



Սուրբ Գրիգոր Լուսավորիչ
Άγιος Γρηγόριος Φωστήρ ή Φωτιστής
Saint Gregory the Illuminator or the Enlightener

Saint Gregory the Illuminator or Saint Gregory the Enlightener (Armenian: Գրիգոր Լուսավորիչ translit. *Western Armenian: Krikor Lousavoritch, Eastern Armenian: Grigor Lusavorich, Greek: Γρηγόριος Φωστήρ or Φωτιστής, Gregorios Phoster or Photistes*) (c. 257 – c. 331) is the patron saint and first official head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. He was a religious leader who is credited with converting Armenia from paganism to Christianity, being the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion in 301 AD.



[Source: <http://www.armenianchurch.net/church/gregory1.html>]

His Early Years

St. Gregory, whose birth name was Suren, was the son of Prince Anag, who was sent to Armenia by the Sasanian, King of Kings of Iran, to assassinate King Khosrov of Armenia and facilitate the Iranian occupation of that country. Our ancestors were convinced that St. Gregory had received the grace of the Apostle because he was conceived near the grave of the Holy Apostle Thaddeus, the first enlightener of Armenia.

Anag and his brother succeeded in murdering King Khosrov in the city of Vagharshabad in about A.D. 240. They fled in haste, but the Armenian contingents stopped them near the city of Ardashad and slew Anag's entire family. Only two infants, Gregory and his brother, were saved from the massacre. Their Christian nurse Sophia took the boys to Caesarea to Eski Shehir, southwest of modern Kayseri in Anatolian Turkey.

In Caesarea Gregory was christened and brought up as a Christian. It is believed that St. Firmilian, the learned bishop of Caesarea, paid special attention to his education. When Gregory was of age,

he married a Christian girl named Mariam, daughter of David. Mariam's brother was St. Athenogenes, prelate of Bedochton, who was later martyred and is well known from the works of early Christian writers.

Gregory and Mariam had two sons, Vrtanes and Arisdages. Three years after Arisdages' birth, the couple willingly decided to part from each other. The elder child, Vrtanes, was placed in the care of his nurse and Mariam took the younger Arisdages with her as she withdrew to a convent. The custom of Christian couples dissolving their marriage ties to seek monastic life was common in the fourth century. Gregory himself headed for Armenia to serve as King Drtad's secretary. At the time of King Khosrov's assassination, Drtad, the king's son and heir to the throne, was still an infant. Drtad was saved and taken to Roman territory. Also saved was Drtad's sister Khosrovitukhd. Drtad was raised under Roman protection and later joined the Roman legions. He achieved fame as a valiant soldier and the Romans recognized Drtad as king of Armenia and helped him to reclaim his ancestral throne in 274. While eastern Armenia was still under Iranian sovereignty, Drtad ruled for two years before he was ousted from his kingdom.

St. Gregory Reveals His Christian Identity

It was at that time (between 274 and 276) that Gregory, who had found out about his father's vile deed, decided entered the service of Drtad under a false identity to make amends. He pursued his duties faithfully over a period of several years. Drtad, once again with Roman help, was permanently established on the throne of western (Roman) Armenia in 287. Soon after, the relationship between him and Gregory deteriorated. The ceremony of thanksgiving and sacrifice to the pagan goddess Anahid in the village of Yeres (province of Yegeghik in western Armenia), following Drtad's great victory over the Persians. When Gregory refused to offer wreaths and thick branches of trees to the altar of the goddess at the king's request, he was incarcerated. During an interrogation by Drtad, Gregory remained firm in his faith in Christ and confessed that he feared God and worshipped the Holy Trinity.

In reckoning his father's heinous deed by enlightening our people with the Divine light, he gave the posterity of those who suffered the loss of a king and independence, and opportunity to inherit eternal life in the kingdom of God.

St. Gregory's Passion

St. Gregory's passion, described in detail by the fifth century writer Agathangelos, and perhaps presented with exaggerations, reminds us how enduring one becomes through faith and prayer. St. Gregory constantly attributed his perseverance to divine intervention.

Enraged by Gregory's boldness, King Drtad ordered him to be subjected to twelve different kinds of torture at a site located to the immediate south of Erez, the present-day city of Erzinjan in Turkey. A monastery dedicated to the passion of St. Gregory was erected at this site.

Gregory's hands were bound behind him and he was gagged. A block of salt was attached to his back, a harness was placed around his chest, and he was tied with cords and suspended him from a high place in the palace. The cross-examination continued and Gregory refused to give in. The process was repeated to no avail, since Gregory was resolute in his dedication to Christ.

The second torture was more severe. For seven days he was suspended, upside down from one foot, as dung was burned from below and ten men flogged him with green rods. Throughout the ordeal Gregory never ceased from praying for the salvation awaiting him. At the completion of the second torture, Gregory was ready to receive eternal life and dared the king to execute him. But Drtad wanted to punish him for his insulting attitude towards the gods of the state and for his obstinacy.

He ordered his shins and feet to be stretched with cords between blocks of wood until they were bloody. When Gregory defied the pain, Drtad commanded the attendants to drive nails through

the soles of his feet. As they made him walk on his feet, blood gushed out and covered the earth. Then they delivered punches to his head, but he did not sway from his faith. His head was placed in a carpenter's vice and a mixture of salt, borax and rough vinegar was poured into his nose by means of a reed tube. Not content with this, they tied a sheepskin sack around his neck half-filled with cinders and left him in that state for six days.

He was once again brought to stand before the king. Gregory's defiance convinced the king that the tortures had not been strong enough to break him. He ordered him to be turned upside down so that water would be poured into his belly by means of a funnel. Then the tormentors shredded the flesh on his flanks with iron scrapers, so that blood gushed out. Following this torture, iron thistles were brought and spread on the ground. Gregory was thrown on these naked and was pushed and pulled until his *entire body* was torn.

When the king expressed amazement about his endurance once again, Gregory replied that it was due to the grace of God. Enraged at the answer, Drtad ordered the attendants to put iron leggings on his knees and strike them with heavy hammers. Gregory was suspended from the gallows and was left there for three days until his knees were broken. Still unyielding, Gregory was subjected to the most horrible torment. Lead was melted in iron cauldrons and poured over his entire body, so that his flesh was completely burned. He miraculously survived this torture as well.

The king was now ready to speak to him in milder terms, when one of the courtiers disclosed to him the true identity of Gregory as the son of the notorious Anag. At the order of the king, Gregory was bound hand and foot and neck and incarcerated in a dungeon. The site of this dungeon was located in the vestry of the St. Gregory the Illuminator Monastery in Karin (modern Erzurum), a pilgrimage site until 1915.

St. Gregory Is Committed to the Pit

From his dungeon in Karin, St. Gregory was transferred to the city of Ardashad and thrown into a bottomless pit reserved for notorious criminals condemned to death and located in the citadel of that town. The bottom was muddy mire where snakes thrived and the air was bad. Those confined there suffered a sure death as a result of the unsavory surroundings.

It is reported that Gregory survived in the pit for thirteen years. Gregory's survival was made possible through the charity of a widow who lived in the fortress where the dungeon was located. She had received a command in a dream to prepare a loaf of bread everyday and throw it down into the pit. That served as the source of Gregory's sustenance for thirteen years. At the site of the bottomless pit there is now a monastery, called *Khor Virabi vank* (Monastery of Khor Virab, a place of pilgrimage facing Mount Ararat and almost on the border of present-day Armenia and Turkey). Above the pit there now a small chapel and at the bottom there is yet another small chapel where the pilgrims light candles and pray. The original pit was twice as deep as it is today. As it was very difficult for pilgrims to descend into it, the lower half was filled at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Today, a visitor must descend by means of a metal ladder with 25 rungs. The entrance to the pit is a circular vortex with a diameter of about five or six meters. Within the monastic complex itself there is also a domed church that was originally dedicated to the Mother of God. The present seventeenth century sanctuary, called St. Gregory the Illuminator, replaced the former church.

The Feast of St. Gregory's Commitment to the pit is at present a day of pilgrimage to Khor Virab in the Republic of Armenia. During the night and morning liturgical hours on that day special hymns dedicated to St. Gregory's commitment to the pit are chanted in all of our churches throughout the world. These hymns, grouped together as a "canon," are attributed to the thirteenth century theologian and poet Hovhannes Bluz Vartabed of Erzinjan.

