

Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Lesson 3

A Community of Disciples: The Circles of the Cross

heart to Heart

Christ has not called you to believe all on your own...

Here I Am, Lord, p. 51



Verse Master

"To those who would come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Matthew 16:24



The Cross of Circles

In 2000, the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) adapted a wonderful resource called "The Circles of the Cross" to guide its programs. These circles were also part of the mission statement of the entire Diocese.

WORSHIP.... refers to our relationship with God through liturgy, prayer, and sacramental life. That's where we actually experience and get to know God. The Divine Liturgy and the sacraments of the Armenian Church provide basic spiritual nourishment, but they must become a meaningful personal experience,

and not simply a formal ritual. Christ said, "*This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.*" (Luke 22:19)

What do you feel when you're in church? Happy? Bored? Explain. 8th graders in church

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

WITNESS.... is the living and sharing of our Christian faith and experience with others, by sharing and living the "Good News" of our Lord. Witness is the logical extension of worship. If we are united with God, we will reflect him in our daily life.

In the same way that Christ constantly pointed to the Father, we, too, must point to him, and witness to our faith through our example and our daily lifestyle. When the disciples were preparing to replace Judas with a new disciple they knew that his *witness* would be important: "*It is necessary to choose someone who has been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was among us....one of these must become a witness with us.*"

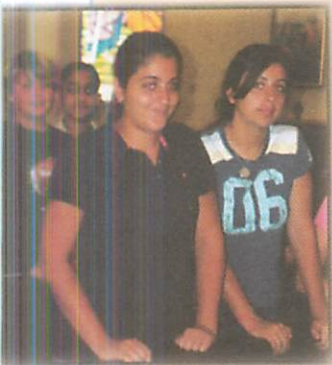
Acts 1:21-22

Are you comfortable talking about God?

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

EDUCATION.... is important to our spiritual growth. We need to learn who God is, how he is at the center of all life, and how that changes our lives. Though



Remember

The Christian faith calls us to discipleship through community which is founded in worship, service, witness, education, and fellowship.



we may be brought up in the Church, we cannot understand the importance of that experience without a sound program of religious education.

As for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.” (II Timothy 3:14-15)

Aside from Sunday School, when and where else do you talk about God?

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



SERVICE.... the emphasis is on sharing one’s “gifts.” Christ came not to be served, but to serve, and he urges us to do the same. Christians may use their respective “gifts” to be kind and merciful as Christ was when he walked among the sick, the poor and the downtrodden and extended his holy hand to them.

“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’”

(Matthew 25:37-40)

What are some qualities and talents you have that you can use to serve others?

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

FELLOWSHIP.... refers to the way in which Armenian Christians gather in parish life and remain conscious that they are people of God - in constant fellowship with each other and the Holy Spirit.

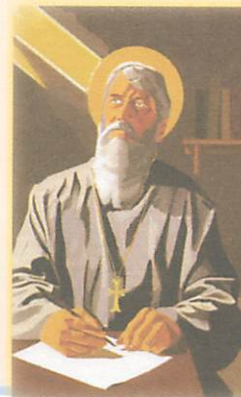


[The early community of believers] “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe...”
(Acts 2: 42-43)

What are some of the things that make you happy about being part of a church family?

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Scenic Overlook

St. Nersess the Great was an early example of a zealous do-gooder in the Armenian Church. The father of St. Sahag of alphabet fame, St. Nersess was elected Catholicos in 353 at a difficult time in Armenian history. He built hospitals, schools, and travelers’ hostels among other public works.

