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PRIMATE'S MESSAGE
ACYOA - GENERAL ASSEMBLY - SEPT. 1984

1985 is the 70th anniversary of the execution of a heinous plan to exterminate a whole nation, the Armenian people. This nation had a history of five thousand years, had kept pace with the progress and civilization of the human race; and after accepting Christ and His teachings as the foundation of her existence and the saving light for the creative spirit of her children, this nation had enriched the lives of her offsprings with a valuable and unique spiritual heritage.

However, another human race, as the dominating political and military power, at a moment of accumulated madness, decided to up-root, to destroy and to wipe out the subjugated Armenian people and her Christian spiritual heritage.

And the first premeditated and planned genocide was executed in 1915.

We thank God for the undying spirit and faithfulness of our forefathers.

They clung to their faith and their spiritual heritage, and carried them with them to all parts of the world wherever they took refuge.

In the United States and Canada you are the grand-children and the great-grand-children of the survivors of the genocide.

You are here today united as the representatives of our youth and that is magnificent. But it is absolutely essential that you as Armenians also unite in thought and action to make the progress and the contribution we so desperately need.

Our biggest cry is a universal cry - the need for better creativity and growth. But I do not worry so much about the needs of the rest of the world as I know there are unlimited resources for them to tap. How do we meet our demands? Where do we find our resources?

The answer is just in front of me. I am looking at you. This united gathering here is what I consider our best resource and the only strength we can rely upon. You are the generation of advanced technology, well equipped to bridge the gap between you and your heritage.

Forward thinking and planning are essential for us to grow and survive. A professional approach to youth program is no longer a luxury.

Each year you assemble with all seriousness to plan, discuss, propose, and decide a course of action. Are you a step up from where you were last year or you are standing still? Are you better equipped to serve your church and your community today than a year ago?

A few years back, for example, we laid the ground work for a Youth Ministry program, with the objective of training youth workers and supervising the training of professionals for parishes. Its primary concern was to create an opportunity for young people to relate and participate in the Armenian Church and community.

I know that the program is still not off the ground, I also know that it will stay there unless you decide on a strategy today, even during these meetings, to canvass colleges, universities and other centers where potential candidates are available. Look at this matter as a challenge.

Another challenging assignment for you will be the Youth Festival in Erevan. The Government of Armenia has designated August 15-25, 1985 for a Youth Festival, inviting the participation of choruses, orchestras, song, and dance ensembles, dramatic groups, individual performers, dance, instrumental and vocal music, recitation, painting, etc.

Here is an opportunity for you to pull your resources together and participate with the best available talents. Details will be provided to you.

You all know the meaning of burned out. That could happen to all individuals, institutions, families, managers, professionals, if they lose sight of beliefs, ideals, spiritual strengths.

You cannot let that happen, you must be serious about our faith, about our tradition, about our mission as Christians. By keeping in touch with God you will be able to manage your problems better, God shall be an infinite source in solving your problems.

Let this assembly be a turning point for all. That should not be very difficult to do, since it can be done by following a few simple rules such as:

Reviewing your past - Who are you? Where did you come from? What's your philosophy in life? What are your values in life and religion?

Educating yourself - Training may be a grind, but it brings with it power. Knowledgeable person is the one who will impress the powerful.

Looking at all the options available - What are your goals? What do you need to achieve them? There are far more possibilities than you think.

Reorganizing - If you haven't yet succeeded try to reorganize yourself. You know who you were last year, the year before, but you are not the same today.

Electing the best possibility - Avoid mediocrity which can easily choke your enthusiasm. Choose to follow the best course.

Doing something daring - Take a risk. Make a commitment. Unless you dare to take a risk, you'll never get ahead. People who risk nothing, do nothing, have nothing, are nothing.

Much as I do not like to tell jokes or anecdotes, I will end with the following adapted story.

A father once said "Son, you have to set a goal and never quit. Remember Katch Vartan?"

The son said "yes".

"Aram Khatchadourian?"

