

THADDEUS AND BARTHOLOMEW

December 1 (A Middle School Activity)



Write the words *Thaddeus* and *Bartholomew* on the board and draw a circle around it. Then proceed with a “webbing” exercise by asking the class to brainstorm about these two names. Tell the class: “I’ve written two names on the board. We’re celebrating the lives of these two saints on December 1, their feast day. What do you know about them?”

With each answer draw a line from the circle and add the word. Answers might include: saint, apostle, Pentecost, Armenia, King Sanandroog, Santookht, illuminators, disciple. If they draw a blank, add words yourself as you tell the story. Make sure you include the following:

- Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew received their commission to Armenia when all the apostles received the gift of languages at Pentecost. Have students open to *Acts 2:1-4* and read this brief story.
- Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew are called the first Illuminators of the Armenian people (St. Gregory being the second).
- St. Thaddeus went to Armenia first. Under the pagan King Sanandroog, Christianity in Armenia was outlawed. St. Thaddeus preached widely, winning the king’s daughter Princess Santookht, to Christ.
- In a traditional story, the princess was offered a crown or a sword by her father and chose martyrdom over worldly power.
- St. Bartholomew also preached widely, converting many pagan Armenians to Christianity, including the king’s sister, Vokoohi.
- The tombs of both saints, who were martyred for their faith, still exist in historic Armenia.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Why do you think it was important for the apostles to know the language of the lands they would travel to (and this was the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost)?
- 2 What would be some of the challenges facing you if you were going into a pagan land 1700 years ago to spread the Christian faith?
- 3 What do you think you would need to bring with you? (See *Matthew 10:9-10* for Jesus’ advice, keeping in mind the code of welcoming strangers with warm hospitality in Bible times.)
- 4 Think of the two royal princesses (Santookht and Vokoohi) who turned their back on wealth and power in order to accept Christ. What might have made their decision difficult? Easy?