

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

Every autumn, the Armenian Church celebrates the Exaltation of the Holy Cross—one of the five major feasts of the Church, and the most important of the four feasts of the Holy Cross.

The Exaltation refers to the True Cross on which Christ was crucified, which according to Church tradition was ceremoniously elevated for veneration on three occasions. It was first elevated by St. James the Apostle, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, who lifted the cross with the words "We bow before thy cross, O Christ"—a formulation still used in the Armenian liturgy.

The second occasion involved the discovery of the True Cross after a period of some 300 years. In A.D. 326, Queen Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, traveled to Jerusalem to identify the holy places associated with Christ's life. She authenticated the True Cross by placing upon it the body of a recently deceased youth, who was miraculously raised to life when he came in contact with the formerly discarded cross. According to tradition, the True Cross was overgrown with aromatic basil, which is used in the commemoration of the feast day today.

The third occasion came in the 7th cen-

tury, when the Persians had seized the True Cross of Jesus after conquering the city of Jerusalem. Leading a coalition of forces, including Armenians, the Emperor Heraclius recaptured the cross and, en route to Jerusalem, passed with it through Armenia, where the cross was repeatedly raised up and venerated.

The cross is a source of great national pride for us as a *khachagir*—or "cross-bearing"—nation. For over the centuries, Armenians have borne Christ's cross with faith, hope and love. What was once an instrument of torture and death—comparable to the modern electric chair—became for us Christians the symbol of salvation and victory over death.

Naturally, to those with no faith, our veneration for the cross makes no sense at all. They cannot understand how so base an instrument could be at the center of our worship on our churches and altars. But we see in the cross the instrument on which our Lord sacrificed Himself in order to cleanse mankind of its sins. The cross for us is the instrument of life: a divine sign that shows the power of life over death. It is for this reason that Christians throughout the world venerate the Holy Cross.



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St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian School concluded the 2015-2016 school term with the end of year Hantess. On Sunday, June 5th 2016, the event started with the students' color guard: the three graduating students holding the American, Armenian and Kharabakh flags. All the students sang the national anthems and several Armenian songs.

Students from Nursery to seventh grade performed poems, skits and dances. The Hantess ended with the Kindergarten students receiving their diplomas and the graduation of the seventh grade students.

The Kindergarten students were Christopher Cehreci, Olivia Martin, Sofia Raquel Ortiz, Isabella Mia Ortiz, Adrina Donikyan, Hagop Kalajian, Angela Badurina and Andrew Loshigian.

This year's graduates were Lucine Kechejian, Alec Boyajian and Alex Ozsolak. All three students read their graduation speeches and received their diplomas promising to come back to help the school.

Our graduating students had a lot to say about their time in school. Lucine said "I was always looking forward to go to Armenian School because it's where I met most of my best friends, and of course, my very caring and passionate teachers. One of my favorite subjects in Armenian School was History, taught by Baron Shant, whom I usually would call mystery man when I was younger. Mr. Shant was such a passionate teacher, that one day when I came home from school I told my parents "you know we lost the war?" then they asked "What war? The Vartanantz War, we lost against the Persians and Mr. Shant was there, and he saw the whole thing!" I told them.

In his comments Alec said "This 10-year journey has allowed me to fully embrace my ethnicity. Besides the language, participating in Armenian dance, music and learning about history has provided me with a strong foundation of my heritage. Armenian School isn't just about learning. It is about uniting Armenians in the Diaspora. I am so proud to be Armenian."

In his comments Alex said "Even though it's come to the end of the "official" school, I don't want to stop learning Armenian. There's still so

much to learn, so next year I'll definitely be here. If I just walked away from this school now, I would probably forget how to speak the language, and I don't want that to happen.

By coming next year I won't only be learning more but I'll also be preserving the beautiful Armenian language in my mind."

Mr. Shant Mardirossian also had his last year as our history teacher. He taught our beautiful and rich Armenian history for the last 16 years in a fun and interesting way. The students always looked forward to his monthly lessons. The school administration, teaching staff, students and school committee would like to thank Baron Shant for his dedication and passion. We will miss him tremendously and wish him the best.

We would also like to thank the Sagatelian/Ortiz family for donating all the proceeds from their Saturday dance lessons to the Armenian School.

The Armenian school would also like to thank Ms. Vehig S. Tavitian who bequeathed \$15,000 to St. Gregory to be used for scholarships to the Armenian School. May God illuminate her soul.

It is with great excitement that St. Gregory Armenian School announces a new Enrichment Program open to all graduated students up to age 16. This Enrichment Program will be for students interested in participating in a year-long independent or group project related to a topic of choice (for example, Armenian Current Events, Art, Music, History, Religion, etc). The program will include Armenian conversation as well as in-house speakers and field trips. The goal of this program is to bring our youth together under the umbrella of our church and enable them to learn and socialize in a casual atmosphere.

M.B.



