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Aram I in Eastern United States & Canada



A high point of the visit was the Pontifical Divine Liturgy in the historic Grace Church on October 5. Grace Church was the site of the first Armenian Liturgy celebrated in New York nearly 110 years ago.



In each community he visited the Catholicos immediately performed the traditional blessing of bread and salt, as this photo shows in Toronto.



Vehapar began his pontifical visit in the New York-New Jersey area. This photo, taken at St. Illuminator's Cathedral, New York City, is his first of many Hrashapar Services. His Holiness's message delivered on this occasion is on page 2.

St. Sarkis



Children and young adults played an important part in the entire visit. In this photo Vehapar is with scouts in Chicago.

From the Editor...

Most of this special issue is dedicated to the visit of His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, to the Eastern Prelacy.

For the duration of his visit, which began October 1 and continued through to November 12 His Holiness was enthusiastically greeted with extraordinarily large turnouts of the Faithful. More than anything the visit showed how much the parishes within the Prelacy had grown.

It is impossible to do justice to Vehapar's visit within these few pages, but I hope it at least gives a hint of the scope and flavor of the journey.

The journey began in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area and concluded in Canada. In each community he visited with the faithful of the local parish, as well as the local schools and old-age homes, and ecumenical friends and political leaders. Wherever possible forums with young adults took place, providing His Holiness an opportunity to establish a dialogue with our younger generations.

During the banquet in New York at the Plaza Hotel the chairman of the Prelacy's Executive Council, Mr. Onnic Marashian, asked why so many of our people have a "stubborn attachment to the ancient and historic See of Cilicia," and then went on to explain as follows:

"It is, I think...the intuitive sense of a dispersed people's loyalty to a Catholicosate that suffered with its people, that went into exile with its people... And, at the beginning of this century, the Catholicosate of Cilicia was forced out again and went into exile to be with its people in the killing river valleys of Syria and Mesopotamia. And miracle of miracles, this homeless Catholicosate found refuge on the hospitable shores of the Mediterranean and in the plains of Syria and it brought this multitude of waifs, decultured, turkified, almost extinct, back to life, and gave them back their faith, their Christianity, their language, their culture, their identity and their sense of belonging. And so it is, Your Holiness, that the See of Cilicia, long a symbol of suffering and exile, rejection and denial, has become a living symbol of resilience, rebirth and resurrection."

Photographs in this issue are by: J.K. Hovhanness, Berge Ara Zobian, and Bedo Der Bedrossian.

OUTREACH

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Towards the 21st Century with Renewed Commitment

by Catholicos Aram I

I give thanks to God for granting me this opportunity to come to the United States for my first pontifical visit to our people on the East Coast of the United States and Canada who are under the spiritual care of the Catholicosate of Cilicia. The Armenian American community is close to my heart, for I studied in New York 22 years ago and have frequently visited the United States as part of my ecumenical responsibilities. I, therefore, know our community with its suffering and hopes, with its achievements and struggles, and particularly with its firm and exemplary attachment to our spiritual, cultural, and national values, traditions, and aspirations. Therefore, with the words of the Psalmist, "I am so joyful" for being this time in this church, as Catholicos of Cilicia. In other words, with you, as the living church of God. I have come here as a shepherd to be with my flock. I have come here in the words of the Gospel, "to know my flock," to know more about its needs and expectations. In fact, knowledge is the source of greater responsibility and service.

I would like to greet your Prelate, Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, in the spirit of love. I know him very well and have followed his activities closely. He has been serving you for 20 years now with a profound sense of responsibility and strong commitment. On this solemn occasion I want to express my appreciation for his devoted service to our community. I believe that Archbishop Ashjian will continue to help strengthen the witness of the Catholicosate of Cilicia and the Armenian Church with renewed faith and committed engagement.

I greet all prelacy related committees with fatherly love. The Armenian Church is essentially a people's church. The people play a pivotal role in all domains, aspects, and at all levels of church life. The Church and the people are one whole. Hence all members and all organizations and structures acting in our community are integral parts of the life and witness of our Church. Therefore, I want to seize this opportunity to express my appreciation to all those committees that are actively participating for an efficient witness of the Armenian Church.

And, I greet with fatherly love and care all members of our community. I pray to the almighty God to illuminate the life of each and every Armenian, to enrich our community with His wisdom and to sustain it with His love.

I embark on this pontifical visit with the theme "towards the 21st century with renewed commitment," a theme which I believe should and will challenge each Armenian to give a profound meaning and a clear orientation and purpose to her and his life.

We are on the threshold of the 21st century. We are living in a world marked with growing crises, uncertainties, and ambiguities, a world which constantly challenges us as church and nation to identify our own place, and to reaffirm and articulate our own identity in the families of churches and nations. Who are we and what should we do and become? Who are we and what is our specific vocation in the United

This is the full text of the first message of His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, delivered in Armenian and English in the Cathedral of St. Gregory the Illuminator upon his arrival in New York, October 1, 1997. His Holiness's visit took him to virtually every parish within the Eastern Prelacy in the United States and Canada through to November 10.

States and Canada? I would like to remind our people of a few facts and reaffirm a few convictions that must constitute, in my judgment, the driving force and motto of each Armenian.

I. We are a Christian people and as such we should live our Christian faith concretely in our lives.

It is meaningless to remember our fathers, their sacred life, their heroic struggle, their spiritual achievements, and their martyrdom if we are not faithful followers of their path. It is futile to have pride in being the first Christian nation in the world if the Christian way of life is not an integral part of our daily lives. In fact, Christian faith is not just liturgy or dogma, membership in a church, or a nominal identity. Christian faith is life which must be lived existentially. We do not become Christians simply by attending worship; we become Christians by participating actively and fully in the life and mission of our Church. Our forefathers perceived and practiced their Christian faith in this way. Christianity for us has never been a passive existence or an emotional state of being. It became a committed struggle and a continuous creation in the realms of spirit and intellect. It became a self-sacrificial witness (martyria) in life and death, for those truths and values which constitute the basis of the Gospel.

Under the difficult conditions of our present life, how faithfully do we live out our Christian faith? In the context of American society where spiritual values and moral principles are becoming more and more marginal and obsolete, to what extent are our children remaining attached to the values, traditions, and goals which have formed our Armenian Christian identity, and have given us a clear orientation through the upheavals of our history? To be obedient to our Lord Jesus Christ, to follow the path of our Fathers who had Christ "as the way" of their life, and translate the Christian faith into our daily lives: This is our first and fundamental obligation as Armenian Christian people. In fact to be truly Armenian means to be truly Christian. Our Christian identity and our Armenian identity are inseparably and deeply interconnected; they condition and enrich each other.

II. Although we have become a diaspora people, yet we have our homeland which is everlasting.

We did not go into diaspora by our own choice. Our enemy through the genocide and exile uprooted us from our centuries-old homeland. The Armenian Diaspora, in spite of the difficult conditions, preserved and kept intact its Armenian identity, struggled and dreamt of a free and independent

Armenia.

Today, thanks to God, we once again have a free and independent Armenia. However, it is not enough to simply take pride and joy in this fact. It is crucial that we bring our active participation to the sacred work of building the nation and the state. It is true that we are citizens of different countries and as such we have a primary responsibility to fulfill our civil obligations in those countries. Yet, we have a homeland that belongs to us and keeps reminding us that we all belong to one nation. While we are not physically living in Armenia, Armenia must become a living reality in our lives. We have to do our utmost to deepen the independence of Armenia, organize its state institutions, and improve the economic life of our people. We have to make a supreme effort to strengthen the struggle of Karabagh for self-determination.

