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TORCH BEARER

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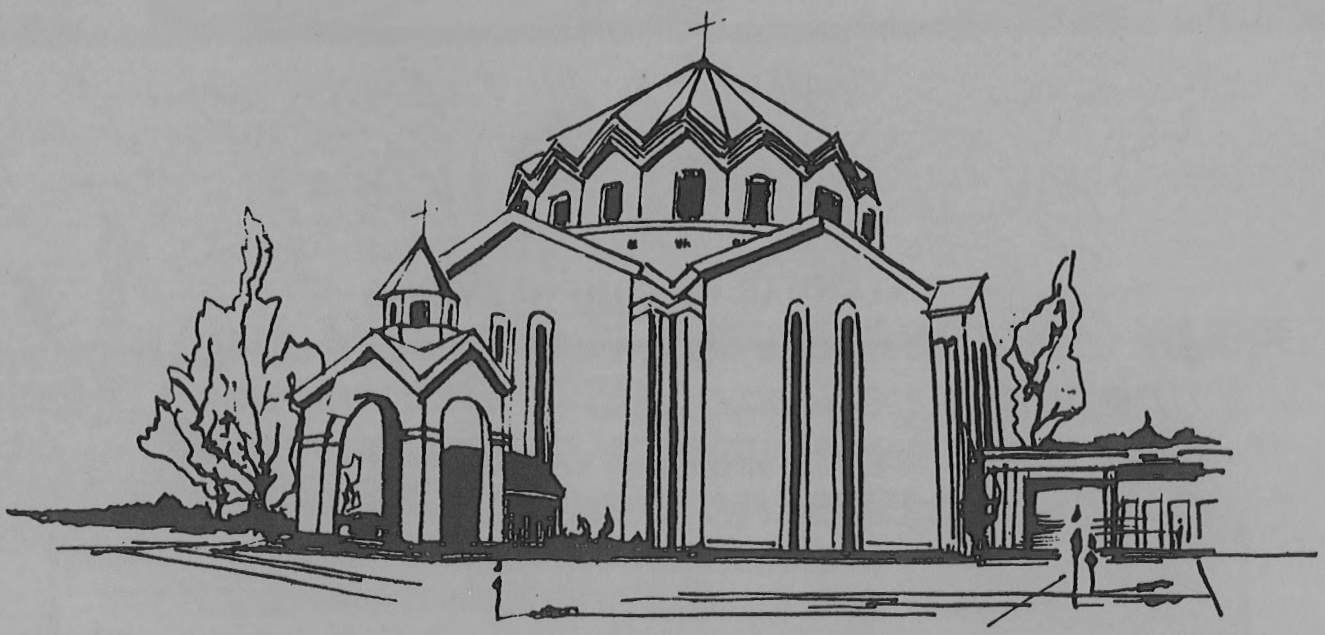

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St. John's Armenian Church

OF GREATER DETROIT

22001 NORTHWESTERN HIGHWAY, SOUTHFIELD, MICHIGAN 48075 – Phone: (Area Code 313) 569–3405

ST. JOHN'S HOSTS PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER

In an unprecedented historic visit, former President Jimmy Carter was the guest of St. John's Armenian Church of Greater Detroit on Wednesday, January 26. Accompanied by his wife Rosalyn, Mr. Carter, along with close personal friend, Set Momjian, former United States Representative to the United Nations, and his wife Joan toured the St. John's Complex.

President Carter was in Detroit to obtain support for his Presidential Library and Research Center at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Aware of his impending visit to Detroit for a luncheon sponsored by the Burroughs Corporation, St. John's extended an invitation to the President, an invitation he most graciously accepted. Mr. Set Momjian, the first Armenian to be appointed to the rank of Ambassador by an American President coordinated President Carter's visit to St. John's. Local arrangements were secured through the efforts of parishioner, Martin Cholakian who was the liaison for the President's visit to St. John's. Well known for his involvement in politics, Mr. Cholakian has been an avid supporter of President Carter.

