

May 4, 2000

To the Most Reverend Bishop Robert Brucato  
Apostolic Administrator, Archdiocese of New York

Your Grace:

I was attending the annual Clergy Conference of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America when I received the sad news of the passing of His Eminence John Cardinal O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York. On behalf of all the clergy and the people of the Armenian Church in America, I would like to extend my deepest sympathies and condolences to you for this great loss.

Over the course of many years, I came to know Cardinal O'Connor not only as a great churchman, but also as a warm and generous friend. On several occasions he extended the hospitality of the New York Archdiocese to the Armenian community--most recently two weeks ago, when he allowed us to hold a memorial service for the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide in St. Patrick's Cathedral. I also recall with great fondness our gatherings at his residence, where he hosted the late Catholicos of All Armenians, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, and other dignitaries of our church.

It was my privilege on several occasions to reciprocate his hospitality and host Cardinal O'Connor here at the St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral and Diocesan complex. Whatever the circumstances, the Cardinal was rightly known for his graciousness and humanity, and it was always a joy to meet with him in a spirit of Christian brotherhood.

Naturally, the news of his illness last autumn deeply affected this entire city, and especially those who knew Cardinal O'Connor personally. Every moment of his life had been lived with extraordinary faith and courage, and we were all confident that he would face this crisis with nothing less than his usual spirit of resolution, good humor and obedience to God. These of course are the prerequisite qualifications for any man who would assume the duties of Cardinal of New York. Even so, Cardinal O'Connor was unique in the way he embodied these virtues, and thus was an inspiration not only to his own flock, but to everyone who looked to him for guidance and leadership.

His absence at the table of Christian fellowship will be sorely felt for a long time to come. But more importantly, the spiritual presence of this courageous man, this caring friend, this devoted servant of God, will always be felt in the great Cathedral of St. Patrick, throughout the city of New York, and in the hearts of countless faithful of men, women and children.

May our Lord watch over His humble servant in death as in life. May He ease the hearts of Cardinal O'Connor's loved ones, and may He grant consolation and guidance to the Cardinal's flock in the days to come.

With prayers,  
Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate