

In Remembrance of Him



A Course on the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church

Student Text

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**A Course on the Divine Liturgy
of the Armenian Church**
Student Text

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By order of

Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate

In Remembrance of Him (*We Believe* high school curriculum)

A Publication of the Department of Christian Education

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

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In Remembrance of Him

Introduction

How did you feel and what do you remember doing the last time you were sitting in church?
Circle as many words as apply:

happy bored interested attentive hungry thinking
singing praying reading inspired tired restless

Perhaps you felt some or even all these things at one time or another during liturgy.

You are about to embark on a course of study that will help make the Divine Liturgy anything but boring! For the next few months, you'll be learning, among many other things....

- ✓ the real reason you're in church and what you're there to do.
- ✓ what those fancy vestments are all about.
- ✓ how not to be in "your own world" but pray with the rest of the church.
- ✓ what *yergyooghadzootyamp luvarook* Երկիրը ածուրեւամբ լուարուք means (whoever can translate this right now gets a free trip to Armenia!).
- ✓ what holy communion can do for you...and what it can't.
- ✓ how you can get past "not understanding the language" (for the moment).
- ✓ what you need to do *after* church is over.

In the space below, write one question (or more) about liturgy that you'd like to see answered during this course.

Example: Why do they open and close the curtain at different times?

Or maybe: Why do we have to go to church at all? Isn't God everywhere?

Your question:

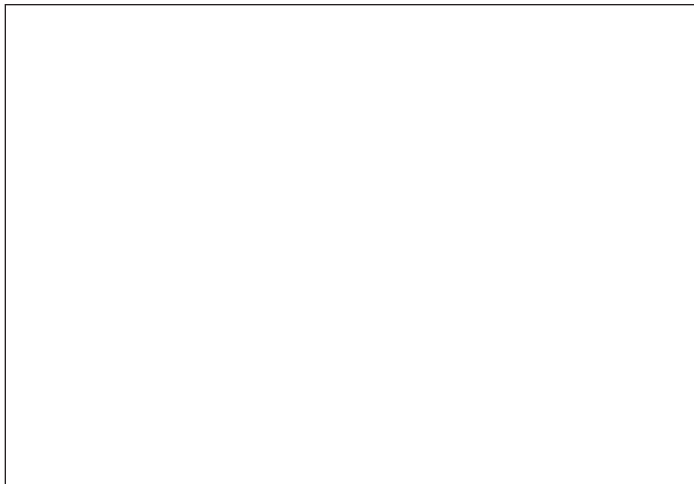
This textbook will be your "tour guide" but the main text for this course will be the Divine Liturgy Pew Book itself. With these books, your Bible, and a pen, you have all you need for the journey. Enjoy!

The Earth is Crammed With Heaven

A Poet's Insight...

*Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes,
The rest sit around it and pluck blackberries...*

The verse above is from the long poem by 19th century British poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning called "Aurora Leigh." What images does she present? Draw one of them here (and you don't have to be a Picasso).



Digging Deeper

1. What does "crammed" imply?
2. Why "common"?
3. What does "afire" suggest?
4. What does it mean here to "see"?

You have probably heard the expression "seeing is believing"

Here's an interesting variation: "believing is seeing"

What might this mean?

Worship: The Heart's Answer to God

In Galatians 4:6 Paul reminds us that "Because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba, Father!" "Abba" is the word for father in Aramaic, Jesus' language, and has an especially intimate meaning, almost like "daddy."

ԱՄԷՆ



Dictionary Definitions

Amen: From the Hebrew for "to support" or "to confirm." The general sense of the word is "so be it," "truly," "indeed."

So God has already entered our hearts and given us the ability to know him and love him. This is quite a gift. It is the impulse that makes us want to worship, almost by nature. It is how we are *made*.

This impulse to know God began at the moment humankind was created in his image (see Genesis 1:27). We are the only ones of all God's creatures who are invited into a relationship with God. We *can* communicate with him.

The Burning Bush (And Other Close Encounters)

Let's turn back to our "earth crammed with heaven." There is another powerful story of a "common bush afire" with God. The story of Moses begins in the Book of Exodus, chapter 2, when the Hebrews were enslaved in Egypt. Most of us remember the story: Pharaoh threatened to kill all baby boys born to Hebrew slaves – out of fear they would rebel as adults – and so his mother placed him in a basket of reeds and set him in the river where Pharaoh's daughter would bathe. You can read the rest to refresh your memory. By the time Moses encounters the burning bush, he has grown up like an Egyptian prince, killed an Egyptian guard for beating a Hebrew slave and fled to Midian where he is tending sheep.

Besides this one, there are countless examples in Scripture of people experiencing God in some personal, powerful way. Too many to summarize; here are only a few. Look them up and be prepared to tell the story:

1. Exodus 3:1-14
2. Isaiah 6:1-8
3. 1 Kings 19:11-13
4. Matthew 17:1-7

These stories can help us understand what we experience in church: the fact that God reveals himself to us freely – that we are touched with wonder, perhaps even a sense of smallness and inadequacy, and that he has something to say, if we listen.



The Armenian Angle

The words “Holy, holy, holy” sung by the angels in Isaiah 6:3 are the basis of our Divine Liturgy hymn “Soorp, soorp” (Holy, holy).

Սուրբ, Սուրբ



Sacrifice, Remembrance, and Atonement

If we are naturally in a state of awe and humility in the presence of God, then it stands to reason that we instinctively want to give something back, to respond. Worship, then, is that instinctive, ritual action that gives thanks, requests mercy, conveys obedience, and praises Almighty God. Noah thanked God for his survival in the flood by placing burnt offerings on the altar (Genesis 8:20). Difficult as it is for modern people to endure (even though we routinely slaughter animals for our high-protein Western diets), animals were used in these sacrifices, their blood a symbol of life and vitality. It was the first and best of one’s flock that was offered, and the best part of the meat that was then burned on the altar (thus “burnt offerings”).

Passover

If you’ve ever seen “The Ten Commandments” movie – the classic that often re-runs on TV at Easter time – you will surely remember Charlton Heston as Moses, leading the Egyptians out of slavery and through the Red Sea. But it took ten plagues sent by God upon the Pharaoh until



he finally released them, the final plague being the most unbearable – the taking of every first-born son’s life. God instructed the Hebrews to mark their doors with the blood of a lamb so that the angel of death would “pass over” their homes. And so this miracle of liberation and life is celebrated with the Jewish Passover, which is detailed in Exodus 12. The Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples was probably a Passover meal, where he established a New Covenant in his body (bread) and blood (wine).

Day of Atonement

Another Old Testament ritual that became an important Jewish feast is the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. Beginning with elaborate instructions (including bathing, special clothing) by God, Aaron gets to the important moment that we read about in Leviticus 16: 21-22.



Who’s Who



Aaron, brother of Moses and Miriam, became his brother’s spokesman when Moses claimed he was not articulate enough to convey God’s will to the Pharaoh (Ex 4:10-16). Although Aaron acceded to the people’s desire to build the golden calf while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai, it was still Aaron and his clan who were consecrated as priests for this new people of God, the Israelites.

? What Do I Do...

When I First Take a Seat in the Pew?

Don’t just plop down and look around. Get to your seat and then, still standing, bow to the altar and make the sign of the cross first. It’s almost as if you’re “signing in,” saying, “Lord, I’m here. I love you and I’m ready to pray with the rest of my parish.” Then, say a prayer of your own, even if it’s the line you just read. Then sit or stand if liturgy has already begun and everyone else is standing.



Up Close and Personal

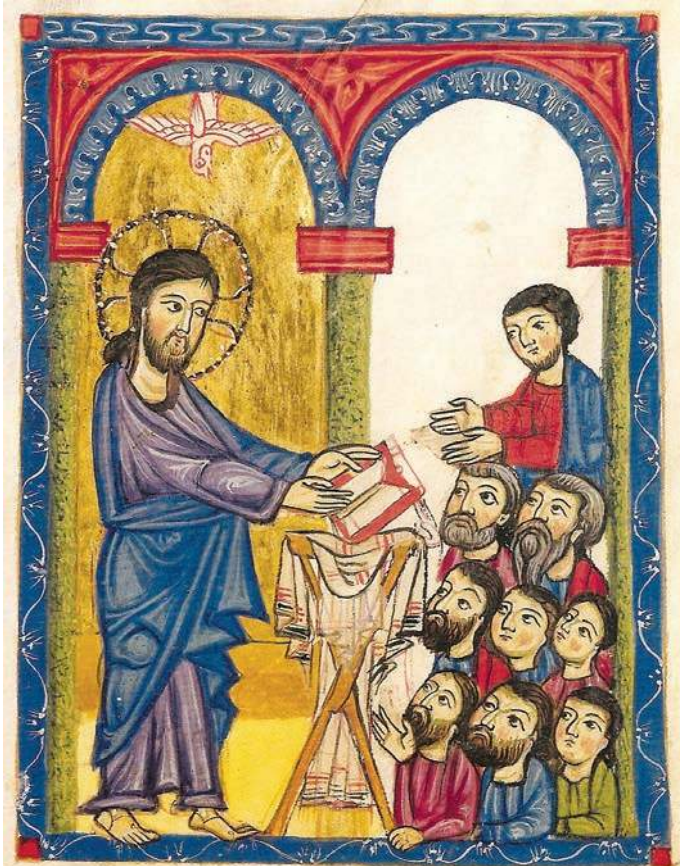
Think of a time you felt especially close to God. There has to be one! Describe it to the class.

What happens in these two verses?

Note that this act of atonement was presided over by a priest (Aaron) but was for and shared by the community. When Jesus rose from the dead, he became the final sacrifice and atonement for our sins.

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ God created us to know and love him.
- ✓ Our natural response when we encounter God is worship.



- ✓ Worship is about gratitude, praise, and the need for spiritual restoration.
- ✓ The Bible contains many examples of people encountering God.
- ✓ Two Old Testament rituals: Passover – the ritual meal of remembrance – and The Day of Atonement – a day of confession and renewal - will have important echoes in the theology of Christian worship.

QUICK QUIZ

1. Draw a line between the words on the left and the best answer on the right.

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| a. Abba | Moses |
| b. Hayr Mer | So be it |
| c. Aaron | Daddy |
| d. Burning Bush | Moses' brother |
| e. Amen | Our Father |

2. In what Book of the Bible would you read about Moses, the Ten Commandments, the Burning Bush, and the liberation of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery?

3. What two Old Testament Jewish Feasts, still commemorated today in that religion, were transformed by the coming of Jesus? _____ and _____.

4. What is the heart's instinctive and natural response to God?



Do This in Remembrance of Me

For all good gifts and all perfect bounties come down from above, from you, the Father of light; and to you is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

*James 1:17



Up Close and Personal

What actions do you take from the time you leave church on Sunday to the time you return in a week that you would qualify as “religious?”

The Way Jesus Worshipped

At the time our Lord lived and taught, the Jews had a well-established cycle of worship and religious observance. This cycle was such an integral part of daily life, that it would be hard to divide life the way we do today, into clear-cut “religious” and “secular” activities. In a primarily agricultural economy, the people of the Holy Land labored as farmers, shepherds, tradesmen, teachers, and priests. Life was not unlike our great-great grandparents living in a typical Armenian (or other) village, governed by the cycle of nature and religious commemorations.

A Sacred Day

The Sabbath was universally acknowledged as a day of rest and restricted activity. This was a long-time custom based on God’s 7th day of rest when he created the world (see Exodus 23:12; Deut 5:12-14). Interestingly, the Sabbath became far more regulated and restricted during the Jewish exile into Babylon (6th c. B.C.) where, without a Temple and in a pagan environment, Jewish exiles became more concerned with bolstering their faith and maintaining their identity through religious observances. It was during this time that restrictions on travel and work were emphasized.

Already in New Testament times, Sunday was becoming the Sabbath for Jesus’ followers (Acts 20:7), Sunday being the day on which Jesus rose from the dead. It was the day after the Jewish Sabbath because Christ fulfilled the Law and renewed Creation so it was both the 8th day of the week and the first. (Think about this for a minute – it does make sense!)

In councils and laws passed in the 4th century, particularly under Emperor Constantine, businesses were closed and restrictions placed on Sunday activities.

A Sacred Place Temple and Synagogue

While Jerusalem was in a free and independent Judah, the huge and magnificent Temple was the primary place of worship and sacrifice. The major ceremonies of yearly festivals were held here along with weekly Sabbath services. Daily sacrifices were made as well and a flow of pious believers would file into the Temple where priests were



Dictionary Definitions

Sabbath: a holy day of rest, from the Hebrew for “to stop, to rest.”

on duty to receive animal offerings – lambs, doves, and even cattle – as sacrificial offerings. One can imagine the bustle – priests splashing the blood offering on the altar, stoking fires for the burnt offerings, others impressively garbed and conducting other rites, greeting visitors... all in the pungent aroma of incense. Priests, Levites and scribes were connected to the Temple duties. But only the high priests could enter the innermost court, the Holy of Holies, where God was believed to be present, and that only once a year.


After the Temple was destroyed in 586 BC by the invading Babylonians who took the resident population into exile, the Jews focused their attention on the Torah and their sacred writings – the Hebrew Bible. This was the Scripture Jesus was quoting when he taught. During their exile and after their return in 537, the *synagogue* became the place where Jews met to worship and learn. It is here we read that Jesus would visit as a traveling guest “rabbi” (Luke 4:16; Mark 1:21) or teacher of the Law.

Worship here chiefly consisted of Scripture readings, prayers, and psalm singing and featured a special cupboard or “Ark” where the scrolls of Scripture were kept.

Sacred Time: Feast Days

In addition to the worship services and offerings, there were special annual religious holidays, some of which brought pilgrims to Jerusalem from distant places. The three important ones were:

- The Feast of Weeks or “Pentecost,” meaning fiftieth day, also called the Feast of the Harvest or First Fruits. Although originally an agricultural feast marking seven weeks after the first grain harvest, it eventually came to commemorate the giving of the Law to Moses by God. It was at this festival that the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles in the form of tongues of fire and allowed them to speak in different languages, later remembered as the birthday of the Church, an event that happened at and became known as Pentecost.



The Armenian Angle
The Armenian for “Sunday” is *Giragi* which literally means “the Lord’s Day.”

Կիրակի


- The Feast of Booths (or tabernacles or tents) which is called “Sukkoth” in Hebrew (meaning “hut”). This was a a Fall festival celebrating a completed harvest of olives, grapes, grain and other crops, featuring thanksgiving and merrymaking – something like Thanksgiving. It was the most popular of the pilgrim festivals. The reference to “huts” was to the huts that farmers would construct to guard their crops as harvesting began. Originally, the celebration would be in or near these very huts. But once all sacrifices were to be made in the Temple at Jerusalem (a 7th c. BC proclamation), pilgrims would construct huts which, conveniently enough, would also serve as their accommodations. The festival was marked by processions, psalm chanting, and various Temple ceremonies. At the Transfiguration of Jesus, if you remember, Peter wanted to stay and build three booths or huts for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, a reference to this.
- And finally, Passover, which was originally a local commemoration of the Exodus but became a pilgrimage feast like the other two. People traveled to Jerusalem, brought a lamb to be sacrificed at the Temple and took it home to share as an extended family.

**Jesus Makes All Things New:
The Last Supper**

At what we now refer to as the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples were probably gathered for a Passover meal in an upper room of an inn. It is here, during this traditional meal, that Jesus did something completely different.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body. Do this in remembrance of me.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:19b



Who’s Who
Elijah appeared next to Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13) as a symbol of the long line of prophets who preceded Jesus. He was the one prophet taken up into heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11) and many thought John the Baptist was Elijah himself (John 1:19-21).

Turn to page 31 of the Divine Liturgy Book and see where the priest says:

Take AREK Առէք
Eat GEREK Կերէք

This is my Body AYS EH MARMEEN EEM
Այս է մարմին իմ

Drink this ARPEK EE SUMANEH
Արբէք ի սմանէ

This is my blood AYS EH ARYOON EEM
Այս է արիւն իմ

Early Christian Liturgy

Based on Jesus’ exhortation to share new life in him by gathering to break bread and share a common cup, early Christian worship centered on a communal meal. Although



ideas varied as to what was shared – bread, wine, water, cheese, fish, fruit, etc. – early Christian documents confirm that it was a literal meal, most likely in the evening, in someone’s home (and women were often cited as being such home church hosts – see Acts 16:14-15, I Corinthians 16:19) with the food provided by those who gathered.

Eventually, the meal became part of an evening service called the agapé (depicted in Roman catacomb paintings as early as the second century). The sharing of a cup of wine and bread had now become the focus of a special Sunday morning service.

Here’s the earliest extant description of believers beginning to band together to live in the Way (the original term used for Christianity) and remember the Lord:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to others as needed. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:42-47

For Discussion

1. Underline the verbs in the verses above. What kind of community is this? Would you want to be part of it? Why?
2. How is your church like or unlike the one described in this passage?

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ In Jesus’ time, people lived in a regular cycle of worship and religious observance, often in sync with the seasons.
- ✓ The Sabbath is a day of rest established in the story of Creation. Sunday became the Christian Sabbath because it was the day *after* the Jewish Sabbath, thereby fulfilling it. It was also the day Jesus rose from the dead.
- ✓ The Temple in Jerusalem was the *only* place for sacrifice and communal worship until its destruction and the exile of the Jews, when the synagogues came into being.
- ✓ The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), the Feast of Booths (Succoth), and Passover were three important Jewish “pilgrim” feasts in Jesus’ time.

- ✓ At Passover supper with his disciples, Jesus established the most important words and gestures of liturgy.
- ✓ The early church quickly became a vigorous community of love and discipleship.

? What Do I Do...

While the choir is singing?

Sing! The entire church – congregation and choir – are supposed to be singing. Use the pew book for guidance with music and words and don’t think you must have a beautiful voice. For the few solos and variables (hymns that change according to the church season) that might be unfamiliar, you can just listen, but otherwise sing away!

QUICK QUIZ

True or False

1. Sunday became an official Christian day of rest in the Middle Ages under a papal edict. _____
2. The primary activity at the great Temple in Jerusalem was prayerful, ritual sacrifice. _____
3. During the Armenian Divine Liturgy, the priest repeats the very words Jesus used to establish the New Covenant. _____
4. There is no mention of the character of the early Christian community in the Bible. _____

Fill-in

5. The three major pilgrim feasts that would bring visitors to Jerusalem each year in Jesus’ time were: _____, _____, and _____
6. The Armenian word for Sunday, *Giragi*, Կիրակի literally means _____.

Finding a Way to Pray Together

A Community Becomes The Church

How did the church grow from a loose fellowship of passionate but also doubt-stricken believers? Many, even among the Lord's own 12 disciples, were torn apart by seeing Jesus die. *What kind of Savior was this?* was the question on the minds of many who did not yet understand that Jesus came to redeem the world from sin and not from the Romans. Let's imagine the church growing during these first few centuries.

Leaders Build and Cultivate Believing Communities

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a huge turning point for launching a world-wide faith. Read Acts 2:1-4 to remember this miracle. Suddenly, the disciples (literally, people who are learning and studying from a master) become apostles (literally meaning "sent out") so they themselves turn from passive listeners to active doers. Thaddeus and Bartholomew, at different times in the first century, go to Armenia. Other people of fiery conviction join in the missionary task of sharing the good news everywhere. St. Paul, formerly the arch-persecutor Saul, goes on three famous missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire, building up Christian communities and converting people to the Way.

Part of this evangelization continues in the form of correspondence. Paul's New Testament epistles are letters to new Christian communities helping them sort out their questions and challenges. In addition to converting people, the apostles became the original community "elders," paving the way for the development of an evolving leadership structure of deacon, priest, and bishop.

By the end of the first century, Christianity had spread from Palestine to Syria, Greece, Asia Minor, and Rome. By the second century, North Africa was home to important centers of Christianity, especially in the cities of Carthage and Alexandria. A few centuries later, St. Nooneh converts the nations of Georgia and Albania.

The Number of Believers Grows

The earliest Christians were basically Jews who were following the charismatic Jewish rabbi, Jesus. Eventually, their views became not complementary but antithetical to Jewish teaching and so Christians became a religious group unto themselves. Early church history is filled with accounts of believers brutally martyred by the Romans. But very quickly, from having once been initially rejected by the larger population, Christianity began to spread like a powerful fire.

From the 12 disciples, numbers grew into the thousands in only a few decades (Acts 21:20). By the mid-third century the number was in the millions!



Who's Who

St. Nooneh came to Armenia in the late 3rd century with Hripsime and the group of nuns fleeing the Emperor Diocletian. She went on to Georgia and Albania (not the same Albania of today) and successfully preached the faith, converting many. Her missionary work in Georgia was underwritten and supported by St. Gregory the Illuminator, the first Catholicos of the Armenian Church, who granted her certain clerical ecclesiastical authority while she was there.

The World Converts!

The Roman Empire became "officially" Christian by the late 4th century. This was a gradual process, beginning with the conversion of Emperor Constantine – it was he who legislated toleration through the Edict of Milan in 313 and then declared Sunday a day of rest in 321 – and then, finally, with Emperor Theodosius' (379-95) policies, such as outlawing paganism and heretical sects, which established an orthodox Christian state. Armenia did so decades earlier, c.301, becoming the first Christian nation.

The Faith Needed Defining

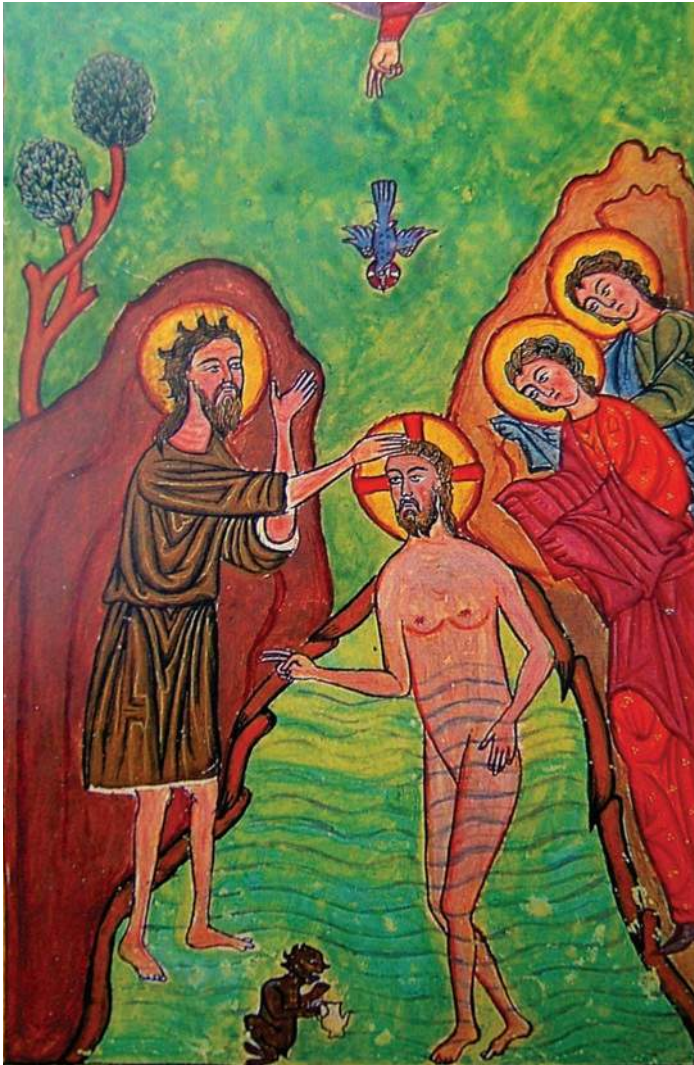
As numbers and communities grew and members joined the faith through a variety of baptismal rituals, questions naturally emerged. How was Jesus divine and human at the same time? How could an ordinary woman be the Mother of God? What does it mean to be baptized? These were resolved in a number of ways, but particularly through general church councils such as the first three Ecumenical Councils (Nicaea, 325; Constantinople 381; Ephesus, 431). The first two of these resulted in the Nicene Creed which we continue to recite every Sunday. Aristakes, St Gregory the Enlightener's son, represented the Armenian Church at Nicaea.

Formalizing a Day of Remembrance

So... the number of Christians is growing exponentially, home churches have expanded into public gathering places, baptisms have become so numerous that they can no longer take place on Easter Sunday after the traditional Lenten period of instruction but must be done throughout the year, the church leadership has established an authority deriving from the first apostles, and the community of believers has developed a way to pray together in remembrance of the Lord. Let's see what that looked like in the middle of the second century.

How They Worshipped Way Back When

Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165) was one of the great Christian "apologists" of the early centuries. An apologist is someone



who would argue systematically to prove the truth of Christian doctrines. This was an important occupation in those years when Christianity was under attack from paganism, humanism, and all kinds of other "isms." Apologetics continues to be an essential branch of theology.

The following description of an early Divine Liturgy as celebrated in Rome can be found in Justin Martyr's 1st Apology, c. 155 A.D., chapter 67, entitled "Weekly worship of Christians":

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.

Then when the reader concludes, the president verbally instructs and exhorts us to the imitation of these excellent things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent by saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a partaking by everyone of the Eucharist, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

And they who are well-to-do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who supports orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in prison and the strangers who are on a journey, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, when he changed darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.

Digging Deeper

Underline all the phrases that describe what believers did. Then paraphrase them in order below. The first one is done for you.

1. *They gathered in one place.*
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

How is this the same as we celebrate badarak today? How is it different?



Up Close and Personal

Armenia was the first official Christian nation. How does this fact make you feel? Why? What challenges does this fact pose to today's Armenian Church members?

What Do I Do...

About sitting and standing? It can be confusing!

The pew book gives very clear indications as to when to sit and when to stand. Your parish may have electronic wall monitors that also indicate whether you're to be sitting, standing, or kneeling and what page of the liturgy you should be on. But if in doubt, stand – that's never inappropriate. And it's a must at a number of key moments of the liturgy such as the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Gospel reading, among others.

The Divine Liturgy: A Brief Historical Review

Those early “dinners” of bread, wine and fellowship shared by Christian groups became the central act of the evolving communities. Modeled on the synagogue gatherings (as well as Jewish fraternal meals known as *khaboora*s during which bread was broken and shared, a cup of wine blessed and shared, and prayers and hymns sung), these meals featured Scripture reading, psalm singing, preaching, and a shared meal.

While the fellowship (agapé) meals continued, the ritual of bread and wine moved to a central place in Sunday worship. Believers understood that in receiving this bread and wine, they were sharing in the very body and blood – that is, the very essence – of their Lord.

“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.” John 6: 56

Over the centuries, the form of this liturgy developed into a basic format with its local variations and influences. As a matter of fact, because there was so much improvisation of prayers, etc, efforts to permanently “fix” the text began as early as the 4th century.

In Armenia...

....there were five texts in circulation until one of them, called the Liturgy of St. Basil, seemed to prevail by the fifth century. Of the other four, all translations from Greek, one of them later became the basic text for the liturgy as we know it today (in use since the 10th century at the latest).

As of 1177, when St. Nersess of Lampron wrote his commentary on the *badarak*, the liturgy has remained unchanged with some minor exceptions, for example, modifications made as a result of contact with Roman Catholic Crusaders (the use of the bishop's mitre), or the insertion of the popular “*Der Voghormya*” hymn in the 18th century.



Dictionary Definitions

Badarak Պատարագ: “Sacrifice,” Classical Armenian, referring to the ultimate sacrifice God made through the suffering and death of his Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation.

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ By the mid-third century, Christians grew in number from less than a hundred to millions world-wide.
- ✓ This growth inspired councils and prolific writings, all of which further defined the faith of the church.
- ✓ The Roman Empire officially becomes Christian by the late 4th century, although Armenia did so decades earlier, becoming the first Christian nation.
- ✓ The earliest description of an actual Divine Liturgy can be found in a treatise by Justin Martyr in the mid-second century and greatly resembles our own in its basic structure.
- ✓ From five original liturgy texts, the liturgy we celebrate today in the Armenian Church was more or less fixed by the 12th century.

QUICK QUIZ

Fill-in

1. Three followers of Jesus who went out into the world in the 1st century to spread the good news of Christ were: _____, _____, and _____.
2. St. Paul's epistles were letters to _____.
3. The woman who converted the nations of Georgia and ancient Albania to Christianity was _____.
4. Armenia became the first Christian nation in the year _____.

