

THE TORCHBEARER • Ջահակիր

St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit

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The Reverend Father Garabed Kochakian ~ *Pastor*
The Reverend Father Diran Papazian ~ *Pastor Emeritus*
Deacon Rubik Mailian ~ *Director of Sacred Music and Pastoral Assistant*



CONFESSING IN CHRIST.....

“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”

Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.” Gospel of St. John 12:23-26 (NRSV)

Being a saint is the calling of every one of us. And with God’s help it is something we can all aspire to. Surely our Genocide martyrs did not, on the eve of 1915, consider themselves to be saint-material. And yet, by standing with Christ at their fatal hour, they showed that they were indeed His saints. As we reflect deeply about this Canonization, it is important to think how sainthood changes our conventional ideas of saints and who they are. In our homes, most of us have old pictures of *hayrigs* and *mayrigs* who died in the Genocide. They are now new Icons of people with spiritual endurance and strength and by whose witness change us. For us this is an amazing moment in history, remembering them and seeing how their transformation from victimhood to victors can a transformation for us as well. The fact is that our troubled world needs saint-like people in it. The world needs us to understand what sainthood is.

The Canonized martyrs of 1915 are witnesses to our shared faith in Christ: their example is a source of strength to us in the present times of trouble. Their Canonization is not an “honor” or prize that our church is bestowing on them; it is rather the acknowledgement of the reality when they accepted death rather than deny Christ. We remember the strong words of Jesus “...But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” [Matthew 10:33]

One question often heard regarding the Canonization is, “Are all of the Armenian victims of the Genocide to be acknowledged as saints?” Obviously, not all of the Armenians who perished during the Genocide died, on account of their Christian faith. Many did, of course, and we have the names and stories of true martyrs who died bearing witness to Our Lord Jesus. While others did die as true witnesses, their names regrettably are lost to history. In the Canonization ceremony to take place in Holy Etchmiadzin on April 23, 2015, *All* of those who died *as true witnesses*—the known and the unknown—will be made Saints. Regardless of whether we know their names, they are all known to God. We might say that the Armenian Church is Canonizing *all those Martyrs, known to God, who died witnessing to their Christian faith*. They are no longer victims but Sainted Martyrs and Victors of the Christian Faith, champions of the church; heroes for Christ.

Now we view them differently. The Genocide will no longer be solely or even primarily about what the Ottoman Turks did to the Armenians - it will rather show their defiance of death in the name of Jesus; taking up His cross reveals the greater reality that is the glory of the martyrs. No longer will we perform the tearful requiem service that has been so much a part of our April 24th observances nor pray for them to be accepted into God’s kingdom as dead victims. To the contrary, for they are ‘alive in Christ’. We turn to them and ask them to pray for us, as saints of the church who dwell in that kingdom.

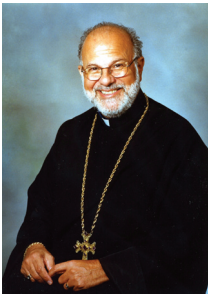
Even though so many remain nameless, the Lord knows the name of everyone who died for Him; He knows their names even when we mortal human beings don’t. God sees the martyrs as individuals; they were fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, people with real lives and stories, just like the people around us. Though some scholars resist the conclusion that it was a form of religious persecution of Christian Armenians, the point to be made here is that the Armenian’s Christian identity - a fact of life for centuries - in Ottoman society was different and vulnerable in a frequently hostile anti-Christian society. Perhaps it is immaterial to dwell on the intentions of the tormenters and whether the Turks were motivated by religious hatred or some political ideology. From the perspective of those who died, they did so knowingly, in the name of refusing to let go of their Christian faith. One hundred years after the Genocide, the questions involving forgiveness remain the most delicate and difficult to consider. We are taught by our Lord that the heart must always be open to forgiveness; but it will be the Holy Spirit that guides us—and not only us: the Holy Spirit, in its time, will guide the entire world, including those who transgressed against our people, to make forgiveness a reality. For this, we continue to pray to the sainted martyrs whose power is even greater than the deniers and who can, by their holy stature, ask God to touch the hearts of those who are still fearfully lost in the abyss of denial. Nonetheless for us Armenians, in light of the Canonization of the Genocide martyrs, we are now able to pray *TO* those martyrs as saints, ask for their intercession on our behalf, and seek their guidance and leadership of our hearts and spirits as we listen to what they have to tell us in return.