Prior to his arrival at the Church, Mr. Carter lunched with a number of major business and civic leaders including Mr. Alex Manoogian, Chairman of the Board of Masco Corp., Mr. Michael Blumenthal, Former Secretary of the Treasury and President of Burroughs Corp., Mr. Henry Ford II, former Ford Motor Co. Chairman, and Mr. Roger Smith, the President of General Motors Corp.

A ten car procession including secret service and police escorts accompanied the President's car to the Church Complex. Mr. Alex Manoogian rode with President and Mrs. Carter while Mr. Momjian followed directly behind in the secret service car.

The A.G.B.U. Alex Manoogian School on the Church Complex was the first stop for the President, and his entourage, where they were warmly greeted by School Board Chairman, Richard Apkarian, Parish Council Chairman, Arthur Mardigian, Mrs. Alex Manoogian, Mrs. Richard Manoogian, and School Board Members. As the President entered the school's multi-purpose room, the entire student body greeted him with "America the Beautiful" followed by a rousing rendition of the school song in Armenian. School Principal, Richard Norsigian, extended words of welcome and introduced the President to the awed students.

In a brief address, the President praised the students for striving to maintain their Armenian heritage while simultaneously meeting modern challenges. Mr. Carter stated that, as President, human rights were one of his major concerns. He also pointed out that the persecution of the Armenian People marked one of the saddest periods in world history. President Carter further remarked that while we cannot forget the past, we look to the future in the children assembled in this school. President Carter expressed gratification that the leaders of the Armenian Community have come forth to establish an Armenian School, and particularly cited benefactor, Alex Manoogian for whom the school is named. President Carter also expressed gratitude for the support that Armenian leaders gave him in his efforts towards human rights during his presidency. In closing, the President remarked to the students that he felt a part of their great family. To the delight of the students, President and Mrs. Carter mingled with the student body and spoke with them on an individual basis. Following a prolonged standing ovation, President and Mrs. Carter accompanied by their entourage proceeded to the Church where they were officially welcomed on behalf of St. John's by Very Rev. Fr. Paren Avedikian, Pastor; Rev. Fr. Haik Donikian, Asst. Pastor; Very Rev. Fr. Papken Anoushian, Student Priest in Residence; and Arthur S. Mardigian, Parish Council Chairman.

Fr. Paren led the President and Mrs. Carter along with a small group including Mr. & Mrs. Alex Manoogian, Mr. & Mrs. Set Momjian, Mrs. Richard Manoogian, Mr. & Mrs. Michael Assarian, Mr. Suren Pilafian, architect of the Church and Cultural Center, and a few elected and appointed officials of St. John's, on a guided tour of St. John's facilities.

The group first entered the Sanctuary of the outstanding Church edifice, the richness and splendor of which left a breathtaking and lasting impact which set the momentum for the afternoon. Fr. Paren pointed out that St. John's, in a sense, is a living architectural monument to the Armenian People, the design of which features inspiring characteristics from forty different Churches throughout Armenia. As the group proceeded down the central aisle, Mr. Carter was drawn towards the massive marble altar, quarried and carved in Italy with a portrait of Christ and the Apostles at the Last Supper. A magnificent oil painting over the main altar depicting the Virgin and Christ Child also evoked many favorable comments.

Fr. Paren then led the guests to the Confessional Chapel below the Sanctuary, which houses a segment of St. John's impressive collection of ancient manuscripts, the oldest of which dates back to 1206. Mr. Carter, immediately recognizing the style of the illuminations on these historical manuscripts, remarked that the altar painting of the Virgin and Christ Child in the Sanctuary were inspired by the works of these early artists. President Carter inquired regarding a 17th century megalonium, which Fr.

