Rev. Fr. Hovel Ohanyan

A Man and His Dog

A man and his dog were walking along a road. The man was enjoying the scenery, when it suddenly occurred to him that he was dead. He remembered dying, and that the dog walking beside him had been dead for years. He wondered where the road was leading them.

After a while, they came to a high, white stone wall along one side of the road. It looked like fine marble. At the top of the long hill, it was broken by a tall arch that glowed in the sunlight.

When he was standing before it, he saw a magnificent gate in the arch that looked like mother of pearl, and the street that led to the gate looked like pure gold. He and the dog walked toward the gate, and as he got closer, he saw a man at the desk to one side.

When he was close enough, he called out, "Excuse me, where are we?" "This is Heaven, sir," the man answered.
"Wow! Would you happen to have some water?" the man asked.
"Of course, sir. Come right in and I'll have some ice water brought right up."

The man gestured, and the gate began to open.
"Can my friend," gesturing toward his dog, "come in too?" the traveler asked.
"I'm sorry sir, but we don't accept pets."

The man thought a moment and then turned back toward the road and continued the way he had been going with his dog.

After another long walk, and at the top of another long hill, he came to a dirt road which led through a farm gate that looked as if it had never been closed. There was no fence. As he approached the gate, he saw a man inside, leaning against a tree and reading a book. "Excuse me!" he called to the reader. "Do you have any water?"

"Yeah, sure. There's a pump over there." The man pointed to a place that couldn't be seen from outside the gate. "Come on in."
"How about my friend here?" the traveler gestured to the dog.
"There should be a bowl by the pump."

They went through the gate, and sure enough, there was an old-fashioned hand pump with a bowl beside it. The traveler filled the bowl and took a long drink himself. Then he gave some to the dog. When they were full, he and the dog walked back toward the man who was standing by the tree waiting for them.

"What do you call this place?" the traveler asked.
"This is Heaven," was the answer.
"Well, that's confusing," the traveler said. "The man down the road said that was Heaven too."
"Oh, you mean the place with the gold street and pearly gates? Nope. That's Hell."
"Doesn't it make you mad for them to use your name like that?"
"No. I can see how you might think so, but we're just happy that they screen out the folks who'll leave their best friends behind."

—Author Unknown

Scholarship Available

The John M. Azarian Memorial Armenian Youth Scholarship Fund is now accepting applications for the 2014-2015 academic year. To download an application and all other necessary forms please visit www.azariangroup.com/scholarship.html. Complete applications must be submitted by May 31, 2014.

The John M. Azarian Memorial Armenian Youth Scholarship Fund was formed in 1976 following the untimely death of John M. Azarian, Sr. by his wife, Barbara. The purpose of the fund is to award scholarships to students of Armenian descent who demonstrate compelling financial need, academic achievement and Armenian church related activities.

St. Vartan Church Wish List—New Church Doors

A project is underway at St. Vartan Church to install beautiful new hand-carved wooden doors in the front of the church. The Church Door Fund has already received several donations, but more are needed to complete this project. Please consider donating to the Church Door Fund, so we can enhance our magnificent church building with new doors, as we show our commitment to St. Vartan Armenian Church.

Lenten Prayer Vigil Services

This month Fr. Hovel will lead two Lenten Prayer Vigil services at St. Vartan Church on April 2 and April 9 at 6:30 pm. Please join us at these services in preparing our hearts for the glorious Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, on Easter Sunday.

Parish Council Installation

St. Vartan Church Parish Council gratefully acknowledges the following donations:

In Honor of Carol Rustigian’s birthday—Ara and Ursula Kaprielian

In Honor of Diana Toomajian’s 100th Birthday—Loretta Emerzian, Harold and Bonnie Koojoolian (Church Door Fund), Harry and Carol Dokouzian (Building Fund), Norma Yaglijian (Endowment Fund), Nora and Harvey Hanoian (Church Door Fund), Charles and Dorris Kezerian (Church Door Fund), Archie and Joyce Kamian (Church Door Fund), Harvey and Janet Kamian, Lucille Sherinian, Ani Amoore

In Honor of Armen and Victoria Markarian’s 50th Wedding Anniversary—Mark Markarian and Jessica Flash (Armenian Genocide Project)

The St. Vartan Voice Newsletter—Elmer and Gloria Kaprielian, Jack and Barbara Bousian

In Memory

† Barbara Anderson
Frances Stevens, Nora and Harvey Hanoian (Church Door Fund)

† Lucy Tulanian
Elmer and Gloria Kaprielian, Greg Cherezian, Virginia Avakian,
Norma Yaglijian (Priest Discretionary Fund)

