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view of the Armenian Church

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**ARE WE PASSING BY
THE CROSS OF CHRIST?**



WINDOW

view of the Armenian Church

Volume III Number 2 — 1993

Cause for Reflection 3

A Wake Up Call 4
by Yeprem Kelegian

Hypocrisy: The Deadliest Sin 7
by Elise Antreasian

The Lost Generation 10
by Dean Shahinian

Parents & the Church 12
by Martin Cholakian

Why I Left the Armenian Church 13
by Louise Kalemkerian

Living Covenant 16
by Lewis Shaw

The Armenian Church and the Believer 19
by Mesrob Sarafian

English as the Language of the Church 21
by Ara Dolarian

Church Membership Requirements 22
by Tateos Abdalian

Publisher

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH
RESEARCH & ANALYSIS GROUP

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INTRODUCTION



Cause for Reflection

Fr. Yeprem Kelegian

Fr. Yeprem Kelegian is the pastor of St. George Armenian Church, Hartford, CT.

I am a hypocrite. And, at times, so are you. Etymologically the word, "hypocrite" comes from the Greek, meaning, "a stage actor" or "to play a part." There are many times in life when we "play a part," put on a mask, become a "hypocrite." In some circumstances we may feel a psychological need to be a hypocrite. We may want to please others by being something we are not. We may simply want to avoid reality.

Let me first share some of my own hypocrisy. I am a priest of the Armenian Church. And yet, I spend most of my time not involved in religious and spiritual activities. Much of my activity has to do with the social, the cultural and the mundane. I am very much an Armenian, interested in our literature and history. I want my daughters to marry Armenians. Yet, my calling is to be a priest serving Jesus Christ—to love and serve him—to be the head of a group of people who love and serve him (i.e., the church). If I don't spend most of my time being a priest, then I am a hypocrite... "playing the role" of a cultural or social director and not a priest.

What would happen if I stopped being a hypocrite? I imagine some people would be displeased. What if I called others away from being hypocrites? They would be even more displeased. In my capacity as a priest, to please people rather than God, is *flagrant* hypocrisy (see Galatians 1:10).

Let's take an honest look at our churches (and at ourselves within the church). Is the Armenian Church's *prime* focal point the ministry of Jesus Christ? Is our primary work, energy, time and resources directed toward salvation? If not, then, my friends, we are hypocrites.

Look at your own church— parties, card parties, bingo, dances \$100 dinners, \$50 dinners, \$10 dinners, festivals, bazaars, plays, socials, outings, trips, picnics.... The percentage of people at church, at Bible studies, at religious conferences or lectures is disastrously low. One might say that all the social activities serve the purpose of bringing people toward the church so that we might preach to them and draw them nearer to Christ. COME ON! Is the sole purpose of a dance to be with fellow Armenian Christians so that we can share our common bond of love of Christ and thus attract others to this dynamic love? We are hypocrites!

The writers of the following articles deeply love the Armenian Church. Our purpose is not to be negative and destructive, but rather to arouse, to wake up, perhaps, to anger. But ultimately they are meant to cause reflection so that we can seek and pray for solutions to our predicament. If we can lay bare some of the hypocrisy within the Armenian Church, then, perhaps, we can proceed to "get real," to not "play a part," but be an Armenian Church rather than an Armenian club with a chapel tagged on.

One more thing: There is a difference between the "Armenian Church" and "The Institution of the Armenian Church." The "Armenian Church" is the body of Christ, directed by the Holy Spirit. It mystically exists in the hearts of the faithful. The "Institution of the Armenian Church" is the establishment which can tend to run amuck and lose its focus. But because the Holy Spirit is within the Armenian Church, there is always hope that the "Institution" will be transformed and once again flourish and grow in America.

A Wake Up Call

Fr. Yeprem Kelegian

At a hotel, when a wake up call comes, some people are indifferent, some are angry, some appreciate it and some say the operator has the wrong number.

This is a wake up call. The institution of the Armenian Church in America has ceased to be a "church" and has become more of a pious fraternal social club.

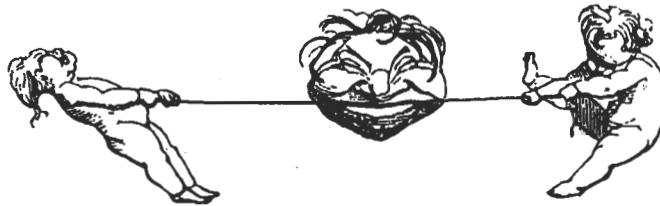
If your response is indifference, there is no need to read on. If you disagree or simply want to read on, consider the following description of what a "church" is meant to be:

The Church is a group of people who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and gather periodically, but especially on Sunday, to rejoice in their salvation and to praise the Lord. In addition, they are a group of people who all love one another because they have been so loved by Christ. The Armenian Church, established by St. Gregory the Illuminator, is a group of Armenians and non-Armenians who gather to worship and love Christ in a particular way, based on certain Traditions and customs. The prime focal point of a church is Jesus Christ. All energy and effort are poured into serving, loving and knowing Jesus Christ. And, of course, there may also be many who come to church because they are yet seeking the higher being whom the other members of the church have already met.

If this is a broadly acceptable definition of a church, what can we say about the present state of the

Armenian Church? Consider the following "reality checks" for our churches and her sub-organizations:

CHURCH ATTENDANCE: This Sunday, calculate the percentage of our community which attends church. Then, deduct anyone not born in America and deduct the first



generation Armenians. Then, deduct those who may have simply come in the last 20 minutes for *hokehankist*. Then, calculate the number of second and third generation Armenians. If the numbers are low, this is partial evidence that we have not effectively done our job of creating a "church." We have been more concerned with creating and maintaining our Armenian ethnic community. This is natural. But the effect of not making Jesus Christ central is that many of those in the second and third generation, so distant from the soil of the "old country," cannot identify enough with this Armenian identity. Perhaps, if we had made our focal point Jesus Christ, more of the second and third generation would be in the church today.

OUR CHURCH MEMBERS: Are they primarily interested in building loving Christian relationships with all others? Before you answer that, have you ever talked negatively about a fellow parishioner with others or,

worse yet, while your children were listening? It is a sad fact that in many of our parishes everyone who walks in is not received with unconditional love. We must remember that we are a "church" only if members are exhibiting the love of God to all others in the community.

OUR CLERGY: Do we, the clergy, get along with and attempt to love one another? The youth in the Eastern Diocese were very clear in their observations of the Armenian clergy that was presented to the 1992 Clergy Conference. They said:

"As the leaders of Christian faith, we want to see you, our clergy, illustrate more love and respect for each other and we want to see you work together for the betterment of our Church. We often hear clergy gossiping about their fellow clergymen and feel that there is too much competition and not enough cooperation. We feel that respect and cooperation amongst the clergy is essential if the clergy, as the spiritual leaders of our flock, are to teach us by example." (see Window, Vol. II, No. 4, 1992, Call to Excellence, p. 19.) The youth have said it all in this statement.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING AND DIOCESAN ASSEMBLIES: Very little, if any, time is allotted to the real work of the church. We spend very little time on things like Christian outreach, bringing people closer to the God, Christian education, the spiritual needs of the youth, the elderly and the children of the church. For example, encouraged by the Primate, at the 1992 Diocese Assembly



there was a three hour discussion on the youth. The discussion was interesting. However, one fourth of the delegates and more than one half of the Diocesan Council chose not to be present. How can we call these meetings "church" activities, if precious little "church" work is being done?

HOW WE HINDER THE YOUTH OF OUR COMMUNITIES: In many of our communities we treat our youth as if we don't want them involved. We, unfortunately, regard the youth as the "future." This sentiment relegates them to a non-existent "present" in the church. We must now begin to nurture and guide our youth to roles of leadership.... A thirty year old young person is being "incorporated" into the community by giving him/her jobs, such as clearing tables, cleaning the church yard, and, generally, doing the work others do not want to do. We must all be doing these types of jobs together. We must encourage our youth to become members of the church and then listen to them. We must encourage them to run for positions as Parish Council members and Diocesan Delegates. We can make room for them by having a few Parish Council members and Delegates, who have been in their positions for years or decades, STEP ASIDE. Yes, step aside and let younger people serve the church and try out their ideas. If you think they do not have enough experience for these positions, how will they ever get that experience if some of our more tenured people don't step aside? If we keep youth in the "future" tense, they may not be there when we need them later.

BAZAARS AND DINNERS: Great food. Do we hold them primarily to draw people closer to the church? Or is making money is the primary reason? If it is the latter, stop them. Some will say that money is necessary to keep the church alive. Wrong. These events simply allow us to subsist. A living church would have parishioners giving themselves financially to support the church. Then bazaars and dinners could be held for the right reasons: to bring people together; to allow others to be attracted by our Christian joy and love; to have those preparing the "feast" the opportunity to work together in harmony with others; to bring children together with their elders to cook and eat food which has been

prepared with love.

BINGO, MONTE CARLO AND ORGANIZED LOTTERIES IN THE CHURCH: These activities can never be justified for any good purpose in the church.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: While Bingo, dances and dinners abound, attendance at Bible Studies and Adult Christian Education programs is almost non-existent. The knowledge of our faithful regarding the faith of the Armenian Church is negligible. A good portion of our faithful do not know much more than Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew; that we converted with great stubbornness to Christianity through the blood of non-Armenian martyrs (St. Gayane, St. Hripsime and their sisters) and the living martyrdom of another non-Armenian.

Calculate the percentage of our community which attends church... this is evidence that we have not effectively done our job...

ian, St. Gregory; that we should be rejoicing over the martyrdom of those who fell in 1915 rather than mourning them as political martyr-victims.

HONORING PEOPLE: In the church, we honor people who have money, will give money or have given money, especially on a Diocese level. A church, however, would recognize a person for his/her Christian witness, selfless Christian love and Christian action. Then that person - being a person who wants all praise to go to God - would refuse the honor.

OUR YOUTH GROUPS: Our agenda is not to radically convert our youth to the love of God. Because of this, they will eventually see the hypocrisy of us using the oxymoron of "Armenian Christian Youth Organization."

On the whole, can we honestly call ourselves a church anymore? On the whole, is the Armenian Church as an "institution" synonymous with the "Body of Christ," directed by the Holy Spirit to do the will of God the Father? The church is not a building. The church is a group of people who have "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). We are not to be ordinary people. We are to be God's "fellow workers; God's field; God's building," (1 Corinthians 3:9).

We must either accept our compromised position and stop calling our institution a "church," or we must step away from our hypocrisy and build a "church." Where do we go from here? For a moment, let us look to the church in Armenia.

When I was in Armenia preaching in the winter of 1992, I was struck by the effects of faith. They have been substantially stripped of everything: heat, electricity, water, food, housing, employment, physical safety.... On a "Maslow-ian" scale of needs, they are at the very bottom. Yet, a great segment of them have hope and, yes, joy because they have turned to Jesus Christ for Salvation...not as a crutch.... Armenians in Armenia are not psychologically weak. They have turned to Jesus Christ as a real solution. He is not a myth or a story or a fantasy. He is real to them. I was struck by the fact that most of those who go to church services, prayer meetings or religious education class go because they have faith in Jesus Christ or are seeking Him. What a beautiful and simple concept: they are Armenians who go to church

because they believe in or want to believe in Jesus Christ. What a great "model" of a church!

