

The Church Celebrates

CHRISTMAS

UNIT

4

LESSON
TWO

From Our Hearts to God

We thank you, God our Father, for the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, as a person just like us so we might know God as a friend. Amen.

MY WORLD

Look at the pictures on this page. What is being celebrated?
Check all appropriate answers.

Birth of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ _____

The Resurrection _____

Visit and Adoration of the Wise Men from the East _____

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross carried through Armenia _____

Baptism of Christ by John _____

All that we celebrate on January 6th, Armenian Christmas _____

The Assumption of St. Mary into Heaven _____

The Transfiguration – when Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah on Mt. Tabor _____

The Revelation of Jesus as the Son of God _____

The reason we do the service of the Blessing of Water on January 6th _____



GOD'S GUIDING WORDS

With all my heart I praise the Lord, and I am glad because of God my Savior. God cares for me, his humble servant... He always shows mercy to everyone who worships him.

Luke 1:46-50



Getting Closer to God

Five Major Feasts Challenge

You have 10 minutes to create something that would teach your classmates about one of these Armenian Church **Daghavar** Events. You may work with a friend or two or you may work alone. Work fast as you only have 10 minutes!

You can

- Make a chart
- Write a song
- Put on a short play
- Draw a picture
- Create a puzzle (crossword, acrostic or other sort of puzzle)
- Write a poem
- Come up with your own idea



Taking a Closer Look

1. Birth of Our Lord Luke 2:1-22
2. Visit of the Wise Men Matthew 2:1-11
3. Baptism of Our Lord Luke 3:21-22

Our Armenian Way

On January 6th, as part of the celebration of the Revelation of Christ or Christmas, the Armenian Church conducts the service of the **Blessing of Water**. A person is chosen to be the Godfather of the Cross. A large bowl of water is brought to the altar. Holy Muron is dripped from a dove container into the water. Then the cross that the Godfather holds is put into the water. The cross represents Jesus and putting it into the water represents his baptism. Prayers are said and hymns are sung for this special celebration. The cross is brought out of the water and the Godfather holds it again. After services are completed, the people come forward and take a portion of the holy water. They kiss the cross the Godfather holds. This is part of how we celebrate Christmas in the Armenian Church.



Time to Celebrate

When is Christmas?

The Early Church (Christianity in the very beginning) decided that the birth of Christ should be celebrated on January 6th. The actual date of Jesus' birth was not known, but the Church wanted to commemorate and celebrate it, so a date was set. At that time there was only one Church. Later, the Church separated into Western (Roman Empire) and Eastern branches.

Almost all churches now celebrate Christmas on December 25th. This is because in the Roman Empire the pagan people celebrated the winter solstice (return of the sun) at that time. Church leaders thought it would be a good idea to replace this pagan feast with the celebration of Christmas.

The Armenian Church continues to celebrate the birth of Christ on the ancient date of January 6. In the Armenian Church we celebrate the revelation of Christ or Epiphany. It includes the **Birth of Jesus**, **Visit of the Wise Men** and the **Baptism of the Lord** when the Dove of the Holy Spirit appeared and God's voice from heaven said "This is my Son."



All holidays have special foods associated with them. In the tradition of the Armenian Church a special dessert called *anooshaboor* is made by cooking wheat, stewed fruits and nuts together. Yummy!



RESPONDING IN FAITH

Christ is the best gift of Christmas because he is always with us. We never outgrow him; instead we grow with him. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

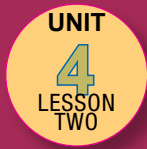
Sharing Our Faith

Our lesson today reviewed the Five Major Feast Days (*Daghavar*) of the Armenian Church as well as what we commemorate and celebrate at Armenian Christmas: the Birth of Christ, the Visit of the Wise Men, and the Baptism of the Lord. We read these stories in the Bible, learned about Christmastime blessing of the water and even had a Godfather of the Cross reenact the blessing! Class ended with a taste of the traditional Armenian Christmas pudding, *anooshaboor*

Living Our Faith

1. Having your home blessed at Christmas and Easter is a tradition of the Armenian Church. Arrange with your priest to have your home blessed.
2. Anoushaboor is a traditional Armenian Christmas food. Make it with your fourth grader this year.
3. If Armenian Christmas is on a work/school day this year, plan to take off from work and school and attend church services. Your priest will give you a letter of acknowledgement of our religious holy day for your child's school.

The Church Celebrates Christmas



Key Concepts

1. The Armenian Church has recognized five feasts as “Major” feasts (*daghavar* or tabernacle); these express important truths about our faith.
2. Christmas celebrates the birth and baptism of Jesus and other related events as his revelation to us as God.
3. The date of Jesus’ birth is unknown; traditions in the Western Church and Eastern Church diverged, creating different dates for Christmas.
4. There are distinct Armenian pious traditions during the Christmas season.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review the names and meanings of the Five Major Feast Days.
2. Create their own presentation of one of the feasts.
3. Read the Scripture story of Jesus’ birth and baptism.
4. Reenact the blessing of water.
5. Read about the history of the dating of Christmas.
6. Celebrate with Armenian Christmas pudding.

