

# **IMPORTANT**

This is the **international version** of the text  
for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

**2026**

Kindly contact your local Bishops' Conference  
or Synod of your Church  
to obtain an adaptation of this text for your local context

*Resources for*  
**THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**  
*and throughout the year*

2026

“There is one body and one Spirit,  
just as you were called  
to the one hope of your calling”

*(Ephesians 4:4)*

*Jointly prepared and published by*  
Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity  
Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches

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# TO THOSE ORGANIZING THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

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## THE SEARCH FOR UNITY: THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

The traditional period in the northern hemisphere for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 18-25 January. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Wattson to cover the days between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic significance. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the Week of Prayer, for example around Pentecost (suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the Church.

Mindful of the need for flexibility, we invite you to use this material throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already reached, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ's will.

## ADAPTING THE TEXT

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use in local situations. Account should be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically. In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material; in other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

## USING THE WEEK OF PRAYER MATERIAL

- For churches and Christian communities which observe the Week of Prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.
- Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the Week of Prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the eight days, and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.
- Communities which observe the Week of Prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the eight days.
- Those wishing to undertake bible studies on the Week of Prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the eight days. Each day the discussions, which this year include a question to consider, can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.
- Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's Church.

# THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2026

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The international team appointed jointly by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (DPCU) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to review and finalise the materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 met at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, from 13 to 18 October 2024.

The drafting of the materials had been entrusted by the WCC and the DPCU to the Inter-Church Relations' Department of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Department coordinated the ecumenical group of Armenian Christians who prepared the first draft of the texts. During the meeting in Etchmiadzin, representatives of this group collaborated with the international team to finalise the texts. The meeting was chaired jointly by Revd Dr Mikie Roberts of the World Council of Churches in Geneva and Revd Fr Martin Browne OSB of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome. On 17 October 2024, the team was received in audience by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

## MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP PARTICIPATING

Revd Fr Martin Browne OSB	Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Rome)
Revd Fr Miguel Desjardins CCN	Bishops' Conference of France (Paris)
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Revd Dr Brigitte Rabariaona	United Bible Societies (Nairobi)
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# THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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## INTRODUCTION

The Armenian Apostolic Church, recognized as one of the world's oldest Christian communities, has played a pivotal role in shaping the spiritual and historical identity of the Armenian people for nearly two millennia. Established in the early 4th century, with roots tracing back to the Apostolic era, this venerable institution transcends religious organization; it embodies national resilience, cultural heritage, and spiritual fortitude. In addition to offering spiritual guidance, the Church has safeguarded Armenian traditions, language, and values, especially during periods of adversity and foreign domination. In contemporary times, particularly amidst challenges such as the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the displacement of the Artsakh population, the Church continues to serve as a source of strength and solace for Armenians. Today, it stands as a beacon of faith, unity, and continuity for Armenians worldwide, providing insights that resonate within the broader global Christian community.

## HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The origins of the Armenian Apostolic Church are deeply rooted in the teachings of the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew, who evangelized in Armenia as early as the 1st century AD. However, it was under the guidance of St Gregory the Illuminator, the first official Catholicos (Patriarch) of Armenia, that Christianity began to flourish. In 301 AD, Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity as its state religion under King Tiridates III, an event that distinguished Armenia as a pioneer of the faith long before the Roman Empire's embrace of Christianity.

The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, located near Yerevan, serves as the spiritual and administrative centre of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Sacred Tradition recounts that St Gregory received a divine vision of Christ descending from heaven and striking the ground with a golden hammer, designating the site for the first Armenian cathedral. This vision led to the construction of the Holy Etchmiadzin Cathedral, one of the oldest churches in the world, symbolizing the enduring bond between the Armenian Church and its faithful. Over the centuries, the Mother See has been a hub of spirituality and ecclesiastical authority, guiding the faithful and preserving Armenian Christian heritage.

## UNIQUE TRADITION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The Armenian Apostolic Church is part of the Oriental Orthodox tradition, characterized by distinctive theological and liturgical practices. Its rituals, shaped by both ancient Christian customs and Armenian cultural influences, reflect profound reverence and spiritual depth. The Divine Liturgy, together with the sacraments of the Church, celebrated in Classical Armenian, incorporate centuries-old chants, incense, and ornate vestments, creating an atmosphere that connects the faithful to the early Church.

The Armenian Apostolic Church, in accordance with the teachings of the first three ecumenical Councils, upholds the Apostolic doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the fullness of Christ's divinity and humanity, aligning itself with the broader Oriental Orthodox communion. The Church affirms that Christ suffered, was crucified, rose on the third day, and ascended into heaven, and it

awaits his glorious return to judge the living and the dead. This Christological understanding profoundly informs the Church's theological discourse and has shaped its ecumenical relationships throughout history. Through the sacrament of baptism, Armenians are born anew in Christ, participating in the divine life through the sacrament of Holy Communion and the celebration of the Eucharist. The Church confesses the Holy Spirit, who inspired the prophets and apostles, continues to inspire the faithful and guide the Church, which is one, holy, universal, and apostolic. The Church administers one baptism and proclaims the resurrection of the dead, the everlasting judgment, and the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Beyond its spiritual mission, the Church has been instrumental in the development of Armenian culture. It played a crucial role in the invention of the Armenian alphabet and the flourishing of Armenian literature and art, including the monumental project of translating the Bible into Armenian. Throughout periods of foreign rule, including the Arab, Mongol, Persian, and Ottoman empires, the Church acted as a guardian of the Armenian language, literature, and arts. Monasteries emerged as centres of learning and cultural production, preserving manuscripts and fostering religious art that embodies Armenian Christian identity. Even under Soviet atheism, the Church maintained a quiet yet resilient presence, supporting the spiritual and cultural needs of the Armenian people.

## THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN ARMENIAN LIFE

Throughout Armenia's turbulent history, the Armenian Apostolic Church has been vital to the survival and resilience of its people. It has provided continuity and stability amid persecution, forced migrations, and genocide. During the Armenian Genocide of 1915, the Church became a sanctuary for those suffering, offering solace and preserving hope for a brighter future. The Church commemorates this tragic event annually, honouring the martyrs' memory and advocating for recognition and justice.

In modern Armenia, the Church continues to wield significant influence over national life. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia experienced a religious revival, and the Armenian Apostolic Church reclaimed its central role in society. Today, the Church engages actively in social, educational, and charitable initiatives, addressing poverty, healthcare, and education. It also supports Armenian communities in the diaspora, fostering unity and ensuring that Armenian traditions and faith remain vibrant among Armenians worldwide.

## ECUMENICAL RELATIONS AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

The Armenian Apostolic Church has a rich tradition of ecumenism, striving to build bridges with other Christian communities. In recent decades, it has engaged in dialogue with various denominations, including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant churches, seeking common ground while preserving its unique heritage. The Church's participation in the World Council of Churches and its relationships with the Vatican and other ecclesial bodies exemplify its commitment to Christian unity and mutual understanding.

The Church's commitment to dialogue extends beyond Christianity, encompassing interfaith dialogue with other religions, such as Islam. These dialogues have fostered peace and understanding, particularly in a region marked by religious diversity and historical tensions. In this spirit, the Armenian Church has contributed to global discussions on religious tolerance, environmental stewardship, and social justice, reflecting its commitment to values of love, compassion, and respect in a complex world.

# BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2026

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## *Ephesians 4:1-13*

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high, he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."

(When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

*New Revised Standard Version*

# INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2026

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“THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT,  
JUST AS YOU WERE CALLED  
TO THE ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING”

*(Ephesians 4:4)*

For this year, the prayers and reflections for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by the faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with their brothers and sisters of the Armenian Catholic, and Evangelical Churches. These resources were developed, written, and discussed at the historic spiritual and administrative headquarters of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in Armenia, during the inspiring days of the blessing of the Muron (holy oil) and the re-consecration of the Mother Cathedral, on September 28-29, 2024, following extensive renovations over ten years. This commemoration provided the people of Armenia and the members of the drafting group with a unique opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the common Christian faith that remains alive and fruitful in our churches today. These resources draw upon centuries-old traditions of prayer and petitions used by the Armenian people, along with hymns that originated in the ancient monasteries and churches of Armenia, some of which date as far back as the fourth century. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 extends an invitation to draw upon this shared Christian heritage and to delve more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide.

Unity is a divine mandate at the core of our Christian identity, more than simply an ideal. It represents the essence of the Church’s calling – a call to reflect the harmonious oneness of our life in Christ amidst our diversity. This divine unity is central to our mission and is sustained by the profound love of Jesus Christ, who has set before us a unified purpose. As the Apostle Paul asserts in his letter to the Ephesians, “there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling” (4:4). This Bible verse, chosen for this year, encapsulates the theological depth of Christian unity.

Throughout the Holy Scriptures, God’s call to unity resonates from the earliest times. Starting with the Old Testament, Abram’s plea to Lot highlights the divine desire for peace and harmony among the faithful: “Let there be no strife between you and me and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred” (Genesis 13:8). Abram’s call for harmony and mutual respect, despite their eventual parting of ways, emphasizes the importance of living peacefully. This divine instruction continues in Leviticus 19:18, where God commands, “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.” Such commandments remind us that forgiveness and love are vital for maintaining unity within the community of faith.

The Psalms celebrate the beauty of unity among God’s people, declaring, “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). This imagery underscores the significance of unity in God’s design for His people. Proverbs, on the other hand, warns against discord among the people of God, stating that God despises those who sow strife among brothers and sisters (Proverbs 6:19), and teaches that patience and forgiveness are essential in maintaining harmony (Proverbs 19:11).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ elevates the concept of unity to a spiritual dimension, mirroring the profound relationship between Him and the Father. Unity among His followers is not merely the absence of conflict but a deep, spiritual bond reflecting the unity of the Holy Trinity. Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 calls for believers to be one as He and the Father are one, demonstrating that our unity is grounded in our relationship with Christ and our collective mission of sharing the Good News. The foundational command of Jesus to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34-35) reinforces that this love is the essence of our unity. This sacrificial and selfless love is both the bond of our community and the primary testimony of our discipleship. Jesus' prayer that our unity would witness to the world (John 17:23) is an enduring testament to His divine mission.

The Apostles echo this theme in their teachings. Paul's epistles stress the importance of unity within the Church, urging us to live worthy of our calling with humility, gentleness, patience, and love (Ephesians 4:1-3). Paul's vision of unity in Romans 12:6 shows the diversity of gifts that build up the Body of Christ. His plea for harmonious relationships in 2 Corinthians 13:11 and Philippians 2:1-2 call believers to be of one mind and one spirit in their commitment to Christ, thus reinforcing the divine mandate for unity, recognizing our diversity.

Ephesians 4:4 summarizes the teachings of Paul about unity, emphasizing, here too, that the followers of Christ represent "one body and one Spirit," united in a single hope. This metaphor signifies the Church as a unified entity transcending barriers of geography, nationality, ethnicity, and tradition. Paul uses the metaphor of the Church being the Body of Christ to describe its unity with the diversity of its members. He writes to the Corinthians, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:12). To the Colossians, Paul elaborates on Christ's role as the head of the unified body of diverse members, stating, "He is the head of the body, the church." (Colossians 1:18). Thus, the Church, although composed of many parts, functions as a cohesive whole. Each member has a unique role and contributes to the overall life and mission of the Church. Recognizing that we are part of one universal Body in Christ encourages global collaboration in spreading His gospel and serving humanity, shifting the focus from internal divisions to a collective mission. Conversely, to limit the Lord's Great Commission to go into the world and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19) to a community defined by ethnic, geographic, or socio-economic boundaries would deprive that community of one of the Church's essential foundations established by the Lord – the unity of His followers worldwide.

The concept of "one body" in Ephesians 4:4 also reflects the nature of the Church. Christianity transcends cultural and national boundaries, uniting believers worldwide in faith and hope. This fellowship, as envisioned in Revelation 7:9, where every culture, tribe, people and language is represented, provides strength and encouragement to believers, affirming their connection within the Body of Christ.

Emphasizing the importance of Christian unity, Paul adds "one Spirit," referring to the Holy Spirit who sustains this fellowship and empowers the Church to fulfil its mission. The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual life and guidance among believers, ensuring that the diverse members of the Church are together in faith and purpose. The Spirit fosters a deep, spiritual connection between believers, transcending differences and creating a bond that reflects the unity of the Holy Trinity. This shared spiritual bond is a basis for reconciliation, guiding believers globally and equipping them for effective witness and ministry. This global guidance helps align diverse expressions of faith with the core mission of the Church.

The teaching regarding the unity of the Church is further expanded by the Apostle in Ephesians 4:4 when he states that all Christians are called to the "one hope" of salvation and eternal life. This "one hope" means that all believers strive towards the same goal – eternal life with Christ. This is the ultimate goal and motivation for Christian living, providing a common vision and

purpose for all believers and uniting them in their faith journey and daily lives. This shared vision bridges confessional and cultural divides, encouraging Christians to work together in every way they can. Making “shared hope” the objective of our calling as Christians defines our membership in the Church in terms of worldwide fellowship in the hope of salvation and eternal life.

In a world with diverse and often divided traditions and expressions of Christian faith, Ephesians 4:4 reminds us that all believers are part of the “one body” of Christ. This unity is not about uniformity but a common commitment to the core truths of the Christian faith. It serves as a powerful witness to the transformative power of the Holy Spirit when Christians of varied backgrounds come together with a shared goal and vision with authenticity and sincerity.

Through its practices and teachings, the Armenian Apostolic Church offers us a profound reflection on the essence of unity within the universal Body of Christ, not merely as a concept but as a living and breathing reality. In affirming the Creed, the faithful declare their belief in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church,” thereby professing the centrality of this unity to their spiritual life. This commitment to unity finds its fullest expression in the Church’s Eucharistic gatherings, where the prayers of the community are not only for Christians around the world and their spiritual leaders, but also for the unity of the Church itself. Every Sunday, in the Liturgy, the faithful embrace one another and sing, “The Church has become one”, a tangible manifestation of their collective faith and shared purpose. The rich, martyrdom-filled history of the Armenian Church and her leaders speaks volumes about their unwavering efforts and resilience to maintain the Christian faith in the land of Armenia and the surrounding region. Unity within the Church should transcend doctrinal affirmation; it is a lived experience that deepens their spiritual identity and strengthens their collective witness. In embracing and living out this unity, the Armenian Apostolic Church not only honours its sacred traditions but also contributes meaningfully to the broader unity of Christ’s universal Church. This reflection invites us to recognize and cherish the transformative power of unity, both within our own faith communities and in the wider Church.

Spiritual maturity involves embracing our differences while pursuing unity with the same vigour as for doctrinal accuracy. Our strength lies in our ability to reflect Christ through our unity, demonstrating His love and grace to the world. By living out this divine call, we fulfil our mission and honour Christ, advancing His Kingdom on earth.

Let us embrace this divine calling to unity, not as an abstract ideal but as a vital expression of our faith. In a world where the Body of Christ is wounded by divisions within and between traditions and confessions, the Apostle’s call to unity is addressed to each of us, not only as separated church communities, but also as individuals within our communities. By living in unity, we not only witness to the love and power of our Lord Jesus Christ but also embody the essence of His teachings. As we support one another and celebrate our diverse gifts and talents, let us reflect the heart of Christ and further His work on earth.

# ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

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## *Light from light for light*

### INTRODUCTION

It is an honour for the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church to be highlighted during this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We are happy to share with our Christian brothers and sisters around the world an ecumenical service that comes from the heart of our church's ancient Christian witness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The title of the service, **Light from Light for Light** is inspired by the attribute of Christ adopted by the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, the monumental touchstone of all Christians, whose 1700th anniversary we commemorated last year. Christ is 'Light *from* the Light'. But the Anointed One was sent into this world with a mission: to shine God's Light into this troubled world, and to bring us into loving communion with each other and with God. Thus, 'Light *from* Light for Light'.

This service is adapted from the 'Sunrise Service', one of the daily prayer-hours of the Armenian Church, which was compiled by the great Catholicos (ie patriarch/leader of the Church), the theologian, hymnographer, liturgical reformer, ecumenist and pastor, St Nersess 'the Gracious' of Gla (†1173). It is significant that St Nersess composed this service, which has no counterpart in any other church, with a specifically ecumenical intent: to return to Christ's embrace a sect of sun-worshipping pagans who were circulating in Armenia during his time. The imagery of Christ the Light suffuses the prayers, hymns and Scripture readings of the service and surely would have attracted the interest of the sun-worshippers. St Nersess sought out the lost sheep not through intimidation, nor by negotiation, but through a creative and loving offering of the very best his church's Christian witness had to offer. Perhaps this can serve as a model for all of us who strive for the Christian communion desired for us by God.

It is also noteworthy that Armenia became the first nation to declare Christianity as its official religion, through the efforts of St Gregory when he converted the pagan King Trdat in the year 301AD. St Gregory is known as 'the Illuminator' because he brought the Light of Christ to the Armenian people through baptism of the Holy Spirit in the name of the Holy Trinity.

The faithful of the Armenian Church are grateful for the prayers of all of the churches during this year. May the Holy Spirit open our hearts wide to perceive more vividly the radiant light of Almighty God's love for his children, the grim disgrace of our division, and the blazing urgency for us to rekindle the light of Christian reconciliation, as we thank God always for the boundless compassion and mercy of the 'Light from Light'.

The texts assigned to the leader (**L**) may be shared between the various clergy or representatives from the different traditions present. Likewise, texts assigned to a reader (**R**) may be distributed among several individuals. Where particular elements of the service call for two readers, this is indicated by **R<sub>1</sub>** and **R<sub>2</sub>**.

Following the prayer after the sermon/homily, the two sides of the assembly recite or chant verses of Psalm 97 alternately, with all joining together on the response. As the psalm is being recited/chaned, candles are distributed to the people. The candles are lit during the hymn which follows, and all join in reciting the Nicene Creed.

While local assemblies may wish to choose suitable songs familiar in their region, it would be desirable, if possible, to sing the hymn texts from Armenia that are included in the worship service. The Hymn of Light (*From the East and to the West*), the hymn during the lighting of the candles (*Ageless, uncreated God*) and the hymn before the Lord’s Prayer (*Christ, the good and gracious Way*) can all be sung to a simple melody which can be found in the Appendix. The hymn during the lighting of the candles also features a short refrain before each verse – a single word, *Looys*, which means “light” in Armenian. The melody is included in the service and assemblies are encouraged to include it when celebrating this worship service.

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

*Light from light for light*

L Leader  
R Reader  
A Assembly  
C Choir or Cantor

### **The Lord's Prayer**

L Blessed is our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**A Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

L For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever.

**A Amen.**

### **Invocation**

R<sub>1</sub> May the name of the Lord be blessed forever, for his name is before the sun.

R<sub>2</sub> All the nations of the earth will be blessed through him and all generations will extol him.

R<sub>1</sub> Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, the only worker of wondrous deeds, the holy name of his glory is forever blessed. The whole world will be filled with his glory.

**A Amen! Amen!**

R<sub>2</sub> Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

R<sub>1</sub> Now and always and unto the ages of ages.

**A Amen.**

R<sub>2</sub> Again in peace let us beseech the Lord. Heed our prayers, raise us to life and have mercy on us.

L Blessing and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.  
Now and always and unto the ages of ages.

