

## CHURCH MANAGEMENT - 1991

### Young Adult Involvement in the Armenian Church Parish

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During the last two decades, having personally been part of at least two Blue Ribbon Committee deliberations, that have dealt with issues concerning the youth of our church in general and the ACYOA as an organization in particular, I have come to the conclusion that there has been too much of theoretical and abstract discussions and not enough concentration on practical programs, activities and field of endeavor. Things that not only will keep our young adults actively busy in the life of our parishes but more importantly will challenge them to break new grounds in their commitment to the church and its mission and contribute to their personal spiritual growth.

The thrust of my presentation, as simple as it may be, is to advocate a consistent, predictable and yes, institutionalized pattern of activities, well planned, adequately funded, permanently placed programs. Among such programs I have in mind are the following:

1. College Outreach or College Ministry.
2. Summer Study Programs in Armenia
3. Summer Study Programs of St. Nersess
4. Mission Program
5. St. Vartan Summer Camp Program
6. Program of "Young Adults" Sunday

I shall elaborate only on the last three because in my opinion they deserve more attention than they have attracted so far.

#### a. Mission Program

Some of you may remember that some time ago the ACYOA organized and implemented these internal missionary activities with the participation of scores of young adults in groups of 5 - 7 with a clergyman as the leader-chaplain of the group. The visits of these missionary groups sparked interest, rekindled enthusiasm and inspired involvement among the young adults of the parish that was visited, as much as among those who did the visitation. I will not be exaggerating if I say that individuals such as Fr. Garabed Kochakian from among the clergy, and Linda Sharigian, Susan Eramian and Diane Green of Richmond, Va., Hagop Injejigian and Deacon Michael Findikyan of Binghamton, Susan Shamamian of Tenaflly, just to name a few, may trace their involvement and dedication to the church to these Mission Programs as much as to the St. Nersess programs. If I recall correctly, in New Britain we even had a convert of a non-Armenian youth. There is no justification why this ministry should have stopped. And, there is no obstacle that cannot be overcome to jumpstart it again.

(cont...)

b. St. Vartan Summer Camp

You are familiar with this program and I thank you for your occasional support. But this is too important of a program to remain a project run on a shoestring. I am not going to waste your time enumerating its benefits to our youth, but if we want our youth to be well grounded, if we want them to develop lasting friendships, if we want them to enlarge their fellowship with other young adults beyond parish boundaries, then this is one program that needs to be nurtured, promoted and maintained as a first class project.

Just think, in terms of quality time spent on our youth, ten days of St. Vartan Camp is approximately equal to 9 months of Sunday and Armenian School instruction and I am not including time spent on sports and social activities of the Camp. Same is true about St. Nersess Program and then some!

c. Young Adults Sunday

This is something new. I have talked about this in the past on a variety of occasions and this is how it should work.

Let us say we agree to declare the third Sunday of each month as the Young Adults' Sunday. A number of things will happen; such as:

1. When Greg wants to go to church, he has a reasonable expectation that Matt and Jeff, Tom and Jerry in addition to Linda, Nancy and Anoush will also be in Church on that Sunday. Whereas now, when Tom is in church on the first Sunday, Linda comes on the second, Tom is there on the third and so on and so forth. They consistently miss each other and the impression sets in that there are no young adults of their age group to relate to.
2. Programs can be developed to enhance the Sunday morning worship, programs that can be geared for the Young Adults.
3. The pastor would be prepared to address his sermon, his message particularly having the Young Adults in mind.
4. If we adopt this schedule Diocesan-wide, then, any visiting young adult in any given parish would know that on the third Sunday, if he/she goes to church, he/she will be rewarded not only in heaven, but also here on earth.

*Fr. Vertanes Kalayjian*