

SAINT GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR, BINGHAMTON
PASTOR'S REPORT

JANUARY 1, 1978 - DECEMBER 31, 1978

The following sacraments were administered during the year:

Baptism and Chrismation (3)

Matthew Robert Haydon, April 22nd
Laura Susan Seraydarian, August 12th
Peter Robert Bogdasarian, August 26th

Chrismation only (4)

Philippe Harry Kalagian, May 22nd
Catherine Lisa Kalagian, May 22nd
Michelle Rose Kalagian, May 22nd
Bonnie Laura Bogdasarian, August 26th

Marriage (2)

Diran Siragan Kradjian to Aida Socie Sarkisian, April 15th
James Joseph Stachnik to Valerie Jean Bogdasarian, July 1st

Ordination (0)

Other sacramental and non-sacramental services:

January 6th, "Blessing of Water - Chur Orhnek" Godfather, Lucas Sarkisian

Received into the Church (1)

Barbara Gialanella, October 15th

Funeral - local (1)

Elmas Kradjian, February 21st

Funeral - out of town (2)

Margaret Markarian (Haverhill, Ma.), February 22nd
Surma Aghaian (Syracuse), October 12th

Visiting clergy (2)

His Eminence Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, celebrated Badarak, preached the sermon and was guest speaker at our Martyr's Day Program on Sunday, April 23rd.

The Pastor help co-ordinate a fund raising drive spear-headed by the Diocese. His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate of the Diocese, visited the community which included cocktails and dinner followed by solicitation that evening and the next day. *SEPTEMBER 16-17.*

Other services:

March 12th, Youth Group Lenten Worship, dinner and discussion--
"Faith Shields."

March 15th, Special Women's saints Day Service held in Syracuse.

May 14th, Parish Council Installation Service.

July 16th, Celebrated Badarak and preached the sermon, St. Paul Church, Syracuse.

August 20th, Celebrated Badarak and preached the sermon, St. Paul Church, Syracuse.

September 8th, Syracuse - Baptized Biesiada Jr. infant, St. Paul Church, Syracuse.

September 16th, Participated in the "Gochoom Service" of Deacon Hagop Nalbandian, St. Paul Church, Syracuse.

November 4th, Married James Parsons to Susie Tufankjian, St. Paul Church, Syracuse.

Religious services rendered for non-Armenian community:

February 12th, Susquehanna Valley Home, Worship Service

February 26th, Same

March 5th, Same

March 19th, Same

April 5th, House of the Good Shepherd (aged) "Arravodyan Jham - Matins"

April 9th, Susquehanna Valley Home, Worship Service

April 16th, Same

April 30th, Same

June 15th, Gave Invocation at I.B.M. Retirees Luncheon

June 23rd, Gave Invocation at Susquehanna Valley Home On-Campus School for the first graduating class.

Ecumenical Worship Services (parish participation):

January 8th, Southside Ecumenical Epiphany Service at our church

Ecumenical services continued:

February 19th, 26th,

March 5th, and 12th, Southside Ecumenical Lenten Series, at Ross Memorial Presbyterian Church, with a fellowship and coffee hour at the last service.

November 22nd, Southside Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at Conklin Avenue First Baptist Church.

Other pastoral and church activities:

June 23rd, American Legion Women's Chapter presented an American flag to our parish. Those on hand beside the parish priest were Henry Kachadourian and Edward Seraydarian.

August 17th - 26th, Teacher and counsellor - St. Nersess Summer Study Conference.

September 17th, Broome County Council of Church's Radio Program Kaleidoscope, W.I.N.R., 68. Parish priest interviewed about the Armenian Church, people and nation.

November 21st, Parish contributed to a Thanksgiving Food Basket for a needy family. The "basket" was given to the Harriet Leombrone family of Binghamton.

Items donated/given to the Church:

One 100 lb. bag of calcium, and roofing materials for the church hall and cottage.

Nishan Ketchoyian

Book shelf

Nurhan Findikyan

Roofing supplies for church hall and cottage and labor on both church hall and cottage.

Henry Kachadourian

Many hours of odd jobs...fixing and repairing church and church hall

Edward Seraydarian

Repair service on copier

Frank Whitney Jr.

Cost of labor on church car

Charlie Seraydarian

COMMENTS

In March of 1979, I will have been pastor of this parish for seven years. It is interesting to note the changes that have taken

place over the years.

