



For Immediate Release

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St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church to be Consecrated on September 20, 2009. First Armenian Church constructed in the state of Arizona.

Scottsdale, Arizona: American Armenians from throughout the Valley and neighboring California will come together on Sunday, September 20, 2009, to witness the consecration of St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church, the first Armenian Church built in Arizona. The newly constructed sanctuary, architecturally inspired by the historic 7th century St. Hripsime Church in Armenia, will be officially opened by His Eminence Hovnan Derderian, Archbishop of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of North America. The Consecration ceremony will take place at 10 am, followed by Divine Liturgy. Parishioners, guest clergy and dignitaries will enjoy the sounds of the Armenian Khachadourian Choir from Los Angeles, who will perform during the ceremony. Following the festivities, a celebration luncheon and program will take place in Melikian Hall, 8849 E Cholla St, Scottsdale, on the property next to St. Apkar Armenian Church.

The community is also invited to a Consecration Eve Dinner Dance on Saturday, September 19, 2009, starting at 6:30 pm. Attendees will enjoy live Armenian music by Khachig from California and a family style Armenian kebab dinner held in the St. Apkar Armenian Church Cultural Center. Reservations are required for both the Saturday night dinner dance and Sunday celebration lunch by contacting Suzie Grigorian at 480-545-9089. Donations to each event, with advance reservation, are \$25/Adults and \$15/Children, respectively. For more information, please visit www.saintapkar.com.



Armenian Church History

According to Armenian tradition, which was put to writing in the course of the fifth century, the earliest missionaries to preach the Christian faith in Armenia were Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew, two of the twelve Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For two and half centuries, Christianity was practiced in Armenia as an underground religion. The entire country became Christian in 301 A.D. when King Drtad III of the Arshagooni dynasty and his court, as well as his armies, the Armenian nobility and the common people, converted to the new faith. The man responsible for all of this and for the establishment of the Armenian Church as a formal institution was St. Gregory the Illuminator, a relative of the king and a devout Christian. Gregory was ultimately ordained a bishop and became the first chief bishop—or catholicos—of Armenia.

The Armenian Church emerged as one of the most important institutions in Armenia and, in the course of a century, forged a totally new identity for the Armenian people. Christianity became deeply rooted in all segments of Armenian society and distinguished the Armenians from their neighbors in terms of culture and religion. Thanks to the efforts of great churchmen like Catholicos Sahag and Vartabed Mesrob Mashdots, Armenian became a literary language at the beginning of the fifth century. St. Sahag and St. Mesrob supervised the translation of the Holy Scriptures as well as a large body of Christian literature so that the teachings of the Church would be accessible to everyone.

Besides her spiritual role, the Armenian Church took over the duties of the Armenian state in 428 A.D., when the Persians put an end to the Armenian kingdom. In 449 A.D. the Armenians under the leadership of St. Vartan Mamigonian rebelled against Persia and fought bitterly in order to defend their faith. Despite the martyrdom of many, they succeeded in their endeavor.

For over 1700 years, the Armenian Church has served the spiritual, cultural, social, educational, and even the physical needs of the Armenian people; it is the center of Armenian life everywhere. Today, the Armenian Church thrives in Armenia and in the Armenian communities throughout the world known as the "Diaspora". In fact, there are more Armenians in the Diaspora than in Armenia itself, due to the dispersion of Armenians by the Ottoman Turks following the 1915 - 1919 Genocide of the Armenian people. Over 1.5 million Armenians perished during the Genocide; "Historic Armenia" which once encompassed most of the central to eastern part of Turkey and parts of northern Iran, was reduced to 1/10th of its size, now present day Armenia.

Despite the calamity that befell them, the Armenians have persevered through their faith, pride, and determination. The Armenian Church, one of the oldest in the world, has been a beacon to its people throughout the centuries. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem is one of the four Guardians of the Holy Quarters, continuing this role from ancient times. The headquarters of Armenian Christianity is located at Holy Etchmiadzin ("the place where Christ descended"), the Church's Mother See, located in the Republic of Armenia, on the very site where St. Gregory the Illuminator and King Drtad founded a cathedral. The present catholicos, His Holiness Karekin II, Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, is the 132nd successor of St. Gregory.

The St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church, in Scottsdale, Arizona, is a small but growing parish. From its humble beginnings in 1957 of only a few Armenian families to the approximately 2,000 Armenian families currently living in the state of Arizona, the parishioners of St. Apkar Armenian Church have turned what was once a dream into a reality: the construction of the first Armenian Church in Arizona. This sanctuary will carry forward 1,700 years of Armenian faith, religion, and culture into the 21st century.