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

Volume XXIII No. 5 — January 2001

The Light of St. Gregory the Illuminator



His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, descends into Khor Virab—the pit where St. Gregory was imprisoned—to light the lantern symbolizing the light of Christianity. The “Light of St. Gregory” has been transported to Armenian dioceses throughout the world where the light will burn for the duration of the celebratory year of 2001.

The Catholicos of All Armenians delivered his Christmas pontifical message from the altar of the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin. His Holiness said in part:

“Standing on the free land of Armenia and under its peaceful blue skies, as your grateful Catholicos of All Armenians, from the resplendent altar of Holy Etchmiadzin we bring you the good tidings of Holy Nativity and, with the greatest of joy, announce the beginning of the celebrations marking the 1700 jubilee of the conversion of our people and the declaration of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia.

“In the year 301, thanks to the vision and the dedication of St. Gregory the Illuminator, our people was blessed and transformed by the descent of the Risen Lord on its land. Glorifying the Almighty and singing his praise—*The only begotten descended from the Father and with him the light of His glory*—the entire Armenian nation stood before God in penance and sanctified its historic land being the first among the nations to declare Christianity as its state religion.... The glorious legacy of our church must continue to inspire our national ideals, strengthen our faith, nurture our noblest desires and bring us closer to God....”

See Page 3 for Information about
Pilgrimages During 2001.

ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹԻՒՆ ԵՒ ՄԵՆՔ

- 40-70 Ս. Թադևոս և Բարթողիմեոս առաքյալներ Հայաստան կը բերեն Յ.Բ. Քրիստոսի Աւետարանն ու լոյսը: Առաջին Լուսաւորիչները իրենց քարոզութեամբ քրիստոնէութեան սերմերը կը նետեն Հայոց աշխարհին վրայ:
- 301 Հայաստան կը դառնայ Քրիստոնեայ առաջին պետութիւնը: Ս. Գրիգոր Լուսաւորիչ և Տրդատ Թագաւոր կը հաստատեն Հայց. Առաքելական Եկեղեցին: Կը կառուցուին առաջին եկեղեցիները՝ Ս. Հռիփսիմէն, Ս. Գայիանէն, Ս. Շողակաթը և Ս. Էջմիածինը:
- 350-370 Մեծն Ներսէս Հայրապետ: Սրտի Լուսաւորիչը հայ ժողովուրդին: Բարեգործ, գրած: Աւետարանի և եկեղեցւոյ սկզբունքներուն անզիջող Հայրապետը:
- 387-435 Ս. Սահակ Հայրապետ, Ս. Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց: Գիրքերու գիտ, Աստուածաշունչի թարգմանութիւն: Հայ եկեղեցին կը զգենու հայութեան շունչը գրականութեամբ և ծէսով: Քրիստոնէութեան հետ ազգային գիտակցութիւնը կը թափանցէ խորը հայու հոգիին:
- 451 Ղևոնդեանք և Վարդանանք: Պայքար յանուն խղճի ազատութեան, հայրենիքի և հաւատքի պահպանման: Խորհրդանիշ գոյութեան, խորհրդանիշ պայքարի՝ վասն արդարութեան, նշմարութեան և յաղթանակի:
- 640-660 Ներսէս Շինող Կաթողիկոս, որուն օրով եկեղեցական բարեկարգական կանոնները աւելի կը դասաւորուին, շարակնոցը կը խմբագրուի, խաղաղութեան պատճառով շինարարութիւնները կը բազմանան (Ջուարթնոց):
- 717-728 Յովհան Օճնեցի Կաթողիկոսի օրով կը կազմուի Կանոնագիրքը, եկեղեցին կը հարստանայ հոգեւոր գրականութեամբ, նաեւ քով, մեկնութիւններով աստուածաբանական գրութիւններով:
- 950-1001 Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացի: Հայաստանը և հայ քրիստոնեան Աստուծոյ մօտեցնող սրբակեաց մեծաւորը: Հեղինակ «Նարեկ» աղօթամատենանին, որ հայուն համար Աստուածաշունչի կողմէն կարդացուող հոգեպարար գրութիւններու և հոգիի բժշկութեան սպեղանին է:
- 1166-1173 Ս. Ներսէս Շնորհալի: Միջ-եկեղեցական շարժման ուսիւրբան, ժամբարաններու բանաստեղծական աղօթքներն ու շարակնները հարստացնող հանճարը:
- ԺԴ-ԺԵ Վանականութեան շարժման գործարար, նոր համալսարաններու դարեր քաջար, աստուածաբանական գրութիւններ, տիտաններ՝ նման Յովհաննէս Որոտնեցիի, Գրիգոր և Մովսէս Տաթևացիներու:
- ԺԶ-ԺԸ Կործանած է այլևս Կիլիկեան Թագաւորութիւնը: Աւելի առաջ՝ Մեծ դարեր Հայքերու՝ Բագրատունեաց, Արծրունեաց Թագաւորութիւնները: Եկեղեցին հոգեւոր իր առաքելութեան առընթեր իր վրայ առած է նուիրական պարտականութիւնը հարազատ մօր մը նման գործարար իր ժողովուրդին և տիրութիւն ընելու անոր:
- 1843-1857 Ներսէս Աշտարակեցի: Յարաբերութեանց տիպարը, ազգասէր հոգեւորականը, յեղափոխական հերոսը: Հայաստանի դժուար տարիները աւելի կը ծանրանան: Ելք մը պէտք է, և ահա առաջին հոգեւորականը կը նայնացնէ ինքզինք իր ժողովուրդի ազատագրական պայքարին հետ:
- 1892-1908 Մկրտիչ Կաթողիկոս Վանեցի: Աւելի լաւ է ըսել՝ Խրիմեան Հայրիկ: Արդարութեան, իրաւունքի և պայքարի ճայնը մեր ժողովուրդին: Վաւերական Հայրիկը:
- Ի. դար Ապրիլեան եղեռն, շարժումն ու անտուն ժողովուրդ: Իր ժողովուրդին նման աստանդական եկեղեցի, Կիլիկեան Աթոռը իր ժողովուրդին հետ տեղահան՝ կը հաստատուի Անթիլիաս, Բարսէն Աթոռակից, Գարեգին Ա. Յովսէփեանց, Զարեհ Սֆանջեան, Խորէն Շինանար, Գարեգին Բ.: Հարածական եկեղեցի. համայնավարութեան բուն պետութիւն, բայց գոյատեւելու կամք, Գեորգեանք, Խորէն խեղճամահ, Վագրէն Ա.:

Եւ քան դարեր լոյսի վկայութիւն, Աւետարանի քարոզութիւն, Քրիստոսի նմանութիւն: Գսան երկար դարեր սուրբեր ու սուրբեր, քան պայքարի ու շար. էջ 2

Christmas Celebrated at Prelacy Churches with Large Numbers of the Faithful in Attendance

Armenian Christmas, Saturday, January 6, was celebrated with large numbers of the Faithful in attendance throughout the parishes of the Eastern Prelacy. The Prelate, His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, celebrated Christmas Mass at St. Illuminator's Cathedral in New York City.

In all Prelacy churches in the United States and Canada, a special Encyclical issued by His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, was read. The Encyclical, which was about the establishment of Christianity for the Armenian people and a call to the Faithful to use this historic year of 2001 as a time of renewal and rededication, was presented in Armenian and English.

The Catholicos said, in part: "The Christian baptism of the Armenian people and the establishment of Holy Etchmiadzin, in other words, the spiritual revolution that took place within Armenian life, was not only a decisive turning point in Armenian history. Rather, it brought new wisdom and identity to our life, gave a new cause and renewal to our history, and brought to fulfillment a landmark event in our eternal path...."

"In 1700 years, our Church has, for the children of our nation, become a rock of faith, a fortress of hope, a source of light, and a raft of salvation. In 1700 years, our Church has become the faithful witness of Christ's Holy Gospel. She became the witness of Christian faith through her courageous evangelizing, her spiritually rich creation, her fertile service of the people and through her brave martyrdom...."

"In 1700 years, the Armenian Church has walked upon the roads of the life of the Armenian people, faithful to Christ's message, carrying out her apostolate of faith and obedient to the message of her patriarchs, saints, and holy martyrs. And this year, in Armenia and the Diaspora, with the whole nation, we will mark the 1700th anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion in Armenia.... Our circumstances are changed, life's imperatives have been turned around. As church and people we find that we are faced with new urgencies, concerns, and imperatives.

"At this decisive moment in our history, for those living in the different circumstances of the Fatherland and the Diaspora, our Church must also open herself to her surroundings especially in this century of internationalization, so that through theological dialogue, ecumenical relations and cooperation, as well as inter-religious understanding, she may renew herself, strengthen the roots, crystallize her identity, accentuate her mission, always remaining faithful to the teachings of the Gospel,

(Continued on page 4)

Assignment of Two Priests Announced

Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan and the Executive Council recently announced the assignment of two priests to parishes in Massachusetts.

