

P A S T O R ' S R E P O R T

Annual Parish Assembly - Sun. Jan. 27, 1985

One full year has passed since my arrival to the Holy Ascension Armenian Community. The year was full of religious, cultural and social activities and also of meetings. As every parish priest experiences, I must confess you that, I too had my ups and downs, bright and dark days or in more simple words- my happy and sad moments.

As you know, on Jan. 18 of last year, I was assigned as pastor on this parish, to take care of the spiritual and cultural needs of more than 250 Armenian families, of this area. I started with visitations to know the families and each member of the family. I have visited a little over ^{than} one hundred families. I still have to continue to visit the rest. Besides my regular visits, I have visited the sick (whenever I knew of course), blessed homes, made special visits for special purposes.

I have presided over 200 meetings - this includes parish council meetings, ladies, ACYOA Srs., ACYOA Jrs., Choir, Armenian and Sunday School, special committee meetings and regional meetings at the Diocese.

I have performed two weddings, seven funerals, four Baptisms and two confirmations. This does not include the services when I participate in non-Armenian churches.

I have started Armenian school for adults as well as children, thus giving a golden opportunity for our parishioners to come and learn "something" about their mother language and cultural heritage. Here I must thank Mary Yapoujian, Garabed Hovannessian and Salpi Tokatlian for assisting me in teaching. Lisa Misakian, one of my bright Armenian school students promised to join the staff and teach Armenian to the children. How nice it is to be a student and teacher. There is no doubt that the Armenian school needs students as well as teachers. Those who would like to help us, please see me. In the month of July, upon my request, Mary Yapoujian went to New York and for one week attended the teacher's training program at the Diocese. Once again I must thank for her great sacrifice - you can imagine what it means to be away from the family for one week, when specially she is a mother of four and has her own business.

Since my arrival, I was concerned about our youth. It is true that there was the junior group of the ACYOA with their devoted officers like Kim Kasparian, Linda Kalfaian and Mark Bousian. But there was no senior group for young adults (18 and up). I brought together young adults and formed the ACYOA senior group. I appointed Maral Kehkejian as chairperson, Debbie Tashjian as Treasurer and James Kalfaian as secretary. In a short period, the group organized two successful social gatherings. I am sure we will plan more activities for our youth in the future. But parents, please encourage your sons or daughters to join the group. Let them come together to socialize, to learn about their heritage and serve their community. Let them come together to discuss their needs and let them tell us what really they expect from us.

In the month of February, I called all our ladies to a special meeting. New ladies guild officers were elected. I thank them for their services. Here I must thank the treasurer Nicky Tarajian for doing a conscientious job. On December 2nd, the new officers were elected. Carmen Fuchs became the chairperson, Ann Gorakian was elected as treasurer and Helen Tashjian as the secretary.

Speaking about this organization, it is sad to see that it has a wrong image in this community. "If you are elected as an officer in ladies guild, that means you belong to the kitchen for that given year." I don't know how much time it will take for me ^{+from me} to change this wrong concept, thought about this auxiliary organization. I don't even know if I will ever be able to change it? The future will tell me. But let me say that, this organization does not belong only to the kitchen. Hopefully in 1985, you will see what I meant by saying this today.

In April 1985, I started a new parish newsletter ANI. Why Ani? Ani was one of the ancient capital cities of Armenia and was famous with her 1001 churches. The people were very religious and patriotic. If today we could remember here in Trumbull, that we are the same people as the people of Ani, and if we could revive their faith among us, I think it will be worth to name our newsletter Ani.

Here I cannot forget the help of the editor Theresa Harabedian. She puts hours and hours every month, to make the newsletter ready in time. It is not enough for me to thank her by words. May God give her strength and health to be able to continue her devoted services to our community.

I also thank the editorial staff, namely Hermine Azarian, Knar Gharapegian, Agnes Kapucuzian, Helen Misakian and Peter Kapucuzian, for their assistance whenever they are asked. I must mention that Peter is also our mail man - everytime that something has to be taken to the Bridgeport main post office, he takes it, just call him. Thank you very much Peter.

One thing about the newsletter. I must remind you that this neither is pastors nor editors newsletter. It is the church's, community's newsletter. It is your newsletter. Feel free to write articles, express your opinions about this or that church matters and so on.

Church choir

Our community has over 250 families but unfortunately, imagine for a moment our choir has only 14 members. Thank God for those 14, I am not complaining. But why more parishioners are not joining to this very important group? I am afraid that a day will come when in America, we will be obliged to hire professional singers to come and sing our Badarak for us. And I know that some churches are doing that.

During the past (especially) six months I have had about 10 meetings and rehearsals. Here again a golden opportunity was given to our parishioners to come and learn our beautiful hymns and church music. Unfortunately many times the rehearsal was done with 4 or 5 people. Where are the others? In August I have sent a personal invitation to all my parishioners, reminding them to join the choir.

I thank all our choir members, especially our organist Virginia Kalfaian, who almost every Sunday has played the organ. And whenever she wasn't there, we all have felt her absence. Thank you Virginia. My thanks also to Charles Balian, choir director, Sonia Trapasso, treasurer and Nancy Hovanessian the secretary. I must thank Peter Kapucuzian for conducting the choir in the absence of the choir director.

I will do my best to increase the number and the quality of our choir. I welcome Tom Garabedian, who joined the choir recently and who was elected as treasurer of the choir.

My words of appreciation to our choir not only for the Palm Sunday dinner, but also for preparing Primate's Christmas visit dinner. It was a successful weekend.

Sunday School

Probably this is the most important school for any parish. A school which takes care of religious education of our children. Again for the success of this school, we need capable teachers. The Diocese has teachers training program for the Sunday school teachers too. We must try to benefit from these type of opportunities.

I thank Theresa Harabedian, the Superintendent for heading this department with her staff Beatrice Javian, J. Sukoian, Margaret Balian, Sonia Sinanian.

My appreciation for their Armenian Christmas buffet and program.

Parents, please bring your children regularly and follow to their religious education.

ACTIVITIES

As I said the year was full of different activities. To remind you some of them are:

- In March, we had Michink dinner, over 70 people were present.
- During Lent, every Wednesday evening I performed Peace and rest service.
- Palm Sunday, Choir had their traditional dinner with over 100 present.
- In April, we had Madagh dinner. I invited a guest speaker from the Hartford area. Over 70 people were present.
- In May the ACYOA Jrs. had their mothers day breakfast. Also we had the Church consecration by the Primate. On that occasion 17 Godfathers were found.
- June and July relatively were calm months, as is the case for all our parishes. Except, the Ladies had a membership meeting. 12 were present.
- In August, the ACYOA jrs; had a car wash and pizza party. The parish had her annual picnic. For the first time we had raffle and also invited a band. Although the expenses were higher, the profit was more too.
- During the months of September and October, the Bazaar committee was busy with the preparations of the Annual Bazaar. In those months we had 3 Pre-Bazaar dinners. Dr. Hanessian was invited to give a lecture on Soviet Armenian.
- In November, we had our Bazaar.

Also an appreciation dinner for all the workers.

- In December, Primate was invited to ordain Clerks and a Deacon. We had a service, on the American Christmas eve. Over 50 people were present.
- And in January, the Sunday school had their Armenian Christmas day Buffet and program.

For the success of our church consecration I must not forget to thank the two committees, Godfathers comm. and Banquet Comm. namely Dr. Berdj Harabedian, Berdj Khachadourian, Richard Edward Jevarjian. Also Theresa Harabedian, Carmen Fuchs and Diane Karageuzian.

I use this opportunity to thank to all our Church, Altar and Pillar Godfathers. May God keep them and their families under his precious cross, and their memory always remain in our Holy Ascension community.