Paren explained, is the lives of the saints. President Carter expressed regret that the Baptist Church does not teach the history of the saints and felt that their lives could be instructive. Mr. Carter also displayed strong interest in the first printed Armenian Bible, printed in Amsterdam in 1666, of which St. John's presently owns three copies.

Next, the President and his entourage were guided through St. John's Museum, the largest depository of Armenian artifacts and ancient relics in America. The Carters were visibly impressed with St. John's collection of Armenian Artifacts, some of which date back to the 7th Century B.C. It was obvious by his comments, that the President possesses a knowledge of Armenian history, and indirectly conveyed this throughout his visit.

An elegant Champagne Reception in honor of President and Mrs. Carter was hosted by St. John's at which elected and appointed officials of St. John's Armenian Church were present. Arrangements of red and white roses and carnations adorned the Reception Hall, which was embellished by a number of tall difenbachia plants and antique decorations which provided a fitting background for the historic visit. Every detail of the memorable event was professionally attended to by St. John's.

During a brief program, Fr. Paren expressed the love, respect and profound admiration that the Armenian People have for President Carter, along with the indebtedness that is felt for his many contributions towards human rights, as well as for his efforts in bringing Armenians into the forefront of American politics. Fr. Paren expressed the hope that future leaders of this country will be endowed with the same virtues, compassionate convictions, and dedication to human rights as President Carter. Fr. Paren indicated that due to limitations set for the visit, only elected and appointed official representatives of St. John's and A.G.B.U. Alex Manoogian School Board Members were invited to welcome the President on this occasion. He further stated that on a subsequent visit, St. John's would be pleased to tender a major banquet in honor of the President, to enable all Armenians to convey their respect to him. In closing, Fr. Paren presented the President with a number of books on Armenian history and art as token remembrances of this great occasion.

Mr. Set Momjian briefly touched on his close association with the President, and stated that it was President Carter who brought human rights to the Oval Office. Mr. Momjian reflected on a day in December, 1977 when thirty-eight Armenians were greeted at the White House by President Carter. "This moving occasion was the first time in history that Armenians were invited to the White House; no matter how many future presidents we shall meet, there will never be a day to replace that meeting, for that feeling comes only once in a lifetime."

Mr. Alex Manoogian conveyed his heartfelt appreciation for President Carter's visit to St. John's. "You, Mr. President, are the first President of the United States to visit any Armenian Church", stated Mr. Manoogian. The audience responded to the statement with an outpouring of strong emotion. Mr. Manoogian continued that Mr. Carter was the only President since Woodrow Wilson, to express genuine concern for the Armenian People, and for this, Armenians throughout the world will be eternally grateful. Mr. Manoogian indicated that through President Carter's efforts, the plight of the Armenians gained official recognition, and subsequently the Detroit Armenian Community was given the opportunity by the City of Detroit to erect a monument on a prominent site in downtown Detroit in memory of the 1½ million Armenians massacred during World War I. As a token of appreciation, Mr. Manoogian presented the President with two replicas of the monument, Gomidas Vartabed, symbolizing the tragedy of the Armenian People, one to be placed in the Presidential Library, another for his residence. Mr. Manoogian expressed the hope that President Carter will include a room in the Presidential Library to house books and documents regarding the historical events of the Armenian People.

President Carter then approached the podium, and spoke of his friendship with Mr. Alex Manoogian and Mr. Edward Mardigian. In his address, President Carter stated that in times of crisis involving basic human rights issues, freedom from persecution, and the enhancement of democratic principals, he always turned to Armenian leaders, as those who had spoken before him on this day, for advice and consul, and looked to their active participation. Mr. Carter stated that although he is no longer President, he will continue to pursue the same principles that obsessed him during his presidency. President Carter explained that the Presidential Library will contain not only references of his own life, but a history of the United States including the composition of our diverse heterogeneous population and their contributions to the growth of this country. Mr. Carter asked for the financial support of the Armenian Community in building the Library and Research Center, and revealed that philanthropist, Alex Manoogian, had already indicated a desire to provide a room in the Center.

