

ՏԵՍԻԼԲ DESEELK



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ADVENT

As Armenian Orthodox Christians, we begin the celebration of the Theophany (*Asdvadzahaydnootyoon*) with a time of preparation called Advent (*Hisnag*). Advent means “coming” – the coming of Christ. In Armenian it is called *Hisnag* from the word for “fifty.” It is the period of time during which we prepare to celebrate the feast of the birth of Christ. It is a time for us to think of the why of Christmas – why the greeting cards, the decorations, the gifts, the family gatherings? A time to look within our hearts to see if there is anything that stands between us and the Good News of Jesus’ birth.

During Advent, we can rededicate ourselves to Christ through our actions, thoughts, and prayers. This is a good time for us to improve our habits and offer them as gifts to God. Perhaps Advent can also be an occasion to discover God’s gifts all around us. We need to have an open heart to receive Christ – God’s greatest gift of all! We complain that Christmas is too “commercial,” but there is a way to live out the real “reason for the season.” Try this: spend a few minutes a day on your spiritual preparation by reading and writing in this journal. If you do, Christmas will mean a whole lot more to you this year.

Advent is a preparatory penitential season, which is reflected in the life of the Church not necessarily by any specific liturgical worship services or a special rite, but by a number of small preparatory liturgical hymns and prayers that gradually proclaim Christ’s coming into the world as a man.

The joyful note of the season, in anticipation of the Nativity of Christ, affords an opportunity for the faithful to exercise their Christian commitment in a mood of happy spiritual toil to “make ready the way of the Lord”. (Matthew 3:3)

As we “make ready the way of the Lord”, let us heed the words of Christ from the Gospel reading of the day according to St. Luke who reminds us that in order to prepare for and receive the Coming of the Lord, we must become like a child in innocence, sincerity, simplicity and humility.



Saint Stephen the Protomartyr

St. Stephen is one of the most beloved saints of the Universal Church, the first person martyred for the sake of Christ's doctrine of love.

According to the hagiographical sources he was from the royal dynasty of Judas and was the son of law-abiding parents. Still a young man he was the servant of the chief priest Kayipaya. According to the same sources when the Lord was taken to home, Stephen took off the cloth from his head and spread it under the Lord's feet thus expressing his true and sincere love. This naturally annoyed the chief priest and he turned Stephen out. Stephen witnessed the death and burial of the Lord but rejoiced with the apostles for the Glorious Resurrection of Christ. According to St. Gregory of Tatev he went to the apostles Peter and John and was baptized. At the moment of baptism an aureole (crown) appeared on the water. After that miraculous event, he was called "Stephen" meaning (crowned). From the Acts of the Apostles it is known that after the Pentecost, apostles served the tables and gave subsidies to the poor. From day to day increased the number of those who



St. Stephen the Protomartyr

believed in Christ. As the apostles were unable to meet the needs of everybody, they asked their disciples to choose seven persons of good reputation for serving the tables. According to St.

Luke the Evangelist, one of them was St. Stephen, "... a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). By the power received from Christ apostles ordained him deacon. Thanks to his God-granted virtues and power Stephen worked wonders. Many people tried to argue with him, but no one was as wise as Stephen. So, some ill-willing persons persuaded some people to say that Stephen scolded God and the Prophet Moses. Inciting the people, the priests and the lawyers they took Stephen to the court. In his speech in his defense

Stephen proved that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and reproached the Jews for their cruelty. He was stoned out of the city and his clothes were put before a man whose name was Saul and who later became the Apostle Paul. In the beginning he persecuted Christians, but later he knew the true God – Jesus Christ, and became the most zealous preacher of the Gospel. St. Stephen was the first person martyred for the sake of Christ and that's why he is called Protomartyr.

Canon for the Feast of St. Stephen the Protomartyr and first to die in the Name of Jesus Christ

*First deacon and first martyr, whom Christ crowned,
and who surrounded by light rejoiced in the heavenly bridal chamber;
Beseech the Lord to grant us life everlasting.*

*You, who as the result of your patience, saw the gates of heaven opened
and the Son at the Father's right hand, You prayed for those who stoned you;
Beseech the Lord to grant us life everlasting.*

*We, the church of the righteous and the assemblies of the orthodox,
Today celebrate your memory, and in tears beseech you, O true witness of Christ;
Beseech the Lord to grant us live everlasting.*

Parish Council Corner

"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God ..."
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Thanksgiving is one day set aside in the entire calendar year when all of us together as a nation, a church and a family have an opportunity to appreciate and give thanks to God for all the blessings that He has given to us. You might ask, what should I be thankful for? We know that giving thanks to God is something we should do unceasingly. We must give thanks for who He is and what He has done for us as well as for His love, goodness and faithfulness. The Lord should be thanked for our daily provisions and for answers to prayer and for others. We must give thanks to God for everything.

