

What God has joined together let no man put asunder.(Mt. 19:3-9;Mk. 10:2-9)

There are various degrees of marriage. There is that of a man and woman but also that of God as Creator and Sustainer of all to His creation, mainly the human being, the main purpose of his creative act. No two things are like in life, as we know it, starting from the beginning of time to eternity. God though keeps a synthesizing process in which individuals discover their proper place and purpose in life. Without God all of this purpose of life is lost and we on the planet Earth are left alone, lost and consequentially suffer because of the absence of a lasting PEACE.

The most important marriage though is the one with God. When this fails however, reconciliation was made possible by God's Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. This marital bond was restored in the sacrament of Baptism and Chrismation as reflected in the baptismal clothes that the newly baptized child wears at the completion of the baptismal rite. They are the child's marital gown as a bride whether the child is a boy or girl. There God Who brought the child into world, keeps him/her to share in His glory through fidelity to their marital vows. We may ask, though, as to why do marriages breakdown? The Pharisees replied to Jesus as to why Moses permitted a written decree of divorce to which Jesus replied that it was because of "the hardness of your hearts." That is to say man-made laws do not supersede a decree made by God.

A wonderful blending takes place in this process with God's will and through His divine grace bringing about a harmony that brings with it PEACE to help the newly-born child of God through the course of all the vicissitudes of life beginning with the growing pains that begin at birth and never cease.

The marriage of a man and a woman is similar to this process in many ways, yet so different. In the blessings of the marriage ceremony, the couple invites God to join them and to be a part of their new life, which is seen when the priest joins their hands and places the hand-cross over the their hands , signifying the presence of God in their marriage.

A partnership is realized not only between each other but that of the couples with God. By their participation in worship services the renewal of the marital contract with God is renewed and retained.

There is also the marriage of family members with each other, which is the most sacred element in society...the family unit. It is from this that a nation is born and kept. What do we seek in a home? Peace. Where we can rest, take off our shoes and take it easy. Peace of mind and soul. Rest is important because by that strength is restored.

Home is a place to eat. We may eat out but that takes much away from us. We might have a sandwich or a snack while watching T.V. or we may have guests and eat in the dining room; but the great workhorse in the house is the kitchen table. We want to eat in peace, with ourselves and with those around us. It is not good to be angry, tired or worried while eating. The conversation should be pleasant, cheerful and not one which arouses one's emotions.

This is how the House of God which becomes home to us. It does all those things for us and much more so that which we seek and wish to enjoy the rest of our lives. But for this to happen, we have to stay in touch with God through his Home on Earth which is the Holy Church so that we may remain in touch with each other and with others. Attending a wedding service can also be an opportunity to renew their marital vow with each other as they witness the marriage ceremony of a friend or love one. It is an opportunity for all also to renew our individual and family commitment to God and by that to each other. In that sense, this will be a memorial event, one not to be forgotten, for by that we remember the renewal of our marriage to God through Christ Jesus on this happy occasion on attending this particular marriage ceremony.

As God's children, we should feel the urgency to want to always have His blessing upon us. We are told by the Holy Scripture of Jesus saying, "knock and it shall be open to you; seek and you shall find it."(Mt.7:7) In this spirit we come knocking the door of God's Holy Temple requesting admittance and where we will always find a cordial welcome. We will have to be earnest and sincere in our desire to want this blessing if we are to enjoy the taste of its fruit. We have to desire it like one who hungers seeking food; or one who thirsts seeking water. We have to be hungry and thirsty. Yes, we will even have to beg for God's blessing in His Home unashamed if we are to taste its fruit. It is only when we deeply want something that we can enjoy it once we have received it. Something received for nothing is seldom really enjoyed and rarely ever appreciated.

O Lord, Who has brought all things into being to share in your glory, we pray that by your mercy you keep us in Your abiding love so that in joyful praise and honor we may glorify Your all holy name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the one and only true God now and forever; for what You have brought into being and together let no man put asunder through the constant strains of life.

Again, "What God has brought together let no man put asunder."

The Legend of the Engagement Ring

Long ago in ancient Egypt, a Pharaoh fell in love with a beautiful young princess. Because of her youth the princess's father refused consent to their marriage. The Pharaoh, being a wise man, desired to have the father's blessing and so agreed to wait until the princess was of age. His love for her grew daily and he longed for some way to show his devotion to her while he was waiting for their marriage. So he called in the royal jewelers and told them to search the land for the most precious stone in existence. This, the Pharaoh had mounted on a ring of gold and took to his love one. As he slipped the ring on her finger, he told her, "Until I can place a wedding band on your finger and claim you for my bride, wear this ring as a reminder of my devotion. Just as the gem is priceless, so is my love for you!" And down through the ages, the engagement ring has served as a pledge of true love and as a symbol to the rest of the world that two people have chosen to spend their lives together. From the writings of Amenophia 11 Circa: 3300 B.C.

Wedding

Jesus says, I am the way, the truth and the life. What is meant by the word life so that we can have a better understanding as to what the truth is and the way to it? That's living, some say, in referring to an easy-going,

fun-loving kind of life as if that is the ultimate goal in this life with nothing really more to do than " to kill time by some pleasure-filled way until we are put away for our final rest.

Christian belief is not set up as something against or opposing relaxing, resting or enjoying oneself, in moderation of course, but the 'Name of the Game' called Life in Christian terms is defined as a way of living which is dead serious in nature and rough by worldly standards. One has to be in condition and learn to respect certain conditions and learn to respect certain disciplines in order to survive life in terms of ordinary living, but that is still not enough. One needs a spirited pick-up to weather not only the common ordinary storms of life but it's an absolute necessity for the really bad ones. There is no substitute for uplift in one's spirit. Physical fitness and mental acuteness are simply not enough.

This is the role the church plays in our lives. It brings to us God's life-saving and life-giving energies called grace. With it, the unbearable becomes bearable and the intolerable becomes tolerable. These energies are found in the place where God lives called His Home. The Church is known as the House of God. We are all invited there to share in His wealth, but we will have to measure up to His standards if we are to become shareholders and participants of this wealth.

