

St. Stephen's Program for Diploma
of Applied Orthodox Theology, A.H.O.S.
Directed Project:

*Menologion of the
Armenian Church*

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The information covered and impact of the project on the target audience:

The goal of this Directed Project was to design and produce a practical, easy to use, book of Armenian Feasts, Fasts and Saints to serve as a devotional aid for our faithful. It is designed to function as a companion to the “Smaller Armenian Breviary” prayer book which I produced for my previous directed project. It consists of a brief summary explanation for the primary feasts and fasts on the Armenian Church calendar. These are arranged in alphabetical order for easy reference. In order to assist the reader in ascertaining an accurate understanding of the Church’s emphasis and the significance of each feast and saint day, each summary explanation is supplemented by excerpts from our compendium of canonical hymns. These excerpts consist of a few stanzas of each hymn proper to the feasts (wherever available). This will enable the reader to use it as a practical resource to follow the Armenian Church’s daily observances of feasts and fasts.

The Primary texts consulted:

-All entries, unless otherwise noted, were adapted from the *Domar* of the Armenian Orthodox Theological Research Institute, *Domar, the Calendrical and Liturgical Cycle of the Armenian Orthodox Church*, (2006).

-Excerpts of Armenian Canonical Hymns (*Sharagans*) are taken from the: *Liturgical Canons and Hymns of the Armenian Eastern Church*, Rev. Fr. James Doyle, OCA,

-*Encyclopedia of Armenian Christianity* (2001), abbreviated EAC

The Secondary texts consulted:

-*Feasts of the Armenian Church and National Traditions*, Garo Bedrosian (1998).

-*Frequently Asked Questions on the Armenian Church*, (2004) abbreviated FAQAC

-*Orthodox Study Bible*, St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology (2008), OSB.

-*Saints And Sacraments*, Abp. Shnork Kaloustian (1964), SAS.

-*The Liturgy of the Hours of the Roman Rite* (1975)

Like the “Smaller Armenian Breviary,” no such book exists for English-speaking Armenian Christians. The only thing close to it is the “Domar” (Eng. = Almanac) by the Armenian Orthodox Research Institute which is very large, cumbersome and impractical for daily devotional use. This English collection of the Armenian book of Sharagans (or Canonical Hymns) is unpublished. Therefore it remains a treasury inaccessible to the faithful. Thus the newly produced Armenian Menologion may be a significant prayer aid to our faithful because it makes accessible liturgical texts and prayers from our “lex orandi” that currently are mostly unknown or unintelligible (in classical Armenian).

The result of this directed project is a substantial booklet with explanations of every feast, fast and saint on the Armenian Church’s traditional calendar -including the numerous saints of the greater catholic/orthodox Church tradition also on our calendar as well as excerpts from each corresponding canonical hymn. The ultimate material goal is the publication of this text as a prayer aid for personal, spiritual benefit of Armenian faithful throughout the diocese. Ultimately, I hope to make it available for parish use and throughout our diocese -with ecclesiastical approval. The Armenian Menologion is for all Armenian faithful who are looking to expand their prayer life and knowledge of our liturgical calendar. It can be a significant aid to become familiarized with a vast cross-section of texts (Historical, Biblical and Liturgical) relative to our Church’s liturgical observances. It will also assist in developing a more in-depth knowledge of the Church’s canonical cycle of feasts, fasts and saints. It can be a wonderful resource for clergy and laity alike as part of their daily devotional rule of prayer. In the months it took to produce this, it has helped me greatly in my own knowledge of the saints and feasts we celebrate. I pray this work, through the grace of Holy Spirit, will have a similar effect on others.

Armenian Menologion (Haysmavork)

Canonical Feasts and Fasts of the Armenian Liturgical Tradition

(Indexed in Alphabetical Order -except the Paschal Cycle which is included with the Great Fast)

+1st Ecumenical Council, 318 Holy Fathers: was held in Nicea in 325 A.D under Emperor Constantine the Great. 318 Bishops were present. It formulated the first part of the Symbol of Faith (the Creed), refuted the teachings of Arius and defined the divinity of the Son of God. Arius had denied the real divinity of Christ and taught that if Jesus was born, then there was a time when He did not exist. The Council declared Arius' teaching a heresy, unacceptable to the Church and re-affirmed that Christ is Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one is essence with the Father, through whom all things were made. St. Athanasius the Great, as a Deacon, played a pivotal role in the theological discussions and in the direct formulation of the Nicene Creed. This Symbol of Faith (as it is known by the Eastern Churches) became the foundation for all future dogmatic formulations. The anathema from the Council is recited to this day in the Armenian Liturgy by the Deacon following the recitation of the Creed by the people: "As for those who say there was a time when the Son was not, or there was a time when the Holy Spirit was not, or that they came into being out of nothing; or who say that the Son of God or the Holy Spirit are of a different substance and that they are changeable or alterable, such does the catholic and apostolic holy Church anathematize."

*O wonderful Fathers who gathered at the Council of Nicea
Always victorious in struggle
Assemblies of blessed unanimous bishops!
You uprooted the spoiling weed
You confirmed decisions for all peoples.*

*At that Council I saw...
The Word from the Father is confessed as Generation and not creation
Always of one essence with the Father and the Spirit
By clear and bright words schism was rejected
And Arius and his dirty heresy were handed over to anathema.
-SHARAGAN: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 5*

+2nd Ecumenical Council, 150 Holy Fathers: was held in Constantinople in 381 A.D under Emperor St. Theodosius the Great with 150 bishops present. Macedonius, somewhat like Arius, was misinterpreting the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit. He taught that the Holy Spirit was not a person [hypostasis], but simply a power [dynamic] of God. Therefore the Spirit was inferior to the Father and the Son. The Council condemned Macedonius' teaching and defined the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Council decreed that there is one God in three persons [hypostases]: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The council also discussed and condemned the teaching of Apollinaris with regard to the incarnation of Christ. Apollinaris taught a Christology (a doctrine of Christ) which denied that He assumed a full and complete humanity. The Council reaffirmed that at His incarnation, the Son of God truly became man, while remaining true God.

Lastly, the Holy Fathers of the Council completed the Creed by adding the last five articles to it regarding the Holy Spirit, the Church, Baptism and Resurrection.

*There arose the cursed root the second blasphemer Macedonius
The despoiling wolf aspired to cut the best lambs from the flock...
By catching them in his teaching
And throwing them down from their high position into the abyss
Macedonius, that blasphemous tongue, was handed over to anathema.*

*When once again the Council assembled they rejected wicked heresies
And confessed the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father
One in essence with the Son and Giver of life to all peoples
Macedonius that blasphemous tongued was handed over to anathema.*

-SHARAGAN: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 5

+3rd Ecumenical Council, 200 Holy Fathers: was held in Ephesus, Asia Minor, in 431 A.D under Emperor Theodosius II (grandson of Theodosius the Great). It was presided over by Cyril of Alexandria with 200 bishops present and addressed the Nestorian controversy. This concerned the nature of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Nestorius taught that the Virgin Mary gave birth to a man, Jesus Christ, not to God, the Logos-Word, Son of God. The Logos only dwelled in Christ, as in a Temple. Christ, therefore, was only Theophoros: The “Bearer of God.” Consequently, the Virgin Mary should be called “Christotokos” (Mother of Christ), and not “Theotokos” (Mother of God). Nestorianism over-emphasized the human nature of Christ at the expense of the divine. The Council denounced Nestorius’ teaching as erroneous. Our Lord Jesus Christ is one person, not two separate persons joined together. He is at once the Man, Jesus Christ and the Son of God, the Logos. The Council decreed that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is complete God and complete man, with a rational soul and body. The Virgin Mary is Theotokos because she gave birth not to man but to God who became man. The Council also declared the text of the Creed put forth at the First and Second Ecumenical Councils to be complete and forbade any changes to it.

*The Word put on flesh
The Bodiless One becomes flesh
United from two natures
He suffers on the four-winged cross
And arises from the tomb incorrupt
Nestorius and his impious heresy were handed over to anathema.*

-SHARAGAN: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 5

+Abdelsmeh, Ormisdan and Sayin, Martyrs: were Persian Christians who suffered and were martyred for preaching and defending the truth of the Gospel in the fourth and fifth centuries.

+Abgar the Witness and the first believing King: Known as Abgar V (4 B.C to A.D. 50), he was king of Edessa (now Ura in southern Turkey), a short lived, independent kingdom and a center of Christianity from a very early date. During the reign of King Abgar, many Armenians lived in Edessa. Some sources state that the king himself was Armenian. King Abgar is considered to be the first king to believe Christ was the Son of God as demonstrated through the miracles He performed. Afflicted with an incurable sickness, the king wrote to Christ, asking Him to come and heal him. The Savior replied to the king that He needed to complete His mission in Israel. However, He promised to send a messenger to cure the king and deliver to him the good tidings of eternal life.

Indeed, following the Ascension of Christ, St. Thaddaeus, one of the twelve Apostles, traveled to Edessa, preached the Gospel, and healed King Abgar and all the sick living in the city. Believing in Christ, the inhabitants of Edessa renounced paganism, converted to Christianity, and were baptized. Later St. Thaddaeus traveled to Armenia to preach to King Sanatruk. Thus, King Abgar's faith sparked the spread of Christianity first to Edessa and then to Armenia. EAC

+Abraham and Khoren: two of the Levontian [Ghevontians] clergy who, subsequent to the Battle of Avarayr, were martyred by the Persians in the 5th century.

*Guided by your exalted wisdom
You conquered in battle with the weapon of the Heavenly King
O Khoren, Good name, famous
You became a witness of the Crucified
And were crowned by your own shed blood.*

*The watchful pastors
With the help of their holy children
By the fire of the Spirit
Put out the flame of the Persian fire worshippers
By their prayers have compassion on us, Giver of blessings
And have mercy on us, Your creatures.*

-SHARAGAN TO VARTANIANS: MODE 8 & LEVONTIANS: MODE 7

+Absalom, Deacon and Martyr: was St. Peter the Patriarch's deacon [300-311 A.D.]. A man full of the Holy Spirit, he worked tirelessly to proclaim the Gospel and turn people to the Light of Christ. He fell asleep in the Lord as a martyr suffering a similar fate to that of his patriarch.

+Acacius, Martyr: born in Cappadocia, he was a centurion in the imperial Roman army stationed in Thrace. He was martyred in the persecution of Diocletian. Several churches in Constantinople were dedicated to him, including one dedicated by Constantine the Great. After being tortured and scourged, he was finally beheaded and died c. 303 at Byzantium.

+**Adom** [Adovm] and his Soldiers, Martyrs: (c. 451) were two armies of Armenian soldiers led by Adovm Knooni and Manajih Rshdooni in the fifth century preceding the Battle of Avarayr. Adovm Knooni and Manajih Rshdooni had been commissioned by their Persian commanders to leave Armenia and proceed to one of the most distant outposts of the empire for the purpose of keeping the Armenian soldiers far away from Armenia and thus preventing them from helping the Armenians in their revolt against the Persian religious and political tyranny. The commanders recognized the Persian plot, turned their backs on their assignment, and returned to Armenia with their armies. The Armenian soldiers were pursued, captured and martyred by the Persian forces because they believed in Christ.

*We beseech You, Lord
Through the intercession of Saint Atom and His companions
Who triumphed in battle with the enemy
Have mercy on us, O Christ.*

*Having purified their souls they turned them into a temple of Your Name
And in the place of shedding of holy blood
They offered up their prayer like incense
Through their intercession have mercy on us, O Christ.
-SHARAGAN: MODE 2*

+**All-Saints**, Old and New, Known and Unknown: is commemorated to honor all the saints known and unknown, and to supply any deficiencies in the Church's observance of saints' feasts during the year. In the early days of the Church, Christians were accustomed to solemnize the anniversary of a martyr's death for Christ at the place of martyrdom. In the fourth century, neighboring dioceses began to interchange feasts, to transfer relics, to divide them, and to join in a common feast; as is shown by the invitation of St. Basil of Caesarea (397) to the bishops of the province of Pontus. Frequently, groups of martyrs suffered on the same day, which naturally led to a joint commemoration. In the persecution of Diocletian the number of martyrs became so great that a separate day could not be assigned to each. But the Church, considering that every martyr should be venerated, appointed a common day for all. The first examples of this are found in Antioch on the Sunday after Pentecost (as is still the practice of Byzantine Churches). St. Ephrem of Syria (373) and St. John Chrysostom (407) also speak of a common day of celebration in their sermons.

*Father by the prayers of those who offered You their souls as a gift
And were participants in the sufferings on the Cross of Christ Your Son, Preserve us.*

*Through the prayers of those who purified their bodies and made them a temple
for you and became a dwelling place of Your Holy Spirit, Preserve us.*

*Through the prayers of those who gave away their life to You
And inherited Your Kingdom in exchange, Preserve us.*

-CANON TO ALL MARTYRS: LAUDATE-DER HERGNEETS

+**Ananias**, Martyr: was from Damascus, where by divine revelation he was commanded to baptize the Apostle Paul. He completed the course of martyrdom when he was stoned during the proconsulate of Lucian. His name means, "God is gracious."

+**Andrew** [Antreas], Apostle and Martyr: was a disciple of John the Baptist before following the Lord. The Baptist pointed Andrew to Jesus referring to Him as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Andrew then asked for and was granted an audience with Jesus and as a result became known as "the first called." This experience led Andrew to proclaim to his friends, "We have found the Messiah." It was Andrew who brought his brother, Simon-Peter, to meet Christ for the first time. Although Andrew was not one of the inner circle of disciples, he played a decisive role in several events recorded in the New Testament. He is also considered as having some connection with the writing of St. John's Gospel. Eusebius states in his "Church History" that Andrew went to Scythia. According to tradition, after Pentecost, Andrew founded the Church of Greece and suffered martyrdom there at Patras, being crucified on an X-shaped cross. This symbol became known as St. Andrew's Cross.

*Foundations of the Holy Sion
Laid by the almighty hands of the Word!
Unmovable mountains
Glower-bearing valleys!
True rocks of faith
Peter and Andrew,
Intercede for us before the Lord!*

-SHARAGAN TO ALL APOSTLES: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN MODE 2

+**Anectus, and Photinus**, Martyrs: were contested in Nicomedia between the years 288-303 A.D. When Diocletian stirred up his persecution of the Christians, Anectus [or Anicetus] presented himself openly and stated that all who worship idols are blind and senseless. He was beaten with rods so ruthlessly that his bones appeared from the rents and wounds in his flesh. As he was suffering further torments, his nephew Photinus came and embraced him, calling him his father and his uncle. He was also put to many tortures with him. They were then imprisoned together for three years. Finally, they were cast into a furnace where they gave up their spirits, and their bodies were preserved unharmed.

+**Annunciation of the Holy Virgin Mary**: This feast comes nine months before the Feast of the Nativity on the seventh of April. It is the celebration of the announcing of the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary as recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke. Even though the feast of the Annunciation usually falls during the season of the Great Fast, the curtain of the altar is opened and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. The Midday Gospel Reading from St. Luke demonstrates Mary's faithful response and willingness to say "yes" to God and fulfill all prophecies by bearing the Christ-child, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Mary

is thus greeted with an exalted salutation by the angel Gabriel because, in her destiny to be the mother of Christ, she is the most blessed woman of all time. [Luke 1:26-38]

*Mother of God, Holy Virgin, Incorrupt temple,
Place of the uncontainable Existing One, the Creator of all the universe!
Today at the joyful announcement of the angel
You bore within yourself the Lord of lords.
We pray you with voice unceasing be our intercessor before Him.*

*You slacked your thirst by drinking into yourself the divine words
which flow from the reasoning fountains of the seers of God's house
Today the unfading Flower has blossomed forth in you,
Today you give fruit in due season,
we pray you with voice unceasing be our intercessor before Him
-CANON: LEVAVI - HAMPARTSEE, MODE 8*

+Anthony the Great [Andon], Monk: was born in the year 251 A.D. in Egypt to very pious parents. His education was limited, however, he attended Church with his parents and intensely observed the services wanting to enrich his spiritual growth. His parents died when he was eighteen years old. He lived with his sister and took care of family affairs. One day when he attended the liturgy, he heard the words that Jesus had spoken to a wealthy young man, “If you will be perfect, sell all that you have and give it to the poor and come follow me...” He was so impressed by these words that he decided to do as Christ had told the young man. He sold off his plots of farmland, gave the money to the poor and entrusted his sister to a Christian home for virgins for at this time there were no monasteries. In the area lived an old hermit. Anthony followed his example by praying, meditating and fasting in order to overcome the many temptations, common to young men. At the age of 35 he departed for the desert where he found a derelict fortress in which he barricaded himself. Completely isolated, but for a good Christian who brought him food every six months or so, he pursued with greater severity his ascetic way of life, constantly battling Satan’s temptations. As the years passed, many men came to him, expressing the desire to follow his example by living the life of a hermit and undergoing spiritual struggles. He taught his brothers to prefer their love for Christ over everything else. Even though St. Anthony lacked an education, his words were full of faith and divine wisdom.

In time, this setting became the first monastery, established in 305 A.D. It is for this reason that Anthony is known as the father of monasticism. From this one brotherhood many more sprouted throughout the known world. Rules were soon established which were to be followed by all hermit monks. During the time of the persecutions under Emperor Maximianus, Anthony and several other monks traveled to Alexandria to encourage and comfort the many suffering Christians. In 325 A.D., Anthony and his monks helped defeat the Arian heretics at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea. His fame thus reached even Constantinople. Constantine the Great and one of his sons wrote letters to St. Anthony asking for his blessing and advice. Anthony fell asleep in the Lord in 356 A.D., at the age of 105. He instructed two of his monks to bury

him secretly. This they did, and his resting place is still unknown. Many miracles are attributed to this spiritual father. St. Athanasius, who knew Anthony and wrote his biography, said, “Anthony was not known for his writings nor for his worldly wisdom, nor for any art, but simply for his reverence toward God.”

*The founder of the hermits,
blessed holy father Anthony,
moved by hope of good things above
despised earthly things and became your soldier, O Christ, God of our fathers.*

*Dwelling in the desert with prayers made with hands outstretched
He drove away numberless legions of the devil's soldiers
and inspired courage and bravery in all the hermits
and became your soldier, O Christ, God of our fathers.*

-CANON: PATRUM- HARTS, MODE I

+Apparition of the Holy Cross, 5th Sunday of Pascha-tide: This is the third feast of the Holy Cross and is celebrated on the fifth Sunday of Quinquagesima after Pascha. This commemoration is in remembrance of the apparition of the sign of the cross over the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives to Golgotha in 351 A.D. This apparition was so luminous that it shone brighter than sunlight. It was seen by both clergy and laity who rushed to the churches to praise the Lord for this miraculous sign. Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem at that time, had recently composed a stern yet respectful letter to Emperor Constans for re-instating the Arian heresy within the Church and disrupting its peaceful functions. Admonishing the Emperor, the patriarch reminded him of the orthodox faith of his father Emperor Constantine the Great and cited the Apparition as a further proof to convince him to return back to the orthodox faith. The Armenian translation of this encyclical is read on this feast during the Rogation [Antasdan] prior to the Gospel lection.

*During the solemn celebration of the temple in Jerusalem
Your cross was shown in magnificence
Lord God of our fathers.*

*The Holy Church stood at the right hand like a queen
Adorned in garment woven from gold
And crowned by the sign of Your cross
God of our fathers.*

*We who have received a new birth through baptism of the holy font
Today joyfully celebrate the appearing of Your cross
God of our fathers.*

-CANON: PATRUM- HARTS, MODE I

+Ark of the Old Covenant and the New [Covenant] Holy Church: In the Armenian Church, the Feast of the Tabernacle [or Ark of the Covenant] is commemorated with the

Feast of the Holy Church and is always celebrated the Saturday prior to the Feast of the Transfiguration. Although the Ark of the Covenant belonged particularly to the Old Covenant and was honored with the greatest solemnity in Judaism, the Armenian Church honors it because in the tabernacle we perceive a preliminary picture of the Church of Christ. This is based on the Christian Belief of the perpetuity of the Church. Even prior to the Holy Gospels and as a preparation for them, God in His wisdom revealed Himself to Mankind gradually through Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses and through the prophets. The Church has existed from the beginning for teaching the truth of God and proper human morality, maintaining this continuity in natural progression through the millennia. This is why the Old Testament is accepted as part of the Holy Scriptures, and is considered as a preamble to the New Testament. We commemorate "the forefathers, patriarchs and prophets" as God's saints, and as examples to the Apostles and the Saints of the Church. It is for this reason also that we commemorate the Tabernacle [or Ark of the Covenant], the Holy of Holies as an example and model of the Church. It is in this same spirit that the hymn of the day proclaims: "Who from the beginning established your Church with wisdom, O Father of Wisdom, Who revealed to Moses upon Sinai."

Wisdom of the Father

*From the beginning in wisdom You established the Church
Which Moses foresaw and depicted on Mount Sion
By the heaven-like Tabernacle radiant in God's glory.*

*By turning Jordan back You prefigured the return of our nature to life
The casting down of the power of death and of hell
By the destruction of Jericho by the ark of the cross
Working the wonderful salvation of the new Israel
Let the children sing praises to You, O Lord.*

-CANON: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 2

+Athanasius the Great, Patriarch & Doctor of the Church: born around 295, known as the "Champion of Orthodoxy," was bishop of Alexandria and defender of the Christian faith during the 4th century crisis of Arianism. He received a classical and theological education in Alexandria, where he was also ordained deacon and appointed secretary to Bishop Alexander. As a theological expert at the Council of Nicea, which gathered in 325 to condemn the Arian rejection of Christ's divinity, Deacon Athanasius defended the unity of Christ as both God and man. In 328, he succeeded Alexander as bishop of the see over which he was to preside for 45 years. Seventeen of these years were spent in exile, imposed on him on five separate occasions between 335 and 366, largely through the maneuverings of the Arianizing party.

In reaction to those who denied both the full humanity and full divinity of Jesus Christ, Athanasius explained how the Logos, the word of God, was united with human nature and how his death and resurrection overcame death and sin. He worked out the implications of biblical passages on the Incarnation and asserted the unity of the Logos and the human nature in Christ. He held that if Christ were not one in being (Gk. homoousios, having the same being) with God the Father, then Salvation could not be

possible; and if Christ were not fully man, then human nature could not be saved. Athanasius was the greatest champion of the catholic faith on the subject of the incarnation that the Church has ever known and in his lifetime earned the characteristic title of “Father of Orthodoxy,” by which he has been distinguished ever since. The blessed Athanasius is highly venerated by the Armenian Church.

+Athenogenes, Bishop and Martyr and the Ten Disciples and Five Martyrs:

Athenogenes was a theologian and was bishop of Sebastia, Armenia, in the time of Emperor Diocletian. He lived in a monastery near the town of Sebaste with ten of his disciples. He is noted for his ministry to the Christians in prison during the terrible persecutions. During the reign of Diocletian, Philomarchus, a cruel persecutor of Christians, came to Sebaste to arrest and murder many Christians in the town. When he saw Athenogenes and his disciples, he told the elder to offer sacrifice to the idols so as not to be slain along with the others. Athenogenes replied, “O persecutor, those whom you mention as being slain are not slain (dead) but rather are in the heavens and rejoice with the angels.” It is traditionally believed that he sang the ancient hymn [attributed to him] “Phos Hilarion” (O Joyful Light) [Arm. Loos Zuvart] in praise and joy as he entered the flames of torture along with ten disciples at Sebastia. This hymn is sung by some of the ancient Churches to this day (especially in the Evening Prayer Services of the Armenian and Byzantine Churches). After cruel tortures, during which an angel of God comforted the martyrs, they were all beheaded; at first the priests and all co-laborers of Athenogenes and after that, Athenogenes himself. All were received into the heavenly fatherland in the year 311 A.D.

+Babylas, Patriarch and Martyr: He was the successor of Zebinus as bishop of Antioch in the reign of the Emperor Gordianus (238-244 A.D.), being the twelfth bishop of this Oriental metropolis. During the Decian persecution (260) he made an unwavering confession of faith and was thrown into prison where he died from his sufferings. He was, therefore, venerated as a martyr. St. John Chrysostom and the “Acts of the Martyrs” relate further concerning him that Babylas once refused an emperor, on account of his wrongdoing, permission to enter the Church and ordered him to take his place among the penitents. Chrysostom does not give the name of the emperor; the Acts mention Numerianus. It is more likely the Emperor Philip the Arabian (244-249), of whom Eusebius reports [History of the Church, Ch. 6] that a bishop would not let him enter the gathering of Christians at the Paschal vigil. The burial-place of St. Babylas became very celebrated.

+Barbara, Virgin & Martyr: was the daughter of a rich heathen named Dioscorus. She was carefully guarded by her father who kept her shut up in a tower in order to preserve her from the outside world. She rejected an offer of marriage which was delivered to her by her father. Before going on a journey, her father commanded that a bath-house be erected for her use near her dwelling, and during his absence Barbara had three windows put in it, as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, instead of the two originally intended. When her father returned she acknowledged herself a Christian, upon which she was ill-treated and dragged before the prefect of the province, Maximinus. He had her cruelly tortured

and finally condemned her to death by beheading. The father himself carried out the death-sentence, but in punishment for this he was struck by lightning on the way home. Another Christian named Juliana suffered martyrdom along with Barbara. A pious man named Valentinus buried their bodies and their graves brought miraculous healing to the sick and the pilgrims who came to pray received aid and consolation.

+**Barnabas**, Apostle & Martyr: was a Cypriot Levite Jew and companion of St. Paul who introduced him to the Apostles. Like Paul, Barnabas believed in the Church's mission to the Gentiles, but split with Paul over a non-theological matter. He evangelized with St. Mark and help found the Church in Antioch. He is the possible author of some early Christian works which bear his name. Some suggest he possibly helped author the New Testament book of Hebrews. He was martyred in 61 A.D. carrying a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew that he copied by hand. His name means "son of encouragement."

+**Barsauma** [Barsimaeus], Bishop: [d. 250 A.D.] was the Bishop of Edessa in Syria, once believed to have been martyred but now credited with being a successful evangelist only. He was noted for converting many to Christianity in his era.

+**Bartholomew** [Partoghomeos], Apostle and Martyr: He is identified as Nathaniel whom Phillip led to Christ and his surname is patronymic, meaning "son of Tolmai." He was born in Cana, Galilee. He preached, together with Philip, in the countries of Asia Minor, Arabia, Ethiopia, India and Armenia. According to the historian Eusebius, when Pantainus of Alexandria visited India between 150 and 200 A.D., he found there the Gospel according to Matthew left behind by Bartholomew, one of the Apostles. Together with the Apostle Thaddaeus, Bartholomew founded the Church in Armenia. Because of his apostolic work in Armenia, Bartholomew was martyred by flaying in Albanapolis (Aghpag), Armenia by order of King Sanatruk in A.D. 66. He and St. Thaddaeus are recognized as the First Enlighteners of Armenia. EAC

Fiery walls of the vineyard planted by the Father and high towers

Golden Cups and Tireless Stewards

Spiritual Fathers of the Armenians

Bartholomew and Thaddeus

Intercede for us before the Lord.

-SHARAGAN: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2

+**Basil the Great** of Caesarea, Bishop & Doctor of the Church: [329-379 A.D.] born in Cappadocia, Asia Minor. He was known as a talented thinker, organizer and reformer. He did much to help spread Christianity. Around the age of 26 he gave up his wealth and a promising career to become a monk. He was soon joined by others. Using his great organizing ability, St. Basil founded many monasteries. He loved people deeply and did all he could to ease their sufferings. He gave away many of his belongings to the poor, and urged other wealthy people to do the same. He told them that rich people were merely the stewards or caretakers of the wealth they had been granted by God.

In 374, Basil became the Bishop of Caesarea and the Church called upon him to defend orthodox Christianity against Arianism (a heretical type of Christianity promoted by the Emperor which stressed that Jesus was not God). Basil wrote against the heresy and preached to crowds about the importance of the Trinity and the Incarnation and worked tirelessly to restore orthodoxy throughout the Church. Basil showed that he loved and cared for people in many ways. He established a hospital for sick people. He built an inn for people who were passing through his city with no place to stay. Basil also organized a food kitchen to distribute food and meals to the needy and assisted in prison reform. He founded monasteries and drew up rules for monks living in the desert and is considered as key to the founding of eastern monasticism. He corrected priests and bishops who were setting a bad example. Using his writing talents, St. Basil created solemn lyrical forms of prayer still used by the Armenian and other Eastern Churches.

*Blessed Basil: By his brilliant teaching
And by his word which was a light for the world
He enlightened the Divine Church
By his prayers let us ask the forgiveness of our sins.*

*Blessed Basil: The gathered of Christ's hosts for spiritual warfare
Firm pillar of the faith and leader of people into life
By his prayers let us ask the forgiveness of our sins.*

*Blessed Basil: Even in the flesh led the life of the bodiless
In austerities from his childhood
Today He was translated into the heavenly tabernacle
Through his prayers let us ask the forgiveness of our sins.*
-SHARAGAN TO ST. BASIL THE GREAT: MODE 8

+**Benjamin**, Deacon & Martyr: was martyred in Persia, by torture for refusing to cease preaching Christianity, c. 421.

+**Blaise**, Bishop and Martyr: was a bishop of Sebastia in Armenia who was martyred under the reign of Licinius in the early fourth century. A tradition from the eighth century tells us that he was born into a rich and noble family who raised him as a Christian. After becoming a bishop, a new persecution of Christians began. He received a message from God to go into the hills to escape persecution. Men hunting in the mountains discovered a cave surrounded by wild animals who were sick. Unafraid, Blaise walked among these animals, and cured them of their illnesses. Recognizing Blaise as a bishop, the men captured him to take him back for trial. On the way back, he talked a worker into releasing a pig that belonged to a poor woman. When Blaise was sentenced to death by starvation, the woman, in gratitude, sneaked into the prison with food and candles. Finally the governor of the region put Blaise to death.

+**Callistratus** and the **Forty-nine Martyrs**: Callistratus was arrested as a Christian, and after being tormented was enclosed in a sack and cast into the sea. The sack burst, and

Callistratus came to dry land safe and sound. Forty-nine soldiers seeing this, also confessed Christ, and with him were cast into prison, then beheaded. They were put to death at Constantinople in the persecution conducted in the reign of Emperor Diocletian (c. 300 A.D.).