Right-Hand Relics

can be found at Etchmiadzin in Armenia and at the Holy See of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon



The Saint's Head

[Controversial...]

Wikipedia states that his head is believed to be now in the Church and Monastery of San Grgorio Armeno in Naples, Italy



San Gregorio Armeno ("St. Gregory of Armenia") is a church and a monastery in Naples, Italy. "San Gregorio Armeno in Naples was built in that century over the remains of a Roman temple dedicated to Ceres, by a group of nuns escaping from the Byzantine Empire with the relics of St. Gregory, bishop of Armenia."

[source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Gregorio_Armeno]

Orthodox sources state that it is located at the Megistis Lavras Monastery in Agion Oros, Mount Athos, Greece

"Στη Μονή βρίσκονται αποθησαυρισμένα Ιερά Λείψανα μεγάλων Αγίων της Ορθοδοξίας, τα οποία σκέπουν τη Μονή και αποτελούν μεγάλη παρακαταθήκη για το «Περιβόλι της Παναγίας» αλλά και ιδιαίτερη ευλογία για τη χώρα μας. Μεταξύ των πολλών λειψάνων αναφέρουμε τα κυριότερα: την τίμια κάρα του Αγίου Βασιλείου και του Αγίου Αλεξάνδρου του εν Πύδνη, αφιερώματα του Αυτοκράτορα Νικηφόρου Φωκά, τη θαυματουργή κάρα του Αγίου Μιχαήλ Συνάδων, τη κάρα του Αγίου Ευστρατίου και το βραχίονα του Αγίου Ιωάννου του Θεολόγου, αφιερώματα του Αυτοκράτορα Βασιλείου Β' του Βουλγαροκτόνου και **την κάρα του Αγίου Ιερομάρτυρος Γρηγορίου επισκόπου της Αρμενίας.**"

[source: http://www.orthodoxia.gr/printer_friendly.cfm?id=969&obcatid=3]

St. Gregory Illuminator



A beautiful Byzantine mosaic from the Church of Pammacaristos (now Fetiye camii) in Istanbul



A statue in one of the exterior niches of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican



The Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates the memory of St. Gregory the Illuminator in three distinct feasts

[Source: <http://www.araratian-tem.am/holidays.php?id=10>]

1st Feast: Commemoration of St. Gregory the Illuminator's torments and commitment to the pit

This feast is the first one among the three commemoration days dedicated to the memory of St. Gregory the Illuminator, the first Catholicos of All Armenians. According to the Armenian Church Calendar, it is celebrated on the eve of the Fifth Sunday during the period of Great Lent. The feast is dedicated to the torments which St. Gregory suffered during his imprisonment.

According to historical sources, St. Gregory the Illuminator was the son of Anak Partev, a knight and nobleman, who killed the Armenian King Khosrov Arshakouni. In retaliation, Anak is executed by the Armenians. His son, Gregory, lived and studied in Caesarea, and was brought up as a pious Christian. Gregory returns to Armenia as an adult and becomes a member of the royal court. King Tiridates (Trdat), the son of King Khosrov and heir to the throne, appoints Gregory as the Chancellor of the Armenian Kingdom. Tiridates, learning that Gregory is a Christian and the son of Anak, subjects him to severe tortures and commits Gregory to death, by imprisoning him in a deep underground pit.

In 301 A.D., after spending 13 years in the pit, St. Gregory the Illuminator is freed from the dungeon and emerges to spread the Light of Christ in Armenia. He thus becomes

the first pontiff of the Armenian Church, baptizes the royal family, and evangelizes the whole of the Armenian Nation. Armenia becomes the first nation in the world to officially proclaim Christianity as her state religion.

St. Gregory the Illuminator is recognized by all of Christendom as a Saint, and he is commemorated in all traditional Christian Churches.



2nd Feast: Feast of St. Gregory the Illuminator's deliverance from the pit

In the year 301 AD, the deliverance of St. Gregory the Illuminator from the pit, was the catalyst that began the "Great Conversion" of Armenia from the darkness of paganism to the Light of Christianity.

