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ST. GREGORY ARMENIAN CHURCH

Haverhill, Mass.  
PARISH VISITATION PROGRAM

Visitors' Guide

You have been chosen to represent St. Gregory Armenian Church Parish Visitation Week. You were chosen because of your commitment to this church and because it was felt that you could represent this church well to other parishioners. Your response in accepting a part in the work of Parish Visitation Week indicates your concern. Your assignment will be to visit a number of homes in this parish, to arouse a deeper commitment to St. Gregory and to secure a definite and sincere intention of giving during 1977.

I - ADEQUATE PREPARATION

- A - HAVE THE PROPER ATTITUDE. Be enthusiastic. This program will be successful, only if you really believe in it. In a very real sense, you are selling St. Gregory. You will find it next to impossible to secure intentions if you have not already made your own intentions. After having made a generous intention of giving yourself, you will be able to persuade others to give with conviction and sincerity.
- B - WORK FROM KNOWLEDGE. Know what your church is doing. Study the Intention Card well. Ask questions and get answers before you visit.

II - SEE THOSE ASSIGNED TO YOU

- A - MAKE VISITS TO THE HOME. You are seeking an intention of giving that should be based on a commitment. The whole family should be involved in this decision. Spouses will generally want to make their intention as one. We would also like to have every person in the household that is a high school junior or older make an intention.
- B - DO NOT TELEPHONE. We are interested in the persons. Remember it is easier to evade the commitment we want over the telephone than in a face to face meeting. Make your visits in person.
- C - MAKE YOUR VISIT WITH ANOTHER VISITOR. When visits are made in pairs, the atmosphere is friendlier and more conducive to our purposes.

- D - VISIT THE EASIER HOMES FIRST. In this way you can practice your manner of visitation with a family that is ready to give. Also when you visit a more difficult home, you can convey the enthusiasm you have already encountered.
- E - VISIT ALL THE HOMES ASSIGNED TO YOU. Don't skip a single one. If you do not see them, it will be difficult to have them visited later on.

### III - MAKING THE ENTRANCE

- A - BE FRIENDLY. You represent your church. Get to know the people you are visiting.
- B - DISCOVER COMMON INTERESTS. Talk about the church, what it does, what it should be doing, what your involvement in the church is, how the family you are visiting is involved. (Avoid controversial topics.)
- C - PERSISTENCE OPENS DOORS. If the family you are visiting is not home or is busy, be polite and call again.

### IV - SHOW THE FAMILY

- A - AROUSE INTEREST IN THE CHURCH. Listen to their ideas and suggestions. Make notes of good suggestions and report them back. Answer questions honestly. If you don't have an answer, promise them you will try to find one. Never argue.
- B - UNDERSTAND COMMITMENT. We are more interested in people than in money. Church is people. Get people interested in the programs and organizations of the church. You are not begging for money. We want people who are committed to church and willing to do what they can for it.

### V - SEEK RESPONSE

- A - BE CAREFUL. Don't be in a hurry. Don't stand up. Be seated and relaxed. Stay long enough to explain everything.
- B - EXPLAIN WEEKLY GIVING THROUGH THE ENVELOPE SYSTEM. By means of the weekly envelope each of us can give more. Do not mention total gift, talk in terms of so much per week. There is no standard and no one has to make an intention of giving. This must be answered by each individual. Some may prefer to give monthly or at one time. They have this option on the intention card, everyone, however, will receive a box of envelopes, if they make an intention. These envelopes are for their convenience and for our records.

### VI - PRESENT INTENTION CARDS

- A - TIMING IS IMPORTANT. At the right time give the family the intention cards. It may be that you will have to call back. At no time leave the intention card.
- B - UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF THE INTENTION CARD. The intension card is not a binding legal contract. It is simply the expression of a sincere desire to give so much during the next year. Urge the family to put down on the intention cards the largest amount they are thinking about giving. During the year, the financial secretary will forward statements about the status of their giving. These are not bills, but simply to inform each person as to how they stand. If a family later feels that it must reduce or even cancel its intention, it may do so by simply informing the financial secretary. At the end of the year, a final statement will be mailed and then the books will be closed. No attempt will be made to secure unfulfilled intentions. We leave this up to each person's conscience. Also at no time will there be a public statement of people's intention and fulfillment of intentions. Everything will be kept in the strictest confidence and known only by the financial secretary.

- C - HAVE INTENTION CARDS PROPERLY AND COMPLETELY FILLED UP. Refuse cash gifts. These indicate only token interest. If you are offered cash, reply in terms of perhaps a percentage of that amount as a weekly offering. Also remember to mention church membership. Most will prefer to pay their membership dues separately. When the intention card is completed, have the family seal and place it in the confidential envelope.
- D - RETURN THE ENVELOPE TO YOUR CAPTAIN.