ARMENIAN SCHOOL UPDATE



SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE

On June 12, we celebrated our Sunday School graduation for Melissa Hartunian, Daniel Koobatian, Tomas Stepanian, Arman Vranka and William Vranka. The graduation ceremony took place after the Divine Liturgy. As Fr. Mesrob Hovsepyan was in Armenia, the service commenced with an inspirational message by Fr. Karekin Kasparian, followed by insightful messages from their dedicated teachers, Annie Ovanessian and Bruce Wiacek. Each of the graduates delivered a speech reflecting on their Sunday School experience. After the speeches, Der Kare-

kin presented each graduate with a diploma and a Bible.

The graduation concluded with Sunday School Superintendents Alice Leylegian and Tom Daw offering St. Vartan, Battle of Avarayr pendants as gifts. Afterwards, the graduates and congregation celebrated with a light lunch, cake and a "Through the Years" slide presentation documenting the spiritual journey of our graduates. We wish to extend congratulations and best wishes to our graduates!



Excerpts from Sunday School Graduates' Reflections

Over the past few years, I started understanding why it was so important to my parents that I come to church. I learned more about my heritage, about being Armenian, about *my* people, and I felt *happy* that I was Armenian ó like I belonged to an important group. It gave me a strong sense of identity. Going to church and to Camp Nubar, as well as being part of the ACYOA, strengthened that feeling even more. I started realizing that our ancestors relied on their faith to get them through tremendously challenging times; I learned the true meaning of sacrifice, and that the power of faith is the reason we are all here today. Love and Faith in God ó these are the things I will carry with me always. Thank you.

Melissa Hartunian

Oftentimes faith isn't taught comprehensively or critically. I've encountered many places where religion is taught as law without any room for questioning. I ask my younger peers to value their ability to get an education which teaches not only the practices of our Armenian Apostolic Church but also that of other religions. Value the teacher that will crack a joke every so often, saying "you're not smart enough to go to hell" or "I'm gonna have to send you to the Buddhists." Value your ability to ask questions that will strengthen your faith and your identity in the Armenian community. I leave this School more knowledgeable than when I began with it, not only about my own faith but also the world. Love it. Embrace it. Appreciate it. Cherish it. Most importantly, do not be afraid to ask questions. Thank you.

Daniel Koobatian

Our Church provides us with a foundation with which to build our lives. Such a foundation is crucial, especially in a world such as ours, with all the turmoil and grief present day in and day out. However, our faith provides us with guidelines on how to survive such an earth, to love your neighbors, and to treat others as you would yourself. Without these lessons, many would be lost today. This is why we, I, must be especially thankful for all of those who have guided me here. My Sunday school teachers, of which there are too many to

name, the members of the clergy and most importantly, two people who put up with me my entire life, both of my parents. When I was younger, waking up early on a Sunday morning was one of the worst things imaginable. However, somehow, my parents convinced me that it would be worth it each Sunday to wake up and attend church, no matter how bad my headache was. The point is, had it not been for their commitment, I would not be standing before you the enlightened person I am. And for that, I thank them.

Tomas Stepanian

I am pleasantly surprised to find a feeling of sadness about leaving Sunday school. I've met so many great people, and the students and teachers are all so thoughtful and committed. I'd like to specially thank Tom Daw and Bruce Wiacek. Mr. Daw was my first teacher back in 5th grade, and I will never forget the good times we had. Bruce was my teacher these last two years, and I will always cherish the engaging discussions we had in his classroom. Both of these guys have become my friends, and the friendships I have made here are truly priceless. I hope that I have also positively impacted the lives of other members of this church, whether you are a student or a teacher. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn and teach here, and I will never forget the experiences and lessons of Sunday school.

Arman Vranka

Sunday school and involvement with the church has been and hopefully will continue to be a huge part of my life. The values and messages that I learned as a result of going to Sunday school are in life more important than any education I received in normal school, and as I've grown up I've learned to appreciate these morals more and more. None of this would be possible without my teachers, my parents and really all members of this church who each contribute to the character and culture of the parish, so I'd like to give a huge thanks to all of them.

William Vranka

ACYOA JUNIORS UPDATE

Last May, ACYOA Juniors of St. Gregory had two big events. On May 14, eleven Juniors had a lock-in at our church. Annie Ovanessian led the spiritual education, Sybil Postian taught Armenian line dancing. Juniors enjoyed a nice feast which was prepared by Arman Bedonian, Robert & Lauren Kayaian and Greg Sahagian. Juniors had a chance to reconnect spiritually and culturally.



Between May 29-30, Juniors travelled to Watertown, MA to participate in Spring Sports Weekend! More than 200 Juniors from East coast churches participated in the event. Talin Bedonian received a service award and Katianna Sarkissian won the first prize in beginners tavloo.



