

The Feast of Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew

The Enlighteners of Armenia



When Jesus started teaching people about God, he chose special people to learn from him. These special students would then go to many other places to spread Jesus' message. One of these special people was Philip. When Philip realized Jesus was a great teacher, he went to a friend of his called Bartholomew to tell him about Jesus. This is what the Bible says about how

Jesus and Bartholomew met:

"The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Philip found Nathaniel (Bartholomew) and said to him, 'We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' Nathaniel said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said, 'Come and see.'

"Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and said of him, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' Nathaniel said to him, 'How do

you know me?' Jesus answered him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'

"Nathaniel answered him, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'

"Jesus answered him, 'Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' "

John 1:43-51

Saint Thaddeus and Saint Bartholomew were with Jesus throughout his ministry, after Jesus' arrest and trial, his crucifixion and burial. They witnessed his resurrection and met with Jesus many times before he ascended to heaven. While Jesus was with them he taught them to teach others the Good News. Jesus told them to tell others that God loved them and gave them Jesus as a gift of love. And Jesus told us the Good News that we do not have to be afraid of death any more. He told us that if we believe in Jesus and follow his teachings, we will begin a new life with God after we die.



After the Ascension when Jesus went up to heaven, the disciples waited as he told them until the Holy Spirit came to them. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did come and they understood everything that had happened and everything Jesus said. They all went to different places to spread the Good News.

Saint Thaddeus traveled to Armenia first. He preached to many people including the king's daughter. Saint Thaddeus was killed by the king because the king was afraid that Thaddeus would get his false pagan gods angry.

Not long after that, Saint Bartholomew came to Armenia. He taught just as Thaddeus had. He also was killed by the king.

Both apostles died, but not before they had started the Church in Armenia. Eventually Armenia became a Christian country because of the work of Thaddeus and Bartholomew.



I Can Do It!

We all know lots of things about ourselves. We know what we can do well. Look at the sentences below and complete them to make a list of what you can do!

1. I'm very, very good at _____
2. Something I can teach others because I am good at it is _____
3. I was a leader once when _____
4. Something new I learned to do recently is _____
5. Something I did that I didn't think I could do at first is _____
6. I felt successful when _____
7. One day I would like to try _____
8. All by myself I learned _____
9. My parents are proud of me when _____
10. What I like best about church is _____

FROM JERUSALEM TO ARMENIA

1. Color the bodies of water blue.
2. Color Armenia green.
3. Draw a dotted line from Jerusalem to Armenia to show the route you think Thaddeus might have taken.
4. Draw a straight line indicating Bartholomew's route.
5. Notice how far Jerusalem is from Armenia. Thaddeus and Bartholomew must have been very eager to spread God's word!



flashlight) will help you see?" (Light the flashlight.) "When we turn it on in a dark room, what will happen? Yes, it will light up the room, it will shine, it will glow. Our Lord is like a flashlight in this dark world of ours. He lights up and shows us where everything is and which way we can go. Have you ever seen a picture of Jesus or a saint with a glow around him or a halo? Why do you think artists have painted a light or bright shining halo around Jesus? The light represents Jesus' power and glory.

"Today we are going to learn a song about a time when Jesus appeared to shine brightly. His appearance changed. We say his body was transfigured and we have a holiday to help us remember this time. The holiday is called Transfiguration. We call it by a common name in Armenian, Vartavar." (Write both words on board.) "Open your texts and we will read through the song before we sing it."

After reading together, ask these questions: Who was with Jesus when he went up the mountain? Who appeared with Jesus? How did Jesus' body change? Who spoke from the cloud? What did the voice say? Do you remember another time a voice spoke from above? (If they cannot recall the baptism, tell them about it. (Mt. 3:13-17) (10 min.)

3. Lead the children in singing the song. If you yourself cannot do this, ask a choir member or someone in your parish who can lead children in singing to help you. If you do not have a piano available, you might want to have the melody recorded. Sing the song several times, but with a different purpose each time so the repetition will not be tedious. Examples: All sing, half the children sing, then the other half, sing quietly, sing loudly, sing antiphonally (one side sing the first half of a verse then the other side sing the second half), clap and sing, etc. (10 min.)

4. Have the children color, cut, and paste together their pictures of Jesus in their student activity packets. Next have the children cut two large ovals of waxed paper about one inch larger all around their pictures. Placing their pictures between the wax paper ovals, iron the combination between sheets of newspaper. The crayon color will melt slightly. Now punch a hole in the top and tie a string. These can be taken home and hung in their bedroom windows. With the light from outside shining on and through their mobile, it will present the idea of the glorification. (20 min.)

