

HYEHOKIN



ACYOA National Young Adult Leadership Conference

On March 10-12, the ACYOA Central Council and the Department of Youth and Education sponsored the 7th Annual Young Adult Leadership Conference at the Don Bosco Retreat Center in Stony Point, NY. This year's theme was "Who is He? Who are We? Who am I?"

Present were 55 people, including young adults from 25 parishes and clergy and presenters. The Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Dean of St. Nersess Seminary served as chaplain for the conference and gave an impressive introduction during Friday night's Vespers service to jump start the weekend. Staff included the entire Central Council and members of the Diocesan Department of Youth and Education; ACYOA Executive Secretary Nancy Basmajian, Jennifer Morris, Youth Outreach Coordinator and Intern Daron Bolat.



Spring 2006

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The conference participants were blessed with a visit from the Primate, His Eminence Abp. Khajag Barsamian who addressed them on Saturday afternoon. He also gifted each participant with a copy of the *Encyclopedia of Armenian Christianity*, an excellent resource on the faith and *The Wonderful Alphabet*, published by the Diocese on the occasion of the 1600th anniversary of the invention of the Armenian alphabet.

The topic, "Who are We?" was ably covered in an interactive session led by Dr. Roberta Ervine, a member of the faculty of St. Nersess Seminary. The Bible Study on "Who is He?" was facilitated by Rev. Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, pastor of St. Mesrob Church, Racine, WI and member of the Diocesan Council, who has been very supportive of the ACYOA Central Council. The participants broke off into four groups and were asked to answer questions on different Bible passages regarding the person of Christ. The Very Rev. Fr. Simeon Odabashian, pastor of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Church, Providence, RI offered the young audience a brief refresher on the basics of faith of the Armenian Church in a session called "What We Believe."

The "Who am I?" question was not answered by a speaker, but rather by the youth themselves, each of whom was asked to create a collage using magazine cut outs and other materials to express who they were. After dinner, Daron Bolat and Saro Kalayjian from Washington, DC explored the underlying topic of the weekend, "Who am I Called to Be?" The last session on Saturday night was a lively Q and A (also called "Hot Topics") with Fr. Daniel in the hot seat. Participants asked a wide variety of questions including everything from gay mar-



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riage and premarital relations to whether or not priests get screened at the airport. The evening ended with Vespers in the Don Bosco Chapel.

On Sunday morning, Fr. Daniel celebrated the Divine Liturgy and with special permission from our Primate, participants were able to receive Holy Communion. He began his sermon saying, "Here we are, here He is, here I am. While we are not in an actual Armenian Church, gathered here today, we are the Armenian Church, we're at the heart of it; we are the best the Armenian Church has to offer." He reflected that while the conference challenged participants to look inside themselves and take stock of who they were, it also reinforced the fact that, like the Prodigal Son, if they stray, they will always be wel-

comed back to "your church, your people, your home." And, he continued, "We will embrace you upon your return."

The final session of the weekend was led by Central Council Programming Coordinator Greg Andonian, who led a discussion on the past, present and future of the ACYOA. He observed that, "after 60 years of service to the Armenian Church, perhaps it is time to redefine ourselves as an organization and move ahead." Ideas were shared and participants departed after a closing prayer from Fr. Daniel.

"The leadership conference continues to empower the youth in terms of becoming better Christians as well as becoming stronger leaders in their communities."

Maggie Merdjanian, Sts. Sahag & Mesrob, Wynnewood, PA

2006 ACYOA General Assembly and National Sports Weekend

Hosted by the Providence, RI Chapter

May 25 - May 29, 2006



The ACYOA was formed on January 12, 1946, in Providence, Rhode Island. Sixty years later, join ACYOA members of the past, present, and future to celebrate back where it all began!

Thursday, May 25th General Assembly

Friday, May 26th General Assembly
Providence Club Night on Federal Hill

Saturday, May 27th Sporting Events at Rhode Island College
Insights program at Rhode Island College
Battle of the Bands-the Philly Kef Band and the Aravod Band

Sunday, May 28th Divine Liturgy
Brunch at St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Church
Sports Finals at Rhode Island College
60th Anniversary Dinner & Ball with the Michael Gostanian Ensemble
After Hours Dance

Monday, May 29th Picnic featuring the Philly Kef Band

Accommodations at the Holiday Inn Downtown
on Atwells Ave, 1-888-HOLIDAY
(Mention "ACY" for group rate of \$ 189/night)

**Visit www.providenceacyoa.com
for more information!**

WHAT TO PROGRAM?!

