

Armenian Christmas

January 6

The exact day and year of Christ's birth has never been established, because nothing definite has been said about them in the Gospels. But it is an historical fact that the celebration of Christ's birth on January 6 in all the Christian churches goes farther back than that of December 25.



In Rome, the pagans celebrated the birthday of the sun on December 25. In their communities and festivals, the Christians too were tempted to participate. Therefore, the leaders of the early church decided that the birth of Christ be moved to December 25 to overshadow the pagan festival. This change spread rapidly to the east and all over the Roman Empire. However, the change did not penetrate into Armenia for two reasons: First, because Armenia was not within the Roman Empire, and secondly, Armenians, having no such festival on December 25 to suppress, did not see any reason to follow the new custom. So they did and still continue to celebrate Christmas on January 6 throughout the world.

The feast that the Armenian Church celebrates on January 6 is more than a "Christmas." It is the celebration of the two most important events in the life of Christ, namely, his nativity, and his baptism in the River Jordan. This

combined celebration of nativity and baptism Armenians call with a long compound word, "Asdvadz-a-Haydnoutiun," which means "appearance of God," or theophany or epiphany. As Christ's birth is the starting point of his human life, so also is his baptism the starting point of his public life and ministry.

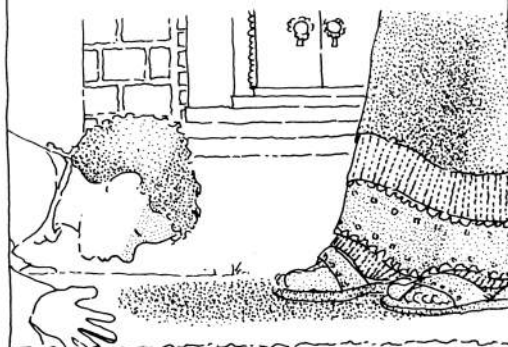
In the Armenian Church on this holy day, January 6, a popular ceremony is performed called "Choor Orhnek," meaning the "blessing of waters." This ceremony was celebrated in ancient times by the riverside or by the seashore. It was later confined to the interior of the church, as it is here in our churches.

Christmas is preceded by a week of fasting, which is actually part of a 50-day Advent season before the actual day of Christmas. This week of fasting, as well as the whole period, is considered as a reminder of St. John the Baptist's proclamations about the coming of Christ and, therefore, constitutes an earnest invitation to repentance.

This internal preparation also consists of prayers, confessions, penance and regular daily church attendance.

The Armenian greeting for Christmas is "Christos Dzunav Yev Haydnetsav," or "Shnorhavor Sourp Dzunount."

Did you know that there's kissing in the Bible? Children often kissed their fathers on the beard. If you met a king, you might kiss the ground in front of him. Early Christians sometimes greeted each other with a kiss. Read Luke 7:36-50. Why do you think the woman kissed the feet of Jesus?



América Latina

El presidente de Chile, Aylwin, anunció el día 15 de mayo que el gobierno había aceptado la oferta de los militares de negociar un acuerdo de paz que permitiera el fin de la guerra civil en el país. El acuerdo incluía la posibilidad de un referéndum sobre la permanencia de la Constitución de 1980, que otorga poderes excepcionales al presidente y al ejército.

El día 16 de mayo, el presidente de Argentina, Menem, anunció que el gobierno había aceptado la oferta de los militares de negociar un acuerdo de paz que permitiera el fin de la guerra civil en el país. El acuerdo incluía la posibilidad de un referéndum sobre la permanencia de la Constitución de 1980, que otorga poderes excepcionales al presidente y al ejército.

El día 17 de mayo, el presidente de Colombia, Gaviria, anunció que el gobierno había aceptado la oferta de los militares de negociar un acuerdo de paz que permitiera el fin de la guerra civil en el país. El acuerdo incluía la posibilidad de un referéndum sobre la permanencia de la Constitución de 1980, que otorga poderes excepcionales al presidente y al ejército.

