



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

Volume XX, Number 2 — Summer 1997

Archbishop Ashjian Attends Opening of Armenian Exhibit in Moscow; Also Visits Armenia and Iran

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, journeyed to Moscow to attend the opening of the "Treasures of Etchmiadzin" exhibit in the Kremlin's Museum. His Eminence left New York on June 30, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Kaloust and Emma Sogioian, the well known collectors and philanthropists from Michigan. Archbishop Ashjian's itinerary also included Armenia and Iran, before his return to New York.

Upon his arrival in Moscow's airport, Archbishop Ashjian was greeted by officials of Armenia's Ministry of Culture and the Armenian Embassy in Moscow, who escorted him to the airport's V.I.P. lounge for a period of rest. Joining him a short time later were Archbishop Diran Gureghian, the Prelate of Moscow; Archbishop Karekin Nercessian, the Prelate of the Araratian Diocese; and Armen Smbatian, Armenia's Minister of Culture, as well as a number of other religious and national leaders, who gathered to welcome His Holiness Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians upon his arrival in Moscow.

Greeting His Holiness at the airport was Alexy II, the Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias. The two religious leaders exchanged words of brotherhood during a reception in the V.I.P. lounge which was followed by a dinner. After dinner, His Holiness Alexy II escorted His Holiness Karekin I to the Russian Patriarch's official limousine, which was placed at the disposal of Catholicos Karekin during his stay in Moscow.

On Wednesday, July 2, in the Kremlin Museum, Catholicos Karekin, Patriarch Alexy, Russia's Minister of Culture, Mr. Sidorov, and Armenia's Minister of Culture, Mr. Armen Smbatian officially opened the exhibit which features a vast collection of Armenian treasures, primarily from Etchmiadzin, most of which have never been exhibited outside of Armenia. Attending the opening were more than 600 religious, state, and diplomatic representatives as well as invited guests from Russia's large Armenian community. A press presentation, under the direction of the museum's director, Mrs. I. Rodimsevan, took place with the participation of 100 journalists. A dinner in Moscow's Metropole Restaurant followed with about 220 guests in attendance.

During his stay in Moscow, His Holiness Karekin I had several meetings with religious and state leaders before returning to Holy Etchmiadzin on July 4, accompanied by Archbishop Ashjian.

For the next seven days, Archbishop

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Catholicos Aram I will Make First Pontifical Visit to Eastern United States and Canada in October



His Holiness Aram I
Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia

His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, will make his first pontifical visit to the Eastern United States and Canada in the fall. Arriving in New York on Wednesday, October 1, the Catholicos will begin his 40 day visit with seven days of full activity in the New York New Jersey metropolitan area.

Departing from New York on October 7, the Cilician Pontiff will then visit communities in Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Granite City, Chicago, Waukegan, Racine, Detroit, North Andover, Worcester, Whitinsville, Springfield, Providence, Boston, through to October 28. On October 29 he will go to Canada where he will visit the communities in Vancouver, Toronto, Cambridge, and Montreal. The visit will officially end on November 10 and His Holiness will return to Antelias, Lebanon.

Accompanying His Holiness from Lebanon will be his Staffbearer. Once in the United States, His Eminence Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, will head an official delegation of religious leaders and dignitaries who will accompany His Holiness.

A National Steering Committee, headed by Mr. Sarkis Ohanessian, as well as local committees in each community have been working since last summer in order to make the visit as smooth and memorable as possible.

During the pontifical visit Divine Liturgies will be held in the following communities: New York City (in the historic Grace Church); Granite City (where a newly built church will be consecrated); Dearborn, Michigan; Watertown, Massachusetts; Toronto, and Montreal, Canada.

His Holiness's itinerary also includes many meetings with dignitaries, ecumenical leaders, ambassadors, and community and national leaders including meetings at the United Nations, various embassies, and religious leaders of sister denominations. As Moderator of the Executive and Central Committees of the World Council of Churches (WCC), His Holiness will also be honored at a number of prayer services, receptions, and luncheons.

His Holiness Aram I (Keshishian) was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1947, where he studied at the Cilician See's Seminary and the Near East School of Theology, and the American University of Beirut. He pursued graduate education at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey (Switzerland), Oxford University (England), and Fordham University (New York), earning two Masters Degrees and a Doctorate of Philosophy. His major areas of specialization have been philosophy, systematic theology, and Near Eastern Church history.

He was ordained a celibate priest in

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The September Issue of Outreach Will be Devoted to the Pontifical Visit

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Preparations for 17th Centenary Celebration Well Underway

A Statement by the Prelate

The following statement was sent by the Prelate to the Armenian Reporter in response to an editorial in the May 24th issue of the newspaper. We are reprinting the letter in its entirety here, because the Reporter chose to omit the first paragraph.

Your editorial, "Further Division in the Armenian Church?" which appeared in the May 24, 1997 issue of your newspaper is a fine example of the worst kind of journalism. The term "yellow journalism" was coined in the latter part of this century to describe irresponsible editors who would go to any length to sensationalize the content of their newspapers in order to increase readership. I regret to say The Armenian Reporter now has the dubious honor of joining this infamous group.

In your editorial of more than 700 words you have not presented one shred of evidence to bolster your libelous charges, attributed to unnamed "well-placed sources," against His Holiness Aram I and the Holy See of Cilicia. Anyone can make outrageous statements and attribute them to "unnamed sources," but common decency prevents most of us from doing so. I want your readers to know that the charges you have made are absolutely and totally false.

The planned visit of Aleksy II, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, is a courtesy visit common amongst religious leaders, and it is not the first time that a Russian Patriarch visits the Cilician See. In June 1945 Patriarch Aleksy I accompanied by a large entourage visited the See in Antelias where he was greeted by Archbishop Khad Acha-baian in the absence of Catholicos Karekin I Hovsepian who was in Armenia for the election and consecration of a new Catholicos in Etchmiadzin. The Patriarch prayed in the Mother Cathedral, paid tribute to our martyrs at the martyrs chapel, and was honored with a luncheon at the Catholicate.

If the Cilician See has become more influential in "international ecumenical affairs and in the international religious community," it is simply because the last two leaders of the See of Cilicia, His Holiness Karekin II, and His Holiness Aram I, both held high positions in the World Council of Churches which provides high visibility on a global level. Catholicos Karekin II was Vice-Moderator of WCC during his tenure as Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy and as Catholicos of Cilicia. Catholicos Aram I is currently the Moderator of the Central and Executive Committees, which is the highest elected position in the World Council of Churches. He is the first Orthodox and the youngest person to be elected to this important position. As Armenians professing to care deeply about the church, you should be proud of this fact. Instead you have embarked on an orchestrated plan of vilification of Aram Vehapar and the Cilician See.

Newspapers have a vital role in our society and the free exchange of views and ideas is of paramount importance. If you are truly concerned about the future of the Armenian church and nation you would care less about sensationalizing the news and more about researching and presenting the truth. In the words of Walter Lippmann, unquestionably one of the finest journalists in American history, "...the paramount point is whether the journalist, like the scientist or scholar, puts truth in the first place or in the second...."

