

The Faith Journey

Lesson 1

Unit Three

What Now? On the Edge of Adventure

Here I Am, Lord

O Holy Spirit, you were a dove sent from on high, descending with a mighty sound and bright light, and armed the disciples with a fire that did not consume while they were waiting in the holy upper room. O, dove immaterial, beyond understanding, you know the depths of God and proceed from the Father, telling us about the awesome second coming of Christ, who is consubstantial with the Father. Blessing in the highest to the Holy Spirit that proceeds from the Father. The apostles drank from the cup of immortality and invited earth to heaven.”

“Arakelo Aghavno” (hymn for Pentecost)



without form

life eternal

equipped

that did not burn them

coming down

of the same substance as



One Step Back

In our last class we were able to catch a glimpse of Jesus through Matthew's eyes.

A. What reassurance was Matthew offering the early Jewish Christians?

B. Identify three reasons why the Hebrew people felt they were in need of a king.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. According to Oxfam, American farmers grow enough wheat, rice and other grains to provide every human being with 3,600 calories a day. That being the case, why do people still starve in countries throughout the world? As Christians, what do you think is our collective responsibility toward the poor? (Matthew 25:35- 36)



Matthew 26: 69-75

What do you think happened to make Peter go from courageously supporting Jesus to denying him three times?

When is it easy to follow Jesus and when is it difficult?



How do you suppose Peter felt after he denied Jesus and remembered that Jesus had predicted the denial?

There are only a few times that a story is recorded in all four gospels and Peter's denial is one of them (Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and John 18). Why do you think that Peter's mistake is told over and over again?



Peter's Disloyalty is Our Problem, Too

Have you ever experienced a friend or family member disappointing you in your time of need? If so, you know that it is an unpleasant feeling. At some time in your life you will experience the pain of feeling abandoned and there will also be times when you are the source of disappointment to another. It's hard to determine which is worse, to be disappointed or to think that you have disappointed someone else—especially someone you love.

The disciples loved and believed in Jesus, but once again we hear how they messed up. First, they fell asleep instead of keeping a prayerful vigil with Jesus, then they ran away when the soldiers came to arrest him, and to make matters worse Peter denied that he even knew Jesus, just as Christ had predicted. How could Peter do it...and, right when Jesus needed him most? How alone and abandoned Jesus must have felt! Imagine, too, how Peter felt when Jesus' prediction came true. Situations like this can surely make us feel terrible. And we long to make things right again.

Like these good friends of Jesus, despite how hard we try, we don't always do the right thing. We've all been in a situation where we denied doing anything wrong, even though we were guilty. We may even blame others. Peter was wrong, and once he realized it, he "wept bitterly." We are often in the position that Peter was...it takes courage to stand up for the truth and for what we believe. We say we believe in Jesus and that we will do everything that he asks us to do, but our human limits hinder us from keeping our promises. However, like the apostles, we are loved by the Lord, so not only is he willing to forgive us, but he is willing to use us to fulfill his holy mission.



Behold, I Make All Things New... Yes, Even You!

The gospel of Matthew ends with two stories of the resurrected Jesus. In the first story he appears to the women at the tomb (28: 9-10). In the second story, that we will hear today, Jesus appears to his disciples – most of whom were nowhere to be found when the chips were down. He gives them a mission. Actually, he commissions them to continue his mission, telling them to “Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (28:19) Imagine that! Despite the apostles’ disloyalty at the most crucial time in Jesus’ earthly life, he appoints them to take over his Father’s business. But they are not quite ready yet—there is a special gift that will be given to them, someone he calls a “Counselor.” (John 14:16) Here’s a clue...it’s one of those gifts that keep on giving.

Read Matthew 28: 16-20

Circle the letter that best indicates how you usually respond when faced with a new situation.

1. When it comes to doing something new, I’m usually
 - a. just plain scared
 - b. very careful
 - c. daring
 - d. afraid of failing
 - e. afraid people will laugh at me
 - f. a follower
 - g. a leader
 - h. willing to try anything

2. The thing I usually have to deal with when doing something I’ve never done before is
 - a. lack of confidence in myself
 - b. lack of faith in God
 - c. fear of standing all alone
 - d. fear of making a mistake
 - e. indecision
 - f. the impulse to rush in without sufficient planning
 3. Finish this sentence: If I knew I could not fail, something I would like to try in the immediate future is...
-

On the Edge of Adventure

“When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”
Acts 2:1-4

Filled with the Holy Spirit

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:4 (NIV)
Based on Acts 2:1-21 (NIV)



