

Diratsoo

Diratsoo's Report
June 1, 1996- December 8, 1996

Often people ask the question, "What does the Parish Priest or Diratsoo do all day? I hope that this report will answer that question and give you some insight into where the community is at and what the needs of the community are.

Liturgical

The liturgical duties that I oversee are: conducting services, preparing booklets & Sunday Bulletins, preparing Choir tapes, conducting Choir rehearsals, arranging sacraments and funeral services, preparing sermons, etc. My fundamental conviction surrounding all of this work is that we need to be «գիտալից» or knowledgeable about the content and meaning of our services. Thus my first task when I arrived was to prepare a service booklet so that everyone could participate in and follow the service. In an effort to promote congregation participation, I also prepared an order of the service for the Blessing of the Grapes (Aug. 18) and conducted an Instructional Liturgy (Nov. 3). Furthermore, I will be preparing another Sunday Service booklet for use after January 5. In light of this effort to promote participation and understanding for the faithful, I have given sermons about saints and psalms incorporated into our service, emphasized the importance of preparation for communion, explained the daily variables and hymns, provided translations of daily hymns. Central to the preparation of services is the preparing of booklets. Any Church publication generally requires the following work: research to determine the appropriate daily variables, translation work, obtaining music (not as easy as it sounds), typing, editing, cutting and pasting, commuting to Kinko's, printing, folding and collating. As an aside, I am on a first name basis with the people at Kinko's. Also, in order to captivate the children, I prepare children's sermons and call the young couples to inform them of special events planned for them and their children. On Badarak days, I have tried to plan as much involvement as possible in the service, by calling altar servers and others to participants in various ways.

There also were several special services during the course of the year. St. Gregory Armenian Church Women's Guild sponsored the Annual Women-Saints' Day on March 24, 1996 and I conducted the service. On August 18th, we celebrated the Blessing of the Grapes Ceremony. On September 8th, we had a special prayer service on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Independence of Armenia. On September 15th, we conducted the Blessing of the Four Corners of the World Service.

Some statistics concerning the services and attendance are:

Average Jashoo Service attendance: 14.3 people/Jashoo Service

(seems to have been a decrease in attendance during the month of November)

Average Badarak attendance: 38.2 people/Badarak.

Annual Picnic (1996): Over 90 people in attendance

Mailing list (to the present) Over 100 Armenian households

I think that there is much work to be done in order to increase attendance at the services. It has become apparent to me that making phone calls, providing transportation, and planning activities would be very beneficial. Another recommendation is that once there is a group of children that is old enough to sing, we can form a youth choir; even why not encourage a young person to consider taking organ lessons. Concerning the Sunday service itself, there is a need to: obtain readers for the daily scriptures. I am ready to listen to your comments about the service or any other liturgical matter.

Choir

The choir of St. Gregory while it is small is indeed very dedicated. I have been working with the choir in order to help them prepare for special services and Sunday variables. Along with the ever willing help of Mrs. Adrienne Kachadourian, I have prepared choir tapes of Sunday variables. Also, a choral and vocal training seminar is in the planning stages. Anyone and everyone is invited and welcome to attend our choir rehearsals or listen to our tapes. I commend the choir for their efforts and especially for participating in the Wake Service held for Mr. Garo Ajamian in Elmira.

Women's Guild

The Women's Guild is a small group like the choir, and also very dedicated. Most of the Women's Guild are members in the choir and vice-versa. The Women's Guild conducted an extremely successful Bake Sale and I thank everyone for their participation. Also, the Women's Guild ministered to our community in several ways during the year by: hosting the Annual Women Saints' Day, helping at the picnic, preparing a Hokejash meal, and sending Sympathy cards to the bereaved. They are planning other activities for the upcoming year. I look forward to their events.

Sacraments, Funerals, and Requiems

Since June 1, 1996 the following Badaraks took place:

June 16, 1996-	Rev. Fr. Sahag Kaishian
August 18, 1996-	Rev. Fr. Arten Ashjian
Sept. 15, 1996-	Rev. Fr. Carnig Hallajian
November 3, 1996-	Rev. Fr. Arakel Aljalian
December 1, 1996-	Very Rev. Fr. Mesrob Semerjian

Since June 1, 1996 the following Baptisms took place:

June 15, 1996-	Natalie Christine George
August 31, 1996-	Joshua Richard Tateosian
September 7, 1996-	Michael John Sarkisian

During the year we experienced the loss and death of the following members:

February 13, 1996-	Harry Sarkisian
August 26, 1996-	Garo Andrew Ajamian
September 27, 1996-	Margaret R. Medzigian

We commemorated the following Hokehankisd services since June 1, 1996:

Mr. Alex Manoogian

Mr. Garo Andrew Ajamian

Garabed, Anna, Sarkis, Harry, and Joyce Sarkisian

Mr. George Torigian

Also, we acknowledge the passing of Harry Kalagian's mother, Martha Kalagian.

