

WESTERN DIOCESE ARMENIAN CHURCH

EST. 1927

WHO WE ARE

PREACHING • TEACHING • LIVING



THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

BURBANK, CALIFORNIA

2015

**Compiled and edited by
Diran Avagyan**

**A Publication of the
Ambassadors of Faith of the Western Diocese
of the Armenian Church**

**BURBANK, CALIFORNIA
2015**

Primate's Message

It is with a distinct pleasure that we would like to congratulate the Diocesan Ambassadors of Faith (AOF) committee on the occasion of this long-awaited publication on the scope of the ministry of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church.

Under the leadership of Arsen Danielian, Esq, the committee undertook the arduous task of compiling the book to educate the general public about the mission, vision, and prospects of the Western Diocese.

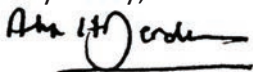
In the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ says, "No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matt. 5:15) Based on the above mentioned biblical assertion, this publication aims to edify the multifaceted ministry of the Western Diocese to make it the *'light that stand high and illuminates everyone in the house.'*

At these turbulent times, when our people are faced with numerous challenges, including but not limited to socioeconomic strains, ever-changing moral and ethical standards, secularization, etc., we are here to cater to the spiritual needs of our flock with open embrace.

May this publication serve as a special invitation to each and every member of our community to come to the bosom of the Mother Church and get involved in various groups, committees, projects, and initiatives offered by the Western Diocese.

Once again, we congratulate the Ambassadors of Faith (AOF), wishing the committee all the best in their future endeavors.

Prayerfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hovnan Derderian", written over a horizontal line.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian
Primate

Preface

Sometimes, when we ask the question—Who Are We?—the process of formulating an answer can be daunting. For the question may lead us down unfamiliar paths, or we may find that pondering the question provokes us in ways we may not have expected. Not surprisingly, since for many faith and religion are ways in which we engage in self contemplation, the church as a religious, educational and self-reflective institution, often encourages us to ask ‘Who We Are?’ in profound and complex ways.

The short booklet to which this is a preface--entitled the same as the question above—Who Are We?—serves a slightly different purpose. For this document attempts to provide a succinct history of the Armenian Church, particularly the Armenian Church in America. While this booklet is not necessarily intended as a guide to answer the titular question, it does not forget the larger purpose of the Armenian Church historically, as well as today. In fact, the booklet opens with a mission statement that states that a celebration of all of God’s Creations, is a fundamental aspect of that mission, and encourages us to realize the aims of that mission through personal and/or communal reflection. There is another critical section in this booklet, The Church In Action, which illustrates the ways in which, the purpose of the Armenian Church, as articulated in the mission statement, has been actualized in material practice.

Above all, this booklet is intended to be a succinct but helpful guide to the Diocese of the Armenian Church in the Western United States, headquartered in Burbank, California, listing in detail the various integrated branches that enable the Church to function as a whole. The reader will find a helpful list of all major Diocesan departments, affiliated committees, and allied organizations, including a section that presents the active engagement of the Diocese in Armenian schools, and a list of Armenian organizations that are collectively affiliated with the church both directly and indirectly. Going beyond the United States, the booklet presents a list of our Diocese’s activities in Armenia.

For all those interested in a succinct reminder of the fundamental reasons for the existence of the Armenian Church, as well as a quick overview of the history of the institution, this booklet should prove to be both useful and inspiring. For those interested in a quick guide that provides information about administration of the Western Diocese, as well as the various groups and bodies that compose it—this booklet serves admirably in that capacity as well. In short, this is an indispensable guide.

Arsen Danielian, Esq.
Chairman, Ambassadors of Faith



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, *Primate*

Arsen Danielian, Esq., *Chair*
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Andre Shamali

WHO WE ARE

The Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church is the spiritual home of Armenians living in the Western United States¹. The Diocese is an integral part of the Catholicosate of All Armenians in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and a member of the Orthodox family of Churches.



¹ Headquartered in Burbank, California, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of North America spans the Western United States, including Washington, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii, Alaska and newly annexed Mexico.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Western Diocese is to lead the Armenian people to God by preaching, teaching and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in accordance with the doctrines and traditions of the Armenian Church, and through collective worship and the privilege of servitude.

Love of God and neighbor, protecting the sanctity of the family, service to the community, respect for life and all of God's Creation are values that we strive to live with individually and celebrate collectively.



THE ARMENIAN CHURCH; A BRIEF HISTORY

BY ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN

The origins of the Armenian Church date back to the period of apostolic evangelization. During the first centuries of Christianity, Armenia had close relations with the West where the new religion had spread. The influence of Syrian Christians came from the south. According to tradition, the founders of the Armenian Church were the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew, whose graves can be found in Armenia and are honored as holy shrines. A succession of Armenian bishops, whose names are remembered in manuscripts, lived in Armenia from the early evangelical period until the beginning of the fourth century, when the country officially accepted Christianity as the state religion. Apart from this, numerous persecutions of Christians took place in Armenia when Christianity was an underground movement, particularly in the years 110 A.D, 250 A.D., and 387 A.D.

The complete and official conversion of Armenians to Christianity was realized in 301 by St. Gregory the Illuminator, who was an Armenian Parthian² by birth and had studied in the city of Caesarea in Cappadocia. He is the patron saint of the Armenians.

The Christian evangelization of Armenia continued during the fourth century with the great help of Greek and Assyrian evangelists. But the spreading of the Gospels faced obstacles because Armenians did not have their own alphabet. To overcome this problem, Mesrob Mashdots, an Armenian monk, invented the Armenian alphabet in 405 A.D. with the support of King Vramshabouh³ and Catholicos Sahag⁴. During the next thirty years, the Bible was translated into Armenian from the Greek Septuagint⁵ as well as the important

² St. Gregory the Illuminator descended from Arshakuni (*Arsacid*) dynasty of Parthia (Persia).

³ Ruled from 389 till 417 AD.

⁴ Sat on the patriarchal throne of St. Gregory from 387 till 428.

