



Illustration by Siran Kaprielian

## EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS: Antasdan

*"Come let us go out into the field."* (Kings 20:11). With this invitation from Old Testament scripture, we respond and join the Lord in the field--the symbol of the world. Hoping to enjoy the bliss of heaven and the presence of God in our lives, we call to Him, the Almighty, and ask for His blessings upon everything which He has made, inviting heaven to earth, inviting Him to continually fill our lives, our every thought, our every deed, with His love.

The 96th Psalm beautifully expresses the requests of our hearts:

Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!"  
Yea, the world is established, it shall never be moved...

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
LET THE FIELD EXULT and everything in it.

Then shall the trees of the wood sing for joy, before the Lord--for He comes...

Following the precepts of this vision of the world authored by inspired men of God, the Armenian Church celebrates the presence of God in the world with the special processional ceremony of *Antasdan*, a word which itself means "field" or "fields."

In this service the four corners of the world are blessed and sanctified. Through our prayers and hymns of praise we ask our Father to bless the food and fruitfulness of the earth. Also as caretakers of the "field" we ask for "divine protection" for the grounds of the earth, farms, gardens and the year's harvest and for monasteries, churches and all Christian leaders and people on the earth.

This service of *Antasdan* is frequently celebrated by many Christians, especially Armenian Christians. In the Armenian

Church it is performed twenty-five times during the year; on the eve of the Feast of the Presentation of Christ to the Temple, on the Sundays from Palm Sunday to Pentecost, the second Sunday after Pentecost, Transfiguration, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and, finally, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross which is an elaboration of the basic service.

The *Antasdan* on the Feast of the Exaltation is the most ceremonious. A cross is placed on a tray and adorned with sweet basil and rosewater and is then carried in to the field, the world, manifesting Christ in our lives.

And we sing:

Amen: So be it.

Alleluia: Praise the Lord.

*From Bless, O Lord  
by Fr. Garabed Kochakian.*

*Bless, O Lord* is a collection of services of blessing which appear for the first time in English and with a commentary. Readers will be delighted at this unique opportunity to finally understand some of the more popular and visible services such as the "antasdan," "the blessing of grapes," "the blessing of water," etc., as well as the lesser-known rites, among which are "the blessing of incense," "the blessing of a new mother," "the blessing of books," and even "the blessing of wedding garments." Perhaps the best explanation of the book's content and value can be derived from its opening inspirational message by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian:

"The Armenian Church is one of Tradition! This is not, as it is sometimes mistakenly construed, a question of quaint customs and pageantry. On the contrary, it is a practice of God's presence in everyday life. Every feast day, every rite of the Church, every blessing service, imbues the day-to-day affairs of life with the Divine..."

*Bless, O Lord* is available through St. Vartan Bookstore for \$8.95 plus \$1.50 postage. Schools and parish organizations will receive a bulk discount and can be billed.

## FIRST REGIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL PENTECOST CELEBRATION: "Hye In The Spirit"

On a beautiful Saturday, June 2, two hundred students and staff from the Sunday Schools of the Eastern Region (NY-NJ-PA) gathered at Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church in Wynnewood, PA. for the first regional Pentecost celebration, sponsored by the DRE.

The day's theme was brightly marked on buttons especially made up for the day: "Hye in the Spirit." Elaborately decorated sheet cakes, each a work of art of flowers and sugar, also spelled out the day's theme. The two large