What makes it difficult for us in America to move toward this model? First, we are generally distracted by affluence, busy-ness, the cares of this world. In Armenia, they have been stripped of material goods and, thus, are forced to reflect on what is important. In America, money, basic safety and comfort have kept us insulated. As we have become "safer" and more secure, we have sensed less of a need for God. Thus, we not only physically moved far from the church in pursuit of suburbia, but we have also spiritually drifted.

At the same time, our extended families have been weakened and even our "nuclear" families are in trouble. For those who can remember back forty years, remember what a family might do on a summer night? Probably sit on the porch and talk with each other and the passing neighbors... or go down the street to visit friends. Today, if a family is home together at all, they might be in their own rooms or all huddled around the television.

With the family unit disintegrating, our churches are suffering because the church "Family" depends on the sanctity and wholeness of the individual families.

Affluence and family structure are only two probable causes which keep us from being a true church. What are the various solutions? Perhaps the only solution is for us to be brought to our knees by a depression. I hope not.

Certainly liturgical reform is necessary. One of the reforms we need to make is for families to come to church services together and pray together. The Sunday School cannot teach a child to worship and pray. That is the daily job of parents, grandparents and god parents. It is spiritually unnatural for parents to drop the children off at Sunday School and then go to church (or to the local restaurant). To implement this simple concept all that is needed is a shorter service and a service more understandable to the second and third generation parents (perhaps the traditional two and half hour service could be reserved for a dozen or so Feast Day Sundays). After services the children go to Sunday School; toddlers and infants are probably

ready to go home; the remaining adults stay for sermon/educational program. The only problem with this plan is that some families come to the services very late and some parents don't even come. Faith cannot be forced on anyone.

We need to look at the basic structure of our the church also. If a parish has over 250 families, a new parish should be formed. You can imagine the objections to such an idea. But it stands to reason that a very large parish cannot be a church "Family."

With the family unit disintegrating, our churches are suffering because the church "Family" depends on the sanctity and wholeness of individual families.

We need to address the problem of people living a great distance from the church, e.g. 30-60 minutes away. This is a common problem. What is necessary in these cases is for "satellite" groups to be set up. Find a family or two which would periodically be willing to invite the fellow parishioners in their area to their home for a church get-together... invite the priest and have a service.

There is also a need for some real loving Christian outreach. We must have large numbers of people in each parish making a concerted effort to reach out to people who do not feel a part of the church, to new people in the community, to those on the fringes. Their sole motivation must be love.

There are many other solutions which can be applied to the problem. However, *the only solution is Jesus Christ*. The only way for Christ to work is for a critical mass of people in all churches to accept Him as their personal savior; to make God their first priority. Once this happens, everything in our churches will be transformed. More people will attend, because faith and love can be contagious. The church will be spiritually and emotionally attractive. All our activities will take on a new meaning. They will be opportunities to serve and love Jesus Christ and each other.

It is time to wake up. If we continue along our present path, the Armenian Church in America will spiritually languish and wilt. Yes, we will still have great bazaars, dances, dinners, bingo, picnics...but there will be a spiritual emptiness. If we can find ways, methods, energy and the will to convert our people to Jesus Christ, then we are on the road to growth.

Where does this change start? It starts with me. I end this article still grappling with my own hypocrisy. How centered am I on Christ? Do I give the love and acceptance Jesus has given me to others? The Lord has entrusted me to be an "ambassador" of His reconciliation.... The "love of Christ" must control me (II Corinthians 5:14-20).

The wake up call is ringing. We must respond to the call if we are once again to be the Armenian Church.

Hypocrisy: The Deadliest Sin

Elise Antreassian

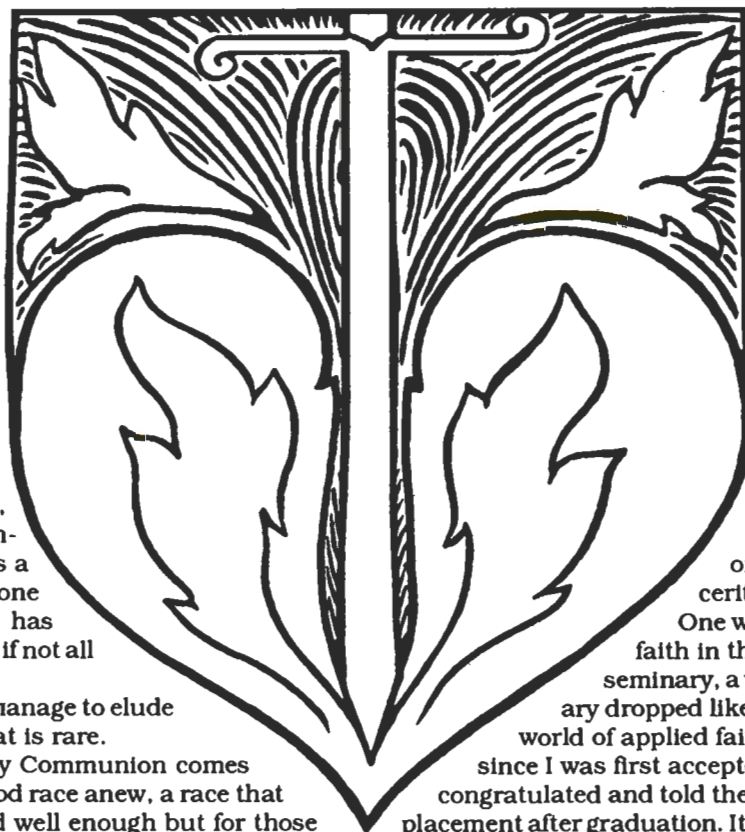
Of all the many and formidable obstacles to salvation, the fathers of the Church deemed seven to be "deadly." We are reminded of their alarming presence every Sunday at confession when they are cited aloud (although the classical Armenian does much to defuse their menace): "pride, envy, anger, sloth, covetousness, gluttony, lust." It is an unbearable list; each word is a stinging slap. Is there anyone in the congregation who has not been touched by some if not all of these sins?

In a good week I may manage to elude just one of them. But that is rare.

And so with each Holy Communion comes the pledge to begin the good race anew, a race that can be run gloriously and well enough but for those seven deadly snares.

For the past several years, however, I have detected in the Armenian Church and even in myself another much deadlier menace. It has always been creeping about, but there were, once upon a time, the heroes and dragon slayers, the saints and martyrs who kept it at bay. It has

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been feeding on the huge, corpulent body of apathy and self-absorption that has settled in our pews, our church meeting rooms, even our homes. Hypocrisy.

And I want to tell you how I, to my horror, have helped to feed the monster.

In my life, there have been two great challenges (in addition to an infinite number of lesser ones) to the depth and sincerity of my faith.

One was when I, having studied faith in the abstract, emerged from seminary, a woman, a female missionary dropped like an ice cube into the fiery world of applied faith. It is now fifteen years since I was first accepted into St. Nersess. I was congratulated and told there were no guarantees for placement after graduation. It is disturbing to think that a school of vocation—especially one so painfully lacking in candidates—could take in students without some assurance that they will be able to find work in their chosen field some day. Many an auto mechanic school promises a job and a bag of tools upon graduation. Does engine repair supersede the mending of souls? But this is the entire church community's problem and one that should be resolved if it continues to invite women to study theology.

I worked in the church before I went to seminary and I have worked there since. The difference, however, has been formidable because seminary education gave me a far more informed notion of what the church is meant to be.

This information has not always been helpful. What the church is meant to be and what it actually is are two different things and in church vocation one struggles endlessly to reconcile that difference.

As a woman, I have had to face the prejudices and misogyny of the ignorant with a smile. But now I think that has been a traitor's smile, the smile of one grown weary of prolonged battles on behalf of lost causes, the smile of one more intent on getting on with things than making them better. The amiable smile of the hypocrite.

Although it is true that our Diocese has female department heads, it is also true that the altar is a male fortress facing a sea of predominantly female faces in the congregation. Who are these women? Does anyone know their stories or those of their mothers and grandmothers? When we remember them, when they are celebrated or even when a woman is honored in her parish, we always hear first what loving wives they are, what devoted mothers, then, ultimately, what loyal widows. The historical record has a way of immortalizing what we want to see immortalized.

Who are these women for whom I have not spoken, for whom I have not risked unpopularity and censure? They not only cook and clean and sew the altar cloths and the vestments, they also established and continue to form the membership of the Women's Guilds, a pivotal force in the Church today; they are the women who run and staff our Sunday Schools, the women who go to church, leaving their men in church lobbies and outside to smoke and talk about politics, as if that were the way to change the world, when the real revolution was going on inside. We celebrate the Battle of Vartanantz every year with great pomp. The Battle of Avarayr was lost. What we need to revere, what women have always understood, was the mighty power of the believing heart.

Over the years, there has often been difficulty in coming up with new saints' names for the annual Women Saints celebration in the Diocese. It's

not that there are none; they have remained sadly anonymous and whatever names are known do not come quickly to mind. And yet in my own life, I have seen the quiet completely undocumented faith of women, their ability to put that faith into action was simply a fact of life.

I remember my grandmothers. Their names are far from household words, unless you count the several households that comprised their families. When she was in her eighties, my mother's mother—who fended for herself for seven years after the massacres before miraculously rejoining her husband in New York where she brought up her family—had a daily morning ritual. Upon rising, she would open the back door of her basement apartment, a door that led up to a garden. The sun would shine in, the early morning dust spiral up in the shafts of light for all the world like incense, and she would say, "Thank you, God, thank

you for one more beautiful day and one more day in the world for me." Her prayer wasn't printed in the newspapers; her simple hymn was never set to music.

As for my father's mother, every day she would read her tattered, yellowed Bible, held together with a corroded rubber band. God knows what that ancient Bible had seen, to what sorrowful places she had carried it with her. She was a school teacher in the old country, but no one had ever asked *her* what she believed. No one had to.

Jesus Christ Himself was the ultimate example of liberator. He talked to women about their faith. What an unheard of thing, telling to a woman about what she believes! He healed them; He included them among his friends. In His life as it emerges in the Gospels, women circulated in the free air of this astounding new faith with a presence and importance men marveled at. Women mourned Him at the Cross; women saw and believed in His resurrection. And if you look at the Gospel of Luke (24:10,11), you will find that when the women told the good news of the Empty Tomb to the other disciples, they laughed at the "idle tale," no doubt a silly women's story. How much those women must have missed Jesus at that moment, He who had made them feel whole and equal in the fractured imbalance of New Testament times! How much He is still missed, as centuries of distorted scriptural interpretation and the bias of a "man's world" continue to cloud the pristine message of Christ.

Am I not part of the problem for not fighting tooth and nail for women's ordination? Or against church practices that reflect primitive taboos against women, menstruation, childbirth?

Am I not part of the problem for not even insisting that it be talked about?

Anxious to discuss this from both practical and purely theological perspectives, women (and men) have been consistently discouraged. I am saddened that a church as strong and rich in tradition and one that had endured as many crises as my church, will not take on the relatively minor and extremely necessary risk of continuing to grow. It is disheartening as well to hear priests who were once the angry young men at semi-

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nary tow the establishment line now that they are ordained. Or is it that they, as I sometimes do, associate themselves more now with the church as an Institution rather than with the Living Body of Christ, the faithful?

As a director of the Department of Religious Education, I am pleased to be serving in a creative and challenging capacity in the church. To people in general and to younger women in particular, I am a visible reminder that there is meaningful work in the church for women and that such work is very satisfying indeed. I cannot explain to younger women why they won't be ordained in our church; I can encourage them to be energetic and ambitious (in the humblest meaning of that word) in their service so that someday this too will be a reality. Or can I do more?

