

ACYOworld PAN-ARMENIAN PILGRIMAGE
"The Christian Family as the Anchor of Armenian Identity"

PROGRAM
July 2–7, 2025

Wednesday, July 2

14:00–16:00 Registration at ACYOworld Central Office, departure and accommodation at Park Resort Hotel, Aghveran.

Dinner

Thursday, July 3

08:30-10:00	Morning Prayer and Breakfast
11:00-12:00	Official Opening
12:00-12:30	Break
12:30-13:00	Session 1: The Kingdom of God
13:00-14:30	Group Discussions
14:30-16:00	Lunch Break
16:00-16:30	Session 2: The Holy Church
16:30-17:15	Group Discussions
17:15-17:30	Coffee Break
17:30-18:30	Group Discussions (continued) and Summary of the Day
18:30	Evening Prayer
19:00	Dinner

Friday, July 4

09:15	Morning Prayer
9:30-10:30	Breakfast
10:30-11:00	Session 3: The Family as the Foundation of the Church
11:00-11:40	Group Discussions
11:40-12:00	Coffee Break
12:00-13:00	Group Discussions (continued)
13:00-14:30	Lunch Break
14:30-15:30	Visit and Prayer at Khachkar Park. Pilgrimage to Ishkhanavank (near the hotel)

15:30-16:00	Session 4: Marriage and Romantic Relationship
16:00-16:40	Group Discussions
16:40-17:00	Coffee Break
17:00-18:00	Group Discussions (continued) and Summary
18:00	Evening Prayer
18:30	Dinner

Saturday, July 5

Visit to sacred sites in the Dioceses of Kotayk and Gegharkunik (Makravank, Hayravank, Sevan Peninsula). Prayer, spiritual reflections, thematic summary of previous days

Sunday, July 6

08:00	Breakfast (for those not receiving Holy Communion)
09:00	Departure to Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin
11:00	Divine Liturgy at the Mother Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin
14:00	Lunch Break
17:00	Closing Banquet

Monday, July 7

Breakfast and return to ACYOWorld Central Office (15/1 Abovyan St.)



The Kingdom of God, Church, Family and Marriage

Session 1: Understanding the Kingdom of God

Goal: To define the Kingdom of God and understand its significance in the Christian faith.

Scripture References:

- Matthew 6:33 – "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."
- Mark 1:14–15 – "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' He said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'"
- Luke 17:20–21 – "Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is in your midst.'"
- Romans 14:17 – "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Initial Reflection Verse:

"The kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15). This highlights that the central message of Lord Jesus Christ's ministry was the Kingdom of God.

Teaching Content:

- The Kingdom of God is a foundational theme in the teachings of Lord Jesus and is central to our Christian faith. It is not merely a distant reality awaiting us in the future, but also a present spiritual reality that begins in the hearts of believers and manifests in the life of the Church.
- When Lord Jesus Christ began His ministry, He proclaimed: "The kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15). This proclamation calls for a radical shift in our priorities and worldview.
- The Kingdom is characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17), and as citizens of this Kingdom, we are called to embody these values in our lives. We manifest the Kingdom when we live with love, humility, and service, showing the world what it means to follow Christ. Lord Jesus teaches that the values of the Kingdom often contrast with those of the world, and thus we are called to seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).
- Through His parables (Matthew 13), Lord Jesus Christ illustrated the nature of the Kingdom using stories like the mustard seed and the hidden treasure, emphasizing that although it may begin small, it can have a profound impact.

- The Kingdom is already present in a spiritual sense, but it will be fully realized at Christ's return, when God will restore all things and establish His eternal reign (Revelation 21:1–4). Until that day, we are called to be faithful citizens of this Kingdom, actively participating in God's mission and spreading the Good News to others.

Activity: Group discussion on personal understandings of the Kingdom of God. Encourage participants to share experiences where they have felt the presence of God's Kingdom in their lives.