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian
Prelate
Armenian Apostolic Church of America
Eastern United States and Canada

May 27, 1997

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, General Secretary of the 17th Centenary of the Proclamation of Christianity in Armenia, was in Armenia for a week-long series of meetings concerning the many plans that are underway in celebration of the 1700th anniversary of Christian Armenia. The worldwide celebration which begins this year with the first of the pilgrimages in August, will continue through to June 17, 2001, when unprecedented commemorations will take place in Armenia.

Archbishop Ashjian entered Armenia by land from Turkey via Georgia. In Armenia he met with Catholicos Karekin I in a number of separate meetings, and provided His Holiness with up-to-date information about the progress of the worldwide plans for the 17th centenary celebration.

On June 17 he met with His Holiness and Mr. Gagig Haroutunian, Vice Chairman of the State Committee of the 17th Centenary Committee and the President of the Constitutional Council of Armenia, and his assistant Mr. Edik Kazarian. During this meeting several subjects were discussed in order to coordinate the programs planned by the church and the state. Meetings also took place with representatives of the state committee for the preservation of historical monuments, including the chairman, Mr. Gorun Khafadarian. Special attention was given to the extension project of the Mariné Church, the renovation of St. Kevork of Moughni Monastery, which as previously reported, will have a convent and farm. Archbishop Ashjian informed the committee that the renovation of the village of Garbi is proceeding with great enthusiasm through a generous contribution by Mr. and Mrs. Armenag and Siranoush Medzadourian of Argentina.

"The reconstruction of St. Asdvadzadzin Church in Garbi is near completion," said Archbishop Ashjian and "adjacent to the church a parsonage is being built and a village park is being developed. We expect the total Garbi project to be completed by September."

On June 13, Archbishop Ashjian was received by Mr. Armen Smpatian, Minister of Culture, and Mr. Lazar Sudjian, president of the state committee on religion. Several matters were discussed, mainly the exhibit of treasures of the Armenian Church which opened on July 2 in the Kremlin Museum in Moscow. "It was a miracle the entire exhibit was organized in just three months," said Archbishop Ashjian, "thanks to the devotion of many individuals."

This historic exhibit is under the auspices of the Aleksy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russias and Karekin I, Catholicos and Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians.

"Armenia is the first of the former soviet republics to receive this honor, and after this exhibit in the same halls an exhibit will open in honor of the 850th anniversary of the City of Moscow," said Archbishop Ashjian.

The beautiful catalog accompanying the exhibit is in English, Armenian, and Russian. All of the objects on exhibit were from the Holy See of Etchmiadzin and among them are masterpieces of Armenian liturgical art, chalices, crosses, relics, all of which originated from Rhomka, Cilicia, and various villages in Armenia.

On July 14, the newly published volume by photographer Hrair Hawk Khatcherian, *Artsakh, a Photographic Journey*, was officially introduced. The publication of this volume was made possible through a generous grant by the Aramian family of Rhode Island. Members of the family were in Armenia



Archbishop Ashjian, the General Secretary of the 17th Centenary, presents a pilgrim's passport to His Beatitude Archbishop Karekin Kazanjian, the Patriarch of Constantinople. The passport will be given to pilgrims on the series of pilgrimages which are planned starting this summer and continuing through to 2001. Archbishop Ashjian had the opportunity to present the passport to the Patriarch personally in Istanbul during Archbishop Ashjian's journey to historic Armenian sites in Eastern Turkey.



for the official presentation.

During his stay in Armenia, Archbishop Ashjian also visited the village of Talish in Mardakert, which is the village that the Eastern Prelacy has been renovating. Mr. and Mrs. Karl and Emma Sogoian have rebuilt the village school and Dr. and Mrs. Raffy and Shoghag Hovanessian have underwritten the renovation of the church and monastery. A recent donation by Dr. and Mrs. Harout and Shaké Mekhjian will enable the village to have an electric water mill.

Archbishop Ashjian was pleased to introduce some of the 17th centenary projects which are well underway, including:

1. The publication of a tourist guide book which is being prepared with the help of the staff of the Armenian Encyclopedia. This 240 page book—the first of its kind—will have 95 color photos and helpful maps.

2. Publication of *Armenia—Land of Pilgrims*, by Haig Khatchadourian. This 160 page book with 80 color photographs and 17 maps, will give details about the pilgrimage tours in Armenia, as well as providing historical information.

3. A "1700th Commemorative Rug" is being produced at the rug factory of Kevork Sarkissian in the Massis area. This wool rug is approximately 72" X 36" with traditional Armenian motifs on the borders and the images of St. Gregory the Illuminator and King Dertad in full regalia in the center. These rugs will be sold for approximately \$600 each.

4. One hundred paintings of saints, martyrs, and heroes of the Armenian church and nation have been commissioned. Ten artists have been asked to complete ten paintings each. Some of the paintings will be of well-known individuals; others of people who have been forgotten through the centuries. On Sunday, June 17, 2001, the paintings will be used in the procession and then will be distributed to churches and monasteries in

Armenia. The artists working on this project are under the supervision of Samuel Bedrosian, principal of the Terlemezian School of Art. Three paintings have already been completed: St. Khat, assistant to Nerses the Great, by Anatoly Krikorian; Smpad I Confessor, by Gagik Vartanian; and St. Nerses the Great by Siravian. The cost of each painting is \$500. Those who wish to underwrite a painting of a favorite saint or hero may do so.

For information about any of the above projects contact the 17th Centenary Committee, P.O. Box 3141, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. ♣

OUTREACH

A publication of the
Armenian Apostolic Church of America
Eastern United States and Canada
138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016
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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

Syran Hagopian Lighter Continues Her Decades of Service to Armenian Church; Recalls Encounter with FDR

by Rev. Khatchig Megerdichian

God has blessed each and every one of our communities with precious, faithful, multi-talented individuals, who have admirably served our beloved church and nation with boundless love and heartfelt devotion and sacrifice. These individuals have been a source of inspiration, and have gained the love and respect of their community as well as setting an example for others to follow.

The community of Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church of Troy, New York, is blessed with such an individual, in the person of Syran Hagopian Lighter.

Syran was born in Marzevan (one of the neighboring cities of Constantinople) in the early 1900's, the daughter of Hagop and Makrouhi Hagopian. Her father, a very successful businessman, became one of the first victims of the Armenian Genocide.

Her mother was left alone at a young age to raise two children (Syran and her older sister, Victoria). They fled Marzevan and eventually settled in Bulgaria, where Syran received her primary education. The Armenian Apostolic Church of Philibeh became a spiritual and national home for the family, her mother being a very devout woman who faithfully took her children to church every Sunday.

God blessed Syran not only with a devout mother, but also a very beautiful and unique voice. At the age of eight, the choir director of the church asked her to join the choir, thus becoming the youngest member of the choir and eventually one of its outstanding soloists.

