

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

October 2023

The Weapon of Victory

In the 4th century, St. Constantine the Great sent his mother, Queen Helena, to find the actual Cross upon which Jesus was crucified. In 326, the location of the Cross of Christ was disclosed, but three crosses were found. To authenticate the true Cross of Christ, the body of a youth who had recently died was placed on each of the three pieces of wood. The Holy Cross of Christ was discovered when the body of the youth came back to life. This is the Feast of the Discovery of the Holy Cross (ԳԻԼՈՒ ԽԱՅ) that the Armenian Church celebrates.

Christians in Jerusalem began to venerate the true Cross of Christ, and since then it has been broken into fragments and dispersed among various church traditions. Within the Armenian Church, there is at least a fragment of the true Cross located in Etchmiadzin, as well as St. Vartan Cathedral of the Eastern Diocese.

Discovering the Cross in our lives today

A discovery in history, but even today, we are called to discover the mystery of the Cross in our daily lives. What is that mystery? Christ redeems all suffering through his grace and life-giving presence. Jesus transformed the Cross, at one time a symbol of torture and execution, into a symbol of faith and salvation, a weapon of victory over death. The mystery and sting of death has been stripped, unveiled by the mystery of the Cross!

St. Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians (15:55): “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?”

As we sing during Badarak, “You, unchangeable, became man and you were crucified, O Christ our God, and you trampled down death by death.”

In his festal hymn composed for this feast, 7th century Catholicos, Sahak Dzoroporetsi writes, “To your miracle-working and mighty wooden cross, Christ, staff of strength on earth revealed; come people let us bow down in worship. To the treasure that could not be hid though ignored by the Jews, which revealed by the yearning of the queen as the wood of life; come people let us bow down in worship. This is the weapon of victory for the faithful, the champion and victory seal against the enemy. Come people let us bow down in worship.”

In his encomium dedicated to the Holy Cross, St. Gregory of Narek addresses the Cross with praise: “You are the holder of victory with utmost power, O almighty sign, witness to the lordly acts of the One who dwelt in you physically, who is described symbolically by the seer in the Apocalypse...as the Lamb riding a white horse and repelling the dragon’s deriding charge.”

Also from the same encomium, St. Gregory writes, “This life-giving cross is the acknowledged sign of victory in the decisive battle waged in the

Bible Readings

Oct. 1 Matt. 24:30-36
Oct. 8 Mark 11:27-33
Oct. 15 Mark 12:41-44
Oct. 22 Luke 4:14-24
Oct. 29 Matt. 24:27-36

Psalm 136:1

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever.

GOD IS GOD
HE IS WORTHY OF MY TRUST
AND OBEDIENCE
—Elisabeth Elliot

divide between destruction and restoration.”

The epistle reading for this Sunday is from St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. He writes, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (I Corinthians 1:18).

How does the Cross impact our lives? Do we believe in the power of the Cross to give us new life in Christ, as did St. Paul? Are we willing to be placed on the Cross, to lay down our own lives, allowing its power to give us new life in Christ?

How do we as a community suffer? How can we unite that suffering with Christ through the power of the Cross? For example, how can the atrocity of the Genocide be a testament to the power of the Cross in the life of the Armenian people and the Armenian Church? How can the Cross steer our course as individuals, as families?

What do the above quotes from St. Gregory of Narek, St. Paul, and Sahak Dzoroporetsi mean in light of the many horrific and unjust acts still being waged in the world today? How can their words, the words from our own Badarak, inspire us to pray?

In the Old Testament we see the Cross in the reading for this Sunday from Wisdom: “Again, one preparing to sail and about to voyage over raging waves calls upon a piece of wood more fragile than the ship which carries him...but it is thy providence, O Father, that steers its course, because thou hast given it a path in the sea, and a safe way through the waves...Therefore men trust their lives even to the smallest piece of wood, and passing through the billows on a raft they come safely to land...For blessed is the wood by which righteousness comes.” (Wisdom 14:1-7)

By Dn. Eric Vozzy EDACNA



On September 17, 2023, the St. Vartan ACYO celebrated ACYO Sunday by assisting the Parish Council.



On September 17, 2023, the St. Vartan Sunday School held an open house to welcome students to the new year. The event included a bouncy house, pizza, and crafts.



On September 10, 2023, St. Vartan members attended the Rally for Life at Union Square in San Francisco to protest Azerbaijan’s blockade of Artsakh.

