

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 11

Dunked!

heart to Heart

Heavenly Father, you called me closer to you in the holiness and enlightenment of baptism. Make me always worthy of this grace. With the power of the Holy Spirit, continue to renew me daily into a new life in you. Help me always remember that at my baptism I was adopted as your child, to be a joint-heir with Christ Jesus and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Adapted from the baptismal prayer of the Armenian baptismal service

How does thinking of yourself as the “temple of the Holy Spirit” change how you think or act?

In one baptism with repentance for the remission and forgiveness of sins;

Ee mee mugurdootyoon, habashkharootyoon, ee kavootyoon yev ee toghootyoon meghats.

Ի մի մկրտութիւն, յապաշխարութիւն, ի քաւութիւն եւ ի թողութիւն մեղաց:



A Backward Glance

1. When the baby is immersed three times in the water of the baptismal font, he or she is sharing in the
 - a. agony of Jesus in Gethsemane
 - b. Jesus' transfiguration in the presence of Peter, James, and John
 - c. Jesus' death and resurrection
 - d. the first three days of Creation
2. The church consists of all the living believers as well as all who have passed away. These groups are referred to respectively as the Church...
 - a. militant and triumphant
 - b. now and forgotten
 - c. prophetic and patriarchal
 - d. present and past
3. The statement in the Creed that the Holy Spirit “came down upon the Jordan” refers to
 - a. the Spirit's appearance at King Dtrd's baptism
 - b. the Spirit's appearance at Jesus' baptism
 - c. the Spirit's presence at Pentecost
 - d. the Spirit's presence as Joshua led the Jews across the Jordan.
4. The four essential features of the Christian Church:
_____, _____, _____, and _____.
5. St. Paul's image of “living stones” refers to
 - a. the twelve disciples
 - b. all Christians
 - c. the bread and wine of communion
 - d. the canonized saints

Verse Master

“No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

John 3: 5





Scenic Overlook

In the earliest days, baptisms took place in lakes and rivers. The River Jordan, where Jesus was baptized, has become a place of pilgrimage where people continue to immerse themselves.



Dunked! Baptism Does A Lot... But Not Everything

Think of a lamp on a bed stand (remember the one Jesus taught about in the Beatitudes?). If it's not plugged in, there is NO way it can ever be a source of light, right? Now think about the baptismal service - of course you won't remember your own but just picture the baby immersed in the font of blessed water, then anointed with holy oil, then taken to the altar for holy communion and then...a party. A celebration that now this child is a fully participating member of the Armenian Church.

So, the "lamp is plugged in." But was the light turned on? Not really. That part is up to you. So with care and attention to what it means to now be a child of God, you are given the rest of your life to learn how you can let the light of Christ shine through you. There are important symbols of the baptismal service...



Water

The baptismal font filled with water recalls so many things: the River Jordan, the life-giving oceans, the water in which the unborn baby floats before being born. Water itself is a paradox. It is a symbol of life. Most of our bodies consist of water; and all living things need water to survive. And yet it also evokes death, since if we were

to be immersed in water too long, we would drown. Floods destroy life, as the Great Flood did. When the baby is immersed in water three times, we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus (remember Lesson Six?), uniting both extremes of water's effect.

The water is blessed in a special act of consecration.

Holy Oil

The water is anointed with holy oil or muron. Oil is another important religious symbol. Think of all the uses we put oil to: it's used as a medicinal balm, to cook food, and to light homes. Oil is a symbol of reconciliation (think of the olive branch; the dove Noah sent out returned with one as a sign of the reconciliation of creation). In fact, in the Armenian Church, oil is poured out of a dove-shaped vessel and during the anointing of the water with muron, the priest sings *Arakeloh Aghavnoh* (*the Dove that was sent*), recalling the descent of the Holy Spirit over Jesus when he was being baptized.



The baby is anointed with the same oil in nine places - the forehead, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, heart, back and feet. We pray that with the power of the Holy Spirit, what we see, do, say, and think will all be conformed to God's glory.



Remember

We are baptized to be freed from original sin and become participating members of the Church.



White Clothes

Dressing the newly baptized child in white is a symbol of spiritual purity and the righteous life we have now been empowered to seek.

The Narod

The traditional red and white braid is often used as a necklace for the baptismal cross now placed around the

child's neck. These colors symbolize sacrifice and purity and recall the blood and water which poured out of the side of Christ. The same type of braid, interwoven with a third green strand as a symbol of life and fertility, is traditionally used as the wedding crown in the Armenian marriage service. (Some people save their baptismal narod and use it in their marriage ceremony!)



Holy Communion

Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, which has separated the rite of initiation into three – baptism, confirmation and first communion – in the Armenian service, the newly-baptized baby is a fully participating member of the Church with the last gesture of the baptismal service – when the baby is taken up to the altar by the priest and given Holy Communion. Having first died and been reborn in Jesus at the baptismal font, the baby now receives Christ. He or she is fully a member of the church and beginning a very personal journey of awakening to his or her new life in Christ.

