



# The Armenian Church of Atlanta

P.O. Box 415 • Riverdale, GA 30274

## **CONGRATULATIONS**

Mr. Ara Keyfer was selected by the Armenian National Olympic committee of the Republic of Armenia. As the Armenian Attaché, he will represent Armenia and the Armenian Olympic Team. Our sincere congratulations to Mr. Ara Keyfer upon this prestigious appointment.

## **PAST EVENTS**

On Saturday night, Aug. 27, 1994, over 50 community members gathered together at the home of Talin and Russell Major, to welcome Fr. Nersess Jebejian back to Atlanta. Fr. Jebejian was pleased by the warm reception, and was happy to see everyone again. Prior to blessing of the food laden table, he performed "Blessing of Grapes". A special thank you to all those who prepared the sumptuous food served that evening.

The Armenian Church of Atlanta honored the memory of His Holiness Vasken I, Catholicos of all Armenians, on Sunday, Aug. 28, 1994 at the Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church. The faithful were present to pay their last respects to our beloved Catholicos. Our choir director, Lorig Zinzalian-Smith, sang "Ee Verin Yeroosaghem", and spoke eloquently of the Catholicos. Her touching tribute moved us all. The worship was concluded with the Lord's Prayer (Hayr Mer), followed by coffee and the traditional "Haigagun Imrik Helva".

Fr. Phillip Scott of the Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church, and his parishioners had placed at the altar a large beautiful flower wreath with the Catholicos's picture in the center. Their Sunday Divine Liturgy was offered for the repose of the soul of His Holiness.

## **CASP / CHILDREN OF ARMENIA SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

The Armenian Church of Atlanta has been contacted by Julie Ashekian, Chairwoman of CASP, a project of the Women's Guild Central Council, organized under the auspices of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. Their purpose is to aid orphaned Armenian children in Armenia and Karabagh who have lost one or both parents.

One of their specific projects involves a particular orphanage in Karabagh, where over 140 orphaned children are in need of financial aid, especially now that winter is approaching. Last winter was extremely difficult for everyone in Armenia, but the children of our homeland were the most vulnerable. We urge you to partake in this rewarding endeavor by supporting an orphaned Armenian child. The future generation of Armenia should not be compromised.

For a \$200.00 tax-deductible donation, you will receive the name, a brief biography, and a picture of the child you are caring for. Please make your checks payable to CASP, and mail them to the Armenian Church of Atlanta, P.O. Box 415, Riverdale, GA 30274. All moneys will be immediately forwarded to CASP. CASP will graciously accept any and all contributions. For additional information, please call Talin Major at 447-9647 or Nancy DiBoyan at 996-8493.

**"To be loved and cherished: that is every child's birthright"**

## A Letter from the Heart - A Family Finds Fulfillment by Sponsoring an Orphan Through the Diocesan CASP Program

NEW YORK, NY - Many Armenian Americans have been very generous in their contributions to various relief programs doing work in Armenia. Giving to such worthy causes is satisfying in itself, but it is even more satisfying to see how our donations affect the day-to-day lives of Armenia's citizens.

Building this kind of "personal connection" between diaspora Armenians and their struggling countrymen in the homeland is what the Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program (CASP) is all about. CASP was created by the Women's Guild Central Council of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America to benefit the segment of the population which is most vulnerable in Armenia's present crisis: her orphaned children.

Participants contribute \$200 a year to sponsor an orphan in Armenia, and approximately 800 Armenian children - ranging in age from infancy to 18 - are now being supported by CASP sponsors. This Save-the-Children-type project has already generated enthusiasm among sponsors from the US, Europe and South America, and CASP will continue to reach out to even greater numbers for as long as the need exists.

What so many find attractive about the program, of course, is the opportunity it affords to create a personal bond with a child in Armenia. The letter that follows was received by Mrs. Julie Ashekian -- the coordinator of CASP -- from Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hougas, two of CASP's many sponsors. It articulates the sentiments of the literally hundreds of individuals, families and communities which have reached out to a struggling child in Armenia, and been deeply touched and rewarded in return.

*"Armenians need your help. Their country has been destroyed by earthquake, and now they live with no heat, no electricity.*



*Little Vahan, age 9 -- the boy being sponsored by the Hougas family -- lives in Gumri, Armenia with his mother Hasmik and his brother Hovhannes. Vahan has only dim memories of his father, who died during the earthquake while at work. His mother, an engineer mechanic, writes that she is grateful to have a family from the diaspora helping out her son. Vahan is one of hundreds of children being helped by the Diocesan CASP program.*

*Armenia's hospitals and schools are in shambles, its housing is in ruins, and the poorest of working conditions prevail. Armenians in the diaspora were called upon to help. Give to the milk fund, give to the clothing fund, give to the food fund, the medical fund, through the Diocese, through your local church, through worldwide charities. We've tried to give a little to each but finally decided it best to support one primary need.*

*"What caught our eye was the appeal by the Diocese's Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program to sponsor an orphaned child. We love children. Ours are grown up and on their own. What better way to help Armenia than by investing in its future by sponsoring a child today? And so we joined the CASP program.*

*"We received information that our sponsored child was Vahan Melikian, age 8, living in Gumri (formally Leninakan) with his mother and brother. His father is deceased. We wrote letters and sent pictures; our niece and nephew (who are Vahan's age) also sent him letters. These were packaged and given to Julie Ashekian, CASP Coordinator, to deliver to Vahan. At this point there was not yet a personal connection with our sponsored child: We felt we were simply helping a child in a distant land.*

*"Several months passed, and then one day a packet arrived with a note: 'Enclosed you will find mail just brought back from Armenia from your sponsored child,' Signed Julie Ashekian. Inside was a letter from Vahan and one from his mother Hasmik, written in Armenian, and translated by CASP into English for our benefit. Also enclosed were pictures of Vahan, his mother and brother Hovhannes, and their village."*

*"In an instant a whole new world opened to us. Mixed feel-*

*ings of joy and sadness filled us as we read the letters and looked at the pictures. Here were real people living in poor conditions but looking forward, with hope, to a better future. We laughed and cried and felt deep within an indescribable feeling of happiness that our sponsorship really meant something to a young boy and his family.*

*"Providing them with a ray of hope has in turn filled us with a sense of self-worth. Our lives are touching the lives of others, and the future will be better for all."*