Donations

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

Stewardship—Vaughn Hovanessian, Ara and Angel Azizian, Caline Soghikian, Barry and Judy Toomajian
Storage Container Maintenance Donation—Zaven Kanneian and Janet Yeghissian

In Memory

† Alice Sarafian to the Orphan Fund

Stuart & Caroline Arakelian, Howard and Rosemary Atamian, Beverly Atamian, Ara & Angel Azizian, Seta Azizian, Vartan & Kim Bardakian Demirjian, Arnav Christine Baron and Tom Porter, Pete & Pat Barsamian, Vartan & Ayko Berberian, Alvert, Cedar, Matthew, Emily, Alex, Susie and Rosie Collins, Carol & Harry Dokouzian, Seza & Dana Dominguez, Nurhan, Mary, & Steven Donikian, Sylvia Gozurian, Harout & Marie Hagopian, Hagop & Linda Hagopian, Hagop & Sonik Hakimian, Christine and Russell Hazarian, Lori & Andy Hill, Vartan & Arlene Hovsepian, Edward & Armineh Jamgotchian, Linda Joyce, Zaven Kanneian and Janet Yeghissian, Arka & Nelly Kargodorian, Coralyn Kettlitz, Harold & Bonnie Koojoolian, Lori & Greg Krikorian, St. Vartan Ladies Society, Wayne & Suzanne Leong, David Madajian, Adrienne Mannis, Don & Lisa Manoogian, Hilda Mener and Karen Mener, Paul & Cheryl Ohanesian, Ron and Liz Ojakian, The Shahbazian and Osmundson Family, Jack & Tammy Papazian, Eunice Park, Michael and Nancy Pretto, Julie & Neil Sayre, Lisa & Steven Sharafian, Richard Sharafian, Harry Sherinian, Caline Soghikian, Judi Swenson, Traci Takahashi, Seta Tcherkoyan, Ed & Suzanne Vasgerdsian, Jon & LeeAnn Williams, Jean Wolslegal, Nadya and Arto Yagjian

† Alice Sarafian

Carole Chang (Altar Flowers), Evelyn C. Boyd, Randy & Mirta Cali, Bob & Sara Dermatoian, Marian Eritzian, Luke & Gina Eskigian, Regina Garabedian, Janet Kamian, Jonas Rivera, George & Nancy Takahashi and Ron & Joyce Takahashi, Albert & Annie Tashjian, Araks Aghazarian, Linda Berberian (The Lawrence Chang Retaining Wall Fund),

Dn. Allan & Rosemary Jendian and Family (Fr. Mesrob Sarafian Religious Education Fund)

† Annabelle Taylor

Ray and Reyhan Shepherd, Linda Berberian (Lawrence Chang Retaining Wall Fund), Edward and Armineh Jamgotchian (Orphan Fund), Jean Wolslegal (Orphan Fund)

† Zohrab Mararian

Ray and Reyhan Shepherd, Suzanne and Razmik Abnous, Alice Gregorian, Kalust Derderian (Ladies Society), Linda Berberdian (Lawrence Chang Retaining Wall Fund), Albert and Annie Tashjian (Ladies Society)

† Deacon Vahe Mener

Artin Der Minassians (Choir Fund)

News From Our St. Vartan Family

Baptism

On September 10, 2023, Fr. Krikor baptized **Zahra Kim and Milena Kim**. Milena's Godparents are Semere Tesfandrias and Rosemarie Lazo and Zahra's Godparents are Bisrat Tesfandrias and Teresa Arroyo. Their parents are Samuel Kim and Hadinet Tesfandrias and their grandparents are Chuung Sik Kim and Chung Wha Kim and Woldu Tesfandrias and Melite Woldeselassie.

Condolences

A funeral service for **Alice Sarafian** was held at St. Vartan Church on September 6, 2023. Our condolences to Alice's children, Karen, Katherine (Meher), and Stephen Sarafian (Marisa); grandchildren, Arielle Pinkston (Lee), Joshua Sarafian, Avedis and Mardiros Gourjian; great-grandson Everett Pinkston; brothers Richard, Robert and Luther Izmirian; and many loving nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Save the date

Ladies Society Christmas Luncheon

December 14, 2023

Details to follow



SAINT VARTAN ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH
INVITES THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

ARCHBISHOP HOVNAN DERDERIAN

PASTORAL VISIT

and

Divine Liturgy

SAVE THE DATE:

**SUNDAY
OCTOBER 22**

| 10AM

WWW.STVARTANOAKLAND.COM

MUSICAL CABARET BENEFIT NIGHT

The St. Vartan Cultural Committee hosted the Armenian Healthcare Association of the Bay Area “Musical Cabaret Benefit Night” on Saturday, September 9, 2023 to raise funds for medical and psychiatric programs in Armenia.

The musical program consisted of a wonderful variety of talented vocalists, with original songs performed by Louise Nalbandian and Tara Baghdassarian. There were poetry recitals, an art exhibit by Ruzanna Ohanjanian, and a very special performance concluding the evening with renowned musician Souren Baronian on clarinet from New York, Rowan Storm on percussion from Los Angeles, Paul Ohanesian on oud, and Lise Lippmann on santuri. The band was a definite treat. Guests were invited to dance along and all thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

AHABA showed slides and gave an update on their 2022-2023 sponsored projects and thanked everyone for their support. Some of the projects they sponsor are eActs - Education of Armenian Children through Sports, Symposium on Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Scholarships for Medical School students, Support for Recovery of Amputees of War, Treating Combat-Related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Research Study, Diabetes Camp, ARPA Institute Class 1000 Cleanroom in the Armenian Physics Institute, PET-CT Study, Support for American University of Armenia Nursing Program, Kooyrigs – the Armenian non-profit organization that serves women, children, and other marginalized groups in Artsakh, Armenia, and Lebanon, and Support for AUA Research4Life Database.

Please visit www.ahabasf.org to learn more about the organization and their projects.



On August 23, 2013, volunteers gathered to prepare kofta for the upcoming St. Vartan Armenian Church Food Festival. St. Vartan thanks all the festival volunteers.



THE HOLY CROSS OF VARAK

In the Armenian Church, the Season of the Cross begins with the Fast of the Holy Cross which precedes the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on the Sunday nearest September 14th. It ends on the Sunday nearest November 18th, the first Sunday of Heesnag.

Within this season, there is a feast particular to the Armenian Church calendar: the Feast of the Holy Cross of Varak – the celebration of the discovery of a true piece of the Cross on which Jesus was crucified.

In the 3rd century, St. Hripsime and her companions, fleeing persecution, brought a relic of the holy Cross to Mt. Varak and left it to the local priests for protection. The location of the relic remained unknown until the 7th century when a monk by the name of Totig had a vision of a cathedral with twelve pillars on the summit of Mt. Varak. In the midst of the cathedral was a radiating cross, which then slowly descended down the mountain and rested over the altar of the monastery of Varak. Totig and his student Hovel rushed to the church and found that the vision revealed the location of the relic of the holy Cross that St. Hripsime entrusted to the priests centuries earlier. Catholicos St. Nersess the Builder certified its authenticity and ordered that the Armenian Church dedicate the third Sunday of the Cross to venerating the Holy Cross of Varak, although today, the location of the relic remains unknown.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

Surely, in some way Jesus is anticipating upcoming events such as his resurrection and ascension, as well as the coming destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD, an event that deeply shaped and influenced the authors of the New Testament, including those of the four Gospels. But with Jesus at the center of all events and time, things tend to be complex and layered, and so this verse also points to the fulfilment of all things. “This generation,” referring not merely to those alive at the time of Christ, but to believers at all times, the generation of the Church, continues until all things are accomplished. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Stepanos Siwnetsi writes,

The crown of good news has not yet ripened, but one sees the good things that have been promised with hope as through a mirror. But at the coming of the just judge, when the crown of good news ripens, then one will see clearly and not with hope, just as in winter the fruit of the fig tree is invisible but in summer it is visible to all.

Time for repentance

That day and hour only the Father knows. In other words, we are to remove any concern about its date, instead living a life pleasing to God in the present as if he could return at any moment. Consider this a gift. God the Father is allowing us time for repentance, for practicing our faith, for transformation to be like him, before all things are accomplished, before the entire created order is healed and restored, including each one of us, to its original nature and harmony as once experienced in the Garden of Eden. St. Cyril of Alexandria writes,

For as humanity is renewed, the whole creation, which had been created for the sake of humanity, is recapitulated and restored.

St. Paul exhorts, “Now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (II Corinthians 6:2) So what are we to do? Make sure our lamps are filled with oil in preparation for the marriage feast with our Bridegroom (see Matthew 25:1-13). Be watchful for opportunities to be the light and fragrance of Christ in the world, and be watchful for any attack from the Enemy. From the hymn sung during Ամուլոսէսի ժամ on the Feast of Varak, the subject and “sign” being the Cross, we sing,

You gave a sign to those who fear, and a weapon against the enemy. With it, protect those who believe in your holy name.

We have an enemy

Who or what is the enemy? The Satan, our adversary, the Devil and the efforts of demons and demonic powers, our own selves, desires, addictions, our preference of earthly things over the maker of the earth, all of which and whom pull us away to become less like God and more like the demons who rebelled against him. Rather than looking beyond ourselves and concerning ourselves first and foremost with eternal things, do we give our attention and priority to that which is immediate or temporal, our bodily senses, wealth and affluence, titles and legacy? In his prayer for Thursday, Hovhannes of Garni writes,

Instead of eternal glory that does not fade away, I loved the transient and the corruptible. Leave me not to my own inclinations.

The power and centrality of the Cross

What about the Cross? Where does it stand in the life of the Church? If the Cross is removed from the Church’s centrality, we risk becoming our own enemy. The Church will become institutionalized and politicized, a club for “members” that rally around something beside the Cross, rather than the Body of Christ bringing baptism, salvation, healing, and hope to the world. We backseat what St. Paul claimed as his foremost reality:

But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (I Corinthians 2:2)

The accomplishment of the Cross

Without the Cross at the very center of everything we do as the Church – local, diocesan, and global – we risk losing any true encounter with Christ for ourselves and for others seeking salvation in a world that is desperate for hope and love. Thankfully, we have been given this time to repent before all things are reconciled. Thankfully, the Cross has accomplished, continues to accomplish, and will accomplish all that is required for our healing and salvation, and so we live with hope looking forward to the time when, as St. Paul writes to the Romans,

Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. (Romans 8:21-24a)

The Sign is the Cross

Ready or not, oil lamps filled or empty, the arrival of the Son of Man will fill the sky and no one will miss it. St. John Chrysostom asks, “With what eyes then shall we behold Christ? For if any one could not bear to see his father, when conscious to himself that he had sinned against him, upon him who infinitely exceeds a father in forbearance, how shall we then look? How shall we bear it?”

How we will look or bear the arrival of the Son of Man is answered by how we look and bear the sight of the Cross now. It was St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catechetical Lecture 15, who interpreted the sign of the Son of Man (24:30) as the Cross when he

writes: “But what is the sign of his coming? Lest a hostile power dare to counterfeit it. And then shall appear, he says, the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. Now Christ’s own true sign is the Cross; a sign of a luminous Cross shall go before the King , plainly declaring him who was formerly crucified.”

(The Armenian icon on the left also depicts the sign of the Cross as the second coming, or return, of the Son of Man.)

Along with St. Gregory the Enlightener in his catechetical work *The Teaching*, and St. Gregory of Narek in his *Encomium on the Holy Cross*, St. John Chrysostom also adopts the interpretation of St. Cyril in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew when he writes, “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; that is, the cross being brighter than the sun,” but this time the Cross is empty, as Jesus is no longer on it.

He has taken back dominion of the world from the demonic powers who rebelled against him. Through the Cross, he has defeated these powers which brought about all forms of corruption, leading God’s creation away from the source of life and healing. By means of the Cross Jesus has restored and will return the world back to his saints, a Kingdom in holy communion with its Creator. (see Daniel 7:13-14, Romans 4:13).

Where does the Cross appear?

Jesus was crucified on a cross that stood on Golgotha. On May 7, 351 for several hours a cross appeared in the sky over Jerusalem extending from Golgotha to the Mount of Olives; a span of almost two miles. A radiating cross pointing to a true relic appeared at the Monastery of Varak. When we look around us on a daily basis, the shape of the Cross appears in the most unexpected places. What is the message of the Cross, what the Armenian Church repeatedly refers to as a նշան (“sign”), about which we continually need to be reminded?

The Cross as a source of life

What was once looked upon as a torture device and instrument of death is now gazed upon as the source of healing and life. If our daily faith ever seems counterintuitive, consider the core of the Gospel. Through the eyes of faith, the mystery of the Cross transforms our tragedies into blessing. Out of death, comes life. The pain that Jesus willingly embraced on the Cross, he asks us to also bear, but as a source of joy! Following the model and example of Jesus on the Cross, it is self-denial, self-emptying, putting our egos and false selves to death on the Cross that is, paradoxically, the way to life (see Philippians 2:6-8).

St. Gregory of Narek prays, And also by being spread upon the tree of death you spread us upon it as well, and thanks to this great mystery united us with the tree of life. (93B)

The Cross transforms suffering

When we have been and are continually crucified with Jesus (see Galatians 2:20), we experience the freedom that is dying to this life, no longer bound by meaningless pain or suffering without God. We still see pain around us, but by way of the Cross and what Jesus accomplished on it we are able to suffer with him, knowing true forgiveness and compassion. Jesus didn’t come to eliminate suffering (that time is coming), but to fill it with his presence, so that we can encounter him through it, perhaps even more directly than when we are free from suffering.

The Cross and forgiveness

The Cross is the gate back to the Garden, the Tree of Life from which we eat the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. As we share Holy Communion we become nourished to forgive and sacrificially give up ourselves for one another, because through the Cross Jesus shares himself with us, his divine gifts and blessings, who he is – i.e. life, forgiveness, hope, and liberating love.

Because we were forgiven, we are able to forgive others and thus commune not only with our Savior but with one another. We experience true freedom, which is not license to do as we please, but freedom from being bound by sin and spiritual decay, that which brings death to our communion with God, that which our enemy relentlessly desires for us. Through the Cross, we are freed to live as a community, the Body of Christ.

The celebrant prays during Badarak: “Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, great in mercy and abounding in the gifts of your beneficence, you, who of your own will did endure at this hour the sufferings of the cross and of death on account of our sins, and did abundantly bestow the gifts of your Holy Spirit on the blessed apostles; make us also, Lord, we beseech you, sharers in your divine gifts, in the forgiveness of sins and in the reception of the Holy Spirit... “(21)

Again, from the hymn sung during Առաւօտեակ ժամ on the Feast of Varak, we sing, “You made known today the appearance of your awe-inspiring second coming, By the sign of your Cross, beaming it on earth. He adorned today the sign of the Cross, With a heavenly light brighter than the sun.” (trans. Bp. Daniel Findikyan)

Marked by the sign of the Cross

With what eyes do we see Christ? How will we bear the Cross today? In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” Is the message of the Cross, and all that it has accomplished, foolishness to us? This is something we really need to ask ourselves by examining our own lives and the life of our parish community, something we should be conscious of and take seriously every time we make the sign of the Cross. Or is the Cross the power of God by which we are marked as individuals, families, and a parish community? What would it look like if that were the case?

From our epistle reading for Sunday, St. Paul writes to the Galatians, “But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world...for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.” (Galatians 6:14, 17b)

Glorying in the Cross

Do we as a Church glory in anything except the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? Or is the Cross just one item on the menu of what the Armenian Church glories in or rallies around, catering to the spectrum of interest among her members? In other words, does our lived experience of the Cross today, reflect that of our Church throughout history, or have we been distracted from the one vision, mission, and purpose given to us by Jesus Christ himself?

Bearing the marks of the Cross

Do we bear the marks of our Savior on our bodies, on the body of our community? Are we, this very moment, as individuals, as parish communities, as the global Armenian Church characterized by the Cross, by our fervent, martyric faith and sacrificial love as a sign (nshan) to those in our neighborhood, at work, at school, in traffic, on the sidewalk, to the world? Live well in the time that we have been given, take up the sign, the Cross of Jesus Christ and follow him, and as a test to determine whether or not we are fit for the Kingdom of God, don’t turn back (see Luke 9:62).

Տոն Վարագա Սուրբ Խաչի

Խաչվերացի երրորդ կիրակին Վարագա սուրբ խաչի տոնն է:

Կլավդիոս կայսեր կինը՝ Պատրոնիկե թագուհին, ընդունելով Հակոբոս Տյառնեղբոր ձեռքից խաչափայտի սուրբ մասունքը, այն Հռոմ է տանում: Որից հետո այդ սուրբ մասունքը, սերնդեսերունդ ժառանգաբար փոխանցվելով, հասավ սուրբ կույս Նոբիփսիմեին, ով Կլավդիոս կայսեր և Պատրոնիկե թագուհու սերնդից էր:

Սուրբ կույսն իր պարանոցից մշտապես կախած էր պահում այդ սուրբ մասունքը, որի վրա թափվել էր Տիրոջ Արյունը: Նա քրիստոնյա ծնողների գավակ էր և կրոնավորում էր Հռոմի Սուրբ Պողոս հոջակավոր վանքի կուսանոցում, որի մայրապետն էր սուրբ Գայանեն, ով շուրջ երեք հարյուր կույսերի դաստիարակում էր Աստծու երկյուղով:

Այդ ժամանակներում էր, երբ Դիոկղետիանոս կայսրը կամեցավ իրեն կնության առնել սուրբ Նոբիփսիմեին, բայց նա հրաժարվելով՝ յոթանասուն կույսերի հետ միասին, իրենց քահանաներով հանդերձ, փախավ Եգիպտոս, ապա՝ այնտեղից Երուսաղեմ, որտեղ նրանք այցելեցին Քրիստոսի տնօրինական վայրերը և սուրբ Աստվածամոր գերեզմանի վրա աղոթելիս հրաման ստացան գնալ Թադեոս առաքյալի վիճակը: Հնազանդվելով հրամանին՝ նրանք գնացին Եդեսիա, ուր գտնվում էր Փրկչի պատկերը: Նրանցից շատերը մնացին Եդեսիայում, իսկ մյուսները շարունակեցին իրենց ճանապարհը դեպի Արարատ: Ովքեր մնացին Եդեսիայում, հետագայում սպանվեցին Դիոկղետիանոսի հրամանով:

Սուրբ Գայանեի խումբը, շրջելով Հայաստանի գավառներում, սուրբ մասունքի միջոցով ամենուր մեծամեծ նշաններ էր գործում: Նրանք մաքրում էին ախտացյալ ջրերը, հալածում դևերին, բժշկում հիվանդներին: Սուրբ Գայանեն և իր խումբը մի որոշ ժամանակ հանգրվանեցին Հոգյաց վանքում, ուր գտնվում էր ամենօրինակ սուրբ Կույսի պատկերը: Հետո գնացին Վարագա լեռը և հաստատվեցին այնտեղ: Լեռան գագաթին, որը կոչվում է Գալիլիա, ամփոփեցին սուրբ Նշանը, որպես մեծ պարգև թողնելով Հայաստան աշխարհին: Եվ դա իրենց կամքով չարեցին, այլ՝ Աստծու նախախնամությամբ: Նրանցից ոմանք մնացին լեռնագագաթին՝ սպասավորելու սուրբ Նշանը, իսկ սուրբ Գայանեն և սուրբ Նոբիփսիմեն, երեք քահանաներով և քառասուն կույսերով, Սուրբ Հոգու առաջնորդությամբ գնացին Վաղարշապատ, որտեղ և նահատակվեցին: Իսկ նրանք, ովքեր մնացին Վարագա լեռան վրա, և որոնցից երկուսը քահանաներ էին, քաջալերվելով սուրբ Գրիգորի Վիրապից ելնելուց հետո իրենց կատարած այցելությունից, այդտեղ եկեղեցի հաստատեցին, որը հետագայում տեղի խասաշունչ եղանակի պատճառով անբնակ մնաց:

Հայոց աշխարհում գիտեին, որ Վարագա լեռան վրա է պահված սուրբ Նշանը, բայց մինչև իշխանաց իշխան մեծն Վարդ պատրիկ Ռշտունու և Ներսես Շինող կաթողիկոսի հայրապետության ժամանակները չէին կարողանում գտնել այն: 653 թ. Թողիկ անունով մի կրոնավոր, իր սրբասեր աշակերտի՝ Հովելի հետ միասին գնում է ճգնելու Վարագա լեռան վրա և հաստատվում այն վայրում, ուր բնակվել էին սուրբ կույսերը: Նրանց իղձն էր գտնել սուրբ մասունքը: Երկար ճգնությունից հետո ավելի է բորբոքվում նրանց սիրտը Քրիստոսի սիրով և սուրբ Նշանի փափագով: Եվ ճգնավորներն էլ ավելի են խստացնում իրենց ճգնությունը և տասներկու օր շարունակվող անսվաղ ծոմապահությամբ հայցում Տիրոջից՝ տեսնել իրենց փափագածը: Եվ մարդասերն Աստված, Ով կատարում է Իր երկյուղածների կամքը, լսում է նրանց և գիշերամիջին, երբ նրանք աղոթում էին, լեռան գագաթից, որտեղ պահված էր սուրբ Նշանը, սահավոր ձայնով նրանց նշան տալիս, ինչից զարմացած նրանք նայում են դեպի լեռան գագաթը և այնտեղ տեսնում պայծառ լույս: Լույսն իր չափով ու ձևով այնպիսին էր, ինչպիսին այդտեղ գտնվող մասունքը: Ճգնավորները շարունակում են զարմացած նայել լույսին, որն աստիճանաբար պայծառանում էր և լուսավորում ամբողջ լեռը, առավել քան արեգակի լույսը, որով սքանչանալով փառավորում են Աստծուն: Ապա տեսնում են լույսի տասներկու սյուններ, որոնք վեր էին խոյացել երկրից մինչև երկինք: Ամբողջ լեռը լցվում է անուշահոտությամբ ու հրեշտակների օրհնության երգերով:

Մինչ կրոնավորները վայելում էին այդ սքանչելիքը, որը տևեց կեսգիշերից մինչև օրվա վեցերորդ ժամը, սուրբ մասունքն իր մասնատուփով հանդերձ ելնում է վեմից և լույսերի մեջ վեր բարձրանալով ու ցլարձակելով՝ գալիս ու մտնում է եկեղեցի և վերաբերվում սուրբ Սեղանին՝ լույս ճառագայթելով վեցերորդ ժամից մինչև իններորդ ժամը: Մինչ ճգնավորները զարմանքի մեջ էին, խաչանիշ լույսից նրանց ձայն է հասնում, որն ասում է. «Քրիստոս հաճեց բնակվել սուրբ Նշանի մեջ՝ Հայոց աշխարհի պահպանության և փրկության համար»: Եվ նրանք առաջ գալով՝ մեծ ահով ու դողով տեսնում են սուրբ Նշանը՝ սուրբ Սեղանի վրա լույսով պարուրված: Ապա այն վերցնելով իրենց ձեռքը՝ արտասովալից համբուրում են ու գոհանում Տիրոջից:

Այդ սքանչելի տեսիլքը ոչ միայն նրանց էր երևում, այլև լեռան շրջակայքում բնակվող բոլոր մարդկանց, ովքեր ակներև տեսնում էին լույսը, որը ծագեց Վարագա լեռան Գալիլիա կոչվող գագաթից: Տասներկու օր շարունակ լույսի սյունները շրջապատում են լեռան գագաթը: Ժողովուրդն եպիսկոպոսներով ու քահանաներով հանդերձ բարձրանում է լեռը, որոնց հետ նաև Վարդ իշխանն իր գործով, և հարցնում ճգնավորներին տեսիլքի ու լուսեղեն սյունների մասին: Նրանք էլ կարգով պատմում են ամեն ինչ, մեկ առ մեկ, և ցույց տալիս եկեղեցու Սեղանին վերաբերված սուրբ Նշանը, որին ժողովուրդը երկրպագում էր և փառք տալիս Աստծուն: Իսկ անուշահոտության բուրուրը դեռ երկար ժամանակ շարունակում էր բազմությանը գնալիս, ովքեր էլ հիացած օրհնում էին ու փառաբանում Աստծուն սուրբ Խաչի երևման համար:

Այս ամենից հետո Ներսես Գ Տայեցի (Շինող) հայրապետը կարգ է սահմանում՝ ամեն տարի այդ օրը տոնել «Վարագա սուրբ խաչի տոնը»՝ Քրիստոսի և Նրա սուրբ Խաչի փառքի համար: Ապա տասներկու եկեղեցիներ են կառուցում՝ տասներկու լուսեղեն սյունների երևման տեղում, իսկ այն եկեղեցին, ուր եկավ և հանգեց սուրբ Նշանը, ընդարձակելով նորոգում են և տեղում վանք հիմնում:



On September 17, 2023, St. Vartan Church celebrated the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Join the Choir

All Are Welcome

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



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.



The stained glass windows on the church sanctuary were repaired and sealed to prevent any breakage. This project is part of the Security Grant that St. Vartan received from FEMA.



**WE WANT
YOU!**

To prepare Yalanchi/Sarma for Food Festival

Tuesday, October 3 9:30 am Roll Yalanchi
 Wednesday, October 4 9:30 am Roll Yalanchi
 Thursday, October 5 9:30am Box Yalanchi

Contact Gail Kezerian, hyegail@pacbell.net, or Beth Rustigian Broussalian, bethbrouss@gmail.com, for more information.