President Carter expressed his appreciation for the reception given him, and also expressed pride in being the first president of this great country to visit the historic Church of a great people.

All three local TV channels featured extensive news coverage regarding President Carter's unprece-

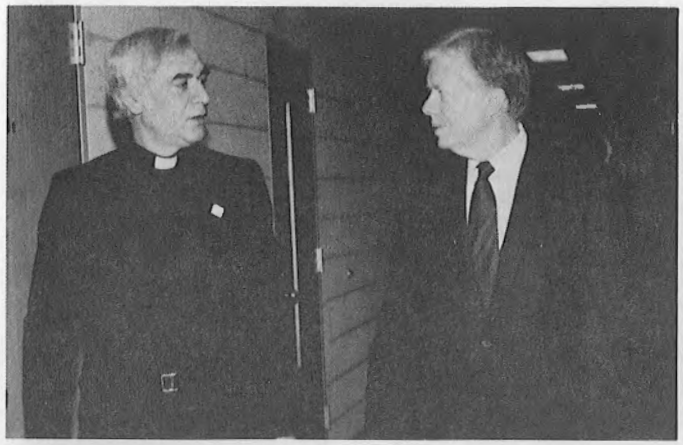
dented visit to St. John's Armenian Church on both the 6:00 P.M. and 11:00 P.M. News Reports on that day. During the visit to St. John's, both President Carter and Mr. Alex Manoogian were interviewed by local radio personality Mike Miller. In the taped interview which was aired on radio station WXYZ, President Carter spoke of his meeting with the students at the A.G.B.U. Alex Manoogian School, and reiterated that one of the most exciting times during his Presidency was the emphasis on human rights, and the opportunity to learn about the pain and suffering on a world-wide basis. President Carter emphasized that he was pleased to visit St. John's Armenian Church because he knew that in history the suffering of the Armenian People has been an example of what we hope to avoid in the future. Mr. Carter acknowledged that he was the first president since Woodrow Wilson who has alluded to the Genocide of the Armenians in which 1½ million Armenians were massacred. Mr. Carter stated that when he established the Holocaust Commission it had heavy Jewish representation because of the aftermath of the Nazi attack on the Jewish Community; however, the Commission also included many distinguished Armenians to make certain that a broader element of the horrors of genocide would never be forgotten.

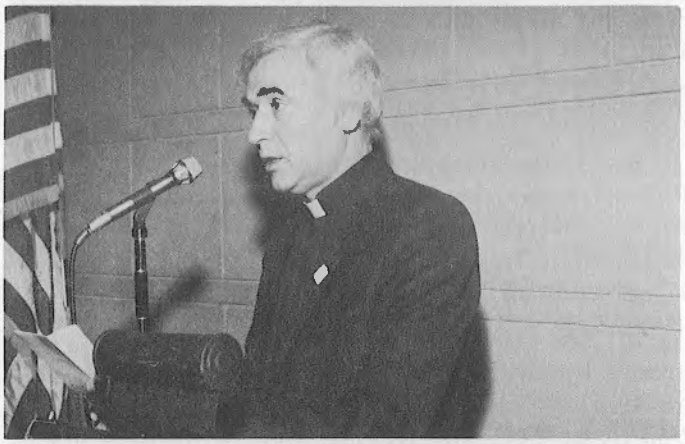
During the radio interview, Mr. Alex Manoogian announced his plans to assist in providing a room in the Presidential Library to house Armenian books, documents, and memorabilia so that future generations will be aware of Armenian history and the contributions that Armenians have made to the United States and throughout the world.

