

St. Vartan Voice

The Newsletter of St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church

Rev. Fr. Krikor Zakaryan, Parish Priest



Սուրբ Վարդանի Չայն

Ս. Վարդան Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցւոյ Պաշտօնաթերթ



Fr. Krikor Zakaryan

June 2023

The Women at the Source of Armenian Christianity

St. Hripsime (Սուրբ Հռիփսիմէ), in her struggle with King Drtad (Տրդատ, also spelled Trdat) before his conversion to Christianity, was “strengthened by the Holy Spirit” and “struggled like a beast.” Drtad was known for his martial prowess and strength: the historian known as Agathangelos tells us that he was “endowed with great strength and vigor; he had solid bones and an enormous body, he was incredibly brave and warlike.” Yet through the power of the Holy Spirit, young Hripsime was able to fend off the lustful advances of the king. The same Agathangelos writes that they fought for seven hours until Hripsime “vanquished the king who was renowned for his incredible strength.” All this was done “through the will and power of Christ.”

During the month of June, the Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates two of the earliest saints of the Armenian Church, two women who stand at the source of Armenian Christianity and the heart of the conversion story. St. Gayane (Սուրբ Գայանէ), the abbess who was the head of a group of nuns that included St. Hripsime, brought her flock from Rome to Armenia, fleeing the Emperor Diocletian. In Armenia, however, the beautiful Hripsime caught the eye of King Drtad, just as she had the Emperor Diocletian. When the king attempted to force himself on her, she defended herself with strength granted to her by the Holy Spirit, “through the will and power of Christ.” A week after Pentecost, the story of the young nun Hripsime who bested a renowned warrior is a profound reminder of the power and strength that the Holy Spirit provides.

St. Gayane the abbess and St. Hripsime, along with their companions, whom we celebrate this month, also remind us of the central role of strong, determined, faithful women at the root of Armenian Christianity. While the conversion narrative usually centers on King Drtad and St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Gayane and St. Hripsime drive the “plot” of the conversion of Armenia. After Hripsime bests and embarrasses King Drtad, the king tries to force Gayane to convince her protegee to give herself over to the king. Instead, Gayane encourages Hripsime in the keeping of her vows and reminds her of the eternal reward Christ promised to all those who believe in Him. When the king realizes the conviction of both women, he has them and all their companion nuns killed.

St. Hripsime, St. Gayane, and their companions become some of the earliest martyrs of the Armenian Church and some of the earliest saints (it is worth noting here that the very first “native” saint and martyr of the Armenian Church was also a woman, St.

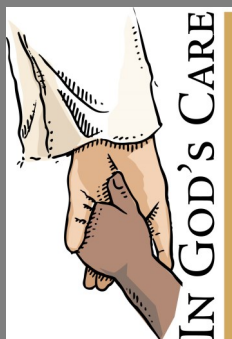


Bible Readings

June 4 Luke 4:25-30
June 11 John 10:22-30
June 18 Matt. 12:1-8
June 25 Matt. 12:38-45

1 John 3:1

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.



Santukht). It is this violent action on the part of the king that leads to his illness, the lycanthropy that causes him to take the form of a were-boar. As we know, at his sister Khosrovidukht's urging, King Drtad finally appeals to St. Gregory to heal him, leading to the king's conversion to Christianity and his declaration that Armenia will be a Christian kingdom. Without the valiant martyrdom of St. Gayane and St. Hripsime, or the faithful encouragement of Khosrovidukht—all women—the conversion of Armenia would never have happened.



Playing such a crucial role in the conversion of Armenia, standing right at the source of Christianity in Armenia, St. Gayane, St. Hripsime, and their companions have inspired Armenians for centuries. Indeed, they are an important source and inspiration for women involved in the Armenian Apostolic Church. As an abbess, St. Gayane is the precursor to all women monastics and ordained women in the Armenian Apostolic Church. In the twenty-first century we often feel the paucity of women engaged in active ministry in the Armenian Church. However, there is a long tradition of Armenian nuns and female monastics. Likewise, while there are only a few ordained women deacons, deaconesses, around the world today, in certain times and places—Istanbul, Tiflis, and Isfahan in particular—Armenian women were ordained to the order of the diaconate. Most often, this took place in the context of a monastery or a monastic order. Ultimately, all Armenian deaconesses, women monastics, and women serving the Armenian Church have as a source of inspiration and a model St. Gayane and St. Hripsime.

These two women, their companions, and the story of their intense faith in Jesus Christ and the strength afforded them through the Holy Spirit have inspired both men and women to commemorate them. After their martyrdom there was an early tradition that placed their burial sites in the city of Vagharshapat, most commonly known as Etchmiadzin after the mother Cathedral. These shrines were eventually built up, and today the two churches of St. Gayane and St. Hripsime both stand in the city of Vagharshapat as some of the oldest standing Armenian churches in the world. Notably, Catholicos Komitas I, known both for his building projects and his hymns, was behind the project to build the church dedicated to St. Hripsime. Dedicated in 618, Catholicos Komitas I also composed a celebrated hymn, *Andzink Nviryalk*, or “Devoted Persons,” to commemorate the dedication of the church. The hymn is sung as the *Orhnutyun Sharagan* the morning of the commemoration of St. Hripsime.

