



Armenian Apostolic Church of America
138 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016

Volume XIX, Number 5 — November 1996

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian's Dual Anniversaries To Be Celebrated in February

by Iris Papazian

The annual Feast of Light celebration hosted by the Prelacy Ladies Guild, always a popular event, will take on an extra added attraction this year, with the dual celebration of the 35th anniversary of Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian's ordination as well as the upcoming 20th anniversary of his election as Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the United States and Canada.

The Feast of Light will take place in the Roof Garden of the St. Regis Hotel in New York City, on February 1, 1997. Plans are underway to make it a meaningful and well-deserved tribute to a clergyman who has devoted his entire life to the church and community.

His Eminence was ordained on May 28, 1961, by the late Catholicos Zareh I and was consecrated Bishop by Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia (now Karekin I of Etchmiadzin). He was elected Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America in December 1977.

On this occasion an anniversary booklet is being prepared which will highlight His Eminence's distinguished service. At Archbishop Ashjian's request, donations received will be used for the reconstruction of the Monastery of St. George of Moukhni, which at one time was a great center for pilgrimages, and a site to which the Armenian people have a special attachment. Located between Etchmiadzin and Yerevan, the Monastery dates back to the 14th century. It was renovated in 1664 and some minor repairs were done in the 1970s and 80s. However, it needs major renovation, including a new roof and dome. Seized by the communists, the current government of Armenia returned the Monastery to the Holy See of Etchmiadzin in 1991.

Within the next few years more than 50 monasteries will be renovated in Armenia and Artstakh in conjunction with the multi-faceted celebrations planned for the 1700th anniversary of Christian Armenia. According to Archbishop Ashjian, this monastery is special because it has facilities to accommodate a convent for nuns. The renovation plans include a new building and the cultivation of the land for orchards and a small farm, through which the monastery can become self-sufficient. All donors will be recognized in the commemorative booklet as well as in a permanent place in the monastery itself.

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Archbishop Ashjian was born on January 3, 1941, in Beirut to Nerciss and Martha Ashjian, and given the baptismal name Hrair. Growing up in the Armenian community in Lebanon, he



One of Archbishop Ashjian's favorite photos: Gazing at Mount Ararat, so near and yet so far.

attended the St. Nishan School, where among his teachers were Yetvart Boyadjian, Yetvart Daronian, Yervant Bedrossian, and the young Karekin Vartabed Sarkissian, who was to have a profound effect on his young student and who himself would go on to hold the highest positions in the Armenian church.

Young Hrair's earliest recollections of life in Beirut revolve around St. Nishan Church. He recalls the deep influence the church had on him and in particular an icon of the Virgin Mother which, although damaged during the civil war, still hangs in the church in Beirut. Singing with great enthusiasm in the church choir, Hrair attracted the attention of Bishop Khoren Paroyan, then Prelate of Lebanon, who, perhaps sensing the future, nick-named him "Bezdig Loussarar," (young sexton).

On October 11, 1957, Hrair was accepted into the Cilician Seminary in Antelias where in June 1958 he was ordained a deacon. After completing the required theological and armenological studies at the Seminary, Catholicos Zareh I ordained him a celibate monk on May 28, 1961, and named him Mesrob in honor of the 1600th anniversary of the birth of St. Mesrob Mashdotz. His sponsor was his teacher and mentor, now Karekin I, Catholicos of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin.

His recollections of that day in May center around Catholicos Zareh: "He was the holiest man I ever met," he

recalls, "and I am so proud to have been ordained by him." On September 1, 1963, he received the rank of vartabed by Catholicos Khoren I.

A young man with a keen intellect, with a life-long love for learning and books, Vartabed Mesrob continued his studies at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland. He participated in the International Student Fellowship, a pilot project of the World Council of Churches and the United Presbyterian Church at Princeton Theological Seminary. He also spent one semester in Paris for in-service training.

Arriving in the United States for graduate studies, he received the degree of Master of Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1970. His dissertation, "A Champion of the Church Universal: St. Nerses of Lambron and his Synodal Discourse," became the basis of a book published several years ago.

Still eager to continue his studies, Vartabed Mesrob continued at Princeton working towards a doctorate. He had just completed all of the course requirements and was preparing to begin work on his dissertation when he received word of his election as Primate of the Diocese of Iran and India, a post he held until July 1977.

