

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

July 2022

In the Dark about the Transfiguration

Three disciples come face-to-face with the mind-boggling nature of God. How do they react? And is there a lesson for us in their experience? That's the question the church poses in the Feast of the Transfiguration—which the Armenian Church will observe on Sunday, July 24, 2022.

A Mystery

There is a mystery at the heart of Christianity. In our Divine Liturgy, we worship Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnate Word of the Lord, through whom the entire universe was created. As humble human beings, we might naturally ask, Where do we fit into all this? Can such a cosmic being really care about creatures as small as us?

A clue to such questions is quietly offered in the Gospel story of the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13).

Prior to the Transfiguration, Jesus had been very secretive about his true mission and identity, even to his twelve disciples. At one point, Jesus asked them who they thought he was. After a round of wrong answers from the others, Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus blessed Peter for this insight, and then disclosed the prophecy of his own death and resurrection.

Now, the disciples had always understood that Jesus was a unique and important figure—he was, after all, a riveting teacher, an inspiring leader, a powerful miracle-worker. But here, for the first time, they were being let in on the secret of just how special Jesus was.

With that disclosure, the groundwork was now prepared for the visual spectacle of the Transfiguration—which is the very next episode in Matthew's gospel.

Alone and Apart

The story begins: "After six days, Jesus took Peter and the brothers James and John, and brought them up into a high mountain apart."

Right from the start, we are given a subtle reminder of the mystery of Creation, in the seemingly unnecessary comment about "six days." The mountaintop, too, is a place of mystery. The difficult climb, thin air and cold climate all make the high altitudes inhospitable to human beings: this is a world quite literally "apart" from normal human activities and concerns, where the heroes of the Bible met in solitude with God Himself.

In this strange, unearthly environment, Jesus suddenly appears physically changed and glorified—transfigured—to the three disciples: "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Even more amazingly, Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the prophet emerge from the mists of Biblical history, and break into conversation with Jesus.

This fantastic scene unfolds as if the disciples were not there; the presence of Peter, James and John is either forgotten or ignored by the participants in the mystical proceedings. For their own part, the disciples must feel as though they have stumbled upon something they were not supposed to see. It is Peter who finally finds voice to speak, but his words are little more than a plea to be useful: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you would like, let us build three tabernacles (shrines or shelters) here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

Bible Readings

July 7 Matt. 12:38-45
July 10 Matt. 13:24-30
July 17 Matt. 14:13-21
July 24 John 16:24-17:8
July 31 Matt. 18:10-14

Transfiguration

As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. Luke 9:29-30

THIS
IS MY
beloved
SON
hear him.
Luke 9:35, KJV

It is a kind and pious sentiment; but it seems woefully inadequate to the grand scale of the event. Imagine having three of the greatest figures of all time materialize right before your eyes, and all you can think to say in response is, “Can I get you a seat?” In such circumstances, it might be better simply to keep silent.

Jesus, Moses, and Elijah seem to take no notice of Peter’s remark; in fact, before Peter has a chance to finish, he is interrupted by the most astonishing apparition yet: “a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” The voice is so terrifying that the disciples—brave, tough men in normal situations—fall to the ground and hide their faces in fright.

Lifting Their Eyes

At this point, one feels compelled to ask: Just what is going on here?

Reading the story fills us with questions: What does Jesus’s transfiguration signify? Why are Moses and Elijah present—what do they represent? Are they supposed to be ghosts? Conjured spirits? Actual historical figures plucked from their own times? What are they talking about with Jesus? And what is the meaning of that cloud?

Unfortunately, none of these questions is answered for us in the story. We may speculate about them, or interpret them in various ways, but in the most profound sense, we are in the dark about the Transfiguration.

Yet this is a familiar situation for us. God’s ways are mysterious, and His infinite nature defies human understanding. The church’s theological teaching is our attempt to come to an understanding of God and the universe He created. But even this is just a peek into something we cannot fully comprehend.

The story of the Transfiguration illustrates a parallel situation, where the disciples get a rare glimpse of Christ’s full glory, and his central place in God’s scheme. By comparison to such things, the hopes and fears of human existence seem terribly small and meaningless. Perhaps this is the source of the disciples’ fright—just as the fear of human nothingness is the source of much confusion and misery in our own world.

But the key to the story is yet to come.

As they lie on the ground, their bodies trembling, their eyes shut, the disciples feel a gentle touch, and hear a reassuring voice: “Arise,” it says, “and be not afraid.” They look up, emerging from their self-imposed darkness—and what do they behold? The glorious Son of God? The culmination of Biblical history? The divine creator of the universe?

In the truest sense, all of these things are still standing before them.

But what the disciples see is much simpler, and in its own way much more wonderful: “When they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”

One imagines that Peter, James and John must have greeted the calm, familiar sight of their master with a sigh of relief. They—and we—still have many questions about the Transfiguration and the mysterious universe it embodies—questions which may never be answered to our complete satisfaction.

But the gospel writer seems to be telling us that what we really need to look at, first and foremost, is Jesus Christ. Because he contains all of these mysteries within himself, Christ is our human point of contact with the gigantic questions about God, Creation, and man’s place in it. He is our familiar doorway onto the unimaginable.

Out of Darkness

We are like the disciples in the story of the Transfiguration. Christ has called us to walk with him. Why did he choose us? Where is he taking us? We cannot say for certain. All we know is that he is leading us upward. Our ascending path will be strenuous at times, and it will lead us to a place beyond our everyday lives. Some of the things we see during our climb may be too enormous, too confusing, too frightening for our human minds to grasp. At the same time, our human gestures of piety and reverence, however sincere they may be, are inadequate to the momentous thing we seek to honor—much as Peter’s remarks about building shrines seems ridiculous as a response to what he saw.

But Christ did not come among us just to show us how insignificant we are.

He came to show us that the infinite God Who created the universe, who transcends time and space, is not too big to concern Himself with human things. With his hand on our shoulder, and his voice in our ear saying “Be not afraid,” Christ has come to lead us out of the darkness.

By Christopher H. Zakian



“Christ’s Transfiguration,” from an Armenian illuminated gospel executed in 1475 by a scribe identified as Aristakes; from the collection of the Walters Art Museum (Manuscript W.540, fol. 9v).

ՄԵՐ ՏԵՐ ՀԻՄՈՒՄ ՔՐԻՍՏՈՍԻ ՊԱՅԾԱՆԱԿԵՐՊՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՏՈՆ (ՎԱՐՆԱՎԱՌ)

Վարդավառը Քրիստոսի Այլակերպության կամ Պայծառակերպության տոնն է, որը Հայ Առաքելական Սուրբ Եկեղեցու տաղավար տոներից երրորդն է և նշում ենք Հոգեգալուստից յոթ շաբաթ հետո հանդիպող կիրակին: Որպես շաբաթական տոն այն հանդիպում է հունիսի 28-ից օգոստոսի 1-ն ընկած ժամանակահատվածում:

Քրիստոսի պայծառակերպության մասին կարդում ենք Մր. Մատթեոսի (Մատթեոս 17:1-9), Մր. Մարկոսի (9:2-9) և Մր. Լուկասի (9:28-36) Ավետարաններում:

Հիսուս Իր հետ վերցնելով Պետրոս, Հակոբոս և Հովհաննես առաքյալներին՝ նրանց հետ բարձրանում է Թաբոր

լեռը և նրանց առաջ կերպարանափոխվում. Նրա դեմքը փայլում է ինչպես արեգակը, իսկ զգեստները դառնում են սպիտակ, ինչպես լույսը: Այդ պահին Հիսուսի երկու կողմերում երկնային լույսի մեջ պարուրված հայտնվում են Մովսես ու Եղիա մարգարեները ու սկսում զրուցել Տիրոջ հետ՝ Նրա վերահաս տառապանքների ու խաչելությամբ մահվան մասին: Մովսեսը՝ հրեա ժողովրդի մարգարեն և օրենսդիրը, որ ապրել էր Քրիստոսի ծնունդից 1500 տարի առաջ, և մարգարեներից Եղիան, ով (Ն. Ք. 1000 տարի առաջ) հրե կառքով ու հրեղեն ձիերով երկինք բարձրացավ, իրենց երևումով վկայեցին, որ Քրիստոս է մարգարեների կողմից հնուց ի վեր կանխատեսված Ճշմարիտ Մեսիան աշխարհի Փրկիչը: Հիսուս Մովսեսին բերեց մեռյալների աշխարհից, իսկ Եղիային՝ ողջերի աշխարհից, որովհետև ինչպես Դ Թագավորությունների գրքում է պատմվում Եղիան անապատում երկնային կառքով երկինք փոխադրվեց և այնտեղ ողջ է մարմնով: Եվ, ուրեմն, ըստ եկեղեցու հայրերի՝ Եղիան և Մովսեսը Պայծառակերպության խորհրդի մեջ համապատասխանաբար ներկայացնում են երկինքը և երկիրը, կենդանին և մահացածը, կանգնելով Հիսուսի կողքին, վկայում են, որ Նա է Տերը, «կենդանեաց եւ մեռելոց» և Աստվածը՝ «երկնի եւ երկրի», արարիչը՝ նոր կյանքի, միավորողը և մաքրագործողը տեսանելի և անտեսանելի աշխարհի: Մովսեսը խորհրդանշում է Օրենքը, իսկ Եղիան՝ մարգարեությունները: Եվ Քրիստոս նրանց բերեց ցույց տալու համար, որ Ինքն է լրումը Օրենքի և մարգարեությունների:

Նման սքանչելի տեսարանից զմայլված ու արբեցած՝ Պետրոս առաքյալը բացականչում է. «Տե՛ր, լավ է, որ մենք այստեղ ենք, եթե կամենաս, երեք տաղավար շինենք, մեկը՝ Քեզ համար, մեկը Մովսեսի, մեկն էլ՝ Եղիայի համար»:

Այա լուսավոր մի ամպ է գալիս, որից հնչող Հայր Աստծո ձայնը, ինչպես մկրտության ժամանակ, ասում է. «Դա՛ է Իմ սիրելի որդին, որին հավանեցի, Նրան լսեք»: Այդ ձայնից աշակերտները խիստ վախենում են և դեմքի վրա գետնին ընկնում: Այնուհետև Հիսուս մոտենալով նրանց՝ ասում է. «Վե՛ր կացեք և մի՛ վախեցեք»: Երբ առաքյալները բացում են իրենց աչքերը, Հիսուսից բացի ուրիշ ոչ ոքի չեն տեսնում: Լեռան բարձունքից իջնելիս Հիսուս նրանց պատվիրում է մարդկանց ոչինչ չասել մինչև մեռյալներից Իր հարություն առնելը:

Հնում Պայծառակերպության տոնը հայերը մեկ օրվա ընթացքում էին կատարում: Սակայն հետագայում այն ոչ միայն 3 օր դարձավ, այլ կցվեց նաև շաբաթական պահքը և նախատոնակը: Հետագայում գրվեց իրադարձությունը գովերգող Ներսես Շնորհալու կողմից գեղեցիկ ու հոգեզմայլ շարականը՝ նվիրված Վարդավառին:

Ճիշտ է Քրիստոս պայծառակերպվեց հարությունից ու համբարձումից առաջ, սակայն Վարդավառը տոնում ենք Հարության ու Համբարձման տոներից հետո, քանի որ Քրիստոս Ինքն ասաց, որ Իր մասին չպատմենք մինչև Իր՝ մեռելներից հարություն առնելը:

Տոնը Վարդավառ է կոչվում Տիրոջը վարդի հետ համեմատելու պատճառով: Ինչպես վարդը կոկոնի մեջ է ծածկված լինում՝ նախքան բացվելը և բացվելով բոլորին հայտնապես երևում է, այդպես էլ Տերը նախքան Իր պայծառակերպվելը պահում էր Իր մեջ Աստվածության պայծառությունը, իսկ պայծառակերպվելով հայտնում է Իր Աստվածությունը: Ինչպես նաև վարդը փշերի մեջ է աճում, այդպես էլ Հիսուս հրեաների մեջ երևաց, ովքեր խաչեցին Նրան:

Թաքոր լեռան վրա Քրիստոս պայծառակերպվելով աշակերտներին ցույց տվեց Իր զորությունն ու փառքը մինչ Իր խաչվելը, որպեսզի նրանք իմանան, որ Իր տկարության պատճառով չխաչվեց, այլ կամովին, որպեսզի աշխարհը փրկի:

Կազմեց Կարինե Սուգիկյանը

Donations

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

Stewardship—Ray and Reyhan Shepherd, Fr. Krikor and Yn. Anoush Zakaryan, Ara and Angel Azizian, Yeghia and Ana Dalmeida Apkarian, James and Mihoko Malian,

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In Honor of Norma Yaglijian's 100th birthday—Nora and Harvey Hanoian (Ladies Society), Jessica Soojian (Stewardship Fund)

In Honor of the Baptism of Brock Scarborough—Vahe and Hilda Mener

In Honor of Matthew Manoogian's Birthday—Don and Lisa Manoogian (Endowment Fund)

In Memory

† **May Ann Sievers**

Michael Kilijian, Mary and Alain Ekmalian

† **Emma Mazmanian**

Linda Berberian

† **Virginia Madajian**

Linda Berberian

† **Rick Magarian**

Linda Berberian

† **Sharon Leyman**

Dana Schiller, Denise Navara, Nancy and Al Tiedemann

On-Line Bible Study

Wednesday, July 6, 2022

Thursday July 14, 2022

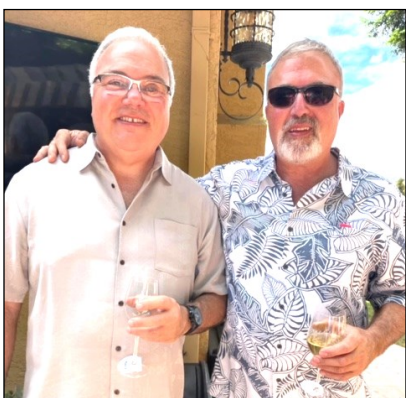
Register for Bible Study for Zoom Code at:
<https://www.stvartanoakland.com/events>



Bible Study will take a break for the remainder of July and resume on August 11.

Wine and Cheese Fundraiser

The St. Vartan Church Community enjoyed a Wine & Cheese Fundraiser at the home of Stuart and Caroline Arakelian on Sunday, June 5, 2022. In addition to great wine, an elaborate charcuterie board, silent and live auctions and fellowship, attendees enjoyed musical performances by jazz musician, Joel Martin, and by Andrew Hagopian (grandson of renowned Richard Hagopian) and Paul Ohanesian.



More photos on page 5

Wine & Cheese Photos...continued from page 5



Food Festival Workdays

Please join us at 9:30 am for Food Festival preparation workdays:

Monday June 27
Monday, July 11
Wednesday, July 20
Saturday, July 23

Simit
Cheese Beoreg
Kufta
Cheese Beoreg

Tuesday, July 26
Thursday, August 11
Wednesday, August 24

Simit
Cheese Beoreg
Kufta

St. Vartan needs your help!

St. Vartan has always trusted its volunteers to achieve the tremendous amount of preparation needed to hold our annual food festival.

Please consider joining us on our workdays.

We can only do this together!

Bring a dish to share for a potluck lunch.

The Holy Translators Sahag and Mesrob

The calendar of the Armenian Church lists under the title “Holy Translators” a number of saints, including St. Sahag the Parthian, St. Mesrob Mashdots, St. Yeghishé, St. Movsés the Grammarian, St. David the Invincible, St. Gregory of Nareg, and St. Nersés of Hromgla. Sahag and Mesrob are commemorated as a team, distinct from the rest of the Translators, on the Thursday following the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

Sts. Sahag and Mesrob are considered major saints of the Armenian Church because of their efforts to spread spiritual and intellectual enlightenment throughout the Armenian world. Under the sponsorship of King Vramshabuh and Catholicos Sahag, St. Mesrob, inspired by God, created the Armenian alphabetic script in a.d. 406. His first and foremost endeavor was to engage himself and his pupils to the task of trans-lating the Holy Scriptures into Armenian. For a period of more than four decades, Sts. Sahag and Mesrob established schools, educated the young and spread the word of God throughout Armenia and its neighboring regions.

ST. SAHAG THE PARTHIAN

Catholicos St. Sahag the Parthian (a.d. 387-438) is a major saint of the Armenian Church and one of the glorious pontiffs to have occupied the throne of St. Gregory, his ancestor. In the history of our church very few men have held the office of catholicos for such a long period during such a turbulent time.

St. Sahag was the son of St. Nersés the Great and therefore a direct descendant of St. Gregory the Illuminator and the Arshaguni royal dynasty. In his youth he was educated in the West, receiving a solid secular and religious education in Greek. At a later date he employed his learning in the task of revising and editing the first translation of the Holy Scriptures by St. Mesrob and his pupils. For this he had at his disposal an authentic copy of the Holy Scriptures in Greek brought from Constantinople.

In a.d. 387, when St. Sahag became catholicos of Greater Armenia, Armenia was partitioned between the Roman and the Persian empires, with the larger part falling under Persian control. Although Armenian kings ruled in both parts, they were subject to their respective emperors and reigned as governors, but retained their royal titles. This state of affairs, and especially the Zoroastrian Persian control in the east, did not promise smooth going for the church or for the Armenian people in general.

In these circumstances, the invention of an Armenian alphabet and the founding of a literary tradition was not accidental, but rather a determined effort to confront the difficulties awaiting the church in the future. It must be noted that the intellectual enlightenment of the Armenian people was accompanied by an intensive effort on the part of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob to proselytize the Armenians in Persian Armenia, as well as in the outlying provinces severed by the Persians. Their missionary work was also carried out in the neighboring lands. While St. Sahag worked in Persian Armenia itself, St. Mesrob preached and taught in the outlying provinces and neighboring lands, as well as in the Greek sector of Armenia.

In a.d. 428 the Persians deposed the Armenian Arshaguni king Ardashir and put an end to the Armenian monarchy. Since St. Sahag was related to the Arshagunis and supported the king, they also deposed him as catholicos of Greater Armenia. In Sahag's place they installed first an Armenian priest from southern Armenia, and later two Syrian bishops, one following the other. These men were given the administrative and judicial responsibilities of the office, while St. Sahag was still recognized by the people as their spiritual leader. He devoted his later years entirely to teaching and literary activity. In c. 433, his disciples brought from Constantinople copies of the Councils of Nicaea (a.d. 325) and Ephesus (a.d. 431). He is probably responsible for the Armenian translations of these, now in the Armenian Book of Canons.

St. Sahag died in 438 and his body was taken to Daron under the care of Tsdrig, the wife of his grandson, St. Vartan Mamigonian. He was buried in Ashdishad, not far from the church of St. John the Baptist built by St. Gregory. A magnificent church was subsequently built over the grave itself, and was later enclosed in a monastic complex. The monastery was destroyed in the Middle Ages, but the saint's tomb, restored and enclosed within a small structure, was a place of pilgrimage until 1915.

Besides being commemorated with St. Mesrob, St. Sahag has a special day designated for himself alone. That feast falls on a Saturday before the Sunday that is one week before the Great Pargentan Sunday.

ST. MESROB MASHDOTS

The creator of the Armenian alphabet was born in the village of Hatseg, located in the region of present-day Mush. He was the son of a commoner named Vartan who was a client of the Mamigonian clan. As a youth Mesrob had learned Greek, Persian and Syriac, and had ultimately entered the military. Because of his gift for languages, he became a secretary in the royal chancellery.

Disenchanted with a secular way of life and being spiritually inclined, Mesrob chose to become a priest. Soon thereafter, gathering a few pupils around him, he went to the



Extract from “The Holy Feasts of Saint Gregory the Illuminator: Celebrating the Life & Lineage of Armenia’s Patron Saint,” by Fr. Krikor Maskoudian (New York: St. Vartan Press, 2003).

region of Koghtn in modern Nakhichevan to lead a solitary life in the wilderness and preach to the people of that region, who were still not converted to Christianity. During his mission-ary work, he came to realize the necessity of having a literary tradition in Armenian so that people could understand the Holy Scriptures and the liturgy.

These concerns led St. Mesrob to Catholicos Sahag, who took him to King Vramshabuh. In audience with the king, the two laid out the need for a literary language. The king commissioned a certain Vahrij to consult a Bishop Daniel in northern Syria, who, rumor held, possessed an old alphabet invented for the Armenian language. Vahrij sought the help of a priest named Hapel, who contacted the bishop, acquired the alphabet from him, and brought it back to Armenia.

With the arrival of Hapel, St. Mesrob gathered a number of young pupils to test how well this alphabet could express the Armenian language. He noticed, however, that Bishop Daniel's letters were not suitable for the phonetic structure of Armenia. Thereupon, Mesrob took some of the pupils and set off for the great learning centers of northern Syria, in the expectation of finding a solution for his concern. While he was in the town of Edessa (modern Urfa), he received a vision from God, which showed him the forms of the letters of the Armenian alphabet. Mesrob commissioned a scribe named Rufinus to draft the shapes of the letters he had created. While still abroad, he immediately undertook the translation of the Bible, beginning with the Proverbs of Solomon.

On his return to Armenia, St. Mesrob established schools and devoted the rest of his life to educational and missionary work. His travels took him to the outlying provinces of Armenia, to Georgia and Caucasian Albania, to the imperial court of Constantinople and to the Greek sector of Armenia. While in Georgia and Albania, he also created alphabets for the Georgian and Albanian languages.

Besides his work as a teacher and missionary, St. Mesrob was a staunch supporter of orthodoxy. He successfully wiped out the seeds of heresy from Armenia. As an administrator of the church, he is said to have held the rank of chorepiscopus (a bishop tending to people living in the countryside). After St. Sahag's demise he became the locum tenens in charge of the spiritual affairs of the church.

St. Mesrob outlived St. Sahag by only six months. He died in 439 and was buried in the village of Oshagan. His tomb is located in a crypt under the altar of the church of Oshagan and is a site of pilgrimage. The present church over the crypt is a nineteenth-century structure, replacing an earlier church built in the seventeenth century. We know from historical sources that a chapel had been built on the crypt soon after the saint's burial.

In our days, it has become an established tradition among the members of the brotherhood of Holy Etchmiadzin that the doctoral staff (the insignia marking the vartabed, or doctor of the church) is bestowed at the church of Oshagan.

News From Our St. Vartan Family

Baptism

Klay Zakarian was baptized at St. Vartan Church by Fr. Krikor Zakaryan on May 22, 2022. Klay is the son of Armen and Lauren Zakarian and the grandson of Armenouhi Banklian, Jack Zakarian, Maria Caristrom and Edward Minkel. His Godparents are Rafi Sarkissian and Madisen Menkel.

On May 29, 2022, Fr. Krikor baptized **Brock Ace Scarborough** at St. Vartan Church. His Godparents are Gregory and Kim Henesian. Brock is the son of Billy Scarborough and Christina Henesian and the grandson of Mark and Maida Henesian, and Peter Scarborough and Rita Robinson.

Blen Samuel, the daughter of Samuel Habtemariam and Winta Assefaw, was baptized at St. Vartan Armenian Church by Fr. Krikor on June 11. Her Godfather is Yonas Goitom and her Godmother is Elsa Fesshaye.



Condolences

St. Vartan Church is sorry to announce the passing of church member **Shannon Gentry** on May 29, 2022 in St. Louis, Missouri. Our condolences to Shannon's husband, Ed Gentry.

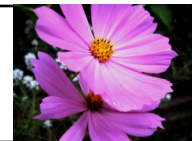


On Monday, May 30, 2022, Fr. Krikor Zakaryan met with Norma Yaglijian, who turned 100 years old on May 29. He presented her with a congratulatory letter from the Primate and had a lovely visit looking at photos and samples of her artwork. Norma is a founding member of St. Vartan and an enduring example of strength and dedication to our community.



Altar Flower Sponsors Needed

There are several Sundays open for altar flower sponsorship. Please contact the church office, or sign up on the sheet in the church hall entryway to sponsor altar flowers.



Ladies Society Awards Camp Scholarships to Essay Writers

The St. Vartan Ladies Society is proud to announce this year's winners in the Hye Camp Scholarship "What God taught me during the Pandemic" essays. We congratulate Avetis Varshavsky and Manvel Avanesian for their heartfelt essays, and thank all the essay writers. The ladies wish the boys a memorable time at camp. We look forward to seeing photos of their time at camp!

What God Has Taught Me Through The Covid-19 Pandemic

By: Manvel Avanesian

Over the COVID Pandemic, God has taught me many lessons. But out of all of those things, there were three lessons that stood out to me the most. First, God has taught me to be grateful for what I have, no matter if I like it or not, and never take things for granted. He also taught me to care for and help people in need. Last, God has taught me to be more patient and always trust him. In conclusion, God has taught me many valuable lessons during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

God has taught me to be grateful for everything that I have. After seeing families torn apart and isolated from each other, it made me think about how lucky I am to always have my family around. Seeing people with no food or even no shelter on the news during these tough times, I started to be more thankful for the food that was put on my plate and the roof that I was under. Also, I began to value things more after realizing that what I have is what someone is probably wishing for right now. I learned that I should never take things for granted.

