

Consecration of Altars & Paintings Held at Chicago Church

By Yeretzgin Rosalie
Papazian

PALOS HEIGHTS, IL - Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church, Eastern United States of America, consecrated three new altars and three new paintings, donated by Mr. & Mrs. Greg Srabian, on Sunday, April 18, at Sts. Joachim and Anne Armenian Church here.

Garo Srabian, son of the donors, was the Godfather of the Day and assisted in the washing of the marble altars, which were stripped of ornamentation, and the paintings, with water and wine in preparation for the Holy Consecration.

Surpazan Hayr blessed and consecrated the main altar and the two side altars with Holy Muron, invoking the Holy Spirit to be present to strengthen us in our faith. He then blessed and consecrated the main altar paintings of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child, and the two side altar paintings of Sts. Joachim & Anne with their infant child Mary, and St. Gregory the Illuminator, patron saint of the Armenian Church.

Surpazan Hayr then celebrated Divine Liturgy on the newly consecrated altar and delivered an inspiring sermon on the significance of the day. Assisting him was Archpriest Rev. Fr. Diran Papazian, Pastor.

Those who served at the altar were Deacons John Hovsepian, Dr. Norayr Madanyan and Nazar Halajian. Shunt and Onnig Madanyan incensed as a pair, adding to the beauty of the liturgy. The angelic sounds of Sts. Joachim & Anne Choir and guests were under the direction of Dr. Susan Mardouian. The organist was Martha Auer. The Junior Choir and acolytes were from the Sunday School.

Hokehankist (requiem service) was held for all deceased members of the Srabian and Mikaelian families in whose memory the altars and paintings were donated.

The Church was overflowing with worshippers. Many of them were relatives of the Srabian and Mikaelian families from various parts of the United States and Canada, and parishioners from Chicago-area churches. In the Hovanessian Church Hall, additional seating was provided with a TV video screen of the ceremonies.

After church services, a Banquet/Program was held at a nearby banquet hall with over 200 people in attendance. Dr. Garbis Meguerian, Parish Council Chairman, welcomed everyone and introduced Mr. Srabian.

Mr. Srabian reflected upon his life and the influence that led him to make this contribution to his Church. He acknowledged those involved in bringing this 8-year altar project to its completion. He intro-



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, during consecration of three new altars at Sts. Joachim & Anne Church/April 18.

duced each of his relatives and special guests.

Violinist Rita Yeretsian, 16-year-old Sunday School student, performed "III Partita" by J.S. Bach with great artistry. She is the daughter of Dr. Ara & Rosy Yeretsian.

Then Dr. Meguerian introduced the Pastor of Sts. Joachim & Anne, Der Diran, with love and humor.

Der Diran, in turn, welcomed friends and guests and reflected upon the events of the day. He then introduced the Primate by citing his achievements as a confirmation that he is a leader for our times.

Archbishop Khajag, in his address, reminded everyone that we had been part of a unique experience as witnesses to the consecration of altars. He emphasized that when we pray before these altars and paintings we will relive the experience; that the marble stone of the altars and the canvases of the paintings have been consecrated to help us in the worship of the Holy Trinity.

Surpazan Hayr gave a brief biographical sketch of Mr. Srabian who had had as a youth known our Catholics [Vazken I] as a teacher in Romania. He is presently serv-

ing as a member of the Parish Council and as Junior Choir director. Surpazan Hayr ended his address commending Mr. Srabian for his good works and challenged each of us to lay a solid foundation for our children to know and appreciate the Christian faith taught by the Armenian Church. He then presented Mr. Srabian with the St. Vartan Award, which was read by Fr. Diran.

Archbishop Khajag acknowledged the presence of Mr. Tom Nugent and Mrs. Marcella Reich whose daughter/granddaughter, Denise, is serving in Armenia with the Peace Corps.

The architect of the marble altars, Mr. Berdj Gumshdjian, from Bay Village, Ohio, was present with his family. The artist of the paintings is Mr. Armand Moumjian of Boca Raton, Florida, who was unable to attend because he is traveling abroad.

On Saturday, Archbishop Khajag met with Sunday School children, parents and teachers for lunch and dialogue about contemporary issues. The Primate warned against changing our faith to accommodate changes in the world but encouraged us to always help those in need.



Mr. and Mrs. Greg Surabian, donors of paintings to Sts. Joachim and Anne Armenian Church in Palos Heights, IL.