“Mer Doon” Summer Camp

St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church’s Mer Doon 2016 summer camp program took place in the church school building from June 27th to July 1st, Monday to Friday from 9am to 12:30pm. The program was designed for children ages 3 to 6 years old. Children learned arts and crafts, songs, dance, Armenian key words, simple useful sentences, Armenian prayers and elementary Armenian cultural facts while enjoying outdoor play and activities in a safe environment with the loving care of six teachers/organizers including: Yerezgin Dawn Kasparian, Beatrice Postian, Alvert Mayilyan, Aida Pisani, Tamar Kalajian and Nectar Munro and six teacher assistants: Ani Costa, Joyce Papazian, Arto Stepanian, Greg Postian, Nare Mayilyan and Chloe Pisani. In the absence of Der Mesrob while he traveled in Armenia, Fr. Karekin assumed the duties of the religion portion of the program. The last day of camp ended with a celebration cake and rewarding campers with graduation certificates.



WOMEN'S GUILD UPDATE

In January, the Women's Guild of St. Gregory the Enlightener hosted its annual Communion Brunch, greeting & embracing all Parishioners and children. At the end of the month, a well attended general membership meeting was held welcoming several new members to the group.

In March, the WG hosted a (delicious!) Lenten Dinner, featuring Rev. Fr. Arshen Aivazian as guest speaker. The month of April was filled with constant, pleasant fellowship while all available ladies joined in weekly to lend a hand with preparation of the upcoming WG Bake Sale. Chaired by Yn. Dawn Kasparian & Gladys Tachdjian, and held on Sunday, May 1st, it was extremely successful and very well received by the Parish community. Thanks are extended to all who participated.

The WG hosted the fellowship refreshments on Sunday, April 24th in honor of the Ground Breaking ceremony for the Harry & Edna Keleshian Hall.

The WG Thrift Shoppe was busy all season with impressive sales and new customers always coming & going! Closed for the summer, we look forward to the re-opening of the Shoppe on Thursday, September 8th.

Our annual FUNdraiser, held for the 5th time in support of Fuller Center for Housing in Armenia, was a huge success. Connie & Richard Shelenagian, along with friend Ralph Arpajian, graciously & generously volunteered their musical talents for all to enjoy. The evening was filled with the sounds of American Jazz and enjoyment by children & seniors alike! The WG is proud to announce we are well underway to achieving the goal (set by Harry & Edna Keleshian) of 10 houses in 10 years. With \$10,500 required per house, this year's All-American BBQ completed collection for St. Gregory the Enlightener House #5, with collections for House #6 in progress! Many thanks to all who participate in this worthy cause for needed housing in Armenia.

Our Executive Board met on several occasions, as did the dedicated Scholarship Committee. It is with great pride that Gregory Mekenian (son of Lily & Steve Mekenian) was awarded a \$1,500. Scholarship from the St. Gregory Women's Guild toward his college education. Sincere appreciation is extended to the 2016 Scholarship Committee, Dianne Wiacek (Chair) and team of Maria Bedonian, Ellie Krolian, Sybil Postian, Mary Tartarian, and Kohar Teknazian.

The Women's Guild of St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church always welcomes new membership and appreciates participation from the Ladies within our Armenian community. WG membership dues are \$15.00 annually. Speak with one of the WG Executive Board members (Sylvia Kruienza, Adriane Keleshian Bonfiglio, Gladys Tachdjian, Rita Kurkjian) to find out how you can join and become a part of this very worthy organization. Please note, Dianne Wiacek has stepped down from her position as Recording Secretary for the WG, citing health reasons. We again extend our appreciation for her time served and wish her continued good health. We are hopeful *YOUR* involvement will help the Nominating Committee approach new candidates for elections going forward.

Thank you all for helping our WG remain a source of fulfillment spiritually, socially and financially for those in need and for our beloved St. Gregory the Enlightener community. Follow our upcoming events on the church calendar.





St. Gregory Men's Club

The St. Gregory Men's Club welcomed many newcomers on February 5th, 2016, at the first Fellowship dinner of the year. Generous support toward the SGMC's pledge of \$25K toward the Harry & Edna Keleshian Hall (St. Gregory's new youth building) was received with event proceeds & participation in the SGMC sponsored Super Bowl pool.

The men in attendance enjoyed an abundant meal, competitive card games and friendly fellowship. Just weeks later, devastating news of the sudden passing of Harry A. Keleshian, the group's mentor, shocked our community. A dear friend & constructive leader, Harry's passing has left the SGMC with an infinite sense of loss and an immeasurable amount of gratitude & pride. He was an inspiration to all of us and an extremely generous & caring family man. The SGMC looks forward to continuing his dream of gathering good men together for delicious food & pleasant fellowship.

On Friday, August 26th the SGMC hosted our Annual all-you-can-eat Grill Night, featuring ðMega Mike's legendary charcoal BBQ. All proceeds from this event will be added to the over \$15K already collected toward the SGMC's new building pledge.



COLLEGE GRADUATES

Sub-Deacon Ari Narbandian - Graduated on May 23, 2016, with a Medical Degree from New York Medical College. He will take up his Residency training in Emergency Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, MA.

Sub-Deacon Andrew Kayaian ó Son of Robert and Lauren Kayaian, graduated Summa Cum Laude from Fordham University with a B.A. in History and a minor in Orthodox Christian Studies. He will return to Fordham to pursue a Master's Degree in History.

Christine Baydar - Daughter of Aret and the Late Anna Baydar, graduated with a B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Biology from Rutgers University. She has plans to attend a Pharmacy School next Spring.

Lori Janjigian - Daughter of Vahan and Noone Janjigian, graduated with a B.S. from Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism. She has accepted a position with Business Insider.

Anna Marie Sarkissian Munro - Daughter of Nectar and Colin Munro graduated with a B.S. in Environmental studies from the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT. She has plans to continue studying for her Masters and pursue work in her chosen field.

Charles Khachian - Son of Ani and Gary Khachian graduated with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and Applied Physics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. He plans to pursue work in his field.

Liana Kurkjian ó Daughter of Arman and Rita Kurkjian, graduated with a Master's degree in Speech Language Pathology from Mercy College in Dobbs. Ferry NY. She was inducted into the Alpha Eta Honors Society and has accepted a job with Westchester Speech and Language Services PLLC.

Lauren Wiacek ó Daughter of Bruce and Dianne Wiacek, graduated on May 18, 2016 with an M.S. and triple New York State Certification in Early Elementary Education; Elementary Education and Special Education from Mercy College Graduate School of Education.

Bradley Postian - Son of Cindy and David Postian, graduated in May from Roger Williams University in Bristol, RI with a Masters of Architecture degree.

Lena Krikorian ó Daughter of Van and Priscilla Krikorian graduated from George Washington University with a B.A. International Affairs specializing in International Economics and Anthropology. She attended the University of Havana in Cuba as part of her study abroad, interned for the Department of Commerce (International Trade Administration-Cuba Section), U.S. Chamber of Commerce (International Division/Americas), Senator Schumer, Congressman Engel, and the GWU Global Gender Program - where she managed the internet database on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, & Security. Lena was the co-founder and president of the GWU Armenian Club, the Armenian Assembly Summer of 2014 Intern Coordinator, and assisted the Armenian Mission to the UN

on economic development issues.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Aren Antreasyan ó Son of Arsham and Ani Antreasyan graduated from John Jay High School on June 24, 2016 with high honors and numerous awards for his community service. In addition he has received the Silver Medal and Certificate of Achievement from the Armenian Student Association. He will be attending Long Island University/C.S. Post, and has been accepted into the Honors College. Aren has chosen a double major in Film Production and Business Administration/Marketing, and will use his degree to advance the Film Production Industry in Armenia.

Allegra Kevorkianô Daughter of Steven and Lisa Kevorkian graduated from Horace Greeley High School in June. She plans on attending Syracuse University. She is an avid runner and was a member of the Varsity Cross Country and Track Teams. Allegra is a graduate of St. Gregory Sunday School where she also worked as an assistant teacher for 2 years. She has attended AGBU Camp Nubar since age 9 and worked as a camp counselor. Last summer, Allegra traveled to Armenia for the first time on the AGBU Discovery Armenia Program. As part of the program, she did volunteer work with the Fuller Center for Housing at 2 orphanages outside of Yerevan.

Marie-Lise Baroutjianô Daughter of Lena and George Baroutjian graduated from Washingtonville High School in June with high honors. She will be attending Binghamton University.

Gregory Mekenianô Son of Lily and Stephen Mekenian graduated from Byram Hills High School with honors in History, and will be attending George Washington University this Fall.

Alex Harout Tiratsuian - Son of Hovig and Lucineh Tiratsuyan graduated from Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. He received the following Awards from LaGuardia: High School Diploma from LaGuardia (regents endorsement and Instrumental Music endorsement), Music Chairman's Association Certificate of Merit, A&F Fred Mazart Memorial Award, Senior Symphonic Band Award. He also graduated to from Music Conservatory of Westchester and received Artist Certificate award (honors program completion). He will be attending Montclair State University this Fall to major in Piano Performance.

Wills Staudingerô son of David and Holly Malkasian Staudinger graduated from Iona Prep and will be attending Penn State University. Wills made many delivery trips to the local Menø Shelter with the donated canned goods collected at St. Gregory.



*We congratulate all our graduates for the progress they have made this year.
We are proud of their accomplishments and wish them
Godspeed in the future endeavors.*

Young People Discover Armenia through Travel and Service

A group of 16 young people from parishes across the Eastern Diocese traveled to the homeland as part of this year's ACYOA Armenia Service Program (ASP), led by the Rev. Fr. Tadeos Barseghyan from July 2 to 17.

The participants arrived in downtown Yerevan on the Feast of the Transfiguration, also known as Vartavar. Whatever fatigue the participants experienced from the long flight to Armenia quickly disappeared as they were soaked with buckets of cold water by the local children and adults.

The first week began with a trip to the Vaskenian Theological Seminary on Lake Sevan. The group enjoyed swimming and jet skiing in the cold waters of Lake Sevan and visited the ancient temple of Garni.

