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Jan. 25, 1987

P A S T O R ' S A N N U A L R E P O R T

It is hard for me to believe that a week ago, I have started to my fourth year of service as the Pastor of our 55 years old Holy Ascension Parish.

Holy Ascension Armenian Church is a community of people, sharing a common ethnic identity and tradition, committed to Jesus Christ as Lord and to the teachings of both the Christian Gospel and of our Holy Church.

Together with the Parish Council, I am charged with providing leadership to this Parish, responsible for the life and work of this congregation. I accept my responsibilities with total commitment to our Lord, the Armenian Church and her people. With the help of God and the services and support of our faithful people, we have completed another successful year.

If in 1985, we were able to involve 70 different people in this or that organization or committee, I am happy to inform you that in 1986, we were able to involve 107 different people in our Parish life.

In our community we have doctors, lawyers, businessmen, artists, teachers, ordinary workers etc. We must be able to benefit from each of these and have their input in different matters of our Parish.

I like to involve more and more people. That's the only way to revitalize a community and lighten the burden of those who always do the same job. Unfortunately we still have people who only would like to benefit from our church and stay away from it, when it comes to work. "I don't have the time, I am too busy, I am not interested etc. statements are familiar to many of us. I believe that everyone of us should have some kind of responsibility in our church. As the body needs its all parts to work and to remain healthy, similarly the church needs her all members to remain strong and healthy. Please do not always wait for invitation. This is your church come and ask "How can I help my church?". I assure you, you'll find your right place in this or that organiz. or committee.

We have 7 permanently active organizations and probably another 6/7 temporary committees, which are formed at a certain time to do certain job. 1986 was full of different activities. Here are some of those religious, cultural, social and fund-raising activities:

- JAN.- Sunday Schools' Christmas Party
Annual Parish Assembly
- FEB.- Vartanantz feast day celebration.
We had dinner & Krikor Vosganian as guest speaker.
- MAR.- Michink lenten dinner
Every Wednesday " Peace & Rest Service"
Choir's Palm Sunday dinner
- APR.- Victor Arzoumanian, spoke about the ACEF
Attorney Bob Tellalian about wills & Taxes.
Madagh dinner. Fr. Khajag was the guest celebrant, preacher and
speaker in the church. He showed slides on historic Armenian.
April 24 - Div. Liturgy was celebrated by Fr. Guregh Kalfaian.
Vilma Naccashian showed slides on S.Armenia.
- MAY - Oriental Rug Sale
ACYOA mother's day breakfast
55th anniv. dinner. Edward Chapian was the guest speaker.
- JUN.- Sun. School had a trip.
- AUG.- Annual Church Picnic
- SEP.- Bus trip to one world Festival NYC
1st Pre-Baz. dinner, Ara Kalaydjian was the guest speaker.
- OCT.- 2nd Pre-Baz. dinner, Fr. Haigazoun Najarian was the guest speaker.
ACYOA's Halloween party
Mt. Ararat Festival & Bazaar
- DEC.- Ladies Annual ASS'y
Pastor's Sunday
Consecration of the new S.Altars and the bapt. Font & Banquet.
Christmas Eve service.

In 1986, I have presided at over 100 meetings, this includes:
all organizational and committee meetings. I have made the same amount of
visits to the elderly, to those who cannot attend our church services to give
them communion, home blessings and regular visits.

I have performed 7 baptisms, 8 weddings and 5 funerals. I have
participated to two funerals in other churches.

Outside of my Parish I have attended to the following functions

- Women's Saints day at the Diocese
- Regional retreat at St Thomas Arm. Church, Tenafly, N.J.
- Prof. Kevork Kherlopian's lecture at St. Nersess Seminary
- St. Ghevontiantz feast day celebration in Fair Lawn N.J.
- St. Vartan Diocesan Camp
- Regional meeting
- One World Festival in NYC

~~in~~ April

- April 24 commemoration in Hartford. Governor & Congresswoman Nancy Johnson spoke about the Armenian Genocide.
- Dinner W/Constantinople Armenian Patriarch Arch. Shnork Kaloustian, Diocese.

