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In the spirit of the Voskians, Nor Voskiank seeks to support the cultivation of a thriving, united, worldwide Armenian Christian community through prayer, fellowship, and the publication of practical educational resources covering the entire breadth of Christian life as lived, interpreted and testified to by the Armenian Church since ancient times. The Treasury/**Գանձարան** is published quarterly and subscriptions are available by request. To contact us or donate, please visit us at

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FLASHBACK: HAPPY THANKSGIVING

One of the most meaningful celebration days in the United States is Thanksgiving, a uniquely American holiday. The history of Thanksgiving Day is interesting in that despite having its roots as far back as the early 1600's when the Pilgrims first settled in New England, the national holiday was not "officially" established until 1863. President Abraham Lincoln, right in the midst of a civil war, issued an executive proclamation on October 3rd of that year that the last Thursday of every November would be observed as the "day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens." President Lincoln very astutely noted in his proclamation that despite the heartache and suffering plaguing his war-torn country, the nation as a whole continued to be blessed with bounties "so extraordinary in nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God."

Earlier in his speech, the President noted that these blessings, which are so constantly enjoyed in our everyday lives, makes us "prone to forget the source from which they come." Today we are at no less risk for taking granted the myriad blessings that our Heavenly Father showers upon us, both in the United States and abroad. Consequently, Thanksgiving Day for many in this country has become simply a day off from work to eat turkey, watch football and plan out the buying strategy for Black Friday. For that matter, the Holy God to whom our thanksgiving is supposed to be directed has been entirely replaced by friendly faces, secular institutions, and the impartial universe as the objects of our praise.

Fortunately, in the Armenian Orthodox Church, a weekly reminder of the spirit of Thanksgiving Day is available every Sunday morning during the Divine Liturgy (*Soorp Badarak*). Repeatedly one will find short prayers and scripture verses of thanksgiving directed to the Giver of all graces and bounty. In fact, the central act of our Sunday morning worship service - the distribution of Holy Communion or "Eucharist" - is the fulfillment of the spirit of Thanksgiving which pervades the Divine Liturgy. The word Eucharist, derived from the Greek word *eucharisteo* which means "to thank," reminds us that our deepest gratitude is directed toward the One who left his eternal heavenly glory to become human, live among us, and give us eternal life through his sacrificial death on the Cross. When we join with Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, we are filled with his Spirit and Life which transforms us into a thankful people, manifested by the love and grace that we extend to those around us.

As year's end draws near and the Christmas season unfolds, let us make the spirit of Thanksgiving Day a daily observance in our lives. We at the Fellowship of St. Voski are especially thankful to God for His blessings upon this ministry, for our readership and all our supporters. May the joy of this and every holiday season be gift-wrapped with an attitude of thanksgiving and praise as we celebrate together as one united people of faith.

"Let us be thankful for the plenteous gifts of our Lord God, who in sweet bounty nourishes us day by day of His own will, that He may make His servants share in spiritual goodness and in the heavenly kingdom, according to the expectations of our hope. Almighty Lord our God, preserve and have mercy upon us. Amen."

(Armenian Prayer of Thanksgiving)



THE CHURCH IS NEAR BUT THE WAY IS ICY

by Rev. Fr. Hovnan Demerjian

It is difficult to be a priest in Florida and get the message across of God's invitation to his heavenly kingdom. It's so beautiful here in the winter, that heaven doesn't interest anybody. And it's so hot here in the summer that hell isn't that scary! As with all jokes, this one too has grains of truth in it; especially the first part. Those of us who live in this Diocese, who live basically comfortable lives, tend to feel that we have no need for God or his invitations for something better. Thank you very much, God, I'm fine—you do your thing, I'll do mine.

This apparently isn't just a contemporary problem, however, as our Scriptures and ancient church writings could all be summarized as books of invitations from God to man—of God trying to break through to His people; to Moses, to Jonah, to King Trdat, to me and to you. Sadly our holy writings also record the fact that many people throughout the ages have rejected His different invitations.

The parable of the great banquet, read in preparation for Christmas in all Armenian Churches, condenses all God's invitations in history—and man's rejections—in a few sentences. A master of a house (God) prepares a banquet and has invited many people to come. When the day comes, most of those invited find bad excuses of why they can't come: "I have to work," "I already had an engagement," etc. The master grows angry at their lack of response and vows that "none of those who were invited will taste my dinner" (Luke 14:16-24).

As we know, Jesus' parables are not stories that only happened to certain people at a certain time in the past, but stories that happen to all people at all times. We continue the parable of God's great banquet every Sunday in which the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. Unlike any other banquet, the *Badarak* is an invitation to dine with the Lord, where everyone is invited, every single week, forever—until the coming of Our Lord. Who has a wedding and invites everybody? Who has a Christmas dinner and invites everybody? Normally none of us would—but by the grace of God, on Sundays we do.

If your church is like mine, not everyone heeds this weekly invitation. Some have very good reasons, most do not. There is a wonderful Ukrainian Orthodox Proverb which says: "The church is near, but the way is icy, the tavern is far, but I will walk carefully." We do what we want, what we love and what we value. We make excuses for what we don't want, don't love and don't value as much as something else.

Perhaps the biggest misconception which keeps people from church is that they don't know Who has invited them to supper. It's not your parents, it's not your priest and it's not your bishop. Many people make the mistake of worrying about who is pleased by their participation in church or disappointed at the lack thereof. This is not something to worry about! Almighty God, who made all of creation and breathes special life into each of us, is He who invites us to weekly fellowship and communion with Him... And we answer with our excuses!

The question naturally arises of whether one can be a good Christian without going to church. Perhaps some can be a good Christian without church, but it's very hard to become a better Christian without church. God uses the everyday trials and graces of a local church community to discipline and form us into more gracious Christians.

And so the invitation stands, this Christmas season. Let us renew the strength of our commitment to God and our brothers and sisters in Christ, in preparation for his Christmas arrival. Let us by the strength of our example—the door of our churches and our hearts wide open—encourage others in our church families to heed the Lord's invitation to grow in Him. Let us share with others the honor which brings us to church every week. How, unworthy as we are, we accept the invitation to dine with a king, whose kingdom is not of this world, whose banquet has already begun, but for those who believe, carries on forever; Amen.

Rev. Fr. Hovnan Demerjian is the pastor of St. Hagop Armenian Orthodox Church in Pinellas Park, Florida

THE PEACE OF GOD

by Dr. André Markarian

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

Gospel of John 14:27

Have you ever been asked, “If you could have three wishes, what would they be?” This thought provoking question, a favorite among previous generations familiar with the genie-in-the-bottle fairy tales of old, predictably invokes a slew of creative answers including “to win a million dollars,” “to fly like Superman” and “to live forever.” Among the list of commonly offered answers is the wish for “world peace.” The desire for “peace” has been a constant pursuit since the beginning of civilization: peace in the home, peace in the community, peace in the nation, and peace in the world. But what does having “peace” mean, and why should having peace even matter at all? Furthermore, can lasting peace really be achieved, or is it simply a state of being that comes and goes, forever sought after but never realized in any meaningful or permanent way?

Obviously the concept of peace means different things to different people. Images of a tranquil lake against the backdrop of a glowing sunset, or lacy clouds passing over the peaks of snow capped mountains conjure up feelings of “peace” for many. When most people talk of “achieving peace,” they are usually referring to two or more factions in a state of conflict who would benefit by laying down their arms, settling their differences, and living harmoniously together – a process that generally involves professional third-party arbitrators and negotiators to be successful. For individuals in pursuit of “internal” peace, this typically means trying to remove all anxieties and worries to achieve some sort of psychological calmness or tranquility in their lives. In modern times, this pursuit of personal peace often involves self-help books, mental health counselors, meditation gurus, prescription medications, illicit drugs and endless other strategies to achieve lasting peace in one’s personal space. Sadly this version of peace is shallow and unfulfilling, an attempt to put the blinders on and ignore one’s difficult circumstances. This form of mock peace is still contingent on one’s situation and is simply a form of escapism – it neither comforts nor perseveres. *Real peace must be deep in the soul*, not just a fleeting feeling that governs the present, superficially appeasing the conscience or transiently satisfying the gnawing desires of the heart.

Fortunately, the Christian concept of “peace” is far deeper and richer than the world’s way of understanding and achieving peace. The word *peace* is ubiquitous in the English translation of the Holy Bible, used over 400 times in both Testaments. In Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, we encounter the word *shalom*, a very complex term that conveys many meanings including “well-being,” “completeness,” “wholeness,” “in right relationship with,” “success or fulfillment” and even the idea of “safety.”

Both the Old and New Testaments rely heavily on the nuanced meanings of *shalom*, where it is mainly—if not exclusively—translated by the word “peace” in the English Bible and “խաղաղութիւն” (*khaghaghootyoon*) in the Armenian Bible.

In the Armenian Orthodox Church liturgical tradition, the notion of *peace* is also no stranger. Included as one of the Daily Hours services (*Jhamerkootyoon*) is the “Peace Hour” (*Խաղաղական ժամերգութիւն/Khaghaghagan Jhamerkootyoon*), a late night service filled with Psalm recitations, prayers and moving hymns including the familiar “*Nayats Seerov*” (Look with Love). The word *khaghaghootyoon* and its other grammatical forms are used over 45 times in the major sacramental services (Baptism, Marriage, Funeral, etc) and 27 times in the *Soorp Badarak* (Divine Liturgy), the premier worship service of the Armenian Church. It is almost inescapable for a faithful Sunday-morning worshipper to miss the phrase “*Khaghaghootyoon Amenetsoon*” (Peace to all), repeated regularly by the celebrant as he carries the divine blessing of peace from the Holy Altar and delivers it to the congregation while making the sign of the Holy Cross. Equally recognizable is the phrase “*Yev yevus khaghaghootyan uzder aghachestsook*” (and again in peace we beseech the Lord), proclaimed by the deacon every time he presents the censer to the priest to be filled with incense. Let us also not forget the quintessential liturgical ritual of peacemaking known as the “Kiss of Peace,” offered just before the recitation of the Eucharistic Prayer, with its associated hymn “*Kreesdos Ee Mech Mer Haydnetsav*” (Christ In Our Midst).

THE SOURCE OF PEACE IS GOD

So what do Scripture and our sacred Armenian Church tradition teach us about “peace”? First and foremost, we learn that *God is the only source of true peace*, an objective reality that is not based on circumstances or subjective attitudes as with the world’s version of peace. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans (15:33) refers to our Heavenly Father as the “God of peace,” and in his letter to the Philippians (4:7) he tells us that the peace of God “surpasses all understanding,” categorizing it as an entirely supernatural phenomenon. In the Armenian translation of Philippians 4:7, we read that the peace of God is “above all” understanding (“*Եւ խաղաղութիւնն Աստուծոյ որ ի վեր է քան զամենայն միտս*”). In metaphysical terms, being “above all” would indicate that the peace God gives is

transcendent, meaning beyond or above the range of normal or physical human experience. It is not something that we can attain on our own through negotiation, meditation, inspiration, or intoxication. God's peace is wholly *other*, a numinous gift that can neither be explained by the intellect nor brought about by human activity.

What then does this kind of peace actually look and feel like? An excerpt from the central prayer of the Peace Service from the Armenian Daily Hours gives us some sense of the depth of this divine gift:

“Beneficent Lord, who by your great compassion have prepared eternal rest for those who labor virtuously, and have called to yourself with a sweet voice those that are heavy laden and wearied with sin, promising them rest. Grant us also, Lord, to pass this night in undisturbed *peace* and to us, who are laboring under the weight of sin, grant security by your mercy and make us worthy of perpetual rest with all your saints.... Giver of good gifts and fountain of *peace*, O Lord our God, *pacify* our minds and thoughts from all satanic troubles this night and at all times, so that being guided by you in this transient life we may reach your eternal heavenly kingdom which you have prepared for your saints from the beginning of the world.”

(Book of Daily Hours/Ժամագիրք Աստուծոյ)



This passage reveals that the peace of God is a form of supernatural “rest” and “security,” a rock upon which we find our moorings from the tumultuous and unpredictable seas of our lives. God's peace releases us from our daily sin and stressors, frees us from the cares of the world, and protects us from all evil forces, bad influences and dangers. In their place, he provides a state of tranquility and serenity that comforts, reassures and heals. The prayer notes that even in the midst of all the trials and tribulations that life presents us, God grants his peace to those who “labor virtuously,” despite having to live continually under the “weight of sin.” Such is the tension that exists in the lives of all Christians – on the one hand we strive for God's righteousness and work for His purposes, yet we are regularly ensnared by the enticements of sin. Thankfully, God's *peace* gives us rest from this worldly tension and restores us in our daily walk when we come and drink from his bountiful “fountain of peace.”

THE DELIVERER OF PEACE IS CHRIST

How do we obtain the peace that God offers? Romans 5:1 teaches us that when “we are justified by faith, we *have* peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is the one who brings peace to us, but contrary to what his disciples thought at the time, Jesus made it clear that he did not come into the world to bring about the kind of peace that the world seeks. “Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division” (Luke 12:51). The peace that the world needs is not the kind of peace it wants or can even understand without God opening up our spiritual sight: “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes” (Luke 19:42). Jesus was trying to help his disciples understand that true, lasting peace can never be achieved by some form of self-help technique, war strategy, contractual agreement or act of the will. We, in and of ourselves, are unable to reach God's peace because we have lost our way from His peace, having entered into lives of sin which place roadblocks and barriers to discovering the peace that continually flows from Him. Peace comes only from a supernatural transformation of the heart and will brought about by the work of Jesus Christ himself, as is described in St. Paul's letter to the church in Colossus: “And through him to reconcile to

himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making **peace** by the blood of his Cross” (Colossians 1:20). Only through his death on the Cross could true peace be made possible on this earth, thereby reconciling us to God, restoring our broken relationship with Him, and placing us back on the path of His righteousness where peace abounds.