Helping Armenia is not a humanitarian task. It is a sacred vocation of each and every Armenian since we all belong to Armenia whether we are living there or elsewhere. This profound sense of belonging to Armenia must be tangibly manifested in our own lives. We also expect that our brothers and sisters in Armenia to look at Armenians in the Diaspora with the same perspective, considering them as an inseparable part of the one nation and the one homeland.

III. We are one Nation and one Church.

We have always been one nation and one church in spite of inner tensions, and conflicts often imposed by historical circumstances. We must never forget that disunity has weakened the inner strength of our people, and has made us vulnerable to foreign influences. More than at any other time, at this crucial moment of our history, we have to think and act with the vision of unity; this vision will sustain our reflection and action, and will become the driving force of our individual and community life.

I want to reaffirm here what I have stated on different occasions, that the Armenian Church is one; it has never been two and it will never be two. The Armenian Church has one origin, one history, one dogma, one hierarchy, and one mission. Any other perception or interpretation is simply unacceptable. It is true that due to historical circumstances two Catholicosates emerged in the life of the one and the same Church, but, our Church has never been divided. One has to make a clear distinction between the undivided oneness of the Armenian Church and the jurisdictional or hierarchical expressions of the Church.

The Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, the Mother See of the Armenian Church, and the Catholicosate of Cilicia, living under different conditions, have always served the same Church and the same people as co-workers and partners. It is true that sometimes non-religious factors have created misunderstandings and tensions in their relations. But, in spite of tremendous obstacles of various nature and scope, the two Sees have always worked together, and served our Church together.

(Continued on page 5)

A Pontifical Message from Antelias...

Upon his return to Antelias from his first pontifical visit to the Eastern Prelacy of the United States and Canada, His Holiness Aram I issued the following Pontifical Message.

I greet you with fatherly blessings and love from the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon.

This morning upon my return to Antelias from my first pontifical visit to our diocese of the East Coast of the United States of America and Canada, in the Cathedral of St. Gregory the Illuminator, I rendered thanks and glory to Almighty God for having granted me the excellent opportunity as pontiff to be with my flock entrusted to my spiritual care and, in the words of the Gospel, "to know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14).

In fact, I spent 42 days with our people visiting almost all areas of the East Coast of the United States and Canada. I met our people in the churches, in the community centers, in the schools, and homes for the aged. I talked with the youth and with senior citizens, intellectuals and university students and people from all walks of life. I engaged in frank and open dialogue with all of them. I learned about their experiences and achievements, expectations and concerns. In other words, I was exposed to a wide spectrum of our community life in its various aspects, dimensions and manifestations.

And now, as I think back of the wonderful days of my pontifical visit full of important events, significant achievements and enriching experiences, I want to extend my warmest thanks and high appreciation to our Prelate His Eminence Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian who organized my visit meticulously, and followed its full implementation closely. I would like also to express my deep appreciation to the Vicar of Canada, His Grace Bishop Khajag Hagopian and to the Vicar for the East Coast, Very Rev. Anoushavan Tanielian, the clergy, the Executive Council, the Board of Trustees, the Parish Councils and to all organizations, institutions and the press who contributed to the visitation program by preparing and participating in different activities and events.

At the completion of this long pontifical pilgrimage which, I believe, brought forth new breath of spiritual renewal and national awakening in our community, I would like to underscore a few basic facts and highlight some significant aspects.

Significant Presence of the Faithful

I observed with great satisfaction the great number of people who are gathered around the church and the community structures. In fact, in all parish communities that I visited, whether large or small, I saw a considerable number of people attending church services, taking part in community activities, in cultural functions and in youth gatherings. People came to meet their chief-shepherd with great enthusiasm, with a sense of renewed awareness of their spiritual and national belonging. I believe that this positive

and spontaneous response of the people, in spite of many practical difficulties, is a concrete manifestation of their firm attachment to their community and to its related institutions. The sense of being together as a community is for me one of the most characteristic features and promising signs that was eloquently expressed at every stage of my visit.

Well Organized Structures

My pontifical visit provided me a unique opportunity to have a comprehensive view of our community in all its dimensions and domains. I came to have a better understanding of Prelacy and parish related bodies, the way they function and set their priorities. I was also largely informed about the activities of other community related organizations and institutions. In all these structures, I was very much impressed with the sense of organization, discipline, and responsibility. The life and work of the people in these structures are sustained by mutual accountability and sharing, and are motivated with creativity and commitment. This is, in fact, a common reality that pertains to all dioceses and communities under the jurisdiction of the Catholicosate of Cilicia. It acquires, however, more importance and significance in countries such as the United States and Canada where organized community life is so difficult due to distances, social make-up, work patterns, and life-styles.

"Our Church must become more responsive to the challenges of the new times and needs and expectations of our people. During my meetings with youth a number of pertinent questions were raised that must be dealt with seriously by our church. We can no more ignore moral, ethical, and social issues that in one way or another also touch our youth in the pluralist societies of today. Our church in the United States and Canada must listen to these questions and make them part of its pastoral service and Christian witness."

Vitality and Efficiency

I was deeply moved by the vitality and creativity of our institutions and organizations. The Prelacy, which is the center of our diocesan life, is not just an office or administration: it is a shining center of activities. It is at the Prelacy, under the leadership of the Prelate and the Executive Council that priorities are established, and important initiatives are taken. It is at the Prelacy that major events are organized, clear directions are given to parishes, and their activities are scrutinized. I was impressed with the amount of energy, enthusiasm, and dedication that characterize the work of our pastors, boards of trustees, the ladies guilds, educational committees, day and Saturday schools, associations of senior citizens, youth organizations and other social institutions. In fact, our community structures are not mere committees or offices, projects, or paper work. They are essentially people committed through service to the ideals and goals that mark the life and witness of our church, and the aspirations and struggle of our nation.

Ecumenical Relations

One of the most important aspects of

my visit was the ecumenical encounters that I had almost in all parishes I visited. I was warmly received by church leaders. The reciprocal visits and working meetings deepened our ecumenical partnership. Furthermore, the historic meeting with the Ecumenical Patriarch in Boston, my visit to the headquarters of the National Council of Churches in New York, and the message I gave to the General Assembly of this Council in Washington came to emphasize the profound ecumenical significance of this pontifical visit. It also came to indicate the well-organized and intense inter-church relations and collaboration of the Prelacy on national and local levels.

Active Political Involvement

I was so glad to witness the extensive and dynamic political contacts that the Prelacy and our organizations have established with political circles and government authorities on state and federal levels. It is important to note that in these relations besides local and domestic issues, questions related to Armenia, Karabagh, and the Armenian cause acquire an important place. In fact, during my meetings with the state officials, senators, congressmen, governors and mayors, I came to realize the serious political work done by our organizations. Today, more than any time, our communities in the United States and Canada are actively engaged in the local political life. The highest interests

of our nation with a homeland, history, and culture. Our forefathers shed their blood in order that we remain a distinct nation with our own specific identity, Christian traditions and spirituality, and with our cultural and moral values. The sense of nationhood must be constantly deepened in your life and common consciousness. You are an integral part of your societies, yet at the same time you belong to a nation. You must, therefore, re-organize and fulfill your individual and community life in a way that it becomes a major asset in nation-building process.

b) The Armenian Church plays a pivotal role in nation-building process. In fact, the church has never been for us just a spiritual structure or a place of worship, but a God-given reality that has embraced the totality of the life of our nation. It was not by accident that our people have always felt themselves more Armenian and more secure in the Armenian Church. The Armenian Church gave us life where death surrounded us. It became a source of light where the darkness dominated our life. It became hope-generating reality where hopelessness invaded our life at the most critical moments of our history. Today, at this decisive juncture of our history, the Armenian Church remains for us the fortress where our authentic Armenian identity is forged and kept alive and intact. Therefore, you must consider our church as a sacred treasure of your life.

