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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

## Սուրբ Վարդանի Չայն

Ս. Վարդան Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցու Պաշտօնաթերթ



Fr. Krikor Zakaryan

March 2022

### Armenian Sources on Fasting

The season of Great Lent, in Armenian Medz Bahk, Մեծ Պահք, starts at the beginning of March. Lent is perhaps the most well-known season of the Armenian Church: the penitential character is reflected in practices like the closed curtain during Badarak, while Divine Liturgy and the weekly readings include some of the most poignant of Jesus Christ's parables. As a season of preparation for Easter, Lent leads the Christian to Holy Week, and the commemoration of the entire point of Christ's earthly ministry, his death and resurrection. Theologically, this is profound and consequential for the life of both individual Christians and the life of the Church. Early Christian leaders recognized this, and it was common practice for catechumens, the initiates preparing to become Christians, to receive instruction during the period of Lent before their baptism on Easter. St. Cyril of Jerusalem gave the most celebrated of these instructional lectures as a series of sermons. Armenian Church theologians found these homilies so profound that they embedded the readings at the heart of St. Cyril's sermons into the daily readings for Lent. Lent, then, is a deeply spiritual season, one which, more than other seasons—before Christmas, or the “Season of the Cross,” for instance—still impacts the lives of contemporary Christians.

That impact is felt by Armenian Christians in large part due to the practice of fasting during Lent. Indeed, the name for Lent translated literally means the “Great Fast.” It is the longest and most consequential of the fasts of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Other seasons and days of fasting are also built into the Armenian Church's calendar. During a “normal” liturgical week, Wednesdays and Fridays are intended to be fasting days. Other shorter fasts precede most feasts. Easter, as the culmination of Christ's ministry and the heart of mystery of Christian salvation, is in some ways the ultimate feast. It makes sense, then, that it is preceded by the ultimate fast.

Fasting in the Armenian Church, though, especially during Lent, often causes anxiety amongst parishioners and believers. Perhaps due to a lingering understanding of the Lenten fast as “giving something up” and sticking to it in a legalistic manner, many Armenian Christians worry about whether or not they are doing Lent “right.” There have been many things written to dispel this problematic anxiety. We will not rehearse the arguments against them here. Instead, I would suggest a beautiful little piece written by Bishop Findikyan, which you can find in the magazine The Treasury, called, “Giving it Up? Fasting During Great Lent in the Armenian Church.” He eloquently posits, “fasting is not a fundamental, right-or-wrong exercise that must be enforced by strict rules in order for it to be effective.” Rather, fasting helps remove “clutter from our lives so that we may more plainly recognize God in the world around us, in people around us, and in our very own lives.” Any fasting practice that helps accomplish this is “doing Lent right.” I encourage you to read the entire article for his

### Bible Readings

March 6 Matt. 5:38-48  
March 13 Luke 15:1-11  
March 20 Luke 16:19-31  
March 27 Luke 18:1-8

### Joel 2:12-13

“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, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.



thoughtful and productive discussion on how to approach “the true meaning of Lenten fasting.”

Today, rather than rehearse arguments about fasting, I will simply point to some of the classic works on the topic in the Armenian Christian tradition. These are the sources at the heart of the Armenian understanding of fasting, those texts that have shaped all subsequent thought on the topic. As the Bishop notes, “the diversity in perspectives and approaches to fasting from one Armenian Church teacher to another is dizzying.” However, taken together, these sources on Armenian understanding of fasting can help to guide the believer on a Lenten journey, to approach Lenten fasting as a meaningful practice embedded in the larger spiritual practice of Great Lent.



Dr. Abraham Terian, Professor Emeritus at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary notes that “a substantial part of the early Armenian writings on fasting is associated with the name of Hovhan Mandakuni, a prominent churchman of the 5th century who held the office of Catholicos for twelve years.” Some of the writings on fasting attributed to him have been convincingly shown to be from the pen of other authors, most notably a homily known as “On Strictness in Fasting.” This piece is thought by many to be written by Hovhan Mayragometsi. Of those definitely written by Mandakuni, there is an “encyclical” on fasting from the *Book of Letters*, which we discussed just two weeks ago, as well as some canons on fasting and a litany. Dr. Terian writes about the so-called “encyclical” from the *Book of Letters*, as well as a longer piece titled “On Love and Sanctity Whereby Creatures Prosper,” from which the “encyclical” was excerpted. You can read Dr. Terian’s discussion of Mandakuni as the major source of Armenian theological thinking on fasting, along with a partial translation of the “encyclical” either in the book *Worship Traditions in Armenia and the neighboring Christian East* or in *Volume 13 of the St. Nersess Theological Review*.

