

## MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE ARCHBISHOP TORKOM MANOOGIAN

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen...

We are most pleased to be with you on this auspicious occasion to express our gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Zaven Yegavian, as the distinguished representative of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation of Lisbon, Portugal, an institution committed to strengthening and nurturing the values of education and knowledge among the Armenian communities dispersed throughout the world.

The book has been a national symbol of intellect and the cornerstone of education for our people since the creation of the Armenian alphabet in the 5th century by the visionary monk, Mesrop Mashtots.

Soon after, the first Armenian libraries were established in the monasteries of our homeland and have played a vital role in the intellectual history of our nation.

For the past seventy four years, in the noble, centuries-old tradition of these Armenian libraries, the Calouste Gulbenkian Library of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem has been fulfilling its role of bringing together and preserving valuable works of Armenian religion, language, art, literature, and history, as well as representative works of world literature in many languages.

How was it that the Gulbenkian Library came to be?

His Beatitude, Archbishop Yeghishe Tourian, of blessed memory, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1921 to 1929, had a distinguished career as a priest, preacher, poet, philosopher, philologist, and bibliophile.

Patriarch Tourian had long envisioned *"a library, with all its accoutrements and facilities, and with its collections of books... St. James Convent has a large collection of manuscripts, as well as ancient Armenian imprints, and a quantity of non-Armenian books, and collections of newspapers, which must be centralized in a Library and cataloged."*

To these would be added *"the personal library of His Beatitude, which he had established even when he was a lay person, with a focus on Armenian, enriched especially with new and most recent publications in French, German, and English languages, and works in classical Greek and Latin."*

In order to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Patriarch's ordination to the priesthood in 1929, it was decided that the most appropriate gift from Armenians the world over would be a library building.

Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, best known as *Mr. Five Percent*, was a financier, industrialist, diplomat, arts connoisseur, and philanthropist. His selfless contribution, in memory of his father Sarkis and his mother Dirouhi, made possible, in 1929, the realization of the Patriarch's vision through the construction of the Library, which bears his name.

Calouste Gulbenkian's legendary generosity is well-known. It has been perpetuated in Jerusalem over the past seven decades through the continued support by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation of Lisbon, Portugal, and the Saint Sarkis Trust Fund of London.

Both of these institutions are committed to Armenian causes: (1) the establishment, growth, and development of educational institutions in Armenia and the Diaspora; (2) the publication of scholarly volumes of academic importance; (3) financial assistance for the professional advancement of talented artists and musicians; (4) scholarships to assist students in the pursuit of their academic careers—including the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem's own Seminarians and the students of our Holy Translators School; and in Amman, the Calouste Gulbenkian/Uzbashian School.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Library is considered one of the most important repositories of knowledge in the Old City of Jerusalem, and one of the world's most comprehensive resource centers for materials in Armenian and other world languages by and about Armenians from earliest times to the present. Today its collections consist of more than 100,000 volumes, books as well as bound periodical publications, half in the Armenian language and the other half in other world languages.

Especially notable is that the Library receives nearly all the Armenian periodicals that are published anywhere in the world where there is an Armenian publishing house. The collections are classified according to a modified Dewey Decimal System.

Realizing how important the Library had become as the heart of the information infrastructure of the Armenian Patriarchate, we called upon members of the Armenian Librarians and Libraries Information Committee of the American Library Association to lend their professional expertise in the systematic review and reorganization of the Library's collections.

The Gulbenkian Foundation, through the good offices of its Armenian Affairs Director, Dr. Zaven Yegavian, and Vice-Director, Miss Astghig Tchamkerten, has continued to provide financial support to ensure the progress of this ambitious undertaking.

Today we honor these two individuals, who have been instrumental in the renovation of the Gulbenkian Library, this unique treasure house of Armenian culture and knowledge.

Dr. Zaven Yegavian, as the director of Armenian Affairs for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, is no ordinary director. He is a man full of the Armenian spirit, who during his twenty years of service to the Foundation has totally devoted himself to the well-being and progress of Armenian educational institutions the world over, as well as to the perpetuation of Armenian culture.

Dr. Yegavian is not just a promoter of Armenian culture. He is also a scholar in his own right, and has contributed his editorial talents to a number of the Gulbenkian Foundation publications. Because of his tireless devotion in furthering the Foundation's commitment to Armenian causes, he is truly worthy of our expressions of gratitude and appreciation.

Miss Astghig Tchamkerten, the vice-director of Armenian Affairs for the Gulbenkian Foundation, also plays an important role in furthering its mission. In addition to her numerous administrative duties, she is in charge of Armenian School Affairs. A daughter of Armenia, she has authored a moving account in French about rediscovering her roots and heritage, entitling her memoirs, "*Arménie: Mes Racines*".

It is our distinct pleasure to bestow upon Dr. Zaven Yegavian, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem Patriarchal Medal of Honor for his extraordinary dedication and exemplary service to Armenian causes.

Represented in relief against the medal's golden background is the dome of the Armenian Church, with the star of Bethlehem as a crowning symbol to the laurel wreath which encircles it. An inscription beneath reads: Պատրիարքութիւն Հայոց Երուսաղէմ – Armenian Patriarchate Jerusalem.

We regret that Miss Tchamkerten is not present to receive our expression of thanks in person. Therefore, we ask Dr. Yegavian to also accept this Patriarchal Medal on her behalf for her singular contributions.

Before inviting Dr. Zaven Yegavian, we express our heartfelt thanks to His Eminence, Archbishop Vahan Topalian, the Patriarchal Vicar and spiritual leader of our Armenian community in Jordan, for his warm hospitality, together with the assistance of the organizers of this enjoyable event.

In closing, we pray: "*Bismillahu rrahman'ul rahim*", may the All-Merciful God grant His Majesty King Abdullah II, courage, strength, and long life to continue his tireless efforts in bringing prosperity to his loyal subjects and peace to the region.

And may the Lord's blessings from the holy sanctuaries of Jerusalem be showered upon Dr. Zaven Yegavian, Miss Astghig Tchamkerten, the Trustees of the Gulbenkian Foundation and the St. Sarkis Trust Fund, and the distinguished guests present here today.

We look forward to welcoming all of you one day to the Holy Land, to the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and to its revitalized Calouste Gulbenkian Library.

19 August 2003  
Amman, Jordan