

February 6, 1965

PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - 1964

Very Reverend Father Tashjian

Dear Parishioners,

While I shall be addressing you in our common mother tongue, and I want you to know that my dialect is a better one than any of those used by anyone present here, you shall undoubtedly notice that what I shall say will also be in your hands, in printed form, but in English. This is intentional and is my modest contribution to the latest fashion in biculturalism in Canada. I would like to think that it may even set a new trend although I oftentimes wonder if any problem between French and English speaking Canadians could have been solved had all Canadians known Armenian.

In other years, the tradition has been for the Chairman to paint an expanded picture of all the activities that his Parish Council successfully undertook in its term. This is not my intention.

What your Parish Council did, you saw it or were witness to it; or had no time to participate and we are all sorry you did not.

If you did not like it, the onus is on all of you: you should have never elected anyone of us.

You shall have, in a few minutes, an opportunity to re-elect or elect four new members for this year and I am sure you shall keep in mind my comments to choose the best four.

What I want to say is what we did not do. I shall endeavour also to explain why we could not do it.

When a newcomer lands in this city, and over 300 arrived last year, he usually comes from a land where Armenian communities are older than this country

is. These communities were the results of the sweat and pride of their forefathers; they existed when Canada was still the country of fur trappers, Christian missionaries and foreign soldiers. All these Near Eastern Armenian communities were spiritually not only self-sufficient but developed to a shining point of advanced civilization -

They had their Churches;
they had their schools;
they had their clubs, social, business, sports and political;
they had their homes, their lands, their stores;
and they were usually located all within distinct sections
of a town or a city.

All these are gone.

And the need of all of them is so acute that we all forget to question whether we really need all of them in this country.

And the desire to find all these surroundings is so great that we all hang on to the only established center we have, the Church, to find in Her everything we have lost.

Dear Parishioners, your Parish Council did only two things this year: maintain lively Church activities and help the teaching of our language to the young.

We did not endeavour to create or establish any of the things that we have lost.

The Church, your Church, cannot be all at the same time; but if you all help Her, not the way you used to help well-established and old institutions in the Old Country, but as your forefathers did when they established these institutions, then your next Parish Council may be able to do better.

Do we need Parochial schools as we had them in the Near East? Only fathers

and mothers can answer this question after having thoroughly searched and weighed what their children will gain versus what they shall lose.

In my young years, and as long as we lived in a town where the Armenian schools were the best, my father sent me to Armenian schools. He did also send me, a few years later, in the same town, to a school maintained and operated by the Universal Israelite Alliance because this was the best in town: may I add that over half of the Israelite Alliance school students were not of Jewish faith but Armenians, Greeks, Christian Europeans and a few Moslems. Today, most of these schools will only take students up to Grade 5 because they cannot compete with the local schools in teaching properly older students.

The French language has been maintained in Quebec with the great assistance of the Roman Catholic Church; there, the saying goes: "one who loses his tongue, loses his faith". This is wonderful, coming from a Church which talks to humanity, throughout the world, in over 100 different languages.

Our Church has been the cradle of the Armenian language: our Church shall maintain it as long as every father and mother shall help Her. We have the right to be idealists and endeavour to succeed where all North America has failed. Whether we fail or succeed, let us not forget that our Church shall continue to be our Church.

And our thanks go to all those who carry the battle of language against oblivion. They need a better support from all of us. Do not ask from them the impossible: they are already doing it.

But do not forget that already now, over 25 Armenian children are taking Sunday school classes in English, in other Churches. This number shall grow and when it exceeds the number of those attending our Armenian Sunday school, then we may have a problem on our hands.

I suggest that your next Parish Council considers already most seriously

this problem.

We failed in continuing our summer camp; possibly, everything is not lost since there is now a nucleus of a "scout" movement. But the benefits of a summer camp should not be denied to our young children: if we do not give them opportunities to find their friends amongst our community, you can rest assured that they shall find these opportunities elsewhere and not necessarily to our liking. May I ask our future scout masters to think seriously of undertaking this camp project.