The second greatest challenge to my faith has been motherhood and its incumbent challenge of passing along Christian lifestyles and values (and whatever else the parent deems vital, although not necessarily for herself). It is one of the ironic truths of Sunday School education that young couples, themselves, part of church families, having avoided church for the first years of their marriage, will promptly return as soon as they have children who should benefit from church and community life. It seems we often do things for the good of our children without wondering why, if they are of such benefit to our little ones, they have no real importance to us! In this way, generation after generation has passed along certain *habits* of faith without pausing to consider their true impact.

We all have a share in this conspiracy because it is only human to avoid the great personal sacrifice that activism, reform and change require. But I ask myself, am I more culpable as a church "insider," as someone in a position to make informed demands and have not? This is the insidious hypocrisy, sadly, of *convenience*. It is the one that makes it all right to insist that my children go through certain motions because it is easier than creating new, more meaningful ones.

It is the hypocrisy that tells my children it is important to go to church. If it is so important, why am I not there every Sunday? Because I am tired of praising, petitioning, and thanking God in a language as remote to people today as are the times

in which it was spoken? Because I am immune to the same ethnic, nationalistic, or, if religious at all, then hackneyed message from the pulpit? Because I am tired of the top-heavy altar, overpopulated with deacons, sub-deacons, altar boys – girls have recently been permitted to join them if they are 12 or under. (*Editor's Note: This age restriction is only placed in the Eastern Diocese. The other two American Dioceses do not have this restriction.*) I shall leave it to your knowledge of biology to understand why – who would be bored silly if they were forced to sit in the pews with the rest of the congregation (and many of them, indeed, are very uncomfortable when they are not *active* participants in the liturgy)? Because I am exhausted by the length of the service, a length that is a source of pride to some ("oh, this is nothing; this would have taken five hours in Jerusalem/Beirut/Cairo...") and, for others, to daunting a challenge for

Do we, the Armenian faithful, see the face of Christ in others? What have I done to make a difference?

revision? Because I am tired of the reproach, however subtle, of parishioners who watch my children fuss noisily in their seats, if they are not actually climbing up onto the service book racks – to, in the words of my four-year-old son, "see God better." How many in church that day, including myself, had come to see God at all? – and resent the disruption, as if this were an opera concert and the audience had best be quiet.

Why?

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord!" the Good Book says. And how many times did I put my finger to my lips and glare at my children?

It is all of these and none of these. For there are times I sit in church and am moved to tears by unknown forces, the emotional tug of the *sharagans*, the memories, during *Der Voghormia*, of departed loved ones. But I have analyzed these moments meticulously. These are not the emotions of a religious experience, someone in community, encountering God. They belong more to a kind of family ritual, performed so many times that they possess the power to move by sheer dint of nostalgia. Is this what I want for my children?

No.

But the torpor of hypocrisy is too heavy to dislodge. There is no time, there is no use, there is no real urgency for change, I seem to be telling myself, I must be telling myself.

It is the hypocrisy that tells my children it is important to help others. The two great commandments of the New Testament are about love: love God; love one another. And yet what a conditional love ours has become. How indifferent we, whose suffering must surely occupy the greatest share of our national memory, are to the suffering of others. When the Department of Religious Education tried to organize a Lenten fundraising campaign (an annual tradition) in our Sunday Schools in the early 80s to benefit the genocide survivors of Cambodia, it was amazing how many times looks were exchanged between parents and teachers, as if to say "Cambodia? What does this have to do with us?" No doubt this was the common retort to appeals for Armenian genocide victims in 1915, but do we ever make the ironic connection? Many came right out and said that they would feel better helping other

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THE LOST GENERATION: *An Armenian Church Scenario*

Dean Shahinian

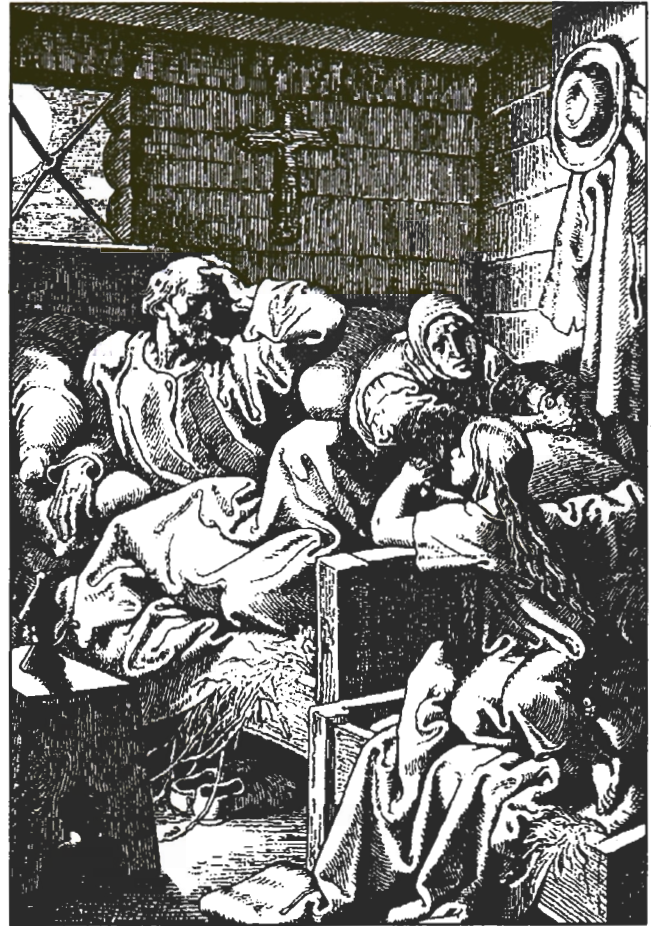
Recently, the question of how to address the plight of young Armenian adults has resurfaced. The issue at hand is the second generation of Armenians and their relation with the Armenian Church. As we know, second generation young adults can bring a parish community enthusiasm, new ideas for activities, various professional skills, and other qualities and resources into the church. Thus, many people are concerned that their children, grandchildren or other relatives or friends have stopped participating in the Armenian Church.

There are numerous reasons given to explain the absence of this generation in the life of the church. Here are some of them offered by Armenian young adults, who say that the Armenian Church in America:

- Lacks an apparent mission.
- Offers an Eastern form of worship that is alienating to Western minds.
- Does not teach about contemporary moral issues.
- Is mostly a social club and not a community of faith.
- Treats people as second-class parishioners if they do not speak the Armenian language.
- Has lay leaders who do not set good examples.
- Is irrelevant to their lives.

Many of these concerns are outside of the control of most parishioners, and others may be situation specific. However, each man and woman in every parish can influence one of the most important factors that determine whether second generation young adults participate. That critical factor is: the way he or she treats young adults. When a parishioner forms a relationship with a young adult – treats him or her with respect and meets some of his or her needs – the young adult will become more involved in the community.

Here, I would like to present two humorous vignettes depicting how young adults are treated at two imaginary



Armenian Church parishes. Both skits are caricatures and neither replicates any actual parish. At Parish #1, the selfish parishioners who deal with young adults want to take their money, time and free professional advice; to use them as chaperons, cooks and chauffeurs; and to manipulate or berate them if they do not appreciate such treatment. At Parish #2, the caring parishioners who deal with young adults want to praise and encourage them; to give career counseling and advice on marriage; to offer them food, a social outing and programs to meet their spiritual needs; and to seek their ideas on how to improve parish life.

While we may smile and laugh as we read and may recognize personal experiences in both of these vignettes, our challenge afterwards is to consider, "What type of person do I want to be in my relationships with young adults? How will I make this a reality?"

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WHICH IS YOUR CHURCH?

CHARACTERS

Mrs. Pezishkian, mother of daughter in her 20's
 Susan, young doctor in her 20's-30's
 Armen Norian, newcomer to the community in his 20's-30's
 Tom Lavian, financial analyst for company in his 20's-30's
 Mrs. Kitigian, older woman with arthritis in knee
 Mr. Barabian, aggressive man who sells raffles
 Mrs. Manchian, mother of strong-willed teenage son who is applying to college
 Mr. Jashian, man who recruits women to cook for the bazaar
 Mr. Zullian, father of teenagers who need activities
 Mr. Porevian, talkative man who remembers the good old days
 Rev. Karozian, parish priest

SCENE

Sunday morning. The fellowship hall of Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew Armenian Church. The Divine Liturgy has just concluded and parishioners are leaving the sanctuary and entering the fellowship hall.

Armen, a newcomer, enters and stands alone, looking at people as they come in. Nobody talks to him and he talks to no one else. Other parishioners come and go.

CHURCH I

AFTER BADARAK AT THE COFFEE HOUR

Mrs. Pezishkian and Susan, her daughter, enter the hall.

Susan (complaining): I hardly understood a single thing they said or sang in the church. Nobody does. Classical Armenian that nobody speaks. Chanting, sensing, standing, sitting, people going through the motions. Why do we come? (pause) There are no young adults here. The people talk only with their friends – they ignore me unless they want me to do something for them or give some money. I could be doing...

Mrs. Pezishkian: Ssh. Be quiet. It's been weeks since you came last. This is your parish. These are your people. You will enjoy being back in the Armenian Church.

Susan: Why? Are they serving lehmajune?

Mrs. Pezishkian (ignores the question): Oh, look, there's that nice Tom Lavian – he doesn't come around often. Wasn't Tom in your Sunday School class?

Susan nods.

Mrs. Pezishkian: Why don't you say hello to him? (Mrs. Pezishkian pushes Susan towards Tom. Then she turns and goes offstage.)

Tom (sees Susan and walks towards her): Hi Susan! I haven't seen you in a while. How's your internship at the hospital going?

Susan: Hi Tom! Glad to see you. The hospital's been interesting. I'm in pediatrics and enjoying it. Some working conditions are tough to cope with, but I am under a great doctor. How is your work with the company?

Tom: I enjoy it. But, they keep me working late practically every night and some weekends. So, I am beginning to think of looking elsewhere. (Keeps talking until interrupted) I've been working on some commercial loan agreements in a deal that is very complex...

Mrs. Kitigian (an older woman, comes up to the two, looks at Susan): Dalis, I need to talk to you. (She pulls Susan

by the arm away) Susan, my knee aches. Take a look at it and do something.

Susan (dismayed): Is this the same ache you asked me about at the picnic a few months ago? ...and at the concert last month.

Mrs. Kitigian nods: Yes.

Susan: There's not much I can do. Why don't you rub some Ben Gay on it? As I said before, if you want, I will recommend a doctor who specializes in arthritis.

Mrs. Kitigian (indignant): Uff! Is that all you can do? (she leaves in a huff)

Susan: Sorry, Tom. You were telling me about your work...

Mr. Barabian (carrying books of raffles enters, walks up and stands between them, saying): Tom, Susan, I haven't seen you in a while. (pause) You need to buy some raffle tickets for the church. Here, it's \$10 per book. (Pauses, hold out four books) Young professionals should buy a couple, don't you think?

Tom and Susan each look for their wallets and give him money for the raffles. Mr. Barabian takes the money, gives them the raffle books and leaves.

Tom to Susan: I thought we just gave money for name day, and for Easter and for aid to Armenia...seems like they always want our money or free professional advice. (Resuming their conversation) What was I talking about? Oh, dear, work's been busy. This year, I am not even teaching Sunday School, which used to be fun – molding the next generation.

