

St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, January 4 – Divine Liturgy, 10:00 a.m., Viewing of the Documentary *Everyone Prays in Holy Etchmiadzin*

Monday, January 5 – Eve of the Feast of the Nativity and Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ

Tuesday, January 6 – Feast of the Nativity and Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ

Sunday, February 8 – Annual Parish Assembly

LOOSAVORICH STAFF

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Editor

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Dear Reader,

We are very enthusiastic in bringing you a bulletin that will keep you informed on the various activities of our parish. The Loosavorich staff recognizes parishioners who make contributions to the newspaper. Those wishing to make donations or sponsor the cost of printing the newsletter, please send your donations to the attention of Dn. Artur Petrosyan or Pauline Nahabedian in care of the church. We also are open to your suggestions. Feel free to share your ideas and thoughts with us and make your newspaper more enjoyable for you. We appreciate your support and help.

*Vol. 3/ Issue #3
Winter 2008*

He's Baaaaaak!

Well I am back. It was an amazing honor to have been the first member of the Brotherhood of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin to have been called to serve not only the Holy See but also our Homeland. I know and believe that I was chosen because of the resiliency of our community to accommodate this unprecedented service to the Holy See and the Armenian Church.

There are so many feelings and experiences which I have endured and lived over the past year. I know that I have grown and expanded my horizons while serving our brothers and sisters in Armenia.. I know that as I have, each of you in your own ways, have grown. and I look forward to exchanging our mutual experiences which took place over the past year. I am anxious to listen to your stories, both positive and negative, which you lived during 2008.

I would be remiss, and frankly as a pastor, it would bother me, if I did not acknowledge the milestones of the past year which you all experienced...the good times and the bad times. As a Shepherd, it is important to me that I share in the challenges and joys which you all have experienced in my absence while in Armenia. There is no way in which I can fully understand what you all felt, and I also know that you all cannot understand what I experienced in our beloved homeland. However, I am looking forward to listening to you all and listening to your stories.

The Very Rev. Fr. Dajad Tsadourian is to be commended and thanked for his service to the St. Gregory community in my absence. He was there to lead you, hold your hands, laugh as well as cry with you as the community evolved. We continue to pray for his ministry as he continues his studies in Cleveland as he prepares to return to the Mother See in Armenia next year.

There have been many challenges to not only the St. Gregory Community in 2008, but we must acknowledge that there are even more challenges to our community and world in the



year of 2009. I look forward to leading and serving the St. Gregory community as we face these challenges together.

I wish to let you all know that I am committed to the St. Gregory Family in the coming months and years as we re-connect with one-another. I wish that there were a way to call and speak with each of you at once upon my return, however I know that it is humanly impossible to do so. I look forward to your invitations to perform Home Blessings, so that I can bring the Word of our Lord into your homes and listen to your stories and share my own from my experiences while in Armenia.

The coming weeks and months will be challenging for us all...I know that you all have your individual personal challenges...and I have the challenge of reintegrating myself back into the community. I am thankful to the St. Gregory Parish Council for giving me the space to move back into my apartment and find myself in a new world.

It is imperative that we work together as build our beloved community which we call... St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church.

With prayers,

Very Rev. Fr. Aren Jebejian
Pastor

The Sermon of St. Basil of Cappadocia

Listen to me my children, I regard you like my own, I will teach you in detail of the Lord's fear; woe to me if I do not preach to you everyday, I am obliged to speak and inform you about God's will - to be kind of the heart and fulfilled.

The prophet Ezekiel terrifies me with his words every day; through God directing His words to the priests and says: "I entrusted you as a guardian of these people. If you see someone threatened by a sword and you do not alert him by blowing your horn, and the sword finds anyone of them unprepared, he will die illegally and I will demand his blood from you."

Truly, the sword is hell's threat and the horn is God's command.

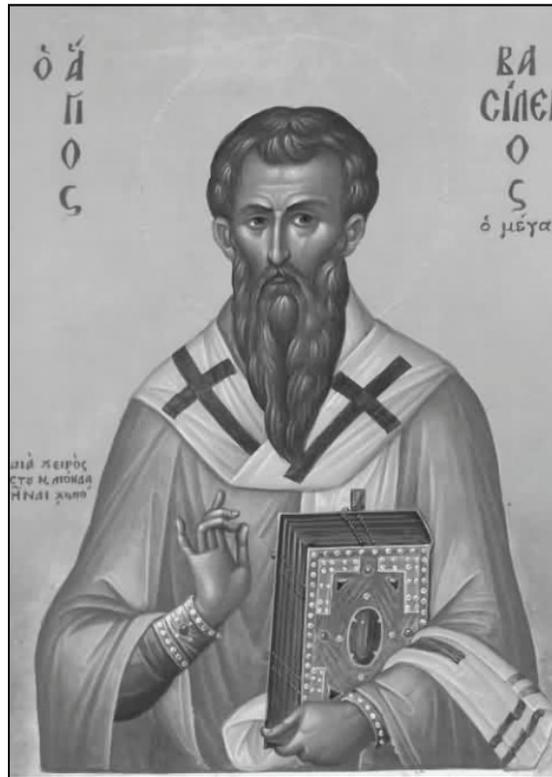
Brothers, whatever I tell you now, I am human like you with many more sins. But because I have been assigned as leader and counselor, I will gladly fulfill God's will in front of you with tears and heartfelt grief.

I do not want to confuse you with new and imaginary words, because honestly, I am also going to give an account of you, and for your understanding I am transferring to you our old and sacred Fathers' sealed rules.

But first you should know that the angels were not honored with priestly duty because the angels are innocent. It was given to priests, because they sin and long for Christ's forgiveness. Likewise, they will give the people hope for forgiveness of sin and repentance.

And now I beg you all patiently to listen to me.

Behold, Jesus Christ, descending from heaven, is seated at the Table and His invisible heavenly power has spread over the earth surrounding the Holy Table waiting for the Son of God and the Holy Spirit to distribute grace to the good people who approach cleansed. And now, brothers, approach with caution and fear in your heart, what you saw is not bread and wine, for it was that great mystery that is not visible to the naked eye but that you can only see through the eyes of your soul, for those



who search for it with a clean spirit will be fed spiritually and will rejoice with God. For those who do not, God can transform the mystery into raw meat and blood as has happened to one of the saints. But because the senses cannot comprehend raw meat and blood, God exemplified it with bread and wine. But do not look at it as bread and wine because this is truly Christ's Body and Blood. No one should approach unprepared and scornful because it is a scorching fire that burns and destroys sinners. Therefore, you should be cleansed by repenting, if you do not, then you will be consumed. No one should give up all hope and go away with a meaningless fear because that is not fear but God's contempt.