We failed in providing fully for the needs of all those who wish social, business, sports and political activities. We say to all these potential members of one club or the other: it is your duty to join Canadian organizations. By accepting the benefits of a democratic country, all newcomers have also taken on the obligations attached to being good citizens.

My remarks go particularly to all those who still hold political aspirations: the day we left the shores of the old countries, we left there our old politics.

If you have energies left and constructive ideas in politics, for the sake of our Church, do not bring them here but make the entire country take notice of you. Speak up, but not here.

The Canadian political forum is a very fertile one provided you participate in it as any good Canadian citizen should do. Politics in this country cannot be confined to the scale of a small community such as ours but must be expanded to take in larger groups of citizens, cutting right through creeds, ethnic origins and races.

We failed in interfering in the affairs of ACYOA but we are delighted to see them grow as we would have liked to grow. I believe that our youth has a most difficult challenge ahead and recognizes it. The era when one must stay in school until he is almost thirty is dawning on us. A generation much better

than ours is in the making: our wish is that more of the younger parishioners take a more active part in the affairs of this Church.

We failed in giving proper support to our Ladies' Auxiliary: there is something wrong somewhere when it is always the same small number of ladies who have to roll up their sleeves and be subject to criticisms of those who do nothing, regardless of how well they worked.

This attitude is wrong.

Let me simply say that while some women may never become ladies, all those who participate in Church affairs are ladies.

As far as I know, we have only ladies in our community and this is why we want to see more of them pitching in the Ladies' Auxiliary.

We failed in supporting properly our choir for which we apologize. But it never came to our mind that our religious music needed any support. All it needs is some voice, we thought, since this heavenly music makes it sound like talent. May your next Parish Council be successful in creating more interest in the choir which under our Pastor's guidance and Minas Celian's "baguette" made our delight all last year.

I have kept our biggest sin for the last confession: we failed in seeing always eye to eye with our Pastor. We stepped on each other's ground and failed to confine our activities to our own spheres.

If we failed in achieving harmony in a continuing manner, we possibly succeeded in learning to know better each other. We do hope this sin is not mortal as in our Pastor we shall always have one who will intercede on our behalf.

My heart cries for the absence of my predecessor from amongst us: he was

just and good, entirely devoted to our community. He established high standards of integrity and morality: no one will know better his devotion and abnegation than those of us who worked with him.

I know that for the sake of his Church, he forgave us long ago for all our failures.

I wish to thank everyone of you for everything you did for your Church: and for everything you shall continue doing.

And I want to express publicly the deepest appreciation of all those who shall retire this year from the Parish Council for the assistance and friendship which was extended to them by their colleagues of the Council.

Before closing, I have two motions to present.

The name and personality of Setrak Adourian has been associated to this Church since and before Her inception.

The first Armenian that everyone first met in Toronto has been Setrak.

I shall go one step further and say that one of the few members of this community who best personifies an Armenian is Setrak Adourian.

Set, as he is known to all his friends, is retiring after forty years of service to his community. I know that he shall never be too far, as he cannot live without his Church. But we cannot live without him either.

I move, therefore, that we unanimously nominate Set as our "Honorary Secretary" which shall bind forever Set to this Church that he helped build and this community that he helped establish.

My second motion refers to the duties trusted by the parishioners upon our auditors.

As our Pastor reminded it to us in his address, in June last year two committees handed their resignations simultaneously to our Archbishop and to his representative amongst us, namely our Pastor. This was done in a mutual spirit of compromise and reconciliation.

The direct consequence of the above is that there has not been an auditing made by representatives of the parishioners of the expenses and accounts authorized by your Parish Council in 1964 and related to the construction of this Parish Hall. Your present auditors did not feel that you had authorized them to do this work and I personally agree with them. They will undoubtedly point this fact to you in their report.

Therefore, I move that your present auditors be empowered to audit all the expenses and accounts relating to the extension of our Parish Hall.

There remains one last word to say and it is the continuation of a dialogue between my grandfather who was a priest and myself: I can now confirm that he was right when he predicted what an "ass" I would make of myself by getting involved in community affairs without becoming a priest. But dear parishioners and my very dear deceased grandfather, what a delightful way of becoming an "ass"! Thank you to all of you for having helped me solve a family argument.