

Basic Rules and Manners in the Armenian Apostolic Church

The Scripture says: “GUARD YOUR STEPS WHEN YOU GO TO THE HOUSE OF GOD. GO NEAR TO LISTEN...” (Ecc.5:1)

Church Attendance: We should all strive to come to church regularly and on time. Our church service begins at 9:30 for early morning services. Badarak commences at 10:00 AM. Efforts should be made to acquire the habit of arriving at church at the beginning of the service, but if we cannot, there is no need to feel embarrassed. It is better for you to arrive a bit late than not attend at all. Ideally, early comers should take the pews up front and leave the back ones for late comers so there will be least amount of distraction.

Entering the church: Your entrance into the church must be reverent and respectful. While entering, if you find that the Bible is being read, or if the Havadamk (The Nicene Creed) is in the progress, stay in the vestibule or back of the church until it is over. Other times to wait before entering the church are:

- During the Hayr Mer (Lord’s Prayer)
- If the choir is singing Soorp, Soorp (Holy, Holy)
- If the choir is singing Miayn Soorp, Miayn Der (One is Holy, One is Lord)
- If the choir is singing Der Voghormia., (Lord, have Mercy)

At all the above indicated times, wait until the particular hymn, prayer, etc. is completed before entering the church. When you take your place in the pew, bow your head, make the sign of the cross, and inaudibly say a personal prayers or the “Lord’s Prayer.” You are now ready to participate in the service.

General Manners in the Church: An attitude of reverence and respect forms the foundation of our church manners. Concentration on the ceremony should be our main concern. Therefore, heads turned to look for friends, and other similar distractive motions are bad manners in church. Other general rules are as follows:

- Dress in modest and appropriate clothing. Think of how you would want to look if you were standing in front of God Himself.
- No gum chewing or eating of any kind.
- Do not cross your legs while sitting. It is a sign of “casualness” that is considered irreverent
- Do not stretch or place arms on pews or across the backs or pews.
- Do not walk from the middle aisle.

Participation: Always keep in mind you are not a spectator, but a participant in the church services, Upon entering the church take a liturgy book, turn to the specified page and follow the services. This way you will be able to follow the actual Liturgy Book and understand its meaning. Our church utilizes an electrical device on the wall above the choir to depict the appropriate pages for the service.

The Liturgy Book will also instruct you as to the proper time to sit, stand, or kneel during the service. You are encouraged to sing along with the choir do not sing, however, with the officiating Priest and the person serving as Deacon at the Altar.

Leaving Church: Your departure from church should be as reverent and as orderly as your entrance. When the service is over, the congregation should come forward, kiss the Gospel and receive Der Hayr’s personal blessings and cross yourself before exiting. Greeting others, shaking hands and having conversations should wait until you are out of the church proper.