Communion is the door to the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, Christ-Son of God and our God. But those who approach purified will be earnestly adopted by God. But be mindful that every true child has the resem-

blance of his father and when you say—"Our Father Who art in heaven"—and make requests from Him, you should approach Him and His likeness, so He will listen to your prayers.

But if you do not resemble your heavenly Father in your deeds and with your prayers you do not honor Him. He will not listen to you, instead a wicked person's father, who lives in hell, will hear you, because you have behaved poorly.

Truly by hearing all this, be good, stay away from evil and fraud, so that you become worthy of your heavenly Father's blessings. Get rid of jealousy, fraud, wickedness, hypocrisy, pride, arrogance, self-seeking, conceit, antagonism, resentment, usury and the rest of all evils—a love for money, greed, temptation for women and use of magical drugs, all kinds of evil, animosity, lust, especially the ugly words coming out of your mouth, insult, paganism and resist going astray, the mention of these words will taint the minds of the people that are speaking as well as the ones that are listening. At the Day of Judgment their detestable mouths will be filled with worms if they do not stop cursing. The Lord said: "He who calls his brother stupid will deserve to burn in hell."

Therefore, we need to cleanse ourselves of our sins—no adultery, prostitution, sodomy, stealing, spitefulness, slothfulness, drinking, ill thought and ill feelings, killing, trouble-making, mercilessness, slandering, profanity, animosity, swearing, infidelity, lawlessness, unjustness, gossiping and other sins that are so bad that they are dangerous and unworthy of mentioning. I advise everyone to throw away his evil life and accept an honest life that is holy, thoughtful, kind, sweet, correct, peaceful, helpful to the ill, the afflicted, the poor, the homeless, the destitute, be virtuous, loving, faithful, hopeful, and love God and his people, because love is the most important virtue that comes from a good heart and true faith.

Respect your fathers and mothers and love your wives as you love yourselves. And you women love (obey) your husbands like you love (obey) our Lord, together fear God and observe the Lord's Day, Sunday.

*Be good, stay away
from evil and fraud,
so that you become
worthy of your
heavenly Father's
blessings.*

Young people, who are not married, love spiritual cleanliness, and by receiving this Communion you will be enlightened like a glistening mirror and when sunrays shine, your virtues will grow, you will live and will not be condemned as stated by St. Paul, the Apostle.

Truly there are premature deaths and suffering from unbearable pains, leprosy and other pains you can get from undeserving or being ill-prepared for Communion. No one should enter with hypocrisy thinking that those that are left behind are unworthy, because God does not accept suspicious persons. Do not be ashamed of things you have done that are human because it is not shameful. The biggest disgrace is the one that is obvious to all, even though now you are covering it by not confessing and repenting but on judgment day you will be confronted and you will not be able to cover up anymore, because your soul will prosecute you.

Thus, I told you everything in detail, from now I am innocent. The burden of your sins is on your head. That burden is now off of me. But I know that some of you despise the things I said to you today from the altar for on judgment day you will be facing Christ with the Holy Bible as your witness. Then the person that is being sneered at will not be able to be scorned, but will be scolded and chastised and will be sent to an inextinguishable fire.

Now I am going to conclude by telling you that I covered everything properly. Truly, those that take Communion properly will be decorated with St. Peter's good deeds and honored with the other apostles and will lie rewarded by Christ and God. But those who resist taking Communion are crucifying Christ again, and those shameless and unworthy people who take Communion are participating in the role of Judas and others who crucified Jesus. You know what is good for you. The Holy Spirit is the place where holy people live and is the source of all goodness that will cleanse your souls and your bodies. Redemption through Communion will provide remission of sins, glory to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

From the Parish Council Desk

Looking forward to a successful and fruitful new year

The year 2008 has been quite unusual for the parishioners of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church. It has been a year of change and challenge.

Last November, we said farewell to our pastor Father Aren who travelled to Armenia to fulfill a year of service at the Holy See of Etchmiadzin. During his absence, we were very fortunate to have Very Reverend Father Dajad Tsaturyan serve as our Interim Pastor.

St. Gregory's parish life was disrupted in the early morning hours of Sunday, June 8, 2008, when we were all saddened by the news of the electrical fire in our Cultural Hall. We were thankful that the sanctuary was virtually unharmed, however, the smoke damage to the Cultural Hall and other areas was extensive. The renovation and restoration process has been a long one. It has been a challenging time for us all and we would like to thank our parishioners for their patience and support.

We were unable to hold our annual Armenian Fest this year and this was a great disappointment not only to our parish, but to all those who have enjoyed the camaraderie, great food and fun over the years.

Unfortunately, the fire has affected all of our normal activities. However, we have been able to rise above the many obstacles which we have faced due to the devotion, commitment and strong faith of our parishioners.

As a result of countless meetings, I am happy to report that plans are now well under way for the cleanup, repair and renovation of our Church and hall. We are excited about the changes and cannot wait until everything will be completed. We are also enthusiastic that we can all soon plan the activities and events we missed this year.

On November 20th, we were happy to welcome Fr. Aren home after a long year away. The year has come full circle. On Sunday, November 23rd, everyone was happy knowing that our spiritual leader was back with us. We

are eager to hear about his experiences in Armenia.

As the Christmas holidays approach, we are thankful for all our blessings. We look forward to a successful and fruitful new year with many activities and encourage your participation and support so that our Church will continue to grow and flourish.

Happy New Year and Merry Christmas!

Michelle Babikian
Parish Council Chairperson

Keep in Your Prayers

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt 21:22

Marty Hamparzomian, Rev. Fr. Vahram Hazarian, Grace Klujian, Alyce Schaffer, Janice Sommese, Mary Sommese

May God touch them with His healing hand and grant them good health and strong spirit.



Noteworthy News from Nairi Choir

Georgette L. Mrofcza, Choir Director

Two days before Thanksgiving... Loosavorich article overdue...so many things to do to prepare for the Holidays...but I have to get this written and actually one of the most rewarding things I do is my "choir stuff." As of late I find a new joy and calm in our *Badarak* service. I am amazed after all these years, there is still new found beauty and understanding in our Divine Liturgy—it is inspiring. It is so beautiful. I know I have gone on and on before about how blessed we are to be Armenian Christians, but it always bears repeating!

