

# This is What We Believe

Dear Lord, the whole Bible was given to us by your inspiration and is useful to teach us what is true and make us realize what is wrong with our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is your way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone. Open our hearts when we hear your Word at liturgy, Amen.

(based on 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

## words, words.....The Word

During the Synaxis, we say and hear many words...

*Orhnya Der* Bless, father.... **Օրհնէա Տէր**  
*Der voghormya* Lord have mercy **Տէր ողորմէա**  
*Soorp Asdvadz* Holy God **Սուրբ Աստուած**  
*Havadamk* We believe... **Հաւատամք**

But when we get to the Scriptures, we are hearing something very special, in fact, the entire focus of this part of our Sunday worship, namely, the Word of God. At every liturgy, Scripture is read from the Old Testament (although the Old Testament readings are sometimes omitted), the New Testament (the epistles, Acts), and – also of course from the New Testament but in a very special category – the Gospels.

These readings are based on the Lectionary of the Armenian Church, which is a book that lists the Bible passages which the Church has selected and ordered to be read daily during church throughout the year. The Armenian lectionary has its roots in reading cycles that developed as early as the 4th century in Jerusalem.

For the faithful, these readings are often included in Diocesan calendars. In your diocesan calendar, look up the reading that is indicated on your birthday.

Write it here \_\_\_\_\_. What is it about? \_\_\_\_\_

Find the readings for today's Divine Liturgy:

Old Testament: \_\_\_\_\_ What is it about? \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament: \_\_\_\_\_ What is it about? \_\_\_\_\_

Epistle: \_\_\_\_\_ What is it about? \_\_\_\_\_

## So Far...

1. \_\_\_\_\_



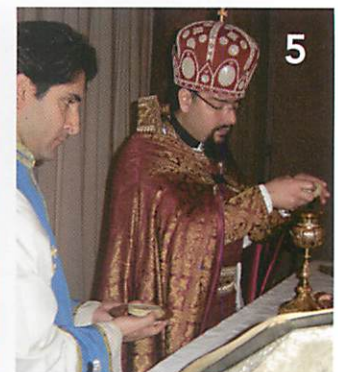
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_



8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_



10. \_\_\_\_\_



11. \_\_\_\_\_

12. \_\_\_\_\_



### ? What Do I Do...

**When they start passing the Kiss of Peace. Help!**  
This beautiful, biblically inspired gesture of peace is common in most Christian churches. In some, people actually shake hands or hug those at either side and in front and back of them in the pews. For our more ritualized greeting, place your hand over your heart, turn to the person greeting you, bow towards their right shoulder and then their left, and as you do, respond by saying: "Orhnyal eh haydnootyoonun Krisdosee" **Օրհնէալ է յայտնութիւնն Բրիստոսի** or "Blessed is the revelation of Christ."

Then turn to the person on your right, bow towards their right shoulder and then their left and as you do, give the greeting: "Krisdos ee mech mer haydnetzav" **Բրիստոս ի մէջ մեր յայտնեցաւ** or, in English, "Christ is revealed among us."



### The Armenian Angle

The Armenian Church continues to recite the "anathema" after the Creed as a reminder that specific issues divided believers in the early centuries and needed to be rectified and agreed upon (through prayer and the hard work of the Ecumenical Councils). Even today, all the faithful need to worship out of the convictions held to be forever true by the one Holy Church.

### We Believe!

In the early centuries of Christianity, men and women would publicly confess their belief before being baptized. But as the event of Christ's death and resurrection began to be interpreted differently and sometimes incorrectly by some, it became necessary to have a complete and thorough statement of faith.

So the brief, simple confessions (the most famous one being the Apostles' Creed) were eventually replaced with the beautiful "Nicene" Creed, so called because it was formulated at the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 (although finalized at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381). This creed responded to all the controversies that had developed about the divinity of Jesus Christ, about his mother Mary, and other issues.

By exclaiming it together, in one voice, with hands positioned palms together, right thumb over left as a symbol of unity, we announce our complete trust and faith in the teachings of the Holy Church. And since we recite the Creed immediately after the Scripture is read, we are also aware of its foundation and source in Holy Scripture.

The earliest evidence that the Nicene Creed was part of the Divine Liturgy comes from the 8th century (although it may have entered the Liturgy earlier), making it a statement of faith for Christians to repeat every time they gathered to participate in the Eucharist. In a society in which most common people were illiterate, repetition and recitation were powerful learning tools; the regular recitation of the Creed and the hearing of the Scriptures strengthened faith.



### Dictionary Definitions

**Creed:** From the Latin verb "to believe" (credo), a creed is a formal statement of faith or confession of belief.



### Up Close and Personal

*What are your core beliefs from the Armenian Christian faith? On that basis, what creed-like phrases could you write?*



## Who's Who

Amazingly enough, Armenia had a representative at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea! It was St. Aristakes, the younger of St. Gregory the Enlightener's two sons. Aristakes was ordained a bishop by his own father in 318 and was then sent to Nicaea where he was recorded as a representative among many other great churchmen from across the burgeoning Christian world.

## In Your Own Words

Turn to page 18 of the Divine Liturgy Book.

There are 12 statements of faith. Put them in your own words below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

## The Least You Need to Know

- ✓ The readings from the Old and New Testaments help us understand God's character and purposes.
- ✓ The Creed is a summary of our most important beliefs as Christians. We recite them together as an act of worship: many hearts and minds become one as we declare what we believe.
- ✓ The Synaxis prepares the faithful, through prayer, Scripture and Creed, to receive the greatest gift of the Liturgy, the Body and Blood of our Lord.

## QUICK QUIZ

### True or False

1. The Armenian lectionary was written in the 18th century to make sure Armenians throughout the world were reading the same Bible passages.

True

False

2. Daily Scripture readings are listed on the annual Diocesan-issued calendar.

True

False

3. A lectionary is a list of readings designed exclusively for your personal devotional use.

True

False

4. The Nicene Creed was formulated by the apostles and finalized by the Emperor Constantine.

True

False

5. I think having a creed is important/not important (circle one) because

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