

BIBLE - II

John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea crying out, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is he was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight.”

Matthew 3:1–3

Although Herod liked John and knew of his immense popularity among the people but because of his word to his daughter, Salome, they had the wish of his wife, Herodias carried out to have John beheaded. Herodias did not like John because of certain things he has said about his marriages to Herod and to his brother before him. This was an opportunity to silence him.

Governments, those in the power structure of society, attempt to muzzle the voice of the centers so not to disturb their authority. Criticism or persuasions other than that held by the majority was/is forbidden or at least restricted and contained.

The first English settlers in the New World, the pilgrims, were not held in high esteem in England because of their different lifestyle and belief. They came to America in order to secure for themselves more freedom to practice their religion free from persecutions. Their voice in England was like someone speaking from the wilderness being very weak because it was said in a remote and distant place away from the mainstream of society. America was a wilderness when they came and there they encountered great hardships. Many of those living in the first small settlement died. But some of them survived and from this humble beginning arose a powerful nation, the greatest in the world today founded by people like themselves seeking freedom while others sought the greater fortunes of life. Sadly though, the spirit of Thanksgiving at that meal shared by the Native American Indians and the early settlers has greatly diminished. The corruptions and evil practices of the old world found its way into the system of the New World. That is, there are the minorities, the undesirables, the homeless ‘street’ people, the poor, the undesirables, homeless and poor and those others for various reasons have difficulty surviving being regarded as a burden and whose voice and presence is given limited exposure, so not to disturb the economic and power structure

Be it in our Armenian community, the American society or other countries in different lands, we humans, especially those in governing circles have difficulty in dealing with criticism for that which is different from the accepted norm.

We either grow smaller or bigger. For a nation continually to grow bigger in stature, it has to grow in spirit by possessing an open mind and heart and an ear to hear those voices that seem to be coming from the wilderness. It is in responding to the needs of those who comprise the lesser segment of the population that the overall moral and dignity of the general public is retained.

Penance/One of the Church’s Seven Sacraments

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"(Mt. 4: 17)

This was said by Jesus (Mt.17) and John the Baptist (Mt.3:2). One statement has within it two extreme opposites that are both strongly negative and yet positive in the same breath. The Armenian word for repent

is, 'abashakharhartzek', meaning to stay away from, also refrain from. It is much milder than the English version which connotes someone having a guilt complex. Repent denotes more of an acknowledgment of personal wrongdoing and an evil character whereas the Armenian is more or less an admonishment to stay away or refrain from the worldly ways which can lead to a habit of condoning the wrong doing that is making it acceptable that which was once unacceptable and now accepted as the norm or law.

In either instance it is an acknowledgement of the presence of evil in the world around us and the world within us. In a sense it shows our subservience to an external force. We ask, are we in control of our destiny? If not, who is in control?

The kingdom of heaven" is the complete opposite denoting a force that frees/liberates, a positive charge restoring and building where the former is always destroying, corrupting, contaminating and attempting to control. Both are taking place at the same time. But there is a difference of night and day, light & darkness. Light is the positive charge in darkness is negative in nature. Where there is light, darkness is in retreat. The rising of the morning sun dispels the darkness. When the sun sets, darkness comes to fill the void. There is no room for both. The Apostle Paul puts it this way..."What has Christ with Belial? (Belial is Satan meaning that "where there is no more a good" or "A good for nothing", meaning something that is useless; or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever; also what agreement has the Temple of God with idols? What her loyal to mix, much less light and darkness.

"Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" is a plea, is beseeching those of the human race to turn from and be aware of the trappings of the world, and to develop a good working relationship with God in Christ by which one is freed and assured added protection from entrapment.

Mary was close to Jesus not only as a concerned mother but as a loyal faithful follower and the believer. He was her light and life. She was a concerned mother but also clung to Him as a child does to his/her parent. In continuing the work of God through Christ, the church is like a lighthouse that is always giving a beacon of light providing light and direction for her people so they will not get lost or misled by worldly/mundane ways

Not only is there a message of the other world or life hereafter in this passage but also practical steps as to the conduct of life in this world in a very pragmatic sense

"You, therefore, must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

MATT. 5:48

This is a tall order, impossible in human terms, but nevertheless a call from God for us to strive toward.

What is perfection? Who is a perfect being?

If someone says that he or she is perfect, our immediate, even instinctive reaction is that that person is missing something or that there is a vacuum in a part of their mind. A perfect being can be described as someone who is self-satisfying. That is, the person does not have to go out of his or her own self to find satisfaction and happiness. Also, that being is self-sustaining and self-perpetuating not in need of anything outside of its own existence. This is what God is all about. He not only does not need anything but shares whatever he has with everyone whether they are evil or good. Satan is sustained by God's goodness. If God ceased to share, Satan would cease to exist. God shares all that he has with us to fulfill our needs and calls

upon us to do the same in the spirit that He shares with us. If we don't, we become like the devil and if we do, we reflect God's goodness.

Why does God call us to perfection knowing that it is impossibility for us?

Some find this incredulous and consider it as a license to steal, cheat and lie. Is this what God is promoting? The purpose is a noble one in which when we realize our limitations we discover the difference is made up through God. The gap is crossed by the helping hand of God who brought us to the limit of our human potentialities. This can be seen in all things, be they the elements in nature or human characteristics such as in our behavior before each other and God.

God through Jesus has another very difficult assignment for us his followers-"sell all your belongings and give to the poor."(LK 12:34) In so doing a person places oneself at risk at being depended upon public welfare. In sharing generously with others and expecting nothing in return one should do it an economic fashion. The Apostle Paul asked God to remove a weakness that plagued him. God's answer was that what he had was enough to sustain him and that Paul didn't need anymore.

The more we have the more we are called to share with others who do not have. This is the underlying spirit, girder of support of all that is basically good as seen be it from the perspective of our Armenian ancestors or that of the American forefathers. In both instances presently there is a groping to rediscover that which is precious and dear to us all - the blessing derived from our endeavors toward perfection.

"Be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect."(Mt.5:48)

Matthew 8:23-27

The sun had begun to set along the seashore where Jesus was teaching the multitude in parables as to what the kingdom of heaven was like when He turned towards His disciple saying, "let us pass to the other side." After they had sent the people way, they set out in their boats. When darkness had set in and had gone quite a distance from shore, of great wind storm arose. The waves began to beat heavily against their boat filling it with water. Jesus was asleep at that time in the hinder part of the boat when His disciples being concerned with their situation and alarmed over their Master being asleep while they were on the verge of sinking, came to Him saying, " Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Jesus arose and rebuked the wind has set to sea," Peace, be still." Then the wind ceased and it was a great calm. Then turning to His disciples He said, " Why are you so fearful? Why is it that you have no faith?" And the disciples became exceedingly afraid and began to say unto another what manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

We too might be tempted to question the faith of the disciples. Hadn't they seen to healings that their Master had performed such as the curing of those who were possessed with such maladies as leprosy and palsy? They had been eyewitnesses and yet they were filled with fear because their very lives were in danger. It would be easy for us living in the 20th century to look back and pass a judgment on an event from which we find ourselves totally detached, but let us for a moment put ourselves in the place of the disciples. Would we have been without fear? Would we have remained steadfast in our faith if we have found ourselves in a similar predicament? Some would be honest with themselves and with frankly admit that they would have most likely had faltered. Being weakened the spirit they too would have been filled

with doubt as to disciples had been. But there are those who see the beam in their brother's eye but who fail to the beam that glows in their own eyes. (Mt. 7:3); Lk. 6:41,42) There are those who find it difficult to reflected knowledge their own true weakness and human frailty and consider it to be a defeat rather than a gain in making such an admission

The trials of life are many. We not only are encountering continuously those physical storms of which we read so much of and hear about in our daily news that are the cause of so many human disasters and hardships, but we are also confronted with a perpetual in a storm, which we might say is a spiritual storm, in a personal struggle that takes place in the hearts and minds of man. Is man able to cope with the storms? Is he able to control his own being and his own destiny? Life is very complex and in its entirety incomprehensible to the human mind. Unless man puts his trust in His Creator, is likely to be like a man who is built his home on sand that under the slightest trial will be doomed to be destroyed. (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk.6:47,48) Christ asks for complete trust and a total belief in Him. When we live with that belief and trust that He cares for us under all circumstances and situations and renders His care for us through His mystical body, the Holy Church, the light of life begin to burn more fervently within us bringing a sense of beauty into our lives and making our worries and cares less burdensome.

Let us listen to the words of the Apostle Paul writing of tribulations that he encountered while he was in Asia in his letter to the Corinthians saying," for we would not have you ignorant brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, of our strength, insomuch that, that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raised the dead, who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver, in Whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." And he continues," for our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in this world and more abundantly toward you."

(I Cor. 1:8-11) By the living example of the great Apostle and the many other Saints, we too can daily renew our strength in spirit to battle the storms of life no matter what forms they may take, but putting our faith in God Who raiseth the dead and by His grace, keeping our conversation in this work in simplicity and Godly sincerity.

THEN CAME TO HIM THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN SAYING," WHY DO WE AND THE PHARISEES FAST OFTEN, BUT YOUR DISCIPLES DO NOT FAST?" AND JESUS SAID TO THEM,"CAN THE CHILDREN OF THE BRIDE CHAMBER MORN AS LONG AS THE BRIDEGROOM IS WITH THEM? BUT THE DAYS WILL COME WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM SHALL BE TAKEN FROM THEM, AND THEN THEY SHALL FAST."

Matthew 9:14-15

How can the children of the bride chamber fast or be in mourning as long as the bridegroom is with them? Here Jesus depicts Himself as the bridegroom amongst His disciples who He calls the children of the bride chamber. Here the Church is understood to be the bride and the disciples, who are a very important part of the Church, the children of the bride chamber. They are in a state of joy because of the presence of the Bridegroom. The joy of those that wedding banquets, like the one which Christ attended and Cana, sheds light on their spiritual joy in being one with their Master. They are in the holy wedlock which the Church is in also. This wedlock is not one of temporal or worldly character, but a spiritual and everlasting union in which their hearts and souls are attached, but whose mysteries their minds could never fully penetrate or understand. Being a part of the Church, we are also a part of the bride chamber through adoption. Christ, in

redeeming us from our sins, made this possible for us. Through the original sin of man, who was given the name of Adam, sin entered our nature and corrupted it, but through Christ, Who is known as the second Adam, death was blotted out and man was reinstated in the grace of God. In Psalm 51:5, the psalmist says: "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceived me."

We were born in sin, but through baptism, the way was made open for us to regain that which was we had lost. This is the joy of the Christians; this was the joy of the disciples who were not keeping the fast like the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist.

The question might arise though, as to why John the Baptist and his followers are not considered to be a part of the bride chamber, for it is he, who heralded the coming of the kingdom and exhorting the people to repent of their sins. St. John Baptist and his disciples were named with the Pharisees, not because they were living that hypocritical life which Christ so bitterly reprimanded the Pharisees for living, but because John the Baptist, although not entirely, was still considered a part of the Old Covenant of the Law and the Prophets, which was fulfilled in Christ. His role was that of being a 'forerunner' heralding the way for the Savior, the promised Messiah, to come..." But the day will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast."

Christ was foretelling of His return to God the Father from whom He was sent, and how in those days, His disciples as well as all His followers, like the disciples of John, will have to fast and pray while they wait the return of the Bridegroom, but before He departed He promised them a Comforter. In the Gospel of St. John (Jn.14:15-16) we read..." If you love me, keep my commandments; I will pray to the Father and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever. "It is the Holy Spirit Who descended upon the disciples at Pentecost and Who we receive at our baptism Who is the Comforter sent by the Father promised by Christ.

It is essentially upon this important event that happened once and for all in history and in our own personal lives that we should turn our thoughts and attention during the Lenten period. It was by our baptism in the Holy Font in the Church that we were brought back within the fold of God's grace for which we are most unworthy to receive. It is through this free gift that we get a glimpse of the boundless mercy and love of God toward man. During the season of Repentance, we should turn our mind eyes inward and examine the depths of our souls. In this meditation, we would discover and recognize that, that which we are all born with, called sin, has turned us from the worship of God to the worship of ourselves. We would recognize that like the first parents, Adam and Eve, Satan endeavors to turn us from the true love of God. By fasting, though, our weakened bodies force our minds to turn inwards and through prayer our souls become strengthened with a spiritual power.

Christ had fasted 40 days and nights without food. Our church calls these days of fasting the "Salt and Bread days." Although this may seem high in ideals to which we might not be able to obtain, nevertheless we should make a sincere effort to limit ourselves to the barest necessities. The needs of the body are constant but so is that of the soul. The soul needs its spiritual nourishment just as the body needs its calories. Jesus' answer to Satan at His temptation to make the stones into bread was..."Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." This is the spiritual nourishment that fortifies our souls. Through fasting and praying a way is made open for the grace of the Holy Spirit to operate within us, cleansing our hearts, enlightening our minds and ennobling our souls, so that we may be as the wise virgins, prepare for the return of the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom as departed and you are left

to fasting and praying until His return, but He has left us the sacraments that are the seven mysteries of the Church, through which we become adopted children of God. This is a deep mystery, such as a true marriage is also. And we should endeavor to realize that holy wedlock that we are in with Christ in the Holy Spirit. Our prayers should be directed to God, besieging His aid in guiding us on that narrow path to the Light of Life.

Darkness no longer prevails where light has entered. The darkness of our souls is enlightened by the Light of the world, which transforms us to be children of the Light. Within the darkness of the world, we should be burning as burning candles showing the works of God the Spirit, Who unites us with our Lord within His mystical body, the One, Holy and Apostolic Church, the Bride of the bride chamber.

"...But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them and then they shall fast."

St. John the Baptist

"Truly I say to you, among those born of women, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."(Mt. 11:11)

On the last day of the eight-day cycle of Christmas which began on January 6 and ending on January 13 is celebrated the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ by John the Baptist. This feast day of the birth and baptism is always celebrated every year for eight days from January 6-13. This is a fixed date that never changes. The first feast following this cycle is dedicated to the birth of St. John the Baptist.

St. John is called "the forerunner" and that other times referred to as the "precursor" of Jesus. He prepared the people, or you might even say, conditioned them for the arrival of the Messiah. His was an important role in the earthly ministry of our Lord. Jesus says, that no greater man was born of woman, but adds that, the least in heaven is greater than him. The reason for the second part is so that the people with that mistake John as being the Messiah. Jesus Himself who is born of woman but in a unique way, is in accordance to our Christian belief, the greatest in heaven and on Earth. The woman, who bore Him, Mary, is regarded as the greatest of all the Saints. But the next the important person is the St. John the Baptist. In our human ways we always categorically place people in positions of being first, second, third etc. with this human element in mind the Church regards John the Baptist the second most important person next to St. Mary. The Lord and master of all, of course, is Jesus.\

John and Jesus were related. Their mothers, Mary and Elizabeth, were cousins. John was six months older than Jesus. Their close to one another in spirit and talk more so than as blood relatives. Although the gospel does not bear on this point or show a close association between the two except at the time of Jesus baptism, they do show the depths of John's respect for Jesus. He knew and knowledge openly his mission as being secondary to Jesus' ministry. He accepted this willingly and with great humility. For instance, when Jesus came to him to be baptized John questions Jesus whether this was right or not. "I need to be baptized by you and you come to me?" he asked, but Jesus said, "so let it be." And by this He instituted the ceremony as a sacrament of the Church.

The John baptized others besides those which Jesus did. People would come to him from all regions to be baptized by him. He preached saying, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" and would baptize the

penitent. It is rather strict and rough life by our standards. He lived in the wilderness and his food was locusts and honey and his clothing was made from camel's hair. We might be tempted to liken him to be rather a shabby person by our standards today we don't care what others think of them but to the contrary people in John's held him in great esteem to such an extent that the King, Herod, was afraid to have him imprisoned when John spoke publicly against his marriage with his wife, Herodias, who was also his brother's wife. The new John was very popular and anything against him would cause a disturbance. His wife, Herodias, however did not share his feeling and by a deceitful way had John killed. Once while her daughter, Salome, entertained Herod and his guests with her dancing he proposed to give her whatever she wished, even half of his kingdom. She approached the mother asking her advice who told her to ask for the "head of John the Baptist." This is how this great man met his death. Qualities that exemplified John's character were a deep-rooted faith and faithfulness in service which arose from genuine love for his master.

John and Jesus baptized persons of adult age. Repentance was associated with the baptism of John and gifts of the Holy Spirit with the baptism of the New Covenant that is the New Testament era. The baptismal ceremonies were either by effusion or immersion in water. It was an external act of an internal happening. The early Church continued this practice but later began to baptize infant children. The mortality death rate of young infants was quite high and was felt that children should not be deprived of the kingdom. Infant baptisms began with Godfathers who were of sound belief served as sponsors and spoke-persons of the child, promising to raise the child in the teachings of the Christian faith. One important point in these beliefs was the repentance of sins. Today their teaching aspect and repentant character has been practically lost everything has become a matter of formality. This was not true in the beginning

Let us for a moment delve in some points that the character St. John the Baptist has in common with newborn babies. The conception growth of a child in the mother's womb takes place in a mysterious but wonderful way. When the child is born the mother experiences a great joy, not only in seeing the newborn but the relief from the burden of bearing a child. The child is not left alone to provide itself. It has to be given the proper care. It has to be cleaned, clothed and fed. Besides these constant physical demands, the child demands another thing which can be regarded as the most important of all of its needs. This is attention and a genuine love from his parents. This is a just demand for the child was brought into the world not be left alone or to entertain but to be cared for. This is a vital part of its growth period. They need attention in order to grow properly. It seems quite evident that this vital ingredient is missing in homes and families around the world today. If we are seeking solutions for the insurmountable burdens facing mankind today, we will see the crux of it is found not in making huge grants for better or more progressive industry, nor better schools or programs and jobs, not even economic and social adjustments. Solution is getting the love that the child seeks and demands in its tender age. There is a difference between showering a child with too much affection and that of genuine care. Affection does not transmit sensitivity that true love does a child senses that from the very beginning from the presence or absence of it. Everything else in a child's life is secondary to this

John the Baptist had a deep rooted faith and faithfully served out of a genuine love. He didn't mind taking a secondary role. This may have been nurtured and I love full of mercy.

25 years ago this church was born. It was given his christening in the consecration ceremonies and was named St. John the Baptist. Like a newborn baby the newly consecrated edifice requires some basic needs

in order to function. There was cleaning, cooking, maintenance, acquisitions of vestments, robes, articles, the performance of services and rituals; meetings and decisions. This world needed but above all the church demanded of its faithful and a genuine love. Again like the newborn baby all of the other operations were secondary to this. Sometimes it was there and sometimes it wasn't. Like a family, the church community grew by trial and error. It was through that bond that the faithful in their service is still the vital ingredient of belongingness in the youth.

In order to meet all the needs and challenges confronting the new and tender flock, the faithful would often feel like they were living a life in the wilderness. They would wonder they were demanding too much of their bodies and souls especially when they saw others of other communities only having to have to do half or less of the sacrifice that they were in serving the same Master. This service and dedication can only be highly esteemed and praised by others who know by similar experiences how great the challenges are. It was a calling of the church to have such a scene as John the Baptist was noble ideals was its goal. We come here to her, the Church, as a people came to the saint repenting for our wrong doings so that we may gain a new life. We want to do the best we can to crystallize in our beings those traits of a deep seated faith, service out of fidelity and love so that we too may be pleasing to our Lord and Master.

Matthew 12:1-8

This lesson concerns the Temple and the Law. How important is the Temple (in our instance the Church) and the rule, laws and canons surrounding is governing role? The law book, upon which the Temple and those in the governing body receive their authority, is the Bible– the Old and New Testament, known as the Old and New Covenants. The Old Testament is divided into two parts– the Law and the Prophets. The law defines the legal and judicial aspects and prescribes what needs to be done. The prophecies points to the future where there will be better times. In that is seen and understood the limitations of the law. But as the Apostle Paul says in his letter to the Romans (7:16)... "The law is good", that is, it serves a good purpose. The problem arises however when they attempt is made to live by the "letter of the law." Although the law as good as serves a good purpose, things did not get better by living by the "letter of the law." This is the reason for the prophecies which points to better days in the future as seen fulfilled in the New Testament's Gospel books "The Good News." Whereas the Old Testament is known for its Laws, the New Testament is books about the spirit of man. That is, one is called not to live by "Letter of the Law" but by "the Spirit" which is why Jesus says "I tell you that there is something here greater than the Law" inferring justice and mercy.

It took 50 days after Jesus' resurrection to usher in an era; one of not by the law by the spirit.

But where did this take place? Not in the streets of Jerusalem or the fields of Judea but in "the Upper Room" which became the first Christian church. Thereafter the Temple became the church being brought to a new and higher level. Jesus didn't do away to a new and higher glorious level making her the bride and "apple of His eye", a beautiful bride the room his children were to be born and raised. There are laws and canons, rules and ordinances governing her, but again not by the letter of the law but by a merciful spirit. That is there are times when some of the laws and regulations are relaxed when there is seen a greater need.

This does not do away with the Church and its regulatory aspects, but at times puts it on a 'hold' position. To be more specific, at times the worship service can be held outside of the church's sanctuary such as at summer camps or at an outing on an open field. These are, of course exceptions and not the rule. The Church is not an ordinary building, it is the 'House of God' and as such the services should be held in God's House where His children are called to be guided with Him on a regular basis no matter if they were married and baptized somewhere else. It should be understood that the Church is not a place of fellowship for people to see each other but a place where the family of God gathers together and to be with Him in worship thus strengthening the bonds of friendship or brotherhood amongst themselves.

We are in the season of the Holy Spirit when the establishment of the Church is commemorated. We must remember that although there are laws regulating her governing role, we live by the spirit and not the letter of the law to promote justice and mercy in the world that we live in.

Matthew 12:1-8 (continuation)

The Law is good - says St. Paul - prevents lawlessness; a sense of right & wrong, otherwise a chaotic condition sets in. "What is the norm?"

*The law does not produce the good or is the promotion of goodness brought about by living by the letter of the law.

*The law does not bring about mercy which is love or call it merciful love.

*The Law does not produce justice otherwise police state should be our desired goal.

*Law prevents a bad situation from becoming worse and chaotic

The Old Testament bears this out. It is comprised of two parts: the Law and the Prophets. The prophets not openly point out the inadequacy of the Law but also point to better days in the future.

It is interesting to note the context in which this reading is set. It is in the third Sunday at Pentecost, in the season of the Holy Spirit at the birth of the first Christian church in Jerusalem. The Church became a child the mother at the same time which can be seen in the celebration of the Holy See of Echmiadzin. Again we see something greater than the Law in that the child, which is a first Christian Church and the child which is the Armenian church with its Holy See in Echmiadzin.

It was on that day (Pentecost) that the Temple of the Old Testament became the Christian Church of the New Testament which was made possible by the arrival of the Holy Spirit of God. Henceforth, we no longer live under the Old Law but the New Law. We no longer live by The Letter of the Law but by The Spirit of the Law

Matthew 12:1

Pharisees were critical of the disciples of Jesus for eating corn on the Sabbath. It was customary for anyone who was hungry while travelling to be able to go into a garden or field to eat from the product grown there but only to satisfy the hunger. But this was prohibited on the Sabbath. Even travelling on the Sabbath wasn't allowed. Jesus reply to them was that David went into the temple and ate of the 'show' bread which was only permitted for the priests to do. Also even the priests whose duty are to enforce the laws profane them and are found blameless. Jesus adds that if you knew what it meant "I will have mercy and not

sacrifice then you would not condemn the guileless because the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. There is one greater the temple here.

Pharisees and the Chief Priest were men of high respect and held prominent and influential positions in the eyes of the Israelites. What they said was law because they were conveying God's message. They were degrading Jesus' followers because Jesus had grown very popular to the point where their positions were being undermined. He was becoming too much to compete with so they had to find something wrong, some fault on which they could capitalize minimize this high esteem He held before the people. They weren't thinking of 'love and mercy' but questioning the act in respect to the law which was their power. If they were interested in mercy they wouldn't have condemned the guiltless but they weren't interested in righteousness.

The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. God had given the law to the Israelites through whom he was working in history during a certain period. The Israelites were expecting the Messiah/Emmanuel who was to come from the lineage of the prophet-king David but who was to be greater than David and to be Son of God through the bloodline of David. David and his followers ate of the showbread which was not permitted according to the law of the Temple. Then why couldn't Jesus, who was of the Lineage of David and the Messiah, and his followers do likewise?

Temple

Israelites brought their offerings there. (Isaiah 1:10-15) God speaks through the prophets asking why all of these offerings? I do not enjoy or delight in blood of all these animals. Who required these things from you when you come to me. No offerings, no more incense, new moons and Sabbaths. All these my soul hated and I am weary. When you spread your hands, I will hide my eyes; when you make, prayers I will not hear, your hands are full of blood. Reason for this is seen in the first part of the lesson. (Isaiah 1:1-10) The Lord 'says he has brought up children and they repel against me. An ox knows his master, the ass his master's crib, but my people do not know nor does it consider, a sinful nation, full of iniquity, evildoers and corruptor. The whole body is sick from head to foot, only a small handful has remained faithful.

The Temple was where they should be doing their prayers and in order to be able to enter to pray, they were to give an offering as a sign of assurance of their faith. Now they felt that as long as they could keep the sacrifices that would satisfy God and there would be no need to pray and still be able to continue to live whatever kind of life that they wanted be it immoral, iniquitous, etc.

The full meaning of Jesus 'statement in St. Paul's letter to the Romans explains it more clearly... "Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies; do not yield the members of your body of unrighteousness to sin but to God as a body raised from the dead as instruments of righteousness to God, for sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but grace.

The Pharisees of today are those people who criticize others in order to appear great and eyes of others and as they do so, trample the weak, the simpleminded and pure at heart. We are not under the law to do something mechanically such as the burnt offerings of the past and church offerings today shouldn't be seen in the sense as were burnt offerings, if its intent is not sincere as a Thanksgiving offering for the grace received. Churchgoing is to receive God's grace, and to do His will which is his law, a law of love full of mercy. Love and mercy are done in relationship with the ministry of the church. Man is not an island unto

himself but is an integral part of society on Earth as it is in heaven where the faithful gather to worship with those the same belief.

What is the kingdom of God like?

(Matthew 13:24–30)

This parable of THE SOWING OF THE WHEAT AND TARE SEEDS can be said as A CASE FOR THE OPPOSITION TO CENSORSHIP. The field in this instance is the world and the good seeds are the first created people being without spot or blemish, that is they were sinless. Satan came along and willfully sowing seeds of evil corrupting the original pristine state of the first created. Instead of removing it, that is taking out the evil from the first parents and each succeeding newborn, God leaves man to grow with it within him but giving them, that is the first parents, enough to sustain themselves. That plant or person that produces for the general good becomes acceptable while the bad crop is taken to be burned.

How is it possible to be numbered among the acceptable? There are persons whom we call saints. We ask ourselves as to how did they become worthy of such a status. For example, there are the saints in our Armenian tradition, Saints Sahag and Mesrob whom we consider to be great pillars of our faith. How did they become successful? By dedicating their lives to God, we say. But again the question arises as to how?

God burned the bad crop with fire. It was by fire, a spiritual flame that they, Sahag and Mesrob, allow to burn the evil inclinations that constantly were tempting them. They burned the evil by that fire allowing the good to persevere within them. They strove to be men of God working in his fields, which for them was the land of Armenia. They qualified and by their example showed how it is possible for those of us their followers.

Evil is always with us. It is around us and arises within us. There is a constant struggle taking place within us between the good that God wants us to do and the evil which opposes it. The only control we have over it is to check it by God's law following His Commandments, His rule of law. The law full of mercy.

What is the kingdom of God like? Good people endeavoring to remain clean in the sight of God and who are always helping one another.

This Gospel reading begins as a simple episode. It gradually develops into a more complicated and complex situation ending with a fantastic finale. It is like piece of great music which begins with a simple yet pleasant melody. This is developed by the composer through its variations and counterpoints to a more highly sophisticated plain reaching a climax with a magnificent ending. The music and its composer are regarded to be great because they have endured down through the ages. There is a constant demand to replay it because it always attracts listeners and leaves them in a satisfied state. This then is one of the qualities or signs of greatness: the ability to continually attract followers generation after generation. There are some things or persons that are able to communicate to one generation but fail to draw a following in another. This happens because the lure of its excitement soon fades away and it becomes a thing or person of the past to be remembered or recorded but never or very seldom to be relived again. They may be considered to be a good piece of art or a good writer but not great. It does not endure because it fails to create a demand to sell. This then is another sign of greatness: the ability to sell at all times that is in any age. These characteristics combine to produce the authenticity of a particular work or person.

Simplicity and being able to retain simplicity in some form or another is the key to the secret of greatness. The simple theme is developed to a higher and complex level but it must at the same be able to intact it original simple beauty. Its genuine greatness is seen in the flexibility it has in being move between two poles (the simple and the more complex) with relative ease and coherency. It is a very difficult task that appears relatively easy to the viewer or listener.

Now that we have become with some aspect of what we might expect, let us proceed and examine more closely the Gospel reading. It began with Jesus hearing of the beheading of John the Baptist. John was not only a close relative of Jesus but they were dear friends. They held the same noble ideals and beliefs working for the same beliefs and mission John is called the "forerunner" that is, the one preparing the people for Jesus' preaching. The people and nation as a whole were given ample warning of the things to come. The prophets forewarned them for centuries but in this instance John becomes the last before the proclamation of the "Good News" by Jesus.

Being full of the frailties of human nature such as ours, except for sin, Jesus must have been sorely affected sorely affected sad news. If we were in a similar predicament, we would, must naturally want to be left alone. We probably wouldn't want to be bothered with anything for a while and would meditate privately on the loss of a dear friend. This is what Jesus did. He went to "a desert place "to be" apart" from the people. We are not certain, but he probably went alone without his Apostles. Whatever the case may have been, Jesus at this time was seeking privacy.

When word spread about as to His whereabouts, the people began to leave the cities in hope of finding Him. Instead of being annoyed at the sight of the multitude approaching Him, Jesus was moved with compassion and "went forth" to meet them healing their sick. He could have remained indifferent or He could have fled to a mere distant and remote place but He didn't. Jesus had "compassion toward them." The people had taken the time and the trouble to seek Him out' and when they found Him Jesus didn't refuse them nor did He disappoint them by turning them away. With all of the sorrowful feelings weighing upon His heart on the recent death of a dear friend, He still made Himself available to fulfill the needs of those who sought Him.

Towards nightfall, Jesus' disciples approached asking Him to send the people away. "This is a desert place," they said, "and it is late. Let them go to the nearby villages to buy something to eat." Jesus tells them that they didn't need to go and that the disciples should provide the food for the people. With this the mode of the atmosphere changed. A simple situation suddenly becomes complicated. The problem arises as to how were they going to feed so many persons? They tell Jesus, " We only have five loaves (bread) here and two fish." Jesus has them brought to him and had the people to sit down on the ground. Then taking the five loaves and the two fish He looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the bread and gave it to the disciples who in turn distributed it amongst the people. Everyone ate and was satisfied, that is to say, no one was left hungry. After they all had eaten, twelve baskets full of "left-overs" were collected. Five loaves of bread and two fish has unbelievably become enough food to fill a multitude's appetite and still fill twelve baskets.

The situation progressively becomes more complex and complicated. It began with Jesus seeking privacy. He is then confronted with those who followed Him to heal their sick. He then not only heals but miraculously feeds all of them with a few bread and only two fish. Finally, of these twelve baskets full of fragments are collected. If this in itself is not amazing enough, the reading ends stating the number of

persons who were present. It claims that there were five thousand men beside the women and children which is an unbelievable figure! Imagine the amount of food required to satisfy the appetite of more than five thousand hungry people!

The lesson of this reading is quite explicit and seems obvious. It claims that Jesus not only fulfills the need and necessities of the individual who earnestly request it, but also that of the group. The Gospels is full of instances telling the reader where He heals individuals and gives His undivided attention toward the person rather than the group. Here, again the healings were not performed as a group but individually, but the need of the whole group was not overlooked nor was it neglected. The lesson also relates that no matter what the condition might be, Jesus is never too weary, never too tired nor too busy for those who take the trouble and the time to seek Him. Jesus will not fail anyone or anybody at any time under any circumstances who calls upon Him but the seeker or seekers must take the initiative.

This can be applied today as well as to individual or a group such as a church whether it is large or small. If someone or some group wishes to seek Him out, Jesus is not a difficult person to find. In fact, in seeking Him, they will have found that Jesus had already come to them. The person however has to begin though, by having a very simple faith in Him. Of course comparable to any great work of art, this simple faith undergoes gradual change in its growth process. It will reach such an intense stage that a person will wonder if there is a possibility of it to continue on. The person or group will undergo a period of serious doubt but that which will bring the individual or group through this extremely involved period is a 'simple' in Him. This simple theme, this simple faith, has to be retained or else all the complications arising from the complexities will drive the person or group into utter confusion and even chaos.

Jesus will provide and see a person/or persons through all hardships if there exists 'a simple faith'. Like a piece great piece of music whose simple melody is interwoven through intricate stanzas of what is known as counterpoint music, periods of serious doubt will cause a wavering of faith, but the simple faith in God like the simple melody the individual or group through difficult times to a dramatic climax in the finale. So too the Word of Jesus miraculously sees an individual or group through all of its difficulties, healing alleviating spiritual physical ailments.

Jesus' followers, His disciples and even those to be His successors might waver in faith and in their duty but Jesus will not falter or fail. As He said, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you will be able to say to even to a mountain, to be removed and it will happen."(Mt. 17:20)

Matthew 18:10-14

In this Gospel story Jesus tells of a man who takes his hundred sheep to the mountain for grazing. One of them gets lost and he leaves the on the mountainside to while he goes in search of the lost one. When he finds it rejoices more over it than ninety nine that he left behind.

It's not known man whether this man was a shepherd or not but we would seriously question his wisdom in leaving the 99 on the mountain to the fate of wild animals and thieves. If we were in his and our livelihood depended on it, I seriously doubt whether we would have done the same.

The man in this story is God and we see that He does many strange, even foolish things for our sake. He leaves heaven with its grandeur and comforts, becomes one of us, sacrifices himself in the person of 'His Only-begotten Son', all for our sake and if He finds one of us of like mind and heart, He rejoices more than

all that He that has. We speak in worldly terms in order to understand God's message of redemption and salvation. Jesus begins and ends the story with a reference to children and exhortation to the adults to not to despise young children because they have their angels who behold the face of God in heaven. The moral of the story is that special care is to be given to children's upbringing to see that they receive that which they will need in the future years of their lives to meet their physical, mental, spiritual needs and also not to be afraid to do the extraordinary for their benefit

There much to be thankful for what we have. Past accomplishments are a source of pride. It is like a man who has reached area on the mountain where he lets his sheep to graze freely about. However, if the sheep discover that in place of the green grass and vegetable life that the ground is dry and thorny, they will have to look elsewhere for their basic needs.

A good and well-rounded educational program for the young is essential for them to receive the basic nourishment for their body, mind and souls otherwise they may be forced to seek in places that are not all together safe for them and consequently can easily get lost on the mountain side like the sheep that had gone astray seeking food. A sound educational program is designed to provide food and nourishment for not only one's own but for others. The success for such a program a cause for much rejoicing not only those of one's own to keep but more so for the ones it was able to save that went astray that lost child where the community itself finds its salvation. In order it to reach that blissful stage though, the people of the community must learn to do extraordinary things.

