

St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church
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The St. Vartan Voice

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St.Vartan Voice

The Newsletter of St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church

Rev. Fr. Krikor Zakaryan, Parish Priest



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Fr. Krikor Zakaryan

February 2022

St. Vartan and the Battle of Avarayr

St. Vartan is considered one of the most famous heroes of the Armenian people. He, along with a brave band of Armenian soldiers, clergy, and companions, resisted the more powerful and larger Persian army and sacrificed their lives in order to defend their Christian faith. The famous battle took place on May 26, 451 A.D. on the plains of Avarayr, in the province of Artaz in Armenia.

Very few biographical details exist about St. Vartan's early life. However, various sources confirm his noble lineage. He was the grandson of St. Sahag, who, in turn, descended from St. Nerses, and ultimately his lineage is traceable to St. Gregory the Illuminator. His father, Hamazasp, was the sparapet, or commander-in-chief, of Armenia at that time.

St. Vartan was well educated, most likely by his grandfather, Catholicos Sahag. Instead of entering the priesthood as others in his family had done, he became a soldier. St. Vartan was considered the worthy representative and head of the Mamigonian clan, which in the royal succession of Armenian kings, held the fifth position. He was respected by the King of Persia as the commander-in-chief of the Armenian armies. Equally important as St. Vartan's dedication to being a good soldier was St. Vartan's dedication to being a faithful Christian. He believed that one cannot serve one's people without serving Christ at the same time.

However, the political situation in Armenia during the mid-5th century made it increasingly difficult for Christian-Armenians to practice their faith. The Persians, who occupied the various Armenian regions, initially allowed the Armenians to retain their own rules and practices. However, because of the Armenians' growing zeal for their religion and the consequent loss of Persian influence, the Persians retaliated.

The Persian ruler, King Yazdigerd II, was a ruthless, evil person, who was fanatically opposed to Christianity. He was particularly cruel to the Armenians. He imposed unfair taxes and demanded that the Armenians abandon their religion and submit to the precepts of the pagan Persian religion (Zoroastrianism) and its worship of fire.

It was during this time a decree was sent out demanding that Armenians convert to Zoroastrianism. In response, Armenian bishops, led by St. Leontius as well as St. Vartan, called a council at Ardashad and unanimously agreed to defend their faith at



Bible Readings

Feb. 6 John 6:15-21
Feb. 13 John 6:22-38
Feb. 20 John 7:37-52
Feb. 27 Matt. 6:1-21

1 John 4:16

So we have come to
know and to believe the
love that God has for
us. God is love,
and whoever abides in
love abides in God, and
God abides in him.



all costs. They sent their declaration of faith to the king, who became more enraged and issued further threats. Ultimately the brave Christians led by St. Vartan were forced to fight against the Persians. Numerous accounts exist describing the undying faith of these Christian warriors as they prepared for battle. They prayed, recited the Twenty-Third Psalm, shared their food, and took communion together as they waited to face the powerful Persian army, which outnumbered them.

The battle has been described as bloody and horrendous. Although St. Vartan, along with many of his comrades, suffered defeat and died, their fight to defend their faith was not in vain. The Persians eventually stopped their efforts to convert Armenia to Zoroastrianism.

The Feast of Vartanantz, commemorated on the Thursday preceding Great Lent, is both a religious and nationalistic one. It is a symbol of the conscience, the faith, and the general rebellion of Armenians against tyranny, and their effort to preserve their identity and freedom. Although St. Vartan, as leader and patriot emerged as the most revered figure, the many other commanders, priests, and companions who numbered over 1,036 are also remembered on this feast day for their martyrdom. Many churches throughout the Diaspora have been named after the Vartanian saints, including St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church of Oakland, CA.

Christmas Yughakin

Norma Yaglijian	Vahe & Hilda Mener	Gary & Satenik Eldemir
Arto & Nadya Yagjian	Joanne Agabashian McCarthy	Anne Dyer
John & Lee Ann Williams	Don & Lisa Manoogian	Jack Dorian
Asli Apkan & Stephan Wenger	John & Hourik Lonergan	Nurhan & Mary Donikian
Patricia Watchmaker	Richard Koobatian	Linda Diers
Hasmig Vasgegrdsian	Vartan Keshishyan	Berge & Sara Dermatoian
Susan Van Diggelen	Hermine Keshishyan	Brian & Cynthia Der Matoian
Marlene Tolegian	Helin Karunyan	Kathleen Demerdjian
Dinorah Diamond & Thomas Terzian	Janet Yeghissian & Zaven Kanneian	June Demerdjian
Greg & Seta Tcherkoyan	Aram Kaloustian	Diane Conrad
James Taylor	Robert Kachadoorian	Hasmig & Anto Cingoz
Annabelle Taylor	Edward & Armineh Jamgotchian	Ray Chiljan
Hagop & Elizabeth Tatoian	Vartan & Arlene Hovsepien	Jack & Barbara Bousian
Don & Virginia Tafjen	Lara & Rupert Horoupian	Kegham & Roxanne Boghossian
Victor & Belle Stepanian	Lori & Andy Hill	Sophie Bedrosian
Richard & Judy Sharafian	Mark & Maida Henesian	Adrienne Baker
Edward & Karen Sarafian	Nora & Harvey Hanoian	Annie Avedissian
Hrant Sahagian	Amy Hailozian	Lou Aronian
Carol Rustigian	Wartkes Hagopian	Ana Dalmeida & Yeghia Apkarian
Norman & Virginia Rees	Alice Gregorian	Violet Apelian
Elizabeth & Ron Ojakian	Sylvia Gozurian	Araks Aghazarian
Karnig & Silva Mikaelian	Dickie & Seno Garabedian	Eevet Aghajan



St. Vartan Church celebrated Sourp Stepanos (St. Stephen) feast and also celebrated our Deacons at church and at lunch.



