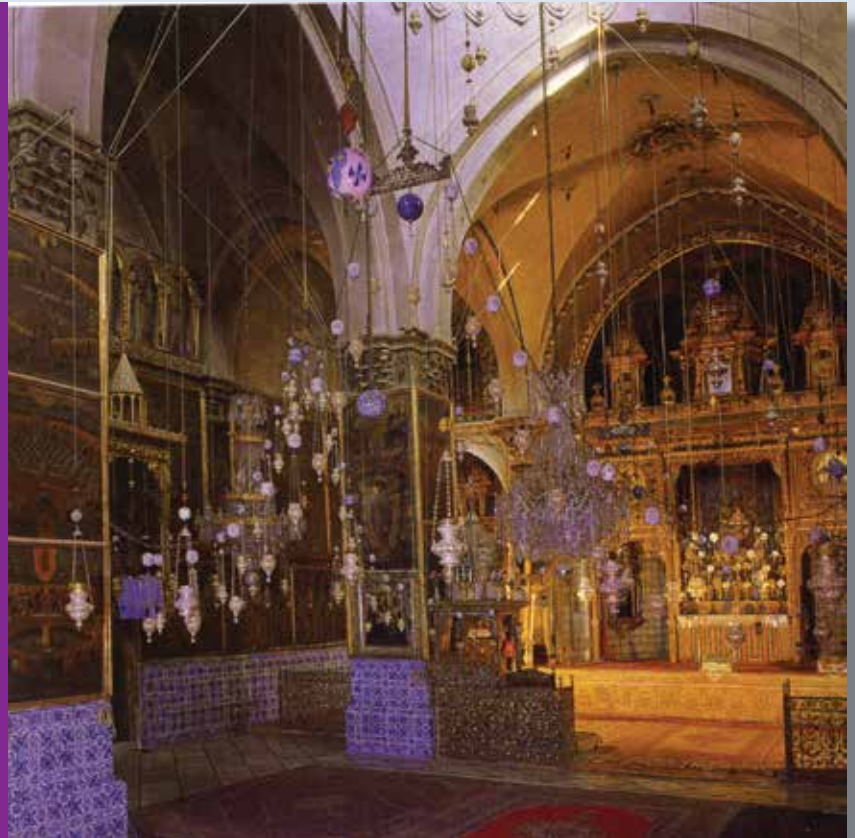
The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

One of the oldest sites of worship in the Holy Land, its walls and floors were once entirely covered by mosaics, including scenes of the Nativity; only a few are still visible. The Church is overseen by all three denominations — Armenians, Greeks and Roman Catholics. In addition to a chapel in the ground floor of the church and a monastery adjacent to the church, one portion of the actual grotto where Jesus was said to have been born — marked on the floor by a world-famous silver star — is held by the Armenians, who have there an altar adorned with lamps and paintings. Badarak is celebrated every morning by the Armenians.



The Armenian Patriarchate and St. James Cathedral

The Armenian cathedral, like the monastery around it, is called the Cathedral of the Saints James after Jesus' two disciples of that name. The remains of St. James "the Great" (sometimes called Jesus' "brother") are interred beneath the main altar. The head of St. James "the Less," who was martyred around 44 A.D, is buried in a side chapel. In its present form, the Cathedral reflects a major expansion that took place in the 12th century, partly thanks to a major donation by the Armenian king of Cilicia. The many silver lamps (ganteghs) that light the cathedral, the beautiful tiles and paintings that cover its walls, and the gilded wood of its many altars, are an awe-inspiring sight.



The cathedral is the heart of the St. James monastery. A huge, 17th-century iron door leading from the city road into the Patriarchate is closed at night (in earlier times at 8 pm, currently at 10 pm), in keeping with monastery rules, and is opened again at the ringing of the church bell in early morning. Immediately inside the gate is a vaulted stone passageway along which thousands of pilgrims through the centuries have passed; the white stone path is worn as smooth as a mirror. The passageway leads to the small courtyard of the St. James Cathedral, and beyond it to the great courtyard of the monastery. Among the many institutions housed in this impressive complex surrounded by high stone walls are two churches, one dedicated to St. Toros and one to the Holy Archangels; the glorious St. James Cathedral; the Gulbenkian Library; the Mardigian Museum, and the Holy Translators School (Srpotz Tarkmanchatz) for pupils from nursery school through grade twelve. There are also more than 300 rooms once used by pilgrims, which now serve as living quarters for members of the Armenian community, as well as the residential buildings of the St. James Brotherhood, and the offices of the Patriarchate.

