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National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia Concert in Alice Tully Hall Concludes Prelacy's 1700th Anniversary Commemorations in Grand Fashion

National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia receives the admiration of an appreciative audience.

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Very Rev. Fr. Muron Aznikian Is Assigned to Cathedral



V. R. Fr. Muron Aznikian

The Prelate, Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan and the Executive Council recently announced the appointment of Very Rev. Fr. Muron Aznikian as pastor of St. Illuminator's Cathedral in New York City.

Very Rev. Fr. Muron (baptismal name Vahe) was born in 1957 in Lebanon where he received his primary education at the Apkarian School. After graduating from elementary school he was accepted at the the Seminary of the Holy See of Cilicia where he successfully completed the eight-year curriculum for celibate priesthood. He was ordained Deacon by Archbishop Ardavazt Terterian in 1976. He continued his studies at the Near East School of Theology. In 1980 he was ordained into the sacred order of priesthood by Archbishop Datev Sarkissian and renamed Muron.

In 1983, after completing his thesis, "Vahan Koghnatzi's Life and Martyrdom," he received the degree of Vartabed and the right to use the Doctoral Staff.

Hayr Muron taught at the Seminary and the Apkarian High School and also served as the Dean of the Antelias Sunday School, chairman of the religious educational council, and advisor to the Armenian Church University Students' Association.

In 1988, upon the request of Holy Martyrs Armenian Apostolic Church in Encino, California, Hayr Muron was assigned as Dean of the Parish. Under his dynamic leadership the Holy Martyrs Church reorganized its church choir, Ladies Guild, and reopened its Sunday School. It was through his efforts that the Armenian Apostolic Youth Organization was started with the express purpose of instilling

Catholicos Aram's Message to International Conference on Sacred Sites

I send to you my greetings in the spirit of humankind from the headquarters of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia of the Armenian Church, in Antelias, Lebanon. I also greet the Venerable Dharma Master Hsin Tao, the founder of the Museum of World Religions and the initiator of the Global Commission for the Preservation of Sacred Sites. I consider this gathering of eminent representatives of world religions and different spheres of society, of particular importance as it takes place at a critical point of human history. In fact, conflicts, tensions, socio-economic evils and the deterioration of moral and spiritual values have led the world to new uncertainties and complexities. Humanity is in search of new meaning and identity, new direction and vision.

I firmly believe that religion has a pivotal role to play in this context. It reminds the governments and civil societies the crucial importance of spiritual and moral values of the life of human community and promotes peace with justice, human dignity and human rights, the God-given gifts of humanity. I also believe that religion, as a major force in the life of society, is

This is the text of the message His Holiness Aram I addressed to the International Conference on the Global Preservation of Sacred Sites, which took place November 9-12, 2001, in Taipei, Taiwan.

called to play an important part in combating the evils that in different ways and forms, endeavor to impose their dominance everywhere. Hence, this Conference on Global Preservation of Sacred Sites is a promising step on the quest to give more visibility and efficiency to the role of religion in the life of contemporary societies. In this context, I consider the dialogue and collaboration among the religions of the world vital and urgent.

According to the program, this panel will address the following theme: "Religions and the Preservation of Sacred Sites."

At the outset of my few remarks, I would like to state clearly that religious sites are not merely monuments or places of special importance. They are sacred by their nature and scope; they are sacred by their very mission. I want to share with you a few perspectives and experiences emerging from the tradition of my Church, the Armenian

Orthodox Church.

1. Religious sites are sacred because we believe that God-humanity dialogue takes place in these places. In fact, we consider the church the most sacred place in Christianity. It is the temple of God, the place where God dwells, where God reveals Himself and invites humanity to engage in communion with Him. This is why we consecrate the churches and religious sites. We also consecrate all the objects and materials that are used in our religious sites. We believe that, with consecration, these geographical realities are transformed into new realities by acquiring a new quality, a new meaning and vocation. Furthermore, we believe that in these sites people become united and are sustained by divine presence.