Mrs. Manchian (comes in and interrupts): Excuse me, Tom. You remember my teenage son, George?

Tom: Yes, he was enrolled in my Sunday School class last year, but showed up only once. Very strong will, but I am sure that he will mature as he gets older.

Mrs. Manchian: Yes, and thank you for sending him all of those postcards to remind him about Sunday School. George is applying to colleges and I want you to write recommendations to four schools – tell them how good he is, strong mind – just like you said...you write so well.

Tom: (Gulps hard) Well, (pause) I will help you and write recommendations. Tell George to call me up with the specifics and bring me the forms next Sunday.

Mrs. Manchian: (Annoyed) Tom, you know, George is really too busy to call you. He has school and sings in a rock band with his friends. (She hands Tom some forms.) Here are the forms. (Without waiting, she walks away.)

Tom: (Shakes his head). Anyway, we were talking about...

Mr. Jashian (enters): Susan, honey, the ladies need some help in the kitchen. They are making sarma for the bazaar. Go help them. And let me tell them that you will come and work to make bourma and kufte on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

Susan: I really can't cook. Perhaps I could help some other way? Last year, I helped with decorating in the evening and got compliments.

Mr. Jashian: An Armenian girl cannot cook? Nonsense. We need you in the kitchen. The only reason you decorated last year is that dign Zarouhi, who had decorated for the last 37 years, was sick. Now, she is well and will decorate the hall this year. You have to cook. Be

continued on p. 25

Parents & The Church

by Martin Cholakian

As a parent of two lovely daughters – one a nineteen year old college freshman and the other a nine year old third grader – I would like to share with you my expectations as a parent, from a pastor, a parish council and parish organizations and how they all interrelate in making up parish life. My experience as a father with my children range from football games at Spartan stadium in East Lansing to winter campouts with the Eskimo Tribe in Indian Princess'.

But, first let me establish one premise. My children, through the public school educational process have been taught to "think critically." They have been exposed to an education system which encourages and promotes young people to say what they think, always question and certainly not follow blindly. They have been ingrained with the proposition that there are no limitations in their futures and as women of the 90's they can choose and become whatever they want to be.

We have created a sense of oneness in our family. Each of us is a vital member of the unit with equal voice, yet my wife and I retain the leadership roll as parents.

My wife and I learned at our children's baptism and confirmation that our children are possessions of God and we merely have them for a short time, to lead them to Christ.

With that as some background on my family, the question is, what do I expect as a father, for my children from the Armenian Church?

Ideally, my grocery list would include all of the following:

- A Church that is Christ centered
- An atmosphere where my children can learn about and experience first hand the love of God.
- A Church that truly is the living body of Christ and reflects that in all of its endeavors.
- A Church where my children can take their family life experiences and share them with others in Christian fellowship.
- A Church community that is a true witness for Christ.
- A Church where my children can use terms like daily devotions, prayers before school, prayers before meals, evening prayers, hearing the word of God without being labeled as born again Protestant.
- Leadership, both clerical and lay, who without equivocation, accept its young adults and children as an equal and important members of the Church family.
- A Church that nurtures its young adults, encourages them to accept their responsibility in the life of the Parish and supports them spiritually.
- A Church where the oneness of a family is sacrosanct and the family becomes the frontline soldiers for Christ.
- Lastly, a Church that helps the family create a legacy for the future, one that ensures the Parish will have a Godly heritage.

All of these things are my wish for my daughters, just as they were for my parents and my wife's parents.

I mentioned a legacy for the future and I'm reminded of a story about the early Christians. Picture a television reporter doing a man in the street interview with a citizen of Rome during Caesars reign. "Who among Rome's people will leave a legacy for the future" asked the reporter. The young man immediately responded "Oh Caesar and Nero will. They have been strong leaders who have built a great and powerful Roman Empire." The reporter then inquired, "What about these Christians gathered across the street." The man quietly answered, "Are you nuts? Peter and that bunch follow that guy Jesus, they must be crazy?" And isn't it funny now after 2000 years we name our children, Peter, John and Mary while we name our dogs Caesar and Nero.

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Why I Left the Armenian Church

Louise Kalemkerian

I left the Armenian church, after serving her professionally for 20 years. I left in order to seek ordination in another tradition. I left after much soul-searching and many tears, for I love the Armenian Church deeply, and wanted to serve her. But I left because I had no other choice. I left because the hypocrisy in the Armenian Church excluded me, and many others like me. It is this institutional hypocrisy about which I write.

There are many people like myself who have given up on the Armenian Church during the past two decades. At least 25 people that I have known personally, seminarians, seminary graduates, priests, both married and celibate, and even a bishop, have left their service of the Armenian Church, because of the entrenched hypocrisy. And I am not even considering the numberless lay people who have left. Additionally, there are a number of clergy presently serving whom I count among my friends and colleagues, who are burned-out and totally disillusioned by the pervasive hypocrisy in the Armenian Church. And all of this in the midst of a tremendous clergy shortage, and incessant appeals for more candidates for the priesthood. Our seminarians see the crises facing the Church and are wavering. When will our church authorities be realistic and face these issues?

We, the clergy and the laity of the Armenian Church, have rendered her



into a pharisaical institution. We have enabled her to become an institution caught up in ritual and formalism.

The standard by which the Armenian Church is governed is based upon the whim of the bishops or ecclesiastical authorities. Each clergyman operates out of his own agenda, when confronted by a thorny issue. When he does not agree with a given situation, he passes the buck to the Bishop. The Bishop, in turn, relegates the issue to the Catholicos if it does not fall within his own priorities. The Catholicos, in his turn, either resolves the issue, or when he chooses not to deal with it, concludes it is a local concern. Or he may con-

sign it to the Bishops' synod and maintain that only they can resolve such weighty matters. Another "out" he has used is, "Let my successor deal with these issues after I'm gone." At each level there is an appeal to the "canons," and at no time is there ever a citation from them.

Let me note some of the flagrant issues which have a stranglehold on the Armenian Church today, which point up the hypocrisy in which we are all participants. All of us were grafted onto the Body of Christ through our baptism. Yet many members of the Armenian Church fall away from Christ during their lives. We have members of our parishes,

with whom I am personally acquainted, who openly proclaim their disbelief in God, in the salvation offered by Our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of these people have been elected to parish and diocesan office. Such individuals pay their parish dues and then elect and get elected, and become "pillars" of the Armenian Church. This is not hypothetical. At the present time we love diocesan and parish leaders who are avowed unbelievers. And there is no way to remove them, as long as they have an "ian" at the end of their names and salute Armenian nationalism. How long must we endure this hypocrisy?

What about the crisis of celibacy in the Armenian Church? It is the teaching of the Armenian Church that celibate priests are monks, and therefore belong in monasteries. It is from the ranks of those monks that our bishops are chosen. Yet, we have closed our eyes to the promiscuity some of these celibates, both priests and bishops, who openly violate their pledge of abstinence. Instead of demanding reform of the laws requiring celibacy, we tolerate and perpetuate the existing crisis. Is this not the hypocrisy of which we are speaking?

If the Armenian Church is a living entity, then, as all living things, it must grow and change. But the liturgical and ritual practices of the Armenian Church have been calcified in the name of tradition. What is tradition? Is it not the body of practice and experience that must be modified by every generation? Instead, the Armenian Church regards tradition as a static thing and tradition has become whatever the hierarchs deem it to be. For example, it has become sacred tradition that the feet of 12 boys be washed on Holy Thursday. Despite the fact that the DONATZOOYTZ (The Directorium, or book which indicates how the feasts are to be observed) instructs that "The Bishop or the priest shall wash the feet of everyone from the oldest to the youngest." The *donatzooytz* does not specify the number or the gender. If the reasoning behind washing the feet of only 12 boys is that Jesus washed the feet of his 12 male disciples at the Last Supper, why then do we not restrict to 12 males the participants in Holy Communion, which was instituted at the same time?

Canon law is part of the written tradition of the Armenian Church.

But the canons of the Armenian Church have not been updated by conciliar action for many centuries. Every bishop is left to make his own decisions. Nor have the canons been translated into English, so that automatically excludes anyone who does not read Armenian fluently from studying them. Both lay and clergy appeal to the "canons of the Armenian Church" to justify intransigence, to decry reform or any forward movement.

According to the canons, Easter begins at sundown on Holy Saturday. Yet in many, if not most parishes, there is a "special" service of Easter Holy Communion for the children of the parish on the morning of Holy Saturday at which time the Easter chants and hymns are sung. This is in direct opposition to the canons, and theologically incorrect, but has become an accepted practice, even by the hierarchs. If we are concerned

Instead of offering spiritual food and nurture, the Armenian Church offers language and culture to her children

about maintaining the traditions of the Armenian Church, this isn't one of them. How long must we endure this hypocrisy?

Armenians very proudly claim that we celebrate the Birth of Our Lord, Christmas, on January 6. Why then do we transfer this important celebration to the following Sunday as we did this year? Why not canonically change this celebration to the following Sunday instead of hypocritically holding onto a practice we cannot maintain? I am afraid that those resisting reform and renewal in the Armenian Church regard her as a house of cards. They fear if you touch one just one, the whole structure might collapse. The Armenian Church is not a house of cards. God has protected the Armenian Church for centuries against all odds, from hypocrisy and corruption within and from persecution without, and will continue to protect her.

Every child who attends Church school learns of the heroic efforts of Sahag and Mesrob to translate the Bible into Armenian so that it could be read to the people in their own language. They translated the Holy Scriptures to make them understandable to every believer. It is hypocrisy to appeal to the legacy of Sahag and Mesrob while maintaining that the language of our worship can never change. In the spirit of Mashdotz, we must update and translate the language of our liturgy to English, the language that is understood by the people.

Ingrained nationalism continues to dominate and define the agenda of the Armenian Church. Many clergy and laity claim they can both preserve Armenian culture and proclaim the Gospel. They cannot, they do not. Jesus himself said, "No one can serve two masters for [they]...will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other." (MT. 6:24) In most, if not every parish, the Armenian language and culture are promoted through programs, forums, classes, and institutes. But regular Bible studies, retreats for various ages, and ongoing adult education are the exception rather than the rule in our parishes. How many times have I heard the refrain, "If I wanted to learn about Jesus, I could go to my neighborhood church. I come to the Armenian Church to be Armenian." Is this what



the Armenian Church is for?

The Armenian Church has abdicated her responsibility to save her children's souls. Instead of offering spiritual food and nurture, she offers Armenian language and culture to her children. Her services continue to be conducted in a foreign language, classical Armenian. Very few people understand classical Armenian and are therefore excluded from real participation in the services of the Church. To paraphrase St. Paul, "how can people believe in the Gospel if they cannot understand it? And how are they to understand it without someone proclaiming in a language they comprehend?" (cf. RMS. 10:14) How can our people understand the message of salvation if it is offered in a foreign tongue?

I have a vocation to the priesthood. That vocation was developed and nurtured in the Armenian Church, through Sunday School, Armenian school, regular church attendance, family involvement, St. Nersess programs and ACYOA. I tried to answer my call in the Armenian Church. I wanted to serve Our Lord in the church in which I was born and raised. In 1968, the Primate, Abp. Torkom Manoogian, invited me to go to the seminary. I went without my parents' support or my friends' understanding. After graduation, I worked professionally in the Armenian Church for many years both at the diocesan and Parish levels. In the late 70's I began to speak out publicly for the ordination of women to the priesthood. I prayed, I searched the Scriptures, I wrote articles, I spoke at conferences and meetings, and in 1982, at the invitation of the Primate and Diocesan Council, I presented a paper at the Diocesan Assembly advocating the opening of the ordained ministries of the Armenian Church to women, beginning with me. I have been belittled, made fun of, denounced. I have been told I unArmenian, a heretic, and a Protestant for pursuing ordination. I endured much pain, but I stayed in the Armenian Church hoping she'd change, and permit me ordination. I stayed, and struggled, in spite of the fact that one high-ranking clergyman admitted to me that if I were wealthy, I could buy ordination for the right price.