In the history of Armenian architecture, St. Hripsime is, as Dr. Christina Maranci puts it in her recent book *The Art of Armenia*, “one of the most admired monuments of early medieval Armenia.” It is an example of an “inscribed tetraconch,” a type of Christian church architecture unique to Armenia and Georgia. This type of church is very close to what most people have in mind when they think of a traditional Armenian church. In fact, the St. Vartan Cathedral in New York, the Cathedral of the Eastern Diocese, is modeled on the church of St. Hripsime, as well St. Garabed Armenian Church of the Desert in Rancho Mirage, CA and the newly built Church of San Diego in Del Mar, CA!

While St. Hripsime might have been the inspiration for grand architecture and for beautiful *sharagans*, there are also two women, both living in the 8th century, who wrote sacred hymns of the Armenian Church. One, Khosrovidukht of Goghtn dedicated the beautiful hymn, *Չարմաւնալի է ինձ*, “It is Astonishing to Me,” to her brother, Prince Vahan of Goghtn, who was martyred in 731 A.D. Some scholars think the hymn was written by a different 8th century woman writer, Sahakdukht of Siunik. Sahakdukht was the sister of the renowned Armenian polymath Stepanos Siunetsi. Stepanos Orbelian, the 13th century historian of the region of Siunik is the first to mention her. Orbelian tells us that Stepanos Siunetsi had a sister, educated at Dvin, who became an ascetic. Though he mentions several musical compositions by her, only one, dedicated to St. Mary, survives. These are the only two women from the early centuries of Armenian Christianity known to have composed sacred hymns!

These important early women saints and composers of the Armenian Church have been the source of architectural traditions, the inspiration for songs and poetry, and even hymns themselves. Situated at the very heart of the story of the conversion of Armenia, St. Gayane and St. Hripsime mark the important role of women in the Armenian Apostolic Church. Khosrovidukht and Sahakdukht remind us that women have been creative, driving forces of Armenian Christianity throughout the history of the Church. Whether through their martyrdom or their profound words of devotion, they demonstrate faith in Jesus Christ and are powerful role models for all of us.

Donations

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

Yughakin—Lara and Rupert Horoupian

Lawrence Chang Retaining Wall—Seza and Dana Dominguez

Stewardship—Angel and Ara Azizian, Caline Soghikian, Dana and Seza Dominguez, Ray and Reyhan Shepherd, Yeghia and Ana Dalmeida Apkarian, Vaughn Hovanesian

In Memory

† **Lou Aronian**

Janet Kamian, Mike Kilijian

† **Albert Odabashian**

Lucille Dolab (Armenian Humanitarian Aid)

† **John Gulbenkian**

Arto and Nadya Yagjian

† **Greg Tcherkoyan**

Karen Harootenian

† **Judy Sharafian**

Janet Kamian, Mike Kilijian, Jack and Ron Dorian, Nora and Harvey Hanoian (Ladies Society),

Nurhan, Mary and Steven Donikian (St. Vartan Voice)

† **Leo and Sally Manoogian**

Don and Lisa Manoogian (Endowment Fund)

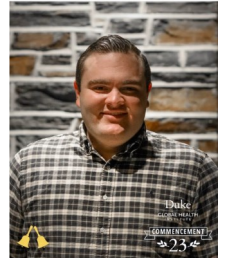
News From Our St. Vartan Family

Birth Announcement

Congratulations to Bradley and Rose Kalebjian on the birth of their daughter **Lily Jean Kalebjian** on April 29 in Fresno. Congrats also to grandparents Greg and Laura Mazmanian of Orinda, and Paulette Kalebjian of Fresno.

Congratulations Graduates!

Joshua Sarafian graduated from Duke University with a double major, earning a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences and Bachelor of Arts in Global Health. He continues to pursue his graduate degree, a Master of Science in Global Health and simultaneously engages in research, while serving as a teaching assistant in the program. At the same time Joshua continues to serve as president of Ayo! CONNECT, the non-profit foundation he founded in memory of his grandfather. Joshua is the son of Karen Sarafian and the grandson of Alice Sarafian and the late Father Mesrob Sarafian.



Congratulations to **Hagop Soghomonian** for graduating from Los Cerros Middle School. He is the son of Sako Soghomonian and Laura Karaboghosian, and Vasken's big brother. Hagop will attend San Ramon Valley High School in August.

Avetis Varshavsky is graduating from Buena Vista Elementary School as an Honor Student. His proud parents are Armena Petrosova and Paul Varshavsky, and older brother Anastas. Avetis will be attending Walnut Creek Intermediate School for the next school year. He also got accepted to the Diablo Valley Futbol Club MLS Next team for the upcoming season.



The St. Vartan Voice will run more graduation announcements in the July newsletter. Please send graduation announcements and photos to stvartanoakland@aol.com if you or a loved one is graduating this spring.

Stewardship Appreciation

On Sunday, March 19, 2023, a Stewardship Recognition & Appreciation lunch was held for our 2022 Stewardship Program donors. The following welcome message was delivered by Liz Ojakian, Stewardship Chairman:

“Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to our Stewardship Recognition Celebration. On behalf of Fr. Krikor and the Parish Council, I’d like to thank you for joining us today in celebrating our 2022 Stewardship Program Donors and celebrating everything we have been able to do as a result of their generous philanthropy. Our stewards understand the value of investing in our future and the impact their generosity and commitment has created for our church community.

