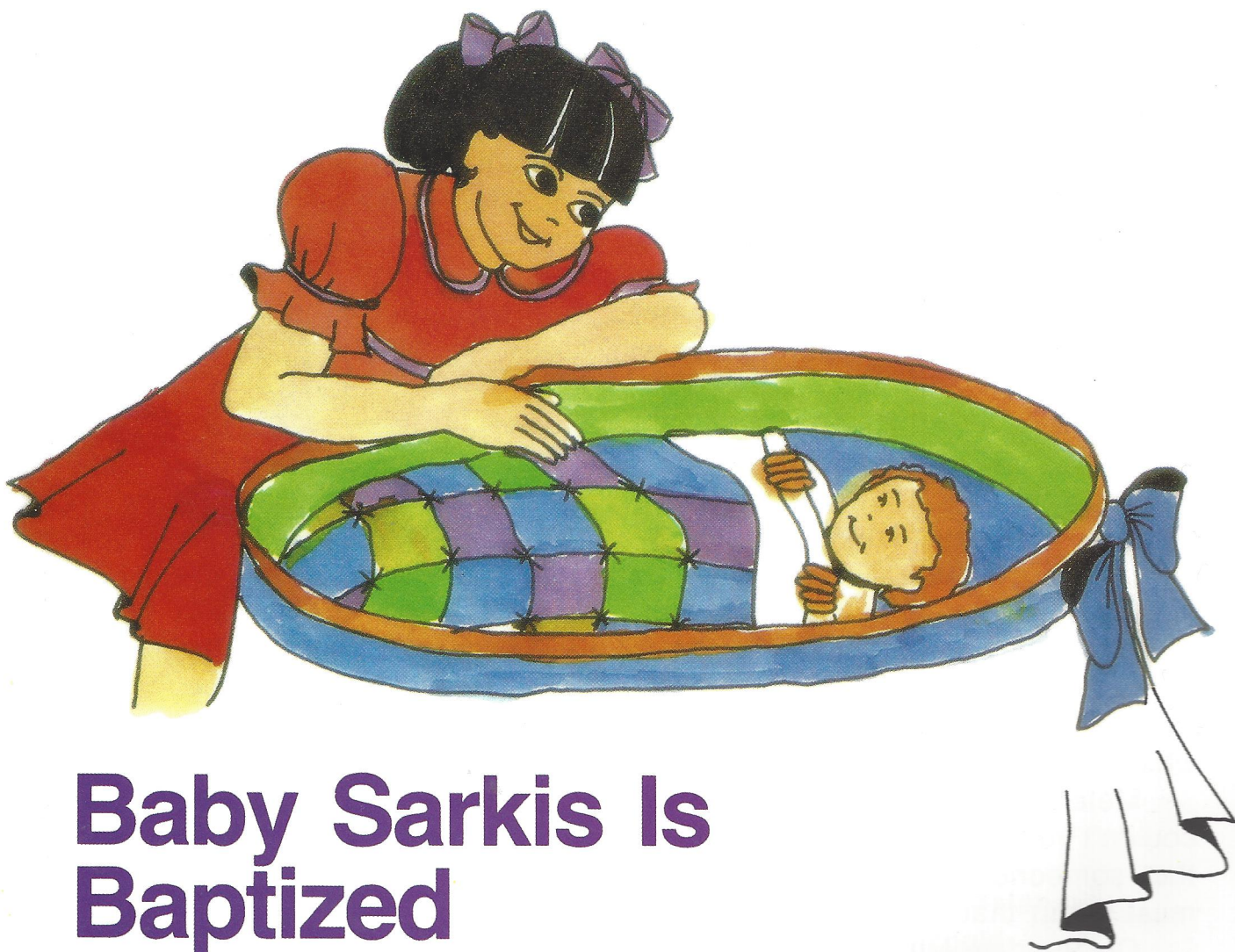


BAPTISM



Baby Sarkis Is Baptized

Once there was a little girl named Melanie. She lived with her family in a house in a big city. She had a mother and father, and a grandmother, but no brothers or sisters. She had friends and playmates who lived near her. She missed not having any brothers or sisters. She would ask her mother, "Why do other children have a sister or brother? Why can't I have one?" And her mother would only

say, "Someday, Melanie, you'll have one too."