Fortunately for those that love Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and trust in him as Lord and Savior, God’s peace is within reach. During his final meal after washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus reassured them saying “Peace I leave with you; *my peace* I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27). Notice that this is not a simple mealtime blessing of *shalom*, but an offering of Jesus Christ’s own *personal* peace, the supernatural peace of God. This is the same indescribable peace that carried Jesus through the mockery, beatings, and rejection in the final hours of his life, and ultimately to endure crucifixion and the pouring out of God’s wrath upon him on the Cross for our sakes. There in the midst of incomprehensible suffering and persecution, Jesus Christ remained unwavering in his divine mission to save the world and deliver his peace to it.

It is this same divine peace that the officiating priest distributes to us every Sunday morning during the *Soorp Badarak* whenever he says “*Khaghaghootyun amenestsoon*” (Peace to all). The eternal Christ, who is supernaturally present during every *Soorp Badarak* in a very real and personal way, offers his divine peace to every believer present. Just before the priest takes off his crown and slippers prior to the preparation of the Eucharist, he prays this short prayer:

“With your peace, Christ our Savior, which surpasses all understanding and speech, defend us and keep us fearless of all evil. Make us equal to your true worshippers, who worship you in spirit and in truth; for to the most-holy Trinity is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and onto the ages of ages. Amen”

It is the supernatural peace that Christ brings to his people that is necessary for our protection and perseverance. It is the power of his peace that allows us to be reconciled to God *and* to each other, as is revealed in the first few lines of the *Soorp Badarak* hymn *Kreesdos Ee Mech Mer Haydnetsav* (Christ in our Midst):

Christ in our midst has been revealed; He who is God, is here seated. The voice of *peace* has resounded; Holy greeting is commanded. This Church has now become one soul, The kiss is given for a full bond. The enmity has been removed; And love is spread over all of us.

Like a resounding trumpet, the distribution of Jesus’ peace is proclaimed among the congregation and sealed with a holy kiss. The schism that once separated us from God’s love and peace has been mended, allowing not only full



restoration of relationship with Him, but the spreading of his love and peace over all his faithful servants. Reconciled, healed and empowered with holy love and peace, the priest ends the Divine Liturgy celebration with the following words: "Be blessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Depart in *peace* and the Lord be with you all. Amen." We are sent forth into the world enveloped "in" the safety and solace of his peace, like a fully equipped battleship ready to brave the tumultuous waters of the sea of life.

PEACE: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

When God sent his only begotten son to die on the Cross to reconcile us to Him and put everything right again, our sins past, present and future were forgiven. Metaphorically speaking, our "war" with God was over, and we have made "peace" with Him. That was God's wonderful purpose in salvation. We are now in a position to receive all his graces, not the least of which is his divine peace. This peace not only refers to the eternal peace that awaits us after Christ's return when we are given our new resurrected bodies, but it is divine peace that is available to us to enjoy **right now** throughout the course of our daily lives. We ought to lay hold of this peace as it belongs to us as children of the Most High. The peace that the Lord gives has to be received in order to be applied in our lives. When we accept the promise of the peace of Christ and allow it to overtake us, we are freed from the suffocating grip of our external circumstances. Although we will continue to be confronted with temptation, tribulation and all manner of worldly difficulties, we can walk through the fire of life's challenges with calm, untroubled hearts, always knowing that our safety rests upon the unmovable rock of **His** peace. Only then can the world ever expect to see harmony among peoples and nations. As the prophet Isaiah poetically described, only when the peace of Christ has overtaken the world, one person at a time, will "nations beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4). Only then will true and perfect peace overtake the world and "you shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12).



APPLICATION

Like all the graces of God, to receive and be immersed in His perfect and lasting peace requires effort and commitment. Here are a few suggestions to help experience the fullness of divine peace in your life.

1. **Trust.** Jesus has told us clearly that he has given us his peace, and he continues to offer it in abundance to those that believe in him and will accept it. We must resist the temptation of succumbing to those feelings of guilt, worry, frustration, hopelessness and fear that so often plague our lives, and trust wholeheartedly that Jesus will infuse us with his supernatural peace. There is no greater testimony to his faithfulness than his Crucifixion and Resurrection.
2. **Obey.** Obedience is one of the key factors in assuring that our lives are aligned with God's will and that his graces will rest upon us. Sin, in all its forms, is the primary reason why God's gifts cannot be received and enjoyed. As the Old Testament prophet Isaiah has instructed us, "The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever" (Isaiah 32:17). Simply put, if you don't obey all God's commandments and follow His will, you cannot be at peace with Him and therefore cannot obtain His peace.



3. **Study.** Diving regularly into God's word is both instructive and a reminder of the joys of knowing God's peace. The Holy Bible provides the most powerful testimony of how God has and will continue to bring about peace in the lives of the faithful.
4. **Pray.** Spending quiet time every day to talk to the Lord is the wellspring of a life filled with godly peace. The book of Psalms is particularly suitable as a prayer companion for experiencing the serene comforts of God's peace. Who can resist the images of peace found in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd..." In addition, specifically pray that the Holy Spirit, who fills all Christians with the fruits of divine life, especially grant God's peace in abundance.
5. **Worship.** As mentioned earlier, the peace of God is regularly distributed in church as we worship alongside other members of the Body of Christ. Because Jesus himself is present with us in the mystery of every Eucharist celebration, when we partake of Holy Communion we receive his divine peace first hand just as the disciples did centuries ago. United as one family, we collectively rejoice in the distribution of his blessings for our eternal joy, comfort and peace.

“And let the peace of
Christ rule in your
hearts, to which indeed
you were called in one
body.”

Colossians 3:15

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ANGEL

Հրեշտակ=hreshdag

by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian

Beginning with Thanksgiving and lasting until Christmas, the Advent season is a time when we remember and are thankful for all the people and things in our lives. We see many symbols that remind us of this season: Christmas trees, presents, Santa Claus, mangers and stars. All these things bring to mind the Nativity story of Christ, but one of the most iconic characters (and symbols) of Christmas are angels.

Angels play an intricate part in the Christmas story. The archangel Gabriel brought news to Mary that she would be the mother of God and reminded her that all things are possible with God. Angels came to the shepherds in the fields, bringing great news that the Savior was born. And according to tradition, an angel warned the Magi in a dream, to flee from Herod by a different route after they visited the new born king.

We see them during this Christmas season and read about them in the Bible. We hear about them in books, TV shows and movies and even speak about our guardian angels. But what are angels? The Church Fathers describe them as luminous beings, without bodies, whose main purpose is to serve and praise God. They are assigned to protect families, nations, locations, our bodies and

especially, our souls.

Some angels are given names expressing their missions, such as Michael (who is like God), Gabriel (God is my strength) and Raphael (God heals). Other angels are assigned to certain virtues, like friendship, courage, marriage and peace. We see this in our litanies when the deacons ask, “for the angel of peace to guard our souls, let us ask of the Lord.”