For those of you who are not aware of what our Stewardship Program is all about, it is an annual pledge our donors make in stewardship levels ranging from \$240 a year to \$5,000 plus a year. Participation is open to any individual or family and is separate from being a dues-paying church member. You can be a Steward without being a dues-paying member, but of course we encourage you to be a member and participate in the Stewardship Program. You can contribute to one or both programs as many donors have done.

Today is just about saying THANK YOU to the special people whose contribution has allowed us to sustain and expand the programs and initiatives that make our church and community develop and grow, such as funding our youth programs, education, athletics, community building, cultural events, and member relations involving outreach, recognitions, technology, and communications. Basically, through their steadfast support, our Stewards fund vital projects and activities that help our church develop and flourish.

Stewards, YOU are our heroes! None of what we do would be possible without you, and we know it! So, we just wanted to say THANK YOU and let you know how much we appreciate you! We celebrate YOU and right now, you are making a difference!

Our sincerest thanks and appreciation as we look forward to building our parish community, and our gratitude to Ara Azizian for helping to establish the St. Vartan Stewardship Program.

If you have any questions regarding our Stewardship Program, please feel free to ask me or Fr. Krikor.

We hope you enjoy your lunch and following the lunch we will have a gift presentation to our Stewards followed by a performance by Anna Krikorian. Thank you.”

The 2022 Stewards were gifted a beautiful standing glass cross engraved with the following: “Thankful for You. I thank my God every time I remember you. Philippians 1:3”



Gata Cooking Class

The St. Vartan Cultural Committee held a Gata Cooking class with instructor Anush Krikorian on Saturday, April 22, 2023. Nineteen students participated in the class and got hands-on experience working with the dough and making the delicious pastry. Participants had a lot of fun in class making the pastry and socializing with one another. Many wanted to know when the next cooking class was going to be held and are looking forward to attending. Participants were especially grateful to take home the Gata they had just prepared and share it with family and friends. A special "Thank You" to Anush Krikorian for her time and efforts in sharing her culinary talents and delicious Gata recipe with us.



The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and the Feast of Holy Etchmiadzin

The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin lies among the vast fertile valley of River Arax, near historic Mount Ararat, where, according to Biblical legend Noah landed after the Flood.

The Mother Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin is one of the most ancient and most beautiful examples of Christian architecture. It was founded to commemorate the proclamation of Christianity as the national religion of Armenia. The original building was completed in 303 AD.

Since its distant beginnings, Etchmiadzin has remained the spiritual center of the Armenian people.

Etchmiadzin was built on the site of the settlement called Vardkesavan after Prince Vardkes. The renowned Armenian historian Movses Khorenatzi (Moses of Khorene) writes that under King Vagarshak this rapidly growing and thriving settlement was fortified by a wall and a large rampart and renamed Vagarshapat or Nor-Kakhak (New Town).

In the middle of the 2nd century A.D., the Romans, having destroyed Armenia's capital of Artashet, established themselves in Vagarshapat, which they renamed Caineapolis, and proclaimed it the new capital. For more than two centuries Vagarshapat remained the capital of Armenia and the seat of the Armenian kings.

It acquired growing significance as Christianity became the official religion. The Mother Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin, built from 301 to 303, became the seat of the Armenian Church. However, 60 years later the invasion of the Persian army reduced Vagarshapat to ruins. But the Persians did not touch the cathedral. Today's city of Etchmiadzin sits on the ruins of the ancient city of Vagarshapat — the city getting its name from the cathedral.

Etchmiadzin is Armenian for “the descent (echnel) of the only begotten (miatsin).” It is so named because of its origins in the miraculous vision of St. Gregory the Illuminator. St. Gregory saw Christ's hand descend from heaven, then strike the land with a gold hammer. The image of a church soon appeared on that location. On that spot, St. Gregory built the cathedral, which he called Etchmiadzin.

The name of the feast day is officially called the “Feast of the Catholic Church of Holy Etchmiadzin” (canonically known as Don Sourp Edjmiadzni Gatoghiguh Yegeghetzin, found in the book of days liturgical calendar). It is not Catholic in the Roman Catholic sense, but in the older meaning of the word: Universal.

The use of the word “Catholic” to mean universal can also be found in the word *Catholicos*, which means universal bishop. It reflects the idea that there was one church, founded by Jesus Christ and spread by the Apostles. Using the term “Catholic” was a way of noting that fact despite the difference in language and local hierarchy that developed as the church grew. It is as a “Catholic” church that the various bishops and leaders gathered for the various ecumenical councils, trying to hammer out issues as one universal church.



The Only-Begotten Descended

Landmarks are significant to a culture or society, whether local, national, or global. Armenians especially trade stories about their visitations to various landmarks particular to Armenia. These sites of pilgrimage such as Khor Virap, Artsakh, and of course the Holy See, Etchmiadzin carry deep meaning for many of our faithful. Speaking of the Holy See of the Armenian Church, why was the site on which it was built named Etchmiadzin, meaning “The Only-Begotten Descended?”

Following his emergence from the pit at Khor Virap and the conversion of King Drtad, St. Gregory the Enlightener had a vision. In the vision, as described by the historian Agathangelos, St. Gregory beheld the architectural shape of what was to become the cathedral of the Armenian Church with its pillars, arches, and dome.