Another high-ranking clergyman offered counsel in how to proceed

toward achieving ordination to the diaconate for myself and others. We followed those directions and then were told that ordination could not take place without the concurrence of the Catholicos and the Synod of Bishops. Even though the 1986 Diocesan Assembly overwhelmingly voted (96-22) to support the ordination of women as deacons. The blatant contradiction is that the Armenian Church had and still has women deacons. Ironically, there is an inscription on the gate in Holy Etchmiadzin "In memory of Archdeaconess Hripsime Taghilyrantz." And the Primate, Catholicos and Bishops' Synod could not ordain women as deacons in 1986? Why does the present Primate ordain young women as clerks, or *tbirs*, but then prohibit them from holding candles at the altar unless they are under 12?

It is this hypocrisy which pushed me out of the Armenian Church. I

I t is hypocrisy to appeal to the legacy of Sahag and Mesrob while maintaining that the language of our worship can never change.

heard Jesus' call to "Come, follow me," but was not permitted. I and the others like myself stay until we can no longer compromise ourselves. Then we leave. We play musical chairs in the Armenian Church, and when the music stops, and we have no place to sit, we leave.

Where is the authority of the Armenian Church? Do we, laity and clergy together, look to Our Lord Jesus Christ as our head? All the members of the Armenian Church are members of the Body of Christ. *There is only one head - Jesus himself.* Does the hierarchy of the Armenian Church accept this? Does the membership of the Armenian church accept this? The Catholicos, all bishops, priests, deacons, all people, and even the Pope, are members of the Body, who pray "thy will be done" to the Head. We must seek to discover that will. And Jesus himself gave us the standard, saying, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath." (MK. 2:27)

Is not the Gospel of Our Lord the ultimate authority for our life and work? And the Gospel teaches us love, inclusion, equality, tolerance. Jesus repeatedly contended with the religious establishment, the hierarchy of his own day. He challenges them, for idolatizing the rituals and the law of Judaism. Has the Armenian Church not done the same? Jesus struggled against the formalism which we are now worshipping? Part of my charge in writing this piece was also to come forward with suggestions for correcting the situation in which we find ourselves. I offer the following: The Armenian Church must give up her mission to save the Armenian nation and promote Armenian culture, and take up the Cross of Christ. Other organizations (philanthropic, charitable, political, etc.) will fulfill the former, no other organization will fulfill the latter. **ONLY THE ARMENIAN CHURCH CAN PREACH THE GOSPEL.** It must become sole her reason for existing. People should come to the Armenian Church to learn about Jesus. Secondly, the Armenian Church must make education of her members, adult and children alike, her top priority. Weekly, on-going adult education sessions at the same time Church school is being conducted is a must.

continued on p. 26

Living Covenant as the Beginning of Orthodox Theology

Rev. Dr. Lewis Shaw
Special to Window

The West has, for generations, faulted Orthodoxy for its "anti-quarianism" – supposedly an excessive attachment to ancient externals, and rigid forms, coupled with a lack of spontaneity. What is supposed to be Orthodoxy's liturgical, doctrinal, and disciplinary formalism is said to have suppressed the spiritual vitality of people, and reduced the soul's search for God to superstitious ritualism, unforgiving sternness, and an immovable ecclesiology incapable of addressing the desperate questions of the late twentieth century.

This characterization of Orthodoxy arises from a particular kind of theological understanding which, as basic premises, opposes Law to Gospel; the God of mercy to the God of justice; and grace to law and nature. Such a critique deplores the supposed sense of guilt which the Orthodox way inevitably presses on Christians. The spirit behind this kind of criticism is the distinction between a merely human institution identified by an emphasis on empty ceremonialism, on the one hand, and a dynamic faith emphasizing an inner, personalist faith of relationship, on the other. Critics evoking such an understanding might assert that Or-

thodox tradition had no inherent spiritual significance outside of ancient Mediterranean political commonwealths, and was adhered to after the fall of Byzantium primarily with the intention of exacting obedience from an oppressed peasantry. Pleasing God was a secondary concern at best. According to such a view, the image of a person who builds his life around the normative Orthodox guidelines of tradition, discipline, and observance, reveals a servile orientation to life.

Modern theorists of religion have focused in the past on the epistemological conflict between science and religion, but now seem to focus more on what would appear to be the negative and oppressive views of humanity which, they say, a religious viewpoint indispensably involves. Thinkers adopting this stance stress human responsibility for history, and as a consequence presume the necessity of overcoming the passivity and self-negation which they assume a religious world-view entails. Celebrating human autonomy and freedom in determining history, they revolt against any theology or religious philosophy which would seemingly undermine, or deny, such liberty. Man, the morally-accountable agent, is the measure of all things – God and history included. The heart of this outlook is entirely man-centered; its

promotion of human autonomy makes man lord not only of history, but of God as well. God is reduced to either a kindly, but not terribly active, Being of a sort of deism, or a "thought-concept" having little meaning for a truly free individual.

Now, it may be the case that belief in an omnipotent, benevolent Lord of history can foster feelings of powerlessness and retreat in the face of injustice. Moreover, one can endure, to a certain extent, suffering in this world if one believes that there is divine justice at the end of the day. One can offer resignation to the moral and natural evils of the present, or the past, or the future, if one anticipates that there will be a time of divine reckoning for all that has gone wrong. History ceases to be a meaningful arena for the exercise of justice either divine or human. Apathy about the present state of the world seems the only safe refuge.

It may be that traditional Orthodoxy sometimes expresses itself in such a way as to suggest that believers are psychologically repressed, angry, inhibited, and apathetic; that they are never spontaneous, unguarded, or cheerful; and that they lack the bravery, self-confidence, and will to be responsible historical agents. The example of a typical nineteenth century Russian or Armenian priest, often a liturgical

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functionary with little zeal for learning, pastoral work, or societal change, offered scant inspiration to contemporary liberal Orthodox political activists. Amongst other Orthodox groups, however, devotion to Christ was replaced by the idolatry of nationalism; the ends of nation and of Church, while in reality often opposed, were seen as identical.

In contrast to the above Western theological and secular views of Orthodoxy, I would characterize it as a God-centered way of life encouraging initiative and freedom, a path predicated on an autonomy made possible by Christ. An ecclesial-covenantal vision of life and history, with Christ-Church as the bond between Christians and God, and tradition as the articulation of, and organizing principle of, relationship between Christians and God, sets man free into wholeness and a life lived in the divine Presence. Tradition, mediated through the Pentecost covenant, pushes man into an "upward openness" where he is desirous both of meeting God and of assuming responsibility for history. Apathy, retreat, and resignation are not characteristic of the Christian living out the demands of a sacramental vision of creation in God's Church.

The Church, the extension of the Second Person of the Trinity into the world, is unique. The Church is itself a sacrament, Christ present for us today. The election and birth of the Church at Pentecost in Jerusalem represent a metaphysical claim regarding the ontological uniqueness and oneness of the Church. The Church cannot be other than one, because Christ is one. This uniqueness is not something vague, nebulous, or abstract; it is observed and expressed clearly when the Church acts to celebrate the sacraments. I subscribe to a view that a serious commitment to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and a commitment to sacrament and tradition, ask one to believe that the Church embodies perhaps the most authentic way for the worship of God – with an all-encompassing claim for discipleship. Christ provides us with a center and an anchor point beyond the histories of particular communities, and leads us into the fullness of human history. The anchor point He gives us is the Church, the home and shape of man's story.

The Church puts the Christian inside a community. Since God's covenant in Christ is made with the whole body of His people and not with Christians as individuals. The Christian's pilgrimage is communal, and cannot take place in isolation. The covenant between God and His Church, sealed as it is in the loving, uncompelled commitment of sacrament celebration, forges an unbreakable bond between theonomous persons and the Person of Christ in His community, the Church.

Although the conceptions of the Church as sacramental Pentecost community – place of God's covenant with creation in Christ, and destiny of the highest manifestation of that covenant, man – has its precedents in the Orthodox catholic tradition, they are not the only ecclesiological concepts found there. Contemporary theology has used many models

God's covenant in Christ is made with the whole body of His people and not with Christians as individuals.

and metaphors to expand and explicate the connection between God and people in Christ's Body, the Church. Scholars have found the ideas of theologians – Paul Evdokimov, Sergei Bulgakov, Georges Florovsky, John Zizioulas, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, and Avery Dulles, amongst others – helpful in talking about the Church. Fundamental ecclesiological principles discussed by these thinkers relate not only to definitions of the Church's authority, but also and especially to the question of God's authority. This is a matter intimately linked to the twin problems of the idea and of the exercise of ecclesial authority.

God's power to call humankind, through the Church, into the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, and to require the allegiance of humanity, rest on what God the Son did for us on Calvary, His gift of the Spirit to us at Pentecost, and His continuing provision for our needs – during our walk in this earthly wilderness – in the sacraments. We are bound to God because of what He has done for us in Christ: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). God's redemption and providence establish His right to allegiance – it is a right which must, in a sense, be earned. God does not claim, however, the fealty which is His by right. In the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the divine Champion Who assumed all human nature into His person, God invites us into the way of creative co-partnership, the way of building His kingdom in history – an invitation to participate in active discipleship. The Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, Who in Jesus Christ constitutes the fullness of covenant, offers to humankind the way of the Cross – imitation, self-denial, and resurrection – and the Church on behalf of humanity accepts it. The Church community walks the pilgrim way both because it loves God and appreciates the significance of the road which the way charts. God has the community's belief, loyalty, and obedience because tradition lends meaning to its relationship with God, and its journey in history. Imitation of Christ, belief, and obedience are not, in my thinking, interpreted as the collective price demanded by God the Son for what He did in His earthly life, but are themselves signs

and gifts of God's incarnate love. As love given and accepted cannot be coerced, but perhaps only invited, the community's acceptance of the Way – while not independent of Pentecost – is not bound by tit-for-tat interpretations of Calvary and the Atonement. Acceptance of the gift of the Way of discipleship does not depend on the promise of future reward or punishment. It is a commitment grounded in freedom and love, as only it can be.

Because the relationship between God and humanity is one of love, I find it most adequately and poignantly expressed not by monarchical language, but by the biblical metaphor of husband and wife. Marriage, while an eschatological image, is also an image of God's love for Israel – it is an invitation to intimacy which abolishes the personhood of neither partner. The will and commitment to respond to the feelings and needs of the other becomes a part of one's own personhood, such that there is a communication of idioms between the two, which destroys the will of neither. The marital relationship and sacrament – in which persons bless each other with mutual affection and accord – is fundamental to, and cannot be taken away from, the partners' understanding of themselves as persons. God has "legislated" the autonomy of humanity – but it is an autonomy centered and grounded in a personal, communal relationship with God. Marital and family relationships involve a fusion of the independent and relational aspects of personality – just so, God and Church join in a relational bond. The love of the Church for God is such that Christians do not act in isolation, but always in consciousness of their intimate tie to the whole of redeemed creation. Christians define themselves as persons through their relationship to God, both as a community and as individuals, and therefore always live, work, and do, in the life-giving presence of the Spirit. But the Christian path of creative co-partnership with God – the destiny of man – is not a union with God in which individual self-consciousness is swallowed up in a sea of divinity. Rather – taking the Person of Jesus as model – creative co-partnership with God is a communion of, and communication of, traits in which God's longing to be human is met by

our desire to be divine. Thus seen, one's otherness is not only accepted, but celebrated, as a gift of God – and the purpose of one's personhood is the discovery of the unique role one has to play in the deification of the universe. Crucial to one's celebration of otherness is the responsibility that one has for the discovery of one's part in creation.

