

A VISIT WITH ZVART-FRIDAY AUGUST 7TH, 2026

By David Kazarian

Most of us know **Zvart Jambazian**, our feisty 90-plus-year-old friend and church member who lost her home, furniture, and many of her belongings during the hurricanes. With no close relatives nearby, Zvart eventually traveled to Maryland to live with her niece and her niece's husband.

Zvart has had more than her share of falls over the years. I experienced one of them firsthand when we were in Armenia. We were visiting a church with Mount Ararat in the background, and Zvart wanted to climb a hill to get a better view of the surrounding countryside. I was concerned that she might fall, so I accompanied her to the top, where she enjoyed the beautiful scenery.



I carefully guided her back down to the church.

Once we reached level ground, I turned my attention elsewhere. Zvart walked toward the church, did not see a curb, and fell onto the hard stones, breaking her wrist. That happened years ago, but unfortunately, falling has remained a recurring problem for her.

More recently, while her niece was traveling to California to visit her daughter, Zvart stayed with her nephew in New Jersey. While there, she fell and was sent to a rehabilitation facility to recover. I happened to have business in New Jersey and went to visit her. Even though she was in a nursing facility, Zvart was energetic and delighted to see me. She even recorded a message for our church, which I still hope to share with everyone during one of our Sunday social hours.

After recovering and returning to her niece's home, Zvart's balance was still not what it once had been. She fell again, this time sustaining serious injuries to her face and neck. Her niece was concerned that Zvart might not survive and told us that she was speaking only Turkish.

I wanted very much to visit her, so I brought Sason, who speaks Turkish, and asked Father Hovnan if he would come with us. He graciously agreed.

We flew to Baltimore and drove to Rockville last Friday, where Zvart was staying. When we saw her, I believe she was aware that we were there, although I cannot be certain. She responded to Father Hovnan's prayer, but she was in very serious condition.

After our visit, Zvart's niece and nephew graciously insisted that we have lunch with the family. Their kindness reminded me of something I have always believed: **our Armenian church is a family.**

I feel close to everyone in our church, and I believe many of our parishioners felt that same closeness to Zvart. I remember when she came to visit us after the hurricane. Her plane landed on a Sunday after

church had already begun, but she rushed to church because she wanted to be with her church family. When she entered the sanctuary, everyone applauded.

Zvart's niece and nephew were incredibly generous and welcomed us into their home. We shared a meal together and saw the loving environment in which Zvart had lived before her fall.

Our Church Family



On the flight home, I had several hours to reflect on what had happened and on the dedication of the people in our church.

Sason gave up an entire day to make the trip so he could translate if necessary and be there for Zvart.

Father Hovnan came to see her and pray with her in person—perhaps for the last time.

I've always said that I want to see people who are nearing the end of their lives while they are still with us, rather than waiting until they are in a casket. Even so, I almost wish I had not seen Zvart in such a condition. Her face was badly bruised, her eyes were swollen, and she was wearing a cervical collar under the constant care of the nursing staff. She was refusing food and drink.

But when Father Hovnan prayed, something remarkable happened. Zvart lifted both of her hands into the air, almost as if she were rejoicing.

That was the only moment when I saw the spirit and energy that we have known in Zvart over the years. I told Father Hovnan that I didn't know whether Zvart fully understood

that we were there.

But **God knew we were there.**

I believe Zvart will be welcomed into Heaven. She has been a faithful servant for many years and is the kind of compassionate human being God created each of us to be.

I am afraid I may never see Zvart alive again, but I am grateful that I had one last opportunity to visit her. I prayed for her on the plane home, and I will continue to pray for her in the days ahead.

John Burke, in his book *Imagine Heaven*, shares stories of people who have had near-death experiences and describes their accounts of Heaven. Reading those stories makes me think of Zvart. I am sure that when her time comes, she will be welcomed into that wonderful place—and that she will be sitting with the Lord, singing and rejoicing **as only Zvart can.**

(Zvart Jambazian went to her eternal rest on August 12, 2026. This piece was written 3 days earlier on August 9th)