

DIOCESAN DELEGATE REPORT 1991

by Virginia Greene

The meeting was called to order on Thursday, May 9th at 2:06 p.m. by Dr. Dennis Papazian. The invocation was given by Bishop Khajag Barsamian followed by the singing of Hayr Mer and Soorp Asdvadz. The confirmation of a quorum was established with 74 delegates present and 45 clergy. Congratulations were given to Bishop Khajag on his appointment as Bishop. The announcement of Assembly officers took place with Martin Cholakian of Detroit, Michigan as chairman and George Marifian of Illinois as vice-chairman.

The English secretary was Berjouhi Haigazian of Philadelphia and Garabed Hovhanissian as assistant. Armenian secretary was V. Rev. Fr. Krikor Maksoudian with V. Rev. Fr. Oshagan Gulgulian of Richmond, Va. as assistant. A welcoming address was given by Bishop Khajag. He expressed his thanks to Vasken I on his appointment as Bishop and mentioned that as he knelt he renewed his vows to serve God, serve the Armenian Church and the Armenian people and hoped that our young will sacrifice and dedicate themselves as we have. He said that we must pray that God help us all and with God's blessings be servants of the Armenia people. The minutes of the 1990 were read and passed as amended. A message from Catholicos Vasken I was read where he had told of the tragic situation of Karabagh, the shelling with the armed forces, homes all in fire and requested that all church organizations send letters to Senators, Congressmen, to make statements on this issue and to contact the local news media. A proposal was made at the Clergy Conference which preceded the Diocesan Assembly about atrocities committed in Armenia of the Soviet troops shelling Armenian villages. They endorsed a proposal to demonstrate on Saturday, May 10th in New York at the Soviet Consulate. The chairman of the Courtesies Committee was appointed as V. Rev. Houssig Bagdasarian.

A report on the Clergy Conference was given and mentioned that the following topics were discussed; the spiritual rebirth of the church, family worship, shorter Divine Liturgy, unity issue, missionary work in Armenia, present situation in Armenia and discipline in Armenia. Messages from the Western Diocese and the Canadian Diocese were given. The Western Diocese, it seems has the same problems as the Eastern Diocese in regard to youth involvement.

The representative of the ACYOA, Tony Barsamian spoke at length about a youth ministry plan. He mentioned that they only had 450 members and pointed out that the Cleveland parish with 100 church members had 60 ACYOA members. Nancy Basmajian, director of ACYOA also spoke on a youth ministry program and stressed that it must begin at the ages of 11 and 12. She observed that the youth leave for several reasons, 1-involvement in other things, 2-put off by hypocritical adults, 3-find the church dull, unchallenging and uninteresting, 4-dislike their pastor and 5-find the church does not meet their needs. She stressed the need for positive self esteem programs, strong relationships with peers, the need to be needed and useful and the need to understand their faith. We must strive to design programs that appeal to young people. Rev. Vertanes Kalaydjian of Washington D.C. said that we must bring the church into society and bring society into the church. Parental influence is important, they must be taught right from wrong and parents must set examples. Fr. Arnak Kasparian thought that youth must be given responsibilities. The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m. and a special session was called immediately after this session to discuss this further. This special session was set for the purpose of youth problems and what needed to be done. This meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m. Friday, 137 delegates were registered and after a short religious service, the meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. Haig Messirlian from the Diocese of California spoke about their problems which were similar to ours. He said that there were now, 300,000 Armenians in California and 15 active churches. They also had mission parishes in Seattle, Palm Springs, Glendale and Reno. They have a day school, kindergarten to 6th grade with 137 students.

Elections were held for Board of Trustees, Diocesan Council, clergy member, Diocesan Council, lay member, Auditing Committee, Nominating Committee and Proposals Committee.

A proposal was made to have one person attend the Diocesan Assembly between the ages of 21-35 and to have voting privileges. Motion was defeated. Proposal 2 - was made to devote one full day during the Assembly to the Youth Program. Motion passed; 3-encourage and have contact with sister parishes in Armenia; passed; 4-allow priests to administer communion to the hand; defeated; 5-Youth parish problems be added to Diocesan Council meeting every other year-passed; 6-stewardship for Armenian programs-passed; 7-election process of assembly officers-defeated; 8-council arrange a standing committee with relations with religious leaders, passed.

