

St. Vartan Church  
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*The St. Vartan Voice*  
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# St.VartanVoice

The Newsletter of St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church  
Rev. Fr. Hovel Ohanyan, Parish Priest



## Սուրբ Վարդանի Չայն

Ս. Վարդան Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցու Պաշտօնաթերթ

Fr. Krikor Zakaryan

October 2020

### Celebrating the Saints

This year, on October 31, the Armenian Church will celebrate All Saints Day. As a church we remember the good and holy people—whether known or unknown—who were spirited heroes filled with Christ’s love, endurance, and faith. Often they started out as ordinary people with ordinary lives. But they became extraordinary models of the character of sainthood.

Even so, the saints of the church remain obscure to many of us. We spend countless hours a day reading books, newspapers, the Internet; but seldom do we read about the saints and their lives. Yet if we don’t know them, how could we ever follow their holy examples?

And how will we recognize the “seeds” of saintliness in the people around us—even in ourselves? In St. Paul’s writings to the early Christian communities, he commonly addressed his followers as “saints,” simply because he saw them as good, holy, God-loving people. In Armenian we have specific words—Asdvadzaser, Asdvadzahajoh—to describe those who devotedly follow the Lord throughout life. These are the saints of our daily experience.

But how is a “Capital S” canonized Saint declared?

Surprisingly, in the Armenian Church tradition, no rigidly structured process is involved. It happens by consensus of the laity and clergy: a universal agreement that a particular person’s deeds and intentions—his or her “living in the spirit of God”—pointed to sainthood. Such people are said by the church to “sit at the right hand of Christ,” and to be honored and emulated by the faithful.

### Light Shining Through

Remember this, though: No one is born a saint. We are all born sinners, and only by sacrament and faith do we answer God’s call to holiness. For some, making that choice seems the furthest thing from the earlier record of their lives. St. Paul persecuted and killed Christians; the Armenian King Drtad tortured St. Gregory, murdered St. Hripsime, and went mad. Both—and many others like them—eventually saw the Light of God, and saw their lives transformed.

You might say the Light of God shines through them, to illuminate the world. Perhaps that explains why churches often depict the saints in stained glass windows. The light passes through the painted figures to illuminate the sanctuary and shine on the worshippers. But this should also remind us that Christ’s Light can shine through us, too—and bring its warmth and brightness to those around us.

Remember that Heaven is not the only “home” of the saints. Every one of them first lived here on Earth. That is where sainthood begins. Were we to meet the well-known saints during their earthly lives, we might be surprised to find that for some of them, at least, their demeanors were not sweet and angelic, but gruff and sharp around the edges. In that regard, they really were no different from us. But it’s the good they performed, the faith they embodied, that



### Bible Readings

Oct. 4 Mark 11:27-33  
Oct. 11 Mark 12:31-44  
Oct. 18 Luke 4:14-24  
Oct. 25 Matt. 24:27-36

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:23-24





makes them models to imitate—and celebrate.  
And we will indeed celebrate them on “The Feast of All Saints: The Old and the New, the Known and the Unknown.” Through prayer we will ask them to inspire us with their spirit, and to intercede on our behalf with God. We will not pray to them—only Christ our God receives prayers. But we will pray with the saints, firm in the conviction that it is not the church that makes a saint holy: it’s the saints who make the church holy.  
By Fr. Garabed Kochakian EDACNA

Sunday School Update

Please save the following dates for our Fall/Winter Sunday School Program. We hope you'll join us for some safe and socially distant activities to keep our Sunday School families connected!  
Times and locations TBD and are open to change depending on county restrictions.  
Please check website and Friday email announcements for details as events near.

- Saturday, September 26  
Morning hike at regional East Bay trail
- Sunday, October 11  
Zoom Meeting with activity for kids
- Saturday, October 24  
Arts and Crafts in church hall
- Sunday, November 8  
Zoom Meeting with activity for kids
- Saturday, November 21  
Cooking Class in church hall
- Sunday, December 6  
Zoom Meeting with activity for kids
- Saturday, December 19  
Holiday outreach event if possible



**Congratulations**  
St. Vartan Church congratulates Fr. Krikor Zakaryan who became a citizen of the United States of America on August 24, 2020.



