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### HOME BLESSING: A POWERFUL ARMENIAN TRADITION

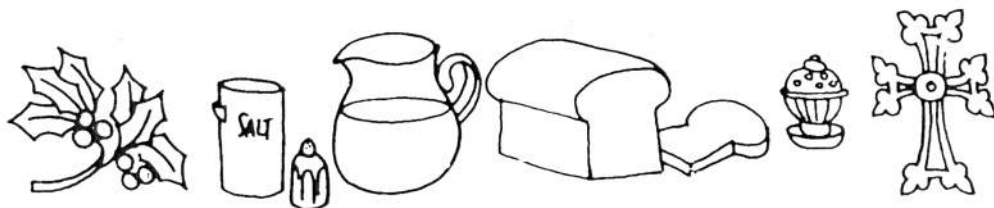
The home is not blessed to make it holy since all that God created is good and holy. It is rather for the purpose of *dedication* or *rededication*, a reminder that the home reflects the Kingdom.

Decades ago in Armenian villages, the *dzookh*—which has come to be the word for “parish” but which literally means “smoke”—was defined by groups of chimneys or homes. In this way two or three village priests would divide the care of the flock in a town. They would bless the homes of families in their jurisdiction.

Traditional times of the year for Armenian homes to be blessed are Eastertide (the fifty days following Easter), Christmastide (until February 14, The Feast of the Presentation), and after having moved into a new home. A rich and evocative blessing, the *Dnorhnek* has practically fallen into disuse along with many other blessing rituals, chiefly because the world is no longer popularly perceived as sacred and in need of repeated prayer and anointing.

This perception is indeed perplexing considering that there has arguably never been a time when God’s blessings were more needed!

At a home blessing, every member of the dwelling assembles with the priest to sanctify together four life-giving gifts.



#### **Bread**

Bread is blessed as a potent symbol of God’s greatest gift offered back to him in the form of a humble loaf. The staff of life, it is the vital spiritual food of Holy Communion, where it represents the ultimate convergence of the sacred and the profane.

*“This is the bread which came down from heaven . . . whoever eats this bread shall live forever” (John 6:58).*

#### **Water**

Water, the symbol of chaos out of which God created the world is also essential to life. God drew forth life from the formless waters (*Genesis 1*); we ourselves float in a liquid womb; without water we quickly perish; and in the water of baptism we are “washed clean,” die to sin, and are reborn in Christ.

# Rebuttal

The following text is a rebuttal to the article "The Role of the Teacher in the 21st Century" by John Doe. It discusses the importance of teacher education and the need for ongoing professional development.

The article by John Doe, "The Role of the Teacher in the 21st Century," presents a compelling case for the importance of teacher education and ongoing professional development. However, there are several key points that require further exploration and clarification.

First, the author emphasizes the need for teachers to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to address the diverse needs of students in the 21st century. This is a crucial point, as the educational landscape has indeed changed significantly. However, the author does not fully address the challenges of implementing these changes, particularly in terms of resource allocation and teacher workload. It is essential to consider how these new demands can be met without compromising the quality of education or the well-being of the teaching profession.

Second, the author highlights the importance of ongoing professional development for teachers. While this is a widely recognized principle, the author does not provide a clear framework for how this development should be structured and supported. Professional development should be a continuous and integrated part of a teacher's career, rather than a series of isolated workshops or courses. This requires a systemic approach that involves collaboration between schools, universities, and professional organizations.

Finally, the author suggests that teacher education should focus on developing a range of skills, including communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. These are indeed essential skills for the 21st-century classroom. However, it is also important to ensure that teacher education programs provide a strong foundation in subject matter knowledge and pedagogical expertise. A balance must be struck between these two areas to ensure that teachers are both content experts and effective educators.

In conclusion, while the article by John Doe raises important issues, it also identifies several areas that need further research and discussion. A comprehensive approach to teacher education and professional development is needed to ensure that teachers are fully prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.