

DRAFT

Address by Archbishop Manoogian to DELEGATES

As I was preparing my notes for this address, I had the benefit - I think that is the right word - of a commentary from one of the young men who served as summer interns at the Diocesan headquarters over the past several weeks.

His comment had to do with a phrase I had planned to use for this audience - calling you "leaders of tomorrow". Very accurately, he pointed out that it would be correct to say "leaders of today" recognizing that you are, in your present roles, functioning in leadership capacities already.

I agree with his critique - and I believe that the phrase "leaders now" carries significant importance for all who are gathered here as delegates to this ACYOA Assembly.

We have spent much time in offering congratulations of various kinds during this Fortieth Anniversary event - congratulations to individuals and to each other for the success that ACYOA has achieved over these past four decades. Such statements are perfectly in order and yet I must cite for you a term that you have all heard at one time or another: "What are you going to do for me now?"

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What lies ahead for ACYOA? Next year, next decade, next century. The year 2001, the start of another century, will^Xupon us in less than fifteen years.. It is not too soon to think about where ACYOA can be - should be - at that time.

How is ACYOA going to become even more meaningful for those who participate? How will you make it attractive to those who are not taking part, but should be participants?

How should ACYOA expand its activities?
What should be done that isn't being accomplished now?

I am sure that each of you knows someone - several individuals, perhaps - who should be seated here today. I am talking about people you know who have the background and the talents to be valuable additions to ACYOA leadership. How can you reach out to these people - in a persuasive, positive way - to bring them into the organization?

These are the kinds of questions you must address - along with many others - if you are to fulfill your responsibilities as leaders.

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ACYOA offers great opportunities - or, if you wish, challenges - for those of you taking part in its work. How are you going to take advantage of these chances to expand your own capabilities and, at the same time, service the interests of our Church?

Every so often, someone tells me that "these young people today don't want to accept responsibility". I do not believe these statements. The evidence I have tells me the opposite is true. I see young men and women taking on important roles in the work of the Diocese and in the parishes everywhere I go.

For everyone who talks to me about the lack of experience of our young leaders, I tell them of the energy and innovation that are inherent in our youth and so often lacking in the older generation.

As many of you may recall, last year I mentioned some new programs that I hoped to see initiated in the Diocese that will complement the goals of ACYOA. I am happy to say that these are moving ahead.

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Plans are moving ahead for "International Youth Fellowship Week" that will bring to our Diocese young men and women from other parts of the world to spend some time with our young people. While this will begin on a modest basis, with individuals from other dioceses in California and Canada, we look forward to seeing young men and women from abroad joining this kind of assembly as our own representatives visit other parts of the world on behalf of ACYOA.

The Campus Ministry program I spoke about last year will get under way in the near future. I will be visiting campuses in various parts of the country, helping to set up a means whereby local families and parishes can be put in contact with Armenian-American men and women as they arrive on the campuses. It is a very important stage in the development of Christian men and women and we should try to provide all of the support we possibly can for our youth. We will be calling upon our parishes to provide us with the names and locations of their college-bound men and women so that we can put this program into operation as quickly and effectively as possible.

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I mentioned at the outset something about the just-completed "Summer Intern" program. This was the first time the Diocese has undertaken such an operation - and I am delighted to say that it was extremely successful. Four young people, from parishes across the Diocese, all members of ACYOA, came to work at our headquarters in New York City. They were assigned to specific tasks in the administration of the Diocese and worked very hard and very well at their jobs.

They met with Diocesan officials and myself daily, at meals and in services as well as in work assignments. There was a very free exchange in our discussions - something that I found extremely valuable. I hope they did, too. Having the benefit of face-to-face communication, especially on a continuing basis, with the young people of our Church can only be helpful to the clergy and hierarchy.

You can be sure that this program will be continued - and expanded - in the coming years. It serves not only our purposes but also those participating, giving them a unique opportunity to see how the Diocese operates - the problems that must be faced and the amount of time and effort required to make things happen.

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There is something else that I believe can be gained through that intern program - a point that can be appreciated and utilized by everyone here. I am speaking about concern for the future: but based on a knowledge of the past.

To plan properly for the years to come, we must study the past. Despite some people's opinions to the contrary, all that has gone before should not be forgotten. There is much to admire, much to build on in the annals of ACYOA. You should examine these past forty years carefully, to determine those elements that have brought about the success we celebrate now. Utilize the best of what has taken place and create the new structure for the future.

I have called you leaders of today - and so you are. Act as leaders - don't wait to be told what to do, use your God-given intelligence and judgement and move ahead. As Christian men and women, you know that God will be with you.

DRAFT (Revised)

Address by Archbishop Manoogian at ACYOA 40th Anniversary Event

It is with great joy that I speak ^{with} to you today- joy that we are able to assemble in such pleasant surrounding and in such delightful company. Joy, too, that the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America is able to celebrate forty years of fruitful service - with the real prospect of many more decades of devotion to the people of our Church.

It is appropriate on this wonderful occasion that we recall, with loving gratitude, one of the key people responsible for the formation of ACYOA - Bishop Tiran Nersoyan, who worked so diligently to bring about the formation of the first Constitutional Assembly in January of 1946.

I believe that one of the main reasons for the success of ACYOA over these many years has been the emphasis on the establishment of a strong parish base for the organization. It was not set apart from the structure, but was, and is, very much a part of the Church.

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In addition to providing a variety of programs, including sports and entertainment that would be of interest to young men and women, ACYOA undertook a great many projects that were of immediate value to the local parishes and to our church overall. ACYOA members helped parish building and renovation operations as well as took part in other activities that proved to be of lasting value. ACYOA participated in the Diocesan drive to raise funds for the restoration of the Motor Church of Holy Etchmiadzin.

Perhaps most important of all, ACYOA undertook the sponsorship of publishing a number of books and other documents that have helped to enhance the teachings of our Church. Many of these publications were utilized by the Department of Religious Education when it began operations.

The story of the growth of ACYOA has not been without its thorny side as well. It would not be truthful to say that the forty years were filled only with success. It might be pleasant to think so, but it would not be correct.

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Twenty years ago, in the early and mid-1960s, ACYOA was affected, as were so many other organizations and institutions in America, by the dramatic changes that swept through society - especially with respect to our youth. Young men and women everywhere, at every level of the economy and society, were "dropping out", or "turning off" - or, more unfortunately, "turning on" to one substance or another. There were new religions, new communes, new lifestyles. ACYOA was touched, along with other parts of American society as well. For two years, the annual General Assembly Weekend was suspended - and things were not as they should have been.

Fortunately, there was still strength at the parish level. Much of the work of the national section was handled by the Diocese. Yet, two very valuable programs were inaugurated during this painful period - activities that still provide benefits to the participants as well as to the Church.

I am referring to the Armenian Studies Program which provides a means for members of ACYOA to go back "home" - where most have never been - to Armenia. They have a chance to experience, in a very meaningful way,

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about the customs, the people, the language, the beauty - all that makes our Armenian heritage so precious to us.

During this same period, about fifteen years ago, the National Sports Weekend began - attracting nearly a thousand young people from all around the country to participate in a wide variety of sports competitions, entertainment and, in general, have a wonderful opportunity to meet young people of similar backgrounds and interests.

In addition to sponsoring sports competitions, ACYOA continued to foster its educational contributions through such efforts as the development of audio-visual programs that help to explain the character of the Church liturgy and other important topics.

I could go on and on about all of the things that ACYOA has been doing, is doing and plans to do. However, you people are well aware of all of this. My objective is to let you know how much importance the Church places on these ACYOA efforts.

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I am personally pleased to see how ACYOA has continued to place emphasis on the development of leaders, recognizing leadership qualities early on; by conducting ^{SUCH} leadership programs as the Sam Nersessian Awards which call attention to young people who exemplify the characteristics one would hope to find in a sincere Christian devoted to his or her Church.

The scholarship programs that send worthwhile young people to attend courses at St. Nersess Seminary offer another example of the kind of positive approach to developing leaders that I happily applaud.

Perhaps the finest compliment that can be paid to ACYOA on its fortieth anniversary is the fact that so many - almost all - of our American-born clergy and lay workers, were members of ACYOA in their early years. Of course, we can trace a very high percentage of marriages over the past forty years to couples who first met while attending ACYOA events.

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That's why ACYOA is so vital to the future of our Church. We are a relatively small congregation - yet we are not weak. Our strength stems from several factors - not the least of which is that Armenians seek each other out - to provide help and support.

In the nearly forty years that I have been associated with ACYOA, I have seen it grow and flourish in a way that exceeds anything Bishop Tiran might have anticipated. It succeeds not because of any unique organizational structure or magical formula - it succeeds because of people - people like yourselves and those who came before you.

It is people who make ACYOA work - people who contribute to the strength of our Church and the general welfare of the Armenian community in America. Those of you who are taking part in ACYOA now - who are here today - are the leaders of today - and tomorrow. That is not an idle statement - it is a point of fact. The history of the last forty years has proven this to be true.

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The mantle of leadership brings with it not only justifiable acclaim - it also carries a great deal of responsibility. That is not something to be taken lightly. It means that you are in positions where you give direction - not by issuing orders, but by the example you set. Your presence here is such an example. Many individuals with whom you come in contact are affected by what you do - and don't do. You may not realize it, but you are roles models for younger people. You must act accordingly.

You are responsible adults, capable of controlling your action. Therefore, you should behave as the Christian men and women you claim to be.

It is not easy to be a Christian these days, but I must remind you - when was it ever so? Ask your grandparents and other relatives who survived the holocaust - they know how hard it can be to maintain the Christian faith. For them and their contemporaries, it meant facing death - literally. For those of us enjoying the freedoms of this country, being a Christian means that we have to resist the temptations to do all

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those things that we know are contrary to our Christian beliefs - but which are deemed acceptable by the rest of society.

Often, the biggest challenge for today's Christian is to say "No!" - when faced with a chance to do something we know to be wrong - while the rest of the world says it is all right. That is where your leadership must come in - through your actions as Christians. We do not need "lip-service Christians" - we need men and women who will live and act as Christians in every aspect of their daily lives.

Will this always be easy? Of course not - but who said that good things can be achieved without some effort? Your role, as leaders, will be even more demanding since it will be up to you to provide the example, to show the way.

As you go on your journey, know that you will have God's blessings available to you - whatever you need will be provided in return for your continued Faith.