

ՄԲ ՍԱՐԳԻՍ ԶՈՐԱՎԱՐԻ ՏՈՆ  
Երիտասարդների եւ Սիրտ Բարեխոս



# *Feast of St. Sarkis*

the warrior patron of love and youth

**Armenian Church Youth of Australia  
proudly presents**

# **ST. SARKIS DAY**

**Youth Blessing Service**

Երիտասարդների Օրհնություն

**In the tradition of the Armenian Church you are invited  
to take part in a special blessing ceremony presided by:**

**His Eminence Archbishop Aghan Baliozian**

**Primate of the**

**Diocese of the Armenian Church of  
Australia and New Zealand**

**on Friday, 3rd February 2012, at 7:00pm  
at the Armenian Apostolic Church of Holy Resurrection  
10 Macquarie Street Chatswood 2067**

By the order of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, the Feast of St Sarkis the Captain and his Companions is proclaimed a day of blessing of the youth. Together with his 14 soldiers, St Sarkis was martyred for the sake of Christian faith.





# FEAST OF ST. SARKIS THE WARRIOR

patron saint of love and youth,  
his son Martyros and  
his 14 soldiers and companions



## Day of Blessing of the Youth

By the order of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, the Feast of St. Sarkis the Captain and his soldiers-companions is proclaimed day of blessing of the youth.

Captain St. Sarkis is one of the most beloved saints among the Armenian nation. Together with his 14 soldiers-companions he was martyred for the sake of Christian faith.

During the period of reign of the king Kostandianos the Great (285-337) St. Sarkis, being very courageous, was appointed the prince and General in chief of the region of Cappadocia bordering Armenia. When during the period of reign of the king Julianos the Betrayer (360-363) the persecutions against Christians started by God's will St. Sarkis and his only son – Martyros, came to live in Armenia, and the Armenian king Tiran, grandson of Tiridates, received them very well. From Armenia St. Sarkis and his son went to Persia, and started serving in the army of the Persian king Shapouh as the captain of regiments. Become aware of the fact that Sarkis was Christian the king Shapouh ordered him to worship the fire and offer sacrifice to the heathen gods. But the captain immediately refused to obey the order saying, "We should worship one God - the Holy Trinity, which has created the earth and the heaven. Whereas fire or idols are not gods and the human being may destroy them." After these words the saint destroyed the temple. The annoyed crowd fell on the saint and his son. First the son of the saint was martyred. The saint was put into prison and remaining unshaken in his faith was beheaded.

After the martyrdom of the saint, light appeared over his body. 14 soldiers-companions of the saint also were martyred for the sake of Christian faith.

For the Armenian nation St. Sarkis is one of the most beloved. It isn't casual that St. Mesrop Mashtots brought the relics of the saint to the village Karbi (Ashtarak Region) and the Church of St. Sarkis was built over his relics.

Sts. Atomians were the Armenian captains Atom Gnouni and Manajihir Reshtouni who together with their regiments served in the Persian royal court during the period of reign of the idolater king Hazkert. Upon the excitation of archimagi king Hazkert started persecutions against Christians in order to eradicate Christian faith in Persia. Captains Atom Gnouni and Manajihir Reshtouni received an edict from Hazkert inviting the captains together with their regiments to the royal palace with the intention of forcing them to apostasy. At first the Armenian captains obeyed the order, but being aware of the trap prepared by the king they started back home and on their way home they stopped in the province of Andzevatsyats. Becoming aware of the numerous Persian Army persecuting them soldiers of the captain Atom Gnouni, encouraged by the prophesy of a saint hermit living on the mountain preferred voluntary martyrdom. Persian Army reaching the Armenian regiment surrounded them and killed the saints by words. Whereas Manajihir Reshtouni and his soldiers reached his native land – Reshtounik, where he confessed his being Christian and was martyred in 449 AD.

## St. Sarkis, Patron of Youth and Love

In Armenia it is accepted to celebrate the Feast of St. Sarkis not only according to church rites and prayer, but also according to various folk traditions. St. Sarkis the Captain is the patron of youth. Many miracles happen thanks to his intercession. On the day of the feast young people pray the saint asking him to make their prayers audible to God. St. Sarkis is the realizer of the love longings. There are many legends about St. Sarkis and one of them is the following.

Poor bard Gharib loved Shah-Sanam who was the daughter of a very rich man. Shah-Sanam loved him too, but because the bard was poor, the Shah-Sanam's father was against their marriage as he wished to marry his daughter to a rich man. Bard Gharib decided to go to foreign countries to earn money and to accumulate wealth. But before leaving for foreign countries bard Gharib asked Shah-Sanam to promise to wait for him for seven years providing that if he were late even for one day the young woman might marry according to her father's will.

That seven-year-period was a very difficult period for bard Gharib. He couldn't see his beloved, had no news of her, but nevertheless, he wasn't disappointed and waited for the time when they would meet, make a family and live together for the rest of their lives.

Working day and night for seven years bard Gharib accumulated wealth and started his way back to the motherland. However, on his way back he faced many difficulties and hardships. It seemed to him that he wouldn't be able to reach his beloved. So, he prayed with honest heart and righteous mind to St. Sarkis asking for help.

Listening the prayer of the bard, St. Sarkis immediately appeared sitting on his white horse, seated him on the back of the horse and in one moment brought him to Shah-Sanam. Seeing the bard's strong will, their sincere and deep love and devotion, Shah-Sanam's father blessed their union.

Fast of Catechumens established by St. Gregory the Illuminator precedes the feast. On the eve of the feast, in the evening, young people eat salty cookies and relate the appearance of their future bride or bridegroom in their dream to eating of the salty cookie. Also, on the night preceding the feast of St. Sarkis the faithful people place a tray full of porridge before the door believing that while passing near their door at dawn St. Sarkis will leave his footprint on it, symbolizing the fulfillment of their dreams.

## Tradition

People in love present each other cards, flowers or sweets on the occasion of the feast. On the day of the feast a Divine Liturgy is celebrated in all churches named after St. Sarkis. Following the Liturgy a special ceremony of blessing to youth is offered.

Also, on the night preceding the feast of St. Sarkis the faithful people place a tray full of flour before the door believing that while passing near their door at dawn St. Sarkis will leave the footprint of his horse on the flour symbolizing the fulfillment of their dreams.

As Armenian church tradition for St. Sarkis Day ceremony, all the Armenian youth are invited to take part in the special blessing ceremony, at the Armenian Apostolic Church of Holy Resurrection, Chatswood, on Friday, 3rd February 2012, at 7:00pm.