

Wisdom is learning to live our lives according to God's commandments in a world which often makes things very foggy and gray when we might wish for black and white answers. For example, Jesus taught us to "love one another even as he loved us" (John 13:34). While this teaching is clear, exactly how we apply this to life in every situation is far from clear. How can 12 year olds live this out while playing (and fighting) at a school playground? How can adults who seriously disagree about parish finances live this out? How can one relate this teaching to the Oklahoma City federal building bombers? It is in Christian community that we must learn to live out the very teachings we learn from Christ. Christian education means practicing what Christ teaches, first in community, but also in the world.

The goal of Christian education is not merely the offering of facts to remember. Christian education teaches us each to be a disciple of Christ and to know God. Ultimately the desire is not to have a few who powerfully control the facts of Christianity but to have a living community in which every one actively is seeking how to live according to the teachings of the Master. "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

The best teachers in Orthodox Christianity are those who are also best disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are actively engaged in understanding the Gospel teachings and striving to live by them are the ones who are the true teachers of the faith. Orthodox Christian theology requires us to move far beyond seeing the educator as one who passes along a few facts to some students. The teacher must help the students learn the lessons of Christ by applying them to daily living.

- Fr. Ted Bobosh
 Excerpted from OCEC News

CELEBRATING THE TRANSFIGURATION

Every summer while our Sunday Schools are closed and many of our parishioners dispersed, the Armenian Church celebrates two major feasts: the Transfiguration of Christ (July) and the Assumption of Mary (August). You might choose to remember the Transfiguration at a fall Assembly with the following prayer celebration.

Select a class or classes to make the presentation. Have them prepare the following:

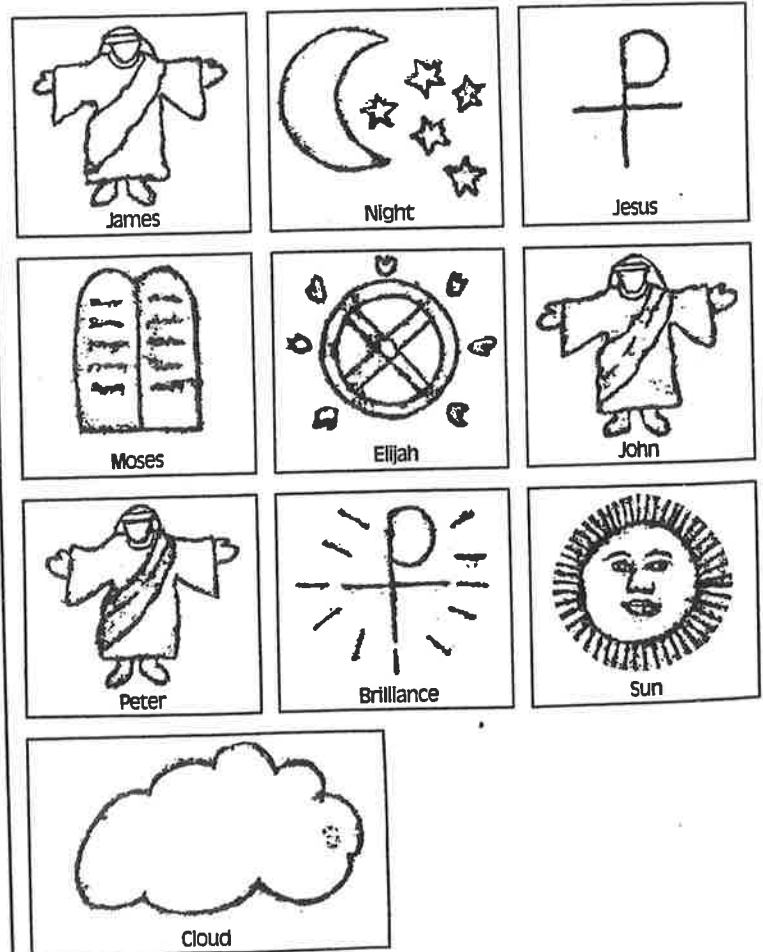
Make construction-paper signs like those below. Staple or tape each sign to a stick. Have the participants use the cloud pattern to make small, white construction-paper clouds to wear during the celebration.

Choose a leader, a narrator, and a person to be the voice of God. Choose participants to carry the signs and explain what they are to do during the telling of the story. Choose participants to provide music (tambourines or other similar instruments) and sound (drums or hand clapping).

On the Assembly day (the Assembly director can do the first three steps or a different person can do each one):

1. Introduce the Feast Day with the background reflection on page 7. Add to it from other DRE publications in your reference library such as *Living the Armenian Church Year* and *Saints and Feasts*.
2. Read the story of the Transfiguration in Mark 9:2-8 or Matthew 17:1-8.

Signs



A Background Reflection

On July 23, we celebrated the feast of the Transfiguration. "Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. He was transfigured before their very eyes" (Matthew 17:1-2).

