

St. Mary, Yettem

by Rev. Fr. Vartan Archpriest Kasparian

Note: The history of St. Mary Armenian Church from the earliest days until 1986 is presented in the previous volumes prepared for the 65th Anniversary in 1976 and the 75th Anniversary in 1986, respectively. The purpose of this presentation is to bring the reader up to date on events from 1986 to the present, 2011, when we are celebrating the 100th Anniversary of St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem.

The full story of Yettem begins about 2000 years ago in a place we have come to call the Holy Land. We are gathered with our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles as He gives them His final farewell and directions. As our Lord looks at His Apostles, He speaks to them and gives them their charge. He says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." [Matt. 28:18]

Two of the Apostles who were there assembled, St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew, brought Christ's message and Church to Armenia; others traveled with the same message to different parts of the world. Christianity was preached and practiced in Armenia from the earliest days. For a time, it was a persecuted faith. Then, through the evangelization efforts of St. Gregory the Illuminator, in AD 301 Christianity was proclaimed as the state religion of Armenia. Subsequently, in AD 404, an Armenian alphabet was compiled by St. Mesrob for the sole purpose of rendering the Holy Bible and the various services and theological treatises into Armenian. From that point, Christianity had a firm basis in Armenia.

Our people lived in what is known as Greater Armenia, growing, practicing their Christian faith, and not infrequently being persecuted for being Christians. This persecution reached its climax in the late 19th and early 20th century. At the instigation of the Ottoman Turkish government, using World War I as the pretext, a massive genocide was begun. It began in earnest in 1915. When it was over, some 1 ½ to 2 million Armenians had been killed and an entire nation had been pushed off of its ancestral homeland.



Even though this slaughter occurred in 1915, for years before there were signs that all was not well. The Turks were Muslims and according to the Muslim law – Sharia – Christians were considered as second class citizens or subjects of the Ottoman Empire in which they lived.

Even in the 1890's it was felt that some basic changes had to be made. The liberty of the United States seem to beckon. Our people knew that

here in America they would be free to practice their religion, unfettered and freely. A group from the "old country" came to the San Joaquin Valley, present-day Yettem. This group consisted of Rev. Haroutiun Jenanyan, Nazareth Spenchanian, and Gabriel Baghdoyan. In 1901, they returned to permanently settle, selecting the Yettem site because, with its orchards, vineyards, farms, and mountains, it reminded them of their homes in the "old country."

Others came. After a while, they began to sense the need for a spiritual life. On Pentecost Sunday in 1903, the first religious services were held in Yettem, under the trees. That same year, the name "Yettem" was officially adopted.

Eventually, the first St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem was built. The Blessing of Stones for the new church was conducted by Bishop Hovsep Sarajian in May, 1909, after a celebration of the Divine Liturgy. It was duly consecrated on July 3, 1911 by Bishop Moushegh Seropian. Not too long after, the first Ladies Society of the Western Diocese was established here at St. Mary Parish in Yettem. That first wooden church served the community well for many years. Then, on June 12, 1945, it was destroyed by fire. At the time, the then Parish Priest, The Rev. Fr. Garabed Kalfayan was in Jerusalem, returning from a meeting of the National Ecclesiastic Assembly which had just elected Kevork VI as the Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians. When he received word of the church's having been burned down, he responded, "Don't worry about the church's having been burned. We will yet build a better one." And so it happened, under the leadership of Garabed Simonian and with the active participation of the members of the parish.

This new church was consecrated on November 16, 1947, by Bishop Vartan Kasparian and Archbishop Mampre Calfayan. In the mid-1940's Lillian Neffian became the first woman to become a voting member of St. Mary Parish. In 1956 a 10th anniversary celebration was held. Later, in 1960, the parish was honored with a visit by the then Catholicos, His Holiness Vazken I.

Once again fire hit the community. On February 27, 1965, the original Yettem Hall was completely destroyed by fire. It was eventually rebuilt and on April 21, 1968, the new hall was dedicated. Eventually, in 1974, the hall was renamed the Khacher and Shatene Majarian Hall in honor of the generous donation of land which the couple made to St. Mary Parish. The participation of the community was so widespread that the mortgage was burned on March 23, 1969.

Again the parish was honored by visits of a high ranking clergyman, this time in the person of His Beatitude Archbishop Shnork Kaloustian, Patriarch of the Armenians of Turkey. He visited the community in 1970, 1974, and 1978.

In a desire to make the interior of the new church even more beautiful than it was, the ACYO initiated a Stained Glass Window project which was eventually completed in 1976. It added immeasurably to the interior of the church.

On September 8-9, of 1973, Deacon John Kasparian, the Spiritual Administrator was ordained to the sacred priesthood by Bishop Vatche Hovsepian, Primate of the Western Diocese. He thus became the first American born member of the Western Diocese to be ordained to the priesthood of the Armenian Church.

Under the leadership of Richard Hagopian, assisted by Jack Peloian, Sam Farsakian, Harry Kaloustian, and Roxie Barsamian, the 65th anniversary of St. Mary Parish was duly commemorated. The event was most notably marked by a Gala Banquet and by the publication of commemorative book presenting the history of the parish from 1911-1976. Two years later, in 1979, the St. Mary Ladies Society celebrated its 75th anniversary. Later, in 1984 the Ladies Society sponsored and underwrote the cost for an

Armenian Martyrs' Monument. It was dedicated by Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian.

On February 2, 1982, the 70th Anniversary of St. Mary Parish was observed. As we approached the mid-1980's, preparations were begun for commemorating the 75th anniversary of St. Mary Parish. The General Chairman for this historic event was Jerry Shapazian. The year long observance began in October, 1985. Subsequent activities included the preparation of an anniversary flag, a march from the old Yettem train depot to the church, the offering of a Divine Liturgy, the re-enactment of the naming of the parish, the release of doves and balloons, several receptions, an organ recital by Berj Zamkochian, the donation of a carpet of St. Mary Church donated by George Kaspien, and a carpet of Holy Etchmiadzin donated by Lucille Margosian, John & Sharon Kaprielian, and son, Ara; Karon Penny and sons, Douglas and William; Aron Margosian; George and Rose Marie Margosian and daughters, Melissa and Tina. The major highlight of the year long activities was on October 18, 1986, with a gala banquet. The banquet and program were captured in video, along with the introductions of all those in attendance. All were pleased by the showing of the video of the history of St. Mary Parish community of Yettem which presented Yettem's story from the earliest days until 1986. Just as for the 65th Anniversary, again a commemorative book was prepared and published, bringing the story of Yettem up to the year 1986. Jerry Shapazian, General Chairman for the 75th Anniversary was granted an Encyclical of Commendation.

At the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, October 19, 1986, His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian ordained Acolytes Jason Kaloustian and Richard Kizirian to the rank of Stole-bearer and Darren Ananian was ordained to the rank of Acolyte.

When the various Anniversary activities were concluded, in 1987 a Ways and Means Committee was formed, with Larry Barsamian serving as the first chairman. Later, in 1987, Fr. Vartan Kasparian, Parish Priest, was elected as Chairman of the Diocesan Council and served in that capacity until 1989. In November of the same year, Fr. Vartan served as the official translator for His Holiness Vazken I on his visit to the Western Diocese. In the spring of 1988 the Western Diocese purchased a camp site near Dunlap. Our ladies worked to prepare the kitchen by the purchase and placing of cooking utensils, a refrigerator/freezer, and generally stocking the kitchen. When the camp officially opened on July 9-10, 1988, His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian celebrated the Divine Liturgy and our own Matthew Davidian and Katherine Kasparian served as altar servers. On October 15, 1988, His Eminence ordained them, along with Craig and Lisa Ouzounian as Acolytes. Also, in the fall of 1988, an Armenian Language

School was re-established and continued until 1990.

Our Ladies Society then underwrote the cost of installing marble flooring at the main altar and marble siding for our



side altars. In 1989, our Ladies Society celebrated its 75th Anniversary. Also, during this year, His Eminence Archbishop Vatche ordained Randy Tellalian to the rank of Stole-bearer. Our own ACYO also donated the new marble sign over the main entrance to the church.

The following year, 1990, Fr. Vartan left St. Mary Parish for an assignment as Vicar General and Youth Director for the Western Diocese. He was succeeded by Fr. Artoon Sempadian who served at St. Mary Parish until 1993. During Fr. Artoon's tenure, the property west of the church parking lot was purchased by the parish. Also, in 1990, Carolyn Mikaelian was the first woman elected to the Parish Council of St. Mary Parish. During Fr. Artoon's tenure, the present wrought iron fence and gates were made and installed. The main gates were donated by Fr. Artoon and Yeretzgin Betty in memory of their son, Michael, who perished in a motorcycle accident.

On July 7, 1991, Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian conducted the following ordinations in St. Mary Parish: Sub-deacon Sirag Kalfayan was ordained to the rank of Full Deacon; Stole-bearers David Yahnian, Alan Farsakian, and Randy Tellalian were ordained to the rank of Sub-deacon. The parish also instituted the practice of awarding scholarships for the children and grandchildren of parish members for our Diocesan Summer Camp. Our fund source for these scholarships has been the Mekjian-Kutumian Fund.

During the 1980's and through 2011, a number of projects were completed. Among them was the remodeling of the Majarian Hall Kitchen, the building of a Memorial Wall on the east side of the Majarian Hall, the complete redoing of the parking lot, the building and dedication of a special khachkar



(cross stone), the re-roofing of the Sunday School building. Earlier, the Ladies Society underwrote the cost of our Armenian Martyrs' Monument. This was completed in 1984.

When Fr. Artoon left the parish in 1993, his position was filled by Fr. Stepanos Dingilian who served St. Mary Parish until 1996. It was during his tenure that the Yettem Open Golf Tournament was initiated, under the chairmanship of Harry Kaloustian in 1991. On August 18, 1994, His Holiness Vazken I, Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians entered his eternal rest. Later that year, on September 24, 1994, at a Special Diocesan Assembly called to elect representatives to the National Ecclesiastical Assembly at Holy Etchmiadzin to elect a successor to His Holiness, two of our parishioners, Richard Hagopian and Araxie Menendian, were selected as two of the delegates from the Western Diocese. At the close of 1994, on December 18, His Eminence Archbishop Vatche ordained John Aslan, Christopher Aslan, Christopher Sheklian, and Ryan Tellalian to the rank of Acolyte.

Two of the memorable events in our parish during 1996 were the historic visit of the new Catholicos, His Holiness Karekin I. The second was the ordination of Sub-deacon Randy Tellalian to the rank of full Deacon.

In 1997, the bell from the former Armenian Presbyterian Church of Yettem was donated to St. Mary Parish. Since then, it has been kept in a special place just to the north of the main entrance to the church. In the same year, Pete Barsamian was given a Certificate of Commendation from Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian.

With Fr. Stepanos's departure in 1996, the parish was without a full time priest until 1998, when Fr. Sahak Kaishian was assigned as the new Parish Priest. He served in St. Mary Parish until 2003. During his tenure, a regular Sunday Bulletin was again prepared and distributed each Sunday giving the day's scriptural readings and announcements of upcoming events. In 1998-1999 the kitchen of the Majarian Hall was completely remodeled. The project was funded by Isabel Lion in memory of her parents, Aram and Satenig Keklikian and under the leadership of George Ouzounian, Shirley Ouzounian, and Araxie Menendian.

Although he was not the Parish Priest at the time, the parish observed the 25th anniversary of Fr. Vartan's ordination to the priesthood.

His Holiness Karekin I entered his eternal rest on June 29, 1999. On September 11, 1999, Fr. Sahak was selected as one of five clergy representatives to the National Ecclesiastical Assembly to elect a successor. Elected was Archbishop Karekin Nersessian who became His Holiness Karekin II.

The year 1999 also marked the year when some of the members of our Ladies Society began to volunteer to help out at Sister Ursula's Kitchen in Visalia in cooking and serving meals for the needy.

In October 2, 2000, His Eminence Archbishop Vatche



Hovsepian conducted the following ordinations in our parish: Kay Hagopian, Hagop Tabibian, Christopher Sheklian, and Ryan Tellalian were ordained as Sub-deacons. Matthew Agnew, Jacob Kaishian, Melissa Sheklian, and Vana Tellalian were ordained as Acolytes.

In the year 2000, Fr. Sahak initiated the first Vacation Bible School and this practice was continued until 2010, when lack of attendance forced its suspension. On the positive side, during that same year, the Ways and Means Committee was reactivated, with Anna Kaloustian capably serving as Chairman until today. Also, the year 2000 marked the awarding of an Encyclical [Gontag] of Commendation being awarded to Betty Farsakian for her years of service to St. Mary Parish.

The year 2001 was truly historic for the Armenian Church throughout the world. It marked the 1700th Anniversary of the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia. Commemorative events were held throughout the world. Of course, the main one was held at Holy Etchmiadzin. Five young people from our parish joined in the celebratory pilgrimage to Holy

Etchmiadzin to commemorate this great event. They were Erica Ananian, Sandra Enfiedjian, Tamara Enfiedjian, Tamara Karakashian and Ryan Tellalian. The exterior of the church was beautified by a wrought iron entrance railing which was made, constructed, and installed and donated by Chuck Simonian and family. His Holiness, Karekin II paid an official visit to our parish during 2001. Later on in the year, on October 21, 2001, under the chairmanship of Harry Tellalian, St. Mary Parish observed its 90th anniversary. A commemorative book was published to mark this event.

During that same year, Beatrice Soxman became the first woman to be elected to the office of Parish Council Chairman. Fr. Sahak's tenure as Parish Priest ended with his departure from the parish in 2003.