Whenever I sit down to write an article, I review past articles and I recall last year around this time we were bidding a tearful farewell to Fr. Aren and tentatively welcoming Very Rev. Fr. Dajad Tsaturyan. None of us knew what to expect. Will he just do Divine Liturgy? What all will he do? Weren't we all surprised? Oh, yes. And blessed! Fr. Dajad proved to be a humble spiritual leader who always put our needs first. There were many accolades at his farewell gathering following his last Divine Liturgy on Sunday, November 16, 2008. He will be long remembered and missed. And so as the choir sat in the sanctuary after services to take pictures, our emotions ran from happy for his presence, sad for his departure, anxious about the return of Hayr

Aren. Changing of the guard... Sunday, November 23, the door opens, *Badarak* begins and there is Fr. Aren, likes always! He's back! As if he had never left. It was strange to me, but or so fitting, that his return began for so many of us with the Divine Liturgy. No hellos, no hugs, but the sign of the cross, "Our Father...." It wasn't until the sermon that he spoke to us. Then it all seemed real. He's really back. In his sermon he talked about the people of Gavar where he stayed in Armenia. How happy they were with so little, because their hearts were so full of Christ. A lesson we seem to overlook so often in our busy, hectic lives. This was a sermon we will long remember. As a choir we welcome Hayr Aren back and look forward to his guidance and wisdom as we face a challenging time in our church's history.

I want to personally thank the members of the Nairi Choir for their unending support following the fire. They carried on, as they always do, even though I was absent for many months. I thank them for their understanding and their devotion to service to the Lord.

We are now in the 50 day period called Advent. We joyously await the arrival of our Savior. The choir will resume practice twice a month—schedule to be announced. *Anyone* is welcome to join us. Please call George Nahabedian (847-967-5649) or myself (630-620-4260) if you are interested and want information on dates and times.



2008 Armenian International Women's Association Conference / Buenos Aires, Argentina

By Carrie Nahabedian

I had the pleasure this month to travel to South America with my sister Chris LaForce to speak at the AIWA conference. Earlier this year, I heard about AIWA and the conference in Buenos Aires from Sylvia Tirakian of Harvest Song Artisanal Preserves. The organization was established 18 years ago in Boston by women who recognized the need to establish and connect Armenian women worldwide. AIWA is a non profit NGO created to address the critical issues facing women everywhere, regardless of political persuasion and religious affiliation.

They meet every three to four years. Previous conferences were hosted in the cities of Yerevan, Geneva, London and Paris.

AIWA was born in the rough and challenging times following the massive earthquake in 1988 in Armenia. Their goals are simple and straightforward: to provide a forum for dialogue and discussion on issues of interest to Armenian women in the fields of education, social welfare, culture and business and to increase the visibility of Armenian women worldwide.

The conference attracts women from all over the Diaspora, The Americas, Europe, Armenia, Jerusalem and Moscow. The conference schedule was three days in length and covered topics that were wide ranging and hosted by prominent women such as Rakel Dink, the wife of the late Armenian Journalist, Hrant Dink, Donna Evans, the wife of the former US Ambassador to Armenia, Liliana Negre, a Senator for the Republic of Argentina, Gohar Sarigissya, the wife of the Armenia's Prime Minister. They were joined by Archbishop Kisag Mouradian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church in Argentina and many ministers of affairs from Armenia.

The group, as expected was a lively, social and loving group of women! It was great reuniting with the strong Armenian community from Los Angeles, who were so supportive of me when I lived there. Joan Agajanian Quinn

who is a AIWA representative to the United Nations as well as an accomplished artist and filmmaker, Armand Arabian, a retired California Supreme Court Judge and his wonderful wife Nancy, Eric and Linda Avazian, Lily Ring Balian who was the conference co-chair, and Cindy and Ken Norian all who have either dined at NAHA or at the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles. I know this group very well because I cooked a few weddings for the Armenian Community in Southern California and helped them when they needed guidance for their new church and community center kitchen.

Chris and I visited St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church on Armenia Street in Buenos Aires and the wreath laying ceremony at the Martyrs' Monument. The church was very old and had assigned seats for "regular" church goers. It was interesting to see how everyone from outside Argentina reacted to this unusual practice! People walked in and out during the service, which we only attended for a few minutes since both of us were exhausted from our journey. The choir was in the balcony overlooking the sanctuary and there was also bench seating on the sides of the church. The street also had an Armenian restaurant and a cultural center and hall which was a beehive of activity since over 125 Armenians from around the world converged on it!

I was the speaker at the luncheon on the final day of the conference. I spoke about the strong family values and bonds that were instilled at a very early age from our grandparents and parents. The need, especially in these uncertain and tumultuous economic times for the "family table" and the love that comes from dining and joining together as a family. It was these strong principles that guided me in my career and was instrumental in the success that followed. The strong bond of our family at NAHA is evident everywhere, from the personality, leadership and natural creativity of Michael and I, to the support of my sisters



Chris and Cathy and to the talent of Tom who made our vision a reality. Of course food is the thread the weaves through it all and I spoke about being passionate about what you love to do and putting "love" into what you cook, that is what makes the difference! The women were very receptive and enthusiastic about the topic and asked me many questions about cooking, my career and how it all came about.

The conference closed on many "high" notes, some very emotional and moving. Rakel Dink spoke passionately in Armenian about the strength and resilient nature of Armenia and the need to keep it alive and growing. Barbara Haroutunian moved the crowd to their feet as she pleaded with great exuberance about the importance of being together and working to solve issues to better Armenia. Each continent made their voice heard so they could host the next conference with Moscow and Los Angeles the front runners.

The conference chairs and AIWA organizers were inquisitive if Chicago and the Midwest would like to play a more active role in their group. If Los Angeles does host the next con-

ference in the coming years, I would wholeheartedly recommend it since the women are so diverse in their professional backgrounds and it makes for great programs and communications.

As Chris and I traveled throughout the city after the close of the conference, we would run into women we had met and you could feel the bond. Many of them did not speak English and I was embarrassed that I could not converse with them in Armenian! So many women asked about people they knew in the Chicago land area and it led to great conversation. I was happy to have been invited to participate in the conference because it prompted us to have a South American "adventure", but I was thrilled with being able to meet such energetic, loving and spiritual women who are passionate about their life and the bonds of the Armenian Church.

St. Gregory thanks the following for their generous donations: Sue Volkman in memory of Leonard "Skeeter" Shook and Beatrice Mossler in memory of her husband Donald.



On September 9, 2008, fourteen excited parishioners of St. Gregory's embarked on a pilgrimage to Armenia. Imagine the anticipation of these travelers who have never been to Armenia before. The members of this "crew" were: Marty Abezetian, "Little" Marty Abezetian, Sandy and Brooke Bower, Nancy Vartabedian Braun, Jack Cholakian, Mary Dadian, Arnie, Dorothy and Craig Koresian, George and Pauline Nahabedian, Agnes Vartabedian and Dolores "Dolly" Wolzark. What a group! Read on about their adventures.

A Pilgrimage to Armenia

By Brooke Bower

My lovely aunt called a few weeks ago and said, "I have a task for you." I replied, "OK, but I want to first say — no thank you, I do not want to be the Kitchen Chair for the next Church Picnic." Little did I know she had something even more enjoyable in store for me.

She provided the assignment, "Your Aunt Pauline and I would like you to write a brief article about our journey to Armenia. We think you would be good at it," she added.

This was surely no small task, a summary of the pilgrimage to Armenia, with 14 Armenians ranging in age from 23 to 80. I'm surprised the Sun Times hadn't already asked for a summation about how we all returned in one piece!

I personally felt the top three pilgrims with the most demerits during our excursion should have to co-author the article, but figured if we relied on them the article might show up 15 minutes late or not at all! (sorry Marty, little Marty and Mary —

we never did decide what the punishment was going to be for the most demerits on the trip!) I thought it best that I accept the responsibility and thanks my aunt for the opportunity.

Then, I asked my mom what my article should say. I needed a starting point. Mom said to put in a little humor, share some history and tell people what we saw.

So, here we go...

"Don't forget the individual baggies of toilet paper and packets of Imodium," my mom yelled from the other room. "What had I gotten myself into," I thought, "packets of Imodium? Had she thought of everything?"

Little did I know that my mom and Aunt Dorothy had been planning this excursion for months. They had thought of everything! We loaded the car and headed to the airport; 6 pieces of luggage, 6000 pictures worth of memory cards, video camera, snacks, regular camera, back up camera, and that was just for two people!



We all met at the airport gate and the journey began — everyone loaded on the plane, we got to our seats, we ate, we slept, we visited and finally, we landed in London. We piled off the plane, excited to be half way through our journey to Armenia, everyone was energized, then — the 5 hour layover hit. It was as if someone popped our balloon and all the air deflated. Everyone's true personalities started to shine.

When we arrived in Armenia, everyone was ready for their bed at the hotel. It was 10:30 P.M. in Yerevan. We collected our luggage, which seemed 10 times heavier than when we left for the trip and made our trek through the airport looking for the tour lady that would be holding a “St. Gregory Church” sign. As we exited the airport, we were greeted by a riot like crowd. Nothing like I had ever seen before. We were nervous, scared, excited, and of course exhausted. Our group didn't know what to do or what to expect. We followed our tour guide, loaded on the bus and headed for the Marriott Hotel in Yerevan.

After our first night sleep, the journey truly began. I am sure each of us had our own memorable moments, but since this is my article, I get to share mine!

I have to say that we *saw, discovered, learned,* and *experienced* many amazing things.

WE SAW

We saw Mt. Ararat on one of the most clear and beautiful days. We saw the poverty the Armenian people live with each day. We witnessed what the wonderful donations the Women's Guild did for

the girl's at *Mer Doon*. In Etchmiadzin, we saw the lance that pierced the side of Christ and wood from Noah's Arc.

WE DISCOVERED

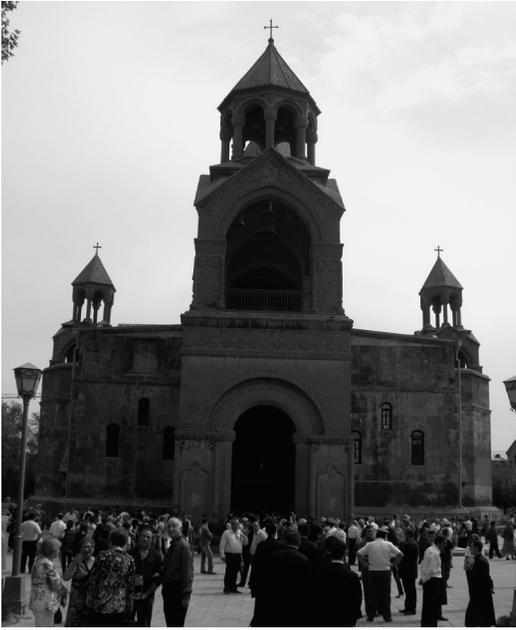
We discovered that when Jack “falls asleep” at the dinner table, or while riding on the tour bus, that he is really just “praying.” For the readers that were unaware, he prays a lot. We discovered the pearl of Armenia – Lake Sevan.

WE LEARNED

We learned that Arthur has one of the most lovely and generous families that many of us have ever met. Aunty Agnes learned that she will never visit a casino in a foreign country with Marty and Jack, while Nancy learned how to do Vodka shots while crying and laughing at the same time.

We experienced, boy did we experience— bustling open-air markets, a personal meeting with the Catholicos, the amazing St. Gregory choir signing in the St. Mary Church — the church carved into the side of a mountain. We experienced the blessing of the Holy Muron that happens once every 7 years.

We had the privilege of being escorted around by Hayr Soorp during our trip. He added many educational stops along the way. We had the opportunity to meet many of the gentlemen that now inhabit the Vazgenyan Monastery where Arthur studied. They greeted us with open arms and presented us with a beautifully orchestrated vocal experience. They shared many songs that will be a



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part of their next CD. We then also traveled to a very special place that will likely live in our minds forever. We made a stop at *Mangadoon*, the orphanage where Hayr Aren has spent many of his days. This stop was not only emotional, but also amazing. The children were so happy to see us and show us their home.

We spent some memorable time reflecting at the Armenian Genocide Memorial. It was difficult to walk through the memorial and see the devastating pictures and experiences that the Armenian people suffered. The memorial had an eerie silence yet it was peaceful at the same time.

We spent time in Etchmiadzin. We participated in the special Sunday service at the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin, the headquarters of the Armenian Orthodox church and the most visited pilgrimage site in Armenia. While there, we received a personal tour of the Catholicos's residence and surrounding gardens.

As our time in Armenia passed, we continued to see and participate in many remarkable things. Many of us made the difficult descent into the underground chamber where St Gregory the Illuminator was imprisoned for 13 years. At the same location, some friendly local Armenians graciously persuaded Uncle Arnie into purchasing a Wish Dove which he held, made a wish and sent out into the



Armenian sky. I think his wish came true because we were all present to help him celebrate his 70th birthday at Dolmama, a lovely restaurant in Yerevan.