Who is this Jesus of Nazareth? For centuries people have asked this question. The Transfiguration is part of the answer. To bring encouragement and to offer hope, Jesus manifested himself in a way that elicited wonder. In awe and amazement we are able to see more deeply and understand more profoundly. In wonder, we do not think, organize, or solve a problem; we are simply overcome. Like the apostles we too can respond in awe when we hear these words: "This is my Son on whom my favor rests" (Matthew 15:5).

The transfiguration took place six days after Jesus had laid down the conditions of discipleship. "If you wish to come after me," he said, "you must deny your very self, take up your cross, and begin to follow my footsteps" (Matthew 16:24).

The transfiguration experience, then, offered the apostles a glimpse into the life of the Son of Man in his eternal glory. According to an ancient tradition, the mystery of the transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor. In Scripture, mountains have always been used to show the presence of God. Alone on a hill or mountain, in quiet and solitude, with the beauty of the earth before us, it is easier to open oneself to the presence of God.

God is slowly revealing himself to us through his Son and through his Spirit. In the Transfiguration we experience this presence and rejoice that we are called to be part of Jesus' glory.

When Christ is revealed
we shall be like him, for we shall
see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

3. For younger children, offer the following brief message:

Materials needed: Two fine linen napkins from the same set, one dirty and crumpled, the other clean and neatly pressed.

In this reading, we heard how three disciples saw Jesus in a way they had never seen Him before. They had been with Jesus on the fishing boat. They were with Him when He ate, slept, traveled, and talked to people. They had seen Jesus perform miracles, but He still appeared to be an ordinary man. He may have had power that no

other man had, but it didn't show when you looked at Him.

On this mountaintop they saw Jesus in a splendor they had never dreamed of. His face shone like the sun. Even His garments became radiantly white. A short time later Jesus again appeared to them as He always had—a regular man. They must have wondered which was the real Jesus.

Maybe we can understand this by looking at these two pieces of cloth. See this one. It is a beautiful napkin. You could put it on the table for the most fancy dinner party you ever had. It is clean and beautiful.

But look at this old rag. It is a mess. You might either keep it with the cleaning supplies or into the garbage.

But wait! Take a closer look at it. This old rag is exactly the same cloth as this fine napkin. They come from the same set. One is ready for use. The other has been used. Which one is the real napkin? Both of them are. The one ready to be used will be messed up. The one that is messed up will be cleaned and ironed.

Which is the real Jesus? The Jesus whom the disciples knew in their everyday life was the real Jesus—the Jesus who was a man in the same way that they were men. But the Jesus whom they saw transfigured on the mountain was also the real Jesus—the Son of God, who became a man and yet remained God. He was the Savior, who did not always show His rightful glory as the Son of God but who nevertheless had it all the time.

Christ also comes to us in everyday, simple, sometimes even dull ways: yet in each coming there is a glorious, exciting, beyond-our-understanding event. In ordinary water and simple words written and spoken in our own language, he comes in baptism. Yet in that simple act He gives us the washing of a new birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In a book, His words come printed in ordinary ink on the same paper as any other book: yet it brings a message of God's eternal love for you in Christ. In a Sunday School class where you squirm and daydream like in any other class, something special occurs; for there you find that you are a child of God, created by Him, redeemed by Him, and loved by Him with a love that is far beyond our understanding.

Sometimes we get tired of the commonplace things in our religion. Sometimes we wonder if the great moments are really true or if we imagined them. But see them together. Only God can make such great news so simple that even we can understand it.

4. Practice singing "Vor i Ierinnun," the Feast Day hymn (see the DRE's *A Treasury of Armenian Chants*).

Gather the participants, wearing their clouds and holding their signs or instruments, at one side of the room. Present the Prayer Celebration:

PRAYER CELEBRATION

The Story

Leader: Let us celebrate the glory of Christ. He is the Son of God! In wonder and awe, we remember his presence in our lives as we tell the story of the Transfiguration.

Narrator: The sun is setting. A long day has come to an end. *(Sun moves slowly in a semi-circle across the room and disappears.)*

Night has come. *(Night stands to one side of the acting area.)*

Jesus walks with his friends Peter, James, and John. He leads them up a high mountain. *(All four walk in place as if ascending a mountain. Drums play.)*

While praying, *(Jesus and the apostles kneel.)*

Jesus changes in appearance. His clothes become dazzlingly white. *(Brilliance stands in front of Jesus. Tambourines play.)*

Suddenly, two men appear and begin talking with Jesus. *(Elijah and Moses stand on either side of Brilliance.)*

One is Elijah, the other Moses. *(Tambourines play.)*

Peter exclaims, "Lord, how wonderful that we are here. With your permission, we will set up three tents—one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah."

Suddenly a bright cloud overshadows them. *(Clouds appears. Sun stands in front of Night. Tambourines play.)*

Out of the cloud comes a voice:

Voice: This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him. *(Tambourines play.)*

Narrator: When they hear this, Peter, James, and John fall to the ground, overcome with fear and awe. *(Peter, James, and John fall. Cloud and Sun disappear.)*



THE TRANSFIGURATION

(cont'd on page 13)