The ACYOA partnered with the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) to prepare the service aspect of the pilgrimage. The first service project took place at Camp Aragats in the mountains of Meghradzor village. The camp hosts 400 children each summer (ages 9 to 15), including 16 Syrian refugees. Many of the children come from poor backgrounds.

Another stop on the itinerary included Khor Virap Monastery and a climb down the pit where King Drtad held St. Gregory the Illuminator. In the pit, participants sang the Armenian Church hymn "Soorp, Soorp" ("Holy, Holy").

The participants met with His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, at Holy Etchmiadzin. After meeting with the Catholicos, the group participated in the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin and at the nearby St. Gayane Church.

"To finally step foot inside the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin after reading about it and seeing pictures of it in Armenian and Sunday School was an

amazing experience," said Arsen Yelegen of White Plains, NY.

For the second service project, the group traveled to an apricot orchard in Yerevandashat village, where they helped remove pits from apricots to prepare the fruit for drying.

The participants enjoyed the freshness and flavor of the food in Armenia. In addition to the delicious meals at various restaurants, they were guests in

local homes, where they were treated to traditional home-cooked meals. The families of Fr. Barseghyan, the pastor of St. Sahag Church of Saint Paul, MN, and Yn. Gayane were among those to host the ASP group.

The group visited the FAR Children's Center in Yerevan, which provides a nurturing environment to vulnerable children (ages 3 to

18). The young people toured the facility and had a chance to play games and sports with the children.

One of the most moving days of the trip was when the group visited the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide memorial and museum.

Another highlight of the trip included crowdfunding with FAR's "Ayo!" in downtown Yerevan. The ASP group joined "Ayo!" to demonstrate street workouts and breakdancing routines to raise money for outdoor gyms in Artsakh. The ASP group performed the "Michigan Hop," a popular Armenian-American dance.

Other memorable sites included the monasteries of Saghmosavank, Geghard, Noravank, and Datev. "Learning about the people of this country, seeing the beautiful sites, and lending a helping hand to our homeland made me happy to have been a part of ASP," said Aleen Kaltakdjian of San Antonio, TX.

Excerpts from article written by Arsen Yelegen



Annual Diocesan Assembly & Annual Clergy Conference



Rev. Fr. Mesrob Hovsepyan, Lisa Kouzoujian, Ann Daw, Zaven Tachdjian, Van Krikorian, Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian

The 114th Diocesan Assembly was held in downtown Cleveland, from April 28 to 30, and hosted by the St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church of Richmond Heights, OH. At the Assembly the Diocese introduced a new theme for the coming year, which encouraged reflection on the legacy bequeathed by the generation of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Titled "Legacy of Our Martyrs: A Gift to Carry Forward," this year's theme will be explored through a social media campaign, parish resources, and local events.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), presided over the meeting of more than 125 clergy and lay delegates, representing parishes from across the Eastern Diocese.

On Friday morning, April 30, delegates took part in small group sessions, during which they heard annual reports from the Diocesan ministries, including Armenian Studies, Christian Education, Communications, Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Development, Mission Parishes and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center.

Presentations were also made by representatives of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, Fund for Armenian Relief, Ararat Center, Sacred Music Council, ACYOA, and the Women's Guild.

Diocesan Council member Zaven Tachdjian (St. Gregory the Enlightener Arm. Church, White Pains,

NY), who represented the Eastern Diocese at the Ecclesiastical Representative Assembly in September 2014, made a presentation on the universal by-laws for the global Armenian Church. Delegates at the 114th Diocesan Assembly adopted a motion to establish a standing committee consisting of two clergy and three lay members to report regularly on the Ecclesiastical Representative Assembly and the National Ecclesiastical Assembly, and these respective assemblies' efforts regarding with the bylaws for the global Armenian Church.

The 115th Diocesan Assembly will be hosted by St. Hagop Church of Pinellas Park, FL.

Clergy, delegates, and community members gathered at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Cleveland, OH, on Friday evening, April 29, to honor two distinguished individuals for their support of the Armenian Church and contributions to the greater Armenian community. The Grand Banquet of the 114th Diocesan Assembly was hosted by the St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church of Richmond Heights, OH.

The award for the "Friend of the Armenians" was bestowed on Dr. Taner Akçam, professor of history and the Kaloosdian/Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University, in Worcester, MA.

Receiving this year's "Armenian Church Member of the Year" award was Armenian General Benevolent Union President Berge Setrakian.

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The 114th Diocesan Assembly was preceded by a clergy conference, held April 25 to 28, at the Quail Hollow Resort and Conference Center in Painesville, OH. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), presided at the event where members of the clergy gathered for prayer, services and a series of presentations on various aspects of the ministry.

Diocesan Youth Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

I was very thankful and humbled to be a part of the young adultø pilgrimage to Jerusalem, lasting for duration of 8 days this past June. A group of close to 30 young professionals across the Diocese was led by Father Hovsep Karapetian. Not only did our group get extremely close on the trip, we all shared the experience of visiting sites in the Holy Land. The group stayed in the Notre Dame hotel in the new city of Jerusalem, just a stoneø throw away from the New Gate entrance to the old city.

