

Message to the National Representative Assembly  
Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America  
May 10-12, 2018  
St. Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church of Merrimack Valley  
North Andover, Massachusetts

[Translation]

Your Grace,  
Reverend Clergy Brothers,  
Honorable Delegates,  
Representatives of Boards of Trustees, and  
Dear Guests,

At this time when the National Representative Assembly of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America has already been officially convened, I greet all of you with Christian love and fatherly affection, seeing in you the spirit of service that is the impetus of your dedication to our church and people.

At this first opportunity, I express glory and thanks to our All-Bountiful God, who with His abundant mercy and sweet love blessed us to serve our glorious people by teaching the Gospel and remaining faithful to our church canons and traditions.

It is with feelings of gratitude and filial respect that I thank His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia, whose advice and instruction were vastly helpful for the general good of our Prelacy's religious and administrative work.

I have brotherly greetings for His Eminence Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian, Prelate of the Western Prelacy, and for His Eminence Archbishop Papken Tcharian, Prelate of the Canadian Prelacy. As in past years, this year also our relationship with our sister prelaties has been, and will remain, cordial and brotherly, always helping each other, working together in religious and future projects. I wish both Prelates success in their God-pleasing mission.

I extend brotherly greetings to Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, the newly elected Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. As in the past, I am confident we will continue to work together for the benefit of the Church's goodness and progress.

On behalf of the Religious and Lay Councils, as well as our Prelacy communities and faithful people, I extend special greetings to the pastor of St. Gregory Church of North Andover, Rev. Fr. Stephan Baljian, the Board of Trustees, and auxiliary organizations, who are hosting us

at this National Representative Assembly and making every effort to make our stay comfortable and enjoyable. Fifteen years ago, when St. Gregory of North Andover hosted its first national assembly, I encouraged them with a special appreciation for their “considerable daring” for a small community. With that step they would gain the experience to now become one of our most lively, active, and advanced parish communities. And, look around—this Assembly gathered here is the best witness of their indefatigable effort, dedication and God-pleasing mission.

I have a debt of gratitude to express to our Vicar General, His Grace Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian, for his service with total dedication, to our Clergymen, as well as to the members of the Religious and Lay Councils, to all of our Boards of Trustees, to our dedicated compatriots and benefactors, to the Ladies Guilds, and choirs, deacons, and acolytes who serve our people faithfully and diligently, and who assist in the harmonious and productive success of our endeavors.

Dear Delegates and Guests,

Twenty years ago, by the election and invitation of the Prelacy of the Eastern United States and Canada, I assumed my office as Prelate and after being re-elected for five terms, now today, other priorities become reason for me to stand before this honorable assembly and submit my resignation from my religious and administrative duties, with wishes for the continued success for the Prelacy’s mission and service.

In hindsight, when I look back at my 20 years of service, with spiritual peace, above all else, I give glory to Almighty God for keeping me spiritually, mentally, and physically healthy, so that to the best of my ability, I could satisfy all the needs that pertained to the spiritual growth of our people, who as children of the Armenian Church and people, would continue to keep the centuries-old holy legacy with greater illumination and spirituality, serving the Glory of God and the progress of our Church. Without God’s help, I am sure that our human mind and body would not be able to withstand all the challenges.

Next to the God-given glory, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to our glorious people and our co-working committees, the National Representative Assembly, Executive Councils, Boards of Trustees, for their input and instruction.

I don’t know to what extent I was able to keep alive and effective the legacy planned and accomplished by my predecessor, His Eminence Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, of blessed memory, during his 20-year tenure of service. The fruit of his all-grateful dedication, was taking the Prelacy, together with its communities, from a modest condition into newer and newer accomplishments. He created and organized Religious Education and Armenian Education Councils that capably fulfilled, and continue to fulfill, the obligations and needs that face them,

always taking into consideration new and constructive and professional educational methods to become ever more helpful for the religious and national edification of the faithful. The accomplishments of varied and many programs requires dedicated individuals, which we have, but it is necessary to find and prepare new manpower—specialists who will use their ability and talent to achieve fresh and useful accomplishments.

