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Hospitals and Orphanages Visited During Archbishop Ashjian's Recent Trip to Armenia

Visits to hospitals and orphanages in Armenia have become a regular part of the itinerary of Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, during each of his visits to Armenia. His latest journey was no exception. The Archbishop was in Armenia in March to oversee the distribution of the Easter Food Basket campaign, sponsored by the Prelacy, which provided more than 10,000 baskets of food to the families of teachers and school personnel in the border regions of Armenia and Artsakh. In addition to his visits to Holy Etchmiadzin where he conferred with His Holiness Vazken I, Catholics of All Armenians, the Prelate visited the Karageuzian Clinic, the Marash Orthopedic Center, the Central Military Hospital and the Nor Kharpert Center for Handicapped Children. He also visited officials of the Vararagn Association and the Ministry of Education. His Eminence was accompanied in Armenia by Very Rev. Khajag Hagopian, Vicar-General of the Prelacy.

KARAGEUZIAN CLINIC
"You hear so many stories," the Prelate said, "about how difficult it is to get things done in Armenia, the corruption, etc., that it was a pleasant surprise to visit the Karageuzian Clinic in the Nork region of Yerevan. It is an oasis in the wilderness."

The Prelate described how the Karageuzian Fund, headquartered in New York, established the clinic under the directorship of Dr. Gamo Der Bedrosian. The Foundation secured a building, renovated it, and it is now fully operational. Archbishop Ashjian and V. R. Hagopian toured the facility which houses three state-of-the-art dental clinics where children up to 14 years of age receive free dental care. "The quality of the care is so high that people from all over Yerevan come to the clinic where three dedicated doctors—Dr. Alice Badalian, Dr. Dikran Garabedian, and Dr. Narine Danielian—and a staff of 18 technicians provide dental care," Archbishop Ashjian said.

"The facility was so well equipped and maintained, it was a joy to see, and I was very much impressed by the Director, Dr. Der Bedrosian, who is not satisfied giving the best dental care, but has established facilities to help the children in the area. Young boys and girls come after school to learn woodworking and needlework." The boys make bread baskets, ornamental plaques, etc. while the girls learn needlework both in the traditional and modern methods. According to Archbishop Ashjian the results are amazing. "I saw some of the most beautiful pieces of needlework—actual reproductions from pages in Armenian manuscripts."

VARARAGN ASSOCIATION

The past three years the Prelacy has offered assistance to the population of Artsakh through the Vararagn (the old



Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian celebrates the Divine Liturgy at Holy Etchmiadzin during his visit last August. His most recent visit in March was to oversee the distribution of more than 10,000 baskets of food to needy families in the Prelacy's very successful Easter Basket of Hope campaign.



Young boys learning woodworking at the Karageuzian Center, "a model institution" according to Archbishop Ashjian.



Archbishop Ashjian distributes new clothing, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Harold and Josephine Gulamian of New York, to the Nor Kharpert Orphanage.



Archbishop Ashjian visits hospitals to see wounded volunteers.

name for Stepanagert) Association. The Association is registered under laws of Karabagh; Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, serves as President, and Mr. Lawrence Aroushanian, chairman.

Mr. Aroushanian visits regions in Artsakh regularly and distributes money to needy residents. Since 1992, \$29,000 has been distributed. Most recently allocations were made in the villages of Sis, Majdalashen, Petashen, Montepert, Shoushi, Stepanagert. Also 250,000 Trams

were allocated to the Mayroutun Fund which recently presented medallions to His Holiness Vazken I, His Holiness Karekin II and to Archbishop Ashjian, among others, in recognition of their assistance.

The current allocations by the Vararagn Association will go to the following areas: Harterk, 200 families; Nerkin Khoratagh, 200 families; Chapar, 150 families; Mokhratagh, 250 families; Aghapekalinch, 250 families. These allocations are made to help families and to encourage them to remain on their historical land.

MEETING WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION

At the Ministry of Education, Archbishop Ashjian met with Mr. Haig Khazarian, the Minister of Education, in order to establish a working relationship to implement two specific projects. Accompanying the Prelate were Hayr Khajag and Mr. Sergei Haroutounian, the director of the Prelacy office in Yerevan.

