

July 12, 1979

The Reverend Father Kevork Arakelian  
Pastor, St. Gregory The Illuminator Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, New York 13903

Dear Father Kevork:

We have received your letter dated July 5, 1979, inviting us to visit our Binghamton parish on Sunday, September 28<sup>th</sup> 1980, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the consecration of St. Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church in Binghamton, New York.

Unfortunately, we will be unable to visit Binghamton on that date as we will be in Etchmiadzin from September 20 through October 20, 1980.

However, we will be happy to be with you in Binghamton either on November 30 or December 7, 1980, whichever date is convenient for you. Please let us know.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
Primate

# Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.  
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903  
(607) 722-8801

July 5, 1979

His Eminence  
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
630 Second Avenue  
New York City, New York 10016

Eminence:

While Your Eminence was in Binghamton we spoke about a visitation date in 1980. I know your schedule was quite full and I am not sure what dates were available.

In the interim, I reminded Parish Council that next year is the 50th anniversary of the consecration of our church and that it should be observed. We all agreed and picked Sunday, September 28, 1980, as the celebration day.

We would be greatly pleased if Your Eminence could be with us on this our 50th anniversary.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevork Kahana Arakelian".

Kevork Kahana Arakelian  
Pastor

December 12, 1979

Mrs. Carol Bogdasarian  
Chairman of the Parish Council  
St. Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, New York 13903

Dear Mrs. Bogdasarian:

We have received the Parish Council's letter of December 1, 1979, signed by the Corresponding Secretary, Dr. Aristakes Khachadorian, in regard to the resignation of Father Torkom Arakelian from your parish. We hope to be able in the near future to assign another priest to serve in the parish, and shall communicate with the Parish Council to make the appropriate arrangements.

In this season of the Nativity of Our Lord, we pray that the Lord grant you the light of His wisdom and grace.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
Primate

# Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.  
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903  
(607) 722-8801

December 1, 1979

His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate  
630 Second Avenue  
New York City, New York 10016

Your Eminence:

At our last Parish Council meeting of November 28th, Father George Arakelian notified us that there was a strong possibility he would resign as priest of our parish. Although he did not submit his formal resignation, he implied that there was a strong likelihood of being accepted in the Western Diocese and specifically in the Armenian Church in Fowler, California.

Over the past five years our parish has realized the need of a full-time priest and have benefited a great deal from Father George. This comes as a complete surprise to us, but we always realized that this might occur some day.

The parish council decided that they would like a new priest as soon as possible. We would appreciate a list of possible priests or deacons who may be interested in our community or a community of our size. We would also be deeply interested in any suggestions you may have that would help us.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Kachadourian'.

Aristaks Kachadourian  
Corresponding Secretary

December 11, 1979

The Reverend Father Kevork Arakelian  
Pastor, St. Gregory The Illuminator Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, New York 13803

Dear Father Kevork:

We have received your letter of December 4, 1979, and that of Aristaks Kachadourian, Corresponding Secretary of the Parish Council, of December 1, 1979, as regards your resignation of your position as Pastor, and your agreement with His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian. We note that one of your parishioners is to be married in February, and if you are still in Binghamton then, we should be pleased if you could perform the ceremony. If this proves impossible, please let us know so that we may make arrangements for another priest to officiate.

We deeply appreciate the services you have rendered in our Diocese in general, and particularly in our parish of Binghamton, and we pray that God's guidance be with you in your new venture and that He grant you and the members of your family much joy in your new assignment.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
Primate

c.c. Parish Council Chairman

# Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.  
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903  
(607) 722-8801

December 4, 1979

His Eminence  
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
630 Second Avenue  
New York City, New York 10016

Eminence:

I have been interviewed by His Eminence, Archbishop Vatché Hovsepian, Primate of the Western Diocese, and I have also come to an agreement with the Parish Council of St. Gregory the Illuminator Church, in Fowler, California. Therefore, I am resigning as pastor of St. Gregory the Illuminator Church, Binghamton, New York, as of January 31, 1980.