† Garbis A. Kerimian of Long Island, NY
Madlen and Hera Boyyan (Orphan Fund)

† Hrant and Theresa Torrosian
Liz Ojakian (Genocide Memorial Project)

† Meran Manoung Saroyan and Alice Hagopian Saroyan
Antica Saroyan Odabashian (Genocide Memorial Project)

† Varoujan Avakian and Vicken Avakian
Suzan Avakian

† Anna Topalian of Providence, RI
Vartan and Arlene Hovsepian (Ladies Society)

† Vrej Hagopian
Marie and Harout Hagopian (Milk Fund)

† James K. Taylor Sr.
James Taylor III (Genocide Memorial Project)

† Jacob Hamalian
James Taylor III (Genocide Memorial Project)

News From Our St. Vartan Family

Anniversary

Congratulations to St. Vartan members Ralph and Lillian Kalibjian who celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary on February 19.

Condolences

Anna Topalian passed away peacefully following a courageous battle with ALS, in Providence, R.I. on February 18, 2014. We offer our deepest condolences to her husband, Kacheg, daughters Suzanne (Razmik) Abnous, Debra (James) Tashjian, and son, Kenneth (Medina) Topalian, and their families.

Baptism

Alexander Berc Bavoukian was baptized at St. Vartan Church on March 1, 2014 by Fr. Hovel Ohanyan. Alexander is the son of Christopher and Aslin Bavoukian and grandson of Bernadette and Antranik Bavoukian and Nevin Atlas. Nimrod Khamo served as his godfather and Sherie Khamo as his godmother.

Thank You

Our very sincere thanks for the uplifting cards, phone calls and prayers, during our hospital stays, to the wonderful parishioners of St. Vartan Church.

A special "Thank You" to Fr. Hovel for his personal warmth and spiritual attention.

Al and Mae Kaljian
Pilgrimage

Armenia & Ararat from both sides — June 2014

By arrangement of His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese and on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, a special and once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Armenia — headed by Father Vazken Movsesian.

Combine SPIRITUAL REVIVAL with cultural nourishment. This is trip like no other.

- 16 Days (from June 14) in Armenia & Artsakh (Karabagh), in the Cradle of Civilization, with pilgrimage destinations to Etchmiadzin, Geghard, Tatev, Gandzazar, Haghpat, Sevan, Khor Virab, Shushi and more...

- 6 Days (June 30) in the Historical Lands of Armenia — crossing over the border to visit historic Armenian sacred land and space, - Kars, Ani, Van, Mush, Karin and the Holy Cross Church at Aghtamar.

Special services and meditations at these historic sites, to connect you with the past, present and restoring vitality in every participant.

$2,990*
Includes: Hotel (dbl occupancy); ground transportation, tour guide, all meals (a few exceptions) and tips, entrance tickets, spiritual & cultural programs
*Price includes a $350 tax deductible participation fee to Western Diocese.

Price does not include: Air Fare; nominal visa fees, tips, insurance, incidental expenses

Note: Air transfer is not included in the price. The sooner you apply, the less expensive will be the flight price. Group rate may be available from LAX. $500 deposit guarantees your place. For more info, price options and RSVP — Yelena Zakarian tel. +1.818.667.9040 or yzakarian@gmail.com
Prelude to Easter

The Armenian Church calls the final week of Christ's life on earth Great Week or Holy Week (Avak Shapat). During this time, we share in His teachings, His suffering, His death, and His resurrection.

Holy Monday is dedicated to the creation of Heaven and Earth, the foundation for Christ's Second Creation. Christ condemns the fig tree that did not bear fruit (as Israel failed to bring forth the fruits of repentance) and teaches that faith can have the strength to move mountains, overcoming despair and even death.

The parable of the Wise and Foolish Maidens (Matthew 25:1-13) is the focus of Holy Tuesday. Ten maidens waited for their bridegroom. (In the custom of that time and place, the bridegroom would fetch the bride from her parents' home to bring her to his own.) Five of the women foolishly took their lamps with no extra oil and when the bridegroom was delayed, could not go out and meet him. The wise maidens went prepared and joined him in the marriage feast. Similarly, we must pray and wait, in a state of perpetual preparation to receive Christ.

In the reading for Holy Wednesday (Matthew 26:6-13), a fallen woman anoints Christ with costly oil and kisses his feet. The apostles chastise her for wasting oil that could have been sold to help the poor, but Christ defends her action, perceiving her deed as one of devotion, and knowing that this anointing anticipates His upcoming death and burial.