+**Catherine, Virgin & Martyr:** was of noble birth and learned in the sciences. When only eighteen years old, Catherine presented herself to the Emperor Maximinus who was violently persecuting the Church, upbraided him for his cruelty, and endeavored to prove how iniquitous was the worship of the gods. Astounded at the young girl's audacity, but incompetent to vie with her in point of learning, the tyrant detained her in his palace and summoned numerous scholars whom he commanded to use all their skill in specious reasoning that thereby Catherine might be led to apostatize. But she emerged from the debate victorious. In fact, several of her adversaries, conquered by her eloquence, declared themselves Christians and were at once put to death. The emperor, enraged by this and similar miraculous events, finally had Catherine martyred by beheading. It is believed that angels carried her body to Mount Sinai where later a Church and monastery were built in her honor. Today St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai remains the oldest monastery in the world.

+**Christina, Virgin & Martyr:** was the daughter of a rich and powerful magistrate named Urbain. Her father, who was deep in the practices of heathenism, had a number of golden idols, which she destroyed, and then distributed the pieces among the poor. Infuriated by this act, Urbain became the persecutor of his daughter. He had her whipped with rods and then thrown into a dungeon. Then he repeatedly attempted to martyr her but the Lord delivered her from each one of these torments. She eventually outlived her father who died of spite. Through the power of Christ she endured even more inhumane tortures by the judge who succeeded her father. Finally, after having her tongue cut out, she gained the martyr's crown at Tyro being pierced through with arrows. Her relics are now at Palermo, Sicily.

+**Codratus, Soldier & Martyr:** was martyred in the persecutions of Diocletian with a group of martyrs under his leadership for professing Jesus Christ.

+**Conception of the Holy Theotokos** [Dec. 9]: We celebrate the conception of the Virgin Mary by her parents Joachim and Anna. This major festival is observed during Advent when the Church prepares for the Nativity of the Lord. Thus the faithful rejoice in the event by which Mary is conceived in fulfillment of her parent's prayers and nurtured in holiness in order to become, by God's grace, the mother of His Divine Son the Messiah. In the Armenian Church tradition, the Theotokos was born subject to the sin of Adam together with all mankind, and with Him she shared the need for redemption. The pure and immaculate life of the Virgin Mary up to the Annunciation by the Archangel and her freedom from personal sins, was the fruit of the union of the abundance of grace that was poured upon her and her own spiritual labor. According to St. Gregory of Datev, "Christ taking body from the Holy Virgin, took the original sin of mankind on himself and took it with him onto the cross; He himself bore our sins in his

body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness (1 Pet 2:24). St. Nerses the Graceful also states, “The Virgin Mary, from whom He took Flesh, was of the peccable nature of Adam, and [by that nature being] united with the Divine nature of God, the peccable became impeccable.” Thus the Virgin Mary was prepared as a worthy vessel for the descent of God the Word to earth. The coming down of the Holy Spirit totally sanctified the womb of the Virgin Mary for the reception of God. FAQAC/Domar

*Ever Virgin! You were able to receive in your womb God the Word.
We magnify You, blessed among women.*

*You were worthy to receive in your embrace the Light of all that exists in the flesh.
We magnify you, blessed among women*

*Ever Virgin! You were named the spotless Temple of the economy by the Holy Spirit,
We magnify you, blessed among women.*

CANON OF THE RESURRECTION: MAGNIFICAT-MEDZATSOOSTSEH

+Constantine the Great, Roman Emperor: was the son of Constantius Chlorus, who ruled the western part of the Roman Empire (Gaul and Britannia), and Helena, the holy equal of the Apostles. He became disposed to accept Christianity by his mother. His father, although he was a pagan, nevertheless protected the Christians, seeing that Christians were faithful servants and honest citizens. Constantine, whose character was active, bellicose, accessible to all and generous, farsighted and perspicacious, manifested the traits of a world class genius, and it was not in vain that he was chosen by God’s Providence to accomplish the greatest turnabout in the empire and in the whole world. In 312 A.D. a new war arose between the Emperor Constantine and the Caesar Maxentius, the son of Maximian. During this war, not long before the decisive battle, Constantine saw with his own eyes a shining cross in the sky with the inscription: ‘By this sign conquer’ [NIKA in Greek]. On the following day, by Constantine’s order, images of the Holy Cross were made on all the standards of his army. After this victory, the Emperor Constantine published the first manifesto in Milan that permitted everyone to accept Christianity without fear. In a second manifesto, signed by them in 313 A.D., it was ordered that the places of assembly for Divine service and all the real estate taken away during the persecutions be returned to the Christians.

The Emperor Constantine dedicated his whole life to the good of the Church and did so much for her that he merited the appellation “Equal of the Apostles.” From his time, state institutions, laws and military service began to be oriented toward the requirements of Christianity. He stopped the pagan games, freed the clergy from civic obligations and Church lands from general taxes, abolished execution by crucifixion, permitted the freeing of slaves at Churches without special formalities (which were very difficult in the civil courts), and also forbade private persons to offer sacrifices to idols and to turn to divination at home, reserving this right only to societies. He commanded that Sunday be celebrated throughout the whole empire. In protecting Christian virgins, he abolished the laws which the Romans had against celibacy. He granted the Church the right to receive property by bequest, permitted Christians to occupy the highest state

posts, ordered Christian Churches to be built and forbade imperial statues and images to be carried therein as was customary in pagan temples. Finally, he completely left Rome, founded a new Christian capital on the shores of the Bosphorus and invited Christian bishops to solemnly consecrate it, having named it Constantinople. One of Constantine's' greatest services was the convocation of the First Ecumenical Council in the city of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Devoted to the Church with all his soul, Constantine, however, put off receiving baptism until the last days of his life, in accordance with the custom of that time. When he sensed the approach of death, he received this great mystery with reverence and peacefully reposed in the Lord during prayer on the 21st of May, 337 A.D.

+**Cosmos and Damien**, the penniless Physicians, Martyrs: Theodosia, the mother of the these saints was a very pious woman whom the Greeks inscribe in their calendar. Despite having been widowed, she raised and educated her five children with great care. Two of the youngest became doctors. The mother taught them in the true way that, "since you receive freely, you shall give freely." They went forth and headed and drove out evil spirits and they restored good health and proclaimed the Gospel. They were arrested as Christians and subjected to severe tortures, finally being martyred through decapitation in 285 A.D. during the early reign of Emperor Diocletian.

+**Cross (the Holy): Discovery & Exaltation:** The first Bishop of Jerusalem, St. James the Apostle, elevated a cross, blessing the faithful and according to tradition sang for the first time, "We bow before thy Cross, O Christ..." This tradition, established by St. James from the earliest times of Christianity, was the foundation for devotion for the Great Mystery of the Holy Cross for Christians. The true and Holy Cross was discovered by Queen Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, in 326 A.D. According to ancient reports, an informed Jew from Jerusalem by the name of Judah disclosed the place where the Cross was buried and three crosses were found. In order to discern which was the true Cross the body of a youth who had recently died was placed upon each cross. When he was placed on the third Cross he was resurrected. Thus the true and Holy Cross was discovered. It was at this time that Bishop Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem, elevated the Holy Cross before the faithful who, having witnessed the miracle, were awe-inspired and venerated it. The commemoration of these historical events is celebrated in the Armenian Church on the Sunday closest to October 26, known as the **Discovery of the Holy Cross**.

*The God-loving queen came to the city of Jerusalem
With fervent desire she sought the tree of life
Which had borne on itself
The God of our fathers in the flesh*

*On the holy place was spread fragrance [of basil]
And Jerusalem rejoiced at the appearing in the place of the skull
of the Holy Cross
Which had borne on itself the God of our fathers in the flesh.
Bless the Lord and exalt Him forever.*

-CANON: PATRUM- HARTS MODE 3

The third and most auspicious occasion on which the Holy Cross was elevated and venerated was upon its return from captivity. In 610, King Khosrov of Persia waged war on Emperor Heracle of Byzantium, conquered Jerusalem and took the Holy Cross. Heracle regrouped and with the assistance of Armenian general Mjejh Knouni and Armenian troops, he was able to hand Khosrov a great defeat. In 629, the Persians accepted the demands that the Holy Cross be returned. Its ceremonious journey from Persia to Garin, from Garin to Constantinople and finally back to Jerusalem was extremely emotional for Christians of this region. It was elevated constantly along the way for the spiritual comfort of the faithful and everywhere was a symbol of pious worship. It was this event, celebrated by Armenians on the Sunday nearest to September 14, which was the foundation for the feast of the **Exaltation of the Holy Cross**.

*You stretched out Your spotless hands on the Cross, O Christ our God
And in it gave us the sign of victory... By it preserve our life.*

*The world-saving outstretched wings of Your cross, O Christ our God
You gave to us as a staff of power... By it preserve our life.*

*You gave life again to him who had died by eating from the forbidden tree
By the tree of life... By it preserve our life.*

-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN MODE I

+**Cyprian**, Bishop & Martyr, and the **Forty-five Martyrs** of Carthage: Cyprian was born around 200 A.D. He was the bishop of Carthage and one of the major theologians of the early Church in Africa. He was the son of wealthy parents and became a teacher of rhetoric and literature. He converted to Christianity in 246. Shortly thereafter he was ordained a priest and elected bishop of Carthage in 248. He was forced to flee Carthage during the persecutions of Emperor Decius from 249 to 251. After his return, he turned to the problem of Christians who had failed to stand firm during the persecution (the lapsed). Cyprian favored their readmission to the Church but under stringent conditions. He opposed the schism of Novatian, who believed that lapsed Christians should be permanently excluded. In the renewed persecution of Valerian's reign, on Sept. 14, 258, Cyprian was martyred along with a group of forty-five others near the city of Carthage.

+**Cyril** of Alexandria, Patriarch and Doctor of the Church: [c. 376-444] born at Alexandria, Egypt, Cyril received a classical and theological education at Alexandria and was ordained by his uncle, Theophilus. He succeeded his uncle as Patriarch of Alexandria upon Theophilus' death in 412. In 430, Cyril became embroiled with Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, who was preaching that "God alone, could be said to be Theotokos" [Arm. Asdvadzadzin; Eng. God-bearer]. Nestorius argued that this term, if applied to Mary, might lead the faithful to suppose that Mary was mother of the divine nature of Christ, whereas she was mother only in respect of his human nature. Cyril took interest in the dispute and sent protestations to Rome concerning the utterances

of Nestorius. In 431 Cyril presided over the third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus, attended by some two hundred bishops, which condemned all the tenants of Nestorius and his followers. Two years later Archbishop John, representing the moderate Antiochene bishops, and Cyril, reached an agreement and joined in the condemnation, forcing Nestorius into exile.

During the remainder of his life, Cyril wrote treatises that clarified the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation that helped prevent Nestorianism and Pelagianism from taking long-term deep root in the Church. Cyril was the most brilliant theologian of the Alexandrian tradition and highly revered by the Church of Armenia. Accurate thinking, precise exposition, and great reasoning and skill characterize his writings. The Armenian and other Ancient Orthodox Churches profess St. Cyril's famous Christological formula, "One nature incarnate of God the Word" [Gk. *Mis physis tou Theou Legou sesarkomene*]... [teaching that] Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in one nature and one person.

+**Cyril** [Judas Cyriacus] and his mother, **Anna**, Martyrs: Some identify Judas, as the bishop of Jerusalem who was slain during a riot in the 133. Local traditions however, tell us of Judas Cyriacus [or Quiriacus], a Jew who is believed to have revealed to the Empress Helen, the place in which the Holy Cross lay hidden, and after being baptized and made bishop of Jerusalem, suffered martyrdom under Julian the Apostate. An account of his dialogue with the emperor Julian, and of the torments endured by him and his mother Anna, is furnished in the "Acts" of his martyrdom.

+**Cyril**, Deacon & Martyr: and companions suffered and were martyred at Heliopolis by pagans under the direction of Julian the Apostate, c. 362 for preaching the Gospel.

+**Cyril**, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Doctor of the Church: "make your fold with the sheep; flee from the wolves; depart not from the Church," Cyril admonished catechumens surrounded by heresy. These were prophetic words for Cyril, who was to be hounded by enemies and heretics for most of his life. Although they would exile him from his diocese, he never left his beloved Church. Cyril's life began a few years before Arianism and he lived to see its suppression and condemnation at the end of his life. In between, he was the victim of many of the power struggles that took place. Born about 315, Cyril was brought up in Jerusalem. His parents were probably Christians and he also had a sister and a nephew, Gelasius, who became a bishop. Cyril may have belonged to a group called the Solitaries. They were men who lived in their own houses in the cities but practiced a life of complete chastity, asceticism, and service. After being ordained a deacon and then a priest, his bishop, Maximus, respected Cyril enough to put him in charge of the instruction of catechumens. We still have these catechetical lectures of Cyril's to this day. When Maximus died, Cyril was consecrated as bishop of Jerusalem. Because he was supported by Acacius, the Arian bishop of Caesarea, the orthodox criticized the appointment and the Arians thought they had a friend. Both factions proved wrong as Cyril would end up in the middle.

When a famine hit Jerusalem, the poor turned to Cyril for help. Cyril, seeing the poor starving to death and having no money, sold some of the goods of the churches.

Later, when Cyril did not appear at councils that Acacius called, Acacius accused him of selling church goods to raise money and had him banished. Cyril's case was probably dropped when Acacius refused to testify at a council (because he objected that Cyril was allowed to attend). Thus Cyril returned to Jerusalem. This was not the end of Cyril's troubles because Acacius carried his story to the emperor -embellishing it with false details. This brought about a new synod run by Acacius who now had him banished again. Eleven years later Cyril was allowed to go back to find a Jerusalem devastated by heresy and strife. Although he was never able to put things completely right, Cyril did attend the Council of Constantinople in 381 where the Nicene Creed and orthodoxy triumphed and Arianism was finally condemned. Cyril received justice at the same Council which cleared him of all previous rumors and commended him for fighting "a good fight in various places against the Arians." Cyril had eight years of peace in Jerusalem before he died in 386, at about seventy years old. His Catechetical Lectures and Liturgical developments in Jerusalem had vast influence on the rest of the Church.

*You children of the New Sion,
Who bless the Holy Trinity!
Celebrating today with the armies of the bodiless angels
The memory of the holy patriarch Cyril,
Bless the Lord with a new song.*

-SHARAGAN: PUERI- MANGOONK MODE 5

+**Daniel**, Prophet and the Three Children: **Sedrach, Meshach, and Abednago:**
In the years following 600 B.C., Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians, the Temple built by Solomon was destroyed, and many of the Israelite people were led away into the captivity. Among them were the illustrious youths, Daniel, Sedrach, Meshach and Abednago. The emperor of Babylon, Nebuchadnessar, gave orders to instruct them in the Chaldean wisdom, and to dress them in finery at his court. But they, in cleaving to the commandments of their faith, refused the extravagance and led a strict manner of life. The Lord granted them wisdom, and to Saint Daniel the gift of perspicacity and the interpretation of dreams. Having preserved sacred faith in the One God and trusting on His almighty help, in his wisdom, Daniel surpassed all the Chaldean astrologers and sorcerers, and was made confidant to the emperor Nebuchadnessar.

Later Nebuchadnessar gave orders to erect in his likeness a huge statue, to which it was decreed to accord the honors befitting a god. For their refusal to do this, the three holy youths, Sedrach, Meshach and Abednago, were thrust into a burning fiery furnace. Miraculously, the holy youths walked amidst the flames, offering up prayer and psalmody to the Lord (Dan. 3:25-90 LXX). The Angel of the Lord [Who, according to many Church Fathers and our Liturgy, was a pre-incarnate Theophany of Christ Himself] appeared and made cool the flames, and the three youths remained unharmed. The emperor, upon seeing this, commanded them to come out, and was converted to the True God. Daniel's prophetic visions about the seventy weeks (9:24-27) and the prophecy of Michael (12:1-12) tell of the signs of the First and Second Comings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Daniel interceded for his people before the successor to Darius, the emperor Cyrus, who esteemed him highly, and who decreed freedom for the Israelite people.

Daniel himself and his fellows Sedrach, Meshach and Abednago, survived into old age but remained in captivity. Daniel was also miraculously delivered from a horrible death in the lion's den. According to the testimony of St. Cyril of Alexandria, Sedrach, Meshach and Abednago were beheaded on orders of the Persian emperor Chambyses.

*The prophet Daniel prayed to the Lord God
To deliver the three young men in the furnace in Babylon.
Exalt the eternal God of our fathers
Who delivered those who bless Him from the hands of death.
The Lord: Exalt Him without ceasing.*

*Ceaselessly exalt Him whom the Seraphim and people bless with voice
unceasing by day, by night, and at every hour.
The holy youths in the furnace extinguished the raging fire by prayer
And in wondrous voice sang with the angels,
Saying: Exalt Him without ceasing.*

-CANON FOR THE 5TH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST: PATRUM-HARTS

+**David of Dvin** [Tavit Tvinetsi], Soldier & Martyr: was born [701 A.D.] of a Persian father and a Christian mother and given the name Sourban. He entered military service of the Arab overlords at a very young age and was assigned to Armenia, where he served side by side with the Armenian prince Krikor Mamigonian. He accepted the Christian faith and was baptized by Catholicos Nerses the Builder and renamed Tavit. He lived many years in peace and made his home near the Armenian capital, Tvin. When Abdulla Votigan became overlord of Armenia, he started a series of persecutions against the Christians. Tavit, a former follower of Islam, was among the first to be arrested. When he refused to change his religion, he was crucified and speared upon the cross, at sixty years of age. His body was buried near the Mother Church of Tvin and the cross and spear used to martyr him were kept in the Church.

*Blessed holy ascetic,
Lord David filled with divine grace!
The fame of your courage has reached the heavens to the glory of angels
And has spread throughout all the earth for the gladness of men*

*You acquired to yourself the name courageous on the course of asceticism
O Lord David
By Christ's cross you conquered the enemy
You filled the whole world with joy and by your prayers to God
You became our helper.*

-SHARAGAN: MODE 4

+**Desert Fathers of Egypt**, Anchorites and Monastics: Paul, Paul the Simple, Marcarius of Alexandria, Evagrius, John of the Little, John the Dwarf, Nilus, Arsenius, Siseos, Daniel, Serapion, Marcarius the Elder, Poeman, and other Holy Fathers: are all

contemporaries who lived in the fourth century. The first and earliest anchorite among them was Paul, who had fled to the desert of the Thebaid during the persecutions under the Emperor Decius [A.D. 249-251]. He lived in the desert for ninety-seven years and died at the age of 114. Anthony, a late contemporary of Paul, was the founder of the ascetical movement in Egypt and a true champion of the faith. Paulus was an elderly farmer who joined Anthony in his old age and became an anchorite. Marcarius was one of Anthony's disciples who lived in the Thebaid desert. Onophrius was still another anchorite from Egypt. Evagrius, a learned man not of Egyptian origin but from Pontus on the Black Sea, spent his last years in the Egyptian desert. There he was instructed by Marcarius and, because of his austere way of life, became renowned among the anchorites. Evagrius is an important Christian writer and some of his works, translated into Armenian in the fifth century, have survived to this day.

Another disciple of Marcarius was Serapion who converted people to the Christian faith during his sojourn in Athens and Rome, and ultimately settled down in the Egyptian desert as an anchorite. Nilus and Arsenius were also not of Egyptian stock. Nilus had been a disciple of the renowned John Chrysostom. He ultimately chose the ascetic way of life and spent his remaining years in the Monastery of Sinai. Some of Nilus' writings were translated into Armenian also. Arsenius was of Roman origin; he went to live in the Egyptian desert, where he spent the rest of his life as an ascetic. St. Marcus the Abbot, an Athenian by birth, spent most of his life as a hermit in Africa. Barsumas, a fourth century bishop of Edessa, was persecuted by the Arian heretics. He was exiled to Egypt, where he spent the rest of his life as an anchorite. The Egyptian Fathers are commemorated as a group on the Thursday following the Second Sunday of Advent. Anthony, however, is commemorated as a major saint during the period right after the Octave of Theophany. FAQAC

+Dionysius the Areopagite, Bishop & Martyr: was from Athens, a learned man, and a member of the famous judicial court of Mars Hill (Gk. Aeros Pagos -hence the name Areopagite). When St. Paul preached in Athens, he was one of the first to believe in Christ (Acts 17:34). Early writers say he became the second bishop of Athens, after Hierotheus, whom Dionysius calls his friend and teacher "after Paul" [On the Divine Names, 3:2]. Dionysius suffered martyrdom for his faith, according to some accounts in Athens about the year 96 A.D. The writings attributed to Dionysius were actually written in his name by an anonymous early Father now called "Pseudo-Dionysius" (because he wrote under this pseudonym). The Dionysian corpus of works (including "Mystical Theology") were probably written c. 500 A.D. They are considered the work of an articulate Athenian Neoplatonist and express an authentic Christian mystical tradition with eloquent poetic language and strong exposition of ideas. They rank among the classics of Eastern and Western Christian spirituality.

+Discovery of the Belt and the Jewel Box of the Holy Theotokos: Since there are no relics of the Holy Mother's earthly body (as she was assumed into Heaven), her personal belongings became articles of pious devotion. As they were secretly kept during the time of persecution of the early Church, they began to appear in later times. The first, her belt or girdle, was discovered in Jerusalem in the fifth century during the reign of Emperor

Argadeos. This important article of clothing and decoration for Eastern women was later translated to Constantinople and placed in the Cathedral dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, where it was recorded to be at the time of Empress Zoe's miraculous recovery more than half a century later.

The Jewel Box of the Holy Mother of God, in which she kept her veil, was the second item discovered [the first was her belt]. According to tradition, two aristocratic brothers made a vow to go to the Holy Land. In a village of Galilee (most likely Nazareth), many people were making pilgrimages to a certain Jewish woman's home where there was a box to which many miraculous cures were attributed. Through cunning, they were able to have another box made like the one they saw and switch it with the box of the Holy Mother. They returned to Constantinople where they were received with great ceremony and the box was placed in the Cathedral dedicated to the Holy Mother of God.

Mary, Mother and Virgin

*In your womb you bore the indescribable light of Divinity made flesh
We praise and magnify you.*

The ranks of apostles were terrified by the partial light

*But you, Mary, Mother and Virgin
Bore within you the divine Fire entirely
We praise and magnify you.*

A bright cloud overshadowed the apostles

*But the Holy Spirit and power from on high overshadowed you
Holy Mother of God
We praise and magnify you.*

CANON FOR TRANSFIGURATION: MAGNIFICAT-MEDZATSOOSTSEH

+Dormition and Assumption of the Holy Theotokos [Verapokhoomn]: one of the Five Tabernacle [daghavar] Feasts of the Armenian Church. After the Ascension of her divine Son, the remainder of St. Mary's life comes to us mostly through Holy Tradition. She lived out the rest of her days in Jerusalem and was cared for by St. John the Evangelist. She died in Jerusalem some 15 years after Christ's Ascension and was buried in her family tomb in Gethsemane. It is believed by some that the Holy Mother died in the city of Ephesus while there with St. John. All of the Apostles, save Bartholomew [other traditions say it was St. Thomas], who was absent at the time, conducted her funeral with great ceremony and hymns at her cave-like tomb in the Garden of Gethsemane. After a short while, Bartholomew returned and wished so dearly to see the Holy Mother one last time that he convinced the Apostles to open the tomb. Upon opening it, they could not find the body of the Holy Mother but angels' voices were heard for three days and nights. They interpreted this as a sign that our Lord had assumed [taken up] His Mother into heaven as He had promised her.

The Byzantine tradition refers to the feast as the Dormition and in the Latin tradition it is called the Assumption. The concept of her Assumption is a most ancient

one as is witnessed in early Christian sacred prose and poetry dedicated to the Holy Mother. Yet it did not become a formal doctrine of the Church until the ninth century. It wasn't until the 12th century that the feast was titled the "Assumption." Customarily the Service of the Blessing of the Grapes is performed on the feast of the Assumption. This is a special service dedication to the autumnal harvest of which the grape is usually the first fruit (in Armenia usually harvested middle to late August). It is also recognized that the grape is that from which the wine of Holy Communion is made.

*Today God the Word has translated the Mother of virginity
The looser of the birth pains of first-formed Eve
Into the heavenly tabernacle created by God
And into life unspeakable
For this the Holy Church with joyful voice sings to Him a new praise.*

*Today the Mother of God, the Holy Virgin
Entrusted to the choir of Angels her holy soul
Shining brighter than the sun, like the fiery spirits
For this the Holy Church in joyful voice sing to her a new praise.*

*Today the bodiless angels carried the pure body
Of the Mother of God and Virgin
To the place far removed from all that is earthly
So that she might participate
In glory inexpressible, inaccessible to men
For this we sing to her a new praise with joyful voice.*

-CANON FOR THE DORMITION: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 7

+**Drtad** [Tiridates], King, his wife **Ashken**, Queen, and his sister **Khosrovitookhd**, Princess: [330 A.D.] Drtad was sent to Caesarea and then to Rome after the assassination of his father and other members of the royal family. When Drtad returned and assumed the throne he eventually encountered St. Gregory the Illuminator who was preaching the Gospel in Armenia. Once Drtad discovered that Gregory was the son of his father's assassin, he condemned Gregory to the pit. As a result of this and the brutal martyrdom of the Hripsimeyan nuns, the king eventually lost his sanity. His wife, Queen Ashkhen (daughter of the King of the Alans), and his sister, Princess Khosrovitookht, had most probably already accepted Christianity through the efforts of the Hripsimeyan nuns, Gregory and others in the Armenian Christian underground movement. It was the Princess who suggested to the king that Gregory be brought out of the pit to cure him. Upon King Drtad's acceptance of this and his subsequent miraculous cure, he, his wife, and his sister accepted Christianity. In penitence for his horrible acts, Drtad built the Hripsimeyan martyria. When Gregory returned from Caesarea where he was ordained a bishop, the king, his family, and his entire court and army met Gregory en route and received Holy Baptism in the Euphrates River. The king then aided the construction of Holy Etchmiadzin Cathedral. He encouraged Gregory in spreading the Gospel throughout Armenia. Queen Ashkhen and the Princess went together to the fortress of

Garni to live the remainder of their lives in dedication to the Lord. The King did likewise, retiring to Gregory's place of retreat, Mt. Sebouh, where hostile princes who wished to reestablish paganism martyred him.

Son of God!

*You worked something wonderful, beyond nature on the king of Armenians;
by the staff of your wrath You turned his senselessness into understanding.
For this, on the day of his memory,
the children of the Church bless you, O Lord.*

*Just as once the tyrant in Babylon,
You changed into the image of the unreasoning
the great king Tiridates
whom beast-like tyranny had won to itself.
For this, on the day of his memory,
the children of the Church bless You, O Lord.*

*At the prayers of Saint Gregory,
You returned to Him human nature
having taken from the great king Tiridates the nature of the unreasoning.
For this, on the day of his memory,
the children of the Church, bless you, O Lord.*

-SHARAGAN: PUERI- MANGOONK MODE 7

+**Elijah** (Elias) the Prophet: was a real but almost legendary figure. Similar to St. John the Baptist, he was hairy, dressed in animal skins, and came out of the wilderness, terrifying the whole country with his announcements of impending calamity, and then disappeared. Elijah was one of the greatest and most remarkable prophets of the Old Testament. Not much is known of his origin except that he was a Thesbite. He appeared on the historical scene during the reign of Achab [9 c. B.C.]. He delivered to that impious king the message of Yahweh: Israel would be punished by a long drought and Achab's house would fall. He then lived to see the tragic end of Achab. Next we hear of Elijah in connection with Ochozias, Achab's son and successor, to whom he predicted that the injuries received in a fall would be fatal. The end of the earthly life of Elijah came mysteriously. As he was conversing with Eliseus on the hills of Moah, "a fiery chariot, and fiery horses parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" [4 Kings 2:11 LXX].

He is commemorated on a Sunday because he is the greatest among the prophets; appeared at the Transfiguration as the prophet of "life" and the new covenant; as distinguished from Moses and the old covenant. However, most important is that Elijah did not experience death.. But was take to heaven... hence, like the Holy Mother of God [Theotokos], was enumerated among the heavenly. In the Armenian Hymn, "Ee vereen" Elijah is described in a resplendent fashion living in old age like a dove dwelling within the harmony of the heavenly Garden of Eden. Elijah is a highly beloved and dearly cherished Prophet-Saint of the Armenians [and all the Eastern Churches] and held in

highest esteem among all the saints of the Old Testament. He is the Messianic prophet who, one might intimate, propels through Christ the Passover from the Old to the New Covenant ... and therefore, with Christ offers the restoration of Israel [the New Israel] through the second coming.

Today with the great Elijah

Let us purify ourselves by fasting,

That we may be granted to see by the spirit

The divine Light.

Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord.

-CANON FOR 5TH SUNDY OF GREAT FAST: PATRUM- HARTS, MODE 7

+**Elisha** (Eliseus), Prophet: was the son of Saphat and from the town of Abel-me-oul and had been a husbandman. In the year 908 B.C. at God's command, the Prophet Elijah anointed him to be Prophet in his stead. This happened while Elisha was plowing his land having twelve oxen under yoke. Straightway, Elisha slew the oxen and cooked them, using the wooden plough and the other instruments of husbandry as firewood; then he gave the oxen as food to the people. Bidding farewell to his parents, he followed Elijah and served him until the latter was taken up into Heaven. When Elisha received his teacher's mantle and the grace of his prophetic spirit twofold, he demonstrated whose disciple he was through the miracles he wrought and through all that is related of him in the Fourth Book of Kings. He departed full of days and was buried in Samaria, about the year 839 B.C. Even after his repose, God glorified him; for after the passage of a year, when some Israelites were carrying a dead man for burial, they cast the dead man on the grave of the Prophet. No sooner had the dead man touched the Prophet's bones, than he came to life and stood on his feet (IV Kings 13:20-21). Jesus, Son of Sirach, says, "He did wonders in his life, and at his death his works were marvelous" (Ecclesiasticus 48:14).

+**Epiphanius of Cyprus**, Bishop, Father and Doctor of the Church: A Hellenized Jew who converted to Christianity, Epiphanius was born at Beth-Saddouk (or Besanduk), near Eleutheropolis, in Judea, around 310 A.D. While very young he pursued the monastic life in Egypt. On his return to Judea, in 333, he founded a monastery in his home town and was ordained to the priesthood. He remained a monk there for thirty years, serving as its superior. He was fluent in five languages, and extensively studied in theology and the classics. In 367 his reputation for asceticism and learning brought about his nomination as Bishop of Constantia [Salamis] the metropolis of the Island of Cyprus. For nearly forty years he fulfilled the duties of the episcopate, but his activity extended far beyond his island. Epiphanius' zeal for the monastic life, ecclesiastical learning, and orthodoxy gave him extraordinary authority. Hence the numerous occasions on which his advice and intervention were sought in important ecclesiastical affairs. He combated the heresies of Arianism and Origenism. He was a friend of St. Jerome but an opponent of St. John Chrysostom whom he felt was insufficiently orthodox. While a brilliant speaker, his confrontational approach was sometimes an obstacle in persuading his opponents. He was an authority on the Scriptures and on heresies. He fell asleep in the Lord in 403 A.D.