True or False

1. Armenia was represented at the Council of Nicaea by St. Gregory the Enlightener. _____
2. Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. tolerating Christianity. _____
3. Christianity grew slowly in the 1st to 3rd centuries. _____
4. The earliest description of Christian worship is from the 5th century. _____

Stepping into Heaven

"Dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in you we are joined together and rise up to become a living, holy building founded on you. In you we are truly built together to become a beautiful dwelling in which you live by your Spirit."

(based on Ephesians 2:21-22)

Circle your answer in each pair:

1. When you walk into your church, you're thinking...

happy to be here *can't wait to leave*

2. You're sitting in the pew and see the priest come down the aisle in his vestments. These ornate clothes make you wonder...

why? *wow!*

3. As the service continues, do you feel it's

God and me *God and us*

4. When you look around you, do you feel

part of a family *a face in the crowd*

5. What's your view on communion?

take it or leave it *don't leave without taking it*

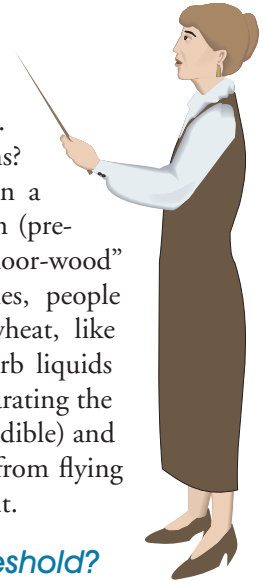
Sacred Space

There are as many kinds of churches as there are different groups of people who worship God. Places of worship usually reflect the basic beliefs of the people who gather in them. Sometimes they are sparse and bare, like meeting halls, built for people to hear and reflect on the Word of God. Sometimes they have lofty, pointed arches and spires, symbolic of a high and mighty God in heaven. Sometimes the walls are covered with sacred paintings and ablaze with candles.

Stepping Into Heaven

Where We Are

Let's pretend we're entering church together. We step over the threshold. Do you know what threshold means? It's that little piece of raised wood in a doorway. It's from an old Anglo-Saxon (pre-English) word that literally means "door-wood" but the theory is that in early times, people covered their floors with threshed wheat, like we cover floors with sawdust to absorb liquids or dirt (threshing is the process of separating the good part of the wheat from what's inedible) and the "threshold" would keep the stuff from flying outside whenever people went in or out.



What's important about a threshold?

In the early church (and even today), to pass over the threshold of a church was to pass from the secular world to a sacred one. So it was always very special.

Who can think of a way the symbolic nature of the threshold is still important today? (Hint: it has to do with marriage.)

Yes! There used to be a tradition – and some still do it – of the groom carrying the bride over the threshold into their new home, where they will be reigning king and queen. And if you've ever been to an Armenian wedding, you know that the bride and groom sit on chairs, symbolic of thrones, and that they wear crowns. So it all points to their being king and queen of a new creation – their married life together.

The Narthex/Vestibule – the world

Okay, we're over the threshold, now where are we? What's the first part of the church we come into?

The Narthex

We step over the threshold and come into what you might call the "lobby" of the church. We're definitely in the house but we're not yet in the main place.

Where do you find lobbies?

What do you generally do there?

In the same way, in the church lobby, we come in, get ready to enter, make a donation, pick up a candle, get the church bulletin, and exchange hellos with the greeters. We are preparing to enter the "main place."

This area was originally separated from the rest of the church by a screen or railing. It was here where anyone who wasn't a baptized Christian would have to go when others would prepare for and receive communion. You can still hear the deacon say during *Badarak* “*Mi vok herakhayeets... mertsestsee...*” Մի՛ որ յերախաւից...մերձեցի... (Let none of those still preparing for baptism come near) right where the Eucharist part of the liturgy begins. That's a signal for non-Christians to leave. Of course this is purely symbolic now, but it's something to think about isn't it? Communion was and still is a serious event for believers, and true believers only!

Even now, all our churches separate the narthex from the rest of the church with doors or a screen.

? What Do I Do...

When the priest comes around in procession censuring us and holding out his hand cross?

If you're near enough to the aisle, approach him, kiss the hand cross and say “Heeshescheer yev zees arachee anmah kareenun Asdoodzoh or, in English, “Remember me, also, before the immortal Lamb of God.”

The Nave

Leaving the church narthex, we enter the main space of the church. Now we have really entered a special place, the place where we gather as the worshipping Church. The name for the place where we sit in pews is called the nave.

Interestingly enough, this comes from the word for “boat” in Latin. And this really describes the place perfectly. Because we are on a journey, aren't we? We are the people of God, sitting together, and moving towards him in our prayers and hymns. So this big space, filled with seats and people in those seats, is like a huge ship, the ship of the church. By the way, if you go to Armenia or Jerusalem, the ancient churches certainly don't have pews. That's a modern invention. Standing was the basic worship position until more modern times.

So here we are, we get into our pew, cross ourselves, say a prayer – even if it's hello God this is so and so, I'm here. Amen. Anything at all really, maybe just some quiet time to focus on the journey ahead.

The Dome

Now let's say we're sitting down right in the middle of the church. And we look up. What do you see in almost all of our churches? Yes, a dome. From the outside it kind of imitates the shape of the building. On the inside it sometimes features paintings or stained glass windows. One of the important architectural characteristics of an Armenian church is a dome that sits atop intersecting arches. This was distinctively

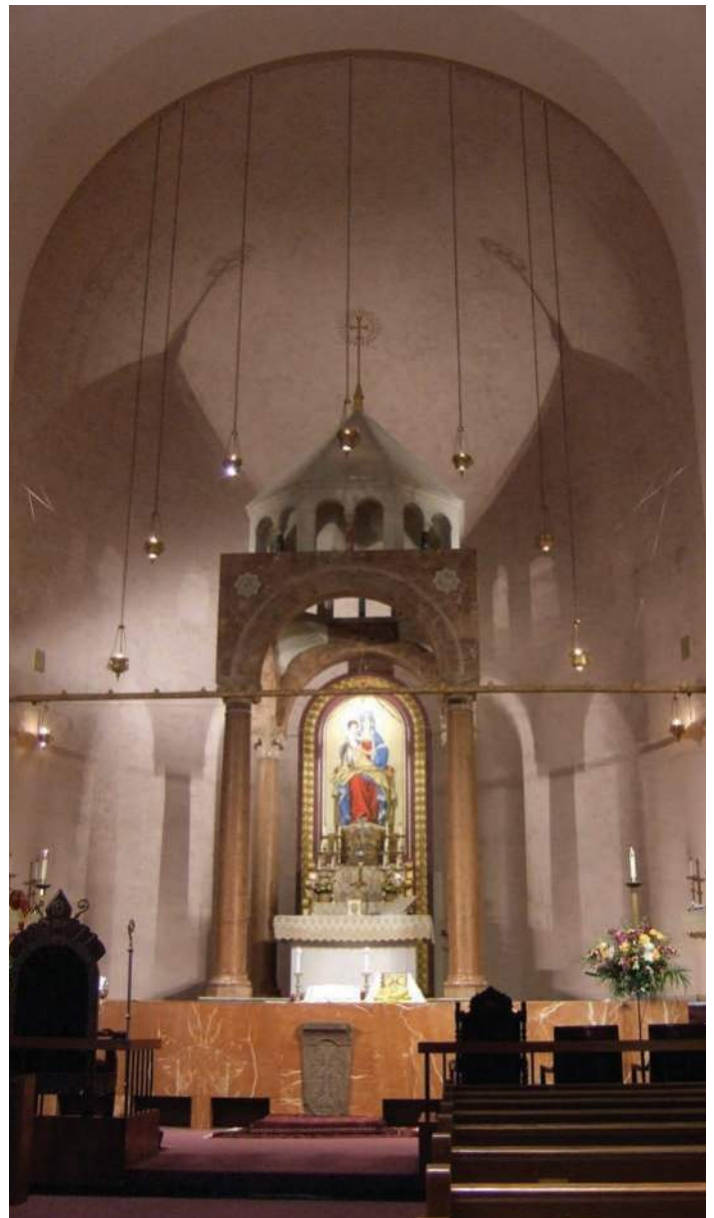
Armenian, and it allowed a lot of empty space – no huge pillars that you might see in gothic cathedrals, for example.

What can the dome in the church's center remind us of?

So while every home has a roof – whether it's thatched, or tiled or tin – the church has a special roof that points us to heaven. But what's different about a dome is that it's like heaven itself – it's round, embracing, symbolically, everyone seated below. Also, there are times, such as for a *hokehankisd* (requiem) or funeral, when the priest and deacons gather under the dome to be closer to the people.

The Chancel

Okay. Liturgy has begun and we're praying and singing together and we're all facing in the same direction – even the priest. Unlike many other churches, including the Catholic and Protestant, the Armenian priest faces the altar with everyone else as he leads the community in worship. What





Dictionary Definitions

Narthex: Portico or lobby of an early Christian church, originally separated from the nave by a railing or screen; an entrance hall leading to the nave of a church, from the Greek for box and fennel (a stalk-shaped plant).

Nave: The central part of a church, extending from the narthex to the chancel, from the Latin for ship, *navus*. Interestingly, the Armenian word for ship is *nahv*. Could also be a corruption of the Greek for “temple”: *naos*.

direction are we facing? North? West? East - where every Armenian altar is set. We face East where the sun rises, and from where the Lord will return at the Second Coming.

We see first a sort of intermediate area, don't we, right below the altar? This is called the chancel (in Armenian, *adyan*). The chancel has been described as the place where we make our case, as if in court (only in this case the Judge, symbolically present at the altar above and before us, is compassionate). What are some things you see here? Chairs. A bishop's chair, too, one a bit fancier and higher than the others. This is a symbol too.

What is the meaning of the bishop's chair?

Here, you'll see the podium from where the lections are read – not the Gospel, which is read...**from where?** The _____. But the readings from the Old Testament and the New Testament (aside from the Gospels) are read from the lectern or reading stand in the chancel. It's called a _____ in Armenian.

Whom do we see besides the reader in the chancel? The _____ and _____(s) assemble there at certain



The Bishop

From the Greek, “episcopos” for “overseer,” the bishop is the highest order of ministers and, in the Armenian Church, is the only rank able to confer holy orders (ordain into the ministry). Bishops are generally assigned to be head of an entire district of churches or Diocese.

The New Testament often refers to “presbyter” (meaning “priest”) and “episcopos” interchangeably but by the middle of the 2nd century a threefold ministry of bishop, priest, and deacon had evolved (it took a few centuries more for these to be fully distinguished in the Armenian Church) and all major centers of Christianity had a bishop as regional administrator.

times – for example, when the priest confesses and ritually washes his hands or at the end of liturgy for the last blessing and dismissal. And often, this is where the choir assembles and sings. The Bible tells us that the angels are singing God's praises around the clock so we, too, join with the choir in singing.

Of course, you will certainly remember that it's in the chancel where we go to kneel and confess our sins before we take communion. Often the chancel is divided from the pews with a gate or a railing, often described as the “gates of heaven.” So as we move from the threshold to the altar, we are that much closer to “heaven.”



The Armenian Angle

In the Armenian Church, the sanctuary is separated from the faithful by a curtain which is usually open to signify that Christ has opened the way for us to the heavenly sanctuary. It is closed at specific moments during the Liturgy; it is also

closed during Great Lent, to remind us of our exile from Paradise as a result of sin.

The Altar

So we're sitting, and standing, and praying and singing and of course our eyes are looking forward and our faces are forward and we see before and above us, what? Yes, the altar.

The altar sits on a raised stage called a _____. The altar is the holiest place in the church. Why? It is the place where Christ _____ and where, through the power of the _____, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood.

What else do you see on the altar? _____

The altar is always free-standing, so that the various processions can go around it.

The Gospel Book is also on the altar, enthroned, as Christ himself is present. This is the table of God's Kingdom (Luke 22:30).

The *jajanch* contains a martyr's relic, a symbol of how the church is founded on the lives of saints and martyrs.

So, let's remember that journey and these basic places. Summarize in a simple phrase, the definition and importance of each:

The Narthex _____

The Nave _____

The Dome _____

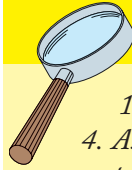
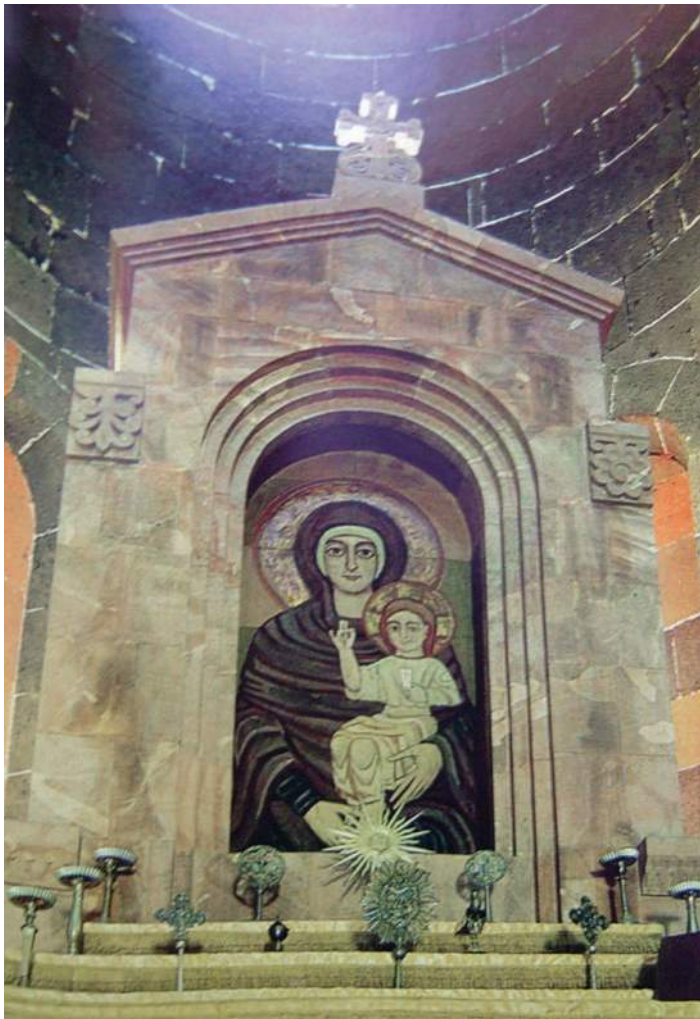
The Chancel _____

The Bema _____

The Altar _____

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The appearance and structure of a church reflect the basic beliefs of the people who gather there.
- ✓ The narthex, nave, dome, chancel, bema, and altar are basic “places” in the church building, each with theological/symbolic meaning.
- ✓ The Church was established by Christ as his Body, as a “living, holy building.”
- ✓ We are members of that Body and living stones in that spiritual building that is the Church.



