



YETTEM ԵՊԵՄ

Հրատարակութիւն Եղեմի Ս. Աստուծածին Հայաստանեայց Եկեղեցւոյ
A Publication of St. Mary Armenian Church Yettem, California
Rev. Fr. Mashdots Keshishian, Parish Priest

January 2021

PRIMATE'S MESSAGE ON THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

“C'est en lui que nous avons l'être, le mouvement et la vie” (Act. 17:28).

“For in Him we live and move and have our being...” (Acts 17:28).

The Miraculous Birth of Christ – THEOPHANY - is the ultimate Truth in the life of humanity. Prior to Christ's Miraculous Birth, humanity was incapable of elevating itself to the level of comprehension that we have been created in the image of God and bear within ourselves the divine love and wisdom of God.

The Birth of Christ is the mystery of God Incarnate who humbled Himself and descended to Earth in order that we may ascend to the abode of the Almighty. It was the resolute faith of the apostles, which led them to embrace the true teachings of Christ and to preach the Word of God as it had been entrusted to them. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This exact message was preached by St. Paul, the Apostle. St. Paul's ministry was summarized in the following phrase:

“For in Him we live and move and have our being...” (Acts 17:28).

The Birth of Christ is the mirror of our existence. It is through His Birth upon which our life's journey is conditioned. Furthermore, as we follow in His footsteps we see the reflection of our lives and the harbor of peace. The Miraculous Birth of Christ obliges us to live and act humbly, to lead prayerful lives, to transform our lives into a living Gospel, to become the radiating light and the divine inspiration in each other's lives.

The Birth of Jesus calls upon each of us without exception to celebrate the commencement of a new life with childlike innocence and purity. Christ's Miraculous Birth exhorts us to embrace the Babe of the Holy City of Bethlehem if we wish to emulate and walk in the footsteps of God.

The great philosopher Pascal summarizes this Truth with the following words:

“C'est le Cœur qui sent Dieu, et non la raison. Voilà` ce que c'est qui la foi: Dieu sensible cœur, non a la raison.” “It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason. This, then, is faith: God felt by the heart, not by the reason.”

At the dawn of the New Year, the Birth of Christ spreads the longing for a new life, the abundance of faith and hope. The emergence of the coronavirus brought the world to a standstill. The pandemic claimed the lives of nearly two million people, causing a massive global social and an economic crisis. And amidst the chaos, our nation and Motherland faced devastating losses of life, the surrender of ancestral lands and the martyrdom of thousands of young soldiers. These tragedies however must be overcome by our unwavering Christian faith, our resolute belief in hope and love offered to us by Christ, our Lord in order that we may avoid frailty, gain the strength to reject all temptations and take comfort in a new life whose source is derived from Christ Jesus and the manger in Bethlehem.

God is the centrality of our Christian Faith, in whom the purpose of our life's mission is originated. In other words, a faithful who relies on God embraces the divine calling and finds spiritual joy in serving humanity. Enrooted in our Christian Faith is the yearning for perfection, as commanded to us by the Almighty God. Therefore, our ancestral Christian Faith enlivens in our hearts the recognition and adherence to God's commandments.

The philosopher Emmanuel Kant summarizes it as such:

“La religion est la connaissance de tous nos devoirs comme commandements divins.”

“Religion is the recognition of all our duties as divine commandments.”

Beloved, let us greet one another with the divine greeting of Christ's Miraculous Birth. Let us be cognizant of the Truth that Christ was born in order that we may never frail in our vision of spiritual rebirth. Each one of us, despite our weaknesses, possesses divine strength and wisdom, in order to overcome temptations, trials, and tribulations and to strive to lead a God-pleasing life. Therefore, let us celebrate Christ's Miraculous Birth by filling our lives in the New Year with noble deeds, let us renew our faith and commitment to service in our calling as Christians, cherish our families and loved ones with Christ's divine love. Let us wholeheartedly support our Motherland that has gifted us the spiritual jewel of Holy Etchmiadzin, where the descent of God's Only Begotten Son has been affirmed.

The Birth of Christ is an invitation to a life of humility. May the radiating light from the Babe of Bethlehem illuminate each of our lives. Life is blessed and beautiful when one emulates the life of Christ, our Lord. A Christ-like life embodies love and wisdom and especially, a peaceful spirit.

