

ՔԱՐՈԶԽՕՍԱԿԱՆ

**ԱՂԱՆ ՎՐԴ. ԳՈԳԶԵԱՆԻ ՔԱՐՈԶԸ՝  
ԽՕՍՈՒԱԾ Ս. ՅԱԿՈԲԵԱՆՅ ՄԱՅՐ ՏԱՃԱՐԻՆ ՄԷՋ ՏԵՂԻ  
ՈՒՆԵՅԱԾ ՎԱՍՆ ՔՐԻՍՏՈՆԷՈՒԹԵԱՆ ՄԻՈՒԹԵԱՆ ԵՒ  
ԽԱՂԱՂՈՒԹԵԱՆ ԷՔԻՍԵՆԻՔ ԱՂՕԹՔԻՆ  
(27 Յունուար, 2025)**

**Your Eminences, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, esteemed clergy, and all those gathered here in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

I greet you in this Holy Cathedral of St. James with the peace and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is precisely this peace, the peace of our Lord, that I ask us to reflect on this evening. It is all too easy, in gatherings such as this, to feel surrounded by the walls of a sanctuary that you don't regularly worship in. Or to feel surrounded by strangers that you don't see in your daily devotions, rituals, your daily prayers. But this evening, dear brothers and sisters, we do not gather here as strangers, but we gather as one body in Christ, united by one miraculous Birth and one miraculous Resurrection, united by the love of our Lord, who calls us all into His eternal peace, through our united presence. Even if that united presence should be just two or three of us..... it prevails.

The promise of peace, especially the peace in times of struggle, especially the peace in times of war and unimaginable suffering, that promise of peace is not just a mere absence of conflict (PAUSE), once again, that promise of peace, is not just a mere absence of conflict, but it is rather the deep and abiding presence of God in our hearts.

In the Armenian tradition, our Church fathers, many of whom look over us from the icons in our beloved sanctuary, icons that have been blackened through centuries of prayer and incense, they emphasize that peace begins within the human soul and *only then* extends outward to our relationships with others. That we must remember that this peace we all seek only begins in our hearts if Christ is to be found dwelling there. That if we desire to be instruments of peace in our broken world, we must first allow that peace to settle deeply within us, in the places of our own wounds, our brokenness, our anxieties, our overthinking, our worries, our fears. As it is only from this deep and private, inner place, that we can begin to deliver peace to others.

Many believe that peace can be delivered to us by other means. That peace is not an idea tied to the heart, but rather a simple negotiation. Something created through decision and strategy. Something delivered through governance and power to those hopelessly waiting in the deepest of suffering. But we must remember, we must not make the error of thinking that peace is only a human endeavor, for in its essence, it is a divine gift. Something that flows directly from God's grace. As the Prophet Isaiah writes: "For the mountains may depart, and the hills be

removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” (Isaiah 54:10).

Jerusalem, the holy city that is called to be a city of peace, is the place our Lord has chosen to put us in the midst of so much uncertainty. With our clerical, administrative, spiritual, and community concerns, I know that I am not alone in feeling the mounting pressures of this life of service we have chosen as Christian clerics, ministers, and preachers. But let us be reminded that this is also the very place where we are invited to reconcile, not only with one another, both friend, family, and even foe, but we are invited to reconcile with God Himself. We must remember that our task here in Jerusalem, is a unique one. We must bear the responsibility of that task and seek our personal reconciliation with Him, that He may guide us into unity as Christians in the Holy Land. A unity that will be a foundation stone for peace, for the future generations of clerics who serve in our stead, long after we are gone.

St. Gregory the Illuminator, in his vision of Christ, reminds us that peace and reconciliation is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, a fruit that must be nurtured in our lives through prayer, through fasting, and through our commitment to living out Christ’s instruction: “Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9).

This is a message that we pray echoes loudly in the context of the Middle East today. But it is in times like these, in these moments of uncertainty, that the message of Christ shines brightest. Christ does not call us to the easy path. He calls us to the paths of love and service, paths that require us being selfless, requiring us to sacrifice over and over again. And it is these very paths that will help us heal after so much pain and suffering, it is this path, that will allow us to build up into a new Jerusalem, a Jerusalem of peace.

And so let us leave this sanctuary of St. James today united in our Lord’s peace. For this unity with our Lord’s peace, this unity with each other as Christians in the Holy Land, it will guide us, it will comfort us, it will protect us. Let us go forth and be agents of that peace, not just here in Jerusalem but wherever we may find ourselves. May the light of Christ shine through us, a light that cannot be extinguished, a light that will lead us to a future filled with hope. A light that will lead us to a peace lasting now and always, and unto the ages of ages, Amen.

