

Lesson 3

Easter and the Dominical Feasts



Pray Together

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

Day by day, O Lord, three things we pray. To know you more clearly, to love you more dearly, to follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

St. Richard, Bishop of Chichester

Quick Quiz

Write the correct answer in the space.

1. Fasting is one of the ways we prepare for a _____.
2. The 50-day period leading up to the celebration of Jesus' birth is called _____.
3. The story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) standing in the temple is basically about how to _____.
4. _____ is the period of fasting and prayer that precedes Easter.
5. The popular term for the Wednesday of mid-Lent in the Armenian Church is _____.



Did You Know?

Some scholars believe that the actual date of Jesus' crucifixion is April 7. In the Armenian Church, this also happens to be the date of the Feast of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary.



The Greatest Day of All

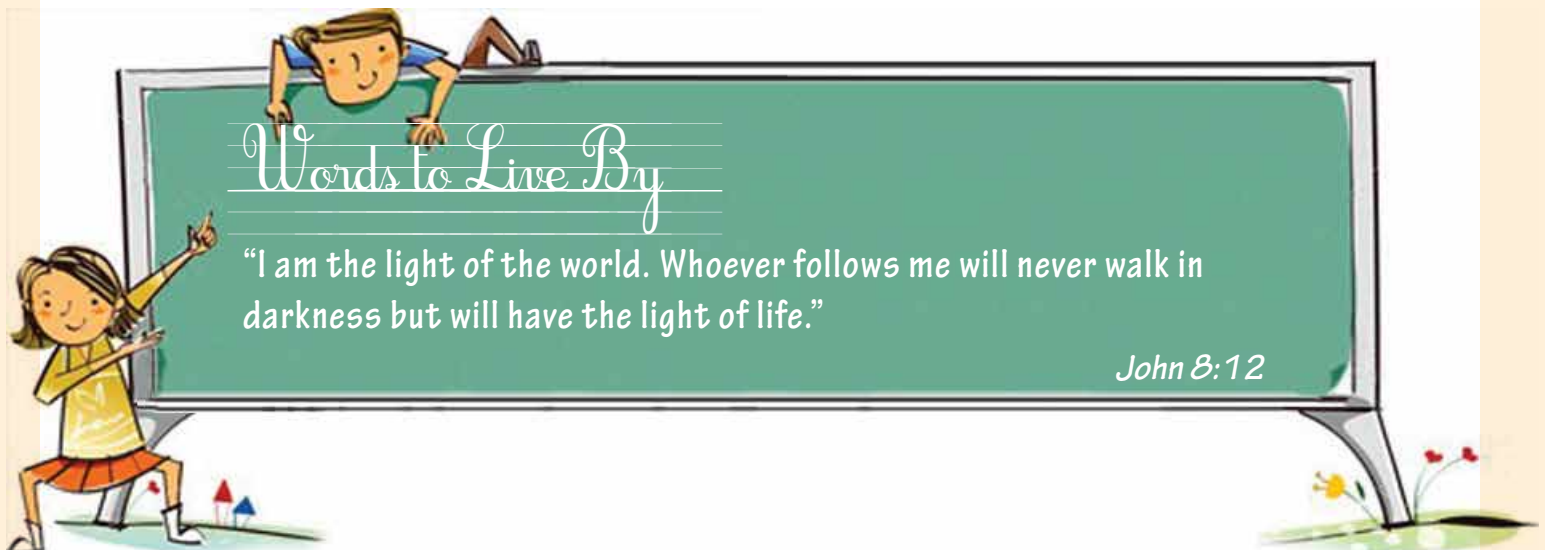
How sad Jesus' family and friends must have been after his crucifixion on the cross, the day we commemorate on Good Friday. They had lost their beloved teacher and they were afraid all their hope was gone. In the dark of the morning, Mary Magdalene trudged forlornly to the tomb to visit Jesus' body. To her horror, the stone was rolled away and Jesus' body was gone! Thinking it had been stolen, she sat crying outside the tomb. Even though Jesus had promised he would rise from the dead, that promise did not really sink in with Mary until he stood before her and called her by name.

