



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II
SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS
OF ALL ARMENIANS WITH HIS ENTOURAGE**

Thursday, 8 May 2014

*Your Holiness,
Dear Brothers in Christ,*

I gladly offer a most heartfelt welcome to you and to the distinguished delegation accompanying you. Through Your Holiness, I also extend respectful and affectionate greetings to the members of the Catholicate family and to all Armenians around the world. It is a particular grace to greet you here so close to the tomb of the Apostle Peter and to share this moment of fraternity and prayer.

With you, I praise the Lord, because in recent years relations between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Church of Rome have been strengthened, thanks to the events which are so dear to our memory. Here I recall the visit of my sainted predecessor to Armenia in 2001, and the welcome presence of Your Holiness in the Vatican for the official visit to Pope Benedict XVI in 2008 and for the inauguration of my ministry as Bishop of Rome last year.

Here I wish to recall another occasion full of meaning in which Your Holiness participated: the commemoration of the witnesses to the faith of the twentieth century, which took place in the context of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. In truth, the number of disciples who shed their blood for Christ during the tragic events of the last century is certainly greater than that of the martyrs of the first centuries, and in this martyrology the children of the Armenian nation have a place of honour. The mystery of the Cross, precious to the memory of your people and depicted in the splendid stone crosses which adorn every corner of your land, has been lived as a direct participation in the chalice of the Passion by so many of your people. Their witness, at once tragic and great, must not be forgotten.

Your Holiness, dear Brothers, the sufferings endured by Christians in these last decades have made a unique and invaluable contribution to the unity of Christ's disciples. As in the ancient Church, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of new Christians. So too in our time the blood of innumerable Christians has become a seed of unity. The ecumenism of suffering and of the martyrdom of blood are a powerful summons to walk the long path of reconciliation between the Churches, by courageously and decisively abandoning ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit. We feel the duty to follow this fraternal path also out of the debt of gratitude we owe to the suffering so many of our brothers and sisters, which is salvific because it is united to the Passion of Christ.

In this regard, I wish to thank Your Holiness for the effective support given to ecumenical dialogue, and in particular to the work of the joint commission for theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and for the skillful theological contributions offered by representatives of the Catholicate of All Armenians.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any way afflicted with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God” (2 Cor 1: 3-4). Full of trust, may we walk the path that lies ahead of us, sustained by so great a cloud of witnesses (cf. *Heb* 12:1), and implore the Father for the unity which Christ himself prayed for at the Last Supper (cf. *Jn* 17:21).

Let us pray for each other: may the Holy Spirit enlighten us and lead us to that day, so greatly desired, in which we can share the Eucharistic table. We praise God in the words of Saint Gregory of Narek, “Accept the song of blessing from our lips and deign to grant to this Church the gifts and graces of Zion and of Bethlehem, so that we can be made worthy to participate in salvation”. May the all-holy Mother of God intercede for the Armenian people now and always.