

V.E. NIAGARA FALLS

~~DIRECTOR~~ OF D.R.E. VISITS CANADIAN PARISHES SCHOOLS

The Miss Elise Antreassian, the young and dynamic Director of the Department of Religious Education, ^{Elise Antreassian} of the Armenian Church, spent four fruitful days visiting in parishes in Toronto, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls on February 24-27. Each of these ^{four} parishes has different needs, and her efforts were directed towards defining them and providing advice and encouragement for the Christian education of the youngsters of each community.

Her first stop was St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in St. Catharines, Ontario. An all-day session was held with Superintendents *Alice Torossian and Audrey Paroian* and the teachers of the school:

Discussion centered on ways to improve the quality and number of programs available, as well as attendance. A recruitment program was worked out to be pursued on a month-by-month basis for both new students and new teachers, as well as a curriculum and program of special activities for the ^{coming} next several months. At the general parish gathering the same evening, a good number of children and young people appeared - ^{a special effort had been made to bring them & their families be present} children whose parents had not even ~~been active~~ ^{have preceded} in the church! The film, "The Growth of Our Children," was shown, followed by a brief talk on religious education. Comments by many people after the program indicated several areas of concern that needed special attention: one, that it ^{was difficult to explain getting} had taken a great effort to ^{the entire parish mobilized to attend & participate in such programs;} get so many to attend (as is the case with many parish gatherings); two, ^{the need for renewed energy in} that ~~there is great concern~~ ^{Armenian} for the current weakness of parish auxiliaries; and three, frustration over the lack of full community participation in church life, especially youth. The gracious host and Pastor, the Very Rev. Fr. Kegham Zakarian, concurred with these concerns.

On the positive side, St. Catharines is a well-established parish, and there is great interest in the religious education aspect as well as an active parish life. The ^{internal} difficulties ^{that it has} - that can arise in any parish family ^{will certainly} - can be alleviated by a commitment on the part of the Armenian community to make ^{their commitment} to God and to the church their number one priority, with all aspects of life flowing ~~out~~ ^{from} that point. ^{Indeed,} the film was very well received - one comment ^{was} "It's nice to know that there is a professionally done film about our church and our ^{faith} religion." The ~~talk~~ ^{individual discussion that followed} that followed the film provoked

The film was energetic & sometimes impassioned.

~~much enthusiastic discussion.~~ As one observer pointed out: "We have got to get back to Christianity and make it the center of our lives as Armenians."

The next stop was St. Sarkis Armenian Church on the New York side of Niagara Falls. Here is an example of a small church with an outstanding Sunday School. The two teachers - the mother and daughter team of Alice and Ani Avdoian - attended last summer's Mardigian Institute, sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Mardigian, and held at Diocesan headquarters in New York. ^{Adding} Using the impetus ^{to their own talent & education,} providing by that training, they invested the new year's classes with creativity, imagination and hard work. Their regular students are getting an extraordinary Christian-Armenian education. The D.R.E. film "The Growth of Our Children" was shown to the small group of parishioners, ~~and~~ ^{but} the highlight of the visit was meeting with the teachers and seeing their fine work. Unfortunately, as is the case of some parishes, there are Armenian families in the vicinity that remain uninvolved in the Church. Arsen Avdoian, Parish Council Chairman, ~~communicated~~ ^{communicated} the hard work and ~~was an excellent example of~~ long hours it takes to bring "unchurched" into the community. Deacon Michael Ohanesian, the youthful and dedicated Visiting Deacon of the parish, lives in Detroit but regularly commutes to the church ~~to administer to the flock.~~ ^{for a variety of duties.} His efforts, among others, include ~~the~~ ^{a plan for} creation of a learning center for children and adults.

St. Sarkis has a great potential in that there is ~~a~~ ^{is a good} sizable community of ~~Armenians~~ ^{Armenian} families, ~~although~~ ^{presently uncommitted} Armenians in the area. As Mr. Avdoian says, "The Armenian Church is such a necessary part of any Armenian's life that it breaks my heart to see so many people uninvolved, people whose lives could be so much more vastly rewarding if they would just reach out and become involved." The other great assets ^{in Niagara Falls} are the vitality and commitment of ~~Deacon Michael,~~ ^{The Avdoian Family,} whose vision, compassion and love for his people and for God could make a difference in the lives of many; and the generosity, energy and devotion of the Avdoian family.

The third stop was ~~to~~ the Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Toronto, where the dedication and love of the teachers was ~~an inspiration to Miss Antreassian.~~ ^{very apparent.} Unfortunately, parental apathy ~~as far as religious~~ ^{concerns church} ~~commitment~~ ^{commitment} is a problem ~~at~~ ^{(as it so often is).} There are many families involved in ~~at the~~ cultural and social activities, but not ~~involved~~ with the church itself. On the day Miss Antreassian visited the School, there were countless children in the vestibule who were not members of the Sunday School. ~~Their families had come on this Sunday only because of a special parish assembly.~~ Otherwise, they and their children are not at the church on Sundays. Because of

a part of a larger solution,

~~this~~, the Sunday School is considering a step which the D.R.E. heartily approves: using a bus to bring children and young people to church. In the past, this idea has been discouraged on the grounds that the church is for ~~families~~ *the entire family*. However, at the prospect of losing a new generation because of their parents' lack of ~~interest~~ *commitment*, schools are beginning to think in terms of providing transportation.

The ~~strongest points~~ *vital assets* of this parish's Sunday School are the great dedication of ~~the teachers and~~ Superintendents Kaspar Yardenian and Alis Kuyumjian, ~~and~~ *the teachers,* and the many children whose parents are already active parish members and ~~have only~~ *to realize* the importance of religious education in the children's lives.

A final stop at

The budding parish of the Armenian Church of North York in Toronto provided the exciting opportunity of launching a brand-new Sunday School. Five ~~teachers~~ *potential* and Acting Superintendent Luiz Kassabian ~~were~~ *had* assembled ~~and met~~ to discuss D.R.E. materials, school procedure, and scheduling. After the meeting ~~and~~ *was* a special and lavish Vartanantz program, *during which* a brief presentation was made on religious education. ~~The~~ *deeply* parish is intent on being a ~~true~~ church of God and ~~they~~ *in the true sense of the word* are genuinely interested in seeing ~~that~~ *a* the Sunday School ~~succeeds~~ *take root. The very gracious*. Parish Council Chairman Onnig Torossian has worked ~~hard~~ *very* along with his Council and the entire community to originate "one beautiful church family - not ~~only~~ *just* a social and cultural club - but a church."

No social commitment

** Over 200 people were present.*