

Unit One: A Community Over Time

Lesson 7

The Sacraments



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyñ Surpo, Amen.

Lord, you who once called us to the holiness and the enlightenment of baptism, we pray you, make us worthy of your most precious grace. Help us to always put off the old garment of sins and be renewed daily into a new life in you. Fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Adapted from the prayer of baptism of the Armenian Church

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. St. Athanasius was opposed to the ideas of a priest named

- a Drtad b Pilate c Arius d Nersess

2. Khosrov Antzevatzi called the Divine Liturgy a

- a great medicine b service of beautiful hymns
c chance to read Scripture d great work of art

3. Who thought Mesrob Mashtots' plan for an Armenian alphabet was a great idea?

- a Caesar Augustus b St. Gregory the Illuminator
c Gomidas Vartabed d Catholicos Sahag

4. _____ climbed Mt. Ararat to look for Noah's Ark.

- a Catholicos Aristakes b King Drtad
c Ghevont Yeretzi d Soorp Hagop of Medzpin

5. St. Justin the Martyr first heard the Gospel in the city of

- a Ephesus b Rome c Jerusalem d Constantinople

Milestones in Our Christian Life



Everyone's life has "milestone" moments.

A milestone is literally a stone that marks the distance from a given point. If you had to mark off your life so far in milestones what would they be? Label them below:

BIRTH

TODAY

Members of the *Christian* family have milestones as well. They mark important moments of a believer's life at which time – although he is with us at *all* times - God is *especially*, mystically present. The word mystical is important here, since the exact nature of how our human experience and God's presence intertwine at these moments is beyond words. In Armenian, the word for "sacrament" is *khorhoort* which literally means "mystery."

The church has named each of these occasions a "sacrament" and while there are many such moments, the church has marked off seven formal 'rite of passage' sacraments.

1. After our physical birth, at which time we become part of a human family, we are born again spiritually, becoming members of *God's* family – the Body of Christ – through **Baptism**

During baptism, we are immersed in the water of the font three times, sharing in Christ's death and resurrection. Our godparents promise to help us grow in our faith. All our friends and family are present as witnesses. In the early church, this was performed at church with the entire community present.

Today, baptisms are private affairs, with just the immediate family attending. Why do you think baptisms were once done with the entire community present?

2. Moments after we are baptized, we experience the sacrament of..... **Chrismation**

We are sealed with holy oil, a sign of the Holy Spirit gracing us with the strength and understanding to live a faithful life. Nine parts of the body are anointed – the forehead, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, heart, back and feet with holy muron—"the oil of gladness" (Hebrews 1:9).

Why do you think these places were chosen to be anointed? What might they represent?

Immediately following Chrismation, we are dressed in new white clothes and presented to the altar to receive our first Holy Communion (more on that later).

We are now fully participating members of the Armenian Church – right from infancy!

3. Sunday Badarak is the weekly invitation by Jesus to continue sharing in his life-giving Body and Blood through the bread and wine of Holy Communion. But as we grow, we are asked to face very seriously the ways we may have "missed the mark" in aiming for a truly Christian life. Sin is the religious word for missing the mark and before communion we have the beautiful opportunity to think about our sins and ask forgiveness. That confession, whether private or the ritualized confession we do at church is the sacrament of **Penance**

The priest has been granted the privilege to release us from these sins. We are given the chance to start all over again – like a new beginning every Sunday. (It’s no accident that Sunday is the first day of a new week!)

Why do you think it’s important to really think about your sins and seek forgiveness?

4. The ultimate sacrament for every Christian is **Holy Communion**

This sacrament was established by Jesus himself at the Last Supper, when he took bread and wine and shared it among his disciples as a sign of the New Covenant and a sign of eternal life with him through his own Body and Blood. We should receive Holy Communion whenever we are in church, as it is the whole point of being there!

5. Many people will have the experience of finding a life partner and forming their own new family. This is the sacrament of **Holy Matrimony**

Or more commonly known as.....marriage! Of course, getting married in the church is just the beginning. A religious billboard campaign once posted a huge highway sign that said: “Loved the wedding; now invite me to the marriage. Love, God.” It takes a lifetime of commitment to turn the sacrament of matrimony into a God-centered marriage.

