

Pentecost! A Vocations Day Assembly

(To be used on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, also known as Church Vocations Day. If your Sunday School ends before then, conduct the Assembly on a Sunday in May. Parents: use this as a family celebration at home.)

All: Hayr Mer.

Leader: Today *(or, on June 4)* the Armenian Church and the Christian Church as a whole celebrates a very special day of the year, Pentecost. In a way, this is a birthday celebration, because it was at Pentecost that the Church really began. We'll hear in the Bible reading about how the Holy Spirit blessed all of Jesus' apostles with the gift of speaking and understanding different languages. With that gift, they could travel all over the world and spread the Good News of Jesus. It was at that time that St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew were commissioned to go to Armenia and teach Armenians about Jesus Christ. Not long after, around the year 301, the Armenian Church was formally established by St. Gregory the Illuminator. It was the very first national Christian church. And that started the Church as we know it today, our spiritual home, a community of Christians who come to church to be with each other like a family, to learn about God, to pray, to grow to love the Lord and one another, and to serve one another.

Service is a big part of being Christian. Today, think about the different ways people work closely with God, whether as a priest, or a Sunday school teacher, or an ACYOA leader, or whatever. It could be that someday you'll have the happy chance to be one of these people, doing God's work as a career.

All: Thank you God, for this wonderful world and for all the special people we love. Thank you too, for all the different ways there are to work close to you! Make us strong and wise so that we can see those ways. Help us to feel how exciting it is to be a priest, or a teacher, or any of the other kinds of people who serve you and work for our people. Bless us with open hearts and open minds, God, so we can see what really matters in this world: our families, our friends, our fellow citizens, the people who help us to grow and learn in the church, and you, God, our Father and Friend. Hear our joy, God, as we, the children of your Church, gather for your blessing. We know you will open our eyes to truth and lead our heads and hands to serve you. Amen.

Gospel reader: *(Kisses Bible, takes it, and reads Acts 2:1-47. Use the following "interpretation" that will make the passage easier to understand. Slip a copy of it into the right page of the Bible.)*

It was the day of Pentecost, a harvest festival, and Jesus' apostles, who were in the habit of meeting daily, were in a room together. Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James, and also Matthias who had been selected to take the place of Judas Iscariot.

Suddenly the entire house was filled with the sound of rushing wind, and tongues of fire licked into the room, and came to rest on the head of each man. Immediately they began speaking to each other in foreign languages and understanding each other.

In Jerusalem at that time were many religious men from other countries and they quickly gathered at the house and, to their astonishment, each heard his own language being spoken. Parthians, Medes, Mesopotamians, Elamites, Asians, Egyptians, Libians, Romans, Cretans, men from Judaea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Phrygia and Pamphylia . . . all listened in amazement to these men whom they knew to be Galileans speaking in other tongues. They could find no explanation for this.

A few tried to laugh it off. "They're drunk," they declared, but Peter corrected them. "Hardly drunk," he said, "at nine o'clock in the morning."

Then Peter talked to the people about Jesus and his crucifixion and as they listened they were deeply touched. Throughout the day more than three thousand people came forward to be baptized.

These were the first Christians. They set up their own community, sold their possessions and shared the money between themselves providing for each according to his needs. They went to the temple every day to pray and met in each other's houses to break bread, as Jesus had done at the last supper.

People admired them for their kindness and generosity, and the miracles worked through the apostles aroused great interest, so that each day more people joined them.

Leader: (You'll need ten large pieces of paper on which the following words are printed: SPIRIT, PENTECOST, FLAMES, BAPTIZE, GRACE, CROSS, MYSTERY, WATER, SAVIOR, FAITH; a wastebasket.) There is a word written on each of these ten pieces of paper. Look at the words one at a time. (Show the words in the above order.) Now that you have seen the ten words in order, I am going to tear up the paper and throw it away. (Shred the paper and throw it into the wastebasket.)

Now I want you to repeat back to me those ten words in the same order. Can you do it? You probably feel something like Jesus' disciples did on the night before his death. He told them that he was going to leave them. They were not prepared for that. They had assumed that he would always be with them. Even though he had taught them many things, they could easily forget what he said or get the message mixed up, as they frequently did. He had explained some of his parables, but each of the disciples might remember the explanation in a different way. Jesus had not written anything down for them to restudy. Perhaps none of them had taken notes on his teachings.

You can see why the disciples were upset. They felt that the future of all his great teachings would depend on them. The salvation of the world would depend on how well they remembered what Jesus had said and done. That was a big load for them. Just as you

can't be sure that you can remember those ten words in the same order-you probably couldn't even pronounce some of them-the disciples could not be sure they could repeat all of Jesus' teachings.

But Jesus told them not to worry. He said: "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

The future of Christ's teachings did not depend on the disciples' memories. It depended on the power of the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the disciples and filled them with the power of Christ's message for the world. They spoke it boldly, and it is still heard today. And just as the message is still heard, there are more and more "messengers," people working day after day to pass along the word of God. These are very special people for us, our priests, our teachers, program directors at our church and in our Diocese, and many others who have a full-time job in the church. These are exciting jobs!

Take collection; make announcements.

Leader: Today we celebrate the great Church feast, Pentecost. It's also a day that has been set aside by the Primate of the Diocese, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, for us to consider the many ways we can serve the church. Let's keep in our thoughts and prayers all the people who work for the church and help us to grow in God. Vocations Day is a day we can also use to remember that we might choose the church as a full-time job someday, whether by becoming a priest, by working with young people in the church, by being a teacher, by working at the Diocese, on a church newspaper, whatever! There are lots of exciting ways of working for God. And today's the day when we remember how the Holy Spirit sent the first "full-time" church workers-the apostles of Jesus-out into the world to serve him. We might do that too. Think about it.

All: Lord, help us to do your work

So that where there is hatred, we can bring love.

Where there is wrong, we can bring the light of forgiveness.

Where there is trouble, we can bring harmony.

Where there is error, we can bring truth.

Where there is despair, we can bring hope.

Where there are shadows, we can bring your light.

Where there is sadness, we can bring joy.

Lord, lead us to comfort, rather than be comforted.

To understand, rather than be understood.
To love, rather than be loved.
And lead us, Lord, to your work.
So that someday,
Day by day,
We are in your service. Amen.

All: "Orhnetzitz uzDer" (*sing in Armenian; at conclusion recite*): "I will bless the Lord at all times; at all times praise of him shall be on my lips."