Matthew 19:5,6 (Mark 10:5-8)

It was along the coast of Judea where Jesus was teaching the people when the Pharisees in trying to tempt Him, approached Him asking whether was lawful for a man to put away his wife to which Jesus said, "What did Moses command you to do?" and they replied "to write a bill of divorce and to put her away." Jesus replied that it was because of the hardness of your hearts that he wrote you this precept but in the beginning of creation "God created them male and female and that for that cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. Therefore, that what God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

The blessed sacrament of holy matrimony is the blessing of God bestowed upon those who are joining their lives together in holy wedlock. During the service in which they receive the blessing and grace of our Lord they take an oath fidelity and chastity ty to each other during periods of trials and tribulation for the remainder of their lives. The relationship between Christ and His established church is the shining example set before them which should be their guide. Christ is often referred to as being the bridegroom and the church bride. It was for us who unworthily comprise the membership of her body that He sacrificed Himself so that we might be saved. The spotless Lamb of God gave of Himself, losing Himself in order that we may live. This is the marriage, that mystical union of Christ and the Church through which we become the children of God by adoption. Christ was sacrificed for us but we in turn have to take it upon ourselves by which we in turn become partakers in His crucifixion. There is a sacrifice on the part of both parties. Similarly in a marriage both parties are called to sacrifice so that there may be an oneness, a unity of mutual respect prevailing despite their personal differences. The deeper and more meaningful sense of their union is that of their heart and souls where the roots of true understanding and companionship exists. Much more is expected from the husband than of the wife because the burdens, responsibilities and decision making of the household rest upon his shoulders. That is one of the reasons why he is considered to be the

head or master of the house. His wife who is his aid and helper in life is called to be obedient to him but this should not be misinterpreted by him to mean that she be a slave to his domineering will but rather as a life companion sharing his burdens and responsibilities. The role of husband and wife though has drastically changed since many women now are part of the work force that before World War II was predominately a male work force but the role of being charitable, mutual understanding, fidelity and chastity must prevail so that in sharing their lives with each other their unity remains steadfast. It should be understood also that the strength of a nation lies in the strength of the family units that comprise that nation.

The purpose of the sharing of their lives isn't the end purpose for the marriage but rather a means to bring forth children. In this respect they become partners with God in His on-going creative act. God gave to them the power to regenerate through which human life is sustained in the world. It is a gift of God given to man and a power and right that must seek to use in accordance with his Creator's divine will.

The task again is not complete in only bringing forth a child into the world, but there the more arduous task begins and that is the new born's upbringing and total education. Through the years the child grows physically and his mind begins to develop slowly under the loving care of his parents. The parents as loving guardians have a profound affect as to how the child will have to behave in his later life. Therefore, the times of the members of the family in regard to each other should be a closely knit one.

Families have a sense of strength and power when the ties and discipline amongst its members are firm. But just as the head of that each family is the father and the heart the mother, is the church and the relationship of the family with the church which gives to it is he essential vitality. This is where the child and the family as a whole receive their spiritual nourishment. The worship services, church schools and the pastor play an important role in the lives of all its parishioners whether its parishioners whether it be in their individual or their corporate lives. It is there that they the husband and wife had truly become one and it is through it that their oneness is kept. In partaking in the worship services the parents and children not only bind their ties with each other more firm, but also reaffirm their dedication to their Savior through whom their unity was made possible.

“WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER.”
(Matt. 19:5,6;19:3-12)

Part I- Deals with the moral question of marriage and divorce, questioning by Pharisees. Divorce granted because of the hardening of the heart. Pharisees brought this subject up, not Jesus to which Jesus gives an answer to question. But those matters concerning the major dogmas of the Church, Jesus brings forth the subject.

Part II – Concerning the question in regard to marriage the Disciples remark that – “if this is the case it is better not to marry.” To which Jesus' reply... there are those who are eunuchs from birth, other eunuchs made by men, eunuchs of their own will to serve for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.(eunuchs are understood to be servants of God) and then adds...”He who is able to receive it let him receive it.”

Part II brings the question marriage and divorce into a new perspective; a relationship of the individual with His Creator as seen in Isaiah (5:1-10) where Isaiah speaks of the Divorce of Israelites from their Master. It should be remembered that this is an Israelite talking to the people of Israel.

The question arises as to the relationship of the Armenian Church to this generation in America? Why is there a divorce between the faith and the people, especially the youth? One might ask to..."What divorce?" All a person needs to do is to explore the statistics and it will become quite obvious that a very few of those who consider themselves as members take an active role in making their church as an essential part of their regular home life. It is safe to say that less than 10% take an active role in attending services on a regular basis and in taking on some of the basic needs in making this 'House of God' as part of their home life so that the house that they live in is a home for all the members of the family.

Why the divorce? Why isn't there a mutual understanding and love? Why isn't there a nearness of thought and spirit? As Jesus said that it was because of "the hardness of the heart." Gospel precepts are not easy to follow. The disciples discovered that in what Jesus was talking about concerning marriage to which they replied that, "then it is better not to marry." But these teachings make us much more mature, wise and stronger in all aspects of our life. The weak and timid stay away from them as the apostle Paul explains in his first letter to the Corinthians. (1 Cor. 1:26-31)

What then is the church seeking...foolish individuals who have the courage, stamina and willpower to do that which is necessary for the welfare and well-being of others. There were many reasons why people wanted divorce papers in the days of Moses. Moses probably became tired of hearing this and granted it, but this does not justify the act. Everyone has a holy task of fulfilling his/her moral and financial obligation not only for their own benefit but for the general welfare of all.

The Armenian Church has and always will be a pioneer church. It is in its blood stream to make good Christians and able-bodied human beings. Where these qualities are absent there is a deterioration of life. Therefore "What God has joined together let no man put asunder." It should remember though that the first and most important marriage of any person is each of our marriage is with our Lord on an individual basis. It is upon the continual success of that marriage that all the other marriages a person has in life such as that of husband and wife, of parents with their children and children with their parents, with one's relatives and friends, classmates and co-workers, neighbors and community where one resides to the state and country they live and that with all of humanity. A marriage with God is one that extends to all of humanity and the world that we live in including those that are hateful toward us as explained in the Gospel of Matthew (5:46)... "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." The anecdote in THE ORTHODOX STUDY BIBLE explains that...Love is not merely an emotion. It is- an uncreated divine energy which inflames the soul and unites it with God and to other people. (I John 4:7-21)

and Jesus went into the temple of God and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple and overthrew the tables of the money changers and the seats of them that sold doves and said unto them, that it is written 'My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.'

Matthew (21:12-13)

Offerings to God of various kinds can be traced from the dawn of human history. It constituted a marked feature of the Israeli worship. There were two types; public and private according to whether they were offered at the expense of the nation or an individual. There were three types: 1) Drink offering 2) vegetable or meal offering 3) Animal offering or sacrifice.

The shedding of blood was a necessary accompaniment of every offering. Without it there was no remission of sins and as such without performing this act, man had no right to approach God. In the case of extreme poverty, a bloodless offering was permitted but it was made and accepted only in connection with the blood of the great public altar.

The drink offering was made only in connection with the meat offering which accompanied all burnt offerings. The burnt offering or animal offering had to be an animal without blemish that is without spots.

The sacrifices were of three kinds and in each case the blood made the atonement of the sin. 1) The burnt offering the blood was sprinkled round and about the altar and the entire animal consumed on the altar signifying the entire self-dedication of the offense to God. 2) The sin offering were those made for the expiation of sins, but capital sins that were committed deliberately which the penalty was death, could not be expiated. 3) The peace offering was either as (a) a thanksgiving offering in recognition of unmerited and unexpected blessings, or as (b) a votive offering in payment of a vow or a (c) free-will offering as an expression of an irrepressible love for God or a peace offering may be prompted by the need of renewing a peaceful communion with God.

There was a whole system for the prayer of offerings with various meanings, but the one purpose was to grant to the individual or the nation permission to approach God. It was not the prayer itself but the right to approach the Temple for the prayer to be said. This is the reason why the peddlers and merchants were selling in the Temple. At first they were selling near the Temple, but gradually they began to work themselves into the Temple.

With this eventually the idea of the offering no longer was becoming a means to an end but the end itself, that is to say, the offering became the prayer. It is this change that Jesus was attacking, that is in the changing of the meaning of the House of God from a place of prayer to a buying and selling market place.

Offering and Prayer - The same problem plagues every church that is built. It is true that an offering is used to meet the expenses needed to maintain the church structure, but any offering to the church is an offering to God. But, if we believe that we are satisfying God by fulfilling our pledge or payment, you can just imagine Jesus standing in the midst of the church with whip in hand ready drive out that type, those who think that way. Our offering or pledge is for the soul purpose of permitting us the right to enter in order to participate in the services with others of same faith.

In the early church only those who were found fit to worship were allowed in the corporate services. In fact the same rule holds true to our today but it is a rule and not a practice. With the chanting of...MEE VOK HERAGHAYITZ MEE YOK EE TERAHAVADITZ YEV MEE VOK HABASHAGHAROGHATZ YEV HANMAKRITZ...those persons are asked to leave the church proper and at the chanting of...UZTROONS UZTROONS YEV UZKOOSHOO TIAMP... the doors are to be guarded so others will not enter. But again, this is a rule and not a practice.

The offering or pledge is permitting those holding the same faith to come together and worship in fellowship. As children of the Armenian Church we have a great burden on our shoulders. We are asked not only to maintain ourselves but to help needy Armenians living in other lands to contribute towards to maintain our rights in Holy Land where we have a centuries old right to many of the sacred places there. For the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches with whom we share these rights, it is not a major problem as it is for us. But it should be remembered that as we were born in pain and that those who

suffer and sacrifice the most for the right cause are rewarded the most. Like the widow who gave of her bread money and about whom Jesus said that of all the money put in the offering box at the Temple, no one gave more than her because they gave of what was extra and she gave of what was needed.(Mk.12:41-44) We too are asked to give and believe, and have faith that God will fulfill our needs.

Jesus' Second Coming – Parousia

**"For as the lightening comes from the east and shines as far as the west,
so will the coming of the Son of Man".
(Matthew 27:27)**

This is an explanation of the second coming of Our Lord by the Evangelist Matthew. The greatest anxiety plaguing every human is his or her own personal survival. Freedom has little value when confronted with ones' survival. Dictatorship even can become palatable in extreme situations. People want security. Health permitting, a person works at a job and with the earned wages meets the family's needs. Once security is established there is the possibility of luxury of gaining additional security in various forms.

Education is held in high esteem. There are visions and hopes of unlocking opportunities to greater earnings. With the birth and growth of the scientific age it was assumed naturally that the demand for specialized skills would increase. An abundance of educated specialists plus automation led to a surplus of personnel in the technological field exposing the fallacy of this assumption. Meanwhile the increase in the world population demanded more essentials such as houses, food, clothing, and with this there is an increase demand for laborers knowledgeable in trades and crafts. Their opportunities however have become less and security sometimes jeopardized as a result of the drift of men from the technical fields seeking jobs and the ever increasing number of youth entering the labor market and also women who have been granted equal job opportunities. Completion has become keen. This plus the pollution factor, contamination and other related problems, has made the enigma surrounding the future survival as extremely complicated and serious matter.

We have left a period of over abundance and are entering a stage of not scarcity, at least, limited supply. As yet we have not reached a critical stage. Hopefully a solution will be found. We rely heavily on man's ingenuity. Everybody looks to the government as though the government fulfills all the needs and will of the people. Whatever is attempted, however, will serve only as a temporary relief. Even the government will be unable to contain the ebb of the oncoming overflow. It is only through the unity of hearts though that a lasting solution is possible. Our hearing ability to hear each other must be approved. This is possible only through unity in prayer under the Fatherhood of a Supreme Being called God. The world condition is tied with the condition of the Church. If the Church is successful, full of the life of Christ, the world will be in a good condition that will be brought through the glorious return of Jesus Christ to this world bringing about the enlightening of the hearts and minds of mankind.

MATHEW 28:16-20

“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of The Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that whatsoever, I commanded you and lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

This is one of the last charges that Jesus gave to his Apostles before they began their mission. We can form a better idea of the meaning of the word Apostle by looking at the Armenian word for it-arakial-which means "the one sent", that is, the one sent out to do a special task. This, of course, is understood in the Christian context meaning the twelve chosen by Jesus and sent out to carry on His mission. We would like to think of these men as being extraordinary personalities who would stand out in any society at any time or we would like to think of them as being potentially great leaders or educators who could easily influence or who could sway great influence over people. If someone is going to start a new movement or begin a new religion, he naturally is going to seek and gather around him a group of the best talent so that there will be a dynamic impact. The Apostles neither were not highly talented persons nor were they highly educated. In fact, they were considered to be quite illiterate by the leading dignitaries of that day, having only an elementary education, somewhat comparable almost to what we today know as a 'drop out.' On the whole, they were simple men, doing simple work for a living, something comparable to a worker in the factory or a dock worker or, on one of the wharfs at a seaport an ordinary office worker doing an insignificant job or probably a truck driver or a cook in a diner. These were the type of men Jesus chose to continue His mission of establishing God's Kingdom.

Looking at it with our eyes and our knowledge of how things ought to be done or even with the eyes and knowledge of those living in yesteryears, we would judge this cause ultimately doomed to failure. We would say He chose poorly and made a big mistake in selecting these types of persons. But Jesus called out, "Come, follow me" and they rose leaving -- their work and followed. Some were plain fishermen just as Peter, Andrew, James and John, where brawn, muscle, and the know-how on the seas was more important than knowledge acquired through books. Mathew had the job of writing out tax receipts. Maybe he had a shingle hung out like the ones we see today, "Tax forms 'filled out here". The livelihood of the others remains obscure but we are sure that their positions in the society of that day and age were quite insignificant.

Although Jesus said "Come, follow me", this doesn't mean that they followed Him around Galilee and parts of Judea day and night for three years. They would be with him for a while and then return to their jobs to make a little more money, and return again when their Master beckoned them. In this way, they were learning off and on those things that which they were commissioned to transmit to future generations. They were not only not great educators or even mediocre ones, but they were also timid and afraid during this period, having many doubts in their minds. Even though they were eye witnesses to great and wonderous miracles, their thoughts were still preoccupied with temporal matters - "Master, who is to be the greatest amongst us?" or their complaint on the storming sea, "Master, don't you care that we perish?" A great mission entrusted to a group of ignorant and fearful men, "go forth, teach and baptize."

Again, looking at it with our human thoughts and logic, we ask, who would think that this would ever succeed? Who would think that the church could really be established after its leader was gone? This is what was in the minds of those who had Jesus crucified; Once he was gone, the movement would collapse because there was no successor of notable caliber to take his place. They were an impetuous, rambunctious, and crude lot. The future of the church looked very dim and even more so, it looked black not only for the immediate future, but also into the unforeseen future years. There was no bright outlook for a better tomorrow.

But it didn't fail, it succeeded. It succeeded to such an extent that now 2,000 years later the Church is so large and powerful that it is afraid of its downfall through too much power. Today, when we look back, we

try and picture a different type of beginning, portraying these men as great giants in their times. We make comparisons to the great leaders of our times and with this in mind, we are seeking a Savior to pick up all of the broken pieces and to put them together again like Humpty Dumpty who fell off the wall. These were simple, plain, ordinary men having only ordinary positions and stations in society and filled with the same fears, anxieties and frailties that possess any human being. So when Jesus gave the charge, "Go forth teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of The Son, and of the Holy Spirit", it more or less was like taking an ordinary man off the street whom we will call Tom Jones, and after a skimpy training period of only three years, put him into a space capsule on top of a titan missile and send him off to explore the moon. What are his thoughts?...but what about?... It was to this type of persons that this commission was given and it was through their efforts that it succeeded.

What was the cause for its success? Faith, hope, courage and boldness that came from a new spirit to face grave situations prudently together hard work and an enlightenment of the Holy Spirit which they let lead them. By this, the impossible became possible.

We have a similar experience in the annals of our own Armenian history in the battle of Vartanantz which we will celebrate next month. The Persians made a final decision to liquidate the Armenians once and for all. For centuries they were trying to have us as a strong reliable ally. Sometimes we were and other times we weren't, depending on how strong or weak they were. If they were powerful, we were a good ally, and if they, the Persians, were weak, we weren't so good. This brought about the circumstances of making the decision to incorporate Armenia, body and soul, once and for all, within the Persian Empire. Although Vartan was a great general, he was not without human faults and frailties. He didn't want to war with an enemy that outnumbered him about 10 to 1. He knew the situation well and the consequences of such a battle. He gathered his family and fled to the Greek dominate regions. Later, some of the clergy persuaded him to return and the rest is history. The future of the Church and the nation remained very bleak even after the battle. The only thing that the battle solved was that it kept the Persians out, but probably what most everyone must have been thinking was that when the second assault comes, they will realize the intentions. The future looked very bleak.

When we look back on the pages of history, we don't see those men as being full of perplexities and fears, but picture them as endowed with superhuman traits, something missing in ordinary persons. They were, though, just as the rest of us. Again, courage, boldness, constant sacrifice and work with faith and a dedicated and faith and spirit in God made the impossible possible.

Today, when we look into the future, we face the same bleak future. We ask ourselves over and over again, "When this and the next generation pass on, what will there be?" We feel lost within the bounds of 200 million people. Whether you look within or without of what we have, we ask perplexingly, "how can we succeed?" We are filled with the same human fears and anxieties that set in the early Church and those in the days of Vartan, but comparatively speaking, ours seem not as bleak.

What is the key to success? The deceased, who was part of this process and transitional state exemplifies in some way how this is possible. Like the Apostles, he wasn't regarded as highly literate. He had simple education and lived a simple but virtuous life. He was called to mission which he followed and did his best to succeed. This mission was to raise seven (7) children of faith and impart within them a sense of their heritage so that they would continue as best they could. There weren't many available doors open or many chances to succeed, but with determination to continue by work, years of toil and sacrifice brought forth its

fruit. Day in and day out, year after year, he kept his composure, not wasting his time, money or energy and living prudently. Before he closed his eyes for the last time he saw the fruits of his labor. Again, we see the fruits of the virtue of boldness to face up to difficult situations with a resolute determination to try what is humanly possible and fortunately see and enjoy the positive results. We don't say that all problems have been solved and that the future is going to be bright and rosy. We still don't have a sense of direction and still living on the stormy seas with the Apostles, full of fear that at any given moment we are going to be washed under. But we can succeed if we bring forth our just portion and there is the possibility for us and all succeeding generations of making the impossible possible.

