

Ս. Մեսրոպ Հայաստանեայց Եկեղեցի

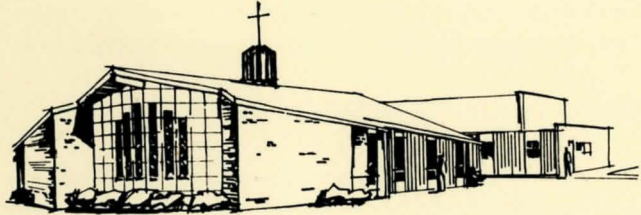
Րէյսին, Ուիսքոնսին

St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church

Racine, Wisconsin

1925

1975



Remember the deeds they did in their  
generation, and great glory and eternal  
fame shall be yours.

1 Maccabees 2:51

## THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

The Armenian Church is the birthplace of my soul,  
Like a vast grotto it is simple and profound, dark and light—  
With its hospitable court, ample tribune, and hushed altar  
Standing in the distance, as though it were a ship afloat . . .

The Armenian Church I see with my eyes closed,  
I breathe and hear it through the clouds of incense  
Which rise towards the feet of the Infant Jesus,  
And through the fervent prayers vibrating its walls . . .

The Armenian Church is the mighty fortress of my forefathers'  
faith,  
Raised by them from the earth stone by stone,  
And brought down by them from heaven, one dewdrop and one  
cloud at a time,  
And in which they enfolded themselves peacefully and humbly . . .

The Armenian Church is a great embroidered tapestry,  
Behind which the Lord descends into the chalice, and  
Before which all my people stand with bowed heads,  
To commune with the past through the life-giving bread and  
wine . . .

The Armenian Church is a peaceful haven across the turbulent seas,  
It is fire and light in the cold of the night;  
It is a shady forest in the scorching midday sun  
Where lilies bloom by the River of Hymns . . .

The Armenian Church beneath every stone in its floor  
Holds a secret passage leading up to Heaven . . .

The Armenian Church is the shining armor of the  
Armenians' soul and body,  
In it her crosses are as a dagger;  
Her bell rings forth and her song is always Victory . . .

1924

—VAHAN TEKEYAN

Translated by Srpouhie A. Essefian



ST. ETCHMIADZIN

### ՍՈՒՐԲ ԷՉՄԻԱԾԻՆ

Դարեր եկան, դարեր անցան, է՛ջմիածին.  
Քո հիմն անշարժ ու անսասան, է՛ջմիածին.  
Ձե՛ս ձեռակերտ դու մարդկեղէն առօրեայ,  
Դու շողակաթ լուսոյ խորան, է՛ջմիածին:

Խաւարի մէջ դու վառեցար որպէս կանթեղ,  
Վառ պահեցիր մեր սրտերում կայծն երկնային  
Անփառունակ ըստրուկ երկրի դու լուսագեղ  
Անշէջ փարոս ազատութեան, է՛ջմիածին:

Յըրուած հօտի դու ժողովող անոյթ փարախ,  
Հաստա՛տ լինի թող մեր վրայ քո հովանին.  
Գրիգորի Սուրբ օրհնութեամբ ծաղկի՛ր խաղաղ,  
Փա՛նֆ, ապաւէն մեր աննըման էջմիածին:

ՅՈՎՀ. ՅՈՎՀԱՆՆԵՍԵԱՆ



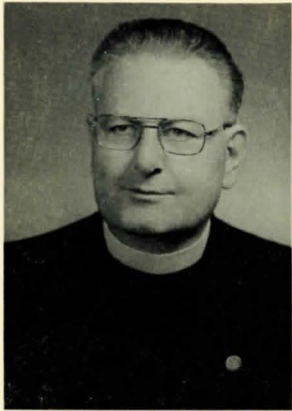
His Holiness Vasken I,  
Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians,  
The 140th Pontiff

His Holiness was born Levon Baljian in Romania in 1908. After graduating cum laude from Bucharest University in 1936, he taught in Armenian schools and later entered the seminary. He was ordained into the priesthood in 1943. He held the posts of Primate of Romania and Bulgaria, and was a member of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council in Etchmiadizin, Armenia, prior to being elected and consecrated Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians in October 1955.



Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
Primate Armenian Church of America

His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian was born in Iraq 1919. He was ordained into the priesthood July 23, 1939. He was consecrated a bishop by His Holiness Vasken I, Catholicos of all Armenians, October 14, 1962. He has been Primate of the Eastern Diocese since April 30, 1966.



PASTOR'S  
MESSAGE

On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of  
St. Mesrob Armenian Church.

The fiftieth year is an important milestone in the life of an individual. At present there are few fifty-year old men and women who expect to live another fifty-year period upon this earth. It is not so in the life of a church community. When we take into account the fact that the Cathedral of the Holy Mother See of Etchmiadzin has lived for many centuries - in spite of periods of obscurity - since the time of St. Gregory the Enlightener and King Dertad of Armenia, our St. Mesrob Church with a fifty year existence is in a phase of adolescence.

Great sacrifices were necessary before St. Mesrob Church could be acquired and consecrated on Christmas Day 1925. The church became a reality thanks to the Christian faith, hard work and dedication of Armenian immigrants and survivors of the 1915 Turkish genocide, most of whom had been deprived of the opportunity of receiving higher education. We owe the founders of St. Mesrob Church a debt of gratitude. The fruition of the spiritual seeds sown by them is the erection in 1972 of our new church in the attractive Caledonia district of Racine.

The last fifty years were not always years of continuing progress for the St. Mesrob Church. For almost half of those years the St. Mesrob parish was without the care of a resident, permanent pastor. Each time a gap ensued upon the death or departure of a pastor, there were setbacks in some areas of parish life and functions. In spite of this handicap, the zeal and dedication of parish councils and auxiliary organizations have assured the continuity of some activities.

At the threshold of the second fifty-year period of our parish, let us make our challenge the giving of impetus to activities which will bring credit to the name of our church, St. Mesrob Mashtotz, the inventor of the Armenian Alphabet and giver of the Holy Bible to the Armenian people, would want us to be Armenian-spirited and ready to exemplify our Christianity with concrete deeds.

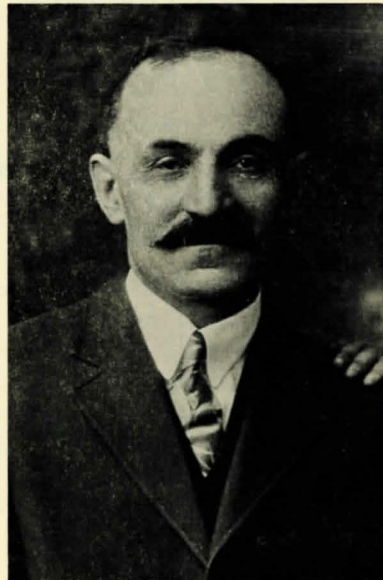
This is my wish for you as we approach the day of celebrating our fiftieth anniversary as a living church.

(Rev.) Arten Ashjian

ST. MESROB ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC  
CHURCH HISTORY



ALTAR PAINTING



GODFATHER IN 1925  
KIRKOR BAJAK KEYISHIAN

Armenians came to Racine as early as 1892. In that year, three young men from the Armenian province of Kharpert arrived from Waukegan, Illinois, to settle here. They soon followed by countrymen from other provinces in Western Armenia, mostly from the towns of Tomarza and Joujooon in Caesaria. Having fled from Turkish persecution and oppression, these people came to make a new life in a land of freedom and opportunity. Most of the early immigrants found employment in one of the many industries in Racine.

By 1910 the few Armenians who had settled in Racine would occasionally hold religious services in Wergeland Hall on State Street. The first Armenian clergyman to visit Racine was the Rev. Mesrob Kahana Sahagian in 1914. A committee consisting of John Poladian, Avak Kalfa Akgulian, Nishan Bokazian, Hairabed Dadian, and Barsam Kalfayian was formed the following year for the purpose of providing visiting clergymen.

Until 1922, Racine was considered part of the Midwest Parish and shared the services of the Rev. Tavit Kahana Avedisian with other nearby cities. In 1922 Racine became a separate parish. The Rev. Vartan Kahana Tavitian became the first permanent priest of the new parish the following year. From 1922 up to the time of the consecration of the first St. Mesrob Church, St. Luke's Episcopal Church at 614 Main Street allowed the use of its facility on Sunday afternoons and at various other times.

According to the minutes of the Board of Trustees, on August 19, 1923, the Armenians of Racine having reached a population of 150, met

at Wergeland Hall to plan for a permanent Armenian church home. A building committee was formed consisting of Krikor Kamakian, Haroutune Kalagian, Haji Hajinian, Arsen Levonian, Movses Garabedian, Armenag Vartoukian, and Sarkis Buchaklian.

Much was accomplished in 1924 toward the realization of an Armenian church in Racine. On April 8, 1924, a meeting was held and a grand total of \$3,535 was raised for the building of a new church. However, in a communication to the Building Committee, His Eminence Archbishop Tirayre Hovanessian, Primate of the Armenian Church of North America, stated that it was his desire that the Danish Baptist Church at 1326 State Street be purchased instead of building a new church. The community agreed and the Bargaining and Negotiating Committee consisting of Attorney Gulbank Gulbankian, Hairabed Dadian, Toros Madaghian, and Khosrof Yaghoupian was formed. Mr. John Kamakian, in behalf of the community, signed the necessary documents to establish ownership on October 12, 1924. The price of purchase was \$18,000.

From the date of purchase until December of 1925, the community worked zealously to prepare the church for the day of consecration. A sum of \$7,000 was spent for repairs, renovations, and changes in order to conform to the standards of an Armenian church. The altar with its intricate carvings was designed and built by Avak Kalfa Akgulian with the assistance of Barsam Kalfayian and Zeron Zeronian and very closely resembles the main altar of the Monastery of Tomarza. Gulbank Akgulian painted the altar painting of the Virgin Mary and Christ enthroned as well as the paintings depicting the Baptism of Christ and Christ the Good Shepherd. The Holy Sepulchre which is used in the church from Good Friday until Ascension Day

was built by Sahag Jansouzian. The Rev. Vartan Kahana Tavitian, our first permanent priest, provided the church with the baptismal font which was his personal gift. All of the above are presently used in the new St. Mesrob Church.

Our first church edifice was consecrated on December 25, 1925, by the Primate, Archbishop Tirayre Hovanessian, who was assisted by the Rev. Vartan Kahana Tavitian and the Detroit parish priest, the Rev. Khachig Kahana Krouzian. The godfather was Kirkor Bajak Keyishian who requested that the church be named St. Mesrob in memory of his father, Mesrob. Also in 1925, the Ladies Auxiliary was formed. Its executive committee members were Mrs. Mary Dadian, Chairman, Mrs. Mary Mikaelian, Mrs. Johar Dadian, Mrs. Margaret Hajinian, Mrs. Hripsime Kamalian, Mrs. Haiganoosh Kirkorian, Mrs. Beatrice Bajak Keyishian.

St. Mesrob was one of the earliest churches in the Diocese to have a Sunday School. It was chartered in 1935 by the Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Mampre Calfayan. Its first superintendent was Toros Madaghian.

As the work of the church progressed, other organizations were formed. Through the efforts of the Very Rev. Soukias Vartabed Kalfayian, the Women's Guild was organized on July 17, 1945. Its executive board consisted of Mrs. Blanche Hardy, Chairman, Mrs. Evelyn Armaganian, Miss Rose Kirkorian, Miss Altoon Levonian, Miss Alice Garabedian and Mrs. Virginia Musurlian.

On March 21, 1946, the Primate, His Grace Bishop Tiran Nersoyan, organized the Racine Chapter of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America. Sam Garabedian, Sahag Akgulian, Jack Madaghian, Catherine Madaghian and Shockey Gengozian were its first executives.

During the parish's fifty year history, the church has been blessed with a choir, Armenian School and Bible Study Group. Many of the deacons and clerks who so faithfully served our church in the past are now deceased. On this solemn occasion we honor the memory of Haroutune Barootian, Zeron Danajian, Hovhannes Gurunian, Haji Hajinian, Barsam Kalfayan, Hairabed Mikaelian, Peniamin Torosian, and Armenag Vidian who for many years served the liturgical needs of our church.

After forty-seven years of serving the spiritual and cultural needs of the Armenian community of Racine, St. Mesrob outgrew its facility at 1326 State Street, and its members began to explore the possibility of a new edifice. In 1964, at a Parish Assembly a Planning Committee was formed to investigate the feasibility of building a new church. The original members were the Rev. Dajad Kahana Davidian, President, Paul Minasian, Chairman, Mikael Garoukian, Sue Esayian, John Esayian, Sam Akgulian, Mike Janikian, George Gulbankian, Harry Cherkinian, Mark Akgulian, and George Stevoff. In 1966, the Erie Street property was purchased for a sum of \$57,500. Payment of the mortgage of this property was completed in 1968.

The project for the new St. Mesrob Church was started in early 1972 with the location of the parish home which was moved and relocated on the property. That year's Building Committee consisting of the Rev. Guregh Kahana Yetenekian, President, Harry Cherkinian, Chairman, Sam Akgulian, Mike Janikian, Perry Paragamian, Mikael Garoukian, John Esayian, Mark Akgulian, Harry Akgulian, Al Topalian, Sahag Akgulian, George Sahagian, Dick Vartanian, Paul Buchaklian, Ira Eland, Sarkis Kazarian, Joe Yahnian, Frank Vidian, and George Stevoff. This committee completed the project.

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On January 21, 1971, St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church at 4605 Erie Street was consecrated by the Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian. Clergymen assisting were the Rev. Guregh Kahana Yetenekian, the Church's pastor, the Very Rev. Arshag Vartabed Khatchadourian, pastor of the Holy Resurrection Church of South Milwaukee, and the Rev. Patee Kahana Metjian, pastor of St. John's Armenian Church of Greenfield. The church's sixteen god-fathers are Mark Akgulian, Carl Ammeian, Margaret Armaganian, Harry Boranian, Harry Cherkinian, Sarkis Cherkinian, John Esayian, Sam Garabedian, Mikael Garoukian, Murad Genozian, Mark Jandigian, Kai Kazarian, Jack Levonian, Michael Minasian, George Sahagian, Frank Vidian.

St. Mesrob Church has a seating capacity of 230. It is complimented by the Cultural Center with an auditorium-gym which accommodates up to 400 people. There are several classrooms that are used for Sunday School and Armenian School classes as well as for meetings. The entire complex has a value in excess of \$400,000.

This day, February 1, 1976, is one more milestone in the history of our church. As we bless the memory of our deceased parishioners who by the Grace of God brought us to this joyful day, may their blessed memory ever be an inspiration to us, the living, to carry on the persecuted and victorious Faith of Our Fathers for the Glory of God and the splendour of the Armenian Church and Nation, ever faithful to its teachings, traditions and services to mankind.

50th Anniversary Banquet

Sunday Afternoon, 2 o'clock

February 1, 1976

Grand Ballroom, Ramada Inn, Milwaukee

M E N U

Wine

Tomato Juice - Tossed Salad

Top Sirloin Steak

Oven Brown Potatoes - Green Peas

Assorted Rolls - Butter

Chocolate Parfait

Coffee

P R O G R A M

Master of Ceremonies ..... Sarkis Cherkinian

Invocation ..... The Primate  
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian

Welcome ..... Shockey Gengozian  
50th Anniversary Committee Chairman

Introduction of Guests

Recitation ..... Araxie Hardy

Guest Speaker ..... Richard Norsigian Jr.  
Principal of A.G.B.U. Alex Manoogian School  
Detroit, Michigan

Vocal Selections ..... Searagon Kerkonian

Remarks ..... Reverend Arten Ashjian  
Pastor

Address ..... The Primate  
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian

Der Getzo ..... Very Rev. Arshag Khatchadourian  
Pastor, Holy Resurrection, So. Milwaukee

Benediction



PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Paul Chobanian  
Harry Cherkinian  
Paul Tewagian  
Sarkis Cherkinian  
Murad Gengozian  
Manoog Jansouzian  
Edward Kaprelian

ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

Shockey Gengozian  
Mary Ann Injasoulian  
Charles Hardy  
Janet Akulian  
Takouhi Andekian  
George Sahagian

Acknowledgements

We take this opportunity to thank all who contributed, and to the numerous persons who so graciously gave their time and services for the success of the 50th Anniversary celebration.