2. Religious sites express the cultural values of a people. They are built by a given people in a given place and time. They bear the identity, traditions, values, the suffering and hope, the dreams and vision of a people. Culture embraces the totality of the inner and outer worlds of a people. Religious sites vividly and authentically manifest the peculiarities and specificities of a culture, and the suffering and hope of a

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National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia Concert in Alice Tully Hall Concludes Prelacy's 1700th Anniversary Commemorations in Grand Fashion

by Florence Avakian

"Passion and Light" aptly describes the spectacular performance of the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, on Saturday evening, November 10. It was dedicated to the 1700th anniversary of Christian Armenia, and sponsored by the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, under the leadership of the Prelate, His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan. The celebrated group, under the baton of its Artistic Director and Principal Conductor, Aram Gharabekian, played a difficult and varied program before a sell-out enthusiastic audience of more than one thousand people.

Attending this special event were a number of dignitaries including Armenia's Ambassador to the United Nations and Mrs. Movses Abelian, Lebanon's Ambassador to the United Nations Celim Tadmoury, Archbishop Zareh Aznavourian, Exarch of the Armenian Catholic Church Bishop Manuel Batakian, Armenian Evangelical Church pastor Rev. Dr. Peter Doghramaji, AGBU International President Louise Manoogian Simone, Stephanie Platz of the Russel Sage Foundation, and Chris Kosrowsky and Jacintha Duong of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association.

Also present were several well-known artists, including the Juilliard Music School Dean Dr. and Mrs. Stephen Clapp, Metropolitan Opera soloist Lucine Amara, concert violinist Anahid Ajemian, Hollywood and television star Kay Armen, pianist and ethno-musicologist Sahan Arzruni, and concert pianists Lucy Ishkhanian and Arthur Papazian.

The concert was preceded by a cocktail reception in the spacious lobby of Alice Tully Hall. The excitement in the concert hall was palpable as conductor Aram Gharabekian strode confidently onto the stage. Edvard Grieg's five-movement "Holberg Suite" is a work of majestic beauty which includes the ebullient *Prelude*, the flowing and sweeping *Sarabande*, and the joyous



Soloist Suren Bagratuni receives enthusiastic reception.



Soloist Ararat Dallakian performs Ruben Altounian's haunting "Hollow Land."



Maestro Aram Gharabekian, Tamara Petrosian (concert master), and soloist Suren Bagratuni in front of the large poster at Lincoln Center.

Gavotte, the dramatic and lilting *Air*, and the spirited *Rigaudon*. The Norwegian composer had composed it to mark the bicentennial of the birth of Norwegian-Danish playwright Ludvig Holberg whose universal personality he respected.

Franz Joseph Haydn's "Concerto in C major for Cello and Orchestra," found in 1961, after being lost for some 200 years, is a graceful and serene com-

position. The first-movement lively *Moderato* introduces the principal theme which is developed throughout the meditative *Adagio* and the gallant *Allegro Molto*. The work displayed the unique virtuosity of cello soloist Suren Bagratuni, a distinguished international recitalist, chamber musician, and recording artist.

Following intermission, works by two outstanding Armenian composers

were presented. "Hollow Land" which received its U.S. Premiere at this concert, is dedicated to the victims of the September 11 tragedy. Master duduk and zurna soloist Ararat Dallakian brought out with heartfelt artistry the devastating, sorrowful, as well as mellow and peaceful transitions of this piece. For Armenians, the duduk and zurna have always characterized the soulful sound of the homeland. The modern work's noted composer Ruben Altounian is chairman of the String Quartet Department at the Komitas Conservatory, and son of the great authority on Armenian folk music Tatul Altounian.

"Symphony for String Orchestra and Timpani," by celebrated composer Edward Mirzoyan is a five-movement composition of intricate rhythms and melodies. Replete with dissonances and polytonality in a tapestry of Armenian folk tradition, the dynamic work was presented with eloquence and passion. Solo percussionist Arsen Ter-Tadjian provided the contrasting dynamics.

The composition which is regularly performed throughout the world, was first premiered in 1962. At the time, Aram Khachaturian commented, "Mirzoyan's Symphony opened a new page in Armenian music." And Dmitry Shostakovich called it "the achievement of not only Armenian art, but also of the entire musical culture." Mirzoyan, one of the best known and loved artists in Armenia was awarded the title of "People's Artist" of the former Soviet Union, and served as chairman of the Armenian Composers' Union from 1950 to 1980.

