

# RAISING SAINTS

CHILDREN + FAMILY MINISTRY // WEEKLY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS + PARENTS

## SAINTS HRIPSIME AND GAYANE, AND THEIR COMPANIONS

The Sunday after Pentecost is dedicated to the remembrance of the Prophet Elijah. Eastertide has culminated with Pentecost inaugurating the life of the Church to carry out Jesus Christ's commandment to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:19-20)

This Sunday is immediately followed on Monday by the remembrance of St. Hripsime and her companions and on Tuesday by the remembrance of St. Gayane and her companions. They are exemplars of hearing Christ's command to go and make disciples of all the nations.

These two women of noble lineage lived in Rome and received the light of Christ through the disciples of St. Paul. According to tradition, St. Paul had established a convent for women who dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ. In mid-third century, Gayane was entrusted with the care of the community of women who lived there. Among them was a young woman of Roman royalty, named Hripsime who left the comfort and luxury of the palace and joined the community of Christian women. The values and morals of Roman society troubled her greatly. She found her peace within this Christian community. Hripsime was renowned not only by her unblemished spiritual life, but also with her physical beauty.

Early in the fourth century Diocletian began to persecute Christians. The convent was under great danger. As a result, Gayane planned to leave Rome with about seventy of the maidens in her community and two priests. Their journey was an arduous one from city to city. They first visited Egypt and Jerusalem. Having fulfilled their pilgrimage in Jerusalem they continued their journey towards Armenia. They had heard that there was a sizable Christian community there and a convent dedicated to the Holy Mother of God called Hokyatz Vank (Convent of Souls.) This is where St. Bartholomew had brought an icon of the Virgin Mary.

The community of Hokyatz Vank welcomed them and together they continued their work of evangelizing pagan Armenian communities. The presence of Gayane and Hripsime and their companions had already become known since they had not missed any chance to evangelize the local communities. Hripsime and her companions continued their journey while preaching the Good News and converting many, even pagan priests. Finally, following Diocletian's example, King Tirdat had also begun to persecute Christians. The persecution became very obvious so they found refuge on Mt. Varak and lived in dugouts. This is where Hripsime buried the relic of the cross which she had been wearing around her neck to protect it from desecration.

Gayane and Hripsime were headed with their companions to Vagharshabed to visit Khor Virab,

where St. Gregory was imprisoned. They were pursued and found by the King's militia and Hripsime was taken to the palace. King Tirdat employed all methods to entice Hripsime to marry him. Hripsime could not be convinced and with courage stemming from her devotion and reliance on Jesus Christ, she refused the king. Soon she was arrested by the king's executioners. First, they cut her tongue which had dared to refuse the king. Then they burned her. Thirty-three of her sister companions rushed to the site to bury her remains, but they too were killed.

King Tirdat full of vengeance had Gayane arrested, had her tongue cut for having advised and supported Hripsime. Then she and three of her friends were taken outside the city gates, tortured and beheaded.

Thirty-seven martyrs in all, Hripsimeh, Gayaneh and their thirty-three companions, heroines of the faith, have much to speak to us about living a Christ centered life. The lures of a secular life defined by corruption, deception, oppression, materialism and infidelity, are challenges which we are all faced with daily in many ways. We can resist and refuse these only by remaining faithful to Jesus Christ's example. For their virtuous example to us, we turn to them in prayer:

Saints Hripsime, Gayane, and Companions,  
pray for us.

YN. SIRARPI AIVAZIAN



[www.stjohnarmenianchurch.org](http://www.stjohnarmenianchurch.org)