

# THE TORCHBEARER • Ջահապիր

## St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit

22001 Northwestern Highway • Southfield, MI 48075

248.569.3405 (phone) • 248.569.0716 (fax) • [stjohnsarmenianchurch.com](http://stjohnsarmenianchurch.com)

**The Very Reverend Father Aren Jebejian - Pastor**

Clergy residing within the St. John parish and community:

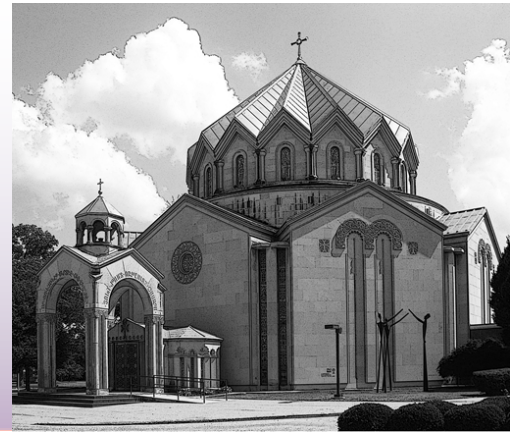
The Reverend Father Diran Papazian

The Reverend Father Garabed Kochakian

The Reverend Father Abraham Ohanesian

Deacon Rubik Mailian - *Director of Sacred Music and Pastoral Assistant*

Ms. Margaret Lafian - *Organist*



## HONORING FATHER GARABED KOCHAKIAN FOR HIS SEVENTEEN YEARS OF DEDICATION TO THE SAINT JOHN PARISH AND COMMUNITY!!



On Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup> the St. John Armenian Church of Southfield, MI, honored their pastor of more than seventeen years. Divine Liturgy began the day with the pews overflowing and standing room only filled with long time parishioners and community members. During his final sermon as the parish pastor, Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian expressed appreciation to the parish community for allowing him to be the shepherd to the flock, and assured the faithful that while his role may change, his love for the Church and Her people will remain vibrant. Following his final *Badarak*, an exceptional banquet was held to honor Fr. Garabed. The banquet was titled "Celebrating a Life of Service" and provided an opportunity for the parish community to come together and honor their pastor, Fr. Garabed, and Yn. Roberta, as they embark on their new adventure of retirement.

During the afternoon, we were all privileged to hear many tributes to Fr. Garabed and Yn. Roberta and the common theme throughout all of the messages focused on their devotion to our community and how our lives have been enriched through their contagious devotion to our faith. The Mistress of Ceremonies, Jennifer Morris, weaved many heartfelt reflections and stories from clergy around the Diocese into the program regarding Fr. Garabed's life. Her remarks gave a complete picture of his earlier days as Dn. Danny, touching upon his school days, meeting his future wife during a summer studies program in *Hayasdan*, their marriage, and his ordination. Fr. Garabed had a remarkable career of service in many roles including parish priest to Diocesan Chancellor, youth leader, champion of Christian education, artist, author and member of many community ecumenical organizations.

Parish Council Chair, Jeffrey Axt, spoke on behalf of the parish community and presented Fr. Garabed and Yn. Roberta with an all expense paid trip to the location of their choice: Jerusalem or Armenia. Senior Deacon, Mihran Hoplamazian, spoke on behalf of the altar servers. He has faithfully served on the altar for eighty-seven years. 2016 future Sunday School graduate, Danielle Sarafian, spoke on the impact Fr. Garabed has had on her and other youth. He baptized Danielle.

Matushka Valerie Zahirsky (graduate of St. Nersess, former Diocesan Department of Religious Education Director, wife of an Orthodox Church in America priest) spoke about the importance of the role of the *yeretzingin* and partnership in ministry, highlighting some of Yn. Roberta's talents and her steadfast support of her husband in his ministry.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Edward Sarkisian spoke to Fr. Garabed's many initiatives and accomplishments. Pastor of St. Gregory of Narek, Richmond Heights, OH, Rev. Fr. Hratch Sargsyan was present and shared funny, light hearted memories of his two-year internship under the guidance of Fr. Garabed. Diocesan Vicar, V. Rev. Fr. Simeon Odabashian was in attendance and read the Primate's message.

