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THE HOLY ASCENSION

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Jan. 31, 1988

### PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

It is hard for me to believe that two weeks ago, I started my fifth year of service as the Pastor of our 57 year old Holy Ascension Parish.

Together with the Parish Council, I am charged with providing leadership to this Parish and responsible for the spiritual 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.

In general, I am happy to see that the Church attendance has gone up, the number of members have increased (in spite of having lost many members in recent years) the number of children who are attending our Sunday and Armenian Schools have increased, the number of actively involved parishioners in our parish life has also increased. These are all good news. And all these, because of you and your commitment to our Lord and our beloved Church.

In 1987, we had 6 permanently active organizations and another 4-5 temporary committees, which are formed as a certain time of the year to do a particular job.

1987 was full of different activities. Here are some of those religious, cultural, social and fund-raising events.

- Jan. - Sunday School's Christmas Party  
Annual Parish Assembly
- Feb. - Celebration of Vartanantz Feast - Dinner & Program. The beautiful program was prepared by our Armenian School children.
- Mar. - Michink Lenten Dinner by Women's Guild  
Every Wednesday during Lent we had "Peace and Rest" service followed by lectures in the church hall.  
-Women's Saint's Day bus trip to Fairlawn, N.J.  
-Luncheon with guests from the Women's Guild Central Council.  
-Choir's Palm Sunday Dinner
- Apr. - Madagh Dinner & Program, Ara Kalaydjian, Editor, of the Mirror-Spectator newspaper was the guest speaker.  
-April 24 Badarak 7PM & Coffee Hour  
-A video was shown about Historic Armenia.
- May - Annual Rug Sale  
-Annual Clergy Conference & Diocesan Assembly  
-ACYOA'S Mother's Day Breakfast  
-Bus Trip to New York's Avery Fisher Hall to hear the Troupadour Choir from Armenia  
-56th Anniversary Dinner & Program.  
A video was shown about Jerusalem
- June - First Annual Dinner Dance
- Aug. - Annual Church Picnic
- Sept. - First Pre-Bazaar Dinner & Program  
Hagop Garabents, writer, was the guest speaker.
- Oct. - Bus trip to New York's Avery Fisher Hall to hear the State Choir of Armenia  
-Second Pre-Bazaar Dinner & Program  
Zarmine' Boghosian, Principal of Bayside's Armenian School was the guest speaker.  
-Mt. Ararat Festival and Bazaar
- Nov. - Bus trip to St. Vartan's Cathedral, N.Y.C. to see His Holiness Catholicos Vasken I and attend His banquet at the Hilton.  
  
Unfortunately, Primate's lecture about Gomidas Vartabed was cancelled.
- Dec. - Women's Guild Annual Assembly  
-Pastor's Sunday  
-Christmas Eve Service & Coffee Hour

In 1987, I have presided over 100 organizational and committee meetings and I have made the same amount of visits to my parishioners, to the elderly, to the sick, and visits for other purposes, such as to counsel, to bless homes, to give communion to shut-ins etc.

I have performed	<u>2</u>	Baptisms
	<u>4</u>	Weddings
	<u>5</u>	Funerals

in my church. I have participated in two funerals and one wedding in other sister churches.

Outside of my Parish I have attended to the following functions:

- In Feb. - Clergy retreat (one week) in Larchmont, N.Y.  
Ghevontiantz Feast Day celebration in Fairlawn, N.J.
- In Mar. - Women's Saints Day at St. Leon's Church, N.J.
- In Apr. - On April 24, participated at the memorial program and service at the State Capital, in Hartford, where the Governor also spoke about the Genocide.
- In May - Clergy Conference & Diocesan Assembly in Springfield, Ma.  
Attended Fr. Vartan Assadourian's funeral in New Britain, Ct.
- In Oct. - Attended a dinner with His Holiness Catholicos Vasken I at the Diocese.
- In Nov. - Attended Vehapar's Badarak at the Diocese and later the banquet at the NY Hilton.
- In Dec. - Attended Trumbull Clergy luncheon and conference at St. George Albanian Church where we met the newly elected First Selectman, Mrs. Morag Vance, who spoke to us about the needs and future plans of the Town of Trumbull.  
Just to inform you, in April, 1988, our church will be the host to the group's bi-monthly conference.

Besides all these, at least on 3-4 different occasions, I have visited our Diocese, met the Primate, Vicar and have been at the different departments and bookstore.

