

310 13th Avenue NE
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
June 14, 1987

Rev. Fr. Zaven Arzoumanian, Ph.D.
Armenian Church of South Florida
P.O. Box "O", Pompano Beach, FL 33061

Reverend and dear Father Arzoumanian,

I recognize that I am making a most extraordinary request, and I am grateful to you and to Archbishop Manoogian for your willingness to listen to me.

First, let me clarify those parts of my letters that were perhaps poorly phrased.

When I referred to "the absence of a local priest," I was speaking of the absence of a resident priest of the Armenian Church. I understand that as Pastor, you celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the Armenian faithful during your regular visitations. What I meant to say was that it might be of value to the Armenian Church to have a local priest "in residence" during your absence to serve the Sacramental needs of the faithful.

I do indeed maintain the order of the sacred priesthood for my little flock. We have a small chapel for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy which I offer on Sundays at eleven a.m. The chapel is sufficient to accommodate 12 to 15 people, and our group numbers up to ten. On the occasions when we have had larger gatherings, we have also used St. Thomas' Church.

My secular employment, although full-time, is very much under my scheduling control more often than not, and I have the necessary time for pastoral care. My detailed explanation of my employment was for the purpose of assuring the Primate that I am neither a transient nor a vagante. My family is deeply rooted in Pinellas County.

I am a former Roman Catholic, ordained to the priesthood of the Old Roman Catholic Church. My theology during the past ten years has steadily departed from that of Rome and moved toward the East. I have seriously considered the faith of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, but do not feel comfortable with many of their practices, including the emphasis on veneration of icons.

My search has led me to the Armenian Church, and I find myself very much at home theologically among the Oriental Orthodox. I have found nothing in the faith of the Armenian Church which is at variance with my own

beliefs. And most importantly, the Armenian Liturgy expresses in its words and in its actions the faith that I hold and believe.

Theologically, I perceive no barriers to reception into the Armenian Church. However, there are clearly some cultural barriers which are perhaps insurmountable, and it may be that Archbishop Manoogian will have no choice but to reject our petition on this basis. Certainly we have no familiarity with Armenian language or customs, and would be unable to celebrate the Liturgy in the Armenian language or with the traditional singing.

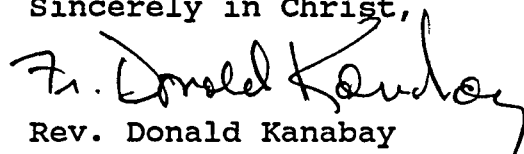
It is my prayer that we be received into the Armenian Church as an exceptional act; that we be permitted to offer an Armenian Liturgy akin to a "low Mass" for the benefit of our people, maintaining the essential elements necessary for validity, but being dispensed from the fullness of Armenian custom and culture. The Ecumenical Liturgy published by Archbishop Manoogian in 1976 would be ideal for our needs.

Although we are not a large group, I believe the majority of our people would choose to be received into the Armenian Church. We have been striving for some ten years now to maintain our spiritual stability, and would thank God for an opportunity to drop anchor in a safe port.

I would be delighted to meet with you on the occasion of your next visit to St. Petersburg, and I certainly will accept your invitation to attend your Liturgy on August 21. Perhaps you would wish to examine our chapel facilities at that time. If you wish, I could make a trip to Pompano Beach in the interim.

Please forgive the delay in responding to your letter. I was on vacation, and just returned yesterday. Thank you again for your kindness in this matter. I ask a remembrance in your prayers, and remain,

Sincerely in Christ,


Rev. Donald Kanabay