


ARMENIA Հայաստան ANCIENT PEOPLE, ENDURING FAITH



Khor Virap Armenian Apostolic Monastery in the Mt. Ararat Plain, Armenia,
originally built in the 7th century A.D.

NEW YORK
ENCOUNTER



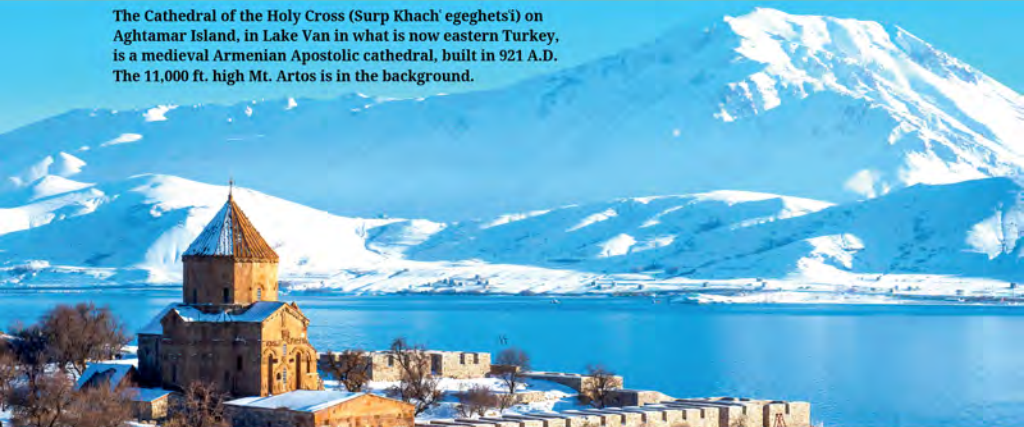


Mt. Ararat, 17,000 ft. high, is the resting place of Noah's Ark, overlooking Khor Virap (Deep Pit) Monastery built in the 7th century A.D. on the Ararat Plain.

Armenia: Ancient People, Enduring Faith

Did You Know?

- Armenians trace our lineage from Noah through his son Japheth. Noah is believed to have lived 4,000 - 5,000 years ago. Armenia's historic homeland is the Mt. Ararat region where Noah's Ark landed after the flood.
- In the 1st century A.D. Jesus's Apostles St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew preached the Gospel and were martyred in Armenia.
- In 301 A.D. King Tiridates III, a persecutor of Christians, converted and proclaimed Armenia the first Christian nation. Armenia is 97% Christian and has 4,000 churches that are primarily identified with either the Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, or Armenian Evangelical traditions.
- The current Republic of Armenia is the size of the state of Maryland with half the population of about 3 million residents.
- Due to religious persecutions, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, about 6 million Armenians, the diaspora, live outside of Armenia. According to the Armenian Consulate in Los Angeles, it is estimated that 1.5 - 2 million Armenians live in the USA with California having the most at 1.2 million.



The Cathedral of the Holy Cross (Surp Khach' egeghetsi) on Aghtamar Island, in Lake Van in what is now eastern Turkey, is a medieval Armenian Apostolic cathedral, built in 921 A.D. The 11,000 ft. high Mt. Ararat is in the background.



Traditional Armenian Clothing
The Taraz



Arakchins, traditional Armenian hat



Traditional Armenian Instruments
L-R: Duduk, Zurna, Tar, Kamancha, Saz

The Current Republic of Armenia



Republic of Armenia
("Hayastan")

Founded: 21 Sep. 1991
(as the third Armenian republic)

Capital: Yerevan

Nationalities:

- Armenian (98.1%)
- Yazidi Kurd (1.2%)
- Russian (0.4%)
- Other (0.3%)



The Republic of Armenia lies just south of the great Mount Ararat range of the Caucasus and fronts the northwestern extremity of Asia. Armenia is bounded by Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey. The capital Yerevan is thought to be one of the world's oldest capitals, deriving its name and location from the 8th Century B.C. Erebuni Fortress of the Kingdom of Urartu. Biblical records state that Noah and his family settled here after the flood which is believed to be some 5,000 years ago.

To the east of Armenia is the Republic of Artsakh that until the ethnic cleansing of September 19, 2023 was primarily populated by Armenians for 2,000 years .

