

ADDRESS BY THE PASTOR
TO THE
ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

It is a pleasure to greet members of the St. Sahag-St. Mesrob parish on the occasion of the Annual Parish Assembly. Truly, we have every reason to be proud of our past accomplishments, and to look forward with confidence towards the future.

For the past seven months I have been with you, having numerous encounters with parents and individual church members, my overall observations lead me to believe that our parish is a dynamic, vibrant congregation. As pastor, I have seriously pondered our community's priorities and the methods to achieve some beneficial aims for our youth, our young couples, our adults and our senior citizens. Allow me to share some of my ideas and aspirations.

Naturally, our number one priority must be the experience of spiritual growth - individually and through family. After all, a church exists to promote the spiritual way of life and demands from her members' adherence to God's will. Regular church attendance, family devotion, along with works of charity will add to the value of our community life. This will be our continued emphasis in the years to come.

Along with spiritual growth comes a concern for nurturing our faith. We often call this Christian Education. Our church must provide opportunities for her members to grow in faith through Sunday School classroom teaching, Bible Study fellowship, ACYOA Prayer Breakfasts, spiritual seminars, conferences, and retreats. All these activities will further enhance our community growth in Christian knowledge and help us achieve new heights. These will be our continued emphases in the years to come.

Naturally, another important priority must be the youth of our parish. Organized, supervised and effective programs and activities will help them grow in faith, culture and in appreciation of their heritage. We plan to promote: Retreats, overnight hikes, day hikes and seminars, to name a few. It is our wish to see every youngster age 8 to 16 attend St. Vartan Camp. We believe the experience will have a beneficial effect on our youth, will allow them to grow together, and to form lasting friendships, etc. We will do everything possible to realize these goals.

Our concept of church membership needs an overhaul. Paying minimum dues and not being involved in the life of the parish is a farce. We believe God has bestowed many talents on each one of us and those talents must be used in various ways for the welfare of God's Kingdom, the church. We hope to prepare a membership manual to promote membership inquiry class, and to introduce methods of assimilating new members. Also, I propose that a Membership Committee be formed to pursue these goals.

Administratively speaking, our church office needs modernization in every respect. Adequate office conference facilities must be provided. It is about time the computer age reached our church office, to facilitate our membership list, our mailings and a host of other activities which need taking care of. Through the years the needs of our parish have grown tremendously, but our handling of these routine duties has not kept pace.

I believe the time has come for us to face the challenge, to relieve our indebtedness by paying, fully, the mortgage on Hayatian Hall. Some of you have made pledges. Many have not yet contributed. The general attitude that the project was mishandled must not deter us. Now is the time to live up to this community responsibility. We recommend forming a committee to take on this challenge and see the debt is paid in the foreseeable future. It is our duty and our responsibility to see that it is paid.

I believe the time has come for our parish to look seriously into purchasing a 16-seat van. Such a vehicle would be useful for youth outings, for senior citizens, and for various other parish needs. I know some of the difficulties. It is within our abilities to overcome them. I believe the van will be a useful and much needed service for our parish needs.

I believe the time has come, also, to reactivate an Endowment Fund Committee. We need to urge every member to undertake projects that will meet our community needs by donating a sum of money in honor of an occasion or through bequest in memory of a friend or relative. It will be the job of this committee to promote and inspire our members into making our church a beneficiary in their Wills.

All of these ideas and aims are good and beneficial to our community when they are realized. But in order to achieve, one must be practical. How can we meet the needs of our community when 85% (margin of error -5 or +5) of our members are

content with pledging the minimum - which is \$2.00 per person per week. Only 15% of our church budget is realized through annual pledges. One must wonder where the other 85% is coming from. A challenge lies ahead. Each one of us must give proportionate to his or her income and according to the needs of the church. Otherwise, the above ideas will be mere aims on paper.

Any church is small whose members think of minimums in church attendance, prayer, service or giving. If the philosophy of the majority of the church members is, "How little can I do and still get by?", the church indeed is little. It's a "big" church - regardless of size - if its members think in terms of giving their very best!

I am confident that as I propose these objectives, we will pursue them with love, determination and sacrifice. We are called to help and support each other. One person, or a group of people, cannot do it alone,

I am thankful for the confidence you have placed in me and for the good fellowship I enjoy with everyone. I know together we will make the difference!

Yours in Christ's Service,

The Reverend Paree Metjian