

# **THE HOLY MARRIAGE: THE ALTAR GOSPEL BOOK AND THE CHALICE**

## **DEDICATION**

This work, “The Holy Marriage: The Altar Gospel Book and the Chalice”, is dedicated to my dear wife, Yeretsgin Varteni, on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our marriage; and also on our marriage of serving the Lord on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of my ordination into the Holy Order of Priesthood in the Armenian Church. These two coincide with the 1700<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Armenian nation’s acceptance of Christianity as the faith of the Armenian people and their marriage to God through Jesus Christ. On these auspicious occasions in our personal lives and that of the church and people we serve, we offer our prayers of thanksgiving to the Almighty for all of His blessings and pray that we be worthy of their continual blessings upon us, our children, grandchildren, the people we serve and indeed for all of mankind.

## **THE 1700<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOLY MARRIAGE**

The church, St. Gregory the Illuminator, is where the monastery called Khor Virab( that is, the “*Deep Pit*”), is located and where St. Gregory, the Patron Saint of the Armenian Church was imprisoned to die from starvation. His miraculous survival for fifteen years was made possible by the aid of Armenian Christians, some of whom were from the royal family. His main source of strength, though, came from the power of prayer and his personal commitment to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Upon his release and conversion of the Armenian King, Trdat, and subsequently, the conversion of the Armenian nation to Christianity, St. Gregory had a vision called, “shoghagat”, which means, “*a beam from heaven*”), in which the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, descended from His throne in heaven with a hammer made of gold in His right hand. When He struck the ground with it, a beautiful church appeared, which God wanted St. Gregory to build. With help from the King, the Mother See, Holy Echmiadzin, was realized. This was the beginning of the marriage of the Armenian people to God through Jesus Christ.

In 2001 A.D. a year-long celebration took place by Armenians everywhere, commemorating the 1700th anniversary of this marriage, a holy wedlock marked with turbulent days of hardship, deprivation and trials, yet it preserved because of spiritual blessings both great and small. Blessed be the God of our fathers, who made this possible, so that, we, living in the 21st Century, may still enjoy those blessings now and forever.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Dedication.....</b>  |  |
| <b>.ii The 1700<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Holy Marriage.....</b>    |  |
| <b>iii Introduction.....</b>  |  |
| <b>iv The Holy Marriage: The Altar Gospel Book and the Chalice.....</b>   |  |
| <b>v Preface.....</b>   |  |
| <b>vi The Celebrant Priest.....</b>                                       |  |
| <b>Part I.....</b>  |  |
| 1 Vesting.....  |  |
| 2 Psalm of Vesting.....   |  |
| 3 Prayer before Vesting.....  |  |
| 4 The Robing of Vestments.....  |  |
| 5 Hymn of Vesting.....  |  |
| 6 Psalm of Ablution.....  |  |
| 7 Prayer of Intercession and also General Confession and Forgiveness..... |  |
| 8 Preparatory.....  |  |
| 9 Entrance/Ascent.....  |  |
| 10 The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Psalm of of Entrance.....                          |  |
| 11 The Prayer of the Celebrant.....                                       |  |
| 12 Prayer in the Sanctuary.....   |  |
| 13 The Prothesis/Preliminary Preparation of the Offering.....             |  |
| 14 Psalm of Prothesis.....  |  |
| <b>Part II – The Synaxis/Gathering Together for Worship.....</b>          |  |
| 15 Censing.....   |  |
| 16 Enarxis/Lesser Entrance.....   |  |
| 17 Lections.....  |  |
| 18 Creed .....  |  |
| <b>Part III (A) – The Holy Sacrifice.....</b>                             |  |
| <b>13 The Offeratory.....</b>   |  |
| <b>14 Laying of Gifts.....</b>  |  |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 15 | Kiss of Peace.....                        |
| 16 | Eucharist/Thanksgiving.....               |
| 17 | Prologue.....                             |
| 18 | Anamnesis/Remembrance.....                |
| 19 | Epiclesis/Calling of the Holy Spirit..... |
| 20 | Diptychs/IntercessionalPrayers.....       |
| 21 | The Lord' Prayer.....                     |
| 22 | Inclination/Elevation.....                |
| 23 | Doxology/Hymn of Praise to God.....       |

### **Part III (B) – The Holy Sacrifice.....**

|    |                                |
|----|--------------------------------|
| 24 | Intinction and Fraction.....   |
| 25 | Prayer of Intinction.....      |
| 26 | Exhortation for Communion..... |
| 27 | Prayer of Fraction.....        |
| 28 | The Communion.....             |
| 29 | The Partaking.....             |

### **Part IV.....**

|    |                                   |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 30 | Final Blessing and Dismissal..... |
| 31 | Last Gospel and Comments.....     |
| 32 | Receiving of 'Mas'.....           |

### **Part V.....**

|    |                                       |
|----|---------------------------------------|
|    | A Reverence for the Gift of Life..... |
| 25 |                                       |
|    | Epilogue.....                         |
| 26 |                                       |

### **Acknowledgement.....**

27

### **About the Author.....**

29

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **THE HOLY MARRIAGE:**

## **THE ALTAR GOSPEL BOOK AND THE CHALICE**

The Sacrament of all sacraments, the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak, celebrating Jesus' Crucifixion, whether it be called Divine Liturgy, Holy Eucharist or "Mass", is in remembrance of, or more specifically correct, the re-membering to today's generation, The Last Supper, the Passover Meal, when Jesus instituted the Blessed Sacrament as written in the Holy Gospels.... "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is my body.' And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (*Matt 26:26-28; Lk.22:22-24*), which became, following Jesus' Crucifixion and Blessed Resurrection from the dead....

### **THE SUN AND SUNLIGHT OF MAN'S SPIRITUAL WORLD**

#### **PREFACE**

The beauty of the Armenian Church - its architectural style, music, paintings, services, rituals, sacraments - is found within the elements that she houses, mainly....the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion, which is associated with the Chalice; and the living and life-giving Word of God, as seen in the Gospel Books of the Holy Bible. All the beauty in and around the Armenian Church, are focused and centered upon these two objects - the Chalice and Gospel Book - that are bound together in a Holy Marriage and Sacred Ministry. The Gospel Book, commonly known as the "Jashou Avedaran", is the book that contains all the Gospel readings of the Divine Liturgy during the course of the year (a reading for each day of the year), with additional readings, for example, for the services of the "Repose", the "Oil-bearing" women (those who came to anoint Jesus' body in His grave), and also for the Processional, or Antasdan(*Field*) service. These two- the Chalice (*Holy Communion*) and Gospel Book(*Word of God*)- are the sunlight of the spiritual world by which all other spiritual life can be seen and by which they exist, otherwise there would be total darkness.

Upon entering the Church, one's attention is drawn to the Main Altar, where on ordinary days, or whenever Divine Liturgy is not being celebrated, the Gospel Book can be seen in the middle of the first or lowest gradual (*step*) on the Main Altar. Usually it is bound with a gold-plated medal cover with imprints of the Crucifixion and Resurrection on each side of the cover. It remains there until after the reading of the "Creed", "Anathema", "Doxology"

and “Prayers of the Lection”, or Lessons of the Day, when it is placed on the right side of the first gradual(*step*) on the Main Altar. It can be said to be serving as the protectorate of that particular space on the Altar for someone special, the

Holy Chalice, which during the Divine Liturgy Service is brought in by a solemn procession to the Main Altar with the pre consecrated bread and wine in it. They will become the body and blood of Jesus during the “Prayer of Epiclesis”, when their consecration takes place.