I will be remaining in the Binghamton area for approximately a month. Thus I have expressed to Council that if they wish, and with the permission of Your Eminence, on the Sundays I am in town, I will gladly celebrate Badarak. Also, since we have a parishoner who will be getting married in February, and so as not to cause a hardship, I will marry the couple before leaving for California.

Your servant in Christ,

Handwritten signature of Kevork Kahana Arakelian.

Kevork Kahana Arakelian  
Pastor

Copy: Carol Bogdasarian,  
Chairman, Parish Council

January 8, 1983

Dr. A. Kachadourian  
Corresponding Secretary, Parish Council  
St. Gregory The Illuminator Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, New York 13903

Dear Dr. Kachadourian:

With reference to our letter dated December 15, 1982 regarding the annual visit of His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian to your parish, please note that His Eminence has earmarked the weekend of June 25/26 to visit Binghamton.

Kindly let us know if this date is convenient to your parish.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Terzibashian  
Secretary to the Primate

c.c. The Very Rev. Fr. Sooren Chinchinian

December 15, 1982

Dr. A. Kachadourian  
Corresponding Secretary, Parish Council  
St. Gregory The Illuminator Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, New York 13903

Dear Dr. Kachadourian:

We thank you for your letter dated December 1, 1982 addressed to His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian concerning the annual visit to your parish.

As soon as His Eminence returns from Jerusalem, we will let you know the date he will be able to visit your parish in 1983.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Avakian Stoneson  
Executive Director

c.c. Father Souren Chinchinian



# Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.  
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903  
(607) 722-8801

December 1, 1982

His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate  
630 Second Avenue  
New York City, New York 10016

Your Eminence:

At our recent parish council meeting, we discussed your annual visit to our church. We realize how very busy you are and how time flies when trying to set a specific date for such an occasion.

The parish council was hoping that you might set a date some time in June, 1983 for your visit. This will give ample time to make changes in our dates as conflicts arise.

Hoping everything is well with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. Kachadourian, M.D.".

A. Kachadourian, M.D.  
Corresponding secretary

AK:k

April 19, 1983

Dr. Aristaks Kachadourian  
Corresponding Secretary  
St. Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, New York 13903

Dear Dr. Kachadourian:

His Eminence Archbishop torkom Manoogian has received your letter dated March 29th 1983, regarding a suitable date for his annual visit to your parish.

Please note that the only available date on His Eminence's calendar is August 27-28, 1983 and if this date is convenient for your parish, please let us know at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Terzibashian  
Secretary to the Primate

# Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.  
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903  
(607) 722-8801

March 29, 1983

His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate  
630 Second Avenue  
New York City, New York 10016

Your Eminence:

I am again writing you about a suitable date for your annual visit to our church. It is unfertuante that you were not able to come in June. However, it appears that September or October may now be more convenient. In the event that you have a cancellation in your shcedule, will you notify us?

There is always the possibility that we may see you in August when you take your short summer break at the lake. We certainly enjoy these short visits.

I'm wishing that all is well with you and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Aristaks Kachadourian' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Aristaks Kachadourian, M.D.  
Corresponding Secretary

AK/k

Aug. 27-28 - available

August 12, 1983

The Reverend Father Kevork Arakelian, Parish Priest  
St. Gregory The Illuminator Church  
Post Office Box 246  
Fowler, California 93625

Dear Father Kevork:

We thank you for your letter dated August 5, 1983 informing us that you will be on vacation in the Eastern Diocese from August 15th through September 1, 1983. We will be pleased to see you at the Diocese whenever you will be able to visit New York City.

With regard to your request for permission to conduct the Mezgian wedding and a baptism in Binghamton, New York, we have no objection provided the invitation is extended to you by the parish priest.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torikom Manoogian  
Primate

**ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR  
ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH**



**ՍՈՒՐԲ ԳՐԻԳՈՐ ԼՈՒՍԱՒՈՐԻԶ  
ՀԱՅՑ. ԵԿԵՂԵՑԻ**

Post Office Box 246  
Telephone: Office - (209) 834-2919  
Fowler, California 93625

August 5, 1983

His Eminence  
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
630 Second Avenue  
New York City, New York 10016

Eminence:

Please be advised that I will be on vacation in your Diocese from August 15 through September 1, 1983.