Our church in the United States and Canada faces two major concerns that must be treated seriously and responsibly:

First, almost in all my public interventions I touched the question of unity. I stated clearly and emphatically that one united jurisdiction is an imperative and that the prevailing situation must be normalized through a dynamic process of collaboration, by building mutual trust and understanding. I believe that this process should penetrate and permeate the entire life of our people in order that unity may emerge from the actual life of the people, and that it may reach its full realization gradually with the active participation of the people. Therefore, I advise you to avoid all kinds of attitudes and activities that may hamper this process. I appeal to you all to initiate programs and activities that strengthen and expand mutual collaboration within a clear vision of unity.

Second, the renewal of the Armenian Church remains a priority concern. Our Church must become more responsive to the challenges of the new times and needs and expectations of our people. During my meetings with the youth a number of pertinent questions were raised that must be dealt with seriously by our church. We can no more ignore moral, ethical, and social issues that in one way or another also touch our youth in the pluralist societies of today. Our church in the United States and Canada must listen to these questions and make them part of its pastoral service and Christian witness.

c) The Armenian culture too has a major part in nation-building. It was not a sheer coincidence that the Arme-

(continued on page 4)

Message (continued)

nian culture was formed and developed in the Armenian Church, and the Christian faith was re-incarnated in the Armenian life through the Armenian culture. The close identification of faith and culture gave us the force to survive as a distinct church and nation. In a Diaspora situation our cultural heritage plays an instrumental role in maintaining our identity against those trends and tendencies that constantly jeopardize our particularities. People and nations cannot survive without referring to their roots. You must, therefore, strengthen your roots by enriching your life with our cultural values and traditions.

d) The pursuit of our human rights as a people is integral to the process of nation-building. Nations live with dreams. We too have our own unfulfilled demands and unrealized dreams which are inseparable parts of our life and our texture. We should never forget the Armenian Genocide, the first genocide of the 20th century. We should never forget our one and one-half million martyrs and their sacred legacy. Our rights still remain violated. The Catholicosate of Cilicia, being itself a victim of the Genocide, has a special responsibility in the pan-Armenian struggle for justice. You are the children of martyrs and you too have the sacred obligation to take an active part in all endeavors aiming at the restitution of justice to our people.

e) Being a nation means having a homeland. Our forefathers imbued the soil of Armenia with their faith, tears and blood. Our homeland was several times devastated and ruined by enemies. And now, thanks to God, we have once more a free and independent Armenia which is the home of each and every Armenian living in this world. We all have obligations and rights towards our homeland. We should first of all fulfill our obligations and then claim our rights. Armenia is passing through a period of transition full of uncertainties and facing many challenges. Therefore, it is vitally imperative that we Armenians living in the Diaspora make helping our brothers and sisters in Armenia our top priority.

f) We shall never forget Karabagh where our people are struggling for their legitimate rights for self-determination and independence. Karabagh was ours, is ours now and will always remain as such. People living in Karabagh are not newcomers; they are indigenous people, they belong to the land and the land belongs to them. We must continue supporting Karabagh by all our means.

g) To achieve all these goals, we must strengthen the unity of our people. We have and we may have different views. We may sometimes agree and sometimes disagree on certain matters. But this should never lead us to internal controversies or polarization. The seeds of division and estrangement must be once and for all destroyed. We should remember that we all have the same roots and are different branches of the same tree. Let us therefore, in unity engage ourselves in the sacred task of church, nation and state building.

This is the way that each Armenian should follow. This is the way that you should follow with renewed faith, hope and courage.

Aram I

Historic Meeting of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Catholicos Aram Takes Place in Watertown

The New England community turned out in large numbers to witness the historic meeting of the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, Patriarch of Constantinople and New Rome, and the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, His Holiness Aram I, on Wednesday, October 28, at St. Stephen's Church in Watertown, Massachusetts.

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, noted that "this unprecedented meeting was undoubtedly the high point of the Catholicos's visit to the Eastern Prelacy. It was an event that those who attended will remember for many years to come."

Catholicos Aram's pontifical visit to the Eastern United States and Canada coincided with the visit of His All Holiness to the United States—a fact which Patriarch Bartholomew noted in his comments, "What a happy coincidence, that we are both here in the United States at the same time."

The Ecumenical Patriarch I, the spiritual leader of more than 250 million Eastern Orthodox Christians worldwide, began his visit to the United States on October 24 in New York City where he was greeted by a vast number of dignitaries and faithful of the large orthodox community. On Sunday, October 25, the Patriarch led a service of Divine Liturgy at Madison Square Garden with the attendance of more than 20,000 people.

Hours before the Patriarch's arrival at St. Stephen's Church police had closed many of the streets leading to the church. Many busloads of the faithful of the orthodox churches arrived in hopes of catching a glimpse of their 57-year-old Patriarch who is counted as the 270th in line dating back to the Apostle Andrew, brother of St. Peter.

The two church leaders were escorted into St. Stephen's Church by an impressive and colorful procession of clergymen, choristers, acolytes, cross and banner bearers, candle holders, censer and fan bearers, with all of



Patriarch Bartholomew and Catholicos Aram at the altar of St. Stephen's Church in Watertown present their message to the Faithful.

the pomp and circumstance characteristic of orthodoxy.

A meaningful and impressive ecumenical thanksgiving service in Armenian, Greek, and English took place with biblical readings, prayers, and hymns.

Both church leaders addressed the faithful. Catholicos Aram I welcomed His All Holiness Bartholomew with warm words of greetings, expressing the joy of the Armenian community being given this opportunity to welcome His All Holiness. The Catholicos noted how the two have become true and good friends through the years especially during their long association with the World Council of Churches. His Holiness had special words of praise for Patriarch Bartholomew for his valued contribution to the World Council of Churches especially in terms of the Orthodox participation. He also noted the warm relationship between the Patriarch and the Armenian church worldwide with both the Mother See of Etchmiadzin and the Great House of Cilicia.

In his address Patriarch Bartholomew said,

"Your Beatitude, we are no strangers to one another. For some time now, we have journeyed together, sharing the common endeavor of bilateral and Inter-Christian meetings. These meetings have served to increase interest in the Patristic legacy of the Eastern Church, through a steady familiarization with the depth and wealth of the ecclesiastical, theological and spiritual experience of the first and undivided Church of Christ.

"So often, we have seen that we hold the greater part of the theological tradition of our two Churches in common. That which unites us, is greater than that which divides us. Indeed, those things that divide us can be said to be external historical and human factors, which have hindered the rapprochement of our Churches.... We have had many opportunities to confirm with Your Beatitude, that our points of view coincide on a whole range of subjects. Your auspicious term of office as Chairman of the Committee on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches has had substantive implications. Therefore, we welcomed your accession to the famous Throne of the Catholicos of Cilicia for the Armenians with utmost satisfaction. Your rich experience, your proven intellect, your deep theological sensitivity, and your personality create a guarantee you will carry out the weighty responsibilities of the Primate of this Church with all success."