Coat of arms of the Republic of Armenia



Peoples of the Caucasus: Ethno-linguistic-religious distribution



Note: Some ethnic groups are omitted to conserve space. Placement of group names may not align with the actual geographic distribution of populations. Note: Language names are approximate: Armenians speak "Armenian", Azerbaijanis speak "Azerbaijani", Turks speak "Turkish", Kurds speak "Kurdbani", etc. Note: Predominant groups and associations are shown. Some ethnic groups have minority religions.

NEW YORK ENCOUNTER



Armenian Ethnogenesis

Armenians trace their lineage and Mt. Ararat homeland from
Noah => Japheth => Gomer => Torgom =>
Hayk (Haig) - the Patriarch of Armenia

*"In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month,
the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat."
Genesis 8:4 (4,000 B.C.- 5,000 B.C.)*



The Descent of Noah and his family and the animals from Mount Ararat
painting by H. Ayvazovsky
Found in the collection of Armenian National Gallery, Yerevan

This is the oldest map in the world, *The Babylonian* also known as *Imago Mundi*. It is 2,600 years old and Armenia is the only modern country found on this map.



The Babylonian Map of the World
Credit: The British Museum



Artistic depiction of the Babylonian Map of the World
Image source: Cartography-images



Armenian History

For even though we are small and very limited in numbers and have been conquered many times by foreign kingdoms, yet too, many acts of bravery have been performed in our land, worthy of being written and remembered...

– St. Movses Khorenatsi, Armenian Bishop and historian. History of Armenia Book I, 3:7 ca. 482 A.D.

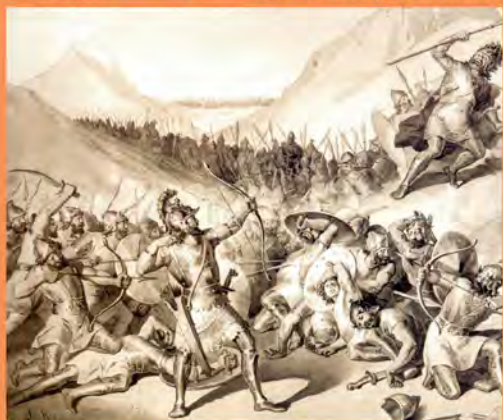


A painting of Movses Khorenatsi by Hovnatian Hovnatianian



Hayk (Haig) and his people, from the time of their forefathers Noah and Japheth, had migrated south toward the warmer lands near Babylon. In that land there ruled a wicked giant, King Bel. Bel tried to impose his tyranny upon Hayk's people. But proud Hayk refused to submit to Bel. As soon as his son Aramaniak was born, Hayk rose up and led his people (300) northward into the land of Ararat. At the foot of the mountain he built a village and gave it his name, calling it Haykashen.

– St. Movses Khorenatsi
History of Armenia I,10–12



L. In 2492 B.C. Bel and his large army attacked Hayk and 300 of his compatriots who had resettled in their ancestral land around Mt. Ararat. Hayk killed Bel and was able to break free of the tyranny of Babylon.

R. Hayk standing next to the tomb of Bel. In the back-ground is Mt. Ararat, with Noah's Ark on its peak. The map at his feet depicts his peoples' historic homeland, the region of Mt. Ararat and Lake Van. In homage to Hayk, the Armenians also call ourselves Hays from Hayastan. Khorenatsi wrote that the words Armenia and Armenian originated from the name of Hayk's son Aramaniak or Aram.



Digging Ancient Armenia

The Armenian Highlands show traces of settlement from the Neolithic era. Archaeological surveys in 2010 and 2011 have resulted in the discovery of the world's earliest known leather shoe (3,500 B.C., below L), straw skirt (3,900 B.C., below R), and wine-making facility (4,000 B.C., below) at the Areni-1 cave complex.



Recent studies and radar scans have found 5,000 year old human artifacts and a yet unconfirmed angular structure below the soil that appears to be Ark sized in the Durupinar region of Mt. Ararat (L).

The Urartu/Ararat Kingdom

The name Urartu (Armenian: Ուրարտու; Assyrian: Urartu; Hebrew: Ararat) comes from Assyrian sources and was an Iron Age kingdom between the 9th - 6th Centuries B.C., centered around Lake Van in the Armenian Highlands. The Kingdom of Ararat is mentioned by the Prophet Jeremiah (630 B.C. - 580 B.C.) (Jer. 51:27) and in several other places in the Bible.

