

## Old WB Grade 7 7.4 The Creed: How It Came to Be

### Procedure

1. Open with a prayer. Talk together about the "sermons" students wrote last time. (10 min.)
2. Tell the class that this week you are going to look at the Creed, a very important part of the Divine Liturgy. Using the liturgy books, go over the text of the Creed to make sure students understand what it means. Note: For this study, look only at the articles of faith, not the anathema that follows. (7 min.)
3. Tell the class that next week you're going to talk a little about the history of the Creed and how the Church developed it. Because this is the statement of our faith, of what we believe, it is a great privilege to say it. Only those who are in the Church have the privilege to say the Creed.

But like most privileges, it also brings responsibilities. We are responsible for trying to live by it.

With this introduction, have the class do the "Privileges and Responsibilities" exercise in the student text on pages 90 and 91. After they finish, talk about the Biblical passages. The first, from Matthew, speaks of the "talents" or opportunities to serve God that we've each been given. This is the privilege; the responsibility is to use them.

In Romans, our privilege is to receive God's grace. Paul then outlines our responsibility to use this grace in the best ways.

The reading from Timothy says that those who are privileged to be rich are responsible for using their money in generous ways.

In Hebrews we read that we're privileged to know God more closely than all the people of the Old Testament. So we are responsible, seeing all the wonderful things they did for God, to be his good servants too.

The reading from John's first letter says that we're privileged to be called God's children, and must therefore do what is right. (18 min.)

4. Now that the students have studied the Creed, let them make crossword puzzles about it. (They can use the Set-of-Six for an example.) Each student should try for about ten words, going up and down, which they can then "chart" on their graph paper by drawing heavy lines around the squares which the words will go in.

The students can use words directly from the Creed, such as "God the Father is the maker of heaven and \_\_\_\_\_ (earth)."

Or they can use descriptive statements like "The Creed tells what we \_\_\_\_\_ (believe)."

5. Next week during class, the students will try to do each other's puzzles. Collect them so you can make copies of each one for all class members. (15 min.)
6. Have students continue with Part Three of "My Badarak Book" in the student text.

7. Assign the "Numbers Puzzle" on page 92 for homework. Check answers next week:

*One*—baptism

*Two*—heaven & earth or visible and invisible things

*Three*—body, soul, mind

*Four*—suffered, was crucified, was buried, rose

*Five*—spoke in the Law

spoke in the Prophets

spoke in the Gospels

came down on the Jordan

preached in the Apostles

(10 min.)

7. Close with a prayer.

## Session 4—The Creed: How It Came to Be

### Key Concept

The Church formulated the Nicene Creed to express what all her members believe.

### Objective

Students will

State some basic facts about the Council of Nicaea at which the Creed was written.

### Background for Teacher

It's important for our students to realize that the Church is an historical reality. One way to help them see this is by talking about the Ecumenical Councils, in which the Church met together and formulated the beliefs that God has revealed to us.

This formulation, being done by human beings, was not without strife and disagreement. Yet the Holy Spirit was present, as God promised, and therefore people of good will *were* able to agree on what should be said.

However, there was at least one person present whose will was to convert the whole Church to his way of thinking—the learned and articulate Arius, who claimed that Christ was not co-eternal with his Father, but created by him. Arius was condemned by the council. The principle is that if a person cannot believe what the Church knows to be revealed by God, then that person cannot be part of the Church.

All these issues will be part of this lesson. (For a better understanding of all this, read further in Nersoyan's *History*.)

### Materials Needed

- Copies of student crossword puzzles from last time for each class member
- Pens and paper
- Bibles
- Copies of Nersoyan's *History* for each student
- Divine Liturgy books

• Special note: the DRE office has a filmstrip on the Council of Nicaea, accompanied by a tape. It runs 15 minutes. If it's available, you may want to show it as an *optional* part of this lesson. (We are not suggesting it as part of the given lesson plan.) Check with the DRE office to obtain the filmstrip.

#### Procedure

1. Open with a prayer. Check "Numbers Puzzle" quickly. Then have students exchange and complete each others' crossword puzzles, which they created last week. In a large class, you won't be able to complete every puzzle. Students can take the remainder home. (15 min.)

2. Tell the class that the Nicene Creed was formed by the Church as a clear statement of the truths that God revealed to her. This was done in a meeting of the whole Church, what we call an Ecumenical Council.

With this introduction, let the class read "A Creed Is Written" in the student text, and the story of St. Athanasius in the Nersoyan book. (15 min.)

3. In discussion with the class, make the following points:

a. We believe that the Holy Spirit is in and guides the Ecumenical Councils because Christ promised that the Spirit would be with his Church always. (Your class has already looked at the meeting at Jerusalem which Acts describes; now look together at Acts again. In Acts 15:22—where the *whole* Church makes a decision—and 15:28, the meeting of the church is linked with the presence of the Holy Spirit.)

b. A man like Arius is wrong in putting his own interpretation on what God has shown us. Read together

2 Peter 1:20-21, in which we are warned against just this thing.

c. Some people think that the disputes over theology were narrow-minded and unimportant. Yet, as we said before, they can affect our whole idea of God and salvation. Not only that, but these issues come up again and again. Today, in our own society, there are Arians — the Jehovah's Witnesses, who do not teach Christianity but teach instead the *heresy* which Christianity condemned so long ago. (Make sure your students know what "heresy" means.)

d. Look together at the "Anathema" which follows the Creed in the Divine Liturgy book (p. 13a). This was put there to show that the Armenian Church follows the Orthodox teaching of the Council of Nicaea, not the heresy of Arius.