"Yes"

"William Saroyan?"

"Yes"

You know what they all had in common?"

"What"?

"They didn't quit. Remember Harry Narikian"?

The kid said "No. Who was he"?

"See, you don't remember him. He quit."

Some people look upon any setback as the end. But my message to you is you cannot quit. We as a nation did not survive through all these centuries by being quitters.

I pray that we also, as the present generation, may live and work as the genuine inheritors of the valuable and unique spiritual heritage of our forefathers.

God bless you.

PRIMATE'S MESSAGE
ACYOA GEN ASSEMBLY - SEPT. 1984 - BANQUET

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Somehow I was envious watching the final outcome of the Olympic games which I am sure most of you watched in awe and admiration. I was envious not because of all the glory, the gold medals, the grandeur, the roar and record breaking crowds, but the Olympiad gave Americans a renewed spirit of pride and patriotism, a sense of brotherhood and belief in themselves, which clearly echoed across the land and indeed around the world.

It is a similar spirit that I have come to witness during these few days as I followed your weekend activities. Your concerted effort to excell, your friendly, yet competitive performance, were commendable and reflective of true spirit of sportsmanship. In organizing the highly successful event of the year you have established a criteria that should serve a model for our youth everywhere.

Whether you realize it or not, and I trust you do, the kind of people we want to be heavily rests on your shoulders. As energetic, active and compassionate participant in our church and church related activities it is your turn now to do some good and bring about changes.

That would require determination, perseverance. Changing old habits would not be easy, you should be prepared to face obstacles, but the best advice I could give you is the advice a pastor once received as he was confronting rejections over his new plans from the oldest elder of age 89 who said "It's hard to teach old dogs new tricks. If I were you I'd try to get new dogs". Only by the influx of new members we can continue on the vision of our elders, improve on their work.

You probably have heard the story of the three negative women who lived in the bayou. They complained every day, "We've got it bad living in the bayou. No opportunity here. Others are living in the city where they have unlimited opportunities. Us, we got nothing". After listening to the complaint a positive-thinking woman said "Nonsense! Opportunity? You want opportunity? You got opportunity. You live on the bayou. The bayou leads to the river. The river leads to the gulf. The gulf leads to the ocean. You can go anywhere from where you are".

What kind of Armenians do we expect you to be? Certainly better than we are, and I don't mean just materially. Not merely passive participants offering the minimum you can and that as a favor. But an active participant in the overall pursuit of being a better informed Armenian, involved and caring.

The time is here for you to be creative and imaginative, to think, devise and implement methods to bring the youth together, working to vitalize your presence as Armenians within your larger communities.

The coming year will provide several opportunities for you to demonstrate your strength as a group and as individuals.

Next year marks the 70th anniversary of the Genocide, the black days never to be forgotten, that should serve an occasion for us to celebrate the rebirth of a nation scheduled for annihilation. Your role can become an important factor in the success of the programs that will go on during the entire year.

Also, the Government of Armenia has set aside August 15-25 for a Youth Festival in Yerevan, open to individual performers of dance, instrumental, vocal music, painting, chorus, orchestras and dramatic group. The festival will have a competitive nature, enabling the best teams or individuals to receive special prizes. Application forms will be available for you here.

Your participation could make the difference!

These, along with your regularly scheduled activities, such as the Archbishop's Annual Tournament, Armenian Studies Program, Award and scholarship programs, etc. would combine to make 1985 an exciting and a challenging year for you. Go for it!

PRIMATE'S MESSAGE FOR THE ACYOA
GENERAL ASSEMBLY - 1983

IT IS WITH JOY AND ANTICIPATION THAT WE ARE WITH OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, DURING THE ACYOA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND SPORTS WEEKEND EACH YEAR. TO SPEND THIS TIME WITH YOU, MEETING TOGETHER, PRAYING TOGETHER, EATING TOGETHER AND ENJOYING ALL THE FELLOWSHIP WHICH THE ACYOA PROVIDES IS REFRESHING. IT REJUVENATES US ALL, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO THIS KIND OF SPECIAL TOGETHERNESS.

WHY DO WE DO THIS? WHY DO WE TRAVEL TO PLACES MILES FROM OUR HOMES, SPEND HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS, AND SPEND HOURS IN MEETINGS. IT IS TRUE THERE IS THE SOCIAL REASON - THE BROTHERHOOD, THE GOOD TIMES, THE SPORTS COMPETITION, THE DANCES, THE MUSIC, AND PERHAPS EVEN SOME ARMENIAN WEDDINGS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ALL THIS IS A PART OF THIS WEEKEND. BUT THE ORIGINAL QUESTION CALLS FOR MORE.

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WE COME HERE TO DEFINE WHO WE ARE AS AMERICAN AND CANADIAN ARMENIANS. WE COME TO DETERMINE WHAT WE ARE TO DO AS A CHURCH YOUTH ORGANIZATION. WE GATHER TO TRY AND BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS TO BE A CHRISTIAN AND WHAT EXACTLY IT MEANS TO BE AN ARMENIAN. AND WE COME HERE, TO THIS ASSEMBLY, BECAUSE WE CARE. WE HAVE CONCERN ABOUT EACH OTHER, ABOUT OUR HERITAGE, ABOUT OUR PEOPLE, ABOUT OUR CHURCH AND ABOUT OUR WORLD.

IF ALL THESE ARE REASONS WHY WE ARE HERE, THEN WHAT IS IT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO? IT IS GOOD AND HEALTHY TO ASK THAT BASIC QUESTION. UNFORTUNATELY, TOO OFTEN THE QUESTION REMAINS UNANSWERED. WE KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT WHEN A QUESTION IS LEFT UNANSWERED OR A DISCUSSION REMAINS UNRESOLVED, OUR EFFORTS BECOME SOMETIMES MEANINGLESS.

THERE IS MUCH FOR US TO DO. IF WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT OUR FAITH, SERIOUS ABOUT OUR CHRISTIAN MISSION, THEN THERE IS MUCH TO UNDERTAKE. IF WE FEEL THAT OUR HERITAGE IS A VITAL PART OF OUR LIVES, THEN MANY TASKS AWAIT US.

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT THEIR CHRISTIANITY IS ESSENTIAL - NOT JUST IN NAME, BUT IN A DEEPER, MORE MEANINGFUL WAY. TODAY OUR YOUTH SEEK THE ESSENCE OF THEIR CHRISTIAN FAITH AND EMBRACE JESUS CHRIST AS THEIR LORD. TODAY, OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PROUD OF THEIR IDENTITY AS ARMENIANS AND THEY SEEK OUT INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR LANGUAGE, HISTORY, LITERATURE, MUSIC, ART AND ARCHITECTURE.

TO WATCH YOU IS INSPIRING, BECAUSE YOU CAN AND WILL CARRY OUT ALL THE DREAMS OF YOUR GRANDPARENTS - THE IMMIGRANTS WHO CAME

CAME HERE WITH NOTHING AND BUILT THE SOLID FOUNDATIONS OF OUR COMMUNITY. IT IS YOUR GENERATION THAT HAS THE POWER, THE STRENGTH, THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE FREEDOM TO DO SO MUCH, LARGELY THANKS TO THOSE GENERATIONS WHO CAME BEFORE YOU AND PAVED YOUR WAY.

THEY COULD ONLY DREAM OF THIS DAY - YOU CAN LIVE IT!

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THESE VAST HUMAN RESOURCES - THIS FLOWING ABUNDANCE OF ENERGY? TO SQUANDOR IT WOULD BE A CRIME, A SIN, AND AN INSULT TO OUR ARMENIAN ANCESTORS. IT IS OUR PRAYER, OUR HOPE, THAT YOU WILL USE THE ABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO REACH NEW HEIGHTS FOR THE ARMENIAN CHURCH AND PEOPLE, THAT YOU WILL TAKE BOLD NEW INITIATIVES, AND BUILD UPON THE DREAM OF YOUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS.

