

# The Church Celebrates

## FIVE MAJOR FEASTS

UNIT  
**4**  
LESSON  
ONE

### From Our Hearts to God

*Jesus, I love my special days. Thank you for them. Amen.*

## MY WORLD

“We all have our special days. So does the Church. What days do you celebrate in your family? Mark them in the correct month on the calendar.

Find the Bible reading on your birthday. Write it here: \_\_\_\_\_.

What is it about?

Just as we have special days and special celebrations we look forward to each year, the Church has special days and special celebrations we look forward to as a church family each year. Your family may keep a book or calendar of these celebration days. The Church keeps a book which is a calendar of its celebration days also. It is called a Donatzooytz. In Armenian, this literally means a book that will “show you the feasts.”

What five important feast days, called “Major Feasts” does the Church celebrate? Mark them on the calendar.

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER

# GOD'S GUIDING WORDS

Leviticus 23:1-2

The Lord said to Moses: "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: 'these are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.'"

1. *To me, this means that* \_\_\_\_\_

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under heaven:  
a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build up,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.



2. *To me, this means that* \_\_\_\_\_

# Getting Closer to God

What would you do to get ready for....

1. A birthday party?
2. A family vacation?
3. The first day of school?

We need to prepare for important events in our family life. We prepare for important events in our church life as well. We prepare for events that come again each year and enjoy those days.

Our church celebrates **Five Major Feast Days:** Christmas, Easter, Transfiguration, Assumption of St. Mary and Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Before each of these Major Feast Days there is a week of preparation. As a Church, our most important Feast Day is Jesus' resurrection (Easter). It is our greatest day of celebration because through his death and resurrection we are saved from death and can look forward to a new life with God in heaven after this life is finished.

One of the ways we prepare for these Feasts is to think about our relationship with God.

- We pray.
- We attend special services.
- We try to focus on God more and everyday things less.
- We eat simple foods.
- Sometimes we say special prayers.
- Sometimes we give money and food to the needy because God wants us to think about those who are less fortunate than we are and help them.



## RESPONDING IN FAITH

O God, thank you for this life and the new life to come. Amen.



# Taking a Closer Look

## Remembering the Five Major Feast Days

There are eight sections inside the number five.

Starting in the first section at the bottom write

EASTER

CHRISTMAS

TRANSFIGURATION

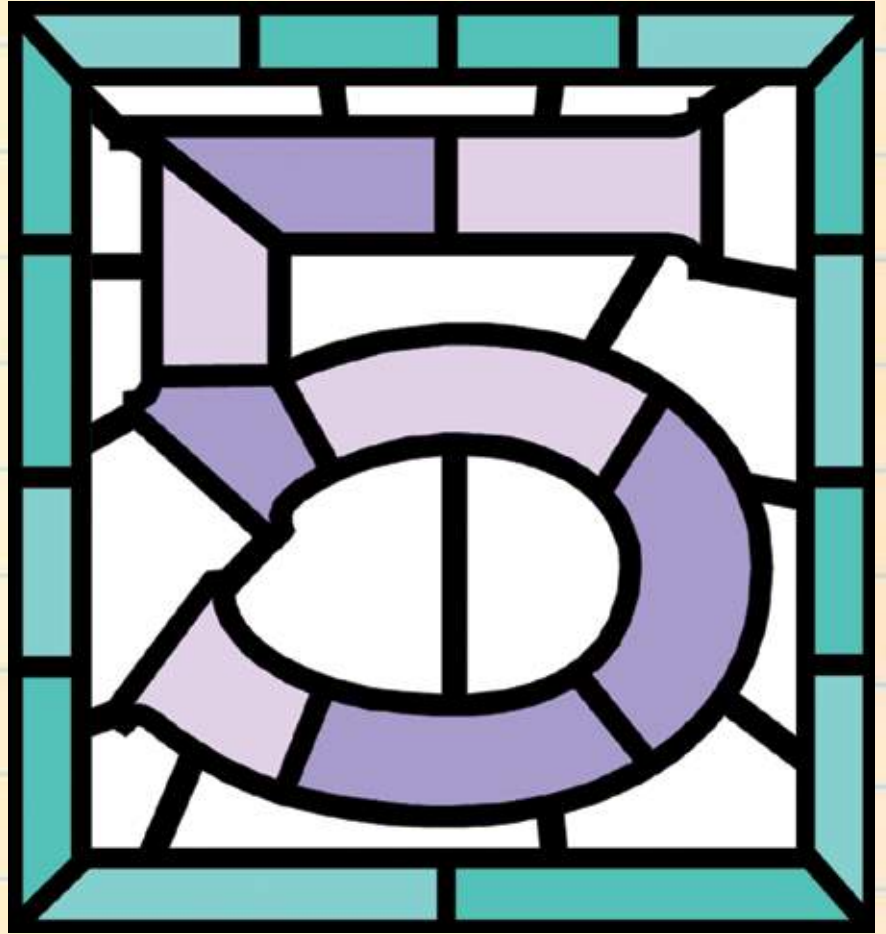
ASSUMPTION

HOLY CROSS

FIVE

MAJOR

FEASTS



## Our Armenian Way

The Five Major Feast Days: Who, What Where When!

The Five Major Feast Days in the Armenian Church are called “Tabernacle” or “Daghavar” feasts. The word “tabernacle” means “booth” and comes from the Old Testament tradition of setting up special little booths during the harvest festival.

You’ll be making special memory cards on these important feasts.



# Time to Celebrate

Decorate your Feast Day cards and play a review game!



## FAMILY CORNER

### Sharing Our Faith

This week we learned about the church calendar which marks feast days and saints days year after year. The *Donotzooytz* is the calendar of the church which guides us through the year. Students did a thorough review of the Five Major Feast Days of the Armenian Church – ask them to tell you about these feasts!

### Living Our Faith

1. At home this week look through your family's photo albums. Look for all your Christmas and other holiday gatherings. Dye a few hard boiled eggs red with onion skins in the traditional Armenian way.
2. Together with your child look at the church calendar. Show your child the feast days marked on it. Look for your name day if you were named for a saint. Look at the weeks before Easter and their special names. Look for days when special events are celebrated.

God's healing?" Discuss, but make sure to include the idea that it is not a shopping list of requests that God should fulfill, but a *conversation* with God. The person praying can tell God anything, can ask God anything, can be happy or sad, content or angry. We should always keep in touch with God through prayer to share our lives and thoughts and desires with him and to be open to God speaking to us through our parents, our Sunday School teachers, our priest, the Bible and life itself. Our prayers for the sick are for healing of all kinds. Just as Harry in the story says, if physical healing is not possible, then the soul and spirit are healed and strengthened. (If children ask why God can't heal anyone he wants, tell them that God is not a magician who enters our world and fixes things for us. Rather he gives us the inspiration to help others, fight diseases, love one another, and can give us the *spiritual* gifts that are his to give and that we can get from nowhere else.) Conclude with **God's Guiding Words**.

4. Direct students' attention to and "teach" **Getting Closer to God and Our Armenian Way**. 10 min.

5. **Time to Celebrate** Instruct students that they will be making a card to send to someone they know or may know in the future who is in need of prayers for healing. Distribute the page of prayers and Bible verses along with envelopes. Encourage students to design them as they please; they might also add their own drawings. They should write a personal message inside if they have someone specific in mind; or they can write the message at a later date. If they want to mail it to someone, addresses and stamps can be provided at home by parents. Conclude with **Responding in Faith**. 20 min.

### Extending the Lesson

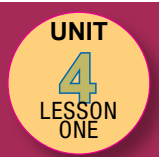
Use the **Sacraments Maze**, and/or **Sacraments Test/Word Search\*** as enrichment and review exercises.

**Sacraments Test answers;** 1. Initiation 2. Penance 3. Marriage 4. Unction 5. Holy Orders 6. God 7. Chrismation 8. Baptism 9. Communion 10. Unction

### Word Search answers:

H	M	I	C	A	P	R	A	Y	T	G	B
O	O	N	Z	P	L	U	W	I	U	O	A
L	C	O	M	M	U	N	I	O	N	D	P
Y	X	H	A	G	N	I	F	D	C	M	B
S	W	Q	R	Z	C	O	E	E	T	H	A
O	I	K	R	I	L	N	Z	A	I	L	P
R	P	R	I	E	S	T	S	C	O	L	T
D	E	W	A	Q	O	M	W	O	N	B	I
E	G	I	G	N	K	X	A	N	P	O	S
R	D	P	E	N	A	N	C	T	H	R	M
S	H	U	S	B	A	N	D	O	I	N	M
H	P	E	N	A	N	C	E	I	L	O	O
A	C	O	L	Y	T	E	F	L	C	Z	N

## The Church Celebrates The Five Major Feasts



### Key Concepts

1. The church calendar celebrates the life of our Lord and the special people and events in salvation history.
2. There are spiritual seasons of the church just as there are seasons in the physical year.
3. These seasons and feasts unfold in a cycle of preparation and celebration.
4. There is a special Armenian Church calendar called the *Donatzooytz* that guides us through the year, beginning with the most important feast, Easter.

