

November/December 2002

OUTREACH

Volume XXV, No. 4



2003
Year of the Bible

From the Editor

The Year of the Bible

The Bible is the most powerful book in the world. In its myriad of editions, not to mention languages, it is a permanent best seller. But, I would venture to say that by and large in most homes the Bible remains unread.

Catholicos Aram I has proclaimed 2003 as the “Year of the Bible.” During the year of 2003 each issue of *Outreach* will feature at least one article about the Bible, with the intent of encouraging young and old to become more familiar with the Bible. In the Armenian language the Bible is called *Asdvatqashounch*, literally *The Breath of God*. In English it just does not have the same beauty or meaning. The closest English rendering would be *The Word of God*.

The Bible is actually an anthology of many books. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew; the New Testament in Aramaic (the language of Jesus) and Greek. The Armenian Bible was translated shortly after the development of the Armenian Alphabet by Mesrob Mashtotz, and quickly became noted for its faithful and complete translation, thus earning the title, “Queen of Translations.”

My personal favorite (in English) is the King James Version, al-
(continued inside back cover)

Letter to the Editor

To the editor:

As per my discussion with you in the recent past, I finally did get around to reading the second issue of the new *Outreach* [July/August], and I thought you might appreciate a few comments (for publication, if you should deem so).

I was most pleased, interested and educated by the scholarly article by your son Michael on the Armenian Christian Religion and its historical attitude towards war. [*The Morality of War and Armenian Theology*, by Michael B. Papazian]. It obviously is well researched, well written and most timely in relationship to our times, i.e., the consideration of a pre-emptive strike against Iraq. I would be delighted if articles of this quality regarding the attitudes, the laws, the writings, etc., of our Armenian Christian forefathers regarding such other contemporary issues as the role of women in the Armenian Church, the relationship of the Armenian Church to other Christian churches and other religions, abortion, divorce, the marriage of clergy and a myriad of other topics could be written and published.

Jack Mardoian’s article regarding the history of and the problems facing the Prelacy was most incisive, thought provoking and challenging. He is to be congratulated for this profound study and its implications for the future. I wonder if the National Representative Assembly discussed his report and what recommendations if any did they make or plan to implement. Indeed, what was missing from the issue was the sum and substance of the discussions and conclusions of the Assembly, which are of greater interest than just reporting the names of the honorees and their accomplishments (although that is important too). For instance, was there any discussion on unity?

But, again, my congratulations to you for significant improvements in the intellectual and physical quality of *Outreach*.

George Dermksian, MD
New York City



Front Cover: The Gospel of Etchmiadzin, the oldest known Armenian Gospel. The text was written at the Monastery of Noravank (southeast of Yerevan) in 989. It is considered to be the most faithful copy of the earliest Armenian Bible translation done in the early 5th Century. Four illuminations of feast days date back to the 7th Century. The Gospel was kept in Etchmiadzin, hence its name. Since 1920 it has been on permanent loan to the Matenadaran (Museum and Repository of Manuscripts) in Yerevan from the Catholicos of All Armenians. It is one of the few manuscripts that will probably never be permitted to be on exhibit outside of Armenia. A limited edition of a facsimile was produced several years ago.

Back Cover: Baptism of Christ, from the Etchmiadzin Gospel.

OUTREACH

is a publication of the
Eastern Prelacy of the
Armenian Apostolic Church of America
138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016
212-689-7810 / 212-689-7168 (fax)
e-mail: email@armenianprelacy.org
web page: www.armenianprelacy.org

His Eminence
Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan
Prelate

Iris Papazian, *Editor*
Khajag Zeitlian, *Design*
Mardirous Minas-Haftvani, *Business Manager*

Comments and/or editorial contributions may be mailed to the attention of the editor Outreach, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY, or by email to info@armenianprelacy.org or by fax, 212-689-7168.

OUTREACH (USPS 426-490) is published bimonthly by the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016. Printed in Canada. Periodical rate postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to OUTREACH, c/o Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016.

ISSN: 1064-3087



Prelate's Message

2003: The Year of the Bible

It is with feelings of thanksgiving and words of praise that I thank God in all our names for gracing us with peace and goodness through 2002, and ask Him to make us worthy of the year 2003.

Glory and honor to God for His Word, protection, grace and goodness.

The year 2003 in its totality will probably have different content and meaning in our collective and individual lives. We will remember the anniversaries of significant events and historically important people, with appropriate commemorations that permeate our national and ecclesiastical life.

The Holy See of Cilicia and all of the dioceses under its jurisdiction, will celebrate 2003 as *The Year of the Bible*, in accordance with the encyclical issued by His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia. In all of our planned activities in both our collective and individual life, the Bible must be present as a source of inspiration, a life-long endeavor that gives us the rule of life and provides direction to our words and work.

The power for the spread of Christianity was the Word of God. The inspiration of the saints, martyrs, and confessors was Christ's message and commandments, strengthened by the spirit of love and sacrifice and by the witnesses who gave their lives to God in order to have an everlasting life through His Word. St. Mesrob Mashtots' basic principle was proper and meaningful: to develop the Armenian alphabet, as a gift of inspiration, in order to bring God's Word to His people, so that God's Word would turn into the *Holy Book of the People*. In obedience to God and in gratitude for His plans, our people turned the Holy Book into the source of their thinking, the fountainhead of their behavior and their bread and water. Our people fashioned their image with the principles in the Bible and remained—always remained—obedient to Christ and through His Word we remained the *People of the Holy Book*. What Grace! What joy for the anointed people to be the genuine children of God! A people who, as a nation, embodied Christ, just as Christ became the

embodiment of God's Word: "And the Word was made flesh," (John 1:14). That Incarnation, Christ's birth and the birth of our Christ-like people was conceived and germinated with God's Word which grew in us and became full of life. It turned us, as a nation, into His first-born child, the most worthy progeny of His Kingdom.

Christmas and Epiphany—God's Incarnation and the Incarnation of His Word—holds a message for us. Through His incarnation Mankind received salvation and the good news of eternal life. We were given the good fortune to be a member of God's family and to partake at His table. For the sake of our salvation God descended to be closer to us, not only so that Mankind would get closer to God, but especially to bring Mankind closer to Man. He became the supreme example of love, brotherhood and self-sacrifice, which he expected us to follow. He asks from us the same humility he showed through His Incarnation. Humility to His glory, humility toward His mission, and faithfulness in our journey toward heaven, which becomes reality by a life filled with peace and love and by spreading His Word. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14).

Living with God, making Him an ever-present part of our lives, brings us closer to His Word through the Holy Bible. It is our obligation to spread and explain His Word, to live by His Word, and show that we are co-workers in spreading the truth of God's plan.

On the occasion of the New Year and the joyful tidings of Christmas, let us open our hearts as a vessel for God's Word, to accept those like us with love, so that in the spirit of sacrifice and with a clear conscience we become part of the Kingdom that God has reserved for Mankind.

Happy New Year and a Blessed Christmas. Christ is born and revealed.

Archbishop Oshagan
December 2002

Armenian Christmas

by Rev. Fr. Archpriest Gorun Shrikian

The Armenians are the only nation in the Christian world to celebrate Christmas, or rather the Nativity and the Epiphany of Jesus Christ, on January 6. This tradition goes back to the early church, when there were no separations in Christendom, and the Nativity and the Epiphany of Jesus were celebrated together on January 6, until the second half of the fourth century A.D., when the Roman church separated these two events, celebrating the Nativity on December 25, while keeping January 6 as a feast day for Epiphany. Soon the Byzantines, or the Greek Church, followed the Romans for practical reasons, since it was difficult to perform the Nativity ceremonies in Bethlehem and the Epiphany ceremonies at the bank of the River Jordan on the same day. Later this tradition continued in the Western churches or within the circles of their jurisdiction and influence.

If the reason for the Greek Church to change the Nativity date was derived from a practical consideration, it was the same for the Roman church, although the reasons may seem dissimilar. In Rome the month of December or rather the last part of December was a time for many festivities such as *Saturnalia*, *Sigilaria*, *Juvenilia* and *Brumalia*, all linked to the winter solstice or the new birth of the sun. Thus, a parallel was drawn between the birthday of the sun and the Son of God who became the light of the world. But the intent was not limited to the above-mentioned interpretation. All the Christian churches were concerned that it was difficult to uproot the traditional pagan festivities from the minds of new believers.

To supplant these heathen festivals, the Romans established December 25 as the birthday of Christ, thus Christianizing the pagan festivals. These changes were intended to weaken paganism, either by depriving the people from attending these festivals or replacing them with Christian festivals. We know from Armenian Church history that St. Gregory the Illuminator replaced the Feast of Navasart with the Feast of Transfiguration. However, the Armenian Church held fast to the ancient tradition and did not change feast days for mere practical

compliments and reasoning.

As to the meaning of those festivals, the Armenian Church promulgates their religious connotations without excluding their social aspects. In the Armenian tradition, the social festivities, the gift exchanging, and the house and tree decorations are connected with the New Year rather than Christmas. Santa Claus, or Saint Nicholas, comes on New Year's Eve, descending from the chimneys to visit Armenian children.

On Christmas Eve, a solemn Mass is celebrated preceded by scroll readings taken from the different books of the Bible, which cite the birth or the coming of the Messiah. The third chapter from the book of Daniel is also read by a deacon and three young men standing on the altar, representing Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, the youths who sustained their faith in God, in spite of the tortures imposed on them (see Daniel, Chapter 3). This service is called a Candlelight Service since the parishioners would return home carrying lighted candles to announce the birth of Christ who came as a light to the world.

(See Matthew 4:16, 5:14; Luke 2:32; John 1:5, 8:12, 12:36; Acts 13:47; Romans 13:12.)

Following Christmas Eve church services, according to the Armenian tradition, the choir members go from house to house singing hymns dedicated to the Nativity and Epiphany of Jesus Christ. On Christmas day, January 6, following the regular services, a special service is performed dedicated to the Epiphany or the Baptism of Christ, which became a turning point in Christ's life. As we know from the Scriptures, at the end of His Baptism, a voice came from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) [See also Mark 1:9 and Luke 3:21]. This service, called *Churorbnek* or the Blessing of the Water, commemorates the Baptism and the manifestation (Epiphany) of Christ recognizing Him as the true Son from Heaven, who will now begin His ministry.

In ancient times this service was performed along the banks of a river, but later it was confined to the

"In the Armenian tradition, the social festivities, the gift exchanging, and the house and tree decorations are connected with the New Year rather than Christmas. Santa Claus, or Saint Nicholas, comes on New Year's Eve, descending from the chimneys to visit Armenian children."

(continued on page 23)

A Christmas Message for the Ages: Our Search for Peace

by Rev. Father Vartan Kassabian

The Christmas season brings with it a time when our hearts seem to be filled with unexplainable joy and peace. More than any other time throughout the year it seems to bring out the best in all of us. We tend to become more understanding, tolerant, and charitable even under difficult circumstances. What is it about Christmas that brings out the best in us? Think about that question for a moment and do not answer it too quickly. Most of us will probably find it very easy to do, but if we really think about it deeply enough we will find that it is more difficult than we thought. However, we need not look very far in our search to find the answer.

The Book of the Prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament and the Gospel of St. Luke in the New Testament contain two very profound chronicles concerning the coming of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In Isaiah, Chapter 9, the Prophet refers to Christ as the “Prince of Peace.” St. Luke (Chapter 2: 14) proclaims, “Glory to God in the Highest Heaven...and Peace on Earth.” In both instances the word emphasized is “Peace”! Imagine for a moment that you could go back to that moment in time and put yourself in the place of the shepherds who were so afraid before being reassured by the Angel of the Lord.

We can look at them and see ourselves. Yes, those shepherds were really not any different than you and me. They, too, were searching for that peace that all of us yearn for. Are we not afraid of what life may bring our way? Each and everyday seems to be an unending search for total peace, happiness, and satisfaction. The reason the search never seems to end is because we are searching in all the wrong places.

During the Christmas season last year, I found myself walking and browsing in a local department store. While passing by the jewelry area, I noticed a young

couple involved in a heated debate about what kind of gifts to purchase for their respective mothers. The debate between the two became more heated and eventually turned into somewhat of a public spectacle.

It seems the young man was intent on spending a large sum of money on a gift, while his partner insisted that what really mattered most was the thought, not the cost. The discussion continued for sometime until a young store employee—no more than 18 or 19 years old—kindly asked if she could help. Both of them eagerly welcomed her intervention, however I do not believe they were prepared for her answer. In the kindest of words she said to them: “If you are searching for a Christmas gift

for someone you love then you came to the wrong place.” She asked the couple to spell the first six letters of Christmas—CHRIST. The couple gazed at one another in utter amazement. She continued, saying that the jewelry counter, or for that matter any other department in the store, does not represent the true meaning of Christmas. Imagine a young girl with such a devotion to Christ! She could have lost her job, but that seemed to be of no concern to her.

Most of us, like the misguided couple, are searching in all the wrong places for true peace and happiness. We can never find peace because we are seeking a worldly, secular, and human peace, which is material and not spiritual.

In the Gospel of St. John, Chapter 14:27, our Lord said: “My peace I give to you. My peace I leave you, and the peace I give you is not fragile like the peace of the world, so do not be afraid.”

Can we honestly ask ourselves why we do not have peace and not know the answer? Let us look at ourselves, and the society in which we live. We celebrate the coming of Christ, yet we attempt to remove Him from every

“The greatest gift of Christmas is Christ. He came into this world to save you and me. There is neither peace nor salvation outside of Christ. There will never be peace in this very uncertain journey that we call life until we search for peace in Christ Our Lord.”

aspect of our daily lives. The young store employee has taught us an eternally valuable lesson, and that lesson is that you cannot have Christmas without Christ. No one can bring Christ into your life but you; the search must begin and end with you.

Imagine how our Holy Mother of God must have felt as she and Joseph searched for a place to bring our Lord into the world. They too were searching. Observe the symbolism used in our secular society to portray the message of Our Lord's Birth. Do any of them really tell the story that Jesus is the reason for the Season? We ask ourselves, why would God bring His only Son into the world in a dark and cold manger? St. Paul answers us by reminding us that what Man considers to be important, God considers to be folly for no one knows the ways of God.

The greatest gift of Christmas is Christ. He came into

"...you cannot have Christmas without Christ. No one can bring Christ into your life but you; the search must begin and end with you."

this world to save you and me. There is neither peace nor salvation outside of Christ. There will never be peace in this very uncertain journey that we call life until we search for peace in Christ Our Lord.

Look into the eyes of the Lord and kneel before the Holy Manger. What more do we really need to seek peace? Let us kneel before the Lord and forgive others so that we too may be forgiven. Let us accept the faults of one another with mercy and love, as our Lord accepts and loves us.

On this Holy Christmas morning let us greet the coming of Christ our Lord in the immortal words of our church fathers: "O Mystery Great and Magnificent who was revealed on this day." (*Khourourt Medz yev Uskanchelee*).

Christ is the peace we seek and search for. Let us seek Him and ask this question as we begin the New Year: Where will we be searching in 2003? ❖

Rev. Father Vartan Kassabian is pastor of St. Gregory Church, Granite City, Illinois.

Orphan Sponsorship Program

The Prelacy's Orphans Sponsorship Program was launched in May 1993. Through the years it has grown and today more than 800 children in Armenia and Artsakh are enrolled in the program. We receive many letters from the children and time-to-time we will publish some of the letter. In this issue we are publishing a letter written by nine-year-old Hrair Krmenian, along with an English translation.

