

St. Vartan Church  
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Oakland, CA 94610

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“May I have a word with you about the new summer choir outfits?”

### The St. Vartan Voice

newsletter is published once a month by St. Vartan Armenian Church.

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

- Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate
- Rev. Fr. Krikor Zakaryan, Parish Priest and President of All Church Organizations
- Parish Council Chair: Dicko Shahvekilian
- Parish Assembly Chair: David Ojakian
- Choir Director: Artin Der Minassians
- Organist: Araks Aghazarian and Ida Mazmanian
- ACYO Chair: Joseph Apkarian
- Sunday School Superintendent: Janef Yeghissian and Karen Mener
- Ladies Society Chair: Marlene Tolegian and Arlene Hovsepian
- Cultural Society Chair: Liz Ojakian
- Hokejosh: Nora Hanoian
- Newsletter Editors: Arlene Hovsepian and Rachel Harger
- Church Secretary: Rachel Harger
- Altar Flowers: Carole Chang
- Church Custodian: Wartkes Hagopian

Divine Liturgy Service—Sundays 10:30 a.m.

650 Spruce Street, Oakland, CA. 94610

Phone (510)893-1671

Fax: (510) 893-2102

Email: stvartanoakland@aol.com

Website: www.stvartanoakland.org



# 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

August 2020

### Building up the Body of Christ—With a Twist

Ճաշակեցէք եւ տեսէք՝ զի քաղցր է Տէր.

Taste and see that the Lord is sweet.

(Psalm 33/34:8)

Who imagined, even two months ago, how so much in our church life—in our professional, personal, and global lives, too—would be changed, almost at the snap of a finger?

We didn't know it at the time, but a tsunami was in the distance, and approaching. None of us knew exactly what was about to happen. The Church itself felt unsure; on unfamiliar terrain despite its age-old experience. Our leaders needed to first understand, and then quickly adjust to, the Coronavirus threat.

As we would soon discover, the more pressing need was for the entire Armenian Church to abruptly halt life as previously known. And almost simultaneously, it had to reformat itself into something approachable, appealing, and assuring to our people. Something that would be appreciated by them in this time of crisis.

The church's traditional practices of outreach—personal contact, face-to-face association, even the sacramental use of hands—was suddenly denied to us. Our familiar old tools were no longer at our disposal. So clergy took up the tools at hand—mainly in the “remote” technologies of our day. They learned to “beam” our holy services—for Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and even Easter Badarak—to the faithful.

We discovered that these efforts were welcomed beyond the local parish, among wider audiences. In some way, it presented a chance to Build Up the Body of Christ in ways we might not have imagined.

For me personally, as a deacon, this national lockdown marked the first time since 1985 that I could not enter through the doors of my church to serve on the holy altar. But I did get the chance to experience services with pastors I had never heard preach or sing before.

#### Different World, Different Approach

In this time, there is no drive down a familiar road to church. No finding a seat in your favorite pew. No palms on Palm Sunday. No Holy Communion. The actions we've all done too many times to count are not being done now. Instead, we practice putting on a mask and gloves when we leave home.

In this time, each of us has had to say goodbye to friends and loved ones. Sadder still, our clergy now represent us at funerals we cannot attend, especially for those lost from the dreaded disease. Against our feelings of loss, we're denied the consolation of kissing, hugging, and showing our true expression as a feeling people.

But also in this time, we have had to reach deep down into our souls, to

### Bible Readings

- August 2 Matt. 19: 3-9
- August 9 Mark 2:1-12
- August 16 Luke 2:1-7
- August 23 Luke 1:39-56
- August 30 Mark 4:35-41

### Matthew 28:20

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”



retrieve an inner strength that only our Resurrected Lord can give. It's a strength our Hye ancestors knew well, and drew on—relied on—countless times in their lifetimes.

It is a strength we, in this time, may have forgotten; a strength we not have known was available to us. But it is the spiritual strength that has allowed us to rise to the present occasion—and will sustain us until that unknown day when we are able to receive Holy Communion in person, together, once again.

