

NEW SUNDAY-EASTER AGAIN **TWO REALITIES**

The two realities took one week each and both culminated with a woman being the crowning glory of its process. The first was with the creation of the universe and the human species and the last and final act being the formation of Eve; and the second was on Holy Week when God through Jesus Christ removed the partition separating mankind from His holy presence culminating in the assumption of St. Mary, mother of Jesus, into heaven

The Sunday following Easter is called “Easter Again” or “New Sunday.” Easter cannot be confined to one day. It is the one day that takes all other days onto itself. All the days, weeks and months from the beginning of time until the very end are taken up into Easter like liquid poured through a funnel into a bottle; or the shining of the light of the sun over the universe. Their feast days, major or minor, all celebrations and all commemorations are meaningless without Easter. It is the one undergirding support and life-giver to all and all things.

It was the culmination of Jesus’ life, especially the last week of His life called Holy Week that ended in His crucifixion and burial that sin was nailed to the Cross and buried in His tomb which is why during the singing of the songs at those services that praises are sung to Jesus’ suffering, crucifixion and burial. All sin from the beginning to the end of time is buried by this one burial and God’s holy presence assured once again as it was in Paradise in the midst of His children because of Jesus’ holy resurrection from the dead. This is communicated to all generations by means of the sacrament of Holy Communion by which the reality of the tomb of Jesus is brought into the reality of present day life for the renewal soul to heal and repair the broken spirit of man.

There is another reality which in essence is unreal and that is the graves of humans. Once I visited an elderly man in the hospital and asked him his well-being to which he replied in Armenian that can be summed up in the saying that ‘we live in an unreal world’ (sood ashkharhi mech gabrink). The only thing that is real in this world, which is a constant, is the grave. Much is done to beautify it to look magnificent, such as the grandeur of the pyramids, burial places of the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt whose constructions are unbelievable. No matter how beautiful or great, a grave remains a grave. Some chose to be cremated and have their remains thrown over open waters. The Hindus send their remains of their cremated down the Ganges River. Others have their remains strewn over open fields to return to nature from where it came. As the Bible says, “you are dust and to dust you shall return.” (Gen. 3: 19)

Mankind is confronted with two realities from which to choose. Both are a culmination of the week’s work of God in the creation during Holy Week. One might say that there is no choice. It is obvious which one is preferred, but in reality, the reflection of the total life of all humans who comprise society is one of living in the unreal world of this world over the realities of the real world where truths remain unchanged. As members of that society we suffer the bitter consequences but the truths arising from the empty tomb of Jesus gives us renewal of spirit and hope in the now and for the hereafter.

The message of ‘Easter Again’ and ‘New Sunday’ is the one of the two graves: one in which we offer flowers and kind remembrance of loved ones in their casket at the time of the burial; and the other from which the faithful take a flower, as a sign of everlasting life and where life is a full bloom always continuously

blossoming new flowers while the blossomed flowers remain in full bloom, fresh, beautiful and fragrant as the day they were first blossomed.

EASTER AGAIN-NEW SUNDAY

Two realities confront mankind. One is the empty tomb in which Jesus was buried after his crucifixion from which he rose from the dead. In the Easter celebration events following his burial are recalled, the appearances to some of the faithful upon his resurrection from the dead all of whom were His followers to various degrees, some as chosen apostles and others being ordinary people who believe in him among whom was his mother, St. Mary.

The second Sunday of Easter is called Easter Again and also New Sunday. One message that it offers is that the celebration of Easter cannot be confined to one day. The day of His resurrection is the first day of a new season that is without end.

The first week of the Old Testament calendar takes unto itself all the other days, weeks, months and even years from the beginning of time until the very end. All of the feast days, be they major or minor, all celebrations and commemorations have meaning only because of the Easter message. It is the undergirding support life giver to all.

It was the culmination of Jesus' life, especially of the events during the last week of his life called Holy Week which ended in His crucifixion and burial; In His being nailed to the cross the sins of the world were nailed to the cross, which includes all the sins from the beginning of time until the very end. In Jesus' burial, all sins were buried in God's presence from all of His children. The mystery of the sacraments of Holy Communion becomes a reality because of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The reality of the empty tomb of Jesus is seen in the renewal of the broken spirit of human beings.

The other reality is the grace of human beings. Once I visited an elderly Armenian man in the hospital who had seen much tragedy in his early years. Those bitter memories stay imprinted in his soul and mind even though life became better for him. I asked about his well-being and his answer in Armenian can be summed up by saying that we believe in an 'unreal world' which in Armenian is... 'Sood Ashkhari mech gabrink'. The only thing that is real in this world which is constant and not transitory is the grave. Much can be done to beautify it, make it look magnificent, such as the pyramids in Egypt whose constructions are unbelievable but nonetheless the grave is only a grave. Some choose cremation and have their remains thrown over open water as the Hindus do into the Ganges River; while others have it strewn over open fields from whence it had come as the Bible says in the book of Genesis (3:19) "you are dust and to dust you shall return."

Mankind is presented with two realities from which to choose. One might say in reality there is no real choice. It is obvious which one a person would prefer but in reality the reflection of the total lifestyle of the human race is one living in the reality of this world. As members of that society all suffer the bitter consequences, but the truth rising from the empty tomb of Jesus is renewed spirit and hope in those who rest their belief and trust in Him which is the message heralding from the empty tomb.

The message of Easter Again is the one about the two graves: one upon which flowers are offered in kind remembrance of loved ones after the Committal service at the cemetery of loved ones; and the other from

which flowers are taken as a sign of everlasting life that takes place after the Evening service on Holy Friday. It is the custom of our people to take a flower from the tomb of Jesus after the Holy Friday Evening Service.

WORLD CHURCH- GREEN SUNDAY

A child is born whose birth is celebrated. That child grows to adulthood and has children not only for one generation or two but forever. The question is asked as to how this is possible. Jesus' birth is celebrated on January 6th. Through His resurrection, all become children of God who believe in Him. This is not confined for one period of time but for all time into eternity. These children need a home where they are cared for and enjoyed by their parents. This is provided by the housing of God's children in His home, called the House of Prayer.

This particular house became home on the day of the arrival of the Holy Spirit of God that took place 50 days after Jesus' Resurrection of the Dead. It was the first church to be born; a child that has become Mother of all Churches that were going to be born and now exist. It is located in Jerusalem and referred to as "The Upper Room". It is the place that Jesus directed two of his disciples to go to prepare a place for them, that is, His Apostles to pass the Passover and He, Jesus, instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion which is THE SACRAMENT OF ALL SACRAMENTS. It was there that His faithful gathered in prayer after His resurrection and where he visited them as well as other places. It was there that the Holy Spirit descended giving birth to her who was to become mother of all churches. This First Church, called World Church, is remembered on the Third Sunday of Easter each year. The reason it is remembered is because she was so close to our Lord not only in time, but in spirit. There her children gathered and their leaders, the Apostles, whom Jesus prepared to be his official spokes persons after His ascension into Heaven.

