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Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate

**Primate's Message to the Parish Assembly of St. John's Armenian Church
of Greater Detroit**

Gathering together as the family of St. John Armenian Church you have come here to assess your accomplishments of the past year and chart out new horizons for the future. As your Primate I ask you to reflect upon those words which give glory to God and are sung each week in your sanctuary.

The chant of the angelic hosts - "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors" -- has captured the attention and imagination of Christians at all times. The solemn nature of the chant inspired the fathers of the Church to incorporate it into the Morning Office of common prayer in the east and into the Mass in the west.

"Glory to God in the highest heaven" is a wonderful way of praising the Lord, one which we must remember at all times. Glory and praise are indeed befitting God Who is our Creator and the One Who made mankind master of everything on earth. In return for all His beneficence and especially His Mercy despite our transgressions, we can only sing words of praise to God.

We are all created in God's holy image and are commissioned to bring the Peace of His Son into the world. And, if we are to be those bearers of peace, we must heed the words of this song of the angles.

The second part of this chant, "on earth peace among those whom he favors," is in reference to us. The birth of a humble child in a manger destined for animals is obviously looked upon as the moving force that will establish peace among those whom God pleases.

The manifestation of God, however, is not a peaceful event for mankind under any circumstance. Beholding the source of life and power in the universe would be, to say the least, an unusual experience for any human being. If the force of occasional natural phenomena such as storms, earthquakes, tornadoes and the like strike us with awe, imagine what kind of a feeling the sight of the Creator of the entire universe would generate in our hearts? Yet, two thousand years ago God manifested Himself in a peaceful way in order to be reconciled with a mankind in transgression since the time of Adam. The Son of God came to this world as a human baby in order to bring peace and love so that we could prepare ourselves for eternal life and through salvation become truly worthy of beholding the Creator without fear.

The presence of children in any household produces joy and love. It brings parents closer and gives a meaning to family life. Discord and enmity give way to reconciliation and happiness. Even rugged and tough hearts are known to melt at the sight of such innocent children. What Christ's birth was for mankind is what the birth of a child is to a family. The Son of God took on flesh in order to melt the rock in our human hearts. His revelation in our midst is the very source of love and brotherhood. That is why every Sunday we sing in Church "Christ has been revealed in our midst, the voice of peace has resounded." But we must pay special attention to the remaining words of the angelic chant, "Peace on earth," which is intended not for all but only for those whom God favors. Are we among those favored by God?

The answer to this question is clear. We will be favored by God, if we truly believe in Christ and take to heart the message of the revelation - "the church is become one soul, the kiss given for bond of fullness. The enmity has been removed, and love is spread over us all." "The Church is become one soul" means that as Christians we are all - male and female, young and old, wise and unwise, learned and uneducated, American-born and foreign-born - members of the same church, one and the same corporate body of Christ. If we make a sincere effort to look at other Christians as our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will be able to overcome all obstacles that hamper our struggles in the church.

Soon the season of Great Lent will end and it is my hope that the weight of sin will be lifted from us all through prayer and fasting. As our thoughts turn to Easter and the Resurrection of the Son of God who from the innocence of childhood to perfected adulthood, we too can experience that "new life" in Christ finding that favor with God of which the angels at Our Saviour's birth sang with joy. With Jesus, struggle has been overcome and victory has been achieved. This victory, being the peace Our Lord, has made possible His Peace to be ours.

Let us heed the instructions of the Holy Angels and work together for the good of our Church, both young and old alike. No matter where we come from, no matter what our cultural background is, and no matter what language we speak, we are all one in Christ if we are baptized in the holy font of the Armenian Church.

May the Holy Spirit inspire and strengthen each one of us so that we all become the true disciples of Christ and worthy sons and daughters of the Armenian Church.

With prayers,

Abp. K. Barsamian

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Primate

March 26, 1993