We had a pretty hectic, but nonetheless enjoyable and fulfilling schedule, visiting the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, the Dead Sea, Jordan River, and the Mount of Beatitudes (just to name a few). We celebrated Badarak in the Church of the Nativity, Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Church of St Maryø tomb. For each of the Badarakø, a few participants helped the seminarians serve on the altar as well as others who sang with the choir. Der Hovsep led a water blessing service in the Jordan River.

The group also had intriguing Bible Studies at various holy sites led by Father Hovsep, St Nersess Seminary graduate Shake Derderian, and recent St Nersess Seminary graduate (and native Jerusalemite) Arpi Nakashian. At each of these holy sites, I was truly humbled and inspired. Entering Jesusø tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher at ~4AM in the morning preceding Badarak was so powerful that it could not be described in words. Pilgrims and tourists from around the world had come to see these holy places. One of the Bible studies we had was on the Mount of Beatitudes which was utterly beautiful and peaceful. It was a great place to just think and reflect.

I was both impressed and surprised about how much influence the Armenian Church had in Jerusalem. For instance in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Armenians are responsible for a gated portion of the Garden. The seminarians help take care of the por-

tion as well as a few others who are responsible for the land. Walking through the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, one cannot miss the Armenian icons and letters amidst the Greek and Roman Catholic icons. It was incredible to think that Armenians had many icons and altars in one of the most visited places in



all of Jerusalem. The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem was also very remarkable; St James Cathedral in the Armenian quarter simply could oneø breath

away. The ceiling was lined with more lanterns than one could count. The walls were layered with holy paintings depicting Bible stories and parables. Arpi took us on a tour through the Quarter as well as setting up a øsocial nightø with the local Armenian children and families. We had pizza and played volleyball with the youth there.

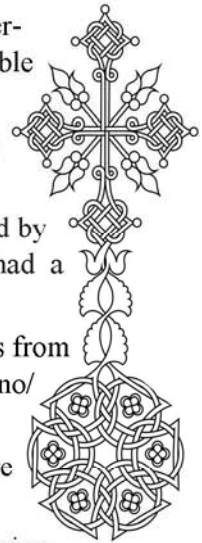
We were also lucky enough to have a free day where we could explore the different quarters of Jerusalem. We had visited the øwailingø Western Wall in the Jewish Quarter as well as visited Mosques in the Muslim Quarter. It is truly fascinating how each Quarter changes; the Jewish quarter seemed a bit more modern and was the densest with people, the Muslim Quarter was more Middle Eastern based (oriental rugs hanging from the walls, bazaarø etc.). The Christian quarter churches seemed a bit more medieval-era based. Because of June being the month of Ramadan, the group was told by our tour guide to be respectful and try not to drink water or eat food as we passed through the Muslim Quarter. Each Quarter had its own very distinctive style and beauty. It was fascinating to see so many different kinds of people praying in a central holy city.

I am truly humbled and thankful for being a part of this trip; I would like to express my gratitude to Der Mesrob as well as Khajag Srpazan for his vision and Mr. Aso Tavitian for his truly generous donation. The experiences and friendships we all made are truly priceless.

Paul Derderian

May

- May 1, Sunday** - The Women's Guild Bake Sale. Delicious variety of Armenian, Mediterranean and American desserts, breads and sweet specialties were available baked by the Women's Guild members.
- May 8, Sunday** - Sunday School Bake and Plant Sale took place following the Divine Liturgy.
- May 14-15** - ACYOA Juniors Lock-In. Juniors enjoyed a nice feast which was prepared by Arman Bedonian, Lauren Kayaian and Greg Sahagian. Juniors had a chance to reconnect spiritually and culturally.
- May 15, Sunday** - Musical Performance by Tsirani Armenian Folk Ensemble. Musicians from Armenia travel the East Coast to raise money to benefit the Nagorno/Karabakh Relief Effort.
- May 22, Sunday** - "Komitas and his Impact on the Legacy of Armenian Music." Lecture by Ashley Bozian-Murtha.
- May 29 - May 30, Sunday** - Juniors travelled to Watertown, MA to participate in Spring Sports Weekend! More than 200 Juniors from East coast churches participated in the event. Talin Bedonian received a service award and Katianna Sarkissian won the first prize in beginners tavloo.



June

- June 5, Sunday** - Armenian School End-of-Year Program
- June 12, Sunday** - The Divine Liturgy celebrated by Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian and the Sunday School Graduation. A presentation by the students followed by a light luncheon celebration.
- June 26, Sunday** - Guest Celebrant: Rev. Fr. Tateos Abdalian. We also welcomed Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Fidikian accompanied by the St. Nersess Deacon's Training session participants.
- June 27 - July 1, Monday - Friday** - Mer Doon Summer Camp held its summer weeklong session including the children of 3-6 years old. The curriculum consisted of Armenian Language, Religion, Music, Dance, Arts and Crafts, Story Time and Outdoor Fun.

