

**Be the Church. Come and celebrate!**

Two of the five major church feast days fall in the summer (parents, ask your children for the names of the other three!). Try to attend one or both this year. Take communion as a family. Use this sheet to better understand the day.

**July 30—The Feast of the Transfiguration (*Vartavar*)**

- One of the five major feasts days of the Armenian Church.
- Jesus took his three closest disciples, Peter, James and John, up Mt. Tabor with him.
- There he was “transfigured,” appearing radiant, his clothes became “dazzling white.”
- The prophet Elijah and the patriarch Moses appear at his side.
- A voice from heaven exclaims “This is my beloved Son.”
- The story can be read in the synoptic Gospels: *Mark 9:2-10; Matthew 17:1-9; Luke 9:28-36.*
- This is a “variable” feast that can fall anytime between June 28 and August 1.
- Some customs of an ancient Armenian pagan festival for the goddess Asdghig are still associated with this feast, such as decorating the church with roses or flowers (hence the popular name *Vartavar*) and spraying one another with water.

**August 13—The Feast of the Assumption (*Asdvadzadzin*)**

- This is the oldest of feasts associated with St. Mary.
- The Armenian Church celebrates this feast on the Sunday nearest August 15.
- It commemorates the taking up into heaven (“assumption”) of the Holy Mother at her death.
- Tradition relates that St. Mary lived another 15 years after our Lord’s crucifixion.

St. Bartholomew, the only apostle absent from Jerusalem when St. Mary died, asked to visit her tomb upon his return a short while after she was buried. When the tomb was unsealed, her body was gone and angels were heard singing for three days and three nights.

- The blessing of grapes is associated with this feast day.
- Grapes are the “first fruit” of the harvest, just as St. Mary was the first true apostle and witness of the new covenant as the “mother of God” (Jesus) or *Asdvadzadzin*. Grapes are also made into the wine of holy communion.

