

SETTING UP A BOOKSTORE FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PURPOSES IN YOUR PARISH

A. WHY EVERY ARMENIAN PARISH NEEDS A BOOKSTORE

Every Armenian parish needs to provide for its people a place where they can get materials for the following purposes:

1. To learn about the Christian religion;
2. To learn specifically what the Armenian Church believes and teaches;
3. To bring Christ into the home and to be able to worship in the home and practice Christianity in a way consistent with the teachings and traditions of the Armenian Church.



A church bookstore can accomplish the first two purposes, by providing Bibles, children's Bibles, and other books and literature which are informational and inspirational. The third purpose can be accomplished by providing prayer books that are from the tradition of the Armenian Church, as well as other objects which can be used in the home, such as traditionally Armenian styled icons.

There is an immediate need for such bookstores in our parishes. Most Armenians know very little about their religion and Church tradition. Many are ignorant of the basic tenants of Christianity. Most of those who have learned something of Christianity have done so from sources outside of our Church, and thus have learned a form of Christianity inconsistent with our Church's beliefs.

This has resulted in many people leaving the Church. It has also resulted in those people who have stayed in our Church supplanting the beliefs and traditions of our forefathers with beliefs and traditions which historically are very foreign, and which even in some cases are heretical in nature.

B. WHY PARISH BOOKSTORES SHOULD BE CONNECTED TO THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

The purpose of these bookstores needs to be primarily Christian Education. Having a store purely or primarily for fund raising purposes will not address the problems discussed above. Administering the parish bookstore through Sunday School will better preserve the educational and missionary purpose of the store.

Armenian Sunday School programs exist to educate and raise our children in the faith of the Armenian Church. However, any teacher can tell you that a child whose education is reinforced at home will learn better than a child whose education takes place purely at school. Providing a place where parents can get Bibles, children's Bibles, prayer books, and books explaining the faith to them, will provide these children with an environment at home which will support their education at Sunday School.

Furthermore, as stated above, these bookstores should not be for fundraising, but rather for educational purposes. Selling expensive items at high prices will result in fewer things being bought. The consequence will be less people getting informational and inspirational books and items into their home. That, of course, will be counter-productive.

C. WHAT KIND OF BOOKSTORE DOES MY PARISH NEED?

That depends on your church's size and demographics. A smaller parish will have less needs than a larger one. English speaking parishes will of course need more English materials than an Armenian speaking parish. The important thing is to have a place where people can go to get basic religious books and items. Your church may want to start with a small table in the narthex with a few Bibles, children's Bibles, a couple of prayer books and some pamphlets explaining the faith. From there it can expand, depending on the spiritual needs of the people.

D. RESOURCES FOR PARISH BOOKSTORES

1. Western Diocese and Eastern Diocese of the United States:
Western Diocese of the Armenian Church
818-558-7474
<http://www.armenianchurchwd.com>

St. Vartan Gift and Book Shop
(Eastern Diocese)
212-686-0710
<http://www.stvartanbookstore.com>

These two sources have books in both Armenian and English. These include Bibles, informational books about Christianity and the Armenian Church, inspirational books, children's books and prayer books. They also have other things, including icons, jewelry and gift items.

2. Conciliar Press
800-967-7377
<http://www.conciliarpress.com/>

Call and ask them to send you their book catalogue. Conciliar Press was started by former Protestants who converted to Orthodoxy. They have excellent booklets written to answer a lot of questions people ask after having been in contact with Protestantism. Questions such as, "Why do you pray to Mary?" "Why do you pray for the dead?" "Why do you baptize infants?" "Why do you call your priests 'Father'" and many more, are answered in these Conciliar Press booklets. Titles include: *Facing Up To Mary, Mary Ever-Virgin, Call No Man Father, Prayer and the Departed Saints, Which Came First: The Church or the New Testament?*

3. Festal Creations
866-455-4266
<http://www.festalcreations.com>

Run by Mr. Phil Tamoush, Festal Creations has gift items and costume jewelry from many Christian traditions, including the Armenian Church. Prices are reasonable. His items include Armenian Cross nightlights and suncatchers. Call him and ask for his catalogue and especially for information on Armenia items.

4. Ani's Icons
ani.babikyan@gmail.com

In addition to making Greek style icons, Ani Babikyan makes wood mounted icons in the traditional Armenian manuscript style. She makes them in both small and large sizes. Unfortunately, she does not have a website up yet, but if you e-mail her, she can send you pictures of her work.

5. Amazon.com

From Amazon.com, one can order the Orthodox Study Bible. It is an English Bible with the Old Testament translated from the Septuagint, one of the ancient manuscripts used by St. Mesrob in his translation of the Bible. It is therefore the English Bible most like the traditional Armenian Bible. It also has commentary and notes which are consistent with the tradition of the Armenian Church. It is a "must have" for any Armenian Church bookstore.