The Patriarch also had warm words for His Holiness Karekin I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of Armenians and noted, "We made a sacred journey to Armenia only three months ago and experienced both old and new treasures from the wealth of the Armenian people. We witnessed the religious, cultural, and national monuments, both great and small."

Student Exchange Proposed

Expressing the need for better mutual understanding, the Ecumenical Patriarch proposed "an exchange of students and people between the Holy



Doves of peace and brotherhood are released at the conclusion of the service.

Historical Meeting (continued)

Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and the Theological Seminary of Antelias in Lebanon." The proposal was received with great enthusiasm.

Joint Declaration Issued

On the occasion of this historic meeting, the two church leaders issued a joint declaration, giving thanks to "Almighty God for granting us this opportunity to meet in the context of our visits to our respective Churches in the United States of America, as brothers in Christ, called to serve the people of God."

The joint statement went on to say, "Indeed, this is not the first time that we meet. For many years, we have prayed together, reflected together, and worked together in the ecumenical movement, for the common witness and the visible unity of the Church. Now we are called by God and our Churches to serve with greater responsibility to our people. We believe that the Churches must intensify their efforts toward an even greater partnership. Ecumenism is no more a matter of choice. The Ecumenical movement joins Churches in common Christian witness and involves them in a process of growing together through mutual understanding and trust toward the realization of Christian unity." [See full text of the joint declaration].

The prayer service came to an end with the benedictions by His All Holiness Bartholomew I and His Holiness Aram I, with the Greek hymn of praise, "Tis Theos Megas," and the Lord's Prayer.

As the procession left the church to the strains of "Oorakh Ler Soorp Yegeghetsee" (Rejoice, Holy Church), the Catholicos and the Patriarch released two white doves at the door of the church, as a symbolic gesture of peace and thanksgiving. ✚

Archbishop Ashjian Attends State Department Dinner

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian had received a host of invitations for various events in honor of the Ecumenical Patriarch, but was unfortunately unable to attend all because of his commitment to be with the Catholicos during the duration of the pontifical visit. His Eminence, however, did take a one-day leave and went to Washington, DC, in order to attend a reception at the White House hosted by the First Lady. Archbishop Ashjian was warmly received by the First Lady. He also had the opportunity to discuss details of the joint meeting in Boston with the Ecumenical Patriarch, which was a few days away. That same evening Archbishop Ashjian attended a dinner at the State Department hosted by the Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. The next morning, before rejoining the pontifical entourage, His Eminence attended a breakfast hosted by Vice President Al Gore. ✚

"He loses all who loses the right moment."

—Spanish Proverb—

**Joint Declaration of
His All Holiness Bartholomew I,
Archbishop of Constantinople,
New Rome and the Ecumenical Patriarch
and
His Holiness Aram I,
Catholicos of Cilicia and
Moderator of the World Council of Churches**

We, Bartholomew I the Ecumenical Patriarch and Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, give thanks to Almighty God for granting us this opportunity to meet, in the context of our pontifical visit to our respective churches in the United States of America, as brothers in Christ called to serve the One Church of God.

Indeed, this is not the first time that we meet. For many years we have prayed together, reflected together, and worked together in the World Council of Churches and in the ecumenical movement at large for the common witness and the visible unity of the church. And now as we are called by God and our churches to serve with greater responsibility to our people, we believe that our ecumenical engagement should be deepened and expanded further. We believe that the churches can no more live in isolation from each other. Ecumenism is no more a choice. The Ecumenical movement is a movement of the Holy Spirit that brings the churches together and involves them in a process of growing together through mutual understanding and trust towards the full realization of Christian unity.

In fact, the Orthodox Churches have played an active role in the promotion of ecumenical goals. They have been instrumental in forming and shaping the World Council of Churches by making it the most comprehensive and global manifestation of the ecumenical movement. As we move towards the third millennium, it is vitally important that the Orthodox Churches re-articulate and re-strengthen their commitment to the ecumenical movement in general and the World Council of Churches in particular.

We also consider the on-going Oriental Orthodox–Eastern Orthodox theological dialogue of decisive importance for the future of Orthodoxy and the ecumenical movement.

It is with these thoughts in mind and hope in heart that we reaffirm our commitment to the goals and the vision of the ecumenical movement.

Aram I
Catholicos of Cilicia

28-10-1997
Boston, USA

Bartholomew I
Ecumenical Patriarch

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Renewed Commitment (cont. from p 2)

Therefore, it is vital that at this decisive juncture in our history, the two Catholicosates, as inseparable parts of one Church, establish a closer and more organized collaboration. I firmly believe that such a collaboration will strengthen further the unity of our Church and people.

My dear Armenian American community. I know quite well the crisis that stirs your community life. I personally experienced during my student years your crisis in all its aspects, dimensions and manifestations. It is not my intention to open the dark pages of your history and identify the reasons for this divisive situation. I don't want to blame anyone. But, I would like to announce here clearly and in a straightforward way, as I did last year in Los Angeles, that this division should not prevail. The existence of two jurisdictions, two diocesan structures, two primates in the same place is unacceptable. One united jurisdiction in America is an imperative. This abnormal situation must be normalized through an orderly process and within a clear vision.

I would like at this point to make two important observations which should become the bases of our reflection and action in this process.

First, we must all realize that the key to normalizing this situation is in the hands of our people. The people cannot accept division or unity imposed from above or from outside. The people should determine their own future. In the life of the church and particularly in the life of the Armenian Church, the will of the people is pivotal. It is the people who got divided, and the people who must be united. In other words, unity should emerge from the life of the people as a natural process and it should be approached by them, acquiring its concrete manifestation in the life of the community.

Second, the unity is not realized through structural reunification or jurisdictional and administrative readjustment; it can be achieved only by creating an atmosphere of understanding and trust in the life of the people. Administrative unity is futile when it is not tangible in the life of the people through mutual trust. This mutual trust results only from full and unconditional collaboration. I still remember the sad picture our community life displayed some 20 years ago. In fact, many things have changed. We can easily identify positive and promising signs of unity in all aspects of the life of the community today. The messages of the Catholicos and the joint initiatives of the two primates have certainly had their strong impact on the creation of this encouraging atmosphere. However, I do believe that it was mainly the mutual determination to work together that brought about these positive changes in the life of our community. That is why the collaboration aiming at confidence building must be deepened and re-organized further as the most efficient way to the full realization of unity.

It is with these thoughts in mind and hope in heart that I appeal to all members of the Armenian American community, and particularly to the primates and diocesan committees to deepen and expand further the profound sense of belonging to one nation and one church. As Catholicos of Cilicia I am

(Continued on page 6)

Here and There With Vehapar



His Holiness and Archbishop Ashjian examine a rare manuscript donated to the Cilician See's Museum by well-known benefactor and collector, Karl Sogojan.

Granite City Church is Consecrated



One of the highlights of Vehapar's visit was the consecration of the new St. Gregory the Illuminator Church in Granite City, Illinois. Sunday, October 12 was a historic date for the members of this parish and their pastor, Rev. Vartan Kassabian. Appropriately, the new church was dedicated to the 1700th anniversary of the acceptance of Christianity as a state religion in Armenia. His Holiness anointed the altar while Archbishop Ashjian, and Bishops Khajag Hagopian and Moushegh Mardirossian anointed the pillars and the baptismal font. Following the consecration Vehapar celebrated the first Mass in the new church and delivered the sermon. After Mass, a banquet took place in Vehapar's honor attended by the Mayor, representatives of sister churches, and of course the Faithful of the community.



