



## Green Pilgrimage Network

# Armenian Apostolic Church theological statement on green pilgrimage

As representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, we join our efforts in safeguarding the creation and call upon the whole mankind to take care of the nature the way our Heavenly Father takes care of His flock because:

We believe that the whole universe and the various beings existing in it as well as life were created and loved by Lord God. On the sixth day of creation humanity received the commandment from God: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28, and 9:2), echoed in the Psalms: “You made him ruler over the works of your hands” (Psalm 88:6). However, this commandment does not imply the exploitation of nature by humanity; instead it lays particular responsibility on the wreath of creation. This is affirmed in the next chapter of The Book of Genesis where we read that: “Lord God took mankind and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15). Humanity with its abilities is not the only witness of God: yet, as the Psalms say, nature is also witness: “The heavens praise your wonders” (Psalm 89:5).

Lord God, Creator of the Heaven and the Earth, teaches humankind through creation. Nature is one of the most important means of knowing God and perceiving God. And the whole Holy Scripture from Pentateuch to the Books of the Prophets, from the Gospels to the Book of Revelation is full of natural sceneries making divine truths perceivable.

Finally, the special value of nature is emphasised by Christ by making it an oratory (Matthew 26:36, Mark 14:32). The cradles of spiritual life in Armenia are the monastic brotherhoods and



*The cathedral at Etchmiadzin, Armenia*

monasteries full of hermits and anchorites, and the theological schools wreathed by the presence of Reverend Fathers. The prayer houses are always located in forests, high mountains, by lakesides or on desolate islands which for centuries have inspired harmony with nature to the thousands of Armenian as well as foreign pilgrims and ordinary visitors.

During daily service we also pray: “for seasonable weather, gentle rains and abundance of fruit” (Book of Hours, Etchmiadzin, 1999, p. 399). And during the orders of Andastan (Blessing of the four directions of the world), Djrorhnek (Blessing of the water), Khaghoghohrhnek (Blessing of the grapes) established as a result of the reforms realised by the Holy Fathers, the Armenian clergymen bless the land, its fruit, the fields, the plants and their roots, the churches and the dwelling places together with the four directions of the world (Book of Hours, Etchmiadzin, 1999, p. 268).

The Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, loyal to the divine commandment, the tradition of its predecessors and the rich experience of the Church, expostulates and teaches its faithful children. And at the same it takes care of nature, the witnesses of which are various environmental measures and seminars, classes of green theology, tree-planting in the Nersisyan forest in Etchmiadzin (organised by the joint efforts of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Round Table and ECLOF Foundations) as well as installation of solar power in the Vazkenian Theological Seminary on the island of Sevan for water heating and other household needs.

The harmonic implementation of this goal is to be established firmly on our branches like the Truthful Vine (John 15:1-17).

*Prayerfully*

*Bishop Hovakim Manukyan*

*Director for Inter-Church Relations, Armenian Apostolic Church*