+Ephrem of Syria, Father and Doctor of the Church: was born c. 306 in Nisibis (Syria), Mesopotamia. Possibly born of pagan parents, he was baptized at eighteen. He served and studied under St. James of Nisibis and became head of his school. Ephrem most probably accompanied James to the Council of Nicea in 325. Syrian sources attribute the deliverance of Nisibis from the Persians in 350 to his prayers, but when in 363 Nisibis was ceded to the Persians by Emperor Jovian, he took residence in a cave near Edessa in Roman Territory. Edessa (now Urfa in Iraq), was the site of a famous theological school and this was where Ephrem did most of his great theological writing. Tradition says he visited St. Basil at Caesarea in 370 and on his return helped alleviate the rigors of the famine of the winter 372-373 by distributing food and money to the stricken and helping the poor (which as a deacon, was one of his duties).

Ephrem's fame rests on his writings, above all on his metrical homilies and his hymns. The latter in particular were designed for popular use and were didactic in character, often directed against various current heresies. He is largely responsible for introducing hymns into public worship. Ephrem wrote commentaries on a considerable number of books of the Bible, and a personal "Testament" which seems to have been added to by a later hand. He countered the heretics -especially the Arians and the Gnostics- and wrote on the last Judgment. All his works are elevated in style, flowery in expression, and full of imagery; even as a theologian he wrote as a poet. He has always been regarded as a great teacher in the Eastern Churches and many of his works were translated into Greek, Armenian and Latin. Ephrem passed his entire life in his native Mesopotamia and fell asleep in the Lord at Edessa (Iraq) June 9, 373.

*Just as the Apostles in the Upper Room received the tongues of fire
You also were filled with grace from the fountains of the Holy Spirit
You abundantly distributed it
And with it filled thirsty souls throughout the universe
O blessed Saint Ephrem, intercede before Christ for us who celebrate your memory.*

*You are the reasonable vineyard planted by God which brought forth fruit
By which you nourished and do nourish the children of the Church
O writer of the heavenly Kingdom
And teacher of the God and New Covenants
O blessed Saint Ephrem, intercede before Christ for us who celebrate your memory.*

-SHARAGAN TO ST. EPHREM: MODE 7

+Evangelists: For the lives of each Evangelist see the entries under their individual names: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

+Etchmiadzin, the Catholic Holy Church, (2nd Sunday after Pentecost): The Feast of the Catholic Church of Holy Etchmiadzin is commemorated two weeks after Pentecost, which is the Sunday immediately following the Saturday celebrating the Deliverance of St. Gregory the Illuminator, which was recorded by Agathangelos. In the vision he saw the shape of a cathedral with pillars and arches amidst clouds and blinding lights. In

Vagharshabad, at the place of the ancient Armenian pagan temple, Christ the only-begotten [Etch-Miadzin] descended and struck the earth with a golden hammer. This feast commemorates the final eradication of paganism in Armenia and the establishment of the Holy Armenian Church and her pontifical authority. It is also a commemoration of the Armenian Church's role [established by the Apostles and based on the truth of the Gospels] in the universal [catholic] Church. The word "Catholical" denotes that Etchmiadzin is the central, "Mother" or Basilical Temple of the Church among the Armenians.

*The Holy Church has been set up as a holy tabernacle
And Christ the King is offered in it in sacrifice
Come, you faithful, let us sing a new song to Christ.*

*The hosts of angels come down from the heavens
Sing a song of praise in wondrous voice
The thrice-holy hymn.*

*Rejoice, Holy Church, espoused and full of grace
Adorn Your children
Let them sing praises to Him Who shone on you,
The Mother Church, the Temple of Light.*

-CANON TO SHOGHAGAT: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 5

+Eugenia, Philip, Claudia, Sergius, Apito and the Two Eunuchs, Martyrs: Eugenia was a Roman by birth, who lived at Alexandria, where her father, Philip, was sent by the Emperor Commodus (180-192 A.D.) to be governor of Egypt. Eugenia received a fine upbringing and was noted for her good disposition and beauty. Having become acquainted with the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, she yearned with all her soul to become a Christian and so in secret from her parents, in the company of her two servants, attired in men's garb, she set out to a monastery for men. There together with her servants she accepted holy Baptism. By her ascetic feats, Saint Eugenia acquired the gift of healing. One time a rich young woman turned to her for help. Seeing what before her seemed a young monk, this woman burned with an impure passion, and upon being spurned she contrived a slander about a forcible attempt. Eugenia came to trial before the governor of Egypt, i.e., her father, and she was forced to reveal his secret. Her parents were exuberant, finding before them one over whom they had long grieved. After a certain while they all accepted holy Baptism. But Philip, upon the denunciation of pagans, was displaced from the post of governor. The Alexandrian Christians chose him as their bishop. The new governor, fearing the wrath of the people, did not dare openly try to execute Philip, but instead dispatched assassins. While Philip was in prayer, they inflicted wounds upon him, from which he died three days later as a martyr.

Having thus become widowed, Claudia [wife of Philip] and her daughter and servants set out to settle near Rome. There Eugenia continued with monastic life. She and Claudia brought many young women and widows to Christ. After the course of several peaceful years, the emperor Galienus (260-268) began anew the persecution

against Christians, and many of them found refuge with Claudia and Eugenia. Both Eugenia and Claudia were martyred for proclaiming the Gospel without fear. Both her brother Sergius and Apito and the Two Eunuchs who traveled with Eugenia suffered the same fate. (D)

+**Euphemia**, Virgin and Martyr: a native of Chalcedon, the traditions surrounding her martyrdom state that she was tortured and then slain by a wild bear because she refused to attend a pagan ceremony. A Temple was erected in her honor in the fifth century.

+**Ezekiel**, Prophet & Priest: was the son of Buzi and a Levite. At the age of twenty-five, he was taken with many others into captivity to Babylon but God's hand protected him. In the fifth year of his captivity [c. 594 B.C.], he began to prophesy. His book of prophecy, divided into forty-eight chapters, is filled with mystical imagery and marvelous prophetic visions and allegories. Ezekiel saw in a magnificent vision the glory of God and four strange living creatures. Then God called him to preach repentance to the Hebrews and to predict the many disasters threatening the Hebrews. Ezekiel asks his fellow Hebrews to cast away all transgressions and to find themselves a new heart and a new spirit. In the passage about the "gate that remains shut" through which the Lord alone entered, the Fathers saw a foretelling of the Incarnation of the Word from the Virgin (44:1-3). In the section about the "dry bones" that came to life again (37:1-14), he prophesied both of the restoration of captive Israel and the general resurrection of mankind. There are no direct quotations from Ezekiel in the New Testament, but in the Apocalyptic writings (like the Book of Revelation) there are many parallels and obvious allusions to the later chapters (40-48). Having prophesied for twenty-eight years, Ezekiel was martyred by the order of a Hebrew prince of the tribe of Gad because he reproached them for their idolatry. His name means: "God is strong." EAC/Domar

O Christ, Sun of Righteousness

Through the prophets You revealed to all the human race

The hidden mystery of Your economy

And the appearing of Your light.

They taught Israel to adore Your lordship

And clearly proclaimed the salvation of the Gentiles

The Messiah is coming, the King of Israel.

They likened the womb of the Holy Virgin to the Temple

From whence was given us the bread of immortal life

The heavenly hosts ceaselessly bless Him

-CANON TO THE HOLY PROPHETS: MISERERE-VOGHORMYA

+**Ezra, Priest:** was a learned and pious priest residing in Babylon in the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus. In the seventh year of the king's reign, Ezra obtained leave to go to Jerusalem and to take with him a company of Israelites [457 B.C.]. The journey took four months and the company brought with them a large freewill offering of gold, silver,

and silver vessels. It appears that Ezra's great design was to effect a religious reformation among Palestinian Jews. He first enforced the separation of all who had married foreign wives (Ezra 10:1). This was accomplished within six months of their arrival at Jerusalem. Thirteen years later he is recorded as being in Jerusalem again, this time performing purely priestly and ecclesiastical functions under Nehemiah's government. A Jewish tradition states that he was buried in Persia and various Old Testament works are ascribed to him.

+Fast of Advent: Armenians begin the celebration of the Theophany [Manifestation; Arm. Asdvadzahaydnootyoon] with a time of preparation called Advent [Arm. Hisnag], fifty days before January 6 (on November 18th or the Sunday closest to it). Advent is a time to begin to purify both soul and body to enter properly into and partake of the great spiritual reality of Christ's Coming. Although Advent was like Lent at one time, ostensibly, a period of fasting; in modern times, it has taken the form of three week-long fasts during the fifty days in addition to the regular fast days of Wednesday and Fridays. The three week-long fasts during Advent are: 1) The Fast of Advent [Hisnagats Bahk], 2) The Fast of St. James [Soorp Hagopah Bahk], and 3) The Fast of the Nativity [Dz'nuntyan Bahk]. This season does not constitute the intense fasting season that is characteristic of Great Lent; rather, Christmas Lent is a period of anticipation and contrition wherein we exercise humility and innocence to prepare ourselves for the great and joyous Feast of the Nativity and Theophany of Our Lord. Advent is a preparatory penitential season which is reflected in the life of the Church not necessarily with any specific liturgical worship services or a special rite, but by a number of small preparatory liturgical hymns and prayers that gradually proclaim Christ's coming into the world as a man.

Two weeks preceding the Nativity, the Armenian Church commemorates the King and Prophet David as a sign of the Messianic prophecies that the Christ-child would be born of the House of David and its Kingship. The Preeminent Apostles Peter, Paul, James and John, Stephen -the first martyr, James -the first bishop of Jerusalem and brother of our Lord, symbolize the Lord's earthly ministry for the manifestation of the Kingdom of God as the fulfillment of all righteousness. Finally, one week prior to the Nativity, the Church observes a week long strict fast called "The Fast of the Nativity" which marks the final preparation in anticipation of the birth of the Son of God. The joyful note of the season, in anticipation of the Nativity of Christ, affords an opportunity for the faithful to exercise their Christian commitment in a mood of happy spiritual toil to "make ready the way of the Lord" (St. Mt. 3:3).

In reality, the Eastern Churches do not keep a liturgical season in preparation for Christmas, but they observe a fast. In the Byzantine Rite this fast has been customary since the eighth century. It begins on November 15th and lasts until Christmas. Its name is "Quadragesima of St. Philip" because it starts on the day after the Feast of the Apostle Philip. The Syrians of the Antiochene Rite also have a fast of forty days before Christmas, but the Catholic Syrians keep it, by Papal indult, only for the last nine days before the Nativity. The Armenians celebrate a fast of three weeks (instead of the original seven weeks -as stated above). The Copts observe a fast which is very strict, from November 24th (in upper Egypt) and from December 9th (in lower Egypt) until the

Feast of the Nativity (which they celebrate on the Western Epiphany). The Syro-Chaldeans begin their "Fast of the Nativity" or "Fast of the Annunciation" at the middle of November or, in some dioceses, on the Sunday nearest to December 1st.

+Fast of the Catechumens [Arachavorats]: occurs three weeks before Poon Paregentan [Great Day of Good Living], the eve of the Great Fast, or 10 weeks before Pascha. It originally consisted of 5 days of severe fast (dzom) wherein nothing was consumed from Dawn to Dusk. At the end of the fast the Church commemorates Jonah the Prophet and reflects on the repentance of Nineveh as an example of broad repentance. Saint Nerses the Grace-filled points out the fact that when Saint Gregory the Enlightener emerged from his agony in the pit of Khor Virab, the central message of his evangelistic mission was the five days of severe fast (dzom) "like unto those of Nineveh." This, he pursued as a means of healing and enlightenment and preparation for conversion to the Christian faith. Historically catechumens were instructed for three to four hours daily and required to stand through every Church service, segregated from the regular congregation. Subject to constant lectures and warnings from the clergy, they fasted daily until sunset, kept continent and neither bathed nor cut their hair. They were exorcised on Holy Saturday afternoon, before the Paschal Vigil began. Following midnight, they were led to the place of baptism where they were immersed in the sacred waters, baptized, anointed and dressed in white linen to greet the dawn and take their first communion as Christians.

+Fast of the Dormition [Verapokhman]: a five day period of repentance (Monday thru Friday) preceding the Sunday of the Dormition and Assumption of the Theotokos.

+Fast of Gregory the Enlightener: a five day period of repentance (Monday thru Friday) preceding the Saturday feast of the Discovery of the Relics of St. Gregory the Enlightener.

+Fast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross [Khatchverats]: a five day period (Monday thru Friday) preceding the Sunday of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

+Fast of the Holy Cross of Varak: a five day period of repentance (Monday thru Friday) preceding the Saturday feast of the Holy Cross of Varak.

+Fast of James (Jacob) [Hagop] of Nisibis: a five day period of repentance (Monday thru Friday) preceding the Saturday feast of St. James of Nisibis.

+Fast of the Transfiguration [Vartavar]: a five day period (Monday thru Friday) preceding the Sunday of the Transfiguration.

+Forty Martyrs of Sebastia: are celebrated each year on the Saturday following the mid-point of the Great Fast. It commemorates the lives of forty brave young men who chose to die rather than renounce their Christian faith at a time when the spread of Christianity hung in the balance. In the first decade of the 4th century, the Roman Emperor Licinius began his anti-Christian crusade, ordering renunciation of the faith by all army personnel

discovered to be Christian. The investigation quickly disclosed that a battalion in Sebastia, who were recognized for their military prowess, harbored Christian sympathizers. These Forty confirmed that they were Christians, boldly declaring that although they were faithful to the Roman King, they also would remain faithful to their heavenly King who supplied them with hope, motivation, and courage. After various repeated attempts to convert them back to pagan faith, the King ordered a more severe punishment.

In the heart of the winter of 316, the forty were left naked, neck deep in the ice-cold water of a lake. One of the forty could not endure the torture and ran out of the lake to a hot bath provided to tempt the Christians to renounce their faith. He died immediately after submersing himself in the hot water. But late that night a light shone from the heavens, forming halos over the heads of the soldiers. Seeing this, the guards were thrown into confusion. One of them declared on the spot the undeniable truth of Christianity, and threw himself into the lake in place of the one who apostatized. The forty became the most inspiring testaments to Christianity in the East, and a church with forty cupolas in their memory could be found in Sebastia before the 14th century invasion of Tamerlane.

*Today the Church celebrates the memory of the feats of the unconquerable martyrs
Who in Sebaste entered into battle and courageously triumphed over the enemy;
By their prayers, O Christ, spare us.*

*Today the blessed forty martyrs who received unbearable sufferings on the frozen lake
Were warmed from above by the light of rays word cannot express
O Christ, who came down into the midst of Your Saints, spare us.*
-CANON, CANTENUS, MODE 8

+**George**, Soldier & Martyr: A legend about George states that a dragon lived in a lake near Silena, Libya. The beast ate two sheep each day, at a time when mutton was scarce. It also killed many people. Hearing of this report, upon entering the region, George crossed himself, rode to battle against the serpent, and killed it with a single blow with his lance. George then gave a magnificent sermon and converted the locals. Having been given a large reward by the king, George distributed it to the poor and then left the region. He was later martyred by beheading c. 304 at Lydda, Palestine.

+**Gordius**, Hermit, Martyr: was a soldier in Caesarea, Cappadocia. Convert to Christianity. Dismissed from the army as his religion made his loyalties questionable to the authorities. Lived as a desert hermit. During the persecutions of Diocletian, he turned himself over to the authorities so he could publicly proclaim his faith. He was martyred by beheading in 304 A.D. (D)

+**Great Fast** *Note: Here begin the entries for the Pascal Cycle up to Pentecost.

The Great Fast [Arm. *Medz Bahk*], is also called *Karasnork* [literally, *Fast of the Forty*; Latin, *Quadragesima*; Greek *Tessarakoste*] since it lasts forty days. The days of lent are referred to as *Karasnortagan* and the Sundays, *Karasnortagan Giragi*. The Great

Fast is the longest of the fasts prescribed in the liturgical calendar and it begins on the Monday following *Poon Paregentan* and lasts for forty days [six weeks] up until the Friday prior to *Lazarus Saturday*. The Great Fast is therefore “the” preparatory spiritual journey with its destination of Pascha, “the Feasts of Feasts.”

A. The Posture of the Church: During the Great Fast the Church maintains a penitential posture that is physically displayed by the closing of the altar curtain on the eve of Poon Paregentan as a symbolic representation of the expulsion of Adam and Eve, the first human beings, from the Garden of Eden. The faithful are thus ushered into the Lenten period as penitents seeking to return to their Creator through prayer, forgiveness and instruction. Also, during the Great Fast it has become the practice of the Armenian Church to not offer Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgy.

B. Fasting: A special word must be said about fasting during the Great Fast. Generally speaking, fasting is an essential element of the Christian Life. Christ fasted and taught men to fast. Fasting is done in secret, without ostentation or accusation of others [Matthew 6:16, Romans 14]. It has as its goal the purification of our lives, the liberation of our souls and bodies from sin, the strengthening of our human powers of love for God and man, and the enlightening of our entire being for communion with the Holy Trinity.

The Church rules for fasting are derived from those practices followed in monastic life. In earlier centuries during the Lenten period, with the exception of Saturdays and Sundays, a total abstinence of food was observed. Today, however, it has become the practice of the Church to abstain from meat and meat byproducts only eating those foods which are not derived from animals. These rules exist not as a Pharisaic burden on the faithful [Luke 11:46], but as an ideal to be striven for; not as an end in themselves, but as a means to spiritual perfection crowned in love to prepare us to commune with God.

C. Liturgical Structure: The Great Fast originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Pascha [Zadig], when the faithful rededicated themselves and when catechumens were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of the Great Fast, the individual Christian imitates Jesus’ withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days and rededicates himself to the church through prayer, fasting and learning. [Matthew 4:2]

To understand the various liturgical particularities of the Lenten period, we must remember that they express and convey to us the spiritual meaning and the central idea of the Great Fast, to its function in the liturgical life of the Church. It is the idea of repentance. In the teaching of the Armenian Church however, repentance means much more than a mere enumeration of sins and transgressions to the priest. Confession and absolution are but the result, the fruit, the “climax” of true repentance. And, before this result can be reached, become truly valid and meaningful, one must make a spiritual effort and go through a long period of preparation and purification. Repentance means a deep, radical reevaluation of our whole life, of all our ideas, judgments, worries, mutual relations, etc. It applies not only to some “bad actions,” but also to the whole of life. At every moment of life, but especially during Great Lent, the Church invites the penitent to

concentrate attention on the ultimate values and goals, to measure life by the criteria of Christian teaching, and to contemplate human existence in its relation to God. This is repentance and it consists therefore, before everything else, in the acquisition of the *Spirit of repentance*, i.e., of a special state of mind, a special disposition of our conscience and spiritual vision.

The liturgical cycle is thus a school of repentance. It teaches us what repentance is and how to acquire the spirit of regeneration, without which “absolution” remains meaningless. It is, in short, both teaching about repentance and the way of repentance. And, since there can be no real Christian life without repentance, without this constant “reevaluation” of life, the liturgical worship of the Great Fast is an essential part of the tradition of the Church. The neglect of it, its reduction to a few purely formal obligations and customs, and the deformation of its basic rules constitute one of the major deficiencies of Church life today.

D. Sundays of the Great Fast: In the Armenian Church all Sundays of the Great Fast have a theme. The Church provides these themes for the purpose of communicating the reality of Christian life and to prepare the penitents for communion with Jesus Christ. These are as follows:

1. First Sunday - Sunday of the Eve of the Great Fast

Great Day of Good Living [Poon Paregentan]: the last Sunday, which precedes the six week period [40 days] of the Great Fast. It falls seven weeks prior to the Resurrection Sunday [Holy Pascha] and is moveable with an interval of thirty-five days, along with the Feast of the Resurrection, from February 1 to March 7. The theme of this day recalls man’s existence while living in perfect harmony with God in the Garden of Eden. The hymns and odes of the day recall the story of God creating mankind in His image and likeness, placing man in a bountiful garden paradise without sin and allowing man to share in His divinity. The Great Day of Good Living ushers the faithful into the Lenten period of strict fasting, penance and reconciliation, with its ultimate destination of Pascha, the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Second Sunday - Sunday of the Expulsion

The message of the *Sunday of Expulsion*, continuing on the theme of *Paregentan Sunday*, commemorates Adam and Eve’s fall and banishment from Paradise as a result of their sin of disobedience toward God and His law [read Genesis 2:1-24 and 3:8-19]. After the expulsion man became subject to death, pain and every human imperfection. Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of God, “Of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall die.” (Genesis 2:17). Eve was tempted by a serpent to eat the fruit of the tree [“you will not die, you will be just like God”]. After she did, she convinced Adam to eat of it as well. Adam and Eve then made aprons of fig leaves to cover their lower parts. After this act of disobedience God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. The act of disobedience damaged the unity of mankind with God and led, according to the biblical story, to man’s mortality, fall and expulsion from paradise. Prior to the fall, man experienced a state of innocence in paradise, with freedom of unity and communication with God, and

possession of immortality and harmony in the cosmos. During the Great Fast, Christians fast in preparation for the Feast of the Resurrection on Pascha Sunday, striving to return to dependence on God and experience a healing of the relationship between God and humanity. The ultimate goal therefore, is an even closer union with God and closer likeness to God than existed in the Garden of Eden.

3. Third Sunday - Sunday of the Prodigal Son

The *Parable of the Prodigal Son* teaches the lesson of God's Fatherly love and forgiveness for those who repent. The parable describes the passion of a caring father for his runaway son. Day after day, the father had been scanning the horizons for any sign of his lost son. Although in the first century a father would typically wait until a son showed some sign of respect before addressing him, here the father threw all social conventions aside. He could not wait to see his son. He started walking toward him. With open arms, he embraced his son, pulling him tightly to himself. God is like this loving father. He wants to welcome sinners back home with open arms. Through the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus presents a vivid illustration of God's mercy for repentant sinners. [cf. Luke 15:11-32]

4. Fourth Sunday - Sunday of the Steward

The Sunday of the Steward instructs us to use one's possessions prudently and wisely. Here, Jesus uses the example of a shrewd manager to reveal the foolishness of hoarding earthly riches. The lesson of the parable revolves around the shrewd manager realizing his own predicament, that he would be judged for the dishonest way he had handled his master's possessions. He tried to obtain friends who would provide for his welfare later, by decreasing what was owed to his master. His shrewd action would guarantee his future welfare. With this parable, Jesus is pointing out that everyone should follow this manager's example. Instead of frantically holding on to one's possessions that will soon disappear, people should give possessions away, especially to those in need [Luke 12:33]. Money will not last but people, God's Word, and His Kingdom will. [cf. Luke 16:1-15]

5. Fifth Sunday - Sunday of the Judge

The Sunday of the Judge, reminds us of the importance of prayer and of the virtues of humility, fear of God, justice and protection of the weak. The Parable of the Widow and the Judge, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector illustrate the results of the proper practice and importance of persistent prayer with a humble heart. In the former parable, Christians, like the widow, should not give up praying to God even when facing indifference and powerful opposition. If a helpless widow wins her case by persistent pleading before a callous judge, how much will God's elect find quick justice before a loving and righteous Father? After encouraging the disciples to be persistent in prayer, in the latter parable, Jesus teaches them how to pray. This parable sharply contrasts the prayer of a Pharisee with that of a tax collector. Jesus commended the tax collector for his humble, contrite and "justified" prayer to God and contrasted that with the hypocrisy of the Pharisee's sense of self-righteousness. [cf. Luke 17:20-18:14].

6. Sixth Sunday - Sunday of the Advent

The *Sunday of Advent*, the Last Sunday of the Great Fast, reminds us of the end of the present order of the world, the second coming of the Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment and the creation of a new earth and a new heaven. The Gospel for Matins according to St. Mark articulates Jesus' prophecy about the future end times. Jesus gave His followers a prophetic picture of the end times, including events leading up to it. He also talked about future events connected with His return to earth to judge all people. Jesus predicted both near and distant events without putting them in chronological order. Jesus warns His followers about the future to provide them with a guide to live by glorifying God in the present age to prepare for the future fulfillment of the Kingdom. Many predictions Jesus made in this passage have not yet been fulfilled, but they were made to help the faithful remain spiritually alert and prepared at all times as the Church eagerly waits for His Second Coming. [Mark 13:1-37]

+Great and Holy Week: In the Armenian Church, the final week of Christ's life is called "Great Week" [Arm. *Avak Shapat*; Grk. *Megali Evdomas*]. In the west, the traditional Churches have termed it simply "Holy Week" which the Armenian Church finds satisfactory. During this week, a strict fast is observed until after the *Jrakalooys* Divine Liturgy. Each day of this week has a theme:

-Great Monday - The sterile fig tree, which bears no fruit and is condemned by Christ.

-Great Tuesday - The wise virgins who unlike their foolish sisters, were vigilant and prepared when the Lord came to them.

-Great Wednesday - The fallen woman who repents and gives her wealth to Christ, as contrasted to Judas who betrayed Christ for money.

-Great Thursday - The Passover meal [commemoration of the establishment of the Holy Eucharist], which Christ celebrated with His Twelve Apostles; also, Judas' betrayal and Christ's washing the feet of His Apostles. Late Thursday night [into Friday morning] also marks the arresting of Christ, His imprisonment, trial, torment and passion.

-Great Friday - Commemorates the crucifixion, death and burial of Christ.

-Great Saturday - continues the burial and at night proclaims the Resurrection at the *Jrakalooys* Divine Liturgy.

-Pascha [Zadeeg] Sunday - Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Great Week is the culmination of the religious experience of the faithful who have just emerged from the long penitential period of Great Lent. Great Week is preceded immediately by Lazarus Saturday, wherein Christ offers us the hope of Resurrection. On Palm Sunday, He triumphantly enters Jerusalem in fulfillment of the prophecies; and having chosen the way of the Cross, He invites the faithful to witness His passion that they might share in His Resurrection.

+Lazarus Saturday: *Remembrance of the Raising of Lazarus*

The joy that permeates and enlightens the service of Lazarus Saturday stresses one major theme: the forthcoming victory of Christ over Hades. "Hades" is the Biblical term for Death and its universal power, for inescapable darkness that swallows all life and with

its shadow poisons the whole world. But now -with Lazarus' resurrection- "death begins to tremble." A decisive duel between Life and Death begins giving us the key to the entire liturgical mystery of Pascha [Resurrection]. Already in the fourth century Lazarus' Saturday was called the "Announcement of the Resurrection" [Pascha]. For, indeed, it announces and anticipates the wonderful light and peace of the next -The Great- Saturday, the day of the life-giving Tomb [Great Saturday]. Lazarus, the *friend* of Jesus, personifies the whole of mankind and also each man, as Bethany -the home of Lazarus,- stands for the whole world -the home of man. For each man was created as a friend of God and was called to this friendship: the knowledge of God, the communion with Him, the sharing of life with Him: "in Him was Life and the Life was the light of men" [St. John 1:4]. And yet this Friend, whom Jesus loves, whom He has created in love, is destroyed, annihilated by a power which God has not created: death. In His own world, the fruit of His love, wisdom and beauty, God encounters a power that destroys His work and annihilates His design. The world is but lamentation and sorrow, complaint and revolt. How is this possible? How did this happen? These are the questions implied in John's slow and detailed narrative of Jesus' progression towards the grave of His friend.

And once there, Jesus wept, says the Gospel [St. John 11:35]. Why did He weep if He knew that moments later He would call Lazarus back to life? The Armenian Church teaches that all the actions of Christ are both Divine and human in one and the same person, the Incarnate Son of God. He who weeps is not only man but also God, and He who calls Lazarus out of the grave is not God alone but also man. And He weeps because He contemplates the miserable state of the world, created by God, and the miserable state of man, the king of creation... "It stinketh," say the Jews trying to prevent Jesus from approaching the corpse, and this "it stinketh" can be applied to the whole of creation. God is Life and He called man into this Divine reality of life and ..."he stinketh." At the grave of Lazarus Jesus encounters Death -the power of sin and destruction, of hatred and despair. He meets the enemy of God. And we who follow Him are now introduced into the very heart of this *hour of Jesus*, the hour, which He so often mentions. The forthcoming darkness of the Cross, its necessity, its universal meaning, all this is given in the shortest verse of the Gospel - "and Jesus wept." We understand now that it is because He wept, i.e., loved His friend Lazarus and had pity on him, that He had the power of restoring life to him. The power of Resurrection is not a Divine "power in itself," but the power of love, or rather, love as power. God is Love, and it is love that creates life; it is love that weeps at the grave and it is, therefore, love that restores life... This is the meaning of these Divine tears. Love, which is the foundation of life and its source, is at work again recreating, redeeming, restoring the darkened life of man: "Lazarus, come forth!" And this is why Lazarus Saturday is the real beginning of both: the Cross, as the supreme sacrifice of love, and the Common Resurrection, as the ultimate triumph of love. On Saturday evening [the eve of Palm Sunday] a hymn of the Armenian Church relates:

*Today, having come to Bethany,
With Your all-powerful command You called out to Lazarus.*

And death began to tremble

*Hell was conquered
Corruption was destroyed,
O Life-creating Christ, save us!*

*Today, having come to Bethany,
You announced Your holy and all-mighty resurrection in advance
Calling incorrupt from the tomb him who had been dead four days
O Life-creating Christ, save us!*

-CANON: CANTENUS, MODE I

Thus, as we emerge from our penitence of the Great Fast, we are first greeted by Christ's promise for the Resurrection of all mankind.

+**Palm Sunday** [Arm. *Dzaghgazart*; literally "Girded with Flowers"]: is the feast of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Having raised Lazarus from the dead, Christ was hailed by the people as the Messiah and new king of Israel. By entering Jerusalem, riding on a white donkey, the Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled [Zechariah 9:9]. The people hailed him shouting "*Hosannah! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*" And they spread flowers and palm branches before Him. The ode [Arm. *dagh*] for Palm Sunday brightly illustrates His coming: *Today, the created rejoice, with gleeful blessing. Heaven and earth come together, Resound in applause. Today on Mt. Zion, the Nard has spread its fragrance. The rose glows with color, of intense red violet.* On the morning of Palm Sunday, palms are blessed in church and distributed to the faithful. The faithful follow in procession as they celebrate the great and triumphal victory of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. With this, we also enter into Holy Week and accompany the Lord through His passion by saying, "*Cry aloud, Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

In the evening, after the Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy, the faithful gather at the Doors to accomplish the Service of the Opening of the Great Doors [Arm. *D'rnpatsek*]. Just as, through the raising of Lazarus, Christ opened the doors for the resurrection of all mankind and, in like manner He showed us the way of the Cross and invited us to witness His passion and share in His resurrection, so also, the Church symbolically opens its doors that the faithful may enter into the kingdom of God and come before His throne. In this manner, the faithful follow Christ [the second Adam] who redeems our sins and leads us back to Paradise from whence Adam was expelled due to his disobedience. The faithful gather at the porch of the Church while the priest kneels before the great doors [in Western countries this is done inside the church, on the bema, before the drape of the apse]. Then a profound dialogue ensues between the priest representing the people and a voice behind the great doors, until finally, the voice bursts forth: "Come ye, who are blessed by the Father, inherit the kingdom which was prepared for you from the beginning of the world." The priest cries out in reply: "Open the doors of justice for I would enter and confess to the Lord." Then the great doors of the Church are opened and the people enter with resounding joy, singing: "Open to us the gate of your mercy Lord, and make us worthy of your dwellings of light together with your saints."

