

THE TORCHBEARER • Ջահապիր

St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit

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The Reverend Father Garabed Kochakian ~ *Pastor*
The Reverend Father Diran Papazian ~ *Pastor Emeritus*
Deacon Rubik Mailian ~ *Director of Sacred Music and Pastoral Assistant*



LENT... LET LIGHT SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS... 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6

January 28 and 29 marked the weekend of the Women's Guild Annual Retreat which was held at the Embassy Suites in Livonia.

Elise Antreassian, Coordinator of Christian Education for the Eastern Diocese, was the facilitator, and spoke on *The Holy Spirit: At Work in the Lives of Women*. How should our faith change our lives? There were thirty-four ladies in attendance, five from the Women's Guild of St. Gregory of Narek Church In Cleveland. Those who attended enjoyed the camaraderie and found the presentation very enlightening. Thank you to Heidi Aprahamian and Kim Kalajian for chairing a wonderful weekend.



Guild members have been busy baking every Tuesday through the month of February and part of March. These items are for sale every Sunday after Church through Palm Sunday. If there are any questions, feel free to contact Joyce Obenhoff at 586.754.3984 or e-mail at shortafoot@comcast.net.

The second printing of the Women's Guild cookbook, ***Armenian Cuisine: Preserving our Heritage***, is for sale after Church on Sundays or contact Marianne Dardarian at 248.661.0617.

~Joyce Obenhoff

The ACYOA Central Council is sponsoring a weekend Lenten retreat at the Columbiere Conference Center in Clarkston, Michigan for ACYOA members 18 years or older.

This national event will be held March 25-27, 2011 and will be led by Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Dean of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

With a theme of
"Conversations with God for a New Generation,"
this retreat will bring together ACYOA members from many states to connect with one another on a deeper level, to refresh and reflect on the meaning of Great Lent and our relationship with God.

To register or for more information, just contact ACYOA Executive Secretary Nancy Basmajian at acyoa@armeniandiocese.org or 212-293-1248.

THE CLOSED ALTAR - PAGYAL KHORAN

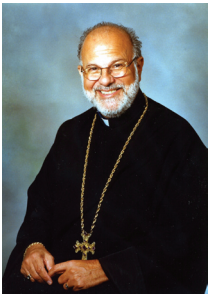
On March 6th, the altar curtain will be closed for the forty days of Great Lent and will be reopened on Palm Sunday, April 17th. There will be no offering of Holy Communion during the Divine Liturgy until Palm Sunday. Should anyone desire Holy Communion during Great Lent, please contact Father Garabed. The following changes occur during Great Lent:

- *There is no Kiss of Peace during the Divine Liturgy*
- *The Holy Gospels Book is not venerated after worship*
- *Hymns are sung in penitential melody*
- *Names of saints are not remembered*
- *The organ is not played when you depart from the sanctuary*
- *All should remain silent when exiting the sanctuary after worship in respect to those who remain for devotional prayers*
- *Weddings and Baptisms are not celebrated*

Church Office Hours: Monday - Friday: 9 AM - 5 PM

After hours in an emergency, please contact: Pastor's Cell: 248.225.9888 • Administrator's Cell: 248.880.8391

MARCH 2011



FROM FATHER GARABED'S DESK.....

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:16

Why?

I have come to learn over the past almost 35 years as a servant of the Lord that I am never away from my vocation as a priest and the call of Christ "to feed my sheep" entrusted to my care. Whether here in our parish or away, I am the *Der Hayr*, the pastor that I have been called to be by my ordination.

As I feed you, my flock, it seems as though there is never enough time to accomplish and complete my priestly work, and sometimes I must confess it is overwhelming. I think of how our Lord must have felt as He *withdrew and retreated from the crowds who never ceased to follow him*. That I can surely identify with; it is human to want a break from the everyday demands.