Christ is Born and Revealed,
Blessed is the Revelation of Christ.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian
Primate of the Western Diocese
of the Armenian Church of North America

Feast of the Nativity 2021

Parish Notes

CONDOLENCES

On behalf of our St. Mary Parish family, we wish to extend our deepest sympathy to Mike and Judy Skaff and family on the passing of Mike's mother, Carmen Skaff. Mrs. Skaff passed on December 19th. Graveside funeral services were conducted in Exeter by Father Mashdots on Wednesday, December 23, 2020.

ALTAR CANDLES DONATION

Shari Ananian and Julie Bair have donated altar candles in honor of their mother, Reba Ananian's birthday on December 4th.

ALTAR FLOWERS DONATION

December 13th – Linda, Mark and Ben Wall Alan, Marceen, Nick and Shant Farsakian

HOKEHANKIST REQUESTS

December 13th

Betty Farsakian

Seven years after her passing,
Requested by Linda, Mark and Ben Wall,
Alan, Marceen, Nick and Shant Farsakian

HOKEHANKIST DONATIONS

(November 23 – December 29)

For Repose of Betty Farsakian's Soul

December 13th – Linda, Mark and Ben Wall
Alan, Marceen, Nick and Shant Farsakian

THANK YOU

We want to thank Charlie and Elizabeth Ananian for coming up with the idea, contracting out, and paying for the installation of the green fence covering on our east fence.

Charlie also came over and cleared out the debris along the fence line prior to our annual bazaar and fertilized the shrubs. Our outdoor worship center just keeps getting better!

CONGRATULATIONS ALTAR SERVERS

We congratulate all of our deacons and altar servers that have served so faithfully. St. Stephen, the Protomartyr, who was one of the seven deacons ordained by the Apostles according to the New Testament book of Acts, was the first martyr of the Christian church. In the Armenian Church, the day recognizes the important role of Deacons and altar servers.

ARMENIAN CHRISTMAS TO BE CELEBRATED

In the Armenian Church, "Armenian Christmas," as it is popularly called is officially celebrated on January 6th and it is a Major Feast Day. Historically, all Christian churches celebrated Christ's birth on January 6th until the fourth century.

Because January 6th falls on a weekday this year, in Yetteem we will be celebrating on Sunday, January 10th. Armenian Christmas is a culmination of celebrations of events related to Christ's Incarnation. Theophany or Epiphany (or Astvadz-a-haytnootyoon in Armenian) means "revelation of God," which is the central theme of the Christmas Season in the Armenian Church.

Traditionally, we have held a luncheon following services on that day. This year, because of the strong possibility of inclement weather, we **will not** be able to host such a dinner. Depending on the weather on that day, we will either hold services outside or only stream services because of restrictions on in-person inside worship.

CALLING ALL SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS!

Sunday school is having Zoom classes on the second and fourth Sundays of each month at 11:00 AM. All Sunday school age students are welcomed and encouraged to attend! Please contact Tracy Valencia if you need the Zoom link and for any questions at 559-824-0913.

PARISH COUNCIL CORNER

It has been a most unusual holiday season as both Thanksgiving and Christmas have been celebrated quite differently this year. We have had to adapt to make the best of things, not only in our personal lives, but in other aspects as well. This too was true for our church family and community as adjustments were made here as well.

We will continue to hold outside services as weather permits. If it becomes too cold or wet, we will move services inside where they will be streamed on our webpage and Facebook page. Each Sunday since mid-September, Der Mashdots (and many times his family) has set up our outdoor altar. After services, our altar servers help in moving everything back inside the church.

Speaking of our altar servers, Sunday, December 25th, was the Feast of St. Stephen, the Protomartyr, who was one of the seven deacons ordained by the Apostles according to the New Testament book of Acts and was the first martyr of the Christian church. Thinking back, when we were without a priest, they organized themselves to provide services to our congregation. Thank you, gentlemen!

This past month, our Ladies Society also made a successful adaption to their annual bazaar. As reported elsewhere in this month's bulletin, their proceeds far exceeded expectations. Thank you to those who planned and orchestrated the day's events and thanks to those who attended or contributed. It was a fun and safe event.

I remain amazed on how well we have weathered the storm this year. I can only imagine what we will be able to accomplish when things return to "normal".

Happy New Year!

Myron Sheklian
Chairman

LADIES SOCIETY NEWS

Christ is born and revealed! Blessed is the revelation of Christ! What a blessing it is to start the new year with the birth of Christ our Savior. He brings us joy this new year to a better place than 2020.

We celebrate the New Year welcoming our new member, Janel Zerounian. She is a life-long member of our Yetteem community and daughter of member Marilyn Zerounian. Following in the footsteps of her parents Pete and Marilyn, I know she will be a valued asset. Welcome Janel!

Our annual Holiday Bazaar far exceeded my expectations with your donations and your attendance. Because of you, we raised \$6,468.31. Considering we were complying with COVID regulations, you, our family, once again gave us tremendous support. I know many of you were unable to attend because of health issues and other issues, but I felt your support and well wishes.

Thank you to all of you who donated an item for our silent auction and/or bake sale, to all of you who placed a bid or bought a baked sale or auction item, and to all of you who supported our efforts by making a monetary donation. Thank you to Margie L. Davidian, Debbie and Myron Sheklian, Tracy Valencia, Donna Torosian, Debbie Agnew, and Mark and Linda Wall for donating the food for the meal.

Thank you to our outstanding committee for putting on our successful event. Committee chairladies were Tracy Valencia - bazaar co-chairlady, Margie L. Davidian - meal chairlady, Tina Peters and Janice McWilliams - silent auction co-chairladies, Madlien Hebesha and Debbie Sheklian kufta makers co-chairladies, and our bazaar committee members were Debbie Agnew, Georgia Davidian, Shirley Ouzounian, Donna Torosian, Nancy Krikorian, Adrienne Poochigian, Judy Skaff, Gina Ananian, Sandy Kalfayan, and Julie Poochigian. What a great job they did!

Thank you also to those that made our kufta. Madlien Hebesha, Judy Skaff, Gina Ananian,
(continued on the next page)

Janice McWilliams, Margie L. Davidian, Mari Louise Menendian, Yn. Maral Keshishian, Sandy and John Kalfayan, Tracy, Ani, and Lauren Valencia, Elizabeth Torosian, Sandra Vartanian, Laurie Menendian, and Charlie Davidian. Great job and so tasty!

Our condolences to our members Judy Skaff and Adrienne Poochigian for the loss of their mother-in-law and grandmother Carmen Skaff. May she rest in peace.

Birthday wishes for January goes out to Janet Gomes, Adrienne Poochigian, Donna Torosian, Hasmik Gregory, and Peggy Fernandes. We wish them all God's blessings.

I'm looking forward to a fresh start in 2021 and getting back to fellowship with our members. Happy New Year and may it bring us peace, good health, joy, and God's blessings.

*Linda Farsakian-Wall
Chairlady*

ARTSAKH AID

The parishes of our Diocese play an instrumental role in the rebuilding of our homeland and showed immense support to our homeland during the tragic war in Artsakh. To date our parish and individuals have contributed about \$6,000 to this effort.

As we move forward with these efforts in supporting the humanitarian efforts and strengthening Armenia and Artsakh, we ask that you make your future donations to **St. Mary Armenian Church** and write **"Armenia and Artsakh Relief"** on the **memo line**. In this way, we can forward and direct donations to go to Diocese-endorsed programs.

St. Mary Yettem face masks are available for purchase in the church office or at the Parish Council desk on Sundays. Thank you to David and Lisa Krause for this project. Suggested minimum donation for each mask is \$5.

ACYO

ACYO will be having their monthly meeting on January 24th after the Divine Liturgy.

PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council' next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 20, 2021.

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

The next Ways and Means Committee Zoom meeting will be held on January 14th, at 7PM.

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

The Annual Parish Assembly meeting will be held on Sunday, February 21, 2021. More information will follow in the February 2021 bulletin.

RAFFLE TO BE HELD

We will be holding our first monthly church raffle on Armenian Christmas, January 10th on Facebook Live. Our thanks to those of you who have purchased almost 550 tickets! Thanks to Tina and the Peters family for coming up with this great fundraiser for our church. Profits so far are \$7400. It is not too late to purchase and be part of the fun!

ALL services are livestreamed on our webpage at www.stmaryyettem.org. There are links on the "Camera Tab" for INSIDE and OUTSIDE services. The Holy Badarak is streamed on our Facebook page each Sunday beginning at 10:30 AM.

The St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem Facebook page and website will keep you informed about our church schedules, events and miscellaneous happenings. Make sure you stop and visit often as we are always adding lots of pictures and information.

Fr. Mashdots is available for pastoral care, spiritual guidance, and support. Please inform Der Hayr of those who may be sick at home, hospitalized or may simply want to talk, so that he can organize a time to contact them. (559) 528-6892 or Reverend Father Mashdots Keshishian at (818) 293-9098.

St. Mary Armenian Church, Yetteem

JANUARY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 New Year's Day Divine Liturgy at 11:30 AM	2
3	4	5 Eve of the Nativity and Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ	6 Morning Service at 9:45 AM Feast of the Nativity and Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ Divine Liturgy At 10:30 AM	7 Remembrance of the Dead	8	9
10 Celebration of Theophany/ Armenian Christmas at 10:30 AM	11	12	13 Feast of the Naming of our Lord Jesus Christ	14 Birth of St. John the Fore-runner Ways & Means Zoom Meeting 7PM	15	16
17	18 M L King Day	19	20 Parish Council Zoom at 2 PM	21	22	23
24/31 ACYO meeting after services	25	26	27	28	29	30

Sunday Schedule:

Morning Service (Matins) 9:45 AM
Divine Liturgy

Office Hours
Tuesday – Friday
9:30 to 2:30

Father Mashdots can be reached at:

559-528-6892 – Office
559-528-6897 – FAX
818-293-9098 - Cell



Ladies Society Outdoor Holiday Bazaar
December 6, 2020

Why Do Armenians Celebrate Christmas on January 6th?

"Armenian Christmas," as it is popularly called, is a culmination of celebrations of events related to Christ's Incarnation. Theophany or Epiphany (or Astvadz-a-haytnootyoon in Armenian) means "revelation of God," which is the central theme of the Christmas Season in the Armenian Church. During the "Armenian Christmas" season, the major events that are celebrated are the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem and His Baptism in the River Jordan. The day of this major feast in the Armenian Church is January 6th. A ceremony called "Blessing of Water" is conducted in the Armenian Church to commemorate Christ's Baptism.

It is frequently asked as to why Armenians do not celebrate Christmas on December 25th with the rest of the world. Obviously, the exact date of Christ's birth has not been historically established-it is neither recorded in the Gospels. However, historically, all Christian churches celebrated Christ's birth on January 6th until the fourth century.

According to Roman Catholic sources, the date was changed from January 6th to December 25th in order to override a pagan feast dedicated to the birth of the Sun which was celebrated on December 25th. At the time Christians used to continue their observance of these pagan festivities. In order to undermine and subdue this pagan practice, the church hierarchy designated December 25th as the official date of Christmas and January 6th as the feast of Epiphany. However, Armenia was not affected by this change for the simple fact that there were no such pagan practices in Armenia, on that date, and the fact that the Armenian Church was not a satellite of the Roman Church. Thus, remaining faithful to the traditions of their forefathers, Armenians have continued to celebrate Christmas on January 6th until today.

Christmas Prayer

Dear Lord, I want to pray for those who are struggling to get in the Christmas spirit because they are going through a difficult time right now. Comfort those who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Bring hope and ultimate recovery to those who are dealing with addiction. Heal those who are sick. Bring peace to those who have fractured family relationships. Let them be overwhelmed with your love today, Lord. May they feel your presence surrounding them. May they be reminded of the real meaning of Christmas God wrapped in flesh, coming to Earth to offer His life as the ultimate sacrifice so that we might have forgiveness, peace, freedom, and life in Him and through Him. Thank you Lord for this great gift. In Jesus' name, Amen.

New Year

Presently all Christian churches celebrate the New Year on January 1st. The word "January" means "birth". Before Christ's coming to the world mankind was the captive of hell and constrained by eternal death. Being born in January, Christ destroyed the hell, saved the mankind from eternal death and leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. That is why January became the year's beginning. January 1st is the first day of the first month of the year of birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. On January 1st a Divine Liturgy is celebrated in all churches. According to the folk tradition on January 1st people decorate the New Year tree symbolizing the Tree of Life of Eden.

St. Mary Armenian Church
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