

The Church Celebrates

THE EXALTATION

UNIT

4

LESSON
FIVE

From Our Hearts to God
Jesus, your cross is _____
Amen.

Free Issue

MY WORLD



MULTINATIONAL FORCE WINS HOLY CROSS FROM PERSIANS

Special report — 628 AD — town of Karin, Armenia



Today Christians throughout the world celebrate the victory of their armies which have marched on the Persian Empire and won back the Cross of Jesus Christ.

A little history first, dear readers. In 610 AD, the Persian King Khosrov with a large army attacked the Byzantine Empire.

Enthusiastic about the initial victory, in 614 AD the Persian army entered Jerusalem. Many people were killed and many people were imprisoned. The Persians entered the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and took the Holy Cross.

Three months ago, the Byzantine army led by the King Heracles fought

against the Persians to rescue the Holy Cross. The Armenian army regiment, led by Mzhez Gnounie, supported the Persian army. With the Lord's help, the Byzantine army won the battle. The Holy Cross was solemnly brought to our town today, from where it will be carried to Constantinople, and then to Jerusalem.

Huge crowds gathered by the roadside as the army passed through. As the soldiers lifted up the cross for all to see, people were seen crying, crossing themselves, and falling to their knees.

GOD'S GUIDING WORDS

"You must take up your cross each day and follow me." *Luke 9:23*
What do you think Jesus means when he tells you to take up his cross?

Getting Closer to God

The cross is used in many places and in many ways. Our priest blesses us with his hand cross. There is a cross on the altar. There are crosses all around the church. There are crosses in holy pictures. We wear a cross on a necklace.

A crucifix is a cross with Jesus on it. In the Armenian Church we see a crucifix during Lent and Holy Week, but most crosses in the Armenian Church do not have the figure of Jesus on them. The empty cross like the empty tomb on Easter morning shows us Christ rose from the dead and gives us a new life after our death – life with God in heaven.



Number the reasons you feel the cross is important starting with #1 as your most important reason. You do not have to number every line.

- It is beautiful.
- It reminds me of Jesus.
- It tells everyone I am Christian.
- It is the way criminals were killed during Jesus' time.
- It shows people that a building is a church.
- When I wear my cross I show others I am Christian.
- When I see others wearing crosses I know they are Christian.

Our Armenian Way

To celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, a special service called Antasdan is performed. During this service the priest and altar servers lead us in blessing the four corners of the world.

After each of the four blessings, we join the priest and altar servers in singing "Amen, Alelooya."

ԱՄԷՆ. ԱԼԵԼՈՒԻԱ AMEN; ALELOOYA

U - - սէն. U - լէ - լու - -
 A - - men: A - le - loo - -

իս, ս - լէ - լու - իս ս - լէ - լու - իս:
 ya, a - le - loo - ya, a - le - loo - ya.

A cross is decorated with basil and flowers and the priest blesses the basil. After the service the congregation can take the basil home and use it to season their food that day.



Taking a **Closer** Look

Today we will make and decorate a cross with basil and flowers. Take it home and put it in your room for this week. Every day look at your cross and remember that Armenians took part in the efforts to bring Jesus' holy cross back to Christians.



Time to Celebrate

We can celebrate this feast day in our classroom. Choose classmates to be the priest, the deacon, the censor, two acolytes. The rest of the class can be the congregation.

The priest should lead the altar servers to each of the four corners of the classroom and holding the cross say:

Bless the world and make it holy by the sign of this cross.

The deacon should say:

Let us sing.

The censor should swing the incense as the class sings:

Amen. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.



RESPONDING IN FAITH

Lord, your cross is special to us because it reminds us of your great gift to us, salvation. Amen

FAMILY CORNER

Sharing Our Faith

Today our fourth graders learned the story of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross; ask your child to teach it to you! The children decorated a cross with flowers and basil and then participated in a very abbreviated version of the Antasdan blessing service, which seeks God's blessing on the whole world.

Living Our Faith

1. Cook a dish with basil in it together this week.
2. Use your computer to research more information about the Armenian Church's Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Try the ministries website of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church: www.vemkar.us.

different readings by calling names and pointing to a reading. Note that procedure #4 depends on different Bible translations so adjust accordingly. Read **My World** to the class, then have them find the story of the Transfiguration in the Bible that was given to them and read it silently. Ask for volunteers to retell the story in their own words. Say: “I will share with you some reasons why this event is important. I want you to think about the top two reasons. When we have finished you will talk to each other and decide among yourselves which are the top two reasons.” 15 min.