In reflecting on this passage from St. Luke's Gospel, it is obvious how important it is to withdraw sometimes and be away. We all know that need in our daily lives-- the weekend getaways, the vacations, the time to attend seminars to improve the quality of our work. No doubt, Jesus knew this and retreated, or as the Gospel writers state, "withdrew." Though He *withdrew* during His Galilean ministry, He never stopped being Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah to whom people turned to be healed, to learn more about God and discover Him in their lives. The Lord Christ was who He was, wherever He was and in any situation He found Himself.

For example, when He slept in a boat that nearly sank with His frightened Apostles, the power and energy of God was nonetheless awake and ready to act even though He withdrew into peaceful repose. When He withdrew and was away, while His dear friend Lazarus died, His power to give hope, inspire, comfort and resurrect life never ceased. The power of God was always ready to rescue the fallen world--alive at all times.

I used to think that the life that I had chosen as a priest and had been given at ordination, a life that all priests share, was and is one that is 24/7 with no time to rest or withdraw and get away. But I soon came to realize that sometimes it is essential and almost required to "let go, retreat, be away, withdraw," so that in those moments of retreat I could see more clearly what my work and mission had to be, where I had to refocus my energy, what I really had to do better in order to build the Kingdom of God in my field of dreams with freshness, zest, more innovations, spark and zeal.

I've learned through God's grace and wisdom and through my own experiences that it is almost a requirement to withdraw from the crowds in order to refresh and recover myself, as Jesus did. By following His example it has become as essential as the work I do, almost a Divine imperative.

Not only for a priest, but for all who follow Christ, we need to go to the wilderness for a time away from the everyday routines. Every Christian needs to withdraw in order to understand better what life's expectations are. Great Lent is upon us, that season of spiritual withdrawal from the activities and pleasures of life we enjoy so much and even sometimes take for granted. We withdraw to be less in the world and more with the Lord.

In your fasting, prayer life, and Lenten disciplines of all types, it is a chance for you to replace worldly ways and pleasures with heavenly ways and treasures, so that you and I together, like Jesus Our Lord, can see and appreciate the value of everything we have and thank God for the tangible and spiritual blessings more and more as we refrain from worldly pleasures and discover heavenly treasures during the 40 day Great Fast.

Jesus withdrew to think about His work and ministry, His mission and task in order to please His Father in Heaven and do His will. It is the same for us, especially during Great Lent's days of prayer, fasting, sacrifice and good works, may we discover once again in our 40 day journey how we can be a better priest, a better spouse, a better friend, a better son and daughter to please God our Heavenly Father. *We go away in order to pray so that from the Lord we never stray.*

May this season of grace and renewal open your hearts more to know Jesus Christ, today, tomorrow and forever.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AT HOME DURING LENT?

- At the dinner table, pray each night for peace in the world and in your family.
 - Ask Christ to show you as a family how to communicate better and share your thoughts and hopes.
 - Always ask for each other's forgiveness before eating. Forgiveness savors and sweetens life, like food and drink.
 - Observe a moment of silence to think about Jesus before you eat. Christ flavors life more than the salt and pepper we put on our food.
 - Read from the Holy Bible, especially the accounts of Holy Week:

I Corinthians 11, 23-32	Matthew 26:17-30	John 6:28-34	John 13:21-30	John 15:1-12
John 13:1-11	John 18:1-11	John 19:16-30	John 19:38-42	John 20:1-18
 - Embrace each other at the table before ending your meals. It is sweeter than dessert (which you might give up for Lent).
- These are just a few ways to observe the Holy Season of Great Lent at home.

~ Father Garabed

THE MEANING OF LENT.....

*"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry." (Matthew 4:12.)*

This is the Biblical basis of the period called Lent, given to us to prepare for the Feast of Feasts, the Resurrection. Just as we need time to prepare for any great event in life, we need time to make ourselves ready to participate in the blessed and wondrous event commemorated by Easter.