Undoubtedly the emotion and spiritual deepening caused by this beautiful service is equally as inspiring today as it has been throughout the centuries, filling the faithful with the grace of the Holy Spirit and with anxious anticipation to participate in Christ's passion and resurrection on the great day of Pascha.

*Today we have seen manifested to the world
The Word who has no beginning
Who sits on the throne of glory with the Father;
Bless Him with the voice of the Cherubim.
Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.*

*Today the young colt is like the Cherubim
And the Hebrew children offered blessing to the Son of David
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

*Today the universe rejoices at the coming of God's Son into Jerusalem
And calls out with a loud voice;
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE I

+Great Monday: The theme of *Great Monday* is that of the sterile fig tree that did not bear fruit and was condemned by Christ [Matthew 21:18-22]. Christ was disappointed in finding that the people of the covenant [Israel] bore no fruit. Israel, like the barren fig tree, failed to bring forth the fruits of repentance. Nevertheless, Christ points out that faith can move mountains and can overcome death and despair.

*Come, you sons of men,
On this day bewail mourn the fall of our father
Who sinned and was deprived of the glory in which the Creator had adorned him
And put on a covering of fig leaves
instead of the light word cannot express*

*Jesus, Renewer of our nature!
As a sign of the old man You dried up on this day
The barren fig tree.
Renew us also from our old sins for immortal life.*

-CANON FOR GREAT MONDAY: CANTEMUS, MODE 3

+Great Tuesday: The theme of *Great Tuesday* is the wisdom of the wise virgins who, unlike their foolish sisters, were prepared for the Lord when He came. The reading [Matthew 25:1-13] clarifies what it means to be ready for Christ's return [Second Coming] and how we should live until He comes again. The message is clearly identified at the end of the passage wherein Matthew records: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" . . . when the Lord shall come.

King of glory!
In expectation of You, we joyfully will go out to meet You
Who come to judge the earth.

With the lamps of faith brightly burning.
With the choirs of the wise virgins,
Let us enter the bridal chamber with the Heavenly Bridegroom.

Let us make haste
Before the sound of the divine voice rings out
That we may not find ourselves outside
Like the five maidens with lamps that had gone out..
-CANON FOR GREAT TUESDAY: MISERERE-VOGHORMYA

+Great Wednesday: carries the theme of the sinful woman who repents giving her wealth to Jesus and kissing His feet, unlike Judas, who betrayed Christ for money. The Gospel [Matthew 26:3-13] relates that the sinful woman, unlike the apostles who were preoccupied with the imminent danger surrounding Christ, demonstrated the fullness of her repentance in anointing Jesus and kissing His feet. The apostles did not understand and chastised her for wasting what might have been used for the poor. Christ defended her action as one of beauty and devotion knowing that this anointment was in anticipation of His death.

*Your servant-image
Anointed by Your divinity word cannot express
Today You were well pleased to allow sinners to anoint with myrrh,
We bless You who come for the salvation of the world.*

*You explained the anointing with myrrh
As an announcement beforehand of Your life-giving burial.
On this day the money-loving thoughts of Judas were revealed.
We bless You who come for the salvation of the world.*

-CANON FOR GREAT WEDNESDAY: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 7

+Great Thursday:

Morning - Remembrance of the Last Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Great Thursday marks the Lord's Last Supper. It was at the Passover meal wherein Christ broke and distributed unleavened bread, and passed the cup of wine telling the disciples these were His Body and Blood of the New Covenant [Matthew 26:17-30]. Through this covenant Christ demonstrated that man [a creature of God] could participate in the kingdom of God -indeed could be in communion at His table in His eternal kingdom. In the Gospel according to Luke [22:28-31] He relates: "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; as my Father appointed kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."

Evening - Remembrance of the Washing of the Feet by our Lord Jesus Christ.

A stirring part of Great Week is accomplished at this time when the people gather at the door of the Church [in the narthex; Arm. kavit] and the priest comes to his knees, as did Christ, and washes the feet of twelve men, as was done to the disciples. The hymns and mood are spell-binding as the priest anoints their feet with oil and washes them. The Gospel gives us this account in John [13:1-17]. The services continue uninterrupted into Great Friday

*Fountain and Ray of Light, Light inextinguishable:
You took on Yourself to wash the disciples' feet;
Cleanse from us the darkness of gloomy thoughts 332
And fill us with Your light.*

*You pointed to Your body and blood
The remission of sins
And without being consumed
You are offered in sacrifice among us,
Dispel from us the darkness of gloomy thoughts
And fill us with Your light.*

-CANON FOR GREAT THURSDAY: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 5

+Great Friday

Commemoration of the Passion and Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. During Thursday night there is a vigil and reading of the Scriptures: Night-Khavaroom

The latter evening services are dedicated to the betrayal, arrest, torture, passion, and trial of Christ up to the hour of crucifixion. On this late evening, perhaps the most beautiful and stirring music of the entire Church is chanted. The mood is deeply silent and mournful. The Church witnesses the passion of Our Lord in almost complete darkness as twelve lighted candles [one of them black, symbolic of Judas the traitor] are lit representing the twelve Apostles. The hymns are ethereal and filled with passion and faith. Six sets of laments are chanted, each followed by a Gospel reading depicting Christ's betrayal, imprisonment, torture, trial, sentence and finally his crucifixion. As each one of these chants is accomplished, two candles are extinguished. In the end, with the exception of one candle symbolizing the light of Christ, the church is plunged into total darkness as the bishops, priests, deacons and people pour forth their very spirit and resound with an earthshaking voice the Chant of Crucifixion - *Daradzyal*:

*From hand to hand and foot to foot
stretched across wood upon wood,
the bitter fruit [of crucifixion] transforms life into death
between two unrighteous ones.*

*Here was the naked figure of the law-giver
whom the blind [unbelievers] could not see,*

Except for one of the thieves.

This hymn continues to depict the final hour, telling us how He [Jesus] was given vinegar to quench His thirst for water, and His wound inflicted by the spear of the soldier. And as His mother watched, the heavens roared and the ground heaved, giving forth the skull of Adam, and saving the thief in the final hour. The thundering roar of the chant *Daradzyal* suddenly ceases. With the church almost in total darkness the clergy and clerks sing with great lament the hymn *Ardzat-sirootyamp* [For the Love of Silver] painfully reliving the betrayal and passion:

*Obsessed with a greed for silver
Judas betrayed his great teacher
To the Jews, for thirty pieces of silver.*

*He [Judas] divested himself
Of the Divine Holy Spirit
And, he vested himself in Satan
And took Satan upon himself and wore him.*

*On that night when our Savior was betrayed
To die upon the cross
He ascended the Mount of Olives
And praying, he said this:
"Father, take this cup from me."*

A disturbing silence seizes upon the faithful. Then with the light of Christ hidden from the faithful...in a trembling, distant and lamenting sound the voice of a young tortured male cries out the words of Christ to His mother. This touching lament is found nowhere in the recorded ledgers of the liturgical books of the Armenian Church and was apparently introduced through pious provincial Armenian tradition. Here are the heart-rendering words of Christ to His mother as expressed in the Armenian Church tradition, on this one night of the year, at the moment of Christ's crucifixion:

Where are you my Mother - Oor es Mayr im

*Where are you my mother, sweet and tender?
Your love consumes me.
My eyes have filled with burning tears,
I have no one to wipe them.*

*As long as there is life in me,
I shall wait anxiously for you,
Lest you should arrive too late,
And find me dead.*

At noon on Friday the Church in deep sorrow commemorates the Crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ with readings, psalmody and hymns. The readings from the Old Testament refer particularly to the Messianic prophecies, which reflect upon Christ's being the awaited Messiah. The Gospel readings deal with Christ's passion, crucifixion and death upon the Cross.

+Great Saturday: - *Commemoration of the Burial of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The services Friday evening inaugurate the Great Saturday observance and remembrance of our Lord's entombment in the Holy Sepulcher. Herein is read the Gospel of Matthew [27:57-61] and a white tomb is placed in the chancel of the Church adorned with flowers. In many churches during the services the tomb is taken in procession around the Church's temple, where after the faithful approach to venerate and kissing the Gospel, take a flower from the tomb. Here the Church waits at the tomb until Pascha eve arrives and anticipate the resurrection of the Lord.

*Christ, born of the Virgin
Today in the flesh is laid in a virgin tomb
And He who loosed the pains of Hell
Is sealed by the seal of the priests.*

*The Creator of all, Who slumbers not in His nature,
Today sleeps among the dead
He who keeps Israel, Who Himself slumbers not,
Is guarded by soldiers.*

*Christ, the Joy of creatures,
Today is bewailed by the sorrowful women, as One dead
And the Fragrance of Immortality
Is anointed by reverent myrrh-bearing women.*

-CANON FOR THE BURIAL: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 3

Jrakalooyts- Lucernarium of Pascha

The Evening Services of Holy Saturday inaugurate the Paschal celebration, for the liturgical cycle of the day always begins in the evening [as it does on the previous two nights]. On the Eve of Sunday, the Church takes off its penitential nature, opens the curtain of the altar and begins to pray in great anticipation of the Lord's Resurrection.

Prior to the Divine Liturgy, the Old Testament readings of creation and the prophecies are read and the faithful prepare to enter into the rapture of the Resurrection. These lessons from the Old Testament are all centered on the promise of the Resurrection, all glorifying the ultimate Victory of God, prophesied in the victorious Song of Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea, the salvation of Jonah, and that of the three youths in the fiery furnace.

Finally, at the *Jrakalooyts* Divine Liturgy the altar curtain opens, and the clerks proclaim the introit for Pascha, "*Christ is Risen from the Dead, trampling down death by*

death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life." This phrase gives great meaning to Great Saturday because Christ's repose in the tomb was an "active" repose. He came in search of His fallen friend, Adam, who represents all men. Not finding him on earth, He descends to the realm of death, known as Hades in the Old Testament. There He finds him and brings him life once again. This is the victory: the dead are given life. The tomb is no longer a forsaken, lifeless place. By His death Christ tramples down death. The entire Church then elatedly resounds with the rapture of joy and love in His Resurrection exclaiming, "Hail Jerusalem-the Lord is Risen."

+Holy Pascha (Easter) [Soorp Zadeeg]: *The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ It is non-fasting until the Ascension.*

In the center of our liturgical life, in the very center of that time which we measure as a year, we find the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Resurrection is the appearance in this world, completely dominated by time [and therefore by death], of a life that will have no end. The one who rose again from the dead does not die anymore. In this world of ours, there appeared one morning someone who is beyond death and yet *in* our time. This Resurrection, is the central theme of Christianity and it has been preserved in its purity in the Armenian Orthodox Tradition.

The center, the day, that gives meaning to all days and therefore to all time, is that yearly commemoration of Christ's Resurrection at Pascha. This is always the end and the beginning. We are always living *after* Pascha, and we are always going *toward* Pascha. It is the earliest Christian feast. The whole tone and meaning of the liturgical life of the Church is contained in Pascha, together with the subsequent fifty-day period, which culminates in the Feast of Pentecost, the coming down of Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. This unique Paschal celebration is reflected every week in the Christian Sunday, which we call in Armenian "Harootyan or" (Resurrection Day). If you open a calendar, you will find that all Sundays are centered in that paschal mystery, the day of Resurrection. In fact, the English word Sunday is translated into Armenian as *Giragi*, which comes from the Greek *Kyriaki heemera*, meaning "the Day of the Lord." Thus, in the Eastern Church tradition, the very name of the day [*Giragi*] represents the Paschal mode of its celebration as Resurrectional.

Tied into this mode is the fact that Pentecost is the fulfillment of Pascha. Christ ascended into heaven and sent down His Holy Spirit. When He sent down His Holy Spirit into the world, a new society was instituted, a body of people, whose life, though it remained of this world and was shared in its life, took on a new meaning. This new meaning comes directly from Christ's Resurrection. We are no longer people who are living in time as in a meaningless process which makes us first old and then ends in our disappearance. We are given not only a new meaning in life, but even death itself has acquired a new significance. In the paschal intonation we sing, "He trampled down death by death." We do not say that He trampled down death by the Resurrection, but by *death*. A Christian still faces death as a decomposition of the body, as an end; yet in Christ, in the Church, because of Pascha, because of Pentecost, death is no longer just the end but it is the beginning. It is not something meaningless which therefore gives a meaningless taste to all of life. Death means entering into the Passover of the Lord. This is the basic tone, the basic melody of the liturgical year of the Church. Christianity is, first of all, the

proclamation in this world of Christ's Resurrection. The spirituality of our Church is paschal in its inner content, and the real content of the Church life is joy. We speak of feasts; the feast is the expression of joyfulness of Christianity.

If we have a message, it is that message of paschal joy which finds its climax on Pascha night. When we hear, "Christ Is Risen," then the night becomes -in the terms of St. Gregory of Nyssa- "lighter than the day." This is the secret strength, the real root of the Christian experience. Only within the framework of this joy can we understand everything else [Mark 16:2-6].

*Today is our Passover through the slaying of Christ
Let us who have been made new from the old sin celebrate the feast, saying:
Christ has risen from the dead.*

*Today the radiant angel came down from heaven and made the guards tremble
And proclaimed to the holy women, saying;
Christ is risen from the dead.*

*Today let us, the New Israel called to Christ,
Freed by the blood of the lamb of God
Join with the choir of heavenly angels, saying:
Christ is risen from the dead.*

-CANON FOR HOLY PASCHA: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE I

*Today good news has been given to first-formed Adam;
You who sleep, arise!
Christ who is risen is already shedding His light on you;
The God of our fathers.*

*Today the myrrh-bearing daughters proclaim good news to Eve;
We have seen Your resurrection. O Christ who art risen.
The God of our fathers.*

*Today the angels descended from heaven and give the glad news to men;
The Crucified One is risen and has raised you with Himself,
The God of our fathers.*

-CANON FOR HOLY PASCHA: PATRUM- HARTS, MODE 8

+Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, 40th Day of Pascha-tide: It was the incorporeal Logos, which came down among men. But today it is the Word made flesh, both true God and true man, who enters the kingdom of heaven. Jesus brings into heaven our human nature, which He had assumed. He opens the door of the kingdom to humanity. As if by proxy, the faithful believers take possession of the benefits, which are offered and made possible to us. God has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus [Eph. 2:6]. When the disciples had been separated from Jesus, they remained full of hope, for they knew that they were to receive the Spirit. He

commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father. The cloud surrounded Jesus, but this cloud is colored already by the fire of Pentecost. Jesus, is going away from us, leaves in us an attitude, which is one not of regret, but rather of joyous and trustful awaiting. Jesus' departure has been both an act of benediction and an act of adoration, the one corresponding to the other [Lk. 24:51]. This is what the feast should be to us. If Jesus withdraws with an act of blessing, and if we adore Jesus as He withdraws [figuratively], we will be filled with new power -which comes from this adoration- and we, like the apostles, will return "with great joy."

*The heavenly powers were terrified,
Seeing Your ascent, O Christ
In fear they asked each other, saying:
Who is this king of glory?*

*He is the Word and God made flesh
Who killed sin on the cross
Who has ascended and enters Heaven with glory
The Lord mighty in His power.*

*This is He who arose from the tomb and destroyed Hell
Having ascended, He enters with glory to the Father
The Lord mighty in battle.*

-CANON: LAUDATE-DER HERGNEETS

+Pentecost. Sunday of the Advent of the Holy Spirit. 50th Day of Pascha-tide. Paregentan of the Fast of the Prophet Elijah (Elias): This day was the Jewish feast of the Pentecost that commemorated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Because of this there were many Jews in Jerusalem from different lands. When they heard an unusual noise in the air, they started gathering near the house where the Apostles had been. They were surprised to hear, each in his own tongue, the wonderful works of God. The time of fulfillment of the prophesies had come, when the Spirit of God would come down on those faithful to Him. The words of Peter [Acts 2:22-24], inspired by the Holy Spirit deeply moved the people, and on that day about three thousand people were baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such was the beginning of the spreading of the Gospel, that through the apostles and their disciples it first spread throughout Judea, and then throughout the world.

From the time when the Holy Spirit rested over the apostles [Acts 2:2-3], they became very different. Those who had just recently ran in fear from the garden of Gethsemane, now began a world-wide bringing forth of the Gospel. They were not to be stopped by threats, torture, or death. There were followed by ever new generations of witnesses and martyrs for Christ. Mighty rulers armed against them, philosophers opposed them, great temptations were put in their path -but crucified, burned, perishing in the arenas of gladiators, they stood firm in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Troubling waves of false Christians, unworthy pastors, false teachers and dissenters crashed over

them -but nothing can destroy the Church of Christ. In the words of our Divine Teacher, “I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” [Mt. 16:18].

*When the Dove, who had been sent down from on high
Came down with a great noise
In the form of a brilliant light
He set on fire the apostles seated in the holy Upper Room
Without consuming them.*

*The Dove immaterial, unreachable,
who searches out the depths of God
Declares that taken by Him from the father
The terrible and second coming of Him
Whom they proclaimed one in essence.*

*Glory in the highest
To the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father
Who inebriated with the cup of immortality
The Apostles who invited earth to heaven.*

-CANON FOR 1ST DAY OF PENTECOST: CANTENUS, MODE 7

*Note: Here Ends the Pascal Cycles. Entries resume alphabetical order.

+**Green Sunday, World Church Sunday**, 3rd Sunday of Pascha-tide: Commemorates the establishment in Jerusalem of the first Church where Christ met with the Apostles in the upper room. The designation of Green Sunday may have had something to do with the season of spring. During the Divine Liturgy it has become the custom for the Church to be decorated in green and for the clerics to wear green vestments. The reading of the day [John 2:23-3:12] alludes to newness or transformation.

*Today the multitudes of angels share in our celebration
For the heavenly King comes into the Holy Church.*

*Rejoice and be exceedingly glad,
O Church, betrothed to God!
For the Lord of lords has chosen you
And been well pleased to live in you*

*Shine, shine, O catholic Church!
For the divine Light from the Father and Light
Has arisen on you
And has enlightened your children.*

-CANON: MISERERE-VOGHORMYA

+Gregory the Enlightener, Bishop & Confessor: A very early and universally attested tradition of the Church states that the Apostles St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew were the first to bring the Gospel to Armenia and so our Divine Liturgy invokes them as our "First Enlighteners." Yet the faithful they gained were to remain persecuted for the next couple of centuries under the Apostles successors, the Bishops, who maintained the Apostolic Faith. Hence we have many martyrs from this period celebrated in our Church Calendar. Yet the work of the conversion of the nation was reserved for another holy soul, another Enlightener.

St. Gregory was exiled from his homeland when he was very young. This was because his father had assassinated the King of Armenia as a result of a dynastic struggle. It wasn't long before Gregory's father was also killed in retaliation and so the young boy had to be exiled to Cappadocia to save his life. There -in this great Christian center of learning which produced the likes of St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Gregory of Nyssa- Gregory was imbued with the Christian faith from his infancy. It was there he would receive his great instruction into the depths of the Holy Scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition.

Once his formation was complete, on an evangelical inspiration, Gregory set out to convert the Land of his Fathers and returned to Armenia. The King of Armenia at this time was the son of Tiridates II who had been murdered by Gregory's father. Arrested for evangelizing, it was made known to the reigning King, Tiridates III, that Gregory was the son of his father's assassin. After unspeakable tortures, he had Gregory cast into a deep, dark pit. There he would remain for an astounding 13 years, only to be kept alive by a house-servant of the King who was secretly a Christian. She sustained Gregory's life by dropping food down to him as occasion would allow.

King Tiridates (Trdat in Armenian) by this time was violently persecuting the Christians in his realm in imitation of his friend, the infamous Diocletian, Emperor of Rome. Finally, the Armenian King was stricken with an affliction which made him go mad to the point of imagining himself a beast grazing down on all fours. The King was finally persuaded by his sister (St. Khosrovitoukhd) to release Gregory who, upon his release, prayed for God to heal the King of his affliction. Immediately the King was healed: physically and spiritually. He became a believer, was baptized and set about the work of assisting St. Gregory the Illuminator in the evangelization of the Armenian people. Because of his great assistance to St. Gregory in spreading the Gospel, King Tiridates is also a canonized saint of the Armenian Church. This mission found great success and in A.D. 301, made Armenia the first nation on earth to have "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

Lord Gregory!

You are the delightful new Paradise planted in the land of Armenia!

Which cost sweat and many toils.

Watered by the streams of the word of truth,

You gave from yourself wondrously beautiful offshoots,

Covered with a multitude of flowers.

You were on earth a heavenly light

*Which received its brightness from the Sun of life;
You dispelled thick darkness from the Armenian people
And it saw the light of the Holy Spirit's grace.*

-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 8

+Gregory the Enlightener's Extreme Passion and Descent into the Pit of Virab:

Khor Virab, which is built like a fortress, is where St. Gregory was imprisoned by King Tiridates III in 287. After refusing to acknowledge the goddess Anahit, Gregory endured unspeakable tortures and then was cast in this deep pit and left for dead for over 15 years. It became an important holy place of pilgrimage for later Armenian Christians.

*Participant with the choir of the spiritual heavenly armies
Dressed in the garment shining with purity,
O Lord Gregory!
You went down into the deep dirt filled pit
And among poisonous serpents
To save us from the evil dragon*

*Lord Gregory, who toiled with hope!
By fiery prayer and your spiritual love
You brought up with yourself into the heavenly tabernacle
Us also fallen from heaven into the depths of hell, wounded by sins.*

-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 8

+Gregory the Enlightener's Emergence from the pit of Virab: In 287 A.D., after condemning St. Gregory to the pit, Trdat started the persecution of Christians in Armenia. Shortly thereafter he persecuted the group of Christian nuns that came into Armenia, lead by St. Gayaneh. After ordering the execution of these pious women, Trdat went insane, imagining himself to be a boar. His sister, St. Khosrovitookht, had a dream that only Gregory could heal her brother. She told the people at court that Gregory was alive and was the only man who could cure the King. They sent men to the pit and to their amazement, found that Gregory was indeed alive. When Gregory was taken to Trdat, the ailing King knelt down before Gregory and confessed, saying, "Your God is my God, you religion is my religion." Gregory then resumed his ministry preaching and converting the Armenian nation to Christianity. He baptized the king and royal family into Christianity and conducted mass baptisms throughout Armenia. After being anointed bishop by Leontius, the Metropolitan of Caesarea, Gregory assumed the leadership of the Armenian Church as its first Catholicos-Patriarch, a post he graced for 25 years.

*Fragrant balm bestowed on us from above!
You struggled fifteen years in the deep pit
You came forth from it by vision inspired by God
You healed those struck by the devil
And by your brilliant teaching you established them in faith.
In the spirit of prophecy you saw the awful vision revealed above*

*The tabernacle on high was opened
Enlightened by heavenly light
And men conversed with the armies of the fiery angels.*
-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE

+Gregory the Enlightener, Discovery of the Relics of: is commemorated on the Saturday before the 4th Sunday after Pentecost. Late in life, Gregory retired from ecclesiastical service to adopt the life of a hermit in his final years. His son Arisdages, took his place as Catholicos, and represented the Armenian Church at the first Ecumenical Council in Nicea. Gregory went to the "Caves of Maneh" located on Mt. Sebul near Erzinjan (now in Eastern Turkey), which had been the residence of the Virgin Maneh, one St. Hripsimeh's companions. Eventually Gregory fell asleep in the Lord and his remains were found and buried by a shepherd, not knowing who he was. During the fifth century, a hermit named Karnig was guided by a vision to the grave of the saint and discovered his relics.

Over the centuries Gregory's relics have been distributed to Churches all over the world. Some were taken to St. John the Baptist Monastery in Pakavan where St. Gregory had baptized King Trdat. They were kept in a box and taken out on important occasions. In A.D. 450, when a rumor arose that St. Vartan and the Armenian nobles had accepted the Persian religion during their visit to Persia's royal court, the returning nobles were met by a gathering. These priests, noblemen and commoners held forth the box of St. Gregory's relics as a reminder of their Christian roots. The right hand of St. Gregory is, in fact, a greatly venerated relic of the Armenian Church kept in the Catholicos repository in Etchmiadzin. This precious relic is brought out once every seven years for the service of the Blessing of the Holy Muroon [Muronorhnek]. The consecrated oil produced from this service is used for the rites of Chrismation and other Sacraments and sacramentals in the Armenian Church throughout the world. In the early 21st century, another important relic of St. Gregory the Illuminator was ceremoniously given by John Paul II, Pope of Rome, to Catholicos-Patriarch Karekin II of Etchmiadzin, for the 1700th anniversary of Armenia's conversion. This was meant as an ecumenical gesture of love and fraternity between our Churches.

*Let Mount Sepuch crowned with light, rejoice like Sinai,
For on it stopped like a rainbow in the cloud St. Gregory
Overshadowed like Moses by marvelous light
And giving brightness of our faces
By the grace of the Holy Spirit*

*The fiery armies surround and guard the mountain
The dwelling place of St. Gregory like Mount Carmel
The living chariots the most pure prayers of our spiritual father,
The Holy Enlightener surround it like a wall
Him we have as our constant intercessory before the Lord.*
-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE

+Gregory of Nyssa, Bishop & Father of the Church: born c. 330 in Caesara, Cappadocia, Gregory was the younger brother of St. Basil the Great and the friend of St. Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzen). He was educated in Athens and influenced by the works of Origen and Plato. He was married to Theosebeia, who may have been a deaconess. At first a professor of rhetoric, he became disillusioned with his life as a teacher. He then became a priest and a hermit. His mother and sister already lived the monastic life. He became Bishop of Nyssa, lower Armenia, in 372, and Archbishop of Sebaste. He was so easy-going, tactless and inefficient in monetary matters, he was easily cheated and deceived. This situation deteriorated to the point that Demosthenes, governor of Pontus, accused Gregory of stealing Church property and had him imprisoned. He escaped, but was deposed by a synod of bishops in 376. He wandered in exile for two years and was then restored to his see. Gregory attended the Council of Antioch, fought the Meletian heresy and participated in the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople as a theologian. He fought against Arianism and for the reaffirmation of the decrees of the Council of Nicea. The Council called him, "Father of the Fathers" because he was widely venerated as the great pillar of orthodoxy and the great opponent of Arianism. He fell asleep in the Lord around c. 395.

+Gregory the Theologian [Nazianzus], Bishop, Father and Doctor of the Church: (c. 329-390 A.D.) was one of the three Cappadocian Fathers [the other two being Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa]. His father was the bishop of Nazianzus, Gregory the Elder and his mother was St. Nonna. He was educated broadly in Christian writings, especially Origen, and in Greek Philosophy. While studying in Cappadocian Caesarea, he met Basil, and formed a friendship that had lasting effects on his life. Together, they assembled the Philokalia, an anthology of Origen's works. Gregory's mother, Nonna, formed the center of faith in his family and encouraged him toward the ascetic life. Although reluctant, because of the strong influence of his father, Gregory was ordained a priest. He felt he was unworthy of this vocation and he feared that the great responsibility would test his faith. He assisted his bishop father to prevent an Arian schism in the diocese and in his opposition to Arianism, he brought many of its heretical followers back into the fold by engaging in various theological disputes.

He became bishop of Caesarea in 370 A.D. and Archbishop of Constantinople in 381. He disliked the city greatly, despised the violence and slander involved in these disputes, and feared being drawn into politics and corruption. Yet he continued to work to bring the Arians back to the faith. For his trouble he was slandered, insulted, beaten, and a rival bishop tried to take over his diocese. He was a noted preacher on the Trinity. When it seemed that the faith had been restored in the city, Gregory retired to live the rest of his days as a hermit. Gregory wrote great theological discourses and poetry. He taught that belief in God's incomprehensibility was crucial for theological orthodoxy. His rhetorical skill and defense of the Nicene position, as shown in his five Theological Orations, earned him the title the "Theologian."

*By the light of the divine word you beatified the Church
And dispelled the darkness of ignorance from the souls of men
O master holy Gregory*

Be our intercessor before the Only-begotten Word of the Father

You revealed to the Church

To confess as one

The consubstantial nature of the undivided Trinity

O master saint Gregory

Be our intercessor before the Only-begotten Word of the Father.

You taught to confess the saving economy of Him

Who became man for our sake

As one Christ from two natures

A marvelous union

-SHARAGAN TO ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN - MODE 3

+**Gregory of Nareg** [Krikor Naregatsi], Monk & Doctor of the Church: [950-1010 A.D.] was born in the city of Nareg and received his education under the guidance of his father, Bishop Khosrov (Antzevatsi, author of the earliest commentary on the Armenian liturgy) and from Anania Vartabed, Abbot of Nareg Monastery. At an early age, he and his two brothers entered the monastic life. Naregatsi launched his writings with a commentary on the Song of Songs. Krikor felt he was too young for this assignment, yet it was acknowledged for its clarity of thought as well as excellence of theological presentation. He wrote a number of famous works, sharagans (liturgical hymns), treasures, odes, melodies, and a wealth of Church writings but his masterpiece is his book of Lamentations called "Nareg" in which his universal genius is revealed (it has been translated into at least thirty languages). He is considered the greatest poet of the Armenian nation and its first and greatest mystic. His poetic style, great humility and holiness have been an inspiration to the Armenian faithful for centuries. Numerous miracles and traditions have been attributed to the saint. This is most likely why he is known as "the watchful angel in human form."

+**Gregory of Datev** [Krikor Datevatsi], Monk & Doctor of the Church: [1346-1410 A.D.] was born in 1346 in the province of Vaitoz Tzor. He was one of the famous students of Hovhannes Vorodnetsi and while on a pilgrimage with his mentor to Jerusalem in 1373, received Holy Orders. Later he was to receive from his teacher the degrees of Doctor of the Church (Vartabed) and finally Supreme Doctor of the Church (Dzayrakooyn Vartabed)). Like Vorodnetsi, he was well versed in Latin and had studied all the great Greek philosophers. In that style, he wrote the famous "Kirk Hartzmantz" [Book of Questions], a work of practical theology, and two collections of sermons, the style and depth of which set a new standard for Armenian preaching. Although Gregory spent most of his life in the Monastery of Datev, he did travel to other monasteries where he taught and gathered students. Men marveled at his genius and clarity of thought and wherever, he went students and admirers followed him. He increased the number of students and novices in each monastery that he visited. St. Gregory added the granting of the doctoral staff to celibate priests and the prayers for the granting of the Veghar (hood) as well as the degree of Supreme Doctor of the Church to the Book of Ritual (Mashtotz).

