

Second Palm Sunday – Our Mothers

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
May 13, 2018
Gospel Reading: John 12:12-23*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Whoever has been to Armenia has seen the statue of Mayr Hayastan (Mother Armenia), which is placed on a hill above the city of Yerevan, looking down on its residents. The story behind this statue is as follows...during the Soviet Union times, the Armenians wanted to replace the statue of Stalin which was there with a cross above their city. Naturally, during the Soviet times, this was illegal, so they found a cunning sculptor who created a statute of Mother Armenia, holding a sword perpendicular to her, thus resembling a cross (silly Soviets). So to this day, Mother Armenia, or the cross, looks down upon her children in Armenia.

This past week many celebrations happened, especially on May 8th. May 8, 1945, is known as V-E Day (Victory in Europe Day), the day when Nazi Germany officially surrendered, ending World War II and Mother Armenia was defended from fascism. May 8, 1992, is remembered as the Emancipation of Shushi, a city which was freed from the Azeri forces during the Karabagh War, an act of Mother Armenia protecting and freeing her children from tyranny. Then this year, May 8, 2018, a bloodless revolution was won. A new prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan was elected and the children of Mother Armenia healed and defended her from years of bribery and corruption.

Naturally, May 8th will be a date that is inscribed on the hearts and in the minds of all Armenians for centuries to come as a miraculous day, but it is also a day special to our St. Sarkis community. Truly it is Divine Providence and thanks to Facebook reminding me of past memories, because on May 8, 2016, two years ago, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian came to our community and anointed the cornerstones of our new church: our spiritual mother.

Today is Mother's Day, a day we remember, honor and show our love to our mothers, but it is also a day we should remember our motherland (Armenia) and our spiritual mother, the Church. Our Church Fathers refer to the Church as our spiritual mother because traditionally, we do not have godmothers. In the baptismal service, every child receives a godfather, but there isn't a godmother because the role of godmother is taken on by the church. That is to say, the role of godmother is taken on by each and every one of us: the community.

Now, of course, no mother is perfect and that includes the Church. As a result, people complain about our spiritual mother and abandon her. The usual complaints are she is sick, poor, old, different, not like others, strange, my brothers/sisters are not being nice, etc. There are many excuses why people may not like or appreciate our spiritual mother, the Church, and thus, leave her and abandon her for another. Yet, the question stands: if our physical mother was sick, poor, old, or different, if she was not like the other moms or our siblings weren't nice to us, would we

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still abandon her? Would we search for another? Would we say to her, “I don’t need you anymore, I can do it all on my own?”

I pray the answer is no, but this is what happens when it comes to our church. Any child who rejects or abandons his or her mother because of illness, elderliness or poverty is an ungrateful spoiled brat who is not worthy of being called that mother’s child. Rather, when our mother in is need of help, we should run to assist her, heal her and support her. This it the attitude we must have towards our mothers, Mother Armenia and our spiritual mother, the Church.

So today, as we call and/or visit our mothers or if our mothers have fallen asleep in the Lord and are no longer with us, let us remember them and give thanks to God for blessing us with them. Let us give thanks for a truly free and independent Mother Armenia, with a government for the people, supported by our prayers for wisdom and guidance from above. And yet, let us also remember our Church, our spiritual mother. For just as a mother is not a mother without children, likewise, our spiritual mother can only be called our mother with children, with us.

Let us thank God always for our motherland, our spiritual mother and our mothers.

Amen.