

Unit Three: Sacred Living: Saints as Mentors

Lesson 6

Taking A Stand



Pray Together

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

With your peace, O Christ our savior, which is beyond all understanding and speech, defend us and keep us fearless from all evil; make us equal to true worshippers, who worship you in spirit and in truth; for to the most-holy Trinity is fitting glory, dominion and honor, now and forever and unto the ages of ages.

Badarak - Prayers after the Lections



Quick Quiz

True or False

- Jesus' parables sometimes involved women.
- Lydia was a trader in oils and spices.
- Phoebe was a deacon of the early church.
- Saint Shushanik was the daughter of Vartan Mamigonian.
- Her husband, Vasken of Ghougark, converted to Judaism.

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

What is important enough to you that you would consider devoting your whole life to it? Maybe even dying for?

Looking Above

Christian history is built on the sacrifices of generations of believers. Ever since Jesus walked out of the tomb on Easter morning, untold millions of believers have given their time, talents, riches, and even their lives in his service. Some have been canonized by churches or remembered by history, but most are anonymous men, women, and children who quietly did what they knew to be right regardless of the cost.

When the faithful think of Jesus' teachings, they remember all the ways that life is given its true meaning by living as he has told us to. When we think of the Resurrection, we remember Jesus' promise that his people will live with him forever when we leave this world. Christians want to please Jesus and be with him more than anything, so they do not let anything stand in their way. They boldly face ridicule, persecution, and even death to get their prize, eternal life in Christ.

The famous Christian theologian and writer (you might know him as the writer of a series of children's books starting with *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*) C.S. Lewis wrote a beautiful description of the kind of strong faith needed throughout life. In *A Grief Observed*, Lewis said that his own faith - so shaken by his wife's death - reminded him of a nice sturdy cord that he kept in his basement to use for wrapping packages. For that purpose it was very good. But if he had to hang from it while dangling over a cliff, would it hold him? Lewis said most people, including himself, had a perfectly nice faith for wrapping packages. But when we needed to hang on for dear life, it would never hold!



Well We Were Warned!

Read Matthew 10:16-31.

Why does loyalty to the Christian faith come with so many problems? Isn't it more logical that a person who obeys God should have an easy life? Maybe, but if everything went well all the time our faith wouldn't mean much. If we stay with him in trial, however, our faith grows stronger. We lean on him, and he has a chance to work in our lives. He sustains us day by day no matter what. We are grateful and remain faithful until we are reunited with him forever.

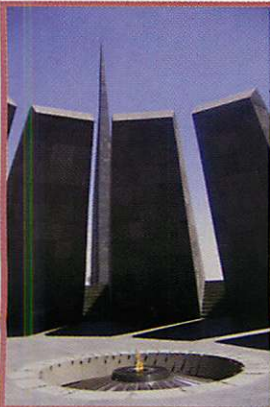
An Awesome Faith

As Armenians, we have a modern-day legacy of rock-solid faith. Not so very long ago, our ancestors endured unspeakable cruelty and suffering during the Genocide. The lives of the Armenians were generally spared if they agreed to convert to Islam, but almost none did. They could not bring themselves to do so. They were not willing to risk their eternal salvation even if it meant saving their own lives and those of their loved ones. We shall look upon these martyrs with awe and pride as we forge ahead with our own walk of faith.

What do you know about this infamous event?

Did You Know?

The Armenian Martyrs Monument - *Dzidzernagapert* (Fortress of Swallows) - was built in 1968 outside of Yerevan. It consists of 12 massive blocks of stone that lean inward over an eternal flame. These stones represent the 12 provinces in Western Armenia that were emptied of Armenians during the Genocide. A nearby obelisk, consisting of two pieces separated by a fissure, symbolizes the union of Western and Eastern Armenia.



The Armenian Genocide: Who, What, When, Where, Why

Who were the victims? **Who** was responsible?

What happened?

When did this happen?

Where did this happen?

Why did this happen?

- God commands us to forgive our enemies no matter how badly they have harmed us (Colossians 3:13).
- Do you think the Turks should be forgiven? Why or why not?
- How can we forgive as God wants us to without allowing our history to be forgotten?



Words to Live By

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Hebrews 11:1



Faith in Action

Discuss as a class:

- ✓ Have you ever felt pressure from peers to be unkind to a fellow student? How did you handle it?
- ✓ Have you ever gone out of your way to show kindness to someone outside the “popular” group? How did the “popular” group react? How did the unpopular person react? How did you feel afterwards?
- ✓ The social waters of middle school are notoriously tricky to navigate. What bothers you about the social hierarchy in your school?
- ✓ What grade were you in when you noticed that there was a social hierarchy? Did you lose any friends around that time? How did that make you feel?
- ✓ What seems to be the thing that gets someone sent down to a lower social group?
- ✓ What could the media (movies, TV, etc.) be doing to make middle school a little kinder?
- ✓ What are some things you can do to make your world a little better by taking a stand for your faith?

Our Armenian Way

St. Vartan Mamigonian and his companions serve as beacons of faith. Their courage and conviction is a model for our own lives. The Armenian Church commemorates these brave and faithful warriors with the Feast of Vartanantz, which usually falls in February, on the Thursday before Lent begins. It is also an occasion to celebrate those who are named after Vartan or any of his other martyred officers.

St. Vartan and the battle of Avarayr are so intertwined with our identity that many churches all over the world, including our cathedral in New York City, are named after him and his fellow commanders. A statue of Vartan on horseback (by the renowned sculptor Yervant Kochari) stands on a busy street in Yerevan to remind us of the heroism and sacrifice of the Mamigonians.