The images of Christ as Teacher, and of His followers as pupils, are complementary metaphors I should like to bring forward as being descriptive of the relationship between God and His Church. Christ as Teacher – a figure recognized and cherished in the iconography of the Christian faith – is an image of encouragement to His disciples to think for themselves, and assume responsibility for the way tradition is to be understood and practiced. The fact that the Church not only declared that the age of prophecy had ended, but also put the lives of Saints Gregory the Illuminator, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and John of Damascus on a par with the prophets, seems to suggest that the Church has certainly as high an appreciation of the role of teacher, as it does for the role of prophet. Christ the Teacher of a group of disciples, even today instructing His Pupil the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit, is an ecclesiological and Christological metaphor the depths of which have not begun to be plumbed. The figures of God as Husband and as Teacher prevent a tit-for-tat system of rewards and punishments from operating in the dynamic between God and Church. These are imageries in which the personhood and integrity of all covenantal parties is acknowledged; walking the pilgrim way, humans are given the gifts of personal dignity and of responsibility. These metaphors partially illustrate my understanding of the Pentecost covenant as mediated by tradition.

In order to do justice to the way Christians have understood the community's bond with God, it is essential to go to the tradition – built upon the twin foundations of dogma and Gospel – and not only to the Bible. For many centuries, Christians committed to the Orthodox catholic faith have viewed what the Church thought about Trinity, Jesus Christ, the universe, and itself – expressed in its liturgy, iconography, sacraments, literature, and councils

– as no less valid than written Scripture. Addressing himself to this issue, one theologian argued that all Church doctrine and tradition existed *in embryo* in the apostolic teaching, and unfolded and was expounded as the need arose. But how can the Church give these things a weight equal to that of the written word of God? What one finds in studying the decisions and proceedings of councils, for example, are reasoned arguments about the way God, the Church, and the world are related. None of the conciliar proceedings, nor any of the Fathers' commentary regarding the subjects of those proceedings, begins with the statement "thus says the Lord." Unlike the Bible, conciliar texts do not emphasize direct intervention by God in contemporary events. In Scripture, God is at the center of the stage on which the drama of the redemption and salvation of humanity takes place. God guides, punishes, and responds. He speaks to humankind through His chosen prophets, apostles, and martyrs. In the tradition, however, it is the community, the Body of Christ – Christ-Church extending the Second Person of the Trinity into the present – through its Fathers and teachers, which occupies center space. Yet, despite the fact that there is no claim *per se* to direct revelation in the councils, the reader who penetrates beneath the surface of a given discussion realizes how deeply God is present, and involved, in the councils.

Theologians and teachers who devote their lives to the study of the tradition show the Church how it is to understand what God requires of it. The existence of the tradition contradicts the idea that "later" means "spiritually inferior."

To accord the tradition equal status with Scripture is to augment revelation not merely with a particular body of literature or school of teachers, but with a manner of interpretation that emphasizes the open-minded possibilities of learning from Christ and the Holy Spirit. The tradition's creative style of interpretation gives Christians the freedom to apply their own reason, within the realm of grace, to the understanding and application of covenant. For a Christian, the meaning of covenant is defined by tradition.

The Armenian Church and the Believer

Fr. Mesrob Sarafian

Some years ago at the Church retreat in Santa Barbara, a well known professor of Armenian studies told the audience, "When I want to know about God or be spiritually inspired, I attend the Baptist Church on the corner. When I need to re-identify with my Armenian roots, I go to services at the Mother Church." This attitude is realistically indicative of the problem the Church faces today.

In fact, our Church has real difficulty communicating its true Christian message to its people. Why? Perhaps there is an underlying assumption about our people that is incorrect—that, somehow, they know what the Church believes and that they have accepted its teaching as the basis for their personal faith. If this is true, why are so few motivated to come forward in faith, to involve themselves more fully in the Church's worship life, to attend and participate in Divine Liturgy on a regular Sunday basis, to willingly serve God in the Church in whatever capacity, not as one who grudgingly takes his turn as a Parish Council, Ladies Society, or ACYO officer, but as an eager Christian volunteer, to teach Sunday School, to assist the priest in any capacity, like visiting the sick, the

lonely, the disaffected parishioners. In a word, the faithful Armenian Christian should be a joyful and willing servant of the Lord Christ, one who believes and serves because of his love for God and neighbor.

So, what's the problem? What's missing? For many Armenian Christians, faith is uncertainty. Consequently, there is little sense of commitment and the love of God does not become a priority in their lives, nor does the awareness of the Church as God's Kingdom on earth, not because it is Armenian or ancient or traditional, and not because it has been passed down to us by our beloved forefathers, but because it is still, today, the relevant, living, witnessing and continuing presence of Jesus Christ in the world. The Church exists primarily to carry forward the mission of its Lord, Jesus Christ, the salvation of its children. How can the Church accomplish this today? How will it continue to do so in the next 5, 10, 25 years? If it does not focus properly on its spiritual goals, the Church is in danger of withering away, in much the same way as the Fig Tree in the parable of that name, spoken by our Lord, Christ Himself. This story is an important lesson, as we are reminded that we must fulfill the purpose for which we were created or suffer the consequences of unfaithfulness. And this lack of a clear understanding and concern for what the church believes is the most seri-

ous and pressing problem our Church faces, not only here in North America, but also in the Middle East, and in Armenia itself. What are we going to do about it?

Tenets — First of all, we, as Church leaders, must stop assuming our people know what the Church is all about. Our clergy in every parish, must carefully prepare sermons and teaching programs, i.e., the meaning of the Creed, to explain its relationship to the Divine Liturgy, to the Bible, and to the total message of Jesus Christ. The Church is not an institution apart from real life, or some kind of interesting ancient relic; it is, instead, a living guidepost of faith for every Armenian Christian. The words of the Creed are relevant to every Christian; Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church, and Lord of our life, both individually, and as the Corporate Body of Christ—the Church. Our congregations need to hear this message preached and taught every hour they are in Church. The Sacraments, whether Baptist, Confirmation, Confession, or Holy Communion, should be clearly explained, with their spiritual message emphasized, until that meaning penetrates the hearts and souls of our believers, showing how each sacrament impacts their daily lives, how it results in a new Christian awareness, how it challenges the pagan thinking of a godless society.

How can we do this? Teach,

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preach and explain, show the relevance of the Creed to the way we live. When the Creed proclaims that Jesus Christ became Man for our salvation, how does this reality affect your life? What does it mean to you? At Baptism, how are you cleansed of sin? At Confirmation, in what way does the Holy Spirit seal you, give you power to live as a Christian? Do we not believe that a Sacrament should evoke a positive response in the believer, moving each of us to express our love for God in worship weekly, if not daily? This is only one aspect of what needs to be taught in Church; even during Divine Liturgy. It is all a part of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ the Church has always proclaimed. So, proclaim it today, again, for this generation of Armenian Christians, and if the real meaning of the Creed cannot be comprehended because of our beautiful classical language, then sing it or say it in modern Armenian, or in English, or French, simply and clearly, so that its power may touch the lives of every worshipper present.

Morality — In our society, morality is, at best, an uncertain commodity. The communications media, TV, newspapers, magazines, the secular organizations, such as gay rights movements, abortion rights activists, sexual freedom advocates, pressure groups in general, all are attempting to influence the direction of American society increasingly toward paganism, toward anarchy of thought, word and deed. But this is not the freedom that Jesus Christ proclaimed; it is, instead, license to do your own thing, to be your own person, to care only for the self and what will bring pleasure and satisfaction to the self. Does such an attitude, such a way of life negatively impact others; so what! It's your life, live it your way, and forget everyone else! In our modern society with its diversity of lifestyles and ideas, there is a continuing decline of moral values. The boundary lines between right and wrong are being erased (indeed, is anything wrong if it feels good?). In the face of this moral lassitude, what does the Church have to say? Can it continue to remain silent? As the Body of Christ, the Church is never out of date, but eternally in the now, the present, as it has much to say about modern issues. Does the average Armenian Christian know, or even care, that the Church strongly opposes indiscriminate abortion, euthanasia, cremation, unethical business practices, living together before

marriage, civil divorce? How many Armenian Christian couples insist on marrying in a beautiful Church ceremony with all the trappings, yet, at the first signs of trouble between them, (irreconcilable differences as they are called), run immediately to their attorneys rather than to their priests. Could it be that the priest is not taken seriously as a reconciler or spokesman for Christ, one who will do everything in His power to heal the relationship? No? So the couple will go ahead and divorce in a civil court, and, as individuals, may return later to the Church to request a second beautiful marriage ceremony, this time with a new partner. After all, what is more sacred and traditional and meaningful than an Armenian Church wedding? Again, what do we do? Does the Church have anything to say about all this? Does anyone care that the Church does not even recognize civil marriage, let alone accept civil divorce?

The moral teachings of the Church need to be explained to our people, so that they may learn in their hearts how God wants us to live

For many Armenians, faith is uncertainty. Consequently, there is little sense of commitment and the love of God does not become a priority in their lives...

as Christians. For the Church has something to say about even the most complex problems that confront us. Christ's word can make a difference. Here, again, the priest must focus his teaching on any contemporary issue that relates to the Christian life: the sanctity of marriage, sexual morality, before, during and apart from marriage, what it means to be a Christian businessman, the priority of God's Kingdom, even over the profit motive.

Finally, the Church needs to communicate itself through its liturgical life. Again, many of our people regard the Church ceremonies as beautiful, inspirational, traditional, and boring. They come to Divine Liturgy on occasion, stand and sit through services for an hour and a half, an hour, or even a half hour, depending on how late they arrive. Do such faithful derive anything more than a "fuzzy, comfortable" feeling from, perhaps, the beautiful singing of the choir, or the "fine voice" of the priest? Yes, the Divine Liturgy is classical and wonderful, but somehow, seems totally alien from contemporary life. How many times have I heard this same question asked, "Why do we do the same thing week after week?" I am tired of answering it and the problem is not primarily language; it is a question of ethos, of understanding the true meaning of our worship service in the context of the Church's and believer's life. Our Divine Liturgy is not a pageant, not an opera, not "the same old thing," but the highest most perfect expression of our love and praise of God. Divine Liturgy is our great privilege as Orthodox Armenian Christians, our opportunity to receive forgiveness of sins, to be accepted again by our Loving Heavenly Father, to become one with our resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, that is, in becoming one with God.

Congregational participation in Divine Liturgy is sadly lacking. Yet, Divine Liturgy can no longer be considered as a production to be witnessed and not lived: We need to encourage the congregation to sing along with the choir, and to stop worrying about petty questions such as when to stand or sit. You are in your Father's House, and you should feel comfortable there, yet filled with awe at what God has done in Jesus Christ, sacrificing Himself for you. Both Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches encourage the participa-

Continued on p. 24



English as the Language of the Church in America

Ara Dolarian

The American born Armenians who do not have the Armenian language skills are no less Armenians than those who speak the language. Both share the same culture, traditions and religious heritage. Both are the children of the fortunate survivors of the tragic events of 19th and early 20th century. They are also potentially the catalysts that will keep the Armenian Church alive in the United States.

