

One Hundred and Eleven Years

By Linda Jevahirian

Every year on April 24 Armenians across the globe memorialize the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The Young Turks of the Ottoman Empire tried to wipe out the Armenian people in a brutal massacre camouflaged by the chaos of World War I. The slaughter resulted in bloodshed and death but failed to finish the job. The demons who commanded the killing and deportations are ghostly witnesses to a nation, people and culture that, since the beginning of their time, has flourished and thrived. The heroes are the eternal Armenian souls – the martyrs - who carry our prayers to God.

In 2015 the Armenian Church canonized the victims of the massacre as saints. *The Order of Intercessory Prayer of the Holy Martyrs* is celebrated yearly and venerates those who suffered and perished. In 2026 the prayer service featured young adults who spoke about how the survival of the Armenians has inspired their hope for the future of their heritage and faith.

Gabby Krikoroian of St. John Armenian Apostolic Church remembers a time when she didn't feel like she quite belonged in the world around her:

"I didn't fully recognize it at the time, but I was quietly carrying a weight with me—the weight of being a diasporan Armenian in a small community. A weight consisting of pride, determination, devotion, and faith—but also, at times, guilt... and even a sense of isolation. Something essential has survived - our Christian faith and Armenian *hoki*. To keep this going we have to continue the persistent togetherness. ... this unspoken *gab*, or tie—that binds us all to one another, and to those who came before us, and those who will come after us. To me, this is how we stay Armenian."

Hovhannes Vardanyan Koehler of the Armenian Congregational Church, said of the victims:

"Instead, they willingly chose to take the path of martyrdom. We must now take the path of the survivors. We must strive forth together. That's why as young Armenians living in a free society, exposed to so many social and material distractions, we should learn from the example of the martyrs to remain firm in our faith and live ideal Christian lives.

On this memorial remembrance day of our sanctified martyrs of the 1915 genocide, we should also reflect upon the many similar sacrifices our forefathers made through the ages and preserved our Christian heritage. We must in turn emulate our ancestor's sacrifices and piety by dedicating our lives to serve our communities and churches by becoming more involved in spiritual and social activities, by living Christian lives while proudly advocating for truth, justice, and human rights."

Narek Basmajian of St. Vartan Armenian Catholic Church so faithfully recited:

"I want us to believe in God. Trust in him. Trust his justice. *'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled'* Matthew 5:6. Let us believe in his justice and work every day towards that justice. Let us believe that we will return to Mush, Van, Ardahan, Shushi, Hadrut and Askeran."

Richard Norsigian, Co-Chair of the Armenian Churches of Greater Detroit Genocide Commemoration Committee summarized the presentations:

"The very meaningful reflections by our youth brought forth assurance, and the profound effect of their presentations exceeded all expectations. First and foremost, in no uncertain terms, they declared that the torch of Armenian survival has been passed to our future generations, thereby securing the

Armenian Christian faith, culture, and heritage wherever our people live, whether in Armenia or in the diaspora.

Secondly, it revealed their profound reverence for our sanctified martyrs of the Armenian Genocide and their generation's assurance that the martyrs did not die in vain.

Finally, it had a deep and heartwarming impact on the hundreds gathered to honor our sanctified martyrs. I was indeed very proud of all four of our young presenters."

The martyrs were a persuasive witness to our faith. The hymns and songs sung during the April 24 service remind us of what we are called to honor:

"We call to you, holy martyrs,
Angels with an earthly body,
Holy advocates and witnesses.
You completed your lives in death by the sword.
Your commemoration on this rousing feast
Is like the stream of your flowing blood,
O holy ones.
May they be a holy sacrifice with the Lord
So that we may be kept always safe and secure."

To the Martyrs of April, *Aprilyan Nahadagneroon* (L. Nazaryantsee/arr. K. Pidejian)

"Sleep peacefully, martyred brothers,
You who fell fatally wounded in battle."

Song of Eulogy for the Martyrs, *Maherk Nahadagats* (K. Garvarentsee/V. Tekeyan)

"For those who fell for our freedom,
Today our hearts together form an altar.
Devotion to their souls is our only thought now,
Our hope and love ascend toward them as incense."

Saints' Eyes, *Surberu Achqer* (Martin Aharonyan/Tadevos Tonoyan)

"But the Saints' Eyes keep reminding us that God watches us from above."

Click [here](#) to watch a stunning performance of Saints' Eyes as Armenian youth commemorate humbly the sorrow, the resilience and the eternal vigilance of the devoted.

In the eyes of the universe one hundred and eleven years is just a speck of dust. But it is the dust of our people that fell to the ground - ancestors that we so profoundly revere for making the ultimate sacrifice to keep us bound as one Christian nation, on earth and in heaven, from now until eternity. To pray through the martyred saints is to be connected to God.

Further Reading

To learn more about the sanctified martyrs and the meaning of sainthood and martyrdom in the Christian tradition, click the links below to watch two videos published by the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. The third link is the Detroit memorial concert in 2015.

- [Bread & Salt: Alive in Heaven](#)
- [A Great Cloud of Witnesses](#)
- [A 100-Year Journey of Remembrance and Song](#)