

ADDRESS
HIS GRACE BISHOP HOVAKIM MANUKYAN
Reception organized by ACCUK,
MARIOTT LONDON
11 July, 2015

Your Grace,
Your Excellencies,
Reverend Fathers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to greet you all wholeheartedly and express my deepest appreciation for the honour extended to me as the new primate of the diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ says: "For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve" (Mark. 10:45). Indeed, the words of our Lord regarding service echo in my mind specially now as I am called to serve the Armenian community in the United Kingdom and Ireland. I have come here to join you with the clear understanding that to be a bishop in a Diaspora community, first of all means to serve with a vision that good leadership is good stewardship.

I have come to a community that has deep historical foundations and has resiliently met many challenges over the decades. There have been and still are many great Armenians in this country, who are known for their achievements and merits and their service to the nation. Though we have come from diverse countries and even traditions, we all aspire to be one flock under the arches of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, deeply rooted in our culture and tradition. As the 5th century Armenian historian Yeghishe affirms, Christianity is a most visible and inseparable part of our make up as a people -- a reality that has been true throughout our history.

Wherever we have gone, our communities have built churches and schools to preserve and pass on our faith, language and identity. Throughout the centuries, as Yeghishe attests, for the Armenians the Church of Christ has been their mother and the Gospel their father. The Church, as mother, symbolises inclusiveness, care and service towards her faithful; "fatherhood" symbolizes her mission and teaching. No doubt, the Armenian Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland is an expression of this as well and will continue to serve its people; the Church is the pillar that keeps and strengthens our faith and identity as an inclusive community.

Prayer and liturgical life in the language of our forefathers and celebrations of our sacred feasts and festivities will continue to keep alive in us the love towards our ancestral legacy. As a progressive community we will both remain faithful to our traditions and will address the challenges of our times with new approaches, including those of language. We will continue to reach out and engage all

Armenians in the life of the community and the Church. We envision strengthening existing parish communities and creating new ones. We have a strong and committed Armenian youth who deserve continued attention and care. The links and relations with the homeland offer many opportunities for growth, nourishment and mutual support.

I have come here in the solemn year of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, when the Armenian Church has proclaimed saints the victims of the Armenian Genocide who were martyred for their faith and homeland, at the historic event in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, April 23rd, 2015. Genocide is a crime targeted against a group, and as a group, we are all Genocide survivors. We have a challenging task and work for justice ahead of us, which binds us as the surviving generation. We do believe that as Church and community we have to continue our efforts towards full and complete recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. The recognition and condemnation and reparation to the descendants of the survivors are not questions solely related to the Armenians, but are questions of justice and prevention of crimes against humanity.

Dear brothers and sisters, the new martyrs and the saints are with us and are praying for us. Today the rivers in those ancient lands are still stained with the blood of martyrs. Armenians and many other communities in the Middle East are suffering hardship and persecution. We will continue our ecumenical collaboration with sister Churches to protect the rights of the Christians in the Middle East. From my experience, I have confidence in our ecumenical relations and that the Churches will continue to express their united prophetic voice in defence of the rights of Christians in the Middle East and those suffering in different corners of the world.

I would like to thank the faithful people of this community, those who have given and continue to give their time and energy to the Church; the donors and supporters who keep the mission of our Diocese alive; the clergymen, chairs and members of the parish councils, the primate's office staff and all the volunteers for their work and dedication.

My special thanks to all those who organized this reception, particularly the Armenian Community Council, headed by Mr. Ara Palamoudian. I look forward to working with you for the vitality of this community and in pursuit of our shared mission.

Many thanks to you all. And May God's abundant blessings be upon you all.