

SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE ACYOA CONVENTION

DEAR ACYOA DELEGATES

I am very happy to be here today to share with you this memorable occasion, to be better acquainted with each one of you and to learn from you. *[It also gives me a great spiritual uplift to have with us as guests the Primate of California and Canada, His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian and the Very Rev. Hovnan Derderian. Their presence here signifies the unity of the Armenian Church on the North American continent and the brotherly love that prevails in our Church. Having them here at my side gives me greater strength, assurance and determination to carry the heavy burden of the yoke of Christ on my weak shoulders.]*

The present Convention in particular will help me as your new Primate to understand you and your needs better. This is a most opportune time in my life to turn to you, since I am not agewise far removed from you by a wide gap. The past experience of my predecessors, Archbishops Tiran Nersoyan and Torkom Manoogian, serve as a witness to the fact that if a newly-elected Primate of this vast Diocese wishes to achieve any results during his tenure of office, he must be sensitive to the youth movements in our Church. From the first day of my election as Primate of the Eastern Diocese last May, I decided to follow the example of great churchmen such as Archbishop Tiran and Patriarch Torkom, now the occupant of the Holy Apostolic See of Jerusalem, by directing my attention to the youth and the ACYOA. One of the points I made in my acceptance speech to the Diocesan Assembly that elected me was the promise that I would make every effort to strengthen the ACYOA and create a department of youth at the Diocesan Headquarters.

Today I come here with a more elaborate proposal, one that aims at reviving our traditional values and strengthening the roots of our Church community. We shall try to establish within our Diocese a FAMILY MINISTRY, of which the YOUTH MINISTRY will be a part. Family Ministry will draw the people of our Diocese together into a single unit or a family so that everyone will feel himself or herself as a member of the one and the same corporate body of Christ. In all the parishes throughout our Diocese we would like to see a spirit of love, brotherhood, tolerance and acceptance, so that the youth may not be patronized by their elders, the old may not be rejected by their juniors, the newly-arrived immigrants may not feel alien and the American-born may not be led to think of themselves as less Armenians. We would like to see an interaction among the different church and community organizations, generations, classes of people and Armenians in general. The resultant atmosphere from such interaction may perhaps keep within the fold of the community the thousands of youth, college and post-college age men and women living away from home, who drift away from Armenian life, get involved in non-Armenian institutions and usually never return to the bosom of our Church.

I realize that the Family Ministry is a most ambitious program that deserves a great deal of attention. For that reason, I felt that we should tackle the first step as soon as possible. Consequently, the Diocese contacted a professional organization to assess our resources on a national scale, examine our needs and make recommendations. The research by this firm is already on its way and representatives will get in touch with various individuals in our parishes during the next several months.

It was unfortunate for the organization that the ACYOA Executive Secretary, Douglas Tashjian decided to return to his profession after two and a half years of very useful service to the youth of our

3.

Diocese. We were fortunate to have him and are thankful for all the wonderful work he did, including the revival of the ACYOA monthly publication and his exemplary accomplishments in the earthquake relief effort. While the Diocese is still looking for a replacement, Antranig Barsamian was appointed as interim Executive Secretary. Having served in this capacity in the past for over a year, he will bring his knowledge and experience to this office. In addition to this appointment, Steve Sarkisian was assigned to pursue a special project researching the state and needs of our young people from Birth until marriage. Steve's report will be made available soon and we are very thankful for his effort throughout the summer months.

Realizing well that the Youth Ministry in our Church could not succeed without bringing into the Church the young people who are in college, Nicole Mazmanian was appointed as our College Coordinator. For the past several months she has gathered information on Armenian students in colleges and compiled an impressive list. Ultimately these young Armenians will be contacted and encouraged to enlist in various Diocesan or parish programs. One such program, called "MY KINSMAN PROGRAM" had already been established four years ago and has served as an extended family for Armenian students away from home.

The ACYOA can and must play an important role in implementing our plans for a Family Ministry in order to help in these difficult times the extended Armenian family, the Armenian people, here in America, in the Middle East and particularly in Armenia. The future leaders of our people and the Parish Council members, delegates, priests and bishops of our Church will come from your ranks. You are young, vibrant and idealistic; your zeal is what the Armenian people and the Church community need. Get involved, and involve your friends and relatives in the Church. Be a part of Christ's family. May God bless you and give all of you the wisdom to choose His way.