The procession of the Chalice to the Altar(*Veraperoum*), during the Divine Liturgy celebration, is like a bride adorned in her beautiful bridal gown, entering the Sanctuary of the Church to join her bridegroom for the marriage ceremony. It signifies Jesus’ ascent of Golgotha on the way to His Crucifixion, making it possible for the bride (*Chalice*) to have her place in the most sacred place of the Church Sanctuary... on the Holy Altar. The bridegroom (*Gospel Book*) is placed to the right on the first gradual of the Altar after the reciting of the Creed, which is immediately to the right of the area where the Chalice is to be placed. It remains there for the entire Divine Liturgy Service, while the bride (*Chalice*) occupies the middle portion until the marriage is consummated, seen in the receiving of the Blessed Sacrament by the faithful....the feeding of God’s children. After she has fulfilled her task, the bride (*Chalice*) returns to her former place, which is usually in a niche in the right side wall of the Main Altar, and the bridegroom (*Gospel Book*) returns once more to take his place of honor in the middle of the first gradual on the Main Altar.

The service of the Blessed Sacrament, Divine Liturgy, therefore, is a marriage ceremony celebration, the marriage of life to life - life here on Earth, in the temporal world, to life eternal in the essence of the Godhead and Holy Trinity... Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God was determined to have this marriage realized, and spared nothing for its realization, and spares nothing for its continual healthy union.... “what God has joined together, let no man put asunder”(Matt 19:6; Mk.10:1-9). The marital

union was made possible through the Cross of Jesus, and its blessings kept firm through Jesus’ continual sacrifice(*Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak service*) on His Heavenly Altar in the “Jerusalem on High” (*Ee Vereen Yerousaghem*), that is, “Jerusalem in Heaven”. In reference to the Church, the Apostle Paul writes that, it “always bears in the body the death of Lord Jesus, so that the life, also, of Jesus may be made manifest in one body” (*II Cor. 9:10*).

The Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak Worship Service is the development of four components in the action of Christ while instituting the mystery of Holy Communion at the Last Supper as recorded in the Gospels(Matt. 26:26-28; Lk. 22:14-17))..... Jesus (a)took

bread, (b) gave thanks, (c)broke, (d) and gave it to His disciples. The four parts of the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak Worship Service are..... (a)Offeratory (*took bread*) (b)Eucharist (*gave thanks*) (c)Intinction and Fraction (*broke*) (d)and Holy Communion (*and gave it to His Disciples*). The theme may be seen as an extension of the creative and recreative action of God.....(a) “took bread”, corresponds to the incarnation of the Word of God (*taking on of flesh*); and to God’s creative act as recorded in the Book of Genesis, whereby His very Word, all creation came into being, and sustained by His Divine Power(*the Holy Spirit*); (b) “gave thanks”, corresponds to the Word made manifest in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and His Earthly ministry of healing diseased souls by the removal of sin; as well as providing food for their continued spiritual and physical well-being; (c) “broke”, refers to Jesus’ Crucifixion or Creation II, in which the recreative act of God for the redemption of the human soul takes place and its restoration back to life(*immortality*); (d) “and gave it to His disciples”, is in reference to Jesus’ Resurrection from the dead by which immortality is granted to the human soul for all to live eternally by God’s grace in His Holy Family praising God’s Holy Name now and forever( *Jn.14:2-6;also I Cor. 15:*

**THE CELEBRANT PRIEST**-The Priest performing the worship service, is called a Celebrant, a noun reflective of the joyous atmosphere that surrounds the worship service celebration, like that of a wedding feast, which is the reason why he wears colorful vestments during the ceremony. At the beginning of the worship service (*Part III*), the Celebrant Priest removes from his person all that denotes his position or signifies the honor of his office that he holds within the hierarchy of the Church. Literally, he becomes a child....a child of God, like his parishioners congregated with him, with whom he identifies in the joyous celebration, while serving as a representative of Christ, seen in the decorative vestments he wears.

## I

**VESTING**- Vesting of the Celebrant Priest takes place privately in a room appropriately called “the vestry”. During the vesting , he first divests himself from his worldly garments stained by sin in the reading of Psalms and Prayers, before putting on those articles of clothing symbolic of a spiritual nature. Concerning the origin of sin, Holy Scriptures(*Gen.2*) attribute the act initially to be committed by Eve, in which her husband, Adam later participated. She was not created in the manner that Adam was into life, but rather, directly from Adam himself (*Gen.2: 15-23*). And as such, they became an extension of one another, affected by each others behaviors, strengths and weaknesses, and molded into an inseparable unity of life. They shared each other’s joys, pains and sufferings and all that which accompanies the union of a man and woman whose lives are joined in holy wedlock. Adam and Eve were united in an indissoluble union-“whatever God unites let no

man put asunder” (*Gen.2:24; Matt.19:6; Mk10:1-9*). Likewise, all humans suffer or rejoice because of the relationship they have in their marriage with each other in the family of God. Because of the original sin, the whole human race was put under a common “curse”( *Gen.2:16-24*), which extended beyond their persons, even to the very ends of the universe, causing a rupture between the spiritual and physical universes. The inhabitants of the physical world became contaminated and inherited a corruptible condition(*mortality*), all of which was redeemed by the “saving-grace” of God through Jesus Christ.

**PSALM OF VESTING**-The Psalm of Vesting is read by the Celebrant Priest before being vested. In it, he is reminded of the meekness of David, from whom Jesus was descended. Jesus’ divine nature was from the Fatherhood of God, but His human nature followed the natural order of man with a human lineage dating back to Abraham or to Adam, depending on which chronology one follows...the Gospel of Matthew(1:1-17), or the Gospel of Luke(3:23-28). The Psalm stresses the role of the priesthood as servants of God’s will in the House of God. All Psalm readings end with the glorification of the Holy Trinity... Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thereby bringing the Old Testament- reading and act- within the realm of the “Good News” New Testament proclamation.

**PRAYER BEFORE VESTING**- In the “Prayer before Vesting” reference is made to Melchizedek, a person, from whom arose an Order of Priesthood having no beginning or end, that is, a Priesthood being eternal in character (*Gen.14:17-24; Heb.6:13-8:13*). Reference is made also to the “wise virgins”, indicative of a state of fidelity and sanctity of the soul (*Matt.25:1-13*). Jesus possessed both characteristics, being eternal and pure.

**THE ROBING OF VESTMENTS** - The robing of vestments by the Celebrant Priest takes place after his divestment from the worldly, to put on that which is spiritual in character. First, he puts on a pair of white socks and a pair of colorful slippers. At the beginning of the Worship Service (*Part III*),

during the chant calling for “The Dismissal of the Catechumen”(those not yet baptized but being instructed in the teachings of the church, and also those in a penitential state), he removes his slippers, indicative of the holy ground Moses stood on in the desert before a burning bush, through which God chose to communicate with him. Moses was directed to remove his sandals, because the ground he was standing on, was regarded as being holy (*Exodus 3:5*). So too, the Altar area, where the Celebrant Priest stands during the worship service, is considered to be holy. Prayers and Blessings are offered while the remainder of the vestments are put on ....the crown, shabik(*alb*), stole, girdle(*belt*), maniple, ephod/or amice, cope and towel.

## HYMN OF VESTING

During the vesting, the Choir is singing the “Hymn of Vesting”, “Khorhoort Khorin” (*Deep Mystery*) creative of the fact, that the assumption of a sacred task by a sinful man to represent his people, the Church, before God, is a mystery. It continues until the Celebrant Priest enters the Sanctuary of the Church and comes before the Holy Altar stage or bema. If he is a Bishop or a Clergyman of higher rank, the song “Hrashapar” (*O Glorious God*) is sung as the processional march takes place into the Sanctuary of the Church. The verses of “Khorhoort Khorin” follow a certain pattern.....

