

**CONSECRATION OF
ST. NERSES SHNORHALI
ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH**



**March 2, 2024
Jacksonville, Florida**



MER HAYRENIK

Mer Hayrenik, azat ankakh,
Vor aprel e dardar
Yur vordikə ard kanchum en
Azat, ankakh Hayastan.
Yur vordikə ard kanchum en
Azat, ankakh Hayastan.

Aha yeghbayr kez mi drosh,
Vor im dzerrkov gortzetsi
Gishernerə yes kun chegha,
Artasukov Ivatsi.
Gishernerə yes kun chegha,
Artasukov Ivatsi.

Nayir nran yerek guynov,
Nvirakan mer nshan
Togh pogh-poghi tshnamu dem
Togh misht pantza Hayastan.
Togh pogh-poghi tshnamu dem
Togh misht pantza Hayastan.

Amenayn tegh mahə mi e
Mard mi angam pit merrni,
Bayts yerani, vor yur azgi
Azatufyan kzohvi.
Bayts yerani, vor yur azgi
Azatufyan kzohvi.

*Arranged by Barsegh Kanachyan
Lyrics written by Mikayel Nalbandian
First adopted in 1918 as anthem
Relinquished in 1922
Readopted in 1991*



**HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II
PREEMINENT PATRIARCH AND
CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS**



Consecration – St. Nerses Shnorhali Armenian Apostolic Church



**HIS GRACE BISHOP MESROP PARSAMYAN
PRIMATE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH
[EASTERN]**



Consecration – St. Nerses Shnorhali Armenian Apostolic Church



ԱՌԱՋՆՈՐԴՈՒԹԻՒՆ ՀԱՅՈՑ
ԱՍԵՐԻԿԱՅԻ ԱՐԵՒԵԼՆԱՆ ԹԵՄԻ
ՄԵՍՐՈՊ ԵՊԻՍԿՈՊՈՍ ՊԱՐՍԱՄՅԱՆ՝ ԱՌԱՋՆՈՐԴ



DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN
CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)
BISHOP MESROP PARSAMYAN, PRIMATE

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP MESROP PARSAMYAN
Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

With profound joy, and a heart filled with gratitude to God, we gather today for the long-awaited consecration of St. Nerses Shnorhali Armenian Church of Jacksonville, Florida. This sacred ceremony marks not just the sanctification of a physical structure, but the reaffirmation of our collective commitment to our faith, heritage, and community.

The consecration of a new church is a cornerstone in the life of every Armenian Christian community. It is a testament to our enduring faith and resilience. Your patron saint – St. Nerses Shnorhali, a holy and devoted servant of God – stands as a beacon of faith and steadfastness in our rich history. His spirit permeates this holy edifice, reminding us of our duty to uphold the spiritual values of our faith.

This church, now a hallowed sanctuary, is a place where the faithful will gather to celebrate our liturgies, share our joys and sorrows, and grow in our spiritual journey. It is a home for all of us to deepen our connection with God, to find solace and strength, and to continue the legacy of our ancestors.

As we consecrate St. Nerses Shnorhali Armenian Church, let us remember that it is not just the walls and the dome that make a church. It is the congregation – *you, the faithful* – whose prayers sanctify its space. Each stone of this church bears silent witness to your faith; each icon reflects your pious devotion.

I exhort you to see this sacred space as a source of spiritual nourishment and growth. May this church serve as a foundation for future generations to understand, embrace, and cherish our Armenian Christian identity. Let us come together in unity and love, fostering a community that reflects the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the example of His servant St. Nerses.

May God bless this holy sanctuary, and may His grace and peace be upon all of you, now and always.

With heartfelt blessings and prayers,

Bishop Mesrop
Primate

March 2, 2024

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REV. FATHER TATEOS R. ABDALIAN MESSAGE



S. Թադէոս Ա. Քհնյ. Ապոստոլեան
Rev. Fr. Tateos R. Abdalian
12 Hearthstone Drive Pelham, NH 03076
H 603.508.6140 M 603.320.1380 Email dertateos@yahoo.com

March 2, 2024

To the faithful of the Armenian Church of Jacksonville, FL

Through the many years spent together, the dream of having our own church sanctuary has now become a reality. I offer my congratulations to you all, especially to those many individuals who, over the years, have labored unceasingly and are now able to experience this day. May the labors of your hands be blessed always.

In humble tribute to you, I offer a prayer for the occasion.

O Lord our God, who has built thy Holy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets, and has made your beloved Son Jesus Christ its cornerstone, we ask for your blessings as the faithful of this community present the work of their hands in the building of this Temple.

You who sent your only begotten Son to the earth instructing our Holy Father Gregory the Enlightener in a vision to build the first Church in our ancient land of Armenia, have granted and inspired the good people of the Armenian Church of Jacksonville Florida with the same vision, having their hearts and souls moved to bring their sacred undertaking to completion.

We pray that this edifice always be a house dedicated to your glory, a center for the strengthening of the Christian faith and knowledge of your people.

Grant to these your servants, O Lord, the grace of your Holy Spirit so that they may always be the followers of Your holy will as faithful and worthy descendants to the faith our forefathers.

Strengthen them heavenly Father, in their efforts to advance your Kingdom upon this earth and bless them with the peace that radiates from You, together with Your Son and Holy Spirit, now and always. Amen.

May the walls of your newly consecrated sanctuary always resonate with the joyous songs and prayers of you, her faithful servants.

With love and blessings always,

Father Tateos and Yeretziqin Margaret Abdalian



REV. FATHER PAREN GALSTYAN MESSAGE



Dearly beloved parishioners, friends, and supporters of Jacksonville Armenian Church,

Almost 3 years ago, when I first time came to Jacksonville for the Grape Blessing Service, you all had only one dream, to have your own consecrated church for services. Today we gather in joyous reverence as we consecrate this sacred space unto the glory of the Almighty Lord.

May this Church be an inspiration of Faith, Hope, Love, and Compassion. As we dedicate these walls, let our hearts be consecrated to Serve, Uplift, and Spread the Divine Light of Our Savior. May all who enter this Sanctuary find Comfort, and may the purpose of this Sanctuary echo with the resonance of God's Grace. Amen.

*Rev. Fr. Paren Galstyan
Pastor of Soorp Haroutiun Armenian Church, Orlando, FL*



CHAIRLADY'S MESSAGE



For the last 20 years I have been involved in the Jacksonville Armenian community. During this time I utilized my skills to assemble the parishioners to gather for fellowship and special occasions. I held different positions on the Parish Council and in 2006 was first elected as Parish Council Chairlady. This position is stressful at times, but with the support of husband, family and friends, we have accomplished so much and achieved many goals. Under the guidance of Der Tateos, when he was Director of Mission Parishes, we held bible studies, Badarak in the Greek Orthodox Church, yard sales, Christmas parties, Easter egg hunts, picnics and the most delicious fellowship meals enjoyed by all.

Also, I would like to give a very special Thank You to Charles Takesian for donating the altar, altar curtain, stained glass windows and various church items from the former Ocala Church. His donation made the consecration today a reality.



If you told me in 1992 that my family and I would leave former Soviet Union and travel to the U.S. and help establish an Armenian Church in Jacksonville, Florida, I would have said you were out of your mind. I realize now that God had a different path for me to follow. I am here today to tell you God has blessed me beyond my wildest dreams.

Elmira Grigoryan



BENEFACTOR, MABLE ALTOONJIAN

Excerpts from A Life of Building Family, Community Continues

*By: Lena Flora Casper Jones
Armenian Reporter International;
Paramus. 15 June 2002: 14.*



In life, some people make their presence known to others with great fanfare. And then there are others who walk quietly yet firmly, leaving the imprint of their influence. It is in this second way that the life of Varsenig "Mable" Altoonjian has touched others, through the lessons taught by her family and her code of serving others in whatever way possible.

The 94-year-old Mable considers life a privilege to be lived well and with gratitude. At the present, the witty woman with a sharp memory resides in Ponte Vedra, FL (just outside Jacksonville), at Vicar's Landing Health Center. She is the last remaining member of her family, which included her twin sister Satenig "Marjorie," older sister Armenouhi Flora, and younger brother Kevork. Mable's family has always been a great source of strength, comfort and fellowship for her. Now the Armenian Church fills those places in her heart, and she would like to see it grow in Jacksonville. Mable's parents always challenged their children to be the most they could be, to find what they sought in life, and to use the opportunities available in America. The things most highly valued in Mable's family revolved around family unity and the Church. The beauty of living in America, she said, is that you can keep and cherish both cultures. However, she said it is crucial that we keep our Armenian culture alive.

Any community that can establish an Armenian parish must come together and do so, Mable said. But a church cannot be built by one man, she said, because it is a joint effort to create a sense of ownership and contribution by all. The Jacksonville, Florida, area has experienced tremendous growth in its overall Armenian population and is now seeking to establish an Armenian church. Mable is one of many in the community who support such an endeavor. From her viewpoint, with love and a true sense of mission, anything is possible.

Only time will reveal the future of Jacksonville's Armenian community. But, as Mable has confidently stated, there is nothing we cannot accomplish together in such a wonderful country.



BENEFACTOR and GODFATHER

CONGRATULATIONS TO CARL BAZARIAN

*With Love from
Parish Council of St. Nerses Shnorhali Armenian Apostolic Church*



We are happy to share the remarkable news that our very own Carl Bazarian, one of the co-founders of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), the Vice Chairman of the FAR Board of Directors, and one of the Founding Families of the Armenian Church of Jacksonville, Mission Parish, has received distinguished recognition from both the Government of Armenia and the Mother See of Etchmiadzin.

Mr. Bazarian was bestowed with the Gold Medal of the Government of Armenia, a prestigious honor acknowledging his exceptional and unwavering support for the Armenian people spanning an impressive 35-year period. In addition to this, Catholicos Karekin II conferred upon Carl the Order of Nerses Shnorhali, an esteemed award from the Mother See of Etchmiadzin. This recognition underscores Mr. Bazarian's extensive service to the Armenian Church and the people of Armenia, including his pivotal role in various Armenian Mission Parishes within the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern).

Mr. Bazarian's commitment to the Armenian Church and the Armenian people traces back to the mid-90s during his tenure as the Chairman of the Armenian Assembly of America. Even earlier, in 1989, while at the U.S. Treasury, he played a crucial role in supporting a historic airlift, collaborating closely with the White House and DOD, delivering vital humanitarian assistance to the children of Gyumri (then Leninakan) after a devastating earthquake struck the region. He was pivotal in spearheading multimillion-dollar assistance to Armenia with USAID and USDA during the early years of Armenian independence.

In 2003, Mr. Bazarian was honored with the prestigious American "Ellis Island Medal of Honor" for his accomplishments in emerging markets investment programs and his significant contributions to the humanitarian and economic development of the Republic of Armenia.



NERSES SHNORHALI ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH

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Rev. Fr. Paren Galstyan – Visiting Pastor

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March 2, 2024

Dear Parishioners of St. Nerses Shnorhali Church of Jacksonville:

I am humbly honored to be chosen as Godfather and especially bestowed the right to name our Church.

I am so proud of our community coming together to make this Consecration a reality after so many years of dedication. You worked so hard and provided enormous sacrifice, in building this Sanctuary and Parish Hall with your bare hands, as well as raising the necessary funds to finish its construction. Most importantly, you kept the community together and grew our church which now thrives.

Armenian Churches in the Diaspora are crucial in keeping our unique Armenian Apostolic Christian heritage despite suffering centuries of genocide, ethnic cleansing forcible displacement, and wars with powerful, aggressor nations. Our Jacksonville community reflects the recent influx of refugees from Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku.

I am so thankful to our leadership team, especially our Parish Council Chairs Edward Shakaryan and Elmira Grigoryan and longstanding members of the Parish Council and their respective families for allowing them to make this consecration a reality by devoting long hours to make this happen. Elmira proudly carried the torch for many years – always with high energy, patience, and a smile.