The banquet was sold out with close to 700 parishioners and friends filling the St. John Cultural Hall. As the day came to end, *Der Hayr* came to the podium as the final speaker of the afternoon. He humbly spoke of his love of the Lord, his love of service, his love of our parish and all those in attendance. He asked us to show our love to our new pastor and to embrace his youthful energy and new ideas. At the conclusion of his talk, all in attendance rose to their feet in spontaneous affirmation of their love for our beloved Fr. Garabed. It was an extraordinary day for an exceptional man with a well-deserved "Celebration of His Life of Service."

-Jennifer Morris

### FR. GARABED & YN. ROBERTA – THE PARISHIONERS THANK YOU

On Sunday, October 25, 2015, Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian celebrated his final *Badarak* as our pastor. It was an emotional day as he had been our pastor for over seventeen years. Immediately following church services, over 700 parishioners and friends attended a luncheon in the Hall.

Dedicated members of our parish, many of whom worked closely with Fr. Garabed and Yn. Roberta, have graciously contributed some of their thoughts on these seventeen years we have spent together. You will find these thoughts throughout this issue of *The Torchbearer*.

-compiled by Elizabeth Aprahamian

**Parish Office Hours: Monday - Friday: 9 am - 5 pm**

After hours in an emergency, please contact: Pastor's Cell: 773.457.4122 • Administrator's Cell: 760.832.1142

SPRING 2016

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR...

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Dear Faithful of St. John Armenian Church,

It is nearly six months since my assignment here at St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit. Each day has been a blessing for me. Around every corner are new and interesting challenges. What I love most is the sense of not only community, but also the incredible history that has been passed down to us by our forefathers. This incredible Sanctuary and complex dedicated to God, reminds me daily of my personal responsibility in my ministry here in Detroit.

On the threshold of the 101st Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, we are reminded of the new relationship that we are beginning to enjoy with the new saints of the Armenian Church. There is a sense of renewal in the Armenian Church from The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, all the way to our parish and beyond. In just a few short weeks His Holiness Pope Francis will be visiting our small but important country of Armenia. We are truly living in historic times.

The new relationship that we are establishing with the new saints reminds us of our own relationships we have, beginning with God and continuing to our brothers and sisters in and around our own community. This has been especially poignant for me since I am increasing my relationship with God and as I embark on establishing and growing the new relationships here within our own community. With such a large community it is at times daunting to try and get to know each and every parishioner. With my own human frailty, I will try my best and look forward to growing these new bonds in the love of Our Lord.

Speaking of relationships, with this special issue of *The Torchbearer*, I am happy to highlight the wonderful farewell dinner for Fr. Garabed, your pastor for seventeen years. I felt that it was important to emphasize the event that honored your relationship with your pastor and Yn. Roberta. We tried to compile and represent to the best of our ability the love and feelings you all have expressed over these many years to a "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11). Take a moment and enjoy these wonderful memories.

In the coming months, *The Torchbearer* will be on hiatus until the Fall of this year so that along with the Parish Council, we can, to use factory terminology, "re-tool" not only *The Torchbearer*, but also all of the ways that our parish reaches out to the faithful in print or electronic form. I am excited by the prospect of bringing you closer to your church and thus closer to God so we can enjoy a stronger relationship with Him.

With prayers,

*Father. Aren*

## PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS...

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Dear fellow St. John Armenian Church Parishioners,

On behalf of the Parish Council I am proud of this edition of *The Torchbearer* highlighting the "Celebration of Service" of our beloved Fr. Garabed Kochakian's seventeen years of devoted ministry at St. John Armenian Church. This edition of *The Torchbearer* is most appropriate to honor *Der Garabed's* ministry as well as to communicate with you our plans for future and regular *Torchbearer* editions planned in 2016 and beyond.