Ladies Society Update

It's 2022 and it's a new beginning. The ladies are planning for activities for the year. Please send your dues of \$35 to our Treasurer Nelly Kargodorian, 420 La Casa Via, Walnut Creek, CA 94598.

Lenten season will be soon be here. Here's a recipe that will be an added treat to your table.

Ladies Society Featured Recipe of the Month
Lentil Keyma

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 cups yellow lentils | 3/4 cup of fine bughlur |
| 1 onion chopped | 2 tablespoons chopped parsley |
| 1/4 lb. butter | 5 cups of water |

Salt and pepper to taste.
Cook lentils in the water until half cooked.
Saut  onions in butter and add to the lentils, with parsley and seasonings.
Cook slowly until lentils are tender.
Add bulghur, mix well, then cover and let simmer for 2 minutes.
Let cool, then shape like patties and garnish with chopped onions and parsley

Khanoot Korner

Pickup day this month is Saturday, February 12 from 11 am to 1 pm in the church hall. To order, please call me at (408) 247-3772. Please leave a message with your order if you get the machine, and I will call you back to confirm. Please note, my schedule can get busy and it may take a few days for me to get back to you. -Kristian

Here’s what we have:

- Armenian coffee — \$6/ 6oz
Bulghur — \$2/ pound (all sizes)
Choreg — \$17/ dozen (very limited)
Gata w/Khoritz — \$15/ dozen
Cinnamon Lahvosh Hearts — \$4/ box
Lamajoon (regular) — \$12/ half-dozen
Soujouk — \$11
Vermicelli — \$2

- Bastirma — \$15
Cheese Berag — \$40/ 2-dozen small
Dzedzadz — \$2/ pound
Lahvosh Hearts — \$4/ box
Lahvosh 5” Rounds — \$7/ bag
Luleh — \$32/ four (thaw and cook)
String Cheese — \$12
Ladies Society Cookbook — \$ 25

Church Projects

The St. Vartan Parish Council continues to improve the church and hall buildings with maintenance and beautification projects. Windows with dry rot located in the church sanctuary behind the altar and in the priest and deacons’ rooms, were replaced with new windows last month and a new carpet was placed around the altar. Upcoming projects include repairing broken windows in the sanctuary choir loft and Church Hall roof repair.



“The heart-shaped communion wafers were a nice touch for Valentine’s Day.”

Armenian Christmas Celebration

January 5, 6 & 9, 2022

Godfather of the Cross: **Avedis Stephen Gourjian**



Donations

St. Vartan Church Parish Priest and Council gratefully acknowledge the following donations:

Ladies Society—Suzanne and Ed Vasgerdsian

Richard Demirjian Athletic Fund—Philip and Linda Tavlian

New Stewardship Donations

Platinum Level—Stuart and Caroline Arakelian

Silver Level—Barry and Judy Toomajian

In Memory

† **Rick Magarian for Richard Demirjian Athletic Fund**

Steven and Joanne Layshock, Christine and Russell Hazarian, Edward and Kristian Minasian, Barbara Shimoff, Dorothea Hazarian, Gregg and Lisa Chorbajian, Armen Phelps

† **Rick Magarian**

Peg Magarian, Barry and Judy Toomajian

† **Dorothy Demirjian for the Richard Demirjian Athletic Fund**

Steven and Joanne Layshock, Dick and Deborah Atkian, Christine and Russell Hazarian, Larry and Graceann Nishon and Family, Dorothea Hazarian, John and Paula Boghossian, Margaret Layshock, Armen Phelps, Mike and Sue Kilijian, Adam and Louise Vahratian

† **Richard and Dorothy Demirjian for the Richard Demirjian Athletic Fund**

Alyson Lamond

† **Dorothy Demirjian**

Evelyn C. Boyd, Sylvia and Charles Cherezian, Mark and Maida Henesian, Janet Kamian, Mae Kaljian, Barry and Judy Toomajian, Suzanne, and Ed Vasgerdsian (Ladies Society), Greg and Seta Tcherkoyan, Demirjian Family

† **Emma Mazmanian**

Evelyn C. Boyd, Alice Gregorian, Ara and Hasmig Gregorian, Mae Kaljian, Barry and Judy Toomajian, Suzanne and Ed Vasgerdsian (Ladies Society), Greg and Seta Tcherkoyan