Lent gives us the opportunity to:

- Renew our commitment to God
- Reflect on our lives and let them be directed by God
- Respond to Jesus' call for love and mercy toward all of God's children

Lent is a special time in the year when we guard against worldly distractions and make room for the Holy Spirit to fill us. During Lent we go into our own inner wilderness caused by sins, spiritual laziness, and empty vanity. There we confront the devil. Through prayer, fasting, Bible reading, and self-examination we gain the strength to work at being more loving, humble and gentle. After a successful Lenten journey, we should each be able to say "Be gone, Satan." We also will find ourselves hungry after this long effort; hungry for the only thing that can truly fill the place we have worked hard to clear: the beautiful fruit of the Resurrection, which is Life Everlasting with Christ our Lord.

The heart of Lent is inner penitence and reconciliation with God. Begin with self-examination and inner healing. Set aside this period to examine and evaluate your life as a Christian. Spiritual renewal is possible only if you're willing to repent for your sins and change your life for God.

Uniting with God involves:

- Sorrow for Sins—Changing your life begins when you admit that Christ suffered and died for your sins.
- Spiritual Growth—Christian maturity begins when you acknowledge dependence on God. Resolve to accept and carry out His will.
- Commitment—Realize that commitment to God is more than just going to church. It involves carrying out God's will daily, whatever the circumstances.
- Perseverance—Keep your hope and faith in Easter's promises alive all year long, every year. Realize that Christians of every age have experienced times of testing and have overcome temptation and despair.

Source: <http://www.armenianchurch.net/worship/lent/index.html>

THE SUNDAYS OF LENT

The six Sundays of Lent take us through the history of God's relationship with us, from Creation to the present moment.

THE SUNDAY OF EXPULSION (March 13th) tells about our great sin: pride. Humankind had all they needed in the Garden of Eden; their lives with God were complete. But Satan appealed to their pride and tempted them to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. When Jesus was later tempted to turn stones into bread in the wilderness, He knew that we do not live by bread alone but by God's Word.

THE SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON (March 20th) gives us a Biblical case history of a proud young man who demands his father's inheritance, leaves home, ends up poor and alone, and returns to his father for forgiveness. When he comes to his senses and says, "I will arise and go to my father," he sounds a Lenten cry for all of us.

THE SUNDAY OF THE UNJUST STEWARD (March 27th) relates how a household steward makes his master's debtors grateful to him by reducing their bills. The master praises him for looking out for himself. This is a strange story unless we read carefully, for we are being asked to be clever and use the things of this world not for ourselves but for God's glory.

THE SUNDAY OF THE JUDGE (April 3rd) tells about a judge who will not help a poor widow until she breaks down with her persistence. In light of this example, can we doubt that God in His infinite love for us will help us? We are asked to continue to pray and listen.

THE SUNDAY OF THE ADVENT (April 10th) points us toward the time when Jesus will come again, not as a gentle savior but as a righteous judge in the glory of His Father. We will be judged for the acts of goodness we have performed. Did we feed the hungry? Did we console the suffering?

PALM SUNDAY (April 17th) celebrates the triumphant entry into Jerusalem of our Lord Jesus Christ.

LENTEN PRAYER

O Lord and Master of my life,
take from me
the spirit of sloth,
faint-heartedness,
lust of power and idle talk.

But, grant to me instead
the spirit of charity,
compassion
and love for humankind.

You, O Lord and King,
first, let me see my own
sinfulness
and not be a judge to others,
and remember me,
like the Prodigal Son.

Amen.

THE "NEW" TORCHBEARER IS TWO YEARS OLD!

It has been two years since *The Torchbearer* format underwent a change. In an effort to improve communication with our members, community and friends as well as to be more cost efficient, a new design was adopted that maximized the amount of news while still allowing for sponsors to underwrite the costs. Our sponsors embraced the new 'ad' concept and the one page of sponsors can completely cover the cost of production and postage for ten issues of the traditional *Torchbearer* as well as the *Yearbook*. Currently professional design services are being donated and with the replacement of our office copy machine by a much-needed business printer, the entire process has been accomplished 'in-house'. With the hard work of our office staff and a group of volunteers, we are able to produce *The Torchbearer* in a timely fashion, keeping the community well informed of all that occurs at St. John's. In addition, the Easter and Christmas issues of *The Torchbearer* reach the entire mailing list of 2200 and include the Worship Schedule and holiday information thus eliminating two major mailings each year.