Up Close and Personal

1 Peter 2: 4-5; 9-10.

4. As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by mortals but chosen by God and precious to him – 5. you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...9. you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

1. Circle all verbs. Do you see a movement, a series of steps and their results? Explain.
2. What images does Peter use to describe us?
3. What’s so powerful about the image of each one of us being “a living stone?”

QUICK QUIZ

Fill-in

Provide the correct word for the definition.

1. Sits atop intersecting arches, mimicking the canopy of heaven. _____
2. From the Greek for “overseer,” the highest of the three ordained orders in the Armenian Church.

3. The raised stage where the altar is found.

4. The beautiful image describing all Christians as parts of a spiritual building.

5. The main body of the church, from the Latin for “ship.” _____
6. The church lobby or foyer.

7. The space between the nave and the altar.

A Sacred Journey and a Guidebook

Meditation on “Journey”

In one of the beautiful stories of the desert fathers and mothers (the 3rd and 4th century believers who went into the desert wildernesses of the Near East and North Africa), a story is told of a particularly inspiring woman of prayer whose worship of God was admired far and wide. Impressed by the accounts of her exemplary life, a pilgrim set off to find her and study her ways. Coming upon her simple stone hut in the desert, the pilgrim watched through a window-like opening in amazement as the famed woman sat serenely with her eyes closed. Later, the pilgrim respectfully approached and, disturbed that he had not seen anything he might emulate, asked: “Dear lady, what do you possibly accomplish just sitting there?” To which she replied gently, “I am not just sitting! I am on a journey.”



The Armenian Angle

The earliest commentary on the Armenian Divine Liturgy in existence is that of Khosrov Antzevatzi (Khosrov of Antzevatzik) written in the 10th century. It became the source book for all Armenian commentaries to come and remains an invaluable resource for all liturgical studies.

Basic Actions: Proceeding, Censing, Signing, Bowing

Processions

Worship is a journey, a moving forward—sometimes it’s us moving toward God and sometimes it’s God moving toward us. Once in a while, it even seems like a parade or a march. Our destination is the Kingdom of God.

Actually, our procession begins when we leave our homes and drive to church. Once there, we proceed through the narthex into the nave, move to our pew and the journey continues. We move forward to the chancel for confession, communion and then again at the end of liturgy to kiss the Gospel. Then, of course, there are all the times during worship when God moves towards us. Can you think of any?

You have to think symbolically. For example, God is in the Bible and in communion. So when we see the deacon (during *Soorp Asdvadz*) processing around the altar with the Gospel and bringing it to us, we see God reaching out to us through his Word. Later in the liturgy, when we see the

priest hold up the chalice, within which rest the bread and wine/body and blood of Christ, we remember how God reached out to us through his Son, Jesus. How about early in the liturgy when the priest and deacons come down from the bema and proceed through the nave? We see the priest with the *poorvar*, censing the people. That reminds us how God came down from heaven in the person of Jesus Christ and walked among us here on earth.

Censing

Another thing we see (and smell) is the censing. This is usually done by the deacon, who swings the *poorvar*. As air hits the smoldering incense, smoke spirals upward. This is a very old custom, dating back thousands of years to Biblical times. The smoky fragrance rises toward heaven, taking our prayers to God.

It’s also a sign of respect or adoration when the deacon censes the altar, the baptismal font, the chalice, the gospel book, the bishop (if he happens to be visiting and is sitting in his special chair in the chancel) and, of course, the congregation. The deacon swings the *poorvar* քորվար toward us, the people of God, acknowledging in us the image of God and our calling to holiness.



Sign of the Cross

The cross is the most important symbol of our faith, and crossing ourselves is a way of witnessing to the fact that our lives are intertwined with the way of the cross – it is part of who we are. (“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Mark 8:34)

The sign of the cross is one of the first things we learn as children. It illustrates our special status as children of God and expresses our belief in the saving power of the cross of Christ. When we cross ourselves in the lunchroom at school, for example, it is a way for us to witness to our faith. What are some times in the liturgy when you cross yourselves?

? What Do I Do...

Whenever the priest turns to the congregation and blesses us with the sign of the cross?

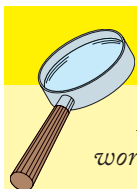
With a slight bow of the head, cross yourself in return as you receive this blessing from the altar.

The Body at Worship



Finally, we believe that the whole person—body and soul—should take part in worship. Therefore, the various positions of the body during liturgy have special significance and are expressions of our faith. Standing is the basic worship position. During the liturgy, just after the Kiss of Peace, the deacon says, “Let us stand in awe, let us stand in the fear of the Lord, let us stand straight and let us attend with good heed.” We stand because in Christ we have been redeemed, given back our true human stature, freed from being a slave to the sinful part of our nature.

During liturgy there are also times when we bow or kneel. We do this, for example, during times of repentance such as confession. We also kneel as a sign of reverence or respect or deep devotion such as when the chalice is presented to the



Up Close and Personal

For you, what's the most meaningful gesture or word(s) of our Divine Liturgy?

priest. We bow for the same reason: before the cross or the chalice or the altar.

We do sit at specific times at liturgy, mostly as a concession to modern standards of comfort. Originally churches had no pews - everyone stood or knelt for the entire liturgy.

We sit for the epistle readings, the great litany (more on that later), and the sermon, for a few instances.

Two Movements in a Symphony of Faith

We can begin our consideration of the Divine Liturgy itself by looking at it as a journey of two movements. What do we mean by “movement”? Here are some dictionary definitions:

- In music, a symphonic movement is defined as a “self-contained section of an extended composition.”
- In literature, “it’s a progression of events in the development of the plot.”
- In poetry, “the rhythmical structure in a composition.”
- In general, “a series of actions and events taking place over a period of time and working to foster a certain principle.”
- “An organized effort by supporters of a common goal.”

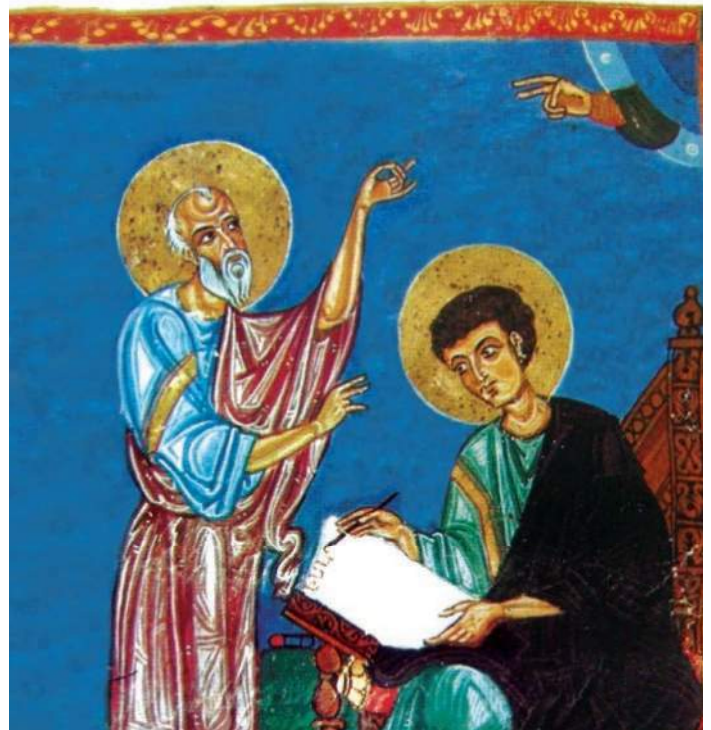
How do these definitions help you understand the idea of “movement” in the Divine Liturgy?

In the “first movement” of the Divine Liturgy, Jesus comes to us through his Word, the Gospel reading.

In the second, through his Body and Blood, or Holy Communion.

In a very fundamental way, each of these is an “incarnation.”

When Jesus was born to a specific woman, Mary



(Asdvadzadzin) in a specific place (Bethlehem – in Hebrew “house of bread”), at a specific time, which we now mark as the year One, God was said to have been made *incarnate*. Think of the words of the Nicene Creed:

“Who for our salvation came down from heaven, took body, **became man (human)** was born perfectly of the Holy Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit...”

Use It or Lose It

Okay! We’re ready to turn to the official guidebook for our journey. Skim through your Divine Liturgy book and describe it as if you were explaining to a friend what its important features are (the first is done for you as an example). Reading the section “How to Use this Book” will be an important first step:

1. Divided into two parts: the first for those who can read Armenian; the second – English and English transliteration of the Armenian.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10
- 11.
- 12.



Who’s Who

St. Basil of Caesarea (c.330-379 AD) is credited with compiling the liturgy most widely used in the early centuries of the Armenian Church according to documents from the first half of the 5th century. St. Basil is considered one of the great church fathers, known for his leadership, scholarship and devotion to the poor.

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The Divine Liturgy is a journey to God that begins the minute we leave our homes for church.



Dictionary Definitions

Incarnation: To invest with bodily nature and form, from the Latin *incarnare*: to make flesh (the word “carnival” means “removing meat” a reference to the pre-Lent revels that would mean eating meat for the last time before Lent). The Incarnation is the eternal Son of God becoming the man Jesus, at once both fully human and fully God.

- ✓ The signing of the cross and other bodily gestures are part of the “total body workout” of worship.
- ✓ The Divine Liturgy consists of two main sections, the Liturgy of the Word – when Jesus is present in Scripture, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist – when Jesus is present to us in the bread and wine.
- ✓ These “movements” are preceded by a preparation and a conclusion and final blessing.
- ✓ We need to learn how to use the Divine Liturgy book as we would need to learn how to use any other guide or reference book, including the Bible.

QUICK QUIZ

Fill-in

1. The word for God becoming a human being is _____.
2. The earliest commentary of the Armenian Divine Liturgy we now have was written in the _____ century.
3. The person at the altar who most often uses the poorvar or censer is the _____.
4. When the priest turns from the altar to bless us, we respond by _____.
5. In the 5th century, the liturgy most widely in use by Armenians was written by _____.
6. There are _____ *major* parts to the Divine Liturgy.

Getting Ready to Be the Church

"Lord, in the spirit of priestly vesting, help us to fight against the powers of the enemy by clothing us with righteousness. May our faith encircle our hearts and may we always remember the white robe of joy and salvation put on us all at our baptism. Amen." (from the vesting prayers)



Up Close and Personal

Can you be a Christian without attending church?

Well, you *could* live a Christian life of prayer, good works, hope, forgiveness, and love as modeled and taught by our Lord himself. But there is one thing you can't be without attending church and that is... the Church! Only when we are gathered together "in his name" (Matthew 18:20) can we be said to have become the Church, a Jesus-centered, spiritually grounded community of faithful, in which we share in the love of the Lord through Holy Communion, parish life, and service.

And so gathering to praise God together becomes a very important thing to do since it is in community that we become fully Christian.

The following article is adapted from the August 23, 2005 issue of *The Christian Century*. While the story itself and the event it refers to are not current, they still pose timeless questions. Read it and then discuss.

1. In what community(ies) in your daily life does your presence *truly* matter to others and their presence *truly* matter to you?
2. What's the difference between social togetherness and being spiritually grounded?



In July 1995 Chicago was wrapped in a deadly heat wave. For days the mercury hovered in the three-digit zone, with heat indexes reaching 120 degrees. In that period 739 Chicagoans died of heat-related causes.

Emergency teams reported finding inadequate or non-existent ventilation in the residences of the dead. Persons living with cardiac or pulmonary weaknesses were the most susceptible. Of course, the elderly were the most susceptible.

What major media accounts failed to report was another deadly killer: the absence of community. The majority of people who died in the heat wave died alone. They had no one checking in on their attic apartments or their windowless lives. No family, friend, or neighbor showed up to discover the severity of their plight.

The absence of community does not require a heat wave much less hundreds of deaths to make its presence known. It surrounds us in a daily way...We may not always be aware of this void. But the scarcity of a deep sense of community can wreak havoc below the surface of outwardly busy lives.

But in church, week-by-week, individuals gather together voluntarily in congregations, often with high expectations of experiencing what they cannot locate in their solitary lives. The church's business, after all, has everything to do with relationship, putting people in touch with each other and with God.

Social togetherness and friendliness may be abundant. But this is not the same as participating in and being deeply entwined with a spiritually grounded community. Inhabiting the same ecclesiastical space on Sunday morning is not the same as belonging to a community where your presence truly matters and their presence truly matters to you. The way in which members of a church reproduce the love of God through love for one another will indicate whether they are indeed the Body of Christ or simply a religious club.

The Preparation

In this part of the Divine Liturgy, the church is getting ready to meet the Lord. The priest is preparing for his role and we, the congregation, are preparing to participate in the most important event that has ever happened. God the Son entered history as a human being, taught, healed, died, rose again and is with us always, powerfully so at liturgy.



Who's Who

Aaron was the first priest. Since Moses felt he was not eloquent enough to be God's spokesman, God chose his brother Aaron and had Moses consecrate him as High

Priest. Aaron's descendants would have the sole right to be priests. When this right was disputed later, God asked Moses to take all the princely staffs of the 12 tribes of Israel and place them on the sanctuary altar (Numbers 17). The staff of Levi's tribe, on which was written Aaron's name, sprouted buds during the night, indicating God's favor.

Vesting

The vestments worn by the priest have evolved through literally centuries. Most of them derive from the garments worn by the temple priests of the Old Testament as itemized and described in Exodus:

"Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor. These are the garments they are to make: a breast piece, an ephod (an apron-like garment), a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for Aaron and his sons so that they may serve me as priests. Have them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen."

Exodus 28

Some, like the bishop's miter (the distinctive headdress resembling the Pope's which wasn't used in the Armenian Church until the 14th century), entered Armenian tradition in later years under Roman influence. There were influences, as well, from the clothing of the royal court and the splendor of royal processional garb.

The origin of many vestments (and vessels, for that matter) is complex. Often, ritual symbolism for them evolved later.