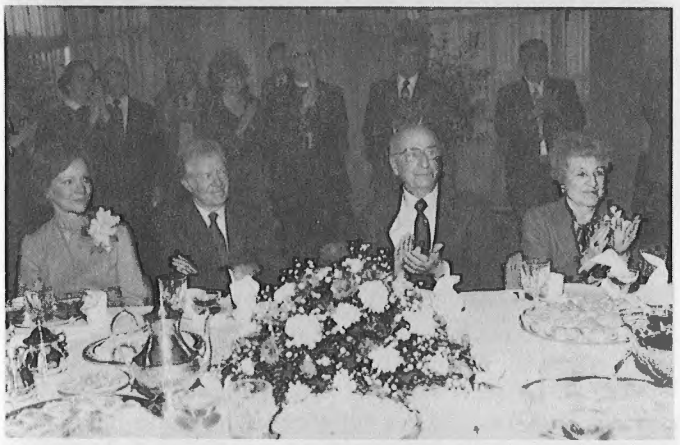
The Pastor and Parish Council extend their sincere appreciation to the following ladies who prepared Armenian delicacies for the Champagne Reception in honor of President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter: Mrs. Helen Armoudlian for the preparation of Khadiaf; Mrs. Helen Armoudlian, Mrs. Mary Kezelian, Mrs. Anoush Papelian and Mrs. Lucille Sherman for the Cheese Boerag; Mrs. Armenouhi Gopigian for the Bird's Nests; and Mrs. Victoria Zamanigian, for the Kurabia.

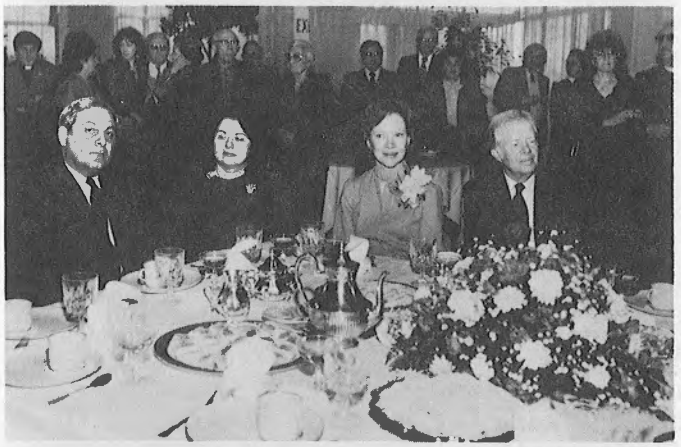
Following his visit to St. John's, President Carter called Mr. Set Momjian from California, for the specific purpose of conveying his gratitude for the warm hospitality that he received at St. John's Armenian Church, and indicated that he was deeply moved by the experience.

Press Release
St. John's Armenian Church
of Greater Detroit









TEXT OF FR. PAREN AVEDIKIAN'S ADDRESS DURING PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT

As all of us here know, throughout centuries, Armenia, because of her geographic location has been a battleground for neighboring nations. A large segment of our population was forced to immigrate to America following World War I to escape the unprecedented events that befell our people, the massacre of one and a half million Armenians. Today, persecution prevails against Armenians in the Middle East, and again, Armenians look to this great land to be their home.

During and immediately following World War I, America, the country with a conscience, turned her back on us; but one man, her President, Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States, attempted to extend a helping hand, and an understanding heart. Unfortunately, the Armenian Question remained just that, one man's crusade.

It was not until the 39th President of the United States occupied the White House that Armenians were again thought of by a man occupying the highest office in the world. This man was President Jimmy Carter, a man with a deep commitment for human rights, and this was the perception of America that he conveyed throughout the world, particularly to the oppressed peoples: an ideal that today has been discarded like a shameful and ugly rag.

Fulfilling his commitment to the rights of Americans from all backgrounds, President Carter was the first United States President to appoint an Armenian, Set Momjian, to the rank of Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1978, when the United Nations Human Rights Commission on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide decided, in Geneva to delete Paragraph 30, you Mr. President took the step to right this wrong by instructing the United States delegation, which included Ambassador Set Momjian, to reinstate Paragraph 30; a commendable attempt which unfortunately has not yet materialized.

