

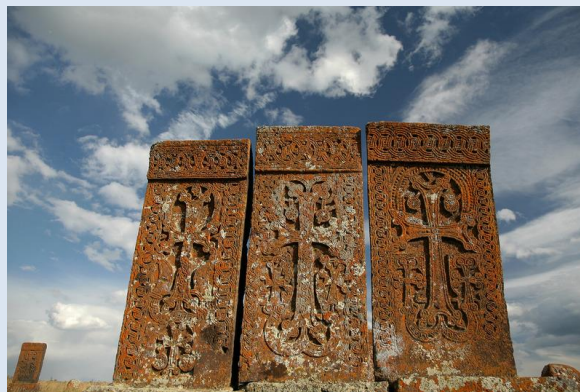
St. James Armenian Apostolic Church (Evanston, IL)

In Celebration of the Armenian Cultural Month

**"*THE KHACHKAR: A CORNERSTONE
OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY*"**

Presentation by

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**Sunday, October 4, 2015
After Badarak**

Nishan Hall

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ARMENIAN CULTURAL MONTH

“Armenian Cultural Month” arrives each October, and with it a flurry of lectures, readings, exhibits, sacred celebrations, and other events intended to remind Armenians of the richness of their cultural heritage.

It was originated in the Eastern Diocese and it dates back nearly seventy five years.

Archbishop Karekin Hovsepian officially designated October as the month for celebrating and embracing Armenian culture in an encyclical dated August 14, 1942.

In introducing the idea to the public, Archbishop Hovsepian encouraged everyone in the community to participate in the special observance. He emphasized that “culture,” broadly understood - literature, language, music and art - had always found a welcoming home in the Armenian Church, alongside the church’s ministry to preach the gospel of Christ to its people. Hovsepian noted the church’s historic support of Armenian cultural and educational institutions, and affirmed that the church itself had been a “school” to the nation, encouraging literacy among the people and broadening their awareness of history and the larger world.

The greatest expression of this is the fact that the written Armenian language began as a sacred undertaking of the church, to translate the Bible into Armenian. Indeed, October was chosen as the most fitting candidate for Armenian Cultural Month because it includes the most distinctive of Armenian holy days, the Feast of the Holy Translators, celebrated every year on the Saturday before the 5th Sunday after *Khatchveratz* (the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross).

With characteristically poetic words, Archbishop Hovsepian concluded his encyclical by taking a larger view of the importance of culture to the enduring story of the Armenian people. (The extract below is translated from the original Armenian):

“We have to enlighten our people so they can better understand and appreciate the value of our Armenian language, literature, and culture. These are the treasures of the Armenian Church and nation - our foundation, and the things that will ensure our continuance.”

These points, presented in the encyclical and reproduced in the September 1942 issue of *Hayastanyaitz Yegeghetzi*, remain the essential outlines of Armenian Cultural Month, 67 years later.

*From an original Armenian essay by Fr. Krikor Maksoudian,
adapted by Chris Zakian*