

# St. Vartan Voice

The Newsletter of St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church  
Rev. Fr. Hovel Ohanyan, Parish Priest



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Fr. Krikor Zakaryan

April 2020

## The Mystery Disease

The day is over, you are driving home. You tune in your radio. You hear a little blurb about a little village in India where some villagers have died suddenly, strangely, of a disease that has never been seen before. It's not influenza, but three or four fellows are dead, and it's kind of interesting, and they're sending some doctors over there to investigate it.

You don't think much about it, but on Sunday, coming home from church, you hear another radio spot. Only they say it's not three villagers, it's 30,000 villagers in the back hills of this particular area of India, and it's on TV that night. CNN runs a little blurb; people are heading there from the disease center in Atlanta because this disease strain has never been seen before.

By Monday morning when you get up, it's the lead story. For it's not just India; it's Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and before you know it, you're hearing this story everywhere and they have coined it now as "the mystery disease." The President has made some comment that he and everyone are praying and hoping that all will go well over there. But everyone is wondering, "How are we going to contain it?" That's when the President of France makes an announcement that shocks Europe. He is closing their borders. No flights from India, Pakistan, or any of the countries where this thing has been seen.

And that's why that night you are watching a little bit of CNN before going to bed. Your jaw hits your chest when a weeping woman is translated from a French news program into English: "There's a man lying in a hospital in Paris dying of the mystery disease." It has come to Europe. Panic strikes. As best they can tell, once you get it, you have it for a week and you don't know it. Then you have four days of unbelievable symptoms. And then the end is fatal.

Britain closes it's borders, but it's too late. South Hampton, Liverpool, North Hampton, and it's Tuesday morning when the President of the United States makes the following announcement: "Due to a national security risk, all flights to and from Europe and Asia have been canceled. If your loved ones are overseas, I'm sorry. They cannot come back until we find a cure for this thing."

Within four days our nation has been plunged into an unbelievable fear. People are selling little masks for your face. People are talking about what if it comes to this country, and preachers on Tuesday are saying, "It's the scourge of God." It's Wednesday night and you are at a church prayer meeting when somebody runs in from the parking lot and says, "Turn on a radio, turn on a radio." And while the church listens to the radio, the announcement is made. "Two women are lying in a Long Island hospital dying from the mystery disease." Within hours it seems, this thing just sweeps across the country. People are working around the clock trying to find an antidote. Nothing is working. California. Oregon. Arizona. Florida. Massachusetts.

It's as though it's just sweeping in from the borders. And then, all of a sudden the news comes out. The code has been broken. A cure can be found. A

### Bible Readings

- April 5 Matt. 20:29-34, 21:11-7
- April 9 Matt. 26:17-30
- April 11 Matt. 28:1-20
- April 12 Mark 16:1-8
- April 19 John 1:1-17
- April 26 John 3:1-12

### Easter Greetings

One who gives:  
Krisdos hanyav ee merelotz.  
Christ is risen from the dead.

One who receives:  
Orhnial eh harootiunn Krisdosi.  
Blessed is the resurrection of Christ



vaccine can be made. It's going to take the blood of somebody who hasn't been infected, and so, sure enough, all through the Midwest, through all those channels of emergency broadcasting, everyone is asked to do one simple thing: "Go to your downtown hospital and have your blood type taken. That's all we ask of you. And when you hear the sirens go off in your neighborhood, please make your way quickly, quietly, and safely to the hospitals."

Sure enough, when you and your family get down there late on that Friday night, there is a long line, and they've got nurses and doctors coming out and pricking fingers and taking blood and putting labels on it. Your wife and your kids are out there, and they take your blood type and they say, "Wait here in the parking lot and if we call your name, you can be dismissed and go home."

You stand around scared with your neighbors, wondering what in the world is going on, and that this is the end of the world. Suddenly a young man comes running out of the hospital screaming. He's yelling a name and waving a clipboard. What? He yells it again! And your son tugs on your jacket and says, "Daddy, that's me." Before you know it, they have grabbed your boy. "Wait a minute, hold it!" And they say, "It's okay, his blood is clean. His blood is pure. We want to make sure he doesn't have the disease. We think he has got the right type."