The morning liturgy service on Holy Thursday marks the institution of the New Covenant: Holy Communion, which Christ established at the Last Supper. During a Passover meal, Christ broke and distributed unleavened bread and shared the wine with His apostles, identifying these as elements His Body and Blood. Through this sacrament, mankind participates in the Kingdom of God. Another episode at the Last Supper is recalled during the evening service on Holy Thursday. "The Washing of the Feet" ceremony commemorates how Christ washed the feet of His apostles, setting an example of humility and love. The priest in turn washes the feet of twelve church members, usually young men.

On Holy Thursday, an all-night vigil is kept in memory of the last sleepless night of our Lord on earth. This service is called Khavaroom (darkness). Before He was arrested, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and endured in solitude the agony of His impending death. Six sets of laments are chanted, each followed by a Gospel reading depicting Christ's betrayal, imprisonment, torture, trial, sentence, and crucifixion. Twelve lit candles, 11 white and 1 black (representing Judas), are extinguished in pairs.

Holy Friday is the most solemn and sad day of the Christian calendar. The "Crucifixion Service," usually held at midday, recalls the suffering, execution and death of our Lord, memorialized amid readings from the psalms. In the evening, a white tomb is placed in the chancel of the church for the "Entombment or Burial Service." The tomb is adorned with flowers and during the service is taken in procession around the church. As the faithful leave the church they approach the tomb, kiss the Gospel book, and take a flower in remembrance.

On Holy Saturday, also known as the Easter Vigil, the mystery of salvation in the Resurrection of Christ is celebrated. The church is dark, its lights are dim. Then the great verses from Isaiah 60 are read: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you", at which point the lights are suddenly turned on. The dramatic, joyful candle-lighting ceremony is called jrakalouytz.

Finally, Easter Sunday celebrates the joy of the Resurrection and the promise of salvation for all humanity. Armenian Christians around the world exchange the Easter greeting: Krisdos haryav ee merelotz! Orhnyal eh harootiunun Krisdosee! Christ is risen from the dead! Blessed is the resurrection of Christ! For each of us, Easter is a time of personal renewal, rebirth and enhancement of our covenant with God. We can feel this renewal in our hearts and souls, and we see it in the world around us, with the blossoming of flowers, trees and green grass symbolizing the beginning of a new cycle of life.

Easter Sunday is followed by a period of 40 days, during which time there are no saints' days or fasting days. This period is dedicated to the glory of Christ's Resurrection and to the 40 days He spent on earth after His Resurrection. The 40th day after the Resurrection is Ascension Day, commemorating our Lord's entry into heaven.
Primate’s Congratulatory Letter to Diana Toomajian
A Devout Parishioner of St. Vartan Armenian Church in Oakland
On her 100th Birthday Celebration

Dear Mrs. Toomajian,

From the Headquarters of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, we greet you with the love and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and extend to you our pastoral blessings. We congratulate you wholeheartedly on your 100th birthday and pray to the Almighty God to shower you with divine blessings. This occasion becomes even more special as you celebrate it with your loved ones and share the joy with the beloved members of your community and church family.

As an esteemed parishioner of St. Vartan Armenian church, you and your late husband, Suren, played an immense role in the acquisition of the present church building on Spruce Street. As an exemplary Armenian couple, you became Ambassadors of Christ and visionaries as you helped to build the House of God. Your immense contributions to the community life will forever be remembered. You have been actively involved in all aspects of church life. As an esteemed member, you have helped to transform the Ladies Society. Through your contributions, the Ladies Society became a driving force in the church.

You have graciously carried on the sanctity of the Armenian motherhood and have dedicated your life to your family and your church. For 61 years, since its inception, you have shared your cooking expertise at St. Vartan’s Annual Bazaar. In recognition of your selfless service, invaluable contributions and unwavering Christen Faith, you were awarded the prestigious St. Nerses the Graceful medal by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. Your noble deeds have earned you tremendous respect among your peers and members of the Armenian-American community.

From the bottom of our hearts, we congratulate you and pray to the Heavenly Father to protect you and your loved ones and grant you peace and blessings.

Prayerfully,
Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate

Diana Toomajian celebrated her 100th birthday with the members of St. Vartan Church after church services on Sunday, March 2, 2014.

Thank You Caline
On Sunday, March 16, after church Fr. Hovel held a special blessing service for the robes, garments, altar clothes and table coverings created and repaired by Caline Soghikian to use in Church for the glory of God. Thank you, Caline, for your beautiful handwork!

Fr. Hovel participated in the World Day of Prayer with Bay Area clergy at St. John Armenian Church in San Francisco on March 7, 2014.