The Kingdom of Urartu, 9th-6th Centuries B.C.



In a study published in 2017 the complete mitochondrial genomes of 44 ancient skeletons from Urartu were analyzed alongside other ancient populations found in modern-day Armenia and Artsakh. The study shows that modern-day Armenians have the closest genetic link to those ancient skeletons.

According to historian Mack Chahin in his book *The Kingdom of Armenia*:

Armenians can legitimately claim, through Urartu, a historical continuity of some 4000 years; their history is among those of the most ancient peoples in the world.

Archeological site of the remains of the 2,700 year old Ayanis Castle which sits atop a hill overlooking Lake Van. One of the best-preserved heritage sites linked to the Urartu civilization.



From Tigran The Great To the Current Republic



Tigranes II, more commonly known as Tigran the Great, was a king of Armenia. A member of the Artaxiad dynasty, he ruled from 95 B.C. to 55 B.C. Under his reign, the Armenian Kingdom reached its peak spanning from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. The map shows the different stages Armenia has gone through up to the present day facing and surviving ongoing challenges to its freedom and self-determination.

During Tigran's reign, a coin was struck saying King of Kings. It is thought that the star on his royal tiara may represent Halley's comet, which was visible in 87 B.C.



A New Way: Faith, Hope, and Love

During the 1st century A.D., Jesus' Apostles St. Thaddeus/Jude and St. Bartholomew, preached the Gospel of Christ in pagan Armenia and were martyred there (below L). St. Sandukht, daughter of King Sanadrouk, was converted to Christianity by St. Thaddeus, and she in turn converted many others. Her father told her to renounce her faith or die by the sword. Out of love for Christ and holiness she became the first known Armenian Christian convert, martyr, and saint (below R). St. Paul describes this radical, God infused sacrificial love that transforms lives and has the power to overcome the tyranny and brutality of the sword.

...Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails... For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

-- 1st Corinthians 13: 1-13



Shortly after St. Sandukht's martyrdom, St. Thaddeus was martyred in 65 A.D. The Armenian Monastery of St. Thaddeus began with the building of a church on the Apostle's tomb in 68 A.D., was completed in 1262 A.D., and renovated in 1811 A.D. It is now located in Chaldoran County, Iran and is a popular pilgrimage site for Armenians from around the world that takes place at the monastery above on St. Thaddeus' July 23 feast day.



The True, The Good, The Beautiful



The image of St. Hripsime painted on her tomb, flanked by the St. Hripsime Cathedral (L) and the St. Gayane Monastery (R), both built in the 7th century in Armenia. An icon of St. Gayane (below).



St. Hripsime and her 36 companions were Catholic nuns who lived as hermits in a Roman monastery. St. Hripsime was very beautiful, and the Roman Emperor Diocletian vowed to marry her.

To avoid his forceful advances St. Hripsime, her fellow nuns, and their leader St. Gayane fled to Armenia.

When the Armenian King Tiridates III saw the beautiful St. Hripsime, he commanded her to marry him, but St. Gayane told her to refuse and she did.

Because of St. Hripsime's refusal, the King tortured and killed her, St. Gayane, and the other nuns in 290 A.D. For their faith in Christ, these 37 women are honored by Armenians as martyred Saints.



The First Christian Nation



St. Gregory the Illuminator (d. 328 A.D.) is the founder of the Armenian Church. He converted King Tiridates III and Armenia from Zoroastrianism to Christianity in 301 A.D., making Armenia the first Christian state. St. Gregory is shown baptizing the King and the Armenian people (L).

Before his conversion, King Tiridates III persecuted and killed Christians and imprisoned St. Gregory in a deep pit called Khor Virap for 12 years after he refused to make a sacrifice to a pagan goddess. St. Gregory was freed with the help of Tiridates' sister Princess Khosrovidukht who had a dream that St. Gregory could heal the King from an injury or illness that made him mad like a boar if he was released from the dungeon to pray over him.

After St. Gregory's release he prayed over the King and the King was healed, became a Christian, and declared Christianity to be the religion of Armenia. St. Gregory preached the Gospel of Christ throughout Armenia, built and established numerous churches, and was consecrated the Catholic Bishop of Armenia. The 7th Century monastery Khor Virap is built on the site of the pit St. Gregory was a prisoner in (below).



The Breath of God

Prior to the fifth century, Armenians had a language but no alphabet. When Armenia was split in half by the Byzantine and Persian Empires in 387 A.D. their independence and unity was compromised and needed a unifying alphabet in order to survive as a nation. St. Mesrop Mashtots as a monk (below L) was tasked in 405 A.D. with inventing the Armenian alphabet and translating the Bible, which is called the “Breath of God”. He also established at the Amaras Monastery in Artsakh the first translation school (below R).

St. Mesrop’s invention of the Armenian alphabet was initiated after an apparition – *the subconscious ordering of the entire, new alphabet at once: not in a vision or a dream, but as a right hand inscribing the letters on stone, seen by the eyes of the soul.* The Armenian alphabet exhibits this divine inspiration as it begins with God and ends with God. The first letter “Ա” stands for Astvats, and the last letter “Ք” stands for Christos, the Armenian words for God and Christ, respectively.



The alphabet allowed Armenians to preserve and expand our teachings, liturgy, traditions, and identity. The 36-letter alphabet (two more were added in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and a ligature in 1920) is the sole member of an independent branch of the Indo-European language family. The two main dialects are Eastern and Western Armenian.

To illustrate the alphabet's beauty sometimes the letters are drawn in the shape of birds (above L). This special writing is called turchnakir. A beautifully illuminated Gospel of Mark in Armenian, Middle Ages (above R).



Religious Freedom, Self-Determination

The Battle of Avarayr was fought on May 26, 451 A.D. between Armenia and Persia which ruled Armenia. It is considered one of the first battles in defense of the Christian faith as the Persians waged war to force the Armenians to renounce Christianity and revert back to Zoroastrianism.

Avarayr was so well fought by the smaller Armenian army led by St. Vardan Mamikonian and his nephew Vahan, it paved the way for the Nvarsak Treaty of 484 A.D. which affirmed Armenia's right to practice Christianity.

The battle is one of the most significant events in Armenian history, for the defense of our Christian faith and self-determination has become a foundation of our Armenian identity to this day.



In 464-465 A.D. St. Eghishe was asked to write the history of the battle of Avarayr (above) and is quoted below regarding Armenians' Christian faith and hope:

Whoever thought they could strip us of Christianity as though it was a piece of cloth will now realize that this is impossible for it is like the color of our skin. Being Armenian and being Christian are like two wings of the same bird. The bird cannot fly with only one wing, but with two wings it soars.

-- History of Vardan and the Armenian War, Chapter V



The Sighs of the Heart



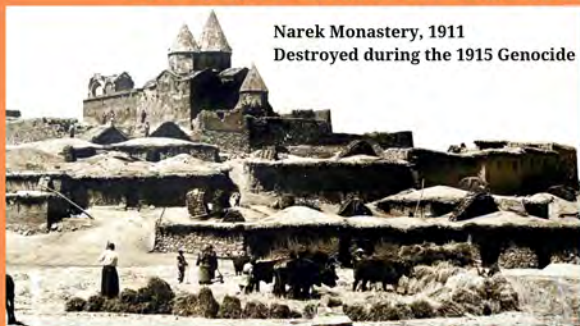
An Armenian mystic at Narek Monastery, St. Gregory of Narek set out to find an answer to the question:

what can one offer to God, our Creator, who already has everything and knows everything better than we could ever express it?

To this question he gives a humble answer: *the sighs of the heart* - expressed in his Book of Lamentations (1001-1003 A.D. above). St. Gregory called his book an *encyclopedia of prayer for all nations*. His prayers are considered prayers of healing by Armenians.

Healer of the sorrows of Eve, change my day of anguish into a feast of gladness. Be my advocate, ask and supplicate. For as I believe in your inexpressible purity, so do I also believe in the good reception that is given to your word. Amen.