Բարեւագիր

Բարեւ յարգելի հովանաւոր,

Ես Հրայր Կրմենեանն եմ, նահատակուած՝ Վարուժան Կրմենեանի որդին: Ես ունեմ մայր եւ աւագ եղբայր: Մեծ ցաւով նշեմ, որ շատ շուտ գրկուեցի հօրից, բայց ինչ կարող եմ անել երբ հայրենիքը վտանգի տակ է: Ապրում եմ Մասիս քաղաքում, սովորում եմ թիւ 6-րդ դպրոցի 5-րդ դասարանում: Սովորում եմ գերագանց: Ունեմ շատ շատ երագանքներ, բայց ամենից մեծ երագանքս է դառնալ ֆուտպոլիստ: Ես դեռ չգիտեմ ձեր անունը, բայց շնորհակալ եմ Ձեզ նման բարի մարդկանցից, որ ուզում էք հոգալ մեր մանկուց անհայրացածներին մասին:



Greetings Honored Sponsor:

My name is Hrair Krmenian, son of the martyred Varoujan Krmenian. I live with my mother and older brother. I note with great regret that I was deprived of my father much too soon. But what can we do when our Fatherland is in danger! I live in the city of Massis and attend School No. 6. I am in the fifth grade and am learning many good things. I have many dreams, but my biggest dream is to be a football player. I do not know you, but I am very thankful to generous people like you for supporting my schooling.

PLEASE HELP!
There are many children waiting for a sponsor.
For information about sponsoring a needy child
contact the Prelacy office, 212-689-7810.
Only \$180 per year.

New England Regional Deacons' Seminar

The third in a series of regional seminars for deacons took place at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown, Massachusetts on November 16. The Prelacy's Religious Council under the auspices of the Prelate, Archbishop Oshagan, organized the seminars, to enhance the quality of service rendered by those who serve on the altar in various parishes. Twenty-five deacons, sub-deacons, stole bearers and acolytes from New England participated. They represented the following churches: St. Stephen's, New Britain, Connecticut; St. Gregory, Indian Orchard, Massachusetts; Holy Trinity, Worcester, Massachusetts; St. Asdvadzadzin, Whitinsville, Massachusetts; Sts. Vartanantz, Providence, Rhode Island; St. Gregory, North Andover, Massachusetts; and St. Stephen's, Watertown, Massachusetts.

The day began at 8:30 a.m. with breakfast prepared by the St. Stephen's Ladies' Guild, followed by the opening of the seminar in the sanctuary. After welcoming remarks by the church's pastor, Rev. Archpriest Antranig Baljian,



Archbishop Oshagan with participants of the Deacons' Seminar, which took place in Massachusetts. Similar seminars are planned for other regions.

made it clear that service on the altar should not be by rote, but accomplished with understanding in order that it becomes more meaningful both to the server and those whom he serves.

Keynote speaker, Very Rev. Fr. Anoushavan Tanielian, vicar general and chairman of the Prelacy Religious Council and pastor of St. Sarkis Church in Douglaston, New York, spoke to the participants about the role of the deacon as portrayed in the Bible. He drew upon the themes found in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Book of Acts to explain what the needs of the New Testament Church were and how the office of deacon rose out of them. He then continued by illustrating examples of how present-day deacons in the Armenian Church can serve and be active not only in the liturgical life of the parish but also in the charitable, theological and personal spheres of church stewardship. He challenged all of the deacons not to treat their service in the church as an arbitrary thing, but to serve and care for the church as ordained clergymen.



The deacons listen to the lecturer. Deacon Shant Kazanjian, Director of Christian Education, took the participants through the Liturgy, step by step, explaining the practical, liturgical and theological meanings.

His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan, addressed the assembled church servers and explained to them why this and similar seminars were being held at various regions. He emphasized the importance of being reverent and fully versed in the dynamics of service, especially during the Divine Liturgy, which is the highest expression of our faith as individuals and as a community. The Prelate

Over the course of two sessions, workshop leader Dn. Shant Kazanjian, the Prelacy's Director of Christian Education, took the participants of the seminar through the Holy Liturgy step by step, explaining the practical, liturgical and theological meanings behind that mystical sacrament. After the first session ended for lunch break, prepared and served by the Ladies' Guild. The second

Religious Education — School for Discipleship

by Deacon Shant Kazanjian

When people ask me what I do for a living, I am often tempted to say (tongue-in-cheek, of course) that I am in the business of Christian education, a ministry that most people do not want but all need. Christian education? Who needs it? What is it for?

For some people, religious instruction is something done for and with children; or, it is something good for teenagers – an antidote for their unruly passions or rebellious nature. For others, it is an elective, nice to have if convenient, but don't ask me to make a commitment. Still for others, it is not for the masses but rather for the spiritually elite. And then there are those whose faith is sort of eclectic, picking and choosing what they want to believe – “no one needs to tell me what I should or should not believe; I determine what I should believe in!” This “cafeteria style” religion is all too common nowadays.

Actress Penelope Cruz was recently quoted as saying: “I was baptized and had my first communion, and I believe in God in my own ways. But the philosophy I most identify with is Buddhism because it's the one that doesn't say, ‘this is the only way.’ I don't want to put a title on what I believe.”

This is a free society. People are free to believe whatever they want. For us Christians, however, who

take the Scriptures seriously and regard it as the highest authoritative source in matters concerning faith, we do well to remember that God is what the Bible says God is, and what he demands of his people is presented there. Anything other than that is a figment of one's imagination. The Bible, for us, is the heart of our faith, and everything in our church is based and shaped and formed according to the scriptures – the worship services, the theology, the prayers, the hymns, the icons, and so forth. This is foundational.

How then are we to view the role and the function of Christian education in our lives? To facilitate this reflection, let's look at the last three verses of the Gospel of St. Matthew, where the resurrected Jesus gives his final mandate to His disciples: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always” (Matthew 28:18-20). Here we have the climax of the Gospel, and Christ is giving a “job description” to His disciples, so to speak, and by extension to His Church. The disciples are commissioned 1) to make disciples, 2) to baptize, and 3) to teach. These three are integrally linked.

(continued on page 10)

Deacons' Seminar cont.

session commenced after lunch.

Of course, being from different parishes and traditional backgrounds, there was some discussion over certain issues pertaining to the proper execution of the deacon's service at the Holy Table. These discussions were very insightful and facilitated a heightened sense of awareness among the participants. Everyone in the room, including the lecturers, learned something new about the

execution of the Holy Badarak and the different liturgical traditions that exist today within the Armenian Church.

The seminar concluded with a traditional Saturday evening (*Giragnamedits*) vespers service conducted by Fr. Anoushavan and Fr. Antranig, with the participation of Dn. Shant, Dn. John Doursounian of St. Stephen's, seminarian Dn. Nishan Baljian and St. Stephen's choir master, Vartan Seraderian. ❖

School for Discipleship

(continued from page 9)

The word disciple (*Mathētēs* in Greek, *ashagerd* in Armenian) by definition means a learner, a pupil, an apprentice. In the New Testament, a disciple is someone who is called by Jesus to follow him, to learn of and from Him.

After His resurrection, Christ was not around physically to go to the public squares and summon people to follow him. That call “to follow Christ” came through the preaching of the Gospel by His apostles and disciples. Those who accepted the invitation were baptized. In the New Testament, to be baptized in someone’s name means to become that person’s follower, to belong to that person, to become a member of his family. So, baptism, among other things, initiates us into the family of God, the Church, and enlists us in discipleship.

Discipleship begins with baptism, but it is imperative that it be accompanied by teaching. Making disciples, baptizing and teaching go hand in hand, according to the mandate of the Lord – “Go... **make disciples... baptizing... and teaching** them to obey all that I have commanded you.”