I wish to thank our Diocese for supporting this Mission Parish, especially Archbishop Khajag Barsamian. The Mission Parish is a fundamental life commitment in my family. In 1915, my father Kegham Bazarian, only 5 years old, was a survivor of a genocidal Turkish forced deportation march through the Syrian Desert, miraculously making it to Aleppo with his mother Mariam. He made it and vowed to God to be loyal to his Christian beliefs for the remainder of his life. His 3-year-old sister, Elizabeth, died of dehydration during this ordeal. He made it to a Syrian orphanage and eventually ended up in Watertown, Massachusetts. He was committed to building the St. James Armenian Church in Watertown and despite being a factory worker, was both a Founder and Deacon at the church for over 40 years. My mother, Josephine, worked hard to raise money, same as you, and instilled in us a strong Christian ethic. Today, my brothers Charles, Richard, Harvey, and Sister Mary Jo are still involved in Mission Parishes and currently building Churches in 3 distinct New England communities. It is in the Bazarian gene to give back and keep our community and church cohesive.

Why the name St. Nerses Shnorhali (the gracious)? Well, there are several: first, Shnorhali means gracious (kind, polite, generous, compassionate) which reflects our community; second, our first visit from the Diocese and subsequent Mission Parish visiting priest was led by Father Nerses Jerbedian; third, our new Primate, His Grace Bishop Mesrob Parsamyan is a scholar and expert on St. Nerses Shnorhali, the beloved, writer, poet, hymn writer, ecumenical leader, and saint, not just within the Armenian church but also with the Greek Orthodox and Catholic Church; and lastly, I received the St. Nerses Shnorhali award from Karekin II Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians last month. Hence, the naming of our church is not just a coincidence, but spiritual guidance that you are blessed to be worshipping at the Sanctuary of a special Saint whose name is being consecrated in our church.

With gracious respect to our very special community.

Carl J. Bazarian
Parish Council Member



FOUNDING FAMILIES

Olivia & Gene Brooks



Silva & Harout Baboyan



Liana & John Brooks



Linda & Carl Bazarian



Consecration – St. Nerses Shnorhali Armenian Apostolic Church



Elmira Grigoryan



Nadia Maroukian Ioannides



Viktor & Natalya Piriyan



Eduard & Anush Shakaryan



Consecration – St. Nerses Shnorhali Armenian Apostolic Church



PARISH COUNCIL AND CONSECRATION COMMITTEE



Standing left to right: Irina Shirakuni, Soorin Vardanian,
Natalya Piriyan, Elmira Grigoryan, John Brooks,
Liana Brooks, Tatyana Yeremyants

Seated: Diane Williames, Silva Baboyan



HISTORY OF OUR COMMUNITY

We are a recent immigrant community consisting of families mainly from Karabagh, Baku, Sumgait, Yerevan largely displaced by economic hardship and persecution after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Between the U.S. State Department facilitating our hasty immigration and our networking, we settled in Jacksonville, Florida. At the time, Jacksonville had very few Armenian Americans to assist us in building our community. We struggled to survive, to get jobs related to our educational backgrounds, and to adapt to a new language and culture. Most importantly, we were looking to establish new Armenian roots. In the early eighties, a handful of families in the community would gather in the Brooks home and scan phone books to find Armenian names, then call them and ask if they wanted to visit with other Armenian families in the area. Who could say no to a mezza platter of choreg & cheese, tabbouleh, hummus and lahmajun. Those visits became the seeds to help grow a church-based community.

We are very proud that in 1999 the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church granted “Mission Parish” church status to our community. Since then we have been holding monthly church services with the pastoral leadership of visiting Armenian priests, including Rev. Fr. Nersess Jebejian, Rev. Fr. Tateos Abdalian, Rev. Fr. Zenob Nalbandian, Rev. Fr. Anania Arabadjian. Church services were held at the Saint John Greek Orthodox Church. The attendance and enthusiasm at these services proved the Armenian community of Jacksonville was growing and the need for an official home of our own.

