

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

EASTERN DIOCESE

April 30-May 1, 1971
SAINT GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR CHURCH
MONTREAL, CANADA

First Session

The first session of the Annual Diocesan Assembly of 1971 was held on April 30, in the St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Montreal, Canada, with 107 Of the 155 delegates and alternates present.

After the election of the Assembly officers and the appointment of committees, the following constitutional amendments were approved for the second successive year, thereby becoming part of the By-laws;

1. "The Diocesan Assembly is a permanent body and shall consist of elected lay delegates and all the priests and higher ranking clergymen under the jurisdiction of the Diocese."
2. "The Primate shall preside over the Diocesan Assembly. The Assembly shall elect its officers composed of chairmen and secretaries, in such numbers as it may deem necessary, to conduct the meetings. These shall hold office until the next Annual Assembly whereat their successors shall be elected. The Diocesan Assembly shall also have the following standing committees: Nominating, Proposals, and Budget. These committees shall serve a term of one year starting with the adjournment of the Assembly whereat they were elected and ending with the completion of the next Annual Assembly. The standing committees shall convene at least once before the Annual Assembly. The Assembly chairman may appoint such committees as are necessary for the conduct of the Assembly."

Second Session

April 30, 1971

At this session, the Assembly voted and took the following actions:

1. It approved a fund-raising campaign to amortize the mortgage of Saint Vartan Cathedral.
2. It voted to authorize the Diocesan Council to initiate the appropriate steps for the unification of the Eastern and Western Diocese of North America.
3. It authorized and directed the Diocesan Council to seek an

accounting of funds raised within the Diocese, under diocesan sponsorship and with diocesan cooperation, for use in projects outside the Diocese. It further decided that all funds so raised shall remain in the trust of the Diocese and are to be used solely for the purposes for which they are collected.

4. It resolved to make every effort to meet the needs of retired Primates and higher ranking clergy as well as to improve the present clergy fund.
5. It directed the committee working on the rotation of the clergy to study the question further in cooperation with the Primate and Diocesan Council and to submit a report through them at the next Assembly.

Third Session

May 1, 1971

The decisions of the third session were the following:

1. The Assembly approved a motion directing the Diocesan Council to explore and implement means by which at least six representatives of the ACYOA, the Sunday School, and the Armenian School can be represented and can participate in this year's Assembly proceedings.
2. It appointed a committee to study and forecast what our needs will be as they relate to clergymen so that we may more realistically deal with the shortage of priests.
3. It accepted a budget of \$285,000.
4. It directed the Diocesan Council to investigate the allegations concerning the misuse of funds raised for the repair of the Holy Sepulchre, asking the cooperation of the Patriarch of Jerusalem through the proper accounting of the use of the funds transferred to it by the Diocese, with the results of the investigation to be communicated to the delegates within 30 days.
5. It decided to hold the 1972 Assembly in Troy.

As I conclude my last report to you as your delegate, I cannot help but express regret that the Diocesan Assembly has failed to take action on a plan to rotate the clergy. I feel very strongly that this is an absolutely necessary ^{to} infuse a little more vitality into our Diocese and to distribute evenly among the various parishes whatever talent is available among our spiritual leaders.

The basic problem is very clear. The need is obvious. No amount of rationalization for the retention of the status quo is convincing. We can say all we want about bringing in new persons into the church in

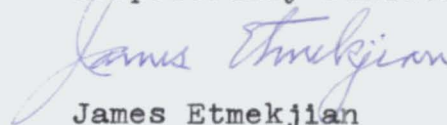
order to eliminate the shortage of priests and to improve their quality even more. The realities give us no hope whatsoever of realizing such a dream in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we have to make the best use of what we have. This means that we have to possess the courage to take drastic steps at the parish and diocesan levels but within the canons, traditions, and rules of the Armenian Church. It also means that both the clergy and the laity will have to sacrifice and work together in the hope that we may build a better church in these uncertain times.

I hope very much that this assembly will resubmit the plan for the rotation or redeployment of the clergy to the Diocesan Assembly in order to make certain that the question is not swept under the rug through the efforts of a committee that is loaded with uninformed individuals whose heads are buried in the well known sand.

Although this is the last act I perform as your delegate of nearly six years, I shall never cease to be aware of the problems of a small parish, and I shall continue my efforts to call to the attention of the governing bodies of the church the difficulties which beset our smaller communities.

I wish to thank all the members of the parish for having given me the opportunity to serve the Holy Ascension Armenian Church. It has been a most interesting and at times very challenging experience. It will be strange, indeed, to be absent from your assembly, but I know that from this distance I shall be sharing every moment of the meeting with you, listening in my imagination to each individual as he expresses himself on a given subject in his inimitable fashion. I hope that you will have a most successful meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



James Etmekjian
Diocesan Delegate