

May 13, 1986

Mr. Howard Hoffmaster, Editor
Journal Times
212 Fourth Street
Racine, WI 53403

Dear Mr. Hoffmaster:

We have read with interest, the story which appeared in the Saturday, May 3, edition of your newspaper, reporting on our Diocesan Assembly which took place in your community last week.

The article's headline and opening paragraphs concerning the possibility of admitting women to the Diaconate may cause misunderstandings about our Church's position on this important topic.

The text of the proposal discussed by the representatives to the Assembly carefully describes the procedure to be followed: a request to the Primate of the Diocese to exercise his hierarchical authority, at his discretion, to forward to the head of our Church, His Holiness Vazken I, Catholicos of All Armenians, a request to consider ordination of qualified women to the Diaconate.

It must be recognized that there are several steps that must be taken before such a proposal can be considered for implementation. The action by the delegates last week constitutes a request to the Primate to give this consideration - nothing more. As pointed out in the article, there is a great deal of work, examining our Church canons and procedures, which must be completed before further steps can be taken.

Our purpose is not to indicate rejection of this proposal, but rather to temper the enthusiasm of those who may read the story and believe that such ordination of women to the Diaconate is imminent. That is not the case.

Our Church traces its roots back to the beginnings of Christianity, when two of Christ's disciples, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, came to Armenia to preach the Gospel and died there, martyrs to the Faith. Changes in the way our Church operates are not made pre-emptorially but only after careful consideration of all aspects of the matter.

One last point, the Diocese is reported in the article to cover all of North America except Canada. There is, in fact, a Diocese that incorporates the state of California, where many of our fellow Christian Armenians reside.

Prayerfully,

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian
Primate

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Delegates say 'yes' to women

By Karen B. Tancill
Journal Times

CALEDONIA — The people in the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church sent a message to the head of the denomination Friday.

They want women to be allowed into the diaconate.

The people made their statement in a resolution passed during the business session of the diocese's annual meeting. The meeting continues through Sunday at St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church at 4605 Erie St.

The Eastern Diocese covers all of North America except for Canada.

The way the church operates, women can't be sacramental functionaries, said the Rev. Garabed Kochakian, pastor of St. Mesrob. They can't assist the priest at the altar during the liturgy. They can't administer Holy Communion to the sick. They can't be considered for the priesthood.

The only role they can have during the service, said the executive director of the diocese, Michael Kermian, is that of choir member.

The resolution asking that the head of the church consider women for the diaconate was written by the diocesan council, which Kermian said is comparable to the board of directors of a

corporation.

The resolution stated that "since men and women are equal in the eyes of God, both are called to serve Him."

The delegates debated about 30 minutes before voting 95 to 21 in favor of the resolution. No women spoke.

The major opposition to the resolution came from those who felt the diocesan council should have investigated church canons to see what they say about women in the church before drafting the resolution.

The Rev. Zaven Arzoumanian of Pompano Beach, Fla., questioned the need for more deacons.

"Where is the shortage of deacons in our parishes? We had a service in a South Florida church where we had nine deacons on the altar."

Francis Najarian of Wooster, Mass., said, "You don't always have to demonstrate a need to take an action. Very often you can take an action because there is a desire."

There is a desire on the part of many women to be in the diaconate, he said.

Joseph Kalemkerian of Paramus, N.J., said speaking as a deacon, "there is a need. I cannot attend funerals during the middle of the week because I work."

The head of the diocese, Archbishop Turkom

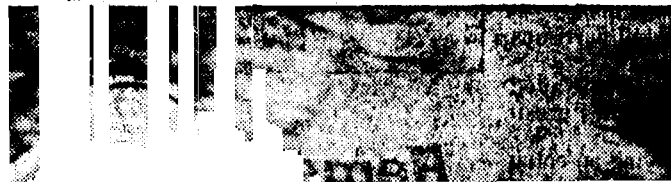
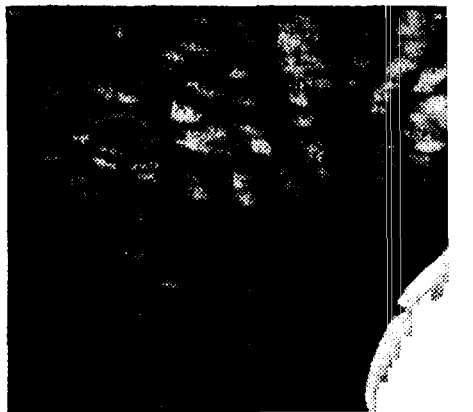
Manoogian, said although he was glad people in the diocese were discussing the issue, he, too was concerned that the council had not done any canonical or sociological research before drafting the resolution.

"I believe that changes do take place in the church," he said, speaking in general terms. But, he said, it's up to the hierarchy of the church to decide when and how those changes will take place.

The delegates also requested the diocesan council create "a vigorous mechanism to study and adopt positions in accordance with the teachings of the Armenian church relative to moral issues and problems resulting from 'new' lifestyles in our society today."

The resolution was introduced by St. Mesrob's Church. Those speaking in favor of it said they felt creating that mechanism would give the church more visibility. They noted that the Roman Catholic Church had gotten a lot of attention because of the pastoral letter on peace the bishops wrote.

The delegates are to elect an archbishop today. During an evening banquet at the Sheraton-Racine, Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis) and U.S. Rep. Les Aspin (D-East Troy) are to receive "The Friends of the Armenians" awards because of their efforts to get the Genocide Resolution passed.



Policy violates law

By Len LaCara
Journal Times

RACINE — The Unified School District's policy on AIDS victims discriminates against homosexuals and the handicapped, a state equal rights officer has determined.

Katherine Kehoe of the Equal

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