Until then, we will continue to Build Up the Body of Christ, but with different tools; a slightly different approach. And whatever the obstacles of the moment, we will project Faith, Hope, and Love to our faithful people, and beyond. “Taste—eat, relish, experience—and see that the Lord is gentle and sweet.”

*Deacon Levon Altiparmakian, April 15, 2020*

### *News From Our St. Vartan Family*

#### Condolences

St. Vartan Church announces the passing of **Seranus Zeki** on July 18, 2020. The family held a private service at St. Vartan Church and asks for donations to St. Vartan Church and the St. Vartan Church Orphan Fund. Our deepest condolences to Seranus' children, Satenik (Garbis) Eldemir, Reyhan (Ray) Shepherd, Sarkis (Kuhar) Zeki, and surrogate daughter, Viktorya (Asbet) Artun; her grandchildren, Ani Elmaoglu, Maral Ghiglia, and Jaqueline Zeki, and her sister-in-law, Sahinar (Vahan) Uzuncan, her nieces, nephews, family and friends.

#### **St. Vartan In-person Worship Closed**

Following the directive by California Governor Gavin Newsom, St. Vartan Armenian Church has again closed in-person worship on Sunday mornings until further notice. St. Vartan Church will continue to live-stream Sunday services on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/stvartanoakland/live>. When the county allows, St. Vartan will resume in-person worship.

Contact Fr. Krikor at 510-435-0802 or stvartanoakland@aol.com in case of emergency.



## Grape Blessing Service

Sunday, August 16  
10:30 am

Drive-thru blessed grape pick-up at St. Vartan Church  
12-2 pm



*Please wear a mask and stay in your car to pick up grapes.*

### **A Heartfelt Appeal to our Compatriots Residing within the Boundaries of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America and Mexico**

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are all keenly following the worrisome and troubling news from the Motherland. From July 12 onward, Azerbaijan continues to carry out military aggressions and strike the residential areas in the bordering region of Tavush, targeting peaceful citizens and disrupting the natural flow of life of our brothers and sisters in Armenia.

Unfortunately, as a result of Azerbaijan's inhumane attacks, young soldiers have lost their lives and some are wounded. The bombardments have caused destruction to homes, public and governmental buildings, transportation services and places of employment. As a result of these attacks, the government of Armenia has sustained massive economic damages.

It gives us a great comfort and sense of pride to know that the Armenian government has already undertaken the arduous task of reconstruction. Glory to Lord, for all things and especially for our strong country, which is capable of safeguarding its borders and protecting its citizens.

With this letter, we appeal to each and every one of you, exhorting to unify as a powerful diaspora, pledging our full support to the Motherland. It is our moral obligation to extend a helping hand to our brothers and sisters in Christ and participate in the noble mission of rebuilding Armenia. Most notably, we ought to show our solidarity to the residents of Tavush region, who along with our brave soldiers, vouchsafe the safety of our country.

His Excellency Armen Sarkissian, the honorable President of Republic of Armenia, has made an important announcement today, encouraging our compatriots to make generous contributions to the “Empowerment of Bordering Regions” fundraising campaign organized by All Armenian Fund. Direct donations can be made through the designated website [www.himnadram.org](http://www.himnadram.org). The collected funds will be earmarked for the immediate needs of the Tavush region.

A few days ago, His Excellency Nikol Pashinyan, the honorable Prime Minister of Republic of Armenia, made a similar announcement, urging our compatriots to direct their donations to the “Insurance Foundation for Servicemen.” Direct donations to this foundation can be made through a secure website [www.1000plus.am](http://www.1000plus.am).

As the Primate and spiritual leader of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America and Mexico, we exhort you with fatherly love to transform your prayers of peace and prosperity into tangible deeds of kindness and generosity as tokens of love and dedication.

*Prayerfully,  
Archbishop Hovnan Derderian  
Primate Western Diocese of the Armenian Church*



On July 12, 2020 Fr. Krikor Zakaryan celebrated Divine Liturgy with the assistance of Deacon Steve Donikian.