The Lord receive their souls in heaven.

Educational Programs

For the upcoming year, I am working on planning a series of lectures during Lent, a Martyrs' Day lecture, and other lectures on Armenian religious and cultural subjects. It is my and the Council's hope that this will help to generate interest in the community. If there are subjects you are interested in, or if you know of lecturers, or wish to give your input, please contact me and we can talk about these matters. Also, we are planning a one-day crash course in Armenian culture and language for March or April of 1997. At any time I would be happy to conduct Bible Study, Divine Liturgy Lectures, organize a retreat, and/or other lectures. Please let me know if you are interested and when would be a convenient time to conduct such a program.

Administrative

There are an overwhelming amount of administrative duties that need to be taken care of, even in a small parish. Some of the things that occupy my time are: setting and typing agendas for meetings; updating the mailing list and creating a comprehensive database with names of spouses, work numbers, children's ages and names; typing and collating and folding Sunday Bulletins; purchasing office supplies and going to the printer; checking on the inventory of cleaning supplies, paper goods and the like; scheduling priests; planning coffee hours; cleaning the Church, altar, candle stands, office and bathrooms; making phone calls to arrange Council meetings; conducting choir rehearsals; arranging lectures (1997), aiding in the planning of dinners and special events (annual picnic); opening mail, writing correspondence and thank you letters; preparing fliers and general mailings; preparing a annual report and so on. Believe me, the list goes on. I do not mind doing this work as it is necessary to help the parish run; however I can always use help on mailings and would very much like someone or a few individuals to take responsibility for a newsletter.

Ministry

The primary goal of my ministry is to take care of the spiritual needs of the community. I do this in a number of ways through ministering to a family during visitation or at the time of a baptism or wedding or on the occasion of the death of a loved one.

For all sacraments, I plan a pre-sacramental session with the couple, where I discuss the meaning of the sacrament and exhort the couple in Christian living and Christian parenting. As well, I provide a complete English translation of the sacrament to be performed.

On the occasion of someone's passing, my goal is to comfort the family of the departed and

to discuss concerns that one may have in experiencing loss and dealing with suffering. I do this in the context of the Church and also pray for God's comfort for the family and desire to spend time with the family through personal visitation and phone visitation. Also, it is a difficult task to prepare a eulogy and I do so laboring with great care to strive to be sensitive to the family and provide meaning in the context of our Christian faith on the occasion of the death of a loved one.

On the occasion of a funeral, I have been given the authority by the His Eminence Abp. Khajag Barsamian, Primate to conduct the Wake Services; however it is necessary to bring in a priest for the Funeral Service.

Aside from these services within the community, I also participated in a Wedding Service in New York City on Sept. 14, 1996.

Besides my pastoral input at the time of a sacrament or service, visitation is a crucial part of my ministry. It is truly a blessed opportunity for me to visit you at home or (God forbid) in the hospital. I have not done as many visits as I expected up to this point; the reason is that there have been so many other duties to take care of. Nevertheless, I will be calling you and please feel free to call me at the church or at home to arrange a visit or a "Home Service". As well, please keep me informed if you or someone you know is ill so that I can visit. Too often, I find out after the fact from third and fourth parties. Beyond these responsibilities, I also counsel those in need and am always ready to console and guide the faithful.

Young Couples & Children

An essential element in the life of our Church is the participation of young couples and their children. I have been in regular contact with these families and am planning activities for and with them. We planned children's activities for the annual picnic (Aug. 18), gathered on Oct. 30 for a Halloween activity at the Discovery Center, and planned a Christmas party geared towards young children (Dec. 15). I believe that it will be possible to organize an Armenian School for them in the near future. Many of the women baked such wonderful things for the Women's Guild Bake Sale. Have you ever heard of "Snickers-Doodles" or "Mamool"?

Diocesan-wide Activities

July 18, 1996- Lecturer at the St. Nersess Summer conferences
October 24-27, 1996- Organized & presented morning service workshop for the Choir convention
Organized the Worship Services for the Choir Convention

Presently, I am serving a 3 year term as Corresponding Secretary to the Central Council of the Diocesan Choir Association.

