

RAISING SAINTS



CHILDREN + FAMILY MINISTRY // WEEKLY GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

APPARITION OF THE HOLY CROSS LEVEL 1: AGES 5 - 8

How did you learn to make the sign of the cross? Do you remember the name of the person who taught you?

Write it here.

As you got older, you learned much more about our Lord Jesus Christ. You learned to say these words each time you made the sign of the cross. To find out, fill in the blanks by writing the letters which match the color of the lines.

o a i r e h

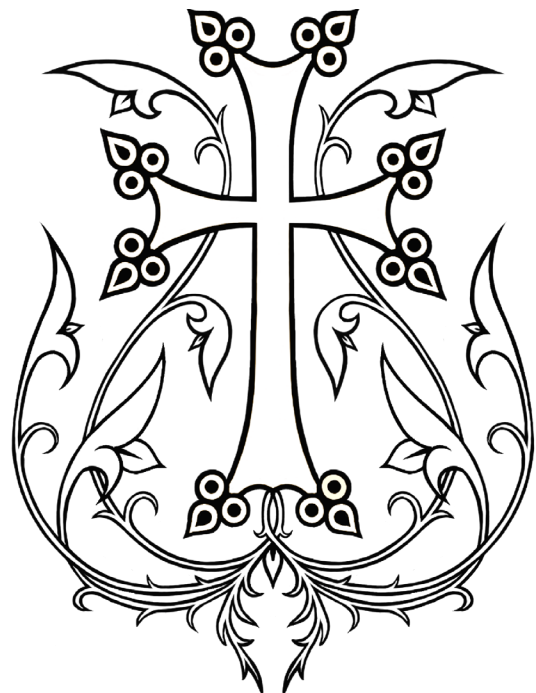
In the n__m__ of the F__t__e__, and of the
S__n, and of the H__ly Sp__t. Amen.

When you began to read better, you started to learn much more about the life of Jesus Christ, his love for us, and his sacrifice on the cross for our sake. Your teachers and parents have been helping you to understand and learn well. When you were baptized your parents and godparents promised the Church that they would help you to love Jesus our Lord and learn to become his followers.

Many years ago, there was a bishop in Jerusalem who made sure that all new Christians would learn about Jesus too. He was a caring teacher. His name was St. Cyril of Jerusalem. He was very concerned when some people started teaching wrong things about Jesus, the Son of God. He prayed to God to help him to correct the wrong teachings. God answered his prayers. On a beautiful May morning he was so surprised! A huge light in the shape of the cross was shining very brightly on the skies of Jerusalem, reaching

from Golgotha where Jesus had been crucified, all the way to the Mount of Olives where Jesus used to pray often. The cross was shining so brilliantly in the middle of the day, that even the rays of the sun could not block it. Everyone in Jerusalem, young and old ran out to see this beautiful shining cross and went to the church of the Holy Sepulchre to pray and thank God for giving them this hopeful sign.

Each year we celebrate this event as the Feast of the Apparition of the Holy Cross on the fifth Sunday of Easter. This year we will be celebrating it on May 7. Go to church and celebrate this day because Jesus Christ gave us his holy cross as a sign of victory.



LEVEL 2: AGES 9 – 12 & LEVEL 3: AGES 13 - 17

When you were baptized your parents and godparents made a solemn promise to God and the Church that they would raise you to learn to love God and help you to become a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. You learned prayers and went to church with them.
2. Your teachers in Church School also helped you to learn about the life of Jesus Christ.
3. As you grew into adolescence perhaps you had some questions about our Christian faith, which is normal to do. Even now, whenever you have questions do not hesitate to ask your parents, teachers and your priest to help you clarify and understand our faith. This is how people grow in faith and have a firm grasp of the love that Jesus Christ our Lord has for us. This knowledge gives us hope and guidance in our lives.

During the early years of Christianity people had their own struggles to learn and be firm in their understanding of the correct teachings of the Church about Jesus Christ. The word which means correct teaching is “orthodox”. As early as the fourth century false teachings known as the Arian heresy were circulating and dividing the unity of the Church. The heretical Arius taught that Jesus was a created being, therefore not God by nature, as a result, subordinate to God the Father. This clearly negated the orthodoxy of our faith by distorting the oneness and unity of the Holy Trinity.

Perhaps even today you may hear from your friends at school or read on social media information which goes against what you believe as an Armenian Orthodox Christian. That can be very disconcerting. If you have been in such a predicament and felt either confused or unsettled, what did you do about it?

If you wish, write about it here.

It is in such situations that the example and guidance of our ancestors in faith helps us not to divert from our true and orthodox faith. Let’s focus on the Feast of the Apparition of the Holy Cross which we shall celebrate on May 7, which

speaks to us of the importance of the cross in our Christian life journey, which is a pilgrimage towards reunion with our Creator God.

The apparition or appearance of the cross is a significant event which occurred on May 7, 351 A.D. in Jerusalem. Those years were challenging times for the young Church as we read above about the Arian heresy. St. Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem, wrote to Emperor Constantius of Constantinople, who leaned towards the heretical Arian teachings. He described the miraculous vision on the skies of Jerusalem and invited the Emperor to return to the true faith. The Emperor was deeply moved by the bishop’s testimony and returned to the orthodox faith affirming that Jesus is God, equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit. St. Cyril’s letter is read in our Churches on the Feast of the Apparition of the Holy Cross during Morning Service. Here is a segment which describes the event.

In the days of your father Constantine, favored by God and of blessed memory, by the grace of God, the salvific cross of God was discovered in Jerusalem, and this happened in his days because in his beautiful piety he caused the holy places to bring forth their treasures. But in your days, most pious king, wonderful and miraculous events happened not on earth but on the face of the sky, because the sign of the victory over death of the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I mean the blessed cross appeared over Jerusalem in brilliant and shining rays. During the days of Holy Pentecost, at the beginning of the month of Ahegan (May), on the third hour, the all-victorious sign of the cross formed of light appeared over the sky extending from Holy Golgotha to the Mount of Olives. It was seen not just by one or two people, but was clearly visible to the entire population of the city. Nor was it like a quick and passing sight, but was visible over the sky for hours, and was sparking with shiny rays that overshadowed the rays of the sun, otherwise, if it was not brighter than the sun, the sun’s rays would have covered its brightness. And its rays were so much stronger than the sun that the entire population if the city rushed to the Church [of the Holy Sepulchre], filled with awe and joy at the divine vision. (Armenian Church lectionary)

St. Cyril of Jerusalem’s invitation to the Emperor to guard the correct teachings of the Church is a call to vigilance to us also. We know that there are all sorts of distorted Christian teachings which circulate in our society. If you are ever confronted with such incorrect views of the Christian faith what can you do to safeguard your own correct

understanding of the faith? Choose from the list below and number them in the order which you would choose to act:

- Talk to your Church School teacher.
- Talk with your parents and ask for their help.
- Talk to your priest about your questions.
- Ask your priest or Church School teacher for reading material recommended by the Church.
- Regularly attend Divine Liturgy and pray with the community, paying close attention to the English translation of the prayers which will present our orthodox faith.

May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and may his shining holy cross ever brighten your heart.

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Try coloring your own version of an icon of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. You can follow the provided colored icon as an example.

Have Fun!