He was a great defender of the faith, spiritual leader, wonderful preacher, and pious and humble believer. St. Gregory of Dagestan is often called the “Second Gregory the Enlightener.”

+**Grigoris Rajig**, Martyr: (d. 549) was a Persian by birth from the Rajig family. Grigoris was originally named Manjhr. At a very young age, he moved to Armenia and adopted the Christian faith and his new name. Grigoris entered a monastery near the capital city of Dvin and was so renowned for his piety and strong faith that the monastery was eventually named Rajig Manjhr. He was tortured and finally beheaded by the Persian governor of Armenia for having ignored the governor’s command to renounce his faith and return to Persia.

+**Helena**, Mother of Constantine the Emperor: Helena’s main service was that she disposed her son Constantine toward the Christian faith at a time when other youths of noble birth were being brought up in the pagan spirit and despised Christianity. Her second service was the finding of the Lord’s Cross. In memory of this event, the Church established the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross of the Lord, one of the major feasts of the Church year. During the reign of Constantine, the name of the city of Jerusalem was restored in place of Elia Capitolina, which it had been given under the Emperor Hadrian. Helena built several churches in the Holy Land. These included upon Golgotha the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord [known in the West as the Holy Sepulcher]. There, each year on Great Saturday the grace-filled fire comes down. Churches were also built by Helena on the Mount of Olives (where the Lord ascended into heaven), in Bethlehem (where the Lord was born in the flesh), and in Hebron at the Oak of Mambré (where God appeared to Abraham).

+**Hierotheus of Athens**: According to some accounts, Hierotheus, like Dionysius the Areopagite, was a member of the court of Mars Hill in the 1st century. Having first been instructed in the Faith of Christ by Paul, he became Bishop of Athens. He, in turn, instructed St. Dionysius more perfectly in the mysteries of Christ. The latter, on his part, elaborated more clearly and distinctly Hierotheus' concise and summary teachings concerning the Faith. He was inspired of God, "a divine hymnographer," as Dionysius says [On the Divine Names, 3:2]. Having lived in a manner pleasing to God, he reposed in the Lord.

+**Hripsimeh, Gayaneh** and their **Virgin Companions**, Martyrs: Thirty-three nuns under the leadership of Gayaneh escaped to Armenia hoping to find refuge from the Roman Emperor who desired to wed one of them, Hripsimeh, because of her unusual beauty. The Armenian King Drtad, being in contact with Rome, heard of their entry into Armenia and likewise desired Hripsimeh. After many efforts to convince her, the king saw that it was useless and that she would not consent to his desires, nor would she leave her companion, nor the worship of Christ. The king became enraged and had Hripsimeh’s tongue cut out first, then her body burned with great torches. Her womb was torn from her. After all this, she was dismembered. The following day, Gayaneh and her companions were tied to stakes where they were skinned alive. After that, their intestines

were torn from their bodies and finally they were decapitated. Upon his delivery from the pit, St. Gregory built chapels over the relics of the holy nuns. Later, during the time of St. Sahag Barteve [4th c.], these chapels were rebuilt and, during the Catholicate of Gomidas [7th c.], two beautiful cathedrals were erected -the Cathedral of St. Hripsimeh being a monument of Armenian architecture. The Catholicos also wrote a beautiful sharagan in their memory, "Antsink N'viryalik."

*Today Saint Hripsimeh was called into the Kingdom of Heaven
For in combat with the tyrant she courageously conquered him
Confessing Christ the King, the Lord God of our fathers.*

*The Lord, Bless Christ the King with new songs of blessing.
With new songs of praise, praise Christ the King
Who adorned Saints Hripsimeh and Gayaneh with a resplendent crown*

*With new songs of praise, praise Christ the King
By the rosy blood which they shed
They renewed us who had been taught by Saint Gregory.*

-SHARAGAN: PATRUM- HARTS, MODE 8

+Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop & Martyr: was a convert to the Faith and a disciple of St. John the Apostle and Evangelist. St. Chrysostom says that St. Peter appointed Ignatius as his successor as Bishop of Antioch, a see he governed for forty years. The saint longed to shed his blood for his Lord Christ but opportunity was not granted him during the persecution under Domitian. While the short reign of Nerva lasted, the Church was in peace, but under Trajan persecution broke out anew. In the year 107, the Emperor came to Antioch. Ignatius was seized and brought before him. Having confessed Christ, Ignatius was condemned to be taken in chains to Rome, there to be exposed to the wild beasts. During this last journey he was welcomed by the faithful of Smyrna, Troas, and other places along the way. During his long journey, Ignatius addressed seven epistles to various Churches, in which, as a disciple of the Apostles, he testifies to the great truths of the orthodox faith. Belief in the All-Holy Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, and Communion as the true Body and Blood of Christ are all attested to by Ignatius in the clearest of terms. He thus provides an inestimable witness and link between the apostolic and post-apostolic eras of the Church. He arrived in Rome just as the public spectacles in the amphitheater were drawing to a close. The faithful of the city came out to meet him. He was at once hurried into the arena where two fierce lions immediately devoured him. He ended his saintly life by a glorious death, exclaiming, "May I become agreeable bread to the Lord." His remains were carried by the faithful to Antioch, where they were interred. In the reign of Theodosius they were transferred to a Church within the city. At present they are venerated in Rome.

*You called to the spotless wedding feast
Those chosen from the beginning of the world
You summoned to share in the joy*

*Of those who sit at table in that bridal chamber
The Bearer of God (Theophorus) as well
By his prayers preserve us, O King of glory.*

*Blessed Ignatius drank the cup of Your love which gives immortality
And, like the wheat of God
Crushed by the teeth of the beasts
He became pure bread for the Lord God.*
-SHARAGAN TO ST. IGNATIUS: MODE 7

+**Innocents of Bethlehem**, Martyrs: were the boys of Bethlehem aged two or under who were murdered by King Herod the Great, according to Matthew chapter two, in a futile attempt to ensure that he was rid of the Christ-child.

*Today the innocent holy infants in the age of childhood
By their premature sufferings became witnesses of Your incarnation
Lord God of our fathers.*

*Scarcely born from their mother
At tender age they entered into combat
And endured sufferings for Your sake
Lord God of our fathers.*

*And so we have as intercessors before You
The blessed holy martyrs
Who in Bethlehem accepted suffering for Your sake
Lord God of our fathers.*
-CANON: PATRUM- HARTS, MODE 7

+**Irenaeus**, Doctor, Bishop & Martyr, "Follower of the Apostles": was born near Proconsular, Asia in the first half of the second century [between 114 - 142]. While still very young, Irenaeus heard the holy Bishop Polycarp (d. 155) at Smyrna. During the persecution of Marcus Aurelius, Irenaeus was a priest of the Church of Lyons. The clergy of that city, many of whom were suffering imprisonment for the Faith, sent him [c. 177 A.D.] to Rome with a letter to Pope Eleutherius concerning Montanism, and bore emphatic testimony to Irenaeus' merits. Upon returning to Gaul, Irenaeus was chosen to succeed the martyr Pothinus as Bishop of Lyons. During the religious peace which ensued following the persecutions, Irenaeus turned his attention to pastoral duties and also missionary activity. His writings almost all were directed against Gnosticism, the heresy then spreading in Gaul and elsewhere. In 190 he interceded with Pope Victor to lift the sentence of excommunication laid by that pontiff upon the Christian communities of Asia Minor which preserved the practice of the Quatrodecimans regarding the dating of Holy Pascha. There are some reports that his life ended with martyrdom but these are unconfirmed by Church tradition. Irenaeus' writings remain a profound witness to early Church doctrine and an invaluable link between the apostolic and patristic eras.

+Isaiah, Prophet & Martyr: one of the four major Old Testament Prophets, he lived 700 years before the Birth of Christ, and was descended of royal lineage. The Father of Isaiah, Amos, raised his son in the fear of God and in the law of the Lord. Eventually Isaiah entered into marriage with a pious maiden-prophetess and had a son, Jashub. He was called to prophetic service during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judea, and he prophesied for 60 years during the reign of kings Joatham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh. The start of his service was marked by a vision in which he beheld the Lord God sitting enthroned in a majestic heavenly temple while six-winged Seraphim encircled Him crying out, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Saboath, heaven and earth are filled of His Glory!” The temple shook and was filled with the smoke of incense. After this, Isaiah’s mouth was purified with a red-hot coal from the heavenly altar to make him fit for the proclamation of the Lord’s prophecy. The Lord sent him to the Jews to exhort them to turn from the ways of impiety and idol-worship and to offer repentance.

Isaiah left behind him a book of prophecy in which he denounces the Jews for their unfaithfulness to the God of their fathers. He predicts the captivity of the Jews and their eventual return from captivity during the time of the emperor Cyrus. The destruction and renewal of Jerusalem and of the Temple is also foretold. But most importantly, the Prophet Isaiah, with particular clearness and detail, prophesies about the coming of the Messiah, Christ the Savior. He names the Messiah as God and Man and Teacher of all the nations. He foretells the Birth of the Messiah from a Virgin, and with particular clearness, he describes the Suffering of the Messiah for the sins of the world, and he foresees His Resurrection and the universal spreading of His Church. By his clear foretelling of Christ, he merited being called an Old Testament Evangelist by the Fathers of the Church. Isaiah had also the gift of wonderworking. During the time of a siege of Jerusalem, by his prayer he was able to miraculously draw out from beneath Mount Sion a spring of water, which was called Siloam (i.e., “sent from God”) and through his prayer the life of Hezekiah was prolonged for 15 years. He eventually was martyred by order of the Jewish king, Manasseh, by being sawn in two and was buried not far from the Pool of Siloam. His relics were eventually transferred to St. Lawrence Church in Constantinople and his head is preserved at a monastery on Mt. Athos.

*Having purified the Holy Prophets
You made them the dwelling place of Your divinity
And generously poured out into their souls
The streams of Your undefiled and heavenly grace
Through their intercession have mercy on us.*

*Having revealed to those who loved You
The hidden mystery of the economy
Of God the Word one in essence with You
You made them the heralds of the unspeakable future
Through their intercession have mercy on us.*

-CANON TO THE HOLY PROPHETS: CANTMUS, MODE 2

+**James** (Jacob) [Hagop] **the Greater**, Apostle and Martyr: the elder brother of the sons of Zebedee, like his brother, he was also a fisherman. James, along with his younger brother John, and friend Peter, constituted the privileged group known as the inner circle of Christ's disciples. James was present at the Lord's Transfiguration and His Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. For their ardent zeal, he and his brother were named by the Lord "Boanerges," which means "Sons of Thunder." Because of his great love for Christ, James was hated by the Jews and soon beheaded by Herod Agrippa [A.D. 44]. He was, in fact, the first of the Apostles to suffer martyrdom. It is believed by some that he preached in Spain and an old Spanish tradition states that his body was transferred to Santiago de Compostela, Spain. As a result St. James is one of the most revered saints in Spain.

*The Word who has no beginning,
who received a beginning from the Virgin,
appeared on earth in the flesh.
The Heralds of the Word of truth saw Him,
and proclaimed Him to the universe as God and Man.*

*God the Word in reality united Himself with flesh
while remaining unchanged in essence;
The Sons of Thunder were witnesses to this
and everywhere proclaimed the Word who became flesh.*
CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 8

+**James** (Jacob) [Hagop] **the Lesser**, Apostle and Martyr: is called "the Lesser," to distinguish him from James the Greater. He was the son of Alphaeus and was also called "the brother of the Lord" because his mother was the sister of St. Mary, the Theotokos. He was holy from the time of his birth and was even allowed to enter into the sanctuary of the Jerusalem Temple, where he offered prayer for the people. Because of the long hours he spent on his knees in prayer, he was called "the camel-kneed" -even by the local Jews. His sanctity was so well known, he became known as "James the Just." He was the first Bishop of Jerusalem and was the author of one of the New Testament Catholic Epistles. He is also credited for the Liturgy which bears his name. James was finally martyred in 62 A.D. while delivering a sermon to the Christian faithful. EAC

*Learn righteousness, you who dwell on earth,
look at the righteous James,
who by his way of life was pleasing to God.
Let us make him our intercessor before the Lord for our souls.*

*He became the head of the holy apostles
and was called brother of the Lord from the House of David.
Let us make him our intercessor before the Lord for our souls.*
CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN MODE 7

+James of Nisibis, Bishop & Monk: A beloved and prominent saint not only to the Syriac Church but also to the Armenians. He was born, raised, worked and died in the city of Nisibis which today is known as Nusbyien a city in south eastern Turkey. He passed his early years in study and with spiritual edification. As a young man he withdrew to the desert to live and pray as an ascetic. When the bishop of Nisibis died two candidates emerged from two conflicting groups. However, with the advice of the hermit Maroukeh, everyone focused on James the hermit and summoning him from the desert ordained him bishop in 320 A.D. in Amida. The life of St. James was filled with many miracles, which simply witnessed to the fact of his great holiness and spiritual depth. He had been a disciple of the hermit Maroukeh and he in turn had been a teacher of Ephrem of Syria, a great patristic writer. James attended the first Ecumenical Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 where he enjoyed great respect from the Emperor Constantine and those who attended the Council.

He became one of the great champions of Orthodoxy in the Church against Arius and Arianism, which were condemned at the Council of Nicea. It is believed that two or three times he saved his city from Persian invasion through his prayers. Although subjected to persecution and tortures prior to becoming a cleric during the persecution of Maximianos, nevertheless he died peacefully at an old age in 338 A.D. His relics, of which there are many, were taken to Constantinople in 970 A.D. and were the object of great honor in the imperial city.

*And we with a joyful voice celebrate your holy memory
O venerable witness of Christ, holy bishop James
We have you as intercessor for us before the Father in heaven.*

*You accepted severe toils to see Noah's ark
And from the angel's hands received a portion of the wood
Which served the human race as salvation
We have you as intercessor for us before the Father in heaven.*

-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 6

+Jeremiah, Prophet & Martyr: was one of the four major Old Testament Prophets. He was the son of Hilkiah of the priests that were in Anathoth and was called very young (B.C. 626) to the prophetic office, prophesying for forty-two years. During the reigns of Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, he opposed the Egyptian party, then dominant in Jerusalem, and maintained that the only way of safety lay in accepting the supremacy of the Chaldeans. He was accordingly accused of treachery. As the Chaldean threat increased, the persecution against Jeremiah grew stronger and many sought his life. Jeremiah, though, was "as a fenced brazen wall," (Jer. 15:20) and went on with his work, reproving kings, nobles, and people. The disaster which Jeremiah had long foretold at last came about. the above mentioned kings were carried into exile, but Zedekiah, who was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, was more friendly to the prophet, though unable to protect him. The approach of the Egyptian army and the consequent departure of the Chaldeans made the position of Jeremiah more dangerous, which led him to seek escape from the city. He was seized and thrown into a prison pit to die, but was rescued.

On the return of the Chaldean army, the final blow came. The city was taken, the temple burnt, and the king and his princes shared the fate of Jehoiachin. Jeremiah expressed his sorrow in his book of Lamentations. After Jerusalem's capture, B.C. 586, by the Chaldeans, the people, disregarding Jeremiah's warnings, took refuge in Egypt, carrying the prophet with them. In captivity his words were sharper and stronger than ever. He did not shrink even there, from speaking of the Chaldean king as the "servant of Yahweh" (Jer. 43:10). He was finally martyred in Egypt, being stoned by his fellow Jews because he exposed their false prophets and foretold their calamities. The tomb of the prophet is near Cairo and is revered by Christian pilgrims to this day. DOM/EAC

*You sent into the world the holy prophets as heralds of Your coming
And You Yourself humbly came
To fulfill by the New Law what was lacking
In the books of the Law and Prophets
Through their intercession have mercy on us, O Christ.*

*Through the Prophets in antiquity
You called the Gentiles to be a new people to You
And the daughter of Sion, the Church of the Gentiles
To be the beloved bride to the immortal Bridegroom
Through their intercession have mercy on us, O Christ.*

*The Seers with the help of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit
Proclaimed the glory of the new Church
Which You, Creator of creatures, built on the rock of faith
That it may be exalted higher than the ancient Church by Your command
Through their intercession have mercy on us, O Christ.*

-CANON TO THE HOLY PROPHETS: MISERERE-VOGHORMYA

+**Joachim and Anna**, parents of the Holy Theotokos: Joachim, son of Barpathir, was a descendant of King David, to whom God had revealed that from the descendants of his line would be born the Savior of the world. Anna was the daughter of Matthan. Through her father she was of the tribe of Levi and through her mother she was of the tribe of Judah. The spouses lived at Nazareth in Galilee. They were childless into their old age and all their life they grieved over this. They had to endure derision and scorn, since at that time childlessness was considered a disgrace. They never grumbled but rather continued to fervently pray to God, humbly trusting on His will. Once during the time of a great feast, the gifts which Righteous Joachim took to Jerusalem for offering to God were not accepted by the priest Ruben, who considered that a childless man was not worthy to offer sacrifice to God. This pained the old man very much, and he, regarding himself the most sinful of people, decided not to return home, but to settle in solicitude in a dissolute place. His righteous spouse Anna, having learned, what sort of humiliation her husband had endured, in prayer and fasting began sorrowfully to pray to God for granting her a child. In his desolate solitude and with fasting, Righteous Joachim also besought God for this. And the prayer of the saintly couple was heard: to both of them

an Angel announced that there would be born of them a daughter, who would bless all the race of mankind. By order of this Heavenly Messenger, Righteous Joachim and Anna met at Jerusalem, where through the promise of God was conceived and born to them the daughter, named Mary. Joachim died a few years later after the Entry into the Temple of his blessed daughter, at about age 80. Anna died at age 70, two years after him, spending the time in the Temple alongside her daughter.

*Today has budded forth from Anna, Mary
The bush in whom the divine fire was kindled;
That bush which Moses saw on Sinai
Surrounded by light unapproachable.
As prefiguration of the Virgin
Let us praise Him who gave us her who is blessed among women.*

*Today the lambs of the Law,
Joachim and Anna,
Have given us the fleece which receives the heavenly dew
From which has streamed forth the rain of life
And poured forth to the world the fountain of knowledge.
Let us praise Him who gave us her who is blessed among women.*

*Today a barren mother gave birth to you from the root of Jesse
As the tree of life,
Our Lady who blossomed forth
Which gave its fruit in due season to men
The Bread of Life which comes down from heaven.
O Holy One, intercede for our souls.*

-CANON FOR NATIVITY OF THEOTOKOS: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN

+Job the Righteous: was the patriarch from whom one of the Old Testament books is named. His residence in the land of Uz marks him as belonging to a branch of the Aramean race, which had settled in the lower part of Mesopotamia (probably south of Palestine, in Idumean Arabia). He was wealthy but was always righteous and merciful, helping many people. Job had seven sons and three daughters whom Job always praised God for. Satan envied Job because he praised God and was beloved by the Most High. Therefore, he wagered with God that if Job lost all of his cherished loved ones and possessions, he would renounce his loyalty to Him. One day robbers looted Job's wealth and all his sons were killed. In a short time Job became the poorest and most unfortunate of people, losing all that he had. But he did not complain. With great humility and meekness he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Satan then inflicted loathsome sores on Job all over his body. Job's friends, thinking that he was being punished for grievous sins he had committed, reproached him and encouraged him to admit his wrong doing. God allowed all of this in order to prove Job's righteousness in the face of temptation. When God saw Job's unbounded humility He appeared to him in person. God returned to Job his health, his

wealth and blessed him with wonderful new children. The story of Job is a lesson for all who suffer great temptation so they will never become desperate and lose their faith in God's love, mercy and providence.

+**Jonah**, Prophet: prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, the King of Israel from 793-753 B.C. The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amathi, saying: Arise and go to Niniveh, the great city that was guilty of evil plots against God [Nahum 1:9], great cruelty, and immorality, and preach in it: “because in wickedness its has come up before me” [Jonah 1:2]. But the Prophet, instead of obeying the Divine command, “rose up to flee into Tarshish from the face of the Lord” that he might escape the task assigned to him by the Lord. Jonah tried to run from his assignment and ended up spending three days and three nights in the belly of the whale. When Jonah got out, he grudgingly went to Ninevah, preached God’s message and witnessed them repent. The message is clear. God responded in mercy by canceling the punishment on Ninevah. God had said that any nation on which he had pronounced judgment would be saved if they repented [Jer. 18]. Here, the Ninevites chose to follow God by preparation [by fasting] for the Lord’s mercy through repentance and then collectively accepting God’s message. This pleased God and in turn He showed great mercy to the Ninevites by including them as members of His people. On the other hand, God became disappointed with the Jews because they did not want to share God’s message with the Gentiles, just as they resisted that role in St. Paul’s day [1Thes. 2:14-16]. Just as the Ninevites fasted and repented from their wicked ways, so too are the people of God, during this preliminary fast before the Great Fast, to repent and reconcile themselves to God and one another as they enter into the most penitential season of the year. Then, and only then, can these people of God truly live as God’s chosen, New Israel. Jesus tells us that his Resurrection [after three days and three nights in the heart of the earth] will prove the he is the Messiah. Jesus said that at the Great Judgment, the men of Ninevah will stand up to condemn the Israelites for their failure to repent [Mt.12:39-41].

*Through the Prophets
You showed in prefigurations
The hidden mystery of Your economy word cannot express
O God of our fathers.*

*Being kept alive in the belly of the whale
Jonah thereby prefigured Your undefiled burial in the earth,
O God of our fathers.*

*Announcing beforehand the mystery of Your saving Gospel
He preached repentance to the people of Nineveh,
O God of our fathers.*

-CANON: PATRUM-HARTS,. MODE 8

+**John the Forerunner & Baptist**, Prophet and Martyr: lived as a hermit in the desert of Judea until about A.D. 27. When he was thirty, he began to preach on the banks of the

Jordan against the evils of the times and called men to penance and baptism “for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” He attracted large crowds, and when Christ came to him, John recognized Him as the Messiah and baptized Him, saying, “It is I who need baptism from You.” When Christ left to preach in Galilee, John continued preaching in the Jordan valley. Fearful of his great power with the people, Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Perea and Galilee, had him arrested and imprisoned at Machaerus Fortress on the Dead Sea. This happened when John denounced his adulterous and incestuous marriage with Herodias, wife of his half brother Herodias. Because of this, she prompted her daughter to ask for John's head. Herod, regretfully, was under obligation to grant her request. John inspired many of his followers to follow Christ when he designated Him “the Lamb of God,” among them were Andrew and John, who came to know Christ through John’s preaching. John is presented in the New Testament as the last of the Old Testament prophets and the forerunner of the Messiah. The Church regards John the Baptist as one of the two prime intercessors for the Church, the other being the Holy Theotokos.

The Forerunner of the Kingdom of Heaven

St. John the Baptist

Appeared to the world as the herald of eternal salvation.

Through his prayers, O Lord hear us and have mercy.

Through the prayers of the greatest among the prophets born of women

Of Him who revealed to us You

Who appeared on earth as God and man

O Lord hear us and have mercy.

Through the prayers of the Voice crying in the wilderness

The Fulfiller of God's mystery

Today beheaded by Herodias

And translated into heaven with the choirs of the angels,

O Lord hear us and have mercy.

-CANON: MISERERE-VOGHORMYA

+**John the Theologian** [Hovhannes Asdvadzapan], Apostle and Evangelist: was a fisherman in Bethsaida and the second son of Zebedee and Salome. He was a disciple of John the Baptist before becoming one of Jesus Christ. He and his brother, James, were given the name the “Sons of Thunder” by the Lord because of the thunderous way they proclaimed the Gospel. John, along with Andrew, were the first to have an audience with the Lord. He was the one “whom Jesus loved” and who reclined on Jesus' bosom at the Mystical Supper. John is thus known as the "Beloved Disciple" of the Savior and it was he who followed Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane to Golgotha, the only apostle not to forsake the Lord. The Lord entrusted His own mother, Mary, to John while they both stood at the foot of His cross. He was imprisoned with Peter and later appeared in the Sanhedrin. After the Resurrection, John outraced Peter to the tomb but still allowed him to enter first. It was John who recognized the Risen Lord at the Sea of Tiberius where our

Lord spoke to him the words that were interpreted by some to mean that he would never die (Jn 21:23).

John was with Peter and the other Apostles when they prayed and received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In Jerusalem, he was present at the Jerusalem Apostolic Council. John went on to Asia Minor and settled in Ephesus and was later exiled to the island of Patmos. Although his unwavering confession of Christ led John to be boiled in burning hot oil, the Lord delivered him and he was the only Apostle who did not undergo martyrdom. Late in life, he authored the Holy Gospel which bears his name as well as the three Catholic Epistles and the Book of Revelation. For the sublime theology contained therein he was the first to merit the title "Theologian." He fell asleep in the Lord c. 101 at Ephesus and a Church was built over his tomb which was later desecrated and made into a mosque. His name means "God is gracious." EAC

O blessed master John!

*You received outpouring of grace from the Light most pure
and appeared as wondrously-adorned in the assembly of the blessed apostle
Beseech the Lord to forgive us our sins.*

*You leaned on the breast of the Unapproachable light who makes us tremble
You were purified like gold in the fire
and shone with light among the holy apostles,
like the sun among the stars.
Beseech the Lord to forgive us our sins.*

*You drank from the living fountain streams of grace,
on the wings of your spirit you entered into the incomprehensible,
You announced the consubstantial Son co-eternal with the Father.
Beseech the Lord to forgive us our sins.*

CANON: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 8

+John Chrysostom (the Golden-Mouthed) [Hovhannes Vosgeperan], Patriarch, Doctor of the Church and Confessor: [c. 347-407] one of the greatest of the Church Fathers. He was born in Antioch and studied Greek classics there. As a young man he became an anchorite monk (374), a deacon (c. 381) and a priest (386). Under Flavian of Antioch, he preached brilliantly in the cathedral for 12 years, winning wide recognition. In 398, he was suddenly made Archbishop of Constantinople where he soon gained the admiration of the people by his eloquence, ascetical life, and charity. His attempts to reform the clergy, however, alienated many monks and priests, and those of the court of the Roman emperor of the East came to resent his denunciations of their ways. He lost favor when he demanded mercy for the dishonored Eutropius and when he refused to condemn certain monks accused of heresy without a hearing. Empress Eudoxia and Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, succeeded in having John condemned (403) by an illegal synod on false charges.

The indignation of the people which resulted was reinforced by an opportune earthquake, and the superstitious Eudoxia had John recalled. He continued to attack the

immorality of the court and Emperor Arcadius exiled him to a remote part of Armenia. His reply to the hostile empress was: "Chrysostom fears only one thing -not exile, prison, poverty or death- but sin." There he continued to exert influence through his letters, and Arcadius moved him to a more isolated spot on the Black Sea to the very extremity of the Empire. On September 14, 407, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, John, already ill, died from the rigors of his forced journey. John Chrysostom influenced Christian thought notably. He wrote brilliant homilies, interpreting the Bible literally and historically rather than allegorically. His treatise on the priesthood (381) is considered a classic. His sermons and writings are remarkable for their purity of Greek style. In 438, John's body was returned to Constantinople, and Emperor Theodosius II did penance for his parent's offenses. John Chrysostom had a profound influence on the Armenian Church, having spent his last years in Armenia.

Blessed master holy John!

*From the Father without beginning You received the spirit of knowledge
By your divine words you have enlightened the Holy Church
Beseech the Savior to remit our sins.*

Golden Mouth!

*You are the proclaimer of the undefiled Word
From your lips the living steams, flowing in four streams, has watered
the whole universe
Beseech the Savior to remit our sin.*

Blessed master and teacher

*You have already drawn near to the inexpressible light of the Trinity
Today the Church celebrates the memory of your repose
Beseech the Savior to remit our sins.*

-SHARAGAN TO ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: MODE 8

+John, Patriarch of Jerusalem (386-417 A.D.): succeeded St. Cyril of Jerusalem as Patriarch. Born around 350 A.D., he spent time growing up with the monks of Nitria in Egypt. It was at the monastery of Nitria that he learned about Christianity and the teachings of Origen. He was esteemed very highly, possessed a sharp mind and intellect and delivered eloquent homilies. The clergy held him in high esteem and Pope Anastasius called him a man of divine virtues. Throughout his tenure as Patriarch however, he became the subject of criticism because of his indecisiveness in condemning questionable teachings about the Lord. He is also said to have had dealings with Jerome Augustine and Chrysostom among others. He died in 417 A.D. in failed health.

+John of Otsun [Hovhan Otsnetsi] (c. 728 A.D.), was Catholicos between 717 and 728 A.D., Otsnetsi is remembered as one of the most outstanding of the Armenian Church Fathers. Born in the province of Dashratz in the village of Otsun, he studied with Teotoros Krtenavoree, who was the most celebrated theologian of the time. He received the title of philosopher and was educated in the Hellenic school of thought. He, however,

did not bend to Hellenistic politics and during Arab rule in Armenia, endeared himself to the Arab overlords and ushered in a period of tolerance and cooperation. By means of his farsightedness, statesmanship, and piety, he secured some basic and important rights for Armenian Christians such as general religious freedom, the right to worship freely, and exemption from taxes for the church and clergy. He was also able to put a stop to the forced conversion of Christians to Islam. During his second year as Catholicos, he called a Council of Bishops in the city of Tvin where he established thirty-seven canons and organized a collection of the canons of the Armenian Church. These canons were the first such book and it was in time added to and finalized.

St. John is also remembered for his literary and official battles against the numerous sects, which plagued the church at this time. As a writer, he is remembered for his contributions in the Book of Hymns [Sharagans] as well as his many epistles and essays. Respected for his personality, for being righteous, pious, brave, and humble, in addition to being a great statesman and writer, St. John Otsnetsi was greatly loved by the Armenian people. During his latter years, he retired to a mountain monastery, living under sever conditions, as a monk. Armenian Church writers and historians remember his name and he is revered as a saint by all.

