

DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH (EASTERN)

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The Sunday Bulletin of our Mission Parishes

Diocesan Mission Statement

The mission of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church is to preach the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ and to proclaim its message of salvation. This mission is realized through worship, education, witness, service, and fellowship in Christ as expressed in the distinctive faith-experience of the Armenian people.

All the faithful of the Armenian Church are called to participate fully in this mission.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST – July 20, 2014

When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him, and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me." And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:14-21).

Rarely do we see the humanity of Jesus more clearly than here. In the previous chapter he told his disciples that he would suffer and be killed. Then came the vision on the Mount of the Transfiguration which we read in our churches on this Feast Day. What could all this mean?

The case of afflicted children should be presented to God by faithful and fervent prayer. Christ cured the child. Though the people were perverse, and Christ was provoked, yet care was taken of the child.

Like most of us when times are confusing and tense, Jesus seems to have been grappling on this incident with confusing feelings. On one hand he lashes out, dismissing an entire generation as "faithless and perverse" and wishing aloud that he could be rid of them all. But in the next breath, to a desperate father asking Jesus to heal his son, he responds with the simple and affirming words, "Bring him to me." Then he cures the boy of epilepsy.

See here an emblem of Christ's undertaking as our Redeemer. It encourages parents to bring children to Christ, whose souls are under Satan's power; he is able to heal them, and as willing as he is able. Not only bring them to Christ by prayer, but bring them to the word of Christ; to means by which Satan's strong-holds in the soul are beaten down. It is good for us to distrust ourselves and our own strength; but it is displeasing to Christ when we distrust any power derived from him, or granted by him. There was also something in the malady which rendered the cure difficult. The extraordinary power of Satan must not discourage our faith, but quicken us to more earnestness in praying to God for the increase of it.

I suspect Jesus has mixed feelings even now, listening to our prayers. I can hear him saying, to me, to you, "How can you keep praying to me when your lives are faithless and perverse? And then . . . You say someone is sick? Bring him to me."

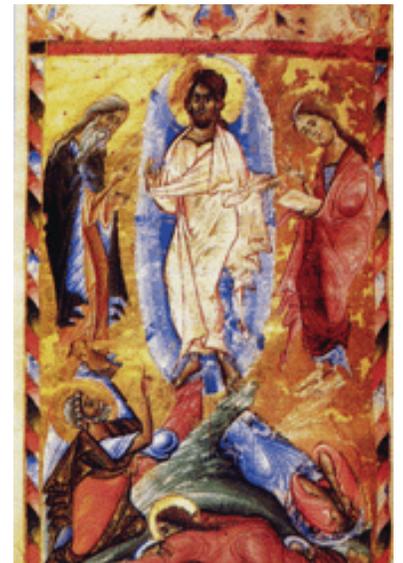
Der Taleas



TODAY IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH WE CELEBRATE THE MAJOR FEAST DAY OF THE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

Referred to also as **Baydzaragerbootiun**, the **Feast of the Transfiguration** is one of the five principal feasts of the Armenian Church, so named because of Christ's luminous appearance. In Armenia it is also known as **Vartavar** (the Festival of Roses) after the old pagan feast, which it replaced. The feast marks Christ's appearance with a resplendent countenance to three of His disciples, Peter, John, and James, on the holy mountain of Galilee, also known as Mount Tabor.

The Bible tells us that when Jesus was considering going to Jerusalem, he spoke with his disciples of the torture that was in store for Him and of the end of His life on earth. Jesus wanted His disciples to be prepared for the coming events. His disciples, however, did not believe that Jesus could possibly face such tribulations and Peter adamantly said none of Jesus' predictions would come true, and Jesus admonished his disciples. About a week later, Jesus had his miraculous Transfiguration.



He went up Tabor Mountain with three of His disciples

— Simon Peter, James, and John Zebedee — to pray as the other tired disciples remained at the bottom of the mountain. It was there that Jesus began to assume a new appearance. The three disciples were amazed when they saw His new radiant being. Though it was nighttime, the disciples saw light coming from the sun in the sky. Among the light they saw two other men — said to be Moses and Elijah — speaking to Jesus about His remaining time left on earth and the sacrifice He would soon make. Then a cloud came upon the group. The voice of



God was heard, saying the same phrase he said when Jesus was baptized, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him!” (Luke 9:35). After the Transfiguration, Jesus asked His disciples not to talk about it until His coming Resurrection. This scene can be found in four different places in the New Testament: Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:11-7; Luke 9:29-36; and Peter II 1:17-18.