The most noteworthy work that I accomplished, with the support of the Executive Council, was the preparation of clergy. Our clergy ranks was facing serious concerns and needs. It was essential to have capable individuals with Western values who could meet those needs, so that with education and preparation they would be able to fulfill and satisfy the needs of our Church and faithful. With their success, our clergy, will be able to become the means for the vitality and progress of our Prelacy communities. Outwardly it seems to be an easy task, but it is a responsible and difficult enterprise. In today's secular world the freedom and the choice taken by our young generation faces us with serious concerns—family and social obligations, difficulty of healthy education and good behavioral instruction in our schools and sometimes in our families, put us face-to-face to serious problems and difficulties. We need far-sighted eyes looking over a long span of time in order to satisfy the future needs that will confront us. And recognizing and seeing the demand of young people for religious and intellectual preparation, we took the audacious step of preparing clergy, and I am happy to say, in large measure, we succeeded.

Coming to our current young generation, in order to strengthen the religious and intellectual provision of the children of our parishioners, we tried to diagnose and find the exact cure. To satisfy our concerns we formed a Youth Ministry Committee, whose immediate duty was to bring our young generation into the life of our Church, arming them with spiritual values and national awareness, preparing a future generation with greater knowledgeable engagement, so that our people's golden chain grows longer with new links. I am very happy with the initial successes! I will be grateful to all of you—clergy fathers, delegates, boards of trustees, Sunday and Saturday school teachers, organizations and auxiliary members, especially conscientious parents—when you successfully fulfill responsibilities and obligations, not just for today, but especially for our brilliant future and expectations. Review your work from a positive angle of relativity, seeing and accepting that there are others working with much more success, and strive for the best and more. Do not be satisfied with a negative relativity that a sick person has when he consoles himself by thinking that there are others who suffer greater pain.

If during the course of the past years, successes were recorded (let the work speak for itself), I attribute the success to our collective efforts that were made with sacrifice and faithfulness to principles, by the people and the diligent work of the administration, staff, and especially the dedication and loyalty of our people. And the failures, that were for sure unwilling, can be attributed to me and my short-sightedness for not seeing the questions exactly or clearly.

However, I know very well, it is only the industrious person who makes mistakes or errors. Our collective memory must not lament when we look back. On the contrary, when we look back it must stimulate our abilities for new accomplishments.

Dear Delegates and Guests,

Facing God and with the imperative of satisfying the needs of our people, the awareness of our duty pushes us to more action and work. The truth of our sacred Church's faith, the ownership and propagation of the priceless cultural legacy of our dedicated people—in other words the entire Armenian identity should be carved on our mission, and must never fall under a shadow. For centuries our forefathers kept our nation's sacred legacy. Many sorrowful events darkened our people's lives—the genocide against our Homeland and people was the threat of final loss. But our solid faith, our steadfast hope, and our strong identity, like the infrangible granite of Ararat, stood up against the enemy and with persistent struggle we survived, we re-created. In a few weeks we are going to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the glorious victory of May. That is our history—audacity and victory. Heed the message of our martyred saints and participate in the struggle of our heroic people so that our commemorations become messages and not memorials.

Often, I too, have directed messages to our pious people. It is with heartfelt emotion that I give you my last message as your Prelate. For 19 consecutive years, through my messages I asked you to pay attention to the questions that confronted us with different imperatives each year that we tried to put under a spotlight and find solutions. Your instructions, your presentations, and especially your honorable behavior made my life worthy, enriched me intellectually, and as an individual person I had many co-workers and true friends. I feel it my heartfelt duty to extend my sincere thanks to all, without exception: to the Prelacy's Vicar, to our Clergy, to my Assembly co-workers, to the Prelacy staff, benefactors, to all our compatriots of the church and nation. I beseech all of you to be **“With each other and for each other.”**

I end with the farewell words of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Love each other. Love our Church, our Fatherland, and People.”

Thank You.

ARCHBISHOP OSHAGAN

Prelate

Armenian Apostolic Church of America (Eastern Prelacy)

May 10, 2018

North Andover