#### VII - SOME LAST WORDS

- A - Your assignment cards contain notations indicating the families affiliation with St. Gregory. Please make notations on the card, if necessary and return these cards to your captain. If for any reason you were unable to visit anyone inform your captain before the deadline, on that date all assignment cards and intentions of giving should be in the captains hands.
- B - When you see families you have visited later on in church or at functions, go up and talk to them. Remember we are all part of one family, God's family.
- C - REMEMBER, THIS IS YOUR CHURCH. IT DEPENDS ON YOU. EVERYONE MUST DO HIS SHARE.
- D - One last word, that should also be first - Prayer. Pray for the success of Parish Visitation, pray that you will be a good visitor, pray that each family your are to visit will be moved to greater commitment. Remember prayer is simply talking things over with God.

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#### SITUATIONS and QUESTIONS

- A - Family is watching TV. Either ask them to turn the set off, or make another appointment. Never compete with television.
- B - At times you may find that the family you are visiting is in the midst of a crisis or emergency. Do not bring up the intention card. Maybe you can help or perhaps relay the information to your priest.
- C - We hope all the information on our assignment cards is correct. There may be mistakes, if so apologize for any inconvenience and make the correction on the card.
- D - Questions or Objections. Objections are often attempts to avoid making a commitment. Some people are afraid to make a commitment. They do not know how to give. Perhaps they would like to give, but have never learned to give well. Giving is a joy and it is a habit, that is learned. Objections are frequently unconscious attempts to evade the issue. They are offered in good faith, but down deep the real question is the question of learning to sacrifice. Questions or objections should be answered but answering excuses alone will not bring a person to the right decision. Above all, do not argue.
  1. "I don't like the priest (or Parish Council chairman, etc.)". We are making commitments to our church, not to any individuals. The church is bigger and more important than any one person. If the person dislikes the church so much that he cannot bring himself to give to it, he should definitely find another church that means something to him.
  2. "I'm not a member." For many people this may be technically correct, but, except for possible error, all people to be visited are affiliated with this church in one way or another and are closer to this church than another. If you discover that this person is actually closer to some other church, close the interview.

3. "My spouse is not a member." Families with divided denominational or parish loyalties are increasing and present a specific problem. Usually such a family ends up supporting neither church meaningfully. The other church concerned also has problems and needs. You might suggest that they consider an intention and then divide it between both churches.
4. "All the church talks about is money and there is too much pressure." The church talks about many things and does many things. In order to talk and do, it needs money. There is nothing wrong for the church to seek support from those who are its parishoners. It is true, however, that the church has had to rely on gimmicks and/or pressure to raise funds to meet its obligations.

Hopefully, through the Parish Visitation Program enough income will be generated that we no longer need to panic whenever a large bill needs to be paid. If a person belongs to an organization, such as the church, he believes in it and is willing to support it to the best of his ability. Giving must come from loyalty and not from pressure. If some one doesn't want to give, obviously he really doesn't belong.
5. "I am too old, the young people should give." This is true, but fortunately it is our young people or rather the generation born in America that is supporting our church. We no longer need to rely on the older generation. Most older people are on limited incomes and it may be difficult for them to give anything large. And yet it is good for them to know they are wanted and that anything they can give will be appreciated.
6. "I am a student, I do not have a job." This church belongs to each of its parishoners and has an obligation to all of them. In the same way, each parishoner has a responsibility to his church. We want everyone to make a commitment from high school junior on. Even the youngest of those we will be asking have an allowance and should be asked to make a commitment. Not because we need the money, but because giving is a habit that slowly develops from smaller to larger gifts.
7. "Things are tough this year, I am unable to make the commitment I want." This is probably a very sincere statment. It's not easy to make. People should be asked to give only what they sincerely feel they should and honestly feel they can. No more, no less. We are not trying to persuade people. If someone cannot give this year, your attitude will probably determine what he will give in the future.
8. "What is the church going to do with all that money? Why can't they keep expenses down?" Look at our budget. These figures represent the actual operating cost of our church. We have a large complex to operate and maintain. We have a large parish to serve. There is even more we can do and should be doing, but for this we need all the support that only our people can give us.
9. "I don't come to church every Sunday." Urge them to come every Sunday! This is the ideal; the fact, however, is that many people will be unable to come every week. Some may have good reasons, others will not. Whatever the case we cannot force people to come, but we can impress upon them the fact that the Church needs their continuing and not occasional support. The person who makes a commitment should develop the habit of setting aside what he intends to give to the church as his first obligation every week. When he does come, he can bring all his envelopes with him, or put all his offering in one envelope. For the person who prefers to give annually or monthly yet comes to church more regularly, he can choose to put his empty envelope in the Sunday offering plate since he is already giving in another way.