

ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

January 1 - December 31, 1992

By the grace of God we have completed an active year in our parish life, full of religious, cultural, educational and communal activities. Briefly stated, the following noteworthy events and developments mark 1992 as a year of growth: Significant additions on our lists of voting members, pledging stewards and the choir; re-instituting a seniors group; the burning of our church mortgage; a quality adult educational program; the marking of the 20th anniversary of our Armenian School; the initiation of an acolytes class; our church "gnkahayr" becoming the recipient of the distinguished Ellis Island Congressional Medal of Honor and the witnessing of the moving moment when the flag of the Armenian Republic was raised alongside 140 flags of other nations at a special ceremony at the United Nations.

This is the 20th Annual Parish Assembly of St. James Church. It is a milestone in the life of a small community which started with about 20 members and is ready to greet the 200th voting member in the next few weeks. After wandering in a few locations, we settled in our present property over 12 years ago, perhaps not realizing then that soon we would need more adequate facilities for the various activities of our parish leading to further growth. Seven years ago, we initiated a building project intending to build a new church edifice, a fellowship hall and an administrative/educational building on our present land. However, after much difficulty and labor, familiar to most of you, we have had to resign reluctantly and painfully to the necessity of searching for a new property. Today we will be presented with the responsibility of voting for a ten-acre land, discovered after endless search and toil, to be the new site of our church complex. We feel God has been leading us through many hurdles and disappointments. Continuing our faith and dependence on God, let us seek His will as we make our commitment of spirit and matter to embark upon a significant and exciting venture, to build for the further growth of our parish and for the glory of God.

I - LITURGICAL

Badarak was celebrated at our church every Sunday and weekdays of major feasts. In an effort to better understand Badarak and fully participate in it, explanatory sermons were given on 4 consecutive Sundays in November. As an added means to our communal participation in this central worship service, we have placed explanatory sheets in our Badarak books to be used by the congregation. Badarak in our church starts at 10:15 am every Sunday, preceded by a brief Morning Service at 10:00 am. Promptness in attending services is still a practice that needs improving. I urge our parishioners to make a concentrated effort in the current year to get into the habit of arriving at church on time and participating in the service regularly.

On the first Sunday of the month, in lieu of sermon, I have encouraged the congregation to ask questions of interest pertaining to our Christian faith, practice, worship and cultural legacy, which I have tried to answer and discuss to the best of my ability. On the second Sunday of the month (family worship day), school pupils, parents and teachers have been requested to participate in Badarak.

On January 6, the traditional date of Armenian celebration of Theophany (Nativity, Baptism and Manifestation of Jesus Christ), a pot luck luncheon was held following Badarak with an impromptu program, when we also said a hokehankisd prayer for the soul of Mr. Simon Tutak.

On May 17, our congregation was invited to attend Badarak at St. Nersess Seminary because our church hall was occupied with the rug sale and the Seminary was holding graduation exercises.

During 1992 it has been my privilege to administer the following:

- 7 Sacraments of Baptism in our church
- 1 In another neighboring Armenian church
- 5 Weddings, all in other churches
- 6 Funerals in our church

House blessing, betrothal, grave blessing and memorial services have also been conducted upon request. My deep appreciation to our deacons, altar servers, choirmaster, organists and choir members, many of whom travel long distances to participate in our worship services. May their service and proximity to the altar add blessings upon their families.

II - EDUCATIONAL

The educational ministry of our church includes adults of all ages, as well as children in the Sunday and Armenian schools. Sermons, adult educational programs, visitations and significant occasions in the life of families (Christening, wedding, hospitalization crisis and funeral) have been utilized to impart the basic teachings and traditional practices of our church as they relate to our daily living at the present.

In the fall, we offered a series on "Daily Issues & Problems in the Light of the Bible", exploring teachings of the Bible on various vital issues. A panel of competent speakers shared their thoughts with a group of motivated members. Adult language classes were also conducted.

We had another series of successful Lenten programs offered on three alternate Fridays with guest speakers.

A few youngsters from our parish participated in the St. Vartan and St. Nersess summer programs, becoming better acquainted with our religious and cultural heritage.

In the fall, we invited Anahid Chookhachian to resume the post of Armenian School Principal. With an augmented teaching staff, she is doing a conscientious job with our children.