+John of Orodni [Hovhannes Vorodnetsi], Doctor: (1315-1388 A.D.), was born in the village of Vaghantan within the county of Vorodn during that period of Armenian history when the Unitors [or Uniates] were trying strenuously to Latinize the Armenian Church and thereby undermine her orthodox faith. St. John of Orodni gathered many clergy and encouraged theological study as well as proper education of the masses in order to safeguard the orthodox faith of the Armenian Church. He was a member of the monastery of Kailitzor where he served as an instructor and was very beloved of his students. Later, he moved to the monastery of Datev where he continued his teaching and causational pursuits. During this period, he was offered the Archepiscopal See of the Siunik Province but refused in order to continue his work. Extant among his many works are commentaries on the Gospel of John and the Pauline letters; he was also one of the leaders of the Armenian Church in defending her autonomy and the purity of her theology. Most of his life was dedicated to the battle against the unitors and the preservation of the orthodox faith. He was loved and respected by his many students and followers.

+Joseph the Father-of-God: Descendant of the house of David. A carpenter by trade, Joseph was the earthly spouse of the Theotokos. He was also the adoptive father of Jesus Christ. He was a visionary who was visited by angles. He is noted for being a just man and also for his willingness to immediately do whatever God told him. He fell asleep in the Lord in the 1st century, probably prior to the Passion of Jesus Christ.

+Joseph of Arimathea: was born at Arimathea, a city of Judea. He was a wealthy Israelite, a good and just man, who was himself looking for the kingdom of God. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin or supreme council of the Jews. He was secretly a disciple of Jesus, "for fear of the Jews." The Crucifixion of the Master quickened Joseph's faith and love, and suggested to him that he should provide for Christ's burial

before the Sabbath began. Unmindful therefore of the possible considerable personal danger, Joseph boldly requested from Pilate the Body of Jesus. Once in possession of the our Lord's sacred Body, he and Nicodemus (who had brought the spices) wrapped it in fine linen and grave bands. Joseph laid it in his own tomb, new, unused, and hewn out of a rock in a neighboring garden, and withdrew after rolling a great stone to the opening of the sepulcher.

*True and righteous Joseph,
Asked from Pilate Him who gives gifts to all men
And has given us a treasures undefiled.*

*We wrapped in clean linens the body of the Lord
Who puts on light as a garment
Who put on us the garment of incorruption.*

*He laid him in a tomb newly cut and sealed Him in,
Him who gave life once again to the first formed man
Who loosed the bonds of the death of men.*

-CANON FOR THE BURIAL OF THE LORD: LAUDATE-DER HERGNEETS

+**Jude-Thaddaeus** [Hoota-Tateos], Apostle and Martyr: was also called Lebbaeus, he was the brother of James Alphaeus. He ministered first in Palestine and later in Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia (Iran). Together with Bartholomew, Thaddaeus spread Christianity in Armenia, preaching mostly in the district of Ardaz. Tradition states that Thaddaeus brought to Armenia the spear with which Christ's side was pierced. Thaddaeus was martyred in 46 A.D in Armenia by order of King Sanatrug. He and St. Bartholomew are recognized as the First Enlighteners of Armenia. EAC

*Fiery walls of the vineyard planted by the Father and high towers
Golden Cups and Tireless Stewards
Spiritual Fathers of the Armenians
Bartholomew and Thaddeus
Intercede for us before the Lord.*

SHARAGAN: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN MODE 2 MIDDAY

+**Julita and Kyriakos** [Cyrucus], Martyrs: lived at Caesarea Cappadocia during the reign of the emperor Diocletian (284-305). She was from the city of Iconium. Fearing the persecution of Diocletian, she took her son Kyriakos, who was three years old and departed for Seleucia; but finding the same evil there, she went over to Tarsus in Cilicia, where the ruler arrested her. He took her son from her and tried with flatteries to draw him to himself. But the little one, in his childish voice, called on the Name of Christ and kicked the ruler in the belly so hard, that the tyrant became enraged and cast him down the steps of the tribunal. In this manner, the child's head was crushed, and he gave up the spirit. As for his blessed mother, she first endured many torments and finally was

beheaded in the year 296 A.D. St. Basil the Great devoted his Praiseworthy Discourse to St. Julita, seventy years after her death as a martyr.

*The son of a pious mother, child in age
Strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit
You were in armor a soldier of the Heavenly Leader
And were crowned in struggle with the lawless, O Saint Kyriak
Intercede for our souls before Christ, who planted you.*

*A beneficial dew descended on the fields of your country
When your precious blood flowed through the earth
The Angels rejoiced, receiving you into their midst
O mother gladdened by your son, O holy Julita
Intercede for our souls before Christ your Creator.*

-SHARAGAN TO STS. KYRIAKOS AND JULITA: MODE 4

+**Justinia**, Virgin and Martyr and **Cyprian**, Bishop & Martyr: According to a popular tradition, Cyprian was a native of Antioch who became a practitioner of sorcery and magic. He traveled widely in Greece, Egypt, Macedonia and the Indies to broaden his knowledge of the black arts. When Aglaides, a young pagan, fell in love with the beautiful Justina, a Christian of Antioch, he asked Cyprian to help him win her. Cyprian tried all his magic and diabolical expertise to win her for himself but was repelled by her faith and the aid of St. Mary. Cyprian then assailed Justina with every weapon in his arsenal, to no avail. Cyprian then realized the overwhelming power of God arrayed against him. Realizing the sinfulness of his past life, the repentant Cyprian then repulsed the devil by the sign of the Holy Cross. He then turned to a priest named Eusebius for instruction and was converted to Christianity. He destroyed his magical books, gave his wealth to the poor, and was baptized, as was Aglaides. Justina gave away her possessions and dedicated herself to God. In time, Cyprian was ordained and later was elected bishop of Antioch. He was arrested along with Justina during Diocletian's persecution and they were tortured at Tyre by the governor of Phoenicia. They were then sent to Diocletian, who had them beheaded at Nicomedia.

+**Khat**, Bishop: [370 A.D.] from the Village of Marak, collaborated and worked closely with St. Nerses the Great. He possessed great love for the Church and performed his ministry with faith and selfless dedication. Khat had a particular passion for helping the poor and for that reason Nerses placed him in charge of caring for the poor. When Nerses had to leave Armenia, he ordained Khat a bishop for the province of Bakravank and for the princedoms of the Arshagoonyats and he appointed him as vicar. Khat was married with two daughters, one of whom he gave in marriage to a person named Asdig who, after Khat's death, succeeded him as bishop of the Arsharooniyats. Nerses had entrusted all of the benevolent works of the church to Khat "his deacon." At one point Khat severely chastised Arshad [one of the kings] for his killings. Arshad commanded that he be stoned to death and when this happened large throngs came forward to stop the stoning, saving Khat. It is not known how long he lived before St. Nerses fell asleep in the Lord. He is

so closely associated with St. Nerses that even after Khat's death the Church decided to commemorate the two together on the same day.

+Koharinyank: Koharinos, Zamidus, Tuchicus, Ratigus and Teotoros, Martyrs: [1156 A.D.] The Islamic overlords of Armenia took Prince David of Sebastia and his eldest son captive. During their captivity, both were forced to convert to Islam, but David's wife and four younger sons, Koharinos, Zamidus, Tuchicus, and Ratigus, who had remained behind, practiced their faith openly. When the four young men came of age, they entered military service and soon it was discovered that they were Christians. They were called before their commander and because their father was a Muslim, they too were expected to be so. Through the mediation of their older brother, they were spared and returned to their position. Fearing that they had given the impression of changing their faith to save their lives, they made no effort to hide their Christian faith. Ratigus entered Soorp Nishan [Holy Sign] monastery. The others worshipped openly in the presence of their children, hoping it would inspire their conversion. Once again they were arrested. This time, however, they were severely tortured and finally beheaded in 1156 A.D. Koharinos' son, Teotoros the monk, upset by his father's and uncles' martyrdom, made public denunciation of the authorities. He was arrested, tortured and finally beheaded, joining his father and uncles in martyrdom.

+Lazarus the friend of Christ and his sisters, **Martha and Mary:** (Gk. Lazaros, a contraction of Eleazaros, meaning in Hebrew, "God helps"), he was the brother of Martha and Mary of Bethany. All three were beloved friends of Jesus. At the request of the two sisters, Martha and Mary, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Soon thereafter, the Saturday before Palm Sunday, Lazarus took part in the banquet which Simon the Leper gave to Jesus in Bethany. Many of the Jews believed in Jesus because of Lazarus. As a result, the chief priests sought to put him to death. Martha and Mary may have assisted Lazarus in a mission to France. Some accounts say he became bishop and eventually suffered martyrdom there.

+Levont [Ghevont], Priest & Martyr and Companions, Martyrs: Catholicos Hovsep of Haghotsim; Bishops Sahag and Tati; Priests Mousheh, Arshen, Manuel, Abraham, Khoren; Deacons Kachach and Abraham (454 AD). St. Ghevont was born in the last part of the fourth century in the village of Ichevan, was highly educated and assisted St. Sahag and Mesrob in the translation of the Bible into Armenian. St. Hovsep [Joseph] was born in 396 A.D. and was educated by Mesrob Mashdots. He was an excellent administrator and was known as a gentle servant of Christ. Hovsep became Catholicos in 444 A.D. The day before the battle of Avarayr, Vartan and the Armenian soldiers spent the night in prayer and devotion. The entire army prayed and took Holy Communion. The head of the Church, Catholicos Hovsep, was there together with his clergy. Priest Ghevont (Leontius), most zealous among the clergy, together with Vartan Mamigonian, encouraged the soldiers with his inspiring words.

After the battle of Vartanantz, St. Levont and his companions were abducted by the Persian King and placed in custody. During a later battle, the Persians suffered a great loss and under the evil influence of the pagan priests, their losses were attributed to

the fact that the Armenian priests had not been punished. Some were taken separately and the remainder in groups, and were tortured mercilessly and then martyred. Historians have recorded the martyrdom of each of the saints. St. Levont was also taken to Persia and exiled with Catholicos Hovsep to the land of Vergan [south of the Caspian Sea], where he was tortured and martyred. St. Hovsep served for eighty years until he was exiled and martyred at the age of 58 [in 454 A.D.]. These saints are especially loved and honored by the Armenian people because they were martyred for their strength of faith and love of Jesus Christ.

*Ghevont the holy teacher who enlightened all
Offering his hearers exalted teachings
Poured out the light of knowledge into the souls of perfect men
Who out of love for Christ voluntarily accepted death.*

*The fire of love for the Giver of Life burned in the souls of the holy Ghevontians
Loudly encouraging each other, they rushed forth to meet death
As spiritual pilots they triumphed over the waves of sin
And thereby made for us a way to the heavenly harbor.*

*Come let us also follow the true teacher
Come, let us celebrate with rejoicing the memory of the Fathers
Let us be united into one with the Body of the Savior
That we may shine by our good works in the heavenly bridal chamber.*

-CANON TO ST. LEONTIUS & COMPANIONS: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 8

+Longinus, Centurion & Martyr: The soldier who pierced the side of Jesus during the Crucifixion. He became a convert and was eventually martyred for witnessing to the Christian faith in his home territory of Cappadocia.

+Lucian, Priest and Martyr: was a theologian, scholar, and martyr highly praised by Sts. John Chrysostom and Jerome. A scripture scholar from Samosata, Lucian studied at Edessa and was ordained at Antioch as a presbyter. He authored many works on the Bible and Church doctrine, and his writings were so respected that Jerome used Lucian for his own scholarly endeavors. Little has survived of Lucian's works, but tradition declares that the second of the four creeds promulgated by the Council of Antioch was composed by Lucian. He also supposedly established the famous theological school of Antioch, which claimed among its famous members Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia. Lucian was arrested in Nicomedia, and was racked and put to death in the last persecutions of the Church by Roman officials (c. 312 A.D.).

+Luke, Holy Evangelist: born in Antioch of pagan parents and possibly a slave, Luke was one of the earliest converts. He was a physician by profession. Tradition states that he was also a painter and was the first to make iconographic representations of Our Lord Jesus Christ and St. Mary, Theotokos. He traveled with St. Paul and evangelized Greece and Rome with him, being there for the shipwreck and other perils of the voyage to Rome

(recorded in the book of Acts). He wrote the Gospel According to Luke, much of which was based on the teachings and writings of St. Paul. He also wrote a history of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles. He was martyred in Greece.

+**Maccabees**, Old Testament Martyrs: The title “Maccabees,” which was originally the surname of Judas, one of the sons of Mattathias, was afterward extended to the heroic family of which he was one of the noblest representatives. “Hasmonaeans” is the proper name of the family, which is derived from Cashmon, great grandfather of Mattathias. The Maccabees were a priestly family, which under the leadership of Mattathias, initiated the revolt and resisted the tyranny of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, King of Syria, and after securing Jewish independence [and re-conquering Jerusalem], ruled the commonwealth till overthrown by Herod the Great. The standard of independence was first raised by Mattathias, a priest of the course of Joiarhi. He seems, however to have been already advanced in years when the rising was made, and he did not long survive the fatigues of active service. He died in 166 B.C., having named Judas -apparently his third son- as his successor in directing the war on independence. After gaining several victories over the other generals of Antiochus, Judas was able to occupy Jerusalem except the “tower,” and purified the temple exactly three years after its profanation. Nicanor was defeated, first at Capharsalama, and again in a decisive battle at Adasa 161 B.C., where he was slain. This victory was the greatest of Judas’ successes, and practically decided the question of Jewish independence; but shortly after Judas fell at Adasa, fighting at desperate odds against the invaders. After the death of Judas, Jonathan his brother succeeded him in command, and later assumed the high-priestly office. He died 144 B.C., and was succeeded by Simon the last remaining brother of the Maccabean family, who died 135 B.C. The efforts of both brothers were crowned with success.

+**Maccabees, Eleazar the Priest, Solomonia and her Seven Sons**, Old Testament Martyrs: Eleazar, an honorable priest 90 years old, was told to eat swine’s flesh, which would be a sure sign of apostasy from the Law of God. He refused to do this. His misguided friends (who highly esteemed him) offered to give him another kind of meat to eat and tell the king it was pork. This way the appearance would be that he ate pork, but he would keep the law in a physical way. He refused, and was tortured and burned. The wicked king Antiochus, called by some “Epiphanes,” then tried to force the seven athletes of God, all brothers, and noble offspring of Solomonia, to eat swine’s flesh. They too were tortured in horrible ways terrible to contemplate, one at a time, with the rest looking on. Each had the skin flayed from his face, and was burned in a hot griddle. After their martyrdoms, all of which were encouraged by that true lover of God and wise mother, Solomonia, she threw herself into the flames and joined her sons to share in the rewards each so firmly believed in and deserved (see 2 Maccabees chapters 6 & 7).

+**Mamas**, Shepherd & Martyr: Preached to the animals in the fields. These animals gathered around him to hear the good news and a lion stayed with him as a protector. The lion accompanied him when he was examined in the persecutions of Aurelian and was Martyred c. 275 in Cappadocia. His relics were translated to Langres, France in the 8th century.

+**Marcarius** and **Eugenius**, Priests, Martyrs: lived during the time of Julian the Apostate, and were subjected to severe tortures and then banished to the deserts of Arabia where they continued their evangelization. They were crowned with martyrdom by decapitation in 362 A.D. (D)

+**Mark**, Holy Evangelist: believed to be the John whose other name was "Mark" (Acts 12:25) and the young man who ran away when Jesus was arrested (Mk 14:51-52). He was a disciple of St. Peter and traveled with him to Rome. St. Peter referred to him as "my son Mark" while he was with him in Rome. Mark authored the earliest canonical Gospel, the Gospel According to Mark, much of which was based on the teachings and writings of St. Peter. He traveled with his cousin St. Barnabas and with St. Paul through Cyprus. He evangelized the region of Alexandria and established the Church there, and also founded the first Christian school there. He was martyred on the 25 of April in the year 68 at Alexandria and his relics are at Venice, Italy.

+**Mark**, Bishop & Martyr: (d. 389 A.D.), the bishop of Arethusa, on Mt. Lebanon proclaimed the Gospel by establishing Christian Churches and shouldering the responsibility of bringing order to the Church. He destroyed a local pagan temple, enraging the pagan populace. Emperor Julian the Apostate ordered that Mark and other Christians rebuild the temples that they had destroyed. Mark fled rather than comply, but he surrendered when members of his flock were arrested. He was tortured by being dragged through the streets, but he remained so loyal to Christ and the Church that he was set free when Emperor Julian pardoned him. In some reports Mark dies as a martyr.

+**Matthias** [Madatyan] Apostle and Martyr: was not of the twelve but was one of the seventy disciples of Christ. After Christ's Ascension he was chosen as an apostle by lot to fill the vacancy left by Judas Iscariot. Judas had betrayed the Lord to the authorities for thirty pieces of silver and after the Crucifixion, he committed suicide. Matthias had been a follower of Christ from the beginning of His preaching. He ministered in Palestine and was martyred by stoning either in Palestine or Ethiopia for preaching the Gospel. EAC

*Knowers of the mystery of the will
and Stewards of the one lordship of the Thrice-holy Trinity
Trumpet sounds words of announcement throughout the whole world
Saints Simeon and Matthias
Intercede for us before the Lord.*

-SHARAGAN: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2 MIDDAY

+**Matthew** [Madteos], Apostle, Evangelist, and Martyr: was a Jew from Galilee and a resident of Capernaum. Originally he was a Roman tax-collector referred to as "Levi," but when Jesus called him to be His follower, Matthew immediately followed the Lord and became his disciple. After the Ascension of Christ and Pentecost, Matthew worked to evangelize the Jews of Palestine for a long time. Later, before leaving for remote

countries to preach the Gospel, he wrote his oral sermons upon the request of the faithful Jewish Christians. Thus came about the Gospel which bears his name. Matthew's Gospel is given pride of place in the canon of the New Testament, and was written to convince Jewish readers that their anticipated messiah had come in the person of Jesus. In his genealogy he emphasizes the Lord's human nature and origin. Therefore, in Christian symbolism, Matthew's Gospel has been represented by the figure of man [cf. Rev. 4:7]. After he ministered in Palestine for 15 years, he was martyred either in Ethiopia or Parthia (modern Iran) for preaching the Gospel. His name means "gift of God." EAC

Early Herald and Evangelist

Song of Salvation

Terrifying sound

Pride of the human race

Saint Matthew

Intercede for us before Christ.

-SHARAGAN: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2 MIDDAY

+**Mesrob**, Monk and Holy Translator: was born in the village Hatsegats in the province of Daron. In his early years, he learned both Greek and Persian and served in the Armenian Royal Court. Later, he entered the ranks of the clergy and with other young clergymen, he went to preach in the province of Goghtn around 395 A.D. During this period, he realized the great need of the Armenian people for an alphabet of their own, so he petitioned the Catholicos, Sahag, and together they requested the aid of King Vramshabouh. After much research and many travels, Mesrob produced a provisional alphabet. However, it was eventually found to be inadequate to fully express the Armenian language. Later while Mesrob was in deep prayer in a cave near the village of Palu, he had a vision in which, according to Goriun his biographer, "the hand of God wrote the alphabet in letters of fire." Upon Mesrob's return to the Catholicos and King, he was received with great jubilation. Immediately, the Holy Translators worked to translate the Holy Bible in the Armenian Language. The first words translated into Armenian were from the introduction of the Book of Proverbs, "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding."

The Holy Translators opened schools to teach the newly discovered alphabet, among whose students were the famous translators Yeghisheh, Movses, Tavit and Vartan. Mesrob spent many years translating and writing literary and ecclesiastical works. He went to many provinces where paganism still existed and preached the Word of God in the people's own language, with the light of the Holy Gospels. During this period, he was invited to Georgia and Caucasian Albania where he likewise invented alphabets to suit their languages. Mesrob gave the Armenian people the most precious of gifts and continues to serve as an inspiration to all generations (especially to writers and poets). His life's works were recorded by one of his famous students, Goriun, in his book, "The Life of Mashdots." Mesrob was buried in Oshagan in the province of Vaspouragan where a beautiful cathedral has been built in his honor and where one may go and pay homage to

the saint to this day. The name Mesrob may be an abbreviation of Mar Serop (in Persian “Mar” connotes “Lord” or “Reverend” and in Armenian, “Serop” denotes “Seraphim“).

Master and Teacher!

Like Moses, you brought to the land of Armenian

The book of Laws

Through which the sons of Torkom were enlightened

-CANON: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 5

O God! You bestowed on the sons of Torkom

The divinely-inspired books in letters

Revealed to Saint Mesrop in a vision

Through his prayer have mercy on us.

-CANON: MISERERE-VOGHORMYA

+**Movses** [Moses] of Khoren, Holy Translator & Martyr: known as the “Father of Armenian History,” was also one of the more important students of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob. He is noted for his abilities in philosophy as well as being a great spiritual leader and pious in nature. He possessed a genius, which was soon realized and he was commissioned to write a history of Armenia. Later he also wrote a number of very important works among which are histories, poems, hymns, orations, and chants. He was ordained bishop but in a later period. He met opposition for being a student of the great translators and was martyred.

+**Mucias**, Priest & Martyr: was martyred [304 A.D.] in the persecutions of Diocletian for overturning a pagan altar.

+**Myrrh-bearing Women** (Myrophores) [Youghaperits]: There are eight women that are generally identified as the myrrh-bearers: Mary Magdalene, Mary Theotokos (the Virgin Mary), Joanna, Salome, Mary the wife of Cleopas (or Alphaeus), Susanna, Mary of Bethany, and Martha of Bethany. Each of the four Gospels give different aspects of the roles of these eight women at the Cross and at the tomb on Pascha morning, perhaps since the eight arrived in different groups at different times. An often confused aspect in the Gospels is that two of the Marys had a son named James. The Armenian Church has a special service dedicated to the Myrrh-bearers which is offered on Sundays and special feast days. During this service, Psalms are sung and the Gospel passages regarding the Resurrection are read.

Shedding tears, the holy Myrrh-bearing Women hasted

To Your Tomb, O Lord,

To anoint Your incorrupt body.

The voice of the angel-evangelist rang out to the blessed women:

Why do you seek the Living among the dead?

For the Lord is risen and has destroyed Hell.

*The blessed women announced to the disciples
The resurrection of the Lord
In joy Peter and John went to the life-giving tomb.*

-CANON FOR THE RESURRECTION: LAUDATE-DER HERGNEETS

+Nativity and Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ: The birth and the baptism of Jesus are celebrated together on January 6 because it is believed that Jesus came to the Jordan on his birthday. In the early Church, Theophany was an eight day feast which began January 6 and lasted until January 14. In addition to celebrating Christ's birth, the feast also recalled the other events related to the Nativity, including the Flight to Egypt and the Massacre of the Babes of Bethlehem (also known as Holy Innocents). The Armenian Church celebrates the baptism of Jesus during Theophany with a special service known as the "Blessing of the Waters." The union of both the birth and baptism of Christ into the Theophany feast speaks to the wisdom of early Church Fathers who wanted to remind us of the importance and the imperative of our own baptism or second birth. Therefore, on January 6 of each year, we travel with Jesus from his physical birth in Bethlehem to His Baptism in the Jordan river and find in the Baptism of our Lord, the reminder of our own baptism. And here we are provided with the opportunity to rekindle in our hearts the new life we received at the baptismal font and to live our lives as children of the Father.

This ceremony of the Blessing of the Waters is replete with symbolism. Performed after the Divine Liturgy, the celebrant and the congregation gather around the blessing fountain which is usually a large basin filled with water. Taking a large cross, the priest immerses it into the basin, symbolizing the entry of Jesus into the water of the Jordan river. From the altar, a dove shaped silver container of Holy Muron (or Chrism), is brought forth and placed near the basin. Once the elements are ready, various passages from the Bible are read. The Holy Muron, which symbolizes [and actually communicates to us] the Holy Spirit is then poured into the water, reminding us of the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove on the newly baptized Jesus. With hymns and prayers, including one written by St. Basil, the service continues until the celebrant takes the cross out of the water. As miraculous water gave life to the Israelites during the exodus in the desert, Jesus now delivers us from death through the water of the holy font. Thus at the conclusion of the ceremony, the believers are invited to take some of the anointed water, and consume it. This is a reminder that Jesus gives us the Water of Life and that those who drink from it will truly never thirst again (John 4:13-14, Rev. 22:17). -Adapted from Nerses Manoogian

*A wonderful and great mystery is revealed on this day!
the shepherds sing with the angels;
they announce the good news to the world.*

*A new King has been born in the city of Bethlehem;
you sons of men!
bless Him,*

for our sake He became flesh. 39

*He whom heaven and earth cannot contain
in wrapped in swaddling clothes;
not being separated from the Father,
He rests in the holy manger.*

CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN MODE 8

+Nativity of John the Baptist: According to Holy Scripture, John the Forerunner [Arm. Garabed] and Baptist [Mugurdich] was the son of Zachariah, an elderly priest of the Temple in Jerusalem “of the course of Abijah,” and his wife, Elizabeth, a kinswoman of Mary who visited her. He was probably born at Ain-Karim southwest of Jerusalem after the Angel Gabriel had told Zechariah that his wife would bear a child even though she was an old woman. His parents were of humble stock from the mountain regions of the province of Judah who construed the birth of their John by divine intervention as a clear link between the son of a Hebrew priest and the Son of God. The birth of the Forerunner was announced in a most striking manner. Zachariah and Elizabeth, "were both just before God... but they had no son, because Elizabeth was barren" (Lk 1:6-7). They were advanced in years and the reproach of barrenness bore heavily upon them. Then when it was Zachariah's turn to perform his priestly duties in the Temple, an angel of the Lord appeared to him to announce that Elizabeth would bear a son, and they would call his name John. At this startling revelation, Zachariah was hesitant to believe. The angel then sternly foretold that for his incredulity, Zachariah would not be able to speak until the promise was fulfilled. As the scriptures record, "When his time of service was ended, he went to his home... his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion" (Luke 1:23-24).

*Early morning star
Who went before the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness
And the economy of the Son of God
Saint John, intercede for us before Christ*

*You foresaw the unspeakable depths of the Highest
By revelation of the Spirit in the womb you were purified
And made a Temple of God and the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity
Saint John, intercede for us before Christ.*

*The Archangel Gabriel sent to Zachariah
Brought the good news of Your wondrous and holy birth
From barren and elder Elisabeth
Saint John, intercede for us before Christ.*

-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2

+Nativity of the Theotokos: The tradition of the Church records that Joachim and Anna were pious Jews awaiting the promised messiah. The couple was old and childless. They

prayed earnestly to the Lord for a child, since among the Jews barrenness was a sign of God's disfavor. In answer to their life-long prayers, and as the reward of their unwavering fidelity to God, the elderly couple was blessed with the child who was destined to become the Mother of the Messiah-Christ, i.e. the Mother of God. The feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos is therefore a glorification of Mary's birth, of Mary herself and of her righteous parents and the great work God performed through them. It is a celebration as well of an important event in preparation for the salvation of the world.

*Heavenly Father! You had compassion on men born in sin
As says the prophet;
Today you gave to our nature as gift the Holy Virgin
who gave birth to your only begotten Son,
Through her prayers, have mercy on us, O Lord.*

*Son of God! From the cloud of the law
Today you rained down on us the Virgin Mary
From whom you were born in the flesh,
Through her you took on yourself the sin of first-created Adam.
Through her intercessions,, have mercy on us*

*Holy Spirit! You purified the heart and womb of the Mother
Of Him equal with You in glory,
Today to her barren parents
You have the Mother of the word who blesses Eve,
Through her intercessions , have mercy on us, O Lord.*
-SHARAGAN: MISERERE-VOGHORMYA, MODE 4

+**Nerses the Great**, Patriarch: St. Hoosig had two sons, Bab and Atanakineh, who did not pursue the clerical life. Nerses [373 A.D.] was the son of Atanakineh and from a very early age, displayed his love and abilities for religious and national life. After a period of administration by two Catholicoi who were not very distinguished in their works, the nation once again sought its spiritual leader from the line of St. Gregory. At that time, Nerses was still a layman and serving in the court. Because of his humble nature, Nerses had to be persuaded to accept Holy Orders. According to tradition, at his ordination as bishop by Bishop St. Basil of Caesarea, “the Holy Spirit descended upon the two in the form of a dove” and later during the first Divine Liturgy, “a pillar of fire appeared and his face was illuminated like Moses.” One of the greatest of Nerses’ accomplishments was the Council of Ashdishad [364-65 A.D.], where canons were drawn up concerning the sanctity of family life, improvement of social conditions, the establishment of institutions such as hospitals and inns for pilgrims, and the establishment of monasteries and convents.

It is for this reason that he is also known as “Nerses the Builder.” Partly because of the Perso-Byzantine struggles, and partly due to his strength of character in criticizing the audacity of the princes, St. Nerses was not a favorite of the court. He is noted for his many benevolent and spiritual works. He is remembered as one of the initiators of the

national revival and of the new impetus to the religious life, which was to reach fulfillment in the Golden Age of Armenian Literature. A grateful and loving nation surnamed the saint “Great.”

*Saint Nerses, pure in soul
From birth you were chosen to inherit the paternal lot
Of shepherding righteously and lawfully.*

*You adorned the Church with the laws of truth
And established good order within it.
Through his prayers have mercy on us, O Christ.*

*With great honor Saint Nerses was honored
By the blessed chosen holy Fathers of the Council
Where he confessed the Spirit true God with Father and Son.*
-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 4

+**Nerses the Grace-filled** [Shnorhali] of K‘la, Catholicos & Doctor: [1102-1173 A.D.] was the son of Prince Abirad and the grandson of the great Church writer, Krikor Makisdros. He studied under Stepanos Vartabed in Garmir (Red) monastery and was ordained at 18 years by his brother, Catholicos Krikor III Balavouni in the City of Hromgla. By the age of thirty he was consecrated a bishop. He served as the personal aide and right-hand man to his brother, the Catholicos, whom he succeeded in 1166. Merely to list all of Nerses’ works would be a tedious task. He is most famous for his General Epistle which elaborately guides the Armenian people in their faith. He is also remembered for his many letters, orations, poems, such as “Lament for Edessa,” a moving masterpiece on the destruction of that city, commentaries and ecclesiastical studies.

A great musician as well as writer and poet, St. Nerses enriched the Book of Hours with many songs and the Book of Sharagans with a wealth of sacred hymns, adding almost a third to their number. His book, Jesus, Son Only-begotten, is used by devout Armenians and is second only to Nareg. St. Nerses was an ecumenist as well as an astute theologian and beloved leader. The title grace-filled was previously an educational rank but Nerses added a new dimension to it and is remembered for his loving nature and paternal care of his flock. Along with Gregory of Nareg, he is a pillar of Armenian literature, especially of the Silver Age. St. Nerses is perhaps the most beloved of all Armenian saints and is respected universally. His resting place has been a place of pilgrimage for Christians of all kinds.