Church Sign Humor

Cremation is your last chance for a smoking hot body.  
Adam and Eve — The first people to not read the Apple terms and conditions.  
With all this rain, we need a guy. Fear not...we NOAH guy!  
Forgive your enemies, it messes with their heads.  
The fact that there is a highway to hell and a stairway to heaven says a lot about anticipated traffic numbers.  
Honk if you love Jesus. Text while driving if you want to meet him.

Khanoot Corner

As the October newsletter goes to print, our Online Khanoot Store has opened and our volunteers are busy planning for the October Drive-Thru Festival. I imagine that by the time you receive and read this you will have enjoyed a wonderful luleh kebab meal and filled your freezers and pantries with yummy Armenian goodies from the event.  
Of course, we aren’t stopping there. We plan to remain available throughout the year as your go-to resource for the delicious Armenian comfort foods we all love. Thanks to the reopening of Nina’s Bakery in Fresno we will continue to offer lamajoon so long as demand remains. And, of course, we’ll continue to offer new items as we are able to make and procure them. Be sure to sign up for the weekly St. Vartan email announcements, and read the Khanoot Update to find out what’s new. I look forward to seeing you all at pickup, and I cannot close without adding a very special thank you and shoutout to Nicole Vasgerdsian for her amazing work on our online store.

Kristian (the Khanoot-keeper)

Discovery of the Holy Cross

On Sunday, October 27, 2020 the Armenian Church will commemorate the Feast of the Discovery of the Holy Cross (Kude Khatchi). Empress Helena, mother of Constantine and a devout Christian, wanted to find the True Cross. She went to Golgotha (Calvary), which had become an obscure and neglected place. According to some chronicles, it was an informed Jew named Juda who pointed out the location. After excavation at the site, three wooden crosses were found. In order to identify the True Cross, the three crosses were successively placed on the body of a youth who had just died. When one of the crosses was placed on him, the young man came back to life. This was determined to be the True Cross. The commemoration of this event takes place on the Sunday closest to October 26, and can vary from October 23 to 29.  
Christ’s exact burial site was also located, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built on that spot in 335. The church was destroyed by fire in 614 when the Persians invaded Jerusalem; it was subsequently rebuilt. The current dome dates back to 1870. Three denominations (Armenian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox) administer and maintain the church and surrounding grounds, unfortunately not always harmoniously. Agreements strictly regulate times and places of worship for each denomination. Ironically, for centuries a Muslim family has been the custodian of the keys to the church, which is within the walled Old City of Jerusalem.

A Prayer During this Pandemic

I come to you, Heavenly Father, seeking renewal of my weary and worried spirit. Let me rest in you for awhile and feel you surrounding me in safety and love. Then let that rest in you call forth new strength in me.  
For others who are weary, I pray for comfort and peace. For others who are worried, I pray for solace and reassurance. For the desperate, I pray for relief and hope. Help us all set our priorities differently, so you come before all other demands in our lives. Only then, we know, O God, may we be filled with your life once again for the fullest living on this earth, even during days of darkness.  
Hear my prayers and grant me your peace, in the name of Jesus, O Lord. Amen.



St. Vartan Voice On-line

After a hiatus in mailing paper copies of the St. Vartan Voice newsletter due to COVID-19, St. Vartan is pleased we can resume mailing copies of the newsletter to our faithful. However, if you prefer receiving the St. Vartan Voice on-line, instead of via the US mail service, please contact the church office at stvartanoakland@aol.com. All donations for the St. Vartan Voice are gratefully accepted.