A few observations. First, the disciples are to be taught to obey the commandments of Christ. They are not to learn facts and information about Jesus, but to learn to live in a manner that is in complete conformity to the will and teachings of Christ. Where would we find his teachings? Obviously, for St. Matthew, in the entire Gospel. Accordingly, throughout the history of the church, the Gospel has been the primary text for teaching and for religious education.

Second, discipling-teaching is a life-long journey. All baptized are enlisted in the school of discipleship, a school that has no graduation day. Unfortunately, the school has recorded many dropouts.

Third, The teachers in the school of discipleship are those who are absorbing and assimilating the teachings of the Gospel into their lives and translating them into acts of love and mercy and justice. This also means that learning Christ takes place in the company of other disciples in the church.

It is interesting to note that the final mandate of the Lord is not about making believers out of people. That’s assumed. But what is not assumed and is mandated by the Lord is the notion of discipleship – faithfully living in accordance to God’s will as expressed in the Bible. As Jesus says in Matthew 7, verse 21 to 22, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven,

but only those who do the will of my Father in heaven.”

Through baptism we are enlisted as disciples; Christian education and instruction is the schooling in discipleship; And its basic text is the Gospel. Of course, discipleship is never a finished task; it is always under construction. It is incumbent upon us, as Christians, to do our utmost to learn and follow the teachings of Christ. Otherwise, we are not taking our baptism seriously and hence Christ’s invitation.

We were all received into this school of discipleship when we were baptized as a free gift. Yes, the admittance to the school was free; the work is demanding; and the rewards are eternal. ✠

“Discipleship begins with baptism, but it is imperative that it be accompanied by teaching. Making disciples, baptizing and teaching go hand in hand, according to the mandate of the Lord.”

You can write us at the following addresses:

Prelacy Main Address:
email@armenianprelacy.org

Press Office / Outreach:
info@armenianprelacy.org

Armenian Religious
Education Council:
arec@armenianprelacy.org

Armenian National
Education Committee:
anec@armenianprelacy.org

Prelacy Bookstore:
books@armenianprelacy.org

**Our official website has a new
address. Visit us at:
www.armenianprelacy.org**

Siamanto Academy: 20 Years of Cultural Enrichment

Changing times have rendered people more attuned to their cultural differences. Armenian language and culture has thus become a prerequisite for Armenians to count as an identifiable component in the global ethnic mosaic. Siamanto Academy offers one such venue.

Since its inception twenty years ago, New York's Siamanto Academy has become a viable prototype to emulate. It fills the void—the limbo—that exists between graduation from Armenian school and college. The Academy offers college-level instruction in ethnic heritage par excellence. Pride in national identity, and traditional and moral values are subliminally instructed in addition to the basic curriculum. Rev. Fr. Anoushavan Tanielian, Dr. Herand Markarian and Mr. Haroutune Misserlian, give their hearts and souls to the program, as they instruct and educate those who will become the leaders of tomorrow. Guest lecturers, field trips and interscholastic endeavors integrate a well-rounded education. The provision of college credit recommendations to Academy graduates by the American Council on Education in Washington DC, has been an added incentive. The true success of the Academy can best be seen that other communities, like Philadelphia, Providence, and Washington DC, are contemplating establishing similar Academies in their areas.

The element of enjoyment at the Academy is as important as teaching. Initial reluctance experienced by some students soon converts to anticipation to attend the Academy where camaraderie flourishes into lifetime friendships.



Before going back to class.



Siamanto Students during lunch break.

The brainchild of Dr. Steve Checkosky and Mrs. Norik Baboorian-Checkosky, the Academy began under the auspices of the Armenian National Education Committee (ANEC) and the supervision of Mrs. Hourig Sahagian-Papazian. Mrs. Checkosky, the principal of Siamanto Academy for the past decade, has been involved in its progress since its inception, even commuting from Washington, DC during the past year. She relocated to the capital this summer and as a result has regrettably resigned from her position. Outstanding among her many accomplishments in recent years is the Academy's cultural presentations at the ANEC Schools festivals. ANEC director, Ms. Gilda B. Kupelian, has substituted in the interim, also teaching Armenian language arts.

ANEC has invited Ms. Talar Danayan, to serve as Acting Principal this year. A former Siamanto Academy graduate, she is a history major who currently teaches high school students in a New Jersey Public school. Ms. Danayan has enthusiastically accepted this new challenge.

Mrs. Checkosky sums it up the best: “Twenty years ago, when we first started Siamanto, we knew the idea was a good one. Now, as a leader among Armenian schools, Siamanto has become a great success and has met and exceeded our expectations. Can there be a stronger combination in any Armenian weekly school program—college-accreditation, talented students and the finest instruction?”

Here are some thoughts articulated by Siamanto students:

“Siamanto Academy gives all young Armenians the opportunity to learn about their heritage. I am very fortunate to be a part of this Academy where I learn the history of my people. Being involved in an Armenian community is a great benefit to me. I enjoy coming to Siamanto where I can make Armenian friends.”

Sylvie Aghjayan

“Siamanto is a good place for a lot of things. We learn a lot each week and about things that help us. It shows how we are Armenians and how we care about that. There are a lot of good people in this school. Everyone is a good friend to know. Every day is good and fun in Siamanto.”

Mark Yetemian

“I think going to Siamanto is very good. It teaches us about Armenian culture, religion and history. We also get to make new Armenian friends. It is also good because it preserves Armenian culture so no one forgets about it. Also, it later on helps us in college because we get credits.”

Massis Sarkissian

“I like Siamanto Academy because I learn about Armenian history and Armenian poets, playwrights, actors, etc.... I also make a lot of friends, some I’ve known for a long time. Siamanto is like a second home for me.”

Mardo Piranian

“I have very positive feelings towards Siamanto. Since I graduate this year, at first it may seem, thank God I am almost done. But I will miss the experience of seeing all my Armenian friends every Saturday, to speak our lan-

guage and to learn about our culture. We are all very lucky and fortunate that we have such profound and important professors teaching us.

“I have learned a lot at Siamanto, whether it be about Armenian culture, religion, history, or literature. I have also expanded my tolerance to learning and doing work because I know that it would pay off. I have a great sense of accomplishment when I hand in homework and get it back with a great grade that I earned.

“I love coming to school even though it may not seem so some weeks, but I know that if I didn’t come, I would have missed out on a lot. I’m lucky to have this school close to me (although I come from NJ) and being able to come every week to learn about who I am as a person and an Armenian. In the future I will send my children here so they can have the same experience as me and have the Armenian culture live on. It will live on through all those who attend Siamanto Academy.

Taleen Kapelian

“I like Siamanto because I am with my friends. I love singing and learning Armenian history. I also love learning about the Armenian language and religion. Learning at Siamanto will make me a better Armenian....”

Emma Biramian

“Siamanto Academy gives me more of an opportunity to learn about my culture that I didn’t know about already. We learn about our Armenian history how our ancestors suffered throughout the many centuries Armenians have been around. All the hardships we have gone through like the Armenian Genocide in 1915. But there has also been some good times in Armenian history like when Armenians were the first people to turn to Christianity. They also got their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. All these things I have learned in Siamanto and much more from Baron Harout. We have also learned the proper grammar for writing in Armenian from Baron Markarian. Siamanto is an excellent academy for the Armenian generation to go and learn about their culture.”

Alexis Kesisyan



Mrs. Norik Checkosky flanked by 1996 Siamanto Academy graduates.

Book Review:

Hagop Nersoyan

The Other Tower: An Armenian Christian Look at Terrorism

Jerusalem: St. James Printing Press, 2002. 66pp.