### Objectives

During this session students will

1. Mark a calendar of events in their lives that repeat each year and compare it with the church's annual commemorations.
2. Find the Five Major Feast Days on the church calendar.
3. Discuss ways we prepare for family events and church commemorations.
4. Create information cards on the Five Major Feasts and then play a review game.

### Materials Needed

1. Diocesan calendars (or copies), one for each student; see procedure #2
2. 5X7 blank index cards (see procedure # 5)

### Note to the Teacher

Next week's class calls for a bowl of *anushaboor*, a traditional Armenian Christmas pudding. Ask a volunteer to make it or make it yourself. Keep in mind that it contains nuts, so be aware of allergies.

### Background for Teacher

The feasts of the church guide our worship, prayer, and Scripture reading. The *Donatzooytz*, the official ecclesiastical calendar, lists the celebrations, commemorations, feast days, fast days, and Bible readings for each day. Just as national holidays are set on a regular calendar, the immovable and moveable feasts are set on the church calendar and everything else falls into place.

The Five Major Feasts of the Armenian Church are the backbone of the church calendar. Each major feast day is preceded by a week of fasting. This pious tradition emphasizes the importance of preparation. Easter, Christmas, Assumption, Transfiguration and Exaltation of the Holy Cross are paramount as they represent the most important events in the life of the Church. Of course, Easter is the most important of these five as it celebrates the Resurrection of the Lord. Without Easter, nothing else matters. It marks the beginning of the church year.

### Procedure

1. Open with the prayer in **From Our Hearts to God**.
2. Distribute the Diocesan calendar (or copies). Read **My World** and have students fill in their special days in the blank calendar boxes (such as birthdays, parents' anniversaries, first day of school, etc.). Discuss. Ask students to look up the Bible readings (Gospel selection, preferably) on their birthday, write it in their student texts, read it, and share the message with the class. Then have them find the Five Major Feast Days and write them in the appropriate box: for example in the January square – Birth of Christ. Do the same for Transfiguration (which can be written across June through August), Easter (March-April), Assumption (August), and Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September). 15 min.
3. Read **God's Guiding Words** first (Leviticus) as a choral reading and then (Ecclesiastes) with a different student reading each line. Ask students to write the one-line summary. (Guidelines: 1. God asks us to set aside special days of celebration

and 2) there is an appropriate time for everything. For Ecclesiastes, point out that the verses do not condone war or hate or killing, but that the wise writer of Ecclesiastes understood that these things happen in our world. 5 min.

4. Segue with: "Beautiful, so we see that there are many different occasions in both our family life and in the life of the church where we celebrate, we remember, we honor, whether it's people or events. Now these occasions take preparation, don't they?" Discuss how children might prepare for the three occasions listed in **Getting Closer to God**. For vacations, you might want to pose: What if you were going to the beach? To Disney World? To Armenia? Then read the rest of the text. 10 min.
5. Have students fill in the Number 5 in **Taking a Closer Look**. Then begin **Our Armenian Way**. Distribute 5 index cards to each student and have them write in large letters on each the name of one major feast. Then have them turn the card over and list down the left side the words **Who, What, When, Where, Why and Our Armenian Way** (this will be the Armenian name for the feast and one special way we celebrate) with space in between to write a few words. Write the same words on the board and tell the class that you will be reviewing each feast by supplying answers to these questions. Write the first title: Christmas and proceed, allowing just a few minutes to get the basic story for each. Follow the guidelines below. Review the entire answer but then write only the part of the answer in bold and ask students to copy on their cards. If there is time, students can decorate cards. After the review game, cards should be kept in their folders.

