

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 160627a

Monday 27.06.2016

The Pope visits the Armenian Apostolic cathedral and Catholic cathedral of Gyumri

Vatican City, 25 June 2016 – On Saturday afternoon Pope Francis, along with the Catholicos Karekin II, visited the “Yot Verk” apostolic cathedral of Gyumri, dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, known also as the “Cathedral of the seven wounds of Mary Most Holy”, with reference to its miraculous icon. The Seven Wounds are those of the sufferings Mary endured in her life, from the flight from Egypt to the burial of Jesus.

The Cathedral, originally built in wood, was substituted with a structure in dark local stone by the Kamsarakan princes (1874-86). During the Soviet period, when all the churches of Gyumri were closed, Yot Verk was the only place of Christian worship open to the faithful. The main altar was used by the Apostolic Church, the northern apse housed a statue of the crucified Christ from a Catholic church and was used for Catholic worship, and the southern apse held a Russian icon of St. Nicholas and was accessible to Orthodox faithful of the Patriarchate of Moscow. Damaged during the 1988 earthquake, the cathedral was restored after independence with the contribution of Armenian benefactors who had emigrated to Argentina. The dome is twelve metres high and above the main altar there is an icon of Mary with the infant Jesus by the Armenian painter Vardges Surenyants.

The Pope and the Catholicos entered the cathedral in procession. Inside they were awaited by a number of Armenian Apostolic bishops and a small group of disabled people and Syrian refugees. Once inside the temple, the Pope and the Catholicos prayed in silence before the Marian icon of the seven wounds and then went on to venerate Christ crucified, after which the Pope imparted his blessing to those present.

The two then transferred to the Armenian Catholic cathedral of Gyumri, a distance of 700 metres. Dedicated to the Holy Martyrs, building work began in 200 and was completed by the current Ordinary, Archbishop Minassian, five years later. Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, presided at the rite of consecration, concelebrating with the Armenian Catholic Patriarch His Beatitude Grégoire Pierre XX Ghabroyan, the Ordinary Archbishop Minassian and the apostolic nuncio Archbishop Solczynski, in the presence of a high delegation of the Holy Etchmiadzin, the president of the Republic and the state authorities.

Upon arrival, the Holy Father and His Holiness Karekin II, who entered the temple in procession, were welcomed by Archbishop Minassian, the Armenian Catholic ordinary, and by the parish priest. Inside the cathedral they met with a number of benefactors of the Catholic Armenian Church. The Pope recited a prayer and the Catholicos imparted his blessing.

After the visit they both transferred to the airport of Gyumri to depart for Yerevan, in order to attend the ecumenical meeting and pronounce a prayer for peace.
