

FAMILY BLESSING

One of the holy traditions of the Armenian Church is the Home Blessing Service, which according to St. Gregory of Datev was established by Our Savior Jesus Christ, when after His Resurrection He entered the upper room and blessed the disciples. When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (John. 20:19). During the apostolic times, the twelve apostles of Jesus visited the homes of the faithful to bless them and to spread the good news of Christ's birth and His Resurrection. Likewise their followers - priests and bishops, entered the homes of the faithful on the occasions of Christmas (Theophany) and Easter (Holy Resurrection) to tell the good news of our Lord's Nativity and to bless them and their homes through a special Service.

Through the Home Blessing Service, the house of the faithful becomes a small church. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:2). During the Service the priest prays to God and asks Him to keep the home, its inhabitants, and the children in good health, so that they live a devout life, glorify the name of Almighty God and heighten the Holy Church.

Since March, I have not been able to conduct home blessings because of the pandemic. During the warm days of summer and fall, however, I was able to make a few porch and backyard visits and conduct *Antasdan* (blessing of the fields) in your gardens. The weather does not allow me to continue doing this, and the numbers in our area continue to make it inadvisable to enter your homes at least for the immediate future.

But all is not lost: I invite you to schedule a time for your family to visit St. James during the week or over the weekend to receive the blessings of the church. During your brief visit, I will conduct a family blessing service and bless a piece of bread and a small container of salt that you can take back home along with a candle. This way we can keep up our tradition of seasonal home/family blessings in a safe manner.

Please contact me directly to arrange your visit. If you decide to come, please keep in mind that based on current regulations, everyone entering church must wear a mask (unless a child is under two years old), sanitize their hands and maintain six-foot social distancing. I will schedule only one family at a time, and the section of the sanctuary we will be using will be disinfected after each visit.

With anticipation of Christ's birth and renewed hope for the New Year,

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