In the fall of 2003, by the appointment of the new Primate of the Western Diocese, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Fr. Vartan returned as the Parish Priest of St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem. For the first few months this was on a part time basis because he was then teaching full time at Mt. Whitney High School in Visalia, with supplemental classes at Chapman University and West Hills College. In June of 2004, the appointment became full time. Fr. Vartan then designated the second Sunday of each month as Childrens' Sermon Sunday and the fourth Sunday of the month as Question and Answer Sunday. The regular publication of the parish newsletter YETTEM was resumed.

On December 3, 2003, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan paid his first official visit to St. Mary Parish. On this occasion he presented a patriarchal Encyclical [Gontag] of Commendation and St. Nersess medal to Deacon Sirag Kalfayan and Araxie Menendian.

No sooner had Fr. Vartan returned to St. Mary Parish when



the parishioners decided to celebrate the 30th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

On January 18, 2004, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan again visited St. Mary Parish, this time to bestow the title of Avak Kahana (Archpriest) upon Fr. Vartan. At about the same time, our Mr. & Mrs. Club undertook the project of purchasing and installing a ceiling mounted projector which can be used for VCR tapes, DVD's, and in conjunction with a computer. They also purchased a new sound system for the Majarian Hall.

Our Ladies Society observed its 90th anniversary on April 3, 2004. His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan presided over the day's events which included a consecration of the Khach Kars (cross stones) to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Genocide of 1915. The following month, May 16, 2004, Fr. Barouyr Avedisian from Holy Etchmiadzin was our guest. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy and delivered the sermon. A couple of weeks later, on May 30, 2004, with His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian presiding and officiating, the 100th Anniversary of the first services conducted in the community of Yettem was commemorated with an outdoor Morning Service [Matins]. There followed a solemn entrance into the church, the blessing of our new Rodgers organ and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Barely a month later, from June 11-14, His Holiness Karekin II paid a pastoral visit to the parishes of the San Joaquin Valley.

During the Lenten season of 2005, we initiated a Souper Supper program. It consisted of meeting each Wednesday evening during Lent, having a simple meal of soup, bread, and a beverage, and then the conducting of the Lenten Peace and Rest Services. Over the years, the basic format was kept. For Good Friday of 2005, our parish was invited to take part in a community Good Friday Service. It consisted of a march from St. Mary Roman Catholic Church in Visalia to the Fox Theater where a brief service was conducted. For several years, the basic format was the Roman Catholic Service of Stations of the Cross. In 2007, we were honored by having some of our ACYO members carry the representation of Christ's tomb [kerezman] in the procession from the church to the Fox Theater. Our choir sang for several of the services at the Fox Theater. In 2011, our ACYO members again joined in by helping to carry the cross in the procession.

Then, on April 3, 2005, our St. Mary Ladies Society observed its 90th anniversary. From October 18 through November 7, 2005, at the invitation of His Holiness Karekin II, Fr. Vartan spent three weeks at Holy Etchmiadzin. He had the opportunity to meet with

the students at the Kevorkian Seminary at Holy Etchmiadzin. Earlier in the year, Fr. Vartan had been appointed to be the official representative of the Western Diocese to the National Council of Churches. His first attendance was at the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches at Baltimore, Maryland. He attended subsequent General Assemblies in Orlando, Florida, New Jersey, Denver, Minneapolis, and New Orleans.

On May 28, 2006, during the Divine Liturgy, Sub-deacons Christopher Sheklian and Ryan Tellalian were ordained to the rank of full Deacon. Sara Davidian, Benjamin Wall, Jacob Yahnian, and Mikelle Yahnian were ordained to the rank of Acolyte [Tbir].

Our ACYO Chapter hosted the ACYO Diocesan General Assembly from November 23-25, 2007. The St. Mary, Yettem chapter won the ACYO Achievement Award for that year. During the General Assembly, an educational presentation was made by Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian and Megan Jendian of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

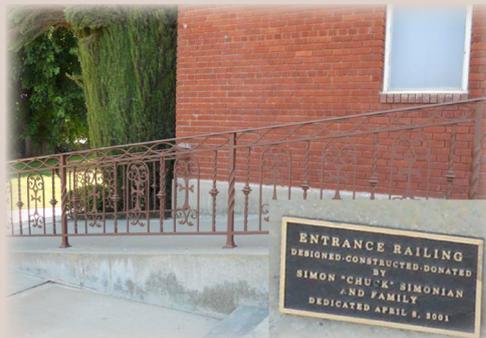
During 2008, under the sponsorship of our Ways and Means Committee and the financial backing of Dr. Neshan Tabibian, we produced a DVD entitled "Understanding Our Divine Liturgy". This DVD, explaining the Divine Liturgy has been ordered from as far away as Australia.

As a sign of our community involvement, on Sunday, April 20, 2008, Tulare County Sheriff Bill Whitman and Visalia Police Chief Bob Carden came to St. Mary Parish and delivered a most informative presentation on Gang Activity in Tulare County.

From July 1-19, 2008, Fr. Vartan led some 23 of our Diocesan Youth in a CYMA (Christian Youth in Mission to Armenia) pilgrimage to Armenia. Members of the pilgrimage from Yettem included Jordan Yahnian, Kevin Yahnian, Kevin Kalfayan and Tamara Karakashian.

As a part of this pilgrimage, the first ever general meeting to form an International ACYO was held. Tamara Karakashian and Kevin Yahnian were delegates from St. Mary ACYO Chapter of Yettem. These meetings were held at Holy Etchmiadzin.

In order to keep up with the physical needs of the parish, throughout 2008 and 2009, a number of projects were begun and brought to fruition. Among these were the repainting of the church (inside and out), a new air-conditioning system for the church, and installation of wall to





wall carpets. Also, in 2009, the Parish Council initiated a weekly phone call reminder program to keep in closer touch with parishioners. Continuing this process of upgrading, in 2010 all of the church pews were refinished, the parking lot was completely

redone and the grounds were re-landscaped, and new seat cushions were prepared and installed. On December 15, 2009, the Armenian cultural exhibit was showcased at The Tulare County Museum of Farm Labor and Agriculture at Mooney's Grove Park.

Throughout 2010, a number of events were held to mark the 100th Anniversary of St. Mary Parish. These included: the Yettem Golf Tournament; the taking of a congregational group picture; our official kick-off with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian and the ordination of Kevin Yahnian as a Tbir/Acolyte, followed by an old fashioned outdoor picnic; recognition and honoring of the living godfathers of the present church; recognition and honoring of the past Godparents of the Cross for Armenian Christmases past; a General Requiem Service/Hokehankist in memory of the past parish priests and all elected officers of St. Mary Parish; a showing of the video presentation from our 75th Anniversary in 1986; and, finally, our Gala Banquet and Program on Saturday, July 2, 2011, and the Sunday, July 3, 2011 celebration of the Divine Liturgy by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian who ordained Acolyte Kevin Yahnian to the rank of Stole-bearer. This was followed by a Yettem style fellowship and luncheon which was enlivened by



the playing of Richard Hagopian, his son Armen, and grandsons Philip and Andrew. With these events, the celebration of our 100th anniversary was brought to a close. A George Ananian Memorial Fund is established.