⁵ The primary Greek translation of the Old Testament by the seventy Jewish scholars.

writings of the Fathers of the Church. These translations successfully rival Latin and Greek renditions of the Holy Bible in their clarity and richness of language and precision of syntax. This Cultural Revolution resulted in a political uprising against the mighty Persian State led by Saint Vartan the Warrior. In the battle of *Avarayr* in 451, the Armenians defended their faith and secured their right to practice Christianity freely.

The Arab invasion of Armenia lasted from 640 A.D. to 885 A.D. In the next period (885-1045), an independent kingdom was established by the Pakraduni Dynasty and later the Roupinian Dynasty set up the independent Kingdom of Cilicia (1199-1375). From 1375 until the recent past, Armenian history was shaped by foreign rule in Armenia and in the other countries where Armenians immigrated to and settled.

Since the first days of Christianization, Armenians have followed the Church of Alexandria doctrinally and in ecclesiastical direction principally through the Cappadocian Fathers. Christologically, they have held the same doctrine as Saint Cyril and have professed the creed “One Nature of the Incarnate Word of God,” while at the same time anathematizing the teaching of Eutyches⁶. The Armenian Church teaches that Christ became a real and perfect Man in body, mind, and soul without ever ceasing to be God (miaphysitism). Of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, the Armenian Church has accepted the decisions of the first three (Nicaea in 325, Constantinople in 381, and Ephesus in 431), rejected the fourth and has refrained from pronouncement relating to the subsequent councils. The Armenian Church accepts the infallibility of the Church in the Ecumenical Councils. The Armenian Church’s teachings on sacraments and church order do not differ from the other Orthodox Churches.

⁶ Eutyches first came to notice in 431 at the First Council of Ephesus for his vehement opposition to the teachings of Nestorius (disunion between the divine and human natures of Christ). His condemnation of Nestorianism as heresy led him to monophysitism, another extreme that describes the divine and human natures of Christ intermingled in one nature (mostly divine).

PRIMATES OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE



Bishop Karekin Khachadourian
1928-1932



Archbishop Mampre Calfayan
1942-1946



Bishop Shnork Kaloustian
1953-1956



Bishop Papken Varjabedian
1958-1962



Bishop Torkom Manoogian
1962-1966



Bishop Yeghishe Simonian
1966-1970



Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian
1971-2003



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian
2003-present

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

It is a matter of common knowledge that before 1870, there were individual Armenians who immigrated to the United States, coming here for a variety of reasons. History records that in 1656, the Governor of the Virginia Colony, Edward Diggs, issued a special invitation to two Armenians from Turkey, bringing them to America to establish and expand a silk raising and producing industry. The first known Armenian immigrant to the United States was named Khachadour Vosganian who was from Constantinople and who came to New York in 1834 as a student. In the period from 1840 to 1860, many young students from the Armenian provinces, Constantinople and Cilicia came to the United States to learn a trade, to establish commercial ties, or to secure their future at New York University, Princeton, Yale, or other institutions of higher learning by pursuing courses in religious, medical, or other scientific fields. Until the 1880s, individual and mass immigration of young Armenians coming to the United States continued.

As a result of the Hamidian persecutions and massacres of 1894-1896, and subsequently, the premeditated Armenian Genocide between 1908 and 1915, as well as the Russo-Turkish War, there was a general insecurity of life. Given the woeful living conditions, our people were forced to leave their fatherland to find a safe haven.

The unbearable conditions under communism in Armenia during the past century also contributed to the expansion of the Armenian communities in the Diaspora.

Upon the request of the Armenians of Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1888 The Very Rev. Hovsep Dz. V. Sarajian was assigned to serve as the parish priest of the Worcester community and other cities in the East Coast.

Father Sarajian was the founding pastor of Our Savior church in Worcester - the first Armenian Church in the United States built in 1890, and subsequently consecrated on January 18, 1891.

In 1894, Father Sarajian resigned from his pastorate and assumed new pastoral duties in Persia, where he served until 1898.

In 1898, Catholicos Mkrtich Khrimian, who extended his jurisdiction to the Armenian Church in America in response to Constantinople Patriarch Malachia Ormanian's request, consecrated Fr. Hovsep Sarajian as a bishop, sending him to Worcester, Massachusetts, where he had previously served in the capacity of an Archimandrite for four years.

It was Bishop Sarajian who also consecrated the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Fresno on October 14, 1900. He also consecrated the St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Fowler in April of 1910.

During that period, at the initiative of Bishop Sarajian, the Diocesan Headquarters of America was established in the city of Worcester, Massachusetts on July 17-18, 1901. The first Armenian-American Diocesan Assembly, which prepared the Diocesan By-Laws, was convened in Worcester, Massachusetts on July 12, 1902. Shortly thereafter, on September 6, 1902, His Holiness Khrimian Hayrig ratified the By-Laws with his encyclical.

Simultaneous to the East Coast, the Armenian population was growing in the West Coast quite rapidly. In 1910, responding to an inquiry from the diocesan office in Worcester, the Fresno parish reported 5,000 Armenians in California, of whom 4,000 were in Fresno.

To tend to the spiritual needs of the growing Armenian American community in California, the Diocese of California was established as a separate entity by the encyclical of His Holiness Kevork V, Catholicos of All Armenians, on November 28, 1927. The Diocese of California, later renamed as the Western Diocese of the Armenian

Church of North America, held its first Diocesan Assembly on October 28, 1928.

At the time of the establishment of the Western Diocese, 1927-1928, there were five (5) churches in California:

1. Holy Trinity (consecrated in 1900 in Fresno)
2. St. Gregory the Illuminator (consecrated in 1910 in Fowler)
3. St. Mary (consecrated in 1911 in Yetttem)
4. Holy Cross (consecrated in 1923 in Los Angeles)
5. Sts. Sahag-Mesrob (consecrated in 1924 in Reedley)

Bishop Karekin Khachadourian of Trabizon was the first elected Primate of the Western Diocese who assumed the office on May 26, 1928.

