

# ***The Third Sunday of the Assumption – Belts***

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian  
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX  
August 28, 2016  
Gospel Reading: Mark 4:35-41*

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

Today, the Armenian Church celebrates the Feast of the Discovery of the Belt of the Mother of God. Sometimes, instead of belt, the words sash and cincture are used, but they all mean the same thing. According to tradition, the belt was made by Mary herself and was made from camel hair. After her assumption into heaven, the only article of clothing to remain was her belt, which remained in Jerusalem and then moved to Constantinople, finally arriving in Greece, where it resides today.

Many miracles have been attributed to Mary's belt, the most well-known took place in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when the Empress Zoi fell ill and Emperor Leo VI placed the belt upon her, healing her immediately. The feast, which we celebrate today, did not become part of our church calendar until the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi added it in.

But, what is so important about a belt and why is there an entire feast dedicated to the discovery of this belt? To answer this, we must first understand the importance of belts in the ancient world, the modern world and the Bible.

In the ancient world, belts were wider, covering a good portion of one's abdomen and were worn to keep tunics and robes in place from blowing around in the wind. It was also used to keep money and to hang swords and weapons from. So if one didn't have a belt in the ancient world, one would be without money, defenseless and with a tunic blowing in the wind.

Today belts are just as important, especially in different occupations. Police carry guns, batons and handcuffs on their belts, while construction workers carry hammers, screwdrivers and tape measures. In Karate and other martial arts, belts are a sign of experience and skill. Even here in Texas, many cowboys wear belt buckles, showing their support for a sports team or other product. But probably the most important belt we hear about today is in our cars: our seatbelts which protect and save our lives from injuries and death.

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In the Bible, the word “belt” is seldom mentioned. Instead another phrase is used, “gird your loins”. It is mentioned many times by the prophets, the apostles and God to the people, always as a prelude to an undertaking.

One’s loins are found about the hips and a little towards the back. This is a vulnerable and difficult place to defend. Thus, the phrase, “gird your loins” means to wrap your vulnerable part of your body with your belt and keep it defended. In our everyday lives, sin and the enemy are constantly attacking us and our souls are the battlefields with the war being waged within us.

We might complain and say that we have done nothing to upset Satan, why does he attack us, but we forget that our baptism is a declaration of war on his kingdom. Prayer and fasting are bombardments on his domain. Holy Communion is a life-giving bandage for the wounds we receive in this war. We interrupt his lines of communication when we do not participate in gossip. Good works: feeding the poor, visiting the lonely, welcoming the stranger are attacks on Satan.

Yet, to do all of this, St. Paul exhorts us in his letter to the Ephesians, when he says, “gird your loins with truth” (6:14). What is truth? Or more precisely, who is truth? Christ Jesus is truth. We must wrap ourselves with Christ and must allow Him to shield and protect us. He is our defense and refuge. He is invincible and triumphant and will trample upon Satan and destroy his kingdom.

As we go out to fight the war against hatred, injustice and indifference, let us gird our loins with Christ, so He may defend, save and protect us from sin, temptation and the devil.

Amen.