1990

SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE ACYOA CONVENTION

DEAR ACYOA DELEGATES

I am very happy to be here today to share with you this memorable occasion, to be better acquainted with each one of you and to learn from you. *[It also gives me a great spiritual uplift to have with us as guests the Primate of California and Canada, His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepien and the Very Rev. Hovnan Derderian. Their presence here signifies the unity of the Armenian Church on the North American continent and the brotherly love that prevails in our Church. Having them here at my side gives me greater strength, assurance and determination to carry the heavy burden of the yoke of Christ on my weak shoulders.]*

The present Convention in particular will help me as your new Primate to understand you and your needs better. This is a most opportune time in my life to turn to you, since I am not agewise far removed from you by a wide gap. The past experience of my predecessors, Archbishops Tiran Nersoyan and Torkom Manoogian, serve as a witness to the fact that if a newly-elected Primate of this vast Diocese wishes to achieve any results during his tenure of office, he must be sensitive to the youth movements in our Church.

From the first day of my election as Primate of the Eastern Diocese last May, I decided to follow the example of great churchmen such as Archbishop Tiran and Patriarch Torkom, now the occupant of the Holy Apostolic See of Jerusalem, by directing my attention to the youth and the ACYOA. One of the points I made in my acceptance speech to the Diocesan Assembly that elected me was the promise that I would make every effort to strengthen the ACYOA and create a department of youth at the Diocesan Headquarters.

Today I come here with a more elaborate proposal, one that aims at reviving our traditional values and strengthening the roots of our Church community. We shall try to establish within our Diocese a FAMILY MINISTRY, of which the YOUTH MINISTRY will be a part. Family Ministry will draw the people of our Diocese together into a single unit or a family so that everyone will feel himself or herself as a member of the one and the same corporate body of Christ. In all the parishes throughout our Diocese we would like to see a spirit of love, brotherhood, tolerance and acceptance, so that the youth may not be patronized by their elders, the old may not be rejected by their juniors, the newly-arrived immigrants may not feel alien and the American-born may not be led to think of themselves as less Armenians. We would like to see an interaction among the different church and community organizations, generations, classes of people and Armenians in general. The resultant atmosphere from such interaction may perhaps keep within the fold of the community the thousands of youth, college and post-college age men and women living

away from home, who drift away from Armenian life, get involved in non-Armenian institutions and usually never return to the bosom of our Church.

I realize that the Family Ministry is a most ambitious program that deserves a great deal of attention. For that reason, I felt that we should tackle the first step as soon as possible. Consequently, the Diocese contacted a professional organization to assess our resources on a national scale, examine our needs and make recommendations. The research by this firm is already on its way and representatives will get in touch with various individuals in our parishes during the next several months.

It was unfortunate for the organization that the ACYOA Executive Secretary, Douglas Tashjian decided to return to his profession after two and a half years of very useful service to the youth of our Diocese. We were fortunate to have him and are thankful for all the wonderful work he did, including the revival of the ACYOA monthly publication and his exemplary accomplishments in the earthquake relief effort. While the Diocese is still looking for a replacement, Antranig Barsamian was appointed as interim Executive Secretary. Having served in this capacity in the past for over a year, he will bring his knowledge and experience to this office. In addition to this appointment, Steve Sarkisian was assigned to pursue a special project researching the state and needs of our young people from Birth until marriage. Steve's report will be made available soon and we are very thankful for his effort throughout the summer months.

Realizing well that the Youth Ministry in our Church could not succeed without bringing into the Church the young people who are in college, Nicole Mazmanian was appointed as our College Coordinator. For the past several months she has gathered information on Armenian students in colleges and compiled an impressive list. Ultimately these young Armenians will be contacted and encouraged to enlist in various Diocesan or parish programs. One such program, called "MY KINSMAN PROGRAM" had already been established four years ago and has served as an extended family for Armenian students away from home.

The ACYOA can and must play an important role in implementing our plans for a Family Ministry in order to help in these difficult times the extended Armenian family, the Armenian people, here in America, in the Middle East and particularly in Armenia. The future leaders of our people and the Parish Council members, delegates, priests and bishops of our Church will come from your ranks. You are young, vibrant and idealistic; your zeal is what the Armenian people and the Church community need. Get involved, and involve your friends and relatives in the Church. Be a part of Christ's family. May God bless you and give all of you the wisdom to choose His way.

I would also like to express words of appreciation to all the ACYOA Central Council members for their dedication and good work which they do for strengthening the youth movements in our Diocese, Lisa, Suzie, Laurie and Charles.