



Just as we celebrate our own and our friends' birthdays, Christians around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. At Christmas we share God's message of hope, love and peace by focusing on the love we have for family and friends, and especially on the great love that God showed us by sending us His Son.

Jesus tells us, "Love each other as I have loved you." Besides loving our family and friends, we are asked to love the people around us – even people we might not know.

DECEMBER

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10	11	12	13	14	15
17	18	19	20	21	22
24	25	26	27	28	29

JANUARY

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The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Christ but early Christians celebrated both the birth and the baptism of Christ on January 6th. After some time, the Roman Catholic Church started observing Christmas on December 25th so that it would coincide with an existing pagan feast dedicated to the sun. While other churches later followed this new date, the Armenian Church continues to keep the earlier tradition of celebrating both the birth and baptism of Christ on January 6th. This combined celebration has a long, compound Armenian name *Asdvadzahaydnootyun* which means revelation of God.

The Christmas celebrations in the Armenian Church start on the evening of January 5th with a special service called *Jerakalooys* (full of light). At the end of Mass, the priest proclaims the good news of the birth and revelation of Christ as the Son of God. Everyone in the church lights a candle which they carry back to light their homes in remembrance of the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World. We pray that He may guide the whole family throughout the year. Once home from church, families enjoy a traditional *Khetoom* (eve) meal of fish.



On January 6th, Armenian churches around the world are filled with people participating in the joyful celebration of Christ's birth and baptism.

Right after the divine liturgy of the nativity, a special ceremony called *Cherorhnek* (blessing of the water) is performed symbolizing the baptism of Jesus.



When Jesus was about thirty years old He was baptized by *Hovhanoo Megerdich*, (John the Baptist) in the Jordan River. As He was being baptized, the skies opened, the *Soorp Hoki* (Holy Spirit) descended on Him in the shape of a dove and a voice from heaven said, "You are my Beloved Son."



Today, *Myuron* (holy oil) is poured from a special container resembling a dove, into water placed in front of the altar. This is in remembrance of the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus at His baptism. Everyone present is given some of the blessed water to take home. All members of the family, especially the sick, drink the water which is believed to heal physical and spiritual illnesses. According to custom, farm animals and pets are considered part of the family so the water is shared with them as well.

An important aspect of Christmas day is that families eat their main meal together.

On this day Armenians greet each other in a special way by repeating the good news *Chrisdos Dzenav Yev Haydnetsav* (Christ was born and revealed to us).

The response is *Orhnyal è Haydnootyunn Chrisdossi* (blessed is the revelation of Christ).

Some of the names celebrated on this day are **Avedis**, **Avo** and **Manuel**.