The Apostles had their deep differences amongst themselves, different outlooks and persuasions like all human beings. But they never allowed these differences to divide and separate themselves from each other. They always kept uppermost in their minds and hearts that which brought them together and kept them together; the bond they had in Christ Jesus and his teachings and being the Promised messiah sent from God and as such their personal savior. These served to keep alive in them and amongst themselves, and indeed towards all others, respect for each other's opinion. This is called mutual respect, which is the corner-stone for a true brotherhood. Sadly it is this most ingredient in the life of the church that is missing today in the Christian Church.

In remembering the First Christian Church, The Mother of All Christian Churches, and in recalling the spirit that prevailed amongst the faithful, especially amongst those called to leadership, it is incumbent that work and prayer be directed towards the recovery of that wonderful spirit of brotherhood that existed in the first Christian Church, the mother of all churches where harmony and peace ruled over the attempts to seed discord and division. This is the earnest desire of all believers who trust and have faith in the ways of God.

May God help us to overcome our shortcomings and bring again the unity through the love Christ has amongst His children in His House of Prayer and especially for those us members of the Armenian faith.

SUNDAY OF THE WORLD CHURCH KNOWN ALSO AS GREEN SUNDAY

This feast day is in commemoration of the first church that was located in Jerusalem. It is where the Apostles gathered together with St. Mary and the faithful to pray. It is where Jesus and the Apostles celebrated the Passover meal where Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion in blessing the bread and wine to be His body and blood. After His glorious resurrection from the dead Christ appeared to the Apostles there. The Apostle Thomas doubted about the reality of the resurrected Christ whereupon Christ had him feel with his own hands the place where the nails pierced his hands. Upon doing so and realizing the reality of the risen Christ, Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." which is the first pronouncement of Jesus being not only Lord but also being God. The lesson of the day is that God's word is not only for a particular people and nation but for all of mankind.

Green symbolizes life and growth and with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead the world now became an open field where upon the Word of God brings new life where decay and death once existed and reigned, but now became full of life by the preaching of 'The Holy word of God.'

FEAST OF THE APPARITION OF THE HOLY CROSS AND MOTHERHOOD (FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER)

In the year 350 A.D., the sign of the cross appeared in the skies over Jerusalem during the day. Its appearance was quite apparent and vivid; brighter than the light of day and witnessed by all for many hours. Heated debates were taking place at the time amongst the church fathers concerning the nature of Christ: was He an ordinary being like us of earthly parentage, accepted by God for being a good person or was He in our likeness but whose divine dominated His human nature? These delicate issues were heatedly debated with strong arguments offered by different persuasions. The final position, known as orthodoxy (the correct position) states Him to be equally human and God, but without confusion or strife within Himself; somewhat similar to the interlacing of the body, mind and soul within us.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem of that day, Cyril, wrote a letter to the Emperor about the heavenly apparition as a sign from God championing the Orthodox viewpoint. The Emperor of that day, Constantine, sided with the Arians who stressed the human over the divine in Christ.

Interesting and important as it may be, it was not God's intent to establish theological and doctrinal truths nor holy traditions, church orders and sacred books. God's purpose was to use all as a means to convey His merciful love for the healing and well-being of his children. He did this by preparing the way before His appearance as recorded in the Old Testament. His appearance in the person of Jesus of Nazareth began a new era for the religious experience of man and the turning points in world history. Jesus lived for 33 years. It was only in the last three years of his life given to His earthly ministry of which the last week of the third year being the most critical called Holy Week. It is the one week that made all the other weeks from the beginning until the end of time holy. God created the physical universe in one week and recreated the spiritual universe

in one week. The most critical part was at the end of the week beginning with Holy Thursday. It ended on Sunday morning Jesus' Holy Resurrection from the dead without which all else would have been in vain. (see I Corinthians 15:12–22)

The three hours of Jesus' crucifixion from 12 noon until 3 PM became the crucible for a new beginning. Three days later, He rose from the dead which became our Sunday morning. Without the resurrection of Jesus all else is in vain. From these humble beginnings, a new beginning started. It grew, multiplied and spread to all places and raised all times filling Earth with Jesus's blessing from heaven where He reigns eternally. It is similar to the spreading of a germ but for a good cause. When a germ finds a home in the body, it grows, multiplies and spreads. It continues until something is able to overcome it.

Motherhood within the family of the human race began with the forming of the first mother called Eve. Adam, her husband, had everything yet he was very unhappy because he had no one to share it with. Loneliness is a dreaded disease. He had something precious deep within himself which he could not bring out to enjoy. It took an act of God by means of an unusual operation. Holy Scriptures describe it in this manner. (Genesis 2:21–22) God put Adam into a deep sleep, somewhat like the administering of anesthetics to someone before a major surgery. Taking one of Adam's ribs, God formed Eve. It is interesting to note that Adam, the man, had the feminine within himself but it needed to be brought out for him to enjoy. He was unable to do this by himself. It took an act of God.

Eve was the first mother but it was not until after many years, even centuries later that the mother who exemplified all motherhood in highest and noblest form was manifested in the person of mother, known as the Mother of God, St. Mary, the saint about all saints. This too was made possible by an act of God in a mystery whereby a virgin bore a child yet retained her virginity not only in body but in mind and soul. This was possible because Mary allowed God to take blood from her from which the Christ child, the Son of God was conceived. By virtue of His shedding of blood on the Cross received from her, that is his mother St. Mary, in Jesus' ultimate resurrection from the dead, that she and all like her received something precious, more than that by Adam in having his Eve. In permitting God to come into her life, co-mingle in her essence, the best of St. Mary was brought forth for her to enjoy and those around her, even to this day. It was by an act of God, through her son and Lord Jesus, that the best of Mary was brought out.

Motherhood is not confined to a woman who brings a child into the world. Motherhood is the embodiment of all noble characteristics and virtues as demonstrated in the life of the Mother of God, St. Mary and her son, Jesus, who made all this possible by the six-hour of His being on the cross and subsequent resurrection from the dead.

In that, one witnesses the naked truth of God... His total emptying of Himself and total commitment towards all, which is the essence of motherhood in its noblest form. God calls all, male and female, fathers and mothers, single persons or married, leaders and followers, priests and laity to cultivate and develop the noble virtues of motherhood. This is the reason for God's creative act and the primary mission and ministry of the church.

This can be seen in the Feast of the World Church celebrated on the third Sunday of Easter known as Green Sunday. In a sense every church, regardless of its size, is a "world" church which in its worship service the world is brought to her people and the congregation in turn taken to the world by the Blessed Sacrament celebrating Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. Not only are they brought into contact with all of mankind but also the family of God in heaven.

Theological truths, dogma, doctrines, rites and orders, holy traditions, etc., as ultimate expressions of religious truths are important but they are not enough. Children of the Armenian Church are blessed with a rich tradition. The survival of the Church and her people despite enormous odds, seemingly insurmountable obstacles, can conjure a pride of belonging and retaining her existence but these are not merits for one's acceptance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Belonging to the Orthodox, the correct faith, calls one to greater responsibilities as an individual in lifestyle, behavior and attitude. As the Lord says, "Everyone to whom much is given, much will be required." (Luke 12:48)

Mountain climbers know well that the higher one ascends, the more difficult it becomes. God's intent is not an adherence to a set of rules and procedures or even traditions as done in the Old Testament days but to be moved by the spirit of the Gospel as witnessed in the early life of the church in the New Testament. The words of Jesus to the Pharisees are as true today as then... "for you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith; these you ought to have done without neglecting the others." (Matthew 23:23) It is not living by the 'letter of the law' and all that it prescribes that will improve and sustain life but by the 'spirit of the law' of the Holy Gospels, the culmination of which came in the crucifixion of Jesus, manifesting the heart and soul of God, that is the motherhood of God in its pristine form. Like the Cross, which was a one-time happening in the history of man, but fills all of heaven and Earth, so too, motherhood radiates from a particular person and encompasses everything within it everything near and far until the very end and beyond. Motherhood in the worship service of the Holy Sacrifice, called in Armenian, Soorp Badarak, go hand-in-hand.