Calling all Festival Food Server Volunteers!

If you are interested in serving for the upcoming Food Festival in October, please go to the Sign-up Genius Website and look up the sign-up sheet with the email

"linda@mcmahonrt.com":

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4AA8A82CA0FFC52-stvartans1>

If you have any questions or want to schedule directly, please contact

Linda Gozurian McMahon at

linda@mcmahonrt.com or

415-515-4079. Thank you.

HELP WANTED

Please consider working in the Dessert Booth during our upcoming Festival. There are plenty of slots available on both Friday and Saturday, Oct. 6th and 7th. Even if you have committed to working elsewhere, you can come before or after, to the dessert booth!

Do you love making/drinking Armenian coffee? We have a job for you, as well!

You may sign up through the link below.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090448AFAD2DA57-dessert2>

Thank you for your consideration.

Any questions/concerns, please contact @ Janet Yeghissian @ jhyeg@sbcglobal.net

Grandma's Attic, Entrance Booth, Games Booths

If you would like to volunteer for any of these areas, or want to help at the Festival, but don't know how, contract Nicole Vasgerdsian at nvasger@gmail.com.

Festival Donations

Leg of Lamb—Regina Garabedian, Kristin Bassetti, Melissa Rodgers, Gary and Satenik Eldemir, Lucille Dolab, Barry and Judy Toomajian, Armen Phelps, Judith Person, Jon and LeeAnn Williams, Suzanne and Ed Vasgerdsian

Case of Tan—Lucille Dolab

Armenian Beer—Seno and Dickie Garabedian

Case of Wine—Caline Soghikian, Dana Smith

Festival General Donation—Brian and Cynthia Der Matoian, Jim and Mihoko Malian, Michele Radcliffe

Tent—Raffi and Nora Gregorian, Barry and Judy Toomajian, Suzanne and Ed Vasgerdsian, Edward and Armineh Jamgotchian

Festival Donation Requests

Please consider making a bazaar donation to one or several of the categories listed on the chart. Mail check to church or donate on the church website: stvartanoakland.com/donate

Festival Donation Request

Items Requested	Number of Donors	Item Cost	Items Received	Still Needed
Leg of Lamb	100	50	54	46
Tent	15	250	8	7
Admission Booth	1	250	1	0
Game Booths	5	200	0	5
Newspaper Advertising	4	100	0	4
Case of Wine	10	50	6	4
Case of Armenian Tan	2	50	1	1
Case of Armenian Beer	12	40	3	9
Armenian Coffee	2	30	1	1
Program Guide	5	25	1	4

ST. VARTAN ARMENIAN CHURCH 68TH ANNUAL

Armenian Food Festival

FRI, OCT. 6, 2023
5:30-11:00PM

SAT, OCT. 7, 2023
NOON-11:00PM

Celebrate Armenian food, music, dance and culture

Music by Khatchig Jingirian and dancing at 9:00pm

Food served until 9:00pm

dance performances

marketplace • games for kids

vegetarian fare • food to go

grandma's attic • church tours

illustrations by
alysiakezerian.com

ST. VARTAN ARMENIAN CHURCH 650 SPRUCE STREET, OAKLAND
510-893-1671 STVARTANOAKLAND.ORG

St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church
650 Spruce Street
Oakland, CA 94610

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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: Harout Hagopian
Parish Assembly Chair: Don Manoogian
Choir Director: Armena Petrosova
Organist: Araks Aghazarian
ACYO Chair: Ani Vasgerdsian Brady
Sunday School Superintendent: Karen Mener
Ladies Society Chair: Lisa Manoogian
Cultural Society Chair: Liz Ojakian
Armenian School Principal: Anna Massis
Hokejosh: Nora Hanoian
Hye Social Chair: Annette Kevranian
Boys Basketball Coach: Mike and Daron Boloyan
Girls Volleyball Coach: Annette Kevranian
Newsletter Editors: Arlene Hovsepian and Rachel Harger
Church Secretary: Rachel Harger
Altar Flowers: Sylvia Gozurian, Elo Markarian, Suzanne Vasgerdsian, Carole Chang
Mas Committee: Sylvia Gozurian, Elo Markarian, Hilda Mener
Church Custodian: Wartkes Hagopian

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

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