

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION OF THE  
HOLY CROSS

[Fairlawn, Nov. 17, 1996]

"For today the sun of righteousness with its brilliant light made the glory of its Divinity shine around us. Wherefore miraculously enlightened by it, we acknowledge the solemn designation of this sanctuary." [St. Hovhannes of Odzun].

How many times in the course of one day—while we are on our way to work or on our way back home, or on a weekend trip somewhere—does our gaze rest on a church structure? Consciously or subconsciously we

recognize it as a church and dismiss it from our minds as our thoughts continue to dwell on other matters. It takes another kind of an experience—a feeling that one can sense only inside a sanctuary and in the presence of a congregation—to become fully aware of the presence of Christ, the sun of consciousness. It is always His presence that makes us realize that we are in the House of God, in the Temple of the Lord with the Daughter of Zion, the Holy Queen, in the nuptial chamber of the Holy Universal Apostolic Church.

The church is indeed the House of God, because, according to the prophets, the

Word of God dwells and rests in the Christian sanctuaries. The church is also referred to as the Temple of God not in memory of the Temple of King Solomon, which has a geographical location, but as a celestial vault from one end of the world to the other. That is the reason why we Armenians build our churches in the likeness of the vault of the heavens, with a massive dome, arches and vaulted ceilings. For we believe that the rays of His glory appear there and the Lord of glory lives in it. The church is the Daughter of Zion and the Holy Queen, since it took its beginning at Mount Zion, where Christ preached the

Good News, through which we are united with God as His adopted children.

The church that Christ built is His corporate Body, which serves all people who turn to it as an impregnable shelter. In this stronghold, Christ and His faithful share the same yoke and are collectively called the offspring of Zion. The designation of the Church as the Holy Queen is due to the fact that the Word of God shedding His incorruptible blood decorated it with the royal purple and crowned its head with His Holy Cross.

In Christian symbolism the church is the nuptial chamber of the celestial king.

This is not a mere poetical metaphor, but a true reflection of the bond between the celestial bridegroom—that is, Christ—and the souls of the righteous at rest, who were enlightened with the universal message of the Gospel, endowed with faith and cleansed by the Holy Font.

The universal and the apostolic nature of the church is also true, as it is open to all those who wish to heed the invitation of the Holy Apostles or their designees and successors, to assemble at one site of obedience, be baptized and be reborn into God's inheritance.

These comments on the church, which are based on the teachings of our fathers, should not only be known to every Armenian Christian. It is important that each one of us earnestly applies his or her mind and soul to feel within ourselves the essence of these statements. Otherwise, the church will have no meaning, and this as well as any sanctuary becomes just an impressive hall. In order avoid this and impress the fear of God in our hearts, our church fathers introduced liturgical practices to make us feel that through consecration a new or a renovated church structure truly became the house of God.

The services today were intended for this purpose. In this house of God the faithful of the Fairlawn parish, as before, shall come to pray and be one with the Lord Jesus Christ. In the house of God one prays but also listens to God's words. The main source for these is the Holy Bible, which is read in our church not once but on several occasions every Sunday morning. Excerpts from various books are also incorporated into the offices and the Divine Liturgy.

Listen attentively to these so that the presence of Christ our God may also shed the brilliant light of His divinity on you and give you a deeper understanding of the heart, so

that you may truly become one with Him.  
Amen.

END