

WITNESS

pamphlet #2

by order of
ARCHBISHOP VATCHE HOVSEPIAN
Primate

a YACE publication

A Publication of
The Western Diocese
of the
Armenian Church of North America
Youth Activities & Christian Education Department

November 2, 1985
Feast of All Saints

INTRODUCTION

In 1983, the Armenian Church Youth Organization initiated the most beneficial practice of spending the afternoon session of its Annual General Assembly in November discussing topics which are of importance to the youth of the Church and to the community in general. During the discussions of that first year, the topics of PRE-MARITAL LIVING ARRANGEMENTS, THE VALUE OF LIFE, CULTS, and THE FAMILY were dealt with. In 1984, at the ACYO General Assembly at St. Paul Parish in Fresno, the topics of YOUTH AND SUICIDE and TERRORISM AT HOME AND ABROAD were discussed.

In this present small volume, it is the results of these latter discussions which are presented. It must be borne in mind that although some small amount of editing was necessarily involved, the thoughts and expressions are those of our youth. Their comments and views are not and cannot be viewed as official statements of the Armenian Church. However, they are an eloquent testimony to our youths' understanding of their Christian faith and the bringing of that faith to bear upon real life situations with which they themselves are daily faced. As mentioned in the INTRODUCTION to WITNESS — pamphlet #1, *“these discussions and their subsequent publication are a means for our youth to make a positive Christian witness.”*

It is hoped that those who read this pamphlet will gain some insight into our youth, the situations with which they live, and their own Christian faith.

THE REV. FR. VARTAN KASPIRIAN — COORDINATOR
Western Diocese
Department of Youth Activities and Christian Education

Feast of All Saints
November 2, 1985

YOUTH AND SUICIDE

Clergy Advisor — Rev. Fr. Vartan Kasparian

Lay Advisor — Laurie Menendian

Recorder — Pamela Manoogian

CONCLUSION:

This topic of youth and suicide was very close to home for some members of our discussion group. Quite a number of the group members had known someone who had attempted or committed suicide.

Laurie Menendian, who was the lay advisor, is a counselor for young people. She gave us statistical data on the percentage of attempted and committed suicides. Out of 100 attempted suicides a dozen deaths are realized. For suicides committed by 15 thru 19 year olds the statistic is 9.1 out of 100,000 and for 20-24 year olds it is 14.9 out of 100,000.

We came up with many reasons why young people may attempt suicide, such as loss of a loved one, loss of a girlfriend/boyfriend, divorce (parents), illness, loss of hope/goals, loss of dignity/self-esteem. Self-worth was one of the main emotions people should have. We all agreed that self-worth is important in believing that you have a purpose in life.

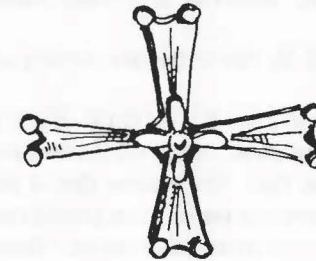
To get to a point where you feel the only option you have is suicide must be the lowest time in someone's life. We discussed the feelings the suicidal person may have: anger, sadness, betrayal, loneliness, emptiness, confusion, hurt, rejection.

Laurie Menendian told us about three clues to look for in a person who is suicidal. First, the person usually makes a statement. Some even come out and say "they would rather be dead." Second, they start changing some of their habits, such as eating, sleeping, etc. Third, they can start over-reacting due to most everyday problems. These are signs or clues to look for.

We all agreed that as Christians, we must always be ready and willing to help someone who may have signs of suicide. The church has a very distinct view on suicide: thou shalt not kill. The church's stand is against suicide. The church will not perform a burial service for the suicide victim. Sometimes a priest will go to the cemetery for a prayer. If there is any sign that the person was trying to repent, like trying to prevent the suicide, a burial service will be given.

We discussed ways to help a person who is contemplating suicide. You should never lie to the person, be completely honest without hurting the person's feelings. Face the issue of suicide with the person. Sometimes all the suicide victim wants to do is talk, so you should just listen. Be realistic in your approach to a suicide victim, don't act like you are judging them.

Don't fear to ask for help and if you can give help, give it! Simple concern and affection is what may prevent or delay an attempt at a suicide.



TERRORISM AT HOME AND ABROAD

Clergy Advisor — Rev. Fr. Shahe Altounian

Lay Advisor — Deacon Barlow Der Mugrdchian

Recorder — Raffi Nalvarian

In this discussion, terrorism is understood/defined as *making a point by means of force*. Current Armenian terrorists are attempting to focus world attention on the Armenian claims arising from the still unresolved Armenian Question and the attempted Genocide of the Armenian people by the Turks.

For some, the acts of the Armenian terrorists are aimed at capturing media attention for the legitimate Armenian claims arising from the Genocide of 1915 in which approximately 2 million Armenians lost their lives and another almost 1 million were dispersed to the four corners of the world. In general terms, the terrorists are attempting to secure:

- 1.) justice for the Armenian people
- 2.) acknowledgement of the Genocide by the Turks
- 3.) return of the historic Armenian homeland, guaranteed by the Treaty of Sevres
- 4.) retribution for losses incurred by the Armenian people

Some also see the acts of the Armenian terrorists in terms of an attempt at revenge on the Turks for the atrocities which were perpetrated on the Armenian people by the Turks in 1915 and the years following.

As members of the Armenian Church and the Armenian Church Youth Organization, we are faced with the question: *How do we view terrorism?* It is our feeling that terrorism is in fact not achieving goals which are favorable to the Armenian people. Because of its negative nature, its results are negative. Additionally, as Christians, many Armenians do not morally accept terrorism. For them, terrorism is morally unacceptable.

Still, the valid issues raised by the terrorists remain and must be solved.

We recognize that at a human level it is difficult, if not impossible, to forgive the Turks for the atrocities imposed upon the Armenian people. However, as Christians, we must do just that. We realize that a strictly Old Testament, view of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" can justify terrorism. Yet, as Christians, we are to be moved by Christ's dictum of "turn the other cheek".

In spite of this Christian response, the issues raised by the terrorists still remain. Now we are faced with the question of how these issues can be resolved. A key to their resolution is education regarding the facts of the Genocide. This involves education of our own Armenian people and education of the general public. Such education would serve as a means to ultimate recognition of the Genocide and the various issues arising from it. This is done with the aim of eventually redressing the wrongs to which the Armenian people have been subjected since the Genocide of 1915.

We discussed and suggested the following as means of education and securing recognition.

- 1.) producing movies and/or literary works about the Genocide
- 2.) re-establishing unity among our own Armenian people
- 3.) a church activity or fund whose purpose would be to present the historical facts of the Genocide
- 4.) Armenian Studies programs in colleges throughout the United States
- 5.) constantly stressing the positive achievements of Armenians in society

Additionally, we can strengthen our own cause by:

- 1.) standing-up for any people or nation undergoing persecution
- 2.) constantly espousing TRUTH as it relates to all such questions, especially the Armenian Genocide of 1915