

SPECIAL LESSON

The Story of St. Vartan and His Courageous Faith

Teacher Preparation and Materials Needed:

Activity: “Faith in Action Skits”

Materials Needed:

- Index cards or slips of paper with pre-written scenarios (or let students create their own)
- Optional: simple props (hats, scarves, signs, etc.)

Words of the week:

քաջ - kach - brave

պատերազմ - ba-de-raz-um - war

յաղթանակ - hagh-ta-nag - victory

Objective and Moral Character Focus:

To help children understand the historical significance of St. Vartan, his role in defending Christianity, and how they can apply his example of bravery and faith in their own lives.

Memory Verse:

**“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith;
be courageous; be strong.”**

-1 Corinthians 16:13

Lesson

Lesson Opening & Creating Interest:

**Wisdom Prayer, written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled (Shnorhali).*

Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Զօր՝ Յիսուս, տու՛ր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի
Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց եւ ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛վ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո
արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi
ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos yev paneets yen kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots
eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your
sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures
and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

Lesson Body:

St. Vartan Mamigonian was a great Armenian hero who lived in the fifth century, a time when Armenia was a proud Christian nation. He was a brave general, a strong leader, and a man of deep faith. Armenia was special because it was the first country in the world to accept Christianity as its official religion in AD 301. The people of Armenia were proud of their Christian heritage and followed Jesus with love and devotion, just like we do today. They lived peaceful lives, thanking God every day for the blessings they received.

Unfortunately, not everyone followed Armenia's example and was inspired by Christian faith. One day, this peaceful life was interrupted by the Persian Empire, a powerful neighboring kingdom ruled by a king Yazdegerd II who did not believe in Jesus. The Persian king wanted to take control of Armenia and force its people to abandon Christianity and worship the Persian gods instead. This worried the Armenian people. They didn't want to lose their Christian identity or give up the faith they had held onto for generations.

While many were scared, Vartan Mamigonian stood firm in his trust to God. He knew that defending their faith was the right thing to do. He believed that no king, no matter how powerful, could take away the Armenians' love for Jesus. St. Vartan and everyone in the Armenian nation deeply believed that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior and rejecting Him would be equal to rejecting life itself. As a strong leader and a soldier dedicated to protecting his country and its beliefs, St. Vartan was determined to stand up to the Persian king and defend his people's right to worship God.

When the Persian king sent a message demanding that the Armenians give up their faith, Vartan and the Armenian leaders rejected it. This made the Persian king furious. He sent a huge army to attack Armenia and force the people to convert to Zoroastrianism (the Persian religion that worshiped fire and other gods).

Vartan knew that the battle would be difficult. The Persian army was much larger and had more weapons, but Vartan was not afraid. He believed that the strength of their faith was greater than the size of the enemy's army. He gathered the Armenian soldiers and their families and led them in prayer, celebrating the Holy Badarak and baptizing those who were not baptized. Together, they asked God to give them courage and strength. They knew they might not win the battle, but they trusted that God would guide them and that they were fighting for something far more important than just victory—they were fighting for their faith and their future. Knowingly, they marched to face death because they knew they were marching towards martyrdom and toward eternal life.

This battle, called the Battle of Avarayr, became one of the most important events in Armenian history. Vartan and his soldiers fought bravely, knowing that they were protecting their faith, their families, and their homeland. Despite their courage and determination, Vartan and many of his soldiers lost their lives in the battle. But

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even in defeat, they never lost their faith in God. Their bravery became an inspiration to the Armenian people, who refused to give up their faith, even when faced with persecution.

In the end, Vartan's sacrifice and the prayers of the Armenian people had a lasting impact. Although the Persians won the battle, they could not destroy the Armenians' faith. For the next 30 years, the Armenians continued to fight for their faith and ultimately won the war and for this reason, Armenia has remained a Christian nation until today. The people continued to praise God and passed down their faith to future generations.

In the coming weeks, we will remember St. Vartan and his soldiers as true heroes who showed us that even when things are hard, we can be brave and trust God. Their story teaches us that standing up for what is right, even when it's difficult or dangerous, is always worth it. Vartan's courage reminds us that with faith in God, we can face any challenge and make a difference, just like he did.



The tapestry showing the Battle of Avarayr is a famous artwork by Grigor Khanjian. It shows Vartan Mamigonian holding his sword high, leading the Armenian forces to protect their faith and freedom. Among the fighters are familiar faces from Armenian culture, including the writer William Saroyan. This important artwork is on display in Holy Etchmiadzin, where it stands as a symbol of Armenian strength and pride.

Activity: “Faith in Action Skits”

Materials Needed:

- Index cards or slips of paper with pre-written scenarios (or let students create their own)
- Optional: simple props (hats, scarves, signs, etc.)

Examples of scenarios may include:

- A friend is being pressured to cheat on a test, and you have to decide whether to speak up.
- Someone makes fun of another student for their beliefs, and you feel conflicted about whether to intervene.
- You’re invited to a party where you know people will be doing things you don’t feel comfortable with.
- A classmate is left out during a group project, and you have a chance to include them.



Instructions:

1. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students and give each group a scenario card.
2. Ask students to write various scenarios that reflect common challenges where students might need to show faith or courage.
3. Allow each group some time to discuss the situation on their card and how to demonstrate faith and courage in the scenario. Give them 10-15 minutes to plan their skit.
4. Encourage creativity but ensure they show a positive solution.
5. Each skit should be 2-3 minutes long.
6. Groups will take turns presenting their skits to the class.

Reflect and discuss:

After each skit, ask the class:

Q: What did the characters do to show courage and faith?

Q: Was the solution realistic? What could be done differently in real life?

Q: How can we apply this lesson to our own challenges?

Wrap-Up:

Discuss how acting out scenarios helps them prepare for real situations.

Optional Extension:

Create a “Courage Wall” in the classroom, where students can write down acts of courage they witness or experience during the week. This can be revisited regularly.

Q: What’s one thing you included that’s really special to you?

Review

Memory Verse Review:

"God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Lesson Review:

Questions:

1. Why did the Persian king want the Armenians to give up their faith? (The Persian king wanted the Armenians to follow the Persian religion because he believed it would make them easier to control and more loyal to him.)
2. How did Vartan respond to the king's demands, and what does that say about his character? (Vartan refused to give up his Christian faith, even though he knew it could lead to a battle. This shows that Vartan was brave, loyal to God, and willing to make sacrifices to protect what he believed was right.)
3. What challenges did Vartan and the Armenians face in standing up for their faith? (They faced a powerful army, the threat of death, and pressure to give in to the king's demands. They also had to stay strong as a community and trust in God during difficult times.)
4. Do you think it was easy or hard for Vartan to make this choice? Why? (It was probably very hard because he knew the risks, including the possibility of losing his life and seeing his people suffer. But his strong faith and sense of duty helped him stay committed to doing the right thing.)
5. What lessons can we learn from St. Vartan about facing challenges in our own faith? (We can learn to be brave when we face tough choices, to stand up for what we believe in, and to trust that God will give us strength, even when things seem hard or scary.)

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Life Application

What are we going to do with what we have learned today?

Just like St. Vartan, we are called to stand firm in our faith, even when life is difficult or when others may not understand our beliefs. This means being brave enough to do what is right, trusting that God is always with us. Whether it's standing up for a friend, telling the truth, or staying committed to our faith, we can pray and rely on God's strength to guide us. Vartan's story reminds us that when we trust in God, we can face any challenge with courage and confidence.

** Departing Prayer, written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled (Shnorhali).*

Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesher-ee, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sa-sanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.