Words to Live By

The beautiful ceramic street signs all over the Old City of Jerusalem are all designed and made by Armenian artisans. These were ordered by the Jerusalem municipality in the mid-1950s with a further request in 1967 for the addition of Hebrew to the Arabic and English already inscribed on the signs.



Did You Know?

An old Armenian tradition holds that between Easter and Ascension, women should not do any sewing in the evenings – otherwise they might become “chicken-blind” or unable to see while looking into the light!

0 Jerusalem

Several Bible readings appear below, followed by an equal number of statements. In the space provided, write the letter of the statement that best describes what is going on in each reading.

1. Matthew 23:37-39 - “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say ‘Blessed is he who comes in the Lord.’” _____
2. Zechariah 14:8 - “On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea, and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter.” _____
3. Joel 3:17 - “Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill; never again will foreigners invade her.” _____
4. Psalm 122:6-9 - “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.’ For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, ‘Peace be within you.’ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.” _____
5. Isaiah 65:18-19 - “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and crying will be no more.” _____
6. Zechariah 2:3-5 - “Then the angel who was speaking to me left, and another angel came to meet him and said to him, ‘Run, tell that young man, Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of men and livestock in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will be its glory within.’” _____
7. Psalm 125: 2 - “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and evermore.” _____



- 8.** Isaiah 40:9 - “You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’” _____
- a.** When he is born, the good news of Jesus will go out in all directions.
 - b.** God’s people will be so numerous that walls can’t contain them, so God himself will guard them.
 - c.** Jesus is very sad because he really wants the Jews to believe in him, so they won’t suffer harm.
 - d.** Be happy for what I do, because one day I will be happy with my people, and they will not be unhappy ever again.
 - e.** Spread the news of Jesus good and loud, because you are telling them about their God!
 - f.** God always has and always will surround his people with an encompassing love.
 - g.** Once my people realize I am their God, they will be safe from attacks of all kinds.
 - h.** King David pledges to do his best to bring good things to the people of Jerusalem, and he asks others to keep Jerusalem in their prayers.

Our Armenian Way



Armenian ceramicists are world-renowned for their hand-painted tiles and pottery. Ceramic workshops belonging to the Antreassian, Balian, Karakashian, Davidian and Sandrouni families became famous Armenian landmarks of the Old City. Tiles made by present day members of those families supply not only local architecture but design needs the world over, and have been featured in museum exhibits. The Balian, for example, played a major role in renovating the ceramic tile for the Dome of the Rock mosque.

Though there is an ancient pottery tradition in Armenia, these Armenian ceramicists of Jerusalem descend not from Armenia but from the Armenian artisans working in Kutahya in Ottoman Turkey. You may have heard of the famous ceramic tiles of Kutahya. There, the art of ceramic tile-making and pottery flourished as early as the 14th century but peaked in the 17th and 18th with famous Armenian artisans as the principle producers. In Kutahya, Armenians were influenced by Turkish and Muslim motifs in addition to designs with origins in China and Persia. Fleeing Turkey during the years of the Genocide, ceramicists set up shop in the Old City and were able to make free use of local Christian imagery and Armenian illustrated manuscript motifs. Armenian ceramics today reflect the journeys Armenian immigrants took from their hometowns through the Ottoman Empire and finally to Jerusalem – their combination of influences are unique and makes for the most beautiful ceramic work in all of Israel.

