

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

1982

Whenever a Pastor contemplates a state of the Parish message, he is ever aware of the prophetic passage "my thoughts are not always your thoughts saith the Lord".

What criteria do we use to judge a successful year, a successful Parish? Can we claim success when the bills are paid, the budget supported, dinner menus deliciously prepared, bazaar profits doubled - with one word the physical aspect is proven to be healthy - but is this a reasonable criteria to pass judgement on and say: "We are great, we have accomplished the task."

This may satisfy our egos, our minds, but cannot satisfy the every-thirsty soul of a conscientious Christian. One great question remains to be answered and that is "have we been faithful to the call of God?. I cannot pass judgement on your behalf but I can admit from my observance that we have failed in some aspects.

We need to learn the real purpose of the church. We need more kneeling and praying people; we need more volunteers to become associated with the life of the church, more people in the choir, more children in the Sunday School, more boys and girls in the ACYOA, more women in the Guild. We need dedicated people of vision to remind us that we are one world and one people - to remind us of our obligations of investing our time, talents and treasures.

As a family of work and worship, we need to be aware that pews without people is sadness to God and the Pastor, the classrooms without children is a show of disrespect to our martyred forefathers - just the fantasy of having a beautiful church only breeds vanity.

Always and forever we need to be aware of the purpose for which this Parish was established 51 years ago. We exist to worship God, to be a friend to each other, to be virtuous and charitable, to be faithful to our national heritage and to be one under God and to save our souls. To me this is the strongest criteria of success, progress and achievement.

We have come a long way physically. How much ground we have covered spiritually - that is the big question.

We are living in difficult times and strange circumstances. We must be aware of these and resolve to meet the challenges ahead with determination, confidence and faith.

The new challenges are more spiritual and emotional. I am referring to our resolve to rise to the occasion and relate to 300 Armenian families in our area who must be made part of the on-going life and leadership of this Church.

I am referring to more than 150 children and youth who must be given identity and direction to find their roots and be proud of it.

As good as the old days and methods may have been, we do need new vision, new programs and renewed faith to make the Gospel, the Church, a reality and to find new excitement in living and being a wonderful HYE.

As a family of work and worship, we need to be aware of these facts and in perseverance explore some areas and initiate some progressive action. We should consider:

- (1) A forceful movement to spread "The Word" and make our community conscious of regular church attendance, as well as church-related functions.
- (2) A renewal of commitments concerning our first priority - that of educating our children in the faith and heritage of our forefathers, subscribing to the ideals and goals of the Sunday School.
- (3) As parents we must do our utmost to acquaint and encourage our offsprings to participate in youth activities; inspire and install in them sense of belonging. Once youth is lost it can rarely be recovered, and to mourn the loss of our children once it is too late is useless.
- (4) It is obvious that mixed marriages have broken all previous records to an alarming degree. With due respect to all our "odar Marsuss and passah's, this has to be a public relations issue to indoctrinate, guide and educate our youth that the best way is the Armenian way.
- (5) We ought to revive the truth that a family who prays and works together in the Church is a healthy and happy family. We strongly impress upon you to take active part in all organizations, support their affairs and their endeavors for the good of all concerned.
- (6) This magnificent Church and property cannot be considered ours, yet! The bank owns it! Special effort and plans must be formulated to raise funds and at least partially pay the remaining \$222,000 mortgage.
- (7) Reviewing the condition in which all our Churches are struggling for survival, I have come to the conclusion that we should seriously think about establishing if not our own, at least a Diocesan Endowment fund earmarking our Church as the beneficiary for future support and sustenance of our Church.

- (8) It is imperative that we members or non-members subscribe to the weekly pledge system for the sound support of the budget as a main and steady source of income. The yearly bazaar and pledge system should almost cover the budgets set for coming years.

These are some of our apparent needs and these are areas in which every member of Holy Ascension can participate in some way.

1982 has been one of growth, change and progress - although not all our major endeavors and activities were enthusiastically supported.

Parish Council report covered most of these physical and financial aspects during 1982.

Your Pastor has taken keen interest, provided leadership and involved himself in the realization of these activities. His work on the religious side has brought him unforgettable experiences which cannot be shared and revealed as public secret.

Thinking and pondering along these lines, I can sincerely communicate to you that during this period, I have tried - to the very best of my ability - to attend to the spiritual needs, administrative chores and educational programs by officiating, preaching, lecturing, organizing, providing leadership, visiting, writing, printing, by hearing and absorbing the cries of need and by having an in-depth evaluation of every event and every situation.

I have shared my experience, knowledge and spiritual wealth with the young and old, who have made this small church an object of their love and concern, and have stood by their Pastor through thick and thin, supporting him in every respect.

- A. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP - Soorp Badarak has been offered on 50 Sundays, and sermons have been preached in Armenian or English. On various Sundays, special sermonettes were also preached for the benefit of our Sunday School pupils. On special occasions, services were conducted according to Diocesan directives and church calendar.
- B. RITUALS - Six (6) Baptisms, Three (3) weddings, Two (2) deaths, Forty-Four (44) requiem services, Three (3) grave blessings.
- C. PASTORAL VISITATIONS - Categorized as follows: (1) Hospital (sick calls) (2) Nursing Homes (sick and elderly), (3) Shut-ins, (4) Home calls for counselling and family crisis, (5) Home calls to bereaved families, (6) Home calls for happy occasions, (7) Home Blessings, (8) Administrative and business calls and miscellaneous visitations - Number 162.
- D. Administrative Duties This includes office, clerical work, correspondence, answering inquiries, management, Parish Council and church affiliated organizations, promotion and execution of cultural and educational programs, involvement and leadership in social concern projects, issuance of certificates and directives.

E. PUBLICATIONS AND CIRCULARS/ The "Voice" - official bulletin of our parish has been published and mailed by monthly to our parishioners and community at large, as well as throughout the country, to a reduced mailing list of 750 addresses, consisting of 32 pages in each issue. The entire responsibility of editing, art work, typing, printing, and mailing, is handled by the Pastor and his family.

The "Voice" has brought us acclaim and introduced our parish throughout the entire Diocese, as a lively, progressive, and well-organized community. Unsolicited contributions, mostly from out-of-towners has made our bulletin self-supporting, and even a profit-making enterprise.

In addition to the "Voice" special pamphlets, with artistic rendering, have been regularly prepared and mailed, advertising and announcing the various functions, as well as "in lieu of flowers" lists, Christmas and Easter "Yughakin" donations numbering 38, have been edited, printed, addressed and mailed, again by the same team.

At our personal expense we have mailed hundreds of Christmas, Wedding, Get-well, Sympathy, Birthday and other miscellaneous cards during this year, on appropriate dates and occasions.

The updating and correcting of addresses on our mailing list has been another time-consuming project, but which has insured us a next to perfect mailing list.

F. ORGANIZATIONS Our church affiliated organizations functioned diligently. We are especially happy with the strengthening of the Jr. ANYOA and we urge our parents to encourage and direct their children, 13-17 years of age, to join and become members.

With this accounting, new challenges and responsibilities face us for the on-coming year. We ask everyone to rally around the church, join hands, to become effective stewards for the advancement of our church and of our people.

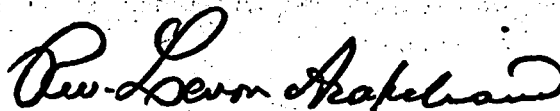
This report would not be complete unless a sincere acknowledgement is made for the fine, dedicated, and able work accomplished by our outgoing Parish Council Chairman, Dr. Berdj Harabedian. I am personally indebted to him for his continuous support and knowledgeable leadership over the past years of service to our church. He has been a sort of right hand to me, in the many facets of church work. His mannerism has brought peace, coordination and solidarity to the Parish Council, whose cooperation, respect and high esteem toward my humble person I have enjoyed during my tenure.

Now, I come to the difficult portion of this report. Ten years have gone by since that first Sunday (October 8, 1972) I celebrated Badarak at the Barnum Avenue Church.

At this junction, we feel our mission has been accomplished and it is time to move on. Due to a variety of reasons and circumstances, we have decided to accept the repeated invitations of the Primate and Diocesan Council of the Western Diocese, to assume the Pastorate of St. John Armenian Church of San Diego. The date for this move will be in the early part of May, 1983.

I will be following your acts and deeds, which I am confident will be fortified with a positive attitude and behavior. Remain firm in your dedication and devotion in the service of our beloved church. Look forward to the year ahead with the anticipation that God has even greater blessings in store for you in 1984. Let us all be realistic and optimistic and continue to worship, serve, love, and sacrifice faithfully and regularly.

Remember, there is nothing that God, you, your pastor and organizations together, cannot accomplish. Thank you and God bless you.



Rev. Levon Arakelian