That is the ever present question of ACYOAers starting or reinstating chapters around the Diocese. The following is a dramatization of a conversation overheard at a recent local ACYOA meeting as members planned their calendar for the coming year. Names have been changed to protect the identity of those involved.

Margos: Well, let's sponsor all social events so we can attract a big group of people and start a HUGE ACYOA. I know a great bar around the corner and an awesome DJ that can play at our dances.

Toros: But wait! What about the "C" in ACYOA! What about bible studies, attending Divine Liturgy together and hosting educational events?

Margos: Good point Toros. The ACYOA *IS* the only Armenian youth group affiliated with the church, but shouldn't we save that church stuff for later? I mean, how many people will we get to sit in bible studies! It's all about NUMBERS, NUMBERS, NUMBERS!

Toros: I see what you are saying Margos, but surely there is a way to attract new ACYOA members AND offer Christ-centered programming.

Margos: But how Toros!?!?!?

Margos and Toros (scratching heads): HMMMMMMMMMMMM.

Starting up (or jump-starting) an ACYOA chapter can certainly be a daunting task. Even the most enthusiastic, well-intentioned individuals can soon become discouraged when it comes time to program. Unfortunately, there is no "one size fits all" solution. Each chapter has different needs, different age groups to cater to, different responsibilities in par-

ish life, different personalities working together etc. But there is one thing that all chapters do have in common -- Our mission as Armenian Christian youth to serve the church, and "show obedience to the Lord through worship, fellowship, service, education and witnessing." Those who have attended national and regional ACYOA conferences have analyzed these five tenets or "circles of the cross" year after year until they are blue in the face. But there is good reason for it. Used as a guideline, these circles can be practically applied to create balanced Christ-centered programming that offers a bit of everything for everyone. Below are just a few tips to help avoid the pitfalls of our friends Margos and Toros.

1. Numbers don't matter as much as you think

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20

Hey, Christ said it. Just a few dedicated individuals can comprise a very successful chapter. Don't be afraid to start small. Your mom was right, quality is much better than quantity.

2. Well, ok, maybe numbers matter a little.

Ok, so you have a few core people who are excited about the ACYOA and have held a few small successful events. You have a good thing going, why not bring some more people into the fold? Of course, everyone's first reaction is to send out the notorious group e-mail. It's fast, it's easy and you contact a lot of people at once. But really, how many mass e-mails do you delete because you just don't have the time to read them all? And how many go right into your junk mail box without you seeing them? Mass e-mails definitely serve an important function, but when it comes to recruiting new members the personal touch is

the way to go. Pick up the phone and ask an old friend to join the group at church this Sunday. Ask an old Sunday school classmate if she would like to help out at the ACYOA booth at the

bazaar. People want to get involved but they just don't know how. You'll be surprised how many people will lend a helping hand and get involved when asked.

3. Mix up the circles -- They are not mutually exclusive!

Usually a program or event will encompass more than one circle. For example, a bible study might most obviously fall under education, but really all participants are worshiping and witnessing their faith as they learn together. Throw in a post bible-study dinner at the local diner with your pastor and fellowship is covered as well.

4. Fellowship is not a dirty word

Yes, it's true, sponsoring only dances and pub crawls is not an example of quality ACYOA programming, but providing social opportunities is an important part of growing and strengthening your group. As participants spend time together, they get to know each other better, and hence can better work with each other and feel more comfortable worshiping and witnessing together. Try thinking outside the box. There's more to social events than sitting around the dinner table at a smoky restaurant. Maybe your members would be interested in starting a soccer team, or begin practicing basketball or volleyball for Sports Weekend. Come together to bake cookies for the holidays or volunteer together at a soup kitchen (which is also serving and witnessing). . . the possibilities are endless.

5. Programming doesn't haven't to come out of thin air

Stumped for new ideas? The ACYOA Central Council has been feverishly working on a new initiative called SNAP: **S**ynchronized **N**ational **AC**YOA **P**rogramming. For each month we will be suggesting activities that chapters all around the Diocese can take part in. Also, you can always contact your regional liaison (you can find them on www.acyoa.org) for more ideas.

