

THE WORD OF GOD: Christmas Special

Lesson 10. Traditions and Why We Need Them

Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

Video Lesson: [Bread & Salt: Water Blessing](#) (Duration 4:08)

Guessing Game: What's in the Stocking?

You Will Need: Stockings, pen and paper, 10 to 20 Christmas related items.

References:

www.vemkar.us

Topical Series Booklets: [Faith of the Armenian Church](#)

Memory Verse:

“Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.”

- 1 Corinthians 11:2

Lesson Body

Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ գիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, ee paneets yev kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

We all enjoy celebrations and feasts. During the holiday season, right after Thanksgiving, as lights slowly appear on houses, Christmas trees glisten through the windows, kitchens become busy with holiday cooking and gifts pile up under the tree, our hearts fill with joy and anticipation.

For Armenian families in the United States, the Christmas season is a little bit longer and is full of many family traditions. We often say that Armenians celebrate Christmas twice: American Christmas on December 25th and Armenian Christmas on January 6th. This season is full of wonderful cultural and personal family traditions.

Traditions are customs we follow that have been passed on to us from our parents, grandparents, and generations before us. They hold great cultural and spiritual value in our lives and help make us who we are. Specific for a particular nation or a country, they make history and form a strong bond between the past and present.

‘Tradition,’ from Latin tradition, means the handing down or transmission of knowledge from one generation to another. The Armenian word for tradition, *աւանդութիւն*, has the same idea and meaning, “to pass on, hand over” from one generation to another. It is a connecting piece which binds people from one period to another.

Specific traditions which take place in our faith and church are referred to as Holy Tradition. Holy Tradition is that which has been passed on within the Church from the time of Christ’s apostles down to the present day. St. Paul refers on multiple occasions to the traditions that he imparted to the communities he founded: “Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.” 2 Thessalonians 3:6

Holy Tradition is limited not only to written texts but encompasses the whole life, liturgy, ethos, and practices of the Church, inspired, and guided by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul indicates as much when he writes to the Church at Thessalonica: “So then, brothers, stand firm, and cling to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Among the elements which make up the Holy Tradition of the Church, the Bible holds the preeminent place. Other elements are the Church’s liturgical life and prayer, its dogmatic decisions, canons (laws and guidelines), its church councils, the writings of the church fathers, the lives of the saints, and finally its creative expressions such as its traditions of music, architecture, and iconography.

Of course, not everything the Church does belongs to its Holy Tradition. Some things are just customary practices of an age and can be passing fads, like men wearing suits every week to church or having oil filled lanterns in the churches.

Holy Tradition is not fixed or static but develops and evolves with each age, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the Church adapts and evolves to the new conditions in the world faced by each generation. Holy Tradition is not to be understood as something man has created on his own but rather is the ongoing way in which the Holy Spirit is present in and with the Church “guiding her into all truth” (John 16:13). Likewise, regular traditions change and evolve over time because some generations add to the tradition.

The tradition of gift giving during the holiday season is connected with the act of passing on a tradition itself. Those traditions we pass on are gifts which hold cultures, nations, and families together. Those specific traditions are cherished and shared with love just as gifts of Christmas are.

There are many Christmas traditions around the world. People cherish this time and looking forward for beautiful gatherings and celebrations. Many originated in churches, many in christian families, based on their customs or cultural customs.

Decorating a Christmas Tree – This tradition has come to us from Northern Germany. This custom became fashionable and started spreading around the world after Queen Victoria and German Prince Albert were sketched in the Illustrated London News standing with their children around a Christmas tree. This tradition is loved and followed by every Christian family. Making our homes festive in anticipation of Christ’s birth. The evergreen tree, which never loses its leaves/needles in the dead of winter, is still alive, symbolizing everlasting life.

Christmas Carolling – Although, it is not an Armenian tradition, some families like to celebrate it in their neighborhoods and churches. We sing and join the ranks of angels in celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, just as the angels rejoiced and spread the good news.

Attending Candlelight Liturgy at Church/Jrakalooys – On the evening of January 5, families go to church for a Christmas Eve service to pray and celebrate. We attend this beautiful service, again, joining the angels in singing praise and worship. During that evening’s Holy Badarak, fire from candlelight is distributed to all the faithful, who take the flame home and spread the good news of Christ’s birth and the light of God entering the world.

Blessing of water – We celebrate this tradition on January 6 at the conclusion of Holy Badarak. The priest blessing water is a symbolic commemoration of the “Baptism of Christ”. In the Armenian Church, the service is called CHURORHNEK. The Blessing of the Water celebration was originally performed in the Holy Land, at the river Jordan on Theophany, January 6. As the word spread of the beautiful ceremony in the Holy Land, churches outside of Jerusalem began to perform this ceremony by the riverside or at the seashore. Later, because of subsequent Islamic prohibitions under the Ottoman Turkish Empire, this and other public out-door rituals were henceforth accomplished within the confines of the churches.

Video Lesson: [Bread & Salt: Water Blessing](#) (Duration 4:08)

Guessing Game: What’s in the Stocking?

You Will Need: Two stockings, pen and paper, 10 to 20 Christmas related items.

Lesson: Like the gifts in the stockings, we may not be able to fully grasp the traditions of the past. Yet, by feeling and experiencing them, we understand our traditions better.

How To:

1. Divide the items evenly and fill the two stockings with Christmas-related items.
2. Divide the teens into two teams.
3. Pass the stockings to each team.
4. Now the teammates have to feel the items from the outside of the stocking.
5. The team members have to work together to deduce what items are in the stocking.
6. After deciding, they have to write down the names of the items and hand it over to the teacher.
7. The team that guesses the most items correctly will be the winner.



Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

At Home

Please complete the assignment by next class.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.”

- 1 Corinthians 11:2

MAKE A CHRISTMAS CARD:

Make a cheerful Christmas card for your priest, teacher, friend or relative. Make it as colorful as possible.