+**New Sunday**, 8th Day of Pascha: The Sunday which follows Pascha Sunday is called New Sunday because it is the first Sunday after the Resurrection. Aside from the Resurrection of Christ, this day also reflects the calling of and conversion of the pagans to Christianity, and the growth and expansion of Christ’s Church. Analogically, New Sunday [or Nor Giragi] also reflects the new relationship of God’s people. The Christian Church replaced the tribe of Judah as the new “Israel.” Israel means “people of the

covenant.” Hence, “Israel” is not a geographical location, but rather the name or reference to a people in a special covenant or relationship with God. With their denial of Christ, the Israel of the Old Testament relinquished their role as the “Israel” of God’s covenant. The “new” sons of Zion [Arm. Sioni Vortik], being the Body of Christ [the Church = Arm. Yegeghetsi - Grk. Ecclesia] is in fact the “new” Israel. Therefore in its role of Israel, the people of the covenant [the Church] are the heirs to or recipients of the promise of salvation through Christ’s death and resurrection. The Church has wisely chosen the Gospel of John’s prologue as its reading for “New Sunday” because it powerfully proclaims Jesus as the Son of God, the Word made Flesh. Although Jesus took upon Himself full humanity and lived as a man, he never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the source of eternal life. This is the foundation of all truth.

*Wonderful is the mystery of Your economy, O Christ!
You came down from the Father
Moved by love for the Bride and Church who You chose to Yourself;
For this You are glorified, O Christ, King immortal.*

*You arose and appeared to the foundations of Your Church
Thomas refused to believe those who had seen You
Today You showed the wounds of Your body to Him who desired it.*

*With trembling Thomas touched the wound of the spear and nails
And cried out and confessed You, the Risen One, as Lord and God
For this we who have not seen but have believed are blessed.*

-CANON OF NERSES OF LAMBRON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 8

+**Nicholas of Myra**, Bishop and Father of the Church: was born in the Middle East in the fourth century. He was ordained a priest by his uncle. On his way in pilgrimage to the holy land, Nicholas was caught in the middle of a terrible storm. He began praying and calmed the stormy sea. Eventually he was ordained the bishop of Myra [Smyrna]. With great zeal he assumed his new position, especially focusing his energies on the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the widows and the orphans. He was known for his great love for children. A well known story about Nicholas tells of how he helped three unfortunate young sisters who all had suitors but had no dowries to marry because their poor father could not even raise the money. When the first daughter was ready to marry, Bishop Nicholas thought of a way to give her money anonymously -wishing to avoid notoriety. The good bishop tossed a bag of gold into the house at night. Later, when the second daughter prepared to marry, she too received a mysterious bag of gold. When the third daughter prepared to marry, the poor father of the three girls was determined to find out who had been so generous. So he kept watch and saw the bishop drop another bag of gold into the house. Some accounts state that Nicholas, (perhaps suspicious of being watched) climbed aloft the roof and dropped the third bag of gold down the chimney where it landed in a stocking hung there to dry (which is the reason we hang Christmas stockings to this day). When the father saw what had happened, Nicholas begged him to

keep the secret, but, of course, the news got out. From then on, when someone received an unexpected gift, they often thanked St. Nicholas.

When the Emperor Licinius resumed the persecutions initiated by Diocletian, Nicholas was arrested and exiled. During his exile, he did not abandon his preaching of the Gospel. With the return of peace, he was restored to his Episcopal throne and he attended the first Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. It is said that during the Ecumenical Council Nicholas ended a debate with the arch-heretic Arius by punching him in the face for denying the divinity of Christ. The following year after the Council, Nicholas fell asleep in the Lord -peacefully and happy. He is considered a patron saint not only of sailors but also of children toward whom he had always given special attention. In America, he is often referred to as Santa Claus which is equivalent to the Armenian "Gaghant Baba." He is considered the national saint of Russia. His popularity spread to the west when his relics were translated in 1087 A.D. to the city of Bari, Italy where a huge cathedral was built in his name.

*The bodiless angels were amazed, seeing the blessed Nicholas,
Who in the flesh led an unearthly life
By his prayers we beseech the forgiveness of our sins.*

*We who have sinned beseech You, O Holy Trinity!
Remit our sins by the prayers of Nicholas
By his prayers we beseech the forgiveness of our sins.*

-SHARAGAN TO ST. NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER - MODE 8

+**Nooneh** (Nina) and **Maneh**, Virgins: [c. 320] entered Armenia with Hripsimeh and her companions. Nooneh then proceeded to Georgia where she was successful in converting the Georgian queen, her son and finally King Mihran. She received spiritual guidance and support from St. Gregory who had given her certain ecclesiastical authority until he could send clergy to Georgia. She is noted for her holy works and life. Maneh, like Nooneh came with the Hripsimeyan nuns. She had a vision and retired to a life of prayer, meditation, and solitude in the Armenian Mountains. Many years later, when St. Gregory passed the nun's place of retreat, he called to her; but she requested that he wait three days. After the three days had passed. St. Gregory found the nun Maneh had fallen asleep in the Lord. He buried her with prayers and blessings and stayed in that place until his own passing.

*(dsa) The virgins gave birth to many nations
The mothers and girls to the assembly of elders
They all, in material embrace, educated in fasting and prayer
By faith grew up in Christ.*

*(nou) They made enviable the wedding chamber of virginity
For they renewed it with fire and blood
They gave themselves to fire and the sword
Ad with lamps burning brightly*

Making their way

They entered into the bridal chamber.

-CANON TO THE HOLY VIRGINS: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 8

+**Onouphrius**, Hermit: [4th Century] became a monk at a cenobitic monastery near Thebes, which he left to lead a eremitic life. For 60 to 70 years, Onouphrius lived alone in the desert and wore only his hair and a loincloth of leaves.

+**Paul** [Boghos], The Thirteenth Apostle, Martyr: Born in Tarsus [Arm. Darson], a major city of Cilicia. Paul was first called Saul. Although he was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, he was also a Roman citizen. By trade he was a tent-maker. As a Pharisee he zealously participated in the persecution of the Apostles and the followers of Christ. Saul was converted as a result of the Lord's revelation unto him on the road to Damascus. He was chosen by the Lord and from that moment on he dedicated his life to service to Christ, often calling himself a "slave of Christ." Paul, along with Peter, is recognized as one of the greatest Apostles because of the miracles he performed and the Churches he established. He was a great preacher of the faith and left behind him numerous writings inspired by the Holy Spirit. None of the Apostles authored as many writings as Paul (some of which were written even while he was in prison). His fourteen New Testament Epistles serve as great sources of the orthodox faith. Because of his numerous missions to the Gentiles, he became known as "the Apostle to the Gentiles." Paul's apostolic ministry included extensive travel, sufferings and even martyrdom, being beheaded in 67 A.D. in Rome by order of the emperor Nero. EAC

You recovered your sight

You saw the unspeakable Paradise and the third Heaven

You contemplated the higher things

Interpreter of profound mysteries

Thirteenth Holy Apostle Paul

Father of all

Intercede for us before the Lord.

-SHARAGAN: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2 MIDDAY

+**Patriarchs of the Old Testament**: Adam, Abel, Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedech, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Eleazar, Joshua, Samuel, Samson, Jephthah, Barak, Gideon, and other holy Old Testament patriarchs.

+**Peter**, Patriarch and Martyr: Was the bishop of Alexandria [around 300 AD]. A native of Alexandria, Egypt, Peter survived the persecutions of Emperor Diocletian and served as a confessor for the suffering Christians. Made head of the famed Catechetical School of Alexandria, he was a vigorous opponent of Origenism before receiving appointment as bishop. He composed a set of rules by which those who had lapsed might be readmitted to the faith after appropriate penance, a settlement, which was not to the liking of extremists of the community. Thus, in 306 when the persecutions began again, Peter was forced to flee the city. The partisans of Melitius, Peter's chief critic, installed their

favorite as bishop of Alexandria, thereby starting the Melitian Schism, which troubled the see for many years. Peter returned to Alexandria in 311 A.D. after a lull in the persecutions, but was soon arrested and beheaded by Roman officials acting on the decree of Emperor Maximian. He is called the “seal and complement of martyrs” as he was the last Christian slain by Roman authorities. Eusebius of Caesarea described him as “a model bishop, remarkable for his virtuous life and his ardent study of the Scriptures. (D)

+**Phillip** [Pillibos], Apostle and Martyr: Born in Bethsaida, he accepted the call of Jesus and also led Nathaniel-Bartholomew to Christ. Phillip also witnessed the feeding of the five thousand and the Ascension of Christ. Phillip, on another occasion, asked Jesus “Lord, show us the Father” to which Jesus replied, “Have I been with you so long and yet you do not know me Phillip?” He should not to be confused with Phillip, one of the seven Deacons. The Apostle Phillip preached the Gospel in Scythia and Phrygia and suffered martyrdom by crucifixion. EAC

Immortal pastures and waters of rest for Christ's flock,

Vigilant Shepherds

Expellers of Darkness

Reasoning Sheepfold

Saints Thomas and Phillip

Intercede for us before the Lord.

-SHARAGAN: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2 MIDDAY

+**Phillip**, Deacon & Evangelist: was one of the first seven men chosen by the apostles to be a deacon and missionary (Acts 6:2-6). His role as a deacon was to perform administrative duties for the early Church. Phillip was among those “scattered abroad” by the persecution that arose after the martyrdom of Stephen. He first went to Samaria, where he labored as an evangelist with much success (8:5-13). He was directed by God on a deserted road from Jerusalem to Gaza and there met an Ethiopian Eunuch, a chief officer of the Queen Candace, who was at that time reading a passage from the prophecies of Isaiah (53:6-7). Phillip preached to him the glad tidings of the Savior and the eunuch received his message and believed and was forthwith baptized and then “went on his way rejoicing.”

+**Plonius**, Priest & Martyr: [d. 250 A.D.] a priest from Smyrna, was put to death with a group of fifteen companions under Emperor Trajanus Decius. They were arrested during a liturgical celebration. Known for his wisdom and abilities as a preacher, Plonius and his companions were ordered to make sacrifices to the gods and, after they refused, they were put to terrible tortures before being burned at the stake.

+**Polyeuctus of Melitene**, Martyr: was an officer in the Roman legion and a convert. In his zeal as a new convert, he tore up Valerian’s imperial edict of persecution of the Christians, then smashed idols being carried in pagan procession. He was tortured and martyred. His story was well known to the ancients who built several churches with his name, including a huge one in Constantinople in which it was customary to swear legal

oaths. His Acts were widely read and formed the basis for theatrical tragedy. Beheaded in 250 A.D. in Melitene, Armenia. (D)

+Presentation of Christ to the Temple on the Fortieth Day: According to the Mosaic law, when the time of purification was over, the mother was to “bring to the temple a lamb for a holocaust and a young pigeon or turtle dove for sin.” If she was not able to offer a lamb, she was to take two turtle doves or two pigeons and then the priest prayed for her and so she was cleansed [Lev.12:2-8]. Forty days after the birth of Christ, Mary complied with this precept of the law, she redeemed her first-born from the temple [Num 18:15], and was purified by the prayer of Simeon the just, in the presence of Anna the prophetess [Lk. 2:22].

This first solemn introduction of Christ into the house of God was in the earliest times celebrated in the Church of Jerusalem. We find it attested for the first half of the fourth century by the pilgrim of Bordeaux, Egeria or Silvia. The day was solemnly kept by a procession to the Constantinian basilica of the Resurrection, a homily on Luke 2 and the Divine Liturgy. The feast then was simply called the fortieth day after Epiphany and was held of Feb. 14 (as it is to this day in the Armenian Orthodox Church). This demonstrates that in Jerusalem Epiphany was then the feast of Christ’s birth [on Jan. 6]. From Jerusalem the feast spread over the entire Church and later on began to be kept on Feb. 2, since within the last twenty-five years of the fourth century the Roman feast of Christ’s nativity (25 December) was introduced. In Antioch it is attested in 526 and in the entire Eastern Empire it was introduced by the Emperor Justinian I (542) in thanksgiving for the cessation of the great pestilence, which had depopulated the city of Constantinople. The feast is also called “Derendas,” which means Candle Mass Day. Armenians traditionally would burn wood during this feast. Today, candles or lanterns are lit in people's homes instead.

*Today the Life-creator came into the Temple
and is received with love into Simeon's arms
and with joy in Jerusalem.*

*Today this earth has been called heaven;
for the Lord of lords.
Who came down from heaven to earth.
Agrees to be presented by the work of His own hands.*

*Today Christ our God
has appeared as light to the Gentiles
and as glory to Israel, His people.*

CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN MODE 7

+Presentation of the Holy Theotokos to the Temple: It stands to reason that the Almighty God's choosing of the Virgin Mary to be the Mother of God was not a matter of random selection. In his wisdom, God did not select from nobility but rather from a humble, thoroughly devout, daughter of equally devout parents whose names were

Joachim and Anna. Tradition has it that Anna, who was childless for many years, reached a point in her life when, just short of despair, she prayed in earnest that God grant her a child and promised that, should her prayer be fulfilled, she would pledge this child to His holy Temple. It did not matter to Anna that the child granted her by God was a girl and, faithful to her word, she presented her daughter, given the name of Mary, to the holy Temple at the age of three, on the 21st of November. Mary remained in the house of God for twelve years, emerging at the age of fifteen with purity and wholesomeness found in no other creature of God. By the time she returned to her parents the holy Mary was not only a flawless maiden but in her twelve years had acquired the knowledge and wisdom of the deepest scholars -something usually denied a female of those days. The priest entrusted with the care of Mary was Zechariah, the father of St. John the Baptist. While still in her teens the Virgin Mary was visited by the Archangel Gabriel, sent by God to tell Mary that she was to become the mother of the Son of God.

*We bless and magnify You, Mother of God
The gate which appeared to the prophet Ezekiel
Through which no one has passed but God alone.*

*We bless and magnify You O Christ
Who in the bush to the prophet Moses
revealed to the human race the new mystery of the Virgin.*

*We bless and magnify You
Begotten of the Father apart from time
And from Your Mother in manner no word can express
Who in time revealed Yourself as Son of the Most High
For the salvation of all.*

-CANON FOR THEOPHANY: MAGNIFICAT-MEDZATSOOSTEH 82

+**Red Sunday**, 4th Sunday of Pascha-tide: The ascription “Red” traditionally is thought to reflect the brilliance of red flowers, which burst forth in bloom at this time of year symbolizing the new life given through the blood sacrifice of Christ. The Sunday’s Gospel of John [5:19-30], emphasizes the life-giving word of Jesus. Similar to Green Sunday when the Church is vested in green, it has become the custom on Red Sunday for clerics to wear red vestments and for the church to be decorated in red. The name “Red Sunday” seems to have no ecclesiastical origin or significance but may have been, like green Sunday, a popular designation related to a spring festival and the new season, since at that time of the year the fields were adorned with red and green.

+**Romanos the Melodist**, Hymnographer: was one of the greatest and most original of the early church hymnographers and is referred to by some as “the greatest Christian poet.” He flourished around 496 A.D., in the reign of Anastasios. He was born in Emesa (modern Homs), Syria, probably of Jewish parents. From Homs he went to Beryte (modern Beirut), where he was deacon in the Church of the Resurrection. He then became a priest in Constantinople, where he received the gift of poetry in the church of the

Theotokos (Kyros). He fell asleep in the Lord c. 540-550 A.D. in New Rome (Constantinople) and was buried in the church of Kyros. Romanos introduced hymnography into the Eastern Liturgy which was of Syro-Palestinian origin. Before him, there were only a few poetical church compositions in Syria, such as, "O Gladsome Light," and "Glory to God in the Highest." Romanos wrote a classical form of hymn with a long and elaborate metrical dramatic homily which usually paraphrases a Biblical narrative. He is credited with writing many beautiful hymns that have had an impact on Armenian hymnology.

+Sahag Bartev [Isaac Parthian, the Great], Patriarch and Holy Translator: Catholicos Patriarch of Armenia (338-439), otherwise known as Isaac the Great and sometimes as Parthev owing to his Parthian origin. He was the son of Saint Nerses the Great and descended from the family of Saint Gregory the Enlightener. Left an orphan at a very early age, he obtained an excellent literary education in Constantinople, particularly in the Eastern languages. After his election as patriarch, he devoted himself to the religious and scientific training of his people. Armenia was then passing through a grave crisis. In 387 A.D. it had lost its independence and been divided between the Byzantine Empire and Persia; each division had at its head an Armenian but feudatory king. In the Byzantine territory, however, the Armenians were forbidden the use of Syriac language, until then exclusively used in Divine worship: for this, the Greek language was to be substituted. Because of the use of Greek the country was gradually hellenized. In the Persian districts, Greek was absolutely prohibited and Syriac greatly favored. Hence, the ancient culture of the Armenians was in danger of disappearing and national unity was seriously compromised.

To further evangelize the people and preserve its national character, Isaac invented, with the aid of St. Mesrop, the Armenian alphabet and began to translate the Bible. Their translation from the Syriac Peshito was revised by means of the Septuagint, and even, it seems, from the Hebrew text (between 410 and 430). The liturgy also, hitherto Syrian was translated into Armenia, drawing at the same time on the Liturgy of St. Basil of Caesarea. Isaac had already established schools for higher education with the aid of disciples whom he had sent to study at Edessa, Melitene, Constantinople, and elsewhere. Through them he now had the principal masterpieces of Greek and Syrian Christian patristic literature translated, e.g. the writings of Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil, the two Gregories (of Nazianzus and Nyssa), John Chrysostom, Ephrem, etc.; therefore ushering in the Golden Age of Armenia literature. Through Isaac's efforts the churches and monasteries destroyed by the Persians were rebuilt, education was cared for in a generous way, the pagan worship of Ormuzd which Shah Yezdigerd tried to set up was cast out, and three councils were held to re-establish ecclesiastical discipline and canon law.

Isaac authored liturgical hymns and two of his letters (written to Theodosius II and Atticus of Constantinople) have been preserved. Although a third letter addressed to Proclus of Constantinople is attributed to him, scholars believe this dates from the tenth century. It is doubtful that he had any involvement in the Council of Ephesus (431) though, in consequence of disputes which arose in Armenia between the followers of Nestorius and the disciples of Acacius of Melitene and Rabulas, Isaac and his Church did

appeal to Constantinople and, through Proclus, obtained the desired explanations. A man of enlightened piety and of very austere life, independent in character, in 430 he was allowed to return to his patriarchal throne. In his extreme old age he withdrew into solitude, dying at the age of 110. Neither the exact year nor the precise month of his death is known, but it seems to have occurred between 439 and 441. There are several days of commemoration to him in the calendar of the Armenian Church.

*O Christ, from the root of the Holy Fathers, in the person of the holy patriarch Sahag
You gave us a staff for shepherding Your flock.*

You dispelled the darkness of ignorance in Armenia

And through him poured out the light of wisdom on the sons of Torgom

Lord, You made known to this saint

The mystery of Your coming in vision

On the day of his memory's celebration

Accept the supplications of Your worshippers.

-SHARAGAN: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 8

+**Sahag** [Isaac] and **Hamazasb**, Princes & Martyrs: During the Arab rule in Armenia, these two brothers, with a number of other Armenian nobles, were responsible for a minor revolution. When they were finally captured, they were given the choice between changing their religion or death. They refused to convert to Islam so the Arab overlord, in his impassioned anger, had them severely tortured and finally beheaded in 786 A.D. Then he had their bodies hung and finally burned with the ashes spread into the wind so that no relics would remain from their martyred bodies.

+**Sahag** [Isaac] and **Hovsep** [Joseph], Princes & Martyrs: [808 A.D.] were the sons of a Muslim father and an Armenian mother. Their father not only permitted his wife to remain Christian but also allowed her to raise her children as Christians. Pressured by the Muslim overlords to convert, they resisted and were tortured and martyred in the city of Gad'n because of their refusal to accept Islam.

+**Santookhd**, Virgin & Martyr and **Thaddaeus**, Apostle & Martyr: Santookhd was the daughter of King Sanatrook, and was converted to Christianity by the Apostle Thaddaeus. When the king heard of her conversion, he tried every means possible to get her to return to paganism. Exhausting all possible means of persuasion, the king finally offered his daughter an ultimatum between the crown and a sword; between martyrdom for Christ and the regal coronet. Remaining steadfast in her faith, she chose the sword, thereby becoming the first saint of the Armenian Church. She is also remembered as the first witness for Christianity in Armenia as well as an apostle in that she, alongside the Apostle Thaddaeus, was instrumental in the conversion of many others. After her martyrdom, Thaddaeus secretly buried her relics and a few days later was also martyred by decapitation at the hand of the same king. Through a divine vision, their relics were discovered near the field of Shavarshan by a monk named Giregos in the 4th or 5th century.

*Today the Holy Church boasts of you
O witness Saint Santoukhd
You left the greatness of your father's throne
And shed your holy blood for the sake of Christ.*

*Thought by the Apostle Thaddaeus
And made firm by him in the true faith
You rejected the service of paganism
And were made worthy to be translated to the Father.*
SHARAKAN: PUERI- MANGOONK MODE 8

+**Sarkis** [Sergius] and **Bacchus**, Martyrs: were two courageous leaders of the Roman army. They were martyred for the Christian faith around the year 307 A.D. Sergius, an officer in the Roman army, and Bacchus, an officer under him, were friends of Emperor Maximian. When they did not enter a temple of Jupiter with the Emperor, he ordered them to do so. When they further refused his order that they sacrifice to pagan gods, they were humiliated by being led through the streets of Arabissus in women's garb and then sent to Rosafa, Mesopotamia, where they were scourged so terribly that Bacchus died of the scourging; Sergius was then tortured further and beheaded. Devotion to them was very popular in the East and Christian Arabs drew the images of Saints Sarkis and Bacchus on their banners. Devotion to them is still very vibrant in Lebanon where there are numerous churches dedicated to them.

+**Sarkis** [Sergius], Captain & Martyr, his son **Mardiros** and his **Fourteen Soldiers**, Martyrs: Sarkis lived during the 4th century and was from Caesarea of Cappadocia in Asia Minor. He rose through the military ranks as a consequence of his valiant campaigns and even became a trustworthy and faithful general to Emperor Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman and Byzantine Emperor. At the accession to power of Emperor Julian the Apostate, in 362 A.D., Sarkis took refuge with his son Mardiros in Armenia. Later when the Pagan Emperor Julian fought against the Persians, Sarkis and his son went to Persia to join the Persian army in the service of Persian King Shapur II. Sarkis, along with Mardiros, fought with great bravery against Julian's defeated army. Sarkis was also able to convert many Persian soldiers to Christianity. King Shapur II eventually discovered that Sarkis was a Christian and asked him to abandon his faith and embrace Zoroastrianism instead. He gave him this option because he did not want to lose the faithful and courageous service of his top general. Both Sarkis and his son steadfastly refused to abandon their faith. King Shapur's promises of higher positions and of wealth did not cause Sarkis and Mardiros to alter their firm stand. They would rather die than deny Christ. Finally, the king executed both Sarkis and Mardiros. After the death of St. Sarkis, fourteen of his soldiers who had become Christians came to bury the Saint. These soldiers also met a martyr's death at the hands of the Persian king for simply burying their teacher in Christ.

Holy captain of army and single combatant of the heavenly King

*You took on yourself in this world torments
out of love for the Immortal One
Saint Sarkis, Swift to aid
Crowned by the cross!
Intercede for us before Christ.*

*Evangelist of Great Armenians
who appeared in its midst from the north 155
Like a southern wind in the flower-bearing field (98)
Saint Sarkis, Swift to aid.
Tree of immortality!
Intercede for us before Christ.*

-SHARAGAN: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2

+**Second Palm Sunday**, 7th Sunday of Pascha-tide: This Sunday has been given this designation based on the readings for the day. Beginning with New Sunday, the Armenian Church reads from the four Gospels every day in their proper order, and in that order the sections relating to Christ's entry into Jerusalem, as described in the four Gospels, coincides with the seventh Sunday of Pascha-tide.

*By Your voluntary death, You put death to death
And by Your incorrupt resurrection You have renewed the world.
Glory to You, Christ, King of glory*

*By Your life-giving blood You have enlightened the Holy Church
We sing to You with the angels.
Glory to You, Christ, King of glory.*

-CANON: MIDDAY

+**Seven Sleepers of Ephesus [Malchus, Marcion, Dionysius, John, Serapion, Maximian, and Constantine]**: lived in the third century A.D. when Ephesus was ruled by the Emperor Decius, who was a terror to Christian believers. Fleeing persecution, seven Christian young men left Ephesus and found a cave outside the city walls. They sealed themselves in and went to sleep in the Byzantine-era necropolis cut into the rock. Two hundred years later in the fifth century A.D. an earthquake opened up the cave and awakened the sleepers. They crawled out of the cave and wandered back to Ephesus to find a changed city. Christianity had taken hold. After being allowed to witness the triumph of Christianity over their former pagan homeland, the Seven Sleepers returned to the cave and after falling asleep again, their souls went on to paradise. Soon afterwards, the Grotto became a holy shrine for those who wished to venerate the Seven Sleepers and seek their intercession.

+**Seventy-Two Disciples of Christ**: In Luke 10:1ff the Lord appointed seventy two men to go out as missionaries, as apostles. Though not so prominent as the Twelve, the Seventy Two carried out their missions with fervor and enthusiasm. The Tradition of the

Church confirms that the Seventy Two remained true to the Lord and their calling, fulfilling a vital role in the spread of the gospel. These were not random choices or accidental volunteers but true disciples, true apostles, whose labors carried the message of their Lord throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Though lists of the Seventy Two vary somewhat, all are remembered in the calendar of the Church. This day [January 4 on the Byzantine Calendar] is set aside to remember them all, and the record of their work is preserved in accounts handed down through the centuries from place to place, especially in those locations where they labored. The Seventy Two were instrumental in helping to plant the Church throughout the world. Many became bishops, but the names of all are numbered in heaven in the Book of Life, as faithful servants of the Lord, apostles and foundations of the Church. OSB

O Christ!

*You showed beforehand the image of Your twelve Apostles
and Seventy Two Disciples*

*In the number of Fig Trees and springs of water in Elim [Ex 15:27].
Through their prayers have mercy on us, Savior, lover of man!*

Jesus, Wisdom of the Father!

*You built Your House the Church and set up in it as pillars
the seven lighted glory of the Spirit
and sent out Your servants, the Holy Apostles, to call the Gentiles
to drink in joy mixed wine from the cup.*

Through their prayers have mercy on us, Savior, Lover of man!

-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 8

+Shoghogat: The Splendorous Apparition of Holy Etchmiadzin according to the Vision of Saint Gregory the Enlightener: takes place on the Saturday prior to the Feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God. The reason this feast is celebrated at the time of the Assumption is that the mother Cathedral of the Armenian Church (Holy Etchmiadzin) is named in honor of the Holy Mother of God. The title of the feast, Shoghogat, refers to the vision St. Gregory had of the falling of the rays of light down on Holy Etchmiadzin. After some time, the Mother Cathedral became commonly known as Etchmiadzin whereupon the name Shoghogat referred to the other three Churches the Illuminator had built where he first saw the ray of light. At that particular site one of the martyred virgin companions of St. Hripsimeh was buried and it was believed her name was Shoghogat.

*The Only-begotten came down from the Father
And with Him the light of glory
Voices rang out in the lowest parts of the deep.*

*Having seen the great light
The patriarch Gregory with rejoicing announced it
To the King who had believed.*

*Come let us build a holy tabernacle of light
For here in the land of Armenia
Light has shone upon us.*

-CANON: PUERI- MANGOONK, MODE 8

+**Silas** (Silvanus), Apostle & Martyr: was one of Paul's main missionary companions, Silas was sent with Judas Barsabas by the Church in Jerusalem to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Silas attached himself to Paul when Judas returned to Jerusalem. Paul chose him to take the place of John Mark as a traveling companion after he had become dissatisfied with John Mark on their first trip together.

+**Silvester**, Pope of Rome: was the son of Romans named Rufinus & Justa. In the era of Constantine the Great, Silvester succeeded Militades as Bishop of Rome and occupied this position for twenty-one years. This was the era of Constantine the Great, when the public position of the Church so greatly improved, especially in the Imperial City. Silvester took part in the negotiations concerning Arianism and the Council of Nicea, and the expression "omousion" was perhaps agreed upon with him before the council. The pontiff also sent legates to the Ecumenical Council to represent him. During Silvester's pontificate were built the great Churches founded at Rome by Constantine. There is no doubt Silvester contributed to the development of the liturgy of the Roman Church. During his reign, moreover, the first martyrology of Roman martyrs was probably drawn up. Silvester also helped with the establishment of the Roman school of singing. He fell asleep in the Lord on 31 December, 355.

+**Simeon** the Stylite: was born c. 390 A.D. at Cilicia, near Syria. He was the son of a poor shepherd, and worked as a shepherd as a child. A would-be monk at age 13, he was turned away from monasteries because of his severe self-imposed penances. Tired of the gossip and arguments from fellow religious, he lived as a hermit on top of a column, occasionally preaching to those who gathered to watch and pray with him and starting a movement of pillar-living among Eastern hermits. He fell asleep in the Lord c. 459.

+**Simon-Peter** [Seemon-Bedros], Apostle and Martyr: the brother of Andrew and a native of Bethsaida in Galilee, Simon was by trade a fisherman. He was given the name "Cephas" ["Petras" in Greek or "Peter"] by Jesus and was called to be "a fisher of men," a disciple. In all lists of the Twelve he is named first. He also belonged to the inner group of Apostles (along with James and John) who witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter and were present at the Lord's Transfiguration and His Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. When Peter professed his belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord promised to him, "Thou art Peter and on this rock will I build My Church," meaning on the rock of faith in the Savior. Peter's confession of faith was soon followed by a sharp rebuke, from the Lord. Peter said that he would never leave his Lord, and was answered by the prediction of his triple denial. Peter later made reparation for this triple denial by triple protestation of love. For this repentance, Jesus reinstated Peter in his apostolic mission, commanding him: "Feed my sheep."

After the Ascension, Peter remained a leader among the Apostles. He spoke on the day of Pentecost and was the first to perform a miracle in the name of Jesus. He accepted Cornelius for baptism and thus opened the Church to the Gentiles. His authority is evident at the Apostles' Council at Jerusalem, although Paul rebuked him for giving in to the demands of the Jewish Christians to disassociate himself from the Gentiles. Peter ministered in many countries in the East and West and he founded the Church in Antioch. Peter authored two Catholic Epistles addressed to faithful Jews living in the Diaspora (or outside of Palestine). He later went on to Rome with his wife (who accompanied him throughout his missionary travels), and was forced to witness her martyrdom. He was then crucified head downward by order of the Emperor Nero (c. 67 A.D.).