I have also been invited to Binghamton to conduct the Medzgian wedding on September 17, 1983, and perhaps a baptism. Therefore I am requesting permission from Your Eminence to conduct those Sacraments. Thus I will again be in your Diocese from Septemger 15 through September 20, 1983.

Your servant in Christ,

Kevork Kahana Arakelian  
Parish Priest

November 18, 1983

The Very Reverend Father Sooren Chinchinian  
Pastor, St. Gregory The Illuminator Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, NY 13903

Dear Father Sooren:

We thank you for the letter dated November 6, 1983 signed by Dr. Aristaks Kachadourian, Corresponding Secretary, informing us that it was decided at a meeting by your parish council and parish members to have your annual parish assembly on the second Sunday of December every year, to avoid setting different dates every year.

We have no objection to the decision taken by your parish to have your annual assembly every year on the second Sunday of December, if you can have your annual reports and the Treasurer's report ready.

May the Lord bless you all for your concern for the welfare of His church.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torikos Manoogian  
Primate

c.c. Parish Council Chairman

# Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.  
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903  
(607) 722-8801

November 6, 1983

His Eminence Archbishop Terkom Manoogian, Primate  
630 Second Avenue  
New York City, New York 10016

Your Eminence:

At a recent meeting of the parish council and the parish, a change in the date of our annual parish assembly was made. We voted to have our meeting on the 2nd Sunday of December. This change would avoid setting a different date every year and plans can be made easily knowing the specific date well in advance.

The parish council did not feel there would be any problem and the parish agreed, since most of our members are still in the community before the holidays.

We hope you agree and approve this change in date.  
Hoping everything is well with you,

Sincerely,

Aristaks Kachadourian, M.D.  
Corresponding secretary

AK:k

August 22, 1984

The Very Reverend Father Souren Chinchinian  
Pastor, St. Gregory The Illuminator Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, NY 13903

Dear Father Souren:

Please note that we still have not received your response to our letter dated June 21, regarding the proposed Fall Regional Meeting on October 27, for Binghamton, Niagara Falls, Syracuse and Rochester parishes.

We would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

Michael M. Kermian  
Director

cc. Dr. A. Khachadourian



June 21, 1984

Dr. A. Kachadourian  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, NY 13903

Dear Mr. Kachadourian,

Thank you for your letter of May 27. I have set aside October 27 as a possible date for the Fall regional meeting for Binghamton, Niagara Falls, Syracuse, and Rochester parishes.

I hope the date will be convenient for all as it is the only available Saturday in Serpaman's diary for the rest of the year.

It is regretable that we had to postpone the April meeting, but I hope we shall be able to make up for lost time at the Fall meeting.

Best regards, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Michael M. Kernian  
Director

MAY 31 1984

# Saint Gregory The Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church



12 CORBETT AVE.  
BINGHAMTON, N. Y. 13903  
(607) 722-8801

May 27, 1984

Mr. Mesrob Kermian  
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America  
630 Second Avenue  
New York, New York 10016

Dear Mr. Kermian:

RE: Regional Meeting in the Fall

I have been instructed by our delegate to the Diocesan Assembly, Alice Bogdasarian, that we arrange for another date for a regional meeting. As you can recall the April meeting was cancelled suddenly, which caused a great deal of concern.

We would appreciate if the diocese could arrange for another date this fall for a regional conference with Syracuse, Niagara Falls and our parish councils. We would be more than glad to host this conference.

Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain,

Sincerely,

A. Kachadourian, M.D.  
Corresponding Secretary

Rochester

Tentative Oct. 6 + 7

June 4, 1986

Mrs. Adrienne Khatchadourian  
17 Avon Road  
Binghamton, NY 13905

Dear Mrs. Khatchadourian:

Thank you for your letter of May 5, regarding the tenure of the Binghamton parish pastor.