Following the martyrdom of the Christian nuns, led by St. Hripsime and St. Gayane, upon the order of the Armenian pagan King Tiridates, the ruler becomes seriously ill. The sister of the king, Khosrovidoukht, has a dream where it is revealed to her that the only remedy for the king's condition is to free St. Gregory, still imprisoned in the dungeon, and that he alone could cure the malady. Thirteen years following his imprisonment in the "deep pit" of Artashat, the royal court submits to the request of Khosrovidoukht and frees the Christian Gregory. With the intercession of Gregory's prayers, the king recovers, Gregory becomes the patron saint of the Armenian Church, and Tiridates, and his wife - Queen Ashkhen, become ardent supporters in Gregory's efforts to preach Christianity throughout Armenia, and baptize the Armenian nation.

Pagan temples and statues are destroyed in Armenia, and replaced with Dominical Crosses in their locations. Christianity is proclaimed by the King and the Catholicos to be the state religion of Armenia, the first nation in the world to do so. St. Gregory is sent to Caesarea, where he is consecrated as the first Pontiff of the Armenian Church, and becomes the first Catholicos of All Armenians.

The feast of St. Gregory the Illuminator's Deliverance from the Pit is one of the greatest of the Armenian Church. A solemn Divine Liturgy is celebrated in all Armenian Churches on this day.

3rd Feast: Commemoration Day of the discovery of the Relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator



The Commemoration Day of the discovery of the relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator is one of the three significant feast days dedicated to the memory of the Patron Saint of Armenia.

According to Holy Tradition, following Armenia's conversion to Christianity, in his final years, St. Gregory led an ascetic life in the cave of Mane on the Mountain named Sepuh where he died in 326 A.D. Shepherds, finding his body, buried him not recognizing the Armenian Pontiff. One of his students, Garnik from Basen sees a vision, where Gregory identifies the location of his relics. The relics were thereupon transferred to the village of Tordan, in the province of Daranagh, and buried there.

The relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator are one of our most revered within the Armenian Church, as well as all Christian Churches. Following their discovery, some were taken to various places for safekeeping, among them Vagharshapat (Etchmiadzin), Byzantium, and Italy. The Right Hand of the Saint, preserved in the Mother See of

Holy Etchmiadzin, is one of the most important sanctities of the Armenian Church, and is used by the Catholicos of All Armenians during the blessing of the Holy Chrism (Muron). To commemorate the day, Divine Liturgy is celebrated in our Churches.

St. Gregory is honoured on the 30th of September by both the Byzantine (Greek Orthodox) and Latin (Roman Catholic) churches



Γρηγόριος ο Φωτιστής

Ανάμεσα στους αγίους άνδρας, στους οποίους οφείλεται ο εκχριστιανισμός ολόκληρων λαών, είναι ο Γρηγόριος ο Φωτιστής, του οποίου η Εκκλησία σήμερα γιορτάζει την μνήμη. Ο άγιος Γρηγόριος, αφού πρώτα έζησε βίον μαρτυρικό, χάριν της πίστεώς του κι εξ αιτίας της αγριότητας του ειδωλολάτρου βασιλέως της Αρμενίας, έπειτα σαν βραβείο και σαν έπαθλο της μεγάλης πίστεώς του, αξιόθηκε να γίνη πραγματικά ο φωτιστής του λαού του, αφού πρώτα βάπτισε τον ίδιο τον πρωτότερο διώκτη του και βασανιστή βασιλέα. Λίγοι άνθρωποι σαν τον Γρηγόριο, υπέφεραν τόσα βασανιστήρια κι έμειναν ακλόνητοι στην πίστη τους - αυτό είναι προνόμιο των αγίων Μαρτύρων. Μα και λίγοι άνθρωποι, σαν τον άγιο Γρηγόριο, συνέδεσαν το όνομά τους και το έργο τους με τον εκχριστιανισμό ενός ολόκληρου λαού - αυτό είναι από τα άθλα των Αποστόλων. Μάρτυς και Απόστολος υπήρξε ο άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Φωτιστής.