During the 1960-1980 period, we note that a new and stronger wave of immigration of Armenians from the Middle Eastern countries began to arrive in Los Angeles as a result of political unrest, civil war and social instability in the region. They came primarily from Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. Then, with the independence of Armenia from the Soviet Union in the early 1990's, we saw an unprecedented immigration of Armenians to the United States.

The influx of immigrants to Los Angeles made the city into the largest Armenian community outside of Armenia. Naturally, the characteristics of the Los Angeles Armenian community have undergone through major social, ethnic, cultural, spiritual, religious and organizational changes.

Along with these realities, new challenges and demands are created for the Armenian Church, requiring new approaches, methods and points of view.

In the summer of 1960, during the primacy of Bishop Papken Varjabedian, His Holiness Vasken I, Catholicos of All Armenians was the first Pontiff to visit the Western Diocese.

On Saturday, March 13, 1971, at St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettem, during the Diocesan Assembly, His Grace Bishop Vatché Hovsepien was elected to be the seventh Primate of the Western Diocese, succeeding His Grace Bishop Yeghishe Simonian.

The newly-elected Primate immediately set about to secure for the Diocese its own Headquarters as the administrative center of the Armenian Church in the Western United States and to establish, as much as possible, a new religious mission with new perspectives and a new mode of thinking. The result of his efforts was the acquisition of the present building of St. John Garabed Armenian Church of Hollywood, which, at the same time, served as a parish church and the Diocesan Headquarters. The Diocesan Headquarters functioned in Hollywood until it was moved to the complex of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Pasadena in 1994, following the Northridge Earthquake.

As a result of Archbishop Vatché Hovsepien's serious and tireless pursuit, in 1997 the present Diocese building in the city of Burbank was purchased and the Diocesan Headquarters was moved to its new location as an appropriate center for the administration of the Diocese. It was during the primacy of Archbishop Vatché Hovsepien that plans for an adjoining cathedral were set forth.

On May 3, 2003, at the 76th Diocesan Assembly held at the Diocesan Headquarters in Burbank, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian was elected as the 8th Primate of the Western Diocese.

The primacy of Archbishop Derderian has thus far gained its own recognizable characteristics which are:

- Church and administrative reorganization
- Recruiting and preparing candidates for priesthood
- Expansion of Christian education and ethics in the community
- Regular conferences and lectures for the clergy
- New plans and projects for parishes and follow-up for their expeditious implementation
- Decisiveness in strategic implementation

- Honoring those, who have made a difference in the life of the church and the community

These distinguishing characteristics of ministry portray Archbishop Derderian's vision and the way he perceives the mission of the church in the 3rd millennium.

Throughout the historic existence of the Armenian people, the Armenian Church has always been a living phenomena. Each generation, to a greater or lesser degree, has grasped the idea that the Armenian Church is a spirit, which has lived for centuries in the souls of the Armenian people, and the Armenian people have been an integral part of the existence of the Church.



THE CHURCH IN ACTION - A DECADE OF REBIRTH (2003-2013)

In the last decade, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church was completely transformed and reorganized under the leadership of its Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian.

In the following next pages, we will outline the major accomplishments achieved during this period of time in a comprehensive and orderly manner.

REORGANIZATION OF THE DIOCESAN HEADQUARTERS

“The strength of a Diocese lies in its ability to stay on the right path.”

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

It is noteworthy that in the short span of 10 years, the number of Diocesan staff has nearly tripled (average age is 35). The expansion of Diocesan programs and missions took root with the staffing of these trained professionals, who have undertaken numerous programs and projects in the Diocese.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At the direction of the Primate, the position of the Executive Director was created in 2006. The Office of the Executive Director is responsible for planning and implementation of all administrative matters of the Headquarters.

ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT

During the Primacy of Archbishop Derderian, in order to meet the needs of the expanding Diocese, the need of transitioning the

Accounting Department from a part-time position to a full-time position became evident. The restructuring of the department proved to be effective.

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

US President Ronald Reagan has admittedly said that information is the oxygen of the modern age. And indeed, without effective communication and dissemination of accurate information, the work remains unnoticed and lost in the process. Our Communication Department works hard to keep the community in the loop by updating them on various Diocesan events, projects, and initiatives.

The introduction of our weekly eNewsletter was a major undertaking towards going 100% green and cutting the cost of mailing.

The Western Diocese takes pride in its state-of-the-art website, which enables the faithful to get enormous information just at their fingertip. With integrated multimedia and social networking features, the website connects people from around the globe.

TV AND MEDIA DEPARTMENT

In 2005, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian spearheaded a new TV project called “The Voice of the Armenian Church.” The success of the program was echoed throughout the community. Encouraged by this success, in February 2011, a television and media department was launched with state-of-the-art cameras, lighting fixtures, and most importantly, a professional crew.

Presently, the Diocesan programs are aired on local Armenian Channels and are broadcast on the internet via “YouTube” and “Vimeo” platforms.

This department keeps the Western Diocese active on social media platforms, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Aimed at providing spiritual nourishment and promoting Christian values, the Christian Education Department holds weekly Bible study sessions, lectures, seminars, spiritual retreats, etc.

Close to 200 pamphlets, brochures and over 100 books of religious, theological, educational, sacramental, and devotional nature have been prepared and printed by this department since 2003.

The Christian Education Department also prepares radio and TV programs on various ethical and religious issues.

ARCHIVES

Shortly following his election, Archbishop Derderian sought it necessary to restructure the archives of the Western Diocese. To accomplish this task, new rooms were furnished with archival cabinets, and proper staff was assigned to reorganize the files in a professional manner. An enormous amount of files were digitized and stored in the digital database facilitating the entire work process.

THE “BAIDSAR TERPANJIAN” BOOKSTORE

On June 15, 2007, the Primate presided over the official opening ceremony of the “Baidasar Terpanjian” Bookstore of the Western Diocese. The bookstore is home to numerous religious, educational and literary publications. Multimedia (CDs and DVDs) content, souvenirs and children’s publications are also available in the bookstore.

