

Armenian Church News



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Remembrance Sunday at the Genocide Memorial in Cardiff

Community warmly welcomed Primate Bishop Hovakim to Wales

Armenians in Cardiff and from various places in Wales and beyond gathered on Saturday, 7th November, one day before Remembrance Sunday, at the Armenian Genocide Memorial in the Temple of Peace. The Primate, His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, presided over the service, held on the 8th Anniversary of the erection of the Armenian *khatchkar* memorial, and on the occasion of Remembrance Sunday. Despite the rain, a dedicated crowd of Armenians joined Bishop Hovakim, Father Movses Sargsyan and the choir from London in prayers, remembering not only Armenians, but, as the Primate underlined, all victims of past and present atrocities.

Organised by the Cardiff Parish, under the leadership of John and Ani Torosyan, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Hovakim at the Ararat Baptist Church, where Armenian families, young people and children from near and far had



gathered for the worship service. In his sermon, Bishop Hovakim spoke about the Archangels Gabriel and Michael, as it was their feast, and their mission as God's messengers, servants and advocates, and explained how these attributes are important in the lives of the faithful. The celebrant was assisted by Father Movses, deacons Hovik Hovhanessian and Nairi Afrikyan, and little Hovig Tchilingirian. The choir, under the direction of maestro Aris Nadirian, had especially come from London on this occasion. Special clergy guest, Canon Patrick Thomas, better known as "Honorary Pastor to Armenians in Wales" for his closeness to Armenians, took part

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His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Primate

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in the Divine Liturgy by reading the Gospel passage of the day. At the end of the service, the Primate invited Canon Patrick to bless the congregation, which he delivered in both Welsh and English.

Following the Divine Liturgy, Shakeh Major Tchilingirian invited the congregation to take part in the “Circle of Life” Armenian circle dance ceremony. Shakeh had conceived the “Circle of Life” especially to commemorate the centenary of the Armenian Genocide and as a way of celebrating the triumph of the Armenians over death and destruction. Even as she briefly demonstrated the steps to the participants, she said “the dance steps did not matter as much as the intention of holding hands and taking these steps together.” The first dance was a Gorani with the soul-awakening call of the *zurna* and the pulsating drums. Goranis are song-dances from Mush/Daron about lost love and lost land and the yearning for them. The second dance was one

typically danced by Western Armenians who are the surviving descendants of the Genocide. With its very closely linked arm-hold, it was defiant, grounded and full of hope. Everyone took part in the circle dance, including the children. One of the participants said, “We felt we were getting stronger and stronger by each step we took together.”

A delicious lunch was prepared by the ladies of the Parish, under the leadership of Ani Torosyan. Homemade Armenian and Middle Eastern dishes were served and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

In the afternoon, two books were launched with a special programme: Rubina P. Sevadjian’s *In the Shadow of the Sultan*, a novel, and Delphine Jacquart’s (Brigitte Tavitian) *Memoire*. John Torosyan, chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed everyone and expressed his delight





that Rubina Sevadjan was present and spoke about her book; Arpie Morselli introduced *Memoire* and Canon Patrick Thomas, author of *Remembering the Armenian Genocide*, reviewed the Genocide Centenary year. Passages from *In the Shadow of the Sultan* were read by young Gaiane Kanekanian, David Danekanian, Maria Essave Vanegh and Leo Essave Vanegh. At the conclusion of the programme, the Primate congratulated the authors and gave his blessing. Bishop Hovakim was presented with a gift by Canon Patrick Thomas, a replica of a Celtic cross. Book signing and conversation with the authors continued after the formal closing of the event.