From the Armenian Church of Philibeh she went on to sing in the Armenian Cathedral of Sophia, Bulgaria; St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Church and St. Gregory the Illuminator Church in Philadelphia; Holy Cross Church of New York; and Holy Cross Church of Troy, New York. Over the past nine decades of her life, she has faithfully served six Armenian Apostolic Churches, been a soloist for over 80 years and choir director for over 65 years.

Syran's musical achievements went above and beyond her exemplary service to her beloved church and nation. She pursued a career in music and sang in the Grand Cosmopolitan Opera Company of Philadelphia, where she performed in many leading roles become one of the opera company's rising stars.

She was awarded a four-year scholarship which would have enabled her to travel and perform in a variety of European opera houses. Unfortunately, she had to turn down the scholarship in order to care for her ailing mother.

Syran utilized her talent during World War II entertaining U.S. servicemen in officers clubs and canteens in Richmond, Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt signing the Social Securities Act which provided pensions for retirees. President Roosevelt gave the photo to Mrs. Syran Hagopian Lighter who met the President while she was entertaining servicemen during World War II. In a conversation with FDR she talked of the Armenian Massacres and the fact that she was caring for her elderly and ailing mother who had no other means of support. He told her, "You are taking care of your mother. I am going to take care of you."

It was during this period that Syran met and became acquainted with many high-ranking government officials and politicians including President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

One day when Syran was entertaining the servicemen in the presence of President Roosevelt, an Armenian American soldier asked her to sing an Armenian song. She sang *Anoush Karoun*. The President enjoyed the song so much he asked for an encore and later called her to his table. Syran gave the President a lesson in Armenian history, informed him how the Armenian Massacres affected her life. She told him how her mother was widowed at a young age and the sacrifices she made to raise her two daughters. She also told the President how her mother was now sick and how she was taking

care of her, since her mother had no other means of support.

The President was impressed with Syran and her story and he gave her a photograph of the signing of the Social Security Act, telling Syran, "You are caring for your mother in her old age; I am going to take care of you in your old age," referring to the Social Security legislation.

Syran is very proud that she had the privilege and honor of entertaining the President and cherishes his memory and his gift.

We are very proud of Syran's lifetime accomplishments. We pray that God grant her a long, happy and healthy life, so that she can continue to faithfully serve her beloved Armenian church and nation for many years to come. ✦

ANEC Announces Winners of Setian Awards

The Armenian National Education Committee, sponsored by the Eastern Prelacy and the Armenian Relief Society, recently awarded the coveted "Setian Ancient Armenian Coin" awards to deserving students for excellence in Armenian studies.

This award, generously donated by Mr. Gary Setian of Massachusetts is traditionally presented to students during their school's year-end ceremony.

Siamanto Academy, NY:

Angel Danayan, Joseph Garabedian, John Khatcherian, Natalie Krichian, Ryan Safarian, Melanie Sayadian.

Nareg School, Ridgefield, NJ:

Tania Guluzian.

Armenian Sisters Academy, Radnor, PA:

Taleen Khoury, Philip Nigon.

St. Gregory School, North Andover, MA:

Valerie Saryan.

ARS Marzbed School, Racine, WI:

Sona Mikaelian.

St. Stephen's School, New Britain, CT:

Serbe Kechichian.

St. Illuminator's Day School, Woodside, NY:

Maida Parisyan.

St. Sarkis Suzanne & Hovsep Hagopian Saturday School, Douglaston, NY:

Arine Nazarian.

Taniel Varoujan School, Chicago, IL:

Loucine Megerdichian, Karine Birazian.

St. Stephen's Saturday School, Watertown, MA:

Dzovig Essajanian, Alice Khanjian.

St. Stephen's Day School, Watertown, MA:

Michael Ajemian, Arsho Kantarjian.

Armenian Sisters Academy, Watertown, MA:

Victoria Zakarian, Mary Ann Ekmekian.

St. Illuminator's Saturday School, Woodside, NY:

Rosette Vartanian.

Mourad School, Providence, RI:

Victoria Kabakian, Meline Taraktzian.

Sourp Hagop Saturday School, Montreal, Canada:

Sevdan Sarkissian, Bedig Charshafian.

Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School, Bayside, NY:

Haig Minassian.

A Mini Lesson

The four orders or minor ranks in the Armenian Church are:

1. Doorkeeper (Trnaban)
2. Reader (Untertsogh)
3. Exorcist (Yertmnetsootsich)
4. Candle Bearer (Mohmagrogh or Chahagir)

Kremlin Museum Exhibit

(Continued from page 1)

Ashjian remained in Etchmiadzin to oversee the work of the 17th Centenary Committee of which he is the General Secretary. In this capacity he presented an extensive report to the international steering committee.

On Saturday, July 12, accompanied by Mr. Armen Smbatian, His Eminence went to Artsakh where the new volume published by the Eastern Prelacy, *Artsakh: A Photographic Journey*, by Hrair Hawk Khatcherian, was introduced. Present on this occasion were members of the Aramian family from Providence, Rhode Island, who were the sponsors of this magnificent book.

On Wednesday, July 16, Archbishop Ashjian entered Iran through the border town of Meghri, where he joined His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, to participate in a pilgrimage to St. Tadeh Monastery, where Catholicos Aram celebrated pontifical liturgical services on Saturday, July 19, and at the Monastery of St. Stephen the Protomartyr on July 20.

Following the Divine Liturgy on July 20, Archbishop Ashjian returned to Armenia and on July 22 returned to New York via Moscow. ✦

Դպիր եւ Սարկաւագ Զեռնադրութիւն Ալեքսանտր Վարդանեանի



Կիրակի, 25 Մայիս 1997, ուրախալից օր մը հանդիսացաւ Նիւ Ճըրզիի Սրբոց Վարդանանց Հայց. Առաք. Եկեղեցւոյ Ծովին համար, երբ Թեմիս բարեխնամ Առաջնորդ Բարձր. Տ. Մեսրոպ Արք. Աշճեան կատարեց Ալեքսանտր Վարդանեանի դպիր եւ սարկաւագի ձեռնադրութիւնը: Ա. Պատարագը մատուցեց Հոգ. Տ. Մեղրիկ Վրդ. Բարիբեան: Խարտաւիակութիւնը կատարեց Եկեղեցւոյ Հովի Գեղա. Տ. Նարեկ Ծ. Վրդ. Ալեքսանտր Վարդգէս Թէքիրեան, Զօհրապ Զաքարեան, Անդրանիկ Ապարեան, Յակոբ Թէքեան եւ Վահան Գուլումեան մասնակցեցան ձեռնադրութեան: Դպրաց դասը ղեկավարեց դպրապետ Արմէն Պապամեան եւ երգեհոնը նուագեց Տիանա Յարութիւնեան: Իր քարոզին մէջ, ձեռնադրիչ Սրբապանը գնահատեց նորոգ ձեռնադրեալ սարկաւագին Հայ Եկեղեցւոյ հանդէպ ունեցած նուիրումը: Նաեւ, Սրբապանը գոհաբանական մտաբանեց կատարեց եւ օրհնեց Նիւ Ճըրզիի Հ.Մ.Ը.Մ-ի սկաւտներուն եկեղեցի բերած եռագոյն դրօշակը 28 Մայիս 1918-ի Հայաստանի անկախութեան տարեդարձին առթիւ: Ապա, Եկեղեցւոյ սրահին մէջ, Հովին ու Հոգաբարձութիւնը հիւրասիրութեամբ մը պատուեց Ալեքսանտր Սրկ. Վարդանեանը: Հիւրասիրութեան ներկայ գտնուեցաւ Մայր Եկեղեցւոյ Հովի Արժ. Տ. Մուշեղ Ա. Բճյ. Տէր Գալուստեան: Առաջնորդ Սրբապան Հայրը յայտնեց, թէ Կիրակի, 27 Յուլիս, քահանայ պիտի ձեռնադրէ Ալեքսանտր Սարկաւագը: Հոգաբարձութեան Ատենապետ Տիար Զարմայր Սեդրաքեան շնորհաւորեց Ալեքսանտր Սրկ. Վարդանեանը, ազնուափայլ Տիկինը եւ վաւակները ու հրակիւնքը զիրենք որպէսզի կարկանդակը կտրեն:



