

# ACYOA Celebrates 40th Anniversary; Honors Founder Abp. Tiran Nersoyan

By Susan Shamalian

NEW YORK, N.Y. - More than 300 alumni, members and friends of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America gathered at the Diocese of the Armenian Church in New York City on Saturday evening, November 29, 1986, to attend a joyous event - the Gala 40th Anniversary Celebration of the ACYOA honoring the founding Primate, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan.

The site of this Mid-Atlantic Region Dinner-Dance was the Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium, which was attractively decorated in purple and yellow, the organization's traditional colors. Special ACYOA Story Books, anniversary pens, and a commemorative booklet were distributed to all present.

The festivities began with a Reunion Hour during which guests of various generations renewed their friendships and also viewed an impressive collection of ACYOA memorabilia on display in the adjacent G-Hall. Celebration Committee Vice-Chairman Joseph Kalemkerian then announced that the dinner would commence with the processional entrance of honored guests, followed by the group singing of the "Star-Spangled Banner" accompanied by Susan Shamalian at the piano.

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, then led the recitation of the ACYOA Prayer and pronounced the invocation. Nancy Basmajian, Director of the ACYOA Juniors, proposed a toast to Archbishop Tiran, to the organization's alumni and to the future of the ACYOA.

Anniversary Celebration General Chairman Rose Mekenian began her welcoming remarks with the introduction of New Jersey Assemblyman Garabed "Chuck" Hayataian, who expressed his pride at having been a former member of the New York Holy Cross Church ACYOA.

Mrs. Mekenian thanked all those present for attending the celebration. She acknowledged with gratitude the Mid-Atlantic Anniversary Planning Committee, Diocesan staff members, parish representatives and donors to the commemorative booklet, which had been designed and assembled by Joseph Kalemkerian.

### Anniversary Cake

An elaborate cake-cutting ceremony followed, led by the Primate and Archbishop Tiran. Participants included past and present ACYOA Central Council Chairmen and members, Directors and Executive Secretaries, who were invited by Mrs. Mekenian to the stage, where they placed lit candles on five anniversary cakes that spelled out ACYOA. This touching segment of the program concluded with the jubilant group singing of "Happy Anniversary".

Rose Mekenian then introduced former Center Council Chairmen Michael Simonian and Arda Nazerian, who served as master and mistress of ceremonies. Following his intro-



Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, Rose Mekenian (Chairperson of Celebration Committee), and Archbishop Torkom Manoogian hold the plaque presented to Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan (the founding Primate of the ACYOA) during the evening.

spiritually and socially, and that it has been a "dynamic and inspiring organization founded by a truly dynamic and inspiring man." Archbishop Tiran's sister, Diramayr Mariam Jebejian, and other members of his family were present for the occasion.

### Social Messages

Mr. Simonian called upon Zaven Hovsepian, the first and five-time Central Council Chairman, to address the guests. Mr. Hovsepian recalled how Archbishop Nersoyan had conceived the ACYOA, believed in our young people, and achieved his vision, creating an organization that has adapted to change and lived for two generations. He pointed out that during the next 40 years, the ACYOA can be a vehicle for expanding and developing many programs, and that, like the U.S. Marines, "Once you're in it, you're in it!"

Arda Nazerian subsequently called off the names of the clergymen and other special guests present at the dinner and invited Archbishop Torkom to lead a prayer in memory of deceased ACYOA members. She then introduced recent Central Council Chairman Shake Ajamian, who noted that the organization's purpose had been to use the Church's precious resource, its young people. Miss Ajamian added that the ACYOA has grown, changed and succeeded in setting Christian goals that have been a lifeline of the community.

The final and youngest guest speaker was high-school senior, Sarkis Jebejian, grandnephew of Archbishop Tiran and past Chairman of the New York-New Jersey Regional Juniors. In a combination of articulate Armenian and English, Sarkis recalled that Archbishop Tiran had been a tremendous influence on him and a source of spiritual strength. He pointed out that the ACYOA had played an important role in his life, both

spiritually and socially, and that it has been a "dynamic and inspiring organization founded by a truly dynamic and inspiring man." Archbishop Tiran's sister, Diramayr Mariam Jebejian, and other members of his family were present for the occasion.

Anthony Barsamian, current Acting Executive Secretary of the ACYOA Seniors, followed next on the program, suggesting that like Archbishop Tiran, we must give of ourselves. "Each of us must make a commitment to find our young people, be their mentors and their teachers; then the Armenian Church will have a future," he insisted.

Judge Vincent Gurahian, Diocesan Council Chairman, congratulated the ACYOA and predicted that those who are in the organization today will hold roles of importance in the Armenian Church in the future.

Arda Nazerian read messages from New York Governor Mario Cuomo and former ACYOA Executive Secretaries Rev. Karekin Kasparian and Deacon Megerditch Mouradian, who were unable to attend.

Miss Nazerian then called on Rose Mekenian, "the driving force behind this event," whose extensive involvement in the Armenian Church began years ago in his home parish of Cleveland, Ohio. Joseph Kalemkerian added that Mrs. Mekenian had worked tirelessly on the planning of this celebration for the past eight months, and presented her with a bouquet of roses on behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Region 40th Anniversary Committee.

Mrs. Mekenian graciously expressed her thanks and noted that it had been a special privilege to head the committee because of the mixed generations involved. "Archbishop Tiran has always been an inspiration to me," she stated, and presented His Eminence with two special gifts - a video cassette recorder and a specially inscribed commemorative plaque.



Anthony Barsamian, Acting Executive Secretary of the ACYOA Seniors, makes his remarks at the ACYOA Mid-Atlantic Region 40th Anniversary Celebration Dinner-Dance.