Review by Michael B. Papazian

In this brief though evocative book, Professor Hagop Nersoyan seeks to present an Armenian Christian perspective on terrorism in the aftermath of the terrible attacks of September 11, 2001. Prof. Nersoyan begins by noting that his point of view is based on the Armenian Church's understanding of John 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The Armenian Church's understanding of this verse is in turn based on the formula of St. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 378-444), which speaks of "one nature of the Incarnate Word of God." The Cyrillian formula is contrasted with the Chalcedonian formula that speaks of two natures united in the Person of Christ. Though acknowledging that all metaphors are imperfect, Nersoyan compares the one nature of Christ that is both divine and human at the same time to a floe of ice in the Antarctic that is at the same time both ice and ocean. This brief discussion of Armenian Christology suggests that Nersoyan's ensuing discussion of terrorism is informed by this distinctive one-nature approach that is more fruitful than the Chalcedonian two-nature Christology. Whether this is correct is a question that we will have to return to.

Nersoyan makes use of an account in the Gospels of an act of terrorism and of the collapse of a tower to develop a Christian approach to terrorism and violence:

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." (Luke 13:1-5)

Nersoyan points out that in this passage Jesus rejects the identification of victimization with punishment. Jesus rejects the idea that people are punished because of their

sins, and thus the Galileans who were killed by Pilate were being punished for their sins while those that escaped did not sin. Or that those who died in the collapse of the tower were punished because they had offended God. Instead of this, Jesus denies that the victims were worse offenders than the survivors. Unless we repent, all will perish as the Galileans did.

But Jesus' saying raises a difficult question. If everything that happens in the world is God's will, why do some suffer and die while others live? Nersoyan's first suggestion is that God's will is not necessarily connected to any specific person being harmed or dying. The laws of nature mandate that some actions will cause harm. For example, the law of gravity and the fragility of human bodies accounts for why we are hurt in falls. But the laws of nature, being uniform, are not suspended to prevent good people from being harmed. And Nersoyan adds that this is a good thing. If we were to view all suffering as God's punishment, we would have no reason to help those who suffer. Instead, we would think that they deserve to suffer.

But these considerations raise the larger question that philosophers refer to as the "problem of evil." Why is there evil and why does it afflict people seemingly at random? Of course if there weren't an all-powerful and all-good God, the existence of evil would not pose a problem. But given that God is capable of doing everything and that He loves us, He presumably neither wants us to suffer evil nor is he unable to put an end to evil. His acquiescence to evil is a profound conundrum, leading some to deny the existence of God. But attempting to prove God's existence using logic is not an option. Nersoyan rightly points out that if we could prove God's existence in the same way that we can prove a theorem in geometry, we would be deprived of freedom. We would have no choice in whether to believe in God, just as we have no choice about whether to believe the Pythagorean theorem given that we have some elementary understanding of geometry. This is why, Nersoyan notes, there is no mention of proofs of the existence of God in the Bible.

Nersoyan goes on from here to draw a parallel be-

tween argument for the existence of God and argument that seek to respond to the problem of evil. If the human mind were to explain the existence of evil and prove its compatibility with the existence of God, then evil would cease to be a challenge and an invitation to do God's will.

This still leaves us with Jesus' statement that "unless you repent, you shall perish likewise." The key word here is "likewise." In what way will those who do not repent perish like the Galileans? Nersoyan argues that the unrepentant will perish like the Galileans in the sense that an unrepentant world must be the scene of crimes and wrongdoing. There can never be a guarantee of safety in such a world. Nersoyan then notes another subtlety in the statement. Jesus says "perish" rather than "die." To perish is to die an unexpected and violent death. So Jesus is saying that our deaths will be unexpected and violent unless we repent. How, then, can we avoid perishing by repentance? Of course, if we expect and prepare for death, then we will not die unexpectedly. Thus, repentance involves a preparation for death. The Christian both recognizes and is reconciled with the necessity of death.

But true repentance must not only remove the unexpectedness of death but also its violence. How can this be achieved? Nersoyan argues that while all death is in some sense violent, the violence can be mitigated or reduced by being made more bearable. The life of the Christian martyr provides a model of a death that mitigates violence. Rather than confronting or becoming angry at the enemy, the martyr experiences a transcendent joy in sharing the suffering of the Lord. The martyr does not lament his own physical death but instead mourns the spiritual death of his persecutors. And this connects with Nersoyan's understanding of repentance as "self-recentering." The unrepentant person focuses on the self and this world. The repentant Christian focuses on the Trinitarian God. By nature, we seek our own physical comfort. Repentance is the supernatural act that brings us out of our self-centered nature and into the Body of Christ.

What prevents us from seeking repentance? Nersoyan characterizes humans as material "centers of acquisition." Because of our physical nature, we require and demand material goods such as food and possessions. Because there is only a limited supply of material goods and they cannot be completely shared, the relationship among

all of the centers of acquisition is marked inevitably by greed, conflict, and discord. We are called to resist these things but they remain constant features of our material or spatio-temporal existence. Jesus, however, was never a center of acquisition. Instead of living a life of acquiring material possessions for Himself, He lived a life of service to others and "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:7-8). This is the life that the repentant Christian seeks. The Christian life is a paradox because it must work within the material world in order to be free of the limitations that the material world imposes. Our individual acts of love may only be small steps toward the Kingdom of God but our reward, Nersoyan says, is the simple "joy of being a note in the symphony that the living God conducts" (32).

But then Nersoyan raises the question of the practical consequences of the Christian life: is Trinitarian Christianity an adequate approach to resolving political conflicts? Does it make any sense to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39) in a world in which not everyone believe in or practices Christ-centered love? If we follow Christ's command also to give our cloak to anyone who asks for our coat, the evildoer will not be satisfied but will take all our possessions.

Nersoyan suggests that we not read the command that we turn the other cheek as an end in itself. This act is not

something we do simply because it is intrinsically good. Rather, it is good because and to the extent to which it serves the "efficacy of the saving Cross" (48). Accordingly, turning the other cheek is one strategy among others that Christians use to serve Christ. Nersoyan wants us to put this verse within the context of the entire Gospels. There are times when Christ did not simply tolerate or accept what others did. He denounced the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and attacked the money-changers in the temple in Jerusalem. Nersoyan points to three examples of either Christian or Christian-inspired nonviolent resistance of evil: Gandhi's resistance to British rule in India, Martin Luther King Jr.'s struggle for equality of the races, and Pope John Paul II's role in the defeat of communism in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. What marks these struggles as Christian is that the salvation of the oppo-

'Nersoyan goes on...to draw a parallel between argument for the existence of God and argument that seek to respond to the problem of evil. If the human mind were to explain the existence of evil and prove its compatibility with the existence of God, then evil would cease to be a challenge and an invitation to do God's will.'

ment was a fundamental motivation of resistance. King, for example, did not simply want to redeem the black people. He was also motivated by the desire to free white people from the sin of racism and segregation. Thus, his life exemplifies that of the Christian martyr more concerned for the spiritual welfare of his persecutors than his own suffering.

The Christian life must also remain faithful to Jesus' statement that "whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35). Authentic Christianity, Nersoyan writes, is opposed to nationalism. This connects with Nersoyan's understanding of repentance as recentering. The natural inclination is for us to center ourselves within the biological family or national group that we belong to. In repenting, we come to see that human relations must be based on our common humanity and not on any ethnic exclusivism or nationalistic sense of superiority. Since many of the wars and conflicts that afflict the world today are based on national differences, repentance can have a profound impact on world politics. Nersoyan ends by noting that such a Christian approach to politics is certainly possible but has not been realized because of people's natural inclinations and resistance to repentance.

