



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ARMENIAN SISTERS OF
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

Friday, 27 June 1997

Reverend Mother Superior,

Dear Sisters of the Congregation of the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception,

1. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of your congregation's foundation by Catholicos Antoine Pierre IX Hassoun and Mother Srpuhi Hagiantonian, I am pleased to welcome you to the house of the Successor of Peter, where the Bishops of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate, gathered in Rome for their Synod, met a few days ago. As I receive you, my thoughts reach out to the Armenian people who were sorely tried during this century; I also recall the recent visits of Patriarch Karekin I and Patriarch Aram I, to whom I wholeheartedly renew my fraternal sentiments on this occasion.

I would like to thank the Lord for your founders' fidelity to the Holy See and for their devotion to the cause of Church unity; in the perspective dear to Nerses IV Šnorhali and Gregory the Illuminator, the Armenian Christian community strives to make ecclesial communion the primary task of pastors and faithful. The religious who preceded you gave their lives to remain faithful to Christ and to his Church, as well as to their consecration; may the blood of the Armenian martyrs be a Gospel seed, so that the Christian unity for which Jesus prayed to the Father may be fully achieved!

2. From the beginning, as successors of Hripsimè and companions, the religious of your institute have been eager to bear witness to Christ through prayer, an ascetic life, by spreading God's word and by charitable assistance to poor families; during the periods in recent history when the Armenians suffered most, they tirelessly devoted themselves to bringing relief to their brothers and sisters, with an intense love.

Strengthened by your spiritual heritage in the heart of the Armenian Christian community which is preparing to celebrate its 17th centenary, may you preserve your specific vocation. Through contemplation you contribute to raising the world to God and you mysteriously contribute to the sanctification of the whole people. Through meditating on the Gospel and praying to the Lord with the help of the psalms, you receive the graces necessary for your missions.

Furthermore, I urge you to continue your tasks as teachers in the formation of youth, in Armenia and in the countries where you are established, so as to open young people to human, civil and Christian values, to foster the advancement of woman, and relations between Christians of different denominations and with non-Christians.

3. Continue your original work “in honour of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary” today as well. To do this, I invite you always to place your trust in the Mother of the Saviour and each day to take her as a model of the love of God and neighbour; in fact, she knew how to accept the angel’s word, to make herself available to the divine call and to put herself at the service of her cousin, Elizabeth.

At the end of our meeting, I entrust you to the Immaculate Virgin and I ask her to help you in your religious life and in your apostolate. I wholeheartedly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, as well as to your Sisters and all who benefit from your pastoral zeal.

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