

LECTIONARY OF
THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC ORTHODOX CHURCH
FOR SUNDAY SYNAXIS AND FEAST DAYS
compiled, edited and designed by Fr. Arshen Aivazian

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The translations into modern Armenian and English of
the following readings from the fathers of the church
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Prayer of the Blessing of Water by St. Basil of Caesarea
Prayer over the Penitents by St. Basil of Caesarea
Prayer and Blessing of the Penitents by St. John Chrysostom
Homily on the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist by St. Basil of Caesarea
Exhortation on Love by the Blessed Vartabed Hovhannes Blooz
Treatise on the Sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Blessed St. James, Bishop of Sruj
Letter of St. Cyril of Jerusalem addressed to Emperor Constantius
Prayer addressed to the Holy Trinity by St. John Chrysostom
Prayer on the Descent of the Holy Spirit by St. Nersess of Lambron
Prayer on the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ by St. Yeghishe Vartabed
Prayer for the Blessing of Grapes by St. Nersess the Graceful

Lectionary Readings in the Armenian Liturgical Year
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Selections from the Holy Scriptures in the Armenian Lectionary in Biblical Order
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Hierarchy of the Armenian Church at the time of the publication of this Lectionary

HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II
Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians

HIS HOLINESS ARAM I
Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia

HIS BEATITUDE ARCHBISHOP NOURHAN I
Patriarch of Jerusalem

HIS BEATITUDE ARCHBISHOP SAHAK II
Patriarch of Constantinople

Hierarchy of the Armenian Church in North America at the time of the publication of this Lectionary

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Primate, Diocese of the Armenian Church of Canada

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INTRODUCTION TO THE LECTIONARY OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

The Lectionary is one of the earliest liturgical books to develop in Christian worship. The practice of reading select passages from the Law and the Prophets was a well established tradition in Jewish worship.¹ Our Lord himself attended the Synagogue and on occasion read the Holy Scriptures.² Early Christian communities, made up mostly of Jewish converts, continued the tradition.³ As Christian scriptures emerged in the decades following our Lord's ascension, they were included in the worship service of the developing liturgical life of the Church.⁴ Gradually the Gospels and other Christian writings were included in the worship service. By the end of the first century select passages from both the Old and the New Testaments were incorporated into the services of the Christian Church.

In the early centuries the priest or the worship leader selected appropriate passages to be read. With the development of the Christian liturgical year a collection of readings from the Holy Scriptures emerged and spread through neighboring communities. Thus developed the Lectionary of the Christian Church. Jerusalem, where the holy places associated with the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ attracted many Christian worshippers, became a center and a leader in the development of Christian worship and liturgical practice. By the 4th and 5th centuries the Jerusalem Lectionary emerged as the standard for the universal church.

The Armenian Lectionary (Հաշոց Գիրք/Jashots Kirk or Հաշոց (Jashots) reflects its Jerusalem origins even in its present form. It has gone through various editions over the centuries. The last edition of the Lectionary was done by Catholicos Symeon of Yerevan (1763-1780) in the context of his revision of the Տօնացոյց (Donatsooyts/Typikon).

The Lectionary was first published in Venice in 1686 by the priest Thaddeus Hamazaspian of Yerevan. It has been published in Constantinople, Rome, Etchmiadzin in 1872, and Jerusalem in 1873. The Etchmiadzin Lectionary was reprinted in 1999. The Jerusalem edition, which was reprinted in 1967, is the commonly used Lectionary now in the Armenian Church.

In the United States, the first Armenian Church communities continued to use the existing Lectionary in the first few decades after the formation of the Diocese in 1898. However, as the English speaking generations matured the needs of the community and the urgency of reading the Holy Scriptures in the common language of the people, whether English or modern Armenian, became a necessity. The hierarchy of the Church has formally granted permission for the proclamation of the Word of God to be done in English or modern Armenian.

The proclamation of the Sacred Scriptures in public gatherings of the community of the faithful is the core and essence of liturgical worship. In the course of a liturgical celebration the proclamation of the Word is done as shown in the Տօնացոյց (Donatsooyts/Typikon). In the celebration of the Divine Liturgy the Word is proclaimed at the beginning in the segment known as the Synaxis (Հաշու Ժամ/Jashou Zham), also known as the Liturgy of the Word. After the faithful gather for the celebration of the Eucharist the Word is proclaimed, the priest gives the homily reflecting on the readings just proclaimed and the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist is celebrated.

Presently the Lectionary readings during Liturgical celebrations in general and the Divine Liturgy in particular present a challenge. The failure of the vast majority of the faithful to gather in time for the celebration poses a clear challenge as the proclamation of the Word is done either during the Synaxis in the absence of the majority of the faithful or moved to a later spot thus breaking the traditional structure of the liturgy. The absence of a Lectionary in English poses some serious issues as well: the Synaxis Psalm is often eliminated, the selection from the Old Testament in general and the prophets in particular is usually omitted, and in many cases the prescribed readings are edited, often out of necessity, but without any general uniformity.