MANY MISSIONS AWAIT YOU. YOU ARE NEEDED - NOT ONLY TO DO THE PHYSICAL WORK OF THE CHURCH, BUT TO PREPARE AND DO GREATER THINGS. YOU MUST LEAD THE FIGHT OF OUR PEOPLE AGAINST THOSE WHO TRY AND DEFAME AND BELITTLE THE ARMENIAN NATION: AGAINST THOSE WHO TRY AND DISTORT HISTORY: AGAINST THOSE WHO DENY WHAT IS TRUE AND AVOID WHAT IS JUST. YOUR MISSION IS TO RIGHT THESE WRONGS - NOT WITH EMOTIONS - NOT WITH VIOLENT AND DISHONORABLE METHODS - BUT WITH EFFECTIVE MEANS. YOU MUST USE INTELLIGENCE, KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY, OF POLITICS, OF THE WAY THE WORLD FUNCTIONS TODAY. YOU MUST BE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR HERITAGE AND TAP ITS INFINITE POWER, KNOWING THAT THE STRENGTH OF CULTURAL WARFARE CAN BE AWESOME.

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THIS IS A TASK IN WHICH YOU MUST BE IN THE FOREFRONT. YOU MUST EDUCATE YOURSELVES, EDUCATE THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW, AND SHAKE UP THOSE WHO ARE INDIFFERENT.

BEYOND THIS, IT IS ALSO YOUR LEGACY, AS A SON OR DAUGHTER OF A SURVIVOR, TO STAND UP FOR JUSTICE FOR ALL PEOPLES - NOT JUST ARMENIANS - AND DEFEND THOSE PEOPLES AND NATIONS WHICH ARE BEING WRONGED. WE MUST STAND NOT ONLY FOR OUR CAUSE, BUT FOR THE CAUSE OF THE VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AROUND THE WORLD. WE MUST WORK TO PUT AN END TO MAN'S INHUMANITY TO HIS FELLOW MAN.

WE MUST ALSO REALIZE THAT THE UNDERLYING CAUSE OF THE EVILS OF THE WORLD AND THE PROBLEMS WE ALL FACE IS A BASIC LACK OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. IN GRASPING THESE VIRTUES, IN FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE SET FOR US BY JESUS CHRIST, WE WILL FIND THE SOLUTIONS TO THOSE OBSTACLES THAT STAND IN OUR WAY.

WHAT ARE THESE VIRTUES? UNDERSTANDING ONE ANOTHER: HAVING PATIENCE, BEING HONEST, BEING LOYAL AND DEDICATED, LIVING WITH A SENSE OF HUMILITY AND CHARITY TOWARD OTHERS, HAVING FAITH IN GOD AND HIS ABILITY TO WORK WITHIN US, AND BELIEVING THE WORDS OF CHRIST. HE SAID "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE ... WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME WILL PERFORM EVEN GREATER WORKS ... IF YOU ASK ANYTHING IN MY NAME I WILL DO IT." (John 14:6-14).

IF WE ARE INDEED GUIDED BY THESE VIRTUES, IF WE ARE INSPIRED ENOUGH TO ACTIVELY ACCEPT THE LEGACY WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN AS ARMENIANS, THEN WE, AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS THE ACYOA, CAN ACHIEVE GREAT THINGS.

THIS ORGANIZATION, THE ARMENIAN YOUTH ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA IS DESIGNED TO BE A VEHICLE TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS. IT IS UP TO US TO REVITALIZE OUR ACYOA - TO STREAMLINE IT, TO MAKE IT ENERGY-EFFICIENT, TO MAKE IT WORK AND PRODUCE!

IN YOU, WE LOOK FORWARD TO A NEW ERA FOR OUR CHURCH AND OUR PEOPLE.

LET THAT NEW DAWN BEGIN RIGHT HERE AND RIGHT NOW.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL.