



from the office of the
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America
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news:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUMMER RETREAT BRINGS TOGETHER EASTERN AND WESTERN DIOCESE FOR WEEK OF LEARNING AND FELLOWSHIP

Sponsored by ACYOA and ACYO

"East and West: One in Christ" is the theme of this summer's National Retreat to be held from July 16-22 at the Western Diocese Church Camp in Dunlap, California. Father Vasken Movsesian, Pastor, St. Andrew Church, Cupertino, California, will be the retreat master for the week. Father Vazken has designed a progressive program around the theme and each day's discussions, classes and workshops will build on the previous day. Other instructors will also be at the retreat including Deacon Hratch Tchilingarian, a recent graduate from St. Nersess Seminary in New Rochelle, New York.

The retreat offers religious instruction in an unstructured atmosphere challenging participants to learn about themselves while recognizing their individual responsibilities to the Church. Stimulating workshops and discussions will give everyone a chance to search, discover and grow. The price for the weeklong retreat is \$140.00 which includes lodging, meals and other facilities such as swimming, boating and horseback riding. The retreat is an excellent opportunity for young Armenians to learn about their religion and spiritual selves, while meeting new friends from coast to coast and Canada. Anyone interested in an application can call Scott Najarian of the ACYOA Central Council at (508) 754-0806.

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6/8/89



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ACYOA VOLUNTEERS MANAGE STORAGE SPACE AT KENNEDY AIRPORT

The ongoing relief effort for the earthquake survivors in Armenia continues at the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. The Diocese recently acquired the use of a 30,000 square foot storage facility at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City for holding items such as medical equipment, clothing and supplies, which will then be shipped to stricken areas. The space was loaned to the Diocese by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for an unlimited time.

Douglas Tashjian, Executive Secretary of the ACYOA, has been coordinating the ACYOA volunteers to unload trucks filled with clothing, medical equipment, and supplies and stuffed animals for children. To date, the facility has served a double purpose - not only is it a storage space, but a center for preparing these items for shipment. The Diocese has already sent three planes to Armenia, loaned by the Flying Tigers and Aeroflot. Pan American Airlines serves as the ground crew for Aeroflot, since the Soviet airline does not employ one of its own. It was this Pan Am crew that donated its time in preparing the unloaded cargo for the flights to Armenia.

The items taken on board these airlifts, and the flights themselves, have been coordinated under the auspices of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, through the tireless devotion of long-time Diocesan volunteer Adrienne Alexanian. She has supervised the interstate trucking and air shipment of donated items to Building 14, as the facility is known, while Doug Tashjian has mobilized volunteers from his pool of ACYOA members. Many volunteers are college students who were home for the Christmas holidays, and spent their vacation helping in the relief effort. These young Armenians reacted enthusiastically and immediately when asked to help. Mr. Tashjian noted that over a four-week period, 200,000 pounds of relief supplies were unloaded, by hand, without forklifts, conveyors, or professional assistance.

"I must admit, when we arrived to unload the first truck, and saw the back door open, with boxes falling out, the task seemed enormous. But I knew we'd get it done with faith and will," said the Executive Secretary.

Although inexperienced in the fields of receiving and warehouse management, Douglas Tashjian seems to have plunged into the project fearlessly. An exuberant and determined young man, he was able to round up many volunteers to unload, inventory, and palletize (a process by which boxes are manually stacked on wooden platforms) the items. ACYOA volunteers came from St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, New Jersey; St. Thomas Armenian Church, Tenafly, New Jersey; St. James Armenian Church, Purchase, New York; Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs, Bayside, New York; Holy Cross Armenian Church, Union City, New Jersey; and from the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New Rochelle, New York.

Port Authority Management was astonished when informed that these volunteers were second- and third-generation Armenians. The Project Manager of Building 14, Frank J. Mirovsky, told Doug that he expected the group to have been born in Armenia, thus giving them a direct tie to the disaster. Mr. Tashjian explained that the link is not physical, but emotional, spiritual, and cultural.

"The commitment of ACYOA volunteers is very gratifying," Doug said. "It is fulfilling to know that we have made a difference, and to see determined volunteers striving toward the goal of aiding our people. While working, we were aware of our direct contribution to the effort to save lives and to keep people warm. The experience of handling the donated items, preparing them for shipment, and knowing that they will be distributed to Armenians, in Armenia, is one we will never forget."

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1/24/89



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACYOA SPONSORS INSPIRING MARTYRS DAY CULTURAL PROGRAM

The ACYOA presented an especially moving program on Saturday April 22 commemorating the 74th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Held in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium, it was organized by the Executive Secretary of the ACYOA, Douglas Tashjian and ACYOA Juniors Director, Nancy Basmajian. The event drew an impressive crowd and afterward, many expressed their wish that more of their family and friends had been there to experience the spirit of the evening.

The program began with opening remarks simply wrought and powerfully spoken by Mr. Tashjian. He talked about the suffering and sacrifice of the Armenian people and juxtaposed it with the comfort and success of today's Armenian-American community. He posed the question of this security creating a community which can at times be apathetic, indifferent, and uninformed. His statements were a solemn reminder of the responsibility which lay in the hands of young Armenians today.

Mr. Tashjian said, "we must be aware of the commitment and duty that was felt by our ancestors, and manifested in this country by the survivors, and understand its current importance in propagating our heritage...will the awakening of many Armenians, following the earthquake, be one of emotion or long-term commitment?"

When introducing the program, Mr. Tashjian said, "tonight, the ACYOA commemorates the martyrdom of our ancestors, and the dedication of the survivors of the Genocide. This evening we present Armenian culture with performances by young Armenian Americans. Recently, an American relief worker, returning from his mission in the earthquake zone, commented to me that in his missions to many countries, he had never seen so many statues honoring saints, artists and poets rather than soldiers and victorious armies. I told him that art is the heart and soul of the Armenian people, and the work of these Armenian

young adults is a testimony to that tradition." Mr. Tashjian then introduced the evening's first performers, The Karatsayn Singers.

Formed in 1988, the Karatsayn Singers are a group of Armenian young adults from St. George Armenian Church in Hartford, Connecticut who perform Armenian choral works a capella. Under the direction of Anoush Khachoyan, a graduate of the Gomidas conservatory in Yerevan, the six-member group consists of two sopranos, Armen Valentini and Chris Shooshan, alto Dina Bagdigian, tenor Anoush Khachoyan and basses Peter Bedrossian and Ara Kazarian. The group sang three selections, "Marineh Vankoom" by H. Bekirian and Maria Hagopian, followed by two Gomidas pieces, "Andooni" (the Homeless) and "Groong" (The Crane). The group elegantly graced the stage and gave fine performances of difficult pieces. The stark atonal arrangements were particularly haunting and conveyed the suffering of the Armenian spirit.

Harold Hagopian, a young violinist was the second performer. Accompanied by Audrey Axxin on piano, this prodigious musician began with Mozart's Concerto #5, First Movement and then played three pieces by Armenian composers: "Poem for Violin", by Aram Khachaturian, "Oror" (Lullaby) by P. Ganachian and "Dziranee Dzar" (Apricot Tree) by Gomidas. An impassioned performer, Mr. Hagopian beautifully played the Armenian pieces which contained varying dynamic ranges in tempo and most significantly in the music itself. His Armenian heritage contributed to giving this emotionally charged performance.

Mr. Hagopian has won many music competitions and is a graduate of the Juilliard School where he received a Bachelor of Music degree and was also a member of the Juilliard Orchestra. Last year Mr. Hagopian won first prize in the Allied Arts String Competition. Most recently, he was invited to Germany for the second time to participate as a member of the Schleswig Holstein Musik Festival Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

In introducing singer/songwriter Shami Arslanian, Mr. Tashjian relayed how he had received a telephone call from Ms. Arslanian after the earthquake which had moved her to begin writing a song which she premiered on Saturday evening. Entitled "Long Live Armenia", the piece was beautifully sung by Ms. Arslanian. She was accompanied by her husband Steven Weisbart on piano, Kim Nazarian, back up vocal, and Darmin Meeter on saxophone. Bright and vivacious on stage, Ms. Arslanian had the audience in an outburst of applause before the song was even over. The singer is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts and she and her husband now own and manage a successful recording studio in New York.

A literature reading followed of "Men Without Childhood" by Andranik Zaroukian read by Tom Mardirosian, actor/playwright. Mr. Mardirosian's emotional reading described in the first person two young Armenian boys orphaned and essentially left without a childhood. It was easy for one in the audience to reflect on the reality of orphans, which again have been forced upon us, this time by the earthquake.

Last fall Mr. Mardirosian appeared Off-Broadway in a play he authored, "Saved From Obscurity." He can currently be seen in the film "New York Stories" in the vignette entitled "Life Without Zoe."

The Very Reverend Father Khajag Barsamian, Vicar General of the Diocese gave closing remarks in which he expressed his appreciation for the outstanding program and its participants.

He said, "tonight, the souls of the Martyrs are smiling from the heavens. This program demonstrates that their spirits are alive; these young, dedicated Armenians are an attestation to their faith."

Father Khajag then related a story of when he was in Rome in the community of San Egitio. Invited to participate in a service by the San Egitio Youth Organization of the local church, Father Khajag was moved when shown a piece of a large stone placed at the altar. There a young man asked, "Father, do you know where this stone comes from?" Father Khajag replied no and was astonished when the young man said, "It is from Lake Van in Armenia. We here in San Egitio know the history of the Armenians and how much they have suffered. This stone is a symbol of your invincible faith."

A Requiem Service presided over by the Vicar General concluded the program. The lights were dimmed and one by one everyone's candles were lighted, blazing like small torches. A silence fell over the auditorium and one knew that for Armenians all around the world, Martyrs Day symbolizes our suffering, perseverance and ability to overcome triumphantly in the face of tragedy.

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4/28/89



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LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Part Five of A Five Part Series on the ACYOA Earthquake Relief Team

All vacations and trips come to an end. Warm memories linger for a while until the demands of work and every day life force their way back into one's consciousness. But last summer there was a trip, a journey, that a group of young Armenian men and women took to Armenia from which the memories will remain indelible. The ACYOA Earthquake Relief Team set out to build a one family home in the city of Stepanavan designated by His Holiness Vaksen I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians to be reconstructed by the Armenian Church. What the group didn't realize before they left was that Armenia would give them a gift they would carry in their hearts forever. That gift was friendship, comraderie and a deeper understanding of what it means to be an Armenian.

What prompted these men and women to give so much of their time and effort to a project which only promised to offer working in difficult conditions? It has been several months since the trip and in speaking with a few members of the team one sees that the trip fulfilled their hope of being able to help the needy who still live amongst destruction from the earthquake.

Linda Minassian, a customer service manager in Cranston, Rhode Island, said "When I heard about the trip I knew I had to go no matter what. I had never been to Armenia," she continued, " I knew that I had to go for myself and my fellow Armenians. Something inside told me to make the trip."

Gary Khachian, a lawyer from Norwalk, Connecticut said, "The trip was an opportunity for me to help. I wanted to see first hand what had happened and where assistance was most needed."

One thing was clear in speaking with Mr. Khachian and Ms. Minassian--the destruction was much worse than expected. Ms. Minassian said, "The devastation we saw on



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One thing was clear in speaking with Mr. Khachian and Ms. Minassian--the destruction was much worse than expected. Ms. Minassian said, "The devastation we saw on

television and in other press was nothing compared to the real thing--because when we got to Armenia we saw that it was all around us."