Young couples desiring to bring their lives together as partners in life come to God's Holy Church asking that God's Blessing bestowed upon them. Prayers are said that God receive the requests of their prayers and bless their marriage so that their lives will be filled with happiness and peace. Satan, however will try by all the deceitful means that are known to him to try and destroy that which God has bond together. He is often successful. The best surety we have in safeguarding ourselves from these trappings is by returning to the House of the Lord and there in a spirit of thanksgiving worship the Almighty which will keep firm and steadfast the bonds of the marriage vow by God's grace. With the final blessing the prayers of all is that the blessing that this young couple received will be continually renewed by their participation in services as a regular part of their lives for the remainder of their lives.

It is with this in mind that couples come to church requesting that God's blessing be bestowed upon them so that their lives in the days ahead will be fortified and strengthened by His assistance. We all must learn (and I must add, the sooner we learn this lesson the better it is going to be for us} that God's assistance in this Game of Life is indispensable for which, I repeat certain discipline and conditionings are required if we are to receive its full benefits. May God's blessing be upon them and upon us all so that what we may do be that which needs to be done properly.

A NEW CHAPTER

Young couples embarking on a new adventure in life where they will be to a greater extend on their own but not all together detached from others will find on the way some those who are ready and willing to assist them giving good advice and a helping hand while others who will be trying to take advantage of every opportunity afforded them to use them for their own personal gain. As a new adventure there will be moments of sadness

and disappointments interwoven with the more joyous times. They will be confronted with uncertainties at times and there will also times when decisions will already be made for them and they will have to comply to them whether they like them or not.

This is not altogether colorful portrayal of life that I am presenting but eventually, if we have not already have not been exposed to these elements to a certain extent, we will have to face them eventually. Pressing issues and demands will be the cause of many worrisome moments. Some say that it is the survival of the fittest, but don't be deceived by such loose talk nor be persuaded by it for it is absurd. This is the work of man and the wisdom of his lips and tongues serving his ego.

Life remains static and the same as long as the hearts and minds of man continue to travel along an unrighteous and unjust way which is contrary to the will of God. Some believe that this is the reality of life only because they fail to see or they do not want to be made to believe that the true reality is a noble and virtuous life centered on the church. It might be thought that these are impractical high ideals but in truth they are the only real part of life that makes sense. Without the Church, imperfect as it may seem to our human eyes, life has no meaning.

My intentions are not to dampen the joyous moments of a wedding ceremony nor do I imply that until now our lives have been contrary to Christian principles but rather I'm conveying these thoughts which will be to your benefit and also to all who are in attendance in this sacramental rite and pray that this message finds a place in your and all of our hearts.

"And now, O Lord beneficent, according to Thine order we take off the chaplets of the crowning of marriage from their heads and we bless them with the sign of the Holy Cross in Thy name."

This is part of the prayer of the removal of crowns during the ceremony of holy marriage. During this sacrament the bride and her betrothed become husband and wife and thus a family is formed. As God had done in the beginning in creating the first family, Adam and Eve, the Church continues this sacred act. The Church becomes an agent of transmitting divine grace which forms and protects the family from internal and external danger, thereby insuring Her preservation and enhancing her opportunity of flourishing.

The Church is the body of Christ. As members of the Church we form one part of Jesus' earthly body. The heart of His body is the altar from which flows the life-saving and life-giving body and blood of Jesus. The head of the church is Jesus himself. He controls and governs the members of His Holy Body like the mind controls and governs our behavior and action. Jesus, then, is the third party of the marriage who has brought about the being of the family into existence by means of the sacrament of Holy Marriage. When Jesus is not a member of the family unit or is replaced, the disintegration has taken hold. Her existence hence is vulnerable to destruction. The crowns signify that the family is more than a family unity.

The family is a kingdom having the right to enjoy her sovereignty and unalienable rights. All of the family-unit kingdoms together comprise to form a nation of people. The family units are the body of that kingdom; she is the heart and soul of that kingdom; and she is the mind or head of that kingdom. All of the workers, military personnel, educators, intellectuals, leaders arise from the family-unit kingdoms of the nation of people.

A nation therefore is a kingdom comprised of kingdoms. She is protected, persevered and flourished as long as her children keep their trust in God. For us Christians, this means being faithful to Christ and the precepts of our Christian teachings. Christ, the head of the body of the Church, must always remain the head of body, our family and our nation of people for which here is a need for us to [put aside the crowns of our worldly glory and be adorned by the crown of Jesus.

"And now, O Lord beneficent, according to Thine order we take off the chaplets of the crowning of marriage from their heads and bless them with the sign of the Holy Cross in Thy name."

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you that you also love one another." (Jn.13:34)

Love is a difficult word to explain and the definition given in dictionaries seems wholly inadequate to bring to light the true depth, width and broad scope of this word. Love is looked upon by different people in many different ways. Some hold it in high respect and approach it with a sense of sacredness while others understand it to be part of and regard it as and classify it with the common ordinary experiences of life. But wherever love is alive it causes one of two extremities and they are either a deep pain or a boundless happiness. The emotions which are an important part of the physical make-up of man are caught up between these two and affect a persons' well-being.

For example, the Armenian Church closes the Altar Curtain during the Lenten Season depriving the faithful from the fruits of the resurrection that is the message of Easter which is celebrated with every Divine Liturgy Service. Instead it places a picture of Jesus' Crucifixion during this period of self-re-examination so that we who regard ourselves as believers can test ourselves to see whether the love of this individual whom we say is our Lord and Master is really alive within us. In so doing, the Church is questioning our faith as to whether we are sharing in His passion, His suffering and in His death; or do we regard Him as another man who was able to leave His mark in the Books of History and Religion?

DIAMONDS

The diamond is the hardest naturally occurring substance known to man and also one of the most valuable. Because of its hardness the diamond is the most enduring of all gem stones. Diamonds are crystals formed almost entirely of carbon. Scientists believe they were formed millions of years ago when carbon was subjected to great heat and pressure. Diamonds are among the most costly jewels in the world partly because they are rare. Another reason why diamonds are so expensive is that the cutting and polishing the rough diamond is a slow and costly process. It must be done by a highly trained worker, who took many years to learn to do his work skillfully.