THE “AGA SARGSYAN” LIBRARY

The official opening ceremony of the “Aga Sargsyan” Library of the Western Diocese was held on June 6, 2006 and was presided over by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. The library houses over 9000 books and periodicals

some of which are out of print and are extremely valuable. The collection of books is mostly comprised of individual donations.

“ZORAYAN” MUSEUM

On September 11, 2010, the Zorayan Museum of the Western Diocese was dedicated by His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of all Armenians during his Fourth Pontifical Visit to the Western Diocese. The dedication coincided with the day of the consecration of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral. As a well-known and respected venue within the community, the “Zorayan” Museum has hosted the exhibits of such renowned artists as Carzou and Pinajian. Presently, the Zorayan Museum houses exquisite historical and religious artifacts such as manuscripts, vestments, precious metals, and coinage.

YOUTH DEPARTMENT

This department is in charge of youth missions and outreach. Under the supervision of the Youth Department fall the Sr. and Jr. ACYO (Armenian Church Youth Organization), CYMA (Christian Youth Mission to Armenian), Summer Camp, Annual Retreats, Sport Weekend, etc. Not only does the Youth Director organize, plan, and execute the general activities of the year, but also coordinates the work of the different chapters throughout the Diocese.

“ARCHBISHOP VATCHE HOVSEPIAN” SUMMER CAMP

Neighboring the famous Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks, the 160 acre plot in the scenic Dunlap community of Fresno County serves as campgrounds for the “Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian” summer camp, owned and operated by the Western Diocese. Acquired on December 3, 1987, the campgrounds underwent a series of additions and renovations during the Primacy of Archbishop Derderian. Such additions included the building of new log cabins, the addition of the tennis and basketball courts, the boat house, “Lion’s Den,” and a miniature outdoor theater.

At Archbishop Hovnan Derderian's initiative, on July 15, 2013, the Armenian Church Summer Camp was renamed "Archbishop Vatche Hovsepien Summer Camp" in honor of the former Primate.

Presently, the construction of a Chapel dedicated to the late Primate of the Western Diocese and Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, H.B. Abp. Torkom Manoogian, and a multipurpose hall are in their planning stages.

RENOVATIONS, ADDITIONS, AND UPDATES IN THE ARSHAG AND ELEANOR DICKRANIAN DIOCESAN COMPLEX

During the Primacy of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Diocesan Headquarters and the adjacent area underwent a complete renovation. The renovated areas included the Nazareth and Sima Kalaydjian Banquet Hall, the Paul Brothers Galleria, the Armen Hampar Reception Room, the administrative offices, the Primate's reception room, the computer lab and the chancellor's office. New offices and departments were established. The renovations were completed in April of 2013 and the Administrative building was named "**Western Diocese Turpanjian Diocesan Building.**"

The functionality of the renovated facilities allowed the Diocese to hold numerous religious and cultural events within its confines transforming the Diocese Headquarters into the spiritual and cultural center of the Armenian community in Los Angeles.

COUNCILS, COMMITTEES, AUXILIARY BODIES, AND PROGRAMS

"We are all partakers in the mission of the Church"
Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

As a part of the Diocesan restructuring, the number of committees and auxiliary bodies were multiplied during the Primacy of His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian. They are:

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

The Diocesan Assembly, presided by the Primate, is the representative body of the Parishes and the legislative body of the Diocese. Convening once a year (usually for three-day sessions), the Assembly is comprised of delegates from all parishes across the Western Diocese.

DIOCESAN COUNCIL

The Diocesan Council, with the Primate as its President, and comprised of members from the Diocesan Assembly, is the Executive Body of the Diocese. The Council oversees the general governance of the Diocese. The Diocesan Council elects its chair at the beginning of each Council's term of office.

DIOCESAN STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Institutions prosper when they follow a uniquely designed strategy. The Diocesan Strategic Planning Committee was formed by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian shortly after his election as Primate. The Committee is one of the most important bodies of the Diocese which seeks to effectively plan and pave the path to the future.

WESTERN DIOCESE ENDOWMENT FUND (WDEF)

The WDEF is one of the pillars of the financial security and stability of the Western Diocese. Income derived from the fund sponsors educational programs, humanitarian missions, building projects and many other missions. Established in 1979, the contributions to the Western Diocese Endowment Fund have increased dramatically since 2003 thus further expanding the operations of the Western Diocese.

LADIES' SOCIETY CENTRAL COUNCIL

The Ladies' Society Central Council is the governing body of all the chapters of Ladies Societies throughout the Western Diocese. In

the last decade, the LSCC has organized numerous events including retreats, cultural activities and women's day of prayer. In 2010, the Ladies Society Central Council became one of the many Godfathers of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral.

LADIES AUXILIARY COMMITTEE

This committee is comprised of dedicated women with wealth of experience and unparalleled record of service, who not only provide valuable counsel to the chapters of the Ladies Society but also organize various Diocesan events contributing to the financial stability of the Diocese. The Debutante Ball is the signature event of this committee. In 2010, the Ladies Auxiliary Committee became a Godfather of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral in 2010.

ARMENIAN CHURCH YOUTH ORGANIZATION (ACYO)

The ACYO was established by the late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan in 1946 for the Dioceses of North America to build a venue through which young Armenian Americans could grow within the context of the Armenian Church and hold fast to the values of their people.

The purpose of this venerable organization is to integrate its members into the life of the church by providing opportunities for Worship, Service, Education, and Fellowship in Christ according to the doctrines and traditions of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

With each generation, the organization strives to develop the tools to address the ever changing nature of American culture and adapt to communicate the true meaning of Christ's message and value of our Armenian Apostolic faith.

Inspired by Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan's vision, Primate Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, initiated the Pan-ACYO in the summer of 2008 bringing together the Armenian youth from across the globe. Besides the regional meetings throughout the year, the Pan-ACYO holds its annual convention in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

In 2004, the Stewardship Committee of the Western Diocese was formed to address the shortage of future spiritual leaders of the Armenian Community within the geographical boundaries of the Western United States. A survey conducted in 2004, following the election of His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian as the Primate, indicated that the average age of clergy within the jurisdiction of the Western Diocese was about 65. This was a clear indication that the Diocese would shortly be facing an acute shortage of clergy, and that steps were needed to address this situation in order to ensure the future vitality of our Armenian Churches and communities.