The English word “angel” comes from the Greek word *angelos* which means “messenger,” whereas the Armenian word հրեշտակ/*hreshdag* comes from the Persian word *ferishte*, which means “one who is sent or dispatched.” Therefore, angels are sent with a purpose or a message; but what is that message?

There were once two angels: one who was always relaxing on the clouds and another who was constantly flying from Earth to Heaven. One day, the relaxing angel asked, “What do you do?”

“I take all the prayers that begin with ‘God, help’ up to God” responded the busy angel. He then asked the relaxing angel, “And what do you do?”

To which the relaxing angel replied, “I also take prayers up to God, but those prayers which begin with ‘God, I

thank and praise you’.”

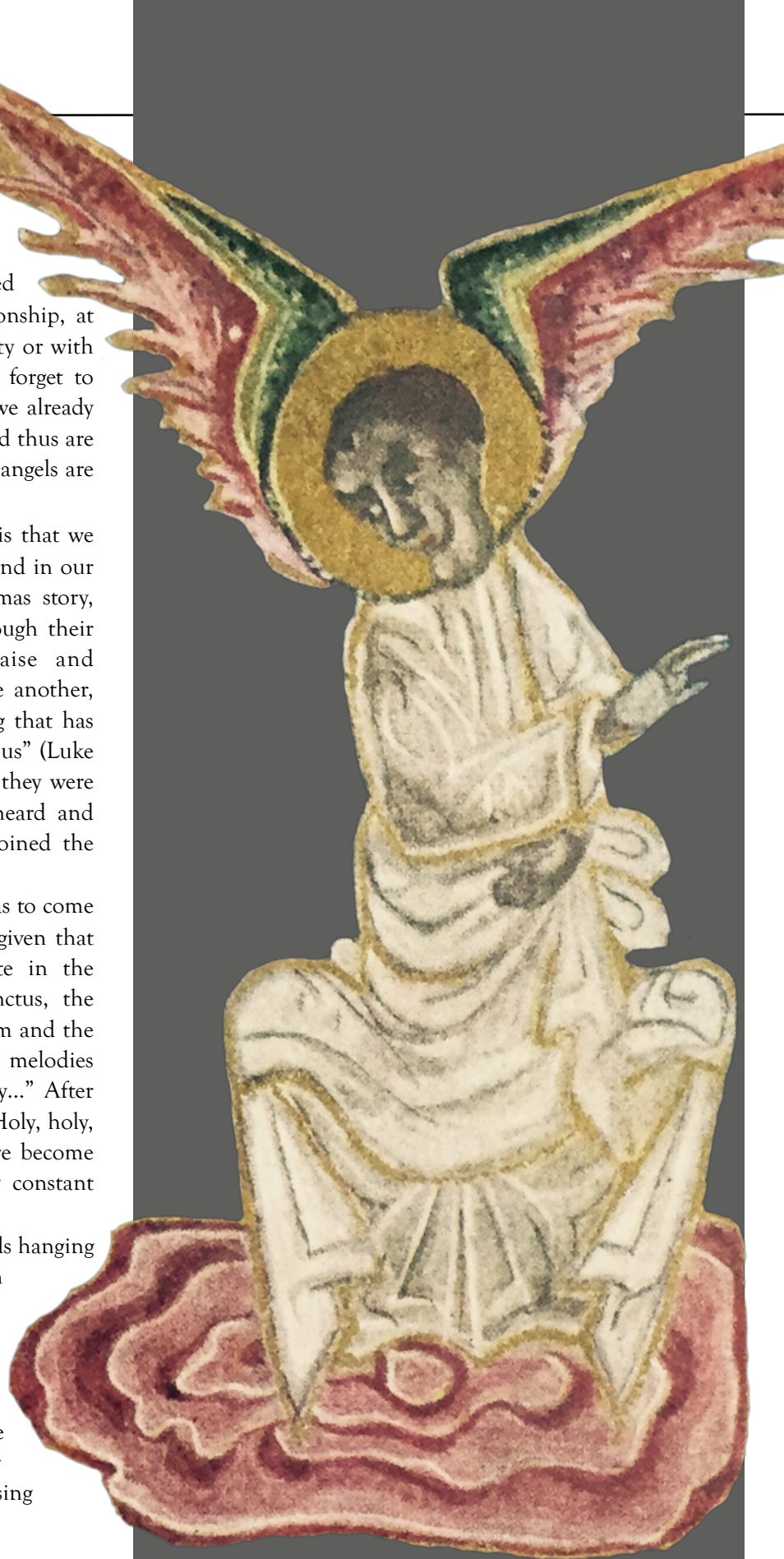
This short story teaches us two important lessons: first, it speaks volumes about prayer and a Christian’s prayer life. So often when we pray, we immediately jump into listing all the things we need help with from God. Help at work, in a relationship, at home, in school, with our health, in a community or with others. When we only ask for help, we usually forget to thank and give praise to God for all the things we already have. As humans, we tend to focus on the bad, and thus are blinded to the good that exists all around us, but angels are not that way.

The second lesson we learn from this story is that we must strive to be more angelic in our prayer life and in our everyday lives. We see, especially in the Christmas story, how the angels came to the shepherds and through their praise, preached God incarnate. Their praise and thanksgiving moved the shepherds to say to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us” (Luke 2:15), and upon returning from the Bethlehem, they were “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them” (2:20). They joined the ranks of angels.

However, we do not have to wait for Christmas to come in order to praise God with the angels. We are given that opportunity every Sunday, when we participate in the Divine Liturgy. Immediately preceding the Sanctus, the priest cries out, “And, in accord with the seraphim and the cherubim, we should sing holy songs and make melodies and, boldly crying out, shout with them and say...” After which, the choir and whole congregation sings, “Holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts” (Soorp, soorp, soorp) and we become accompanists to the angels in heaven who sing constant praise.

So in the Christmas season, when we see angels hanging from trees, figurines for sale in stores or pictures in workplaces, let us remember that we too are called to be like the angels; singing and praising God. In our prayers, we must dedicate time to thanking Him for all He has done in our lives and make an effort, if we do not already, to attend the Divine Liturgy where we join the ranks of angels. May our guardian angels and all the heavenly hosts be and sing with us God’s glory in the New Year.

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YOU ARE THE CHRIST

PETER'S SLICK CONFESSON

by V. Rev Fr. Michael Daniel Findikyan

“**W**ho do you say that I am?” Jesus asked his disciples one day as they were trekking through some towns in first-century northern Palestine. When his eager disciple Simon Peter stepped up and replied, “You are the Christ,” Jesus heaped praise on him, blessing him and declaring that Peter was the “rock” on which the church would be founded.

Strange. Why was Jesus so impressed just because his most faithful follower and close friend knew his name?

We read our Savior’s name hundreds of times in the New Testament, and we pronounce it constantly in our liturgies and prayers. We quite naturally assume that “Jesus Christ” is just like the name of any other person—Hagop Hagopian, Marie Antoinette or Donald Trump. Actually, when Peter the Apostle identified Jesus as “the Christ,” he was not designating him as “Mr. Christ.” Christ is not Jesus’ last name—not, at least, the way we normally think of last names.