Armenia, like a diamond had its beginning in ancient times, being one of the nations of the early civilized world. They say it was located in the wrong place of the world, because it was constantly subject to the pressures of great opposing forces, the great powers of the day. These great powers not only were in opposition to one another but strove to annihilate the existence of the Armenians by making it one of their own. Instead of being

incorporated and being absorbed within the sphere of the super powers of the day, it miraculously persevered. The Armenian poet Kevork Emin stated it beautifully in saying that instead of bringing about our termination they created a diamond.

That diamond can be seen in the national character of the Armenian people and their customs, traditions, folklore, culture and religion. A child is born with these and is exposed to them and as such they become a further developed in that person's character. **"Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you."** (Mt.7:6) We place our pearls and precious jewels in a safe place so that they may not be stolen and serve through us a beneficial purpose for the common good. A Diamond is the most precious and expensive of all gems. **"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?"** (Jn 14:2) I'm certain that when a person's life reflects that what a diamond is in the world of precious jewels, they will have found a haven safe from all the devices of Satan, in the House of our heavenly Father.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you and not as the world gives do I give you."(Jn.14:27)

We all seek peace within ourselves, peace of mind so our thinking is more clear and orderly and comprehensible at least for ourselves even though others might have difficulty understanding it. We also seek a peace of heart which is full of anxieties caused by the tensions in life. We want peace in our souls which is disquieted by the restlessness of our emotions. A sure and lasting peace will be a stabilizer in the vicissitudes of life which holds many uncertainties concerning our future. We seek a peace which we can trust, one we can rely on and which has within it sincerity and genuine quality.

This is the peace of Jesus. The peace of Jesus is a dynamic force. It is an action that causes a condition to happen. Sometimes we find the key to this happiness in our own selves and other times, we find it through another person who possesses the characteristics of being trustworthy, reliable, sincere and genuine in character. Sometimes this condition is brought about through the combination of both, that is, from within and from without. It was an active life-giving force which brought about a peace of mind, heart and soul of St. Francis of Assisi who said, "You have made us for yourself, and we are restless until we rest in You".

From our Church hymnal (Sharagan) the following verse "Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, rose upon the Earth and made the darkness of ignorance to flee add after his death and resurrection, ascended to the 'Father from Whom He came' Who is worshipped by the heavenly and earthly beings together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Because of Whom, we also humble ourselves to the Father in spirit and in truth."

The dictionary defines the sun as a heavenly body around which the Earth revolves and which gives light and heat to the Earth and other planets of the solar system. The solar system is defined as anything pertaining to, proceeding from or determined by the sun. In other words, it is the sun's system. Together with the air and the water, it is one of the most basic essential needs of man.

One of the first acts of God in His glorious creation was to create light. What would life be like if we didn't have it? We have electricity that lights up the nights and oil and gas that furnish us with heat but these are limited, very limited in comparison to the service rendered by the sun. The sun therefore for us earthly dwellers is an irreplaceable object.

Likewise, Christ is irreplaceable. Jesus says that, "I am the way, the truth and the life."(Jn.14:6) Our Church father writes in this hymn that he is the sun, the sun of righteousness. It is He that warms and enlightens all of the hearts and souls of men that walk upon this globe seeking justice and righteousness. We all are affected by Him and keeps our spirits warm and shows us the way. He asks that we be like Him.

Some references to Jesus's healing power mentioned throughout the Gospel books...

Mark 1:33,34 - and the whole city was gathered together about the door. And He healed many who were sick with various diseases.

Mark 3:11 – For He had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch Him.

Luke 4:40 - Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him(Jesus) and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.

Luke 6:19 - and all the crowd sought to touch Him for our came forth from Him and He healed them.

Matt.8:16, 17 – and He healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah," He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

Matt. 14:14 And He went ashore, he saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and he healed them. And he healed all who were sick.

The deceased, was a little sun in herself. Her genuine and sincere personality and character flowed in all directions warming everyone that knew her or happened to speak to her whether they were a close friend or a distance acquaintance. She was weak physically but not in spirit. She had an illness which was plaguing her and hampering her health but this never altered her disposition. She always greeted you with a pleasant smile and left you with that same pleasant feeling. Love and respect were deeply seeded in her soul. She was deeply affected by the recent death of her father and although he had lived a full life, she would always be moved to tears whenever she would talk about him because as she so modestly would say, "he was my father" She was like her Lord, a humble person. She was very humble, a faithful wife, a devout mother and a genuine friend to everyone. She had the teachings of Jesus crystallized in her being. When you saw her, it was like seeing sun shine. She is going to be missed just as we would miss sun. She cannot be replaced just as Christ cannot be replaced. There is one Christ. There is one sun in the sky above us and we are going to miss the one Lucia whom we all knew. She had no degree. She was no professor, but all of us thou without exception can learn a lesson from her and her shining example and that is by bringing a little sunshine to each other just as she brought it to us.

"Yea out of the mouth of babes and suckling's thou hast perfected praise" Matt. 21:16 (On the occasion of the death of a ten year old boy)

I feel at a loss for words at a time like this. You try and bring a combination of words and thoughts together appropriate for the occasion and they seem as though they would be almost meaningless within the somber heavy atmosphere. Words just seem silly at a time like this. the only thing to do is really not to say anything but humble our heads and feel grief stricken that such a thing should happen to someone so young, so energetic and thoughtful and full of life. Why did it happen or why does it happen to those so young? Every parent who had a child his age who have had the same or a contagious disease similar to this probably have asked themselves that same question a million times. We ask ourselves...Why? Although we find ourselves at a loss for the right answer we inwardly humble ourselves before the almighty will of God, just as naturally as we humble ourselves before this grief stricken young boy. That is the only sane answer and solution that we have. God so willed that it be. This doesn't sound satisfying but who is ever satisfied with the things in life? The only person who comes

near to having a complete satisfaction is the person who thanks God for what he has and doesn't think about those things that he doesn't have. This thought comforts and alleviates some of the pain, but it does not do away the suffering completely. Grief and sorrow do remain. But he wouldn't want us to be moping, groping and feeling sorrow all the time because he wasn't that kind of boy. He wasn't a loser. He was a winner all the way. Even to the end he was entertaining us. One of his last words were "How much is 4 & \$?" After asking this question several times and failing to receive a respond he would ask, "Well then, if you don't know that much, how much is 3 & 3?"

