

40th Anniversary

ARMENIAN CHURCH
YOUTH ORGANIZATION
OF AMERICA

1946 - 1986



Once upon a time there lived a wise Archbishop whose diocese covered most all of North America. One day he thought to himself, "How wonderful it would be if there existed a special organization for all the young people of our Church."



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Originally prepared by:

Artin Artinian, 1967

Revised and reproduced on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of ACYOA - 1946-1986.



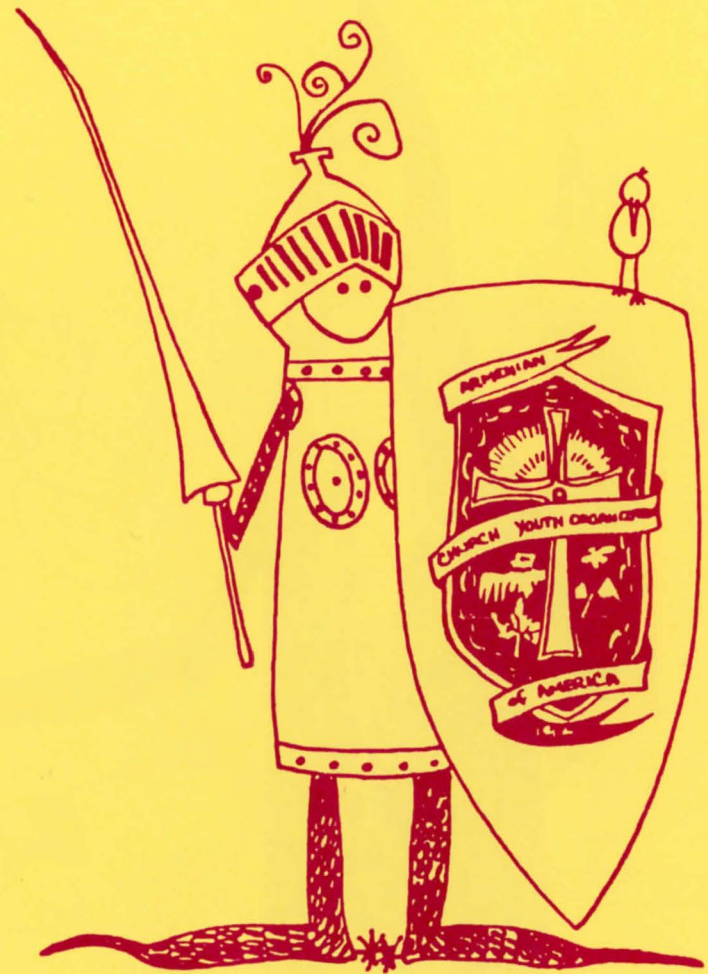
Now there lived in the same diocese the Wizard Belittle. When he heard of the Archbishop's plans, he hastened to see him. "Listen to me!" he said roughly. "Your plan is pure folly! It is sure to fail! Youth are too irresponsible and unpredictable!"



Despite this warning, the Archbishop sent forth his heralds with a proclamation: 'Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye! To all the youth of the Armenian Church. You are invited to attend a special assembly in Providence, Rhode Island during the month of January in the Year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-six.'



And the young people came, and they listened, and they agreed with the Archbishop, and they formed an organization, and it was called The Armenian Church Youth Organization of America. They appointed some of their peers to serve as a Central Council to carry out their plans to do good work.



And they made themselves an emblem which would symbolize the spirit of the organization: Unity - Church - Country - Heritage. The symbols were to be mounted on a shield to emphasize the determination of the members to serve the objectives of the new organization and defend them against the powers of evil.



"It is encouraging to see the enthusiasm you have shown," the Archbishop said, "and I will always be at your side." Then, with a bit of hesitation and sadness, he went on to confess, "I am not as wealthy as some people think. Thus, the organization will have to be self-supporting for the present."



Therefore, in order to carry out the many worthy projects planned, it was necessary that each chapter pay taxes to the Central Council in proportion to their wealth. There were years when the treasury was nearly bankrupt. And then there were the bountiful years. Years which provided funds to undertake worthy and needed projects.....



To acquaint the local communities with all they had been doing and to rededicate themselves, it was decided to hold an ACYOA Day annually in each parish. Thus, during the period of Great Lent, each chapter set a day for this purpose. Most chapters used Palm Sunday as ACYOA Day, and this successfully developed into the Diocese officially designated Palm Sunday as ACYOA Day - a celebration of the meaning of ACYOA in every parish.



Now a strong organization was established - an organization which not only had national programs, but consistantly participated in community-oriented projects through their respective home-parishes.



Conferences for Sunday School teachers were first organized by the ACYOA. These conferences inspired the birth of the "Council for Religious Education," which later developed into the Department of Religious Education for the Diocese, directing the Church Sunday Schools preparing curriculum and training teachers. The continued enthusiasm and determination of the organization helped in the establishment of The Armenian Theological School in America - St. Nersess Seminary.



And who would have believed that the youth yearned not only for knowledge of their own church, but of their sister churches as well. Thus, joint study programs were held with different faiths. Now the ACYOA was experiencing many good days and fulfilling the expectations of the Archbishop.



But, alas, there were dark and gloomy days as well. A chilled wind blew over the organization and its members began to drift. Now this was just the opportunity the Wizard Belittle was waiting for. "I warned you," he said to the Archbishop in a rude and defiant voice.



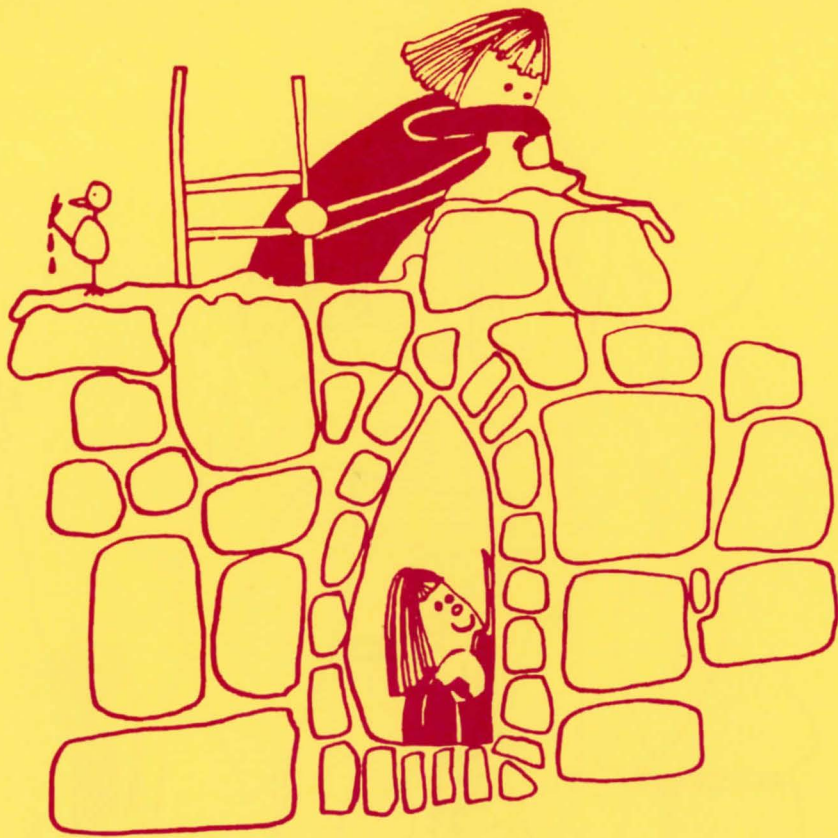
The Archbishop jumped to his feet and roared, "Get out of my sight, Wizard!" He would have thrown his staff too, but he remembered his dignity just in time. Then he thought, "It is apparent that more aid and guidance must be provided for the youth." To do this, an 'Executive Secretary' was appointed, regional conferences planned and leadership clinics and seminars organized.



Thus, as the years unfolded, a warm, bright happy sun shown on the ACYOA again. There was a rebirth of the original goals and objectives. Retreats and religious conferences became an established part of the ACYOA along with many other good things.