He also saw Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, descend from heaven with a golden hammer and strike the ground where the cathedral was to be erected, which happened to be the site of a pagan temple, the remains of which still exist today underneath the Holy See.

The Church and the Mother of God

There are many names and descriptions of Jesus, so why choose the name “Only-Begotten” for the Holy See, a name that refers to his incarnation? Furthermore, why was the Mother Cathedral originally named after the Virgin Mary and not the Incarnation explicitly? Why not name it in honor of the Holy Trinity?

When Christianity was brought to Armenia long before the official national conversion in 301, the practice of venerating Mary came with it. In fact, the naming of churches after Mary was a common practice in the Early Church, since, like Mary, the Church begets children of God through the baptismal font. In a very real way then, she is the Mother of the Church; she loves us and cares for her Church as she lives in intercession, putting in a good word to her Son on our behalf.

In this way, both the Church and Mary are truly dwellings or shrines of God. The Armenian word for the Mother of God Աստուածածին / Asdvadzadzeen means, “Birth-Giver of God” or “God-Bearer.” In a way, Mary is the embodiment of the Church, and so we often refer to the Church with maternal or parental imagery.

During the service for the Feast of Holy Etchmiadzin, the priest prays, “With a golden hammer you struck the

abysmal depths and put to flight the bands of demons. There you miraculously designed in luminous form, Holy Etchmiadzin, our Holy See. You made it a storehouse of your unfading divine grace so that it may be the parent, teacher, and overseer of all the Armenian Churches.”

Indeed, the Mother of God is an image of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. This is why in Armenian churches we place an image of the Virgin Mary and Child over the altar table where Holy Communion is celebrated, where the gifts of bread and wine, by way of the Holy Spirit, become the Body and Blood of Christ. It’s an image of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, as the Mother of God is the portal by which God himself entered the world as flesh and blood.

The Church as our Mother

St. Gregory of Narek affirms the imagery of the Church as our mother and the connection of the Church with the Incarnation of Christ: Just as without the Father, there is no Christ, so without the womb of the mother Church, the soul cannot be fulfilled.

He continues his prayer dedicated to the Church: “This spiritual, heavenly mother of light cared for me as a son more than an earthly, breathing, physical mother could. The milk of her bosom was the blood of Christ.” (75 K-L)

As we celebrate the Feast of Holy Etchmiadzin, we join our prayer with St. Gregory of Narek, that the Church, universally, as well as our very own Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, would function as a parent, a mother under whom we are raised and nurtured in Christian life and faith.

Etchmiadzin, the Universal Church, and The Pit

The Feast of the Universal Church of Holy Etchmiadzin (Կաթողիկէ Եկեղեցւոյ Սրբոյ Էջմիածնի Տօն) is celebrated on the second Sunday of Pentecost, following the Saturday celebrating the deliverance of St. Gregory the Enlightener from the pit.

The building of the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin is a significant turning point in the life of the Armenian people in that the Holy See was built over the site of a pagan temple. Thus, a true conversion and penitential event took place as Christianity literally and symbolically displaced pagan beliefs with a new worldview, the center of which is God, the Creator, and his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Սուրբ Գրիգոր Լուսավորչի նշխարների գյուտը

Հայաստանյայց Առաքելական Սուրբ Եկեղեցին հայոց ամենամեծ սրբի՝ Սուրբ Գրիգոր Լուսավորչի հիշատակին նվիրված երեք տոն ունի՝ Լուսավորչի մուտն ի վիրապ, Լուսավորչի ելն ի վիրապ և Գյուտ նշխարաց Սուրբ Գրիգոր Լուսավորչի: Սրանցից ամենանշանավորը, թերևս, Գյուտ նշխարացն է, որը տոնվում է Հոգեգալստից հետո՝ չորրորդ շաբաթ օրը:

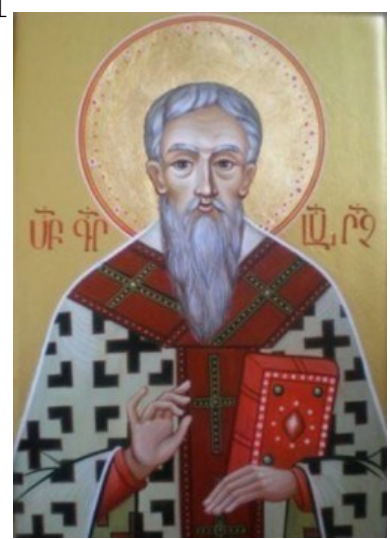
Սուրբ Լուսավորչի կյանքի վերջին ժամանակահատվածն անցել է ժողովրդից հեռու և անտես: Նրա՝ բոլորին քաջ հայտնի առանձնակեցությունն անցնել է Դարանաղյաց գավառի Սեպուհ լեռան Մանյա այր անունով հայտնի քարայրում, որտեղ ապրել է Հռիփսիմյանց կույսերից Մանեն: Սուրբ Գրիգորը երբեմն-երբեմն թողնում էր քարայրը և այցելում ժողովրդին: Թերևս նրա վերջին այցելությունը Վաղարշապատ կապված էր որդու՝ Արիստակեսի՝ 325 թ. Առաջին տիեզերական ժողովից վերադառնալու հետ:

Սովսես Խորենացին վկայում է. «Թեպետ և նա այնտեղ բնակվեց, բայց ժամանակ առ ժամանակ հայտնվում էր, շրջում էր մեր աշխարհում, աշակերտածներին հաստատում էր հավատի մեջ»:

Ավանդության համաձայն, հովիվները Սեպուհ լեռան վրա շրջելու ժամանակ մի քարանձավի մեջ տեսնում են ձերունու՝ կոթնած իր գավազանի վրա՝ բազուկները տարածած ու անշնչացած: Նա նույն այրում էլ թաղվում է հովիվների ձեռքով, ովքեր չճանաչելով կաթողիկոսին՝ նրա մարմինը ծածկում են քարակույտով:

Սուրբ Գրիգոր Լուսավորչի մատուները մեծ մասը Թորդանից տեղափոխվել և ամփոփվել է Չվարթնոցում: Այնուհետև նշխարները տարվել են Կոստանդնուպոլիս: Նրանց հիմնական մասը հայ կույսերը VIII դարի վերջին փոխադրել են Իտալիայի Նեապոլ քաղաք, որտեղ հետագայում, ի պատիվ Գրիգոր Լուսավորչի, կառուցվել է Սուրբ Գրիգոր Հայի եկեղեցին՝ կուսանոցով:

Ցավոք հայտնի չէ, թե Լուսավորչի՝ Թորդանում ամփոփված նշխարները որ ժամանակներից սկսած բաժանվեցին տարբեր վայրեր: Նրա Սուրբ Աջը, որը պահվում է Սուրբ Էջմիածնում, եղել և մնում է Հայրապետական աթոռի իշխանության պաշտոնական նշանակը, ինչպես և անանց գանձն ու գորությունը: Քրիստոսի սուրբ Խաչափայտի և սուրբ Գեղարդի մատուները հետ այն սուրբ մեռնի օրհնության ժամանակ գործածվող գլխավոր սրբություններից է: Ըստ որոշ տեղեկությունների՝ 5-րդ դարում Բյուզանդիայի Ջենոն կայսեր հրամանով Լուսավորչի նշխարները Թորդանից բռնությամբ տեղափոխվում են Կոստանդնուպոլիս և Հայաստանում է թողնվում միայն Լուսավորչի Աջը, որով լուսավորվեց Հայոց աշխարհը:



«Ի՛նձ պետք է, որ քեզնից մկրտվեմ, և Դու ի՞նձ մոտ ես գալիս» (Մատթ. 3:14)

Հունիսին Սուրբ Հովհաննես Կարապետի ծննդյան տոնն է

«Ես ձեզ ջրով եմ մկրտում ապաշխարության համար, բայց ով գալիս է ինձնից հետո, ինձնից ավելի հզոր է, և ես արժանի չեմ հանելու նրա կոշիկները. Նա կմկրտի ձեզ Սուրբ Հոգով և հրով» (Մատթ. 3:11): Այս խոսքերը պատկանում են Սուրբ Հովհաննես Մկրտչին, ով ավետեց Փրկչի՝ Հիսուս Բրիստոսի գալուստը: Նա կամուրջն է Հին և Նոր Կտակարանների, և բոլոր մարգարեներից տարբեր է նրանով, որ եթե մյուսները խոսում էին Փրկչի գալուստի մասին, նա ունեցավ հնարավորությունը տեսնելու և մկրտելու Նրան: Սուրբ Հովհաննես Մկրտչի գլխավոր առաքելությունը, որով և նա հիշատակվում է, Քրիստոսին մկրտելը և Նրան իբրև խոստացյալ Մեսիա հայտարարելն էր:



Սուրբ Հովհաննես Կարապետի մասին Փրկիչն ինքը շատ բարձր կարծիք ուներ: «Ճշմարիտ եմ ասում ձեզ կանանցից ծնվածների մեջ Հովհաննես Մկրտչից ավելի մեծը չի ելել. բայց երկնքի արքայության մեջ ամենից հետինը նրանից մեծ է » (Մատթ. 11:11),- ասում է նա Սուրբ Հովհաննես Մկրտչի մասին վկայության մեջ: Սուրբ Հովհաննես Մկրտիչը զարդարված էր աստվածային շնորհով դեռևս իր ծննդյան ավետիսի պահից, երբ նրա հայրը՝ Զաքարիա քահանայապետը տաճարում աղոթելիս հրեշտակի միջոցով իմացավ որդու ծննդյան բարի լուրը: Երբ Զաքարիան թերահավատությամբ մոտեցավ հրեշտակի ավետիսին, համբացավ, իսկ Սուրբ Հովհաննես Կարապետի ծնունդով՝ սկսեց խոսել և օրհնաբանեց Տիրոջը:

Սուրբ Հովհաննես Մկրտիչը Քրիստոսին ճաչել է Նրա Սուրբ Ծնունդի համար ցնձացել է դեռևս չծնված: Երբ Եղիսաբեթի նրա մոր մոտ եկավ Սուրբ Մարիամ Աստվածածինը, նա Սուրբ Հոգով լցվելով բացականչեց. «Որտեղից ինձ այս ուրախությունը, որ իմ Տիրոջ մայրն ինձ մոտ գա, որովհետև ահավասիկ, երբ քո ողջույնի ձայնը հասավ իմ ականջին, մանուկը ցնձալով խաղաց իմ որովայնում» (Դուկ. 1:43-44):

