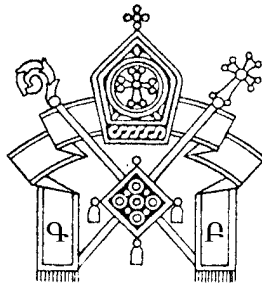


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SUPREME PATRIARCH
CATHOLICOS
OF ALL ARMENIANS
MOTHER SEE OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN

A LETTER OF PONTIFICAL BLESSING & APPRECIATION

TO THE DIVINELY-FAVORED DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA
IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY of the establishment of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, we send our Pontifical blessings from the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, to congratulate your Primate, the Very Reverend Father Mesrop Parsamyan; the Reverend Clergy; the esteemed members of your Diocesan and Parish Councils; and all our faithful children of the Eastern Diocese.

It was in the year 1898 that the Armenian Church's Diocese of America began its history. This was a time that also saw the massacre of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey; the destruction of age-old monasteries and churches on our native soil; and the depopulation of Armenians from their ancestral lands. So it was an act of remarkable foresight when Catholicos Mkrtych Khrimian – "*Khrimian Hayrig*," of blessed memory – had a vision that a bright, enduring future awaited the Armenian people on the soil of the United States, where so many faithful Armenians had lately taken refuge. And under that vision he established the Armenian Diocese of North America, to advance the ministry of our Holy Church in the New World.

Today, we can reflect with gratitude on how the establishment of this Diocese was a critical development in the budding national and religious life of the Armenian faithful who had settled in the United States. Indeed, it was the foundation for the glorious history that would follow for the American Armenian community. In short order, dozens of churches would be built in the United States, gathering under their wings the Armenians exiled from the homeland. New parishes, educational institutions, and national unions would be established to edify spiritual and cultural life – and to preserve a sense of national identity among the new American Armenians.

The jubilee of the Diocese's establishment is an occasion to remember your fathers and mothers, the pious servants and benefactors of blessed memory, who for more than a century occupied their time and talent to advance Armenian life in America. It is an opportunity to honor the children of our people who made a praiseworthy contribution to our church and nation, and whose strong legacy supports your further accomplishments today. With appreciation, we remember too the diligent Primates and devoted pastors of the past, whose unified efforts built up and brightened the Diocese, and brought energy to its national-ecclesiastical life.

Beloved Children: The Eastern Diocese continues to play a valuable role in helping our homeland prosper, and keeping our Holy Apostolic Church bright. We gratefully recognize the Diocese's consistent support for the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, by which many

productive programs have been – and continue to be – realized: all them benefitting the renewal of spiritual life in our land. Especially touching to us is the Eastern Diocese’s willing response to our plea, following the tragic 44-day war, to support our sisters and brothers of Artsakh through efforts that would lighten their heavy burdens, resolve their great challenges, and encourage them to build a free and independent life on their native land.

In this jubilee year, we send our fatherly appreciation to your Primate Father Mesrop Parsamyan, to the clergy, to the members of the Diocesan and Parish Councils, and to all of our pious American Armenian children. Before the Altar of Descent at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, we pray that the Lord on High will always support you with His abundant grace.

Dear Ones, we exhort you to remain unshaken in Faith, Hope, and Love; to always keep the flame of our national and spiritual traditions alive in your hearts. With the same devotion that has characterized these past 125 years, make your communities strong and your parishes ever-more fruitful. Keep focused on the education and character formation of the new generation, so that the American Armenian community will remain vital, and record ever-greater achievements in the annals of your Diocese.

From the depths of our heart, we pray that our beneficent Father in Heaven will keep the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America under the protection of His Righteous Hand, and always bless the faithful American Armenians, for the glory of God and for the brightness of our Holy Apostolic Church.

*Be ALIVE in the Lord, STRENGTHENED by the graces of the Holy Spirit,
and ALWAYS BLESSED amongst us. Amen.*

With blessings,



KAREKIN II
Catholicos of All Armenians

*This Encyclical was issued on May 16th
In the Year of Our Lord 2023 & the Armenian Calendrical Year 1472,
At the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.*

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