6. When a person answers the call to give his life to ministry in the church, he might prayerfully speak with his pastor and bishop about it, enter a school of theological studies known as a seminary (our own seminary in America is St. Nersess Armenian Seminary), and ultimately experience the sacrament of **Holy Orders**

This is one of those sacraments, one of those “milestone” moments that are very specific – a person choosing a vocation in the church – which most Christians don’t experience. But if you ever have an opportunity to attend an ordination – go!

There are three basic orders in the church: deacon, priest and bishop. Before these, come what are called the “minor orders,” all of which fall under the name “tbir” or clerk. Many boys and girls serve the church on Sundays by assisting as acolytes or singing in the choir and undergo these orders.

Why do you think it might be exciting to serve the church in an ordained ministry?

7. The sacrament which brings healing and prayer to the sick is called, reasonably enough, the sacrament of **Prayers for the Sick or Final Anointing**

Why a sacrament which suggests two purposes (why pray for healing if it’s ‘final’)? Well, originally, the “final anointing” was intended for the dying. Over time, this was reserved for clergy only. Prayers for spiritual healing, accompanied by anointing with holy oil (although not *muron*), was offered to all the faithful at times of illness. If you ever have a family member who is in the hospital or very ill, ask your priest to visit and pray and anoint your loved one. Go with him on the visit.

Words to Live By

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.”

Romans 8:28

Back to the Bible

The Armenian Church looks to Scripture for the origin of our sacraments. Below are Bible verses that describe each sacrament. Look up the Bible verse; then draw a line from each passage to the sacrament it describes.

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Matthew 18:18 | Holy Orders |
| 2. Genesis 2: 24 | Holy Communion |
| 3. John 1:32 | Anointing of the Sick |
| 4. Mark 14:22-24 | Marriage |
| 5. Hebrews 5:4 | Penance |
| 6. John 3:5 | Baptism |
| 7. Mark 6:13 | Chrismation/confirmation |



Did You Know?

Two sacraments may not be repeated: baptism and ordination. Interesting! They both mark the start of a new life in Christ.

Our Armenian Way

When a baby is born to an Armenian family, planning for the baptism, chrismation, and first holy communion begins almost immediately. The family is excited to introduce the baby into God's family. During the baptism, the baby is immersed three times into water, symbolically "dying" (Christ was in the tomb for three days) and being born again into a new life in Christ. Chrismation (sometimes called confirmation) seals this commitment with the Holy Spirit, then the baby receives holy communion. This way, even a very young child can be a fully participating member of the Armenian Church!



2. Read **Teachers of Treasure** and the accompanying readings. 10 min.
3. Assign one of the people in **God's Special Helpers** to each student. If you have more than ten students, you will need to provide mini bios of other saints so each child has an assigned person. Have the children read their individual bios to themselves. Provide each student with a mask. It will probably save time if you cut out the masks before class. Instruct them to use markers to create a mask of their designated saint (the text illustrations may be helpful). When they have finished, tape or glue the handles onto the masks so they may be held in front of the students' faces. When this is complete, give each student an index card. Have them write a brief introduction of their saint, then attach the card to the back of the mask. Rehearse them a couple of times, then have them present their saints to a younger class. They do not need to memorize their information, but may read it from the card. After the presentation, collect the masks and keep them in a safe place, because the students may want to re-use them in the unit roundup in Chapter 9. 40 min.
4. Read **Our Armenian Way** to the students. Review the prayer a few times and use it as the concluding prayer. 5 min.

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Key Concepts

1. The sacraments serve to unite us with our Lord in concrete ways.
2. The sacraments mark special milestones in our lives.
3. We can look to Scripture to see the origins of the sacraments.

Objectives

During the session the students will

1. Compose a timeline of significant events in childhood.
2. Review the seven basic sacraments of the Armenian Church.
3. Complete an exercise matching the sacraments with the corresponding Bible verse.
4. Play Sacrament Jeopardy.
5. Briefly review baptism in the Armenian Church.