-- St. Gregory of Narek, Doctor of the Catholic Church



Narek Monastery, 1911
Destroyed during the 1915 Genocide

*The Sacrifice
pleasing to God is a
broken spirit. A
broken and contrite
heart, O God, thou
wilt not despise.*

-- Psalm 51:17



Houses of God, Gates of Heaven

Armenia is thought to be home to some 4,000 churches. They are considered houses of God and gates of Heaven as Jesus is sacramentally present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist. Here are some examples of various Armenian Apostolic and Catholic Churches and Monasteries in Armenia and in countries where the Armenian Diaspora reside. The distinctive cone shaped domes are reminiscent of the volcanic cone of Mt. Ararat.



Armenian Catholic Cathedral of St. Elias & St. Gregory the Illuminator, Beirut, Lebanon, 1928 A.D.



Etchmiadzin Apostolic Cathedral, oldest Cathedral in the world, Vagharshapat, Armenia, 303 A.D.



*San Lazzaro Armenian Catholic Monastery, Venice, Italy 1717 A.D. Named after St. Lazarus, the patron saint of lepers.



Our Lady of Bzommar Monastery, headquarters of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate, Bzommar, Lebanon, 1749 A.D.



St. John Armenian Catholic Church, Sohrol, Iran, 400's A.D.



Tatev Apostolic Monastery, Armenia, 800's A.D.

* San Lazzaro Island was as a leper colony from the 12th to 16th centuries, until it was abandoned. Mechitar, an Armenian Catholic monk fleeing persecution was given the island by the Venetian government. He founded the Mechitarian order on the island whose 35 monks, seminarians, and students study Italian and Armenian language, history, and culture. In 1789 the monks set up a polyglot printing press and translated many scientific and literary works into Armenian. These works are housed in the 150,000 volume library that includes more than 4,000 Armenian manuscripts, some nearly 1,300 years old. They also house many curios from Ancient Egypt, Sumeria, and India.



Khachkars



Over the last 1,700 years Armenian religious art has flourished such as the unique cross-stones known as Khachkars.

Khachkars are carved memorial stones bearing a living cross, biblical scenes, rosettes, interlaces, and botanical motifs. The stylized cross represents the sacrifice of Christ for us on the wood Cross that gives us new life.

The Cross is understood to be the Garden of Eden's Tree of Life spoken of in the Book of Genesis and the Khachkars are meant to represent the Cross as our true Tree of Life.

Since 2010, due to their symbolism and craftsmanship, Khachkars are inscribed in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.



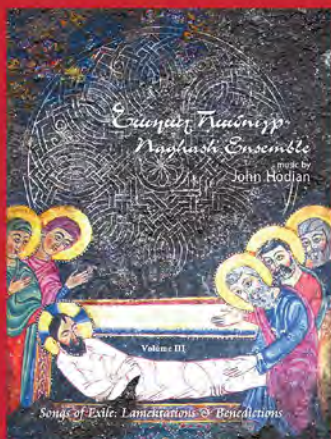
Expressions of Faith, Hope, & Beauty

Armenian rugs and ceramics are unique "texts" composed of a language of faith, hope, beauty, identity, and the heritage of ancient and contemporary Armenians. The frequent use of birds, fruits, flowers, animals, and stylized crosses represent the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life, Noah, Jesus the New Adam and paradise restored by His Death and Resurrection. The Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem is known for its long history of artisans who specialize in decorative tiles and pottery such as the examples below.



Poetry and Songs of Exile

Armenian poets and musicians have been a vital part of Armenian history. One little known poet is Mkrtych Naghash, a moniker that means painter, who was a 15th century Armenian Priest, Archbishop of Diyarbakir, mystic, painter, and poet known for his theological and artistic prowess in the Ottoman Empire. When in his religious zeal he constructed a church whose steeple was higher than the city's minarets, the Ottomans sentenced him to a life of exile, the life of a ghareeb. Naghash wrote about his predicament and the spiritual reality that we are all grieving ghareeb waiting, longing, hoping for a safe and secure homeland. Yet his 15 earthly lamentations and spiritual reflections point us to look beyond the earth which is passing away and seek our one true and perfect heavenly homeland that we all long for. One of these lamentations called *Composed in Exile, Ode on a Ghareeb* is printed here.



Songs of Exile - Naghash's poems
by John Hodian, Naghash Ensemble
Painting by Naghash



Naghash Ensemble L-R: Arpi Ter-Petrosyan, Hasmik Baghdasaryan, Tatevik Movsesyan, John Hodian, Harutyun Chkolyan, Tigran Hovhannisyanyan, Aram Nikoghosyan

Naghash's poems have recently been masterfully composed by Armenian American John Hodian and are performed for sold out concerts by his Yerevan based Naghash Ensemble (above L). Their Songs of Exile trilogy project beautifully presents Naghash's timeless 15th century poems by intertwining classical western music with traditional Armenian music.

