

SAINT GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR, BINGHAMTON

PASTOR'S REPORT

JANUARY 1, 1973 - DECEMBER 31, 1973

The following sacraments were performed during the past year:

Eucharist (18)

by visiting priests, 11

by resident priest, 7

The only reason this sacrament is mentioned is because I was not ordained to the priesthood until September. Ordinarily, it is understood that Eucharist is celebrated every Sunday.

The breakdown is as follows:

January 7th	Rev. Fr. Vertanes Papazian
January 14th	His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian
February 25th	Very Rev. Fr. Mesrob Semerjian
March 11th	Rev. Fr. Nerses Jebajian
April 21st	Very Rev. Fr. Mesrob Semerjian
April 22nd	"
May 20th	"
June 17th	"
August 26th	Very Rev. Fr. Arshen Aivazian
September 30th	His Eminence Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan
October 7th	Very Rev. Fr. Mesrob Semerjian
November 18th	
'til year end	Rev. Fr. George Arakelian

Baptism (2)

Gary Gerald Tateosian, April 21st

Krikor Harout Kerjilian, December 30th

Marriage (3)

Robert Franklin Kalwas with Valerie Robin Garabedian,  
August 25th

Demos Kontos with Louise A. Kachadourian, October 6th

Richard Leroy Walden with Rita Shakey Kradjian, December 28th

Ordination (1)

Deacon John Raymond Arakelian to the priesthood, being named Father Kevork (George), September 30th.

Other services

Vartanantz service and program, February 28th  
Hokehankisd on Martyrs' Day, April 24th  
Jashou service was held on the Feast of Ascension, May 31st  
Funeral, September 5th, Mr. Manoog Bogdasarian. Presided  
over by Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan and conducted by  
Rev. Fr. Mampre Kouzouian.  
Feast of Saint Stephen the Proto-deacon and first martyr  
of the Church was celebrated on December 23rd. After  
the celebration, Christmas Carols were sung by all members  
in the Church.  
Vespers (Gir-a-gah-mu-ditz, Vigil), every Saturday at 5:00 p.m.

Choir

The choir has made good progress since Mr. Paul Ketchoyian took over as director in October of '72. Since then, the choir has grown from four members to fifteen. This choir is composed mostly of our parish youth. There has been remarkable improvement in both choir and director in this past year, both musically as well as in word pronunciation. It should also be noted that within the past eight weeks the choir has begun to sing in harmony. Now that I am resident priest, we have begun to look for adult members for a second choir. It was decided that the "youth" choir should sing twice a month and should spend the other weeks in Church School.

Paul has been greatly helped by our organist, Pauline House, who is a Julliard graduate. Pauline has worked hard and has given sound advice which is always welcome.

We are still looking for both a back up organist and choir director.

### Church School

The Church School has had its ups and downs. The most difficult aspect is to find full time people willing to teach. Even after a re-organization in late November, the same difficulty still plagues us.

In early December, the "assembly" portion of the Church School was introduced in Binghamton for the first time. So far it is running smoothly.

In late December, Mrs. Anoush Dekmejian was appointed our new Church School Superintendent, replacing Mr. Michael Ketchoyian.

### Armenian School

The Armenian School closed for the summer in late April. Because of meager attendance and difficulty in finding teachers, a committee was formed to look into the different ways of improving the existing situation. One idea brought forth was to have an intensive Armenian School limited for a certain number of weeks rather than drag it from September through May. To this date there has been no decision from the committee.

### Youth Group

Youth Group has remained a strong active group throughout the year, and I pray that this continues.

The group has grown so much that it is currently in the process of being divided into two.

Women's Guild

The Guild has been well organized and its meetings have been conducted efficiently, yet the number of attending members at meetings has dropped off. Nevertheless this year the Guild sponsored more activities than last year.

Parish Council

Parish Council members worked hard this year, especially on maintenance of the church building itself, in organizing a most successful dance, picnic and for the 50th anniversary of the Binghamton parish and the 75th anniversary of the Diocese, the latter two events being celebrated on December 2nd.

Other Activities

May 27th, plate passed for Saint Nersess Armenian Theological School for education of seminarians.

June 24th - July 3rd, Father George and Sandra served as counsellors at the Saint Nersess Summer Study Conference, Elberon, New Jersey.

November 11th, pilgrimage to Saint Vartan Cathedral when I celebrated my first Eucharist.

Week of December 23rd, the parish gave a Christmas food basket to a needy family.

December 31st, New Year's Eve party organized by Anoush Dekmejian and Alice Boyajian.

Comments and Observations

Even though I have already thanked everyone with personal letters, I must thank the parish as a community for the preparations made for my ordination. The Parish Council for arranging for the dinner and hall, the Women's Guild for the buffet they prepared on the eve of ordination for all out-of-town guests and parishoners,

and to the choir for putting in many hours (sometimes tearful) for practice.

I have been in this parish now, almost two years and have observed that the people of this community DO want a functioning Church with a parish priest, but almost on their own terms. I can best explain that by quoting from our parish newsletter, The Enlightener, December, 1973 issue, page 5 of Dr. Vahe Garabedian's Article:

"We have been a parish without a resident priest for over 40 years and are now expected to fall into a new and different life style. We are asked to attend church often and regularly on a day which we had set aside for our own personal desires. And why has this come about? The answer is that we wanted it. We signed a petition to that effect two years ago. It therefore behooves us to participate in and support the functions of our parish."

The members of this community want a Church School, while fewer want an Armenian School. Yet when asked to teach, the answer is a firm and direct NO. Binghamton has had a very strong Church School in the past with, it seems, enough people to teach. A priest can be assigned to a parish but you cannot force the members to participate. Which in my mind re-affirms what I said when I arrived: 'a priest is only as good as his support.'

ITEMS DONATED TO THE CHURCH

Icons:

Saint Gregory the Illuminator

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kallen,  
in memory of Ovsanna Ketchoyian.

Saints Thaddeus & Bartholomew

Steve & Ronald Turekian,  
in memory of their mother,  
Araxie Turekian.

Christ's Baptism	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kalleh, in memory of Araxie (Ketchoyian) Turekian.
Censor	Mr. Sam Turekian, in memory of his wife, Araxie Turekian.
Candle Lighter	Mrs. Anna Sarkisian
Biblical and Historical cloth pictures	Mrs. Esgouhi Afarian
Chalice cloths	Mrs. Mary Misakyan
Gospel cloths	Mrs. Mary Misakyan
Hand cross cloths	Mrs. Mary Misakyan
Rug for the Nursery	Mr. Ara Misakyan
Choir robes	Women's Guild
Lecturn covers	Women's Guild
Crosses for the Altar	Gary Rejebian
Baptismal and Marriage Narods	Gary Rejebian

Respectfully submitted this twentieth day of January, 1974.

*Fr. George Arakelian*  
Father George Arakelian,  
Pastor