“A Hundred Years From Now”

Your Eminence, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, our beloved Primate;

Reverend clergy brothers and honorable "Yeretsgeens."

Our distinguished honorees, esteemed guests, parish leaders, dear friends, and my beloved St. Vartan family: Բարի եկաք սիրելի ընտանիք:

Tonight, I want to begin not with the year 1926, but with the year 2126.

Imagine, one hundred years from tonight, a young child walking through the doors of St. Vartan Church, holding the hand of a parent.

That child looks toward the altar, hears the familiar prayers, sees the light of the candles, and feels something deeply comforting.

This is my church. This is where I belong.

That child has not yet been born.

We do not know that child's name.

But what that child will find here, one hundred years from now, depends on what we do today.

And that, my dear friends, is the true meaning of our centennial.

One hundred years ago, a generation of faithful Armenians had a dream.

Many had known suffering, uncertainty, and loss. They understood the pain of leaving behind so much.

But they also understood something greater.

They could lose their homes. They could lose their possessions. They could be separated from their homeland.

But they would not lose their faith.

And so they built something that would outlive them.

They built St. Vartan.

Not simply with stone and wood, but with sacrifice, prayer, determination, and love.

They did not know our names.

They never imagined this beautiful celebration tonight.

And yet, everything they did, they did for us.

What an extraordinary gift they left behind!

Tonight, we bow our heads in gratitude to those pioneers. To the clergy, the leaders, the mothers and fathers, the countless volunteers, and the generations who carried this church through both joyful and difficult times.

And now, a century later, look around this room.

Their dream is alive.

This morning, we celebrated fifty years of faithful service by Deacon Vartan Berberian, while welcoming David Ojakian and Garen Gregorian into the diaconate.

Think about that.

Fifty years of service being honored, and a new generation beginning its own journey of service.

Different generations. One altar. One faith.

That is the beauty of our Church.

But tonight, amid the joy and celebration, I want to ask something of each of us.

When our descendants gather here in 2126 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of St. Vartan, what will they thank us for?

Will they thank us simply because we maintained a building?

Because we organized beautiful banquets?

Because we celebrated our history?

I hope they will have much more to celebrate.

I hope they will thank us because we kept the faith alive.

Because we raised children who loved their Church.

Because we welcomed new families and embraced those who felt forgotten.

Because we had the wisdom to preserve what is sacred, and the courage to prepare for a changing world.

Because we understood that our responsibility was not simply to protect yesterday, but to prepare tomorrow.

My dear friends,

Our founders faced the challenge of establishing this church.

Our challenge is to make sure that its doors remain open, its pews are filled with new generations, and its mission remains alive.

We must give our children more than memories of what St. Vartan used to be.

We must give them a Church they are proud to call their own.

A Church where faith is lived.

Where Armenian identity is cherished.

Where love is stronger than division.

And where Jesus Christ remains at the center of everything we do.

We are not the owners of St. Vartan.

We are its guardians for a brief moment in its history.

We received this sacred inheritance from those who came before us.

And one day, we must place it into the hands of those who will come after us.

May we place it into their hands stronger, more vibrant, and more faithful than we received it.

So tonight, as we celebrate one hundred extraordinary years, let us make one promise together:

That we will not be remembered merely as the generation that celebrated the first centennial.

Let us be remembered as the generation that made the second centennial possible.

And when that child walks through the doors of St. Vartan in the year 2126, may that child never have to wonder:

Did the people who came before us think about our future?

May the answer be found in every prayer, every welcoming embrace, and every corner of this living Church.

Yes. They thought of us.

They loved us before we were born.

And they left us something worth carrying forward.

May God bless St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church, its first hundred years, and the generations who will carry its sacred mission into the next hundred.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.