In the Armenian calendar, the feast takes place on the 14th Sunday after Easter — 98 days later— so it is movable within an interval of 35 days, from June 28 to August 1. The Orthodox and Catholic churches observe the feast of Transfiguration on a fixed day, August 6.

The central importance of the transfiguration becomes clearer in the context of Jesus' entire life and mission. Just before going to Mount Tabor, Jesus revealed to the disciples his Father's plan for the salvation of humanity, which would necessitate his torturous death but end in his glorious victory. The transfiguration was Christ's inspiration and glory in anticipation of fulfilling his Father's plan.

According to Bishop Gregory Arsharuni (ca. 690), Aylakerpum-Vardavar, as the feast is known in the Armenian Church, was established by St. Gregory the Illuminator, who substituted it for the pagan feast of Aphrodite called Vartavar (roseflame), because Christ's glory opened like a rose on Mount Tabor. Just as Christianity in general built on the foundation of the Jewish religion represented by the prophets Moses and Elijah, so too the Armenian celebration of transfiguration was placed upon the foundation of earlier worship. For Christ did not come to abolish the previous relationships man had with his Creator, but rather to strengthen relationships that had been forming ever since God made the world and left hints of his image within it.

The official observance takes three days. Sunday is the principal feast, Monday likewise is an ordained feast day and includes the commemoration of the dead, and Tuesday is a non-festal or weekday dominical.

The Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ is perhaps the least known of the five Major Feast Days (*Daghavar*) of the Armenian Church, but it is the only one of those five that took place during the three-year ministry of Christ. Having taken three of His Apostles, John, Peter and James, to a high mountain, He was changed, or transfigured, before them: **HIS FACE SHONE LIKE THE SUN AND HIS CLOTHES BECAME AS WHITE AS LIGHT ... AND THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN**

SAID, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON WITH WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED. LISTEN TO HIM."
(Matt. 17:2 and 5).

Today is considered a Major Feast because it was a turning point in the way Jesus would be understood by the Apostles. Peter, shortly before this event, declared that Christ was the awaited for one, The Son of God. But the others, and the world, had not yet understood that. The events of the Transfiguration revealed without question who He was; The Son of God.

Here being revealed with the Law-giver Moses and the prophet Elijah shows Christ being the completion of the Laws and prophets and is manifest as God. It is interesting to note that in the Armenian Church the *Sharagan* for the Feast of the Transfiguration, *Aysor Lereen Tapor* is sung with the same melody as *Aysor Tzaynum hayragan* which is the sharagan (hymn) for the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, both begin manifestations of Jesus' divinity.

All feast days should have immediate relevance to our lives. At the Feast of the Transfiguration it is not enough to believe in the historical accuracy of something that happened 2000 years ago. Rather, that same Christ, who is still as present as He was on that high mountain, should fill our hearts. The Feast of the Transfiguration is **OUR** time to be transfigured into better, more gentle, more peaceful and loving Christians. A time to rejoice in the knowledge of His Divinity which is the means of our redemption.



THE PAGAN FESTIVAL OF VARTAVAR

This celebration from ancient pagan Armenia means **FLAMING OF THE ROSE** and was celebrated midsummer in honor of Anahid, goddess of chastity. The main feature of the festival was the offering of a dove and a rose to her golden image.

With the conversion of Armenia to Christianity, St. Gregory the Illuminator directed that the Feast of the Transfiguration be celebrated on this day in order to do away with these pagan practices in Armenia. Yet, the name Vartavar still remains with many of its customs.



The festival was celebrated differently in various parts of Armenia. Up in the mountains every family brought a sheep for sacrifice, adorned with colored papers and pigments and as the sheep approached the shrine, lighted candles were fixed upon their horns. Sheaves of grain, fruit, flowers and doves were also brought as sacrifices, while dust from beside the altar was carried home to children as a talisman.

