

**THE MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II
SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF
THE HOLY NATIVITY AND THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**
(Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, January 6, 2004)

“Unto you is born this day...a Savior”
(Luke 2:11)

Dearly beloved faithful and devoted people,

On this good morning of the Holy Nativity, resounding in our souls from the Altars of Armenian Churches, is the great heavenly tidings: “Unto you is born this day...a Savior”. Our spiritual life is shaped by this angelic tidings. As Christians we believe that God Who created the world, also saved the world. In the grotto of Bethlehem the Son of God became a child to save man from the prison of sins and to restore his divine image and liberated soul, so that he return from the paths of death toward his Creator – back to the source of life. The love of God towards man was confirmed through the revelation of Jesus; and the manger in Bethlehem became mankind’s fountainhead of blessing, from where God-given, saving grace and hope dawned upon the world.

“Unto you is born this day...a Savior.” This great tidings of salvation is the focal point and the content of the preaching of the Christian Church, which sets aflame the light of faith in the souls of men. The loving and forgiving gaze of God shines within that unblemished light, delineating our road from downfall to ascent, which has been rendered smooth by the Lord our Savior.

The Savior is born to us this day, Lord and Guide of souls, Restorer of life. Born is the Redeeming Savior, reconciliation with God and good will among men, excellent and boundless mystery of love, Who leads mankind on the paths of brotherly love, compassion and forgiveness; and through the passageways of justice and peace.

On this soul-renewing day of the Holy Nativity, together with the ranks of angels, let us praise God in the highest realms, and with our first prayer let us ask that peace be durable throughout the world, and that the social development of nations and states progress and strengthen with the values of humanity which emanate from the knowledge of the truth that all men are children of God.

Dearly beloved faithful, all epochs have their imperatives. In the rapidly changing course of our materialistic and secularizing age, man as an individual – and mankind as a whole – need to recognize the spiritual aspects more than ever. Centuries-old traditions can be altered, values can adopt new meanings, but the truth that the world without God is meaningless is always unchangeable, and that man in reality is alone and hopeless without a living relationship with his Creator. It is through the feeling and the experience of being part of a whole, that the human soul is capable of being sad with the sorrow of others, and of being happy with the joy of others; of loving his friend as his own person,

and of doing good works. The Savior came into the world, with the message of loving one's neighbor. With love for one's neighbor, the sounds of enmity and war will be silenced, terror and violence will cease, and trampled rights and justice will be restored. It is with this love that every human thought and effort will be directed towards the increase of the universal good and the conquest over poverty and need; victory over the contamination of the environment, and triumph over the spreading of vices and the corruption of morals; which also are the realities of our times. In the fullness of time, Christ came into the world and dwelt in men's souls opened through faith. Is it perhaps not the time that the human soul be renewed with faith and become alive with love? Is it perhaps not the time to seek forgiveness, to find forgiveness, to turn back from God-denying ways, acts and practices; so that the whole world be always guarded under the grace of the love, peace and blessing of the philanthropic, loving and merciful God?

Dearly beloved faithful Armenians, through the gift of our Apostolic Holy Church, we have become worthy of the universally shining light of the love of the Savior. We have found the grace of spiritual freedom, which has brought manifold blessings into the life of our people. In whatever political realities we found ourselves, we always remained victorious – victorious through Armenian culture, which is the expression of our Savior-trusting free spirit. Regardless if Armenian statehood was in existence or not, the Armenian Church always remained the free spiritual Motherland of the Armenians, exalted and unconquerable, where love of freedom was nurtured as the God-given wonderful and inviolable precious gift. We believed in the revelation of the Savior, and during the difficult crossroads of history, we found the strength to confront the temptations, to live and to create, and to defend our right to freedom.