Two pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin were made, and became annual programs. These journeys help inspire ACYOA members by taking them back to the founts of their national and spiritual origins.



Contributions were made to aid in the restoration of a cathedral in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, as well as in the Holy Land - Jerusalem. And when a cathedral was to be built in the diocese of their Archbishop, they gave again. The ACYOA went on to establish scholarship grants to college and theological students, and provided funds for participants in religious study programs.



From the inception of the organization to the present, members of the ACYOA wrote their own newsletters and magazines (i.e. The Armenian Guardian, Keghard, Executive Update, Junior Connection). Also sponsored and undertaken were other publications and educational projects which were "firsts" for the Diocese.



One day the good Wizard Joy suggested to the Archbishop, "The young people need merriment if the organization is to remain vigorous." Thus, social programs were planned - and the arts were not neglected.



Then, at the 18th ACYOA General Assembly, it was proposed that missionary work be done within the Armenian Church.....20th Century Crusaders, made up of high school and college students who spend their summer vacations ministering to forgotten Armenian Christians.



The missionary idea was expanded upon, and it was decided to engage a field worker to go amongst the ACYOA chapters giving practical guidance and advice.

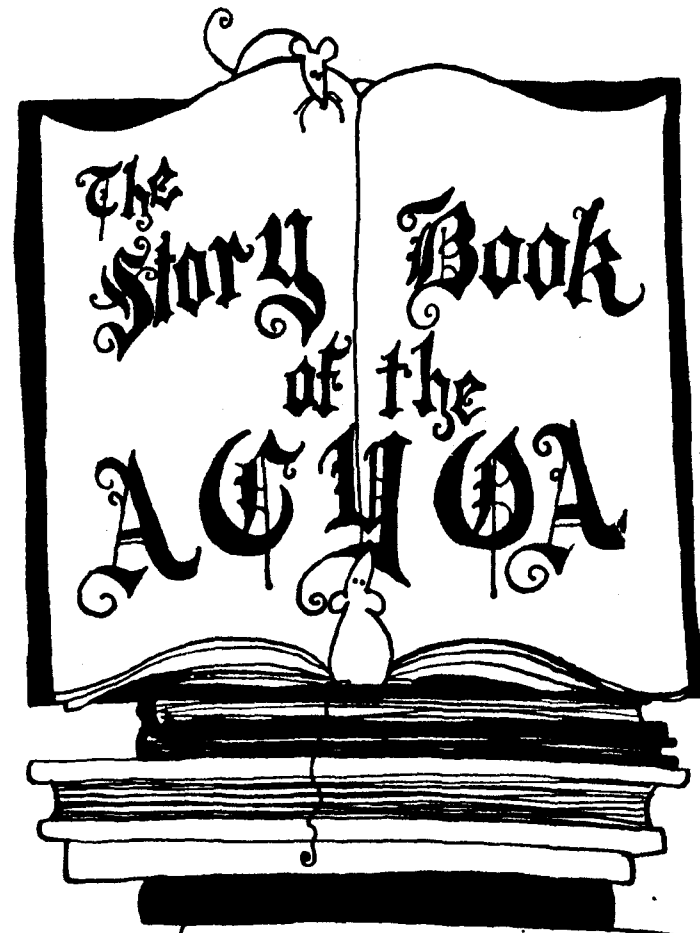


Now the Archbishop called his elders together in council to discuss the ACYOA's good points and its weaknesses.....They talked of religion, education, culture and joy; and they all agreed that while there was still much work to be done, the future of the Armenian Church was in good hands.