In 1986 we have formed found the second donor for our 2nd side Altar and had the consecration of the two Side Altars, baptismal font and two paintings. Indeed it was a big relieve for the Pastor & the Parish Council to see that they were built and consecrated after almost 2 yrs. of work.

During this past year we lost few families, they moved from the area. But also we gained few new families. The membership went down by five, from 121 to 116.

In 1986, I wanted to start Bible Study classes/gatherings for our Parishioners. I have formed a " Bible Study Comm." consisting of Maureen Najarian, Dorothy Nepola and Barbara Bousian. A circular was mailed to by me on March 5th, asking to contact either me or the comm. members, if anyone wish to attend Bible study classes. If I am not mistaken as of today one person showed interest. I still remember those 3/4 individuals who on different occasions were lecturing me about the " true" mission of our church. Where were they when they received this circular, why they don't* only talk and demand, and when we try to satisfy them, they never show up.

In '86, I have given 9 explanatory and educational lectures on Wednesday evenings in our church hall, for all the parishioners. The topics were as follows:

" The Divine Liturgy" , " The Basic structure or the 5 principal areas of the Arm. Church" , "Rank of the Clergy and how to address them" , " Items and articles used in the Arm. Church", "Understanding the true mission of our church and the responsibilities of a Parish Priest", "Some differences between the Armenian & the Catholic Churches", " The Golden age of the Armenian people", " The 7 Sacraments", " Armenians today".

It is sad that the maximum attendance to those lectures was 15/16 and minimum 4/5 people. I hope and wish that more people attend to these lectures and benefit from them. These lectures are open to everybody. I express my words of appreciation to all those who came and showed interest.

1986 was a successful year also because of these reasons:

- The Sun. & Arm. Schools were reorganized, the number of the teachers and students were increased.
- The old and wrong image of the ladies guild organization have changed. My first two years I did have difficulty in finding candidates for this organization, This year the same 7 expressed their wish to serve another year. Also the number was increased from 7 to 9.
- The number of our choir members have increased.
- For the first time eleven young adults said " yes" to the Pastor and served in the consecration banquet committee. I only hope and pray that this will be their beginning.

- We had the consecration of the new altars and Baptismal font. A souvenir booklet was published.
- For the first time the picnic & the Bazaar went smoothly. No Problems and no complaints.
- The church attendance had increased although it hasn't reached yet to my expected point.
- We have formed our Mr. & Mrs. Club and called it Hye Timers. The purpose of this organization was to bring all our adults, singles and married couples together, so that they could socialize together. It is good to see that once a month the group is trying to organize an enjoyable evening. I only would like to see that the group work a little more in organized way and have their officers and meetings like any other organization.
- We have started the work of preparing a new Parish directory for our community. For the first time the directory will also include the photos of our parishioners. For this, I have asked Barbara Bousian to organize the picture taking days. It is a tremendous job. So far it's going smoothly I am thankful to Barbara and to all of you for supporting us in fulfilling this important project. I am hopeful that in 1987, we will have our new directory.
- The entire wall of the three altars were painted by council members and few other parishioners.
- And finally, I strongly feel that I am closer to my parishioners, I know them better and they have more confidence in me. This is very important I am sure for any Pastor.

According to the canons of our Holy church, I have done all our religious services besides the Badaraks, sacraments and funerals (i.e. Rest & Peace service, Holy week services and two Jrakaloutz Badaraks). I hope I will see more people attending these services.

I see that some traditions and customs of our church are being forgotten by the majority of our people... just to mention few;

- Engagement service
- Blessing of homes during Christmas & Easter
- Blessing of the graves on memorial days
- Jrakaloutz Badarak
- Peace & Rest service (during Lent)
- Receiving Holy communion on 5 major feast days.

Few words about donations -

I am fully aware that our parishioners pay their dues and pledges. Also, on various occasions they support our social and fund raising activities. But I still feel that there are 4 different occasions, so 4 types of donations, when every one of us should participate. They are: Christmas Yughakin, Easter Yughakin, Madagh dinner, Church anniversary. Those who cannot be with us on those four Sundays, I think they should mail their donation to the church. This has nothing to do by being member of our church. All those who get the benefit of our church should support their church at least on these 4 occasions. It is difficult for me to remind my parishioners about their minimal financial obligations. I know that we have many generous people and they always support our church. My words

are not directed to them. My words especially belong to those who show their faces when they need us- the church- and after that again you don't see them - God knows for how many months.