After much prayer, funds were donated to purchase the current property at 3900 Atlantic Boulevard. On November 2, 2011 the Armenian Church of Jacksonville officially had a home. The structure needed to be totally renovated to suit our needs. The community stepped up and volunteered their time and talents to remodel the first floor into a beautiful dining hall. Fundraisers and special events were held to raise funds for the next major project, which was to renovate the upper floor into a sanctuary where Badarak would be held. While plans and designs were being made, the covid pandemic occurred and plans were temporarily halted. We were devastated but did not lose faith that the sanctuary would eventually be completed.

GOD HEARD OUR PRAYERS. In 2021, with the assistance of Bishop Daniel Findikyan, the Diocesan Council and the Demirjian Foundation, we obtained the necessary funding which would enable us to complete the final phase of our renovations to the sanctuary. Shortly thereafter, construction was underway and by 2023 renovations were finalized.

Our mission is to make every effort to carry on Armenian traditions and teachings and create a welcoming and caring community.

TODAY, MABEL’S DREAM HAS COME TRUE



GODFATHERS OF THE CONSECRATED CROSS

Mr. Carl Bazarian

Mr. Soorin Vardanian

Mr. Harout Baboyan

Mr. John Brooks

Mr. Jack Froonjian

Mr. Ed Galoustian

Mr. Roman Galustov

Mr. Rafael Grigoryan

Mrs. Nadia Maroukian Ioannides

Mr. Arkady Khalafyan

Mr. Erik Mirzoyev

Mr. Viktor Piriyan

Mr. Aleksandr Shafiyev

Mr. Charles Takesian

Mrs. Diane Mangasarian Williames

Mr. Nicholas Yedigarov



RECIPIENTS OF THE ST. VARTAN MEDAL

Mrs. Olivia Arslanian-Brooks

Mrs. Olivia Brooks, was born in Arak, Iran, to Hrand Arslanian and Satenig Nehapetian. She was raised in Tehran, Iran, along with four siblings. Olivia attended Tehran University and post-graduation she began her career working as a secretary to an officer at the Armishmag complex in Tehran. It is there that she met her husband, Gene, in 1959. They married in 1961, and then the couple settled in Callahan, Florida, to raise their sons John, Haroot and William Hrand. They are blessed to have two beautiful granddaughters Nicole and Sophia, along with their daughter-in-law Liana.

Fueled by her deep Christian faith, instilled during her early years, Olivia had a passion to establish an Armenian Parish in Jacksonville, Florida, where Olivia and Gene later moved. Together with Gene and others, she diligently searched for Armenian names in the phone directory. Once a name was found, they reached out to ask for help to build a vibrant Armenian Christian community.

Olivia served for several years on the Parish council, but her commitment extended beyond her church duties. Additionally, she assisted in the settlement of Armenian refugees to the North Florida area as well as visited local government representatives advocating for Armenian issues. Mrs. Olivia credits prayer and God's blessings for gathering a small team of dedicated Christians that love serving the Lord Jesus Christ and the community. Although a long and sometime difficult path, she cherishes the experiences and connections forged in realizing her dream of a thriving Armenian church community that she hopes will continue to serve the North Florida Armenian community well into the future. Olivia is a shining example to future generations of all that can be accomplished with faith and prayer.



Mr. Soorin Vardanian

Soorin's talent lies in his hands. He first got interested in furniture repair at the age of 16. His knowledge continued to grow under the leadership of his father. His interest in carpentry grew as well. Today, he is well versed in framing and internal design. With the generous help of his son Sergey and parish volunteers, the renovated sanctuary of the Armenian Church of Jacksonville was able to be resumed and completed in a timely fashion.

The Armenian Church of Jacksonville Mission Parish is truly blessed to have such a dedicated and gifted person in its midst.

Soorin is married to Irina and has two sons, Sergey and Alexander. Soorin cherishes his Armenian roots and has instilled these beliefs in his children as well as passing on his knowledge of carpentry.





WITH GRATITUDE

The Parish Council of Armenian Church of Jacksonville, now known as St. Nerses Shnorhali Armenian Apostolic Church, wishes to thank the following people for their generosity and commitment to insuring the future of the Jacksonville Armenian community. In addition to the people listed below, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every person who has given of their time and talent without hesitation. You can take pride in knowing that you have built up this community and Church for the present and future generations.

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Brooks Family

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Altar Servers Mentored by Father Tateos Abdalian



Sergey Vardanian



Left to Right: Aleksandr Shafiyev, Erik Mirzoyev, Fr. Tateos, Mallory Maslar, Rafael Grigoryan, Nicholas Yedigarov



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IN LOVING MEMORY OF ASHOT NALBANDYAN



IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY FATHER, VLADIMIR GRIGORYAN
GRANDMOTHER, ROZA GRIGORYAN
GRANDFATHER, RAFIK AVAGIMOV

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CONGRATULATIONS TO MY MOTHER, ELMIRA
I AM SO PROUD OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS
THAT LED TO THIS GLORIOUS CONSECRATION DAY



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. . . let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.
(Matthew 5:16)

Congratulations on this glorious day of celebration.

Fr. Tateos and Yeretzgin Margaret Abdalian



IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY PARENTS AGOP AND SIRAN MAROUKIAN WHO TAUGHT ME, BY THEIR EXAMPLE, WHAT THE TRUE VALUES OF LIFE ARE:

- 1. Love God with All Your Heart;*
- 2. Protect and Honor the Family, it is the Cornerstone of our Society;*
- 3. Help those in Need;*
- 4. Be Grateful for those Dedicated Christians who over the Centuries Built and Maintained the Armenian Churches thus Preserving our Faith, Language and Culture.*

By following the example of our ancestors, we should thank the hard working, dedicated parishioners who have made a dream become reality by consecrating the first Armenian Church built in Jacksonville, Florida.

Nadia Maroukian Ioannides




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Volodymyr Kramarev
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Irina Dadamyan
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*Congratulations to the Jacksonville
Armenian Community on the Consecration
of the Church you dreamed of for decades.
God's grace is upon you Good and Faithful
Servants!*

*In loving memory of my parents Noubar and
Virginia Mangasarian and Grandmother
Yevkin Mangasarian*

Diane Willames and Family



*This beautiful khatch was lovingly hand carved by
one of our parishioners, the late Ashot Nalbandyan.
He spent countless hours etching the intricate details
using old world tools with his God-given talented
hands. His dream was to one day see it displayed on
the altar in the Jacksonville Church. ASHOT'S
DREAM CAME TRUE TODAY. He is no longer
with us but he will be remembered when you look at
this beautiful carving on the altar every time Divine
Liturgy is celebrated.*



St. Nerses Shnorhali – the Gracious (1102-1173) **Սուրբ Ներսէս Ճնորհալի**

Saint Nerses IV the Gracious, Catholicos of Cilicia, (in Armenian: “Sourp Nerses Shnorhali” – Սուրբ Ներսէս Դ. Վալեղի Ճնորհալի, in Greek: Άγιος Νερσές ο γεμάτος χάρι Θεού, in Russian: Св. Нерсес IV Шнорали – Клаеци “Благодатный”), is a major theologian, poet, writer and hymn composer of the Armenian Church. He is considered one of the greatest literary figures in the Armenian ecclesiastical history.

Nerses was born in June 4, 1102 in Tsopk castle near Aintab (present-day Gaziantep, Turkey). He was descendant of the noble Pahlavouni family, and through female lineage he was descendant of St. Gregory the Illuminator. His father Apirat Pahlavouni was an army general, who was killed in a battle at the time Nerses was only ten years old. After the loss of their father, Nerses and his older brother Gregory were placed under the guardianship of their maternal grand uncle Catholicos Gregory II the Martyrophile (Գրիգոր Բ. Վկայասէր). They were settled in “Karmir Vank” (“Կարմիր Վանք”) an Armenian monastery at Fhoughri, under the custody of monk Stepanos Manouk, a renowned scholar and theologian.