Though short, Nersoyan's book is filled with valuable insights on Christian repentance and its relation to politics. In part because the book is short, many points that need to be elaborated are not. I note, for example, his discussion at the beginning of the book on the Christology of the Armenian Church in relation to Chalcedonian Christology. Nersoyan says that the Armenian or Cyrillian Christology is a "more felicitous way of recognizing that Jesus Christ was both God and a human being" (3). That Christ is both God and man is the central truth that informs Nersoyan's book. Yet I could not find anything in Nersoyan's subsequent discussion that would be alien or suspect from the perspective of Chalcedonian Christology. This, for me, is further evidence leading me to think that the Christological dispute between the Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians is one that is a purely abstract and linguistic one without any substantive consequences touching the life of the faithful. One wonders whether it is really the nationalism and cultural divisiveness, which Nersoyan rightly sees as contrary to the Gospel, that

keeps these communities of Christians apart after more than 1500 years. Perhaps then it would be best to omit reference to Christological debates and to focus on the Christ who is both perfect God and perfect man in the confession of all orthodox Christians.

Another point that I would like Nersoyan to say more about is the analogy he draws between arguments for the existence of God and arguments that attempt to account for the existence of evil. I believe that Nersoyan's analogy does not hold. I agree with his claim that if God's existence could be established in the same way the Pythagorean theorem can be, then we would not be free to choose whether to believe or not. Nersoyan makes a parallel objection to arguments that responds to the problem of evil. If an argument could account for the existence of evil, then we would no longer view evil as a challenge to

do God's will. But a response to the problem of evil does not necessarily explain evil. It at best shows that God's existence is compatible with evil or that one can rationally believe in God even in the face of the enormous evil in the world. If I am convinced that evil is compatible with God's existence, I need not become complacent. I can still believe that evil is a challenge. If I were to believe that the existence of evil makes the existence of God either impossible or unlikely, I am

more prone to fall into despair. But by understanding that evil is compatible with God, I am further sustained in the hope that allows me to see evil as an invitation to do God's will. Thus, the dichotomy that Nersoyan presents us with—either we treat evil as a curiosity and a philosophical puzzle or we actually go out into the world and do something about evil—is not correct. Rather, our theorizing about the nature of evil, at its best, serves to support our practice.

These two points are, however, minor objections to a work that will profit all who read it, whether Armenian or not, whether Christian or not. Nersoyan has admirably shown that the Armenian Christian faith and theology is neither obsolete nor impractical. Instead, the living faith remains a compelling response to the evils and afflictions of the contemporary world. ❖

Professor Nersoyan's book is available at the Prelacy Bookstore and the Diocese Bookstore.

“Since many of the wars and conflicts that afflict the world today are based on national differences, repentance can have a profound impact on world politics. Nersoyan ends by noting that such a Christian approach to politics is certainly possible but has not been realized because of people's natural inclinations and resistance to repentance.”

Atom Egoyan will be Honored By Eastern Prelacy on January 17

Atom Egoyan, the force behind the making of the movie *Ararat*, will be honored by the Eastern Prelacy on Friday evening, January 17, with a cocktail reception followed by a special program and award presentation ceremony. The event will take place at the New York Yacht Club located in mid-town Manhattan, 37 West 44th Street.

“Mr. Egoyan’s film has created a great deal of positive publicity for the Armenian genocide,” said Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, Prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America. “I am so very pleased that a group of young professionals from the New York metropolitan area have taken it upon themselves to organize this event for the Prelacy to honor Mr. Egoyan and the film.”

Heading the committee is Khoren Bandazian, Esq., who credits his committee for coming forth with creative concepts for the event. “The committee is determined to make this a worthy event to honor a talented filmmaker.

Egoyan commands great respect in the industry because of the films he has made in the past, many of which have garnered top awards. Because of his reputation, *Ararat* received the highest attention. The articles and reviews in the print and electronic media have brought the Armenian Genocide to the public’s attention in the best possible way.”

The reception at the Yacht Club will begin at 7 p.m., followed by the program at 8:30 p.m. The program will include the presentation of a special award to Mr. Egoyan, the showing of clips from the movie, and a question and answer period. Joining Mr. Egoyan will be his wife, Arsinee Khanjian, who has a

major role in the film. Other cast members and representatives of Miramax, the distributor of the film, have also been invited to attend.

Reviewing the film in the New York Times (November 15), Stephen Holden called *Ararat*, “hands down the year’s most thought-provoking film.” Holden also wrote, “The ideas jostling through *Ararat*, Atom Egoyan’s profound reflection on historical memory, tumble off the screen in such heady profusion that while watching the movie you may worry that you’ll miss something important if you so much as blink. The catalytic event around which it spins those ideas is Turkey’s elimination through massacre and forced deportation of more than a million of its Armenian citizens (two-thirds of the country’s Armenian population) in 1915, a catastrophe that remains largely swept under the rug of world industry.”

Egoyan himself has described *Ararat* as being about stories that don’t get told. “What happens when people live with these things? It’s not just a question of the Armenian genocide. Those stories don’t go away. That’s the central emotional thrust of this film: what happens when things are left unsaid?”

Space is limited, so advance reservations are a must. Pre-paid reservations can be made (\$125 per person) by contact-

ing Sophie (ext. 26) at the Prelacy, 212-689-7810, Checks should be payable to the Armenian Prelacy.

Business attire is required and the use of cell phones and cameras are not permitted at the New York Yacht Club. ❖



Academy Award nominated director, Atom Egoyan



A scene from the “Van” set of the film-within-a-film in “Ararat”

Executive Council Convenes in Watertown, In the First of a Series of Regional Meetings

Realizing the importance of keeping in touch with individual parishes in order to be informed of their thoughts and needs, the Executive Council has begun a series of joint meetings with the parishes on a regional level.

The first of these regional meetings took place on November 16, at St. Stephen's Church in Watertown, Massachusetts. Participating parishes included: St. Stephen's, Watertown, MA; St. Gregory, North Andover, MA; Sourp Asdvadzadzin, Whitinsville, MA; Sts. Vartanantz, Providence, RI.

Richard Sarajian, Esq., chairman of the Executive Council, explained the rationale of this action. "Although we keep in touch with our parishes through all of the modern-day means, and our Prelate, Archbishop Oshagan, visits the parishes on a regular basis, there is nothing like a face-to-face dialogue. For this reason we decided to schedule regional meetings and invite the local parishes to join us in a dialogue about their concerns, our concerns, and how to best come to a meeting of minds for the greater good."

The Executive Council convened Friday evening for



The first regional meeting with parishes and the Executive Council took place in Watertown, Massachusetts.

By and large, the members of their Boards of Trustees and their NRA delegates represented the parishes. Topics discussed included: Goals of the parish and how it is expected to achieve these goals; what the board expects or needs from the Prelacy; The working relationship between the Board and Pastor; Recommendation for changes in administrative issues, locally or nationally; and financial issues.

As a general rule, the parishes looked to the Prelacy for more educational materials; better marketing of Prelacy programs; effective use of technology; strengthen the Church spiritually; encourage regional conferences; attract the younger generations, possibly by establishing Youth Ministers; "Other than Sunday" Liturgy in English; and programs for non-Armenian spouses.

His Eminence spoke about the pilot program of an instructional Liturgy that is underway at St. Gregory Church in Philadelphia. This will be conducted on Saturday evenings for a period of three months. Archbishop Oshagan also noted that the Prelacy is undertaking the preparation of a comprehensive Liturgy Book in English, Armenian, and English transliteration. Once it is prepared, but before it goes to press, individuals from different backgrounds will be given the opportunity to determine its effectiveness and the need for changes.

The success of the first regional meeting has convinced the Executive Council of the need to continue a meaningful dialogue with the local parishes. "It is the best way for us to understand each other's concerns and problems. It is also a way of sharing our successes," said Archbishop Oshagan. ❖



Leaders of individual parishes met with the Executive Council and later all the parishes gathered for an exchange of ideas.

their regularly scheduled Executive Council meeting. On Saturday each of the participating parishes met individually with the Executive Council. After the individual meetings everyone came together for further discussions and to share ideas.

"This meeting was very successful and helpful for all of us," said Archbishop Oshagan. "The representatives of the parishes had the opportunity to get to know the members of the Executive Council and the channels of communications were greatly enhanced."