Mark 2:27-33

The lesson part of Badarak service prepares us to worship God. The sermon should follow the lesson as a rule for this reason. In the Gospel lesson we find Jesus walking about in the Temple when the chief priests and scribes approach Him asking, "By what authority do you do these things and who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered, "I'll tell you if first you will answer my question as to whether the baptism of John (the Baptist) was from heaven or from men?" They then began to argue amongst themselves saying if we say 'from heaven' then he will reply, 'why didn't you believe him' referring to when Jesus was baptized by John, John spoke of Jesus saying 'this is He of Whom I spoke and Whose sandals I am not worthy to tie' and If we answer 'from men' there is the fear of the people because they regarded John as a prophet, that is man sent by God. So they told Jesus "We don't know..." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

From this we can understand that if we approach God in His Temple of Prayer with questions of whys and wherefores, we will become confused and doubtful and return home receiving little or no benefit because we didn't receive any answers to our question. We ask ourselves what did I go to church for?

St. Paul tells us in this reading to 'examine yourself'(Gal.6:4), to see whether we are holding to our faith. Faith should be understood as a belief being simple and direct. St Paul continues... 'mend your ways and heed to my appeal and agree with one another, live in peace and the God of Peace and love will be with you.'

Mark 4:27

Autumn is the season when farmers and home gardeners begin to harvest the crop whose seeds they had planted in Spring. It took time for the seeds to grow and mature into a full grown plant. First, the soil was made ready for the seeding by plowing it then a soil enrichener of some sort was spread over where the seeds had been sown. For the most part the major portion of the gardener's work is through and as the evangelists writes in St. Mark's Gospel (4:27)"The farmer sleeps and rises night and day as the seed grows and he knoweth not how."

Aside from the weeding and watering he might have to do, it is the earth that nourishes the infant seed causing it to grow. This is the summertime, the period of growth, the period of recreation, "the sleeping and rising" time when we spend the days more leisurely, enjoying the outdoors and seeing nature in bloom. As the time slowly passes by the seed begins to lose its form and becomes a little plant, shooting forth stems and branches. It grows with time until it is mature enough to bear fruit. What a wonderful mystery that is unfolded before our very eyes but too many who are lost in the rush and turmoil of everyday living it has

lost its marvelous and exciting significance. Nature repeats herself so often that the hidden beauty of this has been taken for granted.

The evangelist likens this parable of the farmer sowing his seed to the Kingdom of God where the seed being the Word of God, His Only Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, Who in the fullness of time revealed Himself to mankind. The world we might say was made ready for this revelation when God spoke through the Law and the Prophets to the chosen people the Israelites. He spoke with other nation and peoples in various other ways, such as through their cultures and customs, but more specifically you might say to the Israelites through whom He was to make His particular revelation. The period of the Old Testament would correspond, therefore, to springtime when the soil was being prepared for the seeding and in the fullness of time the seed was sown with the Blessed Virgin was conceived with the Christ child. The kingdom of God became planted in the universe. This planted in the soils of all baptized and confirmed in the Word of God.

As spring his way to summer so too must the newborn baby begin to grow and enter childhood. Slowly his body grows and begins to walk and play. He begins to say a few words and when he is of age he is enrolled in the school. His mind begins to develop more rapidly and he starts to form habits. It is during this tender but important stage of his life that under the loving care of his parents and the instruction he/she receives from the church that they implanted seed of baptism receives its nourishment which is needed for the child's spiritual growth. St. Luke says of St. John the Baptist (Lk.1:80) that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit." This is the summertime of a person's life when they have no responsibilities or obligations to fulfill. But as time goes on the individual begins to shed his/her childhood thoughts and feelings and passes through another transitional phase known as adolescents. It is then that the individual is more conscience of a change taking place. They are then asked to do rather than to have things done for them. To a certain extent they're asked to make decisions, take on responsibilities and sometimes even to lead thus preparing them for the things to come, that is adulthood.

Then begins the autumn season of the person's life, comparable to that time of year when the farmer harvests his crops, the mature individual through the duration of his/her life not only bears fruit but also simultaneously is seeding a new crop. By their actions, decisions, work, conversation they are influencing and being influenced. One sign of a mature person is he/she who lives with a thankful heart...thankful for the gifts of God, the food, water and shelter which they count not as a personal gain or victory but rather as a divine blessing. They may take these blessings for granted, but when the hunger pains set in or the cold and sickness into the body; they become more conscience of the needs. They often forget too soon that which they had passed through when the hardship ceases or a remedy is found for the illness. Every person is endowed with the gift of reason.

Whether or not we actually have experienced any sort of suffering we have the ability to recognize and acknowledge the fact that these are blessings of God to man and that we ought to express our thanks for them by living with a grateful heart and rendering Thanksgiving to our Creator in prayer.

Home for the Soul
(Gospel of Mark 10:28–31)

(28) Peter began to say to Jesus," Lo, we have left everything and followed you and followed you." This is not a complaint registered by Peter on behalf of the Apostles but rather an expression of the deed love,

respect and belief that they had in Jesus. For them, nothing was as important as being with Him and nothing was of any value without Him. Although they left everything because of Him their game was much more.

(29, 30) Jesus said, " Truly I say to you, there is no one was left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the Gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in time houses and brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers and land with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life."

(31) But many who are first will be last and the last will be first

First concerning the saying..." For my sake and the Gospel"...in the books comprising the Holy Bible, the four books called the 'Gospels', that is the "Good News", are the prime essence and heart of the others. The heartbeat of the Gospel is fact of Jesus 'resurrection from the dead and establishing of the one great commandment which is regarded the first and foremost of all the others. It is found in the response of Jesus to the inquiry by the scribes and Pharisees as written in the Gospel of Matthew (22:35–38) where Jesus tells them..." You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great the first commandment. And the second is like it. You should love your neighbor as yourself." It should be understood that number one is always number one and cannot be replaced by another nor can another be coequal to number one. Number two becomes like number one when the conditions of number one has been fulfilled and by that is brought into one's class. Also the time condition of one's heart, soul and mind is not for a day, month or years but for one's entire lifetime. Basics significances of one's life can be found in the other passages. That which is most precious for an individual is that which is nearest and dearest to that person which is one's home and family. It is there that an individual finds his/her identity. It is there, whether it be a rented apartment, a single room or private home, that person always returns. Everyone has the right to have a place that they call home. Pleas are made for persons who have become homeless as a result of disasters, be they man-made or part of the works of nature. "Street" people are those helpless souls living at the mercy of society who have forsaken honor holy to exist. Their numbers are increasing at an alarming rate because of the economic situation. No one should be without a place to sleep or the opportunity to be a decent meal at least once a day. No one should be without the place that can be considered to be a home, even if it is only one night, knowing that another will be available tomorrow elsewhere.

The Apostles forsook everything, their homes and families, because they discovered something more satisfying and rewarding as followers of Jesus.

Having a home and family does not assure fulfillment of one's life. One can become homeless within the confines of one's own home, even though there may be even financial security, when a person is not at home with one's own soul. A home can be one's prison instead of one's palace. To be at home with one's soul needs to be at home with one's Lord which is the purpose of the first great commandment. When a person is at home with the Lord and as a result of home with one's own soul, that person not only gains the blessings of one's home and family but the blessings of the extended family which is one's neighbors. That not only means the immediate vicinity of a neighborhood but to the ends of the world; to those living from time immemorial to the end of time; the family of angelic hosts and Saints, and even to those, the service of evil who were incessantly in opposition to God's will, attempting to drive a wedge between the Creator and

his creatures. That is the reason for verse 31 in which God's children are forewarned all persecutions with the increase of homes and families as a result of forsaking home and family for Christ and the Gospel. Evil never ceases in this endeavor to corrupt, deceive and usurp the mind and hearts of humans which is why there is a need of fidelity to one's Lord by loving him with "all" of the faculty is of the heart, soul and mind, during one's entire life. Isn't this what God is striving towards during the course of human history?

For this to be realized there is a need for a house which will serve as home for one's soul and that is the house of God called the Church. It is there, more than anywhere else, that the immediate presence of God is experienced. God is everywhere and at all times but more specifically in a particular time and place in His home. It is there that an individual comes home to one's own soul through which all other blessings are added which is the loving of one's neighbor as oneself that is the sharing with others the love God shares with His faithful even to those considered to be one's enemy. When God places conditions of loving Him or for His glorification, it is entirely for a very unselfish reason that that is, so that his children will never be deprived of His glory and honor which He abundantly shares with them. For this reason He continuously makes great sacrifices and one great sacrifice which is His total self through Christ Jesus on the cross.

Indeed, this is the purpose and goal of the church's mission and ministry to her sacramental life. When the church is successful in this respect, everything else succeeds. When she does not succeed it is because of the shifting of priorities in which number one is replaced by others. A tremendous struggle ensues as a result, simply to exist. As the Lord says..." He, who has ears to hear, let him hear."(Matt. 11:15)

When one hears God's word, one begins to hear the voice and they words of one's spouse, children, family and friends and that of one's neighbor near and far. When one hears and understands others even though being not in agreement with them, the seeds of brotherhood have been sown on fertile ground because of the prevalence of mutual respect. The spirit of harmony and cooperation takes place despite deep-seeded differences. In all of this can be seen that God's word and actions are not only ethereal but even more so very pragmatic in character.

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The evangelist likens this parable of the farmer sowing his seed to the Kingdom of God where the seed being the Word of God, His Only Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, Who in the fullness of time revealed Himself to mankind. The world we might say was made ready for this revelation when God spoke through the Law and the Prophets to the chosen people the Israelites. He spoke with other nation and peoples in various other ways, such as through their cultures and customs, but more specifically you might say to the Israelites through whom He was to make His particular revelation. The period of the Old Testament would correspond, therefore, to springtime when the soil was being prepared for the seeding and in the fullness of time the seed was sown with the Blessed Virgin was conceived with the Christ child. The kingdom of God became planted in the universe. This planted in the soils of all baptized and confirmed in the Word of God.

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Home for the Soul
(Mark 10:28-31)

(28) Peter began to say to him (Jesus), "Lo, we have left everything and followed you." - This is not a complaint registered by Peter on behalf of the Apostles but rather an expression of the deep love, respect and belief they had in Jesus. For them, nothing was as important as being with Him and nothing was of any value without Him. Although they left everything because of Him their gain was much more.

(29,30) Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother of father or children or lands for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and land with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life."

First, concerning "for my sake and the Gospel" ... in the books comprising the Holy Bible, the four books called the "Gospels" that is the "Good News", are the prime essence and heart of the others. The heartbeat of the Gospel message is the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and the establishing of the one great commandment which is regarded first and foremost above all the others. It is found in the response of Jesus to the inquiry by the scribes and Pharisees Matt (22:35-38) where Jesus tells them..."You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself". It should be understood that number one is always number one and never can be replaced by another; nor can another be co-equal to number one. Number two is "like" number one when the conditions of number one has been fulfilled and by that is brought into number one's class. Also the time condition of, all of one's heart, soul and mind, is not for a day, month or years but for one's entire lifetime.

Basic significances of one's life can be found in other passages.

That which is most precious for an individual is that which is nearest and dearest to that person which is one's home and family. It is there that an individual finds his/her identity. It is there, whether it be a rented apartment, a single room or a private home that a person always returns to. Everyone has the right to have a place that they call home. Pleas are made for persons who have become homeless as a result of disasters be they man-made or by nature. "Street" people are those helpless souls living at the mercy of society who have forsaken honor only to exist. Their numbers are increasing at an alarming rate because of the economic situation. No one should be without a place to sleep or the opportunity to eat decent meal at least once a day. No one should be without a place that can be considered to be a home, even if it is for only one night, knowing that another will be available tomorrow elsewhere.

The Apostles forsook everything, their homes and families because they discovered something more satisfying and rewarding as followers of Jesus. Having a home and family does not assure total fulfillment of one's life. One can become homeless living within the confines of one's home, even though there may be financial security when that person is not at home with one's own soul. A home can be one's prison instead one's palace. To be at home with one's soul a person needs to be at home with one's Lord which is the purpose to the first great commandment. When a person is at home with the Lord and as a result, is at home with one's own soul, that person not only gains the blessings of one's home and family but the blessings of the extended family which is one's neighbors. That not only means the immediate vicinity of a neighborhood but to the ends of the world; to those living from time immemorial to the end of time; to the family of angelic hosts and saints, and even to those, the servants of evil who work incessantly in opposition to God's will, attempting to drive a wedge between the Creator and his creatures. That is the reason for verse 31 where God's children are forewarned of persecutions with the increase of homes and families as a result of forsaking home and family for Christ and the Gospel. Evil never ceases in its endeavor to corrupt, deceive and usurp the mind and hearts of humans which is why there is need of fidelity to one's Lord by loving Him with "all" of the faculties of the heart, soul and mind, always during one's entire life. Isn't this what God is striving towards during the course of human history?

For this to be realized there is the need for a house which will serve as home for one's soul and that is the House of God called the Church. It is there, more than anywhere else, that the immediate presence of God is experienced. God is everywhere and at all times but more specifically in a particular time and place in His home. It is there that an individual comes home to one's own soul through which all other blessings are added which is the loving of one's neighbor as oneself, that is the sharing with others the love God shares with His faithful even to those considered to be one's enemy. When God places conditions of loving Him or for His glorification, it is entirely for a very unselfish reason and that is, so that His children never are deprived of His glory and honor which He abundantly shares with them. For this, He continuously makes great sacrifices and the one great sacrifice being His total self through Christ Jesus on the Cross. Indeed, this is the purpose and goal of the Church's mission through her sacramental life. When the Church is successful in this respect, everything else succeeds. When she does not succeed it is because of the shifting of priorities in which number one is replaced by others. A tremendous struggle ensues as a result simply to exist. As the Lord says..."He who has ears to hear, let him hear."(Matt. 11:15) When one hears God's word, one begins to hear the voice and words of one's spouse, children, family and friends and that of one's neighbor near and far. When one hears and understands others even though not being in agreement with them, the seeds of brotherhood have been sown on a fertile ground because of the prevalence of mutual respect which is the foundation and pillar of support for true brotherhood. A spirit of harmony and cooperation will take place despite deep-seeded differences. In all this can be seen that God's words and actions are not only ethereal but even more so, very pragmatic in character.

Mark 11:3 "They feared the people"

It was during the last days of Jesus's ministry while he was walking and teaching amongst the people, that the Pharisees, who were seeking a means of seizing Him, approached Him asking some leading questions among which was the following, "By what authority do you do these things and who gave you this authority?" They knew that they to present the question in such a way so that Jesus' answer would have to be decisive and appear as blasphemy before the people. They had hoped that in this way, that not only would the people be witness, but also support them and thus, they would appear justified in their deceitful plan.

Jesus knew their thoughts and instead of answering, counteracted with a proposal, that they would have to first answer His question, then He would answer theirs. We don't know whether He gave them time to think it over, because the conversation continues right into Jesus' question, "The baptism of John (the Baptist), was it from heaven or of men?" Now this put the Pharisees on a spot. If they wanted a reply they were going to have to give Him a satisfactory answer before the people. Now the Pharisees knew that if they would say "in heaven", Jesus would answer "Then why didn't you believe him?" because John the Baptist, in reference to Jesus, had told the people, that He, that is Jesus, was greater than himself and also at the time when Jesus came to John to be baptized, John said to Him "I have need to be baptized by you and you come to me?" Therefore, they knew that if they say "from heaven" they would have answered their own question the way that they had wanted Jesus to, thus they would be working contrary to their plans. Secondly, if they answered "of men" they feared the people, because they knew that the people considered John to be a prophet, that is to say, a man sent by God. We see how Jesus has them stepping into their own trap. We can almost sense the intensity of the atmosphere, with each farseeing the others thoughts and answers.

It is here, that the presence, the unheard voice of the people has a definite influence. It was through them that the Pharisees were to gain justification, but now because of Jesus' question in their presence this plot proved unsuccessful.

What is meant by the people and what is meant by a crowd or a mob? I believe it is safe to say that the people represent the majority who are God-fearing and law abiding, whereas the crowd is the self-interest minority group. In this instance, the decision of the people was done during the daytime and in a public place for all to witness, in comparison to the mob that arrested and took Jesus to trial under the cloak of darkness. One was a tool of God and the other a companion of Satan and his cohorts. It is during the Lenten season, when we are asked to sacrifice some of the luxuries of life, in order that we may take a true inventory on our personal lives, concentrating and reflecting upon our past, and examining our relationship with our Creator that we ask ourselves as to "where do I stand? Am I honest and truthfully fulfilling the tasks God has set before me, or am I seeking my betterment at the cost of my fellow man? We should be showing the existence of the love burning within us by our actions and works and also we should be influencing and making ourselves known to others, so that evil will be in retreat and not advance on toward victory.

O Lord, Who wills that which is good and Who is the director of the will, do not let me follow the inclinations of my heart but lead me to live always according to Your Divine Will. Amen.

PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE
"But he who endures to the end will saved"
St. Mark 13:13)

The translation of the Armenian text would read, "He who is patient will be saved." There is no conflict in the usage of these words, 'endure' and 'patient', because they have similar meanings. Each text explains in the best way using its peculiar language this particular situation. For example, in the Armenian, there is a sense of movement with the word "patient". It isn't as one sitting down twiddling his thumbs passing the time away but rather gives the sense of one who while carrying on his/hers daily chores endures a hardship which seems to be temporarily confronting him or her. The Armenian word for endure in either its colloquial or classical connotations does not give the sense of patience with action. It depicts rather a stagnate condition. Whereas in the English "patient" has more of a static mood of "sit and wait" while endure leaves the impression of waiting a hardship through while continuing one's regular work. In either case 'patience' or 'endurance' are words that more or less complement and supplement each other's meaning. Our Lord explains the meaning of this passage in the first twelve verses of this chapter. It begins with the disciples praising the structure of the Temple which they were leaving as to what a wonderful building and beautiful stones; to which Jesus answers to correct their thinking, by telling them that there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down That is, this type of beauty is deceiving because it is temporal and not eternal. Look toward those things which have eternal value.

The lesson continues with Peter, James, John and Andrew asking Him privately on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple as to when this will happen and what sign will there be of His coming?

Here we understand more clearly about what Temple the disciples were speaking about because if one goes to the Mount of Olives today, they will still see Solomon's Temple which is on Mount Zion directly opposite of the Mount of Olives. It is interesting to note that this Temple symbolizes all of the grandeur and wealth of King Solomon and his era. Since this building is still standing to this day, we can say that the

prescribed time has not yet arrived; although that doesn't necessarily mean that the arrival of that time and the downfall of this structure will have to coincide. Jesus was using this to illustrate a point.

