



DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA
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Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate



November 2, 1993

The Reverend Father Yeprem Kelegian, Pastor
St. Mesrob Armenian Church
4605 Erie Street
Racine, WI 53402

Dear Father Yeprem:

We thank you for your letter regarding our directive about the mode of administering Holy Communion. We appreciate your personal convictions but remind you that as the Church we are committed to her discipline and tradition as ordained clergymen. It has come to our attention that you are administering Holy Communion not in conformity to the present practice of our Church and have altered the form of the Divine Liturgy. For whatever reasons you are led by to disregard our present directive on communion, we ask you to cease immediately the manual (hand to hand) administration of Holy Communion and return to the present form for all of your parishioners. This is our expectation.

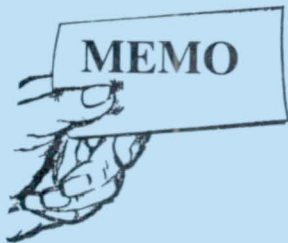
Furthermore, any changes to the Divine Liturgy as it is celebrated in our churches that would alter its structure, form and idiom of communication should not be done. Of course, certain occasions allow for special celebrations of the Badarak as we have shared with you "The Common Liturgy", however, any deviation from the standard Canon is unacceptable without consulting us.

Should you have any questions, you are always welcome to call and discuss them with us. We pray for your continued ministry to our flock in Racine.

With prayers,

Abp. K. Barsamian

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Primate



From The Desk Of:

Fr. YEPREM KELEGIAN

Dear Srpazan Hayr,

Enclosed is a Letter to the Editor from me. I thought it better to send it to the Armenian Church rather than something like the Reporter.

I had meant to talk to you about this directive regarding communion on the hand. I think it was a real theological step backward. You see, for many people it is NOT about AIDS, but rather it is about wanting to receive on their hand. They may use the "disease" argument but when I see people taking it on their hand, I see in their eyes a real deep spirituality and love for Jesus.

Also, the Directive never mentioned that at one time in the Church, communion had been given on the hand. After stating the patristics it could have been stated that, since the church grows and changes, we no longer do this.

The letter to the editor sounds negative visa vis you, but I think you are doing a pretty good job. Keep it up.

Madcheem i hampooyr tzer Soorp achooyn

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Yeprem Kahana Kelegian".

Yeprem, Kahana, Kelegian

To the Editor:

In response to the editorial, "An Intelligent, Rational Approach and Resolution", I must simply say that I was saddened. The editorial reports on a Directive regarding not giving communion on the hand. I was one of the clergy that did NOT agree with the general consensus that Communion must only received the "traditional" way.

First, the Directive completely ignores the fact that many people want to receive Communion in their hand for *spiritual* reasons and NOT for health reasons. They want "to hallow their eyes by the touch of the Holy Body" as they "become partakers of the divine nature." (St. Cyril of Jerusalem). This aspect was not even vaguely addressed.

Secondly, nowhere in the Directive and the accompanying theological discourse was there any mention that it is in Tradition for the faithful to receive Communion in the palm of their right hand (St. Cyril of Jerusalem; St. Basil of Caesarea). In a theological discussion on Holy Communion I expect a scholarly approach, or at least some mention of what is in Tradition. More importantly, the people of the Armenian Church deserve more information than what is being doled out to them.

Thirdly, Fr. Haigazoun Melkonian states, "If one believes that Holy Communion can be a means of transmitting anything but life and is therefore corruptible, then by definition it ceases to be Holy Communion." Is this the doctrinal position of the Armenian Church?! If it is, then what do we say to a cancer patient who is deathly afraid of catching any "bug" (forget AIDS). Shall we tell the patient just

coming off chemotherapy that their fear is unfounded and that if they continue to adhere to that irrational fear, they do not know what communion is? Speaking to Dr. Garo Garibian, can he empirically and categorically state that absolutely *nothing* contagious can be transmitted by giving communion the "traditional" way?

Fourth and, I promise, last: With so many other issues which need to be addressed and which need to be clearly spoken upon by the Church, we have picked this issue. And, in the way it was treated, we have taken a step backward. This is mystifyingand sad.

-30-

Fr. Yeprem Kelegian
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