On this day, the people would amuse themselves by throwing water upon each other. For this reason, it is often called, **ARMENIAN WATER DAY**. After the doves were set flying, the priest sprinkled the people, and they in turn sprinkled water over each other. The festival also included a fair was held with handicrafts, races, competitions, and games with the victors crowned with wreaths of roses.

(extracted from various websites including the Diocesan website <www.armenianchurch.net>)



Introit for Today's Feast

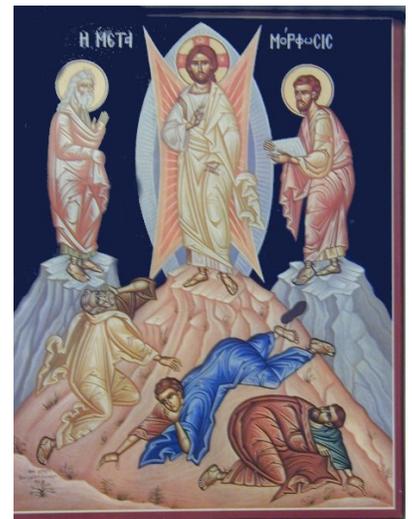
On this day, O Lord,
thou dost manifest thyself to the disciples on Mt.
Tabor.

And the disciples being sore afraid, cried aloud
saying:

Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, Lord,
and one for Moses and one for Elijah.

And now we also, thy reasonable flock,
sing together with thy true witness:

Send down upon us the light of thy grace
at the second coming and save us.



The Mid Day (Jashoo) Hymn

Rejoice, O Mother of the Lord, crown of virgins;
this day thy Son shone forth his paternal glory;
to him at all times commend our souls

Moses and Esijah wait on him;
Thabor and Hermon rejoice in his name;
to him at all times commend our souls.

Isaiah saw thee as a swift light cloud,
and the Father out of the cloud did acknowledge thy Son to be his;
to him at all times commend our souls.



The Bible Readings Prescribed for this Sunday

WISDOM 7:25-8:4;

Wisdom is identified by the author with the spirit of God by transferring the functions of the spirit to Wisdom. He recalls God's earlier dealings with the just and the wicked in Egypt at the time of the Exodus.

ZECHARIAH 14:16-21:

The Festival seems to speak of the final joyful re-gathering and restoration of Israel as well as of the ingathering of the nations. All the nations will observe the great feast.



I JOHN 1:1-7:

Authorship of this letter and the Fourth gospel are attributed to the same person. This can be easily detected by comparing today's reading with the "Prologue" of the Gospel of John (1:1-18). Living witnesses, i.e., the Apostles, have in these final days experienced the revelation of God, which has existed from the beginning. The joy that Christ promised and bestowed on His apostles comes from fellowship with God that may be possessed by the entire Church.

MATTHEW 17:1-13:

The narrative of the Transfiguration, wherein is described a vision of Jesus in heavenly glory as the Messiah of God. Moses and Elijah, the great men of the religion of Israel, appear with Christ as a fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and Prophecies.



Whether there is a celebration of Badarak in your community this week or not, you are asked to pray for and not to forget:

- The Hierarchal leaders of the Armenian Church, His Holiness, Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians; His Holiness; Aram I Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia; His Beatitude, Archbishop Nourhan Manoogian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem; His Beatitude, Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople; that the presence of God be with them always and that they be true to their positions of trust and sacredness;
- Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Diocesan Primate and the members of the Diocesan Council that they administer to the affairs of our Diocese with wisdom, prudence, and above all love of God;
- The people of the Middle East and the Holy Land – Christians, Arabs and Jews – that are suffering death and destruction at the hands of unscrupulous and ungodly people;
- the faithful of our Mission Parish communities, that the Holy Spirit received through our Baptism and Confirmation infect them with the love of God and the genuine desire to do His work in His Church;
- Archbishop Avak Assadourian, Primate, of Iraq, Archbishop Ardashir Nalbandian of Syria and our Armenian brothers and sisters there, that they be kept safe from the harm and violence which surrounds them each day;
- the recovery of good health, the healing of infirmities and the presence of God in the lives of those who are ill in the hospital or at home, especially for His Beatitude, Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan, Armenian Patriarch of Turkey that he receive comfort and healing;
- the men and women who are serving in the armed forces of the United States, that they kept safe and able to return to their families unharmed;
- for peace and prosperity in the homeland of Armenia, in Artsakh, in Javakh and throughout the world and among all people of all nations;
- those who are experiencing personal, marital and emotional conflicts in their lives;
- those who generously offer their time, talents and financial resources in the building up of our Church.

Let us pray, DER, VOGHORMIA; LORD, HAVE MERCY.



NAME DAYS we celebrate today - Vartkes, Vartavar, Vart, Alvard, Zevart, Lousvart, Nevart, Vartanoush, Vartiter, Rose.

In the Armenian Church, we have the custom of honoring a person on their particular Feast Day or Name Day. Each week those names that are being celebrated will be listed and remembered. Celebration of one's Name Day is considered to be spiritually important, for the individual develops special spiritual ties with his Patron Saint and, consequently, with God. We honor the person by presenting them with a light candle and saying "anoonovut dzeranas" "may you grow old with your name" which in turns means wishing the person a long life.



With our Sunday Bulletin, we present to our faithful various prayers from Scripture, our Sacred Tradition, and Church Fathers to use, offer, learn, and to receive the comfort and benefit prayer brings. Today,

The prayerful Ode (Dagh) sung on this day

This day Mount Tabor is rejoicing and the great Hermon is exulting;

For the divine light this day shone on that mountain.

Mount Tabor is rejoicingn ah rejoicing, ah rejoicing, rejoicing and exulting!

This day Mount Tabor has flourished and is filled with luminous flowers.

For Jesus blossomed in the body and manifested the glory of Adam. Mount Tabor is rejoicing, ah rejoicing, ah rejoicing, rejoicing, and exulting!



Back to Basics

As mentioned many times on these pages and on those of our eTsayn sister publication, the basic teachings of our Armenian Church have somehow become a lost memory for our faithful. While new methodologies in teaching should be explored, the core of what is to be taught and learned does not always necessarily need to change. Here we will ask 5 questions taken from the ARMENIAN CHURCH HYE-Q question and answer game in the hope that they will provide an opportunity to strengthen your understanding of our faith teachings. The answers will appear at the end of the Sunday Bulletin. Keep Score. See how well you do.

ARMENIAN CHURCH HYE-Q

1. Name the synoptic gospels.
2. What is the Armenian word for "Good News"?
3. What evangelist was a tax-collector?
4. Who succeeded St Gregory as Catholicos?
5. What does the word "epistle" mean?



a thought for this week . . .

The Carpenter

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer-contractor of his plans to leave the house-building business and live a more leisurely life with his wife enjoying his extended family. He would miss the paycheck, but he needed to retire. They could get by.

The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and asked if he could build just one more house as a personal favor. The carpenter said yes, but in time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end a dedicated career.

When the carpenter finished his work the employer came to inspect the house. He handed the front-door key to the carpenter. "This is your house," he said, "My gift to you!" The carpenter was shocked! What a shame! If he had only known he was building his own house, he would have done it all so differently.

So it is with us. We build our lives, a day at a time, often putting less than our best into the building. Then with a shock we realize we have to live in the house we have built. If we could do it over, we'd do it much differently. But we cannot go back.

You are the carpenter. Each day you hammer a nail, place a board, or erect a wall. "Life is a do-it-yourself project," someone has said. Your attitudes and the choices you make today, build the "house" you live in tomorrow. So! Build wisely!

Remember to....

Work like you don't need the money.

Love like you've never been hurt.

Dance like nobody is watching.



Answers to ARMENIAN CHURCH HYE-Q

1. Matthew Mark and Luke
2. Avedaran
3. Matthew
4. Aristakes, his son
5. "Letter" as in the Letter to the Romans



And finally . . .

Everyone makes mistakes
in life, but that doesn't mean
they have to pay for them
the rest of their life.
sometimes good people make
bad choices, It doesn't mean
they are bad.
It means they are human.