In 1987, for the first time, we had a dinner-dance. 100 people attended and it was an enjoyable evening. I thank Nazareth Azarian, the Chairman, and all the other committee members for organizing it so well.

We have planned our Second Annual Dinner Dance and it will be held at Leidle's on Nov. 19, 1988. Hopefully we will have more people attending this enjoyable event.

#### PAINTINGS

As of today, we have 3 donors for the church paintings. Four of the paintings will be ready by the end of June 1988. We need seven more donors for these 10 paintings. Each painting will cost \$2,000.

#### HALL RENOVATION

I am sure many of you already have heard about the hall renovation that will start in a few weeks. If you haven't, you will today, when our treasurer presents his annual financial report and budget. But what I want to mention here is this:

In our last Parish Council meeting, we decided to find a donor, a benefactor for the renovation expenses of our hall and restrooms. The hall will be named after the donor's name (or his/her families name).

The amount that we are asking for is \$15,000. This might look like a huge sum, but if you take into consideration that the renovation will cost almost twice that amount, I think most of you will agree that it's a fair figure. For those of you who don't know, I must say that this is not a new idea, many churches have done it before us, including our Diocese.

In 1987, our care-taker resigned from his position and vacated the Parish house. The Parish house was completely painted by our parishioners, (thanks to all those who helped us), the rugs were changed, a few things were fixed by Richard Kalfaian and Herbert Avakian (thanks to them also) and was rented to four young men.

The entire church was also painted by our Parish Council members and parishioners. I thank all those who helped us in painting the inside of the church.

Since May 1987, we have a cleaning woman, who comes once a

week just to clean our church, both upstairs and down.

In 1988, we are very hopeful to have a part-time caretaker. All of our Parish Council members agreed to this and feel the importance of having someone responsible <sup>and</sup> in charge of maintaining our building.

PURCHASE OF AN ADJACENT PIECE OF LAND

There is a piece of land adjacent to our church property which is presently for sale for a very attractive price. This will give us a second entrance to our back 5 acres of property. Details about this you will hear from Nazareth Azarian, who was asked to investigate about this land by the Pastor and Parish Council.

I hope that this assembly makes the wise decision here today and approves the purchase. I strongly feel that we should buy this land.

NEW DIRECTORY

We have completed our work with the directory and mailed the entire up-to-date list of our community to the "New England Church Directory Ltd". Hopefully, it will be printed within a few months. Here I thank Mrs. Barbara Bousian for taking this responsibility upon herself.

PLEDGES

As you know, recently new pledge cards were mailed to all our parishioners and friends, who live in our community and benefit from the services of our church. Those cards were mailed to over 250 families. According to our 87 records, only 68 families have pledged to our church. I strongly believe that each and every family must pledge to our church, and the amount should be decided by you. Unfortunately, we have many who never pledge and we have others who never increase.

I hope that we all understand the importance of pledges and also feel our Christian obligation towards our church.

I personally believe that 1/3 of our annual budget should come from pledges.

I feel bad many times to see how our churches in this country have overburdened themselves with different fund-raising activities, only to keep their physical existence.

The truth is, that many(6) churches, have forgotten the true mission of our church, because of a few so-called "business-minded" people that neither care nor know about our church. What good is it to burn the mortgages of our churches, when at the same time we burn new generations by not giving them proper and basic education about our religion, language and cultural heritage.

And this mentality and approach is also true, at least for some, when it comes to the duties of a Parish Priest.

Let me remind you that a Pastor is first of all a Priest, preacher, teacher, counselor and comforter. How sad it is for me to tell you that, half of my time is wasted by none essential things, things that neither has to do with my education nor my training.

And I am saying all this because I love you and because I am not a careless, lazy shepherd.

Before closing this part, I sincerely thank all those who have financially supported our church. Here I thank also, the old pledge committee members, Dr. Berdj Harabedian, Sonia Trapasso and Steve Goomrigian.

#### A FEW WORDS ABOUT OUR YOUTH

As I said in my last year's report, I will repeat the same this year. More than the help of the Diocese, Pastor or Parish Council, we need the help of our parents. Yes, the help of a concerned father, the love of an Armenian mother to bring their sons and daughters to our and their church services and functions.

Today, we are worried about the clergy shortage, but I am afraid the day will come when we will worry about the lack of parishioners and members.

To guarantee and secure our survival, we need to bring and teach our youth.

We love our young adults as we love our children. They are ours, our present and future. Please help us, so that we can help them.

Let's not lecture anymore to each other about the importance



of our youth. Let's act now and involve them in our parish life.

I thank very much our two former superintendents of our Sunday and Armenian Schools, Dora Garabedian and Mari Yapoujian.

Both of them served two years. I also thank the two new superintendents, June Utecht, Sunday School and Salpi Tokatlian of the Armenian Language School. I also thank all the teachers who are helping them.

I thank all our choir members, Vrej Yapoujian, Chairman, Conductors, Charles Balian and Peter Kapusuzian, Deacons, Vrej Yapoujian, Tom Dabakian and Tom Garabedian. Organists, Virginia Kalfaian and Rose Avakian. May God increase the number of our choir members.

I also thank the ACYOA Chairperson, Mechelle Kasparian, all the officers and members and their advisors, Kim Kasparian and Steve Avakian.

Special thanks to all our Women's Guild members who served our church for the last two years under the capable chairmanship of Margaret Azarian.

For the first time in 9 years of my priesthood, I was able to convince a Women's Guild chairperson that she does not only belong to the kitchen but also like school teachers can go to the Diocese for a week and follow an Armenian Studies Program. My appreciation to her for understanding me in that, ~~too~~.

After this group, for the first time in 9 years, it is disappointing not to have a Women's Guild organization. I don't know, sometimes God works in his own way. Hopefully, this will be corrected again in the future. I thank very much Margaret Azarian and Barbara Ketchian for attending the Women's Guild Annual Assembly in Springfield, Ma. and representing our Women's Guild.

I also thank all the Cultural Committee members whose chairman is Ralph Trapasso. The Building Committee members, Edward Jevarjian, Chairman and Richard Khachian, Treasurer.

Special thanks to all those who helped in the typing and putting

together and mailing our church newsletter, ANI, namely Margaret Azarian and Helen Misakian, typists; Hermine Azarian, Peter and Agnes Kapusuzian, Sonia Trapasso and Margie Malkasian.

I also thank our social worker Margaret Manugian for helping morally our parish<sup>one's</sup> and friends.

Thanks to Felice Avakian and Arshalous Dinihanian for making our church mas.

Thanks to the officers of Hye-Timers and the Chairman, Vrej Yapoujian.

Special thanks to all the Rug Sale Committee members and their Chairman, Shavarsh Papazian.

Thanks to all the Bazaar Committee members, specially Co-Chairmen Archie Misakian and Herbert Avakian and Treasurer Ralph Trapasso.

I thank Dr. Berdj Harabedian, our Diocesan Delegate, for representing our parish at the Diocesan Assembly in Springfield, Ma.

Also thanks to our so-called church maintainance people, namely, Richard Kalfaian, Peter Kapusuzian, Herbert Avakian, Harry Tashjian, and Shavarsh Papazian.

I also thank all the parishioners who sponsored coffee hours in 1987.

My report will not be complete if I forget to mention all the members of our Parish Council who provided leadership with the Pastor to this community in 1987.

Mardy Azarian, Chairman for the last 5 years. I'm thankful to him for his support and input. Archie Misakian, Vice-Chairman, Tom Dabakian, Secretary, Shavarsh Papazian, Treasurer, Richard Kalfaian, Ass't Treasurer, Herbert Avakian and Harry Tarpinian, Advisors.

I thank them very much for their counsels and decisions, for attending our church services almost every Sunday and for all their services.

Yes, I do admit that we are still far from being the perfect church-community.



We too have our weakness<sup>of</sup> and shortcomings but the important thing, is that we tend to correct ourselves and become more and more perfect. And this we can do only with the love of Christ and the faith of our Holy Fathers.

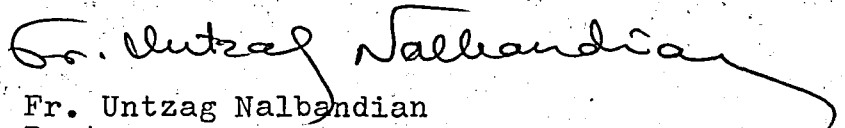
I thank all of you for supporting our church morally and financially and by all your unselfish services. We need each one of you.

May God Bless you, your families and all your loved ones.

I end my report by bringing the words of Jesus which he directed to his disciples and which he directs also to us today and always.

"Anyone wanting to be a leader among you must be your servant. And if you want to be right at the top, you must serve like a slave. Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve".

Prayerfully,



Fr. Untzag Nalbandian  
Pastor