### Primate's Address

Archbishop Torkom then addressed the guests, emphasizing the importance of leadership. "Every member of the ACYOA must act as a leader by their words, attitudes, actions and life," he noted. "We must study the past to prepare for the years ahead." The Primate pointed out Archbishop Tiran's steadfast devotion to the Church and its members and said, "We recall with gratitude the work of Archbishop Tiran, who worked so diligently to bring about the first ACYOA Constitutional Assembly... We think of him with much admiration and much respect."

Archbishop Torkom concluded his remarks with the presentation of a gift from all ACYOAers - a beautiful portrait of Archbishop Tiran by painter Soss Melik, which will be displayed in the Tahlj of the diocesan headquarters.

Deeply touched, Archbishop responded with eloquent words of appreciation for the gifts and said, "I thank you very much from the bottom of my heart for recalling the part I had in the founding of the ACYOA." He congratulated the organization's members through the four decades and acknowledged the efforts of Archbishop Torkom, who had worked with him since 1946 as a close associate in the ACYOA endeavor.

"The youth are our future," Archbishop Tiran continued. "I'm really moved by the love you have shown me...there's nothing sweeter or more uplifting than to come together with this love," he concluded.

The program came to a close with the Benediction and Closing Prayer led by Archbishop Tiran. The final portion of the celebration then began with dancing to the music of the John Vartan Ensemble and D.J. Ron.

It was truly glorious reunion and a fitting tribute to Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan as well as to the youth who have been the organization through the years.

ACYOA Central Council past Chairmen present at the celebration in addition to those previously mentioned were Manoog Heditjian, Casey Kazanjian, Max Boudakian, Missak Arahamian, Leon Hojagian, Mark Kazanjian, and present Chairman, Scott Najarian. Several of them as well as other Central Council members had traveled considerable distances to attend. Past Central Council members participating were Mary Shalakian (also first Executive Secretary), Haig Serabian, Mary Azarian Zolitan, Arax Selvinajian, Betty Ekmanian, Rose Bannaian Mekenian, Arpena Tavitian Sbarbaro, Alex Dadourian, Ann Dadaian, Joseph and Louise Kalemkerian (both past Executive Secretaries), Penie Alilemdjian Papanian, Carol Der Boghosian, Robert Doramajian, Sona Yazijian, and current member Gregory Sarayardarian.

Members of the ACYOA Mid-Atlantic Region 40th Anniversary Celebration Committee were as follows: Most Rev. Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate; Very Rev. Fr. Khajag Barsamian, Advisor; Nancy Basmajian, Advisor; Rose Mekenian, General Chairman; Joseph Kalemkerian, Vice Chairman/Booklet; Lori Kalemkerian, Corresponding Secretary/Booklet Ads; Shake Ajamian, Recording Secretary; Ann Dadaian, Assistant Secretary; Leon Hojagian, Treasurer; Arda Nazerian, Publicity; Arpena Sbarbaro, Dinner; Michael Simonian, Program; Mary Selvinajian, Reservations; Marge Ajamian, Decorations; Gregory Sarayardarian, Lighting; Gregory Doukjian, Dance; John Nersesian, Dance; Carol Der Boghosian, Photographer; Suzie Ashjian, Hotel Information; Missak Arahamian and Avedis Sakalian, Members.



At table of Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan's relatives, from top to center, nephew Shahe and Olympia Jebejian; nephew Aren and Seta Jebejian; grandnieces Talia and Maria Jebejian; and grandnephews Aren Jebejian (Florida), and Tiran Jebejian and Krikor Anoushian.



Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, the founding Primate of the ACYOA, acknowledges a warm greeting as Judge Vincent Gurahian, Diocesan Council Chairman, Rose Mekenian, Celebration Chairperson; Arda Nazerian and Michael Simonian, Mistress and Master of Ceremonies, listen.

Photos: Carol Der Boghosian

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Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan receives gifts presented by Rose Mekenian, as the Primate and Diranayr Mariam Jbejian (Archbishop Nersoyan's sister) look on.



Shown at the head table are from the left: Archbishop Torkom Manoogian; Judge Vincent Gurahian, Diocesan Council chairman; Rose Mekenian, Celebration chairman, Arda Nazerian and Michael Simonian, mistress and master of ceremonies.

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## Anoush Krikorian Entertains St. Vartan Guild Members

Anoush Krikorian, the well-known entertainer, was the guest performer during the monthly meeting-luncheon of St. Vartan Cathedral Guild held at the diocesan complex, New York City on Tuesday, December 2.

On the occasion of Western Christmas, Mr. Krikorian recited poetry, sang Armenian songs, told jokes and acted out skits.

Shown in the picture are, from the left: Anoush Krikorian, Rev. Fr. Arten Ashjian, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, the Primate, and the Very Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Najarian, acting vicar general.



Past and present ACYOA Central Council members and executive secretaries/directors participate with Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian and ACYOA founding Primate, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, in the cake-cutting ceremony.

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The Primate concluded his remarks with the presentation of a gift from all ACYOAers — a beautiful portrait of Archbishop Nersoyan by painter Soss Melik, which will be displayed in the Tahlij of the diocesan headquarters. Deeply touched, Archbishop

Arpena Sbarbaro, dinner; Michael Simonian, program; Mary Selvinazian, reservations; Marge Ajamian, decorations; Gregory Saraydarian, lighting; Gregory Doudoukjian, dance; John Nersesian, dance; Carol Der Boghosian, photographer; Suzie Ashjian, hotel information; Missak Arahamian and Avedis Sakalian, members. Susan Shamamian