Outside of Mandakuni (and Mayragometsi), several other Armenian patristic writers tackled the question of fasting. Many of these sources can be found in classical Armenian in the *Matenagirk ‘Hayots’*, the fifteen-volume definitive collection of Armenian classical writing published by the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias. First and foremost among these is “Homily 9”, from a collection of sermons attributed to St. Gregory the Illuminator known as the Hajakhapatum Jark, or the “Oft-Quoted Discourses” (found in Volume 1:7-138). One of the most important sources in Armenian Christianity throughout the ages, there is currently no definitive English translation of these sermons, including “Sermon 9” dealing with the topic of fasting. Other authors who discuss fasting or even the specific fast of Lent include Khosrovik Vardapet (Volume 6:699-707) and a short piece “On Lent, with an Explanation of the Readings” attributed to “Samuel Kamrjadzoretsi and Paul, with others” (Volume 10:742-746). Though these important sources are only in Classical Armenian, they will greatly reward any reader who takes the time to tackle them.

In terms of more contemporary sources, Bishop Daniel’s beautiful little article points us to what is still the definitive treatment of fasting in the Armenian Christian tradition, a book in Armenian titled *Meals and Feasts in Ancient Armenia* by a Mkhitarist monk and scholar, Fr. Vartan Hatsuni. This book includes references to the fasting practices of historical and saintly figures of the Armenian Church. According to Bishop Daniel, the book “shows that the earliest writings in the Armenian language already mention fasting as an established ingredient of Christian life in the homeland.”

—Source EDACNA

About the picture: Marginal Illustration of the Temptation of Christ from a 13th century Cilician Armenian Manuscript Reproduced in “Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century (Volume II)” by Sirarpie Der Nersessian

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Hye Café

Food-to-Go

Lenten Edition

St. Vartan will be holding our first ever online Lenten food sale, coming soon! We'll have all your favorites for you to pre-order and pick up on Palm Sunday, April 10 after services. Sales will open the first week of March at [www.stvartanoakland.com](http://www.stvartanoakland.com)

**Possible items for purchase include:**  
Hummus, tabouleh, muhammara, eech, vospov kofte, Armenian potato salad, bean salad...and more!

OAKLAND A's ATHLETICS

SAVE THE DATE!

Armenian Heritage Day

SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 2022 VS. CLEVELAND GUARDIANS

11:00AM TAILGATE, 1:07PM GAME

Kef at the Coliseum!

Join the Oakland A's and the entire Bay Area Armenian Community at the first ever Oakland A's Armenian Heritage Day. Proceeds from each ticket will support Mt. Davidson Landmark Park and Cross. Details and ticket information coming soon!



**Donations**

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

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Ed and Suzanne Vasgerdsian, Sylvia Gozurian, Hasmig Vasgerdsian

**Church Humor**

*Preachers Lamentations*

A minister in Florida lamented that it was difficult to get his message across to his congregation. It's so beautiful here in the winter, he said, that heaven doesn't interest them. And it's so hot here in the summer that hell doesn't scare them.

*The Package*

There was this gracious lady mailing an old family Bible to her brother in another part of the country. "Is there anything breakable in here?" asked the postal clerk. "Only the Ten Commandments," answered the lady.

News From Our St. Vartan Family

Condolences

His Eminence, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian conducted the funeral service for **Carol Rustigian** at St. Vartan Church on February 10. Our condolences to Carol’s children, Beth (Jim) Broussalian, Caroline Bruderer, and Paul (Chelsea) Rustigian; her grandchildren, Melanie & Michael Broussalian, Luke & Mason Bruderer and step-grandson Nate Bruderer, and Julian & Skylar Rustigian; her half-brother, Gregory (JoAnn) Messigian, and her nieces Amy (Corby) Legault and Emily (David) Messigian.



Baptism

On February 11, Fr. Krikor performed the sacrament of Holy Baptism for **Bronte Alysia Reed**, daughter of Charles and Shu Hua Reed. Her Godparents are Andrew and Katie Yagjian.

**Mark Allen Perriera** was baptized by Fr. Krikor at St. Vartan Church on February 11. Mark is the son of Manuel and Ina Perriera. His Godparents are Vahe and Hilda Mener.

Wedding

Fr. Krikor conducted the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony at St. Vartan Church for **Abraham H. Hagos and Miriam Asefaw Sioletson** on January 29.

WHAT SHOULD I GIVE UP FOR LENT?

MEAT? SWEETS? CHOCOLATE? ICE CREAM? BEVERAGES?

Many of us try to be more disciplined for Lent and give up something that we really like. That’s great! Fasting has always been an important tradition of Lent. This year however, let us also consider other things that we can give up.

\*Give up complaining\* – Focus on gratitude

Philippians 2:14-15 – Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure...

1 Thessalonians 5:18 – Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Jesus Christ.

\*Give up bitterness\* – Turn to forgiveness

Ephesians 4:31 – Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Ephesians 4:32 – Be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

\*Give up worry\* – Trust in God

Matthew 6:25 – Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life... who by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Matthew 6:33 – But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

\*Give up discouragement\* – Be full of hope

Deuteronomy 31:8 – The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Isaiah 40:31 – But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

\*Give up hatred\* – Return good for evil

1 John 2:9 – Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

Luke 6:27 – But I tell you who hear me; Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

\*Give up anger\* – Be more patient

Matthew 5:22 – But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Proverbs 15:18 – A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

\*Give up gossiping\* – Control your tongue

Psalms 34:13 – Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.

Proverbs 21:23 – He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.

Ladies Society Featured Recipe of the Month

Baba Ghanoush—Eggplant Appetizer

- 2 Eggplants 1 1/2 lbs
- 1/4 cup tahini (sesame seeds)
- 1 TSP madzoon (yogurt) added for lighter tasting
- Salt to taste
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 2 gloves garlic (crushed)
- Olive Oil

Preheat oven to 400F

Cover baking sheet with foil.

Clean eggplant and pierce with point of knife. Place on prepared baking sheet and bake in oven for 35 to 40 minutes.

When cool enough to handle, peel eggplants and remove the seeds.

Place peeled eggplant in food processor container and sprinkle with lemon juice to keep from browning.

Add tahini, garlic, and salt. Process until smooth.

Spread onto serving platter and drizzle olive oil over the top.

Garnish with chopped parsley, paprika or pomegranate seeds.

Serve with pita bread and crudites. Cover and store in refrigerator.

Makes 2 cups.

Paree aghorjahk!

Khanoot Korner

Spicy lamajoon is back! Pickup day this month is Saturday, March 12 from 11am to 1pm in the church hall. To order, please call me at (408) 247-3772. If you get the machine, please leave a message with your order, and I will call you back to confirm. Our next pickup will be in May—please order this month if you need items for Easter.

This is what we have:

- |                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bulghur — \$2/ lb                     | Cheese Berag —\$40/ 2-dozen small   |
| Gata w/Khoritz — \$15/ dozen          | Lahvosh Hearts — \$4/ box           |
| Cinnamon Lahvosh Hearts — \$4/ box    | Lahvosh 5” Rounds — \$7/ bag        |
| Lamajoon (regular) — \$12/ half-dozen | Lamajoon (spicy) — \$12/ half-dozen |
| Luleh — \$32/ four (thaw and cook)    | String Cheese — \$12                |
| Vermicelli — \$2                      | Ladies Society Cookbook — \$ 25     |

St. Vartan Athletics

Boys Basketball is Coming to St. Vartan

St. Vartan is excited to announce the formation of a Junior Boys Basketball team! We're recruiting boys of all skill levels, between the ages of 12-17 for a team that will ultimately (hopefully) compete at Sports Weekend on Memorial Day in Fresno. We're tentatively scheduling practices Saturdays at the St. Vartan church hall from 9-11am starting in the near future.

Girls Volleyball is Off and Running (and Hitting and Spiking)

Under the fabulous guidance of Coach Annette Kevranian and Assistant Coach Jackei Apfel, the girls volleyball team is off to a great start! Girls ages 12-17 are practicing Sundays from 2-4pm and are having a great time while they learn techniques and sharpen their skills. Good news is that there's still time to join this great group of girls and become part of the team!

Contact Nicole at [nvasger@yahoo.com](mailto:nvasger@yahoo.com) to find out more information or sign up for either team.

Sunday School Returns Monthly in the Spring!

We've decided to hold Sunday School once a month for the last few months of the school year so we hope you and your children will join us on the following fun and activity-filled days: March 6, April 3, April 10 (Palm Sunday), April 17 (Easter), and our last day will be May 1.

We will have lessons and activities for the kids and a Children's Sermon with Der Hayr (excluding Palm Sunday and Easter). Each session will include a special cooking or art project for the kids—look for specifics to come via email as the dates approach. We hope you'll join us for the last few sessions of the Sunday School year before we break for summer and we're looking forward to a robust program with fewer restrictions in the Fall!

If you have questions or want to be added to the Sunday School email list, contact Karen at: [karenarmine@me.com](mailto:karenarmine@me.com).



## St. Vartan Honors Stewardship Donors

On January 23, the 2021 St. Vartan Armenian Church Stewards were honored for their financial pledges that benefit the Church's youth and development programs.

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## On-Line Bible Study

March 2    March 10    March 16    March 23    March 30

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



## Trndez Celebrated at St. Vartan Church

The traditional Tiarn'ndaraj celebration took place on Sunday, February 13, 2022 at St. Vartan Church. After the prayer service the ACYO members and the faithful joined in the lighting of the bonfire, shurjpar (round dance) and jumping over the fire. The tradition of lighting a fire represents the light of Christ that illuminates the world and purifies all those who believe in Him. From the Gospel of Luke 2:21-33, "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them..."

At the conclusion of the festivities all gathered around the fire for s'mores, hot cocoa and fellowship.