3. Distribute the hand-out “The Importance of the Transfiguration,” and have students take turns reading aloud; make sure each reason is clear. They may want to reread them as they decide which two are the most important. Discuss.
4. Read **God’s Guiding Words**. If students are using a variety of translations, call on them to hear the variation in translation. 15 min.
5. Read **Getting Closer to God** Ask if anyone has a grape plant at home. If any student does, ask them to tell about how it grows, how the family cares for it, etc. Bring out long, thick green yarn. Tell the students that the yarn represents a grape vine. Tape the yarn to the wall or board. Give each student a copy of the bunch of grapes and the grape leaf from the back of this manual and have them write something they learned about Jesus on the grapes and something very important Jesus taught them on the leaf. As they are done, have them come to the green yarn and tape their grapes and leaf. 15 min.
6. Read **Our Armenian Way**. Remind students that this Feast Day is commemorated in August. Two of the Five Major feast Days take place during the summer, which means, unfortunately, many students won’t be at liturgy on these days!
7. Turn to **Taking a Closer Look** and **Time to Celebrate**. Enjoy! While you’re eating, ask students to look at the vine the class created and share a prayer of thanks for something on the vine. For example, if someone wrote: “I learned that Jesus was transfigured,” the prayer of thanks might be: “Thank you God, for showing us your glory on that special day.” Conclude with the prayer, said together, in **Responding in Faith**. 15 min.

Evaluating/Extending Your Lesson

Since the lesson was about two of the Major Feasts of our church, it is important to judge how much of the information about these events was taken in by the students. Can they retell the stories?

Can they explain the significance of each event?

If not, you might want to reinforce the stories of these holy days in other ways by having students

- create a song about them to a familiar tune
- do a sorting exercise by putting statements about each event under the correct title
- write the main details on blocks and stack them up to tell the story from the top block to the bottom block.

Living In Tune With The Church The Exaltation



Key Concepts

1. The Exaltation of the Holy Cross commemorates Armenia’s celebration of the recapturing of the cross from captivity in Muslim-held Jerusalem.
2. Armenians hold the cross in very high regard as it represents the resurrection, the foundation of our faith.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Write their thoughts about the cross in a prayer activity.
2. Read a “newspaper” account of the exaltation of the cross.
3. Discuss what it means to “take up Jesus’ cross and follow him.”
4. Learn the refrain from the Antasdan blessing “Amen. Alleluya.”
5. Make a cross with sticks and basil.
6. Reenact an Antasdan blessing.

Materials Needed

For procedure #7:

A cross for each student made from two tongue depressors glued together (do this part at home to allow glue to dry properly).

Two crosses (about 12” tall, can be made of two paint stirring sticks cut to the correct size and tied or glued together to form a cross) decorate them with some basil and flowers (for the “priest” and for the processional

cross the “deacon” carries)

Fresh basil

A tray of basil leaves (for the priest’s cross which will lie on top)

Some small, fresh flowers (baby’s breath) or some silk flowers

A card with these words written on it: *Bless the world and make it holy by the sign of this cross*

A *poorvar* or censer (can be made with a cup and yarn with some small jingle bells attached)

2 candle tapers with yellow tissue attached at one end to simulate flame

Note to the Teacher

You can reenact the blessing in a simplified manner as indicated in procedure #7 or you might invite a deacon to explain the rite to the children and reenact it with them.

Next week, you might need some extra space to play a “Badarak Relay Race.” Plan accordingly.

Procedure

1. For the opening prayer in **From Our Hearts to God**, say: “As you can see there is a blank in our opening prayer today. Each of you will get a chance to say the prayer and fill in the blank with your thoughts about the cross. For example, you might want to say, Jesus, your cross is always showing me how much you love me. Amen. Or you might want to say, Jesus, your cross is beautiful. Amen. Or you might want to say, Jesus, your cross is what I wear to show everyone I believe in you. Amen. Take a minute to think about what the cross means to you. Write your thoughts on the line and when it is your turn to pray, read your prayer.” 5 min.
2. Say: “At the time of the battle for the Holy Cross there were no newspapers, but if there were, this is what the paper might say.” Have the students take turns reading the article in **My World** aloud. Instruct them to be dramatic and excited in their reading! Conclude: “The Armenian people did their share to win back the Holy Cross. They participated in the battle alongside Christian soldiers from other Christian nations. Working together, these Christian nations regained the cross which is so precious to all of us.”
3. Ask students to read the verse in **God’s Guiding Words** aloud. Discuss the question. For a 4th grader,

answers might include: being faithful, doing what’s right, doing what we think Jesus would do, doing what might seem difficult at first (a cross is heavy, wooden, hard to hold – children can picture soldiers holding up the cross as they carried it through Armenia) but becomes easier and even joyful after a while (i.e. helping a family member, being kind to another student who has been mean). 15 min.