The priest wears this special clothing as a sort of "armor." Symbolically, he is covering himself in Christian virtues and girding himself for the Christian victory over evil as won by Christ and exemplified by the triumphant chalice of bread and wine (which is Christ himself shared among us).

The priest is assisted during the vesting by the deacon. As each piece is put on, the priest says a prayer. Turn to your Divine Liturgy books where you'll find the particular prayers for each item.

Armor of God

The crown (saghavart)

ՍԱՂԱՎԱՐՄԱՆ

This bulbous kingly headgear recalls the royalty of Christ the King as well



as symbolizing the victorious liberation of the soul from bondage to evil. Traditionally, twelve arched pieces are joined to form a peak which is topped by a cross. This made its appearance after the thirteenth century and may have been inspired by Persian helmets.

a. According to the prayer, what is the purpose of the *saghavart*?

The alb (shabig) ՇԱԿԻԿ



The alb is a long white shirt that reaches the ankles. It is often embroidered at the hem, sleeves and neckline. Its white color is a symbol of purity of heart, just like the white that is worn by the newly baptized. Records show that in the third century, white was a preferred color for priestly vestments.

b. According to the prayer, what is the purpose of the *shabig*?

The stole (poroorar) ՓՈՐՈՐԱՐ



This long stole has a hole for the neck and is, in actuality, the deacon's stole that has been draped around the neck and sewn up in the center. It symbolizes righteousness.

c. According to the prayer, what is the purpose of the *poroorar*?

The belt (kodi) ԳՕՍԻ



A fabric belt matching the cape that is worn over the poroorar. A symbol of the strength of faith and the priestly authority of binding and loosing.

The cuffs (pazban) ԲԱՂԱԿԱՆ



These wide cuffs are the same material as the cape and are worn over the shabig on the forearms. They symbolize strength and moral cleanliness as well as the hard work and penitence required in the Lord's service.

The collar (vagas) ՎԱԿԱՍ



Matching the cape in color and fabric, the stiff wide collar had a long linen piece and ribbons that allow the collar to be worn by crossing the ribbons to the front and then tying them in back. It has come to symbolize obedience and the yoke of Christ.

The cape (shoorchar) ՇՈՐՇԱՐ



Made of beautifully textured and ornamented fabric, the cape is a symbol of the glory of the new spiritual life and a shield-like defense against evil.



The towel (tashginag)

Թաշկինակ

An oblong piece of linen hung on the left side of the belt, the towel is used by the priest at certain moments of the liturgy, for example, to dry his hands after ritually rinsing them in water or to dry the chalice after distributing communion. It indicates spiritual cleanliness.



The slippers (hoghatap)

Հողաթափ

Since regular street shoes would be inappropriate for the altar of God (remember how Moses removed his shoes at the Burning Bush, Exodus 3:5), richly ornamented fabric slippers are worn. They symbolize the fact that Christ tramples evil underfoot. There are many decorative designs possible but traditionally snakes and scorpions are featured (Psalm 91:13).

Church Vessels and Books

Aside from the priest, deacon, and people, there are some other important essentials to the worship service. These are the books and vessels or “tools” that help us worship.

Chalice (Sugih) Սյիհ

The flared gold or silver cup that holds the communion wine into which the bread will be immersed.



Censer (Poorvar) Բուրվան

An incense burner suspended from chains and swung by altar servers and the priest. Incense is symbolic of the ascending prayers of the priest and the people. In Psalm 141:2 we read: “May my prayer be set before you like incense.” And in Revelation 8:3-5, an angel burns incense on a golden altar, and smoke ascends with the prayers of saints.



Gospel Book (Avedaran)

Աւետարան

Held high in procession and read from the altar, kissed and revered by the faithful, the silver or gold-plated Gospel Book is a powerful symbol of the Word of God. After all, it is in these pages that we find the life and teachings of our Lord. Therefore, along with the chalice, it is the most important symbol of Jesus himself present at Liturgy.

Candles (Mohm) Մոմ

These are everywhere in our worship – held by the altar servers, lined up on the altar and side altars, and available in candle stands for the



? What Do I Do...

When the Epistle reading ends and the Gospel is about to be read?

Stand. We stand for the Gospel readings because in these we hear the Lord himself speaking to us through his life and teachings.

faithful to light in prayer. Of course in an age of electricity, they are no longer necessary for illumination. Rather, they remain beautiful symbols of the light of Christ, who is the true light “that shines in the darkness.” (John 1:5)

Liturgy Book (Badarakamadooytz)

Պատարագամատույց

This is the priest’s service book.



Belled fan (Kushotz)

Բշոց

This disk attached atop a long wooden rod, decorated with cherubs, and surrounded by ball-shaped bells, was once used to keep insects away from the chalice. It is now shaken as a musical-type accompaniment to hymns and to symbolize angels driving evil away from the sanctuary.



Host or Wafer (Nushkhar)

Նշխար

A small thin wafer of unleavened bread, stamped with the image of the crucifix and often wheat and grapes.



Staff (Kavazan) Գաւազան

This staff is used by priests (of a certain rank) and bishops as a symbol of their teaching authority. The staff is capped by two serpents facing each other, a symbol of wisdom. The bishop’s staff is topped by a traditional shepherd’s crook, symbolizing his authority and love for his flock.

Dictionary Definitions

Nushkhar literally means “a fraction” since historically it was just part of the bread gifted to the church by the faithful. As early as the 8th century (the Council of Partav, 768), priests were directed to be the sole preparers of the nushkhar (whereas anyone can prepare “mahs”).



The Armenian Angle



Khorhoort Khoreen is the first hymn of the liturgy, sung as the fully vested priest enters the sanctuary in a procession around the church with the altar servers. Its verses are an acrostic of the name of the administrator of the Haghartzin Monastery (near Dilijan, Armenia), the musician Khachadoor Daronetsi (13th c). He is said to have composed this for an open-air liturgy. It refers to the deep mystery (*khorhoort khoreen*) of the Incarnation.

Խորհուրդ խորին



Banner (Khachvar) Խաչվառ

A rectangular piece of richly embroidered cloth, suspended from a rod, often adorned with tassels and patterns of Christian images: eagles, lambs, the cross. These are used in festal and other processions.

Holy Picture (Icon)

Սրբանկար

Every Armenian altar features the picture of the mother of God (*Advadzadzin*) seated on a throne with Jesus on her knee or in her arms. This central painting focuses our attention on the Incarnation (God made flesh). There may be other paintings adorning the two smaller side altars.



The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ Only by gathering as the Body of Christ in one place do we truly become the Church.
- ✓ The preparation section of the Divine Liturgy begins with the priest's vesting.
- ✓ The priest wears special vestments to mark his ritual role as celebrant, confessor, and consecrator of the Eucharist.
- ✓ Each vestment has a special significance and prayer.
- ✓ Objects used in worship are called vessels; they are the important "props" of worship.

QUICK QUIZ

Answer True (T) or False (F)

- _____ 1. A list of vestments worn by the priest appears in the Gospel of Matthew.
- _____ 2. The priest wears special clothing as a kind of armor like a soldier.
- _____ 3. The bishop's miter was borrowed from the Roman Catholic tradition.
- _____ 4. The crown is known as "the helmet of salvation."
- _____ 5. The poroorar was originally the deacon's stole.
- _____ 6. The pazban or cuffs are only worn on major feast days.
- _____ 7. The shoorchar or cape is worn by the priest because Christ wore one.
- _____ 8. The kodi represents the priest's authority of "binding and loosing."
- _____ 9. The towel is never really used during the Badarak.
- _____ 10. The slippers worn by the priest are made of richly ornamented fabric.

MATCHING

Draw a line connecting the words that match:

crown	kodi	գօտի
tunic	pazban	քաղպան
stole	saghavart	սաղաւարտ
belt	shabig	շապիկ
cuffs	shoorchar	շուրջան
collar	poroorar	փորուրար
cape	tashginag	թաշկինակ
towel	hoghatap	հողաթափ
slippers	Badarak	պատարագ
Divine Liturgy	vagas	վակաս

O Mystery Deep

Examine us, Lord, and test us, try out our minds and hearts. We know how merciful you are and will be pleased to hear your opinion. We love the house where you live, Lord, the place where your glory dwells. And we will always proclaim the wonderful things you have done. Amen.



Up Close and Personal

If you were asked to confess (and could share it) one thing you did this week that you and God would not be proud of, what would it be?

A Prayer of Faith and Praise

Let's continue our journey from last week. The priest has vested. The congregation is in quiet personal prayer, preparing to participate in this amazing mystery - Christ among us! You're sitting in the front pew and see the door open and your priest and altar servers appear and proceed into the sanctuary. In the chancel, before everyone, the priest recites Psalm 26 as he ritually washes his hands in a symbolic act of purification. The prayer we opened class with is based on this psalm. Look in your pew books, page 4, to see the complete and original psalm.

1. Why do you think the celebrant will be pleased to hear God's truthful assessment of him? (line 8)
2. What do you think it means that the priest washes his hands "in innocence"?
3. In the second line on page 5, we hear how the priest (through the psalmist's words) will "tell of all your wondrous works" which he will do through his role in the Divine Liturgy. How can *we* do this?

So....the celebrant has dressed in Godly attire, leaving behind his worldly clothing.
He vests.



Dictionary Definitions

Celebrant The officiating priest at the celebration of the Eucharist or at a sacrament (such as a wedding).

He has expressed his desire to be free of sin as he proceeds with the holy sacrifice.

He undergoes purification.



Purification

Purification with water in a symbolic hand washing is a very ancient religious ritual.

Hands are symbols themselves of things we do, our actions. Clean hands represent pure actions. Even further, the washing of hands is an outward sign of an inner state.

In the ancient pagan world, no one dared to pray to the gods until he had cleansed his hands. In Chapter 6, line 266 of the Iliad, Homer makes Hector say "I dread bringing my wine as an offering to Jove with unwashed hands."

The same practice prevailed in Jesus' time. A striking instance of the symbolism is exhibited in that well-known action of Pilate, who, when the people clamored for Jesus, that they might crucify him, appeared before the people, and, having taken water, washed his hands, saying at the same time, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. See to it."

Confession of sins

The next step the celebrant takes in preparing for liturgy is his confession before the congregation. Imagine this touching moment, which so many miss because it is not understood or because people come late! Following the ancient tradition of public confession, the priest turns to the faithful and declares himself a sinner in "thought, word, and deed" and asks everyone to pray to God for his forgiveness.

Find this confessional prayer on page 5 of the pew book.



The Armenian Angle

The Psalms are an important foundation of the Armenian liturgy and is the book of the Bible most often quoted during Badarak, with over a dozen direct references.

The Psalms:

The Prayers of the Badarak

As the priest ritually washes his hands, he is softly reciting a psalm. Psalms are an important foundation of Badarak prayers and hymns. In the Preparation part of the liturgy alone, three psalms take center stage.

Now turn to the Book of Psalms in your Bible. It is the longest book in the Bible. The psalms are prayer poems that can either be sung or chanted in worship or spoken as prayers. There are 150 psalms, most of them written by King David. They were collected over a long period of time and became a very important part of the worship of Israel. The earliest Christians used the psalms in worship and teaching and telling others the good news about what God had done through Jesus Christ. Why do almost all liturgical services of the Armenian Church include the psalms? Because they contain many of the Bible's main ideas about God: praise, thanksgiving, faith, hope, sorrow for sin, God's loyalty and help. They also contain every human emotion: fear, anger, sorrow, joy, regret, despair, disappointment, love, etc. But at the heart of all these feelings is a deep trust in God.

Jesus used the psalms all the time and they were often quoted by the writers of the New Testament.

Test your Psalm IQ: What's expressed in Psalm 105:1-3? Psalm 13:1-2?

Choose one of the following Psalms and answer the questions: Psalm 26, 100, 43, 137

1. What is the theme of this psalm?
2. What are key words or phrases that support this theme?
3. If you were going to put this psalm to music, what instrument(s) would you use?



Who's Who

Notice the prayer to the Holy Spirit by St. Gregory of Narek on page 7 of the pew book. Born in 951 in the village of Narek (southern shore of

Lake Van), Gregory was educated and spent his entire life in the famous monastery of that name which had by then become a thriving center of learning. He was encouraged and tutored by his father Bishop Khosrov and his uncle the famous scholar Ananias. Armenia was experiencing a renaissance in literature, painting, architecture and theology of which St. Gregory was a leading figure. He died in 1003. His most famous work is a collection of prayers popularly known as "Narek" which he considered his last testament: "its letters like my body; its message like my soul."

? What Do I Do...

When the priest or deacon censures the congregation?

With a slight bow of the head, cross yourself. Censuring is a form of blessing, so to respond in this way indicates you acknowledge this with reverence.

Behind Closed Curtains

Read pp 9-11 (top) of the Divine Liturgy book to get a sense of what's going on behind the curtain while we ourselves are prayerfully preparing for the liturgy. As you do, fill in the blanks.

1. The _____, representing the people, presents _____ and _____ (also known as "the _____") to the priest. First he presents the _____.
2. The priest blesses the _____ with the sign of the _____ and places it on the small plate called the _____.
3. Then the _____ presents the _____.
4. The priest blesses the _____ with the sign of the _____ and pours it into the _____.

QUICK QUIZ

The Preparation – getting ready

List four important actions the priest performs during the Preparation:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What two important actions do we, the worshippers, perform?

- 1.
- 2.

5. Then the priest makes the sign of the cross over the _____ times, saying, (from the Gospel of _____ 1:35): “The Holy _____ will come upon you and the _____ of the most high will _____ you.”
6. The chalice and _____ (the small plate that sits on top of the chalice) are covered with a _____ and set in a side _____.
7. Altar servers light _____ and prepare for the_____.

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The priest prepares for the ritual role he is about to undertake by symbolically purifying himself, confessing his sins, and asking the congregation’s prayers for his forgiveness.
- ✓ Liturgy begins not at the altar, a symbol of heaven, but among the people.
- ✓ Washing one’s hands, as the priest does, is an ancient symbol of purification.
- ✓ Behind the closed curtain the gifts are received and prayed over. The preparation ends with the opening of the curtain.



God Comes to Us as Word

Dear Lord, you who have taught us all to pray with one heart and one voice and promised to fulfill the requests of two or three agreeing in your name, help us draw near to you and know you. Bless us as we gather today in the beauty and peace of your house. Amen.

