

Martyrs: St. Santookht

THE STORY OF ST. SANTOOKHT THE FIRST MARTYR OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Characters:

St. Thaddeus, the Apostle

St. Santookht

Sanadrook, the King of Armenia

Narrator

Messenger

Narrator: St. Thaddeus, the Apostle, came to Armenia during the 1st century A.D. to preach the gospel of Christ. His words about Jesus were both powerful and convincing. Many pagan priests embraced the new faith and were baptized by him. He preached courageously, without fear of persecution, and openly spread the Good News.

ACT I

Setting: Town of Shavarshan, home of the King of Armenia

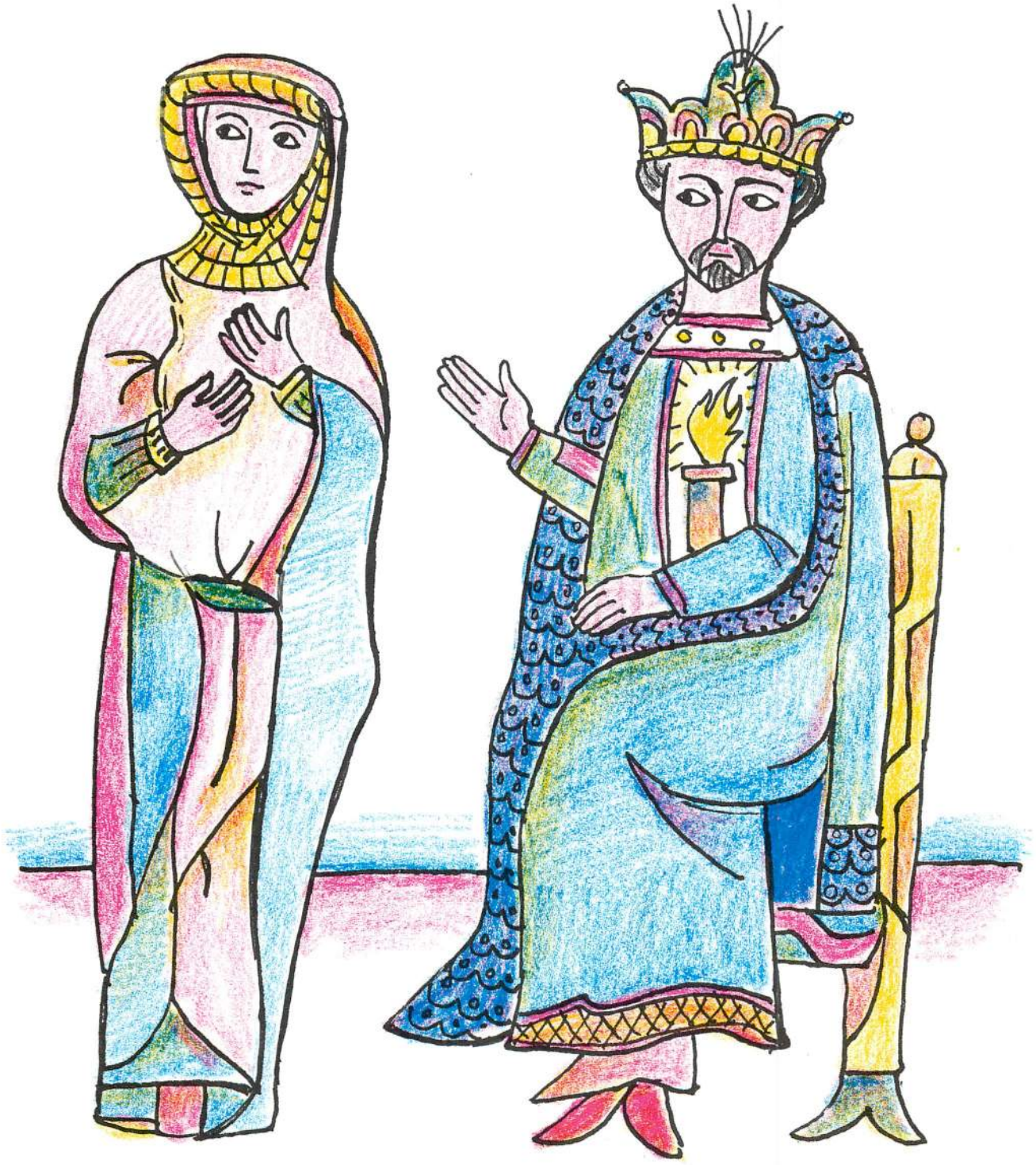
St. Thaddeus: God is light and there is no darkness at all in him. If we live in God, we will be cleansed of our sins. If we say we have no sin, we deceive

ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will forgive us and we will be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Santookht: I wish to know more of your God. You told me that Jesus Christ is the true life-giving light and that he created the sun. Yet my pagan religion worships the sun as a god. Our sun god keeps us warm and gives us light. I do not understand, but something inside tells me this gentle man Jesus is the true God.

