

Fifth Sunday of the Holy Cross – Holy Translators

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
October 9, 2016
Gospel Reading: Mark 12:35-44*

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

Yesterday the Armenian Church celebrated the Feast of the Holy Translators and celebrated the lives of the fifth century saints Mashtots, who discovered the Armenian alphabet and his student, Yeghishe. Together, along with many other students, they translated the Bible and canons of the great Ecumenical Councils from Greek and Syriac into Armenian. However, along with these great 5th century men were saints Movses Kertogh and David the Invincible Philosopher (6th century), Gregory of Narek (9th century) and Nersess the Grace-filled (12th century). Yet, the question arises, why are these four men of the 6th, 9th and 12th centuries considered Holy Translators?

First we must understand what the word *translation* means. Today, when one translates, one converts or changes words from one language to another. However, this is not the original meaning of the word. The verb, *to translate* originally meant, “to carry from one place to another”, this is why, especially when we read the Lives of the Saints, it is often mentioned that the saint’s remains were “translated” (that is taken) to either Jerusalem, Constantinople, or Rome. But again, according to today’s meaning, *to translate* means making something understandable for another.

These saints are all holy translators because they translated for the Armenian people, that is to say, they helped the Armenian people understand their faith and who God is. They took what was unknown and foreign and made it known and accessible.

Anyone who knows two or more languages knows how difficult it is to translate because there are nuances in different languages and exact meanings that cannot be translated. It is challenging to take the meaning of a word or concept from one language and culture and bring it to another. To do such a task requires that one know both languages impeccably.

These Holy Translators knew both languages exquisitely – they did not just know Armenian well and Greek or Syriac, but they also knew the language of spirituality and how to speak with God. They were able to translate that to the Armenian people. Our Lord was the greatest “translator” the world has ever seen because He took the spiritual truths of the

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
October 9, 2016*

heavenly kingdom and brought them to humanity. He took what was foreign to humanity and made it understandable through parables, everyday examples and acts of compassion, mercy and love.

We celebrate ArmeniaFest every year on the second weekend of October and every year people question why we celebrate it on this weekend. Some say it is because it is cooler, while others say it is because the Greek Festival is two week earlier and the Lebanese Festival is last weekend, so ours has to follow theirs. But the real reason we have chosen this weekend and continue to choose this weekend is because of the Feast of the Holy Translators.

We as a community, parish and family teach our culture, heritage and faith to others. We take the Armenian culture and faith from Armenia and are bringing it to Dallas, Texas. But we mustn't stop there. We too are called to be Holy Translators. We are called to translate our faith and the Holy Gospel of Christ to everyone we meet. This means we must understand our faith and who God is so that we can make them understandable to others. And if we do not understand or if we have questions, then we should approach and ask Der Hayr or others who would know the answer so we can grow in our faith and in the spiritual language.

Let us strive to be holy translators, like the Holy Translators we remembered yesterday. Let us translate our faith not just this weekend, but every day and every moment we meet others who do not understand our faith. Let us make them understand and, eventually, like the Holy Translators did centuries ago, let us enlighten them with the light of the knowledge of God.

Amen.