

## Unit One: A Community Over Time

### Lesson 4

# Dogma, Councils, and Canon Law



### Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyrn Surpo, Amen.

God, sometimes it seems that you want so much from us, more than we know how to give. But we know that you love us and want us to love you. We know that your way is right. Through prayer and quiet times, through helping others, help us to learn the path to your eternal love.

*My Lenten Journal (Albert Keshgegian)*

## Quick Quiz

### Mark the correct answer.

#### 1. God's people become stronger Christians when they

- a  lift weights                      b  practice their faith together  
c  run a mile each day            d  argue with people of other faiths

#### 2. In church, when we receive Holy Communion we recall

- a  King David                              b  ancient Egypt  
c  Jesus' death and resurrection      d  Moses freeing the Jews

#### 3. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus says, "For where two or three are come together in my name

- a  expect a miracle                      b  beware of the devil  
c  do not eat or drink anything      d  there I am with them

#### 4. Paul traveled often to encourage

- a  the 12 tribes of Jacob    b  enslaved Jews in Egypt    c  the early church    d  the Virgin Mary

#### 5. All of the following are part of the Armenian "Book of Hours" except

- a  Etudes                              b  Nocturns                      c  Vespers                      d  Peace Hour



# Law and Order

Life is full of so many rules. At home there are rules – what time we have to come in, when we can watch TV, what chores we have to do. At school there are rules – about homework, playground behavior, and when we may talk in class. Governments have rules, too, such as the age for driving a car.

Discuss these questions as a class:

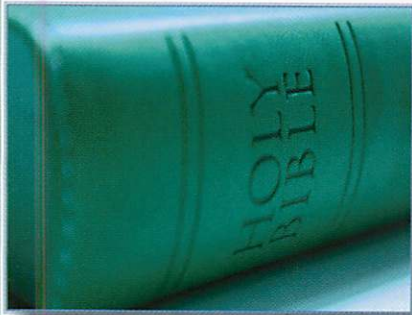
Which one of your parents' rules bothers you the most?

Which of their rules do you think is the most helpful or makes the most sense?

Do you think it's a good idea to make people pay taxes?

What would happen if nobody paid taxes to the government?

Is it important for the Christian community to have rules?



## Psalm 119

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm in the Bible. It is divided into twenty-two sections, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. What a great way for Jewish children to learn their A-B-C's!

Read Psalm 119:97-104 and answer the questions below:

1. What emotion describes what the psalmist feels for God's law? (verse 97) \_\_\_\_\_
2. God's commands make us wiser than our \_\_\_\_\_.
3. God's teachings give us more understanding than our \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The psalmist keeps his feet from every evil \_\_\_\_\_.
5. What food does the psalmist think of when he reads God's commands? \_\_\_\_\_



## The Nicene Creed Our Statement of Belief

The Church has rules and laws, too. They are born from teachings given to us by God in the Bible. The Bible is sometimes hard to understand. But we when we read it again and again, our understanding grows as does our faith!

The leaders of the early church realized that ordinary people might have trouble understanding God's word, especially since very few people could read in those times. The church fathers had to work hard to make sure they were teaching correct things to the people. They

constantly prayed, studied Scripture, and met with other believers to build a true understanding of God. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these ideas were organized into canon, or church, law.

By 325 AD, the king of Byzantium had become very worried about all the false ideas that were appearing. He organized a meeting of church leaders in the city of Nicaea, which is near Istanbul, Turkey. St. Aristakes, son of St. Gregory the Illuminator, represented the Armenian believers. This meeting, called the First Ecumenical Council, produced the statement of belief known as the Nicene Creed, or "Havadamk," which means "we believe." (It was actually completed at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople.)

We recite the Nicene Creed each week during Badarak.



## The Nicene Creed

“We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of God the Father, only-begotten, that is of the substance of the Father.

God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten and not made; of the self-same nature of the Father, by whom all things came into being in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible;

Who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate, was made man, was born perfectly of the holy virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit;

By whom he took body, soul, and mind, and everything that is in man, truly and not in semblance.

He suffered and was crucified and was buried and rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven with the same body and sat at the right hand of the Father.

He is to come with the same body and with the glory of the Father, to judge the quick and the dead, of whose kingdom there is no end.