“Christ” is Jesus’ title. It is his occupation, appended to his given name much like certain traditional last names such as “Miller,” “Goldsmith,” Derderian (son of the priest); or the torturous surnames that Turkish officials hoisted upon many of their Armenian subjects to designate their professions and trades—Tutunjian (son of the tobacco merchant); Pidedjian (son of the baker); or Findikyan (either “son of the hazel nut merchant” or “son of the man who was short and round like a hazel nut,” depending upon which of my relatives’ onomastics you believe).

Jesus praised Peter because in identifying him as “the Christ,” the apostle had made a powerful acknowledgment of his own faith that Jesus is—as Peter continues, “the Son of the living God” [Matthew 16:16, Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20]. Bound up in the name “Christ” is the most profound, most incisive, daring and provocative theological profession of the Christian faith. It is nothing less than the heart and core of the Gospel, the Bible and the Christian faith.

Christ is the English form of the Greek word *christos*, which means, “anointed,” or coated with oil. The Greek word is the exact translation of the Hebrew word *mshiah*, from which we get the Anglicized term, “Messiah.”

For the Armenian translation of the Holy Scriptures, St. Mesrob and his colleagues chose to retain the Greek word *pphuunnu* [kreesdos], rather than to employ the otherwise perfectly suitable Armenian word *odzyal* [odzyal], which also means literally, “anointed.” It seems that by the early to mid-fifth century, Christian Armenians were already accustomed to associating Jesus’ name with its epithet in the

original Greek. In early and medieval theological writings, Armenian *vartabeds* will occasionally use the word *odzyal* [odzyal], and rarely the Armenized Hebrew word *utshu* [mesia], to refer to Jesus. But overall their preference is clearly for *pphuunnu* [kreesdos].

When the Apostle Peter identified Jesus as “the Christ,” he acknowledged him to be the Messiah, the heaven-sent savior long anticipated by the prophets, who would restore their kingdom and confer upon them God’s eternal protection.

At this point, the thoughtful believer will ask how and why the Jewish people would conceive of their prospective redeemer as one who has been slathered in oil? And furthermore, why did Christians adopt this odd designation? To be sure, “anointing” is a somewhat archaic or poetic way of expressing the idea of ordaining or deputizing someone to act on one’s behalf. So in this sense, the Messiah or the Christ is the one anointed or authorized by God to do God’s work. But this does not resolve the problem. What is the connection between God’s ordained delegate and ointment or oil?



The thoughtful believer may be surprised to learn that for our medieval ancestors the connection between God and oil was perfectly obvious and entirely logical. As is so often the case, we children of modernity who struggle to find relevance in the Bible and the Liturgy, and to believe in Jesus the Christ, are at a distinct disadvantage compared to previous generations. While rearing us in the marvels of deep space science, quantum reality, digital technology, medicine and wireless media, our modern western education has blinded us to other spheres of reality and learning, leaving us in many ways intellectually impoverished and spiritually crippled.

And so we need to pause to contemplate the wonder that is *oil*.

To all human beings, in all times, places, and societies, oil is a substance of immense practical and economic value.

Water of course is the most essential element because without it there can be no life. One can refrain from eating for days or even weeks and still survive. Deprived of water, by contrast, a person dies in a matter of hours.

Yet after water, oil is the most precious element. Oils of various types are found throughout nature: in plants, in animals, in fish, in the ground. Even human beings secrete oil. The chemical composition of oil lends it a plethora of powerful physical properties that so intrigued ancient and prehistoric human beings, that they instinctively consigned oil to the realm of

the mysterious and transcendent. In other words, they associated oil with the *Diety* or *Dieties*, however a given society may have understood that notion.

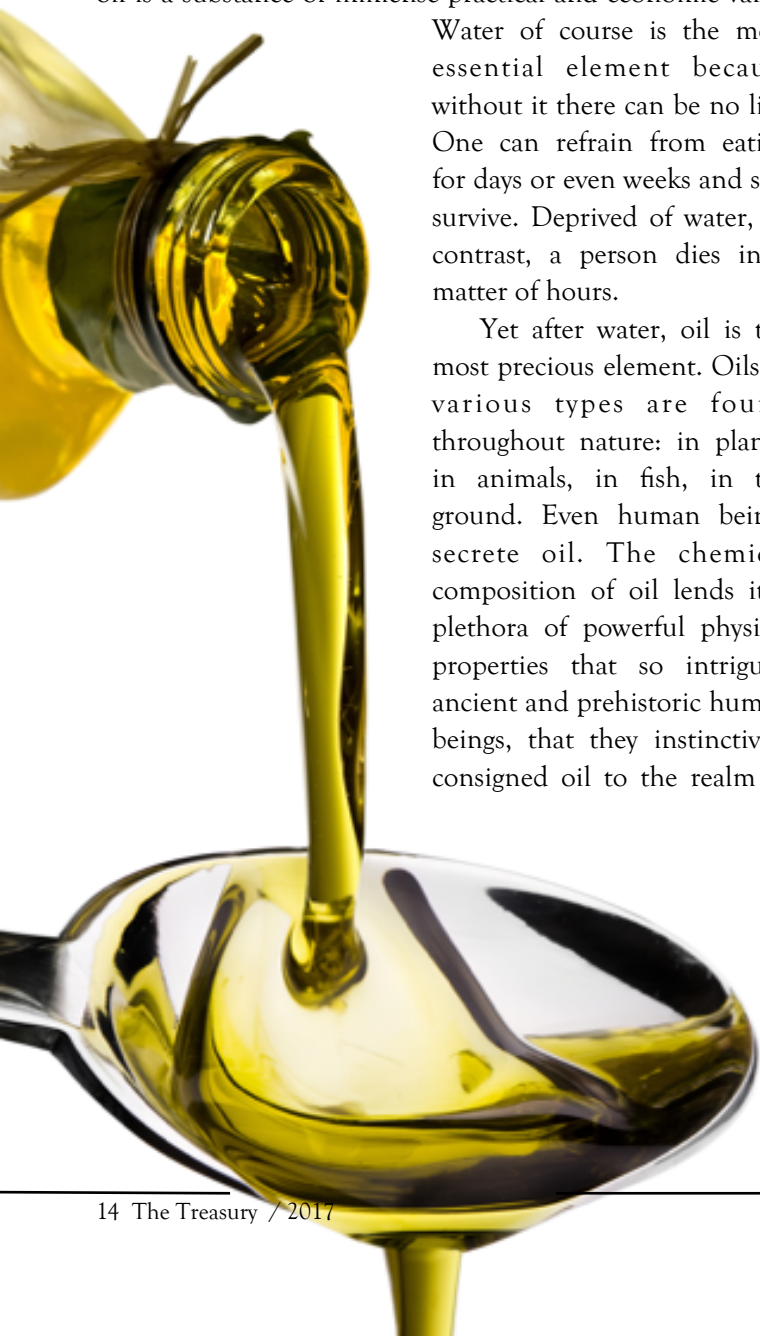
Oil is one of the most calorie-rich foods on earth. A very small amount satisfies hunger pangs and provides excellent nourishment that translates into energy and well-being.