5. Text story (Taking Vartavar Too Far). Say: "Now we're going to read a story about how two boys celebrated Vartavar." (Read to them or have them take turns.) "And we'll find out why I have a bowl of water on my desk."

Questions: Why did the brothers throw water on each other? Have any of you ever celebrated Vartavar by sprinkling water?

"Jesus was revealed as God's Son in this story.

Can anyone find where it tells about that? Let's sing the song again.

Transfiguration is one of the five major holy days of the Armenian Church. One of the reasons why it is one of the five major feasts is because it is a time when Jesus was revealed as God's Son.

"Let's end our class with our Transfiguration song instead of a prayer. You may want to teach the song to your family at home this week."

Homework: Have the children memorize John 3:16 — "For God so loved the world that he gave his Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life." Draw and color a picture of how you think Jesus looked when he was transfigured. Write a letter to an imaginary friend and tell your friend about the Transfiguration. (10 min.)

Vocabulary

Transfiguration

Vartavar

Pagan

Elijah

Glorified

Session 3—The Feast of Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew

Key Concepts

1. Jesus chose Thaddeus and Bartholomew to be his special disciples and later to be apostles.
2. Thaddeus and Bartholomew brought Christianity to Armenia.
3. We call Thaddeus and Bartholomew Enlighteners because they brought the light of the knowledge of Jesus to us.

Objectives

Students will

1. Read and answer questions about Thaddeus and Bartholomew.
2. Discuss the meaning of the term Enlightener.
3. Fill in the activity sheet, "I Can Do It!"
4. Locate and fill in items on a map of the travels of Thaddeus and Bartholomew.
5. Color pictures of the saints.

Background for Teacher

Although not much is said in the Bible about the disciples Thaddeus and Bartholomew, they were among the original twelve chosen by Jesus for special work. The story today relates their being selected and tells of their mission and eventual death in

Armenia. (In Unit V, Special People of the Church, Session 3, St. Santookht, the children will learn more about the apostles in Armenia.)

“Enlighteners” refers to those who brought the light of the knowledge of Jesus to others. Jesus is the primary enlightener. He is often called the *light of the world*. Thaddeus and Bartholomew are called Enlighteners in our church. The term is most commonly used with Saint Gregory.

The objective of the lesson is not to dwell on the scanty information we have about Thaddeus and Bartholomew, but to teach that they are primarily responsible for establishing the Church in Armenia.

Note: The Hebrew name Bartholomew is Nathaniel in Greek.

Resources: *Saints for Children from the Tradition of the Armenian Church* by Kalemkerian and Hovsepian; Bible Dictionary; Bible.

Materials Needed

- 2 candles
- A name card for “Thaddeus” and one for “Bartholomew”
- Crayons
- Bible

Procedure

Light the two candles before the children arrive and place them on the teacher’s desk. They represent Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Have the two name cards ready but not shown.

1. As children enter, greet them and check their homework (they should recite John 3:16).

(When all are settled, draw attention to the candles and ask what they are used for.) Say: “Jesus is also called the light of the world. Let me read some references to light in the Bible (1 John 1:5-7): ‘Now the message that we have heard from his Son and announced is this: God is light, and there is no darkness at all in him . . . If we live in the light, just as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another.’

“And in St. Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus calls his followers the light (Matthew 5:14): ‘You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.’

“Darkness is the symbol of sin; by contrast, light is the symbol of holiness and purity.

“These two candles represent two men who were among Jesus’ special friends. They are Thaddeus and Bartholomew.” (Place name cards by candles.) “Today’s lesson is about them and what they did to bring

the light, Jesus, to Armenia. It is because of them that Armenia became a Christian country.”(10 min.)

2. Read the story by turns and stop the reading to insert information:

After “*come and see*”: Bartholomew was a very educated person. He had studied the Scriptures—holy writings—and knew a lot about God. He also knew that God was going to send a Messiah, which means savior, to help his people. Bartholomew even knew that this special savior would come from Bethlehem because the Scriptures said he would. When Philip asked Bartholomew to come to hear and see Jesus of Nazareth, Bartholomew said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” In other words, he was saying that Jesus couldn’t be the Messiah if he came from Nazareth. Bartholomew did not know that Jesus had grown up with Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem!

After “*I saw you,*” add: Bartholomew was really amazed and knew that this Jesus was very special. He felt that Jesus already knew him even though they had never met. Certainly Jesus knew Bartholomew was an honest man who didn’t play tricks on people. Jesus had said Bartholomew was a man in whom there was no guile. Bartholomew calls Jesus Rabbi in the next part of the story. Rabbi means teacher. Continue reading to the end (page 43).