God also has taught me to help and care for those in need. During the pandemic, some people had to sacrifice valuable things, while others lost their jobs, businesses, families, loved ones, or something else. These people have gone through a lot of tough experiences but still did not have a good outcome. Seeing these people through tough times, I learned that we should help each other as much as we could. Either it is donating money to them or a foundation, or just donating some food. Not only that, I learned that in some cases you can help someone just by talking to them.

Last, God has taught me to be patient and to always trust him. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I was afraid of catching the virus because I have asthma and everyone was saying that it might be life-threatening. I prayed to God asking him to keep me safe and he did. I tried being as patient as possible when waiting for the pandemic to settle down and for things to go back to normal, and it eventually did. I learned that patience is very important in life and that I can always trust God.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, I learned a lot of valuable lessons from God. Without these lessons, I would not be where I am at today. I learned to be grateful for my belongings, to help and take care of others, and most importantly, to trust God. I learned a lot from him, but there is plenty of more things to learn.

What God taught me during the pandemic

By Avetis Varshavsky

God taught me many things during the pandemic like, going to church to pray for people and their health, serving on the altar, spending more time with my family, playing with my cousins and siblings like my brother Anastas and my cousins Manvel, Michael, Lusi and Gaya. I also learned how to behave and I became more calm during the pandemic. I learned how to spend time with my pets that includes my dog Toby and my parrot Roma and of course my lizard Lizzie.

I noticed that during the pandemic I became in some way smarter and not smarter in a good way at the same time. The pandemic also taught me that life can't be all just for me because in the United States it's very safe in some places especially where I live, and in other places we have War like in our country Armenia. I learned that during the pandemic it's not just for me, it's for the whole world because any second anything can happen. My Religion Christianity has a strong heart. In the Armenian War during the pandemic my whole family was crying and praying trying to help in some way, but actually we can't do anything because we live across from each other from the whole world. My family would help, I mean even if we could. But even Armenians that live in Armenia can't stop it. So we pray for God to help them but that's the only thing we are supposed to do to help them.

During the pandemic I also got my snuggly little puppy I already mentioned Toby. We got him when he was 3 weeks old as a Christmas gift. He changed half of my heart and even life. Sadly one thing happened during the pandemic we didn't want—my grandpa's sister passed away on February 22 2022. Before that happened we prayed for her every night and asked God to help her but sadly it was too late.

Another thing that happened in the pandemic is that first I had two lizards but sadly we had to give away one named Gray. During the pandemic something didn't go as I expected everybody changed in my family almost everybody. and I don't know what I can do, so I spend a lot of time with my family like I went to Hawaii and I go to my cousin's house almost five times a week and spend a lot of time with my family. I went to my grandpa, my grandma, my aunts' and my uncles' house to visit them. We also went to the pool almost every day in the summer with my cousins, my friends and family. Another thing that we did in the pandemic was that we played a lot of sports including basketball, tennis, and soccer. I also spent a lot of time playing on my tennis courts and playing with my cousins, riding bikes, going on hikes, walking and running.

Things that we did in the pandemic was that we had to suffer in Zoom for school. Me and my mom and my dad and my brother always play board games but now it just kind of disappeared. We don't play anything together, we just study, eat, drink and are free. Well, except for my parents, they don't go to school and they never do. Because they have the most important responsibility to take care of their kids. This is what I learned during the pandemic, how to be more responsible and how to spend more time with my family. So you see I learned a lot from the pandemic.

Armenian Sports Weekend

ACYO is just back from ACYO Sports Weekend in Fresno where the St. Vartan sports teams competed in basketball, volleyball and dodgeball. We won some, we lost some but our kids each had a personal success either making an amazing basket or acing a serve.

Our junior girls' volleyball placed second, junior basketball took third and our senior boys played a tough game and placed second in basketball. We are so proud of our teams and how they worked together, and their dedication paid off. St. Vartan was also awarded the Sportsmanship Award of the tournament!

Our players had fun—our parents had probably even more fun—and our ACYO is officially strong!



