

## MESSAGE TO 1991 ACYOA ASSEMBLY

Dear Delegates:

It is with great excitement that I stand before you today. As you may recall, last year I addressed you for the first time as the Primate of this Diocese. On that occasion I announced plans for a new approach to the ministry of the Armenian Church of America—an approach which would have serious implications to the ACYOA and the other programs which affect yourselves and your contemporaries.

The ACYOA as currently constituted has been a strong and loyal arm of the Armenian Church for these past 45

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years. But like any organization, it requires a serious reappraisal of its objectives and its administrative structure.

Today, after a year of research and planning, the Armenian Church of America is poised on the precipice of a bold new undertaking which will reinvigorate its sacred service to all her children—not the least of which is the constituency represented by this distinguished assembly. With your endorsement, the Diocese is prepared to launch the first phase of its new Department of Youth Ministry.

It is of course no secret that the status of its youth has been a matter of utmost concern to the membership of the Armenian Church. This past spring, at the annual Diocesan

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File

Assembly in Tenafly, New Jersey, the subject of youth constituted a large part of the discussion among the delegates. Indeed, a special panel was convened to analyze this very issue, and a vigorous dialogue ensued among clergy, lay people and youth representatives.

The topic of young people in the Church was also an area of passionate concern among the participants of the International Conference of Armenian Clergy, which was held in New York this past June. In nearly all facets of its mission, and in nearly all of the Armenian communities in the diaspora as well as in the homeland, the Church's ministry to its up-and-coming generation has emerged as the rallying point for large numbers of our faithful—

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spanning generational and geographic boundaries.

I should add that of all the dioceses of our Church, the three Dioceses of the Armenian Church of America seem to be in the best position to tackle this issue head on: we have the most wide-ranging expertise and the greatest resources, including the most promising resource of all—the vibrant and energetic youth of our very own parishes. Other Armenian communities are looking to us for leadership; what we accomplish through the Department of Youth Ministry will have repercussions beyond our shores.

As I see it, there are three important components to our project of maintaining the young as a strong and vital

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-participant in the life of the Armenian Church. The first requires that we understand the needs of the younger generation.

The basic outlines of each individual human life are unchanging—we all go through the same general rites of passage on our life's journey. However, we ought not to be so arrogant as to assume that the particular experiences of one generation are simply repeated in the next.

I don't think that anyone can dispute that both the challenges and the opportunities of your contemporaries are vastly different from those of your parents and grandparents. The Church must be cognizant of both ideas: it must take into account the particular strains and

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possibilities held out by life in this sophisticated, secular, fast-paced and even dangerous society, while always holding before it the eternal standard of what constitutes the character of a Christian in the Armenian sense.

If the first element is to understand your needs, then the second element is to understand your abilities. By this I mean that the Church ought not to take for granted the tremendous abilities, drive and experience that young, educated Americans bring to everything they do these days. In fact we ought to utilize these abilities in this project. The direction that our Department of Youth Ministry takes will in the profoundest sense be a result of the effort that you each exert on its behalf.

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In my experience, the Armenian youth does not wish to be merely the passive recipient of a program formulated according to what someone else thinks is needful and beneficial. Without exception I have found that young people in our Church are eager to be on the ground floor of any new enterprise—they want to participate in the planning, the decision-making and the execution of any program.

A youth ministry in particular demands your participation in all stages of its development. I invite all of you to be involved in the process—not simply as some empty gesture of appeasement, but because each of you has something valuable to offer the final product. To this

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end I have met with many of you over the course of the past year, listening to your concerns and ideas about the Church and her mission. There is much more still to do, and I know that, with God's guidance, you will rise to the occasion.

The third element that contributes to the overall success of our plan involves reaching out to those who for a variety of reasons have left the fold. Many who have left the Church because of indifference may be attracted to the idea of this new Department of Youth Ministry. Others will come when its programs are fully in place. Still others will be harder to recover, for they have already become involved in other activities, and have completely lost

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with the Church. Once the Youth Ministry programs are off the ground, we must make strenuous efforts to reach out to all of these people, and revitalize the ranks of the Armenian Church with young and fresh members.

