

Rev. Arsen Barsamian

Church life is altar centered. All of the services and activities ^{are} directed towards the Holy Altar. The church members and church affiliated organizations directly or indirectly serve the altar; the priest, deacons, choir members, Parish Council, Women's Guild, Church Schools; Youth organizations, Dance group, baseball team and last but not least the Senior Group. The entire church membership serves the altar in rendering various services to the church. But the presence of each person at the hour of worship on a regular basis is of prime importance. No other activity can be considered as a substitute or regarded as of equal value as participation in the Holy Eucharist service.

The altar is called the Holy Table. The Last Supper is re-presented ^{there} ~~them~~ during the worship service. We join the Apostles at the Passover Meal at which the Lord's presence is ⁱⁿ our midst forever by virtue of His sacrifice on the cross and resurrection from the dead. It is a moment of joy and as such the services reflect that mood in creating an atmosphere of rejoicing. These ^{the} families of the church become one and each family becomes more solidified within itself.

The most important part of a person's life is found in one's own family circle. Family life centers around the dinner table which like the celebration of the Holy Eucharist should be a time of relaxation in enjoying God's gift of food and each others company. The conversation accordingly should be appropriate so not to provoke an uneasiness which in turn triggers ~~adverse~~ ^{adverse} effects in the digestive system. So too, evil and all of its form are renounced when one enjoins in the festivity of the Lord's Supper during the Holy Eucharist celebration. ~~God's~~ presence is actualized at that very moment. Everyone comes to peace with their own selves and with others; fear is dispelled, confidence restored and an optimistic outlook in the future takes hold. The fire of hope remains aflame where the Lord is.

The teachings of the Armenian Church are on firm and solid grounds. They are sound which means they are applicable to varying situations and conditions. We believe them to be the best which is why we wish to be a part of the body to which they belong--the Holy Church. For the church's voice to be heard and understood, she must speak clearly and in a language the people can understand. She has to be relevant to the present age. Relevancy should not be confused with conformity. The church is not conforming to the ways of the world but uses present day methods and language to further her holy cause--the solidarity of the family in the home and in the family of God. New doors have to open so others may find their place around the table to savor and enjoy that which we have. Armenians are known as hospitable people willing to share their own with others. Their faith should be no different. But for this to happen changes are necessary. In opening new doors one must be cognizant of another matter of equal importance and that is, not to close doors that are already open. For many of the members God speaks to them through the present system passed on from generation to generation. In introducing change to be relevant to a particular segment, others should not be deprived to whom the present practice is relevant. The period of accomodation is a very sensitive one conjuring mixed emotions and deep feelings. Understanding and patience are necessary if the faith is to survive. No one group ~~holding~~ to a particular persuasion should prevent others from finding their place in the sacred hour of worship. In other words, no discrimination, prejudice or bias before the Holy Altar, the Holy Table of God. All groups need each other and the God they wish to worship.

The Armenian Church is at a crucial juncture especially here in America. She must find a common language with the new generation while retaining her ties with those she already has a common tongue. It requires wisdom, fortitude and genuine love by all. Benefits are immediate and insure the same for future generations. The task is overbearing, God's help is imperative. His blessings will continue to flow from the Holy Sacrament celebrated on the Holy Altar, the Holy Table of God for those who worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The following is a summary of some of my activities during 1986 many of which are the same I have been doing in previous years. These are in addition to the visits to sick and shut-ins and areas of counseling and assistance to our parishioners and others in need. These pastoral activities take priority over the others. *listed below.*

- 1...Presided over church organizational meetings and coordinated their activities.
- 2...Prepared the church calendar and saw to its implementation, deletions and adjustments when needed.
- 3...Assisted in the publication and mailing of the Sevan Newsletter and other church circulars.
- 4...Did the necessary correspondence in Armenian as well as in English.
- 5...Did some purchasing of office and church supplies and maintenance needs.
- 6...Handled monies received during the week and passed them on to the treasurer with proper notations.
- 7...Contacted the members of the Stewardship Program, deposited their donations and saw to their being recorded in Sevan.
- 8...Ordered altar flowers when requested and took them to the sick or shut-ins.
- 9...Handled the responsibilities of the church library and assisted those writing school papers on Armenian faith and history.
- 10...Made the grape arrangements for the Blessing of the Grapes on Feast of St. Mary.
- 11...Participated in the joint Thanksgiving Day Services held by the West End Churches.
- 12...Handled monies for the Cultural-Educational Fund, The Annie Bickers Fund; Church Stewardship Program and the Nick and Elizabeth Baronian Cultural Fund for 6 months. I am ~~proud~~ ^{pleased} to report that Sam Baronian Sr. is now in charge of these fund programs.
- 13...Made arrangements with WRFK for the braodcasting of the Serkaian tapes and his interview.
- 14...Attended by special invitation the ceremonies commemorating the 200th anniversary of the adoption of Virginia's Statue for Religious Freedom at the Capitol.
- 15...Attended an interfaith service of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in conjunction with the above celebration.
- 16...Conducted a Lenten Service Bible Studies.
- 17...Made arrangements for Surpazan's visit in February.
- 18...Also for the visitation by Archbishop Sion Manoogian.
- 19...Attended meeting of Virginia Council of Churches at Greek Cathedral.
- 20...Assisted in the arrangements of Der Mardiros and Yeretsgin Chevian's choir seminar for our choir members.
- 21...Attended the Calisch Memorial Interfaith conference at Beth Ahabah.
- 22...Lectured to Union Theological Seminary's History Class in Armenian History & Religion.
- 23...Lectured to a high school age youth on our church history and teaching.
- 24...Lectured at Colonial Place Christian Church in their series "Learn to Worship God" about the Armenian faith.
- 25...Made arrangements for Surpazan's visit on the 30th anniversary of the Church.
- 26...Assisted the Cultural Committee for the George Mgrdichian Concert and Dinner.
- 27...Held a daytime Bible Studies and Church Teaching Session during September and October.

The following is a report on the number of baptism, marriage and funeral services during 1986.

Baptisms.....5 Marriages.....2 Funerals.....7