Rev. Fr. Sarkis Aktavoukian has been assigned to serve the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church in Worcester, and Rev. Fr. Serop Azarian has been assigned to St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church in Indian Orchard.



Rev. Fr. Sarkis Aktavoukian

Rev. Fr. Sarkis Aktavoukian, son of Rev. Ghevont and Baydzar Aktavoukian, was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1951, with the baptismal name of Avedis.

After receiving his primary education at Sahagian Elementary School, he attended Karen Jeppe Armenian College. After graduation he taught four years at Sahagian School, until his acceptance in the Polytechnical Institute of Yerevan. There, he received his Master's degree as a Civil Engineer.

He worked for a year as an engineer and moved to Kuwait to hold the dual positions of vice principal and principal of the Armenian School for sixteen years.

Later, he attended the Armenian Theological Seminary of the Catholicate of the Great House of Cilicia, and was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Zareh Aznavourian in October of 1999. After his ordination he served both the St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral in Antelias and St. Neshan Mother Church of Beirut, Lebanon, until his immigration to the United States.

He received the four minor clerical orders from Archbishop Ghevont Chibyan, Prelate of Aleppo in 1964 and the right to bear the stole (ourar) by His Holiness Khoren I Paroyan, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, in 1972. In 1995, Bishop, (now Archbishop) Oshagan Choloyan, Prelate of Kuwait, ordained him to the diaconate.

Until his nomination to the pastorhood of the Holy Trinity Church, he spent a period of orientation for three months at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown, Massachusetts.

Rev. Fr. Sarkis is married to the former Maggie Keleshian and they have two children, Sarkis and Shoghag.



Rev. Fr. Serop Azarian

Rev. Fr. Serop Azarian was born on November 6, 1968, to Hagop and Siran Azarian, in Kuwait, with the baptismal name of Antranig. He received his primary and high school education in the Armenian national schools of Kuwait. Soon after his graduation from high school he and his family immigrated to the United States of America in August 1987.

As a young man in the United States, he joined the U.S. Army in February 1989. He is currently a peacetime veteran of the United States armed forces.

The former Antranig received his rank of acolyte in 1992, and the order of the Diaconate in May 1994, in Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church in New Jersey. During his residence in New Jersey he took a very active part in the life of the NY-NJ community in religious, national, educational, cultural and athletic events.

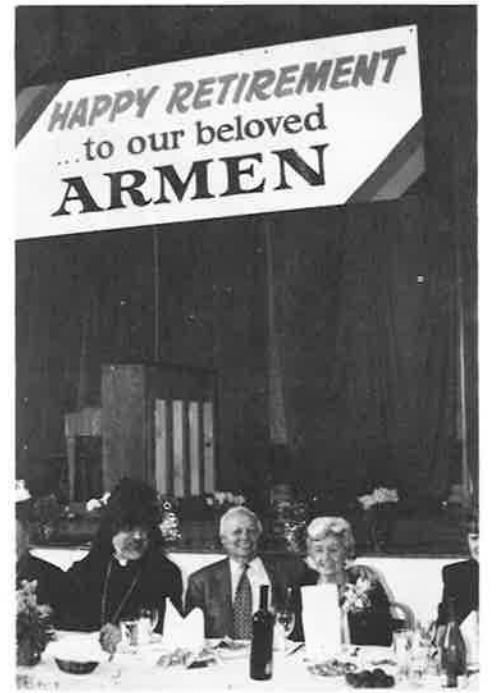
Pursuing his life-long dream of serving the Lord, Deacon Antranig received his undergraduate and theological education, first in Montclair State College (NJ) and later Emmanuel Bible College, Pasadena, California.

He participated and successfully completed the Prelacy-sponsored one year Priesthood educational Course and participated in the Prelacy's St. Gregory of Datev Religious Institute for more than nine years. He later became a lecturer in two St. Gregory of Datev seminars, in Elverston, Pennsylvania in 1997, and Dzaghgatzor, Armenia, in 1998.

Rev. Fr. Serop was ordained a priest on January 10, 1999, by Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan.

Fr. Serop is married to the former Naira Zakaryan. They have a daughter, Sena.