Jesus had performed many miracles around his disciples, yet they did not fully realize he was the Son of God until he defeated death by walking out of the grave. Once his friends saw him alive after the Crucifixion, they understood. All he had told them was true! The disciples were overjoyed. They stopped hiding and worrying about being killed. Instead, they soon charged forth like lions to spread the Word fearlessly wherever they were sent.

The Resurrection is the basis for our faith. By this act, Jesus proved he was God. He showed he has the power even to defeat death. We could then know that he has the authority to forgive all sins and give us the eternal life he had promised. Our entire church year rests upon this event. Christmas, Pentecost, and all the other dominical feasts would not be meaningful without the Resurrection.

In the early church, Easter was given the greatest attention. In fact, in those early centuries, converts to Christianity all studied and prepared for their baptisms on Easter Sunday. It was a great day of new life for everyone.

1. Why is Easter so important, more so even than Christmas?
2. What are some ways you have seen God's power in your world?
3. If the Resurrection were to occur today, how do you think people would react?



Celebrations of the Life of Our Lord

Read the following Scripture verses. Draw a line to match them to the Dominical feasts they describe:

Luke 19:37-40

Easter

Luke 2:21

Baptism of Jesus

Mark 16:4-7

Palm Sunday

Luke 24:50-53

Presentation of our Lord at the Temple

Luke 2:8-14

Naming of our Lord

Matthew 17:1-3

Ascension of our Lord

Luke 2:22-24

Theophany/Nativity/Christmas

Matthew 3:13-17

Pentecost

Acts 2:1-4

Transfiguration of Jesus



from Jerusalem

They Have Seen the Risen Lord!

Many saw Jesus after he rose from the dead. Read all about it in:

John 20: 11-18

John 20: 24-29

John 21: 1-14

Hints of Jesus: Daniel

Daniel was a faithful Jew. No matter what sort of pressure he faced, he never turned his back on his faith. He prayed each day and kept all the dietary laws. Under God's protection, Daniel rose to a position of power as an advisor to kings.

Eventually, Daniel was working for Darius, king of the Medes. Darius was so impressed with Daniel's work that he planned to give him charge of the entire kingdom. Darius' other advisors were furious



when they found this out. They convinced Darius to pass a law forbidding anyone in the kingdom to pray to any being but the king himself. At their insistence, Darius agreed to this.

The jealous advisors knew that Daniel prayed to God every day without fail, so they arranged to “catch” Daniel praying to someone other than Darius. Though Darius liked Daniel, he was forced by his own law to throw Daniel into a pit filled with lions. The pit was covered with a stone, and the king retired to a restless and anxious night. The next morning, Darius hurried to the pit and called out to Daniel.

To the king’s joy, Daniel was alive and well. Daniel told Darius that God had sent his angels to protect him from the lions. Darius realized who the living God really was, and he ordered all his subjects to honor him.

This event reminds us a bit of Jesus. The Pharisees and scribes who tried to turn the people against Jesus are like the jealous advisors who plotted against Daniel. Like Daniel, Jesus was turned over to certain death by someone with whom he worked closely. Most importantly, Jesus came back to us, not merely from a den of dangerous animals, but from death itself!



Our Armenian Way

The Armenian Church commemorates the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday with the “Khavaroom,” or “Vigil” service. During this solemn service, we remember the betrayal, arrest, and suffering of Jesus before his Crucifixion. Among the hymns, Psalms, and other prayers are six Gospel readings: John 13:16-18:1, Luke 22:1-65, Mark 14:27-72, Matthew 26:31-56, Matthew 26:57-75, and John 18:2-19:16.

Some Armenians have the custom of tying knots on a thin string with each of these Gospel readings during the Khavaroom. Afterwards, the string with the knots is worn around the wrist to remind the believer of the sufferings of Christ on our behalf. There is no set time for removal, but some wearers keep the string on until the Ascension, some until Pentecost, and others until it falls off. No matter how long it is worn, the Vigil Service bracelet is a quiet way to frequently recall the great gift of our salvation which was bought with the Blood of the Lamb of God.



8. Luke 18:9-14. A Pharisee prays arrogantly, happy he is not like others. A tax collector nearby prays as a humble sinner. Message: God will lift up those who humble themselves.

5. Have the class do the **Special Times Word Search Puzzle**.

6. Conclude with **Our Armenian Way** and a closing prayer. “Lord, help us keep you close to our hearts as we celebrate the feasts of the church and as we prepare with prayer and fasting. Let each day be the special gift from you that it is. Amen.” 15 min.

Unit Two: Sacred Time – The Church Year

Lesson 3

Easter and the Dominical Feasts

Key Concepts

1. Jesus’ conquest of death is the most important event in the life of a Christian.
2. The Resurrection is important because it demonstrates God’s ability to keep his promises.
3. The Resurrection gives purpose to the other dominical feasts.
4. The incident with Daniel in the lion’s den is an early demonstration of God’s power to defeat death.

Objectives

During the session the students will

1. Read about the importance of the Resurrection.
2. Contribute to a discussion about Easter and God’s power.
3. Examine Scripture verses that show the basis for the other dominical feasts.
4. Complete a matching exercise about the dominical feasts.
5. Participate in an imaginative recreation of Easter morning based on the Gospel accounts.
6. Learn how the prophet Daniel prefigures Jesus.
7. Reflect on a specific Armenian custom during Vigil Service.

Materials Needed

- Pencils/pens
- Something that can serve as a fake microphone
- A video recorder and laptop computer

Procedure

1. Welcome the students and stand to say the opening prayer together. Have them take the **Quick Quiz**.
Answers: 1. feast, 2. Heesnag/Advent, 3. pray 4. Medz Bahk/Great Lent, 5. ”michink” 5 min.
2. Read **The Greatest Day of All**. Discuss questions. Guidelines: 1. Direct students to the information in their text; 2. Accept reasonable answers; if there are few, remind them about the power of family love, the sacrifice people make to help others (they either have heard or read about), the amazing beauty of the natural world, etc; 3. Perhaps people would be very moved in these difficult times; or cynicism might make them think it was a “trick.” 10 min.

3. Have the students read the Scripture passages in **Celebrations of the Life of Our Lord** and complete the accompanying matching exercise. The answers are: Palm Sunday, Naming of the Lord, Easter, Ascension, Theophany/Nativity/Christmas, Transfiguration, Presentation of our Lord at the Temple, Baptism of Jesus, Pentecost. 15 min.
4. Have the students read John 20:1-18, 24-29, and John 21:1-14 in **Breaking News from Jerusalem..** Assign each student a character from these readings and one student as the reporter. Have the reporter interview each of them about what they saw when Jesus rose. For fun: Record the exercise and show it to a younger group at a later date. 20 min.
5. Teach **Hints of Jesus: Daniel**. As you teach, have students underline or highlight key phrases. 5 min.
6. Teach **Our Armenian Way** and ask students to complete the following when you've finished: "I learned that...." (they can refer to their text as they do this). Dismiss the class with a prayer. 5 min.

Unit Two: Sacred Time – The Church Year

Lesson 4

Feasts of the Cross

Key Concepts

1. Our debt of sin is so great it required nothing less than the punishment of Jesus to redeem it.
2. After the Resurrection, the cross – once a symbol of shame and death - became a sign of Christ's victory over death and our forgiveness.
3. We are instructed that if we are to belong to Jesus, we must emulate his example of service and sacrifice.
4. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is one way the Armenian Church celebrates the power of God to cleanse us of our sins.

Objectives

During the session the students will

1. Explore the meaning of the cross and its message of service and sacrifice to us.
2. Participate in a class discussion about how we can serve the Lord.
3. Review the history of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.
4. Set up and decorate a food collection box.
5. Read about the Holy Cross of Varak and recall two facts about the reading.

Materials Needed

A large cardboard box
 Cross form from back of this manual
 Basil
 Miscellaneous pieces of gift wrapping paper
 Scissors
 A few sheets of plain white paper
 Markers