An Encounter With God in Two Parts

1. The Liturgy of the _____ also called the _____.

2. The _____

Before and After

1. The Liturgy of the _____ or the _____ is preceded by the _____.

2. The _____ is followed by the _____.



Dictionary Definitions

Incense: An aromatic substance such as a fragrant wood or gum (a thickish liquid that is secreted by a plant or tree and hardens into a brittle solid) that is burned to create a pleasant odor. OR the smoke such a burning produces. From the Latin *incendere* which means “to burn.”

Incense **ἵσχυ**

Burning incense is an ancient act of piety. In ancient Egypt, a dead king was censed for both purification (it literally masked the putrefying flesh) and protection (as it was meant to prepare the king for entrance into eternal life). A third concept from the ancient uses of incense was that of “vertical communication” – a means of sending up prayers from human beings to God. All over the ancient Near East incense was used in cultic rituals. We often read reference to the magnetic power of incense to pagan gods – they were actually meant to be attracted by the incense, even inhaling it.

Old Testament priests are often seen burning incense in temple rituals or as a symbol of prayer. A beautiful psalm attributed to David, exclaims:

May my prayer be set before you like incense

May the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

Psalm 141:2



Look up the following references in your Bible and describe what’s being said about incense:

1. Exodus 30:7-8 _____

2. Exodus 30:34-36 _____

3. Isaiah 1:11-17 _____

4. Matthew 2:11 _____

5. Revelation 8:3-4 _____

Remember Me

The priest proceeds through the church in procession with altar servers, offering his hand cross to the faithful who can kiss the cross while saying:

“Remember me, also, before the Immortal Lamb of God.”

“*Heeshescheer yev zees arachee anmah kareenun Asdoodzo.*”

Յիշեալիք եւ զիս առաջի անմահ գառինն Աստուծոյ:

In response, the priest acknowledges that he will indeed remember you:



“You shall be remembered before the Immortal Lamb of God.”

“*Heeshyal lichik arachee anmah kareenun Asdoodzo.*”

Յիշեալ լիչիք առաջի անմահ գառինն Աստուծոյ:



The Armenian Angle

The *sharagans* or hymns sung during *badarak* were originally designed to be sung in a single melody line. Eventually, the music was set to a four-part harmony for a mixed chorus. The version most familiar to us is that of Magar Ekmalian although others, including the renowned priest-musician Gomidas, have also composed music for our liturgical hymns.

The Gospel Above All

The deacon now takes the Gospel Book reverently into his hands and holds it high over his head as he proceeds around the altar. It is a beautiful moment to see this gold or silver-covered, often jewel-studded Gospel Book held aloft in a parade around the altar. By lovingly adorning it, we express our reverence and adoration of the Lord, since he is the sole subject of the Gospels. In holding it high, we demonstrate Jesus’ place as Lord of our lives. As the deacon proceeds around the altar, the choir and congregation sing *Soorp Asdvadz* (“Holy God”) which sings of God’s holiness.



Up Close and Personal

*Do we really consider Jesus Lord of our lives?
How is this reflected in your life?*

Litanies: Petitions from the Faithful

Litanies appear several times in the Divine Liturgy. The ancient Greek meaning of the word *lité*, means supplication and litanies *are* liturgical supplications or prayers in which the deacon declares a series of petitions which alternate with fixed responses from the congregation.

Let’s look at the litany on pages 15 and 16 of the liturgy books. Underline key words in each petition.

If you had to give this litany a title, what would you name it?

A Sunday School Petition

This first litany featured a series of prayer requests for the church and the body of believers. Write a litany petition for the Sunday School. It can start

“Lord, please grant / please help / please inspire / please encourage...”

Write it here and read it when your turn comes in the group litany

? What Do I Do...

During the Creed? Why do we need to hold our hands in that rigid position?

Whether it's chanted, sung, or simply said, whether in classical Armenian or in English, the Creed is the basic statement of faith that all those gathered are professing. So take it seriously, read the words from the pew book (if you say them often enough, you eventually know them by heart) or recite in the language you understand. The position of your hands is symbolic of the unity of the church (palms outstretched together, thumbs crossed, right over left).

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The Synaxis or Liturgy of the Word is the “teaching” half of the Divine Liturgy, meant to educate and prepare worshippers for the Eucharist.
- ✓ The Synaxis focuses the congregation on the Word of God.
- ✓ The Gospel Book contains the revered Word of God and, as it is adorned in precious metal and stones and carried aloft, is a symbol of Christ himself.



QUICK QUIZ

True or False

1. Incense was one of the gifts Joseph gave Mary at the birth of Jesus.
 True False
2. The high point of the Liturgy of the Word is receiving communion.
 True False
3. As the Synaxis begins, the priest moves quickly through the church to get back to the altar in time for Hayr Mer.
 True False
4. The deacon raises up the Gospel Book in a procession around the altar.
 True False
5. Litanies are the embroidered veils that cover the chalice.
 True False
6. The Armenian Divine Liturgy consists of two major parts with a preparation and a last blessing.
 True False

This is What We Believe

Dear Lord, the whole Bible was given to us by your inspiration and is useful to teach us what is true and make us realize what is wrong with our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is your way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone. Open our hearts when we hear your Word at liturgy. Amen.

(based on 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

words, words.....The Word

During the Synaxis, we say and hear many words:

<i>Orhnya Der</i>	Bless, father	Օրհնէա Տէր
<i>Der voghormya</i>	Lord have mercy	Տէր ողորմէա
<i>Soorp Asdvadz</i>	Holy God	Սուրբ Աստուած
<i>Havadamk</i>	We believe	Հաւատամք

But when we get to the Scriptures, we are hearing something very special, in fact, the entire focus of this part of our Sunday worship, namely, the Word of God. At every liturgy, Scripture is read from the Old Testament (although the Old Testament readings are sometimes omitted), the New Testament (the epistles, Acts), and – also of course from the New Testament but in a very special category – the Gospels.

These readings are based on the Lectionary of the Armenian Church, which is a book that lists the Bible passages which the Church has selected to be read daily during church throughout the year. The Armenian lectionary has its roots in reading cycles that developed as early as the 4th century in Jerusalem.

For the faithful, these readings are often included in Diocesan calendars. In your Diocesan calendar, look up the reading that is indicated on your birthday.

Write it here _____. What is it about? _____

Find the readings for today's Divine Liturgy:

Old Testament: _____ What is it about? _____

Gospel: _____ What is it about? _____

Acts/Epistle: _____ What is it about? _____

So Far...

1. _____
2. _____



3. _____
4. _____



5. _____
6. _____



7. _____
8. _____



9. _____
 10. _____



8



9

11. _____



10

12. _____



11




12

? What Do I Do...

When they start passing the Kiss of Peace. Help!

This beautiful, biblically inspired gesture of peace is common in most Christian churches. In some, people actually shake hands or hug those at either side and in front and back of them in the pews. For our more ritualized greeting, place your hand over your heart, turn to the person greeting you, bow towards their right shoulder and then their left, and as you do, respond by saying: “*Orhnyal eh haydnootyoonun Krisdosee*” **Օրհնեալ է յայտնութիւնն Քրիստոսի** or “Blessed is the revelation of Christ.”

Then turn to the person on your right, bow towards their right shoulder and then their left and as you do, *give* the greeting: “*Krisdos ee mech mer haydnetzav*” **Քրիստոսի մէջ մեր յայտնեցաւ** or, in English, “Christ is revealed among us.”



The Armenian Angle

The Armenian Church continues to recite the “anathema” after the Creed as a reminder that specific issues divided believers in the early centuries and needed to be rectified and agreed upon (through prayer and the hard work of the Ecumenical Councils). Even today, all the faithful need to worship out of the convictions held to be forever true by the one Holy Church.


We Believe!

In the early centuries of Christianity, men and women would publicly confess their belief before being baptized. But as the event of Christ’s death and resurrection began to be interpreted differently and sometimes incorrectly by some, it became necessary to have a complete and thorough statement of faith.

So the brief, simple confessions (the most famous one being the Apostles’ Creed) were eventually replaced with the beautiful “Nicene” Creed, so called because it was formulated at the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 (although finalized at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381). This creed responded to all the controversies that had developed about the divinity of Jesus Christ, about his mother Mary, and other issues.


By exclaiming it together, in one voice, with hands positioned palms together, right thumb over left as a symbol of unity, we announce our complete trust and faith in the teachings of the Holy Church. And since we recite the Creed immediately after the Scripture is read, we are also aware of its foundation and source in Holy Scripture.

The earliest evidence that the Nicene Creed was part of the Divine Liturgy comes from the 8th century (although it may have entered the Liturgy earlier), making it a statement of faith for Christians to repeat every time they gathered to participate in the Eucharist. In a society in which most common people were illiterate, repetition and recitation were powerful learning tools; the regular recitation of the Creed and the hearing of the Scriptures strengthened faith.



Dictionary Definitions

Creed: From the Latin verb “to believe” (credo), a creed is a formal statement of faith or confession of belief.



Up Close and Personal

What are your core beliefs from the Armenian Christian faith? On that basis, what creed-like phrases could you write?



Who's Who

Amazingly enough, Armenia had a representative at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea! It was St. Aristakes, the younger of St. Gregory the Enlightener's two sons. Aristakes was ordained a bishop by his own father in 318 and was then sent to Nicaea where he was recorded as a representative among many other great churchmen from across the burgeoning Christian world.

In Your Own Words

Turn to page 18 of the Divine Liturgy book.

There are 12 statements of faith. Put them in your own words below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10
- 11.
- 12.

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The readings from the Old and New Testaments help us understand God's character and purposes.
- ✓ The Creed is a summary of our most important beliefs as Christians. We recite them together as an act of worship: many hearts and minds become one as we declare what we believe.
- ✓ The Synaxis prepares the faithful, through prayer, Scripture, and Creed, to receive the greatest gift of the Liturgy, the Body and Blood of our Lord.

QUICK QUIZ

True or False

1. The Armenian lectionary was written in the 18th century to make sure Armenians throughout the world were reading the same Bible passages.

True

False

2. Daily Scripture readings are listed on the annual Diocesan-issued calendar.

True

False

3. A lectionary is a list of readings designed exclusively for your personal devotional use.

True

False

4. The Nicene Creed was formulated by the apostles and finalized by the Emperor Constantine.

True

False

5. I think having a creed is important/not important (circle one) because

The Eucharist: The Focus of it All

Lord, help us remember that when we are at your holy altar and there remember that we have a problem with someone near and dear, we need to reflect seriously before taking another step. Indeed you ask us to leave the altar and leave the church and go and be reconciled with whomever we have hurt or has hurt us. Lord, help us remember the seriousness of your command to "love one another" so that our worship of you is not cold and meaningless but filled with love! Amen.

(based on Matthew 5:23-24)



What's A Catechumen?

The first major part of the Liturgy, the Synaxis, is all about getting ready, about learning, about receiving God through his Word, through the Gospel.

What are we getting ready for?

To receive Jesus himself, through the Eucharist.

How have we prepared?

The priest has vested and confessed before the congregation; he has carried the cross and censer through the church and congregation; the deacon has led us in prayers for the Church and for ourselves; we have heard the Holy Word of God through the Scripture readings; we recited the Creed to affirm the basic beliefs we all hold to.

So far, we're just warming up. In fact, turn to page 23 of your Liturgy books and notice the very first thing the deacon says when we have officially started the second major part of the liturgy, the Eucharist.

Write it here:

Now, what does this *mean*? Seems like the deacon is dismissing people of

little faith.....okay, that's a no-brainer, why would someone who doesn't believe want to participate anyway?

the penitents.....okay, this refers to people who are staying away from the liturgy during an imposed period of penance

the unclean.....perhaps those who were once thought ritually unclean (and there were such categories) or, more recently, those considered spiritually unclean and

the catechumens..... read on!



Who's Who

Who were or are the *catechumens*? Well, in the early Church, a catechumen (pronounced ca-tuh-cue-mun, a form of the Greek verb "to instruct") was a person who was undergoing training and instruction preparatory to receiving baptism. They could come to church but were dismissed before the ultimate act of faith – taking communion – because they weren't baptized yet. Those were the days when being in church was an earned privilege. Amazing how times have changed! And, by the way, no one is really asked to leave today. This is just a remnant from an earlier time, one that is felt to reflect an important if not practicable truth.

The King of Glory

We are now at the moment in the Divine Liturgy when the deacon brings the gifts that have been stored in a side niche to the priest. These gifts are the bread and wine.



In early centuries, people in the parish would bring grain and flour and loaves of bread or grapes or wine from their own fields. But now, in a far less agricultural society, our gift of money goes to purchase these items. But always remember that these “gifts” are from you, the people! And that you are offering them up to God through the prayers and actions of the priest to become the spiritual food of the Eucharist. As the deacon goes to the niche and solemnly bears the chalice around the altar to the priest, we usually kneel before this awesome beginning – the first step to the transformation of this humble food and drink to the Body and Blood of the Lord.



As the priest censes the chalice and then takes it from the deacon, exalting it before the people and then placing it on the altar, he is reciting a dialogue with the deacon straight out of the Psalms. Psalm 24 to be exact.

Psalm 24 is one the oldest Psalms in the book, and almost certainly written by King David. (While the entire book is attributed to him, some were most probably the work of musicians writing in his style.) It was probably written to accompany a triumphant procession into the Temple. Or it might have been a song David wrote as he danced and sang when he brought the Ark of the Covenant into the ancient-gated city of Jerusalem (Samuel 6:12-15, 17).

Dictionary Definitions

The Hill of the Lord: Refers to Mount Zion upon which King Solomon built the Temple.

Read the Psalm and summarize the verses:

Psalm 24

Verses 1 and 2 tell us:

Verses 3 and 4:

Verses 5 and 6:

Verses 7 and 8:

Verses 9 and 10:

Why do you think that this Psalm is quoted as the priest receives the chalice of bread and wine from the deacon?

The Holiest “Kiss” በከጋክ

If the greatest gift offered us at Liturgy is Jesus Christ himself, then the next best has to be the promise of unity and love in the Kiss of Peace. As we turn to embrace our pew neighbors, the words of *Kreesdos Eee Mech Mer* ቅዱስ መጠን ሆኖ ሆኖ announce that all of our separate souls have become one Church. Incredibly enough, that is what we are empowered to be at Liturgy. We assemble not for our





The Armenian Angle

The Armenian Church is the only church to retain the distinctive formalized greeting that has each worshipper greet his or her neighbor with a bow over the right and then left shoulder, hand over heart. The greeting is always — no matter the season:

Krisdos ee mech mer haydnetzav Բրիստոս ի մէջ մեր յայտնէցաւ: (Christ was revealed among us) to which the reply is: *Orhnyal eh haydnootyoonun Krisdosi* Օրհնէալ է յայտնութիւնն Բրիստոսի: (Blessed is the revelation of Christ).

private moment with God – that we can have at any other time, any other place - but to become what we became at baptism, a member of the Body of Christ, the Church.

