

THIS SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2012 IS CALLED SUNDAY OF THE
CATHECUMENS, “ARACHAVORATZ GIRAGI”

This Sunday is preceded by one week of intense fasting and penitence. According to St. Nerses Shnorhali, this fast is established by St. Gregory the Illuminator, who after his release from Khor Virap began to evangelize, first by making the Armenian people observe five days of fasting so as to receive healing grace. On the fifth day of the fast, on Friday, the memory of Prophet Jonah is observed, as an example of a great act of penitence. And on Saturday the feast of St. Sarkis observed. This is why, this fasting popularly is known as well as the fast of St. Sarkis.



St. Sarkis the Warrior lived during the fourth century in Cappadocia. He was appointed the military commander of Cappadocia by Emperor Constantine the Great. When Emperor Julian ascended to the throne and started persecuting the Christians, St. Sarkis being a devout Christian, together with his son Martiros took refuge in Armenia. He eventually joined the Persian King Shapur II to fight Julian. However, when King Shapur discovered that Sarkis was a Christian he asked him to denounce Christian religion and embrace Zoroastrianism. Both father and son refused to do so and both were martyred. Fourteen of his Iranian soldiers, who had converted to Christianity, were also martyred when they came to bury St. Sarkis.