

HOLY ASCENSION ARMENIAN SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

January 27, 1985

To all those present who are not aware of our Church's weekly activities, let me introduce our school to you.

We are The Holy Ascension Armenian School, founded by our Der Hayr immediately after his appointment as our Parish Priest. During the month of February, letters were mailed to all our people inquiring from them their most desired time and day to hold our classes. As we all know, there was no way to please everyone. The majority agreed to Wednesday evening.

Our first meeting was held on March 7th, with a very encouraging crowd of over 40 attendants. The group was divided into three classes. One was the non Armenian speaking class, DerHayr as the teacher, one was the Beginner Class, with Garo Hovhanesian as the teacher, and the third was the intermediate class, Armenian speaking, with myself as the teacher. The classes were held for one hour from 7:30 to 8:30 and were followed by very interesting and enlightening lecture sessions by Der Hayr.

As the lessons progressed, the number of students dwindled to a mere twelve, depending on the weather. Those who persisted, attended classes religiously and completed the year with satisfaction. We had our closing in June with the rest of the schools, with a buffet lunch prepared by the school staff. The proceeds were used for school supplies.

During the summer vacation, invitations were sent from the Diocese to all churches and organizations, asking for volunteers to participate in a one week educational program sponsored and all expenses paid by the Diocese, to train, inform and prepare better educated teachers. With DerHayr's encouragement, and my family's support and sacrifice, I attended those classes. I must say it was the most rewarding and memorable week of my life. Together with fifteen other concerned mothers from all over the diaspora, we enjoyed the hospitality of our diocese. No need to say the food was delicious and fattening. Those ladies outdid themselves, serving us three meals a day. During lunch, we were honored by the presence of His Eminence, and sharing with him his and our concerns for the future of our children as Armenians, was the highlight of our days.

We were lectured by child experts, language and reading experts, all professors in their fields. Armenian History was discussed by no other than our own Dr. Etmekjian. Religion, Art, Armenian Folklore and Dances were all topics of our studies. All this was prepared by ever so dynamic Silva Der Stepanian and Mr. Noubar Koupelian. The week was over too soon. On Sunday, we were all invited to attend Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral.

After, a beautiful program was prepared by the students, and we were all awarded "Certificates of Achievement" by Prof. Jacobson, and beautiful gifts from His Eminence brought from Armenia.

Coming back to the real world, I informed Der Hayr about all the lovely things I was introduced to and taught. Together we enthusiastically started our recruiting program. This time we encouraged the parents to enroll their children as well as the adults. This year's classes are held on two separate days. Der Hayr is teaching on Wednesdays as usual and Mrs. Salpi Tokatlian and myself are teaching on Sunday mornings before Sunday School. I am very happy to announce that we have a new recruit to our staff, Ms. Lisa Misakian who will be helping out as a substitute teacher. We are all very proud of all those children and adults for their persistence and hard work.

I would like to add a few words here with all of your indulgence. My words are directed to all and every parent who has a child, school age or adults. It is your duty to give that child the opportunity to learn his or her Mother Language. A nation will survive by its land, tradition and language. For all of us in the Diaspora, we have to depend on our language to survive as a nation. Our aim is to teach every child to participate in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, to sing "Havadamk" with the deacon, to pray Der Voghormia with the congregation, and to understand the reading of the bible in his own language. A language which is beautiful as well as rich, which sustained itself for almost two thousand years, through hardship, struggle and massacre. I recollect reading in one of my school books how an Armenian mother during those horrible days sitting on the sand in the deserts of Derzor, surrounded herself with the half-naked children who survived the killing, was scribbling on the sand the Armenian Alphabet, telling them to learn it, to never forget it, for that was the only tangible and valuable treasure they had and no one could ever take that away from them.

Living in this free country of ours, given all the pleasures of life, let us not forget our duty. It is up to us to carry on. To keep the language alive and by doing so, all those killings become a victory and their sacrifice won't be in vain.

Thank you.

Submitted with respect,

Marie Yapoujian

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