



Սուրբ Խաչ Հայաստանեայց Եկեղեցի Holy Cross Armenian Church

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Fellow Armenians:

Toronto. April 21, 1982

"It is with a deep sense of concern that we address you today in a matter that is of utmost importance. . ." So states a letter dated March 18, 1982 from the office of the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

We also address you with a deep sense of concern, which is based upon the need to let the truth be known in its entirety and to allow justice to prevail.

A parish of the Armenian Apostolic Church was dissolved, four of its members were publicly punished without stated reason and an entire community set to turmoil. What possible justification could there be for these acts? The Primate has attempted to vindicate himself in the enclosed letter dated March 18, 1982. It is our contention that none of the "reasons" he states would warrant his actions. Barring a community from worshipping in its chosen House of God is not an act to be viewed lightly. We would therefore ask the reader to view these incidents with a sense of gravity and objectivity.

A reference is made in the second paragraph of the Primate's letter to a signed agreement on the part of the Holy Cross Parish Council. What is not referred to however, is a letter dated Aug. 14, 1979 and numbered 26474 from the primate's Office and addressed to the then Vicar of Canada stating that, "...the Parish Council has to obey the orders of the Primate and the Diocesan Council within the limits of Canadian laws." Whether the interpretation of the restrictive phrase is to be left to the Primate's discretion or not is not clarified. One would assume that the Primate would not wish to see Holy Cross Parish of Toronto get entangled in any legal difficulties, hence the reference to "the limits of Canadian laws." Why then does the Primate in the fourth paragraph of his letter "question the intention of the authors" of a letter to Revenue and Taxation Canada? If the "limits of Canadian laws" were to be taken into consideration, was it not correct to firstly find out what these laws stated? There can be no question as to the "wisdom" of such an act.

It is true that Revenue and Taxation Canada did in fact reply to a letter by the Diocesan legal counsel. They stated that, "if the Diocesan dues are payment for services rendered, such would be an acceptable practice under the Tax Law, and that the Holy Cross Church should verify this contention." All of these phrases, taken from various parts of the Taxation Dept. letter are quoted out of context and with an all important omission. The entire phrase should and does read, "...Holy Cross Church should verify this contention and to maintain sufficient records to substantiate that such 'services' have been

purchased, and purchased at a reasonable cost." How is Holy Cross Church to maintain "sufficient records to substantiate that such 'services' have been purchased and purchased at a reasonable cost", if the Diocese will not cooperate by furnishing ~~itemized~~ invoices.

Throughout the articles of the Diocesan Bylaws numerous references are made to the non-violation of "local ordinances and statutes". And yet, the Primate states that, "the Diocesan Assembly found the Holy Cross Parish to be in violation of the Diocesan Bylaws by virtue of the non-payment of their Diocesan assessment." It is of interest to note at this point that the Diocesan Assembly arrived at their decision after having heard Diocesan authorities interpretation of the facts, for the delegates of Holy Cross Parish were prohibited from participating in the May 1981 Diocesan Assembly. Holy Cross Parish was not given the opportunity to prove that they were not only adhering to the letter, but also to the spirit of the Diocesan Bylaws.

The Primate further states that futile attempts were made on the part of the Diocesan Council and himself in an effort to resolve this assessment issue. At no time however was an effort made by the Diocese to comply with the demands of Revenue and Taxation Canada. Numerous attempts were not necessary, one simple and sincere effort would have been sufficient.

Despite a lack of cooperation on the part of the Diocese, Holy Cross made a gesture to show it's intention of goodwill in the form of a cheque for \$1000.00 U.S.

The decision to communicate through "paid intermediaries" was deemed necessary only after having received the Primates' letters dated Aug. 10, 1981 #27423 and Oct. 2, 1981. These letters were based upon discussions which the Primate had previously initiated between himself and the legal counsel of Holy Cross Church. It was only after receipt of the Oct. 2, 1981 letter that the Parish lawyer felt a need to correspond with the Diocese in writing to further clarify the requirements of Revenue and Taxation Canada.

We would like to draw your attention to the following articles of the Diocesan By-laws prior to reading paragraph 10 of the Primate's letter. They read as follows:

13. The Annual Parish Assembly shall be held regularly once a year during the months of January or February, unless decided otherwise by the previous Annual Parish Assembly. Special Parish assemblies may be held when necessary. Annual or Special Parish Assemblies shall be called with the approval of of the Parish Council by the Parish Priest or the Chairman of the Parish Council, as the case may be.

15. Special Parish Assemblies may be held also upon the written request of at least one-third of the total membership or fifty members of the Parish, whichever is the lesser.
18. The Annual Parish Assembly shall elect a Chairman and Secretary by a plurality of of the members present and voting. Special Parish Assemblies shall be conducted by the Parish Council Chairman and the Parish Council Secretary will act as secretary of these assemblies.
19. The Parish Priest, or in his absence, his assistant shall preside, ex-officio, over the Parish Assembly except when the Primate or his Vicar is present, in which case the latter shall preside.

In calling a Special Parish Assembly without the knowledge or approval of the Parish Council and in appointing a presiding officer to chair such assembly, the Diocesan Council and Primate acted in direct violation of the above noted articles. Only the Parish Council Chairman can chair and the Parish Priest may preside at these meetings, unless the Primate or his Vicar is personally present.

The Primate refers to the Special Parish Assembly of the Holy Cross Parish as an "experience which the Diocesan representatives would prefer to forget". The parishoners of Holy Cross would also like to forget that evening of Feb. 21, 1982. The Diocesan representatives, Fathers Paren Avedikian and Mampre Kuzuian, accompanied by a lay secretary and Father Houssig Nishanian had come with full intentions of dissolving the Holy Cross Parish, regardless of the outcome of the meeting. The unorthodox manner in which the meeting had been called and the verbal asides of "bosh luff" uttered by the Diocesan representative stirred the 120 members present into a state of frenzy. When Father Paren began to pound his fist on the table and announced the dissolution of the Holy Cross Parish, the members reacted accordingly. How was a faithful group of parishoners to react to a pronouncement made by their own clergy. What does it mean to dissolve a parish at a moment's whim. If the decision was not made at a moment's whim,

and was therefore a foregone conclusion, what was the point of calling the meeting?

Our forefathers have given their lives in defence of their church and the Primate asks that we not become abusive or belligerent when our church is dissolved. Does he fully comprehend the gravity of his actions? The formation or dissolution of a parish cannot be regarded as a passing fancy to be toyed with lightly. What atrocities had been committed by the parishoners of Holy Cross Church that they were to have their Church taken away from them? The Diocesan representatives were either unable or unwilling to answer this and other questions put to them on Feb. 21, 1982.

There are no justifiable reasons for their proclamation of dissolution.

As if the dissolution of Holy Cross Church was not punishment severe enough, the Primate gives further punishment to four selected Holy Cross members. Neither the reason for the selection of these four members, nor the nature of their "crime" are stated. What the Primate seems to disregard is article 10 of the By-laws which states;

10. A member of a parish acting in contravention of these By-Laws may be deprived of his right to vote and to hold office by the TWO-THIRDS vote to the members present in a duly assembled Parish Assembly. The decision shall be effective upon confirmation by the Primate.

The Primate, seeing the need for a second parish in Toronto has decided to create a new North York Parish. What was the point of dissolving an existing parish if the same parishoners are to be asked to join the new parish? We do not object to the creation of new parishes. On the contrary, may the number of parishes increase tenfold, not however, at the expense of closing existing parishes. The faith of a group of people is not a toy.

In his closing statemnt the Primate asks that God keep us "firm in the faith of our forefathers". We the parishoners of Holy Cross Church of Toronto have been so blessed. Attendance at our services throughout the Holy weeks of Easter was an indication that we are "firm in the faith of our forefathers". Our faith in God and His omnipotence overrules any mortal proclamation.

Throughout history our forefathers have stood firm in their belief to practice their faith wherever they chose, the parishoners of Holy Cross Church are following in their footsteps.

Respectfully

Parish Council
Holy Cross Armenian Church
HOLY CROSS ARMENIAN CHURCH