GOD WILL  
WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR  
FROM THEIR EYES.  
REVELATION 7:17



On September 13 Fr. Krikor celebrated the Exaltation of the Holy Cross with a prayer service. You can watch this service and all of St. Vartan Armenian Church’s Sunday morning services on-line at: <https://www.facebook.com/stvartanoakland/live>.





## ST. VARTAN CHURCH SANCTUARY REMODEL

While St. Vartan has been closed to in-person worship, the sanctuary has been undergoing a remodel. In September tile was laid around the front and side altars. Altar candles were also cleaned. Renovations will continue with new carpet installation at the end of the month. St. Vartan thanks Seta Jindoian, Nazar Jindoian, Ara Azizian, Wartkes Hagopian, Fr. Krikor Zakaryan and Carole Chang for assisting with the remodel.



**St. Vartan Church Parish Council gratefully acknowledges the following donations:**

**Grape blessing**—Hermina Sarkis-Kelly

**St. Vartan Voice Newsletter**—Margaret Beardsley

**In honor of volunteers who prepared chicken kebab meal to go**—Barbara Morjig

### **In Memory**

† **Sean Cassidy**

Suzanne and Ed Vasgerdsian

† **Peter Hanoian III**

Nelly Kargodorian and Georgette Derghazarian

† **Seranus Zeki**

Edward and Armineh Jamgotchian

(Orphan Fund)

† **Clara Bedrosian Bousian**

Barbara and Jack Bousian

### **ENDOWMENT FUND**

#### **In Memory**

† **Peter Hanoian III**

Jeff and Karen Hazarian,

† **Sona Tuncer**

Sylvia Alexanian

## Parish Council Update

My Faithful and Fellow Parishioners,

Our Sanctuary improvements continue to move forward, specifically with the new carpet project. Last month we were able to complete the cleaning of our chandeliers, and took the opportunity to reduce our operating costs by retrofitting the chandeliers with LED fittings and lights. Just this past week, the teams were able to begin the tile installation upon the Altar and we anticipate the carpet installation taking place in the next several weeks.

Under normal circumstances and times, the entire Church with the guidance of our Ladies Society and Food Festival Committee are hard at work preparing all our delicious items that we offer during our annual festival. Unfortunately, 2020 has challenged everyone to think outside the box and alter long standing traditions we have grown very fond and accustomed to.

With this challenge in mind and building upon the momentum and success of our kebab drive-through last month, the Fundraising and Food Festival Committee have been able to put together a drive-through event that will take place on October 3. This drive-through will provide our parishioners with a vast number of items that you can take home and enjoy with your family, including St. Vartan's world famous Luleh Kebabs. The Luleh Kebab can be purchased as individual meals, or the newly available option to purchase a family meal. In addition to the kebab dinners, the Ladies Society Khanout is now online! You can place your orders by September 25 online by visiting the St. Vartan Website and accessing the [SHOP](#) option at the top of the page. Order all your Manti, Lahmajoun, Soujok, Basturma and even our very own Hasmik Cingoz's Meat Boureg and more, directly from the website. Place your orders now, as quantities are limited and will be sold until no longer available and can be picked up on October 3 during the Kebab drive-through. Please ensure you place your orders prior to the deadlines, in order to allow our volunteers with enough time to complete your requested items. Also note, that only pre-orders will be accepted, to better serve everyone.

Additionally, as we've asked in the past, please continue to make your donations directly from the website, this could include Food Festival donations that we've typically received as we prepare for the event. Donations are always welcome and very much appreciated, especially with these trying times and our standing fundraising events being canceled, due to the pandemic we all currently are facing.

Gratefully,  
Dicko Shahvekilian





## The Holy Translators

During the month of October the Armenian Church calendar lists the following saints under the title “Holy Translators”: Sahag the Parthian, Mesrob Mashdots, Yeghishé, Movses the Grammarian, David the Invincible, Gregory of Nareg, and Nersess of Hromgla.

The English word “translator” hardly does justice to the Armenian word tarkmanich. To our ancestors the word tarkmanich had the meaning not only of translator, but also of commentator, narrator, writer, poet, rhetorician, historian, intellectual, and philosopher.