Over the years, in order to help meet the various financial needs of the parish, following the generous example of Khacher and Shatene Majarian who donated some 20 acres of farmland to St. Mary Parish in the 1940's, the following funds were established: the Majarian, Roupenian, Margosian, Koobatian, and Zerounian funds were combined into a Heritage Fund; Mekjian-Kutumian Fund was established for Diocesan Summer Camp Scholarships for children and grandchildren of Voting Members of St. Mary Parish; Peloian & Tellalian Fund was established for financial aid to our Sunday School; Beautification Fund whose purpose is to be used at the discretion of the Parish Council; the Zakaria and Gulkatiar Mekjian Fund for the overall beautification and up-keep of St. Mary Parish; Evelyn Tashjian Estate for the



general benefit of St. Mary Parish. The Special Projects Fund is to be used for the enhancement of the church building and grounds. Recent donations to the funds include

the following: Harry and Virginia Ekizian, Harry Davidian and Family, Eddie and Georgia Davidian in memory of Vernon Davidian, Michael Mekjian, and an anonymous donor.

Also, over the years several of our members have been honored as follows: recipients of an Encyclical [Gontag] of Commendation and/or St. Nersess Medal for years of dedicated service – Deacon Sirag Kalfayan, Araxie Menendian, Sarkis Tamouzian, Deacon Charlie Simonian, Sub-deacon Harry Neffian, Betty Farskian, and Miritz Barsamian. The following members have also been the recipients of the Diocesan Hye Spirit Medal: Edward Kraus, Carolyn Mikaelian, Myron Sheklian, Sark Yahnian, Pete Zerounian, Pete Barsamian, Harry Davidian, Anna Kalfayan, Anna Kaloustian, Lucinne Bennett, Sylvia Davidian, Harry Ekizian, Idalene Barsamian, Richard Hagopian, John Maranian, Sylvia Yahnian, and Sark Tamouzian, James Soxman, and Beatrice Soxman. Throughout the 100 year history of St. Mary Parish, many people have made various donations to the parish – crosses, chalices, altar covers, and a host of other item such as candle sticks, altar cloths, wedding goblets and crowns, eternal lights, decorative Gospel books and various other items for liturgical use. For all of these we say a most sincere THANK YOU. However, it is impossible to remember all of these within the context of this article. All of these various gifts, whether large or small, are truly appreciated and hereby acknowledged.

May all of our Lord's many blessings be abundantly showered upon all those, both the known and the unknown, whose work and sacrifices over the years have helped to make this 100th anniversary possible. Our prayer is that all those who are part of this present realize that their efforts and dedication are what will produce a future. We have received the faith because of the efforts of others. It is our unique privilege to pass that faith on to others. We look back upon the work of our predecessors and are moved to wonder at their accomplishments. In 25 or 50 years from now, when that generation looks back to the formative years of the 21st century



HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

- 1890's Rev. Haroutiun Jenanyan, Nazareth Spenchian, & Gabriel Baghdoyan first come to the San Joaquin Valley near present-day Yettem.
- 1901 – They return to permanently settle.
- 1903 – The first worship service is held in Yettem, on Pentecost Sunday.
- 1903 – The name YETTEM [Eden] is officially adopted. This is the only Armenian Church/Parish with an Armenian name.
- 1904 – Services are held in the Yettem School.
- 1909 – On New Sunday, the Sunday after Easter, the first Parish Council, Choir, and a Building Committee are organized after the Divine Liturgy which was celebrated by Bishop Hovsep Sarajian, Primate of the Diocese of America. Krikor Arslanian was chairman of the Building Committee and the architect.
- May, 1909 – Corner stones for the new church are blessed by Bishop Hovsep Sarajian, thus becoming the 5th Armenian Church to be built in America.
- January 17, 1911 – New church construction is begun.
- July 3, 1911 – The new church is consecrated by Bishop Moushegh Seropian and named St. Mary – Soorp Asdvadzadzin.
- 1912 – Sunday School and Armenian School are organized.
- 1914 – Ladies Society is established, the first in what was to become the Western Diocese.
- 1915 – A library is established.
- 1916 – Debt for the church is cleared.
- April 20, 1920 – General Antranig visits Yettem.
- October, 1922 – Rev. Fr. Vahan Guldalian arrives as the first parish priest and serves until 1924.
- 1927 – The California Diocese is established and St. Mary, Yettem was one of the original five parishes within its jurisdiction.
- July 22, 1932 – Rev. Fr. Vartan Davidian arrives as parish priest and serves until 1934.
- October 2, 1938 – Educator Aristakes Kalfayan, born in Chomaklou, is ordained to the priesthood for Yettem by Archbishop Garabed Mazlumian, Primate of Greece, and renamed Fr. Garabed.
- December 2, 1939 – Rev. Garabed Kalfayan arrives as parish priest and serves until his retirement in 1962.
- 1942 – Fr. Garabed Kalfayan is elected as Chairman of the Diocesan Council and serves in that capacity until 1947.
- 1945 – Fr. Garabed Kalfayan, along with The Very Rev. Vartan Dz. V. Kasparian and Arakel Yazijian represented the Western Diocese for the election of the new Catholicos, His Holiness Kevork VI. Fr. Vartan returns as Bishop Vartan Kasparian.
- June 12, 1945 – The original wooden church is destroyed by fire.
- August 6, 1946 – The Parish membership gathered at Mooney Grove Park where 59 out of 65 votes were cast in favor of building on the same site in Yettem and to preserve its name of St. Mary – Soorp Asdvadzadzin.
- Mid-1940's – Lillian Neffian becomes the first woman to become a Voting Member of the parish.
- September 29, 1946 – The Blessing of the Foundation Stones for the new church takes place with Locum Tenens, Bishop Vartan Kasparian presiding and officiating. Garabed Simonian, Sarkis Simonian, and Simon Kashian are the main builders. Architect was Lawrence K. Cone [Condrajian].
- May 18, 1947 – His Holiness Kevork VI, Catholicos of All Armenians, in a Gontag [Encyclical] bestowed the title of Avak Kahana – Archpriest – upon Fr. Garabed, “Hoviv Yettemee.”
- November 16, 1947 – The new church is consecrated by Locum Tenens Bishop Vartan Kasparian and Archbishop Mampre Calfayan.
- 1947 – A brief historical booklet relating to the Yettem community was published in Armenian by Fr. Garabed Kalfayan on the occasion of the consecration of the new church.
- September 9, 1949 – St. Mary Parish of Yettem has representatives at the Diocese meeting to establish the Armenian Church Youth Organization [ACYO]. As Locum Tenens, Bishop Vartan Kasparian was presiding.
- 1956 – Fr. Garabed Kalfayan is selected as Locum Tenens of the Western Diocese and serves in that capacity until 1957.
- August 12, 1956 – The 10th Anniversary of the Consecration of the New Church was observed with the Primate, Bishop Shnork Kaloustian, presiding. A historical pamphlet was published.
- July, 1960 – His Holiness Vazken I, the Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians visits St. Mary Parish of Yettem.
- 1962 – Rev. Fr. Kourken Koudoulian arrives as parish priest and serves until 1969.
- February 27, 1965 – The original Yettem Hall is destroyed by fire.
- June 23, 1966 – The first meeting of the Building Committee for the new hall, under the chairmanship of Jack Peloian, met at Earl's Café in Orosi.
- September 11, 1966 – The Groundbreaking for the new hall is conducted by Bishop Yeghishe [Elisha] Simonian.
- November 5, 1967 – The sealing of the corner stone for the new hall takes place.