† **Deeramayr Hyule Khachikyan for the Ohanyan Family Fund**

Elizabeth and Ron Ojakian, Edward and Armineh Jamgotchian, Harry Yaglijian, Barry and Judy Toomajian

† **Deeramayr Hyule Khachikyan**

Armen Phelps

† **Sourin Azizian**

Edward and Armineh Jamgotchian, Vic and Anne Azizian, Barry and Judy Toomajian

† **Antranik and Lena Avakian**

Seza Dominguez

† **Berch Balaban**

Nurhan, Mary and Steven Donikian (Voice Newsletter), Arto and Nadya Yagjian

† **Thomas Bardakian**

Kim Bardakian

† **Ed Minasian**

Janet Kamian, Barry and Judy Toomajian

† **Norm Mickaels**

Barry and Judy Toomajian

Hayrik Abnous

Vartan and Arlene Hovsepian (Ladies Society)

News From Our St. Vartan Family

Condolences

Funeral services for **Avak Minassian** took place on December 17, 2021 at Wilson & Kratzer Chapel of San Ramon Valley in Danville, CA followed by the burial at Memory Gardens Cemetery in Concord, CA. Our condolences to Avak's wife, Aida Minassian; his son, Edwin (Kristina) Minassian and children; and his daughter, Dalita (Edward) Lara and children.

Fr. Krikor conducted a graveside service for **Berch Balaban** on January 7, 2022. Our condolences to Berch's family and friends. Our condolences to Berch's wife, Janis Balaban; his daughter, Debora Ent, her children, Michelle, Matthew and Rebekah; his daughter, Christina Luna, her husband, Moises, and children, Sofia and Luca; his daughter, Brenda Kuehnle, her husband, Kale, and children, Rachel and Joshua; first cousins, Sylvia Alexanian and family; and Mary and Nurhan Donikian and family.

The Meaning of Lent

The principles and practices of Lent in the Armenian Church are deeply rooted in the Bible, the ancient Christian traditions, the life-example of Christ and His disciples, and the lives of the great church fathers, all of whom contributed to the establishment of the canons of Lent. The focus of Lent is on “Man the Sinner”: on his repentance, his spiritual cleansing, and his eventual salvation.

Here are two biblical passages that elaborate the deeper meaning of Lent:

Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God. (Joel 2:12-13)

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, to be seen by men. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:5-6)

Lent is a very personal spiritual journey. It is a period of sincerity, self-recognition, and reflection. Abstinence, moderation, and sacrifice free us for meditation and the realization of the darkness of our world without God. As the prophet Joel advised us, you must “turn towards the Lord...with all your heart”—with honesty and humility. In this way, we are able to create a bridge between God and us. Through prayer, we communicate with God, express our love, ask for forgiveness. Prayers of the sincere heart are acceptable to God.

Jesus’ advice as recorded in Matthew’s gospel brings to mind a novel by the Russian writer Anton Chekov, which relates how two thieves attack and kill a street beggar and proceed to tear his garments to distribute amongst themselves. In one of the inner pockets of the suit, one thief finds a piece of bacon. He proceeds to have his first bite, when the other thief, suddenly angered, says, “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? Today is Friday, a day of fasting!” His friend looks at him in astonishment but stops eating the bacon, and the two leave the forest without breaking their fast.

The story points out, in a comic way, that fasting by itself has no meaning if you are disobedient or (like the thieves) committing crimes. Fasting during Lent needs to be done in the context of deep reflection on the truth about ourselves, in a spirit of unusual sincerity and honesty. Fasting is, in fact, a companion to prayer: one more way we speak to God from the heart.

The true understanding of Lent rests on a sturdy tripod of prayer, abstinence, and charity. Lent reminds us that man is always confronted with choices—choices that lead us to two paths in life. The first path is one of darkness, evil and sin. The second is that of light, God, righteousness, and goodness. At the juncture of these two paths stands the fortress of prayer, abstinence, and charity, which leads mankind forward to seek perfection. This is the purpose of Great Lent in the Armenian Church.

The Armenian Apostolic Church has ruled on the traditions of Lent by creating canons based on the thought of the apostles. Apostolic Canon #8 reads: “The Apostles ordered and affirmed that the 40 days be set aside as days of abstinence from evil-doing, from sin and from food, preceding [the day] of the passion of our Savior.”

The oldest Armenian Lenten traditions hardly allowed for the consumption of any food at all. Indeed, the Armenian Church sometimes refers to Lent as Aghouhatzk, meaning “salt and bread,” because at one time these elements were the only permitted foods. Over time, Lenten rules have changed to allow any food that does not derive from animals (meat and milk, e.g.). Alcoholic beverages were also forbidden. These rules were based on the Biblical principle that many human vices proceed from eating and drinking.

This year Lent starts on Monday, February 28, 2022.



On-Line Bible Study

Morning Bible Study: Wed., February 2, Wed., February 9, Wed., February 16, Wed., February 23

Evening Bible Study: Wed., February 2, Thurs., February 10, Wed., February 16, Wed., February 23

Register for Bible Study to receive Zoom Code at: <https://www.stvartanoakland.com/events>

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Tiarn'ndaraj / Trndez



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2022
6 PM

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