Finally, this Canonization is not just an event for the Armenian Church; it is bringing other churches together in solidarity with us, in acknowledgement of our martyrs. And let us not forget that other Christians today are suffering the same kind of persecution and martyrdom that our ancestors endured a century ago. In the very headlines of the day, we read today about new martyrs for Christ, Syrians, the Copts of Egypt and others as well who become our new saints and a light to shine into the dark corners of the world. As we have prayed for the *Victims of 1915*, blessed are the new *Victors and Saints* now who pray for us.

Church Office Hours: Monday - Friday: 9 AM - 5 PM

After hours in an emergency, please contact: Pastor’s Cell: 248.225.9888 • Administrator’s Cell: 248.880.8391

JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH 2015



FROM FATHER GARABED'S DESK.....

"...whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave" [Matthew 20:26-27]

With these words I have reflected upon seventeen years of service to Christ the Lord and especially upon my final year here at St. John's as your pastor, and what it really has been for me to be a servant of the Lord. We are called to serve our people in many capacities in the ordained priesthood: as pastor, teacher, counselor, arbitrator, administrator and other ministries. But the most important for me has been the one of being a 'slave' to Christ's Holy Gospel and Mission; being your servant.

One might ask, 'can there be joy in being a slave, a servant'? Of course, and especially in the vocation of one's ministry to the people of God as a priest. This has filled my heart with more joy than words could ever express during my time here with you.

But now the time has come to seek other ways to continue my ministry during my 'senior years' and still be of service to Christ's Holy Church and perhaps even Saint John's. Parting is sorrowful, but it is also sweet. For me the sweetness has been to enjoy your love and support, rejoicing together, sharing sorrow together with you as we have walked hand in hand, heart to heart as the one blessed family of St. John Armenian Church.

Wherever my ministry may take Yeretzgin and me in the days and years ahead, our time spent as your leaders, teachers and ministers of worship will forever remain as a source of our spiritual fulfillment.

Inspired by His Holy Spirit I thank God our Father and Christ His Son for imbuing me with a lifetime to serve. I thank Yeretzgin Roberta for her unwavering support and walking with me in my nearly 40 years in the Lord's vineyard of the Armenian Church. And I thank particularly all of you here at St. John's for your support and pray that you will embrace your new pastor when he arrives and grant him with the same love, dedication, zeal and spirit to continue all the good works that we together have planted.

The parish of St John's since its beginnings has been a spiritual haven for our people who have come to enjoy the spirit of Christ and his presence and a very integral part of my life as well; even before my pastoral assignment in 1998. I was blessed to begin a new life here as a husband to Yeretzgin Roberta, having had our wedding blessed in the walls of this holy sanctuary. And for the nearly forty years that have passed, as a visitor whenever we came home to Detroit to be with family, and for these many past years especially as Der Hayr and Yeretzgin. This community has been a long part of my life and by the grace of God, I was privileged to become your pastor.

Also, you should know that from the earliest days in the 1920's, when St. John's was established, until today, our parish has been a star in the crown of our Diocesan parishes with the many good leaders that have served here and also the greater ministries within our Diocese. Both Yeretzgin Roberta and I pray that the Lord continues to guide you all as you prepare this year to receive a new pastor to join this great family of faith. In the years ahead, continue to *Live the Gospel of Christ* and celebrate His presence in the age-old and beautiful tradition of the Armenian Church wherein the flame of faith, hope, and love will continue to glow as the Light of Christ for future generations.

God bless you all and thank you for sharing in my priestly works so that the days and years ahead in this wonderful garden of St. John's will not only equal the successes we have achieved together, but even outweigh them with greater works to be as the word's of scripture say *make a house - built by wisdom and becoming stronger through good sense*" - Proverbs 24:3

Thanks for the memories of love and understanding.

Peace and blessings always,

~ Father Garabed

METRO DETROIT EVENTS FOR THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE CENTENNIAL
WWW.ARMEANIANGENOCIDECENTENNIALMI.COM

Monday, April 13, 10:30 AM - Wayne State University, Lecture by Khachig Mouradian, Adjunct Professor, Rutgers University. Musical performance by Nune Milikian, Siberian-born Armenian violinist, jointly sponsored by Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee & Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies at WSU

Tuesday, April 14, 7:00 pm - Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills - Lecture by Khatchig Mouradian and a second speaker is TBA. Co-sponsored by University of Michigan-Dearborn, WSU, Holocaust Memorial Center.