There is much more than meets the eye in these words and it is much more than a matter of simple arithmetic that is involved here. These words showed a profound and well molded character within the framework of this young boy. I don't know what he was thinking about when he asked these questions and I don't know what was in the back of his mind. I would like to make a conjecture of what I feel that he was thinking, but this is only a supposition on my part. I believe he knew very well that the end was coming. This seems quite obvious, but for him this wasn't the end because he wasn't a loser. By nature he was a winner. It seems that for him, life in and around us was a simple matter. What begins must end. It is as simple as one & one is two. In this vein he would say to us, keep the simple things simple within their formulas and the pure things immaculate within their state. Do not confuse and complicate. It's simple, what begins must terminate its fleshly state in this life.

This message of his is compelling having its sobering effects making one feel as though you have been lying to yourself all of your life as a drunk and all of a sudden something like this comes along, the courage of a 10 year old, which hits you in the face and awakens you from your drunken condition. It sobering effects makes a person to realize that in life itself and within mankind there are still those beautiful things alive in the present that were counted as dead and gone. We see that life isn't a great big arena where everyone is competing against each other trying to see who is going to be the winner. We see that life isn't crime and corruption and all of the degrading aspects of a degenerate type of life where some are living off of that which rightfully belongs to another. We aren't decadent.

What he is telling us is that within this life there is a bright thin line which is pure and simple. Our minds become clouded by the usurper of the real life who is trying to capture our hearts. Life is simple and it is pure. It takes a ten year old to sober us up by washing away all of these clouds and cobwebs and brings within us for a moment that wonderful experience which we will long remember. It is like enjoying a good airing out by letting in some fresh air. Yes, we have all sobered up, but for how long? How long will it take before we return to our drunken routines? No matter what we do, all who know and hear of this boy will again enjoy a refresher course on what life really is. It is as simple as "What is 4 & \$?" or if that is too difficult then, "What is 3 & 3?" We not only humble our heads before this great fighter, but we also say thanks; thanks for waking us up and making us to realize what is real and what is not! We learn from the historian, the scientist, the professor, the teacher, the preacher, the technician, the specialist, the experienced, the inexperienced, the priest, our friends and also from the man on the street. These people work hard and long for them to be heard. Sometimes they labor a whole life time without ever getting a word in. It is remarkable that this boy within the short time allotted to him says something that really struck home. I'm sure that it will long be remembered and appreciated by all of us who knew him.

Love is an unseen force. God unseen to our human eyes, loves; a love though that is full and replete with mercy.. By that love He created: the world, heavens and heavenly bodies, the angels and beings, and that there is. Although we see forces opposing one another in nature, the creation possess within it a harmony and order which we marvel at. By all this we gain an insight, form a concept as to the almightiness and grandeur majestic

sublimity of our Creator. In order to see love though, which is invisible to human sight, and to make it intelligible for us to comprehend and made visible, there is a need to gain sight which can only come through the eyes of a pure heart. This, in turn, unlocks the door to the secrets of this divine mystery for us.

An untimely death suddenly ended earthly sojourn of this young man. It must have been an unseen love hidden and sealed in the depths of his soul that moved him to share with the less fortunate to enjoy the beauty of God's creation. He is sharing his eyes with an unfortunate person deprived of sight with the hope that he or she he or she may enjoy the beauty of God's creation. He bequeathed his body for research with the hope to speed the discovery of cures for diseases so that someone who is plagued with an ailment can enjoy God's blessings more fully and abundantly. Only a person plagued with a disease probably understands what it means when it is said "what is life without one's health." An unseen force called love motivated this young man to have compassion on his fellowman and now we pray the Lord rest his soul in His eternal peace and that the Holy Spirit of God comfort his family.

As his Lord, so did our dear friend compassionately take upon himself the sufferings of all our pain and infirmities. He was always available and ready to serve. His days and his nights were given to those who needed him. He never refused but met each request as a challenge you might say to his integrity, no matter how disruptive it might be to him personally for that much needed rest which was essential for his own health. He had to be confined to bed before he would say no, but even then, he did what he could. Like His Master whose very name heals, the name of our dear friend has found its way into the inner most parts of our hearts where his memory will always be honored and cherished. That is why there is barely a dry eye amongst us today because his loss has touched the most sensitive parts of our souls. We are moved by his compassion toward his fellowman. Calling him a dedicated man is not enough in describing the magnitude of his spirit. His greatest weakness was that he loved people too much. Let us remember that it was Our Lords' unbounded love towards man that brought Him to His Cross in Calvary. He was proud of his ancestral heritage and this pride was not confined to one in name alone but in his blood and in his spirit. Along with the extremely busy schedule of his own profession, he took on responsibilities. Not simple ordinary responsibilities but heavy ones that demanded much time and energy and he fulfilled them. He was deeply involved in our church activities and was generous in his service, whether it was physical, financial or moral. He enjoyed doing it and received satisfaction from it for he wanted others to benefit from it. He didn't want anyone to be deprived from the vast wealth of our past heritage and he gave himself time and time again so unselfishly for that noble purpose. His personal world was centered on his family, his lovely wife and wonderful children. The love from there spread to his brothers and sisters, relatives and friends. The love this family has towards each other overflows into their religious and life. We share in their loss today. Our dear friend is no longer with us but the image of his great and noble spirit continues on. His very name still possesses healing power for us whose lives he has touched, still bringing comfort to us in our moment of sorrow. "The memory of the just is blessed"(Prov. 10:7) May the Lord enlighten this soul and grant to his wife, children, brothers and sisters and their families comfort by His Holy Spirit.

God is love

God is love. That is He withholds nothing. There is a continual and ongoing total giving of Himself. This is manifested in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ seen in the fullest, highest and noblest degree in His crucifixion. Jesus never withheld anything from anyone. He gave totally and completely of Himself, always for the sake of the glory and praise of God and for the benefit of His fellow human beings, the human race. We may ask, what is God trying to prove by this?...that He is good, great and almighty? And to whom is He proving Himself to? God is in trying to prove anything to Himself or anyone else. It is part of His nature to continually to give of Himself. It would cease to be God if it were otherwise.

She experienced some very bitter moments in her life. At a very young and impressionable age, the horrors of the massacres took place under the guise of relocation. It was a bitter experience that, like many others she would get upset speaking about. So she preferred silence taking her memories with her to the grave. It was too horrendous for her to handle.

She married and has three wonderful daughters of whom one is stricken with multiple sclerosis at a young age. Like God, she gave totally of herself for family, friends and even strangers, not out of duty or obligation but rather as part of her nature. She wouldn't be herself if she did otherwise like God wouldn't be God. As God gave totally of Himself for His family, we the members of the human race, so to, she gave totally for her family which was everything for her.

After the death of her daughter and the death of her husband a few years later, the sun began to shine a little more for her to enjoy life in other ways such as having more time for her children, and children and great grandchildren. She takes a painting after 70, enjoys reading good books and music having a musical background herself embroiled in at a young age.

You might say she saw and took advantage of those things on the brighter side of life for some 20 years until her health began to fail. As she loved and cared for others, she too was loved and cared for by her children and loved ones. The bitter experiences of life didn't overcome her. She didn't succumb to them and become a different person. She wasn't bitter with the world or with life or with the life given to her. She remained to her loving giving nature, that gift of God, leaving many sweet and wonderful memories in the hearts of her loved ones, especially her precious family.

"By God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us." says the psalmist (Ps. 67:1)

If these were not the exact words, they are in the spirit, I'm sure, but one of the peripheral requests the person for whom we are performing the services today; a dear mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and faithful member of our church. God blessed her with a long life upon which His face had shown upon her brightly. She encountered hardships of course and probably had many personal disappointments, but on the whole, God seemed to have answered the request of her prayers. He lived a good life and a rather healthy one, loved and cared for by her children and their families whom she adored seeing the days of her grandchildren and also her great grandson about whom she would speak with pride and joy. His youthful energies brought a new happiness into her life and a reflection of the youthfulness in her heart. Although her body would not respond to these desires because of the problems that arose from old age, she always remained young at heart. She had an unusually keen and alert mind to her very last days and it seems to all, she had led a rather active life. During the last few years ministry became less vibrant, she would always say when she would see me, "Well, I made it." Attending church services and functions was always a very part of her life." I don't know what it is, but every time I attend, it gives me new life and feels that empty void within me." She told me once. She was extremely proud of being an Armenian. Whenever she read or heard of Armenians doing well her face would light up and by the same token, if someone of Armenian descent is something wrong she felt hurt as though the blow struck her personally. Her pride was not one which excluded other traditions. To enjoy what others had to offer but she was extremely proud of her ancestral heritage which was an ancient heritage rich in experience.

God has been gracious to the Armenian people and has blessed us and it has been a people who have always had a grateful heart for His blessings and a people that have always been able to recover, to resurrect so to speak, by his mercies.

"May the Lord be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us." says the Psalmist.(Pm. 67:1)

HAYK-HAYKAZOUN

In trying to describe the person often revert in finding the answer in the definition found in the meaning of the person's name. For example the name of the deceased we are praying for today whose name was name is Haykaz comes from the name Hayk. He was the son of Noah's son Togarma or Torkom in Armenian.

Although Hayk is more or less a legendary figure, he personifies to a greater extent the Armenian character. In the stories of Hayk we find living in the lower basin of the Mesopotamian Valley in the regions of Babylonia. It was a hot, humid and dusty land but worse, the political climate was intolerable. A tyrant by the name of Bel(Nimrod) had control and was extremely cruel. Hayk decided to take his family, who were called Haykazouns, to move elsewhere. He traveled northward up the Mesopotamian Valley to the land of Ararat where the mountains, rivers and streams and fair weather seemed to be a suitable place for them to settle. These same features were symbolic of the noble aspirations of the spirit, that is the high mountains were a living picture of the ascent of their soul starting from a strong base and soaring upward; the running waters signified life, abundant and free; and the clear air symbolized purity. They found a home for the soul as well as the bodies. This was the land of their grandparents, Noah and his family.

The Haykazouns loved it because they were free to benefit from the sweat of their labors and talents. Bel challenge Hayk in a war but was defeated. Hayk one this hard battle and his freedom for himself and his family.

It would be an 'Alice in Wonderland' ending if we could say that he and his people, the Haykazouns, lived happily ever after but the truth is that he and his descendants to the present age, continually had to struggle to retain their freedom that demanded sacrifice. The land of the Hayks or Haykiids became Hayasadan which Armenians call Armenia.

Those of the family of Hayk, we noted were called Haykazouns from which came the name Haykaz. It denotes the integrity and courage of the man and his quest for the high and noble. These characteristics are indicative of the men for whom we pray today. Haykaz was kind and gentle and respected and respected. He loved his family and had a competitive spirit and was unafraid before a challenge. He was a fighter when the time called to be one and met everyday problems well foreseeing the needs of tomorrow.

His character did not change it later life when bodily ailments plagued him constantly. He was aided by his wife who did her utmost even though she too had ailments plaguing her. With her aid in the love of the family, he was able to withstand the challenges of life similar to the mutual love and respect that existed at the time of the Patriarch Hayk and Haykazouns. May the merciful Lord enlighten his soul and grant comfort by the Holy Spirit.

King Artashes

While viewing the bounty of the land and the writing of smoke from the chimneys of the hamlets and also remembering the faithfulness of his people, King Artashes longed to live and enjoy a bit longer the happiness of

its people with them. The word ‘ojakh’ which means fireplace is commonly used in referring to home and home life. Its warmth which heated the house and the glow of its fire that provided light usually was one large room where everything took place. It is where the family often gathered together to pass long Winter nights. It is where the meals were cooked and baking done. It also meant the loving atmosphere surrounding the home signifying the sanctity of family life.

In this vein the school is referred to as the “fireplace for the mind” and the church as the “fireplace for the soul.” (ojakh)

So more than his earthly possessions, the grandeur of his palace life the treasure which made him happy was the homes of his people, signified by the rising smoke the chimneys which each one for him signified a separate jewel.

Together with her late husband, she formed a home life, simple but full of love. They lived a good, clean life and had an abiding belief in the faith of their fore fathers. They not only serve one another but together they served the physical, intellectual and spiritual needs of their children. They served the Armenian community before the construction of the church and continued with a dedicated spirit after its construction always in the spirit of serving with a humble heart their Creator. This in itself is a precious jewel in the person of contribution to the new life that formed in the New World. This was, by no means, a small contribution. Everything good, pure, simple from the world of their childhood in Armenia, was mixed with the same that was offered in the New World where they took refuge. After her husband's death she moved closer to the Church where she received her solace from the warm and light provided by "the fireplace of her faith."

Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures are composed of a select group above but are called the Old and New Testaments that is the covenant of the divine has sealed with man. These books are considered to be sacred and holy because they were inspired by the one Who alone is Holy. The Armenian name for these sacred texts is "The Breath of God" that is to say that just as God breathed into the body of Adam giving life to his mortal body He also breathed His divine presence into the souls of Saints inspiring them to put into words understood by man in describing to them as to what His Divine Majesty is all about.

These books and their messages were an important part of the life of the deceased. They gave her companionship in her moments of loneliness, living with David and Moses, Peter and Paul and all of the greater personalities of the Bible. The Holy Scriptures give her comfort and hope during the darkest moments of distress when the cares of the world were pressing upon her such as the horrendous days and following years of Great Armenian genocide. It sustained her and gave to her, most of all, a breath of new life granting her strength and vitality into a body which had undergone the complex battles of years of living. Now that her master and Lord has called her, she has sealed her life in this world, leaving behind these books and body to enter a new life. We pray for her soul and the souls of the victims of that inhumane and unjust act, that they receive their reward in the land of the living of God's heavenly kingdom and that we who are yet among the living, may He grant the blessing of His great mercy.

Personal Observations of a Brave Man

He was good-natured, kind, considerate and sincere and a man who always weighed his words, certain of his thoughts and of his mind. He knew also his shortcomings and recognize them to be the frailties of human nature

and so, he was unafraid to acknowledge him but at the same time didn't allow others to take advantage of this weakness (if this virtue can be considered a weakness) to belittle the esteem he had toward his own person and in so doing he taught those who were tempted to fall into this degrading experience, to hold correctly and in the right perspective, the high and noble values towards their own selves. You didn't have to agree with him and share his outlook and viewpoints. He didn't expect others to be like him nor was he out to convert others to his way. He accepted another person's rights to his own thoughts as being legitimate as his were to him. After a conversation with him, one had respect towards the free spirit of his mind and heart.

He was also a man of integrity and a fierce competitor. He became a member of the Armenian Volunteer Army and awarded one of the highest honors that this is told by the government of France. It was not the honor that made the man but the character man that overshadowed the award. The more than 50 blessed filled years of marriage with his wife together with his children and grandchildren was reward enough for this humble man. May the Lord accept his soul and grant peace and comfort to his love ones.

One of the Armenian Church Fathers in a church hymn likens Jesus to the sun in the heavens in calling Him the Sun of Righteousness.

Just as it is by the sun's radiant like that life is kept on planet Earth similarly despite the peace that flows from the person of Christ that righteousness, truth and life find their source around that which they revolve in orbit.

After long illness to the conditions imposed by the law of nature and in accordance to God's divine will and devoted mother and grandmother read over her loss as well as many in the church community.

The termination of her earthly life is like the setting of the sun for those who knew her and enjoyed the warmth of her personality. She was a humble person gifted with many commendable talents of which one that outshone and surpassed all others was the warmth of graciousness of her character one could not fail to be impressed by this even in meeting her for the first time. There was even sweetness in her anger, that would not grieve nor pain but in a mysterious way kept the bonds of friendship between her and others firm and steadfast. She was a fine example of motherhood in every sense of the word. It is by the beat of the pulsation of her heart that life and love breathed into her family and their family life. It is a virtue that is deeply embedded in the hearts of the Armenian people as taught to them by the Church. She was very hospitable to all she knew as well as to strangers. She was faithful, dedicated and loyal to the faith of her forefathers. Her sun no longer shines in our midst but she is left behind a wonderful left legacy of unforgettable memories which like the sunrays bring her life and work to us. Her children and grandchildren suffer now under the pains of the wounds of her loss but by God's compassionate loving grace will they be able to be comforted and restored to some semblance of normalcy. Their love and respect towards her during the last years when the pains of her illness became increasingly greater. I am certain that they will continue to do their utmost to keep her memory vivid than cherished in our midst.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when its branches are yet tender and put forth leaves, you know that summer is near. (Matt, 24:32)

Again we near the fall season of the year when we once again have the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of the harvest. In spring the climate warmed, heating the Earth causing the snow to melt and life to sprout forth that laid dormant during winter. Movement, birth and growth are words that are reminiscent of our youthful days. Continuing on through the summer further growth takes place, a deeper richness and stature; when nature

becomes decked in her various garments of apparel. On into autumn, young plants after producing the fruit of its life continues on slowly and recedes back to mother Earth from where it had come. With winter comes the cold northerly winds and everything becomes covered with a blanket of snow, protecting and keeping awaiting the advent of another spring.

Our lives can be seen revolving in the same cycle but of course for much longer extended period of time. The strength, vigor and intensity of youth develop into a mature, responsible personality which eventually turns to a period of relative serenity and gentleness of old age. One might make an analogy of life with someone walking along the seashore leaving a footprint near the water's edge which is erased by the continual oncoming waves. The waves and water in this instance are symbolic of time covering up what had been done and what had been established.

Our dear friend and a companion some while those near and dear to him being a wonderful father and grandfather has entered his winter season but the mark he has left upon all shall long be remembered for many years while leaving his personal mark in "The Book of Life" which can never be effaced because it is the time that I have any effect upon it.

