



**HOLINESS IN THE WORLD: THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS
THROUGH FAITH IN ACTION OF DIANA APCAR AND
ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR SPIRITUAL AND MORAL
RENEWAL IN MODERN ARMENIA.**

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Holiness in the World: The Christian witness through faith in action of Diana Apcar and its significance for spiritual and moral renewal in modern Armenia

In this essay, I will explore the concept of Holiness in the World and show how ordinary Christians can live holy lives through faith demonstrated in action. An excellent example of this concept is the appointment of Diana Apcar as the Honorary Consul of Armenia to Japan in 1920 during the short-lived First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920). She is the first Armenian woman diplomat and the first woman in the world to be appointed as Honorary Consul. She was also a diaspora Armenian writer, humanitarian, businesswoman, and philanthropist. Diana's example indicates the concept of Holiness in the World because she was guided by faith in Christ, providing her courage and conviction in her actions. She rescued thousands of Armenian families after the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire, enabling their entry into Japan, and caring for them while there. Significantly, the Armenian Catholicos Gevorg V dedicated two encyclicals to Diana Apcar. Diana corresponded with many influential people of the time and used her diplomatic status to promote the interests of the suffering people among them.

In the Armenian Apostolic Church, the canonization process of Christians was suspended after the 15th century. The last Saint to be canonized was Gregory of Tatev, a famous Armenian theologian, monk, and rector of Tatev University. Only in 2015 did the Armenian Church recognize the Genocide victims who suffered in the name of Christ as martyrs. Canonization of individuals is still not currently practiced in the Armenian Church. Diana Apcar is the best example of a person who can revive the topic of Christian holiness and renew the discourse on the canonization of Christians in the Armenian Apostolic Church or the recording of their merits.

Today, interest in Diana Apcar's personality is rapidly increasing in Armenia, the Armenian Diaspora, and the world. Diana remains famous in history as one of the first female diplomats in the 20th century. She was a prolific writer on acute international political problems of the early 20th century and a human rights defender. This essay's original and unique contribution will relate specifically to the Christian side of Diana Apcar, her religious experience, spiritual life, and commitment to Christian values, which we can interpret as Holiness in the world. In addition to belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church, as a national aspect of faith, she clearly showed a living faith in Christ through a personal relationship with Him. This topic is crucial because Diana Apcar can become a distinct personal example in the Holiness in the World category and potentially be canonized by the Church.

Good soldier of Christ and defender of the Faith: Diana Apcar's Christian witness in favor of the sacred rights of the Armenians and oppressed people through faith demonstrated in action

To explore this topic of the essay, I used the methodology from the field of ethical theology described by Edith Wyschogrod in her work *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy (Religion and Postmodernism)*.¹ This section of ethical theology is very well suited when considering the personality of Diana in the context of her holiness in the world manifested in action. The method described by Wyschogrod is

¹ Wyschogrod, Edith. *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy (Religion and Postmodernism)*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 326.

important in this work, since the subjects described by her are mainly from real-life situations, using the example of ordinary Christians. She defines holiness as renunciation of oneself to serve others, it is radical altruism in practical service to the needs of other people. Basically, the pains and sufferings of other people encourage people to act, which subsequently is a factor of their holiness. Wyschogrod notes that reacting to the “needs and desires of Another”² and denying oneself and one's needs for the sake of another is often a sign. As I will show later, these qualities of Diana Apcar were fundamental to her, reflected in her tireless service to the needs of other people.

In addition to the method of ethical theology described by Wyschogrod, I also use the ethnographic method in theology outlined by Sharen and Vigen.³ This is important to understand the intertwining of all the features of the Armenian identity, formed in historical, political, confessional and traditional conditions. To do this, it is necessary to be familiar with the ethnic, religious and historical features of the Armenian society.

Regarding the religious life of Diana Apcar, her commitment to unconditional faith in Christ, and her service to suffering people as her Christian mission, I want to start with the words of Pastor Schenck at Diana's funeral. The funeral took place in Yokohama, Japan at United Church, on July 10, 1937. During Diana Apcar's funeral ceremony, Pastor Schenck delivered an insightful speech in which he summarized and completed the image of Diana in the aspect of her faith. Faith was Diana's primary purpose and driving force. I want to start the description with his final words about Diana because, as it says in James 1:12, the crown of eternal life will be given to those who stand to the end.⁴ So Pastor Schenck noted the following at the beginning of his speech: “There is much in the life and bearing of Mrs. Apcar that reminds me of the soldier, the good soldier of Jesus Christ, the sentinel on guard-strong, courageous, inured to hardship, loyal to her convictions, her racial heritage, to her mother Church and to her beloved people. Many times, I have pictured her in mind as a Defender of the Faith”.⁵ These words accurately and thoroughly show the personality of Diana, her merits, and her absolute commitment to faith in Christ.