The Prelates' REACH Fund

\$200,000 dollars raised toward goal of \$1,000,000

In celebration of the 35th anniversary of Archbishop Oshagan's service to the Armenian Church, the Prelacy has established a new endowment fund called the Prelates' REACH (Religious Education within the Armenian Church) Fund.

It was Archbishop Oshagan's wish that such a fund be established in lieu of an anniversary banquet or any other type of celebration, in order to focus on the future. Furthermore, it was His Eminence's wish that the Fund be designated as the "Prelates' Fund" honoring all Prelates who served in the past as well as those who will serve in the future.

Armenian Americans along with some friends abroad, have joined together to build the REACH Fund into a substantial resource for the Church. The Fund will allow the Prelacy to bolster Christian education in our parishes and schools, as well as sustain other humanitarian and cultural programs, especially those programs developed for our youth.

Jack Mardoian, Esq., former Executive Council chairman, is spearheading this effort and to date over \$200,000 has been donated to the fund. "Proceeds from the fund," said Mr. Mardoian, "will help bolster core Prelacy programs for community outreach, youth services, Christian education, and clergy training. Our goal is to raise one million dollars in order to properly help establish this fund."

Mr. Mardoian described His Eminence's achievements saying, "As an author, educator, Scriptural translator and Prelate, Archbishop Oshagan has been instrumental in the intellectual and organizational growth of the Armenian Church and the Cilician Catholicosate, not only during his years as Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy but also during his years of service in Kuwait, the Gulf States, Syria, Lebanon, and throughout the world."

A series of fundraising events have been scheduled in various areas. The first of these events took place in

Philadelphia in May at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Michel Nalbantian. The second took place in December at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rene and Linda Chirinian in Connecticut.

During a pastoral visit to St. Stephen's Church in New Britain, Connecticut, His Eminence was feted by the parish in honor of his 35th anniversary. Congratulatory messages came from local and state officials including a proclamation from the Governor of Connecticut, John G. Rowland, who proclaimed October 27, 2002 as

"Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan Day." The Governor said, in part, "I commend Archbishop Choloyan for his outstanding character and leadership abilities. His proud history of commitment to God and the religious community is a great source of spiritual strength.... This honor is a true testament to his dedication, commitment and tireless efforts to provide a variety of religious programs to his parishioners as well as the community-at-large."

His Eminence has been receiving congratulatory words of encouragement and praise from all over the world. Mr. Kaloust Sogioian of Michigan, recently wrote: "Archbishop Oshagan is exactly the type of leader that the Armenian Church in the United States needs. Having spent many years of his young adult life here while attending Princeton Theological Seminary, he is totally aware of the special qualities and needs of the Armenian American community.

I was pleased to see that during his first four-year-term of office, Archbishop Oshagan made a special effort to visit every parish and listen to the voices of the people, especially our younger generations. This is the mark of an effective leader. I congratulate His Eminence on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of his ordination and wish him good health, fortitude, patience, and insight so that he may continue in his mission of service to the Armenian Church." ❖

State of  Connecticut

By His Excellency JOHN G. ROWLAND, Governor: an

Official Statement



President of Karabagh is Received at Prelacy



His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan hosted a breakfast reception on Tuesday, November 19, for Arkady Ghobgassian, President of the Mountainous Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh. The President was on a visit to the United States prior to the Thanksgiving Day telethon raising funds for the vital north-south highway in Karabagh. The President (right) was accompanied by His Excellency Moses Abelian, Permanent Representative of the Armenian Republic to the United Nations. The reception was attended by leaders of the Armenian American community who listened to the President's message and then responded with comments and questions. The Prelacy parishes raised money for the telethon on three separate Sundays through a special plate offering.

Photos courtesy of Harry Koundakjian



The President and guests examine the art work of students affiliated with the Armenian National Education Committee. The children's artwork was a result of a special educational project about Karabagh.



Ordination Service in North Andover

Archbishop Oshagan during ordination service at St. Gregory Armenian Church, North Andover, Massachusetts. Top row, left to right: Deacon Berj Karibian, Deacon John Saryan, His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan, Deacon Avedis Garavanian and V. Rev. Fr. Yeghishe Manjikian. The Sunday School students being ordained as acolytes are: Dean Devejian, Sean Devejian, Mardig Frounjian, Justin Gostanian, Dro Gregorian, Gregor Gregorian, Michael Guzelian, Christian Hidirsah, Nishan Ovian, and Michael Nicolosi. St. Gregory Church, which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary, will be the featured parish in the next issue of Outreach.



News from the Catholicosate of Cilicia

Greece's Benaki Museum Exhibits Treasures of Cilicia

His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, presided over the opening of the exhibit of treasures of the Cilicia at the Benaki Museum in Athens on October 30. Joining him were the Head of the Greek Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Archbishop Christodoulos, as well as the President of the Greek parliament, the representative of the Greek President, the Minister of Culture, ambassadors, ministers, and parliamentarians and more than 3,000 visitors.

Titled "Armenian Relics of Cilicia," the exhibit was organized by the Benaki Museum with the support of the Armenian Church in Greece and the initiative of the Karabet Kalfayan family.

The exhibition centers on the history and art of the Armenians of Cilicia, from the time of the foundation of the medieval kingdom of Lesser Armenia in the 12th century until the Genocide of 1915. Many of the exhibited pieces are from the collection of the Holy See of Cilicia.

More than 80 objects are on display including treasures from the Armenian Church of St. Sophia in Sis, Cilicia, which were brought with the caravan of refugees all the way to Aleppo and then to Antelias in Lebanon where the Catholicate of Cilicia sought refuge.

The material is complemented by three



important manuscripts dating from the period between the 12th and 14th centuries, from the Armenian Monastery of the Mekhitarists in Venice.

The main groups of the exhibition are comprised of illuminated manuscripts from the 13th-17th centuries, coins dating from the 12th-14th centuries, incunabula from the 16th-18th centuries, and church silver and hieratic vestments from the 13th-19th centuries, all of which define the identity and mark the historical vicissitudes of the Armenian people.

The older objects dating from the 13th-14th, particu-



His Holiness Aram I and His Beatitude Archbishop Christodoulos view the treasures during the opening of the exhibit.

larly the manuscripts reflect the East Christian world in Byzantine and Crusader times, a world to which the Armenian kingdom also belonged.

The works of silver from the same period may trace their influences to Armenian art, from the brief contact between the kingdom of Cilice and the medieval West,

when the Muslim threat and the missionary zeal of Rome led the leadership of the Armenian Church to adopt a policy favorable to union with the Latin church.

The later works of Ottoman times reflect the fruitful union



Above and left: Two of the exhibited treasures on view at the Benaki Museum in Athens, Greece.

between the Armenian artistic tradition and the trends of Ottoman art, mainly from 18th-19th centuries.

They present common stylistic features with Greek liturgical objects, a result of the co-existence of the two peoples, as much in the towns and villages of Asia Minor as in the large urban centers such as Constantinople and Smyrna.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue containing photographic material and contributions by Tom Sinclair, assistant professor in the Department of Turkish Studies of the University of Cyprus, Helen Evans, curator of the Byzantine Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Joanna Rapt, of the Cole Critique des Hates Etudes of the Sorbonne, and Anna Billion, curator, Department of Post-Byzantine Art in the Beaky Museum, who is also the curator of the exhibition and editor of the catalogue.

Religious and Lay Executive Councils Meet in Antelias

His Holiness Arum I presided over the meeting of the Religious and Lay Councils, which took place in Antelias, November 7 to 9. All of the members of these Councils from various dioceses throughout the world attended.

His Holiness provided a brief report outlining the significant aspects of the work of the Catholicate during the last few months, and then identified priorities for the coming period.