FEAST OF THE APPARITION OF THE HOLY CROSS

The sign of the cross appeared in the skies over Jerusalem during the day in the year 350 A.D. Its appearance was quite apparent and vivid being brighter than the light of the day and witnessed by many for a long period of time. Heated debates were taking place at the time amongst church fathers concerning the natures of Christ... was he an ordinary human being like us and accepted by God or was he in our likeness but whose divine nature rules his human nature? These delicate issues caused volatile debates and arguments. The church's position known as orthodoxy claims Him to be equally human and God; being truly both at the same time without confusion, somewhat similar to the union and relationship of the body, mind and soul within us.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem of that day, Cyril, wrote a letter to the Emperor about this happening. The Emperor was encouraging a return of Arian ideas emphasizing the human over the divine nature. Cyril used the appearance of the cross as a sign of God championing the Orthodox viewpoint.

God's intent was not about theological or doctrinal truths but to convey His merciful love for the healing and well-being of his children. He did this by preparing the way before his appearance. He appeared in the person

of Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ, that is the anointed one. Jesus lived for 33 years of which the last three were given to His ministry. The last week was critical and took place in the three-hour span during His crucifixion on the cross, from 9 AM until 3 PM. The time between 12 noon and 3 PM is when the skies in the world darkened and was the most critical before giving his last human breath. Three days later he rose from the dead, being buried late on the first day (Friday) and rising on the third day, Sunday morning. From these very humble beginnings Christianity spread to all places, everywhere throughout the world and to all times reaching and establishing itself in heaven where it reigns eternally.

It is similar to the spreading of the germ but for good cause. When the germ finds a home in the body, it grows, multiplies and spreads. It does not stop until something is done to overcome it, such as the body immune system and medication to facilitate the operation. God's action in human history is somewhat like that process but for a good cause. What Jesus did in a short period of time amongst his people, gradually grew and spread throughout the world. The appearance of the cross was not to establish religious truths, important as they may be, but a manifestation of the merciful love of God like that of a mother for her child. One might say that the crucifixion of Christ manifests the motherhood of God to mankind; a constant total giving of oneself for one's family.

Glory to the Holy Cross of Christ. Glorious praise to His crucifixion. Glorious praise to His burial. Glorious praise to His Holy Resurrection. Christ is risen from the dead. Blessed be the resurrection of Christ.

ASCENSION

Ascension denotes movement; an upward movement; Jesus' Ascension into heaven and His return to our Heavenly Father. God is movement in all directions and at all times. If the movement stops, He stops being God. To understand Jesus' ascension into heaven one must understand the perpetual motion, action of God in regard to the universe and the human race. God's action took on a personal touch through his Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; in His Incarnation, Baptism, Transfiguration, Trial and Suffering, Crucifixion and Burial, Resurrection and Ascension which brought about the open return of the Holy Spirit. A full cycle took place but it did not stop there, for with the coming and arrival of the Holy Spirit Christ was brought to the world and the lives of human beings from generation to generation, so they could be with God their Creator.

Why was this necessary?

What started with God in the beginning was brought to a halt by the hands of man. The human race didn't want to be a party to this God's plan of action that was, you might say, man-ward bound but stopped. The original human being became unrecognizable because the natural flow and circulation with the Creator ceased and was caught off. The acts of God through Christ restarted the movement and circulation so that those of the human race who wished to grow and reach full stature according to the intent of the Creator could do so.

God is in constant movement in motion yet He remains one and the same. It may be said that God causes changes because of movement and change within Him leads that to fulfillment. God remains the same because movement does not affect his total being. Paradoxically as it may seem, changes needed for something to remain the same. Change has to take place within a given body, structure, institution, etc., for

the continuance of his existence and identity. No part of the human body or organic structure ever stays the same. From the moment of conception, the organs, nerve system, bone structure, circulation of blood, etc., are constantly undergoing change. Our whole is in a state of flux. It is by this process that one's appearance is retained and remains recognizable. If change is inhibited to the point where it is stopped, a sudden and radical change takes place in the appearance and becomes almost unrecognizable.

How is circulation or change stopped?; by being turned inward towards one's own self a self-centeredness of being in one's existence. Being conscious of one's own existence is not wrong. God has created everything. Every individual human being is the result of the creative act and the center of God's attention. There's nothing wrong with that. But it becomes damaging and detrimental to one's own existence when isolationism takes place from those around about a person. It is similar to the flow of AC current where the electrical current alternates and in DC where the current is direct and only in one way and direction. Movement has to be both ways for a healthy condition to be had; a development of a type of temperament and disposition which reflects a giving off as soon as it has received, having the ability to receive and instantaneously give at the same time causing a change but yet being a constant flow like the running waters of the river.

ASCENSION – MEMORIAL DAY

With the celebration of the Ascension of Jesus to God the Father we commemorate the event when Jesus returned to the eternal abode from where He came. With the presence of Jesus God lived in the midst of us. The manhood of God began with the birth of Jesus, the Only- begotten Son of God. After 30 years He preached the life-giving Word of God and then was crucified and died. The body born of the Virgin Mary rose from the dead by virtue of the power of its divine nature, and it became a glorified enlightened body. It ascended returning to the Father from Whom He had come.

The return trip home is always a pleasant experience. As a child especially, we can recall how after an absence we yearn to return to the home of our parents to savor the home cooking and relax in the comforts and pleasantries of home which are difficult if not impossible to duplicate.

The Church being our spiritual home is where our souls are comforted. It nourishes and comforts, heals and consoles our souls. When our sojourn in this world is ended, the soul yearns to be accepted and found worthy to enter our heavenly Father's habitation to be with our Lord who cared for us in this life. We want to ascend as he did and live a life of blissful happiness.

Memorial Day is the day set aside each year to honor our dead especially those who gave their lives for our country. If they hadn't made this sacrifice themselves, we would not be able to enjoy that which we possess today. One of our prized possessions is the privilege of living in this land whose government is designed to be ruled by the people, for the people and of the people. This is a gift to us.

The sons of the first fathers of this nation left their homes, with some never returning, so that this nation could be born. It was born in pain but its birth brought the reward of new joys. The sacrifice of the sons and daughters of the following generations made it possible for it to continue to live on. They too left their homes with many never returning again. If they hadn't, it is doubtful we would enjoy that which we have today. We

acknowledge with grateful hearts the supreme sacrifice of all these men and women who were of different nationalities, races, colors and faiths and who unselfishly rendered this service for others to enjoy.

