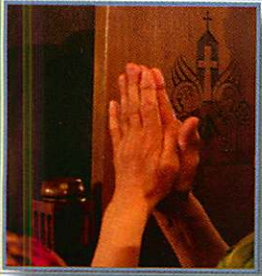


Unit Two: Sacred Time – The Church Year

Lesson 1

We Live in God's Time



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooy'n Surpo, Amen.

“Blessed are those who do not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers.”

Psalm 1:1-3

Sacred Time – The Church Year

Until the past 200 years or so, most people lived on farms and in small towns. Far from the cities, people arranged their lives around the seasons. Spring meant planting, summer, tending the crops, and autumn brought the harvest. Winter was a time of repairing farm equipment and trying to keep warm and fed.

As God ordered the world with the seasons, the Church has seasons of its own. They do not have to do with weather, but with the eternity of time and God himself. The Church remembers sacred events and people year after year in a pattern that we intend to repeat until the Lord's return. These special times are called feasts.

In the Armenian Church, feasts may be grouped into general categories such as:

1. Tabernacle Feasts

These are the five great feast days of the church, on which key beliefs and seasons are founded, all deriving from the life of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

- a. Christmas – the birth of our Lord
- b. Easter – the resurrection of our Lord
- c. Transfiguration – Jesus transfigured on Mount Tabor, in the presence of Peter, James & John
- d. Assumption – Mary is taken up into heaven at the end of her life
- e. Exaltation of the Holy Cross - the cross is venerated as the Byzantine army passes through Armenia, having captured the cross from Persian-occupied Jerusalem in the 7th century

2. Dominical Feasts

These are connected to Jesus' life.

Theophany (Nativity), Naming of our Lord, Presentation of the Lord, Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Transfiguration



3. Feasts of Mary, Mother of God

Annunciation, Mary's birth, Purification, Conception, Assumption, Discovery of her sash, Discovery of the reliquary (a box containing a veil belonging to Mary).

4. Feasts of the Cross

a. Discovery of the Cross – On a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 326 AD, the Empress Helena discovers three crosses in the rubble. When she places the body of a youth being borne in a funeral procession on them, he is revived on the “true” cross of Christ.

b. Apparition of the Cross – A huge cross appears in the skies over Jerusalem in the year 351.

c. Exaltation of the Cross – The veneration of the Cross after it was rescued from Persian-occupied Jerusalem in the 7th century and brought through Armenia by Heraclius and his army (which included Armenians).

d. Holy Cross of Varak - The monk Todik discovers (650 AD) the piece of the cross buried by the nun Hripsime on Mt. Varak as she was fleeing persecution.

5. Feasts of the Church

a. New Sunday – The Sunday immediately after Easter, celebrating the establishment of the Church.

b. World Church (Green Sunday)– A reference to the Upper Room where Christ's apostles were visited by the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire; a celebration of the life and growth of the entire Christian church.

c. Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin

6. Saints' Feasts

These numerous feasts remember special people of the Armenian Church as well as those from other churches.

You may hear feasts described as fixed, movable, or tabernacle.

Fixed feasts occur on the same calendar dates each year, such as Theophany (Christmas), which is always on January 6 in the Armenian Church.

Movable feasts change dates according to the cycle of the moon or the need to celebrate on a Sunday. An example of a lunar movable feast is Easter, which occurs sometime between March 22 and April 25. The Exaltation of the Cross is one of the feasts that change dates because they must fall on a Sunday.

Tabernacle feasts (Five Major Feasts): The word “tabernacle” refers to the tents that were set up in fields many years ago so that believers could celebrate together in large groups.

Using the church calendar, complete the following exercise:

1. Find your birthday. Write the date here: _____. Look up the Bible reading in the back of the calendar, and write the Bible reference here: _____.
2. Find Christmas for this calendar year. January 6 falls on what day of the week? _____
3. When is Easter? _____
4. What two major (Tabernacle) feast days fall in the summer? _____ and _____. What are their dates this year? _____.
5. Flip through the calendar from January to August. Count the church feast days that you had already known about. List 3 here that are new to you: _____

God Calls Us To Celebrate Together

Church feasts did not come about because people wanted an excuse for a party. In the Old Testament, God gave the Jews many feasts to celebrate with specific instructions on how they should observe them. After Jesus' resurrection, Christians, too, marked the events that had changed their lives forever.

Read the following Scripture passages. In the space provided, write the name of the holiday you think it describes:

Numbers 9:9-14 _____

Luke 2: 1-7 _____

Mark 9: 2-8 _____

Acts 2: 1-4 _____



Words to Live By

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38

Did You Know?

An old Armenian tradition holds that between Easter and Ascension, women should not do any sewing in the evenings – otherwise they might become “chicken-blind” or unable to see while looking into the light!

Our Armenian Way

In Unit One, Lesson Three we learned about the Zhamakirk, or “Book of Hours.” This is the daily cycle of prayer observed in Armenian monasteries. We, too, can enjoy these prayers, as we move through each part of our day. We can draw close to God and let his peace fill us before we begin each new activity.

Below is a sampling of the prayers from the Zhamakirk:

Prayer at sunrise

O great and almighty God,
Receive these our morning prayers...
Make your light of righteousness and wisdom
shine over us and make us children of light
and children of day, that in the days that follow
we may lead our life in piety
and live it without sin.

For you are our helper and savior
and to you befits
glory, lordship and honor,
now and forever and ever.
Amen.

Sunrise Service

Prayer in the morning

We give you thanks
O Lord our God...
Strengthen us also,
O Lord,
during this day and at all times,
so that with enlightened minds,
we may always do what is pleasing to you,
and attain the eternal good gifts
with your saints.
Through the grace and mercy
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
to whom befits
glory, lordship and honor,
now and forever and ever.
Amen.

Matins

Evening prayer

Compassionate
Father, nurturer and
creator of all creatures,
receive the prayers of
your servants at this
evening hour, for you
are generous toward
everyone with your
gifts. Have mercy, O Lord, on the whole world and
on your holy church, on the sick, on those who are
in pain, on travelers by land, sea or air, on those who
bear witness to their faith... For you, almighty Lord,
know our needs and our desires more than what we
ask or comprehend. To you, with your Son and most
Holy Spirit, befits glory, lordship and honor, now
and forever and ever. Amen.

Vespers

Nighttime prayers

O beneficent Lord,
Look with your mercy
upon those who worship you
and praise your name.
Send your angel of peace to us,
that he may come
and keep us safe night and day,
in our waking and in our sleep.
So that in this life
with worship and worthy service,
we may arrive at your heavenly kingdom
which you have prepared
from the beginning of the world
for your saints,
and together with them,
give thanks.
We praise the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit,
now and forever
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Nocturns

