



ACYOA
ARMENIAN CHURCH YOUTH ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

H Y E H O K I N

DECEMBER 2006

PAN-NORTH AMERICAN RETREAT

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There is truly something holy about being 5,000 feet high in elevation and witnessing beautiful landscapes, rolling mountain tops and shooting stars. If you open your heart and mind to God's beauty, He does communicate to His children.

Close to 80 Armenian youth from the Western and Eastern Dioceses of America gathered at the Armenian Church Camp just one hour east of Fresno, California for its second annual Pan-North American Armenian Church Youth Organization Retreat over the weekend of September 22-24. They experienced a closeness with God our Creator.

The Power of Prayer

With a hint of autumn in the air, insightful and thought-provoking discussions and presentations were made under the arbor of the campsite. Matthew Ash, Youth Director of the Western Diocese, and the ACYO Western Diocese Central Council organized the weekend.

YOU are the Salt of the Earth

Fr. Vartan Kasparian, parish priest of St. Mary Armenian Church (Yettem, CA), offered the opening reflection. He began by reading Jesus' words:

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. [Matthew 5:13]

"It is up to you to be truly *the salt of the earth*," he said. "Add your precious Christian-Armenian flavor to all that you do."



YOU Make the Choice

Fr. Yeghia Hairabedian, parish priest of St. Gregory Armenian Church (Fowler, CA) made a presentation on Saturday morning. He discussed the meaning of the Lord's Prayer. "You have been given two invitations. One is from the Devil to go to Hell, and the other is from God, to be with Him in His Eternal Kingdom," he said, adding forcefully, "You make the choice."

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- The latest information on upcoming events
- Check out our new layout!
- Join the Hye Hokin staff.
- Genocide awareness: we CAN make a difference



OPINIONS

MY CHURCH?

Do you know that in the past three years, overall parish membership in our Diocese has *decreased* by 46, 97, and 51 people, respectively? That's a total loss of 194 dues-paying members!

What does this mean? It means that we, the youth, aren't becoming members of our parishes—maybe because we don't know the benefits, or maybe because we're simply unaware.

A dues paying member of a parish is eligible to vote at the annual par-

ish assembly (usually around February—check your parish calendar), and elect parish council members and Diocesan delegates.

Paying dues is also a perfect opportunity to practice stewardship—giving back to God what He has given to us. Most parishes have weekly offering envelopes. This year, try taking a box of envelopes, and sending in your weekly donation. It's another small way of giving thanks to God, it gives us a sense of service to our Church while connecting us with our



local parish, and it gives us a sense of ownership, as well. It is said that we care for what is our own. Paying dues is a simple reminder that this is our church.

The ACYOA can make a big impact in this area. We can start by making sure we are dues paying members ourselves. Let's do our part to bring those numbers back up, while taking an active role as members of the body of Christ—OUR Church.

-Maria Derderian

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SUBMISSIONS

HYE HOKIN welcomes all submissions that provide an open exchange of ideas and experiences. Submissions are printed on a space-available basis. The HYE HOKIN staff reserves the right to reject any submission for any reason, without notice. The opinions expressed in articles, letters, and commentaries are those of the individual author.

HYE HOKIN NEEDS YOU!

Are you a journalism major?

Do you enjoy graphic design?

Is writing your passion?

Join the HYE HOKIN staff!

The ACYOA Central Council is forming an Editorial Staff to help ensure the timely publication of our quarterly newsletter. We need to fill a variety of positions, ideally with dedicated ACYOA members who are from all throughout our Diocese, and have enthusiasm to make our newsletter the reader-based forum that

we hope it becomes.

This is a wonderful opportunity to be a steward of the church by using your talents to serve.



All levels of participation are welcome, depending on your availability. The following positions are available:

- Regional correspondents
- Layout staff
- Features staff
- Opinions staff
- Copy editor
- ...and more!

For more information, please e-mail maderderian@yahoo.com.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

St. Paul's letter to the Colossians 3: 23-24

NEWS

Exciting things are happening in the ACYOA! The 2006-2007 Central Council has been traveling nonstop, meeting three times since May in order to work on many of the new and exciting initiatives taking place this year.

These initiatives include:

- Revamping publications, such as the website, HYE HOKIN, and creating a new informational brochure
- Updating the structure of regional conferences
- Several initiatives to increase chapters and membership.

Keep checking www.acyoa.org for the latest updates!

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The ACYOA is working on a project to set up satellite ACYOA chapters on certain college campuses. How do you feel about this idea—will it work? What is your experience with maintaining your faith while at college? Let us know by writing to acyoa@armeniandiocese.org, for printing in the next issue of HYE HOKIN.



The Central Council in Watertown, MA, with Fr. Arakel Aljalian and ACYOA Srs. Chair Jennifer Tagarelis.



It is with great joy that we announce that our completely redesigned website is now live! Not only have we changed the look, but we have reorganized the menus and added lots of new technology to ensure the most effective communication to you, our members. Some of the exciting new features include tons of photo albums, downloadable forms and information, and an online calendar that can be customized to view

in your region! If you haven't checked it out yet, please visit www.acyoa.org right away and sign up for our e-mail list to receive all the news as it becomes available.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to our previous webmaster, ACYOA Alumnus Mr. Shunt Madanyan of Sts. Joachim and Anne Church in Palos Heights, IL, who generously donated his time and talents for many years to the ACYOA. Thank you, Shunt!

Continued from page 1

Later in the morning, Fr. Vartan shared detailed stories from his personal life as a priest as he spoke about the various types of prayer and encouraged the young people to communicate with God.

Next Year Canada

On Saturday afternoon the two central councils met to share ideas and brainstormed on how they could be more effective in reaching the youth

as an official organization of the Armenian Church. The youth leaders also discussed next year's 3rd annual Pan-North American ACYO retreat, which will take place in the Canadian Diocese on September 21-23, 2007.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated under the starry sky at midnight, as the united ACYO youth truly felt the presence of Jesus Christ around the chalice at the altar.

The next morning after a closing discussion and final prayers, the group packed their belongings and left the inspirational mountain top of the Armenian Church Camp, hoping to be more vigilant in their prayer life and also more involved in their ACYO and church parishes.

(Source: www.stnersess.edu)

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

By Fr. Tateos Abdalian—pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Cheltenham, PA

For me, there is a power to silence that allows all the noise of this world to die away to help us focus on a “still, small voice” that reveals the true nature of things, but only as we learn to be quiet.

One of the most special times I would enjoy while a student at Holy Etchmiadzin was when at the end of the day the gate was closed and all the “outside people” had to leave.

“Be still and know that I am God...”

Psalm 46:10

There I could sit in the great Cathedral after evening worship and just listen to the sounds of silence.

I believe that we need to explore the power of quietness and the menacing modern practice of filling every moment of our lives with sounds and activities. Living in this world, I too am just as guilty of this habit as is probably most everyone who reads this.

Our lives are filled with sounds not just for our ears, but our world is filled with “noise” for our eyes and mind as well. We are a people who are suffering from sensory overload and it shows in the fractured

lives we lead and how we have had to compartmentalize our lives to survive this onslaught of “noise.” And in the midst of all this, the Church is to preach to the world and have you understand the Word of God clearly.

Our Lord had the habit of pulling away from the crowd because He needed to be quiet and pray. Once, when Jesus perceived that the people were about to come and take Him by force and make Him king, *“He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.”* (John 6:15) Jesus saw the need to regularly be alone with His Father to strengthen His soul. More of us should take that example as our own.

The power of silence and stillness in our lives cannot be overlooked if we want to understand that God gives us the gift each day to do something important that can lead us to a better, fuller life. But this silence, this stillness presents us with a powerful challenge to our modern lives that seems to be measured by our busyness rather than by our holiness. What are the lessons we can learn from silence?

First, the truth is that no words will ever be able to really convey our need or our love for God. We will

never be able to really enter into the mystery of God’s love for us until we are confronted with our own inadequacy to reach God on our own terms. Being quiet before Him gives us another opportunity to confront this inadequacy.

Second, if all our communications with God are one-sided, jabbering our desires into His ears, then how can we listen to Him? The Old Testament prophet Elijah learned that God was speaking to him during a particularly difficult time in his ministry *“in a still, small voice”*. (1 Kings 19:12) This “still, small voice” forces us to be quiet and stop the incessant speaking or complaining to God for a period of time. We become no longer the center of attention, but a listener to the wisdom of God and His loving communication with us.

Finally, silence allows us the time and the space to leave a place where we are constantly asking God for something, and go to a place where we actually allow ourselves to learn to love Him for Himself and not for what He can give us. It is the self-centered notion that our voice, our needs, and our desires are of paramount importance that keeps us enslaved to a small spiritual life. But silence allows us the time to truly think on and medi-

tate on the beauties of Christ and His love for us. It is here in this quiet time as we gaze upon His face that the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

Why not try taking a few moments this day to be quiet in front of your vision or image of Christ. Don’t empty your minds as some Eastern mystical religions teach, but fill your mind with the face of Jesus and allow His presence, which is always as close as your very breath, to teach you how to silence the noise of life and “tune in” to that *“still, small voice”* that longs to teach you the Truth of eternal life. To do this takes courage, time and commitment.

As always, the choice is yours.



Fr. Tateos, pictured with Yn. Margaret, was a speaker at a recent rally in Washington, D.C., to raise Genocide awareness for Darfur, where he got to meet George Clooney!

MY JOURNEY WITH JOURNEY FOR HUMANITY

By Julie Hoplamazian, Diocesan College Ministry Facilitator

On October 27th, a group of young Armenian adults called Journey for Humanity came to New York City as part of their national walking tour to raise genocide awareness and action. They have walked all the way across the country from LA to DC for this cause. We met at St. Vartan Cathedral this morning and walked to Times Square where we stood in somber silence, holding banners, handing out pamphlets, mindful of the history that has killed millions of people, in the midst of one of the busiest places on earth. Our presence in New York City was a bit of an anachronism, a living specimen of history in the eye of a storm of business-people, tourists, flashing lights and swirling sounds all whisking around Times Square. It was our walk, though, that made the event so powerful and moving.

When you first start walking somewhere, your mind is on where you're going. But on a long walk, you begin to stop thinking about that, and sometimes you stop thinking in general. You get lost in your own thoughts. And so as we walked, I started to forget how cold my hands were, or how my feet were hurting, and my mind slowly shifted to the purpose of all this walking. We were walking to raise genocide awareness and action. Some people who passed us asked, "What's genocide?" The fact that our ancestors, along with millions of other people from other races, have perished as a result of ethnic cleansing and there are STILL people walking the streets of New York who don't know what the word "genocide" means made my steps more purposeful and my hands a little tighter around the banner I was holding. How can people not know? I thought to myself. How can people grow up not learning about the Armenians, the Jews, the Cambodians, the Bosnians, the Rwandans, and now not be aware of those perishing in Darfur at this very mo-

ment? How can people not know that time and time again, the world has turned its back on victims of genocide – or offered too little too late? And with each step I took, I thought about the steps my ancestors took. How their steps were steps toward despair, deportation, desolation and death. And how our steps were steps toward awareness, toward social justice, toward action, toward hope.

I thought about the phrase I was taught as a child: Those who ignore the mistakes of history are doomed to repeat them. Sadly, history's mistakes have been repeated because perpetra-

tors of genocide have not been held accountable for their crimes against humanity. This is problematic for two reasons. First, it silently allows these crimes to continue. By not holding perpetrators accountable, we are saying that crimes against humanity, the most vile of crimes, are crimes you can get away with. We are permitting them to happen again. Second, by allowing these crimes to recur and by allowing genocide denial and ignorance to continue, we fail to name these events "mistakes." We fail to show the world that genocide is truly wrong and evil and intolerable. Until the entire world vows to stop perpetrators of genocide, it will continue.

It is thoughts like that, when I look at all that has gone wrong in the world, that make me wonder where the hope is. I asked a mentor of mine this once when I was feeling hopeless. I was working in an urban setting, in a well-to-do church surrounded by

homelessness and poverty, and my mentor was criticizing me for making all my sermons too "fluffy" and not addressing the real issues of poverty. I got frustrated and sort of exploded at him. "Well what am I supposed to say? Where is the good news for these people? Their lives are horrible, they live on the street, and they are cold at night...Where is the hope?" He looked at me and said, "The hope is in the people's response. That is the gospel."

I have taken that with me and it rang true today. The recurrence of genocide all over the world feels hopeless. It is a problem of colossal proportions. But by making people aware of it, we can hope that they will take action. I don't necessarily have hope that ethnic cleansing and genocide will cease to be a problem in this world. But after today, after seeing the response of the people walking by us on the street, I have a little more hope that the word will spread and action might follow. I have hope that the efforts made today will have a ripple effect. Even though genocide might happen again, I have hope that there will come a point where the world will finally say, "no more."



Edward Majian, one of the group's marchers.

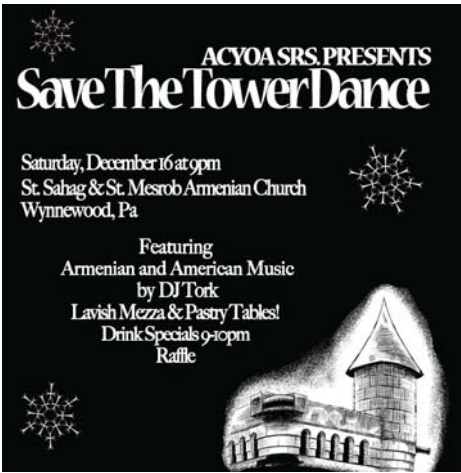


www.journeyforhumanity.com



Julie with the marchers and Diocesan staff members holding banners in Times Square.

EVENTS AND UPDATES



Wynnewood, PA—The St. Sahag St. Mesrob chapter is full of excitement, with a new Executive Board chaired by Vicken Bazarbashian. Among other activities, the chapter just held a benefit dance to help raise funds for their church’s historic belltower.

