

CHOIR ASSOCIATION ASSEMBLY BANQUET SPEECH
NOV. 6, 1994—ST. JAMES CHURCH, RICHMOND, VA

Dear Tbirds, Tbrouhies and Friends:

As we mark the end of this 48th annual Assembly of the Choir Association, it is worth reflecting for a moment on the great privilege we have been given, to serve on the altar of the Armenian Church.

The Divine Liturgy, the Sacraments, and the form of common prayer are the medium through which we human beings communicate with God. Liturgy is a sacred language, that serves as a direct channel between the

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hearts of the faithful and our Creator. Because of this, making our Liturgy more beautiful and more understandable deserves our best efforts, for these inspired words and music bring out the best in human beings.

For the past few days, we have all been excited by the new tools which the Choir Association and our Diocese in general have been producing, to help teach the sacred music, and bring it into the hearts and souls of greater numbers of our people. But above all, it takes a certain kind of dedication to learn our liturgy. And we Armenian Christians are fortunate to have among us a large number of dedicated people like yourselves, who attend church regularly and serve God as deacons and clerks.

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That same spirit of dedication and activity was on display this weekend in our host parish. I would like to thank the people of the St. James Church, and especially their deacons, choir members and altar servers, for their generous hospitality. I should also express my gratitude to the local Assembly committee, and the Choir Association Central Council, for organizing this memorable and successful event.

Finally, let me offer a special congratulations to the pastor of the St. James Church, Fr. Nareg Berberian. This was an important few days for him, for more than one reason. I can't help thinking that it was not so long ago that Fr. Nareg was a young deacon, studying at the

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seminary and working at the St. Vartan Cathedral. His many friends back in New York miss his warm and friendly presence, but we are very proud of his elevation to the degree of "vartabed," and wish him continued success and inspiration in his ministry to God, His Church, and the Armenian people.

This Choir Association banquet is traditionally the occasion that our Diocese presents its Renaissance Award to a member of the Church who is also a distinguished figure from the world of music, science, and the arts. This year's recipient is a gifted singer, and a true daughter of the Armenian Church: Anita Terzian. the internationally known mezzo soprano.

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Anita's distinguished career has taken her around the globe. She has performed at the world's great opera houses, and has worked alongside some of the major talents of our day, such as Jose Van Dam and Placido Domingo.

Born in Iran, Anita was raised in New York, and is a graduate of the Juilliard School; she has also studied under such operatic stars as Maria Callas. She has been active in the Armenian community since her childhood, and is always eager to perform before her people. Armenian audiences throughout the United States, Europe and the Middle East are equally delighted to listen to Anita's beautiful voice, and her memorable interpretations of our classic musical heritage.

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Anita has generously given her talents to many Diocesan functions, including our Pro-Musica series and the concert commemorating the 25th anniversary of the St. Vartan Cathedral. At the request of our former Primate, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Anita made a recording of the entire Divine Liturgy, which faithfully captures the beauty of the liturgy we all love.

Like so many Armenian artists, Anita's early interest in music was nourished within the embrace of the Church. She served as a soloist in the choir of Bayside's Holy Martyrs church, as well as in the St. Vartan Cathedral choir. For all her accomplishments, Anita displays a charming humility, and points to her parents,

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Arthur and Seda Terzian, as the origin and inspiration for her gifts.

With her creativity at its height, Anita continues to bring honor and beauty to the Armenian people. May God grant her a long and healthy life, so that she may continue her valuable service to His Church. It is a great pleasure at this time to present the Renaissance Award of the Diocese of the Armenian Church to Miss Anita Terzian.

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