The new format was the first component of a communication package which included a new design for the Sunday Bulletin; an updated web site where timely information is always available, and where one can read the Bulletins, *Torchbearers*, event flyers and all the other information the site provides; and an email system that informs the community of funerals and will be expanded to include other events and notices.

Currently over 100 readers, 10% of the member mailing list, have chosen to help save the church printing and postage costs by reading *The Torchbearer* online with the added advantage that it appears there in color!

The financial advantages have been significant. In 2006 with about half as many issues, *The Torchbearer* expenses were \$22,551 with an income from ads, gifts and subscriptions of \$7,695. In 2010, expenses for ten issues plus the *Yearbook* were \$4,569 with an income of \$11,418. *The Torchbearer* is now self-sustaining and should it become necessary to hire design services and/or act upon one of the printing bids and use an outside company to produce *The Torchbearer*, the sponsorship income will cover the costs. A full page of sponsors is always the goal, and your sponsorship participation is always welcome. Please contact the Church Office if you are interested.

Those of us involved with the production of the eleven issues of *The Torchbearer* are pleased with the feedback we have received and welcome your comments and input. Communication on all levels is probably the most important aspect of any institution and we hope that *The Torchbearer* is fulfilling its mission. Please complete the form below and we look forward to hearing from you!

~The Torchbearer Editorial Staff

THE TORCHBEARER • Չահաւկիր

Please check all that apply for your household in the form below and return to the Church Office. Thank you!

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

Email _____ (Will not be shared)

- ☐ I would like to be included in an e-mail system that will bring me timely parish and community news, and notified when *The Torchbearer* or other documents can be accessed online. My e-mail address will be shielded from view as part of a group and not shared with anyone.
- ☐ I would like to receive *The Torchbearer* online as part of an effort to reduce printing and postage cost to the parish. I will be notified by email when the issue will be available.
- ☐ As a non-member of the parish, I would like to subscribe to *The Torchbearer* at a cost of \$30 year. I have included a check made payable to "St. John Armenian Church - *The Torchbearer*".
- ☐ I would like to be a professional or business sponsor of *The Torchbearer* or I have been an advertiser in the past. Please contact me with information. (*The Torchbearer* is published eleven times a year and is a valuable promotional tool as well as a way to support St. John's.)
- ☐ I would like to receive information on becoming a member of St. John's and/or becoming a Steward.
- ☐ I would like to make a donation to the success of *The Torchbearer*. I have enclosed a check.

IN OUR PARISH.....

Hey partners! The Parish Council hosted the February 18, 2011 **Kef Club**, chaired by Karmen Santourian, featuring a country western night. Ara Ekizian really took the bull by the horns as he brought in an authentic pair of Texas long horns that he displayed over the entrance. It really set the mood.

Over sixty guests, including parents, children, and grandparents were treated to barbecued chicken, sweet corn, baked beans, corn bread, salad and a peach cobbler with ice cream. This wonderful grub was conceived and prepared by Parish Council member and Chef Paul Yousoufian.

Everyone looked marvelous decked out in country western garb. Mary Negosian and John Kalajian took home a small prize for their terrific western outfits. The younger set created a cowboy sunset art project with Kim Kalajian's guidance. While some folks enjoyed listening to country music, others played tavloo, cards and basketball. In fact, Mary Terio claimed



that she had not played tavloo in years, but that evening she kept rolling doubles and won every game. See you at the next Kef Club for another fun evening.

ELIZABETH FAGAN TO TALK ABOUT WHAT ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE UNEARTHED ABOUT LIFE IN ANCIENT ARMENIA

Ancient capitals of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Bronze Age cemeteries, fortresses of the Iron Age, medieval churches, and caves dating back to the Stone Age—Armenia currently has many active excavations involving archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography in Yerevan, often in collaboration with colleagues from the U.S., Ireland, Italy, France, and Germany.

Archaeology in Armenia has received quite a bit of attention in western media in the past year, for the discovery of the “world’s oldest known leather shoe” and the “earliest winemaking facility that’s been found,” but these unique finds cannot begin to represent the wide array of archaeological projects currently underway in Armenia.

To bring our community up to date on the latest discoveries in this exciting field, the Armenian Research Center, University of Michigan-Dearborn and St. John Armenian Church are cosponsoring a lecture and PowerPoint presentation on Monday, March 14, 2011, 7:30 pm in the St. John’s Vartan Room.

The featured speaker will be Elizabeth G. A. Fagan, a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago, pursuing a dual degree in ancient history and archaeology. She will give an overview of some of the exciting digs in Armenia, discussing the work of archaeologists in their quests for information about the past in Armenia, and Armenia’s place in the past. From shoes to sherds (or shards), each excavation has unearthed dramatic details about what life was like in the South Caucasus.

Ms. Fagan has worked in Armenia a number of times and spent most of 2010 living in Yerevan on a Fulbright-Hays grant, researching for her dissertation project on the methods of legitimation used by the Armenian kings of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. She specializes in the ancient history of Armenia, as well as Armenian coinage and the inscriptions found in the Armenian Highland.

Light refreshments will be served following the conclusion of the program. We invite all of our parishioners to attend and learn more about our ancient heritage.



SACRAMENTS

Baptisms & Chrismations

February 2011

19 Justin Julian
Son of Vladimir & Liana Karamzins
Godparents: Grigoriy Melkumyan
& Seda Jamardova

Funerals

February 2011

1 Margaret M. Vartan, 78
5 Edward N. Pashalian, 80

March 2011

1 Frank Arslanian, Woodlawn

FUND RAISING DURING THE LENTEN SEASON

Charity and good deeds are known as "**ALMSGIVING.**" Our children should embrace the great benefactors of our parish and community by offering their help in the spirit of love and compassion to help those who do not enjoy the same comforts as they do. This is the sacrifice of Great Lent, giving up and giving over to others. This year the projects which will receive the proceeds of Lenten fundraising are: **The People of Haiti** and **Camp Siranush in Armenia.**

Kroger Community Awards Program

allows St. John's to earn money
each time you shop at Kroger
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The most recent quarterly proceeds
from the program were \$144.02!

To register online, go to:
krogercommunityrewards.com
and be sure to have your
Kroger Plus card handy.

Follow the directions on the website.
Call the Church Office if you need help.
Thanks for participating in this program
and helping the Church grow.

You can help bring the Light of Christ!!

The youth of our parish returned from the St. Nersess Summer Conferences with a special hand-painted donation box for the ongoing work at the Seminary where the future priests and Christian educators for the Armenian Church in America are trained. This colorful box now is placed on the candle table in our church lobby as a reminder that your donations, no matter how great or humble, can make a difference. Every week when you purchase a candle or two, don't forget St. Nersess Seminary in your spiritual prayers and with your donations as well. Make a gift that will keep alive and bright the light of Christ in our Church, in our parishes, and in our homes.

Marriages

Arrangements for weddings are to be made at least eight months in advance. Marriage preparation and counseling are required before the celebration of the sacrament. The Bestman (Khachyeghpayr) must be a member of the Armenian Orthodox Church. The parish office will make all necessary arrangements for the deacon, organist and soloist. Marriages are not celebrated during Great Lent.

Baptisms and Chrismations

All baptisms must be scheduled at least two months in advance. Pre-baptismal preparation for the parents and godparents is required. At least one of the godparents must be a member of the Armenian Orthodox Faith.