Unit Four: A World Church

Lesson 3

The Armenian Church in America I



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

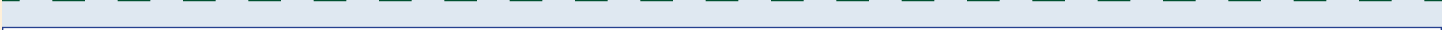
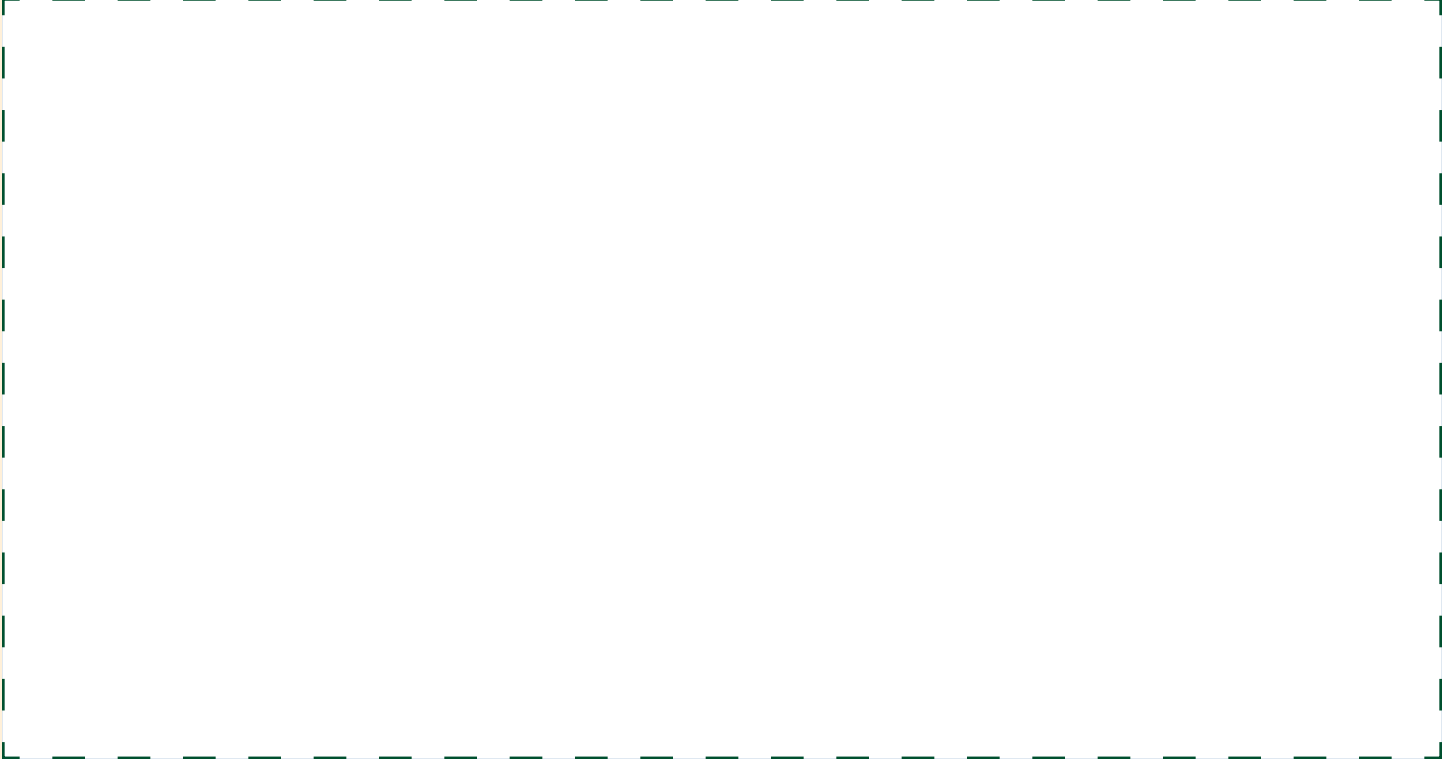
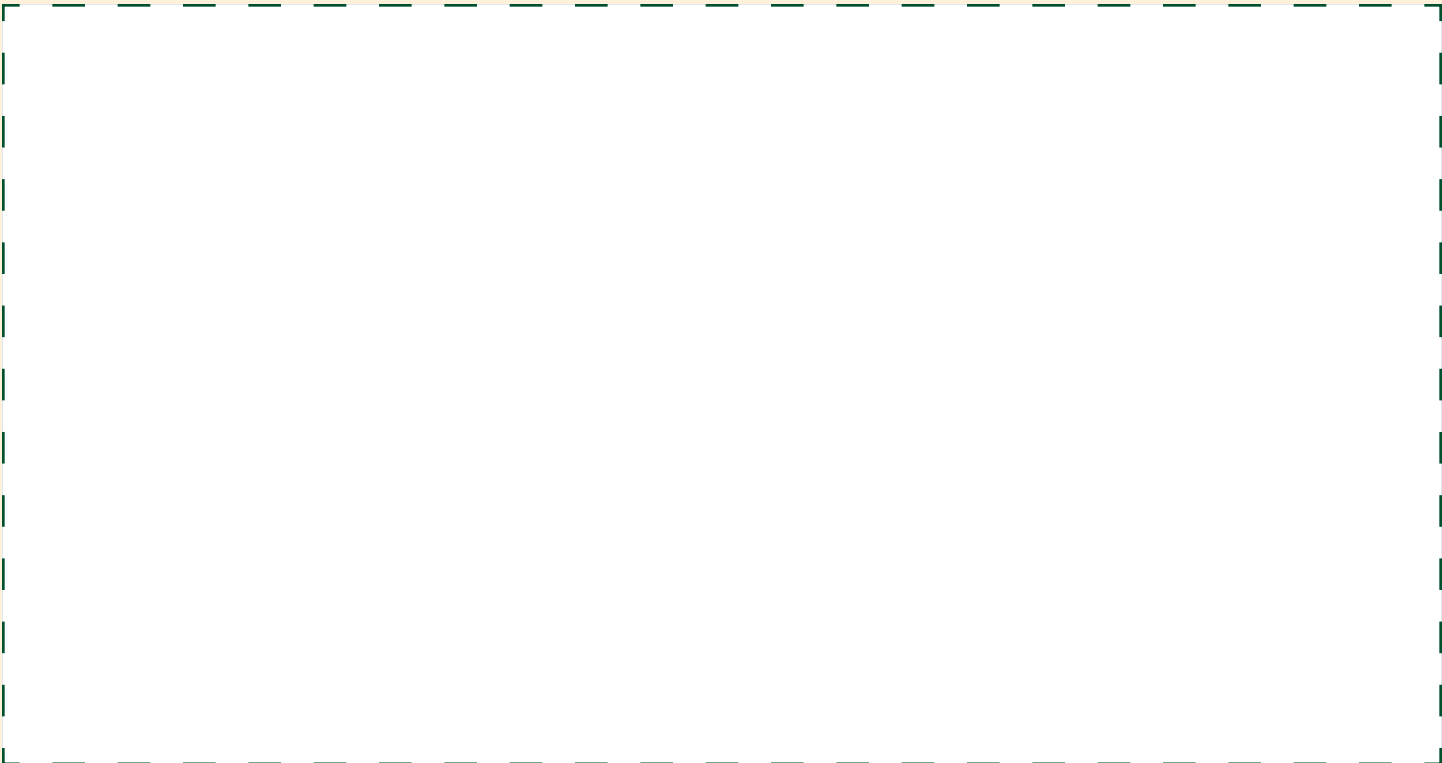
“We thank you, Father Almighty, who prepared for us the Holy Church as a haven, a temple of holiness, where the Holy Trinity is glorified. We thank you, Christ the King, who granted us life through your life-giving and holy body and blood. And we thank you, Spirit of Truth, who has renewed the Holy Church. Keep her without blemish through faith in the Holy Trinity for evermore. Amen.