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Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

*St. Mesrob
Armenian Apostolic Church
4605 Erie Street, Racine, Wisconsin 53402*





PLEDGE

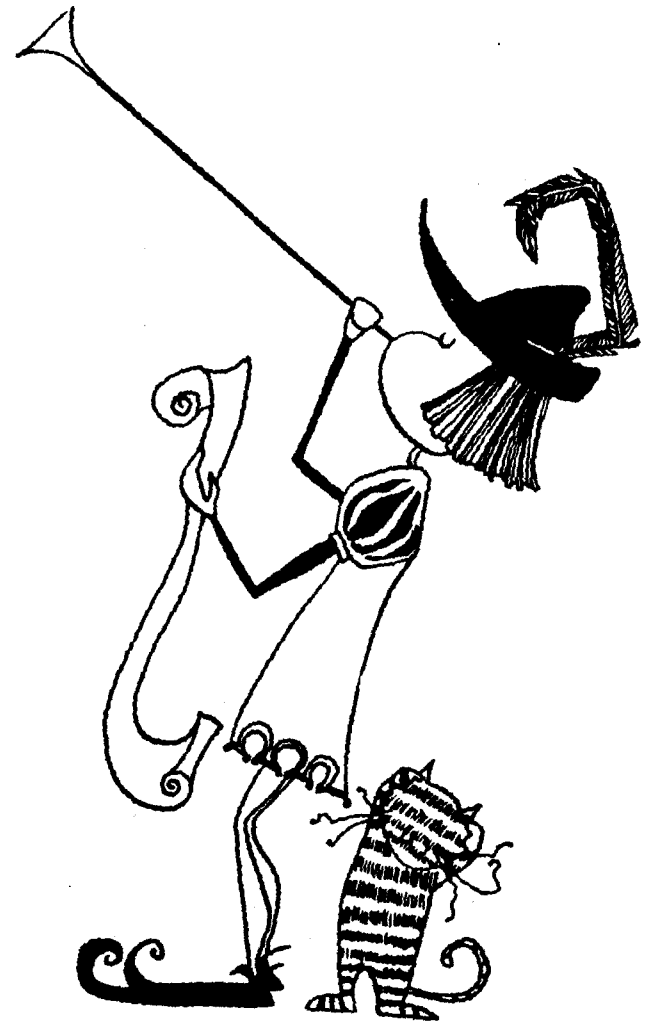
I solemnly promise and declare upon my honor, that as a member of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America. I shall, to the best of my ability, be a faithful son of the Armenian Church; shall be a devoted upholder of the Armenian cultural heritage; shall be a loyal citizen of the United States,* and I shall diligently abide by the objects, policies, and decisions of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America. I shall not strive for personal recognition and pleasure, but will serve our Church, our Community, and Country, for the greater glory of God.