For the success of our Bazaar I thank the co-chairpersons Theresa Harabedian and Gladys Jevarjian, Ralph Trapasso the treasurer and all the committee members and to all of you. It will be very difficult to mention the names of all those who worked for the Bazaar. But we all know you... Thank you for your devoted services.

I also must thank for the services of our Altar servers namely Deacon Vrej Yapoujian, Sarkis Nazarian and Vartan Tarpinian. And I congratulate the ordination of our five clerks, namely Sarkis Nazarian, Vartan Tarpinian, Mark Bousian, Dikran Yapoujian and Christopher Balian and wish that after their ordination they will go forward, while serving.

Renovations

After my arrival to this parish, within first three months, I completely have renovated the pastor's office and the clergy vestry room. Here I must thank Vehanoush and Haroutune Chouljian for taking care of the expenses.

Also thanks to Katherine Gopoiian for buying a Xerox machine for our church.

While speaking about renovations, I cannot forget the services of Harry Tashjian, Richard Kalfaian, Garo Garabedian, Herbert Avakian for doing most of the paintings of those rooms and doors-upstairs and downstairs.

I also would like to thank our Diocesan delegate Dr. Berdj Harabedian for giving his precious time in representing our parish at the Diocesan Assembly. I must also thank him for keeping the records of our parishioners pledges. Probably that's a kind of work that does not appear, but it requires hours and hours. Thank you Berdj.

I must thank the ACYOA Jrs. for being responsible for the coffee hours during the first 10 months of the year. Upon their wish I gave that responsibility back to the ladies. There is no doubt that we need sponsors for the coffee hour.

Last but not least, I thank the 7 parish council members, for their support and co-operation with the parish priest. I particularly would like to thank the chairman Mardi Azarian, for his ^{wife} matured advices in my difficult moments and also the treasurer Steve Goomrigian, a nice and humble person, for doing a conscientious job. I doubt if I will have another Dikranagerdzi treasurer like him. The job of the treasurer is a difficult one. It requires time, honesty. I think he was the right person for this job.

Also thanks to the building comm. members, namely, Richard Kachian, Edward Jevadjian and Mardi Azarian for their services to our church, especially for taking care of the mortgage payments and accounts of our church.

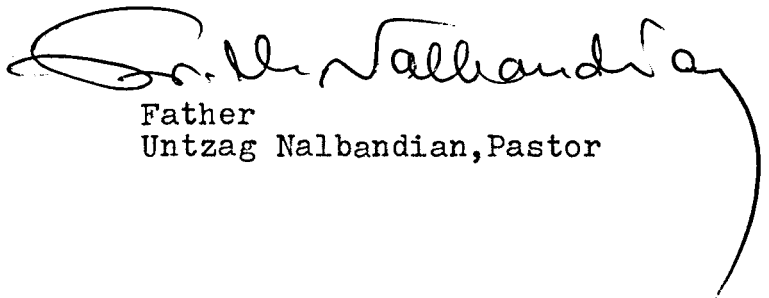
There is no doubt that in 1985, we will have more religious, cultural and social and also fund raising activities in our community. Please try to be more active in our parish life. Support your pastor & P.C. "We can't do that", "It won't work", "we never have done it that way" - these are just some of the many negative reactions which can arise when some project is proposed. Sometimes such cautions are justified in the light of experience, but at other times they are just excuses for inaction.

It is bad to fall into the habit of being defeatist, about plans before they are even carefully considered or tried.

In one's personal life, a person may become chronically discouraged. He gives up and never tries anything different. He misses doors of opportunity, because he is too negative to walk through them or even to see them.

Before you condemn it, consider first, the possibility of a plan being good, practical, helpful. It might work .

May 1985 be a good year for our community. And may the blessings of God and our Holy church be with you now and always.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Father Untzag Nalbandian". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name. A long, thin, curved line extends from the bottom right of the signature, looping back towards the center of the page.

Father
Untzag Nalbandian, Pastor