Below, I will quote other words from Pastor Schenck that are also important in describing Diana Apcar's deep faith. They indicate that Diana continued her Christian ministry and mission for decades, until the end of her life, which was her primary motivation in life. It is also clear from this speech that despite the absence of an Armenian Church in Yokohama, Diana Apcar has always remained committed to her tradition and the “Mother” Armenian Apostolic Church. Her loyalty to Christ and the Armenian Church shaped her conscious identification with the heritage of her ancestors, manifested in a living and active faith. The most valuable of the pastor's words are the words about Diana as a defender of the Christian faith and his comparison of her to a soldier of Christ. It was a very accurate description of her; even though she was a woman, she was a persistent, strong, and unshakable person. We will see later that her constant sense of Christ's help in her works of mercy results from her deep faith. Pastor Schenck's words about Diana are essential as an example for all future generations, as shown by her testimony of Christ through her deeds of mercy and salvation of oppressed peoples. Here, Diana identified with the soldier of Christ as a witness to his covenants.

² Wyschogrod, Edith. *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy (Religion and Postmodernism)*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 326.

³ Scharen and Vigen. *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*. London, Continuum, 2011, p. 41.

⁴ “Bible.com” Online Bible, accessed September 10, 2024, <https://www.bible.com/bible/114/JAS.1.12>

⁵ Pastor Schenk. *Address that made at funeral of Mrs. Diana Apcar*. Yokohama, Union Church, July 10, 1937.

For centuries, Christians suffered through martyrdom, but in Diana's personality, we see an aspect of the testimony of faith as self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Pastor Schenck urged those present at the funeral to follow the example of Diana, who testified to the faith and defended the rights of minorities through her actions. Pastor Schenck concludes: "For those of us who have still our courses to finish, our work to do, and who have gathered here to offer our last tribute of farewell to the earthly presence of this mother in Israel, there is very little that I need say except that we cannot better honor her memory of perpetuate her ideals than by being good soldiers also, defenders of the faith, taking up the torch of her courageous testimony, a testimony in behalf of the sacred rights of minority groups, of justice to the oppressed, and holding it high; soldiers of the cross in a world that sorely needs courageous, uncompromising Christian testimony."⁶

Diana's actions witnessed her faith and struggle to save oppressed Armenians, giving personal support for the young, newly formed First Republic of Armenia and communicating with world leaders about supporting Armenia. Her status as the first female Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Japan gave her even more weight, which she used to protect Armenian refugees by helping send them to the United States. In a letter to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson dated December 20, 1920, Diana Apcar spoke about the agony of the young democratic Armenian Republic and asked for help.⁷ She also kept in touch with American Secretaries of State and many other influential people of that time.

During the horrific Armenian Genocide in 1915, Diana believed that The Ottoman Turks would destroy her historical homeland and Armenia's Christian population. The term "Genocide" did not exist, describing the horrors that the world was facing for the first time. Despite all the pain, she relied on God and wrote that "the final decision of Armenia emptied of Armenians" lay in the hands of the God of Abel." At the same time, she relied on world leaders, especially U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who, as the leader of a powerful neutral country, would follow the will of God and ensure peace: "President Wilson as the Chief Magistrate of a great neutral state and the representative of a great neutral nation must go over the side of the God of Abel in order to work for a Stable Peace."⁸

Diana's ten-year effort to find a guarantor country and her request to the United States to take over the newly formed Armenian Republic almost succeeded. President Wilson requested a mandate from the Senate for Armenia, but, at the last moment, due to the isolationist actions of the United States Senate, it was rejected.⁹ Diana took the news with great pain that the United States refused to take a mandate over Armenia, resulting in the continuation of the tragedy for the Armenian people, and Armenia's continued struggle for its existence. Despite all the disappointment and hopelessness, her faith in God and the mercy of Christ remained unshakeable. Faith was not a reason for her to relax and trust that God would take care of her people, and His mandate would be for the best. To this, she wrote: "But God stands above all principalities, and powers and nations, therefore I who began this work of desiring American political interference in

⁶ Pastor Schenck. *Address that made at funeral of Mrs. Diana Apcar*. Yokohama, Union Church, July 10, 1937.