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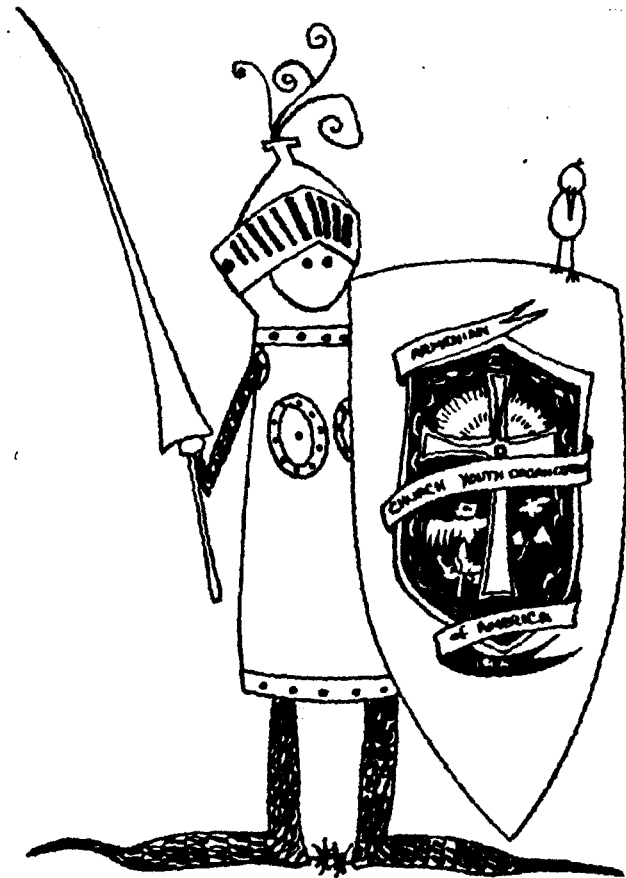
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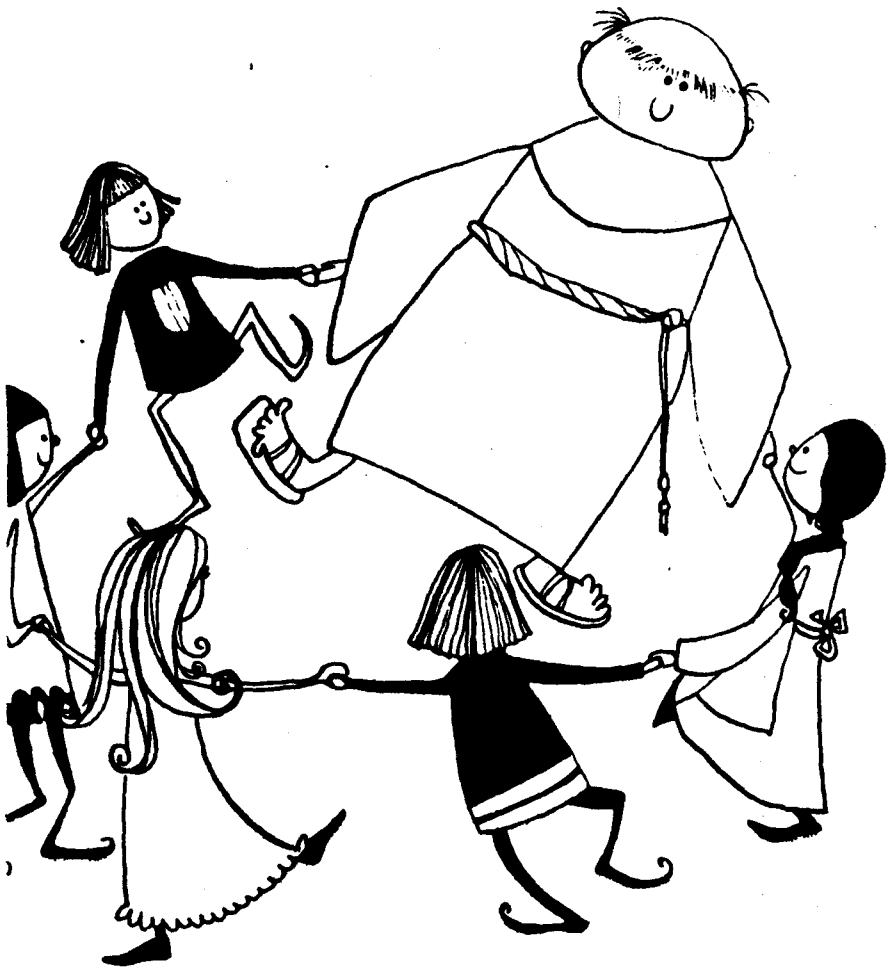
Therefore, in order to carry out the many worthy projects planned, it was necessary that each chapter pay taxes to the Central Council in proportion to their wealth. There were years when the treasury was nearly bankrupt. And then there were the bountiful years. Years which provided funds to undertake worthy and needed projects. . .



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From the inception of the organization to the present, members of the ACYOA wrote their own monthly magazine - The Armenian Guardian. This was only the first of many publications and educational projects which were undertaken.