Do you have questions regarding ACYOA programming or anything else pertaining to the ACYOA? Please send your questions to acyoa@armeniandiocese.org.

-Submitted by: Karen Khatchadourian

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

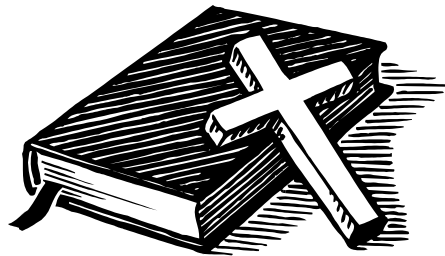
-SUBMITTED BY DARON BOLAT

We often hear questions such as "are you born again?", "have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?", and "are you saved?" And we may not necessarily know how to respond. The Armenian Church often uses these words, but they mean very different things in our church than they do in others, such as in the evangelical churches. We may be using similar words, but we're definitely not speaking the same language (and I don't mean Krapar). Jesus told Nicodemus that, "Unless someone is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). So what does that mean? For some people being born again means you suddenly and in one moment, during your baptism, decide to dedicate your life to Jesus Christ. And in that one moment your life is transformed.

This may be the experience for some people, but the Armenian Church views it differently. Certainly at our

baptism, a fundamental change takes place in us. We are born of the Spirit, and become children of God and heirs to His kingdom. Just as we are born physically and have physical parents, our baptism is our spiritual birth, and our Godparents are our spiritual parents. Baptism is a beginning, and is something that continues over the course of a lifetime. "It takes a moment to perform a baptism, but a lifetime to live one." We say that we are born again at our baptism; we are spiritually reborn, this rebirth is a continual process which takes place throughout our lives.

"Are you saved?" This is another



question that we are sometimes faced with. Some Christians feel that once they have accepted Christ, their salvation is guaranteed, and they are assured of going to heaven. The Armenian Church does not see this as a guarantee. Salvation is something that comes from God alone, and it is His choice alone who will and will not be saved. Although with our baptism, we can inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, we sin and fall away from Christ. All of us sin. Therefore, we need to always ask God for his mercy, so that he will save us. We are saved only with Christ's second coming and we inherit the Kingdom (1 Peter 1:5).

Although it is important to recognize and understand the differences between how our church and other churches look at various aspects of our faith, it is also important to recognize that among Christians, there is much much more that unites us, than does divide us.

creative corner

HAYASDAN

by Zakaria Kowalski

It's the December nights
like this one,
when winter moonlight and
frost
dance upon the windows,
and heavy blankets
cocoon us in bed,

that you get the urge
to tiptoe your fingers
over my arms, which sag
like sunflowers upon the hills
of your breasts.

In the darkness,
you search out the tattoo
on my upper left arm,
whispering how my skin

is brown
like the arid Turkish plain.

You touch the flag that flaps
in invisible wind
and trace the ancient script
that lies beneath.

This word, you say. This word,
when spoken,
rolls off the tongue
like sweet candy.

Hayasdan

Hayasdan

Hayasdan

And in that crow-black
darkness
you tell me that the letters
are like black birds fluttering
before the storm.

(This poem was published
in "Groong" in July, 2004)

If you would like to submit your
original work for publishing in a
future Hye Hokin, please e-
mail to
acyoa@armeniandiocese.org

ARCHBISHOP'S TOURNAMENT '05

Philadelphia, PA - The team from the Holy Martyrs Church in Bayside, NY was victorious once again at the Archbishop's Invitational Tournament, hosted this year by the ACYOA Seniors of Holy Trinity Church in Cheltenham, PA. Led by



tournament MVP, Zachary Armen and leading scorer Justin Ohnigian, Holy Martyrs defeated the talented St. James-Watertown, MA, team at the historic Palestra, 53-29. Holy Martyrs reached Sunday's final by defeating the team from St. Vartan Cathedral 62-43 in their semi-final game, earlier in the day. The other semi-final game saw St. James and Sts. Sahag & Mesrob-

Wynnewood, PA battle to the final minute until St. James pulled away to win by 8 points, 45-37.

Following the semi-finals, 5 players competed in the final round of the three point contest. With 17 points in the final round, a tournament high, Gegam Oganesian won the contest and became the first ever, Archbishop's Tournament three-point champion.

In addition to the acknowledgment of the players, Holy Martyrs coach, Misak Arahamian won the award

for the tournament's Most Outstanding Coach.



Fr. Tateos Abdalian, pastor of Holy Trinity, presents the championship trophy to the Holy Martyrs team.

The tournament committee would like to thank all of the attendees for their participation, and they look forward to hosting the tournament again in the future.

The Central Council thanks the ACYOA Seniors of Holy Trinity for doing a great job hosting the tournament!

JUNIOR'S SPORTS WEEKEND



Fr. Haigazoun Najarian, pastor, presents the overall trophy to the host team.

As Archbishop's Tournament was taking place in Philadelphia, 136 young participants from 14 different parishes

gathered down the road for the ACYOA Jrs. Sports Weekend, hosted this year by the St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church of Wynnewood, PA -- whose parish teams won both the boys and girls tournaments. The fun and games started on Friday and included co-ed volleyball, which was won by a team comprised of parishioners from Wynnewood and the Holy Trinity Church of Cheltenham, PA. Also during the

event parishioner, John Eskandarian and youth advisor, Vache Soghomonian, were honored for their years of service to youth ministry.

For more information about upcoming events for ACYOA Juniors please contact the Diocesan Coordinator of Youth Outreach, Jennifer Morris at

jenniferm@armeniandiocese.org.

UPCOMING TRAVEL ABROAD!



ACYOA ASP
 Armenia Service Project
 Habitat for Humanity

July 5-27, 2006

For Young Adults Ages 18-28

Cost \$2000

(includes round trip air from NYC, accommodations, two meals a day, transportation to work sites and tours)

Space is still available! Apply now!

“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.”

-James 2:26

• With the blessings of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, serve the people of Armenia by providing parish homes, through Habitat for Humanity, in three villages with currently sub-standard housing in the Diocese of Arakadzosn in Ashdarak.

• **Travel** to—and **learn** about—some of the most famous religious and cultural sites in our ancient land. **Worship** in Holy Etchmiadzin, the faith center of the Armenian Church.

• **Experience** life in the capital city of Yerevan, including its nightlife, shopping and dining.

• Extend your trip with **Birthright Armenia** and get your roundtrip airfare reimbursed. For more information, please go to www.birthrightarmenia.org.

For specific information and to download an application, visit www.acyoa.org or contact: Nancy Basmajian, ACYOA Executive Secretary, at 212-686-0710 (ext. 43) or e-mail acyoa@armeniandiocese.org.

The Diocesan Department of Youth and Education and the ACYOA invite Sunday School and Armenian School teachers and young adult leaders to join

A PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

August 20-August 29

\$1848 per person
 (double occupancy)

Fly NYC to Tel Aviv

Guided tours of:
 Jerusalem

The Armenian Quarter
 Jericho

The Jordan River
 Nazareth and Cana

Gethsemane

The Sea of Galilee

Dead Sea

Bethlehem

Space is limited

For information call
 (212)686-0710:

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Gilda Kupelian

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Our pilgrimage will include places where Jesus lived and taught, on-site Bible studies, visits with the Patriarch of Jerusalem, interaction with the local Armenian community, and celebration of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God at her tomb.

The trip includes round-trip air, first-class accommodations, two meals daily, and fully guided day-trips by bus.

See the land of our Lord, walk in His footsteps, and feel the ancient Armenian pulse of Jerusalem in this unique pilgrimage.

Led by Fr. Mardiros Chevian, dean of the St. Vartan Cathedral, with DYE and ACYOA staff

Sign up by June 15

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

A church attendee wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. “I’ve gone for thirty years now,” he wrote, “and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can’t remember a single one of them. So, I think I’m wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all.”

This started a real controversy in the “Letters to the Editor” column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: “I’ve been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked

some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this...They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If not given me these meals, I would be dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!”



When you are DOWN to nothing...God is UP to something! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible!

-Author unknown

Hot Topics-Ask Us Anything!

Q: Must I fast before taking Holy Communion?

A; YES.

St. Paul has the following to say about this matter in 1 Corinthians 11:27 and 29:

27. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

29. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.

The pious Christian must approach the Holy Altar with a

clean mind, body and heart. Confession, penance and fasting are the tools for cleansing one's insides.

If a person is required to eat breakfast for health reasons, he/she may do so before receiving Holy Communion. The dietary rule also does not apply to people who are bedridden or hospitalized.