The Primate then gave his report including topics with emphasis on the Youth, Sunday School, Armenian School, ACYOA and relations with religious leaders. Also mentioned were the future of the clergy, St. Nersess Seminary, young adult involvement in the parishes with focus on the Armenian family ages 8-16; college age 17-22 and young adults 23-30.

It was suggested that 1% of the annual budget be sent to the Diocese for the Youth Ministry program and also was suggested that quarterly reports be sent to Parishes on the earthquake situation.

Unity Committee report was given and it was stated that only one member from the Prelacy Committee had attended a called meeting and he stated that he was attending as an individual and not from the Prelacy Committee. No explanation was given as to why other Prelacy members did not come to this meeting. No further meeting was being scheduled until the Diocese heard from the Prelacy.

Mr. Bulbulian spoke on behalf of the Earthquake Committee and mentioned that shipments of materials and baby formula were sent to Armenia. An emergency fund is established so that emergency supplies can be sent. \$2,800,000 has been spent on the Stepanavan construction. A United Armenian Fund (UAF) has been formed comprised of the AGBU, AMAA, the Diocese and the Prelacy to charter planes to send supplies to Armenia. Our total contribution to the UAF thus far has been \$400,000. There have been 96 apartments built. Now with the spiritual uprising in Armenia, bibles are being sent through the UAF airlifts. The most important feature that is being considered in the construction of these buildings is the safety feature. The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m. and it was suggested that everyone convene at 9 p.m. after the dinner to further discuss the youth issue and other unfinished business since the afternoon meeting on Saturday was to be cancelled due to the demonstration in N.Y.C. Buses were chartered on Saturday and many of the delegates and clergy attended this demonstration in front of the Soviet Consulate. Bishop Khajag Barsamian, Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, and heads of various organization all spoke including the presidents of the ADL, Arthur Halvajian president of Medical Outreach for Armenians spoke on behalf of the ASA; the president of the AYF, AGBU were all guest speakers at this event.

The Courtesies Committee report followed with acknowledgements to the following: expression of allegiance, loyalty, love and respect to His Holiness Vasken I with prayers that the Almighty God continue to bless him with long and healthy life; love and respect to His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manogian for his 24 years of fruitful service to our Diocese; congratulations to Bishop Khajag Barsamian as our new Primate; greetings to the President of the United States praying that God give him strength and wisdom; to the Governor of N.J. and officials of the Borough of Tenafly, N.J.; expression of sorrow on the death of His Eminence Bishop Dzon Der Hagopian who was Primate for 60 years of service to our people; sympathies to the family of Dadour Dadourian who gave years of unselfish service to our Diocese; appreciation to Cardinal John O'Conner, Archbishop of N.Y. who is honored this year as "Friend of the Armenian People" for his untiring efforts and his love and concern toward the Armenian people; extend grateful recognition to Mrs. Dolores Zohrab Liebmann who is honored as "Woman of the Year" for her philanthropic concern in many ways to strengthen the Armenian Church in America; appreciation to the Diocesan Council, under the presidency of Bishop Khajag Barsamian and chairman Judge Vincent Gurahian for devoted service to our Diocese; appreciation to its chairman, Martin Cholakian vice-chairman, George Mariflan; secretaries, Berjouhi Haygazian, Garabed Hovhannissian; V. Rev. Fr. Krikor Maksoudian & V. Rev. Fr. Oshagan Gulgolian; expression of sorrow to our brothers and sisters who continue to suffer the disaster, political turmoil and

communal strife in Armenia; congratulations to Bishop Papken Varjabedian on the 50th anniversary of his priesthood; gratitude to the Armenian Church of Our Saviour of Worcester, Mass which is celebrating its 100th anniversary as the first Armenian Church in America. The Diocesan Assembly was closed at the end of the Saturday morning session for the purpose of attending the demonstration in New York City.

REPORTS OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DIOCESE

DEPT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (DRE)

DRE continues to provide direction and resources for 36 established Sunday Schools and six newly formed functional schools. It promotes religious education in communities through its publications, workshops, periodicals and special events designed for superintendents /teachers, students & communities. A monthly bulletin is published giving information, activities and teaching ideas for Sunday School teachers and administrators and these are sent out in bulk to all Sunday Schools. Their other publications include SUNRISE, a mini-magazine for middle graders geared to 4th and 6th graders; MUSTARD SEED a monthly for primary students grades 1-3; 1990 LENTEN CAMPAIGN a national drive conducted in all participating Sunday Schools produced \$2,810.79 for the benefit of the Primates Fund for Religious Education in Armenia; Armenia Outreach, Sunday Schools throughout the Diocese participated in a special Christmas outreach program which entailed the buying and wrapping of colorful school supplies and small items of outerwear as presents for Armenia's children; Lenten and new Advent family calendars for day by day activities through Lent was released in January. Other projects included the release of a book SAINTS AND FEASTS that was translated by Father Haigazoun Melconian of Philadelphia which comprises a thorough review of the church year and its meaning as well as brief biographies of 38 Armenian saints; a baptism video with the filming of an actual baptism expected to be released in 1991.

ARMENIAN LANGUAGE LAB AND RESOURCE CENTER

The Mesrob Mashdotz Institute continues to offer language courses to adults. One day crash courses were sponsored by various churches in the Diocese. More than 50 attended each of the programs. "Teachers college" provides a one week course for Armenian School teachers. Other activities included, a one week program for adults seeking to broaden their knowledge of Armenian culture; a ten day summer program for youngsters, ages 3 to 15 that was developed by the parish school of Pa., a five hour course to teach the alphabet and the reading of words and sentences; back to school packets, lesson plans and materials for teachers, parents and students. Many periodicals are published including a 24 page Armenian literary magazine, a 12 page Armenian magazine for the intermediate level; a quarterly for beginners with illustration by children; religious education in Armenia, many copies of which have been sent abroad; posters, booklets and test manuals and various other items are available. Materials are provided for Armenian programs of Camp Vartan and Camp Nubar.

ACYOA continues its activities with emphasis on offering young adults a variety of religious, cultural, educational and athletic programs and encourages participation in Armenian Church and community life. They sponsor the ACYOA Sports Weekend, a cultural weekend, Martyrs day commemoration; invitational tournament, publications, endowment Fund which has 117,000 and an additional pledge from M/M Edward Mardigian of \$50,000.

KRIKOR & CLARA ZOHRAB INFORMATION CENTER

This information center's aim is to create or locate resources and compile materials on the history and culture of the Armenian people; to assist the media as well as the scholars; writers and university students researching Armenian topics, making available to them information, materials and reference to various resources; to organize conferences, seminars dedicated to different aspects of Armenian civilization to deepen our understanding and disseminate information about the past and present accomplishments of the Armenian people; to publish books, bulletins, and brochures to focus the interest of Armenian and non-Armenian public on Armenian topics. At the Diocesan Banquet on Saturday

evening during the Assembly, Mrs. Dolores Zohrab Liebmann graciously donated \$1,000,000.00 once again to the Diocese.

ST. VARTAN BOOKSTORE

continues to supply various books, periodicals and gifts throughout the year.

ST. NERSESS ARMENIAN SEMINARY

The Seminary continues its purpose to educate and train candidates for the priesthood and service in the Armenian Church. Summer religious seminars were held in five sessions with 150 students participating; weekend parish visitations were made by the seminarians and rector; retreats were held for various church organizations. They now have 11 students, 300 retreat and seminary participants and their budget is \$325,000.00

ARMENIAN CHURCH ENDOWMENT FUND (ACEF)

This fund was established in 1973 its purpose being to raise funds through endowments for the benefit of the Diocese; for varied religious, educational and charitable purposes and for the Cathedral complex in N.Y. In the years since the ACEF has increased its assets to more than 12 million dollars.

ST. VARTAN CAMP

This 11th season at the Loomis Chaffee School in Ct. from July 1 to 14 offers both a one week and a two week program for children and teens.

MY KINSMEN PROGRAM

The purpose of this is to reach out, on a one to one basis, to college students living away from home.

ST. VARTAN CATHEDRAL GUILD

This organization has a membership of 150 men and women and is an auxiliary group formed to support the Cathedral and to encourage adherence to the doctrines and traditions of the Armenian Church. They meet monthly and during the year they have contributed \$5,000 to the Diocese of earthquake relief, Karabagh relief and Cathedral needs.

ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH CHOIRS

Their objective is to assist church choirs in developing their knowledge of the love for the Armenian Church and its music, by learning chants. Private contributions channelled through the ACEF have enabled the Association to provide a number of deacon's and music training scholarships each year to individuals who wish to further their knowledge of music.

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