For this reason, the group of saints labeled as Holy Translators includes the familiar names of Sahag and Mesrob, but also the names of a 5th-century historian, a 6th-century grammarian, a 6th-century philosopher, a 10th-century poet, and a 12th-century theologian.

Sts. Sahag and Mesrob are considered major saints of the Armenian Church for their efforts to spread spiritual and intellectual enlightenment throughout Armenia. Under the inspiration of God and the sponsorship of King Vramshabuh and Catholicos Sahag, Mesrob Mashdots created the Armenian alphabetic script in A.D. 406. His foremost endeavor was to translate the Holy Scriptures into Armenian. For a period of four decades, Sahag and Mesrob established schools, educated the young, and spread the word of God throughout Armenia and its neighboring regions. The literary output of these 5th-century figures is referred to as “the literature of the Golden Age.”

### St. Yeghishé Vartabed:

St. Yeghishé, the historian of the Vartanants War, was the secretary of St. Vartan Mamigonian, chaplain of the Armenian troops, and a former pupil of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob. As a bishop he participated in the Council of Ardashad in A.D. 449, when Armenians openly defied the Persian demand to convert to Zoroastrianism.

After the great rebellion of 451 and the martyrdom of St. Vartan, Yeghishé spent years in seclusion, living a solitary existence on the mountains of southern Armenia. When his fame as a saintly man became known, he moved to the mountains south of Lake Van. He died in the wilderness and was buried there; his grave in the village of Varishad could be seen until the early 19th century.

St. Yeghishé was a prolific author, who spent most of his life in military camps and in the wilderness. Most people know him as the historian of the Vartanants War: a unique piece of Christian historiography, full of philosophical reflections and poetical inspiration. Other writings are attributed to Yeghishé, but only some are considered genuine. These include writings on the Transfiguration, the human soul, and the Old Testament books of Genesis, Joshua, and Judges.

### St. Movses Kertogh (the Grammarian):

Very little is known about this saint, but he is mentioned as the teacher of writers who flourished in the 6th century. This leaves no doubt that he actually lived sometime in the first half of that century.

Movses Kertogh was the bishop of Pakrevant: a man well-versed in Greek grammar, rhetoric and philosophy. Modern scholarship attributes to him the translation, from Greek, of the Grammar of Dionysius Thrax: a landmark in the history of Armenian literature.

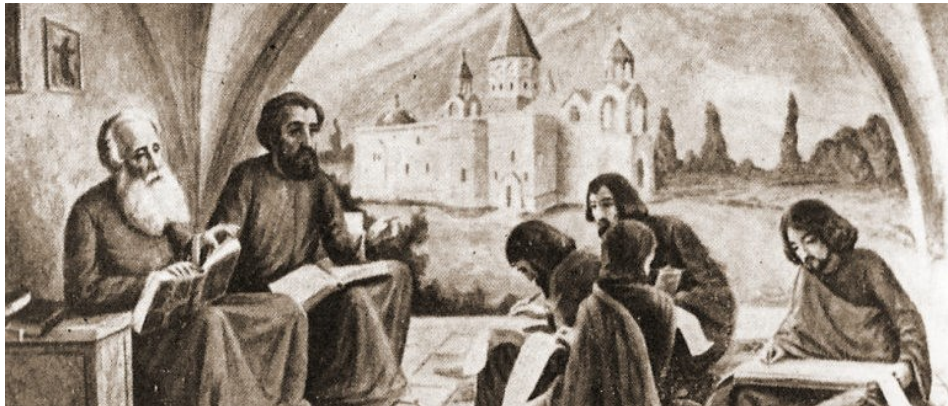
His works opened the way to new translations and original works in philosophy and theology. Technical words and idioms formulated by Movses remain indispensable today for coining scientific and philosophical terminology in modern Armenian.

Movses is also one of the earliest hymnographers of the Armenian Church. A medieval list names Movses as author of all the hymns of the Theophany (Christmas) cycle, several on the Resurrection (including the Magnificat hymns), and others hymns

### St. David the Invincible:

Although tradition states that St. David the Invincible was a pupil of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob, it has now been established that he is a late 6th/7th-century personality. Like Mesrob Mashdots, he came from the district of Daron.

As a young man he went to Alexandria, Egypt, and studied in the renowned Neo-Platonic school there with a philosopher named David.



The latter is also known to have been a Christian of Armenian origin. The fact that both teacher and pupil have identical names has created much confusion in historical works, with the result that the works of these two Davids have all been attributed to one person.

The David we venerate as a saint is responsible for the Armenian translations of a number of philosophical works. He was surnamed “the Invincible” because of his invincibility in philosophical dialectic.

David’s translations provided Armenians with a philosophical language they could employ in theological discussions. His Armenian translations of the works of Aristotle—rendered from manuscripts more ancient than those we have today—have been extremely valuable for understanding that great Greek philosopher.

### St. Gregory of Nareg:

St. Gregory of Nareg is known for his prayer book, The Book of Lamentations. He was the son of a priest named Khosrov, who after his wife’s death was elevated to the rank of bishop.

As a boy, Gregory was placed in the care of his mother’s uncle, Anania Vartabed, abbot of the Monastery of Nareg south of Lake Van. He was among the first generation of pupils at Nareg (founded in the mid-900s). Gregory became a monk and spent his life in the monastery teaching and writing.

His saintliness was acknowledged during his lifetime. He spent time in seclusion, praying in a cave by the lake, where he received a vision of the Holy Virgin with the baby Christ in her arms. He later wrote about this miraculous experience.

St. Gregory died on October 7, 1003 and was buried in Nareg. The monastery remained a pilgrimage site until 1915; but following the Genocide it was razed to the ground. In 1021 Gregory’s relics were laid near the city of Agn and a monastery was built there. By the 19th century, however, the monastery was in ruins, and after 1915 the site was abandoned entirely.

Besides The Lamentations, St. Gregory wrote a commentary on the Song of Songs and odes dedicated to feast days—some of which are still chanted at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy.

### St. Nersess Shnorhali (the Graceful):

St. Nersess Shnorhali was born in the early 12th century, to a family that traced its ancestry from St. Gregory the Illuminator. Various members achieved renown as generals, statesmen, and men of letters in the 11th and 12th centuries.

Orphaned as a boy, Nersess and his older brother Gregory were placed in the care of their great uncle Catholicos Gregory II. While his brother ascended to the patriarchal throne in 1113, Nersess was sent to Garmir Vank near Kesun (a town east of Cilicia). His title shnorhali —“the graceful” or “grace-filled”—is thought to be an honorific bestowed on distinguished alumni of the Garmir Vank.

As a bishop, Nersess became his brother’s chief adviser at the Catholicate of Hromgla (an outcrop on the Euphrates, in southern Turkey). His diplomatic missions with Latin and Greek churchmen influenced his outlook, shaping Nersess into a world-renowned ecumenist. When he became catholicos, Nersess’ letters with the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus led to an attempt to unite the Armenian and Greek churches; but the effort failed because of Nersess’ death and the Byzantines’ crushing defeat at the hands of the Seljuks of Rum. Nersess died in 1173 and was buried at Hromgla.

One of the most prolific Armenian writers, St. Nersess Shnorhali is the author of epics, poems, encyclicals, pastoral letters, and theological treatises. He is best known, however, for his prayers, songs, and hymns—which still constitute the bulk of the Armenian Book of Hours and our Hymnal.

By Fr. Krikor Maskoudian, adapted from his book,

*The Holy Feasts of Saint Gregory the Illuminator: Celebrating the Life & Lineage of Armenia’s Patron Saint.*

## On-line Bible Study with Fr. Krikor

Wednesday, October 7  
Wednesday, October 14  
Thursday, October 22  
Wednesday, October 28

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