First, I would like to thank those who contacted me to volunteer their skills and services for the compilation of content and administrative tasks associated with *The Torchbearer* publication. St. John is blessed to have an abundance of talented and selfless volunteers in its midst who come forward on a variety of initiatives related to our Church. *The Torchbearer* has been under review since late last year in an attempt to revitalize its format, create content that is relevant, timely and coordinates all Auxiliary Group and Church Organization messaging and information in a unified theme falling under the St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit umbrella. The Parish Council in conjunction with our Pastor, Very Rev. Fr. Aren Jebejian, began coordinating this effort in December 2015 upon *Hayr Soorp's* arrival. We believe this is the perfect time to build on the foundation of those who came before us while tapping into the creativity and talent of new members of our community on a number of initiatives relating to our Church including *The Torchbearer* publication. We believe communication in general and *The Torchbearer* specifically, is the most appropriate place to begin as we embark on the next chapter of our Church ministry and communication with our parishioners. Our goal will be to rely on the foundation of those who came before us, modernize where appropriate and communicate with you on a regular basis.

As already mentioned, we have begun the internal changes and coordination, which will be necessary for an updated *Torchbearer*. We anticipate we will publish our "new and improved" *Torchbearer* beginning in the fall of 2016. Until then, please enjoy this edition of *The Torchbearer* dedicated to *Der Garabed's* seventeen years of devoted ministry at St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit.

-Jeffrey E. Axt, Parish Council Chairman

In the seventeen years that I have known *Der Garabed*, he has had a profound effect on my life. From the very beginning, he took me under his wing and helped guide me through my spiritual journey, from sitting in a pew to my ordination as a deacon. He has been patient, kind, and an effective mentor to me. He has been with me at some of my darkest moments of my adult life, providing spiritual support and comfort, even flying to Milwaukee at a moment's notice when my mother died to preside at her funeral. It has been a pleasure for me to serve *Der Hayr* in multiple capacities at St. John. During that time he became a spiritual father, a brother, a friend and a part of my family.

-DN. DAVID APRAHAMIAN

I have faithfully attended Yn. Roberta's Bible class. And many days we were blessed to have the presence of *Der Hayr*. I am so grateful for the knowledge I have gained of the Bible from Yn. Roberta and how both have deepened my spiritual life.

-LINDA TIFFANY

## "CELEBRATING A LIFE OF SERVICE" -

*Banquet Keynote Address delivered by Dr. Edward G. Sarkisian*

It is a great honor to have been asked to give the keynote address today on this special occasion in the life of our parish. I was told that a keynote address is much like a good sermon. It must have a good beginning, a good ending and to keep these two parts as close together as possible. I would add one more thing - you need a good subject. We happen to have a great subject.

Today I have the privilege to speak to you about someone that by now needs no introduction. But, there is a wonderful story to tell as we have gathered to honor Fr. Garabed for his lifetime of service.

It has been said that "What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God." His life began in Salem, Massachusetts as Daniel Kochakian, a grandson of immigrants from Kharpert, Turkey. The story has many threads weaving through his childhood leading him to the priesthood and ultimately here in Detroit. He came from a loving family with three brothers and a sister. Both of his parents were active with the Armenian community - his mother chaired the North Shore AGBU and his father belonged to the Knights of Vartan.

But not living near an Armenian Church or having a family car, Daniel grew up in the Episcopal and Unitarian Churches only occasionally riding with friends to the Armenian Church in Lawrence, MA. His grandmother was very close to him and instilled a special spark about his faith and heritage. In fact, Daniel's great uncle, *Der Stepan DerStepanian*, had been the first married priest in the United States living in Worcester in 1896 before returning to his family in Kharpert. Daniel became involved with the ACYOA, the Armenian Church and ultimately found his way to St. Nersess Seminary.

He studied at the Vesper George School of Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Art, and earned a BA degree in Classical Languages from Iona College. He continued his studies at the then newly formed St. Nersess Seminary and St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary. In 1970 Daniel was sent along with fellow seminarians Manoog Kelegian (aka Fr. Yeprem) and Raymond Arakelian (aka Fr. Kevork) to study at the Monastery of Holy Etchmiadzin. They were part of a bold experiment as there was doubt that American born men could become Armenian priests.