Friday, April 24, 7:00 PM - Ecumenical Service at St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Basilica, 18100 Merriman Rd, Livonia. Clergy from various faiths have been invited to take part. Choirs from Armenian churches will sing. Principal Homilist, Abp. Allen Vigneron, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Detroit. Sponsored by the Four Armenian Churches Of Detroit

Friday evening, June 19 - St. John's Komitas Choir will sponsor a concert to celebrate Armenian culture by the Armenian Community Chorale at the Max Fisher Orchestra Hall, Detroit.

Saturday, April 18, 7:00 PM - Edsel Ford High School, Dearborn - Robert Fisk: Writer & Journalist and Correspondent of the Independent and Erik Bogosian, Armenian-American actor, playwright and novelist speak. Special dance performance by the Hamazkayin Arax Dance Group.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PEW.....

In our minds, we know it's March. But out my kitchen window, it still looks like the tundra! The weather may seem foreboding but remember, we have snow plows and indoor heating, so don't let a little cold and crummy weather keep you from the fellowship that we all enjoy. If you're looking for a place filled with warm hearts, look no further than your church. And, of course, the Women's Guild activities.

The word 'outreach' has almost become a buzz word for good works. Sometimes, we may be so busy looking out, that we may have looked right over our own built-in mission. I am guilty of being that person, sitting in a full church on Christmas Day and thinking, 'who are these people?' And, then, 'where are our people?' Well, 'these people' *are* our people and as a Christ centered Guild whose mission it is to live our faith, we must begin to make welcome and include all of our people.

When our grandparents fled all that was familiar, with nothing in their hands, they may have been outsiders to their new environment, but they created their very own church community and welcomed each other without reservation. We may not have had any part in the building of our community, but we certainly can try to have an active part in its inclusiveness and perpetuation.

Please try to take a moment to make yourself a familiar face to someone you might not know. It's a very comfortable experience for us to greet friends after church. Think about extending that same feeling of belonging that we all appreciate so much. Our Guild is looking forward to activities in the near future that will hopefully, extend our hands in keeping with our mission.

Stay warm in body and heart.

- Yerchanig Joy Callan -

BE READY, BE PREPARED.....

The final stage the St. John's Armenian Church Emergency Plan is now complete. Stage 1 is the Fire Drill and Emergency Evacuation Plan. Stage 2 is the Tornado Drill and Emergency Evacuation Plan. Stage 3 is the Lockdown Emergency Plan. For the convenient use of our staff, these plans are easily accessible in the red bags located in various places around the church complex. Church staff has been trained to help guide parishioners in case of emergencies. Below is the plan for a lockdown emergency **warning** and a **lockdown with an intruder** to our complex. Please take the time to review this within your families. While we don't anticipate a problem like this, we must always be prepared when it comes to the safety of our community. There are two types of lock down:

LOCK DOWN with WARNING = Threat outside the building.

LOCK DOWN with INTRUDER = Threat or intruder inside the building.

LOCK DOWN WITH WARNING

All outer doors to the building should be locked. No one may enter or leave the building without a Parish Council member guiding the person in or out of the building. Activities within the building continue as usual. Building remains locked down until an ALL CLEAR has been given by the Pastor, Building Administrator, or Parish Council Chairman.

LOCK DOWN WITH INTRUDER: OPTIONS: EVACUATE - HIDE - FIGHT

EVACUATE: IF near an exit door and IF possible, a decision can be made to run out of the building and get as far away as possible. If a decision is made to run, make sure hands are raised above your head with fingers spread to show police you are not armed or dangerous. **HIDE:** When evacuation is not possible, everyone should get out of the hallways and into **rooms that can be locked** or are out of the intruder's view - lock the doors!

- **Call 911** - give as much information as you can.

- Close window blinds and turn off lights; if time allows, blockade the door with heavy furniture or chairs.

- Silence cell phones or anything else that may make noise.

- Hide in the farthest corner of the room, away from hall windows and the door.

- Remain calm and quiet until **POLICE** have given an ALL CLEAR to leave the room. Follow all directions of the police.