⁷ "Diana Apcar letter to Woodrow Wilson" The Stateless Diplomat, accessed September 15, 2024, https://issuu.com/dianaapcar.org/docs/wilson_letter?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=dianaapcar.org

⁸ Apcar, Diana. *Correspondence - The Coming Peace*. Yokohama, The Far East, 1916.

⁹ Hovannisian, Richard. *The Republic of Armenia: Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization*. Vol. 4. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Armenia, now am hoping that God will take up the mandate, and there is no doubt that nothing would be better.”¹⁰

Diana Apar's approach to politics was based not on the interests of empires and their ambitions but on justice, the struggle for human rights, and her insightful vision of the consequences of ignoring the truth and God's covenants. Hers was a clearly defined political analysis filled with Christian spirit, which today would be associated with the field of political theology or religious politics. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch newspaper wrote a review of Diana Agabeg Apar's book, *The Peace Problem*: “Diana Agabeg Apar is a prophetess in exile...She knows the Bible, Old and New, as she knows world-politics, and she comes nearer knowing both by heart than most diplomats. She pleads for peace in the name of Christianity against what she calls ‘the curse of the world – Imperialism.’...Knowledge of world politics, absolute sincerity and burning eloquence characterize this inspired appeal.”¹¹ She was ahead of her time, in her work of analyzing world political processes and foreseeing the consequences for the world, while ignoring the rights and freedoms of peoples through the spread of imperialism.

Diana considered imperialism a political phenomenon contrary to Divine principles, as imperial consciousness has always led to people's sufferings, wars, and tragedies: “God has willed “On earth peace,” but Imperialism destroys Peace. Is it therefore any matter of surprise that Imperialism should always end in decay and dissolution?”¹² These arguments are relevant in our time. Ignoring the rights and freedoms of people and enabling aggressive countries sick with imperialistic ideologies leads to the destruction of world order and human tragedies. Diana often quotes from the Bible and discusses Christian issues in her writings. We see her explicit orientation toward Christ and her adherence to the radical altruism of Christ toward others. She explored the global political processes of her time through the prism of the confrontation of the forces of evil against the mother Church, identified in the face of oppressed Christian minorities. In this regard, Diana often used biblical scenes and metaphors to explain the international processes of her time. Even though she never visited Armenia, she represented the Armenian Diaspora and belonged to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Diana was baptized in the Armenian Church in Almeida, Yangon (then Rangoon), and her baptismal certificate is preserved in the Armenian Cultural Foundation archive in Arlington, Massachusetts, U.S.A.¹³

In her works, she reveals the character of the Armenian Christian heroes, their joyful family life, which unexpectedly turned into suffering and martyrdom, and their unshakeable faith in Christ and hope. Diana's book “In His Name”¹⁴ describes the massacre in the Armenian city of Adana and tells individual stories of heroes who demonstrated the strength of their faith before the most terrible torments and death. This publication is both political and religious, and described by The New York Times magazine the following way: “It's such a strong impression that the Times classified it as a religious book.”¹⁵

¹⁰ Apar, Diana. *Correspondence - The Coming Peace*. Yokohama, The Far East, December 23, 1916.

¹¹ St. Louis Post-Dispatch newspaper review of the Diana Agabeg Apar's book, *The Peace Problem*

¹² Apar, Diana Agabeg. *The Peace Problem*. Yokohama, Japan Gazette Press, 1912, p.131.

¹³ “Diana Apar (Gaiana Agabeg) Baptismal Certificate” The Stateless Diplomat, accessed September 15, 2024,

<https://dianaapcar.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Gaiana1.jpg>

¹⁴ Apar, Diana Agabeg. *In His Name*. Yokohama, Japan Gazette Press, 1911, p. 52.

¹⁵ Apar, Diana Agabeg. *In His Name*. Yokohama, Japan Gazette Press, 1911, p. 52.