[source: <http://www.ec-patr.org/gr/saints/m09-30.htm>]

Εορτάζοντες την 30ην του μηνός Σεπτεμβρίου
Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΣ ο Ιερομάρτυρας επίσκοπος της
Μεγάλης Αρμενίας
ΟΙ ΑΓΙΕΣ ΡΙΨΙΜΙΑ (ή Ριψίμη), **ΓΑΪΑΝΗ** και άλλες **32**
ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΜΑΡΤΥΡΕΣ

Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΣ ο Ιερομάρτυρας επίσκοπος της
Μεγάλης Αρμενίας

Ο Γρηγόριος ήταν γιος του Ανάκ, πού ήταν συγγενής του βασιλιά της Μεγάλης Αρμενίας, Κουσαρώ (290 μ.Χ.). ο Ανάκ, λοιπόν, σε συνεργασία με το βασιλιά των Περσών Αρτασίερα, σκότωσε τον Κουσαρώ. Άλλα οι σατράπες της Αρμενίας έκδικήθηκαν το φόνο του, σκοτώνοντας τον Ανάκ και όλη του την οικογένεια. Διασώθηκαν μόνο δύο παιδιά του, πού ένας ήταν ο Γρηγόριος. Στην Καισαρεία συνέβη να συναντηθούν ο γιος του φονιά Ανάκ, Γρηγόριος, και ο γιος του θύματος Τηριδάτης. Τότε ο Γρηγόριος σπούδαζε με ζήλο τα Ιερά γράμματα, (στην Καισαρεία της Καππαδοκίας από τον εκεί αρχιεπίσκοπο Λεόντιο), πού μεταξύ άλλων λένε: "τελείων δε

εστίν ή στερεά τροφή, των δια την έξιν τα αισθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα εχόντων προς διάκρισιν καλού τε και κακού"1. Δηλαδή, ή στερεά και υψηλότερη πνευματική τροφή είναι για τους τέλειους χριστιανούς, πού από την άσκηση έχουν τα πνευματικά αισθητήρια γυμνασμένα στο να διακρίνουν εύκολα μεταξύ του καλού και κακού. Γυμνασμένος, λοιπόν, και ο Γρηγόριος στη διάκριση, όχι μόνο δεν αποστράφηκε τον Τηριδάτη, αλλά τον πλησίασε με αγάπη, αποδοκίμασε την πράξη του πατέρα του και τον βοήθησε σε κάποια ασθένεια του. Όταν αργότερα ο Τηριδάτης έγινε βασιλιάς Αρμενίας, βασάνισε φρικτά τον Γρηγόριο (πού τότε ήταν επίσκοπος Αρμενίας). ο Θεός, όμως, επέτρεψε να γίνει ο Τηριδάτης σχιζοφρενής. Αλλα δια των προσευχών του Γρηγορίου θεραπεύθηκε, μετανόησε και βαπτίσθηκε χριστιανός με όλο του το έθνος. 1.πρός Εβραίους, ε' 14.



ΟΙ ΑΓΙΕΣ ΡΙΨΙΜΙΑ (ή Ριψίμη), ΓΑΪΑΝΗ και άλλες 32 ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΜΑΡΤΥΡΕΣ

Ή Ριψιμία μαρτύρησε στα χρόνια του Διοκλητιανού (284-304). Ήταν όμορφη στο σώμα και σεμνή στο ήθος (κατ' άλλους και μοναχή). Επειδή δεν δέχτηκε την πρόταση του Διοκλητιανού να γίνει γυναίκα του, κατέφυγε μαζί με την γερόντισσα Γαϊανή, πού λέγεται ότι ήταν καθηγουμένη της Ριψιμίας, στην Αρμενία. ο βασιλιάς όμως της Αρμενίας Τηριδάτης, άκουσε για την ομορφιά της Ριψιμίας και θέλησε και αυτός να την κάνει γυναίκα του. Αλλ' ή αγνή Ριψιμία αρνήθηκε και έτσι κίνησε την οργή του Τηριδάτη, ο όποιος διέταξε να τη βρουν και να τη συλλάβουν. ΟΙ απεσταλμένοι του τη βρήκαν γύρω από τα μέρη του Αραράτ, όπου κρυβόταν. Εκεί λοιπόν, οι βάρβαροι, της έβγαλαν τα μάτια, κατόπιν έκοψαν τη γλώσσα της και στο τέλος έκοψαν το σώμα της σε μικρά κομμάτια. Έτσι ή Αγία Ριψιμία, παρέδωσε την αγνή ψυχή της στον στεφανοδότη Χριστό. Μαζί όμως με τη Ριψιμία, μαρτύρησαν με φρικτά βασανιστήρια και ή γερόντισσα Γαϊανή, καθώς και 32 Παρθενομάρτυρες. Άλλοι αναφέρουν ότι, μαζί με τις Αγίες αυτές μαρτύρησαν και 70 άνδρες, πού κρύβονταν σ' εκείνα τα μέρη.

