

On Becoming a More Committed Armenian Orthodox Christian

Many people in the Church today suffer from a lack of faith, a lack of commitment and a lack of holiness. In the liturgical intercessions of the Armenian Church the deacon bids the people: “Let us commit ourselves and one another to the Lord God Almighty.” The response of the faithful is: “To You, O Lord, we commit ourselves.” To be committed to Christ requires a radical change of life. It requires our willingness to come out of our comfort zones. To be His followers Jesus said, “If any man would come after me he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.” As the saying goes, “If Jesus is not ‘Lord of All,’ He isn’t Lord at all.” Our Lord said, “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.” (S. Lk. 16:13). The following are practical ways of recommitting our lives to Jesus Christ as Orthodox Christians in order to become His faithful followers.

1. ***Make the Divine Liturgy the center of your life.*** Make it the most important event of your week. Do not miss attending it for anything except the gravest of reasons (like an illness). Bring your entire family to the Divine Liturgy every week and worship together. The Divine Liturgy is meant to be a celebration and remembrance of our Lord’s Holy Sacrifice by His entire community gathered together as one body around His Holy Altar. The sharing together of the Body and Blood of Christ is what makes us His Church: (cf. St. Paul’s 1 Cor. 10:17, Heb. 10:24-25, St. Ignatius’ Smyrnaeans 7:1). Teach your children the importance of the Divine Liturgy and not to miss it for anything, not sports, not trips, not even for Church School on Sunday Mornings. Buy Catechism books on our Orthodox Faith and teach them our Holy Faith yourself. This will help you grow in Christ together as a Christian family.

2. ***Establish for yourself a devotional daily rule of prayer.*** Daily offer prayers in the morning and in the evening either individually or as a family. Start off simple and expand this as you gain experience and knowledge and as time permits. For more info see my essay: “Keeping a Daily Rule of Prayer,” <http://www.looys.net/PRYRRUL3.DOC>

3. ***Commit yourself to learning the Holy Scriptures.*** A simple way is by following the Church’s daily lectionary. Use the *Orthodox Study Bible* and read the notes in order to learn the Orthodox understanding of our daily lections as taught by our Holy Church Fathers. Start off with just the weekly Sunday Gospel and eventually work up to reading each day’s lections and notes, available at: <http://www.armenianchurch.org/index.jsp>

4. ***Become familiarized with the Church’s liturgical calendar*** and the numerous saints and feasts we celebrate by reading books about these Saints and Feasts -especially on their observance. Be in tune with each day’s theme, whether it be a Saint, a Feast or a Fast.

5. **Observe our Church's Fasts to the best of your ability.** Remember every Wednesday and Friday is a Fast Day and we have several penitential periods throughout the Church year. We should not receive Holy Communion on Sunday unless we have made an honest effort to keep these Fasts. For more info see the essay: "Keeping the Fasts of the Armenian Orthodox Church," <http://www.looys.net/FAST.DOC>

6. **After fasting, receive sacramental forgiveness of your sins** regularly by going to Confession. This is one the greatest ways of growing in holiness, commended to us by numerous saints and Church Fathers.

7. **Commit yourself to learning more about our Holy Orthodox Faith.** Read books that have the authorization of an Orthodox hierarchy to ensure you are getting authentic Orthodox Christian information.

8. **As you learn our Holy Faith, share it with others** who are near to you (family and friends). Help them also come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we do these eight simple steps, I dare say we can accomplish a "**New Illumination**" of our people -just as St. Gregory once enlightened our people who formerly were in darkness. By working together as the Body of Christ -His Holy Church, a people set apart- we can begin this **New Illumination** like that achieved by our Holy Illuminator and our Holy Fathers, Sahag, Mesrob and the Holy Translators who spread the Orthodox Faith to our people and brought us to the "Light of Christ."

On the Feast of St. John Chrysostom,
Patriarch and Confessor, 2010
Sub-Deacon Lazarus W. Der-Ghazarian

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