

## HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS St. Cyril of Jerusalem

On Saturday, February 22, the Armenian Church commemorates the life of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Gyooregh Yeroosaghema Hayrabed). One of the many defenders of the True Faith in the mid-fourth century, St. Cyril was bishop of Jerusalem 349-386.

Although the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325 had discredited the Arian heresy and its advocates, by the time Cyril became bishop, Arians had regained enough power in the Jerusalem Church to become a major concern again. The Arians were in fact able to have Cyril banished from his see three times during his tenure. It is almost incredulous to 20th century Christians that a bishop would be deposed over matters of faith. We find it easier to understand that a bishop might be removed from office for moral infractions or for political reasons, than for matters of faith. Yet it was just such faith-centered issues that were the core and concern of the 4th century Church. Bishop Cyril and other orthodox bishops fell victim to "takeovers" of their sees by people who subscribed to false teachings. Cyril's last exile, 367-378, was enforced by the Arian Emperor, Valens. When he finally returned to his see after the Emperor's death, he was faced by a city sunk in corruption and disorder, and devoted his last years to its reclamation.

Cyril is remembered principally for his educational talks, or *Catecheses*, on the sacraments. His gifted preaching and teaching provided instruction in the faith that the church in Jerusalem needed desperately. (Some excerpts from St. Cyril are found elsewhere in this issue.)

Cyril's teachings still have value for us today. In a time when Armenian Christians are seeking to better know the faith, Cyril's writings provide access to our centuries-old treasure, the Armenian Church.



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