We acknowledge with grateful hearts also in remembering the supreme sacrifice of those warriors who fought in the battle of Sardarabad, a victory that assured Armenia its continual existence and for the Armenian people. She still nurtures her children with the traditions and customs of the past and enriches us by those same traditions and customs, we who are living in other lands. She leads, guides, protects and enriches us and our children.

Moment of reflection awakens a gratitude to those who made this possible for us and this in turn prompts the spirit of Thanksgiving to arise within us to the Almighty for this precious gift radiating upon the Feast of our Lord's ascension to our Heavenly Father.

ASCENSION **(LUKE 24:50, 51)**

Jesus' ascension took place 40 days after his resurrection from the dead. As He lifted His arms He blessed his Apostles and like a bird with outstretched wings, He rose ascending into heaven. He did not flap His arms like a bird would with its wings but ascended by an innate power and energy defying the gravitational law of nature which says whatever goes up must come down. If power energy takes a human being beyond the gravitational sphere as in a rocketed spaceship, man enters into a state of weightlessness, and uncontrollable condition unless tied to a space vehicle.

God's law states that what comes down must go up. God in becoming a member of the human family descended to our condition. But now He returns. An index of inexhaustible energy, the power of the Holy Spirit, granted Jesus the power to rise from the dead. Jesus's resurrection was not covered by the law of nature but by God's law. For 40 days, He appears periodically to his Apostles and disciples, his mother, and others of his followers. In the reading of Luke 24:36 – 43 we see the resurrected body has flesh and bones and broiled fish.

What is God's purpose in all of this?

By His life mission Jesus brought a piece of heaven to Earth. Heaven is a place where there is perpetual motion because of an inexhaustible energy. One does not become tired, one does not sleep there. There is no time to become bored. The piece of heaven that Jesus left on the planet Earth is the Church. It is where the Christians renew their energy. We see this in Luke 24:51–53. While He blessed them, he parted from them and ascended into heaven. And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the Temple blessing God.

There is an Armenian saying about Lake Sevan that it is "a piece fallen from heaven." It is the highest freshwater lake in the world surrounded by mountains. There is always a strong wind blowing over the lake causing an agitated condition. Lake Sevan seems to be in a state of unrest with perpetual motion with

unlimited energy like that heaven. There is danger, however, of the lake drying up. Too much water is being drawn off upsetting a delicate balance in nature. A tunnel was bored through a nearby mountain drinking water from the Arpa River averting, temporarily at least, a disaster. Fortunately the level is not receded and remains steady on the same level.

A piece of heaven could have been lost but God's piece of heaven remains eternally because it is not covered by the law and or nature. As cooperation was needed by man with nature to save Lake Sevan, man's cooperation with God is necessary to enjoy this piece of inexhaustible energy that is in a state of continual perpetual motion.

"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In my father's house there are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you, I will come again and take you to myself and that is where I and you may be also." (John 14:1 – 3)

What a relief! Everything is taken care of. A place is being prepared for each of us in the house that is already built. Our room is being prepared for our arrival. It's God's home. He owns it. So we must live by his rule..." believe in God and believe in Me" says Jesus.

Our homes and places of habitation are in constant change. In the beginning there never seem to be large enough rooms. At a certain point of life, they become too big and so changes are needed for a smaller place; first, maybe to a condominium, and then sometimes to a one room apartment. There is a bird whose nest is called 'a palace in the sky.' It is 10 times larger than what it needs. After its siblings begin to fly, they abandon the nest, never to return.

God's creation is more than what we need. The problem is that we are never satisfied. Our wants always outweigh our needs. As a result we become crippled.

God had another child to help; the crippled children, his brothers and sisters. In this we gain insight to the divine motherly characteristics and instincts of God. This is not seen in nature where the female may expel the male or at times they even slay them after bearing the young; the parents, even the mother, may remain indifferent to the fighting battles of the young by not interfering. The stronger ones deprive the weaker of food, sometimes causing them to die from starvation. We do not see this in nature - a mother animal nursing a crippled offspring back to health. They leave it to die or to remain as food for predators. God helps all of His children who are crippled in spirit. He prepares a place for them to stay and provides for their needs eternally under the condition that they remain faithful to his Commandments believing in Him as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

ASCENSION

In the singing of the Trisagion..."Holy God, Holy Almighty and Holy and immortal Who ascended in glory to the Father, have mercy upon us." It is interesting to note that it does not mention heaven but rather to the

Father. Heaven and Earth are created, but Jesus' ascension was beyond creation and went directly to the Godhead from Whom He had come.

Little is written in the Gospel about the birth and resurrection in comparison to the missionary life of Christ and less is written about His Ascension but, nevertheless, these have been the source of inspiration for the great works in the field of fine arts such as music, paintings, sculpturing, etc., bringing out the geniuses of these great masters. God did not become man to make ingenious but to fulfill the needs of man's spiritual salvation in order to comfort the weary, strength the weak in spirit, healed the sick, etc.

The major portion of the Gospels relate to the life of Christ and his ministry and teaching and especially as to how we of the human race might be able to become like Him. The reason for God's manhood in the writing of the Scriptures was in a sense to take away practical ideas concerning the way man should live. They were attracted to Jesus' supernatural but not to His supernatural teachings. But it should be remembered that it is the 'sayings' of Jesus that alleviate permanent the pains of the world. The sayings of Jesus were too much to bear. They were about what to do as to what is right and wrong and as to righteousness and unrighteousness. They were also about justice and injustice and duties, attitudes, speech, etc. of man and being practical, concrete ways of life to bring lasting peace to the souls of man upon Earth. But in the eyes of man these demands seem too great because the worldly sacrifice seemed too much and too great to bear.

If man searches the Scriptures diligently he will find spiritual satisfaction but within the contents of the teachings of the Church; but why from the mysteries of the birth and the ascension?

I believe it is because if we've reached a point of satiety or satisfaction, we become dissatisfied and disillusioned with what we have and begin to descend from that which brought the satisfaction. The teachings of Jesus are concrete and practical advice. The mysteries are needed to keep man's appetite and craving for the unknown. If man has no appetite he has reached the point of satiety where craving has ceased. God acts in history in a way to keep the appetite of the hearts and minds of man searching for higher and nobler goals. Could this be the reason why our church fathers chose the Gospel readings of Jesus' Commandments to his disciples to go and teach, baptizing the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rather than the reading on the ascension itself?

ASCENSION

**"YOU WHO HAVE ASCENDED GLORIOUSLY TO THE FATHER IN HEAVEN
HAVE MERCY UPON US"**

(TAKEN FROM THE TRISAGION ON THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION)

The ascension of our Lord into heaven was actual and real. It took place at a time and place in history. We believe that if we were with the Apostles we too are witnessing Christ ascend bodily into heaven just as they did. The Apostle Thomas had some doubt as to the reality in actuality of the risen Lord and Jesus said to him after his resurrection, "come and feel" when Thomas saw and felt he believed and Jesus said, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet believed." It should be understood that there are two types of seeing. One is with our physical eyes which encompasses within it the eyes of our minds and our living experiences, while the other is through the eyes of our hearts and souls.

We did not have the actual experience of seeing the ascension, but we do have the experience and opportunity to learn of the witnessing of that truth in the lives of the Saints within the working of the church and through the experience of our own personal lives; but firstly though it is through the workings of our personal lives.

