

September 28, 1982

Mr. Michael Zeytoonian
18 Meeting House Path
Ashland, Mass. 01721

Dear Michael:

Enclosed please find a copy of the speech presented by me at the Second Anniversary Banquet of New Britain parish with a copy of the program for use in the "BEHA".

If you need any further information please call or write.

Yours truly,

Frank Avakian Stoneson
Executive Director

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New Britain Speech FHS
9/26/85 ✓

Reverend Clergy, Sister Irene, Mayor Mac Namara, Father Vartan, Honored Guests and family of the Holy Resurrection parish:

I am very happy to be here today, not only as a representative of your Diocese, but as a devoted friend who has come to offer congratulations on the second anniversary of the consecration of the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection. Appropos, I would like to quote from the Primate's message at the time of the consecration two years ago:

"The first settlers of the town of New Britain named their hamlet after what was then the greatest and most popular empire on earth. They came to a vast continent of impenetrable forests and mountains and trackless swamps. They brought with them only their faith and their hands. There is no town of New Armenia in the United States: but there ought to be one, for our people have also come to a new world from an old land, enduring poverty and hardship, building, ever building a new life.

The Armenian Church community of New Britain is a little, newly-lit candle of our faith. We know the dedication and expense that this parish has brought to the joyful enterprise of building a new home for its children and of raising the dome of immortal life through faith in Jesus Christ over this peaceful town. We are truly grateful to God for the chance to share in this unique joy of our faithful. Today the lamp of the Illuminator lights us in New Britain, the angels are glad, the spirits of the saints rejoice in heaven above us. We are a people that has seen the threshold of extinction; we know how precious life in our faith is, and it triumphs."

I would like to express my personal admiration for the gracious manner in which every member of this parish has personally given over the years through their time, their untiring effort, their physical labor, their enthusiasm, and their financial resources to this, their spiritual home. I find your spirit, which I witnessed firsthand at the 80th Annual Diocesan Assembly a constant source of inspiration in my own daily endeavors. I must say that I will never forget that wonderful experience, because the love and fellowship that was so evident to me and to all who attended was such a vivid example of what the true meaning of Christian life is and can be. For months I have heard nothing but words of gratitude and respect for your community from the many people who attended this past assembly. It warms my heart to see by such example just what the power of faith, spirit, love and brotherhood can accomplish, and that these qualities are so much more powerful and enduring than sheer numbers or the mere giving of dollars could ever be.

Today you have kindly given me the honor to be your guest speaker, but I feel that I am the one who is honored to be invited into your presence, because when I am with all of you, I feel that I am being personally invited into your home with that true Armenian hospitality and

warmth. By your example, we are shown that people are so much more important than buildings, than possessions, than material things.

You all know as well as I do those people who have spearheaded the initiation and completion of the task of building one of God's houses -- Those such as the Abrahamians, the Avedisians, the Azarigians, the Badrigians, the Bagdigians, the Der Margosians, the Hoosigians, the Hoogas, the Hovhanessians, the Maljanians, and the Simonians, to mention only a few of those individuals and families in this community. And you must know that none of this work was done for personal glory or credit. It was only for the benefit of their spiritual lives that they carried on so selflessly for the continuation of the unbroken thread of the Armenian way of life that has stretched -- sometimes almost to the breaking point -- back to the year 287 A.D.

In that year, St. Gregory The Illuminator delivered the message of Christ to the pagan king Dertad, who was so electrified by this revelation that he proclaimed that from then on the religion of the entire country would officially be Christianity, and under his protection. This was not done against the will of the people, but with it, because the Armenians of that time had been pulled apart for so long by the empty paganism of the Romans and the violent fire worship of the Persians, that they desperately needed and wanted the healing word of God in their lives. Therefore began the process of the tying together of the disparate villages of the Armenian lands into one unit, consisting of the people and the church. So, rather than this process having been done by force, it was done out of love and the desire for the people to become one with themselves and with God. And this is the spirit that I see here in this flourishing parish today, the desire to achieve unity by a common striving for the betterment of each individual person and his family, for the ultimate benefit of all.

In this parish each person in the community took part in creating this unique house of worship. Many innovative and successful means of doing so were employed -- the building committee, the local campaign, the general building fund in which almost everyone in town was successfully solicited for donations, the groundbreaking campaign, the mail campaign, the "buy-a-brick" campaign, and the most unusual and heartening of all -- the "weekend crew", volunteers who after their usual week of hard work on the job would actually spend their precious weekend, and some weekdays too, doing the physical labor of clearance and clean-up, moving supplies, painting, and general supervision of construction on the church site. They were not afraid to roll up their sleeves and go get their hands dirty, because nothing was too much when their goal was so clearly in sight.

Now that you have your beautiful new church and grounds completed, you must devote time to developing and improving the many varied programs and organizations within -- the Sunday School, the Armenian School, the Choir and the ACYOA which provide such superb foundations for your children who will carry on your work because of the example you have provided for them in deeds and not just in words -- the Mr. & Mrs. Club and the Women's Guild, which nurture fellowship and provide many services on a continuing

basis -- and the newspaper "Loos", which is a small but bright beacon that shines out its hopeful light to all.

Your beloved and kindly Pastor, the Reverend Father Vartan Der Assadourian, has inspired and guided you since 1967, and we at the Diocese feel as blessed to have him among our revered clergy as you do to have him as your advisor and teacher of God's word.

Your small community exemplifies the following words, quoted from Hebrews, chapter ten, verses 22 to 24 by His Holiness Vazken I, Catholicos of All Armenians, on the occasion of the consecration:

"Therefore, let us come near to God, with sincere heart and a sure faith, with hearts that have been made clean from a guilty conscience, and bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep His promise. Let us be concerned with one another, to help one another to show love and to do good. Amen."

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.