Thus, the first priority of the Stewardship Program was to recruit, educate, and train young candidates to serve as future clergy. Following their ordainment by the Primate, they would then be ready to be assigned to parishes. The acute shortage of clergy was met with a two-pronged approach: 1) to educate young deacons at seminaries within the United States; and 2) to bring in from overseas recently ordained clergy to serve at the Western Diocese following a reorientation and training program. This approach has been very fruitful in that, as of this reporting, most of our established churches, as well as our new mission parishes, have young clergy assigned by the Primate, and feedback from those parishes has been overwhelmingly positive.

JUNIOR GODFATHERS COMMITTEE

The Junior Godfather Program is designed on the basic principle that Godfathers are guardians of the faith who are entrusted with protection of our Christian faith that has guided our nation through the chapters of history. It is the goal of the Junior Godfather Program to provide opportunity for all Armenian children and youth to bond with the church and to commit to become guardians of the faith of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church. Once the child/youth becomes Junior Godfather, his/her name is etched on a fruit of the

pomegranate tree carved on the wall of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral. The importance of Junior Godfathers is the chain that links them to the liturgical life of St. Leon Cathedral and the Armenian Apostolic holy Church.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COUNCIL (CEC)

Christian Education Council is in charge of the Sunday Schools of the Western Diocese. Through effective collaboration with local parishes, the council, along with the instructors, strive to bring children closer to God through a nurturing life of prayer, reflection on the Bible, and knowledge of the Armenian Orthodox Traditions in order to become active life-long members of the Armenian Apostolic Church Community. In an effort to ensure uniformity, a special curriculum and proficiency guidelines were created. At the conclusion of 2011, a formal Catechist Credential Program was established offering Continuing Education Credits to Catechists within our diocese. This continuing education program undoubtedly motivates the members of our Faith Formation Teams throughout the Diocese, to nurture their personal faith journey.

The Council also provides financial support to newly formed Sunday Schools of the Diocese.

SATURDAY SCHOOLS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Under the direction of His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Western Diocese has more than ten Saturday Schools in California with more than 500 students. The schools aim to build a strong foundation for Armenian identity enhancement in our young generation. The language and culture curriculum instills knowledge of the Armenian language, history, religion, and culture.

The curriculum is based on California language teaching standards, and provides teachers with lesson plans, instructional methods, strategies and activities. All schools use the same texts and educational materials.

ARMENIAN EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE

Established in 2013, this committee works in collaboration with daily Armenian schools in the area ensuring that Armenian and religious studies are taught at the highest level. Furthermore, the Armenian Educational Committee provides training opportunities for the instructors of Armenian and Religious studies.

ABP. HOVNAN DERDERIAN SCHOLARSHIP FUND COMMITTEE

The Archbishop Hovnan Derderian Scholarship Fund assists deserving young men and women of Armenian descent in achieving a secondary and undergraduate school education. Furthermore, it awards scholarships to help fill unmet financial needs of students in the pursuit of educational opportunities.

The committee works hard to ensure that no deserving scholar in our community is deprived of an education due to an unmet financial need.

The ultimate vision of the Abp. Hovnan Derderian Scholarship Fund is to mold leaders to be of service to the global community of faith. The recipients of this scholarship are expected to demonstrate impeccable Christian character, competence and commitment through leadership in their churches, communities and professions.

PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

In the last few years, the PTO of Western Diocese has worked closely with the Parent-Teacher Organizations of local Armenian Schools, offering guidance to the schools as it pertains to religious and Armenian studies. Unlike the Armenian Educational Committee, which primarily works with school administrations and instructors, the PTO of the Western Diocese collaborates with parents involving them in the educational process of their children.

ARMENIAN IDENTITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

This program, specifically designed for the 15-30 age-group, was launched in 2012. It was designed to equip the participants with a sound knowledge of the history of the Armenian Church and the Armenian people, as well as to introduce them to the Armenian culture through immersion. During the three-day program, participants attend lectures and seminars, learn Armenian music and dance, and indulge themselves in the rich Armenian cuisine.

RELIGIOUS RETREAT COMMITTEE

The Religious Retreat Committee organizes annual retreats to promote collective prayer in a tranquil atmosphere, where the faithful can strengthen their spirituality through religious lectures, meditation, and pastoral guidance of the Diocesan clergy. Far from urban noise and daily hustle, the participants are granted a unique opportunity to reconnect with God and His wonderful creation. In the natural setting and monastic seclusion, the faithful finds it easier to concentrate, reflect, and pray.

CHRISTIAN STUDY COURSES

Christian Study Courses (CSC), a mission supported by Diocesan Primate His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, was launched in July 2012. The goal of CSC is to spread the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to promote Christian values, and to prepare catechists, staunch defenders of the Christian faith.

Unlike regular bible studies, these courses discuss biblical and dogmatic issues from the theological point of view, also incorporating the authentic and genuine teachings of the ancient church fathers.

DISCIPLES' MISSION

The Disciples' Mission of the Western Diocese organizes pilgrimages to Diocesan parishes, to create a mutual Christian bond and fellowship between parishioners and to teach the history, theology,

and doctrine of the Armenian Apostolic Church through means of discussions and lectures. Established in 2012, the Disciples Mission has visited close to 10 parishes and communities.

AMBASSADORS OF FAITH

With the inception of “Ambassadors of Faith” in 2013, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese, envisioned a new leadership strategy, which would utilize the influence of well-respected civic leaders in communicating and promoting the mission of the church as imparted to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The final outcome is a shared commitment to the common faith and commonweal of the Armenian community and the Western Diocese. As St. Peter the Apostle duly conveys in 1 Peter 3:13, ambassadors are those individuals who present their noble values and are equipped to answer questions with grace and wisdom.

Historically, the laity has always been involved in the life of the church at different levels, including in its leadership. The lay leaders have represented the views and expectations of their respective communities in different church councils as well as served in various advisory boards. In today’s multidimensional ministry, more than ever, the church leadership should be a joint venture that equally engages the clergy and the laity working together for the common vision.

Loyal to the teachings of our Lord, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and her sacred tradition, Ambassadors of Faith (AOF) are called to be facilitators between the hierarchy and the congregation by translating the “hefty” church language and making its “lofty” perceptions more comprehensible on a peer-to-peer level. In other words, AOF provides a voice to articulate the message of the Armenian Church, the role of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, and the goals of the Western Diocese as well as its function in the society at large.

“ZVARTNOTS” CULTURAL COMMITTEE

The Western Diocese has been home to hundreds of cultural activities and events throughout the past decade. Considering the sheer number of events organized by the Diocese, and the need to have those events organized on a coordinated and regular basis, “Zvart-nots” Cultural Committee was formally established in July 2011.

The main purpose of the committee is to preserve and promote Armenian Language, literature, identity and heritage in the diaspora through literary evenings, concerts, lectures, and other cultural events.

ASSOCIATION OF ARMENIAN CHURCH CHOIRS (AACCWD)

In order to ensure uniformity in performing the liturgical hymns of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Association of Armenian Church Choirs of Western Diocese (AACCWD) was founded in 2003, immediately after the election of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian as the Diocesan Primate.

The main objective of this association is to promote the teaching of the sacred music of the Armenian Church, encouraging choirs to learn and adhere to the liturgical rites, canons, and traditions imparted to us by the church fathers.

In 2007, through the arduous efforts of AACCWD, the Western Diocese published a Book of Liturgical Hymns especially for its Choirs. Three years later, an audio CD was released for the Diaconate of the Diocese. Additionally, at the initiative of AACCWD, the Western Diocese released a CD of the Divine Liturgy as arranged by Komitas Vardapet.

Besides regular meetings and its annual convention, the association organizes regional workshops to assist local choirs within the Diocese.

SHNORHALI MUSIC COMMITTEE

Music and song remain as the best expression of our inner world. Among other nations in the world, Armenians have created splendid music that is distinct and flavorful to their rich culture.

In efforts to promote and share the beauty of genuine Armenian music, the Shnorhali Music Committee comprised of a number of professional musicians was established by the Primate in 2013.

DATEV OUTREACH

Since opening its doors in 2012, Datev Outreach has provided numerous community awareness programs. Centered on the alarming issue of domestic violence, it has organized major walkathons through the neighborhoods of Glendale and Burbank. Datev Outreach has since been providing various services such as one-on-one counseling, or computer literacy courses to individuals affected by domestic violence. In the words of Rev. Fr. Vazken Movsesian, founder of Datev Outreach, "Ours is a holistic approach, as Christ himself taught us – to heal the sick, to mend the brokenhearted and to proclaim the power of love over evil. What we are doing now is the first step in a bigger project to provide sanctuary, resources and empowerment to the members of our community who suffer domestic violence."

CHRISTMAS BALL COMMITTEE

The Christmas Ball Committee has played a vital supporting role for the Western Diocese since 2003. The tradition to honor and acknowledge young professionals and leaders in the legal, medical, educational, communication/media, political and philanthropic fields was initiated by Archbishop Derderian at the beginning of his primacy. Every year, in a festive note, we conclude the year with the Christmas Ball, celebrating the achievements of the Diocese and the Armenian community at large.

PROTOCOL COMMITTEE

Representing the thousands of Armenian Americans living within the jurisdiction of the Western Diocese, in August 2005 the Primate sought it necessary to establish a protocol committee, an organizational body aimed at strengthening the ties between government officials, their constituencies and the Western Diocese. It is noteworthy that our events are attended by numerous government officials on the local, state, and national level on a regular basis. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Protocol Committee, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America has become a highly recognizable and respected institution.

ECUMENICAL AND INTER-FAITH RELATIONS

The City of Los Angeles is admittedly a megalopolis of religious and cultural diversity on the world stage. Located within the boundaries of the Greater Los Angeles Area, the Western Diocese actively participates in the ecumenical dialogue and takes part in inter-faith events. Since 2003, due to the active involvement of the Primate, the ecumenical and inter-faith relations have been strengthened.

Today, the Western Diocese is represented in the Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders (LACRL), the Southern California Ecumenical Council (SCEC), Faith and Order, Oriental Orthodox Churches, Los Angeles Inter Religious Council, Glendale Religious Leaders Association, Ecumenical Relations in Sacramento and the Arizona Ecumenical Council.

MISSIONS IN ARMENIA

"Armenia is an everlasting truth..."
Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

ETCHMIADZIN CHILDREN'S FUND (ECF)

Since its establishment in 1990, the Etchmiadzin Children's Fund has extended a helping hand to thousands of children from disadvantaged families in Armenia, including orphans. With the generous support of benefactors, ECF helps to reduce the stress of economic hardship in the lives of needy children in Armenia, allowing them instead to focus on staying in schools and developing into productive members of society.

Throughout the years, ECF emerged to become a robust program with permanent donors and a huge army of supporters. For this continued success we owe, of course, to our diligent Primate, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian as well as past and present chairs and committee members, who through their conscientious and dedicated work became the embracing hands of our Lord for the needy children in Armenia.

MER HOOYS – HOUSE OF HOPE

"Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5)

Mer Hooys is an independently formed 501c3 non-profit California corporation that is directly affiliated with and supported by the Western Diocese. The program operates from the Nakashian Children's Support Center in Yerevan. Mer Hooys is also a registered institution of the Holy Mother See, providing protections that afford the Board the ability to operate independent of significant government involvement.

The program mission is to provide a home and educational program for teens in Armenia from disadvantaged lifestyles, such as abusive families, institutions, and boarding homes. The program provides a full educational menu as a supplement to public school, including training in religion, multiple languages, computer skills, personal health, art, music and dance, and seminars with respect to dangers of human trafficking, prostitution and domestic violence.

CHRISTIAN YOUTH MISSION TO ARMENIA (CYMA)

Originally established in Canada in 1992 by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Christian Youth Mission to Armenia (CYMA) of Western Diocese serves to unify and strengthen the Armenian community by creating a bridge between the youth of the Diaspora and our Homeland through collaborative participation in the social, religious, professional and cultural life in Armenia.

SISTER CHURCH PROGRAM

The Sister Church Program was founded to provide financial support to the churches in Armenia through the local parishes of the Western Diocese.

Currently, through the Sister Church Program, the Western Diocese supports 14 parishes in Armenia, Artsakh and Georgia. Participating parishes include:

- St. John Garabed, Hollywood – Holy Resurrection (Diocese of Armavir)
- St. John Garabed, San Diego – St. John Mkrtich (Diocese of Artsakh)
- St. Gregory the Illuminator, Pasadena – St. Mary (Diocese of Gougark)
- St. Peter, Van Nuys – St. Sarkis (Stepanavan)
- St. Mary, Costa Mesa – St. Mary (Tashir)
- St. John, San Francisco – St. John (Sisian)
- St. James, Los Angeles – St. Gregory the Illuminator (Goris)

- St. Kevork, Glendale – the Savior (Musa Ler) and Holy Resurrection (Parakar)
- Armenian Church of Crescenta Valley – St. Nshan (village of Gai)
- St. Leon Armenian Cathedral, Burbank – St. Kevork Cathedral (Tbilisi, Georgia)
- Armenian Church of Riverside – St. Narekatsi (Alaverdi)
- St. Garabed, Rancho Mirage – Diocese of Georgia
- St. Paul, Fresno – Village of Tsovinar Sunday School (Diocese of Gegharkunik)
- St. Vartan, Oakland – St. Mariané (Ashtarak)



MISCELLANEOUS PROJECTS IN ARMENIA

Motherland Armenia and Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin are the two important strongholds that safeguard and preserve our Christian Armenian identity in the Diaspora. The faithful benefactors of the Western Diocese realize it very clearly that our prosperity, progress, and growth in here are conditioned by the impregnability of the two strongholds. Having this in mind, the benefactors of the Western Diocese went beyond the geographical limits to get involved in church building and other God-pleasing projects in Armenia. More specifically, through the generous donations of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian, the Harichavank monastery and the adjacent theological seminary were completely renovated. Benefactors Bedros and Anna Oruncakciel made it possible for the building of the Conference Hall and the Gymnasium in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. Furthermore, Drs. Petros and Karine Taglyan made a generous contribution to the library of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in memory of Dr. Yeghia Taglyan. Diocesan benefactor John Stevens of blessed memory, sponsored the renovation of the church in the village of Berd.

Lastly, with the active participation of Diocesan benefactors, more than a million dollars was raised for the Stewardship Fund of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. The funds will be allocated for the

education, training and pastoral preparation of future clergymen of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

DIOCESAN CLERGY

“A clergyman, as a humble servant of the Church, ought to extend to the flock of Christ an invitation to a new life”

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

In order to meet the spiritual needs of the largest Armenian community outside Armenia, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian found it necessary to enrich the Diocese with young and capable clergymen.

Thus, in the last decade, 9 clergymen were invited to the Western Diocese for administrative or pastoral duties, 6 young clergymen have been ordained as priests, 270 were ordained as deacons and sub-deacons, and 315 as acolytes.

ST. LEON ARMENIAN CATHEDRAL

“The vision of the Diocesan Cathedral is the crowning of our faith.”

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

The vision of building the Diocesan Cathedral dates back to 1927, since the establishment of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. This vision has always brought together the faithful under the leadership of our former Primates. It is during the Primacy of His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian that this vision truly gained momentum and was realized.

The Ground blessing Ceremony of the Cathedral was held on October 2, 2007 and was presided over by His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians. On September 11, 2010, the Pontiff, again, presided over the consecration of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral, the spiritual center of the Western Diocese.

This magnificent cathedral bears the name of St. Ghevont (St. Leon, Leontius, Leontine, etc.) and his courageous clergy companions, collectively known as the Levontian Fathers, who gave their lives for their faith and their nation in 451 AD⁷.

Designed by renowned architect Kaaren Khoudikian, the St. Leon Cathedral synthesizes the classical Armenian and modern architecture. Stain-glass windows and red tufa exterior give the Cathedral an unmistakable Armenian look. The entire compound and the Cathedral itself is adorned with hundreds of Khackkars (Armenian cross-stones) carved by distinguished artist and sculptor Gaspar Gharibian.

CATHEDRAL'S CONSTRUCTION AND FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

The Construction Committee of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral was formed in 2005 in order to manage the planning and execution of the construction process. The Committee performed its obligations flawlessly. Today, after the completion of the Cathedral, the Construction Committee continues to oversee construction projects, renovations, and general maintenance projects at the Western Diocese.

⁷ In 450 AD, hundreds of Persian magi came to Armenia with the intention to forcefully convert Armenian Christians into their pagan religion, namely Zoroastrianism. St. Ghevont and his companions resisted the magi in all possible ways and drove them back until the Persian army descended upon Armenia again in 451 AD. St. Vartan Mamigonian was leading the battle in the field of Avarayr along with St. Ghevont and other priests, who not only fought on the front lines, but also spiritually encouraged the soldiers.

The tremendous support and the tireless efforts of the Fundraising Committee of St. Leon Cathedral cannot be overlooked. The committee had started to raise funds through various means way before the construction of the Cathedral. The dedicated committee members, to this date, continue their mission and organize community events as well as private receptions to raise necessary funds for the prosperity of the cathedral.

CATHEDRAL LADIES' GUILD

St. Leon Cathedral Ladies Guild was founded in 2010, under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian. The Guild organizes cultural and community events to support the St. Leon Cathedral. Additionally, the Ladies Guild of St. Leon Cathedral raises funds and spearheads initiatives for increasing community involvements by promoting unity.

The Cathedral Ladies' Guild was instrumental in raising funds for the Holy Martyrs Monument erected in the Turpanjian Plaza at the Diocesan Complex on the occasion of the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide.

Cathedral's Ladies Guild is proud to be a "Life Steward" of the Diocesan Stewardship Program, as well as one of the Godfathers of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral.

CATHEDRAL'S "LITTLE ANGELS" SATURDAY SCHOOL

The school was founded in September 2010 and has been widely known and respected within the community. Its enrollment grows on a yearly basis with students eager to learn their mother tongue.

The highly qualified and experienced teachers use special textbooks prepared by the Ministry of Education of Republic of Armenia and a curriculum based on California language teaching standards to teach Eastern Armenian, Armenian History, and culture to children from age 6 to 16.

On April 9, 2015, the Ministry of the Diaspora, in collaboration with the World Armenian Congress and the Union of Armenians in Russia held an annual contest in Armenia's capital Yerevan. The contest honored those institutions in the Diaspora with notable achievements in the preservation of the Armenian identity. Of the ninety-five institutions and organizations, the “Little Angels” Saturday School of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral was honored with the top prize as Guardians of the Armenian Language. The Cathedral's Saturday School was awarded a Certificate of Excellence, a souvenir trophy as well as a monetary prize.

KHACHADOURIAN JOINT CHOIR

Following the consecration of St. Leon Armenian Cathedral, it became necessary to form a more uniform Choir comprised of professional singers. For over three decades, the Khachadourian Choir has earned the respect of the community through the Choir's powerful and inspiring voices.

The Choir eloquently performs the hymns of the Divine Liturgy on Tabernacle Feasts and special occasions, mesmerizing the faithful with their professional renditions.

NEW CHURCHES AND MISSION PARISHES

“The establishment of parishes within the Western Diocese is one of the most crucial missions, as with the formation of each parish, a new family is formed.”

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

Prior to the Primacy of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Western Diocese had 25 parishes under its jurisdiction. In the last ten years, nine church buildings were acquired and nine new parishes were formed.

NEWLY CONSTRUCTED CHURCHES

- St. Peter, Glendale (Consecrated on January 4, 2004)
- St. Gregory the Illuminator, Pasadena (Consecrated on September 29, 2007)
- St. Kevork, Portland (Consecrated on March 22, 2009)
- St. Apkar, Scottsdale (Consecrated on September 20, 2009)
- St. Sarkis, Santa Clarita (Consecrated on December 20, 2009)
- St. Leon Armenian Cathedral, Burbank (Consecrated on September 11, 2010)
- St. Garabed, Rancho Mirage (Consecrated on January 7, 2012)
- Holy Resurrection, Seattle (Consecrated on January 14, 2012)
- Armenian Church of Crescenta Valley (Blessed and Dedicated on August 11, 2012)
- Armenian Church of Las Vegas (currently under construction)

NEW MISSION PARISHES

- Denver, Colorado
- Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Tucson, Arizona
- Boise, Idaho
- Palmdale, California
- Ventura County, California
- Victorville, California
- Riverside, California
- Carmel, California

It is worth mentioning that new properties were acquired for the Crescenta Valley, Las Vegas, and San Diego parishes. The adjacent property to St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church was also acquired as part of the expansion process of the parish. The Taglyan Cultural Complex was built next to St. John Garabed Armenian Church in

Hollywood and the Kirkjan Hall was built in the adjacent area to the Armenian Church of the Desert as part of an expansion project.

ARMENIAN SCHOOLS

“We must make it our mission to instill in the hearts of the youth the unshakable Christian faith of our Church forefathers in order that they may walk alongside God and be immersed in His love.”

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

The Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America continues educating the youth in efforts to preserve our Christian faith, our rich heritage and our identity.

The Diocese is actively engaged in the curriculum of five Armenian Schools. They include AGBU Manoogian-Demirjdian School, AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian School, T.C.A. Arshag Dickranian School, Little Angels Art School and Alfred and Marguerite Hovsepien School. Religious courses are offered at the above mentioned schools. The tens of Diocesan Saturday and Sunday Schools offer Armenian classes and teach children to walk the path leading toward God.

On several occasions throughout the year, the Primate pays pastoral visits to the local schools where he meets with the students, faculty and PTO.

ST. GREGORY HOVSEPIAN SCHOOL

St. Gregory Alfred and Marguerite Hovsepien School, established in 1984, is a Pre-K to 8th grade bilingual institution with over 200 students. Accredited by WASC, the school board has set very high academic standards to the point where graduates are accepted to the very best high schools in the area and continue their education to the university level.

In the safest possible environment, the school strives to impart the students with solid and multidimensional education to cultivate conscientious scholars, critical thinkers, creative visionaries, environmentalists, appreciators of the arts, and most importantly, confident Armenian-American Christians.

Additionally, the school offers extracurricular subjects such as Choir, Computer Sciences, Dance, Drama, Gardening, Poetry, and Visual Arts. The gardening program, particularly, has enticed the school community to reuse, reduce and recycle. Finally, the after school sports programs have enthused K-8 students to join basketball and volleyball teams. Recently, chess (as a mental sport) was added to the after school activities.

VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

“We must always search for and find the servant of Christ who fulfills an obligation with dignity and the noblest of hearts”

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

In general, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church is an inclusive institution in nature and strives to maintain good relationship with all organizations and establishments that serve the interests of the Armenian community, and whose missions are somehow aligned with the mission of the Western Diocese.

As the spiritual center of the community, the Western Diocese takes pride in fond mutual relations it has had established throughout the years with numerous Armenian and non-Armenian organizations and associations, as well as media outlets.

EPILOGUE

Indeed, since its establishment in 1927, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America continues to grow, prosper, and thrive. Especially, during the Last decade we have seen the Diocese in full action catalyzing the positive change in every façade of its ministry through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Primate, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian has made it very clear that nothing can hinder the wave of Change as it starts to sweep through our lives. Stereotypes, traditionalism, misoneism, conservative mindset, or comfortability are simply unable to withstand the incredible power of the avalanche that brings renewal, freshness, and new perspective. Where the Holy Spirit is present, there cannot be stagnation. When the Holy Spirit is working, everything is in motion.





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