You all know better than I do, how often people move in this country. Everytime that we see new families moving to our community, let's show our horpitality, love and care to them. They need our assistance and friendship.

Few words about common sense-

- I have noticed that during dinners, when we a guest speaker is lecturing, some people talk and disturb others. It's not fair for those who want to receive something from the speaker.
- When an announcement will be made by someone , a pastor, chairman etc., it takes 5 minutes to keep the people in silence.
- When RSVP invitations are mailed , please try to respond on or brfore the deadline.
- After the dinners, many times we need men to help us to fold and put the tables back - because we have the nursery. Most of the time I have to ask the last few men to put them back. Some might think that it is the job of only P.C. members. They are wrong. This is the job of all parishioners.
Similar thing is the leaving the lights of the hall on. Please have these things in your mind and help us.

Few words about our youth

Here more than the help of the Diocese, Pastor, P.C. - we need the help of our parents. The help of a concerned father, the love of an Armenian mother. It is true that we always say that we need our youth. But a day will come in their lives, when they will need us- the church.
We love our young adults, they are our children, our present and future. Please help us, so that we can have them in their ancestor'e church.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

It is true that since Fr. Oshagan's erevean chorale's cocert we haven't organized that kind of cultural event in our parish. Although I always have invited guest speakers both clergy and lay man to speak us about our culture. We aal must know that good/high quality cultural events are always costly. Erevan chorale's concert cost us over \$2500. If we were able to pay them, it was because of our sponsors who each donated \$50 - we published their names in the booklet.

I see nothing wrong in finding sponsors at least once a year for a major activity. But I know that few people do not like even this idea. I am very happy that most of our people do understand this simple point and support me.

Together with the cultural comm., we will organize high quality and enjoyable cultural events.

In 1987, I have few plans, such as organizing a spring dance (June 6), a cultural event in April or May, continuing the educational lectures. I still have a dream to organize a band by our parishioners. Also, I am very hopeful to find 10 ten donors for the 10 paintings. As of today we have 3 donors.

We have gone a long way, but still we have long way to go.

I thank all the organizations, Parish Council, Ladies Guild, Choir, Armenian school, Sunday School, ACYOA jrs. , ACYOA Srs. - their officers and members for serving to our church in 1986 unselfishly.

Also all those who served in different committees such as, cultural comm., Bazaar comm., Building comm., Pledge & membership comm., Ani newsletter editor & staff, Rug sale comm., social worker, Church maintenance people, Deacons, acolytes, organists, conductors, youth advisors and all the others - who supported our church in other way, be it morally or financially. On Pastor's Sunday, I have mentioned the names of all the people who served our church - altogether 107 names - it will be repetition to do the same today.

I also would like to express my words of appreciation to the following 4 parishioners for serving our parish and retiring/departing. Harry Tashjian, served 6 yrs. in the Parish Council. Garo Garabedian, served 4 yrs. in the Parish Council. Dom Garabedian, one year in the Parish Council. Dora Garabedian, one year in the Sunday school.

The last two are moving from our area in few months. Thank you very much.

My report will not be completed if I forget to mention the other council members who provided leadership with the Pastor to this community in 1986. Mardy Azarian, chairman for the last 4 years. I am thankful to him for his support and input. Archie Misakian Vice Chairman, Tom Dabakian Secretary, Tom Garabedian Treasurer and Richard Kalfaian - for all their services. I thank them very much for attending our church services almost every Sunday. Also, our Diocesan delegate, Dr. Berdj Harabedian for representing our parish at the Diocesan Assembly.

I conclude with the same words of my last year's report;

" Let us continue to seek God's inspiration and strength as we work together to build stronger our Armenian Christian heritage through the family of Holy Ascension Armenian Church. Let us be guided by His Love, peace and hope, always remaining faithful to the faith of our forefathers, as we work not for our own personal vanity but for His glory and the good of His people".

F. V. Nalbandian
Father Untzag Nalbandian
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