

# ***Fourth Sunday of the Holy Cross – Authority and Pride***

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian  
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX  
October 2, 2016  
Gospel Reading: Mark 11:27-33*

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

Yesterday the Armenian Church remembered the *Feast of the 72 Disciples of Christ*, who were sent out, two by two, and were given authority to cast out demons, heal the sick and preach the Gospel. When they returned, Christ promised them that they would tread upon serpents and scorpions without injury (Luke 10:19). Our Church Fathers took this promise and made it a reality, by sewing pictures of serpents and scorpions in the heels of the priest's slippers. This theme of authority is also in today's Gospel reading, when the Pharisees and Scribes come to Christ and question Him, saying, "With what authority do you do these things?" (Mark 11:28).

Authority is a wonderful thing in this world, because it brings order to nations and keeps peace among people. Yet, authority can also do great damage to an inexperienced person's soul. Authority can go straight to someone's head and cause pride. We all know people who have done this, in our workplaces, in our families and even in our parish.

Perhaps the greatest example of this is Lucifer (Satan). As his name shows, he was given the authority to bring the morning light, but this authority turned into pride, causing him to fall because he refused to bow down and honor God's creation: mankind. This event and Satan's disobedience is remembered in the Armenian word for *pride*, հպարտութիւն/hpartoutyun. The word comes from two words, հրէշտակ/hreshtak, which means *angel* and պարտութիւն/partoutyun, which means *defeat/loss*. Thus, the word հպարտութիւն/hpartoutyun means *the angel's defeat* or *the angel's loss*. Because it was through pride that the angel Satan lost his authority.

There were once two roosters living in the same farmyard. They both want the authority to rule the farmyard. At last one day, they flew up to fight it out, beak and claw. They fought until one of them was beaten and crawled off to the corner to hide. The winning rooster flew to the top of the barn, where he proudly flapped his wings and crowed with all his might to tell the world about his victory. An eagle heard the loud crowing, swooped down, carried him off to his nest and ate him.

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We learn from this story and from Lucifer's example that we must take on authority cautiously and with humility, lest we fall into the sin of pride. Each of us holds some type of authority. For some it becomes a power-trip, while for others it is a responsibility. It is our obligation to fight against the distortion of authority, which is pride, so that true authority may prosper.

If we see others who have become prideful in their positions of authority, we must approach them with love and kindness, showing them humility and having them understand that as easy as authority is given, it can also be taken away. And if we are the ones that have become proud in our positions, we must always look to Christ as our example, who wielded authority with humility and service.

Yet, most importantly, let us ever remember Christ's answer to the 72 disciples when they returned, boasting that even the demons listened to them. He said, "Do not rejoice that the demons listen to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

Amen.