

"We Exist for Armenia & Etchmiadzin" Archbishop Tr'trian of Antelias on Church Unity

By Hratch Tchilingirian

LONDON, UK - Since the election of Karekin I as Catholicos of All Armenians, the issue of church unity has once again become one of the most debated topics in Armenian communities around the world.

On April 22, this reporter conducted an interview in Antelias with His Eminence Archbishop Ardavazt Tr'trian, the newly elected Locum Tenens of the Great House of Cilicia. His thoughts on church unity follow:

Q. What is the significance of this election to the Armenian Church?

A. The Cilician See still has a lot of work to do in the national life of our people. As long as its usefulness is emphasized in the life of our people, this See will continue to exist. And if there comes a day when the See realizes that it does not have any role to play -- or it is realized that in the Diaspora the Catholicossal status of this See is not needed -- then the people will decide for themselves. We have a council system and the council or the assembly decides what they wish.

Q. Generally speaking, after the election of His Holiness Karekin I as Catholicos of All Armenians, there is a good atmosphere for church unity. What are your thoughts on this issue?

A. The Church is always one. At one time people caused certain upheaval -- most of the time the noise was in the papers, but the Church was one in everything. And now, with the election and enthronement of Catholicos Karekin I, this unity has been further emphasized. In actuality, there was nothing substantial between the two Sees. When Etchmiadzin was in need, this See helped. This is our understanding.

The Cilician Catholicosate is always an auxiliary [Arm.: ozhantag] of Etchmiadzin. Whenever needed, this See can dedicate its most valuable servant to Etchmiadzin. [The election of Catholicos Karekin] was a proof of that; therefore, this is our understanding of unity. When there is a need, we are completely ready to dedicate our abundant service to Etchmiadzin. Our existence is for Armenia, for Etchmiadzin. As I have said to His Holiness Vazken I in 1971, this See is not self-ending, it is not self-centered. The purpose of this See is Armenia, it is Etchmiadzin. And we shall continue to work for them.