**Divine Liturgy**  
10:30 am  
Live-streamed Sunday Mornings at  
<https://www.facebook.com/stvartanoakland/live>  
Services also available to watch 24/7.



*Worship with us from*  
**HOME**

## Parish Council Update

Moving Forward Together

Dear Friends,

By now you have probably heard that we have decided to cancel this year's Food Festival and the Annual Summer Picnic. This was not an easy decision to make. However, we felt it was the right thing to do for the safety of our own church members as well as the health of the general Bay Area.

These annual events are cornerstones of our St. Vartan community. We all enjoy sharing our Armenian heritage and take pride in sharing our culture. Canceling these events is not only a loss in sharing our beautiful community, but a major loss in income for our church. And while the loss of the festival income has certainly put a strain on the church, the loss of time spent with our St. Vartan family is felt even more profoundly. We must not be disheartened. This community has always come together in times of need, and we are confident this time will be no different!

In the coming months, we will be introducing new and exciting fundraising efforts and online events in order to supplement the lost income from canceling our major events.

- **Online Khanoot: We are opening the Ladies Society pantry and will hold online sales of prepared food which will be available for pick-up.**
- **Dinners to Go: The backyard barbecue will be fired up for meals for pickup.**
- **Directory: Community directory to replace the festival directory.**
- **Socially Distant Social Events: Online bingo, game nights and more!**

*We also ask that you please consider a donation to the church during this time of need and encourage donations that have typically been made towards the Food Festival to be sent in lieu of the canceled event.* These donations will help St. Vartan to supplement our operating income as we struggle to meet our financial needs and expenses. We recognize that many are experiencing hardships of their own and we know it is not possible for everyone to donate. If you are able, please visit our website at [www.stvartanoakland.com/donate](http://www.stvartanoakland.com/donate). You can also mail a check to the church.

Please continue to visit our new website where we announce new community events and opportunities to get involved. Services are streamed every Sunday at [facebook.com/stvartanoakland/live](https://facebook.com/stvartanoakland/live). If you are having trouble with any of the technology involved in streaming services, please reach out to the Parish Council or church office.

We are looking forward to a summer together—whatever way we can.

*Sincerely,*

*Father Krikor Zakaryan and The St. Vartan Church Parish Council*

## HYE CAMP 2020 WE ARE GOING VIRTUAL!

We just couldn't go a summer without Hye Camp so we will be virtual for 2020. We have a lot of fun things planned and hope you will join us for an interactive experience with campers and staff. There is NO COST, we would just like to provide you with some fun activities and interactive videos to help keep the Hye Camp spirit going even though we can't be together this summer.



For More information visit the website:

<https://www.hyecamp.com/hye-camp-2020>

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

**Chandelier cleaning, installing energy efficient lighting fixtures and bulbs**—Ed and Suzanne Vasgerdsian, Barry and Judy Toomajian  
**LED lightbulbs**—Edward and Armineh Jamgotchian  
Yughakin—Barbara Morjig

### In Memory

† Sean Cassidy, son of Mike Cassidy & Beverly Terlep  
Rachel Harger (Orphan Fund)

## Ladies Society Update

We take this opportunity to reach out to our Ladies Society Members in the hopes that one day soon we will be able to join together. The unknowns of the coronavirus have kept us apart, but we know that Armenians are survivors and that our faith will help us through these troubled times.

In the meantime, we have been in contact with the Central Council Ladies Society and will participate in a second Zoom Town Hall meeting with Archbishop Hovnan Derderian and Ladies Society Board representatives of other churches in the Western Diocese to exchange ideas of opportunities to serve our parishes during this coronavirus situation.

Earlier this month, a limited number of our Executive Board members attempted a “trial workday” preparing our Cheese Beoreg—adhering to the Covid 19 guidelines of “social distancing” and other precautions of course. It was the first time we had been together as a small group since last March. No hugs, but lots of smiling eyes above our masks!

## Khanoot Update

Ladies Society and Parrish Council are exploring the option of establishing an online Khanoot with weekly "contactless" pick-up. In the meantime, please contact Kristian Minasian at 408-247-3772 with Khanoot orders and inquiries.



## Feast of the Assumption of the Mother of God

The Feast of the Assumption (Arm. Verapokhoomn) and Dormition (Arm. N'nchoomn) is one of the Five Tabernacle (daghavar) Feasts of the Armenian Church.

After the Ascension of her divine Son, the remainder of St. Mary's life comes to us through Holy Tradition. It states she lived out the rest of her days in Jerusalem cared for by St. John the Evangelist. She died in Jerusalem some 15 years after Christ's Ascension and was buried in her family tomb in Gethsemane.

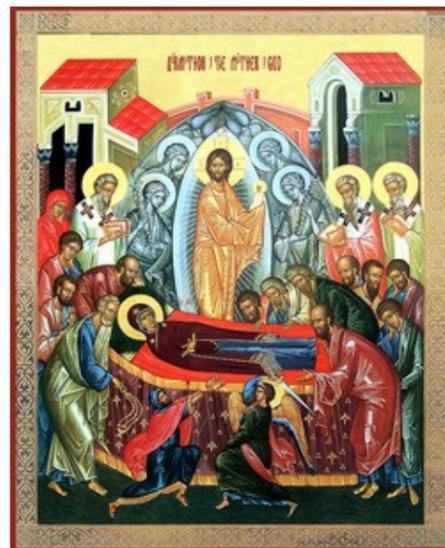
The other tradition which states that the Holy Mother died in the City Ephesus is not a very reliable one and was most likely formulated because St. John the Evangelist had lived in that city. Nevertheless, the church on the occasion of her "death" offers the greatest respect with great solemnity and rituals. This non-variable commemoration is the oldest of all those dedicated to the Holy Mother and is celebrated by all churches on August 15. The Armenian Church celebrates this feast on the nearest Sunday to the 15th of August (August 12-18) which was adopted at the time of St. Nerses the Graceful if not later. Its commemoration lasts for nine days and not three as it did previously.

The Holy Tradition concerning the death of the Holy Mother appears nearly identically in the traditions of all the ancient churches and was presented in the abridged fashion in the Sharagan "Arevelk Kerarpin" by Giragos Vartabed:

The Holy Virgin lived in Jerusalem after our Lord's crucifixion for fifteen years after which she passed away. All the Apostles, save Bartholomew, who was absent at that time, conducted her funeral with great ceremony and hymns at her cave-like tomb in the Garden of Gethsemane. After a short while, St. Bartholomew returned and wished so dearly to see the Holy Mother one last time that he convinced the Apostles to open the tomb. Upon opening the tomb, they could not find the body of the Holy Mother. Angels' voices were heard for three days and nights. They interpreted the angels' singing as a sign that our Lord had assumed [taken up] His Mother into heaven as He had promised her. They found the empty tomb a confirmation of that promise for she had not been dead but had fallen asleep. For this reason, the church refers to the end of her earthly life as "the dormition" rather than "death." (in the Byzantine tradition the Feast is called Dormition and in the Roman, it is called Assumption.) The concept of her Assumption is a most ancient one as is witnessed in sacred prose and poetry dedicated to the Holy Mother. Yet, it did not become a basic teaching (doctrine) of the church until the ninth century. And it wasn't until the 12th century that the feast was titled "the Assumption." We should note that the Service of the Blessing of the Grapes is customarily performed on the Feast of the Assumption. This however is a special service dedicated to the autumnal harvest of which the grape is usually the first fruit (in Armenia usually harvested middle to late August) and also from which the wine of Holy Communion is made. There is however no canon stating that this service must be performed on that particular Sunday.

