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ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF AMERICA

The Liberator Savior

“And he named him Jesus.” (Mt 1:25)*

During these days of remembrance of the birth of Christ, our thoughts go back twenty centuries ago to the miraculous event of the birth of Jesus, and I envision the joy of his parents Joseph and Mary. It is a time of parental emotions and family happiness ahead, especially when we consider God’s intervention on future events—the annunciation of the angel and Mary’s pregnancy, her visit to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and finally the birth of the heavenly king in a simple manger.

Mother of God Mary praised God by alluding that the one conceived in her will bring salvation to humankind by dethroning the powerful and elevating the meek. (Magnificat)

And Mary gave birth to her child and in keeping with the message of the angel, named him Jesus—Savior, the liberator of the faithful.

As children of the Armenian Church, we accepted Christ into our faith believing in the salvation of humankind as well as salvation of individuals. For centuries we prayed to Him, turning His sermons and commandments into the strength and purpose of our everyday lives and we forged the principles of Christianity on our national character. As individuals we beseeched and prayed for our own salvation filled with the hope of eternal life. But at the same time individual salvation in our faith also became collective—the hope of salvation for our entire nation. Eternal life and the survival of our nation and our martyrdom had no other power but the love of Christ and the hope to find the salvation of our nation with Him and by Him. Our dedication and fidelity to our faith became the supreme expression of our spirit of freedom, and by necessity living in freedom with Christ became our faith and our national “Creed” and our collective course. This is how we lived. This is how we preached. This is how we survived.

Our motto became, “For the sake of faith and for the sake of fatherland,” just as the Vartanank proclaimed and embraced national freedom through their martyrdom. With the freedom of the soul our faith became our devotion, martyrdom, and victory.



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During these inaugural days of the New Year, the date 2018 takes us back 100 years ago to another sacrifice, struggle, and victory. Our nation's uprising on May 28, 1918, was nothing else if not the wings of freedom after the genocide, our resurrection and victory after our national crucifixion. For centuries our national life was enriched and strengthened with the love of Christ, and our heroes and people proclaimed their love of the fatherland. For the sake of faith and fatherland the unsilencable call compelled them to the supreme sacrifice and salvation. Is not our faith in Christ the road to salvation? Yes, that same faith, sanctified by martyrdom, pressed our people to go toward the field of struggle with emotions of faithful witness and victory. The freedom of the soul hovered over the blood and sweat consecrated on our ancestral soil for which martyrdom for the soldier and the peasant earned honor and in defense of that honor—glory.

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary, with its glorious and eternal message, it is necessary to be dedicated as a nation to our Christian faith that formed our concept of freedom, and gave life and image of our spirit of national freedom. That freedom is immortal, and like the God of our faith, is eternal. And we the faithful children of this truth are today called upon to remain in the same faithfulness, to turn the salvation given to us by Christ's birth into an oath for our national salvation that we won with the victory in May. And just as unfaithfulness to Christ is faced by God's judgment, so also indifference to the fatherland is faced by our nation's judgment.

Therefore, during these days of remembrance of the birth of Jesus, our message is that we, as a nation, must be dedicated to the truths of our faith, and live with Jesus our Savior, and as a nation be dedicated to the strength and immortality of our fatherland.

And then, may the New Year and Holy Nativity be joyful for all of us.

Prayerfully,

ARCHBISHOP OSHAGAN
Prelate
Armenian Apostolic Church of America
(Eastern Prelacy)

January 1, 2018



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*Jesus, in Hebrew Yeshua, means “the Lord saves” or “the Lord is salvation.”