He was young at heart and had youthful look in his eyes and on the broad friendly grin across his face. He told me once that, 'the world is full of lies' (ashkharuh sood eh) that is to say that you cannot trust it. This might seem to some to be a pessimistic outlook on life but by no means was he a pessimist. What he is saying is that anyone who puts his/her trust and belief in the world and the ways of man is a fool. Repeating the verse stamped on our monetary coins, it is "In God we trust" and not in the ways of the world. His youthful character, warm personality and sincerity will be missed especially by his family who did their utmost in caring for him in his time of need. May God grant eternal rest his soul and comfort those who mourn his departure.

We are taught that there is more to life than what we can try to fully comprehend. Mary the mother of Jesus was hurt in seeing her son on the cross. She was there when his lifeless body was placed in the grave. On the third day she returns with some of the other faithful women to anoint his body in accordance to their belief. Although Jesus had spoken at times of his resurrection from the dead, it was too much for her or any of His followers or even the Apostles to comprehend. So when she arrives at the tomb and finds it empty, she is confused and concerned as to what they had done to her son's body. An Angel of the Lord appears to Mary Magdalene who was with her, to tell the Apostles that Jesus had risen from the dead. The risen Lord appears to her and some of the faithful often on during a 40 day. After which he ascends into heaven and returns to God the Father from whom He had come.

The tides of time came and after gone but haven't been able to wash away the footprints of Jesus. They are still with us in Jerusalem, in Judea and Israel and throughout the world. Footprints of Jesus cannot be effaced but to the contrary they continue to multiply.

We ask, why is it that after someone dies that we can verbalize, put into words that which we could not do when they were alive. It may be because love penetrates then deeper into the most innermost chambers of our being which we know exists but which remains unknown until a particular time. Something that is part of us yet which we don't fully understand but one day we will because there are things that even the tides of time has no jurisdiction over. Hate does not act or work that way we don't have to wait for a person to die to know whether we hate that person. Out of the love of God we learn to love even those persons.

Our Armenian Christian faith provides an indispensable medication in the form of the sacraments. The faithful partake in the sacramental life of the church to receive life, not death.

One night I saw a program on television that was about religion, science and government. It was about a family that belonged to a particular church that was being prosecuted by the state for failing to take their child for medical help. According to our faith cooperation is sought between religion and science to help human beings.

This is the spirit I saw when he received the Blessed Sacrament. He received help from the medication he took which greatly alleviated the pains of his illness. There are instances where we see especially in our martyred saints bearing excruciating pain and suffering during their martyrdom who through faith and prayer were able to bear all this pain through their faith in God. This does not discount the need for medication for someone who is in need of it.

In this particular case he was aided by the loving care of his wife who was always faithfully and his aid and by his children especially in those last days of his life. He enjoyed nature. His last days were spent in his yard watching and listening to nature. One day together with his wife we talked about God, faith and belief and also about having a calling and also the inner voice that speaks within us. I likened it to a mother calling a child. If the child is enjoying his /herself and knows the called is to do chores, they may play deaf and dumb. "I never heard you" may be there reply to a scolding as to why they didn't come sooner. That's human nature. But mother is persistent and always calls again. She is the voice that resounds within us. I told him also of a song that was popular years ago, the name of which was "The Best things in Life are Free." He remembered it. I told him that the best things in life that are free are right before us and they entertain us all the time: the shade, trees, flowers, birds and their chirping, sounds of rustling leaves. I told him that Armenian poets often would write as though they were having a conversation with the bird. They usually had difficulty in finding someone to listen to them so they would opt in telling their woes or seeking word from a loved one living in a distant land from these animals in nature. Indeed the best things in life are free. The best thing in life that was free for him was family life. He was raised in a big family with very hospitable parents and the mother who was a very warm and loving person. It was a big family but there was always room for others. The doors of his own home likewise were always open with his wife and their children having the welcome sign out for all to come. The great gift of life has with the days of grief and joy.

Now he is called to end but to a new beginning, to another home and to another family. Death as described by Jesus is a state of sleep and an awakening into a new life. We pray that the Lord accept our prayers I received this child of His into His eternal habitation where love and the blessed life of all always and grant comfort by the Holy Spirit to his loved ones.

Funerals

We are surrounded by tragedies in all shapes and forms. We are bombarded with news events through the news media which instantaneously communicates happenings to us. Like so many other things it comes immediately such as instant coffee and microwave dinners. We share the grief of others but so much is happening that it overwhelms us. We become senseless, semi-deaf, able to hear while being deaf at the same time it evokes our sympathy but not a pain it becomes painful though it strikes home or when one dear to us that it becomes personal touches us. It is like being called in a whirlpool, a vortex, where we have lost all control and whose centrifugal force drives us in and in a downward motion. We struggle and fight but it seems to be in vain. We pray for time and for a miracle to happen.

News of terminal disease shatters our inner world. Like a broken glass that we try to mend by putting the pieces together but know that it will never be the same. We don't expect it to be the same and reconcile ourselves to the new reality. They drive and the will, the love to continue to live is strong. It is like a deep mystery.

The deceased demonstrated the strong characteristics and was not a quitter. In a sense she always saw life as a unique blessing: a blessing to be a human being living on this planet Earth and to be a part of the human race; to be a member of God's family and a member of the Christian faith through Jesus Christ; and most specifically for us of the traditional faith through the blessed sacrament to enjoy the blessings of family and family life. She had a dedicated mother who courageously took on every responsibilities early in life after the loss of her husband; a husband who faithfully was at her side in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, and did what was needed to be done, honoring her desires and wishes out of love for her; the blessing of having children, their seven blooming flowers. She honored and enjoyed the calling to motherhood and in return enjoyed her children's love and honor towards her indeed these blessings far out-weighed the tragedies and hardships of life. And all of the money in the world couldn't have bought a better life than the blessings she enjoyed.

A Prayer Service For A Dear Friend

What is a prayer? It is a conversation. In a conversation there is a common courtesy to talk face-to-face unless it is over the phone and in this day and age by other means. If it is not face-to-face we don't have to worry about being presentable as to "Do I look all right?"

Speaking with someone should be an enjoyable experience both friendly and relaxed. Friendly in Armenian is 'ungerayin' that is to say being able to sit down and having a meal, breaking bread with someone with a friendly and warm disposition which in turns aids in the digestive process of the food. Therefore the conversation should be in a relaxed atmosphere for persons enjoy each other's company and the art of listening and speaking the one in which there is mutual respect, love and care for each other's thoughts and ideas.