Melanie was very excited when her mother surprised her with the news, "Melanie, we're going to have a new baby in a few months." How happy she was! That was good news to hear. She told her teacher and classmates in school the very next day.

The weeks passed slowly, but Melanie tried to be patient. She tried not to ask her mother too often, "When will the baby come?" Finally, one night her mother woke her and said, "Melanie, daddy and I are going to the hospital now, grandma will help you get up in the morning and get ready for school." When Melanie woke up the next morning, she rushed downstairs. Grandma told her the big news. "You have a baby brother, Melanie. And his name is Sarkis."

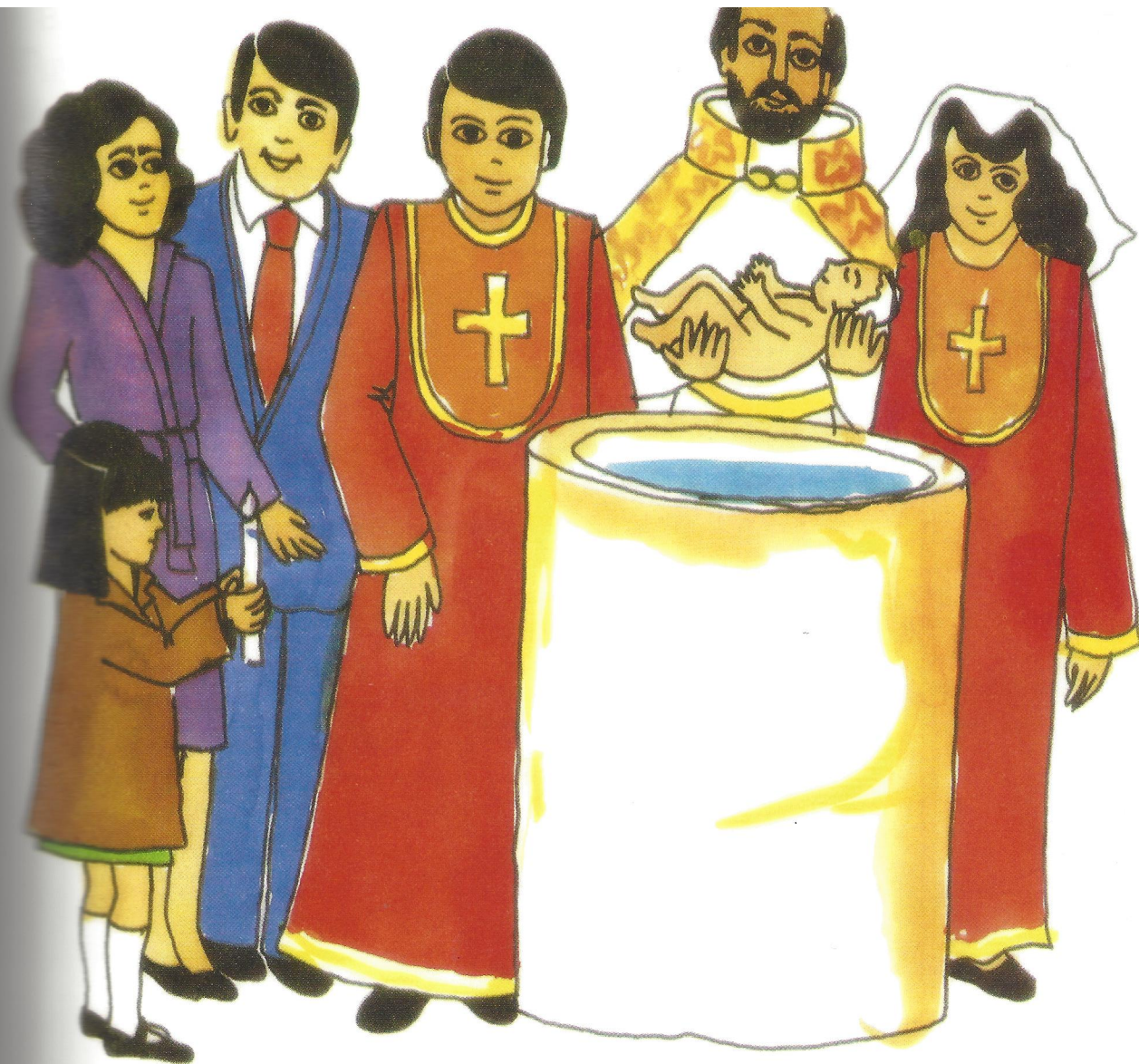
Sarkis was a noisy baby at first. He seemed to cry all the time. And mommy and daddy paid so much attention to this noisy little boy that Melanie was sorry she had wanted a baby. Sarkis was so little, too. Melanie didn't think he would ever be much fun. But one day he learned to smile, and Melanie enjoyed that. Melanie liked making Baby Sarkis laugh, and her mother was happy that Melanie was so helpful.

One day mother told Melanie, "This Sunday we will have Baby Sarkis baptized at church. After the service we will all come home and have a party. "What is 'baptized?'" asked Melanie. "It means that we will bring Sarkis to church and make him part of God's family," said mother. "Did you have one for me? And a party too?" "Oh yes," said mother. "In fact, your godparents, Aunt Virginia and Uncle Michael, came from Boston for the occasion. They will be Sarkis' godparents too. It was such a special day. You looked so nice in your baptismal dress. And you didn't even cry very much when Father Gregory put you in the water."

Melanie tried to imagine what Sarkis' baptism would be like. She couldn't remember anything from her own. But it was nice to think that someone would come all the way from Boston for the day. It must mean that it was pretty important.

On Sunday, Melanie and her parents got up early and got ready for church. Melanie wore her new red dress. Then mother got Sarkis ready. "What will he wear for the baptism?" asked Melanie. "Aunt Virginia will bring a new white suit for him," answered mother.

When they got to church, all the relatives were already there. Melanie hugged and kissed her grandparents and godparents and cousins. Der Nersess, the priest, met them at the door. Soon the service began. Melanie didn't understand very much but she saw



how happy everyone looked. Der Hayr took Sarkis from Aunt Virginia's arms and put him in the water. Sarkis screamed. Melanie heard Der Nersess call Sarkis by his whole name, Sarkis Peter. Sarkis cried even louder. Then Der Hayr handed the crying baby to Uncle Michael.

He put something on Sarkis' head and hands and feet. Melanie couldn't see everything that was happening, but she could see smiles on everyone's faces. Finally it was time for Aunt Virginia and mother to dress Sarkis in his new clothes. They gave him to Uncle Michael to hold. Der Hayr put Holy Communion in his mouth.

Soon the service was over. Der Nersess leaned over and kissed Sarkis on the forehead while Uncle Michael held him. Mother and daddy kissed Sarkis and it was Melanie's turn.

It was so nice to see all of her cousins and relatives. Melanie

was happy that so many people had come. She had a good time playing with her cousins and friends. It was a good party for Sarkis' baptism.

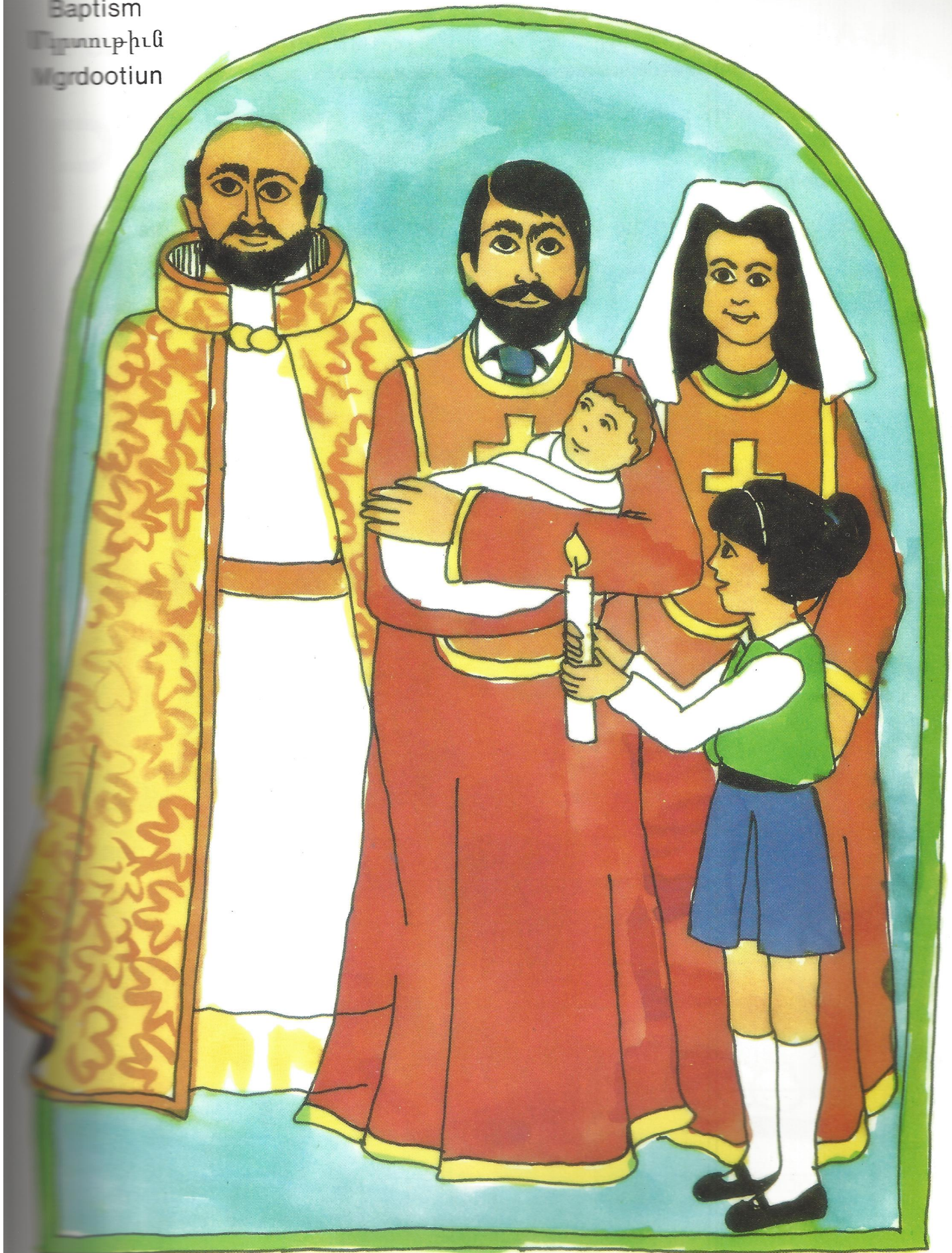
Later, she asked her grandfather about the service. "Why was it held, grandpa? And why did so many of our relatives come?" Grandpa answered, "All of us, beginning with your parents, wanted Sarkis to be part of God's family. Today Der Hayr made him a member of this family. All of us are part of God's family, and we ask God to include Sarkis too. Your parents and godparents promised to help Sarkis grow up loving God. And all of our friends and relatives wanted to celebrate this occasion. All of us in God's family love him and want to do good things for him."

"I'm glad we brought Sarkis into God's family, grandpa. Now can I have another piece of cake?"

Symbols of Baptism



Baptism
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NAMING

Perhaps you were only a baby when your parents took you to church to be baptized.

In baptism, you became a member of God's family.

At baptism, your parents promised to help you to love and serve God.



Ask your parents to tell you about your baptism by finishing these sentences:

I was born on _____

I was baptized on _____

at _____ church

in _____

My Godparents are _____

Other people at my baptism were _____

I was baptized because _____