Armenian Apostolic Church canonizes one and a half million faithful



April 23, 2015 – The canonization of one and a half million Armenians, victims of the persecution unleashed against the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century, took place in Echmiadzin, the spiritual center of the Armenian Apostolic Church. It was part of the commemoration of the centenary of those tragic events. The canonization was led by the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I. During the ceremony, icons of the Armenian Church's new martyrs were consecrated.

The service was broadcast live in many cities of the world, in which Armenian communities assembled to honour the victims of the genocide. One hundred tolls resounded from holy Echmiadzin's belfry in commemoration of the centennial tragedy of the Armenian people.

The ceremony was attended by Armenian President S. Sargsyan, heads and representatives of Christian Churches, and political and public figures. With the blessing of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church led by Metropolitan Varsonofy of St Petersburg and Ladoga, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate, arrived in Armenia for the commemoration events.

The delegations of other Local Orthodox Churches were headed by Patriarch John X of Great Antioch and All the East; Metropolitan Rostislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia; Archbishop Tikhon of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada; Metropolitan Seraphim of Zimbabwe (Patriarchate of Alexandria); Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostra (Patriarchate of Jerusalem); Bishop Anthony of Moravici (Patriarchate of Serbia); Bishop Naum of Russe (Patriarchate of Bulgaria); Metropolitan Isaiah of Tamassos and Oreini (Orthodox Church of Cyprus); and Metropolitan Meliton of Marathon (Greek Orthodox Church).

Participating in the events are also heads of Oriental Churches including Coptic Patriarch Theodore II, Patriarch Aphrem II of Antioch and All the East (Syrian Orthodox Church); Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan; as well as heads and representatives of the Eastern Catholic and Protestant Churches including Maronite Patriarch Beshara Boutros al-Rahi; Bishop Richard Chartres of London (Church of England), and others.

The delegation of the Holy See was led by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Among the participants was also Rev. Dr. O. F. Tveit, secretary general of the World Council of Churches.

The day before the canonization, a global forum ‘Against the Crime of Genocide’ took place in Yerevan. It was attended by Armenian officials and public and religious leaders who came to Armenia from many countries of the world.

On the same day, Metropolitan Varsonofy consecrated the bells and crosses of the newly-built church of the Russian Orthodox Church dedicated to the Elevation of the Honorable and Life-giving Cross of our Lord. It will be the Armenian representation of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

On April 23, Metropolitan Varsonofy laid a wreath at the memorial to Russian soldiers who died for the Motherland in wars with the Ottoman Empire and Persia in the 19th century. He also visited Russian Military Base No. 2012 to meet with its servicemen and give them archpastoral edification.

The commemoration events in Armenia with the participation of the ROC delegation will last till April 24.

DECR Communication Service

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