"Anathematize" means here to denounce someone, to say that the person is no longer part of the Church because he has shown he cannot follow the Church's teachings and therefore doesn't *want* to be part of the Church. When someone is anathematized, it means the Church can no longer deal with him and must leave him to the mercy of God. (10 min.)

4. Have the students finish Part Four of "My Badarak Book."

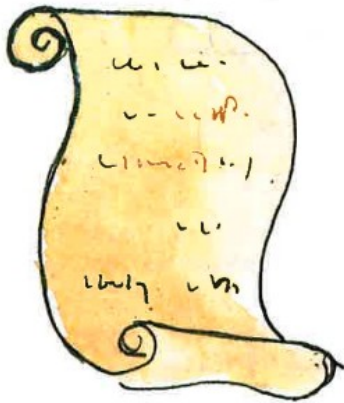
If there is time and students want to, you may discuss their answers on the "Ring the Bell" exercise.

Close with a prayer.

(20 min.)

Note: Encourage your students to look back over their answers and ideas in the four-part "My Badarak Book" in this unit. It will help them reflect on their place in the Church, and the place of the liturgy in their lives.

# The Creed: How It Came to Be



## A Creed Is Written

In the years after 312, something new happened to Christianity in the Roman Empire. The Emperor Constantine had made it a legal religion. This was wonderful in many ways. But it also gave freedom to some people with wrong ideas. Some of these people, rather than accept who Christ said he was, started to spread their own ideas about him. One of these men was a very intelligent but conceited man name Arius. He taught that God created Jesus Christ, just as he created us. This concept destroys the most basic teaching of Christianity — that Jesus Christ is God and is our Savior. For how can he save us if he's just another created being like us?

Yet Arius' teaching became very popular. Some people like to think they "know all about" God instead of admitting that what he does is a mystery too great for us to understand. So they liked this "simple" teaching of Arius.

The Emperor Constantine was concerned about the divisions among Christians, between those who followed Arius and those who did not. So in the year 325 he called a meeting of the whole Church, in the town of Nicaea. It was at this meeting — we call it the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea — that our Creed was formed. It was very important that everyone should know exactly what the Church taught, and that's why the Church wrote this Creed.

To learn more about all this and about the great St. Athanasius who challenged Arius at the Council, read the appropriate chapter in *Great Stories: From the History of the Armenian Church*.



## MY BADARAK BOOK Part Four

In studying the history of the Creed, you have learned about the Council of Nicaea, a

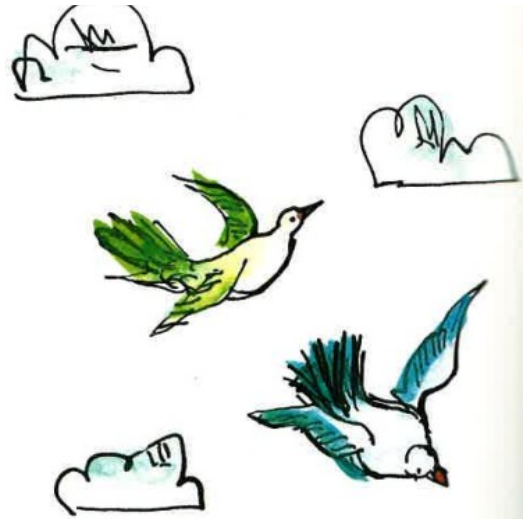
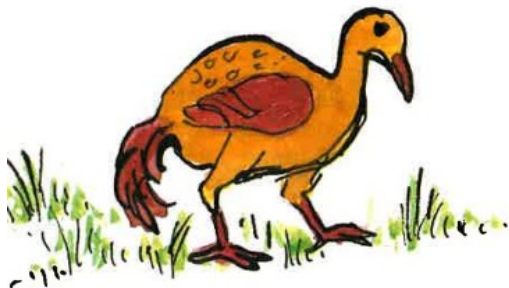
meeting of people who came together for very important reasons.

Have you ever been part of a group with a decision to make? This might be your family, a group of friends, or a group in school. Describe your experience here:

You read today about St. Athanasius, who kept to the true faith while many around him were following Arius. Do you think this was a hard thing to do? If so, why?

Perhaps you've been in a position of trying to hold onto what's right while others around you go wrong. Describe what that was like:

Now that you have studied the Creed, do you have any new thoughts about it? What might you think about the next time you hear it in church?



We have talked a lot today about beliefs. Here's an exercise to test your own beliefs.

## RING THE BELL

How much do you care about each of the following items? Put the letter next to each item in its appropriate place on the bell tower.

- A. Helping my country.
- B. The right to go to church without punishment by the government.
- C. The right to choose my own friends.
- D. The right to own a gun.
- E. The right of each person to hear the "Good News" of Christ.
- F. Becoming rich.
- G. Being popular.
- H. The right of everyone to learn to read.
- I. The right to vote.
- J. Defending my country.
- K. Defining my faith.