

*Did you know . . .*

## **Blessed Among Us: St. Gregory Of Narek**

On April 2015, in a Mass commemorating the Armenian genocide, Pope Francis declared St. Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Church. What was most unusual in Pope Francis' decision is that St. Gregory was not a Catholic. He was a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is a non-Chalcedonian Church, rejecting the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon which stated that Jesus Christ is one Person who is both divine and human. The divine and human natures of Christ being distinct, yet united in one Person.

The relationship of the Armenian Apostolic Church to the Catholic Church is long and complicated. The Armenian and Catholic Churches were in conflict after the Council of Chalcedon (451AD). The Armenian Church, confirmed in two successive national councils held in 506 AD and 551 AD, the adherence to monophysitism, which asserted that in the person of Jesus Christ there was only one divine nature rather than two natures, divine and human.

The Armenian Church is independent and autocephalous (a hierarchical Christian **Church** whose head bishop does not report to any higher-ranking bishop), and defines itself as apostolic since it traces its origins to the apostles Thaddaeus and Bartholomew. It maintains good relations in an ecumenical spirit with the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Churches, and has its own leader, the Catholicos, entirely independent of the ecclesiastical hierarchies of the other confessions.

The Armenian Church defines itself as both Orthodox and Catholic, as it regards itself to be an expression of true Christian faith and of the universality of the Church. In December 1996, St. John Paul II and His Holiness the Catholicos of All the Armenians, Karekin II, signed a joint declaration in which they affirmed the common origin of the Armenian Church and the Roman Catholic Church. [Press Vatican, June 23, 2016]

St. Gregory was a member of the Armenian Church. He was born in the city of Narek around 951 AD, entered the local monastery at a young age and remained there the rest of his life. He was a prolific writer and his Book of Lamentations, a collection of 95 prayers, he subtitled "Conversations with God from the Depth of the Heart. He completed it just prior to his death. When asked what gift one might offer to God, he replied "the sighs of the heart."

His beautiful writings gained him the title of Doctor of the Church. St. Gregory died in 1003. He is a saint of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Doctor of the Catholic Church, the only Doctor "who was not in communion with the Catholic Church during his lifetime."

St GREGORY of NAREK  
DOCTOR of the CHURCH



**PRAY for US!**

**Judy Pearson**