

KAREKIN II, SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST,  
BY THE MERCY OF GOD AND THE WILL OF THE NATION  
CHIEF BISHOP AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS,  
SUPREME PATRIARCH OF THE PAN-NATIONAL PREEMINENT ARARATIAN SEE  
THE APOSTOLIC MOTHER CHURCH OF UNIVERSAL HOLY ETCHMIADZIN.

CHRIST-BEQUEATHED GREETINGS OF LOVE AND PONTIFICAL BLESSINGS  
TO THE CATHOLICOSATE OF THE GREAT HOUSE OF CILICIA,  
TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATES  
OF HOLY JERUSALEM AND CONSTANTINOPLE,  
TO ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND DEACONS,  
TO DIOCESAN ASSEMBLIES,  
DIOCESAN AND PAROCHIAL COUNCILS AND OFFICERS,  
AND TO ALL BELOVED FAITHFUL ARMENIAN PEOPLE.

“The path of the righteous is as the dawning light that shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.” (Proverbs 4:18)

The centennial of the Armenian Genocide is before us, and our souls resound with a powerful call for justice and truth that will not be silenced.

Each day of 2015 is a day of devotion for our people, a spiritual journey to the memorials of our martyrs in the homeland and in the diaspora, before which we kneel humbly in prayer for the souls of the innocent, who rest in unmarked graves, having accepted death rather than reject their faith and nation. Indeed, “the path of the righteous is as the dawning light that shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.”

In 1915, and in the years that followed, Ottoman Turkey committed genocide against our people. In Western Armenia—our historic homeland—and in Armenian communities throughout other parts of the Ottoman Empire, one and a half million sons and daughters of our nation were subjected to slaughter, famine, and disease, as they were deported and forced to march to their deaths. A centuries-old inheritance was pillaged. Thousands of monasteries and churches were desecrated and destroyed. National institutions and schools were razed to the ground. Our spiritual and national values were uprooted. Western Armenia—where our people had lived since the time of Noah, where we forged an identity and shaped a distinctive culture—was savagely wrested from its native population. Eastern Armenia—the birthplace of our church, where the Only Begotten descended, and from where our people received the light of St. Gregory—was threatened out of existence.

In this time of darkness—when Armenia was splintered, when its fragments were scattered the world over—it was hard to believe that a new day would come. But our people persevered. By the Lord's grace, our people rose up from the ashes, and they began to build anew. In Eastern Armenia, a country was built out of ruins, a homeland of light and hope—where Armenians once again harnessed our people's creative force in education, in the sciences, and the arts. Today, though we still face hardships, we continue to strengthen our independent homeland, where our people live in freedom,

and look with hope to the future. The Armenian spirit also flourished in far-flung lands, where our exiled people set down roots, built schools and churches, and gave generously of their talents in these new places they now called home.

Glory to you, O Lord, boundless glory. "Like a shield you protect us with your good favor" (Ps. 5:12). By placing our hope in You, O Lord, our people were illuminated and empowered. Your light kindled the ingenuity of our spirit. Your might propelled us to our victories. We created in the face of destruction. We lived in the face of annihilation. It was your will, O Lord our God, that our nation should live and rise again, so that we might seek justice where there has been oppression, concern where there has been indifference, and truth where there has been denial.

We will continue our fight without retreat, working together in unity until justice triumphs over darkness. Our innocent martyrs and the suffering of our people cry out for justice. Our destroyed shrines and the falsification and distortion of our history cry out for justice. Our people believe that the countries, national and civic organizations, and individuals who have recognized the Armenian Genocide will be joined by others who believe that the affirmation of truth will lead to a world free of hostility and violence.

We express our gratitude to all those who had the courage and conviction to recognize and condemn the Armenian Genocide, and also to the countries and individuals who gave a new home to our people. These acts of justice and compassion are glimpses of humanity at its best, and they are lessons we can pass on from one generation to the next, to guide our world toward peace and harmony.

It is a spiritual consolation for us, as the Catholicos of All Armenians, to announce to our people that during the Divine Liturgy on April 23, 2015, our Holy Church will perform a special ceremony canonizing as saints our sons and daughters who became martyrs for their faith and for their homeland. With this encyclical, we pronounce April 24 as the Day of Remembrance of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

My dear Armenian people – a nation martyred and resurrected – live boldly, go forward with confidence, never lose sight of our beloved Mount Ararat, and always keep faith and hope alive in your hearts. For it is to you that our Lord speaks: "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name... Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown" (Rev. 3:8-11).

Let us remain steadfast in our faith, which dispels darkness and brings into view the horizons of hope. We walk with God, and the life of faith is our victory. May the memory of our martyrs guide us as we walk uprightly on the path to justice. In this milestone year, let us draw strength from the firm determination of our people, who trampled death and rose again to rebuild, to renew, and to reassert the spirit of our ancestors. And let this be the lesson we teach our children and our grandchildren, so that they, too, keep our Armenian spirit burning bright.

Before the Holy Altar of the descent of the Only Begotten, we ask God to keep our people everywhere in peace, safety, and prosperity. May the innocent souls of our

martyrs rest in peace, and may love, justice, and truth reign over humankind. May the ways of the righteous shine upon the world until the dawn of a new day brings peace to all.

May our Lord Jesus Christ be with us, now and always. Amen.

With blessings,

Karekin II  
Catholicos of All Armenians