Uncle George, Craig, and Mom scaled the hill of Khor Virap to take in the beautiful view of Mt. Ararat and the surrounding landscape. Dolly, dear Dolly, she did her best to participate in all activities while suffering through some extreme back pain. The Garni Temple, Amberd Fortress, Old Dilijan, The Complex of Letters, The Manuscript Museum, St. Mesrob Mashdot's tomb, and a drive through the village of Oshagan rounded out our trip.

All in all, we had a fabulous time. We returned home more informed and more passionate. We were given these very fine words as a parting gift from our Hayr Aren, "Remember the good things, forget the bad things you saw or experiences you had and know that we (the Armenian people) are making progress. One day Armenia will return as a successful nation."

A few highlights from our trip:

- 14 Armenia pilgrims
- 78 unloads and reloads onto the tour bus
- a few thousand pictures developed
- 2 Wish Doves launched
- Holy Communion received in Etchmiadzin
- 1 wipe out on the uneven pavement
- 7 ears of (feed) corn shared
- Many pounds of very fresh fruit consumed
- Hours of Armenian dancing
- Emotional visit with Arthur's family
- Many miles traveled

ONE PRICELESS PILGRIMAGE



Our Sunday School

Our Heritage

By Mary Kazarian, Sunday School Superintendent

One Sunday, after church services in early October of this year, I was confronted by a surprising number of people, all with a similar question on their minds: "Where are the children? Why were there no children sitting in their special section this Sunday? We like seeing the children on Sunday—where were they? Isn't there Sunday School anymore?"

"Sunday School has *NOT* been discontinued," I assured them. "It was unfortunate that so many families, by random chance, had unavoidable obligations occurring on this particular Sunday. The children would be here, for sure, next Sunday." Of course, as I knew it would, attendance was back on track the following Sunday.

What greatly surprised me, however, was the adults' special awareness regarding the children. Each Sunday, the children, matter of factly come to Sunday School, interact with each other and their teachers, follow a routine of learning, and participate in *Badarak* ceremonies, such as confession and communion. To them, there is nothing unusual about their participation: they apparently feel themselves to be an integral part of the Armenian Church. As I reflected on this, I visualized little Aidan, Harry and Reno sitting so patiently and following the others in making the sign of the cross; of Claudia, Francesca, Nina, Lucia, Eve, Ani, Evelyn, Sarah, quietly singing along with the choir or reciting the confessional and sacred prayers by heart; of Marshall, Charles, Tony, Harutyun and Simon subduing their playfulness and listening expectantly to the children's sermon; of Alex, Kyle, Nick watchful toward the young ones and assisting them during communion. I also thought of the adults during *Badarak* and their familiarity with the various protocols, the rising and sitting, making the sign of the cross, responding to the chants of the deacon or the priest. How many had sat as Sunday School children and

absorbed the forms and rituals which they so comfortably followed today? What did Sunday School mean to them when they were children? What does it mean to them now?

Was it the missing children on that October Sunday that perhaps stirred an intuitiveness of the preciousness of their heritage, a reminder of those that had come before them, of those that will remain after them, of those yet to come? Did that Sunday, when the Sunday School pews were empty, somehow stir a sense of recognition and responsibility for upholding the religious and secular traditions so closely tied to who and what we are — our precious "Armenianism?"

I thank those who questioned me about the missing children that October Sunday. I thank you for reawakening in me, and possibly yourselves, the heritage of the Armenian Church as a deeply meaningful guiding presence of our total being. Not least of all, I thank the parents and children who make a commitment to the Armenian Church and the Sunday School an important part of their daily lives.

On October 18, 2008, The Department of Youth and Education of the Diocese of the Armenian Church sponsored a special seminar for adults, teenagers and children. The seminar, hosted by St. Mesrob's Church in Racine, Wisconsin, provided an interactive learning adventure intended to increase an appreciation and knowledge of the Old Testament. Using hand motions, catch phrases and visualization techniques, the instructor led the audience on a fun-filled "walk" through the major events of the Old Testament. Kudos to Edie Johns and her daughter Claudia who prioritized their busy schedule to join me in attending this fascinating workshop. Claudia's review of the workshop follows:

Claudia Johns (11 years old)

"Creation. Fall. Flood. Four thousand years. Ur. Persian Gulf. Salt: Sarah, Abraham, Lot,



Terah. Tigris. Euphrates. Haran: Teran dies. " These are the words that were repeatedly used in the Walk-Thru-The-Old-Testament Seminar. But, the guide wasn't just talking. He was also waving his hands in the air to help the visitors remember the different sections of the Old Testament. I should know, considering I was there!

I'm 11 years old and I attended - wondering why my mom made me come to a grown-up-boring-as-all-get-out seminar thing on a Saturday. At the time, I didn't know what was actually going to happen. I was in for a surprise when I go there! For one thing, it wasn't boring.

The first thing our guide did was show the instructions of the seminar: Have fun, learn and don't take notes. He said that this wouldn't be all listening to him and all serious and stern and boring sorts of things! I didn't really believe him (it was Saturday and I wanted to watch TV shows, convinced this would bore me to death!). But 10 minutes into the seminar, I was participating and listening to every word and memorizing every hand movement.

In 6 hours, we learned hand movements and key words to help us remember the basics of the Old Testament. We did stop for a yummy lunch that the people from St. Mesrob's Church in Racine prepared for us. Creation all the way to Christ!

I don't remember it all, but I do remember a lot, and I think it will help me when I'm reading the Bible. Now when I read from the Old Testament, I

will know where we are in the story before Christ.

By Edie Johns, Sunday School Teacher

The seminar truly was outstanding. It was exhausting to try and review the entire Old Testament in a single day, but we found it refreshing to review it as a whole rather than dig into detail.

We hope to bring some of what we learned to our Sunday School like the use of hand gestures and designations of people and areas in the room where we were sitting to help us "see" the geography of the Holy Land. For example, our guide pointed to a woman volunteer and asked if everyone could see her. He told us God called Abraham, who lived near (h)'r (UR). Groaning, but with laughter, we reviewed the geography of the Holy Land with Ur, the Tigris, Euphrates, Haran, Sea of Galilee, Jordan River and Dead Sea. Soon we found ourselves on the "west" side of the room waving at the others as we became the "waves" of the Mediterranean Sea.

The seminar truly was outstanding. It was exhausting to try and review the entire Old Testament in a single day, but we found it refreshing to review it as a whole rather than dig into detail.

A reminder: There is open registration for Sunday School all year long. Our Sunday School needs and appreciates each family's participation.

From the Women's Guild

By Raelene Ohanesian, Women's Guild Chairperson

*Ladies, Daughters, Sisters, Mothers,
Aunts, and Granddaughters . . .
You are invited to join a party already
in progress.*

In the last few years, I have shocked many people while talking about my love and enthusiasm for the Women's Guild.

People outside our community can't believe we have an organization like this.

People inside our community or who share our culture don't expect to see a "young career girl" so interested in being a part of this organization. Funny. It surprises me, that anyone could not be excited about this amazing group.

My response to each of these people is the same. "Everything we do together is like going to a party with some of the funniest and most talented women you have ever known."

If you haven't already, I cordially invite you to join the party!

In Medieval times, "guilds" were formed as

small societies in which artisans or merchants could belong with fellow members who shared a common occupation or trade. The Women's Guild of the Armenian Church, and specifically at St. Gregory the Illuminator is different. Many women. Many ages. Many nationalities. Many occupations. Many skills. Many talents. What we share in common is a love and passion for the spirit, heritage and progress of our Church and Church family.

For me, there is one other important component. This organization connects me to all those who have come before me. I am joined with a long line of women who I have never known, but who are just like me. Their hearts, their laughter, their hands, their beliefs are the same as mine. They have passed something forward and we must also pass it forward, in turn. That is powerful.

I speak often, to women about joining the Women's Guild. Some say things like, "I don't like to bake" or "I don't have time". While baking IS an important part of our heritage and culture, as well as our most important fundraiser for the Church, it is far from all we



are, or all we do. I invite EACH of you to attend ANY of our events, at your convenience. You will be glad you did.

I do not ask you to consider joining the Women's Guild for all of the events, dinners, dances, meetings, fundraisers, baking dates, retreats, parties or socials you cannot attend. I ask you to join us for the ONE event you can.

For more information about the Women's Guild at St. Gregory, please contact me on my cell phone 563-505-0534 or at home 224-764-2016 anytime.

Nothing Stops the Guild from Making Choereg for our Hye Campers - hairnets and all.

Have you ever heard that old saying about the Post Office . . . "neither sleet nor snow nor dark of night . . . ?" Ever since I joined the Guild, that saying has new meaning to me. Time and time again, I have seen first hand, a group of talented and enthusiastic women take a little of this and a little of that and turn it into an experience that is so much more than could have been imagined.

When it came to the long-time tradition of making choereg for Hye Camp, this summer's fire presented many obstacles. The largest of those obstacles being, that we had no kitchen. Making the choereg was no question, how and where were soon answered with the help and support from our sister chapter at St. James Armenian Church in Evanston. Together, 16 women working with joyous hands and hairnets, talking and laughing, telling some new and some old stories until the last of the 42 dozen choereg was cooled and bagged.

I remember, both as a Hye Camper, then as a staff member, looking forward to Wednesday mornings at Hye Camp. It was always the morning we enjoyed "choeregs and cheese" provided by St. Gregory. It was by far everyone's favorite breakfast. In my 17 years at Hye Camp, there may have been a year where there



was no choereg – but I can't remember one. This year, despite our fire, was no exception.

Everything in life comes full circle. It didn't occur to me at the time, but any or all of those 9-year old girls enjoying choereg for breakfast with her cabin mates, talking about the daily news, sharing stories with her friends, talking about her family, may one day be the chairwoman of the St. Gregory Guild. And so it goes, our tradition continues.

Special thanks to the steadfast St. Gregory women; Helen Babikian, Kay Berberian, Charlotte Bader, Sandy Hitik, Vicki Kaprelian, Silva Karachorlu and Rose Tootooian.

Special thanks to the Women's Guild at St. James for welcoming us into their kitchen, and especially the following women for their hands; Debbie Der Asadourian, Mary Babagian, Lisa Coloian, Alice Gregorian, Anna Marie Norehad, Haiganoush Paylan, Margaret Stepanian, and Mariam Tatosian.

On the Sunday that Hye Camp ended, the children promptly presented a "Thank You" card in which all the campers and staff had signed their names.

A Journey Home

Karina Nikogosian

When coming to America 10 years ago, I began learning about my roots by attending St. Gregory Armenian Church in Chicago. Raised in Russia, I did not know much about the Armenian culture and religion. Learning about church traditions and being a part of a strong Armenian community made me realize that going to Armenia is something I must do. In the summer of 2008, I embarked upon a journey that I will never forget. Spending time with other Armenians and learning about my country as a member of the Armenian Service Project has enriched my life. Visiting all the churches and the historical sites, allowed me to stand in the shoes of my ancestors and glow with pride for my country. Despite multiple attempts by other nations to take our land and break down the spirit of Armenians, our nation continues to flourish both in Hayastan and in the diaspora communities.

One of the best parts of my trip Armenia was spending time with Very Rev. Fr. Aren Jebejian and seeing him lead the Divine Liturgy service at Holy Etchmiadzin. I was very proud that he

was given the honor to celebrate Divine Liturgy in such a historical church. It was also very comforting to have another St. Gregory member on the trip: Jessica Abezetian. Jessica and I could not wait to see Fr. Aren in Hayastan. Fr. Aren has known my family from the time we moved to America in 1998. I consider him a dear friend of mine, which is why his presence on our visits to the monasteries and other historical sites was very important to me and I wish he comes back to Chicago soon. The most memorable moment of the trip was when Fr. Aren and Fr. Tateos sang in the Kechard Monastery to display the great acoustic quality of the monastery. The echoing liturgical songs they sang brought the monastery to life and made me feel as if our ancestors were among us at the moment.

Aside from learning the historical background of my country, our ASP group spent time with the children at Camp Tsitsernak in Vanadzor, teaching them English. There is only a limited amount of English that we were able to teach in 10 days, but even the language barrier did not stop us from interacting with the campers. There was a very important bond connecting us with the children, our heritage.



It was fulfilling to know that the children were just happy that we spend time with them. Although many of them come from very poor homes, just having a friend to talk to and play sports with was enough for many of them; they were simply happy to have a role model around them. There are many things that we, living in America take for granted, even simple necessities as school or sports supplies. We were able to bring those items to the children for which they were extremely grateful.

I thank the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America for organizing such great programs as the Armenian Service Project and encourage those considering joining this trip to do so without delay. I am extremely grateful to have had such an opportunity and will cherish all the experiences I have shared on this trip.