Little is known of her personal history from the New Testament. Her purported genealogy is given in Luke 3. According to Luke, she was of the tribe of Judah and the lineage of David (Ps. 132:11; Luke 1:32). She was cousin by marriage to Elisabeth, who was of the lineage of Aaron (Luke 1:36). According to the Gospel of James (not part of the New Testament), and commonly accepted in Christian tradition, she was the daughter of Joakim and Anna. Before Mary's conception, Anna had been barren, and her parents were quite old when she was conceived. They took her to live in the Temple in Jerusalem when she was three years old, much like Hanna took Samuel to the Temple as recorded in the Old Testament.

While she resided at Nazareth with her parents, before she became the wife of Joseph, the angel Gabriel announced to her that she was to be the mother of the promised Messiah while remaining a virgin (Luke 1:35). After this she went to visit her cousin Elisabeth, who was living with her husband Zacharias (probably at Juttah, Josh. 15:55; 21:16, in the neighborhood of Maon), at a considerable distance, about 100 miles, from Nazareth. Immediately on entering the house she was saluted by Elisabeth as the mother of her Lord, and then forthwith gave utterance to her hymn of thanksgiving (Luke 1:46-56; comp. 1 Sam. 2:1-10). (This hymn is commonly known as the Medzatsousteh [Latin, Magnificat.] After three months Mary returned to Nazareth to her own home. Joseph was told in a dream (Matt. 1:18-25) of her condition, and took her to his own home. Soon after this the decree of Augustus (Luke 2:1) required that they should proceed to Bethlehem (Micah 5:2),



some 80 or 90 miles from Nazareth; and while they were there they found shelter in the inn provided for strangers (Luke 2:6, 7). But as the inn was crowded, Mary had to retire to a place among the cattle, and there she brought forth her son, who was called Jesus (Matt. 1:21), because he was to save his people from their sins. This was followed by the presentation in the temple, the flight into Egypt, and their return in the following year and residence at Nazareth (Matt. 2). Mary apparently remained in Nazareth for thirty uneventful years. During these years only one event in the history of Jesus is recorded, viz., his going up to Jerusalem when twelve years of age, where he was found among the doctors in the temple (Luke 2:41-52). Probably also during this period Joseph died, for he is not mentioned again. (This history is selective; a very different history can be presented depending on which of the gospels is preferred.)

After the commencement of Jesus' public ministry little notice is taken of Mary by the Gospel writers. She was present at the marriage in Cana. Very few gospel stories mention her until we find her at the cross along with her sister Mary, and Mary Magdalene, and Salome, and other women (John 19:26). She was with the little company in the upper room after the Ascension on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14). From this time she wholly disappears from the biblical accounts. Her death is not recorded in Scripture. According to Latin and Eastern Church tradition, between three and fifteen years after Christ's Ascension, in either Jerusalem or Ephesus, she died while surrounded by the apostles. Later when the apostles opened her tomb, they found it empty and concluded that she had been bodily assumed into Heaven. [A tomb in Jerusalem is attributed to Mary, but it was unknown until the 6th century.]

The Armenian and other Orthodox traditions teach that after Mary's death [falling asleep in the Lord] and burial, she was assumed and taken up bodily into heaven; this is called the Dormition and Assumption [Arm. N'nchoomn and Verapokhoomn]. These traditions, however, have not pronounced the Assumption as a dogma of the Church, nor have they held that this doctrine is necessary to salvation

*Excerpt from: Samoorian, V. Rev. Fr. Ghevont. DOMAR: A Compendium of Directorium and Calendar of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church according to the traditions of the Apostolic See of Jerusalem. Armenian Orthodox Theological Research Institute [AOTRI], 2006.*

### On-line Bible Study with Fr. Krikor

Wednesdays at 7 pm

(except the third week of the month, when it will be on Thursday at 7 pm)

Register for Bible Study on the events page of the church website or by

[CLICKING HERE](#)

You will receive an email with a Zoom code to sign on to Bible Study.

This code will allow you to sign in to each week's Bible Study and will no longer change when the Bible Study topic changes.

#### August Dates

Wednesday, August 5, Wednesday, August 12, Thursday, August 20, Wednesday, August 26