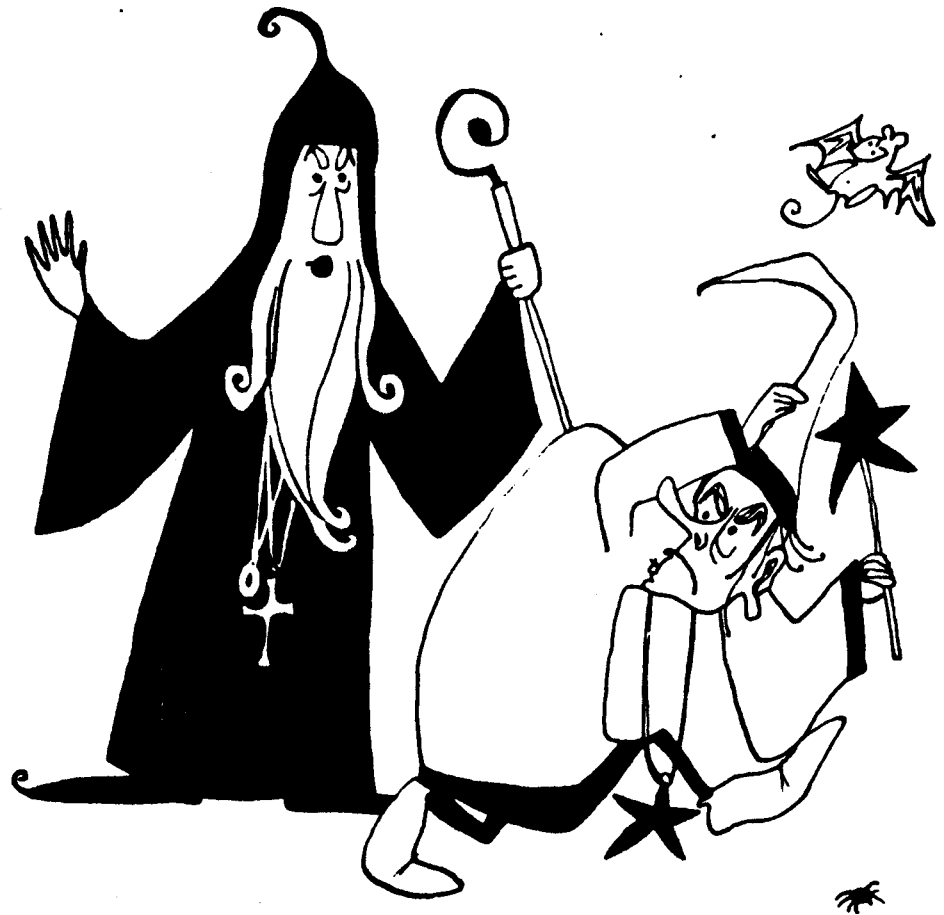
Conferences for Sunday school teachers were first organized by the ACYOA. These conferences inspired the birth of the Council for Religious Education which now directs the Church Sunday Schools of the Diocese. Continued enthusiasm and determination of the organization helped in the establishment of The Armenian Theological School in America.



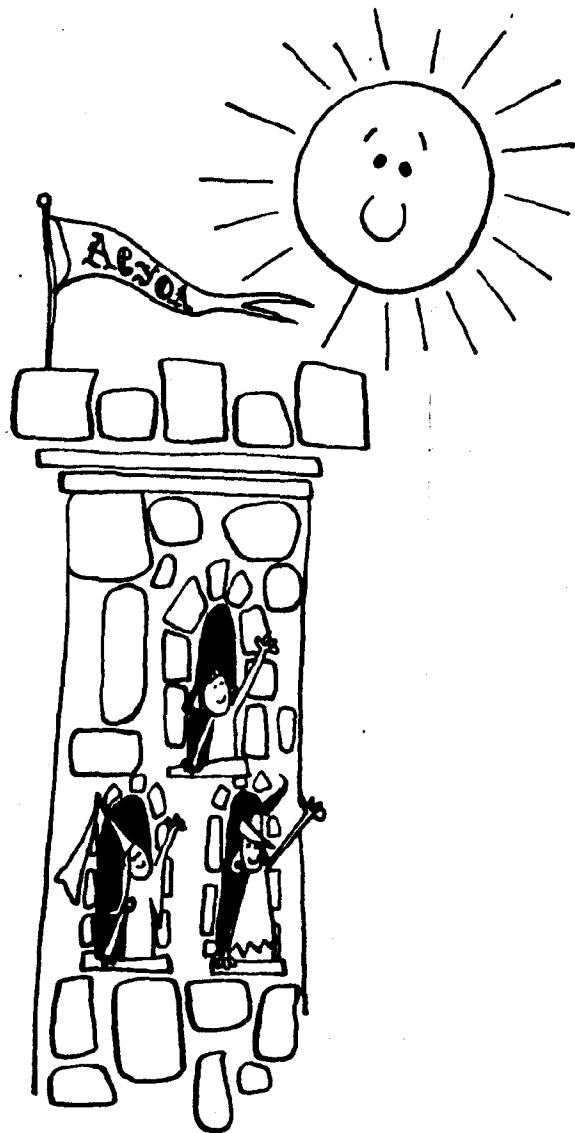
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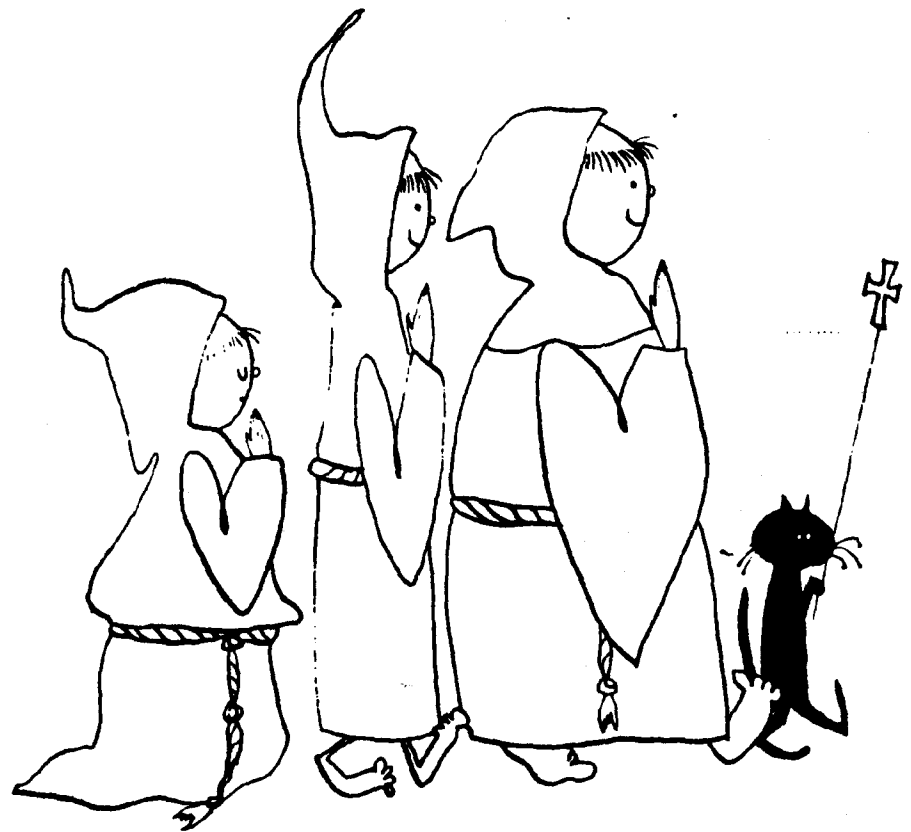
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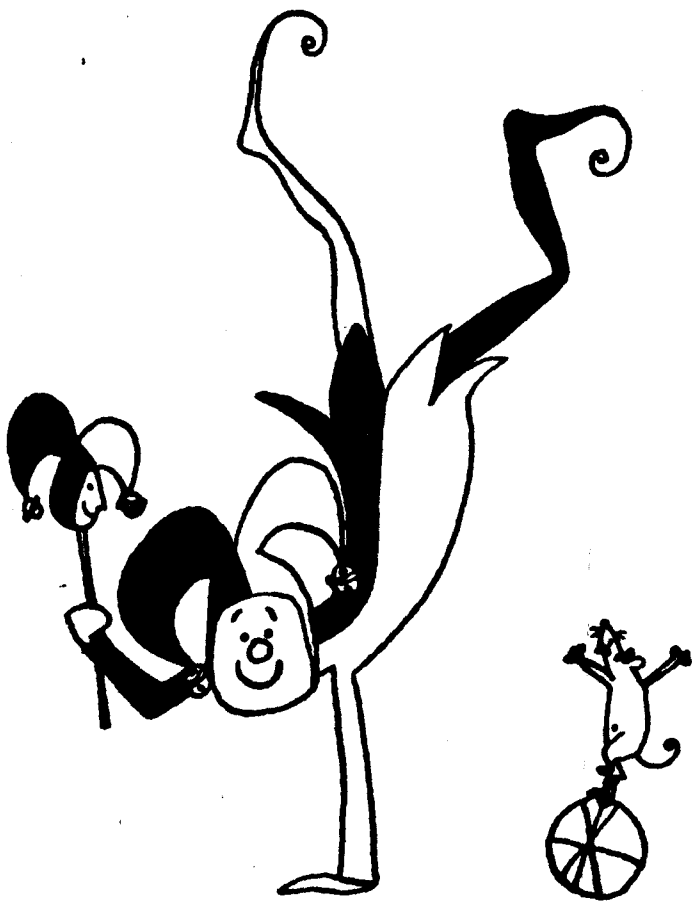
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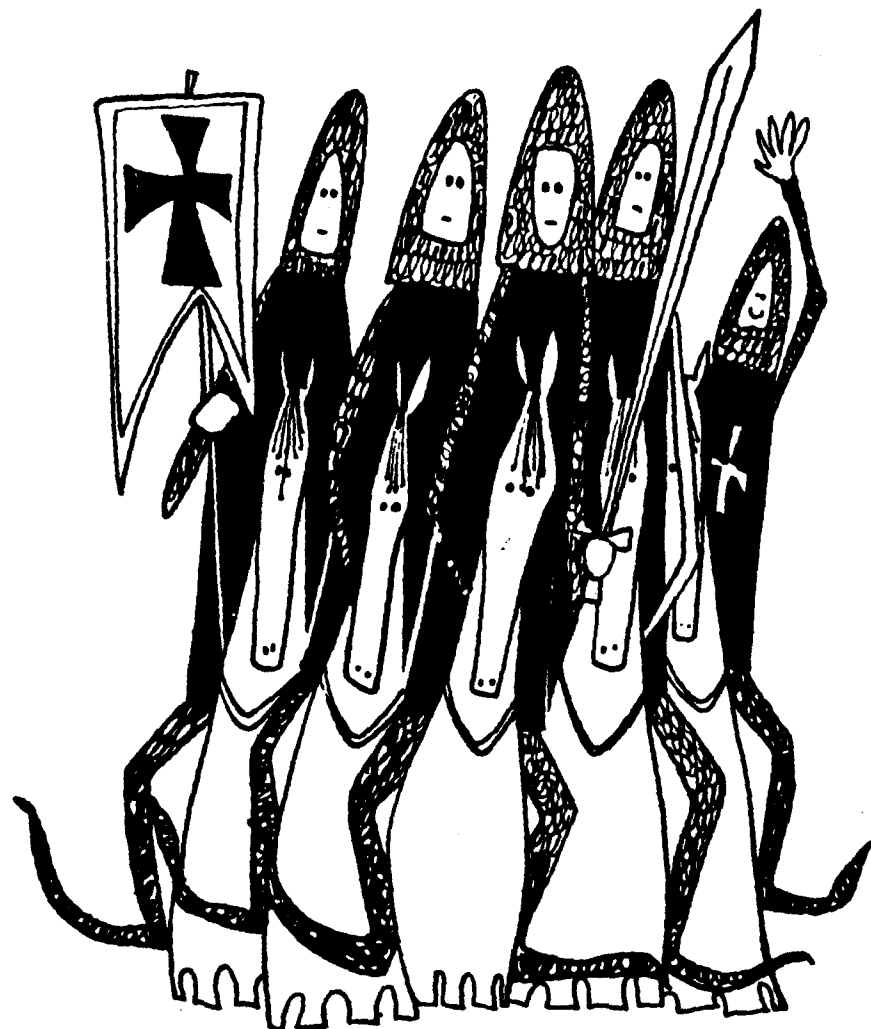
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