One of the major reasons why we believe in Jesus' glorious Ascension is because we know that through the experience of incorporating his teachings and commandments into our lives we have experienced an ascension that is a spiritual uplifting. That's why we are convinced of His being the Son of God and our Savior. Not only do we believe this to be true for ourselves but for all of mankind. It is through Him that man has ascended to a new and dynamic relationship with God. A way was made open for spiritual ascent. Experience is sufficient, scientific data and philosophical explanations are not needed. Where did he return to? In the Trisagion we read "To the Father in heaven." That is, he returned to the glory from where He had never left. Christ is God in the flesh. We should not look for a specific answer because it would only be speculative. We should remember what the two men in white apparel said to the Apostles. (Acts 1: 10–11) "That is all there is until he returns, so go and do what He commanded. You have your orders."

Therefore it is incorporating Jesus into our lives and experiencing an ascended life that we also will experience our Lord's ascension which will become more understandable for us.

ST. JOHN 20:19

Then the same day (that is that day of Jesus' resurrection) at evening, being the first day of the week when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, that Jesus came and stood in their midst and said unto them, "Peace be unto you."

On the 40th day after Easter, that is, after Christ's glorious resurrection, we celebrate his Holy Ascension into heaven. It has also been designated as a day when we remember the transfer of the Supreme Patriarchal Chair of all Armenians from the city of Sis in Cilicia to Holy Echmiadzin, in the year 1441 A.D. When the Roupenian dynasty in Cilicia fell after the death of Levon V, the clergy in Armenia, who were known as the Eastern clergy, under the leadership of Gregory of Dathev, held a council in 1441. It was decided then with approval of all to return the Mother Chair from Sis, where he had been situated since the time of the Catholicos Krikor Bahlavoni in 1147, to Holy Echmiadzin. With the election of Giragos Vribatzi, whose election was accepted by all contesting parties, the Supreme Patriarch Catholicos officially again became located in Holy Echmiadzin where it has remained to this very day.

The words of Christ to his disciples, "Peace be unto you" is the proclamation of the Armenian Church conveying Christ's peace to its faithful during the course of the Divine Liturgy and other services. One often hears the words... "Khaghaghoutiun amenetsoon" which means "Peace be to all" and also "For the peace of the world and the establishment of your Holy Church." From this we can see that the supplication for peace is not only made for a particular group or sect, but for all of mankind; not only for the Armenian Church but for all members of Christ's holy body. The pronouncement of the church is like a radio signal relaying the message of the Only-begotten Son of God the four corners of the Earth, but not as the world would like to hear it but as Christ gave it, as we read in St. John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you not as the world gives do I give it to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Because the message isn't of this world or the way one would prefer to hear it, it is a reason why it is often misunderstood. We may ask, but why does it have to be repeated as often as it is especially during the Divine Liturgy Service? Why isn't one pronouncement sufficient?

In answering we make an analogy in no perfect sense though with the heart. Why isn't one beat of the heart enough to start and keep the blood circulating for the duration of our life? We know that the body was formed in such a way that with each beat, new and fresh basic essential nourishment is pulsated into the bloodstream taking the place of the old whose function has been served. Similarly, the message of peace through the Church is basically the same at all time. Because it is speaking to a new day and age, the Church has to be ever mindful of the new conditions and situations that are prevalent and in turn constantly breathe into the new, new and essential vitality. In that way, the new generation will have the right sense of direction to follow and have a healthy outlook in its perspective into the future. That is why we have to be constantly reminded, and why the message has to be continuously ringing out.

When we hear and understand the message of peace and let it pulsate its energy into our inner being, then we will be convinced we have found an unbeatable combination, which we will consider it to be the bread line of our life; a life of peaceful existence; a personal piece which molds the broken segments of our life into an integral, healthy whole; and an external peace to be shared with all men making the swords of war into plowshares of peace. This is the role of the Armenian Church beginning from its center, Holy Echmiadzin, to convey and work for the establishment of the peace of Christ in the world. Therefore, when we hear the message of peace being chanted during the services, that is be mindful of its purpose and join within the Deacon beseeching the Lord for the peace in the world and the establishment of His Holy Church, so that we may share in his greeting to the Apostles of "Peace be unto you."

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER **SECOND PALM SUNDAY AND PENTECOST**

The Seventh Sunday of Easter known as second Palm Sunday is found in the Ascension days of the Easter season. This is that ten day period from Ascension Day (40th day of Easter) until Pentecost (50th day of Easter) when the arrival of the Holy Spirit is celebrated. The songs peculiar to Ascension are sung such as the Trisagion (Soorp Asdvadz) variable of "who ascends in the glory to the Father." On the feast of Pentecost the variable "who came and rested upon the Apostles" is sung.

To understand the meaning more fully a step needs to be taken to the period of the Great Lent which is tied with Easter. The beginning of the 40 days of fasting is determined by when Easter is celebrated each year. The Great Lenten period is a time for reflection over the fallen state of the human soul caused by the separation from God. The day before the fast days which is considered to be the first Sunday of the Great Lenten period is called "The Day of Good Living"(Poon Paregentan) when the blessed days of Paradise, where the lives of the first parents lived in the Garden of Eden, are recalled when they were together as one with God. Their relationship was a loose one, in which they were not together with God for 24 hour periods each day. There were times when there was an absence of God's presence, that sin, which was the cause for the separation, took place. The first parents realized the wrong they had committed and were afraid to be seen by God and so they "hid themselves"(Genesis 3:8). Until then the relationship was a pleasant coming and going meeting of each other. The ties were severed and the relationship alternated after the introduction of sin into their lives." Communication with God henceforth was through intermediaries...sacrifices, later priests and offerings and

then prophets before the coming of Christ through Whom the obstacles were removed so that the relationship was as it was in the beginning, a free and open, unfearful coming and going.

It brings to mind thoughts of Christmas time as seen through the eyes of a child when there is a great anticipation with the coming of St. Nick in the great joy with his arrival. Sadness sets in though when he leaves. The whole of its return, however, the following year buoys the spirit though knowing that Santa shall return once again.

The coming and return of the Lord with the celebration of Pentecost – the arrival of the Holy Spirit – in the middle of the year brings and refreshes the faithful as the spirit of Christmas does for a child, but in this instance it is for the children of God. In enjoying his holy presence the faithful become one with him once again and move about freely, coming and going, because they know that He is not too far away. The question arises though, will they be happy because of the blessed union or seek to hide themselves like the first parents after the fall into sin? The church endeavors always to bring about a happy reunion.

Jesus said, "I have told you this while I am still with you. The counselor and comforter, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you." (John 14:25)

Pentecost, that is the arrival of the Holy Spirit of God, is 50 days after the resurrection of our Lord from the dead and ten days. It took place in the Upper Room where the Last Supper was held and Jesus instituted the Divine Liturgy, which is the basis of our Holy Eucharist worship service known in the Armenian Church as the Soorp Badarak service. This was the first Christian church and is found in Jerusalem. It is the mother church of all churches throughout the world. Pentecost that is 'the Arrival of the Holy Spirit' is the celebration of the first Christian Church's birth, baptism and confirmation or chrismation meaning the taking on of Christ. It was the beginning of a new era known as the era of the Holy Spirit which continued to this very day I shall continue into the future forever.