When I first arrived, strengthening the Sunday School was the primary concern of the parish. Over the years the curriculum and teaching have improved but Sunday School continues to have problems. Why? Because any curriculum put out on a Diocesan level can never take in the circumstances of small parishes in which varying age groups must be lumped together in a class, we cannot fully adopt a single curriculum throughout. Each year new textbooks are chosen from any number of curriculae. Although the Kindergarten and Intermediate classes have good materials this year, Senior class suffers from lack of a textbook. Unfortunately a good solid progression from year to year becomes impossible. In addition, no matter how good the curriculum, people are needed to teach; over the years this too has been a "sore" spot. Phone calls, personal contact and even letters have been sent out and practically all efforts have fallen upon deaf ears. Since November, Senior class has been without a teacher and is in danger of falling apart. Up until now, however, we have been always fortunate to find three teachers, not always the same, to pass on to our youngsters the Faith of our forefathers.

Speaking of forefathers it is interesting to note that as a national Church we express our desire to have our children learn their "mother" tongue along with their cultural heritage. Yet there is a question of priorities, i.e. skiing, tennis, football and hockey games, etcetra, which seem to drag the youngsters away from that which we parents think is important. Again finding teachers has been a traumatic experience, which finally ended up last year (1978) with one young man (Michael Findikyan) and the parish priest

teaching; and very truthfully, neither qualified to teach the language. But, the willingness was there; time was spent preparing what we could. Two youngsters attended Armenian Class in the fall. Result: We decided to "close" Armenian School. There is no point in having an Armenian School if parents cannot convince their children to attend.

No one stays young forever. After High School graduation, many young adults go away to college, thus diminishing the number in our Youth Group. Over the past two years the toll has been great. Approximately half of our youth (15 members) have left the area, leaving a small [REDACTED] Youth Group behind. Youth Group seems to have lost its spirit and as yet, no one has found a cure for its malaise. Moreover, losing our youth leaves us without the associate teachers, choir members and altar servers we would normally have in High School graduation. What really bothers me as a priest is not their leaving; that is natural. I too left "home" for a higher education, but the failure of our youth to return to Church on those Holidays and summer vacations when they return home greatly disturbs me. This leads me to ask myself the question that any normal parent would; "Where have I failed as their parish priest? Why is it that they do not return to worship, especially during the summer months?"

Most unfortunate for our parish last year was the loss of both Paul Ketchoyian, choir director and Raymond Seraydarian, altar server. Both left the area for employment. I have felt the impact of their departure most of all. Fortunately, Michael Findikyan, our organist, has filled part of that void with the help of our ever faithful singers: Michael Ketchoyian, Anoush Dekmejian, Armenian Dekmejian and Louise Kontos. Moreover, a number of young people decided to join the choir in '78 and we have seen an improvement in our choir as a result.

Although the end of 1977 left the running of the Women's Guild to me, 1978 saw a quick revival. By early February new officers had taken over the guild, and the average attendance jumped from eight to ten to 18 to 20 members. I pray that this trend continues and that more women will take responsibility when asked to volunteer and not let all the work fall on the same shoulders.

At at least half of its meetings this past year, Parish Council has been pre-occupied with money. Rightly so in that money has been tight; rising prices and inflation have hit the Church just like any other family. What we have not done is hit upon a solution. We are still "talk" and "no action." As one of our council members said: "Even if we come up with a workable solution, we are not willing to WORK to see it accomplished." Unfortunately that statement, paraphrased as it is, is true.

It should also be noted that with the financial pinch that our parish has been in for the past two years, Parish Council has been unable to give me a cost of living raise. Thus with the permission and the approval of both His Eminence the Primate, and the Parish Council, since June 19, 1978, I have been working part-time in the evenings to supplement my income.

Our chairman has noted in her report that "...socially we seem to be a well adjusted parish, but not so spiritually..." and she suggests certain ways to correct the situation. I whole-heartedly agree, but note that her suggestions i.e. Bible study, discussions and lectures have been initiated in the past (see Pastor's Reports of 1974, page 5, 1975, page 5, 1976 page 7, and finally again in 1977, page 6). My conclusion based on these past experiences is

that this congregation is not interested in any such spiritual sustenance. Although at times the non-Armenian community requests such programs and services from me, our own people do not. I remain always ready to organize and participate in any spiritual program and only wish that I ^{would} receive such requests.

Respectfully submitted this twenty-eighth day of January, 1979.

Kevork Kahana Arakelian
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Pastor