To be frank, this element of the Youth Ministry program has the most far-reaching implications, because it bears directly upon the future strength of our Church. In twenty years, will the numbers of the Church remain what they are today? Or will our parishes be burgeoning with new members, who had been attracted to the Church in their youth through this very Youth Ministry, and who in full adulthood have returned to the ancestral home of their faith?

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Whichever scenario comes to pass, the result is very much up to us gathered here now. What we decide over the next few days—and what we actually accomplish over the next year and beyond—will determine the destiny of our Church into the next century.

Ultimately, the youth movement in our Church cannot be an end in itself: in some sense any attempt at a Youth Ministry is a kind of preparation for life in the Church and in society at large. I think that a legitimate question to ask at this point is "What is the purpose for which these young people are being prepared?"

The emphasis we place on the upbringing of our youth is not an end in itself. It is a beginning: a preparation for

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the services they will render in adulthood, a foundation for a lifetime of devotion to God. The overarching aim of the Department of Youth Ministry is to fully integrate all of our younger generation into the full communion—the family—of the Armenian Church.

It is that idea of Family which is most necessary in our society today. And it is precisely the family which will be the centerpiece for the superstructural department which will incorporate the Youth Ministry in its operations. In other words, the design is one in which our young people are not shunted off in some corner, isolated from the rest of Church life, but rather are initiated into the organic whole of that life.

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By focusing on Family Ministry, we hope to bring a unified vision and direction to the activities of our Diocese. We are fortunate to have with us here the newly-appointed director of that ~~Family~~<sup>Youth</sup> Ministry: the Reverend Father Mardiros Chevia. Father Mardiros is no doubt familiar to many of you already; as Rector of the St. Nersess Seminary he has been instrumental in organizing one of our most successful youth programs: the St. Nersess Summer Studies Program.

The St. Nersess Summer program is responsible for bringing the excitement and fellowship of the Armenian tradition to an entire generation of Armenian young people. Many of you assembled here today still harbor

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·fond memories of summers spent in New Rochelle with "Deacon Mike," as Fr. Chevian was called before his ordination. Fr. Mardiros is eager to begin work on the Family and Youth Ministry projects—his enthusiasm is quite infectious.

The related Family and Youth Ministries are only one facet of an overall restructuring at the Diocese. One of the chief innovations in this restructuring is the establishment of an office of "Chancellor." The man who has been appointed to occupy this central administrative position is the Very Reverend Father Houssig Bagdassian, who will now be the head of all Diocesan departmental activities, including the Department of Religious Education

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and the Armenian Language Lab and Resource Center. Again, the idea is to foster unity of vision and continuity of action, creating a "woven fabric" of ministries and services which embrace the entire "family" of our Church.

I would also like to introduce to you the Diocesan Vicar General, the Very Reverend Father Haigazoun Najarian. He will be serving as the liaison between your respective parish priests and the Diocese, and is also my own right-hand man, who represents the Diocese in my absence.

Each of these priests will be working with you and with me in realizing the new Department of Youth Ministry, and they each bring strong administrative experience, insight and impressive personal dedication to

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all the projects they undertake. They are also friendly, warm and humorous men who are a delight to work with. I encourage you to introduce yourselves to them as well as to myself, and to approach us with whatever suggestions and ideas you may have for the benefit of the Youth Ministry or the Diocese as a whole.

May I also express my gratitude to this year's ACYOA Central Council. Charles, Sara, Lynda, Steve, Suzie and Laurie have performed their respective tasks admirably, and with the dedication and love which has always been the hallmark of the ACYOA.

All of us assembled here owe a special debt to Lisa Manookian, who after two terms as Central Council

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Chairman has completed her term of office. Lisa, we have been fortunate indeed that for the past four years, the Central Council has been graced with your diligence, efficiency and intelligence.

Finally, we must bid a fond farewell to Antranig Barsamian, who for the past year has assumed the position of Acting Executive Secretary of the ACYOA. Antranig's enthusiasm for the Armenian Church and her young people is a pleasure to behold, and an inspiration to his fellow staff members at the Diocesan Headquarters. He has been instrumental in the organizing stages of the Youth Ministry project, and I know that he—and all of the outgoing officials of ACYOA—will continue to be active among the youth of our Church.

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Before closing, allow me to draw your attention to some special guests who are joining us today. As in past ACYOA Assemblies, the youth groups of the Western and Canadian Dioceses have sent representatives to these proceedings to observe, advise, and otherwise contribute to the overall sense of solidarity that pervades the joint activities of the North American Dioceses. I bid them welcome, and extend my warmest regards to His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian, Primate of the Western Diocese, and to His Grace Bishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of Canada. They have bestowed their blessings upon our enterprise, and I am grateful for their support.

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We also have in our midst two young observers from the Republic of Armenia: Armen \_\_\_\_\_ and Lala \_\_\_\_\_. We have all been astonished by the events in the homeland over the past year—and none seem more remarkable than the developments of the past few weeks. The youth of Armenia has played an indispensable role in the progress of recent times. These two friends from overseas are a touching reminder of our enduring ties with Armenia; they are beautiful blossoms from the young tree of a free and independent Armenia.

And so a great task lies before us. Making the dream of a successful Youth Ministry a reality will certainly test our ingenuity and dedication, but with God's help, we

—18—

will prevail. I understand that, as we look from the precipice out into the unknown, many of you may be apprehensive about this project—not knowing where you will fit into the scheme of things, or how the comfortable old forms may be changed beyond recognition.

I want to assure you that nobody will be left out in any stage of this Youth Ministry. In fact, the fundamental goal of this project is to foster even greater degrees of participation from ever-increasing numbers of your peers. I think that one of the genuine virtues of the Armenian Church is the democratic nature of our decision-making apparatus, which offers the chance for a broad spectrum of people with an even broader array of interests to be involved in the process.

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As Christ said to His apostles when they expressed similar concerns, "In My Father's house there are many mansions." We might interpret those words as meaning that the Church has room for many kinds of people, offers many venues for service and participation. You are all the beloved sons and daughters of the Armenian Church, and she will not forsake you. Regard her sanctuary as your home.

We are each in our own way called to be apostles of Christ. This vocation goes beyond any program we might develop, or any administrative structure we might erect—it lies at the very heart of the Christian enterprise. The apostles were concerned with one thing and one thing

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only? proclaiming the truth. They were apprehensive at first, but when the time came, those apostles proclaimed that blessed truth of the Gospel with a power and boldness that shook the foundations of the world.

As Christians, we must not be afraid to imitate them, to accept the responsibilities of our own apostleship. I challenge you to speak your minds, to debate and deliberate, to convince and persuade your brothers and sisters, not just today, not just during this Assembly, but whenever you sense that the Armenian Church needs your help. Ours is a living Church—not a fossilized relic. The active presence of our young generation is the sweetest reminder of the vitality and resilience of our faith.

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May God bless you all, and may he inspire the work of this Assembly.

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DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA, 630 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016-4885 212 686-0710

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRIMATE

On the occasion of the 45th Anniversary of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, I extend my warmest greetings and congratulations to all members and alumni of this noble and precious organization.

The world of forty-five years ago heralded uncertain times for our people living in this country. The Armenian community as it was then constituted was substantially an immigrant population; it was unclear to what extent the unique Armenian identity would survive among the new generation of native-born Americans.

Tiran Srpazan's vision of an Armenian Church Youth Organization was unprecedented, and thus experimental. But his hypothesis proved correct: the pride and love with which those original ACYOA members embraced their ancient heritage was in no way diminished by their dislocation from the motherland. This 45th Anniversary Celebration is evidence that the children of those pioneers intend to carry on the beautiful traditions of their ancestors.

This is all the more poignant in light of the fact that the year 1991 represents the centennial of the consecration of the first Armenian Church in America. Today, at the close of an incredible century of achievement, there are more than 100 Armenian Churches in this country.

How appropriate that the ACYOA has chosen to convene their own Anniversary Celebration at the site of one of the newest sanctuaries in our Diocese—the St. David Church of Boca Raton, Florida. The continued growth and expansion of the Armenian community is a vivid sign of life, and testament to that vitality and exuberance for which the ACYOA is our most enduring and optimistic symbol.

It is equally appropriate that you have chosen this occasion to honor two beloved supporters of the ACYOA. Edward and Helen Mardigian are dedicated servants of this Church and all of her people, but they have always enjoyed a special relationship with the Armenian youth. Their enthusiasm and generosity on behalf of projects to educate and unite young Armenians has benefited your entire generation.

May God bless you all, and may you continue to honor His Name with the zeal and faithfulness of your forefathers.

With prayers,

Bishop Khajag Barsamian  
Primate

27 January, 1991

January 8, 1991

PRIMATE'S MESSAGE

It is always a pleasure for me to know that young Armenians are together once again for the happy combination of sports and Christian fellowship. I would have liked very much to be with you to watch the athletic games and the educational competition which I was gratified to see included in the weekend's activities.

People are always fond of saying that youth are the future of the Church. But the Armenian Church is one big family and every moment of life is precious to it. You are the energy and imagination of today's church and as such a vital part of its everyday life.

I look forward to working with you to not only build the Armenian Church but to help you build a strong personal faith as well.

God bless you and keep you strong. My prayers and blessings for a successful weekend.

With prayers,

Bishop Khajag Barsamian  
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DIocese OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA, 630 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016-4885 212 686-0710

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRIMATE

On the occasion of the 21st Annual Sports Weekend of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, I extend my heartfelt greetings and congratulations to the ACYOA and its entire membership.

In the United States, it is customary to regard a twenty-first birthday as a watershed in the life of the individual: it marks an initiation into the full rights and privileges of the community-at-large, and a concomitant broadening of the scope of responsibilities one bears in the society.

And so it is fitting that, as we gather for this 21st Sports Weekend, the ACYOA itself is about to cross its own threshold of maturity, as the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America embarks upon an ambitious project to revitalize its entire mission to our youth, to young adults and to the families which provide the bedrock for the life of the Church.

Throughout the past year, I have consulted in both formal and informal settings with your peers, with ACYOA leaders, with clergy and Diocesan delegates to discuss the strengths and weaknesses, the requirements and possibilities of the various organizations which cater to the youth of our Diocese. Through this dialogue, the plan for a new Department of Youth Ministry began to take shape—a blueprint which builds upon the vibrant successes of the past, while meeting the needs of contemporary youth and young adults.

This Assembly and sports competition at the St. George Church of Hartford—which have brought together so many young Armenians from across the Diocese—is a vindication of our efforts to revitalize the Church's mission to her posterity. And your own continual acceptance of the mantle of responsibility is a ringing endorsement of your enthusiasm for the faith of your fathers and mothers.

Indeed, in Armenian communities around the world—in the homeland as well as throughout the diaspora—our people are experiencing the thrill of rediscovering our singular Christian heritage. Satisfying this spiritual hunger is a mighty task for the Church, but the participation and devotion of your generation will invigorate this mission. I encourage each and all of you to seize a role in this historic enterprise.

The torch of our ancestral faith has been passed to you, the latest generation of Armenians. All of the hopes and prayers of your elders are with you, as together we prepare to enter an exciting new chapter in the history of the Armenian Church of America.

With prayers,

Bishop Khajag Barsamian  
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July 1991

Armen / lala

MESSAGE TO 1991 ACYOA ASSEMBLY

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It is of course no secret that the status of its youth has been a matter of utmost concern to the membership of the Armenian Church. This past spring, at the annual Diocesan

Assembly in Tenafly, New Jersey, the subject of youth constituted a large part of the discussion among the delegates. Indeed, a special panel was convened to analyze this very issue, and a vigorous dialogue ensued among clergy, lay people and youth representatives.

The topic of young people in the Church was also an area of passionate concern among the participants of the International Conference of Armenian Clergy, which was held in New York this past June. In nearly all facets of its mission, and in nearly all of the Armenian communities in the diaspora as well as in the homeland, the Church's ministry to its up-and-coming generation has emerged as the rallying point for large numbers of our faithful—

156

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I should add that of all the dioceses of our Church, the three Dioceses of the Armenian Church of America seem to be in the best position to tackle this issue head on; we have the most wide-ranging expertise and the greatest resources, including the most promising resource of all - the vibrant and energetic youth of our very own parishes. Other Armenian communities are looking to us for leadership; what we accomplish through the Department of Youth Ministry will have repercussions beyond our shores.