- **FIGHT:** As a **last resort**, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the intruder. Act as aggressively as possible, throw items at the intruder, yell and commit to your actions (don't be tentative).

Deacons' Training Program: June 24 - July 2

Directed by the V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan

High School Summer Conference A: July 3 - 12

Directed by the Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian

High School Summer Conference B: July 17 - 26

Directed by the Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian

Post High School Summer Conference: July 28 - August 2

Directed by the Rev. Fr. Mardiros Chevian

Since its inception in 1963, the summer conferences have offered young people Bible study sessions, daily worship, lectures from clergy and lay leaders, Armenian language instruction, as well as sports and outings. Last summer, St. Nersess welcomed nearly 100 high school and college aged students to learn more about their Christian faith and heritage. Each day, a new topic of instruction is offered including classical Armenian, in-depth historical teachings of the Armenian Church, teachings from the Gospel, Bible meditations, explanations of the Divine Liturgy, and how the Armenian Church compares in its teachings to other denominations. Students are enriched and fulfilled with a deeper understanding of their faith.

For the Deacons' Training Program, young men gain a deeper understanding of the church's worship services through practical workshops and interactive classes. Students are placed in classes according to experience. In Level I, students are introduced to the duties of an acolyte. In Levels II and III, students are introduced to liturgical practicum. All students take Armenian classes and voice lessons. Upon completion of the program, students return to their home parishes with polished liturgical skills and a stronger faith.

MOVSES KHORENATSI MAKES THE NY TIMES.....

Movses Khorenatsi, a historian in the fifth century, wrote that his native Armenia had been established in 2492 B.C., a date usually regarded as legendary though he claimed to have traveled to Babylon and consulted ancient records. But either he made a lucky guess or he really did gain access to useful data, because a new genomic analysis suggests that his date is entirely plausible.

Geneticists have scanned the genomes of 173 Armenians from Armenia and Lebanon and compared them with those of 78 other populations from around the world. They found that the Armenians are a mix of ancient populations whose descendants now live in Sardinia, Central Asia and several other regions. This formative mixture occurred from 3000 to 2000 B.C., the geneticists calculated, coincident with Movses Khorenatsi's date for the founding of Armenia.

Toward the end of the Bronze Age, when the mixture was in process, there was considerable movement of peoples brought about by increased trade, warfare and population growth. After 1200 B.C., the Bronze Age civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean suddenly collapsed, an event that seems to have brought about the isolation of Armenians from other populations. No significant mixing with other peoples after that date can be detected in the genomes of living Armenians, the geneticists said.

The isolation was probably sustained by the many characteristic aspects of Armenian culture. Armenians have a distinctive language and alphabet, and the Armenian Apostolic Church was the first branch of Christianity to become established as a state religion, in A.D. 301, anticipating that by the Roman Empire in A.D. 380.

The researchers also see a signal of genetic divergence that developed about 500 years ago between western and eastern Armenians. The date corresponds to the onset of wars between the Ottoman and Safavid dynasties and the division of the Armenian population between the Turkish and Persian empires.

"This DNA study confirms in general outline much of what we know about Armenian history," said Hovann Simonian, a historian of Armenia affiliated with the University of Southern California.

The geneticists' team, led by Marc Haber and Chris Tyler-Smith of the Sanger Institute, near Cambridge in England, see long-isolated populations like that of the Armenians as a means of reconstructing population history.

Armenians share 29 percent of their DNA ancestry with Otzi, a man whose 5,300-year-old mummy emerged in 1991 from a melting Alpine glacier. Other genetically isolated populations of the Near East, like Cypriots, Sephardic Jews and Lebanese Christians, also share a lot of ancestry with the Iceman, whereas other Near Easterners, like Turks, Syrians and Palestinians, share less. This indicates that the Armenians and other isolated populations are closer than present-day inhabitants of the Near East to the Neolithic farmers who brought agriculture to Europe about 8,000 years ago.

The geneticists' paper was posted last month on bioRxiv, a digital library for publishing scientific articles before they appear in journals. Dr. Tyler-Smith, the senior author of the genetics team, said he could not discuss their results for fear of jeopardizing publication in a journal that he did not name.

The Fine Arts Committee of St. John's Armenian Church



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BLESSED IS THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST!**

IN THE FRONT LOBBY...

When finding yourself in the front lobby of our Church, check out the Tuesday Lunch Club (TLC) newsletter.

