

**Address of Patriarch-Catholicos Nerses Bedros XIX  
Catholicos of All Armenian Catholics  
Consecration of Our Lady of the Assumption Church  
Saturday, March 6, 2004**

Your Grace  
Reverend Fathers  
Representatives of Government Bodies  
Distinguished Guests  
And most beloved faithful parishioners of Sydney

It is with great joy that I recall these words from the Holy Bible, “ This is the day of the Lord’s victory; let us be happy, let us celebrate!”

As Christians we rejoice in the knowledge that with the Assumption of the Holy Mother she was glorified and crowned as our Heavenly Mother.

The consecration of this renovated church with the participation of the first Armenian Catholic pastor in Australia, Monsignor Ouzounian, the present pastors of Sydney and Melbourne, Father Parsegh Sousanian and Father Kevork Berberian, and in the presence of our faithful and honoured guests is an occasion for exceptional joy.

This Church, majestic in its simplicity, owes its existence to the Armenian Catholic parish of Sydney, its generous benefactors and the entire Armenian community.

You must be the majesty of this church not only with your regular presence but with your enthusiasm and living faith.

This church is the symbol of the church established by our Lord and also a symbol of the temple of our soul, for as St. Paul says, “For we are the temples of the living God!”

This church was consecrated today. With our baptism we were also anointed with the Holy Chrism and through this sacrament our souls became “temples to the Holy Spirit”.

The church being more than this stone structure is the gathering place of the living church, the congregation of the faithful, who gather to express their faith in collective unity led by the priest. St. Peter in his first letter instructs the first Christians with these words, “Come to the Lord, the living stone rejected by man as worthless but chosen by God as valuable. Come as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building the spiritual temple, where you will serve as holy priests to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.”

With the same thoughts one of our patriarchs has said, “When we dedicate this newly consecrated church to the glory of God, we recognise the souls of our youth as majestic temples filled with the Holy Spirit. With these words he recalled St. Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians “Surely you know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you!” And therefore dear faithful, you are the living church.

Every church must serve as a house and school of unity for its congregation. Unity becomes real when there is a spirit of cooperation amongst Christian individuals, committees and organisations.

Truly, you are the living building stones of the church and you are bound together with the mortar of sincere Christian love. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives within us, when establishing the church said “And now I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.” With the grace of God, may your bodies and souls become temples to the Living God. Let us thank the Lord, who encouraged His faithful to construct this temple of prayer and who granted them love, commitment and drive.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude the Church Council and Church Finance Committee members and all faithful who have worked hard in completing the renovations of the church and also in the organisation of its consecration. I ask the Lord to bless them all and invite the Holy Mother to reward them for their efforts.

I also thank the Government of Australia and in particular the Premier and Government of New South Wales who have so generously welcomed my compatriots to this most hospitable country and afforded them the opportunities to grow and prosper within their ancient traditions, culture and Christian faith.

I conclude by announcing that I will offer Holy Mass in this newly consecrated church tomorrow celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pontification of the Holy Father as the Vicar of Christ. We will pray so that the Lord will strengthen him to continue his unique mission on behalf of the Catholic Church and humanity. I will also pray for all your good and noble intentions.

Amen.