ACYOA News

By Talin Hitik

On the weekend of September 26 - 28, over 50 young adults and clergy from the Eastern, Western and Canadian Dioceses gathered at the Techny Towers Conference Center in Techny, IL (Northbrook) for the 4th Annual Pan North American Retreat (PNAR). The goal of this yearly event is to bring together young people from the three North American Dioceses to connect with each other through spiritual growth and Christian fellowship. This year's retreat was sponsored by our own ACYOA Central Council. The weekend theme was "Eight Days a Week?" and the retreat leader was Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian, Director of Youth and Vocations for St. Nersess Seminary. On Friday night, shortly after the participants had arrived from all over the country, Fr. Stepanos introduced the weekend's theme by playing the Beatles tune, "Eight Days a Week". He explained that Sunday, which we know as the Lord's Day, is also theologically known as the "eighth" day; a day beyond time. It is the day of resurrection and of renewed creation.

The rest of the weekend's presentations continued to be incredibly lively, interactive, and inspiring. On Saturday morning, participants cackled with delight, as Fr. Stepanos made a grand entrance into the conference room donning a full suit of armor! He stayed in costume during his entire session, which was aptly entitled, "Putting on the Armor of Faith:" Going into Battle Daily to Live a Christian Life. Other sessions included St. Nersess seminarian Ben Rith-Najarian, whose session was entitled "I Will Bless the Lord at All Times:" How Scripture Guides Us through Our Daily Life; College Ministry Facilitator Julie Hoplamazian, whose topic was "Blessed are the Merciful:" Christian Service as a Means of Prayer; and Dn. Matthew Ash of the Western Diocese, who spoke on "Let Your Light so Shine Among Others:" Living the Example of Prayer. There was also a Bible study on the Lord's Prayer conducted by Dn. Levon Kirakosyan, and a panel discussion entitled, A Dummy's Guide to College Life, led by Talin Hitik, Program Coordinator of the Central Council.

After a fun-filled weekend, the participants worshipped together at Divine Liturgy, which was celebrated by Fr. Stepanos. Everyone had had so much fun getting to know each other over the weekend, that they were all so hesitant to get on their planes back home. In all, the weekend was a great success!



Mary Najarian Poulsen 1925-2008

Mary Najarian Poulsen was born on January 26, 1925 in Chicago, IL, to Michael and Zabel Najarian. She was one of 4 children – 3 sisters, Elizabeth, Mary and Rose and brother Jack. Elizabeth and Jack predeceased Mary.

Mary was the organist for St. Gregory Church at the Hoyne Avenue address for many years. She played the organ while her older sister Elizabeth was the choir leader. Rose, the youngest sister sang in the choir just to be near her older sisters. They were fondly labeled the “3 Najarian Sisters.”

Mary was also a charter member of the Chicago ACYOA and very active for many years.

Upon graduating from high school she was an office clerk for Felt Products and within a few years became the Executive Secretary to the President. There she was introduced to Robert Scott Poulsen who became her husband. They were blessed with 2 children Bobby and Robin and 4 grandchildren. Mary’s whole life was a loving bond with her grandchildren. Her husband Bob died of a heart attack in 2003.

During her illness with lung cancer, her prayer was to live long enough to see her oldest grandchild Rachel graduate from high school and on June 1, 2008 (in a wheelchair) was able to attend her graduation and she also got to see her enter Valparaiso University.

Mary was loved by so many and will be missed by so many, especially her friends at St. Gregory. She attended church faithfully and always sat in the same pew every Sunday. It will be difficult not to see her there.

Mary passed away on September 5, 2008. The “Dan Gark” was officiated by Rev. Fr. Dajad Tsaturyan and graveside burial was officiated by Rev. Fr. Tavit Boyajian at Irving Park Cemetery.

Mary was a true example of a special passage from the book of Timothy, “I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.”

May her soul rest in Everlasting Peace.

In Lieu of Flowers

St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church gratefully acknowledges and thanks the following parishioners and friends for their donations in Lieu of Flowers in Memory of Mary Najarian Poulsen:

Children of Mary Poulsen – Robin and Bill Bendewald and Robert and Alice Poulsen and grandchildren Rachel, Tessa, Ryan “Bubba” and Sabrina.

George Jr. and Sharon Anast, Marian and Dean Argiris, Ralph W. Benway, Deborah and Ralph Derasadourian, William and Elaine Doyle, Charles and Annette Frankian, Alice and Ernest Gregorian, William and Beatrice Green, Howard and Margi Kahan, Elizabeth Kamajian, Robert and Victoria Kaprelian, Dr. Vahe and Mrs. Silva Karachorlu, Mary Kazarian, Barbara and John Lannan, Claudia and

Edward Lannan, Don McNulty and staff of Riken of America, Inc., Bea Mossler, Raelene Ohanesian, John and Shooshan Paklaian, Haig and Agnes Pedian, Eric Poulsen, William Poulsen, Sharon and Stuart Shapiro, Oscar and Margaret Stepanian, Mariam Tatosian, Michael W. Tootoian, Agnes Vartabedian, Susan Volkman, Nancy L. Weiss, Gladys Zakarian, Tomas S. Cantos, Dennis and Mary Kay Mitchell, Nanette Rankin Family, Agnes E. Lovell Mary D. Alloian, Margaret and Hugo Sarkesian, Helen and Nishan Babikian.

Loosavorich Newsletter

Martin Abezetian, Arnold and Dorothy Korresian, George and Pauline Nahabedian

Donation of Divine Liturgy Book
Nairi Choir

News, News, News

A fond farewell and thank you to Fr. Dajad for his spiritual guidance during a difficult year at St. Gregory... and a warm welcome back to Fr. Aren, who has returned from his year long stay in Armenia.

Now with the reconstruction of our Cultural Hall beginning, we thank all who never gave up and came to church, regardless of the many obstacles caused by the fire. The sanctuary was there for our prayers and badarak.

We said a sad "goodbye" to Mary and Phil Battle this summer as they made their way to their new home in North Carolina. We know their children and grandchildren are thrilled to have them near- by... but, their Chicago family truly misses them. Don't forget to visit us!

Making the move – congratulations to the Babikian family and to Sella Gircik on their new homes. We wish them much happiness.

Georgette and John Mrfocza hosted a farewell dinner for Fr. Dajad at their home in Lombard. The Nairi Choir members were present and enjoyed an evening of excellent dining and

conversation.

The St. Gregory Christmas Party! What more can we say. It was held at Costa's Restaurant in Greektown on Saturday, December 6th. Those who attended had a wonderful time enjoying the great food, door prizes and games. We were entertained by "BobbyG" singing all the old favorite tunes, along with many Christmas songs. The crowd sang along and danced, even the "younger" generation joined in. Our thanks to the Nairi Choir who organized, donated and even "entertained".

Don't forget to read the article about the St. Gregory "Fabulous Fourteen" and their pilgrimage to Armenia. The laughs, tears (and there were plenty of them), van rides, morning breakfasts, lunches, vodka toasts, families, Etchmiadzin, the wonderful historic tours, Meri (our tour guide), Fr. Aren's enormous knowledge and most of all, the children and friends made this truly a magical trip.

Weddings:

September 6, 2008

Kelly Rose Reibel
Sean Michael Dzubin

November 1, 2008

Ara Arsham Zakarian
Natalie Tovar

New Arrivals:

July 11, 2008

Delaney Catherine Kersten
Daughter of Timothy and Nicole Moore Kersten. Grandparents: Patrick and Kathleen Moore.

July 26, 2008

Quentin John Kargenian
Son of Jack and Kirsten Kargenian. Grandparents: Gloria and Harold Kargenian, Dr. Gerald Malek and Patricia Harrington.

August 11, 2008

Alaina Lia Libertini
Daughter of Jenna and Bruno Libertini. Grandparents: Armen and

Linda Zakarian; Mr. And Mrs. Fernando Libertini.

Great-grandmothers: Beatrice Asadorian and Rose Zakarian.

Baptisms:

June 28, 2008

Dominique Marie Klujian
Daughter of Haig and Nicole Klujian
Godparents: Dominic John Vacca and Arpe Klujian Petkus.

Calvin Alexander Petkus
Son of Arpi and Geoffrey Petkus. Godparents: Haig Mathew Klujian and Nicole Klujian.

September 13, 2008

Ava Grace Grzymkowski and Sloan Madeleine Grzymkowski
Twin daughters of Sara and Jeffrey Grzymkowski. Godparents: Edward Klujian and Stacey Esparza.

November 13, 2008

Quentin John Kargenian
Son of Kirsten and John Kargenian. Godparents: Peter Harold Kargenian and Sara Kuth Gray.

November 29, 2008

Alaina Lia Libertini
Daughter of Jenna and Bruno Libertini. Godparents: Fernando Libertini and Dawn Zakarian.

Funerals:

September 8, 2008

Mary Najarian Poulsen

October 18, 2008

Charlotte Tavitian Kadlec

November 3, 2008

Mary Kerridan

Sandy's Corner

The holidays are here and what's better than getting the children together to make cookies. Yes, it takes time and patience but they will remember doing this with you for the rest of their lives. One basic recipe makes three different cookies. They are very delicious. This recipe makes 4 dozen 2 inch cookies. If rolling out for cutout cookies it will make fewer cookies depending on size of cutouts. Decorate by sprinkling tops with different color sugars. Decorate cutout cookies with royal icing or powdered sugar icing. This recipe is from the Food Network.

3 in 1 Sugar Cookie

Ingredients

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour	3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon baking powder	3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1/4 teaspoon fine salt	2 large egg yolks
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature	1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Coarse sugar, aka sanding or crystallized sugar	1/4 teaspoon finely grated orange zest

Royal Icing, recipe follows

Directions

Whisk the flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl. Beat the butter and both sugars in another medium bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 30 seconds. Add the egg yolks, vanilla and orange zest mixing until fully incorporated. Slowly add the flour mixture, and continue beating until the dough comes together, stopping and scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed.

For rolled cookies: Roll about a tablespoon of dough by hand into a ball. Dip 1 side of the balls into some coarse sugar and place them sugar-side-up on an ungreased baking sheet, leaving about 1-inch between cookies.

For sliced cookies: Divide dough in half, roll by hand into 2-inch-wide logs, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, at least 2 hours. Cut the logs into 1/4-inch-thick cookies and place them on ungreased baking sheets, leaving about 1-inch between cookies.

For cutout cookies: Divide dough in half, pat into disks, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, at least 2 hours. Roll dough between lightly floured parchment, or waxed paper, until about 1/3-inch thick. Transfer sheets to a baking sheet and refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes. Cut into desired shape using a cookie cutter, place them on ungreased baking sheets, leaving about 1-inch between cookies. (Gather the dough scraps together, pat into a disk, chill and reroll.) Refrigerate cookies while preheating the oven to 375 degrees F, for at least 30 minutes. Bake the cookies, until the bottoms are golden, about 10 to 15 minutes depending on shape. Cool on sheets until firm enough to transfer to a rack to cool. Decorate as desired and serve, or store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 month.

Royal Icing: 5 tablespoons meringue powder (egg white powder), 6 tablespoons water, 1 pound confectioners' sugar (about 3 3/4 to 4 cups or 1 box)

Food coloring, as desired (Paste coloring is best)

Combine all the ingredients, except the food coloring, in the bowl of a standing mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix slowly until stiff enough to form peaks. The icing should be pure white and thick, but not fluffy and bubbly. If the frosting is overbeaten, it will get aerated which makes it harder to work with. If this happens, let the frosting sit to settle, then use a rubber spatula to vigorously beat and smooth out the frosting.

Alternatively, combine ingredients in a large bowl, and beat with hand beaters on low speed until the frosting thickens to stiff peaks.

Add up to 1 tablespoon food coloring and mix with a rubber spatula until the color is uniform. (Adding too much color reduces the sheen of the frosting and can break down the consistency of the frosting over a couple of days.) Store icing, covered, with plastic film on the surface of the icing. Yield: 1 pound royal icing (1 2/3 cup)

Powdered Sugar Icing: 2 cups powdered sugar, 2 large egg whites, 1/2 tsp. lemon juice

Whisk powdered sugar, egg whites and lemon juice in medium bowl until well blended. Spoon 1/4 of icing into 4 small bowls, tint icing with food coloring. Decorate cookies with icing and assorted decorations. Let stand until icing is firm and dry. Icing can be prepared 3 days ahead.



Donations towards the purchase of poinsettia plants to beautify the Holy Altar and Sanctuary during this Christmas season will be gratefully received.

If you would like to order a poinsettia plant in memory/honor of a loved one, please mail this form to the church office with your donation or bring it to church and drop it in the mailbox outside the office.

All donors' name will be printed in the Christmas Sunday Bulletin.

Poinsettias may be taken home after the Divine Liturgy on January 6, 2008.

Donor Name _____

Number of Plants _____ @ \$15.00 each \$ _____

In Memory of _____ *or* *In Honor of* _____

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