And since God is love (I John 4:8), there is a lot of kissing that goes on during Liturgy: we kiss the cross, we kiss the Gospel, and we kiss one another, admittedly a bobbing of heads over one another's shoulders, but...nevertheless. Kissing has its contractual side. The kiss of respect – for the cross, for the Bible, for a revered person – promises faithfulness, allegiance, and mutual love.

But the promise can also be false, like Judas' kiss. St. Ambrose wrote, "A kiss conveys the force of love, and where there is no love, no faith, no affection, what sweetness can there be in kisses?" And so with the gift comes a challenge. In that ritualized greeting, are we taking seriously the invitation to meet our Lord halfway: "As I have loved you so you must love one another. By this will all people know you are my disciples." (John 13:34-35) ?



Up Close and Personal

What are you usually thinking during the Kiss of Peace? What might you try to think about?

? What Do I Do...

When I go to the priest to receive communion?

Approach the chalice, cross yourself, open your mouth for the priest to place a piece of communion safely inside, then cross yourself again. Although we never want to have our backs to the altar, it's neither safe nor necessary to back away from the chalice. Slowly turn and join the other communicants who have gathered at one side of the chancel.

QUICK QUIZ

Match the words with their meanings:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Catechumen | a. "The King of Glory" |
| 2. Gifts of the people | b. Teaching part of the Liturgy |
| 3. The Synaxis | c. Preparing to be baptized |
| 4. The Eucharist | d. Liturgical gesture of love |
| 5. Psalm 24 | e. Holy Communion |
| 6. The Kiss of Peace | f. Bread and wine |

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The Eucharist is the ultimate purpose of the Divine Liturgy; historically, at this part of the Liturgy, those not baptized were asked to leave.
- ✓ The congregation symbolically gives the gifts to the priest in the presentation of bread and wine by the deacon.
- ✓ The Kiss of Peace cements the love relationship among the faithful as well as between the faithful and God.



Take, Eat!

How truly right it is, Almighty God, to always adore and glorify you because you saved us through your Word, your co-creator Jesus Christ. It was he who lived among us as a human being, and like a divine master-builder, made earth into heaven.

Help us to continue this holy work in all we do and say, so that we too have a role in building a new creation. Amen.

(First paragraph based on the priest's Eucharistic Prayer)



Up Close and Personal

What special things do we do to remember someone important?

Looking Up (Even When You're Down)

We're at the moment in liturgy when we are ready, reinforced with all we have heard and experienced so far, to affirm the holiness of God. The beautiful hymn "Soorp, soorp"—usually launched by a soprano soloist who can hit the high notes—is really, as are all the hymns of the Divine Liturgy, a song that all of us should sing.

The hymn derives from a very interesting Scripture story. Turn to Isaiah 6:1-8. But before you read, a bit of background: Assyria, the invincible superpower of the time, looms over Judah, ready to attack. King Uzziah, who had brought stability and hope to this tiny nation, has just died. Things couldn't have looked worse from Isaiah's perspective; the prophet had to have hoped that his own prophecies could be derailed by a change of heart in the people. Nope. Didn't happen.

But strangely, in the very year King Uzziah died, at perhaps one of the lowest moments of his life, Isaiah is given a unique glimpse of heaven. Now turn to Isaiah and read. Then do the following Bible study exercise:

Isaiah 6:1-8 "Holy, holy, holy!"

- What might Isaiah have been feeling before the vision?**
 - I'm helpless
 - I'm frustrated
 - I'm lonely
 - I can't take this anymore
- What do you think might have been Isaiah's initial response as the vision began?**
 - awe
 - fear
 - motivation
 - guilt
- What did Isaiah mean when he said: "My lips are unclean and I live among a people of unclean lips"?**
 - There's a problem with my speech
 - There's a problem with my heart
 - I'm just like everyone else
 - I'm not worthy
- How do you think Isaiah felt after the burning coal experience?**
 - Confused
 - Encouraged
 - Free
 - Ready for action
- If I were Isaiah, my sense of _____ would be the first to be awed.**
 - Sight
 - Smell
 - Hearing
 - Feeling
 - Taste
- What would be the hardest for me to do after I say "Send me!" to God:**
 - Tell a friend about Jesus
 - Help the poor
 - Visit a hospital or nursing home
 - Give money to charity
 - Other



Who's Who

Isaiah was a giant in his day (c.740-680 B.C.), a respected prophet and poet in royal circles despite his unpopular message. He predicted the fall of Jerusalem (which indeed came about in 586 B.C.) and God's deliverance of his people from the Babylonian captivity (which also came to pass in 538 B.C.) as well as their ultimate deliverance from sin by Jesus Christ. Beloved for his insights and poetry, Isaiah is quoted more often in the New Testament than all the other prophets combined.

The Armenian Angle



During the Intercessions, many people in the Church, living and dead, are prayed for: saints, Christian leaders, monks, priests, prophets, patriarchs, and all believers. Among those mentioned is the Diocesan *Primate*. No, this isn't a relative of the higher apes! The *Primate* in the Armenian Church is the head of a cluster of churches or Diocese. Do you know the name of your Primate? He is as important to you as the President of the United States since, with the Diocesan Assembly and Council, he governs the life of the Church within his jurisdiction.

Arek, Gerek (Take, eat!) Առեք, Կերեք

Matthew 26:26-30

Luke 22:14-20

I Corinthians 11:23-26



Dictionary Definitions

Intercession: From the Latin, meaning "intervene," a prayer to God on behalf of another. The Armenian Church uses the word *parekhosootyoon* which means "putting in a good word" with God for someone.

The Intercessions: Getting Real

As the priest and deacon lead us in praying for a long list of people (pp 35-39 of the Divine Liturgy book), why not envision real people? For example, who would you think of when you are asked to pray for...

Pastors?

Deacons?

Devout kings? (think pious leaders everywhere)

People who have died?

People in captivity?

What group of people would you suggest adding to the list of those we pray for here?



At this moment in the liturgy, we stand and sing the beautiful community prayer the Lord himself gave us, affirming in the first few words that God is indeed our father. Since we say the prayer so often, every Sunday in song, sometimes in quick recitation and always in classical Armenian or King James English, let's take a moment to think a little deeper about what we're saying.



My Lord's Prayer

Next to each traditional line, write a word or phrase expressing the line in your own words, without using any of the key words on the left

Our Father _____

Who art in heaven _____

Hallowed be thy name. _____

Thy kingdom come, _____

Thy will be done, _____

On earth as it is in heaven. _____

Give us this day _____

Our daily bread _____

And forgive us our trespasses _____

As we forgive those _____

Who trespass against us. _____

And lead us not into temptation _____

But deliver us from evil _____

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory _____

Forever and ever, amen. _____

? What Do I Do...

*When they pass the basket or plate for offering?
(How crass!)*

Far from being crass, the offering basket is our opportunity to return some of God's own bounty – after all, everything is his gift to us – back to him. In earlier decades, Armenians would bring gifts of bread, wine, oil (for the church lamps), beeswax for candles, cloths and flowers to decorate the altar, and livestock to be blessed, slaughtered and shared among the faithful. In our more modern urban setting, money substitutes for things and so this is how we provide for the church's needs.

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ As the Eucharist service unfolds, we enter more deeply into the holiness of God.
- ✓ The priest prays for the Holy Spirit to enter the gifts of bread and wine that they might become the Body and Blood of our Lord.
- ✓ The congregation prays for the entire Body of Christ, the Church.
- ✓ Finally, fully conscious of our miraculous status as God's children, we pray to him as Father in the Lord's Prayer.

The Main Event

Getting Ready for the Main Event

Let's take a step back before we move forward again.

Just as the Son of God came down from heaven to be born, live, die, and rise again, so he comes to us in *every* Divine Liturgy, again in an incarnation (meaning something is given form or flesh).

- Through the words of the Gospels, those four sacred biographies from which book (the *Avedaran*) we read every Sunday, which we adorn and which we exalt in a special procession around the altar.
- Through the bread and wine of communion which become the life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord.



Dictionary Definitions

Avedaran: In the Armenian language, the suffix “ah-ran” means “place where.” So a kordzaran is a factory, or a place where work (kordz=work) is done. The Avedaran is the place where the Good News is found (Avedis=good news).

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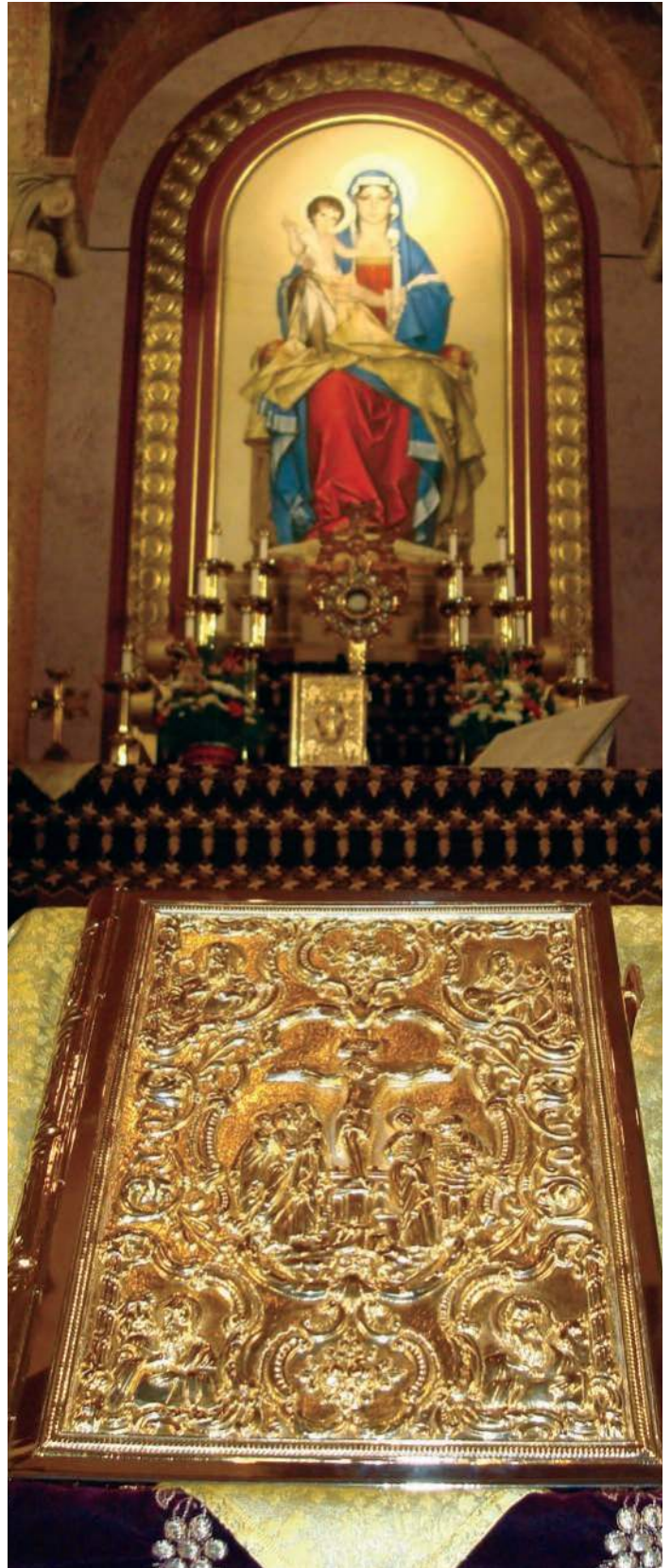
These, then, form the two basic movements of the Divine Liturgy: the Liturgy of the Word, and the Eucharist. These two liturgical sections are preceded by a preparation and end with a “wrap-up” or last blessing and these four sections can be outlined according to some main events. Jog your memory and your years of church-going to match the photos on the following pages with the actions they depict:



Who's Who

In his famous 10th century commentary on the Divine Liturgy, Khosrov Antzevatzi wrote this about confessing sins and receiving Holy Communion:

“God is the physician of souls; show him your wounds and he will provide you with a remedy and cure. He is a father and his heart is moved by your weeping for your spiritual pain. He knows our nature is prone to stumble and has arrayed numerous treatments for our recurring ailments...first and foremost the frequent celebration of Christ's sacrifice which is always offered to atone for the sins into which we constantly fall....”



The Preparation 1-10

1. *The priest vests prayerfully with the deacon's help.*



2. *He and deacons proceed from the vestry into the church.*



3. *The priest ritually washes his hands.*



4. *The priest confesses his sins.*



5. *The priest and deacon(s) go up to the altar and the curtain closes.*



6. *Behind the curtain, the deacon presents the priest with the gifts of bread and wine.*



7. *The priest blesses the gifts, after which they will be set aside in a side niche.*



The Liturgy of the Word (Synaxis) 11-22

1. *The curtain opens, the priest and deacons proceed through the church. He censes the altars and offers his hand cross to be kissed by the faithful. (Tapor)*



2. *As we sing Soorp Asdvadz, The deacon proceeds around the altar holding the Gospel book high (Lesser Entrance).*



3. *We are led by the deacon in a litany of prayers for the church and the people.*



4. *The Bible is read, culminating with a Gospel reading.*



5. *The creed is recited to proclaim the belief we all share.*



6. *The deacon leads us in prayers for ourselves.*



7. *The priest takes off his crown and slippers.*



The Eucharist 23-52

1. *The deacon chants “Mi vok,” reminding us that only those who are confirmed in the Armenian Church or are from sister churches are privileged to receive Holy Communion.*



2. *The deacon carries the veiled chalice containing the bread and wine to the priest and they are then placed upon the altar.*



3. *The kiss of peace is passed as we share the love of Christ with one another.*



4. *The priest begins to pray the Anaphora.*



5. *The priest says the words of Jesus: “Take, eat, drink.”*



6. *The priest prays that the Holy Spirit will come upon the gifts and turn them into the body and blood of Christ (The Epiclesis).*



7. *We pray for the saints and all who have died as well as the living leaders of the Armenian Church (The Intercessions).*



8. *We sing the Lord’s Prayer.*



9. *The curtain closes while we pray for mercy; behind the curtain the priest and altar servers take communion.*



10. *We confess our sins and receive Holy Communion to be restored in the sight of God.*



11. *We sing songs of thanksgiving for Holy Communion.*



The Last Blessing 52-55

1. *The curtain opens and the priest comes down from the bema with the Gospel book.*



2. *The Gospel is read.*



3. *The priest blesses us and we go forward to kiss the gospel book.*



A Life Without Sin

Doomed to Fail or "A" for Effort?

