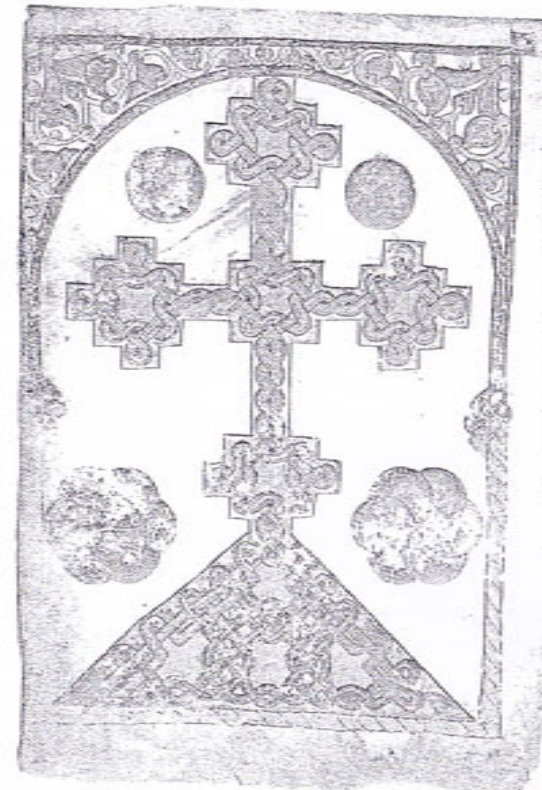


SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2010, 3 p.m.
Armenian Orthodox Cathedral of St James, Jerusalem

Fourth
**EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER OF ALL CHURCHES FOR
RICONCILIATION, UNITY AND PEACE**
BEGINNING IN AND PROCEEDING
FROM JERUSALEM

Presided over by H.G. Archbishop Nourhan Manougian



prayed with the

**Saturday Vesper of the Feast
of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**
According to the rite of the Armenian Orthodox Church

**WELCOME MESSAGE OF ARCHBISHOP NOURHAN MANOUGIAN,
GRAND SACRISTAIN OF THE ARMENIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE, JERUSALEM**

On this auspicious occasion of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, we greet the Christian faithful in the four corners of the world with brotherly love from the Cathedral of Saints James in this Holy Land.

The Armenian Apostolic Church in its liturgical calendar has four feasts dedicated to the Holy Cross, of which the feast of the Exaltation remains to be the major one and it's also one of the five major feasts of the Armenian Church.

The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is doubly significant for the Armenian Church, because Armenian military forces joined the Byzantine Emperor Heracles, who was himself of Armenian origin, in the expedition to retrieve the Cross from Persia. After the liberation of the Holy Cross, Armenian and Byzantine armies, on their way to Jerusalem, passed through Armenia triumphantly raising the Holy Cross to the solace of the Armenian faithful. And since this historic event The cross of our Lord has occupied a special place in the life of the Armenian Church. For the next two days, according to the Julian calendar, the Armenian Church of Jerusalem will mark and celebrate with great pomp this unique event .

We invite the faithful all over the world to join us today in glorifying our resurrected Lord and his all-conquering Holy Cross.

†

The Armenian's turbulent history of foreign domination drew them to contemplate with particular devotion the Mystery of the Cross, by which Christ transformed suffering and death into joy and life.

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, which vigil is celebrated through this Vesper service, is in fact one of the main five Feasts of the Armenian Orthodox Church, among Christmas, Easter, the Transfiguration and the Assumption of Our Lady, the Virgin Mary. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is characterized, during the Sunday celebration, by a solemn blessing of the four corners of the world – given with the relic of the Holy Cross – as a symbol of the Cross being the source of every blessing for mankind.

The blessing of the four corners of the world is repeated in other liturgical time in the Armenian Church: in the afternoon of the Easter Sunday, and every Sunday following Easter, until Pentecost.

The services in the Armenian Church are dedicated to the different persons of the Holy Trinity, or sometimes, to the Holy Trinity itself. The Vesper Service is normally dedicated to the Son of God.

