

Interviewer: Eric R. Bruder

INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY

Name: Father Vartan Kassabian

Date and Place of Birth: Dec 17, 1957 Providence, RI

Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Interview Date, Time, and Place:

10-29-2001 / 8:30 Am at St. Gregory Armenian Church

Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):

Father Vartan spoke with passion about Jesus Christ, the call on his life to minister, the resilience of the Armenian people, and the role of the church within the Armenian community.

He spoke of the history of the Armenian people and within that context he elaborated upon the twentieth century holocaust at the hands of the Turks.

He also spoke at length on the parallels of each holocaust as the truth about them was suppressed and in some cases denied.

He also spoke about the 'Golden Age' of Armenian literature and the results which that era brought about in the people of Armenia.

Lastly, he just returned from a visit to Armenia in August of 2001.

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:

As Father Kassabian is devoted to the people he serves, the interview was conducted as a prelude to a full days visitations. Thusly, the length of the interview is one hour where as with a more liberal schedule; we might have spoken much longer,

Interview Summary: continued--

It will be clear from the recorded interview that the written record is shallow compared with the depth of the recorded narrative. In some cases he spoke in Armenian, which has 36 letters in the alphabet. At those times when he spoke in untranslatable terms I spelled phonetically as best I could.

I stopped the tape prematurely one time. Also, I spoke about Arthur Bedian as a potential interview subject. This comment seems out of place, as it is related to prior ongoing conversation which was prior to the tape recording.

Biographical summary

Father Vartan Kassabian

Father Vartan, as he likes to be called, has the distinction of being the first American born Armenian Orthodox priest. He received the call to the priesthood at the age of ten and vividly relates the feelings of being drawn by the voice of Jesus Christ.

The emphasis on the resilience and determination of the Armenian people throughout recorded time is interwoven in the interview and is part of the magnetizing force that has always drawn the Armenian people to the Church. Father Vartan is also very informative on the circumstances surrounding the holocaust of the Armenians at the hand of the Turks, and the effect that that single event had on the course of subsequent history.

While Father Vartan is a full-time minister of the Gospel, he also is a husband, and father to three children. Their names and ages are as follows: Scott 25, Susan 19, and Megerdich 12. His wife's name is Pauline Kassabian and she is the mother to all of his children.

Father Vartan was born December 17, 1957 in Providence, Rhode Island. He attended Providence College in Rhode Island and from there traveled to Antelias, Lebanon where he attended the Armenian Theological Seminary from 1991-1992. Father Vartan then served at the former Bulgarian Church in Lincoln Place neighborhood at 7th St. and Maple St. for five years, until 1997. He then took on the responsibilities of St. Gregory Armenian Church in the suburbs of Granite City, located at 1014 W. Pontoon Rd. Since going to St. Gregory, he has been a part of a building project in which a new sanctuary was constructed in the classic Armenian architecture. He recounted the unique challenges that each station has posed in his service to the Armenian Church.

The sacrifices that are required to be effective in the ministry are enormous, as Father

Vartan related many of his duties in the interview. He is clearly distinguished among the servants that I have met, in that before anything cultural; the universal message of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in a voice which resonates the impact that the very same message has had on his life. The manner in which he gives all the credit for anything good in his life, to the singular goodness of God, illustrates his genuine love for and admiration to the one whom he serves. The written transcript can merely serve to document the text of our interview, while the passion with which he spoke is intrinsically etched to the spoken words which colored our time together.