

The Holy Translators

Almost 400 years after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christianity was still spreading throughout the world. The Armenian people wanted to learn about the Lord very much, but there was no written Armenian language. All the books were written in Greek or Persian and church services were con-

ducted in Greek or Syriac. There was a great need to spread the Word of God to the Armenian people, in their own native language.

St. Sahag and St. Mesrob were aware of this need and eager to find better ways to teach the people of Jesus. This is how they did it.

ST. SAHAG AND ST. MESROB

St. Mesrob was a master of foreign languages. He was a leader of the church and a zealous missionary. His missionary enterprise marked the beginning of his trials and labors in finding an Armenian alphabet and translating the Bible. In order to Christianize the people it was necessary to place in their hands the writings of the Church Fathers and the Holy Bible. St. Mesrob travelled extensively and preached the gospel in the remote parts of Armenia, where Christianity had not yet penetrated.

St. Mesrob made up his mind to find a proper alphabet for his people and translate the Bible and the entire church ritual into Armenian. He went to see his friend the Catholicos, St. Sahag, and told him of his desire to formulate an alphabet. The two petitioned the king for financial and protective aid which the king granted eagerly. It was exciting to see the harmonious

cooperation between the religious, intellectual, and temporal authorities in a most noble cause.

St. Mesrob travelled widely to consult with some well-known Greek scholars who were not able to help him in his search for new letters for Armenian sounds. Mesrob decided to put his research aside and withdraw into a world of prayer and meditation. During this time a vision came to him. In this vision from God, the long-sought letters were written on a board. This explains the old tradition of the Armenian people that their alphabet was of heavenly origin.

St. Mesrob presented his work to his friend Sahag. The Catholicos who had talents in music and art, re-shaped and re-arranged the letters and they together gave the final touch to one of the most perfect of alphabets. The Mesrobian alphabet contained 36 char-



acters. Later, during the Middle Ages, two more letters were added to make 38.

St. Sahag and St. Mesrob began training their disciples in the new alphabet, and undertook the task of translating the Bible and church ritual. It took about thirty years to translate the whole Bible. After this great achievement, they translated many other literary and religious works from Greek and Syriac into Armenian.

St. Sahag, St. Mesrob and their disciples have become known as the Holy Translators or Soorp Tarkmanitchk. Their literary works have contributed to what is considered the Golden Age of Armenian literature.

The Church celebrates the memory

of the Holy Translators during the month of October which is also known as “Cultural Month.”

Answer the following questions:

1. St. Mesrob was a missionary who travelled to remote parts of Armenia to spread the word of God. How can we be missionaries today in our own parish?

2. St. Sahag, St. Mesrob, and their disciples became known as the _____

3. How did St. Mesrob decide upon the letters to be used in the Armenian alphabet?

DISCIPLES OF THE HOLY TRANSLATORS

These Bible proverbs are written in code. It is your job to decode the passages and become disciples of the Holy Translators. (All the letters are in proper order, but to figure it out, you must decide where one word stops and the next one begins.)

AW IS ESO NACCE PTS HI SFAT HE RSDI SCI PLI NE

Proverbs 13:1

AG OO DNA ME ISTO BEM ORE DE SIR EDT HANG REAT RIC HES

Proverbs 22:1

TH EFE AR OFT HELO RDL EA DST OLI FE

Proverbs 19:23

AGE NT LEAN SWERT URNSA WA YWR ATH BUTA HAR SHWO RDS TI RSU
PAN GER

Proverbs 15:1

Choose another proverb and encode it (divide the word groups in different places just as the ones above). Write your proverb here in code and have a friend decipher it!
