

Cardinal Keeler Joins in Celebrating 1,700 Years of Armenian Christianity

His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, will be the principal speaker at an ecumenical prayer service on Wednesday, May 30, 2001 at 6:00 p.m. in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

The public is invited to attend the prayer service, organized by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Orthodox), and the National Council of Churches, to honor the 1,700th anniversary of Armenia's conversion to Christianity.

The Catholicos, based in the ancient city of Etchmiadzin in Armenia, is traveling throughout the United States visiting his North American flock. The church represents seven million members world-wide.

Cardinal William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore and representing the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for this event, will also speak. Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, is host.

The prayer service will incorporate parts of the Armenian service of welcome and be accompanied by the D.C. Boys Choir and the 150-member Knar-Ani Armenian Choral Group.

At 3:00 p.m. on May 30, Catholicos Karekin will tour the recently opened Pope John Paul II Cultural Center, near the Basilica in Washington. The visit will likely add to conversation when Pope John Paul II visits Armenia this fall, also marking the Armenian church's historic milestone.

Media are invited to attend both the Cultural Center visit and prayer service. Archdiocesan point of contact is Ray Kempisty or Matt Lane at 410-547-5379.