O M D E D N W Q T H X X G E M
 U A Y N M H I B Q O O U K P Y
 W J U W E V B L V H N L O E O
 O O R I B A M O E E Z G Y N E
 S R N N C E G W T A T N U T I
 K P L D Y D M I R R Q J W E W
 M A N A E G L N O T H E R C S
 C U M L N R X G S L S Z Z O W
 V P L J H G S A H P P N H S X
 Y I C D Y N U M N P I Q D T U
 F P J G X K W A F X S R U R W
 T Z C B E X Y Z G S P S I Y B
 Z F I R E G P E S E E T N T Q
 D E C L A R E D G E A C M K Y
 L S G F K V Z C V M K L N J T

| | | | |
|---------|-----------|---------|--------|
| FIRE | PENTECOST | WONDERS | AMAZED |
| HEAR | OTHER | SPEAK | WIND |
| SPIRIT | BLOWING | TONGUES | HOLY |
| DECLARE | LANGUAGE | SOUND | FILLED |



Our Armenian Way

The Armenian Church celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit fifty days after Easter on the Feast of Pentecost (*Hokekaloost*). But did you know that we all have our own “personal” Pentecost? Chrismation (we sometimes refer to it as confirmation; it follows immediately after baptism) is the anointing of nine parts of the body with holy muron or chrism and is one of the seven sacraments of the Church. Every time someone receives the sacrament of *chrismation* the gift of the Holy Spirit is given and through that gift God *changes* us. With chrismation, we are now empowered to bear the fruit of a life in the Spirit (we’ll learn more about that later in this unit). Just like the apostles, we become better equipped to live our faith and share it with others. Of course, we are free to ignore that change and all those possibilities. Baptism and chrismation are just a *beginning*, an opening of a door. As we journey through life, we still need to keep choosing to step in.

How Do I Witness?

1. Luke writes of wind and fire. What do these images tell us about the Holy Spirit?
2. How do you think those who were in the crowd felt when they witnessed such an amazing event?
3. With the power of the Holy Spirit the disciples were able to become people they could never be without this power. How does the Holy Spirit empower us today?

Did you ever wonder how Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew were able to communicate with the Armenian people? The Armenian language was a gift from the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when the tongues of fire rested upon them!

*Spirit of God, true God,
who came down into the Jordan River and the Upper Room,
and filled me with the light of faith at my baptism,
make me pure once again with your holy fire
just as you purified the apostles with fiery tongues.
Amen.*

St. Nersess Shnorhali



the disciples were *still* wondering where the earthly kingdom was that Jesus was supposed to restore (in their understanding). Many people in Israel hoped for a Messiah who would solve their problems. The Messiah they hoped for would put food on the tables and make Israel a powerful world nation. Undoubtedly, the apostles and other disciples felt hopeless, abandoned and lost – as they watched their candidate for king being nailed to the cross. They had given up everything to follow him: homes, families, and jobs. He touched their hearts and they changed their lives for him. And now, in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus tells them he is leaving them. But as a departing word of comfort, he tells them to wait (Acts 1:4) assuring them that God has promised a gift for them, the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit will fill them with power and give them everything they need to carry on when he is gone. 2. Jesus' mother and relatives (common understanding of the word "brothers") were upset with Jesus' travels and teachings; this must have been difficult for everyone, including Jesus. It is here that Jesus affirms that the family of believers may be more important than your actual family. 10 min.

4. As a segue to the next activity, ask students who it is they believe is responsible for creating a framework for a just programs that help feed the poor? (food stamps) b. What does your church or school do? c. Businesses? d. Community organizations? (i.e. Meals on Wheels) d. What does your own family do for those in need?

Ask them to stand by the sign that they feel has the most responsibility to fix the problem. If they believe they all are equal allow them to stand in the middle of the room. Discuss their choices. The best answer is all four; it's been said that to "set a table with food enough for all requires all four legs." Ask the class: a. Do they know of government programs that help feed the poor? (food stamps) b. What does your church or school do? c. Businesses? Community organizations (i.e. Meals on Wheels) d. What does your own family do for those in need? 10 min.

5. Teach or read **Healing Leadership Still Needed**. Have students conduct the food distribution exercise as directed in their text. Conclude the segment by asking the students to collectively reflect on the responsibilities of Christians to helping others across the globe. 10 min.
6. Explore the five Scripture passages in Matthew which identify the leadership qualifications that the Jewish people of Jesus' time witnessed in **We the People Choose Jesus!** Allow the students time to complete the reflection questions that follow each passage. Answers: (authority/power; heals, feeds, models faith, teaches). 10 min.
7. Teach or read **Our Armenian Way**. Allow the students time to identify the challenges they have in their faith journey. Discuss briefly. Answers might include scientific world that plays down religion (even though science and faith are not mutually exclusive), non-believer friends, family's lack of emphasis on faith.
8. Conclude the class with everyone reading the prayer in their text. 10 min.

Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 1: What Now? On the Edge of Adventure

Key Concepts

1. With the Great Commission, Jesus entrusted his disciples – the same men who had deserted him – to be evangelists in the world.
2. Gathered in our humanness, we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit for the mission and we are SENT.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Pray the words of the Pentecost hymn "Arakelo Aghavno" and complete a synonym activity.
2. Complete a review exercise.
3. Explore Peter's denial of Jesus and reflect on its meaning for us today.

4. Participate in a Bible study and discussion on the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 16-20).
5. Read and “enter into” the Pentecost story (Acts 2: 1- 4) through a continuum exercise.
6. Complete a Word Search on Pentecost.
7. Recognize that the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew to go to Armenia and empowers each of us in the sacrament of chrismation.

Procedure

1. Pray the words of the hymn “Arakelo Aghavno” together. Review the story of Pentecost quickly by asking students to retell the story together (turn to Acts 2: 1- 4 for help). Then have them write in the synonyms (*coming down, equipped, that did not burn them, without form, of the same substance as, life eternal*). When they have finished, pray the prayer with the synonyms. 10 min.
2. Review last week’s session by responding to the questions in **One Step Back**. Answers:
 - A. That Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah promised in the Hebrew Scriptures. B-1 A king would care for them and give them identity. B-2 A king would unite them. B-3. A king would make them a mighty nation. C. Too much food gets consumed by wealthy nations and not enough gets to countries where food is scarce and people are starving. Scripture gives us the story of the Last Judgment (see Mt 25:35-36) and reminds us that we will be judged by our response to the ‘least among us.’ Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church. It is our Christian responsibility to offer them relief through works of charity which will always be an essential part of the mission of the Church. 10 min.
3. Tell students: “When we read the gospels, or hear them read, we often fail to realize that the events involved ordinary people like us, people who didn’t understand what was happening to them. For the apostles, knowing Jesus and spending time with him was a daily adventure. They never quite knew what would happen next. I am going to read a passage from Matthew’s gospel. As I read, try to get inside the story. Imagine what it would have been like to be there, to be one of the disciples who had spent so much time with Jesus and then saw him arrested and beaten.” Read **Matthew 26:69-75** and then discuss the reflection questions. Spend at least five minutes on the second question as this has to do with daily living. Only the last question has a definitive answer: “This is an important message for people of all times everywhere: Jesus will deal with our mess-ups just as he did with the apostles...as long as we keep trying to improve, God will continue to forgive us and use us to bring his light and love to the world. He always gives us the opportunity to start over.” Conclude by reading **Peter’s Disloyalty is Our Problem, Too**. 10 min.
4. Read or teach **Behold, I Make All Things New...Yes, Even You!** Allow students five minutes to answer all questions, then discuss. 10 min.
5. Read Acts 2:1- 4 (reminding students that they must surely remember this reading from earlier lessons) together from the Student Text (**On the Edge of an Adventure**), dramatically. Add sound effects, use movements. You might want to call on a few volunteers to provide a dramatic version for the class. After the reading, play a “continuum game” to prompt discussion. Tell students that in the front of the room there’s an imaginary continuous line with points on either side of the room. You will ask a question and students will get up and stand along the line according to their answer. Then ask students: “If you had been one of the apostles when all the noise and wind began blowing, what do you think you would have done?” To the extreme left: ‘shrink back in terror;’ on the extreme right: ‘moved closer to the activity to see what was going on.’ If somewhere in between, have students stand accordingly. Discuss. A second question: “I might have been thinking” (extreme left): ‘that Jesus was perhaps punishing me for being disloyal and abandoning him’ or (extreme right): ‘trusting in Jesus, knowing that this could only lead to something good’ and then points in between. Discuss. Conclude that, no doubt, the apostles reacted in many different ways, just as students had today. But in the end, the power of the Holy Spirit made them strong in their faith and able to do many things they never would have imagined they could do. End with a “just-for-fun” discussion of what language they might have wanted to suddenly know if they had been there on the day of Pentecost. 10 min.

6. Have students complete the **Word Search**.

7. Read **Our Armenian Way** and then **How Do I Witness?** Discussion guidelines: Wind: Jesus compares the Spirit's work to wind: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going." (John 3: 8) Fire: Fire speaks of purity and power. Steel is tempered with fire to make it stronger. The Spirit's work is both mysterious and powerful. He breaks the sinner's stubborn will. He changes sinners into saints. For #3, refer students to the last few lines of **Our Armenian Way**.

8. Conclude with St. Nersess' prayer in their texts.

10 min.



Unit Three: The Faith Journey

Session 2: The Holy Spirit: An Eye-Opener!

Key Concepts

1. Thanks to the vigor and commitment of the apostles and St. Paul, the Early Church grew exponentially.
2. The Church grew under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as documented in the Book of Acts.
3. Conversion, as evidenced in St. Paul, is dying to old ways of thinking and acting and opening oneself to an authentic relationship with Christ.
4. Both the Armenian nation and every individual, from the apostles to each one of us, are called to conversion.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Complete a review exercise.
2. Perform Acts 9: 1-31 as a Reader's Theater.