

In the Parish

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St. Mesrob Armenian Church of Racine, Wisconsin, recently celebrated a milestone: the 50th anniversary of the founding of the first Diocesan Church Sunday School in America.

Present for the celebration of "The First Fifty Years" were the V. Rev. Fr. Khajag Barsamian, Vicar General of the Diocese, and Nancy Basmajian and Elise Antreassian of the Diocesan Department of Religious Education, as well as 300 guests from the local community and throughout the United States.

Mr. Toros Madaghian, founding father of St. Mesrob's Sunday School, was honored with an Encyclical Gontag and the Order of St. Nersess Shnorhall, by H.H. Vasken I, Catholicos of All Armenians, through the request of the Diocese. The Gontag was read and presented to him by the Vicar General. On behalf of the local community, as an expression of gratitude, Miss Anna Keishian was presented the St. Mesrob Mashdotz Award by Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Pastor of St. Mesrob Church. The Diocese's St. Vartan Award was presented to Mr. Sam Kaprelian for his 37 years of unbroken service as a Church School teacher in the St. Mesrob parish.

Fr. Khajag and Elise Antreassian each expressed congratulations to the Church School of St. Mesrob. As Elise Antreassian presented an Armenian illumination of Jesus's first miracle — the Wedding Feast at Cana of Galilee, she said: "This miracle speaks of your efforts, faith, and accomplishments over the past 50 years. . . . simple faith has been changed into a fifty year miracle of Christian life and witness." Fr. Garabed expressed the need of continuous Christian education: "We are not only fed spiritually by our Sunday School for personal satisfaction, but are also fed to feed others. We must all be the teachers of the next 50 years; the nurturers of the seedlings of faith which will produce great fruits for our people, and make possible "The First One Hundred Years."

As part of the program, the children of the Sunday School, under the direction of Mrs. Dawn Barsamian, sang a medley of Armenian and non-Armenian hymns of praise, inspiring the guests to sing with them.