Diana's analysis on international maneuverings is not just a dry political essay, but a study through her faith, where she applies religious reasoning in the struggle of evil with the Divine order. She describes the events as a spiritual conflict, not just a clash of empires with their interests driven by the spirit of evil, hatred, and homicide, and manifested in the mass killings of the Armenian Christians. As an example, in the chapter, Peace in Europe, in her book "The Great Evil,"¹⁶ her criticism of imperialism is presented as part of the struggle between God and the devil.¹⁷

Diana's deep faith can be seen in her correspondence with the Armenian Catholicos Gevorg V, who recognized Diana and her works by presenting her with Encyclicals of the Catholicos. The Catholicos dedicated two encyclicals to Diana Apcar: one in 1916 and the second in 1926 for her humanitarian work on behalf of her countrymen. In the Encyclical of 1916, the Catholicos writes: "To the modest Mrs. Diana Apcarian in Yokohama, Japan. We learned of your efforts from a relative of yours, with contented hearts, about the love and attention you have shown toward your unfortunate compatriots, and of how you facilitate their stay in that distant land, enthusiastically doing your humanitarian work. As a religious leader of all Armenians, I am pleased to learn about your modest and helpful activities. I appreciate you and wish God to strengthen you in your activities, with love and consolation for our sisters and brothers of your ever-tortured nation."¹⁸ In the 1926 Encyclical, the Catholicos expressed gratitude to Diana for her constant support of Armenia and the Holy See of Echmiadzin. He calls out her active faith and love for the Holy See Echmiadzin and blesses Diana and all her family.¹⁹ Her financial assistance to Echmiadzin is mentioned as well, as in 1925 Diana paid 80 yen to go toward the renovation of Echmiadzin Cathedral.

Also of interest is the testimony of Bers Vapashan about Diana, who said the following: "Mrs. Apcar is mysterious and absolutely. She is a very practical person and has a special personality that cannot be replaced by any other person. She was a devoted parishioner of the ancient Armenian Church. She is a daughter. Her faith in God is bright, comprehensive and unshakeable."²⁰

So, we see that after living in Japan for about 40 years in the absence of the Armenian Church, she retained a deep connection to it and expressed her steadfast faith in God through her deeds.²¹

Diana Apcar can be considered an example of Holiness in the world.

What is Holiness in the world?

Studying the Bible, we see many places where Christ Himself calls for holiness and His apostles talk about the holiness of Christians. All Christians are called to holiness, as

¹⁶ Apcar, Diana. *The Great Evil*. Yokohama, Japan Gazette Press, 1914, p.114.

¹⁷ Mesropyan, Meline. 「ディアナ・アプカーと来日アルメニア人難民 [Diana Apcar and the Armenian Refugees in Japan]. PhD thesis, p. 108, <http://hdl.handle.net/10097/00125709>

¹⁸ Gevorg Catholicos of Armenians. *Encyclicals to the modest Mrs. Diana Apcarian in Yokohama, Japan*. Holy See of Ejmiatsin, Armenia, 1916. (These documents are part of the Diana Apcar Collection at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, in Arlington)

¹⁹ Gevorg Catholicos of Armenians. *Encyclicals to Diana Apcar*. Holy See of Ejmiatsin, Armenia, April 24, 1926. (These documents are part of the Diana Apcar Collection at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, in Arlington)

²⁰ Mesropyan, Meline. 「ディアナ・アプカーと来日アルメニア人難民 [Diana Apcar and the Armenian Refugees in Japan]. PhD thesis, p.65, <http://hdl.handle.net/10097/00125709>

²¹ Apcar, Diana. *The Unity of the Churches*. The Japan Evangelist, September 1911, pp. 370.

this is the highest goal of human perfection. We can see in 1 Peter 2:9-12 “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”²² The Apostle Paul also writes on holiness: “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”²³

A separate field of theology, such as Hagiography, deals with the virtue of holiness. Based on experience, the Church has identified different groups of saints and categories of holiness. At various stages in the history of the Church, there were different priority groups of saints. In the first centuries, they were primarily martyrs, as witnesses of faith through their martyrdom. In the Middle Ages and up to present-day, monks, priests, theologians, and government officials became saints. At some point, the Church began to identify with this category of Christians. Gradually, the term Holiness in the World became a category of Christians who live ordinary lives but show faith through their activities, works of charity, and unique attitudes toward people. By these actions, they testify to Christ and the gospel. These Christians are also named Everyday Saints, though not officially canonized; nevertheless, the virtue of holiness is present in them.

However, the official Church defines holiness according to specific criteria and deeds that witnesses must prove. I aim to give examples of Christians who are yet to be officially awarded the status of a saint in the canonical sense but are very close to gaining this recognition, which may occur in the future under certain circumstances. Such Christians are commonly referred to as non-holy saints, daily saints, or saints in the world. Considering the example of Diana Apar, I categorize her holiness as holiness in the world, which describes Christians, who are not Church officials, priests, bishops, or monks, living a pious life in the world.

Despite one's acts of holiness, the Church has defined specific criteria for a person to be declared a saint and be canonized. Several formal holiness criteria include an impeccable confession of faith, even at the threat of death, miracles manifested by God through this saint and popular veneration. As a procedure for canonizing a righteous person, I would like to give an example from the Catholic Church, as it has developed a more detailed procedure for recognizing the holiness of a Christian. Due to the process's complexity, often the person's lack of recognition, and the variety of sources, declaring a Christian a saint has several stages and difficulties. Before canonization, the first stage elevates a Christian to a Servant of God. The Servant of God in Latin is *Venerabilis Dei Servus*, a title given before the start of the beatification process.

Regarding the Armenian Apostolic Church, of which Diana Apar was a member, canonization traditionally applied more to Church leaders since their works and lives are well documented. Of course, in addition to the evidence of their Christian activity, the most crucial aspect is the nationwide veneration of the potential saint's personality and their miracle work. For a more objective assessment, we must also consider historical circumstances, limited information, and the long time Armenia has been under the rule of various empires, mainly Muslim. Therefore, monasteries and monks became a separated phenomenon in the Christian community, which were isolated; the Church sometimes became a place of monks and bishops. In this regard, the Armenian Apostolic Church's last saint was Grigor Tatevatsi (1346-1409), a famous theologian, scientist, and

²² “Bible.com” Online Bible, accessed September 10, 2024, <https://www.bible.com/bible/114/1PE.2.9-12>

²³ “Bible.com” Online Bible, accessed September 10, 2024, <https://www.bible.com/bible/114/EPH.1.3-4>

monk. There are many works by Grigor Tatevatsi²⁴, and he is revered among the faithful and his disciples. He was one of the most educated people of his time and revived scholarship within the framework of monastic Church life. His was the last case of personal canonization in the Armenian Church, and since the 15th century, the practice of canonization of individuals has been discontinued. However, in 2015 an outstanding achievement in the field of the canonization of saints in the Armenian Apostolic Church was the act of group canonization of the 1.5 million martyrs of the Armenian Genocide. It was a collective canonization of the martyrs for the centenary of this incident, without identifying a specific name or names during canonization. Of course, this is also evidence of the need to revive the tradition of canonization of individual saints and an essential step in this direction. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between the group canonization of genocide victims and the canonization of a person in connection with their merits.

As we can see, there are different criteria for determining holiness and different circumstances and forms. In this essay, I am talking about a woman, a faithful Christian and a representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church, who demonstrated her faith through her actions. Her actions were of such a scale (aiding an estimated 2000 people) that their results and further influence had a significant national impact. Diana Apar's faith experience inspired her to take large-scale actions through charity and enlightenment. Also significant is the period of her life and the tectonic shifts that took place during the First World War, and the tragedies associated with it: tragedies for the whole world and the terrible genocide of the Armenian people, Diana's countrymen. The Armenian people became victims of the genocide organized by the Turkish Ottoman government, the first genocide of the 20th century. Between 1.5 and 2 million Armenians and hundreds of thousands of other indigenous peoples of the region, including Greeks, Assyrians, and other Christians, were killed by Ottoman Turks.

Diana Apar, being an Armenian living in the Diaspora, far beyond the borders of her historical homeland, took this atrocity on a personal level; not remaining indifferent, she chose to act. Her faith was the primary source of her action and her foundational strength. Tragedies of this magnitude paralyzed many people and took away the hope of a return to everyday life. Diana admitted that it was only through her radical commitment²⁵ to living in communion with Christ that she gained the strength to help others and work for the rebirth of the Christian nation. Diana Apar was the woman who saved and helped thousands of people, to warn of the impending disaster, to argue for self-determination and a protectorate for Armenia. At that time, holiness was manifested in the martyrs of the genocide in 1915, as well as in those who, in connection with their Christian mission, selflessly served for peace and the salvation of the families of the martyrs. As we can see, there is a mutual connection between the martyrs of the genocide and Diana, who showed holiness in the world through Christian service to the families of these victims. Here, we can talk about other aspects and forms of holiness but under different circumstances. Despite the significant difference between Armenians living in their historical land who were subjected to genocide and Diana, as an Armenian who had never been to her ancestral homeland, their mutual bond is inextricably deep. This bond indicates how much the Armenian identity, and the Church had a crucial connecting role in shaping the unity of faith and culture. The Armenian Church defined the martyrdom

²⁴ Hakobyan, Hayk. *Saint Grigor Tatevatsi the Golden Belly*. Yerevan, Gitutyun NAS RA, 2022.

