



Saints Joachim & Anne
Armenian Apostolic Church

14 February 1991

His Grace Bishop Khajag Barsamian
Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian
Church of North America
630 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Your Grace:

As the Chairman of the Parish Assembly of Sts. Joachim & Anne Armenian Church, I have been charged to write this letter concerning the Assembly's position on Commemorative Observances of the Anniversary of the Genocide.

On the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Genocide, the entire Armenian community in this area joined together to form the 75th Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Greater Chicago. This commemorative committee of 60 members, consisted of 18 organizations representing all the Churches of the Diocese and Prelacy, the Protestant Congregational Church, all social, political, cultural and charitable organizations in the greater Chicago area.

The committee voted to remain intact to keep lines of communication open. At a meeting on February 5th, the Genocide Committee unanimously endorsed a plan to conduct Divine Liturgy services this coming April, with the participation of all the Chicagoland Churches. The service would be held at the St. James Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Chicago, as it was last year.

On February 10th, during our Annual Parish Assembly meeting, the Genocide Committee proposal was presented for consideration. Our Parish Assembly enthusiastically and unanimously approved our participation with the other Churches to commemorate the 76th Anniversary of the Genocide this April. Our pastor, Fr. Diran Papazian, informed us of your position of non-approval of joint observances with the Prelacy Churches based on the fact that **there is no established procedures for unity between our Churches.**

Our parishioners, without exception, voiced their great disappointment at this decision. Please bear with us as we describe our particular situation in this community. This decision would have a profound, serious effect on the very health, integrity and viability of the Armenian community in the Chicagoland area.

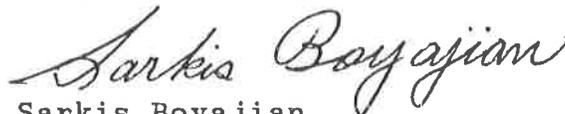
In the Chicago area, we have only 8,000 Armenians, a very small number compared to any other large city. Because the Armenian population here is so small, it is vital we work in concert with each other if we are to be a viable community. The 18 organizations here had been divided for 70 years. Last year through the advent of the 75th Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee, all of those organizations worked together in a superb, awe-inspiring harmony and camaraderie, that warmed the hearts of every Armenian in the Chicago area. The feelings and experiences were so beautiful and intensely exhilarating, that the 75th Commemorative Committee unanimously voted to establish this body as a permanent committee.

As you can understand, by the position the Diocese has taken, you have literally compromised this beautiful new-born committee. Your action will certainly create a schism and possibly destroy what the Chicagoland Armenians worked so hard and proudly achieved. It saddens us to think that our Church would have been responsible for the demise of this committee.

We urge you to review your position on this matter and hope you will render a favorable response as quickly as possible so that we can proceed with our plans for the April service.

We believe that once a year on the anniversary of the Genocide, the Armenian people should pray together, as one nation, for the peace of the souls of all victims.

Respectfully yours,



Sarkis Boyajian
Chairman
Annual Parish Assembly 1991



Lottie Mikaelian
Secretary
Annual Parish Assembly 1991