Regrettably, most American Armenian do not have the Armenian language skills. They are unable to fully participate in the practice of their religion. Though the doors of the Church are open, in reality, the doors are closed since the English speaking population does not understand the Church's religious rites and teachings. Through the years, the Church has protected and preserved our religious, cultural and national identity. It has been the repository of the wisdom, truths, and philosophical thoughts that have historically bound the Armenian Christian community together.

Most Armenian speaking people believe that preserving the Armenian language in the practice of the religion is a key factor in the preservation of the Armenian Church and the perpetuation of the Armenian culture. Unfortunately, the Armenian language no longer unites the Armenian community. The lack of Armenian language skills prevents the English speaking population from becoming meaningfully involved in the Church. If the Church hopes to continue its role to teach, unify, and lead its followers in worship, the Church must recognize and understand the changing characteristics of American Armenians and celebrate the Church's services in English. This is critical if the American Armenians are to retain their identification with the Church and perpetuate it in this country.

The questions of language would not have been a factor had we as Americans lived in a closed Armenian community where Armenian was the spoken language. That is not possible or desirable if the American Armenian is to be a participant in the mainstream of the American society.

The Church's hierarchy must decide whether it wishes to reach out to the American Armenian population. It must decide if it wants to be alive in the lives of these children of the Church. Without such an effort on the part of the Church, the assimilation process into American congregations will continue to accelerate.

The American churches have and continue to aggressively reach out to attract the American Armenians to their congregations. They clearly and convincingly communicate those fundamental Christian teachings which our people need. In as much as the Armenian Church has been unable to satisfy the religious aspirations of many American born, they have no alternative but to go with those who worship in a meaningful and relevant way.

Though the American born Armenians may have strong emotional and intellectual ties with their background, as they become more integrated into the mainstream of American society, their identification with their past becomes more difficult to maintain.

The power of the dominant American culture is undeniably powerful, rich and attractive. It offers the population all the rights and options a free society can offer. Among those is religious freedom. The concept of religious freedom must be clearly appreciated as a golden opportunity for the Armenian Church. It offers the freedom to enhance and expand our Church's mission. It would seem to be in the Church's best interest to take advantage of this long awaited opportunity to reestablish our faith in the lives of the American born Armenian and communicate the Church's understandings with its people.

The Armenians have withstood impossible obstacles and challenges throughout their history and sustained themselves with their Christian faith. The contemporary American culture places another challenge at the door of the Church. Meeting this obstacle and overcoming it will assure it a more meaningful and productive future in this part of the world.

What's Required to be a Church Member?

Fr. Tateos Abdalian

Fr. Abdalian is the pastor of St. Peter Armenian Church in New York and a columnist for Window.

Ask any number of parishioners from any church to describe what a parish priest does and is expected to do and you will get as many different answers as the number of individuals you ask. The basic ingredients are usually the same, however, you must always ask the "local expert." The expectations that are placed upon the parish priest are innumerable.

The other day, I was with a clergyman who – for various reasons – was considering another pastoral position. He explained the process of meeting with "search" committee members who expressed their collective opinions, expectations and conceived notions of what the priest's duties were to be, and their questions were designed to ascertain whether he could meet those requirements. This seemed normal enough to my friend and myself until he said that the group of interviewers themselves began to give their individual opinions as to what the "job description" was to read. Some even openly, in front of the interviewee, disagreed with the others until the committee chairperson said . . . "the duties were to include everything that was said by everyone."

Whether it's a recipe for *kufte*, or listing the duties expected of a parish priest, everyone has their own particular taste, opinion and ingredients. But let's go a step further. I wonder what would happen if an individual had to go through a similar screening process in order to become a parishioner? That's right, a selection process for individuals to become parishioners of a particular parish. When I mentioned this to my priest friend – knowing me for as long as he has – he thought that I had finally slipped. But think of it....

When one joins a fraternal organization such as the Masons, the Knights of Vartan, Elks, etc., there is an investigation into the background and character of the individual and then a balloting is held. When one wishes to join a private country club, he goes through a similar process. We are interviewed for our jobs, for college placement, sometimes even when we think about moving into a particular neighborhood or condo. All this is conceivably done to insure that the integrity of the organization, whether country club or school, is maintained.

During its infancy, when an individual wished to become a part of the Christian Church, which basically meant baptism, the process involved prayer, examination as to compliance with the doctrines of the faith and then consent was given by the community. Why should it be any different for someone wanting to join a parish today? Shouldn't the members be screened, examined, interviewed, accepted and then be allowed to become members of the parish? After all, it is from our members that we elect our Parish Councils, who are to create the proper Christian environment for the faithful. It is they, who in turn interview the prospective parish priests, handle the budget, make the decisions that will affect the stability of the parish... they become our Diocesan Delegates who in turn elect our Diocesan Primate and members of the Diocesan Council; they decide which diocesan programs will be funded and which will not... Should we entrust these privileges to just anyone?

Here are my suggestions for parish membership requirements:

- * The applicant must believe, understand and accept the Nicene Creed, i.e., our profession of faith.
- * The applicant must be familiar with the Bible, especially the gospels.
- * The applicant must demonstrate a willingness to work toward strengthening the Armenian Church community as a whole, as well as her individual members when they are in need. The person should be tolerant and patient and should accept each person with love as an equal before God.

After creating my list, I also did a very non-scientific survey of ten individuals who are active members of an Armenian Church and asked their comments. No one could pass the first requirement, only two passed the second one. As expected, all ten said absolutely yes to the third, however they could not understand the reasoning for such a statement. Membership in our parishes are dwindling; there is a lack of participation on the part of our youth and young adults; there is a shortage of priests, etc.

Yes, we should interview prospective pastors to see whether they have a direction for the parish. Yes, we should do all that we can to increase the number of parishioners in communities. But I wonder what what is it that brings and keeps one within the Armenian Church – a solid faith in Jesus Christ, expressed by our actions, or Digeen Mariam's *kufte*?

ANTREASIAN (continued from p. 7) Armenians and, indeed, compromises were often made so that some obscure Armenian school or campaign would share the gift with, let's say, the *world's* hungry, or the *world's* homeless. Now, at least, a campaign for the miserable hordes would be ennobled by an accompanying Armenian cause, however trifling.

And when the world opened its heart and everything else, pouring massive amounts of food, clothing, money, housing into earthquake-ravaged Armenia, were we the least bit influenced to give in kind? As an employee of the Diocese, I know what meager collections were received for the starving of Ethiopia, our sister in the Oriental Orthodox Church, a country whose most powerful icon in recent memory has been the picture of children bloated with hunger and besieged by flies. And meager as well have been almost all our Sunday School Lenten drives which have averaged less than \$1.00 per child set aside during the 40-day Lenten period for those less fortunate, including our sisters and brothers in Armenia whose cause is now far from trifling. It's not the children's fault; their sense of generosity is just a reflection of their elders who have actually excused the paucity of the gift on poor motivation and the economy. Is it so surprising that our children have no notion of sacrifice, when their parents, and I count myself among them, are more concerned about the beauty of their homes than that no one in the neighborhood should go to bed hungry?

Do we, the Armenian faithful, see the face of Christ in others? What have I done to make a difference?

This is the monster I have fed and it grows larger by the moment because so many add to its trough. But hypocrisy can be defeated and indifference and ignorance transformed into the twin whips that drive it away. To all of us - parishioners, parish leaders, clergymen, Diocesan leaders - I offer suggestions to help us make the church the living Body of Christ again:

- Ordain women and make the altar a reflection of the fullness of creation, male and female.
- Revise the language and structure of the *Badarak* with care and purpose, but begin now.
- Have an active social service

auxiliary in every parish that is in the full-time business of dispensing aid to all who hurt in the community, not just other Armenians.

- Have a social service center at Diocesan headquarters with the same outreach.

- Teach our congregations what it means to worship so that on Sunday mornings our churches resound with song and responses.

- Reform the sacrament of confession in the Armenian church so it is cathartic and real.

- Have a Sunday School in every parish and hold it before or after badarak, or on another day entirely, to allow children to worship with their families. And let them, children only please, make noise.

- Require a home-study course on the Armenian Church (a reading list, plus assignment) for anyone wishing to hold office in the parish or Diocese. The people in charge should know what they're in charge of.

- Require Bible studies in every parish run by the clergyman or a competent volunteer or a paid professional. The Word of God should be given its due.

- If a church gets too big for the clergyman to care for the spiritual needs of all its members or for parishioners to know each other, form two parishes. This is not divisive, it is true unity. A church should not be a corporation, but a large family.

- Have catechism classes for new members of a church so that all parishioners have the same knowledge of the church's mission.

- Stimulate discussion of current events, ethical dilemmas, politics and other everyday realities and encourage Christian concern and action.

These are just a few. I know many more could and must be added to the list and taken seriously by those in a position to make changes. But changes are what Christianity is all about. When God broke into the world and was made incarnate, life and all human understanding were forever altered. Our relationship with the rest of Creation was restored with the proviso that we be true stewards laboring for the love of God and the good of others. This is the labor of the Christian soldier, unfettered by complacency, indifference, hypocrisy.

Perhaps, with each other's help, it is a labor that can renew the Church and every faithful heart within.

SARAFIAN (continued from p. 21) tion of the congregation during worship; our people should be praying and singing in response with the choir, to live the liturgy, not to stand there with blank expressions on their faces as if they have no idea what is going on. Liturgical reform is long overdue to eliminate such mechanical participation; we must again teach the meaning and the method of passing the Kiss of Peace, so the people are no longer afraid of receiving or giving.

Let us not deceive ourselves; we are competing with non-Armenian Churches in a life and death struggle for our people. We need to prepare and utilize a "low" mass or short liturgy of, approximately, 45 minutes plus sermon; this service can be celebrated on common Sundays, reserving the full Divine Liturgy for feast days. Again, sermons should be well prepared, meaningful and relevant, whether in Armenian or in French or English. If Divine Liturgy is alive for you, then it won't be too long, and if it is relevant, it will be alive. It is a matter of understanding its true meaning for your life. Remember, if Divine Liturgy or other Church services remain obscure, remote and incomprehensible to our congregation, the church is no longer serving its Lord.

The hour is late; we must represent our wonderful Mother Church to our people today in a new and challenging way. We must sow the seeds of faith anew to this generation of Haig. When properly confronted with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, they will respond in faith by God's grace; and no longer will they be satisfied with being "Christmas" and "Easter" Christians. They will, instead, want to know and love their Lord just as the Church does. They will understand, perhaps for the first time, what the Church is all about, what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, a disciple, just as our beloved forefathers were disciples who knew and believed and died for this same wonderful faith we have received as stewards of our generation.

Let us re-commit ourselves as faithful Armenian Christians, to our beloved Mother Church, to its historic and true mission: The salvation of souls. And let us remember that God will judge us for our response to His Will and His challenge to us as Church leaders.

As Jesus says in Revelation 3:15 "I would that you were either cold or hot. But be not lukewarm, (be not indifferent,) for then I will spew you out of my mouth."

SHAHINIAN continued from p. 9

in the kitchen, and come Monday and Wednesday help you think through some of those complex deals, or dealing with corporate life, just give me a call.

Tom: Thanks very much, sir. I really appreciate that and may call you up, because I have been facing some tough decisions.

Mr. Barabian: Any time, Tom. *(He leaves to sell raffle tickets to some older people.)*

Tom: That's really nice of him. *(Resuming their conversations)* Yeah, it's been busy. This year, I am not even teaching Sunday School.

Mrs. Manchian comes and interrupts: Excuse me, Tom. You remember my son, George?

Tom: Sure. In fact, he was enrolled in my Sunday School classes last year but only came once. Very strong will, but he'll mature.

Mrs. Manchian: George is applying to colleges - who do you think we should get to write recommendations? I am not asking you because you hardly know him.

Tom: *(Gulps hard)* Well, he should talk with the teachers who know him real well and like him. They will write the best recommendations. I'll explain this to him if you want.

Mrs. Manchian: *(Grateful)* Thanks, but I'll tell him what you said. I don't want to take up your time.

Tom: Anyway, we were talking about...

Mr. Jashian *(enters)*: Sudan, honey, the ladies are in the kitchen making sarma for the bazaar. *(Pause)* Can I bring you a few from the kitchen to sample?

Tom: Thank you so much.

Susan: I'm sure that they are delicious. We may get some in a few minutes. *(After a moment.)* If you need help decorating the hall again this year, I'd love to volunteer.

Mr. Jashian: Thanks, Susan. I will call you.

Mr. Zuilian comes and interrupts: Good to see you again Tom, Susan. The parish council next month is sponsoring the teenagers to go to the amusement park *(Pause. Tom and Susan look apprehensive.)* with their parents as chaperons. *(Tom and Susan look relieved.)* The parents don't want to spend the time, but we told them that the kids are theirs and they have to!

Susan: Good idea.

Mr. Zuilian: But the reason I came over is that the parish council knows that you and the others are great young people. We want to sponsor an outing for the young adults - our treat. Do you have any ideas?

Tom *(flattered)*: Thanks, very much, Mr. Zuilian.

Susan: Why don't we call Simon, Linda, Greg, Roxanne, and some of the others and talk about it? Thanks so much for thinking of us.

Mr. Parevian *(comes up and loudly)*: Young people! That's what I love to see, the young people together. You know, I was young myself once. *(To Susan)* In fact, you know Tom here is one of the brightest and most practical young men I have ever met. *(To Tom)* And Susan is one of the most beautiful and responsible young ladies I know; and she is so kind. Think about it.

Tom and Susan talk silently, while Mr. Parevian walks over to Armen.

Mr. Parevian *(goes up to Armen)*: Hi! I don't believe I know you. I am Gregory Parevian.

Armen *(happy)*: Hi, I am Armen Norian, and just moved

here from New England. Thanks for stopping to talk to me. I am a computer programmer for IBM.

Mr. Parevian: That's great. Welcome to the community. Let me introduce you to two other parishioners who work for IBM. *(They both walk off.)*

Rev. Karozian *(comes up)*: Tom, Susan, it must be two months since I have seen you. *(Grows smiling)* I am so delighted to see you again. I always enjoy your smiling faces. It brings back memories of our retreats and Sunday School outings.

Tom: Thank you, Hayr Soorp.

Susan nods affirmatively.

Rev. Karozian: How is it being a Christian in the "real world?" Remember, we are in the world, but not of it.

Tom: Well, you know, I have been wondering about how to apply Christianity in some of the things that I am being asked to do.

Rev. Karozian: Why don't you come by Tuesday or Wednesday evening this week and let's talk about it. Meanwhile, I will be asking God in my prayers to give you wisdom in the situation. *(To both Tom and Susan)* If I can help you with anything, just let me know. *(Pause)* And I am considering ways to make the worship more relevant to everyone, including young adults. Let me know if you have any suggestions - as long as we keep the substance, the form should be as meaningful and helpful as possible to our people.

Tom and Susan both smile: That sound's great, Hayr Soorp. We will discuss it. *Hayr Soorp waves goodbye and leaves.*

Tom: Susan, good seeing you again. See you soon.

Susan: Yes, see you again next Sunday.

Susan walks to the side and waits a few moments for her mother.

Tom starts to walk off. He sees Mrs. Manchian and walks over to her: Mrs. Manchian, I am going home now and drive in your direction. May I give you a ride home?

Mrs. Manchian *(looks pleased)*: Why, yes, thanks very much, Tom.

Tom and Mrs. Manchian walk off.

Mrs. Pezishkian comes back and talks to Susan: I saw you talking to Tom and all those others. Didn't I tell you - isn't it enjoyable to come back to the Armenian Church?

Susan *(smiles at her mother)*: Yes, indeed, mother. Susan hugs her mother and they walk off.

Comments? Opinions?

Write:

Letters to the Editor

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KALEMKERIAN (continued from p. 13) Divine Liturgy should then follow the "education hour," so children and adults can worship together. The Sunday morning education sessions should focus on applying the Gospel to everyday, real life issues, and can be led by the clergy or by trained adult leaders. And continuing education for clergy is an additional aspect of this recommendation.

Thirdly, ordain women as deacons and priests. Women were part of Jesus' inner circle; accept women as full and equal members of God's creation. If Jesus could, why can't his church do the same? Embrace non-Armenian members and make them feel at home. Undertake immediate and thoughtful liturgical renewal, including utilizing English in the liturgy where desired, so that the Divine Liturgy and other services can be true, participatory worship experiences. Update canons, increase participation of lay people at all levels, make people feel that the Armenian Church is theirs, that they own it, together with the clergy. Make the Armenian Church inclusive. Also, we must demand accountability of lay and clerical people. Since the bishops play such an important role in our church, we must provide forums where they can be questioned by concerned church people. Where do the bishops stand on vital issues?

And what is my part in this odious dishonesty that has corrupted the Armenian Church? My hypocrisy is that I didn't dare speak out about these issues while I was in the Armenian Church. I went along with the existing situation because I was afraid to speak out publicly. Now I have gained my freedom by joining the Episcopal Church, where I am in the process leading toward ordination to the priesthood. Others were approached to write an article from this perspective, but could not. It was too painful for some, and what I have written has been intensely painful for me as well. There will be those who try to discredit me for writing these things. Jesus called those people "white-washed tombs." I have spoken what has been heavy on my heart and soul for many years. I love the Armenian Church. I have cried many tears for her. She is my Mother. I pray that she waken from her comatose state and see the pain of her children, and open herself to be healed by the Holy Spirit.

Christ on "Hypocrites"

Matt. 6:2 "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

Matt. 6:5 "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

Matt. 6:16 "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

Matt. 15:7 "You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.'"

Matt. 22:18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites?"

Matt. 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them.

Matt. 23:15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Matt. 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others.

Matt. 23:25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Matt. 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth.

Matt. 23:29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous,

Matt. 24:51 He will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Mark 7:6 He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;

Luke 12:56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

Luke 13:15 But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water?"

Source: NRSV



The Armenian Church Research and Analysis Group (ACRAG) was founded in 1989 by a group of clergy and laity of the Armenian Church. ACRAG attempts to feel the need for a professional and innovative approach to the matters facing the Armenian people in general and the Armenian Church in particular. With a firm commitment to the Traditions of the Church and sharing the vision of St. Gregory the Illuminator, ACRAG, through its *Window*, provides a forum for contemporary Church thought. The aims of ACRAG are: Through research and observations, highlight the role of the Armenian Church in the life of the Armenian people; To provide a forum for dialogue and discussion on matters concerning the Church today; To provide publications that would further contribute to the growth of the Armenian community in the Faith of their forefathers; To fill the gap between the National and Religious characteristics of the Armenian Community.

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Past Windows you may have missed...

Window Vol. I, No. 1 **PREMIER ISSUE**

The first issue of Window is an eight-page introduction that sets the tone and scope of this "new" publication. It consists of three articles written by the editors and a translation of Patriarch Torkom Kushagian's "Revival in the Armenian Church."

Window Vol. I, No. 2 **"ARMENIAN THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION"**

This issue provides a series of articles in search of an Armenian theology of Liberation, stimulating discussion and dialogue between Armenian church members and theologians. The issue provides a descriptive and interpretive study of the subject and underlines its application in the Armenian Church.

Window Vol. I, No. 3 **"1915—THE YEAR THE CHURCH DIED"**

This entire issue is dedicated to the martyred clergy of the Armenian Church during the Genocide of 1915. With this issue, *Window* turns the views of its readers back 75 years and provides a glimpse of the pre-Genocide Armenian Church. For the first time in the English language, the monumental work of Teotig—a scribe who tediously recorded the lives of the martyrdom of the Armenian clergy—is presented with statistical and analytical charts. Addressed in this issue are the issue of remembrance, the problem of canonization of the victims and the silence of Church leadership concerning religious treasures.

Window Vol. I, No. 4 **"IS THE COLLAR CHOKING THE PRIEST?"**

This issue discusses the role for the Armenian priest from the perspective of both the Armenian community and the Church. In doing so, it dispels some of the stereotypes and myths associated with the Armenian clergy. Issues such as reform, recruitment, and contemporary challenges to the church are discussed in a very sincere and open forum.

Window Vol. II, No. 1 **"CULTS IN ARMENIA"**

In an attempt to educate the Armenian community on the dangers of cults, this issue provides an extensive coverage of cults presently operating in Armenia. The deep psychological wounds caused by the 1988 earthquake have facilitated the infiltration of various cults into Armenia under false pretenses. This issue of *Window* poses a challenge to the Armenian community and the Church, by the fact that "the cults will do what we neglect! They will extend where we cannot reach! They will be heard where our voice is silent."

Window Vol. II, No. 2 **"INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ARMENIAN CLERGY"**

The first ever International Conference of Armenian Clergy held in New York, June 17-21, 1991 is covered with exclusive interviews and analysis by the *Window* editors. An inside view of the conference is provided. Detailed information about the current situation in Armenia by the directors and leaders of the Center for the Propagation of Faith. Candid and alarming revelations regarding the religious awakening in Armenia and the Church's ability (or inability) to provide for the needs of the people. Must reading for anyone concerned with the current and future state of the Armenian Church in Armenia and the diaspora.

Window Vol. II, No. 3 **"ARE ALL BRANDS THE SAME?"**

This issue of *Window* explores the Armenian Protestant and Roman Catholics churches, providing a history of their development and place within the Armenian Community. A candid discussion of possible means of reapprochement is provided. Also, the place of the Armenian Church within the world Church community is explored with statements by the Orthodox Churches and reflections concerning the cost of unity. This issue is filled with facts and information. A map of religions is provided as a centerpiece to this important volume.

Window Vol. II, No. 4 **"TESTING THE MYTH AND BEYOND"**

The understanding of myths and their place in religious perception is the theme of this issue, especially as it is applied in the Armenian Church and community. The main article gives an excellent definition and explanation of what Myth is. Of particular interest is a discussion of Vahé Oshagan and the controversy surrounding a piece of his writing, entitled *Odzoom*. Also, two articles discuss services in the liturgical tradition of the Armenian Church, namely Blessing of Madagh and Chrismation.

Window Vol. III, No. 1 **"THE CHURCH IN ARMENIA"**

This issue presents a series of interviews conducted in Armenia, which give a general view of the state of the church and religion in the post-soviet Republic of Armenia. There are conversations with the Catholicos, representatives of Armenian political parties; Armenian "skinheads," and others who are closely involved with the church. The guest editorial in this issue is written by Bishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Armenian Church of Canada.



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