²⁵ Wyschogrod, Edith. *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy (Religion and Postmodernism)*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 326.

of Armenian Christians in the genocide in 2015 as an act of sacrifice and testimony of Christ, canonizing the victims of the genocide who died for the sake of faith and Homeland. Studying Diana Apar's personality, dedication, Christian service, and sacrifice for her people, I am sure she would also be ready to suffer death for Christ. We can observe such readiness in her book "In His Name."²⁶

It is essential to discuss the originality of the Armenian religious consciousness, which is not formed on philosophical disputes but manifests in practical active faith. We need to understand this to consider the accents in the Armenian Church and the ethnic peculiarities of the manifestation of holiness. Studying Christianity, we can see different features of Churches. Holiness in the Armenian Church initially had more of an active component than a theoretical or theological one. Armenia became the first Christian state in 301AD, fundamentally affecting people's self-consciousness. Christianity was deeply rooted in Armenia in the 4th century and became a form of defining the national identity. Arguments about the truth of Christianity have always been secondary, but the primary objective was the need to preserve the Christian faith.

Following are some examples of Christians who have shown holiness in the world and have received official Church recognition and canonization. These are modern saints in both the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. By studying their lives, it is possible to identify shared characteristics and principles, which manifest holiness in the world and compare these characteristics and principles with those of Diana Apar. They include Giuseppe Moscati, Catherine Doherty,²⁷ Anna Abrikosova, and Alexander Schmorell,²⁸ who, in many ways, are very close in type to Diana Apar and her faith demonstrated in action.

For example, Giuseppe Moscati (July 25, 1880 – April 12, 1927) was a pious layman who used his profession as a doctor to spread Christianity and performed works of mercy among the sick and those needing spiritual help. Pope Paul VI beatified him on November 16, 1975.²⁹ Moscati was canonized on October 25, 1987, by Pope John Paul II. The canonization of Moscati is an example of holiness achieved by a modern layman who has chosen a profession while living an ordinary life.³⁰

An essential definition of holiness in the world for our topic is the Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness in the modern world made by Pope Francis on April 9, 2018. He calls them the five significant manifestations of love for God and neighbor, which, in his opinion, are of particular importance considering certain dangers and limitations existing in modern culture.³¹ The five manifestations of love for God and neighbor are³²: perseverance, patience, and humility; joy and a sense of humor; courage and passion; participation in society; and constant prayer.

²⁶ Apar, Diana Agabeg. *In His Name*. Yokohama, Japan Gazette Press, 1911.

²⁷ Murray, John. *Servant of God: Catherine de Hueck Doherty*. The Messenger, July 2007.

²⁸ Jäger, Lorenz. *Neumärtyrer Alexander Schmorell: Die Engel staunten ob deiner Geduld*. Frankfurt, FAZ, 7 February 2012, p. 27.

²⁹ "The Holy See" Solemn Rite of Beatification of Giuseppe Moscati, accessed September 15, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/homilies/1975/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19751116.html

³⁰ Ponti, Giovanni. *Giuseppe Moscati: A Man, A Physician and a Scientist*. Acta Med Hist Adriat, 2015, p. 171-180.

³¹ "The Holy See" Gaudete et exsultate: Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world - Activities of the Holy Father Pope Francis, April 9, 2018. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

³² "The Holy See" Gaudete et exsultate: Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world -

Spiritual and moral renewal in modern Armenia through the legacy and personal example of Diana Apcar

This topic is critical in practical terms, especially for modern Armenian society. Besides the fact that I have tried to reveal Diana's personality in the category of Holiness in the World, this work can give the Armenia's Christian society an unmistakable sign to follow her example. Since Armenia is the first Christian state and Christianity is rooted in its culture, traditions, and people's self-awareness, this does not necessarily stimulate a practical Christian life. The historicity of Armenian Christianity has always been an essential aspect of self-preservation and survival in the environment of Armenians living within Islamic empires and other cultures. Additionally, the systematic murder of the Armenian intellectual and cultural elite in the last years of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the loss of national identity at the level of meaning and practice. The first step faced by Armenian society were the issues of survival, salvation, and the creation of statehood. The Armenian people began to revive their identity after the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, gaining internationally recognized statehood in a small part of their historical territories. Then, the remnants of the intellectual and political elite contributed to the formation of statehood and the revival of cultural identity. Independence was a short period for the Armenian state, from 1918 to 1920, having been under Ottoman rule for over 500 years. Its hope was the beginning of a new renaissance; however, the state was plagued with starvation and disfunction. Given the devastation of the Genocide, the background for the survivors was one of complete spiritual and material devastation. This is the context in which Diana Apcar began her official mission—a short period marked by the revival of a genuine Christian mission and a commitment of self-sacrifice. As we can see from Diana's example, genuine spiritual revival can follow despite tragic events. During this period, Diana Apcar showed her faith in action by saving thousands of families of victims of the Armenian Genocide, gaining entry for them into Japan and enabling their transit to the United States while providing them with their immediate needs of money and housing for several months.³³ Her official status as a female consul gave her a lot of authority to work more effectively on humanitarian issues. But it must be said that Diana worked for years, before and after her short appointment as Consul.

