

Pastor's Report

One year ago, when I assumed the pastorate of this church, I considered it a first priority to familiarize myself with the parishioners for the purpose of establishing working relations. I started making daily visitations to the homes of the parishioners after setting up appointments with them. I was willing to visit any Armenian without distinction of his religious and social affiliation because I firmly believed that our church, having national character, felt obligations to all Armenians in our neighborhood and vice-versa. I did not hesitate to go into deteriorated neighborhoods to meet with elderly Armenian widows and widowers since they needed my presence much more than the others. My visitations provided parishioners the opportunity to discuss family and church matters at ease. I managed to visit the homes of all those who responded to my request for an appointment.

In addition to home visitations, I paid visits once a month to elderly Armenians who lived in various nursing homes. Their number stood at eight. They felt cut off from their families, suffering from loneliness. It was not easy for them to make friends with other residents of the nursing home given their different backgrounds. As I conversed with them in Armenian, they got the impression of being at home facing a familiar figure. I took my time to listen patiently to their stories and concerns. After giving them a word of encouragement and comfort, I departed.

Hospital visitations took precedence over all my duties because of their urgent nature. The depressed patients needed to be cheered up so that they could hold out hope for speedy recovery. People, whether they are patients or not, live by hope. If one's hope fades, his life ends up on the rocks. Whenever someone from our parish became hospitalized, I rushed to the hospital to lift his spirits by inspiring him with courage and hope. I did not content myself with visiting the patients only once. I made a special effort to visit them as many times as possible. Each time, I ended my visitation with a prayer.

I attached much importance to Paros, the newsletter of our church. I regarded it as an effective avenue to inform our parishioners in particular and non-parishioners in general of the activities of our church. But its primary purpose lay in educating our people through articles concerning spiritual, social and marital issues. Having this in mind, I contributed one or two articles to the Paros every month. We feel sad that Florence Goekjian, the editor, and Ann Karayan, the typist, have asked to be relieved of their tasks as of June, 1990, for personal reasons. We take this opportunity to express our deep appreciations and gratitude for their longtime dedicated services to our church.

I delivered sermons regularly on all Sundays of the year, regardless of the weather conditions and the size of the attendance. Preaching forms an important part of the worship services in any church since it

is the interpretation of the word of God. On Sundays, the divine Liturgy remains the same, more or less. The only thing which changes is the content of the sermon. Being conscious of this fact, I did not spare time and effort in preparing meaningful sermons. The favorable comments which I have received from many parishioners convinced me that my preaching served its purpose.

I came up with the idea of organizing monthly cultural gatherings designed to complement our parishioners' spiritual needs provided through sacraments of the church. After holding the first one on the reconstruction efforts in Armenia, the continuity was interrupted to give way to more pressing affairs put on by other church organizations. The purpose of these lecture series is two-fold: to awaken consciousness in the members of our new generation about their valuable traditions and cultural heritage; secondly, to help them preserve their national identity and take great pride in it.

Furthermore, I went to the Diocese for one day to familiarize myself with the programs offered by various departments and discover the feasibility of implementing them in our parish. In some of these programs, professors are involved from the New York and New Jersey areas. To ensure their participation, we need to wait for milder weather. One of the many advantages connected with these programs is that the Diocese underwrites all the expenses of the speakers. The Diocese does not take in all the time, it also gives away.

Last year, we had a visiting clergyman on two occasions. While he was celebrating Divine Liturgy, I seized the opportunity to go to the Sunday School to see how the students were doing. I stopped by each classroom and talked to the students. At the end of the classes, as the students assembled for prayer, I spoke to them. Sunday School is in the good hands of Ann Karayan. She is the right person in the right place at the right time. She is surrounded by dedicated teachers.

As the president of the Women's Guild, I feel deeply concerned about the low attendance at the monthly meeting. Only one-fourth of the total members show up at the meetings. It needs all the help it can get from its members. I urgently call upon all members to make time to be present at the meetings. Giving two hours of their time, once a month, is not too much to ask for. To support Women's Guild amounts to supporting our church because the Women's Guild is the backbone of our church.

I tried hard to establish Bible Study Classes, but encountered stumbling blocks. At the first session, a handful of people showed up and then they dropped out. Two of them told me that their schedule did not allow them to come on weekdays. Others cited the distance being a factor in their decision not to come to the Bible Study Classes. Unfortunately, the same thing happened to the Armenian Weekly Language Classes for adults sponsored by AGBU.

I extend my special thanks and deep appreciations to our enthusiastic deacon, Serop Demirjian, as well as to Haig Arpajian, our altar

server, who performed their duties so persistently that we greatly admire them. I feel indebtedness to our energetic choir members for doing their utmost to enhance the beauty of our church services through their harmonious singing. My greatest appreciation goes to the active and dedicated members of the Parish Council for their cooperation.

Very Reverend Father Sooren Chinchinian
Pastor

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