We believe also in the Holy Spirit, the uncreate and the perfect, who spoke in the law and in the prophets and in the Gospels;

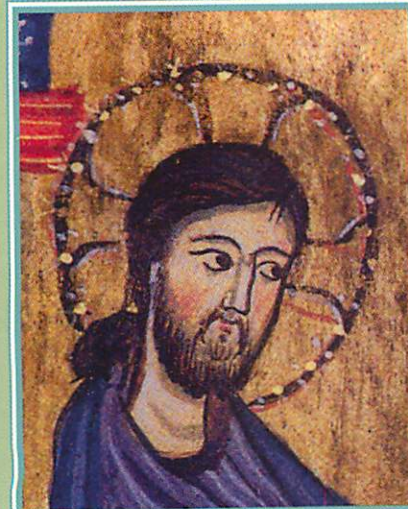
Who came down upon the Jordan, preached in the apostles, and dwelt in the saints.

We believe also in only one catholic and apostolic holy Church;

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

In the resurrection of the dead, in the everlasting judgment of souls and bodies, in the kingdom of heaven, and the life eternal.”

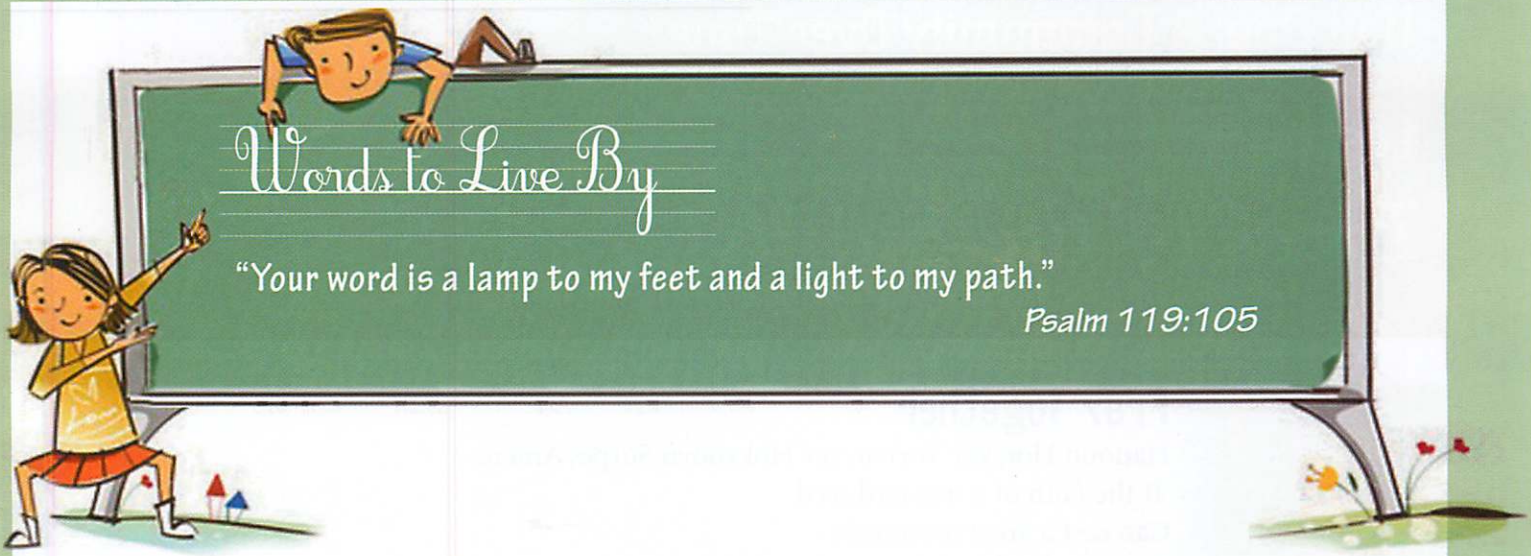
Two other Ecumenical Councils were called to combat strange teachings that arose after the Council in 325 AD. The second Ecumenical Council took place in Constantinople (today’s Istanbul) in 381 AD, and the third at Ephesus in 431 AD. Without these meetings our church would not have been able to feed us with correct ideas about God.



## Did You Know?

The most important idea of the Council of Nicaea was to clarify the idea that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human.





## Our Armenian Way

Before he became a monk, St. Gregory the Illuminator was married and had two sons, Vertanes and Aristakes. Aristakes, born about 270 AD, studied in Caesarea and grew up to be a monk. Aristakes lived at a monastery in the desert, where he happily spent his days in prayer and worship.

Around 325 AD, St. Gregory wanted to return to the quiet life of a monk, so he asked his son Aristakes to replace him as Catholicos. Aristakes left his hermit's life and lovingly tended the young Armenian Church. After his service to the church, which included travel to the Council in Nicaea, Aristakes was murdered by a nobleman in the year 333 AD.