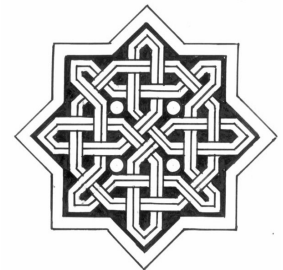
As this holiday approaches and we all look forward to spending time with our fam-

ily and friends and to feasting on wonderful foods, we want to take time to remember and give thanks for a group of parishioners who have served St. James and have not been duly recognized. We in no way want to diminish the work of so many who tirelessly give their time to St. James, but we would like to especially recognize and thank Brian and Meg Karmajian, Laura Bayindarian, Lynea Gregorian, Nora Krikorian, Christine Simon, Anna Kirakosyan, and Arpi Paylan Bazarian, our Sunday School staff of recent years, who put in countless hours of preparation time to teach the faith of the Armenian Church to parish children. We appreciate their years of dedication and service.

We also extend our thanks and appreciation to Hovsep Babayan and his sons, Andre and Alen, who have quietly and without recognition provided countless structural and electrical repairs to our church building. Mr. Babayan is a man who exemplifies true Christian charity and unconditional love for all.

Deborah DerAsadourian

Parish Council Chairperson



We extend our thanks and appreciation to Mr. & Mrs. Ohanness & Annahid Korogluyan for generously underwriting the printing and mailing expenses for the premier issue of DESSELK. With the Korogluyan family's generous donation, our parish was able to open yet another avenue of communication with our parishioners. Through weekly Sunday Bulletins, e-Bulletins, Calling Posts and mailings, we will continue to keep parishioners apprised of all activities and events. We hope that you find the articles and information in DESSELK of interest to you and your family. May the Lord continue to bless the Korogluyan family.

Fr. Hovhan & Parish Council

Mission of the Armenian Orthodox Apostolic Church

The Mission of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church is to preach the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ and to proclaim its message of salvation. This mission is realized through worship, education, witness, service, and a common life in Jesus Christ as expressed in the distinctive faith - experience of the Armenian people. All members of the Armenian Church - both clergy and lay - are called to participate fully in its mission.



Follow Him

"The Call to Serve: Ministry of the Faithful"

A message from Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

"Follow me," said our Lord Jesus Christ, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:19). He spoke these words to the simple fishermen whom he called to be his first disciples. But his call to "Follow me" also had a broader audience, as the evangelist Mark records:

"Jesus called the people to him with his disciples, and said to them: 'Whoever would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me'" (Mk 8:34).

Over and over again in the gospels, our Lord utters this call to people from every station in life. "Follow me" is Christ's invitation to join him, to become close to him, to walk in his footsteps—and thus to know him more intimately.

Life in the Armenian Church confirms the multi-faceted nature of Christ's call. Certainly, in our church, one kind of call is associated with the priesthood, and there is a unique ministry that goes with it. But Christ *also* calls in different ways to *all* his faithful followers. Indeed, wearing the very name "Christian" means that you are answering his call to "Follow me." It means that you are striving to live in daily imitation of our Lord's example and spiritual message. It means that, whether as a member of the clergy or the laity of the church, you are performing Christ's ministry on earth.

This idea of lay ministry—the "ministry of the faithful"—is the theme of our Diocese this year. Throughout the coming weeks and months, it will be the focus of our discussions and activities—from the Diocesan level to our local parishes and individual families.

Our theme is summed up in the title, "**The Call to Serve: Ministry of the Faithful**," and through it, with our Lord's guidance, all of us as a Diocese will gain a deeper understanding of lay ministry: where it begins, where it leads to, and what it can mean for our church.

As ministers of our Lord, we are the lamp through which the light of Christ shines on others, illuminating them to the presence of Christ in their lives. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the people to whom we minister can themselves become a part of the Ministry of the Faithful. I feel that this ministry is being performed *whenever* and *however* you participate in church life. Perhaps you are a member of the choir, or a deacon on the altar, or a teacher in Sunday School or Armenian School. Perhaps you serve on the Women's Guild, or another parish organization. Or perhaps you are comforting a fellow parishioner in pain; reaching out to a human being in need; or lending moral or material support to others. *Each of these is a service to our Lord*—an opportunity to participate in the Ministry of the Faithful.

But in its broadest conception, the Ministry of the Faithful is not limited to the family, the parish, or even to the church as a whole. Indeed, your work as lay ministers of Christ can have profound consequences for the entire society we inhabit. Still, it is in church, living and working side-by-side among our fellow Armenian Christians, that we receive the inspiration and strength to carry this ministry forward.

May God bless all our people, and may He grant us many occasions to serve Him, our society, and our fellow countrymen, under the radiant beauty of the Armenian heritage.