July

- July 3, Sunday** - Vartavar, Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord.
- July 30, Saturday** - St. Gregory Women's Guild All American BBQ. We also enjoyed a special Live Jazz Music by Rich & Constance Shengian, and Ralph Arpajian. Proceeds benefited the Fuller Center for Housing in Armenia towards the St. Gregory house #5.

August

- August 7, Sunday** - Presentation of the St. Gregory Women's Guild Scholarship. The \$1,500 Scholarship was awarded to Gregory Mekenian, son of Lily and Steve Mekenian for his great academic achievements.
- August 14, Sunday** - Feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God, Blessing of the Grapes Service.
- August 26, Friday** - St. Gregory Men's Club Grill Night.

Feast of the Holy Ascension in Trumbull, CT



On May 5th, Thursday, Holy Ascension Armenian Church of Trumbull, CT welcomed the area clergy to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Ascension. Divine Liturgy was celebrated by V. Rev. Fr. Garegin Hambartsumyan,

guest from the Mother See who is the Dean of Gevorkian Theological Seminary.

We thank Fr. Untzag Nalbandian and the entire congregation for the warm welcome celebration.

Meeting of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches at Virgin Mary & St. Pachomius Coptic Orthodox Church



On Tuesday, March 15, 2016 H.G. Bishop David of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of NY & NE hosted a meeting of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches at Virgin Mary & St. Pachomius Coptic Orthodox Church. In attendance were SCOCH chairman H.E. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian (Armenian),

H.E. Mor Titus Yeldho (Malankara-Syriac), H.G. Bishop Makarios (Eritrean), H.E. Mor Jean Kawak (Syriac), H.G. Bishop Karas (Coptic), and the priests and lay representatives of the Coptic, Syriac, Eritrean, Malankara-Syriac, and Armenian Churches. Among other clergy from our Diocese, Fr. Mesrob represented our parish.

Haig Dikranian Memorial Scholarship

New to St. Gregory the Enlightener Parish is the Haig Dikranian Memorial Scholarship created by his brother, renowned soccer coach Armand Dikranian, the retired men's Soccer Coach for Southern Connecticut State University winning national championships. This scholarship was set up in Haig's memory for anyone desiring to attend our Diocesan St. Vartan Camp or the St. Nersess summer conferences. In 2016 the Haig Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Arpie Tikranian, daughter of Dr. Haroutyan and Lucine Tikranian. Arpie is nine years old and attends St. Theresa School in Trumbull, CT. She is in the fourth grade. Fluent in Armenian, she attends St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian School on Saturdays, along with her younger brother Raphael.



Haig Dikranian and his brother Armand founded Victory Soccer School in 1972 which thrives successfully today. It was the beloved Der Paree Metjian who turned to Haig to help him realize his vision in setting up a permanent site for a camp dedicated to Armenian youth. Today it is known as St. Vartan Camp. Carrying out Der Paree's vision, Haig was instrumental in securing the Canterbury School in New Milford, CT and later securing Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor, CT for St. Vartan Camp. Haig organized its sports program bringing in his best coaches from Victory Soccer School to guarantee a successful program. Der Paree's vision for St. Vartan Camp was indeed realized. Haig's mantra was for young boys and girls to go out and have FUN.

Parish Council Members

- Rev. Fr. Mesrob Hovsepyan - Pastor
- Ann Daw - Chairperson
- Eleanor Krolian - Vice Chairperson
- Chris Bonfiglio - Treasurer
- Arman Bedonian - Asst. Treasurer
- Gayane Hamparsoumian - Recording Secretary
- Maria Stepanian - Corresponding Secretary
- Mike Pisani - Adviser
- Lauren Kayaian - Adviser
- Anna Bruno Loshigian - Adviser
- Gayane Manoukyan - Adviser
- Fram Cehreci - Adviser



Parish Council Dedication Service May 1, 2016

We congratulate the newly elected and current Parish Council members for assuming their new responsibilities.

Our heartfelt appreciation to Greg Sahagian, Sylvia Kruienza, and Hakob Meneshian for their dedicated service as former Parish Council members.





May 7, 2016

Tigran Santurian – Son of Nikolai and Elena Santurian

July 2, 2016

Phoebe Estelle Clark – Daughter of Michael and Alexa Christon Clark

July 3, 2016

Vahram Sarkis Dadoyan – Son of Daniel and Anna Verdiyan Dadoyan

August 14, 2016

Garen Robert Ayvazian – Son of Robert and Siranoush Ayvazian

August 27, 2016

Kaylee Marie Dobert – Daughter of Nicholas Charles and Kimberly Ann Dobert



January 28, 2016

Grace Guroian



April 21, 2016

Nazeni Esayan

January 30, 2016

Thomas Carl Bardarkian

April 30, 2016

Edward Dorian

March 5, 2016

Harry Arsen Keleshian

June 1, 2016

Satenik Shahikian

March 11, 2016

Satenik Kechejian

June 24, 2016

George Jamgochian

March 19, 2016

Klaydis Choukhachian

ENLIGHTENER Newsletter Donations

PLEASE NOTE: There is an expense of approximately \$500 for publishing and mailing each issue of the *ENLIGHTENER*. Any contributions sent to defray part of this cost are greatly appreciated. Please use this form to send your donation for this purpose. Please feel free to send us also your comments and suggestions regarding our publication.

