

National Committee for the
Visit of His Holiness
Vasken I
Catholicos of All Armenians



Diocese of the
Armenian Church of America
630 Second Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016-4885
(212) 686-0710

CONTACT: Ms. Nancy Mouradian
(313) 224-0414
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HIS HOLINESS VASKEN I, SUPREME PATRIARCH OF ALL
ARMENIANS, CONSECRATES A "KHATCHKAR"
-- ARMENIAN STONE CROSS --
AT ST. JOHN ARMENIAN CHURCH, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22**

Detroit, Mich. -- The "Khatchkar" -- a sculptured stone Cross -- one of the glories of Armenian art and the Christian faith -- will be consecrated by His Holiness Vasken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, at St. John Armenian Church, 22001 Northwestern Highway, Southfield, Mich., on Sunday, November 22, at 12:00 noon.

Consecration of the sculptured Cross, over five feet in height, follows celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Church by the Catholicos who is in Detroit on a pontifical visit from the Holy See at Etchmiadzin in Armenia, USSR. During his month-long sojourn in the United States, His Holiness has visited New York City, Boston, the West Coast and Canada. Thousands of Armenians in the Detroit area are turning out for the Catholicos' visit, the first in almost 20 years.

The "Khatchkar" to be consecrated at St. John was sculptured in Armenia and presented to the Church as a special gift.

In many ways, the "Khatchkar" resembles the Irish High Cross. Some scholars see a possible link between Armenia and ancient Ireland because of this as well as other shared similarities in the creation of illuminated manuscripts and various types of religious art.

-more-

news release

The "Khatchkar" emerged as a dominant religious concept during the Middle Ages, after the liberation of Armenia -- the world's oldest Christian nation -- from Arab domination. The Cross -- "Khatch" in Armenian -- is carved on stone slabs, often fixed on huge stone bases. These memorial stones, found in graveyards and around monasteries and cathedrals, are usually rectangular in shape, the Cross being the motif carved in relief on the central plane. In most cases, the Cross is intertwined with elaborate interlaced carving, suggesting the Tree of Life and its sinuous strands accompanied by flowers and leaves. Birds and animals abound. "Khatchkars" are often embellished with depictions of Christ, the Virgin and Child, angels and saints. There are also such Biblical scenes as Daniel in the Lion's Den; the Sacrifice of Isaac; the Nativity; and the Baptism of Christ.

"Khatchkars" are always placed on the walls of Armenian churches and cathedrals upon their consecration. Inscriptions on those found in cemeteries commemorate the name and family of the deceased.

The symbol of the "Khatchkar" appears in Armenian illuminated manuscripts, and it has been used widely in rugs of Armenian origin. In this case, the symbol of the Cross is woven in many intricate ways into overall elaborate patterns and designs.

Ancient "Khatchkars", which have archaic carvings of divine and Biblical personages, strongly resemble those on Irish High Crosses. The parallels between Armenian and Celtic sculpture and interlaced work are apparent, and some historians believe there is evidence that Armenian monks and missionaries may have visited Ireland in the early Christian period.

#

JMB - 11/87