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Armenia Visit: Speech at Armenian Apostolic Cathedral at Etchmiadzin

Pope Francis

Arriving in Armenia June 24, Pope Francis highlighted the ecumenical nature of his journey by making the trip's first official appointment a visit to the main cathedral of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Etchmiadzin. Visiting the Orthodox cathedral, the pope focused on the faith of the country's 3 million people, the need for reconciliation and peace in the region, and the role of Christians in showing the world that faith is a power for the good of humanity. For both nights of his trip, Pope Francis was a house-guest of Catholicos Karekin II, patriarch of

"For Armenia, faith in Christ has not been like a garment to be donned or doffed as circumstances or convenience dictates but an essential part of its identity."

the Armenian Apostolic Church. "This sign of love eloquently bespeaks better than any words can do the meaning of friendship and fraternal charity," the pope said. In a world "marked by divisions and conflicts as well as by grave forms of material and spiritual poverty," he said, people expect Christians to provide a witness and example of mutual esteem and close collaboration. The pope spoke in Italian; a Vatican translation of his speech follows, copyright © 2016 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

It is very moving for me to have crossed the threshold of this holy place, a witness to the history of your people and the center from which its spirituality radiates. I consider it a precious gift of God to be able to approach the holy altar from which the light of Christ shone forth in Armenia.

I greet the catholicos of all the Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II, with heartfelt thanks for his gracious invitation to visit holy Etchmiadzin, and all the archbishops and bishops of the Armenian Apostolic Church. I thank you for your cordial and joyful welcome. Thank you, Your Holiness, for having welcomed me into your home. This sign of love eloquently bespeaks better than any words can do the meaning of friendship and fraternal charity.

On this solemn occasion I give thanks to the Lord for the light of faith kindled in your land, the faith that has given Armenia its particular identity and made it a herald

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