Our story takes an interesting twist in Etchmiadzin as Daniel met a visiting group of young Armenians from Detroit (many of whom are here today) that included Roberta Carman - his future *yeretzhin*. He continued his studies at the Melkonian Institute in Cyprus and at the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. Upon returning home he completed his Master of Divinity with a thesis of "Religious Art in Armenian Theology." He later earned a Masters Degree from the University of Wisconsin in Art History with a specialization in Armenian Art and Architecture.

In 1974 Deacon Daniel became deacon-in-charge of the Church of Our Savior in Worcester, MA. Deacon Daniel married Detroit's Roberta Carman in 1976, was soon after ordained to the priesthood and given the name Garabed. During those early years, Fr. Garabed had developed a reputation for his energy, charisma and natural ability to reach out to young people. He became Assistant Pastor to Very Rev. Fr. Yeghishe Ghizirian and finally Pastor. In 1982 Fr. Garabed was called to serve as pastor of St. Mesrob Armenian Church in Racine, Wisconsin.

In 1992 Fr. Garabed was needed by our Primate in New York and appointed Chancellor of the Diocese. He served as the Ecumenical Officer representing the Armenian Church of North America for over twenty years on the General Board of the National Council of Churches. Over the years he has taught at the Edward and

Helen Mardigian Institute, St. Nersess Summer programs and worked extensively with the Diocesan Department of Religious Education. He has authored many of our Church School materials as well as publications on our sacraments, and Armenian Art and theology. He has served on Central Council of Diocesan Choir Association. Currently he serves on the National Bilateral Consultation of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in the USA. Fr. Garabed is the current Chair of the Diocesan Ecclesiastical Arts and Architecture Commission assisting new Churches within our Diocese. In 2001 Fr. Garabed was elevated to the rank of archpriest by Diocesan Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian.

While some may call it luck, others know that in this case it was divine intervention as Fr. Garabed was assigned in 1998 to St. John Armenian Church. The importance of having the right person at the right time can never be underestimated. He was clearly the right person - at the right time.

He immediately immersed himself in our parish life and sparked a revitalization of St. John in the eyes of the greater community beyond our walls. Today we enjoy closer fellowship with our brothers and sisters at St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church as well as the Armenian Congregational Church and St. Vartan Armenian Catholic Church. One of Fr. Garabed's great passions has been ecumenical activity bringing our church out into the greater Christian faith world around us. St. John Church has also become more engaged with the Diocese and is looked upon as one of the preeminent parishes. We have become respected leaders again both at Assemblies and on Diocesan Boards. As someone that has served with him on the Parish Council, on the Board of St. Nersess and at the Diocesan Assembly I can tell you that there is no greater champion or outspoken individual working to make a difference for the good of our church.

Those of you here today that have worked with Fr. Garabed know that besides his close attention to detail, he is a great collaborator who brings out the best in everyone. He is unwavering in his loyalty and support to those around him. He knows how to find the right people for a task and turn good ideas into great ideas. He will be the first to tell you that he did not do it alone, but with the help of others in our very supportive and talented community. That's what great leaders do.

