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PRELATE'S EULOGY FOR ARCHBISHOP SUMBAT LAPAJIAN

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Dearly beloved,

With a heavy heart we are gathered in this sanctuary to pay our final respects to our beloved brother-in-Christ Archbishop Sumbat Lapajian, a remarkable man and clergyman who lived his life true to this Scripture passage, devoting his life, heart, and soul to working for the Lord.

It is said the measure of a life well-lived is through the lives they touched. If Archbishop Lapajian's life is to be measured by those he touched, then he lived a truly rewarding and purpose-filled life. Most of you here today had the good fortune of knowing him personally, and you all have your own personal memories of him.

Archbishop Lapajian was many things to many people, but he was first and foremost a humble and faithful servant of God. Having been orphaned at a very early age, he was raised at the Birds' Nest Orphanage under the guidance of Maria Jacobsen, who nurtured him and shaped him into the man he became. Rather than discourage him, his lot in life served only to strengthen him, inspire him, and prepare him for his calling and ministry to help others in need. Through hard work and dedication he rose to prominence, but he remained humble no matter what position or title he held. He was a simple man, a kind man who related to any and every one and empathized with his fellow man. This humility and sincerity earned him the love, respect, and admiration of all who knew him.

Archbishop Lapajian was a dedicated son of the Armenian church and nation. From early on, he felt a calling to serve God, the Armenian Church, and the Armenian people, and remained steadfast and unwavering in this calling and mission throughout six decades. He served with the same conviction and passion from the time of his arrival in the United States in the early 1960's until

recent years, giving himself fully to the work of the Lord and to his flock. His life and service bore witness to his deep love for and devotion to our Lord and our Church.

He was a devoted pastor and spiritual leader. I am sure there are generations of families here who were baptized and wed by Archbishop Lapajian, or had him conduct funeral services for your loved ones. In good times and in bad, he was always there, whether to share in the joy of a birth or marriage, or the sorrow of a death. He was there to celebrate on joyous occasions, and there to console in times of sadness. To many of you he was more than a pastor; he was a family member, a father figure, a grandfather, a mentor, a friend who could be called upon at any given moment.

He was also an effective leader, who was the first Prelate elected to head the Western United States. During his tenure, and even prior to being elected Prelate, he was instrumental in the establishment of a number of parishes and schools which are thriving today, and set the foundation for the successes we have today.

He was a talented teacher who influenced the lives of many of his students in Lebanon and the United States. Understanding the value of an education, he dedicated himself to self-education after having to leave school at a young age to earn a living. He eventually returned to school, graduating from Haigazian University, and became a teacher himself. In the many years he spent teaching, he ensured that his students received the best education he could provide and thus the best opportunities life had to offer. I am sure his students are among us today and remember their beloved teacher and his teachings from long ago.

Finally, he was an exceptional preacher of the Word of God. Each and every Sunday he stood on this very altar, and before that on the altar of Holy Cross Church in Los Angeles and of various Prelacy Churches, and taught his congregation the Word of God through his spiritually uplifting sermons. He spoke with wisdom yet simplicity, with solemnity yet humor, in a manner that young and old could relate to. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). The word of Christ dwelled in Archbishop Lapajian, in accordance with these words by the Apostle of Christ. It was the guiding force of all he spoke and all he did, and he dedicated his life to spreading the word of Christ, teaching it and instilling it in his parishioners.

The Lord gave us this remarkable man, and for that we are grateful. "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). We are privileged to have had a clergyman like Archbishop Lapajian serve within the Western Prelacy for over four decades, and we are ever thankful for his many accomplishments and contributions to the advancement of our Prelacy and to the spiritual nourishment he provided to our community.

And now, the Lord has taken away, He has called His servant home. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Let us find comfort in that he is now removed from the physical pain and suffering of the last few years and in the abiding presence of God where there is no sorrow nor pain, but the fullness of peace and joy with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And let us not despair, for his life was truly fruitful. He led a life of great service and leaves behind a legacy which will not be forgotten. Through our many fond memories, his influence will continue.

His loss is being felt far and wide, from the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Lebanon, to Brotherhood members in various Dioceses around the world, to our Prelacy, and especially the parish community of Holy Cross Cathedral where he was a beloved everyday presence for forty years.

May God bless the memory of Archbishop Sumbat Lapajian, and may eternal light shine upon him as he dwells in peace in the glory and kingdom of our Lord Almighty.

Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian
Prelate, Western United States

July 26, 2010