Vehapar at the opening of the renovated St. Illuminator School and Community Center in New York. At right is the principal, Ara Caprielian. At left is Ara Arslanian, a long-time supporter of the school.

Renewed Commitment

(Continued from page 5)

ready, in spite of my heavy schedule, to meet all our committees, organizations and our people without any distinction or discrimination.

To live out our Christian faith, to manifest concretely our belonging to the same homeland, nation and the Church, and to strengthen our unity, ought to be the guiding principle of the life and the work of each Armenian, each community and the whole Armenian nation.

The Armenian American community as well, must re-organize its life and identify its priorities in the light of these guiding principles and basic convictions. It is a fact that our community in America, in spite of difficult conditions of its life, remained firmly attached to the church, school and the culture, as well as, strongly committed to the Armenian cause. Furthermore, in spite of the inner tensions and estrangements from each other imposed by a particular period of its life, the Armenian American community remained committed to the common vision of unity. It is true that you give a clear articulation to that vision with strong faith and firm determination.

This is the challenge before every Armenian and the whole Armenian American community. You are called to translate this challenge into conscious awareness and responsible commitment as you move towards the 21st century.

I want to conclude my first message to our people in the United States and Canada with the following prayer: May the Triune God sustain and bless our people, our homeland and our church for His glory, and for His Kingdom, now and forever. ✙



Somehow word got out that Vehapar loves papaya and the ubiquitous papaya appeared just about everywhere.



The memorable Divine Liturgy at Grace Church in New York City and the magnificent choir, 140-voice strong, organized and directed by Very Rev. Meghrig Parikian.

Here and There With Vehapar



Sts. Vartanantz Church, Providence, Rhode Island.



St. Paul Church, Waukegan, Illinois.



Worcester and Whitinsville communities welcome Vehapar.



Mayor of Niagara Falls welcomes Vehapar.



Arriving in Troy, New York.



Young parishioners in Washington, DC area entertain His Holiness.



St. Sarkis Church, Dearborn, Michigan.

Vehapar in Canada



With the president of the National Assembly of Quebec.



Hundreds of young people came to meet the youth program in Montreal.



Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.



Vehapar addresses the community in Laval.



The procession leaving the Basilica of St. Marie du Monde in Montreal.

ԱՐԱՄ Ա. ԿԱԹՈՂԻԿՈՍ ԿԸ ՀԱՆԴԻՊԻ ՔԱՆԱՏԱՅԻ ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՐԱՆԻ ՆԱԽԱԳԱՀԻՆ ԵՒ ԱՐՏԱՔԻՆ ԳՈՐԾՈՑ ՆԱԽԱՐԱՐԻՆ

Նրկուշարքի, 3 Նոյեմբրի առաւօտուն, Արամ Ա. Կաթողիկոս Մեծի Տանն Կիլիկիոյ իր պատուիրակութեան հետ միասին ժամանեց Քանատայի մայրաքաղաք Օթավա: Օղակայանին մէջ Վեհափառ Հայրապետը ընդունուեցաւ Մոնթրէլէն ժամանած Ընդունելութեան Յանձնախումբի, բնական իշխանութեանց ներկայացուցիչներուն, Քանատայի մօտ Լիբանանի դեսպան Քասէմ Ժապէրի, Քանատայի խորհրդարանի անդամ Սարգիս Ասատուրեանի եւ խումբ մը ազգայիններու կողմէ: Այլ ու հացի աւանդական օրհնութիւնէն ետք, խօսք առնելով Լիբանանի դեսպանը ողջունեց Վեհափառ Հայրապետին գալուստը Օթավա: Վեհափառ Հայրապետը իճէ հետ իր ողջոյնն ու բարեմաղորութիւնները փոխանցեց Լիբանանի դեսպանին եւ ներկաներուն: Յայտնեմք, որ ստիպողական կացութեան մը բերումով Քանատայի մօտ Հայաստանի դեսպանը չէր կրցած ներկայ գտնուիլ Վեհափառի ընդունելութեան:

Օղակայանէն Վեհափառը ուղղուեցաւ Վարչապետարան, ուր հանդիպում մը ունեցաւ Վարչապետին հետ, պաշտպանութեան նախարարին եւ երեք երեսփոխաններու ներկայութեան:

Ապա Վեհափառ Հայրապետը այցելեց Քանատայի Ընդհանուր Կառավարչին, որ որոշ իմաստով նախագահն է երկրին: Վեհափառ Հայրապետը իր պատուիրակութեան անդամներուն ներկայութեան կարճ հանդիպում մը ունեցաւ ընդհանուր կառավարչին հետ, որմէ ետք Վեհափառը եւ Կառավարչը ունեցան շուրջ մէկ ժամ տեսողութեամբ առաճօն հանդիպում մը

ԱՐԱՄ Ա. ԿԱԹՈՂԻԿՈՍ ԿԸ ՀԱՆԴԻՊԻ ՔԱՆԱՏԱՅԻ ՎԱՐՉԱՊԵՏ Ժ. ՔՐԷՔԻԱՆԻՆ

Նրկուշարքի, 3 Նոյեմբրի առաւօտեան ժամը 11-ին, Քանատայի մայրաքաղաք Օթավայի մէջ Արամ Ա. Կաթողիկոս Մեծի Տանն Կիլիկիոյ հանդիպում մը ունեցաւ Քանատայի Վարչապետ Ժ. Քրէքիանի հետ վարչապետարանի իր գրասենեակին մէջ: Վեհափառ Հայրապետին շփախումբին մաս կը կազմէին Հիւսիսային Ամերիկայի Արեւելեան եւ Քանատայի բնի Առաջնորդ Մեսրոպ Արք. Աշնեան, Քանատայի շրջանի Առաջնորդական Փոխանորդ Խաթալ Եպսկ. Յակոբեան, Քանատայի մօտ Լիբանանի դեսպան Քասէմ Ժապէր, Քանատայի միակ հայ երեսփոխան Սարգիս Ասատուրեան, ինչպէս նաեւ Քանատայի Վեհափառի Ընդունելութեան Յանձնախումբի անդամներ Վիգէն Յովսէփեան, Յակոբ Տէր Խաչատուրեան, Հէրի Մարգարեան, Տէք. Ժիրայր Գասմանեան եւ Տէք. Ժան Առաքելեան:

Վարչապետին հետ հանդիպումը եղաւ երկու հանգրուանով: Առաջին հանգրուանին ներկայ եղան Վեհափառ Հայրապետի պատուիրակութեան բոլոր անդամները. իսկ երկրորդ հանգրուանին, Վեհափառ Հայրապետին հետ ներկայ եղան Մեսրոպ եւ Խաթալ Սրբազանները, Լիբանանի դեսպանն ու երեսփոխան Սարգիս Ասատուրեան:



With His Eminence Archbishop Michael Peers, wearing the Pectoral Cross presented to him by Vehapar, in Toronto.



With the Speaker of the House in Ottawa.



Vehapar enjoys the entertainment provided by a young student in Toronto.

Vehapar is Received & Honored



With the General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan.



Exchanging gifts with Cardinal John O'Connor at Archdiocese in New York.



With the Mayor of Worcester, Raymond Mariano.



At the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America with Archbishop Spyridon.



A joyful moment with Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua in Philadelphia.



Being welcomed at the Catholic Near East Relief Center in New York.



New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani presents a gift to Vehapar.



A visit to Armenia's Mission to the United Nations.



Sharing a lighter moment with the Serbian Metropolitan, Monsignor Christopher.



A prayer service at the Syrian Orthodox Church in Teaneck, New Jersey.



Presenting a Khatchkar to Archbishop Francis E. George of Chicago.

Kaloust & Emma Sogolian Sponsor Building of New Church in Armenia



Archbishop Ashjian and Mr. and Mrs. Sogolian examine the architectural plans for the new church the couple is sponsoring in the Vayk region of Armenia. There currently is no church in this area which has a population of about 40,000. Below is a view of the western facade of the new church which will be named St. Dertad Church.

The construction of a new church in an area of Armenia which has no church will be underwritten by the well-known benefactors, Kaloust and Emma Sogolian, of Michigan.

The announcement was made by His Eminence Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate and Executive Director of the 17th Centenary Commemoration Committee. The new church is being built in the Vayk region of Armenia near Yeghegnatzor which is about one hour's drive from Yerevan. It will probably be named St. Dertad, in honor of the King of Armenia who together with St. Gregory the Illuminator proclaimed Christianity as Armenia's state religion.

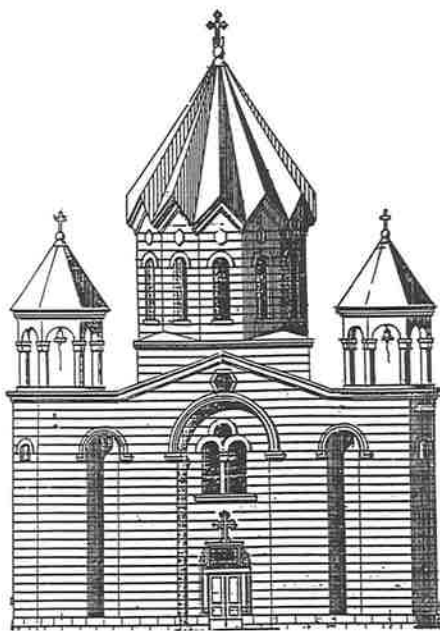
"Vayk was a new development during the soviet era," said Archbishop Ashjian, "and there was no church built, so the area residents do not have a house of worship. Now thanks to the generosity of this extraordinary couple the people of that area will have their own church."

According to the Prelate of Vayk and Siunik, His Grace Bishop Abraham, the new church will be serving a community of about 40,000 people. The architecture of the new church will be in keeping with pure Armenian style and will have a seating capacity of 400.

The project will be under the direct supervision of the Catholicate of Etchmiadzin and the 1700th Centenary Committee. The actual construction will be closely monitored at all stages by the committee overseeing the building and renovation of churches.

The Sogolians have been generous supporters of the Armenian Church and through the years have made major contributions for various projects. They were one of the major sponsors of the new museum of the Cilician Catholicate in Antelias, Lebanon, which will have its formal opening on March 30 during the 1998 pilgrimage to Antelias and Armenia. In recent years they financed the renovation of the secondary school in Talish in Karabagh.

They are noted collectors of Armenian manuscripts, paintings, and objects of art some of which they have generously contributed to museums. Their most recent donation—a rare and valuable 15th century manuscript—was made to His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, during his recent pontifical visit to the United



States. Their philanthropy has touched upon every aspect of Armenian life. They have been generous supporters of local churches such as St. Sarkis Church in Dearborn; they have sponsored the publication of many books, and recently they were in Paris to support Charles Aznavour's benefit concert.

Karl Kaloust Sogolian was born on December 18, 1924, in Detroit, Michigan, son of Paravon and Haiganoush Sogolian. His mother and father were devoted parents to their seven children and dedicated community members who encouraged their children to be active members of the Armenian community.

Kaloust graduated from Western High School and continued his education at the Detroit Institute of Technology, graduating with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering.

From his earliest recollection he wanted to have his own business because, in his words, "I never wanted anybody to tell me what to do." With perseverance and relentless efforts in 1951 he was able to open a modest machine shop, which from a humble beginning grew into a large and successful auto parts manufacturing.

Karl's love affair with machines made him an avid motorcycle and sports car driver, motoring through every State in the United States. Because of his love and respect for machines, he produced only high quality parts. Car manufacturers loved his trouble-free parts which earned him long-term contracts.

In 1955 while attending an Armenian community dinner in the

(continued on page 11)

Book Review...

The following review of *Armenian Church Patristic and Other Essays* by Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian appeared in the St. Nersess Theological Review (1:2 1996).

Reviewed by Abraham Terian

Unlike many other collected essays, this book maintains a thematic content which, unfortunately, is not indicated in the cumbersome title—or even in a subtitle. The following would have been a more suitable designation for its contents: *Studies in the Theology of St. Grigor Tat'ewac'i and Other Essays*, since more than half of the book deals with the thought of St. Grigor Tat'ewac'i, a prolific theologian of the fourteenth century—his understanding of the image of God in man, his sacramental doctrine, and his angelology (pp. 19–146). Three other essays complete Part I of the book, entitled "Church Doctrine and Teaching." They deal with the ecclesiology of St. Irenaeus, the ecumenical councils in the history of the Armenian Church, and, farther afield, a historical and theological assessment of cremation (pp. 147–193). Part II of the book, entitled "Historical Studies," has three essays that pertain to Hellenistic subjects: the first two deal with the aftermath of the conquests of Alexander the Great, first that of the Near East in general and then that of Armenia in particular; and the third with the Taurobolium, the sacramental sacrifice of a bull in certain mystery cults of the Greco-Roman world (pp. 197–226). This part concludes with another, farther-afield essay on the Millet system, the Ottoman jurisprudential empowerment of minorities within the Empire (pp. 227–251). In addition to generous notes with ample references to primary sources, each essay has its separate bibliography.

Reviewers of this book may become handicapped by the fact that it begins with a laudatory Foreword by Vigen Guroian that functions as both a preview and a review of the collected essays (pp. 9–11). Of course, this is for the benefit of the readers. Guroian's praise of the author's "intellectual integrity" and his ecclesiastical and theological commitment is well deserved. Modest about his own contribution, the author has the following disclaimer in the Preface: "I don't think I am vain enough to believe that I am presenting something new to the academic world, or a definitive word on the subjects treated; God forbid such an ambition!" (p. 14). However, with this publication Archbishop Ashjian makes some important contributions to scholarship, not only in his bringing to scholarly attention the hitherto little-studied works of Tat'ewac'i but also in his comprehensive treatment of an earlier, entangled period in the history of the Armenian Church. So also is his treatment of the mostly obscured Hellenization of Armenia. Moreover, his two essays at the end of the respective parts ("Cremation: A Historical and Theological Perspective" and "The Millet System") emanate from pastoral concerns and may be viewed as excellent examples of applied theology, having to do with the life of the church in the Armenian diaspora. Even though the reader is reminded of the fact that these essays collectively belong to the

time of the author's graduate studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, there is a degree of scholarly quality in them that is rarely seen even in post-doctoral research.