4. Read or teach the first two paragraphs of **Getting Closer to God** and ask for other places children might see a cross (at a cemetery, on signs, bumper stickers). Then read the directions for the next part and allow a few minutes for the students to number. Look over what they have done and ask each student to read their #1. 5 min.
5. Read **Our Armenian Way**. Teach or have your volunteer teach “Amen. Alleluya,” the refrain of the faithful after each of the three times the priest asks God’s blessing on the basil. 10 min.
6. Read **Taking a Closer Look** and have each student take a cross, criss-cross the twine around the center hub and knot it, then decorate it with basil and flowers (by sticking a few sprigs into the twine). 10 min.
7. Read through **Time to Celebrate** and have the class decide who will be the priest, deacon, censer and altar servers. Give the student who is the priest the card with the words *Bless the world and make it holy by the sign of this cross* on it. Place the large cross on the tray of basil and have the two altar servers carry it. At each corner the priest will stop, take up the cross, make the sign of the cross with it, and then place it back on the tray as they move to the next corner.

Do this symbolic, simplified version of an Antasdan service with the students. Be sure to go in diagonally opposite corners for the first two blessings, then rotate and do the last two blessings in diagonally opposite corners. The procession begins with a deacon holding the large cross (tapori khach), then the two altar servers holding the tray, then the priest, and then the deacon with the poorvar.
8. Read **Responding in Faith** together before dismissing the class. 15 min.

Evaluating Your Lesson

At the beginning of your next class, give the students this short quiz to see how much information they retained.

Fill in the blanks. Use words from the list below.

1. In September we celebrate the _____ of the Holy Cross.
2. The _____ had taken the cross on which Jesus was crucified.
3. The _____ helped get it back.
4. The Cross is decorated with _____.
5. The service of _____ blesses the world by making the sign of the cross in four directions.

Words to use: Antasdan Exaltation Armenians
Persians basil

Extending the Lesson

Have students turn to previous lessons and come up with review questions to ask the rest of the class.

We Worship God A Sunday People (Overview)



Key Concepts

1. Worship is a central expression of faith, a special time set aside for being with God together with the people of God.
2. At Liturgy, we individual Christians become the Church.
3. Our main form of communal worship is the Divine Liturgy on Sunday.
4. This worship service brings us to union with Jesus through Holy Communion.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Read and analyze a Psalm of praise.
2. Examine and discuss the reasons for attending church.
3. Participate in a fill-in exercise on being in church.
4. Construct a paper plate outline of the parts of the Badarak.
5. Play a "Badarak Relay Race" to review key moments in the Divine Liturgy.

Materials needed

Tambourines and recorder, if possible, for reading of Psalm

Paper plates, two per student (see procedure #4)

Two Badarak books, a minute timer that rings, pencils and scrap paper (see procedure #6)

Procedure

1. Read Psalm 150 in **From Our Hearts to God** together as a choral reading. After the presentation, tell students that the book of Psalms is a collection of the many poem-like prayers that were written for worship in Old Testament times. Many of them were written by King David himself and many were written by others of the time. They were often put to music or chanted, sometimes to the accompaniment of instruments. Discuss questions in the text. 10 min.
2. Tell the class: "We're going to be spending the next 5 sessions on the Divine Liturgy, our Sunday Badarak. This will be a detailed look at what we touched on in just one lesson in Unit Two and I hope some of this will sound very familiar." Read **My World** and discuss the question. Children might say they'd rather avoid church on a nice day, but counter with these observations: 1. The nice day will still be there after church. 2. It's an exciting opportunity to become something larger than themselves, something that unites them into one body (and the Church is called "the body of Christ"). 3. Church and Holy Communion really do give extra strength to our faith and can give a special kind of peace to us for the rest of the week. Conclude with **God's Guiding Words** to affirm God's special presence when we get together for *his* sake. 5 min.
3. Segue with: "Let's continue to consider why we go to church and what we do there." Read **Getting Closer to God** and have students fill in the blanks. (Answers for the scrambled words are WORSHIP, PRAY, SING, COMMUNION). Discuss answers in the sentence completion; accept all answers. The first might include sing, pray for the leaders of the church and for all people, receive communion, remember the saints, think about how I can be a better person during confession, etc. The last: Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday which made it the day we gather to remember him. 10 min.