St. Vartanantz
Fr. Hovel presented a lecture on the Feast of Vartanantz to the students at the Armenian Relief Society Erepouni Friday Armenian School in Walnut Creek on February 28, 2014.
St. Vartan Ladies Society Lenten Luncheon
Thursday, April 17
12:00 Noon

Family Worship Day
Sunday, May 4
10:30 am
♦ Complimentary lunch
♦ Special message by Fr. Hovel
♦ Sunday School WILL meet

AHABA Dinner Honoring Dr. Soghikian
You are cordially invited to attend the inaugural event of the Armenian Healthcare Association of the Bay Area, honoring Dr. Krikor Soghikian with a dinner at St. Vartan Armenian Church Hall on Saturday, April 5, 2014 at 6:30 pm. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian, cofounder of the American University of Armenia. For more information contact Mariam, 650-814-9923, Elena 925-895–895-5351 or Jerry 650-961-2013.

Lenten Luncheon
The ARS Erepouni Chapter will hold a Lenten Luncheon after services on Sunday, April 6, 2014 in the St. Vartan Armenian Church Hall.

St. Vartan Cultural Committee presents:
Film and Pasta Dinner
Friday, April 18, 2014
following
Good Friday Service
at 7 pm
99th Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

Memorial Program
Featuring Guest Speaker
Dr. Keith Watenpaugh
Founding Director of the UC Davis Human Rights Initiative

Thursday April 24th 2014  7:30 pm
St. John Armenian Apostolic Church
275 Olympia Way, San Francisco

Requiem Program
Sunday April 27th 2014
Walk for Remembrance – headed by Bay Area Youth
Start point - St. John Church - 12pm gathering
End point – Mount Davidson Memorial Cross

Requiem Service and Flower Offering—2:00 pm
Mount Davidson Armenian Memorial Cross
125 Dalewood Way, San Francisco
Palm Sunday Brunch

Sunday
April 13th
Following Church Services

All proceeds to benefit Children’s Center in Armenia sponsored by Western Diocese

Delicious sit-down meal to satisfy every appetite!

$15 per adult  $10 per child 5-11 years

Sponsored by Sunday School and Jr. ACYO

Save the Date

Hasmik Harutyunyan Farewell Concert
Saturday, May 17, 2014 at 7:30 pm
St. Vartan Armenian Church
Sponsored by St. Vartan Church Cultural Committee
### St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church

**Schedule of Easter Services, 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>Morning Service</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Divine Liturgy and Sermon</td>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Opening of the Doors &amp; Service of Antasdan (in the parking lot)</td>
<td>Follow Badarak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Brunch following service</td>
<td>After Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Thursday, April 17</td>
<td>Divine Liturgy—Memorial of the Last Supper</td>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Ladies Society Lenten Luncheon following service</td>
<td>12 noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Friday, April 18</td>
<td>Service of Betrayal and Passion of Our Lord</td>
<td>8:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Saturday, April 19</td>
<td>Reading of the Scriptures</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easter Sunday, April 20</td>
<td>Morning Service</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Service of Antasdan (Blessing of the Fields) ... following Badarak</td>
<td>Follow Badarak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Sunday, Merelots, April 27</td>
<td>Morning Service</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requiem Service — Following Badarak</td>
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### Home Blessing

The Home Blessing Service is one of the most ancient and revered traditions of the Armenian Church. The three necessary items to conduct this service are: water, bread, and salt.

For the traditional Easter Home Blessing, please call Der Hayr for an appointment at 510-893-1671.

### Requiem Service

A Requiem will be said for the souls of the departed on Merelots Sunday, April 27. Those who would like to have the names of their departed loved ones included, should contact the church by April 24 at stvartanoakland@aol.com or 510-893-1671.

### Easter Yughakin

It is customary in the Armenian Church to provide **Yughakin**, especially around the feasts of Christmas and Easter. This practice dates as far back as the time of Moses in the Old Testament. **Yughakin** in Armenian means "price of oil". Each local church community would donate money specially earmarked towards the purchase of oil, which in turn would keep the lanterns burning and ultimately the doors of the Church open. At this season of Christ's resurrection let us remember and continue the custom of **Yughakin**, so we can keep our "oil-burning lanterns" always burning and our doors always open at St. Vartan. Please be generous to the Church in observing this ancient Armenian custom.
Register Now Armenian Summer Camp

You can register for Armenian Summer Camp at www.hyecamp.com. The four weeks of camp this summer are: Week 1: July 13-19; Week 2: July 20-26; Week 3: July 27-August 2; Week 4: August 3-August 9. Family Day: May 17, 2014.