Regulation of Sacramental Services

In accordance with Diocesan discipline mandated by the Primate, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, all sacraments, e.g. funerals, weddings, baptisms and rites of Christian burial, can only be administered in the church sanctuary, which has been consecrated for the celebrations of these sacred rites.

Remember

*St. John Armenian Church
in your will.*

CHOOSE A MINISTRY TO SUPPORT,
ESTABLISH AN ENDOWMENT,
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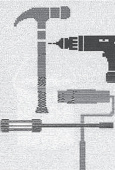
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We welcome your comments and suggestions, so please feel free to contact the Church Office so we may continue to improve the way we bring information to our parishioners, subscribers and the St. John community. If you would like to help defray printing and postage costs, and are computer savvy, please consider receiving your *Torchbearer* online as 10% of our readership already does. The added bonus is that it appears in color online! Please contact the Church Office.

If you would be interested in sponsoring an issue of the *Torchbearer*, that is, assuming the costs of producing one, please contact May Kafanian at the Church Office for further information. We also need volunteers who would be interested in helping prepare *The Torchbearer* for mailing. This occurs around the 25th of the month and for just a few hours. Again, please contact the Church Office.

We invite you to visit the St. John web site for up-to-date calendar information, the Sunday Bulletin, *The Torchbearer*, event information and links to internet sites of interest to our parishioners:

stjohnsarmenianchurch.com

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE.....

March

- 1 Feast of St. Ghevont the Priest
- 3 Feast of St. Vartan the Warrior - *Vartanantz*
- 6 Great *Barekendan*
- 7 First Day of Lent
- 9 ACYOA Fish Dinner; Lenten Vigil
- 12 Annual Lenten Retreat Seminar
- 13 Men's Society Pancake Breakfast
- 14 Lecture by Elizabeth Fagan - "Of Shoes and Sherds: Excavations and Archaeology in Armenia"
- 16 ACYOA Fish Dinner; Lenten Vigil
- 18 Kef Klub, 6:00 pm, Recreation Center
- 23 Afternoon Bible Study; ACYOA Fish Dinner; Lenten Vigil
- 30 ACYOA Fish Dinner; Lenten Vigil

April

- 3 Men's Society Pancake Breakfast
- 6 ACYOA Fish Dinner; Lenten Vigil
- 7 Feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary
- 13 ACYOA Fish & Lobster Dinner; Lenten Vigil
- 15 Kef Klub, 6:00 pm, Recreation Center
- 17 Palm Sunday - ACYOA Day Tea
- 19 Great & Holy Tuesday
- 21 Great & Holy Thursday
- 22 Great & Holy Friday
- 23 Great & Holy Saturday
Church School Family Dinner
- 24 **Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord – Easter**; Women's Guild Easter Tea

April

- 25 Armenian Martyrs Day (*observed*)
- 25 - 27 Annual Clergy Conference, Cambridge MA
- 27 Afternoon Bible Study
- 28 - 1 Annual Diocesan Assembly, Cambridge MA

May

- 1 Men's Society Pancake Breakfast
- 7 Church School Bike & Walk-a-thon, Hines Park
- 15 Church School Graduation & Tea
- 20 Kef Klub
- 25 Afternoon Bible Study
- 30 Memorial Day – Complex Closed
Grave Blessings at area cemeteries

Moms and *Manoogs* play group sponsored by the Women's Guild: first and third Tuesdays in the Nursery at 10 am.

Note: All events at St. John's Church and Cultural Hall unless specified.

FINDING YOUR WAY TO CHURCH.....

Earlier this year the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) began the reconstruction project on the Southfield Freeway (M-39). This, of course, impacts access to the St. John Church campus. Please refer to the MDOT website for information on the progress of the project. You may also access the Google Maps, Yahoo Maps and Mapquest web sites for the best way to arrive at St. John's from your home. We hope you "find your way to church!"

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