

March 21, 1975

Mrs. M. Buchakjian
32 Merion Drive
English Town, N.J. 07726

Dear Mrs. Buchakjian:

We were saddened by your letter of February 24 (post-marked March 16), though we were pleased that you were concerned enough to take the trouble to write to us.

We have been made aware of the problem from other sources, and are considering an early visit to the parish where we may confront the matter directly and personally.

Your concern with the Church, with the Armenian School and with our youth generally is altogether commendable, and the pain you feel when such good work is frustrated is natural and understandable.

But for us at least, your conclusions do not follow reasonably. The circumstances you describe should not discourage you from becoming a member of the parish; on the contrary, if the Church has meaning for you, as it obviously does, they should prompt you to join right away. No point of view, good or bad, prevails automatically; every point of view must have supporters in order to prevail. And the Church must have members, many members, concerned with its well-being, if it is to fulfill its purpose and achieve its mission.

The occurrences at the parish assembly, as you describe them, are surely deplorable. We will address ourselves to these. Meanwhile every parishioner, every member has a place in our scheme of things. If we renounce this place, if we abandon our responsibility, for whatever reason, we are all poorer for it.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian
Primate

Feb. 24, 1975

His Eminence
Archbishop Toros Manougian Primate
Diocese of the Armenian Church
630 2nd Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10016

Dear Serpazan Hays,

I am writing this letter to you as a concerned Armenian and one who was intending to join the St. Mary's Armenian Church in Elberon. Fortunately, before I made such a move, I attended the Parish Assembly Meeting which took place there on Jan. 16, 1975. Needless to say, I now have my reservations about joining the Church. What I witnessed that day broke my heart. I could not believe that my fellow Armenians could be so hopelessly narrow-minded. All of my life I've been taught to respect the Church and the Der Hays. I saw no respect for either that day. It brought tears to my eyes to hear a man stand up in front of approximately eighty people and call the

Der Hays a liar. This and many other incidents of ignorant disrespect took place in the Church itself. From what I could see, there were a few instigators in the group and the rest followed like blind puppy dogs.

Unfortunately, the same instigators have been selected to high positions, and that is why I fear that St. Mary's Church will not flourish as it should.

I got the distinct impression that they do not want the young people of the community and that is a mistake. They need the young & the young need the Church.

The Armenian School that has been established has met great opposition, and for what reason?! It can only be to the best interest of the community for an Armenian School to exist here.

I was born and raised in this country, and I truly believe that in this great "melting pot" known as the United States, it is very difficult to hold onto your nationality. I am very proud to be an Armenian, and I want my children to know the

same pride. Their home life is filled with it, but they need more. They need the Church and The St. Mary's Mesrobian Armenian School. How do you explain to a five year old child that she's not wanted there? My husband is on the Educational Committee for the school, and we believe in it very strongly. I myself have started an art class for the children. The greatest satisfaction of all is to see the enthusiasm of the teachers and the students. All of the teachers are volunteers and love being there. The children love the school. We have 35 registered, and not one of them is doing something he or she does not want to do. You would be delighted to see the progress we've made in this short time despite the limited facilities we have to work with. It is beyond comprehension that anyone can oppose such a thing. When you hear statements like "We don't need an Armenian School" - "It's not important." - "Why should we care and support it, we have no children." - it is very

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disappointing. Don't these people know that all of the Armenian children are theirs. That the whole future of Armenian life in this country is in the hands of the children and the youth. They are making a mockery of the whole idea of Armenianism.

Imagine how wonderful it could be with the ambition, enthusiasm and strength of the youth combined with the wisdom and experience of the seniors of the community. The dream of building a cultural hall here for everyone to use, but we need everyone's co-operation or that dream can't come true. Togetherness is one of the key words if we are to succeed.

Our Der Hayr and Yeretzgin are two of the hardest working people I have ever met. Their unselfish dedication should make us all very proud. And yet, there are people who would like to see them fail and constantly oppose them.

Our community is made up of people with different political beliefs, but there is no reason why these beliefs should divide us or

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should enter into the Church and
the Armenian School. Der Hays
Kalayjian, Yeretzgin and the young
people involved with the St. Mary's
School have made every effort to
keep the Church and School on
politically neutral grounds so
that everyone can take full ad-
vantage of them. But again,
we have met great opposition. I
see the Church as the heart of
the community and the political
fanatics as great knives tearing
it apart.

I realize that I am only one
person writing to you, but I feel
that I am conveying the thoughts of
many other people who feel the same
as I do. There is a tension in our
community that I would like to
see disappear. Hopefully you can
see your way clear to look into
this matter and I'm sure with
your guidance, we can eliminate
the problem for good.

With great respect, I remain,

Very Truly Yours,
Nargis Buchakjian