

SAINT GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR, BINGHAMTON
PASTOR'S REPORT

JANUARY 1, 1979 - DECEMBER 31, 1979

The following sacraments were administered during the year:

Baptism and Chrismation (4)

Christopher Arthur Kradjian, May 12th
Daniele Verjeen Ayer, June 3rd
Jillian Lee Turabian, June 24th
Setrak Raffi Kerjilian, December 30th

Marriage (2)

Douglas Bruce Schoettinger to Suzanne Lynn Bogdasarian, August 18th
Alan Gregory Mahakian to Marie Louise Lamoreaux, September 8th

Other services

January 7th, "Blessing of Water - Chur Orhnek" Godfather, Michael Medzigian

March 11th, Youth Group Lenten Discussion and fellowship

June 3rd, Our parish celebrated Badarak at Ross Memorial Presbyterian Church, as Ross Memorial used our sanctuary (their original place of worship) for their 100th Anniversary Celebration. Our parish hosted a reception in our church hall for all those gathered that morning.

August 5th, Celebrated Badarak and preached the sermon at the Armenian Church of Westchester

December 2nd, Celebrated Badarak and preached the sermon at St. Gregory the Illuminator, Fowler, California

Funeral (2)

Garabed (Charles) Karibian, June 12th
Esgoohi Afarian, December 27th

Visiting Clergy (2)

His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate, made his yearly pastoral visitation on May 19th - 20th. His Eminence celebrated Badarak, preached the sermon and was guest of honor at our family dinner.

Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian...see Ecumenical Worship Services p.2.

Religious services rendered for non-Armenian community:

January 17th, House of the Good Shepherd (aged) "Arravodyan Jham-Matins"

July 11th, House of the Good Shepherd (aged) "Peace and Rest Service"

Ecumenical Worship Services (parish participation)

January 7th, Southside Ecumenical Epiphany Service at St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church; our choir sang "Aysor Tsaynun."

March 11th, 18th, 25th and April 1st, Southside Ecumenical Lenten Worship Services. Each church conducted their own "Traditional" Lenten Services in their own churches. Ours was on March 25th, with Fr. Karekin Kasparian presiding and preaching the sermon.

November 21st, Southside Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at St. John Roman Catholic Church. The offering was given to the Diocese of the Armenian Church, Hunger Relief Fund.

Other pastoral and church activities

January thru June, Volunteer Chaplain at Susquehanna Valley Home. As the school year ended, the Home relocated its population of problem children and tried to establish a new program for the educationally handicapped. Since the Home was not given permission by the State of New York for this new venture, my voluntary chaplaincy ended.

January 10th, Broome County Council of Church's Radio Program "Kaleidoscope," WINR 68 - helped to interview student from Lebanon.

February 15th, Church - A.G.B.U. joint Lebanon Fund Raising Activity - raised and sent \$1630.00.

March 28th, Lecture "Sin and Confession," St. George Armenian Church, Hartford, Ct.

July 26th - August 5th, Teacher and Counselor - St. Nersess Summer Study Conference.

December, Church members contributed food toward a Christmas Basket for the needy - given to the E. Roe Family of Binghamton.

Items donated/given to the Church

Three "Tserakordz" (hand laced linen for the Altar) and one hand made linen to cover the Baptismal Font.

Satenig Ketchoyian

One 100 lb. bag of Calcium

Nishan Ketchoyian

Many hours of odd jobs

Edward Seraydarian

Repair service on copier

Frank Whitney Jr.

Cost of labor on church car

Charlie Seraydarian

Cleaning of church hall curtains

John Bogdasarian

Comments

I was very pleased last summer when I encountered little difficulty finding teachers for Church School for the school year 1979-1980. In the past it has been a real problem to get people to teach. Also, after several years of trying I was able to form a committee of three people to co-ordinate special occasions for the Church School, thus relieving the teachers of that burden. Thus far, teachers and committee members have completed their duties willingly and competently.

Even before my arrival in Binghamton, Marion Rejebian was Youth Group advisor. With her staff, she has capably guided the youth in all of their endeavors in the areas of service, spiritual growth and social activities. As of June, 1979, she resigned her position, but not before she received a commitment from Linda Misakyan to take over the helm of the Youth Group. Although I have expressed my thanks in a personal letter to her, I wish to again thank Marion for all her sacrifices on behalf of our youth.

I have had the opportunity to watch Linda in action and am pleased with what I have seen so far.

In February, 1980, Nancy Basmajian, representing both the Council of Religious Education and the A.C.Y.O.A. Jrs., will visit our parish to give both our Youth Group and Church School some ideas and guidance. Nancy has been appointed by the Diocese to work with the A.C.Y.O.A. Jrs., as well as to upgrade and to implement curriculum for the Council for Religious Education.

Again this year, Women's Guild has maintained a strong membership and good attendance at every meeting. When the Guild members "put their minds to it" they are able to accomplish any task. But as always, it is the few that do almost all of the work. The Guild has found spiritual enlightenment at the beginning of each meeting by having a Bible passage or prayer read and explained. One of the projects undertaken this year by the Guild was a rummage-bake sale which proved very profitable. That was followed by an equally successful bake sale. Needless to say, our Guild always comes through when the parish is in need of extra funds.

Although our choir does not hold practices on a regular basis, it has shown an increase in members, which is a step forward. Michael Finkikyan continues to be our organist-director and devotes much of his time and talents for our services as well as for all of our Ecumenical Services. Michael has been sent to both the St. Nersess Programs and Choir Assemblies and always returns prepared to help improve our choir. There is no question, however, that we still need a choir director, as well as a back-up organist.

Our Armenian Dance Group was going strong at the beginning of '79, with an occasional dance exhibition at various local community functions. However, college demands have decreased the size of the dance group considerably. It is difficult to perform with just a handful, especially when some dances require more people than we have. I thank Louise Kontos for her interest in our young adults and for sharing her knowledge of Armenian Dances with them, so that they are now able to dance with confidence. I hope that this group may be revived once again.

In the Fall of 1978, and at the request of a couple of parishoners, a Mini-Cultural Activity was begun. Although begun with a small group of eight people, an average of 35 people now attend. Topics vary widely and have included religion, art, music, poetry, authors and traditions of our national heritage. Holding these activities on Sunday evenings in parishoner's homes has proved most beneficial.

The Council, as usual, has had its hands full trying to run the daily needs of the parish and more often than not has gotten caught up with the finances of the church. Council members have done a good job with our pledge system, which usually accounts for half of our budget. Where we have failed is to find a project that will generate an income of \$10,000 or more. There is a lot of work done for both the dance and picnic, neither of which brings in much net income. One of the problems throughout our parish is that we, collectively, want activities, but we are unwilling to work for them. The same few do most of the work and, although their work, time and effort are appreciated, the parish needs the full co-operation of all members.

January 31st is my last day as Pastor of this parish. Many are wondering why I am leaving... the answers are as follows: As a priest, I too must grow in my spirituality. On several occasions, I tried instituting Bible Studies, lectures and discussions, but these efforts were not crowned with success. Also I am sorry to report that Armenian School died out after our initial years of success. It is my sincere desire that this parish respond more enthusiastically to my successor in these matters, as well as in a general sense to all church activities so that the burden is shared more equitably in organizing church dinners, dances, picnics and other church endeavors.

It must be emphasized again that more co-operation in fund-raising activities as well as in the day-to-day operation of the church is needed. The handful that are working, are working very hard and, as can be expected, are tiring. More strong backs, hands and legs are needed so as not to burden the few. This is our church; we must all do our share. This will also allow us to increase our budget so that Council will have greater leeway to negotiate for a Parish Priest who will not have to supplement his income with a second job.

I depart this parish because I am called upon to serve a larger congregation which is bound to provide for me greater challenges and wider responsibilities. I look forward to these at this stage of my spiritual and pastoral development. Additionally, my growing family has placed upon me a greater financial burden which will be eased through my assumption of a larger parish.

In 1972, you opened your arms and accepted us, and later our children, into your family. With love in our hearts we leave you and know that we have made some very lasting and deep relationships with this family we call ours. I leave you knowing that there are still problems unsolved and people that need help. I pray that the Holy Spirit strengthen you all and help the new Parish Council find a priest to guide you from this day forth.

Respectfully submitted this twenty-seventh day of January, 1980.

Kevork Kahana Arakelian
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Pastor