Save the Date

Sunday, August 28, 1-5pm

ACYO Family Pool Party and BBQ

Heather Farms, Walnut Creek

Church youth ages 12-18
and their families are invited to join us
at Heather Farms in Walnut Creek for poolside
fun in the sun and a barbecue. Details and
registration information to come
at stvirtanoakland.com.





On June 5, 2022, the ARS Erepouni Friday School held a closing program in the John Marukian Church Hall.

Congratulations Graduates!



Nathan Sharafian, son of Brian Sharafian, grandson of Richard and Judy Sharafian, recently graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering. Nathan will be returning to the Bay Area to work for a traffic engineering consulting firm in Oakland.



Holly Bazigian graduated from the College of San Mateo. Her proud family members include parents, Craig and Susie Bazigian, sister Lauren, and grandparents, De Witt (Mary) Thompson and Ann K. (Paul) Bazigian. Holly will continue her education at Boise State University in the fall.





Jazzical Komitas Concert at St. Vartan

On June 9, 2022, Joel Martin performed a concert, Jazzical Komitas—Passion of Fire, in the John Marukian Church Hall. The evening included a wine bar, appetizers and dessert and proceeds benefited Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) and St. Vartan Church. Special thanks to Laura Dirdadian for arranging the concert.

Joel A. Martin is a Norwalk CT-based pianist, producer, composer, and arranger who has collaborated with, and/or written music for, Grammy® Award-winners, Rock and Roll Hall of Famers and a variety of musical luminaries. On March 10, 2022 Joel released his 9th CD "Jazzical: Komitas – Passion of Fire" paying homage to Armenia's cultural and artistic icon, Komitas Vartabed, with a world tour being planned in support of this project.



Church Humor

The Little Boy

A little boy in church for the first time watched as the ushers passed around the offering plates. When they came near his pew, the boy said loudly, "Don't pay for me, Daddy, I'm under five."

Abraham's Computer

Abraham bought himself a fancy new computer. He was showing it to Isaac one day. "Look at all the wonderful programs it has on it. And look at all the neat things it can do..."

Isaac was impressed, but a little concerned..."But dad, I don't think your computer has enough memory."

Abraham said "Don't worry son; the Lord will provide the RAM."

Mrs. Watson

During her sermon on Jesus's teaching that we should love our enemies, the pastor asked the congregation to raise their hands if they had enemies. Everyone did so except for Mrs. Watson in the front row, who had just turned 95.

"Mrs. Watson," the pastor asked, "how could you possibly live for 95 years and have no enemies?"

"That's easy," the senior citizen replied, "I just outlived them!"



RUMMAGE SALE

**Saturday, August 20, 9am-3pm
St. Vartan Church, Oakland**

Community Rummage Sale

Clear out those closets! Get into that garage! Donations are now being accepted for our Second Annual Rummage Sale!

We will not be accepting the following items: clothing, shoes, books, DVDs or video tapes, broken or dirty kids' toys, non-functioning or outdated electronics, children's safety items such as car seats, strollers, and cribs.

Small furniture accepted. Please check ahead if you have anything oversized. We cannot do pickups. Please donate items that are sellable!

You can bring items to church on Sunday mornings, or arrange a time for drop off with the church office at (510) 893-1671.

Questions or want to volunteer? Contact Nicole at nvasger@yahoo.com.

All skill levels welcome.
Sign up for a round of golf or for hole sponsorship via the St Vartan website.
www.stvartanoakland.com



Second Annual **GOLF TOURNAMENT**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 2022

Los Positas Golf Course
LIVERMORE

SAVE THE DATE

More info at stvartanoakland.com coming soon!



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: Armena Petrosova
 Organist: Araks Aghazarian
 ACYO Chair: Anna Krikorian
 Sunday School Superintendent: Karen Mener
 Ladies Society Chair: Suzanne Abnous
 Cultural Society Chair: Liz Ojakian
 Hokejosh: Nora Hanoian
 Hye Social Chair: Annette Keyranian
 Boys Basketball Coach: Mike Boloyan
 Girls Volleyball Coach: Annette Keyranian
 Newsletter Editors: Arlene Hovsepian and Rachel Harger
 Church Secretary: Rachel Harger
 Altar Flowers: Carole Chang
 Church Custodian: Wartkes Hagopian

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