He has often said that one of his greatest regrets is that the responsibilities of his service prevented him from completing his doctorate. In 1991 Princeton awarded him a second Master's Degree in recognition of the

Prelacy on Internet



The updating of the computer department at the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America continues with the latest addition being the inauguration of the Prelacy's own page on the Internet.

The updating of the computer department began nearly two years ago with the aim of developing and equipping the Prelacy with the best possible computing capability and, of course, a link to cyberspace.

According to Rev. Nerses Manoogian, pastor of St. Gregory Church in Philadelphia, and the chairman of the Prelacy's computer committee, phase one, which was completed last October, entailed the networking of the Prelacy's eight offices with powerful personal computers. "This phase of our upgrade was made possible through a generous donation by the family of the late Khazar Aramian of Providence, Rhode Island," said Rev. Manoogian.

The purchase and configuration of the hardware was handled by Sarkis Gharibian of Springfield, Massachusetts.

Following this auspicious beginning the committee began to vigorously plan the second phase and did so in a relatively short time. Phase two entailed the design and implementation of special applications for the Prelacy's Bookstore, Library, and Accounting Department and the signing on of the Prelacy's own page on the Internet.

During the 1996 National Representative Assembly in New Jersey the Prelacy and the computer committee found a great sympathizer in the person of Varkis Markarian, an active member of the Providence community and a delegate of the Assembly who generously volunteered to underwrite the entire cost of the second phase.

"On behalf of the computer committee and the Prelacy, I extend words of gratitude to Mr. Markarian and the Aramian Family," said Rev. Manoogian. "Their enthusiasm for this project of enhancing the Prelacy's communications system made our work much easier. I also extend our committee's words of gratitude to the Prelacy staff, and to Sylvia Tirakian and Ardak Melkonian for their knowledgeable technical support." The Prelacy's web page may be accessed by typing:

<http://www.ijj.com/prelacy>

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Archbishop Ashjian's Dual Anniversaries (Continued from page 1)

work he had completed toward the doctorate.

During his career as a teacher, he enthusiastically embraced the positions of Assistant Dean and Dean of the Cilician Seminary, a teacher and preacher at the Karen, Jeppe College in Aleppo, Syria, and Principal of the Mardikian School in Antelias, Lebanon.

On October 30, 1977, in St. Gregory's Cathedral in Antelias, he was consecrated Bishop by his former teacher, Catholicos Karekin II. Two months later he was elected Prelate of the Eastern United States and Canada, the community he continues to serve today with great dedication and energy. In June 1983, Catholicos Karekin II elevated the Prelate to the rank of Archbishop.

As a dedicated ecumenist, he participated in the International Student Fellowship, attended conferences in Lebanon, Jordan, France, Switzerland, Ghana, Finland, Egypt, and Odessa. He has been a member of the standing committee of the Conference of the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and was a delegate to the World Council of Churches' 6th Assembly in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the most recent Assembly in Canberra, Australia. In 1991, His Eminence was appointed to serve on the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission.

A prolific reader and writer, Archbishop Ashjian has written many articles and more than a dozen books in both English and Armenian. Currently in press is yet another volume of his sermons and essays, Remembrance and Hope: Essays of Faith and Life.

Archbishop Ashjian has served the Armenian American community since January 1978 and since that time the growth of the Prelacy in its scope and depth of service has been extraordinary, largely due to his perseverance and vision.

He is quick to credit his staff and especially the community without whose support, he says, he would not have been accomplish half as much.

"I always try to do my best," he says, "but in many tasks that go beyond ecclesiastical duties, I could not have succeeded without the good will of the Prelacy institution, including my Brothers in Christ, the Prelacy staff, various committees, our benefactors, and all those who give their time and their talent."

Those who know him and have worked with him throughout his tenure can attest to his determination in the face of many hardships. His love of his work is evident in the unwavering enthusiasm and optimism which are always part of him. Some would say that "workaholic" is not a strong enough description; he often has said, "Sometimes I can't wait for morning so I can get to work."

His steadfast dedication was most

evident at the outset of the Karabagh movement in Armenia. He was the first to mobilize demonstrations following the massacre of Armenians in Baku, Sumgait, and elsewhere, and was able to attract the wide attention of the tough New York print and electronic media. Immediately after the earthquake in Armenia, he turned his attention to helping the people in the Homeland and with a minimum of staff and resources was able to raise millions of dollars in addition to millions more in goods and services.

He visits Armenia regularly to oversee the Prelacy programs which include the caring of nearly 800 orphans. At a time when retirees and intellectuals in Armenia were in dire need, he mobilized resources to provide monthly stipends. He organized a program to plant trees following that first harsh winter, found sponsors to provide orphanages with fresh fruit, vegetables, and meat, initiated sister church programs, helped reconstruct a village in Artstakh, and made sure that the Prelacy fully participated in shipments of humanitarian aid through the U.S. government, the United Armenian Fund, as well as the Armenia Fund,

U.S.A., which he supports fervently.

His imaginative programs in the United States have attracted wide attention. A case in point is the monumental commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in Washington, D.C. The five days in our nation's Capital was attended by thousands from all over the world. It was the largest gathering of survivors, sadly, never again to be matched. Those who were present at the final service in the amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery will forever remember that bright, sunny, April Sunday morning with hundreds of survivors bearing witness and paying tribute to the million and half martyrs in the presence of five thousand Armenians.

His visionary capability has produced events like the Ani Millennium celebration, and the Cilician Symposium which brought to New York scholars from all around the world for a four-day multifaceted event which was sold-out (with a waiting list) weeks before the actual event.

Always on the go, he reaches out to every segment of the community. He feels it his duty to visit all of his parishes; he is currently on a schedule to visit

every community during which time he will not only meet with trustees and leaders but set aside several hours when parishioners can meet with him. "When a clergyman loses touch with the people, he no longer can effectively serve his faithful people," he says.

Recently, he was entrusted with the greatest challenge of his career and the greatest event in our community's lifetime: the 1700th commemoration of Christian Armenia. As Executive Director of the central committee, Archbishop Ashjian will plan and oversee the massive international events which will take place beginning next year and continue through to the year 2001.

That this tribute to Archbishop Ashjian is being sponsored by the Prelacy Ladies Guild is particularly meaningful, because he has said on many occasions that the Ladies Guild is the "heart and soul" of the Prelacy. The members of the Guild are taking every measure to make this year's Feast of Light an extra special event and one that will honor an energetic and visionary spiritual leader, a kind and unwavering shepherd, and a faithful and devoted servant of God. ✚

Եկեղեցական Զգեստին Շքեղութիւնն Ու Պատմութիւնը

Կեանքիս մէջ իմ համար անգամ առիթը ունեցաւ ներկայ գտնուելու եկեղեցական շատ քաջադիմ և համարձակ արարողութիւններու, որոնց ընթացքին թմբակ վրայ իմ կողմէ շարունակ ելին եօթը, ութ, և ութսուներեք, առաջնորդներ, պատրիարք կամ կաթողիկոս: Մարդ իր քովանդակ կեանքին մէջ իմ համար է միայն որ կրնայ տեսնել այդպիսի տեսարան մը: Եւ Սուրբ Խորանին վրայ այդպիսի տեսարան մը մարդու մտքին մէջ կը քանդակուի անմոռանալի գիծերով ու գոյներով: Մանաւանդ գոյներով: Որովհետեւ այդ տեսարանին դիմաց մարդ կը ցնցուի ոչ միայն այդքան մեծ թիւով բարձրաստիճան հոգեւորականներու մէկտեղումէն, այլ նաեւ անոնց հագած եկեղեցական հագուստներուն շողողուն գոյներէն ու գեղեցկութենէն: Սա արդէն ինքնին երեւոյթ է եւ մարդ այդ պահուն կը մտածէ որ աշխարհի ամենէն կատարելագործեալ լուսանկարչական գործիքն իսկ պիտի չկարենար հարազատ կերպով վերակենդանացնել այն հիանալի գոյները, որոնք պարզուած են Սուրբ Խորանին վրայ: Մենք եկեղեցին կը սիրենք: Մենք եկեղեցական արարողութիւնը կը սիրենք: Եւ անշուշտ մենք մեզի երթեմք կը հարցնենք թէ ինչո՞ւ կը սիրենք եկեղեցին կամ եկեղեցական արարողութիւնը, մանաւանդ Սուրբ Պատարագը: Պատասխաններ ունինք մեր մտքին մէջ: Կը սիրենք, որովհետեւ հաւատացեալ ենք: Կամ կը