#### *Christmas(Theophany)*

Ask: **Who** is this feast about? **Jesus**. You can ask who else was present: (Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels)

**What** is this feast about? Celebrating the **birth of Christ**  
**When** did this happen? In approximately **the year 1**. **When** do we celebrate it? **January 6** (December 25 for all other churches; January 6 was the original Christmas celebrating Jesus' birth and baptism for all churches, but his birth commemoration was separated in the West to replace a pagan holiday in December.)

**Where? Bethlehem**

**Why? God the Son entered the world as a human being** to teach us about true faith and ultimately die that we might live with God forever.

**Our Armenian Way? Dzunoont; blessing of the water** in honor of Jesus' baptism

#### *Easter*

Ask: **Who** is this feast about? **Jesus**.

**What** is this feast about? Celebrating the **resurrection of Christ**.

**When** did this happen? In approximately the **year 33**.

**When** do we celebrate it? Easter is what is known as a moveable feast, so it can fall anywhere between **March 22** and **April 25**.

**Where? Jerusalem**

**Why?** God the Son willingly died on the Cross and rose again to **save us from our sins** and give us the hope of eternal life.

**Our Armenian Way? Zadig;** coloring eggs with onion skins

#### *Transfiguration*

Ask: **Who** is this feast about? **Jesus**. You can ask who else was present: (Peter, James, and John)

**What** is this feast about? The celebration of **Jesus' appearing radiant** before his closest disciples. Moses and Elijah appeared next to him and a voice was heard from heaven saying "This is my Son; I am pleased with him."

**When** did this happen? Approximately **30-33 AD**

**When** do we celebrate it? A moveable feast, the transfiguration can be marked between **June 28** and **August 1**

**Where? Mt. Tabor in Jerusalem**

**Why? Jesus' glory** was **revealed**; he was the fulfillment of the law and the prophets and God's Son.

**Our Armenian Way? Vartavar** (the word derives from the pagan feast honoring Anahid; her altar was decorated with **roses** for which the word in Armenian is *vart*); a tradition of splashing one another with **water**

#### *Assumption*

Ask: **Who** is this feast about? **St. Mary**

**What** is this feast about? Commemorating **Mary's being taken up into heaven**

**When** did this happen? **1st century**

**When** do we celebrate it? **August**; a moveable feast, the Assumption can fall on a Sunday between August 12 and 18

**Where? Jerusalem**

**Why?** As the **mother of God**, in Armenian: *Asdvadzadzin*, Mary was given the **unique honor of being taken up to heaven** bodily.

**Our Armenian Way? Verapokhoomun** (the taking up); **blessing of grapes**

#### *Exaltation of the Holy Cross*

Ask: **Who** is this feast about? Heraclius and the **Holy Cross**

**What** is this feast about? Remembering how the cross of Jesus was **exalted in Armenia** as the Byzantine army brought it back from captivity in Persia to Jerusalem

**When** did this happen? **628 AD**

**When** do we celebrate it? **September**; as a moveable feast it can fall on a Sunday between September 11 and 17

**Where? Armenia/Jerusalem**

**Why?** The cross was so beloved that men risked their lives to return it from its captors; **Armenians revered** it as it passed through.

**Our Armenian Way? Khach Veratz;** blessing of **basil**, special antasdan (blessing of the fields) 25 min.

6. Play a review game with the cards students have made (**Time to Celebrate**). Have students spread the cards out in front of themselves and hold up the appropriate one as you read the questions below. The holy day that marks the birth of Jesus is called ...? *Christmas*

• The holy day that is about the time Jesus took three disciples up Mt. Tabor and revealed himself in his glorified state all bright and full of light is called ...?

*Transfiguration*

• The holiest day of the church year, the day Jesus rose from the dead is called ...? *Easter*

• The feast day that is about the Holy Cross being paraded in Armenia after its successful recapture from the Persians is called ...? *The Exaltation of the Holy Cross*

• The holy day that is about Mary being taken up to heaven is called ...? *The Assumption*

• The most important feast day of the church is... ? *Easter*

Time permitting, ask students to ask questions of one another!

7. Conclude class with **Responding in Faith** 5 min.

#### **Evaluating the Lesson**

Next week, as students walk into class...

- Ask "What is (name a feast day) about?"
- Give student a picture of the feast day and say, "Can you give me a title for this picture?"
- Give the student a card with the description of the feast on it and ask, "Can you identify this feast?"

#### **Extending the Lesson**

Have your children create a board game of the Five Major Feast Days or a card matching game.