Composed in Exile

Soul don't say 'ghareeb' or else my heart will bleed. A ghareeb in a strange land has a hard time indeed. Like a bird that strays from the flock with nowhere to rest. Disoriented until he reaches his end. Ghareeb don't take it to heart, these difficult days will pass. Every ghareeb has made it home don't worry, you will too. They say God is merciful and will bless every ghareeb. Maybe He will also help you realize your heart's desire.

Soul, though you speak well, my heart is blacker than coal. The pain of exile has drained the color from my face. When I think of my brothers and my loved ones my soul leaps to my mouth but cannot escape. Ghareeb, do not be anguished, one gains nothing from anguish. Many children agonize for nothing, that leads them nowhere. Anguish brings pain to many, and pain brings death. The longing heart is the most cursed.

Atas, to the ghareeb I say, though in a foreign land, with eyes full of tears that stream down his face, when he sits with others, his heart bleeds for sure. He looks to everyone but has no one to call his own.

We are all ghareeb, brothers, no one ever has a homeland. We all together will depart because that life is our homeland. Find the way here on earth, so that your soul is not tormented in the hereafter. Make the saints your friends and turn the angels into loved ones.

Translated by: Nareeg Seferian,
S. Peter Cowe, Haytoug Chamlian, John Hodian, and Bet Williams



Serving the Family of Faith...



There have been Catholic Armenians since the preaching of Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew, but it was not until 1749 A.D. that the Armenian Catholic Church was formally established. The Armenian Catholic Church is an Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with the Universal Catholic Church, which includes the Latin Church and 22 other Eastern Rite Catholic Churches. The head of the Armenian Catholic Church is the Patriarch of Cilicia Raphaël Bedros XXI Minassian whose see is the Cathedral of St. Elias and St. Gregory the Illuminator, in Beirut, Lebanon.



The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Catholic Church is the Armenian Rite. It is an independent ancient oriental rite with Antiochian, Cappadocian, Byzantine, Syriac, and Greek influences.



... Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg, USA & Canada



The Armenian Catholic Eparchy of our Lady of Nareg, USA and Canada is headquartered at St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral in Glendale, CA (above), and is the sponsor of this exhibit. Bp. Mikael Mouradian (L) oversees the Eparchy's eight parishes, three missions, and three schools.

The Patroness for the Eparchy is Our Lady of Nareg, Mary the Mother of Jesus - the Mother of God, the Theotokos (R). The Monastery of Nareg or Narekavank was a tenth century Armenian monastery near the shores of Lake Van, in what is now in eastern Turkey. It was abandoned and destroyed during the 1915 A.D. Genocide.



The Communion of Persons



For those called to Christian marriage, it is the loving communion of a man and a woman that is transformed by the sacramental grace of the Holy Spirit into a complimentary life-long and fruitful bond open to the begetting, raising and teaching of children. Marriage is a sign of God's Kingdom, for it begins to restore the unity and fruitfulness of mankind lost in the Garden of Eden that through faith in Christ will reach fulfillment in Heaven.

The wedding crowns placed upon the bridegroom and the bride in the wedding ceremony are symbols of the hope of eternal reward for righteous living and sacrificial loving, which by the grace of God the bride and groom help each other and their children to attain.

Every athlete in training submits to strict discipline; he does so in order to be crowned with a crown that will not last; but we do it for one that will last forever.

– 1 Corinthians. 9:25



The Burning Tigris

The Hamidian Genocide massacred 500,000 Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the mid-1890s. The massacres are named after Sultan Abdul Hamid II who targeted the Christian Armenians for extinction. This was a precursor to the Armenian Genocide of 1.5 million Armenians between 1915-1922 by the ruling party of the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turks. The pictures below document examples of the genocide, the first one of the 20th century.



Harput, Turkey 1915 A.D. Armenian men being marched out of town and massacred.

Pictured R: Mass grave for Armenians massacred in Erzurum, Turkey.