**St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church
1131 North St., White Plains, NY 10605**

Donation for *Enlightener* in the amount of \$ _____

Name: _____ Address: _____

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Parish Council

President	Rev. Fr. Mesrob Hovsepian (804) 405-9399
Chairperson	Ann Daw (914) 528-7845
Vice Chairperson	Eleanor Krolian (914) 428-7037
Treasurer	Chris Bonfiglio (914) 741-6220
Asst. Treasurer	Arman Bedonian (914) 747-2521
Recording Secretary	Gayane Hamparsoumian (914) 686-0840
Corresponding Secretary	Maria Stepanian (203) 340-9312
Members:	Mike Pisani (914) 793-4007 Lauren Kayaian (914) 723-7159 Anna Bruno Loshigian (914) 773-5557 Gayane Manoukyan (347) 465-8503 Fram Cehreci (201) 917-3495

Diocesan Delegates

Lisa Kouzoujian
(203) 967-8206
Van Krikorian
(914) 835-5080
Zaven Tachdjian
(914) 934-1551

Parish Organizations

Choir Director	Dn. Mirijohn Givelekian (203) 321-8642
Choir Chairperson	Anoush Givelekian (203) 321-8642
Arm. School Principals	Margrit Hamparsoumian (914) 686-0840 Maria Bedonian (914) 747-2521

Sunday School Superintendents	Tom Daw (914)528-7845 Alice Leylegian (203) 461-8343
ACYOA Jrs. Chair	Sarah Kayaian (914) 723-7159
ACYOA Srs. Chair	Michael Givelekian (203) 565-9880
Hye Steppers Chair	Avadis Sakalian (914) 737-9129
Women's Guild Chair	Sylvia Kruiuzenga (203) 637-3638
Thrift Shop (a division of Women's Guild)	Annette Bashian (914) 381-4080 Sybil Postian (914) 273-6738
Men's Club Co-Chairs	Chris Bonfiglio (914) 741-6220 Vrej Markarian

Other Church Contacts

Church Secretaries	Zepure Madjarian-Scalise (914) 725-2573 Elise Meneshian-Hingson (203) 249-3339
Librarian	Aida Pisani (914) 793-4007
Culture Committee Chair	John Wolohojian (212) 724-2575
Outreach Committee	Gail Keyishian (845) 855-1484
Stewardship/Membership	Paul Keyishian (845) 855-1484
Property Manager	Hagop Meneshian (203) 637-5361
Facilities Rental	Yn. Dawn Kasparian (914) 632-3024

Sunday Worship Schedule

Matins (Morning Service)	9:45 a.m.
Divine Liturgy	10:15 a.m.
Sunday School	10:30 a.m.

Pastoral Care, home and hospital clergy visits: The pastor is always available and would like to visit homebound and hospitalized parishioners. If you or someone you know is ill or hospitalized and would like to be visited, please call the Church Office at (914) 428-2595. Please note: when asked about your religion at a hospital, patients should list themselves as *öArmenian Orthodoxö* or *öArmenianö* not *öötherö*.

Funerals: Families should make arrangements with the funeral director of their choice, who will contact the Church Office to arrange the funeral service. Generally, St. Gregory coordinates funerals with Ballard-Durand Funeral Home in White Plains, who is familiar with our church traditions. Funerals may not be performed on religious holidays, major feast days, Saturdays after 3:00 p.m., or Sundays.

For Baptism, Weddings and other services: please call the Pastor as soon as possible to set up an appointment to discuss arrangements. *Hokehankisd* services (Requiem services) are held on the first Sunday of the month. Arrangements for the donation of altar flowers and altar candles should be made through the Church office by Wednesday. Please send all pictures, articles and correspondence to: saintgretorychurchwp@gmail.com



UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER

October 2, Sunday - A special presentation by Kristina Cornelio about Youth Ministry: Helping College Students Find God on Campus

October 22 - 23 - The St. Gregory Cultural Committee Proudly Presents: Our Parish Artists and Their Works

October 29-30, Saturday-Sunday - ACYOA Juniors Lock-in

October 30, Sunday - His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians will be present at the Divine Liturgy at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York honoring the 17th anniversary of His Holiness' enthronement as Catholicos of All Armenians.

NOVEMBER

November 6, Sunday - The St. Gregory Award Banquet

November 12, Saturday - Official Opening of the New St. Nersess Seminary Campus and Consecration of its new Chapel. His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, will officiate over the consecration and opening ceremonies.

November 13, Sunday - Women's Guild General Membership Meeting following the Badarak.

DECEMBER

December 4, Sunday - 45th Anniversary of both St. Gregory Armenian School and Sunday School following the Divine Liturgy.

December 7, Wednesday - Women's Guild Annual Christmas Luncheon