Armen Babamian Honored for 65-Years of Service



Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan with Armen and Rita Babamian during a luncheon on Sunday, January 14, honoring Armen for his 65 years of dedicated service to the Armenian Church. Mr. Babamian, who has been the choirmaster at Sts. Vartanantz Church, Ridgefield, New Jersey, for the past 35 years, recently announced his desire to relinquish his duties. A testimonial luncheon took place following the Divine Liturgy with a capacity attendance of parishioners, friends, and family.

St. Asdvadzadzin Church Sunday School Performs

On Sunday, January 7, Soorp Asdvadzadzin's Sunday School held its annual Christmas party. The highlight of each year's party is the children's presentation for the congregation. Teachers and students prepared for several months with Scripture verses, narrations, acting roles, costumes, dance steps and Christmas carols sung in both English and Armenian.

The children did sing with their hearts and the applause after each number demonstrated the approval of the audience. "White Christmas" was dedicated to the older guests. "It's a Small World" was dedicated to Nellie, the Armenian child sponsored by the Sunday School, which was accompanied by a slide show of pictures featuring Nellie throughout the year in her home in Armenia. The concert concluded with a prayer and dismissal by Der Aram and a delicious array of refreshments served by Sunday School parents.

St. Asdvadzadzin is very proud of its growing Sunday School enrollment and participation under the dedicated direction of Mr. Alan Goshgarian, and guidance and encouragement of Der Aram Stepanian. In the three short years since Mr. Goshgarian assumed his role as Director, enrollment has increased from just a handful of students to well over thirty. An active membership campaign led by Der Aram to increase church members in the parish has also been successful in the short time of just two years.

A Mini Lesson

The tradition of *yughakin* donations to the church can be traced to the days of Moses when the people were asked to keep the lights of the House of the Lord lit. Pure olive oil was used in ancient times and the faithful either made monetary donations or brought pure olive oil to be used for the *ganteghs* (lamps) in the church. This tradition continues today. At Easter and Christmas the faithful are asked to make *yughakin* donations to keep the church illuminated.

OUTREACH

A publication of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America Eastern United States and Canada
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OUTREACH (USPS 426-490) is published monthly, with the exception of a combined summer (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 postage paid at New York, NY 10016. Postmaster: Send address changes to OUTREACH, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016. ISSN: 10643087

Պատմութիւն եւ Մեծ Զար. էջ 1-էն

Վկայութեան դարեր՝ մարտիրոսներ ու մարտիրոսներ: Այս եղաւ Հայ Եկեղեցին եւ վերոյիշեալները պարզապէս քանի մը յիշատակելի թուականներ ու անուններ են այս սրբազան եւ աստուածահաստատ ամբողջին ճամբով հայ ժողովուրդէն ժողանգուած: Հոն կայ նահատակութիւն, վկայութիւն, ոգի, սիրամիտ եւ ստեղծագործութիւն:

Քսանմէկերորդ դար, 1700ամեակ: ՊԱՏՄԱԳԻՐԸ ԻՆՉ ԴԷՊԹ ՈՒ ԱՆՈՒՆ ՊԻՏԻ ՅԻՇՏԱՆԿԷ: 1700ամեակը պէտք է իբր կնիքը դնէ Հայ Եկեղեցւոյ եւ ժողովուրդի պատմութեան վրայ

ա. Մեծ վերադարձներով մեր վնիւ ու կենսատու ակունքին՝ Աւետարանի հշմարտութիւններուն եւ քրիստոնէական սկզբունքներուն:

բ. Նոյն այդ լոյսով ու անմահական ջուրով նոր ապրումի վերածելու զանոնք, արդի կարիքներուն եւ հնարաւորութեան ճամբով զանոնք գործնապէս թարգմանելու ամենօրեայ մեր կեանքին մէջ: Ներշնչումի աղբիւր:

Եւ այս բոլորը ոչ թէ կարդալով, ոչ թէ գնահատելով, այլ մեր մասնակցութեամբ զանոնք մշտական զօրութիւն դարձնելու եկեղեցւանուէր մեր կեանքին ընթացքին: Պատմութիւնը յիշատակ չէ. պատմութիւնը այժ է:

**A Message from
Archbishop Oshagan...**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The year 2001 is one that we have been anticipating for some time, because it is the culmination of our several years of commemorating the 1700th anniversary of Armenia's conversion to Christianity. This is a time of great inspiration for us to return to our Christian faith through its history, witness, and creative talent.

There will be many different types of celebrations planned both in our Homeland and the Diaspora. Most importantly there are several pilgrimages which I heartily encourage you to undertake. The pilgrimages will become indelible memories and will stimulate our faith and fervor.