**Verses 1&2**-are about the creative act of God concerning the creation of Heaven and Earth, while...

**Verses 3 & 4** tell of the recreative act of God in His reconciliation with man, through the Only Begotten(*Jesus Christ*), by which the Coming of the Holy Spirit is made possible.

**Verses 5-8** relate of the establishment of God’s Holy Church-House Prayer, realized by the Coming of the Holy Spirit, and through which the Holy Spirit operates to meet the specific needs of the faithful, while still being in all places, things and beings throughout the universe. The Holy Spirit brings the believer into an intimate relationship with the crucified Christ by the Priests, servers of God’s will on Earth. The Priests do God’s work, operating within the elements, that is, using that which is of material substance, to do that having spiritual significance. The presence of the Holy Spirit makes the doings of the Priest effectual.

**Verse 9**-basically defines the reason for the above....Heavenly King (*Christ*), preserve Your Church and keep Your worshippers in peace.

**THE PSALM OF ABLUTION** (*Psalms 26*)- The “Psalm of Ablution” is recited after the Celebrant Priest enters into the Church Sanctuary and is standing before the bema(*stage*) of the Holy Altar. It is read silently, if he is a Priest of regular rank, and audibly with the Deacon if he is a Bishop or a Clergyman of higher rank, after which a blessing of peace is given(*Jn.14:27*), whether the celebrant priest be of regular or higher rank during the singing of the last verse of the “Hymn of Vesting”.

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND ALSO GENERAL CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS** follow. They express a desire to establish a relationship with the spiritual after disassociating oneself from that of worldly matter. The uniqueness of St. Mary, in the family of saints, can be clearly understood in the “Intercessional” prayers to saints and also from the special reverence demonstrated towards her person as seen in the celebration of her feast day...The Assumption of the Holy Mother-of-God. It is considered to be a Major Feast Day together with the other Major Feast Days that commemorate the major happenings in the life of her son, Jesus, for the salvation of mankind. Only her feast day has that unique distinction among those of the family and class of saints. She is the saint of all saints, and the greatest human to be born of human parentage,



having both a human father and mother, Joachim and Anna. Her son, Jesus, was a son of man(born from a human being...Mary), but Who is regarded by Christians as being fully God, as the Son of God, while still being totally and completely human, a unique condition that no other human possesses...a mystery, among many other acts of God, that are beyond human comprehension.

**THE PREPARATORY** stage comes to a close with reference to Jesus as being “the Lamb of God”, in a bidding by the Clerks(*Choir Members*) to... “Remember us also before the immortal Lamb of God”, to which the Celebrant Priest replies, “You shall be remembered before the immortal Lamb of God”. In a sense, the faithful of God regard themselves as being spiritually dead, to be revived and sustained by the blessings and gifts of “the immortal Lamb of God”. Reference to Jesus as being “the immortal Lamb of God” (*Gn. 12:1-14; Mk. 14:12,22-25; Jn. 1:29*) embodies the spirit of a “madagh” offering(a memorial meal, often made with lamb meat) which is offered in remembrance of deceased family members or someone held in high esteem. The “madagh” meal is later taken and given to the sick, poor and needy, in the spirit of the “Good News” Gospel of sharing with the less fortunate the greater blessings of life.

**ENTRANCE/ASCENT** -The 1st Psalm prior to the Entrance/or Ascent(*Psalm 100*), is chanted alternately by the Deacons, or at times, by the Clerks(*Choir Members*). It is the first part of the ascent to the Holy Altar, which is considered to be the meeting place of Heaven and Earth, by virtue of Jesus’ Crucifixion/Resurrection, celebrated on the Holy Altar. Colors of the rugs covering the Church Sanctuary and Altar areas sometimes suggests this: dark red, the color of blood for the general Sanctuary area; and the intermixing of blue and green on the Altar floor, with blue signifying Heaven and green, the planet Earth. The bidding of the Deacon..... “by the Holy Church”, indicates that those congregated for worship regard the Church as being a vehicle, or an artery and vein, thus a bloodline, through which the Holy Spirit will circulate and operate similar to the circulation of blood in the body.

**The 2nd PSALM OF ENTRANCE** (*Psalm 43*) is said alternately by the Celebrant Priest and Deacon as they ascend to the Holy Altar area. It describes the struggle, but yet, the jubilation of the soul, in its ascent to God, the Heavenly Father.

**THE PRAYER OF THE CELEBRANT** done only when the rank of the Celebrant Priest is a Bishop or a Clergyman of higher rank, is said silently in a knelt position. It is directed to the Holy Spirit, by and through Whom all is realized. In the second part of the prayer, the Celebrant Priest is directed to.... “implore with tearful sighs”, reflective of the manner in which the Holy Spirit prays (*Rns.8:26,27*). The primary essence of prayer and God’s

divine nature is expressed in the closing phrase which is said aloud... “for Thine is the compassion, the power, the lover of man, the strength and the glory from ages to ages. Amen.” In the House of Prayer, the believer joins God in prayer Who constantly prays for His children day and night, and at all times, and at all hours “with tearful sighs”.

**THE PRAYER IN THE SANCTUARY** explicitly identifies the Altar area to be the meeting place of Heaven and Earth, the Garden of Eden, Paradise regained, as seen in the words of the “Prayer of the Sanctuary”, which says... “in this habitation of angels...”, after which, the Altar Curtain is closed.

**THE PROTHESIS/PRELIMINARY PREPARATION OF THE OFFERING**-In the Prothesis or Preliminary preparation of the offering, the blessing of the bread and wine, takes place behind the closed curtains. This constitutes the preconsecration of the elements(*bread and wine*), which later will be consecrated to be the Body and Blood of Jesus as instituted by Jesus at the Passover (*Last*) Supper. In accordance to early Church practice, parishioners would bring bread (*unleavened*) to the Church and placed it on a table in the middle of the Sanctuary. A portion (*nushkhar*) would be “taken up”(veraperoum) by the Deacon to the Altar to serve the sacred role of being the corporal body of Jesus by a process called transubstantiation, that is, the mystery of bread and wine becoming the body and blood of our Lord by virtue of the mandate given by our Lord during the Passover(*Last*) Supper(*Matt26:26-28; Lk.22:14-17*). They would, however, still retain their basic qualities of bread and wine. The remainder of the bread, that was not used for the consecration, later is distributed to the congregation at the end of the service to be taken to the sick and infirm, and those who, because of illness, were unable to attend the worship service, as a remembrance of them in the prayers of the faithful participating in the worship service. The setting aside, the separating of the elements from all others to serve a specific purpose, brings to mind the “calling” of Abraham who was told to leave his parental home and ancestral homeland in Ur with his family, in order to serve the designs that God had set forth for him to do in another land, the Promised Land( *Gen. 12:1-9*). His brother, Lot, and his family, also went with him. As head shepherd, Jesus not only leads His flock to fertile pastures, the Promised Land, but feeds them from His very essence. In attending church worship service, the Faithful of God leave their homes to go to the “Promised Land”...the church, where they find that which has eternal value. While the Celebrant Priest is preparing the elements(*bread & wine*) to be the body and blood of Lord Jesus behind the closed curtains, the Choir sings the “Melody” for the day. “The Melody for the Feast of the Cross” identifies the Cross of Jesus to be the Tree of Life “blooming in the garden planted by God”. The third and fourth verses mention “the wood

on which Lord Jesus was nailed,” in which “we have put our trust and worship” (*Deuterocanonical/Apocrypha Book, Wisdom of Solomon 14:1-5; Gal.6:14-16*). In “The Words of Prothesis”, as the Celebrant Priest places the host(*bread*) on the paten and then pours the wine into the chalice, the throne of Jesus is identified as being “made not by hand”(human ingenuity), alluding to the eternal character of the Cross of Christ, to serve “the redeeming economy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”. “The Prayer of Prothesis” reveals the sanctifying aspect of the heavenly bread as being “food for the whole world”.

**PSALM OF PROTHESIS** (*Psalm 93*) is said by the Celebrant Priest as he covers the chalice with the chalice cloth. The words of annunciation by the Archangel Gabriel to St. Mary are reiterated over the covered Chalice, as he makes the sign of the cross three times over the elements saying.... “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you.....” (*Lk.1:35*). The elements(*bread and wine*), at this point, become comparable to that of St. Mary, when she was conceived with the Christ child by the Holy Spirit at the time of the annunciation. The Chalice is then taken and placed on another altar or in the niche to the right of the Main Altar until it is ceremoniously brought in procession to the Main Altar during the “Great Entrance”(Veraperoum). The preconsecration and preparatory stages of ascent and the purification (*ablution*) of the bodily from the worldly have now come to a close.

## II

**THE SYNAXIS/GATHERING TOGETHER FOR WORSHIP** is the second step towards Divine Liturgy Worship, when attention is directed towards preparing the mind and intellectual capacity of the faithful for holy worship. At the onset, with the opening of the Altar Curtain, a censuring takes place by the Celebrant Priest in procession around the sanctuary, amongst the congregants in worship, signifying revelation....the coming of God to join the family of man by becoming one with them. This began with the birth of Jesus, recognized by Christians to be the Son of God, that is, God in our midst, as seen in the opening of the Altar Curtain and the Celebrant Priest's descent into the Church Sanctuary. The procession around the sanctuary is indicative of Jesus' Earthly sojourn; and the ascent to the Altar area, signifies Jesus' ascent, and return to God the Father, from Whom He had come.

**CENSING-** Prayer is a conversation with God, a heart to heart which reaches to the very essence of the Godhead, where God's merciful love abounds. Concerning prayer, Jesus said... “but this kind(regarding a particular kind of healing) never comes out except by prayer and fasting”(Matt. 17:21). In the “Hymn and Prayer of Censing”, and in the very act of censing itself, the faithful are reminded that one's prayer should be pleasing, like the fragrance of sweet-smelling incense, thereby having the possibility of being deemed

acceptable before God, like the offering of Abel, the son of Adam and Eve. A request is made to the Celebrant Priest by those participating in the worship service as he passes by them in the processional march, to.... “remember us before the immortal Lamb of God”, to which he replies, “You shall be remembered before the immortal Lamb of God”. The faithful, congregating in worship, join the righteous of the past in prayer by recall of their names, requesting their intercession, that is, to speak on their behalf. In the “Processional Hymn”, the

following are remembered.... Zechariah( the father of St. John the Baptist) who was a Priest, among whose important priestly duties was the burning of incense in the Temple(*Lk 1:8-25*); and also the acceptable offerings of Abel(*Adam and Eve's son, Gen 4:1-5*); and the great Patriarchs, Noah and Abraham. In Zechariah( more specifically, his son, St. John the Baptist), the Old Testament era comes to a close, while Abel, Noah and Abraham, personify the time at the onset of its formative stage.

**ENARXIS / LESSER ENTRANCE**-In the “Introit”(introduction to the Lesson part of the worship service at the beginning of the Enarxis), a proclamation is made to one of the major acts, or grand economies established by the Word of God, the Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. This sets the tone of the service and starts a process by which the blessings of God to mankind could be had once more, as they were in the beginning. The theme is re-enforced in the “Jashou Responsory for the Days of Resurrection”(Ps. 93:1-5) and the “Jashou Hymn and Prayer of the Second Antiphon”. In the “Prayer of the 3rd Antiphon”(read inaudibly by the Celebrant Priest), mention is made of “2 or 3 gathered in Your name”, referring to the passage in the Gospel according to St. Matthew ( 18:19,20). “The Prayer of Lesser Entrance” brings to mind the singing of angelic hosts at the time of Jesus’ birth (*Lk.2:8-16*) as well as references to angelic hosts, seraphim and cherubim, in the Old Testament. During the singing of the Trisagion Song of “Holy God, Holy and Almighty, Holy and Immortal...” (*Soorp Asdvadz*), the Gospel Book is brought in procession around the Holy Altar in what is called the “Lesser Entrance”. The song is directed to the second Person of the Holy Trinity and to the glorification of the Word of God. In the “Prayer of Trisagion”, said in an inaudible manner, man is described as being made in God’s “image” and adorned with every grace. He is instructed to seek

wisdom and prudence, since without those virtues, sin would set in to replace the void left by their absence. Satan is a grand opportunist and takes advantage of all the occasions at hand, that either he had brought about, or that are caused due to the negligence of man. In the “Great Litany of the Synaxis”, requests are made for the world; and for the civil authorities and religious leaders of the day, that their lives be reflective as possessing

wisdom and prudence; as well as for “them, that are at rest and have fallen asleep in Christ”.

**LECTIONS**-Psalms are read( most generally chanted) at the beginning of readings, be they from the Old Testament, or Epistles (*letters*) of the Apostles and Gospel readings. Gospel readings during the Worship service are always read from the Altar stage(*bema*) indicative of their importance within the Holy Bible as being the life-giving “Word of God” coming from above. In accordance to the “Directive of The Feasts”(Donatsoyts), a book containing the Scriptural readings for each day of the church calendar year, and also other related instructional matters, one becomes aware that there are approximately 1250 readings from Holy Scriptures for various Church services during the course of the year, not including the reading or chanting of innumerable Psalms.

**CREED**-A summary of the Church’s belief is expounded in the Nicene Creed sung or chanted after the Gospel reading. Its intent is to set the worshipper’s mind straight and in accordance to the teachings of the lessons of the day, both from the Old and New Testaments, and to the teachings of the Church. The Lessons are didactic; they teach, to remind and to set straight one’s belief, whereas the role of the Preparation was directed towards the physical well-being of man. The heart is now free, and the mind set on the correct path to worship properly

### III(A)

## THE HOLY SACRIFICE

**THE OFFERATORY**-It should be understood, that for those adherents to the teaching of the Armenian faith, and also for those of the “traditional” faiths(*Catholic and Orthodox*), there is only one worship service and that is the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak, whether it be called Divine Liturgy, Holy Eucharist or “Mass”. The one Crucifixion and Resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ is the only redemptive means for the salvation of mankind. There is no other. This service gives meaning and significance to all other services. One may say that the others are born from it and sustained by it. It is the one Holy Tradition upon which all other traditions are based and have their validity and legitimacy to function. At the beginning of the service, a dismissal takes place of those not worthy to approach the sacred act: those not baptized, and those who are in a penitent state. Today, this rule is kept in theory, but not in practice. No one is asked to leave the church. In the early period of Christianity, worship was done in the privacy of the faithful. It was not open to the public in order to protect the faithful from persecutions directed against Christians at that time. More importantly, to be a part of the Christian community required a commitment by an

individual to accept the teachings of Jesus as taught in accordance to Apostolic preaching, after which an individual was accepted into the Christian family through the sacrament of Baptism. The worship service commences with the Deacon's chanting of "The Dismissal of the Catechumens", when the Celebrant Priest removes his crown and slippers; and if he be a Bishop or a Clergyman of higher rank, he removes from his person all that which signify his order within the hierarchy of the church. From that time on, until the end of the worship service after the faithful have received Holy Communion, the place where he stands before the Holy Altar, is considered to be a special place, holy ground, such as seen in the case of

Moses before the "burning bush" in the wilderness(*Exodus3:5*). The song, "With Angelic Order", is then sung by the Choir as the offering (*Offertory/Veraperoum*) is being brought in a grand procession to the Altar. One is reminded, then of the fact that the Church is the House of God, a House of Prayer, Paradise, the Garden of Eden recreated. It is a place where the faithful are to experience the presence of the living God and reality of life as it exists in heaven; and where the children of God, seekers of righteousness(*Matt.5:6*), gather together with the heavenly hosts, to sing holy praises and glory to His Holy Name. While this is happening, the Celebrant Priest says inaudibly "The Prayer of the Great Entrance", which is reflective of the penitent soul of the Prophet-King David. Meanwhile, the faithful are kneeling and pray, being ever mindful of the fact, that as participants of Jesus' Crucifixion, they too find overbearing the heavy weight of the cross that they are called to bear, and like Jesus, realize the need for assistance to bear it(*Matt.27:32*). An awareness awakens within them, that it was by Jesus' Crucifixion, that the sins of the world were removed. That which was preventing humans from enjoying the immediate presence of God, was buried forever in Jesus' Holy Burial, thereby allowing the sunlight of man's spiritual universe to rise in the dawn of Christ's glorious Resurrection from the dead. The process of renewing vitality to the human soul now begins by inviting the believer to a new status and honor...as a child of God by adoption by the Grand Architect and Physician of Life.

**LAYING OF THE GIFTS** -According to Old Testament tradition, certain procedures were followed in the burial of the dead,such as, the anointing of the body with special oils, the burning of incense and the wrapping of the dead in a burial shroud. The censuring of the offering (*bread and wine*) by the Celebrant Priest, after placement of the Chalice on the Altar, is in remembrance and also

re-enactment of that, which was to be done by the "oil-bearing" and "incense-bearing" women who came to Jesus' sepulcher (*grave*) to fulfill the requirements of this ancient and

sacred tradition (*Lk.24:1*). To their amazement they found the enormous tombstone rolled to one side and the tomb of Jesus empty. Linkage of Heaven and Earth was realized through Jesus' Crucifixion and Burial; and reconciliation of God with His children, by Jesus' Holy Resurrection from the dead. After the censing, the Celebrant Priest again washes his hands as a symbolic act of his unworthiness to handle the bread and wine that are to become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The Litany of Offertory" chanted by the Deacon following the "Laying of the Gifts on the Holy Altar" concludes.. "that we may find the grace of mercy on the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ". That is to say, because of Jesus' Holy Resurrection from the dead, those living in the present age, are living in part, in the future; and the future event (*Second Coming of Jesus Christ*), in part, is part of the present living reality, to be completed in the future at the Second Coming of Jesus, a time only known by God the Father (*Mk.13:31,32*).

**KISS OF PEACE**-The kissing of cheeks was a form of salutation in the time of our Lord (*Lk.7:45*) and a manner in which He greeted His own (*Jn. 20:19*). The Apostle Paul bids the faithful "to salute one another with an holy kiss" (*Rns. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 12:12*). Personal disputes, born of hatred, are considered a defilement to the sacrifice offering, and thereby violate the very spirit and unity of the Body of Christ (*Matt. 5:23,24*). The Kiss of Peace manifests in an outward fashion, the bond of the faithful in holy worship through Christ, and the unity of the Church in the love of God, a bond that extends beyond, to include all humans living everywhere, and in all times in the heart of the believer.

**EUCCHARIST/THANKSGIVING**-The Eucharist corresponds to the second act of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Sacrifice or Holy Eucharist Worship Service. At the Last Supper, at which Jesus instituted the blessed sacrament, it is said of our Lord, that... "He gave thanks..". Eucharist means Thanksgiving..... the giving of thanks.

**PROLOGUE**-The Prologue is an introduction to the "Thanksgiving" theme. It is a time when the faithful in reflecting on their offering to God, deem it only as a token gift to Him, in comparison to that received from God: life to all beings and infinitely more to humans, who are the crowning glory of God's creation. Similar to the widow's offering (*Matt.12:41-44*), in which she casts "all her life" into the treasury of the Temple, the Holy Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross was an unconditional and uncompromising total giving of Himself for the fulfillment of His sacred ministry ... the salvation of mankind. The sacrifice of the faithful during the worship service, and indeed, all of their offerings to God, whether through the Church, or otherwise, can only be regarded as a token expression of thanksgiving to God for all of His blessings.

**ANAMNESIS/REMEMBRANCE**-With the linkage realized between Heaven and Earth, all of creation, from the beginning of time to the very end, is united by the one singular and deciding act of God - The Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak of Jesus upon the Cross. The seekers of righteousness among the family of man, sing with uplifted spirits in unison with the angelic hosts, holy praises of the “Sanctus”... “Holy, Holy, Holy”(Is. .6:13). The words of Jesus at the Last Supper, the Passover Meal, are reiterated by the Celebrant Priest, at which time, Jesus mandated to His faithful to recall His doing and saying at the Last Supper which, in turn, represented (or more specifically, re-presented) that, which took place on Mount Calvary in His Crucifixion. The climax comes, when the Celebrant Priest, in raising the chalice representing the corporal body and blood of Jesus, proclaims, “Thine of Thy own we offer unto Thee, from all and for all”, indicating an all-inclusive character of the redemptive act of Jesus. Not only is this an invitation to the chosen, but also, to those invited to join them and, in deed, for all who are gracefully received, as the song, “Hymn of Blessing”, indicates... “In all things You are blessed, O Lord...”

**EPICLESIS/CALLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**-With the consecration of the bread and wine during the “Prayer of Epiclesis”, they now truly become “the body” and “the blood” of Jesus as a result of an intimate involvement and workings of the Holy Spirit. This is in response to a request by the Celebrant Priest addressed to the Heavenly Father in his “Prayer of Epiclesis”. The gifts (*bread and wine*) henceforth are regarded as the incorruptible body and sinless blood of Jesus.

**DIPTYCHS/INTERCESSIONAL PRAYERS**-The hymns, prayers and litany of the “Diptych”, indicate that the souls of the righteous in the past, saints of God’s Holy Church, and those faithful “fallen asleep” in Christ are part of the living body of Christ celebrated in the Holy Sacrifice/Holy Eucharist, and will rise from the dead by virtue of Jesus’ Holy Resurrection from the dead. During the “Litany and Prayer of Special Litany”, emphasis turns to the living..... leaders in the civil and spiritual realm, and their followers or subjects(as the case may be), with special remembrance made for the needy and poor, concluding with special petitions for departed loved ones, and for those still living, and their particular needs.

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**-After God’s acceptance of the offering, the union of the faithful in Church through Christ, is fully realized with their Heavenly Father and Creator. Upon having received “the spirit of adoption”, mentioned by St. Paul (*Gal. 4:6,7*), the congregation now takes “heart” to call upon God in the paternal mode.... “Abba, Father”, because of the spirit that bears witness that “we are the children of God.... and joint heirs



with Christ”(Rns.8:14-17). “The spirit” is “the breath” of God, which the first humans received at the time of creation(Gen.2:7). It is the gifts of the Holy Spirit, lost by man because of the original sin, but restored by Christ Who conquered Satan and his evil ways. It is the same breath that Jesus breathed upon His Apostles in the Upper Room after His resurrection from the dead, at which time He told them... “Receive the Holy Spirit”.(Jn.20:22); and that which was given on Pentecost(fiftieth day after Easter) to the Apostles and faithful gathered in the “Upper Room”, the place where Jesus and the Apostles had the Passover meal, the Last Supper, at which He instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion. It is, also, that which is conveyed to the faithful by The Celebrant Priest in his blessing during the Worship Service.

**INCLINATION AND ELEVATION**-Wholeness, wholesomeness and oneness with God can only be retained by humility. “The Prayer of Inclination” is addressed to the Holy Spirit, the source of all virtues, of which, humility is the greatest. The words chanted by the Celebrant Priest, as he raises the host(*bread*) in full view of the congregation.... “unto holiness to the holy”, signifies that, that which is from God for the people of God, returns in a glorified form and elevated state to God through Christ. “Holy” refers not only to the body of Jesus(*host/bread*), but through Christ, the saints, those persons who were made spiritually clean (*holy*) by virtue of their faith given by God.

**DOXOLOGY/HYMN OF PRAISE TO GOD**-With the sitting of Christ in glory on His heavenly throne at the right hand of the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, the “Eucharistic Prayer” concludes with three “amens”, and then, one more conveying the assent of the people to their participation in the sacrifice of Christ. The “amens” signify the total submission of those in worshipful service to God’s will. St. Paul says, “For all the promises of God find their yes(*amen*) in Him. That is why we utter Amen through Him to the glory of God”(II Cor.1:20).

### III(B)

## INTINCTION AND FRACTION

**PRAYER OF INTINCTION**-Blood is the symbol of life. At the time of conception a rapid reproductive process of the fertilized egg cell takes place in the mother’s womb and becomes even more accelerated with the formation of blood vessels and circulation of blood. The blood received from the mother hastens the formation of the newly conceived child during the embryonic stage. By the shedding of Christ’s blood on the Cross, the mystical body of Christ-the Church and her people- was born and kept clean from impurities caused by sin, similar to that which happens to a child in a mother’s womb.

With the immersion(*intinction*) of the sacramental body(*host/bread*) into the sacramental blood(*blessed wine*), the act of salvation by Christ's blood has been completed during the celebration of the Blessed Sacrament. The sacramental body (*host/bread*) is immersed three times into the sacramental blood(*wine*) during the "Prayer of Intinction", indicating the spiritual baptism of the believer by the fire of the "Spirit" through the living and glorified Body of Jesus, the resurrected Christ from the dead. In the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation, the believer became a member of the Body of Christ and family of God, when immersed three times into the baptismal font and with the anointing of the Holy Chrism(*Holy Oil*). The Church(*Body of Christ*), henceforth, became the spiritual home for the child of God serving a need similar to that of a home in which a person resides and to which one always returns. With their Baptism and Chrismation, the faithful found a home for their spirit, and in the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak Worship service, the renewal of the blessing takes place by the fire of the Holy Spirit. The words of St. John the Baptist come to mind about the saving-grace made possible through Jesus... "Who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"(Matt. 3:11)

**EXHORTATION FOR COMMUNION**-The Celebrant Priest then raises the Blessed Sacrament and presents it to the congregation declaring the present reality of the elements(*bread and wine*) ..... "This is life, hope, resurrection, propitiation and remission of sins". An exhortation, as to the spirit one should approach and receive Holy Communion, is given in the "Bidding of the Deacon", in which he calls for the singing of psalms in praise of the Lord God, the immortal heavenly King. It is interesting to note, that heavenly beings are portrayed in Holy Scriptures as being totally content with their condition and with the knowledge they possess, even though it may be limited as that of humans. Their contentment is reflected in the singing of praises and glory to their Creator, which is a spontaneous out-pouring and thankful expression arising from a spiritual heart full of joy.

**PRAYER OF FRACTION** -As the Celebrant Priest reads privately, behind closed curtains, the closing part of the "Prayer of Fraction"... "the fulfillment of the Holy Spirits", he breaks the consecrated host/bread and puts it into the chalice. This signifies the unity of the Body of Christ, the Church, that is, the individual members who comprise the membership of the Church, with the person of Jesus. The act corresponds to Jesus breaking the bread at the Last Supper after giving thanks. The statement... "the fulfillment.." indicates the fulfilling function of the Holy Spirit in relation to the gifts(*bread & wine*), and also, in conjunction with the believer to his/her preparation to receive the Blessed Sacrament. This act encompasses within it all of the purposes of God's creative and recreative act, from the beginning of time to the very end; it reveals the oneness that prevails within the Godhead and person of Jesus Christ, even in individual parts or

members. There is no separation or isolation of existence in God, nor one within the person of Jesus Christ. An inner harmony and symphony of life exists between them, and within them, bound by a merciful love, by which the unity of their holy marriage is kept firm and holy.

**THE COMMUNION**-The prayer, song and Deacon's bidding before receiving the Blessed Sacrament are a summary explaining the reason for God's action and the joy that comes with it.

**THE PARTAKING**-In the "Prayer of Tasting", the professing to the reality of the elements(*bread & wine*) to be truly the body and blood of Jesus Christ, is reaffirmed by the Celebrant Priest as he receives his communion privately behind closed curtains. The culmination and climax of the worship service is after the opening of the Altar Curtain. The faithful come forward then, "in fear(*holy*) and with faith", to receive Holy Communion, which serves as food and medication for their soul. Together with the living presence of God and the hearing of His voice, the communicant receives internally that which God has to offer to sustain his/her spiritual vitality. The believer has now become one with the Lord, similar to the oneness a person experiences in body, mind and soul. As Jesus said.. "I will be in you and you in Me" (*Jn.15:5*). After receiving the Blessed Sacrament, the essential purpose of the Holy Sacrifice service has been completed and the apex of the worship service has been reached. The faithful have now arrived to the summit of their spiritual life. Refreshed, rejuvenated and invigorated in spirit, the heartfelt gratitude of the congregants is expressed in the "Thanksgiving" songs and prayers, reflecting the spirit of praise seen in Psalms 145-149. After the faithful have received Holy Communion, and while the Deacons chant the "Biddings" and the Choir sings the song of "Thanksgiving", the Celebrant Priest consumes the remainder of the Blessed Sacrament saving some, though, for emergency use. He washes and cleans the Chalice, after which the Deacon returns it to its proper place. The Celebrant Priest then puts on his crown and slippers; and if he is a Bishop or a Clergyman of higher rank, the paraphernalia signifying his office within the hierarchy of the Armenian Church. All of this is done behind closed curtains prior to the "Final Blessing."

#### IV

**FINAL BLESSING AND DISMISSAL**- The Altar Curtains are opened and the Celebrant Priest says aloud the closing prayers. The faithful become mindful, during the saying of the prayer, of the unique blessing of the Blessed Sacrament Worship service for them as individuals and those gathered in corporate worship, as well as for the whole Church of Christ and entire world, and for those in the secular world entrusted with the role of leadership, and in deed, for all of mankind in all times and places. The Celebrant Priest

then proceeds down from the Altar area to the Church Chancel, the place where the Worship service began before the Altar stage(*bema*). During this the Choir is singing three times..“ Blessed be the Lord’s name from this time forth and forever more”, which reflects and reaffirms the spirit of Psalm 73:19, praising God’s Holy Name, and also the spirit of those greeting Jesus upon His entry into Jerusalem celebrated on Palm Sunday(*Jn.12:13*). Here the Celebrant Priest proclaims aloud, concerning the Messianic role of Christ, that...”You are the fulfillment of the law and prophets, O Christ God, our Savior....”(Matt.5:17)

**LAST GOSPEL-** In the reading of the Last Gospel, the theological foundation of the sacrament of Holy Sacrifice is reaffirmed. The final phrase... “and the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us”, serves as a reminder to the faithful of their receiving of Christ(*Holy Communion*) through the Holy Sacrifice service. The reading from the Last Gospel is taken from the first chapter of the last Gospel book, which was written by the Apostle and Evangelist, St. John (1:1-14). It is interesting to note that the last lines of the last chapter of the same Gospel brings to the believer’s attention information concerning knowledge, alluding to the difference between knowledge that comes from God, and that acquired in the world... “But there are also many things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”(*Jn.21:25*)

After the Final Blessing, the faithful manifest their reverence towards the “Holy Word of God”, contained within the Gospel Book (*Jashou Avedaran*), by coming forward and after making the sign of the cross, kiss the Gospel Book prior to their taking leave from Church. In kissing it, the faithful say to the Celebrant Priest, who is holding it.. “May the Lord remember all of your offerings and make them acceptable before Him”, to which he responds... “May the Lord grant unto you according to your heart and may He fulfill all your counsels”(Psalm20:4). After they have departed, the Gospel Book is returned once more to its place on the first gradual of the Holy Altar, to serve again, as guardian of the holy place until the next Worship service celebration.

By the disobedience of the first human earthlings to the original commandments of God(*Gen.2:16,17*), mankind suffered an irreparable loss of the virginity of the human soul, and consequently, inherited instead, a mortal condition ending in death. Its recovery was made possible through the Cross of Jesus and His glorious Resurrection from the dead, by which the fruit of the “Tree of Life”(immortality) was made accessible once more to the human specie. In receiving the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion during the Holy Sacrifice Worship Service, the faithful should be ever mindful that, they are to do it “in spirit and truth”. Our Lord said ..... “But the hour is coming, and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father *in spirit and truth*, for such the Father seeks to worship

Him”(Jn. 4:23). Concerning the word “hour”, the Armenian word “jham”, which means “hour”, is used to denote the Church as a holy edifice serving God's divine purpose, as well as the services that take place within her sacred walls. This can be seen, also in the name of a service book, that is often used during church services, called “Book of the Hours”(Jhamakirk).

**RECEIVING OF “MAS”**-Upon leaving Church, “mas” is distributed to the faithful, which is the remainder of the unleavened bread-offering brought by the faithful, from which a portion was taken to be used in the worship service. As it is distributed, the giver of the “mas” says... “mas yev pajin yeghitzi kez ee Soorp Badarakes”(May this be your portion from the Divine Liturgy); to which the receiver replies..... “Pajin eem Asdvadz havidian eh”(God is my portion forever).

The faithful of God come to Church bringing a little bread as a token of man's earthly existence, but returns home possessing all of the blessings of eternal life in the glory of God through the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak Worship Service, Divine Liturgy or Holy Eucharist, the Last Supper of Our Lord, where He instituted the Blessed Sacrament ..... “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body’. And He took a cup, and when Jesus had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’”(Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:17-19)...which became following Jesus' Holy Crucifixion and Blessed Resurrection from the dead ...

## **THE SUN AND SUNLIGHT OF MAN'S SPIRITUAL UNIVERSE**

### **V**

#### **A REVERENCE FOR THE GIFT OF LIFE**

The journey of life is full of wonders proceeding from revelations that unfold to new and more spectacular revelations, all of which are enveloped within a wonderful mystery and reverence towards life. Our Church Fathers describe the end of this journey in a very simple way and one easily

understood.... as a harbor and a haven where good-will prevails forever. The magnetic drawing energies of a Super-natural Being, known as God, overshadows and underscores all that is called into existence. It is by God's creative nature that all are transformed and brought to the fullness of their being( *Parable on the Grain of Wheat, Jn. 12:24-26*). Only

those of the human race are able to perceive the magnificence of this great mystery, through the imaginative eyes of their soul embedded in a belief in God. It is in the context of this reality that a reverence towards life arises... a reverence that undergirds the followers of Jesus Christ, known as Christians. It determines the conviction of their personal persuasion and outlook of life as well as the manner in which they behave and conduct their lives.

### **THE 1700<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOLY MARRIAGE**

The church, St. Gregory the Illuminator, where the monastery called Khor Virab( that is, the “*Deep Pit*”), is located, is where St. Gregory, the Patron Saint of the Armenian Church was imprisoned to die from starvation. His miraculous survival for fifteen years was made possible by the aid of Armenian Christians, some of whom were from the royal family. His main source of strength, though, came from the power of prayer and his personal commitment to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Upon his release from prison and conversion of the Armenian King, Trdat, followed by the conversion of the Armenian nation to Christianity, St. Gregory had a vision, called “shoghagat”, which means “*a beam from heaven*”. In this vision, the Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, descended from His throne in heaven with a hammer made of gold in His right hand. When He struck the ground with it, a beautiful church appeared, which

God wanted St. Gregory to build. With help from the King, the Mother See, Holy Echmiadzin, was realized. This was the beginning of the marriage of the Armenian people to God through Jesus Christ.

In 2001 A.D. a year-long celebration took place by Armenians everywhere, commemorating the 1700th anniversary of this marriage, a holy wedlock marked with turbulent days of hardship, deprivation and trials, yet it preserved because of spiritual blessings both great and small. Blessed be the God of our fathers, who made this possible, so that, we, living in the 21st Century, may still enjoy those blessings now and forever.

## **PART I**

(My introduction to Part I)

Life, the universe and all of our personal lives are in a forward and upward movement. Times does not stand still but moves on, as the saying goes..."Time Marches On". This causes tension in our lives, a tension that remains throughout our lives. The question arises then..."How do we deal with this tension?"

Sooner or later, we begin to realize the need for help. The business world, academic institutions and government offer their remedies. Some have temporal benefits but nothing seems permrenant. God offers us of the human race, His help, which can be seen in the ministry of the church. In the process we become wedded with God through Jesus Christ in

a Holy Marriage. In marriage, as in life, we all go through changes to which we must adjust. In the relationship of the husband and wife, adjustments need to be made not only to their own personal lives, but to that of each other. And when blessed with children, to the changes their children undergo. Once blessed with children, the lives of the parents is one in which all their time, money and resources are devoted for the well-being of their family. God is totally involved with the lives of His children, members not only of His Holy Church, but those of the human race. He identifies with them by becoming a member of their family through His Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Self-imposed restrictions and discipline are required for the success of this marriage and an adherence to certain principles and commandments. Similar to mountain climbers who need to go through a preparatory stage, the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak service begins in the first part called “The Preparation” with the vesting of the celebrant priest in a room called the Vestry. This is the beginning of the process of renewing our marital vows with our Lord, and as such keeping our ties with Him on a firm basis.

## **PART II**

(My introduction to Part II)

The second stage of worship service is in preparing the mind, the thought process we humans possess. This is during what is called the ‘Synaxis’ or Lesson period of the Divine Liturgy. It is then that readings from the Old and New Testaments take place, followed by



the Gospel reading for the day, which is always read from the Bema/or Altar Stage. Then the chanting or singing of the Creed follows which is a pronouncement of the basic teachings of the church's belief. This period may be likened to a mountain climber during the first part of the ascent, after finishing the preliminary requirements. The body and mind now are ready to enter the higher pursuits of happiness found in the Divine Liturgy service of the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak. It is there that we will further strengthen and solidify the marital ties with our Creator, Who in this instance is the Bridegroom, and we, the members of His Holy Church, His Bride.

### **PART III**

(My introduction to Part III)

The third and most important part of the Divine Liturgy now takes place with the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak, which is the crucifying of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ on Golgotha known also as Mt. Calvary. This happened over two thousand years ago, but because of the eternal aspect of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, it is as real today as when it happened. All of the past and even the future become part of the living present because of Jesus' Holy Resurrection, that brought heaven and all eternity into the present age. During the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice/Soorp Badarak, our marital ties with our Lord and Master are strengthened, a sacred union upon which we find our stability and security in life. Through this holy wedlock other marriages come forth...the marriage of husband and wife; that of parents with their children; a marriage a

person has with those sharing the same belief; and the marital ties a person has in his/ or her relationship with relatives, friends, classmates, co-workers, fellow citizens and also with those of the human race, and indeed, even with those living in the heavenly abode. Life is a mystery, be it during our soujourn on the planet Earth or in the life to come. Through it all, the blessings bestowed in the Holy Marriage by our Creator, the journey of life to life becomes one of spiritual joy and happiness despite the hardships and pains a person encounters on the way.