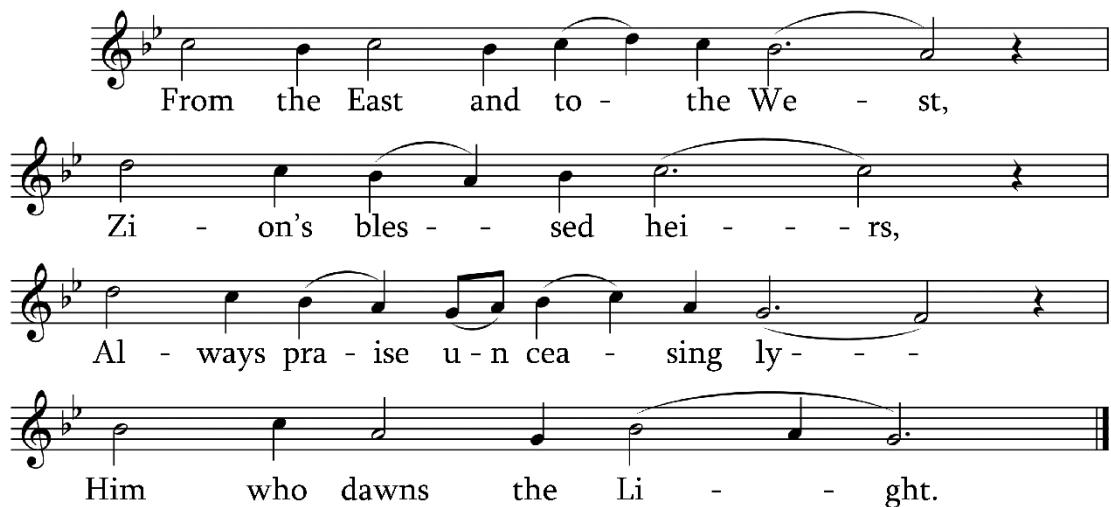
**A Amen.**

*Psalm 72:15-18*

## Hymn of Light

*As the hymn is being sung, a large candle is lit in the front of the church.*

Moderate



From the East and to - the We - st,  
Zion's bles - sed hei - - - rs,  
Al - ways pra - ise u - n cea - sing ly - - - ,  
Him who dawns the Li - - - ght.

C/A **From the East and to the West,  
Zion's blessed heirs,  
Always praise unceasingly  
Him who dawns the Light.**

**Churches of the righteous ones,  
All who honour him,  
Glorify the One who gave  
Meaning to the light.**

*St Nersess the Gracious*

## Litany

R From Sunrise in the East to Sunset in the West, and throughout the entire Christian world, wherever people call on the name of the Lord in holiness – by their prayers and intercession may the Lord have mercy on us. Let us beseech God to deliver us from sin and from the temptations of the world. May the Lord accept the vows and supplications of our hearts and count us worthy of his faith and his commandments together with all of his saints. Almighty Lord our God, raise us to life and have mercy on us.

**A Raise us to life, O Lord.**

R *(If celebrated in the morning)*

That the Lord may usher forth this sunlit morning and guide the day ahead in peace; with faith, let us beseech the Lord.

or

*(If celebrated in the evening)*

That the Lord may usher forth this coming evening and the night ahead in peace; with faith, let us beseech the Lord.

**A      Grant it, O Lord.**

R      For an angel of peace to be our guardian, let us ask the Lord.

**A      Grant it, O Lord.**

R      For the pardon and forgiveness of our transgressions, let us ask the Lord.

**A      Grant it, O Lord.**

R      For the great and mighty power of the holy Cross to help us, let us ask the Lord.

**A      Grant it, O Lord.**

R      Once again, for our true and holy faith, all together, let us beseech the Lord.

**A      Lord, have mercy.**

R      Let us commit ourselves and one another to the almighty Lord our God.

**A      We commit ourselves to you, O Lord.**

R      Have mercy on us, Lord our God, in your great mercy. Let us all say together as one:

**A      Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

## Prayer and sharing the peace

*The Leader may face East for the following prayer, which is prayed with arms outstretched:*

L      From Sunrise in the East to Sunset in the West, blessed are you, O Lord, because you are King, and your name is revered throughout the universe. Let our psalmody resound sweetly in your hearing. Let justice dawn from your righteousness and rise over our frailty, and may your most holy name be glorified. Let us become worthy to abide by your commandments and to sing praise and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

**A      Amen.**

*The Leader faces the people and may make the sign of the Cross, while saying:*

L      Peace to all.

**A      And with your spirit.**

*The people may exchange a suitable greeting of peace.*

R      Let us bow down to God.

*The people bow down to God in worship, saying:*

**A Before you, O Lord.**

*The Leader may turn to the East and prays again, saying:*

L Everlasting God, Eternal God, you dawned as light in this world and you illumined us from the darkness of our sin. Infinite God, you came into our finite existence, abundantly pouring out the gifts of the Holy Spirit on your creatures. Now and for all eternity you are extolled, most great God, with the Father and the most Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

**A Amen.**

## Scripture readings

R1 This reading is from the Prophet Isaiah (58:6-11)

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

R2 This reading is from the Letter of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians. (4:1-13)

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high, he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

**C/A (chanted) Alleluia. Alleluia.**  
**For with you is the fountain of life;**  
**in your light we see light.**

R Alleluia. Rise to your feet.

*The Leader faces the people and may make the sign of the Cross, while saying:*

L Peace to all.

**A And with your spirit.**

R Listen attentively to the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to John. (12:31-36)

**C Glory to you, Lord our God.**

R Attention! God is speaking.

Jesus said to the crowd: 'Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, 'We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?' Jesus said to them, 'The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.'

**C/A Glory to you, our Lord Jesus Christ.**

## Sermon/Homily

### Prayer

R Gracious Lord, God of all,  
Guide for the lost, Light for those in darkness.  
Our eyes turn to you, hear our prayers.  
May the sun of your glory shine forth, giving life and light to all, from the East to the West, and from the North to the South. Let the morning rays of your eternal spring awaken us who await your coming.

O Jesus Christ, Light from the Light, dwell within us, who have come together to worship your holy and precious name. Let your life-giving radiance kindle within us a deeper love for one another. May your brilliant light stir us to ever more flourishing unity. Like diverse flowers in the garden of your Kingdom, may your divine brilliance cause us to bloom in harmony. And so, all as one, may we always joyfully praise and glorify you, and the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

*Adapted from St Gregory of Narek*

## Responsorial psalm

*The two sides of the assembly recite or chant verses of the psalm alternately, with all joining together in the response. As the psalm is being recited/chantered, candles are distributed to the people.*

R Our eyes turn to you, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.

**A Our eyes turn to you, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

**Side<sub>1</sub>** The Lord is king. Let the earth rejoice;  
let the many coastlands be glad!

**Side<sub>2</sub>** Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;  
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

**A Our eyes turn to you, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

**Side<sub>1</sub>** Fire goes before him,  
and consumes his adversaries on every side.

**Side<sub>2</sub>** His lightnings light up the world;  
the earth sees and trembles.

**A Our eyes turn to you, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

**Side<sub>1</sub>** The mountains melt like wax before the Lord,  
before the Lord of all the earth.

**Side<sub>2</sub>** The heavens proclaim his righteousness;  
and all the peoples behold his glory.

**A Our eyes turn to you, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

**Side<sub>1</sub>** All servants of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols;  
all gods bow down before him.