While more than 100 years have passed since the Armenian Genocide, the trauma of the genocide is still deeply rooted in Armenian society, due primarily to the Turkish state's denial and fabrication of historical events. Sadly, this trauma is considered a weakness due to a misunderstanding of Armenia's role in world political processes and a lack of understanding of the feat of the genocide victims. Armenians must overcome this tragedy by reflecting on the bravery and dignity of the Armenians killed in the genocide. Subsequently, the Armenian Church has begun this transformation with the canonization of the victims of the genocide, which has changed the focus of the tragedy from victim to martyr, from loss to hope. Unfortunately, this act of group canonization in modern Armenian society is not yet fully understood. So far, society has not examined the role of the holy martyrs and how they might reshape people's views in regard to the principles

Activities of the Holy Father Pope Francis, April 9, 2018.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

³³ Mesropyan, Meline. 「ディアナ・アプカーと来日アルメニア人難民 [Diana Apcar and the Armenian Refugees in Japan]. PhD thesis, p. 361, <http://hdl.handle.net/10097/00125709>

of holiness. Many people continue to perceive the martyrs as victims, applying a pessimistic attitude, rather than seeing them as those who glorified Christ and Armenia with their blood. However, every Armenian family has an ancestor who is a victim of genocide and therefore is already a glorified holy martyr. Time is required to affect society's positive perception and revival after trauma and tragedy. The lack of recognition of the crime and revisioned history by the Turks perpetuates the genocide. The uniqueness of the situation is that the Armenian people and every individual family became the heirs of the holy martyrs. This sacrifice of the saints could transform society and the self-perception of the heirs, but this process of awareness is very slow. The main reason is that we don't have precise knowledge about the individuals who have shown holiness in action. There were many of them, but not so many about whom there is recorded information. Diana Apcar is one of those few personalities who has shown holiness through her work by helping the victims of the genocide. She is widely recognized given the scale of her personality, her specific deeds, spiritual state, and deep faith. I am sure she will be an excellent example, an inspirational model, who can influence and hopefully transform Armenian society today. She is a concrete and invaluable example for the next generation of Armenians, who need reliable role models for inspiration. Generalized examples of holiness often do not reach the heart because of the lack of personal dialogue and connection to the person.

Another significant factor grows from the post-Soviet desert, a generation raised by the Soviet worldview and a people lacking its true national identity. Therefore, the revival of real modern examples that mean so much in Armenian society is fundamentally important. Diana's example is significant for the impulse and motivation of modern Christians of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Her example will help strengthen the sense of belonging to the Church and encourage communion with Christ.

Considering the importance of Diana's role for the Christian revival of modern Armenian society and an excellent example for a new generation, two years ago, my team and I decided to erect a monument to Diana Apcar in Yerevan. My National Center Development Foundation³⁴ is engaged in institutional and intercultural projects in Armenia, implementing dozens of systemic projects in Armenia. We are implementing the Diana Apcar Monument³⁵ project with a small team, which, besides myself, includes a relative of Diana Apcar, who lives in the United States, and a historical scholar who researched Diana's life and accomplishments, who lives in Japan. The Foundation has received official permission from the City of Yerevan authorities to erect a statue of Diana Apcar in the park named after her.