■ April 21, 1968 – The new hall is dedicated. Present were the future governor of California, George Deukmejian and the featured speaker was Dr. Aram Tolegian of Los Angeles. Presiding was Primate Bishop Simonian.

■ March 23, 1969 – The new hall mortgage is burned.

■ September, 1970 – St. Mary Parish is visited by the Patriarch of the Armenians of Turkey, His Beatitude Archbishop Shnork Kaloustian. He ordained Garabed Simonian to the rank of Sub-deacon. He makes additional visits in 1974 and 1978.

■ March, 1972 – The St. Mary Yettem chapter of the Armenian Church Youth Organization initiates the Stained Glass Project for the church.

■ May, 1972 – The Very Rev. Khachadour Sarajian comes as parish priest and remains until February, 1973.

■ March 1, 1973 – Deacon John Kasparian is appointed as Spiritual Administrator for St. Mary Parish of Yettem while also serving at Sts. Sahag-Mesrob Parish of Reedley.

■ September 8-9, 1973 – Deacon John Kasparian is ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Vatche Hovsepian, Primate of the Western Diocese, and renamed Fr. Vartan. He serves as parish priest until 1990 when he is assigned to Diocesan duties in Los Angeles.

■ October 7, 1973 – Fr. Vartan's first Divine Liturgy is celebrated.

■ August, 1974 – The Yettem hall is officially named for Khacher and Shatene Majarian and becomes known as Majarian Hall.

■ January 12, 1975 – The first Benefactors' Day is held. The following are ordained: Sub-deacon Garabed Simonian to the rank of full Deacon; Stole-Bearer Harry Neffian to the rank of Sub-deacon; Server Sirag Kalfayan to the rank of Sub-deacon; Servers Edward Derderian and Larry Forsaking to the rank of Stole-bearer; and servers Michael Derderian; Alan Farsakian; Kay Hagopian; Harold Hagopian; Armen Hagopian; Jeff Mortanian; David Yahnian; and James Zerounian to the rank of Acolyte [tbir]. A Catholicical Encyclical [Gontag] of Commendation is presented to Deacon Garabed Simonian.

■ 1976 – The Majarian Hall kitchen and storage facilities are enlarged. The Stained Glass project for the sanctuary is completed.

■ April, 1976 – The new Vestry and Choir Rooms are dedicated by the Primate Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian. The total cost for this project was underwritten by Arsen and Roxie Iskenderian.

■ February 20, 1977 – The 65th Anniversary of St. Mary Parish is observed with the Primate, Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian, presiding. Acolytes Alan Farsakian and David Yahnian are ordained as Stole-bearers. The stained glass windows are consecrated. Catholicical encyclicals are given to Sub-deacon Harry Neffian and Araxie Menendian. The new altar pictures of the Madonna and Christ-child, gifted by the Armen Menendian Family, and the Last Supper gifted by the Sark Davidian Family, were also consecrated.

■ The 65th Anniversary Chairman was Richard A. Hagopian, along with Co-chairmen Sam Farsakian, Harry Kaloustian, and Jack H. Pelioian. A commemorative book was published.

■ April 2, 1978 – His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian consecrated the 4 pictures of the Evangelists, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John at the base of the main dome. These were donated by Arsen & Roxie Iskenderian, Mr. & Mrs. Edward H. Kamlin [Kemalian]. Nish & Ann Majarian for Jeannine Majarian, and Roxie Barsamian and Pepron Cherkezian. Also, His Eminence dedicated the new Choir and Vestry Rooms which were donated by Arsen and Roxie Iskenderian.

■ September, 1979 – The Ladies Society observes its 65th anniversary.

■ February 1, 1981 – Acolytes Michael Derderian, Kay Hagopian, Harold Hagopian, and James Zerounian are elevated as Stole-bearers. Gary Ananian, Mark Ananian, and Carl Ekizian are ordained as Acolytes [tbir].

■ February 2, 1982 - The 70th anniversary of St. Mary Parish is observed. The stained glass windows of St. Stephen and Gomidas Vartabed, in the Vestry and Womens' Choir Room respectively, were consecrated. A brief commemorative booklet was published.

■ 1982 – The church parking lot is renovated.

■ October 16, 1983 – George Ekizian is ordained to the rank of Sub-deacon. Acolytes Gary Ananian and Armen Hagopian are ordained as Stole-bearers. Jason Kaloustian and Richard Kizirian are ordained as Acolytes [tbir]. The tenth anniversary of Fr. Vartan's ordination to the priesthood is observed.

■ 1984 – St. Mary Parish initiated an Envelope Pledge System.

■ October 21, 1984 – The Armenian Martyrs' Monument, gifted by the St. Mary Ladies Society, is dedicated with His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian, Primate of the Western Diocese, presiding and officiating. Survivors of the Genocide are honored during this banquet.

■ April 23, 1985 – Requiem Service [Hokehankist] is conducted at the St. Mary Martyrs' Monument by priests of the Armenian, Greek and Serbian Orthodox Churches.

■ October, 1985 - Benefactors' Day–Opening Day Ceremonies for the year long observance marking the 75th anniversary of St. Mary Parish of Yettem. Jerry Shapazian was Anniversary Chairman.

■ February, 1986 – The Century Club is established.

■ April 18-19, 1986 – A commemorative organ concert is presented by Boston Symphony Orchestra's Berj Zamkochian.

■ May 4, 1986 – The Commemorative Altar Carpet of St. Mary Church, gifted by George Kaspian, is dedicated.

■ July 3, 1986 – The 75th anniversary of the consecration of the first St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem is celebrated. There was a march with some horse drawn vehicles from the old Yettem train station to the church. Upon arrival at the church, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Fr. Vartan Kasparian, with Archbishop

Vatche Hovsepian presiding and the participation of Bishop Aris Shirvanian, The Very Rev. Sasoon Zumrukhdian, and Rev. Fr. Kevork Arakelian

■ October 18, 1986 – Gala banquet and program celebrating the 75th Anniversary of St. Mary Parish is observed. Chairman Jerry Shapazian received an Encyclical of Commendation. A commemorative book and video were presented.