Questions for discussion: Why did Thaddeus and Bartholomew travel to Armenia? What happened to them? Did the new Christians stop believing in Jesus because Thaddeus and Bartholomew were killed?

Say: “By the way, Bartholomew is a Hebrew name. You might see the name Nathaniel in your Bibles at home. Nathaniel is the Greek name for Bartholomew, but the person is the same.” (15 min.)

3. Direct children to do the “I Can Do It!” activity and discuss answers.

Say to the children: Thaddeus and Bartholomew had no special talents or abilities other than those lots of people had. But Jesus chose them to do special work and he helped them do it. He taught them and the Holy Spirit came to be with them to guide them. Jesus can teach us as well and the Holy Spirit can live in us to guide us to do special work. All we have to do is ask him to help us. (10 min.)

4. Map Activity: “Let’s look at our map (in text) and follow the directions.” (Some discussion of areas and places may take place.) “Look at how far away Jerusalem is from Mt. Ararat. That was a long way to travel in those days. The apostles probably walked all the way. As they went from town to town, they would teach the people there about Jesus. They started churches all along their way.” (15 min.)

5. Enlighteners Coloring Activity. Say: “Who can tell me what an Enlightener is?” (Distribute appropriate student activity packet sheets.) “These two pictures are Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Write their names

under their pictures. Color the pictures and then color a yellow glow around them. This will represent their ability to enlighten people by telling them about Jesus.” (10 min.)

Homework: Say: “When you are at home this week, show your parents the picture you colored and explain that they are Enlighteners. Tell them the story of Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Have your mom or dad sign your picture when you finish telling them the story. Don’t forget, you can read the story in your textbook to refresh your memory. *Extra credit homework:* Memorize Matthew 5:14.

Closing prayer: Lord, help us be enlighteners also. Help us tell others about you. Amen.

Extending the Lesson

Make up a song about Thaddeus and Bartholomew to a familiar melody.

Have each child make a paper candle and write his/her name on it. Materials: white paper, red paper, tape or glue. Use red paper for flames.

Vocabulary

Thaddeus
Bartholomew
Nathaniel
rabbi
Ascension
Hampartzoom
pagan
Mt. Ararat

Session 4—Vartanantz

Key Concepts

1. We celebrate Vartanantz Day to commemorate the Battle of Avarayr.
2. The Armenians of that time felt they were called to respond to God’s gift of love.
3. We reaffirm that commitment each time we celebrate Vartanantz Day.

Objectives

Students will

1. Sing Vartanantz hymn.
2. Read the story of Vartanantz and the Battle of Avarayr and make up a stick-puppet play of the story demonstrating their knowledge of them.
3. Play a Tic Tac Toe type game to reinforce memory of story characters.
4. Tell of times they took a stand for their religion (a real or imaginary incident).
5. Re-create the Vartanantz story at home with their parents and their siblings, using the stick-puppets to recall today’s lesson.

Background for Teacher

Many resources are available about Vartanantz Day.

Briefly, this lesson stresses the Feast of Vartanantz as a commemoration of the efforts of Armenians at that time to follow their religion.

In most parishes, Divine Liturgy is celebrated on Vartanantz Day and the children should be encouraged to attend. Keep this in mind if you are not using this lesson around the time of Vartanantz Day.

Materials Needed

- Ice cream bar sticks or pencils
- Tape
- *Optional:* Background pictures for the stick-puppet play
- Crayons
- Large sheets of paper
- *Optional:* Map of Armenia showing Avarayr
- For introductory interest: set of stick-puppets already made and propped up in clay
- Scissors
- Paste

Procedure:

Getting the room ready: If you have a map available, display it. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the map. You should have prepared a set of stick-puppets (perhaps an older grade child can do it for you as an assignment), and have them set up by pushing the sticks into balls of clay. You may wish to place different characters at various children’s desks.

1. As the children enter, collect and briefly check homework. Tell children they may look at the maps and characters until class is ready to begin.

Open with Romans 8:37-39 — “In all . . . things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus Our Lord.”

Say: “What I have just read to you plays a part in the story we are going to read today. Some of you may have already guessed what that story is. Before we look at it, have you ever felt what I just read? Have you ever felt so strongly about something that you would not change? Nothing would make you change? Do you feel that way about being a Christian? The heroes in today’s story felt that strongly about staying loyal to their religion, Christianity. Let’s open our books to page 45 and read the story together.” (10 min.)

2. You may want to present the vocabulary before the reading by putting the words on the board and explaining them to the children. This is especially helpful if you have some poor readers.

Have the children read the story by turns.

Questions: Why did the Armenians fight the Per-