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- 1 Acts 13:27; 15:21
 - 2 Lk 4:16-17
 - 3 Acts 13:14-15
 - 4 Col 4:16; 1Thess 5:27

The selection of a proper translation for authorized use in liturgical settings is another issue of utmost importance. Currently different translations are used in various parishes. We lack textual uniformity. There are many fine English translations of the Bible. But not all translations are suitable for use in the Armenian Church. The authorized translation for Liturgical use should reflect the theology and teachings of the Church. Some translations, even though popular, do not this important criterion. For this Lectionary I have used the New King James Version (NKJ) for its sound reflection of Orthodox theology and its authorized usage in other Orthodox jurisdictions. For the selections from books that are included in the Canon of the Bible of the Eastern/Oriental Orthodox Church (known as Apocrypha in the Western Canon) I have used the St. Athanasius Academy Septuagint (SAAS).

The need for a new revision of the Lectionary has become an urgent matter for the Armenian Church, and it has been the subject of much discussion and debate in the last few decades. Until such time as a revision is accomplished it becomes imperative to do what we must to bring the Word to the hearing of the faithful in the most effective and practical way possible.

The publication of this Lectionary is the first such endeavor. It is not the entire Lectionary. It contains only the Synaxis readings for Sundays and readings for some feast days through the liturgical year. (For a complete calendar of daily readings please refer to the Lectionary Readings in the Armenian Liturgical Year on page 588 of this Lectionary.) The readings are presented in full leaving the editing, if necessary, to the Diocesan or parish church authorities. In addition to the selections from the Holy Bible the Armenian Lectionary contains prayers, homilies and treatises from church fathers. They are included in this Lectionary in full, with the modern Armenian and English translations side by side, for the first time. Regarding the public reading of these homilies, the ideal would be to read all in their entirety. However, considering our present circumstances and time constraints on liturgical celebrations the decision of what to read and how much is left up to the presiding clergy. In an effort to help in the selection of passages to read publicly sections that may be omitted are shaded. However the final decision is still up to the celebrant priest. These homilies are rich in spiritual reflection and will nurture the soul of the reader and the listener. I had before me previous translations of some of these readings from patristic literature. Particularly I benefited from the modern Armenian translations by the late Patriarch of Jerusalem Archbishop Mesrob Nshanian (d. 1944) published in the Patriarchate's monthly magazine *SION* in 1957, and the *Prayer on the Descent of the Holy Spirit* by St. Nersess of Lambron by Yeghivart published in 1936.

My research to find English translations of the readings from St. John Chrysostom or St. Basil of Caesarea did not yield any results. My friend Dr. Abraham Terian, Professor Emeritus of Patristics at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, suggested that these writings may have survived only in their Armenian translations from the original Greek. The Very Rev. John Behr, former Dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and a scholar of patristic literature confirmed that opinion and encouraged their translations as they would be available to students of patristic literature for the first time. My thanks to both Dr. Terian and Fr. Behr. I am especially grateful to Dr. Terian for reading my translations and making many suggestions and corrections, and for making available his English translation of the Prayer of St. Nersess of Lambron on Pentecost. Special thanks to His Grace Bp. Daniel Findikian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, for giving his imprimatur to the publication of the Lectionary; to the Rev. Fr. Mardiros Chevian, Dean of St. Nersess Armenian Theological Seminary, for making the facilities and means of the Seminary available for storage and distribution of the Lectionary. Lastly, my sincere thanks to Mr. Robert J. Kleeblatt for his invaluable help in intellectual property and legal matters.

Lastly, I give thanks to our heavenly Father, to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit who inspired me in every step of this monumental task. Praise and glory to the Holy Trinity.

May this Lectionary help in bringing the Word of God to the people of God. May it resound in the life of the faithful.

Fr. Arshen Aivazian

INSTRUCTIONS TO LECTORS

The Minor Orders of the Church, i.e. the Clerics (Arm. Կղերիկոս/Gherigos), commonly known as Դպիր/Tbir, includes the Lector or Reader (Arm. Ընթերցող/Untertsogh). In the Service of Ordination the bishop prays that the Lord will “pour his graces on his servant who is called to the service of reader,” then he hands the Holy Scriptures/Lectionary to the postulant with the exhortation “Take the Scriptures and be a narrator of the Divine Word...and as you become a reader in the House of God fulfill your assignment with all care.” The following instructions and guidelines are intended to help Lectors/Readers fulfill their calling to bring the Word of God to the people of God.