The year 1978 also marked the formation of the Presidential Commission on the Holocaust. In April, 1979, the first commemoration of Holocaust Day took place in Washington, and on this moving occasion Mr. Alex Manoogian was invited to light a candle on behalf of the Armenian People. Again our President appointed an Armenian, Mr. Set Momjian as a member of this permanent committee, as well as our beloved Governor James Blanchard, who at the time was a Congressman.

In 1979, by Presidential appointment, Mr. Richard Manoogian became a member of the White House Preservation Fund, the Fine Arts Committee of the State Department and the Committee for the Preservation of the White House.

In November 1980, Mr. Edward Mardigian was invited by you, Mr. President to attend the Madrid meeting of the Commission of Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Helsinki Accord which issued a strong statement on Europe, was formulated by this Committee in 1975. The 1980 conference was called to reinforce and implement the Helsinki Accord, and an Armenian was part of that conference.

We are indebted to you President Carter. You have our love and our respect. Your presence in the White House gave our community the impetus to organize and to enter politics. Your confidence in our people, your compassion, and your Christian charity, brought them to the forefront. Had you not occupied the White House and accepted us, the Armenians, I am convinced that today, George Deukmekjian would not be occupying the Governor's Mansion in Sacramento, California.

On behalf of a grateful Armenian People, this small gathering at St. John's is here to convey our deep respect and love for you.

It is our impression and our hope that you will be returning here in the future, and at that time our entire community will be given the opportunity to show their gratitude and appreciation to you.

I pray that this great nation will bring forth and again place in her highest offices, individuals like yourself, endowed with the same virtues, compassionate convictions and dedication to human rights, which is the Lord God's will for us Christians, and our responsibility to mankind.

TEXT OF MR. ALEX MANOOGIAN'S ADDRESS DURING PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter as the guests of St. John's Armenian Church of Greater Detroit.

This is a historic occasion for us because you Mr. President are the first President of the United States to visit an Armenian Church.

Within the framework of your human rights policy, you have been the only President since Woodrow Wilson to express genuine concern regarding the historic plight of the Armenian People. Your concern was translated into most forceful words and tangible deeds; as you opened the White House to the Armenians and you assigned our representative, Mr. Set Momjian to the Holocaust Commission.

I myself was privileged, Mr. President, to be invited by you to light a candle on behalf of the Armenian People at the first commemoration of the President's Council on the Holocaust at the Rotunda in April, 1979.

Armenians around the world will never forget those memorable events, which were only made possible through you . . . And today, we really miss you.

We have a representative group of Armenians to greet you here, however, we hope that you will have more time in the future to accept the appreciation and the gratitude of the entire Armenian community at a larger function.

The Armenian community was allowed by the City of Detroit to erect a monument, Gomidas Vartabed, symbolizing the tragedy of the Armenian people, in the heart of downtown Detroit. On behalf of the Armenian community, I am pleased to present to you, a replica of the Gomidas Monument to be placed in the Presidential Library. It is my sincere hope that the library will also house an Armenian Section, where books, documents and memorabilia can be preserved.

I wish also to present another replica of the monument to Mrs. Rosalyn Carter for your residence, to remind you always of the warm sentiments of a grateful Armenian community.

To conclude my remarks, I wish to thank you once again for honoring our Community. You will always have our warmest wishes and firm support in all of your future endeavors.

Thank you.

GODFATHER of the LORD'S BAPTISM

During the official observance of the Nativity and Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ on Sunday, January 9, 1983, the Godfather of the Lord's Baptism was Master Christopher Costa, the son of parishioners, Patrick and Diane Costa. We have placed these photographs here to show the dedication and determination of this youngster, aged eleven, and to encourage other parents to place the names of their sons on the list of future Godfathers of the Lord's Baptism at St. John's.