

Dear Parishioners,

1991 will go in the annals of our Diocese as a very memorable year, since it is not only the 100th anniversary of the first Armenian Church in the Western Hemisphere but also the 60th anniversary of the Holy Cross Church of Lawrence.

For historical accuracy, it must be stated that the first Armenian sanctuary built in Worcester was also the parish church of several communities that spread from as far north as New Hampshire to as far south as Pennsylvania. One of these communities was Lawrence which is

mentioned in a list containing the names of communities that made contributions to the construction of the Holy Saviour Church one century ago.

In 1898 Catholicos Khrimian Hayrig greeted the Armenians of various cities in the United States in his encyclical whereby he established the Diocese of America. Lawrence is one of the cities mentioned and thus had the distinction of being an integral and an active part of our Diocese since the beginning. It was organized as a parish long before the construction of the present church and had pastors since the end of the nineteenth century. In view of these facts, the sixtieth anniversary we celebrate today does not mark the origin of the community but the culmination

of at least forty or fifty years of parish activity that led to the construction of a beautiful new church in 1931.

Looking at the past accomplishments of the Lawrence parish, one is impressed with its organizational structure, activities and accomplishments. Lawrence may not be a modern metropolis, but the Holy Cross Community is, certainly without a doubt, one of the larger parishes in our Diocese. What has made this possible is the fellowship and the Armenian spirit generated by the original Armenian immigration here from Kharpert, Chmishgadzak, Chnkush and my native Arapkir.

A little over a decade ago you demonstrated that you were no less generous and ambitious than the generation

that built the church. You introduced major renovations in the hall and other sections of the complex. Your parents' generation and you deserve a great deal of praise for all you have done to maintain your sanctuary and your religious heritage. Yet, there is more to be done.

When we build buildings of stone and brick, we seldom realize that there is another intangible and invisible structure to be raised, a spiritual structure of love and Christian fellowship. Of the two this is the more difficult structure to raise. For the physical structure, we make contributions out of our pockets. The spiritual structure, on the other hand, requires contributions out of our hearts. The stone structure of a church does not generate any kind

of a feeling unless human love has touched its walls at one time or another. Your sanctuary is a living memorial to the love and fellowship generated by earlier three or four generations.

That wonderful tradition must be continued because it pleases God. Love is the essence of God and also the basic teaching of Christ. We must base our community life on love. Our individual differences should not interfere with this goal, which we seek as Christians. When it comes to pursuing that goal, every difference, disagreement, discontentment and the like must be set aside and the joy of experiencing pure love must overcome other human feelings.

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On this sixtieth anniversary I can only repeat to you the words of our Lord: "Love one another." Let the souls of grandparents and parents, who built this church, look at you from their place of rest and be content with the goodwill that prevails among you.

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*Lawrence church*

**Banquet Speech - Lawrence - 10/20/91**

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could keep them in fetters for eternity. They brought their faith to the new world and transmitted it to us so that we would also receive the grace of God and become heirs to our heavenly father's inheritance.

As the heirs of such a legacy we have no possible choice nor could afford turning away from God. St. Paul states: "but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be one more?" These "beggarly elemental spirits" affecting us these days are attitudes such as apathy, lack of faith, laziness in tending to our spiritual needs and other similar tendencies.

We must attentively hearken to St. Paul's words and not forsake our inheritance. The opportunity to rise and reach the level of dignity where humanity and divinity meet must not be abandoned. I pray that we all grow strong in our faith and become true children of God. Amen.

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File: Bishop Khajag : Sermons

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