The mission of the Holy Spirit is to bring Jesus Christ to the world. And with Him comes the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit; and together they bring evil to submission, free mankind and grant salvation of the soul. On the day of Pentecost, the Apostles, Jesus' mother Mary, and His disciples and faithful gathered in the Upper Room. They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Artist renditions always show St. Mary in the midst of the Apostles sitting on the chair on a slightly elevated level, noting her position of preeminence amongst them and the most revered, honored and respected amongst all the saints. But there is something more than a matter of position and title of honor. Her presence or the spirit thereof exerts a great influence, an influence known as 'the silent' presence. St. Mary had NO authority, nor was she a spokesperson on an official capacity, nor did she ever seek any of them. But yet by her presence she exerted a very strong and positive influence over the early Church like ours and adherers of the traditional faith such as those of the Catholic and Orthodox faiths. St. Mary's conduct and behavior was an example before all individuals and institutions as to how to conduct their lives and businesses. Her life was an embodiment and reflection of the seven cardinal virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are Humility, Contentment, Meekness, Diligence, Liberality, Temperance and Chastity.

The New Testament of the Holy Scriptures took shape and form within the framework of the early Church, again were the virtues of this great woman reigned. From the beginning and in subsequent years, the Church Fathers grappled with important issues and made momentous decisions concerning the teachings of the faith.

There were heated discussions and debates, at times turning into ugly quarrels and arguments. Even wars were fought over issues concerning faith. St. Mary's silent presence always was a reminder to them and the world as to their true calling and how to conduct their lives. In the propagation of the Gospel of the "Good News", the Apostles etched and carved the spirit of Mary on the new converts bringing Christ into their lives by her since Jesus her son was an inseparable part of her life. This is the heart of the Armenian soul which can be seen in the sanctity of the home where seven cardinal virtues are embodied and reflected – in the gifts of the Holy Spirit – humility, contentment, meekness, diligence, liberality, temperance and chastity.

What the world needs today what the church needs to rejuvenate within her and sacred walls, is the spirit of St. Mary, the highest and noblest specie of the human race to be born of earthly parents. Her parents were St. Joachim and St. Anna.

St. Mary is the highest and noblest expression of the workings of the Holy Spirit in our midst; the Holy Spirit, our counsellor and comforter Who brings the peace of Jesus into our lives and the world as He had promised.

ARRIVAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

"BUT THE COMFORTER WHICH IS THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOM THE FATHER WILL SEND IN MY NAME,

HE WILL TEACH YOU ALL THINGS AND BRING ALL TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE, WHATSOEVER I HAVE SAID TO YOU."(JOHN 14:26)

The Arrival of the Holy Spirit of God is called 'Pentecost,' meaning 50 days after Easter, that is called 'Hoki Kaloust' in the Armenian Church. With the arrival of the spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, we hear in the reciting of the Nicene Creed... "But we glorify Him was before the ages, worshipping the Holy Trinity and one Godhead Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and always and I unto the ages of ages." We hear of it once more in the doxology of the Divine Liturgy..."Blessed art Thou, Holy Spirit verily God." It's manifestation also took place when Jesus was baptized as He went up straight way from out of the water at which time the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended upon Him (Jesus) like a dove.(Matthew 3:16) and also at Pentecost after Jesus's resurrection from the dead where we read," there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of a fire that sat upon each of them."(Acts 2:3) As a Comforter of the sick with spiritual medication; by a heavenly visitation it is also a grantor of security while recuperating serving as an overall uplifting of the morale of the sick. Jesus was comforted by His healing miracles; preaching of the divine will of God and by His presence gave inspiration to the inner spiritual lives of the faithful and by His many miracles. The apostles turned to Him and did not fear when He was present. They had a deep conviction and trust in Him and His word, although they did not know its full meaning at the time they heard it. Jesus knew by his departure that they, the Apostles and disciples would be confused and their security undermined, setting in fear for which He foretells of the coming of the comforter to teach and to remind them what he had taught them and more so to understand the meaning of all that he had said by which they felt His living presence and love amongst them again.

This fulfillment took place when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room which came in the form of fiery tongues. They regained their confidence, fear was dispersed and it felt the living presence of their Master who comforted them, and equip them to break the dangers and preach the "Good News." Immediately they went into the streets of Jerusalem and began to preach to those present in various tongues. People marveled and asked," aren't these Galileans who are fishermen and disciples of

Jesus? How can they speak in foreign tongues? They must be drunk from wine. Peter explained to them that this was the fulfillment of God's promise spoken by the Prophet Joel (2:4-8)..."And it shall come to pass in the last days" says God, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh."

The "Good News" was not only preached in the regions of Judea but also in Armenia, a nation of people that were devastated by continuous wars and who knew suffering. The preaching of the Apostles gave them spiritual comfort. Their hearts were made ready by the centuries of hardship that they endured and its message found the place in their hearts and took hold quickly which is the reason for them to be the first nation to accept Christianity as their faith. The Holy Spirit through the Church brought Christ into their lives. The Church, imperfect as it may be because her members are imperfect, is perfected by the presence of the Holy Spirit of God which is the reason why it is a refuge, comforter and security to all of her faithful.

In remembering the true meaning of this feast day, we should remember our baptism at which time we were sealed with the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of confirmation called in Armenian 'Gnunk' meaning being sealed, that is, sealed by the Holy Spirit of God.

ADVENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the introit which is the introduction of this feast day we read, "We worship and confess Thee, Holy Spirit, to be God. You who are the cause of all living things and the giver of peace to the world and fill the unknown in the minds of the disciples with abundant knowledge, you appeared in the form of fiery tongues to them. We beseech, O Lord, take care of us and save us."

In the Nicene Creed, we recite, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the uncreated and the perfect, the spoken the laws and the prophets and in the Gospels. Who came down upon the Jordan, preached in the Apostles and lived in the Saints."

The introit is the theme and sets the pattern of worship for the day and the Creed is a guide directing our thinking so it will be led on the right and correct path which is known as the Orthodox faith.

Advent of the Holy Spirit is also called Pentecost meaning the 50th day referring to the 50th day after Easter. It is not a major feast day but is part of and completes the Easter cycle.

Who or what is the Holy Spirit? He is acknowledged to be the third person of the Holy Trinity of God being Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is easier though to identify the Father and the Son as persons of the one Godhead because there is much about them that we can relate to which is similar to our own person such as the voice of God the Father and His paternal strict disciplinary behavior towards His children, the Israelites and the revelation of the person of God the Son as a human being. But the person of God, the Holy Spirit, is almost incomprehensible and very elusive. You do not know when or in what shape or form it will be revealed. Jesus explains it this way..."That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I sent to you, 'you must be born again.' The wind blows where it wants to and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know from where it comes or to where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."(John 3:6-8)

The Holy Spirit is God, being both uncreated and perfect. The Spirit of God causes all things to be and gives peace. It makes the unknown to be known and appears as a dove, fiery tongue and the burning bush. The Spirit of God is described in the book of Genesis as a movement over the face of the waters in the beginning

of creation. The Spirit of God spoke in the Laws, the Prophets, the Gospels and preached in the Apostles and lived in the Saints. By the Spirit of God Jesus rose from the dead (Romans 8:11) and ascended to God the Father. By the Spirit of God the consecrated bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus. By the Spirit of God, Jesus is brought to us and we are taken to Jesus. It causes us to repent and to be humble. In other words, the Spirit of God makes everything alive. The whole creation and all of mankind (which includes all of us), live by this power that we cannot explain, describe or identify because it comes and goes like the wind, but we do know it exists because people have witnessed it and experienced it in the past and in the present often enough.

By the Spirit of God our existence as a people and as a nation has prevailed. No one can explain otherwise how we have reached this point in history other than by the Hand of God. By the Spirit of God that which we do shall live on. Our trust and I hope in the Spirit because we are convinced that it alone is the only truth and that it alone is the only real. It is that which dispenses pessimism from us and gives to us optimism which is a hope and a new life. Make the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit always be in our midst...The day of Pentecost, the Arrival of the Holy Spirit

PENTECOST ARRIVAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The 'Arrival of the Holy Spirit of God' 50 days after the resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, is the most important day of the human race. It is the last day of the Easter season when the partition or curtain separating heaven from Earth was removed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, inaugurating a new day and age for mankind. In a sense, it is considered the final act of God's creative action, an action that never ceases but continues to that which comes into being. Being omniscience, that is all-knowing, God in His infinite wisdom knew all that was to happen before it happened. That is, before anything was made, that is the heavens and Earth, God knew what was to happen to the greatest of His creative act that of the human being and its downfall and need for recovery. This exquisite creation, that is of the human being, was delicate and very vulnerable to intrusion by an evil force. The story of the Bible reveals to mankind what God knows and had predetermined would happen for man to live once more by His grace. Speaking in human terms, God knew that in time, He would become actively and intimately involved in the recovery process which is seen in the incarnation and grace-saving events of Holy Week culminating in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Before Jesus' ascension into heaven and return to God the Father, there was the grand commission to His Apostles (Matthew 28:16-20). The empowerment took place ten days later with the Arrival of the Holy Spirit which descended in the form of fiery tongues upon them and the faithful gathered in the Upper room while they were in prayer. A new energy was released, a spiritual energy, for the recovery and renewal of God's creative act, mainly that of the human soul and heart. Henceforth the old Adam could become a new Adam in Jesus Christ and old Eve, is called to be a new Eve as seen in the person of St. Mary, the God-bearer, by reason of her son, Jesus, being the son of God. The Holy Spirit does this by bringing the spirit of Jesus into the lives of the faithful. The life of Jesus brought about the arrival of the Holy Spirit. The working relationship of the two, indeed all three of the Holy Trinity is intrinsically interwoven like a great art work where there is a symphony of harmony and cooperation. The three of the One Godhead are always in tune with each other

ARRIVAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE"(JOHN 14:6)

Absolute truth is relative to each individual's personal persuasion. For a Christian absolute truth is the person of Jesus Christ but individual and collective interpretations vary, thus the reason for the formation of various

different Christian denominations. All agree that the truth emanates from the Spirit of God which appeared in various forms such as a strong wind and fiery tongues that rested upon the Apostles and faithful gathered in the Upper Room following Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. When they went out into the streets of Jerusalem and began to preach they were drunken men filled with the new wine. With this came the ability to converse in other languages and the Divine knowledge became fully known to them and by them in to the world at large where they communicate it to others.

While the Apostles remained in Jerusalem the number of faithful witnessed an extraordinary growth. So fulfilling the instructions of their Lord in bringing his teachings to the world, the Apostles dispersed with each going to a different land. Only the Apostle James remained in charge of the Church in Jerusalem.

Being equipped with the native tongue, the Apostles were able to communicate with those people and conveyed their Master's teachings in a simple manner as they were taught. Those seeking "the truth" were comforted by this enlightenment and converted to the newborn religion.

The revelation of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues is indicative of the manner in which God communicates. The language of an indigenous people is the expression of their soul. From this arose their culture. The soul and language of an individual is directly affected by the land in which that person lives. The native tongue of a people therefore is inseparable from their native land. One only has to move to a foreign land to realize this. Hearing this native language spoken not only is a comfort in being able to communicate in a natural way but transports that person spiritually to the land by bringing it to him. That is why when a person is totally detached from his fellow countrymen he is overjoyed in hearing and being able to converse once more in his native tongue, when his new environs are still strange and foreign to him.

But the world of truths and ideals is not bound by natural orders. As a concept of the mind, the truth relates to the spirit linking men of like minds together although their ancestry is different and they are separated from one another by living in different parts of the world. Thus men seeking "the truth" discover that they have a common desire to become one irrespective of where they live. Truth is often confused with the culture and native tongue. These, that is the culture and the native tongue, where vehicles by which truth can be introduced to the soul and there it is transformed into a cultural experience. But in order for it (the truth) to become functional, it must be made intelligible to the seeker.

The mission of the Church, in permitting the continual operation of the Holy Spirit within it is to relate to its community in a simple manner that is intelligible to them. Once this is established, being contingent upon the attitude of the seeker, the enlightenment and new revelation instill a desire to know and be acquainted with the native tongue and culture.

Therefore, in seeking "the truth", a way is opened for new horizons and a new life to take place in place of the old.

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is the day we commemorate the event when the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Upon instructions of our Lord they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They waited with hope in prayer and singing psalms. With the reception of the Holy Spirit the preparatory phase their apostleship was fulfilled. Their apprenticeship or period of study ended. This was their graduation and their diplomas were the license to speak on Jesus' behalf.

They became as one, being like in mind and spirit in serving the one Lord without losing their individual characteristics. Every one of them discovered his fulfillment in life in which he could strive toward his perfection. They now began to preach openly and started by preaching in the streets of Jerusalem. They spoke in various tongues to which the people marveled because they knew that they were Galileans men who were not well educated. The Galileans did not enjoy the reputation of being highly educated.

These non-Armenians preached in the Armenian language. They came and preached in Armenian bringing the Holy Spirit and the teachings of the 'Good News' with them. This did not harm nor destroy us but rather more firmly established our identity in the family of nations. It has brought out in us certain characteristics that were dormant within us. It developed certain potentialities that we possessed. It constantly unfolds new spiritual and cultural experiences, enriching and renewing our lives. The coming of the Holy Spirit to Armenia ultimately made us better Armenians.

This event, the coming of the Holy Spirit, was also the birth of the Church. We are celebrating today, then, the birthday of the Church. As the Apostles did, we come together in the House of God waiting hopefully in prayer and the singing of psalms for the coming of the Holy Spirit. We seek to lead us in our worship service, to bring us to God. Without this we feel lost.

The Holy Spirit turns on God within us. It makes believers of us and makes us worthy to be numbered among believers, something which we earnestly desire. By the Holy Spirit we recite the Nicene Creed which begins, "We believe in one God..." It is the Holy Spirit that prompts us to say this, otherwise what we say and do is only superficial and in the form of gestures.

We do not become less of a person because of it. But if we do find it, it brings with it a fulfillment in this life by constantly unfolding new and exciting experiences within us daily. We enjoy a rebirth of life through it.