With prayers,

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Primate

Աշխարհականներու Առաքելութիւնը Հայաստանեայց Եկեղեցւոյ Մէջ

Եկեղեցւոյ մէջ աշխարհականներու կամ հոգեւորականներու բոլոր առաքելութեանց նպատակակէտն է ի սփիւռս աշխարհի տարածել Զրիստոսի թագաւորութեան աւետիսը՝ ի փառս Հօր Աստուծոյ: Այս միջոցաւ՝ բոլոր մարդոց համար կարելի կ'ըլլայ բաժնեկից դառնալ Զրիստոսի փրկութեան եւ օգնել, որպէս զի մեր եղբայրներն ու քոյրերը յարաբերութեան մէջ մտնեն Յիսուս Զրիստոսի հետ:

Մենք քրիստոնեաներս օրհնուած ենք, քանի որ մեր մկրտութեան ատեն՝ Ս. Հոգւոյ միջոցաւ կը ստատանք Աստուծոյ շնորհը: Մկրտութիւնը կ'երաշխաւորէ մեր մուտքը եկեղեցւոյ կեանքէն ներս եւ կը պարտադրէ որ ծառայենք որպէս Զրիստոսի աչքը, ականջը, ձեռքերը եւ ոտքերը: Հայց. Եկեղեցւոյ Մկրտութեան Կարգին համաձայն՝

Մկրտութեան եւ Դրոշմի միջոցաւ ենթական մուտք կը գործէ Եկեղեցւոյ մէջ որպէս անդամ Զրիստոսի մարմնի: Աղամական մեղքը կը սրբուի անոր մէջ: Մկրտուողը յաճառու կ'ըլլայ Զրիստոսի Եկեղեցւոյ անդամակցութեան պարտաւորութիւններուն, ինչպէս նաեւ իրաւունք- ներուն, եւ իր անձը կը նուիրէ քրիստոնեութեան նպատակին՝ որպէս քաղաքացի Աստուծոյ թագաւորութեան, ուր մկրտուողին նոր գոյավիճակ մը կը տրուի:

Որպէս քրիստոնեաներ մենք գիտենք թէ բարի գործերը արտաքին ցոլքերն են մեր հաւատքին: Մենք գիտենք նաեւ թէ մեր առաքելական գործունեութեան ծրագրին համար Յիսուսի խօսքերէն անդին՝ նայելու պէտք չունինք: Յիսուս Մատթեոսի Աւետարանին 25:35-36 համարին համաձայն կ'ուսուցանէ հետեւեալը.

“Որովհետեւ անօթեցայ՝ եւ ուտելիք տուիք ինձի, ծառացայ՝ ու խմցուցիք ինձի, օտարական էի՝ ներս ընդունեցիք զիս, մերկ էի՝ հագուեցուցիք զիս, հիւանդ էի՝ այցելեցիք ինձի, բանտի մէջ էի՝ եկաք ինձի”:

Այլ խօսքով՝ պարտաւոր ենք շօշափելի նիւթական եւ բարոյական նպաստ յատկացնել աղքատներուն: Հասարակաց եւ անձնական աղօթասածութեամբ մեր հոգեւոր կեանքը եւ Աստուծոյ հանդէպ մեր հաւատքը խորացնելը կենսական է որեւէ առաքելութեան յաջողութեան համար: Պարտաւոր ենք ժամանակ ստեղծել որպէս զի լուռ խորհրդածենք Տիրոջ ներկայութեան: Արդարեւ՝ աղօթքի այս վկայութիւնը ինքնին առաքելութիւն մըն է: Կ'աղօթենք ծուխի բարիքին համար, իրարու համար, ծուխի հովիւին համար եւ ընդհանուր համայնքին համար:

Հայց. Եկեղեցին օժտուած է հարուստ միջոցներով որոնք կրնան հիմքը կազմել մեր աղօթարարութեան, մինչ կը զօրացնենք մեր առաքելութեան եւ մեկզմէկու հանդէպ մեր նուիրումը: Ասոնք մաս կը կազմեն եկեղեցւոյ ամենօրեայ ժամերգութիւնները, եկեղեցւոյ հայրերէն՝ Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացիէն եւ Ս. Ներսէս Շնորհալիէն ընթերցումներ, ինչպէս նաեւ այլ եւ այլ շարականներ, սաղմոսներ, եւ բազում այլ նիւթեր: Փոքր ճիգով մը կարելի է դիւրաւ կազմակերպել եւ գործադրել աղօթքի ժամանակացոյց եւ կարգ:

Prayer of St. Hovhanness Mantakuni, Catholicos

Awaken our minds in righteousness for you, Lord our God, so that our eyes may see your salvation. May your divinity come and abide in us, and may your mercy shelter and protect your servants. By day and by night and at all times make us, your servants, reflect always on the love of your commandments, in thanksgiving to glorify the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen

Աղօթք Սուրբ Յովհաննէս Մանդակունի Կաթողիկոսի կողմէ

Զարթո՛ւ՝ զմիտս մեր արդարութեամբ առ քեզ, տէր աստուած մեր, զի տեսցեն աչք մեր զփրկութիւն քո: Եկեսցէ և բնակեսցէ առ մեզ աստուածութիւն քո, և ողորմութիւն քո հովանի եւ պահապան լիցի ի վերայ պաշտօնէից քոց: Եւ զմեզ զծառայքս քո արժանի արա ի տուէ և ի գիշերի և յամենայն ժամու՝ միշտ խորհիլ ի սէր պատուիրանաց քոց: Եւ գոհութեամբ փառաւորել զհայր եւ զորդի եւ զսուրբ հոգիդ, այժմ եւ միշտ եւ յաւիտեանս յաւիտենից. Ամէն:

Jerusalem Experience

by Arda Paylan

Jerusalem is unlike any city I have ever visited. Visiting the Holy City where I could almost see the faith on all the inhabitants was one of the greatest gifts I have received. From June 1st-10th, I had the pleasure of accompanying nearly 40 other Armenians to Jerusalem. There we toured together, ate together, laughed together, cried together, and prayed together. We walked through the footsteps of Christ, from his birth place in Bethlehem to his tomb in the Holy Sepulcher. We read bible passages related to the site or city we were in and at times, you could close your eyes, feel the heat on your back and think you were in a time other than now.



I loved walking the streets of the old city, entering different Quarters and experiencing what each one was like. Wherever we went, there were people of other religions going through the same Pilgrimage we went through. It was so eye-opening seeing denominations of people that are different but still

have the same faith, the same love. One of the experiences that stood out the most to me was listening to a Catholic sermon in our hotel and hearing the priest say, "Make Him present loving one another." This phrase had a profound effect on me and made me realize that no matter how different we are from others, we have to continue to live together and worship together and accept one another.

There was one group of believers in Jerusalem that stood out to me the most, the Armenians. We were exposed to a truly dedicated group of Armenians defending and protecting our rights in the Holy City. We are the only Christians in Jerusalem with our very own Quarter, the Armenian Quarter.



We have rights in some of the Holiest of sites. It is up to the Armenians left in Jerusalem to protect our belongings and our sites. The priests there serve 24



hours a day and prevent our presence from disappearing in Jerusalem. This is where the Armenian Diaspora must realize that we cannot leave it up to the Armenians in Jerusalem to fight for us and defend us on their own; we must stand up and be a part. We must make our own individual Pilgrimages to Jerusalem to show that we care and that we appreciate the efforts of those working for our rights. I will never forget my experience in Jerusalem and I thank the St.

James Armenian Church in Evanston for giving me such a faithful and beautiful opportunity.

Thank you.

2011 Membership/ Stewardship Participants

(as of December 1st, 2011)

The following is a list of participants to date in our 2011 Membership/ Stewardship Pledge program. At the beginning of each year, a Membership Dues/Stewardship Pledge Form is mailed to all parishioners requesting their annual Dues/Pledge commitment for the following year.

This list represents those who have made that commitment for 2011.

Members

*First-time Members are designated with **

Gevik & Varya Anbarchian	Bea Green	Armand Norehad
Patricia Antaramian	Kathleen Green	Harry Omartian
Ohannes Arakelian	Ernie & Alice Gregorian	Arda Paylan
Sona Artinian	Kavork & Nairy Hagopian	Krikor Paylan*
Adom & Amanda Asadourian*	Richard & Marie Ipjian	Vartan & Hayganush Paylan
Rosa Ashikian	Vahan Janjigian*	Ani Poladian*
Mary Babagian	Danielle Kalajian*	David & Emily Rabjohns
Houseb & Jenik Babayan	Elizabeth Kamajian	Bob & Christine Simon
Heather Baltrusaidis*	Brian & Margaret Kamajian	Eddie & Allison Simon
Charles & Dawn Barsamian	Aznif Kashian	Oscar & Margaret Stepanian
Ayda Bayindirian	Neshan Keshian	Baykar & Chicky Tatosian
Charles & Rose Boyian	Zarouhi Kedjidjian	Montsic & Janet Tatevosian
Jack Coloian	Alice Keljik	Mariam Tatosian
Ralph & Debbie DerAsadourian	Stephan & Peggy Kerridan	Oscar Tatosian Rita
Steve & Paula Erickson	Ohannes & Anahit Korogluyan	Terterian
Lisa Esayan	Mary Anne Koshgarian	Ani Tokat
Dr. Larry & Wendy Farsakian	Dr. Sam Mikaelian	Kary Valenziano
Chad & Lisa Fischer	Joelle Minassian*	B. General Walter G Vartan
Juraine Golin	Miran Mirzabegian	Gentre Vartan
Hakop Goorji	John & Lucine Nersesian	Avedis & Ankin Yazicioglu
Vartges Goorji	Anna Marie Norehad	Mari Yeghyayan
Krikor & Angele Gosgarian		