[source: http://www.pigizois.net/sinaxaristis/09/30_09.htm]



Ο άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Φωτιστής των Αρμενίων

Η Εκκλησία σήμερα εορτάζει τη μνήμη του αγίου Γρηγορίου του Φωτιστού των Αρμενίων που έζησε τον 3ο μ.Χ. αιώνα. Ο άγιος Γρηγόριος ήταν γιος του πρίγκιπα Ανά, ο οποίος μετά από συμφωνία με τους Πέρσες Σασανίδες, δολοφόνησε τον βασιλέα Χοσρόη, αλλά οι ακόλουθοι του βασιλιά εξεγέρθηκαν και σκότωσαν για αντίποινα αυτόν και την οικογένειά του το 238, εκτός από τον μικρό του γιο τον Σουρέν, που φυγάδεψε η τροφός του στην Καισάρεια. Εκεί, το παιδί ανατράφηκε σαν χριστιανός κι αφού βαπτίστηκε, πήρε το όνομα Γρηγόριος. Αφού απέκτησε μεγάλη μόρφωση νυμφεύθηκε τη Μαριάμ κι απέκτησαν δύο παιδιά. Όμως, μετά από κοινή συμφωνία η μεν Μαριάμ ακολούθησε το μοναχισμό και ο δε Γρηγόριος τον ασκητισμό. Όταν ο πρίγκιπας Τιριδάτης, ο γιος του Χοσρόη, ανακράθηκε βασιλιάς της Αρμενίας θέλησε να θυ-

σιάσει στη θεά Άρτεμη και σύμφωνα με την παράδοση ζήτησε να το κάνει ο γραμματέας του, που δεν ήταν άλλος από τον άγιο Γρηγόριο. Ο άγιος αρνήθηκε ομολογώντας ότι είναι χριστιανός κι ο βασιλιάς διέταξε να τον υποβάλουν σε βασανιστήρια. Όταν δε, έμαθε ότι είναι και ο γιος του δολοφόνου του πατέρα του διέταξε και τον έβαλαν σ' ένα βαθύ λάκκο για να πεθάνει. Όμως, ο άγιος παρέμεινε ζωντανός 13 αλάκερα χρόνια, διότι μια χριστιανή του έφερνε κάθε μέρα λίγο βρεμένο ψωμί. Όταν ο Τιριδάτης αρρώστησε, σύμφωνα με την παράδοση, θεραπεύτηκε από τον άγιο Γρηγόριο κι αφού πίστεψε και βαπτίστηκε χριστιανός, από τον άγιο, ανακήρυξε τον χριστιανισμό επίσημη θρησκεία του κράτους. Ο δε άγιος Γρηγόριος αφού χειροτονήθηκε επίσκοπος Αρμενίων και βάπτισε χιλιάδες πιστούς εκοιμήθη ειρηνικά.



Εφημερίδα «Πολίτης», 30 Σεπτεμβρίου 2009

St. Gregory the Enlightener



Gregory the Enlightener was also surnamed the Illuminator. He is of unknown origins, but unreliable tradition has him the son of Anak, a Parthian who murdered King Khosrov I of Armenia when Gregory was a baby. The infant Gregory was smuggled to Caesarea to escape the dying Khosrov's order to murder the entire family, was baptized, married, and had two sons. When King Khosrov's son, Tiridates, regained his father's throne, Gregory was permitted to return, but he incurred the King's displeasure by his support of the Armenian Christians and his conversion activities. In time, Tiridates was converted to Christianity by Gregory and proclaimed Christianity the official religion of Armenia. Gregory was consecrated bishop of Ashtishat, set about organizing the Church in Armenia and building a native clergy, and worked untiringly to evangelize the Armenians. Curiously enough, he set into motion the process that was to make his See a hereditary episcopate when he consecrated his son

Aristakes to succeed him. He then retired to a hermitage on Mount Manyea in Taron and remained there until his death. Many extravagant legends and miracles were attributed to him, many of which are celebrated as feasts by the Armenians. He is considered the apostle of Armenia. His feast day is September 30th.

[source: http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=122]