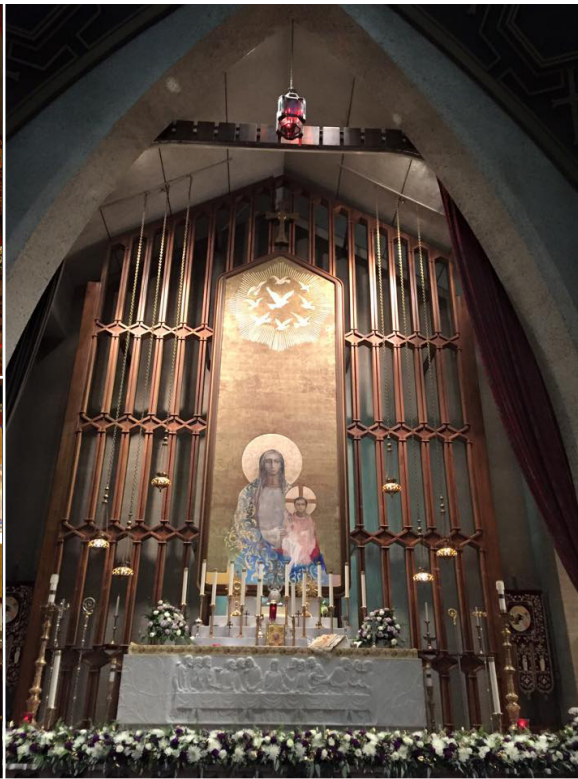
A lot has changed in the world as well as in our community since Fr. Garabed's 1998 Detroit arrival. He has reached out to a diverse community of new immigrants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and the Middle East. Seventeen years in the life of a parish can be measured in many ways not the least of which by the numbers of baptisms, engagements and weddings, house blessings, hospital visitations, funerals, *Badaraks* and holidays.

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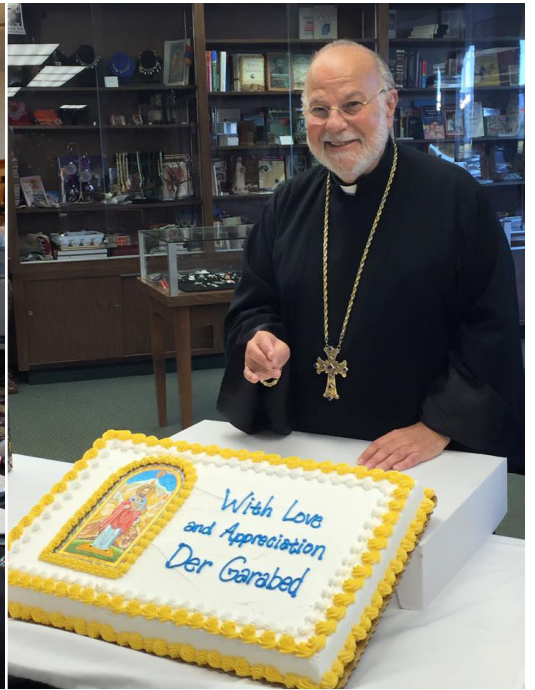
Roger and I appreciate every day that Fr. Garabed and Yn. Roberta have been our pastor and our 'First Lady' for the past seventeen years. They led and taught us in so many ways, celebrating with us, mourning our losses and just being present in our lives. We pray that God continues to bless both of them as they embark on a new journey.

**-ARDIS AND ROGER GREGORY**











He has created a nurturing environment and been a positive spiritual influence for a generation of children in our Sunday school. Anna and I can attest to this in our own family and consider our selves blessed to be the object of *Der Garabed's* love and ministry. Let's take a few minutes to look at some of the tangible milestones and achievements that are a part of his legacy:

- In our sanctuary we have beautiful mosaics that reflect the artistic vision and talents of Fr. Garabed.
- We have a stunning new *Kerezman*.
- The organ was repaired and rededicated.
- Implementation of training programs for altar servers, acolytes, sub-deacons and deacons.
- Establishment of a lector corps.
- We have had services for the renewal of marriage vows, baptismal blessings and a Great Lenten lecture program.
- Retreats for married couples, Men's Society, Women's Guild and ACYOA Juniors. Seventeen Great Lenten Season Retreats.
- A reactivated and rejuvenated Men's Society.
- Church school worship programs, Sunday school curriculums, and St. Nersess summer conferences engaging our youth and their families.
- We have instituted Easter and Christmas family worship and dinners.
- Monthly visits for Holy Communion at Manoogian Manor.
- ACYOA national programs, pilgrimages to Armenia and Jerusalem.
- Hosting two ACYOA Senior Sports Weekends.
- Ecumenical Outreach and Worship Programs with Metropolitan Christian Council of Detroit, Detroit Interfaith Leadership, Oriental Orthodox Clergy Fellowship, and the Orthodox and Catholic Witness Dialogue
- An Ecumenical Celebration of the 1700<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Christianity in Armenia.
- Outreach programs to University of Michigan and Michigan State University Armenian students college ministries.
- St. John has taken an active roll in outreach working with Jefferson House and the Fuller House Armenia Building program as well as Habitat for Humanity in our local community.
- The Komitas Choir has taken pilgrimages to Paris and Armenia. With Deacon Rubik's help a St. John Armenian Church Music Guild has become active presenting major concerts in our hall and sanctuary.
- In addition to his activities with the Diocese and Christian Education, Fr. Garabed has mentored Fr. Hrach Sargsyan and Seminarian Sub-Deacon Levon Asdourian.
- He has served on the Primate 's Clergy Task Force Advisory Committee.
- In our community we have erected a Memorial for the Baku Sumgait / Kirovabad Pogroms, as well as the Shrine for the Armenian Martyrs of 1915.