Stewards

Gevik & Varya Anbarchian	Kavork & Nairy Hagopian	Peter & Larissa Petrakis
Anonymous 1	Zarouhi Kedjidjian	David & Emily Rabjohns
Anonymous 2	Ohannes & Anahit Korogluyan	Bob & Chris Simon
Charles & Rose Boyian	Dr. Sam Mikaelian	Mariam Tatosian
Ralph & Debbie DerAsadourian	Armand and Nadia Mirjanian	Oscar Tatosian
Dr. Gregory and Randa Dumanian	John & Lucine Nersesian	Rita Terterian
Dr. Larry & Wendy Farsakian	Anna Marie Norehad	Gentre & Dorothy Vartan
Chad & Lisa Fischer	Armand & Marilyn Norehad	B. General Walter G & Jane Vartan
Barry & Juraine Golin	Harry & Shirley Omartian	
Kathleen Green	Vartan & Haganush Paylan	

*Total pledged: \$26,040.00
Goal: \$30,000.00*

INCLUDING ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH IN YOUR WILL

Making a planned gift as part of your estate plan is not just for those who have wealth or special financial expertise, but for anyone with a generous spirit who wants to designate their gifts while they are living. Each time we gather together at church for worship or afterwards for fellowship we are reminded of the gifts that were so generously given by the founders of our community. Remembering St. James' either in your will or in a trust not only honors God, but leaves a legacy that will impact future generations of Armenians both those who will be born in this community and those who will move in.

Dznoont. Epiphany.

This feast is the anniversary of the birth and the baptism of Jesus Christ. He was born in a manger of Bethlehem, near Jerusalem City, but He was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. The Armenian Church celebrates both the birth and the baptism of Jesus Christ on the same day, the 6th day of January. Because Jesus was baptized when He was almost thirty years old (Luke 3:23), His baptism happened nearly on the same day as His birthday, according to church traditions. For this reason this feast is called birth and baptism, or Christmas and Epiphany. When Jesus was baptized, He prayed to His Father; and as He prayed, Heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove. And a voice came from Heaven which said, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). By these words, the divinity of Jesus Christ was revealed to the world. This event is called Epiphany. In the beginning all Christian Churches celebrated both Christmas and the baptism of Christ on the same day, the 6th day of January, as the Armenian Church does. But later on the date of Christmas was changed to the 25th day of December, which was the



Armenian miniature of the baptism of Jesus, 1273; Topkapi Museum, Istanbul

pagan feast day of the sun in Rome. In order to abolish this heathen feast the Roman Catholic Church transferred Christmas from the 6th day of January to the 25th day of December. It was very hard for the Church of Jerusalem to celebrate Christmas in Jerusalem and then go to the River Jordan on the same day, the 6th day of January, to celebrate the baptism of Jesus. Therefore, these two feasts were separated, and Christmas was celebrated on December 25th and the baptism on January the 6th. Then the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Greek and some other Churches in the East began to celebrate these two feasts on two separate days as mentioned above. As time went on, these two days, December 25th and January 6th, were finally sanctioned in these ancient Churches. However, to this day the Armenian Church, being faithful to the old tradition of Christianity, continues to celebrate Christmas and the baptism on the same day, the 6th of January. Therefore, in the Armenian Church after the offering of Christmas of Christ on the (mass) a special ceremony of the blessing of water takes place every year. - The Cross is immersed in this blessed water and then taken out again, symbolizing the baptism of Jesus Christ.

The Blessing of Water

In the Old Testament water was distinguished as one of the miraculous provisions of God. Not only it is vital to man, but also for nourishing the earth and for growing crops in abundance. The concept set forth by the prophets attributing the spiritual dimension of cleaning water, is abundantly illustrated in the flood story (Gen. 6-8) wherein, following the great flooding of all the earth, Noah's Ark landed on the mountain of Ararat (Armenia), after the earth had been cleansed of wickedness. Water in the New Testament is significant to the concept of cleansing, renewal and of victory. The baptism of Christ and the Washing of the Feet of the disciples by Jesus reinforce Old Testament interpretations of spiritual cleansing, and offer a wonderful legacy to the sacramental and ritualistic life of the Christian Church.

The blessing of waters was widely practiced by the early Christian Church. The bishops or local Metropolitans would go to the rivers, streams, fountains, springs, lakes, ponds and brooks in procession to bless the waters, especially on the great feasts of Christmas and Easter. It is likely that before the inception of infant baptism, Christmas and Easter were the preferred days wherein multitudes gathered near a body of water and were baptized "en masse" after the water had been blessed. The tradition of blessing water continued into the later centuries and assumed a more ritualistic form rather than sacramental. (*cont. on p. 9*)

Armenian Christmas Customs

Christmas customs are diverse as the provinces of Armenia. It is not unlikely that many Armenian customs traveled to the Greeks and Romans once they also became Christianized- and subsequently throughout Europe. But, each nation claims its own unique customs even though they may be shared by others.