Materials Needed

- Chalk or dry erase board
- Chalk or dry erase markers

Procedure

1. Welcome the students and stand to say the opening prayer together. Have students take the **Quick Quiz**. Answers: 1. c, 2. a, 3. d, 4. d, 5. a 5 min.
2. Read **Milestones in Our Christian Life**. Guide their milestone chart by saying: "Well, what would you start with as the given point? (Your birth, of course, when you became a new member of your family) Then what's the next milestone marker? (Your baptism, when you became a member of the church family)"

Other milestones could be: first steps, first word, first day of school, graduation from elementary school (many end at 5th grade), etc. For the specific sacrament questions, allow free discussion. Guidelines for 1) baptism: community involvement might be important since the child is now part of a large church family and with everyone involved and witnessing, this might reflect the reality of baptism better than a small family celebration. 2) The parts of the body are symbolic: by anointing the forehead, the Holy Spirit is prompting righteous thinking, the eyes, righteous vision, etc. The ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, heart, back and feet are all symbols of what we hear, what we smell or “take in,” the work we do, our feelings and love for God and one another, our strength (back), our path or direction (our feet). 3. This creates self-awareness so that we can live more mindfully about what we think, say, and do. It is spiritually healthy (and actually essential) to let God in to help us get back on track. But you can’t fix something if you don’t know it’s broken! 4. The lower orders afford young people the opportunity to serve, to be part of a larger, more meaningful world – the church; ordination to the diaconate or priesthood offers exciting, meaningful work – helping others, leading the church, celebrating liturgy, teaching, etc.

3. Have the students read **Back to the Bible** and complete the accompanying matching exercise. Bookmark your own Bible and be prepared to check their verses.

The answers are 1. Penance (the loosing of sins refers to the forgiveness of sins through confession to the priest), 2. marriage, 3. chrismation (confirmation), 4. holy communion, 5. holy orders, 6. baptism, and 7. anointing of the sick. 20 min.

4. Divide the students into three teams. Tell them they are going to play Sacrament Jeopardy. They must answer in the form of a question, and they must raise their hands to answer. You will call on the first person who raises his or her hand. Award 100 points for each correct response, and deduct the same for each incorrect answer. Keep score on the board. Each participant should get a snack or small gift as a prize. The questions are:

This sacrament was established by Jesus at the Last Supper.

(What is holy communion?)

Known as the sacrament of crowning.

(What is marriage/matrimony?)

The one sacrament a priest cannot perform.

(What is holy orders/ordination?)

The three main orders of the Armenian Church.

(What are deacon, priest, bishop?)

They are known as the “sacraments of initiation.”

(What are baptism, chrismation, communion?)

Group or private confession is an integral part of this sacrament.

(What is penance?)

Of the three major orders, only this one can perform the sacrament of holy orders.

(Who is the bishop?)

The miracle at Cana relates to this sacrament.

(What is marriage/matrimony?)

This sacrament includes the laying on of hands.

(What is holy orders?)

The only sacraments that cannot be repeated.

(What are baptism and ordination?)

This sacrament has a dove as its symbol.

(What is chrismation/confirmation?)

A narod (braid) and cross are placed around the neck in this sacrament.

(What is baptism?)

We experience these two sacraments in every Divine Liturgy.

(What are penance and holy communion?)

15 min.

5. Read **Our Armenian Way**. Conclude with a prayer and dismiss the class.

5 min.

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Lesson 8

Sacred Music and the Arts

Key Concepts

1. The Armenian Church has a rich history of religious art and music.
2. Our Christian artists and composers sought to reflect God's glory with their work.
3. Scripture gives instructions for making colorful vestments and other religious items.
4. The Bible encourages us to make music for the Lord.

Objectives

During the session the students will

1. Explore Armenia's tradition of religious art and music.
2. Read Scripture verses that underlie these traditions.
3. Participate in a class discussion of the role of art and music in worship and in the secular world.
4. Create their own illuminations.
5. Examine a brief selection and poem about khachkars.

Materials Needed

If possible, have on hand a sample of an ornate vestment piece, a khachkar (small replica), an Armenian manuscript illumination, a piece of Armenian church music. These are all illustrated in their texts, but anything you can pass around is always helpful.

Regular pencils

Gold metallic markers or colored pencils, as well as other colors

Pictures of illuminated manuscripts

Calligraphy book (optional)

Construction paper slightly larger than their drawings, for mounting and display

Double-stick tape

Illuminated letter handout from the back of this manual

Procedure

1. Welcome the students and stand to say the opening prayer together. Have them take the **Quick Quiz**.
Answers: 1. F (sacraments), 2. F (in Scripture), 3. F (holy orders), 4. T, 5. T 5 min.
2. Take turns reading **Reflections of God's Glory** aloud. Have the students read Psalm 150 to themselves or you might read it aloud together. 20 min.