Providence, RI— Another St. Sahag & St. Mesrob chapter (and 2006 Sports Weekend hosts) recently held their annual Christmas Dance, featuring the fabulous ARAVOD Ensemble, on Saturday December 2 at 8PM

in their church hall. Check back for pictures in the next issue!

Evanston, IL— At press time, our vibrant new Evanston chapter just finished hosting the Midwest Regional Conference, with a record 50 people in attendance from 7 parishes! We’ll have photos and updates in our next issue. Thank you Evanston for your warm welcome!

Washington, DC— The DC chapter spent Nov 10-12 at their fall retreat in Maryland, and just recently participated in the Thanksgiving Day Trot for Hunger, organized by So Others Might Eat (SOME). They raised about \$2,600 and woke up early on Thanksgiving morning to



walk the route. They won the first prize for most money raised. Good job team!

Southfield, MI— The Detroit ACYOA, hosts of the 2007 General Assembly and Sports Weekend, thanks everyone who attended their Diamond Gala November Dance, which took place November 25th in their church hall. Almost 400 people were in attendance! There was an Alumni Cocktail Reception open to all preceding the dance, where past ACYOA members reminisced and viewed all of the ACYOA memorabilia on display. For information on Sports Weekend, visit www.detroitacyoa.org.



2007
Sports Weekend
Detroit, MI



COLLEGE MINISTRY UPDATE

www.college301.org



ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK 2007

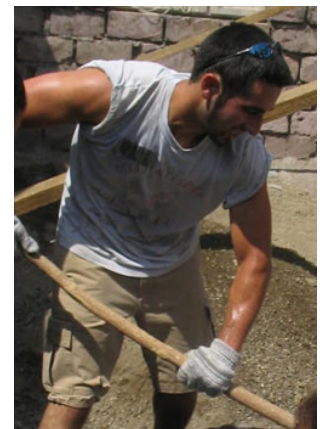
March 4-10, Richmond VA

March 11-17, Atlanta GA

March 18-24, Charlotte NC

After a successful first year, the Alternative Spring Break trips are back, once again working with Habitat for Humanity.

Travel south, work on a home for a needy family, and learn more about your faith and culture. Space is limited, so sign up early! E-mail julieh@armeniandiocese.org for more information.



SAVE THE DATE!

8TH ANNUAL YOUNG ADULT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

MARCH 2-4, 2007

*One of our most popular programs!
A great opportunity to meet people from other chapters, share ideas, and focus on our faith.*

ASP ARMENIA SERVICE PROGRAM

JULY 5-28, 2007

*"A trip to Armenia is worth more than 1000 sermons"
-Abp. Hovnan Derderian*

SUBMIT YOUR CHAPTER UPDATE AND EVENT!

E-mail acyoa@armeniandiocese.org with the information, and we will do our best to include it in the next issue of Hye Hokin.



ST. NERSESS CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE JANUARY 3-6, 2007

Take a break from the hectic holiday season for a chance to recharge amidst the beauty of St. Nersess during the Christmas season.

To download an application, visit www.stnersess.edu.



GIVE BACK THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON



Why not organize a community charity event for your ACYOA chapter or parish this holiday season? Share God's love for the world by helping the less fortunate.

Make your parish a drop-off center for a Toys for Tots drive, collect gently used winter coats to distribute to the local shelters, or visit a local Children's Hospital or Assisted Living home with your ACYOA. Also check at your

town library or community center for local opportunities.

Check out these websites for information

- www.toysfortots.org
- www.nycares.org
- www.wish.org
- www.volunteer.gov
- www.mytwofrontteeth.org



ACYOA

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enriching
lives
today
laying the
foundation
for our
tomorrow

SPORTS

HOLY MARTYRS CONTINUES ARCHBISHOP'S TOURNAMENT REIGN WITH FOURTH CONSECUTIVE CHAMPIONSHIP



WALTHAM, MA— Holy Martyrs Church in Bayside, NY, and St. Leon Church of Fair Lawn, NJ, faced off for the title. In the end, Holy Martyrs took home the trophy on Columbus Day weekend, October 6 to 8, 2006, for this year's

Archbishop's Tournament. Teams from Wynnewood, Watertown, and Providence rounded out the tournament, held at the Health Point Gym in Waltham, MA, the training home of the Boston Celtics.

The final game came just one hour after the intense semifinals, which had Watertown, Bayside, and Fair Lawn battling for a spot in the championship game. As fans looked on, Bayside took an early lead and dominated the sec-

ond half with their 3-2 zone defense, winning the game, and their fourth consecutive Archbishop's Tournament championship.



Thank you to the St. James ACYOA Seniors of Watertown, MA, for hosting the fun weekend!