The three initial studies on Tat'ewac'i are particularly fascinating for someone interested in medieval theology. In the first we find a continuity of the Hellenistic Jewish (Philonic) understanding of the image of God in man as the imprint of His Logos in the human *nous* and its equation with the Divine Spirit breathed upon the earth-born man (Gen. 1:26–27; 2:7). The early Christological adaptation of this interpretation by the Fathers is here given a further Trinitarian interpretation (though not necessarily original with Tat'ewac'i). The second study with its focus on Baptism, Confirmation and Communion, provides a window into the understanding of the catechuminate in the fourteenth century Armenian Church. And so also with the third study, which provides an understanding of the extent of the influence of the "Celestial Hierarchy" of (Pseudo) Dionysius the Areopagite, which was translated into Armenian early in the eighth century by Step'anos Siwnee'i and Dawit' Hiwpatos, in Constantinople. Tat'ewac'i manifests recognizable milestones in the history of the interpretation of the above mentioned Genesis passages, the catechuminate, and the angelic hierarchy, all of which are discussed rather completely by the author—especially their place within the thought of Tat'ewac'i.

The preceding highlights do not reduce the significance of the other essays, which are worth reading for their insightful observations. Throughout, the author's theological concerns guide the treatment of his topics in an even and quite cautious fashion, as he moves from the medieval to the classical and also to the near-contemporary. The book reflects not only admirable scholarship permeated by incisive theological insights but also pastoral concerns laden with keen historical awareness.

It is hoped that the tidings of this book will bring in a stronger wave of interest in the theology of the Armenian Church, both past and present. ✚

Armenian Church Patristic and Other Essays

by Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian
is available at the
Prelacy Bookstore

Also available is
Archbishop Ashjian's newest book:
**Remembrance and
Hope: Essays of Faith
and Life**

For information contact
Prelacy Bookstore
212-689-7810

“...it is time to ask ourselves some very bold and honest questions. It is time sit down to evaluate the state of our young generation and the Church.”

Where Are You on Sundays?

by Deacon Antranig Azarian

sit down to evaluate the state of our young generation and the Church.

- It is estimated that only 2-3% of Armenians attend the Divine Liturgy on a regular basis. What do the other 97-98% of our people do on Sundays?

- The inter-marriage rate in the United States between Armenians and non-Armenians ranges between 50 to 60%. Do these married couples continue to come to the Armenian Church?

- The need for new parishes is gradually increasing, while the numbers of new priests is decreasing. Do we still consider clergyman a “job for those who cannot afford to do anything else,” or is it a call by God to serve the people?

- After the fall of the Soviet Union, there is constant and great need for spiritual nourishment in Armenia and the Diaspora. What are we doing as people towards achieving our goals, or are we leaving everything on the shoulders of the clergy?

What “bars” the Armenian youth today from attending church services?

Occasionally many teenagers and young adults complain that the church is not the place that fulfills their needs, and sometimes that it is the last place of priority for visitation on their agenda, because it is “not their place,” “old fashioned,” “non-communicative” for them.

Going to the Armenian Church is never a problem for these people. We see teenagers and young adults coming to church, but not to attend the Badarak or to pray. Mainly our youth show-up for basketball, educational, cultural gatherings and meetings. They furnish countless “itsy-bitsy” reasons for not “being able” or “not having the time” nor desiring to attend the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. These excuses extend from well-known cliches to down-right honest reasons. They range from, “I do not understand the language of the Badarak” to “I am not that religious.”

Throughout most of the history of the Armenian nation, our existence and sequential survival have rested on three major factors: Home, School, and Church. These factors prevented our assimilation and destruction despite countless menaces, invasions, and conquering by foreign powers.

These pillars of our survival are simply indispensable for all times, and without them it is hard to imagine the survival of our people in the future as a collective. To illustrate them, we can imagine a tripod of a video camera. Just removing one leg of the tripod can cause it to fall to the ground!

In my humble opinion, not a single Armenian has the moral, cultural, ethnic, political, or legitimate right to say, “I cannot attend church on Sundays.” If we look at our past martyrious (but also glorious) history, we see the effects that our holy faith imprinted upon our conduct and its influence on our thought and action. Christianity became a defense line against the waves of assimilation implemented by the Zoroastrian East, by the Imperial West, by the Moslem South, and the Barbarian North. The Armenian Church was the unsinkable ship which guided our people through tidal seas and dark nights. It was the source of inspiration, faith, belief, spiritual nourishment, power, and of dedication.

It is not desirable to stay with the “was” of the Armenian Church. With a new enthusiastic vision it continues today its sacred mission of leading our spiritual life towards the 21st century. And on the threshold of the 1700th anniversary of Christianity in Armenia, it is time to ask ourselves some very bold and honest questions. It is time to

“Children learn mainly by example; what they learn they pass on to the next generation.”

One of the greatest losses among our people is the fact the the Armenian youth are the most “no-shows” in our churches and most married couples come to church basically on the following occasions: Armenian Christmas, Palm Sunday, Easter, baptisms, weddings, funerals, and requiems which they may or may not attend.

Some youth say that one of the reasons is that they do not understand Armenian and therefore they feel out of place in the Church. But not knowing Armenian is just an excuse for not coming to Badarak; if we consider ourselves to be Armenian faithful, isn't our duty to make an effort to learn the fundamental parts and prayers of the Liturgy?

Some say that the worship service is too long and boring; others think that going to church 2 or 3 times a year is sufficient. These and similar arguments indicate that the given person is greatly misinformed about the place, reason, and mission of the Church. We do many things that we don't understand, yet we still do them. For instance, we operate computers and drive cars, but we do not have an idea how they operate. We might also watch operas in foreign languages which might last for hours, but not understand what they say in Italian, German or French.

We work almost eight hours a day, five or six days a week to fulfill our physical needs, and to pay our bills. Does it seem “too long” to devote one hour and forty minutes of our “precious” time for God who provides for us at all times? If we think that “church” is the brick-walled building only, we might be in a great misconception. Church consists of live composition. It is

the people who make up the live stones of the church, and all people, whether we consider them sinners or not, are the true “body of Jesus Christ.”

Many young people have the “innovation of praying at home. “Home prayer” is just a pretext for laziness and not going to worship service. Although prayer at home is marvelous and should be encouraged, it can in no way substitute attending the Divine Liturgy on Sunday. Prayer is communication with God, but it can never be communion with God.

It is only in the church that we get into a holy communion with God. The church building is designated to be the worship house in which the live church gathers to commune with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. If we have friends in distant areas, but we communicate with them only two or three times a year, where does that friendship stand? Likewise, those who come to church two or three times a year are out of touch, and they resemble *guests*, not children of God.

“The way to value the 1700th anniversary of Christianization of Armenia is to increase the faith and participation of our younger generations in the life of the church.”

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). We are always vigorously enthusiastic about those things we love. How can we stimulate our youth and increase their participation in the life of the church?

One of the greatest failures in our communities are the parents themselves who do not lead their children by being a good example. Many just drive their children to Sunday School and leave until it is time to pick them up. Moreover, they live with the misconception that if their child is baptized and knows the Lord's Prayer and one or two prayers, that should make the child a good Christian. The number of parents who teach their children basic Christian principles at home is at a minimum, or nearly non-existent.

Children learn mainly by example; what they learn they pass on to the next generation. If parents are apathetic toward the church, their children will follow.

A strange trend is growing among our people, and especially our youth: being Armenian vs. being Christian. They think that going to church is a sign of weakness and it is not constructive for the political upbringing of our youth.

The Armenian Church remains the center of Armenian life. Any sound-minded Armenian cannot and should

“It is a grave mistake to think that the youth can come to church and remain attached to it automatically. No clergyman should take our youth for granted.”

not think “Armenian vs. Christian” but “Armenian and Christian.” We cannot separate “Armenian” from “Christian.” We need both.

A last, but not least, obligation falls upon our clergymen. Most of them are not properly motivating our young people (from whom our future clergymen will emerge). Some of our clergymen are content with only performing the sacraments. It is a grave mistake to think that the youth can come to church and remain attached to it automatically. No clergyman should take our youth for granted.

Nothing should “bar” our youth from being in the church. Nothing should make them feel that they can be more secure out of the church rather than inside it. There isn't one single reason that anyone can miss a place that is more holy than anything, more inspiring, more divine, more Armenian, and more at home than the Armenian Church.

If everyone pays a little more effort, if we all become a little bit more diligent and work more honestly, if we strengthen our homes, schools and churches, the life of the community can be more dynamic, more smooth and eventually we can see more people and more youth becoming eager to attend our churches, to worship the Lord in the spirit of truth, and to carry the torch of our faith to the next generation. The way to value the 1700th anniversary of Christianization of Armenia is to increase the faith and participation of our younger generation in the life of the church. Anything less than that would be self-deception and false gratification. ✚



Sogolian

(continued from page 10)

old Hye Getroun, to quote Karl: “I was bored and slumbering when suddenly in the audience I noticed a pretty face. And I let it be known I would like to meet her.” That young lady was Ms. Emma Tabibian from Constantinople, who was visiting relatives in Detroit. Karl and Emma were married the next year and remain devoted to each other.

“When the Sogolians were told that this area of Armenia had no house of worship, they did not hesitate for a moment. Thanks to them Armenians in the Vayk region will now have spiritual sustenance which they need and fervently crave. His Holiness Catholicos Karekin I is deeply grateful for this generous act of love on the part of two very dedicated Armenian Americans,” said Archbishop Ashjian.

WCC Moderator Calls for Recommitment To a Fellowship of Risks and Hopes

Catholicos Aram is Moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Prior to coming to the United States he was in Geneva, for several weeks for meetings of the Central and Executive Committees. At the conclusion of those meetings the WCC issued the following release:

As the World Council of Churches (WCC) nears the conclusion of its first half-century of service, the moderator of the Central Committee has called upon member churches to "recommit ourselves to a fellowship of risks and hopes."

Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, also cited several concerns about the WCC, including his belief that the organization is in "institutional paralysis" because it has become absorbed with structures and programs and finds it difficult to adjust to changing realities in the churches and in the worldwide ecumenical movement.

But the moderator expressed his belief that the Council's planning process, "Toward a Common Understanding and Vision" (CUV), will help the churches revitalize the WCC and clarify its role.

"As they move towards the 21st century, the churches are called to redefine the way they want to stay and grow together, and re-commit themselves to the common vision which sustains this fellowship," Aram declared. "The CUV helps us to move to the next century more confidently."

The Common Understanding and Vision process was mandated by the WCC Central Committee in 1989 and has focused attention on the mission and structure of the council. The Central Committee will process some 135 responses to CUV from member churches and consider a final draft report this week during its meetings in Geneva. The final report will be approved by delegates to the Eighth Assembly of the WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe, December 3-14, 1998.

Noting that the 156-member Central Committee is meeting for the last time before the Assembly, Aram offered some personal "perspectives and concerns" about the ecumenical movement in general and the World Council of Churches in particular.

"I am absolutely convinced after my almost 30 years of ecumenical service that one of the major roles of the ecumenical movement is to challenge the churches to define what it means to be a church in the world of today," he said.

That world is far different from the one in which the WCC was born in 1948, he noted. In the northern hemisphere, "the institutionalized church is facing a growing crisis of identity and relevance" while in the south "the church is booming at an unprecedented pace." In both hemispheres, he said, evangelical and charismatic movements are attracting millions.

These movements require the institutionalized church "to re-define and to re-affirm its specific identity and vocation in the power of the Holy Spirit and,

in the midst of fragmented and disoriented societies, to act in faithful obedience to the Gospel and to respond to the needs of people by seeking new ways of being a church."

One way the institutional church can respond to people's needs is to stay in touch with the people, he said. "The church is not a place where people go, but a reality that should embrace the whole life of people. This is exactly the ecclesiology of my own [Armenian Apostolic] church. Any ecclesiology that does not touch the concrete and daily life of people at the grass-roots level loses its credibility and reliability."

The churches must also decide how they will continue relating with each other through the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, [Catholicos] Aram suggested. "Sometimes we tend to speak about the WCC as if it is a reality outside the life of the churches," he said. "Yet what is happening in the WCC is, directly or indirectly, the projection of the internal life of the churches. In fact, the WCC is the churches together in Council. As such the Council does not take any decisions nor does it advocate issues apart from the churches."

As the CUV process continues, Aram said, the churches must work to free the WCC from "prevailing dichotomies: unity and mission, ecclesiology and ethics, local and global, etc.," which have resulted in a "continuing tension" between the theological and social-action thrusts of the Council.

The moderator also warned that the Council "is increasingly threatened by institutional paralysis... Over-institutionalization has made the Council lose much of its creative dynamism and

vision. Meetings, paper work, computers and travel have heavily dominated the life of this house."

Aram also suggested that the WCC is still heavily influenced by European and North American and Protestant sensibilities, despite the fact that Orthodox churches have been WCC members for nearly 50 years and most member churches are in the southern hemisphere. Orthodox churches, in particular, are "less and less enthusiastic" about the Council because their traditions have not been fully integrated into Council life. "These churches are reminding us, out of their painful experience, that ecumenism and proselytism cannot co-exist," he declared.

He called upon member churches to have the "humility to recognize our limitations and shortcomings." The ecumenical movement "also taught us how to tolerate our divergences and even live with tensions," he pointed out.

"Ecumenism is the courage to be together and to grow together," he said. "Our obedience to the command of the Lord and our faithfulness to our missionary vocation have given us the

courage to come together in the power of the Holy Spirit."

He expressed optimism for the future. "Some of us think that the ecumenical movement is in winter," he acknowledged. "As we move towards the end of the century, the coming Assembly, the 50th anniversary of the WCC and the Millennium will become important steps on the way towards ecumenical spring. Let us always remember that the ecumenical pilgrimage is a costly one. We should have the courage to pay the price if we are committed to one faith, one eucharistic fellowship and a common witness to the world." ✚

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches, now 330, in more than 100 countries in all continents from virtually all Christian traditions. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member church but works cooperatively with the WCC. The highest governing body is the Assembly, which meets approximately every seven years. The WCC was formally inaugurated in 1948 in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

A Mini Lesson

Luke, the third synoptic Gospel and the forty-second book of the Bible, was probably written between A.D. 80 and 90. Luke is also the author of Acts, which was prepared as a sequel to his Gospel. Like the other authors of the synoptic Gospels, Luke portrays God as a sovereign power of absolute goodness and the Divine Father of all; he portrays Jesus Christ as Son of God and Son of Man; and he looks for Christ's second coming to earth. He emphasizes the universal character of the kingdom of God, and with broad human sympathies, he describes the blessings of this Kingdom as close to the poor and humble. His style of writing Greek is regarded as of higher quality than that of the other Gospel authors; and the beauty, grace, and tenderness of his book have made it one of the most beloved in the Bible. ✚

Aram I Addresses National Council of Churches



Rev. Dr. Joan Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., introduces His Holiness Aram I to the General Assembly which took place in Washington, D.C. Rev. Dr. Campbell introduced him as "an international figure, having played an integral role in the international and inter-faith movements."