Priest's prayer from the Armenian Divine Liturgy

Your Own Cartoon History

In the boxes provided, sketch cartoons of your family's story. It could start from when your “clan” first arrived in America. Feel free to add captions in bubbles or outside the boxes.

My Family: The Beginnings



Words to Live By

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13: 35

Quick Quiz

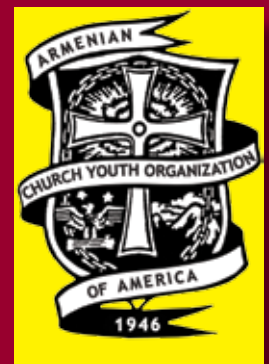
Mark the correct answer.

- 1. All of the following religions call Jerusalem their spiritual center except**
a Islam b Buddhism c Judaism d Christianity
- 2. After the Genocide, Armenians began _____ in Jerusalem.**
a training priests b training soldiers
c setting up a government d translating Scripture
- 3. Isaiah 65:19 states that the sounds of _____ will no longer be heard in Jerusalem when the Lord rejoices over the city.**
a trumpets and cymbals b horses and chariots
c weeping and crying d thunder and earthquakes
- 4. Armenians began to visit and settle in Jerusalem**
a shortly after the Battle of Avarayr b during the persecutions in Turkey
c in the 12th century
d even before the Armenian kingdom officially converted to Christianity in 301
- 5. The Armenian Church of Jerusalem officially has a role in overseeing these holy sites:**
a The grotto in Bethlehem where Jesus was born b the tomb where Mary was buried
c The Church of the Holy Sepulchre where Jesus was crucified and buried and rose from the dead
d all of the above e a and c only

Our Armenian Way

The letters of our youth organization, ACYOA, stand for “Armenian Church Youth Organization of America.” It is a great way for our young people to get together for reflection and service and make new friends in the Armenian community. The ACYOA pledge is as follows:

“I solemnly promise and declare upon my honor, that as a member of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, I shall, to the best of my ability, be a faithful son or daughter of the Armenian Church; shall be a devoted upholder of the Armenian cultural heritage; shall be a loyal citizen of the United States; and I shall diligently abide by the objectives, policies, and decisions of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America. I shall not strive for personal recognition and pleasure, but will serve our Church, our community, and our country, for the greater glory of God.”



- As you read in the cartoon history, one of our great Diocesan Primate, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, was instrumental in founding the ACYOA. Do you think it is important to have a national youth organization? Why or why not?
- Look at the pledge, what values does it ask members to uphold?

Unit Four: A World Church

Lesson 4

The Armenian Church in America II



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyin Surpo, Amen.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Psalm 90:1-2

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. Most of the earliest Armenian immigrants came to America in the 19th century as

- a factory workers b farm hands c students d government officials

2. In what city was the first Armenian church in America established?

- a Detroit b Worcester c New York d Philadelphia

3. The first priest sent to America to lead this flock, later to be our first Primate, was

- a Fr. Hovsep Sarajian b Fr. Vartan Mikayelian
c Fr. Khachadour Vosganian d Fr. Mamigon Babikian

4. Archbishop Ghevont Tourian was assassinated in 1933 while celebrating Badarak in Holy Cross Church, NYC by

- a Turkish terrorists b American protestors
c Armenian political fanatics d a disgruntled priest

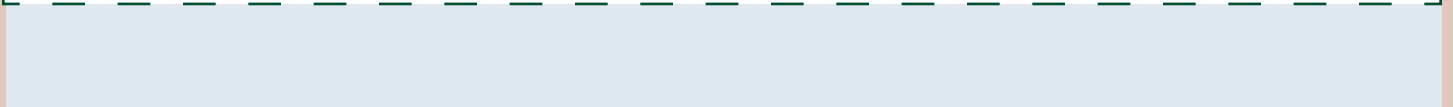
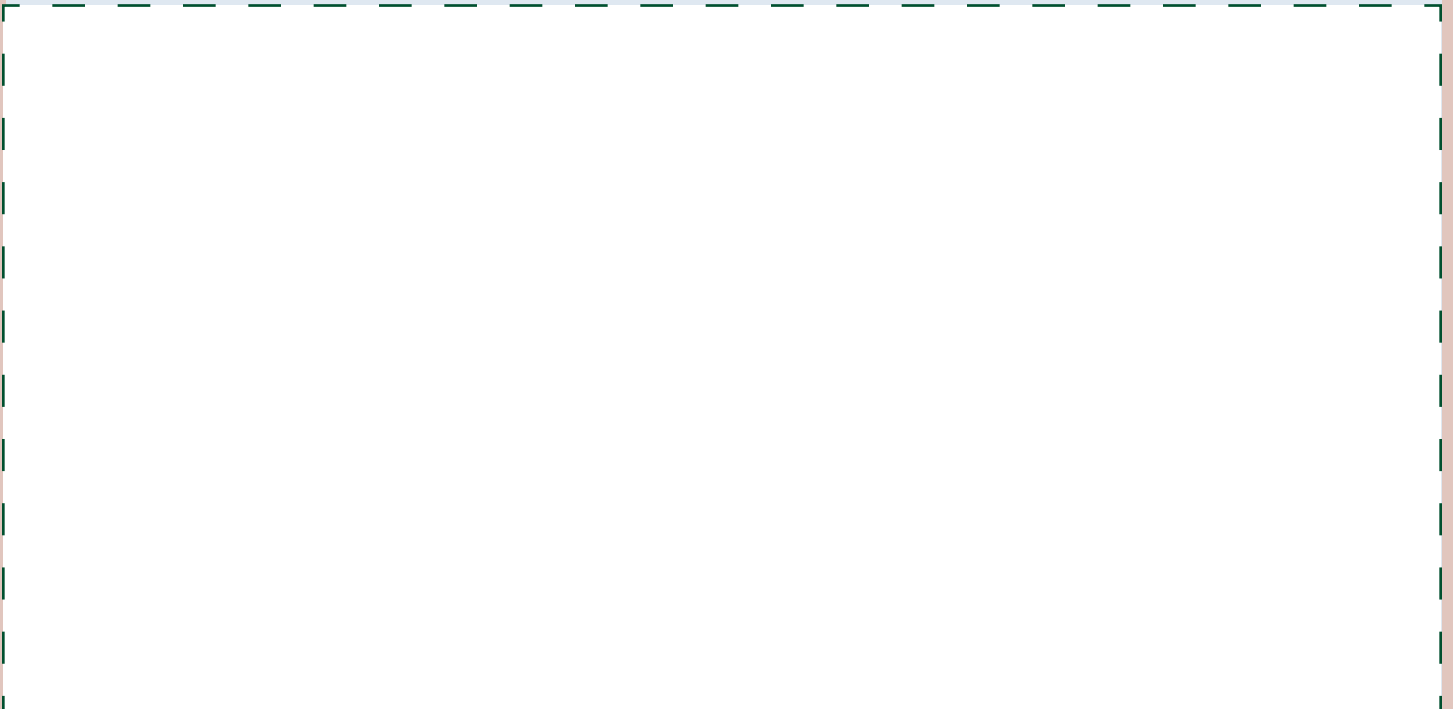
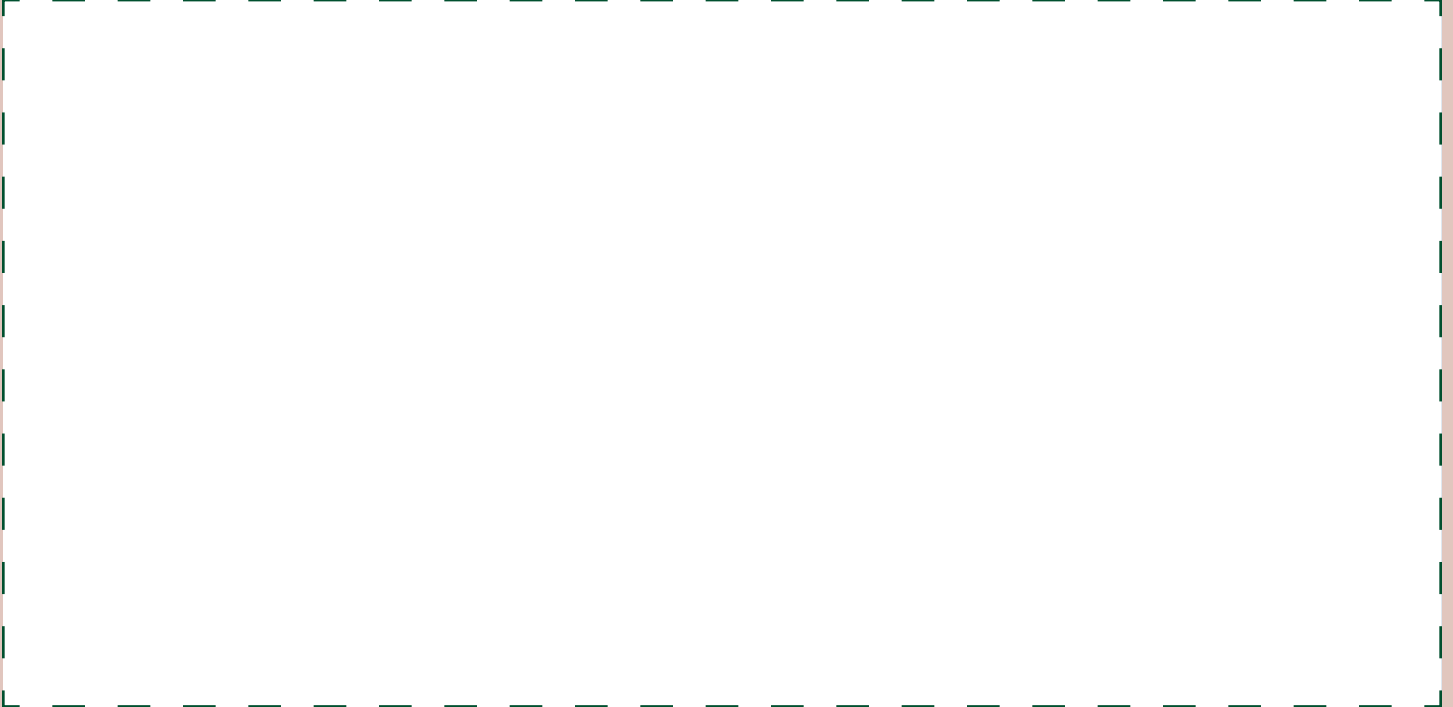
5. The Armenian Church Youth Organization was created under the leadership of Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan in