The vibrant and beautifully put together publication updates readers on TLC and other events, has great visuals, and also gives readers a hearty laugh with plenty of jokes and anecdotes.

- APRIL 19, 2015 -

PLEASE NOTE THAT A FINAL REQUIEM
WILL BE PERFORMED ON THIS DAY
FOR THE ARMENIAN MARTYRS WHO
WILL BE CANONIZED AS SAINTS ON
FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2015.

SACRAMENTS

Baptisms

February 2015

- 14 Rayvan Omar Zadoyan
Daughter of Amar Farooq Sayrob Zadoyan &
Rand Sabah Naeem
Godparents: Samir Sayrob Zadoyan & Noor A. Abdalkreem

Weddings

January 2015

- 24 Margarita Davydova & Titas Laurinaitis
Khachyeghpayr: Edmond Azadian
Maid of Honor: Angelina Smith

Funerals

January 2015

- 1 Richard Torigian, 81, Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens
3 Masis Kayayan, 61, Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens
6 Elizabeth Melidosian, 84, Woodmere
11 Shakey Godoshian, 93, White Chapel Cemetery
22 Esther Janigian, 93, Woodlawn

February 2015

- 11 Harry Mardigian, 74, Woodlawn
23 Johnny Johns, 88

March 2015

- 1 Berj Paul Kurkechian, 83, Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens
4 Zepur Bekri, 91, Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens
13 Kasper Ohannasian Jr, 74, Evergreen

Marriages

Arrangements for weddings are to be made at least eight months in advance. Marriage preparation and counseling are required before the celebration of the sacrament. The Bestman (*Khachyeghpayr*) must be a member of the Armenian Orthodox Church. The parish office will make all necessary arrangements for the deacon, organist and soloist. Marriages are not celebrated during Great Lent.

Baptisms and Chrismations

All baptisms must be scheduled at least two months in advance. Pre-baptismal preparation for the parents and godparents is required. At least one of the godparents must be a member of the Armenian Orthodox Faith.

Regulation of Sacramental Services

In accordance with Diocesan discipline mandated by the Primate, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, all sacraments, e.g. funerals, weddings, baptisms and rites of Christian burial, can only be administered in the church sanctuary, which has been consecrated for the celebrations of these sacred rites.

ACYOA ENTER FINAL STRETCH FOR SPORTS WEEKEND.....

Under the chairmanship of Linda Kalfayan, our seniors met with all events committee chairs for the ACYOA Seniors National General Assembly and Sports Weekend.

This year, Sports Weekend will take place in Detroit. We are expecting hundreds of Armenian Youth throughout our Eastern Diocese to converge here in Motown and at St. John during for their annual youth gathering the weekend of May 21-25th, and on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide remembrance.

Watch for details of events!



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or a Parish Council member for ways to
leave a legacy to your Church.



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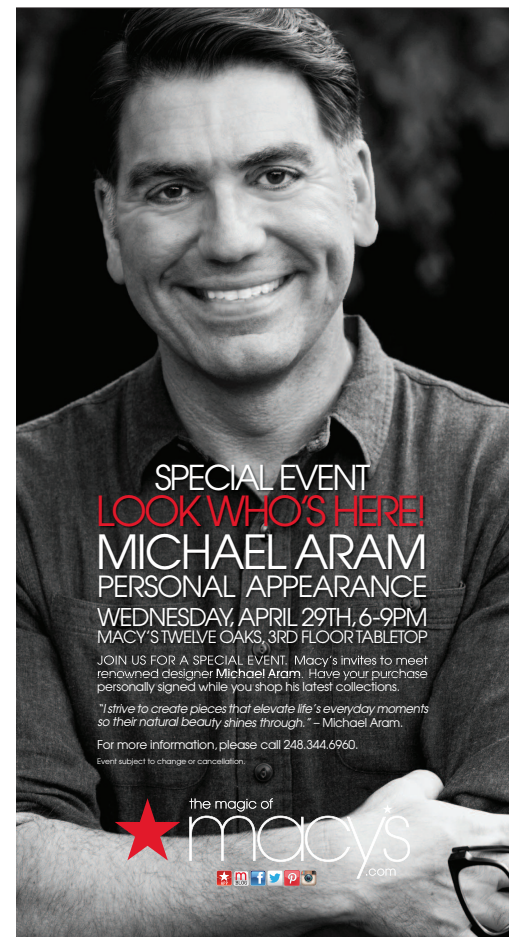
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We welcome your comments and suggestions, so please feel free to contact the Church Office so we may continue to improve the way we bring information to our parishioners, subscribers and the St. John community. If you would like to help defray printing and postage costs, and are computer savvy, please consider receiving your *Torchbearer* online as 10% of our readership already does. The added bonus is that it appears in color online! Please contact the Church Office.

