THE TORCHBEARER · Duhulhn

St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit

22001 Northwestern Highway • Southfield, MI 48075 248.569.3405 (phone) • 248.569.0716 (fax) • www.stjohnsarmenianchurch.org

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



Dearest Torchbearer readers,

For most for us, the end of winter brings about a sigh of relief. We wake up one morning to discover that the air isn't as cold, the faint sound of birds chirping is finally audible, and small buds are visible beneath thawing branches. And, before we know it, spring has sprung. A new season is here. Time, once again, has flown by like a bird.

The spring season hit St. John's in full force this year as we geared up for the centennial of April 24, 1915. As our readership undoubtedly knows, this event was significant for the Armenian community. From distinguished guests, to last minute ceremonial details, to the reception at St. Mary's Hall, our church and many of its parishioners took the lead in ensuring this great and large-scale event properly commemorated and celebrated the lives of the 1.5 million Armenian victims - now Saints - of the 1915 Genocide. This was certainly not an easy task, but one the community of St. John's readily took on. Like springtime, the energy at our church was undeniable. Surely our ancestors smiled down upon us from His Heavenly Kingdom as they watched the efforts of this tight-knit church and its leadership.

Although the new season ushered in a refreshing energy, mid-April rained our parish with deep sadness as we lost our beloved and faithful servant of God, May Kafafian. She blessed our church with seventeen years of hard work and dedication, and remained faithful to us and to the Lord despite the toll May's health took on her body. She was more than our secretary; May held our church together and provided the integral love, compassion, and care a parish requires.

This issue of the *Torchbearer*, which was painfully difficult without her - both emotionally and logistically - to put together, is dedicated to our darling May and to the centennial of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and subsequent canonization of our Martyrs.

Your editor.

Tulia

EXCHANGES OF GRATITUDE

Beloved,

For almost a half of century, our church community has grown to be a bridge among all people and this is a testimony of other religions and ethnic communities granting our community that honor.

On April 24, 2015, we hosted the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, in which over 2500 people gathered in the church, the Activity Center and outside as the relics from 1.5 million men, women and children who were killed in 1915 were blessed. Present was His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of the Greek Archdiocese, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel from the Romanian Orthodox Church of America, His Eminence Archbishop Allen Vigneron of the Detroit Catholic Diocese and scores of clergy representing all denominations in our area.

We are honored to be granted this privilege, to share in the suffering of others as our people have suffered for centuries, especially in Syria. Presentations were given to the dignitaries and to me personally as I accepted on behalf of the suffering in Syria.

In the words of Fr. Garabed Kochakian: "A sincere thank you on behalf of the four Armenian faith communities in Greater Detroit, St. John, St. Sarkis, St. Vartan and the Armenian Congregational Church, we express our profound gratitude to the Rev. Fr. George Shalhoub and the congregation of the Antiochian Orthodox Basilica of St. Mary for opening their sanctuary and entire complex to host the Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Your gracious hospitality and support will be forever an eternal bond of our Christian witness."

Your Priest,

Fr. George Shalhoub

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

Under the direction of deacons Richard Norsigian and Manouk DerHovakimian, and with the support of Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Fr. Hrant Kevorkian, Rev. Shant Barsoumian, and Fr. Mikael Bassale, of St. John's Armenian, St. Sarkis Apostolic, Armenian Congregational, and St. Vartan's Catholic Churches, respectively, the steering and subcommittees worked tirelessly



to ensure the 100th anniversary and subsequent canonization of our martyrs as Saints of the Armenian Church was, indeed, a community effort.

If the year leading up to April 24, 2015, was chaotic, then the days winding down were utter madness. Last minute details, important guest clergy, and vital logistics were just the tip of the iceberg at St. John's. For me, coordinating and planning the ecumenical service became a full time job as I worked with Fr. Garabed to ensure a smooth service. So when he asked me to be a part of the procession, the edges of my eyes welled up with tears of genuine surprise, joy, and honor. Although none of my ancestors were victims of the 1915 genocide, as an Armenian whose parents also faced massacre, I felt an undeniable connection and obligation to the martyrs-turned-saints.

As I arrived early to set up for services, my jaw

dropped to the ground like an iron anchor in the sea. I could not believe the turnout was so high an hour before worship was scheduled to begin. While the committee initially predicted no more than two thousand guests, we were astounded to find that St. Mary's Antiochian Basilica, our host parish for the event, was quickly overflowing with three thousand people of all backgrounds.