- Since 1998 St. John has hosted two Pontifical visits, one Diocesan Assembly and Diocesan Clergy Conference, and conducted many lectures on Armenian History and Art.
- We celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. John Parish and Komitas Choir; we also returned for a celebration in our original Oakman Avenue Church.
- This past April St. John participated in a monumental observance of the 1915 Genocide.

In life we find people with an avocation or hobby. Many others with a vocation or career. Being a pastor requires having a calling - something that goes far beyond what words or deeds can measure. Fr. Garabed has been there for the happy occasions in our lives to share our joy and he is the one we look to at times of trouble or sorrow for comfort. He has shepherded us through difficult world crises. He is our leader and spiritual guide. He has taught us about faith, hope and love by his example. What a wonderful legacy you have left us.

St. John's is about to turn a new page in its rich history as we welcome a new pastor. In recent years we have adopted the mantra "*Honoring our past - Celebrating our future.*" This is a celebration today for one other very important fact. This story has the happiest of endings. We are not here to say good-bye. You will remain with us as our beloved pastor emeritus.

When I started to speak I said, "What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God." You are an inspiration for us to follow - you have truly given back to God. Fr. Garabed all of us are here today to honor you not just because you have been our pastor. We are here because of the person that you are. You are beloved by all of us.

May God continue to bless your life, your ministry and your service.

Fr. Garabed and Yn. Roberta have a special connection for us because they are also family members. An endearing quality of *Der Hayr* is his ability to learn and remember each parishioner's name. While giving communion, he blesses each communicant by name – an extraordinary feat. Fr. Garabed took the initiative in securing donors and personally overseeing the completion of the magnificent mosaics that now grace our sanctuary. He also whole heartedly supported the re-establishment of a Music Guild which has presented so many beautiful and awe inspiring programs.

Yn. Roberta has been a true example of the women's role within the church. She has demonstrated her cooking talents in the Women's Guild, most notably as a member of the *Hye Dining* cooking DVD and the *Hye Cuisine* cookbook committee. Her monthly Bible class is her way of sharing, explaining and illuminating the word of God. *Yeretzgin's* lovely voice has been gracing the Komitas Choir every Sunday during *Badarak*.

Fr. Garabed and Yn. Roberta have shared their faith, love and dedication to God. We were and still are blessed to have them as part of our St. John family.

**-DAVID AND MARIANNE DARDARIAN**

...The occasion is a bittersweet one, I know, for it marks Fr. Garabed's retirement from active pastoral service in the Armenian Church. Now, those of us who know *Der* Garabed realize that "retirement," in his case, is a relative term. Service to our church and people is as much a part of his makeup as his blood, flesh and bone, and his retirement will not alter that fact.

Nevertheless, this does mark the end of his ministry to the St. John parish, and a significant turning point in the life of *Der* Garabed. He is a man of deep learning and refined taste, and would be impossible to sum up his importance to our community and church in just a few words. As a young man, had he so chosen, he could have excelled in any walk of life: in the academy, the professions, or the arts. He chose instead to devote his life to the service of God. That choice proved to be a blessing for our church and community.

