



(Vatican City, June 23, 2016).- On the eve of his apostolic trip in Armenia from 24 to 26 June, the Pope has sent a video message to the country, broadcast yesterday afternoon, in which he expresses his joy and asks the Armenians to pray for his imminent visit. “With God’s help I will come among you to make, as the motto of the trip tells us, a visit to the first Christian country”, he says. “I come as a pilgrim, during this Jubilee Year, to draw upon the ancient wisdom of your people and to drink from the wellspring of your faith, steadfast as your famous crosses sculpted in stone”.

“I come to the mystical highlands of Armenia as your brother, inspired by the desire to see your faces, to pray together with you and to share the gift of friendship. Your history and the events in the life of your beloved people inspire admiration and pain in me: admiration, because you have found in Jesus’ cross and in your ingenuity the strength always to rise up anew, even from sufferings that are among the worst in humanity; and pain, for the tragedies that your forefathers have experienced in the flesh. Let us not allow painful memories to become the master of our heart; even when repeatedly assailed by evil, let us not give up. Instead, let us do as Noah did, when after the flood he never tired of looking towards the sky and of freeing the dove several times, until she finally returned to him bearing a tender olive leaf: it was the sign that life could take hold again and hope could arise again”.

“As a servant of the Gospel and a messenger of peace, I wish to come among you to support every effort on the way of peace, and I would share our steps on the path of reconciliation, which generates hope”.

“May the great saints of your people, especially the Doctor of the Church Gregory of Narek, bless our encounters, which I eagerly await”, the Holy Father exclaims at the end of his message. “In particular, I look forward to

embracing again my brother Karekin and, along with him, I wish to bring renewed zeal to our journey towards full unity”.

“Last year, from different countries, you came to Rome, and we prayed together beside the Tomb of St. Peter. Now I come to your blessed land to reinforce our communion, to advance along the way of reconciliation and to let us be inspired by hope. Thank you, until we meet again! *Tsdesutiun!*”.