Topics discussed by the Religious Council included issues and projects related to Christian education, ecumenical relations, 1,000th anniversary of Nareg, ethical issues, publication of textbooks and booklets, and the Seminary. The Lay Council discussed issues pertaining to community schools, cultural activities, human rights, finance, relations with the dioceses and collaboration between the Armenian Diaspora and Armenia.

The joint meeting of the councils discussed issues concerning collaboration with the hierarchical sees of the Armenian Church, diocesan bylaws, and pontifical meetings.

In his closing remarks, His Holiness said, in part: "What we do as a church is not ordinary work, it is a mission. The church's reflection and action must be under girded with this vision. The Armenian Catholicate of Cilicia not only believes but also is committed to people-oriented missionary action. The Armenian Church should act with this self-perception. The Armenian Catholicate of Cilicia, through different projects and activities, has made our church a missionary reality in the life of our communities all over the world." ❖

Armenian Christmas

(continued from page 5)

interior of the church. Today, a bowl of water is placed on the Bema of the church while the choir sings the hymn *Loos ee Louson*. Then the priest reads the Gospel (Matthew 3:1-7) and adds water in the bowl in a cross-like manner. The choir sings the hymn *Ov Zarmanalee* and *Aysor Tsainun Hairagan*. The priest then immerses a hand cross in the water, which symbolizes Jesus Christ's Baptism, and blesses the water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. After the blessing he takes out the cross and gives it to a young man who stands as the Godfather of the Cross. Then the priest pours Holy Muron (consecrated oil) in the bowl invoking the Holy Spirit that may descend and proclaim the Sonship of Jesus Christ as it happened during His Baptism. At the end of the services the members of the congregation approach, kiss the cross held by the Godfather and depart in peace. Those who wish may drink from the blessed water or take it home for family members who were unable to attend. This service symbolizes the Baptism and the manifestation of the Epiphany of Christ. After the services are over, the faithful, filled with joy and gratitude toward God, thank Him that He sent His Only-Begotten Son for our salvation, greeting each other by saying, *Kreesdos ee Mech Mer Haidnetsav*. The reply will be *Orbnial eh Haidnootiunnn Kreesdosee*. Translated this means, "Christ was manifested amongst us" and the reply "Blessed is the Manifestation of Christ."

After church services, it is customary for Armenian families to visit each other's homes and share each other's hospitality thus creating an atmosphere of common brotherhood and Christian love. Christmas is the time for Armenians to enjoy the Good News of Christ's birth and the Manifestation of the Son of God. It is an occasion to glorify God for the grace that He bestowed upon Mankind sending His Only-Begotten Son for their salvation.

How Christmas is celebrated today is another story. But, the spirit of Christmas is still as relevant to us as it was to our forefathers. Therefore, let us celebrate the Birth and the Manifestation of Christ with true Christian spirit. Let us make Christmas a spiritual rebirth of our souls and minds. ❖

Rev. Fr. Archpriest Gorun Shirikian is Pastor-Emeritus of St. Sarkis Church, Dearborn, Michigan. His prolific writings continue to inspire and serve the Armenian Church.

SPECIAL PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER EXTENDED

ILLUMINATED ARMENIAN MANUSCRIPTS OF THE CATHOLICATE OF CILICIA

By Sylvia Agemian

(Translated from the French by Pierre Papazian)

262 pages

more than 300 photographs in color & black and white

**With a preface by His Holiness Karekin II
Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia**

**Preface to the English edition by
His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan**

**Pre-publication price: \$40.00 (until February 1, 2002), including shipping and handling.
After December 10: \$50.00, plus shipping and handling.**

Sylvia Agemian, a noted and respected art historian provides us insight on the Armenian manuscripts that comprise the collection of the Museum of the Catholicate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon. This collection has never before been studied in depth as done by Dr. Agemian. Some of the manuscripts, like the famous Gospel of Bardzrberd and Book of Ordination, (which are considered to be the jewels of the Catholicate's collection), were among the rare treasures saved by the monks in 1915, transporting them from Sis to Aleppo and then to Antelias.

"...the miniatures of the Antelias collection still remained, from the scientific and artistic perspective, a closed world for the public. Only some rare miniatures, generally in black and white and seldom in color, had been the object of special study.... It is this gap that is now closed with the publication of this book which is the work of Sylvia Agemian, learned specialist and talented analyst of the Christian art of the Middle East..."

*Karekin II
Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia
From the Preface to the French Edition, July 1991*

Please send me _____ copies of Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts of the Catholicate of Cilicia at the special pre-publication price of \$40.00 per copy including shipping and handling.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Make checks payable to: Armenian Prelacy Bookstore
138 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016

From the Editor

(continued from inside front cover)

though I concede that later versions are more accurate and easier to comprehend. But, the beauty of the language in the King James Version—so Shakespear-ean—is important for me.

I look forward to the coming issues of *Outreach* and our journey together through the “Year of the Bible.”

Traffic Jams

My commute from New Jersey to Manhattan and vice versa takes me along the East River drives. One afternoon, stuck in a New York-style traffic jam, I glanced across the river toward The Bronx and saw a large black and white billboard with this message: “Keep using my name in vain, I’ll make rush hour longer.—God.” Intrigued, and nowhere to go, I pulled over to the side and snapped a photo.



I have since learned that there is a series of billboards with different pithy supposed messages from God, such as, You think it’s hot here? ...Will the road you’re on get you to my place. ...Let’s meet at my house Sunday before the game...and so on.

I don’t know who is responsible for the billboards, but it made my commute on this particular day a little less frustrating.

Thank You

We continue to receive wonderful comments about the new *Outreach*, as well as some good suggestions. Your input is always welcome. Several of you complained about the absence of the “hands of Man and God” fashioned after the famous work of Michelangelo in the last issue. It was just a temporary omission because of the artwork used on the cover last month. The “hands”—so symbolic of *Outreach*—are still with us. ✠

Prelacy Calendar of Events:

Bible Study at the Armenian Prelacy, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, from 7:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. led by Dn. Shant Kazanjian, Director of the Armenian Religious Education Council (AREC). Topic: Great Themes from the Gospel of St. Matthew. For information: arec@armenianprelacy.org

Siamanto Academy meets every Saturday at the Armenian Center, 69-23 47th Avenue, Woodside, New York, 11:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. The college-accredited Academy offers Armenian language, history and Christian studies classes for high school students. For information contact Gilda B. Kupelian, Director of the Armenian National Education Committee: anec@armenianprelacy.org

Prelate’s Annual Christmas Reception, Monday, January 6, 2003, at Prelacy, 138 E. 39th Street, New York City, 7 to 9 p.m.

Tribute to Atom Egoyan and the Making of Ararat, Friday, January 17, 2003 at the New York Yacht Club, New York City.

Ghevontiank Annual Clergy Conference, February 24, 25, and 26, 2003, with the participation of clergy from North American Prelacies, at St. Illuminator’s Cathedral, 221 E. 27th Street, New York City. The Conference will concentrate on the millennium anniversary of the Book of Lamentations by St. Gregory of Narek and the 40th anniversary of the death of Catholicos Zareh I.

National Conference for Christian Educators, March 21-23, 2003, at the Wonderland Conference and Retreat Center, Sharon, Massachusetts. Theme: The Sacraments of Healing—Anointing the Sick and Confession. For information: arec@armenianprelacy.org

Musical Armenia, Sunday, March 23, 2003. Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York City.

ANEC Armenian Schools Festival, Sunday, March 23, 2003 (Northern New Jersey), with the participation of students from Armenian day and one-day schools from the Mid-Atlantic region. For information: anec@armenianprelacy.org

Mother’s Day Luncheon, Thursday May 8, 2003, at The Pierre, New York City. Sponsored by the Prelacy Ladies Guild



Eastern Prelacy of the
Armenian Apostolic Church of America
138 East 39th Street
New York, NY 10016
E:mail: email@armenianprelacy.org

Periodical Postage Paid