



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr ROBERT KOCHARIAN,
PRESIDENT OF ARMENIA***

Friday, 28 January 2005

Mr President,

1. I am delighted to welcome you and I cordially thank you for this pleasant visit, as well as for your kind words. Your presence today reminds me of our first meeting here in the Vatican, in March 1999, for the opening of the Rome-Armenia Exhibition, and of our meeting in September 2001, at Yerevan, during my Apostolic Pilgrimage to Armenia for the Jubilee celebrations of the 1,700th anniversary of the Armenian People's conversion to Christianity.

I willingly take this opportunity to send an affectionate greeting to the entire Armenian People and extend it to the millions of Armenians who, despite being scattered across the world, always preserve their ties with their culture and their Christian traditions.

2. Mr President, I am eager to express my sincere appreciation of the good relations that bind the Holy See to your Country's Government. I know that the Catholic community is well-thought of and respected, and its various activities contribute to the well-being of the entire Nation.

We all eagerly hope that collaboration between the Holy See and the Armenian Government will continue to increase and, wherever situations so require, that the status of the Catholic Church can be perfected.

3. In addition, relations of esteem and friendship exist between the Catholic Church and the Apostolic Armenian Church. Thanks to the initiative of Catholicos Karekin II, who gave it an even greater emphasis, this understanding will certainly have a positive impact on the peaceful coexistence of the entire Armenian People, required to face many social and financial challenges.

Furthermore, I hope that real, enduring peace will be achieved in the region of Nagorno-Karabagh, Mr President, which is your birthplace. This could come about by a determined refusal to resort to violence, through patient dialogue between all the parties, thanks also to an active international mediation.

4. The Holy See, which down the centuries has ceaselessly condemned violence and defended the rights of the weak, will continue to back every effort to build a solid and lasting peace.

Mr President, I assure you of my prayers for you yourself, your family and the Armenian People, as I invoke the abundant Blessings of God upon you all.

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