Throughout the program, the unique role of the conductor was impressive. Aram Gharabekian, the acclaimed music director and conductor formerly of the Sinfonietta Orchestra in Boston, conducted with confidence, grace and a thorough love of the music. A dancer on the podium, he created a special choreography with his sweeping arms, graceful hands, and expressive body movements as he inspired his musicians, drawing out the desired artistry.

Lengthy standing ovations brought on three encores including beloved and well-known dances by Komitas. As the crowd slowly left the concert hall, noted singer Kay Armen enthusiastically commented, "This group is phenomenal. I got gooseflesh all the way down to my toes."

At the dinner party for the orchestra following the concert, Maestro Gharabekian, voicing the feelings of the players, expressed his deep appreciation to the committee and the Prelate. Richard Sarajian, Esq., on behalf of the Prelacy's Executive Council, expressed pride and gratitude to the orchestra and conductor for a performance that will be remembered forever.

The beautifully designed commemorative book and concert program, given to all concert attendees, was the work of Neshan Koulian, Principal and Creative Director of Koulian Williams Design Group.

Outreach

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St. Hagop Church in Racine Hosts Conference on Armenian Spirituality

by Mary M. Olson



Seminar attendees with their priest and speakers.

On November 3, the community of St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church in Racine, Wisconsin, hosted a one-day seminar titled, "Armenian Spirituality 101." The conference presenter was Deacon Shant Kazanjian, director of the Armenian Religious Educational Council (AREC). The seminar was the fourth in a series of events planned by the community in commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of Christian Armenia. Earlier programs included a Liturgical Concert, a slide presentation of sites in historic Armenian lands now located in modern day Turkey, and a requiem service honoring St. Hagop's first choir director, "Varjabed" Mr. Khachig Dadian.

Deacon Shant organized the seminar under two main themes. Part One focused on the basic and essential ingredients of a spiritual life: foundations, vision, and theory. Part Two centered around the nurturing of our life in Christ; how to actualize our beings as Christians.

The day began with morning services celebrated by Hayr Sourp Vaghinag Miloyan, assisted by Deacon Shant. Following a buffet breakfast, Board of Trustees chairman, John Buchaklian welcomed the forty-six participants. Mr. Buchaklian read the resolution passed by the Wisconsin legislature proclaiming an annual commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of Armenian Christianity in the state. The podium was then turned over to Dr. Mary M. Olson who introduced Deacon Shant.

Deacon Shant began his presentation by noting that it was the Feast of All Saints Day in the Armenian Church and thereby even more fitting to host this seminar on this day. In Part One of the presentation, Deacon Shant made it very clear to the audience that the Bible must serve as the primary text for spirituality. Deacon Shant modeled this premise throughout his presentation by reading from various passages from both the Old and New Testaments supporting his major points.

Deacon Shant made it clear that spirituality is about our relationship with the One and Living God, and that the Church is here to help us with our journey in finding and developing this relationship. He then illustrated where



Seminar participants with members of Racine's 1700th anniversary committee. From left to right, John Buchaklian, Esq., Mary M. Olson, Ed.D., Deacon Shant, Hayr Vaghinag, Sonia Buchaklian, and Julie Der Garabedian.

the Bible gives us the signposts for our journey and defines for us what we are to do as Christians. "The Bible is not just information, it is for formation." The Bible tells us that the essential nutrients for a spiritual life are: 1. The Word of God; 2. Prayers; 3. Fellowship; and 4. the breaking of bread (Eucharist/Badarak).

In Part Two of the presentation, Deacon Shant went on to explain that we must have these nutrients of a spiritual life in our lives on a daily basis. This translates into the need for daily Bible reading by every Christian and daily prayers, as well as attending and participating in the Badarak on a weekly basis.

In explaining the need for daily prayers, Deacon Shant taught the attendees the Elements of Prayer, or a Rule of Prayer. The rule of prayer includes an opening recitation, the recitation of "The Lord's Prayer," the reading of a Psalm, an additional Bible reading, petitions or general intercession, intentional prayer, the Trisagon, and a closing recitation. This Rule of Prayer is based on the *Zhamakirk* or the Armenian Book of Hours. "Our prayers highlight our understanding of faith and our faith shapes our prayer life," Deacon Shant told the audience.

The audience participated throughout the day with questions. The program was concluded with a rousing and motivational address by Hayr Vaghinag, who also offered the closing benedic-

tion followed by the singing of *Giligia*.

