



Alumni of the Month May 2018 **Fr. Krikor Sabounjian**

Central Council Chairperson Mallory Maslar interviews Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, pastor of the Armenian Church of the Holy Translators in Framingham, MA, about his life growing up in the Church, and involvement in the ACYOA.

Mallory Maslar: How did you first get involved in the ACYOA?

Fr. Krikor Sabounjian: I got involved in the ACYOA as a progression from my childhood life at St. James in Watertown, MA. I attended Sunday School and served as an Acolyte. The natural progression was to then join the ACYOA as soon as I become of age. At that time the ACYOA was one organization – the Junior group was a part of the Senior group and the ACYOA Seniors were mentors and advisors to the younger group. It was in the late 60s/early 70s that the two groups separated, and the Junior group began having convocations at retreat centers while the Senior group had their meetings in hotels. I served as the Chairman for the ACYOA Juniors in Watertown for a few years. However, my involvement in ACYOA Seniors was from a distance because I entered St. Nersess Seminary immediately following my High School graduation. I would participate whenever a came home for breaks and I served for several years as the ACYOA Senior General Assembly Chairman. This was when George Tashjian was the Executive Director and the ACYOA was a flourishing group with a large membership.

MM: What impact has the ACYOA had on your life?

FKS: Having been involved on many levels, my experience in the ACYOA directly influenced both my decision to enter the Seminary as well as later – after my graduation from St. Nersess Armenian Seminary – to become the first full-time Parish Youth Director of the Diocese at St. James – in the 1980s.

The friendships that I made in ACYOA have remained to this day – some 50 years later. In fact, my present parish – the Armenian Church of the Holy Translators – was started and grew from a group of friends that had relationships through the ACYOA. Many of us also have stood up for each other at our weddings and have been Godparents to our children.

MM: What are some of your favorite memories being involved in the ACYOA?

FKS: Back then basketball was still a viable sport during the Sports Weekends, however volleyball was the number one highly competitive sport. We would practice seriously all summer in preparation for our “Fall Classic.” At the time the Sports Weekends were during Labor Day weekend. There was intense competition between St. James in Watertown and St. John in Detroit virtually every year. We would leave all that we had out on the court and would play with intense seriousness of purpose. One year, St. James would win – the next year, St. John – and so on. That is until the games were over. Once the games finished – no matter how

intense or competitive they were – and believe me there were tense matches every time - we would gather in each other's rooms for kef before the dances celebrating the friendships.

MM: What have been some of your influences in your Christian life?

FKS: Obviously, now being a Parish Priest for over 20 years, I can say that the ACYOA has had a big part in showing me how to have meaningful Christian friendships that last forever and how important the role of the Church was in molding those friendships.

MM: Any advice for current and future ACYOA members?

FKS: Never take for granted the awesome gift you have been given to be able to belong to a group like the ACYOA where you can be yourself totally and know that you are loved and accepted for who you are and not for who you pretend to be. Never take for granted the importance of surrounding yourselves with people who have the same spiritual, moral and cultural goal (or maybe values). Never take for granted the importance of these friendships in your present life but also in your future – these are the friends that will be there forever. Never take for granted the power of the Holy Spirit to mold you to be the light of Christ's love in your world through regular participation in the life of our Church.