The monument will attract people and draw attention to Diana Apcar's notoriety, which hopefully will culminate in educating the citizenry about Diana. The statue will fix her image in society and increase interest in her accomplishments. The image of Diana in the monument will convey the strength of her character and, through Christian symbols, show her holiness in the World. We decided to depict the Armenian cross in her left hand and in her right hand a document showing her status as the world's first appointed female consul. By doing this, we want to show Diana's faith manifested in action. Also, behind Diana's head, the sun will rise as a symbol of the Japanese sun (Japan is called the land of the rising sun); at the same time, the sun from behind will look like a halo over

³⁴ "About National Center Development Foundation" National Center Development Foundation, accessed September 8, 2024, <https://www.national.center/>

³⁵ "About Diana Apcar Monument" Diana Apcar Monument, accessed September 8, 2024, <https://www.dianaapcar.am/>

the saint's head. In the background, the sculptor depicts survivors of the Armenian Genocide whom Diana saved, as faceless figures, lining behind her. The objective of this monumental work is to formalize all the detailed descriptions of Diana Apcar's personality and activities in a single collective image, as a way of honoring her and providing inspiration for today's Armenian citizenry and subsequent generations. Based on the very positive reactions and enthusiastic reviews we have received so far; we are confident that this project will have significant impacts in both a resurgence of Christian values and in strengthening the Armenian national identity. In practice, many in Armenia have discovered Diana Apcar for the first time and seek to show their reverence for her.

In 2023 the Armenian people endured another ethnic cleansing event with the expulsion of the entire population from the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), accompanied by many murdered victims. Azerbaijan is systematically destroying Armenia's Christian heritage by ransacking ancient churches, monasteries and cemeteries; the indigenous Armenian population has lost its historical lands, an autonomous territory given to Azerbaijan by Stalin. I personally saw how a century-old trauma of hopelessness had taken hold of Armenian society. This feeling of hopelessness was made worse by the direct betrayal of the Russian peacekeepers who allowed this atrocity to happen.

Diana Apcar's words are ever relevant today, exposing the policy of pandering to aggressors, which always frees the hands of the country of aggression to commit new crimes. Despite this, she does not lose hope and leaves the last word to God. To this, she said: "Wanton butchery of a people is murder. To strengthen and hold up the hands of the murderer is murder. To supply the murderer with death-dealing instruments is murder. Even if the exigencies of European politics and the interest of Turkish bondholder's demand that the murder must be committed and condoned, yet God will demand the price of murder".³⁶

Diana even wrote a prayer that she asked to be read before the Church service, which read: "I wish to spread this prayer among the Armenian nation, so that wherever there are Armenians they pray to God so that Armenia is liberated that the Armenian Republic remains firm. Grant God and have mercy."³⁷

Conclusion

I came to this topic from a clear understanding for the need to transform Armenian society after the genocide, 70 years of Soviet rule, and continued assaults on indigenous Armenian populations. The revelation of Diana Apcar in her Christian spirituality and mission is very significant for Armenian society and should be held up as a model to admire and aspire to, especially the modern generation. This work may contribute to the beginning of a discourse on the terminology of holiness in the world, which is currently not used in the Armenian Apostolic Church. Further study of this topic through consideration of the general criteria of holiness in the world may lead to more profound research on the possible canonization of Diana Apcar, if the personality meets more formal and verified criteria. Of course, there is a theological commission and various procedures for this, but this is a good first step to pursue closer study of Diana Apcar's

³⁶ Apcar, Diana Agabeg. *The Peace Problem*. Yokohama, Japan Gazette Press, 1912, p. 9.

³⁷ Ghazarians, Ara. *Diana A. Apcar (1859—1937): The First Armenian Woman Diplomat*. Arlington, MA, Armenian Cultural Foundation, 2010.

personality by the official Church. Also, this essay may prove to be the impetus for a possible update of the approach regarding the issue of holiness among Christians in the Armenian Apostolic Church, as I have shown by the example of other historical Churches. The factor of Holiness in the World of some Christians of the 20th century in these Churches is gradually moving toward formalization and further official canonization. This is already an approved practice and a verified procedure in the Roman Catholic Church.

In this regard, this work will encourage the Church to take a closer look at the personality of Diana Apcar in the light of her possible holiness. At least start a discourse about her holiness while in the category of holiness in the world. It will also help the Church to strengthen its trust in the modern Armenian society. Figures such as Diana Apcar are closer and more significant to today's generation than medieval saints. It is in the interests of the Church to discover modern saints and examples of holiness in the world.

Diana Apcar was buried in Yokohama. Her tombstone is engraved with the simple words befitting her life and faith, "Out of Earth's shadows unto Heaven's Glorious Day. We Loved Her, but God Loved Her Best."³⁸

(6958 words)

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³⁸ "Gravesite of Diana" The Stateless Diplomat, accessed September 15, 2024, <https://dianaapcar.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Gravesite-Diana-husband-and-son.1.jpg>

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