Deacon Shant also met with Sunday School teachers and Board of Trustee members on Friday and Saturday evening. Following church services on Sunday morning, Deacon Shant joined the congregation for their weekly "coffee hour," where he answered individual questions.

The overwhelming response to the seminar was that it was a true learning experience, that it was filled with valuable information, and that Racine would like Deacon Shant to return for another seminar. A suggested topic for the next seminar was "The Sacraments."

The 1700th Anniversary Committee consisted of Mrs. Sonia Buchaklian, Ms. Julie DerGarabedian, Mr. John Buchaklian, and Dr. Mary M. Olson. The committee would like to thank the Ladies Guild for their help in providing the seminar luncheon. The entire St. Hagop community would like to thank Srpazan Hayr, Hayr Vaghinag, the Racine Board of Trustees, and especially Deacon Shant for this opportunity.

**I tell you and you forget.
I show you and
you remember.
I involve you and
you understand.**

H. H. Aram I

(Continued from page 1)

people. They are the living testimonies of the culture heritage of a people.

3. Faith is not a conceptual notion; it is an expression of the inner yearnings and aspirations of a human being. It requires structure to articulate itself in human society. Religious sites are concrete manifestations of the spiritual values, traditions and desires of communities of faith. Hence, their significance goes beyond their cultural importance and geographical confines. Religious sites constitute the spiritual treasures of a faith community.

4. Religious sites are the guarantors of the continuity and identity of religions, cultures, civilizations and nations. Through them the historical continuity of a faith community is assured, and the specific identity of a community is safeguarded in time and space. Through religious sites the community is built and empowered spiritually and morally.

Therefore, religious sites belong to all humanity. They are the spiritual richness of all humanity and, as such, they must be preserved, they must be kept intact and remain a source of veneration. Religious sites must become instruments for the promotion of spiritual and moral values, of love and reconciliation, of justice and peace in this world.

My church and my people have attached a special importance to religious sites. In the course of our history many invaders have destroyed our churches, chapels, centers of pilgrimages. Our people have renewed and built new ones. In fact, we have built the house of God before our own houses.

I want to draw the kind attention of this Conference to the fact that hundreds of Armenian religious sites have been totally or partially destroyed, desacrilized and used for non-religious purposes, in the eastern and southern parts of Turkey that used to be for centuries a major center of the Armenian Church and the people. In fact, in 1915, during the First World War, the Turkish-Ottoman government of the time planned and executed a Genocide against its Armenian population. One and a half million Armenians lost their lives and the rest were dispersed all over the world.

It is vitally important that the religions of the world join their forces to preserve the sacred sites of all religions. I believe that we can do that by deepening the mutual respect, understanding and trust among religions, by working together for justice and human rights, and by combating the evil forces that dehumanize humanity and destroy the creation of God.

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V. R. Muron Appointed
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Armenian Christian values to the youth and young adults of the San Fernando Valley. In addition to his duties at the church, he also taught 7th to 12th grades at the Ferrahian Armenian Day School. To further his own education, he attended Pierce College where he studied English, politics, and psychology.

In 1990 he was assigned Dean of the Holy Trinity Church in Fresno, California. With diligence Hayr Sourp advanced programs to meet the spiritual, religious, social and educational needs of the parish including training programs for altar servers, revitalization of the choir, establishment of a youth association, re-establishment of the Saturday Armenian language school, a quarterly publication, a new Sunday School curriculum, establishment of social services, and weekly bible study courses.

In 1995 he was elevated to the rank of "Supreme Archimandrate," (Dzayrakouyn Vartabed) by Archbishop Datev Sarkissian.

Returning to serve the Holy See of Cilicia, in 1998 His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, appointed him spiritual advisor of the Armenian Church University Students Association and Superintendent of the Armenian Sunday Schools. In addition to these duties he taught English and Old Testament at the Seminary.

Encouraged by the Catholicos, Hayr Muron attended Pittsburgh Theological Seminary where he received his S.T.M. degree in Theology and Biblical Studies in 2000.

During the past year Hayr Sourp served as Pastor in Southern Florida and visiting clergy in various Eastern Prelacy communities.

The Prelate and Executive Council wish Hayr Muron success in his new mission of service to St. Illuminator's Cathedral.

A Mini Lesson

Luke, the third synoptic Gospel 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. 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 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.

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