Discussion Questions:

- What is the Kingdom of God?
- Is it a physical place or a spiritual reality?
- How did Lord Jesus describe the Kingdom of God?
- What does it mean for our daily lives to be citizens of the Kingdom?
- How can we actively seek the Kingdom of God in our lives?

Closing Prayer (Addressed to the Holy Trinity):

Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we thank You for opening the doors of Your Kingdom to us and calling us to be its living citizens. Guide our hearts and minds so that we may first seek Your Kingdom and righteousness in our lives. Let our everyday walk be filled with peace, joy, and truth—bringing glory to You. Amen.



Session 2: The Church as the Instrument of the Kingdom of God

Goal: To understand the role of the Church in proclaiming and preparing the Kingdom of God.

Scripture References:

- Matthew 16:18–19 – "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..."
- Ephesians 1:22–23 – "And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way."
- Acts 2:42–47 – "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer..."

Initial Reflection Verse:

The importance of the Church, particularly the Armenian Apostolic Church in our context, should be emphasized based on the verse:

"On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18).

Teaching Content:

- Lord Jesus Christ established the Church as an instrument to proclaim and prepare the Kingdom of God. The Church is not merely a building or an organization, but a living spiritual body made up of believers called to serve, bear witness, and draw others into God's Kingdom.
- The Church exists to spread the Gospel, making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20).
- In Acts 2, we see how the early Church functioned as a living Kingdom community: devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. As a result, they grew and were united. The Church reflects Kingdom values through worship, teaching, service, and love (Ephesians 4:11–13). Each member has a unique role that contributes to the body of Christ and the mission of the Church.
- Moreover, St. Gregory the Illuminator, who established the Armenian Apostolic Church in 301 AD by uniting the Christian faith among Armenians, played a crucial role in this process. His labor and devotion helped strengthen the faith and unify the Armenian people.
- As members of the Church—in our case, the Armenian Apostolic Church—we are called to actively participate in its life and mission. This means engaging in worship, serving one another, reaching out to the community, and sharing the Gospel. Paul encourages us, "Let us not grow weary in doing good" (Galatians 6:9), reminding us that our efforts contribute to the advancement of the Kingdom. In doing so, we can help bring the Kingdom of God into our surroundings and demonstrate Christ's love and grace to the world.

Activity: Study Acts 2 to explore how the early Church functioned as a Kingdom community. Participants may be divided into small groups to discuss specific passages and share how these principles can be applied today.

Discussion Questions:

- Why did Lord Jesus Christ create the Church?
- How does the Church serve as an instrument of God's Kingdom?
- What is our role as members of the Church?
- How can we better fulfill our calling in the Church?
- How can the Church effectively reach the community with the message of the Kingdom?

Closing Prayer (Addressed to Jesus Christ):

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for founding the Church as the living instrument of Your Kingdom. Help us recognize our place in Your body and carry out our mission with love and faithfulness. Guide our steps in serving the community, sharing the Gospel, and shining Your light.

May Your presence lead and unite us as Your people.

Amen.



Session 3: The Family as the Foundation of the Church

Goal: To understand the role of the family in building and strengthening the Church.

Scripture References:

- Genesis 2:24 – “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”
- Ephesians 5:22–33 – “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church...”
- 1 Timothy 3:4–5 – “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect.”

Initial Reflection Verse:

The emphasis should be placed on the fact that God created the family first, in the Garden of Eden, and the content should be based on the verse:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

Teaching Content:

- The family is the foundation of both society and the Church. God created the family as a place for love, faith, and spiritual growth. Genesis 2:24 reveals God’s design for marriage and family. When families are strong in faith, the Church also becomes stronger.
- A Christian family is not just a union of people but a “little church,” a sacred place where the Father’s love dwells and is reflected daily. Parents are called to faithfully teach their children God’s Word, leading them with love and respect, as written:
“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6–7).
Unity and love in the family become a powerful witness to the world of the transforming power of the Gospel, as Joshua declared:
“As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).
- Furthermore, the Armenian Apostolic Church places great value on marriage as the foundation of family and social stability. Marriage, as a gift from God, helps strengthen faith and unity, which are essential for both the Church and society. This perspective on marriage places responsibility on parents and families to pass on this vision to future generations, also preserving national traditions.
- Just as Joseph and Mary lived in obedience, faith, and under God’s guidance—remaining united through difficulties—Christian families today are called to withstand life’s challenges by remaining steadfast in God’s will.
- When families are weak or broken, the Church may face challenges. Conflicts, lack of communication, and moral decline can hinder the family’s role in the Church.
- Ultimately, the health of the Church is directly related to the health of its families. As families grow in faith, they contribute to the overall strength and witness of the Church.