If you would be interested in sponsoring an issue of *The Torchbearer*, that is, assuming the costs of producing one, please contact May Kafafian at the Church Office for further information. We also need volunteers who would be interested in helping prepare *The Torchbearer* for mailing. This occurs around the 25th of the month and for just a few hours. Again, please contact the Church Office.

We invite you to visit the St. John web site for up-to-date calendar information, the Sunday Bulletin, *The Torchbearer*, event information and links to internet sites of interest to our parishioners:

stjohnsarmenianchurch.org



SPECIAL EVENT LOOK WHO'S HERE! MICHAEL ARAM PERSONAL APPEARANCE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29TH, 6-9PM
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For more information, please call 248.344.6960.
Event subject to change or cancellation.



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PLEASE SAVE THE DATE.....

April

- 2 Holy Thursday: Divine Liturgy;
Feet Washing Service
Betrayal & Passion of our Lord
- 3 Holy Friday: Order of the Crucifixion of Christ;
Entombment of our Lord
- 4 Holy Saturday: Reading of Scriptures,
Divine Liturgy, Easter Eve Supper
- 5 **Easter-The Glorious Resurrection of our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ**
Easter Tea prepared by+ the Women's Guild
- 12 Project White Cross
- 19 Fine Arts Exhibition "Rebirth", 1:00 pm
- 24 Armenian Genocide Centennial Ecumenical
Service, St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox
Basilica, 18100 Merriman, Livonia, 7:00 pm

May

- 7-9 Annual Diocesan Assembly, Washington DC
National Commemoration of the Armenian
Genocide Centennial, Washington DC
- 14 Feast of the Ascension-*Hampartsoom*
- 17 Church School Graduation & Tea
Last day of Church School
- 21-24 ACYOA National Assembly/Sports Weekend
Hosted by Detroit ACYOA
- 24 Pentecost
- 25 Memorial Day - Complex Closed
Grave Blessings at area cemeteries
- 29 Holy Ascension - *Hampartsoom*

June

- 19 Celebration of Armenian Culture
Concert at Max Fisher Orchestra Hall
Sponsored by Komitas Choir

IN THE COMMUNITY.....

ACYOA NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND SPORTS WEEKEND

Schedule of Events

Thursday, May 21st

- 6:00 pm - 10:00 pm: General Assembly Day 1 at Crowne Plaza Hotel
10:00 pm: Delegate Reception

Friday, May 22nd

- 8:00 am - 6:00 pm: General Assembly Day 2 at Crowne Plaza Hotel
9:00 pm - 1:00 am: Evening Event at Fox Theatre

Saturday, May 23rd

- 9:30 am - 10:30 am: MSU Tollgate Conference Center
Special Program Honoring the Newly Consecrated Martyrs of 1915
Speakers: Rev. Chuck Gaidica (formerly Channel 4 Weather Anchor)
and Sports Announcer Armen Keteyian of ESPN.
- 11:30 am - 6:00 pm: Athletics at Hillside Recreational Center
9:00 pm - 1:00 am: Evening Event at Henry Ford Museum
1:00 am - 3:00 am: After hours at Crowne Plaza Hotel

Sunday, May 24th

- 10:30 - 12:15 pm: Divine Liturgy at St. John Armenian Church
12:15 pm - 1:00 pm: Brunch in Church Hall
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm: Athletic Finals at St. John's Recreational Center
6:30 pm - 2:00 am: Awards Banquet at St. John's Cultural Hall
Keynote speaker: Armen Keteyian
6:30 - 7:30 pm: Alumni Cocktail Hour
8:00 - 2:00 am: Dinner & Dance
2:00 am - 4:00 am: After hours at Crowne Plaza Hotel

Monday, May 25th

- 10:00 am - 1:00 pm: Farewell Brunch at Crowne Plaza Hotel

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