■ October 19, 1986 - Solemn church services with the Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian, presiding and officiating are conducted. During the Divine Liturgy Acolytes Jason Kaloustian and Richard Kizirian are ordained to the rank of Stole-bearer and Darren Ananian was ordained as an Acolyte [Tbir]. This was followed by a fellowship closing the year-long celebration of the 75th Anniversary of St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem. The Etchmiadzin Carpet gifted by Lucille Margosian, John & Sharon Kaprielian and son Ara; Karen Penny and sons Douglas James Penny and William Avedis Penny; Aron Margosian; George and Rose Marie Margosian and daughters Melissa and Tina is dedicated.

■ 1987 – The first Ways and Means Committee is established with Larry Barsamian as Chairman.

■ 1987 – Fr. Vartan Kasparian is elected Chairman of the Diocesan Council. He serves in that capacity until 1989.

■ November, 1987 – Fr. Vartan served as the official translator for the visit of His Holiness Vazken I, Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, during his visit to the Western Diocese.

■ July, 9 & 10, 1988 – With the Diocesan purchase of a Summer Camp facility at Dunlap, St. Mary Parish took an active role in the official opening of our Diocesan Summer Camp. Our altar servers Matthew Davidian and Katherine Kasparian served at the altar during the day's opening Divine Liturgy and Blessing.

■ September 25, 1988 – Our Choir and Deacons traveled to the new Costa Mesa Parish for the Divine Liturgy as an outreach mission trip.

■ October 15, 1988 – Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian ordains Matthew Davidian, Katherine Kasparian, Craig Ouzounian and Lisa Ouzounian as Acolytes [Tbir].

■ 1988 – Armenian Language School is established. Marble flooring at the main altar and side altar areas is installed.

■ 1989 – New marble sign above the main entrance to the church is gifted by our ACYO.

■ 1989 – The St. Mary Ladies Society celebrates its 75th Anniversary.

■ 1989 – Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian elevates Randy Tellalian to the rank of Stole-bearer.

■ 1990 – Fr. Vartan Kasparian concludes his 17 year ministry; leaves St. Mary for a Diocesan assignment in Los Angeles.

■ 1990 – Fr. Artoon Sempadian comes to St. Mary Parish as parish priest and serves until 1993.

■ 1990 – The property west of the church parking lot is purchased by our parish.

■ 1990 – Carolyn Mikaelian becomes the first woman elected to the Parish Council.

■ 1991 – Diocesan Summer Camp Scholarships are established and awarded to the children and grandchildren of Voting Members of St. Mary Parish of Yettem.

■ July 7, 1991 – Sub-deacon Sirag Kalfayan was ordained to the rank of full-deacon; Stole-bearers David Yahnian, Alan Farsakian, and Randall Tellalian were elevated to the rank of Sub-deacon by Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian.

■ 1994 – The Rev. Fr. Stepanos Dingilian arrives as parish priest and serves until 1996.

■ 1991 – The First Yettem Open Golf Tournament is held under the chairmanship of Harry Kaloustian. This continued until 1996.

■ August 18, 1994 – His Holiness Vazken I, Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, enters his eternal rest.

■ September 24, 1994 – A Special Diocesan Assembly of the Western Diocese elected 16 lay delegates to the national Ecclesiastical Assembly to be convened at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin to elect a new Catholicos. Two of these delegates, Richard Hagopian and Araxie Menendian, were from St. Mary Parish of Yettem.

■ December 18, 1994 – John Aslan, Christopher Aslan, Christopher Sheklian and Ryan Tellalian are ordained to the rank of Acolyte [Tbir] by Primate Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian.

■ February 1996 – His Holiness Karekin I, Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians visits St. Mary Parish of Yettem.

■ April 28, 1996 – Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian ordains Sub-deacon Randy Tellalian as a full Deacon.

■ 1997 – The Yettem Armenian Presbyterian Church bell was donated to St. Mary Church. It is prominently placed to the north of the main entrance to the church. Pete Barsamian receives a Certificate of Commendation from Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian.

■ 1998 – The Rev. Fr. Sahak Kaishian arrives as parish priest and serves until 2003.

■ 1998 – A Sunday Bulletin was prepared and distributed each Sunday, giving the day's scriptural readings and announcements of forthcoming events.

■ 1998-1999 – Majarian Hall and kitchen undergoes major remodeling under the joint chairmanship of George Ouzounian, Shirley Ouzounian, and Araxie Menendian. The project was funded by Isabel Lion in memory of her parents, Aram and Satenig Keklikian.

■ 1999 – Some of the ladies of the Ladies Society volunteered to prepare and serve meals at Sister Ursula's kitchen in Visalia.

■ January 17, 1999 - St. Mary Parish observes the 25th anniversary of Fr. Vartan Kasparian's ordination to the

priesthood.

