

Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan's Presentation at St. Sarkis of DFW

By Mary Mukhtarian

The St. Sarkis Church of Dallas Fort Worth was delighted to host the Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Director of the Zohrab Center at the Eastern Diocese during the weekend of November 18-19, 2017. On Saturday evening Fr. Findikyan delivered an enlightening presentation entitled: "The Holy Badarak: 8 Things No One Ever Told You." The Kechejian Hall was full of parishioners who had come to listen to anything new about the Badarak (liturgy), and they were not disappointed. The lecture was followed by a lively question and answer period, and by popular request, a brief recap of the lecture was presented on Sunday following the liturgy. Here are brief notes from this unique presentation:

1. The Structure of the Badarak is Important

The structure of the Badarak, which we believe to be in four parts, is in fact one brief part, Preparation (when the priest puts on his vestments), followed by two longer parts Synaxis (the Word) and Eucharist (taking Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ), ending with another brief part, Last Blessing and Dismissal. It is important for people to realize that the community as a whole is active in all parts of the Badarak.

2. Holy Communion is More than Bread and Wine

Contrary to what we think, Holy Communion is not just the Bread and Wine that we receive as the Body and Blood of Christ, instead it is clear in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 that Communion is Participation, Fellowship, Partnership, Kinship, Collaboration and Community. Thus it is important to know that to receive the Holy Communion is not just the edible portion but the experience of the community together as it affirms the deeper connection with Christ.

3. Everything in the Badarak has Multiple Meanings

There are historical (practical/functional), and allegorical, spiritual, theological and symbolic meanings. Most of us are used to the interpretative understanding of the parts of the Badarak, but some would have been born out of necessity. For example, lighting of candles was started when churches did not have light, and candles were needed to see each other and for the priest to read the Bible. It did not hurt that Jesus is considered the light of the world, so candles have come to symbolize that as well. Actions of the priest are also rooted in ancient practice. What we call Tapor (procession) used to be the entrance of the priest into the church to worship, followed by the congregation. Over time there has been no need for that since the churches are open for people before the Badarak begins.

4. The Priest's Prayers are NOT the Priest's Prayers

These prayers are really the prayers of the whole community. We can take part in them, as he offers them on our behalf. The only personal prayers that a priest offers on his behalf are done just before he gets communion, prior to administering it to the community.

5. The Badarak is Multidimensional

Our Badarak is not linear, which would be interpreted as passing time. Instead, it is spiral with a beginning, middle and end, all interwoven for emphasis and effect. Repetition is important in the Badarak because it draws people deeper into the proceedings. The recognition factor helps people expect and be ready for the multiple blessings in which they take part. Several times during the Badarak the priest blesses the community, which reinforces the deeper attachment to the Badarak.

6. The Badarak is Greater than the Sum of its Parts

The beauty of the Badarak is that the whole meaning of the Badarak is contained in any one of its constituent parts. Every piece in the Badarak is unique, but already has the complete message in it. One could take any line from any prayer and will have the Badarak encapsulated in it, exactly like poetry.

7. The Badarak is NOT About Changing Bread and Wine

It is really about changing YOU and ME. St. Paul clarified that the Body of Christ is the church (community), and allowing the body and blood of Christ to work within us, we become incorporated with each other and we become a community of love. This helps us do the real work that we are meant to do, which is saving the world in the name of Jesus.

8. The Badarak is for the Salvation of the World

Nowhere in our Badarak is there any mention of our Badarak being prepared just for the Armenians. Instead it is meant to be for the whole world, and we are meant to take this love of the Jesus and pass it to others around the world as the message of the Badarak intends.

On Sunday, the V. Rev. Fr. Findikyan was the guest celebrant and preacher, and encouraged us all to take the message of the Badarak and spread it amongst others. Deacon Michael Sabounjian, who had accompanied Fr. Findikyan from New York, gave the children's sermon about gratitude and love for each other. Fr. Findikyan gave a brief recap of the evening's lecture, emphasizing that the Badarak is like a love song that keeps getting stronger as it spreads. He repeated that the Badarak is for us to learn to help everyone see the light through Jesus Christ.

The St. Sarkis community has a special bond with Fr. Findikyan not only for his incisive presentations, but also for the fact that he sponsored our Fr. Ghevond Ajamian, and let's not forget, that he is a Texan from Fort Worth. We look forward to welcoming Fr. Findikyan and Deacon Sabounjian again in the future.