Five tense minutes later, out come the doctors and nurses, crying and hugging one another ... some are even laughing. It's the first time you have seen anybody laugh in a week, and an old doctor walks up to you and says, "Thank you, sir. Your son's blood type is perfect. It's clean, it is pure, and we can make the vaccine." As the word begins to spread all across that parking lot full of folks, people are screaming and praying and laughing and crying. But then the gray-haired doctor pulls you and you wife aside and says, "May we see you for a moment? We didn't realize that the donor would be a minor and we need ... we need you to sign a consent form."

You begin to sign and then you see that the number of pints of blood to be taken is empty. "H-h-h-how many pints?" And that is when the old doctor's smile fades and he says, "We had no idea it would be a little child. We weren't prepared. We need it all!"

"But-but... You don't understand. We are talking about the world here."

"Please sign. We ... we need it all ... we need it all!"

"But can't you give him a transfusion?"

"If we had clean blood we would. Can you sign? Would you sign?"

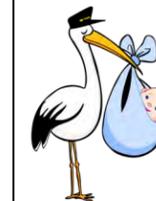
In numb silence you do. Then they say, "Would you like to have a moment with him before we begin?" Can you walk back? Can you walk back to that room where he sits on a table saying, "Daddy? Mommy? What's going on?" Can you take his hands and say, "Son, your mommy and I love you, and we would never ever let anything happen to you that didn't just have to be. Do you understand that?" And when that old doctor comes back in and says, "I'm sorry, we've ... we've got to get started. People all over the world are dying." Can you leave? Can you walk out while he is saying, "Dad? Mom? Dad? Why are you leaving me? Why ... why are you forsaking me?"

The next Sunday, there is a ceremony to honor your son. Some people sleep through it. Some people don't come because they go to the lake. And some folks come with a pretentious smile and just pretend to care. Would you want to jump up and say, "MY SON DIED FOR YOU! DON'T YOU CARE?"

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Gospel of John 3:16-17*

### News From Our St. Vartan Family

#### Birth Announcements



Proud grandparents Andrew and Katie Yagjian announce the birth of Aria Noelle Yagjian. She was born on March 10, 2020 at 7lb 1oz. Her grandparents are Arto and Nadya Yagjian.

Sako, Laura and Hagop are grateful to announce the birth of Vasken Isaac Soghomonian, born on March 10th. We are blessed to have him join our family and look forward to introducing him to the Saint Vartan family."



**Holy Week: A Prelude to Easter**

The Armenian Church calls the final week of Christ’s life on earth Great Week or Holy Week (Avak Shapat). During this time, we share in His teachings, His suffering, His death, and His resurrection.

Holy Monday is dedicated to the creation of Heaven and Earth, the foundation for Christ’s Second Creation. Christ condemns the fig tree that did not bear fruit (as Israel failed to bring forth the fruits of repentance) and teaches that faith can have the strength to move mountains, overcoming despair and even death.



The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

The parable of the Wise and Foolish Maidens (Matthew 25:1-13) is the focus of Holy Tuesday. Ten maidens waited for their bridegroom (in the custom of that time and place, the bridegroom would fetch the bride from her parents’ home to bring her to his own). Five of the women foolishly took their lamps with no extra oil and when the bridegroom was delayed, could not go out and meet him. The wise maidens went prepared and joined him in the marriage feast. Similarly, we must pray and wait, in a state of perpetual preparation to receive Christ.

In the reading for Holy Wednesday (Matthew 26:6-13), a fallen woman anoints Christ with costly oil and kisses his feet. The apostles chastise her for wasting oil that could have been sold to help the poor, but Christ defends her action, perceiving her deed as one of devotion, and knowing that this anointing anticipates His upcoming death and burial.

The morning liturgy service on Holy Thursday marks the institution of the New Covenant: Holy Communion, which Christ established at the Last Supper. During a Passover meal, Christ broke and distributed unleavened bread and shared the wine with His apostles, identifying these as elements His Body and Blood. Through this sacrament, mankind participates in the Kingdom of God.

Another episode at the Last Supper is recalled during the evening service on Holy Thursday. “The Washing of the Feet” ceremony commemorates how Christ washed the feet of His apostles, setting an example of humility and love. The priest, in turn, washes the feet of twelve church members, usually young men.

On Holy Thursday, an all-night vigil is kept in memory of the last sleepless night of our Lord on earth. This service is called Khavaroom (Darkness). Before He was arrested, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and endured in solitude the agony of His impending death. Six sets of laments are chanted, each followed by a Gospel reading depicting Christ’s betrayal, imprisonment, torture, trial, sentence, and crucifixion. Twelve lit candles, 11 white and 1 black (representing Judas), are extinguished in pairs.



Holy Friday is the most solemn and sad day of the Christian calendar. The Crucifixion Service, usually held at midday, recalls the suffering, execution, and death of our Lord, memorialized amid readings from the psalms. In the evening, a white tomb is placed in the chancel of the church for the Entombment or Burial Service. The tomb is adorned with flowers and during the service is taken in procession around the church. As the faithful leave the church they approach the tomb, kiss the Gospel book, and take a flower in remembrance.

On Holy Saturday, also known as the Easter Vigil, the mystery of salvation in the Resurrection of Christ is celebrated. The church is dark, its lights are dim. Then the great verses from Isaiah 60 are read: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you”-at which point the lights are suddenly turned on.

The dramatic, joyful candle-lighting ceremony is called Jrakalouytz.

Finally, Easter Sunday celebrates the joy of the Resurrection and the promise of salvation for all humanity. Armenian Christians around the world exchange the Easter greeting: Krisdos haryav ee merelotz! Orhnyal eh harootiunun Krisdosee! Christ is risen from the dead! Blessed is the resurrection of Christ!

Easter Sunday is followed by a period of 40 days, during which time there are no saints’ days or fasting days. This period, dedicated to the glory of Christ’s Resurrection and to the 40 days He spent on earth after His Resurrection, leads up to Ascension Day, commemorating our Lord’s entry into heaven.



The Women Bring Spices to Jesus’ Tomb



**Poor Sick Boy—Easter Joke**

Marty, a little boy, was in church one Easter Sunday with his mother Doris, when he started feeling sick. 'Mummy,' he inquired, 'can we leave now?' 'No,' his mother replied, 'the service isn't over yet.' 'Well, I think I'm about to throw up.' Marty announced. 'Then go out of the front door and around to the back of the church and throw up behind a bush.' said Doris. After about sixty seconds, Marty returned to his pew, alongside his mother. 'Did you throw up?' Marty's Mum asked quietly. 'Yes,' Marty answered, embarrassed. 'How could you have gone all the way to the back of the church and returned so quickly?' Doris demanded. 'I didn't have to go out of the church, Mummy. They have a box next to the front door that says, "For the Sick".'

**St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church**

Rev. Fr. Krikor Zakaryan

**Schedule of Holy Week Services, 2020**

*If services cannot be held at St. Vartan Church, they will be livestreamed. You can find a link to the live stream on the church website: [www.stvartanoakland.com](http://www.stvartanoakland.com).*

**Palm Sunday, April 5**

Morning Service ..... 10:00 a.m.  
Divine Liturgy and Sermon ..... 10:30 a.m.  
Opening of the Doors &  
Service of Antasdan (in the parking lot)..... following Badarak

**Holy Thursday, April 9**

Divine Liturgy—Memorial of the Last Supper ..... 10:30 a.m.  
Washing of the Feet..... 6:00 p.m.  
Service of Betrayal and Passion of Our Lord ..... 7:30 p.m.

**Good Friday, April 10**

Service of the Burial of our Lord ..... 6:30 p.m.

**Holy Saturday, April 11**

Reading of the Scriptures ..... 6:00 p.m.  
Divine Liturgy ..... 6:30 p.m.

**Holy Easter, Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, April 12**

Morning Service ..... 10:00 a.m.  
Divine Liturgy ..... 10:30 a.m.

**New Sunday, Merelots, April 19**

Morning Service ..... 10:00 a.m.  
Divine Liturgy ..... 10:30 a.m.  
*Requiem Service — Following Badarak*

***Christ is risen from the dead.  
Blessed is the Resurrection of Christ.***

**Requiem Service – Merelots**



A Requiem will be said for the souls of the departed on Merelots Sunday, April 19. Those who would like to have the names of their departed loved ones included, should contact the church secretary by April 16 at stvartanoakland@aol.com or 510-893-1671.

**Easter Yughakin**

It is customary in the Armenian Church to provide Yughakin, especially around the feasts of Christmas and Easter. This practice dates as far back as the time of Moses in the Old Testament. Yughakin in Armenian means "price of oil". Each local church community would donate money specially earmarked towards the purchase of oil, which in turn would keep the lanterns burning and ultimately the doors of the Church open. At this season of Christ's resurrection let us remember and continue the custom of Yughakin, so we can keep our "oil-burning lanterns" always burning and our doors always open at St. Vartan. Please be generous to the Church in observing this ancient Armenian custom.



### Sunday School Corner

In case you have not heard, with the spread of the COVID-19 virus, we have been encouraged to suspend Sunday classes until April 13, 2020. The decision will be revisited at that time. Please take all recommended precautions to keep your families safe.

Wash hands, wash hands, wash hands!



The Sunday School joined with ACYO on Sunday, February 9, to make special Valentine's Day crafts.

### Ladies Society Update

The Ladies Society welcomes Fr. Krikor Zarkaryan, Yeretzgin Anoush, daughters Emma and Grace to our St. Vartan family. Board members Elo Markarian, Hilda Mener, Kristian Minasian, Arlene Hovsepian and Nelly Kargodorian prepared an especially welcoming coffee hour in addition to the March coffee hour hosted by Paul and Cheryl Ohanesian. We are looking forward to working with Fr. Krikor.

Four of our members attended the World Day of Prayer hosted by the Armenian Congregational Church in San Francisco. As you know, this event is rotated between the Bay Area Armenian Churches each year. Next year St. Vartan will be hosting this event and we look forward to your support.

We are happy to report we have received four applications for scholarship to the Hye Camp this summer. Our Board will be meeting to vote on the lucky recipients.

Two upcoming events: At this time, Holy Thursday (April 9) and Mother's Day (May 7) luncheons are on the calendar. Please watch for further information.

We are happy to announce our Board is growing. We welcome Sandy Capurro, Advisor, and Carol Rustigian, Sunshine.



### St. Vartan Statement Concerning Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Dear Faithful,

According to the COVID-19 regulations we ask our Faithful to stay home and venture out only for necessities for three weeks starting on Tuesday, 3/17/20, in a desperate attempt by officials to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. This reality affects nearly 7 million people in the counties of San Francisco, Marin, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda and Contra Costa.

The shelter-at-home order comes as scientific evidence shows social distancing is one of the most effective approaches to slow the transmission of communicable disease. The rapidly changing situation has forced organizations and people to react accordingly, based on recommendations and orders of public health officials.

As such, St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church has taken the following steps in helping our greater community effectively fight against this virus.

A. Conduct the celebrations of the Sunday Services at 10:30 am and Special Prayer Services on Wednesdays at 6 pm, behind closed doors, without the participation of faithful people, by streaming the celebrations online, until Palm Sunday (included), or until further notice.

B. On the feast of Palm Sunday, to perform the Andastan (Blessing of the Four Corners of the World) ceremony and blessing of tree branches without the presence of the Faithful.

C. Cancel all non-essential services, sacraments, meetings, events and functions until further notice. Not to conduct ceremonies of Matrimony. Perform the Sacrament of Baptism only in case of urgency (in case the person to be baptized is ill). In the case of funerals, only perform the Graveyard ceremony, urging the mourners to refrain from organizing crowded funerals and memorial gatherings for meals.

D. Fr. Krikor Zakaryan is available for visitations, special cases administration of Holy Communion and prayers, or any other spiritual support and service to you.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need assistance with groceries or pharmacy!

St. Vartan will continue to monitor and make appropriate decisions during this dynamic situation. Please note that St. Vartan, out of abundance of caution and sincere care, is taking these measures and we ask that all of you take preventative measures to help stop the spread of this virus and protect yourself and others.

Please make sure to check our website for the latest updates regularly- [www.stvartanoakland.org](http://www.stvartanoakland.org).

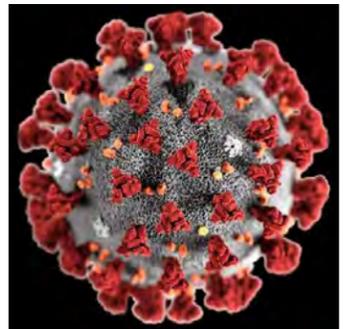
Reliable sources of information about novel coronavirus are:

- California Department of Public Health Website
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website
- World Health Organization Website

Please stay steadfast in your prayer, faith and hope and educate yourself properly from reliable sources to avoid unnecessary anxiety and fear! We keep all of you in our prayer and under our care!

May the Good Lord bless and protect you and yours,

St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church, Parish Priest and Parish Council



### A Prayer During Times of a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced, remember those whose lives are at stake.

Make we who have no risk factors, remember those who are most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home, remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close, remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips, those who have no place to go.

May we who are losing our marginal income in the tumult of the economic market, remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home, remember those who have no home.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

Amen

**St. Vartan Church Parish Council gratefully acknowledges the following donations:**

**St. Vartan Voice Newsletter**—Hermine Keshishyan

**In Honor of Fr. Krikor coming to St. Vartan Church**—Don and Lisa Manoogian

**In Memory**

† **Richard Demirjian** *for the Richard Demirjian Athletic Fund*

Florence Morjig, Jack and Barbara Bousian, Mary Kamian, Lucille Dolab and Family,  
Craig and Susan Bazigian, Caline Soghikian

† **Richard Demirjian**

Larry and Graceann Nishon and Family, Greg and Seta Tcherkoyan

† **Virginia Ratcliff**

Florence Morjig

† **Ed Godoshian**

Greg and Seta Tcherkoyan, Sylvia Alexanian and Family (Choir Fund), Edward Minasian

† **Dikranouhie Soghomonian**

Grace Soghomonian and Angelo Bozionelos (Orphan fund), Eva Karas (Orphan fund),  
Marisa Atamian Sarafian and Stephen Sarafian (Orphan fund)

† **Lodir Zeki**

The Uzuncan Family and the Box Family

† **Dikranouhie Soghomonian**

Caline Soghikian (Orphan Fund)

**Parish Council Update**

On March 8 Fr. Krikor Zakaryan installed the new St. Vartan Church Parish Council after Badarak. The new council includes:

Ara Azizian, Advisor

Suzanne Diers, Assistant Treasurer

Mark Henesian, Vice-chairman

Zaven Kanneian, Member Services, Athletic and Cultural Committee Liaison

Rick Kurkjian, Treasurer

Hilda Mener, Corr. Secretary, Ladies Society Liaison

Paul Ohanesian Recording Secretary

Dicko Shahvekilian, Chairman

Hagop Tatoian, Athletic Committee Liaison

Nicole Vasgerdsian, Assistant Recording Secretary, ACYO & Sunday School Liaison

Arto Yagjian, Maintenance



**St. Vartan Church Welcomes Fr. Krikor**

On March 8 St. Vartan Armenian Church welcomed Rev. Fr. Krikor Krikorian as Parish Priest at St. Vartan Church. Fr. Krikor celebrated his first Badarak as St. Vartan's priest that Sunday, and he also installed the new St. Vartan Parish Council. After the service a special reception was held for Fr. Krikor, his wife, Yn. Anoush, and his daughters, Emma and Grace, sponsored by the Ladies Society.