*You named the blessed Peter
Highest in the ranks of the apostles,
The Head of the holy faith,
The foundation of the Church.*

*You promised to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to blessed Peter,
Who summoned us to the hope of eternal life.
Through his prayers, save us,
Lord God of our fathers.*

CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN & PATRUM-HARTS MODE 7

+Sons and Grandsons of Gregory our Enlightener:

+**Aristakes**, Patriarch and Martyr: the youngest son of St. Gregory the Enlightener was ordained by his father. He entered the service of the Church at a young age, remained celibate and represented the Church of Armenia at the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325 A.D. According to Armenian Historians he was martyred around 333 A.D.

+**Vrtanes**, Patriarch: the eldest of St. Gregory's two sons succeeded his brother Aristakes to the Patriarchal throne in 333 A.D. He worked tirelessly to eradicate Paganism in the provinces of Armenia and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

+**Housik**, Patriarch and Martyr: the youngest son of Vrtanes, was consecrated Patriarch of the Armenians at a young age. He courageously defended the authority of the Church against secular intervention. He was martyred in 347 A.D. by a prince that he chastised for meddling in ecclesiastical affairs.

+**Gregoris**, Martyr: was the eldest son of Vrtanes. He was responsible for spreading the Gospel to the neighboring countries of Caucasian Albania and Georgia where he was also martyred. St. Gregoris Church was built over his remains in 489 A.D.

+**Daniel**, Patriarch and Martyr: an Assyrian by birth, spent many years in Armenia studying under the tutelage of St. Gregory the Enlightener. He assisted in the conversion of Armenia to Christianity and became Patriarch after Housik. The Armenian Prince Diran had Daniel killed [by strangling] in 348 A.D. only one year after Catholicos Housik's martyrdom, after Daniel challenged Diran's attempts to put an end to the descendents of St. Gregory ascending the Patriarchal throne.

*Today with the heavenly watchful angels
You people of Armenia
Celebrating the memory of the Holy Patriarchs
Offshoots from Saint Gregory
Bless the Heavenly Father.*

*Today, you sons of Torgom
Reborn through the font as sons of Sion
On the feast of the Holy Fathers, the Sons of the Great Enlightener
Praise the Only-begotten Son.*

-CANON: LAUDATE-DER HERGNEETS

+**Sophia**, and her **Three Daughters**: St. Sophia [Wisdom] was the mother of the three virgin martyrs: Pistis [Faith], Elpis [Hope], and Agape [Love] who were virgins and martyrs. The daughters suffered martyrdom during Hadrian's persecution [2nd century] of Christians and Sophia fell asleep in the Lord three days later while praying at their graves.

+**Sookiasian**, Martyrs: were members of the Royal Court converted and baptized by the Voskayan priests, after whose deaths they became hermits and lived at Mt. Sougaved [named after Soukias, the leader of these saints] in Armenia. After a number of years, the Caucasian Albanian king Gigianus called them back to court in his presence, but they refused. The king having been angered by their refusal to return and worship the pagan gods had the Sookiasians impaled, tortured and burned to death. Prior to their death, the saintly men petitioned the Lord for mercy and praised His holy name. Two of the younger saints were not apprehended but died later in their mountainous retreat and were buried by shepherds. The date of the martyrdom of the Sookiasian saints was about 130 A.D.

*To the question "Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord,
or who shall stand in His holy Place?"
The prophet answers: "He who has innocent hands and a pure heart."*

*And behold Sougaved represents to us the mountain of the Lord
The high place and dwelling place of the martyrs
who found mercy with God their Savior*

*Each of them took up his cross, to share in the Crucified's death on the cross
Like lambs they all voluntarily went forth to meet their torturers
In the midst of wolves.*

-SHARAGAN TO ST. SUKIAS AND HIS COMPANIONS: MODE 3

+**Stepanos** [Stephen] **of Oulnia** and his **Companions**, Martyrs: [c. 450 A.D.] during a period of severe persecution in Armenia Minor, Stepanos, his parents, a group of nuns, and other companions escaped to the mountains; Stepanos' father died on the way. There they remained successfully hidden for three months until one of the local shepherds

betrayed them. They were called before the judge and professed their faith and willingness to die rather than give up their Christian faith. Stepanos and his companions were subjected to horrible tortures. After the saints were tortured beyond endurance, they were beheaded. Hundreds of pagans who witnessed their martyrdom were inspired to convert to Christianity; their executioners converted as well. The converts gathered up the relics of the saints and took them to the city of Oulnia.

*Today the Holy Church rejoices
Celebrating the memory of the Holy Martyrs
Who courageously fought against the Evil One
And accepted death for the sake of the Lord's name.*

*Through the prayers of the holy companions of Stephen
Accept our prayers, O Lord
Grant forgiveness of our transgressions
O gracious Savior, Giver of Gifts.*

-SHARAGAN TO ST STEPHEN OF OULNIA: MODE 7

+Stephen the Protomartyr, Deacon & Martyr: [Dec. 25] was one of seven men chosen as deacon by the Apostolic Church of Jerusalem to serve the faithful. He is thus known as "proto-deacon." He was a young man filled with the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit, and he testified to Jesus not only by word, but also through his labors along with signs and wonders. His sermons, fortitude, wisdom, and steadfastness aggravated the Pharisees and the scribes, so they decided to put Stephen to death. When Stephen, empowered by the Holy Spirit, testified to the council of Jews that Jesus was the Messiah of whom the prophets foretold, the audience saw Stephen's face shine like the face of an angel. While still speaking, he looked up to the heavens and saw God's glory and Jesus there. He said: "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). The Jews immediately covered their ears, and with a loud shout they rushed against him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him. The book of the Acts of the Apostles records Stephen's great witness of Christ-like love for his executioners. As he was being stoned to death, "he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:57-60). Stephen thus became the first martyr of the Church and Saul was there witnessing to his execution. Some have suggested that it was Stephen's prayers for his executioners during his martyrdom which directly led to the conversion of Saul/Paul to become one of the chief Apostles. The site of Stephen's martyrdom was the eastern gate of Jerusalem which was then named after him. EAC

*You were chosen as a sharer in the hosts of heavenly angels;
You were crowned by the King with an unfading crown;
and were baptized in your own sacred blood,
O first witness of Christ, Saint Stephen,
Great Protodeacon!*

*You fought against the enemy;
Today by your blood you purchased the Kingdom
to the glory of the human race, O Champion of Christ!
Thanksgiving be to the thrice-holy Trinity
which received its witness, Saint Stephen, into the Jerusalem above.*
CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 6

+**Stephen**, Patriarch of Rome and Roman **Priests, Deacons, and Faithful**: Stephen was born in Rome and became bishop in 254. He is historically better known for his controversy with the bishop St. Cyrpian who considered baptism by heretics to be invalid while Stephen accepted these baptisms. However, the Armenian Menologion (Haysumavoork) records him as a courageous and productive hierarch who, during times of persecution encouraged and heartened his flock to remain steadfast in their faith. He converted many pagans to Christianity among whom was also a prince named Nemesios and his sister who was blind. When he baptized them, the girl's eyes were opened allowing her to see, whereupon the prince took upon himself to be ordained a deacon. The emperor heard that the prince had become a Christian he invited him to present sacrifices to the idols. When the prince refused, the emperor subjected him to torture. When he remained steadfast, the prince, named Olomdios, believed in Christ and was also martyred.

Additionally, their servants who had become Christians and were distributing their possessions to the poor were martyred. The Menologion continues stating, "and they arrested twelve of the clergy whom they murdered mercilessly." The names of these martyrs are given and their commemoration is placed in the calendar together with Stephen the hierarch. One day when he was celebrating the Divine Liturgy, the soldiers surrounded the Church and with great noise and calamity, tried to break open the door, which was bolted. Stephen had barely communicated the faithful and consumed the Eucharist when the soldiers broke open the doors and stormed in killing the holy father, "his blood mingled with the blood of Christ... whereupon he became an heir to participate in the eternal Kingdom of Christ." Stephen was martyred in 257 and the faithful buried his body with great honor. In the second half of the 8th century his relics were translated to a monastery which was built and named in his honor.

+**Tavit** [David] the Invincible Philosopher, Holy Translator: was a student of Movses and received his higher education in centers outside of Armenia, particularly in Athens where he received the title of Invincible because of his genius in philosophy. He translated the works of Plato and Aristotle and is also noted for a number of commentaries and ecclesiastical writings. Like Movses, he was subject to persecution. Tavit, like Movses and Yeghisheh, is remembered as one of the Great Translators and intellectuals of the late 5th century who, with pure faith and genius crowned the Golden Age of Armenian literature and Church history.

+**Thalelaeus**, Physician and Martyr: was born in Lebanon; died c. 284. The son of a Roman general, Thalelaeus became a physician at Anazarbus, Cilicia, where he was

called ‘the Merciful’ for his gratis services to the sick poor and fled to escape the persecution of Christians under Emperor Numerian. Thalelaeus was captured, brought to Aegea, Cilicia [or Edessa, Syria, in some Martyrologies] and then beheaded when an attempt to drown him failed. Alexander and Asterius, two bystanders (who may have been the officers in charge of his execution) and also some others converted by his constancy because of their compassion for him, were also martyred with him.

+**Thecla**, Virgin & Martyr: one of the most ancient and illustrious Saints on the Church’s calendar. At Iconium Thecla heard the preaching of St. Paul, who kindled the love of virginity in her heart. She had been promised in marriage to a young man who was rich and generous, but after hearing the discourses of the Apostle’s word she died to all thought of earthly espousals. She forgot her beauty, turned a deaf ear to her parents’ threats and at the first opportunity fled from a luxurious home and followed the Apostle. The rage of her parents and of her suitor followed after her, and the roman power did its worst against the virgin Christ had chosen. Torment after torment was inflicted upon Thecla without effect, until finally the Lord called her to Himself with the double crown of virginity and martyrdom upon her head.

+**Theodore the Captain**, Martyr: was born in Pontus and became a captain in the Roman army during the reign of emperor Licinius (307-324 A.D.). Theodore had been born of Christian and religious parents, and schooled in the teachings of religion. Many knew the bravery of the saintly soldier after he, with the help of God, killed a giant serpent living on a precipice in the surroundings of the city of Euchantum. The serpent had devoured many people and animals, holding in terror all the surrounding countryside. Saint Theodore, having armed himself with a sword and a prayer to the Lord vanquished it, glorifying amongst the people the Name of Christ. For his bravery Saint Theodore was appointed military-commander-captain [stratelatos] in the city of Heraclea, where he carried out a dual obedience combining his official military service with the apostolic preaching of the Gospel among the pagans subject to him. His ardent persuasion, reinforced by his personal example of Christian life, turned away many from the pernicious “false-gods.” Soon nearly all of Heraclea had accepted Christianity.

During this time the emperor Licinius began a fierce persecution against Christians. Wanting to decapitate the new faith, he resorted to making persecution against the enlightened adherents of Christianity, in which he saw it as the fundamental threat to the dying paganism. Among such a threat was also Saint Theodore, a passionate proponent of the gospel. Exposed as a Christian, the military tribunal decided he was a good soldier who had made a mistake. They told him to reconsider, and set him free; wherein he promptly burned down a pagan temple. Arrested again, he was ordered to apostatize. Finally, he was tortured and then tied to a cross and hung. He endured all of these tortures while reciting the Psalms, and was then ultimately martyred by decapitation. Martyred in 319 A.D. at Heraclea, Thrace.

*From the beginning You chose from among men
Those who were a blessing to You
And among them the soldier Theodore;*

*He armed himself with faith
and You united him to the host of heavenly powers;
Through his prayers save us, O Christ our King!*

*As prefiguration of the invisible serpent
Whom You ordered to trample,
With Your help he courageously crushed the head of the invisible serpent!
Through his prayers, save us, O Christ our king!*
-SHARAGAN: PUERI, MODE 7

+**Theodosius**, Roman Emperor: (also known as Flavius Theodosius), was born in Spain, about 346; died at Milan, 17 January, 395. Theodosius is one of the sovereigns by universal consent called Great. He stamped out the last vestiges of paganism, put an end to the Arian heresy in the empire, pacified the Goths, led a famous example of penitence for a crime, and reigned as a just and mighty Christian emperor. A great part of the emperor's activity was spent in establishing the catholic and orthodox faith and repressing Arianism. In February, 380, he and Gratian published the famous edict that all their subjects should profess the faith of the Bishops of Rome and Alexandria. During all his reign Theodosius took severe measures against the surviving remnants of paganism. In 388 a prefect was sent around Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor for the purpose of destroying temples and breaking up pagan associations.

*You adorned Your Church with wondrous beauty
You crowned it with the apostles and prophets
And confirmed it by holy kings.
O Christ, have mercy on us for the sake of his piety.*

*Armed for battle by the power of the weapon of the Spirit,
They repelled the wrath of heretics
And confirmed the universe in the true faith;
O Christ, have mercy on us, for the sake of their piety.*

*You granted Theodosius the Great to rule in the world
and having finished his life in the Orthodox faith,
You translated him today into Your heavenly kingdom,
Have mercy on us for the sake of his piety.*
CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2

+**Theodotus of Galatia**, Martyr and the **Seven Virgins** who were martyred at Ancrya, in Galatia: Thecusa (his aunt), Alexandra, Claudia, Faina, Euphrasia, Matrona, Julitta. Theodotus was a married man who kept an inn at Ancrya, the capital of Galatia. He is described as a man very zealous in the performance of his Christian duties, endowed with many virtues, especially charity toward his neighbor. He brought sinners to repentance and strengthened many in their faith during the persecution which Theoctenus, the governor of the province, was carrying on [c. 303 A.D.] in accordance with the edict of

the Emperor Diocletian. The governor ordered that all provisions exposed for sale should be offered to the idols. Theodotus hid stores of goods and his house became a refuge for the Christians, a hospital for the sick, and a place for Divine worship. At Malos, he sought out the body of the martyr, Valens, and gave it Christian burial. Returning to Ancyra, the Seven Virgins had been called before the judges and made a valiant profession of their faith; they were then sent to a house of debauchery but preserved their purity. Then they were obliged to suffer cruel torments and were cast into the sea with stones attached to their bodies. Theodotus succeeded in rescuing the bodies and honorably burying them. In consequence, he was arrested, and after many sufferings was killed by the sword; his body was miraculously brought to Malos and there entombed by the priest Fronto.

+**Theophilus**, Deacon and Martyr: was put martyred in Libya, Africa. He along with Helladius, a layman, was killed by being thrown into a furnace because of preaching the Gospel.

+**Thomas** [Tovmas], Apostle and Martyr: was called “the Twin.” On the way to Bethany he was willing to go and die with Jesus. Thomas first stated his doubt concerning the resurrection of Christ unless he was able to touch the wounds of the risen Lord. But later when Christ appeared to him risen, Thomas confessed his faith saying: “My Lord and My God.” In so doing, Thomas was the first to publicly confess faith in the Lord’s divinity. According to tradition, Thomas evangelized the Syrians, the Armenians and the Parthians before going all the way to India to preach the Gospel (farther than any other Apostle). To this day the Syrian Malabar Christians of India call themselves “St. Thomas Christians” affirming that their people were evangelized by the Apostle Thomas. Thomas was martyred in Eastern India and buried at Mylapore near Madras. EAC

*Immortal pastures and waters of rest for Christ's flock,
Vigilant Shepherds
Expellers of Darkness
Reasoning Sheepfold
Saints Thomas and Phillip
Intercede for us before the Lord.*

-SHARAGAN: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2 MIDDAY

+**Timothy**, Bishop & Martyr: His father was a Greek gentile and his mother Eunice was Jewish. He was converted to Christianity by St. Paul around the year 47. He was a partner, assistant and close personal friend of Paul. He was also a missionary and became head of the Church in Ephesus. He received two canonical letters from St. Paul. Timothy was martyred by stoning in 97 A.D. for opposing the worship of Dionysius.

+**Titus**, Bishop & Martyr: was a disciple of St. Paul the Apostle. He received a canonical letter from St. Paul. Titus was the first bishop of the Church in Crete and fell asleep in the Lord c. 96 at Goryna, Crete.

+Tryphon, Martyr: was a martyr for Christ and was popular in the early Eastern Church; also called Trypho. He was allegedly a gooseherder who lived near Apamea [modern Syria] and was executed at Nicea [modern Turkey] under the Emperor Trajanus Decius. During the Decian persecution he was taken to Nicea about the year 250 A.D. and put to death in a horrible manner after he had converted the heathen prefect Licius. He is greatly venerated in the [Byzantine] Church, which observes his feast on Feb. 1. Many churches were dedicated to him, and the Eastern Emperor, Leo VI, the Philosopher [912] delivered an eulogy on Tryphon (D).

+Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ [Vartavar]: The Jewish Festival of Booths was a feast of the dwelling of God with men, and the Transfiguration of Christ reveals how this dwelling takes place in and through the Messiah, the Son of God in human flesh. There is little doubt that Christ's Transfiguration took place at the time of the Festival of Booths, and that the celebration of the event in the Church became the New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament feast in a way similar to the feasts of Passover [Pascha] and Pentecost.

In the Transfiguration, the apostles see the glory of the Kingdom of God present in Majesty in the person of Christ. They see that in Him, indeed, “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,” and that “in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” [Col. 1:19, 2:9]. They see this before the crucifixion so that in the resurrection they might know who it is who has suffered for them, and what it is that this one, who is God, has prepared for those who love Him.

*Word and God without beginning
Who sit with the Father and the Holy Spirit
On the throne not made by human hands!
You were sent from the Father
You put on the likeness of a servant
Hiding Your divinity.*

*Today You showed on Tabor
The radiance of Your light no one can endure
Sun of Righteousness
You revealed Yourself to the world
Revealing to Your disciples
The Divinity contained in You.*

*The chosen rank of disciples was awed
They offered to make for You three mystical tabernacles
Cleanse us that we also may be a spiritual temple for you.
-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 7*

+Translators and Doctors of the Church: the feast commemorates the lives and works of some of the great doctors of the Armenian Church tradition. More specifically it

commemorates the monumental task of translating the Holy Scriptures, the writings of the Church Fathers and the canons and Church councils into the Armenian language. Additionally, this feast commemorates the lives of other great spiritual writers who, in the spirit of the first translators, Mesrob, Sahag and their pupils, made great contributions to the Church through their writings. For the lives of each Holy Translator see the entries for their individual names: Sahag, Mesrob, Yeghisheh, Movses the Rhetor, David the Invincible Philosopher, Gregory of Narek, and Nerses the Grace-filled.

*The Holy Translators, like stewards
Were interpreters of the Divine Scriptures
By inventing letters by means of which are preserved on earth as living Words
For the shepherding of the flock of the New Israel
Praise God with a sweet sounding hymn.*

-CANON: CANTEMUS-ORHNOOTYOUN, MODE 2

*O God! You generously spread Your heavenly knowledge and spiritual wisdom
In the Churches of the Armenians
By the Holy Translators
By their prayers have mercy on us.*

-CANON: MISERERE-VOGHORMYA

+Twelve Minor Prophets: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jonah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachia: There are twelve Old Testament books which are collectively known as “The Minor Prophets.” The prophets are not less important than those called “Major Prophets.” Their books are simply shorter. Some of the Minor Prophets lived in Israel; others in Judah. Some preached in the large cities; other in the rural areas. Jonah preached to Assyria. Obadiah’s message was directed toward Edom. The dates of the Minor Prophets range from the ninth century before Christ to the fifth century before Christ. All of the Minor Prophets were servants of God who proclaimed His will to people in need of repentance.

*With marvelous voice the prophets ceaselessly praise Him
Who became flesh from the Holy Virgin
Who appeared to us for our salvation.*

*Of their own will
They took on themselves sorrows and sufferings
And patiently endured them for the sake of the name of the Lord
Who appeared to us for our salvation.*

-CANON TO THE HOLY PROPHETS: LAUDATE-DER HERGNEETS

+Twelve Apostles of Christ, and Paul the Thirteenth Apostle: Jesus Christ selected Twelve Apostles to carry on with authority His Gospel and He sent them to preach and to baptize all nations [Matt. 28:19-20]. The Apostles kept their mission with integrity and faithfulness and dedicated their lives to it. They spread the new faith in the true God into

the world in order to heal it of its infirmities. They organized the converts into groups called Churches. To these Churches the Apostles handed on the treasure of the Gospel, their eyewitness accounts of the Word as they actually saw it take place, -thus preserving it forever through the Church. Receiving this Truth from some of the Apostles [e.g. Thaddaeus and Bartholomew], the Armenian Church is an “Apostolic” Church. It has its roots in the apostolic ministry and succession, the apostolic faith and creed, and the apostolic word and scriptures by which the Apostles and their immediate successors defended the Orthodox Faith and kept it undefiled against the heresies and persecutions.

Jesus Christ Himself gave the title “Apostle” to the Twelve [Lk 6:13 & Mk 3:14]. The term “apostle” [“apostolos” in Greek; a derivative “apostellein,” meaning “to send;” Arm. “Arakyal”] signifies a special mission. An apostle is commissioned by the person who sent him. Therefore, the term apostle is more definite than the term messenger [Greek “angelos”]. An apostle does not merely transmit a message, but he works to put it into practice among the recipients, both to let them understand it aright and to apply its contents in their faith and life. As Jesus was sent by His Father, so the Apostles were sent by Jesus. Jesus Christ used the contemporary term “apostle” and gave it His own content and interpretation stressing the idea of being “sent,” which means that an Apostle is a man with a mission throughout his entire life [and thus the Church today remains essentially missionary]. For the lives of each Apostle see the entries for their individual names: Simon-Peter, Andrew, James, John, Phillip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the Lesser, Jude-Thaddaeus, Matthias & Paul.

*O Apostles of God,
Pillars of faith of the Catholic Church,
Disciples of Christ our God, the Heavenly Teacher,
Intercede with Him to grant peace to all the world*

*Friends of Christ
and stewards of God's mysteries,
Receivers of the Word of life
and Enlighteners of the universe,
Intercede with Him to grant peace to all the world.*

-CANON TO ALL THE APOSTLES: LAUDATE-DER HERGNEETS

+Twelve Holy Doctors: For the lives of each Holy Doctor see the entries for their individual names: Hierotheus of Athens, Dionysius the Areopagite, Silvester of Rome, Athanasius of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ephrem the Syrian, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Theologian, Epiphanius of Cyprus, John Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria.

+Vahan of Goghten, Martyr (d. 737 A.D.): was taken into custody as a young child with many other children of Armenian nobility who had been killed. He was moved to Damascus where he received his education and, like the other children, received Islamic training. He was well liked by the Arab leaders and attained a high position in the court. While serving in the court, the Arab overlords granted the captured children, who had

grown to adulthood, the right to return home. Vahan married and established himself over the lands of his father who was killed prior to his captivity. The Arab overlords, however, demanded Vahan's return and started to pursue him. He fled from one place to another over a number of years, leaving his family and home. At each place he went, the populace became endangered because of his presence so he finally decided to surrender himself, explain his desire to remain in Armenia and practice his own religion. The person governing Armenia had him immediately thrown into prison and after many different kinds of torture, he was finally beheaded. His life and martyrdom were recorded and according to some traditions, his sister wrote the melody and lyric of the hymn dedicated to Vahan.

*Arousing all the powers of my soul, its even more urges me to compose in your honor not a sad elegy, but a hymn that is spiritual and joyful...
Which calls others to walk in your footsteps,
O blessed Lord Vahan, Servant of Christ!*

*Like a brave warrior ready for combat
You bravely entered the race leading to the people of the south
Where, having accepted martyrdom, You were numbered with the choir of the bodiless
O blessed Vahan, Lord of Gokhten!*

-SHARAGAN TO VAHAN OF GOKHTEN: MODE 3

+**Valerius, Candiditus, and Aquila, Martyrs:** (4th c.) were from Trabizon who during the persecutions of Diocletian and Maximian fled from the city to nearby mountains. Ultimately they were arrested and brought before the tribunal. When they refused to renounce their faith they were imprisoned, subjected to starvation and then tortures of thirst. They endured numerous tortures in the name of God. All of them having first been subjected to the test of being thrown into fire, received the crown of martyrdom through decapitation.

+**Varak, Feast of the Holy Cross of:** This feast is particular to the Armenian Church. In the seventh century a solitary monk named Todig (which is an Armenian name of endearment for Theodore) lived on Mount Varak. He longed and prayed for many years to be granted to find a relic of the Holy Cross which tradition said was brought to Armenia by St. Hripsimeh and her companions when they sought refuge there during persecution. They had entrusted it to pious priests who hid it in the place where it remained hidden until Todig's day. One night Todig had a vision that upon the summit of the mountain appeared a brilliant cross which later moved slowly down the mountain and rested upon the holy altar of the Monastery of Varak. Todig and his student Hovel rushed to the Church and prostrated themselves before the holy relic which the vision revealed to be a true piece of the Holy Cross. After the authenticity of the relic was verified, Catholicos Nerses III the Builder ordered that each year, on the Sunday closest to September 28 (2nd Sunday of the Exaltation) be dedicated to the Holy Cross of Varak.

O Christ! Today on the cross

*You manifested the Light
Of Your divinity word cannot express on Mount Varag
Blessed are You, God of our fathers.*

*You have given a sign to them that fear You
And a weapon against the enemy
Preserve them who believe in Your holy name
Blessed are You, God of our fathers.*

-CANON: PATRUM-HARTS MODE 7

+Vartan and his 1036 Companions who died in the Great Battle of Avarayr, Martyrs:

On the Thursday preceding the Great Fast, Armenians celebrate St. Vartan the Brave and all those who gave their lives in this war (called collectively the "Vartanians"). In order to force the Christian Armenians to revert back to the Persian religion, the King of Persia decreed that all Christians under his rule should abandon their new religion and accept Mazdeism.

The Armenians, in a mass meeting of the clergy and the ruling princes, gave a bold answer to this royal decree, insisting that they had not the slightest intention of altering their Christian beliefs. The Persians countered this boldness with a heavy hand. They sent to Armenia a huge army of some 220,000 strong, to crush the resistance and to convert the country to paganism by force. In 451 A.D. on the field of Avarayr (rhymes with fire), near mount Ararat, a band of 66,000 semi-trained and poorly equipped Armenian fighters, under the leadership of Vartan Mamigonian, their commander in chief, stood waiting for the invading army of Persians. Vartan knew full well that the Persians outnumbered his men, that they were well equipped and that they were going to use their hordes of elephants against him, but he put his trust in God and preferred honorable death to servility. The battle of Avarayr came to an end with the fall of Vartan the brave. The Armenians, seeing that they were left without a commander, withdrew to their castles and inaccessible mountains to carry on a guerilla war. The Armenians inflicted great losses on the enemy. In this battle which lasted only one day, and in the subsequent guerilla wars, 1036 Armenians fell against the Persian loss of 3544 soldiers.

In this battle Vartan and his comrades suffered a military defeat but in reality the victory was theirs. They lost the battle but in the end they won the war and attained their aim for which they were fighting. The Persians eventually stopped their scheme of converting the country to their religion, when they realized how steadfast the Armenians were in their faith and convictions. Their defeat became a moral victory. Some thirty years later, a nephew of Vartan, Vahan Mamigonian, brought this religious resistance to a successful end, even from the military standpoint; he dictated his simple terms to the Persians: a) full religious freedom, b) home rule for the country, and c) replacement of corrupt officers with men of dependable character. The Armenians still hold what the Vartanians were fighting for: their Christian faith and heritage. The Persians lost what they were trying to impose upon Armenians, their own religion, because they were themselves converted later to Islam. As a result of such battles in our history and the fine spirit which the Vartanians displayed, the Christian religion has survived in Armenia throughout centuries and under the most trying circumstances. SAF

*With them in courageous battle
Fell a thousand thirty six as martyrs
They shed their blood for the renewal of the Church
And with them were crowned by the Heavenly Leader.*

*Surrounded today by the host of these crowned warriors
We sing glory in praise to you, O Holy Trinity
And we thank You for the mercy shown by You to the Armenian Churches
Brightly adorned by the martyrdom of these strugglers
Our constant intercessors before You.*

-SHARAGAN TO ST. VARTAN AND HIS COMPANIONS: MODE 8

+**Voskian Priests**, Martyrs: According to tradition, the Armenian King Sanadrook sent these five leaders to Rome as ambassadors. On their way they met the Apostle Thaddaeus who converted and baptized them. Their leader, Voski, whose name they bear, led them to the mountains in one of the eastern provinces; there they lived as hermits for over forty years whereupon they started to preach to the Royal Court. There, they converted Queen Satenig's relatives who were Caucasian Albanians and called the Sookiasians. The Vosgeyan priests were martyred by Prince Ardavast in 107 A.D.

*You were made worthy to be taught by St. Thaddeus!
Cleansed by the Divine Fire
You appeared in the dwelling of the Angels like purified gold
O Blessed holy Vosgeyans,
Intercede before the Lord that He might cleanse us from our sins.*

*You remained unflinching before the flattery of the prince
And handed over to tortures
You were slain like a sacrifice acceptable to God
O Blessed holy Vosgeyans,
Intercede before the Lord that He might cleanse us from our sins.*

-SHARAGAN TO ST. VOSKI AND HIS COMPANIONS: MODE 5

+**Yeghisheh** [Elishe], Holy Translator: was one of the most renowned of the students of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob and served as secretary to St. Vartan. He wrote the great history of the Battle of Vartanantz in which he also included a section about the Council of Ardashad. He was author of many books and wrote commentaries on some of the books of the Old Testament. After the Battle of Vartanantz, he retired to the mountains. After returning for a time to civilization, he once again retreated to the mountains of the province of Mogk where he lived a virtuous life. Later when the local peasants learned of his saintly ways, he moved to the mountains of the Rushdouni province, where he fell asleep in the Lord.

+**Zachariah**, Priest: was the father of John the Baptist and of the line of Abia, which ministered at the temple. While he was offering incense and prayers in the Temple, he received a promise from an angelic messenger that he and his barren wife, Elizabeth would bear a son whom they would name John. For doubting the angelic message, Zechariah was made mute by God until the birth of his son. Upon giving him the name John, Zachariah's tongue was loosed and he offered the great prayer of praise known by its Latin title, the Benedictus ("Blessed be the Lord God of Israel..." recorded in the Gospel of Luke, first chapter).

+**Zechariah**, Prophet: was eleventh of the twelve so-called minor prophets or shorter books of the Old Testament, takes its name from a priest who returned to Jerusalem with the exiles from Babylon. He was a prophet of the two-tribe kingdom of Judah and, like Ezekiel, was of priestly extraction. He describes himself (1:1) as "the son of Berechiah" and Ezra (5:1 & 6:14) calls him "the son of Iddo," who was properly his grandfather. His prophetic career began in the second year of Darius, king of Persia [B.C. 520], about sixteen years after the return of the first company from their Babylonian exile. He was a contemporary of Haggai (Ezra 5:1). His name means "Yahweh is renowned / remembered."