All clergy gathered and marched down to a beautiful musical procession led under the direction of Deacon Rubik Mailian and with the help of several talented instrumentalists. As I made my way down the aisle and up the altar, I faced the church sanctuary and all who came to worship as they sat and stood, cramped but relentless and patient, before me.



The view was stunning. St. Mary's, colossal and spacious just the day before, was abundant with people from all parts of



the Armenian diaspora. All languages could be heard — English, Western and Eastern Armenian, Russian, and Arabic. Quite simply, the mission that looked impossible just one year before was now complete, and I got to witness it from the most beautiful vantage point: the altar. My smile was one of beaming pride — pride for all the Armenians of Detroit, recent and several generations removed, that congregated and stood for hours and remembered, and most importantly, *celebrated*, our victims turned saints. My smile radiated joy because they, the perpetrators of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, did not succeed. We are very much alive, and on April 24, 2015, we succeeded.

- Your editor -



We are at a crossroads of history with the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Turkish regime. There has been awareness in every corner of the world as never before - it is no longer the "forgotten genocide". The ultimate message came from Pope Francis at the Vatican calling the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915, not only a crime against humanity but the First Genocide of the 20th century. He then proclaimed that the mass of the second Sunday of Easter at the Vatican would be conducted in Armenian with the Armenian Catholic rite, in the presence of HH Karekin II and HH Aram I. Pope Francis in his message to the Armenians stated "that concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it..." Many people of note here and across the world have come forward in this centennial commemoration year using their individual and collective powers to bring about an end to this "open wound".

The greater Detroit community came together in unity to present several diverse events culminating with a majestic Ecumenical Service of Prayer and Remembrance at the Antiochian Orthodox Basilica of St. Mary on April 24, 2015. The beauty and pageantry of the processional combined with the voices of the Detroit Armenian Chorale raised in tribute to the Martyrs, stirred passion in every heart. The lighting of twelve candles by members



of the processional dressed in the ancient costumes of the twelve provinces of Turkish occupied Armenia was especially moving. Following the service guests were invited to a reception where a mural by Andrea Kalajian, entitled "100 years of Endurance: The Story of a Peoples Struggle for Survival and the Desire for Truth and Reconciliation" was unveiled. The triptych mural depicts the Armenian Genocide and the progression of the atrocities using archival images transitioning into images of the restoration of their historic homeland. The mural will be on display at local Armenian Churches in the metropolitan Detroit area on a rotating basis. Nearly 3000, including 43 clergymen from various denominations were guests were at the event and in this moment there was an overwhelming feeling of unity and pride in the accomplishment toward our common goal.

Prior to the April 24th event, the Detroit community came forward in unprecedented numbers to support all of the programs presented by artists, musicians,

scholars and through film. This was true nationally and internationally as well. The landmark success of the WTVS public television presentation of two films, The Armenian Genocide and Guardians of Music, drew 26,000 viewers and created momentum that was apparent in all other aspects of the planning and programming leading up to the event at St. Mary's Basilica on April 24th.

The consensus of opinion as to the end result of these efforts is that the majority of the participants walked away with a sense of pride and a cathartic sense of unity. The outpouring of contributions by the Armenian community to bring these events to a successful conclusion has been overwhelming - it was a common goal. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Clergy of the four Armenian Churches as well as their committees, who expended a tremendous effort to bring about this unity for the event at St. Mary's Basilica on April 24th. A special thank you to Father Garabed Kochakian, St. John Armenian Apostolic Church, Father Hrant Kevorkian, St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, Rev. Shant Barsoumian, Armenian Congregational Church, and Father Mikael Bassale, St. Vartan Armenian Catholic Church. Thanks are also in order to the Most Reverend Archbishop Allen Vigneron, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, for the April 24th Homily.

Those of us who had the privilege of attending the April 24th service will not soon forget that we were a part of a special moment in history, which could be a turning point for recognition and resolution worldwide for the Armenian Genocide and the healing of an "open wound".

- Jeanette Keramedjian -



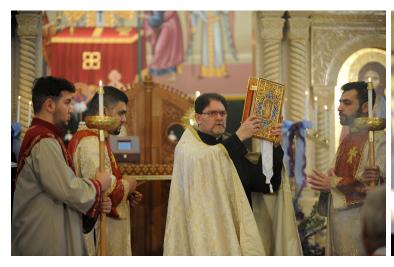






In clockwise order, starting from the top:

- The youth of the community, dressed in traditional Armenian clothes, proceeds down the aisle representing twelve villages affected by the Genocide of 1915.
- Clergy make their way down the aisle as the Ecumenical Service begins.
- A full choir amplifes the procession's effect with beautiful hymns.
- Deacons and chairmen of the April 24th Centennial Committee, Manouk DerHovakimian (left) and Richard Norsigian (right) lead the clergy procession.









In clockwise order, starting from the top:

- Father Mikael Bassale of St. Vartan Catholic Armenian Church is aided by candle bearers.
- Roman Catholic Archbishop Allen Vigneron is pictured as he delivers his powerful homily to an audience of more than three thousand people.
- Father Abraham Ohanesian offers the Litany of the New Martyr Saints of 1915.
- Armenian Church and guest clergy remember the newly sanctified martys, but also recognize lone survivor Ramela Carman (right side of photograph).









In clockwise order, starting from the top:

- Father George Shalhoub of St. Mary's Basilica receives a gift for generously opening his church doors for the April 24th remembrance and canonization.
- Father Garabed leads the sanctuary in prayer and sets the tone for the evening.
- Metropolitan Nicholas receives a gift presented by Father Garabed.
- Metropolitan Nicholas of the Greek Orthodox Church of America says prayers for the 1.5 million Armenians who perished in the 1915 Genocide.

What do we demand? After 100 years, every Armenian will demand something. For everyone, the answer will be different. Before my weekend in Washington, D.C., I had no idea what I demanded.

The minute we arrived at the hotel on Friday, I remember looking around and seeing tons of people. It was impossible for me to believe that all of those people were there for the weekend of the centennial. The moment I finally realized just how many people had attended the event, my grandmother, mother and I were walking down the hallway on the floor of our room towards the lobby. We saw a balcony and looked down to the lobby - a line for the bus to the concert at the Strathmore wrapped around the entire lobby of the Marriott Marquis hotel. I was awestruck. When we reached the lobby, I was even more amazed. Whether it was my mother or my grandmother, every minute there was a new conversation being started, a handshake, an introduction, and a quick story recapping how the two knew one other.

The next day, we attended the Divine Liturgy at the National Shrine of Immaculate Conception. I think the part that amazed me the most was the number of clergy who attended. There were chairs lined up on either side of the altar and



all were filled. As they stood, the congregation stood. As they sat, the congregation sat. I loved that there were so many people in a single church and that everyone was gathered together worship God in a declaration of our faith and to remember the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide.

During the banquet that evening, as awards and recognitions were being given to important people, there were two speakers who really stood out to me. The first was an Armenian singing group by the name of Zulal. They explained



that people in old Armenia buried the dead in the grounds of churches so that when people came to church, their footsteps would comfort the souls of the dead. After this explanation, they asked the whole room to clap to the beat of the *Tamzara*, which would serve as a comfort to the souls of those who died in the Armenian Genocide because they weren't able to be buried under a church. Another speaker who stood out to me was Lara Setrakian. She brought up the question, "What do we demand?" and it spoke to me. I realized then and there that everyone demanded something different, and I finally realized what I demand. I demand remembrance.

William Saroyan wrote that Armenians everywhere would create a New Armenia. This weekend, I saw people from all of these "New Armenias" coming together to recognize the martyrs, now-saints, who allowed us to live lives of pride and happiness. Their strength was passed down to us. We live with the knowledge of what happened to our ancestors and we use that as power to make us a strong nation. This is why I demand remembrance. I demand remembrance so that people all over the world can look to us and think about how we, Armenians, endured and endured, yet came out strong. I demand remembrance so that people know that nothing can break us.

- Danielle Sarafian -



As May's Pastor at St. John's, I hold great sorrow. I also speak as a healer, also wounded by her passing, and am carrying a heaviness of heart with you today, all wounded as well, by the sting of death that has come and taken from our presence, one so dear to us, a much loved wife, mother, sister, friend, our beloved sister May.

As priests are healers of souls, priests are people and also need healing - especially Der Hrant, Der Diran, and Der Abraham, who enjoyed May's loving and giving spirit. We, along with our brother clergy, truly share with Khachig, Barbara, Anne, Arda and Levon, May's family, the deep pain and sorrow that has cast a shadow over you and the irreplaceable loss. *Tsavut danim*.