1. Preparation of clergy to the Vesper service

Armenian Clergy enters the Church, and before joining the Sacristy to dress up the liturgical garments, they stop to kiss the altar adjacent to the Chapel of St James the Major, the Apostle.

According to the tradition, St James the Apostle was beheaded there. His body was later transported to St James of Compostella, whereas his head is conserved in the Armenian Cathedral of St James. St James the Minor, first bishop of Jerusalem, which the Scriptures refer to as the brother of the Lord, is buried under the main altar of St James' Cathedral. The Cathedral is therefore sometimes called the cathedral of the (two) St James. The Cathedral's foundation date back to the fifth century, but the present dimensions are from the Crusader period.

While the bells ring, the Armenian clergy slowly take their fixed positions on the right or left side of the Church.

The wooden bell is an Armenian Jerusalem tradition dating back to the time of Arab domination, when ringing of the ordinary bells was prohibited. The tradition of ringing wooden bells remained after the prohibition was lifted.

2. Presentation of the Feast of the day

From the balcony above the entrance to the Sacristy, at the left hand of the Church, a clergy member presents the Feast of the day (Jerusalem tradition in the Armenian Church).

The Armenian Church in Jerusalem celebrates four Feasts of the Holy Cross:

- 1) Invention of the Holy Cross by St Elena (September)
Commemorates St Elena finding the Holy Cross in a deposit of crosses behind Mount Golgotha (which, according to the tradition, was recognized among others by the fact that an ill person became sane after being deposited on that cross). The anniversary of the invention of the Cross became the anniversary of the Consolation of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.*
- 2) Holy Cross of Varak (October) (Only Armenian Feast)
In the 7th century, two Armenian monks, in the Region of lake Varak in Armenia, saw an apparition of the Holy Cross in the sky. A Church was later built on the place where the apparition took place.*
- 3) Apparition of the Cross (Specific Jerusalem Feast celebrated on the 5th Sunday after Easter. The event took place on May 7, 35)
During the 4th century, under Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem and the byzantine Emperor Constant, the Cross appeared in the Jerusalem sky for many hours; it is said to have been shining more than the sun. As a consequence, 3000 pagans*

converted and were baptized where the altar of St Cyril is now located in the Sacristy of St James's Cathedral. The original baptismal is buried under the altar of St Cyril.

4) **Exaltation of the Cross** (this days' vigil celebration)

Commemorates the return to Jerusalem of the Holy Cross after it was taken to Persia by the Persians in 614, and re-conquered by the Byzantine Emperor (of Armenian origins) Heraklios in 629. An Armenian legion participated to the military expedition, and the holy Cross, on her way back to Jerusalem, passed through Armenia. Testimonies are given also about how the true Cross was put back on Calvary after coming back to Jerusalem, her place before it was taken to Persia. It is said that Emperor Heraklios bowed and removed his crown from his head in front of the Holy Cross.

3. **Opening of the Vesper**

As it is the case in important Feasts, the Clergy members kiss the hand of the Celebrant before going back to their places on both sides of the Church.

Blessed be the our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

4. **The Lords' Prayer**

All services always start with the Lord's Prayer

Incensing while the Lord's prayer is said, after incense has been blessed by the Celebrant.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

5. **Introit - Psalm 55: 16, 18**

I have called upon God and he hath heard me in the evening, in the morning and at noonday.

The Deacon:

I waited upon my God and I set my eyes upon the Saviour, who delivereth his servants and saveth them.

The Priest:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

The Deacon:

Now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Again in peace let us beseech the Lord: Receive, save and have mercy.

The Priest:

Blessing and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Peace unto all.

6. **Introit - Psalm 86**

The Clerks, in antiphon:

Psalm 86

Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear me; for I am poor and needy.

Keep my soul holy, O Lord; and save thy servant, O my God, for I have put my trust in thee.

Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for unto thee have I cried all day; gladden the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul.

For thou, O Lord, art kind and righteous; and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee.

Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayers; and attend to the voice of my supplications.

In the day of my trouble I have called upon thee; and thou hast heard me.

There is none like unto thee among the gods, O Lord; and there is not one that doeth works like thine.

All nations whom thou hast made shall come and bow down before thee; and they shall glorify thy name for ever.

Thou art great, O Lord, and doest wondrous things; and thou alone art God.

Lead me in thy way and I will walk in thy truth; and my heart shall rejoice in the fear of thy name.

I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for ever.

Thy mercy hath been great toward me, O Lord; and thou hast delivered my soul from the innermost hell.

O God, the lawless have risen against me and the assemblies of the violent have sought after my soul; and have not set thee as God before them.

But thou, O Lord my God, art compassionate and merciful;

long-suffering, plenteous in mercy and truthful, attend unto me and have mercy upon me.

Give strength unto thy servant, save the son of thine handmaid; and show me a good sign.

Let them who hate me see it and be put to shame; for thou, O Lord, hast helped me and comforted me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

Now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

The Priest:

Glory to thee, O God, glory to thee: for all things, O Lord, glory to thee.

The Deacon:

Again in peace let us beseech the Lord. Receive, save and have mercy.

The Priest:

Blessing and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.
Peace unto all.

7. Introit - Psalm 140

The Clerks, in antiphon:

Psalm 140

Rescue me, O Lord, from the evil man; deliver me from the man of iniquity.

They devised evil things in their hearts; all day long they prepared for war.

They sharpened their tongues like that of a serpent; and the poison of vipers is under their lips.

8. Introit - Psalm 141

Psalm 141

O Lord, I have cried unto thee, therefore hear thou me; consider the voice of my prayers when I cry unto thee.

Let my prayers be aright before thee as incense, O Lord; and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.

Set a watch, O Lord, for my mouth and a strong door for my lips; lest mine heart go astray with words of evil.

Lest I make excuses for sin with men that work iniquity; let me not be an associate of them that they have chosen.

Let the righteous man teach in mercy and rebuke me; let not the oil of the ungodly anoint my head nor my prayers be according to his desires.

Their judges are imprisoned by the side of the rock; let them hear my words and they will be kind.

As the thickness of the dust that is spread upon the earth; so shall their bones be scattered near to the graves.

Mine eyes are toward thee, O Lord, the Lord; in thee is my trust, O Lord, take not out my breath from me.

Keep me from the snare which hath been laid for me; from the traps of him that works iniquity.

Let the sinners fall into his nets; I am alone until I escape.

9. Introit - Psalm 142

Psalm 142

I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplications.

I will spread before the Lord my prayers; and I will tell my troubles before him.

When my spirit was faint, thou, O Lord, knewest my way; in the path wherein I walked a snare was secretly laid for me.

I looked to the right and I saw and there was none that would know me; I lost my way of escape and none was found that would care for my soul.

I cried unto thee, O Lord, and I said: Thou art my hope and my portion in the land of the living.

Give heed, O Lord, to my prayers, for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors for they have become stronger than I.

O Lord, bring my soul out of prison; I give thanks unto thy name.

And the righteous shall wait for thee; until thou wilt reward them.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

Now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

10. Hymn "Shining Light"

Solo:

O gladdening light of the holy immortal glory of the heavenly Father of the holy giver of life, Jesus Christ.

Sung by the whole choir on both sides of the choir:

We, who have come at the setting of the sun, have seen the light of the evening. We praise the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit of God. And we all say: Amen.

Make us worthy at all times to praise with the voice of song the glorious name of the all-holy Trinity that giveth life, wherefor also the world doth glorify thee.

11. Ascription and Biddings for light and purification

The Deacon:

BIDDING

Having arrived at this hour of the evening, we all lift up our hands and glorify thee, O Lord our God, who hast granted unto us to pass the day in peace and to arrive at this hour of the evening.

Make us worthy, O Lord, with pure heart and with angelic song to offer thanksgiving unto thee, the almighty Lord God.

Save us and mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord our God, according to thy great mercy. Let us all say with one accord:

The Priest:

Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy; Lord have mercy.

ASCRPTION

Having arrived at this hour of the evening we all unceasingly glorify the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

12. Messedi - for Days of the Cross - and Responsory

Psalm 60:4,5

Thou hast given a sign to them that fear thee; that they may be saved from the face of the bow.

That thy beloved be delivered; save us with thy right hand and hear us.

Responsory to be said after the Messedi:

Psalm 141:2

Let my prayers be aright; before thee as incense, O Lord;
And the lifting up of my hands; as an evening sacrifice.

13. Litany of Peace

The Deacon, with the Clerks making the responses:

LITANY OF PEACE

Let us all say with one accord: Lord, have mercy.

—Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world and for the stability of the holy Church, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For all holy and orthodox bishops, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For the life of our Catholicos-Patriarch, lord (N.N.) and for the salvation of his soul, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For doctors, priests, deacons, clerics and for the whole league of the children of the Church, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For the President and Government and the people .

_____, for all pious public servants and wise statesmen, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For the Armenian nation and for all the public servants of the Armenian people, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For our fathers and brethren that are in captivity and in evil servitude, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For all travellers on land, at sea and in the air, that they may arrive in peace at their several good destinations, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For the sick and for all that are afflicted and for their speedy recovery, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For seasonable weather, gentle rains and abundance of fruits, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

For pilgrims and for them that have made vows and for them that bring fruits for the holy Church of God, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

And for them that have been delivered into the hands of the lawless for the sake of the name of Christ, let us beseech the Lord.

—Deliver, Lord, and have mercy.

For the souls of them that are at rest and have fallen asleep in Christ in the true and right faith, let us beseech the Lord.

—Be mindful, Lord, and have mercy.

That the Lord God may be pleased to deliver us from enemies visible and invisible, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

14. Ascription - invocation of Saints, guardian angel, Holy Cross

The Priest:

We hold as intercessors Saint Mary, the Mother-of-God, the glorified, blessed, ever-holy Virgin, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Stephen the Protomartyr, the holy apostles and the prophets, the valiant and triumphant holy martyrs, and the great confessor of Christ, our revered patriarch, Saint Gregory the Enlightener of the land of Armenia.

The Deacon, with the Clerks making the responses:

Remember also all the saints and together with them, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

That we may pass the evening that is near and the night before us in peace and in faith, let us ask of the Lord.

—Grant, O Lord.

The angel of peace to guard our souls, let us ask of the Lord.

—Grant, O Lord.

The forgiveness and remission of our transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

—Grant, O Lord.

The great and mighty power of the holy Cross to help our souls, let us ask of the Lord.

—Grant, O Lord.

And again with one accord by our true and holy faith, let us beseech the Lord.

—Lord, have mercy.

Let us commit ourselves and one another unto the Lord God almighty.

—To thee, O Lord, we commit ourselves.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord our God, according to thy great mercy. Let us all say with one accord:

—Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

15. Collect

The Priest:

Hear our voice, O Lord our God, receive our supplications, the lifting up of our hands and the words of our prayers. Sanctify this our offering of the evening, that we may prepare it for thy pleasure with a sweet smell of fragrance.

Increase in us, O Lord almighty, faith, hope and charity and all deeds of virtue, so that we may always devoutly obey thine ordinances by day and by night according to thy beneficent will, and that we may be worthy to beseech thee for the salvation of our souls and for our spiritual life, O Lord, and to find grace and mercy from thee and giving thanks to glorify the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Peace unto all.

—And with thy spirit.

Let us bow down to God.

—Before thee, O Lord.

Bowing down to thee, O Lord our God, we give thanks to thee, for thou hast granted us to pass the length of this day in peace. Grant us, O Lord, we beseech thee, to pass this evening and the night before us without sin and without stumbling, and to stand firm and abide steadfastly in faith, in hope and in charity and in the observance of thy commandments. Give peace, we pray thee, to the whole world and stability to thine holy Church and salvation to our souls. So that receiving from thee all that we ask, we may always send up on high hymns of glory due to the majesty of thine all-powerful dominion, O Christ our God, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

16. Trisagion (thrice) for Days of the Cross

The Clerks shall sing thrice:

THE TRISAGION,

For Days of the Cross, of the Church,
of Saints and of Fasting

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal,
who wast crucified for us,
have mercy on us.

17. Ascription - intercession of Holy Virgin Mary

Glorified and blessed ever holy Virgin, Bearer-of-God Mary,
Mother of Christ, offer our supplications to thy Son and our God,

The Priest:

That he may please to deliver us from temptation and from all
our perils.

The Deacon:

And again in peace let us beseech the Lord, that the voice of
our supplications be heard by the Lord God through the interces-
sion of the holy Mother-of-God and that the mercy and compassion
of the Lord God may descend upon us.

Almighty Lord our God, save and have mercy.

The Priest:

Blessing and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the
Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Peace unto all.

* * *

18. Start of Adoration of the Holy Cross

The Celebrant shall to the Chapel of St James the major in procession for the adoration of the relic of the
Holy Cross.

19. Levavi - Psalm 121

The Clerks, in antiphon:

LEVAVI

Psalm 121

I lifted up mine eyes to the mountains; from where my help
shall come.

My help shall come from the Lord; who made heaven and earth.

Do not let thy foot be shaken; and he who keeps thee will
not slumber.

He that keepeth Israel; doth not slumber nor sleep.

20. The Levavi chant - Hamparzi Hymn

Sung in the middle of the Church.

Sharakan

3

SURB KHACHN OGNAKAN

25 *Divulogy*

6) I ayo-san-gam ga-lt-yan Ast-va—
 toed-vaya zab khach ye-re-vi yev lo-sa-vo at zi na
 20
 e buys ha-va-ta-t-se-—-toe-—-—

O Christ God, you spread your arms on the Cross, as a sign of Victory, you gave us, save us through that.
 You saved the World with your crucifixion on the Cross and you gave us this Cross as a power to protect us.
 When mankind sinned by eating and tasting the sinfull fruit in the Garden of Eden, with your life giving Cross, you revived us, you saved us with the wooden tree of your cross.
 You invited the entire mankind to Eternity, you Christ, giver of Eternity.

The Deacon:

BIDDING AFTER THE LEVAVI CHANT

For the peace of the whole world and the stability of the holy Church, let us beseech the Lord. Let us all say with one accord:

The Clerks or the Priest:

Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

21. Hymn - Power of the Holy Cross

Zorutyun Surb Khachi

Voice

1) Zo-nu-yan Surb kha-chi qo Qris i-o-s vor lang-ne-ber
 ri ga-lu-tyun ash-khar-—-i sa ga-les-—-oe er
 mez la-—-me-ayro por-dzu-te-ne 2) Qo-ni i sma bar-dara
 tar Ast-—-tats yev i sma le-—-gher ez-poi-va-
 kan Surb zar-—-yund sa ga-ber-—-oe er-mez la-—-me-

13 bis

ayro por-dzu-te-ne 3) Yev ez-—-qer meyas zo-—-qam ez-ga-les-ad
 o-sha-—-me kha-chi qo tar-—-tar ash-khar-—-hi
 sa ga-ber-—-oe er mez la-—-me-ayro por-dzu-te-ne

The power of the Holy Cross which you erected for the salvation of the whole world will save us from all temptation, because upon this Cross was raised God and on it he shed his Blood, therefore this Cross will save us.

And on Your second coming, Your Sign (the Cross) will be seen and illuminate, because it is the hope of the faithfull.

The light of Your faith was given to us, Sign which gives happiness to our heart.

22. Reading from the Gospel of St John 19: 17-22

The Gospel is usually known by heart by the Clergy.

