

Thank You for the Music, Deacon Rubik Mailian

Contributor: Ardis Gregory

If you enter the Sanctuary at St. John Armenian Church on any given Sunday, you will hear the Komitas Choir singing sacred liturgical music during the service, also known as the *Badarak*. The music you hear weekly was written and arranged by Magar Yegmalyan, and on selected Sundays, Komitas Vartabed. It follows centuries old tradition interwoven with the Armenian Apostolic Church and handed down to us by our church ancestors.

This past September 2026 marked the 28th year of the St. John Armenian Church Komitas Choir has been directed and conducted by Deacon Rubik Mailian. Born in Tehran, Iran to Hovanes and Arax Mailian he came to the United States in 1985 to study music. He received graduate level vocal music, conducting, and theology degrees from the University of Houston, St. Nersess Seminary, and St. Vladimirs Seminary. He is an accomplished vocalist and has performed with nationally recognized opera theaters and symphony orchestras. He is an active member of American Choral Directors Association and served as past Chairman of the Sacred Music Council at the Eastern Diocese in New York where he continues his membership.

Deacon Rubik is Pastoral Assistant at St. John Armenian Church as well as Director of Sacred Music which requires his coordination, collaboration, mentoring, preparation and possession of a deep understanding of the Armenian Church service, music, liturgy and tradition. When serving at the altar he supports the pastor, deacons, altar servers, lectors and organist. As an instructor for the Altar Servers Program, he prepares Armenian youth to serve at the altar as acolytes, subdeacons, and deacons.

Through his leadership, the Komitas Choir has traveled extensively both nationally and internationally, sharing its music and uniting its voices with choirs from many different communities. Of particular interest was a trip to Armenia in 2007 by the St. John Armenian Church Komitas Choir which was the catalyst for creating the *Arts of Armenia* program dedicated to teaching children about Armenian literature, music, art, dance, food, and culture. The program is directed by Deacon Rubik and is chaired by Morgan Bell, who was given the staff by Denise Karakashian after her years long leadership.

Ongoing Arts of Armenia classes are held during a weeklong program and taught by professional teachers and artists from the Detroit metropolitan area. The curriculum includes, making ceramic arts, painting, cooking, Armenian dancing, traditional folk

songs and field trips to further enhance their education and enlightenment of Armenian culture and important events in Armenian history.

Deacon Rubik works continually to enhance the choir experience as he teaches new music and the repertoires of other church choirs and cultures. Over the years the Komitas Choir has been presented with opportunities to perform in the United States while visiting many Armenian churches. Internationally they have performed in Paris at the invitation of UNESCO in 2004, and in Armenia. He is deeply committed and grateful to the church and the choir as they bring this beautiful liturgical music to life. He recounts, "One of my most gratifying moments occurred on a particular Sunday morning when a non-Armenian guest attending Badarak approached me and said although he could not understand what we were singing, he felt that the music spoke to his heart. When I heard that, I knew we were doing something right."

Deacon Rubik resides in the metropolitan Detroit area with his wife, Dr. Joyce Yeghissian and their children Sevana and Areg, who are both college students. Currently he is busy expanding the Komitas Choir with additional voices and welcomes new members of all ages who come together to serve the Lord through their love of music.

On October 8, 2027, the St. John Armenian Church Komitas Choir will celebrate their 100th Anniversary. Deacon Rubik, along with members of the choir and community are preparing several events, including concerts and lectures, culminating in a Centennial Gala. If you are interested in joining the choir or helping with the anniversary events, please contact Deacon Rubik at (248) 286-1057 or email rubik@sjachurch.org.