Many factors contributed to Christmas, as well other festive customs: need, availability, previous tradition, desirability and religious prescriptions. A vast array of customs have come down from the diversity of the landscapes of the various Armenian provinces.

In the mountainous Caucasus region, it is known that shepherds and peasants would build fires on the mountain peaks to light the heavens. We also know that the peasantry would gather at the isolated mountain monasteries on the Great Feast of the Nativity to bring their gifts to the monasteries and churches, lighting an abundance of candles and torches along the roads and paths illuminating the sparkling snows.

Throughout the often inaccessible Armenian Provinces, it was a joyous time for families. Mothers had worked throughout the

fall season for the great Christmas Season. They had meticulously prepared candies fruits, raisins, nuts, figs, dates and paste made from grapes, to decorate the sumptuous Christmas tables. Shepherds converged on the cities and towns, realizing that great clans would need sheep to roast for the Christmas banquet.

There was an abundance of dried mint with which to make mint tea for these shepherds as well as weary travelers. Mint tea (*ananoukh*) was not only a treat, but medicinally purposeful. The Mint tea would often be enriched with the preserved peels of oranges and other citrus fruits which were carefully kept in a dry corner of the house.

Throughout the night, great processions of the faithful bearing candles would traffic to and from the churches and home. What a beautiful picture of light and faith. These processions and services were accomplished in the peak of solemnity, while in the home there was much merriment, banqueting and rejoicing.

Gifts were sometimes thoughtfully given personal items suggesting some kind of a message between special friends of the betrothed- but more often the concept of gift-giving was reserved to the

sharing of the great banquet table, and the distribution of the sweet-meats, fruits, preserves and pastries.

Pastries such as sweet-breads, rolls and cookies were often braided into significant symbols or stamped with the sign of the cross.

Before the coming of the Turk, it was likely that the Christmas festivities, with all their joy and solemnity, were accomplished in a more public manner, in the fields and villages and city squares, as well as in the homes and churches.

Fathers would bring forth their first-born sons, when coming of age, to read the scrolls of the Book of Daniel for the Candle-mass (*Jurakalooyts*) services.

In all, Christmas in Armenia, was a unique blending of religious and folk practices in the most meaningful and significant expression of faith ever recorded in the annals of Christian history. Truly, a people who lived their faith with an intimacy short of making them, indeed, scriptural.

(From *Armenian Christmas* by V. Rev. Gevont Samoorian)

The Blessing of Water (*cont.*)

There is considerable evidence that running water was blessed during Christmas and Easter and distributed to the faithful for purpose of healing and spiritual cleansing. Running water symbolized the victory and power of the Risen Christ; and, at Christmas it further symbolized the power of the Manifestation of Christ. The practice of blessing running waters in streams and the natural environment ceased only because of the intrusion of the Turk. Tragically it has not been revived in the freedom of Diaspora. The blessing of waters is done in the enclosures of Armenian churches, but it still initiated by first pouring (running) water into the cauldron while the officiant recites psalms. In some provinces of Armenia baptisteries have been known to have been built in such a way that a bubbling, crystal-clear spring or brook would run through it. Armenian pilgrims to the Holy Land still make special pilgrimages to the Jordan River where they gather water, have it blessed by a monk (*apegha*) and take it with them on their journey home.

Armenians have passionately clung to the tradition of the blessing of water and have piously retired to their homes following services, taking with them the precious holy water of healing and spiritual cleansing.

(adopted from *The Celebration of the Blessing of the Waters* according to the canons of the Armenian Apostolic Church, compiled by V. Rev. Gevont Samoorian)

The Infant Jesus and the Spider

An Armenian Christmas Folk-Tale from the Province of Kharpert

When the cruel King Herod heard that a new king named Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he was jealous and became angry. He ordered his soldiers to go into Bethlehem to kill the little children so that this "new" king would also die. The bright star of Christmas lit the way for the Three Magi: Melkon, Gaspar and Baghdasar, who were bearing gifts for the Baby Jesus. On their way an angel had warned them that the Holy Family was in danger.

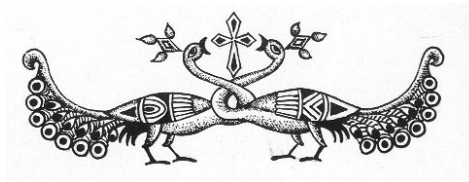
When the three wise men found Jesus, laying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, they presented their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then they told the Holy Family to leave this place and go to safety. Hearing this, Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus and left Bethlehem and began their journey to Egypt to escape the soldiers of King Herod. When the Holy Family had traveled a long distance, Joseph noticed that Mary had become tired. He stopped by a cave and told Mary to take the infant Jesus and rest there, while he gathered twigs to make a warm fire.



While Joseph was gone to gather twigs, a tiny spider was attracted by the soft glow which came from the infant Jesus. The little spider was filled with love and spun a beautiful lace-like web over the door of the cave. It sparkled in the moonlight, and made the infant Jesus happy.

Just then, the noise of horses and soldiers broke the still of the night. It was the clattering of the soldiers of the Terrible Herod who were looking for Jesus. They stopped in front of the cave and dismounted. One of the soldiers noticed footprints on the ground and exclaimed that the Holy Family must be near. Another soldier noticed the cave and pointed it out to the captain.

The captain and soldiers approached the cave but stopped suddenly, when the captain said: "They could not be there. See the spider web. If they went into the cave, they would have broken the web. Let us turn back, they have escaped to safety."



This legend gave rise to the tradition of the women of Kharpert who made beautiful and delicate lace-work with religious patterns for the churches during the Feast of the Nativity.



How should we explain the celebration of Christmas on January 6th in the Armenian Church to our families and children?

Parents could explain to their children that even at the time of the Holy Apostles the traditions in the Christian churches in the different parts of the world were not uniform and that Christmas was probably not observed at all in the very early Church. Parents could add that by the end of the 3rd century Christmas in Rome was held on December 25, which coincided with a major pagan feast, while in the Eastern churches it was observed on January 6th. The Armenian Church has maintained that ancient tradition to this day, whereas the Greek-speaking Christian world switched to the Latin tradition at the end of the 4th century. Children should know that both traditions are old and must be respected, and that as good Christians they must focus on the spirit of the Nativity of the Savior and not the differences in traditions.

Is there a recommended way to celebrate Christmas on December 25th and January 6th in an Armenian household today?

Armenian-American households may exchange Christmas gifts on December 25th, since it is a custom in American society to do so. In traditional Armenian circles gifts were exchanged on January 1st, which is not a day of religious significance. Replacing that tradition with a gift exchange in December 25th is not a major deviation, since the January 1st is only a few hundred years old and is taken from the West. As in American society, Armenian families may have their reunions and dinners on December 25th. In some of our churches in the United States it has become traditional to hold the Feast of St. Stephen the Protomartyr on Christmas Eve (December 24th), though that feast is movable and may not always fall on December 24th.

If possible, the faithful should fast during the seven-day period preceding January 6th and should inform their children that their fasting is a way of preparation for Christmas. On the evening of January 5th, families should attend church and participate in the celebration of the Christmas Eve Divine Liturgy. They should do the same thing on the morning of January 6th and observe that day as the Feast of the Theophany (the Manifestation of God). If they are prepared, they should receive Holy Communion either on January 5th or January 6th. Our pastors will provide letters to explain to school authorities the absence of the Armenian children from school on January 6th.

Kousan Choir

The *Kousan* Choir has enjoyed a rewarding fall season. We welcomed Suzanne Cafouros, a new member who has been faithfully singing with us since August. She is a true asset to our soprano section. We have sung every Sunday for Divine Liturgy and at a wedding. Our weekly attendance has been about nine singers.

We have also had an informative regional choir workshop sponsored by the Sacred Music Council at St. Gregory in Chicago in early November. We reviewed different singing techniques and learned

the hymns for Armenian Christmas. This workshop gave us an opportunity to renew our dedication to our Church, our choir, and our voices.

Sing a new song unto our Lord! (Psalm 96:1) As always, we welcome new and returning members to our choir. No prior singing experience or ability to read music is required. We rehearse once a month following Divine Liturgy for one hour. The commitment is minimal and the rewards are plentiful. Please call Der Hayr, Dn. Kavork (847) 816-1665 or simply come and sing if you are interested.

Altar Guild

No man is rewarded for what he receives. He is rewarded for what he gave.

As announced in our last newsletter, St. James Armenian Church of Evanston has established an Altar Guild coordinated by Deacon Larry Farsakian. Using the *Guidelines for Altar Guilds and Preparing the Sanctuary for the Celebration of the Divine Liturgy* published in 2005 under the auspices of our Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), the Altar Guild's goal is to keep our holy sanctuary clean, neat & orderly so to inspire parishioners to attend and support St. James Armenian Church of Evanston.

With this in mind, we thank our altar servers who each week prepare the holy altar for church services and who contribute to uplifting the beauty of our holy sanctuary.

But our Guild is not limited to those ordained to serve. Lay parishioners are needed also to help with cleaning of the altar and the altar table, maintenance of the altar linens, polishing of the altar vessels, repair of clergy vestments, care of liturgical books, and arranging for altar flowers for each celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

In the last newsletter, a seamstress was requested to step forward so that curtains could be made to cover the overhead storage areas in the vestry and choir rooms. We have the material for the curtains. However, as yet no one has offered their services to this project. So we make the request again. If you can sew, we need your help. If you desire to help make curtains for our vestry, please contact Fr. Hovhan or Deacon Larry.

Remember...The highest of distinctions is service to God and others.

"Taste of Armenia" Street Fair 2011

The St. James Armenian Church of Evanston TASTE OF ARMENIA STREET FAIR was held on Sunday, August 28, 2011 from 12:00 noon until 6:30 PM. With wonderful sunny skies, a light breeze, and temperatures in the low 80's, we couldn't have imagined a more beautiful day.

Under the direction of the 2011 Street Fair Committee, this year's event was on par with those of past successful years. Preliminary financial figures indicate a profit of over \$25,000, a great financial success.

Clark Street was filled with hundreds of people who enjoyed the deliciously prepared food while listening to the music of the Hye Vibes. Many took advantage of the festive music by either watching or participating in the dancing entertainment. The Armenian Dance Company of Chicago presented another enthusiastic performance.

Shish kebab, chicken kebab, and Armenian hamburgers provided the main meals of the day. They must have

been delicious since all were sold out prior to the end of the event. The outstanding assortment of appetizers and desserts helped satisfy the hungry appetites.

The youth enjoyed the excitement of children's games and face painting while most people took advantage of the beautiful day and visited with friends.

The raffle added to the excitement as prizes totaling \$7,000.00 were given away with Garbis Sultanian winning the Grand Prize. For those looking for items about Armenian heritage, the cultural booth presented an educational display of our ancestry. A beautiful exhibit titled, "Of Silk & Psalms: Woven Treasures of St. James" presented the woven fabrics of St. James. Available for purchase were books, music, T-shirts, jewelry and other gifts.

By the end of the day those in attendance expressed their delight in the festivities.

Larry Farsakian
Co-Chair, Street Fair



Births

Nora Deborah Walsh

Born: June 6, 2011

Parents: Elona and Pat Walsh
 Grandparents: Deborah and Paul Simonian
 Great grandparents: Mary and John Ipjian

Kate Isabella Fischer

Born: October 28, 2011

Parents: Lisa and Chad Fischer
 Grandparents: Dawn and Chuck Barsamian
 Great grandmother: Mary Babagian

Minka Barbara Minasian

Born: September 16, 2011

Parents: Michelle and Perry Minasian-
 Grandparents: Barbara and Jack Minasian-
 Great grandparents: Mary and John Ipjian

Elissa Amira Kako

Born: November 7, 2011

Parents: Kelly and Odi Kako
 Grandparents: Sylvia and Paul Ipjian
 Great grandparents: Mary and John Ipjian

Baptisms

Felix (James) Henry Baltrusaitis was baptized on August 6, 2011.

Parents: Heather and Miles Baltrusaitis
 Godparents: J Bradley Vartan and Evelyn Baltrusaitis

Ani Elizabeth Asadourian was baptized on October 14, 2011.

Parents: Amanda and Adom Asadourian
 Godparents: Gregory Asadourian and Kathryn Terrell

Sofia Kodjavakian was baptized on September 4, 2011.

Parents: Elena and Vasken Kodjavakian
 Godparents: Raffi Kodjavakian and Anni Mujukian



Rocco (Armenak) E Minassian was baptized on October 29, 2011.

Parents: Joelle Nadine Mindassian
 Godparents: Eduard Minassian

We welcome them to the Armenian Church and pray that they will grow under the guidance of the Holy Spirit with faith, hope and love

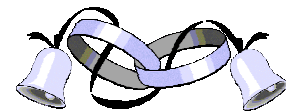
Wedding

Adrian Pawel Orlowski and Garine Erica Leblebajian

Became one during the Ceremony of Matrimony on October 10, 2011.

Best Man: Daniel Orlowski

Maid of Honor: Irena Zagorov



Congratulations to the happy couple!

We wish them a happy and healthy marriage filled with many blessings!

Funerals

Rita Mirzabegian passed away on June 26, 2011

Mary Guediguian passed away on August 4, 2011

May Almighty God grant rest, peace and light to their souls.



Thank You!

A donation for DESEELK Newsletter from Mr. and Mrs. Charles and Rose Boyian is greatly appreciated.

ST. JAMES ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH**ՍՐ. ՅԱԿՈՔ ԿՈՅԱՍՏԱՆԵԱՅՑ ԱՌԱՔԵԼԱԿԱՆ ԵԿԵՂԵՑԻ**

Rev. Father Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan, Pastor

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www.stjamesevanston.orge-mail: stjamesevanston@yahoo.com**PARISH COUNCIL**

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