The Crucifixion

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: [sc JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. ²¹The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

²²Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

23. Prayer

Let us beseech to the Life Giver, Savior our Christ, who willingly was crucified, He saved creatures with shedding His Blood for the forgiveness that we were hoping for. Almighty God, save us and have mercy.

Read by Celebrant:

Bowing in front of You, all merciful and beneficial God, we beseech with all our hearts and ask You forgiveness for our sins, as You promised to all Your servants: Whatever you ask with Faith to the Father in the name of the Son will be given to you.

Therefore, grant to us Your mercy, to all your faithfull, and fulfill their requests, because we trust You with Your abundant mercy to comfort us, in our lives, and guide us to your unspeakable kingdom, to glorify and honor Your Holy Trinity.

24. Yamamur

Read by a seminarian:

Before we bow down in front of Your honorable Cross by kneeling and asking you forgiveness for our sins, because by virtue of Your cross, you lifted the condemnation of the world.

An now, through Your heavenly Sign, grant heavenly peacefulness to the world.

25. Hymn "By the all Victorious Sign"

The Celebrant carries the Cross in procession towards the main altar while the choir sings:

By the sign of your all-conquering Cross, loving Christ, protect us against the invisible enemy.
For you alone are the king of glory, blessed forever.

On this Cross you spread out your undefiled arms, and you poured out your blood for the salvation of the universe. For you alone are the king of glory, blessed forever.

When, at your second coming, this holy Sign is revealed, make us, your servants, worthy of the second renewal. For you alone are the king of glory, blessed forever.

May your Cross be our refuge with its blazing brilliance. That which is named the tree of life destroyed the enemy and dissolved our death sentence, for the salvation of the universe.

Elevating it, heaven exults and the earth rejoices at the revelation of the universal form of the four arms of the holy Cross, which illuminated the world with rays like the sun.

Jerusalem exulted. The faithful rejoiced, marvelously adorned, for they saw the triumphant sign.
All creation shone by its light.

You shined today the light of your unspeakable divinity upon the Cross,

On the mount of Varak.

Blessed is the Lord God of our Fathers!

You made known today the appearance of your awe-inspiring second coming,

By the sign of your Cross, beaming it on earth.

Blessed is the Lord God of our Fathers!

You gave a sign to those in fear, and a weapon against their enemy.

With it, protect those who believe in your holy name.

Blessed is the Lord God of our Fathers!

He adorned today the sign of the Cross

With a heavenly light brighter than the sun.

Bless the Lord and exalt him forever!

He revealed today the redemptive Sign to the angels,

By descending to the mount of Varak.

Blessed is the Lord God of our Fathers!

Come all you saved by the life-giving Cross,
Bowing down to Christ our Savior upon it.
Blessed is the Lord God of our Fathers!

26. Reading from the Gospel of Matthew, 24:27-35

²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹"Immediately after the distress of those days

"the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."³⁰

³⁰"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³²"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it³⁴ is near, right at the door. ³⁴I tell you the truth, this generation³⁵ will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

27. Biddings of the Holy Cross

For Days of the Cross and of the Church

The Deacon:

BIDDING

By the holy Cross let us beseech the Lord, that he may thereby deliver us from sins and may save us by the grace of his mercy.

Almighty Lord, our God, save and have mercy.

28. Collective dismissal

The Priest:

COLLECT OF DISMISSAL

Guard us, O Christ our God, under the shadow of thine holy and precious Cross in peace. Deliver us from the enemy visible and invisible. Make us worthy to give thanks to thee and to glorify thee with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

For All Days

Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

29. The Lords' Prayer

And all shall say:

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

The Priest:

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

30. Final blessing with the relic of the Holy Cross

Be ye blessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Depart in peace and the Lord be with you all. Amen.

"Far be it for me to glory," writes St. Paul, "Except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Galatians 6:14). Like all Christians, Armenians recognize the cross to be the consummate symbol of Jesus' death and resurrection, and through them, of God's abiding presence in our lives.

Historical sources tell us that the service of Procession and Veneration of the Holy Cross originated in Jerusalem in connection with festivities surrounding the dedication of a church built there by Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century. The so-called Martyrium was a basilica built on Mount Golgotha as a shrine for the most precious relic in Christendom: the wooden cross on which Jesus was condemned to capital punishment. For this reason Armenian pilgrims to the holy land referred to this basilica as simply "The Cross" (*Khach*). It stood right next to the holy Sepulcher, the round church built over Christ's tomb, which Armenians to this day refer to as "Holy Resurrection" (*Sourp Haroutjow*), and where, to this day, Armenian monks from the Armenian Patriarchate of Saints James celebrate the holy Badarak every morning before sunrise.

These churches were built to memorialize the most important events of the Christian faith. Constantine chose to consecrate and dedicate the Martyrium on the anniversary of the discovery of Jesus' cross by the Emperor's mother, Queen St. Helena. The anniversary of the discovery of the cross, coinciding now with the anniversary of the consecration of the great Church of the Cross, became the focus for a jubilant eight-day celebration in early Jerusalem, consisting of church services in all of the shrines of the Holy City.

Most anticipated of all was the exposition of Christ's cross, with which the bishop blessed the faithful in the Martyrium on the second day of the celebration. So poignant was this ritual that in time the day after the Anniversary of the Church of the Holy Cross became known as the Feast of the Exaltation (or Elevation) of the Holy Cross. The Armenian Church celebrates these two feasts, the Feast of the Dedication of the Holy Cross (*Naregulek Surp Khachen*) and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (*Khachevrats*) on the Saturday and Sunday nearest September 14.

In the evening of the Exaltation, the priest, deacons, choir and altar servers form a solemn procession (*Anteslam*). Adorned on a tray with fragrant basil, the cross is carried around the church. At each of the four compass points the procession pauses for a Gospel reading. The celebrant repeats the refrain, "Lord have mercy" forty times. He then elevates the relic of the holy cross and offers a blessing for that part of the world and all that it symbolizes: in the East, the Armenian Catholicate and holy See of Etchmiadzin with all the clergy of the Armenian Church; in the West, the world's principalities, governments and peoples; in the South, the harvest; and in the North, all churches and monaster-

of a cross, the choir sings, "Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, who were crucified for us, have mercy on us." The meaning of the ritual could not be more clear: through the holy cross salvation has come into the whole world.

Following the procession, the veneration of the cross takes place. The cross is placed on a table in the chancel, the clergy standing in front of it. The choir sings the ancient hymn, *Khacher ko Kreesdos yergeerbakamnk* (We Bow Down Before Your Holy Cross). Three times the clergy and choir repeat the Hymn while the priest censes the holy cross. Then, as the hymn *Park soorp Winchen* (Glory to the Holy Cross) is sung, the clergy, followed by the people, approach the holy cross and kiss it. By venerating the cross, we express our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross for our sins and destroyed the permanence of death for us by rising to new life. The accompanying hymns proclaim the same mystery: "Christ our God came, and through his Cross, he has given great gifts of goodness to the world." This is the Gospel message in miniature.

The hymns for these services clearly derive from the old hymns sung in Jerusalem for the anniversary of the dedication of the Martyrium. The second part of *Khacher ko Kreesdos*, actually a separate hymn, includes this refrain:

Glory to (the) Holy Cross.
Glory to Holy Sion.
Glory to (the) Holy Resurrection.

"Holy Cross," "Holy Sion" and "Holy Resurrection" are nothing else but the three most important churches in early Jerusalem. The Church known as "Sion" was built over the "Upper Room," where Jesus shared his Last Supper with his disciples, the same place where, later, the Holy Spirit descended upon them on Pentecost. The hymn recalls a time when the Veneration of the Holy Cross was still closely connected with the dedication of the sacred shrines in Jerusalem.

The splendor and beauty of the Procession and Veneration services on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross are testimony to the centrality of this symbol in Armenian Christianity. Throughout their tumultuous history, the Armenians cherished the holy cross as testimony to the great mystery of the Christian faith. When we participate in these services each year, we recall that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39).