

# ***The Feast of the Assumption – Christ Makes Everything New***

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian  
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX  
August 14, 2016  
Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1-7*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today the Armenian Church celebrates the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, the Mother of God. We remember when Mary, the Mother of God, passed away and was buried in Jerusalem, surrounded by eleven of the twelve apostles. St. Bartholomew was the only apostle that was not present at her death and burial, because he was out in the countryside preaching the Gospel. When he returned and learned that Mary had died and been buried, he pleaded with the apostles that they only the tomb so he could see her face one last time. The eleven apostles agreed and when they opened the tomb, Mary's body was gone and they realized that the Lord had come and taken His mother to heaven with him.

It is the tradition of the Armenian Church to bless grapes on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary and this tradition is unique to the Armenian Church. We bless grapes, remembering Christ's words, "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John 15:5), which we also hear during the service for the blessing of the grapes.

However, this tradition also comes to us from pagan times. When Armenians were pagans and worshipped many gods, the first fruits of the harvest were brought to temples and dedicated to the gods. This marked the first day of the year, called ՆԱՒԱՍԱՐԻՂ/Navasart: Armenian New Years. This is why Armenian New Years is not January 1<sup>st</sup>, but in the middle of August. So might say, well since this is a pagan tradition, we should stop doing it and that it is bad that the Church Fathers have included it in life of the church.

Yet, when the Church appropriates pagan traditions, as all churches have done, it teaches us a very important fact about Christ and about ourselves. We learn that Christ makes all things new and can also make us new.

In the Book of Revelation, Christ declares, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5) and St. Paul comforts us, saying, "Anyone who is joined to Christ is made new; he is no longer what he was before, because he has been completely renewed" (2 Cor. 5:17). Anything and

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anyone who is given to Christ, fully, is made new. This is what happened to the Armenian culture and other cultures, when the people gave everything to Christ. He made them new and used the traditions of that culture to glorify His name.

He does the same with each of us. If we dedicate and give our entire life (body, soul and mind) to the Lord, no matter how horrible, sinful or dirty our life was in the past, Christ will take it, clean it and make it new.

We see how God did this with Mary when she dedicated her life to God. She answered the Archangel Gabriel, when she was told she would bear the Son of God, “I am God’s handmaiden; let it be according to your word” (Luke 1:38). Through that confession and act, she was made new.

Our loved ones who have died and passed away will also be made new. At Christ’s Second Coming, He will raise the dead and they shall live again, being renewed in the resurrection. They shall be transformed into something beautiful, radiant and new.

Christ also makes each of us new when we serve Him and His Church, when we participate in the sacraments of the Church, especially Holy Communion and most importantly, when we change our lives in order to avoid sin and glorify God.

Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, the Mother of God, let us make ourselves new again. Let us use Armenian New Years (Նսուսսարդ/Navasart) as an opportunity to make new New Year’s resolutions. Let us follow Mary’s example of service and dedication. And let us allow Christ to work in us and through us to make us new, those around us new and the world new again..

Amen.