In the services we speak to God far different and we know that God hears us. But the most important part of the conversation is not in speaking but in listening. How are our hearts to be open to God? The answer is in hearing **His** voice. How can God's voice sound within us? Becomes was by various ways and means...through nature and Mother Nature has her Ways and Means of communicating it; through the sacraments and songs of the services; and through Bible reading all awaken God's living presence in us and with His living presence comes His voice that speaks to us and in us.

And what does he say? When Moses was in the desert and God spoke to him about the things he, Moses was to do for his people, the Israelites, that is the Hebrew people, Moses asked God, "and if the people ask me who You are, what shall I tell them?" God told Moses to tell them that His name is..."I am Who I am."(Ex. 3:14) that is, God is not the God of the past tense.... He is not a God Who was nor is He the God of the future tense that is a God Who shall be but the God of the living present in which all the past and future time is caught up in the dynamic living present tense.."I am Who I am."

The prayers were offered for our dear friend is to awaken within us the voice that resounds within each and every one of us that says that, yes, God is. When we hear the voice, God's voice, we rejoice in our hearts and souls open to God thanking Him for everything for which we have, singing praises and glory to his all holy name...firstly for the dear precious gift of life; and then the vehicle through which that was made possible, our

parents...." Honor thy father and thy mother"; and for those near and dear to us. In this way, in hearing God's voice within us, we realized that He, God, has already hurt us even before we had even uttered a single word.

In a sense then this prayer services one of Thanksgiving for the gift of life. Persons of vainglory seek to own and control the world even the heaven and all of planet Earth. If you feel at a loss at this particular time is because he took with him much that he put into you, which was a sincere and unselfish love. He didn't take it all but has left some behind within your hearts and souls which is going to grow and serve as a source of strength and comfort to you the rest of your lives.

In the wedding ceremony in the Armenian Church, the prayers said that," may you see the children of your children." He enjoyed this blessing. Family is "the name of the game" in the "game of life" but life is not a game but rather a deadly serious business. Our lives are center around the family life – we are born into a family; in marriage we begin a family; we have our family and friends and relatives. It is in our families that each of us finds his/her identity and happiness or hell because of the tragedies of his absence. Family is important. It is the most important unit in society when it is strong everything a strong. We did this week, all else suffers. The mayors of the cities contend with similar critical issues. They all agreed, though, that the problems that overwhelm society today stem from the breakdown of the family.

All of God's action in heaven and on Earth is directed towards one's sacred task that is for the happiness of the family. What was enjoyed in the beginning in Paradise because of the presence of God, which lost but the loss of His holy presence are sharing and an era of suffering and pain and death in this place. All of God's action in the Old Testament and the New Testament is directed to the restoration of that happiness through Jesus Christ. No sacrifice was too great for God to gain the return of His children. In Armenian the Bible is called the "Breath of God." Indeed God's holy breath, His presence, and His voice was restored in His people and the hearts and souls of His children through this suffering, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is the mission and ministry of the Church to carry on this sacred task.... To make a family unit once more whole and wholesome; we have the family of those who believe that think like we do; there is family and the government world, business world, educational world, sports world but family happiness is brought to each segment from an association with the family of God. As God's children we become a good husband and wife team, a good mother and father, son and daughter, brother or sister, etc. As a child of God we become a good doctor, lawyer and Indian Chief. As a child of God we become a good and effective President of the United States, Governor of the state, professor, school teacher or truck driver. It brings honor to our being and if there is no honor with good is it to any of us even if we behold the highest and most prestigious office in the world.

May God bless his soul and grant him the light of God's life in light, a light that continuously creates, and grant to His loved ones the comfort by the Holy Spirit.

Eulogy for a Dear Friend

Our dear friend is no longer a member of the family of we mortals live on this planet called Earth he died sealing his mortality but lives on in our cherished memories and in God's eternal world. This is our prayer for him and indeed a prayer for each and every one of our own personal salvation. Once I conducted a graveside funeral in Charlottesville, Virginia of an Armenian woman who was close to some of the students at the University of Virginia. She was the mother of one of the teachers at that acclaim institution and often would make some "goodies" Armenian style for some of the students of her daughter. One of them, a young black boy, was selected by the other students to give a talk on their behalf. Among other things, he said "I feel like I've been robbed today. Something very precious and dear has been taken from me." When Jesus was approaching

Jerusalem for the last time at the beginning of what is known as Holy Week, he came to the home of His dear friend Lazarus who had died four days before Jesus' arrival. As He approached Lazarus' grave, Jesus wept. The people around Him, we saw this, he remarked as to how much He loved Lazarus. This was a deep, moving and really touching incident and a manifestation revealing Jesus' humanity. Yet a few moments later He manifested His divine nature by bringing his friend Lazarus back to life. I don't was associated God-given gift but like all of you commit and trust myself and we ourselves the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

He was a brilliant man. The range of his knowledge seemed limitless and his memory seemed unfailing, almost impeccable. He had a good and sound educational background. He was a good student and a scholar. He also encouraged the same to others. He had an investigative and probing mind but also very opinionated which made him a controversial figure in some quarters. He was opinionated but respected people of differing opinions, having a deep compassion towards the needs of his fellowman. His intentions was not to destroy but to build and move forward and at times wasn't afraid to talk in an unorthodox manner.

He was brilliant and controversial but also very imaginative. The intent of school programs is to bring to society not only knowledgeable and intelligent people but also persons who have imaginations, who dared to be innovative, adventurous, creative and yes unconventional but not in the careless or carefree manner for personal glory and gain but in a responsible way where prudence and wisdom dictates decision-making. He was a liberal but yet an ultra-conservative. He was a trusted person by all parties on both sides of the bargaining table is. It was a man of noble character despite some weaknesses due to his humanity. Although he is not Armenian he became a member of the Armenian Church because he saw so much of himself in them such as being a creative people who weathered the harsh realities of life and who learned to take advantage of opportunities to improve themselves while they continued to suffer as a people.

May God grant peace and enlightenment of soul to his adventurous spirit and grant comfort by the Holy Spirit to his family , relatives and friends. Amen.