Jesus continues by warning His apostles of the things to happen and although He speaks to the chosen apostles, it is understood that He is speaking to their successors and all of His followers as well. He forewarns them of those who will come purporting to be Him as if Jesus had arrived in the Second Coming. He tells them not to be led astray. There will be wars of nations against nations. There will be earthquakes and famines but these will be only the beginning of the sufferings to come, He says. He exhorts them to be careful because they will be delivered to judges, governors and kings for His sake to bear testimony. He tells them not to worry or be anxious as to what to say, but to say "whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speaks but the Holy Spirit." There will be a time when brother will deliver brother to death; the father his child; and children will rise against parents and have them put to death and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. This is to show the intensity and the pressure the conscience of all Jesus' followers will be subjected to. He closes the lesson with the consolation of "but he who endures (he who is patient) to the end will be saved."

The lesson to be patient and to endure is a very important one that we learn and re-learn every day of our lives, from the time we are born (even before birth) until our last living breath of life. When a child is even in its mother's womb it shows signs of being impatient. After its birth, it cries when hunger pains set in and learns to have to wait until its mother is ready to feed. Once the child is able to walk and begins to ramble through closets, pantries and what have you, it learns under the supervision of the parents and elders that it is restricted to certain areas and places. When the child becomes of age to go to school, he/she has to learn the patience of staying in a classroom for eight hours each day.

Another major period of a growing child's life is its adolescence stage when it begins shedding its childish composure and begins to approach adulthood. This is the dream period when they have their particular heroes and champions. It is the time of life when girls begin to picture that ideal man of their life and the boys think of how they can stand out among others. They can't wait to grow up to be accepted by the older ones into their groups. The illusions of this dream world gradually give way near the latter teen-years to the period of the ideals when youth question everything about adult life. They are amazed as to why everything is in a constant turmoil and wonder why can't there be a paradise on Earth here and now in a real sense?

Once a person is married, his/her main concern will be to have a home and a secure job. There is the anxiety of wanting to pay the bills as quickly as possible and the incessant aspiration to always better one's position and salary so to insure one's future life. Stability and security are the conscious and subconscious driving powers of all human beings. If a man has a business, he strives to enlarge it so that he will be more successful and thereby not only feels more secure but also more influential. By the time he does reach this position, other problems arise to complicate the situation because by that time that person is either approaching or already is in his/her old-age when the pains of a tiring body begin to wear a person down.

From birth until death, man has to learn to be patient. Man has to learn to endure. This is something that has to be learned within each individual by himself/herself. It is not an external matter but an internal one. Just as wars, famines, earthquakes and other such calamities should not shake one's patience and endurance; these cannot be acquired through external physical matter such as the beautiful Temple, property, wealth and other temporal securities. The person, who learns and is quick to re-learn daily to be patient and to endure, is the person who will be spared and is the person who will be saved.

“Heaven and Earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.”

Mark 13:31

Life is established on a deep and ever continuing mystery: God's creation is a mystery, the birth of His Son and resurrection from the dead; the confirmation and establishment of the church on Pentecost: the formation of the Holy Scriptures. All the composites and core of our religious life are anchored on inexplicable mysteries.

Mysteries mystify. Because of the unknown we naturally (subconsciously at least) become suspicious and view askantly with doubts arising as to its validity as being "real". The real for us is that which we can take hold and grasp such as a handful of soil. Religion being a mystery seems unreal because of the perplexing unknown element that lies beyond our comprehensive ability. Let us for a moment imagine ourselves as astronauts who have flown to the moon. Looking at our planet from this heavenly body we see a great mystery that mystifies us in seeing our Earth "hanging" so to speak, in the heavens with nothing holding or supporting it other than an unseen power. There are no doubt our suspicions about this mystery because we have been there (Earth). If we could travel further like Mariners I and II to observe Earth from Mars we would be more moved and impressed with the immensity and mystery of creation. It is difficult to arrive at these same conclusions as long as our feet are firmly established on the soil of this planet which seems unshakeable. Once far removed however, the illogical can become logical; the unreal can become the real. We see things in a different light for we can say that, that is from where I came (the planet Earth). It has to be real.

The mystery and grandeur of creation literally overwhelms in such a situation. We can more readily accept the belief in the Creator as the grand master of a great creation similarly to what respect we have towards a great architect or sculptor.

Let us take the example of a sculptor. He possesses certain skills and particular talents such as the ability to envision in a piece of rock a picture that he has conceived in his mind. He has the ability to reproduce or translate that conception into reality by directing his tools deftly in to the hard rock carving out shapes and figures. When he has finished, it is put on display for all to marvel. In time, however, in being exposed to the elements of nature and the changing of the seasons, it loses much of its original glamour. Huge sums of money are required to restore the priceless works of art in Venice, Italy which are in danger of ruin.

As a master artisan, God has taken the mass material of sinful human nature and by the genius of His divine wisdom, directed through the tools of the Cross of Jesus, the Church and the Bible, the creation of a new creature. Unlike a worldly artisan however, who puts his tools aside once he has completed his work, God continues to work through these mysteries always making anew so it appears young and fresh as it was in its original state. The mysteries will mystify but suspicion and doubt disappear for now we realize that it is "the most real of all realities! In fact it is the "only real" for as Jesus said and continues to say is "heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away."(Mt.5:18)

CIVIL RIGHTS AND DEMONSTRATION-THE VIETNAM WAR

"And she gave birth to her first born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn".(Lk.2:7)

The evangelist relates to us what happened to Mary after her long journey to Bethlehem from Nazareth of Galilee with Joseph. After arriving in Bethlehem and finding no room in the inn they were forced to go to a stable which was no more than a small cave on the outskirts of the city. It was there that she bore her child. No one made reservations ahead of time in those days and only a king and nobility would be assured of finding a place if there were no rooms. Mary and Joseph were left to find whatever they could. No one gave up his warm and comfortable place, not even for an expectant mother, especially for a commoner such as Mary, a simple country girl.

Today, with all of the business transactions that are constantly taking place, that if reservations are not made ahead of time a person cannot expect to find a room in our busy hotels and motels if they are all booked up. It would even be more difficult to find a place during a special event or a holiday and an exceptional act of charity to find some business establishment to make exception to its rules even for an expectant mother. It is very difficult to persuade society to open its doors to someone who does not hold a prominent position with all its favors and advantages. Not only are the doors of society closed but their hearts also. Compassion may appear occasionally on the scene of the human stage but on a whole, it is more a rarity than a commonplace appearance.

Much stress and emphasis is put these days to make the Church and Her teachings more relevant to today's living conditions. We often hear that the church is living in the past and Her message antiquated. One of the obvious lessons that this blessed event conveys to us through the Church and to all ages is to have compassion.

We believe that we are living in the age of reason, or one might say, reasonableness. Although there still are dictators, kings and ruling Army generals, their days, on the whole, seems to be numbered. More and more democratic ways and practices are being adopted and democratic institutions are being established. People are being granted more privileges and freedom to decide for themselves as to how they wish to be governed. There is a growing respect for the individual and his rights. Civil rights, which means no more than citizens' rights, is part of this movement. This would be practically impossible in a closed society where the few who rule enjoy special privileges, but within an open society with its democratic processes, opportunities should be unlimited.

The Civil Rights Movements here in the United States has taken on a color tone as a racial strife between the black and white communities. This does not overlook or disregard the grievances and strife of other races and nationalities, but by in large because the black community is the largest minority group and because their opportunity to progress and to improve on the whole has been deprived them and lately given wide spread coverage in law making and publicity circles, we automatically think of their plight when we think of civil rights. The demonstrations organized by their leaders in which clergy of various faiths and denominations have participated, has highlighted this movement. It has reached a point where it is not only a question of one's civil liberties but a serious problem of emotional and physical disturbance where the fears and anxieties of man over-shadow the rational and reasoning depriving the compassionate desires of the heart from functioning probably.

Demonstrations were needed and probably will be needed. They are not the solution, nor were they purported to be the solution. They might be when you consider the number of positive acts, steps forward when viewed through the passage of some legislative bills that made into law certain aspects of human equality in 'the land of free' where church bells toll freely calling their faithful to the way of God, which is

in a sense, is an open admission and manifestation of the failure of the Church to bring this message home to its people. Where was the church up to now? Where was it hiding? Why did it finally erupt and take a side?

I personally am not in favor of churches through their official capacities of assemblies or convocations of bishops, to make pronouncements encouraging or discouraging passage of congressional bills, state laws or city ordinances. Individual priests and ministers might use their prerogative granted them as citizens, but it is my personal opinion, a church should not attempt to get involved in political matters and to do so would be a grave mistake for it would be overlooking the freedom of the graces of the Holy Spirit to operate within the individual. It is man's God given right to decide for himself whether he wants to accept or reject what is considered to be equal human rights. If the church has failed in its mission from within to lead its people, who compose the citizenry of that particular society, to the way of truth and light then it, the Church, should acknowledge this failure. Confession is good for the soul. The conscience of the human aspect of the church would be at ease if it makes such an admission.

It must be remembered, though, that God does not dictate to us. He is love that is full of mercy and possesses an understanding heart full of compassion. These characteristics are far from one who rules by dictatorial means. Within Him there is a complete freedom. There is a freedom to accept or reject Him and His principles. As His servants, who has given the Church the right to disregard this freedom of His Holy Spirit to operate within all men? God didn't use divine authority to open the doors of the inns in Bethlehem so that His Son could be born in comfort. God didn't use His divine authority to stop the massacre of innocent children under two years of age which was decreed by King Herod when he heard of Jesus birth. The doors and the hearts of man were and are still closed to His way but God continues to work in mysteries ways to transform the world from a one of evil to a one of good. The inclination of the heart makes society what it is.

It took years, if not centuries to create the present situation. It is not going to be undone overnight. If it fails in the homes and the churches fail to influence the homes, then the change will never be realized no matter how many laws are passed or how many demonstrations are held.

Concerning the issue of the Vietnam War, the explanations given on Civil Rights should suffice to form a picture of my thoughts. We as a church pray for peace; a just peace, a righteous peace and a peace that encompasses a good will toward all men. If there is a war depriving a people to worship in accordance to their faith such as was the case of our Vartanantz, we would pray for victory for those seeking religious freedom. If there is a war depriving a people to govern themselves according to their customs, then we would pray for their victory. But the complexities of wars have become so complicated by political, diplomatic, economical and sociological intrigues and overtones that one wonders at times as to who is the enemy and who is the friend and ally.

The world still left the expectant mother to bear her child in a stable. It regards them as not important enough, too childish for our tastes and not mature enough to merit our attention. The doors of Bethlehem are still closed today because the world is groping with the evils of human failure and error brought about because of the immaturity of the development of the heart as our Lord explained on several occasion as the result of the hardening of the heart not in the physical but rather the spiritual sense. (Mt. 19:8; Mk.3:5)

“For nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. Take heed then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not even

what he thinks that he has will be taken away. Then his mother and his brothers came to Him but they could not reach him for the crowd. And he was told, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you". But he said to them, "My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it".

LK 8:17-21

The first part is easy to understand concerning 'what is not known' eventually will be 'known'; but nothing remains hidden from God. The 18th and 19th verses possess some serious problems. This is what one expects from the world which some consider to be the real world which we must learn to deal with on a practical and pragmatic level. If blessed with much, one has a chance to increase his wealth greater than the person having a little. He has a cushion of support. If he loses some because of wrong or bad decisions, he can still go on. Persons of little wealth are devastated. Because of wealth and position, one enjoys a position of exerting one's influence in favor of certain persons or parties. This is often done to consolidate one's own position against envious rivals. As a result talented and dedicated people are overlooked and society deprived from benefiting from their services. The struggle between the haves and have not's is tense and wide spread. Uprisings are taking place at an alarming rate all around the world. The word of Jesus disturbs us deeply. Does he want us to accept man-made principles as a way of life? What shocks us is that it's written in the Gospel books of the Bible and comes from the very lips of our Lord Himself. But Jesus prefaces this statement by saying ..."Take heed then how you hear", which means we should not misconstrue the meaning of his words in the worldly sense but understand them in the spiritual light of the knowledge of God. He who has much in the way of faith and belief, and applies it to the benefit of his fellowman, to him more will be given; but to those who have little, that which they think they have, will be taken from them if they choose not to put it to good use.

A strong economy is maintained in the financial world with the circulation of money. When the economy slows down, the Treasury Department prints more money to "pump-up" the economy. So, too, in God's world His gifts, divine blessings, are to be put to good use. In either case, stagnation will take place as a result of poor circulation. God's world is one of perpetual motion. There is never a dull moment in heaven. Concerning Jesus' mother and brothers (considered by the church to be his cousins), Jesus brings out the point that no one is overlooked, excluded or granted special favors over others. Those close to Jesus, be they parents, relatives of close friends, lived by the same rule-sharing and putting to good use God's gift. We identify with them to help us do what they did so magnificently in their life.

So listen attentively - God abundantly shares His wealth with us and we, in turn, are called to do the same.

Luke 9: 46-48

One day Jesus was walking with His Apostles which at times He would be walking ahead of them. It happened that at this particular time Apostles were by themselves when an argument arose amongst them as to which of them was to be the greatest. It wasn't a discussion but more of an argument which they had revealing some of their deep-seeded differences. Jesus was only a few steps ahead of them. Why didn't they ask Him? Were they afraid because they knew that which they were seeking was wrong'?

Jesus understood their thoughts and took a child that happened to be there, and put the child at His side in the midst of the Apostles. He did not ask the child's name or who the child's parents were. He didn't question the child whether his or her parents adhered to the practices of their religious faith. We don't know

the faith that the child belonged to. Nor do we know whether it was a boy or a girl. We don't know whether the child was white, black, yellow or red skinned or a mixture of some. We don't what nationality he/she was - Jewish, Armenian, Chinese, Brazilian or one of the South African nations. All we know is that Jesus took a child and put it at His side in midst of the Apostles, a child representing all children of all times, all over world.

Then Jesus tells His Apostles that whoever receives this child in His name also receives Him; and that, 'Whoever receives Him, receives the One who sent Him'; and added that 'the least among them was the greatest.' The Apostles were all grown men selected by Jesus to do God's holy mission on Earth: the salvation mankind. There were only twelve of them and they are confronted with this overwhelming task. Instead of discussing amongst themselves more pertinent problems as to how they were to tackle the immense problems facing them to continue this divine mission and what were they to do to prepare themselves for this task, they were behaving like little children at play in seeing as to who was to be considered the greatest amongst them. They still hadn't received Jesus' spirit or that of the Holy Spirit, so it is understandable why they were still at a great lost still living in their mundane ambitions.

The question facing us is, 'would we do or are we any different from them?' Do we try to prove to one another all the things that we are not or do we busy ourselves with important matters such as to what needs to be done now to assure our children and future generations of all of God's children a world where a true and lasting peace and righteousness reigns. Jesus tells us that their care is entrusted into all of our hands. It is not only their parent's duty but the duty of all to see that each and every child is given the opportunity to learn of Jesus Christ according to the faith of our forefathers. If we want to prove to one another how great we are, then, we are called to busy ourselves with the business of doing something concrete for them now.

John answered, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him for he that is not against you is for you".

Luke 9:49,50

All the people we know can be classified into three groups.-1) Those who are our friends 2) Those who are our enemies 3) The many who are in in the in-between marginal gray area of being neither one nor the other.

Who is a friend?

I suppose one standard of judging is that saying, "A friend in need is a friend in deed." A common expression of disappointment sometimes heard is, "Where were you when I needed you, friend?", but this statement is not always valid because sometimes people find themselves in predicaments where if it is not impossible at least it is very difficult to render assistance.

However, when one is actively trying to do was is considered to be a 'good', he/she becomes an open target of those who do not look favorably upon what that individual is doing because it will prove detrimental to their careers and livelihood. Such was the case of the Apostles who were openly resented and persecuted because their preaching of a new faith. One of them, St Paul, was despised by the Ephesian artisans who made statues of the gods and goddesses, because he preached the one God who was not made by the hands of men. If on the one hand, we find ourselves criticizing these individuals for hindering the truth from being revealed, we sympathize with them in a sense also realizing that this was their livelihood, their life mainstay upon which they depended and which was being undermined by this preacher whose words were

attracting attention. How often truth is concealed because of this, but the often quoted words of Jesus comes to mind, "but man shall not live by bread alone."(Mt.4:4)

It is these types of men who courageously profess their religion that bring out the best or the worst in man, and who often gain more enemies than friends because they attract people which in turn easily arouse the wrath of those who oppose them to come forth, those known sometimes as the loyal opposition party. It is of these people that Jesus speaks, "for he that is not against you is for you." The healer, whoever he was, was not leading nor beginning an opposition movement, so he could be considered a friend.

The Prophet-King David was a powerful and popular king as a result of his establishing Israel as a great power in his day but this kingdom was short lived. The Israelites always remember that era and envision a day when they would be able to relive some of those past glories. David repented for his sins and we share some of his feelings as recorded in the Book of Psalms which is attributed as being written by him. If David didn't write all the psalms, they are indicative of a sorrowful penitent soul that which he had experienced. Such a person of importance unquestionably had his natural enemies who were anxiously awaiting an opportunity to deliver the fatal blow leading to his downfall and to seize his power. David's humility and penitent spirit most likely appeared as a sign of weakness enticing them to attempt to attack. One of the strategies of basic warfare is to attack the enemy's most vulnerable position after breaking his spirit and morale. In the following psalms we read David as saying "Keep us, O Lord, from the wicked who despoil me, and from my deadly enemies who surround me"(Ps. 7:9), "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise against me. (Ps. 59:1) and " For the enemy has pursued me: he has crushed my life to the ground."(Ps. 143:3)

But within his contrite heart David receives a recovered spirit which enables him to overcome as expressed in Psalm 68:1, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those who hate flee from him! As smoke drives away so drive them away; as wax melts before fire, let the wicked perish before God! But let the righteous be joyful! Let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy."

The struggles he encountered against the forces of evil not only surrounding him but within himself, surely must have eventually brought consolation to a soul reddened with anguish and remorse because of wrong doings, injustice, and unrighteousness such as written in the following psalms. "O give thanks to the Lord for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever! (Ps 106), "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation"; and (Ps.3:1)"Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord."(Ps 119)

The "home sweet home" refuge of David's spiritual battles was the House of the Lord, the Temple of God, and his church where he found comfort, solace and safety.

In conclusion therefore, in remembering the words of Jesus, "for he that is not against you is for you," we ought to realize that our enemies are not only those who are actively against us but the forces that are within ourselves tempting and attempting to lead us astray, but it is in the House of the Lord that we are protected and receive our direction in life to life.

ST. LUKE 12: 13-31

The Gospel reading begins with a man asking Jesus to help him obtain his share of the inheritance from his brother. Their father must have recently passed away and obviously there was a problem concerning the

inheritance. He must have heard of Jesus' fame of helping the needy and the deprived and thought that Jesus would help him also. It is true that Jesus never refused anyone in need, but he refused this man's request mainly because of two reasons. First, the request wasn't one of fulfilling a needed deficiency, but dealt with law and jurisprudence to aid a person's financial position. If Jesus did have this authority, he would have to listen to what the other brother had to say also and find out what his reasons were for depriving his brother and to see whether the complaint was a legitimate request on behalf of the brother who was really being deprived. It was for this reason that Jesus says, "When did you hear that I have taken on the role of judge on this Earth, that you come to me, or when have I begun to busy myself in dividing inheritances?"

The second reason was a moral one. In regard to things pertaining to worldly life, Jesus encouraged His followers to seek a higher moral and spiritual life over that concerned with mundane earthly matters. It wouldn't be in line with His preaching for Him to busy himself with the financial gains of one of two brothers. In a sense, this would be encouraging covetous intentions to which Jesus remarked "be careful and beware of covetousness; for man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

In the second part of the lesson, St. Luke has Jesus telling of a foolish man who was a farmer having much land. And every year the land brought forth a good crop to the point the farmer thought to himself, "What shall I do, because I have nowhere to store my crops?" and finally decided saying to himself, "I know what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones to store all of my grain and goods there, and then say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years, take it easy, eat and be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool, this night your soul will be taken from you, and the things you have prepared, whose they will be?" Jesus adds, "So is he who lays up treasures for himself and not heavenly treasures of spiritual wealth and joy."

Luke continues and gives a long explanation of the thing said by Jesus with the intent of summarizing the Gospel's teaching concerning external benefits and needs. He reminds His disciples that didn't need to worry about the needs of the body and soul; the soul being life and the body being to live. God cares for the crows that don't need to plant, harvest and store. He provides through the grace of His Divine Providence. Of course, He will give more attention toward man whose value is more than that of the birds. Man knows through experience he cannot add anything to himself through anxiety: If he is short he cannot become tall and vice versa; if he has white hair he cannot make it black without the use of some hair dye. In reality, he is that which he is without adding anything phony or false. In knowing this, what audacity does he have to think that he is able to do greater things, i.e. prolongate his life span? The lilies of the fields don't worry about taking protective measures assuring their food and water supply, but still they are more beautiful than Solomon was in all of his wealth and splendor. The lily is a plant and as such is here today and gone tomorrow. In comparison, man, you might say, is a super being endowed with a rational mind and an immortal soul. Therefore, since there is a God who provides, it would be only with wavering faith of an unbeliever to forget about the inner needs to seek food, drink, clothing, etc.

As a close to the lesson, Jesus directs that the first and most important goal to achieve is the heavenly kingdom, being confident that God, by His Divine Providence will not forego our daily other needs.

**“And the Apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our belief,’
and the Lord said, ‘If you had the belief as a grain of mustard seed you might say to this mulberry tree,
be plucked by the rots and be planted in the sea and it will obey you.’”
St. Luke 17:5-6**

Flame-Spark: cooks food, heats homes, ignites the fuel for the cars, airplanes, space capsules. Innumerable conveniences are derived from it, but if it is not controlled, thousands of millions of dollars of destruction and untold hardship can take place.

Atom: It is invisible to the human eye but can be seen through special microscopes. When it is split it brings a new era and spreads a colorful horizon. It can reshape the surface of the Earth and provide new energy for industry. The present life will seem medieval through its use. But if not controlled, we have evidence of its destructive power from World War II and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. Its devastating potentiality leaves the human race in constant fear. Conferences are constantly being held to prevent a foolish act. Annihilation of life on the planet Earth is possible and very real from an invisible matter that remains unseen to the naked eye.

Power of Belief: Altogether invisible. Its power can perform miracles and the greatest miracle is the transformation of life of the human beings living of the planet Earth. Through it heaven can be established of Earth. It is implanted in our souls at the time of our baptism. It is the grace of God which is received in the Church and vitality that is renewed there. Proof of its existence is the many witnesses who by their lives bore testimony of its truth and strength.

therefore choose life

What is life? Jesus is life and to learn about Him, we must turn to the Gospel Books of the New Testament that write about His life. Some of those healed even proved ungrateful. For example, only one of the ten lepers returned to convey his thanks praising God for this, as we read in Luke17:10-19. Jesus tells the multitude that they follow Him not to hear and listen to what He is saying but because of the miracles He did. They even wanted to make Him king but He refused. (Jn.6:15)

Life can be seen in the poor widow who gave of her bread money to the Temple box before entering to pray (LK.12:41-45); or in the publican praying in the Temple (Lk.18:9-14). By this we see that in order to receive life, one must have faith. Jesus required faith. Often Jesus questions those requesting to be healed whether that person has it and upon a response which shows a humble and contrite heart, He would do the healing. The Blind were healed, as recorded in Mathew 9:27-34, who were brought to Him. Jesus could have gone to where they were they sitting but chose rather to have them brought to Him. The woman healed of the issue of blood (Lk. 8:41-44) was commended for doing what she had done, that is, she felt it necessary to touch Jesus to be healed. Jesus didn't reprimand her, saying all of her efforts were not needed but as I have said commended her because her faith caused her to act as she did, that is she felt the need to touch Him. During the baptism ceremony, the priest says to the child through the godfather immediately after the baptism itself has taken place, "let it be unto you according to your faith."

Jesus instructs the crowd and his disciples to listen and to do what the priests and the Pharisees tell them to do, but not to follow their example (Matt. 23:1-3). A clear distinction is seen here between the personal operating the Temple and the functioning the Temple itself. For the believer the important thing is the place that God and the Temple of God where he is worshipped, holds in his heart.

Most people both young and old do not care much for church. There is a very strong indifferent attitude towards it. One of the reasons given is that it is seen as a corrupt institution. It is true that the church is corrupt and needs a thorough purging as in the days of the Pharisees but it will always need to be cleaned of this evil because the personnel operating it are human beings full of human frailties. Nevertheless, this does not take away from the function of the church. It is still the Temple of God where we are instructed to go and do that which those who leading our spiritual life tell us to do.

Church reform does not come about by a shorter badarak, less sung sharagans (hymns) or abbreviated services nor will it come about by having a better grade of clergy. Church reform stems from the change of heart within the individual.

You no longer are children but young adults. The day that your bodies changed, when you were able to conceive or to cause conception of a human life, was the day you ceased being a child. This new role however holds grave responsibilities. It demands maturity which is a quality very seldom found even amongst the elders. For example, how did you come here? Who paid your expenses? Who pays for the things you have? If you paid your own expenses - do you live in your own home or apartment? How many persons are you directly responsible for? Unless you can say that I take care of myself in all things, you cannot really consider yourself to be a mature adult.

Aside from these responsibilities, the higher excellence of a person is seen in his services and dedication to his church, his people and towards others.

I'm in favor of not only letting 18 year olds vote but those who are 16. I would like to have two members from this age group on the Board of Trustees so that through them responsibilities of the operation of the church can be directly passed on those in their age group. Money will not be taken for granted so easily then.

I believe that I'm correct in saying that most of them have weekly allowances. How much? \$1.00 or 2.00, 5.00, 10.00? Whatever the amount is not important. What is important though are pledging to one's church, the Temple of one's God. If not, why not? How important is Jesus to you and the Temple of your God? Or does your faith easily condemn and criticize, ending with the pocketbook.

Therefore, chose life but know the life that you are choosing and try to be mature about it that which will require that you be serious, prudent and resourceful.

Luke 18:1

And He (Jesus) told them a parable, to the effect that they ought to pray and not lose heart Because of a crime and drug problem in a particular city prayer services were held for a week. Integrating the Bible passage carefully, it is understood that a solution to a problem is not to be found on a wonder to time basis, but all is through prayer in order to not to lose heart.

The parable that Jesus told to explain this point was about an 'unjust judge. 'A poor widow came to him one day pleading that he here her case against her adversary. He continually refused but one day exasperated over her persistence he finally relents the outcome of the trial is unknown but the point is that he finally agreed to hear her case. The unjust judge had a change of mind but not necessarily a change of heart.

In a P.B.S. Television documentary on the Aid disease, part of the program was concerning a family of seven children. The parents were of the Mormon faith which is adamantly opposed to homosexuality. One of the sons felt he wasn't being accepted by the father. He wasn't living up to the father's expectations. The son leaves home to study law at the University of California from where he eventually receives his law degree. While he becomes strongly attracted to a group of men and after resisting for a long time accepts their lifestyle-homosexuality. He lives a happy and content life but contracts the aid disease. He could have stayed and would have been taken care of by his friends but chooses instead to return home. He is not refused. The mother comments that he is my son no matter what his circumstances might be and openly accepts him while the father, it seems, does not accept him but does not oppose his staying home. It seems also that occasionally they had conversations.

During the bedridden period the son has much time to reflect and meditate on the happenings of the past. He sees homosexuality and his father's faith in another light and understands them better but does not refute the lifestyle he accepted. He does not regret what he did because it seemed inevitable to him. There is no change of mind or heart but rather a better understanding of the situation. The father also reflects on the past and acknowledges mistakes, and questions some of the more stringent tenets of his religious belief, but in principle he too remains loyal to them. During the final days of the son's life his sisters beseech him to 'let go', that is die. He was very close to one of the sisters who at times spoke on his behalf. The son does not 'let go' and lives on. The mother pays her final visit to him and he lives on. The father finally comes after which in a matter of less than 2 minutes the son 'let's go.' He has received something he yearned for his whole life and that is his father's acceptance. The father makes the funeral arrangements and has the son's friends as pallbearers. A change was inserted in the prayer and read that he died from Aids. In principle the father and son were diametrically opposed to each other but during the time of illness they had time to reflect and meditate thus gaining a better understanding of each other. There was not a change of mind but a change of heart when the father accepted his son as a son.

Lent is a time of prayer, meditation and reflection. Our prayer is the peace and the changing of heart and mind of those bent on drugs and crime. May the Lord help them to realize the mistakes of their lifestyle and overcome it by His mercy. But we must not lose heart. In rejecting them as a human being, we reject ourselves for they are a part of us. And Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought to pray and not lose heart. (Luke 18:1)

"He came to his own home and his own people received him not"

John 1:11

With the season of Advent we hear the heralding of and await with anticipation the joyous news of the arrival of the Son of God. We read though in Holy Script that, "He (the Son of God) came to His own home and his own people received him not." How is that God's own people could have the arrogance of not receiving him?

God created the angels and man. Heaven was the abode for the angels and the earth for man. Dissatisfied with the conditions in heaven and their station in life some of the angels rallied around their ringleader, Satan, and began an open rebellion, but lost their battle. For this, they were evicted, from their quarters and expelled from God's kingdom. Like roving bands of bandits, these homeless vagabonds began wandering,

seeking trouble to satisfy their adventurous spirits. They were invisible trouble makers. There was no need for food or clothing or even shelter but yet they lived a lonely and despondent life because they were as homeless orphans. They had no one to whom they belonged. They came to Earth tempting man and Satan was successful in corrupting man. For his disobedience, man too was expelled from his home, Paradise, the heaven on earth.

When the Son of God therefore came "to his own home" that which He had created, it is little wonder that He was ill-received because His house was filled with rebellious children. But to those "who received Him" He gave power to become children of God.

By this we understand that our home life will be a happy and secure one when we apply the energies of our enterprising talents toward serving the purpose of promoting God's noble cause and that we should be content with that and our station in life. (Luke 18:1)

God is Spirit (John 4:24)

God is a spiritual being that creates material things out of nothing. He is unique in this manner because all beings on Earth or in Heaven have to be given in order to do or to make. Like a child in a playpen that plays with toys given to it by the parent, all beings, celestial and earthly, occupy themselves with that which God has given them. What is produced by earthly beings is called culture. Culture in human terms is the expression of the heart, mind and soul of intelligible animals. God has a heart, mind and soul and creation is His culture. The highest and noblest expression of that creative act or culture, even in heaven, is the creation of members of the human race. Some cultures fade into the pages of history. Some prevail such as Chinese, Egyptian, and Greek & Armenian. Culture constantly has to evolve for it to persist. God's culture, His creation is constantly evolving. It never remains the same. It changes in color, shape, designs, & melodies as part of a grand architectural plan. Some aspects seem to stay the same, yet they are changing and evolving to another level but at a slow pace, almost impossible to perceive. So too, the human race is the same in many respects with these earliest of humans living in caves, yet they are always changing in the drama of human history.

Three components of human society are families, churches and schools. There are other institutions such a government and business but the three main pillars to maintain a healthy and viable society are the three above mentioned. The main pillar, though, which all others serve, is the family. The religious and educational systems serve and are the mainstay of the family and home life. The church endeavors to create an atmosphere whereby the house becomes more than a building to house members of a particular family and that it be a home where love, understanding and mutual respect prevail. This is the intent of the church's sacraments and services. A house becomes a home for all when members of a family are 'at home with the Lord in His home, the Church.'

The Church also serves as a school where the science of God is learned and knowledge about Him is gained. The ways of the world and that pertaining to it are learned through the regular educational systems and institutions of higher learning. There the potentiality of the mind is developed in a process of absorbing information. The teachings of the church as a school gives a broader perspective, an all-encompassing view as to how various sciences, subjects and disciplines are integrated and interrelated as part of a plan designed by God and the workings of a Supreme Being.

Why do we need knowledge? What is it suppose to accomplish? The more one knows the less one is dependent on another because one is able to do by and for oneself. It allows a person to become free and independent of others. If a person is knowledgeable in auto mechanics and has the time that person can repair his /her own car, or, know that what is being done to it, is correct or not. Can a person tell the difference between a handmade and machine-made oriental rug? How can one distinguish a diamond and pearl from a fake? Knowledge of a language gives one freedom to mingle and associate with the people of that land.

Knowledge is information. Presently we live in the Information Age. There is so much information that it is overwhelming. It enslaves instead of getting one free. The Knowledge of God not only teaches about God but also exposes the fallacy surrounding the knowledge of the world and its inherent weaknesses. It develops the mind of the heart so to stabilize a person. One seeks, indeed, yearns for stability in an unstable world, especially within one's heart. This permits a person to stand on one's own two feet morally and spiritually speaking. A bedridden person may be very stable, having strong spiritual legs whereas a physically healthy person can be spiritually bedridden.

Ultimately though, the intent of the knowledge of God is to awaken an appetite to learn but to have the information integrated so not to overwhelm and enslave but to serve a noble purpose for the good of all. In this way one understands it to serve a very practical and useful purpose being very pragmatic to meet the needs a person's present needs as well as guiding one to the destination of eternity in future life.

John 5:I-8

There are two parts to this story; the part relating of the happenings before the man's healing and then that which took place after the healing. We see God's hand reaching to him through Christ, although others pay little heed to him. There are many less fortunate people in the world who live in years passed and also today deprived of the direct assistance enjoyed by others. It isn't because God helps some and not others. His Blessing falls equally upon all but He is working through us whom He wants to because Christ-like in order to reach out to others and many times because of our shortcomings this is cut short.

The man, who was healed, knowingly or unknowingly brought greater hardships upon Christ in His confrontation with the Jewish leaders by informing them of His healing him because the Jews ultimately resolved to kill Jesus because of this. Jesus ultimately received the death sentence in return for doing good, but He isn't questioning the consequential happenings because of this, the ifs, ands, or buts. He is simply fulfilling a need.

If by chance we might be of charitable nature in helping other, we may discover that the very same person we rendered assistance, knowingly or unknowingly, may hurt us causing our spirits, at times, to become less enthusiastic to do good again. We hesitate and question whether there is going to be similar repercussions. The once outstretched arm may be shortened for self-protections sake. Similar to the young lad who did everything expected of him but found it impossible to dispose of all his goods to follow Christ and went away saddened, so too the precautionary measures that arise within us are deemed unjustifiable before God. We will still have to accept it as part of our shortcomings and not blame the other person for we have not become that full image of a sacrificing Christ who reaches out to all with absolutely no thought for Himself. We become in a sense like those rushing to the pool to be healed, thinking only of our own selves and letting others to find their own way. It is extremely difficult to help for fear that at times that the

big decision may jeopardize our own lives for the sake of others as Christ did but we should accept it as seen a fault in ourselves and not in others. (I Cor. 1:8-11) By the living example of the great Apostle (St. Paul) and the many other Saints, we too can daily renew our strength in spirit to battle the storms of life no matter what forms they may take, but putting our faith in God Who raises the dead and by His grace, keeping our conversation in this work in simplicity and Godly sincerity.

John 6:16-21

The sun had begun to set along the seashore where Jesus was teaching the multitude in parables as to what the kingdom of heaven was like when He turned toward His disciple saying, "that us pass to the other side." After they had sent the people way, they set out in their boats. When darkness as set in and they had gone quite a distance from shore, of great wind storm arose. The waves began to beat heavily against their boat filling it with water. Jesus was asleep at that time in the hinder part of the boat when His disciples became concerned with the situation they found themselves and alarmed over their Master being asleep while they were on the verge of sinking. They came to him saying, " Master, don't you care that we perish?" Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, " peace, be still" and the wind ceased and there was a great calm. Then turning to His disciples He said "Why are you so fearful? Why is it that you do not have faith?" And they, the disciples, became exceedingly afraid and began to say to one another what manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

We too may be tempted to question the faith of the disciples. Didn't they see the healings that their Master had performed? They had been eye-witnesses and yet now they were filled with fear because their very lives were in danger. It would be easy for us here in the 21st century to look back and pass a judgment on an event from which we find ourselves totally detached, but let us for a moment put ourselves in the place of the disciples. Would we have been without fear? Would we have remained steadfast in our faith if we found ourselves in the similar predicament? Some would be honest with themselves and with frankly admit that they would have most likely had faltered. Being weakened the spirit they too would have been filled with doubt as to the disciples had been, but there are those who see the beam in their brother's eye but who fail to correct the beam that rules from their own and there are those who find it difficult to reflected knowledge their own true weaknesses and human frailty. They consider it to be a defeat rather than a gain in making such an admission.

