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December 31, 1996

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate
Diocese of the Armenian Church, Eastern Diocese
630 Second Avenue
New York, New York 10016

Your Grace:

The following is the brief month report for December.
Fr. Nersess visited both Ann Arbor and Lansing communities with me. His coverage of issues provided both substantial and thought-provoking elements. Grand Rapids did not attend and requires further study into how to motivate them.

Fr. Diran and I met and did set up a schedule of Badarak services for next year. The councils have received the schedules and will incorporate the information into publications.

I am also coordinating soccer matches between youth of both communities. Although not a religious activity, it gives people a chance to meet and myself a chance to have interaction with new individuals--details to follow...

ANN ARBOR:

1) Conducted Jashou Services first and third Sundays. I provided reserve sacrament in context of Jashou service. November.

2) The Sunday School students are preparing to do a Christmas play in conjunction with Armenian Christmas on January 5 in place of a sermon to give some chance for interaction between people in the community.

3) Shahin Uzuncan continues to support me at the altars of both communities. He looks forward to coming to St. Nersess next spring, when altar server's training convenes.

4) We continue to study land and location feasibilities. One important step, thanks to Fr. Nersess' input to me, is I have met with the Greek Orthodox priest in Ann Arbor; and I am pursuing the possibility of utilizing the sanctuary for services and classroom for the children. Our chairman has sent a letter of intent to their community that opens the door for further discussion--we might be able to start there in March if all goes well. The church complex will be up for sale perhaps in four years, and we might be good candidates by forming good relationships with the Greek community. Details to follow...

5) The response to pledge and dues membership has been moving very swiftly. The results thusfar indicate a good turnout. John Ohanian is preparing for a raffle (round-trip ticket to Armenia).

6) Richard Berberian has been appointed as liaison for youth. I will be trying to set up visitations to the youth at the university with Richard.

A dance together with the students is being planned for the first half of '97.

Lansing:

1) Services for twice a month is being discussed, instead of once a month.

2) Our Sunday School continues to meet. Shakeh found religious puzzles for the children to be given out on Armenian Christmas. By buying in mass demand, we got 20% taken off of the items. She plans on distributing about 46 gifts.

3) The deacon's training has been completed. Larry Nishan and Grant Sarkisian continue to practice on their own. Both express interest in going to St. Nersess next spring. That makes three new faces for St. Nersess!

4) A pledge system has been set up so that we can facilitate better our stewardship goals. The Chairman, Genadiy, has indicated to me that the initial response has been gratifying and promising--the immigrants are beginning to understand and show some hope.

5) A Jashou service and dinner/program is being prepared for celebration of Armenian Christmas on January 5. The program is "Sold out"--we have 250 people coming, 15 from Ann Arbor. If all goes well, Lansing will rent a bigger hall for next year. It will be a very full day on January 5 for me--morning in Ann Arbor and afternoon in Lansing.

Special note: Much effort was taken on Fr. Nersess' part, Ani, and myself to find a priest for Armenian Christmas. We did not succeed. Please, your Grace, take into account that I am here and ready and willing to take the next ordination step. Not only my desire but the absolute need exists to provide me with the tools for complete pastoral support in these communities. Ani found that none of the clergy along the east coast were either available nor willing to take on the task of coming out here. We had been trying since Thanksgiving to locate someone--and I was willing to bed the priest in our home and of course transport him. Now, Easter is coming--what shall we do?

May the New Year bring you all of the joy that comes from our Lord's message of birth--Krisdos Dzunav yev Haydnetzav...Tzez yev Mez Medz Avedis...

Prayerfully submitted,

Michael Ohanesian
Deacon Michael Ohanesian
Deacon-in-Charge, Ann Arbor/Lansing