

# Unit Three\* Following Jesus Leaders\* St. Gregory



## We Speak to God

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for the enlighteners of our church, St. Thaddeus, St. Bartholomew and, in particular, St. Gregory the Enlightener. Help us to be enlighteners for you, too! +Hanoon Hor yev Vortvo yev Hokvooyn Srpo. Amen.

## Let's Talk

Not all the people believed what the apostles were telling them. Why? At that time, the Armenian kings were pagans. They did not believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the people were forced to believe in what their kings believed.



Many people in Armenia had the courage to follow the teachings of the apostles. They would meet secretly to pray and worship together.

For nearly three hundred years after the arrival of Thaddeus and Bartholomew, the Armenian kings were against Christianity. One of these was King Khosrov, and later his son, King Drtad.

## Listen to This

Imagine that you are one of those early Christians in Armenia...

Your family and a few other families in your village are Christians.

*Who are you with?*

To attend church services, you have to leave your house secretly and walk quietly to a cave a distance away from your village. *What is the weather like that day? Do you feel the sun on your face? Or rain? Or?*

You meet other families along the way. You enter the cave. *Is it cool inside or hot?*

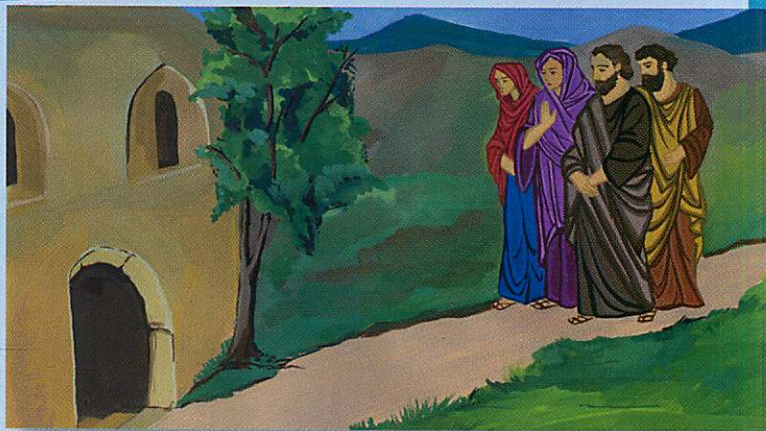
The priest has already begun the service. *What do you hear?*

You pray and sing together. You receive Holy Communion.

After the service ends, families share a little time talking with each other. *Whom do you meet after worship?*

Then you begin the walk home. *How do you feel? Are you tired? Hungry? Happy?*

On the way, you and your friend walk together. You think about what you heard and saw. You wonder why Christians have to meet in secret.



## God Speaks to Us

Saul was a man who was totally against Jesus and his followers. One day while he was walking on the road to Damascus, a bright light shone all around him. Saul fell to the ground. He heard a voice asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you so cruel to me?"

Saul asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Jesus. Why are you cruel to me? Get up and go to the city where you will be told what to do." When Saul stood up, he realized that he could not see. Someone helped him and walked with him to Damascus to a certain house.



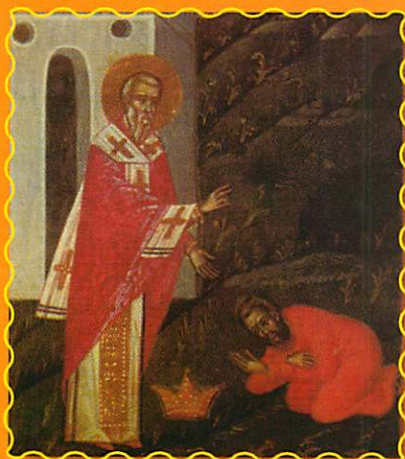
A man named Ananias lived in Damascus. He was one of Jesus' followers. Jesus said to him: "Go to Saul and help him." Ananias knew about Saul and the terrible things he had done to the Christians, but he obeyed Jesus.

"Saul, Jesus sent me to you. He wants you to see and to be filled with the Holy Spirit." Ananias put his hands on Saul. Suddenly he could see! Saul was baptized; and from that day on, Saul was called Paul. He spent the rest of his life traveling from place to place, preaching the words of Jesus.

*Acts 9:1-19*

## We Learn About God

When Jesus asked his followers if they were willing to carry on his work, they promised they would. Even people, like St. Paul, who were against Jesus at first.



When St. **Gregory** was ordered by King Drtad to worship a statue, he said, "I do not worship statues of gold, iron or stone. I am your servant, but I am first loyal to Jesus Christ." As punishment, he was placed in a pit (*khor virab*) and remained there for many years. He never stopped believing in Jesus; and when he was released from the pit, he continued to do good works in Jesus' name.

Jesus told **Ananias** to find Saul and put his hands on him so that his blindness could be cured. Annaias knew about Saul and his cruel treatment of Christians. In his heart, he wondered why Jesus was sending him to do this; but he did what Jesus asked him to do.

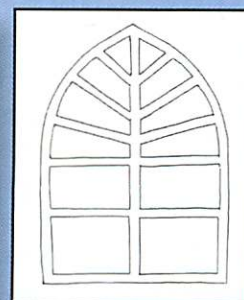


Like the apostles, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, St. Paul, St. Gregory and Ananias, you, too, will be called upon to make choices. Like the early Christians, you have to be strong in your faith, ready to

remain true to Jesus Christ.

## Hearts and Hands

Armenia, First Christian Nation



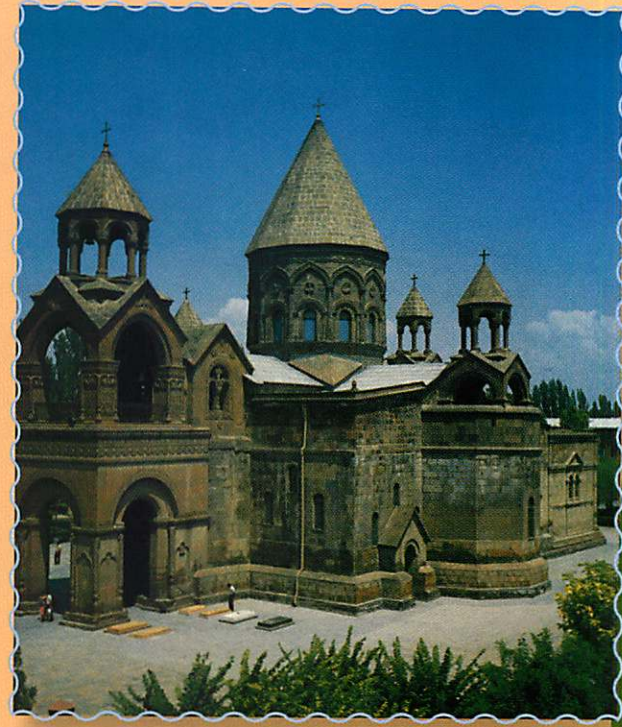
# Our Armenian Way

King Drtad became very ill. His sister, Princess Khosrovitoukht, knew that Gregory was still alive in the pit. She felt very strongly that he would be able to cure her brother. She sent for Gregory, and he cured the king. King Drtad was grateful to Gregory. He knew that it was Gregory's belief in Jesus that cured him. He asked Gregory to baptize him and his family. The king wanted Armenia to be a Christian country.

One night while Gregory was praying, he saw a vision. The heavens opened up, and a man with a radiant face spoke to him. "Gregory!" Gregory recognized the Only-Begotten Son of God (Miadzin), holding a golden hammer in his hand. Jesus struck the ground with the hammer.

When he woke up, Gregory knew that Jesus wanted him to build a church in that place. King Drtad and his family joined the people. Together they helped build the church at Holy Etchmiadzin, the place where the Only-Begotten came down.

The church was big and beautiful. Gregory was the first Catholicos, of Armenia, the first Christian nation.



## For My Family



### Sharing Our Faith

Today we learned about some of the early followers of Jesus Christ; the choices they had to make; and the difficulties they faced while remaining true to their faith. We also discussed how we are called upon to make good choices in our lives.

For nearly three hundred years after Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew went to Armenia, the nation still remained a pagan one, although there were many converts. King Khosrov was a pagan as was his son, King Drtad; both of these men played a part in the Armenian nation becoming the first to accept Christianity.

### Living Our Faith

1. Recall with your child the lives of two of the early fathers of the church.

- St. Paul.
- St. Gregory the Enlightener

2. Be strong in your faith like St. Gregory and St. Paul. Say, "I will follow you, Jesus."