The pilgrimages organized by the Prelacy are:

1. Pilgrimage to Antelias to witness the Armenian Church's most spiritual ceremony—the blessing of the Holy Chrism (Muron),
2. Pilgrimage to Der Zor to honor our million and a half martyrs.
3. Pilgrimage to Armenia.

Details of these pilgrimages can be found on this page.

I would also like to call to your attention to a pilgrimage organized by the Patriarchate of Istanbul, which will take you through historic Armenia, and then to the sacred sites in Armenia. The dates for this pilgrimage are June 4 to June 18, 2001. There are four different options of travel in historic Armenia, so you can select your route depending on the towns you wish to visit. For further information please contact Deacon Shant Kazanjian, who represents the Prelacy on the pilgrimage committee, at 212-689-4481.

I heartily encourage you to take advantage of these unique opportunities.

May God's grace, light and strength remain with you and your family.

Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan
Prelate

Mark Your Calendar

**Prelacy Ladies' Guild
MOTHER'S DAY
LUNCHEON**

**Monday, May 7, 2001
St. Regis Hotel
New York City**

**For reservation or information:
212-689-7810**



PILGRIMAGE TO ANTELIAS, DER ZOR AND ARMENIA

MAY 22 – JUNE 4, 2001

Sponsored by the Eastern Prelacy
of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America and Canada

**BLESSING OF THE HOLY MURON
AND 1700th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS IN ANTELIAS**

Basic Itinerary

Lebanon, May 23-28:

Blessing of the Holy Muron by His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia on Saturday evening, May 26th, Ecumenical Service and cultural programs at the Catholicosate, Armenian Independence Day parade, visits to Ainjar, Theological Seminary of Bikfaya, Armenian Sanatorium of Azounieh and the Birds' Nest of Jebail and sightseeing tours to Baalbeck, Byblos, Harisa and Jeita.

Syria, May 27-30:

One day pilgrimage to Der Zor, visits to Armenian churches and institutions in Aleppo and the Armenian village Kessab.

Armenia, May 29 – June 4:

Pilgrimage to Holy Etchmiadzin and Khor Virab and guided tours in Yerevan and to Lake Sevan, Sardarapat, Garni, Geghart, Hripsime, Gayane and more.

Options

Participants have the option to select the programs offered for Lebanon, Lebanon and Syria or the entire tour. Extended stay in Lebanon, Syria or Armenia possible.

Rates

	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy
<i>Lebanon only</i>	\$ 1600.00	\$ 1725.00
<i>Lebanon and Syria only</i>	\$ 1800.00	\$ 2000.00
<i>Lebanon, Syria and Armenia *</i>	\$ 2750.00	\$ 3200.00

* (Based on a minimum of 25 participants)

Rates include round trip airfare (Virgin Atlantic and British Airways) from New York, first class hotels, breakfast, ground transportation and guided tours. They do not include visa fees and tips. Departures from other U.S. cities possible.

Registration

Registration deadline to secure flight seats is March 15th. A non-refundable registration fee of \$250 required. Full payment by April 20, 2001.

For more information and registration call:

*Nora Najarian at Service Plus Travel
630 Third Avenue, 7th floor
New York, NY 10017
Phone (212) 682-1666
Fax (212) 682-1838*

*Eastern Prelacy
138 East 39th Street
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Christmas Celebrated

(Continued from page 2)

her spiritual heritage, her profession of faith, her traditions and sacred practices....

"We call upon the children of our people to renew their Christian faith and identity, and to strengthen their commitment to the Armenian Church. We especially call upon our young generation to remain tied to the Christian faith fortified by the blood and tears of our fathers, and the spiritual values and moral principles handed down to us by the Church...."

Archbishop Oshagan, who is co-chairman of the Central Executive of the 1700th Commemoration, noted that the anniversary has been marked for the past several years through many activities including symposiums, museum exhibits, renovation of monasteries, and many other commemorative events throughout the world. "Of course," His Eminence said, "this year—2001—the commemorative events will intensify both in Armenia and the Diaspora. Let us all participate in these activities which will serve to strengthen our Church, our faith and our resolve."

Prelate's Reception

In what has now become a long-standing tradition, on the evening of Christmas Day the Prelate hosted an open house reception at the Prelacy. Many friends and supporters attended, witnessed the "Blessing of the House" ceremony and enjoyed an evening of Christmas joy and fellowship.