The trials of life are many. We not only are encountering continuously those physical storms of which we read so much about and that are the cause of so many human disasters and hardships, but we also are confronted with a perpetual in a storm we might say, a spiritual storm. A personal struggle takes place in the hearts and minds of man. Is man able to cope with the storms? Is he able to patrol his own being and his own destiny? Life is very complex and in its entirety incomprehensible to the human mind. Unless man puts his trust in his Creator he is likely to be like a man who built his home on sand that under the slightest trial is doomed to be destroyed. Christ asks for a complete trust and a total belief in Him. When we live with that belief and trust that He cares for us under all circumstances and situations and renders His care to us through his mystical body, the Holy Church, the light of life will burn more fervently within us bringing a sense of beauty into our lives and making our worries and cares less burdensome.

Let us listen to the words of the Apostle Paul writing of the tribulations that he had encountered while he was in Asia in his Second Letter to the Corinthians(II Cor. 1:8-11)..." For we would not, my brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength

in so much that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead and who delivered us from so great a death and continues to deliver in Whom we trust that will yet deliver us." He continues saying "for our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in this world and more abundantly toward you."

By the living example of the great Apostle and the many other Saints, we too can daily renew our strength in spirit to battle the storms of life no matter what forms they may take but putting our faith and trust in God who raises the dead and by His grace, keeping our conversation in our work in simplicity and Godly sincerity

Dedication of a Church Educational Building

John 7:14-18

The building of a church's Educational Building required many hours of dedicated work and personal sacrifice to make it a reality. Much has been accomplished but still more has to be done. The primary purpose of this beautiful structure is to serve for our children to learn about the teachings of Christ is believed and handed down by our Armenian ancestors. As concerned parents we want their children to be good. We would like to have our children to be intelligent, healthy and successful. Successful, though, not so much is being a popular person but be respected in his/her chosen career or profession; be it the carpenter, salesperson, clerk, labor of any kind, etc. In bringing respect to themselves they bring that also to all of us. All of this begins in being good and seeking to that which is considered to be good.

The church teaches us that the source of all that is good comes from God; and that it is available to those who learn to respect that which is considered to be holy and sacred. This is what we want our children to learn. The lessons, pictures and diagrams are all designed with this purpose in mind. Respect that begins here carries over into our homes where a respect in general and love shared by members of the family. God is glorified in this way and we all share in that glory

TRUSTWORTHINESS

John 10:1-10

In describing the bond between him and his followers, Jesus shows the relationship that exists between a shepherd and his flock. In this particular description we find that sheep gathered and their pens and at the entrance a guard is stationed, keeping watch. He opens the door for the shepherd letting him in because he recognizes him as being 'the good Shepherd.' When the shepherd calls out the sheep follow him because they have learned through past experience to trust that voice. It has also brought good things to them. A thief will enter by another way because the guard does not know him nor does he trust him. The shepherd leads them and they heed to the instructions given by the sound of his voice rest of voice of a stranger will alert them to be cautious.

Trustworthiness is a very important word in the vocabulary of the English language and more so within our lives.

Whom do we trust? More correct will be to ask, whom have we learned to trust? Secondly but equally important is the question, who trusts us? But again we must add asking, whose trust have we earned?

One must work in order to earn a person's trust. The bonds of trust are created by sincerity and honesty which bring about respect and a good name and reputation. Nothing but goodness can result from this type of relationship. Incidents may occur cautioning want to be careful but if trust is established over years of pleasant experience, one is apt to 'forgive and forget' so to speak.

For years the Prophet-King David led a lost life until the time he began to turn from heeding the voice of his own mind and began to open his ears to the voice of the Lord. With this came a transformation in his life. One of the marvelous fruits of this happening is the beautiful and awe inspiring 23rd Psalm...

The Bible and the Church teaches us to learn to listen to the voice of the Lord and to heed to his instructions. In putting our trust in it we will experience like David

Mary Magdalene, the mother James and Salome arose at the dawn of a new day and came to Jesus sepulcher and were wondering as to who would rollaway the grave stone. When they arrived there they saw a young men in white garments who told him not to be afraid. I know you are seeking Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. He is not here. He is risen.

John 11

This act in history is believed by us of the Christian faith as an act of God for the salvation of all mankind but doubted by many because of it is thought to be unreasonable and contrary to the law of reason and that seen in nature. This is not my intention to try approved by a reasonable deductions through the miracle of Christ to make this more understandable than as being acceptable in representing the truth but that offer this story in the gospel according to St. Mark as to the insight of God's ministry that keeps unfolding in a mysterious way and headed under the title of the "Economies of God's Theology." It concerns the resurrection of the dead and that of his friend, Lazarus. Concerning the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus was about a two days journey to Bethany which is not far from Jerusalem when a messenger came telling him that his friend Lazarus is sick. Jesus loved Lazarus and the sisters Martha and Mary but instead of leaving He stays for two days and then tells His disciples that Lazarus is asleep. The disciples thinking that Jesus was talking about the sleep we have at night, that it was good that Lazarus sleeps which is a sign for him to heal. But Jesus was referring to death as asleep and that He was going to awaken him from the dead. The disciples also know that the Pharisees had to kill Jesus and were afraid to go, but when they saw that Jesus was determined to go, the disciple Thomas said to the others," that is go, that we may die with Him." As they neared Bethany, Martha came to greet Him and tells Him," Lord, if you had been here my brother would had not died, but I know whatever you will ask God, God will granted to you. Jesus tells her that her brother shall rise again. Martha answers," I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection and the last days." The Jews believed in the resurrection after death to which Jesus replies to her," I am the resurrection of the life and those who believe in me though were dead, shall live." Lazarus had died Directing his question to Martha He asks," Do you believe this?" To which she replies," I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God that will come into the world" which is understood to mean the expected Messiah. Martha returns home and tells Mary that "the Master wishes to see you." Those would come consoling the two sisters thought that when was leaving the house that she was going to her brother's grave and so they went with her, but found themselves before Christ. Mary tells Jesus that if He would have come her brother would still be alive. And when Jesus saw her and those around her weeping, he was moved in the spirit and wept. Those would come with Mary were surprised because they never saw weep and said," look how he loved him." Jesus went to Lazarus' grave and had the stone removed that was sealing the grave. Martha reminded Him that "His body smells by now." Because it was four day since Lazarus had died. Jesus tells

her, "Didn't I say that if you believe you would see the glory of God?" They removed the stone and Jesus lifted up his eyes and giving thanks to God the Father cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" And he who was buried for four days rose from his grave bound in burial clothes. Jesus has the clothes removed and Lazarus set free. Many of the Jews who previously didn't believe in Him now believed but there were still others who were still not convinced and went and informed the Pharisees.

The call to Lazarus to "come forth" is the call to mankind to shed its former self and to put on a new garment of salvation. It is a call to "a new life", a "life of light" resplendent with the colors of spiritual grace. Christ's earthly ministry was neither to force nor one of enforcement to be accepted but a living example beckoning and persuading man to respond. It is an invitation to a new plane where there is broader horizons and where we recognize our bondage in sin and freedom in Christ. Lazarus believed, which is understood in Christ's weeping for him because of his death for which he was made a life and granted a new life. The Easter message therefore is a new life in the resurrection of Christ, a virtuous one where hope, charity and especially love in brotherhood changing the unreasonable to be reasonable, confusing to be understanding, leading one from the grave and the way of darkness to the sun of righteousness by being partakers in His suffering and crucifixion to the benefit by His All Holy Resurrection dispelling the fear as pronounced by the angel saying, "Be not afraid" to which a new strength, power and life is instilled.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth and the light ..."

John 14:06

In the season of Advent we journey to Bethlehem to pay homage and worship the Christ child. Some make the pilgrimage in person like the Wisemen, while many go to their Houses of Worship to greet the "Good News" of the arrival of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. All who journey make a wonderful discovery once they arrive and that is the fulfillment of their expectations: the arrival to mankind of "the truth. Jesus said to Pontius Pilate that "I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is to the truth hears my voice", to which Pilate answered "what is truth?" Jesus believed in himself as being "the truth" because of his faith in God the Father. It was a firm conviction because of the personal relationship He had with God the Father to the very end. He believed and was convinced that He as "the truth" was the highest and noblest expectation of "truth" above all other "truths". Truth is a personal matter that each individual arrives at. The great discovery of the truth one finds is in the Christ Child which brings one to the point of worship of Him is the justice that a person discovers in His person that is not found anywhere else. In this justice, one always receives more than one gives, tenfold, hundredfold, a thousand fold, which is the reason why He is called the King of righteousness. He is "the truth" because of the justice rendered through His righteousness.

Because of this there is law and order, which gives peace, a deep inner satisfaction and contentment. All rejoice upon making this discovery even all of heaven. It is something that brings all mankind together and joins heaven and Earth.

Problems arise shortly thereafter for Satan never rests in his effort to turn those of the human race away from "the truth". Those problems arise because of the confusion that takes place when each attempts to explain what the discovery is all about. Although there may be a similarity among explanations, points on which persons have in common, but because of the personal characteristics of "truth" there is a difference. If there is tolerance of the differences, respect towards another opinion, with mutual respect prevailing, the problem is kept in a controlled situation. But more often than not, an individual or a group persuaded to a

basic truth or philosophy, will insist that it be accepted by all and by various means begin to impose their will upon others. This causes grave problems because it is unjust in that it deprives another of his/her rights. In this prescribed "law and order", by the imposition of one's will over another, peace is lost because of the loss of mutual respect. How can one honor another's belief in the truth when one's own persuasion is not honored in the same respect? In so doing, that is not respecting another person's right to the truth, one actually is working against one's one self-interest.

Jesus never imposed His will upon others. He always used the means of friendly persuasion. He drew people to Him by His miracles and His wonderful stories and sayings, and the manner He conducted Himself and His life. If one was sincerely seeking "the truth", that person would ultimately find it in the person of Jesus as did the Wisemen from the East. The Wisemen of today's society are those who seek not the wisdom as offered by the world but that offered by God through the person of Jesus Christ.

As members of the same faith, we have much in common especially in regard to basic beliefs over those of other faiths and denominations despite, the differences held concerning "the truth". The personal differences are overcome by the prevailing atmosphere of mutual respect. In being tolerant to one's fellow brother's and sister's belief in "the truth" teaches one to be tolerant with the differences of others belonging to other faiths. Tolerance has to be practiced at home for it to be effectively promulgated on a universal scope. That is, how can one strive to be bringing peace to others when one cannot bring it to one's own home?

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men".

Concerning a Newly Built Educational Building Next to the Church

"About the middle of the feast Jesus went up to the Temple and taught. The Jews marveled at it, saying "How is it that this man learning, when He has never studied?" So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me; if any man's will is to do His will, he shall know whether the teachings is from God or whether I am speaking on My own authority. He who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood." (Jn 7:14-18)

The primary purpose of this beautiful structure is to serve for our children to learn the teachings of Christ as handed down by our Armenian ancestors. As concerned parents we want our children to be good. We would like to have them be intelligent, healthy and successful. Successful, though, not so much as being a popular person but respected in his/her chosen career or profession whether it is as a carpenter, salesperson, clerk, laborer, etc. In bringing respect to themselves, they bring happiness to those of us close to them.

All of this begins in being good and seeking to do the good.

The church teaches us that the source of all that is good is from God and that it is available to those who learn to respect that which is considered to be holy and sacred. That is what we want our children to learn. The lessons, pictures and diagrams are all designed with this purpose in mind. Respect that begins here carries over into our homes where respect and a genuine love are shared by members of the family. God is glorified in this way and we share in the glory

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But Counselor, the Holy Spirit Whom the Father will send in my name. He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

– John 14:25-26

We are celebrating the arrival of the Holy Spirit of God. This like Jesus' resurrection and ascension to the Father, is beyond our power of reason and because of that it causes a struggle in our minds which in turn can disturb our souls. The struggle is neither new nor unusual. From the earliest of times there has always been a struggle between God and people and more so between God and His people. It can be compared somewhat to family quarrel. At times there is harmony and closeness among members of the family but more often there are problems and sometimes deep seeded problems. Misunderstanding prevails. But it must be remembered that nevertheless the greatest unit in society is the family.

Churches are a congregation of family units. Our church is comprised of family units and as such is no exception in this struggle with God. We ask ourselves as to whether we are meeting God's standards concerning the educational program. Education is an ongoing process. We never stop learning and the knowledge of God for us is imperative and ongoing. Sadly there's a reflection of the general indifferent attitude toward education whether it be among the Armenians or American communities

Divine Providence – Pentecost

"These things I have spoken to, while I am still with you. But Counselor, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

(John 14:25, 26)

Before the fall of man from God's grace, before Adam sinned, God was preparing to save him. Being created good, how was it that man became evil? Is it God's fault or man's?

To gain some insight into this highly complicated theological matter, there is once again seek the answer in the family unit and behavioral pattern of concerned parents especially that of the mother.

God's life in the sense is like that of a mother: being both instantaneous and spontaneous by nature; a love that knows no restrictions but is restrained by laws. Similarly, God's love finds its restriction imposed by the law of man's will

Concerned parents become apprehensive when they see the child not heeding to their advice but following a course that they know is dangerous; listening and being swayed by others. The parent becomes overly concerned and worrisome, when they realize that they have no control. No matter what they say, a definite course that they know is dangerous; by listening and being swayed by others in whom they have put their trust but whose interest lies only in themselves, as set in. No matter what they say, a definite course has been determined by the will of the child. They can see clearly the dangers I had something that the child is unaware of. They prepare themselves and condition themselves, so to speak, to receive the worse whenever it may happen and in a general sense planning ahead beyond that point.

So too with the fall of man, God foresaw it by understanding the workings of man's mind. He saw that man had determined a certain course which is going to be totally detrimental to his own well-being. So God prepared to save him even before it happened. This is what is called Divine Providence.

As a child is free to choose to let itself be persuaded by others and to do anything contrary to their decision, is often hopeless, so too man was and is free to choose because God created him that way. Sometimes we think we can see clearly that which lies ahead, but we learn, sometimes too late, that which we expected not to happen. We believe God knows therefore common sense should tell us to seek out the answers under His guidance, in the hope that we either are steered clear the danger or seen safely through it.

Divine Providence then is God's forcing a happening and acting before and to help like that of a parent seeing the child walking in a crooked path, preparing themselves ahead of time to help them afterward.

“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”

John 19:19

Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews is a writing that Pontius Pilate put on the cross of Jesus. After washing the feet of the Apostles at the Last Supper in the upper room, Jesus and His Apostles went to Gethsemane, a garden which Judas Iscariot, the Apostle who betrayed Jesus knew well. When he brought the soldiers there and the mob to arrest Jesus, Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, was one of those who came to arrest Jesus. Jesus healed Malchus saying, "Shall I not drink of the cup that my Father had given me?" They bound Jesus and took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest, who question Jesus and where witnesses gave contradictory testimonies. Jesus is then taken to the Hall of Judgement where Pontius Pilate continued the inquiry questioning as to the basis of the accusations. It is there that Peter denied being a member of Jesus's party, a denial that Jesus had foretold would happen. When Pilate found no wrong in the doings of Jesus from all of the accusations, he told the crowd to go and "Judge him according to your law", that is the religious code of law that the Jews lived under. Urged by the leading figures of the religious institution, the crowd was incited to call for the death sentence. But it was unlawful for them to put someone to death on the Eve of the Passover.

Pilate asks Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus then asks Pilate, "Do you ask this question or do others?" To which Pilate's reply was, "Am I a Jew?" Jesus countered with the statement that, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it was my servants would fight to set me free." Jesus added, "For this reason (being King of the Jews) I was born to witness to the truth, for everyone that hears the truth hears my voice." Pilate found no fault in the answer and asked the crowd if they wanted for him to release, the King of the Jews, referring to Jesus, which was a custom at the days of the Passover to release a convicted criminal. Their reply was, "Not Jesus but Barabbas who was a robber." Pilate proceeds to have Jesus scourged, a crown of thorns placed on his head, and dressed in a purple robe signifying royalty and then brought him before the crowd saying, "I find no fault in him." But the crowd incited by the chief priests cried out, "Crucify Him" continuing to cried out "We have a law, and it is by that law he ought to die because he made himself God." Pilate delivers Jesus over to them and washed his hands before the crowd saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this Just Man." To which the crowd replied, "Let his blood be on us and our children." Jesus was then led to his crucifixion, bearing His cross to Golgotha, meaning 'place of the skull' where Pilate had written "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" and placed it on his cross. The soldiers on guard divided his garments amongst themselves while His mother and beloved disciple stood nearby with some of the faithful with Him within from Galilee. Jesus thirsted whereupon one of the soldiers on guard, took a sponge soaked in vinegar and put it in his mouth, after which he 'gave up' His soul. According to Hebraic law, bodies should not remain on the cross during the Sabbath. Permission was received from Pilate to have the bodies brought down before which, in accordance to Roman law, the legs of the crucified were broken if they were still living. But when they saw that Jesus had already died, they pierced His side

with the spear upon which blood and water came forth. Joseph Arimathea received permission from Pilate to bury Jesus and proceeded to have him buried with help from Nicodemus.

This brings to mind the story of a missionary worker in Africa about a hen who gave her life to save her chicks. There are times that the heat become so intense that fires flare up in places where there is a lot of dry grass. After such a fire a person doing missionary work there walked through such an area after a fire. He accidentally kicked a can whereupon little chicks began to run out of it. Upon examining the can, he found a hen inside the can which died from the heat of the fire. The hen obviously gave her life to save her chicks which he took them refuge under her protected wings during the fire. Likewise we take refuge under the shadow of the Holy Cross.

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than men and weakness of God is stronger than men."

I Corinth. I:25

God's wisdom is foolishness to man and man's wisdom is foolishness to God. What is God's Wisdom?

It is manifested in the Cross of Jesus which is a despicable object in the eyes of man for what man would want to have a son only to have him be put on the cross to hang until death in the prime of his life. But this was God's plan from the beginning until now so that we may be saved. This act began a whole new religious movement which was entrusted to the hands of a few men who by worldly standards did not seem very intelligent. These groups of uneducated and unsophisticated men were from the common ordinary class of the society of that day. The faith given to them, in turn, was entrusted to their selected successors and continued in this manner until today out of which these humble beginnings arose the mighty Christian Church. If it is not "the most powerful" it is at least among one of the most influential institutions of our present age. Ironically, herein lays its greatest weakness which is also its greatest enemy and its sheer nonsense and hypocrisy for it to try and retain its image of greatness in society.

The Armenian Church never was a powerful institution because it has spent its physical and spiritual resource living in the Holy Sacrifice serving its people. Monotonous and boring in the eyes of many, but yet it is a life-giving and life-saving institution. It is no wonder that the church has never become successful in worldly terms. Who wants to listen or more so, would want to do where much is demanded and little given is in return concerning human pleasures. The return of one, though, brings rejoicing in heaven. It is a tremendous accomplishment.

In the Gospel reading in Matthew 18:12-14) Jesus says, "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the 99 that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones (children) shall perish."

Let us for a moment put ourselves in the place of this man who has 100 sheep. Would we leave the 99 on the hillsides where they would be vulnerable to the attacks of wild animals and beasts and also thieves or would we remain with them until we saw that they were safely returned to their places and then seek the lost one. Would we want to jeopardize our mainstay to search for one? Of course not, that's foolish, we say. But this is God's wisdom in seeking his lost children on the face of this earth for whom He gave His son but how many are desirous of returning? one in a hundred? one in a thousand? one in a million? Jesus says, "When I return am I going to find anyone with faith?" If Jesus returns this moment with the population

being in the billions, Jesus questions whether He is to find faith? What can this person look forward to on His return? An easier life style for all? Or as Dale Carnegie would say "How to win friends and influence people?" No, to the contrary, he can expect more demands of physical energies and financial resources as Jesus willingly accepted the burden of the cross. He can expect a loss of a great many of his so-called friends who will one by one begin to cool off. But in his estimation, his gains far outweigh his losses which only he realizes it because only he is experiencing it. Foolish, weak, maybe so but by the same token in exchangeable in value.

"Do you know that it in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you might obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable crown. Well, I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after perishing to others I myself should be disqualified."

1Corinthian 9: 24-27

When in Greece the Apostle Paul spoke about the new religion in a language that the people could understand. While in Athens he talked philosophy and philosophers, in Corinth where good athletes rose in Olympic Games, he used terms familiar to sports -- like a boxer "I don't waste my punches in boxing"

As other athletes a boxer submits to strict discipline in training to build up his strength to have power to strike a winning blow or to weaken his opponent but also strength to take his opponents blows To wage an effective fight, he sees that he does not waste punches and will form a personal style, one in which he finds his strength.

Human nature is such that it sides with the underdog because the contest between the two is a dramatization each individual is waging in his dual with life. There is a force that takes an all shapes and form visibly and invisible, known and known, that is in opposition to us. Conditioning is required for survival. God has given us through grace enough strength to endure which is necessary to defend ourselves to endure that is defend ourselves. In order to win, however, control of the game is necessary and this means fighting back; not swinging our arms aimlessly hoping luck will be with us but using our energies effectively, improving, renewing, making life better.

When the Apostles approved of Paul speaking to the gentiles they advised that he "not forget the poor which he was glad to do" (Gal 2: 10)

In our own zeal to win we must be careful to see that not only do we prevail, but improve life for others less fortunate such as the poor who take a devastating blow every day. With help they can withstand and hopefully reach a point where they can not only care for themselves but help others in return. In this way we all become winners are we will all end up being losers.

"He who prophecies is greater than he who speaks in tongue unless someone interprets so that the church may be edified"

I Corinthians 14:5

When someone speaks in tongues it is difficult to understand him because he is speaking of a subject and in a way many are not familiar and unless what he says is very simple and clear, his message most likely will be misunderstood. He might know and benefit from his wisdom but he will encounter difficulty in having

the message communicated to others so that they may share in his talent. Prophesying is conveying in a clear and simple all manner a truth from which all will be able to benefit because it is easily understood.

Once in a conversation, the person with whom I was speaking expressed a dismay with the effectiveness of the church general in bringing Jesus' love and peace into the world and also with what seemed to be artificial and superficial faith of those who were regarded as believers. At one time I shared this person's opinion to a certain extent until a thought came to my mind which was "What would happen ... if there were no churches in the world? By this, I mean not only Christian churches but also Jewish synagogues, Mohamedan Mosques, Hindu Temples, etc. If churches are artificial in an essence and hold no truth in them, then we should rid ourselves of all religious institutions and places of worship. But what would life be like? Man, who is an intelligent animal, would be living without a conscience and his life like that of the animals but on a more sophisticated level. He would constantly be striving to conquer and rule to satisfy his insatiable ego without thought for his fellow man's well-being.

If the world is in a terrible condition now, think what it would be liken if we remove all that which is symbolic of man' humane conscience giving to man a free license to follow the desires of his animal instincts and mechanical intuitions. In removing the church, we not only rid of all that is bad with it, but worse of al, that which is good

The church then, is an external expression of our internal unseen conscience or the awareness of the presence of God in our midst. We become disillusioned partly because of the ineffectiveness of performance. This is constantly being broadcasted to us through the news media that tell us of all the woes in the world. Newsworthy material is basically a dramatic expose' of the evil and their various forms in the world. Accidents, tragedies, wars, inhuman and immoral acts and events attract attention enabling news people to product.

The primary purpose of the church is not to make an expose' of mankind and his depravities but to work in a quiet, humble way in revealing God's will to man for man's betterment, his salvation so that he will not be led by the inclinations of his nature but by the conscious awareness of the presence of God that fills the void of an empty life giving a true meaning to it.

For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation"

"II Corinthians 7:1

The people of Israel are allowed to return to the Promised Land by the mercy of God. They brought with them those who held them captive to be their servants and handmaiden ruling those who once oppressed them. It was a time when they could rest from their sorrows and fears and hardship of bondage. They believed that the Lord had broken the yoke of the wicked and the rulers and by His anger toppled kingdoms with heavy blows unmercifully. All the lands rested in hope and sang forth songs of joy instead of sorrow.

Hell is moved at the coming of the oppressor and the thieves of the earth who were gathered there and dethroned kings of nations rose saying, "Have you been caught and counted as one of us? Your glory has fallen into hell and many of your joys. You are covered with by worms and maggots." This is a dramatic portrayal depicting the relief and comfort of an oppressed nation and the judgement of the wicked ruler and also a moral encouragement through a physical relief by the mercy of God.

In the epistle lesson we hear of St. Paul's arrival in Macedonia, tired, weary and run down, fighting external attacks and inwardly in constant fear. He is overjoyed when Titus brings word that the Corinthians

were in earnest desire, mourning and in fervent mind toward him. In retrospect it must be pointed out that St. Paul had once gone to Corinth and had quite a successful mission there. He had a strong following. After he left, he had heard of how they had returned to the sinful ways and wrote a harsh letter reprimanding them and now Titus had just brought the reply of their sorrow and repentance in which we have the words of the great Apostle saying “godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” in persuading them to change their sinful lives. This time we have an individual who is the recipient of joyous news. Unlike the Old Testament lesson, he is not relieved from physical distress because we have no information as to whether his condition is altered or not but rather we read that he receives an inner spiritual consolation in knowing the return of his followers to the true way of life.

In both the Old Testament lesson and the epistle we have a turn of event, a moment of joy and relief. In the Old Testament the spreading of happiness on Earth after the death and descent into hell of the oppressor and in the epistle the comfort of S. Paul in hearing the return of the Corinthians to the ways of what was taught to them.

In the Gospel lesson we have the healing of a deaf mute. (Mk. 7:31-37) Jesus took him to one side away from the crowd and poked his finger into his ear and spit into it and while holding the mute's tongue looked up to heaven saying "Yeppata" which means 'be opened' and he was healed at that very same moment. Jesus charges everyone that was present not to tell anyone but they talked about it all the more. Comfort and a sudden unexpected astonishment comes at various times and places when God so wills it to happen.

The theme prevailing is an unfathomable depth of God's merciful love comforting the faithful both from physical and spiritual distress whether it be a nation or an individual. Also it reveals the strong relationship and affect they have upon each other be it spiritual and physical: comfort to those who seek His ever present love which is awaiting those who seek His ever present merciful love which is awaiting those who have repented; or that words of faith as the Corinthians had in being sorrowful and repented or that conviction of the Israelites in the mercy of God in liberating them from their suffering, or the opening of a whole new life with its various dimensions, broadening the horizon and inward flight upward as the deaf mute must have experienced in that moment of healing. These are not records of past events but a standard set before us; a certain cure for a world that is caught up in knots, living in a constant fear and periods of anxiety and tension.

The Armenian Church has for centuries forsook worldly comforts in order to attain the fruits of divine consolation. It has been stubborn but not for stubbornness's sake but rather for knowledge, being convinced that what it stood for was basically the true way. Many of us are stubborn but our stubbornness has to do with worldly matters and concerns rather than religious truths. If we are going to be true to our calling as Christians of the Armenian faith and progress in a positive manner, we will have to examine ourselves and our attitudes in regard to our beliefs and behaviors in an honest and truthful manner to see what God wants us to do in accordance with His divine revelation in Jesus Christ as forth by Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the Church.

**"We are glad when we are weak but you are strong.
And so we also pray that you will become perfect."**

II Corinthians 13:9

This statement may seem strange because in reality it is contrary to our human nature. No one, even animals, do not want to be weak. The desire is to be strong, powerful, and full of strength and energy. We like to act from the position of strength, not weakness. There are many good people in this world that have good intentions. The general rule that prevails is that "might is right"; power, influence, spheres of influence, territory and capital. When charity is shown it is to demonstrate the goodness of an individual or

corporation because everyone wants to look good from a position of strength. It would be strange to hear "we are glad to be weak so you may be strong."

St. Paul prays for the Corinthians to be perfect. Only God is perfect and where God is and lives is heaven. Heaven is a place where everyone willingly, in a natural way, gives of themselves for others, beginning with God. There is no weakness in heaven. It is a place where humility and meekness rule which in essence are not weaknesses but strengths. In the Sermon on the Mount, in one of the Beatitudes, which in Armenian is called major blessings (yeranoutiun), is...."the meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5). This is not a manifestation of weakness but strength, power and unbound energy. It can be said that not only will the meek inherit the earth but they shall inherit heaven. It is not "might is right" but meek is right. What is meekness? It is the lowering of oneself to those that are in need...the weak and lowly, deprived and sick, homeless and helpless....as God lowered Himself in the person of Jesus, to help us in the family of man, who are constantly plagued with weakness of various kinds. We are always in a crisis situation. Therefore it is a lowering or becoming weak and using one's resources such as strength, energy, talents and wealth....to aid the less fortunate, with the hope that in their recovery and becoming strong they in turn may do the same....become meek and use their resources for the benefit of others.

“For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation”

II Corinthians 7:1

The people of Israel are allowed to return to the Promised Land by the mercy of God. They brought with them those who held them captive to be their servants and handmaidens ruling those who once oppressed them. It was a time when they could rest from their sorrows and fears and hardship of bondage. They believed that the Lord had broken the yoke of the wicked and the rulers and by His anger toppled kingdoms with heavy blows unmercifully. All the lands rested in hope and sang forth songs of joy instead of sorrow.

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Letter of St. Paul to Timothy
4:11-5:24

Timothy was a young man and a pupil of St. Paus. He must have felt certain of himself when Paul was near, but there came a time, when Paul felt he could be on his own so he entrusted a community of believers to him to continue the faith. Being full of youthful exuberance, Timothy was probably anxious to accomplish certain things and to have certain practices begun. He might have at times excited himself or pressed himself to a point too far; and on the other hand, it might have been difficult for some in the community to adjust to his ways and preferred to have their opinions be given more weight in decision making matters. From this naturally, friction is caused with arguments and misunderstandings arising. This is all conjecture however, but we see how easily this could have happened.

Whatever the problem was, Paul's advice was considered important for he was accepted by both groups. Although he writes the letter to Timothy, he is addressing himself to the whole community and for this reason his letter was read to the community during the service. What is said was considered so important that it was sent and read in other churches as well and in this way eventually became part of the New Testament.

What did Paul say? Basically, he tells Timothy to command and to teach. But how?...by setting himself as a good example in speech and in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. He says, 11b"Let all see your progress. Take heed for yourself and to your teaching; hold to that for by so doing you will save both

yourself and your hearer." He adds, advising Timothy not to rebuke but accept the elders as your fathers and your mothers and the youth as your brothers and sisters.

We see that a rapport is important so that harmony can prevail and once this happens words will find their way into the heart and the communication will be a heart to heart relationship rather than from angry lips.

This lesson is important in giving guidance to our family lives. The number one question plaguing each and every youth in any given generation is 'Who Am I?' The parents always see them as fulfillment of certain of their own dreams in becoming a success in some way. But this does not necessarily mean that this is what the young person has in mind. As a part of the growing process young people's ideas and feelings change from year to year. They are not certain for they are still seeking and are still undergoing a rapid change. During this period they become hero-worshippers, imitators of others, revolutionists, always seeking themselves in someone or something else. That is why fads come and go so quickly. It's served its purpose. Now let's try something else, for I didn't find myself there. It's an excruciating experience for both the child and the parent, and by the time we have found our final shape and form, the mold or casting of any nature and any personality, we find ourselves being parents of a young child dreaming the same dreams our parents dreamed.

Some are not so fortunate to be blessed with parents and some married couples are not blessed with children. Being part and member of any kind of family is a blessing and a very important governing rule is for each to set themselves as an example for the others to follow. Do you want to influence your parents in starting certain practices and forming certain habits? Begin by setting the example yourself. Do you want your child to be someone of whom you will be proud? Set the example yourself being consistent in speech, conduct, love, faith and in purity of life and living.

DISCIPLINE AND FATHERHOOD **(Hebrews 12; 1-11)**

The root word of discipline is disciple which means, a person receiving instructions, that is, incorporates or digests, and then, puts into use. Discipline is associated with fatherhood, whereas, the virtues of motherhood are seen in compassion, consideration, understanding and merciful love. The two, (fatherhood and motherhood) essentially, complement each other and both originate and are a reflection of God's divine nature.

The Armenian biblical text uses the word "khurad" for discipline which seems milder because the common usage connotes advice, but the meaning is the same, that is, learning is a painful and sometimes an uncomfortable experience: going to school; having to sit at a desk some 5-6 hours a day, 5 days a week; hearing about things one knows little about; and expected to give correct answers or be considered to be a failure. It is not easy, no matter how one tries to 'sugar-coat' the process. The ultimate goal is to prepare an individual to live in a world to make a livelihood, earn enough, to take care for oneself and one's family and to do this in a world in which the key words to salvation are power and control, which means having control over others for one's own benefit. In the geopolitical world, it is done in the name of national security.

When one completes the primary education through high-school, a person enters into a more intensive period of study specializing in a particular discipline of a trade, an art or science-car repair, cook, driver of trucks or buses or specializing in one of the various fields of fine arts or sciences. The process remains the

same: to receive (instruction), incorporating and putting to use with the hope of securing a gainful employment. Those considered the highest degrees from prestigious universities cannot assure that that will happen.

Discipline is a life-long process to accommodate the various stages of a person's life. Abuse in any given period can bring the bitter consequences either immediately or in one of the succeeding periods.

The purpose of the virtues of fatherhood is to bring structure and direction to the virtues of motherhood so that energies are directed for the general edification, growth process which is life-long. The virtues of motherhood bring flexibility, an organic ingredient to the structure of the human personality so it does not become stringent and so restrictive that ultimately it becomes self-destructive.

Therefore the lesson of fatherhood is the lesson of discipline, or more so, discipleship, to bring structure, shape and form, within a given framework where flexibility and an organic process of expansion and contraction takes place because of the virtues of motherhood allowing the structure to breathe properly.

"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12: 11), a lesson one learns as a student, a parent and especially as a child, a child of God.

The Book of Revelation/Introduction

The Book of Revelation is the last book in the New Testament and the entire Bible. It is not an easy book to read or understand. This probably is the reason why there are no readings from the book in the church services for the entire church calendar year. But as part of the Bible and therefore along with the other writings has an important role of God for the human race. The lines that I have taken to write about this from chapter 12 verses 1-6 which are about a woman, her child and the Dragon which I understand to be St. Mary, Jesus and Satan.

Another point of interest is that the book of Revelation has 22 chapters and that this part is in the middle of the whole writing suggesting perhaps that that written before and after it may have had these particular lines in mind in addition to the general presentation of the directed to seven Christian churches that were living through some extremely difficult times. In a way it is also telling all future generations that the lives of the holy family and then the church being the family of God went through very difficult times but were able to preserve by the grace and blessing of God as an example for all future generations.

The Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation takes us back to the incarnation of the Son of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth beginning when the Annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel to the holy mother of God, St. Mary and her conception of the Christ child. Mary served as a means by which God became directly and continually involved in His implementation of a plan for the reconciliation of mankind by bringing heaven and Earth into a working relationship where the human race would be able to enjoy God's blessings and help to meet the challenges of daily living. For this to happen there was a need for a purifying process to take place that began when the Archangel Gabriel announced to the blessed mother of her role in the divine process, to which she gave her consent.

It began with a purifying of her soul with the removal of the original sin upon which she received gifts of the seven virtues that the first parents had but lost. All of her life, Mary remained faithful to her calling and was always found acceptable before God. With her conception of the Christ child, she became sinless; a blessing condition should retain her entire life by allowing the graces of the seven major virtues to keep her from the stains of sin and death. Just as Mary became the embodiment of the Christ child so to the physical structure of the church and the faithful there in become part of an incarnation process where the old is removed and replaced by the new that is continuously going on throughout the generations, transforming the human race to a higher and nobler state that can be seen in the Assumption of the Blessed mother of Jesus into the heavenly abode after her earthly sojourn had ended.

In the sense the Book of Revelation is a reflection of this ongoing process that began with the incarnation of the Son of God and continues within the church and her faithful, the children of God, It there in a worshipful prayer service.