Syran Lighter in an operatic role with the Grand Cosmopolitan Opera Company.

Archbishop Ashjian's Sentimental Journey

by Iris Papazian

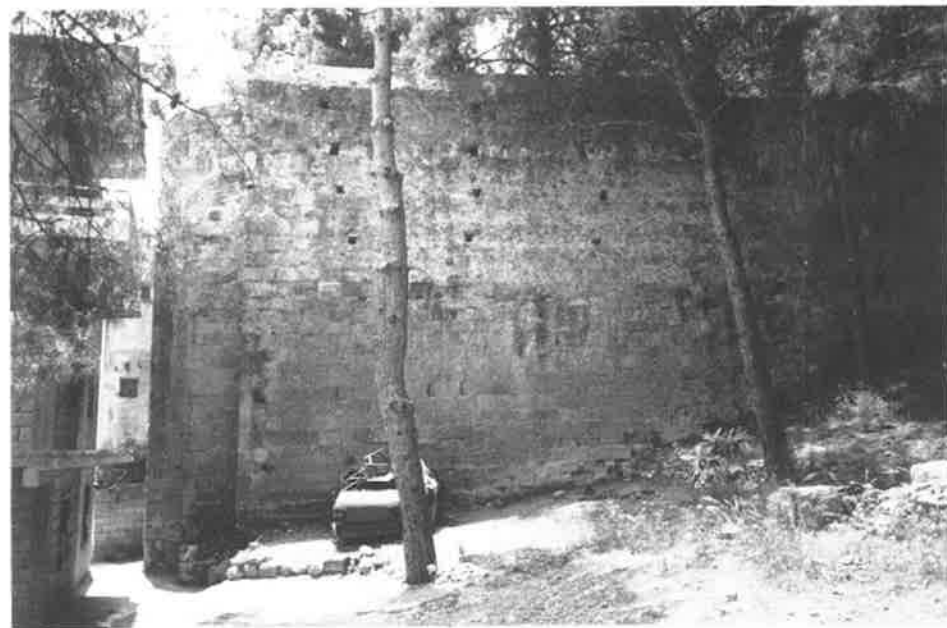


Holy Cross Church in the island of Aghtamar in Lake Van.

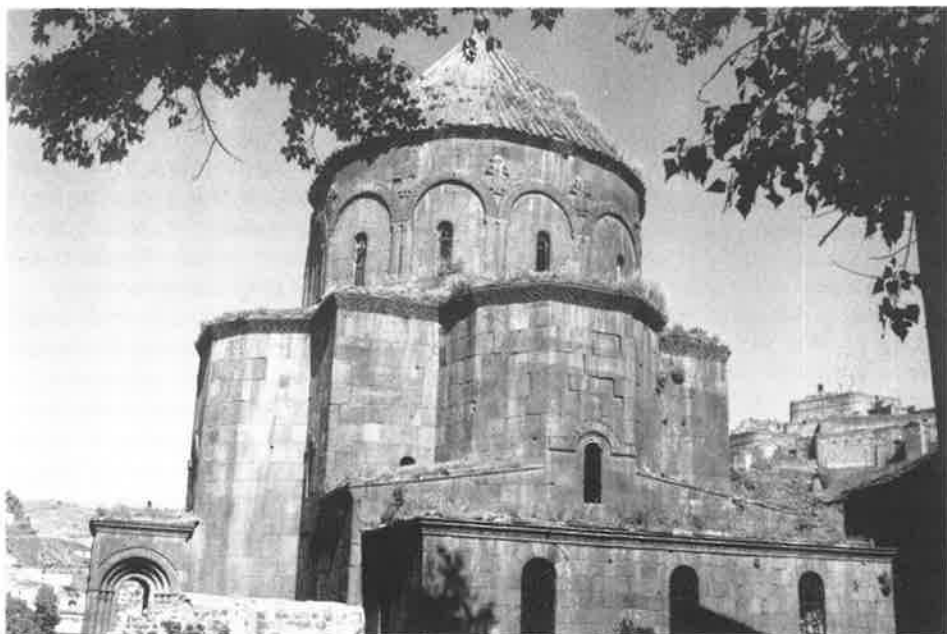


The ruins of Hromkla.

Photos by Hrair Hawk Khatcherian



What remains of the Catholicate of Sis.



Arakelotz Church in Kars.

During a period of four weeks in May and June Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, went on a journey which took him into historic Armenia in eastern Turkey, Georgia, the Armenian Republic, and Lebanon.

For many years it has been the Archbishop's dream to visit the land of his ancestors and the birthplace of his parents. The opportunity to make this sentimental journey became possible recently in conjunction with his duties as General Secretary of the Committee for the 17th Centenary Celebration.

On May 28 he joined an eighteen-member group which was organized by Mr. Armen Aroyan of Los Angeles, and led by Dr. James Russell of Harvard University. Included in the group were both Armenian and non-Armenian tourists and historians, including some friends of Archbishop Ashjian, Dr. Haikaz Grigorian, Dr. Herand Markarian, Professor James Russell, journalist Dr. Barbara Mergaurian, photographer Hrant Hawk Khatcherian and Deacon Alexander Logjan.

His Eminence arrived in Istanbul on May 28 and paid a visit to the Patriarchate where he was received by the Patriarch His Beatitude Archbishop Karekin Kazanjian, and the chairman of the Patriarchate's Religious Council, Archbishop Mesrob Moutafian.

The journey began in Antep and from there to Jebail Mousa, Antioch, Adana, Hromkla, Anavarza, Sis, Urfa, Malatia, Adiyaman, Nemrut Dag, Kharper, Hussenig, Dzovk, Palu, Havav, Dikrangerd, Moush, Van, Aghtamar, Narek, Shoushantz, Varag, Igdir, Kars and Ani.

The journey quickly turned into an emotional pilgrimage with many highs and lows during which the pilgrims lived in moments of sorrow and suffering, as well as great joy, punctuated by prayers and supplications, resentment and protest, faith and trust, frustration and hopelessness, and finally determined resolve.

"We understood the words of the poets and the songwriters when they wrote about *tsangali* (desirable) Giligja, *shkegh* (magnificent) Adana; we searched for *siroun* (lovely) Hajin and lamented at the quietness of brave Zeitoun," said Archbishop Ashjian.

"There were moments of great joy such as on the day we climbed to the fortress of Anavarza where I blessed the marriage of Kevork Khrimian and Susan Kirby, who fulfilled their wish to be married near the birthplace of their parents. The wedding provided the setting for an Armenian service, perhaps the first to be heard there in many, many years."

The group also visited the city of Sis, where they searched for the ruins of the Catholicate. "We were captivated by the beauty of the fortress of Sis," said Archbishop Ashjian, "and we understood why the Cilician kings, in deference to its magnificent beauty, choose to inscribe on their silver coins, *The Fortress of Sis is King.*"

Also on the itinerary was the Catholicate at Hromkla where ten catholicoses served, the last being Stepan IV Hromklayetzi who in 1292, along with the relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator, was held captive and who died in Egypt.

Another joyful moment came when the travelers visited the village of Vakef near Jebel Mousa where a new church, St. Asdvadzadzin, will be consecrated on August 9 and will serve the small number of Armenian families still living there.

Archbishop Ashjian said there are plans to renovate the St. Giragos Church in Dikranagerd, a church which "even in its current neglected state provokes astonishment and admiration."

In Moush, as he had pledged, Archbishop Ashjian formally announced the formation of the St. Garabed of Moush Organization. St. Garabed has been designated as the patron saint of the pilgrimages which are being undertaken as part of the commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of Christian Armenia.

The group spent nearly one whole day in Aghtamar and some were brave enough to go into the waters of Lake Van and become "baptized." "How melancholy it was to pray in the Holy Cross Church, with the images of Christ and His disciples on the walls staring at us," said the Archbishop.

The group also visited the village of Narek, now desolate. The image of a mosque on the very spot where once stood the famed Narek Monastery caused great sorrow.

"Fortunately, through old books, and thanks to our guides, it was possible to locate and climb the mountain to reach the large cave where St. Grikor Naregatzi would often retreat, high above Lake Van. Incense was offered on this holy site, while James Russell, his pupil Sergio La Porte and I read parts of Narek's lamentations. Emotionally, it was a very difficult moment," said Archbishop Ashjian.

As the journey continued, Haikaz Grigorian was able to see his father's village, Pagan. The next day the group visited the village of Herand Markarian's father. "Here amongst the rocks, and on the crumbled epitaph of the Prelate of Van, Very Rev. Tovmas, a requiem service was offered, and we buried a crumbled Nushkhar [consecrated bread wafer] in the ground."

Perhaps the saddest moment came when the group visited the Monastery of Varak. There before their eyes adjacent to the only church still standing within the Monastery a new mosque is being built. "It was a tragic sight, unbelievable and totally unacceptable on all levels," the Archbishop recalls. With saddened hearts the group prayed at the site. Later they met the village's religious leader, Imam Hussein. "We reminded him that Varak is also God's house, and God is merciful toward those who protect His home. The Imam told us that in three or four months the mosque will be finished, and he promised that the church will also be cleaned. We hope and pray that will be the case..." said Archbishop Ashjian sadly.

Another heart-wrenching moment for His Eminence came when he visited Havav, the birthplace of his mother, Diramayr Martha Ashjian. He drank from the village spring of which he had heard so much; he gave historic details about the village to the villagers, showing on a map he had brought with him the Armenian homes of Havav, the churches, the fountains, and cemeteries. Later he and his fellow pilgrims climbed up to Havav's St. Asdvadzadzin Monastery. "I understand now why it was always referred to as *sweet-looking St. Asdvadzadzin.*"

"As we left Havav a beautiful full rainbow surrounded the horizon. Moments later a second rainbow appeared below the first one. A double rainbow! Had God heard our prayers and supplications? Was this His answer...His covenant with us? Perhaps..."

Throughout the journey, at every opportunity, Archbishop Ashjian and his fellow pilgrims prayed and offered requiem services for the martyrs, family members, and heroes of the nation. Services took place in the fortresses of Hromkla and Sis, in the churches turned into mosques in Antep and Urfa, the churches of Vakef and Dikranagerd, the fields of Moush in honor of St. Nerses the Great on his feast day (June 7), in the

to Western Armenia

Holy Cross Church, on the rocks of Narek, in Shoushan, Varak, Ani, and Kars. Everywhere, the memory of those who walked on that soil was recalled.

"There are so many who lived and died in America and elsewhere in the diaspora, who never stopped longing for the home of their childhood," Archbishop Ashjian said. "We remembered Khrimian Hairik in Varak; Archbishop Karekin Survanzian, the Catholicoses of Aghtamar; the Ardsrouni dynasty; the Mamigonian generals; Dajad Terlemezian, Vagharshag Tufenkjian, Aram of Van, Avedis Aharonian, Mgrdich Yotyeghparian, Khatoun Ketjenjian, Roupén Der Minasian, Yeghishe Charentz, Karine Kotancian, and Dro. Prayers and remembrance, literature, music and history mixed together, blending into a meaningful existence for us," said His Eminence.

Archbishop Ashjian praised the group's organizer, Armen Aroyan, and paid special recognition to Professor James Russell who shared his vast knowledge of Armenian history, and whose perceptive mind and sincere demeanor made the trip even more memorable. "It was as if Professor Russell had opened a school with a duration of 15 days."

The journey ended with a visit to the city of Ani, where in the Mother Cathedral a part of the Divine Liturgy was offered. At that moment a group of French tourists entered, saying, "we heard the sounds of angels and we came in." With a smile on his face Archbishop Ashjian recalls, "those words were a great compliment to those of us who are not singers!"

With the first part of his journey at an end, His Eminence together with Deacon Alexan Logian, entered Georgia through Kars, where they were met by the representative of the Armenian Republic to Georgia, Mr. Henrik Mouradian; Academician Mikael Maksoyan, and customs official Armen Khatchadourian. His Eminence was invited to visit the city of Akhalkskha which has a large Armenian population. Here he visited School No. 3.