Introducing the Lectionary

- The Lectionary is a collection of all the readings from the Holy Bible that the Church has designated for every day of the liturgical year.
- The readings ordinarily include a psalm verse known as the *Synaxis Psalm*, a passage from the Old Testament, usually from the prophets, a passage from one of the letters or epistles of St. Paul or from the letters of St. James, St. Peter, St. John or St. Jude, known as Catholic Letters, another psalm verse appropriate for the day known as the *Gospel* or *Synaxis Alleluia*, and a select passage from the Gospels.
- The introduction of the readings in the Lectionary is as it is in the tradition of the Armenian Church. The source of the select passage, i.e. the chapter and verse, are for the reader’s information. It is not read or pronounced in the introduction.
- Take note of the fact that the chapter and verse numbers are from the original Armenian Lectionary. In the English version of the Holy Bible there could be differences in the verse numbers.
- The numbering of the Psalms is different in the traditions of Eastern/Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches. The Eastern/Oriental Orthodox/Roman Catholic number reflects the numbering in the Armenian original and the Protestant numbering appears in parenthesis.

Reading the Word of God

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled beginning of the Divine Liturgy.
- Before the Divine Liturgy begins make sure the Lectionary is on the lectern and mark the proper page.
- The Lectionary readings should be proclaimed from the portable lectern placed in the center on the edge of the chancel or from the stationary lectern usually on the right side of the chancel.
- Always bear in mind that as Lector you are placing yourself in the service of God. You are making yourself a vehicle through whom God is speaking to his people.
- Familiarize yourself with the passage/s you are going to proclaim. Practice the reading beforehand.
- Sometimes there are unfamiliar words or names of places and persons that are difficult to pronounce. You may consult a dictionary of biblical names or a guide to the pronunciation of biblical names on the internet.
- When reading, your voice should be loud and clear, projecting reverence and solemnity.
- The Bible contains books of history, prayer, prophesy, poetry and other genres. Your reading voice and style should reflect the literary style of the passage.
- The hearing of the Word of God should inspire meditation and reflection. Read slowly and deliberately. Take a brief pause between readings to allow the Word of God to penetrate into the mind and heart of the faithful through the action of the Holy Spirit.
- Typically the Synaxis readings begin with a psalm verse and include selections from the Old Testament, Apostolic Letters, the Gospel Alleluia, and the Gospel.
- The Lector reads only the selections from the Old Testament and the Apostolic Letters.
- The choir or the deacon/deacons chant the Gospel Alleluia, followed by the reading of the Gospel from the Bema by the deacon or the priest.

- If the readings need to be edited consult with the parish priest.

The Synaxis/Bashdon Jashou (Պատուհան Հաշու)

- At the beginning of the Lesser Entrance the Protodeacon who is going to proclaim the Gospel, approaches the Altar on the left side of the celebrant priest. Simultaneously, the Lector/Reader comes forward and stands in the center of the Chancel.
- When the choir sings the Trisagion Hymn/Երեւորբեան Երգ-Soorp Asdvadz/Սուրբ Աստուած the deacon receives the Gospel book from the celebrant priest, kisses it in reverence, elevates it and processes around the Altar led by the censor and the candle holders.
- As the deacon approaches the edge of the Bema, the Lector/Reader comes forward and kisses the Gospel book with reverence and makes the sign of the cross, then steps back and stands in the center of the chancel facing the altar.
- Sometimes separate Lectors/Readers are assigned for each reading. In that case both or all assigned readers follow the steps outlined here.
- The deacon turns around and stands on the right side of the celebrant priest. After the celebrant blesses the congregation, the Lector/Reader turns around, steps up to the lectern and stands facing the altar until the priest says: “Զի ողորմած եւ մարդասէր ես Աստուած գոյով... Zee voghormadz yev martaser yes Asdvadz kolov... For you are merciful, God...”
- The Lector/Reader turns and faces the congregation and starts proclaiming the Word.
- If there are more than one reader, Reader 1 finishes his/her reading, steps away and Reader 2 comes to the lectern and proclaims his/her reading.
- Introduce the Word as it is in the Lectionary: A READING FROM... and read only what is printed in black. Do not give chapter or verse. In the tradition of the Orthodox Church chapter and verse are not pronounced as they are inconsequential to hearing and receiving the Word of God.

To Chant or to Read

- In the tradition of the Armenian Church selections from some books of the Holy Scriptures are chanted, and some are read.
- Selections from most of the Old Testament are read, except the Prophets which are always chanted.
- The Psalms are used extensively in the worship services of the Armenian Church. Depending on their usage, they are read, chanted, intoned or sung. On ordinary Sundays the Synaxis Psalm verse is read, but the Synaxis (Gospel) Alleluia is always sung.
- Selections from the Acts of the Apostles, the Letters of St. Paul and the Catholic Letters are always read.
- The Gospel is always chanted.
- The Chanting tone is quite simple and can be learned easily with some practice, but it is not of crucial importance. If you prefer to read it without chanting it is just as acceptable.

How to Conclude the Readings

- In the tradition of the Armenian Church the readings are concluded by chanting the last few words of the last reading in the musical tone that leads into the intonation of the Synaxis (Gospel) Alleluia by the deacon/s or the choir.
- If you are unprepared or uncomfortable chanting the ending words simply read the last few words with emphasis and look toward the choir director or the deacon to indicate that you are approaching the end. Do not say: “Here ends the reading” or any similar phrase as that is not in the tradition of the Orthodox Church.

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