Armenian mother kneeling beside her dead child near Aleppo, Syria 1915-16 on a death march without food or water through the Syrian desert of Deir ez-Zor. Hundreds of thousands Armenians, mostly women and children, died during the forced march and in the desert concentration camps in the Euphrates River Valley.



During the Armenian genocides, missionaries such as American ones pictured below saved thousands of Armenians. The 1915 US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau Sr., was also a great advocate founding the American Committee for Relief in the Near East which saved over a million refugees and orphans (above R.) Near East Relief mobilized churches and synagogues to raise over \$116 million for refugees. Additionally, 1,000 U.S. citizens volunteered overseas, and the American Red Cross under Clara Barton made Armenia its first international relief effort. Armenian orphans in formation below share a fitting Bible verse which expresses a Christian understanding of the graces that comes through suffering.

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

-- 2 Corinthians 1: 8-11

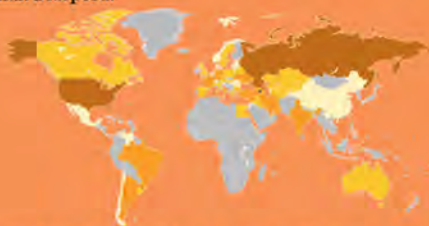


The Armenian Diaspora

The Armenian Diaspora is divided into those communities from Ottoman Armenia (or Western Armenia) and those communities which are from the former Soviet Union, independent Armenia and Iran (or Eastern Armenia).

Before 1870, 60 Armenian immigrants settled in New England. Armenian immigration rose to 2,500 in the mid-1890s due to the massacres caused by the Ottoman Empire. Armenians who immigrated to the US before WWI were primarily from Asia Minor and settled on the East Coast.

The Armenian Genocide, WW I, the communist takeover of Armenia after WW II, the 1975 civil war in Lebanon, the 1978 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the war with Azerbaijan over Artsakh, and the various wars and persecutions in the middle and near east are factors that have caused the growth of the Armenian Diaspora.



The map above shows the 6 million Armenians in the world who currently live outside Armenia and the countries they live in. Darkest to Lightest Tan Color: + 1,000,000, + 100,000, + 10,000, + 1,000. As the diaspora has grown and flourished it has been a tremendous support to the people of Armenia.

Although the exact number of Armenians in the US is unknown, speculation puts the number from anywhere between 500,000 to 2,000,000. Due to the fact that the US census does not have Armenian in the list of ethnicities to choose from, most Armenians mark off "white". The Armenian Consulate in Los Angeles estimates that California could have as many as 1.2 million Armenian citizens. It is believed that Massachusetts has up to 30,000 Armenian citizens and New York 25,000. 105,000 Armenians live in Glendale, CA, which is 50% of the city's population.

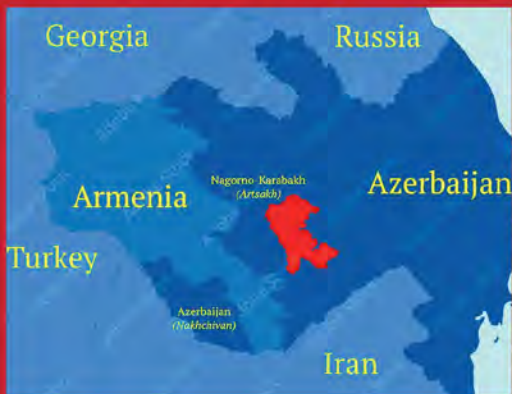


Early members of the Armenian diaspora in the USA were Asador and Haiganoush Bagdazian, pictured above, who escaped from Harput, Turkey in the 1880's with the help of American Congregationalist Missionaries. Their first home in the USA was in Watertown, MA and the picture above was taken in Fresno, CA in 1916. This Armenia Exhibit is dedicated to Asador and Haiganoush, by their grandson and curator of this exhibit Robert Bagdazian, for their love, faith, and sacrifices, and with thanksgiving to God for them and their helpers.



September 19, 2023

The Ethnic Cleansing of Artsakh



Stepanakert, the capitol of Artsakh, before and after its citizens were bombed on 9/19/ 2023.

On September 19, 2023 history repeated itself when Azerbaijan bombed Artsakh, This attack drove out the 120,000 Armenians who were blockaded and starved for 10 months prior to the bombing and are now refugees in Armenia. Luis Ocampo, a prosecutor with the International Criminal Court, labels the starvation and bombing of these citizens as ethnic cleansing. Will Armenia be the next target?

Assisting these grieving refugees, the Armenian Catholic Church's charity *Armenian Caritas*, the *Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)* headquartered in New York City, and the *Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR)* are a few examples of the many charities and relief efforts in Armenia and from the diaspora assisting the refugees in Armenia.



Armenian refugees fleeing their ancient homeland of Artsakh, September 19, 2023



Renewing The Face Of The Earth

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

-- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18



Bishop Mikael Mouradian, pictured below in the middle, was the first Armenian Catholic priest to go into Armenia after the fall of the Soviet Union. He found enduring faith and hope among the suffering Armenians which was the antidote to living under communist tyranny.

In 1992 then Fr. Mouradian visited a remote Armenian village in Skhvilsi, Georgia on the Armenian border. Due to religious suppression and persecution, every Sunday the faithful would go to the church and place priestly vestments on the altar hoping and praying for a priest to someday be allowed to come and celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

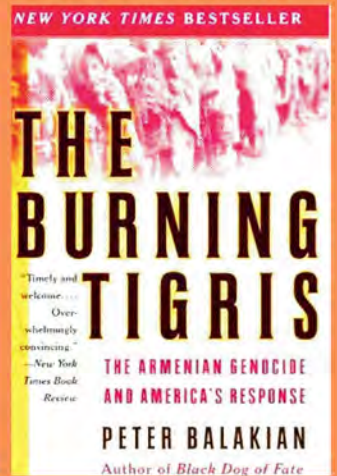
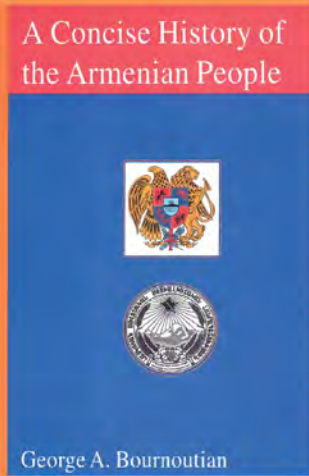
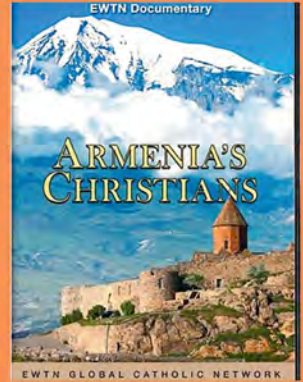
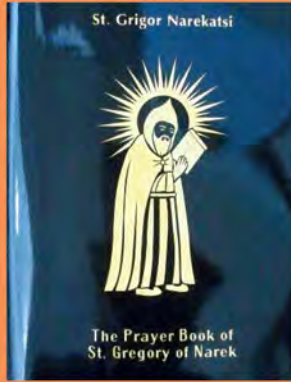
When Father Mouradian approached the village by car, still a mile away, he was astonished at what he saw. Carrying green branches and flowers, the villagers were walking to greet him. They refused to let him step out of the car. Instead, singing hymns they escorted him to the church - like the joyful procession with Christ as he entered Jerusalem.

Because of their strong faith and renewed spirit Fr. Mouradian began weeping: *I went to proclaim Jesus to them, but I was taught by the beautiful, enduring, and charitable faith they had.*

In times like these, we remember and embrace the same three things that preserved the Holy Family as ghareebis in Egypt: faith in God and a strong relationship with Him; a healthy and supportive family life; traditions, friends, and a community who help sustain us.



Resources



Armenian Catholic Eparchy of the USA and Canada
Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral
1510 East Mountain Street
Glendale, CA 91207
<http://www.ourladyofnareg.org/>

Contact Robert Bagdazian (rabagdazian@gmail.com) with questions or comments.

Thank you to all the NY Encounter organizers, workers, volunteers, and attendees. Special thanks to Angelo Sala and his team for the generous invitation to have an Armenia Exhibit; to Simone Rizkallah for being an exhibit catalyst, Bp. Mikael Mouradian for being a supportive sponsor, Jean Paul Chadarevian, Arpy Minasian, Nurhan Becidyan, Haig Chahinian, Hrayr Sherikian and many others for your help with the exhibit!