Materials Needed

Three Bibles with bookmarkers for the readings in the **Taking a Closer Look** section (see proc. #1)

Pencils, markers, paper, some items for costumes such as scarves, plastic grapes, crosses of various sorts, fresh basil and some fresh flowers, aluminum foil, a flashlight or spotlight

A big bowl (preferably clear plastic), a large cross and a towel to hold the cross; have this on display to intrigue students
Anushaboor – enough for each student to have a small portion (ask a parent to make it for the class)

Note to the Teacher

Next week you will need 16 balloons with inserts in them. (See next week’s lesson.) Purchase the balloons and insert the pictures (tightly rolled up) but ask a few parents to volunteer to come to next week’s class (early) and inflate them to be ready for the activity.

Procedure

1. When the students arrive, assign **God’s Guiding Words** to a student to prepare to read at the appropriate time. Also assign the **Taking a Closer Look** Bible readings to three different students. Give each a Bible with a bookmark in it at the right place. Put the book, chapter and verses on the bookmark. While the students are settling in, the readers can go over the reading so they are prepared to read.
2. Begin class by reading **From Our Hearts to God** together.
3. Ask the students to look at the pictures in **My World** and check the appropriate answers. After a few minutes, review together. (All but 4th, 7th, and 8th lines appropriately describe illustrations.) 15 min.
4. Have the student you chose read **God’s Guiding Words** to the class. Tell the class that Mary said this when the angel Gabriel told her she was going to have God’s son. The passage is called Mary’s Song of Praise. Ask the students to think about what they would say to God if God gave them a special task. (Don’t ask them to verbalize, just think about it.)
5. **Getting Closer to God** allows for a wide range of student creativity. Read the instructions to them, decide on how students will work (singly, pairs, groups, or the whole class together) and then get to work. (Have the materials listed in the **Materials Needed** section ready.) If you have a ringing minute timer, set it for 10 minutes. When the allotted time is up ask the students to make their presentations. 30 min.
6. Say to the class: Let’s listen to the Bible passages about the birth and baptism of Jesus. Have your chosen readers read each passage in **Taking a Closer Look**. 5 min.
7. Read **Our Armenian Way** to the class. Bring forth your bowl of water and large cross. Ask for a volunteer to be the *godfather* of the cross (at the moment, church tradition requires it to be a male) then, in the role of the priest, dip the cross into the water (holding it with the small towel) and then hand it to the godfather. Explain that in the actual blessing service, everyone would come forward at the end and cross themselves and kiss the cross before leaving church. “As our godfather holds out

the cross, let's just bow our heads and sign ourselves with the cross."

8. Read or teach **Time to Celebrate**. Distribute portions of the *anooshaboor*; of course, if anyone is reluctant, don't force it. Tell children that the main ingredients of this traditional Armenian Christmas pudding are apricots, raisins, nuts, and wheat.
9. Conclude class with **Responding in Faith**, read aloud together. 10 min.

Evaluating Your Lesson

What went well? Why?

What did not go well? How can it be changed for next year?

Extending the Lesson

If your church has stained glass pictures or icons of any of the Five Major Feast Days, take the students into church to see them. You might want to arrange with their parents that you will bring the students to church after services for them to look at the windows or icons and be dismissed to their parents from church.

The Church Celebrates Easter



Key Concepts

1. Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, the foundational event of our faith.
2. Easter is the most important holy day of the church calendar.
3. The Easter cycle encompasses Poon Paregentan to Pentecost all of which emphasize the importance and meaning of Christ.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Conduct a self-review of last week's lesson.
2. Explore the concepts of Jesus as cornerstone and tree of life.
3. Review the events and lessons of Great Lent, Holy Week, Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost.
4. Draw an Armenian cross.
5. Participate in an activity to review and order the events commemorated in the Easter Cycle.

Materials Needed

A large rock

A branch with leaf or flower buds on it

Drawing paper and crayons or markers

Sixteen inflated balloons, into which each Bible verse from the sheet at the back of this manual has been inserted.

Procedure

1. Pray **From Our Hearts to God**. Then ask students to do the activity in **My World**. Review questions and throw in a few of your own!
2. Read **God's Guiding Words** together. Ask students to underline the words that help us understand why Jesus Christ died for us (*Christ did this to bring you to God*). 10 min.
3. Bring out the large rock and ask the students: "Why do people build with rocks?" (They are strong, they last a long time, they don't require maintenance, they are not expensive, they are easy to get, etc. - accept all reasonable answers.) Read **Getting Closer to God**. After the mention of the word "cornerstone" in the second sentence, ask students to define the word. After some guesses, proceed with the reading which provides a definition. Then have them write in their names and names of loved ones and people they know in the church. 10 min.
4. Read or "teach" the first paragraph under **Our Armenian Way** to the students then have them take turns reading each bulleted text. You can have students come to the front and read; feel free to discuss and ask questions periodically. If you have time, or would like to, turn to the actual Scripture story. Ask if any of your students have participated in Holy Week services such as the Washing of the Feet (*Vodunluva*). If some have, let them tell about the experience. 10 min.
5. Bring out the branch with buds on it. Ask the students: "What happens to these buds in the spring?" (They open up, they become flowers or leaves, they grow.) Say: "Remember when God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden he wanted to prevent them from eating from the Tree of Life because that would give them everlasting life; God did not think people were worthy of this yet. But now Jesus has made it possible after our death to have everlasting life with God in heaven. So Jesus