During Lent, I was given the responsibility by the Diocese of organizing an educational program for the clergy of our Diocese which took place in Larchmont.

We have continued to use our parish newsletter "HOPE" and the monthly "BULLETIN" as another vehicle of imparting useful instructions and news of interest. The newsletter is received by more than 800 individuals including churches.

On May 30, an unprecedented event took place at our church. Over 80 Sunday School pupils and teachers from the NY NJ and PA gathered at our church for a traditional celebration of "The Feast of the Ascension" with Badarak at church followed by the drawing of "vijag" and sports and recreational events on our lawn.

III - OTHER PASTORAL SERVICES

The most significant service the church offers to her members through the pastor is on the personal level of touching their lives in times of need or crisis. There have been several cases of grave illnesses suffered by parishioners that have enhanced in our minds the importance of praying for each other. Here too, a reminder is in order that as soon as we know of any parishioner or friend being admitted to a hospital, it is greatly appreciated that the pastor be informed immediately in order to make personal calls. People seek prayers and benefit from these visits.

This year we have had several situations of needy Armenian families being established in our geographical area, and thus the need has arisen for assistance and direction in establishing and adjusting themselves to various conditions of life in the US, in addition to finding and supplying household furniture and other items.

For me, it is a responsibility and a privilege to be part of the Christian ministry of spiritual and emotional healing and reconciliation in the lives of individuals and families beset by the burdens and perils of life.

"Mission of Faith to Armenia"- On July 26, I went to Armenia with a group of 20 people on a religious mission and returned on August 12. The group consisted of a bishop, two priests, five seminarians and 12 young men and women from the Eastern and Canadian Dioceses. One week prior to departure, the group participated in an orientation program at St. Nersess Seminary, the sponsor of the project.

The primary goal of this mission was to preach, teach and counsel in two cities, Abaran and Charentzavan and surrounding villages.

I went on this mission with excitement, but I returned without joy. Since then our parish has collected more than \$6000 which we have sent to help needy Armenians with 3 individuals; Carol Der Boghosian, George Leylegian and Jennifer Gurahian. The increasingly worsening condition in Armenia, places a Christian and humanitarian responsibility upon our shoulders to continue without fail or complaint to extend our helping hands across the ocean to our brothers and sisters who are facing sub-human conditions in the homeland. Let us continue to also remember them in our prayers.

Serving the church and the community is a distinct privilege which brings with it a spiritual satisfaction which transcends all remuneration and recognition. Nevertheless, today as we review our annual activity, we wish to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation collectively, as pastor and parish council to all of you, who one way or another have contributed to the well-being and progress of our parish. At this time, we wish to acknowledge all the devoted and dedicated members of our parish, who have uncomplainingly given of their time and/or talent helping in the administration office, the worship services, educational programs and organizational life, as well as any other service they may have offered. The services are too many to enumerate and it is too sensitive to omit anyone's name. If they were to be monetarily compensated, we would not be able to balance our budgets. May God bless them all including their families and loved ones.

I would like to make an exception by mentioning the name of Garo Bashian, because he has given notice to the Parish Council that he will not be able to continue the rug sales for our church. As you all know, the past 14 years Garo conducted oriental rug sales in order to supplement the

annual budget of our parish. From year to year these rug sales have netted various figures for St. James, ensuring some years up to 20% to 30% income of the annual budget. No other single function has netted this much to balance our budgets. At this time it is only fair and fitting that we express our appreciation and pray for God's blessings upon Garo, his wife Annette for her continued support and George Bashian of the Bashian Bros.

While we are on the subject of finance, I have the pleasure of announcing to our congregation that a large donation was made by Anahid Birnbaum. Many years ago before she was married, she had set this aside in memory of her parents, Nazaret and Anna Keljikian, who I have had the pleasure of knowing personally. The valiant battle Anahid has been waging with faith for a long time is but a reflection of the spiritual strength she has inherited and learned from her wonderful parents. May God bless Anahid for her generous donation of \$_____ toward the Building Fund.

May the Holy Spirit continue to inspire us all to become more active participants in making this parish even more dynamic and vibrant for the glory of God and for the strengthening of our spiritual, cultural and communal life.

With prayers,


Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian