

# St. Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church

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ELBERON, NEW JERSEY

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Rev. Vertanes Kalayjian, Pastor

October 3, 1975.

His Eminence  
Archbishop T. Manogian, Primate  
Diocese of the Armenian Church  
New York, N.Y.

Serpazan Hayr:

With the date of our meeting with the Diocesan Council getting closer, I feel I should write to you to bring to your attention and the Diocesan Council's attention, a few points which require additional clarification and most urgent consideration.

1- The single and most important item concerning me, as the Pastor of this community is, for the Diocesan Council to recognize the fact that at the forthcoming meeting I cannot act as the mouthpiece of a sizeable portion of this community. I never was and I refuse to be implicated as the "Leader" of any portion of this community. During and after the 1975 General Parish Assembly of our congregation, I was a bewildered witness to a deliberate attempt on the part of the present officials of the Parish to exclude healthy and youthful elements from our Parish life. I only sympathized with the latter to offset the shocking effect of the partisan behavior that was displayed by the said officials and followers of same, during and after the Assembly. Such behavior still continues.

2- For the reason stated above and to have such a meeting be meaningful at all, I respectfully suggest that invitations be extended to:

- a. Mr. John Chakamian, Alternate Diocesan Delegate
- b. Mr. John Pehlivanian, Alternate Parish Council Member
- c. Ladies Guild Executive Committee Members

These will be a good representation from the leadership of this community. So that we may be able to achieve a broader understanding of the situation as compared to my presence alone being interpreted as "Parish Council vs. Pastor". The community problems are much more than the above stated. A reconciliation of any sort should, respectfully, in my opinion, include the individuals above so that they may carry the message of understanding to all concerned.

3- There still remains the thorny question of the Armenian School. Against the general exhortation given by Your Grace, and against the direct advice given by Mr. Jack Antreasian to reach a compromise concerning the appointment of an Armenian School Committee, the Parish Council members have

undermined such a possibility by:

a. Terminating the Last Year's Armenian School Committee's responsibilities without giving reason or cause to warrant such action.

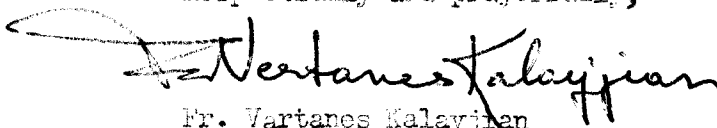
b. Appointing a new Armenian School Committee composed of five individuals, of which two have declined the nomination. The committee of three, nevertheless, met last Sunday (Sept. 28, 1975) and elected (without waiting for the appointment of two additional members) its officers; namely a chairman, Secretary, and a Treasurer, with complete partisan arrogance. This Committee of Three also decided to do away with the Armenian School held on Saturdays and chose to have only an hour long class on Sundays, following the Sunday School. Furthermore, the Committee of Three, against my counsel and advice, refused to consider the preferences of the students (38 in all) and any of the parents of last year's Armenian School.

c. Partly because of the above and along these developments, the Parents of last year's students and the last year's Committee have organized themselves to hold Armenian School someplace else and apart from the Church, again against my counsel and advice. Also, they have resisted pressures brought upon them by responsible members of this community (Messrs. John Chakamian, John Pehlivanian, Hrayr Hovnanian and Armen Bulbulian). I pray, the widespread belief that this could be the beginning of a division within this community will not be proven to be true. The division that is talked about, I might add, is not necessarily along the lines that are familiar to us by now.

4- Harrassments and insults directed to those who have paid their church dues, since January of this year, continues against the advice and the directive given by Your Grace. I am enclosing copies of letters that have accompanied the revised (by the Diocesan office) version of the membership forms. One of these letters was sent to those who were dues paying members on record by Feb. 16th, 1975 Parish Assembly, and the other was sent to those who have become dues paying members in the months of January through June of this year. I do not have to elaborate on the effects of such irritating and irresponsible behavior.

5- Some members of the Parish Council continue their slanderous and defamatory ear-to-ear gossiping and accusations against me without seeking open understanding or explanation. In my humble opinion, the most important items for the Diocesan Council to consider, so as to establish some peace in this community, ~~are~~ items 3 and 4. My personal or official involvement comes next; if it should ever come at all.

Respectfully and prayerfully,

  
Fr. Vartanes Kalayjian

EVK:GGS

cc:

Monl. John Najarian,  
Chairman, Diocesan Council