

For St. James Sunday School Students – 12/20/2020

Sunday School continues with 1 p.m. Zoom connection

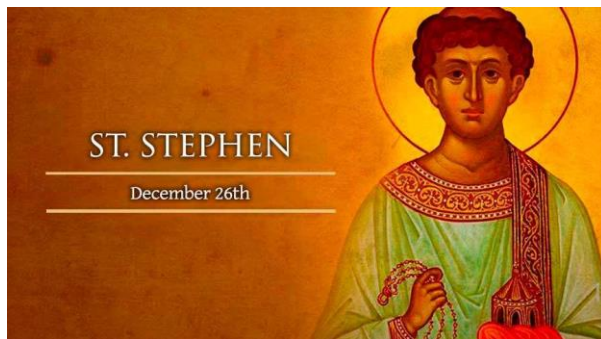
Your Sunday School teachers hope you can join us and your classmates for a Zoom connection this Sunday. As the school year unfolds, our No. 1 priority is to keep you and your families safe and healthy. For our 15th session of the 2020-21 school year, please join us on Zoom at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 20, for a half-hour virtual get-together to talk about ADVENT and keep each other up to date on how things are going in these challenging times! Please remember to ask your parents about Der Hovhan's invitation for families to visit St. James during this special season.

Meeting Link, ID and Passcode for 1 p.m. Sunday

Join Zoom Meeting
Meeting ID: 868 4365 2110
Passcode: D1ytrp

Also, please view this [video](#) showing what happens when **Santa Claus** visits an Armenian home!

Saturday, December 26 is the Feast of St. Stephen



Stephen was a devout believer, ordained along with six others to serve the poor at the common table. Acts 6-8:2 relates his story, culminating in his death by stoning and his burial. He is acknowledged by the Church as the first to die for his faith (protomartyr). The intensity and sincerity of St. Stephen's faith deeply impressed Saul, the infamous persecutor of Christians who witnessed Stephen's martyrdom. Upon his own conversion, he became Paul, zealous apostle. St.

Stephen is the role model for altar servers, particularly deacons. During Badarak on this feast day, it is traditional in some places for all deacons serving at the altar to wear a liturgical crown, which is worn only by priests on all other days of the year, the crown being in this instance a symbol of martyrdom. St. Stephen is often depicted holding a censer and a miniature church.

Reflection: When challenged, Stephen eloquently recounted the history of his faith community (starting with the patriarch Abraham!); can you do the same?

Bible Readings for Sunday, Dec. 20

From Today's Readings

Luke 18:9-14 “To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else” (v. 9), Jesus tells the story of a Pharisee and a tax collector. In this famous parable, the Pharisee looks upon himself as deserving of God’s favor since he dutifully fulfills all his religious obligations. Prideful, he has only contempt for the tax collector, who prays in humility, openly dependent on God’s grace. Reversing people’s expectations, Jesus cites the unpopular tax collector as the one whose prayer is heard and whose faith is honored by God. *Discuss/reflect: In what ways might your rote religious ‘habits’ (worship, prayer, stewardship) be keeping you from knowing who God really is?*

Hebrews 4:16-5:10 When he speaks of Jesus as the ultimate High Priest, the writer of Hebrews is specifically addressing Jews nostalgic for the sacrifices and rituals of the Temple in Jerusalem. He cites the earthly high priests as appointed to represent the people before God, offer sacrifices for their sins, and save those going astray. These tasks bear ultimate fruit in Jesus, God the Son, designated High Priest by the Father and the source of salvation to all who obey Him. *Discuss/reflect: Read verse 16 prayerfully. What must we do to receive mercy and find grace, especially in times of distress? How confident are you in approaching God?*

Isaiah 40:18-31 In a series of rhetorical questions reminiscent of God speaking to Job from the whirlwind (Job 38-41), we are reminded of the greatness of the eternal God, the Creator of all. *Discuss/reflect: Verse 31 is a call to faith: “those who hope in the Lord will not grow weary but will soar on wings like eagles.” God is tireless; even the young and physically robust can weary (v. 28). What strength do you need to draw from the Lord?*



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