Activity: Participants share their personal experiences with family and discuss how these experiences have shaped their faith. They also explore ways to strengthen the connection between their family and the Church.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is the family important in God's plan?
- How can a Christian family help the Church?
- What happens when families are weak or broken?
- How can families strengthen their bond with the Church?
- How can the Church support families?

Closing Prayer (Addressed to God the Father):

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of family.

You have established the family as a center of love, faith, and values.

Grant that our homes may become communities dedicated to You, filled with patience and love toward one another.

Bless our efforts to build harmonious families and to strengthen the foundation of both the Church and society.

Amen.



Session 4: Marriage and Romantic Relationships

Goal: To understand that marriage exists under God’s design and its role in the life of the family and the Church.

Scripture References:

- Ephesians 5:31–33 – “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”
- Matthew 19:4–6 – “‘Haven’t you read,’ he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’...’”

Initial Reflection Verse:

A brief explanation should be given that marriage is part of God’s divine plan, and romantic relationships exist with the purpose of leading to marriage, with emphasis on the verse:

“The two shall become one flesh.”

Teaching Content:

- Marriage is a sacred covenant established by God, serving as the foundation of both family and Church. God designed marriage as a lifelong union between a man and a woman, based on love, faithfulness, and mutual respect. In Ephesians 5, Paul instructs husbands and wives to love and honor each other, reflecting the relationship between Christ and the Church.
- Emotional and intimate relationships that begin during youth are natural, but it is important to understand that they must grow with responsibility and maturity. These connections should be seen as a potential path toward marriage, not as ends in themselves. According to God’s plan, sexual intimacy is reserved for the holy covenant of marriage. Within these boundaries—based on mutual respect, trust, and faith—relationships can become a firm and stable foundation for family life. Relationships outside this context, even when seemingly innocent, can lead to painful consequences both spiritually and emotionally.
- Love is not merely a feeling, but an action marked by patience, kindness, and a willingness to forgive. In a Christian household, open communication, shared spiritual practices, and a commitment to serve one another are key. Marriage is also a divine calling to serve God together, raise spiritual children, and be a light in the world.
- It is essential to remember that the purpose of marriage is to support and preserve relationships. Any relationship that goes beyond this framework does not reflect the Kingdom of God.
- Throughout the history of the Armenian Apostolic Church, marriage has always been viewed not only as a social union but as a spiritual covenant sealed before God. Medieval theologians emphasized that marital love must be rooted in faith, built through patience and mutual service. In the writings of Saint Nerses Shnorhali, marriage is portrayed as a school of true love, where couples walk together in God’s path through mutual trust and spiritual growth. This tradition reminds us that deep and healthy relationships are always founded on personal dedication, faithfulness, and shared spiritual purpose.

Activity:

Participants share their thoughts on how to preserve God-centered relationships and discuss practical steps for maintaining healthy and faithful romantic relationships.

Discussion Questions:

- Why did God create marriage?
- How can couples build strong, Christ-centered families?
- What steps can individuals take to have healthy, God-honoring romantic relationships?

Closing Prayer (Addressed to the Holy Spirit):

Holy Spirit, we turn to You with longing, asking that our marriages and romantic relationships be filled with Your presence.

Teach us to love deeply, to forgive sincerely, and to live out the unity God intended.

May our relationships reflect Your love and be a witness of Your image.

We ask You to dwell in us and guide us in Your peace.

Amen.