## V

### **A REVERENCE FOR THE GIFT OF LIFE**

The journey of life is full of wonders proceeding from revelations that unfold to new and more spectacular revelations, all of which are enveloped within a wonderful mystery and reverence towards life. Our Church Fathers describe the end of this journey in a very simple way and one easily

understood.... as a harbor and a haven where good-will prevails forever. The magnetic drawing energies of a Super-natural Being, known as God, overshadows and underscores all that is called into existence. It is by God's creative nature that all are transformed and brought to the fullness of their being. To understand this more clearly read the parable on the Grain of Wheat found in the Gospel according to St. John (12:24-26). Only those of the human race are able to perceive the magnificence of this great mystery, through the

imaginative eyes of their soul embedded in a belief in God. It is in the context of this reality that a reverence towards life arises... a reverence that undergirds the followers of Jesus Christ, known as Christians. It determines the conviction of their personal persuasion and outlook of life as well as the manner in which they behave and conduct their lives.

## **EPILOGUE**

With this program, “The Holy Marriage: The Altar Gospel Book and Chalice”, my original plan has now come to a close. My intent was to show the relevancy of the Armenian Church to all generations living in all times and places. The journey began in a DVD disc program I devised titled “Hayk and Armen”. In it, I began by introducing Armenia’s location and gave a description of some of its physical features. This was followed by the presentation of some of the important personalities taught to Armenian children as part of their history together with the growth of religious experience amongst the Armenian people. The second program, “The Cross of Jesus and the Tree of Life”, shows the relationship between the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible, and how the act of God, which began in time immemorial, continues through the teachings, sacraments and ministry of the Armenian Church. The third program, “The Holy Marriage: The Altar Gospel Book and Chalice”, is about the mystery of all mysteries, the Holy Sacrifice/ Soorp Badarak or Divine Liturgy Service, at which the life-giving and life-sustaining gifts of the Holy Spirit, are administered to all through the blessed sacrament, the sacrament of all

sacraments....

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP KHAJAG BARSAMIAN, PRIMATE  
DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN DIOCESE)

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MRS. SHARON BAZARIAN McDERMOTT – PHOTOGRAPHER

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### **About the Author**

Rev. Arsen Barsamian was born in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the son of Shnork and Anjel Barsamian. He left a career in music to follow his calling to the priesthood in 1953. Rev. Barsamian's religious education includes study at the Catholicate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon; St. James Armenian Patriarcate in Jerusalem; Kendall College, Seabury Western Episcopal Seminary and Garrett Biblical Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. He was ordained to the Holy Order of Priesthood in 1960 at St. Mesrob Armenian Church of Racine, Wisconsin by the late Archbishop Sion Manoogian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern Diocese). He served the Armenian Churches of St. George (Waukegan, Illinois), St. John the Baptist (Greenfield, Wisconsin), St. James (Richmond, Virginia) and St. James (Watertown, Massachusetts)

### **PRESS RELEASE**

Contact: Rev Arsen Barsamian

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The DVD disc, “The Holy Marriage: The Altar Gospel Book and Chalice” is the third and final in a series of programs devised by Fr. Barsamian. His mission is to make the Christian contributions of the Armenian Church and its forefathers known to the present generation. Through these productions, which have accompanying written material, he invites the viewer to enjoy the evolution in its various forms from ancient times to the present. The Holy Marriage describes the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion as a marriage ceremony of life here on Earth to the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These are presented, or as Fr. Barsamian would say, are re-presented in the Armenian church by the Chalice and Altar Gospel Book. They are the sunlight of the spiritual world by which all other spiritual life exists. The DVD discusses all aspects of the Divine Liturgy having numerous Biblical and other pertinent information and quotations hopefully to arouse the viewer’s desire to want to know more. In it, the viewer travels a journey from revelations unfolding to new revelations, a journey, which Fr. Barsamian says ends in what the Armenian Church Fathers describe as ‘a harbor and haven where good-will prevails forever.’ From this experience, a reverence arises undergirding the lives of the followers of Jesus Christ, granting them the peace they have sought. The journey began in the first DVD, “Hayk and Armen”, describing Armenia’s location and some of its physical features, followed by an introduction of important personalities and events taught to Armenian children as their history. In the second DVD, “The Cross of Jesus and The Tree of Life” Fr. Barsamian leads us through the Old and New Testaments and shows how the act of God that began in ancient times continues through the sacraments and ministry of the Armenian Church. The third program, “The Holy Marriage”, is a portrayal of the Holy Sacrifice/Divine Liturgy as a marriage through which God dispenses life-giving and life-sustaining gifts of the Holy spirit through the sacrament of all sacraments, Holy Communion. Fr. Barsamian further expands its influence to the success of other marriages that we experience in life...that of husband and wife, parents with their children, those sharing a common belief, relationship a person has with relatives, friends, co-workers, classmates, fellow citizens, members of the human race and even with those of the angelic order in heaven. Information concerning the DVDs and books of this series may be found on the website...armenianexperience.net.

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Tel: 617-923-8860; E-mail: [Info@sthagop.com](mailto:Info@sthagop.com); Website: [www.armenianexperience.net](http://www.armenianexperience.net)

**A Comprehensive Story of the Historic and Religious Life of the Armenian People – DVD's and Books produced the by Reverend Father Arsen Barsamian.**

The third and final in a series of programs by Father Barsamian has recently been completed. They

are the product of 40 years of research, practice and ministry in his service to the Armenian Church.

The first DVD, **Hayk and Armen** told in narrative form, traces the development of the Armenian people through their land, legends, religious life and major historic events. Fr. Barsamian chose the names Hayk and Armen, for the story's main characters to reflect the two major threads of development of the Armenian people – legend and history. “Basically, this is a close-up view of our past, both as a people and a nation. It is my hope that it be a motivating factor for our people to appreciate their heritage and awaken a desire to learn more about it. Armenian history is always timely and speaks to each generation. The lessons for survival today can be seen in the lessons learned from the past,” commented Fr. Barsamian.

In the Second DVD, **The Cross of Jesus and The Tree of Life**, Fr. Barsamian leads us through the Old and New Testament Books of the Bible and shows how the act of God, that began in ancient times, continues through the sacraments and ministry of the Armenian Church. This presentation prepares the viewer for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final program...

**The Holy Marriage: The Altar Gospel Book and The Chalice**, connects the marriage ceremony of life here on earth to that of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Sacrifice in the Divine Liturgy portrays marriage as a means by which God dispenses life-giving and life-sustaining gifts of the Holy Spirit through Holy Communion, the sacrament of all sacraments. Biblical quotations and connections to various parts of the Divine Liturgy arouse the viewers' yearning to learn more about the Holy Marriage. The viewer travels an enlightening journey from one revelation to another – an experience that ends in what is described by the Armenian Church fathers as “a harbor and haven where good-will prevails forever.” A reverence arises from this experience strengthening the lives of the followers of Jesus Christ, granting them the peace and spiritual joy they have sought.

Fr. Barsamian's mission is to make the Christian contributions of the Armenian Church and its forefather known to current generations. He invites the viewer to enjoy its historical



and spiritual evolution in its various forms from ancient times to the present; after watching the DVD, viewers will feel a closer connection to God according to the teaching of the Armenian Church.. Born in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Fr. Baramian studied music but was called to the priesthood. After studying at the Catholicate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon, Sts. James Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, he was ordained in 1960. He has served in Armenian churches in Illinois, Wisconsin, Virginia and now at St. James Armenian Apostolic Church in Wataertown, MA.

Each DVD in the series, accompanied by related written material, costs \$15. The script is also available in book form: \$10, for Hayk and Armen; \$5, for the others.



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