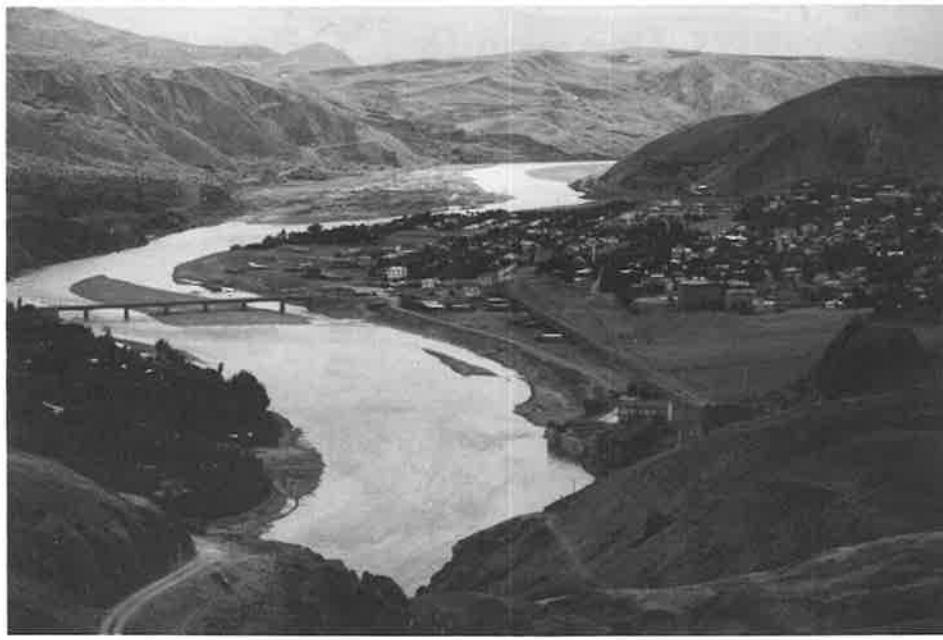
The next day, the Armenian newspaper, "Vrasdan" reported Archbishop Ashjian's visit to Georgia under the headline: "I swam in Lake Van, Ate in Kars, Prayed in Ani..."

The article described the Archbishop's travels. It also expressed the Archbishop's sincere appreciation of the welcome he received at the Turkish-Georgian border. He explained that he was pleased to make his first trip to Georgia and he was happy to see the brotherly care extended to Armenians living in Georgia. The article quotes him, "The journey through eastern Turkey awakened deep memories in me, since that is the birthplace of my parents. I swam in Lake Van, visited the island of Aghtamar, where I prayed in the church, spent a night in Kars, lit a candle in Ani, and at 12 o'clock on June 12th I arrived at the border and entered Georgia. And now, from here I go to Etchmiadzin..."

Archbishop Ashjian reached Etchmiadzin on the morning of June 13 and was received by His Holiness Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians. Archbishop Ashjian and Deacon Logian presented the Catholicos with a stone from Aghtamar and a bunch of flowers from the ruins of Ani.

From Armenia, His Eminence went to Lebanon to meet with His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, and to participate in the ordination of five bishops before returning to New York. ❀

For information about traveling to historic Armenian sites in Turkey contact Armen Aroyan, 818-359-9510.



The Aradzani River in Palou.



With lit candles in hand, the travelers offer prayers in the Mother Cathedral in Ani.



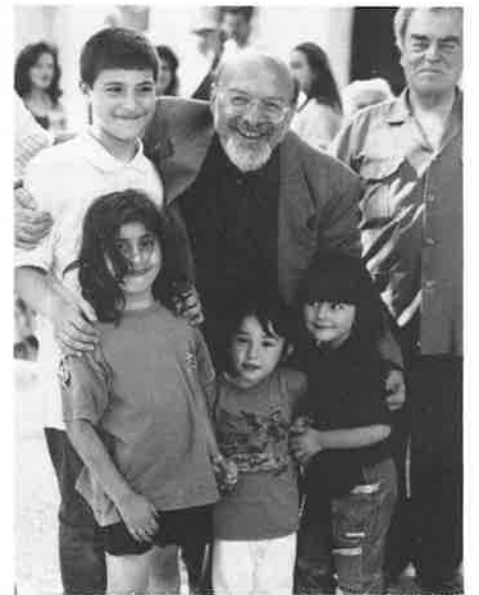
The ruins of the Cathedral of Havav.



A damaged church painting in Dikranagerd.



A spectacular rainbow appeared as the group left Havav and moments later a second rainbow below the first.



Armenian children in the village of Vakef, Mousa Ler, where on August 9 a new church, St. Asdvadzadzin, will be consecrated.



Born in Sassoun, she said her father's name was Haig. Now considered a Kurdish woman she is the doorkeeper of St. Girabos Church in Dikranagerd.



St. Asdvadzadzin Church in Aintab which has been converted into a mosque.

Photos by Hrair Hawk Khatcherian

Profile on Our Parishes: St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philly Marks 30th Anniversary of Ordination of Church at Ridge Ave. 10th Anniversary of Ordination of Rev. Nerses Manoogian Also Celebrated

by Melissa Selverian

A proud church family of parishioners and friends gathered together to honor their family tree, ripe with 30 years of history at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church in Philadelphia, on Sunday, May 4.

Offering his blessings to the more than 300 faithful at the intergenerational union on the anniversary of the church consecration, His Eminence Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian paid tribute to the congregation's spiritual father, the Rev. Nerses Manoogian, on the 10th anniversary of his ordination.

On the momentous occasions, the St. Gregory Church community and its pastor received countless letters of congratulations from spiritual and political leaders, supporters and friends. His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, offered his blessings and words of encouragement. Messages of praise and congratulations were also received from President Bill Clinton as well as many state and local officials.

Honoring the 70-year-long faith, dedication and spirit of the Philadelphia congregation, which moved from 16th and Oxford Streets to Ridge Avenue in the 1960s, His Eminence awarded certificates of honor to some of "the many outstanding parishioners" who helped turn dreams into realities.

His Eminence and Board Chairman, Jack Papazian paid special tribute to those countless church servants who are now resting at God's side but whose toil and sacrifice, selflessness and determination grew the St. Gregory's family tree from but a seedling.

Archbishop Ashjian praised St. Gregory Church as a flourishing branch of a 1,700-year-old tree, the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church. As the Armenian Church reaches its own historic milestone, it relies on the strength, vitality and service of each parishioner worldwide to plant new seeds in a budding Armenia and a blossoming Diaspora, the Archbishop said.

Award recipients on this occasion included Phil DerPilbosian, Asdghig Kazanjian, Maroush Paneyan Nigon, Sandra Selverian, and Marty Shelengian. Former St. Gregory pastor, the Rev. Archpriest Arsen Hagopian, drew enthusiastic and appreciative applause for his 35 years of dedicated service to his Philadelphia church and community. Friendship awards were presented to florist John Hoplamazian for his longtime generosity to the church and to Tony Vraim of Vraim's Funeral Home for serving the needs of parishioners with sensitivity and grace.

Longtime coordinator of the Sunday School and graduates communion breakfast, Sandra Selverian, thanked the congregation for her award, describing her enjoyment in helping pass the torch from one generation to the next. She expressed delight in watching the circle of life in her family become complete: Her eldest son, Richard Sebouh Selverian, served as master of ceremonies as had his grandfather Walter Sebouh Selverian at the church's consecration banquet 30 years ago.

Graciously accepting their awards were parishioners Phil DerPilbosian, a former trustee who, along with his wife Rose, generously and humbly volunteer their time in anything from gardening work to community mailings; Asdghig Kazanjian, an Armenian food store owner and caterer who donates her talents and resources freely to the community; Maroush Nigon, St. Gregory's choir director, whose exceptional voice and musical talents enrich the sanctuary; and Marty Shelengian, a longtime trustee who honors his youthful pledge to God to serve the church with faith and devotion.



St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Rev. Manoogian and Archbishop Ashjian with award winner Maroush Nigon and Karen Jehanian who presented the award. Certificates of Merit were also presented to: Philip DerPilbosian, Asdghig Kazanjian, Sandra Selverian and Marty Shelengian.



Archbishop Ashjian presents a special friendship award to John Hoplamazian. A similar award was presented to Tony Vraim.

A Proud History

The St. Gregory Church community, which labored tirelessly to establish a church at 16th and Oxford Streets in Philadelphia 70 years ago, drew on a history of faith, generosity, hard work and love to build a modern facility at 8701 Ridge Avenue 30 years ago.

The leadership of the Rev. Archpriest Arsen Hagopian, the generosity of parishioners, the personal sacrifices of members and the time, talent and resources of church families and friends culminated in the construction of a new sanctuary, Sunday School classrooms, banquet facilities, and meeting rooms.

The church was consecrated in 1967. Fruitful, fund-raising efforts led to the burning of the mortgage in 1971.

Over the years, the St. Gregory Church has been blessed with much good fortune. The parish has more than doubled in membership. It has added a roster of social, cultural and educational programs at a community center formed from a former parish house. The church has developed strong Sunday School and Haigazian Armenian School programs, hosted National Representative Assembly conventions and honored clergymen and members for longtime service.

In 1991, the St. Gregory family bid special thanks to its faithful shepherd, the Rev. Archpriest Hagopian, as he retired after 35 years of service. A testimonial dinner in his honor featured an outpouring of love and appreciation from an attendance of 500 community leaders, parishioners, and friends. In 1992, the church family warmly welcomed its new and current spiritual leader, the Rev. Nerses Manoogian.

Born to Hovhannes and Yeranouhi Manoogian in Beirut, Lebanon, and baptized Haroutioun, Rev. Nerses Manoogian followed his calling to the ministry, studying for seven years at the Armenian Theological Seminary of the Catholicate of the Holy See of Cilicia. He was ordained an archdeacon in 1968.

Upon his graduation from the seminary, Rev. Nerses served two Armenian communities in Iran—Isfahan and Abadan—as choir director and instructor of Armenian language and religion. In 1974 he married Nektar Mgrdichian. They were blessed with two children, Sevag and Sally.

Rev. Nerses served the Detroit community as Armenian Studies Program director in the Armenian Relief Society Day School, as principal of the five Saturday Schools and as choir director at St. Sarkis Church in Dearborn, Michigan.

After years of sincere devotion as an educator and choir master, Rev. Nerses was ordained a priest in St. Illuminator's Cathedral in New York by His Eminence Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian. Given the priestly name of Nerses, his first assignment was at St. Gregory Church in Granite City, Illinois. While serving this congregation, Rev. Nerses earned his master of arts degree in religious studies from St. Louis University in 1991.

Months later, Rev. Manoogian enthusiastically accepted his new flock, the St. Gregory Church congregation of Philadelphia. He worked diligently to renew and strengthen this congregation through numerous ventures. He established an acolyte training program to teach children the art of altar service, an Altar Guild to beautify the sanctuary, a Youth Ministry to reach out to young teens and a young couples and singles group to draw together post-college age youth. Soon after his arrival he published a booklet summarizing Armenian church life to serve as a reference to new and existing church members. He works to teach Armenian traditions, revive Armenian Christian holiday customs and spread the world of the

(Continued on next page)

Profile on Our Parishes:

A Rich History Guides the Vibrant Philadelphia Community Today



The St. Gregory Board of Trustees in 1956-57 which guided the purchase of the current eight-acre site on Ridge Avenue. On January 13, 1957, an unprecedented fundraising event took place in the Main Ballroom of the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel which resulted in a grand total of \$160,000 (at that time a considerable amount of money) in donations for the new church. The old church on 16th and Oxford Streets was later sold. In photo above, seated left to right: Edward Kurkian, Dikran Kazanjian, Rev. Arsen Hagopian, Archbishop Khoren Paroyan (later Catholicos Khoren I of Cilicia), Yeghishe Melikian, Sarkis Zartarian, Krikor Pilbosian. Standing, left to right: George Dombalagian, John Tokmajian, Asher Mikaelian, Khoren Mukhalian, Jirair Hovnanian, and Edward Papazian.

Editor's Note...

I admit to a certain bias when it comes to the Philadelphia community. Although I was born in New York and have my earliest recollections of church at St. Illuminator's Cathedral, I grew up in Philly and very much a part of the St. Gregory family where I taught Sunday School for many years. I also admit to a nostalgia for the old 16th and Oxford location, a big historic building with a beautiful sanctuary and magnificent built-in pipe organ. When I hear some of our modern so-called organs in our churches today I fondly remember that very special sound. By the time the new church was built and consecrated I had left Philadelphia, but my family is there and I enjoy going back as I did for the 30th anniversary celebration and see that many of my friends are still active members, and best of all, their children are now in leadership positions. —Iris Papazian

Gospel through Bible study workshops and lectures.

Also concentrating on the administrative duties of church life, Rev. Nerses immediately joined forces with a newspaper editor to restructure the church's newsletter, establishing a professional, monthly vehicle for church communication. Rev. Nerses brought young people onto the Board of Trustees, encouraging them to share their professional talents with their church family and supporting their efforts to computerize church records. The pastor works to nurture a dedicated choir, build a better Sunday School and Armenian School and encourages a productive Ladies Guild and Men's Club.

While concentrating efforts on St. Gregory Church, Rev. Nerses finds time to serve on Prelacy committees and to teach at the St. Gregory of Datev Institute's program of Armenian studies.

