

SAINT GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR, BINGHAMTON
PASTOR'S REPORT

JANUARY 1, 1977 - DECEMBER 31, 1977

The following sacraments were administered during the year:

Baptism and Chrismation (2)

Alyssa Marie Goulian, May 29th
Lorig Knar Kachadourian, June 11th

Chrismation only (0)

Marriage (0)

Ordination (0)

Other sacramental and non-sacramental services:

January 6th, "Blessing of Water - Choor Orhnek" Godfather, Greg Misakyan

April 24th, Martyr's Day, Badarak and program

May 19th, Ascension Badarak

Funerals - local (2)

Yeghsa. Taboian, May 2nd
Avak Kalayjian, June 7th

Funerals - out of town (3)

Nellie (Vetzigian) Foster (Syracuse), May 3rd
Krikor Grdikian (Niagara Falls), October 12th
Jack Keledjian (Syracuse), November 23rd

Visiting Clergy (1)

His Eminence, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian made his yearly pastoral visitation on May 21, 22 and 23. While His Eminence was here, he met with the Parish Council and executive members of all church organizations, celebrated Badarak and preached the sermon, presided over our Church School Graduation Exercises and was guest of honor at our family dinner. He also taped a T.V. show on W.B.N.G., channel's program Encounter.

Other services:

March 20th, "Seder Service for Youth Group

April 27th, Special Women's Saints Day Service held in our parish this year.

Other services continued:

July 24th, celebrated Badarak and preached the sermon at Camp Nubar.

August 21st, guest celebrant and preacher (while on vacation) at St. Vartan Church, Oakland, Ca.

August 28th, guest celebrant and preacher (while on vacation) at St. Mary Church, Yetttem, Ca.

December 24th, Feast of St. Stephen, the Proto-deacon and First Martyr of the Church, plus special Christmas Eve Vespers.

Religious services rendered for non-Armenian community:

January 2nd, Susquehanna Valley Home, Worship Service

February 6th, Same

April 5th, Same (Easter Seder Service)

April 6th, House of the Good Shepherd (aged) "Arrevakal - Sunrise Service"

April 24th, Susquehanna Valley Home, Worship Service

May 12th, Same

June 8th, House of the Good Shepherd (aged) "Arrevakal - Sunrise Service"

June 12th, Susquehanna Valley home, Worship Service

September 11th, Same

October 22nd, Same

November 20th, Same

December 11th, Same

December 18th, Same (Christmas Service)

Ecumenical Worship Services (parish participation):

January 9th, Ecumenical Epiphany Service at St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church, choir sang "Khorhoort Medz"

November 23rd, Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at High Street United Methodist Church (unfortunately only parish priest participated)

Lectures given:

May 10th, Catholic Religious Education Office, Binghamton; presented at St. Anne Education Center. Topic: (SEE NEXT PAGE)

Lectures given continued:

"Conscience Formation/Now that we know, what do we do?"

July 1 - 10, Assistant Director, St. Nersess Conference; class lectures delivered and language taught.

Other pastoral and church activities:

October 1st, took youth down to "Orthodox Education Day" at St. Vladimir's Seminary - Note: five adults joined us this year with great enthusiasm.

October 22nd, Sylva Der Stepanian presented: Armenian Language Lab Workshop.

November 22nd, Parish contributed to a Thanksgiving Food Basket for a needy family. The "basket" was given to the Terry Lee Canfield family, Binghamton.

Items donated/given to the Church:

One snow blower, three 100 lb. bags of calcium and roofing materials for church hall and cottage.	Nishan Ketchoyian
One years supply of paper and toner for the copier.	Anonymous
Velvitized picture - "Last Supper."	Yéghsa Taboian
Icon - "Mother and Child," given in living memory of Garo and Meline Soghanalian.	Anonymous
One case of Sacramental wine.	Deacon Hrair and Anoush Dekmejian
Labor for roofing of church hall and cottage.	Henry Kachadourian

COMMENTS

Church School graduated three students out of a possible six in May during closing exercises at which our Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, presided. Three were not graduated because they

did not fulfill an attendance requirement. Agreeing that it had proven successful, the Church School Staff decided to retain the tri-mester system that had been implemented in 1976-1977. This year's tri-mesters are 12, nine and 10 weeks long respectively. Again the Sr. Class fell upon my shoulders for the first eight weeks. Attendance was very poor; out of 11 enrolled an average of three attended. It is my feeling that this was due to the class being held on Saturday mornings. Ruby Hagopian answered my appeal for help and has taken over the Sr. Class; hopefully we will see improvement in attendance this coming tri-mester. It was disappointing to the staff to have only half the students present at the Christmas party. One staff member remarked that it could be perhaps that the seniors do not want to "mix" with the younger classes. I cannot accept that reason.

Youth Group embarked upon a new encounter by inviting Ross Memorial Church's Youth Group to a bowling activity. Hopefully this will lead to mutual spiritual nourishment as well as to other local youth groups. The "Mother of the year" presentation has come to be a highlight of one of our Youth Group community services. It is encouraging to see our youth honor the older members of our church's community. Because of the deep friendships made at the St. Nersess Conferences, our youth invites the youth of other Armenian Churches to our annual dance; which makes everyone feel like one big family. Our remaining youth never forget those who have gone to college. Each year 'care' packages are sent with all kinds of goodies and love. As we picked up again in September, Youth Group did ^{NOT} seem to have the spirit and enthusiasm it once had. Some of the advisors feel that because of the "exodus" to college of our older leaders the younger ones have lost interest. It has also been noted that the older members of the current

Youth Group now have part time jobs and are unable to attend meetings. Youth Group members continue to serve at the altar, sing in the choir, teach in the Church Sunday and Armenian Schools as well as serving at our monthly family dinners.

Women's Guild experiences the same problems year after year: lack of attendance at meetings, refusal to hold office and general apathy, all of which are leading us to a skeleton of a Women's Guild. However, I must point out that the work is being carried out by our executive body and the few members that come to the meetings, and they are to be commended for getting all the work done. But this cannot continue. At our elections in December, there was no one who would run for executive office, therefore, I asked the existing body to remain until after our Ecumenical Epiphany Service on January 8, 1978, after which I will be conducting meetings until officers are elected. The incumbent chairperson of Guild said she and perhaps one other executive officer would remain. I thanked her but felt it would not help our "apathetic" situation---it would again only "gloss" over the problem for another year. I, along with Parish Council, am trying to bring the problem to a head and find a solution.

Due to job and educational conflicts, there were no Armenian School teachers available in September. From September through December Michael Finkikyan has assisted me in teaching Armenian School. We have planned two more tri-mesters of nine and 10 weeks respectively, January through May. The Armenian Language Workshop, conducted in October by Sylva Der Stepanian, was very informative and greatly appreciated. Since then, we have implemented the Diocesan curriculum which our five students are enjoying.

We are still having difficulties in finding members to sing in the choir. I presume this will be the situation here for a number of years to come, unless new families move into the community. Despite the bleak outlook, we do have an average of five members singing each week, and Paul Ketchoyian remains ever faithful to his directing on Sunday mornings. He and the choir have participated in the South Side Ecumenical Services, most notably when they sang "Khorhoort Medz" at the Epiphany Service held in January, at St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church. Again this year we were fortunate to have Michael Findikyan as organist.

Judging by the state of our individual organizations, one could conclude that the general attitude of many church members is apathy. It is evident at worship, meetings and even at once-a-month parish dinners. But we do have faithful members sprinkled throughout all of our organizations and in the congregation as well. All parishes have the same problems to a greater or lesser extent. Since we are a small parish the lack of workers is felt with greater impact. Although we are few in number, I feel we can become a vibrant parish, witnessing better attendance and participation in worship services, holding Bible Study classes, lectures and discussions, and even having a deeper involvement in community affairs. This cannot be done by the current few faithful alone. A greater number must be committed both ^{to} the above and also to the "everyday running" of the Church. This means that we must look "within" in '78 and decide in which direction to expend our energy. We must all be willing to "dirty" our hands and WORK TOGETHER to keep our family a tight-knit, well-organized, living and functioning Body of Christ.

Respectfully submitted this fifth day of January, 1978.

Kevork Kabana Arakelian

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Pastor