

Last Spring - Easter paneling of Education Building Hall?
Demolition of Old Parish House last summer

Pastoral Report - 1972

Matt. 20:25-28

But Jesus called them to Him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord over them and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

This has been a golden rule for me.

To serve the Lord means to serve people but Jesus also adds, "the harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few."

The main thrust of my service, so-to-speak, is directed to consoling people spiritually, leading them and enlightening them with the Word of God as spoken to us through the Armenian Church according to her teachings and sacred traditions.. This is done in many ways. Among some of the sacraments and services are the following.... Funerals - 7; Participating or attending services for our Church friends or relatives - 2; Marriages - 4; Marriage of non-church members outside of our church - 2; christening - 1.

We all derive our greatest spiritual consolation through the Divine Liturgy Service. I try to make this important service meaningful to all. The church by its very nature serves people and the Armenian Church here in America brings its service to all people. For those who are not Armenian but who might be inclined to join, I point out the relevancy of the church's mission and try to make them feel there is a place for them here in the life of our church. The language is not a barrier in rendering its service and it is not required for membership, but it must be remembered that the church has a duty to serve her people who brought this faith to this city and to those who are spiritually consoled in hearing the services celebrated in their mother tongue. With the exception of the Divine Liturgy, which is always done entirely in Armenian, other services sometimes are celebrated in part and sometimes entirely in English so that the persons involved can derive some benefit. My service is directed equally to both these groups, that is those who understand Armenian and to those who do not, but many of both these groups do not have a desire to become active members, - "the laborers are few", but I keep trying.

I believe and am deeply convinced that our Armenian Church's beliefs and teachings are the best. As one of its important missions, this has to be brought to the children. I have worked endless hours and unceasingly to devise a program by which this complicated matter can be presented in its simplest form making it both easy for the teacher to teach and enjoyable for the pupil to learn. Our main objective is to make the Divine Liturgy meaningful for them. They should be finished with the Sunday School course by the time they are sixteen. At that time they should be part of the congregation on Sunday Morning Worship Service but we find many of them absent. The reason for this is because many of the adults are also absent and to insist that the younger ones be present under such conditions is not rewarding them but punishing them.

Those who are sixteen should be part of the working personnel of the church assigned certain duties and also given certain rights. There are very few grown-up adults who can be trusted in fulfilling their responsibilities, so the younger ones again look upon this not as an important operation of the church but rather as punishment. Again the case of too 'few laborers'. *Sunday morning's problem comes from Saturday night*

Another vital aspect of the life of the church which is certainly beneficial to those who allow time for it, is knowledge of the Armenian language, history and culture and also Bible studies. Time and time again, I have encouraged and sought persons, young and old, to do something by themselves or as a group, and I have, over and over again, stated my willingness to meet with anyone to help them to learn but no one has shown a genuine interest in any of these. Because of this lack of interest, all attempts to do something in the past have failed. There is much work left undone in this area. "The harvest plentiful but the laborers are few."

The secretarial work is enormous, whether it be general paper work, correspondence, telephone calls, or making appointments. There are projects that I have started 5 years ago that I have not been able to finish, simply because there is not enough time to do the secretarial work that is required to be done. 90% of all secretarial work is done by my wife and me.

The appearance of the church is important, and its surrounding such as the Educational Building and Church Yard. They are a reflection of our faith. Part of my services to this community is seeing that the premises are kept neat and clean and often I do it myself. Someone is always designated to see that these be done but they take on these responsibilities in name only. A part-time janitor has been hired who come once a week, but someone is needed to supervise and instruct him.

In conjunction with this is our operating cost and our heavy schedule. The following is a list of some of these activities in which I am directly or indirectly involved, such as doing circulars, programming and odds and ends entailed with each....

- Christmas Caroling

-Jan. 9, 1972 - Armenian Christmas and the reading from the Book of Daniel by three young girls, in Armenian.

-Jan. 23, 1972 - Preliminary General Membership Meeting

-Jan. 28 - Cub Scout Dinner.

-Feb. 13 - Annual General Membership Meeting

-Feb. 20 - Vartanantz Celebration

-March 8 - Median of Lent

-March 10 - Hockey Game at Coliseum

-March 17 - Reception for Dr. Boghosian

-April - Holy Week & Easter Celebrations - Services and Preparations

April 23 - Martyr's Day Celebration

- April 27 - Food Festival

April 30 - Educational Building Open House

- May 4 - Bake Sale

- May 11 - Vijag Program - Dinner - Ladies Aid

-May 14 - Mother's Day Program - ACYOA

May 18 - Talk to St. Luke's Episcopal Church Group

- May 20 - St. Paul Episcopal Church Backyard Sale at our church

- June 4 - Sunday School Closing Program
- June 24 - ACYOA Backyard Sale
- June 25 - Shish-ke-bab Dinner - Richmond under Flood condition
- July - Second Sish-ke-bab Dinner
- August - Boy's Club Benefit - Church Facilities used
- Sept. 17 - Arrangements for visiting priest and celebration
Church Consecration Anniversary Ceremonies and
Sunday School Reopening .
- October 22- Meeting with Executive Dir. of Diocesan Office and
Cultural Day Celebration
- October 29- Halloween Party by Sunday School Teachers
- Nov. 9- Food Festival Dinner
- Nov. 11 - ACYOA Dance
- Nov. 19 - Diocesan Office C.R. E. member visitation
- Dec. 10- Church Name-Day Celebration
- Dec. 17 - Dickran Jamgochian Choral Concert and Reception
- Dec. 24 - Christmas Party and caroling to those confined to their homes.
- Jan. 5 - Armenian Christmas Eve Ceremonies and Service
- Jan. 7 - Armenian Christmas Celebration and Dinner-Program

Also order flowers and seeing that they be arranged in the vases. I took care of many donations, gheral in nature, and the Christmas Greeting Card Project which realized over \$200.00.

All of this is necessary in order to meet the church's financial needs and operational costs. Without it St. James Armenian Church in Richmond, Virginia would have to be closed.

Together with these activities is the work on the 'Sevan' publication and general publicity by various means informing she public of our faith, history, etc.

One thing that is vitally important but which is totally neglected and that is visitation to families who have some interest in our church.

The Richmond Armenian Church Community is a fine one. It is as good as any community anywhere whether it be Armenian or not, but there is an enormous amount of work to be done. The Lord says, "the harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few," but I will keep trying in my service to my Lord and to my people.

Rev. Aram Hovhannissian