Oil is a source of energy and light. Easily ignited, it produces fire, which is yet another mythical force here on planet Earth. Until about a hundred years ago, and until today in many parts of the world, the only way to produce light after sunset is by means of fire. Until a century ago, “fire” and “light” were synonymous. So if oil can generate fire, the ancients understood, then it is the source of light and of heat. It is related to the sun, which itself was considered a god in Armenia and other ancient cultures. When the earliest Christian Armenians heard about the first Pentecost, when God’s Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles in “tongues as of fire” [Acts 2:3], this was for them no cryptic symbol. It was for the ancients the most natural thing in the world. How else would the creator of the universe radiate his awesome power on Earth?

Oil is hydrophobic. It repels water. Water is the necessary ingredient of all life, including pathogenic life: germs, bacteria, viruses, molds and other nasty little vermin. This is why we anoint open wounds with ointments and salves after we have washed them out. Repelling water, these oily substances also keep out germs and prevent infection, thus facilitating healing. Simply put, oil equals healing.

Oil preserves. As it repels water-born microbes, oil prevents decay and rot. Fresh foods and even meat packed tightly in oil or fat will remain fresh and edible even after months without refrigeration. The ancient Egyptians and others embalmed dead bodies with oil and other substances, having recognized that after years of entombment, corpses treated in this way did not decompose. Oil, in other words, is an agent of imperishability and incorruption, concepts that the Bible uses to describe the new and everlasting life granted by God.

Oil is slippery. In the days before stealth bombers and laser-guided missiles, when hand-to-hand combat was the rule, soldiers readied themselves for battle by coating their bodies with oil to prevent the enemy from grabbing hold of them. Olympic wrestlers did the same thing for the same effect. Before the bell rings to start a boxing match, the ref pats down the competitors to make sure that they, in violation of the rules, have not earned an unfair advantage



by greasing their bodies to deflect their rival's blows. Think like the ancients: oil repels the assaults of the enemy.

Oil softens. We apply oily lotions and creams to our dried hands to soften them, to make them pliable, tender, gentle to the touch and pleasing to the eye. Soft, lubricated skin seals in the water that our bodies need to survive, and is less prone to damage, nicks and cuts. No one wants to clasp a sandpaper-like, crusty hand.

Many oils are aromatic, in both the chemical and olfactory senses. The sweet fragrance of flowers, fruits, incense and other products of nature come from essential oils that stimulate the human sense of smell. These oils are extracted for use in perfumes and other products since it is well known how powerful the sense of smell is in arousing long-forgotten memories and evoking intense emotions.

One does not need to have a degree in bio-, geo-, or any other kind of chemistry to recognize the extraordinary versatility of oil. In fact, those of us who hold such degrees may be able to describe elegantly the complex, physical, inner dynamics of oleaginous substances using sophisticated mathematical symbols and equations, but we tend to shy away from acknowledging the similarity of these qualities and inner workings with the numinous attributes normally associated with "god."

Neither does one need to conquer thick books of obscure theology to understand why the people of the Old Testament came to refer to their divine redeemer as the "anointed One." The one sent by God for the salvation of the people of Israel was one who exhibited divine power, the types of traits that ancient people universally perceived in oil. The Messiah was indeed the only one who shared and employed the divine properties of God: feeding, sustaining, healing, enlightening, protecting, defending, preserving, and inspiring intense emotions.

When Peter declared Jesus to be "the Christ," he made a bold confession of faith: that this rabbi from Nazareth was the long-awaited divine Savior. This unassuming itinerant preacher and healer was the One who was fully vested by the Creator of the universe, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the heavenly Father, to reconcile wayward, mortal humanity with eternal God. Jesus was the Son of God, God's delegate, the "anointed" plenipotentiary ambassador of God's healing, who bears within himself the full power and essence of God the Father. When Jesus speaks, God is speaking. When Jesus acts, God is acting. "He who has seen me has seen the Father," Jesus starkly asserts [John 14:9].



No wonder Jesus blessed Peter and erected the church upon his faithful profession.

So Jesus is indeed "the Christ." But so are we! All those who sincerely make Peter's confession and pledge to live their lives accordingly become "Christians." From the perspective of the Armenian Church, a Christian is neither merely a follower of Jesus, nor one who endorses Jesus' teachings and lifestyle; least of all simply an adherent of "the Christian religion." A Christian is one who has been washed and *anointed* with the holy oil of baptism, the sacrament that the Armenians originally referred to as "making a Christian." Indeed, one of the prayers of the Armenian liturgy of baptism asks that the Lord "Fill this servant with your heavenly gifts, and fill *him/her* with the joy of being named a Christian, the most excellent calling." How else to visualize God's invisible "heavenly gifts" but by *anointing* the candidate for baptism with oil, which is an essential ritual in the sacrament of baptism of all ancient churches, East and West.

When one is baptized and anointed with the holy oil, poured down into the priest's hand from the dove-shaped vessel, we follow the precedent of Jesus' own baptism, when the Holy Spirit "anointed" Jesus with heavenly gifts that descended upon him in the mysterious form of a dove. Our prayer is that through the oil, the one being baptized may be a true "Christian," indeed, a true *Christ*, a beneficiary of every miraculous, divine quality of God—holiness, love, joy, life—that Jesus the Christ possessed intrinsically.

"You are the Christ," Peter said to Jesus.

"You too are Christ," God says to his baptized, anointed child, who has been sealed with God's "divine sanctifying power," and with God's very own self.

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CATHOLICOS HOVHANNES II GABEGHIAN (R. 557-574)

ON THE BIRTH AND BAPTISM (EPIPHANY) OF CHRIST

by Dr. Roberta Ervine



Introduction

When Catholicos Hovhannes II Gabeghian wrote his homily on the Nativity and Epiphany of Christ sometime in the second half of the sixth century, he was concerned that Armenians might be forgetting why they have always celebrated Jesus' birth and baptism on the same day. After

all, other Christian churches had already changed their festal calendars, separating the two feasts from one another. In other words, the Catholicos feared that other Christians had already forgotten the ancient meaning expressed in birth and baptism – the primal Christian understanding of how we become who we are, as that mystery is revealed to us in these conjointly celebrated events.

Like us, Catholicos Hovhannes says, Christ was twice-born.

Like us, he came forth into the world from the narrow confines of his mother's womb.

Like us, if we allow ourselves to grow in grace, the mature Jesus was born a second time into the fullness of ministry when at His baptism by John he revealed himself to the world as the unique expression of God's saving love for all of creation.

By following the sweet and meaningful ritual of baptism, Jesus declared to all around him that just as God once came to deliver His people Israel from slavery to the Egyptians by leading them through the waters of the Red Sea, so now he had come again to deliver them from slavery to the short-sightedness, ill will and deadly limitations of the world at large by leading them through the water of baptism.

At the Nativity, heavenly angels declared to human shepherds that divine peace and good will had come to humanity from God, in the person of Jesus. At the baptism of Christ, God the Father Himself declared that Jesus was indeed the vehicle of that divine good will, and human beings should *hear him*. Juxtaposing these two heavenly affirmations, the combined feast of Nativity and Epiphany reminds us that both Christ's birth and His baptism point

to realities far greater than the mere historical facts of their occurrence.

Because God has declared His peace and good will towards humanity, because he has declared himself well pleased with Christ His Son, the first two births of Christ and of human beings also imply a third. God has ordained that through Christ, not only will humans be born into the world and revealed for who they are through baptism, but there will also be a birth *from the soil*, as Catholicos Hovhannes describes it; a birth that carries us beyond our native element, the dust from which we were originally made.

This third birth is our birth from death. It is an emergence from the narrow, earthen confines of the grave – an emergence from the waters of death in baptismal liberation from the limitations of sin and suffering and fear. Christ Himself demonstrated this third birth by His own death, burial and resurrection, and in demonstrating it He instituted and affirmed it for humanity as a whole.

All three of our births, Catholicos Hovhannes says, are made possible, joyful and fruitful for us by the fact that Christ had already experienced a fourth birth before his advent in this world. That fourth, divine birth we as humans do not share: we are creatures of time, and thus our births take place within its constraints. The fourth birth of

Christ, God's eternal, unfailing Word, was outside of time. It is not subject to time's limitations or sequentiality. *Born of the Father before all ages*, as the creed affirms, God's eternally creative and living Word is without end and without beginning. The divine humanity of Christ the Word was beyond the constraints of time, and is thus able to carry us beyond those constraints as well.

In his conclusion to this homily, Catholicos Hovhannes clearly hopes that Armenians will continue to distinguish themselves from other Christians by their devotion to the deeper meanings of their ritual calendar, specifically the combined celebration of Nativity and Epiphany. However, Catholicos Hovhannes also takes the opportunity to remind his hearers that every Divine Liturgy is both nativity and epiphany; every Eucharist celebrates the coming of Christ, the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness in the human world, the revelation and unfolding of His liberating grace, and the promise of the third birth into the fullness of God's kingdom. Whether or not we celebrate Christ's Nativity and Epiphany at Baptism on one and the same day every year, we celebrate them together whenever we gather for the Divine Liturgy. Like the feast of Nativity and Epiphany, every Eucharist marks the springtime of new life, and in that celebration we affirm both His and our third birth from death into Life.

“ON THE NATIVITY AND BAPTISM (EPIPHANY) OF CHRIST”

BY CATHOLICOS HOVHANNES II GABEGHIAN

The coming of the spring season reminds us of the beginning of the world's existence.

The great prophet Moses also said to the Hebrew people, *This month of Nisan, in the spring, will be for you the beginning of months*, [Ex 12:2] when that God-worshiping nation every year would bring to mind and celebrate the memory of the miracles that took place as they made their exodus from bitter servitude to freedom, walking on foot across the bottom of the Red Sea to reach the promised land that God had earlier gifted them.

Springtime also signifies the mystical, true creation of the world through the coming of the Lord, who restored the outworn and corrupted nature of this sublunary world to true freedom, brought back humanity from servitude,

and made us from pagans into Christians, true worshipers of God. He applied the aforesaid verse to us, saying as it were, *This feast will be for you the beginning of all feasts, O Christians!*

This is the first among all the feasts of the holy Church. In it the restoration of the entire world came to be – something even more sublime than the world's having come into being from nothing!

It is the first among the feasts. So at the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness [Mal 4:2] in the Nativity, all the spiritual ranks of angels played their respective parts – something the angelic servants of God's altar also do on a daily basis. We do this not for the sake of a temporal promised land, but for the kingdom of heaven and its

eternal promises. We do it not through the leadership of Moses, one of our fellow-servants, but through the true Lawgiver, Christ, who was the Lord and God of Moses and of all creatures. Christ took upon Him the form of a servant [Phil 2:7] by His own will for our salvation, in order to bring us close to Himself. Becoming a member of our tribe through our flesh which He mixed and joined with the fullness of His divinity, He granted us eternal life. Yet He remained unchangeable in His Godhead.

If anyone wants to dig deeper into the dual name of this feast on which such great wonders took place, he should understand the unfailing word; it is the two births of the one, only-begotten Son of God —the first is His birth from the holy virgin Theotokos, and the second took place on the very same day thirty years thereafter, when He was made known to the world through His baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. The Father testified, *This is my beloved Son, with whom I am pleased* [Matt 3:17;17:5], and the witnessing Holy Spirit on that same day came down from heaven in the likeness of a dove and rested upon Him, revealing Him as the world's Savior. As it had happened at His birth, so also did it occur at His baptism. That is why this day is called *Epiphany and Nativity*.

The explanation for the latter name is that God the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [John 1:14] who believe.

The explanation for the former name is that through the testimony of the Father and the Holy Spirit, Christ's identity was revealed to humanity. After those truthful testimonies, the Baptist was bold enough to shout aloud saying, *Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!* [John 1:29].

Let me say it more plainly. The foundation and root of the holy Church's entire structure and of all God-worshiping Christians is this feast, the *firstborn of all feasts* for people who believe in Christ the Savior [1 Cor 15:20-29 + Eph 1:17-20]. Filled with all holiness, spiritual blessings and heavenly joy we shall honor it as the starting point of our salvation.

Because there is a double reason for this feast — the fact that both wondrous births, the one with our flesh by the holy Virgin and the one by baptism in the spiritual font of the Jordan, have come together in one unity on this day — our joy is multiplied, our happiness is multiplied.

First because He took the flesh of our human nature and joined it in a new, unique mixture with His indescribable Godhead, and second because the Father's





voice from heaven did not distinguish His humanity from His divinity but rather called the union of Godhead and humanity in flesh *My Beloved Son, with whom I am pleased* and commanded us to *hear Him* and obey Him.

We honor with the greatest and most exceeding joy, this day on which our nature was itself honored by being taken from us and united with the true Divinity, and a daughter of our own race, was called — and truly was — the Theotokos, the bearer of God's Son, whom a myriad hosts of angels stand to serve.

Those same angels proclaimed the reason for this feast and taught it to human beings, saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill to human beings* [Lk 2:14]. After that declaration, as it says, the creation waited expectantly for the revelation of the Son of God [Rom 8:19] to dispel and throw off from it the weight of the curse that had been laid on it because of humanity's transgressions.

We should also hear what the Evangelist affirmed about how the Word's birth took place: it was indeed *the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us* [John 1:14]. As if speaking in the persona of His Only-Begotten Son, the Father Himself spoke through the mouth of the prophet David, quoting the Word as saying, *The Lord said to me, 'You are my son, and I have begotten you today'* [Ps 2:7]. Since He willingly took upon Himself the form of a servant [Phil 2:7], He does not hesitate to address His Father by nature as "Lord". The prophet follows this with the words *You are my son*, affirming that the first birth of Christ the Word had taken place before all eternity.