Sin means “missing the mark,” in others words, falling short of what God asks us to do and be. For centuries Christians have been openly confessing their sins during – or before – liturgy, and receiving absolution by the celebrant priest.

What a great way to move forward with hope and faith in the future! Interestingly enough, modern psychiatry affirms the ancient need to “repent” by facing our behaviors,

acknowledging them, and moving forward so that healthy actions replace guilt. Of course, that’s as far as we can take the affirmation, since psychiatry does not necessarily talk about God or right and wrong. Protesting the hesitancy of his colleagues to learn from religious concepts, the famous 20th century psychiatrist Karl Menninger wrote a book entitled *Whatever Became of Sin?*



Up Close and Personal

A Confession Exercise

Turn to page 48 in your pew book. Follow the instructions below.

1. In the first confession “stanza” (I have sinned against the all-holy Trinity...), sum up the statement in a few key thoughts. Write them here:

2. In the second “stanza,” what are some concrete examples of the sins cited below from your own life?

Pride e.g. *I was too proud to admit I was wrong about something and apologize to my brother* _____

Envy _____

Anger _____

Laziness _____

3. Summarize the third stanza in a few key thoughts:

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The ultimate encounter we have with the Lord during liturgy is receiving him through Holy Communion.
- ✓ Confession and penance are the final acts of spiritual “housecleaning” prior to taking Communion.



The Armenian Angle

It is an ancient tradition of the Armenian Church that before receiving Holy Communion, the faithful have opportunities to examine their lives and confess individually to a priest, even before liturgy has begun. It has become the custom to offer a general confession and absolution immediately before Holy Communion is distributed. We read a prepared examination of conscience and then the priest, with the Church’s authority, absolves the sins of all who have made confession.

The Lord Be With You All

Lord, grant peace to the whole world, to churches, priests, to Christian rulers and to their armed forces, and to all your people. Amen.

From The Last Blessing and Dismissal



Who's Who

St. John Chrysostom (347-407)

One of the great Fathers of the church, Chrysostom was first a monk then an ordained priest and renowned preacher in Antioch, Syria. His orations were so extraordinary he earned the nickname, "golden-mouth" or "chrysostom." Against his wishes, he was made Patriarch of Constantinople in 398 where he proceeded to be such a zealous reformer that he alienated corrupt churchmen as well as the Empress Eudoxia herself. He was exiled to Armenia (!) in 404 from where he wrote hundreds of letters that are extant. Although many lobbied for his release, he was exiled further East to the tip of the Black Sea but died on his way there. After the Bible, there are more Armenian manuscripts of John's writings than any other author. What does this tell us?



Up Close and Personal

Good and Perfect Gifts

Tell the story about the best gift you ever received. Now list as a class some of the gifts you consider "from God."

Sing Psalms to the Lord!

(Saghmos asatzek!) Սաղմոսն աւագէք

During liturgy, we pray, chant and sing the psalms often, using them as a rich resource for expressing our feelings, just as Jesus did. The Last Blessing contains two Psalms sung to a joyous upbeat melody, since they are exclaiming the greatness and blessedness of God. Look up the Psalms below and draw a line to when you might find it helpful to pray these words (you can generally tell from the first 4 or 5 lines).

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Psalm 127 | a. If you need strength against persecutors |
| 2. Psalm 142 | b. If you feel like God is really an awesome creator |
| 3. Psalm 148 | c. If you feel like God has forgotten you |
| 4. Psalm 13 | d. If you need to remember how comforting God's presence is |
| 5. Psalm 3 | e. If you need to tune down the noise in your world to hear God |
| 6. Psalm 8 | f. If you need to be reminded that God is in charge |
| 7. Psalm 46:10 | g. If you need to tell God your troubles |
| 8. Psalm 23 | h. If you want the whole world to join you in praising God |



Dictionary Definitions

Mahs: literally means a “part” or “portion” and is blessed unleavened bread distributed to the faithful as they leave church. It is intended for those who did not take communion or for people not in church to whom you want to take it.

Often these are simply given out in small waxed paper bags. If your parish follows Armenian tradition (and not all do), the *hokadar* or trustee will break off a small piece of the thin bread and place it on the back of your extended hand. After which you say: “God is my portion forever.” *Asvadz eh eem pazhinus meeshd.*

Աստուած է իմ բաժինս միշտ:



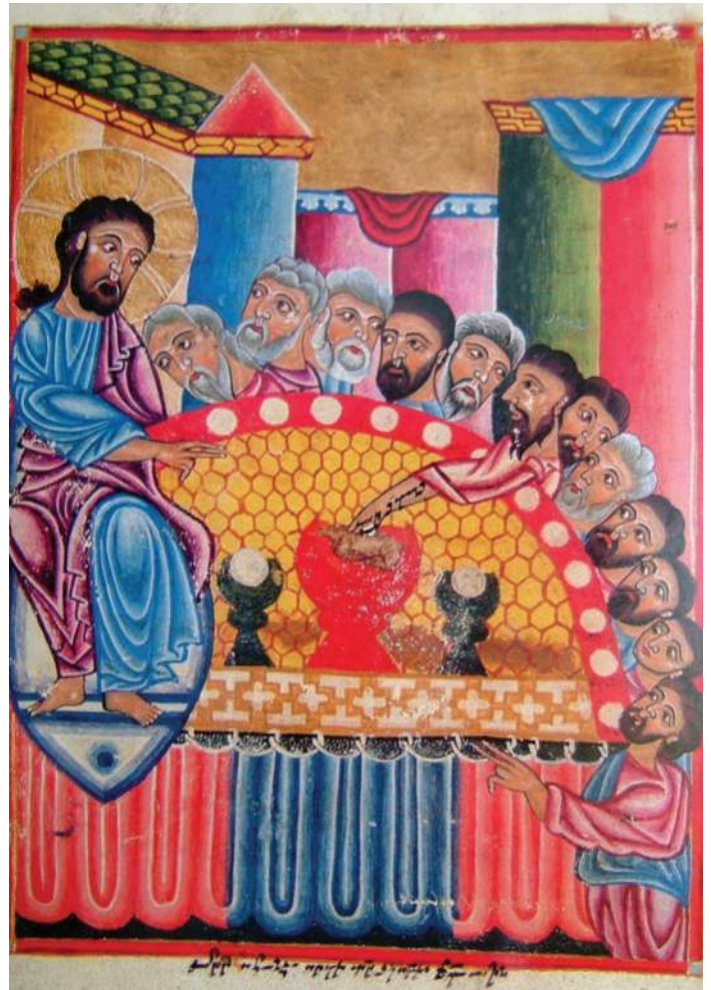
The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The Last Blessing formally concludes the Divine Liturgy with special prayers and a Gospel reading.
- ✓ Kissing the Gospel at Liturgy’s end is a way of bearing the Word of God out into the world.
- ✓ Taking the blessed bread (mahs) is a way of sharing the Lord’s Body with those not present at Liturgy.

? What Do I Do...

When the service has finished and everyone’s going up to kiss the Gospel book?

Join them! It’s very important to touch the Gospel Book with your lips since you have just sung the beautiful words of Psalm 34:1, then vowing to have the praise of the Lord at all times on your lips. This is a powerful reminder that when we leave church, we take the word of God with us and have it guide us in all we think and do. If you want to follow the traditional Armenian practice, before you kiss the Gospel book the priest holds before you, say: “*Heeshestzeh Der zamenayn badarakus ko*” or in English, “May the Lord remember all your sacrifices.” The priest will answer you: “*Datzeh kez Der, ust surdit koom*” or in English, “May the Lord grant to you according to your heart.”



Requiem: Grant Rest and Mercy

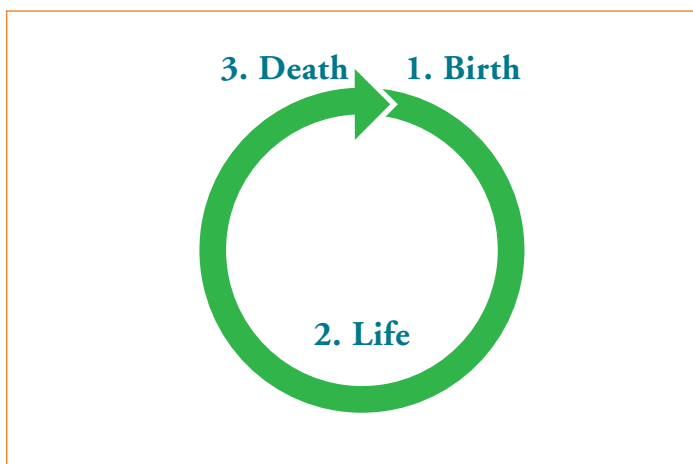
Dear Lord: You, who breathed your last on the cross and dissolved the power of death, grant forgiveness to your servants who have fallen asleep, when you come to judge those whom you created with spotless hands.

From the requiem hymn "Vor haneyitz"

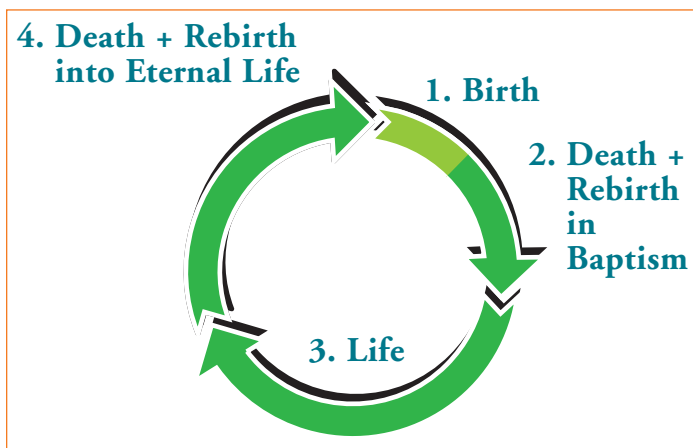
Death: The End AND The Beginning

Isn't this what the cycle of life normally looks like?

Birth.....life.....death



As Christians, however, it's a whole different story. The "life graph" looks more like this.




Birth.....Death.....Life.....Rebirth


How can that be? Think about it. We're all born, of course. There was, indeed, that blessed moment when all of a sudden you simply WERE in the world. From fetus to infant in the flash of an eye (or nine months invisible to all but the ultrasound monitor)! But something amazing happened shortly after that. From the joy of the delivery room you were later delivered to another place by your parents and godparents, even more joyfully – the baptismal font of the church, where you experienced an extraordinary thing: death! For in that triple immersion in the baptismal water, you shared in the death of Jesus, who was in the tomb for three days and then rose to eternal life. You "died" to being a slave to sin, to being a transient being who lives for a time and then is gone. You began life anew as a Christian, a child of God, and, therefore, an heir to all the "good and perfect gifts from above," including eternal life.

But that comes later.

First there's the life you are gifted, "life abundant" as a child of God, living as he intended you to, which is what you learn as you grow in faith with all the tools he has given you – the Bible, the Church, prayer, and the lives of others who witness to life's meaning through their faith and good works.



The Armenian Angle
 During the *Badarak* as well as the special requested requiem, we pray for all those who have fallen asleep in Christ (the church term for those who have died). Did you know that the living *and* the dead constitute the Church? Those who have passed away in Christ are called "the Church Triumphant." And those of us still here on earth are known as "the Church Militant" (still fighting the good fight!).



Up Close and Personal
My Eulogy
 What would you want to be remembered for at the end of your life? How would you want to be described? What would you want your life to have been about? Write 3-4 sentences about yourself that you would like to hear at your own funeral. Don't be silly about this. Pretend your best friend is saying these few words.

The Armenian Hokehankisd (Requiem) Hymns

Review the words of the three Requiem Service hymns on pp 56, 59, and 60 of the Divine Liturgy book. Paraphrase them into simpler, clearer sentences.

1. *Vor Haneyeets Sdeghdzogh Որ յանէից ստեղծող* (You Who Created Out of Nothing)(56)
2. *Kahanayk Քահանայք* (We priests)(59)
3. *Ee vereenun Yeroosaghem Ի վերինն Երուսաղեմ* (In Heavenly Jerusalem)(60)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Who's Who

Enoch and Elijah

Enoch and Elijah were the only two human beings in all of Scripture who were taken up into God's presence without literally dying. You can read about Enoch, the father of the ancient Methuselah, in Genesis 5:24. After a brilliant and fascinating life as a great prophet, Elijah was also taken up into heaven (2 Kings:2).

? What Do I Do...

If there's a hokehankeesd (requiem), can't I just leave?

The short requiem service at the end of liturgy is conducted by special request from a parishioner or parishioners for the church to pray for their deceased loved ones. And since everyone present is part of the church, that means you! So, even though you might not even *know* whom you're praying for, it doesn't matter. They are part of the same Christian family you are and request your prayers. So pray sincerely for God's mercy upon the souls of the individuals named, sing, and listen to the Bible reading in this short, post-liturgy prayer service.

The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The Church consists of both the living and the dead – the Church “Militant” and the Church “Triumphant.”
- ✓ Both during the liturgy as well as in a special requiem service after its conclusion, we pray for those who have fallen asleep in Christ.
- ✓ Praying for the rest and forgiveness of those who have passed on is a declaration of faith and hope in eternal life and Christ's judgment upon his return.

Session 15

Review At Your Own Jeopardy!

Here's your opportunity to see what you've remembered from the past fourteen sessions on the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church as you relax and enjoy a double dose of review! Family members are welcome.

Session 16

Worshipping and Serving Together

This final session will consist of attending the entire Badarak as a class, participating by

- greeting people as they come into church
- reading the lections
- passing the Kiss of Peace
- leading the confession
- taking the collection
- distributing the mahs

And, oh, did we mention...celebrating?!



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