- a 1915 b 1933 c 1946 d 2000

Your Own Cartoon History

In the boxes provided, sketch cartoons of your experience in the Armenian Church. Let each box describe a way you are part of the church. Feel free to add captions in bubbles or outside the boxes .

Me and My Church



Words to Live By

“The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.”

Luke 13: 18-19



Our Armenian Way

The Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople, today known as Istanbul, serves the largest Christian community in Turkey. The Constantinople Patriarchate was established in 1461, although there were several troubled periods in which no patriarch occupied the See in Turkey. With the assistance of two other bishops, the Patriarch of Constantinople runs the churches, as well as a school and the Holy Saviour Hospital. He also produces an annual review called “Shoghagat” or “Rays from Above.”

The Patriarch of Constantinople reports to the Catholicos in Etchmiadzin. Though the community is small, its spiritual authority is respected by other area churches. It has been a loving protector and teacher for the faithful in Turkey for centuries.



Unit Four: A World Church

Lesson 5

The Community As Bedrock



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyin Surpo, Amen.

Oh Christ, guardian of all, let your right hand be over us day and night, while at home and traveling, sleeping and rising, that we may never fail. Have mercy upon all your creatures and especially upon us, the sixth grade Sunday School class. Amen.

Adapted from I Confess With Faith, St. Nersess Shnorhali

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. The only Armenian Seminary in North America was established in 1962 and called

- a St John's b St. Gregory c St. Vartan d St. Nersess

2. St. Vartan Cathedral, mother Cathedral to the Eastern Diocese, was built and finally consecrated in

- a D1898 b 1915 c 1968 d 1990

3. What are the three Dioceses of North America?

- a California, Eastern USA, Canada b Western USA, Eastern USA, Canada
c Canada, America, Mexico d California, Western USA, Eastern USA

4. On December 7, 1988, a catastrophe shook the Armenian nation and Church to its foundations. Devastating the local Armenian population, this sent shockwaves throughout the world. This was

- a a massive flood in Cairo, Egypt b civil war in Lebanon
c an earthquake in Armenia d Turkish protests in Istanbul

5. In 1991, the Armenian Church was once again deeply affected by an event beyond its borders. In this year

- a The Canadian Diocese separated from Etchmiadzin's jurisdiction
b the Armenian Patriarchate lost its hold over sacred sites in the Holy Land
c the euro became the monetary unit of the European Union
d Armenia became a free Republic as the Soviet Union collapsed

Holding the Ladder

Did you ever climb a ladder or hold it for someone who did? Ladders are meant to stand up on their own, but even when all the legs are firmly on the ground, it makes you feel much more secure to have someone on the ground holding it still. Your church community is like the person holding your ladder. You may be high up in the air, buffeted by the wind, but you know you will not fall because you have something holding you steady. Christ is the safe ground, and your community of believers can help to keep you anchored to him and his Holy Word.

- How do you behave differently at Sunday School than you do in regular school?
- Which do you feel is more important: What you learn in Sunday School or what you learn in public school? Why?
- If you studied Christianity online by yourself at home, how would your experience differ from attending Sunday School and participating in church life?
- What are some of the benefits of being a community of believers together?

We're All in This Together

The world we face from Monday through Saturday is a sea of noise, confusion, and mixed-up feelings. On Sunday, we can turn down the noise level in our minds and in our lives when we come together as a faith community. We help prepare each other to face the ups and downs of life in many ways.

When we worship together in the Divine Liturgy, we are surrounded by others who feel the same way about God as we do. We are free to show him our love and reverence, as well as our need for his salvation and protection. We are made stronger in our unity of purpose, because everyone in the church is there for the same reason.

As we observe our ancient rites and learn the Biblical teachings of Christ from our church fathers, we have a well-traveled path to truth about God. Our famously unchanging teachings can correct our course when we may be vulnerable to straying. Our parents, clergy, Sunday School teachers, and other members of the parish are available to keep us grounded in Christ's love and our body of knowledge accurate.

Next time you feel overwhelmed by the outside world, stop for a moment. Think of the church and the sanctity of the sanctuary: remember the fragrance of the incense, the peaceful atmosphere, the majestic hymns, the calm surroundings and the power of the communion chalice. You can look forward to that experience again each Sunday as you and your faith community are refreshed and instructed by Christ himself in the Divine Liturgy.

Bringing the Peace Wherever You Go

What can you do to keep focused on what you learn in church and Sunday School? We are instructed to pray and read the Bible often.

Write a prayer that you can offer to God as you go about your busy week.



Did You Know?

The word "Liturgy" comes from two Greek words that mean "work" and "people" so liturgy means "doing" rather than sitting back.

A People Belonging to God

Read Acts 2:42-47. Answer these questions:

1. To what four things did the faithful devote themselves?

2. What did the apostles do that filled the onlookers with awe?

3. What happened to the worldly goods of the believers?

4. How often did the faithful meet in the temple courts?

5. What happened to the number of people being saved?

Words to Live By

“There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.”

Acts 20:35

Our Armenian Way

Life in a parish of the Armenian Church is a rich and varied experience. We celebrate the life-giving mystery of the Holy Sacrifice—Soorp Badarak, we see our beautiful vestments and our special architecture, we smell the incense during liturgical sacraments and the aroma of Armenian food being prepared for bazaars and picnics, we learn about our common history, our language, and so much more. We are involved in a shared responsibility to care for the church, financially, physically, and spiritually. Our contributions in these areas give us a place to worship that reflects our love for the Lord. Together with our personal prayer life and Scripture study, our participation in a worship community keeps our faith alive and growing in an increasingly complex world.



Congratulations! You've completed the Sixth Grade. Now celebrate!



Department of Christian Education
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
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