**Side<sub>2</sub>** Zion hears and is glad, and the towns of Judah rejoice,  
because of your judgments, O God.

**A Our eyes turn to you, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

**Side<sub>1</sub>** For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth;  
you are exalted far above all gods.

**Side<sub>2</sub>** You who love the Lord, hate evil; he guards the lives of his faithful;  
he rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

**A Our eyes turn to you, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

**Side<sub>1</sub>** Light dawns for the righteous  
and joy for the upright in heart.

**Side<sub>2</sub>** Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous,  
and give thanks to his holy name!

**A Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.  
Now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.**

*Psalm 97*

## Hymn

*While the hymn is being sung, two young people holding unlit candles or tapers light them from the central candle and the light is passed to all in the church.*



Ageless, uncreated God,  
Father, Lord of all;  
Heed our prayers, the earnest pleas  
Of those serving you.



From the Father, wondrous Dawn,  
Just and righteous Sun;  
Rise, shine forth upon us all  
Kind and tender Light.



Spirit pouring from the Fath' r,  
Wellspring of the good;  
Fill us with your rad'iant Light  
In this new day's morn.



Persons three, in nature one,  
One Divinity;  
We confess you at all times –  
Holy Trinity.

*St Nersess the Gracious*

## Creed

L Bathed in the light of the Wisdom of Christ,  
together, let us confess our common faith.

A We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made;  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us all, and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,  
and was made human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered and was buried.  
On the third day he rose from the dead in accordance with the scriptures.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father.  
Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and to life in the age to come. Amen.

## Closing prayers

L Again, in peace, let us beseech the Lord.  
Let us glorify Almighty God, who has shined his light upon his creatures. Now, may he once more shine his abundant mercy upon those who glorify his name in song. Almighty Lord our God, raise us to life and have mercy on us.

A Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

L Gracious and almighty Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, you are the true Light, who cast out the darkness of sin, and shined into our hearts the joy and hope of your eternal Kingdom.

**A Lord, have mercy.**

L Loving Lord, accept the prayers of all your faithful children throughout the world, who call out to you with one mind, one voice, and one heart. Through your beloved disciple John, you promised that if we walk in your light, then we will have communion with one another, and your precious blood will cleanse us of all sin. Bring us that blessed communion, O Saviour!

**A Lord, have mercy.**

L Grant us peace, O Loving Lord, and remove the scourge of civil unrest and violence from the face of the earth. Change the hearts of all who make war and touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by war. Comfort all prisoners of war and speedily bring them home. Let the light of your love shine in all the dark places of our world and hasten the day when all peoples may dwell in peace with justice.

**A Lord, have mercy.**

L O Refuge and Shelter, Lord Jesus Christ, look with compassion on refugees throughout the world, who suffer the agony of displacement and the loss of their homes. Move us to manifest our communion with you, with them and with each other through gestures of hospitality and loving help.

**A Lord, have mercy.**

L O Christ, our Saviour, we pray for the people of Armenia and Artsakh, and their kindred throughout the world, who long ago turned to your light through the preaching of the Apostle Thaddeus and the miraculous witness of St Gregory the Illuminator.

**A Lord, have mercy.**

L Shine the light of your righteousness and wisdom on all your creatures. Make us children of light and children of the day, so that we may always live our lives reverently, and become for all the world, worthy lampstands for your life-giving light.

**A Lord, have mercy.**

L For you are our Saviour, and to you be glory, dominion and honour, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

**A Amen.**

## Hymn

*Moderate*

**C/A** Christ, the good and gracious Way,  
And the living Truth.  
Leader of our spirits from  
Earth to heav'n above.

Jesus, Door to Life, True God,  
Through you we shall come;  
Now admit us to your Father,  
By your Holy Spirit.

*St Nersess the Gracious*

## The Lord's Prayer

**L** Blessed is our Lord Jesus Christ.

**A** Amen.

**A** Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**L** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**A** Amen.

# REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

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## DAY 1

### Our calling

#### Verse for the day

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Eph 4:1).

#### Additional Scripture passages

Micah 6:6-8

Psalm 133

Mark 3:13-15

#### Reflection

In Ephesians 4:1, Paul emphasizes the significance of living a life worthy of the “calling to which you have been called”, which is intrinsically linked to the unity of the Christian community. In the midst of a divided society, the Gospel calls believers to overcome barriers and foster reconciliation. This divine calling invites us to embody God’s values within the fellowship of believers. By aligning our conduct with this calling, we not only reflect Christ’s teachings but also contribute to the unity and growth of the Body of Christ. Recognizing and embracing this calling is essential for living out the true essence of Christian community and nurturing a harmonious, supportive fellowship.

#### A question to consider

How does reflecting on the “calling to which you have been called” as described in Ephesians 4:1 inspire you to actively contribute to unity within your local and wider church communities?

#### Prayer

God of light,  
you have called us out of darkness into your light.  
May our response to your call lead us to actively seek reconciliation  
and share your light in the world.  
Amen.

## DAY 2

### **Bearing with one another in love**

#### **Verse for the day**

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bear with one another in love (Eph 4:2).

#### **Additional Scripture passages**

Zechariah 7:8-10

Psalm 25:6-10

Luke 10:30-36

#### **Reflection**

The Apostle Paul exhorts us to live in a manner worthy of our Christian calling by providing profound social guidance. He calls believers “with all humility and gentleness, with patience” to “bear with one another in love” (Eph 4:2). This divine calling is not merely a personal journey but is vividly expressed in our interactions with others. The four virtues Paul highlights – humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance – are all crucial for nurturing loving relationships. To embody these virtues means approaching others with a spirit of genuine humility, extending gentleness even towards those who test our patience, and showing forbearance with those who challenge us. Most profoundly, it involves “bearing with one another” despite our differences, thereby reflecting a love that transcends all earthly divides and embodies the grace of God's boundless compassion.

#### **A question to consider**

How can the virtues of humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance, as mentioned in the letter to the Ephesians, help us as believers navigate and overcome divisions within our local Christian communities?

#### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you show us how to be patient with one another in humility and gentleness.  
May the light you have shined on our path lead us towards unity  
and help us heal the wounds of division and indifference  
that often break communities apart.  
Amen.

# DAY 3

## **The bond of peace**

### **Verse for the day**

Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Eph 4:3).

