



Representative of Moscow Patriarchate takes part in commemorative events of Armenian Catholic Church, marking centenary of Armenian genocide



On 26 April 2015, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Bishop Savva of Voskresensk, first deputy chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate, attended the commemorative events organized by the Armenian Catholic Church to mark the centenary of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire.

The representative of the Russian Church attended, as a guest of honour, the Liturgy of the Armenian rite, which was celebrated at the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Moscow by Catholicos-Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX of Cilicia of Armenian Catholics, who was in Russia on his first official visit.

Among those who concelebrated with Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX were Archbishop Raphaël Minassian, Ordinary of Eastern Europe of the Armenian Catholic Church; Archbishop Ezras Nersisyan, Patriarchal Exarch, head of the Russian and Nor Nakhichevan diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church; Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio to the Russian Federation; Archbishop Paolo Pezzi, Ordinary of the Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow; Msgr. Petros Petrosyan, vicar of Archbishop Raphaël Minassian in Moscow and all Russia; and the Russian Catholic priests. Praying at the service were over a thousand people, many of whom arrived from different countries.

Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX read out his address dedicated to the sorrowful events which had occurred in the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the 20th century.

After the Liturgy Bishop Savva of Voskresensk also addressed those present, saying in particular:

“We remember the tragic events which occurred a hundred years ago in the Ottoman Empire – the mass extermination of Christian population, the majority of whom were Armenians. Tens of thousands of Armenians were deported to the territories of modern Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and other countries. Many people were tortured to death *en route*. I visited the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan and was shocked by the scale of sufferings that the Armenian people had endured. Everyone who will visit the museum will learn that Russia and its allies in the First World War were the first ones to condemn the genocide against Armenians. On their initiative, the declaration was adopted on 24 May 1915, in which those killings were considered crimes against humanity. Today our people share the grief of the fraternal Armenian people.

“These days the Armenians living in the Middle East are again being subjected to genocide. Trying to justify their crimes by religious rhetoric, radical groups make deliberate efforts to commit even worse crimes than those of a century ago and kill thousands of Christians for being Christians. Moreover, the radicals intend to eliminate completely the Christian presence in the Middle Eastern region, which is the cradle of Christianity.”

On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Bishop Savva wished peace and prosperity to the Armenian Catholic Church.

After the service the procession with the cross went to the Armenian cross-stone (*khachkar*) installed near the church in commemoration of victims of the genocide. The Catholic clergy said a prayer service and blessed the *khachkar*.

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