For more on this topic, see *"Frequently Asked Questions about The Armenian Church."*

To submit a question for publication in the next Hye Hokir, mail to: Nancy Basmajian, c/o The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), 630 Second Ave, New York, NY 10016, or e-mail, acyoa@armeniandiocese.org. Submissions will remain anonymous.

ACYOA Marks 60 Years

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America. With this, we celebrate 60 years of dedicated service to our mother church- the Armenian Apostolic Church. At its first Constitutional Assembly on January 12, 1946, the ACYOA became the first and only national youth organization in America founded by the Armenian Church. To this day, the ACYOA remains loyal to its 60 year old mission: to raise faithful sons and daughters of the Armenian Church and the Armenian Orthodox faith.

The ACYOA is a Christ-centered organization for young people over the age of 18. It seeks to educate young Armenians about their Christian faith, Armenian culture, and Armenian history; prepare young Armenians to be active members and leaders of the Armenian Church; and to provide opportunities for worship, Christian witnessing and service in the Armenian nation.

"Through ACYOA's efforts at the local parish and Diocesan levels, each of you extends the legacy left to us by Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, of blessed memory," Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, said. "The visionary Tiran Spazan understood the need to make our church a welcoming family, where

faithful of all ages could gather and grow. His idea – indeed, his dream – has become a reality thanks in large part to six decades of devoted efforts from ACYOA members. And those efforts have had powerful repercussions beyond our shores: among our sister dioceses, and in our homeland itself. That fact is worth remembering as this grand organization celebrates 60 years of service to our church. By promoting the spiritual life among Armenian youth, ACYOA has performed – and continues to perform – a vital role in the age-old Christian heritage of our entire people."

In recognition of the 60th anniversary of the ACYOA, the ACYOA Central Council has appointed a committee to lead the celebration. Sixtieth anniversary events will be held throughout the year, all across the Eastern diocese. The committee includes current ACYOA members and alumni from several parishes.

When asked about the 60th anniversary of the ACYOA, Central Council Chairperson Maria Derderian commented, "The ACYOA is not simply an organization for the youth, and it is not simply an organization. It was, is, and continues to be a vehicle for members of the Armenian Church to draw near to Christ. During this anniversary year, let us remember the vision of

our founder, Abp. Tiran Nersoyan, and come together as past, current, and future ACYOA members to continue the work of our Lord, praying for His grace and guidance in leading our organization into its next 60 years. We look forward to a variety of programs that the 60th Anniversary Committee will plan and execute- as well as the renewed spirit of enthusiasm which we are confident these programs will instill in the youth."

"Anniversaries are a time to celebrate and, as an ACYOA alumna and current Executive Secretary, I hope to be part of that celebration. But in addition, I think we should use this milestone to look back and see where we've been and what we did and did not accomplish, to be joyful about where we are right now, and to look to the future with excitement and ambition. It is a future I look forward to sharing with alumni, current and new ACYOA members with whom, all together, we can build up the 21st century Armenian Church of America," stated ACYOA Executive Secretary Nancy Basmajian.

This year's ACYOA Sports Weekend and General Assembly will return to Providence, Rhode Island; the birthplace of the ACYOA. The Sts. Sahag and Mesrob ACYOA of Providence are already planning the events for the weekend and are hopeful that the 60th anniversary will draw new interest as well as rekindle the interest of alumni across the country.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 4-7	Annual Diocesan Assembly-Church and Home: Building One Spirit Fair Lawn, NJ
May 25-29	ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend-Providence, RI
June 9-11	St. Nersess Young Professionals Conference
June 13-17	St. Nersess Post High School A Conference
July 2-August 12	St. Vartan Camp (three 2-week sessions)-Ararat Center, Greenville, NY
July 5-27	ACYOA Armenia Service Program
July 15	Ararat Festival-Ararat Center, Greenville, NY
July 30-August 5	Hye Camp-Ingelside, IL
August 14-20	St. Nersess Post High School B Conference
August 20-29	DYE and ACYOA Pilgrimage to the Holy Land
September 22-24	Pan North American Retreat—hosted by the Western Diocese

Visit www.stnersess.edu for all of the St. Nersess Summer Conference dates, and to download the application.



ACYOA Central Council
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
Abp. Khajag Barsamian, Primate
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We're on the web!
www.acyoa.org