It is possible for a human being to have only three births, as we learn from Scripture: first, we are born naturally, from another human being. Second — and much better and more divine than the first — we are born of water and the Holy Spirit [John 3:5], without which it is impossible to be classed as one adopted by God, or to see the heavenly Kingdom, because without it one cannot become worthy of the forgiveness of sin. Nicodemus, with his ponderous mind, had doubts about this, saying it was impossible for an old man to enter again into his mother's womb and be born again, and Christ the Savior reproved Him as an ignorant teacher of Israel [John 3:10].

Regarding this second birth through baptism, we have been taught by the Teacher of all and the Wisdom of God [1 Cor 1:24] that it is possible for our *old man*, ruined by the desire for sin, to enter into the spiritual *womb* of the font's holy water [Rom 6:3-10], and to come out again as a *new man* [2 Cor 5:17], through faith, completely without sin,



having put on the power of God [Lk 24:49] that is complete holiness [2 Cor 7:1].

The third birth is the future restoration of all humanity from the soil. The prophet Isaiah marveled at this, saying, *Who has heard, or who had seen that the earth should give birth to a whole race on a single day!* [Is 66:8] According to the teaching and instruction of the Word, this is a different kind of birth; it is a birth of faith. As the blessed Paul said to the Corinthians, *You have been born through the gospel into Christ Jesus* [1 Cor 4:15]. He also speaks of *My son Onesimus, to whom I have given birth in my imprisonment* [Philemon 10]. Onesimus was not Paul's physical son, but his son in faith and baptism.

These are the three varieties of human birth.

However, as I have already implied, Christ had four births. He experienced His birth from the Holy Virgin as Son of Abraham and Son of David and His birth through baptism in the Jordan by his forerunner John both on the same day, one exactly thirty years after the other. There was also His resurrection from the dead, *on the third day* [Lk 18:33/ Hos 6:2].

These three births of our Savior Christ took place in the latter times of this world.

However, there was also a fourth birth of His that took place before all eternities. It is indescribable and cannot be told! This was His birth from the Father alone, *God from God, Light from Light* as the Creed declares.

Although all His births were divine and indescribable, that one was all the more miraculous and impossible to relate. It is completely beyond human understanding, because we cannot grasp what is beyond time. For as long as the Father has been known, the Son has been with Him. The One is not greater than the Other in honor, nor in seniority. They are distinguished one from the other by the

fact that one is Begotten and the other is Begetter; yet they are both from the same Being.

Today at the Jordan, all these births were revealed to the world. This is why we honor this feast with such exceeding great happiness.

Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, adept in the arts of rhetoric and filled with the Holy Spirit, refuted all heresies from Simon Magus until his own time and rebutted their unrighteous councils. He confirmed the feasts and readings and psalms set up by the holy apostles; he ascertained and set in order appropriate commemorations for the prophets, apostles and martyrs. He affirmed Epiphany at the head of the feasts, as the holy apostles had ordered it. He did not say that the Nativity should precede Epiphany, but rather that they were one and the same. December 25, the day when they celebrate the Nativity in other locations, Cyril allocated as the commemoration of the prophet David.

Maintaining this ancient custom, the holy fathers who convened at Nicaea as well as the blessed saint Gregory the Illuminator and the holy Catholicos Aristakēs did not ordain two separate feasts for the Nativity and the Epiphany, but one single feast. The spiritual *vardapets* and translators who studied in Alexandria and other famous cities followed their example. They did not institute anything novel in this regard, nor did they receive or pass along to us anything different from this ancient tradition.

Thus we stand firm on the foundation of the holy apostles and blessed fathers, who carried out these celebrations on one and the same day. We celebrate the day of the sacred Epiphany in honor of the Holy Trinity, all of whose Persons were present at that baptismal event, and we do not separate into two the Word born of the Virgin, Who was also born today in the Jordan.

This translation was made on the basis of the Armenian text printed in *Matenagirk' Hayots'* 3, 453-455. The translator has adapted the translation to the ears of English speakers by changing certain transitions and supplying words that in the Armenian are understood by implication.

Translated by **Roberta Ervine, PhD**, is Professor of Armenian Christian Studies at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

FINDING THE EXTRAORDINARY IN THE ORDINARY

THE FAITH OF THE MAGI

by Dn. Eric Vozzy



The story of the birth of Christ is replete with a familiar cast of characters – the shepherds in the field, the angels who announce the birth of Christ, King Herod, Joseph and Mary, and then there are the Magi, the Wise Men from the East. Who are these three mysterious individuals and what is their role in this narrative? It is interesting that among the very few people that were invited to the event of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, it included three Gentiles, not from Palestine, but from Persia.

Astrologers and scholars of their time, the Magi anticipated the Messiah of Israel, but as non-Jews why was it important to them? The book of Numbers in the Old Testament gives us insight into their motive through the story of the non-Israelite prophet, Balaam, a predecessor of the Magi. In one of his recorded prophecies, Balaam prophesied about a coming king from Israel. He prophesied that this king “Shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted”(Numbers 24:7). Balaam further prophesied about the coming king saying,

I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not nigh:
a star shall come forth out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.

From the day Balaam’s oracle was uttered, the Magi were devotedly searching for that star under which a deified king would be born. They discovered the fulfillment of this ancient prophecy when they viewed from afar the star that hung in the sky over Bethlehem the night Christ was born. And so the Magi journeyed from the East to seek out the

King. As royal and wealthy members of the elite, we are not sure what the Magi expected to find, but when they found their king, what they saw might have puzzled them.

The Magi didn’t find a palace prepared for a king, but a den fit for animals. They didn’t find Jesus clothed in colors of royalty, but in swaddling cloths fit for burial. Perhaps the paradox of the situation is what compelled them to worship as their eyes were open to the glory that beheld them – the God of the Universe, the One whom heaven and earth cannot contain, born in a cave as a human infant and lying in a trough. We can only imagine the wonder of the Magi after centuries of anticipation.

Curiously, the Magi did not turn around and go home when arriving upon such ordinary circumstances. They were not offended or scandalized by what their eyes saw outwardly. Instead, they worshipped and brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, not for an earthly king, but for God, the eternal King. Mentioning these gifts, Catholicos Zakaria I (855-877) in one of his homilies says, “Opening their treasures they offered incense, as a sign of His being God, gold, as to a king, and myrrh, as for one who would die for the salvation of the world.”

These three wise men from the East demonstrated a depth of faith that we are still called to follow today. They didn’t just possess sporadic devotion, but were consumed with seeking the King. They made a pilgrimage over treacherous landscape, ignoring every perceived danger and obstacle for a higher end, the ultimate End. Who they encountered was not just a king, but the King of Kings, and it is Him to whom we, like the Magi, bow down and offer the gift of our lives, the very gift He first granted us.

Like the Magi, may our hearts be open to find God in the most unexpected of places, to find the extraordinary in the ordinary, to see God everywhere present. Blessed is the revelation of Christ!

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