Before the sacred mystery of the Theophany, we offer glory to the Savior, that the borders of our Motherland are at peace and free, and that today the spirit of our people throughout all corners of the world is wide awake – awake with the realization of our national aspirations, awake with the vision of the whole of Armenian life, integrated and undivided. Today, with the tidings of the Holy Nativity that glorifies freedom in Armenia and in Artsakh, the bells festively toll on our renovated and newly constructed churches, which are being frequented in greater and greater numbers. Today, the name of Jesus the Savior is becoming more recognized and loved by our children and our youth. With our reawakening faith, our life is being transfigured and our hope for the future is being strengthened – in spite of all difficulties. Dearly beloved Armenian people, indeed with self-sacrificing efforts and valiant deeds of a God-loving free soul, with the unity of the Motherland and the Dispersion, we will construct the new tomorrow of Armenian life, hand in hand; we will open the doors of return to the Motherland; and from the slopes of Ararat, new horizons of hope for the homeland will flutter and gleam.

We give thanks to the Most High, that the Dispersion has been and remains to be the outstretched arms of the Motherland. Even though relocations taken place during recent years have caused new circumstances to develop in Diasporan communities, our children gathering together around the Armenian Church are preserving and progressing Armenian life, continuing national traditions, and with the same dedication, they are extending a hand to the Motherland, through the activity of cultural organizations and

educational institutions. Through the opportunities accorded to us by the reality of our free country, today we already witness that with a progressive Motherland, the Armenian Dispersion becomes strong and energetic; and through a unified and organized Diaspora, the Motherland becomes powerful.

We are accountable for our period of time, and it is through our deeds that this era will be recorded as one of restoration – the restoration of the free life, the restoration of our free soul and free thought, the restoration of our Christian character. It is through our new accomplishments and victories, that the time of the rebuilding of our Homeland will proceed – a time for the revival of our national life in our centers of Dispersion, a time for the advancement of our culture and the blossoming of science and education. Christ is our way, Christ is our strength and refuge. Born to us this day is the Savior; born to us is hope and love. This is our belief. This is the truth – constant and eternal.

With the great tidings of the Holy Nativity of the Savior, we bring our Pontifical Blessings to all our beloved faithful in Armenia, in Artsakh and dispersed throughout the world, praying and asking God that we keep unblemished the spirit of unanimity and love between the Motherland and the Diaspora, and the loyalty to our Apostolic Holy Church and the Motherland.

From the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, we convey our greetings and best wishes of fraternal love to the graceful incumbents of the hierarchal sees of our Apostolic Holy Church: His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia; His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem; His Beatitude Archbishop Mesrob Moutafian, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople; and our love and blessing to the entire oath-abiding and dedicated clerical ranks of our Church.

We greet the presence here today of the state leaders of Armenia, headed by Mr. Robert Kocharian, the President of the Republic of Armenia; and we extend our greetings to the President of the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh, Mr. Arkady Ghukasian, and the representative authorities of the Republic. We ask for the abundant blessings of the Savior upon their lives and their nation-building endeavors.

In the love of Christ, we greet the leaders and the representatives of the Diplomatic Missions registered in Armenia, wishing for them the constant solidarity of the Lord in their mission, which is a mission of love, called upon to strengthen the friendship and the cooperation in the life of peoples.

Before the Holy Altar of Descent, in the Bethlehem of the Armenian soul, we raise our prayers to heaven, asking that the light and the graces of the Holy Nativity descend into the souls of men and upon the whole world. We also ask for the most beneficent care and the calming presence of God in those regions where today there is war, destruction, pain and anguish. We wish life-giving hope and endurance to the suffering peoples of those countries, whose difficulties are shared by the children of our nation. May hope, goodness and joy accompany all of our people dispersed throughout the world. May our

thoughts and intentions take wings and may our deeds take shape from the pure source of our faith – the Revelation of the Savior; for the Glory of God, and for the love of the Motherland and our Apostolic Holy Church.

Unto us is born this day...a Savior. This is our faith. This is the truth – constant and eternal. Let us greet each other with the tiding of the Holy Nativity.

“Christ is Born and Revealed!
Great tidings to you and to us.”

With Blessings,

KAREKIN II
CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS