

# I RECYCLED THIS SERMON

I love recycling. Yes papers and plastics at church which, with Teresa Haidarian's help, we have done for a while at the church office. Yes paper and plastics at home which, since Narek was three we used to take personally to the recycling center. But my love of recycling goes deeper than just curbside recycling. My phone is recycled. My mom got an iPhone last year, so she asked if I wanted her old Galaxy S5. Yes of course! My vestments are recycled. This particular vestment belonged to a priest from the Prelacy church. Even this sermon is recycled! I gave a sermon like this on May 15, 2011 and looked back on it to put this sermon together.

Recycling a sermon is not ideal if it is because of laziness or lack of inspiration. But often recycling a sermon is a mark of the Holy Spirit at work. If in reading it over, God's Spirit still moves me- Praise God-that means it was made well and blessed the first time around, so why couldn't it be valuable if repurposed again? If the words were more God's than mine, and if things of God never change, we would expect a lot of recycling in church. In fact, that is why we recycle the readings every year. It is why we recycle the exact same Divine Liturgy, in essence, every week. Our church is a great lover of recycling, be it curbside or cosmic.

The Armenian Church you see is a very ecological kind of Christianity, and we celebrate that especially today. Red Sunday (Karmir Kiraki) is our church's celebration of the earth and creation; 1000 years before the world celebrated Earth Day, our 'Red Sunday' was a kind of earth day. Today we celebrate the rebirth of the land in spring when in Armenian lands, red flowers grow in the fields, hence 'Red Sunday.' So our church has endorsed stewardship of the earth for a long time, and in this way believes in recycling. But we also believe in recycling on a much deeper level, which goes to the heart of what it means to be Christian.

You see if Shahe and his family hadn't brought me these vestments, they would have been left in a closet somewhere for the moths to eat. If my Mom hadn't given me her phone it would have been thrown away. Taking something which is seen to have little to no value and transforming it into something very valuable is a special kind of recycling, we usually call it redemption, and this concept is at the heart of the Christian story.

Recycling something—repurposing it—gives something a second life. It makes something which was old and worthless, valuable and new. Recycling and repurposing in this way is something our Lord has been doing all along, and asks all Christians to follow his example. He took a sick and crazed King of Armenia, Drtad, and turned him into a God-fearing leader of the first Christian nation. He took an Armenian people decimated by the Ottoman Turks, took us from the deserts of Der Zor and blessed us with prosperity and new life in the Diaspora and independent Armenia.

But God's great recycling and repurposing is not something which happened in the past to some other people sometime. Our God is a living God. What he did then he does now if we are willing, which is why we recycle and repeat each week. You might say that God wants to recycle, repurpose each of us every week. I wonder if you feel recycled, repurposed, refreshed when you've come to church, prayed and taken communion? You should. I should. Sometimes you may not want to come, but when you do, Christ brings us new life through his word, prayer and communion. He takes away our worn out sinful and self-centered life of the past week, and repurposes us to be new creations.

Recycling and repurposing are important things which society is slowly catching on to, but they are things that God has already been doing for a long time. A prayer we say every week during Badarak perfectly captures this spirit of repurposing recycling, the spirit of Red Sunday. In preparation for communion I pray this on our behalf: "(Lord) Impress upon us the graces of your Holy Spirit, as you did upon the holy apostles, who tasted it and became the cleansers of the whole world."

The Armenian church has always been the recycle bin, the repurposing bin for the Armenian people and for individuals. As a people, when we were lost and of no use to the powers of the world, God remade us anew. As individuals, each week, when we confess and put aside our old sinful self, we are graced with communion with God. He recycles and repurposes us for a new week to do His will and His work-and as his apostles-to become cleansers of the whole world; now and always, amen.