Սուրբ Հովհաննես Կարապետը Քրիստոսին ճանաչեց, երբ Փրկիչը Գալիլայից Հորդանան եկավ՝ նրանից մկրտվելու: Նա խոնարհաբար ասաց Քրիստոսին. «Ի՛նձ պետք է, որ քեզնից մկրտվեմ, և Դու ի՞նձ մոտ ես գալիս» (Մատթ. 3:14):

Նա իսկապես շատ խոնարհ էր իր հավատքի մեջ և անդավաճան: Եվ մենք էլ՝ որպես քրիստոնյաներ, մեր հոգևոր ուղով անցնելիս շատ բան ունենք սովորելու Սուրբ Հովհաննես Կարապետից: Նա մեզ համար բացառիկ օրինակ է խոնարհության, Աստծո գործերը կասկածի տակ չդնելու, գործելու՝ Աստծո կամքով: Սուրբ Հովհաննես Կարապետն օրինակ է Քրիստոսի նկատմամբ նվիրվածության: Եվ հենց այս հատկանիշների, նման բացառիկ խոնարհության շնորհիվ էլ նա դասվեց սբբերի շարքը՝ դառնալով Աստվածածնից հետո հաջորդ մեծագույն սուրբը:

St. Vartan Church Stewardship Support your Church. Become a Steward of St. Vartan today!

St. Vartan Armenian Church presents the Stewardship Program with the goal of developing and growing our Church. Participation in the Stewardship Program is open to any individual or family. The goal of the program is to fund the church's development programs and carry out parish projects and objectives.

No pledge is too small as every contribution makes a significant difference.

Please donate online at <https://www.stvartanoakland.com/stewardship> or scan the QR with your cell phone camera.



ST. VARTAN ARMENIAN CHURCH

WINE & CHEESE

Fundraiser

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2023

3:00 TO 7:00PM

At a private residence in

DANVILLE

\$50/PERSON

All proceeds to support

St. Vartan Church

**RAFFLE &
SILENT AUCTION**

*Prizes include: one-of-a-kind artwork,
gift baskets, restaurant certificates,
spa packages, sports tickets and more!*

**ARMENIAN MEZZE & MUSIC
WINE TASTING & WINE PULL**

RSVP by May 28 **STVARTANOAKLAND.COM**

QUESTIONS? STVARTANOAKLAND@AOL.COM



The St. Vartan Boys Basketball practices Saturday mornings to prepare for Sports Weekend.

Everyone is Welcome!

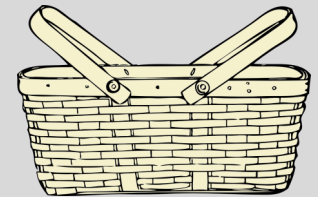
The St. Vartan Choir is looking for volunteer singers. If you have participated in the choir in the past or would like to become a new member of the choir, please contact Choir Director Armena Petrosova at arminestudio@hotmail.com or text (925) 212-2744.



On Monday, March 15, 2023, Fr. Krikor and Yn. Anoush Zakaryan attended the Commissioning Ceremony for Sarkis G. Boyadjian who was serving at St. Vartan's during his time studying at UC Berkeley. Fr. Krikor and Yn. Anoush witnessed the administering of the oath of office, the Commissioning, and the official entry into the United States Naval Service. We wish Sarkis success and may God bless and protect him always.



Save the Date—August 6, 2023 St. Vartan Church Picnic Pleasant Hill Park



St. Vartan Church thanks Elo Markarian and Sylvia Gozurian, as well as Carole Chang and Suzanne Vasgerdsian (not pictured), for creating the beautiful flower arrangements that are displayed on the altar each Sunday. Altar flower sponsorship Sundays are still available.

On-Line Bible Study Summer Break

**St. Vartan Bible Study
will not meet in June and July.**

Bible Study will resume in August on the same schedule: on-line via Zoom on Wednesday nights at 7 pm, except the second week of the month, when Bible Study will meet on Thursday nights.



St. Vartan Voice Via Email

If you would prefer to receive the monthly St. Vartan Voice newsletter via email, rather than via the United States Post Office, please contact the church office at stvartanoakland@aol.com.

Ladies Society Mother's Day Luncheon

On May 11, 2023 the St. Vartan Church Ladies Society served a delicious Mother's Day Luncheon. The Ladies Society thanks all the volunteers who made the luncheon a success and also thanks everyone who donated raffle prizes.



96th Diocesan Assembly—May 4-5, 2023

Fr. Krikor Zakaryan, Parish Council Chair, Harout Hagopian, and the St. Vartan Diocesan Delegates, Ara Azizian, Angel Azizian, Lisa Manoogian and Don Manoogian, represented St. Vartan Church at the Diocesan Annual Assembly.

Congratulations to our beloved Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian on the 20th Anniversary of his leadership of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church. We are indeed blessed to have him as our leader and spiritual father. During the 96th Diocesan Assembly on May 5th, 2023, Surpazan received a vote of confidence to serve another seven years term (starting 2024) as the Primate of our Diocese. Congratulations dear Surpazan Hayr!

Words of Gratitude

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have conveyed their congratulatory wishes on the occasion of the vote of confidence – extending our Primacy for another eight years. By the will of the Almighty God and with the prayers of our faithful, I will humbly continue my pastoral services dedicated to the well-being of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The Church is the most precious gift from God and God calls on us to infuse our lives in the state of the Living Church.

Once again, my heartfelt gratitude to the priests of the Western Diocese, the delegates of the 96th Diocesan Assembly, respective bodies of the Western Diocese, our beloved faithful and to His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians for his blessings.

The grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the love of my people empower and inspire me to be a dedicated servant of His flock and the Armenian Apostolic Church.

“And we offer to you yours of your own from all and for all.” (Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church)

Prayerfully, Hovnan Srpazan

ԳԻՐ ԵՐԱՆՏԻՔԻ

Այսու կ'ուզենք մեր խոնարհ զգացմանց հաղորդ դարձնել բոլոր անոնք, ովքեր իրենց շնորհաւորական խօսքը յղեցին մեզ, Արեւմտեան թեմի Պատգամաւորական 96-րդ ժողովի ընթացքին Առաջնորդի վստահութեան քուէով շարունակելու մեր հոգեւոր սպասաւորութիւնը Արեւմտեան թեմէն ներս, 2024 Մայիսէն սկսեալ եւ եօթ տարիներ:

Աստուծոյ կամօք եւ Ձեր բոլորի աղօթքներու զօրակցութեամբ, մարդկային մեր կարողութեանց սահմաններուն ներածին չափով պէտք է շարունակենք ծառայել մեր սուրբ եկեղեցուն՝ միշտ հաւատարիմ մնալով մեր նախնեաց ծառայական ոգիին:

Եկեղեցին, որ ամբողջութիւնն է հաւատացելոց, Աստուծոյ ընծան է, որուն առջեւ խոնարհած պիտի ծառայենք սիրով ու հաւատարմութեամբ:

Կրկին մեր խորին շնորհակալութիւնները թեմի հոգեւոր դասին, պատգամաւորներուն, Ծիսական եւ յարակից բոլոր մարմիններուն, հաւատաւոր մեր ժողովուրդին ու Հայոց Հայրապետին օրհնութեան համար, որ միայն պարտաւորեցնող է եւ հոգեւորապէս ներշնչող:

«Ձքոյս ի քոյոց Քեզ մատուցանեմ,

Ըստ ամենայնի եւ յաղազս

ամենեցուն»:

Մնամք խոնարհ աղօթարար՝

Յովնան Արք. Տէրտէրեան

Առաջնորդ Հիւսիսային Ամերիկայի

Արեւմտեան թեմի



NorCal Clergy with the Primate



Clergy Diocesan Assembly



General Assembly



Ladies Society Diocesan Assembly



Join Us At

Staff Can Earn Volunteer Service Hours!

HYE CAMP

Counselor and Staff Positions Available Weeks 1 & 2!

2023 Dates:

- Week 1: July 9 - 15 **WAITLIST**
- Week 2: July 16 - 22 **WAITLIST**
- ~~Week 3: July 23 - 29 **FULL**~~
- ~~Week 4: July 30 - Aug 5 **FULL**~~

Gain leadership experience, reconnect with nature, learn about our Armenian faith and culture, and leave with lifelong friendships!

Register at hyecamp.com



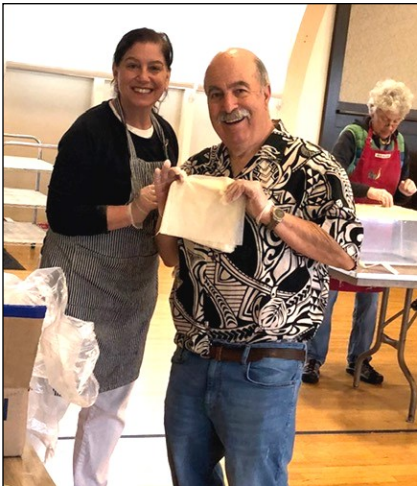
2023 Food Festival Workdays in full swing...Join Us!

Volunteers met on May 8 to make cheese boereg.

Simit workdays are scheduled for August 10 and 17 at 9:30 am. Please let Gail Kezerian know if you are coming at hyegail@pacbell.net.

Kufta Workdays will be held June 21, July 19 and August 23 at 9:30 am. Please let Suzanne Vasgerdsian know if you plan to attend at 925-788-5446.

Lunch is provided at the workdays, but feel free to bring something to share.



Visiting Priests

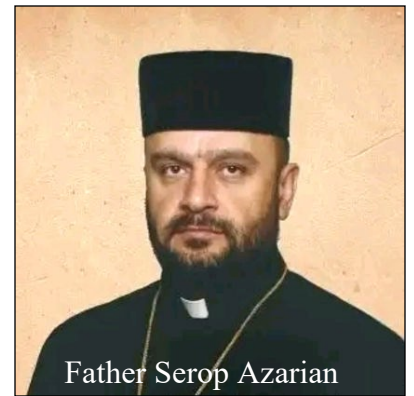
Badarak at St. Vartan Armenian Church will be led by two visiting priests in June, while Fr. Krikor Zakaryan and family enjoy a vacation.

Fr. Tatev Terteryan will be officiating the Badarak Service on Sunday, June 11, 2023, starting 10 am.

Fr. Serop Azarian will be officiating the Badarak Service on Sunday, June 18, 2023, starting 10 am.