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participant in the life of the Armenian Church. | The first /  
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The emphasis we place on the upbringing of our youth is not an end in itself. It is a beginning: a preparation for

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It is that idea of Family which is most necessary in our society today. And it is precisely the family which will be the centerpiece for the superstructural department which will incorporate the Youth Ministry in its operations. In other words, the design is one in which our young people are not shunted off in some corner, isolated from the rest of Church life, but rather are initiated into the organic whole of that life.

By focusing on Family Ministry, we hope to bring a unified vision and direction to the activities of our Diocese. We are fortunate to have with us here the newly-appointed director of that ~~Family~~<sup>Youth</sup> Ministry: the Reverend Father Mardiros Chevian. Father Mardiros is no doubt familiar to many of you already; as Rector of the St. Nersess Seminary he has been instrumental in organizing one of our most successful youth programs: the St. Nersess Summer Studies Program.

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The related Family and Youth Ministries are only one facet of an overall restructuring at the Diocese. | One of the chief innovations in this restructuring is the establishment of an office of "Chancellor." | The man | who has been appointed to occupy this central administrative position | is the Very Reverend Father Houssig Bagdassian, | who will now be the head of all Diocesan departmental activities, | including the Department of Religious Education

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Again, the idea is to foster unity of vision and continuity  
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Chairman has completed her term of office. | Lisa, | we have  
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Finally, | we must bid <sup>her</sup> a fond farewell to Antranig  
Barsamian, | who, | for the past year has assumed the position  
of Acting Executive Secretary of the ACYOA. | Antranig's  
enthusiasm for the Armenian Church, | and her young people  
is a pleasure to behold, | and an inspiration to his fellow  
staff members at the Diocesan Headquarters. | He has been  
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Before closing, allow me to draw your attention to some special guests who are joining us today. As in past ACYOA Assemblies, the youth groups of the Western and Canadian Dioceses have sent representatives to these proceedings to observe, advise, and otherwise contribute to the overall sense of solidarity that pervades the joint activities of the North American Dioceses. I bid <sup>my</sup> them welcome, and extend my warmest regards to His Eminence Archbishop Vatche Hovsepien, Primate of the Western Diocese, and to His Grace Bishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of Canada. They have bestowed their blessings upon our enterprise, and I am grateful for their support.

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will prevail. I understand that, as we look from the precipice<sup>ի վրա</sup> out into the unknown, many of you may be apprehensive about this project—not knowing where you will fit into the scheme of things<sup>սխեմ</sup>, or how the comfortable old forms may be changed beyond recognition.

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May God bless you all, and may he inspire the work of  
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END

to all of us who follow Him today. | Christ was victorious  
over the worst this world had to offer. | With His help, | we  
too | shall humbly join Him | in victory.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
This weekend has been especially fulfilling  
for me, | and I feel | that I have received much  
from the fellowship and goodwill ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> have shared  
together. | In return, | I want you to know that,  
as you leave this joyous event for your individual  
homes and lives, | my prayers | and love go with you.



Of course, that will demand <sup>hard</sup> ~~arduous~~ <sup>work</sup> work from all of our faithful—clergy and laymen, young and old alike. I am not afraid to admit that the many projects that lie on the horizon present an intimidating prospect. But I always rediscover courage and conviction when I return <sup>to</sup> the eternal truth of our religion, a truth which has been preserved in the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus Christ.

All we really know about Christ's life on earth is an afternoon when He was thirteen, and three years during His young manhood. In that brief time, at that tender age, He changed the world. By comparison, our task is almost <sup>to the point</sup> trivially small, and yet His accomplishment in the face of adversity two thousand years ago holds out hope

As you can see, I am sympathetic with this status, with the aspirations which inspire you, as well as the apprehensions which trouble you. Indeed, I must confess that I have a special personal interest in the current and future health of your generation. It is that you are the people who will be working with me over the next few years, and who ultimately will inherit this Diocese and all its institutions. While I am not sure where my ministry will take me in the future, I do know that I love this Diocese and its people; it is my honor to play some small role in helping it attain its shining potential.

to reunite in the name of the One, Holy and Loving God Whom we worship.

I ask you to take on this task from the vantage of a leader guiding his flock; but also from the vantage of a comrade and fellow traveler. You see, <sup>բարեկամ</sup>we are in a similar predicament, <sup>կողով</sup>you and I. After many years of schooling, the men and women of your age group are <sup>կողով</sup>poised on the <sup>նշխ</sup>brink of taking on the burden of leadership in the Church and in society at large. Likewise, after a long journeymanship of service to some of the great princes of the Armenian Church, I too have assumed a burden of leadership in our community.

and elsewhere. | Their distance from the sorrowful past—indeed their innocence—gave these young Russians the fortitude to stand up for their dreams of freedom.

It has been no different in the streets of Yerevan, where your contemporaries are playing a decisive role in determining the fate of our homeland. And I know that, in a similar way, the young Armenians in America can contribute to the resolution of the unity issue.

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In some profound sense, our hopes for a single united Armenian Church reside with you: you must go to your parishes and persuade your fellow Armenian Christians to pursue this course, to set aside our grievances, to rise above our individual self-interests and

At the same time

But ~~finally~~ your generation has come of age—a generation which is distant enough from the original causes of the <sup>division</sup> split to work out a charitable reconciliation. It reminds me of a comment made during the height of the Soviet *coup d'état* by a Russian journalist, when he was asked how to account for the fact that—perhaps for the first time—the people were not intimidated by the brutal might of the Soviet military.

He replied that during the course of the past few years of relative freedom, a new generation of Russians had emerged, who had tasted liberty, and had only heard tales/ about the brutalities of the Communist regime, / and so / were not impressed with the show of force in Red Square

Thanks to the incredible political developments going on in Armenia herself, the external political reasons for our division have been virtually eliminated. ~~But still we seem no closer to full unity. Why is this?~~

I am convinced that the answer has much to do with human frailty. The <sup>disunity</sup> cluster <sup>բացարձակ</sup> of issues and events which surround the problem of Church division remains a sore spot with many of our parishioners even today. Some of your grandparents were present during the origins of the <sup>պայծառ</sup> schism, and even for your parents the wounds are too close to the surface for the pain to be completely dissipated.

I was much heartened to see the Assembly delegates express a strong conviction in support of Church unity. This conviction is sound and noble, and I am proud to see that such weighty matters are on the hearts and minds of our young adults.

However, the way we approach the resolution of this issue is at least <sup>as</sup> important as the conviction itself. We must chart a path to unity which will not create even more division among fellow Armenians of goodwill--a path which will be <sup>immune</sup> to the old and tired arguments which can always <sup>be</sup> raised to obstruct our goal. Most of all, we must seek out practical solutions, which will <sup>ACTUALLY</sup> culminate in full Church unity ~~in fact~~, not solutions which, however well-intentioned, can only offer us the token appearance of unity.

Having said this, I would like to ask you to help your Church to resolve the single issue which for the past fifty-eight years has stood in the way of so much progress, and which has cast a black shadow over even the successes we have attained. I am speaking, of course, about the shameful division which exists within the Armenian Church.

The disunity of the Church has begotten many senseless and tragic results—and none so sad as the fact that disunity has driven many of your peers away from the embrace of their ancestral Church. And yet, I firmly believe that if the unity issue is to be resolved, it will depend precisely upon the activity and charity of your generation.



nities respond to this ~~problem~~, but I hope and pray that the young men and women raised in the sanctuary of the Armenian Church are immunized from this disease of the soul.

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Today and in the years to come, there is vital and noble work to be accomplished, work which will require all of your expertise, ingenuity and courage. Do not be put off by the seeming magnitude of these enterprises; the same blood that allowed your grandparents to stare into the face of death and desolation, and still survive, flows through your veins today. There are no obstacles which we as a people cannot overcome, and your generation will play the pivotal role in the resistance against those obstacles.

you, and you enhance that love with all the refined qualities—education, cultural sophistication, prosperity—that your grandparents would have wished for themselves had circumstances not dictated otherwise.

In your generation, many of the dreams of those pioneers of 1891 have come true. That opens up all sorts of possibilities—but it is also a serious responsibility—a responsibility to utilize your hard-won patrimony for the good and prosperity of the Church and heritage your ancestors fought so desperately to preserve.