He undertook his vows at a time of great need for our Diocese, and for the Armenian Church in general. His service has required not only the virtues of humility, charity, and faith, but also those of courage and perseverance. But by God's grace, *Der* Garabed has seen his ministry blossom, as the mission of our church has grown and prospered in this great land of America...

-Archbishop Khajag Barsamian  
Primate

*Der* Garabed celebrated his first *Badarak* at St. James on a Thursday morning just before he was to end his *karasoonk*...I found myself honored and privileged to be the first person to receive Holy Communion from the hands of the newly ordained *Der* Garabed.

This occasion became a very inspirational and spiritually moving event, for that evening I turned to my wife and asked her, "What would you say if I told you that I wanted to study to become a priest?" Without hesitation she said if that was I wanted she would support me 100%. And she has ever since.

-*Der* Tateos Abdalian

Years ago you were called to Holy Priesthood. Throughout these years God has continually bestowed His blessings upon you. Whilst abiding in Christ the true Vine, He granted you the grace of being the branch of the Vine bearing much fruit. You have been given the strength to live a holy life, in order to portray the image of Christ.

-*Der* Vart Gyoalian

...After I returned to Detroit in January of 2001, I continued my relationship with *Der* Garabed. We met several times over lunch, as well as I had the opportunity to have him over to my house for "foul" during Lent. I have to say that during the last fifteen or so years, my meetings with *Der* Garabed were one of the most interesting, exciting, and enriching times I had, because we were able to discuss theology and history, philosophy and ecclesiology in depth and sharing knowledge and information with each other.

...We were "brothers" because we both took an oath to serve the Armenian Nation, whose history and culture is virtually unknown and unread. ...We still are "brothers" because we both believe in the future of our People and Church...

-Navasart Mardoyan

...Fr. Garabed has served as an example for me and other next-generation priests in our Diocese in our pastoral ministries. It has been a blessing and a privilege for me personally and for the entire St. Hagop community to have his advice, guidance and friendship, which have all helped in the formation of this church. Yn. Anna and I both value and appreciate Fr. Garabed and Yn. Roberta's impressive ministry, as well as their friendship and hospitality.

-*Der* Hovnan Demerjian

Fr. Garabed, you have been an exemplary clergyman. Wherever you were assigned, you served humbly, with love and dedication. You were respected and loved by all. I am sure, even though you are retiring from being a parish priest, you will continue to serve your beloved Armenian Church in other ways.

-*Der* Untzag Nalbandian

Without a doubt, the many years of ministry have been full of highs and lows, joys and sorrows, laughter and tears; but I am confident that the entire way Our Lord, Jesus Christ, guided and supported you. Even though you may hold the title 'retired,' both you and I know that neither Armenians, nor God pay attention to titles, which means you will be called to service again. I pray that the Holy Spirit continue to grant you strength and guidance.

-*Der* Ghevond Ajamian

I have fond memories of working together with *Der* Garabed from the days of Diocesan Mission Program in Richmond, VA. He may not be aware of the fact that, as the mission chaplain, I benefited from my colleagues more than I contributed to the program. Along the way, I also improved my English; thanks to *Der* Garabed.

Yours in Christ,  
*Der* Vertanes and Yn. Anahid Kalayjian

Retirement for a priest is different than that for a layperson. The priesthood is a way of life, not a job. A priest never really retires; he just steps back from the daily activities as a parish priest to devote himself to special projects, plans and a new kind of ministry - a ministry of availability, availability to those who need and can benefit from his years of experience, wisdom and service. I am sure that *Der* Garabed will continue to be generous with his time, talents and knowledge for the good of our church and community.

-*Der* Mardiros Chevian

...Your hard work and steadfast commitment has born good fruit and your ministry has been an inspiration to us all.

We especially appreciate your sincere and pious spirit, which has made Christ present in our midst. Truly you have been for us a living icon of our loving Savior....