On the occasion of his 10th anniversary of priesthood, Rev. Nerses recalled the inspiring words of the clergyman who ordained him, his spiritual father, Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian:

"If you see injustice, war and death and also the kind of tragedy in this life and in society—look always to Christ and His cross, and see the cross as the sign of glory and salvation...feel happy when you hear the Hosanna shouts, but be ready for the shouts of crucify him. Be not afraid and consider all of them your brothers and your people; they are yours and you have to cherish them with all your heart, without any discrimination whatsoever." ✦

**Եպիսկոպոսական Օծում
Գանատայի Առաջնորդական Փոխանորդ
Տ. Խաժակ Ծ. Վրդ. Յակոբեանի**



Կիրակի 22 Յունիսին, Ամբիլիասի Ս. Գրիգոր Լուսաւորիչ Մայր Տաճարին մէջ, Գանատայի Առաջնորդական Փոխանորդ՝ Գերբ. Տ. Խաժակ Եպ. Յակոբեան եպիսկոպոսական ձեռնադրութիւն եւ օծում ստացաւ, ձեռամբ Մեծի Տանն Կիլիկիոյ Վեհափառ Հայրապետին՝ Ն.Ս.Օ.Տ.Տ. Արամ Ա. Կաթողիկոսին: Իր հետ եպիսկոպոսական օծում ստացան նաեւ՝ Գերբ. Տ. Տիրայր Եպսկ. Փանոսեան, տեսուչ Կաթողիկոսարանի տպարանին, Գերբ. Տ. Վարուժան Եպսկ. Հերկելեան, տեսուչ Ճիպէլլի «Թուրոց Բոյն»-ին, Գերբ. Տ. Սեպուհ Եպսկ. Սարգիսեան, կաթողիկոսական փոխանորդ Դամասկոսի թեմին, եւ Գերբ. Տ. Մուշեղ Եպսկ. Մարտիրոսեան, առաջնորդ Ամերիկայի Արեւմտեան Թեմին:

Եպիսկոպոսական ձեռնադրութեան եւ օծման այս արարողութեան ներկայ գտնուեցան Արեւելեան Ամերիկայի եւ Գանատայի Թեմի Առաջնորդ՝ Բարձր. Տ. Մեսրոպ Արքեպիսկոպոս Աշնեան, թեմի Ազգային Վարչութեան ատենապետ՝ Պր. Օննիկ Մարաշեան

եւ տիկինը՝ Վերգին Մարաշեան, Թորոնթոյի հայ համայնքի գործօն անդամներէն եւ թեմի սարկաւազաց դասու ներկայացուցիչ՝ Մանուէլ Արկ. Շէիրեան:

Օծման արարողութենէն ետք եւ յաւարտ սուրբ պատարագի, Կաթողիկոսարանի սեղանատան մէջ նորօծ եպիսկոպոսները, իրենց ընտանեկան պարագաները եւ բարեկամները եւ այդ առիթով Կաթողիկոսարան ժամանած պաշտօնական հիւրերը նաշի հիւրը եղան վեհափառ Հայրապետին:

Նոյն երեկոյեան պաշտօնական հիւրասիրութիւն մը տեղի ունեցաւ ի պատիւ նորօծ եպիսկոպոսներուն: Այդ հիւրասիրութեան ընթացքին Արեւելեան Ամերիկայի եւ Գանատայի թեմի Առաջնորդ Բարձրաշնորհ Տ. Մեսրոպ Արքեպիսկոպոս Աշնեան, Ս. Գրիգոր Լուսաւորիչ, Ս. Մեսրոպ Մաշտոցի եւ Ս. Վարդան Մամիկոնեանի դիմաբանակներով եպիսկոպոսական գեղակերտ մատանի նշանակեց Գանատայի իր փոխանորդին՝ Գերբ. Տ. Խաժակ Եպսկ. Յակոբեանին եւ Ամերիկայի Արեւմտեան Թեմի

Catholicos Aram I

(Continued from page 1)

1968 and received the title "Vartabed" in 1970. He received his episcopal ordination in 1980. He was elected and consecrated as the Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia on July 1, 1995, after serving as Primate of the Armenian Orthodox community in Lebanon for 15 years.

His Holiness has had a life-long devotion to the worldwide ecumenical movement and he is the first Orthodox and the youngest person to be elected as the Moderator of the Central and Executive Committees of the World Council of Churches. He is one of the founding members of the Middle East Council of Churches which was established in 1974. In his position as the General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations of the Cilician Catholicate, he participated in the Nairobi (1975), Vancouver (1983) and Canberra (1991) General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches.

Besides his responsibilities in the WCC, Catholicos Aram has been a member of the Oriental Orthodox—Eastern Orthodox Dialogue; a founding member of Orthodox—Evangelical Dialogue; a member of the Standing Committee of Pro Oriente, a Roman Catholic ecumenical foundation; and Honorary President of the World Religion's Museums Foundation.

Catholicos Aram has written numerous articles in English, French, and Armenian as well as 11 books of which seven were written and published in English. Some of his most recent works include, *With the People* (in Armenian); *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (in English); *The Incarnation of the Gospel in Cultures: A Missionary Event* (in English), and *Nerses the Gracious and Church Unity* (in English).

During the first year of his pontifical ministry His Holiness made pontifical visits to Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Cyprus, Greece, and the Western United States. He has met with Patriarch Shenouda III (in Cairo); Patriarch Parthenios (in Alexandria), Patriarch Hazim (in Damascus), Patriarch Zakka (in Damascus); Patriarch Sfeir (in Lebanon), Patriarch Hakim (in Lebanon), Patriarch Hayek (in Lebanon), Patriarch Aleksy II (in Moscow), Archbishop Khrysostomos (in Cyprus), and Archbishop Seraphim (in Athens). He has also met with the Presidents of Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Cyprus, Greece, Armenia, and the United States of America. ✦

Illustrated History Book Offered by ANEC

A limited number of copies of *Armenia in Ancient and Medieval Times*, which was written several years ago by Dr. Robert Bedrosian, for the Armenian National Education Committee, is available for sale.

The book, which includes illustrations, photographs, and maps, is suitable for students who wish to learn more about the history of Greater Armenia beginning with the Urartian era through to the fourteenth century.

Armenia in Ancient and Medieval Times may be obtained by mailing a check payable to ANEC in the amount of \$10.00 plus \$4.00 for shipping and handling. For more information please call the ANEC office, 212-689-7231. ✦

Առաջնորդ՝ Գերբ. Տ. Մուշեղ Եպսկ. Մարտիրոսեանին: Եպիսկոպոսական այդ զոյգ մատանիները նուիրած էին Թորոնթոյարմայի Թիթիգեան եղբայրներուն կողմէ:

Կը շնորհաւորեմք նորօծ եպիսկոպոսները եւ բոլորին կը մաղթենք երկար եւ արդիւնաշատ ծառայութիւն Հայ եկեղեցւոյ իշխանի իրենց հոգեւոր պատասխանատուութեանց մէջ:



His Eminence Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate, is pleased to announce

The First Pontifical Visit of His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia

October 1 – 7
New York–New Jersey Metropolitan Area

October 7 – 8
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October 9 – 10
Washington, D.C.

October 11 & 12
Granite City, Illinois

October 14 & 15
Chicago, Illinois

October 16
Waukegan, Illinois and Racine, Wisconsin

October 17 – 20
Detroit, Michigan

October 20
Albany, New York

October 22
North Andover, Massachusetts

October 23
Worcester and Whitinsville, Massachusetts

October 24
Springfield–Indian Orchard, Massachusetts

October 25
Providence, Rhode Island

October 25 – 28
Boston, Massachusetts

October 29
Vancouver, B.C.

October 30 – 31, November 1 – 2
Toronto and Cambridge

November 3
Ottawa

November 4 – 10
Montreal

Watch for Details

**The Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America.
Eastern United States and Canada**