She was a person who was nothing other than the word LOVE dressed in a variety of ways. We all know that and experienced that loving care and concern that was the flesh and bones of her very being. For the 17 years I enjoyed her friendship, I can honestly say, never was there a moment or word uttered from her mouth that was hurtful, disrespectful, judgmental or condescending. She was always ready to rescue the souls who entered our complex, always dignified to greet callers on the telephone, always brave and courageous to offer her advice, insights and God-given wisdom however, whenever and wherever needed. You could always count on May for an answer. She kept our parish on track, was truly the brain center that invited everyone with love and hospitality. There is a passage from scripture that states so clearly who May was - she was an angel. These words describe her soul and spirit to the fullest: "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2)

Not only to people do angels share their caring, protection, and guidance, but to each other as well. In fact, when I first came to St. John's,

at time when our parish was in need of healing, it was my first task to find a secretary to be a co-minster with me, to be the good and faithful servant, a believer in Christ, a proud Armenian, a principled individual that would exude the word 'love'. As I approached the chore of finding such a person, it was on Armenian Christmas Day in 1999, that this was all born. It was a Christmas present to me, and our parish, that someone hearing of the need for a church secretary position stepped forward, like the Star in the East that the Magi followed... May...coming from the east coast like me, became that star that shined over this house for seventeen dedicated years. It was as if God sent this angel to help minister our family with all her angelic attributes. How blessed we were. After a short talk with her at our Armenian Christmas dinner, we set up an interview. It took place and then the rest is history. I cannot help but believe God sent her to us, to me, to help give the strength, resolve and spirit, to people who were thirsting for Christ's presence.

This is how it all began and from then on, her hospitality, knowledge, skills of great diversity, dedication, zeal, and pride in her heritage blossomed every day. I know whenever I left the parish for any extended time, I would say to May, "YOU are now in charge". And, in truth she was. Even during these past five years, when her cancer was diagnosed, she never, ever, let it prevent her from coming to work, doing what she loved to do the most - helping build the Kingdom of God in our spiritual home, and in her parish of St. Sarkis that she also unselfishly served.

May was the third child of Arpiar and Vergine (Koshmatian) Cheteyan both from Palu. Devoted wife of Khatchig, sister to Luke and Barbara, and of course loving mother of Anne, Levon, and Arda, she was born in the east and grew up in Astoria, NY, totally entrenched in Armenian life from the cradle. She graduated from Hunter College with a Bachelor in Education and started her career as a teacher in the Armenian preschool in New York being a founding member of the New York St. Illuminator Day School.

Thereafter she worked for the New York Post as a secretary to the City Desk for 15 years. During the tenure of His Holiness Karekin I, our previous Catholicos in Holy Etchmiadzin, she worked as his secretary when he was the *Arrachnort* at the Armenian Prelacy in New York. She danced her way through her Armenian life with the Ardzani Armenian Ensemble of New York and became a force to upstart the establishment of the Arax Dance group in Detroit. An active member of Hamazkayin in New York, a chorister in the choirs of the Armenian Church - first St. Johns and then St. Sarkis, board member of Armenian National Education Community (ANEC), May was connected like a bridge to every aspect of her Armenian identity and proud of it.

She moved to Detroit with her family in 1998 and instantly became connected with the Armenian community here, joining the Daughters of Vartan-Detroit, and continuing as a loyal member of ARS New York and Detroit. And for 17 of loyal and dedicated years of service, she was the parish secretary of St. John's, which bridged her to many Armenians from all sectors of the city. And so began her life's story here.



We all have our stories to share, our loving experiences of her dynamism, creativity, endless talents. These are our comforting memories of her that will never fade away. The best way I could describe her is she was as a conduit - connecting, pulling together one end to the other, making sure that life's traffic moved in both directions. It was her spirit that helped heal and welcome all Armenian people from whatever parish or community they came. She was above division, separation, pride, envy, and other sinful things that keep family members apart; a force and inspiration to be one family. As in a marriage, Jesus says, no longer two but one, May endeavored to make things one and together. With her spirited energy, a new time in Greater Detroit came to shape. Especially this year on the 100th Anniversary of our tragic Genocide, we as churches and community have become one. This was a mission and ministry that May lived for every day, working in her own humble way and demeanor to see. Among my many sorrows of her passing, this one is so regretful because she cannot see her dream and hope. But, I believe somehow she was with us on April 24th, and then at the same time saw the Saints of our people in heaven where her soul no doubt is soaring aloft.

May believed. She knew her God and Savior, Christ, and even in the depth of her own illness and frailty of health, never waned or doubted, but always

called upon the Blessings from the Lord to strengthen and heal her soul. Her life, from the youngest age until today, is a reflection of her loving spirit. Like an angel that she was to us all, she will continue to invade

and rest in our memories of a purpose driven life.

It is with tears we accompany May to the ship that takes her soul to heaven. We are like the Apostles who, with sorrow, watched the Savior ascend to heaven, like Paul's followers embracing him with hugs and kisses for the for the last time. But, as Christianity is a faith of irony, sorrow is not final. Jesus said to the women who wiped his face, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves". Our weeping is for ourselves. May begins her joy in the Kingdom of our Heavenly Father. She is where I want to be someday, she is in the presence of Christ. How can we not be happy for her? But for ourselves, we grieve and lean each other for comfort.

Our days will move on. Our lives will change and we will all grow older, but closer to the time when we will see, and be, with our Savior and see May sitting there at his side. Yes, maybe doing what she did best here...being the angel of peace, the worker angel, keeping the House of God in order there as she did here. To Khachig, Anne, Levon, Arda, Barbara - Togh Soorp Hokin, tzez yev mez barkeveh ir mkitarootiunuh, tzer khoroong visdhderoon yev tetevtsenh tser sookuh aysor yev amen or, yev poojhel tzer dkhrootiunuh, oo tangakin bahe, mer Sireli Mayisi hokin.



And so we commend your soul, oh most beloved sister who lighted up our lives, we give you to God, to inherit Paradise, bringing the greeting saving us all - *Krisdos Haryav ee Merelotz*, Christ is Risen from the dead.

And so I say for us all: Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the Joy of your Master, and wait for us so we may be together one day again. We love you May, forever and ever.

- Father Garabed, in his homily for May -

Baptisms

April 2015

11 Katherine Paulette Apkarian
Daughter of Richard and Alexandra Apkarian
Godparents: Christopher Vosbikian and Diana Ohanian

18 Dominic Douroujalian
Son of Bryan Douroujalian and Amanda Munafo
Godparents: Blake Douroujalian and Meghan Munafo

19 Giana Ujkic
Daughter of Steve and Tamara Ujkic
Godparents: Viktor Lucaj and Dana Peznowski

Papyan KrikorianSon of Sarkis Krikor and Hiba KajalGodparents: Avak Habring and Eda Habring

May 2015

2 Levon Aghassian (Adult Chrismation) Godparents: Mikael and Slava Sarkisov

Haelee Ann DonaldsonDaughter of John and Tanya DonaldsonGodparents: Marc-Andre Bourque and Anouch Mikaelian

Miles Anthony DeNoon
 Son of Andew and Christine DeNoon
 Godparents: James DeNoon and Jennifer Huber

Henry Raffi Vartian
 Son of Raffi and Genevieve Vartian
 Godparents: Jonathan Missirlian and Jennifer Thamer

Raphael D'Ascoli
 Son of Joseph and Mary D'Ascoli
 Godparents: Jeffrey Dardarian and Nicole Toubassi

27 Chris Rafi Ispirean
Son of Rafi Ispirean and Farah Basaqa
Godparents: Krikor Ispirean and Sella Ispirean

30 Marla Samer Sairoob
Daughter of Samer Sairoob and Noor Abdulkareem
Godparents: Nobar Zadoyan and Samaa Nazo

Funerals

April 2015

- George Kurajian, 88, WoodlawnAnn Sarkisian, 87, Woodlawn
- 13 Alice Mortimer, 86, Parkview Memorial
- 13 Virginia May Kafafian, 69, Cedar Grove Cemetery, NY
- Sarkis "Rick" Peter Bayekian, 89, Franklin
- 30 Suzanne Hovnanian, 77, Woodlawn

Funerals Continued...

May

28

8	John Gononian, 61
12	Richard Michael Santourian, 64, Oakland Hills
16	Margaret Oknaian, 85
16	Sirvart Mezian, 96, Woodlawn
18	Juliette Chevikian, 89
26	Mitchell Michael Merdinian, 78, Fairview

Helen Mekjian, 91, Woodlawn

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.

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The Torchbearer Staff

Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Editor-in-chief Harry Avagian, Mary Davidson, Diane Ekizian, Dolly Matoian

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 Kafafian 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.org

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE

IN THE COMMUNITY

August

16 Assumption of the Holy Mother-of-God

Annual Church Picnic

September

7 Labor Day - Complex Clos	ed
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8 Nativity of the Holy Mother-of-God

13 Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Church School Opens

24 Fine Arts Preview Opening & Reception

(Tentative)

25-27 Armenia: Land of Noah's Ark Festival

26 Health Fair

28 Holy Cross of Varak

October

25 Discovery of the Holy Cross

ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC

Blessing of Grapes

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2015

The Feast of the Assumption of the Mother of God

Saint Mary - Asdvadzadzin

On St. John's Church Grounds

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