-*Der* Tavit Boyajian

I have known *Der* Garabed since the beginning of his journey to the priesthood.

We were the number 2 and 3 grads of St. Nersess. From the first time I met him, I could detect in him a humility and gentleness which would be his hallmark. Yes, he is a talented artist, administrator, and an intelligent speaker, but as a Pastor his love of the people is what really makes him shine in the eyes of the people and the Lord. I will always value his friendship.

-*Der* Yeprem Kelegian

Greetings from Armenia! This moment gives me the opportunity to go way back in our lives. I remember fondly when you were the organist at Holy Cross church in Lawrence, when you applied for admission to St. Nersess, when you were in Worcester considering your call to Racine. You have served the Lord well. It is a source of humble pride to have you as a co-worker in the Lord's vineyard. I congratulate St. John's parish in honoring at this time. May our Lord bless you and Yn. Roberta and empower you with the Holy Spirit in the years ahead. The work of a priest never ends.

God be with you always.  
-*Der* Dajad Davidian

# St. John Armenian Church – 2016 Calendar

## RELIGIOUS FEASTS, HOLIDAYS, AND CHURCH SPONSORED EVENTS

<b>April</b>		<b>November</b>	
24	Feast of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide	13	Veterans Remembrance
28-30	Annual Diocesan Assembly - Cleveland, Ohio	20	Men's Society Pancake Breakfast
<b>May</b>		24	Church School Thanksgiving Dinner
5	Feast of the Ascension - <i>Hampartsoom</i>	26	Thanksgiving - Complex Closed
8	Men's Society Mother's Day Brunch		70 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary ACYOA November Dance
15	Pentecost	<b>December</b>	
21	Women's Guild Luncheon & Fashion Show	24	Western Christmas Eve Service
22	Church School Graduation & Tea	25	Western Christmas
	Last day of Church School	26	Complex Closed
26-30	ACYOA National Assembly & Sports Weekend - Boston, Massachusetts	<b>January 2017</b>	
30	Memorial Day - Complex Closed	1	Men's Society Gourmet Dinner
	Grave Blessings at area cemeteries	5	Armenian Christmas Eve Services
<b>July</b>		6	<b>Feast of Nativity and Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ</b>
3	<b>Transfiguration of our Lord - Vartavar</b>		
4	Independence Day - Complex Closed		
30	Hye Camp begins - Ingleside, Illinois		
<b>August</b>			
13	Hye Camp participants return		
14	<b>Assumption of the Holy Mother-of-God</b>		
	Annual Church Picnic		
<b>September</b>			
5	Labor Day - Complex Closed		
8	Nativity of the Holy Mother-of-God		
11	<b>Exaltation of the Holy Cross</b>		
	Church School Opens		
	Men's Society Pancake Breakfast		
24	Health Fair & Blood Drive		
25	Holy Cross of Varak		
<b>October</b>			
9	Men's Society Barbecue Cook-off		
13	Church/Museum Tour & Lunch		
20	Festival Opening Night Dinner & Fine Arts Preview		
21-23	Annual Church Festival		
23	Discovery of the Holy Cross		

*Events are held on St. John's campus unless otherwise noted.  
Dates may be subject to change.  
Dates in **BOLD** are Tabernacle Feasts.*

*The Torchbearer Spring 2016 Special Edition  
Anna Sarkisian, Editor  
Photographs provided by:  
Lydia Doyon • Jennifer Morris • Dr. Edward Sarkisian*

Fr. Garabed has led St. John in many areas. Under his direction, the Men's Society was reactivated. For the first time, members of our community were recognized with the St. John the Forerunner Award. Members of our community were also honored with the St. Vartan Award on the Diocesan level. He reached out to the Baku community and was instrumental in the erection of the monument for the martyrs of Sumgayit and Baku at St. John. Habitat for Humanity and the Fuller Build were initiated during his tenure. And last year he orchestrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commemoration of the Genocide at St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Basilica which was attended by 3,000 people from the Greater Detroit Armenian community.

**-JOHN YAVRUIAN**

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