

**The Commemoration of the  
Armenian Genocide  
His Beatitude  
Patriarch Theophilos III  
24 April 2015**



Your Beatitude Patriarch Nourhan,  
Your Eminences  
Your Excellencies of the Jerusalem  
Diplomatic Corp  
Dear Members of the Armenian Community  
of the Holly Land,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

We gather on this solemn occasion to remember one of the great atrocities of the 20 century - a century that was marked by many horrendous acts of man's inhumanity to man. What the world calls the Armenian Genocide, you call in your own language "Great Crime," and the memory of this crime has marked the soul of the Armenian people around the world.

Today we pray first for the victims of this terrible policy of extermination. May their memories be eternal, and may their witness be an inspiration. The Armenian community lost many of its greatest intellectuals and leaders, as well as other innocent men, women and children in this action, and indeed many of those who today call Jerusalem and Holly Land their home are here because of being displaced from their former homes.

But this is a commemoration in which the Rum Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem also shares in a special way. For during the Ottoman persecution that was so devastat

ing to the Armenian community, hundreds of thousands of Pontos Greeks and Assyrians in the former Ottoman Empire also suffered death and exile. We therefore partake in your grief and remember a time that was so devastating to so many of our respective communities and in our region. For as Saint Paul says, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it." (1 Cor.12:26)

This commemoration reminds us once again that the age of prejudice and persecution has not ended. In our own day, and in our own region, people are still persecuted, terrorized, exiled and martyred for their ethnic identity and religious affiliation. Our sadness on this occasion must be tempered by vigilance and resolve.

Today's commemoration is a stark reminder to us that we must always condemn persecution, violence, and terrorism in any form, and to promote respect for all human life, especially as we all share a common human nature and a common destiny.

We assure and your community, Your Beatitude, of our special prayers today for the victims of this atrocity, and we pray for a deepening of the spirit of mutual respect among peoples of different ethnicities and religious traditions, both in our region and around the world. Our common work and witness to the Light that Shines from the Holly Tomb during this Holly Season of Pascha is our most powerful weapon against the forces of darkness and evil in our world. For as Saint Paul says, "Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high place." (Eph. 6:12)

May God bless, the souls of the fallen innocent victims and place them where the righteous rest. Amen

Christ is Risen!

## From the Franciscan Brothers

Your Beatitude Nourhan Manooghian, Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Beatitude Theopilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Beatitude Fwad Twall, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

Excellencies, Brothers and sisters

1 Y.B. Armenian Patriarch, I want first to congratulate you for this initiative that brings all the Churches of Jerusalem here at the Holy Sepulcher, the heart of Christian Jerusalem, for a common prayer in the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, that took place in these lands 100 years ago and that brought to barbaric death millions of Armenians, but also Greeks, Syrians and many others. Then Christians, as many times in their long history, have been killed, displaced and scattered along all the Middle East, just for being Christians. 100 years ago all the Middle East was again on fire, and at the vigil of dramatic changes, with consequences that are still visible nowadays. Everyone was thinking, then, that the Christian presence in Middle East was going to be canceled for ever: their persecution was the only certainty the Christian knew.

2. And after 100 years we are still here, with a similar phenomenon, especially in Syria and Iraq, but in other part of the Middle East Countries too, with persecution and killing of Christians just for being Christians. But we have to remember here also other non Christian communities that are today under the target of fanatics, and also many Muslims.

3. Like then anyway, we Christians are scared and scattered, but not annihilated. In this very Place, the place of the resurrection of Christ, the heart of the Christian hope, we cannot despair.

4. We know, after all, that the present is not the only 'tense'. a brief look at the history will teach us that, in spite of all, Christ remains our past, our present and our future, he is

"who is, and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:8) and his presence, the church, will endure in spite of all the persecutions. The Christian hope is to see in the seed that rots the ear of wheat, is the ability to discern the times knowing that here Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33).

5. we who have the grace to live in this Blessed Land, are called, like the first women and the first disciples to run from here and announce to the scared group locked up in the Cenacle that He, the Christ, is alive. And He is alive today thanks to the testimony that thousand of simple Christians, from all the Churches and communities, are giving everyday with their fidelity to Jesus, in these dramatic situation.

6. But as important and fascinating this could be, we must not stop at the Holy Sepulcher, in a sort of homage to piety. The message of this place is indeed an announcement of joy and enthusiasm, always to look beyond the horizon to see the profiles of down. "Go and tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you..."

Where? Everywhere. In Galilee and the mountain: in the Cenacle and on the road to Emmaus: in the sea and in the desert, wherever man plant his tent, breaks his bread, builds his city, weeping and singing, sighing and cursing. "He is going before you". Here is the message of this Place. If getting up from the veneration of this Tomb, like the first Apostles, we have a soul willing to follow him anywhere, "everywhere we shall see him, as he said".

7. As many Armenians did 100 years ago, and as many are doing also today.

8. May the Lord be with you and all of us, on the example of the Christians of 100 years ago, the strength to be authentic witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.



**From the Franciscan  
Brothers**

**Armenian Genocide Commemoration  
at Holy Sepulcher  
April 24, 2015**



Dear Beatitudes, Excellencies,  
Dear Priests, Men and Women Religious,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are not far from Golgotha or Calvary, and neither are we far away from many other human calvaries that have taken place and are still taking place on our time.

Today we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, often spoken of as the "Forgotten Genocide."

To describe what he saw, Armin Wegner, a German Army medic, secretly photographed what was going on so that it could not be hidden from the world. He said, "Hunger, death, despair shout at me from all sides. The desert has devoured them." A group of American investigators reported: "this is the most colossal crime of all ages, this wholesale attempt on a race."

Today, the "G" word sends shivers down the spine of those who deny the genocide.

The mendacity behind the denial must be despised. Many national parliaments recognize it, but some major ones equivocate, afraid of alienating an important ally. For them it is simply too inconvenient to tell the truth. They admit that their position is unethical, but given the importance their strategic, political and commercial relations with Turkey, it would be inconvenient to acknowledge the genocide.

We have seen that Turkey is neuralgic on the subject - an example seen in its condemnation of the honesty of Pope Francis

who said: "It is necessary, and indeed a duty to recall the centenary of that tragic event ...[and that] concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it". Turkey's response was to recall its ambassador to the Holy See.

The Armenians were victims of crime; a crime that has been unrequited. But Turkey calls it self-defense.

It is very unsettling that the debates, one hundred years later, have progressed so little - in fact, they have regularly taken steps backward. The Armenian Genocide is a piece of history. It continually filters through, into the present but it cannot find its own historical certitude.

The genocide is still being held hostage by a perverse fight over establishing the most basic facts, that have long been established over and over again.

It has been part of the constant background noise, a bloody 20th century that whispers into our ears, that the genocide can be gotten away with, and that can even be okay to commit it.

Within living memory, murderous race hatred, has been and continues to be inflicted on many nations and the list is long and will grow, unless the world now remembers the Armenians and rejects the claim, that their killing was no more than a military, cruel necessity.

Together let us pray for the people who continue to suffer from the genocide of 100 years ago.

Let us remember many more Christians who are being persecuted for their faith and still experiencing Good Friday without a taste of joy of the resurrection.

In the words of Pope Francis, 'Let us unite ourselves to Jesus the Eucharist, and unite ourselves to so many brothers and sisters who suffer the martyrdom of persecution, of calumny and of murder for being faithful to the bread that satisfies, that is, Jesus.' Amen.