### **Additional Scripture passages**

Isaiah 11:6-9

Psalm 86:8-13

John 14:27-31

### **Reflection**

Peace is a crucial factor in maintaining unity within the Church. In Ephesians 4:3, the “bond of peace” signifies a vital and active principle that not only connects but also sustains the unity of the Christian community. Christ, the Prince of Peace (cf. Isaiah 9:6), preached peace and reconciliation. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), both a gift and a result of the Spirit at work. The “bond of peace” is an active force that maintains church cohesion, holding diverse members together, despite differences in background or opinion. Peace fosters meaningful relationships, allowing believers to interact harmoniously and more readily forgive one another. Paul highlights the fact that true unity requires ongoing commitment to peace. It calls for active cultivation and promotion of peace among members.

### **A question to consider**

How does St Paul’s teaching that peace is a fruit of the Spirit impact our daily interactions and relationships within our communities, especially where there is need for reconciliation or forgiveness?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ,

you are the Prince of Peace.

Strengthen the bond of peace among us and in our troubled world.

Change the hearts of all who make war; touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by war.

We pray especially for the people of Armenia and Artsakh,  
and their kindred throughout the world.

Let the light of your love shine in all the dark places of our world  
and hasten the day when all peoples may dwell in peace with justice.

Amen.

## DAY 4

### Called to one hope

#### Verse for the day

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling (Eph 4:4).

#### Additional Scripture passages

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Psalm 24:1-6

John 17:20-26

#### Reflection

In Ephesians 4:4 the Apostle Paul highlights the profound unity that binds the Church worldwide. This unity is rooted in the one Spirit and the one hope that connect all Christians in their faith. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit ignited the global mission of the Church. This same Spirit empowers us and nurtures our collective mission today, fostering a universal Church that transcends national and cultural boundaries. Our shared hope in salvation through Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of this unity, drawing together diverse peoples into one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. As Christians, we are defined by this singular hope and the one Spirit through whom we are baptized and renewed. Our task is to ensure that this unity is not just a concept but a lived reality, reinforcing our shared mission and love for one another.

#### A question to consider

In what ways can we, as a church or community, embrace the challenge of our one calling, while maintaining our unique identity and traditions?

#### Prayer

Jesus Christ,

you have brought us together in all our diversity as your family and church.

In the face of so many situations on earth where hope has given way to despair and wounded hearts, renew our hope in the Holy Spirit's work of changing the world.

Move us to spread this hope to everyone everywhere.

You are the true Light, who casts out the darkness of sin,  
and shines into our hearts the joy and hope of your eternal love.

Amen.

# DAY 5

## **One faith, one baptism**

### **Verse for the day**

One Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph 4:5).

### **Additional Scripture passages**

Zechariah 14:6-9

Psalm 100

Matthew 28:16-20

### **Reflection**

In Ephesians 4:5, the Apostle Paul emphasizes that the act of baptism solidifies Christian unity by marking the entrance of individuals into the Church's fellowship, affirming their shared commitment to the same Lord. Baptism creates the collective identity of the Church since we are one in the Body of the Lord. This sacrament serves as a powerful reminder that, while members may come from varied backgrounds, their unity in faith and baptism transcends all divisions. By focusing on these unifying elements, the Church can celebrate its diversity while remaining steadfastly united. This challenges us to prioritize our shared identity in Christ over our differences, reinforcing the bond that unites all Christians.

### **A question to consider**

What collaborative initiatives can our various communities undertake to celebrate our shared faith in Jesus Christ and the unity established through baptism?

### **Prayer**

Spirit of God, and true God,  
who descended on the river Jordan, and into the upper-room;  
who enlightened us by the baptism of the Holy Font,  
we have sinned against Heaven and before you,  
purify us again with your divine fire,  
as you did the Apostles with fiery tongues.  
Have mercy on Your creatures and especially on us.  
Amen.

*St Nersess the Gracious (adapted)*

# DAY 6

## One Lord and Father

### Verse for the day

One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all (Eph 4:6).

### Additional Scripture passages

1 Kings 8:56-60

Psalm 148:7-13

Matthew 5:44-48

### Reflection

In Ephesians 4:6, St Paul emphasizes the profound oneness of God, declaring that he is “above all and through all and in all”. God is both transcendent, existing beyond all, and immanent, actively present within his creation. This foundational truth calls the Church to embody and live out unity, rooted in the shared belief in one true God who is the Father of all believers. “All” signifies that every person created in God’s image falls under God’s authority. Worshiping one God creates a strong bond of unity among Christians. Just as family members find common ground through their love for a parent, Christians are called to be united in their devotion to the same Father.

### A question to consider

In what ways can the image of God as the loving and caring Father of all be integrated into the mission and ministry of our different church communities so as to promote a more unified Christian witness in the world?

### Prayer

We confess with faith and worship you, Loving Father,  
for you are in heaven beyond words, and on earth beyond understanding,  
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

In your tender care, you are the beginning and fulfilment of everything.  
Glory forever to you, Father,  
with the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

*St Gregory of Narek (adapted)*

## DAY 7

### **God's gift given in baptism**

#### **Verse for the day**

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift (Eph 4:7).

#### **Additional Scripture passages**

Jeremiah 1:4-9

Psalm 131

Matthew 25:14-18

#### **Reflection**

The churches and all local communities are diverse in their God-given unity, with grace given according to the gift of Christ building up God's kingdom. These spiritual gifts are granted by one Lord, in one baptism, for one purpose. Diversity in unity: this is the unique Christ-centred richness and power of the Church in the movement of the Holy Spirit.

#### **A question to consider**

How will our relations change if we accept that diversity of gifts is not a reason for opposition and competition but for mutual strengthening and sharing?

#### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
by the action of the Holy Spirit in the one baptism,  
you have bestowed wonderful graces and multiple gifts upon us  
for the sake of building up your Body, the Church.

Grant us now the willingness to fully appreciate the richness of their diversity  
and use them fully to further the spread of the Gospel.

In your name we pray.

Amen.

# DAY 8

## **Growing into Christ**

### **Verse for the day**

The gifts he gave were for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13).

### **Additional Scripture passages**

Proverbs 9:10-12

Psalm 119:97-104

John 17:3-7

### **Reflection**

In Ephesians 4:13 the apostle Paul summarizes the vision of the Body of Christ in three key areas: unity in faith, maturity in knowledge, and fullness in Christ. Maturity comes through an ever-deepening knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is life-changing knowledge that leads us to renew our minds and put it into practice in actions rather than just intellectual comprehension. We resemble him more and more as we get to know him better. To gain this knowledge, one must both study his teachings and live them in obedience daily. The “full stature of Christ” is the goal of Christian maturity. It means becoming more like Jesus in every way: loving as he loves, serving as he serves, and reflecting his character. We are called to evaluate our spiritual journey, seeking unity with each other, growing in our knowledge of the Son of God, and striving for his fullness in us.

### **A question to consider**

How are we growing in our knowledge of Christ and allowing that knowledge to shape our actions, thoughts and relationships?

### **Prayer**

O Christ, True Light of the world,  
make my soul worthy to see the light of your glory  
with joy on the day of my calling,  
and to rest with the hope of good things  
in the house of the righteous,  
until the day of your great coming.  
Have mercy upon your creation,  
and on me, a great sinner.  
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.  
Now and always and unto the ages of ages.  
Amen.

# APPENDIX

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## ECUMENICAL SITUATION IN ARMENIA OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS

### INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a significant turning point for Armenia, leading to a resurgence of religious and cultural identity. Over the past three decades, the ecumenical landscape in Armenia has undergone notable transformations, characterized by the revival of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the emergence of new Christian denominations and efforts towards interfaith collaboration.

### REVIVAL OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The Armenian Apostolic Church, one of the world's oldest Christian churches, experienced a renaissance following the end of Soviet atheism. During the Soviet era, religious activities were severely restricted, and many churches were repurposed or left in disrepair. The newfound religious freedom allowed the Church to reclaim its role as a cornerstone of Armenian identity and spirituality.

The revival began with the restoration of church properties and the reopening of seminaries. The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the spiritual and administrative headquarters of the Armenian Apostolic Church, spearheaded these efforts. The Church also focused on forming its clergy, fostering religious education, and restoring liturgical traditions that had been suppressed for decades.

### EMERGENCE OF NEW CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

With the collapse of Soviet control, Armenia witnessed the emergence of various Christian denominations and religious movements. Evangelical and other Protestant churches, previously operating underground, began to establish formal congregations and build places of worship. The Armenian Evangelical Church, with roots dating back to the 19th century, experienced growth. Pentecostal and charismatic movements also gained traction, particularly among younger Armenians seeking contemporary forms of worship. These denominations introduced new theological perspectives and worship practices, adding to the religious diversity within the country. Over the last 15 years a special committee has been established to discuss various aspects of collaboration between Armenian Apostolic and Armenian Evangelical Churches. The areas of collaboration concern merely the social and diaconal mission of the Church in Armenia.

### THE LIFE OF THE OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN ARMENIA

The Assyrians, numbering around 2,500 to 3,000 according to the 2011 census, represent the third largest ethnic minority in Armenia, following the Yazidis and Russians. Primarily adherents of the Assyrian Church of the East, a small community also belongs to the Chaldean Catholic Church. The largest Assyrian populations are concentrated in the villages of Verin Dvin and Dimitrov in the Ararat region, Arzni in the Kotayk region, and Nor Artagers in the Armavir

region. Relations between the Armenian and Assyrian peoples have long been characterized by warmth and friendship, rooted in shared histories and mutual tragedies, including the genocides perpetrated by Ottoman Turkey during World War I. Assyrians also maintain a distinct cultural presence in Armenia, with four public schools where their language, Neo-Aramaic, is taught. Additionally, the Assyrian community is represented in the Parliament of Armenia. Relations between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East are similarly fraternal. This was underscored by the official visit of the Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III to Armenia in 2021, during which he met with the Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II.

## INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND ECUMENICAL EFFORTS

The past three decades have seen a concerted effort towards promoting interfaith dialogue and ecumenical cooperation in Armenia. The Armenian Apostolic Church, while maintaining its primacy, has engaged in activities with other churches such as the Armenian Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church of Armenia through the work of the Bible Society of Armenia, the WCC Round Table Charitable foundation, etc.

Since 2010 the Armenian Apostolic Church and Islamic Culture and Communication Organization of Iran are maintaining an active dialogue on the issues of ecology and religious tolerance. The collaboration was strengthened by the visit of Mohammad Mehdi Imanipour, head of the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization of Iran, to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and an official meeting with His Holiness Karekin II.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the progress made, the ecumenical landscape in Armenia faces several challenges. Additionally, the rise of secularism and materialism in modern Armenian society poses a challenge to the influence of all religious institutions.

However, these challenges also present opportunities for further ecumenical engagement. The shared history of persecution and survival under Soviet rule provides a common ground for Christian communities to build stronger ties. The growing interest in preserving Armenian cultural and religious heritage offers a platform for collaboration on various initiatives.

## CONCLUSION

The ecumenical situation in Armenia over the past 30 years reflects a dynamic and evolving religious landscape. The revival of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the emergence of new Christian denominations have shaped the country's spiritual and cultural identity. As Armenia continues to navigate the complexities of the modern world, the spirit of ecumenism will play a crucial role in fostering a harmonious and inclusive society.

# WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

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## Themes 1968 – 2026

*Materials jointly prepared by the WCC Faith and Order Commission  
and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (now Dicastery) were first used in 1968*

*From 1975 onwards, these texts were prepared on the basis of a project drawn up by a local ecumenical group  
each year in a different country*

- 1968** To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:14)
- 1969** Called to freedom (Galatians 5:13)  
*(Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)*
- 1970** We are fellow workers for God (1 Corinthians 3:9)  
*(Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany)*
- 1971** ...and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13)  
*(Preparatory meeting in Bari, Italy)*
- 1972** I give you a new commandment (John 13:34)  
*(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)*
- 1973** Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)  
*(Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of Montserrat, Spain)*
- 1974** That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:1-13)  
*(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)*
- 1975** God's purpose: all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10)  
*(Material from an Australian group – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)*
- 1976** We shall be like him (1 John 3:2) or, Called to become what we are  
*(Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches – Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)*
- 1977** Enduring together in hope (Romans 5:1-5)  
*(Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva)*
- 1978** No longer strangers (Ephesians 2:13-22)  
*(Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England)*
- 1979** Serve one another to the glory of God (1 Peter 4:7-11)  
*(Material from Argentina – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)*
- 1980** Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:10)  
*(Material from an ecumenical group in Berlin, German Democratic Republic – Preparatory meeting held in Milan)*
- 1981** One Spirit - many gifts - one body (1 Corinthians 12:3b-13)  
*(Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)*
- 1982** May all find their home in you, O Lord (Psalm 84)  
*(Material from Kenya – Preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)*

**1983** Jesus Christ - the life of the world (1 John 1:1-4)  
(*Material from an ecumenical group in Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Céligny (Bossey), Switzerland*)

**1984** Called to be one through the cross of our Lord (1 Corinthians 2:2 and Colossians 1:20)  
(*Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy*)

**1985** From death to life with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-7)  
(*Material from Jamaica – Preparatory meeting held in Grandchamp, Switzerland*)

**1986** You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:6-8)  
(*Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia) – Preparatory meeting held in Yugoslavia*)

**1987** United in Christ - a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-6:4a)  
(*Material from England – Preparatory meeting held in Taizé, France*)

**1988** The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4:18)  
(*Material from Italy – Preparatory meeting held in Pinerolo, Italy*)

**1989** Building community: one body in Christ (Romans 12:5-6a)  
(*Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Whaley Bridge, England*)

**1990** That they all may be one...That the world may believe (John 17)  
(*Material from Spain – Preparatory meeting held in Madrid, Spain*)

**1991** Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and Romans 15:5-13)  
(*Material from Germany – Preparatory meeting held in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Federal Republic of Germany*)

**1992** I am with you always... Go, therefore (Matthew 28:16-20)  
(*Material from Belgium – Preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium*)

**1993** Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5:22-23)  
(*Material from Zaire – Preparatory meeting held near Zurich, Switzerland*)

**1994** The household of God: called to be one in heart and mind (Acts 4:23-37)  
(*Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland*)

**1995** Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15:1-17)  
(*Material from Faith and Order – Preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England*)

**1996** Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3:14-22)  
(*Material from Portugal – Preparatory meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal*)

**1997** We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)  
(*Material from Nordic Ecumenical Council – Preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden*)

**1998** The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:14-27)  
(*Material from France – Preparatory meeting held in Paris, France*)

**1999** He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples (Revelation 21:1-7)  
(*Material from Malaysia – Preparatory meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy*)

**2000** Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14)  
(*Material from the Middle East Council of Churches – Preparatory meeting held La Verna, Italy*)

**2001** I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6)  
(*Material from Romania – Preparatory meeting held in Vulcan, Romania*)

**2002** For with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36:5-9)  
(*Material CEEC and CEC – Preparatory meeting near Augsburg, Germany*)

**2003** We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:4-18)  
*(Material churches in Argentina – Preparatory meeting at Los Rubios, Spain)*

**2004** My peace I give to you (John 14:23-31; John 14:27)  
*(Material from Aleppo, Syria – Preparatory meeting in Palermo, Sicily)*

**2005** Christ, the one foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:1-23)  
*(Material from Slovakia – Preparatory meeting in Piestany, Slovakia)*

**2006** Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them (Matthew 18:18-20)  
*(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland)*

**2007** He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak (Mark 7:31-37)  
*(Material from South Africa – Preparatory meeting held in Faverges, France)*

**2008** Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:(12a) 13b-18)  
*(Material from USA – Preparatory meeting held in Graymoor, Garrison, USA)*

**2009** That they may become one in your hand (Ezekiel 37:15-28)  
*(Material from Korea – Preparatory meeting held in Marseille, France)*

**2010** You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48)  
*(Material from Scotland – Preparatory meeting held in Glasgow, Scotland)*

**2011** One in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (cf. Acts 2:42)  
*(Material from Jerusalem – Preparatory meeting held in Saydnaya, Syria)*

**2012** We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58)  
*(Material from Poland – Preparatory meeting held in Warsaw, Poland)*

**2013** What does God require of us? (cf. Micah 6:6-8)  
*(Material from India – Preparatory meeting held in Bangalore, India)*

**2014** Has Christ been divided? (1 Corinthians 1:1-17)  
*(Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Montréal, Canada)*

**2015** Jesus said to her: Give me to drink (John 4:7)  
*(Material from Brazil – Preparatory meeting held in São Paulo, Brazil)*

**2016** Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)  
*(Material from Latvia – Preparatory meeting held in Riga, Latvia)*

**2017** Reconciliation - The love of Christ compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14-20)  
*(Material from Germany – Preparatory meeting held in Wittenberg, Germany)*

**2018** Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power (Exodus 15:6)  
*(Material from the Caribbean – Preparatory meeting held in Nassau, Bahamas)*

**2019** Justice and only justice you shall pursue (Deuteronomy 16:18-20)  
*(Material from Indonesia – Preparatory meeting held in Jakarta, Indonesia)*

**2020** They showed us unusual kindness (Acts 28:2)  
*(Material from Malta – Preparatory meeting held in Rabat, Malta)*

**2021** Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit (cf. John 15:5-9)  
*(Material from Community of Grandchamp – Preparatory meeting held in Areuse, Switzerland)*

**2022** We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him (Matthew 2:2)  
*(Material from the Middle East Council of Churches, Lebanon – Preparatory meeting held online)*

**2023** Do good; seek justice (Isaiah 1:17)  
*(Material from the Minnesota Council of Churches, USA – Preparatory meeting held at Bossey, Switzerland)*

**2024** You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:27)  
*(Material from Burkina Faso – Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)*

**2025** Do you believe this? (John 11:26)  
*(Material from Community of Bose – Preparatory meeting held in Bose, Magnano, Italy)*

**2026** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling (Ephesians 4:4)  
*(Material from Armenia – Preparatory meeting held in Etchmiadzin, Armenia)*

# KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

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- c.1740** In Scotland a Pentecostal movement arose, with North American links, whose revivalist message included prayers for and with all churches.
- 1820** The Revd James Haldane Stewart publishes “Hints for the General Union of Christians for the Outpouring of the Spirit”.
- 1840** The Revd Ignatius Spencer, a convert to Roman Catholicism, suggests a “Union of Prayer for Unity”.
- 1867** The First Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops emphasizes prayer for unity in the Preamble to its Resolutions.
- 1894** Pope Leo XIII encourages the practice of a Prayer Octave for Unity in the context of Pentecost.
- 1908** First observance of the “Church Unity Octave” initiated by the Revd Paul Wattson.
- 1926** The Faith and Order movement begins publishing “Suggestions for an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity”.
- 1935** Abbé Paul Couturier of France advocates the “Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” on the inclusive basis of prayer for “the unity Christ wills by the means he wills”.
- 1958** Unité Chrétienne (Lyon, France) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches begin co-operative preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer.
- 1964** In Jerusalem, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I prayed together Jesus’ prayer “that they all may be one” (John 17).
- 1964** The Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II emphasizes that prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement and encourages observance of the Week of Prayer.
- 1966** The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity [now known as the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity] begin official joint preparation of the Week of Prayer material.
- 1968** First official use of Week of Prayer material prepared jointly by Faith and Order and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.
- 1975** First use of Week of Prayer material based on a draft text prepared by a local ecumenical group. An Australian group was the first to take up this plan in preparing the 1975 initial draft.
- 1988** Week of Prayer materials were used in the inaugural worship for The Christian Federation of Malaysia, which links the major Christian groupings in that country.
- 1994** International group preparing text for 1996 included representatives from YMCA and YWCA.
- 2004** Agreement reached that resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity be jointly published and produced in the same format by Faith and Order (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (now Dicastery) (Catholic Church).

- 2008** Commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. (Its predecessor, the Church Unity Octave, was first observed in 1908).
- 2017** Marking the commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, the materials for the Week of Prayer in 2017 were prepared by Christians in Germany.
- 2025** Marking the commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the first Ecumenical Council of the Church, held in Nicaea, near Constantinople in 325 AD, the materials were prepared by the brothers and sisters of the monastic community of Bose in northern Italy.