We appreciate your feelings towards the Church, and your genuine concern for the need of a full-time pastor in your parish. We agree with you that "without a full-time priest, there is no church, no spiritual fellowship, and no perpetuation of our ethnic values".

It is gratifying to us as well as to Fr. Sooren Chinchinian to realize that there are concerned parishioners like yourself who realize the importance of having a spiritual leader in the community to nurture the love and understanding of our Church to the children and other members of his flock.

It is hoped that the members of the parish council will realize this importance, and try their best to keep the services of a full-time priest in Binghamton.

May the Lord bless you and your loved ones always with His love and wisdom.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
Primate

17 Avon Road  
Binghamton, NY

May 5, 1986

His Eminence  
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate  
Diocese of the Armenian Church  
630 Second Avenue  
New York, New York 10016

Your Eminence:

Perhaps you have been aware of the situation in our parish regarding the tenure of our pastor. I am frightened for my family and for our parish at the prospect of losing Hayr Sooren.

I feel compelled to send you a copy of the enclosed letter which I recently wrote. I believe that this letter expresses the feelings of many of us in Binghamton.

I thank you for your continued concern and guidance.

Respectfully,



Adrienne Kachadourian

Enclosure

17 Avon Road  
Binghamton, NY

May 5, 1986

Dr. George Rejebian  
Chairman, Parish Council  
St. Gregory Armenian Church  
12 Corbett Avenue  
Binghamton, NY 13903

Dear George:

I am writing this letter to Parish Council with grave concern. For quite some time now, I have felt a general apathy in our church community. Specifically, I can't believe that we are idly standing by allowing our spiritual leader to slip through our fingers. It frightens me to think that our Christian Armenian heritage can allow us to substitute an empty building on Corbett Avenue and a bank account, for a living, regularly worshipping community under the guidance of a priest. I take seriously the need for our parish to have a full-time priest. Many of our children are at the formative age where their faith and spiritual growth depend upon regular participation in the Divine Liturgy and the Sacraments of the church. An occasional short service or Badarak offered by a deacon or a visiting priest are not enough to nurture the understanding of the love of God for our children. God is the center of our family life, and our communion with Him is climaxed each Sunday in the Badarak and by the spiritual messages of Hayr Scoren.

I can't believe that our parents, the founders of this church, would be satisfied knowing that, although great care is taken to maintain the church structure, the very soul within is being starved of spiritual leadership; their legacy to us, then, would be no more than a monument to failure.

With the critical shortage of Armenian priests, we should consider ourselves extremely fortunate and thankful to have a Vartabed of the church as our pastor. It is our duty to do everything we can to keep him with us. I hope that the governing body of our church will be able to do this, otherwise we will all be responsible for the death of the spirit of this church.

Dr. George Rejebian  
May 5, 1986  
Page 2

I ask you to take my concern, as well as the concerns of others who support me, seriously and realize that our Armenian community will no longer be a vital, active ethnic group, culturally or spiritually; it will disseminate! Without a full-time priest, there is no church, no spiritual fellowship, and no perpetuation of Armenianism.

It is with deep regret and because of my sincere desire and conviction that Hayr Sooren must be allowed to remain our parish priest that, should he be dismissed, I will withdraw any and all support I have in the past given so lovingly to this parish.

Adrienne Kachadourian

CC: His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian

October 29, 1986

6 Clarke St.  
Binghamton, NY 13905

Your Eminence:

On October 26, 1986, at a special parish assembly at St. Gregory's Church in Binghamton, NY, a majority vote was taken to terminate the contract of The Very Reverend Father Sooren Chinchinian effective January 1, 1987. I feel compelled to write to you to convey my heartbreak at events taking place at St. Gregory's.

I am an odar who was introduced to the Armenian Church 4½ years ago. In that time, I have grown to treasure the spiritual fulfillment I have found at St. Gregory's and to love the Armenian culture and traditions. I sing in the church choir every Sunday, attend weekly Armenian language classes taught by Father Sooren, and have been the chairperson of the annual Armenian dance in Binghamton for the past 2 years. I am told that this kind of devotion is rare; usually the affiliation of an odar with the Armenian Church is by marriage, which is not so in my case. I say this only to communicate to you that my participation in the church is voluntary, thus illustrating the depth of importance it holds in my life.

I am somewhat of a selfish person; I have come to expect the weekly celebration of Badarak at St. Gregory's. With the vote to terminate Father Sooren's contract, there will be no Badarak. St. Gregory's will become just a building, for I feel there is no church without a priest to perform the liturgy. Therefore, in all humility, although my devotion to the Armenian Church will remain steadfast, my level of involvement at St. Gregory's must, in good conscience, diminish due to the absence of a resident priest.

The events of the parish assembly on October 26 greatly disturbed me. At the beginning of the meeting, a resolution was introduced calling for the termination of Hayr Soorp's contract. During discussion of this motion, the ~~President~~ pro tem *Chairman* failed to recognize many of the parishioners who had petitioned for this special assembly for their views and opinions. Therefore, valid points were not made by the people who are in favor of retaining Father Sooren. An inaccurate account of church funds was also presented to the assembly. The proceeds of approximately \$3,200 from the October 4 Armenian dance were not included in the figures, nor was a sizeable amount of uncollected 1986 annual pledges, which leads me to suspect that, by omissions of truth, the fiscal health of St. Gregory's is being misrepresented. The deficit fiscal position of the church is supposedly the reason why continuation of Father Sooren's services is not possible. It is clear to me that the members opposing the retention of Father Sooren very carefully orchestrated the structure of the meeting. The quick introduction of the termination resolution, non-recognition during the discussion of members who favor the priest, the call to vote before those members had an opportunity to voice their opinions, and the rapid motion to adjourn the meeting after the vote for termination was taken precluded any other motions to be made and discussed.

I would also like to communicate to you my observations concerning the people who are opposed to the renewal of Father Sooren's contract, purportedly due to financial inability to pay his salary. The parish council has recognized that church income has been dwindling for 3 years, yet they have done almost nothing to remedy the situation. Few fund raising projects have been undertaken and some parishioners suspect the reason was to rationalize the release of the priest. Second, those who oppose the retention of Father Sooren stand to lose the least,

Page -2-  
October 29, 1986

as their church attendance is infrequent and their involvement in other church activities is minimal, compared to those of us who reap the benefits of Father Sooren's presence. Third, the total disregard of human decency and humiliating treatment some parishioners have assaulted Father Sooren with is obscene. No one who professes to be a Christian should treat another human being this way, and it is particularly abhorrent to me that an Armenian priest would continually be the victim of such disrespect and cruelty by fellow Armenians. The campaign mounted to terminate Hayr Soorp's services at St. Gregory's has been ruthless and distasteful to those of us who care for and appreciate Father Sooren.

Please understand that it is from sincere concern and love of St. Gregory's and the Armenian community that I write this letter. I am heartsick at the changes that will take place in my spiritual life and the lives of others who value the presence of a resident priest and weekly Badarak after the departure of Father Sooren. I thank you for your time and pray that you will consider somehow intervening to rectify the problems plaguing our beloved St. Gregory's.

Sincerely,

*Pamela A. Russell*



620 Gates Road  
Vestal, NY 13850

November 10, 1986

His Eminence  
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
Diocese of the Armenian Church  
of North America  
630 Second Avenue  
New York, NY 10016

Your Eminence:

I am writing this letter to express my deep concern about the future and continued existence of the Armenian Church in Binghamton.

As you know, a number of us have been struggling to keep a full-time pastor for our parish. We feel that the absence of a priest will jeopardize the perpetuation of the Armenian culture, language, music, and most importantly the spiritual communion which is the basis of our existence.

As adults, we fear that without the weekly badarak and communion with God in our church, we would experience a great spiritual void in our lives. More importantly, however, we are concerned about our children. We have twelve little people in this community who have grown up knowing church only with a priest ever-present. Father Sooren has taught them the Armenian language and Armenian history, he has offered spiritual lessons geared toward their level of understanding, and has passed on to them aspects of the culture which would otherwise have been lost to our future generations. Without a full-time priest, what will be the legacy of the Armenian church in Binghamton for us and our children? Without the spiritual leadership provided by a priest, we fear that this congregation will decline from a potentially strong spiritual community to little more than a structure used for social functions. Our children need spiritual training. Without a priest to provide this training in an Armenian church, these needs will have to be addressed elsewhere. This has been one of our major fears and has been our primary motivation for fighting to keep Father Sooren.

In the process of our struggle, we have faced what I perceive as a blatant subversion of the philosophy of the Armenian church in general and episcopal authority in particular.

The special assembly meeting (of which you have knowledge) was rife with parliamentary manipulation rather than facilitation of the will of the parish as a whole. While our petition requested

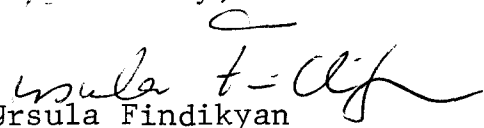
His Eminence Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
November 10, 1986  
Page 2

a special assembly meeting to discuss "the status of a full-time priest," we entered the meeting prepared to discuss "whether the community is in a fiscal position to retain the services of a full-time priest," as was indicated on the agenda dated October 14, 1986.

A resolution from the floor proposing the dismissal of Father Sooren as of 1-1-87 was clearly contrived to be railroaded through and to stonewall any attempts on the part of the petitioners to offer alternatives to dismissal as means for solving these fiscal problems. Requests to explain inconsistencies in the budget were ruled out of order. The statement on the ballots used to vote on this resolution was opposite in meaning to that contained in the resolution. Requests to issue new ballots were ignored, and the meeting was adjourned immediately following collection of the ballots. The petitioners were never given a chance to be heard!

It is inconceivable that a few members of the Parish Council should presume the right to dictate what the future holds for an entire parish and its priest. I hope and pray that you may intervene and not permit these people to act in their own self-interest and to the detriment of us, our children, and Father Sooren who certainly deserves better.

Respectfully,

  
Ursula Findikyan

17 Avon Road  
Binghamton, NY 13905

November 12, 1986

His Eminence  
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian  
Diocese of the Armenian Church  
of America  
630 Second Avenue  
New York, NY 10016

Your Eminence:

By now you are aware of the results of the special meeting held at St. Gregory Armenian Church on Sunday, October 26, 1986. This meeting was a culmination of hours of work to insure ourselves that through proper procedure and usage of the by-laws, we would achieve a democratic meeting representing the petitioners justly and fairly.

Our efforts prior to the meeting, constituted visits with people to discuss the issues, the future of our church, and the importance of keeping a full-time priest.

From the moment the petition was handed to the parish council chairman, a negative attitude developed among several of the parish council members. It was a momentum that spread like cancer into the Armenian community. Through fear that this meeting would defeat the personal wishes of some members of the parish council to "get rid of the priest", they set out to undermine this special meeting. They ignored the two motions which we asked to be included on the agenda. They made private visits to members who had financial influence, implying that Father Sooren was the cause of dissention and division in the community. They totally disregarded Father Sooren's position as president of Parish Council, therefore displaying acts of disrespect and irreverence toward a priest of the Armenian Church. Their intentions, apparently, were to ascertain that this meeting would produce no results other than those of their own desires. In their opinion, the petitioners had no right to question the decision of the parish council concerning the termination of Father Sooren on December 31, 1986. Therefore, we also had no right to request a special meeting. They blatantly ignored democratic processes, thereby accomplishing a 'yes' vote to the resolution proposed by one of the members.

The Parish Council is an elected body representing all the members of the church. It is their duty and responsibility to officiate in matters concerning the church so that harmony exists within the various organizations, under the guidance and direction of the spiritual head and leader of the church. Any personal conflicts among the Parish Council members should not interfere with the workings of the council as a governing body. These conflicts should be resolved within the council and not be allowed to influence the members, to the point of creating dissention of the magnitude we are experiencing now. Because of this, I feel that the council has failed and can no longer be effective and impartial in keeping unity and strength for this church and its members.

For most of the members, the Armenian Church is the center of their lives. I strengthen my faith by doing service to God. Through Women's Guild, Sunday School and playing the organ, I enrich by spiritual needs and the rewards I receive are the soul of my daily life. My spiritual beliefs renew my faith and strength through worship with my family. I question why those few who rule and dictate through the powers of money, greed and self-gratification should be allowed to deny me and those with me the privilege and joy of communion with God in our Armenian Church in Binghamton.

The children who come every Sunday have had the privilege of enjoying weekly Badarak since they were very young. Now, they are at the point of developing values and truths, as they enter the delicate teen years. Their Armenian church must continue to be a refuge and comfort to them, to help nourish and strengthen these values. If we don't maintain the continuity of a spiritual leader and weekly Badarak, they will lose their identity as Armenian children. They need to be constantly reassured that God is in their presence, as they learn to cope with the changes within themselves and the new experiences they face daily. They learn to know about God through prayer, and feel His presence through a living, working and strong Armenian church. The priest in their eyes, is symbolic of God asking him to help them strengthen the bond between God and themselves.

The concerns these children are voicing now are: partaking of Communion each Sunday, and the weekly teachings offered them by Father Sooren. They like Father Sooren very much. They are concerned about his situation and repeatedly ask, "is Hayr Soorp going to stay?"

If a small number of people say he must leave, I ask, why can't he remain for those who want him? There is no justified reason why he can't stay. I pray within the depths of my heart and soul, that you Srbazan Hayr recognize our desperation, and help us, as I hope you will.

Madchim Ee Hambooyr Tzer Adjooyn



Adrienne Kachadourian

PERSONAL

November 20th, 1986

Archbishop Torkom Manougian

Primate

New York

Your Eminence,

As an Armenian and a member of the Binghamton Armenian Church parish, I should like to communicate my view about the recent unfortunate events which have occurred in our parish.

First, the current situation is the result of ill feelings harbored by a minority of individual(s) toward father Souren. It is most unfortunate that these individuals have, through negative campaign, been able to influence their friends to join them in their effort to oust the pastor of our church. It is also regrettable that this campaign is being fallaciously justified under the guise of financial difficulties the church is supposedly experiencing.

A number of parishioners, including parents representing 80% of the community's children, requested a special parish meeting to explore and constructively pursue means of retaining the services of the pastor; the prime concern being the recognition by this group of the vital importance of the continued presence of a pastor for the Armenian upbringing of their children as permanent members of the Armenian people and church.

Unfortunately, the few individuals who, as mentioned above, have their personal differences with the pastor, came to the meeting with a stratagem to ensure the ouster of the pastor. It is particularly noteworthy that, at this meeting, deliberate and obvious misinformation was given about the financial condition of the church. Specifically, when a question concerning outstanding pledges was asked of the treasurer, he provided information which some of us knew to be falsehoods based on pledges we have made. In other words, he grossly understated the amount of the outstanding pledges (not to mention the returns from the church dance which also were not reported). It is my opinion that it is almost impossible to determine the true financial status of our church from the present treasurer who will prevaricate to ensure the departure of our priest. I also deeply regret and resent the disrespectful and insolent comportment of some members of the church towards Hayrsoorp which I, as a true son of the Armenian church, find it insulting and abhorrent to a clergyman and, by extension, to our church, nation and heritage.

I, for one, would like to express my and my family's indebtedness and gratitude to father Souren for instilling the Armenian spirit and ensuring the attachment of the children, in particular my niece and two nephews, to the Armenian church. This feeling, I can assure you, is also shared by the majority of the parents with children who have an appreciation of the history, culture, traditions and heritage of our church and people.

Without a pastor, there is no way that the Armenian spirit instilled in our children by father Souren can

