

**Rev. Fr. Diran and Yeretzgin Rosalie Papazian Annual Retreat:
Connecting with God**

By Elise Papazian

On Saturday March 14, 2026, St John Armenian Church held its 31st annual Rev. Fr. Diran and Yeretzgin Rosalie Papazian Annual Retreat. More than 90 participants gathered for a special day of spiritual renewal, fellowship and reflection.

This year, the guest retreat leader was His Grace, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese. The chosen theme was centered around the title 'Connecting with God' and throughout the day, attendees were invited to step away from daily life distractions and open their hearts and minds to their relationship with God. Through prayers, introspection and shared discussion, all guests were reminded of the presence of God and the ways in which to grow closer to Him.

Those in attendance were touched by the day's spiritual depth, and, also by the strong sense of faith. It is here I must add, besides people from the local metro area, several people travelled from surrounding states, some as far as California. All the participants felt the warmth and hospitality evident through encouragement, understanding and fellowship.

The day began with a continental breakfast, and whereas years prior I solely took charge, this year everyone I asked answered the call to help including, Denise and George Boyagian, Vicki Sarkisian, Melanie Boskovich, and Chuck and Marie Semarjian. At midday, a tasty lunch was served and once again it was prepared by Faouzi and Jackie ElChemmas. All was lovingly arranged with the assistance of Joy Callan.

Thanks to Sara Andonian and Carol Cholmakjian, guests were individually served. 'Breaking bread' and shared meal moments provided additional opportunities for camaraderie and connection. Many thanks also to Karen

Mangune, Paul Andonian, Ann Marie Amerigian, Belinda Kabodian, Gayane Hovhanissyan, Harry Kezelian and Ron Ware.

Much appreciation to our own Parish Priest, Fr. Aren Jebejian, whose time and guidance greatly help to make this special day happen; I remain grateful for your directional counsel in helping me plan and coordinate these annual retreats in loving memory of both my parents, my heart is full.

The retreat concluded in the sanctuary with prayers and meditation and once again embraced the Holy Spirit, drawing the Lord Jesus Christ deep into our hearts and souls. As Bishop Mesrop articulated and shared his final words on this day, "The heart is the core of everything, we must talk with God, and may the seeds we planted today in our hearts continue to grow, bringing peace, strength and a deeper desire to walk with God each day."