սիրենք, որովհետեւ եկեղեցին կը թեթեւցնէ մեզ մեր հոգեւորէն ու մեր սխալներէն: Կը սիրենք, որովհետեւ եկեղեցին մեզի համար կը նշանակէ հաւատական ու ընկերային կեանք: Կը սիրենք մանաւանդ որովհետեւ կը սիրենք երգչախումբը, եկեղեցական երգեցողութիւնը: Ամէն մարդ իր պատճառը կամ մէկէ աւելի պատճառները ունի եկեղեցին սիրելու, եկեղեցական արարողութեան մը ներկայ գտնուելու համար: Եթէ ինծի հարցուի, ես կ'ըսեմ որ մեր եկեղեցին ինծի համար սիրելի է իր գրաբար ու աշխարհաբար Մեծաւսման շնորհով, գրի առնուած այնքան գեղեցիկ աղօթքներով ու քանադասարանական շարականներով, քայքայ ատկէ ալ աւելի՛ հիանալի սրբազան երգեցողութեամբ: Վերցուցէ՛ք երգեցողութիւնը, մեր երգչախումբներուն շքեղ մասնակցութիւնը, այն ատեն շատ կը տօգունի եկեղեցին, շատ քան կը կորսնցնէ իր խորհուրդէն ու վեհութենէն:

Այս քննարկը գիտնէ՛ք: Սակայն ինչ անգամ կը խորհիմք որ եկեղեցին կը սիրենք որովհետեւ կը սիրենք նաեւ եկեղեցական այն համարձակութիւնը, այն հագուստները, գործ եկեղեցին ներս կը կրեն մեր հոգեւորականները, սարկաւազներն ու դպիրները: Ընդհանրապէս կը մոռնանք հանդերձանիւններէն և ներքին մեր եկեղեցասիրութեան մէջ: Միջոցառում հանդերձանիւն ալ մեզ եկեղեցին այնքան կը կապէ, որքան երգեցողութիւնը, որքան աղօթքն ու քարոզը: Վերցուցէ՛ք նաեւ եկեղեցական հանդերձանիւն ու այն ատեն ի՞նչ կը մնայ եկեղեցին մէջ: Պահ մը երեւակայեցէ՛ք որ հոգեւորական մը, մեզի նման շապիկ, քանկոն, տարատ հագած, փողկապ կապած, կոշիկով, Պատարագ կը մատուցանէ Խորանին վրայ: Աներեւակայելի է, քայքայ կ'արժէ որ երեւակայենք անգամ մը: Ինչի՞ կը վերածուէր մեր եկեղեցին, որքան կ'աղքատանար, որքան ցած կ'իջնէր ու կը միանար երկրային քարէներուն ու հողին, կորսնցնելով երկնային ամբողջ շնորհն ու վեհութիւնը:

Ամառնային տաճ օրով, երբ մենք պարզ շապիկով իսկ քրտինք կը հոսեցնենք, ահա Պատարագի քարձրաստիճան հոգեւորական մը Պատարագ կը մատուցանէ ո՛վ գիտէ քանի ինչ կը շնորհ ծանրածանր հանդերձանի տակ: Գլխուն դրած է

սաղաւարտը, կամ խոյրը, հագած է ներմակ շապիկը, վրան կապած է գօտին, ապա փորձարարը՝ որ իսկական լուծի մը խորհրդանշանն է: Դրած է վակապը, որ կը ծածկէ ծոծրակը: Բազուկներուն վրայ անցուցած է քաղաքաները: Յետոյ հագած է ծանր շուրջառը, վերարկուն: Եւ փորձարարը, տակաւին արտախորակը եւ դեռ ինչե՛ր: Մենք այնքան վարժուած ենք այս տեսարանին որ չենք հաշուեր թէ որքան ծանր կը կշռեն անոնք Պատարագի շին ուսերուն վրայ, երբ Պատարագի շին համար թեւը վերցնել ու օրհնութիւն մը տալ իսկ, խաչակնքել իսկ յոգնեցուցիչ է այնքան:

Բայց եկեղեցին ա՛յդ է ահաւասիկ: Այդ ծանրածանր հանդերձանքը Յիսուսին խաչն է արդեօք որ կը դրուի Պատարագի շին ուսերուն վրայ, թէ ոչ այդ հանդերձանիւն իրաւանջիւր կտորը ունի իր ուրոյն նշանակութիւնը: Իւրաքանչիւրը չի՞ ցուցնէր մեր ժողովուրդին ճշտակն ու անուակն աշխատանքի վարպետութիւնը: Եկեղեցական զգեստի իրաւանջիւր կտորին վրայ գոյնի, ձեռակն աշխատանքի, նախշի, արծաթեայ ու ոսկեայ թելերով քանուած պատկերի, հոսկէ հոնկէ փայլող քարերն ու ուրուսներն ու շողողանք մը չկա՞յ:

Կայ: Եւ ա՛յդ է որ մեզ այս աշխարհէն պահ մը կը կտրէ ու կը կապէ երկնին, կամ ըսենք՝ քարձրաստիճան ապրումներն:

Եւ սակայն աւելին կայ եկեղեցական այդ զգեստներուն ու յարակից կազմածներուն մէջ: Կը նայինք անոնց ու մենք անոնց մէջ պատմութիւն կը տեսնենք: Եւ ինչ պատմութիւն: Բայց իսկապէս կը տեսնենք արդեօք այդ պատմութիւնը:

Մարմարա, Սեպտ. 13, 1996

Prayers do not change things; prayers change people; people change things.

OUTREACH

A publication of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America Eastern United States and Canada 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016 Tel: (212) 689-7810 Fax: (212) 689-7168

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OUTREACH (USPS 426-490) is published monthly, with the exception of a combined June-July-August issue by the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome; please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the policy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America. Send all correspondence to the above address to the attention of the Editor. Printed in the United States of America. Periodical rate postage paid at New York, NY 10016. Postmaster: Send address changes to OUTREACH, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016. ISSN: 10643087

ANEC Seminar For Educators

Over sixty participants representing twelve schools from seven states were in attendance at the September 1996 Educators' seminar held at the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America in New York City. Also in attendance were former and current ANEC and ARS members.

Held under the auspices and the initiative of the Armenian National Education Committee (ANEC), the seminar was devised to serve the needs of the schools affiliated with ANEC, as well as those schools that have a collaborative association with the host committee. ANEC is co-sponsored by the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian Relief Society.

Following the opening prayer by Rev. Daron Stepanian, pastor of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, the chairman of ANEC, Mr. John Ouligian, warmly

St. Gregory of Datev Institute 10th Summer Studies Program



Photo left: Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian flanked by the Institute's staff members. Photo right: Participants in the 10th annual St. Gregory of Datev Institute Summer Religious Program. Seventy-nine students from 14 parishes attended.



Organized by the Armenian Religious Education Council (AREC), the St. Gregory of Datev Institute held its 10th annual Summer Religious Studies Program at the St. Mary of Providence Center in Elverson, Pennsylvania, in July, with the participation of 79 teens and young adults plus ten staff members, representing 14 Prelacy parishes, under the leadership of its director, Very Rev. Anoushavan Tanielian, pastor of St. Sarkis Church (Douglaston, New York), and the Vicar General of the Prelacy.

The Summer Program, geared for youths ages 13 and older, seeks to create a context for the youth to expand their knowledge of the Armenian Christian faith and to explore how it forms their thinking and shapes their actions in contemporary society. Through lectures, workshops, Bible studies, faith- and youth-related group discussions, the week-long program focuses on foundational elements of Christian instruction, namely, what we believe, what we celebrate, how we pray, and ways in which we may implement and live out the Christian Gospel in this world. This year the Institute had 33 students in the first year class, 8 in the second year class, 12 in the third year class, 5 in fourth year classes and 21 postgraduate students.

Due to requests from past participants, the usual seven-day Summer Program was preceded by a weekend retreat. Forty-two of the 79 participants attended. Discussion focused on ways to get the youth involved in the life of the Church. The weekend seminar was led by Very Rev. Anoushavan Tanielian and Deacon Shant Kazanjian, the Executive Director of AREC.

The community life of the Institute consisted of morning and evening worship services, 6-7 hours of formal educational sessions, common meals, and some type of community work, recreational activities and socials. The program began each day with Arevakal (Sunrise) Service at 7:15 a.m., followed by breakfast. From 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. five concurrent classes were held, with short breaks in-between classes and a lunch break. In all, there were over 125 forty-five minute classes during the week, about 25 for each of the five levels.

The studies resumed after dinner with a general session for all at 7 p.m., followed by Bible studies for four different age groups from 8 to 9:30 p.m. Every day the Institute ended with the Peace Hour Service. The evening general sessions included a video presentation of the Consecration of the Holy Muron in Antelias, a lecture by Mr. Haroutune Misserlian on the "Similarities and Differences of the Two Armenian Republics," a lecture by Dr. Vahan Kouyoumdjian on "The Power of Speech," and a lively panel discussion on "Dating and Mixed Marriages." The

panelists for the latter were Rev. Fr. Antranig Baljian, Dr. Hovanes Hovannessian, Dr. Vahan Kouyoumdjian and Dr. Arsen Mekaelian; the moderator was Dn. Shant Kazanjian.

The afternoons (2:30-6:00 p.m.) were set aside for recreational activities and socials, which proved to be community-enhancing events for the Institute. Soccer, volleyball, swimming, and canoeing were some of the recreational activities. Friday evening the Institute held its traditional talent show which included vocal and instrumental selections, as well as comedy skits.

One of the highlights of the Summer Program was the visit of Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian who made time in his busy schedule to be with the Datevatzies, a two-day visit that gave the participants an opportunity to come to know their spiritual father.

The Prelacy extends its warm gratitude and thanks to the staff members, the guest lecturers, and the counselors of the Institute; many thanks also to the Pastors and Boards of Trustees of those communities who provided \$200 scholarship for each sponsored participant from their communities: St. Gregory, Indian Orchard, MA; St. Stephen's, New Britain, CT; Sts. Vartanantz, Ridgefield, NJ; St. Gregory, Vartanantz, NY; St. Gregory the Illuminator, Philadelphia, PA; Sts. Vartanantz, Providence, RI; Sourp Hagop, Montreal, Que.

Special thanks also to the parents who entrusted their children to the Institute for a week of spiritual formation; to the Pastor, Board of Trustees, and Ladies Guild of St. Sarkis Church for hosting the graduation luncheon; to Mrs. Asdghig Kazanjian for providing delicious Armenian food on the opening night of the Institute and for hosting a picnic on the occasion of His Eminence's visit. The Institute is also grateful to the following organizations and individuals for their generous donations: The Prelacy Ladies Guild (\$3,500.00); the National Association of Ladies' Guilds (\$1,000.00); ARS Ardemis Chapter of Philadelphia (\$250.00); Mr. and Mrs. Garabed Garabedian, Mr. and Mrs. Artoun Hamalian, Mr. and Mrs. Vartan Karakelian, Mrs. Asdghig Kazanjian, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Khatcherian, Mr. and Mrs. John Megerian, Mrs. Valentine Pagoumian, Mrs. Isabel Semerjian, and Mr. Manuel Shehrihan. A special expression of gratitude to Martha Mekaelian of Illinois for securing various resources for the Institute.

The teaching staff of the Institute consisted of Very Rev. Fr. Anoushavan Tanielian, Very Rev. Fr. Shahé Panossian, Very Rev. Fr. Nareg Alemezian, Rev. Fr. Dr. Mesrob Tashjian, Rev. Fr. Antranig Baljian, Rev. Fr. Nerses Manoogian, Rev. Fr. Khatchadour Boghossian, Dn. Shant Kazanjian, Dr. Hovannessian, and Dr. Arsen Mekaelian. ✚



Participants at ANEC's 1996 Educators' Seminar which took place at the Prelacy take time out for a group photograph. More than 60 educators from seven states attended the informative seminar.

greeted the guests. He applauded the Armenian spirit of all those born in this country and abroad, who are and were instrumental in perpetuating the Armenian communal heritage and spirit. He also praised all those who educate our children in the language of our forefathers with conviction.

The ANEC Executive Director, Mrs. Gilda B. Kupelian, began her welcoming remarks by paying tribute to Mrs. Hourig Papazian-Sahagian, former ANEC director, for her pioneering work in the field of Armenian education. She thanked the attendants for their presence and emphasized their unique mission of instilling their students with the love of the Armenian language and culture. Mrs. Kupelian also informed those present of ANEC programs such as the Students' Festival to be held in New Jersey in the spring of 1997, the dual Siamanto Academy programs, the upcoming seminars that address the needs of our schools, as well as the update and preparation of Armenian language textbooks.

Two prominent members of the educational and pedagogical fields were introduced. Dr. Meline Karakashian of New Jersey, noted educator-psychologist, presented her views on pedagogical and psychological approaches to education. Dr. Karakashian has often been invited by numerous American and Armenian educational and media organizations to share her expertise. At the ANEC seminar, she delivered an interactive presentation that dealt with the problems encountered in Armenian schools. Furthermore, she acknowledged the fact that each school had its strengths and weaknesses. She stressed the importance of prioritizing what needs to be taught in terms of Armenian studies, and invited educators to teach effectively in conjunction with boosting the self-esteem of the students.

Dr. Karakashian offered practical

solutions to specific classroom situations, in light of the Armenian ethnic background of the students, which is often in juxtaposition with their everyday exposure to American culture.

Mr. Hovsep Melkonian, principal of Hamasdegh School in the Washington, DC area, spoke about the mechanics of a working Armenian school. Hamasdegh School boasts an enrollment of 125 students, ten classes and a faculty of 15 dedicated teachers. It has a well prepared curriculum, enjoys the commitment of an efficient teaching staff and the support of an efficient PTA. Mr. Melkonian presented specific factors that make an Armenian one-day school function with professionalism. Both speakers emphasized the importance of the computer as a necessary means for the exchange of ideas.

A much anticipated segment during the seminar, which was conducted in its entirety in Armenian, was the announcement of the "1996 Teacher of the Year." The award was bestowed upon Mrs. Hermine Manoogian of Detroit whose 15 years of service in the Detroit area ARS sponsored school system, has been exemplary. Mrs. Manoogian held the dual role of teacher and principal, traveling to different locations on different days of the week, to be able to reach students. Visibly surprised and moved, the award recipient thanked everyone for the honor, and said that teachers sow the seeds of knowledge and they will receive the harvest. Her advice was to give without any expectation.

Seminar participants were treated to a sumptuous Armenian buffet. They received educational data, informative leaflets, instructional brochures as well as gifts. Everyone agreed the gathering was an efficient forum conducive to the exchange of ideas. ✚



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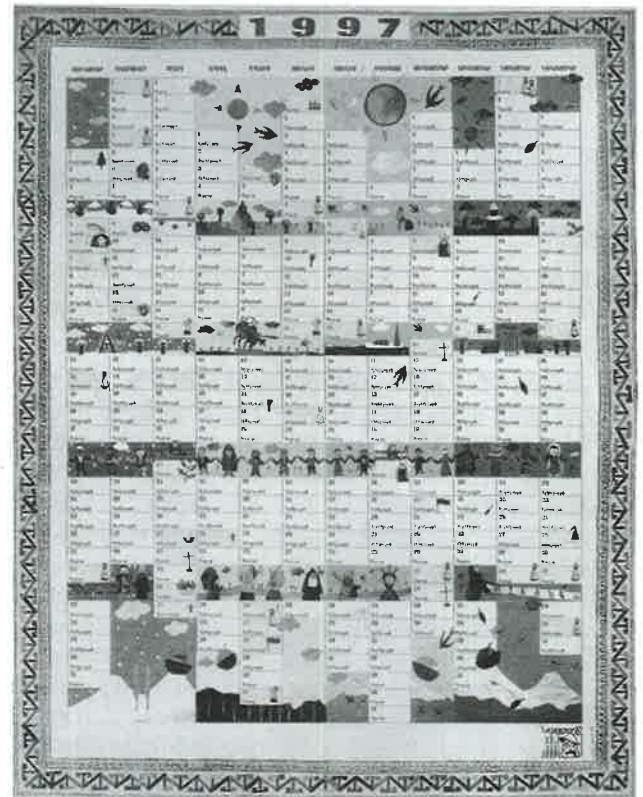
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