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It puzzles me when I read of how many young people in America seem to be crippled with apathy, aimlessness, boredom and self-pity. I do not know how other commu-

that the Armenian Church in America began with a humble wooden structure, constructed out of contributions of pennies and dimes—all that our immigrant Armenians could afford. Our forebears had so little in the way of material resources, only the most rudimentary education, and they had only a basic mastery of the language of their adoptive nation.

What they did have was a supreme love of their Church and heritage, which inspired them to ever greater heights. Let me say too that, after having spoken to many of you, and looking out upon you now, I can see that this sense of pious love and devotion has in no way been diminished with the passage of generations. It is reborn in each of

This idea about new beginnings|has been much on my mind of late,| because 1991 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the consecration of the first Armenian Church in America:|the Church of Our Saviour in Worcester, Massachusetts.| Your sister parish in Worcester is even now preparing for the celebration|which will take place in a very few weeks—on the weekend of September 21, to be exact—+and everyone involved has naturally had cause to reflect upon those early Armenian settlers in the New World,|and upon the tremendous progress|which has ensued in the <sup>intervening</sup> century.

I try to remind myself each morning,|as I look out upon the magnificent stone edifice of the St. Vartan Cathedral,|

efforts, and founded organizations of their own, such as the ACYOA.

But your generation has not yet had the opportunity to truly found an organization to really be on the ground floor of decision-making and execution. The creation of the new Department of Youth Ministry is your golden opportunity to make a mark upon posterity.

I have nothing but admiration for the energy and boldness of your generation of your achievements in school, in the marketplace and in a host of other activities. What I am asking tonight is that you take some of that drive and zeal and direct it into the construction of a lasting, relevant and successful youth ministry for the Armenian Church of America.

that the Department of Youth Ministry represents a major and long-term commitment on the part of this Diocese to its young generation; the discussion during the Assembly sessions generated a great deal of excitement, and my colleagues and I have been inundated with questions, comments and suggestions on this very subject.

During my remarks at the Assembly, I challenged the delegates to take an active role in the realization of this new ministry, and I repeat those sentiments tonight to all of you. When your grandparents came to this country, they were working with a blank slate; they had to imagine the entire shape of the Armenian community in America. Your parents consolidated and expanded those original

I believe that in the years to come, the good people of this Diocese will remember this particular weekend as something of a watershed event, for it marks the beginning of a new era in the Armenian Church's ministry to her younger generation. Earlier this week, your peers sitting as delegates at the ACYOA National Assembly gave serious consideration to a new plan for a Diocesan Department of Youth Ministry—a program which will incorporate the current youth-oriented services the Diocese provides, while at the same time broadening the scope and reach of our entire youth ministry.

You will be hearing more about this development in the weeks and months ahead. For now, let me simply say

Nevertheless, I must say that our hosts for this weekend—the members of the Hartford Armenian community—have made it all look quite effortless. I salute the heroic efforts of the St. <sup>St. Fr.</sup> George <sup>Kevoork</sup> parish, its pastor the Reverend Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, the Parish Council, the ACYOA Central Council, the organizing committee under the chairmanship of Charles Mardirossian and Christine Shooshan, and the Sports Weekend Committee, all of which contributed to the splendid outcome of this event.

And let us not forget the <sup>SP/102</sup> athletes themselves, who whether in victory or defeat have comported themselves with sportsmanship and <sup>St. Fr.</sup> gallantry. All of you have made this ACYOA Assembly and Sports Weekend a source of fond memories for the future.



ADDRESS TO THE 1991 ACYOA ASSEMBLY BANQUET

Reverend Clergy, ACYOA Delegates, Athletes and Friends:

This annual ACYOA banquet ~~and~~ the Assembly/  
and Sports Competition ~~which it concludes~~ embodies  
the full glorious scope and breadth of the experience of  
the Armenian heritage. | The exuberance of youth / bal-  
anced against the restraint of tradition; | the fierce <sup>thrill</sup> thrill of  
athletic competition | balanced against the calm gentleness  
of mutual cooperation; | the joy of reunion, with seldom-  
seen friends | balanced against the the melancholy of say-  
ing good-bye for another year. | Hosting this event re-  
quires a great deal of finesse, <sup>skill</sup> no less than organization, |  
cooperation and patience. |