



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FUNERAL FOR HIS BEATITUDE NERSÈS BÉDROS XIX
TARMOUNI
PATRIARCH OF CILICIA FOR ARMENIANS**

*To His Excellency Bishop Grégoire Ghabroyan
Administrator of the Patriarchal Church of Cilicia for Armenians*

It is with profound sadness that I learned the news of the return to the House of the Father of our beloved brother in Christ, His Beatitude Nersès Bédros XIX Tarmouni, Patriarch of Cilicia for Armenians. I carry in my heart the memory of my meeting with him, accompanied by the Bishops of the Synod and the faithful of this Patriarchal Church, on the occasion of the commemoration of the victims of Metz Yegern and of the proclamation of St Gregory of Narek as Doctor of the Universal Church. It is as if these events which took place alongside the relics of the Apostle St Peter fulfilled the long and faithful journey of your *Caput et Pater*, making it possible to highlight some of the characteristic aspects of his person.

He was, first of all, profoundly rooted in the Rock that is Christ. He held that the most precious treasure that a bishop is called to administer is the faith which stems from apostolic preaching. His Beatitude dedicated himself generously for its diffusion, in particular by fostering the permanent formation of the clergy so that, even in difficult contexts, God's ministers would renew their adherence to Christ, humanity's only hope and consolation.

He worked to ensure the just commemoration of the sufferings endured by the Armenian people throughout their history should become an act of giving thanks to God, considering the example of martyrs and of witnesses, and at the same time obtain from Him the comfort of consolation and reconciliation, which alone can heal the deepest wounds of souls and of peoples.

Patriarch Nersès was at last able to rejoice with all the Armenian people at the elevation of St Gregory of Narek to the luminous title of Doctor of the Church. His Beatitude often wished that the

spiritual charisma of this great Saint should become an example for pastors and for the faithful, certain that in St Gregory of Narek each one could come to know the wonders that the Lord is capable of accomplishing in a heart that opens to Him, in the simplicity and daily abasement, thereby sharing in the turmoil of humanity through a constant intercession.

Invited to receive this threefold legacy that Patriarch Nersès has left us, let us implore the Holy Spirit to continue to renew the face of the Armenian Catholic Church, thanks to the commitment of the pastors and the faithful, and let us also entrust to the Father of all Mercies the weariness related to the limitations and fragilities of our condition as pilgrims on the way to the eternal Homeland.

Upon the family of His Beatitude and upon all those taking part in his funeral rites, I impart my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing, invoking the protection of the Mother of God and, presenting to the Lord the soul of our brother Nersès Bédros with the words of St Gregory of Narek:

“With all our souls we pray and beseech you with tearful cries, O glorious Creator,

incorruptible and uncreated, timeless Spirit of compassion.

You are the intercessor of our silent sighs to your merciful Father.

You who keep the saints, purify the sinners and build the temple, of the living and life-giving will of your Father in the highest”.

From the Vatican, 27 June 2015

Francis