Father Tatev Terteryan



Father Serop Azarian

The Church

Church is what you do. Church is who you are. Church is the human outworking of the person of Jesus Christ. Let's not go to Church, let's be the Church. —Bill Hybels

Church is not an organization you join; it is a family where you belong, a home where you are loved and a hospital where you find healing. —Nicky Gumbel

The True Church can never fail. For it is based upon a rock. —T. S. Eliot

Church Humor

Which nursery song would Jesus have heard the most? "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

Why did Adam and Eve do math every day? They were told to be fruitful and multiply.

What did Daniel tell his real estate agent? "I'd prefer a house with no den."

How do you know Pharaoh was athletic? He had a court.

Which Bible character was the best musician? Samson—he brought the house down.

What did Adam say to Eve when handing her something to wear? "Take it or leaf it."

When someone needed a boat made, what did the people in town say? "We Noah guy."

What's a miracle that can be done by a complainer? Turning anything into wine.

What did Jonah's family say when he told them about what happened before reaching Nineveh? "Hmm, sounds fishy."

What did the classmate say when asked why they kept walking next to the same person at school? "I was told I'm supposed to walk by Faith!"

How are toddlers and those who attempted to build a tower to Heaven similar? They all babble.

Why didn't anyone want to fight Goliath? It seemed like a giant ordeal.

Afternoon at Lake Chabot Sunday, June 25, 1:00 – 5:00pm

Join the Hye Social Club after church for a boxed lunch, hike and boating on Lake Chabot! We'll meet after church at 1:00 pm at the Elderberry Picnic Area at Lake Chabot in San Leandro for an afternoon of fun in nature! We'll have lunch first, then put on our walking shoes for a leisurely paced walk on one of the lake's many trails. Expect a very easy, paved walk appropriate for most fitness levels which will take approximately 60 minutes. After the walk, we'll head back to the Elderberry picnic area and those who wish to take a ride on the lake in the "Lake Chabot Queen" duffy boat are welcome to head to the lake. If you're up for more, we'll have volleyball, horseshoes and cornhole! This is a fun and casual afternoon in a beautiful bay area gem of a park. There is a \$5 entrance fee to the lake parking lot not included in your ticket price.

Hye Social Club is St. Vartan's social group for adults ages 35 and up. For a more family-friendly picnic, please join us at Pleasant Hill Park on August 6 for the St. Vartan Picnic.

<https://www.stvartanoakland.com/event-details/afternoon-at-lake-chabot>

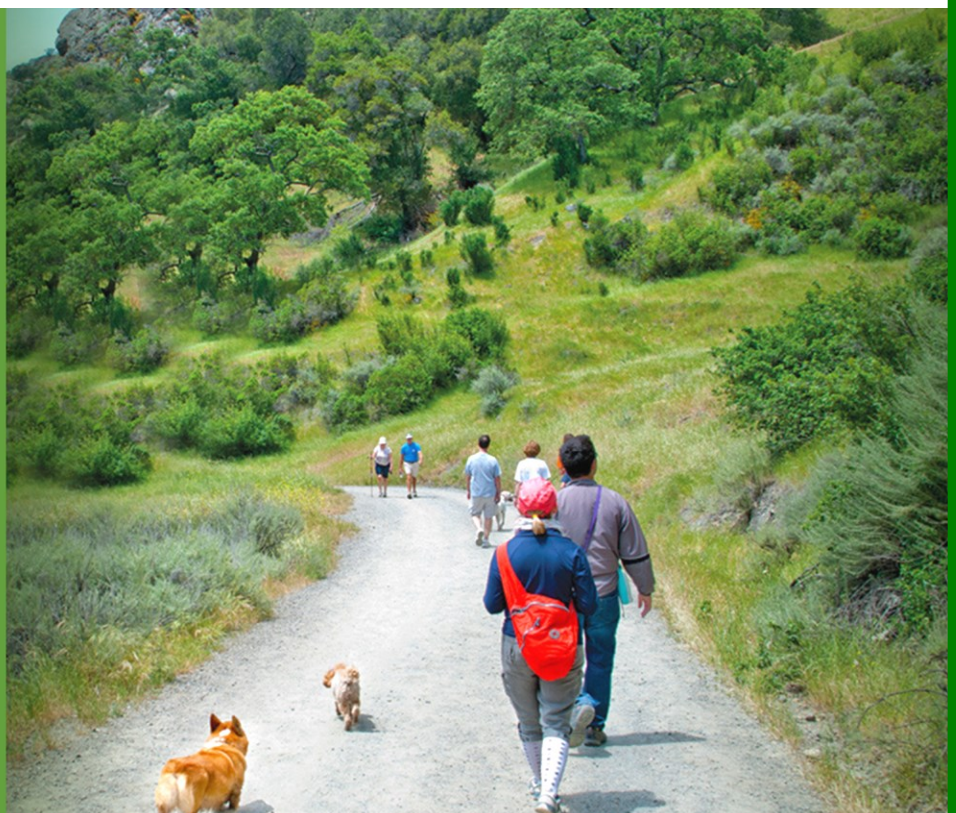


Join us for an afternoon
at Lake Chabot

Sunday, June 25
1:00 – 5:00pm

Meet for box lunch and a
walk along Lake Chabot,
then stay for boating and
other activities.

Register by June 21
stvartanoakland.com



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The deadline for all articles is the fifteenth of each month.

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Church Custodian: Wartkes Hagopian

Morning Service—Sundays 9:30 am
Divine Liturgy Service—Sundays 10:00 a.m.

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