



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO HIS HOLINESS ARAM I,
CATHOLICOS OF THE CILICIA OF THE ARMENIANS**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 5 June 2014*

*Your Holiness,
Dear Brothers in Christ,*

It is a particular pleasure for me to extend to Your Holiness, and to the distinguished members of your delegation, a cordial greeting in the Lord Jesus. It is a greeting which I also offer to the bishops, the clergy and all the faithful of the Catholicosate of Cilicia. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Rom 1:7*).

One month ago, I had the pleasure of receiving His Holiness Catholicos Karekin II. Today I have the joy of welcoming Your Holiness, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia. Together with you, I give thanks to the Lord for the continued growth of fraternal relations between us. I consider it a true gift from God that we can share this moment of encounter and common prayer.

Your Holiness's commitment to the cause of Christian unity is known to all. You have been especially active in the World Council of Churches and you continue to be most supportive of the Middle East Council of Churches, which plays such an important role in assisting the Christian communities of that region as they face numerous difficulties. Nor can I fail to mention the significant contribution which Your Holiness and the representatives of the Catholicosate of Cilicia have made to the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. I am convinced that on our journey towards full communion we share the same hopes and a similar sense of responsibility as we strive to be faithful to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your Holiness represents a part of the Christian world that is irrevocably marked by a history of trials and sufferings courageously accepted for the love of God. The Armenian Apostolic Church has had to become a pilgrim people; it has experienced in a singular way what it means to journey towards the Kingdom of God. The history of emigration, persecutions and the martyrdom experienced by so many of the faithful has inflicted deep wounds on the hearts of all Armenians. We must see and venerate these as wounds inflicted on the very body of Christ, and for this very reason a cause for unfailing hope and trust in the provident mercy of the Father.

Trust and hope. How much these are needed! They are needed by our Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East, especially those living in areas racked by conflict and violence. But we too need them, as Christians who are spared such sufferings yet so often risk losing our way in the desert of indifference and forgetfulness of God, or living in conflict with our brothers and sisters, or succumbing in our interior struggle against sin. As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to learn humbly to bear one another's burdens and to help each other to be better Christians, better followers of Jesus. So let us advance together in charity, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, offering himself to God as a pleasing sacrifice (cf. *Heb* 5:1-2).

In these days before Pentecost, we prepare to relive in mystery the miracle of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the nascent Church. In faith, let us invoke the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, that he may renew the face of the earth, be a source of healing for our wounded world, and reconcile the hearts of all men and women with God the Creator.

May he, the Paraclete, inspire our journey towards unity. May he teach us to strengthen the fraternal bonds which even now unite us in the one baptism and in the one faith. Upon all of us I invoke the protection of Mary, the All-Holy Mother of God, who was present in the Upper Room with the Apostles, that she may be for us the Mother of Unity. Amen.