

PASTORS REPORT

Dear Parishioners:

I have completed a full year at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church. I have finished thus a year and a half with the congregation of St. Gregory. I thank God for the opportunity.

I have celebrated Holy Badarak and Lenten Services during the year according to the ecclesiastical calendar of our Church and delivered mostly English sermons. During 1995 the following sacraments and rites were officiated at St. Gregory by myself:

Baptism and Confirmation of Infants & Adults	5
Holy Matrimony	2
Funeral Services	5

During 1995 I visited hospitals and extended care facilities as I was made aware of the need for these visits. I have also visited the homes of parishioners for various purposes or occasions.

I have attended to my responsibilities at the Church Office daily and have spent as much time as needed to accomplish them. I have also been teaching an Adult Armenian Conversational Class and an Armenian Church History Class on Mondays.

Again in 1995 with some delay we opened the St. Gregory's Sunday Church School with 18 students of all ages and a staff of 4 regular and 2 substitute teachers. I thank our teachers and their assistants for their dedication.

I acknowledge and thank the services of each and every member of the Nairi Choir of our Church who are in Church regularly to help me and our congregation to offer praises to God. I would like also to extend my thanks to Charles Babikian who has served on the altar every Sunday.

I take this occasion to thank the members of the Ladies Auxiliary and the Women's Guild for their dedication and hard work for the well being of our Church. Unfortunately, in both of these groups, the numbers have dwindled to very few. This should be a concern for every member of this congregation. The vitality of a church congregation rests in her organization. If there is no willingness to come forward and to participate in the Auxiliary and the Guild then St. Gregory is not a healthy parish. A few dedicated individuals have extended themselves to almost every area of the life of the Church to the point where it is being taken for granted that sacrificing for the Church is the birthright of these individuals.

I extend my thanks to Mr. Charles Babikian, the Chairman of Armenian Fest 1995 and to Raffle Chairman, Jack Cholakian, to the Women's Guild and Ladies Auxiliary Members as well as to individual parishioners for their hard work in making the Armenian Fest a great success socially and financially.

Saturday, October 14 and Sunday, October 15 were important days in the life of St. Gregory. On the 14th we had the Symposium organized by The Language Lab and Resource Center of the Diocese and hosted by St. Gregory, Coordinated by Sylva Karachorlu and Michelle Babikian, and on Sunday, October 15, the 31st Anniversary of the Consecration of St. Gregory was celebrated. The dinner was coordinated by Sylva Karachorlu, Helen Babikian and Mary Battle and Fund Raising was conducted by Haig Pedian. During the weekend we gained in knowledge, we extended our circle of acquaintances and friends and we were fortunate to be the recipient of the generosity of our parishioners, who celebrated with us the Anniversary of our Church. We thank all who attended, participated, organized and supported us.

Tuesday, June 20, 1995, was a day for celebration of the Armenian spirit of survival. Some 40 youngsters from Armenia, none of whom exceeded age 15, brought cheer and happiness to our hearts by way of singing the beautiful melodies of our Badarak and many of the popular songs we know and sing in Armenian and non-Armenian languages. St. Gregory had been asked to sponsor the event. Even though area sister churches supported us but much was left to be desired as far as attendance was concerned. Hardly 225 people attended the event, which should have been attended by 500 to 800 people instead. I thank all those who volunteered for making it possible for St. Gregory to sponsor the event.

In spite of my ardent desire to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with all the members of the Armenian Community of Chicagoland, the opportunity was denied to us by now a familiar tactic of negotiations within the Armenian community. I have experienced it in Detroit and now in Chicago. Whenever one wants to have a cooperative effort with the Church under the jurisdiction of the Catholicate of Celicia, they don't come as a Church only. They come together with the Party, the Women's Auxiliary of the Party, the Youth belonging to the Party, the Middle-Aged belonging to the Party and the Adult representatives of the Girl and Boy Scouts of the Party and whatever other obscure Organizations they have in name only, so that they could force their will on you by majority vote. As usual the Armenian Congregational Church acts more like a adjunct to the political Party rather than like a Church. Unfortunately, because of this obstinacy and because of unacceptable behavior of trying to jam something down your throat we were not able to bring the Armenian community together. Thus we observed the 80th Anniversary of the Genocide on Sunday, April 23 together with St. James and Sts. Joachim and Anne Churches. In spite

of the fact that it was the 80th Anniversary of the Genocide we were observing, the attendance was poor. As usual our Guild members worked hard to prepare the Madagh, Memorial Meal, served prior to the program.

I extend my thanks to Violet Koresian and Mary Dadian for assisting me in preparing and expediting the Church Paper, Loosavorich. In the year 1995 we published four issues.

I take this opportunity to thank the Second Super Bowl Party Committee, Chairman, Craig Koresian, Vartanantz Lunch Committee, the Mother's Day Brunch Committee, Chairman, George Nahabedian, Father's Day Celebration Committee, Co-Chairman, Alice George and Marge Sarkesian, Mini-Bazaar Committee, Chairman, Agnes Pedian, Annual Christmas Party Committee, Co-Chairman, Michelle Babikian, Seta Babikian and Marilyn Dadian and both Night at the Races events Committee, Chairman, Jack Cholakian, for their efforts making each one of the above events a success.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Nishan Babikian who almost on a weekly basis assists the Parish Council in performing their duties during Church Services and to Mary Battle for preparing the Mas every Sunday without fail.

I had indicated in my last years Pastor's Report that regular attendance and participation of Church Services, Church School, Women's Guild, and Ladies Auxiliary meetings were not what they ought to be. Unfortunately 1995 was not any better. The numerical disadvantage of the Parish combined with the irregular attendance and participation, is a source of disappointment and discouragement.

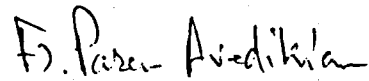
Again, repeating my observation of the previous year, the lack of youth and children participating in the life of the Church does not fare well for the future of St. Gregory. After months of appealing to form a youth organization, I stopped publicizing for its need in our Sunday Bulletin.

The members of St. Gregory must start seriously contemplating the future of their parish. When the responsibility of organizing and effectuating any and all aspects of Church life, religious, social and fund-raising, falls upon some twenty individuals, it is time to wake up and take a hard look at one's self and the road ahead. I have a feeling that some members of our parish have the false sense of well-being since financially we seem to be doing better than expected. Finances are the least important aspect indicating the vigor and vitality of a Church. Finances are only the necessary evil. Let us not forget that the Church is the gathering of people of like minds, who together strive to fulfill their individual and collective responsibilities to God and mankind. The question is how well do we fit in this definition of a Church. Teaching and learning and fellowship opportunities are the most vital functions of the Church outside the act of worship. There is no money mentioned in the above definition, money is only a means of accomplishing the purposes of the Church. Unfortunately, the essential aspect of being a Church is not what our priorities seem to be in this Parish.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Parish Council of St. Gregory and their Chairman, Agnes Pedian, for coordinating the life and activities of St. Gregory.

I would also like to thank Violet Koresian without whose unselfish sacrifices the well-being of St. Gregory would be in jeopardy. I also take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all the faithful members of St. Gregory for their attendance, involvement and contributions during 1995. I pray that the Lord God bless each and every one of you abundantly.

Prayerfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Paren Avedikian".

Fr. Paren Avedikian
Pastor