

even learned an additional 12 for a total of 39. If she remembers the 27 books of the New Testament assigned during the 1997 Vacation Bible School, she will be able to locate a passage anywhere in the Bible as easily as finding a word in a dictionary.

The memory verses were chosen last year and this year to provide the students with a clear explanation of the Gospel of God's salvation and his love for them . . . to equip them to truly become heroes of the faith.

The St. Sarkis Vacation Bible School Committee would be happy to share the curriculum plans they have developed with any parishes interested in conducting their own Vacation Bible School. For information, please contact the church secretary at 972-245-6995.

THE HOLY TRANSLATORS

(celebrated October 10)

Mesrob, Yeghishe, Moses, David, Gregory, Nersess: BACKSTREET BOYS OR MEN OF FAITH?

No disrespect intended in the title above. It's just that we need to go beyond the popular "culture month" image of the Holy Translators, the frenzy of pride over these men who are chiefly remembered in the mass imagination as cultural champions and see them for the deeper values in their stories. A more careful scrutiny will be rewarding!

A great theologian once remarked that we would do better to follow the spirit and goal of our Church Fathers than to blindly exalt their memory and accomplishments. In the case of the Holy Translators, celebrated every October in what has come to be known as Culture Month in the Armenian community, this is especially evident. Perhaps *this* year, we can remember them such that their hopes and dreams are truly honored.

Who are the "Holy Translators?" More can be read about them on pages 13, 16, and 26 in *Saints and Feasts of the Armenian Church* (an abridged and edited translation of Patriarch Koushagian's original work by Fr. Haigazoun Melkonian) or in *Living the Armenian Church Year*. You might want to go over all or a few of their lives in class using these resources. For each translator, articulate (or simply present to students) an important contribution. Then decide what we could do *today* to imitate their lifework.



St. Mesrob

- *Mesrob Mashtotz*. Founded an Armenian alphabet to help evangelize the Armenian people. Their faith and worship could now be shared in their own letters. The first work translated was the Bible, the linguistic fountainhead for centuries of Armenian literature.

- *Yeghishe Vartabed*. The author of many books and Scripture commentaries, his most famous work was an account of the Battle of Avarayr (he was purported to be St. Vartan's secretary), which is filled with Biblical allusions and Christian witness.

- *Moses of Khoren (Movses Khorenatzi)*. He wrote poetry, hymns, orations and histories and was a great church leader. He is best known as the father of Armenian history because of the important *History of Armenia* he wrote.

- *David the Philosopher (Tavit Anhakht)*. He was a celebrated philosopher, translating works of Plato and Aristotle as well as writing on the Bible and the Church.

- *Gregory of Narek*. A mystic poet on a par with the greatest Christian poets and a writer of celebrated commentaries, letters, and hymns, St. Gregory is best known as the author of his *Book of Lamentations*. This prayer book has been an inspiration to faithful for centuries.

- *Nersess the Grace-filled*. Perhaps the greatest of Armenian churchmen, St. Nersess was a brilliant writer, musician, thinker, and spiritual leader. He is remembered as an inspiring ecumenist as well.

To imitate these men's minds and desires for the faithful, have students:

1. Present a display of posters on the Holy Translators under a banner entitled "Beloved Laborers in the Vineyard" or "Good and Faithful Servants of the Lord."

2. Write (upper grades) a brief explanation of a Bible story, one of the sacraments, or other aspect of church life. Reprint the essays in your church newsletter as "Today's Translators."
3. Write a poem on their faith, Jesus, the Holy Spirit or any other subject they would like to describe. Reprint as in #2 above.
4. Translate (those who know Armenian well, of course) a short paragraph from the late Patriarch Shnork Kaloustian's works such as on Holy Week, Biblical saints, etc.
5. Participate in an English-language liturgy.
6. Write a history of the Sunday School or the parish (year-long class project for an upper grade).
7. Visit other Christian places of worship. Discuss similarities and differences. Try to learn more.
8. (Upper grade) explain the meaning of a badarak hymn to a lower grade class.
9. Use the letters of their name to begin each line of a prayer.
10. Plan ways to teach the rest of the community more about their faith.

FAITH AND FAMILY

The single most important factor in the religious development of a child is the example set by parents. In an Associated Press poll, taken by ICR Survey Research in the spring of 1997, 7 out of 10 adolescents said that their parents have done the most to shape their religious beliefs and attitudes, while only 1 in 10 sighted the effects of a minister, rabbi or priest.

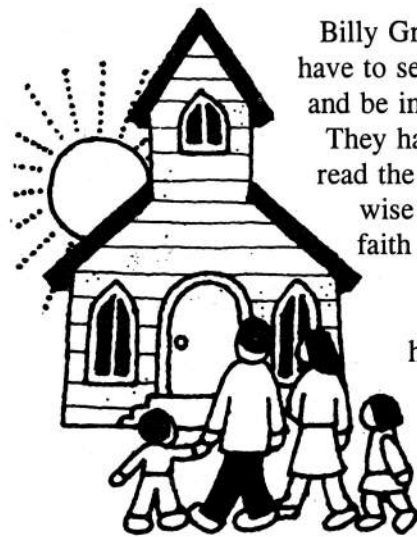
"For indeed, the household is the little church" writes St. John Chrysostom. "They learn more from example, than from us telling them. They have to see love in the home. They have to see love between the parents," says evangelist Billy Graham. Dr. John Boojamra writes in *Foundations of Christian Education*, "love for human kind, grows not as an abstraction, but in the immediacy and intensity of family life; it is this love that is the foundation of our love for God."

"Ask children at St. Joseph's Catholic School how God's love is expressed in their lives, and many will draw a

direct line from the Heavenly Father to Mom and Dad," writes David Briggs, a religious writer. "Katie recalls the moment before her family's car crashed, when her mother's hand reached over to shield her—an act of unselfish love that made the fifth grader feel as if the hand of God had come down to protect her. A classmate, Meghan, remembers when her Dad 'decided to stay home from a meeting to help me with my homework.' Nicholas, a second grader, recalls when his 'Dad took time out of his day to help me build a model dinosaur, it made me feel he really cared about me.'"

It is clear, from many studies on the subject, that religiosity and Christian education do not occur in a vacuum. When parents' behavior contradicts the religious teachings provided by themselves or the church, a crisis of faith can occur early in their lives. The consequences of this can be a gradual drift into disbelief or apostasy in adult life. "Kids report feeling confused and anxious when parents merely drop them off at Sunday school or pick them up at the end of worship services."

Dr. John Boojamra takes a systems approach to faith and family members. "The family for the person, like the church for all its members, is the matrix of faith development." Horace Bushnell in *Christian Nurture* wrote over 150 years ago, "no truth is really taught by words or interpreted by intellectual and logical method; truth must be lived into meaning before it can be truly known." Boojamra writes "he (the child) makes sense out of the church and its faith by seeing what the adults around him do with it—their love, hope, trust, faith and faithfulness."



Billy Graham states, "children have to see parents go to church and be interested in the church.

They have to see their parents read the Bible and pray; otherwise they will grow up and faith will be meaningless to them or they will look upon it as a great big hypocrisy when they're told to go to church."

David Briggs in his series of articles on faith and children