Nerses was ordained as a celibate priest at the age of 17. He was consecrated as a bishop at the age of 35. In 1112, his older brother became Catholicos Gregory III Pahlavouni (Գրիգոր Գ. Պատիւաւունի).

In 1166, Nerses wrote a profession of faith, known as “Exposition of the Faith of the Armenian Church” addressed to the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Comnenos (1166-1180). In his exposition, Nerses referred to the relations between the Armenian and Greek Churches, emphasizing the fact that since both Churches had accepted the statements of the First Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, there was no reason not to reach in an agreement.

In 1171, the emperor and the Orthodox Patriarch Michael III addressed an official letter of reconciliation to the Armenian Church. A delegation was sent from Constantinople, and both sides laid the groundwork for the start of an ecumenical dialogue. However, this dialogue ultimately bore no fruit. After the death of emperor Manuel I, the subsequent political events in the Byzantine empire made its continuation impossible.

Nerses for the rest of his life never ceased to support the approach and the reconciliation between the Churches. At the age of 70, following the tradition of his family, he named as his successor the younger of his two nephews (both of them were bishops). The elder, however, imprisoned his cousin and had himself consecrated Catholicos under the name Gregory IV (Գրիգոր Դ. Տղայ). Nerses reposed himself in August 13, 1173 worn out by ceaseless work and malaria.



Nerses IV has been canonized as a Saint by the Armenian Apostolic Church. He has received the title of “Gracious” (in Armenian: Shnorhali “Շնորհալի”) because of his irenic style and quality of writing. His radiating holiness, which made his contemporaries say that he was “filled with the graces of the Holy Spirit, like a sea that is spread everywhere”. His writings are full of serenity and divine grace. He is recognized as the “Second Illuminator” of the Armenians. Along with his nephew, St. Nerses of Lampron, the archbishop of Tarsus (Սուրբ Ներսէս Լամբրոնացի 1153-1198), are both considered the ardent artisans and champions of the Church unity.

St. Nerses’ feast is celebrated by the Armenian Apostolic Church in mid-October, on the Saturday of the Fourth Week of the Holy Cross. He is also venerated by the Roman Catholic Church. His feast is celebrated on August 13th.

St. Nerses was a prolific writer, a great musician, as well as one of the greatest theologians of his time. He composed prayers, liturgical songs, and chants. He wrote several volumes of poetry, and a vast number of theological works. St. Nerses enriched the Armenian liturgical hymnology with a wealth of sacred hymns, adding almost a third to their number. He is credited with musical reforms that simplified the texts of the religious poetry and the melodies of the chant, bringing it closer to the style of Armenian folk music.

His major poetic works include “Aravot Louso” (“Առաւոտ լուսոյ”: Morning of Light) a collection of prayers for the sunrise service vespers, “Norahrash Bsagavor” (“Նորահրաշ Գասկաւոր”: Newly and Marvelously Crowned) a festive liturgical hymn, “Vipasanoutyoun” (“Վիպասանութիւն”: Enlightenment) a novel in poetic form, and “Voghb Yedesyo” (“Վոցիբ Եդեսոյ”) a lamentation on the fall of Edessa in 1144 (the present-day Şanlıurfa).

“Toukht Enthanrakan” (“Թուխտ Ընթրանարան”: General Epistle) is an exhortation of St. Nerses on pastoral theology and on how Christians should behave. “Hisous Vordi” (“Հիսուս Որդի”) is a reproduction of the Bible in poetic form. It contains stories from Church history, concluding to the events of the End Times. It has been translated into English as “Jesus the Son”.

“I Confess with Faith” is a literary collection of twenty-four prayers (in Armenian: Havadov Khosdovanim “Հաւատով խոստովանիմ”). A prayer for every hour of the day. It has been considered as one of his most prominent works, intended to provide comfort, peace and spiritual strength to the Christians. “Havadov Khosdovanim” has been translated into more than 36 languages. This unique prayer bears the faith, trust, and absolute hope of St. Nerses towards God.

<https://shnorhali.com/>



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