- June 29, 1999 – His Holiness Karekin I, Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians enters his eternal rest. .
- September 11, 1999 – Fr. Sahak Kaishian was elected as one of 5 clergy delegates at a Special Diocesan Assembly of the Western Diocese to selected official delegates to the National Ecclesiastical Assembly to be convened at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin to elect a new Catholicos. The new Catholicos is His Holiness Karekin II.
- 2000 – The first Vacation Bible School is held under the direction of the Rev. Fr. Sahak Kaishian.
- October 22, 2000 – Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian ordains Kay Hagopian, Hagop Tabibian, Christopher Sheklian and Ryan Tellalian as Sub-deacons and Matthew Agnew, Jacob Kaishian, Melissa Sheklian, and Vana Tellalian as Acolytes.
- 2000 – The Ways and Means Committee is reactivated with Anna Kaloustian serving as chairman.
- 2000 – An Encyclical [Gontag] of Commendation from His Holiness Karekin II is presented to Betty Farsakian for her long years of service.
- 2001 – Beatrice Soxman becomes the first woman elected as Parish Council Chairman.
- 2001 – Memorial Wall sponsored by the Ways and Means Committee was established. This project was chaired by Pete Zerounian.
- April 8, 2001 – Church entrance railing was made, constructed, and donated by Simon Chuck Simonian and Family.
- 2001 - A worldwide observance of the 1700th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia was held. The following youth from St. Mary Parish attended the Pilgrimage which was held at Holy Etchmiadzin to mark this historic event: Erica Ananian; Sandra Enfiedjian; Tamara Enfiedjian; Tamara Karakashian; and Ryan Tellalian.
- May 8, 2001 – His Holiness Karekin II visits St. Mary Parish during his pontifical visit to the Western Diocese.
- October 21, 2001 – St. Mary Parish observed its 90th Anniversary, with Harry Tellalian serving as Anniversary Chairman. A Commemorative Booklet was published.
- April 28, 2002 - Neshan and Rosie Sheklian donated the painting of Mary on the south mini altar in honor of their grandchildren, altar servers Christopher and Melissa Sheklian.
- 2003 - Fr. Vartan returns to St. Mary Parish in Yettem initially on a part time basis while continuing to teach at Mt. Whitney High School in Visalia. In June 2004, this appointment became full-time.
- 2003 - Every 2nd Sunday of the month was designated as Children's Sermon Sunday and the 4th Sunday was given to a Question and Answer period in lieu of sermon.
- December 3, 2003 – The newly elected Primate of the Western Diocese, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, paid his first official visit to St. Mary Parish. On this occasion, he presented a patriarchal Encyclical of Commendation and a medal of the Order of St. Nersess to Deacon Sirag Kalfayan and Araxie Menendian. He also dedicated a plaque to the memory of Haig Sheklian and Family who donated the land upon which the present Majarian Hall and Sunday School rooms stand.
- September 2003 – St. Mary Parish observed the 30th anniversary of Fr. Vartan's ordination to the priesthood.
- 2003 – The regular publication of our monthly newsletter YETTEM was continued.
- 2004 – Mr. & Mrs. Club undertakes the project of purchasing and installing a ceiling mounted projector which can show VCR tapes, DVD's, or be used in conjunction with a computer. They also purchased a new screen and a new amplifier system for the Majarian Hall.
- January 18, 2004 – His Eminence again visited St. Mary Parish as celebrant and preacher. At this time, he officially bestowed the title of Avak Kahana – Archpriest – upon Fr. Vartan.
- April 3, 2004 – Observance of the 90th anniversary of the St. Mary Ladies Society and consecration of the memorial khachkars [cross stones] commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Genocide of 1915. Miritz Barsamian received an Encyclical of Commendation.
- May 16, 2004 – Rev. Fr. Barouyr Avedisian from Holy Etchmiadzin celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St. Mary Parish.
- June 11-14, 2004 – Pastoral visit of His Holiness Karekin II to the San Joaquin Valley
- June 30, 2004 – Observance of the 100th anniversary of the first worship services in Yettem. Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate, presiding. Our new Rodgers organ was blessed by His Eminence.
- Lenten Season 2005 – We instituted the Lenten Souper Supper Program consisting of a simple meal of soup, bread, and a beverage and then the conducting of the appropriate Lenten Evening Service, culminating in the recitation of the Prayers of St. Nersess the Gracefilled – IN FAITH I CONFESS.
- EASTER 2005 – St. Mary Parish was invited to participate in a community Good Friday service with several churches in the Visalia area. This practice has been continued ever since.
- April 3, 2005 – The Ladies Society observes its 90th Anniversary
- October 18-November 7, 2005 – At the invitation of His Holiness Karekin II, Fr. Vartan spent this time at Holy Etchmiadzin.
- November 7, 2005 - Fr. Vartan was appointed the official representative of the Western Diocese to the National Council of Churches. This convocation, the first for Fr. Vartan, was held in Baltimore, Maryland.

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■ January 29, 2006 – His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian dedicates the Fr. Vartan Khachkar which was gifted by Charlie Keyan of Indio.

■ May, 2006 – Fr. Vartan is officially inducted into the Chaplains' Corps of the Visalia Police Department.

■ May 28, 2006 – The Rev. Fr. Drtad Bozigian of Holy Etchmiadzin celebrated the Divine Liturgy and delivered the sermon. During the Divine Liturgy, Sub-deacons Christopher Sheklian and Ryan Tellalian were ordained to the rank of full Deacon and Sara Davidian, Benjamin Wall, Jacob Yahnian, and Mikelle Yahnian were ordained to the rank of Acolyte [Tbir].

■ November 6-10, 2006 – Fr. Vartan attends General Assembly of the National Council of Church in Orlando, Florida.

■ April 8, 2007 – Easter Sunday – The Divine Liturgy was filmed in its entirety for the preparation of our DVD – UNDERSTANDING OUR DIVINE LITURGY. Distribution of this DVD was as far away as Australia.

■ June 3, 2007 – Large eternal light over chancel donated by Jack Barsamian in memory of grandparents Hagop and Shooshan Barsamian. Smaller eternal light over altar donated by Anna and Jason Kaloustian in memory of Harry Kaloustian.

■ June 3, 2007 – Fr. Vartan takes part as a presenter in the Pan North American ACYO Retreat in Toronto, Canada.

■ November 5-9, 2007 – Fr. Vartan represents the Western Diocese at the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches in New Jersey.

■ November 23-25, 2007 – St. Mary ACYO hosts the Diocesan-wide ACYO Convention. Our chapter also won the ACYO Achievement Award. An educational program was presented by St. Nersess Armenian Seminary Alumni Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian and Megan Jendian

■ 2008 – Our DVD, UNDERSTANDING OUR DIVINE LITURGY was completed and made available. The project was underwritten by Dr. Neshan Tabibian.

■ April 20, 2008 – Sheriff Bill Whittman and Visalia Chief of Police Bob Carden were present and made presentations on Gang Activity in Tulare County.

■ July 1-19, 2008 – Fr. Vartan leads the Diocesan youth in the CYMA [Christian Youth in Mission to Armenia] group of 23 participants in a month long stay in Armenia. During that same time, several of our ACYO members were among the official delegates to the First International ACYO Assembly hosted at Holy Etchmiadzin.

■ 2008 – Bridal Room refurbished, sponsored by Harry and Laura Davidian, original donors.

■ 2008-2009 – Repainting of the church, and a new a/c system were installed in the church

■ 2009 – The Parish Council initiates the weekly phone call/reminder program.

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■ September, 2009 – Committees are organized for the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem with Beatrice Soxman serving as General Chairman.

■ November 9-13, 2009 – Fr. Vartan represents the Western Diocese at the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

■ December 15, 2009 – The Armenian cultural exhibit was showcased at The Tulare County Museum of Farm Labor and Agriculture at Mooney's Grove Park.

■ 2010 – All of the church pews were refurbished.

■ 2010 – The church parking lot is completely redone and the grounds re-landscaped.

■ 2010 – Crosses for the altar curtain were donated by Rose Marie and George Margosian—the original donors of the curtain.

■ August 28, 2010 – 100th Anniversary Yettem Open Golf Tournament was held under the chairmanship of David Krause, sponsored by the Ways and Means Committee.

■ September 19, 2010 – A picture of the entire congregation was taken.

■ September 26, 2010 – Official Kick-off of 100th anniversary activities. Divine Liturgy celebrated by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian. Kevin Yahnian is ordained to the rank of Acolyte [Tbir].

■ November 8-12, 2010 – Fr. Vartan represents the Western Diocese at the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches in New Orleans, Louisiana.

■ November 14, 2010 – Living Godfathers of the present church – Dick Ekizian and Sarkis Tamouzian were recognized

■ January 9, 2011 – All past Godparents of the Cross from past celebrations of Armenian Christmas [Theophany] were recognized.

■ March 20, 2011 – Requiem Service [Hokehankist] was held in memory of all deceased parish priests, Parish Council members, Parish Assembly Officers, Building Committee members and all elected parish officials.

■ May 22, 2011 – A pilgrimage to St. Mary Parish was made by the parishioners of St. Peter Armenian Church and Youth Center in Glendale, under the leadership of their parish priest, The Rev. Fr. Vazken Movsesian. There was the showing of the historical video prepared for our 75th anniversary in 1986.

■ July 2, 2011 – Gala 100th Anniversary Banquet with Archbishop Hovnan Derderian [Primate of the Western Diocese] presiding. Sark Tamouzian received a Gontag. The following clergy were in attendance: Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian [former Primate of the Western Diocese] Rev. Fr. Shahe Archpriest Altounian; The Rev. Fr. Arshen Archpriest Aivazian; The Rev. Fr. Kevork Archpriest Arakelian; the Rev. Fr. Datev Archpriest Tatoulian; The Rev. Fr. Yeghia Archpriest Hairabedian; Rev. Fr. Raymond Monsignor Dreiling from St. Mary Roman Catholic Church in Visalia; and The Rev. Fr. Richard James from St.

Paul Anglican Church in Visalia. Entertainment was by the Mazmanian Family of the Bay Area.

■ July 3, 2011 – Closing events for the 100th anniversary, Divine Liturgy celebrated by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian. Tbir Kevin Yahnian is elevated to the rank of Stole-bearer. A General Requiem Service was conducted in memory of all the deceased members of St. Mary Parish. At the close of the day's worship, there was a re-enactment of the naming of St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem. This was followed by a Yettem style fellowship/luncheon. The highlight of this event was the playing of traditional Armenian music by Richard Hagopian, Armen Hagopian, Philip Hagopian, and Andrew Hagopian.

A special commemorative book, including all of the celebratory events, is in the process of preparation. It should be ready for distribution by the end of this centennial year.

With these events, the celebrations of this milestone event in the life of St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem came to a close. But, the story doesn't end there. It will continue, with God's grace for a long, long time to come. To Him be the glory and honor, now and always.

We also note the following:

Awards to Parish Members – Over the years, some of our parishioners have been the recipients of various awards, as follows:

- 1947– Rev. Father Garabed Kalfayan, Encyclical granting title of Arch Priest
- 1975 – Deacon Garabed Simonian – Encyclical of Commendation
- 1977 – Sub-deacon Harry Neffian – Encyclical of Commendation
- 1977 – Araxie Menendian – Encyclical of Commendation
- 1986 - Jerry M. Shapazian – Encyclical of Commendation
- 1998 – Rev. Father Vartan Kasparian, Encyclical of Commendation for 25th year of his ordination
- 2000 – Betty Farsakian – Encyclical of Commendation
- 2003 – Rev. Father Vartan Kasparian, Encyclical granting title of Arch Priest
- 2003 – Deacon Sirag Kalfayan – Encyclical of Commendation and St. Nersess Medal
- 2003 – Araxie Menendian – Encyclical of Commendation and St. Nersess Medal
- 2004 – Miritz Barsamian – Encyclical of Commendation
- 2010 – Chuck Simonian - Encyclical of Commendation
- 2011 – Sarkis Tamouzian – Encyclical of Commendation and St. Nersess Medal

The following parishioners were awarded the Diocesan Hye Spirit Medal:

- 2005 – Edward Kraus, Carolyn Mikaelian, Myron Sheklian, Sark Yahnian, and Pete Zerounian.
- 2006 – Pete Barsamian and Harry Davidian
- 2007 – Anna Kalfayan and Anna Kaloustian
- 2008 – Lucinne Bennett, Sylvia Davidian, and Harry Ekizian
- 2009 – Idaline Barsamian, Richard Hagopian, John Maranian, Sylvia Yahnian, and Sark Tamouzian
- 2011 – James Soxman and Beatrice Soxman

Baptisms – Unfortunately, our official baptism records only go back as far as 1934, during the pastorate of Fr. Vartan Davidian. Since that time, there have been 655 baptisms conducted here

at St. Mary Parish of Yettem. The first of these was Surpouhie Hovsepian who was baptized by Fr. Vartan Davidian on March 25, 1934. The most recent was Connor Michael Gostanian who was baptized on April 17, 2011, by Fr. Vartan Kasparian.

Marriages – Our earliest available marriage records go back to the pastorate of Fr. Vahan Guldalian – 1922-1924. The first couple to be married was Yeghia Hovsepian and Araxie Boyajian. They were married by Fr. Vahan Guldalian. Unfortunately, no date is given in the record. The most recent marriage was that of Deacon Ryan Ezras Tellalian and Jasmine Nicole Yedigarian who were married on June 17, 2011, by Fr. Vartan Kasparian, assisted by Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan and Fr. Stephan Baljian There have been 239 weddings here at St. Mary.

Funerals – Our funeral records only go back to 1973. The earliest funeral is that of Leon Omartian whose funeral was on April 11, 1973, and was conducted by Bishop Vatche Hovsepian and Deacon John Kasparian. The most recent funeral was that of Sark Tamouzian. His funeral was conducted on August 17, 2011 by Father Vartan Kasparian, assisted by Father Yeghia Hairabedian. There have been some 253 funerals here at St. Mary Parish.

Establishment of Special Funds:

The earliest of the special funds established for the welfare of St. Mary Parish was the Khacher and Shatene Majarian Estate Fund which consisted of a donation of 20 acres of farmland whose income was to be used for the benefit of the parish. The Special Projects Fund to be used for the enhancement of the church building and grounds. Recent donations to this fund include the following: Harry and Virginia Ekizian, Harry Davidian and Family, Eddie and Georgia Davidian in memory of Vernon Davidian, Michael Mekjian, and an anonymous donor. A George Ananian Memorial Fund is established.

Over the years, the following special funds have been established: the Roupenian, Margosian, Koobatian and Zerounian funds were combined into a Heritage Fund; the Mekjian-Kutumian Fund was established for Diocesan Summer Camp scholarships for children and grandchildren of Voting Members of St. Mary Parish. The Pelonian & Tellalian Fund was established for financial aid to our Sunday School. The Beautification Fund was established for the purpose of general use at the discretion of the Parish Council. The Zakaria and Gulkatir Mekjian Fund was established for the beautification and up-keep of St. Mary Parish. The Evelyn Tashjian Estate was established for the general benefit of St. Mary Parish.

2010-2011: St. Mary Yettem began a presence on the World Wide Web (internet) with a new web page and the broadcast of church services at <http://www.stmaryyettem.org>.