As sung by the choir and the service, "Thou has come and rested upon the Apostles," we pray that you come and live in all of us.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
PROPHET ELIJAH-KING AHAB / ST. GREGORY-KING TRDAT
HOLY ECHMIADZIN

The first Sunday after Pentecost is always in the memory of the prophet St. Elijah. The following Saturday the feast of the release of St. Gregory from his imprisonment is celebrated, followed by the feast of Holy Echmiadzin the next day which is the second Sunday after Pentecost. What is the lesson derived by the arrangement of these feast days in this order and what do these three feast days have in common with one another?

First, the prophet Elijah lived during the middle of the 8th Century B.C. The ruling king at that time was Ahab, whose wife was Queen Jezebel. Under the influence of his wife, the Queen, Ahab looked now favorably towards the pagan cults and their prophets than those of his own people, the Israelites, whose prophets were openly persecuted. This led many of the people to become the followers of the pagan God Baal. This drastically weakened the Israeli religion to a point of crisis.

Elijah called the King to him and in a gathering before a huge crowd, he told the people to decide whether the Lord is God then to follow him; but if Baal, then to follow the King. But the people did not answer. Elijah then proposed that two bulls be offered; one by the prophets of Baal, who were 450 strong at this huge gathering and the other by Elijah who was the lone representative of the Hebrew faith and the God who answers by consuming the offering with fire, He is God. The people cried out saying, "So let it be."

The prophets of Baal gathered wood and placed the slain animal upon it and prayed from morning until noon but had no success. Then Elijah repaired the altar according to the instructions and customs of their religion and had wood and the offering placed on it. Then he had jars of water poured over them three times. He then prayed to God to answer his prayer and the fire of the Lord came and consumed the offering. Filled with a holy fear the people fell to the ground proclaiming, "The Lord, he is God."

Some 1,100 years later an incident happened but this time during the Christian era in Armenia. A man by the name of Gregory, who like Elijah was a great man in his faith, was imprisoned for 15 years because of a conflict he had with thinking because he refused to make an offering before the statue of the goddess Anahid. The king's name was Trdat and he too favored the heathen cults and persecuted the Christians especially the priests. The King became very sick and they had Gregory released from the prison to heal the ailing King. He healed him and in gratitude the King proclaimed Christianity to be the religion for all Armenians. A Civil War broke out between the forces who accepted the King's decision and those who opposed it. Eventually the King's forces were victorious. After the war they returned with Gregory to Vagharshabad and of a church according to a design Gregory had received in the vision. The name of the church is called Holy Echmiadzin, which is the haven of the faith of the Armenian people for more than 1500 years.

As in the days of old, today also God's light sometimes becomes almost indistinguishable within the varying and opposing views confronting man. We often wonder where is the Lord? Who is God? No matter how faint it may appear at times there is always a ray of light shining even though others attempt to extinguish it. The beam of Holy Echmiadzin remains lit by the fires set by God.

THE FEAST DAY OF THE PROPHET SAINT ELISHA

In Armenian his name is Yeghishe. He considered himself to be a humble follower of the prophet Elijah who was considered to be along with Moses and Abraham one of the greater personalities in the Old Testament. He was the son of a well-to-do farmer. One day as Elijah was passing by while Elisha was plowing the field, Elijah through his mantle (cloak) over him and Elisha followed him.

When Elijah knew that he would not live much longer he took Elisha with him to the River Jordan. He took off his mantle and beat the water which divided the waters of the river into two parts and the two parts and the two crossed over on dry ground. As they were going over Elijah asked Elisha what he would want and because he knew Elijah was greatly gifted in spirit, Elisha said, "Let a double portion of your spirit be upon me," to which Elijah replied, "You ask a hard thing but if you see me taken from you it shall be granted to you." As they were walking, there appeared a chariot of horses of fire and it parted them from each other and Elijah was taken up as by a whirlwind of fire into heaven.

Elisha, then taking up Elijah's mantle began to preach continuing Elijah's work. Everyone believed Elisha walked close to God, understood His purpose and had great influence with Him. When he predicted anything by the word of Yahweh (God-Jehovah) it was surely going to happen (1) miracles of feeding a hundred men

with a few loaves of bread as Jesus did but which Jesus fed over 5,000 not including the women and children. (2) the deliverance of Samaria from a siege...and when he prayed, he received an answer to his prayer by restoring the life of a dead child and (3) because of bewilderment amongst his enemies who had come to take him.

In Damascus the heathen Bahadad was sent to inquire about Yabuck by him whether he was to recover from his sick. Noawan, he declared "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the parts of the Earth but in Israel. More than any other prophets he took an active part in politics. He caused the downfall of the House of Ahab and Jezebel. Other prophets would advise and counsel, but Elisha intervened directly. He lived among the people as their friend and help. He would constantly move from place to place but was easily found and available for their needs. He went about doing good (1) restoring the life of a dead child of a Shumite woman; (2) purified the water supply but Jericho (3) provided for the hungry and was always helpful to all whether they were well known or not and He brought God home to them where they lived.

By his very example he demonstrated that the religion of Jehovah meant doing good and not to seek advantage over others by that, a trait that classifies him not only with the great man of Israel but all of Christendom. That is why he is numbered among the saints of the Christian Church.

3RD SUNDAY OF PENTECOST **ISAIAH 1:1-15**

The vision of the Prophet Isaiah in which the Lord speaks to him tell of the Lord nourished and raised the children (which is Israel) and they rebelled against him. He tells of how the ox knows his owner and donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know his master. They do not consider how God led them to the Promised Land but were ungrateful and began to disobey Him. He became a sinful nation that provoked the Holy One of Israel into anger. Because of this, God allows them to be overrun by their enemies. Only a small remnant remained faithful who remembered what God had done. The Israelites tried to win back God's favor by offering sacrifice but God would not listen to the prayers. In this lesson, taken from the Old Testament, where the dominating spirit instead of the Law of Moses, is to see that no righteousness comes from the law with offerings of sacrifices.

ROMANS 6:12-23

The Apostle St. Paul tells the Romans, "Do not live in sin but give the members of your body to be instruments of righteousness unto God for sin will no longer rule over you because you are not under the law but under grace. St. Paul continues to tell them that, "we do not say that we cannot sin because we are not under the law but grace. You know that to whatever you are willing to put your services to him that you are serving; whether it is sin to death or obedience unto righteousness." St. Paul reminds them that they were the servants of sin but now by obeying in their heart that the doctrine given to them by obeying they are made free from sin, and have become servants of righteousness and servants of God and that their reward will be satisfaction and eternal life through Jesus Christ.

This part of the lesson teaches us that grace is a gift of God through Christ unto eternal life for those who yield themselves to be servants of righteousness.

MATTHEW 12:1

Begins with Jesus and His disciples walking through a field and the Pharisees seeing His disciples eating the wheat, questioning Jesus whether it was lawful to do this on the Sabbath or not. Jesus tells them of how David ate of the bread in the Temple which was an unlawful act and also of the unlawful things that the priests did in the Temple on the Sabbath. He continued saying that there is one greater than the Temple in this place (referring to Himself) and if they understood this, He said, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice and you would have not condemned the guiltless because the Son of God is lord of the Sabbath."

