

COMMEMORATIVE REMARKS DELIVERED BY RA PRIME MINISTER TIGRAN SARGSYAN ON 10th ANNIVERSARY OF PASSING OF CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS GAREGIN THE FIRST

Holiness,
Eminences,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we are commemorating Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin the First, the outstanding Armenian statesman and church figure of the 20th century, whose biography is a unique concentration of our history of the last century. His tenure was marked by fruitful and hardworking efforts as he was multilaterally gifted, and his deeds were great.

He was a great Armenian, a spiritual and national individuality truly devoted to Armenian literature and culture. Such was His Holiness, and he was called to be such to resist the global challenges posed by controversial times. He was on the forefront of preservation of the Armenian identity, church construction, struggle for preservation of national originality and national values. He struggled in the name of belief, in the name of the future of our people, for the sake of all what he believed in unconditionally and served sparing no efforts.

History has always assigned Armenian Patriarchs a mission of acting under difficult circumstances full of many challenges, and none of them has failed in duty. Garegin the First was also a wholly devoted servant of the Sacred Armenian Church. His successful undertakings were backed by a broad vision, human charm and wise experience.

Truly blessed are those who happened to know His Holiness and got his blessing. I am one of those who knew Garegin the First before he became Catholicos of All Armenians - when he was the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia.

Lengthy speeches can be delivered about the merits of the Catholicos, especially as we must acknowledge that we have to pay homage to his rich legacy. He will remain in our hearts as a very wise and devoted patriarch, while others will remember him as the advocate of the ecumenical movement, deepening of interchurch cooperation and dialogue, by and large - as a person possessing a strong will and fighting in the battlefield of spiritual service.

He left us a few lessons which should be kept in mind just as Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin the First did follow them.

The first lesson is the call for unity.

The personal example of the Patriarch came to reaffirm the unity of the Armenian Apostolic Church under the watchword of “One nation, one church.”

Unity has always been the key to the achievement of our all-national goals. As a nation and society, we cannot afford going on separated from each other.

We cannot stand by and remain indifferent to each other’s pain. At the time when Catholicos Garegin the First assumed the office of all-Armenian patriarch this was not a theoretical formula, but a basic necessity stemming from the status of the Armenian Church and Armenian society.

The second lesson of His Holiness is that each of us has a tribute to pay to our Homeland and people.

Once he cited US President Kennedy saying: “Never ask what the country has done for you, instead ask yourself what you have contributed to your country.” Any country is bound by duty to its citizens - the State is responsible for the citizens. However, the State consists of each of us, and it needs our care and support.

It is by adding a brick to the building of statehood every day that the State gets stronger just as any baptized Armenian strengthens our church.

The third lesson is the love of national values, culture and schooling.

His immense love of culture and literature stood out among those numerous gifts of Garegin the First.

He was convinced that the nation’s spiritual security was anchored on culture and schooling. His Holiness was on the forefront of the efforts waged to advocate Armenian literature. We are confronted to the same problem today, namely to that of ensuring that the new generation returns to reading, and books become a basic component of everyday life.

The fourth lesson was the precept to live on boundless kindness deserving the Christians.

His Holiness used to say: “Mind your words: they should be such as might return to you with the pleasure of happiness caused to others.”

This is how Catholicos Garegin the First lived and acted, and he is sure to remain as such in the memory of grateful generations.

Therefore, our thankful generation should keep in mind the following precept of the late patriarch of blessed memory: “Let us keep pace with the world without turning off our path.”