The first project is to provide all children (approximately 600,000) in Armenia with milk and cookies everyday through

the help of an international agency.

The second project is to reactivate the vocational centers within the school system which would teach sewing, needlework, woodworking, ceramics, metallurgy, etc. "This is important," the Prelate said, "for those individuals who do not go on to higher education after completing their secondary schooling."

During the meeting with the Education Minister the general state of the school buildings in Armenia was discussed. The visitors were shocked to learn that hundreds of school buildings are in need of major repairs—some are even in danger of collapsing. The financial resources of the Ministry are small and outside help is needed in order to prevent a tragic accident. Archbishop Ashjian suggested that Mr. Khazarian visit the United States, tour the communities and seek financial aid.

VISITS TO HOSPITALS

On Sunday, March 19, the Archbishop accompanied by Very Rev. Hagopian, visited the Marash Orthopedic Center where seriously wounded soldiers are brought for treatment. The two church-



CROSSROADS

A Review of Prelacy and Parish Activities



New England Sunday School

Teachers Explore

Contemporary Social Issues

BY NAYIRI BALJIAN

St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of North Andover, Massachusetts, was the site for a Sunday School teachers' seminar on Saturday, March 19, 1994. Sponsored by the Prelacy's Armenian Religious Education Council (AREC), the seminar was conducted for the New England region Sunday School teachers, and was attended by teachers from the Watertown, Indian Orchard, and North Andover communities, along with a few parents of Sunday School students. In all, there were twenty participants.

The Seminar began at 9:30 a.m., with the performance of the *Arezkai* (Sunrise) Service by Der Gomidas Baghsarian and Deacon Shant Kazanjian. Immediately following this service, the participants were escorted to the church hall, where, after refreshments and a brief introduction, the seminar began. The participants knew that this seminar was going to be truly a unique event, one that went beyond the usual realm of the typical Sunday School teachers' seminar: in the morning session, the first speaker was going to address the issues of PEACE & WAR; the second, AIDS, and the third, ABORTION. Could this have been a misprint? Many wondered what these current issues had to do with teaching Sunday School. They soon found out.

Each speaker was given twenty minutes to speak on his topic, and then twenty minutes was allotted for group discussion. Deacon Shant Kazanjian, Director of Christian Education of the Prelacy, spoke first on War and Peace, intertwining current and biblical examples, and then highlighting God's instructions on matters including: use of force, killing, self-defense, etc. In the twenty minutes following, the teachers asked many questions about how God views war, especially concerning the Armenians, and also discussed what they should be teaching their students, as Armenian children.

Next, Der Antranig Baljian, of St. Gregory Armenian Church of Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, made a presentation about AIDS, addressing many aspects of the disease, including contraction, protection, morality, homosexuality, and condom distribution at schools. The group discussion after this presentation was a bit more lively than the first one, because AIDS is an issue that seems to affect everyone, from those who fear contracting it, to those who have to live with the disease on a daily basis. The teachers were very concerned with the morality aspect of the issues, and explored ways to prevent their students and children from engaging in activities that would expose them to AIDS.

Because the discussions on War and Peace and AIDS lasted so long, Der Gomidas Baghsarian, Pastor of St. Gregory Armenian Church of North An-

dover, was not able to give his presentation on Abortion until after lunch. Following an excellent lunch of fish, bean salad, "eech," a baked potato and sherbet, Der Gomidas spoke. He basically stated the facts with which all Christians should view abortion, according to biblical principles. He informed the participants that God instructs Christians to refrain from taking the life of innocent humans, and he showed, through Scripture, that the fetus in its mother's womb is a very real, God-created being—according to God, a human being. This topic proved to be the most controversial of the three, as the group launched into a heated debate over the right of women to have the choice to have an abortion, especially in situations involving rape, incest, young age, or economic problems. Despite Der Gomidas' iteration of God's words and instructions, many of the participants were still not able to view the fetus as an actual human, thus an innocent creature of God despite the conditions under which it was conceived. Eventually, the abortion discussion was ended, with much effort from the facilitator!

The next item on the agenda was a presentation by Yerezgin Joanna Baghsarian on age-appropriate teachings. Yerezgin basically gave a description of the emotional, physical and mental abilities of the different age groups that the teachers deal with in their own classes. She also provided examples of curriculum enhancement materials and other ways for Sunday School teachers to make their classes more interesting and effective. Many of the teachers were shown new and creative ways to liven up their classes.

Finally, the last activity of the day had the teachers breaking into smaller groups according to the grade level they taught, and having been provided with a list of guidelines for "teaching methods" and "age-level understandings" on the peace issue, the teachers were asked to prepare a lesson that they could present to their students. By working together, and pooling the many ideas and teaching strategies that the participants brought with them, the teachers were able to explore new ways of presenting issues to their classes.

The participants of this seminar were able to return to their respective churches with some new insight and Christian perspectives about current issues. This seminar not only stated the need for education about these issues, but it supplied New England Sunday School teachers with the security, information and ideas to begin such education. It is safe to say that at this seminar the seeds of a revolution were planted—the revolution that will update Armenian religious education so that the Armenian Christians of tomorrow will be equipped to serve God in a world that does not. +

If everyone gives on thread, the poor man will have a shirt.

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Teens Converge at St. Leon Church For Joint Diocese / Prelacy Program



Elise Antreassian, co-director of the Diocese's Department of Religious Education, addresses the teens.

Fifty exuberant 7th-9th graders, along with an equally enthusiastic group of teachers, school staff and some parents, gathered at St. Leon Armenian Church in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, on Saturday, April 9, for a one-day seminar entitled *Armenian Youth: Pressures from Within and Without*.

The large turn-out was especially gratifying to the seminar sponsors: the Department of Religious Education of the Diocese (DRE) and the Armenian Religious Education Council of the Prelacy (AREC). It was their second jointly-sponsored educational program, the first being a Sunday School teacher's workshop held in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, that attracted more than 100 participants in the fall of 1992. Both had been planned as a result of recommendations from the Cooperation Committee of both communities. Diocesan and Prelacy representatives from these, Rose Mekenian and Vahe Amirian, respectively, were present and delighted with the day's activities and spirit.

Everyone was warmly welcomed by Nancy Basmajian of the DRE as well as the pastor of St. Leon's, the Very Rev. Fr. Vahan Hovhanesian who called upon everyone to remember that "we are one church, the Genocide befall one people, there is one free Armenian nation, and we are happy that the religious education directors of the one Armenian Church are here today."

The program was opened with a signature "scavenger hunt" coordinated by Deacon Shant Kazanjian, Director of AREC. Advised that the first to gain 20 signatures would win a prize, the teens shot through the room getting signatures for such queries as "has one pierced ear," "is wearing a cross," "plays a band," "was named after St. Gregory the Illuminator."

The first of the two seminar sessions was then presented by Elise Antreassian and Nancy Basmajian, Co-Directors of the DRE. *The Media Trap: Gender Images and Beyond*, focused teens on the subtle influence of the media, especially TV and advertising; on gender image. Armed with a number of frightening statistics (by the time they graduate high school, teens could expect to watch 16,000 hours of TV as opposed to 13,000 hours of class time), seminar participants watched video presentations on female and male images in advertising and clips of some popular TV shows. Asked to think about techniques used by the media to depict what it means to be a man, to be a woman, to be successful, to love and be loved, audience members discussed the values of Jesus and the people he ministered to: the sick, the disabled, the lonely, the ostracized. "Not the stuff of prime time," noted the



Teens analyze magazine ads.



During mini-group discussion, a participant shares his group's analysis of a gender-stereotyped ad from a magazine with the rest of the participants.

presenters.

In small groups, participants zealously sorted through recent magazines for examples of ad techniques in gender stereotyping and shared their findings with the larger group. Finally, after reading and reflecting on the Creation story and a reading from the New Testament, they tore out words and pictures that shared something about their inner selves and affixed them to a large poster of a human figure as they filed out to lunch. Lunch—hero sandwiches and an assortment of drinks and snacks prepared singlehandedly by St. Leon parishioner Barbara Hovsepian (who has also written textbooks and lectured for the DRE)—had been graciously donated for the occasion and participants picked up a little of everything on their way to outdoor picnic tables or informal dining in the meeting room.

The afternoon session, entitled *The Pressure Bag—Peers and Other Strangers*, was presented by the Rev. Fr. Antranig Baljian, pastor of St. Gregory Armenian Church in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, and chairman of AREC. Lifting up two small paper bags, decorated as a boy and girl and named by the group, Fr. Antranig spoke about the pressures that build up in a young person's life, pressures involving their changing bodies, the new vistas opening up before them, the natural rebellion of the age, among others. "Pressures are part of life," noted Fr. Antranig. "Too little, and you can collapse in. Too much [and he blew up a bag

(Continued on page 3)

CROSSROADS (continued)

until it burst to dramatically make the point] and you explode."

The group listened as Fr. Antranig spoke of the absolutes that do exist, the unequivocal rights and wrongs of life. These and the presence of loved ones, family, parish priest, church friends and, above all, God, can all help when confronted by pressure and decisions. "Always keep in mind that we are asked, to conform to Christ, to be like Him. Most of all: pray, read Scripture, and let love heal."

In small groups with chosen leaders, teens discussed the pressures they were confronting now in their lives. The day concluded with a rousing invitation by Deacon Shant to allow God to ease the burdens of life.

The near-perfect day ended as young people from five parishes, Sts. Vartanantz, St. Leon, St. Thomas of New Jersey; Holy Martyrs of New York; and St. Gregory of Pennsylvania, headed home with high spirits and the memory of lots of new faces. +

AREC Sponsors Young Adult Retreat

After a long winter, wonderful sunny weather was enjoyed on the weekend of March 11-13, by 35 young adults from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, for a weekend of spiritual retreat at Liebenzell Retreat Center in Schooley's Mountain, New Jersey. The Retreat was sponsored by the Prelacy's Armenian Religious Education Council (AREC).

The theme of this year's retreat was "Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith and Commitment," which included three lecture-discussion sessions, all of which were held on Saturday. AREC designed this retreat in collaboration with various young adult groups from the New York/New Jersey area.

Deacon Shant Kazanjian, Director of Christian Education of the Prelacy, welcomed the retreatants on behalf of His Eminence Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian and AREC, Friday evening. After a brief overview of the weekend's agenda and "Husgloom" Service, the participants engaged in informal discussions for the rest of the evening.

Saturday morning, following morning service and breakfast, the first lecture was presented by Deacon Kazanjian on "Meaning-making in Young Adulthood—an Activity of Faith." The lecture was followed by a discussion of how to centralize Christ into our daily lives. After lunch, Very Rev. Anoushavan Tanielian, pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Douglaston, New York, lectured on "Relationship with God." A stimulating discussion ensued on the development of man's commitment to God. The final session—"Interpersonal Relationship and Intimacy"—was presented by Rev. Antranig Bajjan, pastor of St. Gregory Armenian Church in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts. A lively discussion developed among the participants about our relationship not only with Christ but also with our friends, as well as our struggles with intimacy.

Concluding the weekend retreat was the celebration of Sourp Badarak on Sunday morning at Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church in Ridgefield, New Jersey. The Pastor V. Rev. Nareg Alemeztian and the Board of Trustees open-heartedly welcomed the participants to enjoy a Lenten lunch kindly prepared by Mr. and Mrs. Ardash Garabedian.

AREC extends its heartfelt appreciation to Sts. Vartanantz Church for their gracious hospitality, and to Mrs. Asdghig Kazanjian and Valentine Kazanjian for providing Lenten food for the weekend. This retreat enabled the participants to discover and grow in their covenantal relationship with God established at baptism. Everyone parted with hugs and good wishes for safe trips home, and with great anticipation for future AREC retreats.

Maggie Takayan

Sts. Vartanantz Bible Study Group Attends Banquet



Very Rev. Nareg Alemeztian and the Bible Study Group of Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church in Ridgefield, New Jersey, attended a banquet on April 5 at the Ramada Inn in Mahway, at which time Dr. Justis Du Plessis from South Africa was the guest speaker. Dr. Du Plessis, a pastor and evangelist for the last 55 years, spoke eloquently presenting

truths from the Bible and facts of Christian faith and shared anecdotes from his own life's experiences. The Sts. Vartanantz group sang two Badarak hymns for the guests, which thrilled the audience so much that they were asked to teach some of the beautiful Armenian hymns to those in attendance. +

Church Leaders Support Haytaian's Senate Candidacy



Chuck Haytaian with Archbishops Mesrob Ashjian and Khajag Barsamian.

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Garabed Chuck Haytaian received the combined support of the Armenian American community in his bid for the U.S. Senate seat from New Jersey.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, and Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, met recently in a show of unity to ask all Armenians to work for N.J. Assembly Speaker

Haytaian for the good of the Armenian community.

On March 2, Archbishop Ashjian and Archbishop Barsamian, Haytaian and representatives of Armenian churches from New Jersey, New York and Connecticut shared lunch recently at St. Leon's Armenian Church in Fair Lawn, New Jersey. Both religious leaders stressed the importance of church members joining together to support Haytaian because of his past efforts on behalf of Armenians.

NALG Mid-Atlantic Regional Seminar



Archbishop Ashjian with participants of the NALG Regional Seminar.

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Seminar of the National Association of Ladies' Guilds was held on March 12, 1994, at the Prelacy offices in New York City.

The Prelacy Ladies' Guild hosted over 50 seminar participants, who came from Douglaston (NY), Detroit, New York City, Philadelphia (PA), Providence (RI) Ridgefield (NJ), and Troy (NY).

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian opened the seminar with the invocation and his welcoming remarks. Yeretzgin Arpine Shrikian, Chairlady of the NALG welcomed the participants and thanked the Prelacy Ladies' Guild for hosting the seminar. Welcoming remarks were also given by Gemma Vartanian, chairlady of the Prelacy Ladies' Guild.

Dr. Janet Mooradian-Markarian delivered a very interesting and informative lecture on "Armenian Women: Balancing Career and Family." She noted that the

men met with the patients, blessed them, and prayed for their quick and complete recovery.

"It is quite emotional," the Archbishop said "to see all of these young soldiers—some as young as 16, 17 years of age—wounded in the prime of their life. Everyone of them voiced the desire to recover in order to return and fight for their land."



Archbishop Ashjian distributed crosses and gifts to the wounded soldiers in the hospital he visited. "I am back in the United States, but my thoughts remain with all of the people in Armenia and Artsakh. With each visit a little part of you remains there. I have only admiration for the valiant Armenian people who are steadfast in their commitment to the land. I pray that God will look kindly upon them and grant them a much brighter future."

On Tuesday, March 22, Archbishop Ashjian and V. R. Hagopian accompanied by Mrs. Heranoush Hagopian, chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Humanitarian Assistance, visited the Central Military Hospital where they were greeted by the director, Dr. Samuel Krikorian.

There are currently 250 patients in the hospital. Spazanzan and his entourage visited wounded volunteers, blessed them and presented them with crosses, sweets and cigarettes. Archbishop Ashjian paused and smiled. "I recall thinking at the time...back in the U.S. when they learn that I distributed cigarettes they will be shocked...but in the hospitals, as in the front, cigarettes are a big consolation."

Nor KHARPET ORPHANAGE

On Wednesday, March 23, Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian and Hayr Khajag visited the Nor Kharpet Center for Handicapped Children. They were accompanied on this visit by Mrs. Levon Ter Petrosyan, Heranoush Hagopian, and Sona Hamalian.

"This was my third visit to this Center," Archbishop Ashjian said, "and each time it seems to improve thanks to the help of the international agency 'Doctors Without Borders,' and the financial assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Vartoujan Burmnyan of Brazil. Without doubt, the humanitarian aid has made a big difference in the facilities and the care given here."

The First Lady visited all the rooms where children eagerly displayed their talents. Archbishop Ashjian donated sugar and butter to the orphanage and also distributed new outer clothing which had been donated by Mr. and Mrs. Harold and Josephine Gulamerian of New York. In addition to jackets, the Gulamerians donated pajamas, socks, etc., were distributed to the Khrimian School in Yerevan, the Nork Orphanage and the Ara Manougian School in Shoushi.

Alice Khachadourian

