

Jubilee Message of His Beatitude, Nerses Bedros XIX, Patriarch Catholicos of the Armenian Catholics on the 1700th Anniversary of Armenia becoming Christian

Dear brothers and sisters and all of my beloved family in Christ.

We greet all the children of our community in Armenia and in the whole Diaspora from the place of our See, the historic, centuries old Bzommar.

We offer up our thanks to the Heavenly Father who in his limitless goodness to our Nation before many other Nations, has given the Saving Light of the Gospel that became for our people the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The Way, it was that led our Fathers through difficult but auspicious roads to spiritual and national identity and formation as they recognised Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

The Truth, through the remarkable genius and writing of our Holy Translators, has been transmitted to all generations in our own writing and language to grant us the gift of the Divine Word.

The Life, which was bestowed on our people, gave them courage to protect even at the sacrifice of their earthly lives, their religious and national identity throughout the ages. They refused to obey the commands of Hazguerds old and new that they abandon holy faith or nation.

No one can separate us from this faith. We call the Holy Gospel father and our mother is the Catholic and Apostolic Church. (Eghishe).

Today we have the great joy of declaring a Jubilee Year, the 1700th year of Armenia becoming Christian.

The Anniversary should not become only a time of pride and rejoicing for a single year that we are the first Nation among Nations who accepted the Christian faith as a State religion. This burst of enthusiasm would flare up like burning hay and then quickly extinguish.

Instead the Jubilee should be for each of us a time to reignite the Light of our spiritual life, renew and refresh our faith, and examine how we care for others and our conduct in our daily life. It should mark the return to faith and conviction, in the spirit and understanding of Avarayr, to be able to say No to the new dictators who seek to separate the Armenian from God, from religion, from morals and from sacred principles.

The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light. (Is. 9.1) With these words the prophet Isaiah was announcing the coming of the Messiah who was to bring the true light to people fumbling in darkness.

Our Armenian people too, with King Tiridates and his pagan court, were lost in darkness. Yet the year 301 became the Great Date, the Great Happening when to the Armenian World the darkness broke. There dawned the light of Christ, thanks to the prayers, the suffering and the miracles of the great Illuminator, St Gregory.

From that day, the Armenian people walk from century to century with God in the heart, the Gospel in the hand, holy hymns in the mouth and both eyes fixed upon the heavenly goal.

Christ exhorted his listeners, ***For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be. (Mat. 6.21)*** We need to ask ourselves what is our treasure. Material wealth, gold? These are false treasures. The true treasure is God's kingdom. It is our faith, our hope, and our charity.

The Jubilee of the Armenian People becoming Christian should lead every faithful Armenian to these values and virtues thus to draw closer to Christ, He who is the Spring of all that is good.

It is a deception to be bound to fleeting or accidental conditions such as human glory and eminence. Today they exist and tomorrow they disintegrate into dust. Instead we need to become one with the infinite love of Christ that leads us to true happiness. St Gregory of Narek, St Nerses the Gracious, St Nerses of Lampron and all the Saints offer us the example.

The 1700th Jubilee Year should make known throughout the Armenian faithful, whether they are old or young, learned or common men and women, the truth of God's mercy, and His fatherly face.

We are all called to continue the mission of the Illuminator and to proclaim the Gospel.

This is the calling, the aim of the life of the Christian. This is the meaning of God's commandments, this is Christ's teaching and this is the moral for the healthy life.

The 1700th Jubilee Year should also be the beacon to light up every Armenian person and family as a lantern for them to walk safely like their ancestors towards the inheritance of the joys of heaven.

Together with the Patriarch Nerses the gracious we say:

“St Gregory, associate of Seraphines,
With your Illuminating words you have united us also.
Hail to you, teacher, may the Lord be praised amongst us.”

We declare the Jubilee year of the 1700th anniversary of the Armenian people's acceptance of Christianity, officially opened for all of the Armenian Catholic Church.
With Paternal blessing

Nerses Peter 19th,
Patriarch Catholicos of Cilicia,
for the Armenian Catholics.

Given at the Patriarcal See, December 31st, 2000, the second year of our Patriarcate, on the occasion of the Jubilee year of the 1700th anniversary of the Armenian people's acceptance of Christianity,