"When we first saw the earthquake stricken areas, the damage was more serious than we thought it was going to be. It looked as if the areas were destroyed by a bombing," he said. "But as we drove to Stepanavan I noticed the structural damage had been blasted and rebuilt. Stepanavan was not as badly hit. There were more buildings, and life in general seemed a bit normal."

The Team leader, the Very Reverend Father Houssig Bagdasian, Pastor, St. Mary Armenian Church, Livingston, New Jersey, had been to Armenia several times but never under such unique circumstances. "Because of this tragedy" he said, "we thought we could participate in the rebuilding. But one thing we learned was that the undying and unyielding spirit of our people in Armenia is what is helping to rebuild homes and lives."

When asked to assess the ACYOA Earthquake Relief Team's work this past summer, Father Houssig said, "It was very satisfying to work with these young, dedicated, people. They came with a specific goal and mission and they fulfilled it. I am sure all of them would go back if they had a chance."

For the members of the team, the trip to Armenia was a relief mission but also an important journey which provided each and every person with a sense of their identity. They were re-awakened to the fact that they are part of that same struggling family and nation. No matter how far away they may be from Armenia they can be assured that when they return, open arms will be there to greet them.

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PR-ACYOA #5



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ACYOA SENIORS ARMENIAN CULTURAL WEEKEND HELD AT DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

The Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA), founded over forty years ago, still thrives as we enter the upcoming decade. Under the current leadership of Central Council Chairman Scott Najarian and Executive Secretary Douglas Tashjian, the ACYOA sponsors religious, cultural and social events during the year and commits itself to perpetuating the traditions which make being a young Armenian rewarding.

One of the most enlightening programs sponsored by the ACYOA is the Armenian Cultural Weekend which took place this year on February 17-20 in New York City. Young Armenian men and women came from throughout the United States to participate in this exciting event.

The weekend began with registration at the Eastgate Hotel and an evening reception where everyone had some time to get acquainted. Early Saturday morning the group attended an 8:00 Matins Service at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral where the Very Rev. Father Khajag Barsamian was the celebrant.

The day's events got underway with lectures and language classes. Dr. Dennis R. Papazian, Professor of History and Director, Armenian Research Center, University of Michigan - Dearborn spoke on "Armenians and Soviet Ethnic Policy," explaining the position of Armenians as an ethnic group within the Soviet Union and the historical development and current significance of the Karabagh issue. Armenian language classes were taught by various teachers who divided the group according to individual proficiency.

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An important topic in the history of the Armenian religion was covered by the Very Reverend Father Haigazoun Melkonian, pastor of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cheltenham, Pennsylvania, and a member of the St. James brotherhood of Jerusalem, who inspired everyone with "Jerusalem: The Holy Places and a History of the Armenians." Father Melkonian's lecture taught the participants about the importance of the Armenian religion within the framework of Christianity through the ages. "Finding Meaning and Life in the Divine Liturgy" was the subject of a lesson given by Mr. Michael Findikyan. Mr. Findikyan is in his fourth year of studies at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. His talk highlighted the Divine Liturgy as a supreme, elegant and powerful expression of the Armenian Christian Faith which manifests itself through the active participation of the parishioner.

Of particular note was Mr. Findikyan's encouragement to those who do not understand classical Armenian and his assurance that participation in the Divine Liturgy is a rewarding and meaningful experience in its traditional form, when one worships with feeling and faith.

The day culminated with an evening of sightseeing at the South Street Seaport, where ACYOA members were able to enjoy one of New York's loveliest landmark areas. There, they had a chance to see the Brooklyn bridge view and to discuss Saturday's events.

On Sunday morning, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the Very Reverend Father Papken Anoushian at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral and the afternoon lecture schedule began with Armenian art scholar Dr. Lucy Der Manuelian of Tufts University. Dr. Der Manuelian's slide presentation "Lost Treasure: The Story of Armenian Art," described the castles and churches perched at the tops of mountains in historic Armenia, and the carved images and brilliantly colored illuminated manuscripts created through the centuries, and in many cases, with architectural and engineering skills hundreds of years ahead of European technology. Since 1985, she has been the director of a lectureship on Armenian Art and Architecture which is the first university teaching program established in the United States specifically for Armenian art.

Two learned clerics from the Diocese of the Armenian Church followed this lecture.

The Very Reverend Father Papken Anoushian, Canon Sacrist of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, spoke about the development of the Armenian Church and the four ecumenical councils: Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Calcedon. Three councils elaborated the basic tenets of the Christian faith. However, the Council of Calcedon, which separated the Christian Church into different denominations, was *not* accepted by the Armenian Church, as it divided the nature of Christ into two separate parts (the divine and the human). The Armenian Church, along with four other Oriental Orthodox Churches, believes that these divine and human natures are united in the person of Christ without confusion. This doctrine recognized one nature united in the Incarnate Word, and had triumphed in the third ecumenical council when introduced by the See of Alexandria.

The Very Reverend Father Khajag Barsamian, Vicar General of the Diocese, discussed the Armenian language. He explored religious, political and cultural reasons for the development of the Armenian alphabet and the creation of Armenian literature. Father Barsamian examined Armenian translation by the "tarkmanich vartabeds" (holy translators) who travelled to Constantinople and Syria where they spoke with the Greek Church Fathers. After their educational journeys (which lasted between 3-10 years) these young students returned to Armenia, thus marking the Golden Age where the Bible was first translated. Subsequent transcriptions of religious ceremonies and scriptures soon followed. Father Barsamian pointed out that the Armenian translation of the Bible is particularly important to textual study today by religious scholars. Patristic literature has suffered losses of entire books from the Church Fathers, and the Armenian translation of the Bible offers a complete and unabbreviated version for examination. The conclusion of the talk observed the preservation of our identity through speaking this rich and historic language.

The evening ended with a special visit to St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New Rochelle, New York, where the group was received by the seminarians.

Presidents' Day marked the end of the Cultural Weekend with a discussion led by Dr. Richard Hovannisian, Professor of Armenian and Near Eastern History at UCLA in California. Dr. Hovannisian covered the topic of "Challenges and Opportunities Facing the

Armenian-American Community." As we have developed into an educated, economically successful community faced with the challenge of the new wave of immigration and assimilation, he stressed, "we must come to terms with problems in the Armenian community and accept the fact that all Armenian organizations, despite their different missions, share an Armenian identity and the desire to perpetuate our heritage. It is the shared vision which should guide our leaders."

The ACYOA members left New York with a great sense of pride and a feeling of being enriched on their Armenian background from a multi-faceted standpoint. One participant, Gail Tashjian, 25, of San Antonio, Texas said:

"It was an absolutely outstanding program. The lectures were very interesting and sometimes I found myself on the edge of my seat. It was a wonderful journey into my Armenian heritage, language, history and culture. The ACYOA Committee did an excellent job; this is the first time I attended and I hope it won't be the last. God has been very good to me, enabling me to attend so many Armenian functions."

Gary Khachian, 27, who recently became an ACYOA member, came from Norwalk, Connecticut and commented, "The Cultural Weekend provided young Armenians with the unique opportunity to explore a broad range of topics in Armenian history and in culture with a highly distinguished group of scholars. It inspired me to learn more about our proud past and raised my awareness of the challenges facing Armenian-Americans in the future."

There seems to be a general agreement among those who attended the ACYOA Cultural Weekend that it provided them with an experience that is unduplicated anywhere else -- a unique, meaningful opportunity to come together with other young people and learn what it is to be an Armenian. By the reaction of this second year's Cultural Weekend's attendants, it looks as if the ACYOA Seniors Armenian Cultural Weekend will be held for many years to come.

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