St. Thaddeus: In time, you will come to know Jesus and your faith will grow stronger. I will continue to meet you secretly to speak of the Gospel. (Thaddeus blesses her.)

Narrator: St. Santookht continued to meet St. Thaddeus and her love and understanding of Christ grew in her heart. Finally, she was baptized.



ACT II

Setting: The King's Palace

Messenger: Your Majesty, word is that your daughter, Princess Santookht has converted to Christianity and has been baptized by the apostle Thaddeus.

King Sanadrook: Where have you heard such blasphemy!

Messenger: Your Majesty, it comes as common knowledge among the Christians and Jews.

Sanadrook: (to guard) Bring my daughter before me.

ACT III

Setting: King Sanadrook's quarters

Sanadrook: Daughter, what rumors do I hear of your interest in Christianity? Have you been seeing this man called Thaddeus? Answer me!

Santookht: Yes, father. I have found my true God, Jesus Christ, who has filled my life with love and hope for eternal life in heaven.

Sanadrook: Stop this nonsense. Don't you know what I do to these so-called Christians who believe in Christ? They will die as ugly a death as he did.

Dare you speak against the gods of Aramazt, Anahid, Vahakn and Asdghig? Is this one man Jesus more powerful than all our gods combined?

Santookht: His powers are greater, father, and my love and dedication greater.

Sanadrook: Guard, put her in prison and show her what happens to Christians. Torture will soon change her mind.

Narrator: The prison was cold, damp and dark. The princess was put in chains. Bread and water were all she was given to eat and drink. Sometimes she would become very weak. She would compare this life to the life she had at the palace. Then she would remember why she was in prison and gladness would fill her soul. Her faith in Jesus grew stronger every day. From her prison, Santookht encouraged other Christians to prefer shedding their blood for Christ rather than burning incense before false idols.

ACT IV

Narrator: Upon hearing of the imprisonment of Santookht, St. Thaddeus entered the prison in disguise and prayed with her for strength to endure her cross. The king soon found out about Thaddeus and punished the guards who allowed him to enter. It was hoped that their execution before Santookht would cause her to denounce her new faith. However, this proved to be useless. Santookht and other imprisoned Christians went to the site of the execution and encouraged the guards with the love of Christ. This infuriated her father and he called her before him once again.

Setting: The King's chambers

Sanadrook: Daughter, look at you dressed in old tattered clothes. You do not look like a princess at all. You will have to choose here and now either to become a queen and renounce your new religion or keep your new faith and die by the sword. Look before you, on this table lie two objects — a queen's

crown and a sword. Now, choose!

Santookht: Father, I choose the sword. I wish to remain faithful to Jesus Christ because the Kingdom that awaits me is far better than any you, dear father, can offer me on earth. With much sorrow, I choose to go against your wishes.

Sanadrook: Guards! Take her to the place of execution and let her meet her death!

Narrator: The king's orders were car-

ried out. Santookht shed her blood for love of Jesus. She is the first martyr of the Armenian Church and we sing of her proudly in our sharagans. Santookht and many other Christian martyrs knew that the eternal kingdom of God was worth shedding their blood for, and that earthly kingdoms offered a materialistic happiness that would one day come to an end. As hundreds of other martyrs shed their blood for Christianity, the Church grew and became stronger!



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. What two qualities of a saint do you feel Santookht possessed?

2. Through her death, what did Santookht gain?

3. Santookht was faced with a difficult choice — a sword or a crown. How do you feel about her decision? What might you have done in her situation?

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Fill in the blanks with one of the words below which tells us about the life of St. Santookht, the first martyr of our church.

Crown Martyr Courage Sword Faith
Pagan Baptism Gospel Tortured Christianity

1. St. Thaddeus the Apostle came to Armenia to preach the _____ .
2. He became friends with Princess Santookht who wished to learn of _____ .
3. Santookht's father, King Sanadrook was a _____ .
4. When he learned of his daughter's _____ , he put her in prison to be _____ , in hopes that she would give up her new faith.
5. Santookht's _____ and _____ grew stronger.
6. Finally, King Sanadrook gave his daughter an ultimatum: choose either a _____ or _____ .
7. Princess Santookht chose the sword and gave up her life for the love of Jesus. She became the first _____ in the Armenian Church.