Ecumenical Activities

As Diratsoo of our community, I provide an Armenian presence in Binghamton on behalf of St. Gregory Armenian Church. I represented the community at the 55th Anniversary Banquet of the Broome County Council of Services on Sunday, Nov. 10, 1996. Also, Mr. Hagop Injajigian attended the banquet. I have attended the Ecumenical Meetings of the South Side Ecumenical Group and participated in the annual Thanksgiving Service held on Nov. 27, 1996. Also, attended by the Kachadourian family. There will be an Ecumenical Epiphany Service on Jan 12, 1996

During the course of the year, I met with fellow Armenian clergy in Albany so that we could share resources and discuss sermon material.

Also, I said the invocation at the Annual ARS dinner and enjoyed their function.

On Halloween night, I gave out candy outside the church doors and wanted the local community to know that we are alive and well at St. Gregory's. I find that the neighborhood is very supportive of the church.

Coffee Hour

The opportunity to sponsor a coffee hour is an occasion to participate in the life of the community. It would be greatly appreciated if you would enjoin in this service.

Spirituality

As the Diratsoo of this community, it is my goal to convey the teachings and the practices of the Church so that the community can grow spiritually. A very effective means to promote community spirit is by practicing the "Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy". They are the means by which we sanctify ourselves and prepare our hearts for God and for the birth of Christ. During this season of Advent, pick one of these works of mercy and practice it during the day. The "Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy" are:

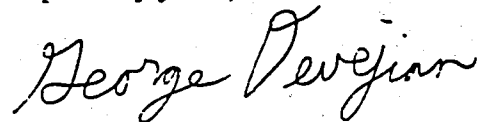
1. to instruct the uneducated
2. to counsel the doubtful
3. to exhort and convert sinners
4. to comfort the sorrowing and afflicted
5. to forgive offenses
6. to suffer wrongs patiently
7. to pray for others, living and dead.

Conclusion

I have noticed that there is the strength of commitment in this parish. Yes, there are many areas of work, but the many contributions of numerous individuals in great and small ways is very evident. Each contribution and effort you make is significant; therefore, I thank each and every one of you for your participation, efforts, and contributions, those you have made in the past and present, and in advance for those you make in the future. I am grateful that Dr. Garabed Fattal has worked so diligently along with the Parish Council to rally the parish to call a Diratsoo to serve your community. I thank the Council: Dr. Garabed Fattal for his greatness of heart, Mrs. Sonnig Kradjian for her enthusiasm, Dr. Vahe Garabedian for his behind the scenes contributions, Mr. Lucas Sarkisian for his dedication, Dr. Aristaks Kachadourian for his handiwork, Mr. Diran Kradjian for his willingness to host a coffee hour and Mrs. Ursula Findikyan for her diligence. As well, I appreciate the valuable input and experience of the former Chairman, Dr. George Rejebian. I thank Mrs. Sonnig Kradjian, Vice-Chair, who despite her illness, has constantly been concerned with the welfare of the parish. In addition to the Parish Council, I thank each choir member, soloist, and reader for his/her gift of voice in prayer and adoration and the organist, Mrs. Adrienne Kachadourian for her giving of her talents to serve the Church. Also, I am inspired by the example set by Mike and Rose Ketchoyian because they have been so consistent in singing and

attending the services. I thank Mrs. Louise Kontos, Women's Guild Chairperson and the Women's Guild for their helping hands in the many functions of the parish. I thank Mrs. Alice Bogdasarian, the former Women's Guild Chairperson, and current Diocesan delegate for her valuable input. I thank the young couples, who have been very enthusiastic to plan events. I thank Mr. Hagop Injajigian for the many invaluable services that he provides assisting me and serving the Church. I thank Mrs. Beatrice Injajigian for preparing the "mas" and cleaning the altar linens. I thank all the cooks, especially, Mr. Kevork Papazian and Mr. Demos Kontos, who serve our community with great dedication. I thank Mrs. Ursula Findikyan and Ms. Pam Russell for being so conscientious about the correspondence of the Church. I thank all the faithful that have pledged so generously to support the Church. A special note of thanks to Mr. George Sarkisian, who was gracious in donating the computer on which this report is typed. I thank all the hosts of the Coffee Hours. I thank all those that have helped in the cleaning of the Church and altar. Moreover, I am grateful to the Jumpers, because not only do they provide service to the community but they care about our Church. And since there is always the risk of excluding a few people, don't forget that I started off by thanking everyone. Finally, I thank the Lord whose unending love continues to feed, strengthen, and guide me in my mission. The success of our church and our community depends on your participation and contributions. Remember, your participation is needed, essential, and God-pleasing. I pray that we may grow as a community to glorify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Devejian". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Rev. Dn. George Devejian, Diratsoo