Khavaroom Service

The late service, *Khavaroom* (Darkness), held on Thursday evening of Holy Week, is a vigil in memory of the last sleepless night of our Lord on earth; his betrayal, arrest, torture, passion and trial. We are dramatically reminded of Christ's suffering for us.

Our Church Fathers have provided us with a service that truly captures the agony and pain that Christ endured for our sake. During *Khavaroom*, the church is in complete darkness except for 12 lighted candles. One candle is black to symbolize Judas Iscariot. Six sets of laments are chanted, each followed by a gospel reading depicting Christ's betrayal, imprisonment, torture, trial, sentence, and his crucifixion. At the end of each chant, two candles are extinguished. As the sixth lament is ended, the church is in complete darkness and the hymn of crucifixion (*Daradzyal*) is sung. The hymn depicts the final hour of Jesus on the cross and tells us how Christ was given vinegar, instead of water, to quench his thirst; and how his side was pierced by the spear of the soldier. As his mother watched, the "heavens roared and the ground heaved."

As a traditional activity for this evenings service, take a piece of thread and tie a knot after each of the seven Bible readings which reflect the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, the betrayal of Judah, the commitment of Jesus to the crowd, His standing before Annanais and Caiaphas, His being struck and mocked, Peter's three denials and regret. The readings from the Gospel are intermitted with the readings of psalms and the singing of hymns (sharagans) written by St. Nerses the Graceful. The Bible readings are: John 3:16-18:1, Luke 22:1-65, Mark 14:27-72, Matthew 26:31-56, Matthew 26:57-75, John 18:2-27, and John 18:28-19:16.

As you tie each knot recall Christ's wounds and heartache at this time of His betrayal as you reflect on your own earthly problems and concerns.

Keep the thread tied around your wrist until 50 days after Easter at the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ(Hampartzoom)